

KEEP OUR FIRE BURNING!

The Traditional Homestead



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*Edited and produced by:
The History Research Project
UNAM Northern Campus*

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The History Research Project - UNAM Northern Campus

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The following persons have contributed to the compilation and production of this booklet.

History Research Facilitator: Vilho Shigwedha Director UNAM Northern Campus; Haaveshe Nekongo-Nielsen, Head, Community Education and Development Unit: *Martin Ndengu*

History Research Advisory Committee: *Mr. Vilho Shigwedha, Dr. Jeremy Silvester, Mr. Abraham Nandjembo, Mr. Ben Shikesho, Mr Petrus Amakali, Mrs. Haaveshe Nekongo Nielsen, Mrs. Betty Hango Rummukanen, Mr. Shilongo Uukule, Mr. Martin Ndengu*

History Research Exhibition Working Group: *Mr Vilho Shigwedha, Mrs Haaveshe Nekongo-Nielsen, Ms Lovisa Nampala, Mr Peter Mwahalukange, Mr Arne Larsen, Mrs Margareth Nghixulifwa, Mr Joseph Ndinoshiho, Mr Vilho Shilongo, Mr Petrus Amakali, Mr Martin Ndengu, Mr Charles Mlambo, Dr. Emita Hill, Ms Johanna Pemberton, Ms Lauren Beaty*

Interviewer: *Mr Vilho Shigwedha and Mr Metusalem Ashipala*

Interviewees: *Refere to the back page*

Photos:

Mr Vilho Shigwedha, Ms Marion Hyde, Ms Johanna Pemberton, Ms Lauren Beaty, Mr. Arne Larsen, Mrs Margareth Nghixulifwa

Other Photos Courtesy of the National Archives of Namibia

Homestead Model Architect: *Mr Peter Mwahalukange,*

Homestead Video Producer: *Mrs Helen Shiimbi,*

NBC Homestead for Video offered by: *Mr Julius Nghitewa,*

Transcripts: *Ms Emily Emvula, Ms Tekla Ndevashiya, Ms Hilikka Elago*

Translations: *Mr Petrus Mbenzi, Mr Angula Ndjembo*

Editing: Oshiwambo version: *Mr Petrus Amakali, Ms Lovisa Nampala and the History Research Exhibition Group.*

English version: *Mr Vilho Shigwedha, Ms Johanna Pemberton, Ms Lauren Beaty and the History Research Exhibition Group.*

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The Ford Foundation and the University of Namibia who are the main sponsors of this Project deserve a hand of applause, without them this exhibition would not have happened.

My appreciation goes to the members of the two committees that worked tirelessly to make the History Research Project one of the success stories of the University of Namibia Northern Campus. These are the History Research Advisory Committee, which provided guidance and advice throughout the three years of this project's existence and the History Research Exhibition Working Group which did a tremendous job and enabled this first exhibition to take place.

The real heroes and heroines of this project are the kings, chiefs and headmen of the 8 traditional authorities as well as the governors, regional councillors and residents of north central Namibia who are the source of information and everything we are enjoying here today. To them I say thank you for keeping our fire burning.

We at the Northern Campus are mounting this exhibition for information and educational purposes and I am therefore inviting all of you to learn from it and to enjoy the rich cultural heritage of the north central regions of Namibia.

Thank you,

Vilho Shigwedha, The History Research Facilitator

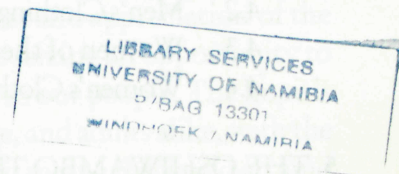


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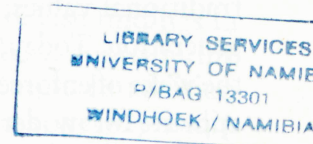
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FOREWORD BY THE VICE CHANCELLOR

PROFESSOR PETER H. KATJAVIVI

UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA



“Our ancestors have created a rich tradition for us - we want to preserve it and pass it on to the next generations” - Meme Elizabeth Ndemupofina Mwatukange

North Central Namibia is endowed with a rich history and cultural heritage. However, awareness of their importance and relevance to the development of society is not well documented. In the past very little was done to document, promote and preserve the history and cultural heritage of Namibia’s indigenous people. In an effort to lay a foundation of promoting research activities and encouraging the conservation and preservation of marginalized and neglected historical and cultural resources, a History Research Project was established in January 2000 at the University of Namibia Northern Campus. The University of Namibia would like to sincerely thank the Ford Foundation for responding to our call and desire to document our history by generously funding the activities of this project.

During the two years of its existence, the project made significant progress, in particular with regard to collecting oral histories, photographs, historical documents and a number of historical and cultural artifacts. As a strategy to disseminate its findings the project produces and presents a weekly radio programme, called “Ongushu yomithigululwakalo nondjokonona” (the value of culture and history), and contributes articles to The Namibian Newspaper’s fortnightly “Picturing the Past” column.

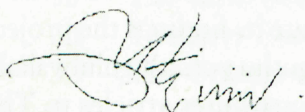
The University of Namibia recognizes that people’s heritage is a construction of a combination of different economic, political and social factors accumulated over many centuries. The exhibition with the theme “Keeping Our Fire Burning: The Oshiwambo Homestead” is the University of Namibia’s way of recognising the important role our forefathers played in developing and maintaining values and traditions in society. In staging this exhibition we are therefore showing our respect and appreciation of the richness of Namibia’s cultural heritage and at the same time seizing an opportunity to educate the citizens of Namibia in matters that are of value to our people. The hope is that through events like these we are providing young people, and adults alike, with the inspiration and ideas that will deepen their search for understanding the world around them in which they continue to live.

This is the first of many exhibitions planned for the next four years by the Northern Campus History Research Project. The theme “Keeping Our Fire Burning: The Oshiwambo Homestead” has been selected for the series of exhibitions because,

for the Oshiwambo-speaking Namibians, the homestead has been the centre where traditional values, customs and cultural practices were passed on to the younger generation. Today, the homestead that once embodied these values is disappearing in the wake of enforced environmental laws, population growth and the newly acquired appetite for modern building materials. Schools and other educational institutions, including universities, must now take over the responsibility of educating people so that values and traditional customs continue to be respected and passed on to the next generation.

The exhibition will attempt to help us remember and preserve the significant traditions and cultural history of the Oshiwambo-speaking population of Namibia and, together with the research collection of the Project will represent an invaluable addition to the University's permanent research holdings. We see this exhibition therefore as an important landmark towards establishing the University of Namibia Northern Campus as an educational centre for all aspects of life which are important for the growth and well being of our people and as a forum where people can engage in discussing issues that are important to the development of our society.

ENJOY THE EXHIBITION.



Professor Peter H Katjavivi

Vice Chancellor

BHK/aua

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the objectives of the History Research Project is to publicise findings in ways that are accessible to the wider public. The project has been contributing articles to the Namibian Newspaper's "Picturing the Past" column. In addition most of the interviewees have been featured on the Project's weekly radio programme "*Ongushu yOmithigululwakalo nOondjokonona*". The radio programme in addition to creating awareness in the community has also created a platform for the community members to dialogue on issues of the region's history and cultural heritage. The project has also collected a substantial number of photographs of historical and cultural importance which have been archived in order to be easily accessed by the public.

To further publicise the findings, during the next four years, the History Research Project will mount three different exhibitions under the theme "*Keeping Our Fire Burning: The Oshiwambo Homestead*". The homestead is chosen because it is the stronghold of community and family values and where customs, traditions and values are passed from generation to generation. The three separate exhibitions will each dwell on a different historical period affecting the socio-economic and political development as well as the cultural status of the homestead. The three phases to be covered are the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. The exhibition, which this booklet accompanies, is the first of the three and it dwells on the pre-colonial cultural norms, customs, traditions and values of the Oshiwambo-speaking people. Many of these have been forgotten or abandoned today although visitors to any home will find that they usually still follow some of the traditions described in the booklet. Most of the Oshiwambo-speaking people reside in the North Central Regions of Ohangwena, Omusati, Oshana and Oshikoto, which lie just south of the Angolan/Namibian border. The exhibition is a combination of this booklet, a video, cultural objects and posters.

2. THE TRADITIONAL HOMESTEAD

"Northern Namibia communities had a systematic way of building their homesteads: There were predetermined positions of the sitting area, kitchen, sleeping rooms, meeting places, granaries and so on. People knew exactly on which side and position everything had to be built" - Meme Ndahafa Kakonda.

A homestead was an important unit of social organisation in the culture of the Oshiwambo speaking people. The physical structure (see homestead diagram on page 10) of an Oshiwambo homestead represented centuries of accumulated history and a traditional way of family organisation. A homestead provided steering structure for community values, customs, beliefs and norms. The primary role of the homestead was therefore, to educate and teach children to abide by community values as they interacted daily with the wider population. Parents as heads of households are custodians in the promotion of community values and must pass such values to their children. In the old days children of both sexes were encouraged to emulate and continue to promote aspects of community inherited traditional values.

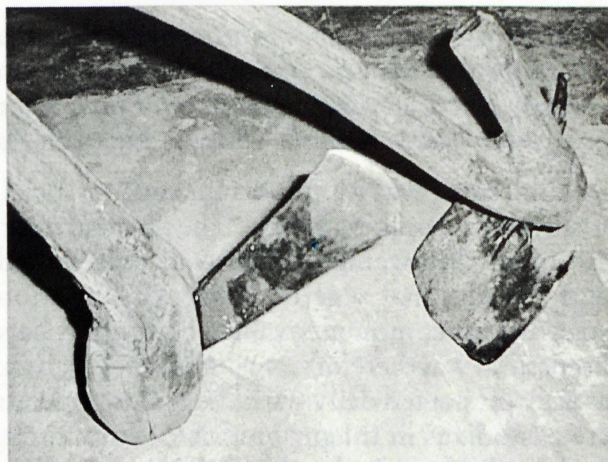
In the homestead, gender relationship were an important factor that determined a child's status and obligations in society. The girls' role in the house, community and society at large were separately defined from that of the boys. Generally, women had the responsibility for the promotion and imparting of community values to all children. However, due to the nature and organisation of household traditional functions they were predominantly promoting and imparting values that concerned women only to their daughters. Likewise men were only committed to promoting and imparting values associated with manhood only to the boys. Traditional values and skills which were passed to girls included, among others, indoor household activities, farming, motherhood, weaving, pottery, cooking, pounding and traditional dances. Boys, on the other hand, received training relating to cattle herding, hunting, farming and homestead making.

When a young man reached the age that qualified him to own a wife and start his own family, his parents sought a piece of land (*Oshitunda*), where 'he could build his house and cultivate food, mainly millet (*omabangu*) for his family. *"It is his father who gives him the permission to construct a new house. The father tells the boy: My son, now you are mature. Two husbands cannot share one house. Go and build your own egumbo"*. – Tate Petrus Amakali

In looking for the piece of land the father advised the young man on the quality of the soil and land tenure suitable for agricultural production. Together with his father or any other close relative from his father's family he would survey the site for the homestead location. When the land had been surveyed, the father gave his son an axe (*Omumati ta perwa ekuya ku he*), as a permission to chop down trees in preparation for the construction of a new homestead.

When preparations for the land were done, the young man notified his father who traditionally was entitled to lead the couples into the new house, and a date for moving was then announced.

The young man and his new wife, in consultation with his parents, would then move out of his parents' homestead and prepare to build his own.

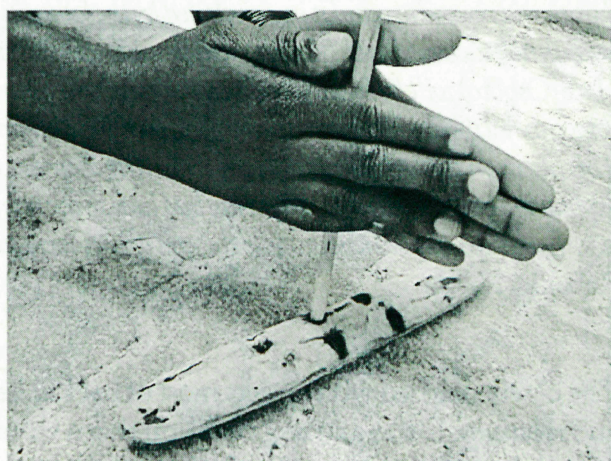


Ekuya and etemo – the traditional axe and hoe.

“Our forefathers have created a good thing for us. We want to keep it. If one wants to establish a house for the first time he should go to his father to be blessed. If his father is not alive, he should see the brothers or sisters of his father to bless him. ... The father should enter the house first, and then you can follow him... Before you put your belongings inside, a small place is prepared where the fire is lit.”
Meme Elizabeth Ndemupofina Mwatukange

Moving to the new homestead was a ceremonial occasion. Sacrifices were offered to the gods and the spirits of the ancestors (*Aakwampungu/Aathithi*) in anticipation of good luck for the new homestead and its occupants. The father or any other person from his immediate family was tasked to make the first mapping of the homestead (*Okusinda egumbo*). The one who maps out the homestead (*Omusindi*) used to bring the following to the new site: a basket full of sorghum (*Omushokolo*), a hoe (*Etemo*) and traditional fire making tools (*Oshidhiga*).

“The first thing to be done when a new homestead was being constructed was to make a fire at the place where the kraal would be located. The fire is a symbol of holiness, strength, protection and prosperity.



Oshidhiga – traditional objects for making sacred fire

.... The Omusindi other than another person was obliged to light the fire at the place where the kraal will be located

*The fire was lit in a traditional way called Okudhiga omundilo and is done by spinning a stick from a local bush called (*Omusbe*), placed between two hands against a flat wood of local trees, the commonest being either the (*Omukanga*), the fig tree (*Omukuryu*) or the (*Omumbolongonga*). The custom does not allow the fire lit from elsewhere to be brought to the homestead on the first date of its launching as it might bring bad evils to the homestead” - Tatekulu Jonas Nuule.*

People from the community were invited to help with the work in constructing the new homestead. Women brought along clay pots of local sorghum brew (*Omalodu*), and food mainly *mahangu* porridge called *Oshifima* served with chicken or local spinach (*Omboga/ombidi*). Young men ate cooked groundnuts (*Oofukwa*) as they work.

Tatekulu Jonas Nuule again: *“For the new homestead the first enclosure to be constructed was the kraal, followed by the parlour where warriors going to war were served with food (Oshoto Shiita) and thirdly the main bedroom (Ondjugo). From the kraal, the fire was taken to the place where the kitchen (Elugo), the heart of any homestead, would be located”.*

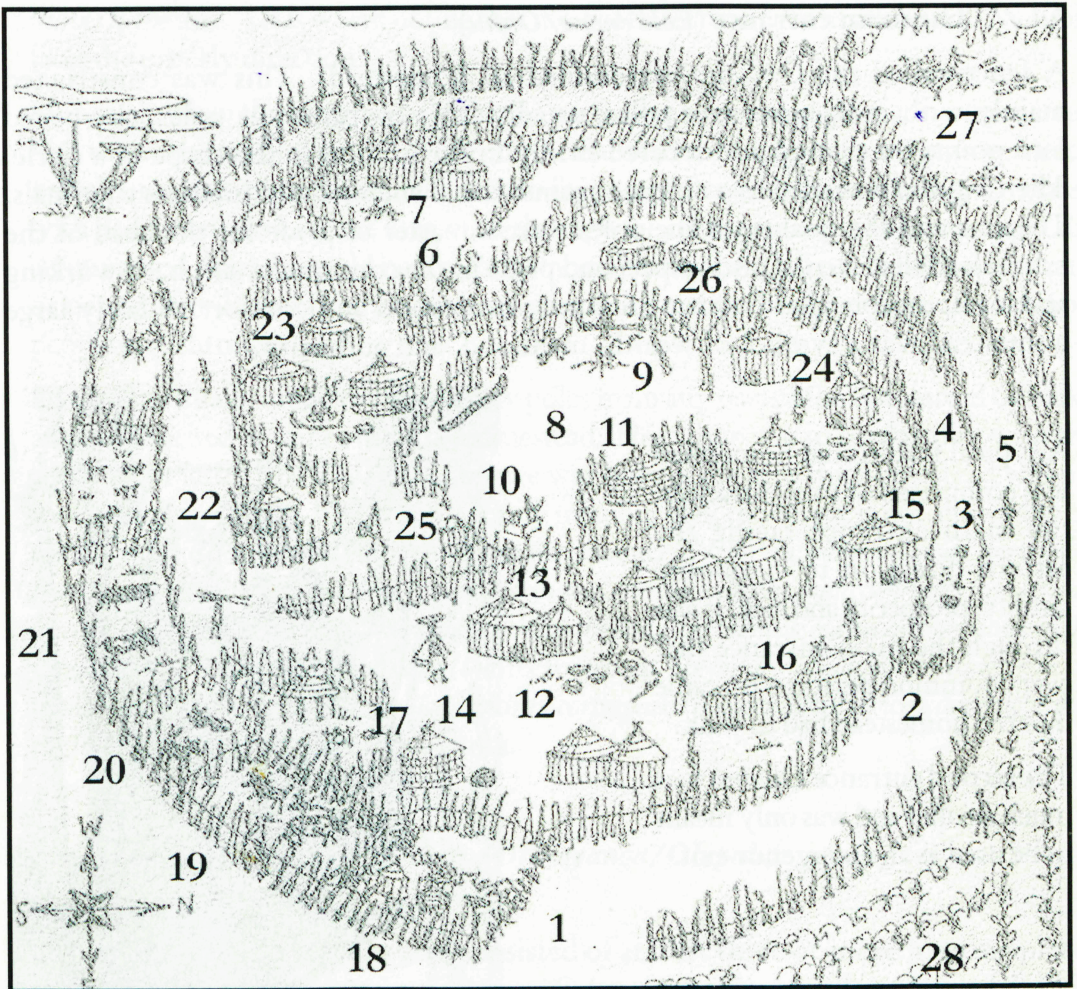
“When the site of the homestead has been mapped out the husband and the wife were entitled to run around the scene of their future homestead. The husband, in front carries a torch of a holy fire as his wife follows him in a circle movement to all important places of the homestead such as meeting place (Olupale), the kitchen (Epata) and the kraal (Oshuunda). As the husband approaches an empty cattle kraal he shouts loud, calling out the names of imaginary herds of cattle and goats” – Tate Lucas Shinedima

“As the couple enter the site of their house to be no one was allowed to utter a word as they approached the site and moved around it in a circle, led by the father in front and followed by the son carrying his bows, knob stick and axe. The man will be told to sit down on a big wooden chair where the meeting place (Oshoto) will be located ... Then the wife will follow with a basket of seeds and many other things; they'll then be introduced to the site of their future home by the ceremonial master (the Omusindi). This occasion took place early in the morning as it was feared that daytime was associated with exposure to evil wishers that will bring bad luck to the homestead, hence it was safer to move into the new homestead at darkness while the evil spirits were still asleep or hauled by darkness.” Meme Rebekka Kalola

The newly married woman gets most of her kitchen products and utensils from friends and relatives. It was a strong tradition that a woman should not buy her first kitchen utensils but she should receive them from relatives and members of her clan for spiritual reasons (*Omundilo wepata*) as it would bring good fortune to her and her anticipated new family. Also, *“when the new house was completed in a day's work, the following two days were marked by joyous celebrations, feasting on traditional beer and food. Both the head of the homestead and the wife received, each a large clay pot of traditional beer (embundju) shared with friends and relatives”.* - Tate Pedro Iiyambo

As time went on, the man would expand his homestead based on his wealth and the number of wives and children he had. The Owambo' tradition required a man to have more than one wife depending on his ability to support and take care of their needs. A man who owned a single wife deserved no status in his community and among his people.

THE HOMESTEAD



- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Main entrance - <i>Eelo enene</i> | 15. Head of household's sleeping room |
| 2. Okampangwa - Gate to keep cattle out | 16. Head of household's storage room |
| 3. Pounding area - <i>Oshini</i> | 17. Butter churning place |
| 4. People's passage | 18. Granaries |
| 5. Cattle's passage | 19. Cattle kraal |
| 6. Boys oshoto | 20. Calves' kraal |
| 7. Boys quarters | 21. Bulls' kraal |
| 8. Main oshoto | 22. Repair room |
| 9. Sacred fire | 23. Second wife's quarter |
| 10. Cattle heads | 24. Third wife's quarter |
| 11. Senior wife's bedroom | 25. Urinary area |
| 12. Main kitchen | 26. Guest's quarter |
| 13. Pantry - Store room | 27. <i>Oshipale</i> |
| 14. Birthing room - <i>Oshalwa</i> | 28. Fields - <i>Epya</i> |

3. COMPONENTS OF THE HOMESTEAD:

3.1 The main entrance (*Eelo enene/Onhu*):

A fence called the *Ongadjo* surrounded all homesteads. This was constructed mainly with indigenous tree poles, usually large mopane tree poles, sharpened into points on the top and secured firmly in the ground in the shape of a circle. The *Ongadjo* was used as a defence against tribal enemies and predatory animals. The size and the quality of the poles were a matter of pride for the head of the homestead that earned him respect and pride in the community as a hard working and a responsible guardian for his family protection and comfort. A fairly large homestead was a symbol of wealth, manhood, and authority.

A typical traditional homestead was comprised of two entrances: the main entrance facing the eastern direction to symbolise fertility, prosperity and luck. It was through the main entrance that every common person who came into the homestead had to walk.

The second entrance *Okantu* was much smaller and was only meant to be used as an emergency exit.



Eelo enene – The main entrance to the homestead

Only members of the homestead, in most cases the head of the homestead, knew the location of this smaller exit, which the entire family could use in case of an attack, especially during cattle raids by neighbouring communities or when an offence was committed by a member of the homestead which required the tribal authority to take the culprit before the law. Tate Petrus Amakali adds the following: *“The location of the main entrance (Ontu) may differ from one community to another. An entrance of a house in Ondonga is situated on the eastern side. There is also the Okantu (the small back entrance). The Okantu is not used by everybody. The owner of the house uses it when he sneaks in or out of the house. The Okantu is on the western side of the house... The sun rises in the east. So people believe that it is a blessing or fortune when the entrance is situated on the side where the sun rises.*

It has a symbolic meaning to our people when they enter the house from the east just like the sun which moves to the west.” It is worth noting that most of the *eelo enene* of north central Namibia faces the easterly direction.

However, when the king pays a visit, to a particular homestead the tradition required him to use the smaller entrance into the homestead through a narrow passage called *Etambo* that leads from the main kitchen to the granaries section. It was a taboo, associated with bad omens, to have the king walk through the main entrance. The king might die an unnatural death or could be struck by incurable diseases that could lead to his death or permanent disability, if he passes through the main entrance where all common people pass through.

It was a spiritually taboo to remove any poles from any part of the homestead or make an unauthorised entrance into the homestead. This taboo was in conformity with the spiritual practice that a special entrance was only made into the homestead when a member of the family dies. When a family member dies, the corpse is not allowed to be taken into the homestead through the main entrance. “*Our ancestors believed spiritually that if a corpse of the deceased passed through the usual entrance, death would definitely find its way into the homestead repeatedly. The people carrying the body had to break open a new entrance in the Ongadjo when they brought the deceased into the homestead. The family would resume using the main entrance only after the entrance through which the corpse passed has been sealed which is done right after the burial.*” - Tatekulu Simeon Hedimbi.

3.2 The meeting place (*Oshoto/Oshinyanga/Olupale*):

A typical traditional homestead consisted of at least three or more meeting places (*Ooshoto*). The most important and largest *Oshoto* in the homestead was located directly opposite the senior wife’s sleeping room. Then there is the meeting place where soldiers going to war are served with food. This is known as *Oshoto shiita* and is located next to the main *Oshoto*. The third *Oshoto* is known as *Oshoto shamutyakemo* located near the head of the household’s bedroom. This particular room serves as the head of the household’s sitting room and only special and respected guests are invited to the *Oshoto shamutyakemo*. All other guests use the main *Oshoto*.

The family would gather together at the main *Oshoto* at night for an occasion called (*Ohungi*) storytelling and games playing time. This is when cultural values were passed down from parents to children. Parents have always played a major role in educating the children about the customary norms of the community. They passed down traditions, beliefs, and values by sharing stories, folklores, and idiomatic expressions like “*Nekwa lya Tsima oye ngaa nyako*” (no matter how poor your mother is, you still have to be proud of her, because she is still your mother).

It is important to note that traditionally the fire had to be kept burning all the time at the main *Oshoto*. The value of keeping the fire burning was to strengthen the bond of the family to the ancestors' holy spirits of the ancestors and to protect the family from evils and bad omens. It is similar to praying to the Gods. The senior wife bore the responsibility of making sure that the fire was kept burning at all times.



The sacred fire should always be kept burning

The main *Oshoto* of the Oshikwanyama-speaking traditional homestead is of more potent value than the other seven ethnic groups of North Central Namibia. The typical *Oshoto* of an Oshikwanyama homestead was characterised by three benches forming a U-shape at the centre with several other benches at the wings.

“The three U-shaped benches were directly facing the sacred fire and were reserved for the head of the household and his two important wives, Munyalombe (first wife) and Mweehaka (second wife). Munyalombe’s bench was reserved on the right-hand side of the husband’s bench at the centre while Mweehaka sat on the left-hand side. If a guest had come to deliver bad news, he or she would be expected to sit on the right hand side of Oshoto, but if he had good news, he or she would sit on the left. A respectable man, when entering Oshoto, was not supposed to sit on the benches closest to the entrance. He would instead cross the centre of the Oshoto area and sit on the far left-hand side benches. This indicates that he was not a coward (Omukatalume/Evaya), but a very respected and responsible man in the community” – Tatekulu Julius Nghitewa

It was also at the main *Oshoto* that celebrations and dancing would take place with hand clapping and drumming. There was a ritual dance at the new harvest (*Oshipe*) and when seeds were being prepared for a new planting season.



Neighbours gathered at Oshoto for traditional beer

During the *Oshipe* (new harvest) celebration food for the *Oshipe* was cooked at *Oshoto* and the following rituals are carried out: The old clay pot stands (*Omasiga*) and the old cooking sticks (*Omaluko*) were thrown away and replaced with the new ones. The husband thanked God for fresh millet. Before the people started eating, the husband took two morsels (*Oonghako/Eenghako*) of the *mabangu* porridge, *Oshifima*, and dipped it in spinach soup (*Omboga/Ombidi*) filled immersed into Marula oil (*Omagadhi goongongo/Odjove*) or homemade butter (*omagadhi goongombe*).

He threw one *onghako* in the easterly direction and the other in the westerly direction while telling the ancestors in each of these directions to take the food. The ancestors were considered to be holy angels. Through them people in life communicated their problems and aspirations to God (*Kalunga ka Nangombe*).

The children had to be served first with the first meal, as they were regarded to be holy. They were also the first to plant the first seeds for the new planting season. When cattle were killed, the heads were exhibited at the *Oshoto* to show the wealth and power of the head of the family. The man's favourite cattle heads were put in a reserved area in the *Oshoto*. When the head of the household dies the *Oipamba* were burned to ashes. Cattle meat had to be roasted on the *Oipamba* ashes for the children of the diseased. By paying homage to that ritual, the wealth of the diseased father was spiritually transmitted to his children. The children were thus commissioned to become prosperous.

As it was mentioned before, in addition to the main *Oshoto* there was also *Oshoto shaAmutyakemo* reserved for the head of the household and his important and respected guests. Sometimes the head of the household took his supper at the *Oshoto shaAmutyakemo* instead of at the main *Oshoto* as Tate Petrus Amakali elaborates:

“Men took supper in the Oshinyanga shamutyakemo. The wife and the children took their supper in the Elugo. After they have finished eating and have stored all the cooking utensils, they join the husband and boys in the Oshinyanga shamutyakemo. It is here where education takes place. The husband and wife teach their children to greet adults and how to talk to them. They are taught how to live with other children. They are told not to tease or beat other children. They are taught to be obedient to the parents. They are warned against teasing or laughing at adults.”

The *Oshoto shiita* was only used whenever, men were preparing to go for war and expeditions such as hunting, rain (making) fetching from *Ewale* and salt fetching from *Ekango*, the salt pans near Etosha.

Oipamba – heads of slaughtered cattle to show wealth and prosperity



It was therefore at this place that the warriors, or hunters or rainmakers were served with food. The food had to be cooked and served by young girls, virgins who had never have not yet experienced menstruation periods. Married women were spiritually not allowed to attend to the warriors as they were believed to bring bad luck to them since they had at one time or the other engaged in sexual intercourse, which, traditionally, is associated with bad luck.

3.3 The Kitchen (*Elugo/Epata*):

The kitchen *Elugo* is where food was prepared in the homestead. Traditionally, food was cooked in clay pots called *Oombiga*. The *Oombiga* were placed over the fire on three cooking stands called *Omasiga*. “Traditionally the *Omasiga* were made of old, slightly damaged clay pots *Likangwa*. Every woman was entitled to own *Omasiga/Omafya*.”

“When we talk about the Omafya in Oshiwambo, we talk of the most important things in the kitchen. We, in Oshikwan-yama, we call the kitchen Epata. The non-Oshikwanyama speaking people call it Elugo. The Epata cannot exist without the Omafya. Every woman has the Omasiga and every person who builds a kitchen, whether she is married or not, must have the Omafya. This is where food for the family is prepared.

The Omafya is very important in our tradition”- Meme Lydia Nakapipi.

A woman cooking at Elugo



“There are some people who make the Omafya out of the loam soil or the Oikaungwa. According to our tradition, if someone has children and one of them dies, then one of the Omafya is removed and replaced with the Efyia made from old and slightly damaged clay pots or loam soil. If none of the children of a mother has passed away, then no Efyia is removed. If a child unknowingly puts Omafya made of loam soil or stone in the kitchen, while all the children born to the owner of the Omafya were still alive, such a child is punished because it would mean death to the siblings” - Meme Selma Penondjambi Daniel In the case of a polygamist family, each wife owned a separate *Elugo*. The main *Elugo* was located in the first wife’s (*Munyalombe*) quarters, and she was in charge of it. This area was separated from her bedroom, which was in the vicinity of the *Oshoto*. One of the most important features that characterised the kitchen was the storage room (*Ondunda yUpungulilo*) where foodstuffs were kept. The most important storage facility found in the storage room was called *Olwiyo luufila/Oshikalungu*.

Meme Selma Penondjabi Daniel describes it as follows: “*The Oshikalungu is a pot in which mahangu flour is kept. This is our rich tradition. Every married woman must have a clay pot which must contain mahangu flour at all times (Olwiyo lOmudali i ha lu kala omupulungushu). The flour is of a significant meaning to our tradition and cultural identity... When the boys go to the cattle post, hunting, etc., our ancestors say they could easily fall victim to hunger and bad luck if there is no flour in their mothers pots... The pot also contains the Evanda that is meant to help family members especially those who are away from home, to avoid dangers. As soon as the flour is almost finished, fresh flour must be added*”

On the same note meme Lydia concluded that: “*Men are more likely to travel around therefore it was believed that they would starve if Olwiyo is empty back at home. Therefore it should contain flour at all times as well as the dried spinach cake (Evanda) kept at the bottom of the Olwiyo, under the flour which spiritually prevented accidents from occurring to the members of the family who are far away from home. Therefore children will be strong wherever they are and at the same time taking it easy when they find themselves under circumstances where there is little or nothing to eat... because they know that back home there is enough food*” – Meme Lydia Nakapipi

The main food cooked at *Elugo* was *Oshifima* porridge made from *mahangu*. It was eaten with beef or goat meat, spinach soup, fish, mopane worms (*Omagungu*), chicken, with dried Makalani palm fruits (*Oondunga*) or by itself, as plain porridge without sauce (*Omukaga/Okutwa oshoma*). The cooking spatula/stick (*Oluko*) was an important object for cooking. It was made of *Omunaluko* roots. The *Oluko* was treated as a ritual. For instance, after cooking the *Oluko* must be given to a child to eat the *Oshifima* from it (*Okukwenya oluko*) rather than cleaning it off and throwing away the *Oshifima* from it or leaving it uncleaned. It was believed that if you laid the *Oluko* somewhere else without giving to the child to feed on, the children in that house would always be hungry. Therefore, in the old days the *Oluko* was handled with care and respect. After cooking the *Oluko* was not laid down but it was given to the youngest child or the last-born (*Onkelo*) in the family to feed on the porridge. He was expected to eat the porridge on it without any sauce or milk (*Omukaga*).

There were also several other taboos governing activities in the *Elugo*. For example, a person was not allowed to pour water at night at the *Elugo*, and no one was allowed to sweep the *Elugo* at night. It was believed that if that happened, people would see snakes crawling at night and the senior wife might become sick and die. Other objects found in the *Elugo* were the *Uusila* (*mahangu* meal), the *Onkundu* (*Mahangu* bran), *Omatiti* (wooden or clay dishes), *Omalilo* (basket dishes), *Ongalo* (flour sheave or shaft), *Ompamba/ombindo* (traditional cup), *Omaholo* (traditional beer cup), *Oshimako/Omhako* (traditional brewery sheave), and *Oitoo* (storage clay pots). There were also important huts found at the kitchen area which included the *Ondundayuupungulwa / Onimeendjugo* where finished food and kitchen utensils were kept, and the pantry (*Elimba*), where food items such as flour, dried meat, dried fish and others were stored.

In addition to food from crops and meat, people near water often caught fish in ponds and flood plains (the *Oshanas*) when there was enough rain or flood water (*Efundja*) from Cuvelai Catchments in Southern Angola. Women and young boys traditionally used the fishing traps (*Oshongo*) made of *Izimba* stalks to catch the fish. Men made a kind of a spear called an *Ekupa* to pierce the fish. Blacksmiths, using stones called *Okatale* from Southern Angola, Tsumeb, and Otavi, also made metal fishing hooks heated with bellows in fire. During periods of good rain when there were many fish in the lakes, people would fish and roast the fish all night while on the fishing expedition known as *Uutota*. People also salted and dried the fish under the sun to prepare for the dry season. They stored the fish in the storage huts strung up on ropes or in clay pots.

There were also rituals associated with traditional fishing:

“According to our tradition when one goes to catch the fish in the vlei, one bites a small piece of coal so that he catches many fish. So we follow our Oshiwambo tradition. ... When I grew up at Ombandjele, there was a pond called Onelungo. It used to have a lot of fish whenever there was enough rainwater. Everyone in the village was aware that in order to get fish from that pond, sacrifices were to be made to the ancestors who owned the place.



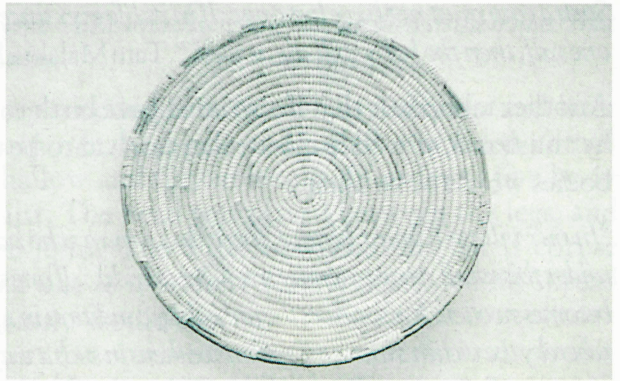
Onelungo pond at Ombandjele village (Ombalantu). It is still of ritual significance

A special day was therefore organised convening the community to offer sacrifices and pray to the gods so that they would grant them permission to get fish from the pond. The most common sacrificial offer made was to roast the first fish caught, immediately after people had been commissioned to start fishing. The roasted fish was thrown back into the water and then people could start fishing.” –The late Theresia Akwenye Fiitilika

The Birthing Hut (*Oshalwa/Oshakalwa*) is a very important hut in the kitchen area. *“The Oshalwa was a hut located within the vicinity of the senior wife’s kitchen. The Oshalwa witnessed both the beginning and the end of life at the homestead. It was at the same time a place where women went to have their babies, where very sick people were attended to and died, and where relatives would gather to mourn the senior wife after she died...”* – Meme Rebbekka Kalola

When a woman was about to give birth, she was brought to *Oshalwa* to deliver, where traditional midwives would attend to her labour and ensured the safe delivery of the baby. These attendants would assist during the birth, make sure the child

was breathing, tie the umbilical cord, and wash both the child and the mother after the birth. The baby was not cleaned or washed with water but it was wiped with red ochre *Olukula* mixed with cow fat. When the baby was born it was placed on the sifting basket (*Ongalo*), which symbolised good luck, and protected the baby from falling on the sand.



Ongalo – symbolises good luck and protects the baby at birth

“When the baby was born midwives used a razor blade called Oshimbi, which looked like a small hand hoe, which was used to cut the umbilical cord. In the past, before the whites came, the small razor blade did not exist among us. This particular hand hoe razor blade was made by ironsmiths (Aakwaanga) from local materials called Okatale, obtained from Otavi, Tsumeb and from Southern Angola... The bellow Omupepo was a significant fabricating instrument to melt and soften hard irons and steel and enabled the making of useful equipment”.

“... The baby’s navel was tied with animal sinews anointed with oil made from oombeke (sour plum) nuts. The Oombeke nuts were pounded into soft powder at the Oshini and applied to the wound so that the wound can recover and the umbilical cord will fall off.” – Tate Simeon Hedimbi

“It was a tradition for every married father to name his child, but the midwives could also give the baby a name reflecting circumstances surrounding its birth. But as soon as its father is informed he gives it a proper name. If he went to Uushimba (contract work) and the baby is a girl he would name it Ndazilepo (I was at work). If he were at the cattle post he would name it Ndayakohambo or Munahambo (I was at the cattle post). ... Long time ago during the reign of kings, when the father was off to the battlefield, the child was named Iita (for a boy) or Niita (for a girl)... On the date of the naming ceremony the father climbs on the poles of the homestead (Egumbo pOlukambo) and shouts: ‘I have produced the one who catches frogs (Onde mu etela omukwati wOmafuma) - if the child were a boy - and his name is so-and-so’. That is how the father bestowed a name upon the child. The wife then ululated.” - Kuku Ndekume Mwaetako

“There were many taboos and beliefs relating specifically to childbirth. Dying during childbirth (Oshiwato) is believed to result when a pregnant woman sleeps with another man, who is not responsible for the pregnancy. The woman will die at childbirth if she did not seek advice of elderly people who would take her to a traditional healer for cleansing to be medicinally washed with local herbs and swept with a broom. If the mother dies as a result of the Oshiwato, the baby is fed with cow’s milk, usually given by the King.

Such a cow must not have lost one calf in its life ever since it has started producing calves. If it has lost one calf, then the baby will die as well.” Tate Malakia litula

Another taboo was that if a woman gave birth to twins (*Epaha/Epasha*), both she and her husband, as well as close relatives, had to be treated and cleansed otherwise their bodies would be swollen.

“In our village (Onambinda), there was a man who had twins Epasha/Epaha... he was treated under this small African ebony tree (Omwandi)... If one was not taken to a traditional healer he/she becomes swollen. It also causes the unhealthy condition in a person, which is referred to as the Oshibuga, whereby the victim’s immune system weakens in such a way that the person keeps on coughing and does not get well. Some traditional healers when treating the victim also sprinkle the herbs in the kraal because it is believed that the Epaha cause the death of cattle... The experts know those herbs. I know of a certain herb, which consists of spikes and it is often used by most traditional healers”... – Tate Simeon Hedimbi

Moreover, an unmarried girl who became pregnant out of wedlock was killed: *“In the past some people who became pregnant before the actual marriage were burned to death. The grass was strewn over a person and she was burned to death... Some women were thrown in the forest to be killed by lions. When she leaves, the crowd of relatives that watched her depart shouted and threw palm tree fruits at her, symbolising that she should fall prey to carnivores... Even an older man was able to do it... The baby of an unmarried girl who became pregnant in the past was also strangled to death, because it was seen as a bad omen for the maternal clan “ –Kuku Ndekume Mwaetako*

All I know is that a girl who became pregnant in the past was burned to death. The pregnant girl and the boy who impregnated her were killed too because they did something which was ominous. They were killed by their own relatives because it was believed that a man who impregnated a girl would cause the death of other men in the clan... That was all I heard but when I was young the midwives used to kill twin babies under the pretext that they were born dead... These babies were buried in the urinary Oshitameno.” – Tate Simeon Hedimbi

As mentioned above, the *Oshalwa* was associated with both ends of life: with birth, and with death. From the *Oshalwa*, a person that had died was taken to be buried elsewhere in the house. The head of the household was buried in the kraal and the boys and unmarried men in the calf kraal. The senior and second wives were considered more important and were buried at the main kitchen while girls and junior wives were buried at the *Oshini*. *“These burial sites were in line with responsibilities entrusted to age groups, sex and status and in accordance with the perceived tradition of the community. It was in line with God’s creation; the kraal is where the boy used to take the cattle and it is proper that he should be buried there. The girl was responsible for pounding, therefore in case of her death she will be buried around the pounding area. That is the place where she is supposed to be buried and everyone who comes in the house will know that one of the girls/daughters is dead.*

The boy will be buried at the kraal so everyone will know that a boy/son has died in the house. That is how it was” – Meme Ndahafa Kakonda.

Initially graves were dug using sharp wooden fork known as *Oshipani* and later on wooden objects fitted with sharp metals at one end called a wooden shovel (*Epana*) were used. Graves were shallow and tiny in length. In order to fit a body inside, the body was bent at the waist. The head was placed between the legs, and the legs were chopped at the knee joint. The ancestors believed that if corpse were buried with the legs stretched out as it is done today, death would spread and more people in the deceased family would die.

3.4 The Senior Wife’s Bedroom (*Ondjugo/Ondjuwo*):

The *Ondjugo* is the sleeping room for the senior (first) wife called *Munyalombe* and her young children. The first wife, *Munyalombe*, was invested with the power to direct the other wives in activities that they were expected to carry out in the homestead. She also acted as a counsellor to the other wives on how they should behave before their husband. In the case of the death of the senior wife, another respected wife would be chosen by the husband to assume the responsibilities of the senior wife.

The *Ondjugo* was arguably the most important place in the homestead. *“Important issues affecting the family and plans for the family were privately discussed in the Ondjugo between the husband and the wife...” – Tate Mathew Kapolo.*

The *Ondjugo* was located directly opposite the *Oshoto* in the homestead. Other men could not go near her room or else they would be fined by the husband.

*“Munyalombe’s bed room had to be open at all times so that when the husband is sitting in his living room at the Oshoto can see what is happening there. The paramount wife was very respected and people believed that she is the one who keeps the fire burning in the house. Before the husband takes any decision, he had to consult the paramount wife first. If he is taking the cattle to the remote pasture, or going on other missions away from home the first wife is the one who prepares and serves him with food (*Onguta/Onghuta*) for the journey so that he stays protected wherever he goes .” – Meme Rebekka Kalola*

The *Ondjugo* was made of mopane poles and *Eloya* clay. The *Eloya* was used to plaster the poles together, to keep the room warm and safe from snakes and other reptiles. Animal dung was spread on the outside of the walls to keep insects away. Inside the sleeping room, a fire was always kept burning to maintain a minimum temperature since there were no blankets.



Ondjugo - bedroom
for the senior wife

Some of the most important objects that form part of the *Ondjugo* included the baby carrier (*Ondhikwa*), the animal skin mattress (*Ombanza*), the leather doormat (*Okambanza koposheelo*), a basket for precious goods (*Oshimbale sb Omondjugo*) and a container for animal fat lotion (*Olukwe*).

- **The baby carrier (*Ondhikwa*)**

“When a child is in the Ondhikwa of its mother then it smells like its mother i.e. it copies the behaviour of its mother... Children were brought up well... in respect of the inherited traditional values because they were carried in the Ondhikwa for two years. A child was carried in the Ondhikwa with its legs hanging down loosely. The child talks to his mother while he faces the neck of his mother. Its mother responds to the words of the child. This constant contact between the mother and child cultivated love and family values in the child through the mother as both the mother and child come to understand and complement each other.” – Meme Martha Lipinge



A woman carrying her child in *Ondhikwa*

As indicated above, the *Ondhikwa* is therefore, an important symbol of cultivating love, trust and mutual understanding between the mother and the child. Each woman carried her baby on her back in an *Ondhikwa*, made of animal hide such as goat, sheep, steenbok, tied with straps around her waist and shoulders. Each clan used a different animal for the hide and every clan had its own style of tanning, cutting and fashioning the *Ondhikwa*. Women made use of both an *Ondhikwa* that they wore everyday as they carried out their daily tasks, and the *Ondhikwa yok Oshiti*, which was smeared with frankincense and used only for special occasions. The *Ondhikwa* was always accompanied by the *Omethi/Eyayi*, a leather handbag which contained nappies mainly made from the fabricated bark of *Omuuva* tree roots which were used to clean the child after it had relieved itself.

The *Ondhikwa* was never made before the child was delivered (*Ino manga Ondhikwa okanona ina ka valwa*) because; according to Wilika Kadhila it was a taboo and it was believed that doing so would result in the child never being born or becoming physically or mentally impaired. When a baby was delivered, a piece of leather strip is added to the mother's leather belt that holds the *Ondhikwa* straps to indicate that a child has been born. Each time another baby was delivered, a piece of leather was added to the mother's leather belt that held the *Ondhikwa*

to indicate that another child has been born. Each time another baby was delivered a piece of leather was again cut and tied to the first one to show how many children a woman had. The pieces representing the number of children born were cut from the *Ondhikwa* when it was first made, kept in a pot, and removed at the time of the birth of each successive child.

Traditionally it was the father's task to provide the *Ondhikwa* for the newborn baby. If the father of the child were dead the father's paternal family or clan would take the responsibility as Meme Alobola elaborates further:

"When a child is delivered, the father goes to inform his father and mother (the grandparents of the new baby). He tells them when exactly the child was born. After he has returned home, the parents of the father discuss and arrange to visit the child, bringing a black goat (if this is what that particular family uses traditionally) to slaughter in order to make the Ondhikwa for the child. The parents of the child wait until after the umbilical cord has fallen off and then the father slaughters the goat. The beer is then brewed and the skin is cut at the Oshoto in a ceremonial occasion. The relatives of both the husband and wife as well as the neighbours are invited when the skin is cut. The skin is then tanned by hand for days until it is soft enough. It was traditional required that the mother of the child carried the baby on her back in the new Ondhikwa before anyone else was allowed to do so. After that the child could then be carried in the Ondhikwa by young children." - Meme Maria Alobola.

As the occasion took off, women sang, ululated and shouted these words: "What has brought us here (*Oshike she tu eta?*)" Others shouted back: "The birth of a new baby has brought us here (*Olurvalo lwe tu eta*)".

- **The container for animal fat lotion (*Olukwe*)**

The *Olukwe* is a small clay bowl, gourd, or tortoise shell containing lotion made from cow fat and *Olukula*. The senior wife used this lotion daily to protect her skin from the sun, the cold, and the wind. It was also used to soften leather clothes.



Olukwe

When a mother brought her newborn to a home for the first time, she and the baby would be taken to *Ondjugo* where their necks and faces would be rubbed with the *Olukula* lotion at the front entrance to the *Ondjugo*. It was a sign of welcoming the baby into the new world and into the family.

*“While rubbing the child with oil, you say: Let another boy or girl follow you... I take the child from (its mother) and ask what its name is. I rub it with oil saying, ‘Take from your grandfathers.’ I also rub the mother of the child with oil and say, ‘Let another girl follow,’ if I am holding a son. This is then the blessing for the future... If you visit a house of your husband’s relatives with a baby or a child who has never been in that house before and no one bothers to smear the child and the mother with the *Olukwe* lotion, that person will be embarrassed and will interpret this to mean that they are not wanted or welcome in the house or the family.”* – Meme Elizabeth Ndemupofina Mwatukange

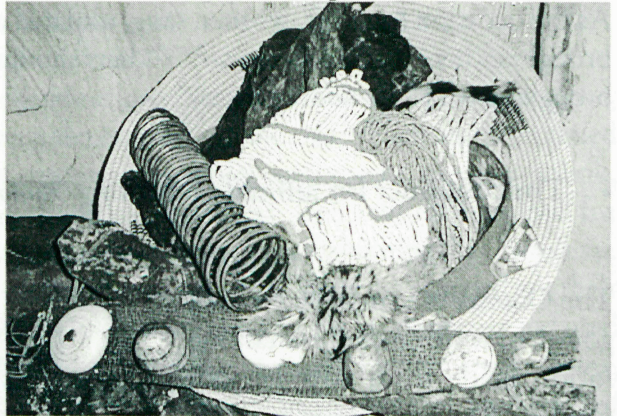
It should be noted that in the Oshiwambo tradition a girl child was equally important as a boy child.

- **The basket for precious ornaments (*Oshimbale shomOndjugo*)**

The *Oshimbale ShomOndjugo* was a woven large basket, made from the leaves of palm tree. It served different functional purposes, which included storage, harvesting and foodstuff carrier. The *Oshimbale shomOndjugo* was of particular significance.

Oshimbale shomOndjugo – where precious ornaments are kept

*“The *Oshimbale shomOndjugo* was very important. It was a container in which all valuable things were kept. It was kept in the *Ondjugo* because the *Ondjugo* was only confined to the family members... Our traditional way of keeping valuable things in the *Oshimbale* has virtually disappeared presumably because the *Oshimbale* was not really safe. If a house caught fire then the valuable things, like the precious beads (*Oondjendje* and *Omauwe*) were destroyed. ...”* – Dr. Mathew Kapolo.



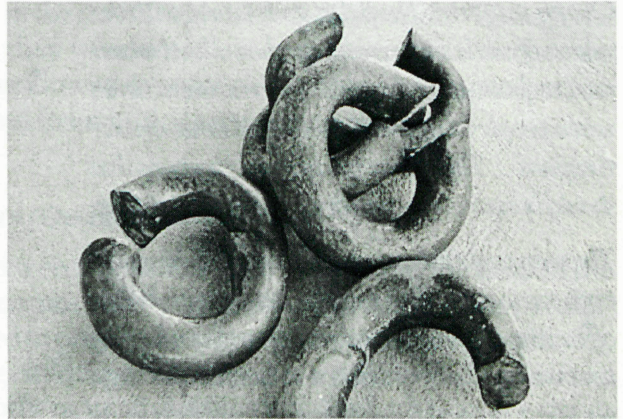
According to Oshiwambo tradition, only the owner had the right to open the *Oshimbale*, however, with permission her sisters and close friends could also have access to properties in the *Oshimbale*. If a wife died, a member of the clan who was designated to open the *Oshimbale shomodjugo* (*Omweegululi gwOondunda*) was the only one allowed access to open sealed properties of the deceased. That person was the one to lead maternal clan and family members into the *Ondjugo* and other storage facilities of the deceased where inheritable objects could be collected and distributed.

3.5 The Homestead urinary (*Oshihuhilo / Oshisitameno*)

The main urinary (*Oshihuhilo/Oshisitameno*) was mainly used at night by the senior wife and her young children and was located behind the senior wife's bedroom. There was also a public *Oshisitameno* near the *Oshoto*. These places were mainly kept to maintain and promote hygiene in the homestead because it was believed that urine killed germs.

“The Oshisitameno was also kept to produce an important cultural substance called Edhilo that was used to add value to Olukula lotion. To obtain Edhilo the women's heavy copper ankle rings (Oongondo/ Eengodo) were buried in the soil at the Urinary area. The regular moisture of the urinary area moisturises the Oogondo, resulting in the formation of dark blue sulphur called Edhilo.

When the substance has formed around the surface of the Oongondo, it was cleaned off and mixed with traditional powder called Olukula and animal fat to add colour, value and lubricant to the lotion. The Olukula lotion was the main body lotion for women and men and for softening leather costumes.” Meme Julia Shikesho

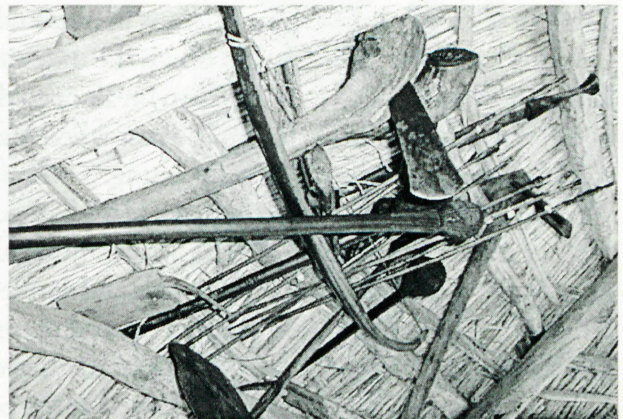


Oongondo – is buried in oshisitameno to produce edhilo that adds quality to Olukula lotion

3.6 The Head of the Homestead's Bedroom (*Omutala*):

Traditionally, the husband had to sleep separately from his wives. His sleeping room was probably the largest and most attractive of all the rooms in the homestead.

In most cases, it was situated right next to the cattle kraal so that he could keep watch of any suspicious movement from outside. This was important in the old days to protect animals against inter-tribal cattle raids. His wives as elaborated earlier slept in the centre of the homestead, and boys slept alongside the *Ongadjo* near the main entrance.



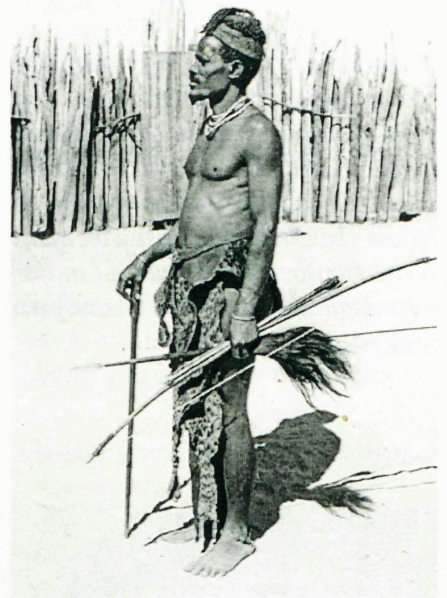
Omutala – head of the household's bedroom

Unlike in the *Ondjugo*, it was common to find beds in most of the men's bedrooms. In the old days, beds were made of local products mainly palm tree branches or the sticks of other trees like mopane and bound together with mopane bark or palm tree leaves. Animal hides were used as mattresses. All important war weapons, like the spears, bows and poisonous arrows, two edged daggers, knobkerries, and axe were kept in the man's bedroom. These were protective weapons against any intruding elements or threat to the homestead.

"The uutati (bow and arrows) is our gun ... It is made from the palm petioles or from the branches Omuhama tree. The palm stick is tied with the sinews of cattle and arrows are then added which used to shoot at whatever.... In the ancient times when people went to war, they used bows as their weapons ... These were traditional weapons that should be near every man or carry them every time.

The man ought to have a panga too which he would even use to cut little poles when the house is falling off or when building new huts. Apart from keeping the bows and arrows closest to him he also keeps the spear (Egonga), a knife and knobkerrie, all suspended on his belt. A man who travels without any of these weapons is regarded as a coward (Evaya). In addition, the man always made sure that his bows and arrows never had contact with the Omasiga in the kitchen. Should that happen, its functional value fades away." – Tate Paulus Helmut

Man with traditional weapons



The axe (*Ekuva*) was very important because when a man cleared the veld (*Okuti/Omufitu*), he used the axe to cut down the mopane trees which were used for building his house. Women also used an axe to break open the marula nuts (*Okutenda Oongongo*) in order to extract the kernel. In the past when one found the metal he would take it to blacksmiths (*Aakwaanga*) for processing. So the axe and spear were made from metal. The bellow (*Omupepo*), which the blacksmiths used to manufacture tools, was a wooden object carved inside and covered with an animal hide. There were two horns that were usually of a gemsbok, pierced through and connected to the wooden object to release air into the fire as a person pushed up and down two parallel sticks that were also pierced through the hide. As the blacksmith drove the two sticks continuously the fire is lit and the metal is heated and softened in the process.

“The axe is also of a spiritual value “if the cattle go missing on a certain day the cattle herder pulls the axe out of its handle and buries it at the entrance into the cattle kraal... This is his prayer to Kalunga that the cattle must not be attacked and killed by lions and hyenas...that they should find a safe way home by themselves. This prayer really worked... When he did that the next morning all the missing cattle will be found lying in front of the entrance to the kraal.” – Tate Helmut Paulus

Unlike *Ondjugo*, the *Omutala* poles were not spread with clay to plaster the poles together. There was also no fire lit in the *Omutala*. Whenever the head of the household desired to sleep with one of his wives, he went to their bedrooms. He might have sought the advice of the senior wife of whom to sleep with on a particular night.

Traditionally, it was accepted for a circumcised boy to sleep with his prospective wife (*Okugwila*) who was not yet initiated in the traditional marriage (*Efundula*). Though the two were allowed to sleep together, they were not allowed to have sex until after she was married. It was the boy who was allowed to come to the house of the prospective wife, but he must first obtain approval from both sets of parents.

3.7 The Girls’ Sleeping Quarters (*Omitala doukadona*):

The girls’ bedrooms were located between the senior wife’s room and the head of the household’s room so that the girls were not able to go out at night without the parents’ notification. This measure was imposed to prevent unwanted and premature pregnancies, punishable by a death penalty. Young children of both sexes were compelled by custom to sleep with the mother or grandmothers, until they were big enough to move out to the girls’ or boys’ quarters. For the duration of the time that the young children spent sleeping in their mother’s bedroom, they were groomed on the values and customs of the community.

The education of young children was not only carried out at night at the sacred fireplace at the *Oshoto*, as many people seem to believe today. Girls at their sleeping quarters

But it mainly took place in the *Ondjugo* with the mother or grandmother, hence the popular saying among the Oshiwambo-speaking population groups that “when you educate a man you educate one person only, but when you educate a mother you educate the entire community”. This meant that mothers played a recognised pivotal role in transmitting community values to the children.



Mothers chiefly paid particular attention to orientating and educating the girls on womanhood related work and general behaviours, trusting that they would grow up with such values and would in return promote and bequeath the same values to their children. This explains why girls spent longer time (sometimes up to the age of twenty) sleeping in their mothers' bedrooms, while the boys were entitled to move to the boy quarters when they were eight years old or even younger. It was therefore, the mothers who were in constant contact with young children at home while men spent most of their time away at the cattle post looking after cattle.

“Once a girl had had her first menstrual period, it was recognised that she was now able to become pregnant. Mothers tried to prevent pregnancy from happening before the daughter was initiated...to prevent pregnancy a mother took a drop of her daughter’s menstrual blood, puts the drop in cores of a palm tree nut, buries the nut or puts it at a place only known to her. This was believed to act as a kind of contraceptive method. The daughter never falls pregnant until the mother releases the nut. Once the girl has been initiated, the day she goes to get married the mother retrieves the palm nut and the girl can now get pregnant. The disadvantage is that if her mother dies before her initiation, she won’t give birth in her entire life”. - Meme Theresia Akwenye.

3.8 The Boys’ Sleeping Quarters (*Omitala dovamati*):

At the age of six young boys could move from the *Ondjugo* to the boys quarters, where they would share rooms with the senior boys, until such a time that he was mature and strong enough to construct his own separate bedroom, to add to the number of the already existing bedrooms in the boys quarters. The more boys were in the homestead the more huts were built in the boys quarters.

The boys’ sleeping quarters were located next to the cattle kraal to keep watch on any suspicious movements in the cattle kraal. This was necessary in the olden days when predatory animals and cattle raids were common. The boys meeting place called *Oshoto* was located to the west of the main corridor that led people into the interior of the homestead. The boys and sometimes the girls met at this place for dinner, because children were not allowed to sit together with their parents at the main meeting place called *Oshoto*. They sang traditional songs, performed dances, told riddles and recited proverbs and idioms. Parents could however, invite them occasionally for counselling and to receive advice on values that the children should emulate and promote within the homestead and in their daily interaction within the broader community.

The boys’ *Oshoto* also acted as the first place where visitors had to be received by children or junior wives. If the visitor intended seeing the head of the homestead, the wife would proceed to inform the husband of the presence of the visitor. If the visitor was important, the head of the homestead invited him to a meeting place

called *Oshinyanga shaMutyakemo* reserved for respected visitors only. If he (the head of the homestead) felt no need to meet with the guest he would tell the wife or children to tell the visitor that he was not in the house. As at the main *Oshoto* the fire was always kept burning at the boys *Oshoto* and as in the case of *Ondjugo* the fire was always lit before the cattle returned home in the evening.

3.9 The Granaries / (*Iigandhi/Omashisa/Omaanda*):

Granaries (*Iigandhi*) refer to the *mahangu* storage containers. *Iigandhi* were made from mopane branches woven together with the bark of mopane trees, or made from palm leaves. The construction of an *Oshigandhi* (a granary) would take a month of continuous work done mainly by men. In cases where there were no men in the homestead to make the *Iigandhi*, the women could also make them. Although the supreme role of the granaries was to store the *mahangu* after harvest, they also measured the owner's wealth. The more granaries a person owned, the wealthier he was. The *mahangu* that was to be pounded in the *Oshini* was taken from the granaries from time to time. The granaries were always sealed with animal dung and clay to keep insects out and to control the unauthorised usage of the food. No one was allowed to break open the seal of a granary without the head of the household's permission.

"...Men used to have their own granaries which were filled with mahangu which will be used at a later stage when his wives have run out of Omahangu. If one of the wives runs out of mahangu before the next harvest... She should request owner of the homestead for more mahangu ... However each wife was entitled to be prudent and careful about how mahangu was spent in the homestead. The husband could refuse giving out mahangu to any of his wives should he learn that the wife had been careless and wasteful at handling the food." —Tate Pendro Iiyambo



Women filling the granary with mahangu

The husband could however instruct the second wife to open the granaries in case of a desperate need for *mahangu* in the house. It was also the second wife (*Mweehaka*) and not *Munyalombe* who was delegated to distribute foodstuffs other than meat and fat, to other kitchens (*Omapata*). The meat, fat and other special foodstuffs were distributed by the first wife.

As well as being used for food, the *mahangu* was also used as a means of exchange for other commodities, like cattle, goats, sheep with other families.

“The senior wife known as Murryalombe, had nothing to do with mahangu distribution in the homestead. Mahangu distribution was the responsibility of the second wife called Mweebaka” - Meme Ndahafa Kakonda.

It is said that other wives were not very happy about the idea of the husband having granaries full of mahangu to himself. Meme Kakonda again:

“She is the one who opens the granary and distributes Omahangu to the other wives. There was an unfair practice whereby some mahangu was kept in the granary of the husband and consequently it would end up with the senior wife who barely does anything. Nobody knows exactly who uses what is stored in the private granary of the man but I assume it is the first wife who makes use of the extra mahangu that is stored in the man’s granary... Children were not allowed to open the granary. It was feared that children would be shocked and be worried if they found out that their granary was almost empty”.

In case of the man’s death, relatives from his mother’s family (*Aakwanezimo/Ovakwanedimo*) inherited the granaries. Women and children did not inherit anything, even though they were instrumental in the production of the *mahangu*.

There were rituals associated with *ligandhi*: One of them which is still observed today. This is when someone is constructing a granary and at the time a close relative dies, he is not allowed to make any contact with the deceased’s family until he has finished making the granary. Further investigation into the reasons why a person cannot leave the unfinished granary for a funeral is needed. The entrance into the granary area (*Etambo*) was restricted to one passage only. It was a taboo to fetch *mahungu* from the granaries into the homestead through the main entrance. There is a separate entrance from the *Etambo* into the homestead so that the neighbours do not see how much *mahangu* is being carried into the house. This was especially important during famine or drought because if neighbours saw you carrying lots of *mahangu* they would come and burrow some then you would not have anything left for your family.

3.10 The Pounding area (*Oshini*):

“The pounding block Oshini that is dug into the ground is the real Oshiwambo mill where Omahangu flour was produced and it is the one which our forefathers used... These modern pounding blocks which stand on their own are not the Oshiwambo make, we believe that they are an Angolan type therefore when we speak of an Oshini used by our forefathers we are referring to those ones dug into the ground.”
- Meme Ndahafa Kakonda

The *Oshini* was the area of the homestead in which *Omahangu* (millet) was pounded and other food products were refined and processed. It was often located along the main passage that leads to *Oshoto*. It consisted of a smooth space, covered in sand, taken from the anthills called (*Oshaanda/ Oivanda*), that are found all over the countryside. This substance is then mixed with water and plastered over the floor of the *Oshini* by the women.



Meme Ndahafa further explains the cultural value of *Oshini*: *“the pounding area is a prominent area in the Oshiwambo household. The Oshini makes it possible for people to live in the house as it is where the food processing is done. It is where the Omahangu is pounded as well as any other products which need to be pounded and refined. Essentially herbs (Iimbodi/Iigwanga), which are used to cure minor viruses such as coughs, are prepared at the Oshini. On the other hand, it also has a spiritual value, if a traveller has lost direction, our forefathers used to take him to the pounding area and instruct him to place his head on the pounding block for about five minutes, and then he would be able to find his direction again. The Oshini plays an important role in the house. In fact, the Oshini is the house because without it there will never be a house and a hungry person cannot do anything. Another ritual associated with Oshini was that when a girl or a wife of the household died, she was usually buried in the pounding area, so the pounding area also served an important ritual and spiritual obligation to the household.”* - Meme Ndahafa Kakonda

“:Moreover ... when you (the wife in case of divorce) have dug out the Oshini you cannot put it back in the ground of that same house anymore or else you will all die one by one...If you’re moving you can dig out your pounding block and use it wherever you’re going. If you want to return you’ll have to get a new pounding block ... if a woman decided to divorce and dug out the pounding block, it means she is leaving forever as she cannot come back to that same house where the pounding block has been removed while the husband is alive.” - Meme Ndahafa Kakonda

Meme Ndahafa Kakonda on the *Oshini* again: *“Like what I said earlier ... the Marula nuts (Omaxuku) as well as making the dry vegetable cake (Evanda) Oshini is used to processed these products. The traditional body lotion called Olukula used to be pounded before it became a finished product. In other words, all food as well as herbs and cosmetics were refined and prepared into finished goods at the Oshini.”*

Women used a long pestle (*Omushi*) to pound the *Omabangu* into flour or process other food products. The pounding of *Omabangu* is a long and energetic practice and played a prominent role in the daily life of the homestead. There were several baskets used in the process of pounding *Omabangu*: one for carrying the millet to and from the homestead, called *Oshitsilo/Oshitwilo*, a flat one for sifting, called *Ongalo*, another one for the bran, called *Okafifilangbundu*, and one last basket used to carry the remaining *mabangu*, called *Oondjeke/Eebeke*.

The process of pounding *mabangu* was as follows: The *Omabangu* grains are taken from the kitchen to the *Oshini*, the girls first removed the bran by the process called *Okubutula/Okuhompa*. This is the first process of pounding. The *mabangu* was dried and then pounded again. At this stage it was called *Okufulula*. The women then separated the ready flour by shifting it from the semi-finished millet with *Ongalo*. Then the left over millet is pounded again and shifted until most of it is turned into flour. They then placed the bran, flour and semi-finished millet in three different baskets and took them back to the kitchen to dry and thereafter made porridge and a traditional drink called *Oshikundu*. At every pounding occasion, after completing the pounding job, girls would always bake *mabangu* cake called *Oshikwiila/Omungome*. If there were fresh milk they would also cook a thin, tasty porridge called *Oshikandela/Oshimbuinda* made of flour dissolved in the milk.

“The mabangu flour’s value is equal to life... Even when we cook the pumpkin we still add mabangu flour to it. Therefore the flour is very important because if we didn’t have it we would die. It is our staple food. Even nowadays when you take a child to the hospital, Doctors will tell you to prepare the mabangu soft porridge for the child. The mabangu is of high economical and cultural value to our people... we need to preserve and improve the technique of producing it. Nowadays mabangu is pounded in the Angolan types of pounding blocks and also by machines. Although our traditional pounding block is eminently losing its traditional value, its meaning and significance in our tradition is still dear to our hearts and memory... and we want our children to share these sentiments with us”
Meme Ndahafa Kakonda

3.11 The Cattle Kraal (*Oshigunda/Oshuunda*):

The cattle were kept in a kraal (*Oshigunda*), that divided into different sections. There were separate kraals for the cows, calves, bulls, sheep, and goats. In the *Oshikwanyama* tradition the main *Oshigunda* is divided into two main parts which are, the *Oshitemaunda* and the *Ohambo yEkalukilo*. Traditionally, every head of a household was required to construct a kraal regardless of whether he had cattle or not. The number of cattle a person owned was a measure of his wealth. A man with more cattle could have more wives and children because he could support them. A man without cattle would find it hard to find a wife.

Because cattle were a symbol of wealth, they would not be killed even if they were very old or sick. The main purpose of keeping cattle was not for their meat, but to supply milk and butter for the family. They also supplied manure to fertilise the soil, fuel for cooking, and used to plough the land. If cattle were slaughtered, all parts of the animal were used: the skin was used for making costumes and as coffins for very important people; the horns were used to extract marula juice, and the ribs and hoofs were used to carve clay pots (utensils). As a symbol of wealth, cattle were also used to pay bridal prices and to bail out someone who was arrested, when someone was found guilty of wrongdoing.

During intensive droughts, the cattle were mostly at the cattle posts, which were located at places where grass and water were abundant. Only a few were taken home after times of good rains or after harvest time to feed on Omahangu stalks.



The cattle kraal

“When the cattle return from the cattle posts, women ululated and shouted words of praise about cattle ... According to the Oshiwambo tradition, the cattle are the most important animals because a ceremony (Oshidhano) is held in honour of the cattle when they returned from the cattle post. This is referred to as the cattle competition/show (Oongombe adbi dhana), comparing who has well fed and fat oxen. If a man has many and well fed cattle he invites his herdsman so that they compete against one another. If the head of the household was wealthy he would reward the herdsman who emerges victorious with a heifer to breed his own cattle and thus encourage him to continue looking after the old man’s cattle. If there is a herdsman who did not graze his cattle satisfactorily, he is motivated by this show (the competition) to feed his cattle well so that he can win next time.” – Tate Lukas Shinedima

Traditionally, milking was mainly a man’s responsibility (even though women could own cattle, this was rare) and men took full responsibility for the care of the cattle. Traditional milking containers, called *Omaholo*, were made of wood. Milk was taken from the kraal into the homestead where it was emptied into a large, dried gourd called *Ondjupa/oxupa*. The milk stayed in the *Ondjupa* until it was full. When it was full, the *Ondjupa* (gourd) was hung with straps of leather (*Omwiya gOndjupa*) from a wooden rack (*Omuhikilo*). Two men would sit, one on either side of the *Omuhikilo* and push the *Ondjupa* back and forth until part of the milk was churned into butter. The men could check to see if the butter had been made,

by lifting the *Ondjupa* lid (*Ekumbo*), off the top. Butter was centrally important to the homestead. It was used as cooking oil in preparing food and was mixed with *Olukula* to make lotion.

As a rule, all women were expected to be at home before the cattle returned to the kraal from the fields. Strangers were also never allowed to pass through the kraal without the owner's permission. When the head of the family died, he was buried in the main kraal, and if a young boy died, he was buried in the calf kraal.

Men and women both owned cattle, but cattle were predominantly men's property and responsibility. When the husband died, as in the case of other property, the husband's closest family members from his mother's clan inherited the cattle that he owned. The father would however, give his children their own cattle at a tender age, before he died. The cattle given to the children were mainly cows. This was so that by the time the children grew up their cows would have produced many calves for them. *"If a problem arises in the clan, then the owner of the cattle is approached to give some cattle. If the owner of cattle dies but he belongs to a large clan, then discussions must be held to appoint someone who can take care of the cattle. Some individuals may receive one cow each to go and rear it. The rest of the cattle are given to an adult member in the family to look after them but a young person who is mature enough can also be given cattle. If a man from that clan is to get married then he approaches the senior person who looks after the cattle for help... However the clan members could give children some cows to rear. Such cows are given to the elder child to look after them on behalf of his brothers and sisters"*. – Tate Lukas Shinedima

Cattle were also used for spiritual purposes. *"A young black calf was only slaughtered for a sick person who was believed to suffer from the deadly spirits of the ancestors known as 'Ohula,'. Ohula is regarded as ancestral spirits that causes the desire to eat fresh meat in the sick person. In the old days the sick person was also given the blood of the slaughtered animal to eat. The blood must be pure, not cooked and not mixed with herbs. As a result the sick person actually heals and recovers from his illness. I think they (the ancestors) probably believed that the blood could cure the sick... The sick person simply licked the blood that was also applied to the patient feet and face. ... Several other words were uttered in praise of the ancestors as the sick person crawls through the slaughtered cow, licking blood"...* – Tate Lukas Shinedima. *"A bull on the other hand was only slaughtered when the head of the household (the owner of the cattle died) or else it was a strong taboo to slaughter a bull as it could result in the death of the owner"* Festus Shiikwa Mbandi

3.12 The Mahangu Fields (*Epya*):

The Omahangu field (*Epya*), rather than the cattle, was the main source of food supply for the family. Farming was mainly for subsistence and people made use of traditional implements, most importantly the hoe (*Etemo*).

The women mainly did all of the farming. It was the women's duty to farm, but the men had control over all of the food produced. The men supervised the women and children as they worked in the fields. Each wife and her children had separate portions of work in the field. But they were all first required to finish farming on the husband's field before they actually start working on their portions. The family also maintained the high quality of the soil by adding animal manure to revitalise poor soil. The main food products were Omahangu, groundnuts, watermelons, beans and other foods.

"The husband had the responsibility to take care of the field and giving parts to the wives. The wives had no right to ask for specific parts which they wanted to cultivate...Cultivation was for the women and children while the man just inspected how the task has been carried out. If he is not satisfied, he may order them to go back and do it properly. If one of them is lazy, she could be beaten. ...The man bought the land and gives his wife a part of the land but the man will always have the bigger part. Therefore the man's mahangu will always be more compared to the wives'. If the woman is hardworking, she may ask for another part to cultivate if her existing one is not satisfactory or enough. As it was said before mahangu never get mixed, each one produces her own and keeps them at her side. Each wife used to cultivate her part but there were days when everyone had to cultivate the husband's part. This will also apply during planting, harvesting and storing of Mahangu" – Meme Rebekka Kalola

The area where the harvested products, such as Mahangu and beans were temporarily stored was known as *Oshipale*. The Mahangu heads were threshed (*Okubwa*) to separate the chaffs from the grains. Before harvesting the *Oshipale* ground was spread with a mixture of clay soil from anthills and water to make it smooth and clean, the same process as in making the *Oshini* floor.



Threshing mahangu

To separate the grain from the chaffs (winnowing), the women shook baskets of newly threshed *mahangu* and let the wind carry the lighter pieces into separate piles and the grains in baskets below. The winnowing process (*Okuyela*) is followed by another process of removing pieces of *mahangu* straws from the grains (*Okutengula*). When the process was complete, the Omahangu was taken into the homestead for storage in a granary (*Iigandhi*). In the case of a good harvest, village women were invited to help in the threshing of Omahangu (*Okakungungu/Ehwo*).

Threshing was usually done by hitting the Mahangu heads with the head of the pestle, the same pestle used in pounding Mahangu into flour, but turned upside down. A cattle was always slaughtered and traditional drinks (*Omalodu*) brewed to feed the people and celebrate the occasion.

Important fruit trees found in the field were the Marula trees (*Omigongo/Eemwoongo*), the Bird Plum (*Omive*) trees, the Makalani palm (*Omilunga*) trees, and the African ebony (*Oomwandi/Eemwandi*) trees. They were economically important to the community because they produced edible fruits, drinks, oils, medicines, and decorations. Traditionally, Omahangu fields were not fenced as they are today. Everyone herded their cattle away from other people's fields. If anyone allowed his cattle to feed on somebody else's Mahangu fields, the owner of the cattle was fined, and usually had to pay back compensation of either millet or cattle. Village headmen were in charge of distributing land equally to the families in the area. A man would live with his parents until he was married, when he would have to begin the process of creating his own homestead.

4. RESIDENTS OF THE HOMESTEAD

4.1 Men of the Homestead

Usually the head of the homestead and the unmarried boys are the typical male residents of the homestead.

4.2 Men's Clothing (*Oonkutuma/Eenghutuwa*):

According to Moller, (1996:116) "*the characteristic features of the dress of the men are a couple of thin, stiff leather antennae, curved like a pair of ox horns and sticking up from the leather girdle. This serves as a kind of ornament but also as a sign of distinction, the more important a man is, the bigger the antennae. The biggest of these which I observed was worn by the chief of the Ondonga tribe for which this decoration is also characteristic.*"

- Based on his cultural context Moller tried to describe the traditional attires of the Oshiwambo speaking people. There were different outfits for different occasions and also the boys had different attires from that of the adult male. The commonest wear for the married men was *Onkuturwa*. Some of the main traditional attires for men were as follows:
- *Ombede* was an important leather cloth for cattle herders (*Aanahambo*). It was worn by passing it between the legs and then hooking it in the belt at the rear and front, covering the back and front of the person, it was fastened to the body in a way that ensured the person's protection from thorn bushes and so that it could not easily fall down when a person was running or when caught by bushes.

- Hunting objects like a knobkerrie (*Odhimbo/Odibo*), or double edge knife (*Omukonda*) could be tucked into the belt when hunting or simply herding cattle.
- Other important items of clothing which cattle herders wore included a leather apron mainly made from the of cattle skins and wild animals could be worn to cover the buttocks (*Eenhumbwe/Onkuntuwa*) and a large leather loin cloth (*Omasbongi*) covering the entire front and buttocks.
- In front a man wore cloth made from the stomach of an animal known as *Eteta*. Leather clothes from giraffes, antelopes and others were mainly reserved for the costumes of important and recognised people in the community. To maintain the high quality of clothing materials, a traditional lotion (*Olukula*) was always used as a lubricant to soften and maintain the quality of these genuine leather products. The leather clothes of poor men were not as soft nor as attractive as those of the rich people, as they could not afford to apply the required amount of lotion to make the skin soft, attractive and long lasting.

The *Eteta*, the cattle stomach membrane known as rumen was commonly used as the front apron could be categorized into two parts. One of these parts was called *Ekopa* and the other one was called *Nambwa*. The former was very large, of high quality and was worn by the rich people known as *Iipuna* or *Eengundja*. The poor and less superior men in the community wore *Nambwa* which were relatively small and less attractive and of lower quality. This apron was structured in such a way that it barely covered the buttocks while that of a rich man covered almost the entire lower waist front and back.



Men in traditional costume

Until a man's marriage was approved by the community he wore an upright 'leather spike' called *Eshongi*. This stood upright from the back of his belt to indicate that he was still not mature and could not take part in decision-making processes pertaining to the family or important community functions. For instance, he could not preside over a court hearing of the community or over family sensitive matters.

"A man was never recognised as having been married until "the fresh sticks" (Oifonono) were cut and heated at the Omasiga in the kitchen.

Beer was brewed and an ox was slaughtered.. Thereafter you were considered as a married man. Even if you had a house, a wife and children you had no right to name a baby...until Oifonono ceremony was held in your honour. At present, people go to church for wedding ceremonies...” - Tate Simeon Hedimbi

It was also common, especially among elderly and middle aged men to wear hats. Hats were made from the leaves of palm trees and also from local grass called *Enenge/Eyangwa*. Traditionally men wore hats called *Alundungu*, made from a part of an animal stomach called omasum (*Onghumba/Omhumba*). Hats were useful in protecting people against environmental factors such as the sun and rain.

“Many men used to wear the hats (Omambale) and they still wear them today, though most of them are of European make. People used to make Omambale from palm leaves and grass ... These hats were fitted with feathers. So different feathers were fitted on the Embale (hat) depending on the choice of the owner. I think you remember that during the previous graduation ceremony (April 2002) there was a man with a hat fitted with a big feather. So his appearance made us gaze at him and reasoned that he was a headman. That is, the Embale could tell and inform people about the status of a person who is wearing it” Meme Sabina David.

Men also wore *Omwaanga* or *Onyoka* on the neck, but relatively fewer in quantity in comparison to how much *Onyoka* is worn by women. Men would therefore wear only one or two strands of *Onyoka*. A person’s clan was the major determining factor about whether one should wear, *Onyoka* or *Omwaanga*? Any person who was familiar with the customs of the Oshiwambo-speaking communities could establish a person’s clan affiliation by simply looking at the type of *Oshilanda* (necklace) worn was it *Onyoka* or *Omwaanga* and wait worn on the person’s neck or waist? Moreover, one could also find out about the person’s clan attachment by looking at the object, mainly sticks attached at the back of his/her *Onyoka*, at the point where the strings of sinew were tied together. These sticks were usually made out of the particular trees *Omufilu*, *Omwaami*, *Omupundi*

A man’s ears could only be pierced for spiritual purposes to tell and inform the public that he was born alone, or both of his parents had died while he was still an infant or when his children were dying at an early age. In this regard charm objects known as *Omupungulula* tree sticks were pierced through the hole to communicate to the public the reasons for the piercing and to drive away evil spirits. This action was called *Okudhitikila*, which is to protect the person against the evil spirits or misfortunes. The affected mother also had her hair cut off with only a little hair left at the front to which talisman objects could be fastened. The child, named Mpingana (if it were a girl) or lipinge (if it were a boy) to mean ‘born after several deceased siblings’ was also pierced and protective objects like beads of *Onyoka* were to be worn.

“Our people had also been wearing shoes for a long time, before the advent of Europeans. Basically, there were two types of shoes. One type was called *Oikayata*, and were mainly made for people when they were busy at home with their daily activities and most importantly when men and young boys went to graze cattle. These type of shoes were strong and therefore preventing thorns from getting through. This type was basically not skilfully designed, and required little time to mend together. The second type are sandals called *Oonghaku dayongolwa*, means skilfully designed and were very famous and specifically meant for prominent members of the community such as kings, particular chiefs and a few others including the blacksmiths. Skins of leopards and giraffes were to some extent used to make these types of shoes hence ordinary people could not afford them”. – Meme Ndahafa Kakonda.

“When Christianity was introduced to our community...it tore our community apart...it led to untold disappearance of many traditional practices... If an African woman was seen wearing Eteta, front leather apron, he/she was regarded as a pagan. When your neighbour or friend becomes a Christian, the relationship between you strained... it was unholy for a non-Christian to interact with a Christian... Christians were forbidden to practice initiation ceremonies, traditional medicine, male circumcision and other beliefs... who ever was found practiced any of those was excommunicated... Nowadays people want to revive their traditions” – Tate Lucas Shinedima

4.3 Women of the Homestead

Women folks who resided in typical homestead were the senior wife (*Muryalombe*), second wife (*Mweehaka*), third wife (*Memetotende*) and the unmarried girls. Women played a very important role in the management and well being of the homestead.

4.4 Women’s Clothing (*Iipako/ Iimona/ Iilanda*):

“The missionaries and traders did not find us naked. We used to cover our bodies with leather costumes. Our women used to decorate themselves beautifully...” – Dr. Mathew Kapolo

According to meme Katrina Tshikongo: “In the *Oshiwambo* tradition *Iipako* referred to all inherited costumes used in the community for different purposes such as body protection, decoration, make up, as talisman or for artistic expression. Women had more varieties of fashion than men. This helps explain why women were so dignified in the community and highly respected by their male colleagues. The following are a few examples of the traditional costume”



Uukwaluudhi/Ongandjera women in *Iipako*

- **Leather garments (*Onguwo*):** This was a long black leather skirt worn by every married woman. The black colour was an indication that only black cattle were killed for clothing. Bulls provided hide when slaughtered for important ceremonies like female initiation ceremonies, but were rarely slaughtered voluntarily. Cows, no matter how old, were not slaughtered because they were of economic value in terms of producing offspring, milk and fat. Among the Western Owambo communities like the Aakwaluudhi, Aangandjera and the Ovakwambi the *Onguwo* was only worn in front while at the back they wore a separate, smaller apron made of soft calf skin known as *Epushu* or strands of ostrich eggshells called *Omwaanga*.

Although most of the leather costumes were made from cattle hides, few people such as chiefs and their wives could afford the precious and very scarce hides of wildlife animals like the giraffe hide called *Ekopeka*, as well as zebra and springbok hides. Custom requires that a married woman should have dresses reaching below her knees, as opposed to the shorter skirts worn by young girls.

The *Onguwo* worn by rich women were fairly long, reaching the ankles and were also well decorated and furnished with all the beautiful ornaments such as the oyster shells, cowry, copper beads (*Uuputu*) and many others.

Kwanyama woman in *Onguwo*



- **Waist Beads (*Ondjeva/Omwaanga*):**

Every young girl wore *Ondjeva/Omwaanga*, a symbolic indication of virginity and girlhood. *Ondjeva* was made from ostrich eggshells clustered together and hanging down from the waist. *Ondjeva* was initially given to a newborn baby by the father's clan.

When girls became mature, they were given more of the *Ondjeva* that they wore in a kind of a bundle hanging down from their waist. At marriage the bride was even given more *Ondjeva* to wear during her wedding and thereafter it was distributed to her future children.



Girls in their traditional dress

The night before the bride depart for the *Efundula* (traditional wedding) people gathered at the home of the bride parents to witness an occasion called *Omafikameno/ Onghuta*. At this occasion the bride was dressed into new garments before leaving to the *Namunganga*'s (the *efundula* ceremonial master) house, the following day. After the wedding, she no longer wore *Ondjeva* but replaced with an *Oshilanda*. "However, the *Aandongga*, *Aakwambi*, *Aangandjera*, *Aakwaluudhi*, *Aambalantu*, *Aakolonkadhi* and the *Aambandja*'s married women could still wear their *Oondjeva* after marriage, rolled up to the waist. But, once a *Kwanyama* woman got married the custom forbids her from wearing her girlhood costumes, the *ondjeva*"- Meme Julia Shikesho

• **Necklace (*Oshinyenye/Ondiwi*):**

Another important costume used by women was the oyster shells necklace (*Onyoka*), a string of beads made from oyster shells and worn around the neck. *Onyoka* was made from oyster shells, while *Omwaanga* was made from ostrich egg shells, but they all served a common purpose.

The number of strings of *Onyoka* or *Omwaanga* that a woman wore around her neck acted as a measure of wealth as both oyster shells and ostrich egg shells were scarce. Therefore, the more strings of *Onyoka* or *Omwaanga* a woman possessed, the richer she was.

Any woman seen without *Onyoka* or *Omwaanga* around her neck could be ridiculed in public.

The public might refer to her as in the words of Tate Immanuel Mwatala "a woman with a bare neck was like a snake". An Owambo woman was also accustomed to wearing strings of *Onyoka/Omwaanga* or other beads called *Omarwe* around the waist. This was particularly important, especially after a woman had given birth to help control her stomach to return to the original size.

"Another important precaution used in this regard was a large animal skin belt called *Omwiya gopela* or *Omwiya gwOmwali*, tighten regularly, after birth to normalise the woman's belly. Should a woman, after giving birth fails to take these precautions the stomach will continue to grow into an undesirable size. In *Oshiwambo* this is called *Okupita Elufu*, a situation whereby the stomach enlarges after birth if no precautions have been taken to control it. In the old days, if a woman was seen without the above ornaments it signalled death of a close family member, because according to the tradition, when the husband dies, the deceased wife was striped off all her jewellery,

Oshinyenye/Ondiwi



bracelets and other precious ornaments worn around the neck, waist, and ankles” Meme Julia Shikesho

- Wealthy women also wore a large white oyster shell called *Omba* attached to the necklace on the back of the neck. These oyster shells were very rare and thus were worn only by rich people. Very often the *Onyoka* or *Omwanga* were dyed with red *Olukula* ochre. Rich women could also afford to wear several beautifully refined *Onyoka* strips. Women who were married to prominent men in the society wore more strands than those who were married to simple men. Some very wealthy women wore carved ivory tusks, called *Ekipa*, attached to the necklace or on strips of hanging leather belts on top of *Onguwo*.
- The *Ondjendje yOshilongo*, the glass beads were introduced to the Aawambo community through early trade with people who had been in contact with the Portuguese. These beads were only worn by members of the royal families, as it was extremely rare to obtain.
- Underneath their clothes, married women wore strands of *Oshilanda* around their waists. It was made of Ostrich eggs shells or glass beads called *Omauwe*. A woman was also supposed to wear copper beads called *Uuputu* on her arms and ankles. The strands around the ankles served as more than just decoration- they helped anchor older women and helped them keep their balance. Women also wore earrings made from strings of *Onyoka*, bones of animals and other local products.

5. THE OSHIWAMBO TRADITIONAL WEDDING (EFUNDULA)

“Our customs and traditions are strong pillars of our identity, without deep knowledge of our customs and the traditions rooted in our ancestors heritage we have no justification to refer to ourselves as Aawambo and so on”. Mr. Shilongo Uukule.

Among the Oshiwambo speaking population groups of Northern Namibia and neighbouring Southern Angola, traditional wedding ceremonies were organized for a group of single young women. This ceremony was known as *Efundula/Obango yiitsali*. Any woman who have not had children could qualify for *Efundula* regardless of whether she had been engaged to a man or not. What was important was to guarantee a woman the freedom to become pregnant, get a husband and produce children with the consent and approval of the community. According to oral traditional stories, it was forbidden for a girl to become pregnant before her *Efundula*. This was believed to bring bad fortune to her family, the community and to its leaders. Those who fell victim to pregnancy before their *Efundula* were

rejected by the community and harsh punishments such as stoning the victim to death or banishment from the community were imposed on them. To save their beloved daughter's lives, many families reportedly tried (although very few succeeded) in smuggling out pregnant girls to neighbouring communities.

In those days there were no clothes and it was very difficult to conceal a pregnancy. If a young girl became pregnant she would therefore notify her immediate parents before the pregnancy became visible to the public. When a pregnant girl was successfully smuggled out of her community to another community she became free and no harm was to be inflicted on her by anybody. Abortion was another method, which was used in order to save lives of those who would have come victims because of early pregnancy. The methods commonly used to abort babies involved smashing the foetus inside the mother's womb by using hands or a knee. As it was expected this process was painful and life threatening.

Every year between April and August the *Namunganga/Omufukiki* conducts the *Efundula* ceremony in consultation and agreement with the senior headmen and he would announce when and where *Efundula* would be taking place. This information enabled parents with grown up girls to decide whether to register them for *Efundula* or not. Every parent who wished to have her daughter married was to go to the *Namunganga's* house and register her daughter with him. Both men and women could equally serve as a *Namunganga* but only those who learned skills to execute the ceremony could become a *Namunganga*. Young girls were not normally consulted or asked their opinions as to whether they wanted to wed or not. Oral historians in *Uukwanyama* and other communities in the four northern regions however, inform us that there were young girls who declined to wed traditionally some of those sought shelter with neighbouring kingdoms, whilst others sought refuge at missionary stations and were converted to Christianity.

Every girl who was to be prepared for the wedding in a particular year had to have her hair plaited in a traditional style called *Elende*. Every girl was expected to stay in such plaits for about five months prior to her wedding (*Efundula*). *Elende* acted as a signal to notify the community that the young girl would be wed soon and become a mature woman. Relatives and friends were to make the necessary preparations and contributions of food, drinks etc to the family. When the date for *Efundula* arrived, a special ceremony known as *Omafikameno* was held before parents (mainly the mothers) took their daughters to the *Namunganga's* house and stayed with them until the first part of *Efundula* was completed. Their main responsibilities involved taking care of their children and providing them with food and advice, particularly on how they were expected to behave as brides.

Every mother therefore, brought enough food to sustain her throughout the *Efundula* and every mother stored food for her daughter separately. Each *Efundula* ceremony was planned to last for a period of four days. Each day was associated with different events and named according to events taking place on that date. The first day at the beginning of *Efundula* was called 'Ondjugo'. On this day, young girls for *Efundula* were assembled in the *Namunganga's* house, where instructions on what to be expected of them during *Efundula* were given. Instructions were given at night inside the *Namunganga's* sleeping room (*Ondjugo*), hence the name *Ondjugo*. The second day of *Efundula* was called *Okambandjona*. This was when all the girls assembled outside the *Namunganga* house (*Koluvanda*) to learn how to sing and dance, because on the date of the main event (*Efundula*), the best dancer was chosen as a winner out of the overall dancers who were all brides (*Aafuko*). It is believed that prizes were given on this day, but it remains unclear so far what form these prizes took.

Brides were compelled to cover their faces with traditional cloth called *Eenghanda*

The third day of *Efundula* was called *Ombandjele/Eemboko*. This was when engaged men, both young and old came to the *Namunganga's* house with presents and good wishes for their wives to be. It is remembered that blankets and clothes were given as gifts in the period from early 1930s.



It is however, not clear what men gave as gifts before these commodities were available. The gifts were handed out to respective brides by prospective husbands on the afternoon of the *Eemboko* day. In the evening of that same day the brides and their prospective husbands would then spend all night dancing at the *Namunganga's Oluvanda*. This dancing is the actual wedding ceremony.

It was also during the dancing ritual that men proposed the unengaged brides for marriage. Every engaged bride wore a strip of sinew or palm leaf on her wrist. Proposing a bride was mainly done by tying the sinew or palm leaf around the bride's wrist. When the bride did not like the man who proposed he she would cut off the sinew or palm leaf, meaning that she declined the offer.

The fourth day was called *Omuubalo/Etoololoikuti*. On that day, every mother was supposed to go back home. But they were to leave their daughters behind. Before mothers departed for their respective homes, a special occasion called *Efundo* took place. This is when every *Omufuko* (bride) changed from her wedding attires into new dresses. When the girls are in that stage they were called *Oibxanangolo*.



Oshibanangolo – the bride in her final stage of wedding

Every bride was to have her body smeared with white ash powder (*Omute*). This made their complexion appear white and scary to those who looked at them. Their hair was also plaited in a different style called *Uunyatela* (actually very similar to today's 'Rasta' style). At the end of *Efundula* mothers, relatives and friends of the brides left the brides with the *Namunganga*. This marked a period of boredom and suffering for the girls as they were left without food (the reason for this is unclear). This condition forced them to hunt for food especially at night. During the day they could feed on local fruits such as *Oonyandi*, *Oombu*, *Oombeke*, *Oonkwiyu*, etc. Local nuts such as *Oondago* and *Oongebu* were also eaten.

The brides could travel for many kilometres and enter any house belonging to one of the girl's fiancés and demand food. It was a custom that the brides could not be refused any type of food that they demanded. They were also permitted to become 'aggressive' and intentionally beat up any man. Customary law prohibited retaliation against aggressive *Aafuko*. At the end of this exercise, they returned to the *Namungangas* house and their mothers were called to come and take their daughters home. Once home every young woman became free to get her husband and start a family. But before any man could take a young woman in marriage, he was required to produce five traditional hoes and an ox for the family of her bride. Any man, who could not afford this, was only permitted to marry a woman that had already given birth. Very few young women were able to get married to single men. Most married men already had several wives and many children. In most cases these men were as old as their own fathers, because most of them could afford a younger bride. In marriage woman were ranked and privileged by the husband in terms of seniority in the marriage. Senior wives supervised junior wives in the homestead.

6. GALLERY OF THOSE INTERVIEWED



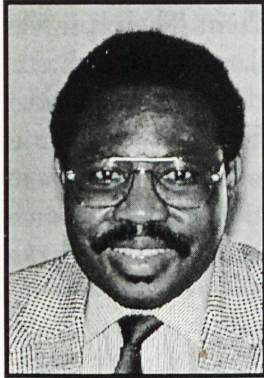
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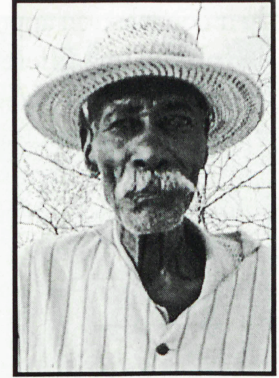
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Mathew Kapolo



Rebecca Kalola



Simeon Hedimbi



Malakia Iitula



The late kuku
Ndekume Mwaetako



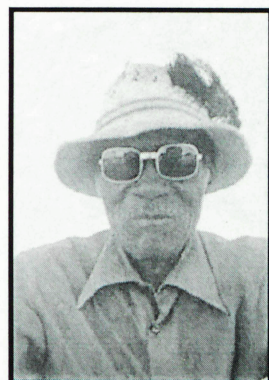
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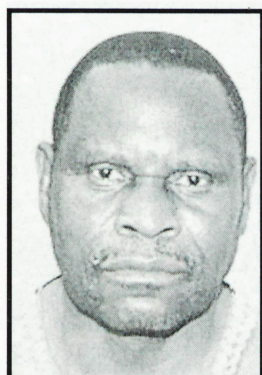
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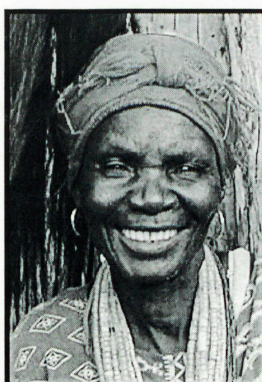
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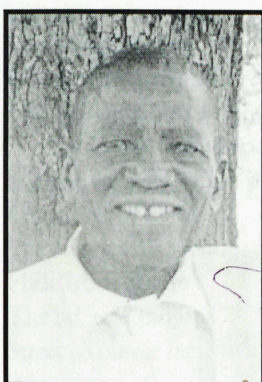
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Martha Iipingge



Julia Shikesho



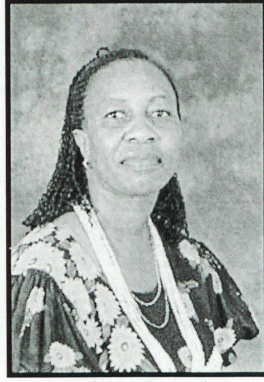
Lucas Shinedima



Julius Nghtewa



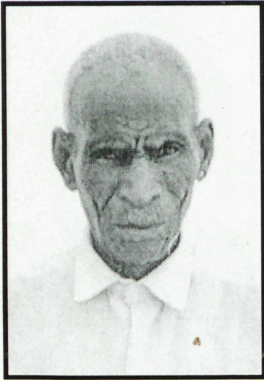
Selma Penondjambi
Daniel



Sabina David



Katrina Tshikongo



Thomas Kalumbu



Wilika Kadhila



Lydia Nakapipi



Festus Shiikwa Bandi

7. GLOSSARY

nd – Oshindonga;

kw – Oshikwanyama;

dhi – Oshikwaluudhi;

sing – singular;

pl – plural

WORD

TRANSLATION

A

Aafuko (nd; pl)

Brides

Aakwaanga (nd; pl)

Ironsmiths

Aakwampungu (nd; pl)

Ancestors

Aakwanezimo (nd; pl)

Relatives from the mother \ father's family

Aanahambo (nd; pl)

Cattle herders

Alundungu (name)

Men's hats

E

Edhilo (nd; sing)

A material added to Olukula to improve the colours

Eeheke (kw; pl)

Mahangu grains left over after turning most of it into flour, should not be consumed but for using the next time you will be making flour

Eelo enene nd; sing)

Main entrance

Eenghako (kw; pl)

Morsels of oshifima

Eenghanda (kw; sing)

Traditional cloth used to cover bride's faces

Eengondo (kw; sing)

Heavy objects made from copper and worn around women ankles

Eengundja (kw; pl)

Wealthy people

Eenhumbe (kw; pl)

Leather clothing worn by boys

Efundo (kw; sing)

Special occasion during Efundula

Efundula (kw; sing)

Traditional Wedding Ceremony

Egonga (nd; sing)

Spear

Egumbo (nd; sing)

Homestead, house

Ehwo (all dialects; sing)

When many people have been invited to help with the threshing of Mahangu

Ekaka (nd; sing)

Local spinach, boiled and dried

Ekango (all dialects; sing)

Salt pan near Etosha, a place where salt is obtained

Ekipa (all dialects; sing)

Carved ivory tusks

Ekopa (kw; sing)

Luxuries men's apron

Ekopeka (all dialects; sing)

Hide from giraffe

Ekumbo (all dialects; sing)

The lid for Ondjupa

Ekupa (all dialects; sing)

Spear to pierce fish with

Ekuva (kw; sing)

Axe

Elende (kw; sing)

Traditional hair style

WORD

TRANSLATION

E

Elimba (kwa; sing)	Place where finished food and kitchen utensils are stored; Storage room; pantry
Eloya (nd; pl)	Clay soil
Elugo (nd; sing)	The Kitchen
Embundju (nd; sing)	A large clay pot of traditional brew
Enenge (nd; pl)	A local grass used as raw material for making hats
Epaha (nd; sing)	Giving birth to twins
Epanda (all dialects; sing)	Wooden shovel with metal end for digging
Epasha (kw; sing)	Giving birth to twins
Epushu (dhi; sing)	Small apron of soft calf skin
Epya (all dialects; sing)	Mahangu field
Eshongi (dhi; sing)	Upright leather spikes worn by boys.
Etambo (all dialects; sing)	Granaries compound
Etemo (all dialects; sing)	Hoe
Eteta (kw; sing)	Cattle stomach used for aprons worn by women
Etoolo loikuti (kw; sing)	The fourth day of Efundula
Evanda (kw; sing)	Local spinach, boiled and dried
Evaya (kw; sing)	A coward
Ewale (nd; sing)	A place in Southern Angola where the Owambos used to go to fetch rain, a northern direction
Eyangwa (kw; pl)	A local grass used as raw material for making hats
Eyayi (kw; sing)	Leather handbag containing nappies

I

Iigandhi (dhi; pl)	The Granaries
Iigwanga (nd; pl)	Herbs for treating illnesses
Iikangwa (nd; pl)	Damaged clay pots
Iimona (nd; pl)	Ornaments
Iipako (dhi; pl)	Ornaments
Iipuna (nd; pl)	Wealthy people
Iizimba (nd; pl)	Bitterbush, <i>Pechuel-loeschea leubnitziae</i>

K

Kalunga ka Nangombe (all dialects; phrase)	God of the Oshiwambo speaking people
Koluvanda (kw; sing)	Outside Namunganga's house

M

Memetotende (kw; sing)	Third wife
Munyalombe (kw; sing)	Senior wife/First wife
Mweehaka (kw; sing)	Second wife

WORD

TRANSLATION

N

Nambwa (name)	Men's apron for the <u>poor</u>
Namunganga (kw; sing)	A person who conduct Efundula
Namunganga (name)	Witch doctor

O

Odhimbo (nd; sing)	Knobkerrie
Odikwa (kw; sing)	Baby carrier
Odjove (kw; sing)	Marula oil, <i>Scelerycarya birrea</i>
Ohambo yekalukilo (kw, phrase)	Another section of the cattle kraal
Ohango yiitsali (nd; sing)	Traditional wedding ceremony
Ohungi (all dialects; sing)	Story telling
Oifonono (kw; pl)	Ceremonial sticks to a newly married man to approve his marriage.
Oihanangolo (kw; pl)	Brides after the wedding
Oikayata (all dialects; pl)	Simple leather sandals
Oilanda (kw; pl)	Ornaments
Oimbodi (kw, pl)	Herbs for treating illnesses
Oitoo (kw; pl)	Clay pots for storing food items, water, omalodu, etc.
Oivanda (kw; pl)	Termite hills
Okafifilanghundu (kw; sing)	Basket for Omahangu bran
Okakungungu (all dialects; sing)	When many people have been invited to helping with the threshing of Mahangu
Okambandjona (kw; sing)	The second day of Efundula
Okambanza koposheelo (nd; phrase)	Doormat made of animal skin
Okantu (nd; sing)	Second entrance safety or emergency exit
Okatale (all dialects; sing)	Copper from Southern Angola, Tsumeb or Otavi used to produce tools like spears, hoes, axe, knives, bracelets, etc.
Okudhiga omundilo (nd; phrase)	A traditional method of lighting a fire
Okudhitikila (dhi; verb)	The art of preventing misfortunes.
Okufulula (kw; verb)	The second processing of Mahangu; making flour
Okugwila (nd; verb)	Sleeping with fiancé prospective wife without having sex.
Okuhompa (nd; verb)	The first processing of Mahangu' removing bran
Okuhutula (kw; verb)	The first processing of Mahangu' removing bran
Okupita elufu (kw; phrase)	A situation whereby the stomach enlarges after giving birth
Okusinda egumbo (nd; phrase)	The first mapping of the homestead
Okutenda oongongo (nd; phrase)	The making of marula nuts, <i>Scelerycarya birrea</i>
Okuti (nd; sing)	Thick forest
Olukambo (all dialects; sing)	Pose of the homestead that kept the poles firmly together and steady
Oluko (all dialects; sing)	Cooking stick, spatula
Olukula (all dialects; sing)	Red ochre from roots of Omuuva tree <i>Pterocarpus angolensis</i> .
Olukwe (nd; sing)	Container for lotion
Olwiyo luufila (kw; sing)	The clay pot where mahangu flour is kept

Word

Translation

O

Omafikameno (kw; pl)	Special ceremony during Efundula
Omafiya (kw; pl)	Old clay pots used as pot stands during cooking
Omagadhi goongongo (nd; pl)	Marula oil, <i>Scelerycarya birrea</i>
Omagungu	Mopane worms, caterpillars of <i>Imbrasia belina</i>
Omaholo (all dialects; pl)	Traditional beer cups or milking buckets
Omaholo (all dialects; pl)	Milking containers or buckets
Omalilo (all dialects; pl)	Basket dishes
Omalodu (kw; pl)	Sorghum brew
Omaluko (all dialects; pl)	Cooking sticks, spatula
Omashongi (dhi; pl)	Upright leather spikes worn by boys.
Omasiga (nd; pl)	Old clay pots used as pot stands during cooking
Omatiti (all dialects; pl)	Wooden or clay dishes
Omaawe (all dialects; pl)	Precious large beads
Omaxuku (kw; pl)	Marula nuts, <i>Sclerocarya birrea</i>
Omba (all dialects; sing)	Large white oyster shell
Ombandjyakula (nd, kw; sing)	The third day of Efundula
Ombanza (nd; sing)	Mattress made of animal skin
Ombede (all dialects; sing)	Leather cloth worn by cattle herders
Omboga (nd; sing)	Local spinach or specifically <i>Cleome gynandra</i>
Omethi (nd; sing)	Leather handbag containing nappies
Omhindo (kw; sing)	Traditional ladle for drinks
Omhumba (kw; sing)	A part of an animal stomach
Omilunga (all dialects; pl)	Trees, makalani palms, <i>Hyphaene petersiana</i>
Omitala doukadona (kw; phrase)	Girl's sleeping quarters
Omitala dovamati (kw; phrase)	Boy's sleeping quarters
Omive (kw; pl)	Trees, bird plums, <i>Berberia discolor</i>
Omiye (nd; pl)	Trees, bird plums, <i>Berberia discolor</i>
Ompamba (nd; sing)	Traditional ladle for drinks
Omufilu (all dialects; sing)	Tree, unidentified
Omufitu (kw; sing)	Thick forest
Omufukiki (nd; sing)	A person who conduct Efundula
Omufuko (nd; sing)	Bride
Omuhamu (all dialects; sing)	Tree, <i>Terminalia pruinoides</i>
Omuhi (nd; sing)	Long pestle used for pounding Mahangu into flour
Omuhihikilo (nd; sing)	A wooden rack holding the milk container
Omuukaga (Plain Omahangu porridge
Omuukanga (nd; sing)	Tree, unidentified
Omuukatalume (nd; sing)	A coward
Omuukonda (all dialects; sing)	Double edged knife
Omuukuyu (nd; sing)	Fig tree (Ficus)
Omuumbolongonga (nd; sing)	Tree, unidentified
Omunaluko (all dialects; sing)	Tree, red bush willow, <i>Combretum apiculatum</i>
Omundilo wepata (kw; phrase)	Family fire
Omungome (kw; sing)	Mahangu cake
Omupepo (all dialects; sing)	Bellow for ironsmiths
Omuupundi (all dialects; sing)	Tree, <i>Grewia deserticola</i>

Word

Translation

O

Omupungulula (dhi; sing)	An object worn as a charm
Omushe (all dialects; sing)	Bush, <i>Grewia</i> species
Omushi (kw; sing)	Long pestle used for pounding Mahangu into flour
Omushokolo (nd; sing)	Sorghum
Omusindi (nd; sing)	The person who maps out the homestead
Omutala (all dialects; sing)	Head of homestead's bedroom
Omuuhalo (nd; sing)	The fourth day of Efundula
Omwaami (all dialects; sing)	Tree, unidentified
Omwaanga (nd; pl)	Strands of ostrich eggshells
Omwandi (kw; sing)	A tree, African ebony, <i>Diospyros mespiliformis</i>
Omweeguli gwooundunda (nd; sing)	A member of a clan who is designated to lead people into inheritable properties in the Ondjugo and other storage rooms after the death of one of the parents.
Omwiya gondjupa (nd; phrase)	Straps of leather
Omwiya gopela/Gwomwali (dhi; phrase)	Large animal skin belt to normalises the belly size after birth
Ondhikwa (nd; sing)	Baby carrier
Ondhikwa yokoshiti (nd; phrase)	Baby carrier for special occasions
Ondiwi (nd; sing)	Necklace made of oyster shells
Ondjendje (dhi; pl)	Precious small beads
Ondjendje yoshilongo (dhi; phrase)	The royal / sacred beads
Ondjeva kw; pl)	Strands of ostrich eggshells worn on girls' waist
Ondjugo (nd; sing)	Senior wife's sleeping room, main bedroom in the homestead
Ondjupa (nd; sing)	A large dried gourd where milk is kept and is used for making butter
Ondunda yuupungulilo (nd; sing)	Place where finished food and kitchen utensils are stored; Storage room; pantry
Ongalo	Basket for sifting Omahangu
Ongalo (all dialects; sing)	Flour sheave or sewing basket
Ongandjo (all dialects; sing)	Fence (palisade) of the homestead
Onghuta (kw; sing)	Meals eaten by men before an important journey to any place
Onguta (nd; sing)	Meals eaten by men before an important journey to any place
Onguwo (kw; sing)	Leather skirt
Onimeendjugo (dhi; sing)	Place where finished food and kitchen utensils are stored; Storage room; pantry
Onkelo (nd; sing)	The last-born in the family
Onkundu (nd; pl)	Omahangu bran
Onyoka (kw; sing)	Necklace made of oyster shells
Oofukwa (nd; pl)	Groundnuts, <i>Vigna subterranea</i>
Oombeke	Fruits of sour plum, <i>Ximenia</i> sp.
Oombeke (nd; pl)	Sour plum fruits from <i>Ximenia</i> sp.
Oombiga (nd; pl)	Clay pots
Oombu	Fruits

Word

Translation

O	
Oondago (all dialects; pl)	<i>Isometes sp.</i>
Oondjeke (nd; pl)	Mahangu grains left over after turning most of it into flour, should not be consumed but for using the next time you will be making flour
Oondunga (nd; pl)	Dried palm tree fruits
Oongehu (all dialects; pl)	Special grass
Oonghaku dayongolwa (nd; phrase)	Shoes for wealthy people
Oongondo (nd; sing)	Heavy objects made from copper and worn around women ankles
Oonkutuwa (nd; pl)	Leather clothing worn by married men
Oonkwiyu (all dialects; pl)	Fig, <i>Ficus sp.</i>
Oonyandi	A tree, African ebony, <i>Diospyros mespiliformis</i>
Oshaanda (nd; sing)	Termite hills
Oshalwa (nd; sing)	Birthing hut
Oshanas (all dialects; pl)	Flood plains
Oshidhano shoongombe (nd; phrase)	Cattle show and competition
Oshidhiga (nd; pl)	Traditional fire making tools
Oshifima (kw; sing)	Omahangu porridge
Oshigunda (nd; sing)	Cattle kraal
Oshihanangolo (kw; sing)	Bride after the wedding
Oshihuhwilo (kw; sing)	Urinary
Oshihuwa (kw; sing)	Unhealthy condition in a person believed to have been inflicted to the person by family members
Oshikalungu (nd; sing)	The clay pot where mahangu flour is kept
Oshikandela (kw; sing)	Mahangu flour and milk porridge
Oshikundu (kw; pl)	Traditional Mahangu drink
Oshikwiila (nd; sing)	Mahangu cake
Oshimbale shomondjugo (nd; phrase)	Basket for precious goods
Oshimbi (all dialects; sing)	A traditional razor blade
Oshimbuinda (nd; sing)	Mahangu flour and milk porridge
Oshimhako (dhi; sing)	Traditional brewery sieve
Oshimpako (nd; sing)	Traditional brewery sieve
Oshini (all dialects; sing)	The Pounding area
Oshinyanga (nd; sing)	Meeting place
Oshinyanga shamutyakemo (nd; phrase)	A meeting place where the owner of the house holds meetings with selected guests, friends and important people
Oshipani (all dialects; sing)	Sharp wooden fork for digging
Oshipe (all dialects; sing)	Celebration of the new harvest
Oshisitameno (nd; sing)	Urinary
Oshitemaunda (kw; sing)	Section of the cattle kraal
Oshitsilo (nd; sing)	Basket for carrying Omahangu to the pounding area
Oshitunda (all dialects; sing)	A piece of land to be settled
Oshitwilo (kw; sing)	Basket for carrying Omahangu to the pounding area
Oshiwato (all dialects; sing)	When the mother dies at child birth

Word

Translation

O

Oshongo (all dialects; pl)
Oshoto (nd; sing)
Oshoto shiita (nd; phrase)
Oxupa (kw; sing)

Fishing traps
Meeting place
The parlour where warriors going to war were served food
A large dried gourd where milk is kept and it used
for making butter

U

Uunyatela (nd; pl)
Uuputu (nd; pl)
Uusila (nd; pl)
Uutati (nd; sing)
Uutota (nd; sing)

Special hair style during Efundula
Copper beads
Omahangu meal
Bow
Fishing expedition at night