

**Our Memories of the Liberation War: How Civilians in Post War
Northern Namibia Remember the War.**

Martha Akawa

**A minithesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for
the degree of Masters in Anthropology in the Department of
Anthropology/Sociology of the University of the Western Cape.**

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ABSTRACT

This research looks at the gap that exists between public representation and personal narratives of the Namibian liberation war. Having observed the absence of private narratives in the grand national memory, I address the questions of how civilians remember the war of liberation and how that shapes their lives in postcolonial Namibia. I am interested in how civilians remember and how they relate the memories and the experience of the past, how they locate themselves in public history and their perspectives on national memory and commemorations. The Namibian government has reconstructed the liberation struggle as one where all Namibians fought against colonialism, but it has excluded and suppressed the memories of ordinary citizens of the country. I conclude that national memory is one-sided as it has not included the memories of all Namibians. The civilians have fought and contributed towards the attainment of independence, but their contributions are neither acknowledged nor rewarded.

DECLARATION

I declare that *Our Memories of the War: How Civilians in Post War Northern Namibia Remember the War* is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Full name... MARTHA... AKAWA Date... 20... February... 2004

Signed... .....



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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The aim of the research is to investigate the tension between public representation and private narratives of the liberation war in Namibia, placing particular emphasis on violence and the memory of it amongst the civilians of Northern Namibia. This area was the main operational zone in Namibia during the war, thus people who lived in this area lived in a war zone. Some provided food, shelter and information to the guerillas of the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) - a risky undertaking that could have cost them their lives. On the other hand, others provided information and assistance to the South African Defence Force (SADF)¹, an act that could also have proved fatal. PLAN was the military wing of the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO). SWAPO, the former liberation movement is currently the ruling party in the Namibian government.

For a period of 23 years (1966-1989) the area ethnically defined by the colonial administration as 'Ovamboland'² (where the majority of the residents were Oshiwambo-speaking³) was characterized by the abduction, abuse, harassment and assassination of individuals. People witnessed all these kinds of violence, and survivors had to live and tell horrific tales (Akawa, 2000). It is unfortunate that the struggle against the violent system of apartheid dragged much of the civilian

population into a climate of violence with the result that today many people still carry physical and psychological scars. (Akawa, 2000).

In postcolonial Namibia, the war is reconstructed by SWAPO as one of a heroic struggle in which all Namibians fought against the South African colonial regime. There is however a gap between state memorialisation and civilians' private narratives, as only a selected few individual memories have found space in the official Namibian history. Civilians, although they suffered, sacrificed and contributed towards the liberation struggle in many ways being excluded from this category (Becker, 2002)

Namibia has been independent for 13 years, yet up to date, private narratives have not been incorporated within the grand, national narrative of the war. The different voices of individuals that could tell a multitude of histories about the war that sometimes concur and sometimes disagree with the national version have been excluded, marginalized and suppressed.

This study explores how civilians remember the war, putting emphasis on how these memories and experiences shape their lives in post-independence Namibia. This investigation is important in showing the extent to which civilians recollect the memories of the past that they experienced, and the extent to which they now tailor, edit and modify their memories to fit in with the government and ruling party's official version of events.

It is against this background that this thesis examines and determines the discrepancies between private narratives and public representations, and seeks to establish whether the excluded voices and memories find themselves in the big public memory picture.

1.2 Aims of my research

- ❖ The research contributes to the anthropology of memory and anthropology of violence in post-colonial Southern Africa, emphasising the selectivity and exclusivity of national memory.
- ❖ It examines and investigates war, violence and memory, especially the tension between public representations and commemorations of the war on the one hand, and private recollection and memories of it on the other.
- ❖ It looks at how people remember the war, placing emphasis on the narratives of different participants and how those mould their lives today.
- ❖ The study inquires into the civilian perspectives of public commemorations and representations of national history, and it also attempts to look at the government's view of national memory, history and representation.

- ❖ It gives the civilians a platform to speak and let go of past experiences that may still haunt some of them, which may become a starting point for their healing process and further enable them to face the future or die in peace.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

The thesis constitutes eight chapters. Chapter one is the introduction of the thesis, Chapter two examines the literature and the theoretical framework of the research. Chapter three explores the dynamics and problems involved in doing anthropology at home. It discusses entering the field and conducting interviews, and introduces the researcher and her family members. Chapter four, 'Northern Namibia as an operational area', gives an overview of Owamboland during the war providing an account of what it was like to live in a war environment. Chapter five (the core of the research), 'We remember the war: Stories and Silences', concentrates on what memories the civilians reveal and how they tell their histories. It investigates how they organise their stories through the sequencing of events and the selection and omission of information. Chapter six, 'The Liberation Struggle as a Nationalist Narrative in Public Memory', explores the ways in which the liberation struggle is remembered in public history (monuments, etc), and the government's stance on liberation remembrance. Chapter seven, 'Revisiting the Liberation Struggle', looks at the civilians' perspectives on public representation and national history and at how they find and locate themselves within this official version of the past. The final chapter concludes the research by giving a summary of the evidence and the argument presented in the thesis.

Chapter Two

Memory, Remembrance and Silence

2.1 Theoretical framework

This chapter investigates the theory of memory and the literature written on violence, war and memory that relates to Namibia and other countries. It also explores why there is so little literature written about Namibia and speculates as to why Namibia has chosen the approach it has in dealing with and commemorating the past.

2.1.1 Memory

The theoretical framework of this thesis is drawn from Werbner's work that critically analyses memory in postcolonial Southern Africa and, particularly, in Zimbabwe. He conceptualises memory as 'a work process', whereby memory gets lived, realised, becomes buried, represented or avoided (Werbner, 1998: 2). Under this notion, memory is contested and subjective, as the memories that are chosen to be officially memorised are selected according to a politically motivated agenda and are therefore biased. I agree with this theory and it fits the Namibian context well as some people and events are identified and legitimised as national heroes or events worthy of commemoration, whilst others are deliberately forgotten and suppressed. This shows the tensions involved in the making of public memory. After the

liberation struggle has ended, the struggle over representation of the liberation war continues, with the outcome still to be determined.

Werbner's work on memory in Zimbabwe embraces 'the right of recountability', and argues that the citizen's memory must be known and acknowledged in the public sphere (Werbner, 1998: 1-2). He notes that the painful experiences of the past can still be traced in people and proposes that people be given voices and allowed space in the official history. Werbner suggests the need to rethink the power of memory and the role it plays in the transformation of postcolonial states (Werbner, 1998: 1-2).

The implication is that Namibia needs to challenge the memory crisis that is emerging by allowing in-depth observation, historical analysis, critique and comparison to be done by state officials, churches, individuals and so on. Werbner has disclosed how selective the national historiography in Zimbabwe is, as those who are chosen as 'heroes' are graded into national, provincial and local categories. (Werbner, 1998: 97). Namibia is taking the same route when it comes to post-apartheid memorisation. It seems as if the people with the power to select what becomes public memory do not realise the significance of making politically subjective decisions, as if they are unaware of the potential tensions created by state commemorative practices, as is demonstrated by the work of Werbner in Zimbabwe (Werbner, 1998:86-88).

How people remember the past depends on how people are living in its aftermath. Connerton (1989) has argued that one's experience of the present depends on one's knowledge of the past. The present is experienced in a context that has a connection with past events and objects, a connection that frames the way in which people interpret their lived experience of the present. It is thus difficult to separate the past from the present, not only because present factors influence and sometimes distort the recollection of the past, but because the past tends to influence and distort the present (Connerton 1989). This conception is of great significance to my research because how people remember the past depends on their experience of today and this will bring out the multiple memories, voices and narratives of the past of different informants.

The telling and not telling of memory is an active process that involves emotions, energy and willingness to reconstruct the past. Memory is not just reliving the past; it is an active force that moulds it. It is tailored, negotiated, suppressed and continuously transformed by social experience, position and identity in society. Memory work is a conscious process, which is why remembering and forgetting are equally part and parcel of memory (Bickford-Smith et al, 2001:17-18, Kuhn, 2000:186). This concept of memory and its characteristics is central to my research, and had to be kept in mind during my interviews as it shapes the outcome of the findings.

This concept of memory has prompted Lambeck and Antze (1996: xii) to argue that "memory that lies buried beneath the present" must be treated as a structure that has

many layers, and that the unpacking of these layers must be done to understand what lies beneath this structure. Although memory is a temporal phenomenon, the unpacking of layers of memory leads to the lifting of veils, removing of screens and excavation of layers of memory.

2.1.2 War commemoration

The transformative steps undertaken by post-colonial societies as they enter independence, includes the establishment of new museums, monuments, historical documentaries, etc. At the same time, people who suffered injustice, trauma and injury as a result of the war demand public recognition for the contribution they offered to the war if they feel a lack of recognition (Ashplant et al, 2000:3). War memory and commemoration is mainly characterized by rituals of national identification and physical and symbolic memorials aimed both at binding the citizens into a collective national identity and at achieving psychological closure as an expression of mourning the dead and remembering the suffering that the war has inflicted on people (Ashplant et al, 2000:7-8).

Ranger and Hobsbawm have also focused on the role played by the construction of war memorials in post-colonial societies. These 'invented traditions' establish continuity between the past and the present and are linked with the inspiration of nationalism, nation-state and national symbols (Ranger and Hobsbawm, 1983:13). This concept is closely related to Anderson's in which the 'nation' is collectively defined by the ways it imagines itself as one entity (an 'imagined community') and

constructs an identity for those who belong to it (Anderson, 1983:6-7). According to Anderson, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier is a perfect example of such imaginings. It acts as a reminder of the sacrifice and the cost that the war has caused the citizens and also serves to legitimate fighting and dying for ones' country; it is an attempt to find a justifiable outlet for the expression of grief. Monuments act as a bridge between the past and present and have important links with nationalism, the nation state and national symbols that help foster an "imagined community" (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983:13 Anderson, 1983:9). Rituals of war commemoration shape national identity.

States take the leading role in shaping the memory and remembrance of a war. The history that becomes national and official is not simply what popular memory has preserved, but what has been selected, written, pictured, popularized and institutionalized by those whose function it is to execute these tasks, and that is mainly the state (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983:13). This means that war memory acquires official status and the monuments and ceremonies that the state selects run the risk of excluding and including what eventually becomes public memory. I argue that this theory fits both post-colonial Namibia and Zimbabwe perfectly as in both countries the governments have taken the same route to select what is included in public history and consequently what memory is suppressed and marginalized.

2.1.3 Violence and trauma

Violence is the main feature of war and during and after the war it remains inscribed in the memories of the people. Whatever the act (rape, torture, harassments, murder,

etc), the survivors of the atrocities are left traumatized and troubled by memories of the horrors they experienced. Trauma is very intimate and personal, enabling people to share their feelings of shame, guilt, and other feelings that are difficult to express. Trauma causes the narrators to restructure and make meanings around traumatic experiences (BenEzer, 1999:29).

Traumatic experiences happen in social environments, that is why they are connected to the social context in which they take place. It is thus in society that people remember, identify and localize their memories (BenEzer, 1999:29, Halbwachs, 1992:37-38). It follows then that even if people have come to terms with trauma, traumatic experiences are usually narrated in ways in which traumatic signals are expressed and can be detected (BenEzer, 1999:34). I concur with Halbwachs and BenEzer that the manners in which people recollect their memories is related to their social background and the connection they have with the location where the experiences took place.

2.2 Literature

Violence and memory has been one of the topics of anthropological interest and considerable research has been conducted on it. However, with respect to Namibia, although some attempt has been made to look at the narratives of the Namibian liberation war, literature on the subject still remains scant in comparison to that on South Africa and Zimbabwe. To overcome this, I am going to look at the parallel between Namibia and South Africa because both went through the same system of

apartheid and were under the same government but took totally opposite routes when it came to remembering and commemorating the war of apartheid. I also contemplate the parallel between Namibia with Zimbabwe because the two have gone through more or less the same decolonising process and it appears the two countries are now taking the same approach to commemoration.

In South Africa, a lot of research has been done addressing violence, trauma, memory and the role of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (T.R.C) in addressing traumatic experiences and constructing a public record of those experiences. Various authors have argued that the T.R.C was a platform whereby victims, witnesses and perpetrators faced “the beast of the past in the eye”, a platform that offered victims an opportunity to relate the violations they suffered before the nation. It has also been argued that it rehabilitated and restored human and civil dignity to victims of human rights violations and consequently allowed them to move into the future with knowledge of the past and, thus, the ability to move on with their own lives (Ross, 2001, Das et al 2001, Rassool et al, 2000)⁴. In the light of what these authors say, there is a clear distinction between the approaches taken in South Africa – state sponsored remembrance and in Namibia – state supported silence.

In the case of Zimbabwe, Alexander et al (2000) did research on violence and memory in Matabeleland aiming at ending a “silence that excluded the people from national memory and to incorporate their stories and their participation in the war into national history” (Alexander et al 2000: 2). Kriger (1992) has also critically

investigated war, memory and violence in Zimbabwe by looking at what peasants themselves have to say about their experiences in the revolutionary guerrilla war. Kriger (1995) has looked into the politics of creating national heroes in Zimbabwe, while Werbner (1998) has explored, and theorised memory work in Southern Africa, paying particular attention to Zimbabwe.

In terms of what has been done in Namibia, undergraduate research papers by an undergraduate colleague and myself have tried to look at the liberation struggle at the community and family level (Akawa, 2000, Hangula, 2000).

2.2.1 Why the silence in Namibia?

After 12 years of Namibian independence, little research on narratives of war has been done. Silence in Namibia is maintained by the policy of 'national reconciliation' that the ruling party is encouraging, and which holds that people should forgive and forget the past (The Namibian, 1 July 1999). It is surprising that there is actually no publication or legislation that defines 'the policy of national reconciliation' and what it involves. I hypothesise that Swapo, the ruling party, seems to fear an open historical debate about some of its own actions during the liberation war, and that could be the reason why it did not opt for the T.R.C model of South Africa. A truth commission in Namibia would have led to a proper investigation and many issues would have been exposed, an operation I suspect Swapo is not willing to risk.

At the core of the problem is the detainee issue, a hot and 'hands-off' topic that Swapo would prefer left alone. The debate is about the Namibians who were detained by Swapo while in exile because they were accused of being South African agents who had been sent to spy on the activities of Swapo. When the detainees' issue surfaced in the late 1980s, it had a great impact on the Namibian political scene. It provoked senior Namibian politicians to the extent that those involved in publicising allegations of human rights abuses against senior military and party leaders were condemned and accused of being "apostles of apartheid" (The Namibian, 7/3/96), or "unpatriotic elements and foreign remnants of fascism" (The Namibian, 13/3/96).

Whilst highly controversial a modest body of work has been published on the detainee issue. The book that stirred the debate most was by Pastor Groth, a German pastor who had been deeply involved with the Namibian liberation struggle. *The wall of silence: The dark days of the Liberation Struggle* deals with the dark days of the struggle, with the emphasis on the fate of those who were accused of being South African spies. It deals with what they went through, i.e. interrogations, fear, harassment, disappearance without trace, etc. (Groth cited in Dauth, 1996).

The book encouraged much debate because it was accessible to read and understand as it was not jumbled with academic methodology and had minimal theory (Dauth, 1996). Out of this, an organisation, *Breaking the Wall of Silence* (BWS) was launched, inspired by the Council of Churches in Namibia (CCN). Both lobbied for the rehabilitation of victims and perpetrators.

At the same time, John Saul and Colin Leys released their edited volume, *Namibia's Liberation Struggle: The Two-edged Sword* (1995). The book gave their perspective on many aspects of Swapo's history and the direction it was taking. Saul and Leys in their recently published article, *Lubango and After*, tackled the detainee issue again, head on. They speculate that Swapo does not want the policy to scrutinise the ordeal of the past, and assert that Swapo is hiding behind the mask of the policy of national reconciliation in a bid to "hide the blood of the past it has on its own hands" (Saul and Leys, 2003: 333).

Saul and Leys argue that Swapo is just continuing "the culture of silence and denial" that it has practised since the leadership was in exile. In exile the leadership was high-handed, unquestionable and unchallenged (Saul and Leys, 2003: 340). Although Swapo came close to admitting the detainee issue in 1990 and promised a diplomatic solution to solving the issue by forming a small, all-party committee to investigate these and similar allegations, the issue still remains unresolved. Although there were warnings, threats and intimidations, people advocating the issue vow not to give up and promise to keep the subject alive. People promise not to give up and are quoted to have made statements such as "Only death will silence me" and "We won't be silenced" (Saul and Leys, 2003: 342, 250). This shows that pushing the detainee question under the rug only postpones a volatile issue that may very well explode one day. This issue also indicates the route Namibia is taking as far as democracy and the solving of national problems is concerned. It raises the questions of how much Namibian history should remain forgotten, for how long and by what means it should be exposed.

McConnell, using the imposed silence on the detainee issue in Namibia as a point of reference, emphasises the importance of the presence of life histories and voices that contradict the official account (McConnell, 2000: 28). He is of the view that in post-colonial African states, the conscious writing of history focuses on the leaders, elite, educated and the “big men” of the struggle (McConnell, 2000: 28). The ordinary people, peasants, uneducated and unemployed are forgotten and disappear when it comes to the writing of history. They are often reduced to footnotes, statistics or illustrative facts and figures (McConnell, 2000: 28). Their voices are excluded and not regarded as legitimate enough to be part and parcel of national reconciliation and identity.

McConnell argues that by including personal life histories and memories in the construction of Namibian history a more multi-layered, complex and kaleidoscopic history will be produced. The different voices tell a multitude of stories about the past and therefore make it more real, inclusive and reflective of the range of peoples’ experience - rather than having a history that is contemplated from top down (McConnell, 2000: 31). He proposes that the imposed silence might pose a threat to Namibia, as there are some individuals and groups ready to challenge any shift towards undemocratic rule in Namibia. According to McConnell until the silenced voices are heard and acknowledged, Namibian history will remain incomplete (McConnell, 2000: 53).

Critical voices on the topic of detainees have been expressed in other media. Pakleppa in his film *Nda mona* ('I have seen') looks at the experience of people who are deeply troubled by the detainees' issue, and how the ex-detainees wish to have their names cleared, among other issues. He did this film because he believes that it is vital to deal with subdued memory "although it's very painful and may be quite dangerous" (www.sacod.org.za).

Apart from academics and critics who have investigated the reason behind the silence in Namibia, few Namibians have written about their experience of the war. It is worth noting that the relevant literature that I will discuss next is largely neither academic nor analytical, taking the form of fiction and autobiography. It could be that people resort to fiction and autobiography to deal with their memories because there is no accessible archive of documentary materials that can be used as a result of Swapo's apparent reluctance to make its own archives accessible to historians.

Kaleni Hiyalwa, in *Meekulu's children*, looks at the histories and memories of the Namibian war of liberation through a fictional narrative. She narrates the war through the central character, Ketja. Ketja was a young girl who was growing up in the 1970s and 80s, in a village along the Angolan border, when the war was at its hottest phase. The novel recounts incidents that were a threat to the lives of rural Owambo (Hiyalwa, 2000).

Ellen Namhila in *The Price of Freedom* (1997) has written an autobiographical account of the war, exile and the return. Just like Ketja, she has given a human face

to the story of growing up in an area torn and ravaged by war, and how it was to be in exile.

Coming on Strong (edited by Orford and Nicanor, 1996) is a collection of stories, poems, personal accounts and works of art by Namibian women. It is an attempt to give Namibian women a platform to express their pain, anguish and experiences of the war. The book is not academic and many stories published are by unpractised and first time writers, but the voices, 'loud, bold and protesting' (Orford and Nicanor) have cracked the silence powerfully.

Becker has investigated the voices and silences in oral and written narratives of civilians from rural Owambo, who lived and experienced the war of liberation such as the stories and poems in the book edited by Orford and Nicanor (1996) as well as some narratives by other intellectuals (Hiyalwa, 2000 and Namhila, 1997). The stories by rural Owambo women are especially significant as they are the first of their kind to be written from the north⁵. The women wrote of the pain and suffering they had experienced, the incidents that they will never forget and the torment they have suffered at the hands of South African soldiers. However, these women have remained silent about some aspects. They have not talked about the widely reported sexual violence against women during the war and have not touched on any of the atrocities allegedly committed by Swapo guerrillas. The ordeal of pain and suffering were experienced by these women and they know what happened and who committed the atrocities. I assume that the exclusions and inclusions of events reflect a conscious selection process. The omission of incidents of sexual violation

and the 'externalising of painful memories' may be an indication of the denial and suppression of painful memories. Alternatively, the women may want to paint a nice picture of Swapo being a clean organisation that brought freedom. Like Becker, I wonder how long ordinary people who lived in Owambo are going to be 'spoken for'. Fictional narratives by intellectuals (Hiyalwa and Namhila) have given a more complex and complete picture of the war and, ironically, have looked more realistically at all the dimensions of the war and the destruction it caused (Becker, 2002:11, 16).

The women's silence on these points could be explained by Connerton's (1989) argument that the construction of official historical narrative can shape a social group's memory and identity (Connerton, cited in Becker, 2002:11). I hypothesise that this could be explained by the notion that the transfer of state power from a perceived pro-South African administration to a Swapo Government seems to have been accompanied by a transfer of narrative power. The current nationalist narrative is largely a response to the pre-independence narrative which promoted images of Swapo as foreign-influenced (by backers such as the Soviet Union and Cuba), anti-Christian (ie. Marxist) and unpopular (ie. 'terrorising' civilians and being 'turned in' by them). All this was contrasted to the projection of the image of the South African security forces as popular, church-going and helping out in schools. Swapo was also presented as ineffective - in contrast to a well trained and high tech SADF - thus the stress on the high disparity in the 'body counts' suffered in operations by both sides and on the sophistication of South Africa's military hardware.

Post-independent Namibia's official narrative is of a nationalist kind, where it is perceived that everybody fought towards the attainment of independence, however it does not include the contribution of the civilians. This silence could be explained by what Becker calls "externalising" painful memories. The perpetrators (South African military forces) are depicted simply as outsiders, whilst, in fact, a substantial number of the members of SWATF and *Koevoet* were from their own communities (Becker, 2002: 11).



Chapter Three

Doing Research at Home

This chapter explores the aspects involved in conducting research at home. It looks at the issues involved in going into the field to collect information and in approaching my 'own' people for interviews. The chapter also examines the experiences and problems I had in the field doing anthropology at home. Further, I discuss the relationships and interactions between my relatives. I might also have looked at the tensions that were influenced or arose as a result of the war, but my relatives were not comfortable with that, so I decided not to.

3.1 Accessing and entering the field

My mother was very excited about my sister's impending wedding and talked about it most of the time. At the time I was staying in Windhoek (the capital city of Namibia), ± 900 km from my village where my mother lives. Every time I telephoned, she would talk about the wedding, the reception, what had to be done and the costs involved. Then one Saturday afternoon in April 2003 I had to tell her about my research and that I wanted her to be one of my participants.

I cooked lunch, served everyone and we sat down to eat. She started talking about the wedding again and there and then I knew I had to interrupt her as I was leaving the following day. I kept telling myself that when she finishes talking about the Sunday reception, I would talk about my research. Just when she finished talking about the reception, she started on the topic of how nice it would be to have a veranda, so that all her friends from the village could sit there. I told myself I would introduce my research when she finished, that was when she started saying she wanted the rooms to be painted to look new and clean for the wedding. I decided, whether the rooms had to be painted or not, I would tell her before I had to leave. I asked a niece to call my father and when he came I apologized for interrupting my mother and eventually introduced and explained everything about the research. Finally she listened to what I had to say, attentively I must say, because she was asking questions about the research, why I was doing it, what exactly she had to do, the kind of questions I would ask and so on.

Introducing my research to Aunt Elizabeth was almost as hard as with my mother. Almost every time I go to the north I go to visit her, take her sugar, bread, cooking oil and so on. So on the day I went to inform her, she thought it was one of these 'visits'. She started telling me how everybody was, how she thinks the harvest will not be good and asking how I was, how Cape Town was and if people in Cape Town lived like them, having fields and so on. I knew that before I drove back home I had to tell her about my research and that I wanted her to be part of it.

The fieldwork was conducted between December 2002 and July 2003, with follow-ups in between that were conducted through either physical visits or over the telephone. Since this is a case study of my family, there was no specific site as my relatives are scattered around the country. In December 2002, I spent three weeks in Walvis Bay to interview my cousins in Walvis Bay and Swakopmund.

The rest of the interviews were conducted in the north where most of my relatives live. I interviewed my parents and the rest of my informants in the comfort of their own houses, in their respective villages. The furthest house that I visited was about 45 kilometers from my parents' house. I drove through the sandy roads to get to these houses, most of which are traditional houses made with sticks and have traditional huts, although today many of them also have brick buildings. Depending on what the participants were doing at the time of my arrival, I joined them and started my interviews only when they had finished their work, but sometimes they abandoned their chores and attended to me.

3.2 Conducting of interviews

Fourteen people were interviewed; three in Walvis Bay and Swakopmund; the rest in Owambo, with one informal conversation held in Opuwo in the northwest of Namibia. Sometimes I interviewed more than one person or I would have a couple of people together talking about their memories of the past. These conversations were more informal as informants would take turns to talk about their experience of the war or about war stories and intervene to complete perceived 'gaps' as they narrated the same story. There was equal participation between men and women. I

did not notice any case of older people trying to correct younger people, or men correcting women.

Some informants were interviewed up to three times. I believe the follow-up interviews encouraged informants to 'open' up as they became more comfortable and confident and to expand on their initial narratives to include more detail or more private thoughts, rather than to refine their stories and edit any inconsistencies. I conducted all interviews in Oshiwambo, this is my mother tongue and that of all informants.

3.3 Placing the informants in context

My informants have different educational levels. These ranged from a Technikon Certificate to a Teachers' Certificate to Secondary and Primary Education Certificates. All can read and write in Oshiwambo and some can read and speak English and Afrikaans. Some are employed by the government and private sectors, one is a domestic worker, some are retired teachers and migrant workers, and some have never been employed and are farmers.

Those in town (Walvis Bay and Swakopmund) live in locations mainly made up of black occupants. They have access to electricity, clean water, television, radio and daily newspapers. They have telephones, both land lines and cell phones. Most of the informants, who live in the rural areas, also have access to electricity in their houses. Although most do not understand English, they own television sets and

watch the news that is broadcasted in Oshiwambo twice a week, otherwise they follow the programmes by looking at the pictures only. In all households, there is a radio that is devotedly listen to, with *Eyakulo lyoshigwana* ('The service of the nation') being the most popular programme. This programme features the announcement of funerals, lost and found items, etc. Some have fixed line telephones in their houses. All informants have access to clean water, with most having taps in their houses. Most are subscribers to the monthly church newspaper – *Omukwetu*, but do not have access to daily English and Afrikaans newspapers. The topical issues are however cited on the radio in Oshiwambo.

The older generation lives in the villages centered on farming activity. Work in the fields starts with planting in December/January (depending on when the rain starts), and ends with harvesting around June/July. They dedicatedly attend church services on Sundays, as this is the only chance they get to go somewhere after the whole week of doing household chores. They attend bible study sessions that normally take place once a week, or depending on the arrangements of those who attend.

The older members of my family also go to pension pay-out points once each month where each pensioner receives N\$ 240.00. Going to hospitals, mainly for follow-ups also forms part of their lives. Most save their money in banks and post offices, and go to either of these at least once a month, depending on the need, otherwise some just keep their money at home.

People in my village who drink alcohol meet at *cuca shops* (a name for a shebeen). A lot of people in the north are infected with HIV/AIDS and, given the high rate at which they are dying now; attending funerals is another dimension that is frequently added to the villagers' lives. The places and activities listed above form the context in which my informants meet and socialize. My relatives meet regularly but I have never seen them talk about events that took place during the war or the war-time deaths in our family. I am not sure as to why they do not talk about the subject, maybe it is too painful to talk about.

3.4 Focus of the research

The research focused on ordinary people who at the time of the war of liberation lived and experienced the war in the north. People experienced the war in different situations and positions. Some of my informants are the children of killed parents; the brothers and sisters of killed siblings; the nephews and nieces of these relatives etc.

The period focused on in the research is the period between 1975 and 1988. When king Elifas (the then king of Ondonga and supposedly a collaborator with the South African occupiers) was killed in 1975, a series of killings followed. At this point the war was at its hottest phase and it was around that period when the members of my family were most deeply affected. My uncle Nendongo was killed (1979) and immediately my mother learnt about her fate; she was also informed that she was next on the list of people to be killed. Four years after that, in 1982, my Aunt

Martha was killed. From that period on, the war was at its peak and a lot of unpleasant incidents followed, including abductions, harassment and the mass killings of civilians. Two of the most notorious incidents were a bomb blast at the Oshakati Bank in 1988 and the 'Oshikuku Massacre', when in 1982 a whole family but one member, was massacred (supposedly by South African soldiers.) Civilians were thus in many different situations that could change the way they felt about each other, the way they saw the war and how it influenced their identity.

3.5 Problems, process and experience in the field

The research was carried out between December 2002 and July 2003. Within that time I traveled to the places where my relatives live, depending on their flexibility. In-depth, unstructured interviews, participant observation, focus group discussions and informal conversations were conducted with people of different age groups, educational levels and standards of living. Some interviews were recorded on tape.

Some informants were very skeptical at first, asking me repeatedly what I 'really' wanted and what they should tell me. Some wanted to rehearse before I could record them. I am not sure if this was due to the convention of recording, or the sensitivity of the topic. I explained well and told them that what I was doing was purely for academic reasons and that I was not affiliated to any political party and I was not from the government. I explained that there would be no reward from the government or any organization, but that it might be a therapeutic experience if it would make them feel good after speaking to me. I told them that they should tell me everything that they remembered about the war and not what they might think I

would want to hear. Most participants made me promise that I should not let anyone else listen to the tapes, although they did not have problems with me using the information and their names.

However there are some things that they would explicitly tell me I could not write. When mentioning the names of people who they claimed were responsible for people's deaths, for example, they would say '*sho no ito ke shi shanga*' ('that you will not write'). Werbner experienced the same thing when conducting interviews with his 'family', in Matabeleland. Some of his participants would insist that "you keep your tape recorder closed, and do not open it ..." or "If you open this and they hear it, they can hate me" (Werbner, 1991: 69).

Some people refused completely to be recorded, even after I explained very well the aims and the advantages of recording. In cases like that I took extensive notes and as a result the interviews took a bit longer. With informants who were interviewed more than once, and had been recorded, I decided to abandon the tapes and recorder in subsequent interviews to see if there was any difference in the ways of telling. I noticed that without the tape recorder people were freer to talk, they talked more and I had to probe less. They even gave different answers to the same questions that I had asked in previous interviews.

Some members of my family were willing and very enthusiastic to relive their past. It was very moving and emotional to hear their memories of the war. However, besides the expressed feelings of the participants, there are hidden scripts not to be

ignored or taken for granted. Memories that are unconsciously and consciously forgotten and suppressed are also an integral part of memory, because forgetting is as important as remembering and one is not possible without the other. Both are active processes requiring effort and energy as they are an act of holding on and letting go (Lambek and Antze, 1996: xxix). The expressed and unexpressed feelings of the informants were manifested in different forms. They revealed this through their facial expressions, body movements, mode of talking and the hidden meanings suggested by sudden silences and changes of subject as Sean Field observed in his research in the Western Cape (Field, 1996:61). I found it very hard to read between the 'hidden manuscript lines' and especially to identify what information was withheld, forgotten, suppressed and revealed either consciously or unconsciously.

My informants had the power to withhold and let go of the information that they want me to know and just tell me the things that they felt comfortable and safe to make known. In addition there is the unavoidable reality of my age, gender and other markers of identity, any of which could sometimes be the reason why the information was withheld or told. Initially, for example, my brother would take me to interviews and would also sit around during the interview, but once when I had to go without him I realized that people were more free to talk with me alone than when he was around. Maybe they saw me as an academic and felt it safer and more appropriate to talk to me. I therefore resorted to going alone.

With group interviews and focus groups, I found people more eager to talk but, some I had to probe more. This could be because group discussion was a more

`natural' setting for the telling of tales to a familiar and trusted audience, as opposed to the formality of the interview, where the insertion of the tape recorder between the speaker and listener emphasized the artificiality and unfamiliarity of the situation. But I believe that my participants have given me answers they perceive to be `true' and not what they think I want to hear.

Everything I heard and observed I took seriously, even informal conversations. People would talk and do things not knowing that I was taking everything as indicative of their ways of referring to and dealing with the past. It was, only later that I made notes of what was said and done. I closely observed the issues that government officials raised, the policies passed and the decisions made affecting the people I spoke to during the period of the interviews. I also paid close attention to the media and particularly the radio and TV which were the most influential sources of information and reflected on the ways in which this might have influenced their discourse.

When going to my informants, especially the old ones, I would take things for them, such as sugar, bread, tea, or any other basic things as these were appreciated. During the interview I would be given cool drinks or *oshikundu* (traditional non-alcoholic drink). Some participants would give me a chicken to take home and all were very excited to see me. I guess the exchange of gifts reinforced the family relationships that I was calling on to encourage people to share their memories with me. Since I am the first member of my immediate family to have proceeded to postgraduate

studies maybe my status encouraged family members to assist me with my interviews as it is perceived necessary for me to successfully complete my studies.

I wish I could have interviewed all of my relatives to hear their stories, but time and resources prevented that. However the biggest challenge that I have had from the beginning of this research is the ethical question of which private issues of my family I can make public, since my relatives were concerned that they were sometimes telling me sensitive information that they would not have stated in a more public context.

3.6 The insertion of the researcher

What follows is a brief overview of how I locate myself within the family, in which I explore all the dynamics and complexities involved in doing ‘anthropology at home’.

I am a daughter of Uilika and the last born of my family (Akawa), the third youngest of the first Kangulohi cousins, the first in the Kangulohi clan to obtain a Bachelor’s degree (B.Ed at UNAM), and the first ever to be enrolled for a Master’s degree.

I was thrilled and yet had some uneasiness when embarking on this research in my own family. Firstly, arriving at my aunt’s house instead of just going to visit to see how she is keeping, or going to my mum, not to ask what to cook for lunch, but to

tell her that she was one of my informants, were both stressful. It seemed possible that my age (26) and gender (female) might have placed limits on the information I was given. I was faced with difficulties including what to make publicly known and what to keep as private family history. Being too 'familiar' with the people and events might have been a problem, but I tried to make it a strength, and was also very careful not to take familiarity for granted.

Given family politics (tension), it is possible that I might not have obtained what I wanted from all members of the family. Perhaps being my mother's child was also an obstacle. If there were, for example disagreements about who should/should not inherit what, or coalitions being formed over family issues involving myself or other members of the family, these could have influenced the ways in which individuals interacted with me. Having obtained my academic qualifications might lead them to think that I regard myself as superior and therefore to assume that I could summon them and ask them questions. Although I had anxiety, there were also some advantages of doing a case study in my own family. I believe the information I got would have been kept away from strangers but I was given access to it; I did not struggle to gain trust or access.

3.7 Meet the Kangulohi Family

In this section I will introduce my family in more detail. Although Werbner in *Tears of the dead* (1991) has skillfully described his 'family' well and in great detail, I thought I would be able to do the same. Werbner has researched on his family in

Zimbabwe, focusing on the colonial through to the post-independent period, and aiming to bring together the study of personal narratives and the extended case method; he needed close rapport so he had to stay with his family.

On my part I found it difficult to dig deep into my family's politics, disputes and relationships. It has been a challenge from the beginning as to what issues I should write about and therefore put on a public stage and what should remain private and hidden 'back stage'. Werbner is an American who has lived in the UK for many years writing about an African family. Although he might see himself as their adopted son, he does not live with them full-time, but is based at the University of Manchester in the UK.

It is not the same for me, especially after my relatives gave me clear indications that they are not comfortable with the idea of me revealing the family's secrets and relationships to the public. Their responses were very quick and often given in a tone that left me feeling 'how could you even ask such questions!' I have done my observations and state my conclusions below. I have however always kept in mind the fact that, after submitting this thesis, I am still going to be a part of my family. I will need my relatives to slaughter cattle when I am getting married, and will not be regarded as a responsible adult if I expose my family's secrets.

3.8 My mother and her siblings

Joel Nuuha, Themus Amaalala, Secilia Namuhuya, Elizabeth Lukwala, Martha Gwaithindi, Emilia Gwapala, Uilika Shitoko and John Nendongo (listed here in the

order they were born) are the children of Mpingana Iiyambo Kangulohi and Maria Nangombe Niinane. They were born in the village of Onkulumbala in the Ondonga area in north-central Namibia.

By the time I was born both of my maternal grandparents were already deceased and I have no idea what they looked like as there are no pictures of them. However I understand that my grandfather was very strict, especially when it concerned working in the field and looking after cattle. My grandmother was remembered as hardworking and caring. She advocated that the same qualities should be passed on to all those who belong to the hyena clan (*Aakwanekamba*)⁶. The people in the family with the name Maria are named after this grandmother and those named Kangulohi, after this grandfather. Uilikas are named after my mother and Marthas, after my Aunt Martha. People name their children after the people that they attach personal value to.

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The following illustration represents the Kangulohi's, their partners and their offspring.

The highlighted names are for the Kangulohis.

1). **Uilika** + Vilho Akawa (my parents)

↓

Veicko, Elinga, Maria, Anna, Laina, Saima, Israel, Emilia and Martha (I am here).

2). **Elizabeth** + Thomas Shigwedha

↓

Israel, John, Isack, Martha, Justina, Margareth, Maria, Magano.

3). **Secilia** + Thomas Ashipala (both deceased)

↓

Barkias, Selma, Fillemon (deceased), Uilika, Martha, Nangula, Andreas

4). **Emilia** + Shorty Walter

↓

Victoria, Veicko, Salomon, Kaarina, Ndapewa

5). **Themus** (deceased) + Naambo

↓

Kandapo, Katende, Kashona, Kangulohi, Uilika, Silvanus

6). **John Nendongo** (deceased) + Tekla

↓

Elinga, Simon, Kangulohi, Shorty, Kaarina, Uilika, Johanna, Isack

7). **Martha** (deceased) + Paulus Shindongo

↓

Emilia and Maria

8). **Joel** (deceased) no off spring

I have no personal memory of Joel, Nendongo, Martha or Secilia (my mother's siblings), as when they passed away I was very young and I lived with my parents. When Uncle Themus passed away however I was big enough and knew him well. He used to visit our house a lot so I assumed he was my mother's favourite or the other way around. Every time he came, we cooked him food before he left; he never called us by our name but every one was *mutekulu* (grandchild). He stayed at our house during his last days and we were all heartbroken when he passed on, my mother was the most affected.

I stayed with Aunt Elizabeth for a while when I was young. She was and still is a nice and warm person. I liked staying at her house because I could get personal attention and was always showered with nice things such as sweets, cookies, cold drinks etc. If the bread would not be enough for everyone, she made sure that I got a piece before anybody else. She would reason that I had to get first because I was used to getting 'things' at home.

Aunt Emilia lived in Otjiwarongo while I was growing up. She would only come to the north once in a while, especially when there was a death, a wedding or any special occasion in the family. She is older than my mother, but she looks much younger. When speaking Oshiwambo (my mother tongue) she would mix it with Otjiherero and Afrikaans, especially the expressions like, 'my God', 'Really' and so on. She is very elegant and clean all the time. If she is dressed for any occasion, you would not think that she is in her 70s, because she will wear a hat, not a doekie, high heeled shoes and she will finish it off with red lipstick. She is very eloquent, and in

many instances if there is anything to be said on behalf of the Kangulohi family, we know that she would not let us down.

Cousin Maria, a daughter of the late Aunt Martha, is also a very nice woman; she is very sociable and can connect with everyone however young or old. When she comes from Swakopmund to the north she makes sure that she visits everyone and we will be assured that we are in for a treat, from sweets, to cookies and all nice things that one cannot get everyday in a village. She also makes sure that everyone gets exactly the same thing, if it is sugar, tea and bread, all households she visits get that. She is a very neat person and when she visits she makes sure that she has cleaned and washed everything.

I grew up in a big family⁷. All, but one of my siblings were brought up by my mother who was a teacher at a local primary school. My father was a migrant worker at Oranjemund and he would only come home once a year, so all responsibilities at home rested on my mother's shoulders. Apart from the eight of us, there were cousins, an extended family and people who came to stay closer to the school. She was very strict and has a strong personality. She treated everyone the same and especially when it came to manual work, she made sure that the legacy of the *Aakwanekamba* (my clan) was upheld. She taught us that possessions do not come easy, that one has to work hard to acquire them, and that when you get them, you must hold on to them with care.

Life was not easy when I was growing up. We all lived in fear; because my mother was apparently on the death list (this issue will be discussed later in the thesis). We took every day as it came, as we did not know what the next day would bring. But that did not deter my parents from providing for all of us. We had enough to keep us going; enough to ensure that every Sunday we would eat '*sondag kos*' (Sunday meal) as my mother used to call it. It mainly consisted of rice and Macaroni and meat. Not every one could afford to have rice, macaroni and meat every Sunday, a meal that many in the village would only eat during Christmas or if there was a wedding feast at the village. That is why people would feel that they have been served well if they get rice, meat and potato salad at any wedding they attend. Coffee, tea and bread would only be for Saturdays and Sundays.

Although that was the case, we were not spoiled at all. We would only get new things when necessary. Otherwise clothes and shoes would be handed down to the others. If an item of clothing became too small for one it would be given to a younger one, or who ever it fitted. And, being the youngest this made it hard for me to own anything new. However, the highlight of each year and the best time to look forward to was the festive season. That was when each of us got two new outfits. One for Christmas and the other for the New Year's church service. And the food, huh, we would of course have the usual of rice, macaroni, meat plus potato salad. Tea and coffee would be served for a week, from when Christmas started until New Year and bread would be spread with jam. Goats would be slaughtered for Christmas and New Year, and on top of all this we would get sweets, cookies and cool drinks. After the festive season, life would go back to the usual routine. Those

were the days when festive seasons had so much value, now things have changed. Now Christmas and New Year's Day are just another 'day off', when we do not have to work.

During my visit home, I approached my mother one morning and I asked her to prepare answers to the questions that I had asked her and that I would talk to her later that evening, because I thought it was something that she needed to think about. I told her that I would like her to tell me about her relationship with her relatives, how it had changed with time and if there was or are any tensions that she would like me to write about. She was quick to tell me that they never had problems, they are happy and they always help each other. She did not even need time to think as there was nothing to think about.

I drove to Aunt Elizabeth's house and asked her the same questions. She told me the same thing, about them being at peace with each other and helping each other in times of need. I persisted but she embarked on the notion of naming their children after their relatives. A child is only named after someone, when that someone is highly valued. On the contrary, if you are angry with someone, you give a child a name that is sending a negative message. She pointed out that our family does not have children with such names. I was stunned to note that, in contrast, Werbner's family has used the strategy of derogatory names to send messages (Werbner, 1991:65-67). She started showing me the connections between the different branches of our family that their names have provided. Israel, my brother, is named after her son. Isack (uncle Nendongo's son), is named after aunt Elizabeth's son,

Isack, Uilika (Themus and Secilia's daughters) are named after my mother. Emilia, my sister, and Aunt Martha's daughter, are both named after Aunt Emilia. Shorty (uncle Nendongo's son) is named after Aunt Emilia's husband, and the list goes on (if you examine the illustration on page 34 it is possible to make the connections).

Given the fact that my youngest first cousin was born in 1979, I brought to Aunt Elizabeth's attention the point that internal relationships might have changed with time and the challenges that the war might have presented to the family. She reminded me that even when the war was critical, they stood by each other and they helped in bringing up and looking after each others children. Before I started school in 1983, for example, I stayed at her house for more than a year and until last year she was looking after Uilika and Fillemon Ashipala's children. Saima, my sister grew up with Aunt Emilia, and before she finished high school in 1989, stayed with cousin Selma. My mother stayed with Uilika (uncle Nendongo and Aunt Secilia's daughters), Israel (aunt Elizabeth's son) four of Uilika Ashipala's children and Veicko, Salomon and Victoria (Aunt Emilia's children). Aunt Martha stayed with Emilia, my sister for almost two years. I realized that I was not going to get anything of the tensions and problems between them, but obtained a better idea of the strength of the links within our extended family. I thanked her and went back home. The relationship between cousins does not really depend on what is happening between the parents, if it is good, it is good, and if there is a gap, it's not because there is tension between the parents.

It is however a norm in my community that elders do not discuss subjects involving tensions and conflicts, with young people, where one is regarded 'young' as long as one is not married. I experience this on many occasions; the latest was during my cousin Fillemon's funeral in June. When people had to discuss what had to be done, they called all 'adults', including my cousin who although as young as me, happened to be married. Despite their statements to the contrary however, I have observed tensions and problems between my mother's relatives. Things like, who allies better with who, who was to inherit what, who was not to inherit what, who should take care of this or that sick relative, etc.

Recently my cousin Fillemon, the son of my late aunt Secilia was sick. Relatives did not want to take turns to look after him. Some said they could not afford to give him bread and fresh milk everyday, nor would they be able to take him to the hospital if he took ill, as they do not have cars. Some felt they were too young to take care of him and asked why it should be them anyway? (the cousin who was refusing to take care of Fillemon is in her 40s). By the time Fillemon passed away, tension was so thick that you could cut it with a knife. Some people were not on talking terms. Only when elderly members of the clan intervened was peace restored. In addition though, I have also observed how hard times bring the family closer together. I could get close and personal with the tensions and conflicts, but I have realized that my relatives are not comfortable with it. As stated earlier this is one of the challenges that I am facing while writing about the people that are part of my family.

3.9 Iyaloo ntowele!!⁸

My sister Emilia got married in August this year (2003). It was very interesting to see how people interacted with each other at the wedding especially after what was happening at the funeral of my cousin who passed away in June. This was the second time the whole family had to meet in the same year. The tension that had surrounded Fillemon's illness and funeral was resolved and it looked like this was an opportunity to show everyone in the family that things have gone back to normal. Everyone came, even those who normally do not attend family gatherings. Everyone helped by contributing material things, money, or just by helping with the chores.

Giving a cow as a gift to the person marrying is regarded as a prestigious act, leaving the one who has given the cow with a special status during and after the wedding ceremony. It shows that one has enough, so you can even give a cow away, but it depends who is getting married or whose child is getting married. Normally this was left to uncles, mainly from one's mother's side, but these days and particularly during my sister's wedding I saw people in their twenties giving cattle, cash and expensive gifts such as a washing machine, a stove, and glassware, just to mention a few.

The wedding feast lasted for a week, starting on a Sunday when the announcement was made in church and the wedding itself took place on a Saturday, this is

normally the procedure that people who marry in church go through. Marrying these days is costly as guests, both invited and uninvited show up in numbers. When there is a wedding in the village, villagers come even if not invited, and everyone has to be served.

Value is attached to the meals served at the wedding, because they are scarce as not everyone can afford them, so, what is served is very important. People would not come to a wedding and be pleased to be served with traditional beer and porridge. They expect to get rice, meat and potato salad. These are the food that must be on the menu, if you want to make guests happy. At my sister's wedding we served the expected - rice, macaroni, potato salad and meat, plus some other dishes that included meat salad, tuna salad, green salad etc. There was even a table of sea food with as many types of fish as there was space on the table. Most of the drinks were bottled and most invited guests had their preferred drinks bought. When we were buying drinks, I heard a lot of this "You know Tate Sacky does not drink Tafel Lager (beer), so we must include Das (another type of beer) and do not forget that Meme Selma and Saara are diabetic, definitely we have to have Diet coke or Tab (a sugar free cool drink)". All these drinks were served to their 'owners', but by and large people were given any cool drink or beer they wanted. What was happening could be what Fairweather called 'showing off' when he attended the wedding of Ndapanda Amutenya (Fairweather, 2003: 288). A good white friend of mine who attended the wedding and saw all the behind-the-scene activities and spending, jokingly said that if he is to marry in Namibia, he will not marry an Owambo as

their weddings are very expensive, he would rather marry a Nama as they apparently only serve tea and homemade bread during their wedding feasts.

In my community, if you are a parent and your child gets married, it is a source of pride, especially if, like my sister, s/he does not have a child before marriage. I could see pride in my parents' eyes. They portrayed so much pride and joy, more than they showed when I gave them my last year's results for the course work component of my Master's degree. Throughout the week of the wedding they were ululating, dancing and shouting "Iyaloo ntowele" (ntowele is everyone who is not a first born and not a last born), meaning, thank you ntowele for making us proud, you have made us happy parents for getting married, even better because you have not humiliated us by getting a child before marriage.

The atmosphere at the wedding was very joyous yet busy. The Friday before the Saturday wedding ceremony was characterized by relatives arriving from around the country, people singing the whole night, with those from the household receiving guests and, worst of all being woken up to give away our beds to late arrivals. Everyone was happy; the interaction was good between everyone. The tension that people had at the funeral was long forgotten or so it looked. This illustrates how my family lives more than ten years after Namibia's independence. The next chapter discusses how the liberation war affected people like those of my family.

Chapter Four

Northern Namibia as an Operational Area

This chapter gives a brief outline of apartheid, the war of liberation and the impact the struggle had on the civilians in northern Namibia. In the midst of the war, the civilians tried to maintain normality, but this was not always possible with imposed Acts, Proclamations etc, that slashed their lives and ways of living. This summary will help one understand their post-independent demands, attitudes, gratitude, anger and disappointments towards the ruling party and the government.

The first armed clash inside Namibia took place at Ongulumbashe in Northern Namibia on 26 August 1966 between South African Forces and the Swapo guerrillas. In 1971-2 migrant workers from outside the homelands had a strike. The workers were against the contract labour system and all it entailed, i.e. low wages, poor working conditions and long absence from families (Soggot, 1986: 46-51, Namibia- The Facts, 1980: 27, To Be Born a Nation, 1981: 188-190). The strike was suppressed by the South African government and, immediately afterwards, a state of emergency was declared in Ovamboland. In addition, a series of emergency regulations, proclamation and Acts were passed. They made life in Namibia, especially in the north, unbearable. Some of the notorious acts included Proclamation AG 9 of 1977, Terrorism Act of 1967, Proclamation AG 26 of 1978, etc which allowed detention without trial and permitted the death penalty for a wide variety of activities deemed terrorist, just to mention a few. These led to a major

exodus of Namibian people leaving the country and going into exile (König, 1983:18, 53, Soggot, 1986: 108-111, Namibia –The Facts, 1980: 32-34).

In 1964, the country was already divided into homelands⁹ after the report and recommendations made by the Odendaal Plan of 1962. The Odendaal Plan stipulated that all black ethnic groups should occupy a homeland. The population groups at the time included Whites, Coloureds, Rehoboth Basters, Namas, Damaras, Ovambos, Hereros, Kaokovelders, Caprivians, Kavangos, Twanas and Bushmen. Each homeland had a legislative council with nominal ordinance-making powers and an executive council. The policy of homelands denied people their common historical roots and did not develop their national identity (Namibia- The Facts, 1980: 15-17).

The policy of apartheid which was in place could be felt in all sectors, especially by black people. Education was of poor quality and had discriminatory policies, and while being compulsory for whites, was optional for black people. In 1975, R68.00 was spent on a black pupil compared to R614.00 on white pupil (Namibia- The Facts, 1980:19). In the 1980s, lessons were given by South African soldiers, as part of their ‘winning the hearts and minds campaign’, a move that triggered a lot of resentment among black students and parents. The escalation of the war disrupted the already poor education system with shortages in school buildings, teachers and materials making things worse. It was reported that boarding schools were constructed next to military bases to prevent students from leaving the country and to make conscription easier. This was one of the causes of the many school boycotts

that spread like wildfire throughout the country. (König, 1983: 31-32, Herbstein and Evenson, 1989: 117).

Health facilities were very poor in the homelands, with most located in the towns where whites lived. With the dusk-to-dawn curfew in the northern part of the country from the 1970s, health services became even more inaccessible. In addition, the fact that people had to travel on roads full of land mines and soldiers made things worse. Health Personnel were often harassed and buildings vandalized by South African Army either for no apparent reasons or because nurses apparently treated Swapo guerrillas. (To Be Born a Nation, 1981:92, Namibia- The Facts, 1980:19-20, König, 1983: 34-35).

Migrant labor was another sector that destroyed local family structures. Men were absent from home for protracted periods and women were left behind to take care of families and attend to all household chores. In the absence of men, women had to make all the decisions and do all the household chores, even those supposed to be done by men. Men were given low wages with which to take care of their households. This made the migrant labour system an unbreakable circle as men never made enough money to become self sufficient and break away from the migrant labor system (König, 1983: 37, Namibia- The Facts, 1980: 27, To Be Born a Nation, 1981:67).

4.1 Militarisation

Namibia saw an increase in military operations and personnel from the early 1980s¹⁰. This increased military presence in Owambo transformed the local way of life, and social life was broken as people were forced to live under constant surveillance. What used to be peaceful and quiet villages were turned into military fortresses, occupied by tanks, armoured personnel carriers, underground bunkers, and thousands of soldiers. All major towns and lots of villages had military bases. The villages and locations next to military bases were surrounded by watchtowers and, with the curfew in place; it was riskier to live next to these places.

To give the war a local face, black Namibians were recruited into the military. Some people joined because of economic necessity (poverty and unemployment), others were not well informed and yet others were conscripted, including students and migrant workers (Herbstein and Evenson, 1989: 69-70, König, 1983:14-15). The most notorious unit was Koevoet¹¹ (Crowbar), which became synonymous with terror. It was mainly composed of black Namibians. A Casspir (the armoured vehicle used by Koevoet members) would normally be filled by black soldiers with a white officer as the commander. Koevoet was responsible for a lot of human rights abuses and in many cases the soldiers got away with the crimes they committed. Violence against civilians took many forms; it could be detention without trial, torture, stop and search campaign, destructions of crops and properties, the list goes on (König, 1983: 42-48).

With the absence of men most of the time due to the fact that they were away on contract labour, or military service with the South African army, or exile, women were more vulnerable to army brutality and rape. Women, as old as 80 years of age, or heavily pregnant, were reportedly raped, and in many cases the culprits got away with the crimes (König, 1983: 46-47, Herbstein and Evenson, 1989: 104-107).

Disappearances without trace also became a common occurrence in Owambo, with civilians mysteriously disappearing without trace after being detained. Many civilians were abducted from their houses, or were captured and were never seen again. Floggings and torture were very common with some people being flogged simply for being Swapo supporters, and others being physically and psychologically tortured. The reported tortures were usually denied by the authorities (Soggot, 1986:61- 69, Namibia- The Facts, 19880: 36, Herbstein and Evenson, 1989: 23).

4.2 The Oshikuku Massacre and Oshakati Bank Bomb Blast

Besides harassments, detention and the torture of individuals, there were reports of attacks on local communities. I have chosen to feature on two of many such cases. In 1982, according to *The Combatant*, (a Swapo newsletter) a family of 12 was gunned down in cold blood by Koevoet members who allegedly faked being Swapo guerrillas. The victims (Gisela Uupindi, Bernadette Thobias, Benediktus Thobias, Nepando Kengaye, Johannes Silas, Gisela Neporo, Erastus Neporo, Erastus Kaatoole, Augustinus Abiatar, Cornelius Jonas, Nelago Ngonga and Hendrick

Shipepe) were well known members of Swapo. The incident took place at Oshikuku, 30km West of Oshakati (The Combatant, June 1982).

Another incident that happened in 1988 was a bomb that blasted apart the First National Bank in Oshakati leaving 27 people dead. *The Combatant* (a Swapo newsletter) blamed the “racist regime for the savagely incident” (The Combatant, February 1988). *The Namibian* (a newspaper that was established in 1985 and which became a mouth piece of the local communities) also reported considerably on the incident, quoting from the testimonies of the survivors and speculating as to who was responsible for the blast. Sam Nujoma, the President of Swapo, roundly condemned the bomb blast and equally rebuked those who blamed Swapo. He regarded the incident as representative of the unfolding tragedy that the nation was going through. He added that perpetrators of these acts have lost no time in “pointing their blood-stained fingers at Swapo, in a vain attempt to paint a false picture of our organization as a blood thirsty, atheistic and terrorist movement”. He added that “only those who were dehumanized by racism, those who lived a life of guilt and fear were capable of indulging in such orgies of mass murder like the Oshakati outrage” (The Namibian, 3 March 1988).

The church also strongly condemned the incident. Bishop Dumeni, whose daughter Anna was among the victims, described the incident as malicious as it terminated so many lives at one time and inflicted so much pain and suffering on many other people. Bishop Dumeni also felt that South Africa had played a part either directly or indirectly (The Namibian, 22 February 1988).

On the other hand the Justice Minister, Fanuel Kozonguizi, of the interim government, the Transitional Government of National Unity, that was supposed to help Namibia move towards independence (but in reality did not facilitate in bringing about independence) dismissed the fact that the SADF was responsible. He said it was a “transparent lie for anyone to allege that the bomb in the Oshakati bank was planted by security forces, as their own cousins work there and whites won’t kill whites” (The Namibian, 23 March 1988).

The Windhoek Observer widely published and printed pictures of the impact of the blast. Its headline on the Monday after Friday’s bomb blast read “SWAPO DID IT”, We will get these murderers”. It stated that the security forces were convinced that Swapo was responsible for the blast as the explosives used were of Russia origin. It was speculated that Swapo was retaliating for the attacks that had recently been made on their camps by the security forces. “The incident only added to the largest spot of disgrace on its already smudged record of its internal terror campaign” (Windhoek Advertiser, 22 February 1988).

Later it was established that it was indeed Swapo who was responsible for the blast in the Oshakati Bank. Leonard Sheehama, a captured PLAN guerrilla, gave a detailed testimony of how he planted bombs in public places, including the one that exploded in the bank in Oshakati in 1988. Sheehama testified that PLAN gave high priority to the bank as a target, as the bank was mainly used by the ‘boers’¹² and

'puppets'¹³ (O'Linn, 2003: 254) and it was therefore regarded as an extension of the Pretoria regime.

4.3 Dusk to Dawn Curfew

A dusk to dawn curfew was instituted by the government in 1979 prohibiting movement outside the home between dusk and dawn in Ovamboland in north-central Namibia and Kavango in the north-east of Namibia. Many civilians were killed by the South African soldiers because when the specific time of the curfew befalls, the soldiers would start shooting, even if people were in the middle of their journeys or chores.

It did not only kill human lives, but also destroyed their way of life. People could no longer do what they used to do before the curfew, they could not go for *uudhano* (moon light dances), *oshimuni*, (when boys could hunt birds or rabbits with bows and arrows), *uundjambi nuukukula*, (when people of the village go to a house in the late afternoon to help work in the fields or with the harvest). It also meant fewer working hours in the fields as people could not work too early or too late. Traditionally if a girl has to announce that she is pregnant to the man who is responsible, she can not go during the day, but in the evening, all these had to change because of the curfew (Herbstein and Evenson, 1989: 106-108). A great deal of social life was destroyed in this way. These things have died, even now after independence I do not see or hear that my nephews went to *oshimuni* and so on.

I would argue that the curfew had nothing to do with the safety of the civilians, but it was a retribution for civilians for supporting Swapo. They were not even allowed to light fires in their own houses after sunset as it was speculated that they might be cooking for Swapo guerrillas.

4.4 The Churches

During the liberation struggle, the church and Swapo became sources of inspiration for the civilians. It was evident that the churches associated themselves with Swapo as they openly resented the activities of state. The Namibian churches spoke out against the atrocities that were committed against the civilians. The Bishops from the Lutheran Churches wrote an open letter to the South African Prime Minister in 1971 condemning the suffering inflicted on the civilians by the army. The Namibian churches were also supported by international church bodies such as the British Council of Churches, Lutheran World Federation and Finnish Lutheran. As a result, the churches became very unpopular with the state and with the military in particular. As the war intensified, the work for the churches became increasingly difficult. Foreign church workers were expelled and deported, the work permits of some were not extended, local pastors were arrested and tortured, church services were disrupted and church institutions were destroyed and vandalized (König, 1983: 25-27, Namibia- The Facts, 1980: 41, Herbststein and Evenson, 1989: 50-57, Soggot, 1986: 34-36).

4.5 The Media

During the war there were two conflicting narratives of what was taking place in northern Namibia. Different media were influenced or controlled by different parties and organizations and different philosophies and ideologies about Namibia's independence were used. Some media were pro-Swapo and the liberation struggle and some were for the state, which was the South African colonial force. It is evident that every side had its own version of the war and that their audiences were informed about what was happening as far as the war and political situation was concerned, as every media made an attempt to indoctrinate its target audience (Heuva, 2001: 81). Civilians in the war zone were influenced by these publications and served to structure their experience of the war and the ways in which they structured and made sense of their memories and explanations of particular events.

One of the church controlled newspapers was *Omukwetu* ('a companion' published in Oshiwambo). *Omukwetu* was a newsletter of the Lutheran church, although it was also available to community members of other denominations. I could not locate copies of this newsletter for the 1970s and 1980s. But it was unmistakable that the paper was not in favour of apartheid and the government of the day as the bishops of ELCIN (The Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Namibia) - Bishops Auala and Dumeni - explicitly denounced the apartheid system. Bishop Auala was one of the pastors who wrote an open letter to John Vorster, the Prime Minister of South Africa dated 30 June 1971, denouncing racial discrimination and the implementation of the Homeland Policy. In 1973, Auala led a delegation of clergymen to a conference

with Vorster. Their complaints included the refusal of residence permits and visas to visiting clergymen and a list of complaints and recorded allegations of injuries inflicted on the civilian population by the security forces (Soggot, 1986: 58). It is even believed that this was the reason why the Lutheran church's printing press in Owambo was bombed twice (in 1973 and 1980) by the South African Defence Force.

Another church newsletter was *Omukuni* ('a sower') which was a paper produced by the Roman Catholic Church and published for the benefit of the Oshiwambo-speaking Roman Catholics (Heuva, 2001: 31) It was, however, also available to members of different denominations, such as Lutherans, and I used to see copies of *Omukuni* at home, even though my family belongs to the Lutheran church. *Omukuni* was launched in 1977 and was printed at the Catholic Church's Angelus Printing Shop. It dealt mainly with spiritual and social topics, but it also included a small section on political issues. The political news bulletin was usually a summary of material that had previously been published in the *Windhoek Advertiser*, a liberal English newspaper published in Windhoek.

Eume ('a friend') was another newsletter published and distributed in the north like the church newsletter. It was written in Oshiwambo and that made it very easy for the people in the north to read and to get access to it. It was established in 1965 and the last edition I could obtain was for the year 1973. It was owned by the colonial state and produced by the former Department of Information Services (Heuva, 2001). It became the main mouthpiece of the homeland government of Owambo.

I speculate that it perished with the administration of Owambo that crumbled following the assassination of the Owambo Prime Minister King Fillemon Elifas in 1975.

The Namibian with the slogan 'Still Telling It Like It Is', (with an earlier slogan before independence of 'Bringing Africa South') was only established in 1985. It is an independent newspaper that, like *The Combatant*, claims to report events as they happen without any fabrication. During the liberation struggle it was perceived as being against the government and became very popular. The supermarkets and cuca shops that sold the newspaper were seen as collaborators of Swapo, but for the readership in the war zone, the newspaper reflected what the readers already knew; running pictures of Koevoet displaying dead guerrillas; seeing guerillas as freedom fighters and human beings; and covering reports and pictures of human rights abuses. (Herbstein and Evenson, 1989:116).

The Combatant was a Swapo newsletter and a voice for PLAN fighters. During the war *The Combatant* was not freely accessible to the public in the north and being caught in possession of it by the SADF, meant trouble. But people used to read the newsletter especially those who were in close contact with PLAN and those who had access to it could only share it with the people that they really trusted as Swapo members (Helena Kandjala, 26/06 03).

There is evidence that the newspapers that circulated inside the country were censored. It was very dangerous if a person was caught reading a Swapo newsletter, such as *The Combatant*. Some foreign journalists were refused an extension of their work permit in Namibia because they tried to investigate a sensitive area, for example the case of alleged Swapo prisoners in Mariental prison. The *South West Africa Broadcasting Corporation* (SWABC), established in 1979 was under the direct supervision of the Administrator General and what was broadcasted was thus strictly controlled. Some listeners tuned in on short wave to the BBC World Service or Swapo's Voice of Namibia from Luanda, but the latter was often effectively jammed. (Namibia- The Facts, 1980: 39, Herbstein and Evenson, 1989: 115).

Within communities trust deteriorated between neighbors and even between brothers and sisters. The sense of security with which youngsters used to look up to elders disappeared as youngsters witnessed elders being humiliated in front of them by the colonial army, and in this way the harsh reality of the war made young people seek for explanations elsewhere. With the disintegration of social life, men sought new ways of relaxation, many resorting to heavy drinking. It is believed that this was the cause of the loss of respect for women and, some argue, could be the cause of the gender-based violence that has sky-rocketed in northern Namibia (Becker, 2001:229-230). In the face of all this however the civilians tried to uphold normal life. Women hummed melodies as they tilled the land; they bore children and looked after them; boys and girls ran bare foot as they tried to get to school on time; and men poetically called their cattle by names as they looked after them. The war

however gradually destroyed this way of life. What used to be basic way of relating to each other was incapacitated.



Chapter Five

We Remember the War: Stories and Silences

This chapter is not going to claim that it can 'discover the truth' and assess the genuineness or falseness of what the narrators remember about the past. It is rather going to explore the ways of telling, forgetting and remembering as mechanisms for dealing with the traumatic past experienced during the war. Like Werbner in *Tears of the dead* (1991: 4-5), I am also concentrating "on the said, the not said, the concealed and the taken for granted". Werbner used this approach as it allowed him to spot how family members of different generations and at different periods of time changed the ways they narrated their lives; paying particular attention to the remembered past. This gave me an insight as to how family members of different generations told their stories to a person from the same family.

The war was violent and inhumane and asking my relatives to remember it brought back some agonizing and painful memories. Some vowed that nothing in this world can heal the wounds that the past has left, while others seem to concur with the policy of national reconciliation advocated by the government, which stipulates that people should forgive each other and forget the past.

It is also very interesting to note that the younger generation (referring to people younger than forty-five years of age) appears to have not yet reconciled with what happened in the past and that they perhaps never will reconcile. While members of the older generation tend to forgive as they generally turn to the bible and believe that everything that happened was permitted by God as nothing sneaks past his watchful eyes. This philosophy makes it easier for them to accept a policy of 'national reconciliation' as they believe they should not hold grudges if everything happen in accordance with God's will.

My analysis concentrates on four selected case studies: First that of my Cousin Maria; second that of my father; third that of my mother and finally, my own. This is going to give an indication as to how people from different generations remember and narrate the past. It also examines how they handle crises at the time of traumatic events and thereafter and in addition how different people had different experiences and different coping strategies.

5.1 I will never forgive!

Maria is the daughter of Martha Kangulohi, the twin sister to Aunt Emilia. Ever since I can remember, she has lived in Swakopmund. She is 45 years of age and is a mother of three since the passing of her youngest son, Vilho in 1998. Despite living on a modest domestic worker's wage, her house in Mondesa, a location mainly for black people is well furnished and she has extended it. Her only surviving son lives with her, as do her nieces and nephews, the children of her sister Emilia (who lives

in Owamboland) and her grandchildren from her eldest daughter (who also lives in Owamboland).

On the day of the interview, I arrived late because I was staying in Walvis Bay (about 30 km away). The taxi that I took from Walvis Bay (where I was staying) made a couple of turns before we eventually drove along the coast to Swakopmund. She was expecting me; in fact, before she greeted me she told me that she had been anxious that I would never come. I apologized for being late and she invited me in. There was food prepared for me, and although I was not hungry, I had to eat to show that I appreciated the effort as, in our culture, it is rude to refuse when offered food and drink. She looked very nervous and was restless and she constantly moved around the kitchen inquiring if I wanted to eat and drink more. I kept conversation casual because before our interview she was already asking what we would talk about. I calmed her down and reassured her that I would not be asking anything she did not know. Eventually we went into the sitting room, and before we began she told everyone in the house that we were not to be disturbed under any circumstances, and that people could only come and watch T.V when we were done. I briefly again told her what I wanted and asked her if she would mind me recording our interview. She agreed that I could record; I inserted the tape, pressed record and asked her to tell me her past memories of the war.

From the beginning of the interview she was already emotional, with a shaking voice she started; "I remember my mother and my uncle Nendongo, they were killed and they did nothing wrong, it was pure hatred and jealousy, just hatred and

jealousy”. She narrated how her mother was killed when she had just been at the village for three days because she bought her children for the holiday from Swakopmund to her mother in the North. She did not really know what happened because when the killers came they only called for her mother to come out of her sleeping hut as it was dark and everybody was already asleep. She went out and everybody was told to stay indoors, in fact Maria was the only other one awake as the rest of the people at home were children. Only later one man came to her (Maria) and asked her to get him water. She went and that was when she realized that there were three armed men in uniforms. She did not recognize the uniforms or the men and they told her to go back and sleep.

She went back to the sleeping hut and sat, until one of the men came and told her again to sleep, “I see you do not have respect that is why we have to go with your mother”. She asked where they would take her mother but did not get an answer. She lay down, but she could not sleep, she recalled in the interview; “I was scared that night”. She stayed in the room for a while and then she decided to come out when the dogs started to bark uncontrollably from the sound of the guns. She told herself “*ta shi ya na shiye, kuusi na ko okegumbo*”, (whatever comes should come, because the dead as well go to the eternal home) and it was then that she decided to get out of the hut. She went to where the people who called her mother were, only to find her mother lying in a pool of blood. She was scared, confused and angry. She went to get a sheet from the hut, covered her mother’s body and went back to her room. She could not go to the neighbours as the immediate neighbour was 500 meter or more away and she was also scared as to where the killers might be and at

that time a curfew was in place prohibiting people from walking around after sunset. The following day the relatives and neighbours came and prepared for the funeral. Her mother was killed in 1982.

Up to today Maria does not understand why her mother was killed, or know who killed her. All she says to try and explain her memory is that it was motivated by hatred and jealousy. She believes that her mother's death had nothing to do with the liberation struggle, and that although she died during the war; her death was probably caused by local power politics. "I have heard the people like Tamutala Shilongo¹⁴ and Selma Mwalimushi are the ones that reported my mother to the killers". The people who apparently reported my relatives are not related, they were just neighbours of Aunt Martha. Rumours had it they were jealous of my family and they were not happy that my family was better-off than them. Aunt Martha's village is about 40km away from my mother's village.

Cousin Maria heard that her mother was killed by Swapo, although it was also believed that she used to cook for the Swapo soldiers, which would suggest that she was a Swapo supporter. She also heard that later that same night, the same people went to her cousin Barkias' house, looking for him, but did not find him. She vowed never to forgive whoever was responsible nor to forget what happened to her mother and uncle.

This view was also supported by Meme Helena Kandjala (Helena Kandjala, 26.06.2003). The claim that Swapo soldiers killed Swapo supporters could be true as

Swapo soldiers did not trust people - even the ones that used to help them with food, shelter, clothes and intelligence. If they were told that a certain person should be eliminated, they would do it, they did not enquire, but just took action and followed orders. Rumours and malicious gossip could therefore have fatal consequences, as fighters from either side might eliminate those who they had been told were sympathetic to their enemies. People in this way used the war to settle animosities and hostilities between each other.

Kandjala is not my relative, but I have interviewed her to get a memory of the war from someone else apart from my relatives. In this instance I am going to use her account to illustrate Cousin Maria's belief that her relatives were killed because of local politics. Kandjala housed Swapo soldiers throughout the liberation struggle. She recalled an incident in which PLAN guerillas killed a father, mother and their son in her village. When they went to kill them, they left from her house but, she did not know that they were going to kill her neighbours. They came back home later that night, woke her up and replayed the tape they were recording when carrying out the deed. "I could hear everything, from the conversations, to the beatings, the sound of the guns, the screaming, the flowing of blood, everything", she recalled. They told her that they would do the same to her and her family if she ever tried to betray them. She was scared, and not trusting them either, she thought that she was already involved and it was too late for her to pull out.

The story of the murdered family is well remembered at the village, everybody that I interviewed knows about it. It is believed that the members of the murdered family

were loyal Swapo supporters, but Joseph Amukwaya, a neighbour and supposed 'good friend' of the deceased reported them to the Swapo soldiers and claimed that they had gone to the SWATF¹⁵ camp at Olukonda¹⁶, (this village is close to my village Ontananga. A SWATF camp was placed there, supposedly to protect the Ondonga king and the royal palace, so they must be 'traitors' and surely have to be eliminated. Villagers do not know what happened to the bodies because when they were taken away by SWATF, they were never returned for burial. People that I talked to did not comment on these matters, apart from recounting the events.

Maria went on to relate how she does not understand why uncle Nendongo had to be killed in 1979. She recounted how she came from Swakopmund to the north for the funeral. When she arrived the first thing that she did was to go to the Oshakati mortuary to confirm that it was really him. "You can not even recognize him, he was badly beaten, (paused), that picture will never leave my mind", she said with tears. After a long pause she continued, "It is unlike my mother, they did not make her suffer, they just shot her, I could hear myself", tears rolling down her cheeks as she spoke. I had to give her a tissue so that, after a short break, she could continue to talk. When she returned to Swakopmund, people used to talk behind her back, or make open statements that her family (Maria's) had a lot of puppets.

When I concluded my interview with Cousin Maria, she started repeating it again. She was showing the traumatic signals, that as Gadi BenEzer (1999:34-36) has indicated, can be detected when one is narrating a traumatic experiences. There were long pauses that came in between her speech during our interview, before or

after the narration of particularly horrific incident. For example when she compared how her uncle and her mother were killed, that must have been a tormenting moment for her as she lost control over her emotions and started sobbing. From that moment there was a change in her voice and her tone and pitch changed as her voice became hoarse. Her voice was full of anger and rage, her lips were trembling and her eyes were fixed at one place only.

5.2 Omathimbo oga li omadhigu¹⁷

My mother, Uilika is a retired school teacher at our village school. She is the mother of nine children and a grandmother to nineteen grandchildren. She is 72 years of age and she suffers from high blood pressure and back ache. She is advised by doctors not to do hard work and, in particular, not to bend as her back bone is weak.

I interviewed her more than once. For our first interview, I telephoned her while in Windhoek to inform her and my father that I would come to carry out interviews with them, since they already knew about the research. It was on a Friday, in April 2003 when I took the bus from Windhoek to the north; a trip that can take eight hours or more. I arrived at home around six o'clock in the evening and there was no way we were going to conduct an interview that night as I was tired, so I waited until the next day. During the night it rained heavily, so that by the morning half of the *mahangu* was destroyed and half was lying on the ground. We had to save what could be saved by collecting the plants that were not badly damaged. When we finished it was around two o'clock and I could not get my mother or my father to settle down. By the time my mother was finally settled, it was already late and I had

to prepare supper. After supper we were all tired and went to bed. I eventually had to postpone my trip back to Windhoek to the Monday, as that Sunday my mother had to go church and I only managed to do my interview with her after the service.

Unlike Cousin Maria, my mother Uilika was not really emotional during the interview. This could be because I had already talked to her previously about her past memory when I wrote my undergraduate thesis about my uncle's unresolved murder. At that time she was very emotional (Akawa, 2000). This time, she remembered how difficult the times were, the killing of her brother and sister, and how she had lived in fear as she had been told that she was also going to die. She said that she was not really scared of death, but she was worried about her nine children that were still young and not yet independent. That was 1979, and I (as the youngest child) was only two years old, whilst my eldest brother was nineteen at the time.

She recalled how she came to know of the threat to her life. A distant cousin came to my aunt Elizabeth to tell her and to pass on the message that she had heard that my mother was next on 'the to-be-killed list'. Aunt Elizabeth passed the message on because my mother was a sister to Nendongo (my uncle), who had just allegedly been killed by Swapo because he was a 'puppet'. As a result, the argument was made that she must be a puppet as well. The cousin could not tell my mother this news herself as she was scared of her, and it was also a kind of respect that one could not just approach an elder like that but had to go through someone else.

My mother was terrified and confused and did not know what to do. She was advised to leave Owamboland and to go and stay with Aunt Emilia in Otjiwarongo for a while and to eventually find her own place there. Ultimately she decided that she would not go anywhere; she would rather die at home with her children. She wondered who would accommodate her and her nine children if we were to move. She also wondered how long the children and she would be welcome and if she had to take along only some of us, which ones she should she take along and, which ones should stay behind, and who was going to take care of the ones that she would leave behind ? So eventually she decided not to go anywhere but to wait for those who were coming to kill her to find her at home. She heard that she had only a week to live.

She believes that they suspected my mother, aunt Martha and uncle Nendongo of being “puppets”, because people were jealous of them. She believes people were jealous because they had enough in life, they were not rich or poor, and never needed to go to people to beg for anything. Some people in the community were not happy about this, and it was common in the community for people who were not poor to be accused by other villagers of being South African agents in order to have them killed and to provide an `explanation` of their relative wealth. That is why, my mother believes, some of the villagers started such rumors against the family. My mother thinks she was connected to Nendongo’s death, because she was a teacher and Nendongo was a businessman, so people thought that they probably talked about political issues as their intellectual understanding was at the same level. As for Aunt Martha, my mother thinks that the villagers were just jealous of her

because she was hard-working, that is why they reported her to the Swapo soldiers that she 'apparently' used to cook for.

Although my mother confronted her (Martha), she denied any knowledge of Swapo soldiers and according to my mother her death came as a surprise, as she, unlike my mother, did not receive a warning. I speculate that if my aunt was familiar with the rumours that my mother might have been a "South African agent", she would obviously have denied any involvement with Swapo as she would not trust my mother. At that time it was not strange to find people, even with the same mother, to be on different sides in the conflict. As Hangula found during his research on the consequences of the war in northern Namibia this kind of climate of fear and distrust was the result of the ways in which the war was fought in Northern Namibia (Hangula: 2000).

My mother also mentioned some names of the people that reported her sister and her brother. Tamutala Shilongo and Selma Mwalimushi, the names that Maria had mentioned, were also given by my mother. She also mentioned the names of those who reported my uncle. She does not know who reported her, but speculated that they must be connected. In Oshiwambo there is a saying that goes "*Ombedhi iha yi yi moshiti*", that means "blame can not be put on a stick, but on a person". It could be that my relatives are only trying to find someone to blame, and that those people were not really responsible, but that is what they believe.

My mother denied any connection with the South African state. In fact she says she strongly agreed with Swapo's goals and also says she too assisted the Swapo soldiers with food and clothes. She said Meme Ndilimeke once brought a Swapo soldier to her and she was told to take care of him if he ever needed anything. She agreed and she gave him clothes and food, but the man never came back.

When I was growing up, I never saw or heard anything about Swapo soldiers being helped at home. Maybe this is because the presence of Swapo soldiers in local houses was kept top secret for the fear that if children were interrogated by SWATF they would tend to speak out.

I am in no position to judge whether or not my mother had at any time been in support of the Owamboland homeland system. My father strongly denied this by stating that "My wife was no puppet" and I believe both of them. I do not however want to overlook the notion that maybe her memory and identity are presently shaped by the ways in which the official historical narrative is being constructed. There is no doubt that the official Namibian historical narrative is being constructed to foster a nationalist agenda and perhaps she wants to support the public representations that guarantee her identity as a nationalist who contributed to the liberation of the country.

The same nationalist sentiment is shared by the widow of the late Fillemon Shuumbwa Elifas, Meme Martha Pinehas (not part of my family). Elifas was the first Prime Minister of Owamboland, and was also allegedly murdered by Swapo

(Windhoek Advertiser, 27 August 1975). Meme Martha does not however think that her late husband was killed by Swapo. She believes rather that his own colleagues in the Owamboland cabinet were responsible for his death and that they knew about it before it happened. She believes that they wanted him dead because they had different opinions when it came to the treatment of the Swapo supporters inside the country. She claims that he wanted them protected from the harassments and assassinations, but that other members of the cabinet wanted them harassed, killed and their activities banned inside the country.

It is remembered by most people that I interviewed that the Swapo members inside the country used to sing a song; “*Lombweleni Ndjomba, pamwe nomusi Elifas, ota tu ya tuya hanithe*”. Meaning, “Tell Ndjomba and the late Elifas that we will come to make them shit”. The song used to be sung while King Elifas was still alive.

Soggot (1986) also has accounts that contradict the image that Meme Martha Pinehas has painted of her late husband. Swapo supporters in Owambo, around 1973, were subjected to floggings simply because they had made “Sam Nujoma their idol”. In the flogging sessions King Elifas used to be present, but never said anything in objection to the flogging. In one flogging session, Franz Nangutuuala had his Swapo shirt removed, a garment of bright red, blue and green fabric. The headman was described as having clapped and chief Elifas laughed as Nangutuuala, now entirely uncovered, was told to get ready for flogging (Soggot, 1986: 67).

5.3 God is the protector!

My father Vilho, a migrant worker at Oranjemund at the time had to take early retirement to come and stand by his wife. He is 78 years of age now, but I think he looks younger than both his age and my mother. His health is generally better than my mother's, although he suffers from arthritis. He can still drive a car and do manual work especially in the field, but has been advised by doctors not to work too hard.

The same weekend that I came to do my interview with my mother, I had to interview him as well. On the Saturday I could not do any interview due to the emergency when we had to save the harvest. On Sunday morning, all the joints in my father's body were sore and swollen and he could not go to church. I, in turn convinced my parents that I could also not go to church, (although I stopped going to church five years ago I still find it hard to tell my parents who are staunch members of the Lutheran church). I cooked lunch as early as possible and started the interview with my father while my mother was at church. This was the first interview of the three that I had with him. For this research the first interview was with him alone; for the second, my mother was present; and for the third my mother, brother and sister were all around and all contributed to the interview.

My father started by telling me how he came to know about the appearance of my mother's name on the supposed to-be-killed list. My mother wrote him a letter explaining very well what the situation was. She also made it clear that she was not a "puppet", and that was only rumour-mongering and jealousy. She included a song

from her hymn book as an encouragement. Some of the verses of which were as follows:

Kalunga oye egameno, Matati wo negonga, Oye no te tushi gi wo, Moongodhi nomiiponga, Omutondi omuhindadhi, oye omukondjithi, Omugeyi omudhudhu ngo, Ye omunandjahi wo, muuyuni mwaa na mukwawo.

Uyuni nando uudhe ndo, , Oosatana poombanda, Ya hala ye tumane po, tse ka tu na uumbanda, omupangeli ongu, ta lel'uuyuni mbu, kwa gee ta ndunduma, ye ita vulu sha, sho Jesus okwe mu sindi.

The basic meaning of the song is: “God is the protector, he is going to shield us against danger. The enemy is aggressive, oppositional, merciless and vengeful. In the world there is no one like him. Even if the world can be filled with Satan, aiming to finish us, we are not afraid. He will be unable, as Jesus will overpower him”.

My father included a detailed account of this song as a reference to the encouragement that they both found in their Christian faith. The family was and still is religious, and they believe that everything that happened was only because God permitted it.

When I asked my father why he took early retirement he told me that he was sick and that the weather in Oranjemund was not good for him. But when I asked him again in a second interview when my mother was also present, he said, “I had to

come because my wife was accused innocently and I had to come to stand by her". I had my note book ready and the tape was already recording

As Elizabeth Tonkin has observed, a person is a social being, and what is remembered can not be disconnected from the relationship, time and space of the teller and the audience in which the past is narrated (Tonkin, 1992: 2-4). The two versions of my father's early retirement could both be true and he had to tell the two because we were in two different situations with different audiences. Maybe he wanted my mother to feel loved and cared for and perhaps he did not see any need to tell me the whole 'puppet' story when we were in a relaxed mood.

My father remembered that those were difficult times. People were harassed for no apparent reason and it was public knowledge that if you were found by the SADF and asked where you were from, you did not even dare say that you were from Ontananga (my village) because it was known that people from this village collaborated with Swapo guerrillas. My father remembered that people had no choice as to who could come to your house. Either Swapo or SADF might come, and you dared not chase either of them out as both of them carried death with them. You just sat back and watched. You could deny what you did not know or what you were not supposed to tell, but refusing them entrance in your house was impossible.

My father stressed how their strength had been in God and the church during those difficult times. He gave thanks that the church, its leaders and their followers were supporting the liberation struggle and referred to a song that was not allowed to be

sung in church, but that was in the hymn book, and which he emphasized described how much Namibians resented colonialism. It was written by a Namibian under the theme, “difficult times”. The lyrics of the song were as follows:

Tate kalunga tal’oshigwana shoye, neho lyolukeno, Omuwa tu sil’ ohenda.

Mevi ndi lyetu, maluhodhi tu ga na, mbizi oya tika, Omuwa tu sil’ ohenda.

Tate u tu shi, otse adhinwa lela, mokati kiigwana, Omuwa tu sil’ ohenda

Tate dhima po, mayonagulo getu, twa yono kungoye, Omuwa tu sil’ ohenda

Tate lotitha, iihuna mevi lyetu, nkugo yetu uva, Omuwa tu sil’ ohenda.

God the father, look your nation, with a graceful eye, Lord have mercy on us.

In our land, we have sorrow, as blood pours, Lord have.....

Father you know, we are the undermined, among the nations, Lord have....

Father forgive our sins that we committed against you, Lord have.....

Father, minimize, trouble in our land, hear our pledge, Lord have.....

The SADF thought the song was aimed at denouncing them and they banned it from being sung, but people did not stop singing it, despite the harassment.

5.4 What is going on?

The oral narratives of the war that I collected are also placed within my own childhood memories of the war which have shaped the way in which I perceive the different forces engaged in the war. I was born in 1977, and at the time that my

uncle and aunt were killed I was very young and did not know what was going on. As I grew older I heard that my mother was to be killed because she was 'a puppet', but at that time I did not even know what 'a puppet' was. I was around seven or eight then. I cannot even remember who told me or how I came to know, but I remember how I and my sister Emilia used to be scared and how I used to say that if my mother dies, I would also kill myself with a knife. No one took time to explain what was going on in the country and I guess I never asked. At the time of Namibian independence in 1990 I was still only thirteen years old.

When we were at primary school at Ontananga there was a song that we regularly used to sing, every time the *Omakakunya*¹⁸ (a name given to the SADF and SWATF, which means 'blood suckers') came to the school. I can not remember who taught us the song, or why we had to sing it every time they came, but one day we were told by them not to even think of singing it again. I never understood why we were not allowed to sing it, but I thought that maybe they were just irritated because the whole school would sing it at the same time, from different classrooms, so that while some were finishing a verse, the others would be starting it or in the middle of it. The lyrics of the song were:

Yayee X4 Omuwa

Yayee X4 ta tu hepekwa

Tse otu shi shi shili, Ehalo lyoye, mokati kaantu yoye Omuwa na li tye.

Eitaalo lyaantu yoye, Omuwa ko leka, opo ya wa pe okusinda, Iikungulu yuuyuni mbu.

Oh Lord X4

Oh, we are being harassed, we know, may your wish be fulfilled, among your people.

Your people's faith, Lord strengthen, that they overpower, the trouble of this world.

At the time I did not really understand what was going on. Apart from *Omakakunya* that used to go to people's houses looking for "*ootori*"¹⁹ (terrorists), I thought life was as it was supposed to be. Swapo guerrillas were referred to as terrorists, but I did not even understand what the term meant. At home *Omakakunya* would ask us to tell them about the people we had cooked for in our house the previous night. That was how they would ask, hoping that we would start talking about these 'people'. Although the soldiers did not know whether or not there were people in one's house, they would ask anyway, at times forcing people to agree that there were Swapo guerrillas there.

The SADF used to tell us that these *ootori* were people like us, but that they smelt differently; they were very dark; were cooked in pots and usually ate grass, although if given food they ate like dogs, with their mouths and not with hands like normal people. The soldiers said they were very dangerous and that if we happened to see any, we should report them immediately. At school, the black soldiers would walk into a classroom and ask us if we had seen any *ootori*, although no one ever admitted to having seen any. They used to hassle boys who were big, demanding to see their identity cards, or asking what they were doing in a classroom with small

children or else they would interrogate them privately. They would make the learners sing for them but not the banned song or, worst of all, they would make all the female ladies whose breasts had developed stand on one side and then stroke and fondle their breasts one by one in front of the class.

The presence of the *Omakakunya* meant terror. Everyone would be so scared that you would sit cold on your seat. Teachers would leave the classrooms and all go to the staff room. The absence of the teacher from the classroom meant that the protection with which all learners could comfort themselves was also gone. Although if you were in the middle of the lesson when they came, it would mean the end of teaching for that day. And they used to come to the school often.

The most feared and notorious were the *Koevoet* (translated in English as 'Crowbar'). A Casspir would be filled with black soldiers and usually one white soldier. These wasted no time, they beat and insulted the people. I also remember the *Etango*, (meaning 'sun'). They were not cruel at all and they were mainly white, they used to distribute sweets, cookies, condensed milk etc.

But we did not like it when they came to vaccinate us. The needles they used were so big, that the sight of it was enough to make you cry. Some learners would try to escape through windows or even pee on themselves. We used to stand in queues, and a white man would inject the whole class with one needle. Not only would the injection make your arm sore for the whole week, it would leave your shoulders with scars for life. Mine are still clearly visible. The running away and the peeing

were not happening because vaccination was bad. Local nurses used to vaccinate us; in fact we used to go to the clinic ourselves. But with the *Omakakunya* it was different; we understood that they were bad people that used to beat and interrogate us. Hence we believed that everything they did must be bad as well.

5.5 Voices and silences

The people I interviewed remember the war only in casual settings. They would not sit down to discuss memories of the war, but the memories could be triggered by any incident. It was amazing to learn that Meme Helena Kandjala had talked about the memories of the war to her grand-children the night before I went to interview her. The grand-children did not ask her to talk about it, but she started telling them when she made a comment “I could have died during the war, I did not survive to see all these problems”. Meme Kandjala, said the statement came as a result of her being stressed by her own children and by the burden of heading a household (her husband having just passed away earlier this year). She is very bitter to see her own children, who are adults now suffering from HIV/AIDS, poverty, drinking problems and is even more hurt when her children start arguing and fighting among themselves.

In most cases when people informally narrated their memories of the war in my presence, their remarks were inevitably triggered by something. For example, my brother came home late one evening and my father started to rebuke him by reminding him how lucky people are these days and how drastically things have changed, because in his days they were not allowed to move about late in the

evenings or the early hours of the mornings. This was how he started recalling his memories of the war. If any of the incidents happened when he was together with my mother, they would tell the stories together, filling the gaps where one had missed or forgotten some important detail. They have never called us or the grandchildren to sit so that they can start telling us the stories of the war.

Even the young generation, myself included, talk about the war only in casual settings. A friend was telling us over breakfast at Arrebusch Restaurant in Windhoek how naughty his varsity friend was. He would stand on top of the bridge with raw eggs and he would throw down an egg to each passing car, aiming for the windscreen. That was the moment when one of the other friends present started telling us how he and his friends used to hide in holes next to the road and throw stones at the passing traffic in his home town of Opuwo in the early 1980s. One day they started doing the usual thing; they hid in the hole and started playing their game. Unfortunately the next car that they threw stones at belonged to an army person. The soldiers stopped the car, and along with his fellows, started shooting at the hole where the stones came from. The hole had an extra exit and that they used to escape. My friend recalled that if it was not for that exit, they would not have survived, as when they came back later to check for the used bullets, there were over forty bullet holes.

The same friend also narrated other stories of the war to me on different occasions. He took me to Opuwo, for me to see where he grew up. When we drove past the Alpha military camp, particularly the area where the SADF soldiers used to train, he

started telling me how he joined the army when he was barely thirteen, because he envied the soldiers' money and their many girlfriends. His aunt came to get him from the army camp and she beat him so severely that he never tried to go back again. He showed me where they used to train for the few days when he was in the army, as well as where one of the boys collapsed and died due to excessive training and exhaustion. He showed me where they used to hide and throw stones at the moving traffic - the location of the incident when they had thrown stones at the army car. He does not stop counting his blessings that his aunt came to get him, as his fellow recruits at the time either died in the war or are just roaming the streets now without decent jobs or lives, unlike him.

Memories of the war are told in bits and pieces unless in a situation of a formal interview, like the one I had with my informants, otherwise the memories of the war are told in episodes when the occasion arises. The stories are not always told in sequence, nor are they always coherent and organized and in some cases memories are not talked about at all.

My mother and her bible study students provide a good illustration of the ways in which memories of the war are not talked about. She assembles every Thursday with about eight of her neighbours to read a script from the bible, discuss it, sing a few songs and pray before finally departing. They however never even attempted to discuss the memories of the war. She powerfully said, "We all know what happened during the war, we all lived here in the neighbourhood, who does not know what happened? What is new to tell? And to who? We have contemporary issues to

discuss and worry about, issues like AIDS, poverty, unemployment, drought, violence, especially against women and children. No one talks about the war, we do not.” People may just be honestly over-burdened by current problems. HIV/AIDS being the biggest problem, as everyone is either infected or affected by it. Or perhaps they choose to consciously forget or repress the past, as that protects the narrators from the pain of the memories that they have experienced (Zur, 1999: 50-51).

Memories are composed to make sense of the past and the present. Memory and remembrance involve emotions, energy and willingness to reconstruct the past, and as such memory is not a passive reliving or retrieving of the past, but an active process that changes and is negotiated even as it moulds the ways individuals and communities live and relate to the past, present and the future. Telling memories is therefore not only what is chosen or not chosen to be told, but what is done with it, how stories are made useful, and how they are remade in different contexts to create intended meanings and to define today’s needs and identity (Kuhn, 2000: 193, Bickford-Smith et al, 2001:17, Field, 1996:61). I agree with what these authors have written as, with reference to my interviews, I have noticed the emotions that came with remembering the past, for instance how my father told me two different versions of the same event when there were people and when there were no people around.

Analyzing my informants’ interviews, cousin Maria is bitter about post-independent national memory and she is confused and distressed as she is unable to enjoy the

consolation and affirmation that is offered by the national memory. Just like me she probably did not understand what was happening during the war although she was already grown up. My parents' strong Christian faith could be the reason that has helped them to accept what happened and what is being offered by the government as public memory. Although I have detected pain in their narratives, I have noticed less resentment than in my Cousin Maria's narrative and my own. In the next chapter I will look into the framework of public memory offered by the dominant narrative in postcolonial Namibia



Chapter six

The Liberation Struggle as a Nationalist Public Memory

This chapter looks at the ways in which the liberation struggle is remembered in public history and memory in Namibia today. It explores the exclusions and inclusions, the acknowledgement and the marginalization of memories in national history.

As in many post-colonial countries, Namibia has taken a celebratory and triumphal route to commemorating the attainment of independence. This has emerged through a national 'Heroes' Acre' on the outskirts of Windhoek. The Heroes' Acre which was established to honour "The fallen heroes and heroines of the motherland Namibia" was completed just in time to coincide with the annual commemoration of National Heroes' Day on 26th August 2002. It is now declared a site to commemorate official national days that mark the significant events of the liberation struggle (The Namibian, 05/07/2002).

As Becker has argued, in postcolonial Namibia, the war is reconstructed as heroic, with the emphasis placed on the claim that independence was attained through 'the barrel of the gun'. The contribution of the civilians is evidently excluded (Becker, 2002).

South Africa has followed a very different process to commemorate the past. South Africa has not up to date used physical monuments to celebrate the attainment of

independence and commemorate the past, instead the government opted for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (T.R.C), a process which allowed victims, perpetrators and witnesses to face the past and relate the human rights violations they experienced during the apartheid era (for discussion of the T.R.C. see Rassool et al, 2000, Das et al, 2001, Ross 2001). Namibia, in contrast, did not opt for a process that would publicly investigate the ordeals of past. Instead the government chose the Policy of National Reconciliation, which argues that people should simply forgive and forget the past. Critics (Saul and Leys, 2003, 1995, McConnell, 2000) have argued that Swapo have adopted this blanket amnesty to conceal the issues that they do not want the public to debate, especially issues that could give Swapo a negative image, the core subject in this case is the detainee issue.

The detainee debate is about Namibians who were detained by Swapo while in exile because they were accused of being South African agents, sent to spy on the activities of Swapo. Publicly investigating the past would, it is claimed, expose Swapo's human rights violations in exile (Saul and Leys, 2003). A direction Swapo will not take as this would ruin the nice image of Swapo as the liberator of the nation. Even in his autobiography, Nujoma writes that "enemy spies would have been eliminated in other wars. The detainee issue is linked to anti-Swapo propaganda; we prefer to leave that sad history behind us" (Nujoma, 2001:357).

6.1 Heroes' Acre

Heroes' Acre ascends on a saddle between two Auas Mountains to the south of Windhoek. It came with a price tag of N\$60 million. The debate around the cost of

the Heroes' Acre topped the Namibian print media even before the official inauguration, however some readers expressed the view that people should not look at the price it cost; they should rather see it as an opportunity to reconstruct Namibian history in totality (M'ule, *Namibia Review*²⁰, August, 2002).

The brochure provided at the inauguration of Heroes' Acre gratifyingly describes the monument. Heroes' Acre provides seating space for five thousand people and can accommodate up to twenty thousand people. From the public stand, which faces south, one looks over a rising symmetrical monument of terraces clad in polished black granite and white marble. A central set of stairs rises through nine levels, where 174 graves of independence heroes are situated, and up towards an eight-meter high bronze statue of a bearded, AK47-holding unknown soldier who is prepared to throw a hand grenade. Behind the statue, near the top of the hill, stands a 34 meter high white obelisk. Behind the obelisk is a curved bronze relief mural depicting Namibia's journey to independence, from early anti-colonial resistance, to the start of the armed liberation struggle, through the stages of the liberation, and ending with independence itself, depicted by a flag-holding soldier marching at the end of a column of fellow soldiers. At the foot of the steps which rise to the obelisk at the top of Heroes' Acre lies a bronze depiction of the medal for Namibian military heroes, which has similarities to the German Iron cross medal. (The Namibian, 05, 07, 2002, The Unknown Soldier, and 26 August 2002).

Not initially part of the plan, was the inclusion of the cafeteria, the eternal flame and a three kilometer long security fence that encircles the site. It is reported that the

President developed the idea of constructing the Heroes' Acre while attending the OAU summit in Harare in 1997. The Heroes' Acre is modeled upon the Heroes' Acre in Zimbabwe which is why the North Korean company Mansudai Overseas Project was approved by the cabinet to construct the monument, as it was this company that had constructed the one in Zimbabwe. At the inauguration of Heroes' Acre in 2002, Kim Jong IL , the 'Great Leader' of the Korean people was awarded with The Most Ancient Order of the Welwitschia Mirabilis Medal for rendering support to Swapo during the struggle and because it was under his leadership that the North Korean architects and artists were invited to assist Namibia with the construction of Heroes' Acre (AACRLS 47 NAN). There has been an outcry that the selection of heroes and heroines should include all Namibians who showed heroism, yet it excludes many people who meet these criteria and the selection process is secretive and discriminates on lines of gender, political affiliation etc.

6.2 The exclusions and inclusions

There is no doubt that the memories that find space in public memory are selected. As Melber argues by including particular groups in the concept of heroism and commemorating their contribution to certain historic achievements, other groups and individuals are implicitly and explicitly excluded, marginalized and left outside of state-defined memory culture and the underlying concept of culture (Melber 2002 : 40).

In my view the main questions to be asked are: What is a hero/ine in the Namibian context? Who qualifies to be hero/ine? If heroism has to look at the criteria of

hero/ine without selecting on the basis of political affiliation, gender etc, then it would include all people who qualify to be heroes including those who are currently disqualified by their gender and political status.

It is very evident that Heroes' Acre and the national rituals that commemorate the attainment of independence and the values associated with it, acknowledge Swapo associates only, and in particular those who were in exile. In answering the question, who are the heroes and heroines of Namibia, one author wrote that "they are those who faced the dangers of the African bush and forests, they fled to unknown destinations, they navigated forested mountains and rivers" (Matjila, 2002:1). This suggests that the heroes are the ones who left their homes to fight. "Heroes are not born, but produced by the struggle" stated Major General Nambundunga of Namibia Defence Force, when asked on Oshiwambo radio about his stance on heroes and heroism during the commemoration of 26 August 2003. Opinions like these illustrate that heroism is associated with those who went in exile and not those who fought from inside the country.

I am of the opinion that too much emphasis is put on the military component of the struggle for independence, to the detriment of the role played by civil society inside the country. The impression spread by Swapo is thus that, the independence of Namibia was attained through the barrel of the gun.

The concept of 'the struggle' in Namibia is used to refer to the armed struggle and those who were in exile. Those who remained in the country are marginalized and

excluded from public memory as if they did not fight. Should acts of heroism be framed and restricted to certain places? What happens to the qualities of heroism that are/were displayed regardless of any particular place and time? What makes Libertina Amathila²¹ more of a hero than Meme Mukwanambwa²² from Eenhana who throughout the liberation struggle risked her life cooking and sheltering the combatants?

Another issue concerns political party affiliation. The branding of heroism as a quality that can only, ostensibly, be exercised by people affiliated to a particular political party will no doubt exclude people who have shown the same qualities, and only been differentiated by the political affiliation. Is the late Clemens Kapuu, who played a leading role in resisting the forced removals from the Old Location in Windhoek, a lesser hero than Dimo Hamaambo?

6.3 On heroism, men and women

In many cases, heroism is associated with physical strength, men and bravery, mainly in the context of battle. The 'Unknown Soldier' at Heroes' Acre depicts a masculine and bearded male soldier, and the soldier holding the flag on the mural symbolizing Namibian's heroic achievement of independence, is also male. Not to ignore the gendered concept and language used in political discourses the monument is even labeled 'Heroes' Acre' and yet the aim is to honor heroes and heroines. So why is it not called Heroes and Heroines' Acre? Unpacking these meanings allows us to ask critical questions about the qualities that should be associated with heroism. A pertinent question is therefore, whether or not heroism can be a triumph

of the mind, and not just the body, and whether it should thus be justified in terms of deeds, rather than determined by status or gender.

At the end of the war, the contributions made by women during the war of liberation were overlooked. Out of the eleven people who have found space and recognition at Heroes' Acre only two are women. Out of sixty-one medals bestowed to living and deceased liberation heroes at the official opening ceremony of Heroes Acre for their contribution towards the struggle only fourteen were awarded to women. Both of these facts indicate that women are underrepresented on the list of heroes who are officially recognized. As I observed on several occasions, women are only mentioned in passing or not at all in speeches on national days. This is in contradiction to the common knowledge that they sheltered, cooked for and clothed combatants, all of which were risky operations and some women paid for this with their lives. They engaged in mobilizations, demonstrations and other forms of resistance to the apartheid system.

6.4 Who are the Namibian heroes?

The selection of who becomes a hero and who does not remains a big controversy. There are obviously exclusions and inclusions according to gender, political affiliation and the division between those who went to exile and those who remained inside the country as is outlined above. To date the technical committee, which was appointed and approved by cabinet to identify heroes and heroines has not yet publicly released any criteria for their selection. Even the tour guides at Heroes' Acre that I have spoken to, do not know the selection criteria, and say that they can

never get 'straight answers' from the people responsible for identifying the heroes and heroines.

There has been an outcry from some members of the public as far as the selection of heroes and heroines is concerned, with letters to the local newspapers raising public concerns. Claims have been made that the selection is biased, that the monument mainly seeks the glorification of Sam Nujoma, and that the project has wasted money that could have been put to better use (Windhoek Observer, 04.05.2002). This is in contrast to the official statement of the president during his inaugural speech at Heroes' Acre where he stated that "for practical, logistical and other reasons, not all of the names that will be received from the regions will find place for inclusion at Heroes' Acre. However, our citizens must rest assured that through transparency the identification process will be thorough, balanced and objective. So to ensure that justice is done to all our deserving national heroes and heroines, each city and each town, all communities, each village and each settlement must participate in this process" (The Unknown Soldier, 26 August 2002). The president promised fair, objective, balanced, transparent and thorough selection and representation. However, thus far there is no indication of these, as there is no balanced selection and representation (women are unequally represented), transparent selection (criteria for selecting heroes and heroines not yet known) or fair and objective (only people from Swapo have been selected).

M'ule, the editor of *Namibia Review* writes that she does not understand why the President thought that the selection of heroes was "an agonizing process", because

to her “this was the easy part of the exercise” and she admitted that “undoubtedly, some egos will be shattered when their nominees do not make it to the national list” (M’ule, 2002:i). If the identification of heroes and heroines takes this direction, Heroes’ Acre might not eventually be a space to “express the policy of national reconciliation, statehood and unity as a nation” as Nujoma put it in his speech at the inauguration of Heroes’ Acre (The Unknown Soldier, August 2002). Instead, Heroes Acre might become a source of dispute and division.

Zimbabwe’s national Heroes’ Acre is a good example of how such a dispute can come about. The observers of the Zimbabwean situation have noted a lot of tensions that have occurred since the erection of the monument. Claims have surfaced that the monument represents national elites only, and that the relatives of local heroes do not receive the same benefits. The national monument was regarded as inaccessible; people have to get permission from the government, including the relatives of people buried there before they can visit the site. Ethnicity is also one of the issues, as the Great Zimbabwe bird represented there is associated with Shonas, which made other ethnic groups feel less represented. The tension did not only come from outside the ruling party ZANU(PF) but from within the party as well. People within the party wanted to see advancement towards economic emancipation rather than the poverty that was evident. The issue of identifying national heroes was one of the disputes with ZANU(PF) viewing the process of selecting national heroes as risky, as it exposed the vulnerability of national unity and the government’s national authority (Kriger, 1995:149-151, Werbner, 1998:85-87). Thus far, the reflection of

official heroes has not been so hotly contested in Namibia, but it can not be taken for granted that the situation will not evolve in this direction

I have concluded that the selection of heroes and heroines is one-sided and that the commemoration of national days has everything to do with SWAPO. The first nine selected heroes are the icons of anti-colonial resistance. Highly embraced by Swapo, they are names that are found throughout the country, in the renaming of streets, schools, airport, on the face on the dollar and so on. Swapo was only launched in 1960, by which time most of these symbolic heroes were already dead²³. These heroes have however been claimed by Swapo as the forerunners of an anti-colonial resistance that Swapo has concluded with victory in the armed struggle. The national and liberation heroes, both the living and the deceased are thus all associated with Swapo. The portfolio of selected regional heroes shows that they were all people who mobilized Swapo supporters, fed guerrillas, used their houses for Swapo gatherings, cared for wounded guerrillas, etc. The national days also feature liberation songs and guest speakers from the Swapo leadership.

6.5 The Unknown Soldier?

The Unknown Soldier at Heroes' Acre is the main feature of the monument; it commemorates those whose names will not be individually remembered and are not known to whoever compiled the list. According to official statements the Unknown Soldier does not depict anyone in particular, a position contradicted by many Namibians. Most people believe that the Unknown Soldier has a lot of features that

resemble President Sam Nujoma although the official version denies it. But when I and my family took a trip to Heroes' Acre this year I was amazed by a girl, around the age of ten, who suddenly started shouting and drawing her mother's attention. "Mom, uncle Sam, look at uncle Sam" she said, pointing at the Unknown Soldier. Most children refer to President Sam Nujoma as 'Uncle Sam' and for a moment I was puzzled. I did not know whether to tell her that the statue was not of Uncle Sam, and that in fact it was of no one in particular. I eventually decided to leave that responsibility to her mother. Whether she succeeded in convincing this young generation about who this soldier was, I do not know. Not that I blame the little girl, as there is so much resemblance between the Unknown Soldier and "Uncle Sam".

6.6 No-name heroes

Vilho Shigwedha, a historian based at UNAM's (University of Namibia) northern Campus in Oshakati has found in his research that, soldiers who died during the war of liberation were known to the local population. Villagers, who in many cases buried them, had personal knowledge of them, having housed them, fed them and stayed with them for some time. They either knew their relatives or the villages where they came from, or at the very least their combat names. If the villagers are contacted, they can provide useful information of where these people are buried and who they were. Shigwedha suggests that proper symbols and personal graves with their names on and the year they died (if remembered) can be provided (Shigwedha, *The Namibian*, 22.06.2002). Currently the Unknown Soldier treats everyone who died during the war as a no-name, died-in-action casualty of the war, even those who can be accounted for. The question can thus be asked: 'who should be

remembered as a hero with a name and who should be a no-name hero?' It happens that the Heroes' Acre is an elitist monument that promotes a particular set of political values – i.e. remaining loyal to a small leadership cadre and not 'wavering' or becoming critical of the actions of this leadership in any way.

Reading Namibia's political culture, this might seem too extreme a judgement, but reading between the lines, it looks like it is replicating the traditional power structures in which the rule of the *Omukwaniilwa*²⁴ was paramount, yet disputable. The parallel would be an alarming one in its implication as the transfer of power in the kingdoms of north would either follow the natural death of the ruler or it would come through the use of violence. Often we hear our current African leaders saying "In Africa we respect our leaders and do not question them".

I argue that what is happening in Namibia is what Hobsbawm has theorized, namely that public memory is selected by those in power, creating the space for exclusions and inclusions. (Hobsbawm; 1983). This could imply that the official Namibian heroes after all are not selected according to their merits as heroes, but only to reflect the personal preferences and knowledge of those few who seem to have the power to decide who is a hero and who is not. The next chapter will investigate where my informants' memories are located in the public memory.

Chapter seven

Revisiting the Liberation Struggle

This chapter explores where my informants place themselves in the national memory and how the roles they played during the war are reflected or silenced in the nationalist narrative.

When one drives through what used to be known as Owamboland, one hardly, if at all, sees any sign that 'Owamboland' was an operational zone for the war of liberation, although some reminders are supposed to show that, including crumbling military bases and the individual and mass burial sites of people who died during the war. An Oshakati-based historian, Vilho Shigwedha has argued strongly that the heavily fortified military bases where the SWATF and Koevoet were trained, from where plans to attack Cassinga were formulated, and from where other operations were coordinated and commanded, seem to be forgotten and neglected. Yet, he argues, they are important sites that should be seen as features of the landscape that could be used to commemorate the war. Most military bases have been destroyed to give space to new constructions, or renovated to be used for non-governmental and governmental projects. Shigwedha is of the opinion that these bases should instead be preserved as national landmarks to promote and consolidate the policy of forgiving, but not forgetting; otherwise in ten years time these bases will not be visible (Shigwedha, *The Namibian*, 22/03/ 2002).

My informants share Shigwedha's view. They feel that the north is neglected when it comes to monuments and war memorials and that the government has forgotten that the north was a war zone. "Nothing is put up as a symbol of recognition or acknowledgement that people have suffered and contributed towards the liberation, I particularly would like to see something at Ondangwa airport, there was a gun that finished a lot of people", said my father, referring to the watchtower at the airport.

My cousin, Nickson, thinks that the government should list the names of the people who died in each of the villages. He is confident that it would be easy because villagers and headmen know the people whose deaths were connected to the liberation struggle. He thought people would welcome such an initiative as they would definitely want their contribution to be acknowledged (Nickson Kangulohi, 18/12 2002). Swapo did begin a similar commemorative project, but they have only tried to record the names of people who died during the liberation struggle in exile, and only list the names of PLAN fighters, not civilians, who were killed inside Namibia (Their blood waters our freedom, 1996). Nickson's suggestion, thus, extends these efforts to include all the people who died inside the country.

People in my family have welcomed the independence of Namibia and they are overjoyed to see the changes that have happened and to be able to do what they were not allowed to do previously. They can now move about anywhere and anytime they want. They can go into any shop, human right abuses are no longer committed against people, the pension allowance is increased, they have free funeral allowances, and the list of the other 'fruits of independence' seems endless.

Most residents of Owambo, feel they owe freedom to Swapo and some people, especially the older generation do not know whether there is a difference between the government and Swapo hence the two (government and Swapo) are used interchangeably. "Swapo brought us independence, water and electricity" is a statement that I have frequently heard during my interviews.

However they are aware of the different treatment that those who remained in the country and those who were in exile are receiving from the government and feel their contribution towards independence is not counted and rewarded. Although they risked their lives by feeding, providing clothes, shelter and clothes to PLAN, the reward they feel they get is to be ignored by Swapo and the Swapo government, while those who went into exile are counted. My informants say that the ex-combatants just need to march from the north and by the time they get to Windhoek they will be offered jobs. People who went into exile are explicitly called to register for job opportunities and their names are kept on a list for vacancies when they appear.

One might indeed be tempted to think that in Namibia favouritism and Swapo nepotism have gone far. There has even been a public campaign by the Swapo Youth League (SYL) to ensure that top strategic positions in the government and parastatals should only be given to 'loyal' Swapo cadres. The SYL stated clearly that "The appointment of people not loyal to Swapo in top positions is the equivalent of putting an unelected party in charge of government affairs". SYL

assured the public that Swapo has trained many people in all professions and they were ready to provide a list of qualified and competent loyal Swapo cadres (The Namibian, 26/07/2002).

People who stayed in the country during the war are bitter because they do not receive the same appreciation and acknowledgement as those who were in exile. They feel they have fought just as much as those who were in exile and feel particularly hurt that some people only went into exile for a few months and when they came back they were recognized as freedom fighters. “What is the difference between them and us who stayed in the country? Is it the repatriation forms that they have?” said a bitter Anna (my sister). She continued that “We have also fought, we boycotted school and sacrificed our education, our lessons were often disrupted, is that not fighting?” Meme Martha feels the same, “It is so unfair that they only recognize those who were in exile, and the fact is “Not all of us could go into exile. Who was going to fight from inside? Who was going to give them food, shelter, clothes and information? Or do they think it was going to be the same if everyone inside the country supported the Boers? We prepared the country for them and we warmly welcomed them back.” My mother is no less bitter, she feels sorry for the young generation that sit at home being frustrated by the government. “The least they could do is to take two people who remained in the country and three who went into exile when giving jobs, they just do not do that,” “*Pamwe oshinima oshaagaluki*” (May be it is a thing for returnees). She was implying that job opportunities, priorities and preferences are supposed to be given to people who returned from exile.

It looks like the government and Swapo see the exiles and ex-combatants as a special group that should get rewards, while those who remained in the country should not. In Zimbabwe the issue of exiles getting special treatment was also discussed and some people were of the opinion that the problems faced by the ex-combatants were faced by everyone, so the time was right for all people to be treated equally. A member of parliament argued that the ex-combatants were not a special case and the problems that they faced were faced by everyone else in the country, as a result they were not going to be given special attention (Kriger, 1995:160-161).

Meme Kandjala is also bitter about a lot of things, but there is one that brings tears to her eyes when she thinks about it. She housed, fed and clothed PLAN from the 1970s until 1989. She vowed to die for the name of Swapo. She displayed immeasurable courage and determination to support Swapo against all odds. She and her family suffered, being beaten was the order of the day, and they even got used to being buried alive, tortured and subjected to electric shock. She personally used to dig holes in her Mahangu field to hide the soldiers' guns. Her husband used to issue Identity Cards as he used to work in the office that issued Identity Cards, thus he used to provide the PLAN soldiers with them to help them travel around freely. He was even jailed for that and she has scars from being beaten and cut that are even visible today.

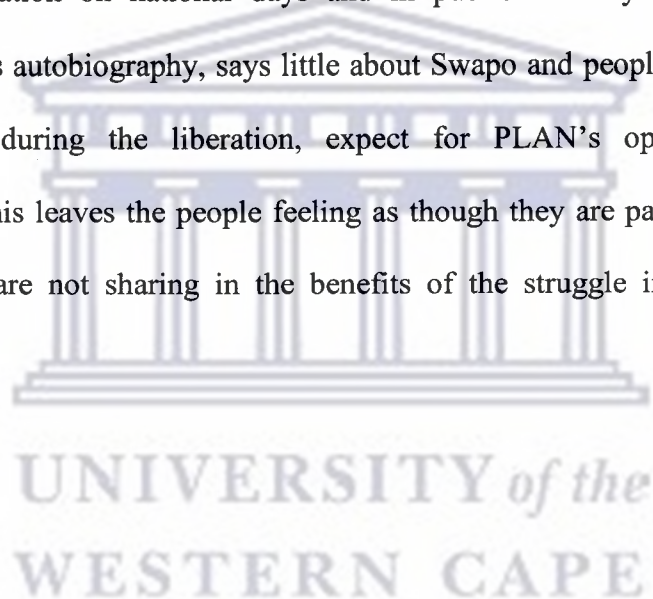
Today her heart is very sore because she is not given free electricity and she feels betrayed. She was promised it and she submitted her name as requested but still has no electricity. Other people in the village paid to be provided with it, but she feels she deserved to get it for free. “I risked too much not to get personal attention, I understand some people get money because of the work they did during the struggle, but I do not get that” she said bitterly.

In postcolonial Namibia, some of my relatives have negative sentiments towards political rituals. Cousin Maria does not attend the meetings and rallies held on national days because she does not see the significance. She still has unresolved issues. If she can get someone to explain why and by who her mother and uncle were killed, maybe she will understand and start attending, otherwise she says that those who are ‘liberated’ can go, but she is not yet liberated inside.

I assume Swapo and the Swapo government is not ready to admit that it was not only Swapo who played a role in the liberation struggle, and not only those who went into exile who helped in bringing about independence. I have observed that on national days, the national radio and NBC’s Oshiwambo station in particular, play only liberation songs, praise the heroes who liberated the country and invite top government officials to deliver speeches and to narrate the story of the struggle in order to remind people how costly the liberation war was. They invite survivors of Cassinga²⁵, Ongulumbashe²⁶ etc, to say how they survived. I have not heard an ordinary man from a certain village who, one Sunday returned from church just to find his house destroyed and to be welcomed by scattered and mutilated body parts

of his family members, recount his story on national radio. This shows that the narrative of the struggle is related and told by those in positions of political authority, rather than ordinary participants. Although during the war of liberation, incidents like the one I cited happened to civilians, after independence they are not given opportunities to narrate how costly and painfully the walk to freedom was.

My informants have shown their dissatisfaction with their lack of acknowledgement and representation on national days and in public memory. President Nujoma himself, in his autobiography, says little about Swapo and people's activities inside the country during the liberation, except for PLAN's operations (Nujoma, 2001:358). This leaves the people feeling as though they are paid the price for the victory they are not sharing in the benefits of the struggle in post-independent Namibia.



Chapter Eight

Conclusions

This thesis has examined the gap that exists between private narratives and public representations of the liberation struggle by looking in particular at the ways people remembered the past and how that shaped their lives today.

The war was violent and bitter and people still have vivid memories of it, even though most people do not talk about it, except very occasionally, when they talk about it in a fragmented way. The social environment is not normally conducive to the uninterrupted telling of a single story and in addition people do not make time to tell their stories in uninterrupted situations, unless it is in an interview setting such as I had with them. They choose to concentrate on the here and now, mainly the social problems that are facing them and their societies, such as AIDS, poverty or unemployment.

Some people are still emotional about the war, as is supported by the signs that they show, while some explicitly admit it. Although some have made peace with what happened, the emotions can still be felt. BenEzer has argued that if people have come to terms with trauma, traumatic experiences are usually narrated in ways that traumatic signals are expressed and can be detected (BenEzer, 1999:34-36), a point well illustrated in my own interview. Some people have vowed not to forgive and forget what has happened to them and their whole family during the war, as they are still bitter and are still looking for explanations of what happened.

Maybe due to their present identity such as their political affiliation, or the nationalist memory portrayed by the Swapo government, some people chose to be selective about what they told me and what they did not tell me. As Connerton has argued 'how societies remember' depends on how people are living in the present and consequently that telling or not telling a memory, is an active process that involves emotions, energy and willingness to reconstruct the past (Connerton (1989) Memory is not just reliving the past but it is an active molding force that changes, is tailored, negotiated, suppressed and continuously transformed by social experience, position and identity in society. Memory work is a conscious process, which is why remembering and forgetting are part and parcel of memory (Bickford-Smith et al, 2001:17, Kuhn, 2000:193).

I have concluded that besides all the incidents of the war, and the danger of tensions and conflicts that these might have posed, my family remained united and held on to each other. They still helped each other in times of need and I believe that the 'tensions' that I have noticed have nothing to do with what happened during the war. However it is always possible that there could be layers of tension that I do not know or have not been told about.

The findings of the research show that some of my informants, my parents in particular, believed and still believe in God, and hold that everything that happened was allowed by God, as nothing sneaks past his foreseen plans and preparations.

What did or did not happen was not because human beings failed, but because God did or did not permit it. This is referred to in the explanations of my aunt and uncle's death, and the fact that my mother survived

I have further concluded that there is a perception amongst the civilians who remained in the country that the government is one sided when it comes to the treatment of the exiles and those who stayed inside the country, believing that priority is given to exiles and Swapo supporters, when it comes to job offers and other basic necessities. Some people want personal attention in terms of material rewards, feeling that the exiles are treated as special but that they deserve the same treatment. I would wish to see, after 13 years of independence, all people receiving equal treatment as all people must have established foundations by now.

In contemporary Namibia, 'monumentalisation' and the commemoration of national days revolve around Swapo. Events and people that are acknowledged as having contributed towards the achievement of independence are highly selected, with the northern area, which was the war zone during the war, and the people who lived there not being remembered in terms of monuments or war memorials. As a result this has created tension between public representation and commemoration on the one hand and private recollection of the war on the other, as civilians feel that they fought during the war of liberation and have greatly contributed to the attainment of independence. They feel however that their contributions to the war and the achievement of independence are not valued, not appreciated and thus not rewarded.

It is concluded that the selection of national heroes and heroines is one sided. Non-Swapo members are excluded and women are not equally represented. Even among the exiles, the ordinary young PLAN soldiers are unfairly under-represented at Heroes' Acre. The 'fallen heroes and heroines of Namibia' are represented by the Unknown Soldier, yet even those who can be accounted for, are treated as nameless casualties of the war. As Werbner has theorized, memory is selected, negotiated, marginalized and tailored; this is the case in present day Namibia (Werbner, 1998: 2). The nationalist narrative has effectively erased private memories and reordered those memories so that local events are written into the larger narrative.



Notes

¹ SADF, South Africa Defence Force, the South African army forces that were in Namibia and whose mission was to conduct long-range reconnaissance operations and undertake or provide support to special missions and covert operations.

² Ovamboland was the colonial name for the area in the far north of Namibia. Now it is made out of the four 'O' regions as some call them, Oshikoto, Oshana, Omusati and Ohangwena. In this paper 'Ovamboland', 'Ovambo' and 'the north' refer to the same area, see note 5.

³ Oshiwambo, the language of Ovambo people, although each Ovambo ethnic group has its own dialect, the dialects are closely related to one another and are inter-intelligible.

⁴ For more details on the T.R.C see, Ross, 2001, Das et al 2001, Rassool et al 2000.

⁵ The North, a Namibian term to refer to the north-central part of the country that includes the four far north regions, that is Oshikoto, Oshana, Omusati and Ohangwena. It excludes the northwestern and northeastern regions.

⁶ A clan that belongs to my mother's relatives, *Aakwanekamba* (hyena Clan). Membership becomes hereditary through the mother, so it is matrilineal. It means my children will become *aakwanekamba*, but my brother's children will belong to their mother's clan.

⁷ Family usage in the thesis does not solely refer to the nuclear family unit, but at times it refers to all Kangulohi relatives and members of the clan. Both connotations are used interchangeably in the thesis.

⁸ A saying that is said during wedding ceremonies to show that people are happy and proud that the person is getting married.

⁹ Homeland, referred to partially self-governing areas in Namibia (and South Africa) designated for indigenous African people.

¹⁰ For details, see Steenkamp, W. "South Africa's border war 1966-1989", (1989) for an extensive, detailed and chronology of the activities of the military in Namibia.

¹¹ *Koevoet*, one of the military units in Namibia. Members were mainly identified because of the armoured Casspir vehicles they used.

¹² Boers, referred to all white people who were part and parcel of the colonial government. White soldiers were also referred to as Boers.

¹³ Puppets a name referring to people who were regarded as agents and collaborators of the South African authorities. They were regarded as the enemies of the struggle.

¹⁴ The names of people who supposedly reported others to the guerrillas have been changed to protect their anonymity.

¹⁵ SWATF, South West Africa Territorial Force, a force designed to be Namibia's fighting force and composed of units recruited from local ethnic groups to fight PLAN

¹⁶ Olukonda, a village next to my village Ontananga, where Kandjala is from. There was a SWATF camp to apparently protect king Kauluma, he was the king at that time and he is still reigning in the kingdom of Ondonga.

¹⁷ The times were difficult.

¹⁸ Omakakunya was a term used to refer to all soldiers fighting for South Africa. It did not matter whether the soldiers came from different units, like Koevoet, SADF, etc.

¹⁹ Ootori, meaning terrorists, referring to anyone fighting on the side of Swapo, especially the guerrillas.

²⁰ Namibia Review, Namibia's official monthly newsletter published under the authority of the Ministry of Foreign affairs, Information and Broadcasting.

²¹ Dr. Libertina Amathila is one of the members of Parliament who was awarded The Most Excellent Order of the Eagle. Her given portfolio is a page and half long and it includes that she was in exile and was the first black Namibian woman Medical Doctor under Swapo's nationhood Programme.

²² This is just a random comparison to make a point.

²³ The symbolic and first selected heroes that have tombstones at Heroes' Acre. By the time the monument was inaugurated, all were already dead. They are Kaptein Hendrik Witbooi, Jakob Morenga, Chief Kahimemua Nguvauva, Chief Samuel Maharero, Chief Nehale Iya Mpingana, Chief Mandume Ndemufeyo, Chief Iipumbu ya Tshilong, Chief Hosea Komombumbi Kutako, Kakurukaze Mungunda.

²⁴ *Omukwaniilwa*, a gender neutral term that refers to every member of the royal family of the Owambo kingdom.

²⁵ Cassinga, a Swapo refugee and military camp that was attacked by SADF in Southern Angola on 4 May 1978. A lot of Namibian exiles died. Now it is a national day in independent Namibia commemorating those who died and those who survived.

²⁶ Ongulumbashe, a village in Western Owambo where the first armed contact between Swapo and South African forces took place on 26 August 1966. 26 August is commemorated as Heroes Day to commemorate the beginning of the armed struggle.



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