

ROOT AND TIP OF THE ||KWANNA: CHIASMUS IN |XAM NARRATIVES

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This article considers the rhetorical figure chiasmus, or ring composition, as it appears in three narratives told by ||kabbo. Chiasmus is contextualized against broader cosmological considerations in a close inter-textual reading that highlights chiasmus as a mnemonic device. It is the contention of this article that chiasmus is ‘embodied’ and finds particular specificity in ‘||kabbo’s Intended Return Home.’ Embodiment implicates kinesthetic attentiveness and somatic sensitivity, which this article explores as they apply to storytelling and endurance running (persistence hunting) as practiced by ||kabbo. Finally, embodiment is shown to be signified in a variety of representative schema such as story, map and rock engravings, which intertwine with motility, wind, paths, death and !k”augen (death influence).

1 Deacon, J. and Skotnes, P. Eds. 2014. *The Courage of ||kabbo: Celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the Publication of Specimens of Bushman Folklore*. Cape Town: UCT Press.

2 Lewis-Williams, J.D. Ed. 2000. *Stories That Float From Afar*. Cape Town: David Philip. pg. 17.

3 Bank, A. 2006. *Bushmen in a Victorian World*. Cape Town: Double Story. pg. 129.

4 Bleek, W.H.I and Lloyd, L.C. 1911. *Specimens of Bushman Folklore*. London: George Allen & Co., Ltd. pgs. 234–237.

INTRODUCTION

||kabbo’s life, which was lived in the context of the Cape colonial frontier, has been documented and celebrated.¹ While it is true that he acknowledged his name and himself as ||kabbo it is none the less misleading to accept this name uncritically for it masks his hybridity and conceals his lived body experiences. Mobilizing his names, all three names, as ||kabbo does in one of the stories suggests the complexities of personhood and circumspection in the face of a fixed static identity.

In fact ||kabbo had four names, and possibly a fifth. His |xam names ||kabbo (dream) and |uhi-ddoro (smoking tinderbox) mark the life of a hunter, sorcerer and rain’s man.

Jantje Tooren, or Oud Jantje signal social and economic upheaval and transition from a hunting and gathering way of life to that of stock thief and farm labourer.² ||kabbo’s ‘little name’ |han≠i≠i (husband’s thoughts) is ||kabbo before conception and was given to him by a maternal aunt when he was a baby.³ A likely fifth name, |xuru (tobacco-hunger, famine), was an appellation that arose as much out of circumstance (stolen tobacco pouch) as from ||kabbo’s passion for smoking. |xuru is ||kabbo as he was remembered by this son-in-law, in song and memory, after he died.⁴ He might not have known |xuru as a name or nickname but nonetheless it is deeply insightful given that ||kabbo associated himself with Smoking People (his conception of the |xam) and he named his son Smoke’s

Man (||goo-ka-!kui, otherwise Witbooi Tooren). Semantically the smoking tinderbox (|uhi-ddoro) associates ||kabbo with the Mantis (||kandoro, tinderbox owner) as the tinder-box, in turn, links both to Smoking People.⁵

What is at stake and what counts, given that "a story is the wind", is not the proper nouns as such but is in the wind that animates stories and names. The story in which ||kabbo elaborates this understanding and his own particular methods of engaging with the wind is embedded in a wider system of beliefs that maintains "the wind is one with the man."⁶ Wind potency is inextricably linked with the practices of hunting and healing⁷ and is associated with breath, spirits-of-the-dead, disorder and death.⁸ When a person dies their wind blows making dust, taking away their tracks, "for we, who are human beings, we possess wind."⁹ What is elliptically suggested by ||kabbo is firstly, a three-way impersonation of mimetic resonances binding wind, story and person together, and secondly, his statement positions his story in a network of relationships and relatedness that includes death and erasure. Within this idiom the |xam notions of paths and walking become central to what follows and further make possible an explication of motility¹⁰ with respect to the transactions between ||kabbo's somatic experiences and the stories that he told.

Entering into the physical and cognitive environment available to ||kabbo reveals a person who is not bounded by the skin. By recourse to possessing wind he gains substantive extension into the environment; or if we accept a two-way mimetic impersonation, the wind possessing him. Furthermore, if the reciprocity between wind and person results in a story, as happens in "||kabbo's Intended Return Home", then this surely is open to hermeneutic investigation.

SKY, PATHS AND WALKING

In the southern hemisphere winter of 1873 ||kabbo sat waiting, as he said; "for the moon to turn back for me." The words were uttered as the first line of a narrative that he told to Lucy Lloyd, and which she transcribed

as "What ||kabbo said to me about his intended return home to Bushmanland." This she subsequently published as "||kabbo's Intended Return Home" in *Specimens of Bushman Folklore*.¹¹ The story appears as "Personal History" in section VIII but as a *kum* it overflows categorization and its influence extends well beyond personal history. However, to better understand the reverberations and attractions of ||kabbo's story, we will explore the investment that he places in cyclical thinking and will consider the rhetorical figures *antimetabole* and *chiasmus* to see how they support a sense of motility and circularity. Three *kukummi* will direct our approach: the story already mentioned, in addition to: "The Children of the First Bushmen (who) throw up the Sleeping Sun into the Sky" and "Death on the Hunting Ground."¹²

||kabbo's immersion in celestial rhythms and his attunement to cyclical patterns is difficult to ignore. In this regard let's note that ||kabbo did not depart for |xara-||kam, his home at the Bitterpits, when the moon turned back for him in July and August; the months in which he told the story of his intention to return home. Nor did he depart in September, a month after concluding the story. Instead he left Cape Town, together with |akunta, on 15th October, 1873. Why ||kabbo did not depart at the next full moon might better be explained by looking a little further. Commencing in September, shortly before his departure, he told the story of the "The Children of the First Bushmen (who) throw up the Sleeping Sun into the Sky." This is the second version of essentially the same story that ||kabbo told two years earlier.¹³ The narration of the first story, as with the second, commenced in September, both significantly at the time of the southern hemisphere summer equinox. The synchronicity between the stories and time of telling, albeit two years apart, suggests that ||kabbo is not only attending to lunar cycles but is cognizant of the solar cycle as well. His stories, first and second version in both instances, appear timed to coincide with the sun's "return" to the southern hemisphere when night and day are of equal duration on about 21/22 September.

5 Lewis-Williams, J.D. Ed. 2000. *Stories That Float From Afar*. Cape Town: David Philip. pg. 17.

6 Hollmann, J. 2004. *Customs and Beliefs of the |Xam Bushmen*. Johannesburg: Wits U.P. pg. 121.

7 Low, C. 2007. Khoisan wind: hunting and healing. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*. 3(7). pgs. 1–96.

8 Blundell, G. 2004. *Nqabayo's Nomansland: San Rock Art and the Somatic Past*. Uppsala University. pgs. 90–97. Hollmann, J. 2004 *Customs and Beliefs of the |Xam Bushmen*. Johannesburg: Wits U.P. pgs 95–126.

9 Bleek, W.H.I and Lloyd, L.C. 1911. *Specimens of Bushman Folklore*. London: George Allen & Co., Ltd. pg. 397.

10 Merleau-Ponty, M. [1962] 2005. *Phenomenology of Perception*. London and New York: Routledge Classics. pgs.113-170.

11 Bleek, W.H.I and Lloyd, L.C. 1911. *Specimens of Bushman Folklore*. London: George Allen & Co., Ltd. pgs. 298–317.

12 Lewis-Williams, J.D. Ed. 2000. *Stories That Float From Afar*. Cape Town: David Philip. pgs. 52–77.

13 Wessels, M. 210. *Bushman Letters – Interpreting / Xam Narrative*. Johannesburg: Wits U.P. pg. 217.

This is noteworthy because following the equinox in the summer months the moon, while continuing to wax and wane, "retreats" in the presence of the sun's dominance. In March, at the onset of the southern hemisphere winter, the sun "departs" going north together with the summer stars. The moon regains prominence as the nights become longer and days shorter after the winter equinox on about 21/22 March. The sun's advance in summer and retreat in winter impacts on the moon's prominence and in so doing reinforces and reflects the sun's attack on the moon, the central theme of "The Children of the First Bushmen (who) throw up the Sleeping Sun into the Sky." As happens in the story a truce is agreed, when the sun acquiesces to the moon's plea on behalf of the children and desists in his attack, allowing the moon to "living return." Could it be that the winter equinox marks the moment of truce annually, once every twelve months, while the waning and waxing moon does so every month, thus giving the story double reiteration? If this is agreed it would explain ||kabbo's departure as foreseen by him and expressed in the story of his intended return home. When he says he is waiting for the moon it appears upon reading both stories that maybe he is watching and waiting for the moon and the sun, and is timing his departure to coincide with the equinox. The crucial detail is that ||kabbo says "He only awaits the return of the moon; that the moon () may go round [...]." What he may imply, if we follow the above explanation, is that the moon's *return* is monthly while the moon's *go round* is annual and connected to the sun.¹⁴

Following this explanation it seems that ||kabbo was not delayed, contrary to previous assumptions, but left when he intended with the moon of the summer equinox. He never wished to leave Cape Town in winter, which would have been the case if he had departed at the next foreseeable full moon. Instead as he said, "I must go together with the warm sun... I shall walk, letting the flowers become dry while I still follow the path." The explanation of a delayed departure only applies if time is calculated and follows a strictly lunar cycle but it provides no reason,

other than contingencies, as to why he did not leave at the next foreseeable full moon. Since sun and moon are central to the sun story there is a strong reinforcement of the theme if the story is told, as appears to be the case, at the time of the equinoxes, when the sun's attack commences in September and when a truce is agreed in March. In all of this there is an acute awareness of both sun and moon: their go round and return, alternating in six-monthly cycles.

What is intriguing, and should be taken further than a single example, is the possibility that |xam discourse was distributed – or at least some *kukummi* were deployed – in accord with celestial concerns and timing. What has been described as "the altering equation between the hours spent in darkness and those spent in light" and the impact that this has on lives lived under the sky is acknowledged by ||kabbo's story and furthermore his waiting for the moon is evidence of a life lived in "the varying shades of opacity between sundown and morning."¹⁵ Waiting for the moon (and sun) is a calculation of time but is in addition ||kabbo's somatic recollection of warmth and cold; light and dark, based on a keen awareness of the altering celestial equation.

At this point we may pause and recognize that mobility and motility are two sides of the same coin. The evidence is convincing and unequivocal: "mobility is the overwhelming default option" adopted by hunting and gathering societies.¹⁶ The distinction between mobility and motility, however, is seldom made: mobility is the observation of a mode of existence while motility is the lived body experience of that mobile way of life. If there is a "heads" on the mobility-motility coin then the flip-side is the post-cranial body (tails) extending down to the legs and feet, which make tracks and create paths. The integration of mobility and motility is obvious in practice. People pursuing a *strandloping* mode of existence, for example, were moved by the tides as also; hunter-gatherers and *strandlopers* were moved by the seasons. It is not trite to say that over many millennia human bodies have been moved by celestial bodies. There is proxy evidence of

14 See 'The Girl Who Made Stars' (Bleek 1911: 73-79) in which go around and return describe movements of the Milky Way, Sun and stars.

15 Steiner, G. 'The Distribution of Discourse' in *On Difficulty and Other Essays*. 1978. Oxford: Oxford U.P. pg. 69.

16 Parkington, J. Dlamini, N. 2015. *First People: Ancestors of the San*. Cape Town: Krakaduw. pg. 76

this age-old celestial awareness in the deposition of shell middens, extending back in time from recent past to the Middle Stone Age on the southern Africa coast and elsewhere.¹⁷ The celestial sensitivity apparent in ||kabbo's story has a long trajectory, bedded in motility and mobility, for which he happens to be a representative voice. He is conscious of the dual movements; celestial and his own, and he is attending to both as did many, many generations of people before him. In most literary analysis the focus is on text and inter-textual reference, with biographical background and social context maybe included. *Kukummi* are different in the sense that they are not "homeless"¹⁸ but are embodied cultural phenomena with strong behavioral and ecological underpinnings. We might say, given the foregoing postulations, that ||kabbo is not the centre of the story, contrary to the anthropocentrism of the story title formulated by Lucy Lloyd, if we remember, which foregrounds ||kabbo. Instead, if there is no centre, his story can be understood as a network of relations in which the individual's affirmations stand within a broader collectivity. Moving the storyteller to the periphery permits the archaeology of the story to be excavated and allows a long body of experience to appear. This is not the only exegesis of course. In fact the story can be read in many ways but the point is that ||kabbo's self-effacement, when he is in story-telling mode, is a self that is cognizant of its obligations and relatedness. When ||kabbo is telling stories he is capable of being himself but is not self-centred. This becomes apparent later.

||KWANNA, ROOT AND TIP

The attention given to the night sky as measured by the equinoxes suggests that dividing the year into four seasons may be a received construct and at odds with |xam thinking, which strongly suggests two seasons. What is translated as autumn in "||kabbo's Intended Return Home" is ||hau that equates to ||kwanna |u, which is to say "the root of the ||kwanna" roughly matching the month of March. This is rendered as "and **autumn** will quickly be upon us there, when I am sitting at my own place."¹⁹ My under-

standing of what is taking place in the transposition between two time systems is that the |xam understanding of time is being forced to fit Western conceptions (Fig. 1). As is logical, the root of the ||kwanna is related to !k'aua that equates to ||kwanna |emm, that is to say "the tip of the ||kwanna." This is approximately the month of September according to the western calendar system. Here what we have in the ||kwanna is the basis of two seasons with the "tip" and "root" matching the summer and winter equinox respectively.²⁰

Circulating through ||kwanna is growth, sap rising and falling: root-to-tip; tip-to-root. Cycling with the seasons the springbok migrations follow the rain and regeneration of the veld. Springbok move from east to west at the time of the summer equinox and return, going in the other direction from west to east, in late February, March at the time of the winter equinox.²¹ What we get a sense of is directionality – springbok moving east-west; sun travelling north-south; sap rising – and then a turnaround when the movement reverses. Directionality and growth is accepted but are understood and are embedded within a pattern of circulation. This conception of movement receives corroboration in ||kabbo's story for he says, "The rain must first fall" and then "the *western* ostriches do, seeking water, *come back*; that they may going along () drink the new water" (my italics). This event occurs when there is water in the "Har Rivier", after the autumn rains, following ||kabbo's return home.

"||kabbo's Intended Return Home" is impressed with and reflects the above pattern. Ostensibly his journey has a set direction from A to B – Cape Town to |xara-||kam but the narrative circulates on several levels. The story is divisible into two halves. The mid-point is marked by a "digression" that describes hunting hares. Seemingly this is unrelated to the story line but this impression is misleading. Later we visit the strategy of narrative embedding. Meantime, on either side of the story-within-a-story the narrator moves back and forth between the place of departure and the destination setting up an oscillation between first half and

17 Parkington, J. 2006. *Shorelines, strandlopers and shell middens*. Cape Town: Krakadouw.

18 As conveyed by Walter Benjamin, following Lukacs (*The Theory of the Novel*), the modern genre is commensurate with an age of 'transcendental homelessness' because the community underpinning the oral transmission of tales was shattered (*Der Erzähler, 'The Storyteller' or 'Narrator'*).

19 Bleek, W.H.I and Lloyd, L.C. 1911. *Specimens of Bushman Folklore*. London: George Allen & Co., Ltd. pgs. 314–315.

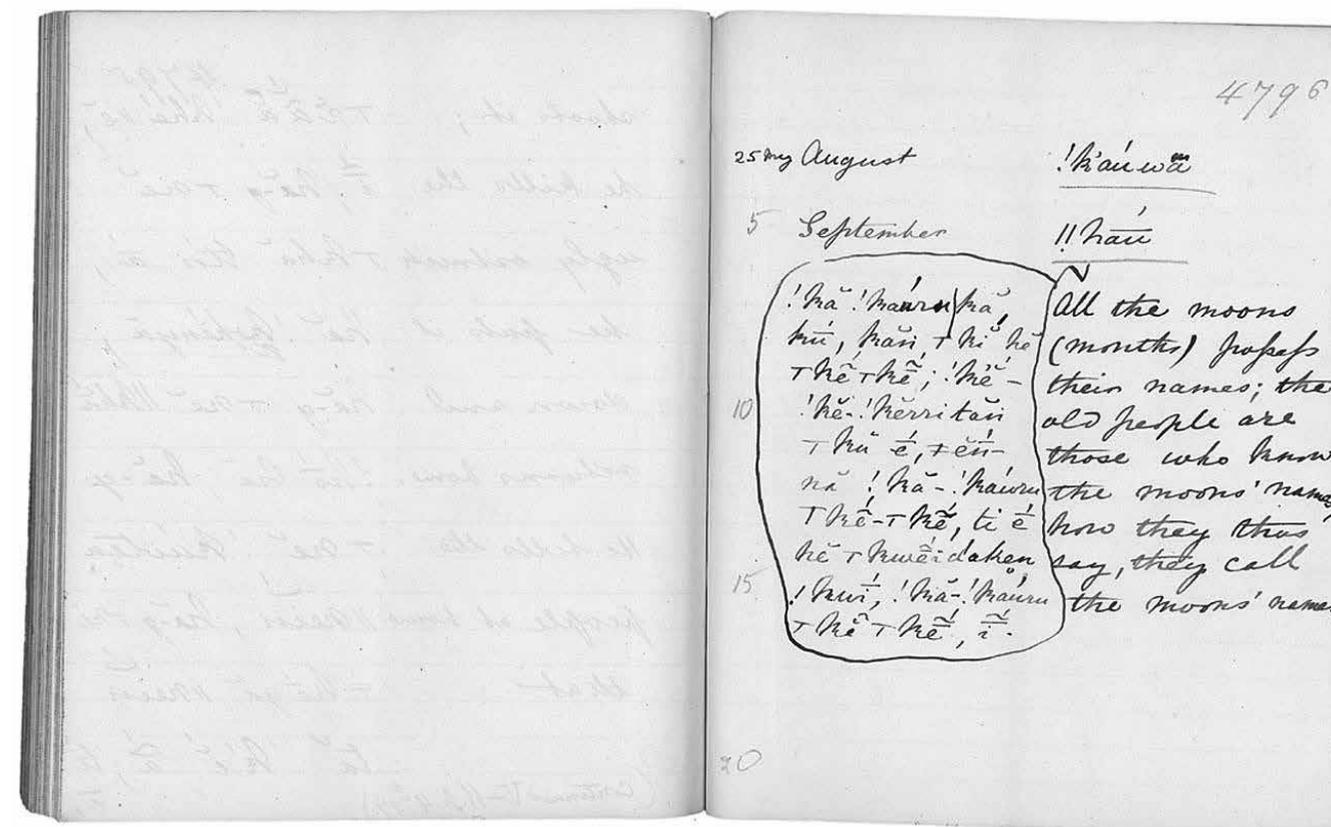
20 This paragraph is a result of my field trips to |xam-ka lau and the conversations that José Manuel de Prada-Samper and I have shared. Both his 'Words about Time', an unpublished nomenclature of |xam words and notions of time plus Roche's article cited in the footnote 21 below are central to the formulation here.

21 Roche, C. 2005. 'The Springbok...Drink the Rain's Blood': Indigenous Knowledge and its use in Environmental History: The case of the |Xam and an understanding of Springbok Treks' South Africa *Historical Journal*, 53: 1–22.

FIGURE 1

As this extract indicates the moon's names, as known by the old people, can no longer be remembered. The |xam time system was displaced and replaced by outside influences.

Source: <http://lloydbleekcollection.cs.uct.ac.za/>



second half of the narrative. This confounds what at first sight may appear to be a straightforward linear journey. Commencing at the tip of ||kwanna so that "the sun will go along, burning strongly" the story progresses and as the days pass and the narrator walks – "the earth becomes hot, while I still am going along halfway." The route is long "For, it is a great road; () it is long." Taking this into consideration the narrator calculates the duration of the journey. "I should reach my place, when the trees are dry. For I should walk letting the flowers become dry while I still follow the path." Arrival home will coincide with the root of ||kwanna. "Then, **autumn** (!k'aua = ||kwanna |emm) will quickly be upon us there; when I am sitting at

my place." As noted earlier the plan is to arrive home at |xara-||kam with the onset of the autumn rain at which time ||kabbo intends hunting ostriches returning from the west where earlier in the season they had gone.

Imaginatively both listener and narrator have walked the length of ||kwanna – tip to root, a full season. This is improbable in real terms for the distance, Cape Town to |xara-||kam, is 560 km. Given a season of six months this equates to 93 km per month or 3.0 km/day. This is nonsense unless ||kabbo intended stopping along the way. What is more probable is that ||kabbo has used the six-month cycle of ||kwanna as a mnemonic aid upon which

This is a non-attached story teller who uses names (my, our, those) but is not rigidly identified with them either. Preparing himself for such an occasion ||kabbo says, “I must sit a little, cooling my arms; that the fatigue may go out of them; because I sit. I do merely listen, watching for a story.” His statement insinuates the |xam notion of thinking strings and suggests Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s characterization of threads, which the philosopher says make it possible to “[d]ilate our being in the world [by] relaxing our intentional threads.”²⁶ If threads and strings (the latter said to be attached to the throat) are related then this is not disembodiment that ||kabbo is speaking of. On the contrary the body is relaxed and the thinking strings are in place, supported by somatic participation and encouraged by kinesthetic attentiveness.

In an aside to herself recorded on a loose sheet stuck to the left-hand page of her notebook (Fig. 3) Lucy Lloyd says: “Must try to get the story bodily.”²⁷ What she is referring to is the somatic nature of the storytelling, typically associated with performative animation but

||kabbo confounds familiar understanding for he says: “I feel that a story is the wind” [therefore] “I do merely () listen, watching for a story, [...]” The juxtaposed listen and watching is indicative of multi-sensory, or cross-modal perception, which ||kabbo encourages. This procedure and process is effective for ||kabbo goes on to say, “I am listening with all my ears,” which implies all senses participating and alert. Moreover the impression received is of ||kabbo attempting to explain a state of active passivity. He conveys this by saying, “I want to hear...I must wait listening.” Formulated thus his words capture both wish and restraint; experienced simultaneously. If this is right then what ||kabbo is saying is that to receive a story requires the participation of a relaxed physical body and an alert sensitive attention. Together they provide the specific condition into which a story is induced to float. He says, “These are those to which I am listening with all my ears; while I feel that () I sit silent.” If the body centers the attention it then seems reasonable to suppose that the thinking strings can be adjusted – relaxed and tuned

– through kinesthetic attentiveness. This impresses upon the manner in which the story gets told and indeed upon its reception, since “the tale which is told nicely, I did get it, as it lay in my thinking strings.”²⁸ The thinking strings of the story teller when tuned and vibrating sensitively set up a sympathetic vibration in the receiver. Moreover thoughts and ideas fall on the thinking strings which go “down each side of the throat into the thinking channels, and remains there and grows up with the hearer.”²⁹ The imagery recorded here is indicative of physical ingestion. Ideas and impressions are implanted in the body via the thinking strings and are not the passing drift of ephemeral thoughts. This would explain ||kabbo’s listening; keenly attentive to his body.

UNSPOKEN WORDS OF THE BODY

Empathetically vibrating thinking strings and bodily attunement also goes some way towards explaining the communication and reception of presentiments, which signal their presence by the sensation of tapping, a picture, or as a message in the body. Curiously ||kabbo’s observations suggest disembodiment, “[...] our names do pass through those people; () while they do not perceive our bodies. [...]” This points to the idea of communication by way of presentiments. Of course he might simply be saying a person is remembered. He could also be implying durability. In other words names and stories have greater durability, or longevity, than an individual storyteller. After all ||kabbo was aware that his words were being written down and would appear in books. Names and stories endure longer than a life time. If taken like this the presumption is that time is chronological but the narrator thwarts single-minded understanding. Strict directionality gets caught up in a back and forth movement – “turning backwards” and “returning.” Sequential time holds and then falters and begins to circulate erasing a clear idea of past and future. “I may listening turn backwards (with my ears) to my feet’s heels, on which I went; [...]” What we get a sense of is a disinvestment in linearity.

Further on ||kabbo says that the “ear does listening go to meet the returning man’s names.” This enigmatic statement implies presentiments if read together with the previous assertion that “names do pass through those people while they do not perceive our bodies.” One way to approach presentiments is through the belief system of *Inanna-se* which says it is inadvisable for a hunter to speak the name of an animal that he has shot since naming the animal will weaken the essential link between hunter and prey.³⁰ *Inanna-se* is a restriction that places the requirements of respect and humility upon the hunter. The animal, its name, and the attitude of the person doing the naming are related through wind, name and *Inanna-se*. Actions can take place from afar because “The wind connects the hunter with the prey like a thread leading from one body to another.”³¹ This fits with a system of belief in which:

Understandings of wind tie into notions of potency – linked to identity and ‘smell essence’, spirits, dead people, illness, and contagion. [...] Sharing wind essence ties people and animals together across space and time.³²

Now the storyteller by mobilizing his names and attracting the wind and a story could foreseeably be intent on acting at long range too. As conveyed by ||kabbo these conditions might feasibly have been activated when he set his names in motion – those names by which he is known to other people. So doing he floats his names in advance down the road along which he intends to walk. The transmission and reception in this instance could be explained as presentiments in which the outcome intended is positive alerting “people who dwell at another place” to listen and “meet the returning man’s names.” If this is right then “a story is the wind” fits with a much larger cognitive environment in which lived body experiences, wind potency and presentiments are coextensive. Invisible names projected (in the wind as a story) find their veracity as a sensation received in another body. ||kabbo confirms that long-range signaling by names occurs silently and is experienced physically, for example; when his wife calls his name in |xam-ka au! and he experiences the effect 600 km

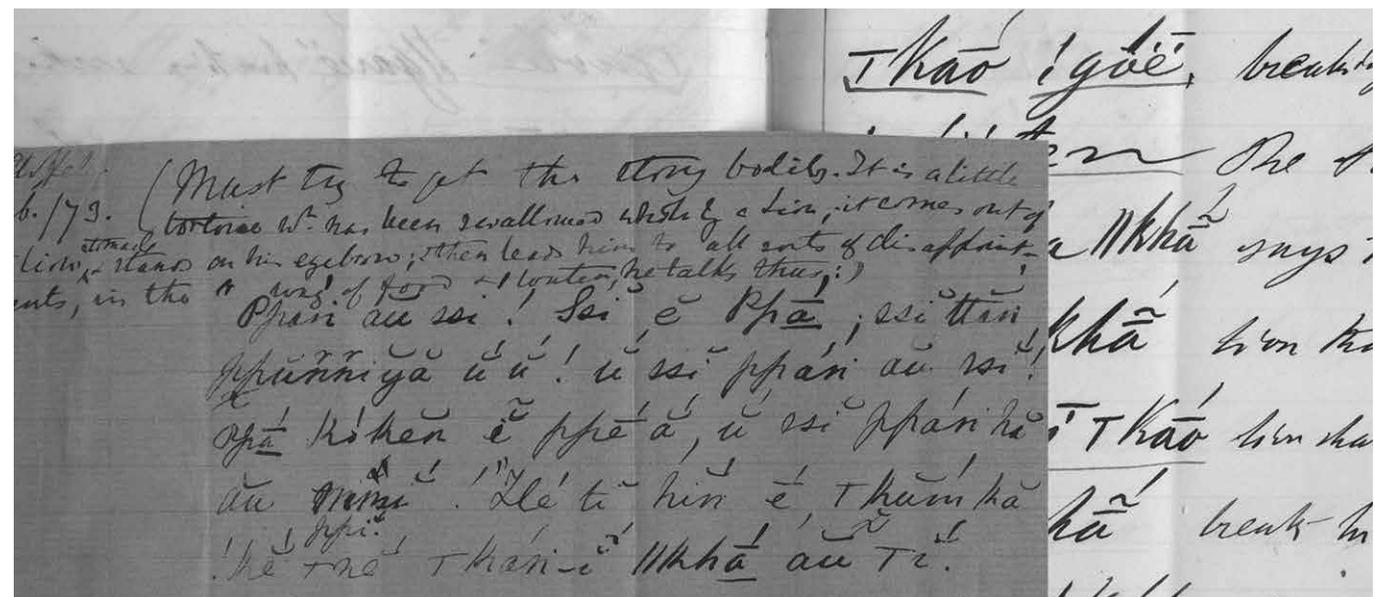


FIGURE 3

Lucy Lloyd's reminder to herself, conveyed in this note, suggests that she was keenly aware of the interdependence of mind and body in the praxis of |xam storytelling.

Source: UCT Libraries, Special Collections and Archive.

26 Merleau-Ponty, M. [1962], 2002. *Phenomenology of Perception*. London & New York: Routledge. pgs. vii–xxiv.

27 Blue folio sheet in Lloyd's handwriting stuck on left-hand page BC151, A1.4.14.

28 Bleek, D. 1956. *A Bushman Dictionary*. New Haven, Connecticut, American Oriental Society. pg. 564.

29 Ibid.

30 Hollmann, J. Ed. 2004. *Customs and Beliefs of the / Xam Bushmen*. Johannesburg: Wits U. P. pgs. 9, 35 & 67. See also Bleek 1911: 274–275.

31 Low, C.H. 2007. 'Khoisan wind: Hunting and healing' *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, pgs. 71–90.

32 Ibid.

away in Cape Town: “I think that !kwabba-an called my name, for I sneeze.”³³

What is indicated by these observations suggests that there is no possibility of excavating the meaning from ||kabbo’s utterances because what he says is suggestive and allusive and is not explication. In principal though the thinking strings are thinking and are engaged with the intelligence of the body. Complicit in this understanding, however, is the idea that names and wind connect people who are distant from each other and so make it possible that: “one man feels the other who comes.” The phenomenon is not an oddity. It is evidence of body comportment and sensitivity that makes it possible to “feel a tapping (when) other people are coming.”³⁴ In this regard ||kabbo is emphatic: presentiments speak truth in the body.

The Bushmen’s letters are in their bodies. They (the letters) speak, they move, they make their (the Bushmen’s) bodies move. They (the Bushmen) order the other to be silent; a man is altogether still, when he feels that () his body is tapping (inside). A dream speaks falsely, it is a thing which deceives. The presentiment is that which speaks the truth; it is that by means of which the Bushman gets (or perceives) meat, when it has tapped.³⁵

DREAMS OF HOME

While ||kabbo is depreciative of dreams in the statement that he gives above this is clearly an anomaly because it goes against his name, Dream, and the evidence. Contrary to what ||kabbo says about dreams in general, it soon becomes obvious that he takes his own dreams seriously and is a lucid dreamer because he is a *!gi:xa* (sorcerer) who “watches as he sleeps.”³⁶ This is demonstrated to be the case in the dreams that ||kabbo had which were recorded during his sojourn/incarceration at the Cape.³⁷ His dreams attest to his power as a sorcerer and dreamer and each dream, in its own way, becomes a prelude to his intended journey home.

In the first dream ||kabbo returns home to his wife !kwabba-an who asks him if he has tobacco. He confesses that he has smoked all the tobacco but then he offers her

his pipe and she smokes. As in many dreams the incident, otherwise not probable in terms of cause and effect, is plausible within the consciousness and context of its apprehension. The dream incident would appear a minor curiosity except that; and this is important, ||kabbo makes the distinction between smoking people and working people. He wishes to be back among smoking people and he expressly praises their communal life: “I do think of visits; (that) I ought to visit; (that) I ought to talk with my fellow men.” In ||kabbo’s reckoning the |xam were smoking people who “go to each other’s huts; that they may smoking sit in front of them. Therefore they obtain stories at them; because they are used to visit; for smoking people they are.” The social context suggests a rich communal discourse and, as we will see, the |xam “spoken” life folds back into ||kabbo’s stories and is inflected in his extensive and astute use of dialogue.

In the second dream titled “||kabbo causes rain to fall” he returns home once again but this time enacts the role of a rain’s man *!khwa: ga: ke*, or rain’s sorcerer *!khwa: ga: !gi:xa*. Dream-and-reality is demonstrated to be of one piece. The dream account describes making rain fall at home in *|xara-||kam* but while he is within his dream ||kabbo, as a rain’s sorcerer, applies influence and makes rain fall in Mowbray, Cape Town as well. He explains this to Lucy Lloyd as an action he took to ease his task of digging the hard ground in the Mowbray garden.³⁸ This is not a vivid dream; this is a lucid dream in which the dreamer believes in the agency operating within the context of dreams and dreaming. In this lucid dream ||kabbo is conscious of his participation – “asking and receiving” – and is aware that he is thereby influencing outcomes beyond the dream: “I dreamt that I spoke. The rain consented.” According to his account the rain, raining in his dream, falls naturally and can be observed in the landscape of |xam-ka au! just as the story with his names, projected towards home, will manifest and be felt in other bodies.

Ostensibly these are dreams that foretell in advance of ||kabbo’s homecoming but they could equally be *kukummi*

33 BC 151 A2 1 012 635.

34 Bleek, D. A. 1956. *Bushman Dictionary*. New Haven, Connecticut: American Oriental Society. pg. 340.

35 Bleek, W.H.I and Lloyd, L.C. 1911. *Specimens of Bushman Folklore*. London: George Allen & Co., Ltd. pgs. 331–333.

36 James, Alan. 2001. *The First Bushman’s Path*. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press. pgs. 208-209.

37 Lewis-Williams, J.D. Ed. 2000. *Stories That Float From Afar*. Cape Town: David Philip. pgs. 131–2 & 261–2.

See Guenther, M. ‘Dreams and Stories’ in Skotnes, P. and Deacon, J. Eds. 2014. pgs. 195-209.

Lewis-Williams, laying strong emphasis on dream and trance, engages the subject of dreams in ‘From Illustration to Social Intervention: Three Nineteenth-century /Xam Myths and their Implications for Understanding Rock Art,’ *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*. 2013. 23(2): 241–262. He takes Bleek to task for eliding the significance of dreams, ‘probably because she did not understand how dreaming could be instrumental, Dorothea Bleek omitted this statement’ (L.II.5.556).

38 Lewis-Williams, J.D. Ed. 2000. *Stories That Float From Afar*. Cape Town: David Philip. pg. 265.

39 Bank, Andrew. 2006. *Bushman in a Victorian World*. Cape Town: Double Story. pgs.162.

40 Watson, S. 1991. *Return of the Moon: Versions from the /Xam*. Cape Town: Carrefour Press. pgs. ix-xxvi.

41 Ibid.

42 Chapman, M. 2003. *Southern African Literatures*. London: Longman. pg. 23

43 Brown, D. 1998. *Voicing The Text – South African Oral Poetry and Performance*. Oxford: Oxford U.P.

44 Lord, A. 1960. *The Singer of Tales*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U. P. pg. 5. See also Opland, J. 1983. *Xhosa Oral Poetry: Aspects of a Black South African Tradition*. Johannesburg: Ravan. pgs. 153–154.

45 Norrman, R. 1986. *Samuel Butler and the Meaning of Chiasmus*. London: St Martin’s. pg. 276.

46 BC151.LII.12 as qtd. in Bank (2006), pg.186.

47 Geurts, K. L. 2002. *Culture and the Senses – Bodily ways of knowing in an African community*. Berkley and LA: University of California Press. pgs. 77–78).

48 Bleek, D. 1956. *A Bushman Dictionary*. 1956. New Haven, Connecticut: American Oriental Society. pg. 503.

adding dream qualities to the texture of |xam discourse. It is to the texture and form of the *kukummi* that we now turn.

TALKING IN CIRCLES

Depending on the commentator it is said that ||kabbo’s style displays a love of digression³⁹ or less approvingly is prone to ramble.⁴⁰ According to Stephen Watson ||kabbo “rarely gives a complete story from beginning to end; he is much more likely to introduce anything that happens to interest him, wondering from natural history to legend and back again in a kind of stream of consciousness.” Watson specifically draws attention to ‘circling.’

One of the most obvious features of the verbal surface of |xam stories is the frequent repetition (with minor variations) of syntactic and other elements, this being characteristic of oral literatures in many parts of the world. It is a feature which creates an apparent ‘circling’ rather than linear progression in many of the stories. [...] What has been called the ‘repetitive density’ of many |xam narratives can be too rich a diet for modern tastes, producing nothing so much as the effect of blurring [...].⁴¹

The effect that Watson speaks of leads Michael Chapman to remark.

[I]t is difficult to decide whether the circularity of the tale betokens the style of the oral imagination or the patience of the tellers in accommodating themselves to the laborious process of [...] longhand transcription [...]. The emphasis, one way or another, is probably a fine one.⁴²

Duncan Brown, links repetition with circularity and the seasons:

[...] repetition emphasizes the principle of circularity [...]. In the case of the Bushmen, the emphasis on repeated cycles may proceed from the fact that their lives were to a large extent governed by the cycles of the natural world: the solar and lunar cycles, the seasons, and so on.⁴³

These observations draw attention to verbal schemes such as symmetry, repetition, inversion, doubling, and so forth. In particular there are two rhetorical devices – *antimetabole*, and *chiasmus* – that deserve further investigation

since they occur in ||kabbo’s story telling and contribute to his verbal sorcery. Like the seasonal mnemonic of the ||*kwanna* it is evident that ||kabbo uses *chiasmus* as a story telling device, not only for rhetorical and didactic effectiveness but because additionally it assists him to compose in performance without memorization.⁴⁴

Chiasmus and *antimetabole* are similar but are not synonymous. *Antimetabole* (“turning around” Gk., counterchange, reversion) is a verbal flick-flack reversing two parallel statements, typically represented as ABBA. Various definitions for *chiasmus* (*chiazio* Gk., to mark with two lines crossing) exist such as: “the use of bilateral symmetry about a central axis,” or “the use of inverted parallelism of form and/or content which moves toward and away from a strategic central component.”⁴⁵ The basic form is represented as ABCBA. In the sample that follows ||kabbo expands an *antimetabole* figure – thoughts thinking: thinking thoughts – effectively creating a ring composition or *chiasmus*.

My thoughts spoke to me. My thoughts in this manner, they spoke to me. Therefore my mouth speaks to thee. My mouth thus, my mouth says to the lady that which I should say to thee. I thus, I thought in the night, while I lay, I thinking lay. I lay upon the bed. I thought that I would say to thee that thou shouldst give me thread. I should sew, sewing place the buttons on the jacket, the buttons which thou didst give them to me...I not a little/gently think of them, for they are handsome.⁴⁶

This is not a straightforward: “Pass me the thread” neither can it be reduced to: “I have thought about it and decided to ask for thread.” Nor is it a demand: “You gave me buttons, now give me thread.” The semantic nuances are largely conveyed by repetition, inversion and symmetry. The rhyming: me, thee, lady in all likelihood comes by way of translation and yet ||kabbo’s statement, while seemingly prosaic in its direct intent, nevertheless achieves poetic inflection. The redublication: sew; sewing is not uncommon and reflects qualities of “movement and kinesthesia”⁴⁷ and is a predisposition inseparable from a manner of thinking that is not strictly linear: “He thought, for his thoughts spoke.”⁴⁸

We are left wondering; who speaks? Are ||kabbo's thoughts thinking him or is he thinking his thoughts? Notice in the first half of the construction his thoughts speak to him. Incrementally his thoughts convince him to say, "that which I should say" which is the cross-over of the chiasmus. Moving away from the central pivot ||kabbo's address switches to first person 'I' as he takes possession of his thoughts and affirms his thinking. In this elegant and succinct example he exploits *chiasmus*, creating a little ring composition in which a self-reflexive self can express two points of view – thoughts and thinking – and is aware of mediating the transactions between both. The question: Who speaks? is not unrelated to the narrator's self-effacement mentioned earlier.

As is perhaps already apparent ||kabbo's oratory engages sound thinking. This is to say that his composition is captivating to an auditory imagination and "rings" true. It is only later that the "ring" may be idealized as a form but in the first instance ||kabbo's request for thread is auditory I am sure.⁴⁹

CHIASMUS, CIRCLE AND RING

Watson and other commentators are right, *kukummi* often do not follow linear logic. Underlying narrative linearity is the imprint of *telos* which, unlike the seasonal ||kwanna and ||kabbo's request for thread, is forgetful of circularity. A linear story goes from A to B and the destination is often the driving point whereas a ring composition on the other hand might also have a point (give me thread) but when it gets there it turns around taking advantage of the reversion to look again, or echo, the first half of the story from an opposite, or reverse perspective (on the other side of the circle).⁵⁰ Derrida took note of this aspect of *chiasmus* and he acknowledges "the 'X' as an apt 'shorthand sign' for deconstruction."⁵¹ Within a ring composition the dialectical and deconstructive possibilities are therefore quite apparent even leading one commentator to note that "it appears as if two authors are wrestling to gain control of a single text."⁵² Resisting final resolution

and allowing ontological uncertainty to prevail allows complex truths to appear: one such is *aporia* and death,⁵³ which occur in "Death on the Hunting Ground" and are embedded in "||kabbo's Intended Return Home."

The aforesaid receives admirable exposition in ||kabbo's story, "Death on the Hunting Ground" which shows how it is possible to present a conflicted situation: express opposing points of view and convey shifting perspectives using *chiastic* construction. We see that a story may well have been useful in a situation of conflict resolution: "They afraid separate, as they do not talk well to each other."⁵⁴ As it happens, separation does occur and people do walk away from one another but the outcome in this story is satisfactory and the tone is conciliatory in an otherwise volatile situation.

Accidentally a hunter is shot with a poisoned arrow. Recriminations pass this way and that. The hunter accepts his impending death. Emotions run high but the wounded hunter calms the situation – what has happened is an accident he says. He asks to be carried home to his wife. On arrival at the encampment emotions run wild. Again opinions are offered as to how and why the accident happened. The hunter's opinion is contested. Repeatedly the hunter must reaffirm that he will die as a result of nobody's fault but because of an accident. The hunter dies and is buried. His wife and children, with no-one to provide for them, are now a potential burden and become the center of an extended debate. Many voices are heard for and against the hunter's wife staying with her husband's family, or returning to her parents with the children. At the heart of the dilemma is a complex set of relationships and familial responsibilities. Consensus is reached and she agrees to go back to her family. On the journey she and the children cross a dry river bed, midway through the narrative. This is the *chiasmus*, the pivotal cross-over of the story.

Arriving home the story of the husband's accidental death on the hunting ground is told again. Argument and counter argument go back and forth, this time on the other

49 Speaking to Anthony Traill about this he suggested that I listen to the recorded message from Mukalap (1930) spoken in lora in which the "ring" is audible. Traill, A. 1997. *Extinct South African Khoisan Languages* (with Compact Disc). Johannesburg: Wits University.

50 White, J.M. 2011. 'Writing In Circles: An Exordium on Ring Composition' *Parabola* 36(1). pgs. 98–113.

51 Derrida, J. 1982. *Positions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. pg. 114.

52 Liu Xie qtd. in McCraw, D. 2006. 'Criss-Cross: Introducing Chiasmus in Old Chinese Literature.' *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* (CLEAR) 28. pgs.67–124.

53 Derrida, J. 2008. *The Gift Of Death & Literature In Secret*. Chicago. University of Chicago Press. pgs. 84–85.

54 Bleek, D. 1956. *A Bushman Dictionary*. New Haven, Connecticut: American Oriental Society. pg. 315.

FIGURE 4

Death is materialized here in the form of a rock engraving that depicts spirits-of-the-dead. These so-called Eldritch figures are widely distributed in time and space in the southern Africa region in both painted and engraved forms. This image and others like it suggest a complex reciprocity between the body as an alive, sensual locus of expression and the body traversed by other impulses that challenge the body's subjective integrity.

Source: The author, personal archive.



side of the *chiasmus*/river. The first half of the story reflects the attitudes and perspective of the hunter's family. The second half of the story reflects the incident as seen from the point of view of the wife's family. At the end of the story many voices have spoken and all opinions have been heard. An unfortunate incident is dealt with and an uneasy consensus prevails.

The profuse detail leads one to believe that the story is the account of an actual event although this cannot be assumed. It may be the fictionalized version of a worst case scenario, lent credence and vividness by the story teller's ability. Nevertheless, whichever way – fiction or non-fiction – the listener is drawn into the credibility of the story. My understanding of the narrative is that it does not offer resolution but is a guide to right action. This gives the story preemptive and redemptive potential.

55 Lewis-Williams, J.D. Ed. 2000. *Stories That Float From Afar*. Cape Town: David Philip. pg. 57.

56 Bleek, D. 1956. *A Bushman Dictionary*. New Haven, Connecticut: American Oriental Society. pg. 187.

57 Blundell, G. 2004. *Nqabayo's Nomansland: San Rock Art and the Somatic Past*. Uppsala: Uppsalla University. pgs. 89-112. Solomon, A. 1997. 'The Myth of Ritual Origins? Ethnography, Mythology and Interpretation of San Rock Art.' *South African Archaeological Bulletin*. 52: pgs. 3–13.

This synopsis is inadequate to the task of explaining the complexity: both the risks and the forces which the story is mediating. Neither does it do justice to the virtuosity and rhetorical skill of the storyteller, other than reveal; the ring composition, the usefulness of *chiasmus* as a story-telling device, and the episodic significance of the repetitions. The story is persuasive and coercive in a way which carries its own lawfulness without laying down the law. The narrative shows that in |xam-ka!au stories were occasions for creating and maintaining collective life, and in this case the story renders the world not harmless but less harmful.

Since paths, in the |xam idiom, are a fundamental condition, an inescapable mode of existence it is obvious that the end can only be realized when the wind blows dust and erases our tracks. Any final sense of an ending (*peripeteia*) remains unconfirmed because for the living, while the path lies ahead, death is deferred. However, from the moment that the hunter's death sentence is introduced, suddenly death is made immanent. Listeners, following the (death) sentence, are invited to step into the dying man's path. Remarkably the narrator conveys the hunter's acceptance of death, without blame, and his decision to live his path intimately to the end. The hunter/narrator's words transport listeners vicariously to the edge of the abyss: "I do not know about another night, whether I shall still be here, because I think I shall not see another day break. I think I shall die in the night. The people will cry here in the night because my heart will have fallen."⁵⁵

These singular observations on death are contained within a broader cosmological discourse in which the moon decrees: "things which walk on the earth are those that must dying go away, I (moon) walk in the dark."⁵⁶ What such dialogue brings to *aporia* and death are the contending aspects of distance (absence) and intimacy (presence). Death brings separation (people will cry) but relations with the spirit world and interactions with the spirits-of-the-dead (Fig. 4) are supported⁵⁷ thus bestowing on death ambivalences. Death is further complicated by

death influence (*Ik"augen*), a reciprocating interdependence between the living and the dead, which is questionably translated as mourning⁵⁸ but *Ik"augen* is far more complex than that because literally it means, “they do the other man death influence.”⁵⁹

Aporia is the place at which the path stops (Gk. “an unpassable path”) but the boundary, if such it is, proves to be porous and this confounds any clear distinction between absence and presence. “Death on the Hunting Ground” is one person’s singular experience of walking the First Bushmen’s Path, leading to death and erasure for “things which are flesh.”⁶⁰ Derrida asks: “How can one be included in another’s death? How can one not be?”⁶¹ These questions are present in |xam daily life and are made palpable on the hunting ground. Later we return to these questions since they are addressed when ||kabbo describes hunting hares; the story that is embedded in the story of his intended return home.

SILENCE AND CIRCUMSPECTION

In defense of nonlinear exposition Edward Said draws a distinction between narrative that follows a progressive approach and lays claim to have made a logical statement. In non-Western, mostly folk traditions, he discerns themes and variations that rely on “exfoliating variation [...] repetition, a sort of meditative fixation on one or two small patterns, and an almost total absence of development.”⁶² In his study of *kukummi* Roger Hewitt drew attention to what he saw as undeveloped plot.⁶³ An example is “The Children of the First Bushmen (who) throw up the Sleeping Sun into the Sky” which is a narrative that is built up on extensive to-and-fro dialogue. Hewitt identifies a lack of plot but *chiasmus* occurs in the story as well, and if *chiasmus* is taken into account then it certainly opens another exegetical angle.

Young children are instructed to throw the sun into the sky. Incrementally we learn that the children are boys who when they have achieved their task become men (*k"audoro*, initiated young adults). The progression follows

life history – children, boys, men – and is suggested rather than described outright. The counter-change occurs when the sun is thrown into the sky, roughly in the middle of the story. Thereafter the children, now young adults, speak for the first time. I believe that at the centre of the story there is an initiation and that rhetorically this is conveyed by the ring composition. What goes unstated and remains silent is given presence by the stories *chiastic* composition, which points to the significance of the silence.⁶⁴

||kabbo is not speaking directly of an initiation though. The story does not impart a meaning *per se* nor does it give categorical knowledge as such but the story focuses the attention, bringing listeners’ (or readers) to a threshold where understanding is self-initiated. From elsewhere we learn that silence is permissible and secrets are respected. This we know from two accounts:

He said to me about it, look...these things they are those about which we now shall not speak, for we will remain silent.⁶⁵

Also contained in the southern San ethnography is the encounter between Qing and Orpen in which Qing is asked by Orpen (*The Cape Monthly Magazine*) if he knows where Cagn is. Qing refers Orpen to the eland for an answer. Orpen then asks if Qing knows where Cagn’s wife is. Qing replies, “I don’t know, perhaps with those who brought the Sun; but you are now asking the secrets that are not spoken of.”⁶⁶

A link between secrets and the sun is clearly made in Qing’s statement. Upon this evidence it is reasonable to suggest that there is communication taking place at several levels when the children throw the sun up into the sky and since the story is about the sun it is also saying, but not saying, the silent secrets that cannot be spoken of. How this is conveyed is through the framing dialogue that supports the ‘silent’ *chiasmatic* axis at the center of the story.

Exfoliating is an apt descriptive in this instance. Listeners are drawn into a process of encounter in which they

58 Bleek, D. 1956. *A Bushman Dictionary*. New Haven, Connecticut: American Oriental Society. pg. 508.

59 Hollmann, J. 2004. *Customs and Beliefs of the |Xam Bushmen*. Johannesburg: Wits U. P. pgs. 90.

60 L II-6: 670–671 rev. ||kabbo connects the |xam path to the First Bushman’s path and the inevitability of death.

61 Derrida, J. 2008. *The Gift Of Death and Literature In Secret*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. pg. 47.

62 Said, E. 1991. *Musical Elaborations*. New York: Columbia U. P. pgs. 98–101.

63 Hewitt, R.L. 1986. *Structure, Meaning and Ritual in the Narratives of the Southern San*. Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verlag. pg. 11.

64 There is a corollary in Adeduntan, A. 2014. *What the forest told me – Yoruba hunter, culture and narrative performance*, (Unisa U. P.) pg. 88. [...] implicit in the hunter’s ethic of silence contra the imperative of storytelling is that the ethic does not totally proscribe narrativity. This interpretation holds that the hunter may tell, but that he must be careful and selective in his choice of audience and details. [...] The need to exclude ‘sensitive’ details from his narrative demands circumspection [...] But the ethic of silence sometimes becomes a device that imbues the narrative with additional value. The awareness that the listener is witness to a guarded secret creates curiosity and ensure attentiveness.’

65 L.V9.4684-8.

66 Orpen, J.M. 1874. ‘A Glimpse into the Mythology of the Maluti Bushmen’ *The Cape Monthly Magazine* July Vol. IX. pgs. 1–13.

67 Bleek, W.H.I and Lloyd, L.C. 1911. *Specimens of Bushman Folklore*. London: George Allen & Co. pg. 33.

68 Low, C. 2014. ‘Locating |xam beliefs and practices in contemporary KhoeSan context’ in Deacon, J. and Skotnes, P. Eds. 2014. Cape Town: UCT Press. pg. 359.

69 Watson S. 1991. pgs. ix-xxvi. Ann Solomon notes the disservice taking place when material is extracted from the |xam corpus, either for poetic or exhibition purposes. ‘People who are different: alterity and the |xam’ in Deacon, J. and Skotnes, P. Eds. 2014. Cape Town: UCT Press. pgs. 329–337.

70 Douglas, Mary. 2007. *Thinking In Circles: An Essay on Ring Composition*. New Haven, London: Yale U. P. pg. 34.

71 A complex example is given by, Broke, S. 2006. ‘Ekalavya and Mahabharata’ *International Journal of Hindu Studies*, 10(1). pgs. 1–34.

72 Liebenberg, L. 2006. ‘Persistence Hunting by Modern Hunter Gatherers’ *Current Anthropology* 47(6): 1017–1025, as well as 2008: ‘The relevance of persistence hunting to human evolution’ *Journal of Human Evolution*, 55: 1156–1159. Also, Wurz, S. 2009. ‘The evolutionary origins of music.’ Diss. University of Stellenbosch. pg. 105. Wurz says, ‘Nevertheless, increased dopamine excretion, related to habitual bipedalism, long distance running chase-hunting and rhythmical movement that evolved around 1.6 million years ago was most probably a pivotal evolutionary significant occurrence.’

73 Previc, F.H. 1999. ‘Dopamine and the origins of human intelligence’ *Brain and Cognition* 41: 299–350.

74 Ibid.

discovery their own meaning through engagement with the circumlocution and indirection that comprises the structure of the narrative. This is not odd since indirection is a common mode of communication that mimics the mannerisms and conduct of the Mantis and is pervasive.⁶⁷ There is an insinuation suggesting initiation into the secrets of the sun and if this is correct it would mean that the story delivers an esoteric aspect. The fundamental understanding of paths is reinforced. What a person is; is both reflected in and a reflection of the path they walk. Walking a path engages the sun in motility and exposes the sun to new perceptions. Prior to being thrown into the sky “the sun lay, sleeping lay” (reduplication again) but in the new role he must stand up and walk. In other words the sun’s motility and path become fundamental to the new personage. According to Chris Low “There is something simple and complex in this idiom [i.e. sleeping, lying down, falling and standing up]. ... Ideationally there is an undoubted link between standing up, waking up, ‘dancing up’, growing up and being potent.”⁶⁸ To follow a paths, is an injunction to motility and life but implicit in the notion of paths is also instruction on cessation and death. For this reason the sun is encouraged and reminded of its path (as are listeners) ideally by telling the story at the time of the equinox, as we have suggested. Such a staging will have reinforced the significance of the story and perhaps have “elevated” and “aided” the sun to stand up and walk its path.

PERSISTENCE HUNTING

If *chiasmus* is not recognized a story can be heard and read but much of what the story teller intended will be missed. This is what happens in Watson’s poetic rendition of “||kabbo’s Intended Return Home.” He excludes the middle section which is the axis of the story. “At this point in his narration,” Watson says, “||kabbo embarks upon a digression several pages in length. For reasons of space, I have not included this.”⁶⁹ It has been noted that longer ring forms very often embellish the mid-turn with an elaborate commentary.⁷⁰ This is what ||kabbo does in this story. Moreover the crux of an embellishment in a ring

composition can address issues relating to promises and secrets.⁷¹ This is a feature of the present story too.

The “digression” that is omitted is a description of persistence hunting and endurance running. This was a practice used by |xam hunters in the 19th century and is sporadically practiced in the Kalahari still today. ||kabbo simply states, “[...] I was () fresh for running; I felt that I could, running, catch things.” Long distance endurance running became possible with bipedalism and as habitual practice over millennia it is thought to have been a determinant in brain evolution.⁷² Investigations continue but what is astonishing is that ||kabbo appears to have been one of the last surviving practitioners among the |xam and his story a rare, perhaps unique, written account. Persistence hunting involves “continually pursuing an animal in the hot sun until it enters a hyperthermic condition and dies.”⁷³ ||kabbo’s description of the process goes as follows: “I might chasing, cause them to die with the sun, when they had run about in the noonday sun. They were burnt dead by the sun.” He goes on to give interesting detail about his own physical condition especially the need to rehydrate after the hunt and the assistance he gets from his wife and children to do this. What ||kabbo could not have known is that persistence hunting increases “dopaminergic innervation” which is the body’s response to overheating. Given his astute somatic awareness he will however have experienced the consequences of increased dopamine availability first hand since it affects cognition and is involved in working memory, motor planning, cognitive flexibility, abstract reasoning and temporal analysis.⁷⁴

We learn from ||kabbo that he undertakes this form of extreme hunting in order to feed an adopted child, Betje (Bara-ta-ken or Horse’s Footpath), the daughter of his elder brother and sister-in-law who die prematurely, one murdered and the other through illness. My understanding of why ||kabbo introduces his adopted daughter into the story (within a story) is because he wishes to evoke for Bleek the responsibilities required to sustain a family in |xam-ka au! and thereby to emphasize the promise of

the gun that Bleek had made to him. It may also be that he is drawing an inference between Betje and Lucy Lloyd who is “adopted” into the Bleek household. In any case he wants to remind Bleek of the promise made at the outset of their agreement. ||kabbo does this by emphasizing that there are children and a family who he must take care of and since he is now old and cannot run as he did before, all would be well if he had the gun. He recalls life as it was among his family, encouraging Bleek not to break the promise. “His (||kabbo’s) children’s children talked, they by themselves, fed themselves; while they felt that () they talked with understanding.” Against this background Betje represents an extra ordinary demand and in his recall of the circumstance ||kabbo emphasizes the out of the ordinary response required of him and his family to meet that demand. Bleek was not a runner, nor was he a hunter but he was a family man.

The best time for persistence hunting, as ||kabbo claims, is in the heat of the midday sun: “I might chasing, cause them to die with the sun, when they had run about in the noonday’s sun.” There are considerable risks. The hunt aims for the death of the animal but this is not a foregone conclusion: it could be the hunter who succumbs. In the short *kum* “Signaling with Dust” the risks of persistence hunting are given vivid description.

And the people run, run out of the house, exclaiming, ‘His heart is that on account of which he throws up earth. Ye must run quickly; for, (it) is his heart; the sun is killing him; (it) is his heart; ye must quickly go to give him water.’ While the people feel that all the people () run to the man. They go pouring water, to cool the man with water. And he sits up, to remove the darkness from his face; for, the sun’s darkness resembles night.⁷⁵

In this description the proximity of death is caused by the intensity of the sun and by association bears a remarkable parallel with the moon’s near-death encounter with the sun, which is described as follows: “[T]he Sun takes away the moon, the moon stands, the Sun pierces it, with the Sun’s knife, as it stands; therefore, it decays away on account of it.” What in the story happens in the sky and is

enacted between sun and moon finds an equivalence and is transacted on the hunting ground between hunter and sun during persistence hunting. The hunter is assailed and “stabbed/pierced” by the sun (as is the animal) but unlike the animal (if all goes well) the hunter “living returns.” The hunter’s physical experience is reflected and is congruent with the cosmic process of death and renewal.

For the purpose of his story ||kabbo engages with a hare and not a springbok. “I felt that I had not seen a springbok. For, I saw a hare.” ||kabbo sticks with the details of persistence hunting but he introduces the hare. He could equally have gone for an eland, kudu or gemsbok. In choosing a hare the story teller shifts emphasis from the prey and foregrounds the sun as significant other.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, we should also recognise that the hare is the harbinger of death, having misconstrued the moon’s message, and for this reason “things which are flesh” do not return when they die. The hare, although physically not equal to an eland or a gemsbok, is for the purpose of the story metonymically and metaphorically loaded.

In a footnote to the *kum* “Signaling with Dust” we learn that the |xam employed several strategies for hunting springbok two of which required endurance running. One way to hunt a springbok was first to shoot the antelope and then, aided by the poison on the arrow, run the antelope to a standstill. The other method was reserved for certain people, those who were “strong enough to bear the sun [for] they are those who chase the living (unwounded) springbok; they run after them through the sun [...]”⁷⁷

These details about the sun and hunting provided by the |xam are interesting because in the reference quoted earlier Qing further goes on to make a connection that links sun and dance. Asked if he knows the secrets of those who brought the sun Qing replies, “No, only the initiated men of that dance know these things.”⁷⁸ This is provocative. Do these initiated men of the dance, who know the secrets of the sun, in any way bear comparison with persistence hunters: “those strong enough to bear the sun”?

75 Bleek, W.H.I and Lloyd, L.C. 1911. *Specimens of Bushman Folklore*. London: George Allen & Co., Ltd. pgs. 385–389.

76 Adeduntan, A. 2014. *What the forest told me – Yoruba hunter, culture and narrative performance*. Johannesburg: Unisa Press. pg. 65. Adeduntan says that the hunter is ‘reminded of the precarious impermanence of his position in the dialogic community where participants contest, sometimes mortally, for primacy. It is therefore part of the hunter’s calling to design and deploy strategies not only to subdue the Other, but also sometimes to recognize the Other’s equal, or even superior, status.’ In the case of persistence hunting the Other would certainly have included the sun.

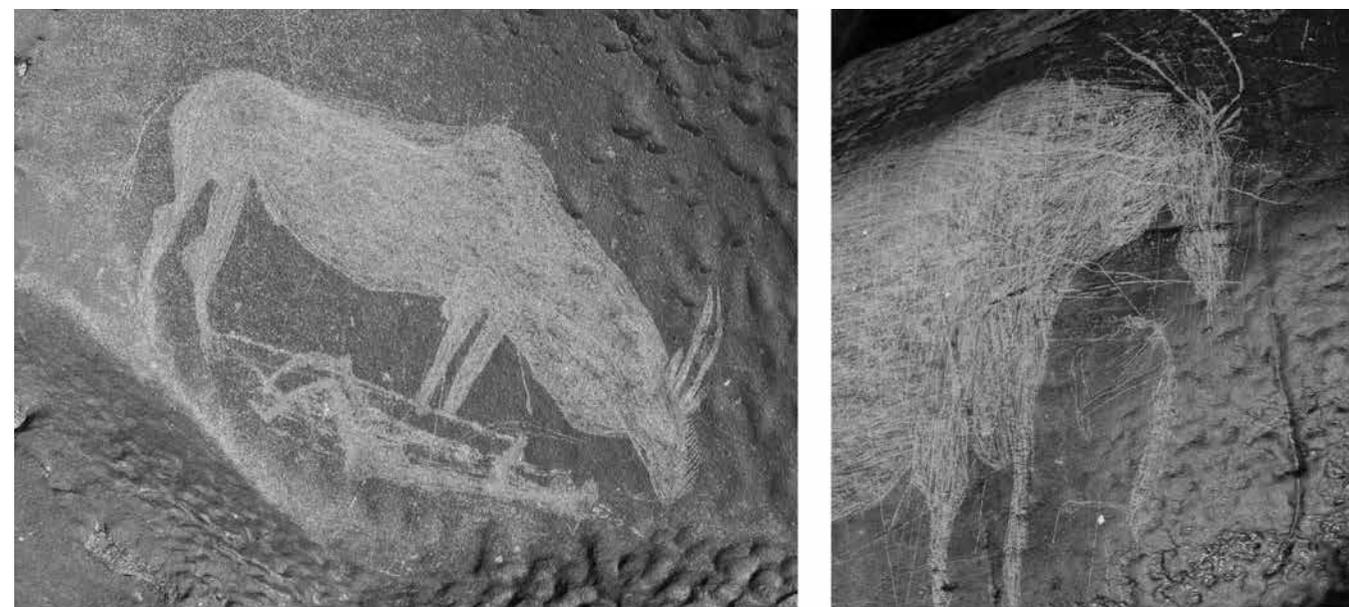
77 Bleek, W.H.I and Lloyd, L.C. 1911. *Specimens of Bushman Folklore*. London: George Allen & Co., Ltd. pg. 387.

78 Orpen, J.M. 1874. ‘A Glimpse into the Mythology of the Maluti Bushmen’ *The Cape Monthly Magazine*. July Vol. IX. pgs. 1–13

FIGURE 5(A)

These rock engravings occur in Ilkabbo’s homeland, |xam-ka lau. Scratched, chipped and scraped into the rock surface they characterize the intangible connection between hunters and hunted. Wind, *Inanna-se* and *!k’augen* are all implicated. As an image set they convey the human-animal identification, particular the moment of death.

Source: The author, personal archive.



Does the foregoing inter-textual reading provide ethnographic leverage that could expand our understanding of image production?

Any disagreement that might arise from making a comparison between dance and persistence hunting must also finally intersect in spite of the differences.⁷⁹ For example the healing dance as practiced in the Kalahari and endurance running both demand out of the ordinary physical exertion and set in motion transformations – chemical-physical, neuropsychological, psycho-phenomenological – which in turn produce changes of body state and consciousness. In the case of persistence hunting the neurological transformations caused by somatic exertion have perhaps had an evolutionary significance, as indicated earlier, for consciousness generally. Altered states of consciousness arising as a result of exertions as practiced in the healing dance find expression in San painted imagery. Most notably these depictions are identifiable in the first place by recognisable body postures and related details associated with the physical experiences of transformation,

79 “Dancing and hunting are not the totally divorced activities someone unfamiliar with San belief and customs could suppose them to be, because San shamans claim that they go hunting while in trance.” Lewis-Williams, D. 1988. “The World of Man and the World of Spirit: An Interpretation of the Linton Rock Paintings.” Margaret Shaw Lecture 2. Cape Town: South African Museum. p. 5.

as corroborated using ethnographic references both from the Kalahari and the Bleek and Lloyd archive. On the other hand we have ||kabbo’s lived body experience of persistence hunting which was clearly significant too and appears worthy of incorporation as the centre-piece of his story, which is not a digression nor is it rambling if evaluated by the criteria of ring composition. Healing dance and persistence running are motility-dependent embodied activities that require both unusual physical prowess and an exceptional ability to monitor and control energies.

With the above in mind, there is an intriguing image set comprised of rock engravings which appear to address certain elements in ||kabbo’s story (Fig. 5(A) above and Fig. 5(B) on page 18). This set of images is distributed on dolerite boulders that are located within a 150 km radius of ||kabbo’s home at the Bitterpits. Scratched, chipped and scraped into the rock surface they seemingly characterize the intangible connections between hunter and hunted – wind, *Inanna-se* and *!k’augen*. As an image set they convey the human-animal identification experienced

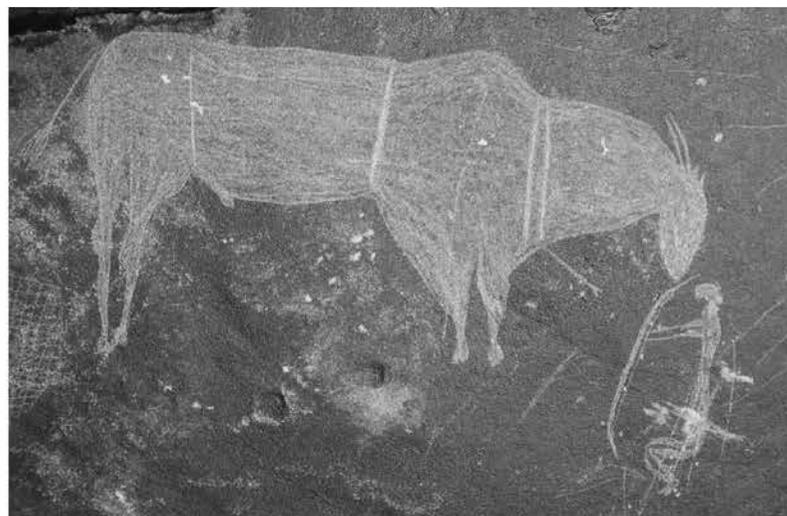


FIGURE 5(B)

These rock engravings occur in Ilkabbo's homeland, |xam-ka lau. Scratched, chipped and scraped into the rock surface they characterize the intangible connection between hunters and hunted. Wind, *Inanna-se* and *!k"augen* are all implicated. As an image set they convey the human-animal identification, particular the moment of death.

Source: The author, personal archive.

during persistence hunting, in particular the moment of death. The location of this closely-grouped image set is most likely related to regional conditions, which match the pre-requisites for persistence hunting, namely extreme heat and open (semi-desert) terrain. The important requirement is that with the right conditions the blood of the animal boils as it is chased, and so does that of the runner, as both bodies approach and enter the hyperthermic state.⁸⁰

These conditions and their relevance to the engraved depictions might better be understood if we return to ||kabbo's story. According to Louis Liebenberg, "[...] when running down an animal the hunter must continually compare the condition of his own body with that of the animal [...]."⁸¹ This is what ||kabbo does for he says, "I must chase it, () with my body." His own physical body state is closely monitored as he begins to identify with the hare: "It would spring up (running) into the sun, while I ran following it." His observations of the hare and the description provided are such that we are compelled to ask: is he describing the animal's condition or his own? "It seemed as if it were about to die; because it had been obliged to run about. Therefore, it went to lie down to die;

because fatigue had killed it; while it had run () about in the heat; for, it was the summer sun, which was hot. The ground was hot which was burning its feet." The experience is such that; "I feel that I was the one who chased it [...]."

Death is very much in the foreground here. Not only does ||kabbo chase the hare to its death but he runs with the hare to the same destination. The chase leads beyond the narrow boundary of personal identity and familiar consciousness. If the hunter is utterly inter-identified with the animal how can there not be a death influence? How are they included in each other's death? An encounter with death is an exposure to alterity and is irreducible to presence. According to Derrida: "The paradox cannot be grasped in time and through mediation, that is to say in language and through reason. Like the gift and 'the gift of death,' it remains irreducible to presence or to presentation, it demands a temporality of the instant without ever constituting a present. It belongs to an atemporal temporality, to a duration that cannot be grasped [...]. The contradiction and the paradox must be endured *in the instant itself*."⁸²

80 Suris, the Khoe word for sun, has a derivative Sai, which is to boil (Hahn 1881: 141) qtd. in Low (2007: 81).

81 Liebenberg, L. 2006. 'Persistence Hunting by Modern Hunter Gatherers' *Current Anthropology* 47(6): pgs. 1017-1025.

82 Derrida, J. 2008. *The Gift Of Death and Literature In Secret*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. pg. 66.

83 Guenther, M. 1999. *Tricksters & Trancers: Bushman religion and society*. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana U.P. pgs. 226-247

84 Deacon, J. Foster, C. 2005. *My Heart Stands In The Hill*. Cape Town: Struik. pg. 109.

85 Hollmann, J. 2004. *Customs and Beliefs of the |Xam Bushmen*. Johannesburg. Wits U.P. pgs. 20-21.

86 Bleek, W.H.I and Lloyd, L.C. 1911. *Specimens of Bushman Folklore*. London: George Allen & Co., Ltd. pg. 298.

The hare's association with death, conflated in the story, includes and envelops the mixed message from moon and hare. At first the paradox of death is resolved in the knowledge of death and renewal, which is the moon's message of cyclical recurrence. Any reassurance however is undercut by the hare's (miss) interpretation. Every statement about death is a reduction. The hare faces an unenviable task. By this account neither ongoing recurrence nor the finality of death are privileged. Both modes of apprehending contribute to a vital dialectic that is productive of meanings, by turns reassuring and disconcerting. The indeterminacy inherent in these accounts is ontologically acceptable and as conveyed (by hare and moon) provides recognition that all assertions (about life and death) are open to inversion. Likewise the embodied experiences of annihilation and transformation are not secondary or derivative but are informative and ontologically fundamental.⁸³

Encounters in the spirit world and familiarity with the spirits of the dead ensure death's abiding presence, visually presented in figure 4. Mortality and death gain imminence, however, in other ways too. Obviously death is physical but death is also what the *!gi:xa* experiences when "entering into the spirit world in the final stage of trance."⁸⁴ Death could also be *!k"augen*, the death influence, or it could be the experience of near-death in the hot sun. All are relevant to the images in figure 5 but it is our contention that both the death influence and the near-death of the persistence hunter are overlooked aspects of the imagery. Crucial to deciphering what is depicted is to accept that an animal has a number of influences – nutritional, medicinal and intangibles such as wind, *Inanna-se* and *!k"augen*. In this respect each species (and for medicine, body part) is imbued with its own potency and influence. For example, when a baboon is shot its death influence enters the bow that is used to shoot it: "For father used to tell me, that the baboon's death would live in our bows, if we did not cause it to leave." The baboon's death influence, as also that of a hyena, are malignant and consequently

the bow must be cleansed: "That is why we cut lines on our bows for we want the hyena's actions not to be on our bows."⁸⁵ It is upon this information and understanding that the bows in the engraved images in figure 5 need to be seen. Of course in the case of the death of a large game animal, particularly an eland, the animal's death is beneficial and the energies are potent but they require control because in excess and out of control they become unpredictable. From these beliefs and point of view the bows depicted in the engravings can be deciphered as being loaded with potency as the animal dies releasing wind and its final breath. Moreover the supine or crouched postures of the hunters in these engravings, plus the intimate proximity and positioning of the bodies, suggests the shared near-death condition.

Presentation remains a matter of praxis and the narrative strategies available to the story teller are not available to the artist chipping rock. Nevertheless there is a connection. A noticeable feature of ring composition is the distancing that framing imparts, i.e. a story-within-a-story-within-a-story *ad infinitum*. It is also true that the opposite can take place when everything collapses into a central defining moment (*metalepsis*). This process of expansion and contraction is so ubiquitous that unless brought to attention goes unnoticed, like breathing. What the engravings in figure 5 capture graphically is the instant in itself; the moment of *metalepsis* when death, renewal, wind, breath, death influence (*!k"augen*) and animal respect (*Inanna-se*) coalesce forming an image. Through both materialized forms – image on rock and story – death achieves re-presentation as a vital, lively aspect of |xam life, imparting *gravitas* to the notion of path.

Announcing his departure in July/August 1873 ||kabbo revealed in passing that the sun and the moon share the same name: *!xoe-ssho-!kui*.⁸⁶ Explaining this he said, "the moon's other name is *!xoe-ssho-!kui* and also [...] the sun's other name is the same." Moreover in a footnote we learn that *!xoe-ssho-!kui* means "the man who knows all places." Two years earlier on 16th September,

1871 ||kabbo, in answering the very first question Wilhelm Bleek asked: What is the moon? answered as follows: “The moon is another/different thing. The sun is different. She is warm. The moon is different. He is cold. The stars are different. They are many.”⁸⁷ What these two statements indicate is that there are many names and a differentiating and discerning intelligence and there is one name *!xoe-ssho-!kui*, the summation of infinite awareness. A tacit understanding of *metalepsis* is here revealed to exist at a cosmic scale – there are many but they are one; there is one but it is many. Once again the circulatory implications are quite apparent. Furthermore *!xoe-ssho-!kui*, composed of sun and moon, exemplifies the interdependence of arising and perishing, death and renewal.

||kabbo was not a graphic artist⁸⁸ but he will have brought his lived body experience plus the stories that he knew to how he perceived the images placed in the landscape he called home. This surely was reassuring to the sense he had of himself even as he was under duress and was confronted with change: “[S]trangers were those who walked at the place. Their place it is not; for ||kabbo’s father’s father’s it was.”

FALLEN WORLD

There is yet another way to understand “||kabbo’s Intended Return Home.” This is to read the story as a narrative of self-creation, an *autopoiesis* account in which ||kabbo attempts to write/foretell himself into an imaginatively projected future; a future that is otherwise bleak. He is the site of his own misfortune, in the midst of cultural collapse and at the centre of immensely destructive social and historical forces. He draws on memory, recollecting both the difficult and abundant times, in order to bolster his convictions. He knew first-hand the destruction brought by modernity riding on the back of colonialism and had experienced the decimation of |xam culture. He knew that the |xam language was fading towards extinction. He devoted two years to recording stories he valued in order to salvage what he could from the devastation.

The psychic pressure on ||kabbo was not insignificant. He was visited by presentiments coming to him in dreams. In dreams he returned home twice and spoke with his wife !kwabba-an, reassuring her of his impending return. His home was written into his future but as ||kabbo surely knew that future was the most uncertain place to which he could turn. No amount of generosity can erase the elegiac tone in “||kabbo’s Intended Return Home” for although the story is one of fragile optimism it is also mourning the way of life it sees passing but wishes to celebrate.

||kabbo’s nostalgia does not however reduce him to defeat or victim.⁸⁹ Rather I hear ||kabbo addressing a fallen world, empowered by his belief in the wind and the potency of his own story. In possession of these things situates ||kabbo within the “ownership of powers capable of influence.”⁹⁰ ||kabbo uses his influence to critique what he sees as two epistemologies, that of working people and smoking people: “[...] work’s people they are. They do not possess my stories.” That “posses” is revealing in the context of the scholarship and recording of *kukummi* that Wilhelm Bleek initiated and that ||kabbo had agreed to participate in. While it is true that ||kabbo endorsed a process of production and recording of *kukummi*, saying it pleased him to know that his stories would find their way into print, there is however revealed here in his statement a disjuncture between story production and (non) reception. There can be little doubt that implicit within “||kabbo’s Intended Return Home” there is a critique that places in question the understanding of possession, real then as now. After two years of intense work could it be that he realized a misplaced earlier enthusiasm when he came to perceive an epistemological difference too vast for any real effective communication between work’s people and smoking people? Or was his comment aimed more generally at an obvious structural contradiction: the interest attendant upon |xam stories and ethnography while the overwhelming evidence pointed at the opposite determination; the force of an ideology driving the destruction of the |xam culture and people? The received wisdom is that

87 BC151.B2.377–8. Qtd. in Bank (2006), pg. 155.

88 By the late 19th century the |xam no longer practiced rock engraving.

89 Solomon, A. 2014. ‘People who are different: alterity and the |xam’ in Deacon, J. and Skotnes, P. Eds. 2014. *The Courage of ||kabbo: Celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the Publication of Specimens of Bushman Folklore*. Cape Town: UCT Press. pgs. 329–337.

There is a strong case to be made, indeed that ||kabbo is voicing the symptoms of solastalgia as the condition is defined in Albrecht, G. et al. 2007. ‘Solastalgia: the distress caused by environmental change’. *Australasian Psychiatry*. 15(1): 95–98.

90 Hewitt, R.L. 1986. *Structure, Meaning and Ritual in the Narratives of the Southern San*. Hamburg: Helmut Buske Verlag. pg. 80.

91 Apropos the wind as metaphor the point is that behind each metaphor there are controlling ideas. For example Shane Moran unpicks the ‘temporal inadequacy’ of metaphor in his (2009) *Representing Bushmen – South Africa and the Origin of Language*. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press.

||kabbo was happy with the legacy he was leaving. I think this is a misconception, or at best debatable, if we take seriously the words: “they do not possess my stories.” This is true too of the wind/story and its attraction – “I feel that a story is the wind” – which is a metaphor⁹¹ open to misappropriation and misunderstanding if set apart from the flesh and body.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A shorter version of this paper (<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/002560046.2016.1263219>) appears in *Critical Arts* 30(6), edited by Michael Wessels, which is the version of record for citation. Two anonymous reviewers provided valuable comment. I also received feedback and encouragement from Chris Low and Mathias Guenther and for this I thank them.

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