



UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE
Department of Anthropology & Sociology

Olufuko revisited: Female initiation in contemporary Ombadja, Northern Namibia.



A photograph of a young Mbada woman who went through *olufuko* in August 2012 at Outapi

Presented in partial fulfilment of the degree of Master of Arts in Anthropology

Erastus T. Kautondokwa

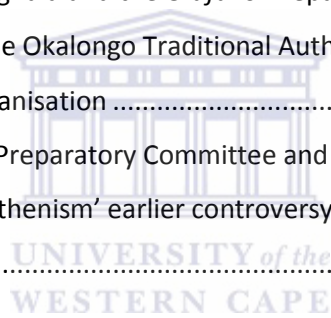
Supervisor: Professor Heike Becker

25 November 2014

Contents

Abstract.....	i
Declaration.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Chapter 1.....	1
1.1 Brief historical background of Owambo.....	1
1.2 Olufuko 2013: Ritual and its contestations in the public realm.....	2
1.3 Heritage politics and state-making.....	7
1.4 Performing nationhood: <i>olufuko</i> regional ceremony gets national status.....	14
1.5 Researching <i>olufuko</i> : reflections.....	17
1.6 Outlined structure and content of the research.....	19
Chapter 2 Calves becoming cows.....	22
2.1 Crossing the line from girlhood to womanhood.....	24
2.2 The rituals of <i>ekotolo/okukotolwa</i>	32
2.3 <i>Omanghako</i> ritual.....	33
2.4 Earlier ethnographic discussions of <i>olufuko</i>	34
2.4.1 The festival seasons.....	34
2.4.2 Food and beverages served to <i>ovafuko</i> during the ceremony.....	37
2.4.3 Involvement of a chief.....	39
2.5 Social significance of <i>olufuko</i>	40
2.6 Symbolic significance of <i>olufuko</i> rituals.....	43
2.7 Personal and kinship significance.....	46
2.8 Contemporary public performance of <i>olufuko</i>	48
2.9 Conclusion.....	48
Chapter 3 Heritage and identity discourse in post-colonial Namibia.....	51
3.1 <i>Olufuko</i> Festival at Outapi.....	52
3.1.1 The exhibition tents.....	57
3.1.2 The ritual ceremony.....	58
3.1.3 The official opening program.....	64
3.1.4 Presentation of speeches.....	66
3.2 <i>Olufuko</i> accorded a national status: analysis of the opening ceremony.....	69

3.2.1 Traditional Authorities and Culture groups	74
3.2.2 The festival actors	75
3.2.3 Musicians	76
3.3 Cultural heritage and identity discourse in post-colonial Namibia and the reconstruction of <i>olufuko</i>	77
3.4 <i>Olufuko</i> as heritage development for tourism	80
3.5 Religious Representations.....	85
3.6 Conclusion.....	86
Chapter 4 Contested notions of <i>olufuko</i> in post-colonial Namibia.....	87
4.1 A move forward	89
4.2 ELCIN's stance on <i>olufuko</i>	91
4.3 The Pastoral letter.....	91
4.4 <i>Olufuko</i> is un-Christian: voices of ELCIN church leaders.....	93
4.5 Conflict between Bishop Shanghala and the <i>Olufuko</i> Preparatory Committee	102
4.6 Haindongo disappointed by the Okalongo Traditional Authority.....	102
4.7 Heritage discourse and Christianisation	104
4.8 'It is my culture': the <i>Olufuko</i> Preparatory Committee and ritual leaders	106
4.9 'National identity' versus 'heathenism' earlier controversy over the <i>olufuko</i>	109
4.10 Conclusion.....	112
Chapter 5 Conclusion	115
Bibliography	120



Abstract

This thesis analyses post-independence Namibian Heritage and identity discourse and its contestations through the contemporary public performance of *olufuko*. *Olufuko* is the ritual of female initiation that marks the transition of young girls into adulthood. The initiation has been an important aspect of the Aawambo¹ women's identity that live in north-central Namibia and southern Angola as it is believed to legitimise womanhood.

I show how Owambo residents embrace regional or ethnic diversity through the performance of *olufuko* as a way of expressing their belonging. Throughout the thesis, I also reflect on the fact that through national attendance at, participation in, and performing of *olufuko* by state representatives and individuals, from all the regions of Namibia and beyond, people have expressed their belonging to a nation state. During *olufuko* ceremonies, both regional and national state representatives advocated the ideas of nation-building through 'unity in diversity', which emphasises the diversity of ethnic backgrounds while harmoniously coexisting. Following Becker (2004), and Becker and Lentz (2013), my central argument is that in the contemporary dispensation, national citizenship in Namibia appears to be defined largely through the emphasis on regional or ethnic diversity. In my discussion, I show how the state appropriated and mediated the *olufuko* ceremony as a national event, though it was performed at the regional level. I show how national identity was visibly represented by national symbols such as the national flag and anthem and how it was audibly live broadcasted by state television and radio during the event. This signified the event as national. The thesis further investigates how national heritage is discussed in post-colonial Namibia by looking into the controversies between the state and ELCIN religious leaders which emanated from the performance of *olufuko*. The thesis is based on ethnographic research, which was conducted between December 2012, during *olufuko* ceremonies that took place in villages in Ombadja, and August 2013, when it culminated in participant observation during the public *olufuko* ceremony at Outapi, Ombalantu.

¹ Owambo is an area which lies north of the Etosha Pan in Namibia. It is comprised of nine polities which extend from southern Angola down to northern Namibia. Aawambo are people who belong to the ethnic group of this area.

Declaration

I declare that '*Olufuko revisited: Female initiation in contemporary Ombadja, Northern Namibia*' is my own work and that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used, or quoted, have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

Erastus Kautondokwa

25 November 2014



Acknowledgements

This thesis came about as result of many people who dedicated their time and contributed their knowledge and experience to the final product. First of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. Heike Becker, who devoted her time and energy in guiding me throughout my entire study. She has been my pillar of strength, a mentor and an inspirational supporter from the beginning. I thank her for many illuminating discussions on technical support, her advice, encouragement, and teaching in academic writing, which were indeed valuable all the way. At the same time, I am thankful to the Carl-Schlettwein Foundation for the financial support that it has provided me during my study at the University of the Western Cape. I thank the Namibian Ministry of Youth, National Service Sport and Culture for providing me with this opportunity to study.

I am thankful to Dr Michael Akuupa, Dr Sakhumzi Mfecane, and Godfrey Maringira for dedicating their time in reading my academic works and their invaluable comments and advice. Very special thanks go to my family, especially my wife, Nehoa, for her moral support and advice, and for taking care of our children who at times felt unloved because of my academic commitment.

I feel indebted to a number of my interlocutors, especially *meme* Ndatoolomba Linea Paulus, Ndilinongwe Mbaka, and *tate*Ndeunyema Amadila for providing me with a favourable environment in their homes, and offering me opportunities to observe and collect data during *olufuko* ceremonies. This has enriched my knowledge of the ritual's background. I would also like to acknowledge the *olufuko* preparatory committee members, especially Nyeuvo Ekandjo for allowing me to access the *olufuko* homestead, and for her time participating in my interviews. Thanks especially to Dr Shekutaamba V.V. Nambala, Lukas Pendukeni Haindongo, Joel Fikeipo, and Dr Martin Ngodji for valuable discussions and their inputs on issues regarding the ELCIN church. Without them, I would not have succeeded. I am deeply grateful to the ritual leaders who provided me with information on their rituals' experiences: Elizabeth Kahungu, Hileni Didalelwa, and Mkwaanyoka Mwatukange. I feel thankful to Mathias Walaula, the senior headman of the Ombadja Traditional Authority, and *tatekulu* Timoteus Nakapala for giving me information on ritual performances in Okalongo. Without the support of many people who kept me company in guiding, supporting, and providing information, this thesis would not have become a reality.

Chapter 1

1.1 Brief historical background of Owambo

The geographic region of north-central Namibia is an area popularly referred to as Owambo, or Ovamboland as it appeared in a number of writings during the colonial period. After Namibian independence in 1990, north-central Namibia was divided into four administrative regions: the Omusati, Oshana, Ohangwena, and Oshikoto regions which are bordered on the west by the Kunene Region, formerly known as Kaokoland (Kaokoveld), and by the Kavango, now Kavango West Region,² on the east (Mendelsohn et al. 2002). The border with Angola lies to the north of Owambo. The demarcation of the border at the north of Namibia cut Owambo in two, with the northern third of the area lying in southern Angola. Aawambo people live in a semi-arid flood plain of the Cuvelai system. Their homes spread across a flat landscape dominated by *oshana* (shallow channels) which occasionally feed the Etosha Pan (a huge salt pan) to the south of Owambo with rainwater. The area has an average annual rainfall of 250–550 mm (Mendelsohn et al. 2002). *Oshana* periodically carry floodwater after heavy local rains or good rainfalls in highland areas some 300 km to the north in Angola (Mendelsohn et al. 2002:15).

The Aawambo people consist of a number of close ethnic groups which inhabit Ovamboland as well as the Southernmost Angolan province of Cunene.³ They comprise the Ndonga, Kwanyama, Kwambi, Ngandjera, Mbalantu, Mbadja, Kolonkadhi, Kwaluudhi, and Aaunda groups. In Angola, they are the Kwanyama, Kafima, Evale, and Mbadja. Aawambo lived in states which were recognised as powerful (Murdock 1959 cited in Davies 1987:13). Some political governance such as Oukwanyama and Ondonga in Owambo were in the past centralised under an *ohamba/omukwaniilwa* (king) who controlled the entire social system with the assistance of *omalenga* (singular: *elenga*) headmen (Loytty 2012:34) appointed by him. The *ohamba/omukwaniilwa* had to be selected from the royal clan, following the matrilineal lineage. The mother of a king held a position of great importance, and the king was to obey his mother (Loeb 1948 cited in Davies 1987). Other polities were headed by an *elenga enene* (senior headman). A headman led the *oshikandjo* (district) which was further

²The Kavango region was recently (2013) divided in two: Kavango West and Kavango East. At independence, it was only one region.

³en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ovambo_people

divided in *omikunda* (wards; singular: *omukunda*) comprised of several homesteads, each with a *mwene weumbo* (head of the home) (ibid.)

Religious belief was and is still part of everyday life in north-central Namibia. Large proportion, about 90%, of Namibians are Christians (Becker 2004, Loytty 2012). Many *Aawambo* belong to one of three mainline churches: the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Anglican Church of Southern Africa (Loytty 2012:32). This follows Christian missionary work in the Owambo area starting in 1870 (Becker 2004:43; Ndeutapo 2005:21; Loytty 2012).

The economic system of pre-colonial north-central Namibia, or Owambo, was based on agriculture, principally cultivation and cattle raising (Eirola 1992 cited in Loytty 2012:33). Families had plots of land for cultivation. *Aawambo* grow mainly *omahangu* (millets), *oilyavala* (sorghum), *omakunde* (beans), *omanyangwa* (pumpkins), and *omakanuwa* (water melons). *Mahangu* was their staple food which they cooked into thick porridge. *Aawambo* also collected fruits such as *eembe* (berries), *eengongo* (marula), *eenyandi* (jackal berries) and *eendunga* (palm fruit). Agricultural farming greatly depended on the rainy season which lasts for about four to five months from December to April (Mendelsohn 2002; Davies 1987). Cattle and goats formed the bulk of the family *eliko* (fortune). They also kept sheep, pigs, and chickens.

Men were usually responsible for *okulifa*, looking after cattle and goats, taking them to find grazing and collecting food for the family. Women were traditionally responsible for cultivating the land, cooking, and raising children. The women were also involved in intricate artwork and crafting such as dressmaking, pottery, basketry, and wood carving.⁴

1.2 Olufuko 2012: Ritual and its contestations in the public realm

In July 2012, while I was browsing through online newspapers to read the news about Namibia, I opened the website of *The Namibian*, a local and widely read daily newspaper in Namibia. As I started scanning through, I found one topic that struck my attention; it read ‘Church, tradition clash in Omusati’.⁵ I was keen to find out more about the topic. When I opened the content of the topic, the first sentence read ‘the traditional and political leadership

⁴en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Ovambo_people

⁵www.thenamibian.com.na accessed on 02/08/2012

in the Omusati region and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN)⁶ are heading for a collision course following the church's decision to denounce the revival of an old traditional practice' (*The Namibian*, 27 July 2012). The topic reminded me of the sour relationship that persisted for a long time between the two institutions. The longstanding contestations on female initiation had still not reached a settlement since arising during the colonial period with the arrival of the missionaries.⁷

The newspaper article surfaced as a result of the contestation over the organised *olufuko* festival which was planned by the Outapi Town Council,⁸ Omusati Regional Council⁹ and the Ombalantu Traditional Authority¹⁰ to take place toward the end of August 2012 and continue to be held annually thereafter. The news of the *olufuko* festival was received with mixed scepticism by some members of the ELCIN leadership. As a result, they disapproved the ceremony where the traditional rituals are to be performed. During ELCIN's Annual General Meeting (AGM) held from 16 to 19 July 2012, ELCIN issued a stern pastoral letter, warning its members not to participate in the planned *olufuko* festival. According to the newspaper, the ELCIN pastoral letter states that the leaders 'view it (*olufuko*) as a route through which the youth will be encouraged to be promiscuous and that this might lead to an increase in the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.'¹¹ The call was directed to the ELCIN congregations in both the eastern and western dioceses.

While the religious leaders were condemning the idea of the *olufuko* rituals which were then expected to take place, the Omusati Regional Council, together with the Outapi Town Council and Traditional Authority leadership of Ombalantu and Ombadja were in the process of making the festival a reality. The former president, Sam Nujoma, who is known to many

⁶The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN) is a Lutheran denomination based in Namibia. It grew out of the work which the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission began in 1870 among the Owambo and Kavango people, in the north of what became German South West Africa in 1884. It was formerly known as the Evangelical Lutheran Owambo-Kavango Church. The name was changed to ELCIN in 1984. ELCIN played a significant role in the opposition to Apartheid in Namibia.

⁷In some parts of Owambo, *olufuko* is known as *efundula* (in Oukwanyama) or *ohango* (in Ondonga). It would be too complex for this thesis to differentiate; I will thus refer to all these rituals as *olufuko* and at times use these terms interchangeably depending on the area referred to or the source literature.

⁸The Outapi Town Council is an elected form of government responsible for running municipal services in Outapi Town.

⁹ Omusati Regional Council is a regional governing body responsible for the development of the region's economic, cultural, health, educational, social, and sport related issues in the Omusati region.

¹⁰The Traditional Authority is responsible for upholding, promoting, protecting, and preserving culture, language and traditional values, as well as running customary courts and land allocation in villages (Traditional Authority Act of 2000).

¹¹www.thenamibian.com.na accessed on 02 August 2012

Namibians (as the first president of an independent Namibia), and the Governor of Omusati Region¹² (the hosting region) Sophia Shaningwa, were anticipated to be the patrons of the *olufuko* festival. According to the newspaper reports, the Governor, an official appointed state representative of Omusati Region, declared that the festival was organised to celebrate ‘our culture’ (*The Namibian*, 27 July 2012). I was interested to find out about the organisers, who, to my mind, were likely to be Christians, baptised within a Christian denomination as I was, and to enquire how they responded to the pastoral letter. Speaking from her position as a Christian, the Governor pointed out that ‘being a Christian does not mean I should forget my culture’ (ibid.) Again, noting the anticipated festival, the then Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Outapi Town Council, the late Oswin Namakalu, pointed out that the festival was aimed at attracting tourists to the town. When I read the newspaper, I was filled with emotion. On the one hand, I was strongly inspired to attend the event as an observer; on the other hand, I was also a Christian who was baptised in ELCIN church, to whom, of course, the pastoral letter was also addressed. On the other hand, I thought of the governor’s point of embracing ‘our culture’ and the CEO’s point of ‘attracting tourists’. Thus, I was confused on what the real objective of the *olufuko* festival was. Was it a festival meant to celebrate ‘our culture’, or was it intended for ‘attracting tourists’, and why would the ELCIN condemn the festival? *Olufuko* was the area of study I was interested to investigate when I applied to study at the University of the Western Cape in August 2011. I would have very much liked to attend the festival; however, due to time constraints and academic commitments, it was not possible for me to travel to Namibia during the inaugural festival in August 2012.

As the weeks passed, I continued browsing internet news sites for more on this topic. I came across a headline reading: ‘Innocent girls offered to unscrupulous men’. As I flicked through its content, I encountered the observation that ‘*olufuko* has a link to polygamy practice as many girls who go through that have to offer themselves to men who want a romantic relationship with them.’¹³ This seemed a strong objection, and the author of the article also questioned the benefit of the rituals to the current cultural situation. I asked myself, ‘What will be happening at this ceremony? Is it the same like any other *olufuko* ceremony that I have attended previously in a village environment?’ The author alleged that the governor was culturally biased in promoting an ‘unhealthy lifestyle’ while she was supposed to be

¹² Omusati region is one of the 14 regions of Namibia with Outapi as its main town.

¹³ www.economist.com.na accessed on 19 February 2013

impartially representing the Head of State in the region.¹⁴ This reflection shows that to some Owambo local people, *olufuko* appeared to be superficially unclean – as it was perceived by earlier missionaries while other people, including the colonial government (Becker 2004, Hayes 2003), perceived it as a normal public celebration of young girls coming of age. As time went by, a range of themes appeared in the newspapers headlines: ‘Condemnation of *olufuko* challenged’; ‘Churchman sneaks into *olufuko* festival premises’; ‘Government censured for *olufuko* practice’; ‘Government endorses *olufuko*’; ‘*Olufuko* is exclusively for ‘pagans’’; and many more. These were the diverse views of the Namibian people taking part in the discourse concerning their heritage. They were challenging the notion of these cultural practices and taking their positions on the seemingly sensitive topic of rituals. The central squabble was the practice of *olufuko* rituals, which attracted much attention from the public and presented the diverse ideologies from different sections of Namibian society on the practices of their identity.

Some of the people’s expressions in the newspapers indicated relatively less acceptance of the traditional performances while others were in favour. Despite the criticism from some individual members of the public, the ELCIN, and human rights organisations, such as NamRight, about hosting *olufuko* in Outapi, the organisers sent invitations to different Traditional Authorities¹⁵ in Owambo to participate in the event. The Traditional Authorities responded by sending their representatives and the festival was hosted as planned. The event was again held for the second time during 24–30 August 2013, at the same venue. During the 2013 session, I, my wife, and our son, Tulino, were eye witnesses to the event. When we attended, I came to realise that while the entire event was styled as *olufuko*, the festival had a dual purpose. On the one hand, it was a coming together as a public spectacle, while at the same time it hosted the ritual event that marks the start of a young girl’s adult life and welcomes these young girls into womanhood.

The preceding vignette reveals the nature of disputes and the struggle that seems to exist between some members of the ELCIN community leaders and the representatives of the state (Outapi Town Council, Omusati Regional Council, and Traditional Authorities). Part of the society view *olufuko* as an old tradition that needs to give way to modern development and these people regard *olufuko* as an affront to their Christian morality. The other section views

¹⁴ www.economist.com.na accessed on 19 February 2013

¹⁵ This is the body comprised of headmen, chiefs, in some areas kings and or queen that deal with traditional matters in the traditional polities in Namibia.

it as part of Namibian tradition and a way of reclaiming, reaffirming, and declaring their identity.

The contestations surrounding *olufuko* have a long history in northern Namibia. They started as early as the advent of missionaries in Namibia. *Olufuko* was viewed as un-Christian, uncivilised, and inhuman by missionaries, especially the Finnish missionaries, who were less ready to allow Owambo Christians to retain their old customs (Miettinen 2005:125). As a result, Owambo customs such as *olufuko* and the wedding ox (an ox that was given to the bride's homestead as thanks-giving) were considered by missionaries to be connected with 'heathenism' and were declared 'un-Christian' and therefore to be abandoned (ibid.) As Miettinen (2005) points out, Christians' participation in *olufuko* (*ohango* in Oshindonga) was strictly forbidden and doing so was a grave offence' (Miettinen 2005:314). The contemporary situation appears to be not much different from that of the old missionaries' condemning of *olufuko* as 'heathenism' and the confrontation that caused.

Consider my vignette above; it appears that some members of the population, together with some local Christian clerics, do not approve *olufuko*, as it was in the past perceived to have sexually enticing aspects, as earlier ethnographers and missionaries pointed out (Tonjes 1911; Loeb 1962; Tuupainen 1970). However, the lack of sufficient evidence on the argument appears to have annulled the rationality of the dispute. On the other hand, some people, such as King Mandume¹⁶ of Oukwanyama, and the colonial administrator Carl Cocky Hahn, a native commissioner of Owamboland, supported *efundula* (Becker 2004, Hayes 2003). In post-colonial Namibia, the same idea is being propagated by the post-colonial state, with some people feeling that their identity should be built on a strong foundation of 'our culture' as the late Oswin Namakalu stated, arguing that *olufuko* is one of the building blocks of this foundation. Maria-Maria, an employee of the state broadcaster, the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC), has pointed out the role of *olufuko* in preventing sexual activities before, during, and even after the ceremony, claiming that it is part of moral education.¹⁷ The former president, Sam Nujoma, emphasised *olufuko* and education as the first priority before the young girls got married.¹⁸ Thus, the entire society was involved in a diverse cultural discourse.

¹⁶ Mandume yaNdemufayo was the last king of Oukwanyama. He died in 1917.

¹⁷ Interview with Petrus Maria Maria Amutenya at NBC radio station, Windhoek, 2 February 2013.

¹⁸ Address by Sam Nujoma, the former president of the Republic of Namibia and patron of the Olufuko cultural festival on the occasion of the second celebration, 27 August 2013.

1.3 Heritage politics and state-making

The discourse of culture as a constructive mediator for building an imagined community of the Namibian nation state emerged through independence. Nationalists during and after the anti-colonial struggle believed that ‘culture’ was used to divide the people (Becker, 2004; 2011; Akuupa 2011). This perception appeared to have roots based on the Namibian historical periods as the system of apartheid administration was premised on the idea of cultural differences as the bases for social and political discrimination. The juxtaposing of the events of Christianisation entangled with ‘indirect rule’ (Hayes 2003) and ‘apartheid vision’ (Becker 2011) which seemingly linked to colonialism in Namibia appeared to have discouraged the people’s perception and practices regarding culture shortly after independence. The first one was from the inception of colonial occupation of Namibia by South Africa in 1915, which sought to institute the system of ‘indirect rule’ which was administered through the ‘embodiment of African power: chiefs and headmen’ as Becker (2004) argued. Becker pointed out that the colonial administration backed the Owambo political authority in their conflict with the Christian missions.

The native commissioner, C.H.L Hahn, promoted *efundula* (*olufuko*) during the colonial period between the two World Wars as a ‘healthy tribal institution’, which Hayes (2003) argues arose from the wider development of the argument concerning ‘indirect control’ whereby indigenous authority was enjoined by colonial officials who were intervening in the administration through the existing structures of African authority (Becker 2004; Hayes 2003). Hahn was against rapid Christianisation, the adoption of western clothing, and the abolition of customary practices (Hayes 2003). In his support of *efundula* in the interests of indirect rule, as Hayes points out, the native commissioner argued that in Ondonga the Lutheran Finnish Missions had ‘practically destroyed the authority of [the] chiefs and headmen so much so that little tribal discipline was left’ (cited in Becker 2004:43). Hayes argues that ‘if we wish to identify the building blocks upon which ‘indirect rule’ was erected in northern Namibia in the 1930s, and acknowledge the borrowing from African historical and cultural precedent in which colonialism engaged, then we need to pay attention to this moment of strange symmetry between Mandume and Hahn and the gender and social frameworks they attempted to apply’ (Hayes 2003). Hahn’s support was influenced by interest in local hierarchies of old traditional rule through which the colonial administration was maintained control.

Secondly, the apartheid policy has largely impacted the perception of culture in Namibia. The implementation of the South African government-appointed Odendaal commission's recommendations in the 1960s resulted in the carving out of ethnically based homelands, in Namibia as well as in South Africa, each complete with its own administration, flag, parliamentary mace, and was an explicit attempt at politicising ethnic differences into nationhood (Becker 2011:536). 'Culture' was thus deemed as the key category to put people in different 'boxes', to emphasise both the divisions and the notion that Africans were somehow different from the colonisers because they supposedly belonged to 'tribes'. Thus the idea of cultural differences was viewed as a categorical distinction that made discrimination valid, as Garuba and Raditlhalo (2008) point out. Culture was thus assumed as the tools for political discrimination. This was illuminated by a commentator in the newspaper who wrote that 'in the past, culture was misused and left the impression that talking about culture means talking about an unvaluable thing aimed at separating people' (Denis Nandi, quoted in Becker 2011:537 and Fairweather 2001:137). This reflects that people still feel that culture as a concept had been used by the apartheid regime to divide the people of Namibia and therefore it should be avoided in the present day.

Heike Becker, a social anthropologist who studied heritage and identity in Namibia, argues that in the first years of its independence, the post-colonial Namibian state was still wary of the discourse of 'culture' (Becker 2011). Like Nandi, Becker points out that most SWAPO (South West Africa People's Organisation) politicians, as well as a small circle of intellectuals, shunned the notion of culture representing the distinctive ways of life of different people (Becker 2011:536). More recently, another anthropologist, Wendy Haugh (2014:12), through her analysis of how nationalism manifested through Catholic youth songs in Ombalantu, northern Namibia, has argued that, in the aftermath of apartheid, the government has consciously downplayed the significance of ethnicity. Thus, it appears that at independence, the emphasis on culture and regional differences as an expression of national identity was not looked at with great concern. Much emphasis shifted to the common descent of the liberation struggle, as Becker (2004) argued; the pre-independence nationalist's emphasis was that the 'liberation struggle was the birthplace for a new nation' (Becker 2011:536), thus favouring authoritarian, nation-building policy.

However, a few years into independence, discourses of nationalism appeared to have shifted as Becker (2011) argues in her analysis, 'Commemorating of heroes in Windhoek and

Eenhana: memory, culture and nationalism in Namibia 1990–2010’. She argued that cultural politics of nationhood have been reinvented in post-colonial Namibia where national identity is no longer to be defined primarily through the common history of the liberation struggle but through the tolerant accommodation of cultural differences dubbed ‘Unity in Diversity’ (Becker 2011:538; Becker and Lentz 2013:7). Becker further claims that more recent narratives have begun to recognise the heterogeneous experience (Becker 2011). The old idea of ‘One Namibia One Nation’ as an embodiment of SWAPO’s nationalist discourse in the early 1970s (Akuupa and Kornes 2013:38, cited from Katjavivi 1989:74–75) appears to have been unfeasible (Akuupa and Kornes 2013:41). The concept appears to have been born of the idea ‘to die a tribe and to be born a nation’ as Peter Katjavivi, then SWAPO secretary for Information and Publicity, phrased it, referring to *To Be Born a Nation: The Liberation Struggle for Namibia*, a Namibian history book published by SWAPO in 1981 (Becker 2011:536). Gradually, the ‘One Namibia, One Nation’ concept shifted to the concept of ‘Unity in Diversity’ (Akuupa 2011; Becker 2011; Becker and Lentz 2013) which was introduced with the expressed objective of nation-building through embracing diverse cultural backgrounds. The idea appears to have moved away from ‘the 1990s recital of a triumphalist, militaristic nationalist master narratives that aimed at homogenising the multi-faceted agencies of Namibians during the liberation war’ (Becker and Lentz 2013:7). Becker and Lentz further pointed out that the ‘former narratives and aesthetics have not gone away but rather been altered through the addition of new layers’ (ibid.)

Shortly after independence, there was a diversity of views and debate amongst the proponents of nationalism on how to address issues of nation-building and how the nation should be viewed in post-colonial Namibia (Becker 2011:537; Haugh 2014:12). Becker pointed out that during the seminar on ‘Ethnicity, Nation Building and Democracy’ that was organised by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in 1993; SWAPO politicians were divided as to how to address these unexpected developments (2011:357). Some Nationalists, as will be shown in the following paragraph, were holding out, supporting the view of ‘One Namibia, One Nation’. This idea was characterised with the need to build non-ethnic national culture that overcomes colonial ethnic divisions (Akuupa and Kornes 2013:38).

Becker points out that Mose Tjitendero, the first speaker of the National Assembly, argued on the basis of the Namibian constitution that the constitution had been drawn up to protect the rights of the country’s citizens as free-flowing individuals (Tjitendero 1993:58–9 cited in

Becker 2011:537). Tjitendero emphasises that the supreme law was designed to achieve a national programme, not in the interests of the tribes, regions, or provinces, but a national programme (ibid.) On the other hand, some SWAPO politicians, such as Hage Geingob, the Namibian Prime Minister, have different views, arguing that ‘before we set about discussing issues of ethnicity, nation building, and democracy, we first of all need to recognise certain facts, namely that Namibia is a multicultural, multi-ethnic nation’ (Becker 2011:537 cited in Geingob 1993:13). Geingob’s statement resonates with the idea of ‘Unity in Diversity’, acknowledging that Namibia is a multicultural society. He also sets out this idea when he metaphorically exemplifies it in his thesis (Geingob 2004), ‘State Formation in Namibia: Promoting Democracy and Good Governance’, where he compares nation-building in Namibia with the building of a house – ‘The Namibian House’ (Geingob 2004:143 cited in Akuupa 2011; Akuupa and Kornes 2013), with ethnic groups, such as the Damara, Herero, Owambo etc., as the building blocks of a house painted with national colours which diminish ethnic differences. The emphasis is on having diverse ethnicities, all ‘harmoniously coexisting’ (Becker 2011: 538). Akuupa and Kornes (2013) argue that the plaster or the painting appears to have fallen off the wall rather quickly after independence (Akuupa and Kornes 2013) as a number of ethnic groups seek to have their distinctive cultural differences recognised. Thus, the understanding of culture (Becker 2011:537) as a ‘self-conscious marker of identity’ (Boonzaier and Spiegel 2008) found its space among the Namibians.

After independence, therefore, things had changed and a national debate broke out over the role of ethnicity within the Namibian nation (Haugh 2014:12). While the dominant view supported the idea of ‘One Namibia, One nation’, other nationalists emphasised the idea of ‘Unity in Diversity’. Wendy Haugh (2014:7) argues that ‘nationalists in post-independence Namibia have worked to unify the state and to develop and implement policies which aim to give all citizens, not just members of particular racial or ethnic groups the opportunity to prosper.’ Haugh points out that ‘what was assumed by some to be national may in fact be recognised by others as ethnically specific and therefore inclusive to some degree’ (2014:12). Haugh further states that ‘members of the dominant ethnic group may not recognise the influence of their own sociocultural background and historical experiences on their vision of the nation while members of the minority ethnic groups may feel that this dominant vision does not speak to their experiences despite its inclusive languages’ (ibid.) She further states that ‘some Namibians feel that this nationalisation since independence has in effect been ‘Ovamboisation’ and a nationwide debate has broken out over the role of ethnicity within the

Namibian nation' (ibid.) These ideas of 'Unity in Diversity' seemingly have significantly influenced some people's perception that culture turned into an appreciative term that brings them together as a nation state through their diverse cultures. Thus, within the framework of 'Unity in Diversity', post-colonial nationalist leaders and thinkers perceive culture as 'the shared beliefs and bonds that mark the identity of a nation' and as 'a tool for popular mobilisation' (Garuba and Raditlhalo 2008:41). Although all nationalists felt the need to create a unified nation, there were different views on how and what a nation should look like. While the dominant group felt that there was a fair national representation, other, smaller ethnic groups felt that they were undermined. This seems to have created societal splits instead of the envisioned nation-building.

Similar to South Africa, where some groups, such as Afrikaans-speakers, certain coloured South Africans, and South African Indians, seek to establish an identity for themselves (Boonzaier and Spiegel 2008:201), 'cultural-ethnic identity' (Boonzaier and Spiegel 2008:201) has come to loom large in Namibia as well. Other examples in South Africa are the #Xhmani San land right claims in the Kalahari, and the appeal for adhering and obeying tradition – the case of Mrs Tumane of the Mononono and Chief Nyalala Pilane of the Bgakgatla-Ba-Kgafela (Robins 2005; Comaroff and Comaroff 2008). In South Africa, ethnic identity also manifests itself through performance of different heritage celebrations such as Cape Minstrel and the 'Coons' (Oliphant 2013), and through the celebration of national days (Marschall 2013) where people celebrate national diversity. In Namibia, the celebration of diverse cultures was indicated through what were perceived to be traditional culture groups at schools and in villages (Fairweather 2006), and the hosting of national as well as regional cultural festivals which are largely based on ethnicity (Akuupa 2011). Becker (2011) argues that in 1996, disputes over the values that pull the nation and local community together began to change. The notion of culture and heritage which had previously been absent from the national discourse (Becker 2011:538) was again brought to the fore. While residents of the former war zone had previously been calling for the abolition of what they called harmful tradition (ibid.), from the mid-1990s onwards the discourse on cultural heritage and tradition became widespread. Eventually, the discussions on cultural value found a place in the local media such as on NBC national television, NBC radio, and in newspapers, such as *The Namibian* and *New Era*, where cultural articles were published.¹⁹ With specific reference to

¹⁹'Picturing the Past' A newspaper column which published historical and cultural articles between 2000–2001 in *The Namibian*.

olufuko, Becker (2004) indicated how the contemporary ceremony of *efundula* was screened in a documentary on the national TV channel (Becker 2004:36) wherein Carstens (ibid.) recorded the preparation of the ceremony, the performances of the dances, songs, and specific ritual practices, and carried out interviews with the ritual leader. In addition to the TV programme, announcements were also aired on the (NBC) oshiWambo radio that *omalufuko* were to take place in different areas of Oukwanyama (ibid.) The influence on culture was so strong that even those who were earlier calling for the ‘eradication of ethnic culture now took a new direction of embracing the notion of ‘our culture’ with the blame shifted to Christianity’ (ibid.) As Becker (2011:538) points out, the concern over ‘cultural loss’ took the centre stage among the local elites such as Owambo clerics, teachers, business people, and academics. My own observations during fieldwork reveal that, in recent years, *Aawambo* started practicing traditional rituals such as ‘*oshipe*’ (new harvest) at their church congregations and perform traditional dances in which *omalufuko* (prular) are also performed as an expression of identity.

As Comaroff and Comaroff (2005) point out, in many former colonies, cultural attachments are often taken, marked, and legally protected as intellectual property. Comaroff and Comaroff suggest the concept of ‘*policultural*’ (in which the prefix ‘*poli*’ indicates the plurality and politicisation of culture). They state that in former colonies, in which ethnic assertion plays on the simultaneity of primordial connectedness, natural right, and corporate interest, the nationstate is less multicultural than it is *policultural*. Comaroff and Comaroff (2005:44) point out that several ethnic groups have been formally incorporated as limited companies; that a large number of others have established themselves as businesses to market their heritage, their landscapes, their knowledge, and their religious practices.

These politics of differences are not new for most post-colonial states. Comaroff and Comaroff (1990) argue that heterogeneity has been there from the first; however, the imagined national community has to be built anyway. They further point out that the notion of polities based on cultural homogeneity and a sense of horizontal fraternity is rapidly giving way to imagined communities of difference and of multiculturalism. ‘Born of long histories of colonisation, these polities typically entered the new world order with legacies of ethnic diversity invented or exacerbated in the cause of imperial governance.’ (Comaroff and Comaroff 2005:42). The Comaroffs further state that the homogeneity has been further attenuated by the movement across the planet of ever more people in search of work opportunities to trade, the transnational mass-mediation of sign, style, and information, the

rise of an electronic commons, the growing hegemony of the markets and the distillation of culture into intellectual property (2005:44). Their notion is, however, interrelated with Appadurai's (1990) five dimensions of global cultural flow which he termed: ethnoscape, mediascape, technoscapes, finanscapes, and ideascapes, suggesting that there is disjuncture in the fluidity of shifting communities, mass-media, technology, finance, and ideas in the global world. These forces, from various metropolises which are brought into the society, tend to become indigenised in one way or another (Appadurai 1990).

Cultural-ethnic concerns have therefore taken center-stage in the analysis of the construction of identities, and are used as shorthand for justifying many of the people's claims concerning the political struggle, social activism, economic competition, and religious affiliation that cultural groupings of people would make for popular mobilisation of people, access to resources, and equality (Boonzaier and Spiegel 2008:199, Garuba and Radithlalo 2008:37). Thus culture and local ethnicity became the basis for making claims, contestations, and has become an instrument of political resistance. Examples of the potential danger of such a development are the ethnic differences between the Kazanga festival of the Nkoya and the Kuomboka ceremony of the Lozi people in Zambia (van Binsbergen 1994), and the horror in Yugoslavia in the 1990s, and the contemporaneous conflict in Rwanda (Eriksen 1993) that were all ethnically related. In this context, the performance of ethnically specific 'culture' became divisive. Culture and ethnicity have thus become 'ambiguous categories invoked in both everyday speech and intellectual analyses' (Garuba and Radithlalo 2008).

Boonzaier and Spiegel (2008:196) claim that the contestation over culture and tradition is itself part of a modern, global reality as a means of constructing identities and that variety of traditions were neither very old, nor very true to any originals or authentic past but always about interpretation and reconstructions (2008:197). Their argument is that if tradition is invented, one has also to realise that it is a political resource and therefore inevitably the site of contestation by competing interest groups. While culture and tradition promote a sense of community tradition, at the same time they may heighten division and difference (Boonzaier and Spiegel 2008:202) as they draw boundaries vis-à-vis others, who thereby become outsiders (Eriksen 1993:7). It is for this reason that the study is looking into these contestations as pursued by the ELCIN church against the state over what came to be known as the 'revival' of *olufuko*.

The above theories of cultural politics and state-making are interesting to me and applicable to the analysis of my study on how cultural heritage that promotes nationhood has been discourses, particularly in the sense that the *olufuko* festival as an ethnic ritual practice was appropriated by the state as a tool for nation-building and state-making. Although diverse ethnicities or regional differences are used to build the nation state, what could be seen is not an ethnic state, but rather the Namibian nation state. Regional differences or cultural diversity appear not to be a matter of concern but a pillar on which a nation state is built, and whereby national citizenship could be identified and legitimised. However, while some people perceived culture and ethnicity as building blocks of a nation state, they can also evoke some forms of resistance and provoke intense emotions and divisions because of their fundamental ambiguity as constructs of human imagination or ideas in people's minds (Sharp 1988).

Becker and Lentz (2013) analysed the politics and aesthetics of national day commemorations. In their analysis of the politics and aesthetics of these, they argued that 'ethnic parades and other immigrant festivals could be both divisive and integrative with regard to national unity, serving as forums where claims were made, grievances voiced, social injustice and inequalities or mistreatments exposed' (Becker and Lentz 2013:4). Becker and Lentz claim that national days do not necessarily reinforce national unity and integration, but can also intensify debates and conflicts about what vision of the nation and which future course, in respect of the right of a minority, should prevail (ibid.) The *olufuko* rituals which recently sparked the seemingly strong debate amongst Namibians could also be viewed through the same frame. Likemindedly, Boonzaier and Spiegel's notion of culture and tradition provides insightful understanding of how the politics of belonging appears to be defined through tradition and how contestations over tradition occur in spaces where values, relationships, and practices can be negotiated. It also provides insight into how culture and tradition are used as a political tool to make political claims, and creates ethnic identities which either further strengthen the idea of state-making or create imagined ethnicities and regional differences.

1.4 Performing nationhood: *olufuko* regional ceremony gets national status

Taking their cue from Kelly Askew's (2002) argument, Becker and Lentz (2013) propose that nations are not only institutional and subjective configurations (as nation states) but also palpable, performative processes. In analysing the politics and aesthetics of commemorations of national days in Southern Africa, Becker and Lentz assert that the performance of the

national celebrations and commemorations occupies a central place in the national consciousness. Thus the implementation of the performance is a key category in research on the role of national days in nation-building and state-making. They draw suggestions for their analysis of the political aesthetics of national days, claiming that ‘performance’ is always a process generated in the moment of production that allows people to believe that the national imagining is real. It is a process engaging both ‘performers’ and ‘audience’, and that performance does not mirror social reality or merely reflect upon it, but actively creates it (Becker and Lentz 2013:5).

Following Becker and Lentz’s argument, I introduce performance in my study of the discourse of contemporary Namibian heritage and identity as the *olufuko* ceremony was carried out within the performance of the public regional *olufuko* festival and not in the villages as it habitually happens. Through the ‘*Olufuko* festival’, the state is involved in its performative process of creating nationhood and fostering its idea of state-formation through funding, organising and attendance by high state officials during this ethnic regional *olufuko* ceremony. The state representatives viewed the festival as an opportunity for creating and ‘promoting the symbolic values that foster a sense of identification with the nation state’ (Marschall 2013:11) through the national flag, national anthem, speeches, traditional dances, music, and the exhibition of traditional goods which was mediated by state television and radio broadcast as well as newspaper journalists during the festival. While the state fosters its ideas of nationhood, the *olufuko* rituals were acted out in reality as the declaration of young girls’ transition into adulthood; thus the performance of the rituals’ ceremony ‘actively creates social reality’ (Becker and Lentz 2013), which is embedded in the ritual actor’s tradition. At the same time, attendants express their infatuation with belonging to the nation state through national symbols, state protocols, traditional dances, and local or regional foods unique to the villages. ‘[T]hrough that it represents national culture and identity’ as Richard Handler (1988) writes. In the same vein, Akuupa (2011:245), who has done a study of national identity-making through the Annual National Culture Festivals and how the festival contributed to the making of nationhood in Namibia, argues that ‘while performers act out diversity through dances and other forms of cultural exhibition during these festivals, the importance of belonging to the nation is significantly highlighted’. Thus, *olufuko* – which is known to be an ethnic cultural practice – was staged in a national context. Therefore, the festival was anticipated as a national symbol and an instrument for building and fostering the notion of state-making along with the national flag and anthem that makes the nation visible.

Carola Lentz, a social anthropologist who researched the politics of state-making and cultural festivals in Ghana, claimed that regional and local cultural festivals that had been recently created or ‘modernised’ provide an interface between local communities and the state (Lentz 2001:47). However, she pointed out that festival were not only political arenas but, also sites for production and negotiation of local cultural identity. This could be related to the Namibian situation whereby the acting out of *olufuko* appears to have provided an arena for the state representatives as well as Owambo traditional leaders to interact with the people and use the festival as political resource to popularise the state’s policies at regional and national level.

In contrast, the traditional performance of *olufuko* had been banned from performance by Christians since the arrival of missionaries (Miettinen 2005) in the 1870s and continued through to the colonial period. Having been an active agent during the liberation struggle (Katjavivi 1989), the ELCIN church supports the idea of nationhood, but in post-colonial Namibia, the ELCIN is still adamant in its longstanding ban on the *olufuko* ritual performance, despite the blame for destroying local Owambo tradition having shifted to the 19th century missionaries (Becker 2004). The ELCIN church’s recently issued Pastoral Letter shows that the church neither condones nor supports *olufuko*, as I will discuss in Chapter Four of this study. It is worth noting that both the ELCIN church and Namibian government appear to be acting according to their own principled interest; the state wants to promote its idea of nationalism based on emphasising local cultural identity, while the ELCIN church spiritedly believes itself to be the custodian of religious morality in the local communities, and thus guards against the performance of traditional rituals. Lentz argues in the case of Ghana that cultural festivals were not just a means of making the existence of the localities known to the national public; they are also a form of local competition for prestige, influence, and resources (Lentz 2001:57). Her analysis appears to fit well in the apparent conflict between the state and ELCIN church in Namibia’s situation.

The above theoretical innovations provided me with a foundation on how the state performed its activities of state-formation through ethnic diversity. Becker (2011), Becker and Lentz (2013), Akuupa (2011), and Haugh’s (2014) analysis of nationalism gave me an insight into how the festivals and Namibian youth contribute to the fomenting of nationalism through the idea of ‘nationhood through diversity’ in Namibia. In the same light, Lentz’s analysis provided me with a frame of analysis on the motivations for reviving the *olufuko* in post-

colonial Namibia. Following Becker (2011), Haugh (2014), Becker and Lentz (2013), and Akuupa (2011), my central argument is that in the contemporary dispensation, national citizenship appears to be defined largely through the emphasis on cultural and regional diversity. The study focuses on *olufuko* in the context of contemporary Namibian heritage and identity discourse, and the contestation around its practice. It seeks to analyse how the Namibian state advocates its idea of state-making through its programs, as happened during *olufuko* festival at Outapi. It also looks at how a public social practice which is known to be an Owambo tradition and used to be organised at the family level, appears to have been placed at the forefront of state-making, and appropriated by the state as a national event. With the state's involvement in the recent regional cultural festivity, the *olufuko* festival appeared a national event. This gives the impression that the state program of creating nationhood is largely based on ethnic identity.

1.5 Researching *olufuko*: reflections

This research is an anthropological enquiry which is interested in a social analysis of the tension between the religious denominations such as the ELCIN and the representatives of the Namibian government over the creation of a national identity through the practice of *olufuko*. It focuses on the way in which the state appropriated the *olufuko* festival as a national event and the ELCIN's position in restricting the performance of traditional rituals – which part of the society believed represented Owambo cultural values.

The study was carried out at Ombadja and Ombalantu, the two areas that form part of the land that makes up Namibia's north-western border with Angola. (Ombadja lies on both sides of this border – in Okalongo in northern Namibia, and the southern part of the Kunene province in Angola). The physical demarcation of the boundary between Namibia and Angola cuts Ombadja in two parts, separating Okalongo from the rest of Ombadja. Ombalantu lies to the western side of Ombadja, entirely within Namibian territory. With the separation of the Kavango region into Kavango East and Kavango West in 2013, Namibia is currently divided into 14 administrative regions. Both Ombalantu and Okalongo are part of the Omusati region.

My fieldwork took place in three phases. The first phase ran from December 2012 to the end of January 2013. During the first phase, I attended *olufuko* rituals at different villages both in Namibia and across the border in Angola alongside the Namibia–Angola border. In order to

understand the discourse and the tension surround the practice, it was relevant for me to be an observer so that I could have a working knowledge on the practical activities as they are unfolding in villages. It was appropriate to carry out fieldwork during the December holidays as it was the time that *oupaka* (young girls) who were of an age to undergo the rituals were spending their holidays with their parents at the homestead, allowing these families to take advantage of the free time and perform *olufuko*.

The second phase of my fieldwork was focused on interviews with different actors in the ceremony; and discourse of *olufuko* such as the ELCIN leadership and the state's representatives. It ran from February to April 2013. This was a follow-up of the first phase of my fieldwork. I had formal as well as informal discussions and interviews with the interested parties, ritual leaders, and parents whom I identified while attending the *olufuko* ceremonies during my first phase of fieldwork. (Time constraints and the public nature of the event did not always allow for much discussion, no personal confidentiality during the ceremony –and thus I had to spare time for in-depth discussions with them). During the second phase, I conducted interviews with church leaders both at the Omusati Region and in Windhoek to find out their stance on the controversies surrounding the practice of *olufuko*. My third fieldwork trip took place in August 2013, when I attended the contemporary public *olufuko* festival at Outapi, in the Omusati region.

I tried my best to immerse myself in the community's ritual performances through attending and observing the processes of moulding young women into adulthood, including all the day-to-day routine from the first day when the initiates arrived in the homestead where the initiation was taking place until the last day of the ceremonies. I took video recordings of the ritual processes of some of the initiation ceremonies. Generally, the ceremony takes five or six days and each day has its specific activities or ritual performances. However, in its contemporary performance, daily activities can be merged and the number of days may be reduced to three, as happened at the one ceremony I attended. However, my immersion was sometimes affected by my dual role as a government officer and a researcher collecting ethnographic information. I will reflect more on this later in this chapter.

I was lucky to have collected audio-visual materials specifically on *olufuko*. I could say my work as a culture officer,²⁰ a government representative tasked with initiating and co-

²⁰ Culture Officers are state representatives who are dealing with culturally related activities at regional, national and international levels in Namibia. In short, they are organizing national cultural festivals, culture groups

ordinating a range of cultural activities has provided me with an ample opportunity to organise, observe, record, and analyse culturally related aspects and some ritual performances. Thus, my analysis was based both on the materials that have been collected from 2010–2012, through collecting official information and organising culture events; and on the materials that I have collected during my recent fieldwork at Outapi (August 2013). All these activities had given me an insightful understanding of the different participants in the cultural discourse.

However, being a culture officer does not always guarantee me limitless access to the community because some people regarded me with suspicion. At times, local residents in Okalongo and Angola perceived me as a state employee whose principal sense of duty they not certain of. Though I come from the same area, some people find it odd that my work is in the community rather than in the office at my place of work in Windhoek. On many occasions I was asked what I was doing in Angola with a GRN (Government of the Republic of Namibia) car. On 16 December 2012, when I gave a lift to women who were also going to Onghwiyu, a village in Angola where *olufuko* was taking place, they were suspicious of my going to *olufuko*. Although in this instance I had a private car, they asked me: '*otoiko ngaa nawa?*' (Are you going there in good faith?), thus questioning my motives for attending *olufuko*. Although it was not directly stated, I observed that the community suspected me of being a government detective, especially at times when I went to Kashamane border post²¹ and had time to observe the *ovafuko* who were going or coming back from Angola after they had undergone the rituals. People were uncertain that my presence in the community was out of goodwill. This has in some way created a buffer zone between me and some of my informants. People have identified me with multiple positions.

1.6 Outlined structure and content of the research

The thesis is structured around different actors and settings, in which the female initiation '*olufuko*' is currently performed and contested.

In Chapter One I have introduced the topic of this thesis and developed my argument in consideration of the past and present trajectories of the discourse of culture and nationalism in Namibia. I looked at how the discourse and the state's enactment of *olufuko* through the Constitutional rights and the recent state support of the *olufuko* festival presented tension

during international visits, or welcoming groups during state visits, encouraging cultural education in schools etc.

²¹ Kashamane border post (locally known as Omuvelo waKashamane) is the main border post in Okalongo

between the political representatives of the state and ELCIN in the post-colonial Namibia. I argued that although the practices of *olufuko* had gone through some alterations over the time and ELCIN church had emphasised culture as an important aspect of expressing identity and belonging, the post-colonial practice of *olufuko* specifically appeared to be outlawed by ELCIN religious leaders.

In the chapter, I also explained the process of my fieldwork. Observation, interviews and informal discussions are some of the tools that I have used in collecting data, using a video camera, photographs and voice recorders as my main data collection tools.

In Chapter Two, I will present ethnography on the transformation of young women to womanhood as it is customarily practiced in villages along the borders of Namibia and Angola. I will present the contemporary practice of *olufuko* based on the village ceremonies that I have observed during my fieldwork. These ceremonies appear to be the model on which the public rituals practice which took place in Outapi was based as it was acted out by ritual leaders from Okalongo. I argue the ceremony has changed from the intention of turning young girls into married women through group marriage, to creating young girls as *ovafuko* (marriageable women).

In Chapter Three, I will present the discourse of heritage and identity as relevant in the context of *olufuko*. I will demonstrate how the state representatives foster the state's idea of nation-building through ethnic ceremonies, and how the performance of *olufuko* rituals in Outapi town in 2012 and 2013 has presented another dimension in the heritage and identity discourse in the Namibian perspective. Through the analysis of the festival it appears that the state has appropriated the *olufuko* festival as a national event that promotes symbolic values that 'foster a sense of identification with the nation state' (Marschall 2013:11) even though it was a regional event. I will argue that in the contemporary dispensation, national citizenship appears to be defined largely through the emphasis on cultural and regional diversity. I will discuss government's endeavour in creating marriageable women, yet emphasise the importance of education to these young women so that they will be able accommodate new developments.

In Chapter Four, I will present in detail the contemporary contestation between the state and ELCIN church over the practice of *olufuko*. I will discuss the historical connections between the contestations over *olufuko/efundula* during colonialism and investigate the recent relationship between the ELCIN leadership, state representatives and different sections of the

society which practice rituals in relation to the promulgated state policies that proclaim the practice of culture of which *olufuko* forms a part. In the discussion, I will present the government position, mixed ideas from the society, and the criticism and stance of the ELCIN church with regard to the hosting of the *olufuko* festival in Outapi. I will argue that some of the Owambo peoples' perception was that they pray and praise God in a 'Christianised' Owambo traditional method, and some local peoples' expectation is thus that Christianity should be practiced in accordance with traditional practices.

Chapter Five is the concluding section and it will provide a succinct discussion of the research findings.



Chapter 2 Calves becoming cows

This chapter's heading was taken from the narration of Lipitwa, a ritual leader who was leading *olufuko* in *meme*²² Ndilinongwe's homestead at a village in Okalongo where Kashoondaha and Ndapanda –the two young women were undergoing the rite. With loud ululation she said:

'Naitye ngaa waka!

Naitye ngaa waka! Iyaloo nyi outana tau ningi eedjidji!

Iyaloo nyi enono laninga omaengelwa!

(Let it be joyful! Let it be joyful! Thanks that calves are becoming cows! Thanks that mud-water became pure!)

When I asked her what she meant, she claimed that 'everything has a beginning! A cow was once a calf, a hen was once a chicken, a lioness was once a cub, so the saying refers to *oupaka* (young girls at a tender age) who are becoming *ovafuko*²³ (marriageable women).' Thus, calves becoming cows metaphorically refers to the transitional process of young girls from childhood to adulthood which is marked by a social public ceremony.

Before I go into the discussion of the festival-style performance of *olufuko* in the public sphere as it happened in Outapi, and the controversies around it which I will discuss in Chapters Three and Four, I will present a discussion of the ceremonies as they are currently happening in the villages in northern Namibia. I will first present an account of the ritual activities as they were carried out by the ritual leaders during the three-day period of transitional process of these two young women journeying from childhood to maturity in December 2012 at *meme* Ndilinongwe's homestead at a village in Okalongo. What was interesting to me was that practice and appearance of the *ovafuko* at *meme* Ndilinongwe's homestead presented a fusion of tradition and modernity as I will explicate in this section. I will argue that the post-colonial practices, and what the *ovafuko* themselves think and feel may be entirely different. *Olufuko* has transformed from the aim of making young girls into married women (traditional marriage or group marriage) to transform young women into *ovafuko* in the contemporary dispensation. I will then present a discussion on the earlier ethnography and contemporary anthropological and historical writing on the rite during the colonial period; my discussion will also look into the current ceremonies and some changes they have undergone in the ceremonial planning and organisation; one such point concerns

²² Meme (mother) is the term used to respectfully address adult women.

²³ *Ovafuko* or *omufuko* (singular), are the young women who are undergoing or have undergone *olufuko*.

the involvement of the chief/king, which was highlighted in the earlier literature. I will also discuss the social and personal significance of undergoing *olufuko* as it was claimed by traditional leaders that I interviewed in Ombadja. I conclude this argument by provisionally stating that the state mediated public *olufuko* performance at the town of Outapi in Ombalantu, which supposedly demonstrated regional identity had been modelled on *omalufuko* that had been happening in villages where the practice had been alive. The public performance of the village ceremonies at Outapi town in Ombalantu appears to have led to a bigger debate on *olufuko* as revealed by a number of people in newspapers and social media as I will discuss in Chapter Four.

I concur with Becker (2004:40) who argues that there is a need to cautiously depict what happened in different places and at different times as an alteration in ceremonial style and practice, effect, songs, and costumes, ritual roles, ritual events, and cultural meaning and understanding. Based on my fieldwork, there seems to be some shifts in the practices, meaning, procedures and objectives between recent performance and the colonial time as presented by earlier ethnographers and missionaries such as Loeb (1962), Bruwer (1959), Tonjes (1911), Estermann (1976), and Tuupainen (1970). Centred on the *olufuko* ceremony that I observed in 2012 at a village in Okalongo, and several *omalufuko* in villages in southern Angola, I demonstrate that the contemporary *olufuko* practices had been modified to suit the aspirations of the local participants and the demands of modern life for example schooling. I will argue that the contemporary *olufuko* does not necessarily imply traditionalism, but that *olufuko* and the *ovafuko* themselves are distinctly contemporary situations and young women of the 21st century.

This chapter is relevant to the entire discussion of the thesis as the performances of *olufuko* in villages appeared to be the basis for the power struggle between the earlier Christian Missionaries and Colonial Administration in colonial Namibia. These controversies appeared to be the roots of the current controversies between the state that sponsored the public *olufuko* performance at Outapi, the *olufuko* ritual leaders who believe in the rituals as a demonstration of their identities, and the ELCIN church. The ELCIN felt that having been the custodian of religious morals during the struggle for independence and after,²⁴ its voice on the state sponsored *olufuko* ceremonies should also be heard in an independent Namibia. I suggest that it is only if we have a background understanding on what happens during *omalufuko*

²⁴ The New Era Newspaper 29 July 2014 - Diescho's Dictum- The role of the Churches in Namibia by Joseph Diescho.

ceremonies at places where ritual ceremonies have been and are still taking place, and heard the voices of the ritual leaders on what they do and from the initiates, that we can have a better understanding and fully participate in the current Namibian heritage and identity debate surrounding *olufuko*. In the chapter, I will engage in descriptive questions: what is happening at places where *olufuko* ceremonies are taking place? What do the ritual leaders do during *olufuko* ceremonies which triggered such uproar over its 'revival' in the post-colonial era?

My analysis of the *olufuko* ceremony is informed by Audrey Richards' (1956) interpretation of the Chisungu, the girls' initiation ceremony among the Bemba of Zambia. In her interpretation of the Chisungu ceremony, Richards uses 'expressed purposes', which she defines as the explanations that the ritual conveners have expressed themselves on the objectives of their rituals. In the same light, Turner (1962:125) refers it to as 'exegetical meanings'. Richard also used 'deduced purposes' of the symbols which she defines as the observer's ability 'to deduce the importance of a symbolic act or the nature of the performer's emotional reaction to it, their interest, tension or boredom. I therefore implemented Richard's expressed and deduced purposes of the *olufuko*.

2.1 Crossing the line from girlhood to womanhood

It was shortly after a day in December 2012, when I and my family arrived at Omatwadiva, my village home in Okalongo, that *meme* Ndilinongwe, a neighbour, came to inform us of, and invite us to, the *olufuko* of her lastborn daughter, Kashoondaha, which was scheduled to take place. She was expected to undergo *olufuko* together with her cousin Ndapanda – both were seventeen years of age and both in grade nine at a local combined school. I felt lucky that their homestead was located a walking distance of about two kilometres from our homestead and she was a family member. As far as I know, this was the second time that the ceremony was taking place at *meme* Ndilinongwe's homestead as she had held *olufuko* six years back in 2006 for her three nieces and two other young girls from the neighbourhood. This time, I hoped to get a good glimpse of the ceremony at her homestead, although there were many other ceremonies taking place at different villages around the same time.

On the morning that the ceremony was expected to start, I walked to *meme* Ndilinongwe's homestead. When I approached her mahangu field,²⁵ I could see many people coming from all directions of the field walking toward her homestead. The field was not tilled yet. Three

²⁵ A fenced off cultivation area where the members of the homestead grow crops: mainly pearl wheat (mahangu), sorghum and beans.

women carrying water buckets on their heads were coming from the water pond which is located on the east side of the fenced-off mahangu field. The pond is the closest free water point and is used for cooking, brewing, and washing, as the community's purified water tap, which people have to pay for using, is almost a kilometre away and it is not easy, it seems, to pay for water usage during a ceremony such as this one. Although the pond was almost entirely covered by plant residues eroded from the mahangu field, it was the source of water for use during the ceremony.

At the entry to the homestead was an *omusati* (Mopani tree) which provided shelter to a number of children who came to watch the proceedings in the scorching sun. Two dozen girls and boys were playing under the tree while some boys were looking after cattle that were grazing inside the green fenced off mahangu field some two hundred meters away from the homestead. A big tent was erected at the entry to the homestead, close to the tree. It was erected in the morning to provide shade and shelter to the people who accompanied Ndapanda and those who came to celebrate and assist in the ceremony. The tent served as *oshingobele*, a designated area which provides shelter to the *ovafuko* and their relatives (Tonjes 1911:132) who came for the ceremony. People were busy with a lot of activities taking place outside the tent, in the homestead, and at the cattle enclosure. An ox was already slaughtered early in the morning as I met with the young men at the entrance of the homestead pushing the last wheel-barrow loaded with meat coming from the cattle enclosure. At the tent, some women were busy shaping *omafiya*.²⁶ Some were preparing meat for cooking while others inside the tent were singing and stamping their feet. I came closer to the women who were singing. It was interesting to hear that the singers were mixing English with Oshimbadja words. They sang '*okwa hala ochargela, nekende lokeengudi*'²⁷ repeatedly. Another one joined in, singing '*Wenyangwa koMeat-Co okwati inayako*' (He denied Wenyangwa [name of an ox] to go to Meat-Co). They were referring to the man who offered the beast that he denied the ox (Wenyangwa) to be sold at Meat-Co, a company that buys cattle, slaughters and sells meat in Namibia.

²⁶ Heaps of clay mud: usually three brick-sized, heaps that are shaped to make it possible for a pot to stand on a fire place at the kitchen

²⁷ 'He wants to recharge, with an on-stand bottle'. The song refers to the man who was cutting meat in the homestead that he needs to recharge with White Horse whiskey so that he could be happy. According to them when he is happy, he can then cut more meat to give to the women to cook.

When I entered the homestead, I saw some young women in their mid-twenties busy cooking porridge at *omafiya* (fire spots) which were erected at three spots at *epata*.²⁸ Some men were braaing²⁹ meat at *oshoto*.³⁰ I came to realise why the cattle were looked after in the field. It was probably the herd that provide meat for the ceremony for the next two days. The entire homestead was under braai smoke bellowing from the charcoal fire at *oshoto* where men and some teenage boys were hard at work. The smell of the braai meat was all over the homestead and probably the neighbourhood which attracted a number of dogs and perhaps some people too. While I was in the homestead, Ndeshipanda, the firstborn of *meme* Ndilinongwe, came to greet me and asked me to go sit in the *oshitala*.³¹ I went into the *oshitala* and took a seat next to *tate* Tomas who was among six or seven men who were mingling while drinking *omalodu*, a traditional light alcohol beer brewed from sorghum wheat. They were also drinking *owalende* a homemade gin made from *eembe* (berries). Tomas is a brother to Kashoondaha's mother and to Ndapanda's father.

Meme Ndilinongwe, the owner of the homestead came to greet me as well. She was dressed in ceremonial style, wearing an *odelela*, a red-and-black striped skirt which is perceived as traditional dress, partly covered by *ondjeva* threaded shells made from ostrich eggshells, with a copper threaded apron at the front and a blue t-shirt. She brought me a nip (200ml) of *owalende* which I gave to the people in the *oshitala* to enjoy. I asked her about the days of the activities and she said:

Ovanhu omafiku ove a tula mumwe opo ihatu kwata efimbo. Nena ekoho mumwe nomakunde, mongula okambadjona nombadje onene. Mongheinya ondjimbulula (the people [family] have merged the days of the ceremony to cut the period shorter. Today is *ekoho/omafiya* [cleansing] and *omakunde* [beans] activities. Tomorrow is *okambadjona* [small jackal] and *ombadje-onene* [big jackal]. After tomorrow is the final).³²

According to her, *ekoho* (literally 'wash') refers to the first *omalodu* that people brew. It is known as '*omalodu ekoho*' (*omalodu* for cleansing). She said that it implies that the first brew cleanses the brewing pots for the entire ceremony.

²⁸ A cooking place (kitchen)

²⁹ Roasting meat

³⁰ Central courtyard in homestead where men usually sit, eat, and socialize around the fire place

³¹ An open hut that is made for sitting purposes during the day or when people are drinking *omalodu* beer made of sorghum

³² According to her it was necessary because only two young girls are undergoing the ritual and the work was not that much.

While we were sitting in the *oshitala*, five or six women came to the doorway of *ondjuwo* (the head wife's sleeping room). While they were dancing and ululating, *ovafuko* came out from *ondjuwo* and sat on *eembadwa* dried cow hides that were laid down on the surface at the doorway to *ondjuwo* with their legs leaning straight forward. I moved closer to the *ovafuko* where about ten women were dancing and ululating to the *ovafuko* and reciting their clan's pride while *ovafuko* sat on the side of the doorway facing to the west where the entry of *ondjuwo* was facing. Their *oumbale* (small palm leave baskets for cosmetics) were placed on the surface close to each one's feet. *Meme* Lipitwa, *omupitifi*³³ from the neighbourhood came out from *ondjuwo* holding *okatiti* (small clay container) with *omaadi* (oil) and *olukula*³⁴ mixture and an additional *okambale* (a small flat palm basket) of *oshide* (peroxide). Lipitwa and another *omupitifi* Linonhu (not their real name) knelt down, each one facing *omufuko*; placed their right-hand middle finger in the *olukula* oil mixture and applied it to the young women's forehead. After applying *olukula* to the forehead, Lipitwa and Linonhu started smearing *olukula* lotion over the body of *ovafuko* while a group of women was ululating.

There was a great contrast between Ndapanda and Kashoondaha, the two *ovafuko*. Even though they were both undergoing the same procedures, on the same days, at the same place, Ndapanda dressed in *onguwo* (*eenguwo* – plural), the tanned cow hides made into leather garments which covered her lower abdomen. Although she was almost half-naked, she looked as if she was fully dressed as her body was well smeared with *olukula* all over and appeared reddish as if she was covered. Her natural appearance was covered by the reddish colour of *olukula*. She had a skank skin on her forehead which partly covered her face. Her neck was decorated with *onyoka*, a necklace of threaded shells, and five white *omba* (circular pieces of shell fastened on a thin leather belt) hanging from her shoulder. Her lower abdomen was covered by two tanned hides; one at the back and the other one covering her front and secured at the waist. Her leather skirt was partly covered at the top by *ondjeva* (threaded shells) which partly covered her hips. Her legs were covered with copper threads, well tucked and fastened to cover about twenty centimetres from her ankle up and like many other *ovafuko* that I saw anywhere else, she was barefoot. Ndapanda appeared well smeared with red ochre all over her body. The materials that she wore seemed heavy as she was not walking easily.

³³ *Omupitifi* or *ovapitifi* (plural) is a ritual leader(s) who is responsible for practicing rituals that transform young women into adults

³⁴ *Olukula* is the powdered roots of *omuva* (teak tree – *pterocarpus erinaceous* Estermann 1976: 60), pounded to form reddish powder which is mixed with oil or butter to form a reddish body lotion



Figure 1. Contrast between Ndapanda and Kashoondaha the two *ovafuko* who went through *olufuko* in meme Ndilinongwe's homestead, Okalongo

Ironically, Kashoondaha, the other *omufuko*, was dressed in a Western outfit. Unlike Ndapanda, she did not wear *onguwo*. She wore a white long skirt and a grey shirt with a white waist coat on top. Her hair was curled and tied with a red ribbon. She held a blue headscarf decorated with red flowers. She had *onyoka* threaded shells on her neck and she wore shoes. Her sister Ndeshipanda said that Kashoondaha choose to wear a western-style outfit herself –‘it is her ceremony thus it is her right to wear what she wants to wear’ she said. Many people including Ndapanda and Kashoondaha’s friends and peers appear to acknowledge Ndapanda’s *onguwo*. Some went to the extent of joyfully teasing her about her breasts. One of the girls, who appeared to be her friend, came closer to her and said ‘*wah! Ndee omavele oye omawa*’ (wah, your breasts are beautiful) and blaming herself for having spoiled hers by having a baby without undergoing *olufuko*. Both Ndapanda and Kashoondaha did not tuck *elende* long hair extensions on their head, as I observed with *ovafuko* on several occasions in Ombadja. Each *omufuko* had two small girls in attendance; five to eight years old: *okafukwena* (plural -*oufukwena*) (small initiate) and *okahindi koifima* (little one who carries food). They sat next to *ovafuko*. Each *okafukwena* carries *oumbale woulilo*, flat small baskets made from palm leaves which looks like a plate, contain cosmetics for *omufuko*, whereas *ouhindi woifima* carries food for the *ovafuko* during the event.

While Lipitwa and Linonhu were busy smearing the *ovafuko*'s skin with the *olukula* lotion, especially Ndapanda whose body was more exposed as she wore *eenguwo*, the other three women: Liendwa, Linomukala and Yoleni came from *epata*, the cooking section of the homestead. One carried a basket of mahangu and sorghum grains known as *etwi* and another one carried *okashuma komalodu*, a small container of traditional brew and placed it on the ground, near *ovafuko*. After Lipitwa and Linonhu finished applying red-ochre, *ovafuko* were then given *omalodu* to drink. Yoleni (not her real name) served *omalodu* to *ovafuko* using *omhindo yofilika*, a unique type of calabash that is used to serve *omalodu* from *oshuma* (a clay pot) and poured it into a traditional *eholo* (cup) which was given to the *ovafuko*. This type of calabash is only used to serve *omalodu* to *ovafuko*. Those who were standing were loudly ululating and waving horse tails while the men appeared to be less active in what was happening. They were sitting, drinking *omalodu* and gin.

After the *ovafuko* had their bodies smeared with *olukula* at the front of *ondjuwo*, they were then told to stand and the whole group of women led by Lipitwa escorted them to *oshini*, a millet grinding site where they together with group of women and girls started pounding *oilyavala* (sorghum) and *mahangu* (pearl millet). Though it has been reported in the earlier literature (Tonjes 1911, Hahn 1928, Bruwer 1959, Loeb 1962, Tuupainen 1970, Estermann 1976) that this was a test of *ovafuko*, I do not agree as they seemed to enjoy themselves rather than suffer as they were pounding together with the whole group of women and girls, and the event was joyful. It also seemed that this was an orientation to womanhood as it is the responsibility of women to ensure that people in the homestead have eaten. While the *ovafuko* and a group of women were busy pounding, their *ovamwahe* (patrilineal cousins) from their father's sisters came into the homestead. They were carrying *oshuma shomalodu* (a beer container), *oumbale* (medium bowl-like baskets made from palm leaves), and *oshikuni shomuhongo* (firewood from an *omuhongo* tree) – which was regarded as best lighting wood. *Oumbale* was full of *oufila womahangu* (*mahangu* wheat flour) known as *omhembefila* and on top of the flour was *ohala*, an ostrich feather erected obliquely in the flour pointing backwards. I asked *meme* Ndilinongwe what they were here for and she said '*oveya okuteya olukuni lavamwahe*' – they came to perform a ritual known as *okuteya olukuni* (literary chopping firewood). They placed their *oshuma* at the entry to the *ondjuwo* and sat down to exchange greetings. After the greetings, the two cousins rushed outside the homestead to gather *omusati* shrubs in the field and collect some small firewood. They brought the

firewood in the homestead and placed it near the entry to *ondjuwo*. The wood was to be used during the ritual known as *okunhuka omundilo* (jumping/crossing the fire).

At noon, all the young girls in the homestead were busy handing out food to the guests who shared in pairs or groups of three or four. Food was mainly *oshifima* (porridge) and meat. Ndeshipanda came to me and requested me to follow her. I followed her to *oshitala* where food: *oshifima* (porridge), roasted meat, and chicken in *odjove* (marula fruit oil) were prepared. It seems that they wanted to treat me as special even though I was not; I was a student, an observer. We ate together with her and the food was delicious. Those who were at *oshingobele* also prepared food and almost everybody in the homestead was eating and drinking *omalodu* which was supplied in large quantity. Although women in the homestead appeared to be busy all the time, men were only sitting in *oshitala* or otherwise seeking out where they could get more *owalende* (gin) or beer to drink. Many of them were already drunk. *Ovafuko* were also given their food and after they finished eating they were released to go take a rest.

Okambadjona and ombadje-onene day

On the second day of the event, I walked to the homestead where the ceremony was taking place at around 6AM to see the happenings of the day. Two women were already up and ululating. *Omalodu* which was brewed the previous day was ready for consumption and the women were drinking it already. At around ten o'clock in the morning, children were running after chickens to be slaughtered, and most of the women were busy preparing food. Some girls were at the *oshini* (pounding site) making *odjove* (marula cooking oil), while others were busy looking after big pots of meat that were cooking at *omafiya*. I went to sit in the *oshitala* where we enjoyed drinking *omalodu* with *tate* Tomas and two other men. Tomas looked rather tired in his green overalls – his eyes were red. He was cutting meat with an axe for cooking.

From where I was seated, I could see *ovafuko* come out from *ondjuwo* and sit at the front of *ondjuwo*. Women started ululating and reciting their clan's pride. As on the previous day, Lipitwa and Linonhu started smearing the *ovafuko* with red ochre lotion at the entrance of *ondjuwo* where they slept at night. *Ovafuko* were then led by Lipitwa and Linonhu to sit in *oshitala*. At around eleven o'clock, *eembwihiki* (small boys who acted the fiancé role in the ceremony) came in the homestead with their mothers and took seat at *oshoto* (central courtyard). Lipitwa went to receive them and return to *oshitala* where *ovafuko* were sitting.

Women in the homestead were ululating and cheering loudly. After a short while, the *ovafuko* and their *oufukwena*³⁵ stood up and walked past *oshoto* toward the homestead entry where they were joined by *eembwihiki*. They passed through the entry of the homestead and went outside the homestead. *Olumana*, a forked fresh omusati branch with some fresh leaves was erected on the ground between the entry and *oshingobele*. *Ovafuko* and their *oufukwena* walked passed *olumana*, while *eembwihiki* passed on the side. They were then led through *onhu yovafuko*,³⁶ and went to a place called *etambo* where another log was laid down for seating. Both of them took their seats together with their *oufukwena*. Food – chicken in *odjove* and porridge – was brought and *ovafuko* ate together with *eembwihiki* while some two or three women were standing ululating. After they finished eating and drinking *omalodu*, they went back in the house. All the people in the homestead received food. They filled all corners in search of a space to sit down and eat.

***Ondjimbulula* day**

The third day of the event known as *ondjimbulula* was full of activities. Early in the morning after *ovafuko* refreshed themselves, they came to the *ondjuwo* and were again embellished with red ochre. After the application of ochre, Lipitwa told them to go to *etambo* where they went through another ritual. They passed through *olumana* again and then through *onhu yovafuko*, then lined up together with their mothers. Each *omufuko* was standing in front of her mother. Their mothers held a fresh *omusati* twig that serves as a lash in their hands while standing and waiting. Lipitwa lit the fire about four metres in front of the queue, using the small dry twigs that were collected during the *eteyo lolukuni* rituals. She then erected an *olumana* over the fire. After this, she erected a mahangu stalk (about 120cm high). After all these preparations, *omupitifi* demonstrated the process of jumping or crossing over the fire. The mother then had to beat *omufuko* with a lash and *omufuko* moved fast to jump over the fire, pass over *olumana*, pick up the stalk with her mouth, and give it to the *omupitifi*. Then the next pair followed.

After jumping the fire, *omupitifi* collected the twigs that were used to beat each other, the stalk, and the *olumana* twig, and placed them in the fire and burned down. After almost everything burned, *omupitifi* took *oshimhako* that was used to filter *omalodu* and dispense

³⁵ These are small girls who act as assistants to *ovafuko*. They stood at the front of *ovafuko* and carried cosmetics and food for the *ovafuko*. They also sleep together with *ovafuko* in *ondjuwo*.

³⁶ Two logs erected one meter apart and connected by two or three pieces of wood at the top which form an archway through which *ovafuko* must walk.

damp *ehete lomalodu* (brew residue) on the fire. *Ovafuko* and their mothers again came to the fire and took turns to stand in pairs on top of *ehete* which was placed on the fire. They stamp on top of each other's feet, before moving away to give a chance to the next pair. When they finished, *omupitifi* said '*ovafuko ova pitaano etanda*' (now the young women have passed the rite).

After *etanda*, *meme* Liendwa brought four hoes with handles and a basket of mixed mahangu and sorghum seeds. She handed the hoe to the *ovafuko* and their mothers and said, '*tambuleni omatemo mulime*' (take the hoes to cultivate). The women marked an area about 50m² where they should hoe. *Ovafuko* together with their mothers started loosening the soil. Liendwa again, handed seeds to the *ovafuko* and their mothers to sow on the cultivated land. When they finished sowing, the initiates and their mothers ran in the homestead shouting 'the rain has come, it is raining!' They went to the entrance of *ondjuwo*. *Ovafuko* went inside *ondjuwo* but their mothers remained outside. I looked inside *ondjuwo*, and I could see them sitting together with their *oufukwena* on the hides that were laid on the floor.

2.2 The rituals of *ekotolo/okukotolwa*

Ovafuko did not stay long in *ondjuwo*. They spent about five to ten minutes before they were called out. *Omupitifi* told them to follow her and led them to *omaanda* (where grain is stored). Here they went through another ritual known as *ekotolo or okukotolwa*. I will discuss its significance a little later. *Omupitifi* and other women prepared different items that they used when they *kotola*. Among the items that I observed were *okambale kongalo*, *omaengelwa* (pieces of ostrich eggshells), *ondjeva* (threaded ostrich eggshells), *omhindo* (calabash-drinking utensil), *oufilawonghehenga* (mahangu flour) and *omhalo yomongwa*, a lump of salt which was made into the shape of a baby. According to Lipitwa, these were very useful items for *ekotolo*. The ritual leader took *omhembefila* (mahangu flour) on her finger tips and used it to draw white lines from the back of Kashiondaha toward her shoulder and on her belly. She then took some more powder and pressed it on Kashiondaha's forehead and navel. Then she took *omalodu*, using *omhindo* to serve it in *eholo* and gave to *omufuko* to drink. When *omufuko* drank the first *eholo*, she was given the second one. She drank it but left a bit of *omalodu*. The ritual leader poured the remaining drink on her back and on her belly leaving it running down her belly. The ritual leader took the lump of salt and made as if she was speaking to a child: '*hai, hai, omunghwaluli woilya ile omukwati womafuma?*' (*Omunghwaluli woilya* refers to a girl – the one who pounds wheat; while *omukwati*

womafuma refers to a boy – the one who catches frogs). She then said ‘*tambula okaana koye, oukakwata nawa!*’ (Take your baby and handle him with care) and threw the lump of salt to the *omufuko* to carry as if she was carrying a baby. The process of *ekotolo*, enhancing the young women’s fertility (according to the ritual leader), was then performed on both *ovafuko*.

2.3 *Omanghako* ritual

After *ekotolo*, the ritual leader led *ovafuko* to *oshingobele* where they underwent a final stage known as *omanghako*. At *oshingobele* they took their seats and were given porridge and *evanda* (traditional dried spinach), cooked under *omaadi eengobe* (butter). Lipitwa took a big chunk and dipped it in the spinach bowl and ate it. After she ate two or three lumps of porridge, each *omufuko* and her assistants started eating together with their mothers.

According to *meme* Ndilinongwe, this activity marks the end of the ceremony. She indicated that it is important to eat *evanda* as it signifies peace and unity within the ceremony and between families.³⁷ The act is also an expression of wishing ample food for the *ovafuko* in their future lives. However, she stated that *ondjeva* (the threaded ostrich eggshells beads that were worn by *ovafuko*) would be removed and replaced with *omushambe*, green grass beads worn by mature women. This was to happen soon after the ceremony when the *ovafuko* will be cleaned and get rid of the *olukula* on the *efiku lokufetwa* (day of scrubbing).

The preceding sub-section has depicted the performances and celebration of one of the *olufuko* ceremonies which I observed at Okalongo. It appeared that there were some variations between the contemporary and the colonial periods in the practice and costumes as I observed *omalufuko* at several homesteads, both in Namibia and in Angola at villages such as Omatwadiva, Onghwiyu and Omufitu-wamutano. It is also interesting, considering the distinctive feature which had been represented in a number of ethnographic literatures – especially Tonjes (1911), Bruwer (1959), Loeb (1962), and Estermann (1976), who presented the account on Oukwanyama: the *ovafuko* dances started in the night to the beat of *ongoma* (a drum) and lasted the entire day of the *efundula*, which I myself also observed at Omunyekadi village in Ohangwena (Oukwanyama). Although I never observed it in Ombadja, I purposely asked *meme* Ndilinongwe and she said:

*Ovafuko vovambadja ihava dengelwa ongoma vo ihava dana. Nale inyi ouyuni wali
uli nawa opo ashike ovanhu vali havaka onga oudano woyiimbo ponhu yeumbo*

³⁷*Evanda* is an edible cooked spinach cake made by pressing lumps of cooked spinach between both hands and dried in the sun which leaves hand marks on both sides of the *evanda*.

kongulohi pamwe novafuko vo ovafuko tava holwa nee kaamati, ndee nganyi ihashi ningwa vali naana, ashike kOmbadja ohashi ningwa. Ovakulukadi ovo ashike hava tokelwa tavadana vo tava imbi veli meumbo. (Ovambadja never beat drums, neither do *ovafuko* dance. In the past, people would only come together outside the homestead entry and perform play songs at night, then *ovafuko* could join them and be proposed to by men. Nowadays, it does not happen often in Namibia, but in Angola it still does. Now it is only older women who may spend the night entertaining themselves by dancing and singing, but inside the homestead).

This indicated that there were variations in the *olufuko* performance, as Becker (2004) pointed out, among different people of North-central Namibia. My observation also revealed that men were less involved in the *olufuko* process as all the ceremonies I attended were led by women as ritual leaders. However, men also had their role such as igniting the ritual fire as the owner of the homestead. A review of earlier depictions and claims of ethnographers on *olufuko* will follow.

2.4 Earlier ethnographic discussions of *olufuko*

Although there seemed to be many similarities between the practice of *olufuko* during the colonial period, and the recent post-colonial practices in villages where the rituals are still happening, as well as at the public performance of *olufuko* at Outapi (as the next chapter will show), it appeared that there were also some changes – as argued by Becker (2004) – effected through historical and social aspects of the practice which might have led to some differences in the practice between the colonial and the post-colonial periods. In this sub-section, I will discuss the earlier ethnographers' writing on *olufuko* in relation to my recent fieldwork observations of the rite, focusing mainly on the festival season, the preparations and practices, duration, foods, and the king/chief's involvement in the ceremony.

2.4.1 The festival seasons

Older ethnographers who researched and wrote about *olufuko* during the colonial period, such as Tuupainen (1970) in Ondonga, and Loeb (1962) and Estermann (1976) in areas of Oukwanyama, indicated that *omalufuko* (plural) were usually held after the harvest, preferably in August (Loeb 1962:244) and/or in mid-summer from November to January (Tuupainen 1970:46), just before the beginning of the rain season. This was done in order to give people a few months leeway before spring planting (Loeb 1962:244). Although there

had not been a study specifically focused on *olufuko* at Ombadja, it appeared – through my observations in the field – that there was not much variation in the season that *omalufuko* used to take place. *Meme* Hileni Didalelwa, a ritual leader at Omupepe village in Okalongo, pointed out that in the past, the period was proper as villagers had done with cultivation and harvest of crops in the field and no danger was posed to crops in the mahangu field. It was also the time that cattle return from the outpost. She further stated that in post-colonial Namibia, the same period appeared to be the time for school holidays as young women spend their time with their parents at home. The period indicated also appeared to correspond well with the hosting of the *olufuko* festival at Outapi as it has taken place in August since its inception in 2012.

The preparation of *olufuko* was as busy as the event itself. In actual sense, the preparations involved not only the biological parents but entire matrilineal and patrilineal clans, as most members of the clan had a role to play. Parents had to make sure that there was enough food. According to Tuupainen (1970), the father of *omufuko* should be informed to prepare an ox. *Meme* Hileni stated that as it has been in the past, the father should also give *etwi*: sorghum and mahangu millet on the day that the daughter informed him as an indication of his acknowledgement and agreement on the preparation of girl's *olufuko*. The girl's mother, on the other hand, has to make sure that there is enough *olukula* from the roots of *omuuva*³⁸ tree which were pounded into fine powder and mixed with *omaadi eengobe* (butter) or *omaadi eemheke* (*eemheke* oil) to make a unique reddish mixture known as *olukula* that was and is still used to smear the body of *ovafuko* during the ceremony. Tuupainen (1970:46) pointed out that 'mothers have to gather watermelon or hazel seeds to grind and mix with red-ochre'.

Although I observed on many occasions that *ovafuko* tucked *elende*³⁹, it was interesting that Ndapanda and Kashoondaha did not wear *elende*. Kashoondaha's hair was curled and tied with a red hair ribbon, and Ndapanda had just her untucked short hair. In many instances, as it was practised during the pre-colonial and colonial periods, young women were prepared in such a way that *elende* were fixed to the women's hair a few weeks before the actual ceremony (Loeb 1962), but as I observed it during my fieldwork at Okalongo, it appeared that nowadays the girl's *elende* was fixed only a day or two before the event or even not at

³⁸ A certain teak tree (*pterocarpus erinaceous* – Estermann 1976:60) with reddish roots

³⁹ Pieces of Baobab bark threaded and fixed to the natural hair of an *omufuko* to form a long extension which reaches down to her knee at the back.

all.⁴⁰ Estermann (1976:73) pointed out that the Ovambadja girls dressed their *elende* close to the skull in thick braids and with thin braids that reach almost to their ankles.

According to *meme* Hileni, *elende* were plaited by *omuvindi*, a woman who also plays a very crucial part as *omupitifi* (ritual leader) during the entire process of *olufuko*. It appeared that plaiting *elende* had a spiritual meaning to the *ovafuko* as well. Hileni stated that when she plaits, she makes as many *omalende* as possible on the young woman's head, but has to make four or five lumps of threads at the back of the *omufuko* which signifies the days that the mother of *omufuko* spent in *ondjuwo* when she delivered her babies. If the mother of the *omufuko* used to spend four days in *ondjuwo*, then she also has to make four threads at the back of the head of *omufuko*. This determines the number of days that *omufuko* will spend in *ondjuwo* when she delivers as well. *Omuvinde* also played another important part during the *ekotolo* ritual. She was the one who provided all herbs that were used to *kotola* the *ovafuko*, as *meme* Hileni pointed out.

When the day of the ceremony approached, all selected girls were taken to the homestead where the ceremony was expected to take place. The initiates were expected to undergo various rituals for more or less five days, that, when successfully completed, bestowed on young girls the status of womanhood (Becker 2004).⁴¹ It was interesting that Ndapanda and Kashoondaha's ceremony took only three days with the activities combined to fit in the programme. In the past (during the first half of the 20th century), the entire ritual period took five to six days. In some areas of Owambo, it took longer than a month (Tonjes 1911:135, Bruwer 1959:119, Loeb 1962:248, Estermann 1976:71, Davies 1987, Becker 2004). This included a period of social seclusion during which *ovafuko* enjoyed considerable privileges and become *oihanangolo* (Tonjes 1911:135, Bruwer 1959:119, Loeb 1962:248, Estermann 1976:71, Davies 1987). During *oihanangolo* state, young girls applied white ashes all over their bodies; took the male roles and used to roam around the villages as boys, equipping themselves with knobkerries and demanding what they like from any man as they were accorded all rights and no taboo was associated with their action (Tonjes 1911:135, Becker 2004). Tonjes (1911), a missionary who lived in Oukwanyama area around the turn of the 20th century, recited how terrifying these white girls were as he nearly fell from his horse

⁴⁰Interview with *meme* Hileni Didalelwa, Omupepe, Okalongo, 8 April 2013. Hileni is a ritual leader whom I met during the 2011 and 2012 *olufuko* ceremonies at Ombadja on the Angolan side of the borders. She has been practicing *olufuko* for a considerable period of time.

⁴¹ Interview with Timoteus Nakapala a senior village headman, at Okalongo Traditional Authority Office, 14 April 2011; also see Becker (2004).

when he encountered them. However, Bruwer (1959:119) stated that this ‘custom has practically been abandoned altogether’. As observed by Becker (2004), it appears that with the change of time, such a period of ‘social freedom’ (Bruwer 1959:119) was no longer practiced in post-colonial times as *ovafuko* had to return to schools. But again, many don’t want to be seen by religious leaders, as *meme* Elizabeth Kahungu, a ritual leader at Omatwadiva village observed. It appears that in recent times people also avoid being seen and consequently reported to their church pastors by religious representatives in the villages. Therefore, they only do rituals in and around their home environments.

However, unlike some claims that the young women were supposed not to know what was prepared for them (Estermann 1976:74, Salokoski 2006:240), it appears that they knew about the ‘occasion for which they prepare from their earliest girlhood, the goal and the climax of their childhood years’ as Loeb (1962:243) argued, and from the time *elende* were tucked on their heads – as they used to be worn for longer during the colonial period. When I asked Kashoondaha and Ndapanda if they knew that they will *fukala* (undergo the rite), they told me that they knew as they were told when they were growing up. I asked Ndapanda when she became aware that she will *fukala* this year (2012) and she said that she was told earlier in January. As I will discuss in the next chapter, I asked the same question to the *ovafuko* at ceremonies that was held Outapi in 2013, and they also pointed out that they knew that they were coming for *olufuko*. Two of the *ovafuko*: Tauti and Ligola (not their real names), whom I met at Outapi, responded that since they were growing up, they have known that they will undergo the rituals because if they did not undergo *olufuko*, ‘their clans will perish’. It appears that a number of girls in areas where *olufuko* was being practiced were aware that they will undergo the ceremony as they were growing up and were not coerced into the rituals as Martin Hepeni indicated (Salokoski 2006).

2.4.2 Food and beverages served to *ovafuko* during the ceremony

It appears that there were also different views over the food and drink that used to be served to *ovafuko* during the ceremony during colonial times which seemingly contributed to the recent controversy between the state, members of the society and the ELCIN churches. Earlier ethnographers claimed that foods given to *ovafuko* were sexually treated by either a male or female ritual leaders. Loeb (1962) states that when girls were summoned from *ondjuwo*, they were given beer to which semen had been added: ‘As he calls her daughter’s name, a mother comes forward with a cup of beer to which he (*witchdoctor*) drops some

herbs and several pinches of dried powdered semen' (Loeb 1962:246). Tuupainen stated that 'in the afternoon the girls were given some beer 'doctored' by a female witchdoctor in order to affect who was possibly pregnant. She further pointed out that 'their fertility was increased to the maximum and guaranteed by the doctoring of their porridge and beer by the penis of the witchdoctor' (Tuupainen 1970:47–48), while Estermann (1976:75) said 'in a cup of this beverage handed to him for this purpose by the old woman, a circumcised man washes his penis three times.' However, Bruwer's informant stated that only herbs were used (Bruwer 1959:118). Miettinen (2005) also refuted the use of private parts, grounding his claim that missionary Jalmari Hopeasalmi, who had written one of the most detailed descriptions of *ohango* in Finnish, did not mention anything about sex in the initiation itself (Miettinen 2005: 319).

Although the recent *olufuko* seemed to be not differing much from performances in colonial times, there seem to be some differences within the ritual practices between the two periods. *Meme* Hileni, a ritual leader at Omupepe, Okalongo, claimed that she uses powdered *oshikangha*, (from *kanghama* –to hold on or wait) certain plant roots to treat *ovafuko*, while some people (clans) use *omhilu* (roots of a certain herbal plant) to treat their *ovafuko* for holding on to fertility or enhancing fertility. Hileni claims that '*itakuti ashike inyi omunhu a fukala ye okuna edjimo, okuna ngaa kuteelela manga nande odula ile mbali.*' (It does not mean that when she went through the rite, she should already be pregnant – she has to wait for at least one or two years). Referring specifically to Oukwanyama, *meme* Linea Ndatoolomba Paulus, also a ritual leader whom I met in 2011 when I was on official duty as a government employee collecting information on *efundula* at Omunyekadi village, Ohangwena, indicated that she had no knowledge of the use of semen. She pointed out that: *efundula meumbo omu ola ninga mo eedula dihapu, tete olali hali pitifwa komusamane wange tate Nghilai fiyo osheshi ahulifa mo 2010, ashike okwati inali djamo nalitwikile. Ashike nghishii nge okuna oshiima shili ngaho.* (Efundula had been performed in our homestead for many years. it was first carried out by my husband Nghilai until he passed away in 2010, but he stated that it should continue in this homestead, I should carry it out. However I do not know such a thing). However, I observed how she used medicinal plant root herbs such as *ehakanhoni*, *oiluta*, *omahola* and *oshinanganamwali* that she finely pounded and mixed with *omalodu* that she gave to *ovafuko* to drink. She gave details of all the uses of herbs in the ceremony such as *oshinanganamwali* which she said it enhances women's fertility.

It was interesting when she was explaining the *oiluta* (herbs) she uses, stating that: *oiluta ohai longifwa okuhakula ovanhu moshivilo. Shama ndee tamuuya omunhu aile moixulo ovanhu ohava tameke okuvela momadimo vafa tava keshulwa. Shama ndee ovanhu ova taafina okamudi aka itava vele nande namuuye omunhu akwatafanene namukwao.* (*Oiluta* is used to treat guests by chewing just a bit of this root. When anybody comes to the ceremony and he or she was involved in sexual activities it affects people in the ceremony. They will develop a stomach-ache/cramp, but if they chew this root before anyone involved in a sexual act comes along, people in the ceremony will not be affected). *Meme* Linea stated that no sexual act of any form is allowed during the ceremony. For that reason, they give *oiluta* medicine to all people who attend the ceremony to protect them in case someone involved in sexual activities comes to the homestead.

The views regarding the use of semen are questionable as this would appear to conflict with the commonly and highly valued virginity that *ovafuko* are supposed to have in order to qualify them for marriage after *olufuko* as Loytty (2012) argued. It would be strange if sexual activities or sexual enticement were allowed in *olufuko* if the ritual leader did not even allow people recently involved in a sexual act to enter the homestead where the ceremony was taking place. It seems that the use of semen is unsupported by ritual leaders, and it is doubtful if such a practice in fact existed, especially in Ombadja areas where ritual leaders were mainly women. If it did exist, then with the passing of time and social development in areas where the *olufuko* is still vibrant, it appears that such a practice is no longer valued in post-colonial times.

2.4.3 Involvement of a chief

A number of writers pointed out that the ceremony was controlled by the chief and it commenced on the days that coincide with the appearance of the new moon (Tonjes 1911:130; Hahn 1928:29; Loeb 1962:243; Tuupainen 1970:46). Loeb (1962) stated that *olufuko* was first held at the king's homestead (1962:244), and then other people at other homesteads could hold the ceremony. Hahn (1928:30) and Tuupainen (1970:46) stated that in Ondonga, *olufuko* takes place where the chief's homesteads once were. The chief was the one to select the ritual leaders who ought to be male as a master and female as an assistant (Hahn 1928:29; Tuupainen 1970:46). The reflection shows that the king's involvement was immense and appeared to strengthen its position especially in Oukwanyama where *efundula* was the main cause of strife between the Christians and the non-Christians as observed by

Loeb (1962). Hayes' (2003) emphasis on the role of the king in *efundula* (Oukwanyama) especially during Hahn's administration was served to bolster the power of the king in the interest of indirect rule. However, as Salokoski's (2006:240) interview with Martin Hepeni stated, the king has no involvement in the Ombadja initiation ceremonies. It appears that the king's authoritative involvement in the practice was less essential in Ombadja as it was not observed in the past. Recent observation and revelations during my interviews with the late *meekulu* Ndiweni yaKakwiyu, a then aged ritual leader at Okafitu-kauvale village who passed-on in 2013, and *tate* Amadila, a homeowner at Onghwiyu where *olufuko* takes place regularly, also pointed out the non-involvement of the king in the ritual's practice in Ombadja during the colonial period as well as in the contemporary post-colonial practice. They said that all arrangements were the sole responsibility of the family. However, both Ndiweni and Amadila stated that the intention of holding the ceremony should be communicated to the village headman who has to inform the police for safety reasons as the ceremony was open to every person. It is, however, unimaginable how the king in the colonial times could control and attend all the *omalufuko* ceremonies in his polity considering the dimension and the distance that he would have to travel.

2.5 Social significance of *olufuko*

In this sub-section, I would like to focus on the interesting aspects of the *olufuko* rituals. I was interested in the question: Why do young women have to undergo *olufuko* and what is the importance of it? Davies (1987) in her MA thesis in anthropology at the University of Kent discussed three main expressive motives of *olufuko*: to ensure and legitimise female fertility; to facilitate the transition from girlhood to womanhood; and to provide a context for teaching and instruction (Davies 1987:81). Her ideas were corroborated by those of the ritual leaders as they expressed the significance of the rituals during my fieldwork. *Meekulu* Mkwaanyoka waMwatukange, an *omupitifi* (ritual leader) who hailed from Okalongo and known by her praise name as '*woingele pofingo, woimbodi mokahembado*' (one who has remedy on her neck, one who has aromatic herbs in a small palm basket), acknowledged that *olufuko* is an important 'rite of passage' (Gennep's 1909) phrase, which signposts a stage of maturity. She indicated that in the past, if a woman did not *fukala* (pass through the rite) she was not regarded as socially mature even if she was physically developed.

Meme Hileni, a ritual leader at Omupepe village and *tate* Nakapala, a village headman, both claimed that *olufuko* is fundamental to the community's existence. 'It gives women's identity

in establishing womanhood, legitimise female fertility and consent them to bear children and empower young woman in social participation', she claimed. Young women who succeeded in the *olufuko* process adore their newly earned status as *ovafuko*; hence their standing in the society was and perhaps is still highly respected and their right to decision-making within their household and in the community was honoured.⁴² I have discussed earlier *meme Ndilinongwe's* comment when the *ovafuko* were crossing *olumana* (forked sticks) and crossing the fire, an indication that *ovafuko* has moved from a stage of girlhood to womanhood. *Olufuko* thus facilitates this transitional process and draws the margin between maturity and immaturity, which is meant to maintain public order. *Meme Hileni*, equated *olufuko* with the European religious confirmation that takes place at churches. Although the church confirmation does not legitimise fertility, she claimed that *olufuko* declares the stage of adulthood of the *ovafuko* as the church confirmation does.

As pointed out by Becker (2004:40), the rituals allow initiated young women to give birth legitimately without social disapproval from their family and the community at large. In the same light, Davies (1987:81) argues that 'a woman's potential fertility was acknowledged visibly by menstruation and the latter was seen as requirement for entrance to the *olufuko* (*efundula* as it is known in Oukwanyama). What *efundula* does then was to allow this fertility to be ensured and legitimised socially.' I have already highlighted particular fertility rituals performed by *omupitifi* – for instance, *okukotolwa*. Becker (2004) also pointed out that in the past, women as old as twenty-five to thirty years old were undergoing the rituals. However, it appears that in post-colonial dispensation, the qualification age has decreased, as young girls ranging between fifteen to twenty-five years old could be considered as mature enough to undergo the rites, though some are still more than twenty-five years old nowadays. According to Hileni, this was done in order to reduce the number and effect of illegitimate pregnancies as parents believe that in recent times young women become sexually active at a younger age than in the past.

According to Becker (2004), when a young woman passes through *olufuko*, she may get marriage proposals from a man by tying a palm leaf on her wristlet, which she can accept or refuse (Becker 2004:49). When *omufuko* accepts such proposals, then marriage could be organised through the *omafiya* ceremony, which takes place after the initiation or later when

⁴² Interview with Timoteus Nakapala, a senior village headman, Okalongo Traditional Authority Office, 14 April 2011
Interview with Ndatoolomba Paulus, Omunyekadi, Ohangwena region, 2011 and 9 March 2013

omufuko has completed her education if she is still in school. Although this was a common practice in the past, it appears that in the contemporary practice, marriage proposals by lashing a palm band on the wristlet of *ovafuko* as pointed out by Davies (1987) and Becker (2004) is rarely used or is not practiced at all in recent development. This could be attributed to the current situation and new developments as the women have to continue with their education. However, *omufuko* can bear legitimate children even though she does not have a husband (Becker 2004), as it was also stated by Hileni. Becker (2004:40) pointed out that *efundula* formed the cornerstone in legitimising female sexuality and reproduction.

Young women who fall pregnant before *olufuko* were given derogatory names such as *omufimbakadona* or *ehengu*.⁴³ It appears that in the past, tolerance to the young girls who fall pregnant before the rite was lower among the Owambo communities. It was believed that a woman who became pregnant before *olufuko* could invoke curses that caused the clan to perish⁴⁴ or the death of the king (Hayes 2003, McKittrick 1998:257). Uninitiated girls who fell pregnant were regarded to have breached the taboo which is believed to threaten the wellbeing of the girl's clan (McKittrick 1998:257, 1999). Becker (2004:40) and Davies (1987:82) cite colonial-era sources which stated that young uninitiated women who fell pregnant in the past were thatched with grass and burned to death. However, they expressed doubt about the practice as there was no practical example of such events wherein young women were burned to death.

McKittrick (1999) cites the penalty, which was regarded as less severe, imposed on an uninitiated young girl who was expelled from western Owambo in 1939 after she fell pregnant. She sought refuge in another community and when she delivered her baby, she returned home with her baby after a year. Her homecoming prompted the chief to expel the entire family. Under such a heavy burden, the young girl's mother pressured her daughter to kill the baby, which the young girl finally did. This matter persuaded the colonial authority to intervene and institute legal prosecution against the young girl for the killing (McKittrick 1999:265–268). Such harsh punishment was halted by both the missionaries and the colonial government (McKittrick 1999). McKittrick stated that young women from the western Owambo areas of Oukwaluudhi, Oukwambi, and Ongadjela were taken for initiation at

⁴³ Interview with *tatekulu* Mathias Walaula the head of Ombadja Traditional Authority and *tate* Timoteus Nakapala, a senior village headman at Okalongo Traditional Authority Office, 14 April 2011, see also Davies 1987:82

⁴⁴ The same belief was also expressed by young girls who went through *olufuko* in 2012 at Okalongo and in 2013 at Ombalantu

Ombalantu but penalties for uninitiated pregnant young girls were imposed less often in Ombalantu (McKittrick 1998:257). It appears that although pregnancy of young women was not acceptable, the Ombalantu people had a different way of resolving the pregnancy problem and perhaps spare the lives of young women, though the loss of life for the mother and the baby was inevitable (McKittrick 1998), as it was handled through unsafe abortion.

It was therefore important for young girls and uninitiated women to refrain from sexual acts that could result in pregnancy in order to prevent any possibility of illegitimate pregnancy. If a girl was found guilty of such acts or socially frowned-upon behaviour, it could result in serious consequences as local characterisations of such girls painted them as disobedient and defiant (ibid.) McKittrick (1999:269) stated that in the past ‘the possibility that girls could be forced into sex was seen as remote: Parents believed that a forced girl must scream, remaining silent is an indication of agreement and willingness.’ Thus, uninitiated girls who engaged in sexual activity were seen as conscious agents who bore full responsibility for their actions as McKittrick argues. Earlier ethnographers indicated the indirect means to obtain sensual pleasure locally known as *okuwila* (bundling) while avoiding dreaded consequences. With *okuwila* a man was allowed by parents of a woman to sleep together with his girlfriend but no sexual intercourse was allowed (Tuupainen 1970:56; Estermann 1976:67). When they slept he would place his head on the girl’s arm – *a wila pokwaako* (fell on the arm). As Loeb stated, this form of courtship helped prevent illegitimate children and the early marriages which were prohibited (Bruwer 1959:120, cited in Loeb 1948). Although *okuwila* and *olufuko* might have a good impact in recent times, it was altogether forbidden by missionaries pointing out that bundling provided the occasion for temptation and fornication (Mallory 1971:188).

2.6 Symbolic significance of *olufuko* rituals

Ritual symbols and activities that take place in the *olufuko* ceremonies are deemed as significant in the social lives of those who practice them. This could be reflected through symbolic activities such as jumping/crossing the fire and *okukotlwa*. As I observed Kashaondaha and Ndapanda jumping across the fire, they beat and were being beaten by their mothers. I was trying to figure out what the aim was but I could not. It was only when I visited *meme* Ndilinongwe after the ceremony that she explained that jumping the fire symbolically indicates that young girls have moved from one social stage to another stage in social life, from girlhood to womanhood. She indicated that these young girls have been

under the guidance of the mother, beaten when they did wrong, but now they have crossed this phase to that of an independent woman. After jumping the fire, the twigs (lashes) that were used to beat each other have to be burned up in the fire that was jumped as an indication of the end of childhood guidance and total forgiveness and compassion between the mothers and the girls. This symbolises the period of independence from parental guidance, hence the twig was burned down on the last day of the event when the ceremony was ending as *meme Ndilinongwe* pointed out.

The suspension of the fire has its meaning as well. *Meme Ndilinongwe* explained that ‘when *ehete* was then dumped on the fire, it signifies the end of *okuhanga* (brewing) for the ceremony.’ When *ehete* was poured on the fire, the mothers and the *ovafuko* took turns to stand on top of the charcoal covered with *ehete* and trap each other’s feet once or twice in pairs, which, she said, signifies the cleansing from the guise of the event. It appears that since the *ovafuko* become mature women, they have to cleanse their feet with *ehete*, so that the young women can start a new life that gives them a new identity as individuals.

Okukotolwa (ekotolo) was another significant ritual in the ceremony. Estermann (1976:75) pointed out that this operation appears to serve a double purpose: ‘the first would be to test whether the patient was pregnant, for it is believed that in that case she would infallibly have to vomit’ when she drink *omalodu* which herbally treated. The second purpose seems to ‘promote fertility.’ As Tuupainen (1970:51) pointed out, ‘maturity means fertility’. Thus, through *ekotolo*, ritual leaders prophesy their goodwill to the young women for blameless reproduction of their progenies. It reflects the parents’ desire for their *ovafuko* to bear children as they believe that during *ekotolo* they open up the *ovafuko* procreative process as pointed out by Hileni. When I asked *meme Elizabeth*, whom I introduced earlier, what it means to draw the lines on the young girls’ back during *ekotolo*, she claimed:

‘Omukulu wonale ota hunganekele ashike oludalo kounona woukadona mbu. Omifinda ido otashiti ondikwa imu tamuka kumininwa okaana. Omongwa oulilepo okaana, ngaanyi hakuti okaana omongwa. Omalodu inga haa tilwa kombuda nomedjimo otaa ulike nghee okaana taka xuhwile ina modikwa ile kekwetwe peke.’⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Interview with Elizabeth Kaxungu, Okafitu-kauvale, Okalongo, 15 December 2011

(Our forebears are blessing these young girls with fertility. The lines represent the baby carrier straps where the babies will be carried. The salt which is used is a symbolic representation of a child, as it is said that ‘a child is salt.’ The *omalodu* that were poured on the back and on the belly symbolises the child’s urine, as it urinates on the mother while carried on her back or held in the hands.’)

The lines that were drawn on the back and on the bellies of the two *ovafuko* using the mahangu flour foreshadowed *ovafuko* having children. It symbolises *odikwa* (baby-carrier) as well as the mother to child connection. The white flour symbolises the nutritious lives of the breastfeeding mother and the wellbeing of the child. Elizabeth also related the consequences for young girls who do not *kotolwa*, arguing that:

*Ovena kukotolwa.....nonga inave shi ningwa, ile inava ningwa nyi hashi ningwa kepata lavo, nena vamwe ohashi kakala oshidjuu. Noukadona ngaa mbu hauhombolwa meehango dokongeleka ohau viyaukwa kovakulunhu vavo efiku leehungi omanga inau hombolwa. Oto hanga kadjalekwa oinima yokepata lavo, ndee taka vaekwa nawanawa, taka ningwa oinima yokepata lavo*⁴⁶

(They have to *kotolwa*, and if they did not *kotolwa* or the procedure was not in compliance with the clan procedures, then it might be difficult for some. Even girls who are married in Churches, they are prepared in the same way on the day before the wedding day. You will find how she is dressed in traditional outfit and well-nourished with red ochre lotion; all procedures that are being done in their clan have to be followed.)

It appears that all the emphasis points to the future procreation of *ovafuko* upon the completion of the ritual circle. As for the symbolism of ‘*okaana omongwa*’ which *meme* Elizabeth mentioned, she explained that salt is the seasoning that almost all human beings use for their nutrition. Owambo people believe that salt is an important commodity, therefore you can’t deny someone salt; similarly, you cannot deny someone a child. It is usually said when the grandparents long for the grandchild to visit them, they say ‘*okaana omongwa, nakeuye vali ketu talelepo*’ (a child is ‘salt’; let him/her come visit us again). Thus a child

⁴⁶ Interview with Hileni Didalelwa, Omupepe, Onembaba, Okalongo, 8 April 2013

symbolises the spice of life, a gift and blessing in the lives of the *ovafuko* and the entire family. However, just as the salt could also make food unpleasant to the taste, so the child could be unpleasant in his/her behaviour when he or she is not well disciplined. The presence of salt during *ekotolo* symbolises a child and the bond between the mother and her small infant – and even with the unborn foetus as indicated by Turner (1962:131) during his analysis of the *mundyi* symbolism in the Ndembu girls' puberty rites (Nkang'a). It appears that the explanations of the ritual activities mostly pointed to the enrichment of the young girl's fertility as the same reference was also made to the pieces of eggshells that were used during *okukotolwa* rituals. Elizabeth articulated that it is believed that the eggshells enhance a young girl's productivity and prophesy abundant reproduction in the young woman's life. Ritual leaders believe that what they do could causes change in the young girls, as Richards (1956:125) pointed out; the women in charge of the ceremony are convinced that they are causing supernatural changes to take place in the girls under their care.

2.7 Personal and kinship significance

While so many of the *olufuko* symbols manifest the identity of the community and its social significance upon the entire group, some of the 'expressive purpose' (Richards 1956) expressed by the ritual leaders and parents that I observed during the *olufuko* ceremony signify symbols of personal qualities or status of the *ovafuko* in the society in which they live. When I observed Ndapanda and Kashoondaha's ceremony, it appeared that Ndapanda wanted to be identified in her traditional attire, saying '*ondahala ngaa kudjala ngaanyi hashidjalwa!*' (I want to wear as is being worn) when I curiously asked about their contrast. She dressed in *onguwo* (leather materials) to signify her cultural roots as many attendants expressed that '*she Ovambadja osho hatu djala nyo*' (that is how Ovambadja put on our costume). Ndapanda was also wearing *ouputu*⁴⁷ which creatively meandered from her ankles to the legs and on her wristlets. However, *meme* Ndilinongwe indicated that *eenguwo*⁴⁸ does not only signify tradition, but also expresses the *omufuko* family status '*oipako yokepata lavo*' (possession of their clan), an expression of the wealth of the clan. Thus to many people, it is a symbol of material wealth and thus they endorse the use of *eenguwo* that they embodied as wealth. However, *meme* Ndilinongwe said *eenguwo* does not prevent someone from undergoing *olufuko* as Kashoondaha has modelled. Kashoondaha expressed her way of life by dressing

⁴⁷ *Ouputu* is made from either copper or gold and beaded to cover ankles or arm wrists

⁴⁸ *Onguwo* (singular) or *eenguwo* (plural) is Owambo traditional attires made from tanned leather, worn by initiates during the ceremony or by old women at special occasions such as marriage ceremony.

modern outfit. Although she had *eenguwo* ready for her to put on, her sister said that, ‘*eenguwo daye omo dili ndee okwati ye ota djala oikutu*’ (her tanned garments are here but she said she wants to wear dresses). Kashoondaha prefers to wear modern outfit which signify her identification with modern society and her freedom of choice. Her hair was styled and she did not have *elende*. Although she had *oshilanda* (neck beads), she did not have copper beads around her ankles or wristlets, and she wore shoes.

The ceremony demonstrated how *ovafuko* express themselves through the visual aesthetic and stylisation meanings of their appearance, and reflect that due to modernity and the rights of individuals, the contemporary practices allow *ovafuko* the liberty of choice for their own modern costumes. It appears that the dividing line between tradition and modernity is blurred as argued through Gusfield (1969:353) who pointed out that tradition and modernity cannot be viewed as polar opposites, but what is seen today and labelled as traditional society is often itself the product of change. The impression was that as Kashoondaha wore her outfit, it does not really signify her opposition to tradition but rather embracing her modern life. It might not be strange that in the near future we might experience many *ovafuko* emulating Kashoondaha’s example as this appeared to be rarely practiced. For me, who grew up in the same community, Kashoondaha was the second *omufuko* that I have observed dressed in western-styled attire. Of course its uniqueness might not apply to other areas such as Oukwanyama, Ongadjera, Ombalantu and Oukwaluudhi where *ovafuko* wear *odelela*, as I will discuss in the following chapter.

Personal or family status was also reflected on *omba* and *ekipa*⁴⁹ which are very rare expensive ornaments (Tonjes1911:127). These are important commodities which are an expression of the personal status as well as the family background of the *omufuko*. There is a value and historical legacy attached to *omba* and *ekipa* as in the past they were worn by well-off people and their association with wealth implies the economic status of the individual’s family. Other symbols appear to signify protective powers. During the ceremony, Ndapanda wore an *onghandanga* (skunk) skin on her forehead. The skunk is commonly known for its ability to emit a foul, strong-smelling odour from its rear in order to scare its predators such as dogs and lions. Ritual leaders believe skunks have a protective power, and thus *ovafuko* cover their faces with the skin of *onghandanga*, believing it will protect them against those who are envious of them.

⁴⁹*Omba* are white circular ornaments made from shells from the river and *ekipa* are ornaments artistically made from ivory tusk.

2.8 Contemporary public performance of *olufuko*

Hayes (2003) states that *olufuko* serves as a gateway ‘through which Owambo women are expected to pass’. The contemporary practice shows that, in the years since Namibia’s independence, the practice of *olufuko* appears no longer to be a ‘hide from Christians ceremony’ as had been the case when Christians were not allowed to attend or perform it by missionaries earlier in the 19th century and later by some local Christian church leaders after independence. Becker (2004:36) pointed out that in post-colonial Namibia, *olufuko* (*efundula*) was widely spoken about after a national TV programme in 1996 recorded preparations for the ceremony, the performance of dances and songs, specific ritual practices, and interviews with some initiates and ritual leaders. Even the people who had earlier told her that they do not know if ceremonies were still held, were now telling her about the announcement over the NBC’s Oshiwambo Radio that *omafundula* were to take place in areas of Oukwanyama. When I visited Okalongo for the holidays, I heard that there were many ceremonies taking place, especially across the border in Angola. Apart from the one that was held at *meme* Ndilinongwe’s homestead, *tate* Amadila, a home owner at Onghwiyu village where I have attended *olufuko* on several occasions, informed me that there were several ceremonies that were registered with the Angolan councillor’s office on the Angolan side.

These reflections show that *olufuko* became part of public culture and there appears to be an increase in the holding of public *olufuko* rituals in the post-colonial states. It seems that although *olufuko* was always held, and perhaps widely known, during colonial times, it was not spoken about until after independence and even publically held at Outapi. In the following chapter, I will discuss my observation of the public *olufuko* festival which took place at Outapi in the Omusati region.

2.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the contemporary practice rituals as they are conducted in post-colonial Namibia. I have examined some of the expressive purposes and significance of *olufuko* as narrated by the ritual leaders. It is worth noting that although some people regarded *olufuko* as a way of expressing social identity – as people expressed at numerous occasions that ‘*she Ovambadja osho hatu ningi nyo*’ (that is how we as Ovambadja do it) – there were diverse perceptions over the practice in post-colonial Namibia as different people view the ritual practice differently. The representation of numerous aspects in the *olufuko*

practice is significant. During my discussion of the procedure and practice of *olufuko* with the ritual leaders, *meme* Ndilinongwe, Elizabeth, and Hileni, much of their interpretation reflected the embodiment of the rituals in the community that continue to practise it. At some points, some details on the reasons why some of the activities were practiced might be eroded such that people did not know exactly why a certain action was performed. Sometime people said ‘*osho twahanga hashiningwa*’ (it is how we find it being done) or ‘*owo omushuululwakalo wetu*’ (it is our culture). Nonetheless, the main objectives given for the young women’s transformation – as expressed by ritual leaders and traditional leaders who carry out the ceremony or lived in the area – are the blessing and moulding of the young girls or women into mature and marriageable women in the society. As stated above, it is believed to cleanse the women from the childhood taboo and bestow on them a healthy reproductive future. From this perspective, the symbolic meaning of the rituals appears to have been vested in their functional effects for the community, notably the extent to which *olufuko* contribute to the integration of the community as well as the individual beings. It also appears that, contrary to the often-depicted male *omupitifi* (Tonjes 1911; Davies 1987), and the use of male treated foods, *omalufuko* in Ombadja and Ombalantu appear to be carried out exclusively by female ritual leaders as portrayed by writers such as Becker (2004).

Although my fieldwork was based on Okalongo and Ombalantu, it appears that the practice of *olufuko* is almost the same throughout the former Owambo area, as most of the ethnographic representations, to a larger extent, correspond with my findings, though there are also variations. This demonstrates that the Owambo people had the same intention for the rite. However, during my observation I discovered that there were slight differences on *olufuko* practice in Ombadja and the north-eastern Owambo. Some of the activities such as beating the drum during the ceremony and the dancing by *ovafuko* to the drum-beat, or *omufuko* creeping between the legs of *omupitifi* when she is coming out from *ondjuwo* (Tonjes 1911; Davies 1987; Becker 2004), exchange of seeds, *elyato loifima* (trapping porridge) at the cattle enclosure and the feeding of *ovafuko* by *omupitifi* in *ondjuwo* (Becker 2004), as practised in northeast Owambo were not practiced in Ombadja. Ironically, rituals such as *okunhuka omundilo* (jumping fire or crossing fire), *okukototwa* and *okuteya olukuni*, *okulima* were also not observed when I attended *omafundula* at Omunyekadi village in Ohangwena. It is worth noting the importance of some of those variations, though the objective of this thesis is not comparative. The ritual performances that I have discussed in this chapter, which were and have been organised publically but at the level of a clan were

then magnified to the wider level of the state when it was organised by the Omusati Town Council and the Regional office at Outapi in Ombalantu.

Therefore, in the next chapter, I will present the public performance of the event which was mediated by the state and broadcast through the state media. I will discuss how the state appropriated and characterised the ceremony as a national event and how different sections of Namibian society expressed their diverse views of *olufuko*.



Chapter 3 Heritage and identity discourse in post-colonial Namibia

In this chapter, I will discuss how the contemporary *olufuko* rituals which were performed during the *Olufuko* Festival which was held at Outapi, a growing regional town on the north-western border of Namibia in the Omusati Region relate to the discourse on heritage and identity. I will discuss how the festival reflects the idea of nationhood through ‘unity in diversity’, the nationalists’ idea which implies that people belongs to the nation through belonging to diverse cultures (Becker 2011). Becker (2011) points out that with the advent of the ‘unity in diversity’ concept, national identity was no longer to be defined through the common history of the liberation struggle but through tolerant accommodation of cultural difference with an emphasis on ‘galleries of cultures’ (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, cited in Becker 2011, and Fairweather 2006) harmoniously coexisting (Becker 2011:535). Akuupa (2011) in his analysis of festivals in Namibia, pointed out that these guaranteed and tolerated differences do not suggest disregard for the state ideology of belonging to the nation state as attendants as well as politicians emphasise the importance of national belonging (Akuupa 2011:270). He argues that the ideas which were transformed through cultural representations produce meanings about ‘being’ and belonging to a particular culture (*ibid.*) Following Becker (2011) and Akuupa’s (2011) claim, it appears that in post-colonial Namibia, people are performing tradition in order to demonstrate their national citizenship through a diversity of culture. Thus, national citizenship appears to be mainly defined through cultural or regional diversity.

I will discuss how the *olufuko* festival relates to Namibian culture and heritage discourse. I will further discuss an analysis of the state politics in mediating the festival and how heritage politics manifested itself through invitations of guests, tourists, and national business people which reflect Lentz’s (2001) idea of ‘politic of invitation and participation’; and speeches by different national and traditional leaders during the official opening ceremony which took place on 27 August 2013 in the presence of about two thousand attendees. In particular, I will discuss questions such as: How does the *Olufuko* festival manifest itself in the discourse of heritage? To what extent does then *olufuko* festival appear to be a national event? Through my discussion, I will demonstrate how the hosting of *Olufuko* festival in Ombalantu was mediated by the state as it was organised by the regional office, town council office and traditional authority office and attended by the Head of State, the former Head of State and high state officials. The festival was broadcast live by the state media –NBC –Oshiwambo

Radio and the national television. With the high state authorities, involvement in mediating the event, state protocol, and speeches during the opening day, the *Olufuko* festival consequently gained public and national significance, though the practice has been criticised by some Christian churches. The link between business and performance of traditional ritual reflects the idea for making the region a centre for cultural tourism. I will therefore discuss how the establishment of the *olufuko* homestead within the *Olufuko* festival premises reflects the idea for cultural tourism development in the area.

I will show that although the event was named and referred to as the *Olufuko* festival, as it appeared on the advertising boards, it was interesting that there was not much connection between the public festival and the ritual performance. The ritual performances took place inside the erected homestead which is located inside the *Olufuko* festival premises. It was interesting that there was no public interaction between *ovafuko* and the rest of the public neither was there any open public gathering where rituals were performed as I will reflect on in the chapter. The ritual ceremony resembled the village performance in such a way that no public display of the rituals took place. The chances of interacting only occurred when individual visitors to the festival visited the homestead during the course of the event.

3.1 *Olufuko* Festival at Outapi

In April 2013, the website of the Outapi Town Council advertised the second '*Olufuko* festival' which was scheduled to take place from the 24–30 August 2013, at Outapi in Ombalantu, following the first one, which took place in August 2012. Since I missed its launch in 2012, I was keen to attend the second session of this festival. Therefore, in August 2013, I, my wife, and son, Tulino, decided to attend the event. On Saturday the 24th, we travelled a distance of 30km from Okalongo to Outapi.

Approaching Outapi, the main town of the Omusati region, I could see from a distance the green billboard which was approximately four metres high and four metres wide. This advertising board is highly visible as it sticks out in elevation from small signboards that advertise the variety of small and medium businesses that were inviting customers to their doors. It was printed in capital letters: 'WELCOME TO OUTAPI' followed by '*Olufuko* festival' as the event was called, which was written in bold italic text. After the '*Olufuko* festival' inscription then follow an axiom: 'Culture: Our Heritage, Our Pride' which was interpreted in Oshimbaanhu as '*Omuthigululwakalo: edhilo lyetu, uuntsa wetu*'.

The inscription continues to tell the reader that Outapi was ‘the Center of Culture and Heritage’ in English and Oshimbaanhu.

There were two emblems depicted on the billboard that appeared to represent or signify the regional identity: a representation of *okatiti*⁵⁰ was on the left hand side of the billboard and the famous Ombalantu baobab tree on the right hand side of the billboard. *Okatiti* was placed on *okambale*, (a small basket made from palm leaves) and it contains *olukula* (red ochre), which was used for anointing and smearing the bodies of *ovafuko*. It represented the traditional identification of the *olufuko* ceremony. In presenting what necessitates heritage, a massive historic *omukwa waambalantu* (baobab for the Aambaantu people) as it was locally known, was depicted. According to the Outapi town council website, the famous Outapi Baobab tree has a historical legacy of Ombalantu. The tree was used by the Aambaantu people as a hideaway during attacks in the past and later it was used as post office and during the South African occupation, the tree was used as a chapel.⁵¹ Its historical legacy and recent significance as a tourist information centre and a campsite made it one of Namibia’s heritage site. Both the historic baobab tree and the ritualistic *okatiti* on the billboard presented a historic dimension of heritage and identity representation of the region in relation to the *olufuko* ceremony. As we drove around the town to get a glimpse of the area, I discovered that there were more billboards at different entry points to the town.

Readings on the billboard might give an impression in the mind of the visitors that the place hosts the ritual ceremony only. I was puzzled as to why the display board shows only culture and heritage aspect of the festival. According to the Outapi website, the objectives of the event were both to host the *olufuko* ceremony and business exhibition of local and international products. However, the representation of the business side of the festival was totally absent on the advertising board.

Just a few meters from the billboard, at the right hand side of the road was an entry to the big *Olufuko* festival premises which host both the business exhibition and where public rituals space of *eumbo* (homestead) – which locals referred to as traditional Oshiwambo homestead – was constructed. By looking at the area that the *Olufuko* festival covers (about twelve hectares), one could claim it to be the biggest plot in the entire town. The perimeter of the

⁵⁰ *Okatiti* is a small bowl made from clay which in this case (ritual) is used to store the *olukula* mixture as lotion for the young initiates. In everyday lives, *okatiti* or *etiti* (big) is used as a bowl in which to place food, especially meat when people are eating.

⁵¹ www.outapitc.org.na

area comprised a cream-painted base wall and black metal rods on the side that face the road whilst the entire perimeter was engirdled with razor mesh. It has two entrances, one at the southern side and the other at the northern side. We entered through the north gate where all exhibitors and visitors' car entered while the southern gate was reserved for VIPs. At the entrance, we paid N\$50 for the car disc which was valid for the whole week and N\$10 for each person, paid each time a person enter the premise. There were about six or seven big white tents which host the various business exhibitors inside the premises. Other small business exhibitors were squashed in small corrugated iron roofs covered with shade nets on the sides at the northern side of the premises while some small business exhibitors erected their own private tents. At the centre of the premises was an *ondjibololo*, an earth-dug room constructed underground where women sit and make clay pots.

The *eumbo* (homestead) that hosted *ovafuko* and where ritual performances of *olufuko* ceremony (which form the core of the controversy between the ELCIN and the Namibian state, which is the focus of my investigation) were held was located at the western end of the premises. This was the place where the ritual leaders performed their ritual act of transforming young maidens into mature women and acquired their new status as marriageable women. I was therefore compelled to present a short account of my experience of this *eumbo* as it formed the basis of the controversies between the ELCIN church and the state.

Eumbo was situated a short distance of about one hundred metres from the business exhibition tents, but both were inside the *Olufuko* festival premises. It was constructed with erected wooden logs made from tree trunks *ladikwa noiti*, which was held together with a horizontal line of small wooden that were placed on either side of the logs and fastened together with barks from omusati trees and oixua (shrubs) *ndee tali kambwa nominghuva domusati*. It has two parallel entrances: *onhu yovafuko* (an entry for the initiates) and the entrance for ordinary people. It was built by a traditional expert *tate* Dapilashipe Halwoodi, who said that he got the skill from his father in the early 1960s.⁵² There was a tent at the entry to the homestead, where we found two town council officials who were providing information and accepting payments from the people who were visiting the homestead. At the same time, the tent was used as a studio by the NBC commentator, known by his nickname as Mapeni Protocol, who had been commentating for NBC radio which live-broadcasted the

⁵²*Olufuko* video interview, August 2012 between Cornelia Erastus, a culture officer from Khomas region and Ndapilashipe Halwoodi

olufuko ceremony. We went inside the homestead to observe and see what was happening. Close to the entrance there was *oshini*, a pounding place for mahangu and sorghum. A short distance from *oshini* there was *oshingobe* a place where *ovafuko* and their relatives were allocated and that is where they cook food and brew *omalodu*⁵³ for the *ovafuko*. At *oshingobe* we found three women busy shaping *omafiya*⁵⁴, while the other two were busy with the pots of *omalodu* which were boiling on the fire. As I have discussed in the second chapter, the first day of the event was known as the day of *omafiya* or *ekoho*.

The homestead had a passageway that led to some sections of the homestead which split into two; one leads to *epata* (cooking section) and *elimba lamunyalombe* (the senior wife's pantry)⁵⁵. The other passageway leads to where *onduda yamwene weumbo* (the husband's sleeping room), *oshitala shamwene weumbo* (an open resting room for the husband) and *eehupa* (the milk churning shed) were located. *Oshoto* (central courtyard) and *ondjuwo yamunyalombe* (the senior wife's sleeping room) were located at the centre of the homestead and were accessible from the passageway. There were small freestanding display boards about the size of an A3 paper on a one metre high stand which provided information to the visitors about a specific section or room at each place. There was not much activity when we arrived in the morning as some people, including the *ovafuko* and *ovapitifi*, had not yet arrived. By the time we arrived at the homestead, only two of the twenty-four expected *ovafuko* were present. They were busy as the women were dressing them in *eenguwo* (singular: *onguwo*) and smearing them with *olukula*.

While we were on our way out of the homestead, we met a group of four *ovafuko* aged between 21 and 24 who were arriving together with their parents and two female *ovapitifi* at this public ritual space. They were dropped off at the entrance of *eumbo* by a vehicle which bore the emblem of the Outapi Town Council. *Ovafuko* wore plaited *omalende* on their heads and were dressed in *odelela*, a long red-and-black striped skirt, which was regarded as traditional and which covers the lower parts of the body from the waist downwards. Their faces showed joyful expressions. Two ritual leaders and parents were ululating and dancing while leading *ovafuko* into the homestead. Journalists, especially those of the NBC TV and radio, newspapers, and individuals were taking videos and pictures. One ritual leader narrated a poem praising Okalongo:

⁵³ *Omalodu* is a traditional light alcoholic brew made from fermented sorghum wheat.

⁵⁴ Three mounds of shaped clay made to support the pot to stand on the fire.

⁵⁵ In the old days when a husband had three or four wives, *munyalombe* was the term for the first wife of the homestead owner.

'Eheee! Eheee!

Okatunda kaHaushona

Okalongo kaHaudano

Okatunda haka uxuala eenghanga

Okalongo haka ombo omakonghola, hehe! Hehe!

Ileni mutale omeya aninga omaengelwa,

Ileni mutale omakala a ninga onyika

Haudano penduka!'

(A small land for Haushona

Okalongo which belongs to Haudano

Okatunda where guinea fowl spent their days

Okalongo where guinea fowl rest at daytime

Come see the water which turns pure,

Come and see charcoals change into fire

Waking up Haudano [*who died long ago so that he could see what was happening*])

Another woman jumps in with praising:

'Wililililili!

Ndahafa wa anduka mefuta vakweni tava filemo ehee! Eheee!

Nailigole, iyalooo!

Omishila mombada

Omishila mombada

Hango ino kuka

Hango ino kuka'

(Ululating

I am happy that you rose from the sea, while others were sinking [*implying that girls have reached the stage of womanhood while others did not*]

Let it be joyous (*the ceremony*)

Wave the [*horse*] tail high up

Let it never cease)

It was almost incredible for me to recognise the faces of the women whom I had known as ritual leaders from Ombadja in Okalongo. These were the same ritual leaders who had also carried out the ritual performance during its debut in 2012 at the same public ritual space in

Ombalantu.⁵⁶ One of the distinguishable leaders was a wife of the prominent Ombadja Traditional Authority⁵⁷ head. Although she was not performing rituals as *omupitifi*, (ritual leader) she was leading *ovapitifi*. Another ritual leader whom I met when I was on official duty at an *olufuko* ceremony which took place at Odila village in Angola was *meme* Mkwaanyoka waMwatukange yaPhillipus who also hailed from Ombadja. She was a well-known



Figure 2. Ritual leaders: Maria Shiponeni, Sara Walaula and Mkwaanyoka waMwatukange yaPhillipus

omupitifi at Ombadja. She was known by her praise name as ‘*woingele pofingo, woimbodi mokahembado*’ (one who has remedy on her neck, one who has aromatic herbs on a small palm basket)⁵⁸ the praising name for Ovakwaanyoka clan. The third *omupitifi* was *meme* Maria Shiponeni from Ondobe-yefidi village, also in Okalongo. These were women who led the ritual process that transformed young women into marriageable women.

3.1.1 The exhibition tents

The bigger area in the *olufuko* premises was the business exhibition site of the festival. We started exploring the small individual food stalls located at the north of the premises. We came across a stall where Frieda, a former classmate of mine at the college of education, and a teacher by profession, was operating. She booked a place where she erected her tent to sell food such as meat, chicken, macaroni, chips and salad. I ordered chips and chicken and while we were eating I asked Frieda how the business was going. Frieda claimed that ‘the business was good as many people were visiting the place. However, she complained that it was not that good as a large number of small business people were only selling food, which made it difficult for some vendors to have customers. She also stated that some exhibitors did not participate in 2013 because during the 2012 session, exhibitors had a problem with electricity which was often switching off and that led to their food that needed to be frozen spoiling.

⁵⁶ Video footage of *olufuko* ritual performance 2012, Ombalantu.

⁵⁷ The Ombadja Traditional Authority is the body of traditional leaders designated to run traditional affairs for the Ombadja polity.

⁵⁸ The name referred to Ovakwaanyoka (snake clan) when praising themselves. Instead of being as poisonous as snake, they have the remedy to cure snakebite.

We proceeded to one of the big white tents where some small business women were selling their products. A range of traditional food such as *omahuku* from kernels of marula fruit that is used to produce *odjove* (marula oil) was sold in this tent. Some women were selling *omaungu* (worms), *omavanda* (dried spinach), *eenhanga* (seeds), *eembe* (wildberries), *eendunga* (palm fruits) and *eenyandi* dried jackalberries (*Diospyros mespiliformis*). Others were selling body adornment products such as *eenyoka*, *ouputu* (threaded copper), *oshide* (dye), *olukula* and earrings. Woodcarved products such as *omaholo* (wooden cups) and milking jugs were also sold. In the next tent we found agricultural products such as *omatanga* (melons), onions, carrots, potatoes, and cabbage that were on display. Some other tents were occupied by different government ministries and State Owned Enterprises (SOE) that were marketing their products and giving information about their services to the public. Companies such as Telecom Namibia and Mobile Telecommunication Network (MTC) which supply the communication network also exhibited their products. On the eastern side of the premises there were pens for animals such as goats and sheep. Companies such as John Deere Tractors, a company that sells tractors and agricultural equipment, were located close to the animal enclosures. According to the *Namibian* newspaper, two hundred and sixty (260) people exhibited their products and services at the festival in 2013.⁵⁹

As the former president Nujoma stated, the *olufuko* event was meant to serve as a springboard for local economic development and attract investors to the Omusati region. It appears that the plan was to position local cultural identity as a commercial entity, ‘a business rising up in the fecund space of the identity economy wherein the corporeal meets the corporate and the essence becomes enterprise’ (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009:9). In this sense, *olufuko* was perceived as an ethnic identity ‘whose object and objectifications may be consumed by others, and therefore be delivered to the market (Howard 2003, cited in Comaroff and Comaroff 2009:10) to benefit local people. However, some people felt that people who participated in the *olufuko* enterprise such as *ovafuko* and *ovapitifi* might not benefit from this commercialisation to the extent of their labour, as Haindongo, a local pastor in Okalongo, argued, which I will discuss later.

3.1.2 The ritual ceremony

On the afternoon of the first day, after all *ovafuko* had arrived in the homestead and dressed in *eenguwo* and some in *odelela*; all *ovafuko* were called to the *oshingobe* which was

⁵⁹*TheNamibian* 14 August 2014

located close to the entry of the homestead. *Omufukiki* instructed them to form up a queue heading the entrance. Although some women had their pots of *omalodu* still cooking on the fire at *oshingobele*, they stared and paid more attention to *ovafuko* than the pots. Many people flocked from their business stalls to watch *ovafuko*. Because these activities were happening outside the homestead, they attracted a number of onlookers.

As was the case in 2012, *ovafuko* from different areas of Owambo appeared and dressed differently. Some put on *odelela* and covered their heads with a headscarf. Their backs and shoulders were covered with an animal skin of which one piece passed over the left shoulder and the other on the right armpit and tied on the ribcage.



Figure 3. *Ovafuko* from different areas of Owambo who went through *olufuko* in Outapi.

Some dressed in *eenguwo* which covered their loins, and covered their faces with threaded baobab bark while others covered their heads with skunk skins. Some had long *omalende* tucked on their head and had their necks covered with *oilanda*. Some of them had copper bead threads tucked on their wrists and ankles. This differentiation occurred because the young women came from different areas such as Ombadja, Oukwambi, Ongadjela, Oukwaluudhi and Oukolonghadhi.

It was a jovial moment as the parents and audience were dancing and ululating while some were dancing to the sounds of the flute that they were blowing. Some were reciting the pride of the *ovafuko* in an idiom:

Iyaloo oinhovele yakulila shimwe, oimhute yatwila shimwe eengolo

(Thanks that the youth have grown up together, that the teens kneel-crawled at once).

While the parents of *ovafuko* were dancing, *ovapitifi* were trying hard to organise *ovafuko* in a queue. *Ningeni utaa omukweyo nawanawa mwataalela monhu yeumbo. Iheeneni iheeneni, inapu pita omhito pomakati.* (Form up a queue leading to the entry. Be closer together, let there be no space inbetween) one *omupitifi* ordered. They lined up, each with her *oufukwena* in front of her. *Ovafuko* were then led by the *ovapitifi* into the homestead at the courtyard of *ondjuwo* and made to sit on *eembadwa* (hides), which were laid down. Small pots of *omalodu* were placed close to each *omufuko*. Here they were anointed and thoroughly smeared with the *olukula* mixture on their bodies. According to Mkwaanyoka, *ovafuko* were smeared by the patrilineal members of their clans. After smearing *olukula*, they were then given *omalodu* and released to relax with their family.



Figure 4. *Ovafuko* pounding *mahangu* and sorghum at *Oshini*

On the second day known as *omakunde*, the mothers of the *ovafuko* were busy preparing baskets of wheat. At around 10 o'clock in the morning, *ovafuko* were called to the courtyard of *ondjuwo* and were smeared with *olukula* all over their bodies again. They were then lined up together with their *oufukwena*.

With a group of women who carried baskets of wheat on their heads, *ovafuko* were led by *ovapitifi* to *oshini*, a wheat-pounding place where they pounded *mahangu* and sorghum. It was interesting as some of the high ranking people such as the governor and some officials also joined the group that pounds. However, it does not appear to have endured as reported in literatures (Estermann 1976; Davies 1987; Salokoski 2006) to *ovafuko* as the whole group of women and *oufukwena* were pounding.

On the third day, early in the morning, we (my wife and I) went to the *olufuko* homestead again. I found Tauti, Ligola and Yoolokeni (not their real names) sitting outside where I would usually find them between their two sleeping tents. They were talking and giggling with each other. Tauti and Ligola were two nieces aged 18 and 19 years respectively. Yoolokeni was also 19 years old. Both came from Okalongo. Tauti and Ligola were both in Grade 12 at Haudano Secondary School. Yoolokeni was reluctant to reveal her educational achievements. I asked them why they chose to join *olufuko*. They hesitated a bit but Ligola opened up enough to say ‘*owo omufyuuluwakalo wetu, she otwa shikula ashike nyi shakala hashiningwa koomeekulu*’ (it is our culture; we followed what our grannies were doing). When I asked them when they became aware that they will *fukala*, Ligola stated that ‘*otwa kala tushishi nale shanyi nga inatu fukala anuwa epata letu otali hulupo*’ (we knew about it long before, because if we do not *fukala* our clan will apparently perish). It seems that the death of the clan (Hahn 1928; Tuupainen 1970; Davies 1987) was the reason by the elders to convince young women to go for *olufuko*.

While I was talking to Ligola and Tauti, the minister of Health and Social Services, Richard Kamwi, visited the homestead. He greeted the *ovafuko* and said ‘*omwa ninga nawalela*’ in his limited Oshiwambo. He further said, ‘this is well done except for these tents pointing to the sleeping tents that were erected in the homestead.’ He seemed to imply that sleeping tents were not supposed to be in there. He proceeded to greet other people at *epata* and other sections of the homestead before he left. I went on to request Tauti and Ligola if they can call others so that I can take pictures of them. They managed to call four others as it was not easy to gather a number of them because they were at different sections of the homestead. Although I paid them ten Namibian dollars (ten South African rands) each to take pictures, many people got an opportunity to stand next to *ovafuko* and have a photo shoot.

At around twelve noon on the day of *okambadjona*, *ovafuko* queued up at *onhu* (the entry to the homestead) and were led by *omupitifi* to *oshingobele*. *Ovafuko* passed through *olumana*⁶⁰ which was erected on their way to *oshingobele* near the entry while the rest walked on the side. At *oshingobele* their foods and *omalodu* were prepared. Food was handed to the *oufukwena* to carry. They were then led to *etambo*, passing through *olumana* and then through *onhu yovafuko*. At *etambo*, they ate and drank together with their symbolic fiancés – small boys, some as young as eight to ten months, who played the role of fiancé. After they

⁶⁰ Olumana is a twig of Omusati tree or shrub with two branches with leaves left over. This twig is erected on the ground for *ovafuko* to cross over between the forked twig

finished eating, they were again led to *oshingobele*, in the same order passing through *olumana* again.

The activities of the day, however, appeared not to run smoothly as many photographers and journalists turned up at the event and they merged their activities with the ritual performances. At times their photo/video-taking disrupted the ritual process as it was the only way that the public interacted with the *ovafuko*. This could be seen as the main interaction between the audience and *ovafuko* as there was no public or stage performance of ritual activities throughout the entire festival. Although the event was viewed as public *olufuko*, the rituals were not publically performed as *ovafuko* had always been confined inside the homestead and were not allowed to hang around outside. All ritual performances were taking place inside and around the homestead environment. The business exhibition and entertainment activities such as music performances were taking place separately in the exhibition tents and on the stages which had been erected for the music performances.

I could say there was no connection between the festival and the ritual performance as there was no collective assembly for the ritual performers, *ovafuko* and the public at large. People who wanted to view *ovafuko* had to get inside the homestead and have some photo shoots together with *ovafuko* and perhaps if lucky to find certain rituals taking place, then one could observe the performances. That was the only instance in which I could say there was an interaction between *ovafuko* and the rest of the public. People were observing rather than verbally expressing themselves. Later in the afternoon *ovafuko* were released to rest and eat.



Figure 5: Some of the *ovafuko* who have undergone *olufuko* in August 2013 at Outapi, taken together with some of their *oufukwena*

The fourth day was *efundula*. The day coincided with the official opening of the ceremony. A number of state representatives who were in the company of the president and the former president visited the homestead on this day. As in the village, the day was meant for the actual celebration with lots of food prepared. No ritual activities took place on this day. Some people were already preparing in the morning for the opening ceremony which started earlier with the arrival of official guests as I will discuss in the next sub-heading. President Pohamba, the Former president Nujoma and other state and foreign officials visited the *olufuko* homestead after the official opening programme to greet and congratulate *ovafuko*. Protocol was strict that not everybody had access to the homestead during the time that the Heads of state and foreign officials were visiting the *olufuko* homestead. Many of us were not allowed inside the homestead at that time. Women were cheering and ululating while leading the officials into the homestead. *Ovafuko* were made to stand in a line as if they were also exhibited while the delegation was passingby. President Pohamba and former president Nujoma greeted them and the delegation proceeded to the exhibition tents. The activities of the day were structured in such a way that the official opening programme did not interfere with the ritual activities.

The fifth day was known as *ondjibulula*. As I observed in Okalongo, *ovafuko* at Outapi also underwent *ekotolo/kotolwa*, a ritual meant to cleanse them and enhance their fertility. They

were first led to *etambo* for a ritual of crossing/jumping the fire and when they finished, they then underwent *okukotolwa* as discussed in Chapter Two. Later in the day, their *omalende* (threaded hair extensions) were untucked to prepare for departure on the following morning. On the last day, *okandjibululwena*, all the people who came for *olufuko* were getting ready as early as nine o'clock for departure to their respective villages.

Becker (2004:49) argues that there were variations in details and durations. She stated changes in practice during the ceremony itself appear to be limited. Unlike at Okalongo where the ritual ceremony that I observed at *meme* Ndilinongwe's homestead lasted for three days, the ceremony at Outapi took six days. This appears to fit well with the arranged programme for the entire festival, which took place over a period of eight days.

In the following sub-section I will reflect on the day of the official opening of the *olufuko* festival.

3.1.3 The official opening program

The day of the official opening of the *Olufuko* festival was full of activities which started early in the morning. The first item, as reflected in the programme, was the arrival of the public at around 08h00 and later the arrival of government officials and dignitaries from the African continent and beyond at 09h00. Members of the public and the exhibitors were entering through the northern entrance while the invited guests were entering through the southern gate. Thousands of people arrived in the morning, filling up about seven tents that were erected inside the *olufuko* premises in addition to the exhibition tents. Different state and traditional representatives as well as African and international dignitaries who came to attend the opening ceremony started filling up one of the two reserved VIP tents which accommodate about two hundred and fifty people in each tent. Business representatives formed up the group that filled the second tent. The arrival of Former President Nujoma was announced through the amplifiers at 09h20, followed by the announcement of the arrival of President Hifikepunye Pohamba at 09h35. As on any state occasion, a red carpet was rolled down in respect of both presidents. Upon his arrival, president Pohamba shook hands with a number of VIPs who were seated in the tent. People were ululating in appreciation of the former president and the president. Both the president and the former president sat at the middle of the front row close to the podium which was erected near the VIP tent. Traditional authority leaders were seated on the side in the same line where the presidents were seated. Ministers, deputy ministers, African government representatives, and other state officials

were also in the same tent in no certain order. The Namibian flag as well as the African Union (AU) and the town council flags were hoisted at the venue.

The official program started at 10h00 with one of the masters of ceremony, Ben Mulongeni, who served in different positions, including Director General of the Namibia Broadcasting Corporation and Director of Planning in the Khomas Regional Council requested the audience to stand up for a rendition of the national as well as the African Union anthem. However, while the people were standing, the master of ceremonies left off from the anthem to allow the marching of culture groups representing traditional authorities as they enter the assembly venue from the *olufuko* homestead. The culture group from Ombalantu Traditional Authority arrived first, followed by Ombadja, Ongandjera, Otjikaoko and Uukolonghadhi. Each group was singing and praising the traditional authority of their origin. After the marching and the groups took their seats, the master of ceremonies requested the gathering again to stand for the anthems; this was followed by a prayer by a Priest, Phillipus Nekwaya Kashima of the Anglican Church in Outapi. Before he said the prayer, he used the opportunity to present his curriculum vitae by introducing himself and his credentials as he claimed that there were many people who did not know him. After mentioning his name he further stated that ‘I am an Anglican priest here in Outapi and at the same time I am also a special advisor to the Governor of Omusati Region...’ It appears that the priest wanted all the people to know about the status of the Anglican church and the festival as it was live broadcasted throughout Namibia. Thus, it appears that while the ELCIN appealed to its members to distance themselves from *olufuko*, local Anglican and Catholic churches (as will be reflected upon in the chapter) were more accommodating of the festival.

Thereafter, the Mayor of Outapi Town, Matheus Ndeshitila stood up to present welcoming remarks. He claimed that *Olufuko* Festival was the third largest social and business gathering that draws a number of investors and customers from countrywide after the Windhoek Show and Ongwediva Trade Fair. He further stated that the festival had generated a significant income since its inception in August 2012, claiming it to be as much as N\$750 000, which he was unable to express in numerical words in front of dignitaries until he resorted into mentioning single digits. After the speech by the town mayor, a culture group; named after the late Doctor Abraham Iyambo the former minister of education, performed *oshiimbo shopaudano* (play song). Young girls of the group were dressed in black skirts and tops made from tanned hides. Although the group’s voices blended into the noise generated by each

group singing its own song, it appeared that their song had less to do with the *olufuko* than with praising Namibia as an independent state.

I could not believe my eyes when I observed that the *ovafuko* were not seated anywhere, despite their being the main focus of – and reason for– the event whose purpose was to transform these young women from maidens into marriageable women. I thought to myself these were the main guests, the brides of the ceremony! I later discovered through the governor’s speech that they were kept inside the homestead. In her own voice she said ‘they are hidden somewhere in the house; you will see them later.’ They did not come to the gathering where people attended the official opening ceremony. They were listening from a distance. I could not hide my feelings; I asked myself: why would they be hidden from the climax of their own ‘ceremony’?

3.1.4 Presentation of speeches

The official opening programme of the festival was characterised by the conveyance of speeches by national politicians and representatives of the traditional authorities. The first person to present her message was the Governor of the Omusati region (the hosting region), *meme* Sophia Shaningwa. Before delivering her speech, she introduced all governmental office bearers in attendance, except for cabinet ministers. She started from the governors, down to the town mayors, constituencies, and town councillors, and expressed her comradely relationship with many of the introduced VIPs as they were either trained or educated together while they were in exile. The Governor assured the public that the festival was a long-lasting plan for the region, stating that ‘*olufuko* is here to stay’. This indicated the determination of the Omusati Regional Office (which the governor heads) to make the *olufuko* ceremony an annual event. The Governor emphasised the importance of the *olufuko* ceremony and reiterated her 2012 opening speech’s points when she accentuated that the young women were not for sale to men, and that they were not forced into the rituals, pointing out that ‘some of them are school-going and have asked permission to be here because they chose willingly to be initiated.’⁶¹ Her emphasis was on the social development of the young girls and she encouraged them to thrive in their academic achievement.

Next to deliver the speech was the head of the Ombalantu Traditional Authority whose speech was partly meant to deliver Traditional Authority policies to their subjects. Speaking

⁶¹Video footage of *Olufuko* ceremony, 2012.

on behalf of the traditional leaders, the head of the Ombalantu Traditional Authority emphasised the importance of the ceremony; he digressed from this topic and spoke about the acquisition of traditional land and gave detailed guidance on the registration of ownership of land by the headmen, appealing to the village headmen to provide the required documents of ownership of land when registering the land to the rightful occupants. During his earlier 2012 speech, he had tried to redefine areas of civil service jurisdiction when he stressed that all community's servants have their respective responsibility and each must ensure his or her fulfilment of such responsibility. Regional as well as traditional leaderships felt that it is imperative that people should respect each other's work and not interfere in one another's obligations or domain as the Traditional Authority's head put it, in his vernacular, that '*kehe umwe okuna oshinakuwanifwa shaye, ndee inatu ikolileni ali moinama yaanhu*' (everyone has a responsibility, so let us not interject in other people's responsibility).⁶² The festival thus provided a platform for explaining traditional authority rules to the civil representatives and their subjects with much emphasis on tolerance against differences in cultures and the respect of each other's roles in the society.

While the Governor and the Head of the Ombalantu Traditional Authority focused on regional issues, the significance of the festival as a national event was emphasised by the national representatives and their influence in the society.

Former President Nujoma, the patron of the *Olufuko* Festival received a special applause from the more than one thousand listeners in attendance amidst the scorching heat. He came to the podium shortly after the *Iita yaKadha* culture group performed a play song about Ovambadja migrant workers who were traveling through Oukwambi to Ondangwa, *tava ka djala okaholo* (to be recruited). Nujoma stressed that the central premise and principle tenets of the ceremony were 'to empower our people and dismantle foreign influences from everyday life'. Although Nujoma did not specify the foreign influence he referred to, his point appears to have been directed at those who suppressed *olufuko* during the colonial era, who he said had 'destroyed our cultural artefacts and symbols of power which they considered as fetish'; it also appeared to have been directed at those who disregard *olufuko* as a social event that brings people together in post-colonial Namibia. He further encouraged both national and traditional leaders to promote traditional ceremonies such as the *Olufuko*

⁶²Video footage of *Olufuko* ceremony, 2012.

Festival, *Oshituthi shomagongo* (marula festival) and other traditional ceremonies, symbols, and rituals associated with traditional culture.⁶³

Nujoma's emphasis was on the importance of formal 'education' and 'cultural upbringing' for the *ovafuko*, who were expected to excel in their education from primary up to the university level and 'become useful citizens of our country as doctors, architects, geologists, marine biologists, agriculturalists, including Mining and Electrical Engineers who are able to tap electricity from solar energy'. He thus emphasised the *ovafuko*'s potential to succeed in modern life and that the participation in *olufuko* will not prevent them from completing their studies and hold a better position in the society. It appears that although the political leaders emphasised the important part that the *olufuko* ceremony plays in the society, the importance of development through formal education and schooling must take priority. It also appears that the Former Head of State was trying to counteract the beliefs of some members of the public that *olufuko* ruins young girls' education as they will no longer go to school after *olufuko* as expressed by some of the Christian leaders, as I will discuss in Chapter Four. Concluding his speech, the former Head of State declared the *olufuko* festival officially open before the Omuhiva Culture Group from Kunene Region came on stage to perform their dance. After the festival was declared open, the official program came to an end and the VIP delegation went on a tour to view the traditional homestead as well as to greet the *ovafuko* who were sitting in the homestead. The delegation continued their tour to the business exhibition tents and later went for a VIP lunch which was organised for the invited guests only.

⁶³Address by Sam Nujoma, the patron of the Olufuko Festival, on 27 August 2013.



Figure 6. President Hifikepunye Pohamba poses for a picture with *ovafuko* during the *olufuko* festival, August 2014. Photo: NAMPA

The president, the former president and other state officials' viewing of the homestead and *ovafuko* during *olufuko* festivals in 2012, 2013, and 2014, reminded me of the Administrator of South West Africa's visit to Owambo which coincided with the *efundula* performance in 1935. This situation led to the protest by the Anglican mission, accusing the Native Commissioner Hahn of 'glamorisation' of the ceremony including the party of the distinguished guests (Hayes 2003). This appears to be a similar scenario to the ELCIN's protest against the hosting of the *Olufuko* Festival (as introduced in the first chapter and discussed in more detail in Chapter Four).

3.2 *Olufuko* accorded a national status: analysis of the opening ceremony

Olufuko ceremonies have been and are still organised at a clan or family level in villages during colonial times and in post-colonial Namibia, as *meevalu* Mkwanyoka has related. However, although the ceremony has been publically held all along, it appears that the idea of hosting a public *olufuko* festival at Outapi town received its motivation from the Namibian state; as the Regional office, Town Council office and Traditional Authority office serve as the organisers, and not the individual family or clan members as is the case in the villages. Thus, with the support of the president of Namibia, the state-led *olufuko* was presented as a national event or part of the state activities in promoting its idea of nationhood. This could be

viewed through Carola Lentz's argument, drawing on her research in Ghana, that in recent times, the local elites have increasingly used festivals as political forums to publicise local interests vis-à-vis the capital, while government representatives, in their speeches to the festival goers, seek to bring government policy closer to the people (Lentz 2001:48).

The manifestation of the state support of *olufuko* and the expression of nationhood through the festival illuminated through the presence of the national symbols such as flag, the singing of the national anthem and the AU anthem, the turnout of prominent national figures and the invitation of many national representatives who enthusiastically attended the event as representatives of their divisions signify the *Olufuko* Festival as a national event. During the gala dinner, which was meant to promote and raise funds for the festival, Nujoma reminded people to remain united in striving for a common destiny, stating, 'let us remember that a people united, striving for common good for all members of the society, will always emerge victorious.'⁶⁴ He further urged all 'stakeholders' to play their part in the promotion of the festival and pointed out a new shopping mall which will be known as Outapi Time Square that will be initiated during the festival.

On the other hand, the incorporation of new media such as the advertising billboards, newspapers, radio broadcasting, websites, and social media such as Facebook during the intensive marketing seems to have informed and motivated a number of people from around the country to participate. It is, however, interesting to learn that the advertising board does not show the event as a business venture but a cultural or heritage ceremony. It appears that the 'heritage' concept was used for a governmental purpose, as Meyer (2013:1) in her study of 'Heritage Dynamics, Politics of Authentication and Aesthetics of Persuasion' states that in 'today's heritage industries, there is a marked trend to fashion heritage in such a way that people are persuaded to appropriate it on the level of experience'. Thus, it appears that through the use of the concept 'culture and heritage', many people were inspired to attend. This was reflected through the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation commentator who live broadcasted the event when he emphasised that it was an '*oshitufi shomifyuululwakalo*' (cultural festival) and by the many women whom I met in the *olufuko* homestead who stated that *otweya kutala omufyuululwakalo* (we came to view culture). Although the event was also meant to boost the regional economy, nothing much was mentioned about the business aspect of the festival.

⁶⁴Address by Sam Nujoma, on the occasion of the launching of the fundraising gala dinner of *Olufuko* Festival, 27 July 2013.

On the other hand, the high turnout of business representatives who contributed through the gala dinner had a significant impact on the success of the event. Eighty-nine businesses and individual families supported the event through fundraising during the gala dinner held on 27 July 2013. Local businesses such as the BH Group, Tona Trade Holding CC, Outapi Engen Service Station and Kambwa Trading were among eighty-nine listed companies and individuals or families that supported the event. Although there was no speech delivered by the business representatives during the official opening, many businesses appeared to have been represented because the second tent was filled mostly by business representatives.

The Head of State, President Hifikepunye Pohamba, former President Sam Nujoma, the patron of the *Olufuko* Festival, and the Minister of Youth, National Services, Sport and Culture, Jerry Ekandjo, whose ministry incorporates the Directorate of National Heritage and Culture Programs, which is responsible for cultural activities, were amongst the prominent figures who came to praise those who had the ingenuity of hosting the *olufuko* event. Other state representatives included Deputy Minister of Home Affairs and Immigration, Elia Kaiyamo, Minister of Gender Equality and Women Affairs, Rosalia Nghidinwa, Deputy Minister of Veteran Affairs, Helena Nikanor, and Deputy Minister of Safety and Security, Erastus Uutoni. Some of these public figures visited the *olufuko* homestead during the course of the festival, such as Richard Kamwi, the Health and Social Services Minister. As he did in 2012, he commended the idea of *olufuko*, stating in his good *Oshiwambo* that '*eshi osho twahala eshi; omwaninga nawalela!*' (This is what we want; job well done!), when he was talking to the official who was serving as his tour guide. He then handed money to some of the *ovafuko* before he proceeded to the other sections of the homestead.

The political significance of the event was based on the national representatives who were invited to the festival. In her analysis of Kakube festival in 1994, Lentz (2001) argues that the significance of the government position on festivals depends on the politician representing the state. 'Which politician is sent by the government is taken as an indication of the significance the government places on the political loyalty of the hosts and his followers, as well as, conversely of the threats posed by the potential opposition' (Lentz 2001:59). This was reflected through the comradely relationship of the invited guests to the governor of the region as she was introducing the VIPs, relating them with the nationalist militaristic past struggle and claimed continuity with the present administration. This corresponds well with Becker (2004:522) who argues that for most of Namibia's post-independence period, the country's public history discourse has emphasised the role played by exile-based armed

liberation politics. The Governor's introduction proved that many of the invited guests had a common history in the Namibian nationalist liberation struggle (1966–1989). The national government representatives did not only represent their ministries or divisions but they were presented as the representatives of all the people and thus their presence also signifies that the event is looked upon as national. Therefore, as Lentz (2001:59) claims for the case of Ghana, the festival has become the site to evaluate the power of the state and the locality, however, in the case of *olufuko*; I would say the relationship has spilled beyond the locality to other neighbouring African states and beyond as is reflected in the next paragraph.

Apart from the local state representatives, there were some luminaries from the African continent and beyond such as the Counsellor of the Embassy of Indonesia in Namibia, the Ambassador of Kenya, Peter Gitau, and Ambassador of Zimbabwe, Chipso Zindoga. Introducing himself, the Kenyan High Commissioner pointed out that the government of Kenya would soon negotiate with the Namibian government to introduce cultural exchange between *olufuko* and the Masai initiation in Kenya. It appears from the Kenyan ambassador's speech that *olufuko* and the Masai initiation have something in common which might form up a distinctive cultural pattern of traditional ceremonies and lifestyles that are unusual from the tourist's perspective and might be very interesting to tourists.

This was not the first time that foreign dignitaries attended the ceremony. In 2012, the *olufuko* ceremony was attended by the Botswana High Commissioner, Duke Lefhoko, his Congolese counterpart, Marie Therese Avemeka as well as the Angolan Consul, Pedro Walipi Kalenga. The presence of African diplomats was meant to signify *olufuko* in such a way that the inspiration was not only Namibian-bound but had an African context as reflected through the speeches especially the Kenyan High Commissioner who affirmed his interest in the ritual performance. It also demonstrated the claim that 'the culture of a people knows no international boundaries' as Lawra Naa Abayifaa Karbo II, the paramount chief of Lawra in Ghana, stated when he was referring to a dancing group from Burkina Faso (Lentz 2001:62). Their attendance appeared to have opened up more possibilities for international cultural exchange. The ceremony signified the status and categorised it as a national event as the Kenyan High Commissioner suggested the negotiations appeared be held at state level rather than at regional level. In the close to twenty years since *olufuko* came out of its hidden-from-the-public-eye nutshell at around 1996 (Becker 2004); it apparently now has turned into a 'public national ceremony' as the major of Outapi signposted in his welcoming speech.

Some people especially in northern Namibia appeared to increasingly embrace the ceremony which got support from the state. This was evident from the increasing number of initiates who took part in the event annually. During the festival's inception in 2012, twelve young women underwent *olufuko*. In 2013, the number increased to twenty-two. This number quadrupled in 2014 when eighty-two young participants went through *olufuko*.⁶⁵ It could also be reflected through the increased amount of income generated from the gala dinner from N\$500 000 in the first year up to N\$750 000 in 2013. It appears that, all in all, the attendance by the President, the former president, and the Minister of Youth, National Service, Sport and Culture has a great national influence.

In a slightly different vein, the high turnout of state representatives at the *olufuko* festival presented a similar images of the past when Native Commissioner of the former Owamboland 'Cocky' Hahn also known as *Shongola* ('the whip') by the locals and his colonial representatives; the Administrators of South West Africa visited Owambo and attended the *efundula* ceremony in large numbers during the colonial period in 1935 (Hayes 2003). A large number of *ovafuko* was organised into lines on this public occasion which massed and moved large groups of young women (Hayes 1998:179). However, as I stated with astonishment in the previous sub-section, at Outapi the *ovafuko* did not attend the official opening ceremony at the premises where the event took place. The governor, however, confirmed through her speech that *ovafuko* were inside the homestead. They remained in the homestead although perhaps they could hear the speeches through the loud amplifiers. Presumably I was not the only person who had wondered about the presence of *ovafuko* as at the next session in August 2014, the president Pohamba himself questioned their whereabouts: 'Where are they?' he asked when looking around the tents. I am, however, not claiming that they were hidden away as the ritual process might not allow them to attend.

In post-colonial Namibia, the state appears to be reconstructing what was not allowed to Christians from the colonial period onwards, as reflected in the former president's opening speech in 2013 where he claimed that 'the colonial powers destroyed our indigenous symbols of power, considered as pagan (*uupagani*) while our people were made to get rid of their own cultural artefacts and in the process, they lost their way of life.' The perception of heritage

⁶⁵ Live broadcast by the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation Television, *TheNamibian*, 8 September 2014, *NewEra*, 25 August 2014.

and the willpower to control one's type of heritage appears to reflect the symbolic enactment of the festival at national level. Through their speeches both the former president and the governor perceived *olufuko* as a tool that could be used to build a strong national identity and a boost to economic development. Thus, *olufuko* was placed at the centre of the activities, which were perceived to strengthen the idea of nationhood and national development.

Speeches by the former president and the governor also signify that the old was not necessarily replaced by the new but exists in mutual adaptation and modifications to suit modern developments such as education. The festival thus appeared to be not only the mode of identity construction, but also to 'bridge the communication gap between local people and the agents of development' as the Regional Secretary of the Lawra tradition in Ghana expressed (Lentz 2001:62). Consequently, it became a social space of meeting the old friends and remembering the past as the Governor related her relationship with most of the state representatives. It also appeared that participants embraced *olufuko* for revitalising their culture and identity, unlike during the colonial period when Christian churches made people believe that participating in or attending *olufuko* was committing sin. The state representation of the festival reflects the government's recognition of the undertaking of the young women into womanhood at a national level in a national festival.

3.2.1 Traditional Authorities and Culture groups

Apart from the high-ranking government office bearers in attendance on the day of the official opening, Traditional Authorities of north-central Namibia, such as Ombalantu, Ombadja, Uukwaluudhi, Uunkolonkadhi, Ongandjera, Uukwambi and Ondonga were represented during the official opening of the festival.⁶⁶ Linked to the Traditional Authorities were culture groups as each Traditional Authority came with a cultural entourage. Culture groups and many other people from the whole of Owambo and Kaoko formed the audience. Individual group members appeared in attires which they perceived as a demonstration of their tradition – the Governor of the region herself showed off her original locality by dressing up in *odelela* (traditional skirt) and a white vest with *oshilanda* (threaded shells) around her neck. She expressed an appreciative question: '*Omuyawete-eeno nyi yafewa yadjala omufyuululwakalo?*' (Can you see how beautiful they look that they wear their tradition?) She was referring to the groups when she introduced the arrival of individual

⁶⁶ Representatives from Otjikaoko Traditional Authority and Vita Thom Royal House from Kunene region the former Kaokoland were also present to witness the official opening

culture groups as they marched from the *olufuko* homestead to the assembly during the opening session. Each culture group held a banner of the *olufuko* festival indicating their traditional authority's name inscribed on top, followed by the same writings as indicated on the advertising boards. The groups were arranged in order as it appeared above starting with the hosting region. They were singing welcoming songs, dancing, waving *omafungu* (horsetails)⁶⁷ and ululating while leading the groups to the venue where the opening ceremony was taking place.

Groups such as Omuhiva Cultural Dance from Kunene, Kaimbi Mundjele Cultural Group, Iita yaKadha Cultural Group, and Abraham Iiyambo Cultural Group were given opportunities to show off their dancing skills, interlude between the program speeches. Traditional performance such as *omupembe*, which is performed by men leaping over the head of another man, was part of the entertainment. Many other dancing groups were offered opportunities to perform on stage throughout the course of the festival.

The presence of representatives of the different traditional authorities who turned up with cultural groups from their respective polities' ensured support for the *Olufuko* Festival, as one can argue following the research by Fairweather (2003, 2006). He found that culture groups were known for their influences through traditional performances at social events as well as village activities, which display a range of rituals including *olufuko*. As Ben Abdallah, the chairman of the National Commission on Culture in Ghana in the 1980s explained when referring to festivals, 'the general idea was to use traditional cultural festivals as an instrument for bringing together the various ethnic groups and forging a new sense of togetherness' (Lentz 2001:54). This could be said to have been the motivation for the presence of different cultural groups at the opening festival. Nonetheless, the sheer number of representatives from different traditional authorities, including even Otjikaoko, a traditional authority from the Kunene Region, the former Kaokoland, which represents the Otjiherero-speaking Himba, Tjimba, and Dhemba people, the local people, and the business people, provides a window of reflection on how different people embrace the idea of a national culture through *olufuko*.

3.2.2 The festival actors

The public *olufuko* ceremony was acted out by different actors from all parts of Namibia. The event was attended by high profile delegates who acted out the public ceremony, starting with the master of ceremonies, Ben Mulongeni, the former director of the NBC and a former

⁶⁷ These are hides of horses tails knitted on wood handle, which are used for celebrations

director of Planning in Khomas Regional Council who came from Windhoek, and a high number of spectators who came from across the country, signifying the elevation of the *olufuko* ceremony to the status of a national symbol. It also indicated how *olufuko* has become instrumental in constructing a shared national identity. It appears that the presence of people from different regions and communities countrywide presented a ‘celebration of commonality’ (Akuupa 2011:245) as it suggests a common history and an intended common national destiny through diversity. Actors from Ongadjera brought unprocessed salt which they took from the Ongadjera salt pan to be used in the ceremony, crushing it into fine powder and making salt lumps which eventually were shaped as dolls, symbolising the future children for the *ovafuko*, thus relating fertility. These dolls were used during the *ekotolo* rituals as I discussed in the previous chapter.

Other actors acted in numerous positions such as *ovapitifi* (ritual leaders). Apart from young women and their parents who came from other Owambo traditional polities, I observed that the performance of the *olufuko* ceremony was carried out by *ovapitifi* and *ovafuko* who had travelled to Outapi from Ombadja on both sides of the Namibia-Angola border. Four of the *ovafuko* that I spoke to came from across the border from Angola. It appeared that Ombadja was regarded as more traditional as the rituals were acted out by people from that area.

3.2.3 Musicians

Local musicians were also a signature attraction at the event. Music plays a crucial role, as it penetrates the public sphere, and its influence is strong. As reflected in the week-long activity programme, musical performances by local performers – selected from different ethnic groups – took place every day. A week-long programme shows that a number of local musicians were invited to perform on stage, of which some performed shortly after the official opening programme. Live shows were delivered by leading Namibian Kwaito musicians, such as The Dogg, and Gazza, as they are known by their stage names; pop music by Blossom, Tequila, and the Otjiherero music, known as Oviritje, by Bullet yaKaoko, which attracted a number of spectators. Other artists, such as veteran musician Papa Shikongeni also gave a live show. What was interesting is that although the event was supposedly focused on the *olufuko* ceremony, it appears that the songs of the musicians had little regard for the *olufuko* event. Those that I have listened to made no reference to *olufuko*; they only played their usual repertoire. However, the attraction of the people, mainly the youth, to the tunes and drum beats appeared to be immeasurable. The performance by music bands such as

Bullet yaKaoko, an Oviritje traditional music group which is not ethnically Owambo, reflects notions of nationalism and common citizenship as Namibians that could come together to celebrate their diversity as a nation. Bullet yaKaoko is known for its traditional musics which draw from highly localised idioms of tradition and origins that evoke belonging and identity (Wolputte and Bleckmann 2012:415). Wolputte and Bleckmann argues that Bullet yaKaoko does not make references to the national discourse which is promulgated by Namibian ruling political elite which define Namibia-ness by reference to the hardships experienced under apartheid and the legitimacy to the struggle for liberation. Contrary, Bullet's music and performances are characterised by phrasing the modern in terms of the old and phrasing the old in terms of the new (ibid.) In 2010, the music group claimed local and national celebrity status as it was heralded as the representatives and ambassadors of the nation (ibid.)

3.3 Cultural heritage and identity discourse in post-colonial Namibia and the reconstruction of *olufuko*

Shepherd (2008), a South African heritage scholar, notes that the notion of heritage offers a language through which to discuss contested issues of culture, identity, and citizenship. He states that 'heritage is of the past in the present' (Shepherd 2008:117), but argues that the exact nature of the relationship is unclear and that the notion of heritage is always experienced from the individual standpoint. The development of heritage and culture programmes in Namibia was built upon a constitutional guarantee and fostered by the Directorate of National Heritage and Culture programmes. With the introduction of the Namibian Constitution which gives rights to the individual to practice the culture of his/her choice (Article 19), the establishment of the Directorate of National Heritage and Culture Programme, and the National Heritage Council, tasked with the promotion of national heritage and culture (Culture in Namibia 1991), the discourse of heritage became one of the significant tools for building the nation state with the concern on cultural heritage.

During the process of cultural review in Namibia in 1991, Andre Strauss and Leo Kenny⁶⁸ claim that all heritage and cultural development perspectives took into account the colonisation, occupation, land alienation, and its socio-linguistic and cultural consequences – what has amounted to cultural dislocation for most Namibian (Strauss and Kenny 1991). They further claim that at independence, the Namibian state was faced with the challenge for creating a national culture that reshapes, redirects, and reunites the nation by counteracting

⁶⁸ Andre Strauss was the deputy director of National Heritage and Culture Programme and Leo Kenny a consultant from the Swedish International Development Authority. They co-authored *Culture of Resistance*.

the process of ‘cultural disinheritance of the indigenous people by the European cultural hegemony’ (Strauss and Kenny 1991:3). Heritage has thus become a medium ‘through which powers and beliefs, politics and history were expressed and contested’ as Hayes (2003) pointed out when she referred to *efundula* during pre-colonial and colonial times.

Soon after independence, the discussion of cultural expression injected new ideas of culture that foster ‘national consciousness’ (Strauss and Kenny 1991:3) with the aim of developing the Namibia material and spiritual culture, and fostering participation in cultural expression through a variety of media, music, dance, drama, poetry, creative writing, popular culture, and crafts (ibid.) which signified belonging to a nation state. In addition, the National Heritage Council (NHC),⁶⁹ in conjunction with the Museum Association of Namibia (MAN),⁷⁰ set up an initiative campaign to identify and document sites with heritage significance in different regions throughout the country. Through the NHC and MAN campaign programme, known as Heritage Hunt, communities nationwide were able to suggest cultural heritage places, objects, buildings, monuments, and plants which were deemed of particular historical, architectural, or archaeological values that carry a national legacy to be classified as heritage.⁷¹ With the constitutional guarantee and the support of these institutions, a public discourse of cultural aspects and the importance of heritage were promoted. As Abungu (1996) argued, heritage thus became a concern for both the people and the state and the Namibian citizenry, becoming involved in a diverse discourse on heritage and identity.

Heike Becker argues that in the first years of its independence, up until the mid-1990s, the post-colonial Namibian state was still wary of the discourse of ‘culture’, because in the apartheid past ‘culture’ denoted separation (Becker 2011: 536), as some Namibians still felt that culture had been the ‘the bases of social and political discrimination and oppression’ (Garuba and Raditlhalo 2008:36). It appears that the fear over cultural expression was inevitable due to the past experience that culture had served as a tool for the colonial segregation of people. On the other hand, the arrival of missionaries in the late nineteenth century, has been said to have played a role in discouraging the appreciation of ‘culture’ by dispossessing ‘cultural artefacts and symbols of power which they considered as fetish and

⁶⁹The National Heritage Council is the national administrative body responsible for the protection of Namibia’s natural and cultural heritage.

⁷⁰ MAN is a non-profit organisation that represents museums and supports museum development in Namibia.

⁷¹www.nhc-nam.org accessed on 11 November 2013.

Our Heritage, Our Pride, A heritage Handbook for Namibia, 2011: 57.

claiming to burn them but instead find their way into museums and private collections in Europe' as former president Sam Nujoma claimed.⁷² It appears that although the colonial government and later the apartheid administration was promoting culture, some of the people were not satisfied with the system of apartheid governance and with the missionaries who were working under the colonial government. Thus, during the first few years of independence, some people felt that in the past, culture was aimed at dividing people, as discussed in the first chapter.

This inference about culture which seemingly came as a result of the ethnic division of the Namibian people based on their cultural background, land, and education during colonial times (Strauss and Kenny 1991) made people believe that talking about and/or practising traditions such as *olufuko* were not morally right in the Christian view. It appears to be the reason why shortly after independence some section of the population felt anxious talking about issues regarding culture and tradition, as indicated by Becker (2011), that SWAPO politicians, as well as the small circle of Namibian intellectuals were not content with the notion of 'cultures' as distinctive ways of life of different people. Becker points out that rural women across the country abhorred the notion and expressed their willingness to do away with 'harmful traditional practices', which were perceived as detrimental (Becker 2011:537).

A new notion of cultural heritage came about in the wake of the government's efforts of re-shaping and redirecting culture so that it would reflect the idea of nationhood. The fact that culture was used as a colonial strategy for political and social discrimination prompted the government of the independent Namibia from about the mid-1990s to introduce strategies for national reconsolidation of cultural elements, such as the reintroduction of cultural festivals with new objectives, as Akuupa (2011) has shown. The state pursued a nation-building strategy through accommodating ethnic diversity by creating a sense of the nation as a civic community, rooted in values that can be shared by all ethnic components of the national society (Policy on Art and Culture 2001:10). Akuupa (2011) claims that cultural performances took a new shape from the former colonial mentality of dividing the nation to be constructively used as an important tool that fosters nation-building and national reconciliation with an expressed emphasis on the notion of 'unity in diversity'. Akuupa's analysis seems to apply not only to national cultural festivals but also to other aspects of

⁷²Address by Sam Nujoma, on the occasion of the second celebration of the 'Olufuko cultural festival', Outapi on 27 August 2013.

diverse cultural background such as regional ceremonies which signify ethnic identity, and which are collectively perceived and equally important as national identity. As part of such cultural practices, *olufuko* was also deemed an important regional ceremony ‘through which the perceived social reality is showcased by actors’ (Akuupa 2011:150). The festival has been equated to other ethnic festivals as the governor of the Omusati region Sophia Shaningwa stressed during her 2012 opening speech that *olufuko* has got a place in an independent Namibia like other ethnic festivals. Her emphasis seems to stress that ethnic culture such as these state festivals appears to signify ‘regional or ethnic identity’ as Becker (2011) demonstrates.

The dialogue on heritage and the interest in reclaiming traditional ‘roots’ reflects itself through the urbanites who wanted to appropriate their ‘traditional’ life through a range of traditional activities as a way of reaffirming their regional, traditional roots. Becker (2004) exemplifies this through the *olufuko* ceremony which was held in 1998 in a town outside Owambo, for an individual bride, a University graduate and the daughter of a leading SWAPO Women’s Council politician, who went through *olufuko* rituals before the church wedding (Becker 2004:53). According to Becker, the ritual lasted for only a few hours and lacked ritual defining activities except for modern ritual garb and the characteristic drumming and dancing (ibid.) However, it appears that a number of the emerging urban elites have found it worthwhile to undergo the same rituals as the ritual organiser who carried out the proceedings, and reported that ‘two other members of the town’s emerging elite had requested her to organise *omafundula* for their soon-to-be married daughters’ (ibid.) Therefore, it is noteworthy to point out that culture had taken centre-stage in the analysis of the construction of regional identities and ‘modes of self-identification’ (Garuba and Raditlhalo 2008) in post-colonial Namibia.

3.4 *Olufuko* as heritage development for tourism

The anthropologist Ian Fairweather (2006:720), who studied cultural tourism and the politics of heritage in Namibia has pointed out that the populated flatland of northern Namibia have had little to offer on the country’s tourism attraction such as dramatic scenery and abundant wildlife as it was seen to be the main attraction in the past. This was illuminated through a report on the tourism potential of the four regions that constituted the former apartheid ‘Owamboland’ by the Northern Namibia Environmental Project (NNEP) (ibid.) The report concluded that tourism activities were virtually non-existent and that ‘cultural heritage’

would be the main product in any future tourism development (Fairweather 2006:721). Another report (Denker and Schalken 1998), cited by Fairweather (2006) advised that the promotion of tourism should capitalise on the fact that the culture of the majority of the Namibian population was rooted in the region.⁷³ He argues that since tourism was widely believed to bring wealth and development, many localities had begun to actively promote their cultural attractions. The arrival of a large number of tourists led to a proliferation of companies organising bus tours that deliver tourists to selected attractions. The communities hoping to benefit from tourists recognised that the key to developing a tourist attraction successfully was to have it included on the tour-organising itineraries. Thus, villagers find themselves competing to offer a distinctive yet recognisable ‘product’ that the tour operators think their customers want (ibid.) *Olufuko* seems to have been considered just such a ‘distinctive yet recognisable’ product that could be offered to tourists by the Omusati Regional Council.

From the above point of departure, it appears that the construction of a homestead in the modern setting of the *Olufuko* festival premises stemmed from the idea of heritage development for tourism purposes as advocated by the state as the late Namakalu, the former CEO of Outapi Town Council stated that the festival was meant ‘to attract tourists’ (*TheNamibian*, 27 July 2012). His statement seems to imply the commercialisation of ethnic culture. As Comaroff and Comaroff (2009:10) stated, ethnicity in this sense refers to membership in a culturally constituted people – one with customary ways that it takes to be distinctive and to which it is affectively attached. The interest in developing a distinctive tourism industry for commercial purposes which might have influenced the construction of the homestead has been juxtaposed with the original idea of maintaining traditional culture in the villages. This is reflected through the objective of the *Olufuko* Festival, amongst others, ‘to create tourism opportunities and to strengthen the local and regional economy’⁷⁴ as it was also articulated by the then CEO of the Outapi Town Council. Culture here appears to be mediated by a market, the idea of ‘commercialisation of identity’ (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009), whereby *ovafuko* were displayed and rituals performed in the homestead. In this section, I will look at some factors that appeared to have motivated the construction of the *olufuko* homestead in Outapi town. I will discuss how the development of heritage, and especially the construction of the homestead as a heritage site, reflected the idea of tourism

⁷³ Denker and Schalken, *Tourism Survey in the four ‘O’ Regions*, p.vi, cited in Fairweather 2006:721.

⁷⁴ www.outapitc.org.na accessed on 16 November 2013.

development in the region. I argue that the homestead provided an opportunity for tourists to meet the locals and experience their livelihood but more meaningfully it was the place that hosted the first ever public state-organised 'rite de passage' (van Gennep 2004) ceremony that transformed young women into marriageable women after independence.

Fairweather (2006) demonstrated the hope of the local Owambo people for benefitting from tourism as the dynamic force to have the diversity of cultural products included in the tour routes. Thus, the idea of constructing a traditional homestead could be looked upon in the same frame. It seems that the organisers wanted to have something that replicates originality, and thus the homestead was built in the *olufuko* premises with tree trunks, which were joined together, reflecting their concern of what they perceived as a representation of the past that gives weight to the cultural sense of reality, which attract tourists in the area. The idea appears to have replicated the old public exhibition of a homestead which was set up in Windhoek Agricultural Show of 1935, in which representatives of the different Owambo kingdoms were exhibited for scientific research (Silvester 1998:17). Nevertheless, the objectives of the Windhoek Agricultural Show homestead appeared to be completely different from the Outapi homestead as the former was meant for scientific research. While the tourists saw the homestead as a place for tourist consumption, the business people saw it as an opportunity to lobby for income, while some locals perceived it as 'our tradition', a sacred place for traditional rituals though perhaps different locals might view it differently. Each understanding entailed a particular relation to the space and its appeal.

There is no doubt that the Oshiwambo homestead, and the performance of the *olufuko* ceremony there, culminate in a centralised national event that reflects a strong sense of nationhood, as exemplified by Lentz (2001) in her study of the politics of cultural festivals, where she analysed the Kakube and Kobine festivals in Ghana. According to Lentz, Kakube festivals, which started as a family harvest festival have over the years developed into an important collective occasion of cultural self-affirmation, while the Kobine festival in Lawra developed into a modern regional cultural festival that attracted visiting national politicians and the media (Lentz 2001:49). *Olufuko*, which was traditionally practiced at a family or clan level – as alluded by *tate* Nakapala as well as *meekulu* Mkwanyoka, appeared as a state project which in turn might grow into a national heritage event which reflects regional diversity. This could also be viewed through families from other ethnic groups that joined Aawambo such as the family of Veneruru Kambindja's, a 17-year-old Himba girl who had

undergone *olufuko* together with Owambo girls during the 2014 session (*The Namibian*, 8 September 2014).

The motivation for the development of heritage places and traditional products for tourism purposes was headed by the Namibian state representatives: Omusati Regional Office and Outapi Town Council as well as the Traditional Authorities. The Traditional Authority has a major role to play as outlined in the Traditional Authorities Act of 1995 (Act 17 of 1995) that Traditional Authorities have functions in relation to culture, language, tradition, values, cultural sites, and ceremonies (Policy on Art and Culture 2001). The three state bodies were the main instruments in organising the *Olufuko* Festival. The government emphasises the importance of promoting the attraction of Namibia's varied culture and heritage as part of tourism products which generate income for the local communities (Consuming Culture 2011). As Fairweather points out, by encouraging heritage performances, the post-colonial state seeks to include the cultural identities of its diverse subjects whilst at the same time subsuming them in a unified national culture (2006:722). Different ministries, including the Ministry of Youth, National Service, Sport, and Culture as the custodian of the heritage and culture programme and the Ministry of Environment and Tourism 'encouraged the development of culture tourism enterprises'.⁷⁵ It appears that with the motivation from the Government and varieties of cultural stakeholders and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), local people developed the wish for historical and cultural reconstruction of the past through all forms of arts such as cultural festivals and cultural villages wherein traditional life is portrayed. It was not impossible that the idea of constructing a homestead in the *Olufuko* festival premises by the Omusati Regional Office emanated from the government's efforts and desire for the development of heritage and historical reconstruction of the past. At the same time, the national policy on tourism of 2008 which identifies cultural tourism as a prioritised form of tourism, which covers a wide range of activities such as storytelling, dance and sensory feelings (Akuupa 2013) might also have motivated the initiative. Therefore, the great concern of replicating what is perceived as originality appeared to be inevitable.

Through the government's strategy of promoting culture and identity, some youth culture groups found opportunities for commercialising heritage for generating income by acting out their identity to tourists through performing traditional dances (Fairweather 2006).

Fairweather discusses such youth initiatives when traditional dances were performed for

⁷⁵ Cultural and Heritage Conservation Workshop, National Museum of Namibia, on 08-17 March 2011, See also *Our Heritage, Our Pride: A heritage handbook for Namibia*.

tourists in the 1990s at the homestead located at Nakambale museum at Olukonda, the old mission church (Fairweather 2006:721). The development of the *olufuko* homestead appears to be in the same frame as the homestead near the mission station at Olukonda which serves traditional cuisine to tourists visiting the old mission church (Fairweather 2003, 2006). Although the two homesteads do not provide the same service, it appears that both seemed to have focused on the development of heritage that attracts tourists in the area, which in turn benefits the local people through culture tourism. Also, International funding programmes such as the Namibia-German Special Initiative Programme (NGSIP) that are concerned with cultural development have a special interest in supporting development and social consolidation at local community level.⁷⁶ This also has an influence on the development of the homestead.

The construction of the *olufuko* homestead appears to benefit local people in one or another way. Although the visitors to the *olufuko* premises pay entry tickets at the main entrance to the premises, people who were interested in viewing *ovafuko* had to pay again when they enter the *olufuko* homestead as well as whenever they speak to or are taking pictures of the *ovafuko*. This appeared to reflect that the establishment of the traditional homestead was commoditised as a generative method of self-sustaining the heritage industry and providing income for the local community. I thus conceptualise commoditisation in Erik Cohen's (1988) terms in which he stated that it is a process by which things (and activities) come to be evaluated primarily in terms of their exchange value, in a context of trade, thereby becoming goods (and services), developing exchange systems in which the exchange value of things (and activities) is stated in terms of prices from a market (Cohen 1988:380). With the payments attached to *olufuko* performance in the homestead, it gives the impression that the ritual of *olufuko* has formed a market. However, the question as to who benefits from this cultural-business branding initiative is important as Comaroff and Comaroff (2009:12) warn that the 'process might also develop dissent, especially when it does not equally benefit the local elites and the grassroots people', such as *ovafuko* and the ritual leaders. Comaroff and Comaroff give an example of the Mambaso Tribal Authority where local people were involved in bow hunting to attract tourists. However, the accusation has been made that it benefits the elites to the exclusion of the poor.

⁷⁶ Cultural and Heritage Conservation Workshop, National Museum of Namibia, on 08-17 March 2011, see also Our Heritage Our Pride 2011, Consuming Culture 2011

3.5 Religious Representations

Although the event was eschewed as un-Christian by the ELCIN church⁷⁷ as I will discuss later, it appears that not all religious denominations were equally opposed to the ideas of hosting *olufuko* as both the 2012 and 2013 *olufuko* ceremonies were officially opened by local Christian priests. In 2013, the ceremony was opened with a prayer by Rev. Phillipus Nekwaya Kashima, an Anglican Priest in Outapi, whereas the 2012 ceremony was opened by Father Josh Thomas of the Catholic Church in the area. In addition, a local newspaper reported that one of the ELCIN's high profile religious leaders was part of the organising cadre of the *olufuko* festival (*The Namibian*, 27 July 2012). Becker (2004:50) argued that in some aspects, Christian churches, today all under Namibian leadership have taken a more accommodating stance toward the initiation of young women. During her fieldwork in 1996, Becker pointed out how she came across a Catholic school where students who had taken part in *efundula* presented a drama of their experience. She also met a ritual female *omupitifi* who was also an active member of the Anglican church. The same observation was made by Hayes (2003) who studied the historicity of *efundula* in the colonial Namibia, indicated that the degree of condemnation varied between different denominations. Hayes pointed out that in more recent years in post-colonial Namibia, the Anglican and Catholic churches appear to have increased their tolerance though the Lutheran church remains opposed. Becker points out that the 'Lutheran church may still be harder on young women who undergo initiation but even ELCIN no longer proscribes the mere observation and celebration of the ceremony' (2004:50). However, it appears that with the recent development of the 'revival' (as some people view it) of the *olufuko* performance in the form of the public festival at Outapi, the ELCIN has taken steps to distance its members from the ceremony.

As I will discuss in the next chapter, the ELCIN released a letter after all the ELCIN pastors held a meeting from 16–19 April 2012 calling on all its congregants 'not to associate themselves with *olufuko* practice' and citing 2 Cor. 5:17 ("Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"). The letter showed some disapproval of all forms of connections with *olufuko*. With the divergent views among different religious denominations and their members on the perception of *olufuko*, it seems that there was no unity among the religious leaders over the validation of *olufuko* as an expression of culture and identity. Also, the attendance by some church representatives and

⁷⁷ The Namibian 28 August 2012, The Namibian 23 August 2012

the sanction of the ceremony by other denominations appeared to have deepened the division among different denominations over the performance of *olufuko*.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown how the growing discourse on heritage has manifested itself through the performance of *olufuko* with the state as the main proponent in its development. I have demonstrated how the *olufuko* ceremony was appropriated by the state and acted out by national and traditional leaders, which signified the recognition of the event as a national festival. While the government was concerned with the creation of a national culture, which creates nationhood through *olufuko*, it also saw the opportunity for the national and traditional leaders to communicate to the people at the grassroots level. At the same time, the festival became an avenue for local income generation, as the state transformed heritage products to meet the needs for cultural tourism; the idea might have influenced the establishment of a homestead to host *olufuko* rituals in the region.

I have presented how a certain section of the population performs tradition as a way of demonstrating national citizenship through their diversity and that transmitting images and representations of the new society and its past to a perceived growing audience of international visitors (Rassool 2000:5). I have also shown how the discourse of heritage has been changing and how the different people have embraced various notions on what should be practiced as part of social values and norms of the society which express identity within a changing world. In the next section, I will discuss the actual contestation over the recently held state supported *Olufuko* Festival by presenting diverse views from religious leaders, the state representatives, and the people, especially *ovapitifi* (ritual leaders), from the areas where *olufuko* is still practiced. I will demonstrate that while one section of the society sees *olufuko* as irrelevant and needing to be dispensed with in order to pave the way for modern development, the *olufuko* actors see it as a cultural expression of identities and modes of self-representation that should be taught together with modern education to impart knowledge and skills to the young girls.

Chapter 4 Contested notions of *olufuko* in post-colonial Namibia

On one morning in August 2013, I visited *meme* Ndilinongwe, a woman from Omatwadiva village who hosted the *olufuko* ceremony that I had attended in December 2012. My intention was to take to her the prints of photographs of Kashoondaha and Ndapanda, the two *ovafuko* that I had taken pictures of during the ceremony, as I have discussed in Chapter Two. I had more on my mind though: I was interested to find out more about the aftermath of the 2012 *olufuko* ceremony that was held in her house and their current relationship with the religious leadership of their congregation after the ceremony. This was because the cleric of their Eshakeno church had warned their church members earlier in July 2012 not to participate in *omalufuko* (plural) ceremonies after the congregation leadership received the pastoral letter (as revealed in Chapter One) from the ELCIN head office. The pastoral letter warned all ELCIN members not to participate in *olufuko* after rumours surfaced that the Omusati Regional Council office was planning to host an *olufuko* ceremony at Outapi town, which was expected to take place in August 2012. When I entered their homestead I found Ndilinongwe and her daughter Kashoondaha, one of the two *ovafuko* who had undergone *olufuko* in 2012, pounding *mahangu* at *oshini* while her mother Ndilinongwe was refining the flour. Ndilinongwe told me to follow her to *oshitala*. After we exchanged greetings, I gave her the pictures and we passed pleasant comments about the pictures. While she was busy selecting the best pictures, I asked Ndilinongwe when she will hold *olufuko* again. Her response was:

'Ondatila shanyi otwali twaifanwa kongeleka tukapulwe kutya ingu etulombwela tuninge olufuko olye' (I am scared because we were summoned to the church to be questioned on who told us to carry out the initiation).

Erastus: *omwali muli vangapi lwamho?*

(About how many people were you there?)

Ndinongwe: *'Otwali ovendji nai, ongeleka aihe oyali ina ovanhu, naamba vaile kOmbalantu ovali vaifanwa.'* (We were so many; the church was almost full even those who went to *olufuko* at Ombalantu were called [for the hearing with the church cleric]) *'Omanga inatuya moshongi efiku etivali, otwa lombwelwa tukapite moshinyanga opo ingu unamo eendjo doiyandjiwa udifute'* (on the second day of the meeting, before we started the meeting, we were told to pass in the office so that those of us who incurred annual contribution debts should settle our accounts).

Erastus: *Ee! Okwati nee ngaali moshongi?* (Ee! what was the solution of the meeting?)

Ndilinongwe: *Otwa kala atupulwa kutya ingu etulombwela tu fukike olye, nonga mba vaile kOmbalantu ova monako ovana vamba tava unganekke olufuko. Ndee atu lombwelwa kutya aatu kala pondje yeongalo oule weedula mbali novafuko vetu.* (We were asked who told us to do *olufuko* and if those who went to Ombalantu had seen the daughters of those organising *olufuko*. We were then told that we were excommunicated together with our *ovafuko* for a period of two years.)

These were the words of *meme* Ndilinongwe, expressing her fear of the worst after she and her *ovafuko* were summoned by their church cleric. According to *meme* Ndilinongwe, the number of those who were suspended from church had increased because even those who went to perform *olufuko* or took their daughters to undergo the rituals at the *olufuko* festival in Outapi were excommunicated. Ndilinongwe has already expressed her concern during the ceremony when she said: ‘*waalye mbela tavaka enda omakufilo*’ (I do not mind, perhaps they will go for confession lessons).⁷⁸ She said this when I asked her. Her story was, however, not the only one as it has already been alleged that the ELCIN church does not allow its members to take part in *olufuko* (Becker 2004; Miettinen 2005). As I will discuss in this chapter, excommunication entails that an excommunicated member will not get all privileges of the church services as the rest of congregants. However, an individual was still a member of the church and could attend Sunday services.⁷⁹

The above vignette relates how some of the local pastors reacted to the church members who participated in *olufuko* (*omalufuko*-plural) which took place either in the villages or at the public *olufuko* ceremony that took place at Outapi town. In the previous chapter, I have discussed the public state enactment of *olufuko* which was performed at Outapi and how the state supported *olufuko* which gives it a national significance. The performance of *olufuko* has caused a stir between the people who support it and the ELCIN local pastors to which some of these people belong.

This chapter’s discussion centers on the contestation between ELCIN churches, on the one side, and the state and people who participated in *olufuko* at another. The chapter attempts to investigate the reality on the ground with regard to the relationship between ELCIN and the state. In the introduction of this chapter I showed how *Meme* Ndilinongwe stating that

⁷⁸ This refers to the confession lessons offered by ELCIN churches to their members who are partially excommunicated by the church and want to confess and repent because of their transgressions against the church regulations. After attending confession classes for three weeks, a member can then stand at the church altar and confess before the congregation.

⁷⁹ Interview with Bishop V.V. Nambala, Oniipa ELCIN office, 5 April 2013.

members of the ELCIN church in Okalongo who participated were called to the congregation office to be questioned and were eventually excommunicated. The information was later confirmed to me by *Meme* Nyeuvo Ekandjo, a senior manager in local economy development at Outapi Town Council and member of the *Olufuko* Festival Preparatory Committee who also revealed that the regional office has received complaints from *ovafuko* who had undergone the ceremony in 2012, that pastors of some churches had excommunicated their members who participated in the ritual event. Hence this section seeks to investigate the tension between ELCIN's ambivalent position with regard to *olufuko* and the government policies that aim at promoting national identity through regional diversity.

4.1 A move forward

Meme Ndilinongwe's story of excommunication was not the only incidence as ELCIN churches had excommunicated church members even before these stories came to light (Becker 2004; Miettinen 2005). People in villages knew that *olufuko* was not allowed by ELCIN. However, they insisted as *meme* Hileni stated that: *nga omunhu afukala kotaka kufilwa ngaa ndee tashuna mongeleka!* (If one has undergone *olufuko*, she can still go for confession and come back into the church!) Becker (2004) has pointed out how people have to attend repentance classes after they are excommunicated. Based on information from the ritual leaders and the informal discussions with some *ovafuko* such as Kashoondaha and Ndapanda who expressed that they will attend the repentance classes after they have undergone *olufuko*, I decided to take a step further to speak to some of the local pastors, so that I could hear what they have to say with regard to the ELCIN church's stance in the performance of *olufuko* rituals. As I noted in Chapter One, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN) is a Lutheran denomination based in Namibia. It grew out of the work which the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission began in 1870 among the Owambo and Kavango people, in the north of what became German South West Africa in 1884. It was formerly known as the Evangelical Lutheran Owambo-Kavango Church. The name was changed to ELCIN in 1984. ELCIN played a significant role in the opposition to apartheid in Namibia.

To get their contacts I bought the ELCIN annual calendar where most if not all their contact details are listed. Firstly I wanted to interview two local pastors of the two ELCIN congregations in Okalongo: Eshakeno and Onandjaba churches. Okalongo was where *olufuko* still practiced and it was where *ovafukiki* and a number of *ovafuko* who went through the rite

at Outapi came from. These churches also serve some of the people from across the border, in Angola, where some women from Okalongo went through *olufuko*. Some of the young women who went through *olufuko* at Outapi also came from this area but in Angola. It was unfortunate that I could not speak to the pastor of Onandjaba church as he had to attend to family matters. When I tried for the second time, he suggested that because of the sensitivity of the *olufuko* debate I should rather speak to Bishop Nambala, the bishop of ELCIN's Eastern Diocese, and generally regarded as the head of ELCIN. I managed, however, to speak to pastor Lukas Pendukeni Haindongo of Eshakeno congregation. Secondly, I planned to speak to the heads of ELCIN, the presiding Bishop Vaino Shekutaamba Nambala. At the same time I also planned to interview Bishop Josaphat Shanghala, the Bishop of the Western Diocese which includes the Omusati region, which hosted the *Olufuko* Festival and where the two congregations fall. Nambala and Shanghala were consecrated as ELCIN Bishops at Ongwediva ELCIN Centre on 13 March 2011. Nambala runs the ELCIN as a whole, deputised by Josaphat Shanghala who was leading the Western Diocese. Shanghala had retired by the end of 2013.

There is an idiom in Oshiwambo, which says: *weenda kombala, upula yo peemhundo* (when you are going to visit the palace, you should ask the neighbouring houses) this was what I did before I visited the Bishops' offices. I asked pastors how to access the Bishops' offices. Nambala agreed to attend to my interview when I called his office. However, it was not easy for me as a government officer to speak to Bishop Shanghala during that time as it was alleged that there was conflict between him and the *Olufuko* Preparatory Committee. Apart from the Bishop's disapproval of the planned *Olufuko* Festival, there was another allegation that Shanghala sneaked in the *olufuko* homestead while it was still under construction as I will discuss later. Because of my position as a government employee, and moreover a culture officer, approaching him for an interview might appear as if I was spying on him. I was therefore advised that it was not a good idea to interview Shanghala during that time. I made another attempt, however, and managed to speak to Bishop Shanghala on 17 October 2014, when he expressed his views and ELCIN's position on *olufuko*.

I further planned to interview and get the understanding of ELCIN pastors in Windhoek, the capital city of Namibia. Some of the people who presided over the *olufuko* festival opening ceremony and state representatives who attended the opening ceremony came from Windhoek. It was also where the pastor, who was alleged to have been involved in the planning of *olufuko* event, as introduced in Chapter One, was based. (He was attached to the

Council of Churches in Namibia). I thus felt that Windhoek was also best suited for my research. I spoke to the pastor whose name I will not mention because of confidentiality, but refused to be interviewed, stating that the topic was sensitive and was not ready to discuss the matter. A number of pastors were not prepared to discuss the topic, citing the sensitivity of the matter since it was at its highpoint, referring me to Bishop Shekutaamba Nambala as the Head of ELCIN. I assumed that their reluctance was caused by the Pastoral Letter as introduced Chapter One; and the high volume of newspaper reports of the ceremony before and after the inception of the *Olufuko* Festival in August 2012. The newspaper report cited some of the church leaders and Christian members of the church who were involved in the organisation of the ceremony (*The Namibian*, 27 July 2012) and some accused Bishop Shanghala of transgressing his own church's rule by sneaking into the *olufuko* homestead. While others argue that another ELCIN pastor 'did exactly what *olufuko* tries to prevent –sex and pregnancies before marriage' by impregnating one of his congregants (*Namibian Sun*, 18 September 2012 and 2 October 2012). This signified the heightened debate and differences between members of the ELCIN leadership over tradition and morality.

4.2 ELCIN's stance on *olufuko*

In this sub-section I will discuss the views held by ELCIN Bishops and pastors who raised their voices and the ELCIN's position on *olufuko* in general and especially the state-sponsored public *olufuko* ceremony. I will discuss the views of Shekutaamba Nambala, ELCIN's presiding Bishop, Josephat Shanghala, Bishop of the Western Diocese and Pastor Lukas Pendukeni Haindongo of Eshakeno ELCIN church in Okalongo. I will also present the views of Pastor Joel Fikeipo and Pastor Martin Ngodji, pastors from Windhoek. But, before I discuss their opinions, let us first look at the Pastoral Letter that I introduced in the first chapter as it appeared to be the basis of ELCIN's position with regard to the hosting of the *Olufuko* Festival in Outapi.

4.3 The Pastoral letter

According to ELCIN Bishops Nambala and Shanghala, and pastor Haindongo, the call to impose sanctions on *olufuko* at Outapi was deliberated during a three days meeting known as 'All Pastors General Conference' of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN). The conference was held from the 16–19 July 2012 at Ongwediva. According to Shanghala, the ELCIN usually holds a meeting every three years to discuss matters pertaining to ELCIN

churches and this conference was part of the triennial ELCIN conference. He stated that the topic of *olufuko* came up as part of the conference agenda which discussed a range of issues pertaining to the ELCIN, its members, and the nation at large. The position of the ELCIN on the proposed *Olufuko* Festival was decided by attendants (pastors and bishops) during this conference. Bishops and pastors then decided to write a 'Pastoral Letter' as it was known, for press release. The letter was signed by the presiding ELCIN Bishop S.V.V. Nambala and sent to congregations. In the letter, the ELCIN leadership expressed their concern in one voice stating: 'We have learned with great concern and sadness about the proposed reintroduction and revival of the traditional girls' initiation rites (*olufuko*) as under preparation at Outapi in the Omusati Region'. Through its Pastoral Letter, the ELCIN distanced itself from the *olufuko* ritual expressed cautiously that '...ELCIN neither condones nor supports the traditional girls' initiation rites (*Olufuko*) as alleged through the media' (attached Pastoral Letter).

ELCIN's expression of sadness and its appeal to its members not to associate themselves with the *olufuko* practice seemed to have shown its total disapproval. The letter further presents ELCIN's reasons on the matter stating that 'it infringes upon Christian values and morals of the society'. The church leadership views *olufuko* as promoting promiscuous behaviour among young women which might increase the spread of sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS. The Pastoral Letter heightened the controversies between the ELCIN and *Olufuko* Preparatory Committee. Shortly after ELCIN's press release, the Preparatory Committee wrote a press release denouncing ELCIN's boycott of the intended festival as I will discuss later in this chapter.



THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN NAMIBIA (ELCIN)
ELCIN Head Office Private Bag 2018, Ondangwa, Namibia
Tel: +264-65-240241 or +264-65-240242 Fax: +264-65-240472
e-mail: head.office@elcin.org.na

July 19, 2012

Pastoral Letter for Press Release

We, the All Pastors General Conference of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN) meeting at Ongwediva Western Diocese Conference Centre on the 16-19/07/2012 has discussed many issues concerning not only the Church life in Namibia but also the life of the Namibians in general. We have learned with great concern and sadness about the proposed reintroduction and revival of traditional girls' initiation rites (olufuko) as under preparation at Outapi in the Omusati Region.

We, therefore, would like to make it clear to our church members that ELCIN neither condones nor supports the traditional girls' initiation rites (Olufuko) as alleged through the media. Our reasons are based on the following:

1. It is against the Biblical teachings and principles (Rom 13:12b-13, 1Joh 2:8).
2. It infringes upon Christian values and morals of our society (Col 3:9-10).
3. It encourages the youth to practice promiscuities which may also lead to the spread of HIV/AIDS and other related diseases.

As such, Christians are obliged to adhere to Christian norms and teachings.

Thus, we appeal to our church members not to associate themselves with olufuko practice (2Cor 5:17).

Signed on behalf of all ELCIN pastors

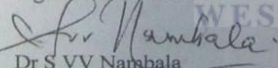

Dr S V V Nambala
Presiding Bishop

Figure 7: The Pastoral Letter

4.4 Olufuko is un-Christian: voices of ELCIN church leaders

It was on the morning of 5 April 2013 when I drove from my village home to the ELCIN offices at Oniipa, a distance of about 110km. The centre is located close to the road that runs from Ondangwa to Eenhana. The buildings looked aged; nonetheless, it is where the Bishop carries out his daily religious duties. I introduced myself to a lady in the Bishop's reception office. She requested me to wait a few moments since there was a visitor in the Bishop's office. I waited for some twenty minutes before the phone rang. It was the Bishop calling to inform the lady that I should go into his office. He was very friendly. I introduced myself to him. When I told him that I am a student and mentioned Prof. Becker as my supervisor, he

indicated that he knew Prof. Becker when she was working at the University of Namibia. This might have given me some advantage as the Bishop was more open to me.

Vaino Shekutaamba Nambala stated that culture in general was a vital component of human nature. He related the importance of culture as he stated that he had taken an interest in culture and was busy researching Owambo clans. Bishop Nambala, however, stated that ‘there were some cultural practices which were in conflict with the Christian beliefs such as *olufuko*; hence it needs to be discouraged’.⁸⁰ Relating to *olufuko*, Nambala stated that there were elements in the performance of *olufuko* which were not admirable to the Christians ethic or way of life. He stated that:

‘It was believed that when a man was leading *olufuko* rituals, he placed his private parts in the drinks (*omalodu*) that *ovafuko* used to drink. If it was a woman, something has to be done again to enhance the fertility of *ovafuko*. Because of such practices, *olufuko* was condemned as Christians do not believe in influences from people but from God only’ (ibid.)

Nambala stated that, for this reason, the ELCIN does not give consent to people performing *olufuko* as it does not harmonise with Christian ethics of serving God. Nambala argued that if the rituals of enhancing women’s fertility were no longer performed in recent years, as they were the main reason for women to undergo *olufuko*, then there was no point in performing *olufuko* in the new development. I asked him if he himself has ever attended the ceremony. He stated: ‘I did not attend any *olufuko* ceremony, but the information was supplied by early local Christians who attended the ceremonies before they were converted to Christians.’

There was no Act in the religious constitution that prohibits ELCIN members’ participation in *olufuko* as Nambala stated that there was no Act as *olufuko* was not the only issue against the ELCIN’s ethics. The bishop stated, however, that the ELCIN usually hold meetings once every three years to discuss church-related issues that affect ELCIN and to take decisions, as was done in July 2012 before the *Olufuko* Festival debut at Outapi in August 2012, which resulted in the ELCIN pastors writing a pastoral letter. The ‘ELCIN wrote a letter to all ELCIN members at all congregations to distances themselves from *olufuko*,’ he pointed out.

It appears that ELCIN members who participated in *olufuko* will be dealt with in accordance with the church’s regulations. Bishop Nambala articulated that members who were found to be contravening the ELCIN’s regulations ‘will be depriving themselves from the church privileges’ (ibid.) Nambala referred to rights such as receiving Holy Communion from the

⁸⁰ Interview with Bishop Vaino Shekutaamba Nambala, ELCIN Oniipa, 5 April 2013.

church; however, a member could attend the church services. ELCIN has decided that people who are found guilty of performing *olufuko* will be excommunicated by their respective congregations (Becker 2004). Other privileges, as stated by Joel Fikeipo, were that when a member who was serving the penalty for participating died, his or her funeral service will not be the same as that of the full Christian. In addition, if a woman has a baby while under suspension, the baby will not be baptised before she confesses. Nambala's view was complemented by Bishop Shanghala when I contacted him through a telephone conversation. Shanghala stated that the ELCIN constitution does not condone *olufuko*. He further pointed out that '*olufuko* was not featured anywhere in the ELCIN constitution neither in the Namibian constitution thus it was illegal. 'Those who organised and participated should know that they have committed adultery as *olufuko* allows women to commit adultery.'⁸¹ He claimed that *olufuko* policy says that if you undergo *olufuko*, apparently 'you are no longer decided to marry one man but you decided to marry different men. If you commit adultery then you have to confess' (ibid.) I was confused about the bishop's statement as I have never heard this before and I did not know any woman who was married to a number of husbands in Owambo. Although the Namibian constitution makes provision for people to practice a culture of their choice (Article 19), Bishop Shanghala claimed that *olufuko* was not featured anywhere in the constitution and the state leaders who supported or inspired people to go for *olufuko* contradicted their own constitution as they were playing a double standard. 'They were also committing sin and should confess' he stated.

It appears that the ELCIN church did not have any consultation and information sharing with all *olufuko* stakeholders to discuss matters relating to *olufuko* and perhaps reach a mutual agreement. Both bishops stated that there was no need for a meeting between the ELCIN and the state. Nambala stated that there was no such meeting and saw no need for it as *olufuko* was not the only concern but there were other pressing issues that were also contradicting the Christian beliefs such as drinking *omaongo/omagongo* (marula sip) and *omalodu*, a light alcoholic Owambo brew. He also pointed out that people were defiant of the church's advice. In the same light, Bishop Shanghala also articulated that he sees no need for such a meeting, as *olufuko* was apparently not featured anywhere in either the church or the state constitutions.

⁸¹ Recorded telephonic interview with Bishop Josaphat Shanghala, 17 October 2014.

In the same light as *olufuko*, Nambala gave another example of the *oyoonda* (wedding ox) which was equally opposed by the early missionaries. Owambo people, including the converted Christians were in favour of the *oyoonda*. Nambala stated that the ox had to be slaughtered and it was believed that the bride should drink blood from the speared ox, to be integrated and be part of her fiancé's clan. The ox was meant to reconcile the two clans.⁸² This conflict was later resolved when the church leaders decided that the ox must die after the bride has left the house thus avoiding the ritual superstition of the bride which was attached to the wedding ox.⁸³ The bishop's narrative above suggests that the debate over inappropriate traditional practices, in the view of ELCIN's leaders, could be changed to suit the local people. The reflection indicates that if any aspect of tradition could be changed in favour of local people's aspirations, one wonders if perhaps the same modification might be applied to *olufuko*, as happened in the case of *oyoonda*.

It is doubtful as to how many young women and their mothers were and will be excommunicated or confessed as from 2012 when 12 women participated; 22 women participated in 2013, and 84 participated in 2014. Bishop Nambala expressed his feeling that those who organised the event and participated were Christians who belonged to either the ELCIN or the Roman Catholic Church. I told him that I was also concerned myself that as an ELCIN church member I had attended *olufuko* ceremonies. However, the Bishop reassured me that the prohibition was not meant for people who were going to *olufuko* for the purpose of study.

It appears that a number of ELCIN pastors had the same view of *olufuko* as many were speaking with the same voice and expressed the same position as the Bishop. Much of what

⁸² Interview with Bishop Nambala, Oniipa, 5 April 2013.

⁸³ The fight over the wedding ox as discussed by Miettinen (2005:323) and McKittrick (1998:258), started with the understanding that the parent of the bride demand that the man who was marrying their daughter should give an ox. In her study of the Owambo tradition, Kari Miettinen points out how the wedding ox has created disagreement and disintegration between the missionaries and local people in different synodic meetings wherein the majority of the Owambo people, including the converted Christians, was in favour of the wedding ox (Miettinen 2005:323–333). Missionaries believe that offering an ox is associated with ritual superstitions of connecting the two clans. Other reasons of conflict for outlawing it as uttered by Emil Liljeblad was that allowing the wedding ox would have led Christians to regard 'our holy customs of confirmation and matrimony' as insufficient ratification of marriage (cited in Miettinen 2005:333). As Miettinen pointed out, from the missionaries' view the parallel system of ratifying changes in a person's social status were not acceptable.

has been said by Nambala was repeated by Pastor Lukas Pendukeni Haindongo, a local ELCIN church cleric at Eshakeno church in Okalongo. Similar to what had been indicated by Nambala; Haindongo also stated that ELCIN deliberated its stance on the organised *olufuko* festival during the pastors' meeting. He stated that ELCIN took a stand that it does not allow *olufuko*, citing ambiguity on *olufuko* performances. Haindongo himself did not agree with *olufuko* performance as he claimed that '*ngaanyi ame moinima yoimengha yolufuko ihaikutwala kokule nande*' (in my case I will not go far with the *olufuko* rites).⁸⁴ The same perception of sexual involvement was also the main point for Pastor Haindongo to denounce *olufuko*. He states that it was believed that *ovafuko* were sleeping with ritual leaders during the *olufuko* ceremony. On the question as to what his church members who participated in *olufuko* should expect, he stated that: *Eongalo olina eufo kutya kehe ngu takakufa ombinga molufuko otaka handukilwa. Nale oshali kutya omunhu okuna kukala pondje yeongalo oule weedula nhatu nge ina kufilwa ashike nganyi eedula mbali oda kufwapo tapushaala odula imwe* (The congregation has its regulation that every person who partook in *olufuko* should be punished. Previously [before independence and few years after independence] the penalty was three years of being excommunicated if the person did not attend repentance classes and confess, but recently two years has been taken off; now it is only one year of excommunication). He stated that the church followed this regulation. He stated that his own congregation had called in all the people who had participated for questioning and he explained the church's procedures.

Although ELCIN has stated its position on *olufuko*, it did not pronounce itself on the penalty for the *olufuko* transgressors. Pastor Haindongo, however, pointed out that their congregation was still waiting for the ELCIN administration to pronounce which steps were to be taken against those who went to Outapi, though individual church leaders had the right to implement the existing regulation. I later spoke to Haindongo again on 17 October 2014 to find out if the ELCIN leadership had decided on what should be done to those who participated. He stated that nothing had been done so far, as the ELCIN leadership (*Elelongelki*) was pushing the issue to the individual church leadership (*Oshikandjongelki*) while the church leadership was waiting for the ELCIN head. According to him both sides feared to take and execute a decision as it was feared that the festival in Outapi was under the aegis of the government, as Haindongo pointed out. However, Haindongo stated that their

⁸⁴ Interview with Lukas Pendukeni Haindongo, Eshakeno Parish, Okalongo, 12 April 2013

church had a confession of about 120 people on 12 October 2014, where most of the people who had undergone or performed *olufuko* confessed.

In line with what had been said by Bishop Nambala, Haindongo complained that during the first few years after independence, the state used to consult other stakeholders as the co-custodians of people but currently it does not, unless the church decided to approach the state to discuss issues pertaining to the welfare of the people. There has never been a church-state discussion with regard to *olufuko* as Haindongo pointed out. He stated that people belong to the state during their lifetime, but when the person dies, church leaders are looked for benediction of that person's body, but recently, church leaders seemed unrecognised by the state. Contrary to Bishop Nambala and Shanghala, other Pastors such as Haindongo, Joel Fikeipo of Hosiana Parish in Windhoek and Pastor Ngodji, a lecturer at Paulinum Seminar in Windhoek felt that it was important for a thorough and detailed church-state discussion on *olufuko* to be held so that a possible agreement could be reached. They expressed that this was vital for the church to give its voice as custodian of the people.

According to Nambala, Shanghala and Haindongo's argument, it appears that the public *Olufuko* Festival caused commotion and political tensions between some politicians, some community members and the ELCIN religious leadership. This tension appears to have been the reality as claimed by Katjavivi (1989) that 'the true test of the close relationship between the churches in Namibia and the nationalist movement will come after independence in the process of reconstruction of a new nation. It is here that the divide may grow again between church members and politics' (Katjavivi 1989:24). Katjavivi further stated that 'they may diverge after the objective of freeing Namibia which brought the church together with the nationalists has been achieved' (ibid.) Although both the state and the ELCIN church had the same objectives in building nationhood before and shortly after independence, the current divergence between the two, as Haindongo pointed out that the state was no longer consulting the ELCIN, supports Katjavivi's claim.

According to Joel Fikeipo, a pastor at Hosiana Parish in Windhoek, it appears that the concern of the ELCIN's religious leaders was based both on the integral practice of the ritual itself, the nurturing of the young women into adult life, and the impact of *olufuko* on the entire society. Fikeipo stated that *olufuko* has a lot of ambiguous ritual practices which were secret and not clear to everybody. According to him, these practices might not be relevant in

modern development.⁸⁵ He expressed his concern over its consequences, stating that ‘girls who undergo the ritual performances were young and do not reach a mature age for marriage.’ It also seems like *olufuko* was comprised of some elements that interfere with development and modernity. Contrary to the call for girl’s education by Nujoma, Shaningwa and Pohamba, which they said should include both formal schooling and the traditional ceremony, he claimed that some of the young girls were in school, and the participation in the initiation might terminate the young girl’s education; he said this because *olufuko* did not specify whether *ovafuko* should go back to school or not. According to him *olufuko* also encourages polygamy because it allows married men to propose marriage to *ovafuko* (ibid.) Fikeipo stated that, for these reasons, the ELCIN allowed its members to practice culture or traditions which do not infringe on Christian principles, but urged them to abandon those that were perceived as ‘heathen’, as Fikeipo claimed.

Fikeipo and another pastor, Martin Ngodji, a lecturer at Paulinum College in Windhoek, both ascribed ‘heathenism’ to *olufuko* as they alleged that much of the performances in *olufuko* – ‘*oyafa ngaa ya nyika omilema*’ (seems to be smelling ‘heathen’) because many of its ritual practices are done secretly and not everybody knows about it.⁸⁶ Ngodji alleged that reviving *olufuko* was like someone who was ‘retrieving garbage from the bin after he has dumped it.’

Although, from the ELCIN’s leadership’s perspective, *olufuko* was viewed as sexually licentious as it might lead to promiscuous behaviour and the further spread of sexually transmitted diseases, some of the comments made by lower-rank ELCIN leaders such as Haindongo and Fikeipo did not suggest that *olufuko* should be dismissed as an obsolete traditional practice. They appealed for the overhaul of the entire *olufuko* ceremony, so that the rite could suit and be valued in modern development. Haindongo, Fikeipo, and Ngodji indicated the necessity for a national public discussion on the discourse of *olufuko* where all parties could come together and resolve their issues, so that the church could perhaps reconsider which elements of the ritual practice could be pursued in *olufuko*. Haindongo felt that perhaps there are some acceptable developments in the tradition; for instance, he told me that in the past, names such as Haindongo, Hamunyela, or Haipya had not been acceptable in the view of the missionaries because they did not understand their meaning, but, today’s pastor believes that they could be used, and thus the same principle might be applied to

⁸⁵ Interview with Pastor Joel Fikeipo, Hosiana Parish Windhoek, 22 February 2013.

⁸⁶ Interview with Dr. Martin Ngodji, a Pastor and lecturer at Paulinum Seminary College, 18 March 2013.
Interview with Pastor Joel Fikeipo, Hosiana Parish Windhoek, 22 February 2013.

olufuko. Fikeipo stated that some traditional elements such as *oshipe* (harvest ritual) and *omundilo woposhoto* (holy fire at the central courtyard of the homestead) which were previously disregarded in the Christian viewpoint were currently encouraged and performed in church. Their claims appear to signify the non-abolishment of the entire rituals. On the other hand, Pastor Mathias Hamukwaya, an employee of the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation in Windhoek, had a different understanding of *olufuko*, claiming that religious leaders were misinformed during the colonial period. He sees nothing wrong with traditional performances of *olufuko*.⁸⁷

Based on the ELCIN's 'well-founded faith-based reasons',⁸⁸ the objection to the initiation rite was voiced by Abisaai Sheyavali, a retired ELCIN pastor and a former head of the Council of Churches in Namibia (CCN), who felt that Christian religion needs to be taken into consideration. The elderly Sheyavali explained the ELCIN's stance and how it continues to stand its ground. According to the newspaper report, the elderly cleric's objection, amongst others, was that:

The Church consists of the people who have been baptised in the name of the Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. These believers have accepted that it is Jesus Christ who redeemed them with His blood from the wrath of God. They believe that they have been delivered from the idolatrous worship to be His disciples and active members of His Body: the Church' (The Namibian, 23 November 2012).

Sheyavali believes that Christians are fully convinced that there is only one universal living God who created heaven and earth and all that is in them. According to the newspaper, the retired pastor stated that the above spiritual benefits cannot be offered by a traditional rite such as *olufuko*. Additionally, he indicated that the 'practice is an evil in itself, with the ritual leaders believed to impart good luck and fortune to the young girls which is differing the Christian belief that God is the only source of blessing' (ibid.)

The ELCIN Bishops and pastors' view of *olufuko* appears to be similar to what Becker (2004) has shown, namely that in the dominant missionary discourse, the initiation of Owambo women was condemned as a perverse occasion for sexual licence (Becker 2004:45). During a telephonic interview which Becker conducted in 1996 with Kleopas Dumeni, the then Bishop of the ELCIN, the leading clergyman stated that *efundula* legitimised sex outside

⁸⁷ Interview with Pastor Mathias Hamukwaya, NBC, radio station, Windhoek, 2 February 2013.

⁸⁸ www.namibian.com.na posted on 23 November 2012, accessed on 19 February 2013.

marriage and, thus, was in fundamental contradiction of ‘Christian values (Becker 2004:50). The Anglican priest Charles Mallory (1971), in his thesis on ‘aspects of the mission’s policy and practice of the church of the province of South Africa in Ovamboland’ stated that during the colonial period, the *olufuko* ceremony was condemned on the grounds that ‘it was believed that the ceremony require immoral conduct of the initiates’ and due to its ‘alleged magical devices’ which were believed to undermine God’s power ‘and lordship over Christians’ (Mallory 1971:188). Mallory pointed out that missionaries believed that the group marriage of *efundula* involved young girls sleeping with the men after the custom of tribal marriage which was regarded as sinful (ibid.), and thus that ‘a Christian may not take any part in heathen and unchristian ways.... such dealings are sinful and very dangerous’ (Mallory 1971:202, cf. Cat., p.25:114). He, however, appears not to agree wholly as he states that it has not been sufficiently appreciated by the church that within the old society, one of the principal reasons for ‘bundling’ and the *efundula* was to ‘avoid sexual permissiveness and immorality’ (Mallory 1971:188).

Some of the earlier missionaries – for instance, August Wulfhorst – also condemned *olufuko* or *efundula* because initiation was seen as a part of the ‘pagan’ Kwanyama’s wider sexual mores, which left much to be desired in the puritan world view of the Wilhelmian German empire (Becker 2004:46).⁸⁹ Wulfhorst, however, was not in agreement on the point that the initiation involved illicit, indecent sexual rites, arguing that young women were not in a rush to undergo *efundula* and become wives as they enjoyed a largely unrestrained sexual freedom (ibid). However, it appears that the upbringing of women differed in different areas as sexual freedom was not permissive to young uninitiated women among people such as Aambadja, because of the fear of pregnancy before *olufuko* which would bring shame to the family. Others, such as missionary Emil Liljeblad pointed out, more generally, that allowing *olufuko* as well as the wedding ox practice would lead Christians to regard ‘our holy customs of confirmation and matrimony’ as insufficient ratification of marriage (Miettinen 2005:333).⁹⁰ This reasoning sheds some light on the missionaries’ prime reasons for abhorring *olufuko*: as it appeared to undermine the culture and authority of their respected European rulers. These points appear to be the same arguments that the post-colonial ELCIN church emphasises so earnestly. Nonetheless, some ELCIN members were not convinced. They pointed out that this was ‘propaganda’ as expressed by the Head of the Ombadja Traditional Authority, Mathias

⁸⁹ Cited from VEM, RMG 2.636 C/k 22; Vorträge und Aufsätze zur Owambo-Mission von A. Wulfhost, 1910–1933.

⁹⁰ Cited from E. Liljeblad to M. Tarkkanen, 31 January 1907, Eac12, AFMS, NAF.

Walaula and by Hamukwaya, who stated that pastors were misled during earlier times of missionaries as I discussed earlier. Different people reason differently, based on varying circumstances which seem to be subjective to power and authority.

4.5 Conflict between Bishop Shanghala and the *Olufuko* Preparatory Committee

Although in post-colonial Namibia it was known that *olufuko* was performed in some northern Namibian villages and in Angola, the recent performance appeared to have sparked much difference between the *olufuko* organisers and the ELCIN leadership. Beside the ELCIN's Pastoral Letter which appealed to ELCIN members to distance themselves from the *Olufuko* Festival, the Preparatory Committee members who organised the event were not pleased with what they called the uninvited visit of Bishop Josephat Shanghala to the *olufuko* homestead. Shanghala was alleged to have visited the homestead where *olufuko* rituals were expected to take place while the homestead was under construction.⁹¹ According to the newspaper report, the Preparatory Committee accused Shanghala of entering the *olufuko* homestead without authorisation. Oswin Namakalu, the then chairman of the committee stated that Shanghala sneaked into the *olufuko* premises around noon on Tuesday 7 August 2012 (*Namibia Sun*, 09 August 2012). This appears to have deepened the rift between the ELCIN church and the Preparatory Committee members. Namakalu said that they did not know what he was looking for, arguing that he had violated his own church's instructions by entering the premises without authorisation. According to the newspaper, the Bishop confirmed that he visited the house, stating that it was not the first time either. He denied that he sneaked in, stating that he found the workers there. Although he did not state what his intention to visit the house was, he stated that he was not the only person entering the house. Namakalu's argument reveals that members of the public were not permitted to visit the homestead before it was completed.

4.6 Haindongo disappointed by the Okalongo Traditional Authority

The hosting of *olufuko* did not only trigger differences between the church and state, but also seems to have steered intra-community clashes between Pastor Haindongo and the Okalongo Traditional Authority. While the entire ELCIN leadership was not pleased with the hosting of *olufuko*, Haindongo was also not content with the fact that *omundilo wolufuko lAambadja*

⁹¹*Namibian Sun*, 9 August 2012

(Aambadja ritual fire) was taken by ritual leaders with the permission of the Okalongo Traditional Authority from Ombadja Traditional Authority to be performed at Outapi, Ombalantu. His concern was not only about the performance of *olufuko* itself but how Christians from Okalongo behaved and the manner in which tradition should be kept in relation to Christianity. Pastor Haindongo argued that: *oukriste nyi weya poshitukulwa shetu shOkalongo noMbalantu, ovanhu mba vakufa ombinga mouChriste votetetete Aambadja! Nomushashwa wotetetete omuMbadja; Nangulohi [name], ashashelwa koSoomi (Finland). Paiife olufuko luuye vali, ovanhu imba vali vayelufa onyeka youyelele moshitukulwa, ovo vali vatameka okutondoka* (When Christianity came to these areas of Okalongo and Ombalantu, the Ovambadja were the very first people to be converted to Christianity! And the very first person to be baptised was Mbadja; Nangulohi who was baptised in Finland. Now when the state introduced *olufuko*, the Aambadja – who were perceived to be the first holders of the torch of Christianity in the region – were again the ones running to *olufuko*). To him, it was not pleasing neither was it in the interest of some people in Okalongo that Aambadja were participating in the Outapi rituals, as he claimed.

Although Haindongo was not supporting *olufuko*, he was not happy with the manner in which *omundilo wAambadja* has been moved away from the jurisdiction of the Ombadja Traditional Authority to Ombalantu. In his view, this did not fit well with the tradition as it has been in the past. Haindongo pointed out that *'nale omupitifi ihatumbu oimbale yaye yolufuko aye inghu kuna ovanhu tavafukala, imba tavafukala ovo haveuya nghu taku fukikwa. Ndee nghanyi, Ovakalongo ovatumba omundilo wavo wOshimbadja ndee taveutwala kOmbalantu'* (In the past, ritual leaders would not carry ritual fire and baskets to places where those expected to undergo *olufuko* were, the initiate would come to the homestead where the rituals were performed. But now, *Ovakalongo*⁹² took their *Oshimbadja* ritual fire from their home to Ombalantu). 'There are ritual people here around where *olufuko* is performed in their homestead, for example [he mentioned the name of the ritual leader] but he never took his ritual fire outside his homestead' fumed the pastor.

He claimed that there seems to be a belittlement of the Aambadja and that a proper consultation with local residents in Okalongo should have been carried out before the Traditional Authority and ritual leaders took the ritual fire. Pastor Haindongo stated that he felt betrayed: *'onDIwete ndafa ndiliwe kohi'* (I feel betrayed) that Aambaantu ignited the

⁹² Refers to people who are living in Okalongo

ritual fire at the expenses of the Ombadja people.⁹³‘If anyone has to be followed concerning this *olufuko*, who it will be, is it not the Okalongo people? And whose benefit was this *olufuko* business? (ibid.) In his capacity, he did not think it could have been possible for the *ovapitifi* (ritual leaders) to take the ritual fire from Ombadja and use it in Ombalantu. In addition, Haindongo argued that *omundilo wolufuko* (*olufuko* ritual fire) was traditionally supposed to burn every day in the house that hosts the ceremony, but according to him it appeared that the ritual fire at the *olufuko* house in Outapi would only be burning during the course of the festival and no one will be able to keep that fire burning before the next session of the festival. It appears that Haindongo felt that culture should remain as it was in the past – fixed in time and space; it also appears that he understood cultural heritage as if it was a homogenous entity that can be lost, or preserved, but not altered, as argued critically by Fairweather (2006). Haindongo’s point suggests the absence of historical changes in *olufuko* and no cultural fluidity which can transcend the traditional borders.

4.7 Heritage discourse and Christianisation

The discourse on heritage and Christianisation that the church has played in moulding culture in Namibia cannot be overemphasised. The history of interaction between various churches as one of the foundations of culture in Namibia was long and complex (Policy on Art and Culture 1991). Its work has been commended by the post-colonial state as it played a significant role as a centre for art and culture and in developing ethics and norms (ibid.), starting from the colonial period. It is, however, doubtful if the Christian churches continue to play the same role as in the past. Pastor Haindongo pointed out that the church has a responsibility over its people as well as for approaching the state in matters pertaining to nation’s interest, such as *olufuko*. As revealed, he claims that in recent time the state representatives do not consult the church on these matters. His claim suggests that although the state has recognised the role that the church has played during the liberation struggle, it appears that the contribution of the church was not recognised in an independent Namibia as it was in the past when the church played a role as the voice of the voiceless and the representative of human rights in Namibia.⁹⁴ It appears that the ELCIN Christian leaders felt that the church, having been a role player in the liberation struggle together with the nationalist leaders who are currently the representatives of the post-colonial Namibia, has

⁹³ Interview with Lukas-Pendukeni Haindongo, Eshakeno church, Onembaba, 12 April 2013

⁹⁴ *Namibia in the 1980s* (1981:15).

been waning in influence with the delights of independence. Thus, through heritage discourse, the church wants to make its voice audible in issues pertaining to nation-building.

Haindongo's claim resonates with an argument made by Joseph Diescho, the former director of the International Relations and Partnerships Office at UNISA and the current Executive Director for the Namibia Institute of Public Administration and Management (NIPAM), who asked: 'is there a role for the Christian church in a nation like Namibia where there is a legitimate and elected government?' (Diescho's 'Dictum' 2014).⁹⁵ Diescho pointed out some commendable works that the church achieved during the liberation struggle, claiming that Lutheran and the Roman Catholic churches deliberately and courageously chose sides with the liberation movement under the aegis of the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) and sent chaplains to the Namibian Christians in exile. He noted that on 30 June 1971, Bishop Auala of the Evangelical Lutheran Owambo-Kavango Church (ELOC) and Moderator Gowaseb of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in South West Africa (ELC) authored what was termed an Open Letter to South African Prime Minister Balthazar John Vorster. The letter accused South Africa of failure in respect of black Namibians. The open letter was a significant factor contributing to a major strike by contract workers in 1972, which was again supported by Bishop Auala.⁹⁶ The churches that united under CCN has also played a role in the 1980s, in taking legal actions that led to the release of over one hundred people detained since the 1978 South African raid on the Cassinga refugee camp in Angola (ibid.)

Diescho further claims that the church played a pioneering role in the formal education sector particularly in teacher education. As such teachers who came out of church schools and were ploughed back into their communities were not only teachers during school hours, but significant role models in the entire community. Becker (2004:48) argues that this included a gender dynamic since it was through the missionaries that Owambo women first got an opportunity of obtaining training in professions such as nursing. It was through its discourse of 'Christian' marriage that the church allowed women to opt out of unwanted polygamous marriages (Becker 2004:47). It was also the church that played a role in educating some of the nationalist leaders including Nujoma who was educated at an Anglican school in Windhoek (*Namibia in the 1980s*). The outcomes of church education changed public life as

⁹⁵ Joseph Diescho's 'Dictum' parts one and two was published in *New Era*, 29 July 2014 and 5 August 2014 respectively.

⁹⁶ *Namibia in the 1980s*.

it allowed Namibians to develop new perspectives within a changing society (Becker 2004:48, Diescho's Dictum 2014).

However, as Diescho argues, since Namibian independence in 1990, the discourse appears to have shifted. Diescho claims that 'after political independence, things changed, arguably for the worse as far as the role of the Christian church is concerned. The church fell prey to political power and lost its direction as the clergy acquired the new role of blessing the food at state banquets and sitting at the head table' (Diescho's 'Dictum', in *NewEra*, 29 July 2014). It appears that with the acquisition of a new role for some clergy and the side-lining of some church leaders in important national decision-making, as claimed by Haindongo, might have some connection to, and influence on relations between the state and the ELCIN church leaders in recent years. It seems that the ELCIN church leaders feel that the church's voice should have been heard much more loudly and forcefully in the areas of political and socio-economic development, as Diescho claims.

4.8 'It is my culture': the *Olufuko* Preparatory Committee and ritual leaders

The contestation over *olufuko* in the discourse on heritage in Namibia increased when the *Olufuko* Preparatory Committee, comprised of representatives of the Omusati Regional Council, Local Authorities in the region and business communities, and guided by the Governor of Omusati region, Sophia Shaningwa, together with Traditional Authorities leaders in the Omusati region, issued a media statement denouncing the ELCIN Pastoral Letter. An undated media statement was signed by the Omusati governor and the then chairperson of the *Olufuko* Preparatory Committee, the late Oswin Namakalu. It cited Article 1(1) of the Namibian Constitution stating that 'Namibia is hereby established as a Sovereign, Secular, Democratic and Unitary state founded upon the principles of democracy, the rule of law and justice for all'. The committee also quoted Chapter 3 Article 19 'Every person shall be entitled to enjoy, practice, profess, maintain and promote any culture, language, tradition or religion subject to the terms of this constitution and further to the condition that the rights protected by this Article do not impinge upon the right of others or National interest.' It accused the ELCIN, and specifically the Pastoral Letter of being misleading, and decided to proceed with its planned festival, stating that 'this Pastoral Press release is therefore harmful to the provision made in the constitution of the Republic of Namibia. It however has to be clear that *olufuko* festival with its four components namely Culture and Tradition, Arts and Craft, Agriculture and Business section will go ahead as scheduled from 21–27 August 2012

in Outapi Town.’ The committee further stated that the *olufuko* centre was a long term development site which was expected to sustain the people of Omusati and the entire country. Governor Shaningwa’s argument was again on the fact that some communities were practicing their tradition in an independent Namibia while *olufuko* was side-lined, based on allegations of promiscuity. The Preparatory Committee’s claim got support from President Hifikepunye Pohamba during the official opening of the *Olufuko* Festival on 22 August 2014, who claimed that there was nothing Satanic about *olufuko*, and thus he pledged his full support for the cultural festival.⁹⁷

Meme Hileni Didalelwa and *meme* Ndilinongwe, the ritual leaders and Christian members of the Okalongo church, equated *olufuko* with the Christian rituals of confirmation, a process that is usually done at the church whenever the youngsters are in their mid-teens. Both *meme* Hileni and *meme* Ndilinongwe pointed out that ‘*olufuko* was more like Christian confirmation that Christians do at churches. They stated that it was and is still done at the same age though the procedure and the period may be different. Hileni pointed out that ‘at church the pastor tells the teens that they are grown-up and can walk alone. Pastors together with the congregants do church rituals such Holy Communion, but nobody ever says what happened there! It is the same as *olufuko*, it is sacred!’ she claimed. She said that when *ovafuko* were given *omalodu* in *eholo* (traditional wooden cup) during the ritual process, it was the same as when they were given a cup to drink from the church altar. She pointed out that: ‘*olufuko* prepares young women for their future lives so that they can have socially legitimate children through the blessings that are bestowed on them during the ritual processes’. She further pointed out that this does not mean that young girls should go wild in uncontrolled, socially frowned-upon behaviour. *Meme* Ndilinongwe stressed that *olufuko* was a passage that young women should go through to signpost to them that they reached a stage of reproduction and can reproduce whenever they were ready. These women should be well educated before they find themselves in the parental stage that some did not prepare for’ she said. It was interesting how the ritual women tried to reconcile both the Christian discourse and their own traditional practices. They saw integration between Christianity and African tradition as the two traditions mutually complimented each other rather than splitting.

In April 2013, I visited *tate* Amadila a pensioner and a homeowner where *olufuko* frequently takes place at Onghwiyu village in Ombadja, southern Angola to find out what he had to say

⁹⁷ Live NBC Tv broadcast of *Olufuko* Festival opening ceremony, 22 August 2014

regarding the church's order about *olufuko*. Although he lives on the Angolan side of the border, Amadila and his family were members of the ELCIN congregation in Okalongo in Namibia. The aged Amadila seemed to have mixed feelings. He affirmed that he was also excommunicated and insisted that he will go for repentance when he was old enough because in his view it did not make any difference to repent at that time as he might perform rituals again. It appeared that although he was a pensioner, he felt that he should not distance himself from traditional practice. *Meme Hileni* argued that '*Ongeleka, ongeleka. Imbo otava ningi oshiima shavo, shavo shomufyuululwakalo wavo, she aatu ningi oshiima shetu inyi twahanga hashi ningwa kovakulu vetu omanga ongeleka inai uya mo imu, vali Kalunga oko akala*' (the church is the church, those are doing their things for their Christian culture, we are doing our thing that our ancestors have been practicing before the church came, and God has existed). *Meme Hileni* stated that she saw nothing wrong with people practicing *olufuko* and embracing Christian doctrine. She further asserted that many women had gone through *olufuko* and then got married in the Christian church, which in her opinion has not been a problem. Hileni has drawn the line between the church followers and her tradition which created 'us' and 'them'. From Hileni's use of the pronouns 'ours' and 'theirs', it appears to perceive a division of the people into two groups.

It appears, however, that different people have different perspectives of *olufuko*. Some Christian church leaders perceive the ceremony such that young women were offered husbands to get married through the ceremony; others looked at the definition and prime aim of *olufuko* which is meant to create a young woman to be '*omufuko*' which qualifies a woman as marriageable. Examining Amadila's response and Hileni's claim, it appears that some local people, especially from the areas where *olufuko* is being practiced, felt that both Christian and traditional culture should be embraced and their expectation was that Christianity should be practiced in accordance with local cultural practices, as shown by Loytty (2012), as all people pray to one 'Supreme Being' whom they refer to as 'Kalunga' as Ndeutapo (2005) points out. This indicates that the notion of Kalunga was well understood in the Owambo tradition before the arrival of Christianity as Hileni claimed, which, as Loytty (2012:21) shows, suggests that all people are guided in their cultural practices (including *olufuko*) by the same God.

4.9 'National identity' versus 'heathenism' earlier controversy over the *olufuko*

In this sub-section, I will show that the contestations that have played themselves out over the past few years have a long history and how the Owambo people who perform *olufuko* came up openly challenging the sanction of *olufuko* already during the colonial period. I discuss the controversies between the state representatives and missionaries. As Loytty 2012 argued, I maintain that with the arrival of missionaries, the Owambo perception of Christianity was that they pray and praise God in a 'Christianised' Owambo traditional method; hence some Owambo residents' expectation was and is that Christianity should be practiced in accordance with the local Owambo traditional practices.

The conflict between the Christian churches and the state over *olufuko* was not new in northern Namibia. It started with the arrival of missionaries in Owambo in the 1870s, when numbers of Owambo people began to convert to Christianity. McKittrick (1998) points out that by the end of the Second World War, about half of the population had converted to Christianity, a shift that was owed to a number of reasons. Some of the reasons were linked to economic status as earlier converts were able to access livestock through gifts to the elders. Others were related with power and the Christian influence within the society (McKittrick 1998:254). Although missionaries were accepting all people, they objected to *olufuko* on the basis that it was a 'heathen' and 'filthy' custom imbued with superstition (1998:258). Becker (2004) argued that, to the missionaries, the nakedness of traditionally clad Owambo embodied the darkness, disorder, and danger – in other words, the 'savagery' of African sexuality and culture (Becker 2004:45). It appears that the early 20th century missions perceived *efundula/olufuko* as an occasion for sexual licence, and thus forbade Christian members from participating in the ceremony because of its apparent, 'true piggish nature'⁹⁸ and that it comprised endless 'excesses and indecencies' (Seiler 1940:1, cited in Becker 2004:45) (as expressed according to the missionaries' view). Some parents were, however, allowing their young girls to convert after they passed through initiation, though they had to attend repentance classes (McKittrick 1998; Becker 2004). The decision could have affected a number of people as anyone who was participating or assisting in any way connected to *olufuko (ohango)* was risking her or himself of being expelled from the Christian church. Parents and their kin feared that pregnancy before initiation could cause a spell for the clan or

⁹⁸VEM, RMG 1.658a B/c II 85; Sckär, Karl, *An Impsectorder Rheinischen: Namakunde*, 30 December 1911, cited in Becker 2004:45

the death of a monarch (Loeb 1962:243; Shigwedha 2000), and thus they were adamant and challenged the male-dominated church through continuous performance of *olufuko*.

On the other hand, the battles over female initiation at times took a coercive character on the part of the traditionalists, too. Finnish missionaries in Ondonga reported in 1944 that parents forced their young convert girls to go for *olufuko* (McKittrick 1998:259). It appears that the situation was not easy for missionaries to control as reports of forced initiation were coming from many directions. In the same year, it again reported a mass attendance of young Christian girls in Ongadjera where, among the initiated, fifteen young girls had been forced to pass through the rite in Ombalantu (ibid.) The pastor claims that even the king, Ushona Shiimi of Ongadjera, who was a member of the church, was involved in the process. Missionaries were accepting young women who ran away because they did not want to undergo the ritual or perhaps they broke the rule of the *olufuko* rite.⁹⁹

In Ombalantu, the situation was no different as the female missionary who was trying to rescue a girl was assaulted later in 1945 by the leader of the initiation and the girl's uncle (ibid.) In a separate incident, a Catholic missionary was charged by parents and headmen because the girls who refused to attend the initiation locked themselves in the mission's house (ibid.)

Although the cases at Ondonga and Ongadjera reached the Secretary of SWA, the administration of the time supported the traditionalist group as it depended on maintaining the authority of the older generation. The native commissioner argued that missionaries were helping the girls flout parental and tribal authority and segregating the two groups into separate communities (ibid.) McKittrick pointed out that the controversy was related to three power relationships. For the administrator, it was necessary to keep older traditional order with respect to the authority of older people over young, the system that would keep feeding labour to the south. Then it was the king's role in initiation, which was under threat, and there was the issue of men forcing women to be initiated (ibid.) The present controversy appeared to have been not that different from the colonial time as it also involved power struggles. The ELCIN claimed authority over the people as Bishop Shanghala stated that the 'state should not violate the church's authority' and Haindongo pointed out the church's obligation after the person's death. Ironically, the state made it clear through the constitution that people have

⁹⁹ Interview with Timoteus Nakapala, Okalongo Traditional Authority Office, 14 April 2011.

the right to practice their culture according to their own choices (Article 19) with the Former President Nujoma and the current president Pohamba supporting *olufuko*.

McKittrick argued that the conversion had created a social division between *aakriste* Christian and *aapaani* non-Christians members, but further stated that the rift indicates fluidity through the way in which Christians and non-Christians try to mediate between missionaries and female initiation (ibid.) as these people were in everyday contact.

The contestations regarding female initiation were not only pertinent in Western Owambo. Oukwanyama, another Owambo polity, located in the East, also saw great deal of this, as several anthropologists and historians have shown. Becker points out that the battle between Rhenish missions in Oukwanyama reached a climax with a drawn-out conflict in 1912/3 with Mandume, the last Kwanyama king (ibid.) Similarly, Hayes (2003) reports that in 1914, king Mandume prohibited young Kwanyama women from getting married in the Christian churches before they had undergone *efundula* as reported in the Rhenish Missionary conference document. Mandume argued that the action will lead to his death if ‘national customs’ were broken¹⁰⁰ (Hayes 2003). Salokoski (2006:239) pointed out ‘difficulty in finding a husband, bringing shame on the family and endangering the initiates who have passed through the rite as concerns for pre-initiation pregnancy on the individual level of the society where the regulation of the female fertility was in the hands of the clan and the local community.’ Hence Mandume was trying to centralise his authority through tight control of his people and a complete upholding of his forebear’s customs. Hayes (2003) argues that ‘Mandume’s gesture was a move towards ritual recentralisation, touching on one further royal insecurity in a range of measures which otherwise focused on judicial, military and tributary matters.’

¹⁰⁰It appears that Mandume wanted to firmly protect his Oukwanyama peoples’ customs at the time of increasing pressure from the Portuguese on the Angolan side, the threats from the Germans, and later the South African authorities and the missionaries. These activities appear to have undermined the authority of the king, thus, Mandume wanted to control activities in his community including *efundula/olufuko*. His quest for young women to go through *efundula/olufuko* was not well received by missionaries, or by some Christian converts. As a result, young women who were converted to Christianity started moving to the mission stations (Hayes 2003).

Hayes also gives evidence on the turmoil that broke out in 1935 between the Anglican mission in Oukwanyama and C.H.L. ('Cocky') Hahn, the Owambo Native commissioner of the time. As I discussed earlier in Chapter One, Hahn supported the rite, calling it a 'healthy tribal institution' that should be preserved (Hayes 1998:74, Becker 2004, Hayes 2003), and was concerned over the 'detrimentalisation' of the community which would result in the breakdown of local hierarchies (Hayes 1998). Becker claimed that 'Hahn's written and visual ethnographic narratives of initiation pertained crucially to the discursive reconstruction of a patriarchal and hierarchical Owambo tradition.' She pointed out that Hahn loved to attend and take pictures at the ceremonies which at some occasion turned residents to repeat *efundula* dances to coincide with his visit (Becker 2004:44). Missionaries were not happy with the way Hahn centralised *olufuko* and staged it in full view of the audiences. According to Hayes (1998), 'they protested at the glamorisation of the ceremony which would result from the performance of *efundula* dances before a large audience including a party of distinguished guests' (ibid.) Hahn's presentation of a large number of participants in *efundula* in 1935 at Oshikango, during Marquis Theodoli's visit, led to the Anglican missionaries' decision to expel young women who were found guilty of participating during the forthcoming visit (Hayes 1998:178).

The long history of contradictions between missionaries and local Owambo people shows that the post-colonial controversies surrounding *olufuko* have been passed on from the colonial period. Missionaries wanted to overtly recreate Owambo religion and probably assimilate people into Christianity –a trend that seemed to be followed by ELCIN church in post-colonial Namibia. This has created different groups among the Owambo people as some people converted to Christianity, while other believed in both Owambo and Christian traditions. As a result, people continued performing *olufuko* and later asked for forgiveness after they participated in *olufuko* as Becker (2004) points out. This decision could be interpreted as a disagreement with the missionaries' set regulations.

4.10 Conclusion

To conclude, it appears that for over three years the *Olufuko* festival had been hosted at Outapi, both contesting sides (state and ELCIN) stand by their initial positions. In this chapter, I have presented different views from ELCIN church and state representatives. I also presented the views from the individual ritual leaders. There are two main issues: firstly, the enduring opposition to the rite due to its supposedly immoral sexual character, which has

taken on new challenges in the time of HIV/AIDS. As stated by Shanghala, it was still believed by some Christians that undergoing *olufuko* was indulging in sexual activities and committing adultery as it is alleged that young women avail themselves to men. It seems that even though the church was aware that *olufuko* ceremonies had been taking place in villages all along, with the new development of what many people labelled as *olufuko* ‘revival’, i.e., the very public festival, the ELCIN has now become vocal in stating its opposition, and standing its ground in the Pastoral Letter. On the other hand, the state representatives carry on with hosting *olufuko*, with an objective of reducing teenage pregnancies before the young women pass *olufuko* and equip young women with knowledge on their journey into womanhood and parenthood. Members of the two opposing sides were prepared to share their views on the ritual’s performance, its perceived objectives, and its anticipated consequences.

In this chapter, I have shown that there were also mixed opinions among the ELCIN leadership. While the ELCIN Bishops and some pastors believed that *olufuko* was promoting promiscuous behaviour which might lead to further spread of HIV/Aids, other pastors, such as Haindongo and Fikeipo, had alternative solutions besides the proscription. Haindongo stated that perhaps the ELCIN should also revisit *olufuko* and its policies so that it will not fall in the same trap as it was the case during the initial stage of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. He recounted that during the initial stage of the pandemic, ELCIN leadership did not support the use of protective measures such as the use of condoms¹⁰¹ which resulted in further spread of the virus and loss of lives. ELCIN bishops and pastors came to accept the use of protective devices when it became apparent that other protective measures, such as abstinence, and being faithful to one partner, were not wholly effective in the prevention of the epidemic’s spread.¹⁰² Haindongo compared *olufuko* to the HIV/AIDS scenario, emphasising that perhaps the rite has also some positive impact on those who perform it.

The reflections in this chapter show that the representatives of the state, especially women, were in favour of *olufuko* – as indicated by several informants, including ritual leaders during and after the *Olufuko* Festival’s inception in Outapi. In post-colonial Namibia, the state has recognised the right of individuals to culture and tradition. Some women’s voices, including that of the Omusati Governor Sofia Shaningwa were explicitly supportive of *olufuko*, claiming that ‘we should not be ashamed of our identity and that it is time that as a nation we

¹⁰¹ See also PACANet Report, 2003, Situational Analysis of the Church Response to HIV/AIDS in Namibia, p.18.

¹⁰² Interview with Rev. Lukas Pendukeni Haindongo, Eshakeno Church Okalongo, 12 April 2013.

should do what is really African.’ Her points were complemented by ritual leaders who claimed that Christians were doing what they pleased while ritual leaders (though they also belonged to Christian churches) were pursuing their mode of traditional life. However, this cannot be overly generalised as there were different sentiments.



Chapter 5 Conclusion

This thesis has explored the discourse of heritage in post-colonial Namibia, focusing specifically on the *olufuko* female initiation in the north-central regions, popularly known as Owambo. It explores how the diverse views on *olufuko* have unfolded between the state and traditionalists on the one side and the ELCIN church and some sections of society, on the other, who found *olufuko* incompatible with the current developments in post-colonial Namibia.

The thesis set out how the actors of *olufuko*, especially ritual leaders transformed young women into adulthood by cleansing them from sexual taboos so that they should be socially accepted and give birth to legitimate children. The process gives *ovafuko* an identity as mature women. However, this process of ritual purification was the cause of the recent controversies between some of the ELCIN church leaders and the post-colonial state. I have presented the historical background of the performance of *olufuko* as well as the contemporary performance as it has been performed after independence in the villages in Ombadja. I also presented the discussion on the newly state-inaugurated public *olufuko* performance which is held annually at Outapi. Through my discussion, I have shown how *olufuko* performance has changed. This is reflected through the *ovafuko* aesthetic as demonstrated by Kashiondaha and Ndapanda during their ceremony.

My discussion in the thesis has also shown the changes in the objectives of the ritual performance in order to address and accommodate new challenges of development. It appears that the recent objectives refrain from *olufuko* being regarded as a 'wedding' as it is referred to, for example, in Ondonga, where in *ovafuko* are engaged during their ceremony and taken to live with their future husband. It appears that with the introduction of the public *olufuko* performance, young women are no longer engaged during the ceremony nor are they simply taken from the ceremony as married women to the houses of their future husbands. As an alternative, the objective appears to have been modified to accommodate present-day concerns such as schooling. It seems to have shifted focus to the creation of marriageable women (*ovafuko*) whereby young women are prepared for maturity and transformed into mature women. In the contemporary practice, young women were no longer regarded as 'just married', but rather as aptly prepared, readily marriageable women. The shift was reflected through much emphasis expressed by both the head of state, President Hifikepunye Pohamba; the former head of state Sam Nujoma and the Governor of the Omusati region, Sophia

Shaningwa. Although young women were expected to complete their formal education and some would wait for a formal marriage, they were, however, cleansed from curse and permitted to bear legitimate children after *olufuko* as they were regarded as mature.

I have demonstrated how the post-colonial government of Namibia supported the practice of diverse cultures and tolerance based on the constitutional right. I argued that national citizenships appear to be largely defined through cultural and regional differences. I have demonstrated how the state's support for the development of the *Olufuko* Festival at Outapi signified the performance of *olufuko* as a national festival, even though it appeared to be a regional event. The presence of state symbols, such as the national flag, the African Union flag, the singing of the national anthem and the African Union anthem, bestowed the festival with a national significance. In the same light, the presence of the Head of the State and the Former Head of State, together with a large number of state representatives and African dignitaries, also signified the *olufuko* ceremony as an event of national importance. The reflection shows that the state views traditional practices such as *olufuko* as tools for building national identity and boosting economic development. I have shown that while the *olufuko* actors celebrate their identity, the ceremony creates an avenue for the state and the traditional leaderships to disseminate information to their subjects, and it also provides an opportunity for the local businesses to participate in an emerging cultural tourism market. While some people perceive the practice of culture as an expression of identity, others see it as an excellent ladder to economic fortune.

This thesis has shown the earlier contestation between the earlier missionaries and the colonial government representatives. Missionaries denounced the practice in their effort of converting Owambo people to Christianity. The spread of Christianisation in the 1930s, and the increasing number of Christian converts (Hayes 1998) led some Christians, especially the younger converts, to abandon their traditional practices. As reflected in Chapters One and Four, missionaries condone *olufuko* on the grounds that it is characterised by sexual activities between young women and ritual leaders. The allegation of superstition was also among the reasons for condemnation by earlier missionaries. These points appear to be perpetuated in the recent condemnation by ELCIN leaders in post-colonial Namibia as the basis for their opposition to the practice.

Owambo people have not been entirely submissive to Christian ethics though. In some other parts of Owambo, especially in Ombadja and Oukwanyama, some people continued

practicing the rituals as this thesis revealed. I demonstrated that although the practice has been restricted to the Christian converts, a number of people, especially traditional leaders, such as king Mandume of Oukwanyama, king Uushona Shiimi of Ongadjera, and other traditional leaders of Ombalantu and Uukwambi, opposed the proscription. In this thesis, I argued that with the arrival of the Missionaries, the Owambo perception of Christianity was that they pray and praise God in the 'Christianised' Owambo traditional method, thus the expectation was – and is – that Christianity should be practiced in accordance with the traditional practices.

On the other hand, the colonial Administrator supported tradition during the colonial period. The Native Commissioner, Hahn, as a representative of the state of the time, was against the ban on *olufuko/efundula* which he blamed on Christians (ibid.) as I have shown in the first and second chapters. Hahn sided with the traditional leadership on *olufuko*, accusing missionaries of detribalising tradition in Owambo. It could be disputed as to what the native commissioner's motive to defend Owambo tradition – especially *olufuko/efundula* – was. On the one hand, it appears that his intention was influenced by his photographic interest in the Owambo tradition. On the other hand, it could be viewed through his interest of presenting Owambo tradition to other colonial state officials as he arranged the staging of *olufuko/efundula* dances during the visit of the Chief Native Commissioner in 1935 (Hayes 1998:178). Hayes, however, points out that the Native Commissioner supported tradition and the traditional elders' authority in the interests of the colonial government. As Hayes (2003), Becker (2004), and McKittrick (1998) have shown, these contestations involve power struggles. Native Commissioner and the traditional leader's backing of the tribal norms exemplified how the discourse of heritage in Namibia has been debated over a period of time.

In this thesis, I have revealed how the discourse on cultural heritage has changed with the transition from a colonial to a post-colonial Namibia, a few years after independence. I have shown how during the liberation struggle, the notion of 'One Namibia, One Nation' (Becker 2011; Akuupa 2011) was introduced by SWAPO nationalists. The narrative was made to discourage all sentiments which suggested separateness or uniqueness at the time of independence (Becker 2011, Akuupa 2011) as some Namibians believed that culture was a tool to divide the people. I have demonstrated how political figures took differing views about the foundations of the 'nation'. Some seemed to promote the notion of 'One Namibia, One Nation' while others supported the concept of 'Unity in Diversity' that appears to give all Namibians a sense of identity. Both notions seem to have the same objective of promoting

nationalism, stressing that culture should be a unifying and nation-building force, as reflected in the introductory chapter. The thesis reveals that although a number of people expressed their desire to do away with traditional practices shortly after independence, the majority came to acknowledge tradition as a way of expressing their ethnic identity. I have argued that in the contemporary dispensation, national citizenship appears to be defined largely through an emphasis on cultural and regional diversity.

I have presented how *olufuko* was publicly reintroduced in post-colonial Namibia. The revival of the *olufuko* ceremony seems to be the innovation of the state representatives of the Omusati Regional and Town Council in conjunction with the Ombalantu Traditional Authority. Although the *olufuko* objectives seem to be the same as they were in the colonial past, which was to make young women marriageable and prepare them for womanhood, there seems to be a revision on the objectives, with an additional set in the recent post-colonial performance. The seemingly revised objectives urge young women not to get married during the ceremony but to pursue their education to secondary and tertiary levels before they get married. The additional set of objectives appears to commercialise traditional performance. As outlined in the *Olufuko* Festival's objectives, and practiced during the *olufuko* festivals that took place during the three years since its inception in 2012, the traditional performance was perceived to be a mode of generating income to the region and to the local individuals as it was branded with commercial activities. The reflection on these findings showed that region appears to benefit through hosting trade fairs which run concurrently with ritual performances, and charging visitors to the *Olufuko* Center. It is, however, yet to be determined as to how the festival benefited some people, especially the ritual leaders carrying out the ritual's performance and the *ovafuko* who went through the public rite in the *olufuko* homestead as they appeared to be the main actors in attracting economic development to the region.

The recent reintroduction and acting out of a public *Olufuko* Festival at Outapi appears to have deepened the difference of opinion between the state and the ELCIN church leaders over the ritual's performance. My interview with the ELCIN bishops and pastors, and my analysis of newspaper reports, established how ELCIN bishops and pastors were dissatisfied with the performance of *olufuko* rituals. I discussed how the contestation over *olufuko* has intensified between the state and the ELCIN bishops and pastors, and human rights organisations in Namibia (particularly, NamRight). Hence ELCIN bishops and pastors issued a Pastoral Letter distancing the ELCIN and its members from the *olufuko* performance, citing

the apparent immorality attached to the rite. Considering the current situation, the bishops and pastors' Pastoral Letter alleged the possible spread of sexually transmitted disease including HIV/AIDS through the performance of *olufuko*. The decision by the ELCIN bishops and pastors seems to have influenced some ELCIN pastors to suspend their congregant members who participated in the ritual ceremony at Outapi and those that participated in *omalufuko* that were performed in villages. NamRight referred to *olufuko* as a harmful traditional practice, and requested the ombudsman to investigate the traditional ritual performance as girls as young as ten years old were apparently coerced into *olufuko*.¹⁰³ Although I verified the ages of the three young women I spoke to who went through *olufuko* during my field observations, it was not possible in my research for me to ask the ages of all young women undergoing the rite.

In the fourth chapter I showed that while the ELCIN bishops and some clerics believed that *olufuko* was promoting promiscuous behaviour, the state representatives, other pastors, and the traditionalists expressed their view that culture was an important component in human lives and they seemingly found nothing wrong with *olufuko* as an expression of identity. The media press release by the state representative of the Omusati region could be looked at as a reaffirmation of the state's position in 'reviving' *olufuko* tradition. It appears that there were divergent views among Namibian people on whether *olufuko* should be permitted as a public social event, or if it should remain barred to the Christian devout.

The main objective of this thesis was to explore the contestations between the state which advocates the performance of culture and the ELCIN church. Within the scope of this thesis, it was not possible to determine the extent to which the festival affected the lives of people, especially the ritual leaders, and the young women, in terms of their social life, education, religious life etc. Thus, this thesis has provided room for future research to find out the social implications of *olufuko* as experienced by the various individuals concerned.

¹⁰³ *Informante* 29 August 2012

Bibliography

- Abungu, G. 1996; *Heritage, Community and State in the 90s: Experience from Africa*, paper presented at 'The future of the Past' Conference, UWC, 10–12 July: 1–3.
- Akuupa, Michael, U. 2011; *The formation of 'National Culture' in post-Apartheid Namibia: A focus on state sponsored cultural festivals in Kavango Region*, Dissertation presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Anthropology), University of the Western Cape.
- Akuupa, Michael, U. 2012; *Living museums and culture in post-apartheid Namibia*, (unpublished).
- Akuupa, Michael, U.; Kornes Godwin 2013; From 'One Namibia, one Nation' towards 'Unity in Diversity'? Shifting representations of culture and nationhood in Namibian Independence Day celebrations, 1990–2010, *Anthropology Southern Africa* 36(1–2): 34–46.
- Appadurai, Arjun 1990; Disjuncture and Differences in the Global Cultural Economy, in *Theory, Culture & Society* 7: 295–310.
- Appadurai, Arjun 1991; Global Ethnoscape: Notes and Queries for Transnational Anthropology, in *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present*, ed. Richard G. Fox, New Mexico, School of American Research Press: 191–209.
- Becker, Heike 2004; 'Efundula: Women's Initiation, Gender and Sexual Identities in Colonial and Post-Colonial Northern Namibia', in *Re-thinking sexualities in Africa*, ed. Signe Arnfred, Uppsala, The Nordic Africa Institute: 35–56.
- Becker, Heike 2007; Making Tradition: A Historical Perspective on Gender, in *Unravelling Taboo*, eds. Suzanne LaFont and Dianne Hubbard, Windhoek, John Meinert: 22–39.
- Becker, Heike; Lentz, Carola, 2013; The politics and aesthetics of commemoration: national days in southern Africa, *Anthropology Southern Africa* 36 (1–2): 1–10.
- Becker, Heike, 2011; Commemorating heroes in Windhoek and Eenhana: Memory, Culture and Nationalism in Namibia, 1990–2010. *Africa* 81 (4): 519–43.
- Boonzaier, Emile; Spiegel, D. Andrew, 2008; Tradition, in *New South African Keywords*, eds. Shepherd and Robins, Ohio, Ohio University Press.
- Bruwer, Johannes Petrus van Schalkwyk, 1959; *The Kuanyama of South West Africa*, Stellenbosch (unpublished).
- Cohen, Erik 1988; Authenticity and Commoditization in Tourism, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel, *Annals of Tourism Research*, 15: 371–386.
- Comaroff, John; Comaroff, Jean 2005; Reflections on Liberalism, Policulturalism & ID-ology: Citizenship & Difference in South Africa, in *Limits to Liberalism after Apartheid: Citizenship, Governance and Culture*, ed. Robin L. Steven, Oxford, James Currey: 33–56.
- Comaroff, John; Comaroff, Jean 2009; *Ethnicity Inc.*, Scottsville, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.
- Consuming Culture: Marketing Namibia's Cultural Tourism Products 2011; A study commissioned by the International Labour Organisation under the millennium Development Goal Fund (MDG-F) Programme on Sustainable Cultural Tourism for Namibia, Compiled by Therese Abrahamsen, Andreas Klemmer, Jeremy Silvester, Naitsikile Iiyenda, Windhoek, John Meinert.

- Davies, Gwyneth 1987, *The efundula: Female fertility and social maturity among the Kwanyama of Southern Angola*, Masters Thesis. University of Kent, Canterbury.
- Eriksen, Hylland, Thomas 1993; *Ethnicity and Nationalism: anthropological perspectives*, London, Pluto Press.
- Eriksen, Hylland, Thomas; Nielsen, Finn, Sivert 2001; *A History of Anthropology*, London, Pluto Press.
- Estermann, Carlos 1976; *The ethnography of southwestern Angola: The Non-Bantu Peoples, The Ambo ethnic Group*, New York: Africana Publishing Company.
- Fairweather, Ian 2003; 'Showing off': Nostalgia and Heritage in North-Central Namibia, in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 29, 1, 279–296.
- Fairweather, Ian 2006; Heritage, Identity and Youth in Postcolonial Namibia, in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 32, 4, 719–736.
- Garuba Harry; Raditlhalo, Sam 2008; Culture, in *New South African Keywords*, eds Shepherd and Robins, Ohio, Ohio University Press.
- Gusfield, Joseph R. 1967; Tradition and Modernity: Misplaced Polarities in the Study of Social Change, in *American Journal of Sociology* 72 (4), The University of Chicago Press: 351–362.
- Hahn, C.H.L. 1928; The Ovambo, in *The Native Tribes of South West Africa*, ed. H.P. Smith, Cape Town: Cape Times: 1–36.
- Haugh, Wendi A. 2014; *Lyrical Nationalism in Post-Apartheid Namibia: Kings, Christians and Cosmopolitans in Catholic Youth Songs*, London: Lexington.
- Hayes, Patricia 1998a; 'Northern exposures: The photography of C.H.L. Hahn, Native Commissioner of Ovamboland, 1915–1946', in *The Colonising Camera. Photographs in the making of Namibian History*, eds Jeremy Silvester, Patricia Hayes, Wolfram Hartmann, Cape Town, UCT Press.
- Katjavivi, Peter H. 1989; Church in the Struggle for Independence, in *Church and Liberation in Namibia*, eds H. Peter Katjavivi, Per Frostin, Kaire Mbwende, London, Pluto Press.
- Kratz, Corinne, A. 1994; *Affecting Performance: Meaning, Movement and Performance in Okiek women's initiation*, Washington and London: Smithsonian.
- Loeb, Edwin 1962; *In Feudal Africa*, Bloomington: Mouton.
- Löytty, Sakari 2012; *People's Church – People's Music: Contextualization of Liturgical in an African church*, A Doctoral Research Project, Sibelius Academy.
- Marschall, Sabine 2013; Public holidays as lieux de memoire: nation-building and the politics of public memory in South Africa, *Anthropology Southern Africa* 36 (1–2), 11–20.
- McKittrick, Meredith 1998; 'Generational Struggle and Social Mobility in Western Ovambo Communities 1915–54', in *Namibia Under South African Rule, Mobility and Containment*, eds Patricia Hayes, Jeremy Silvester, Marion Wallace, Wolfram Hartmann, 1915–46, pp. 241–262, Oxford, James Currey Ltd.
- McKittrick, Meredith, 1999; Faithful Daughter, Murdering Mother: Transgression and Social Control in Colonial Namibia, *The Journal of African History* 40 (2): 265–283.
- Miettinen, Kari 2005; *On the way to whiteness: Christianisation, Conflict and Changes in Colonial Ovamboland 1910–1965*, Helsinki, Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.

- Namibia in the 1980s*; 1981, Catholic Institute for International Relations; British Council of Churches, London: Catholic Institute for International Relations.
- Ndeutapo, Noa 2005; *Onakudiwa ya-IELA 1871–2000: Ondjokonona yongeleki Onghwaevangeli paLuther yomuAngola*, Windhoek, Macmillan.
- Nujoma, Sam 2013; Address on the occasion of the second celebration of the *olufuko* cultural festival at Outapi, Omusati region, 27 August.
- Oliphant, Chanell 2013; The changing faces of the *klopse*: performing the rainbow nation during the Cape Town carnival, Master Thesis, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town.
- Pohamba Hifikepunye 2011; Address on the occasion of the launching of ‘Nationhood and National Pride’ campaign, Windhoek, 27 April.
- Policy on Arts and Culture of the Republic of Namibia 2001; Windhoek, Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture.
- Rassool, Ciraj 2000; The rise of Heritage and reconstruction of History in South Africa, *Kronos* 26.
- Richards, I. Audrey 1956; *Chisungu: A girl’s initiation ceremony among the Bemba of Zambia*, London, Faber and Faber.
- Salokoski, Marta 2006; *How Kings are Made – How Kingship Changes, A study of Rituals and Ritual Change in Pre-Colonial and Colonial Namibia*, Academic Dissertation, University of Helsinki, Finland.
- Shepherd, Nick 2008; Heritage, in *New South African Keywords*, eds Nick Shepherd, Steven Robins, Ohio, Ohio University Press.
- Silvester Jeremy et al. 2011; *Our Heritage, Our Pride: A Heritage Book for Namibia*, Windhoek, John Meinert.
- Silvester, Jeremy et al. 1998; ‘This ideal conquest’: Photography and colonialism in Namibia history, in *The Colonising Camera. Photographs in the making of the Namibian History*, eds Patricia Hayes; Hartmann Wolfram; Sylvester Jeremy, Cape Town: UCT Press.
- Strauss Andre; Kenny Leo 1991; Culture of Resistance, in *Culture in Namibia: An Overview*, Windhoek, Capital Press.
- The Constitution of the Republic of Namibia 1990; adopted in Windhoek.
- Tonjes, H.1996; *Ovamboland. Country, People, Mission with Particular Reference to the Largest Tribe, the Kwanyama*. (English translation of the original published in German in 1911).
- Turner, W. Victor 1962; Three Symbols of Passage in Ndembu Circumcision Ritual, in *The Ritual of Social Relations*, 1962, ed. Max Gluckman, Manchester, Manchester University Press.
- Tuupainen, Maija, 1970; *Marriage in a matrilineal African tribe: A social anthropological study of marriage in the Ondonga tribe in Ovamboland*. Helsinki, Academic Bookstore.
- Van Binsbergen, W.M.J. 1994; The Kazanga Festival: ethnicity as cultural mediation and transformation in central Western Zambia, in *African studies*53 (2): 99–125.
- Van Gennep, Arnold 2004; *The rites of Passage*, London, Rautlege.
- Wolputte, Steven; Bleckmann, Laura 2012; *The ironies of Pop: Local music production and citizenship in a small Namibian town*, *Africa*, 82 (3) 413-436.

Newspapers articles

Shigwedha, Vilho 2000; Picturing the Past: Returning to Efundula, in *The Namibian*, 24 November

The Namibian, 27 August 2012

The Namibian, 23 November 2012

The Namibian, 28 August 2012

The New Era, 29 July 2014

The New Era, 5 August 2014

Namibian Sun, 9 August 2012

Informante, 29 August 2012

Websites

www.economist.com.na, accessed on 19 February 2013

www.thenamibian.com.na, accessed on 2 August 2012

www.namibiansun.com, accessed on 19 February 2013

www.archivalplatform.org/blog/entry/harmful_traditional_practice, accessed on 9 September 2014

www.Outapitc.org.na/olufuko, accessed on 19 February 2013

www.allafrica.com/stories, accessed on 19 February 2013

www.swapoparty.org, accessed on 19 February 2013

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ovambo_people, accessed on 29 October 2014

Interviewees

Mathias Hamukwaya, NBC, Windhoek, 2 February 2013

Petrus Hamutenya, NBC, Windhoek, 2 February 2013

Joel Fikeipo, Hosiana ELCIN church, Windhoek, 22 February 2013

Martin Ngodji, Paulinum, Windhoek, 18 March 2013

S.V.V. Nambala, Oniipa, Ondangwa, 5 April 2013

Lukas Pendukeni Haindongo, Eshakeno ELCIN parish, Okalongo, 12 April 2013

Ndatoolomba Linea Paulus, Omunyekadi, Ohangwena, 9 March 2013

Hileni Didalelwa Omupepe, Okalongo, 8 April 2013

Zema Ishihamba, Omatwadiva, Okalongo, 18 April 2013

Ndilinongwe Mbaka, Omatwadiva, Okalongo, 19 April 2013

Ndeunyema Amadila, Onghwiyu, Angola, 10–17 April 2013

Mkwaanyoka Mwatukange, Outapi, 24 August 2013

Timoteus Nakapala, Ombadja Traditional Authority office, Okalongo, 14 April 2011

Mathias Walaula, Ombadja Traditional Authority office, Okalongo, 14 April 2011

Elizabeth Kahungu, Okafitu Kauvale, Okalongo, 15 April 2011

Shikuma yaShilongo, Olupito, Okalongo, 14 April 2011

