

PRECOLONIAL COMMUNITIES OF SOUTHWESTERN AFRICA

A History of Owambo Kingdoms 1600-1920

By Frieda-Nela Williams



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PRECOLONIAL COMMUNITIES OF SOUTHWESTERN AFRICA

Published by the
National Archives of Namibia
Private Bag 13250, Windhoek

1st edition 1991
2nd edition 1994

Cover Design: Frieda-Nela Williams
Photos: Petteri Mäkelä and Juha Koivisto

Printed and bound by John Meinert (Pty) Ltd

ISBN 0-86976-241-9

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PREFACE

This study is the first attempt to reconstruct the precolonial history of the Owambo people over the period between 1600-1920. The Owambos are a Bantu-speaking people, belonging to the south-western Bantu language group, with a population of over 700,000. They inhabit the geographical area between 16° and 20° latitude and 14° and 18° longitude. Owamboland is bounded by the Okavangoland in the east, the Kaokoland in the west, the Hereroland in the south and the Handa country in the north. These borderlines were still valid until the southern line was altered during the "Scramble" for Africa, when German colonialists extended their spheres of interest toward 18° 50' longitude in 1890. Thus, the name South-Western Africa is applied in this study to a geographical entity which covers areas between southern Angola and northern Namibia, rather than a political region.

However, it was not easy to choose a theme aimed at studying Africa's precolonial period in the field of history, for several reasons. Historians until this day recognize history as a subject which is based on documentary evidence. As a result, the field of oral tradition which forms the major source of precolonial African history is caught up in the theoretical and methodological differences between orthodox historians on the one hand, and social anthropologists on the other. The idealistic approach which purported that history could be understood only in terms of conscious, guided human behaviour, narrowed the understanding of the concept of history and its perception in different communities. The linking of the concept of literacy to conscious action shattered the question of how Africans perceived the concept of history. Thus, literacy and documentation became the recognized ways of preserving history, while orally transmitted history was regarded as a mere myth. Here most historians have been mistaken in not recognizing the fact that oral traditions are not simple tales, but are in most societies linked closely to religion. Through this process, traditions became sacred and their distortion regarded as a violation of the traditional religion. I became bothered during the course of my study by the way in which the "history of the Owambo people" has been written. In many works, the perspective is heavily influenced not only by the ideas and institutions of which we are all products, but more so by the perception of the reality we are faced with.

The independence of Namibia marks the beginning of a new era in African historiography. This was one of my sources of inspiration in the new thinking and approach during the course of writing. Therefore, this study serves as a stepping-stone in the history of the African people, which I hope will open up scientific debates aimed at placing the history of the long-deprived Namibian people in the context of world history.

The completion of this work could not have been possible without the independence of Namibia, which made it possible for me to carry out the fieldwork in Owamboland. It is against this background that I want to thank all my informants,

research assistants and many Namibians who have been actively involved in the struggle for national liberation under the leadership of SWAPO.

I am greatly indebted to the Finnish International Development Agency (FINNIDA) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, and the Finnchurchaid of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, for the scholarship grant and the constant financial assistance throughout the preparation of this work and my years of study. The manuscript of this study benefited very much from the initial comments made by Ella Kamanya, M.A. Muhammed Salih, Seppo Sivonen, my supervisor Associate Professor Seppo Rytönen and Professor Thomas Flou. Their constructive criticism has helped me to improve the quality of this work; I am grateful to all of them. I particularly thank many individuals, especially those who have helped me with the completion of technical matters: Christina Mann for proof-reading the manuscript; Petteri Mäkelä for constructive criticism at various stages of this work, and for helping with much of the drawings in this work; John Hakapandi for the drawing of the Owambo homestead; and Brigitte Lau, who gave the final touch to the manuscript.

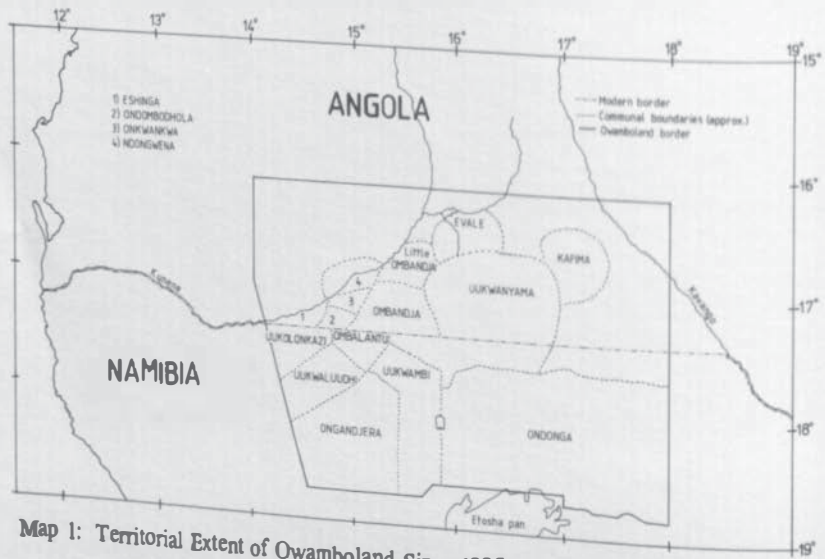
Finally, my gratitude goes to my daughters Kalinde and Shekupe and my parents, who endured my absence during the long years of study. I dedicate this book to the Owambo ancestors who lived through the experience, and who transmitted the traditions through the generations.

ORTHOGRAPHY AND SPECIAL TERMS

The orthography used in this work is similar to that of standard English, when Bantu-language prefixes are dropped. Ndonga is used instead of Ondonga, Kwanyama instead of Uukwanyama, Ngandjera instead of Ongandjera when it refers to the people - hence the Ndonga people, the Kwanyama people, the Ngandjera people, etc. The same logic is applied when referring to polities - the Ndonga kingdom, etc. But where prefixes are maintained *the* is not used, because *O* is an article. This standard is sometimes used interchangeably in this work where it is difficult to use, or when the use of the English article *the* will change the meaning. Clan names are left with their prefixes, for example *Ekwanangombe*: Ekwa- here denotes 'being a member of or affiliated with', if the prefix is dropped then the stem will retain a different meaning by becoming Nangombe, which is a personal name.

Other special terms used are explained by providing an English word with the same or similar meaning; the original word is maintained in brackets. But where the English word does not parallel the Owambo one, the latter is used; for example, in the case of the clan name *Aakwanelumbi*, because its totem is not clear to the author.

Owambo personal names and fathers' names are usually written in such a way that they trace the relationship to one's father; for example, Nangolo dh'Amutenya, hence Nangolo the son of Amutenya; and Nangombe ya Mangundu, hence Nangombe the daughter of Mangundu. While the elaborated English form will be used in the text, the royal genealogies in the appendix will retain their original form.



Map 1: Territorial Extent of Owamboland Since 1885

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Collecting Oral Tradition

1.1.1. Starting the Operation

Since I began to concentrate on the study of African history with special focus on the Owambo people of northern Namibia and southern Angola, the lack of data available in world libraries on the traditions, history, culture, social and economic life of these people troubled me a lot. In an attempt to retrieve the available information about the Owambo people, I chose a few key words, like "Owambo", "Ovambo" and "Ambo", which are related to history, culture, oral tradition and ethnology. Different spellings of the word "Owambo" were used because those who first recorded the traditions of these people had misspelled, if not completely changed, "Aayamba" - their original name.

The disappointments and frustrations that ensued from insufficient information on the history of the Owambo people in world libraries, forced me to embark upon a project that would enable me to collect some information and I hoped, fill the vacuum. The purpose of this study was to collect data about all spheres of the Owambo people's way of life before colonial expansion. Such information is now only available in the annals of what social anthropologists call "live archives".

Despite the growing scepticism among most Western historians concerning the validity of the kind of method applied when using oral traditions as a historical source, relevant methods like those of Miller (1976), Henige (1982) and Vansina (1985) were applied to this study. In their works, they provide guidelines for historians who want to reconstruct the past of non-literate societies, where written records do not exist. Their methods are important steps in every study which derives its sources from oral traditions, and outline the preparation, collection and interpretation of the field data¹. In this respect, Papstein pointed out clearly that the oral historian is doing something different from the historian who works with written data. First, he/she has to undertake fieldwork in order to create a permanent "archive" or "documents", which are recorded outside of the time in which events have occurred; only then are these sources interpreted².

Using the methods of Miller, Henige and Vansina, a systematic questionnaire was prepared in such a way that answers to the questions would provide certain

¹ Miller, J.C. (1976): "Kings and Kinsmen: Early Mbundu States in Angola", p. 11; Henige, David (1982): "Oral Historiography", p. 23; and Vansina, Jan (1985): "Oral Tradition as History", p. 29

² Papstein, R. J. (1968): "The Upper Zambezi: A History of the Luvale People, 1000-1900", p. 26

historical facts, which will help historians to comprehend the past of the Owambo people, when corroborated with other auxiliary sources.

The informants varied greatly in terms of age, vested interests³, clan affiliation and religious beliefs. The periodization of the traditions was taken into consideration by applying the accepted standard which purports that for a tradition to be accepted as a historical source of evidence, it must be handed down at least a generation⁴. Vansina also added that traditions should follow a chain of transmission⁵.

Using a tape-recorder, I interviewed twenty-four informants on various aspects of Owambo life, such as: migration, settlements, the Owambo calendar and hours, clans, royal genealogies, the structures and functions of Owambo kingdoms, political conflicts that surround royal successions, the Owambo religion, place- and personal names, ritual practices and initiation ceremonies. All interviews were transcribed in the original language and translated into English. It should be noted here that the fieldwork I carried out was mainly aimed at comparing my findings with the traditions recorded earlier in the diaries of missionaries Martti Rautanen (1888-1893), August Pettinen (1891-1898), Albin Savoja (1903-1904), Erkki Laurmaa (1924-1934), Nestori Väänänen (1927), and most importantly in the ethnographic data of Emil Liljeblad (1932). The latter collection remains the major documentary source of this work, and it will form the central base for corroborating written and oral data.

1.1.2. Field Problems

Although I had been waiting for an opportunity to do fieldwork, it came so sudden that I could no longer wait for the proper timing for this fieldwork. This was because of the offer made to me to travel back to Namibia and take part in the first free elections to be organized in the country under United Nations supervision and control. I was not only happy to be able to return to Namibia for the first time during my fifteen years of political exile, but I was also fascinated by the possibility of fieldwork that I could conduct while there.

The problem of this timing meant that I could not properly take into account events such as major ritual activities, the sequence and duration of the seasons, or the agricultural/hunting/fishing cycles. The approach proposed by Henige⁶ and Vansina⁷

³ These follow their positions in the society, especially the type of services they render to the kingdom.

⁴ Henige (1982), p. 2; and Vansina (1985), p. 29

⁵ Vansina (1985), p. 29

⁶ Henige (1982), p. 34

⁷ Vansina (1985), pp. 39-40

could not be applied to this fieldwork for another reason: most of the ancient ritual practices had died out due to the expansion of Christianity - except for the initiation ceremonies in some remote parts of Owamboland, especially amongst the non-Christians. These ceremonies were organized once every two years in the old days, but at present the cycle used depends on the number of participants. Unfortunately, I could not foretell what kind of a year 1990 would be, thus I could not experience the seasonal floods (*Efundja*), which occurred this year after heavy rains in the highlands of Angola. These seasonal floods are believed to come once every five years.

The post-war climate and tension emanating from election campaigns became major stumbling-blocks to trust and confidence. There were occasions on which people were not willing to be interviewed unless I stated my political affiliation. In one instance, the present Ndonga King, Immanuel Elifas, suggested to me some of his chief counsellors and elders whom I could possibly interview. To my surprise, the famous chief counsellor Mupenda the son of Angolo and indeed the oldest in Ondonga, refused to be interviewed. Mupenda pointed out to me: "Some old people, will think that you have come to kill them if you go and ask them such questions." From this statement I could tell that he was afraid of things that had happened during the war, and that the immediate change which had taken place could not be understood quickly, especially by old people. That was why, when I returned on the day of our appointment, he was unwilling to see me and denied that we had ever agreed to meet. Mupenda is one of the most important sources on the traditions of the Ndonga kingdom, where he served since the beginning of this century as a counsellor, a position which made him one of the most trusted elders.

Another problem was time. In such a traditional setting, the question of time and appointments becomes one of the greatest problems that any researcher might experience. This affects both the limited time and resources that a researcher might have at her/his disposal. A vast country like Namibia has enormous distances between different wards in its rural areas. There is nothing more annoying than making an appointment, then driving for about two or three hundred kilometres, only to be told upon arrival in the ward where the informant lives that he/she has gone to a neighbouring ward.

Many of these problems can be understood within the political climate that prevails in the country at the time of research. From this experience one can draw the conclusion that the timing of fieldwork research must not only focus on events related to tradition, but also on the general political climate in the country. This might affect not only the success of the fieldwork but also have direct implications on the reliability of the sources from which data is to be collected.

1.1.3. Reliability of Informants

According to the Owambo tradition, anybody who enters the area with the purpose of talking or intermingling with the people must seek permission from the king, chief or the head of the area in which she/he might find her/himself. The king, the chief or the senior officer will then propose the people to be interviewed, people regarded as the official narrators of the traditions of the kingdom, commune or region.

Langworthy pointed out that the reliability of informants varies considerably, depending on their access to traditional historical sources, their memory, their age, and their vested interests in supporting a certain chieftainship of lineage⁸. In addition to the variables mentioned above, literacy also seems to be a determining factor for reliability. These variables can not only influence judgement about the reliability of the testimony, as Langworthy⁹ argued, but can also reveal the quality of the information that one has recorded. For example, the reliability of group histories depends on the cultural environment in which they were shaped because most oral traditions are influenced by the events that were responsible for shaping them. Therefore, the informant's view and interpretation of the community's past, as Phiri observed¹⁰, will entirely derive from them. These world-views in most African societies are what Vansina called "invisible entities"¹¹. Among Owambo communities they represent the ancestral spirits, with the cornerstone of their religion, *Kalunga*, as their symbol. Consequently, the second version of the Owambo traditions of origin refers to the question of how people came about, rather than to how they were created¹². Thus the tradition of origin in Owambo history is related to customs and practice (to borrow Vansina's concepts)¹³.

The reliability of informants can also be judged from the general statements that they make. Some, if not most of them, tend to hide what they regard as the "shameful" part of their tradition or their own experience, hiding it especially from an outsider. One of my informants, Shindondola, said when referring to fire-making in Owamboland: "The making of such a fire cannot be denied. I myself, when I was cattle-herding as a boy, used to make such fires and roast our mice... (laughter)." And

⁸ Langworthy, H.W. (1969): "A History of Undi's Kingdom to 1890: Aspects of Chewa History in East Central Africa", p. 92

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Phiri, Kings M. (1984): "Oral Tradition and Social Structure: Reflections on Historical Fieldwork in Central Malawi", in: *International Journal of Oral Traditions*, Vol. 5, No. 2, p. 101

¹¹ Vansina (1985), p. 132

¹² Williams, Frieda-Nela (1988): "Migration and Settlement in Owamboland 1600-1900", p. 80

¹³ Vansina (1985), p. 132

then he continued: "No, switch off the tape-recorder and erase the part on "mice-roasting", because the whites are going to laugh at us"¹⁴."

Hence, reliability of the informant must also be judged in relation to the interviewer, especially in such a racially polarized society as Namibia at the time when this fieldwork was done. This means that the type of general political climate which surrounded the election period must be avoided, because such an atmosphere will directly affect the data collected, since the informant might be biased regarding the tradition of the group which he is narrating. One must also remember that such political conflicts have been the major causes of historical distortion in most parts of the world. For instance, even though the historian's main concern lies in the question of reliability, traditions collected by travellers and missionaries or colonial officers were not subjected to a systematic process of internal criticism, as are those of the present day. In spite of this weakness, they are still regarded as being reliable, because they contain first-hand information about oral societies. Yet one must point out, as the Russian historian Jerofejev did, that "...we do not necessarily observe everything, but only what interests us"¹⁵: because the circumstances under which those traditions were recorded, were surely influenced by prejudices that existed during the first centuries of the European expansions and cultural contacts.

In his argument on the question of observation and memory, Jerofejev continued that historians are influenced by many psychological and physical factors, like the observer's mood, tiredness, etc. He also pointed out that an eye-witness does not necessarily see everything that happened in front of him, because he cannot focus exactly on the event¹⁶. For example, an observer finding himself in an oral environment may try to focus on an event, but he will simply not understand everything as he expected; this is due to the fact that our perception is much governed by what we expect to see, rather than what we saw. It is also important to note that when we set out for our fieldwork trips, we have already prepared ourselves, and our hypotheses are determined by the analysis we intend to make concerning our subject matter. Thus, the fieldwork will serve as our laboratory where we can test the hypotheses; the results we get will always be closer to what we expected to get.

Miller argued that detectable distortion has survived in the oral environment through the spoken rather than written word¹⁷. If distortion takes place during the period of transmission in oral cultures, as Miller claimed, then the same can happen to recorded events in literate cultures before the actual recording is done. Moreover,

¹⁴ Shindondola, Elifas, p. 346 (FWC. 2); see list of personal data in Appendix VII (b)

¹⁵ Jerofejev, Nikolai (1976): "Mitä on Historia", p. 91

¹⁶ Jerofejev, p. 91

¹⁷ Miller, J. C. [editor] (1980): "The African Past Speaks", p. 2

it must be stated that the data nowadays recorded in what are termed literate cultures are no longer raw like those recorded in the same culture - let us say - before the industrial revolution. The higher level of education does not only provide the eye-witness with conscious objectivity in observing an event, but it has its weaknesses too. For example, take two observers: one from a literate culture and the other from an oral culture; and let them observe a particular event. Interview them afterwards and record the data. During the time of analyzing these data, it was realized that the data from the literate informant will appear in a more logical way [which one might conclude is due to the degree of historical consciousness that exists among this group], or be categorized according to different stages of the occurrence. And at the other extreme, the data obtained from the informant from an oral culture will be raw, illogical to a degree, something that one may not expect.

Which data will give a more reliable picture of the occurrence? I will prefer the data given by the informant from an oral culture if I want to handle the data as a primary source, but if I want to work with the data as a secondary source, then I will use the data given by the informant from a literate culture. I am differentiating the handling of these data in two different categories, despite the fact that they have been recorded at the same time concerning the same event.

An informant is chosen from an oral culture because of his non-literate background, which does not provide him with the Western vision which governs the type of historical truth historians are looking for when collecting their oral data to be used as historical sources. Thus, his vision compared to that of his counterpart will be different, one can be almost certain that this type of raw data might give a picture of the event "as it really was".

In contrast, the data collected from the informant from a literate culture will have been selected in the process of its transmission according to what he expected to see, because his conceptual framework governs his vision in observing events. Of course, one can argue that the data will tell the same thing, but I am concerned with the question of how our perspectives produce what we call "reliable evidence".

Let me state a concrete example from the pre-colonial history of Namibia. When Galton and Andersson visited Namibia for the first time, they met Herero people (whom they referred to as the Damara), some of whom they chose to become their guides and interpreters. When they later met the Owambo people and realized that these possessed iron-making skills because of the ornaments they wore and the iron implements they carried¹⁸, Galton and Andersson wrote in their reports that the Owambo were more intelligent compared to their Herero neighbours. They even went

¹⁸ Andersson, C. J. (1987): "Lake Ngami", pp. 204-205;
Galton, Francis (1853): "The Narratives of an Explorer
in Tropical South Africa", p. 229

as far as classifying them [the Owambo] as a people who belonged to the Hamitic race¹⁹. Truly speaking, I would not classify the Owambo as Hamitic people; instead, I would mistakenly do so with the Herero, because of their physical features that are similar to this human race. What astonished Galton and Andersson was the degree of development that the Owambo people possessed in the forging of iron. Their (Galton and Andersson's) lack of knowledge on the interior development in Africa - accompanied by speculative theories which prevailed at that time, linking the origin of the Bantu-speaking people with the Mediterranean - led them to arrive at such conclusions.

In his article "*Memory and Oral Tradition*"²⁰, Vansina dwelled extensively on the question of memory defects and their impact on the reliability of the informant. Memory as a subject is a specialized area in psychology, a fact that will limit my argument greatly because of lack of knowledge about the subject. Rosaldo noted that Vansina's principles for assessing the likely accuracy of memory could not be corroborated by his fieldwork results, because Rosaldo came to realise that some people have better memories than others, and all people are better at remembering some things and not others²¹. This was also true in the case of the Owambo informants. Vansina's results might be good for the study of informants in a literate culture; as I pointed out, there are differences regarding their observation of an event (see pp. 5-6 above). However, although the three major dimensions of memory code identified²² by Vansina exist passively in the mind of any informant, the informant can only use them when she/he is aware of their existence. That is why I think the use of such a method to test accuracy of memory will be a subject of future studies when the level of consciousness of the informant is raised within the conceptual framework of Western education.

If memory is more a shared phenomenon in an oral culture than it is in a literate culture, where people create private mnemonic devices such as notes, diaries, and the like - to retain accuracy regarding their early idiosyncratic impressions of an event, as Vansina²³ stated -, then one can conclude that memory in an oral culture can be more functional as it uses the process of memorizing. But a literate person who relies on a notebook, will not be trained in this recording practice, because there will be no need

¹⁹ Andersson (1987), pp. 200-201; Galton, p. 134

²⁰ Vansina, J. (1980): "Memory and Oral Tradition", in: "African Past Speaks", edited by J. C. Miller, pp. 262-279

²¹ Rosaldo, Renato (1980): "Doing Oral History", in: *Social Analysis*, No. 4, September, p. 93

²² Vansina (1980), p. 263

²³ Vansina (1980), p. 273; see also Miller, J.C. (1980): "Introduction: Listening for the African Past", in: "The African Past Speaks", edited by J. C. Miller, p. 11

to keep all happenings in one's mind when one knows that one can retrieve them at any time from one's notebook. Thus, memory becomes short concerning recorded events - rather than unrecorded ones, which one has an obligation to remember.

The results revealed by this fieldwork are that a Western-type history cannot be reconstructed from the data collected, since a historian cannot fully interpret oral traditions from an oral culture entirely through a Western theoretical framework or model. These traditional histories are composed of terms and concepts that this model cannot employ. It is in this regard that I agree with those African historians who hold that oral tradition must be presented as a product of the way people in oral cultures think and talk about their past²⁴. This is necessary to avoid interpreting the indigenous history of oral cultures entirely according to a theoretical framework whose cultural background they do not share.

After all, as the great Russian historian Lappo-Danilevski argued at the beginning of this century, "all historical sources are indeed products of the human mind²⁵". Thus, the most important question here is not who recorded what, but whether the method applied in recording a certain tradition or event was suitable for providing a theoretical framework through which such an event/tradition can be interpreted.

1.1.4. Preservation of Owambo Oral Tradition

The transmission and preservation of Owambo oral traditions can be explained by the relationship that exists between the socio-political structures and the oral tradition. This was partly described by Kings M. Phiri (1984), who identified the relationship between oral tradition and social structure on the basis of his fieldwork experience in central Malawi²⁶. In the present paper, however, the social and political structures are combined, thus identifying the relationship between them.

The social and political organization of the Owambo communities is based on matrilineal²⁷ principles, and their identity rests on membership of a discrete kinship

²⁴ è Nzièm, Ndaywel (1986) "African Historians and Africanist Historians", in: "African Historiography", edited by Bogumil Jewsiewicki & David Newbury, pp. 25-27

²⁵ Jerofejev, p. 92

²⁶ Phiri, Kings M. (1984): "Oral Tradition and Social Structure: Reflections on Historical Fieldwork in Central Malawi", in: *International Journal of Oral History*, Vol. 5, No. 2, June, p. 101

²⁷ The line of one's descent runs through the maternal line; this also applies to royal succession, by which one qualifies to become a king if one belongs to the royal clan on the mother's side. The social

group based on descent²⁸. Each Owambo clan is named after its founding ancestor, and every individual family maintained a genealogy that traced ancestry back to the founder of the line (see footnote 27)²⁹.

Owambo society can be best understood in terms of a kinship³⁰ relations model, because it is difficult to explain the duality of the existing clan relations in a single term³¹. For example, a child is born into the community as a product of two different clans, because people from the same matri-clan are not allowed to marry each other, a fact that makes the Owambo people a bi-clan society³². This fact was overlooked by Tuupainen when she argued that "clans in Ondonga did not possess a residential unity nor social integration³³". Tuupainen did not look at the settlement pattern in Owamboland from the matrilineal organizational point of view, and she very much overlooked the laws of mating which prohibit endogamous relationships between members of the same matri-clan and allow inter-mating between different clans³⁴.

Although the geographical dispersion of clans had some impact on clan unity, it is the duty of the head of the clan, usually the eldest male member, to maintain this unity. He presides over the organization of the social and religious rites of the clan by settling disputes among clan members. He also presides over the distribution of wealth and inherited property among clan members, and pays compensation for any crime committed by a member of the clan. With regard to the paternal relations, it is the father who is the head of the family and is responsible for maintaining residential unity. Because a woman does not become a member of her husband's clan by virtue of marriage, nor do their children, the father is mainly regarded as a genitor³⁵.

organization of the Owambo society is organized according to the same principle; for instance, a child belongs to the mother's clan and her/his identity lies with this clan. The paternal clan has no social obligation to the child other than the role it plays in upbringing.

²⁸ Williams (1988), p. 48

²⁹ Pettinen (1926/27), pp. 51-54; Amweelo, Mic. No. 6 (ELC. 344); Kaukungwa, Sem, Mic. No. 49 (ibid.); Nameya, Mic. No. 56 (ibid.); Bruwer, J.P. van S. (1966): "South-West Africa: The Disputed Land", pp. 22-23; Schinz (1891), pp. 303-304; Lebzelter, V. (1934): "Eingeborenen Kulturen in Südwest und Südafrika", Vol. I, p. 192

³⁰ Kinship is the relationship that exists between members of the same family: their social bond, or ties.

³¹ Williams (1988), p. 51

³² Ibid.

³³ Tuupainen, M. (1970): "Marriage in a Matrilineal African Tribe. A Social Anthropological Study of Marriage in the Ondonga Tribe in Ovamboland", p. 82

³⁴ Loeb, Edwin M. (1962): "In Feudal Africa", in: *International Journal of American Linguistics*, Vol. 28, No. 2, July, pp. 102-03

³⁵ Williams (1988), p. 52

The political organization is left to the royal clan, which appoints members of different clans to render services and play roles in the functioning of the political structure³⁶. This structural and functional organization of the Owambo society favours the transmission and preservation of oral traditions through the family, clan lineage, and the kingdom as a political unit. All these traditions reveal different things, depending on the social and political role they played during their time span. The family traditions tell us about their ancestors and the relationship between different clans in terms of social relations, while the clan traditions tell about the origin of the clan, its founder, its migration and who were the co-immigrants, the area to which it migrated, who were the occupants, the migrants' relationship with them, and the special role the clan played³⁷. The traditions of the kingdom always tell about the clans they found in the area they "conquered", the type of special skills they possessed at the time of their arrival which favoured their special position, the role played by different clans in the structure of the kingdom and their relation to the royal clan, their religious figures, and wars they waged with neighbouring kingdoms. This process through which group histories are preserved, forms the general framework on which Owambo oral tradition rests.

The chain of transmission and preservation of oral traditions in Owamboland appears to centre around male members, who are favoured by their dominant position in the society. Most informants in this study were men, because they were telling about traditions of the kingdom, family and clan. As noted above, it will appear to anyone who is not familiar with the structure of the Owambo communities that men have a dominant position in the whole socio-political and religious structure of the Owambo society because the man is the head of the kingdom, the district, the ward, the clan, and the family. But this is not the case: their dominant position is supported rather by their religious position in the community, and religion forms its fundamental basis.

Because of the socio-political and the religious organization in Owamboland, most of the "well-preserved" traditions are those dealing with royal succession, royal genealogy, migrations, ritual practices, initiation rites, salt-fetching trips, wars and cattle raids. All these traditions explain the relationship between the Owambo, their neighbours, and the indigenous occupants of the country, and illustrate further the relationship between clans within their social, religious and political structure. It is worth noting that cataclysmic events such as floods, drought, wars, etc. tend to be remembered more than peaceful events, owing to the agony and destruction they have caused to humanity.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Phiri, p. 105

1.1.5. Ways and Means of Transmission

Despite the fact that Owambo communities are matrilineally organized, the transmission of oral traditions follows the pattern of father to son or uncle to nephew. The position that men have in the communities does not mean that the role of the matri-clan shifts to the patri-clan; it is due to the importance of religion, as pointed out earlier. The transmission of oral traditions in Owambo culture is a sacred duty, because their history is the history of their ancestors, whom they worship; and for religious reasons it is forbidden to distort it.

With regard to royal traditions, there are very strict rules governing the transmission, because the king is the spiritual link between the dead and the living. The king, assisted by his chief minister, presides over all the religious functions of the kingdom. To control distortion the king has his most trusted counsellors who narrate the traditions of the kingdom and its rulers. Vansina pointed out: "It is only in societies with highly centralized political institutions that the study of oral traditions is possible"³⁸, and Phiri also observed a similar practice: "As elsewhere in Africa, politically dominant clans have more to offer in the way of traditions that are rich, varied and colourful because the level of historical consciousness tends to be high among members of such clans"³⁹.

Yet Vansina's theory cannot be applied wholly without alterations to fit the type of social and political structures under study. For example, there are some communities amongst the Owambo-speaking people who did not have a centralized system in the form of a kingdom - such as Uukolonkadhi, Ondombodhola, Eshinga, Onkwankwa, and Ondongona (see Map 1). Onkwankwa and Ondongona were said to have been under the rule of the Mbandja kings⁴⁰. However, group traditions of these communities were preserved and transmitted through the family and clan. This study reveals that the process of transmission does not necessarily follow the line of political organization as Vansina and Phiri claimed, because both social and political organization in Owambo communities are based on religion, and it is the social function of clans to preserve their tradition. For example, in Owamboland as in most parts of Africa traditions - especially those which are linked to origin, reproduction, and the functional life of the society - are regarded as part of the religion. It is for this reason that the king is a highly respected figure, because he is held to be the person who maintains the spiritual link between the living and the dead⁴¹ by presiding over all ritual ceremonies.

³⁸ Vansina (1985), p. 2

³⁹ Phiri, p. 105

⁴⁰ Shikongo, Daniel, pp. 326-327 (FWC. 2)

⁴¹ Uugwanga, Abraham, pp. 399-401 (FWC. 3)

The transmission and preservation of oral traditions in Owambo communities have followed the process of recalling the events that occurred during the lifetime of the informants and what they had heard from their elders. As in many African societies, oral tradition in Owamboland is transmitted in the following ways: around the evening fire, at cattle-posts, at initiation ceremonies, on the way to war, on trips to collect salt and iron ore, while out hunting, and while out on trips to collect firewood or cut palisade. Most of these were undertaken by men. This is an indication that historical consciousness existed among these people; as Shindondola and Uukule put it: "Yes, we remember the past of our people, although we did not have a tradition of writing it down as you are doing now (referring to the author). Our children know about our past because we told them, and we know because our parents and elders told us; this is how we remember our history (*ondjokonona*)"⁴².

The Owambo conception of history may be different from that of people from a literate culture, as Rosaldo noted in his study about the *Ilongits* of northern Luzon, Philippines⁴³. The Owambo people's awareness of the differences that exist between the past and the present, and the importance they attached to the memories of the past, suffice to reveal the existence of historical consciousness in that society.

Most of the data gathered during this fieldwork cover two broad periods: the remote clan histories dating back to about 1520-1850⁴⁴, and recent Owambo histories dating from 1850 to 1917. The remote clan histories are concerned with origin, migrations, clan lineage, culture heroes, and the foundation of the kingdoms. The recent Owambo histories, on the other hand, tell about the royal clan, kings, people's identity, cattle raids, wars, songs of praise and eulogy, ritual practices, counsellors, royal wives and husbands, slave trade, and relationships with neighbouring kingdoms. There are also some data about European travellers, traders, missionaries and colonial expansion, as well as how local resistance against colonial expansion was organized. Some colonial governors and their established colonial institutions were remembered as being opposed to the traditional ones.

Nevertheless, one has to accept the fact that Owambo tradition has not been static; indeed, it has suffered a great deal as a result of structural changes that affected Owambo communities since the beginning of the 19th century and earlier. First, we

⁴² Shindondola, Elifas, pp. 350-351 FWC. 2); Uukule, Shilongo Andreas (*ibid.*), p. 480

⁴³ Rosaldo, p. 92

⁴⁴ These datings are mainly based on the period covered by this study, hence mainly linked to the major political events that affected the disintegration of the Katanga kingdoms of Lunda/Luba and the expansion of the Chokwe, which in turn influenced the foundation of the Imbangala kingdom in central Angola and the change in most political institutions in the region.

have to look into the impact of neighbouring kingdoms such as those of the Ovimbundu, who had contact with the outside world as far as the eastern coast of Africa, where they traded with the Arabs⁴⁵. Second, there was the impact of the Imbangala expansion, which resulted in a change in the balance of power in the region after the foundation of their powerful kingdom of Kasanje⁴⁶. Third, resulting from the expansion of Christianity in the 19th century, foreign cultural values were assimilated. This was the area that had a powerful impact on the traditional beliefs of the people, changing their religious ideas and the cultural values that formed the fundamental basis of their communities. For example, when I asked Helvi Kondombolo about the origin of the Owambo people, her answer drew heavily from the book of Genesis, and she concluded that all people have one origin⁴⁷. Fourth, it was mainly at this stage that structural changes in Owambo communities emerged. Both the German and the South African colonial systems, in their lust for power, were only able to control the people if they weakened the traditional power structures of the Owambo communities. These attempts partly succeeded in Uukwambi and Uukwanyama, but in most of the country the traditional structures survived. The continuing survival of the traditional power structures in Owamboland is an indication that these kingdoms are not as young as they were said to be. If the traditional power structures had not been firmly rooted for centuries, they could not have survived the effective colonial system that prevailed in Namibia and Angola.

1.2. Oral Tradition and Historical Research

1.2.1. Oral Traditions and African Historical Research

The application to the study of the African past, of different methods of collecting and making use of oral tradition has been one of the most controversial issues in the historiography of the continent since the 1960s. Until now there is no explicit method upon which consensus has been reached, that can provide a theoretical framework for interpreting the available oral data collected from different parts of the continent.

⁴⁵ Andersson (1987), pp. 196-197; McCulloch, M. (1952): "The Ovimbundu of Angola", in: *International African Institute*, p. 8

⁴⁶ Childs, C.M. (1949): "Umbundu Kingship and Character", pp. 171 & 180; McCulloch (1952), pp. 5-6; Oliver, R. & Atmore, A. (1981): "The African Middle Ages: 1400-1800", p. 163; Birmingham, D. (1966): "Trade and Conflict in Angola", p. 168; Miller, J.C. (1972 b): "The Imbangala and the Chronology of Early Central Africa", in: *JAH*, p. 168

⁴⁷ Kondombolo, Helvi, pp. 304-305 (FWC. 1)

Unfortunately, the continent of Africa was put into a situation in which the gap between its remote and its recent past was widened by the colonial expansion since 1500. The result of this expansion was the introduction of abrupt changes into the social, political and economic structures; changes that were responsible for the destruction of traditional structures of many African communities.

Hence, the internal development of the continent was altered by the influx of European traders, travellers, missionaries, and colonial administrators. The European presence did not only accelerate internal changes, but also introduced new concepts which were much more effective in changing the peoples' attitudes toward their traditional beliefs, the ethics of producing and selling, the supply of labour to the capitalist market, and new power relations. More importantly, it provided information to the public back home about the wonders the newcomers found in what they termed "primitive" communities. Thus the memoirs which provided Europe with its perception and understanding of Africa's past, were conditioned by epistemological categories largely derived from works written by traders, travellers, missionaries, and colonial administrators, as Vansina correctly pointed out⁴⁸.

After the process of decolonization, the general trend regarding the study of the African past was developing along the lines of decolonizing its history. Scholars who were - fortunately or unfortunately - citizens of former colonial powers, became the "new" Africanist historians. Of course, this seemed natural, because there was an increasing need to make use of the mountainous heaps of materials which the colonial government had compiled in its archives. As Vansina wrote on the emergence of African historical writing: "Until recently the great majority of these historians were not Africans; they did not belong to the societies whose history they described, an unusual situation when compared with earlier historical practices⁴⁹." Although their main objective was to find an alternative - to study and write the history of Africa from a different perspective than the colonial one - they hardly succeeded in breaking away from a tradition that had long prevailed in Africa. What they achieved was the reformulation of research problems in order to address the changing situation. However, the problem of epistemology still remained the most crucial one.

This situation shaped the nature and course of African historical writings since the decade of the 1960s. The main problem still lies in perspective and in the conceptual framework, rather than in the method applied. In his study about "African Historians and Africanist Historians", è Nzièm pointed out clearly: "For Africans, African history is not just a research and technical field. But, in Africa, historians who

⁴⁸ Vansina, J. (1986): "Knowledge and Perceptions of the African Past", p. 29; in: "African Historiography", edited by B. Jewsiewicki & D. Newbury.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 28

study African history live it too, and they have to put up with the consequences and the setbacks of history, in the most intimate and personal manner⁵⁰."

È Nzièm here clearly pointed to what he identified as the principal characteristic of an African historian, and his experience as compared to that of his Africanist counterpart. È Nzièm continues to suggest how the two schools of thought [i.e. the African and the Africanist] perceive the "true" problems of Africa from different perspectives.

È Nzièm is here concerned with the general position of Africa in the historical tradition of the world. For colonial historians like Vedder (1938) and Loeb (1962) in the case of Namibia, African history begins with the colonial expansion. For missionaries like Laurmaa (1949), African history has its roots in the biblical stories. Africanist historians tend to hide such attitudes well by pointing to the methodology of using ancient traditions in the writing of history as the main problem; but the fact is that Western epistemology does not provide a conceptual framework in which traditions can be interpreted according to the way people think and talk about their past. If we take the question of vision, which occupied the works of Vansina, Moniot, and others, the global image of an indigenous person living in a non-literate culture certainly does not match that of his counterpart in a literate culture in many respects. But when it comes to the question of how the former perceives reality, then one can conclude that what is myth to a Western scholar (of whose institutions we are products) is a historical fact to an indigenous person. So, it is up to the historian to draw his line of demarcation between what is referred to as history and myth, through structural analysis of the type of 'myth' in question.

What is important here is the question of how African historians can modify and apply Western epistemological models to local conditions, in order to understand their people's past. This, in turn, will enable the historian to understand the present social, political and economic structures. It is along these lines that African historians have embarked upon several attempts to construct an alternative theoretical model which would be suitable for interpreting the oral data they have tirelessly collected, and thus understanding better the past of the continent before colonial expansion.

Several studies aimed at reorienting perspectives on African history have found expression in the work "*History of the Southern Luo*", by Bethwell Ogot, who developed a school of thought along almost the same lines as Vansina. In his determination to undertake this most challenging task of using oral tradition as a historical source of evidence, Ogot pointed out clearly that "the problem of oral tradition is not peculiar to Africa"⁵¹. Ogot stated that the deficiencies in the body of African oral traditions are also suffered by Anglo-Saxon traditions such as Bede's

⁵⁰ È Nzièm (1986), p. 25

⁵¹ Ogot, B. A. (1967): "*History of Southern Luo*", p. 13

"*Ecclesiastical History*", which was largely compiled from oral traditions⁵² (see Vansina's arguments on p. 14 above).

The problem which surrounds this situation is a result of attitudes rather than of theoretical will - because, if the method of oral tradition was applied to the ancient writings of the Mediterranean, India, Japan, and most communities of the Western European Middle Ages before the turn of the first millennium, as Vansina pointed out⁵³, why can the method in question not be applied to studies of the African past (see Ogot's remarks above)?

Ogot's work was written amid the formation of myriad theories on the question whether the method of interpretation of oral tradition could be used as a historical source for the study of African history. The trend which had developed among folklorists at the beginning of this century suggested that the use of oral tradition in studies of non-literate cultures could not be applied as a whole. Robert Lowie said in most extreme criticism that he could not attach any value to oral traditions under any circumstance whatsoever, because he did not recognize them to be true⁵⁴. He argued uncompromisingly that "tradition never preserves historical facts", and "without precise chronology there can be no history." To this Ogot⁵⁵ and Kiwanuka⁵⁶ replied later that chronologies in most African societies are well preserved in the system of succession, which runs on matrilineal lines and through clan histories. After all, they concluded, "social institutions are what constitutes a society's history, a fact which cannot be ignored by a historian seeking to understand a particular society".

Ogot pronounced a warning that the post-war tendency of producing numerous volumes on colonial institutions mainly served to ignore the African past⁵⁷. His argument was aimed at diffusing claims made by several scholars that "Africa does not have a history that pre-dates the colonial period⁵⁸". "This misconception", Ogot pointed out, "ignores the fact that contemporary institutions are themselves historical products, and can be understood neither singly nor comparatively without attention being paid to their historical dimension⁵⁹."

Arguing in the same vein, Temu and Swai stated that most of the post-war world literature relating to this field harboured eurocentrist ideas denying former

⁵² Ogot (1967), pp. 17-18

⁵³ Vansina (1985), p. xii

⁵⁴ Henige, D. (1974): "The Chronology of Oral Traditions. Quest for Chimera", p. 20

⁵⁵ Ogot (1967), p. 12

⁵⁶ Kiwanuka, Semakula (1971): "A History of Buganda", pp. 1-6

⁵⁷ Ogot (1967), p. 11

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12

colonized societies a culture of their own⁶⁰: "colonial societies were assumed to exist only in the present and so were declared raw materials for colonial enlightenment". Regarding Lowie's claim (see p. 16 above) that "tradition never preserves historical facts", Temu and Swai pointed out that "although for empiricists, a scientific theory can be proved by corresponding theory and fact, it should be noted that facts are themselves theoretical constructs; and therefore we can conclude that facts are not reality itself, but a part of it"⁶¹.

Most recent studies have revealed that there is a need for changing attitudes and methodologies⁶², because African historiography cannot liberate itself from Western epistemological orientation unless the gap between its pre-colonial past and the recent colonial situation is narrowed. As è Nzièm pointed out in this respect: "We cannot pretend to construct the contemporary African societies from nothing. It is necessary to assure African historical studies a solid cultural foundation on the basis of the treasures brought back from the past of what was unquestionably part of Africa⁶³." This task will enable African historiography to take into account the processes of social change and thus trace the development of world historical events⁶⁴.

1.2.2. Interplay Between Owambo Oral and Written Data

The historical period covered by this study derives most (but not all) of its data from oral sources. The existing primary sources can be divided into five broad categories: travellers' accounts, archival sources, early ethnography, linguistics and oral traditions collected by myself. These sources can be used for mutual verification, in spite of the fact that the earliest written record and recently-collected oral records are divided by some 150 years. This alone establishes the continuity of Owambo oral transmission.

The earliest printed source available to the author is a traveller's account by Francis Galton (1853), *The Narratives of an Explorer in Tropical South Africa*. His work consisted of a repetition of what he was told by his guides, and his own observations. Galton's observations were heavily biased by his interest in studying the differences that exist between human races, which later made him the founder of the school of eugenics after his *Hereditary Genius: An Inquiry into the Laws and*

⁶⁰ Temu & Swai (1981): "Historians and Africanist History: A Critique", p. 121

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² è Nzièm (1986), pp. 26-27

⁶³ Ibid., p. 25

⁶⁴ Jewsiewicki, B. (1986): "Introduction: One Historiography or Several? A Requiem for Africanism", in: "African Historiography", Jewsiewicki & Newbury (editors), p. 16

Consequences" was published in 1869⁶⁵. In his earlier work, Galton wrote: "If Africa is to be civilized, I have no doubt that Ovamboland will be an important part in the civilization of its southern parts⁶⁶". Galton paid more attention to race and the possibility of development, rather than recording the traditional culture of the people who impressed him.

Unlike Galton, Charles J. Andersson in his "*Lake Ngami: Exploration and Discoveries during Four Years of Wanderings in the Wild of South Western Africa*"⁶⁷, actually described his first contacts with the Owambo people while travelling with Galton⁶⁸, and devoted some pages to the Owambo neighbours and the relationship between them. He later referred to the expansion of Jonker Afrikaner and his people to the north and their raiding expeditions to the Ndonga kingdom - by then under the rule of King Nangolo the son of Amutenya⁶⁹. My informants Uukule and Uugwanga narrated extensively on the expansion of the "Namawe" (the Nama) raiders, as the Owambo used to call them, under the leadership of Jonker Afrikaner. Uukule pointed out that what was peculiar to these invaders was their use of the horse and the gun in their warfare⁷⁰. Andersson also described the Owambo customs, religion, iron metallurgy, animal husbandry and agriculture⁷¹.

In his second work, "*Okavango River: A Narrative of Travel, Exploration and Adventure*", Andersson related his success in reaching the Okavango River. He recorded his remarkable journey in South West Africa (the name he gave to the country), which established beyond dispute his right to the honour of being the European discoverer of the Okavango River, thus satisfying the curiosity of the early explorers in the region⁷².

In his last work, "*Notes of Travel in South Africa*", published in 1875, Andersson described his journey with an elephant hunter, Green, to the Kunene where they encountered numerous "tribes" bearing a strong resemblance to the Owambo in manners, habits and general appearance⁷³. Andersson specifically pointed out his

⁶⁵ Cited in: Williams, Frieda-Nela (1987): "The Impact of Racialist Ideology and Colonialism on Socio-Cultural Changes in Namibia 1850-1950", p. 10

⁶⁶ Galton, p. 229

⁶⁷ Andersson, Charles John (1987) "*Lake Ngami: Exploration and Discoveries during Four Years Wanderings in the Wild of South Western Africa*" 2nd edition. First published in 1856.

⁶⁸ Andersson (1987), p. 171

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 163

⁷⁰ Uukule, pp. 415-423 (FWC.2); Uugwanga, pp. 362-362 (*ibid.* 3)

⁷¹ Andersson (1987), pp. 203-205

⁷² Andersson, C.J. (1968): "*Okavango River: A Narrative of Travel, Exploration and Adventure*", p. 141. First published in 1861.

⁷³ Andersson, C.J. (1875): "*Notes of Travel in South Africa*", p. 154

surprise of finding one chief dressed in a European manner⁷⁴. Relating his own experience, Green wrote - in his letter of 19 February 1866 to Hahn - that the king they met was Nahuma (correctly spelled Nuyoma) of Ovakwambi⁷⁵. Amakutuwa, one of my informants, referred to this king as Nuyoma - the son of Heelu - who ruled Uukwambi around those years. Amakutuwa pointed out that Nuyoma had an Irish hunter who was staying at his royal capital, known as Cain. Cain built Nuyoma a European-type building, and its poles are still in the ground until this day⁷⁶. Andersson's works thus contributed much to our knowledge of the well-established Owambo communities existing during the 19th century.

While the first such printed work dates back to the middle of the 19th century, oral traditions were recorded at the end of the same century. The first oral data appeared in the work of missionary Martti Rautanen in his diaries of 1888-1893⁷⁷. His diary of 10 January 1889 contains information he got from Nakanyala⁷⁸ the son of Shikongo about the myth of genesis of the *Aayambo*, *Aashimba* and *Aakwankala* peoples (see pp. 57-59). This myth is similar in many respects to that recorded later by Pettinen⁷⁹ and Liljeblad⁸⁰, and was again recorded recently by the author. A similar tradition regarding the myth of origin also exists amongst the Herero people; Vedder used this in his work.

Rautanen's entries of 10 January 1889 reveal the alliance formed between the Kwanyama, Kwambi, Mbandja and Ngandjera when they retaliated against Ombalantu, because they (Mbalantu) had attacked the Ngandjera people in the previous year. Missionary Kalle Koivu noted about this alliance⁸¹ that Shikongo the son of Kalulu entered into an alliance with the Kwambi king, and defeated the Ngandjera people with

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Lau, Brigitte [editor] (1985): "Carl Hugo Hahn Tagebücher 1837-1860 [Diaries]", Part IV 1856-1860, p. 1227

⁷⁶ Tirronen, T. E. (1977): "Nakambale", p. 27; Amakutuwa, Jason, p. 127 (FWC. 1); see also Lau, B. [editor] (1985), op. cit.

⁷⁷ Rautanen's Coll. (1888-93), pp. 568-577 (SI.SA, Hp XXVIII:2)

⁷⁸ Nakanyala was the son of King Shikongo [the son of Kalulu], who was captured by Jonker Afrikaner and his raiding army when they attacked the cattle-posts of King Nangolo the son of Amutenya. He was ransomed later [Uukule, pp. 416-417 (FWC. 2)].

⁷⁹ Pettinen (1926/27), pp. 51-53

⁸⁰ Amweelo, Mic. No. 6 (ELC. 344); Vedder, p. 155

But what is striking in these works is the degree of exactness of the myth, which made me conclude that even if the variants of this myth were recorded at different times, Pettinen and Liljeblad got their information from one source, Amweelo. The problem lies in the writings of Pettinen, who did not cite his sources.

⁸¹ Koivu's Coll. (1909-1917), Hp XIII:1, p. 509

the help of guns. Himanen also described this war which Shikongo the son of Kalulu waged against Ombalantu and Ongandjera⁸². My informant Uukule mentioned that the then Ndonga king, Shikongo the son of Kalulu, requested the Namawe (the Nama people) - who were in Ondonga on his invitation - to help him to fight his uncle Shipanga the son of Amukwiita, by assisting him in fighting the Ngandjera people who were terrorizing most of the Owambo communities with their poisonous arrows⁸³. Informant Kondombolo also described this war, which she said took place between the years of 1857 and 1860⁸⁴. Laurmaa's work corroborates this⁸⁵.

Rautanen's entries of 11 July 1889 consist of a narrative by an old man Nandago the son of Amakuya; Rautanen estimated him to be 60 years old. Nandago⁸⁶ was a master of ceremonies who presided over most traditional initiation ceremonies. His narrative contains the traditions of origin of the Owambo people; the art of rain-making in Ondonga; a list of Ndonga kings; and for the first time I came across the name of King Shangulula the son of Ambinda - none of my informants mentioned his name. One of my informants, Amunyela the son of Nangolo⁸⁷, pointed out that Nandago, who belonged to the Snake clan (*Aakuusinda*), was a well-known master of ceremonies in the whole of Ondonga⁸⁸.

Missionary Sckâr, who worked in Uukwanyama region at the beginning of this century, indicated that the first homestead built at Osimolo by immigrant groups led by Kanene and Sitenu was still there⁸⁹. A similar observation was made by missionary Savola, who was operating in Ondonga during the same time as Sckâr: palisade remains from the time of the second Ndonga ruler, Mbwenge the son of Uule and grandson of Nakateta, were still to be seen standing in the grounds at his royal capital, known as Ombala ya Mbwenge and situated 25 km north-east of Oniipa⁹⁰. Despite the few remains from their early history, the uniqueness of the Owambo cultural development proves the continuity of their culture.

Recent oral traditions collected by the author and narrated by Amakutuwa (1988), Uukule (1989) and Uugwanga (1990) regarding the origin of the name Owambo indicate that the original name of the Owambo people was *Aayamba*, and that it was

⁸² Himanen, p. 14

⁸³ Uukule, pp. 420-421 (FWC. 2)

⁸⁴ Kondombolo, pp. 307-308 (FWC. 1)

⁸⁵ Laurmaa (1949), p. 51

⁸⁶ Rautanen's Diary of 11 July 1889, pp. 70-72; Tirronen (1977), p. 87

⁸⁷ Nangolo, Amunyela, p. 487 (FWC. 2)

⁸⁸ Uugwanga, p. 395 (FWC. 3)

⁸⁹ Sckâr, C. (1932): "Ovamboland: Historisches Ethnographisches Animismus Varia", p. 7; see Appendix VI (b) for the dating by generation.

⁹⁰ Savola (1924), p. 28; see Appendix VI (a) for the dating by generation.

changed by the whites who first recorded it. Rautanen⁹¹, Schinz⁹², and Laurmaa⁹³ also hold that Aayamba was their original name. But Uugwanga thought that it was given to them by the indigenous inhabitants - the Aakwankala⁹⁴. This explains why the name Aayamba still exists amongst Aakwankala (see further discussions on p. 56).

Recent traditions by Kondombolo (1988), Amakutuwa (1988), Kaulinge (1989) and Uukule (1989) correspond to the traditions of origin recorded by Rautanen (1888-1893), Pettinen (1891-1900), Koivu (1901-1917), Laurmaa (1924-1934) and Liljeblad (1930-32). But the misguided perspectives and interpretation of the traditions found in published works like those by Laurmaa, have greatly influenced the reciting of recent traditions. For example, Helvi Kondombolo maintained that the origin of the Owambo people could be explained better by the biblical book of Genesis⁹⁵. Almost in the same vein, Amakutuwa explained that the name "Kwambi" meant "sin". However, traditions recorded earlier by Liljeblad⁹⁶, and those used by Angula⁹⁷, connected the meaning of the name Kwambi with the bird plum fruits and with pot-making (*oombiga*). Kandongo⁹⁸ believed that the name was derived from Kwambi, the founder of their kingdom.

The descriptions given in most written sources not only contain misinformation repeated by today's informants, but generally give a negative impression to an outsider who is not familiar with Owamboland. Regarding the royal succession of the Ndonga kingdom, for example, Andersson wrote: "It seemed that like the custom that prevails in other parts of Africa, the selection of rulers follows such persons only who have a natural tendency to corpulence, or, more commonly, fattening them for the dignity as we fatten pigs"⁹⁹. Even if he recognized the existence of political structures¹⁰⁰, he did not understand the law of succession when he wrote again that "in case of the death of the king, the son or daughter of his favourite wife will succeed him". Andersson then referred to Nangolo's step-brother Chipanga (correct spelling Shipanga) as a princess¹⁰¹. All traditions collected in Ondonga, however, indicate that royal succession follows strictly the matrilineal line of descent - a continuing tradition of succession as will be proved below.

⁹¹ Rautanen's Diary 10.1.1889, p. 12 (SLSA, XXVIII:3)

⁹² Schinz, Hans (1891): "Deutsch-Südwest-Afrika", pp. 271-272

⁹³ Lehto (Laurmaa) Collection (1924-34), p. 515 (SLSA, Hp XV:1)

⁹⁴ Uugwanga, pp. 353-54 (FWC. 3)

⁹⁵ Kondombolo, p. 305 (FWC. 1)

⁹⁶ Amweelo, Mic. No. 6 (ELC. 344)

⁹⁷ Angula, pp. 35-36

⁹⁸ Kandongo, Abed, pp. 133-134 (FWC. 1)

⁹⁹ Andersson (1987), p. 193

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 197

¹⁰¹ Andersson (1987), pp. 199-200

Another problem area in using both oral and written sources on Owamboland lies in personal names. The traditions of name giving amongst the Owambo people date back to their remote past. Their myth of origin tells how Kanzi and Nangombe came out of the Leadwood tree and found a short, light brown person with big buttocks in a squatting position at the foot of that tree. Although this description fits clearly the physical features of a "Bushman", Vedder dismissed it by claiming that it was a recent fabrication¹⁰². Yet Owambo named the people they found in the area they came to occupy *Aakwankala*, a name whose etymology does not refer to "Bushmen" (see discussions on pp. 85-86).

Understanding the tradition of naming among the Owambo people is an important stage for any researcher who is interested in studying the history of the region so that Vedder's mistake is not repeated (see detailed discussion on pp. 57-61). Also, many foreign traders, missionaries and colonial administrators were not known by their original names. For example, missionary Martti Rautanen was well-known by his local name *Nakambale*, which literally means "the person with the hat"; and when he became old, the name changed and became *Nakambalekanene*, meaning "the person with a big hat". Here the missionary acquired the title of a great or honoured person, *-nene*. Most governors were only known by their local names, and very seldom does the informant know their formal names. For example, C. H. L. Hahn became known as *Shongola*, named after the whip he used to beat the Mbalantu people; and H.L.P. Eedes as *Nakale*, because of his height, etc.¹⁰³ My informant Kaulinge referred to most military officers who were in Owamboland during the crisis in Uukwanyama by their military title, such as *Majola* (major). Most European and foreign names were localized so that they made sense to the Owambo people and eased the pronunciation.

It should be noted again that the way in which the missionary records were written depended very much on the writers' personal interests, which were very much overshadowed by their aims of establishing Christian missions. Consequently, records were not, in the main, written to depict the real life of the people, but to give an impression to the public back home of the wonders the writers encountered in those "Heathen Lands" and of the "savages" who lived there. In turn, these records have greatly influenced the traditions by altering the perspective by which they were recited before the external contacts.

¹⁰² Vedder, Heinrich (1966): "South West Africa in Early Times", p. 131; see further discussion in Section 3.3 below.

¹⁰³ Kaulinge, p. 4 (FWC. 2); Uukule, pp. 456-463 (ibid.)

1.2.3. Research Work on the Owambo People

In the historiography of Africa, the history of Owamboland is little documented. Early foreign contacts that might have facilitated a recording of their ancient history did not take place. Not much could be preserved of oral traditions beyond the centuries covered by this study, that is, 1600 to 1920. This is mainly due to factors such as the lapse of memory, the dying out of old generations, and the European intrusion. Moreover, physical conditions of the region are such that civilizations built there could hardly last. Still, although the materials used were mainly wood and grass, some remains of royal capitals and royal burial shrines are still to be found at sites where early immigrants temporarily settled.

Archaeological evidence could be of great importance in tracing the ancient civilization of the Owambo, but so far there has been done but little excavation. One archaeological site which has been excavated so far lies in the extreme north of Namibia, the Kapako¹⁰⁴, in the Okavango area close to the western end of the Caprivi Strip. This site is believed to be the oldest in this area, and is held to be the earlier settlement site of the south-western Bantu-speaking people. The earliest radio-carbon dating from the Kapako site which dates an occupational horizon extending from 1 to 2½ feet below the surface to 1110+ B.P., pre-dates the arrival of the Bantu-speaking populations by approximately 500 years¹⁰⁵. Another site which lies in the neighbourhood of the Owambo region is the Otjinungwa valley, near the Namibian-Angolan border. From here lots of stone tools were recovered, with a radio-carbon dating not less than 15 000 B.C. Unlike the findings at Kapako, which threw light on the movement of the Owambo people and their possible settlement around that site, Otjinungwa does not provide evidence related to the Owambo people. Its findings strongly suggests an early Middle Stone Age industry of the Ovahimba people of Kaokoland. Despite the richness of the material excavated from this site, no bone or charcoal was recovered¹⁰⁶.

¹⁰⁴ Sclâr (1932), p. 4

Existing oral traditions collected by missionary Sclâr indicate that Owambo people hold that Kapako was one of their early settlements.

¹⁰⁵ Sandelowsky, B. H. (1971): "The Iron Age in S.W.A. and Damara Pot Making", in: *African Studies*, 30, p. 4

¹⁰⁶ MacCalman, H. R. (1972): "The Otjinungwa Valley Site: A Middle Stone Age Occurrence on the SWA/Angolan Border", in: *Cimbebasia*, Ser. B. 2, p. 66

The dating of the Otjunungwa site was made by a comparative method, comparing it with other Middle Stone Age industries elsewhere in Namibia, south-western Angola, Mossel Bay, and other similar sites in South Africa¹⁰⁷.

Thus up to now, few studies on the early history of the region have been done. It is due to lack of sufficient data on this region that many historians have not been attracted to studying it. However, the delay in taking up such studies must also be explained by the prolonged colonial situation of Namibia which played a negative role and discouraged if not completely prevented scholars from pursuing such studies.

Further, as a measure for ensuring complete control over historical writings the South African regime appointed their own colonial historians, such as Vedder. This must not only be looked at as a defence mechanism aimed at justifying the colonial position, but also as a brutal colonial act pursued by many former colonial governments in most African countries to fulfil what Friedrich Hegel's philosophy exhorted them to do, when he wrote in 1831: "Let us forget Africa, not to mention it again, for Africa is not a historical part of the world¹⁰⁸." Echoing Hegel's philosophy that Africans did not have a history of their own, these colonial historians attempted to prove that whatever was called history in this continent began with the coming of the white man.

The first attempt to study the past of the Owambo people was made by Heinrich Vedder, a German missionary who, while recognizing that the Owambo belong to the Bantu-speaking people, focused on "tribal" and racial differences rather than tried to prove and identify the differences and similarities between the communities and construct on this basis a cultural understanding of them¹⁰⁹. Vedder's bias is elucidated by reference to his background. Not only was he a colonial historian but also a Nazi sympathizer, as he explained to his friend Rev. J. Olpp in 1933, by then inspector of Rhenish Missions in Namibia: "I am a Nazi of Hitler's kind with all my heart..."¹¹⁰ All this shaped Vedder's eurocentric approach toward the people he was writing about.

Although Vedder drew heavily from travellers' and traders' accounts, missionary and colonial records, he extensively used oral data collected by Sckär and Laurmaa¹¹¹. In reproducing the oral data collected by Sckär and Laurmaa with little or no interpretation, he also like them, failed to cite his oral sources. His major interest was to provide a chronology of oral traditions, by which he dated the arrival of the Owambo people in their present home at 1550 and claimed that the Kwanyama kingdom was founded in the same year. Vedder wanted to present the arrival of the

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 79

¹⁰⁸ Davidson, Basil (1984): "The Story of Africa", p. 16

¹⁰⁹ Vedder, pp. 41-78

¹¹⁰ Lau, Brigitte (1981): "Thanks God the Germans Came - Dr. Vedder and the Namibian Historiography", p. 16

¹¹¹ Vedder, pp. 153-161; see also Sckär (1932), pp. 6-20

Owambo people as coinciding with that of the Portuguese, and also with the Imbangala expansion into Angola, which he believed brought the Owambo with it¹¹². However, Miller's (1972) study on Imbangala movements indicates that when they (Imbangala) arrived in southern Angola, the area was already settled by Ovimbundu and related people, with established kingdoms which the Imbangala conquered¹¹³. But even the oral traditions used by Vedder make it clear that migration into Owamboland was a slow process, an indication that the foundation of their kingdoms could not have taken place in such a short historical time.

Vedder's connection of Owambo migration with that of Imbangala was a fabrication he made by ascribing to the sources information which they do not contain. For example, Vedder wrote that Andrew Battell, an English sailor, who was captured by the Portuguese in 1589 in Brazil and brought to Luanda about 1590, was the first European to write about the Owambo people. Vedder further claimed that Battell met the Owambo people when he was captured by the Imbangala after his attempt to escape from Portuguese captivity. Battell's accounts do not in any respect refer to the Owambo people, and at that time they were not known by their recent name. Neither do they refer to names of clans of which most Owambo communities were constituted¹¹⁴.

Another attempt to write the history of Owamboland was made by Erkki Laurmaa who, while diffusing Vedder's theory, tried to devise his own by linking the Owambo myths of origin with biblical stories. Laurmaa explained that the migration of the Owambo people had passed through the Nile valley into the interior of Africa, because of the religious teachings spread by the peoples of Israel¹¹⁵. Although he made extensive use of the Owambo oral traditions - which he himself tirelessly recorded between 1924-34 - his perspective is narrowed by his concentration on the spread of Christian doctrines rather than on the Owambo people. Despite all these shortcomings, Laurmaa's collection contains valuable data which fill gaps in the written and oral materials on the development of the Owambo kingdoms, especially that of Uukwambi.

A third study was compiled by Edwin M. Loeb, whose materials were derived from one section of the Owambo people, the Kwanyama, amongst whom he spent one year or less. Loeb used the anthropological method of observation to study the Kwanyama peoples' way of life. He traced their origin by identifying the similarities

¹¹² Vedder, p. 15

¹¹³ Miller, J.C. (1972 b): "The Imbangala and the Chronology of Early Central Africa", p. 549, in: *JAH*. No. 4

¹¹⁴ Vedder, p. 15; Ravenstein, Ernst Georg [editor] (1901): "The Strange Adventures of Andrew Battell of Leigh, in Angola... [Edited with Notes and Concise History of Congo and Angola.] Works issued by the Haklyt Society, London, Ser. 2: No. 6

¹¹⁵ Laurmaa (1949), pp. 41-78

he found between them and people of the Mediterranean communities, and thus supported the long-standing hypothesis of the Hamitic theory of origin. With the help of this theory Loeb categorized the Owambo people as a non-Bantu people of North African origin¹⁶. His conclusion, however, was based more on an investigation of the origin of the Kwanyama peoples' cattle, than on tracing the linguistic and ethnic origin of the people he was studying (see Map 3). Loeb's theory and its connection with the Mediterranean governed his unacceptable argument that the foundation of kingdoms in Owamboland paralleled the history of feudalism in Asia minor. Loeb, like Vedder, made extensive use of oral traditions collected by missionary Sckär.

A Roman Catholic missionary, Carlos Estermann, who worked in southern Angola from 1882 began to record folklore amongst the Kwanyama people at around that date. His knowledge of Oshikwanyama enabled him to recruit as informants his Christian companions, local people from Evale, Kafima and from the !Kung (Aakvankala) who spoke Oshikwanyama and were their neighbours. In 1928 he founded a new mission at Omupanda in Uukwanyama and continued to collect folktales, songs, proverbs and riddles¹⁷.

Estermann's ideas, like those of other practising historians at that time, were dominated by the Hamitic theory of Bantu origin. He classified the Owambo people as belonging to that race. However, unlike others, he explained why he accepted this theory: it was not because of the assumption that their degree of cultural development was too far advanced to have sprung from a purely African source; but rather because of their physical features, which seemed closer to those of the Ethiopians than those of the Central African Bantu. This similarity, Estermann thought, was reinforced by a well-developed pastoral economy similar to that of the Horn of Africa where Hamitic speakers dwell¹⁸. Although Estermann made the same mistake as his predecessors when he used the term Bantu to refer to a race and not a linguistic group, it was perhaps his sense of criticism which has made his material so valuable to many researchers. His command of the Kwanyama language and his long stay amongst these people contributed to the quality of his work, but his Christian zeal prevented him from collecting much information on Owambo kingdoms.

A recent linguistic study on Owambo-related people by Kenneth L. Baucom (1972), "*The Wanbo Languages of SWA and Angola*", is a detailed phonological study which analyzes the Owambo languages in terms of Guthrie's method of classification of Bantu languages. Following this classification for the Bantu languages in *Zone R*, Baucom divided these languages [in *Zone R*] into five clusters: *Wambo, Kavango,*

¹⁶ Loeb, pp. 9-14; Loeb used the concept Bantu here as a race and not as a linguistic group.

¹⁷ Estermann (1976), editor's preface.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Hoanib, Ngala and Umbundu; and called them the Kunene-Kubango group¹¹⁹. Anita Pfouts¹²⁰ paper "Economy and Society in Pre-colonial Namibia: A Linguistic Approach" has shed more light on the historic origin of the Owambo communities and their socio-economic development. But her lexico-statistical method which relies on a comparison of basic vocabulary, stands to be questioned, because the similarities she documented could be a result of the constant interaction between these peoples. An extension of the sample vocabulary will create a broader and more reliable body of evidence.

Despite shortcomings these linguistic studies (following Grøenber, Guthrie and Ehret) have established evidence of similarities between Owambo languages and other related languages within the south-western Bantu group through comparative methods of phonology and etymology.

In her work "The Iron Age in SWA and Damara Pot-making", B. H. Sandelowsky (1971) provides a well-documented radio-carbon dating for early settlements in the Olavango region which is reinforced by the oral traditions used as primary sources in this study. Her work is also useful because she compares her findings with linguistic data to establish who were the real occupants of these sites¹²¹.

Beatrix Heintze's work "Kwanyama and Ndonga Chronology Some Notes" (1972/73), is rather poor as it is based on secondary sources such as Tönjes (1911), Vedder (1934), Loeb (1949), and others. Her careless handling of her sources makes her work less useful to this study; for instance, she did not compare her sources or cross-check the validity of the king-list available to her. Heintze's earlier work, "Buschmänner und Ambo - Aspekte ihrer gegenseitigen Beziehungen" (1971/72), outlines the process of acculturation between these two communities and the influence of the "Bushmen" on the formation of "new" Owambo clans. This article suffers from lack of proper investigation, and is mainly based on an unconvincing hypothesis, which the author herself fails to prove. For example, Heintze derived her information on the formation of "new" clans in Owamboland, from the writings of Schinz (1891), Lebzelter (1934) and Loeb (1962), who all confused the clan called *Ekwankala* (Dwarf

¹¹⁹ Baucom, K. L. (1972): "The Wambo Languages of South West Africa and Angola", in: *Journal of African Languages*, 11, 2.

¹²⁰ Pfouts, Anita (1983): "Economy and Society in Pre-colonial Namibia: A Linguistic Approach (c.500-1880 A.D.)", in: "Namibia 1884-1984: Readings on Namibia's History and Society", edited by Brain Wood (1988), pp. 118-130

¹²¹ Sandelowsky, B. H. (1974): "Pre-historical Metal-Working in S.W.A.", pp. 363-365, in: *Journal of the South African Institution of Mining and Metallurgy* (JSAIMM)

Mongoose) with Aakwankala (the Bushmen)¹²². In other cases her data are simply incorrect. For example, Heintze wrote: "Nangolo's younger brother Shipango (correct spelling Shipanga) is said to have ruled autonomously over half of the country during Nangolo's lifetime...¹²³" Shipanga the son of Amukwiita did not rule simultaneously with his step-brother Nangolo, but succeeded him after his death. The conflict which occurred during Shipanga's rule was between him and his nephew Shikongo - the son of Kalulu - upon whom forced exile was imposed and who sought refuge in Ombandja¹²⁴.

In his study "*Die Politische und Soziale Stellung der Häuptlinge im Ovamboland*" (1956), Rudolf Lehmann dealt with the Owambo kingdoms' relations with the German colonial government. Lehmann used the German colonial archives and studied the Owambo kings' attitudes to German traders, colonists, and missionaries. His study is very limited because it concerns itself more with the attitudes rather than with the socio-political change that the colonial government had brought, and its impact on the kingdoms.

Gervase Clarence-Smith's doctoral thesis "*Mossamendes and its Hinterland 1875-1915*" (1975) and his later work "*Slaves, Peasants and Capitalists in Southern Angola 1840-1926*" (1979), examine economic and social development in colonial Angola and northern Namibia. His work is an interesting example of applying orthodox Marxist concepts to the history of the region. His analysis of class formation amongst peasants was developed earlier in a joint article with Richard Moorsom, "*Underdevelopment and Class Formation in Ovamboland, 1845-1915*" (1975). This article deals broadly with socio-economic changes in Owamboland, drawing most of its sources from Uukwanyama.

Martti Eirola's licentiate degree thesis "*Ondongan kuningaskunnan vastaus Saksan siirtomaanvallan lähestymiseen 1884-1910*" is a political history focusing on negotiations between the Ondonga kingdom and the German colonial government on the possible integration of the area into the colonized territory. His outline of Owambo political organization in the mid-1880s proved a useful inspiration for this work¹²⁵. Harri Siiskonen's doctoral thesis entitled "*Trade and Socioeconomic Change in*

¹²² Laurmaa (1949), p. 51; Himanen, pp. 14-15; Namuhuja, H.D. (1983): "Fillemon Elifas", p. 99; Uukule, pp. 413-420 (FWC. 2); Uugwanga, pp. 362-64 (ibid. 3)

¹²³ Heintze, Beatrix (1979/72): "Buschmänner und Ambo - Aspekte Ihrer gegenseitigen Beziehungen", pp. 50-51, in: JSWASS; see also Uugwanga, p. 398 (FWC. 3)

¹²⁴ Laurmaa (1949), p. 51; Himanen, pp. 14-15; Namuhuja (1983), p. 99; Nangolo, pp. 485-486 (FWC. 2); Uukule, p. 415 (ibid.)

¹²⁵ Eirola, Martti (1987): "Ondongan kuningaskunnan vastaus Saksan siirtomaanvallan lähestymiseen 1884-1910", pp. 37-87

Ovamboland, 1850-1906" deals with early trade between Owambo kingdoms and European traders in the region, and its impact on societal changes in the areas of Uukwambi, Uukwanyama and Ondonga. Though it draws its sources from a relatively large collection, this work relies heavily on the missionary materials. The author points out that the reason for this was what he called the reliability of the missionary sources¹²⁶. In spite of the fact that this seems to be his theme, the author also fails to consider how long-distance trade drew the Owambo local market into the world economic system. This work could have only been useful to this study if the interpretation of trade relations had been based on both written and oral sources, so as to reflect the pre-colonial trade in the region.

This criticism of the early works on Owambo pre-colonial history suggests the dissatisfactory state of the historiography on Owamboland. The monopoly of colonial authority in historical studies manifests itself clearly in the work of Vedder. Vedder's "history" of the Owambo was written in such a way that even historical events of Owambo society that predate the 15th century were crammed into the 16th century, to coincide with the Portuguese occupation of Luanda and the arrival of the Dutch settlers in their Cape Colony. Loeb belonged to a "new" generation of colonially biased historians, being a representative of the 1960s' ethno-historical school which neatly intertwined ethnography, history and anthropology with the aim of convincing scholars of its "sincerity". Although he criticized Vedder for not having been able to interpret certain elements of the story he was telling¹²⁷, Loeb himself - though aware of such shortcomings - repeated exactly the same mistake. Laurmaa, of course, was writing under the strong influence of Christian ethics.

My study of the earlier work on the pre-colonial history of the Owambo people by Vedder (1938), Laurmaa (1949) and Loeb (1962) raised new questions about the historiography of Owamboland. I hope to answer some of them by applying a different method in this study. That is, the principal source of this study will be oral traditions collected by myself and Liljeblad corroborated with other sources derived from travellers' accounts and from missionary and colonial records.

Despite several flaws, these works will form part of the secondary sources for this study. The problems that affect them will be tackled in relation to the original sources of information available to me, including the oral traditions I collected myself. A different approach to this subject will be applied, and where necessary a whole work will be turned upside-down.

¹²⁶ Siiskonen (1990), p. 27

¹²⁷ Loeb, p. 365

1.2.4. Formulation of Research Problems

This study will cover what is referred to as the pre-colonial era, that is the period before the colonization of Angola and Namibia. The exact period for the study was determined by the sources available. It should be noted that although the Portuguese had established their colony in Luanda by 1575¹²⁸, and the Germans in Namibia by 1884, Owamboland did not come under direct colonial rule of these regimes until 1917.

The year 1600 was set as the point of departure for this study because it is marked by events that are of considerable importance in the history of the region. On the one hand, the 17th century marks the settlement of the Imbangala¹²⁹ groups from the Lunda/Luba empires in Katanga¹³⁰. The Imbangala movement had a direct impact on the continuous migrations into Owamboland. For instance, when the Imbangala expanded into the areas that were occupied by the Ovimbundu people of central Angola, most of the Ovimbundu and related peoples - like the Ndombe - migrated further west, south and south-west. Thus did the Nyaneka-Nkumbi¹³¹, who are known

¹²⁸ Oliver & Atmore, p. 158

¹²⁹ There has been a lot of confusion in the general application of the name Imbangala to groups that are not connected with the Kinguri-led group, which later adopted this name. Estermann applied the name generally to Ovimbundu people (Estermann 1979, pp. 25 & 27); Childs admitted that he adopted the usage of the name from Estermann for convenience (Childs 1949, pp. 169-179), and McCulloch (1952) took it from Childs; while Birmingham (1969) identified the Imbangala with the 'Jaga'. The term 'Jaga' was used for the Kinguri-led groups by the Portuguese when those people were expanding into Angola, because of the nature of their expansion which bore similarities to that of the Yaka raiding bands, who spoke a language closely akin to Kongo (Miller 1972 b, p. 549; Oliver & Atmore, p. 159). It was not until the publication of Miller's article "The Imbangala and the Chronology of Early Central Africa", in which he compared the traditions of both the Lunda [from where the Imbangala migrated] and the Ovimbundu [whose areas they conquered] with the Imbangala movements, that Miller identified Imbangala movements with the Kinguri-led groups and people that they assimilated on their way. He arrived at the conclusion that the Kinguri-led groups adopted the title Makota after Kinguri's death. And upon their arrival in the Ovimbundu areas, they adopted the name Kilombo [from the Ovimbundu word kilumba, which means initiation]. They then grouped themselves as initiation societies and began to call themselves Imbangala (Miller 1972 b, pp. 549-560; Oliver & Atmore, p. 159).

¹³⁰ Miller (1972 b), p. 549

¹³¹ Childs (1949), pp. 171 & 180; McCulloch, pp. 6-7

as the progenitors of the kingdoms of Uukwambi, Ombalantu, and Ongandjera¹³². On the other hand, the Portuguese slave traders and Imbangala entered into a partnership during this period, by which the latter were to sell their war captives as slaves to the Portuguese at the Benguela slave trading port. From there the slaves were shipped across the Atlantic to the Portuguese colony of Brazil in South America¹³³. These two events not only brought about structural, economic and political changes, but also altered the balance of power in the region.

By the mid-17th century most Ovimbundu and related people were conquered and their kingdoms taken over by the Imbangala rulers or their progenitors. The surviving independent kingdoms suffered continuous attacks from Imbangala in pursuit of war captives for the Benguela slave trade. These raids continued to destabilize the Ovimbundu kingdoms. By the mid-18th century both the Ovimbundu and the Owambo were caught up in the Atlantic slave trade¹³⁴.

The 19th century marked the end of migrations into Owamboland. Two factors might have influenced this halt: by this time, the inhabitants of most parts of the region from southern parts of Angola to the northern parts of Namibia had well-established kingdoms, with those of the Ovimbundu people at the zenith of their power. Another factor which put an unnatural stop to these movements was the colonial occupation of both Angola and Namibia, entrenched by the 1884/85 Berlin conference in which the imperial powers divided colonial territories amongst themselves¹³⁵. The present borders between southern Angola and northern Namibia were drawn by the Portuguese and the Germans on 30 December 1886 and adjusted by the Anglo-German agreement on 11 July 1891¹³⁶. But this did not become a local reality until 1917, when the joint British-South African expeditionary forces attacked the capital of the kingdom of Uukwanyama at Oihole; King Mandume later killed himself not far from his capital when his forces began to run out of ammunition¹³⁷. This borderline divided the Owambo people into two, with two-thirds of the Kwanyama people - along with all Mbandja, Ndombodhola, Eshinga, Onkwankwa, Evale, and Kafima - remaining in Angola, and only a third in Namibia. Colonialism therefore, as noted above, was a major factor in ending both external and internal migrations.

¹³² Oliver & Atmore, p. 163; Laurmaa, pp. 22-23; Iitenge, Natanael, Mic. No. 7 (ELC. 344); Nameya, Hango, Mic. No. 56 (ibid.)

¹³³ Oliver & Atmore, p. 163; Childs, p. 169; Birmingham (1966), p. 570

¹³⁴ Oliver & Atmore, p. 164

¹³⁵ Brownlie, p. 1025

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ "Extracts from Resident Commissioner's Private Diary: 06.02.1917", in: Hahn, A.2048, Vol. No. 13; Kaulinge, Hhd:1 (1876-1946), p. 456; Bruwer, p. 23; Loeb, p. 37; Shikongo, p. 317 (FWC. 2)

Although migrations are nothing new in the history of mankind, the study of those in Africa has been beset with methodological and conceptual problems. The reasons for this can be explained by the Western reluctance to apply the method of oral traditions in African historical research (see discussion on pp. 14-17 above). This study is aided not only by oral data but also by linguistic data, which was a breakthrough in the linguistic field when Greenberg (1955) succeeded in the classification of Bantu languages. This enabled him to infer that the Bantu-speaking people originated in the region of Cameroon and the adjacent parts of Nigeria (see p. 73). Since then, linguistic evidence - and that of branches of linguistics, such as topology and onomastics - has been used for the study of migration in corroboration of oral traditions.

How, then, was linguistics and its branches applied to the study of Owambo migrations? Language as a branch of Owambo culture has been studied in relation to related neighbouring peoples. Studies such as those of Greenberg (1955), Guthrie (1972), Baucom (1972), Baumann (1975) and Pfouts (1983) indicate the linguistic and ethnic relationship between the Owambo and their neighbours: the Herero, the Kwangari and the Nyankema-Nkumbi. In addition, Pfouts included the Luyana-speaking people of the Middle Zambezi, which she held to be the home of the proto-South-West Bantu language¹³⁸.

Archaeological excavation conducted in southern Zambia suggests that sites north and west of the Zambezi have been interaction points of the early Khoisan/Bantu-speakers¹³⁹. The upper Zambezi could thus be regarded as the geographical centre of the language community from which the south-western Bantu groups spread.

Studies on migration have always attempted the difficult task of establishing reasons for these movements. Examples of this can be drawn from three different studies done on migration. In his study of the pastoral people of Somalia, Cassanelli admitted the probability that these nomads were in constant search of better grazing lands and water for their cattle - not only because of the climatic changes and progressive desertification in the north and central Peninsula, but also because they were under constant pressure of population growth resulting from immigration from Arabia and the expansion of Islam. Cassanelli also held domestic political conflict to be one of the reasons¹⁴⁰. Ogot's study of the Southern Luo identified three similar causes that might have contributed to the migration of the Nilotes: overpopulation and overstocking, or external factors¹⁴¹. Lastly a third scholar, Kiwanuka who studied the

¹³⁸ Pfouts, pp. 120-122

¹³⁹ Denbow, James (1986): "A New Look at the Later Prehistory of the Kalahari", p. 8, in: JAH, Vol. 27

¹⁴⁰ Cassanelli, Lee V. (1982): "The Shaping of Somali Society. Reconstructing the History of a Pastoral People, 1600-1900", p. 82

¹⁴¹ Ogot (1967), p. 43

Buganda people, admitted failure when stating: "It is known that these people have always been on the move," a statement which gave an obscured picture, since it does not say anything more as to who made this assumption¹⁴². However, Kiwanuka held that the Kimera migration was possibly due to the disintegration of the Bakwezi kingdom¹⁴³.

Traditions relating to similar movements indicate that Owambo migration were caused by political conflicts, population pressure, and wars. However, the reasons for these migrations seem invariably to have been multiple, depending upon the period when they took place; I have thus identified different periods of migration, because migration into Owamboland was a slow process which consisted of phases rather than waves. For example, oral data indicate that people advanced according to information given by hunting expedition groups; these reconnoitred the fertility of the area and the availability of water and game¹⁴⁴.

Although migrations are not the central theme of this study, I find them very important in establishing the relationship between the Owambo people and their neighbours before and after the foundation of several kingdoms in the region. More importantly their study will help to elucidate the question of ethnicity and how it influenced the development of political institutions - if it did.

However, the main question to be tackled in this study is related to permanent settlements and their influence on the political developments in the region. The pace at which migration into Owamboland took place indicates that there has been a flow of hunting groups - who, prompted perhaps by the ecology of the region, adopted agriculture and animal husbandry, and created permanent settlements. At this stage, Owamboland was already becoming an organized society in terms of production, with the homestead (*gumbo*) as its production unit.

Although the social and economic bases of the Owambo society were already laid, central political organization did not exist until the foundation of kingdoms in the region. This study will look into the formation of these kingdoms and their relation to each other; it will also consider the external influences emanating from their neighbours through trade and cultural contacts.

Another major task of this study will be an outline of the history of the political, social, religious and economic organization of the Owambo communities since the foundation of their kingdoms. It will look at the impact of external influences from neighbouring kingdoms on the internal development of Owambo kingdoms. It will also examine how the modern concept of the state influenced the traditional structures after the first contact with European travellers, traders, missionaries, and colonial officials.

¹⁴² Kiwanuka, p. 33

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 37

¹⁴⁴ Amweelo, Mic. No. 6 (ELC. 344); Pettinen, A. (1926/27)

Having defined the research problems for this study, I feel obliged to point out that even if it is not stressed in this section, it is the objective of this study to attempt to look at the past of the Owambo people from a different perspective than those outlined in Section 1.2.3 above. This most challenging task will serve as a stepping-stone for future research work.

1.2.5. The Methodology

As previously indicated one of the major problems which preoccupy this study is the question of methodology. The methods of Miller (1976), Henige (1982) and Vansina (1985) could only be applied with some alterations to suit my analysis of the Owambo oral data as historical sources. As argued earlier these methods (see Section 1.1 above) do not provide a perspective wide enough to be directly applied to the interpretation of these data.

Having first recognized the inadequacy and unreliability of available written sources, and having questioned the validity of the oral data, I came to realize that none of these data, by themselves, could provide the type of historical facts I was looking for. Methods employed in the earlier work on the Owambo people could not be applied to this study, because they are not only outdated, but have indeed been abandoned because of their racial conception of history.¹⁴⁵

What also makes the present study different from the works of Vedder, Loeb, Estermann and Laurmaa is the methodology employed during the gathering of oral data. For instance, as a first step I needed to find out whether there existed among the Owambo people a word which meant "history", or paralleled it. Shindondola, Uukule and Amakutuwa all hold that history in most Owambo languages means *ondjokonona* (literal meaning: an elaborated story), tradition means *omuhigululwakalo* (inherited tradition), and legend means *ethigululwahokolo* (inherited legend)¹⁴⁶. From these concepts one can infer that *ondjokonona* is closest to the Western meaning of history. The three different concepts indicate that there has indeed been a subtle, differentiated sense of understanding the past, and that the task of reciting the traditions has been an

¹⁴⁵ I am hereby referring to the methods employed by Vedder, Loeb, Estermann and, to a certain extent, Laurmaa in advocating the 'Hamitic myth', which allowed them to shape the history of Owambo people into what they wanted it to be, rather than tracing what it really was.

¹⁴⁶ See also Tirronen, T. E. (1986) "Ndonga-English Dictionary", 1st Edition, pp. 263 & 412

inherited occupation. The concept of *omuhigululwakalo* has a meaning more closely related to the process of transmission.

This process takes place through generations. For example, Uukule and Shindondola explained to me that traditions are preserved so that the younger generation know what happened in the past to their ancestors. They said that there was a necessity to remember the traditions in order to pass them on to the younger generation, because they did not have the art of writing as we do today. In addition to such a practice, the Owambo organized ceremonies in honour of their ancestors; the most important ones were the initiation ceremonies organized by the king. These ceremonies were held at the burial shrines of the oldest king¹⁴⁷.

However, the central question of this study does not only concern itself with the interpretation of the data collected, but also with the understanding of the Owambo people's past - not necessarily "as it really was", but to establish if (in the words of Vansina) what was believed to have happened in the past will help us to comprehend the present Owambo communities¹⁴⁸.

In order to achieve this, I will closely analyze the validity of both written and oral data, tracing how these data were collected, the circumstances that surrounded their recording, who were the informants, the techniques employed, the possibilities of manipulation and distortion that might have occurred during the process of transmission, and then finally whether there was any historian's craft involved in recording them?

¹⁴⁷ Note that this practice has now died out because of the expansion of Christianity.

¹⁴⁸ Vansina (1986), p. 196

2. ECOLOGY AND THE EVOLUTION OF OWAMBO SOCIETY

2.1. Man and his Environment

It has been argued by most historical geographers that "geography is the mother of history"¹⁴⁹. Historians of ecology began to take a different approach. Geography is not enough for man to begin to make history; his action on his geographical environment is preceded by his interrelationship with other organisms and with his environment. As Ogot clearly stated: "The physical environment is passive and cannot actively influence human activity. What seems evident is that human behaviour is affected by environmental forces only in so far as the environment provides resource alternatives, given certain technologies and attitudes of the social group in question"¹⁵⁰. He also said that research should aim at studying man's relationship to his environment; attention needed to be paid to man himself and his cultural inheritance rather than to mere environment. Bearing this in mind I will briefly look at what Owambo traditions tell us about the reasons for their migrations, and their relation to the new environment¹⁵¹.

Some migration tales of the Owambo people refer to conflicts that took place between their rulers in their cradle land¹⁵², some to overpopulation¹⁵³, and others to the fact that they were in constant search of good cultivating and grazing land¹⁵⁴. These references suggest and also indicate that immigrants began to tame the land and make it productive upon their arrival. In addition to agriculture and pastoralism, hunting, and gathering were other sources of livelihood, which supplied people with food during the dry season.

The Owambo's interactions with their environment constitute a long tradition of securing means for survival. Some identify Kapako as one of their earliest settlements¹⁵⁵. This claim is corroborated by archaeological evidence from *Kapako* and *Vungu Vungu* in the extreme north of Namibia around the Okavango River, where traces of iron-working and pottery production are similar to those of modern Bantu-speaking people of Okavango and Owamboland. Another site that provides similar evidence is that from an iron-age settlement in southern Angola, about 300 kilometres

¹⁴⁹ Kiwanuka, p. 25; Ogot, B.A. (1979): "Ecology and History in East Africa", p. 2

¹⁵⁰ Ogot (1979), p. 2

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Henok, Absai, Mic. No. 24 (ELC. 344)

¹⁵³ Amweelo, Abraham, Mic. No. 6 (ELC. 344)

¹⁵⁴ Sckär (1932), pp. 2-6

¹⁵⁵ Sckär (1932), p. 6

north of the Cunene at *Feti la Choya*, indicating that this settlement was occupied by Bantu-speaking people as early as the seventh or eighth century A.D.¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, traditions indicate that the Bantu-speaking populations possessed iron-making skills at the time of their arrival; and that they used iron tools to clear the land for cultivation, and also had long spears for hunting and knives for cutting meat¹⁵⁷. The recovery of iron-work from Kapako and Vungu Vungu confirms the production of tools, of which some might have been used for agricultural purposes. Although earlier traditions claimed that when the Owambo people arrived at their modern home they were already in possession of cattle¹⁵⁸, recent traditions related by Uugwanga¹⁵⁹ contradict this claim by stating that the earliest clans which migrated did not possess cattle. Only clans which arrived later from Okavango brought cattle with them into Owamboland, especially the Cattle clan (*Aakwanangombe*). Uugwanga's claim is supported by Denbow's findings, which suggest that the south-western Bantu-speaking populations acquired their cattle at the banks of the Zambezi after their contacts with the Khoisan people¹⁶⁰ (see Map 3). It is reinforced by linguistic and other archaeological evidence. However, both agriculture and pastoralism greatly influenced the Owambo patterns of settlement.

Although modern Owamboland is a vast area, situated geographically between 16° and 20° S and 14° and 18° E dense populations are concentrated only around the areas of Uukwanyama and Ondonga. This settlement pattern can be explained by the fact that these areas form part of the flood plain recipient zone; the floods come from the Cuvelai River when it overflows during heavy rainfall in the highlands of Angola. The importance of these floods lies in the supply of fish as a supplementary diet, soil nutrients, and the flow of extra water to the region, necessary for underground water reserves which preserve the soil moisture and support the vegetation of the region.

Floods overflow Cuvelai tributaries, such as Tamanzi, Ekuma, Etaka and Oshigambo, which drain into Etosha Pan (this happens also during heavy rain in Owamboland). When water drains into the depression areas of Okandeka Pan, Ondonga Pan, Jan's Pan, the Long Pan and others around this area, it gives moisture to the soil surface, and forms salt strata.

Salt pans are known as *omakango*, and the salt they provided was one of the major bartering commodities of the Ondonga kingdom, before the discovery of similar

¹⁵⁶ Phillipson, D. W. (1977): "The Later Prehistory of Eastern and Southern Africa", pp. 139 & 205; Sandelowsky (1974), p. 264

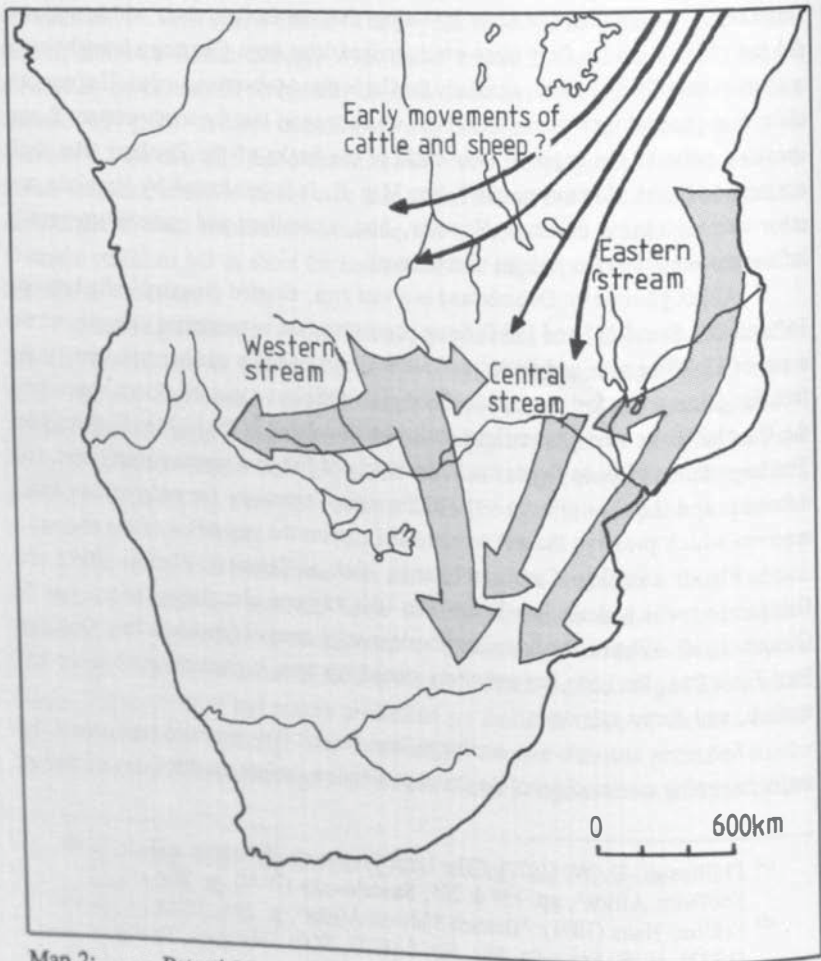
¹⁵⁷ Schinz, Hans (1891): "Deutsch-Südwest-Afrika", p. 293; Sckār (1932), p. 6; Amweelo, Mic. No. 6 (ELC. 344); Shiyagaya, Paulus, Mic. No. 80 (ibid.); Phillipson (1984), p. 276

¹⁵⁸ Sckār (1932), p. 6; Amweelo, Mic. No. 6 (ELC. 344)

¹⁵⁹ Uugwanga, Abraham, p. 398 (FWC. 3)

¹⁶⁰ Denbow, James (1986): "Later Prehistory of the Kalahari", pp. 8-9

pan in Uukwambi and Ongandjera areas¹⁶¹. In addition, water drains into the south-western pan area of Ondonga and to a certain extent south of Uukwambi. The water remains longer on a clay-sand area, known as grass savanna (*ombuga*). The grass savanna provides grass used in roofing, and serves as grazing reservoirs for cattle during dry seasons, because most cattle-posts (*oohambo*) are situated there. Hence, the Cuvelai floods have been great providers of livelihood and the most influential factor in the creation of dense permanent settlements.



¹⁶¹ Loeb, pp. 143-144; Schinz, p. 294

¹⁶² Based on Denbow's study on "Later Prehistory of the Kalahari". (1986)

2.2. Owambo Historical Ecosystem

2.2.1. Environment and Subsistence

The Owambo region is characterized by the Kalahari sands and sandstones, forming a gently undulating plain with an altitude ranging between 1 100 m and 1 200 m. Its soil structure is extremely poor except for the alluvial soils which are fertile and thus suitable for traditional agriculture (see Figure 1)¹⁶³. The climate of the region corresponds to dry forests, composed largely of mopane (*omisari*) forests in the west, fan palm (*omilunga*) and grass savanna towards the west, baikiaea forest in the north and north-east, and acacia thickets and grasslands in the south and south-east¹⁶⁴. Owamboland has a fauna with a variety of wildlife, which was a major attraction for immigrants. Thus, vegetation and animals are part of the historical environment (see Figure 1). It is not the purpose here to discuss different ecological formations in detail, but rather to give a short description of how the environment influenced human settlement.

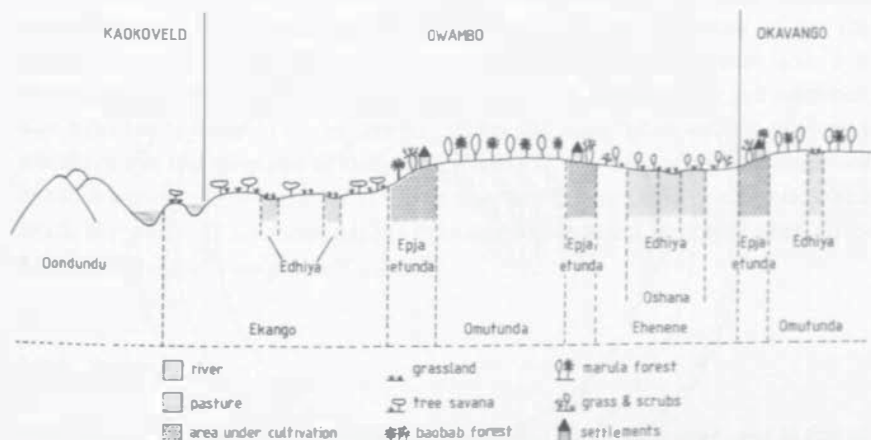


Figure 1: Distribution of Ecological Formations in the Owambo Region¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ Carvalho, E.C. & Da Silva, J.V. (1973): "The Cunene Region: Ecological Analysis of an African Agropastoral System", p. 146, in: "Social Change in Angola", edited by F. W. Heimer, Soini, Sylvi (1981): "Agriculture in Northern Namibia", in: *Journal of the Scientific Agricultural Society of Finland*, Vol. 53, p. 170

¹⁶⁴ Soini, p. 170

¹⁶⁵ This figure is based on Carvalho & Da Silva's study of the "Ecological Formation of the Cunene Region", p. 185; Soini, p. 170

The migrating Bantu-speakers into Owamboland interacted with the ecosystem through the keeping of livestock and the growing of crops. Although immigrants contributed to the building of a strong economic base by introducing new crops, they also brought changes in the ecosystem of the region. The balance maintained by the traditional activities of hunting and gathering - upon which the ancient occupants, Aakwankala (see p. 88 below), were largely dependent for their livelihood - was altered.

The adaptation of immigrants to the region's ecology was aided by the development of an agricultural calendar, which regulated the agricultural cycle of activities such as clearing, seeding, weeding, harvesting and threshing. The calendar also helped with the life cycle of livestock, since cattle-raising, like agriculture, depends essentially on climatic conditions, especially on the average of rainfall.

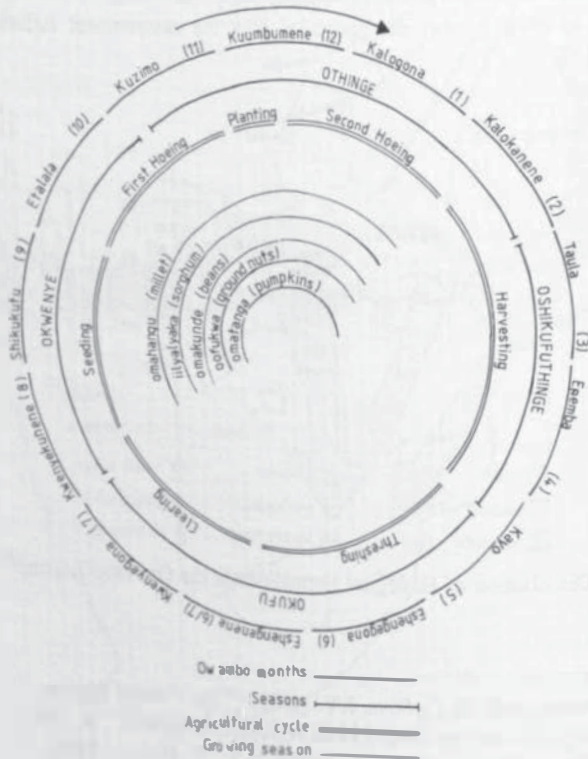


Figure 2: Agricultural Calendar of the Owambo Region¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ This figure is based on Carvalho & Da Silva's analysis of the "Agricultural Calendar of the Cunene Region", p. 190. The numbers behind the Owambo months corresponds to the Julian

2.2.2. Hunting and Gathering

Hunting and gathering have been man's old ways of collecting food. Hides and skins were used for clothing, and horns for tools. Although these practices have changed over time with improved methods in agriculture and cattle-rearing, they still form an essential part of the Owambo culture and economy. Fruits such as those of the bird plum tree (*oombe*) are still gathered, and until today considered as a delicacy in the Owambo diet. This tree is economically also important for its root bark, which is used in dyeing palm tree leaves used for basket- and mat-patterns. The marula (*omugongo*) tree provides marula wine, and edible oil extracted from its nuts. The African ebony (*omwardi*) does provide fruits as well, and its trunks are carved into different sculptures, which were used for barter. The fan palm provides fruits and palm wine, and the leaves are used for basket- and mat-making. All the duties of gathering and drying fruits are done entirely by women, with young boys helping their mothers; while the work of cutting and carving tree trunks is left to men.

Hunting activities used to be largely controlled by the king, who was responsible for opening seasonal hunting grounds¹⁶⁷ at the beginning of the dry season. Although the dry season is the most leisurely period in Owamboland, it is economically important for hunting activities. Game meat obtained from gnu antelopes, blue wildebeests, roan antelopes, zebras, elands and many other animals serve as a subsidiary diet and form part of Owambo subsistence. The balance between crops and livestock was not altered until the 1820s' drought and the late 1890s' rinderpest, which struck the whole of Southern Africa; this catastrophic event destroyed over three-quarters of the Owambo people's cattle¹⁶⁸.

2.2.3. Pastoralism

Cattle-rearing has played a major role in the economy of the homestead, and in that of the clan in particular. Cattle and land constitute the most important economic factor for the clan, because they are inheritable property, and land is not. The clan entrusts the care of its herds into the hands of a maternal uncle, the head of the clan.

Calendar (see Appendix III)

¹⁶⁷ Angula, Efraim (1968): "Uukwambi, Ukwajuudhi n'Ongandjera", in: *Owambo lehistori*, Ostanda Ontintantu, edited by Lahja Lehtonen, pp. 58-59

¹⁶⁸ Bibliographica: Himanen, K.: "Ehistori Ij'Ombalantu" [History of Ombalantu] (Manuscript - SLSA, 1046), pp. 13-20; Siiskonen, Harri (1990): "Trade and Socioeconomic Change in Ovamboland, 1850-1906", pp. 162-166

Domesticated animals in Owambo include cattle, donkeys, horses¹⁶⁹, goats, sheep (not a common animal), pigs and chickens. But cattle are the most significant in the pastoral life of an Owambo man. They form part of his economic and religious life, and are kept both as sacred and as profane animals. Cattle are divided into six main categories: breeding, sacrifice, inheritance, bride-wealth, for refund or ransom, and for barter. Thus, cattle in Owamboland were not kept for "show", as Siiskonen claimed¹⁷⁰.

Cattle for breeding are kept to increase the owner's wealth. Those kept for sacrificial purposes are slaughtered during death lamentation and during ritual sacrificial ceremonies¹⁷¹. Those reserved for inheritance are witnessed by the attendants at his death lamentation, especially by his clan relatives since the property of the deceased is distributed at the end of the mourning period. Those reserved for bride-wealth are contributed by clan members from a special breed to serve this purpose. Cattle bred for payment and ransom are used in payment for death caused by a member of the clan - accident or murder - and cattle ransom was paid by clans to retain their war captives. Cattle used for barter were exchanged by the owner for desired goods¹⁷².

The cattle remain at the homestead when grass and water are sufficient to feed the animals, that is from the beginning of the rainy season (*othinge*) until the beginning of the dry season (*okufu*). Importantly, the cattle will not be driven to the cattle-post before they have had their plenteous grazing feast (*omalweenge*) in the fields after harvesting is completed, to consume the remaining millet and sorghum stalks (*iihenguni*) which are not suitable for building or other forms of human consumption¹⁷³. Both in Uukwambi and Ondonga the grazing feast season was opened by the king, who asked the head of the salt-pan expedition (*Nashidhiga*) to lead the salt-fetching trip - before this feast. It was upon the return of this mission that the plenteous cattle-grazing feast would begin¹⁷⁴. In Uukwanyama, however, this feast

¹⁶⁹ Andersson, C.J. (1875): "Notes on Travel in South Africa", p. 229; Andersson noted that horses had been brought into Owamboland lately, but they were already there when he visited the region.

¹⁷⁰ Siiskonen (1990), p. 54

¹⁷¹ Uugwanga, pp. 399-400 (FWC. 3)

¹⁷² Uukunde, Tomas, Mic. No. 89 a-b (ELC. 344)

¹⁷³ Estermann, C. (1976): "The Ethnography of Southwestern Angola, Vol. I: The Non Bantu Peoples, The Ambo Ethnic Groups", p. 138; Carvalho & da Silva, p. 161;

Uugwanga, p. 393 (FWC. 3)

¹⁷⁴ Uugwanga, p. 393 (FWC. 3)

was inaugurated by a ceremony known as *epena*¹⁷⁵. The cattle were then taken to cattle-posts where grass and water lasted over the dry period. The practice of the feast was adopted to ensure the well-being of the cattle, and to keep up the milk and butter production throughout the year¹⁷⁶. It also helped greatly to prevent overgrazing around the areas near the populated settlements. It created an occupational group of cattle-post holders (*aarahambo*) who look after different people's cattle, and receive every third calf as a compensation from each cattle owner¹⁷⁷. It should be pointed out that an Owambo did not keep his herds at one post; this was to reduce the losses of cattle through raids and epidemic diseases, and also to keep secret a man's wealth, which was known only to himself and to some members of his clan¹⁷⁸.

The combination of agropastoral transhumant cattle management and the agricultural calendar forms complementary annual circles¹⁷⁹. This combination differentiates the Owambo from nomadic people and provides them with a strong socio-economic base.

2.2.4. Agriculture and Land Usufruct

Settlements in Owamboland are established where the area is suitable for traditional agriculture. Such locations or areas are known as small hills (*omivardo*), which are usually above depressions (*iishana*) and vleis (*omadhiya*). Depressions and vleis provide water during the rainy season, and during the dry season wells (*omithima*) are dug in the vlei area to provide water¹⁸⁰. Land is communal property over which a king or headman¹⁸¹ presides and regulates its usufruct directly or indirectly through the Ward headman (*Mwene gomukunda*)¹⁸².

¹⁷⁵ Kaluvi, Nikodemus, Mic. No. 45 (ELC. 344); Estermann (1976), p. 131

¹⁷⁶ Uukunde, Mic. No. 89 (ELC. 344); Angula, p. 59; Estermann (1976), pp. 136-137

¹⁷⁷ Loeb, pp. 149-150; Estermann (1976), p. 137; Carvalho & da Silva, p. 159

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Carvalho & da Silva, p. 156

¹⁸⁰ Carvalho & da Silva, p. 152; Soini, p. 170; see also figure above

¹⁸¹ In communities where there have been no kings, for instance in Uukolonkadi, Onkwankwa, Ondongwena, Ondombodhola, Ombalantu after the death of Kampaku, and - of late - in Uukwanyama after the death of Mandume, and in Uukwambi after the abduction of King Iipumbu.

¹⁸² Bruwer, p. 2; see also Figure 3, p. 144

According to one of Liljeblad's informants, land was owned by the clan at the time of the early settlements in the region. This ownership was limited to places where clan members erected their homesteads and by the extent of the land they were able to cultivate¹⁸³. But the right over land began to change gradually with the increased control by the royal clan¹⁸⁴. Hence the foundation of kingdoms changed the property right over land by establishing a system of land usufruct, which was acquired by the payment in cattle, grain, and hoes to the king¹⁸⁵. The number of head of cattle to be paid depended very much on the size and the fertility of the cultivated land in question¹⁸⁶. Grazing land, water and forests are still utilized communally¹⁸⁷. Tributes derived from land usufruct in the form of cattle, grain, and hoes contributed to the kingdom's economic power (see further discussion on p. 104).

The husband as the homestead head is succeeded by the wife in case of death, but if they both die their married son who is staying with them takes over the land. Succession to the position of homestead head does not automatically include the ownership or usufruct of land¹⁸⁸: except in Uukwanyama, land usufruct was renegotiated and new payments had to be made; thus land was not inheritable in some parts of Owamboland. The right over it ended with one's death¹⁸⁹. This arrangement persisted over generations. Despite the fact that the king controls land and continues to receive tribute yearly from the usufructuary, the homestead remained the most effective landholding unit over whose production the king has no control.

The usufructuary, in most cases a man, distributes his land between his wives, or between his wife and his married son or cousin who is staying with them and forms

¹⁸³ Liljeblad, Emil (1932): "Afrikan Amboheimojen kansatietoutta" [Folklore of the Owambo tribes in Africa], p. 1890

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ According to Kaulinge, this was not the case in Uukwanyama: although here land was communal property, the clan and the family had the right over it, and no tribute of any kind was paid for its use. But in later years, Kaulinge recalled, the Kwanyama people also adopted the Ndonga practice of paying tribute for the right of land usufruct, but only in the case that one wanted to be the head of the ward. He said that this started during the rule of Mandume, but one would only give a cow or a "brownish" pearl as tribute and not payment. But a cultivated field is the inheritable property of the clan, or for one's children, and no-one has the right to take it away, unless a certain crime has been committed (see Kaulinge, pp. 30-31 (FWC. 2).

¹⁸⁶ Tönjes, H. (1911): "Ovamboland", p. 120; Bruwer, p. 23

¹⁸⁷ Bruwer, p. 23

¹⁸⁸ Except in Uukwanyama (see footnote 38)

¹⁸⁹ Bruwer, p. 24; Loeb, pp. 42-44

part of the extended family within the homestead. The husband as the homestead head takes the major share and the most fertile portion of the land¹⁹⁰. The distribution of land between his wives follows seniority. Polygyny in Owamboland has both economic and social implications. The husband usually uses his wives as productive units, and to afford him company; they are responsible for the cultivation of their plots and those of the husband. In fact, they are responsible for the whole process of production, from cultivation to grain storage. Thus, wives - in case of polygyny - were not "kept" as status symbols, as Siiskonen argued¹⁹¹.

The shares of production for homestead consumption which depends almost entirely on the woman's granary were not balanced. In some cases the husband and wife contribute to a common granary, for homestead consumption. But most men are reluctant to do it, because their granaries represent their wealth, and have through this prestige acquired what one might call a 'sacred' value. They are supposedly kept for emergency in case of hunger, and for inheritance purposes; but they are actually used more for 'profane' purposes such as buying additional cattle¹⁹². Thus women were the producers of wealth.

The acquisition of land usufruct and the construction of homesteads in Owamboland contributed to the emergence of a new division of labour and specialization. Agropastoralism drew lines between genders, leaving most agricultural work to women and girls, while men and boys took over the custodianship of pastoral activities. In order to involve both genders in agricultural work, the special job of cattle-post keepers was to emerge. Blacksmithing became a specialized occupation as agriculture evolved, to produce and repair the implements. But this craft was less valued in Ondonga and in most western communities, where it was restricted to certain clans considered to belong to the "lower" class¹⁹³. According to my informant Kaulinge, this was not the case in Uukwanyama: smiths were a highly respected group who were not associated with a special clan, because their occupation was a learnt and inherited skill¹⁹⁴.

Rain-making also became a profession much in demand, vested largely in the Ndonga royal clan - at least until the death of Nangolo the son of Amutenya, when the hereditary link broke because of the dispute over the royal succession between his step-

¹⁹⁰ Kafita, Vilhelm, Mic. No. 43 (ELC. 344)

¹⁹¹ Siiskonen (1990), p. 202

¹⁹² Angula, p. 49; Carvalho & da Silva, p. 154

¹⁹³ Himanen, p. 13; Kondombolo, p. 309 (FWC. 1)

¹⁹⁴ Kaulinge, p. 26 (FWC. 2)

brother Shipanga the son of Amukwiita and his cousin Shikongo the son of Kalulu. Since then, art of rain-making had been vested in the people of Evale¹⁹⁵.

Agriculture in the region is characterized by seed agriculture. Seeding takes place at the end of the dry season, during the months of September (*Etalalagona*) and October (*Etalala-enene*)¹⁹⁶. The principal crops suited to this region of low and unreliable rainfall are sorghum (*iityalyaka*) and millet (*omahangu*), because they are drought-resistant. Sorghum flour is mainly used for beer-making (*omalovu*); when combined with millet flour it provides a milder drink (*ontaku*) for daily drinking. Both drinks are an essential part of the local diet¹⁹⁷. Millet is used mainly for cooking porridge (*oshithima*). Minor crops are beans, groundnuts and different kinds of wild pumpkins (see Figure 2). Beans and another green vegetable (*omboga*) are the most relished; this vegetable is dried in the form of small cakes known as *omakaka*, which are preserved for the season when the fresh vegetable is not available. This vegetable belongs to the spinach type, and its link with ritual ceremonies has increased its reputation as a national delicacy¹⁹⁸. For example, it is prepared when men are taking cattle to cattle-posts; when moving a homestead; and when going to war¹⁹⁹. The appetite for meat is largely satisfied by game²⁰⁰ and small domestic animals like goats, pigs, and chickens. Cattle are seldom slaughtered because they are mainly kept as sacred animals or for other special purposes such as serving as a means of exchange²⁰¹.

The Owambo historical ecosystem thus suggests how people largely depended on the environment for subsistence. Although agriculture and pastoralism have been their major sources of livelihood, hunting and gathering were supplements of their basic diet and still play an important role - forming part of not only their economy but also their culture.

¹⁹⁵ Kafita, Mic. No. 43 (ELC. 344); Uugwanga, p. 405 (FWC. 3); see Map 1

¹⁹⁶ Uukunde, Mic. No. 89 (ELC. 344); Estermann (1976), p. 133; Loeb, p. 151; see Figure 2 on p. 55 and Appendix III

¹⁹⁷ Palgrave, M.C. (1877) "Report to his Mission to Damara and Great Namaqualand in 1876", p. 48; Loeb, p. 151

¹⁹⁸ Angula, p. 59

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Anderson (1875), p. 228

²⁰¹ Estermann (1976), pp. 101-102

2.3. Population

2.3.1. Distribution of the Population

The pattern of human settlement has been one of the man's ways of adapting to ecoregional parameters. This has been particularly so with the semi-desert region in which the Owambo settled. There have been different theories concerning the distribution of the Owambo population. Andersson and Galton, the earlier travellers in the region, thought that the population distribution was regulated by political organization, and estimated the population density in Ondonga to be about 100 people per square mile²⁰². Schinz, however, believed that it was based on ethnic relationships²⁰³, while missionary Savola concluded that it must be explained in terms of the fertility of land and the availability of water²⁰⁴. The author strongly agrees with Savola that early population distribution in this area was indeed controlled by factors like the availability of land - for both cultivation and cattle-grazing - and water. However, the factors identified by Schinz, Andersson, and Galton altered the early settlement patterns, as population began to concentrate around centres drawn together by both social and political organization. Nevertheless, the availability of land and water still remained the essential elements in population distribution.

In fact, all these factors seem to be interrelated when examined in relation to the physical environment and the ecosystem of the region as well as its historical dynamic. Taking into account oral traditions relating that one of the reasons for Owambo migration was the search for better cultivating land, and that the migrating units were in most cases clans²⁰⁵, one may propose the following pattern: first, the immigrants naturally tended to concentrate in localities where the soil was fertile and water available. Second, the political organization that emerged around these centres grew out of family and clan communities, which gradually began to develop a more centralized leadership when one clan was chosen, or imposed its leadership on other clans. Third, the distribution according to political organization was in fact a by-product of ethnic relationships created by clans who shared a common interest. It was thus all these factors which contributed to the distribution of Owambo population.

Poor soil - which is a typical characteristic of this region - and the varied nature of the environment were and are causes of the sparsity of population. Or, as Ominde put it in his study on *"Ecology and Man in East Africa"*: "The distinctive

²⁰² Andersson (1875), p. 219

²⁰³ Schinz, pp. 273-74

²⁰⁴ Savola, A. (1924): "Ambomaa ja sen kansa", p. 33

²⁰⁵ Sckär (1932), p. 7; Amweelo, Mic. No. 6 (ELC. 344); Pettinea, A. (1926/7): "Sagen und Mythen der Aandonga", in: *Zeitschrift für Eingeborenen-Sprachen*, XVII, p. 61

characteristics of the scattered population were controlled by the fluctuating fauna wealth and environmental conditions which man had not succeeded in taming²⁰⁶. Thus, the sparseness and instability of the population are factors which contributed to the foundation of scattered - rather than large and unified - kingdoms in the region. However, these factors should be examined in relation to the ancient settlement patterns of Aakwankala, because population distribution was also controlled by border agreements between the immigrants and the ancient occupants of the region²⁰⁷.

The population density around settlement areas can be attributed to demographic changes which resulted from permanent settlements and the introduction of agriculture into the region. This not only enriched the vegetation of the region, but also contributed to the building of a stronger economic base. New relationships of production and a new division of labour emerged from this, with the agricultural calendar providing a reliable production cycle (see Figure 2 above).

2.3.2. The Owambo Homestead

Most writings about Owambo social and political organization tend to confuse or apply too loosely the words village and homestead. Though he pointed out correctly that there were no villages in Owamboland, Loeb (1962) described the homestead incorrectly as a kraal because of the palisade enclosure (*ongandjo*), which seems similar to that of the cattle kraal (*oshigunda*)²⁰⁸. And Bruwer (1966) simply referred to it as a village²⁰⁹.

²⁰⁶ Ominde, S. H. (1979): "Ecology and Man in East Africa", in: Ecology and History in East Africa", Ogot, B. (ed.), p. 19

²⁰⁷ Rautanen's diaries, 2.1.1891, p. 570; Pettinen (1926/7), pp. 51-53; Amweelo, Mic. No. 6 (ELC. 344); Palgrave, p. 49; Laurmaa (1949), p. 12; Angula, p. 27; Uugwanga, pp. 354 & 402-403 (FWC. 3) Abraham Uugwanga stated that these border agreements were recent agreements. After the extensive wars between several Owambo kingdoms at the end of the 19th century, the Owambo kings agreed to enter into a kind of peace treaty ratified on 19 April 1891. This treaty, which was concluded by all the kingdoms, made the following places sanctuary: between Ongha, in Uukwanyama and Ondonga; and Omagongati, in Uukwambi and Ondonga. According to Owambo tradition, such a treaty took place when elders from all sides meet at the places to be sanctified, where they will slaughter a hornless suckling cow and bury its head at this place. From this moment, nobody with violent intention can cross into another's territory.

²⁰⁸ Loeb, pp. 128-136; see Appendix II. The author also draws from her own experience as an Owambo to correct Loeb's findings, since although Loeb's work is rich in data,

The homestead structure is composed of several huts, separated from each other by a wooden palisade or millet-stalk fence. The wooden palisade which fortifies the homestead and protects its occupants from wars and cattle raids, differentiates the Owambo architecture from that of its neighbours. Its central heart is the kitchen (*elugo*), which forms the domestic economic unit responsible for the distribution of food; this role makes the woman the central figure of the homestead. Another important place is the drawing place (*oshinyanga*); its importance lies in its social function of drawing all members of the homestead together and serving as a transmitting place for tradition. It is here that the parents relate to their children the history of rulers and of their clans, their district, and the whole kingdom. This is done since children are expected to know who is who in their community. The drawing place serves in actual fact also as the religious centre of the homestead; it is where all family ritual practices are performed - like the worshipping of ancestor spirits (*aakwampungu*); and the serving of provisions for the journey (*ongwa*), for those who are going to war, those who are undertaking salt-fetching trips, those who are taking cattle to cattle-posts, and those who go on many similar trips that need the blessing of the parents and family members²¹⁰. The cattle kraal and the granary (*esinzi*) form the economic base of the homestead.

One can see from its structure that the Owambo homestead is different from a village, not only by the complexity of its structure but also by its occupants. The homestead occupants are blood-related kin. Each homestead is usually composed of a husband as the head, several wives or one wife, and their children, thus forming a compound family. However, there is a possibility in both polygynous or monogamous cases that the homestead will form an extended family when the married youngest or only son remains with the parents; this extends the homestead by one or more units²¹¹.

The husband is always the homestead head, but not necessarily the head of the ward (see Figure 3), which is composed of 15-20 or more homesteads²¹². The role of the homestead head is not restricted to men, though - a woman can become the head if her husband dies; or if she establishes her own homestead after divorce. This is a very rare case, however, because usually a divorced woman returns to her parents and forms part of their extended family. But there is something peculiar when a woman

his interpretation and organization lack the proper explanation of certain cultural elements that an Owambo will want to see included. Also this is one of his serious linguistic mistakes, which cannot be permitted to go without correction.

²⁰⁹ Bruwer, p. 23

²¹⁰ Angula, p. 69; Loeb, p. 131; Uugwanga, p. 393 (FWC. 3)

²¹¹ Loeb, p. 131

²¹² Loeb, p. 42; Bruwer, pp. 23-24

becomes the homestead head: this homestead will be called a small homestead (*okagumbo*), acquiring a diminutive form because the owner is female. The homestead forms the production unit of the ward, which produces not only for its own local consumption, but also shares its production with the whole community through its annual contribution of tribute to the kingdom.

2.3.3. Neighbourhood

"The neighbour is a neck-bone"²¹³

Production in Owamboland is a social phenomenon. Neighbouring homesteads assist each other in agricultural work, thus strengthening group relations. This cooperation stems from a desire to reduce the distance between homesteads, which ranges between 500 metres and 2 kilometres or more where the area is sparsely populated.

Major cooperation takes place in the fields of agriculture and pastoralism. Many of the agricultural activities can be done by the family alone, like clearing, seeding and first hoeing. But the fast-growing weeds after the first hoeing are more difficult to cope with. During this time, women ask their neighbours a week or less in advance to come and help with the weeding; this social function is called *ondjambi* (the work to be rewarded). The host will show the neighbours the area to be weeded; and after the work she will serve a meal and beer²¹⁴.

Another area of cooperation lies in the organized taking of cattle-herding shifts by two to four homesteads, depending on the number of cattle and goats. During such shifts, the neighbour is entrusted with the care of animals after their morning milking until the evening milking. This is organized so that boys and men can help with weeding during their days off from the cattle-herding²¹⁵. Cooperation between women continues after harvesting (*okuteya*), in threshing (*okayungula*) and winnowing (*okayela*). To conclude, among the Owambo's exogamous and scattered clans such cooperation is not necessarily arranged on the basis of clan lineage. Rather it focuses on establishing and strengthening ties with other clan lineages.

²¹³ Haapanen, Helmi (1989): "Omayeletumbulo gAawambo", p. 90; this is an Owambo proverb which means that neighbours help each other in many things.

²¹⁴ Loeb, p. 154; Carvalho & da Silva, p. 154

²¹⁵ Loeb, p. 147

3. MIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT

3.1. Theories of Bantu Migration

Theories of Bantu migration are a controversial subject that has preoccupied most post-Second World War scholars of African history, and one of the most disputed themes in African historiography.

Several scholarly studies have classified Owambo peoples by linguistic evidence and ethnic identity as belonging to the south-west Bantu Group²¹⁶. Joseph H. Greenberg through his linguistic studies successfully traced the Bantu-speaking people's nucleus home to Cameroon and the adjacent parts of Nigeria²¹⁷. In supporting his hypothesis Greenberg identified the five central groups of *Tiv*, *Batu*, *Botare*, *Mambila* and *Jawara* as groups which maintained special relationships with the Bantu-speaking people. Since all these people lived in a relatively restricted area near the central Benue Valley, this particular region is strongly indicated as the point of origin of the Bantu-speaking people²¹⁸ (see Map 2).

Greenberg's theory of the West African origin of the Bantu-speakers contradicted the generally accepted view that the roots of Bantu origin lie in the Great Lakes area of East Africa - a theory devised by Sir Harry Johnston in his momentous work, "Comparative Study of the Bantu and Semi-Bantu Languages". Johnston held that Bantu languages in the East African Lake area are more primitive than Bantu languages elsewhere²¹⁹. Greenberg rejected this theory by suggesting that Bantu languages might have undergone change over a period of time during migrations, and that the archaic nature of the Great Lakes languages cannot justify the Great Lakes as being the Bantu point of origin. He concluded that: "if applied to the Romance languages, the disputed theory might lead to the conclusion that Latin originated in Sardinia, where certain conspicuous archaisms are still retained. It would certainly not lead to the conclusion that Latin originated in Rome²²⁰."

The Great Lakes theory of the Bantu-speakers' origin was strongly linked with the racial theory of Hamitic origin, which attributed virtually all seminal events of African history to the stimulus of superior Caucasoids. The theory purports that both Semites and Hamites exercised their influence over the indigenous, culturally passive

²¹⁶ Greenberg (1959); Guthrie, M. (1962): "Some Developments in the Prehistory of the Bantu Languages", in: *Journal of African History*, 3.

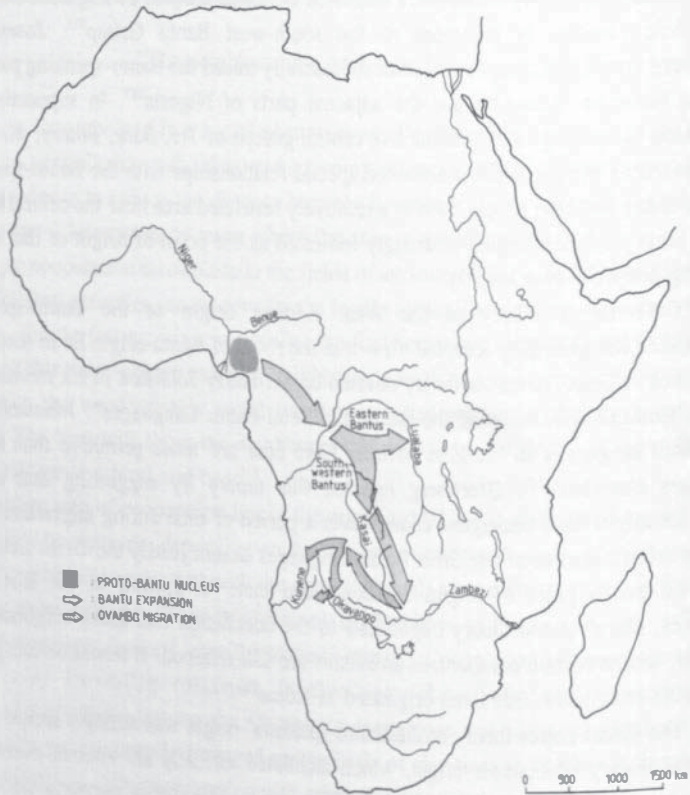
²¹⁷ Curtin, P. H., et al. (1978): "African History", p. 25; Phillipson (1984), p. 276-277

²¹⁸ Greenberg (1959), p. 20

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid.

Sudanic-speaking Negroid population²²¹ in the area of the Great Lakes. This racially orient theory suggests that most of the population of sub-Saharan Africa, except for a relatively small group of forest Negroes in West Africa, are derived from varying Semitic and Hamitic admixtures. Greenberg reject this theory on the basis that a language group cannot be traced with the help of racial categories, and that the term 'Hamitic' lacks any linguistic foundation since it includes four or five branches of the entire language family²²².



Map 3: The Routes of Bantu Migration²²³

²²¹ This view is advocated by Carl Meinhof in his work "Die Sprachen der Hamiten", Hamburg, 1912 - that "Bantu is a mixed language, so to speak, descended of a Hamitic father and a Negro mother" [p. 2, cited in: Greenberg (1959), p. 20].

²²² Ibid., p. 22; Miller (1976), pp. 3-11

²²³ This map is based on Greenberg's linguistic theory of Bantu-speakers' origin, Pfouts' study of 1984, and Phillipson's studies of 1977 and 1984.

His own theory of the Niger-Congo Bantu-speakers' origin was strongly supported by linguistic evidence suggesting their migration route - which began somewhere in Nigeria and brought them first to Cameroon and Gabon, from where they gradually spread eastward north of the forest, and south to the forest edge near the Congo and the Lower Kasai, and the Lualaba tributaries²²⁴ (see Map 2).

Some of these migrating ethnic groups, if not most of them - especially those who were following the south-central 'wave' which moved down from the Lower Kasai, where they probably settled temporarily - might have figured among the royal clan members, or at least some of the influential clans, of the Katanga kingdoms of Luba and Lunda. The expansion of the Lunda kingdom to the west was believed to have made possible the migration of the Kinguri-title' carrying groups into Angola²²⁵. As those who lived with the Kinguri moved about, they absorbed other ethnic groups between the Kasai and the Atlantic, where they finally settled down in about 1600 as the "Imbangala" people; these later ruled over the state of Kasanje near the Kwango River²²⁶. These so-called "Imbangala" were composed of the Kinguri himself and his followers; amongst them were the political title of *Kabungu*, *Mwa Cangombe*, *Kangengo*, *Ndonga*, *Kibombo kya Wulu*, *Kambwizo*²²⁷ and *Lunga* (which possibly acquired the Bantu prefix 'ka-' on reaching Owamboland). Some of these political titles reached Owamboland, like Kabungu, Ndonga and Kalunga - as corresponding to Kambungu, the great traveller; Andonga, the founder of Ondonga; and Kalunga, the Supreme Being.

3.2. Origin of the Name Owambo

Many writers who have written about Owambo people have made several attempts to explain the etymology of their name. The name was first recorded by Galton (1851) and Andersson (1861). Schinz (1891) believed that the word Owambo was of Herero origin; he explained that the stem of the word was not *-mbo* but *-jamba*, which means

²²⁴ Curtin, et al., p. 27; Vansina, J. (1984): "Western Bantu Expansion", in: JAH, Vol. 25, No. 2, p. 138

²²⁵ Miller (1972b), p. 549; Sangambo, M.K. (undated): "The History of the Luvala People and their Chieftainship", pp. 21-24; Vansina (1984), p. 138

The Kinguri-title is a political title given as a symbol of power to members of the royal clan or noble men.

²²⁶ Sangambo, pp. 21-24; Curtin, et al., p. 254; Miller (1972b), p. 549; Henige (1974), p. 37; Oliver & Atmore, p. 141; Vansina (1984), p. 138

²²⁷ Miller (1972b), p. 554; Sangambo, pp. 25-30

rich, and he strongly believed that the name Owambo evolved from the word *Aayamba*²²⁸. Hugo Hahn held that the stem of the word, *-mbo*, should be explained in connection with the word *gumbo* (homestead), and he believed that it was this word that differentiated the Owambo homestead from the "Bushman" village²²⁹. Lehmann (1954) used the name in the same sense as Schinz²³⁰. Loeb (1962) connected it with cattle-posts (*oohambo*)²³¹, Bruwer (1966) and Estermann (1976) following Schinz and Lehmann claimed that the name was of Herero origin²³². None of these explanations have thrown sufficient light on the etymology and historic origin of the name. This is also due to lack of proper methodologies in recent studies like that of Martti Eirola (1987) which continued to rely on guesswork and speculation rather than on the establishment of reliable sources²³³.

Since the principal source for this study is oral tradition, it is necessary to add place- and personal names to this source as supplementary evidence. The method of onomanistics²³⁴ (i.e. the use of place- and personal names) has been widely used to provide evidence of culture and settlement in the study of periods for which written sources are either insufficient or non-existent. Vahtola (1986) has stated that "names can even be used as a reliable source of interpretation when they are treated as part of a system"²³⁵.

²²⁸ Schinz, pp. 271-272

²²⁹ Cited in: Töttemeyer, G. (1978): "Namibia Old and New", p. 4

²³⁰ Lehmann, F. Rudolf (1954): "Die Anthropogeographischen Verhältnisse Des Ambolandes im Nördlichen Südwest-Afrika", in: *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, Band 79, pp. 11-13

²³¹ Loeb, p. 372

²³² Loeb, p. 372; Bruwer, p. 22; Estermann (1976), p. 55

²³³ Eirola (1987), p. 38

²³⁴ There is a great problem in using the science of onomanistics in the study of pre-colonial history of the Owambo people, due to the changes that have occurred in their original names. The attempt that the author embarked upon during her fieldwork - collecting 476 personal names, 1 294 place-names, and 20 clan names with their meanings and praise songs (FWC. 2) was just aimed at compiling data, because the use of such names in historical research will need the art of an onomanistician to classify them according to their geographical distribution and type. In this study, however, we will only concern ourselves with the use of names like Aawambo, Aayamba, Kalunga, and other related names that will help us in understanding the etymology of the name Owambo. The author has made an extensive study, as an amateur, of classifying these names and thus tracing their geographical distribution.

²³⁵ Vahtola, J. (1986): "Onomanistinen metodi Suomen varhaishistorian tutkimuksessa", in: *Turun historiallinen arkisto* 41, p. 118

Vahtola's study points out that when personal names and surnames are used as a source in early history, conclusions should be based on three criteria: (i) the original language of the name; (ii) the geographical distribution of name types and the constituent parts of the names, above all appellations; and (iii) the content of the names, which is concerned with the meaning of these constituent elements and the origin of other elements in the names²³⁶.

The method of onomastics cannot be applied to the study of the Owambo migration, because there has been no tradition of using surnames in Owamboland during the pre-Christian era. An Owambo uses his/her father's first name: for example, Shilongo the son of Andreas [and grandson of Uukule]; the last name, which is supposed to be the surname, has never been used, because the child is identified with the father and not with the grandfather. This tradition follows from the fact that in a matrilineal society like that of Owamboland, the clan is a more important social link than the surname, because a person's identity is traced through the clan lineage - and not through the surname, which leads to one's identity through the paternal line. The latter practice seemed to be more common in a patrilineally organized society, or where both types of social organization operated.

Regarding the name Owambo, a proper historical investigation is needed. For instance, if we agree with the generally accepted view that the name Owambo is Herero-given, then an attempt should be made to trace its etymology, to enable us to establish its historic origin. This can be supported by the same name type, which can provide clarification in case of any change in the original name or of misspelling by those who first recorded it or put it in writing, the European travellers²³⁷.

Oral tradition is perhaps the best source on *how these people were named*, because according to traditions of all Owambo ethnic and cultural related communities, there is always a name-giver (*omuluka*). Thus it is natural to assume that the Owambo were given this name either by their neighbours or by the people whom they found in the area they came to occupy (see similar discussions on p.).

It has been a tradition amongst the Owambo, the Herero too, and also amongst the Nyaneka-Nkumbi, to name one person or thing after another. For instance, a child is named after a close friend or relative; places like Ondonga were named after their founder - Andonga, and even cattle were sometimes named after people. This has been done in remembrance of a particular person, event or place at one time important to you - the name-giver. The Owambo also give names to refer to the time and place of birth, as well as to natural catastrophes like excessive rain, drought, fire, hunger, etc. For example, one who is born during the night is called Nuusiku; during the morning,

²³⁶ Vahtola, p. 118

²³⁷ Amakutuwa, p. 128 (FWC. 1); Uukule, pp. 424-25 (ibid. 2)

Nangula; during rain, Namvula; during hunger, Nandjala; during drought, Shikukutu; etc.²³⁸

What was really the original name of these people? "*Ovambo*" (meaning they belong to that place); "*Ovombo*" (there they are); "*Ovawambo*" (good people²³⁹); "*Ovawambu*" (people of Wambu, also spelled *Huambu*, *Huambo*, *Hambo*, *Vauambos* or *Ova-Uambo*²⁴⁰); or "*Aayamba*" (the rich people)? The author strongly believes that the name evolved from all these terms as related to the root of the word, "Wambu"; this hypothesis is supported by the ethnic and cultural as well as linguistic relationship between the Ovimbundu-related people that occupied the area of Wambu - and the Owambo. As above-mentioned traditions suggested, the Owambo and related people had what one may refer to as a long-existing relationship. The linguistic problem pointed out earlier, and the lack of sufficient evidence to indicate the length of time these groups had been wandering in central and southern Angola before they migrated to areas they occupy today, remain major stumbling-blocks of this study. The author will leave to linguistic archaeologists this most challenging task of providing us with evidence on the length of time that had elapsed after these languages separated.

On the other hand, the author cannot reject the claim that the Owambo people were known at one time as Aayamba, the name believed to have been given to them by the ancient occupants of the area - Aakwankala. This theory has proved correct, because until this day Aakwankala still refer to Aawambo by the name Aayamba²⁴¹. Amakutuwa pointed out that when Europeans first started to use the name Aawambo, the Owambo people thought it was the name commonly used to designate any black person. But when the name Aayamba was used then all Owambo communities knew that it referred to: Aandonga, Aakwanyama, Aangandjera, Aakwambi, Aambalantu, Aakwaluudhi, Aankolonkadhi, Aambandja, Aandongwena, Aankwankwa, Aandombodhola, Aashinga, Aavale and Aakathima²⁴².

This is the same word that Schinz tried to establish (see p. 53) as being the one from which the name Owambo evolved. Later, they became known as Aawambo (sometimes spelled Ambo or Aauambo), an ancient name believed to have been retained by their co-immigrants, the Herero. The author's hypothesis derives from the fact that when Aakwankala named the new immigrants "Aayamba", the Herero, as their co-immigrants, probably wanted them to remain identified with the main group

²³⁸ Estermann (19 6), pp. 36-37; Kaukungwa, Johannes, Mic. No. 48 (ELC. 344); Angolo, Mateus, Mic. No. 12 (ibid.); Amakutuwa, pp. 144-194 (FWC. 1)

²³⁹ Eirola (1987), p. 38

²⁴⁰ Translations on Africa (1964), No. 154, p. 16

²⁴¹ Amakutuwa, p. 128 (FWC. 1); Uugwanga, pp. 353-354 (ibid. 3)

²⁴² Amakutuwa, p. 128 (FWC. 1)

which they left behind. Another hypothesis derives from the fact that when these groups migrated from Angola, the Herero had been known by their name for a long time and had perhaps been an independent group. It should not be forgotten that in most cases - not only in migrations that have taken place on the African continent, but also in Europe, America, Australia and Asia - immigrants kept on giving their old place-names to the new places they were migrating to; this practice was to remind the emigrants of the places they once occupied²⁴³ (see further discussions in Section 4.2).

However, one must still express concern about the name "Aayamba" and its connection to Aakwankala, because it is a typical Bantu name, belonging to a different language group from that of the believed name-giver, Aakwankala. One must thus assume that it was the Owambo people themselves who had identified themselves by this name to Aakwankala - perhaps they wanted to give themselves a new identity, different from the previous one. Perhaps an important point to look into is this: did the change in their original name cause any change in their ethnic identity? Or did they maintain the same identity under their new name? So far in the course of discussion, the author has not detected any indication that any cultural or political conflicts arose from the change of their name. Thus the author can only conclude that the Owambo had adopted a new cultural identity by accepting the use of the new name, but their ethnic identity remained unchanged.

3.3. Nangombe and Kanzi - The Myth of Genesis

According to Owambo traditions, their ancestors first arrived at *Maakuku*²⁴⁴, where they stayed temporarily before trekking toward Oshamba. Oshamba was their first collective settlement where they stayed under five clan leaders: Andonga, Kanene, Hamangundu, Hamukwambi and Hamungandjera²⁴⁵. These leaders had a few things

²⁴³ Schinz, pp. 271-72; Laurmaa (1949), p. 38; Angula, p. 24; Amakutuwa, p. 128 (FWC. 1); Uugwanga, pp. 353-354 (ibid. 3); Rautanen's Diaries, 10 January, 1889

²⁴⁴ This place, *Maakuku*, was named after their first settlement, *Makuzu*, on the banks of the Okavango River, where they stayed with the later-known Kwangari after the migration of these people from Handa of Quipungo. This place appears on the modern Angolan map as *Mucucio*, a name adapted by the Portuguese to suit their p. 19; Henok, Mic. No. 24; see map]. The Herero people named the tree to which the place name refers 'omumborombonga' [Vedder, p. 157; Uugwanga, p. 354 (FWC. 3)]. Uugwanga explained that '*Maakuku*' meant an old leadwood tree.

²⁴⁵ Kafita, Mic. No. 43 (ELC. 344); Sckär (1932), p. 8; Vedder, p. 155; Uugwanga, p. 355 (FWC. 3)

in common which bound them together: a common ancestor, *Mangundu*; a common religious figure, *Kalunga*; and a common place of origin, *Maakuku* or *Omumborombongo*. To strengthen their relationship and to preserve it for coming generations, they constructed a social norm as a myth or legend.

Kanzi na Nangombe aniwa aantu ya za momukuku. Omukuku nwiya gwa kala kokule kuuzilo, kombanda yombuga. Omukuku ngono hagu ithanwa omuti gwa Maakuku. Kalunga sho kwegu lombwele gu tanduke; omuti e tagu tanduka pokati. Tamu zi aantu yane: aalumentu yaali naakiintu yaali, Kanzi na Nangombe naakiintu yauo yaali: nguka omukiintu gwa Kanzi, nguka ogwa Nangombe. Ano sho ya zi momuti moka, oya adha omuntu omufupi a tiligana kashona, e nomatako omanene, a tsehunda mpoka, pekota byomuti ngono. Kalunga a tula po komeho gauo mpoka oongombe, oonzi, amatemo, omakuya, amatenga nuuhe. Kalunga okwe ya lombwele e ta ti: "Oshike mu uutumana mpono owala ngeyi? Kamu wete iinima mbyoka, one nge yi tulile po mpono? Kuhii po shaa ngoka shoka wa hala." Kanzi nokwa thikama e ta hakana po oongombe noonzi netenga nokaha. Nangombe te mu landula e ta kutha po etemo nekaya netenga noongombe ndhoka dha thigwa po ku Kanzi. Okamentu heya okatiligane komatako omanene noka thikama e taka kutha po okahe nkoka ka thigwa po ku yakwawo. Kalunga nokwe ya lombwele e ta ti: "Indeni ihe mpoka mwa hala." Taa yi ihe, taa halakana. Kanzi ta yi kUushimba nomukadhi, ko okalumentu okatiligane komatako omanene ka yi mokuti kwa gama lwokuuzilo, na Nangombe te ya nkunka kOndonga nomukadhi. Taa dhike egumbo byawo e taa kala moka e taa valathana.

"Kanzi and Nangombe came out of the leadwood tree, which is situated far in the east, across the grass savanna, in the place known as Maakuku. The tree split, when Kalunga told it to do so, and four people came out, two men and two women - they were Mangundu and Kanzi and their wives. When they came out they found a short, light brown person with big buttocks in a squatting position at the foot of that tree. Kalunga put in front of them cattle, sheep, hoes, axes, milking pails and small digging poles, and asked them: "Why are you so idle? Can't you see those things which I put there for you? Take, each of you, what you want!" Kanzi stood up and took many cattle, all the sheep, a milking pail and a small digging pole. Nangombe followed him and took a hoe, an axe, a milking pail and the rest of the cattle left by Kanzi. The small, light brown man with big buttocks stood up and took a small digging pole, left

by the others. Kalunga ordered them again, saying: "Go, then, where you want to go!" They went and scattered. Kanzi went with his wife southward, the light brown man went into the forest eastward, and Nangombe and his wife went to Ondonga, where they built their homesteads and stayed and multiplied²⁴⁶.

This legend depicts the Owambo-Herero migration, and tells that when they arrived in the area it was already inhabited by Aakwankala (referred to in the legend as the short, light brown man with big buttocks). The cattle, sheep, hoes, axes, milking pails, and digging poles represent the economic life of these immigrants, and the process of change through adaptation to their new environment by domesticating the animals and making tools. The stage of dispersion represents internal migrations, with Kanzi - the Herero ancestor - migrating southward with his cattle and thus becoming a nomad. Nangombe - the Owambo ancestor - trekked to Ondonga: this refers to Oshamba, where most of the Owambo temporarily settled. However, Ondonga can also refer to the direction they followed from the place where they parted: Ondonga as a direction in Owambo languages means the eastern direction²⁴⁷. The light brown man who retreated into the forest when part of his hunting area fell into the hands of the new immigrants explains his new way of life. The digging pole taken by the Kwankala man symbolizes the tool of gathering plant roots.

The legend thus exemplifies the impact of the migrating Bantu-speaking people on the lives of the indigenous people. Immigrants' possession of domesticated animals and cultivated plants, and their skills in iron-making - represented by the hoe - changed the lives of the earlier occupants in many ways. Barter began between Aakwankala and the Bantu-speaking people, through which the former acquired iron spears and arrow heads to replace their bone tools; the introduction of new plants altered their diet. Of course, trade and economic relations between these people were not one-way traffic: the immigrants also acquired new artifacts and skills which they had not possessed. For example, they learnt the use of poison on their spear heads, an effective method which the Bantu-speakers exploited and used in their warfare. Most importantly, Aakwankala discovered both salt-pans in Ondonga, Ongandjera, and Uukwambi, as well as the

²⁴⁶ Amweelo, Mic. No. 6 (ELC. 344); Henok, Mic. No. 24 (ibid.); Pettinen (1926/27), pp. 51-53; Rautanen's Diaries, 10.1.1889; ibid., 2.1.1891, p. 570. The original language of this myth is Ndonga; this literal translation has been made by the author, and hopefully no change has been made in its originality.

²⁴⁷ Angula, p. 36

Otavi mine, which became important in the Ondonga kingdom's iron industry. This legend also exists amongst the Herero²⁴⁸.

3.4. Owambo Traditions of Origin

Several attempts were made in earlier works on the Owambo people to trace their origin, with no convincing results. Vedder (1938), for example, cites the myth of genesis which explains the origin of clans in Uukwanyama. Failing to interpret the myth as a symbolic whole, he picks out some isolated words in support of his hypothesis, again focusing on the racist Hamitic theory of origin²⁴⁹. Another attempt was made by Laurmaa, who wrote under the strong influence of Vedder. Laurmaa did not come up with anything new, but supported Vedder's theory²⁵⁰. Loeb also complemented the same school of thought²⁵¹. The ambiguities created by the speculations of colonial historiography give rise to a need to study the Owambo people not as a separate entity, but as part of the complex whole of the Bantu-speaking people of central and southern Africa in general, and in particular as part of the linguistic groups classified by Guthrie (1963), Greenberg (1959), Baucom (1972) and Pfouts (1983).

Most Owambo people believe they have come from the east²⁵² when they arrived to settle in their present home; traditions recorded by Kivinen & Sckär (1920s), Liljeblad (1930s) and of late by myself (1988-1990), support this direction of origin.

²⁴⁸ Hahn's Coll. A. 450, No. 9, File No. 2/34; Vedder, p. 131
Vedder, however, simply dismissed it as a recent fabrication, due to the fact that he did not look at the light brown or red man as a Kwankala, but rather identified him with the white man, who for obvious reasons had not yet set foot on Namibian or Angolan soil. This is the kind of pitfall that occurred when the interpreter of the legend did not fully understand it (as in the case of Vedder).

²⁴⁹ Vedder, p. 154

²⁵⁰ Laurmaa (1949), pp. 24-26

²⁵¹ Loeb, pp. 9-10

²⁵² The eastern direction is linked in Owambo tales with ancestral spirits, which the Owambo people worshipped in early times and some still do so until now. An Owambo performs a non-bloody sacrifice during his/her first meal of the new harvest; this feast is known as *oshipe*. It is still practised by many people as thanksgiving to their ancestors for having provided them with rain and a good harvest. The homestead head will perform an ancient ritual of sharing their portion with their ancestors in the east and the west [Ugungwa, pp. 388-401 (FWC. 3)].

More precisely, traditions point out that some of the present Owambo speakers arrived at their present home through the Okavango, the north-eastern part of Namibia, but also from the sites of Evale, now in southern Angola²⁵³. Studies done amongst central and south-western African people by E. Jacottet (1896)²⁵⁴, J. C. Miller (1976)²⁵⁵ and J. Vansina (1984)²⁵⁶, also confirmed the eastern direction of origin. Examining the movements and settlement of the Owambo people within the context of Bantu-speaking migration, Estermann (1976) pointed out with some hesitation that they seemed to have established themselves for some centuries, whose number he found difficult to estimate²⁵⁷.

As to the pressure behind the Owambo migration, traditions suggest that population pressure and scarcity of wild animals in areas they were emigrating from were the main reasons behind these movements at the early stage. At a later stage the pressures emanating from political and power conflicts, wars, and of course population growth seem to have been the key elements; these were related to improved methods of agriculture²⁵⁸. Studies done on political conflicts in central Africa which affected the Luba/Lunda empires at the end of the 15th and the beginning of the 16th century, reveal that these conflicts also had an impact on the central, eastern and southern African kingdoms by spreading new political ideas to the already existing political institutions, or by establishing new ones where they did not exist²⁵⁹.

According to Owambo traditions, migration into Owamboland took place under the leadership of four clan leaders: Sitenu, Kanene, Kambungu and Andonga²⁶⁰. Although Sitenu sounds more legendary than the others, he was said to have been the

²⁵³ Kafita, Mic. No. 43 (ELC. 344); Henok, Mic. No. 24 (ibid.); Amakutuwa, pp. 123-124 (FWC. 1)

²⁵⁴ Jacottet, E. (1896): "Etudes sur les langues du Haut Zambèze", p. 128, note 3; as cited in: Mainga, Mutumba (1973): "Bulozi Under the Luyana Kings", p. 14

²⁵⁵ Miller (1976), especially "The Spread of Lunda Political Titles to the West", pp. 128-140

²⁵⁶ Vansina (1984), p. 138

²⁵⁷ Estermann (1976), p. 54

²⁵⁸ Rautanen's Diaries, 11 July, 1889, XXVIII:2, FMSA; Henok, Mic. No. 24 (ELC. 344); Amweelo, Mic. No. 6 (ibid.); Petinen (1926/7), pp. 60-62

²⁵⁹ Reefe, Thomas Q. (1977a): "Traditions of Genesis and the Luba Diaspora", in: *History in Africa*, Vol. 4, p. 187; Miller (1976), pp. 128-141; Curtin, et al., p. 254; Henige (1972), p. 37; Oliver & Atmore, p. 141

²⁶⁰ Sckär (1932), p. 7; Amutenya, Petrus: "Ehistoli LyaaWambo", (The History of the Owambo People), a manuscript from Rauha Voipio's Private Collection, p. 31; Vedder, pp. 155-156; Laurmaa (1949), p. 21

leader over the other three clan leaders while they were at Osimolo, their first settlement²⁶¹. Sitenu, (Mushindi) Kanene, Kambungu and Andonga were claimed to have come to the region as leaders of hunting groups²⁶², but it was only Kanene and Kambungu who later became founders of the Kwanyama kingdom.

Before presenting further details as they emerge from oral traditions, I wish to demonstrate the integration of these traditions into the much wider context of central African history and historiography. Studies done by Birmingham (1965), Henige (1974), Miller (1976), Reefer (1977), and Oliver & Atmore (1981) indicate that Kambungu and Andonga were political titles of Lunda origin, which spread south- and eastward after the political conflict in the Lunda kingdom noted earlier²⁶³. Reefer proved that events associated with the spreading of these titles took place during the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a time of political tension in the region emanating from the political conflicts in the Katanga kingdoms of Lunda and Luba which affected most of the political structure of this region²⁶⁴.

The Lunda/Luba connection with the Owambo tradition can be traced through the diffusion of political titles by the migrating groups after the disintegration of these empires. Only three titles managed to reach Owamboland in their original form: the Mushindi (Musinda or Ishindi) (borne by Kanene, the founder of the Kwanyama kingdom); the Andonga (borne by a Kinguri-related people²⁶⁵, and by 1650 one of the royal titles in the major Mbundu states of Angola²⁶⁶); and Kambungu (Kabungu)

²⁶¹ Sclär (1932), pp. 4-5; Amutenya, p. 31; Kaulinge, p. 22 (FWC. 1)

²⁶² Sclär (1932), pp. 4-5; Kafita, Mic. No. 43 (ELC. 344);

Vedder, p. 155; Laurmaa (1949), p. 21; Estermann (1976), p. 55

²⁶³ Birmingham (1965), pp. 143-150; Henige (1974), p. 27; Miller

(1976), p. 128; Reefer, p. 184; Oliver & Atmore, p. 141

²⁶⁴ Reefer (1977a), p. 184

²⁶⁵ The root word "Nguni", from which the Kinguri title derives mean a spotted hyena in Ki-Mbundu and Chokwe languages; and 'lion' in some Umbundu languages [Miller (1976), p. 172].

Although this title did not reach Owamboland in its original form, it was adopted as a totem, which became the royal clan totem in Ondonga, Aakwanelamba - meaning 'hyena'. This title might have reached Owamboland from the north-eastern direction along the Okavango river, as traditions claim [Rautanen's Diaries, 11.7.1889, p. 568; Pettinen (1926/2), pp. 60-62; Amweelo, Mic. No. 6 (ELC. 344); Henok, Mic. No. 24 (ibid.)]. The same has applied to Okavango amongst the Kwangari and the Mbundja people (Kampungu, p. 188).

²⁶⁶ Laurmaa (1949), p. 29; Amutenya, p. 37; Miller, J.C. (1972a)

"Kings and Kinsmen: The Imbangalo Impact on the Mbundu of Angola", p. 150; Ibid., p. 249, Footnote 18.

(given to the person responsible for royal ritual ceremonies in the Lunda kingdom²⁶⁷). By the time kingdoms were founded, the four clans leaders had adopted new political titles from people they encountered on their way. For example, the Chokwe political title of *mwu*²⁶⁸ reached Ondonga and was adopted here as a royal title by acquiring the Bantu prefix of *omu-*, hence *omumwa*, meaning the royal person. Another political title that reached this area was *mwene*, of Mbunda origin, which means a chief²⁶⁹; it bears the same meaning in Owambo languages too.

Traditions do not point out clearly how many clans were under the groups of Sitenu, by then the leader of the Fish Eagle clan (*Ovakwalukuwo*)²⁷⁰. The Sitenu-led group was composed of hunters and gatherers, who were wandering around in search of wild fruits and game²⁷¹. Although the migration tales of this group are not clear, one can infer that they might have originated from the Angolan Highlands where this clan is widely distributed²⁷².

Another hunter-leader, who later gained the fame of being the founding father of the Kwanyama nation - Mushindi the son of Kanene - was said to have been a great hunter who migrated with his people from the lower Okavango towards the west. Kanene and his people encountered the Sitenu-led group at Osimolo; the two leaders agreed to merge their groups under the leadership of Sitenu²⁷³. After a long stay a dispute over food arose, which led to the splitting up of the two groups. They thus abandoned their first settlement at Osimolo, which they called "*Oshihetekela*"²⁷⁴ (an

²⁶⁷ Sangambo, p. 25; Miller (1976), pp. 125-126

²⁶⁸ Sangambo, p. 28; Miller (1976), pp. 17, 136 & 146

²⁶⁹ Sumbwa, George Nyambe (1979): "History of the Luyana of Kalabo to 1906", p. 16

²⁷⁰ This clan consists of Nkumbi immigrants, who were hunters from Nano (this name refers to Ovimbundu), and encountered the Zebra clan (*Ovakwaluvala*) on their way to Cwamato (Ombandja), where they attacked them and captured their cattle [Estermann (1976), pp. 25 & 55; Sckär (1932), p. 9; see Appendix IV]

²⁷¹ Sckär (1932), p. 5; Kafita, Mic. No. 43 (ELC. 344); Estermann (1976), p. 55

²⁷² Estermann, C. (1979): "The Nyaneka-Nkumbi Ethnic Group", Vol. 2, pp. 17, 25, 122, 132-3

²⁷³ Sckär (1932), p. 5; Vedder, pp. 155-159

²⁷⁴ This homestead was still there during the time Sckär was writing his manuscript in the 1920s; in 1989, when the author was collecting her oral data one of her informants - Vilho Kaulinge - confirmed that this place was still regarded as the first settlement in Uukwanyama, but that only a few of its remains could still be seen [Sckär, p. 7; Kaulinge, p. 22 (FWC. 1)].

Meanwhile, Kanene and his followers moved southward until they reached Hakafia²⁷⁹, where they encountered the Cattle clan (*Ovakwangombe*), the Wood-cutter clan (*Ovakwahongo*) and the Zebra clan (*Ovakwaluwala*)²⁸⁰. Kanene and his people acquired cattle by attacking the Cattle clan, and trekked further south until they reached Oshamba, a seasonal river, by then occupied by four different groups: Andonga, Hamungandjera, Hamukwambi and Hamangundu. Kanene joined them and stayed there as a leader of this group²⁸¹. It should be pointed out here that although these groups stayed together at Oshamba, they maintained their autonomy, with independent leaders; what they had merged together were the cattle, which they entrusted to the care of Hamangundu²⁸².

Kambungu of the Cattle clan, along with the Wood-cutter clan and the Zebra clan, are believed to have migrated from the direction of Humbe²⁸³. At Hakafia they encountered Kanene and his followers. From Hakafia they moved and went to settle at Onameva, where they built their first settlement²⁸⁴. After long wanderings, Kambungu finally established his royal capital (*Ombala*) at Onambambi, west of the Kunene river²⁸⁵. However, after only a short stay at Onambambi, Kambungu and his followers moved again towards the east until they reached Onehula in central Uukwanyama. There Kambungu built his second royal capital and ruled as an independent king of the Cattle clan, as well as other clans which had joined them during their wanderings²⁸⁶ (see Map 4). Kambungu erected a stone, which was later known as the "stone of the country" (*emanya l'oshilongo*); it became associated with ancestral spirits²⁸⁷.

A group of immigrants which came from the north-eastern direction was associated with another hunter, namely Andonga. Andonga, the leader of the Hyena clan (*Aakwarekamba*), once arrived at the Oshamba river with his companions from

²⁷⁹ Sckär (1932), p. 7; Kafita, Mic. No. 43 (ELC. 344); Vedder, p. 155

²⁸⁰ Kivinen & Sckär, p. 5; Sckär (1932), p. 11; Vedder, p. 155; Estermann (1976), p. 55; Amutenya, p. 31

²⁸¹ Sckär (1932), p. 12; Vedder, p. 155; Amutenya, p. 31

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Estermann (1976), p. 55; Amutenya, pp. 31-32; Kaulinge, pp. 22-23 (FWC. 1)

²⁸⁴ Sckär (1932), p. 7; Amutenya, p. 31

²⁸⁵ Sckär (1932), pp. 7-8; Vedder, p. 155. Onambambi is said to be still regarded as an important place.

²⁸⁶ Sckär (1932), p. 22; Amutenya, p. 31; Tshilongo, V., p. 40 (FWC. 2)

²⁸⁷ Sckär (1932), pp. 7-8; Vedder, p. 155; Amutenya, p. 31; Kaulinge, p. 23 (FWC. 2); Tshilongo, V., p. 40 (ibid. 3)

Ombwenge²⁸⁸. They camped on the banks of this seasonal river, where they hunted and dried their meat. The meat was tied into small bundles of biltong (*omikuto*) with palm leaves²⁸⁹. When Andonga and his companions returned to Ombwenge and talked about the abundance of wildlife and fertile soil around the Oshamba river, the people decided to move to Oshamba. The intentions behind these movements were clearly economic, and one can also see that the people were in constant search of fertile soil and hunting grounds. What remains a mystery here is: if land and hunting places were really the main force behind these migrations, one begins to wonder why these people did not settle on the banks of the Okavango, where the soil was fertile and wildlife abundant. The claim made by traditions here might either be incorrect, or hiding the real motive for migrating. I propose to link this question with the political situation that prevailed in central Africa: this movement could have been sparked by the population pressure around the Okavango emanating from other Bantu-speaking groups who were migrating into the area; or as narrated in many tales, by war²⁹⁰.

In his study on the "*Okavango Marriage Customs*", Kampungu has thrown some light on the Andonga-led migration, and it seems reasonable to suppose that the southern advance of the Imbangala people might have had a direct influence on the migrations of some powerful clans into Okavango. The study has drawn its evidence from the Kwangari and Mbundja people's traditions, which indicate that co-immigration with some of the Owambo-related people might have taken place²⁹¹. Unlike the Owambo traditions, the Kwangari ones trace their origin further back, to the Handa country in southern Angola²⁹² (see Map 4), from where they migrated and settled at Makuzu of Mutenda²⁹³, where a split between them and the Andonga-led group took

²⁸⁸ The Owambo people used to call Okavango 'Ombwenge' and its inhabitants 'Aambwenge', especially when they referred to the Kwangari people [Andersson (1968), p. 141; Sckär (1932), p. 4; Amutenya, p. 33; Kampungu, p. 318; Ugwanga, pp. 356-357 (FWC. 3); Shindondola, p. 339 (ibid. 2); Uukule, p. 410 (ibid.)]

²⁸⁹ Rautanen's Diaries, XXVIII:2, 11 July 1889, p. 569; Pettinen (1926/27), pp. 60-62; Närhi, O. E. (1930): "Afrika Kätöistä", p. 8; Amweelo, Mic. No. 6 (ELC. 344)

²⁹⁰ Rautanen's Diaries, XVIII:2, 11 July 1889, p. 568; Amweelo, Mic. No. 6 (ELC. 344); Henok, Mic. No. 24 (ibid.)

²⁹¹ Kampungu, pp. 240-243; see also Gibson, et al. (1984), pp. 37-38

²⁹² Kampungu, p. 240

²⁹³ Mutenda was said to have been their ruler while at Makuzu. One must relate the Ndonga people's hero with by they eulogized themselves - Namukolo the son of Ashitendo with Mutenda;; it is difficult to conclude whether this was the same person, because the Ndonga traditions are too vague and thin in relation to this question. But if the Hyena clan was at Makuzu, as

place²⁹⁴. The traditions concerning concurrent movements and settlement by these groups around the Okavango were reinforced later by the results from archaeological excavations made at Kapako - east of Rundu - a place strongly held to be one of the early Owambo-Kavango settlements²⁹⁵, and also at Vungu Vungu and Dikundu.

In an attempt to maintain the link between the lands from which they came and those into which they migrated, the Owambo people compiled legends and myths, which they preserved in songs, tales, and praise songs. These were in actual fact the elements which formed the basis of their religion, through which they worshipped their ancestors with the purpose not only of maintaining the link, but also of obtaining their blessing²⁹⁶. That is why traditions of this kind took on a sacred role in Owambo communities. Traditions were memorized and recited by adult men who were appointed by the king as elders of the kingdom, or by the head of the clan, to maintain their traditions and history²⁹⁷. It is against this background that most of the 'mythical' cultural heroes are remembered as the founding fathers of their kingdoms.

traditions suggest, then it is possible that the Ndonga people refer to the same person.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., pp. 190-193; Uugwanga, p. 356 (FWC. 3); Amakutuwa, p. 128 (ibid. 1)

²⁹⁵ Sckâr (1932), p. 7; Vedder, p. 155

²⁹⁶ Uugwanga, pp. 381-383 (FWC. 3)

²⁹⁷ I used the past tense here because the tradition has been dying out, and elders in the community who nowadays practise this are no longer appointed to it but do so because of their own personal interest in the kingdom or clan, or because of their positions as counsellors or clan heads.

4. OWAMBO-RELATED AND NEIGHBOURING PEOPLE

4.1. Ethnic and Linguistic Origin

This section forms one of the most important parts of this study, focusing on the meaning of the concept of ethnic and its use in modern African studies. It will also look at the question of whether ethnic communities have aided the formation of kingdoms in different parts of Owamboland or not. The term ethnic community here is used according to the definition devised by è Nzièm (1980), that the birth of the ethnic society occurred when: "The linguistic community, which had hitherto been homogeneous where the clan was concerned, now included representatives from other clans. It thus became inter-clan. As a result of this process, brothers of the same clan were dispersed and became members of other communities, heterogeneous from the clan point of view but based on a language which was common to all members²⁹⁸".

The concept of ethnic will be used in this study to represent groups of people probably of differing origin, who have come to accept a common identity on the basis of the common cultural values, clan affiliation, and the language they share. The concept has been adopted in this sense here as in most other studies in modern Africa as an alternative to the concept of "tribe" which has been dominating writings on African history in the past decades. The concept of "tribe" is rejected because of its racial connotations, which have been widely used in colonial literature to define the level of civilization of the indigenous people. In actual fact, there is no concept such as "tribe" in the languages and dialects of the people covered by this study. The word used in this connection is *omuhoko*, a word borrowed from the Herero language which means 'a member of our clan or kinsmen'²⁹⁹. "Tribal" divisions based on race were not known in Africa during the pre-colonial period; rather, the divisions that existed amongst these people were based on clan organization, with the family as the smallest unit. And their blood relations were never defined on the basis of race, but on the basis of clan totem.

The difficulties involved in the advancement of a framework in which the linguistic and ethnic relations of these people could be traced, are substantial. Although the occupants of Owamboland share today a common language and culture, they might not have a common origin, neither are they perhaps from the same linguistic and ethnic group. This is suggested by the sheer duration of the process of migration, which was

²⁹⁸ è Nzièm, Ndaywel (1980) "Clan History and Ethnical History: Some Methodological Perspectives", in: *Cultures* (UNESCO), Vol. 7, No. 22, p. 66].

²⁹⁹ Malan, J. S. (1973): "Double Descent Among the Himba of South West Africa", in: *Cimbebasia*, Ser. B, Vol. 2, No. 3, p. 87

a product of different 'phases' since the early period of human movements in the region which probably date back to the first millennium A.D.³⁰⁰

Studies on the migration of the Bantu-speaking people as outlined above, have shed light on the possible movements of the Western Highlands groups and its 'phases' which constituted the Owambo people³⁰¹. These studies have traced the dispersal of Bantu linguistic and ethnic related people as a whole. For instance, a detailed work by Heine using basic vocabulary³⁰², suggested that the dispersal of western Bantu languages took place during the second phase of the process north of the lower Zaire³⁰³.

Heine also pointed out that all characteristic features of a language, except vocabulary, can disappear as a result of intensive borrowing³⁰⁴. This process certainly affected Owambo languages, as witnessed even today by the continuous borrowing from European and Finno-Ugrian³⁰⁵ languages due to their interaction with these since the mid-19th century. Possible assimilation might have taken place between the emigrants and different communities which they encountered on their way. Vansina pointed out that language shifts were caused by social conditions, and cited Ehret who believed that the settlement pattern of the Bantu-speakers favoured the imposition of their language on dispersed populations around them³⁰⁶. Supporting this claim recent studies suggest that the Owambo have assimilated many Twa hunters (also known as the Vatwa)³⁰⁷. Traditions have also referred to intermarriages that have taken place between the Owambo, Nkumbi, Kwangari, Aakwankala, and probably involve people

³⁰⁰ Sandelowsky (1971), p. 4; Phillipson (1984), p. 276; Denbow (1986), p. 14; Vansina (1984), p. 138

³⁰¹ Phillipson (1984), p. 276

³⁰² Heine, B. (1973): "Zur genetischen Gliederung der Bantu-Sprachen", p. 304, in: *Afrika-Ubersee*, 56, pp. 164-185, cited in: Vansina, J. (1980): "Bantu in the Crystal Ball, II", in: *History in Africa*, 7.

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Especially from the Finnish language; this also applies to the fact that the Ndonga language, which is a dialect of the Owambo languages, was grammatically developed and written by Finnish missionaries, especially by T. E. Tirronen.

³⁰⁶ Vansina (1980), p. 302

³⁰⁷ Estermann (1976), p. 55; Clark, J. D. (1981) "Prehistory in Southern Africa", in: *General History of Africa. Methodology and African History*, Vol. I, edited by J. Ki-Zerbo, p. 529

from other communities, too³⁰⁸. Thus, the Owambo ethnic community did not at all remain homogeneous.

The best sources on the early history of the Owambo people are the oral traditions of different clans. However, not all the Owambo clans are depicted in recorded traditions regarding their origin, and we can only infer from the recorded clan traditions that some clans might have been founded locally or might have adopted totems of those who arrived earlier. Analyzing the data on those clans which appear in migration tales, the formation of others may be determined. For instance, according to some accounts, members of the Python clan (*Aakuusinda*) were the first to migrate from Ombwenge into Ondonga. After many years more clans arrived, also claiming to have come from Ombwenge - amongst them the Hyena clan, who took over the dominant position of the Python clan with the help of their superior rain-making skill³⁰⁹. The arrival of the Hyena clan in Ondonga changed both the political and social structure of communities which were settled there. Politically, the Python clan lost their control over other clans as the Hyena clan spread new ideas and institutions. Socially, the position of the Python clan changed drastically as they lost their distinctive identity. Although there is no evidence from traditions which indicates whether members of this clan dispersed afterwards in search of new areas of influence, the presence of the Python clan in other parts of Owamboland might be a result of this power conflict. What is clear from traditions is that the Python clan acquired a special position in Ondonga through becoming a clan from which most of the counsellors as well as royal wives and husbands are drawn³¹⁰.

The dispersion of clans took place from Oshamba; from there four clan leaders and their followers moved to the west and north, where they founded new kingdoms³¹¹. These were the beginnings of internal migration, a process which distributed clans widely all over the area.

The problem involved in studying the pre-colonial history of the Owambo people as regards their ethnic and linguistic origin, lies in the changes which occurred in the names of their original ethnic group. During the constant population movements

³⁰⁸ Amunyela, Amutshila, Mic. No. 7 a & b (ELC. 344); Kondombolo, p. 304 (FWC. 1); Amakutuwa, p. 125 (ibid. 1); Kandongo, pp. 131-132 (ibid. 1)

³⁰⁹ Rautanen's Diaries XXVIII:2, 11 July 1889, p. 568; Henok, Mic. No. 24 (ELC. 344). This clan is known by different names in some part of Owamboland: in Uukwanyama it is *Ovakwanyoka*, in most communities to the west it is either *Aakwamuhanga* or *Aakuusinda* (see Appendix IV).

³¹⁰ Nangolo, pp. 486-487 (FWC. 2); Uugwanga, pp. 397-398 (ibid. 3)

³¹¹ Selär (1932), p. 7; Pettinen (1926/7), pp. 62-68; Amutenya, pp. 31-32; Uugwanga, pp. 354-55 (FWC. 3)

some clans adopted a new ethnic identity, namely that of groups they came to settle with. What makes the study even more difficult is the misspelling of names in materials the author is compelled to use, written or recorded by early European travellers who did not have any linguistic knowledge of the people whose history they were recording³¹². Sandelowsky noted a similar problem with the change that occurred in the name of the Dama people, who are today called Damara, a name recorded by the early European travellers³¹³. This problem is not peculiar to Namibia: it is also encountered by researchers elsewhere in Africa, for example, by Miller (1976) in his attempt to reconstruct the ancient political titles of the Songo kingdom in Angola³¹⁴.

Another problem lies in the lack of linguistic studies - especially in the specialist branch of onomastics - beyond studies done under the general umbrella of western Bantu language classifications. There are, though, some detailed lexical data gathered at the end of the last century by Torrend, in which he compared basic phonology and grammar of all south-western Bantu languages³¹⁵. Torrend's data, however, need an interpretation based on modern methodologies, which can give us a more reliable picture of the linguistic relationship within the western Bantu-speaking group. The author is leaving this challenge of helping us out of this speculative situation to future linguists. Baucom (1974) concluded that Owambo dialects belonged to the Kunene-Kubango language group, or to Guthrie's Zone R³¹⁶. Pfouts (1983) arrived at a conclusion similar to Baucom's, but interestingly links the Kunene-Kubango group to the Luyana³¹⁷. Although Pfouts did not use the available work on the Luyana-Herero-Owambo languages, her conclusion had already been arrived at by Torrend (1891) and Jacotet (1895)³¹⁸. Nevertheless, these studies, along with archaeological findings, have helped us to comprehend better the cultural traits of these people.

Studies on the people of Okavango by Kampungu (1965), and recently by Gibson, et al. (1981) [with the latter using the data collected by Kampungu] indicate that traditions of people of the westernmost Okavango trace their ethnic and linguistic relationship back to the Nganda or Handa of the Nyaneka-Nkumbi ethnic group, and certain units of the Owambo group³¹⁹. Kampungu's study also showed that the Kwangari chieftainship traced its roots back to Mate, who was said to have married a

³¹² Uukule, pp. 424-425 (FWC. 2); Amakutuwa, p. 128 (ibid. 1)

³¹³ Sandelowsky (1971), p. 5

³¹⁴ Miller (1976), pp. 151-161

³¹⁵ Torrend, J. S. S. (1891): "A Comparative Study of the South-African Bantu Languages"

³¹⁶ Baucom, p. 46

³¹⁷ Pfouts, pp. 120-121

³¹⁸ Mainga, p. 14; Torrend, pp. 28 & 30-31

³¹⁹ Kampungu, pp. 240-243; McCulloch, p. 7; Childs (1970), p. 244; Gibson, et al., pp. 22-23; Oliver & Atmore, p. 164

Handa man³²⁰. Estermann (1979) also confirmed this connection by pointing out that traditions of the Tyilenge-Humbi (Quilenge in Portuguese) indicated that the first people to inhabit that area were the Ngambwe, a Nyaneka-related people. These split up at Handa, with some going to Kola and others to Mayulu³²¹, where they settled. Those who settled at Mayulu were said to have belonged to the Hyena clan (*Ovakwangumbe*)³²²; members of this clan are said to have been the first occupants of Quilenge³²³. As regards Mate's fate, Estermann held that Mate, the great elephant-hunter, was a Black Kwankala (probably a Twa), who served as the guide of the Kwanyama and related people during the process of their migration from Handa³²⁴.

The archaeological excavations at Kapako, east of Rundu, suggest Kwangari-Wambo-Mbundja ethnic and linguistic relationship. The Kapako site dates back to 850 ±50 A.D. Evidence of a more recent occupation was found at the Vungu Vungu site, which dates back to around 1650 ±45 A.D. Evidence from this site suggests that iron smelting at Dikundu may still have been practised during the early parts of this century. Charcoal samples from this site are dated at 120 ±50 years ago. The results of the excavation suggest that the present-day Bantu-speaking people of the Okavango territory, together with some Owambo-speaking groups, are probably descendants of

³²⁰ Kampungu, pp. 192, 241-44; Gibson, et al., pp. 38-39;

It is not clear whether the union of Mate and the Handa man have influenced the Kwangari traditions of origin or rather strengthened it. Because if Mate was herself a Handa, then why was it necessary to specify the origin of her husband? There seemed to be a dilemma here, either Mate became a Handa by virtue of marriage or they wanted to prove by revealing the identity of her husband that the whole group was of Handa origin. But Mate's clan affiliation strongly supports this place of origin.

³²¹ This place could be assumed to correspond to Makuzu (Kwangari), marked as Mucuio in Portuguese on a recent map, which both Kwangari traditions hold as the place where they settled and separated from the Owambo-related people after their migration from the Handa of Quipungo (Ehanda la Shimbungu) [(Gibson, et al., p. 38; Jantunen, p. 19; Henok, Mic. No. 24 (ELC. 344)]. It should also be noted here, following the tradition of naming amongst the Owambo people, that they might have renamed Maakuku after Makuzu to remind them about the ancient place they once occupied.

³²² Ongumbe means Hyena - this clan became the royal one amongst the Kwangari, the Mbundja and the Ndonga people (Gibson, et al., pp. 37-38; Jantunen, p. 19).

³²³ Estermann (1979), p. 28

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 29

the occupants of these early sites because they are the most southerly extension of agricultural Bantu-speaking communities in Namibia³²⁵.

Although recent archaeological studies suggest that the earlier occupants of these sites were indeed the Khoisan people, they also suggest that there had been a strong southward movement of the Bantu-speaking people at the beginning of the first millennium A.D.³²⁶ Denbow's findings on the "Western Bantu Cattle" suggest that the south-western Bantu groups acquired their cattle from the Khoisan-Bantu contacts on the banks of the Zambezi³²⁷. Archaeological excavations conducted by T. Huffman at an early iron-age village in southern Zambia also suggest the Khoisan-Bantu interaction north and west of the Zambezi³²⁸.

There are no archaeological excavations in Owamboland which I could use to support my hypothesis, but there is a clear correlation between archaeological findings excavated in what was held to be one of the Owambo first settlement areas³²⁹, and recorded oral traditions from the Lunda-Luba empire of the Congo³³⁰; from Luyana and Lozi people of Zambia³³¹; from the Imbangala and Ovimbundu people of Angola³³²; from the Kwangari people of Namibia³³³; and from the Owambo people themselves³³⁴. These suffice to support the validity of my enquiry on the ethnic and linguistic relations between these people.

The royal genealogy of the Wambu kingdom between the years 1760-70, reconstructed by Childs (1949), reveals an interesting connection in listing Kapoko

³²⁵ Sandelowsky (1974), p. 364

³²⁶ Curtin, et al., pp. 27-30; Denbow, pp. 8-11; Pfouts, pp. 7-10; Phillipson, D. W. (1977): "The Later Prehistory of Eastern and Southern Africa", p. 146

³²⁷ Denbow, pp. 8-9

³²⁸ Ibid., p. 8

³²⁹ Phillipson (1977); Clark, J. D. (1981): "Prehistory in Southern Africa", in: "General History of Africa. Methodology and African History", Vol. I, edited by J. Ki-Zerbo; Clark, J. D. & Brandt, Steven A. [editors] (1984) "From Hunters to Farmers: Causes and Consequences of Food Production in Africa"; Denbow (1986)

³³⁰ Reefe (1977a), pp. 183-205; Vansina (1984), pp. 129-145; Flight, Colin (1988): "The Bantu Expansion and the SOAS Network", in: HA, Vol. 15, pp. 261-301

³³¹ Mainga (1973); and Sumbwa (1979)

³³² McCulloch (1952); Birmingham (1965); Vansina (1965); and Miller (1976)

³³³ Kampungu (1965); Gibson, et al. (1981); and Jantunen [editor] (1963)

³³⁴ As found in the collections of: Liljeblad, Emil (1932): "Folklore of the Owambo Tribe in Africa" (ELC. 344); Williams, Frieda-Nela (1990): "Owambo Oral Traditions" (FWC. 1-3)

Kanene as its tenth ruler³³⁵. Before drawing a conclusion that Mushindi Kanene may be related to Kapoko, let us look at Miller's study on the Imbangala kingdoms. Miller (1976) traced the Mushinda political title to the Chokwe kingdom of Songo³³⁶. Although political titles of this type have put the author in a dilemma, two things are clear and support her hypothesis which links Mushindi Kanene to Ovimbundu. First, although Songo is an old Chokwe kingdom, both Wambu and Songo had suffered directly from the Imbangala invasion, through which they acquired Lunda political titles. Both kingdoms fell under the strong influence of the Imbangala power structure³³⁷. Second, the spreading of Lunda political titles was not restricted to the areas conquered by the Kinguri-related people: they were diffused either through new political institutions founded in the region after the Imbangala expansion, or through adoption by neighbouring kingdoms.

Thus, the definite linking of Mushindi Kanene with either Wambu or Songo kingdoms would be premature if based on the data available now. But at the same time, the author cannot exclude the possibility of such a connection, because the foundation of the Kwanyama political institutions, in the wider perspectives of the political and ethnic formations in the region, emerges as strongly linked with the general balance of power in central and south-western Africa.

This is not only suggested by the ethnic and linguistic relationship of the Kwangari-Handa-Wambo people, but indeed by the migration routes of some Owambo-speaking groups. Most of the accounts so far on Owambo migration tell us that the Andonga-led group came from Ombwenge and that they belonged to the Hyena clan³³⁸. The Kwangari traditions, on the other hand, tell us that both the Kwangari and Mbundja kings belonged to the Hyena clan (*Vakwasipika*) who migrated to Makuzu from Handa³³⁹. The Kambungu-led Cattle clan came from the direction of Humbe³⁴⁰, with the Sitenu-led Fish Eagle clan coming from the sites of Evale³⁴¹. And the Kanene-led Com clan came from the lower Okavango³⁴².

³³⁵ Childs (1970), p. 244

³³⁶ Miller (1976), p. 153

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 112-115

³³⁸ Rautanen's Diaries, 11 July 1889, p. 568; Pettinen (1926/7), pp. 60-62; Amweelo, Mic. No. 6 (ELC. 344)

³³⁹ Kampungu, p. 191; Jantunen, Vol. I, p. 19; Gibson, et al., pp. 37-38 & 83

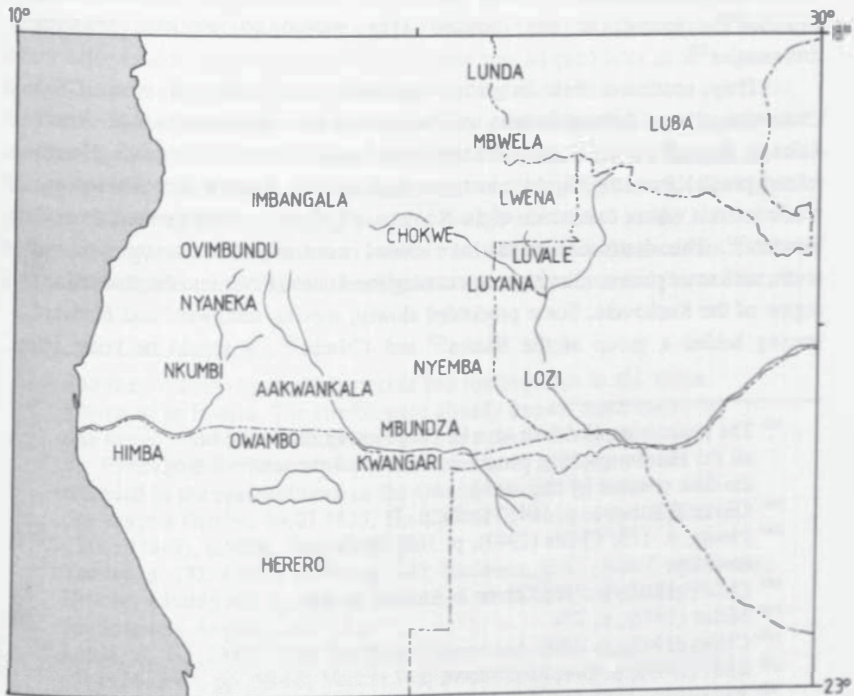
³⁴⁰ Estermann (1976), p. 55

³⁴¹ Sckär (1932), p. 7; Kafita, Mic. No. 43 (ELC. 344); Vedder, p. 155

³⁴² Sckär (1932), p. 5; Kafita, Mic. No. 43 (ELC. 344)

The reason why the origins of the founders of other Owambo kingdoms are not mentioned here, is because their traditions hold that they had come from Ondonga when they went to settle in the areas they occupy today.

This evidence can mean at least three things: first, that the Kwangari, the Mbundja and the Ndonga-related people were the early occupants of Ombwenge, who probably came to settle at an old settlement site of the Khoisan and related people. Second, that the Makuzu occupants had an established kingdom - with the Hyena clan as their rulers - which disintegrated following the intensive war with their neighbours, the Nyemba³⁴³. This was most probably supported by more powerful immigrants from the expanding Lunda rulers or the Mbwela and Lwena, who were believed to have been the founders of the Lozi dynasty³⁴⁴. Third, that amidst the political and cultural turmoil which affected the region after the collapse of the Luba-Lunda polities and the Chokwe expansion, most of the already established political institutions accepted change, which might have culminated in a kind of an alliance. This might also have been accelerated by the abandoning of their original cultural identity, and acceptance of the overlordship of the expanding powerful clans.



Map 5: Owambo Linguistic and Ethnic Related People

³⁴³ Kampungu, pp. 193 & 197; Rautanen's Diaries, 11 July, 1889

³⁴⁴ Mainga, p. 21

4.2. The Herero-speaking people

The origin of the Herero³⁴⁵-speaking people - like that of the Owambo - has been a controversial question which still remains unsolved. Available sources suggest that these people belong to the south-western Bantu Group³⁴⁶. Their migration route, according to traditions, could be traced along with those of Ovimbundu-related people and the Owambo³⁴⁷. This movement brought the Herero-speaking people to the area of Wambu, where they settled together with other related peoples like the Nganda and the Ndombe³⁴⁸. With the expansion of the Imbangala into Wambu they moved westward to the land of Ciyaka, in the region of Mossamedes; the kingdom of Ciyaka had not yet been founded. Two factors contributed to this migration: first, the Herero and other related people did not want to accept the Imbangala people's *Kilombo*, which was a military initiation in which lineage ties were utterly renounced, and children - whether born or adopted - were brought up collectively in a quasi-military formation³⁴⁹. Second, it was because they wanted to continue practising circumcision³⁵⁰.

They continued their migration westward and southward when Cilulu Chahamba, also an Imbangala who was believed to be a son or cousin of Wambu Kalunga, founded the Ciyaka kingdom and drove the Ndombe and the Nganda (Herero-related people) from the Ciyaka country around 1600³⁵¹. Andrew Battell's accounts confirmed this violent destruction of the Ndombe and Nganda people by the Imbangala invaders³⁵². This destruction might have caused more migrations to the west and south, with some phases of immigrants crossing the Kunene River into the mountainous region of the Kaokoveld. Some proceeded slowly, moving southward and eastward, leaving behind a group of the Himba³⁵³ and Chimba³⁵⁴. It should be taken into

³⁴⁵ The name is applied here as a language group consisting of all the Herero-speaking people who occupied the region during the time covered by this study.

³⁴⁶ Oliver & Atmore, p. 164; Pfouts, p. 7

³⁴⁷ Pfouts, p. 123; Childs (1949), p. 169; McCulloch, p. 6; see Maps 3 & 4

³⁴⁸ Childs (1949), p. 180; Oliver & Atmore, p. 171

³⁴⁹ Miller (1972), p. 234

³⁵⁰ Childs (1949), p. 180

³⁵¹ Ibid. (1949), p. 244; McCulloch, p. 7

³⁵² Ravenstein, E.G. [editor] (1901): "The Strange Adventures of Andrew Battell of Leigh, in Angola...", p. 85; Estermann (1979), p. 2; Oliver & Atmore, p. 160

³⁵³ The claim made by Malan (1973, p. 83) that the name Himba was given to these people recently by the Ngambwe, a Nkumbi-related people of southern Angola, after the constant cattle raids

consideration, as stated above, that population movements into this region might have taken place earlier than what is being estimated now. But later movements, which continued as a result of pressure, represented major migrations, which will be covered by this study. A conclusion can be drawn that south-western Angola served as the nucleus home of the Herero, where Herero-related groups like Zimba, Tjimba, Vakwandu, Vamunda, Tjivikwa, Hakavona, Kuvale, Kwanyoka, Ngambwe, Nkumbi and Cilenge still live and maintain a special relationship with them³⁵⁵.

The lands which the Herero-speaking people came to occupy became their communal property. Their economic life became closely linked to pastoralism, with cattle as their main property: a man's status and position in the community was determined by the number of head he possessed. Their lifestyle made them a pastoral people.

The social organization of the Herero-speaking people differs from that of the Owambo, because of their double clan descent system, which runs through both matrilineal (*ejanda*, plural *omaanda*) and patrilineal (*oruzo*, plural *oruzo*) lines³⁵⁶. The author believes that the patrilineal line of descent was adopted later as an important lineage, because of its affiliation to cattle-rearing. As Oliver and Atmore also noted, the Herero speakers were the only Bantu-speaking group who abandoned agriculture and became a nomadic people, hence completing this transition³⁵⁷. The patrilineal lineage became restricted to the care of sacred cattle, religion, and ideological practices. The chief-priest presiding over this lineage also serves as the head of the homestead (*onganda*), whose task is to maintain the link between the ancestors and the living. The religious unit in the homestead is centred around the sacred fire and sacred

into their country by the Swartboois and the Topnaars in the 1870s, proved to be invalid. The Himba were already known much earlier by this name, which the Owambo use until this day to designate both the Himba and the Herero people indiscriminately. This name was recorded in the oral traditions of the Owambo people by 1889.

(Rautanen's Diaries, 10.01.1889, Hp XXVIII:2; Vedder, pp. 156-157)

³⁵⁴ Childs (1949), p. 180; Bruwer, p. 25

³⁵⁵ Vedder, p. 133; Childs (1949), p. 180; Medeiros, C.L. (1981): "Vakwandu History, Kinship and System of Production of an Herero People of Southwestern Angola", pp. 1-13

³⁵⁶ Luttig, H. G. (1906): "The Religious System and Social Organization of the Herero", pp. 58-68; Vedder, pp. 49-50; Bruwer, p. 25; Werner, Wolfgang (1980): "An Exploratory Investigation into the Mode of Production of the Herero in the Pre-Colonial Namibia to ca. 1870", p. 27; Estermann, C. (1981): "The Ethnography of Southwestern Angola. Vol. III: The Herero People", edited by Gordon D. Gibson, p. 82

³⁵⁷ Oliver & Atmore, p. 164; Sckär (1932), p. 7

cattle³⁵⁸. The drawing place (*okuruo*) serves as the homestead's religious centre, where the sacred fire is kindled and rituals like tooth-filing and mutilation, as sacrifices to ancestors, are performed³⁵⁹. It is also where the chief-priest meets with his counsellors³⁶⁰. This corresponds to the Owambo drawing place, a place found in every homestead where the family religious functions are performed.

In Owamboland, where the political system is centralized, the king appoints a chief-priest who presides over all religious functions of the whole community. But amongst the Herero-speaking people, the chief-priest presides over all religious functions of the patri-clans, of which he is the head. He is also responsible for the distribution of inheritance of sacred property amongst members of his patri-clan³⁶¹. The political power amongst these people rests within the descent group³⁶², whose chief-priest represents *Mukulu* - the ancestor. The matrilineal line of descent is mainly associated with inheritance of profane and other property³⁶³.

Traditions of both the Herero and the Owambo hold that these two communities are descendants of a common ancestor (see pp. 81-82). Like the Owambo, the Herero people worship ancestral spirits - [*aathithi* (Wambo) or *musisi* (Herero)] - and all associate themselves with Ndjambi-Karunga, the Supreme Being³⁶⁴. Most of the Owambo and Herero-speakers up till today hold that Maakuku or the Omumborombonga (Leadwood) tree marks the place [they consider as similar to that] where their ancestors parted. This symbolic place ties these people together culturally. The original place is said to be situated along the Okavango River banks of modern Angola³⁶⁵ (see also p. 74).

Besides their cultural relations, the Owambo and Herero-speaking people maintained a special relationship through trade. There were large trading caravans between Ondonga and their southern neighbours the Herero, through which the latter bartered ostrich egg-shells, sheep, and cattle in exchange for ochre powder, iron beads, copper anklets, and salt³⁶⁶.

³⁵⁸ Luttig, p. 63; Malan, J. S. (1980): "Peoples of SWA/Namibia", p. 38; Werner, pp. 27-28

³⁵⁹ Estermann (1979), pp. 28 & 79; Luttig, pp. 79-80

³⁶⁰ Luttig, pp. 103-105

³⁶¹ Bruwer, p. 25; Werner, p. 30

³⁶² Luttig, p. 26; Malan (1980), p. 31

³⁶³ Luttig, pp. 64-65; Estermann (1981), p. 82; Werner, p. 28

³⁶⁴ Luttig, pp. 7-15

³⁶⁵ Andersson (1987), p. 22; Rautanen's Diaries, 2.1.1891, p. 570; Vedder, pp. 131-132; Henok, Mic. No. 24 (ELC. 344); Gibson, et al., pp. 38-39

³⁶⁶ Peltinen (1890-1895): "Letters from Africa", 25.08.1890; Andersson (1968), pp. 199-200

The history of the Herero-speaking people constitutes an important element which is relevant to an understanding of Owambo people. This is not only because of their neighbourhood and trade relations, but also due to the fact that oral traditions trace their descent back to a single ancestor.

4.3. The People of Okavango

The history of the Kavango peoples is rather relevant to that of the Owambo people - not only because Ombwenge served as a nucleus for the north-eastern phases of immigrants but also because of the claim made by both the Kwangari-Mbundja and Ndonga traditions that these peoples share a common royal clan, which traces its descent back to a single ancestress. Their royal clan, the Hyena clan [*Aakwarekamba* (Ndonga) or *Ovakwasipika* (Kwangari-Mbundja)], ruled both groups while at Makuzu³⁶⁷.

Today, Okavango is inhabited by five communities: Kwangari, Mbundja, Mbukushu, Diriko, and Sambyu³⁶⁸. Migration tales of the Mbukushu, Diriko, and Sambyu agree in one way or another that their nucleus home lies in the region of Mash'i or the Kwandu River, a western tributary of the Zambezi³⁶⁹; traditions of the Kwangari and Mbundja hold that they originated from the Handa country, now in modern Angola³⁷⁰. In their legends, hunters are portrayed as leaders of their expeditionary groups, which consisted of clans as their migration units (see Appendix IV on clans and their totems).

Cultural similarities between the Owambo and the people of Okavango are visible in the structural organization of their communities, especially in the principles of matrilineal social and political organization based on descent, succession and inheritance³⁷¹. The royal succession of the Sambyu and of the Diriko follows the matrilineal line of succession through the Hunger and Toad clans (*Wabwankora*); and that of the Mbukushu through the Lion clan (*Wakwonyime*)³⁷². Like most Bantu-speakers the people of Okavango share a common belief based on the worshipping of

³⁶⁷ Sckär (1932), p. 7; Henok, Mic. No. 24 (ELC. 344); Jantunen (ed.), p. 19; Estermann (1979), p. 109; Gibson, et al., pp. 37-38

³⁶⁸ Bruwer, p. 25; Gibson, et al., p. 22

³⁶⁹ Bruwer, p. 25; Gibson, et al., p. 22

³⁷⁰ Kampungu, pp. 190-210; Gibson, et al., p. 38; see Map 3

³⁷¹ Kampungu, pp. 242-245, 417-424; Gibson, et al., pp. 61-63, 92, 128-130, 190-192, 249-251; Tlou, Thomas (1985): "A History of Ngamiland - 1750 to 1906", p. 16

³⁷² Kampungu, p. 466; for clans see Appendix IV

ancestors, with Nyambi-Karunga (in Kavango languages) as the Supreme Being³⁷³. Moreover, all their kingdoms are kindled with a sacred fire³⁷⁴.

Like the Owambo people the people of Okavango belong to the south-western Bantu language group, and are linguistically and ethnically related - except for the Mbukushu language, which is slightly different because of its isolation from other groups and its close link with the Tawana languages after 1750³⁷⁵. They share a common tradition of initiation rites for their adolescents with the Owambo [organized as an important transitional stage into adulthood]: teeth of both girls and boys are incised to form a V-shape³⁷⁶, and their foreheads are tattooed. There are, however, differences in the performance of these latter practices, and they are absent in some Owambo communities. Tooth mutilation is generally practised except in Uukwanyama, and the Kwambi, Mbalantu, and to a certain extent the Ndonga and Ngandjera, practise scarification around the girls' cheeks. Ear-piercing is also a common practice amongst all groups.

Land is communal property in Okavango. Like the Owambo, peoples of the Okavango practise seed agriculture, with millet and sorghum as their main crops. In addition, they cultivate groundnuts, pumpkins, beans, gourds, watermelons, and tobacco³⁷⁷. Unlike the Owambo, however, the people of Okavango do not attach the same value to pastoralism as to agriculture. Hence, pastoralism is regarded as a secondary economic activity. Their lifestyle is somewhat affected by their settlement patterns: living along the Okavango River provides them with a large supply of fish³⁷⁸; hence fishing has become a regular practice, making their economic structure slightly different from that of the Owambo people, because in Owamboland fishing is practised during the flood years only.

Andersson, one of the first European travellers in the area, wrote about the Kwangari people (by then commonly known as the Ovambwenge) after his visit in 1859. Andersson learnt from the Owambo about their eastern neighbours, the "Ovambwenge"³⁷⁹ and when he arrived in Okavango, he encountered them [Ovakwangari people]. He described them as a people who had an identical language

³⁷³ Kampungu, p. 413; Gibson, et al., pp. 98, 147, 204 & 263; Tlou, p. 20; The Sambyu people refer to their Supreme Being as Nyambi, but have of late adopted the Owambo name of Kalunga, used for Christian religious purposes as a substitute for God. But the Mbukushu mainly refer to their Supreme Being as Nyambi.

³⁷⁴ Gibson et al., p. 72

³⁷⁵ Tlou, p. 11

³⁷⁶ Gibson et al., p. 226

³⁷⁷ Malan (1980), p. 99; Gibson et al., pp. 44, 101-103, 217

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

³⁷⁹ Andersson (1968), p. 141

to that of the Owambo and a lifestyle similar to theirs; he also noted their bodies were similarly smeared with ochre and adorned with iron beads and ornaments³⁸⁰. Andersson believed that the ruling chief Chikongo (right spelling Sikongo) was a brother of the Ndonga king. In comparing the two kingdoms, Andersson noted that leadership among the Kwangari was different from that of the Owambo, and believed that in the Kwangari kingdom every man was a captain of his own homestead, and the master of his property³⁸¹. Andersson's observations on the period of 'liberalism' in the Kwangari kingdom were complemented by traditions collected by Kampungu, stating that the Kwangari people enjoyed a period of great prosperity and peace during Sikongo's rule³⁸².

There are contradictory remarks by Andersson and Kampungu as to whether Sikongo belonged to the royal clan of the Ndonga or of the Kwangari. Kampungu's oral data (1965) suggest that a war was waged by the Kwanyama King Haimbili against the Kwangari people. Haimbili attacked their kingdom, by then under the rule of Siremo. Haimbili's warriors captured Sikongo and Mipasi, at that time young boys who belonged to the Kwangari royal clan. At the same time, they also took into captivity two princesses, Nasira and Mpande³⁸³. Hence traditions confirmed that Sikongo was indeed of Kwangari origin and thus not the brother of the Ndonga king, and that he came back to his native land to ascend the throne when there was no heir³⁸⁴.

During Andersson's visit the Kwangari people were already caught up in slave and iron trade with the Mambari³⁸⁵ traders from the port of Benguela, in exchange for commodities like beads, guns, ammunition, and strong spirits, which were in great demand³⁸⁶. By this time, the Ovakwangari were involved in advanced iron- and wood-working. Andersson also noticed that most of the ornaments, household utensils, farming implements, arms, etc. were both for local use and export. Copper and iron were said to have been obtained locally from north of the river³⁸⁷.

The people of Okavango, especially the Kwangari, maintained a special relationship with the Owambo through trade and wars. Through trade, they obtained

³⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 185-186

³⁸¹ Ibid., p. 187

³⁸² Kampungu, pp. 338-339

³⁸³ Kampungu, pp. 319-20

³⁸⁴ Lehto (Laurmaa) Collection (1924-34), HP XV:1, p. 514;

Kampungu, pp. 320-39

³⁸⁵ This name was used to refer to the Ovimbundu, who were also trading under other names, like: Bailundu, Eihean, or Mbundu [(Andersson (1968), pp. 196-197; McCulloch, p. 8)].

³⁸⁶ Andersson (1968), pp. 196-197

³⁸⁷ Ibid., pp. 199-200

copper from the Ndonga people and iron from Uukwanyama. The latter also constantly attacked the Kwangari kingdom, capturing prisoners and booty.

4.4. The Nyaneka-Nkumbi People

Culturally speaking this group belongs to the Ovimbundu people³⁸⁸. The criterion used here to separate it from the main group is the fact that the Nyaneka-Nkumbi out of all the ten or more Ovimbundu communities, are closely related ethnically, linguistically and culturally to their southern neighbours - the Owambo.

In contrast to the history of the Okavango and Herero-speaking people, the history of Ovimbundu in general and that of the Nyaneka-Nkumbi in particular could be regarded as forming the backbone of the history of the Owambo people for the following reasons. First, Angola served as the transitional settlement place of the south-western Bantu-speaking peoples, where - after their migration from what are now Zaire and Zambia - they founded kingdoms like that of the Handa of Shimbungu, today known as Handa of Quipungu. This was ruled by the Hyena clan (*Ovakwangumbe*). After the disintegration of the kingdom, the place served as a nucleus for the north-western immigrants into the Kavango region. Some of these people reached Owamboland via Makuzu, and some directly from the direction of Humbe. Second, Angola, through its southernmost harbour of Mossamedes, served as a reservoir of the slave trade - a fact that contributed to major changes by accelerating the expansion of both the Portuguese pressure and the Imbangala, which in turn altered the balance of power in the region. Third, possibly after the Imbangala expansion, the Nyaneka-Nkumbi had a direct influence on the spreading of new political ideas amongst most Owambo kingdoms: progenitors of the Kwambi, Mbalantu, and Ngandjera kingdoms are said to have been of Nkumbi origin³⁸⁹. Fourth, the early recordings of the Nyaneka-Nkumbi people's history since the 15th century by the Portuguese travellers provide a favourable data base for this study.

The Nyaneka-Nkumbi community is composed of seven sub-communities. Although Estermann classified ten communities, three of them - the Nkwankwa, the

³⁸⁸ McCulloch, pp. 6-7; Estermann (1979), pp. 6-7

³⁸⁹ Laurmaa's Coll. (1924-34), HP XV:1, p. 515; Angula, p. 36; Kondombolo, pp. 305-306 (FWC. 2); Shikongo, p. 327 (ibid.); Iiyego, Mic. No. 35 (ELC. 344); Iitenge, Mic. No. 36 (ibid.); Nameya, Mic. No. 56 (ibid.)

Hinga and the Ndongona - belong to the Owambo group³⁹⁰. These communities inhabit areas extending from south-east of Cahama along the Caculuar River, to its confluence with the Cunene (Kunene) River north of Quiteve (Ositeve); southward beyond Capelongo in the region of Calongo (Okalongo); and to the east towards the Cubango (Okavango)³⁹¹. The Nyaneka community was formerly divided into two big kingdoms, those of Huila (Mwila) and of Gambo (Gambwe), and the name Nyaneka was applied to both kingdoms. The Nkumbi kingdoms were those of the Kamba, Tjiteve (Quiteve or Ositeve), and Mulondo³⁹². According to Estermann, the ruling families amongst the Ovimbundu and Nyaneka-Nkumbi people stem from the Imbangala³⁹³.

The Nyaneka-Nkumbi, like the Owambo and the Kavango peoples, are a matrilineal people, whose royal succession runs through this line. Estermann observed that matrilineity is more valued amongst the Nyaneka-Nkumbi group than among the Owambo³⁹⁴. Their clan organization [*omaanda* (plural) and *ejanda* (singular)] is symbolized by an animal or plant totem like that of the Owambo. Although there are similarities between clans of the two groups, the Nyaneka-Nkumbi clans are much more numerous than those of the Owambo; Estermann counted as many as forty clans amongst this group³⁹⁵. However, in both the Nyaneka-Nkumbi and the Owambo communities, there exist laudatory songs and poems. According to Estermann the Nyaneka-Nkumbi poems consist of an enumeration of events which took place during the migration of various clans - and thus serve as a major source of history, due to their chronological and onomastic details. He held that those of the Owambo, on the other hand, were clothed with metaphor and mystery³⁹⁶.

As with the Owambo, the religious and political power of the community lies in the hands of the king who presides over religious rites and serves as the link between the deceased ancestors and the living³⁹⁷. Most ceremonial rites are organized at the royal capital (*ombala*, a word also used by the Kwanyama people in the same sense). What has seemed to be different is the absence of the sacred fire, which is so

³⁹⁰ Estermann (1979), p. 7; Kondombolo, p. 307 (FWC.2); Shikongo, p. 327 (ibid.)

³⁹¹ Estermann (1979), p. 7; different spellings of name places emerged when the original place names acquired a Portuguese language form of spelling.

³⁹² Ibid.

³⁹³ Ibid., p. 15

³⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 113

³⁹⁵ Ibid., pp. 121-122; see Appendix IV

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ Clarence-Smith, W. G. (1976): "Capitalist Penetration Among the Nyaneka of Southern Angola 1840-1918", p. 2; Estermann (1979), p. 141; Himanen, pp. 5-9

central to Owambo kingdoms in particular and to those of the Bantu-speaking people in general. But it is possible that Estermann, McCulloch and Childs did not grasp its importance, because according to the Mbalantu people's traditions, their sacred fire was collected every year from Onkumbi³⁹⁸. Royal burial practices were similar to those of the Owambo. After the death of the king, his corpse was wrapped in the skin of a freshly slaughtered black cow, and was accompanied by a female slave³⁹⁹, who was alive and offered to continue serving the king in his tomb with water and with fire to light his pipe. According to Estermann this custom lasted longer amongst the Kwanyama people than amongst other groups⁴⁰⁰.

Economic patterns are similar in the two groups, because the Nyaneka-Nkumbi people share a similar ecological distribution of the region with the Owambo. The Nyaneka-Nkumbi, like the Owambo, have a developed agricultural calendar which helps in regulating their agriculture and pastoral activities⁴⁰¹. Animal husbandry is dominated by cattle and goats, with a few sheep; there are also sacred cattle amongst their herds⁴⁰². Their cattle are sent to cattle-posts (*eehambo*) during the dry season; and are eulogized with pastoral songs (*oongowela*) similar to those of the Owambo⁴⁰³. Regarding agriculture, maize (*epungu*) - which is grown to a lesser extent by the Owambo - forms the principal crop amongst the Nyaneka-Nkumbi, who also grow sorghum, millet, vegetables like cow beans and sweet potatoes, pumpkins and peanuts⁴⁰⁴. This can probably be explained by the arrival of the Portuguese in Angola; they perhaps introduced maize seeds from their colonies in South America. Agriculture, like cattle-rearing, is associated with some rituals performed at sowing and harvesting times. A fertility rite is practised during sowing to ensure a good harvest, while the harvesting rite is associated with non-bloody sacrifice (*esaagelo*) aimed at sharing the new harvest with the deceased ancestors⁴⁰⁵.

The Nyaneka-Nkumbi people have a great talent for art; different types of their artifacts are also found in Owambo art, diffused through trade and close cultural contacts between these peoples. Scarification and tooth mutilation are practised here

³⁹⁸ Alweendo, Mic. No. 3 (ELC. 344); Himanen, pp. 3-4

³⁹⁹ The slave was a war captive who was taken over by the king and integrated into the royal clan. But members of the commoner clan bearing the same name as that of the royal clan performed the same service [Shikongo, pp. 324-325 (FWC. 2); Kandongo, p. 134 (ibid. 1)].

⁴⁰⁰ Estermann (1979), p. 141

⁴⁰¹ Carvalho & da Silva, p. 185

⁴⁰² Ibid., p. 155

⁴⁰³ Ibid., pp. 152-153

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 190

⁴⁰⁵ Estermann (1979), p. 152; Uugwanga, p. 393 (FWC. 3)

more intensely than amongst the Owambo. Tooth mutilation is more common amongst the Kwanyama, and to a greater degree amongst the Herero peoples, while scarification is dominant in Uukwambi, Ongandjera, and to a certain extent in other Owambo communities. Tattooing is not very common, except in case of sickness - but never to the extent it is practised amongst the Nyaneka-Nkumbi group.

4.5. Aakwankala - The Ancient Occupants

Aakwankala are the oldest occupants not only of the region which covers Owamboland, but also of most parts of Southern Africa. According to the Owambo myth of creation, when Bantu-speakers arrived in areas they came to occupy, Aakwankala were already there⁴⁰⁶. A similar myth exists also in Herero mythology, complementing that of the Owambo⁴⁰⁷.

The author feels justified in using the name Aakwankala which the Owambo have given to the ancient occupants of the region they came to settle in. The etymology of this name derives from the basic form *onkala*, which means 'a dwarf mongoose'. This, the author believes (as Estermann observed among the people of southern Angola), was an indication of a totemic symbol with which the immigrants wanted to identify them. The clan name - Ekwankala - also exists among the Ndonga, Mbalantu and Kwaluudhi peoples, with *onkala* as its totemic symbol⁴⁰⁸. The name of the clan has been misinterpreted by many writers, who did not understand its origin. Some, like Lebzelter, Loeb, and Schinz, thought that this clan was mainly for poor people because it was dominated by blacksmiths - a profession less valued amongst most Owambo, despite the enormous skills its craftsmen exhibit⁴⁰⁹. Another meaning is based on a literal explanation which derives from the basic form *onkalo* (to reside), hence "those who have been residing here". Of course, the author does not deny the subsequent misuse of the name, which in turn connotes it with an insinuating tendency. This name became generally applicable to identify such behaviour as that of the Kwankala people; for example, if an Owambo does not build himself a proper homestead, then he is mocked by saying that he has built a homestead like the Kwankala hut (*etsali*).

Another example is associated with one's character regarding saving: if one is a great spender or a squanderer, one is referred to as a Kwankala, because when Aakwankala slaughter an animal or gather food, they consume everything the same day

⁴⁰⁶ Amweelo, Mic. No. 6 (ELC. 344); Nameya, Mic. No. 56 (ibid.); Uugwanga, pp. 353-354 (FWC. 3)

⁴⁰⁷ Vedder, p. 131

⁴⁰⁸ Amweelo, Mic. No. 6 (ELC. 344); Himanen, p. 2

⁴⁰⁹ Lebzelter, p. 195; Loeb, pp. 9 & 123; Schinz, p. 321

and do not save it for the next day; this could have been due to the scarcity of wild animals or to poor methods of preservation. This kind of 'labelling' attitude is generally found among most Bantu-speaking groups; it occurs very much with Europeans, too, among whom stereotypes are dominant, like: all Africans are lazy, the English are hypocrites, Germans are stubborn, Finns are shy, Swedes have no sense of humour, etc. This results from their lack of understanding of other peoples' cultures. The examples given above can be considered as stereotypes amongst the Owambo, which have become accepted and are used as such. These factors considered, the author intends to use the name in this study with all the sincerity it deserves, in its original sense. The European-given name - the Bushmen - will not be used in this study, unless quotations are made from works where it is used.

The origin of Aakwankala is not the main issue of this study. However, the fact that they are the oldest inhabitants of the region suffices to establish relevant evidence as to how the migrating Bantu-speakers came to occupy the areas in which they are settled today. Thus Aakwankala people's myths and legends of origin will provide an interesting basis for comparison on how their mythology fits in with that of the Bantu-speakers. It is a pity that nothing much of this group has been preserved in the way of oral tradition; Estermann expressed deep concern, but he himself was not able to do much about it - all in all, he collected only two short stories⁴¹⁰. Nevertheless, Bruwer's story is of much interest. According to their myth of genesis, which seems to be similar to that of the Owambo (see pp. 81-82), Aakwankala believe themselves to be descendants of ancestors who came out of a water-lily leaf growing in a big vlei⁴¹¹. These ancestors, a man and a woman, thus became the heads of Aakwankala family and the founders of their community⁴¹². Aakwankala, unlike other neighbours of the Owambo, belong to a different language group - the Khoisan.

The social organization of Aakwankala is based on the family as their basic unit. They have no centralized authority. The head of the family is in most cases the husband, whose role is to look after the sacred fire, which ensures good fortune in hunting and gathering. He also controls water-holes and hunting grounds, and determines the position where huts are to be pitched⁴¹³. This responsibility is inherited from father to eldest son, which means that their leadership goes through the paternal line of descent.

Aakwankala possess ritual practices similar to those of their Bantu-speaking neighbours. The most important of them is the initiation rite. Boys are initiated as

⁴¹⁰ Estermann (1976), pp. 14-15

⁴¹¹ Bruwer, p. 14

⁴¹² Ibid.

⁴¹³ Vedder, pp. 81-82; Möller, P. (1974): "Journey through Angola, Ovampoland and Damaraland", pp. 148-149

hunters and girls as gatherers. Vedder elaborated quite extensively on the boys' initiation rite. The following is a quotation from his work:

"A hut without a roof is erected under a tree a distance from their settlement. A group of initiates arrives here under the guidance of an old man. The festival begins on the day when the first quarter of a new moon becomes visible, and it can last until the end of the month. Women provide food, but no female is allowed in the vicinity of this place. It is generally held at the end of the rainy season, for it is then that the earth and the hunting grounds are more productive. First, initiates' bodies are smeared with black oil*. Second, initiates are obliged to smoke wild hemp out of stone pipes, which has an intoxicating effect on them. Third, a dance is staged where initiates have to imitate in their walk and behaviour all kinds of animals, which they may one day hunt. This dance is the Bushman's way of worshipping God (*//Gaua*). Finally, circumcision is carried out by an act of incision in the penis with a stone knife; this cut is then rubbed in with a certain powder mixture⁴¹⁴."

After the ceremony, the initiates are given new property as a sign of manhood: an apron, a bow, and arrows. Old property is burnt. The girls' initiation is almost entirely carried out by their mothers, who confine their daughters after first menstruation. During this initiation period, some dietary prohibitions are observed. Girls are taught by old women how to treat their husbands, be faithful to them, and gather wild food for them. After three months of training, the mother will erect a hut for her daughter as a sign of maturity⁴¹⁵. Every man has one wife, and polygyny is not known amongst these people⁴¹⁶.

According to Vedder, Aakwankala worship *//Gaua*. However, several other forms of worship do exist, in the form of an ancestor cult and a lunar cult. Estermann pointed out that their ancestor cult was borrowed from their Bantu neighbours, because according to their own traditions there is no link of this kind between them and their ancestors⁴¹⁷. Unlike the sacred fire of the Bantu-speakers, which serves the purpose of maintaining the link between the living and the dead, that of Aakwankala is for bringing good luck in hunting and gathering and for the health of the family, and is attributed more to *//Gaua*. Their monotheism is related to the existence of the

⁴¹⁴ Vedder, pp. 84-85

* Obtained from seeds of maketti, the fruit of *omunkete* - *Ricinodendron rautanenii*.

⁴¹⁵ Vedder, p. 86; Estermann (1976), p. 7

⁴¹⁶ Angula, p. 7; Möller, p. 152; Estermann (1976), pp. 8-9

⁴¹⁷ Estermann (1976), p. 11

supernatural being //Gaua, an equivalent to Kalunga in the traditional religion of the Owambo. He determines death and provides what they hunt and gather. According to their tradition, in the lunar cult, it is the object of the moon to keep death away from humanity⁴¹⁸.

The similarities between the Owambo and Aakwankala cultures should be seen as having come about by means of diffusion from either of the two groups. It is clear that the Aakwankala language, customs and culture differ a great deal from those of the Owambo. Nevertheless, the impact of the Bantu-speaking people on Aakwankala culture had significant repercussions. The Bantu speakers not only introduced new iron tools, which replaced stone and bone tools, but also turned Aakwankala into their trading partners. In this barter trade, the exchange consisted mainly of Aakwankala providing skins to the Owambo while receiving beans in return⁴¹⁹. This affected the lifestyle of Aakwankala more than many might have thought, because it changed the balance of their diet, which in turn raised a great demand for new trade to obtain the desired commodities.

There are some points that need to be considered in conclusion, to examine whether the discussion has answered the question: who were the Owambo of today? Perhaps this was one of the most difficult questions to answer. But it became clear through the analysis of evidence brought forth by the traditions, and corroborated by linguistic and archaeological evidence, that the Owambo are indeed a Bantu-speaking people, who belong to linguistic groups classified by Guthrie, Greenberg, Baucom, and Pfouts. They are culturally, ethnically and linguistically closely related to the Kwangari and the Mbundja people of Okavango, the Nyaneka-Nkumbi people of southern Angola, and the Herero-speaking peoples of Angola and Namibia - not only because these people happened to be their neighbours, but also because these were the people with whom they identified themselves during the course of their migrations. However, none of these ethnic groups remained homogeneous, as some people might think: they intermixed in the process of their migrations with people they encountered on their way, and more so with the people they found in the areas where they came to settle. They adopted new cultural values, which in turn had some repercussions on their language, such as the acquisition of new vocabularies in connection with tools and other cultural elements they learnt to use, or plants they adopted.

The purpose of this section was not to overemphasize the concept of ethnicity, but rather to demonstrate that the existence of the concept did not influence the political development and social relationships between the pre-colonial communities, as colonial literature implied. In this study the concept of ethnicity was used as an aid towards understanding the political and social formation of these communities. I arrived at the

⁴¹⁸ Vedder, pp. 91-92; Estermann (1976), pp. 11-12

⁴¹⁹ Vedder, p. 86; Angola, p. 7

conclusion that the adoption of common traditions of origin by Owambo and their neighbours provided them with the present ethnic identity. Cultural and social changes as a result of interaction between these people have altered their original identity, depending on the force of influence and assimilation.

The Owambo-related and neighbouring people maintained a reasonable relationship - probably because of similarities they shared, and more importantly because of the cultural, linguistic and trade links. The contacts seem to be as old as their migration and settlement into the region. The study indicates that the Bantu-speaking people did not necessarily belong to one linguistic group, but they became a heterogeneous group after they intermingled with people they encountered. It was this intimate relationship that strengthened their bond. Despite the close neighbourhood they shared, their political, social and economic organization differed. Politically, their systems of rule vary only slightly: with the exception of the Herero-speakers and Aakwankala, they have centralized political systems. Socially, the Okavango, Nkumbi-Nyaneka and Owambo communities have a matrilineal clan system of organization; the Herero-speaking communities have a double clan system; Aakwankala do not have a clear, distinct clan system, and it is the father who plays the major role - hence this study has classified them as patrilineal in their social organization. Economically, the Herero-speakers practise pastoralism; Aakwankala depend on hunting and gathering for their livelihood; and the rest practise agropastoralism. Land is communal property amongst all these groups.

Nevertheless, I have argued that the emergence of lineage out of families with blood relations, facilitated the foundation of an ethnic group; and that the incorporation of this ethnic group into politically oriented communities enabled the formation of larger units under several heads, which gradually developed into separate cohesive political institutions. These larger political organizations came to exist with smaller political units consisting of the clan. Hence, the Owambo political institution emerged out of this socio-political condition which necessitated the foundation of Owambo kingdoms to control land, people, economic resources, and the religion. Although Owambo kingdoms derived their political ideas from neighbouring communities, which contributed greatly as architects of their political structures, these ideas were adopted and modified according to situations that prevailed in communities they (the Owambo) "conquered". The immigrants greatly contributed to the development of Owambo kingdoms in terms of ideology, culture and economy.

5. HISTORICAL EVENTS AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN OWAMBOLAND

5.1. Foundation of Kingdoms

5.1.1. Legends and the Foundation of Kingdoms

The period of expansion must be seen as a turning point in the lives of the immigrants, because of their continuous search for cultivating and grazing land, as traditions indicated. This search reveals that these people had already been settled, because they were in possession of seeds or plants, and cattle. These migrations were necessitated by three main factors: first, the population growth due to improved techniques in agriculture in the lands from which they emigrated, which increased the demand for land. Second, the scarcity of game, which had long served as their dietary supplement. Third, the continuous influx of immigrants from the disintegrating Katanga kingdoms of Lunda/Luba, and the Chokwe expansion. These factors altered and changed the balance of power in the region, because of the spread of new political titles, ideas and artifacts over the region. Hence, these expansions became a natural phenomenon of people spreading out in search of new settlements or areas of influence.

However, it should be understood that the clans which constituted migration units, were not armed with a desire to conquer. Leaders of these migrating groups, who ultimately became founders of most kingdoms in the area were in most cases hunters, who (one may assume) did not have enough skills in warfare, especially when unaware of the strength of the occupants. Of course, there might have been professional warriors amongst them, but they were not organized for any violent conquest and expansion. It should be remembered that the expansion discussed here may be generally linked with historical events which preceded the formation of many kingdoms in central and south-western Africa - and not with even earlier migrations. Earlier migrations were a slow process which took place over generations, and cannot be linked with the 16th century units which culminated in "state" formations. Factors that stimulated the foundation of political institutions and their shape, will be the subject of this chapter.

Let us first look at how hunters founded the kingdoms of Ondonga, Uukwanyama and Ongandjera. According to the Ndonga tradition, Andonga - a prince-hunter, who belonged to the Hyena clan of Ombwenge - came to hunt in the area of what became known as Ondonga, deriving its name from his. Andonga became fond of the hunting areas near Oshamba, and decided to remain there⁴²⁰. Later, Andonga and his companions went back to Ombwenge and talked about their new hunting area;

⁴²⁰ Pettinen (1890-93): "Letters from Africa", 11.08.1890; *ibid.* (1927/8), pp. 60-62; Amweelo, Mic. No. 6 (ELC. 344)

they were generally impressed by the availability of water, fish in the seasonal river nearby Oshamba, fruit trees, and fertile land. Moreover, they also noted that the area was unpopulated, therefore they decided to move there with their families⁴²¹. Traditions also point out that Andonga stayed with his people around the area of Oshamba until they multiplied, but he did not found a kingdom.

One can infer from this legend that Andonga, himself a Mbwenge prince, was probably in search of new areas of influence - as suggested by his observation that there were no people in the area. Andonga thus decided to collect his followers from Ombwenge. These immigrants stayed for a long time at Oshamba, and probably, by the time the population increased, Andonga had already died without founding a kingdom.

Another legend on the foundation of kingdoms in Owamboland comes from Uukwanyama. It purports that the kingdom of Uukwanyama was founded by a hunter named Kanene. Both Andonga and Kanene were at Oshamba, where they lived as leaders of independent groups, but the foundation of kingdoms both in Uukwanyama and in Ondonga took place after the groups which occupied Oshamba dispersed. Unlike Andonga, Kanene - of the Corn clan - encountered members of the Cattle clan under the leadership of Kambungu at Onehula, where the latter had already established his kingdom⁴²². According to traditions, Kanene and Kambungu belonged to two different royal clans, which means that their accidental encounter is regarded as taboo unless one of them drops his royal honour and dignity and accepts the overlordship of the other. The people at Onehula decided to try and reach a compromise through a competition between the two clans, in which the Corn clan would cook beans, while the Cattle clan would strangle a cow with their bare hands; those who won the competition would become the ruling clan. Supporters of both competitors began to mourn in fear of defeat. Hearing this noise, both Kanene and Kambungu ran away. The Mourning (*Ekwanghali*) clan emerged from this event, and Kavonga the son of Haindonga became king⁴²³.

This legend suggests that the competition which was arranged symbolized a sanctity of the royal clan. The strangling of the cow represents manhood, and the cooking of beans, womanhood; this means that these acts were symbols behind which something more is hidden. The truth (or what I think is true) is that a male member of the Cattle clan and a female member of the Corn clan violated a taboo (*oshimenka*)

⁴²¹ Ibid.

⁴²² Sckār (1932), p. 22; Estermann (1976), p. 55; Tshilongo, V., pp. 40-41 (FWC. 3)

⁴²³ Kafita, Mic. No. 43 (ELC. 344); Vedder, pp. 158-160; Angula, p. 32; Kaulinge, pp. 19, 22-23 (FWC. 2); Tshilongo, V., pp. 40-41 (ibid. 3)

which prohibited the cohabitation between members of royal clans. The mourning here was a protest against the violation; from it the clan derived its name. The disappearance of both Kambungu and Kanene symbolizes the loss of their clans' royal honour. This hypothesis is supported by the new royal clan name *Ovakwananghali*, which means "royal on both sides".

The taboo was violated again by Haimbili, the then king of Uukwanyama, when he fell in love with a Kwangari princess, Nasira. The latter was captured during Haimbili's war against the Kwangari King Siremo⁴²⁴. Although Haimbili impregnated Nasira and wanted to marry her, he was prohibited by elders, and the pregnancy was given to his Nyambe counsellor and medicine man, Mbambero. Nasira gave her daughter a Kwangari name, Mpande, but her father named her *Kaulikoshwa*, meaning "the royal descent cannot be washed off"⁴²⁵. Nasira left Uukwanyama and went to Uukwambi, where she married a Kwambi king, Nuyoma (probably the son of Iipumbu), whom she bore a child called *Mukwananghali* meaning "a king on both sides"⁴²⁶. This taboo might not have affected the Kwambi royal lineage in the case of Nasira because she was of Kwangari origin. The Kwangari royal succession continues until this day through the lineage to which Nasira belonged - the Hyena clan.

What is of historical importance here is that the Kwanyama royal clan indeed emerged out of this incident. And the royal succession in Uukwanyama, until Mandume, followed this line of descent. Four factors mentioned in this legend are of great importance in supporting the author's hypothesis regarding the foundation of kingdoms in Owamboland: land, corn, cattle and people.

The third example on the foundation of kingdoms in Owamboland comes from Ongandjera. According to traditions, the occupants of Ongandjera were a pastoral people who, after their migration from Ondonga, settled near the Tamanzi seasonal river, where they found good grazing land for their cattle⁴²⁷. They did not found a kingdom, but were under the leadership of Mangundu the son of Ndjalalo. During Mangundu's rule, according to traditions, a Nkumbi princess arrived in Ongandjera, accompanied by people with hoes. These people began to cultivate and weed a large area (*iilwa*); when the Ngandjera people saw this wonder, they named the princess Niilwa after the cultivated area. Impressed by her work, Mangundu asked Niilwa to marry him. She accepted and became the first Queen of Ongandjera⁴²⁸. Her clan

⁴²⁴ Kampungu, pp. 318-320

⁴²⁵ Ibid.

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

⁴²⁷ Pettinen (1927/8), pp. 66-68; Amweelo, Mic. No. 6 (ELC. 344); Anunyela, Mic. No. 7 a (Ibid.); Iitenge, Mic. No. 7 a & b (Ibid.); Laurmaa (1949), pp. 35-6

⁴²⁸ Laurmaa (1949), p. 64; Tshilongo, V., p. 259 (FWC. 3)

became known as the Royal clan (*Aakwaniilwa*). In actual fact, this word does not mean "royal", but means "the relatives of Niilwa"; the concept only acquired the royal connotation because Niilwa became the founding figure of the Ngandjera kingdom. Thus, *Aakwaniilwa* became their political title.

In this legend, the hoe symbolizes agriculture, as it is mentioned that the Ngandjera people before Niilwa were more pastoralists than agriculturalists. She also introduced the element of kingship, to which she belonged in Onkumbi - her country of origin, and, most importantly, the gender relations by which agriculture became a woman's activity. Thus, good land for cultivating and grazing, and cattle, became the cornerstones of the Ngandjera kingdom's economic life. Before drawing conclusions as to how these elements stimulated the foundation of kingdoms in the region, there is a need to look at examples from other African kingdoms.

5.1.2. Origin of Similar African Kingdoms

In his work on the foundation of kingdoms in Zambia, Langworthy (1972) argued that kingdoms could not have developed in central Africa the way they did without a combination of the following factors: first, the increase in iron technology, and in food production through agriculture and domestication of animals; second, the increase in population; third, the idea of centralization through hierarchical control in which the ruler used both political and religious power⁴²⁹. In his work on the foundation of the Imbangala kingdom in Angola, Miller (1976) saw the formation of these kingdoms as emerging out of a "response to felt need"⁴³⁰. The Imbangala expansion, which took place during a time of growing trade relations in the region, resulted in a need to get hold of the raw materials which were important means of exchange. It was this central factor which Miller thought had stimulated the formation of a centralized system of organization, aimed at controlling these resources. Miller arrived at the conclusion that several factors had contributed towards this end: first, the control over scarce resources, like the salt-pans in the Baixa de Cassanje, and the iron ore deposits in the Nzongezi River; second, the development of a military strategy in defence of these economic resources; third, the increase in manpower through the Kilombo - the Imbangala initiation institution; fourth, the ideological innovation which linked title-holding to authority; fifth, the creation of outside alliances aimed at extending one's influence; sixth, the commercial monopolies, mainly the slave trade; seventh, the agricultural surplus as a supplement for increasing trade; and eighth, technology

⁴²⁹ Langworthy, Harry W. (1972) "Zambia Before 1890; Aspects of Precolonial History", pp. 12-13

⁴³⁰ Miller (1976), p. 271

facilitating the increasing production of iron tools, weapons, etc.⁴³¹ As will be realized in the course of discussion, these factors correspond more or less to those which led to the formation of kingdoms in Owamboland. But let us first see how "state" formation took place in East Africa.

Although the example from East Africa is stated in terms of a European school of thought which traced its roots to Machiavelli, it provides a good basis for comparison when looking at how the state in a European sense differed from the African political institution with which most historians attempt to parallel it. In his introduction to *"State Formation in East Africa"*, Salim (1984) pointed out that the definition of the concept of the state and its application today, have evolved and developed out of the European experience and milieu, hence it is closely linked with territoriality, sovereignty, religion and economy⁴³². Salim pointed out that territoriality is a necessity for sovereignty, and that the economy forms the central, fundamental basis of the state, as characterized by the division of labour, the mode of production, and the exchange of commodities⁴³³. Contributing to the same study, Kalinga observed that although hunter-traders were the founders of states in regions west of Malawi, the means by which they seized political control were a mixture of social, religious and economic factors. They achieved this by intermarrying with leading families, by penetration of indigenous religious institutions, and by monopolizing commercial activities in order to win a large number of clients and followers⁴³⁴.

Having cited what happened during the process of the foundation of kingdoms in central, south-western, and eastern Africa, a conclusion based on similarities needs to be drawn. In one way or another, all four experiences revealed that there were certain elements which directly stimulated the foundation of these kingdoms: first, the economic element, which includes agriculture, pastoralism, and additional resources such as minerals (salt and iron ore); second, the religious element, which includes initiation rites and other ritual practices; third, the increase in population; and fourth, the process of assimilation through intermarriage and adoption of titles as symbols of authority.

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 271-276

⁴³² Salim, Ahmed I. [ed.] (1984): "State Formation in East Africa", p. 2

⁴³³ *Ibid.*, p. 3

⁴³⁴ Kalinga, Owen O. (1984): "The Baloka and the Establishment of States West of Lake Malawi", in: "State Formation in Eastern Africa", edited by Ahmed I. Salim, p. 49

5.1.3. Origin of Kingdoms According to Traditions

Recent Owambo traditions, however, express the foundation of kingdoms in the following words. When asked what the king meant when talking about his kingdom, one of my informants pointed out: "When a king talks about his country, he does not mean people, but land, his land." That was why - the informant continued - during the coronation of King Sheepo the son of Namene, while others inherited the rest of the property of their deceased uncle Martin the son of Kadhikwa, Sheepo (knowing that he was the heir) exclaimed: "The land is mine! That is what I have inherited; I have nothing to do with cattle and other things." Sheepo knew that with the heritage of land he would be able to control and rule those who inherited other property since they would be on his land⁴³⁵. In a similar vein, Shindondola explained that when the king claimed the inheritance of land, he meant people⁴³⁶. Informants from Ongandjera and Uukwambi also related that land was the central issue of inheritance. Until this day in Ongandjera the successor-to-be will be winnowing the sand at the time of inheritance, declaring: "I have remained only with the land⁴³⁷." Hence, land was the most important element, because the king was aware of the fact that if he controlled land, then he ultimately controlled everything on it.

But what about the question of territoriality? It is difficult for an outsider to see where the borders of Uukwanyama, Ondonga, and other kingdoms are, because there are no visible border marks or fences. Traditions tell us about agreements between the Owambo and Aakwankala which reserved a forest belt between Owambo kingdoms as Aakwankala hunting grounds. These agreements seem to have held, because in the history of these kingdoms there have been no border disputes. This brings me to the religious aspect. To ensure respect for these borders, rituals were performed to sanctify them and protect them from trespassers⁴³⁸. Thus the notion of territoriality was well-developed but expansion beyond the agreed borders was not the issue at stake in these kingdoms, even wars waged between them were aimed not at acquiring new territories but at capturing property (in the form of cattle) and prisoners-of-war. Thus, the power of these kingdoms was measured in terms of the availability of land, of cattle, and of people⁴³⁹.

⁴³⁵ Uugwanga, pp. 401-402 (FWC. 3)

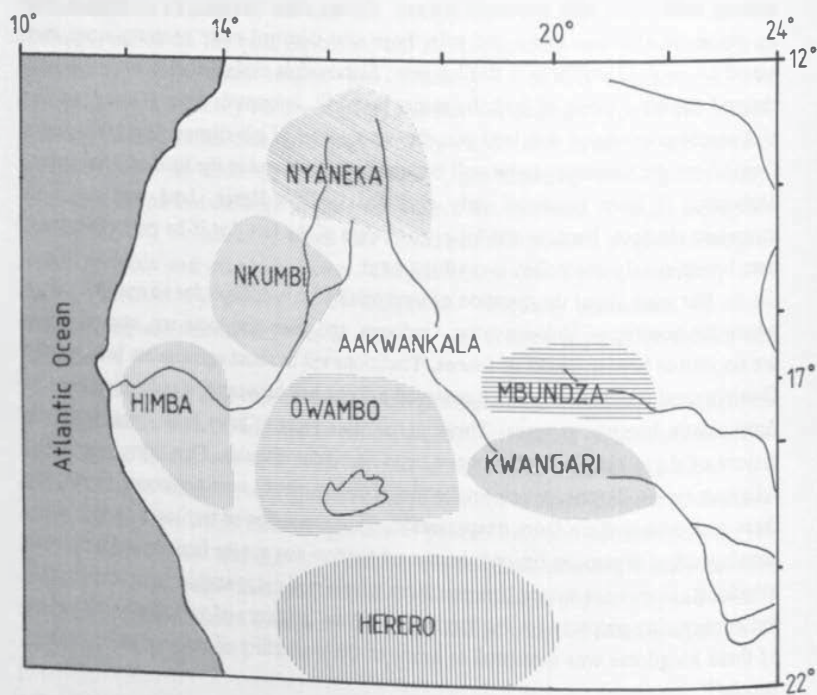
⁴³⁶ Shindondola, pp. 343-344 (FWC. 2)

⁴³⁷ Nameya, Mic. No. 56 (ELC. 344); litenge, Mic. No. 7 a & b (ibid.); Amutenya, pp. 68-69; Amakutuwa, p. 130 (FWC. 2)

⁴³⁸ Ashipembe, Aktofel, Mic. No. 8 (ELC. 344); Uugwanga, pp. 402-403 (FWC. 3)

⁴³⁹ Hamutenya, Sakaria, Mic. No. 21 (ELC. 344); Kaulinge, p. 29 (FWC. 2); Uukule, pp. 482-483 (ibid.) Uugwanga, p. 402 (ibid. 3)

Another element which contributed to the foundation of Owambo kingdoms was the increase in population. Traditions recorded by both Pettinen (1891) and Liljeblad (1932) indicate that the kingdom in Ondonga⁴⁴⁰ was founded when population began to increase. To answer the question which occupied Miller, on "how some clans emerged dominant and others not", the traditions suggest that people at Oshamba began to depict the character of each different clan as that of an animal, to see which clan character would suit that of a good ruler; they reached an agreement and chose the Hyena clan⁴⁴¹.



Map 6: Owambo and her Neighbours⁴⁴²

⁴⁴⁰ Traditions talk about the foundation of the kingdom in Ondonga here because most Owambo tradition refers to Ondonga as the nucleus of their kingdoms [Amweelo, Mic. No. 6 (ELC. 344); Uugwanga, pp. 402-405 (FWC. 3)]

⁴⁴¹ Pettinen (1926/27), pp. 68-70

⁴⁴² The buffer zone between the hunting grounds of Aakwankala and the Owambo people were preserved for a long time. This was so because the agreements between these communities bound them

The historical fact in this myth is, first, the indication that an increase in population which necessitated (to follow Miller's observation) the foundation of the kingdom at Oshamba. But second, once again, there is a need to explain the structure of the myth, to enable us to understand the criteria used in the selection of the royal clan, and to determine what that particular clan had apart from the humble character which the hyena is said to have. Earlier traditions tell us that the Hyena clan gained their dominant position because of their knowledge of and skill in rain-making⁴⁴³. Throughout the political history of the Ondonga kingdom the Hyena clan had a dominant role in the art of rain-making - until the link was broken by a conflict of succession which occurred between Shipanga the son of Amukwiita and Shikongo the son of Kalulu, which undermined the hereditary ritual. It must be noted that this dominance was no longer a question of someone being the head of the family or clan, but of different clans accepting the rule of one particular clan.

Earlier work done on the Ovambo kingdoms described them in the following words. For Vedder, "the chief was an autocrat in the widest sense of the word. The whole land belonged to him, and those who had plots were merely loaning them from him; and he had the right of ownership over the herds of cattle, and of life and death over his subjects⁴⁴⁴." For Loeb, "the Kwanyama had an aristocracy headed by a divine king, and at the apex of the feudal pyramid, the king was the owner of the land and all its inhabitants, animals and humans, even of the game and fish⁴⁴⁵". For Cocky Hahn, "all Ovambo chiefs exercised autocratic rule over their subjects. The chief's rule was supreme. The land, people and all property belonged nominally to him⁴⁴⁶". The impression given in these works is that land was owned by the king, yet this was not the case, because land is communal property in all Ovambo kingdoms over which a king presides. It should be understood that the observations made by these authors were sentimentally attached to their aims in the region. For instance, all of them linked the royal rule with autocracy, using this as an apology to further the expansion of colonialism, under the pretext of introducing 'democracy', a concept they found 'lacking' in those communities. Another point is that these writers, being themselves subjects of autocratic monarchs and of capitalist-oriented systems, did not

to respect the zone.

⁴⁴³ Rautanen's Diaries, 11.07.1889, Hp XXVIII:2

⁴⁴⁴ Vedder, p. 72

⁴⁴⁵ Loeb, p. 297

⁴⁴⁶ Hahn, C. H. (1859-1961): "Tribal Laws and Customs of the Ovambo", Coll. A. 450 [SWA], No. 9, File No. 2/38, p. 1; *ibid.* (1927), "Preliminary Notes on Certain Customs of the Ovambo", with Introductory Remarks by Dr. L. Fourie, in: *Journal of the South-West African Scientific Society*, Vol. III, p. 19

understand the egalitarian type of economic organization in which land was common property.

From traditions and earlier works on the Owambo kingdoms, some conclusions could be drawn to identify elements which stimulated the foundation of the Owambo kingdoms. Land and people were the central issues in the power relations of an Owambo kingdom, along with cattle and grain. These were complemented later by the foundation of an iron mine in Uukwanyama and a copper mine in Ondonga⁴⁴⁷, as well as salt-pans in Ondonga, Ongandjera and Uukwambi. The religious element and ritual practices were the most important elements which formed the ideological basis of these kingdoms. The fact that these elements are similar to those of other kingdoms in Angola, Zambia, and Malawi, does not only lead to a conclusion that the foundation of kingdoms in Owamboland derives from these basic elements, but certainly serves as a proof of direct external influence from neighbouring kingdoms. This diffusion is probably a result of the cultural contacts through trade links and constant immigration.

5.2. Emergence of Political Institutions

5.2.1. Religious Ideology - the Meaning behind Royal Power

If the foundation of Owambo kingdoms was linked to the need to control land, people, economic resources, and religion, then the interesting question to look at is how these factors emerged and shaped the ideas which in turn formed the basis of these political institutions. What possibly undermined the formation of a single political institution was perhaps the question of identity, which was still fragile at that time. This was due to the threat emanating, in particular, from the growing political and economic power of the neighbouring Ovimbundu kingdoms; from the expansion of Imbangala political influence into southern Angola; and in general, from the external pressure of the Portuguese colonial expansion. All these events initiated important modifications in both social and political organization at Oshamba settlement, to the detriment of the people there.

The gradual emergence of political institutions in Owamboland should also be seen in the light of the emerging transitional situation from hunting and gathering to agriculture and pastoralism, which provided the basis for reliable production with the family as its basic productive unit. The emergence of lineage out of families with blood

⁴⁴⁷ Hahn, Hugo (1857): "Missionaries Hahn and Rath Journey in South-West Africa", in: Petermanns Geographische Mitteilungen, 7, Gotha, pp. 295-303, in: Coll. A. 450 [SWA], No. 10, File No. 3/1, p. 300
Moltke Coll. (1883-1922), A.100: "Hoffnungsfelde Leutwein, South-West Africa on 25th November, 1929", pp. 2-3

relations facilitated the foundation of ethnic groups, which - as è Nzièm clearly pointed out - do not necessarily constitute a political organization⁴⁸. But the incorporation of these ethnic groups into politically oriented communities facilitated the formation of larger units under several heads, which gradually developed into separate cohesive political institutions. These structural changes began to alter both economic and political relations. The land which was the property of the clan, became a communal property over which the king presided; while the family, which normally produced for its local consumption, began to extend its production for purposes outside the homestead. Although the kingdom did not control the production of the homestead, it received its share through tribute, which in actual fact was the main source of the kingdom's wealth.

Clan leaders who acquired the royal honour did come with their set ideologies to convince their subjects-to-be of the security they could provide⁴⁹. These ideologies were expressed in religious terms, which advocated the common belief of all clans in the Supreme Being - Kalunga. Kalunga is portrayed as the supernatural figure who possesses power over fertility, rain, and the growth of cultivated plants and a rich harvest⁵⁰. But how, then, did the royal clans acquire the sacred honour, which gave them their special position?

The king was expected to play a role in increasing fertility, in providing rain, and above all as the symbol of life for his people⁵¹. He was seen as the link between the living and the dead, whose sacred duty was to carry out sacrificial rites through which he could secure blessings for his people and country. Although the king was a highly respected figure, he was not at any time identified with Kalunga, although those who were not familiar with the Owambo tradition of respect pointed out that he was treated as a "half-god"⁵². It is true that there might have been some sort of misleading impression given by different people when they observed how Owambo people paid respect to the king according to taboos (*iidhila*) governing their ways of behaviour. The respect shown to the king afforded him a sacred position, and not a divine one as Loeb argued⁵³. Siiskonen supported the claim that Owambo kings had

⁴⁸ è Nzièm (1980), p. 64

⁴⁹ Uukunde, Mic. No. 89 b (ELC. 344)

⁵⁰ Rautanen's Diaries, 2.1.1891, p. 568; Henok, Mic. No. 24 (ELC. 344); Uukunde, Mic. No. 89 (ibid.); Uugwanga, pp. 399-400 (FWC. 3)

⁵¹ Pettinen, A. (1889-94): "Kirjeitä Afrikasta" ("Letters from Africa"), in: Suomalainen, 07.10.1890; ibid., 07.17.1891; Hahn (1928), p. 8; Savola (1916), pp. 98-99

⁵² Pettinen (1889-1894), 8.11.1890; Loeb, p. 41; Tuupainen, p. 147

⁵³ Loeb, p. 41; Aarmi, T. (1982): "The Kalunga Concept in Owambo Religion from 1870 onwards", pp. 84-85

the status of divinity, by stating that "after the king came to power, he was not allowed to leave the territory of the community over which he ruled"⁴⁵⁴. According to tradition, this taboo is associated with respect for other territories where there are kings, also expressed by the proverb that "two elephants cannot be in the shade of one shrub", meaning "two rulers cannot be in one country"⁴⁵⁵. And when one king crosses into the other's country or kingdom, the expression used is "he has lost authority" (*okwa iyata ifo = ano a turuka*). The loss of authority here follows from the fact that if one king crosses into the other's territory, then he will not be a king because there cannot be two kings in one country⁴⁵⁶. This taboo was aimed at ensuring respect for the territorial borders of other kingdoms, hence avoiding the desire to conquer⁴⁵⁷. Members of the royal clan can also lose their royal position if they do not respect such prohibitions, even if they are within their countries of jurisdiction. One of my informants, Abed Kandongo, who belonged to the Kwambi royal clan, said his family lost their royal honour because his uncle Lugambo the son of Nyango acquired sacred power through magic, something which was prohibited⁴⁵⁸.

Thus, the royal clan did not simply acquire power through magic, as Estermann and Loeb argued⁴⁵⁹, because the qualities and skills the clan possessed, and the security it could provide were more important. Of course, magic was used as a force behind these ideologies in the realization of their influence and power. However, it must not be forgotten that taboos became social norms which helped in the maintenance of the fabric of most Owambo societies. Kings used their influence and magical power to sanctify some places which could provide asylum to their people, in case of persecution⁴⁶⁰. For example, if somebody is being chased, then he/she runs to the burial site of the last old king, so that his/her life will be spared. What most scholars are failing to grasp is the type of ideology behind the acquired status, the religion being one reinforcing aspect.

The consequences of the many diversified events outlined in the previous section were dominant in the region, emerging out of the tension between conflicting ideologies: on the one hand, those [the immigrants] who saw royal rule as a unifying factor for the culture of different clans at Oshamba⁴⁶¹; and on the other, those who

⁴⁵⁴ Siiskonen (1990), p. 46

⁴⁵⁵ (*Oondjamba mbali ihadhi go djo moshihwa shimwe = Aapangeli yaali ihaa kala moshilongo shimwe*)

⁴⁵⁶ Ugwanga, p. 380 (FWC. 3); Haapanen, p. 68

⁴⁵⁷ Savola (1916), p. 95; Närhi, p. 10

⁴⁵⁸ Kandongo, p. 132 (FWC. 1)

⁴⁵⁹ Loeb, pp. 303-307; Estermann (1976), p. 76

⁴⁶⁰ Aami, p. 82; Tshilongo, V., pp. 261, 268-269 (FWC. 3);

Ugwanga, p. 396 (ibid.)

⁴⁶¹ Pettinen (1926/27), pp. 68-70; Amweelo, Mic. No. 6 (ELC. 344)

felt that territoriality - as a macrocosm of sovereignty - was at stake under the threat emanating from the expanding groups. Therefore its protection required a type of centralized political organization, with support from clans within it.

The Owambo institutions of kingship thus sprang out of the traditional social structure enshrined in the clan system. The household, under the clan structure, became the first nucleus of the Owambo kingship institution, being responsible for production for both domestic consumption and tribute to the kingdom. Hence, the kingdom emerged out of a high degree of economic and social organization, to which the family and the clan contributed through shaping its social, religious, political and economic elements.

5.2.2. Enthronement of the King

The Owambo people use the expression "to take over the country" (*okulala oshilongo*) to designate the enthronement of the king; and "to anoint" (*okugwayekwa*) to designate the actual coronation⁴⁶² ceremony.

The death of the previous king was not announced until his successor was chosen⁴⁶³. The chief minister took over temporary control, and to convince subjects that the king was still alive, he ordered the chief commander to go and attack a neighbouring kingdom, as if orders were coming from the king⁴⁶⁴. This was done to avoid surprise attacks, because if neighbouring kingdoms heard rumours of the king's death before his successor was chosen, then they would exploit the situation by attacking the kingdom while it was observing the period of mourning (*ongondji*)⁴⁶⁵. Another reason for this measure was to avoid a power struggle among the princes who were eligible for the throne⁴⁶⁶.

⁴⁶² Möller, p. 89; Liljeblad, pp. 663-671; Uugwanga, p. 403 (FWC. 3)

⁴⁶³ Pettinen (1890-1893), 19.10.1892; Estermann (1976), p. 119; Uugwanga, p. 358 (FWC. 3)

⁴⁶⁴ Uugwanga, p. 358 (FWC. 3)

⁴⁶⁵ Estermann (1976), p. 120; Uugwanga, p. 358 (FWC. 3)

⁴⁶⁶ Pettinen (1890-93), 19.10.1892

The king⁴⁶⁷ ascends the throne according to the principles governing the matrilineal rules of succession, which hold that the king must be succeeded by his younger brother, or by the son of his eldest sister, or by any member of the clan eligible for the position⁴⁶⁸. A meeting is organized between chief counsellors - elder members of the community and royal clan - to discuss the successor⁴⁶⁹. As a matter of principle, a prince who was left-handed, or had a cataract in his eye, was not taken into the contest, because such a person was not allowed to become the ruler⁴⁷⁰. According to one informant, in olden days in Uukwanyama, during times when there were many princes, a competition was organized for them in which they had to find the "stone of the country" (*emanya hyoshilongo*), which was hidden under a baobab tree situated on the old kingdom site at Onehula. The royal princes would send their followers to find the stone, and whichever group found it had their prince enthroned as king, because he was believed to have been given the kingdom by Kalunga⁴⁷¹. This practice reduced killings among the competing rivals. In Uukwambi, a similar practice was also carried out, to find the stone hidden in the ward called Iiyale, in the field where Nuukata the son of Tshiinga lived⁴⁷². In Ondonga, the new king was sent to Iinenge, the ancient capital of Nembungu the son of Amutundu, to find power insignia hidden under the "national palm tree"⁴⁷³.

The practice used earlier in Ondonga in deciding the succession to the throne was said to have followed one's bravery and ability to eliminate one's opponents; some did it by killing nephews, even brothers, and leaving only the person whom they wanted to succeed them. For instance, Nangolo the son of Amutenya was said to have killed most of his nephews, leaving only his step-brother Shipanga the son of Amukwiita as his successor. Shikongo the son of Kalulu survived these elimination campaigns, because his uncle thought that he was not eligible for the throne due to his

⁴⁶⁷ The Owambo use three concepts to designate a king: *Omumwa* is the king while *Uuwa* is the royal capital (in Ondonga), *Ohamba* is the king while *Ouhamba* is the royal capital (in Uukwanyama, Ombandja and Evale), and *Omukwaniitwa* is the king while *Uukwaniitwa* is the royal capital (in Ongandjera and Uukwambi). But all Owambo kingdoms except Ondonga use the word *Ombala* (a Nyaneka-Nkumbi word) to designate their capitals.

⁴⁶⁸ Pettinen (1890-93), 15.08.1890; Savola (1916), p. 85; Hahn (1927/28), p. 11; Loeb, p. 298; Estermann (1976), p. 118

⁴⁶⁹ Pettinen (1890-93), 15.08.1890; Tshilongo, V., p. 211 (FWC. 3); Uukule, p. 476 (ibid. 2)

⁴⁷⁰ Tshilongo, V., p. 206 (FWC. 3); Uukule, p. 414 (ibid. 2)

⁴⁷¹ Kaulinge, p. 23 (FWC. 2); Aarni, p. 86

⁴⁷² Laurmaa's Coll., (1924-34), Hp XV:1, p. 515; Tshilongo, V., p. 211 (FWC. 3)

⁴⁷³ Liljeblad, pp. 663-665

disabilities of having a cataract on one eye and of being left-handed⁶⁷⁴. In some cases mothers fled and became refugees in neighbouring kingdoms to hide their sons. It was under such circumstances that Hahn found Sefeni and his step-brother Mweshipandeka in Ondonga, given refuge by Nangolo. Iipumbu the son of Tshi ongo, his mother and the whole family were chased out of Uukwambi by his uncle Negumbo the son of Kandenge; they sought refuge in Uukwanyama, by then under the rule of King Ueyulu the son of Hedimbi⁶⁷⁵. Shikongo the son of Kalulu went to Ombandja, then under the rule of King Nambinga the son of Shishwa, because his uncle Shipanga threatened his life⁶⁷⁶. Nakashwa the daughter of Tshivute went with her mother to Ondonga, then under the rule of King Shikongo the son of Kalulu, after being chased out of the country by her uncle Amwaama the son of Iileka⁶⁷⁷. Haikela the son of Namanyungu sought refuge in Uukwambi during the rule of Nuyoma the son of Heelu, after exile was imposed by his uncle Nambinga the son of Shishwa⁶⁷⁸.

It is not clear from traditions how these conflicts were resolved by means other than killings. It also remains obscure as to when the method of using elders and senior counsellors began, because in the incident between Shipanga and Shikongo in 1857, it was mentioned that the people in the kingdom were divided in opinion about the successor. This means that there had been a method which was used to solve the problem of succession. A similar case occurred in Uukwambi between Nuyoma the son of Heelu and his brother Tshikesho. According to the Kwambi traditions, most people, including the mother, were in favour of Nuyoma⁶⁷⁹.

Analyzing these conflicts of succession, one can conclude that they were the normal practice of power struggle. The change that took place in the system of selecting a successor did not result from outside influence, because the presence of European traders, travellers, and missionaries was at that time short-lived especially in Ondonga, Uukwambi and Uukwanyama. Neither can one say that the influence came from neighbouring kingdoms, because that of the Nyanka-Nkumbi, the Ovimbundu and the Imbangala kingdoms remained very marginal. The author sees this situation as an internal development resulting from the internal political and economic stability of

⁶⁷⁴ Amutenya, p. 27; Uukule, p. 414 (FWC. 2); Uugwanga, p. 361 (ibid. 3)

⁶⁷⁵ Esermann (1976), p. 118; Tshilongo, V., pp. 205-206 (FWC. 3); Kandongo, p. 132 (ibid. 1)

⁶⁷⁶ Laurmaa (1949), p. 51; Uukule, p. 415 (FWC. 2); Uugwanga, p. 361 (ibid. 3)

⁶⁷⁷ litenge, Mic. No. 36 (ELC. 344); Iiyego, Mic. No. 35 (ibid.); Nameya, Mic. No. 56 (ibid.)

⁶⁷⁸ Tshilongo, V., pp. 278-279 (FWC. 3); Shikongo, p. 316 (ibid. 2)

⁶⁷⁹ Laurmaa (1949), p. 59; Kandongo, p. 131 (FWC. 2); Tshilongo, V., pp. 273-277 (ibid. 3)

the Owambo institutions. This hypothesis is supported by Pettinen, who outlined the structure of the Ondonga kingdom at the end of the last century. He confirms that there was indeed a body of elders who were responsible for selecting rulers⁴⁸⁰. Savola and Närhi were also impressed by the high political organization of Owambo kingdoms⁴⁸¹.

The deceased king was buried at his own royal courts in the ox-pen; his successor never occupied the same court. He might found his new capital in the same ward, but never reside on the same field. The burial cult of the king was associated with a practice by which a "slave" girl was buried alive with the purpose of affording him company. The burial shrine was guarded by two elder men, who belonged to the royal clan but were no longer eligible for the royal throne. Their task was to pick up all the worms and throw them back into the shrine, until the body had completely decomposed and no worms were coming out⁴⁸².

After the period of mourning the successor dispatched his people - under the leadership of the custodian of the sacred fire - to the kingdom from where they traditionally got their new fire, to collect fire and inform the king about the bad news⁴⁸³. The envoys would be given the new fire, which they would take to the new royal capital. The enthronement ceremony was organized according to old tradition, with an old man (as a circumcised man was referred to) presiding over it⁴⁸⁴. In the absence of old men in the country, then they were called from neighbouring kingdoms; according to Estermann, the Kwanyama people used to get theirs from Onkwankwa⁴⁸⁵. First, the high-priest, who also served as the master of ceremonies would dispatch Aakwankala to hunt a lion; second, he would order his men to catch and strangle a young "slave" man to death; and third, he would order a bull to be slaughtered. Small pieces of flesh were cut from the human body, and from the lion and bull carcasses; they were mixed with some herbs and cooked in one pot, after which they were put into wooden sauce boats and served to counsellors and some warriors⁴⁸⁶. Loeb and Estermann noted that in Uukwanyama, the king himself also ate the ritual mixture, which was not the case in other kingdoms⁴⁸⁷. In Uukwambi,

⁴⁸⁰ Pettinen (1890-93), 15.08.1890

⁴⁸¹ Savola (1916), pp. 93-99; Närhi, pp. 11-15

⁴⁸² Estermann (1976), p. 119; Kondombolo, p. 308 (FWC. 2); Uugwanga, pp. 379-380 (ibid. 3)

⁴⁸³ Estermann (1976), p. 120; Tshilongo, V., p. 211 (FWC. 3)

⁴⁸⁴ Estermann (1976), p. 121; Ashipembe, Eelu, Mic. No. 10-11 (ELC. 344)

⁴⁸⁵ Estermann (1976), p. 121

⁴⁸⁶ Ashipembe, Mic. No. 10-11 (ELC. 344); Kandongo, p. 135 (FWC. 1); Shikongo, pp. 324-325 (ibid. 2); Loeb, p. 24

⁴⁸⁷ Loeb, p. 24; Estermann (1976), p. 122

some of the king's cousins were adorned with human leather bangles made from the skin of the sacrificed victim⁴⁸⁸, while in Ombandja and Ondonga the victim's sinews were used in stringing the king's pearls which he would wear around his neck⁴⁸⁹. This ritual practice was observed in most parts of Africa, and it was what early travellers, missionaries, and anthropologists referred to as cannibalism⁴⁹⁰.

After the ceremony the king would receive royal insignia, consisting of the national girdles (*omiya dhoshilongo*); the dagger of honour (*omwele goshipika*); the national bow (*uatati woshilongo*); the national arrows (*iikuti yoshilongo*); the national knob kerie (*ondhimbo yoshilongo*); the national iron whistle (*ohiya yoshilongo*); and other iron tools⁴⁹¹. These royal insignia were given to the new king as a symbols of power. The fat from the lion, cooked and mixed with ochre, was used to anoint the king as a sign of actual coronation.

5.2.3. Structures and Functions of Kingdoms

The foundation upon which these kingdoms has been structured, and the relationship between them, cannot be understood without examining their functions. The political and religious titles are given to different members of commoners' clans, and range from those of the chief minister, who is the king's immediate assistant and advisor; the chief counsellors, who are in most cases also heads of districts; the under-counsellors, who are heads of wards; to those of bodyguards; war commander; high-priest; master of ritual ceremonies; heads of salt-pan and iron ore excursions; custodian of sacred fire; and cupbearer⁴⁹². Counsellors in most Owambo kingdoms are not chosen from set clans; the king, while in his youth, observes from among his playmates and associates people with characters that inspire him: especially bravery, hard work and

⁴⁸⁸ Shikongo, pp. 324-325 (FWC. 2); Kandongo, p. 134 (ibid. 1).

In Little-Ombandja, the sacrificial victim was drawn from the commoners' clan of *Aakwanahungi*; and in Uukwambi, from the *Zebra* clan.

⁴⁸⁹ Shikongo, pp. 324-325 (FWC. 2)

⁴⁹⁰ Nārhi, p. 8; Loeb, p. 26

⁴⁹¹ Ashipembe, Mic. No. 10-11 (E C. 344); Liljeblad, p. 667

⁴⁹² Himanen, pp. 4-5; Möller, p. 122; Vedder, p. 77; Tshilongo, V., p. 217 (FWC. 3); Uugwanga, pp. 386-393 (ibid.). It must be noted that these offices are not only derived from oral traditions, but their structures are still intact until this day in Owambo kingdoms. Oral traditions in this case were mainly collected for comparative purposes, to see how traditions have changed over time - if they have.

diligence are the widely used criteria for selection⁴⁹³. Every clan has the right to have members elected to the offices of the kingdom, and it was through such a system of appointment that commoners played a great role in the social, political and economic life of the kingdom. Another means by which counsellors are acquired is by inheritance: when the king dies, the successor inherits all people who were in the service of his predecessor⁴⁹⁴. Some are introduced to the king by fathers or uncles who were themselves counsellors or courtiers; and sometimes children are given by parents to the king on his request, or as an offer to serve him⁴⁹⁵.

With the help of elders in the country the king appoints a council consisting of six or more *senior counsellors*, based on the merits of age, intelligence and experience; this is the highest body of the kingdom⁴⁹⁶. The council serves as the judicial, advisory, and legislative body in the kingdom; it meets under the chairmanship of the king, at set times and also in emergency cases like during a war situation. All decisions of the council are kept secret⁴⁹⁷.

The king's immediate assistant is his *chief minister*, who is also a member of the council of senior counsellors and head of the royal court, in charge of all activities in the kingdom⁴⁹⁸. The chief minister used to be killed on the day when the king was buried, because he was regarded as the most faithful companion⁴⁹⁹.

The kingdom is divided into 57 wards - or more depending on its size - which are headed by *under-counsellors*, appointed by the king from among the courtiers, warriors, hunters, and those who have the honour to be promoted⁵⁰⁰. Their main duties are: to solve small problems affecting their wards; to see to it that law and order is maintained in their wards; to collect the royal tribute - which was mainly paid in cattle, grain, leather or skin, and iron implements - and send it to the royal capital; to see to it that people in their wards have cultivated the plots, allocated to them by the king, and that the harvest is taken to the king; to see to it that their wards have taken

⁴⁹³ Pettinen (1890-93), 15.08.1890; Loeb, p. 298; Nangolo, p. 487 (FWC. 2); Uukule, pp. 477-481 (ibid.); Shindondola, pp. 343-344 (ibid.)

⁴⁹⁴ Shindondola, p. 340 (FWC. 2)

⁴⁹⁵ Kaulinge, p. 30 (FWC. 2)

⁴⁹⁶ Pettinen (1890-93), 15.08.1890; Savola (1916), p. 85; Nārhi, p. 11; Tshilongo, V., p. 211 (FWC. 3); Uukule, p. 476 (ibid. 2)

⁴⁹⁷ Pettinen (1890-93), 15.08.1890; Kaulinge, p. 19 (FWC. 2); Shikongo, p. 326 (ibid.); Tshilongo, V., pp. 262-266 (ibid. 3); for traditional law of Owambo kingdoms, see Appendix V (a).

⁴⁹⁸ Pettinen (1890-93), 15.08.1890; Savola (1916), pp. 88-89; Nārhi, p. 11; Kaulinge, pp. 19-20 (FWC. 2)

⁴⁹⁹ Möller, p. 122

⁵⁰⁰ Pettinen (1890-93), 15.08.1890; Savola (1916), pp. 93-94; Nārhi, pp. 11-15

part in the maintenance of the royal capital, and in the cutting of palisades and collecting of firewood⁵⁰¹. Under-counsellors are members of the district council, but they also take part in general meetings of the kingdom⁵⁰².

The king appoints his *courtiers* - headed by the *butler*, who is the man in charge of all the activities in the royal court. Under him are the *bodyguards*, *attendants*, *messengers*, *cupbearer*, *chief herdsman*, and *cooks*, in addition to those who have grown up with the king. The *bodyguards* are to afford the king security. The *attendants* are the closest bodyguards, who attend to him personally by assisting him in overcoming stress; they are also the people who help the king to sleep in case of insomnia, by massaging his feet until he falls asleep⁵⁰³. *Messengers* are those who carry the king's messages throughout the country; this also includes his envoys whom he sends to other kingdoms. The *cupbearer* is the person who ladles traditional sorghum beer (*omalovu*), meal-drink (*ontaku*), and marula wine (*omagongo*) for the king⁵⁰⁴. Regarding the *cook*, in every Owambo kingdom the king's meat is cooked by men at a place called *Okashila*, while the porridge is cooked by girls at a special kitchen⁵⁰⁵. Wars were the most important activity of the kingdom, for they not only represented its power and fame across other nations, but were a source of population and property, in terms of war captives and cattle respectively. There was no standing army, but every man who had passed through the initiation rite qualified for being a warrior when the king declared war⁵⁰⁶. There were different kinds of conflicts in which Owambo kingdoms engaged: for example, *olugodhi* was associated with war proper, which broke out between two kingdoms because of a certain crisis. *Oshitondokela* was a raid which occurred between kingdoms, or when the king sent out his men to go and attack a ward in his kingdom because it had violated its rules and norms; cattle were also captured during this operation. *Okashava*⁵⁰⁷ (*ekunbu*) was a

⁵⁰¹ Pettinen (1890-93), 15.08.1890; Savola (1916), pp. 93-94

⁵⁰² Savola (1916), p. 93

⁵⁰³ Kaulinge, p. 21 (FWC. 2)

⁵⁰⁴ Estermann (1976), p. 122; Kaulinge, p. 20 (FWC. 2)

⁵⁰⁵ Savola (1916), pp. 88-90; Hahn (1928), p. 24; Estermann (1976), p. 122; Kaulinge, pp. 21-22 (FWC. 2)

⁵⁰⁶ Savola (1916), p. 89; Tshilongo, V., p. 279 (FWC. 3)

⁵⁰⁷ The claims made by Siiskonen about *okashava* on what he termed "The Institution of the Raid in the Ovambo Communities" are misleading. Siiskonen drew his conclusions mainly from sources recorded by Europeans, who, like him did not understand the differences between these institutions. The consequences were more serious when he concluded that raiding and wars were used as synonyms, because in the *okashava* raiding operation, only cattle were captured from their grazing ground; no battle was fought because the herdsmen who tend cattle are usually too few to constitute such a group

cattle raid within or outside the kingdom. This warfare is said to be new, which only began in the late 1870s when long-distance trade increased and the kings did not have enough cattle to pay for the commodities they wanted. The cattle captured during this operation were not used for breeding - they were only used as a means of exchange, while cattle captured during *olugodhi* and *oshitondokela* became part of the herds. *Ofuto* (payment) was another type of conflict, which in actual fact could not cause a war situation. The payment was demanded when people in the kingdom did not respect the kingdom's rules; for example, when a person allowed cattle into the fields to eat stalks before the appropriate feast was formally inaugurated by the king⁵⁰⁸.

To wage such wars the king needs to have warriors, which are recruited in his country with the help of his counsellors; then he appoints a *war commander*, who presides over all war operations on his behalf. But in earlier times - for example, during the rule of Haimbili and Mweshipandeka in Uukwanyama - these kings commanded their own warriors⁵⁰⁹. Apart from the war commander, there are other officers, like the chief of the national girdles (*omukulunu gomiya dhoshilongo*), the one who blew the war-whistle (*omuhiki gohiya*), and the one who carried the fire-log or torch (*omuhumbati goshikuni [onyeka]*)⁵¹⁰. I am not going to describe the whole war operation in detail because that is not the purpose of this section, but I will conclude by indicating wa-related rituals, which were important in the religious life of the kingdom. For example, a purification ritual for blood-guilt (*ontoni*) was organized by

as could stage one. In the case of war, a formal war declaration was made, and the war would break out if the party on the offensive did not accept the reasons behind the war declaration; when the battle was fought, its duration would depend on the differences in strength or resistance between the two opposing parties. And at its end, the attackers would then take captives and cattle if they had won the battle; and if they had not, then most of them would end up as war captives - those who did not manage to escape. Oral sources which Siiskonen used, collected by missionary Liljeblad, made clear distinctions between these operations (Siiskonen, pp. 203-206).

⁵⁰⁸ Savola (1916), pp. 89-91; Hamutenya, Mic. No. 21 (ELC. 344); Hahn (1927/28), pp. 21-22; Estermann (1976), p. 125; Kaulinge, pp. 28-30 (FWC. 2); on differences between these war institutions, see also Tosh, J. (1978): "Clan Leaders and Colonial Chiefs in Lango", pp. 85-87

⁵⁰⁹ Schinz, p. 320; Tönjes, pp. 121-22; Möller, p. 122; Estermann (1976), pp. 126-130; Kaulinge, p. 29 (FWC. 2)

⁵¹⁰ Schinz, p. 320; Pettinen (1890-1893), 05.06.1890; Lebzelter, p. 236; Hamutenya, Mic. No. 21 (ELC. 344); Hahn (1927/28), pp. 22-23; Möller, p. 122; Uukule, pp. 436-439 (FWC. 2); Tshilongo, V., p. 279 (ibid. 3)

families of warriors who had killed people in battle⁵¹¹. War captives also underwent a ritual purification, so that they could be integrated within the local clans.

The king also appoints the *clergy* headed by the *high-priest*; under him are the *custodian of the sacred fire*, the *master of initiation ceremonies*, the *head of the salt-pan excursion* and the *chief herdsman*. The high-priest possesses the king's ritual power, presiding on his behalf over all ritual ceremonies of the kingdom and acting as prognosticator in case of witchcraft⁵¹². For example, he headed the rain-fetching trip to Evale, and performs sacrificial rites of the kingdom in case of a severe drought, an epidemic or a famine, as it was always believed that cataclysmic events were caused by angered ancestral spirits. To appease the spirits the high-priest had to organize a sacrificial ceremony at the site of the royal burial shrine (*ompampa*) of an elder king, where a black ox would be sacrificed, and special parts offered to ancestors. Respect was also paid to sanctuaries: Onehula in Uukwanyama, Ondangwa in Uukwambi, linenge in Ondonga, Kola Vlei in Ongandjera, etc.⁵¹³ The high-priest was also the man in charge of rituals connected with hunting.

The *custodian of the sacred fire* has the duty of keeping the fire burning at the kingdom's drawing place. He used to lead the fire-fetching trips which collected fire from neighbouring kingdoms after the death of the king; for instance, Uukwanyama used to get its fire from Ondonga⁵¹⁴, Uukwambi from Ongandjera⁵¹⁵, and Ombalantu from Ombandja⁵¹⁶. This practice has died out now, with the disintegration of the kingdoms of Ombalantu, Uukwanyama, and Uukwambi; commoners cannot continue this ritual, which was a charm between the royal clans of those kingdoms. In fact, the collectors of the sacred fire were also messengers of lamentation, carrying a message to the king from whose kingdom the fire was fetched that "the fire has been extinguished" in their country, meaning that their king had died⁵¹⁷. They carried with them a hide of the beast slaughtered during the period of mourning, as a sign of sorrow⁵¹⁸. After the king received the message and the hide, he would observe a minute of silence; after that, he would order his high priest to twirl the new fire for

⁵¹¹ Hamutenya, Mic. No. 21 (ELC. 344); Hepeni, Martin, Mic. No. 26 (ibid.)

⁵¹² Alweendo, Mic. No. 3 (ELC. 344); Möller, p. 122; Vedder, p. 77; Kaulinge, p. 20 (FWC. 2)

⁵¹³ Angula, pp. 42-45; Aarni, p. 84; Uugwanga, pp. 399-400 (FWC. 3); Amakutuwa, p. 125 (ibid. 1)

⁵¹⁴ Kaulinge, p. 22 (FWC. 2)

⁵¹⁵ Tshilongo, V., p. 211 (FWC. 3)

⁵¹⁶ Himanen, p. 4; Alweendo, Mic. No. 3 (ELC. 344)

⁵¹⁷ Himanen, p. 4; Kaulinge, p. 22 (FWC. 2); Tshilongo, V., p. 211 (ibid. 3)

⁵¹⁸ Liljeblad, pp. 1877-1880; Tshilongo, V., p. 211 (FWC. 3)

the new king⁵¹⁹. The enthronement ceremony was organized when the custodian arrived with the new fire, which also was used for the purpose of sacrificing in honour of the dead king and the ancestors' spirits⁵²⁰. The new king would distribute the new fire to all his counsellors after the ceremony, who would in turn distribute it to his subjects⁵²¹. The custodian of the sacred fire had to see to it that the fire was not extinguished while the king was still alive - if it did, it was a bad omen and the high priest would be called to prognosticate the cause of the accident⁵²². To kindle it afresh wood from a mopane or ebony tree (*oshithonono*) was put between two pieces of dry wood, which would ignite it⁵²³. The duties of the sacred fire in Owambo kingdoms were to bring blessing to the people, and all animals in the kingdom were protected by it from accidents and sickness. It also protected soldiers in battle, and those who were undertaking long journeys to collect iron ore and salt⁵²⁴. No foreign fire was allowed in the kingdom in olden days; for example, when Andersson and Galton paid their first visit to Ondonga, they lit their fire while waiting for King Nangolo to come and greet them. Nangolo sent an urgent message to them to extinguish their fire, and go to his royal capital to receive the sacred fire of his kingdom⁵²⁵.

Another religious officer is the *master of initiation ceremonies*⁵²⁶. Although they have been organized in varying ways in different Owambo kingdoms, these ceremonies have all symbolized three important things. They were meant, first, to increase fertility amongst the girls being initiated; second, to serve as a transitional stage into adulthood through ritual purification, thus according the girl full status as a

⁵¹⁹ Himanen, p. 4; Kaulinge, p. 22 (FWC. 2); Tshilongo, V., p. 211 (ibid. 3)

⁵²⁰ Himanen, pp. 4-5; Uugwanga, p. 404 (FWC. 3)

⁵²¹ Hahn (1927/28), pp. 18-19; Vedder, p. 154; Himanen, p. 4; Lebzelter, p. 239; Loeb, pp. 47-48

⁵²² Hahn (1927/28), p. 18

⁵²³ Estermann (1976), p. 121; Uugwanga, p. 404 (FWC. 3)

⁵²⁴ Himanen, p. 4

⁵²⁵ Andersson (1987), p. 191; Hahn's Diaries (1837-60), 24.07.1857, No. 135, p. 1049; Uugwanga, p. 359 (FWC. 3)

⁵²⁶ This religious officer is known as *Namunganga* in Ondonga, Uukwambi, and Ongandjera; while he/she is referred to as *omupitifi* in Kwanyama [Estermann (1976), p. 71; Kaulinge, p. 25 (FWC. 2)]. And in both Ombandjas, he/she is known as *okarvandolo* [Estermann (1976), p. 73]. The ceremony itself is known as *ohango* in Ondonga and most parts of western Owamboland; *efundula* in Uukwanyama, Evale, and Kafima; and *olufuko* in Ombandja [Rautanen's Diaries 11.07.1889, HP XXVII:2 (1888-1893); Uugwanga, pp. 393-396 (FWC. 3); Shindondola, p. 351 (ibid.); Nangolo, p. 487 (ibid.); Tshilongo, V., p. 217 (ibid. 3)]

member of the community; third, to link the initiates with ancestral spirits through blood sacrifice made by the king, who slaughtered a beast for the ceremony and sprinkled its blood over the burial shrine of an old king who had gone through the same ritual - and through the drum which is a symbol of all royal ceremonies of Owambo kingdoms⁵²⁷. There was a similar ritual practice among men, but it did not draw great attention like that of the girls, maybe because the men's ceremonies were more informal. While girls' initiation rituals were associated with fertility, those of the boys were mainly a sign of manhood, in which circumcision or incision was performed. This ritual is also dying out, except in remote parts of Owamboland, most probably in southern Angola.

The *head of the salt-pan excursion*⁵²⁸ used to perform the salt-pan ritual - linked to agricultural production and rain-making in Uukwambi, Ongandjera, and Ondonga⁵²⁹ - by sacrificing to ancestors before he sent his men to collect the salt. This excursion was probably one of the most peaceful undertakings of the kingdom, because while it was in progress, no one in the country including the king was allowed to beat up anybody, and no animal could be slaughtered. No one was allowed to be armed during the trip; only a knob-kierie was allowed⁵³⁰. It was only upon the return of the excursion party that the threshing-grounds would be cleared, the cattle stalk-feast would begin, and the new harvest meal would be eaten⁵³¹.

Although this tradition was one of the most important ritual practices of the Ndonga, Ngandjera, and Kwambi kingdoms, it was eventually undermined: first by Christianity, because of its so-called "pagan" character; second, by the European enterprises and their trade monopoly over salt, which undermined its trade value amongst other Owambo communities to which salt had been exported; third, by the

⁵²⁷ Hahn (1927/28), pp. 25-29; Angula, p. 39; Estermann (1976), pp. 70-73; Kaulinge, p. 25 (FWC. 2); Uugwanga, p. 3 (ibid. 3); for further reading on Ohango, see: Tönjes, pp. 132-143; Lebzelter, pp. 228-231

⁵²⁸ The Owambo name *Nashidhiga* derives from "okudhiga" meaning to twirl, because this religious officer was expected to twirl the new fire, which he took to the salt-pan to be used in performing the sacrificial rituals in honour of the spirits of his predecessors.

⁵²⁹ Iihehela, Jason, Mic. No. 19 (ELC. 344); Uugwanga, pp. 386-393 (FWC. 3); Tshilongo, V., p. 217

⁵³⁰ Pettinen (1890-93), 17.07.1891; Liljeblad, pp. 133, 291 & 463

⁵³¹ Pettinen (1890-93), 17.07.1891; Savola (1916), pp. 99-100; Iihehela, Mic. No. 19 (ELC. 344); Uugwanga, pp. 386-393 (FWC. 3); Tshilongo, V., p. 217 (ibid.)

imperial colonial expansion of the borders of the so-called Police Zone⁵³², which put large parts of southern Owamboland behind the red line. The fencing of Etosha not only reduced the size of Owamboland, but it also put constraints on the ritual practices

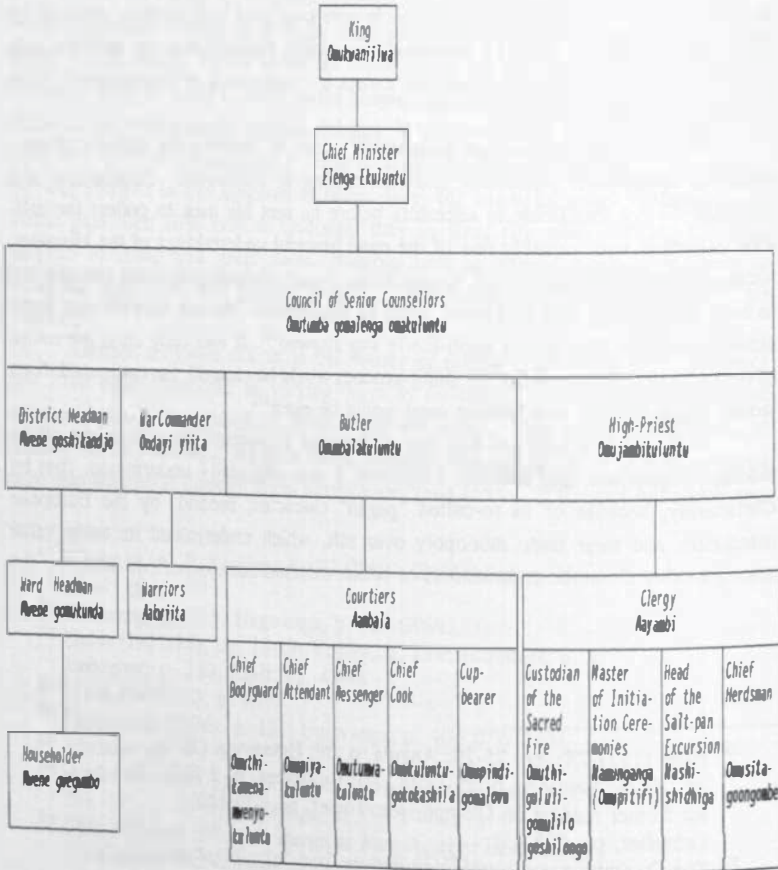


Figure 3: Power Relations in an Owambo Kingdom⁵³³

⁵³² The Police Zone is the area south of the 18 degrees 50' line of latitude, which was drawn during the German colonial period to cut off Owamboland from the south.

⁵³³ Pettinen (1889-1895), 15.08.1890; Savola (1916), pp. 85-97; Hahn (1927/28), pp. 11-24; Närhi, pp. 11-15; Uukunde, Mic.

linked to the salt-pan charms: the *ontsakala*⁵³⁴ herb which was now inaccessible, which accelerated the decay of this traditional practice⁵³⁵. The salt-pan excursion tradition died out in Uukwambi after the abduction of King Iipumbu by the South African troops in 1932, while in Ondonga and Ongandjera it was merely undermined by factors outlined above.

The main task of the *chief herdsman*⁵³⁶ is to look after the royal cattle, milk them and churn butter which he takes to the kingdom. He must know all the cattle by name, and how to eulogize them. He also plays an important role in the religious and economic life of the king by looking after his sacred and profane cattle.

These offices are not hereditary positions. In case of one's death, the successor is chosen according to merits pointed out earlier. Offices were equally distributed to all clans, including Aakwankala. For example, in Ondonga, Ongandjera, Uukwambi, and Uukwanyama, Aakwankala were among the king's bodyguards and wives and were also used as executioners⁵³⁷; in Ongandjera they also served as custodian of the sacred fire of the kingdom⁵³⁸. Traditions suggest that this was done to respect their position as the owners of the land⁵³⁹. The same honour was given to clans who were regarded as the early immigrants. For instance, in Ongandjera the king must as a rule take his wife from the Locust clan or from Aakwankala⁵⁴⁰; this is similar in Uukwambi, where the first wife is selected from the Zebra clan or from Aakwankala; and in Ondonga, where she comes from the Snake and Locust clans or from

No. 89 (ELC. 344); Alweendo, Mic. No. 3 (ibid.); Ashipembe, Mic. No. 10-11 (ibid.); Himanen, pp. 2-3; Tirronen (1986); Kaulinge, pp. 19-22 (FWC. 2)

⁵³⁴ Ontsakala is a herb which produces odorous bulbs, used by Herero women as perfume powder when pounded. This perfume powder is known as *oijizumba* in the Herero language. It was one of the most important export commodities of Ondonga kingdom.

⁵³⁵ Liljeblad, pp. 944 & 1995; Uugwanga, p. 392 (FWC. 3)

⁵³⁶ Estermann (1976), p. 122; Ekandjo, Jeremia, Mic. No. 17 (ELC. 344); Kaulinge, p. 21 (FWC. 2)

⁵³⁷ Andersson (1987), p. 203; Estermann (1976), p. 122; Shindondola, p. 347 (FWC. 2)

⁵³⁸ Iitenge, Mic. No. 7 a & b (ELC. 344)

⁵³⁹ Nameya, in: Hahn, H. C. (1857-1961), Coll. A.450 [SWA], St. U. No. 9, File No. 2/34 [Ovamboland, Customs, History]: "Information on Owambo Chiefs 1909-1942"

⁵⁴⁰ Unlike other Bantu-speakers, the Ngandjera kings adopted Aakwankala traditions of practising monogamy; it was only when the rule was changed by Tshapaka (Amunyela) the son of Tshaningwa that the successive kings began to turn back to polygamy (see p. 179).

Aakwankala⁵⁴¹. War captives were also promoted to high offices, because they were not considered as outsiders; a war captive became a member of the clan of the person who captured him/her - including the Royal clan - and had full right to inherit the king's property upon his death, but was not eligible for the throne. For example, Itamale the son of Ekandjo was captured while young, and grew up at King Iipumbu's royal capital in Uukwambi, where he became a brave war commander⁵⁴². Another example was that of Hamupanda the son of Shiponeni, captured during the rule of King Kambonde the son of Nankwaya in the 1880s. Hamupanda became one of the famous war commanders in Ondonga during the rule of Nehale, who - as a chief counsellor - fought the Germans at Namutoni in 1904⁵⁴³.

To summarize, the foundation of kingdoms in Owamboland was stimulated by five elements: land, people, cattle, corn, and religion. Similar elements have been identified in connection with other African kingdoms. These similarities are an indication that Owambo kingdoms are part of the whole of central African political movement. External influences on Owambo kingdoms were revealed by the fact that most of their founders were of foreign origin: for example, those of Ongandjera, Uukwambi, Uukwanyama and Ombalantu were princes and princesses from Onkumbi; of Uukwaluudhi, from Evale; and of Ondonga, from Ombwenge (the latter was indeed originally from Ehanda). Hence, Angola had served as the nucleus of Owambo royal power. Moreover, the adaptation and modification of political ideas from neighbours of the Owambo enabled their kingdoms to grow and function as independent units, attached to their mother communities only by ritual relationship - through which they fetch fire on the eve of the enthronement ceremony, and rain in case of severe drought.

Royal succession in Owamboland follows the matrilineal principle by which the king is succeeded by his younger brother or his eldest sister's son. Princesses have ascended the throne only in Ongandjera. In the enthronement ceremony for the new king, occasioned by death, a male "slave" was strangled to death and pieces of his flesh mixed with that of a lion and a bull as a rite of power. The ideology of kingship was based on religion, in which the king played a crucial role in maintaining the link between the dead and the living through sacrificial ceremonies. Initiation rites, rain-making ceremonies and the new harvest were the major feasts shared with the dead.

The territories of Owambo kingdoms were defined by the areas of settlement. The central factor regarding the strength of the kingdom was people and land;

⁵⁴¹ Nameya, in: Hahn, *ibid.*; Pettinen (1926/27), pp. 72-75; Amweelo, Mic. No. 6 (ELC. 344)

⁵⁴² Koivu's Coll. (1909-17), HP XIII:1, p. 502; Tshilongo, V., p. 218 (FWC. 3)

⁵⁴³ Uukule, pp. 433-435 (FWC. 2); Kaulinge, p. 30 (*ibid.*); Shindondola, p. 342 (*ibid.*); Uugwanga, p. 368 (*ibid.* 3)

however, there were no expansionist tendencies amongst the kings. Even in the case of war the victors captured cattle and people to strengthen their kingdom, but not territories.

Owambo kingdoms have developed into centralized political institutions over which the king presides. At the centre of his kingdom, there is a council consisting of his chief counsellors, appointed according to merits of age, intelligence, and experience. The council functions as the main judicial, advisory, and legislative body of the kingdom. The king appoints the clergy at the head of religious affairs and the courtiers for the maintenance of the day-to-day household and other activities in the royal residence. The homestead forms the most important unit of the kingdom; it pays tribute in kind, which was and still continues to be the kingdom's main source of wealth and power. There was no standing army, but during a time of war every man who has gone through the rite of passage qualified as a warrior. The office of war commander was a permanent one. As a symbol of the life of the king's subjects, animals and plants, the sacred fire is kindled at the kingdom; it is not allowed to be extinguished - as this would represent a bad omen.

6. DEVELOPMENT OF OWAMBO KINGDOMS (1700-1860)

6.1. Ondonga: Years of Consolidation of Power

According to tradition, the first Ndonga kingdom was founded by members of the Snake clan, who - along with Aakwankala - are still regarded as the owners of the country⁵⁴⁴. Nembulungo the son of Ngwedha was the last king from this clan. He ruled before the invasion of his kingdom by people from Ombwenge under the leadership of Shindongo the son of Namutenya⁵⁴⁵. Mbwenge g'Uule waNakateta, as the Ndonga people called the invader, was said to have come and established his capital near Oshigambo, at a place later known as Ombala ya Mbwenge (the royal capital of Mbwenge)⁵⁴⁶. Mbwenge and his followers used a boat⁵⁴⁷; they paddled along the seasonal river of Oshigambo until they arrived near the capital of Nembulungo at Oshamba. Suspicion arose over these strangers because they used a boat, something unusual in this area⁵⁴⁸. The Ndonga people rose up in resistance under the leadership of Nangombe the son of Mvula (also known as Kayone Mulindi), who fought and defeated these invaders; Mbwenge was killed in this battle and was buried near his capital⁵⁴⁹. Even if Mbwenge did not rule over the whole of Ondonga but only over the people he came with, he is recognized as a ruler. This is probably because the Ndonga people regard Ombwenge as their cradle land. Nangombe, who killed Mbwenge, became the king; he was the first ruler from the Hyena clan⁵⁵⁰. Nangombe's rule was a short-lived episode; nothing much of it is remembered by

⁵⁴⁴ Rautanen's Diaries, 11 July 1889; Nameya, in: Hahn, C. H. (1857-1961), A.450, No. 2/34, "Information on Ovambo Chiefs 1909-1942"; Absai, Mic. No. 24 (ELC. 334); Uugwanga, pp. 353-54 (FWC. 3)

⁵⁴⁵ Laurmaa (1949), p. 48; Uukule, pp. 409-410 (FWC. 2) Uugwanga, p. 356 (ibid. 3)

⁵⁴⁶ Savola (1916), p. 28; Närhi, p. 8; Absai, Mic. No. 24 (ELC. 334); Uukule, p. 410 (FWC. 2); Uugwanga, pp. 356-357 (ibid. 3)

⁵⁴⁷ Missionary Närhi said that during the 1930s, old people claimed to have seen the wreck of this boat in the neighbourhood of Mbwenge's capital (Närhi, p. 8).

⁵⁴⁸ Savola (1924), pp. 27-29; Laurmaa (1949), pp. 48-49; Jantunen, p. 19; Uukule, p. 410 (FWC. 2); Uugwanga, p. 357 (ibid. 3)

⁵⁴⁹ Savola (1924), pp. 28-29; Sckär (1932), pp. 7-8; Ndengu, C., Itope, J. & Nuyoma, P., in: Hahn, C. H. (1909-1942), A.450, No. 9, File No. 2/34; Laurmaa (1949), p. 49; Amutenya, p. 51 Uukule, p. 410 (FWC. 2); Uugwanga, p. 367 (Ibid. 3)

⁵⁵⁰ Laurmaa (1949), p. 48; Uukule, p. 410 (FWC. 2); Uugwanga, p. 357 (ibid. 3); see the Ndonga royal genealogy in Appendix VI (a).

traditions other than his defeat of Mbwenge. He was succeeded by his nephew Nembungu the son of Amutundu.

Nembungu founded his capital at Iinenge⁵⁵¹, named after a treasure hut in which he stored ancient artifacts of the Owambo people, and from where he performed the art of rain-making⁵⁵². He is regarded as one of the famous Ndonga kings, and the founder of the kingdom's structure. He collected all kinds of ancient iron tools, like arrows, bows, spears with two points, pots, etc., from which he selected royal insignia. Then he selected again a group of old men and women, whom he initiated into preserving traditions of the kingdom. Men who were given these responsibilities had to go through initiation ceremonies in which they were circumcised at Omwandi gwaalumentu, a place the king established himself. Women also passed through a similar ritual, but they were said to be sanctified through sexual contact⁵⁵³. To strengthen his kingdom's ideology Nembungu established religious offices, namely the master of initiation ceremonies, the head of salt-pan excursions, the rain-doctor, and the high-priest. He sanctified his royal capital - Iinenge, to serve as a sanctuary for those who were being prosecuted⁵⁵⁴.

During Nembungu's time a meteorite landed in the neighbourhood of his capital, it was regarded as the "stone of the country". No one was allowed to see it, except the elders who had passed through the ritual; it became associated with the art of rain-making⁵⁵⁵. Iinenge became the strength of Ondonga, because all Nembungu's successors went there to collect their royal insignia and to receive blessings from ancestors. The sacred fire of the Ndonga and Kwanyama kingdoms was also collected from Iinenge⁵⁵⁶. Nembungu's burial shrine is there at his capital.

Nangolo the son of Amutenya succeeded his uncle Nembungu, and founded his royal capital at Ondonga around 1820⁵⁵⁷, where his burial shrine is till this day. At the time of his succession, Nangolo unified small, scattered wards which were under the autonomous rule of princes, who did not recognize the central power of the

⁵⁵¹ This name derived from *Enenge* = 'reeds', which symbolize the heads of sorghum and millet in the cult of rain-making [Väänänen's Coll., p. 619; Tirronen (1986), p. 272].

⁵⁵² Vedder, p. 158; Laurmaa (1949), p. 49; Amutenya, pp. 52-53; Uukule, p. 410 (FWC. 2); Uugwanga, pp. 357-358 (ibid. 3)

⁵⁵³ Uugwanga, pp. 380 (FWC. 3)

⁵⁵⁴ Uukule, pp. 410-411 (FWC. 2); Uugwanga, pp. 359, 375-377 (ibid. 3)

⁵⁵⁵ Tirronen (1977) "Nakambalekanene", pp. 56-57; Uugwanga, p. 358 (FWC. 3)

⁵⁵⁶ Liljeblad, pp. 670 & 1881; Uugwanga, p. 358 (FWC. 3); Kaulinge, p. 27 (ibid. 2)

⁵⁵⁷ Ondonga is the name of a ward in Ondonga, probably given as a symbol of Nangolo's fame.

kingdom⁵⁵⁸. To consolidate his power and to stabilize his internal rule, Nangolo eliminated most of the princes leaving behind his step-brother Shipanga the son of Amukwiita, who was eligible for the throne, and his nephew Shikongo the son of Kalulu - whom he did not consider as a threat, because of his physical disabilities⁵⁵⁹. He also made peace with Aakwankala, who became members of his bodyguards.

Nangolo did not only consolidate his internal power, but also strengthened his external influence by defeating Aakwanyama, Aakwambi, and Aangandjera. No kingdom dared to attack him, and as a result his fame rose rapidly amongst his war-torn people⁵⁶⁰. Nangolo was also renowned for his art in rain-making, which he inherited from his uncle Nembungu; according to traditions, the country did not experience hunger during his rule⁵⁶¹.

With the completion and expansion of the Benguela harbour at the beginning of the 19th century, slave trade and the demand for European goods increased in the region and Nangolo became caught up in this exercise. He began to send his trade envoys to sell his subjects as slaves - in addition to ivory - to the Portuguese post south of the Kunene (*omulonga gwaNkwambi*)⁵⁶². The main trading commodities he acquired and which were in demand amongst his people, were glass beads and pearls⁵⁶³. Nangolo also increased trade with his neighbours, bartering for commodities which were not produced in Ondonga. By this time his kingdom had two important export commodities: salt and iron ore. Salt was discovered by Aakwankala during the rule of Nembungu⁵⁶⁴. Iron was a monopoly of Aakwankala, which they bartered with the Ndonga kingdom against tobacco, corn, and calabashes. Apart from trading Aakwankala also paid a yearly tribute in kind to the kingdom, namely iron and copper ore, salt, skins, and game which was brought alive for fear of poison⁵⁶⁵.

Nangolo's kingdom grew in population, power, and wealth. He acquired cattle and people through the wars he waged with his neighbours. This enriched him not only through the increase in his kingdom's population, but also through the payment he got

⁵⁵⁸ Pettinen (1890-93), 11.08.1890

⁵⁵⁹ Pettinen (1890-1893), 11.08.1890; Angula, p. 27; Uukule, p. 412 (FWC. 2); Uugwanga, p. 359 (ibid. 3); see pp. 137-138

⁵⁶⁰ Angula, p. 27; Uugwanga, p. 359 (FWC. 3)

⁵⁶¹ Rautanen's Diaries, 11.07.1889, p. 568

⁵⁶² Hahn's Diaries (1837-69), 17.07.1857, No. 117, p. 1030; Rautanen's Diaries, 11.07.1889, p. 568; Hahn & Rath, p. 302; Angula, p. 28; Uugwanga, p. 359 (FWC. 3)

⁵⁶³ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁴ Pettinen (1890-93), 25.08.1890; Angula, p. 62; Uugwanga, p. 386 (FWC. 3)

⁵⁶⁵ Hahn's Diaries (1837-1860), No. 120, pp. 1033-1034; Hahn & Rath, p. 301; Pettinen (1890-1893), 25.08.1890; Möller, p. 148

from families who ransomed their captives. The increase of wealth was mainly measured in cattle, grain, and the European commodities acquired through trade, of which the most valuable were what became known as the black pearls of Nangolo (*oshikulumona sha Nangolo dh'Amutenya*)⁵⁶⁶.

While at the height of his power Nangolo received Andersson and Galton as the first European travellers to his kingdom in 1851; they wanted a free passage to visit the Kunene River⁵⁶⁷. After their two weeks' stay and trade in Ondonga, Nangolo ordered them to return to Hereroland, by pointing out to them that it was not in accordance with the Ndonga tradition for strangers to come to the kingdom and traverse his country in such a way⁵⁶⁸. One can conclude that these were the beginnings of the direct long-distance trade and cultural contacts with the Ndonga people.

The report made by Andersson and Galton about the state of affairs in the north, and the possibilities of establishing missionary stations there, was hailed enthusiastically by the entire European missionary society. There was, of course, a reason behind this excitement, because the failure of missionary work amongst the Herero people was resulting in near frustration in missionary circles; some, like Hahn, had by that time already started to search for alternatives such as trade in order to secure contacts with people⁵⁶⁹. The frustration became clear in the minutes of the Rhenish missionaries' conference which was convened to consider the matter of sending some missionaries to the north on a fact-finding mission, to investigate the possibility of establishing missionary work there. According to Hahn and Vedder, the minutes of the conference read as follows: "The mission among the Herero has come to an end, and it cannot form a foundation for any efforts amongst the tribes who live in the north"⁵⁷⁰.

Hahn and Rath consequently set out for Owamboland and on 24 July 1857 arrived in Ondonga, where they camped near King Nangolo's royal residence. The king sent them the kingdom's sacred fire and urged them to extinguish theirs, because it was foreign. Hahn and Rath refused to accept the fire, because they regarded it as closely linked to 'heathen' practices⁵⁷¹. Their refusal to accept this important Owambo

⁵⁶⁶ Laurmaa (1949), p. 48; Angula, p. 28; Andersson (1987), p. 204; Uugwanga, pp. 359-360 (FWC. 3)

⁵⁶⁷ Galton, p. 225; Andersson (1968), p. 3; Tirronen (1977), p. 9; Uukule, p. 412 (FWC. 2)

⁵⁶⁸ Andersson (1987), pp. 206-209; Vedder, pp. 295-299; Tirronen (1977), p. 9; Uugwanga, p. 360 (FWC. 3)

⁵⁶⁹ Vedder, p. 307

⁵⁷⁰ Hahn's Diaries (1837-60), 10.03.1856, p. 900; Vedder, pp. 307-308

⁵⁷¹ Hahn's Diaries (1837-1860), No. 135, 24.07.1857, p. 1049; Amutenya, p. 21; see p.

custom made Nangolo suspicious about Hahn and his company; this had cooled down their reception. After they stayed in Ondonga for four days, Nangolo in the company of 200 to 300 armed warriors, went to greet them⁵⁷². After Hahn had explained the purpose of their journey, Nangolo asked for the tribute he had brought for him. Hahn presented the king with the following goods as tribute to his kingdom: two heifers, a fat sheep, a red woollen cap, a piece of dark blue cloth, two scarfs, knives - of which one was a very special one with an iron handle, - pocket knives, a tinder-box, two files, saws, and other small articles⁵⁷³. Nangolo, of course, did not appreciate these things as they were new to him, and demanded to have beads instead, which Hahn and Rath provided.

Nangolo refused to permit Hahn and his company to travel further north through his country to Uukwanyama, on the same basis that he had refused Andersson and Galton⁵⁷⁴. When they left for Otjimbingwe, Nangolo ordered his warriors under the command of his son Namupupa, to follow them until they had crossed the Ndonga kingdom⁵⁷⁵. According to Tirronen, this order was given because Hahn and his companions had seriously violated the Ndonga customs and taboos⁵⁷⁶. But on the other hand, while traditions recognize this fact, they also point out that the king wanted his people to follow Hahn and his companions to capture their booty and their wagons, in compensation for their disregard of the custom⁵⁷⁷. Unfortunately, the Ndonga warriors could not repel the gunfire with their spears, knob-kieries, bows and arrows; the end result for them was great defeat. Nangolo, who was also accompanying his warriors but remained a distance away from the battle, died later at his royal residence.

⁵⁷² Hahn's Diaries (1837-60), No. 141, 28.07.1857, p. 1054

⁵⁷³ Ibid.; Vedder, p. 311

⁵⁷⁴ Hahn, H.: "A Letter to the Editor of S.A.C. Advertiser and C.T. Mail", dated 7 October 1857 and signed by C. Hugo Hahn, p. 6; see p. above

⁵⁷⁵ Vedder, p. 312; Amutenya, p. 23; Uukule, p. 412 (FWC. 2); Uugwanga, pp. 359-361 (ibid. 3)

⁵⁷⁶ Tirronen (1977), p. 10

⁵⁷⁷ Uukule, p. 412 (FWC. 2); Uugwanga, p. 360 (ibid. 3)

6.2. Uukwanyama: Rise of a Kingdom before Mweshipandeka

After the compromise reached at Onehula, the kingdom of Uukwanyama fell under the rule of the Mourners' clan, with Kavonga the son of Haindongo as its first ruler⁵⁷⁸. Aakwanyama thus became united for the first time under one kingdom, with their capital at Onehula. Although not much is known about Kavonga's rule, he was said to have established himself as a priest-king and built a sanctuary hut in his royal residence⁵⁷⁹.

Kavonga was succeeded by Haita the son of Muvale, who ruled from the same royal capital. He is remembered to have been one of the most cruel kings that Uukwanyama ever experienced. Haita was said to have made people cultivate their lands with their fingers; and ordered his counsellors to cut a baobab tree with knives, and women to spread flour on top of the water⁵⁸⁰. The population of Uukwanyama decreased during Haita's rule, because most people fled to neighbouring kingdoms in fear of execution. Hence, his kingdom did not grow in population and in wealth. Haita was killed by his people because of his deeds.

The Kwanyama people suffered a great deal from Haita's rule, because their fields were not properly cultivated for such a long time. After Haita's death, Hautolonde the son of Ndja inherited a devastated country - not only economically, but also in terms of the mistrust and fear that had developed amongst the people during the rule of his predecessor. During his attempt to regain the confidence and unity of his people, the country was struck by hunger; this caused more migration of people to Evale and neighbouring kingdoms⁵⁸¹. The excessive drought that had caused famine in the country made people think of getting a king who possessed the art of rain-making. Hautolonde's brother Nailungu invited a Ndonga prince, Shimbilinga, who had learnt the art of rain-making from his uncle Nembungu the son of Amutundu, to come to Uukwanyama and take over the kingdom from his brother⁵⁸². Nailungu told his

⁵⁷⁸ Kafita, Mic. No. 4 (ELC. 344); Hahn, C. H. (1909-1942), A.450, St. U. No. 8, File No. 2/34; Vedder, pp. 158-160; Angula, p. 32; Kaulinge, pp. 19, 22-23 (FWC. 2); Tshilongo, V., pp. 40-41 (*ibid.* 3); see the Kwanyama royal genealogy in Appendix VI (b).

⁵⁷⁹ Vedder, p. 161; Laurmaa (1949), p. 39; Amutenya, p. 37

⁵⁸⁰ Hahn, C. H. (1909-42), A.450, St. U. No. 8, File No. 2/34; Sckär (1903-20): "Notes Taken From Missionary Conference in Ovamboland 1903-1920", [The Kwanyama Kings], Rynse Missionary; Tønjes, pp. 108-109; Kaluvi, Nicodemus, Mic. No. 2 (ELC. 344); Vedder, pp. 161-62; Amutenya, p. 37; Laurmaa (1949), p. 40; Estermann (1976), p. 52

⁵⁸¹ Hahn, C. H. (1909-62), *op. cit.*; Amutenya, p. 37; Laurmaa (1949), p. 40

⁵⁸² Kafita, Mic. No. 43 (ELC. 344); Hahn, C. H. (1909-62), *op. cit.*

brother Hautolonde to flee the country, but later ordered his men to kill him and enthrone Shimbilinga as the king of Uukwanyama⁵⁸³. Shimbilinga was said to have ruled for a long time, and that strengthened his kingdom's power by defeating strong neighbours of the Kwanyama: the Ovimbundu, the Quilenge, and the Ngalangi⁵⁸⁴.

At the time of Shimbilinga's death, most of the Kwanyama princes were in exile. Haimbili the son of Haufiku was in Mehadilanwa, Okafima and his brother Mulundu was in Lubango. As to their cousins, Shatika the son of Mukwanhuli was hiding in a baobab tree, his brother Muulu was in Ondjindji, and Haihambo and Ngenondje, also sons of Mukwanhuli, were in Uukwanyama with their mother⁵⁸⁵. There was a succession conflict between the sons of Haufiku and those of Mukwanhuli. Haimbili returned to Uukwanyama after the death of Shimbilinga, but his cousin Haihambo chased him out of the country and became king⁵⁸⁶. Haihambo ruled at the same time when Asino the son of lileka was ruling Ongandjera; he asked Asino for help to attack Okafima and kill Haimbili's sons, who were disturbing his rule. After one year Haimbili returned and overthrew him⁵⁸⁷.

Haimbili the son of Haufiku did not ascend the throne after he killed Haihambo, because at that time he was not yet mature. Therefore he invited a Nkumbi prince, Hamangulu the son of Nahambo, to come and take care of the kingdom while he would undergo the initiation rite in Evale, thus obtaining circumcision. Upon his return, Haimbili ousted Hamangulu, and retained his position as the king of Uukwanyama⁵⁸⁸. He strengthened his kingdom by waging wars against his neighbours, like Uukwambi, Okafima, Ondonga, Onkumbi, Ombandja, Onkwankwa, Eshinga, and as far as Okavango⁵⁸⁹. His kingdom grew in population and wealth, but it constantly experienced hunger. During his rule some Portuguese traders had already established themselves in south-western Angola - Bernardino José Brochado amongst the Ngambwe, a Nyaneka-related people, in 1850; and Jacinto, who is believed to be the first European to have crossed into Haimbili's kingdom, in 1856, near the banks of

⁵⁸³ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁴ Laurmaa (1949), p. 40; Amutenya, p. 38

⁵⁸⁵ Kafita, Mic. No. 43 (ELC. 344)

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid.; Hahn, C. H. (1909-62), A.450, Vol. 8, St. U. No. 2/34

⁵⁸⁷ Kafita, op. cit.; Hahn, op. cit.; Loeb, p. 23; Tshilongo, V., pp. 85-86 (FWC. 3)

⁵⁸⁸ Kafita, op. cit.; Shangheta, Noa Kaukungwa, Mic. No. 71 (ibid.); Hahn, C. H. (1909-62), op. cit.; Vedder, p. 163; Amutenya, p. 39; Laurmaa (1949), p. 41

⁵⁸⁹ Shangheta, Mic. No. 71 (ELC. 344); Hahn, C. H. (1909-1962), A.450, Vol. 8, St. U. No. 2/34; Vedder, p. 163; Amutenya, p. 39; Laurmaa (1949), p. 41; Kampungu, pp. 3183-20; Kaulinge, p. 29 (FWC. 2)

Caculuar⁵⁹⁰. It was after these Europeans had set their foot on the Kwanyama kingdom's soil that the famous Kwanyama seer, Shishaama the son of Ndunge, predicted the coming danger the kingdom was facing. Shishaama foresaw the decaying of royal power and the destruction of Owambo kingdoms by foreigners⁵⁹¹. Haimbili was said to have been a peaceful king, who wanted justice to be done to everybody. He committed suicide after he got news from his subjects about the injustices being done toward them by his counsellors⁵⁹². According to Kaulinge, Haimbili was the last king to rule from the primeval royal capital of Onehula⁵⁹³.

After Haimbili's death, the Kwanyama kingdom lost one of its important traditions, that of circumcision. This tradition was important not only for the kingdom's religious life, but also for strengthening external contacts and cultural ties with neighbouring kingdoms in which these rites were performed. The Kwanyama also lost their ancient capital, from which nine kings had reigned.

Haimbili was succeeded by his nephew Haikukutu the son of Sinangola. Haikukutu's rule was short-lived: he ruled for six or seven months only⁵⁹⁴. His nephew Sefeni the son of Mukuju succeeded him. Sefeni had lived in Ondonga with his mother and his step-brother Mweshipandeka, in forced exile imposed on them by his

⁵⁹⁰ Estermann (1976), p. XVIII; *ibid.* (1979), p. 21; Wheelers & Pelissiers, p. 27; Siiskonen, pp. 90-91. Although Siiskonen held that Hahn was the first European to enter the Kwanyama kingdom, this was not the case. According to Noa Kaukungwa Shangheta, from whom Siiskonen claimed to have drawn his information, Hahn was the first white man Noa met, and of course the first to enter the Kwanyama kingdom from the south [Tshilongo, V. (1988): "Autobiography of Noa Kaukungwa Shangeta 1839?-1937", p. 88 (FWC. 2)]. Although no formal or official contact existed before Hahn's visit to Uukwanyama, this cannot be generalized to be the case as far as other Owambo communities - Ombandja, Onkwankwa, Ondongwena, Eshinga and Evale - are concerned. Hahn and Rath (1857) relate in their accounts the information they obtained from their guide Tjizemba, that the Ndonga people traded with the Portuguese in Uukwanyama, but that the latter were not allowed to go across Uukwanyama into other communities (Hahn & Rath, p. 302).

⁵⁹¹ Vedder, pp. 163-164; Laurmaa (1949), p. 42; Amutenya, pp. 39-40; Wheelers & Pelissiers, pp. 26-27; Tirronen (1977), p. 7; Tshilongo, V., pp. 53-54 (FWC. 3)

⁵⁹² Laurmaa (1949), p. 43; Amutenya, p. 40

⁵⁹³ Kaulinge, p. 23 (FWC. 2)

⁵⁹⁴ Kafita, Mic. No. 43 (ELC. 344); Hahn, C. H. (1909-1962), A.450, Vol. 8, St. U. No. 2/34; Amutenya, p. 40; Laurmaa (1949), p. 43

uncle Haimbili⁵⁹⁵. Sefeni ruled for almost three years; during this period, he waged several wars against King Mbinga of Evale and King Mutumbulwa of Big-Ombandja⁵⁹⁶. By the time of his death the Kwanyama kingdom had been badly affected by the frequent successions, which undermined its immediate chances of recovering the economic power and political unity it enjoyed during the rule of Haimbili.

When Mweshipandeka the son of Shaningika succeeded his brother, the political and economic power of the kingdom was on the decline. He ascended the throne in 1862 and founded his capital at Ondjiva. To strengthen his kingdom, Mweshipandeka waged war against his neighbours. By this time trade with the Portuguese had increased; the commodities which were in demand from them were mainly spirits, glass beads, and pearls. Though available guns did not attract the Owambo buyer's attention - and not because the trade links were limited, as Siiskonen concluded⁵⁹⁷. Rather, the Owambo only bought what they did not produce themselves, as Möller correctly observed⁵⁹⁸; that is why guns were not to their taste - they had their own weapons, which still proved effective. The demand for firearms in Owamboland began when the Owambo experienced their use against them by the Nama raiders - in Ondonga in 1852, and when King Shikongo the son of Kalulu sought for assistance from the Nama leader Jonker Afrikaner in 1858, and in Ongandjera and Uukwanyama in 1862⁵⁹⁹. In fact, Mweshipandeka captured his first guns and horses from these raiders⁶⁰⁰. After that, the gun became an important commodity in the trade between Aakwanyama and the Europeans.

Mweshipandeka strengthened the Kwanyama kingdom during his rule. New cultural contacts and trade relations with several European travellers and missionaries brought such commodities and articles as were needed, hence introducing new cultural elements into the Kwanyama society. Apart from meeting Hahn in 1866 at his capital, Mweshipandeka was also visited by Andersson and Green in 1867⁶⁰¹. In 1871 he

⁵⁹⁵ Amutenya, p. 41; Laurmaa (1949), p. 43; Loeb, p. 26

⁵⁹⁶ Hahn, C. H. (1909-62), *op. cit.*; Amutenya, p. 41; Laurmaa (1949), p. 43; Tshilongo, V., p. 85 (FWC. 3)

⁵⁹⁷ Siiskonen (1990), p. 92

⁵⁹⁸ Möller, p. 91

⁵⁹⁹ "Carl Hugo Hahn Tagebücher 1837-1860", Part III: 1852-1855, edited by Lau, B. (1985), p. 598; Vedder, pp. 269-272; Loeb, p. 28; Goldblatt, I. (1971): "History of South-West Africa", p. 29; Tirronen (1977), p. 10; Lau, B. (1987): "Namibia in Jonker Afrikaner's Time", p. 41

⁶⁰⁰ Sckär (1903-20), p. 2; Laurmaa (1949), p. 44; Amutenya, p. 42; Loeb, p. 28

⁶⁰¹ Andersson (1875), p. 231; Sckär (1903-20), p. 20; Vedder, p. 164; Möller, p. 187

invited a Finnish missionary, K.L. Tolonen, to Uukwanyama, where the latter built himself a house in the neighbourhood of the royal capital. Like Shikongo in Ondonga, Mweshipandeka thought that the word for 'missionary' - "*omuhongi*" in the Herero language, which literally meant an excavator or pot-maker in Owambo languages - was associated with a certain craft; that was why the king wanted missionary Tolonen to become a gun repairer and producer⁶⁰². Mweshipandeka died in 1885 after he had ruled for 23 years.

6.3. Uukwambi: Foreign Influence to 1875

The Kwambi until this day regard themselves to be people of Ondonga origin, who - after migrating into their present home - fell under the rule of Aakwankala. The immigrants entered into agreements with Aakwankala, under which they accepted the offer that they could establish their kingdom, but it would be under the control of Aakwankala⁶⁰³. Mukwambi established his royal capital at Ondangwa. After his death, he was succeeded by Nakano, Mbulungundju, and Niigogo the son of Natsheya; they ruled from their capital Ontuli⁶⁰⁴. But these last three kings are regarded as Aakwankala, because part of the agreement was that every Kwambi king was obliged to marry a Kwankala woman, so that Aakwankala could exert their influence over the kingdom in this way⁶⁰⁵. Hence Nakano, Mbulungundju, and Niigogo were born out of the intermarriage between Aakwankala women and Owambo men; according to the Owambo tradition, the latter were the name-givers, as one can also tell from their Bantu names. But something that is interesting to note in this cultural interaction and assimilation is the Bantu-speakers' acceptance of the double descent; because although they were matrilineal, they accepted the paternal line of descent - most probably because Aakwankala followed it. This might also have been the reason why this double descent pattern of succession did not last in Uukwambi, when Neyema ascended the throne.

⁶⁰² Kaulinge, V.: "On the First Missionaries in Uukwanyama", in: Hhd:1, "Other Records Concerning Mission Work in Africa (1876-1946)", p. 456; Nestori Väänänen's Collection (1927-1930): "The History of the Missionary Work in Ovamboland", Hp XXXIX:1-2, p. 622; Tirronen (1977), p. 35

⁶⁰³ Amweelo, Mic. No. 6 (ELC. 344); Laurmaa, Hp XV:1, p. 515; Amakutuwa, p. 125 (FWC. 1); Kandongo, p. 131 (ibid.); Tshilongo, V., p. 251 (ibid. 3)

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁵ Nameya, in: Hahn, C. H. (1909-62), A.450, St. U. No. 9, File No. 2/34; Tshilongo, V., p. 251 (FWC. 1)

After the death of Niigogo, the throne was ascended by Neyema, who belonged to the Zebra clan which came from Ondonga⁶⁰⁶. Neyema commanded the Kwambi people to fight against Aakwankala and end their domination over their kingdom. Aakwankala were defeated and chased out of Uukwambi, and Neyema made new laws which forbade them to settle amongst "Aayamba". Those Aakwankala who remained in Uukwambi were to serve as "slaves" in his court⁶⁰⁷. Neyema established his capital at Oshitundu, named after the Zebra clan, because all those who ruled from this place would belong to that clan⁶⁰⁸. This was the first real conquest which had taken place in Owamboland.

The Zebra clan rule lasted only for three generations: after Neyema's death, Nuyoma the son of Amutako succeeded him, and then Nakwedhi. It was during Nakwedhi's rule that an attractive Nkumbi princess called Mukwiilongo came into Uukwambi; he asked her to marry him and promised the country to her as bride-wealth⁶⁰⁹. Mukwiilongo was said to have come at the same time as Niilwa, the founder of the Ngandjera kingdom; both princesses belonged to the same clan⁶¹⁰. Mukwiilongo married Nakwedhi and gave birth to two boys - Ashipala and Nakantu. After Nakwedhi's death the Zebra clan no longer claimed the succession, as the country had been given to Mukwiilongo and its rule fell into the matrilineal succession of her clan -the Royal one⁶¹¹.

Thus, the Kwambi kingdom fell into the hands of the Nkumbi rulers: Ashipala the son of Nakwedhi succeeded his father and became the first ruler from the Royal clan. He established his capital at Ekamba, where he hid a stone under a mopane tree as a symbol of power⁶¹². Ashipala established a strong kingdom; first, he laid down rules and laws governing his kingdom, enacting nine laws⁶¹³. Ashipala was a Kwambi king famed for his braveness. He waged wars against their powerful neighbour Ongandjera, and he also attacked Ombalantu and Ondonga⁶¹⁴. The Kwambi people until this day eulogize themselves by Ashipala the son of Nakwedhi.

⁶⁰⁶ Laurmaa, Hp XV:1, p. 515; Amakutuwa, p. 125 (FWC. 1); Kandongo, p. 131 (ibid); Tshilongo, V., p. 255 (ibid. 3)

⁶⁰⁷ Laurmaa, Hp XV:1, p. 515; Amakutuwa, p. 125 (FWC. 1); Tshilongo, V., p. 255 (ibid. 3)

⁶⁰⁸ Kandongo, p. 131 (FWC. 1); Tshilongo, V., p. 256 (Ibid. 3)

⁶⁰⁹ Laurmaa, Hp XV:1, p. 515; Natshima, Loide & Eelu, Kagetuza, p. 138 (FWC. 1); Tshilongo, V., p. 259 (Ibid. 3)

⁶¹⁰ Laurmaa, Hp XV:1, p. 515; Tshilongo, V., p. 260 (FWC. 3)

⁶¹¹ Laurmaa, Hp XV:1, p. 515; Tshilongo, p. 261 (FWC. 3)

⁶¹² Laurmaa, Hp XV:1, p. 515; Tshilongo, V., pp. 261-62 (FWC. 3)

⁶¹³ Tshilongo, V., pp. 263-265 (FWC. 3); see Appendix V

⁶¹⁴ Laurmaa, Hp XV:1, p. 515; ibid. (1949), p. 57; Amutenya, . 62; Tshilongo, V., p. 266 (FWC. 3)

Ashipala was succeeded by his brother Nakantu, who established his capital at Otshima near Oshitundu⁶¹⁵. Nakantu was already an old man when he ascended the throne, but he strengthened his kingdom through the war he waged against his neighbours⁶¹⁶. Mukwiilongo did not have a girl, who could have borne children so that the succession of the kingdom could continue through the matrilineal line of descent. Hence the kingdom did not have an heir after the death of Nakantu. A prince was called from Onkumbi to come and take over the kingdom.

Nuukata the son of Tshiinga - Nakantu's cousin - came from Onkumbi to ascend the throne; he established his capital at Iiyale⁶¹⁷. Though his capital remained at Iiyale, Nuukata did not stay in one place: he moved from place to place, and wherever he stayed, these places became sacred because he made them sanctuaries (*Omatambo*)⁶¹⁸. Nuukata was known to be a priest-king, who presided over his kingdom's rituals. He sanctified many places in Uukwambi; the most important of all was the sacred stone (*emanya lyoshilongo*) that he hid in his first field at Iiyale - it became a symbol of succession⁶¹⁹. Although Ashipala hid a similar stone, it did not gain popularity like that of Nuukata. All the kings who succeeded Nuukata were taken to Iiyale to find the stone before they were enthroned; even Iipumbu, the last Kwambi king, went through this ritual practice⁶²⁰.

Nuukata most probably inherited the country at a time when killings were reaching an alarming stage, and he found it necessary to create such sanctuaries to save the lives of those convicted by kings. He actually strengthened the religious belief of the Kwambi people, because until this day such places are still regarded as sacred, despite the growing spirit of Christianity. Nuukata was popular amongst his people.

Nuukata was succeeded by his cousin Iilonga the son of Nyango - who founded his capital at Iino⁶²¹. During Iilonga's rule his kingdom was overrun by the Ngandjera people. By this time, there were few Aakwankala in the Kwambi kingdom after Neyema had chased most of them out; those who remained were treated as slaves. The Ngandjera exploited this situation and allied themselves with Aakwankala, with

⁶¹⁵ Laurmaa, Hp XV:1, p. 515; Tshilongo, V., p. 267 (FWC. 3)

⁶¹⁶ Ibid.

⁶¹⁷ Nameya, in: Hahn (1909-62), A.450, St. U. No. 9, File No. 2/34; Kandongo, p. 131 (FWC. 1); Tshilongo, V., p. 268 (Ibid. 3)

⁶¹⁸ Nameya, in: Hahn (1909-62), op. cit.; Amutenya, pp. 62-63

⁶¹⁹ Laurmaa, Hp XV:1, p. 515; Nameya, in: Hahn (1909-62), op. cit.; Amakutuwa, pp. 125-26 (FWC. 1); Tshilongo, V., p. 268 (Ibid. 3)

⁶²⁰ Laurmaa, Hp XV:1, p. 515; *ibid.* (1949), p. 58; Tshilongo, V., p. 211 (FWC. 3)

⁶²¹ Laurmaa, Hp XV:1, p. 515; *ibid.* (1949), p. 58; Amutenya, p. 63; Kandongo, p. 131 (FWC. 1); Amakutuwa, p. 126 (*ibid.*); Tshilongo, V., p. 270 (*ibid.* 3)

whom they attacked Lilonga's kingdom⁶²². Although the Kwambi people were humiliated, the Ngandjera also defeated most of the other Owambo kingdoms with the help of poison they obtained from Aakwankala⁶²³. The Ngandjera people applied for the first time the use of poison on arrow-points in human warfare. With this new technique, they dominated Owamboland for a long time. During that time, they established their cattle-posts in Uukwanyama and Ondonga, where until this day there still exist what are known as the Ngandjera wells, near places where they had those cattle-posts⁶²⁴.

Tshikesho the son of Nyango became king after his brother's death, and ruled from the same capital⁶²⁵. Tshikesho inherited a devastated country as a result of the pillage caused by the Ngandjera wars against his kingdom, which he was also unable to win. His kingdom remained under the Ngandjera slavery until he died⁶²⁶.

The kingdom of Uukwambi experienced a terrible time, a period of foreign domination and influence that almost shook its political stability. Tshikongo the son of Nyango, who ascended the throne after his brother Tshikesho's death, was said to have had a beautiful wife, whom the Ngandjera King Amunyela (Tshapaka), the son of Tshaningwa, wanted. Amunyela sent a message to Tshikongo to hand over his wife to him, so that he could marry her. When Tshikongo refused to surrender his wife to the Ngandjera king, the latter declared war against him. According to traditions, Amunyela did not win the battle as he thought he would, because by then the Kwambi had also allied themselves with Aakwankala and had acquired poisonous arrows from them⁶²⁷. Tshikongo strengthened his kingdom when he finally defeated the Ngandjera, and thus liberated his people from Ngandjera slavery. He also ruled from Iino. Amunyela was later killed by the Ndonga warriors, when they attacked the Ngandjera kingdom with the help of Jan Jonker Afrikaner in 1862, under the command of Amoomo the son of Katondoka⁶²⁸.

⁶²² Laurmaa, Hp XV:1, p. 515; *ibid.* (1949), p. 58; Amutenya, p. 63; Amakutuwa, p. 126 (FWC. 1); Tshilongo, V., p. 270 (*ibid.* 3)

⁶²³ *Ibid.*

⁶²⁴ Koivu, Hp XIII:1, p. 502; Amakutuwa, p. 126 (FWC. 1); Tshilongo, V., p. 270 (*ibid.* 3)

⁶²⁵ Kandongo, p. 131 (FWC. 1)

⁶²⁶ Laurmaa, Hp XV:1, p. 515; *ibid.* (1949), p. 58; Amutenya, p. 63; Amakutuwa, p. 126 (FWC. 1); Tshilongo, V., p. 271 (*ibid.* 3)

⁶²⁷ Laurmaa, Hp XV:1, p. 515; *ibid.* (1949), p. 58; Amutenya, p. 63; Amakutuwa, p. 126 (FWC. 1); Tshilongo, V., p. 271 (*ibid.* 3)

⁶²⁸ Liljeblad, p. 1467; Nameya, Mic. No. 56 (ELC. 344); Iitenge, Mic. No. 7 a & b (*ibid.*); Hahn's Diaries (1837-1860), Part III: 1852-1855, p. 598; Andersson (1987), p. 163; Vedder, pp. 269-272; Loeb, p. 28; Goldblatt, p. 29; Tirronen (1977), p. 10; Uukule, p. 421 (FWC. 2); Himanen, p. 15; Hahn's Coll. A.450, St. U.

Nuyoma the son of Iipumbu succeeded Tshikongo; he ruled from the same capital at Iino around 1863, where his royal burial shrine still is to this day⁶²⁹. There were two stones under a tree in his field, called "rain eggs" and widely known as "the eggs of Nuutoni"; these "eggs" were significant in discerning the truth. It was believed that if somebody swore by the "eggs" saying "by the rain thunderstorm, by the eggs of Nuutoni", then he was telling the truth; but if he lied he would die from the lightning⁶³⁰.

Iipumbu the son of Nangaku became the next king in the royal succession of Uukwambi, after the death of King Nuyoma, and founded his capital at Okashangu⁶³¹. It was said that he was a friendly king, and everybody was welcomed in his capital; and also that he cared for the poor⁶³². His rule was short-lived. Tshikesho the son of Eelu succeeded him, and founded his capital at Onambashu. He was killed by his brother Nuyoma the son of Heelu⁶³³ - who succeeded him⁶³⁴. Both Tshikesho and Nuyoma had been in exile in Uukwanyama, imposed on them by King Nuyoma the son of Iipumbu, but returned to Uukwambi after an amnesty was extended to them by King Iipumbu the son of Nangaku⁶³⁵.

Nuyoma the son of Heelu established his capital at Iihanguti, but later moved it to Onatshiku⁶³⁶. He was the first Kwambi king to be met by Green, the elephant hunter, in 1866 on his journey to the Kunene River. In his letter to missionary Hahn, Green wrote about his impressions: "...Chief Nahumo or Huimba... This tribe lives

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⁶²⁹ Laurmaa, Hp XV:1, p. 515; Kandongo, p. 131 (FWC. 1);

Amakutuwa, p. 126 (ibid.); Tshilongo, V., p. 271 (ibid. 3)

⁶³⁰ Laurmaa, Hp XV:1, p. 515; Amakutuwa, p. 126 (FWC. 1); Tshilongo, V., p. 271 (ibid. 3)

⁶³¹ Kandongo, p. 131 (FWC. 1)

⁶³² Nameya, in: Hahn (1909-62), A.450, St. U. No. 9, File No. 2/34; Laurmaa, Hp XV:1, p. 515; ibid. (1949), p. 59; Amakutuwa, p. 126 (FWC. 1); Tshilongo, V., p. 273 (ibid. 3)

⁶³³ The surname of these two brothers is Eelu; but it changed through the Kwanyama dialect: Tshikesho sh'Eelu, but Nauyoma ua Heelu. In the Kwanyama language, when the genitive form follows two vowels as in the case of the latter, then the next letter has to change into a consonant.

⁶³⁴ Laurmaa, Hp XV:1, p. 515; ibid. (1949), p. 59; Amakutuwa, p. 126 (FWC. 1); Kandongo, p. 131 (ibid.); Tshilongo, V., p. 273 (ibid. 3)

⁶³⁵ Laurmaa, Hp XV:1, p. 515; Kandongo, p. 131 (FWC. 1); Amakutuwa, pp. 126-127 (ibid.); Tshilongo, V., p. 273 (ibid. 3)

⁶³⁶ Nameya, in: Hahn, C. H. (1909-1962), A.450, St. U. No. 9, File No. 2/34; Kandongo, p. 131 (FWC. 1); Tshilongo, V., p. 276 (ibid. 3)

about 30 miles from the western extremity of Ondonga and ranks between the Ovambo (meaning Ondonga) and the Ovangandjera. The chief is the most civilized of any of the chiefs of tribes we have visited, not even excepting Shikongo. He has discarded the ornaments and skins worn so universally by the other chiefs and adopts the European costume⁶³⁷." Four years later Kurvinen, Weikkola, Rautanen, and Piirainen, the first Finnish missionaries, arrived in Uukwambi; they found Nuyoma already involved in the slave trade⁶³⁸. According to Kurvinen, Nuyoma had some European traders residing at his capital when they arrived⁶³⁹. There was a struggle between the traders and the missionaries; the traders felt that they had been the first to come into Uukwambi and to build a European-type house for Nuyoma - which he wanted for Charlotte, an English girl with whom he fell in love⁶⁴⁰. The traders, in fear of losing their position and market, made it clear to the missionaries that they had already "civilized" Nuyoma before the latter came.

Although Nuyoma was friendly to Europeans, his reputation amongst his people, when told until this day, sends chills down one's spine. Nuyoma waged war against other Owambo kingdoms - Ombandja, Uukwaluudhi and Evale - whence he captured cattle as well as people, whom he sold as slaves to the Portuguese. He recruited some of the captives, especially boys, into a robbery squad known as *Aanyuni*, which terrorized, killed, and captured people and cattle throughout the country⁶⁴¹. Nuyoma never waged war against Uukwanyama, because he considered it as his home - in fact it was where he grew up while in exile. He probably miscalculated, because the acts of terror against his people did not strengthen his rule: instead, most people began to move to neighbouring kingdoms in fear of prosecution and being sold as slaves to the Portuguese traders⁶⁴². This probably explained the low population of Uukwambi during 1876 as estimated by Palgrave⁶⁴³.

Nuyoma was most probably being enticed by the presence of traders at his royal courts. He continued to sell his people as slaves in exchange for guns and ammunition,

⁶³⁷ Hahn's Diaries (1837-1860), Part IV: 1856-1860, p. 1227

⁶³⁸ Kurvinen, P. (1878): "Seitsemän ensimmäistä vuotta Lähetyssaamajana eli iloja ja suruja Afrikasta",
Vihko II, pp. 49-51

⁶³⁹ Kurvinen, P. (1879): "Seitsemän ensimmäistä vuotta Lähetyssaamajana eli iloja ja suruja Afrikasta",
Vihko III, pp. 20-21

⁶⁴⁰ Kurvinen (1879), pp. 21-22; Amakutuwa, p. 127 (FWC. 1)

⁶⁴¹ Laurmaa, Hp XV:1, p. 515; Nameya, in: Hahn's Collection, A. 450,
St. U. No. 9, File No. 2/34; Tshilongo, V., p. 276 (FWC. 3)

⁶⁴² Laurmaa, Hp XV:1, p. 515; Nameya, in: Hahn's Coll., op. cit;
Tshilongo, V., p. 277 (FWC. 3)

⁶⁴³ Palgrave, p. 49; see Appendix I

and alcohol. For instance, missionary Rautanen noted that in 1870, Nuyoma bought an old cannon at the cost of 60 head of cattle; one horse for 6 slaves and 10 head of cattle; and on another occasion one horse for 140 head of cattle⁶⁴⁴. Writing on the impact of long-distance trade on the socio-economic changes in Owamboland, Siiskonen did not see this as outright exploitation. Instead he concluded that the Owambo were ignorant about what he called advanced technology in the manufacturing of firearms⁶⁴⁵. Despite the fact that Nuyoma and other Owambo kings were attracted by the so-called advanced technology, there was more to the high pricing of these commodities. First, traders were involved in outright exploitation of the African people. Second, this brutal exploitation was necessary for traders to pay back their loans, and simultaneously to make very high profits for themselves. Third, it resulted in weakening the economic base of the kingdoms, making kings powerless and dependent on the European market. Nuyoma's power and control over his people was indeed undermined by these factors.

Another factor worth noting is that Siiskonen's study pointed to Nuyoma preventing missionaries from preaching to people other than himself. Here Siiskonen concluded that Nuyoma wanted missionaries to serve as his personal advisors⁶⁴⁶. This is sheer speculation, unrelated to the historical reality which was characterized mainly by uncertainty. First, Owambo kings were not used to people coming into their kingdoms and freely mixing with their subjects in such a way, especially when they began to attract big crowds. Second, Nuyoma was afraid to lose his power and control over his subjects though he managed to control traders and missionaries alike, as Siiskonen pointed out earlier⁶⁴⁷. The reason for his fear was that in Owambo kingdoms, unlike in the European monarchies of the Middle Ages, every person who resided in the kingdom was regarded as a subject of that kingdom and was eligible for any function or position in the kingdom, like the indigenous people were. It must never be forgotten, as demonstrated earlier, that it was the war captives and other foreigners who were often in better positions than the kingdom's own subjects.

The internal relations with neighbouring kingdoms were uninterrupted by the presence of traders in Uukwambi. During his rule, Nuyoma gave political refuge to an Ombandja, Prince Haikela the son of Namanyungu, who was forced into exile by his uncle Nambinga the son of Shishwa. Nuyoma trained warriors and gave them to Haikela to go and overthrow his uncle⁶⁴⁸. After this successful undertaking, Nuyoma sent his warriors to attack Uukwaluudhi and capture cattle and prisoners to finance his

⁶⁴⁴ Tirronen (1977), p. 32; see also Siiskonen (1990), pp. 195-197

⁶⁴⁵ Siiskonen (1990), p. 195

⁶⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 126

⁶⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 192

⁶⁴⁸ Tshilongo, V., p. 278 (FWC. 3); Shikongo, pp. 316 & 322 (ibid. 2)

trade. But while his warriors were in Uukwaluudhi, the people of Evale attacked and almost destroyed his kingdom⁶⁴⁹. In revenge, Nuyoma entered into an alliance with Mweshipandeka and with Haikela of Ombandja, joined their forces and attacked Evale; they captured many cattle and people⁶⁵⁰. Although the Kwambi kingdom lost most of its people, and its power and influence declined during Nuyoma's rule, he was favoured by the weak position of the Ngandjera from which they did not recover.

6.4. Ongandjera: Secrets of its Power

As indicated earlier Oshamba served as the nucleus of all Owambo kingdoms; like Uukwanyama and Uukwambi, Ongandjera was populated from Ondonga. According to traditions, when Bantu-speakers arrived in the area of the seasonal river of Tamanca and founded their cattle-posts there, they encountered Aakwankala⁶⁵¹. The two parties entered into an agreement to stay peacefully together⁶⁵². However, when the Ngandjera population increased, they turned against Aakwankala, fought them and drove them out of the country⁶⁵³.

Although the Bantu-speakers established permanent settlements in the area later known as Ongandjera, they did not found a kingdom. After the defeat of Aakwankala and the death of Ngandjera, Mangundu the son of Ndjalo became the leader of all the clans. After some time, Mangundu married a Nkumbi princess, Niilwa⁶⁵⁴. After his death the royal succession followed Niilwa's clan - the Royal one. Her son Nangombe took over the kingdom which his mother had founded. Nangombe strengthened his kingdom by unifying both Aakwankala and Aayamba under his kingdom as equals. Aakwankala served in his kingdom as bodyguards and as custodians of the sacred fire; it was during his rule that many Ngandjera people intermarried with Aakwankala⁶⁵⁵.

⁶⁴⁹ Amutenya, p. 74; Tshilongo, V., p. 281 (FWC. 3)

⁶⁵⁰ Amutenya, p. 74; Tirronen (1977), pp. 28-29; Tshilongo, V., p. 281 (FWC. 3)

⁶⁵¹ Pettinen (1926/27), pp. 53-54; Iitenge, Mic. No. 36 (ELC. 334); Amweelo, Mic. No. 6 (ibid.); Laurmaa (1949), p. 21; Amutenya, pp. 65-66

⁶⁵² Iitenge, Mic. No. 36 (ELC. 334); Laurmaa (1949), p. 22

⁶⁵³ Iitenge, Mic. No. 36 (ELC. 334)

⁶⁵⁴ Liljeblad, p. 903; Laurmaa (1949), p. 22; Amutenya, p. 69; Iiyego, Mic. No. 35 (ELC. 344); Nameya, Mic. No. 56 (ibid.); Iitenge, Mic. No. 7 a & b (ibid.)

⁶⁵⁵ Liljeblad, p. 903; Laurmaa (1949), p. 64; Amutenya, p. 69; Iiyego, Mic. No. 35 (ELC. 344); Nameya, Mic. No. 56 (ibid.); Iitenge, Mic. No. 7 a & b (ibid.); Estermann (1976), p. 122

Economically Nangombe's kingdom became strong because it had skilled blacksmiths, who probably came from Onkumbi along with the founders of the kingdom. They obtained iron and copper ore from Aakwankala, from which they produced daggers, spears, bracelets, anklets and many other iron articles for barter and local consumption⁶⁵⁶. The Ngandjera economy grew also in the field of animal husbandry - even if Kalle Koivu stated that part of this wealth was derived from cattle raids against other Owambo kingdoms⁶⁵⁷. It should be remembered that these people were traditionally more pastoralists than agriculturalist; the latter became a complementary occupation when the Nkumbi rulers came into the country (see pp. 92-93 above).

Nangombe did not have an heir, since his brother Kanzi had left Ongandjera after their father's death, due to the succession dispute between them. Amatundu the son of Nima - who belonged to the Zebra clan which ruled Uukwambi before Ashipala - succeeded him⁶⁵⁸. Nothing much is remembered about Amatundu's rule, most probably because he was ruling on a temporary basis while an heir was coming from Onkumbi. Niita the daughter of Iitula succeeded Amatundu; she ruled together with her two sisters, Nuunyango and Nandigolo⁶⁵⁹. Nandigolo was the only one who produced heirs to the throne; after their rule her child Nkandi the son of Amwaama thus became king. Nkandi was said to have been infamous amongst his people. His unpopularity forced him to abandon his position as the king of Ongandjera and migrate to Uukwaluudhi; his sister Nangombe succeeded him⁶⁶⁰.

Nangombe the daughter of Amwaama was married to another royal, Prince Iileka the son of Uugwanga, and they ruled the country together. They strengthened their relationship with Aakwankala, and with their help defeated most Owambo kingdoms. Nangombe and Iileka were the first to use poison in their warfare. They probably ruled in the time of the Kwambi Kings Nuukata the son of Tshinga and Iilonga the son of Nyango, because it was during the rule of Iilonga that the Ngandjera attacked and defeated the Kwambi people⁶⁶¹. The events surrounding the rule of Nangombe and Iileka could also be explained by the events which took place in their kingdom after they sanctified many places; they were given praise names whereby

⁶⁵⁶ Angula, pp. 36-37

⁶⁵⁷ Koivu, Hp XIII:1, p. 507

⁶⁵⁸ Laurmaa (1949), p. 64; Amutenya, p. 69

⁶⁵⁹ Nameya, Mic. No. 56 (ELC. 334); Iiyego, Mic. No. 35 (ibid.)

⁶⁶⁰ Laurmaa (1949), p. 65; Amutenya, p. 69; Nameya, Mic. No. 56 (ELC. 334); Iiyego, Mic. No. 35 (ibid.)

⁶⁶¹ Hahn's Coll. A.450, St. U. No. 8, File No. 2/34; Laurmaa (1949), p. 65; Amutenya, p. 69; Nameya, Mic. No. 56 (ELC. 344); Iiyego, Mic. No. 35 (ibid.)

Nangombe became known as Mukatha, and her husband as Nambula⁶⁶². Both corresponded with Nuukata's eulogy names. By the time of their death, the kingdom of Ongandjera was the most powerful of all; its wealth grew and its population increased as a result of the cattle and people captured during their war campaigns against other Owambo kingdoms. The Ngandjera people indeed acquired too many cattle, so that a demand arose to find alternative grazing areas, and they established new cattle-posts in kingdoms they defeated⁶⁶³.

Nangombe was succeeded by her sister Namatsi⁶⁶⁴. Nothing much is known about Namatsi's rule; but she also strengthened the kingdom, because the Ngandjera kingdom did not experience any decline until the defeat of Amunyela (Tshapaka) the son of Tshaningwa, by the Kwambi King Tshikongo the son of Nyango.

Tshaanika (Amatundu) the son of Iileka succeeded his mother's sister Namatsi. He was a great seer; he predicted the coming of Europeans and the enslavement of the Ngandjera people⁶⁶⁵. His brother Asino ascended the throne after his death. Asino continued the tradition laid down by his parents and strengthened his kingdom by waging wars against his neighbours⁶⁶⁶. Asino was succeeded by his brother Amwaama, who continued to build and strengthen the Ngandjera kingdom⁶⁶⁷. The throne was then ascended in turn by their nephews - the grandchildren of Niipindi the daughter of Iileka, and children of Nandigolo the daughter of Iithete - over four successive reigns⁶⁶⁸ [see Appendix IV (d)].

When Amunyela (Tshapaka) the son of Tshaningwa ascended the throne, the Ngandjera kingdom had already been at the height of its royal prosperity for over three generations. Its power grew with the increase of its population and wealth, enriched by captives and cattle gained from wars against its neighbours. Before Amunyela's rule, no polygyny had been practised among any of his predecessors. Amunyela was said to be the first to have many wives. His mother, Namatsi the daughter of Tshiimi, warned him that if he did not get rid of his wives and choose only one with whom he would be enthroned as the king of Ongandjera, then he would die from the burning sun⁶⁶⁹. Amunyela attacked Uukwambi, by then under the rule of King Tshikongo the son of Nyango, because he wanted to marry Tshikongo's beautiful wife. But his

⁶⁶² Nameya, Mic. No. 56 (ELC. 344); Iiyego, Mic. No. 35 (ibid.)

⁶⁶³ Hahn's Coll., op. cit.; Savola (1916), p. 30

⁶⁶⁴ Nameya, Mic. No. 56 (ELC. 334); Iiyego, Mic. No. 35 (ibid.)

⁶⁶⁵ Liljebblad, p. 683; Laurmaa (1949), p. 65

⁶⁶⁶ Hahn's Coll., op. cit.; Nameya, Mic. No. 56 (ELC. 344); Iiyego, Mic. No. 35 (ibid.)

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁸ Nameya, Mic. No. 56 (ELC. 344); Iiyego, Mic. No. 35 (ibid.); Laurmaa (1949), p. 65; Amutenya, p. 69

⁶⁶⁹ litenge, Mic. No. 7 a & b (ELC. 344); Liljebblad, p. 684

warriors were defeated, and this was the beginning of the decline of Ngandjera power and domination over other Owambo kingdoms⁶⁷⁰. Not long after Amunyela's defeat, in 1862, the Ndonga-Nama joint forces burnt down his capital, and he died from the fire that his mother had predicted. After that, the Ngandjera kingdom began to decline economically and politically; the new generation did not produce any Nangombe-type rulers, and the superiority of the poisoned arrows was under threat emanating from the European guns which the Ndonga kingdom had acquired through long-distance trade.

6.5. Ombalantu: A People's Democracy

Unlike Uukwanyama, Ongandjera, and Uukwambi, Ombalantu was not populated directly from Oshamba but from other Owambo kingdoms, and mostly from the neighbouring Nyaneka-Nkumbi⁶⁷¹. The name Ombalantu derived from two words: "*Ombala j'aantu*", which means "the kingdom of the people". The name was given to this kingdom because Ombalantu did not have a centralized authority like other Owambo kingdoms⁶⁷². For a long time the Mbalantu enjoyed what they called "the people's democracy", because their rulers were religious figures, led by the high-priest - the one still remembered is Nakatati⁶⁷³. The high-priest presided over all religious and traditional affairs of the country. Below him were lower religious office-bearers, like: the master/mistress of initiation ceremonies, wise men, magicians and seers; they were responsible for organizing different ceremonies⁶⁷⁴. The main purpose of this type of organization in Ombalantu was, according to traditions, that the high-priest and his associates wanted to preserve the culture of the Bantu-speakers⁶⁷⁵. And indeed Ombalantu became the centre of Owambo culture; the princes and princesses from Ongandjera, Uukwambi, and Uukwaluudhi used to go there to undergo either initiation or circumcision⁶⁷⁶.

⁶⁷⁰ Hahn's Coll., op. cit.; Koivu, Hp XIII:1, p. 502; Iitenge, Mic. No. 7 a & b (ELC. 344); Litjebled, p. 685; Amutenya, pp. 70-71; Laurmaa (1949), p. 66; Amakutuwa, p. 126 (FWC. 1); Tshilongo, V., p. 270 (ibid. 3)

⁶⁷¹ Himanen, p. 4; Laurmaa (1949), pp. 23-24; Amutenya, pp. 75-76

⁶⁷² Himanen, pp. 1-4; Laurmaa (1949), p. 71

⁶⁷³ Himanen, p. 9

⁶⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 4; Laurmaa (1949), p. 71; Angula, p. 45

⁶⁷⁵ Alweendo, Shigwedha, Mic. No. 3 (ELC. 344); Laurmaa (1949), p. 71

⁶⁷⁶ Himanen, pp. 5-6

After a long period of democracy in Ombalantu, an immigrant prince, Kampaku the son of Huhwa, came from Onkumbi and established himself as a king⁶⁷⁷. Kampaku belonged to *Алкωαρηεγο* clan⁶⁷⁸. The Mbalantu people, who were by then used to their traditional democracy, began to feel the pinch from Kampaku's rule, because he ruled with an iron fist. He became widely known for his reign of terror, even beyond the borders of his kingdom. One of the most-related stories tells us how in one year Kampaku ordered his people to cultivate their lands with their fingers, and those who did not comply were burnt alive⁶⁷⁹. That year was known to have been characterized by a widespread famine throughout the Mbalantu kingdom, because fields were not properly cultivated. Kampaku became infamous and hated amongst his people because of his deeds. When the nation could no longer bear it, his counsellors - under the leadership of his cousin - agreed to stop and put down the hut under which the king was carried and burn him alive⁶⁸⁰. Kampaku is believed to have ruled for 15-20 years; at the time of his death, the neighbouring kingdom of Ombandja was under the rule of Nambinga the son of Shishwa⁶⁸¹.

The kingdom of Ombalantu began and ended with Kampaku; it was a short-lived episode in the history of these people, but it left deep marks on the Mbalantu nation. It also raised suspicion regarding the institution of kingship itself: fearing another Kampaku-type ruler, the people decided to turn back to their traditional democracy. Kampaku was never succeeded again by another king. After his death, his nephew Amvula the son of Eposhi was brought from Ombandja to Ombalantu, where he became a royal religious leader rather than a king⁶⁸². All of Kampaku's descendants lived in the royal capital but did not rule⁶⁸³. The most important role they played was the maintenance of the sacred fire of the country, in which they continued the tradition of collecting it from Ombandja - until 1908, when the Portuguese conquered and destroyed this kingdom⁶⁸⁴.

⁶⁷⁷ Alweendo, Mic. No. 3 (ELC. 344); Laurmaa (1949), p. 71; Shikongo, p. 327 (FWC. 2); Tshilongo, V., p. 300 (ibid. 3)

⁶⁷⁸ Shikongo, p. 327 (FWC. 2); Tshilongo, p. 300 (ibid. 3). The author has not translated the name of this clan, because its totem, from which the meaning could be derived, is unknown to her.

⁶⁷⁹ Alweendo, Mic. No. 3 (ELC. 344); Himanen, pp. 8-9; Laurmaa (1949), p. 72; Amutenya, p. 76; Kondombolo, p. 310 (FWC. 1)

⁶⁸⁰ Alweendo, Mic. No. 3 (ELC. 344); Laurmaa (1949), p. 72; Amutenya, p. 76; Kondombolo, p. 310 (FWC. 2)

⁶⁸¹ Alweendo, Mic. No. 3 (ELC. 344)

⁶⁸² Alweendo, Mic. No. 3 (ELC. 344); Himanen, p. 10; Kondombolo, p. 310 (FWC. 1); Laurmaa (1949), p. 72; Amutenya, p. 76

⁶⁸³ Alweendo, Mic. No. 3 (ELC. 344)

⁶⁸⁴ Ibid.

Although the Mbalantu people did not have formal royal rule, their country was rich in cattle and people; these factors attracted cattle raiders, which affected the country very badly. Some Owambo kings exploited the situation of the disintegrated kingdom and the lack of national unity the Mbalantu people experienced after the death of Kampaku, and allied themselves and attacked Ombalantu. Joining this campaign were: King Tsheya the son of Uutshona, of Ongandjera; King Nuyoma the son of Heelu, of Uukwambi; King Haikela the son of Namanyungu, of Ombandja; and King Mweshipandeka the son of Shaningika, of Uukwanyama⁶⁸⁵. They burnt down Ombalantu homesteads, and killed men, boys, women, and girls whose numbers remain uncountable. The victors captured cattle and prisoners-of-war⁶⁸⁶. This war became known as the January war⁶⁸⁷. Before the Mbalantu people had recovered from the aftermath of the January war, Ndonga warriors attacked southern parts of Ombalantu and destroyed five wards⁶⁸⁸. The defeat of the Mbalantu people was caused partly by their lack of national unity - but the lesson they had drawn from this war unified them once again.

Their priest-kings began to wage war against neighbouring communities to regain what they had lost from the outright robbery. Leading these campaigns was Ishitile the son of Uukahona; he waged several wars against Ongandjera and Uukwaluudhi, and once again strengthened the kingdom of Ombalantu⁶⁸⁹. Iita the son of Iitewa became the most famous of all, because he revived the traditional democracy⁶⁹⁰.

6.6. Uukwaluudhi: People of the Same Stock

Uukwaluudhi was populated from Ongandjera, Uukwambi, Ombandja, Evale, and from Kaokoland⁶⁹¹. According to traditions, when the immigrants arrived in this area it was not occupied by Aakwankala as in the case of Ondonga, Ongandjera and Uukwambi. When the occupants realized that they were all from the same stock, they decided to call it "the country of people from the same stock" (*ashilongo sho ludhi lumwe*), hence Uukwaluudhi⁶⁹².

⁶⁸⁵ Rautanen's Diaries, Hp XXVIII:2 (1888-1893), 10 January 1889

⁶⁸⁶ Himanen, p. 12; Amutenya, pp. 76-77

⁶⁸⁷ Himanen, pp. 11-13

⁶⁸⁸ Himanen, p. 14

⁶⁸⁹ Alweendo, Mic. No. 3 (ELC. 344); Himanen, p. 10; Laurmaa (1949), p. 72; Amutenya, p. 76

⁶⁹⁰ Alweendo, Mic. No. 3 (ELC. 344); Laurmaa (1949), p. 72

⁶⁹¹ Amutenya, p. 73; Laurmaa (1949), p. 22; Angula, p. 36

⁶⁹² Angula, p. 36

The Kwaluudhi kingdom was founded by the Dog clan from Evale⁶⁹³. Amukwa the son of Amunyela became the first king; traditions do not tell us more about his work. His two brothers Nalukwiila and Kamongwa succeeded him, reigning over two successive periods⁶⁹⁴. Natshilongo the son of Iikombo became king after Kamongwa's death, but his rule was said to have been short-lived. Shikwa the son of Amupindi succeeded him, but his kingdom suffered constant raids from neighbouring kingdoms⁶⁹⁵. The kingdom of Uukwaluudhi was strengthened by Shikongo the son of Iipinga; he ruled at the same time as Shikongo the son of Kalulu in Ondonga, and Tshikongo the son of Nyango in Uukwambi⁶⁹⁶. Because of the continuous raids against his kingdom, Shikongo ordered his people to bring stones from areas near the Kunene River; he used these to fortify his royal capital. He also built a thorn fence surrounding his kingdom, stretching from Iikokola ward at the Ngandjera-Kwaluudhi borders, to the Kwaluudhi-Mbalantu borders; according to Väänänen, it covered a distance of about a hundred kilometres, being three to four metres high and two to three metres wide⁶⁹⁷. But this fence did not protect the Kwaluudhi people from the cattle raiders, because the Ngandjera warriors burnt it down⁶⁹⁸. Shikongo was a brave man, who was said to have been fond of war and cattle raids against his neighbours, through which he strengthened his kingdom. He joined forces with King Shikongo of Ondonga in an attack against the Ngandjera king, Tshapaka (Amunyela) the son of Tshaningwa⁶⁹⁹. When Green passed through Uukwaluudhi in 1866, he found Shikongo ruling⁷⁰⁰. He ruled for a long time, and died as an old man in 1902⁷⁰¹.

The Kwaluudhi kingdom maintained relationships with other Owambo kingdoms in the form of trade and wars. Its main exports to Ondonga consisted of poison arrows, perfume bulbs and tobacco, bartered against ochre sticks, iron beads and glass beads (the latter obtained from trade with Europeans)⁷⁰².

⁶⁹³ Lebzelter, p. 195; Laurmaa (1949), p. 23; Amutenya, p. 74

⁶⁹⁴ Liljeblad, p. 1468; Lebzelter, p. 195

⁶⁹⁵ Amutenya, p. 74

⁶⁹⁶ Hahn's Coll. A.450, St. U. Vol. No. 8, File No. 2/34

⁶⁹⁷ Nestori Väänänen's Collection, Hp XXXIX:1-2 (1927), p. 619; Amutenya, p. 74; Laurmaa (1949), p. 69

⁶⁹⁸ Väänänen's Coll., Hp XXXIX:1-2, p. 619

⁶⁹⁹ Ibid.; Hahn's Coll. A.450, St. U. Vol. No. 8, File No. 2/34

⁷⁰⁰ Hahn's Diaries (1837-1860,) Part IV: 1856-1860, p. 1226

⁷⁰¹ Liljeblad, p. 1468; Lebzelter, p. 195; Laurmaa (1949), p. 69; Amutenya, p. 74

⁷⁰² Pett'nen (1890-1895): "Letters from Africa", 25.08.1890

6.7. Ombandja: Before the Portuguese Expansion

The Mbandja kingdom is believed to have been a fraction of the Kwanyama kingdom. According to their traditions, Ombandja was populated from both Uukwanyama and Onkumbi, and the foundation of kingdoms in the area became divided along the directions of migration. The kingdom of what is known as Big-Ombandja, with its capital at Mpungu, was founded by immigrants from Uukwanyama; while that of Little-Ombandja, with its capital at Naluheke, was founded by immigrants from Onkumbi⁷⁰³. These kingdoms were ruled by two different royal clans: those who ruled from Mpungu were *Aakwanelumbi*; and from Naluheke, *Aakwanyama*⁷⁰⁴.

Kalipi the son of Nongo and grandson of Shitumbuka is remembered as the first ruler of the Little-Ombandja, who ruled from his capital Naikuluta on the edge of the country. His kingdom was struck by famine. Despite this natural catastrophe he was able to consolidate his rule by preparing himself for war against his kingdom's traditional enemy - Ongandjera. Kalipi waged two successive - and successful - wars against the Ngandjera kingdom⁷⁰⁵. He was succeeded by Nande, whose rule was undermined by a major hunger period; this became known as the hunger of Mwaengwewa. Sipepe ascended the throne after his uncle Nande's death⁷⁰⁶.

It seemed that hunger badly affected three successive generations; until Mongela the son of Naikuluta took over the kingdom, this awful experience persisted. Exploiting this catastrophe, the Ngandjera began to prepare themselves for a war against Mongela. He died before the offensive⁷⁰⁷; but his death did not stop the Ngandjera - they went and attacked his brother Naunyango the son of Naikuluta, and destroyed his capital at Naluheke. Naunyango was the first king to move his capital into the interior of the country, and the founder of Naluheke⁷⁰⁸. The Ngandjera success was said to have been aided by the interminable hunger and by the continuous wars and raids against the kingdom in past years, which had left the people weak and unable to face the advancing Ngandjera warriors⁷⁰⁹.

⁷⁰³ Ituku (Iihuhwa), Sakeus, Mic. No. 39 (ELC. 344); Shikongo, p. 315 (FWC. 2). The well-known Portuguese names are *Quamato-galade* and *Quamato-pequena*, the names given to them by their Imbangala neighbours [Shikongo, p. 324 (FWC. 2)].

⁷⁰⁴ Shikongo, p. 315 (FWC. 2); Estermann (1976), p. 118

⁷⁰⁵ Ituku, Mic. No. 39 (ELC. 344)

⁷⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁸ Ituku, Mic. No. 39 (ELC. 344); Shikongo, p. 316 (FWC. 2)

⁷⁰⁹ Ibid.

Hohela succeeded Naunyango, but his rule was short-lived⁷¹⁰. After his death Nambinga the son of Shishwa became king; he continued to rule from Naluheke. Nambinga chased all his nephews and cousins out of the country in fear of rivalry. He sent his counsellors to go and kill one of them, Haikela, whom he thought to be more dangerous than the others. But when Nambinga's counsellors came to Haikela's homestead, he had already fled to Uukwambi, where he was given refuge by Nuyoma the son of Heelu. The counsellors, instead, killed Haikela's brother Haiwa, whom they thought was hiding Haikela⁷¹¹. Nambinga began to send messages to King Nuyoma to return Haikela. But Nuyoma - knowing that Haikela was on bad terms with Nambinga - ignored Nambinga's request, and continued to prepare Haikela militarily in order to return and overthrow him.

Nuyoma made everything ready, and called upon his warriors to accompany Prince Haikela and help him to overthrow Nambinga⁷¹². Haikela arrived with the Kwambi warriors and went straight to Nambinga's capital, where they found him. According to traditions, Nambinga had earlier dispatched his warriors in the direction facing Uukwambi, to wait for Haikela there, but he had miscalculated because Haikela arrived from a different direction. Haikela killed him and took over the kingdom⁷¹³.

Haikela thus succeeded his uncle Nambinga. He was said to have been a good and peaceful king, who ruled his country for a long time until he died of old age in 1900⁷¹⁴. In 1876 - during his travels in southern Africa - a Swiss botanist, Schinz, visited Ombandja, where he met King Haikela. Schinz estimated his age as ranging between 45-50⁷¹⁵. By the time he ascended the throne⁷¹⁶, the Portuguese had already begun to destabilize the Mbandja kingdoms. Möller described in his memoirs that this destabilization had begun earlier along with that of the Nyaneka-Nkumbi kingdoms at the beginning of the 19th century⁷¹⁷. Shekudja the son of Amakunde succeeded Haikela; he died in 1901 after ruling for one year only⁷¹⁸.

According to Möller the kingdom of Mbandja was strong in its political organization and rich in cattle⁷¹⁹, but it was weakened by constant wars with and

⁷¹⁰ Shikongo, p. 316 (FWC. 2)

⁷¹¹ Ibid.; Tshilongo, V., p. 278 (ibid. 3)

⁷¹² Tshilongo, V., p. 279 (FWC. 3)

⁷¹³ Iituku, Mic. No. 39 (ELC. 344); Shikongo, p. 323 (FWC. 2);

Tshilongo, V., p. 280 (ibid. 3)

⁷¹⁴ Iituku, Mic. No. 39 (ELC. 344)

⁷¹⁵ Schinz, pp. 239-242

⁷¹⁶ Shikongo, p. 328 (FWC. 2)

⁷¹⁷ Möller, p. 122

⁷¹⁸ Iituku, Mic. No. 39 (ELC. 344); Shikongo, p. 316 (FWC. 2)

⁷¹⁹ Möller, p. 85

cattle raids of its neighbours. Its political stability was undermined by the expansion of the Portuguese into southern Angola.

The year 1700 marked the turning-point in the political history of Central and South-Western Africa. It was preceded by events emanating from the European expansion in search of slaves. This movement brought traders to what is nowadays the region of Congo and Zaire, and gradually reached the Luba and Lunda kingdoms of Katanga. External contacts accelerated the decline of these kingdoms, which were already deeply embroiled in conflicts of royal succession. As a result, migration began to take place from these kingdoms. In the process of their migration, royal clan members from them diffused new political ideas throughout lands where they settled and among people they encountered. This process brought the founders of modern Owambo kingdoms. The arrival of the immigrants in the south-western region remains speculatively connected with events mentioned above.

Owambo kingdoms reached the height of their royal power and prestige during the rules of Nangolo (d. 1857) of Ondonga, Haimbili (d. 1858) of Uukwanyama, Queen Nangombe of Ongandjera, Tshikongo (d. 1863) of Uukwambi, Shikongo (d. 1902) of Uukwaluudhi, and Haikela (d. 1900) of Ombandja. Owambo kingdoms maintained a considerable amount of mutual relationships. They paid tribute to each other as a sign of appreciation between royal clans. Most importantly, trade and cultural ties bound them together. These ties and bonds were, however, slowly undermined by the European expansions since the beginning of the 18th century, and more forcefully so since the middle of the 19th century.

Although there were battles between kingdoms, war was not the normal situation before the European expansions. Owamboland was not a theatre of battles as depicted in most colonial and missionary records. Traditionally, kingdoms had waged some wars among themselves, but the aims of such wars began to change in response to the new economic situation emerging from long-distance trade. Hence kings began to raid each other in search of cattle and slaves to finance their trade.

7. OWAMBOLAND AND THE EUROPEAN EXPANSION 1860-1920

7.1. Ondonga - A Kingdom at the Crossroads

7.1.1. Shikongo and Shipanga: A Power Struggle

After the death of King Nangolo the son of Amutenya in 1857, the kingdom of Ondonga experienced for the first time what one may term a power struggle; between Shipanga the son of Amukwiita - the rightful heir to the throne - and his nephew Shikongo the son of Kalulu. The late Nangolo did not foresee this conflict, as he had earlier eliminated all the rivals which he thought would pose a threat to his step-brother's position as the heir. This is depicted by the Owambo proverb: "Two big bones cannot be cooked in one pot", meaning that two powerful people cannot be in one house⁷²⁰. Shikongo found it difficult to live in Ondonga under the rule of Shipanga. Most of the Ondonga people were of the opinion that if Shipanga succeeded Nangolo the Great, then the power and fame of the kingdom would decline. Some thought that Shipanga would be the best for the country because of Shikongo's disabilities. Hence people became divided into two groups: those who supported Shipanga remained in Ondonga, while those who were for Shikongo followed him into exile in Ombandja.

Shikongo returned to Ondonga after his uncle extended an amnesty to him, but was warned upon his arrival that Shipanga still wanted to kill him⁷²¹. Shikongo fled again with his supporters, taking along most of his cattle and property. They trekked until they reached the forest area in the east of Ondonga near a place called Otjolo, where they camped. For their survival they depended on collecting wild fruits and hunting game. Shikongo and his followers moved from Otjolo under the guidance of Aakwankala until they reached Onandoya, a place where he used to have his cattle-post⁷²². Onandoya was one of the first cattle-posts which the Nama leader Jonker Afrikaner raided in 1852⁷²³. While at Onandoya, Shikongo remembered how Jonker Afrikaner - the leader of the Namawe people - raided his cattle-posts, from where he captured Shikongo's two sons Nakanyala and Shipuka⁷²⁴. Shikongo recalled that

⁷²⁰ Haapanen, p. 94

**Omasipa omanene ihaga pi mbiga yimwe = Aanankondo
ihaa kalo gumbo limwe.*

⁷²¹ Liljeblad, p. 144; Uukule, p. 415 (FWC. 2); Uugwanga, p. 361 (ibid. 3)

⁷²² Hahn's Coll. A.450, Vol. 8, File No. 2/34; Liljeblad, p. 145; Uukule, pp. 415-16 (FWC. 2); Uugwanga, p. 362 (ibid. 3)

⁷²³ Hahn's Diaries (1837-1860), Part III: 1852-1855, p. 598

⁷²⁴ Uukule, pp. 415-16 (FWC. 2)

Jonker had used guns and horses when he raided his cattle-posts, and might thus be able to assist him in fighting and ousting Shipanga. Accompanied by his wives and followers, Shikongo undertook a long journey to the south in search of Jonker Afrikaner. Shikongo was said to have taken - apart from cattle - also ivory, which he intended to use as payment if Jonker agreed to assist him⁷²⁵.

In 1858 Shikongo entered into an agreement with Jonker Afrikaner, who gave him soldiers, horses, guns and ammunition, with Jan Jonker Afrikaner as the commander⁷²⁶. Shipanga continued to rule Ondonga peacefully, under the illusion that Shikongo had already died. Surprised enough, he again received a message that Shikongo was coming - with a new powerful ally, for which he began to prepare his warriors⁷²⁷. Shipanga erected his war camp near Onambeke in the eastern part of Ondonga. Before they approached Ondonga Shikongo ordered his war commander, Amoomo the son of Katondoka, to command the joint Namawe-Ndonga warriors during the operation; after its completion they were to proceed to Omandongo, where he would establish his capital⁷²⁸. Shipanga's warriors were defeated with almost no resistance, and the king himself fled to Uukwanyama, where he sought refuge from King Sefeni the son of Mukuju⁷²⁹.

Shikongo became the king of Ondonga. But in 1859, before Jonker's soldiers returned to central Namibia, he requested them to assist him again, this time in attacking the kingdom of Ongandjera, which had by then subdued most Owambo kingdoms and established itself as the main force in the region, with the aid of its poisonous arrow-points. Amoomo the son of Katondoka, Shikongo's war commander, led the operation. Ongandjera was by then under the rule of King Amunyela (Tshapaka) the son of Tshaningwa⁷³⁰. In this attack the Ngandjera people suffered a

⁷²⁵ Hahn's Coll., op. cit.; Kurvinen (1878), p. 44; Liljeblad, pp. 147-150; Tirronen (1977), p. 10; Uukule, p. 417 (FWC. 2); Uugwanga, p. 362 (ibid. 3)

⁷²⁶ Hahn's Coll., op. cit.; Kurvinen (1878), p. 44; Liljeblad, pp. 147-150; Charles John Andersson (1989): "Trade and Conflict in Central Namibia 1860-1864", edited by Brigitte Lau, pp. 20-21; Uukule, p. 417 (FWC. 2); Uugwanga, p. 362 (ibid. 3)

⁷²⁷ Hahn's Coll., op. cit.; Liljeblad, pp. 146-147; Uukule, p. 417 (FWC. 2); Uugwanga, p. 362 (ibid. 3)

⁷²⁸ Liljeblad, p. 152; Uukule, p. 418 (FWC. 2); Nangolo, pp. 485-486 (ibid.); Uugwanga, p. 362 (ibid. 3)

⁷²⁹ Hahn's Coll., op. cit.; Kurvinen (1878), pp. 44-45; Liljeblad, p. 152; Uugwanga, p. 363 (FWC. 3)

⁷³⁰ Hahn's Coll., op. cit.; Koivu, Hp XIII:1, p. 502; Iitenge, Mic. No. 7 a & b (ELC. 344); Liljeblad, p. 685; Amutenya, pp. 70-71; Laurmaa (1949), p. 66; Amakutuwa, p. 126 (FWC. 1); Kondombolo, pp. 307-308 (ibid.); Uukule, pp. 420-421 (ibid. 2); Tshilongo, V., p. 270 (ibid. 3)

humiliation: they were defeated, and their homesteads burnt down; many cattle and people were captured. King Amunyela himself was killed when his royal court was set on fire. After defeating his powerful neighbour, Shikongo felt himself to be in a much more secure position, and he bade Jonker's soldiers farewell. But some Nama and Herero people did not return to the south: they remained in Ondonga⁷³¹. Shikongo's kingdom became one of the powerful kingdoms in Owamboland, strengthened not only by the guns and horses he had acquired, but also because his warriors became more experienced in modern warfare.

He built and fortified his royal residence in an open area far away from the cultivated fields. He became the first Ndonga king to build a fortress (*Ohote*)⁷³². After some time, when Shipanga heard that the Nama soldiers had returned, he came with a group of Kwanyama warriors to overthrow Shikongo; this attempt failed and Shipanga was killed near the brushwood of Nampungu, in Onayena⁷³³. After the death of Shipanga, Shikongo's kingdom began to grow in strength and wealth because of its political stability. But he later experienced surprise attacks from his Nama ally, which led Shikongo to flee his kingdom briefly and go into hiding⁷³⁴. These continuing raids weakened Shikongo's kingdom. Jonker again sent one of his largest raiding convoys to Owamboland at the end of 1861 to the beginning of 1862, which was said to have gone as far as Uukwanyama, Uukwambi and Ongandjera⁷³⁵. By this time, the Nama had extended their raiding campaigns as far as Kaokoland, which had caused the migration of many Himba people into southern Angola to protect their remaining cattle⁷³⁶.

While in Otjimbingwe Shikongo acquainted himself with some missionaries, to whom he had given his son to be educated. He was said to have extended an invitation to the missionaries to come to Ondonga. The first group of Finnish missionaries thus arrived in Ondonga at Omandongo Shikongo's capital in 1870⁷³⁷. By that time there where already some traders in Owamboland who had established their trading posts in

⁷³¹ Hahn's Coll., op. cit.; Nangolo, p. 486 (FWC. 2)

⁷³² Uukule, pp. 420-421 (FWC. 2)

⁷³³ Uukule, p. 422 (FWC. 2); Uugwanga, p. 363 (ibid. 3)

⁷³⁴ The attacks were related to the fact that by that time long-distance trade had increased in the south, and most Nama chiefs became heavily indebted as a result of the decline in numbers of cattle, which were the main means of barter.

⁷³⁵ Hahn's Coll., op. cit.; Koivu, Hp XIII:1, p. 502; Iitenge, Mic. No. 7 a & b (ELC. 344); Liljebblad, p. 685; Amutenya, pp. 70-71; Laurmaa (1949), p. 66; Amakutuwa, p. 126 (FWC. 1); Kondombolo, pp. 307-308 (ibid.); Uukule, pp. 420-421 (ibid. 2); Tirronen (1977), p. 10

⁷³⁶ Malan (1974), p. 115

⁷³⁷ Kurvinen (1878), pp. 41-42; Tirronen (1977), p. 25

different parts. An Irishman, Joseph Grendon, who had built his trading post near King Shikongo's residence, gave his house to the missionaries for their use⁷³⁸.

Shikongo died in 1874 and was succeeded by his nephew Kambonde the son of Nankwaya. Kambonde established his capital at Onamungundo. He was said to have been a kind person but was fond of wars, which he waged mainly against Uukwanyama⁷³⁹. He was succeeded by his sister's son Iitana the son of Nekwiyu. Iitana's capital was at Onampundu in the ward of Onanyeye, near Onayena⁷⁴⁰. He died in 1884 after he had ruled for one year only.

7.1.2. Kambonde and Nehale: A Secession Dispute

After the death of King Iitana in 1884 the kingdom of Ondonga experienced almost what it had been going through after the death of King Nangolo. An incident occurred which prevented Kambonde the son of Iitope, who was the rightful heir to the throne, from succeeding Iitana. Mpingana the son of Shimbu and father of Kambonde and Nehale, was an influential and powerful man in Ndonga politics at that time, and he wanted his son, also called Kambonde, to become the next ruler. Mpingana allied himself with his children against the children of Iitope, until he succeeded in having his son Kambonde enthroned as the king of Ondonga in 1884. Kambonde established his capital at Okaloko⁷⁴¹. After his coronation the conflict of succession turned into an internal family problem between Mpingana, his wife Namupala the Great and their son Kambonde on one hand, and their son Nehale on the other. Nehale also wanted to become king, and refused to recognize Kambonde's legitimate rule. In an attempt to end the conflict, Mpingana and his wife decided to give Nehale his own ward, far from Kambonde's capital. Nehale was given Uutumbe near the Oshamba seasonal river⁷⁴². He was given people to accompany him to his new ward and to help him erect his homestead. Nehale and his company left Ontananga, but upon their arrival near the seasonal river, Nehale ordered them to go to Oshitambi, and not to Uutumbe as his parents had proposed. When they reached Oshitambi, Nehale declared it as his

⁷³⁸ Tirronen (1977), p. 11

⁷³⁹ Hahn's Coll., op. cit.; Tirronen (1977), pp. 41-44; Uukule, p. 427 (FWC. 2); Uugwanga, p. 365 (ibid. 3)

⁷⁴⁰ Hahn's Coll., op. cit.; Uukule, pp. 428-29 (FWC. 2); Nangolo, p. 486 (ibid.); Uugwanga, p. 366 (ibid. 3)

⁷⁴¹ Hahn's Coll., op. cit.; Lehmann (1956), p. 269; Uukule, p. 430 (FWC. 2); Nangolo, p. 486 (ibid.); Uugwanga, p. 366 (ibid. 3)

⁷⁴² Uukule, p. 430 (FWC. 2); Uugwanga, p. 367 (ibid. 3)

kingdom, and the seasonal river as the border between him and Kambonde⁷⁴³. Ondonga became divided into two kingdoms for the first time in the history of its existence. Nehale appropriated Oshitambi (eastern Ondonga) and founded his kingdom, with its capital at Onayena, in 1885. Kambonde's portion became known as Onamayonga (western Ondonga)⁷⁴⁴.

Another incident which occurred during Kambonde's rule was the killing of an advisor of Princess Iifo the daughter of Nankwaya, and a brother of her husband Nekwiyu, by Nehale on 4 August 1885. This incident led Iifo to go and seek for help from Nama leaders, asking them to come and fight the children of Mpingana. She was already bitter that her grandson Uugwanga the son of Uukongo had not succeeded her son Iitana⁷⁴⁵. Iifo left Ondonga and travelled until she reached the area of Otavi, where she met some Nama leaders; they entered into an alliance, and returned in September to fight Nehale and Kambonde⁷⁴⁶. Petrus Zwartbooi was the leader of this operation, which involved 20 Namas, two Bastards, and Iifo's followers. According to Tirronen, the missionaries were forced to help both Kambonde and Nehale to fight Iifo and her allies; obliged by this commitment, missionary Rautanen supplied Kambonde with ammunition⁷⁴⁷. This unrest was part and parcel of the conflicts of succession and the political instabilities which Kambonde experienced during his rule. However, it should also be examined within the broad political situation of Namibia as a whole, which was increasingly influenced by the expansion of German colonists, which forced the African people to look for new alliances.

7.1.3. Colonial Expansion and Ondonga Internal Conflict

The situation at that time was even more fragile because of the deal which King Kambonde and a coloured trader, William Jordan, concluded in June 1885. The deal "sold" an area of 2500 km² which included Grootfontein and the Otavi copper mines to Jordan, at the cost of 300 British pounds in cash, 25 guns, one "salted" horse and

⁷⁴³ Hahn's Coll., op. cit.; Uukule, p. 431 (FWC. 2); Nangolo, p. 486 (ibid.); Uugwanga, p. 367 (ibid. 3)

⁷⁴⁴ Petronen (1889-1895): 03.01.1889; Hahn's Coll., op. cit.; Uukule, p. 431 (FWC. 2); Shindondola, p. 337 (ibid.); Uugwanga, p. 367 (ibid. 3)

⁷⁴⁵ Hahn's Coll., op. cit.; Namuhuya, H.D. (1986): "Nehale Lya Mpingana", p. 8

⁷⁴⁶ Hahn's Coll., op. cit.; Tirronen (1977), pp. 51-52; Namuhuya (1986), p. 8

⁷⁴⁷ Schinz, p. 259; Tirronen (1977), p. 52

one barrel of brandy. Missionary Weikkolin signed as a witness of the deal⁷⁴⁸. After its conclusion Jordan, who considered himself a British subject because of his father, wrote to England and requested protection of his new Republic, which he called Upingtonia after the then Prime Minister of the Cape⁷⁴⁹. This not only angered most Owambo, who could no longer fetch their copper ore freely from Otavi, but it also affected the turbulent situation prevailing in central Namibia. The double role that Jordan played in the Herero/Nama war made Maharero angrier still. He sent Robert Lewis, a trader from Cape Town, as his intermediary to order the Boers - who were by then occupying areas of Waterberg and Otavi - to leave Hereroland. But Lewis, instead, encouraged the Boers to settle in areas around Grootfontein⁷⁵⁰.

The deal increased the existing tensions between Kambonde and Nehale, until the death of Jordan in 1886⁷⁵¹. Jordan was killed in Ondonga, where the deal had been concluded, but his death did not solve the problem of recovering the area, as Nehale had envisaged. His main concern was to keep the Germans out of the area of his jurisdiction⁷⁵². Although the existence of the Republic of Upingtonia was a short-lived episode in the history of Namibia, it did in actual fact aid German colonial expansion and occupation: six years after Jordan's death, the land in question was transferred into the hands of the South West Africa Company in 1892⁷⁵³. What remains a mystery is whether Kambonde really sold the land, or leased it. The author believes that there occurred in this transaction a misunderstanding between the concepts of buying and leasing, due to cultural differences. Traditionally land in Owamboland was not sold but leased, the leaseholder being expected to pay a number of cattle as tribute to the king for the right of usufruct (see Section 2.2.4). Hence, buying was out of question. It is also amazing that the history of selling land in Owamboland should begin and end with the Jordan-Kambonde deal.

In the meantime, the slave trade continued and was in actual fact increasing because of the demand for alcohol⁷⁵⁴. It was further accelerated by the shortage of cattle after the rinderpest, which struck the region between 1896 and 1897, and left kings with almost no cattle to pay for their trade. By the end of the 19th century, the economic power of most Owambo kingdoms was on the brink of decline. The region

⁷⁴⁸ Schinz, pp. 348-49; Tirronen (1977), p. 59

⁷⁴⁹ Schinz, pp. 348-49; Stals, E. L. P. (1967): "Die Aanraking Tussen Banke en Ovambos in Suidwes-Afrika 1850-1915", in: *Archive Year Book for South African History*, 31, Part II, p. 332; Goldblatt, p. 105; Tirronen (1977), p. 59

⁷⁵⁰ Schinz, p. 350; Vedder, p. 422

⁷⁵¹ Vedder, p. 423; Tirronen (1977), p. 61

⁷⁵² Tirronen (1977), p. 61

⁷⁵³ Stals, p. 323

⁷⁵⁴ Pettinen (1889-1895): 15.10.1889

experienced successive droughts, which culminated in years of famine. The colonialists exploited the situation by beginning to make offers in the form of food supplies and political concessions, in terms of the so-called protection treaties. And by the beginning of the 20th century, German colonial occupation was becoming a reality not only in the south of the country, but was also reaching Etosha Pan with the appropriation of the land "sold" by Kambonde to Jordan. The Germans began to extend their borderline further north, under the pretext of creating a quarantine against the rinderpest. They built a so-called disease control post at Namutoni in 1897⁷⁵⁵. It was becoming almost certain that the survival of Owamboland as an independent area was coming to an end. After the death of Jordan, the missionaries were afraid as to what would happen to them; they also began to seek German protection⁷⁵⁶. Negotiations were under way on the possibility of Owamboland to become part of the German protectorate; in October 1898 Captain von Estorff informed the German governor in Windhoek that King Kambonde of Ondonga was in favour of the plan⁷⁵⁷. The Germans dispatched their envoy Captain Franke in 1899 to investigate the situation in the north; he visited Ondonga and Uukwanyama but did not go to Uukwambi, because Negumbo was not prepared to receive him⁷⁵⁸. Continuing their expansionist policies, the Germans built a military post at Olukweyo in 1901; while Namutoni at the end of the quarantine was kept as a so-called border post⁷⁵⁹.

By that time, anti-German sentiments were growing amongst most kings and chiefs, in the north as well as in the south. The long resistance of both the Herero and the Nama chiefs was continuing: none of them were ready to accept the German "protection". As a result, the Germans began to increase their forces so as to pressurize both Witbooi and Maharero. Having realized the problem which faced him in the south and in search of new allies, Leutwein wrote to King Kambonde apologizing for not being able to visit him. Kambonde in his reply indicated that he did not wish to see Leutwein during his lifetime, because the Germans had come with friendly words when they arrived but now they wanted to rule, and he could do that himself⁷⁶⁰. While Governor Leutwein was in the south fighting the Nama leader Marengo, the Herero uprising broke out on 12 January 1904; by this time, Samuel Maharero had already

⁷⁵⁵ Mossolow, p. 5

⁷⁵⁶ Pettinen (1889-1895): 11.06.1891

⁷⁵⁷ Lehmann (1956), p. 269

⁷⁵⁸ Zentralbureau des Kaiserlichen Gouvernements (ZBU), Nr. 2037, W.II.k.1 (Bd.1): "Angelegenheiten des Ovambolandes, Generalia (auch Specialia) 1898-1905"; Tirronen (1977), p. 87; Eirola (1987), pp. 233-235

⁷⁵⁹ Mossolow, p. 5

⁷⁶⁰ Goldblatt, p. 125

made several requests to Owambo kings to join him in the fight against the Germans⁷⁶¹.

On hearing the news of the uprising Nehale sent a message to his brother Kambonde to go and attack the German posts at Okaukweyo and Namutoni. Kambonde, on the advice of Rautanen, refused to accept Nehale's proposal⁷⁶². However, this did not discourage Nehale: he went ahead to show his solidarity towards his Herero brothers and sisters, of whom many were refugees in his kingdom. Nehale sent his warriors into the Herero-German war, under the command of his chief counsellor and war commander, Shivute the son of Ndjongolo. Shivute and his warriors stormed the Namutoni fort on 28 January 1904⁷⁶³. The Germans went on top of the fort from where they were shooting at the Ndonga warriors; the battle lasted only for a short time because there was no direct exchange of fire. Most of the warriors, when they realized that they could not fire back, took cover behind the thorn fence; while some sought refuge inside the fort, and some were leading away the captured cattle⁷⁶⁴. The Ndonga warriors did not withdraw, as Dr. Mossolow tried to imply⁷⁶⁵, but they were taking cover at their positions. For example, after the firing had ceased, Namupala the son of Amoomo - who was inside the building - heard when the Germans lowered the ladder, and watched them until they took the road in the direction of Tsumeb⁷⁶⁶. In fact, no-one else could tell the story better than the Ndonga warriors themselves, who were the last people on the scene⁷⁶⁷. Namutoni was levelled to the ground at the command of Nehale, so that the Germans could not come back again. Regarding the number of deaths and casualties, the figures given by missionary Rautanen still stand to be questioned⁷⁶⁸. The Ndonga evidence indicates

⁷⁶¹ Goldblatt, pp. 129-131; Tirronen (1977), pp. 96-97; Namuhuya (1986), p. 19

⁷⁶² Uukule, pp. 434-435 (FWC. 2); Nangolo, p. 488 (ibid.); Uugwanga, p. 367 (ibid. 3)

⁷⁶³ Lehmann (1956), p. 274; Mossolow, p. 31; Uukule, pp. 434-435 (FWC. 2); Nangolo, p. 488 (ibid.); Uugwanga, p. 367 (ibid. 3)

⁷⁶⁴ Uukule, pp. 441-45 (FWC. 2); Nangolo, p. 488 (ibid.); Uugwanga, p. 368 (ibid. 3)

⁷⁶⁵ Mossolow, p. 32

⁷⁶⁶ Uukule, pp. 441-45 (FWC. 2); Nangolo, p. 488 (ibid.); Uugwanga, p. 368 (ibid. 3)

⁷⁶⁷ It should be taken into consideration that this is not the type of historical event that one can manipulate, because there are still people in Owamboland who were themselves part of the operation, and those whose fathers, uncles or brothers were present. This is also such an event that oral tradition passes down from one generation to another.

⁷⁶⁸ Mossolow, p. 33

that they lost 12 counsellors, and a number of soldiers which no-one counted. They did, of course, bury their dead before they left Namutoni⁷⁶⁹, contrary to Dr. Mossolow's claim that the Germans who went back in 1905 found a heap of bones and skulls of the Ndonga⁷⁷⁰. If they really did find these, then the Germans must have exhumed the bodies of the Ndonga warriors with the purpose of counting the dead. After some time the Germans approached Rautanen to show them Nehale's grave, which he refused to do⁷⁷¹. The Namutoni battle was one of the manifestations of anti-colonial resistance against German occupation. The conflict between Nehale and the Germans persisted until his death in April 1908.

Nehale's death provided the Germans with an opportunity to make another attempt to bring Owamboland under so-called German protection. Captain Franke undertook another journey to the region in May/June 1908. This time he visited Uukwanyama, Ondonga, Uukwambi, Ongandjera, and Uukwaluudhi⁷⁷². Accompanied by missionary Rautanen as an interpreter, Franke met Kambonde the King of Ondonga on 24 May, Iita the King of Uukwaluudhi on 26 May, Tshaanika the King of Ongandjera on 27 May, and Iipumbu the King of Uukwambi on 28 May; in Uukwanyama, missionary Wulforst acted as an interpreter for King Nande on 2 June. Franke concluded the so-called protection treaties with the above-mentioned kings on the respective dates. These treaties - which were written in German, a language none of the kings could read or understand - stated as follows: *"Ich Kaptein erkenne im Namen meines Starvnes die Oberhoheit des Deutschen Kaisers über mein Gebiet ausdrücklich und stelle mich und mein Volk unter den Schutz der Deutschen Regierung..."*

Although the contractors and witnesses' signatures appeared, those of the kings were marked by a cross rather than by a thumb stamp⁷⁷³. These treaties brought Owamboland formally under German "protection"; but in practice kingdoms still continued to function as independent units.

After the death of Nehale, the kingdom of Ondonga became once again a unified whole, which Kambonde ruled for one year until his death in 1909.

⁷⁶⁹ Uukule, pp. 441-447 (FWC. 2); Nangolo, p. 489 (ibid.); Uugwanga, pp. 368-369 (ibid. 3)

⁷⁷⁰ Mossolow, p. 34

⁷⁷¹ Tirronen (1977), p. 125

⁷⁷² ZBU, Nr. 2039, W.II.k.3: "Verträge mit Häuptlingen des Ovambolandes 1908-1909"

⁷⁷³ Ibid.

7.2. Uukwanyama - A Kingdom Under Siege

7.2.1. Portuguese-German Expansions

Like that of the German expansion northward, the Portuguese expansion southward was heavily resisted by communities they encountered. The well-established Ovimbundu kingdoms south of the Portuguese territories were not easy to traverse. One thing that had prevented the immediate expansion of the Portuguese was the Ovimbundu monopoly over the inland trade. The expansion of the Imbangala communities into central Angola, and their joint partnership with the Portuguese, opened up the route for the expansion of the latter further into the interior from the coastal port of Benguela, where they were contained until 1680⁷⁷⁴. Nevertheless, this partnership did not guarantee or speed up the immediate Portuguese expansion into the south - because the Imbangala also wanted to control the interior trading market, like the Ovimbundu traders.

This containment helped most of the Owambo communities to strengthen their internal security and to stabilize their kingdoms, which had still been fragile at the time of the disintegration of the Katanga kingdoms of Lunda and Luba and the expansion of the Chokwe which culminated in the formation of the Imbangala kingdom of Kasanje. But it became clearer that the Portuguese were interested in something more than trade; thus their desire to expand their area of influence began to grow. Another threat to the Portuguese which was imminent at that time was the expansion of exploratory activities on the part of other European traders and travellers around the 16th century. To exert their influence, the Portuguese - after their gradual expansion and conquest of some Ovimbundu kingdoms - attempted to establish themselves in the Huila territory in 1857; this ended in failure⁷⁷⁵ because of the resistance they met with.

Trading and exploratory activities increased in the region by the time of these external expansions. Missionaries had also begun to search for stations from which they could preach the Gospel. King Mweshipandeka of Uukwanyama allowed Tolonen, a Finnish missionary, to build himself a house in the neighbourhood of his capital in 1871⁷⁷⁶. After Mweshipandeka's death in 1883, his nephew Namadi the son of Mweihanyeka succeeded him⁷⁷⁷. Namadi allowed Roman Catholic missionaries to

⁷⁷⁴ Estermann (1979), p. 19

⁷⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 21

⁷⁷⁶ Väänänen's Coll. (1927-30), Hp XXXIX:1-2, p. 619; Kaulinge, Vilho, in: "Other Records Concerning Missionary Work in Africa", Hhd:1 (1876-1946), p. 456

⁷⁷⁷ De Witt, W.B. (1948): "A Soldier's Life and Adventures", in: A.100: J. von Moltke Collection (1883-1922); Laurmaa (1949), p. 44; Amutenya, p. 42; Loeb, p. 28

begin their work in his country and invited a Portuguese trader, Sabatta, to build a trading post near his capital⁷⁷⁹. After that, the European presence began to increase rapidly in Uukwanyama. A confusion arose at King Namadi's death in 1884 which led to the killing of two Roman Catholic Fathers. Fear began to spread, and some missionaries and traders began to flee, seeking refuge with the Portuguese in Humbe⁷⁷⁹.

After Namadi's mysterious death, he was succeeded by his nephew Ueyulu the son of Hedimbi⁷⁸⁰. Ueyulu, then a young boy, inherited the crisis which arose as a result of his uncle's death. Although Ueyulu apologized to the surviving Father Gerald and the Boer trader de Witt for what they had gone through, and paid compensation for the human losses, the Portuguese exploited this situation and wanted to use it as an excuse to invade Uukwanyama⁷⁸¹. In 1897 the Portuguese intensified their campaign with the purpose of conquering the mines of Cassinga⁷⁸². Ueyulu realized the danger, but the Owambo communities were by then engaged in inter-communal wars and cattle raids which intensified after the 1897 rinderpest, in an attempt to regain the lost cattle. While the German expansionist war continued in the south, and the Portuguese intensified their campaign in the north, the Kwanyama, Kwambi, and Ndonga realized the external threat and agreed to enter into a peace treaty in 1889⁷⁸³. Ueyulu fell into the trap of his own weaknesses: the Portuguese exploited his kindness toward the Europeans and began to dominate trade in Uukwanyama more than any other European traders. As a result of this monopoly the country began to be weakened by alcohol, the Portuguese's main trading commodity.

After Ueyulu's death in 1904 his brother Nande succeeded him. By that time, the Kwanyama kingdom was experiencing a sharp decline from the power and prestige it had last enjoyed during the prosperous rule of Mweshipandeka. Then came the Portuguese military conquest over the kingdoms of Ombandja in 1908. The Germans, on the other hand, having not yet recovered from the long wars of resistance in the south of what is now Namibia, embarked upon a "soft" diplomacy, by which they signed the so-called protection treaties with Owambo kings during May/June 1908. The treaty between Captain Franke and King Nande of Uukwanyama was signed on 2 June 1908; through this, Uukwanyama formally became a German protectorate⁷⁸⁴.

⁷⁷⁹ De Witt, p. 1

⁷⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 8-13

⁷⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 13; Shiyagaya, Mic. No. 2 (ELC. 344)

⁷⁸¹ De Witt, pp. 12-13

⁷⁸² Clarence-Smith, G. (1979): "Slaves, Peasants and Capitalists in Southern Angola 1840-1926", pp. 17-18

⁷⁸³ Laurmaa (1949), p. 46; Uugwanga, p. 402 (FWC. 3)

⁷⁸⁴ ZBU, Nr. 2039, W.II.k.3: "Verträge mit Häuptlingen des Ovambolandes 1908-1909"

Amidst the decline of its political and economic power the Kwanyama kingdom was approaching what Shishaama had foretold: that the powerful kings would die out, and foreigners would begin to control it. However, another Haimbili was to be born. After the death of Nande in 1911, his nephew Mandume succeeded him. Mandume inherited a disintegrating kingdom. But when he grew up during Nande's rule, he himself had declared that if he became the next king, then his country would not be the way it was during the time of Ueyulu and Nande - torn apart by alcohol⁷⁸⁵. Mandume's dream was to restore Uukwanyama to its former greatness by prohibiting alcohol trade and consumption among his subjects, and by encouraging them to reconstruct the country through agriculture.

7.2.2. Mandume: An Endless Resistance

By the time Mandume ascended the throne, the Portuguese and Germans had already agreed on shifting the borderline to the south in 1891, from 16° S to 17° S⁷⁸⁶. This new borderline bisected the Kwanyama kingdom into two, and brought it under the control of two foreign powers. Another adjustment was effected later, during Mandume's rule, by the English-Portuguese treaty which shifted the borderline still further southward, from 17° S to 17° 50' S⁷⁸⁷. All these developments affected Mandume's rule very much. On the one hand, he was struggling to keep his people united under one kingdom, but on the other, the colonial powers wanted to complete their last campaign of acquiring colonies and areas of influence.

It was amidst these upheavals that Mandume inherited the Kwanyama kingdom, at a time when world politics were in a turmoil. The events in Europe which preceded the First World War changed the social, cultural, and economic relationships between different nations and peoples. It was in this atmosphere that the Portuguese attempted to exploit the situation of the Germans' defeat in that war, and expand their sphere of interest further south. At the time when the Portuguese were planning to attack Uukwanyama, Wulfhorst (well-known by his local name Hashipala), a German missionary, went to Mandume's capital at Ondjiva and informed him about the German defeat. He advised Mandume to send his envoy to Windhoek and ask for British protection⁷⁸⁸.

⁷⁸⁵ Kaulinge, Hhd:1 (1876-1946), p. 456; *ibid.*, p. 7 (FWC. 2)

⁷⁸⁶ Brownlie, p. 1025

⁷⁸⁷ Loeb, p. 36; Töttemeyer, p. 6; Aami, p. 23

⁷⁸⁸ Wulfhorst to Hauptmann, Omupanda 31.10.1913, Nr. 2039, W.II.k.4 (Bd.1): "Sperrung des Ambolandes, Specialis 1907-1914" (ZBU); Kaulinge, pp. 1-2 (FWC. 2)

Mandume dispatched his envoy, Kashala the son of Haindjoba, to Windhoek. After Kashala delivered the message, the British agreed in principle to go to Namakunde and have a discussion with Mandume; they dispatched Major Pritchard. At the same time, the British revealed to Kashala that they were preparing for a joint attack with the Portuguese against Mandume⁷⁸⁹. When Kashala and the British under Major Pritchard arrived at the German missionary station at Onamakunde, Mandume was commanding his forces in the battle against the Portuguese at Omongwa⁷⁹⁰. Mandume returned to Onamakunde, where they held their discussions; the British asked Mandume to move his capital from Ondjiva to any area south of the new borderline. Under the terms reached in the so-called protection treaty, Mandume was obliged to move his capital from Ondjiva to Oihole. But contradictions arose, because Mandume did not know at the time that he would lose his subjects to Portuguese control, until Major Pritchard informed him that it was illegal for him to cross to the other side of the border⁷⁹¹.

The British began their military build-up at Onamakunde, after they signed a protection treaty with King Mandume under the pretext of providing security⁷⁹². Certain factors aided the success of Pritchard's tour in winning the "confidence" of both Kings Martin [of Ondonga] and Mandume: first, the imminent Portuguese threat, taking advantage of the German defeat; second, the severe drought that caused hunger in Owamboland between 1914-1915; and third, the actual German defeat and the temporary British control of the then German South West Africa.

When the military build-up and reinforcement at Onamakunde was completed, the British urged Mandume to hand in all his weapons, which they claimed he no longer needed because they were there to protect him and his people against the Portuguese⁷⁹³. Mandume refused to accept this proposal, because the Portuguese attack against his country was still a constant threat. Some time after Mandume refused to surrender his weapons, the Portuguese forces launched an attack on his new capital Oihole, in what they said to be a revenge for Mandume's last attacks on the Portuguese side. According to Kaulinge, this battle was the first ever defeat which Mandume suffered from the Portuguese⁷⁹⁴. What possibly contributed to this defeat were the politics of divide and rule that the British and South Africans were pursuing against

⁷⁸⁹ Kaulinge, p. 2 (FWC. 2)

⁷⁹⁰ Pritchard, S.M. (1915): "Report by the Officer-in-Charge of Native Affairs on his Tour to Ovamboland", p. 13; Kaulinge, p. 2 (FWC. 2)

⁷⁹¹ Pritchard, pp. 6-7; Kaulinge, Hhd:1 (1876-1946), p. 456; Kaulinge, p. 2 (FWC. 2)

⁷⁹² Rautanen's Diaries 1915-1917, 24.08.1915, Hp XXVIII:2, p. 578; Pritchard, pp. 3-4

⁷⁹³ Kaulinge, pp. 4-5 (FWC. 2)

⁷⁹⁴ Kaulinge, p. 5 (FWC. 2)

Mandume's rule. They began to build up their intelligence forces in order to control Mandume's movements, so as to be able to contain him in his area of jurisdiction⁷⁹⁵. To intensify their control over Mandume's subjects, they recruited one of his senior counsellors, Ndjukuma the son of Shilengifa⁷⁹⁶. Major Hahn, by then head of the commission dealing with Mandume and the political affairs of Uukwanyama, went to Oihole accompanied by Ndjukuma. Hahn delivered a message from the South African Government to King Mandume, asking him whether he wanted to fight or was prepared to surrender⁷⁹⁷. Mandume declared at once that he would not surrender to a white man, and that they could only get him out of his kingdom by putting a bullet in his head⁷⁹⁸.

In 1917 the joint South African-British troops - and some Owambo forces which Hahn claimed to have been contributed by the Kings Iipumbu and Martin - set out on an expedition against Mandume⁷⁹⁹. But, according to traditions, when King Iipumbu heard about the joint South African-British forces heading towards Uukwanyama, he wanted to send his warriors to go and help Mandume to fight the white man. But King Martin prevented him from doing so⁸⁰⁰. It is therefore very hard to believe that Iipumbu could have dropped his hard line against the white man and abandoned Mandume at the last minute. Unlike Iipumbu, Martin was "between the dagger and the sheath". On one hand, missionaries were advising him not to put up any resistance against the white man; on the other, the colonialists were threatening him with losing his royal power and control over his subjects if he interfered with the operation against Mandume.

The allied forces began to make preparations for a war against Mandume. By that time an arms embargo had been imposed on him. Mandume relied only on his friendship with King Martin of Ondonga, who kept on supplying him with arms and ammunition⁸⁰¹. But Hahn later exploited this friendship, and thereby Martin found

⁷⁹⁵ "Intelligence Report by Major C.N. Manning on Mandume and Military Affairs in Ovamboland", in: Hahn's Coll. A.2048, Vol. No. 13

⁷⁹⁶ "Intelligence Report by Lieut. Hahn, Resident Commissioner's Staff, on Trip to the Northeastern Portion of Ondonga, and Memo Regarding Chief Mandume and Military Matters", dated 1.12.1916, in: Hahn, op. cit.; Kaulinge, p. 6 (FWC. 2); Tshilongo, V., p. 74 (ibid. 3)

⁷⁹⁷ Hahn's Intelligence Report of 1.12.1916, in: Hahn, op. cit.; Kaulinge, pp. 6-7 (FWC. 2)

⁷⁹⁸ Hahn's Intelligence Report of 1.12.1916, in: Hahn, op. cit.

⁷⁹⁹ "Extracts from Resident Commissioner's Private Diary: 06.02.1917", in: Hahn, op. cit.

⁸⁰⁰ Tshilongo, p. 220 (FWC. 3)

⁸⁰¹ Uukule, pp. 454-455 (FWC. 2)

himself caught up unknowingly in the plot against Mandume. Hahn requested Martin to advise Mandume to surrender and leave his kingdom for Damaraland, where he could stay without any problem. Martin, however, became aware of Hahn's plot - which leaked to him through the so-called Native Sergeant Lulus - that the British were planning to capture Mandume and send him overseas, where he would become a soldier⁸⁰². Instead, Martin offered Mandume asylum in Ondonga.

These were the real operations aimed at ending traditional rule and replacing it with indirect rule, which the colonialists had devised to serve the interests of their government. Several attempts were made to destroy King Mandume's image and popularity amongst his subjects. On 3 February 1917 a certain Colonel de Jagger, who was in command of the operation, began to move his forces toward Oihole, where they arrived on 6 February. They found the royal residence deserted. But as a sign of the life of his nation, Mandume had left the sacred fire burning at the drawing place and the chair where he used to sit facing it as a symbol of his royal power. Outside his residence, attached to a pole, a white flag was flying. Despite this sign of peace, Lieutenant-Colonel Fouché ordered his men to burn down Mandume's residence⁸⁰³. After an exchange of fire between the allied forces and Mandume's loyalists in the forest nearby his capital, the firing ceased, apparently because Mandume's forces ran out of ammunition. Mandume's body was discovered a distance away from his royal residence, where he had shot himself⁸⁰⁴. The Kwanyama kingdom was left without an heir. Mandume had lost most of his relatives when they remained in the Portuguese-controlled Uukwanyama; only his mother was with him⁸⁰⁵. Knowing that he had no heir, he had called his subjects before the battle and told them: "Anyone who survives this war must go to Ondonga to Martin to be comforted, and take all my property to him"⁸⁰⁶.

Certain factors were significant in Mandume's years of resistance against both the Portuguese and the British-South African colonialists. First, after inheriting the declining kingdom, Mandume became genuinely committed to maintaining and strengthening Uukwanyama under the traditional rule. Second, to ensure his success, he reformed and enforced all the traditional laws of the Kwanyama kingdom. Third,

⁸⁰² "Copy of Extracts from Resident Commissioner's Diary: 24-30.11.1916", in: Hahn, op. cit.

⁸⁰³ "Extracts from Resident Commissioner's Private Diary: 06.02.1917", in: Hahn, op. cit.

⁸⁰⁴ Ibid.; Kaulinge, Hhd:1 (1876-1946), p. 456; *ibid.*, p. 7 (FWC. 2); Shikongo, p. 317 (*ibid.*); Loeb, p. 37

⁸⁰⁵ Kaulinge, p. 32 (FWC. 2)

⁸⁰⁶ Rautanen's Diaries, 16.02.1917, Hp XXVIII:2, p. 80; Kaulinge, Hhd:1 (1876-1946), p. 456; *ibid.*, p. 7 (FWC. 2); Shikongo, p. 317 (*ibid.*); Shindondola, p. 341 (*ibid.*); Uukule, p. 456 (*ibid.*)

he reformed the terms of trade in his kingdom, by prohibiting the selling of alcohol, because he saw how it contributed to the decline of the kingdom during the rule of Ueyulu and Nande. And fourth, he was fighting against colonialism and foreign domination.

7.3. Ongandjera - Years of Political Rivalry and Recovery

After the defeat of Amunyela the son of Tshaningwa in 1862, the Ngandjera kingdom experienced a decline of its power and royal prestige. This was not only because the successors did not match their predecessors, but also because the kingdom was undermined by the frequency of succession it had experienced. This situation also coincided with the socio-economic change emanating from long-distance trade, which brought the gun - the new weapon which shifted the balance of power in the region. Ongandjera, being far from the trading route, did not acquire this commodity, whereas its neighbours the Kwambi and the Ndonga did⁸⁰⁷. As a result, the power of the Ngandjera kingdom was destroyed, and its royal prestige ended with Amunyela.

Amunyela was succeeded by his sister's child Ekandjo the son of Kadhila⁸⁰⁸. Nakashwa the daughter of Tshiimi - who by then was exiled in Uukwambi - sent her husband Ndjene to seek for help from the Ndonga King Shikongo, to overthrow Ekandjo⁸⁰⁹. She ousted Ekandjo with the help of Ndonga warriors, and became Queen. Ekandjo fled to Ombalantu but later went to Uukwambi⁸¹⁰, where Nuyoma gave him warriors to help him in overthrowing Nalashwa. Ekandjo attacked Nakashwa and killed her in the southern forest of her kingdom. He occupied Nalashwa's capital, but was killed there by his nephew Tsheya the son of Uutshona - who had returned from his forced exile in Uukwaluudhi⁸¹¹.

Although Nalashwa was a strong ruler, who strengthened her kingdom by increasing food production through agriculture rather than resorting to cattle raids, her

⁸⁰⁷ Koivu's Coll. (1909-1917), Hp XIII:1, p. 507

⁸⁰⁸ Hahn's Coll. A.450, No. 8, Vol. 2/34; Liljeblad, pp. 685 & 1467; Iiyego, Mic. No. 39 (ELC. 344); Nameya, Mic. No. 56 (ibid.); Iitenge, Mic. No. 7 a & b (ibid.)

⁸⁰⁹ Hahn's Coll., op. cit.; Liljeblad, pp. 685 & 1467; Väinänen's Coll. (1927-1930), Hp XXXIX:1-2, p. 619; Iiyego, Mic. No. 39 (ELC. 344)

⁸¹⁰ Väinänen's Coll., op. cit., p. 619; Iiyego, Mic. No. 39 (ELC. 344)

⁸¹¹ Hahn's Coll., op. cit.; Liljeblad, pp. 685 & 1467; Iiyego, Mic. No. 39 (ELC. 344); Nameya, Mic. No. 56 (ibid.); Iitenge, Mic. No. 7 a & b (ibid.); Väinänen's Coll., op. cit. p. 619; Laurmaa (1949), p. 66; Amutenya, p. 70

rule was short-lived⁸¹². Tsheya ascended the throne at a time when long-distance trade had reached its apex in neighbouring Uukwambi and Ondonga, as well as in Uukwanyama. By that time, the arms arsenals of these kingdoms were packed with modern weapons, which were not only a symbol of prestige and power but also a direct threat to Tsheya's kingdom. The presence of Europeans in Ondonga and neighbouring Uukwambi, was in itself a threat to the Ngandjera kingdom, as attested by the experience of the Ndonga>Nama joint war against it in 1860 and 1862, in which the gun and the horse were used for the first time in warfare in Ongandjera⁸¹³. Being aware of his own weakness, King Tsheya lived in constant fear of possible attacks from his neighbours.

Despite all these difficulties, Tsheya tried to strengthen his weakened kingdom by first unifying his people. He began his war campaigns to regain what Ongandjera had lost in the past years⁸¹⁴. Avoiding his powerful neighbour Uukwambi, Tsheya sent his warriors to Evale twice in 1871. In the last operation of that year, they joined forces with the Kwambi and Kwanyama kings and attacked Evale⁸¹⁵. In the same year, King Tsheya gave missionaries Rautanen and Reijonen a place to build their station. Their stay in Ongandjera was short-lived: they abandoned their station two years later⁸¹⁶ - because what Tsheya wanted was guns, and not preaching. Although Tsheya did not succeed in obtaining what other kingdoms had in terms of guns and ammunition, he managed to restore the political power of his kingdom. And at the time of his death he had become a favoured Ngandjera king, after the years of political instability⁸¹⁷.

After his death, Tsheya was succeeded by his step-brother Iiyambo the son of Iileka, who established his capital at Engonda. Iiyambo was renowned for his cruelty, which led his step-brother Tshaanika the son of Natshilongo to kill him and take over the kingdom in 1887⁸¹⁸. Tshaanika overthrew Iiyambo with the help of his brother-in-law (and Negumbo's former counsellor) Namulo the son of Iitula⁸¹⁹. Tsheya the son

⁸¹² Hahn's Coll., op. cit.; Iiyego, Mic. No. 39 (ELC. 344);

Laurmaa (1949), p. 66; Amutenya, p. 70

⁸¹³ Kondombolo, pp. 307-308 (FWC. 1)

⁸¹⁴ Hahn's Coll., op. cit.

⁸¹⁵ Väänänen's Coll., op. cit., 619; Tirronen (1977), p. 29

⁸¹⁶ Laurmaa (1949), p. 66; Amutenya, p. 70; Tirronen (1977), pp. 27 & 29

⁸¹⁷ Hahn's Coll., op. cit.; Amutenya, p. 71

⁸¹⁸ Väänänen's Coll., op. cit., p. 619; Hahn's Coll., op. cit.; Iiyego, Mic. No. 39 (ELC. 344); Laurmaa (1949), p. 66; Amutenya, p. 71

⁸¹⁹ Hahn's Coll., op. cit.; Väänänen's Coll., op. cit., p. 619; Liljeblad, p. 685. Namulo was married to Namatshi the daughter of Natshilongo (Liljeblad, pp. 685-686).

of Uutshona had succeeded in strengthening the Ngandjera kingdom by unifying his people. But Iiyambo, during his brief rule, destroyed this unity and confidence through the fear he spread by killing both common and royal people. Thus Tshaanika inherited a declining kingdom, because Ongandjera was again a deserted kingdom.

Tshaanika set about building up his kingdom once again by acquiring cattle and captives from his war campaigns against Uukwaluudhi, Evale, Ombalantu, and Ombandja¹²⁰. But his kingdom, like other Owambo kingdoms, was affected by the rinderpest in 1896/1897 which again dried up the kingdom's limited cattle resources. This catastrophe was followed by years of famine and successive drought. Problems with trade also undermined the economies of most Owambo kingdoms: people could no longer produce sufficient surplus to pay for their tribute and trade because of the unreliable rainfall. What was produced was bartered for domestic consumption. With the Owambo market drawn into the world economic system, the impact of international economic instability began to have its effects on the internal market.

It was under these adverse circumstances enhanced by the insecurity which emanated from the Portuguese invasion of Ombandja - to which he himself sent forces to help King Shahula - that King Tshaanika along with other Owambo kings, accepted the offer of the so-called German protection treaties (see p. 150 above).

7.4. Uukwambi - Last Years of Royal Rule

7.4.1. Negumbo: Rescue of Royal Power

After the death of Nuyoma the son of Heelu in May 1875, his step-brother Negumbo the son of Kandenge succeeded him. The Kwambi kingdom needed such a moderate, but strong king as Negumbo to unify the people once again, because it was on the brink of decline in its royal power and prestige. The problem resulted from the cultural influence to which King Nuyoma succumbed. He began to pay more attention to European traders, who were settled by then around his royal capital, and to the commodities they could offer, than to the welfare of his people and kingdom. What undermined his traditional role as the Kwambi king was his assumption of foreign values which were in conflict with the traditional ones. He began to see his people simply as suppliers of cattle, and themselves as commodities which he used to pay for his trade. Alcohol also greatly undermined Nuyoma's power.

Although Nuyoma waged a number of wars and captured prisoners and cattle, this did not strengthen his kingdom's economic power, because he used most of the cattle and prisoners as payment for his trade with Europeans. Moreover, during his rule many Kwambi people fled the country to neighbouring kingdoms, in fear of being

¹²⁰ Väänänen's Coll., op. cit., p. 619; Hahn's Coll., op. cit.; Liljeblad, p. 685

sold as slaves or losing their cattle through internal cattle robbery by his adopted children.

When Nuyoma realized that he was no longer able to take care of the kingdom, he recalled his step-brother Negumbo from his imposed exile in Ombalantu and Ongandjera, where he had lived for a long time. By that time, Negumbo was already an old man²¹. He established his capital at Onatshiku. Missionary Pettinen, who visited Negumbo in 1890, estimated his age at between 45-50²²; but Möller, who met Negumbo five years later, put his estimate at 60²³. Negumbo inherited the Kwambi kingdom not only amidst the decline of its power and royal prestige, but also during the increase of long-distance trade, the spreading of Christianity, and the colonial expansion. Trade, the main source of the kingdom's wealth in the form of tribute levied from subjects, was already under the control of European traders.

Thus Negumbo was forced to find an alternative in order to strengthen his kingdom. He appointed his son Tshikongo as his war commander²⁴, and began war campaigns to regain cattle and people lost during the rule of Nuyoma. Negumbo did not wage war against Ondonga, Uukwaluudhi, or Uukwanyama²⁵, because they had earlier made peace and sanctified their borders with the charm of "an old woman" (*okakulukadhi*)²⁶. His neighbour Ongandjera became Negumbo's target; it is said that he was not fond of the Ngandjera people at all²⁷, most probably because they had subdued the kingdom of Uukwambi for a long time.

During the time of his rule, Negumbo invited missionaries to come to his kingdom. Missionaries Rautanen and Roiha visited him in 1883; as part of their tributes they gave Negumbo a gun and three and a half kilograms of ammunition, respectively²⁸. Although he wanted missionaries, Negumbo did not understand the difference between them and traders²⁹. This can be seen from his reaction to missionary Roiha, who asked him whether he had any special request to make to the head of the Missionary Society in Finland. Negumbo answered: "Please write and tell him to send me new missionaries and very good guns!"³⁰ Missionaries did not

²¹ Hahn's Coll., op. cit.; Kandongo, p. 133 (FWC. 1); Tshilongo, V., p. 286 (ibid. 3)

²² Pettinen (1890-1895): 05.06.1890

²³ Möller, p. 117

²⁴ Laurmaa (1949), p. 61; Tshilongo, pp. 287-288 (FWC. 3)

²⁵ Amutenya, p. 65; Laurmaa (1949), p. 61; Tshilongo, V., p. 288 (FWC. 3)

²⁶ Amupembe, Mic. No. 8 (ELC. 344)

²⁷ Väänänen's Coll., op. cit., p. 619; Tshilongo, V., p. 288 (FWC. 3)

²⁸ Tirronen (1977), pp. 47-48

²⁹ Ibid., p. 48; Tshilongo, V., p. 288 (FWC. 3)

³⁰ Tshilongo, V., p. 289 (FWC. 3)

understand the contradiction that resulted from the demand for new commodities which the Europeans introduced. What Negumbo wanted was not preaching but better guns to repel his enemies, because his traditional weapons were now proving inefficient. King Kambonde the son of Nankwaya expressed his sentiments regarding the missionary work in the following words: "If you (missionaries) are saying that you have your God, we also have our God (meaning Kalunga); and if you have your traditions, we also have ours, which we consider to be good⁸³¹." Of course, such sentiments should be expressed clearly by a king, because the new religious activities were in contradiction with his traditional religion, the ideology upon which his kingdom was based.

Negumbo's rule began to be undermined not only by the spread of Christianity and of commerce, but also by the expanding colonialists who were at that time extending their offers to "protect" Owambo kingdoms. The colonialists were mistaken in thinking that the northern part of the country was an isolated region, hence assuming that these communities were unaware of what was happening in the southern part of the country. It was under such an illusion that the German colonial government dispatched Captain Franke in 1899 to go and study the situation in the north. Negumbo refused to receive him, and declared he would fight the Germans at once⁸³². Negumbo's refusal was taken as an anti-German sentiment. A year later, an incident occurred in which two German traders, J. H. Schneiderwind and E. Petersen, came to trade in Uukwambi⁸³³. The traders were refused passage to Uukwanyama. And on their way back, their wagon was attacked and their property captured⁸³⁴. According to traditions, Negumbo, though he knew about the incident, did not take it seriously, because the German traders had violated his kingdom's norms when they entered his area of jurisdiction without permission. The Germans sent him an ultimatum demanding the return of the captured property to the owners, and compensation for the damage caused⁸³⁵. Because of the growing tensions, Negumbo urged the people who had captured the goods to return them⁸³⁶. What was important to Negumbo in this incident was that he wanted to stop the German influence - in his country in particular, and in the whole Owambo region in general.

⁸³¹ Tirronen (1977), p. 36

⁸³² Lehmann (1956), p. 280; Tirronen (1977), p. 89

⁸³³ Lehmann (1956), p. 279; Eirola, Martti (1986): "The Uukwambi Incident and its Aftermath: A Study of the Ovambo Resistance Against the German Colonial Power", in: "Studying the Northern Namibian Past: Research Seminar in Tvärminne, 2-4 December 1985". edited by Harri Siiskonen, p. 69

⁸³⁴ Lehmann (1956), p. 279; Eirola (1986), p. 70

⁸³⁵ Kandongo, p. 133 (FWC. 1)

⁸³⁶ Ibid.

7.4.2. A Kingdom Without an Heir

After Negumbo's death in 1908, his sister's son Iipumbu succeeded him. Iipumbu established his capital at Omapona, and finally moved it to Onatshiku³⁷. Although the Kwambi kingdom enjoyed prosperity during Negumbo's successful rule, Iipumbu needed to continue to strengthen its economy to be able to finance his trade. He waged wars against Ongandjera, Ombalantu, and Uukolonkadhi; from these he captured booty and prisoners³⁸. But these wars and cattle raids were short-lived. Because the so-called protection treaties signed between Owambo kings and the German colonial government, were aimed at providing security and protection to the German Kaiser's subjects and property³⁹, clear signs of a declining of the royal rule were coming to light; the king's role was being minimized to nothing but a figure - a phenomenon which has been identified in other parts of Africa as indirect rule.

But what seriously undermined the prosperity and prestige of Owambo kingdoms was the expansion of long-distance trade and the European dominance over it. By the time of his accession to his kingdom's throne, Iipumbu found the Europeans already controlling both external and internal trade. Traditionally, internal trade had been a source of the kingdom's wealth, which it acquired through tribute. Both types of trade were by then integrated into the world economic system. Europeans were beginning to introduce other means of exchange than barter; this undermined not only the barter economy but also the local industry.

Furthermore, the missionaries had begun to spread the gospel, introducing new religious ideas. This greatly undermined the ideology of the kingdom, hence causing a decline in royal power. Colonialism was also an imminent threat: its political ideas had begun to undermine the traditional political institutions. The introduction of wage labour through the colonial industries altered production relations, which brought contradictions into the traditional system. The money economy was also greatly undermining trading relations, because the traditional products no longer served as barter. In actual fact, the main contradiction that existed between the traditional rulers and the colonialists was in their outlook: the kings, for their part, viewed the world from the point of view of their ancestors and the whites from Christianity. The difference that existed between their ethics of production also markedly shaped new relations of production, hence undermining the traditional ways and means of production and the relations thereof.

³⁷ Laurmaa (1949), p. 62; Tshilongo, V., p. 216 (FWC. 3)

³⁸ Väänänen's Coll. (1927-1930), Hp XXXIX:1-2, p. 619; Laurmaa (1949), p. 62; Tshilongo, V., p. 217 (FWC. 3)

³⁹ ZBU, Nr. 2039, W.II.k.3: "Verträge mit Häuptlingen des Ovambolandes 1908-1909"; see pp. 199-200 above

It was amidst these cultural and social changes that Iipumbu inherited the throne. For example, a conflict arose in his royal capital when his daughter Nekulu wanted to be converted to Christianity, which Iipumbu was against. Instead he wanted his daughter to go through the initiation rite. Nekulu fled from her father's court and sought refuge at the missionary station. This soured the relationship between the missionaries and the king. The then Native Commissioner of Owamboland, C. H. Hahn, interfered and urged King Iipumbu to surrender all his guns and pay 20 head of cattle and the same number of horses, if he still wanted to be the king of Uukwambi⁸⁴⁰. For Iipumbu this was an insult; it is not in accordance with the Owambo tradition for a king or a member of the royal clan to pay tribute for the piece of land he occupies. Hence Iipumbu replied to Hahn's demands as follows: "I am not going to pay tax, because the country belongs to my ancestors, and the kingdom to my mother, Ambondo the daughter of Amunyela."⁸⁴¹ Hahn's interference was part of the colonial tactics of forcing out traditional rulers and replacing them with those who would serve the interests of the colonial government. Iipumbu refused to accept the terms of neutrality, and continued his resistance against colonial rule and domination - which finally led to his being deposed in 1932.

7.5. Ombandja - Shahula: A Name that Means "An End"

To understand the tendency behind the Portuguese expansionist policy, let us first look at events that Portugal experienced during the first decades of the 19th century. Portugal itself was going through a disastrous experience at home. While just recovering from the French invasion and the occupation by English troops in the years between 1807-1814, it lost its largest colony, Brazil, in 1822. And in the years between 1853-1861, Portugal was again drawn into political turmoil emanating from the civil wars between the constitutionalists and absolute monarchists⁸⁴². All these experiences affected its economic position in Europe, and most probably undermined the power and prestige it enjoyed over the years of its navigation breakthrough. This position changed Portugal's foreign policy regarding its colonies, which by then were the main source of its wealth. Hence the stronghold of Angola as its largest colony at that time, and the agreement reached by the 1884/1885 Berlin conference on the "Scramble" for Africa, afforded Portugal with a timely opportunity to expand. This was accelerated by the 1890 Portuguese/German border agreement, which shifted the borderline southward from 16° S to 17° S. For Portugal, it was important to exert its influence in the new

⁸⁴⁰ Laurmaa (1949), p. 63; Tshilongo, V., pp. 223-224 (FWC. 3)

⁸⁴¹ Tshilongo, V., p. 224 (ibid.)

⁸⁴² Wheelers & Pelissiers, p. 11

area south of Angola; it was also disturbed by the presence of the Boers who had settled in Humbe. To replace what they had lost in Brazil and to re-establish their power, the Portuguese began to build military forts and posts in the region.

As a result of this military build-up, the kingdom of Ombandja began to suffer from constant Portuguese attacks from the middle of the 19th century⁸⁴³. The war of resistance against the Portuguese and European expansion in the neighbourhood of the Mbandja kingdoms, was marked by the Ovimbundu attack in 1857 on the trading station which had been established by immigrants from Madeira, Brazil, and Germany at Humbe in 1845. Several military forts in the Gambwe region, in Huila, and later in Capangombe in the Kuvale region were abandoned⁸⁴⁴. While travelling in the region around the 1880s, Möller had already noted the anti-European sentiments amongst the Mbandja people, which he described as being aggravated by the constant Portuguese attacks on their kingdoms⁸⁴⁵.

Besides these random attacks on African kingdoms, the Portuguese intensified their aggressions against the Little-Mbandja in 1904, by that time under the rule of King Shahula the son of Amadhila⁸⁴⁶. Shahula ascended the throne when Shekudja the son of Amakunde committed suicide before he (Shekudja) was enthroned as king⁸⁴⁷. The Portuguese started to enter Shahula's kingdom from the banks of the Kunene River, near a fort which they had built earlier. They began to burn down homesteads and force the people to move from the area near the fort⁸⁴⁸. Shahula informed the then king of Big-Ombandja, Sheetekela the son of Huudulu, about the Portuguese aggression against his people, and requested him to join forces and go and fight the Portuguese at the fort⁸⁴⁹. Shahula and Sheetekela prepared their warriors and attacked the Portuguese there. The Portuguese suffered a disastrous defeat: most of them were killed and the rest taken as war captives; the Mbandja armed themselves heavily with the guns and ammunition they captured⁸⁵⁰. The captives were humiliated; they became slaves at Shahula's court. Their hair was cut and their heads smeared with ochre, which they pounded themselves. Their trousers were replaced with garments usually worn by women, made from cow-skin. One of them was released with this message: "I found the king of Ombandja at home, but I do not know what happened to my colleagues⁸⁵¹."

⁸⁴³ Möller, p. 122

⁸⁴⁴ Estermann (1976), p. xviii

⁸⁴⁵ Möller, p. 122

⁸⁴⁶ Ituku, Mic. No. 39 (ELC. 344); Shikongo, p. 316 (FWC. 2)

⁸⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁴⁸ Shikongo, p. 316 (FWC. 2)

⁸⁴⁹ Tshilongo, V., p. 219 (FWC. 3)

⁸⁵⁰ Estermann (1976), p. xx; Shikongo, p. 316 (FWC. 2)

⁸⁵¹ Shikongo, pp. 316-17 (FWC. 2)

This was an insult to the Portuguese; they began to prepare themselves for an outright war against King Shahula. Heading the operation this time was Alves Rocadas; his forces clashed with the Germans at a fort near Naulila, where they suffered great losses⁸⁵². This gave Shahula plenty of time to prepare his forces against the possible Portuguese attack. Shahula once again sought help from Sheetekela, and also requested the Kwambi, Kwaluudhi, Mbalantu, and Kwanyama kings to send him warriors⁸⁵³. This operation could have been a great success because Shahula's strategy was to ally himself with other Owambo kings and push back the Portuguese, thus regaining the independence the Owambo kingdoms had enjoyed. However, Shahula miscalculated by underestimating the internal power struggle between him and his nephew Kaipalulwa. Kaipalulwa had by then established his royal capital on the Mbandja-Kwanyama border, threatening to secede⁸⁵⁴. He entered into an alliance with the Portuguese, in an agreement to oust Shahula and install him as the king of Little-Ombandja.

The Portuguese were angered by the massacre of their people at the fort in 1904, and the Mufilu river bed in 1907⁸⁵⁵. The Portuguese-Kaipalulwa alliance crossed the Mufilu river bed, pushing into the country. By then most of the allied Owambo forces had returned home. Shahula fled the country when he realized that he could not face the advancing troops. When they reached Shahula's capital the kingdom was almost deserted, because most Mbandja people had followed Shahula⁸⁵⁶. He went into exile in Uukwaluudhi, where he was given refuge. But most of his followers went to Ombalantu, Okalongo, Uukolonkadhi, Uukwanyama, and Uukwambi. When the Portuguese took over the kingdom, they killed their ally Kaipalulwa, in the fear that he would again conspire with his nephew against them⁸⁵⁷.

Shahula had gone into forced exile after seven years of protracted wars between him and the Portuguese. Both Mbandja kingdoms remained without their rulers. After suffering the Portuguese defeat, Sheetekela went first to Uukwambi. When King Iipumbu realized that he could not protect him, being nearer to the Portuguese than Martin of Ondonga⁸⁵⁸, Sheetekela went to Ondonga, and then to Uukwanyama - where the Portuguese found him when they began their wars against Mandume⁸⁵⁹.

⁸⁵² Estermann (1976), p. xix

⁸⁵³ Väänänen's Coll., Hp XXXIX:2, p. 622

⁸⁵⁴ Shikongo, pp. 328-329 (FWC. 2)

⁸⁵⁵ Shikongo, p. 329 (ibid.)

⁸⁵⁶ Shikongo, pp. 329, 332-333 (ibid.)

⁸⁵⁷ Shikongo, p. 329 (ibid.)

⁸⁵⁸ Tshilongo, V., p. 220 (FWC. 3)

⁸⁵⁹ "Intelligence Report by Lieut. Hahn, Resident Commissioner's Staff, on Trip to the Northeastern Portion of Ondonga, and Memo Regarding Chief Mandume and Military Matters", dated 1.12.1916, in: Hahn, A.2048, Vol. No. 13; Shikongo, p. 317 (FWC. 2)

Later, after the death of Mandume, Sheetekela fled to Okalongo, where he sought refuge.

Fearing an attack from Shahula, the Portuguese began to send envoys to Uukwaluudhi, extending an amnesty to him and urging him to come back and take over his kingdom. But Shahula's counsellors kept on advising him to remain in Uukwaluudhi. By that time, the Portuguese were sending him brandy as tribute and as a gesture of goodwill. Unlike his advisers, Shahula did not look at the Portuguese offer as an enticement: he thought that they had abandoned their policy of expansion and that they now wanted peace. Shahula decided to return to Ombandja to ascend his throne. Upon his arrival, he went to the homestead of his counsellor Amunyela the son of Shilumatwa⁶⁶⁰, from where he sent a message to the Portuguese about his arrival in the country. The Portuguese arrival on the scene had an immediate effect. They told Shahula that they had come to welcome him back, and that he could take over his kingdom provided that he returned the guns he had captured from the Portuguese in the battles at the fort, Mufilu river bed and Mukoyimu⁶⁶¹. Shahula promised to gather those guns from his people when he settled down, but the Portuguese demanded to see the number of his own guns. The counsellors advised the king to refuse to be disarmed. The Portuguese began to shoot into the air, after which confusion broke out. Shahula fled again and went to the place where he had left his horse. He shot his horse, and two of his counsellors - Ndakalako, and another one, whose name is forgotten - and then shot himself, leaving behind Amunyela as a witness of what happened⁶⁶². When the Portuguese arrived, they found Shahula already dead. The name Shahula really means "an end".

To conclude this chapter, one can point out that the first half of the 19th century witnessed internal conflicts of royal succession in most Owambo kingdoms. Conflicts occurred because of the fragile internal political situation within these kingdoms at that time. In an attempt to solve the problem some kings resorted to their royal and religious power, by which they hid stones in their fields to serve as power symbols. All the successive princes or princesses were taken to such places to find the hidden stone; if they did not find it they lost their rights as heirs.

It was amidst these political conflicts that the European imperial expansion began to take place. Although up to that time Owamboland had not been reached from the south, the trade and debt system, which was on the increase, forced local chiefs like Jonker Afrikaner to search for alternatives in order to pay their debts. As a result Jonker raided Owambo cattle-posts as early as 1852; with the help of guns and horses, he captured large herds of cattle. In 1858 Jonker entered into an alliance with King

⁶⁶⁰ Shikongo, p. 318 (FWC. 2)

⁶⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶⁶² Ibid.

Shikongo of Ondonga, to help him in fighting his uncle Shipanga. After that, the gun and the horse began to change the balance of power in Owamboland, with Ongandjera - the traditional power in the region - losing its might and dominance.

The expansion of long-distance trade led not only to the European domination of both internal and external trade, but to the extraction of enormous profits from Owamboland: Owambo kings paid as many as 140 head of cattle for one horse. The long-distance trade began to integrate Owamboland into the world economic system, through the barter of cattle, slaves, ivory and ostrich feathers for guns, ammunition, spirits, and beads. But the heavy duties and taxation began to undermine the kingdoms' economic and political power. More importantly, because their traditional means of barter were being devalued by the money economy - which in turn undermined the local industry. Cattle, which had been a source of the kingdoms' wealth and prestige, were also diminishing in numbers due to the 1896/97 rinderpest. Hunger began to increase because of successive droughts, and people were no longer able to produce surplus for barter. Dependency on the European market became a reality.

The expansion of missionary work, on the other hand, was exerting a pressure on the culture and ideology of the kingdom. This was perhaps the major force which undermined the ideology of the kingdoms. The concept of breathing life into the dead contradicted the traditional religious system by which the king was held to be the only provider of life. The colonialists' expansion took advantage of the kings' dependency on the European market after their kingdoms' economic decline, and they began to introduce the wage labour system. This not only changed the relations of production, but also undermined the kingdoms' independence and economic power through taxation. Subjects no longer paid their tribute in kind to kings, but instead they paid tax to the colonial government.

The colonialists' tendency toward expansion caused mounting tensions around the kingdoms in this region. With the outbreak of wars of resistance in the south between the German colonialists on the one hand and the Herero and Nama on the other, Owambo kings began to prepare themselves for a possible attack. By then the kingdom of Ombandja had suffered constant Portuguese raids, and King Shahula sought alliance with other Owambo kings to fight the Portuguese. The latter suffered a disastrous defeat at the battle of the fort in 1904. In the same year, King Nehale of eastern Ondonga attacked the German military post at Namutoni, and levelled it to the ground. And in 1917, the English/South African allied forces attacked the capital of King Mandume at Oihole; this battle ended in the death of Mandume, who took his own life. These were instances of anti-colonial resistance by the Owambo people against both the Germans and the Portuguese, and later the English/South African occupation.

Kingdoms maintained a considerable level of mutual relationships. Although they waged wars against each other, to demonstrate power and influence, the

commercialization of raiding did not occur until the European expansion and the introduction of long-distance trade. Hence, economic and cultural changes brought by Europeans, and the concept of individualism advocated by missionaries - contrary to the communal African way of life - greatly undermined the traditional political and social institutions. This process was brought to completion by the colonial occupation of Angola and Namibia.

8. CONCLUSIONS

I have argued throughout this work in favour of oral tradition as a source of historical data for societies which did not have the art of writing to record their past. However, it became clearer from results obtained from the fieldwork which preceded this study, that social, cultural and economic changes had in fact contributed toward altering the local traditions. What was indigenous could not survive the foreign influence brought by external contact, trade, Christianity, and colonialism.

Nevertheless, what did survive was protected by the Owambo people's desire to preserve their ancestral land and their rulers. The intermarriages and intermingling which occurred made these people a heterogeneous group. This aided the formation of a common identity, which afforded them communal unity amongst themselves and their neighbours. The unity was maintained through trade, wars, cultural links held together by common languages they shared, and family ties drawn together by both royal and commoners' clan affiliation. To maintain a continuous relationship, kingdoms established a system of cultural bonds, cemented together by common rituals they shared, like the art of rain-making and the fire-fetching. Evale played the dominant role in the art of rain-making; it became renowned throughout the region for its wise men. This was also the system through which kingdoms exchanged tributes, contributed as an appreciation for rain-doctors and fire-twirlers.

The maintenance of the kingdom and the royal family was mainly the duty of commoners, i.e. subjects of the king. The subjects were responsible for contributing tribute in kind which formed the basis of the kingdom's economic power and prestige. The wars they waged were another source of the kingdom's wealth, in terms of cattle and captives. What undermined the internal process of the development of royal power was long-distance trade, which took over the monopoly of the market. As a result, most kingdoms became economically weakened, because tributes - which had been paid in the form of taxation on local trade - were now being drained into the levies on trade that indigenous people had to pay to the foreign traders.

The introduction of the money economy in Owamboland also decisively undermined the traditional trade system - barter - by devaluing it. Another factor of change was Christianity which brought a new faith, undermining the kingdoms'

ideology and religion. Colonialism, with its centralized system of rule, greatly changed the face of political relations in Owamboland. Although its impact remained very marginal as far as the system of traditional rule was concerned, it succeeded in drawing the kingdom's subjects into the contract labour system - which not only contributed to the building of a strong colonial economic base, but in turn also changed the economic relations between the commoner and the royal clans. The former became his own master, in terms of earning a meagre salary; but in terms of authority, the commoner was drawn into a contradiction between respecting his new master and paying tribute to his traditional ruler. This process completed the colonial occupation of Angola and Namibia, and undermined the political, cultural, and economic autonomy of Owambo kingdoms.

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⁸⁶³ Oral data is the primary source for this study, especially for the reconstruction of the period before the coming of the European missionaries, travellers, traders, and colonizers.

Recent traditions were collected by myself in most parts of Owamboland from August to November, 1989, and June to July, 1990; and some parts by my research assistants, Rev. Jason Amakutuwa and Vilho Tshilongo, from 1987-1990.

The original tapes, together with transcribed versions in Oshiwambo and translated into English, are deposited at the National Archives in Windhoek, with copies at the University of Joensuu. Informants are depicted in this study as authors of the original texts, and are cited accordingly; I remain as the editor of these texts.

⁸⁶⁴ This is the most important primary source in addition to the recent collected oral traditions (see footnote 1), because it contains valuable ethnographic material describing the way of life of the Owambo people and their system of government before the foreign expansion. The information contained in this collection thus fills the gap between different written sources.

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APPENDIX I

OWAMBO POPULATION PRIOR TO 1900

	1876 ¹	1887 ²	1898 ³
Ondonga	20 000	20 000	15 000
Uukwanyama	30 000	20 000	70 000
Uukwambi	5 000	15 000	5 000
Ongandjera	10 000	10 000	5 000
Ombalantu	4 000	?	3 000
Uukwaluudhi	6 000	?	3 000
Uukolonkadhi	?	?	2 000
TOTAL	75 000	65 000	103 000

¹ Palgrave, p. 49

² Schinz, p. 273

³ Brinker, p. 135, in: Tuupainen, p. 159

APPENDIX II

THE OWAMBO AGRICULTURAL YEAR⁴

Seasons	Owambo Months	Months as corresponding to the Julian Calendar
Summer (<i>Othinge</i>)	Kuzimo Kuumbumene Kalogona Kalokanene (Taulagona) Taulanene	November December January February March
Autumn (<i>Oshikufu-thinge</i>)	Epemba Kayo	April May
Winter (<i>Okufu</i>)	Eshengegona Eshengenene Kwenyegona	June June/July July
Spring (<i>Okwenye</i>)	Kwenyekunene Etalalagona Etalala-enene	August September October

⁴ Koivu, Hp XIII:1, pp. 507-508; Väinänen (1927), Hp XXXIX:2, p. 620; Sckär, p. 118; Nameya, Mic. No. 56 (ELC. 344); Tshilongo, V., p. 77 (FWC. 3); Tshilongo, Erastus, p. 136 (ibid. 1); Natshima & Eelu, p. 138 (ibid.); Tirronen (1986).

The Owambo year correspond to the agricultural calendar of the region: the months are named after the production activities, as related to pastoralism, hunting and gathering, and agriculture. For example, the first rains begin during the month of October and in November people begin to catch frogs. The first hoeing takes from December to January, while the marula wine period begins at the end of January.

1898³

15 000

70 000

5 000

5 000

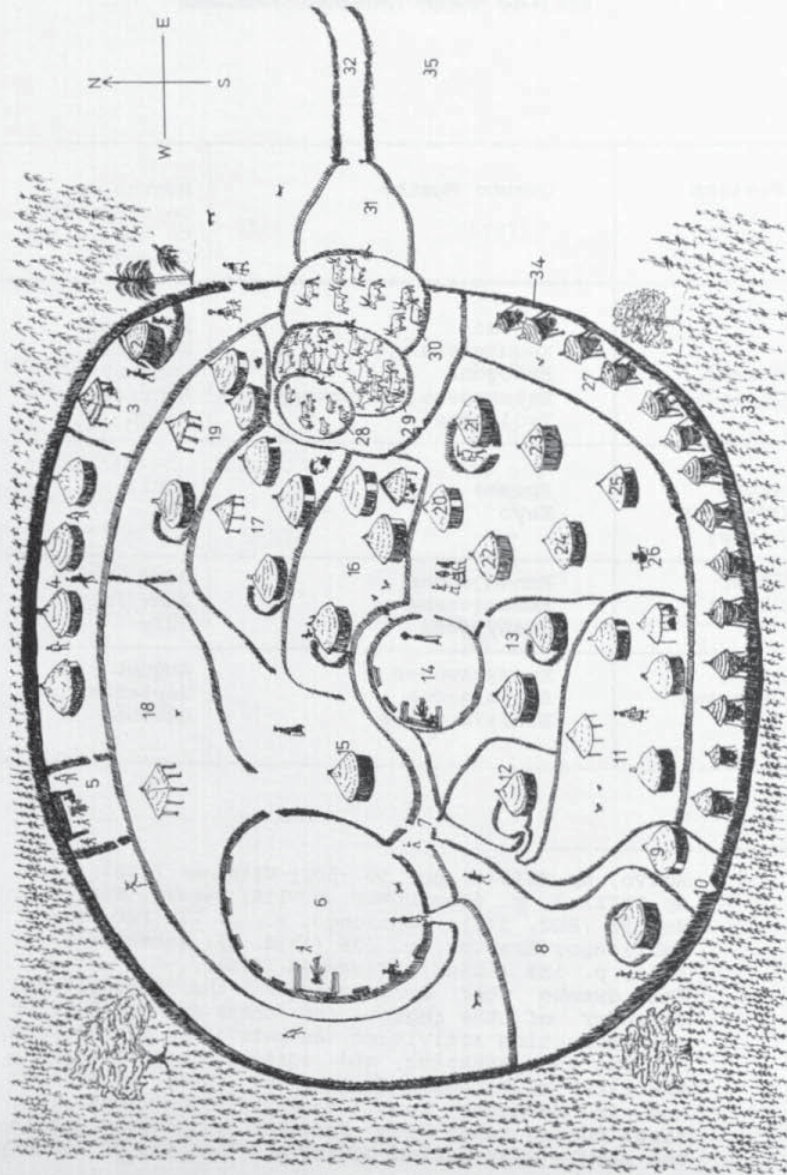
3 000

3 000

2 000

103 000

APPENDIX III: THE OWAMBO HOMESTEAD



1. Main entrance (*eelo*)
2. Pounding place (*oshini*)
3. Passage-yard (*ehale*)
4. Sleeping huts for boys (*omitala dhaamati*)
5. Drawing place for social evenings (*oshinyanga shohungi*)
6. Main drawing place (*oshinyanga oshinene*)
7. Corridor (*omukala*)
8. Sleeping huts for girls (*oondunda dhaakadhona*)
9. Hut for storing hoes (*ondunda yomatemo*)
10. Back entrance (*okanto*)
11. Kitchen of the last wife (*elugo lyo mukulukadhi gwa hugunina*)
12. Sleeping hut for the last wife (*ondjugo yo mukulukadhi gwa hugunina*)
13. Place for guests (*ehala lyaayenda*)
14. Drawing place where the whole family spend an evening (*oshinyanga sha mutyakemo*)
15. Hut where people can take shelter on rainy days (*ondunda yomuzimhi*)
16. Kitchen of the third wife (*elugo lyomukulukadhi go pokati*)
17. Kitchen of the first wife (*elugo lyomukulukadhi go kelombe*)
18. Kitchen place reserved for the only son, the youngest or the most preferred son, who remains home after married to form part of the extended family and look after the parents (*okalugwena*)
19. Kitchen of the second wife (*elugo lyomukulukadhi omutiyali*)
20. Hut for Owambo beer and also palm and marula wines (*ondunda yomalovu*)
21. The husband's sleeping hut (*ondunda yomusamane*)
22. Hut where the husband spends his days when resting (*ondunda ya mutyakemo*)
23. Armoury (*ondunda yomatati*)
24. Storage (*ondunda yiiketha*)
25. Hut for milk calabashes, milking pails and other milking necessities (*ondunda yoondjupa*)
26. Churning frame (*oshihikilo*)
27. Granary (*esizi*)
28. Calf-pen (*okagunda kuutana*)
29. Milking pen (*oshitemagunda*)
30. Enclosure for non-milking cows (*oshihale*)
31. Ox-pen (*ohambo*)
32. Pen entrance (*olwaanda*)
33. Cultivated field (*epya*)
34. palisaded surrounding (*ongandjo*)
35. Field (*elundu*)

APPENDIX IV: A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE OWAMBO, KWANGARI/MBUNDJA
AND MANYEKA-NKUMBI CLANS⁵

TOTEM	OWAMBO	KWANGARI/MBUNDJA	NANYEKA-NKUMBI
Hyena	Ekwanekamba (=Ekwashiiteko, Ekwanamakunde, Ekwaniilwa, Ekwiiga, Ekwandjata)	Vakwasipika	Ovakwangumbe
Snake	Ekuusinda (=Ekwanyoka, Ekwamuhanga, Ekwashitha)	-	Ovakwanyoka
Locust	Ekwambahu	Vakwambahu	Ovakwaneyuva
Lion	Ekwananime	Vakwanyime	Ovakwanyime
Dog	Ekwanambwa	-	Ovakwanambwa
Cattle	Ekwanangombe (=Ekwananghali)	Vakwanangombe	Ovakwanangombe
Zebra	Ekwaluvala (=Etundu)	-	Ovakwaluvala
Elephant	Ekwandjamba (=Ekwathika, Ekwandhila, Ekwatembu, Ekwanaamba, Ekwamanduvi, Ekwamwiila, Ekwamandjila, Ekwamalanga)	Vakwanzovu	Ovakwandyamba
Crocodile	-	Vakwangandu	Ovakwangandu
Buffalo	Ekwanyati	Vakwanyati	-
Fish-hawk	Ekwalukuwo	Vakwazandi	Ovakwalukuwo
Sorghum	Ekwahepo	-	Ovakwahepo
Corn	Ekwaniiilya (=Ekanambumba, Ekwamwiidhi, Ekwaneidi)	-	Ovakwambumba (=Ovakwefinde)
Carvers	Ekwahongo	-	-
Dwarf	-	-	-
mongoose	Ekwankala (=Ekwanafudhi, Ekuuta)	-	-
Sheep	Ekwananzi	-	-

⁵ Pettinen (1926/27), pp. 77-78; Himanen, p. 1; Kaukungwa, Sem, Mic. No. 49 (ELC. 344); Amweelo, Mic. No. 6 (ibid.); Lebzelter, p. 192; Estermann (1979), pp. 121-133; Gibson, et al., p. 62.

Some of these clans acquired their totems from their professional skills: for example, *Ekwahongo* from wood carving, etc.

APPENDIX V:

TRADITIONAL LAWS AND SOCIAL NORMS OF OWAMBO KINGDOMS

A. Traditional Laws⁶

1. *Murder*: No one was allowed to take the life of another person. If such a case occurred, the offender was expected to pay the following to the deceased's clan:

(i) *Ten oxen*: The two clans, that of the offender and that of the victim, were summoned to a certain place, where an ox would be slaughtered with a spear. The blood spilled was a sign of the deceased's blood. This ox was never skinned; it was just cut and roasted with its skin in open flames. Another ox was given to the King, and the rest to the deceased's clan.

(ii) A well-processed *string of pearls made from ostrich eggshells*: as a sign of the deceased's intestines.

(iii) A *ball of tobacco*: symbolized the deceased's head.

(iv) A *loaf of salt*: symbolized the deceased's brain.

(v) A *pipe* which would be smoked in turns between the offender's and the deceased's clans: the pipe was aimed at binding the two clans together, hence as a sign of peace and forgiveness.

2. No one was to put out another person's eye.

3. Rape or adultery were serious offences.

4. No grown-up girl was allowed to leave the kingdom. And no pregnancy was allowed before the girl passed through the initiation rite, or she was exiled or punished by death.

5. All contracted debts must be paid; in case of death, then the clan will be responsible for paying or claiming the deceased's debts or credit respectively.

6. Pyromaniacs were to be punished with death.

7. Witchcraft and magic were prohibited.

8. No bull were allowed to leave the kingdom.

9. No one was allowed to harvest sorghum before the king have send people to fetch *ontsakala*.

10. No one is allowed to fetch salt from the pans before such a period is formerly inaugurated and before all the grain is harvested.

11. No one is allowed to be armed while on a salt-fetching trip; only a knob-kierie is allowed to be carried.

⁶ Pettinen (1890-1895), 17.07.1891; Savola (1916), pp. 105-107; Kafita, Mic. No. 43 (ELC. 344); Uukunde, Mic. No. 89a (ibid.); Tshilongo, V., pp. 263-265

12. Cattle must not be let into the field to eat stalks before the salt-pan excursion had returned.
13. No one was allowed to build a granary during the salt-pan excursion or before its return.
14. The drum must not be beaten during the rainy season

B. Social Norms⁷

1. The King is untouchable: no commoner is allowed to beat or kill a member of the royal clan.
2. No one was allowed to enter sacred places with sandals on his/her feet.
3. No one was allowed to touch sacred things: for example, the country stone, etc.
4. The King must not eat pig's meat.
5. A blind prince/princess must be killed.
6. A left-handed prince/princess, or one with an eye cataract were not become a King or a queen.
7. If the King's wife gives birth to twins, then he should give her to become the wife of one of his subjects.
8. Two mature members of the royal clan cannot live close to each other, and their cattle are not supposed to graze on the same field.
9. Royal persons were not allowed to marry each other.
10. No thief must take away the sacred fire, and it must never be extinguished while the King is alive.
11. No salt must be fetched between the seeding and harvesting periods.

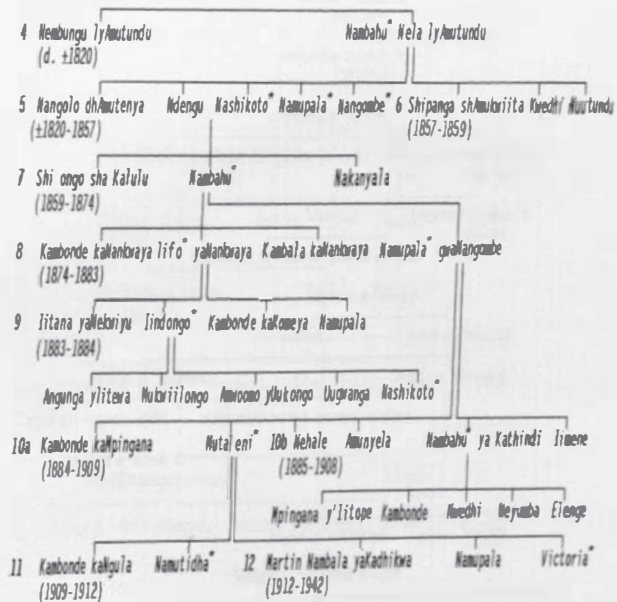
⁷

Pettinen (1890-1895), 17.07.1891; Savola (1916), pp. 98-99; Uukunde, Mic. No. 89a (ELC. 344)

APPENDIX VI: ROYAL GENEALOGIES OF OWAMBO KINGDOMS

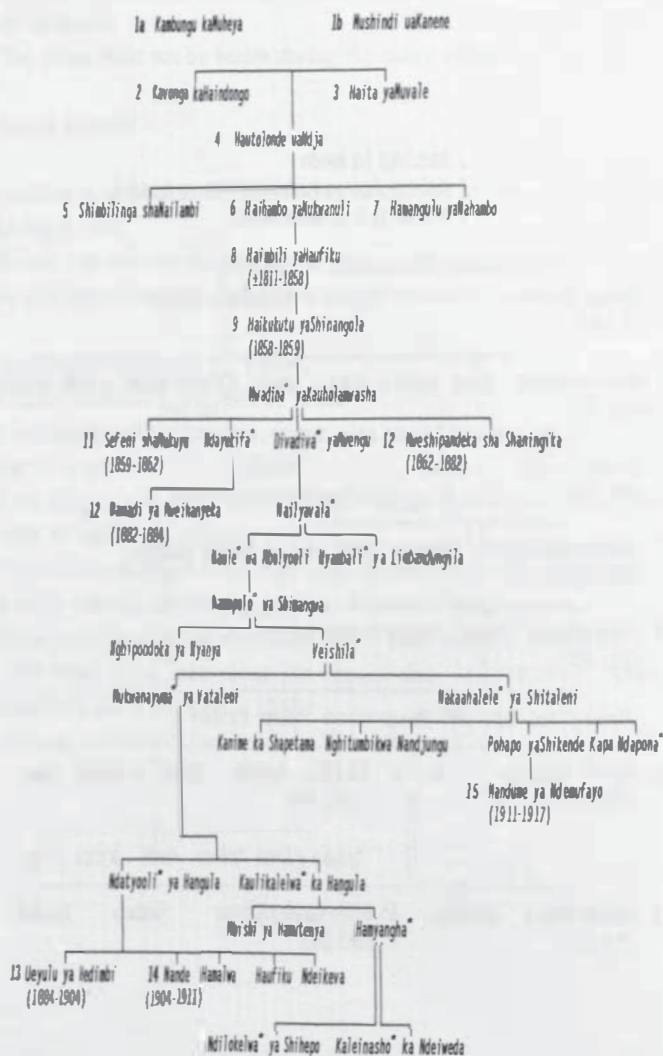
(a) Ondonga⁸

- 1 Mambulungo Iya Ngwedha
- 2 Mumbwenge Guule wa Nakateta (Shindongo sha Namutenya)
- 3 Nangombe ya Mwala (Kayone Mulindi)



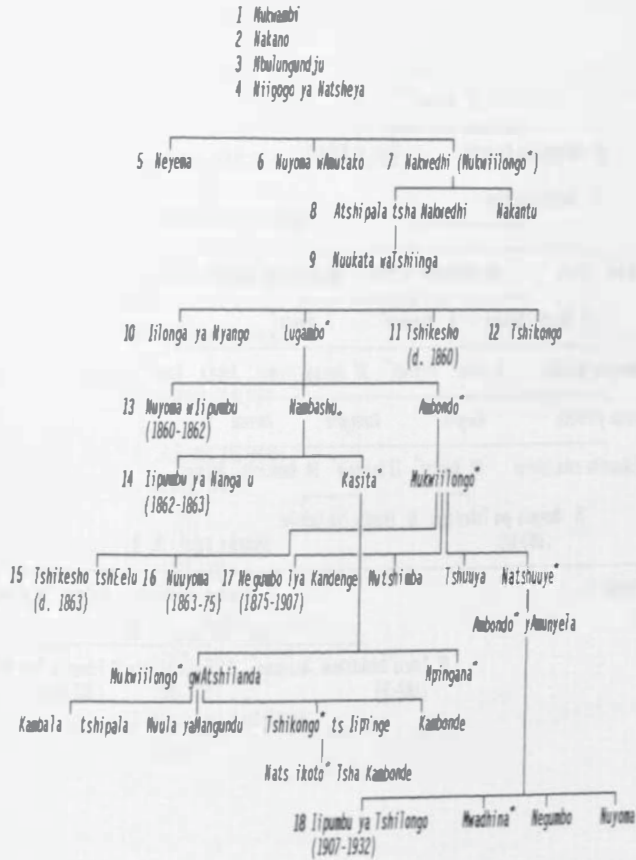
⁸ Kristof Ndengu, Johannes Iitope & Petrus Nuyoma, in: Hahn's Coll. A.450, No. 8, Vol. 8/34; Lebzeiter, pp. 194-96; Amutenya, pp. 49-61; Laurmaa (1949), pp. 47-56; Namuhuya (1983), p. 99; Uukule, pp. 412-476 (FWC. 2); Shindondola, pp. 337-339 (ibid.); Nangolo, pp. 485-86 (ibid.); Uugwanga, pp. 356-386 (ibid. 3)

* = Female

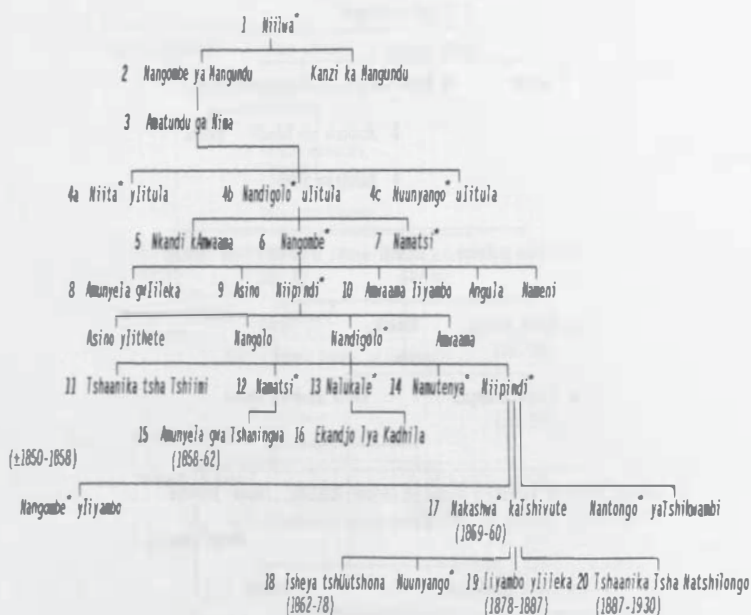
(b) Uukwanyama⁹

⁹ Kafita, Mic. No. 4 (ELC. 344); Shangheta, Mic. No. 71 (ibid.); Lebzelter, p. 196; Estermann (1976), p. 32; Laurmaa (1949), pp. 39-45; Amutenya, pp. 31-47; Kaulinge, pp. 3-12 (FWC. 2); Tshilongo, V., pp. 40-53 (ibid. 3)

* = Female

(c) Uukwambi¹⁰

¹⁰ Pettinen's Diary, Hp XXIV:1, 22.08.1891; Koivu's Coll. Hp XIII:1, pp. 502-507; Laurmaa, Hp XV:1, p. 515; *ibid.* (1949), pp. 56-63; Amutenya, pp. 61-66; Tshilongo, V., pp. 199-299 (FWC. 3); Kandongo, p. 131 (*ibid.* 2)
* = Female

(d) Ongandjera¹¹

¹¹ Väinänen, Hp XXXIX:1, pp. 619-620; Nameya, Mic. No. 56 (E.L.C. 344); Iiyego, Mic. No. 35 (ibid.); Iitenge, Mic. No. 36 (ibid.); Laurmaa (1949), pp. 64-68; Amutenya, pp. 67-73
* = Female

Name: Elifas Sheetheni Shindondola

Date of Birth: During the rule of King Nehale the son of Mpingana

Ward/District: Onambeke
Occupation: Royal husband

Name: Shilongo Andreas Uukule

Date of Birth: During the rule of King Martin the son of Kadhikwa, in 1919

Ward/District: Onyaanya
Occupation: Chief counsellor and Head of the District

COLLECTION 3

Name: Jason Ambole

Date of Birth: During the rule of King Iipumbu the son of Tshilongo

Ward/District: Elim, Uukwambi
Occupation: Counsellor and head of the Iiyale ward.

Name: Julius Arona (second cousin of King Ipumbu)

Date of Birth: -

Ward/District: Uukwambi
Occupation: -

Name: Osvin Mukulu

Date of Birth: 25 February 1930
Ward/District: Oshimbandi, Ombalantu
Occupation: Businessman, chief counsellor and Head of Ombalantu

Name: Armas-Tshafiishuna the son of Nuuyoma and grandson of Mutshimba

Date of Birth: During the rule of King Negumbo the son of Kandenge

Ward/District: Uukwambi
Occupation: Peasant

Name: Vilho Amwiindili Tshilongo

Date of Birth: 15 September 1950
Ward/District: Eeshoke, Engela-Uukwanyama
Occupation: Secretary (typist)

Name: Simeon Tshilongo

Date of Birth: During the rule of King Negumbo the son of Kandenge

Died: 1980

Ward/District: Uukwambi
Occupation: Herdsman of King Iipumbu's cattle

Name: Abraham Uugwanga

Date of Birth: During the rule of King Martin the son of Kadhikwa, 7 July 1921

Ward/District: Omapale, Ondonga
Occupation: Retired teacher, now head of Ontananga ward

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