

**The Reign of Homba Nyangana over the Vagciriku, Relations with Neighbouring Kingdoms, Politics and Challenges to his Leadership: An Era of Hostility and Violence, 1874-1924.**

**By**

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Magister Artium (History), in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Namibia.**

## **DEDICATIONS**

This work is humbly dedicated to the Right Reverend Father August Bierfert (OMI), the founding Father of Nyangana Roman Catholic Mission and Homba Sebastian Kamwanga of the Vagciriku who ruled as from 1985 until January 1999. During their lifetime, the two figures made it their concern that the future generations of the Vagciriku, such as myself, will be able to read some histories relating to the past interactions and wandering of their ancestors [Vagciriku].

## DECLARATIONS

I, Romanus Shampapi Shiremo, declare hereby that *The Reign of Hompa Nyangana over the Vagciriku and Relations with Neighbouring Kingdoms, Politics and Challenges to his Leadership: An Era of Hostility and Violence, 1874-1924*, is a true reflection of my own research, and that this work, or part thereof has not been submitted for a degree in any other institution of higher education.

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May the spirit of UBUNTU continue!

### List of uncommon words.

<b>BaTawana</b> Botswana	A name of a Tswana community in Ngamiland,
<b>Hambukushu</b>	A name of a community in north eastern Namibia, south-eastern Angola and Botswana
<b>Induna</b> Aluyi	A term for a chief's councilor/Lieutenant among the and Hambukushu. (Manduna is plural)
<b>Vagciriku</b>	A name of a community in north eastern Namibia, south eastern Angola and Botswana.
<b>Vakwangali</b>	A name of a community in north eastern Namibia and south eastern Angola
<b>Vambunza</b>	A name of a community in north eastern Namibia and south eastern Angola
<b>Vashambyu</b>	A name of a community in north eastern Namibia and south eastern Angola
<b>Hompa</b>	A Rumanyo and Rukwangali term for King
<b>Kgosi</b>	A Setswana term for King
<b>Fumu</b>	A Thimbukushu term for King
<b>Mwene</b>	A Chinyemba term for King

### Acronyms

<b>BNARS</b>	Botswana National Archives and Record Services
<b>BSACo</b>	British South Africa Company
<b>BWCCo</b>	British Westland Chartered Company
<b>HC</b>	High Commissioner
<b>GSWA</b>	German South West Africa
<b>NAN</b>	National Archives of Namibia
<b>NBC</b>	Namibian Broadcasting Corporations
<b>OMI</b>	Oblate Mary Immaculate
<b>RC</b>	Resident Commissioner

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

The focus of this study is the reign of Hompa Nyangana over the Vagciriku. Hompa Nyangana became the reigning king of the Vagciriku around 1874. The Vagciriku is a community that resides in northeastern part of Namibia and southeastern part of Angola. A significant part of the population of the Vagciriku resides in Botswana. The Vagciriku is a Bantu grouping that belongs to the so-called Kavango ethnic group, which consists of four other communities, namely the Hambukushu, Vashambyu, Vambunza and the Vakwangali. For centuries up to the present, the Vagciriku have inhabited an area on both sides of the Kavango River. From the reign of Hompa Shampapi (1925-1944) who succeeded Hompa

Nyangana, the Portuguese installed a Mugciriku king on its own 'side' of the Kavango River in the 1930s. Prior to the 1930s, one Vagciriku king ruled both sides of the Kavango River. Thus, in his report of 1918, Major Frank Brownlee had the following to say; *it appears that portion of Jangana's (Nyangana) people live in Angola and portion in the Protectorate and that the Chief has been in the habit with Portuguese concurrence of moving to and fro from one territory to the other.*<sup>1</sup>

This study investigates some aspects of Vagciriku history, focusing more on the events that took place during the reign of Hompa Nyangana. There are three main issues dealt within the study; Firstly, by presenting the various theories of clan elders, the thesis seeks to explain the ethnogenesis of the Vagciriku community. Looking at early migration history of the Vagciriku from the perspectives of the various clans, the thesis aims to explain how the Vagciriku had come to perceive themselves as one community. Thus, chapter two mainly deals with the complex question about the origins of the Vagciriku. It is shown in the chapter that the Vagciriku is a community composed of the various matrilineal clans, whose history is narrated by its elders. Hence, one can see in chapter two that instead of presenting Mashi as the only place of origin for the entire Vagciriku community, places such as Kaghonda and Tupundu are also mentioned as other places where the Vagciriku has originated.

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<sup>1</sup> NAN. File no: ADM 30. A report dated (24-04-1918) titled Patrol to Kuring Kuru by Major Frank Brownlee to Lieutenant Cocky Hahn.

Secondly, the thesis explores the political consolidation of the Vagciriku community under the leadership of Hompa Nyangana. Thus, in chapters three and four, the thesis explores issues such as the ascendancy of Hompa Nyangana to the Vagciriku throne and how he consolidated his powers to eventually become an autocratic and undisputed Vagciriku leader. In chapter four, the relations of the Vagciriku kingdom to their neighbours during the reign of Hompa Nyangana is explored. Relying on oral and some written sources, the chapter attempts to show the role played by Hompa Nyangana in contributing to conflicts or in attempts to resolve them.

Thirdly, chapter five and six looks at the transformation of the Vagciriku polity during the early informal and formal colonial period. This chapter seeks to show how the European hunters and traders intruded into the Vagciriku kingdom and how their activities infringed on Hompa Nyangana's powers. The same chapter shows how the Vagciriku community responded to some activities of European hunters and traders in the kingdom. Thus, the chapter explores some incidents involving violent encounters between the Vagciriku and the European hunters/traders on orders of Hompa Nyangana and the effects of these violent encounters on the Vagciriku community. Finally, the sixth chapter deals with the arrival of missionaries. It focused on how Hompa Nyangana through his literate son, Klemens Mbambo, strategically invited the missionaries in his kingdom to avoid foreign encroachments, attacks and ostracism from the Portuguese and some neighbouring kingdoms, including the BaTawana who treated him as a

vassal. Furthermore, the chapter touches on the mysterious deaths of Klemens Mbambo in 1912 and heir-apparent to the Vagciriku throne, Tjimi in 1919. The chapter concludes by briefly showing how Hompa Nyangana's legacy manifests itself in the politics of the Vagciriku Royal Cemetery.

### **The Significance of the Study.**

The study is significant in many ways. In general, the history of the people in northeastern Namibia has not been part of the public history of Namibia.<sup>2</sup> For various reasons, this has been due to the scant attention given to the area by academic scholars in the field of history. Thus, the history of the people from the Kavango Region, which includes that of the Vagciriku, has become part of those 'forgotten histories' in Namibia.<sup>3</sup> However, it has to be recognised that Andreas Eckl (2004) successfully completed a doctoral study on Kavango history entitled *Herrschaft, Macht und Einfluß: Koloniale Interaktionen am Kavango (Nord-Namibia) von 1891 bis 1921*. His work is the first doctoral study to be completed

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<sup>2</sup> See a call for conference papers/articles entitled *Public History-Forgotten History* by the University of Namibia's History Department, in **The Namibian**, Friday edition of the 27<sup>th</sup> August 1999 and 4<sup>th</sup> August 2000.

<sup>3</sup> See a letter entitled *Kavango People Denied Their History* by Kletus Muhena Likuwa in **The Namibian**, Friday edition, 11<sup>th</sup> August 2000.

purely on Kavango history as all others before his had been in fields other than history, even though some of them contain historical information. This author strongly believes that when and if Eckl's dissertation is translated into English, it will open up Kavango history to a wider academic community. This study therefore brings to the fore a history that is new into the public history in Namibia, but also for Botswana and Angola. It is hoped that the study will contribute to the expansion of the current academic knowledge in the field of history in Namibia, in the Kavango Region in particular and in southern Africa in general.

### **Literature Review.**

This study largely drew from oral traditions and histories. This was because there are not adequate primary and secondary written sources on the history of the Vagciriku. The Kavango Region and its peoples were among the last of the various Namibian communities to accept missionaries. The first missionaries to be allowed to operate in the area were the Oblates Mary Immaculate (OMI) of the Roman Catholic Church. This happened during the reign of Hompa Nyangana of the Vagciriku. Hompa Nyangana became the first Kavango ruler to allow missionaries to build a chapel and a school for his people. Prior to May 1910, all attempts by missionaries to start evangelizing activities in the present Kavango Region were successfully resisted by the local leaders. The point is that since modern schooling, in which reading and writing was introduced to the Gciriku Kingdom by the Roman Catholic missionaries only began in 1910, no primary

written sources by local people can be found regarding the early years of the Vagciriku.

The son of Hompa Nyangana, Klemens Mbambo who received some education while in the BaTawana captivity in Ngamiland, Botswana as from March/ April 1894, died in February 1912, only about two years after the Catholic missionaries settled in the area. Mbambo's honorary name was ShaKurara. According to Mate Susana (Interview: 2008) Hompa Nyangana used to call his son Mbambo only by this name. It symbolized respect as in the Vagciriku that a mature person would be called by the name of his/her first child or by the name of the first child of his/her namesake and not by his own first name.

Until the 1930s, there was not a single Rugciriku speaker who could effectively be described as literate or educated. When compared to the other communities in Namibia during the same period covered by this study, no primary documents written by the Vagciriku are available. The only written accounts of the early times that are available are those by white hunters, explorers, traders, Boer trekkers, military officials and later the missionaries. It is universally recognised that most of these writings contained racial stereotypes of the local populations. However, these writings prove crucial in a study such as this one where no other primary written documents are available. It must be pointed out that though there are some primary written sources by these Europeans, none of their writings specifically referred to the Vagciriku for the period before Hompa Nyangana's

reign. The writings, which became public knowledge are those written during Hompa Nyangana's reign. This is truer for the periods 1870s, 1880s, 1890s, and the first two decades of the twentieth century. Such writing was in English, Portuguese, German and Dutch.

However, since the advent of the Catholic missionaries in the Vagciriku area in 1910, some indigenous teachers had written histories of the Vagciriku. For example, the previous Hompa of the Vagciriku, Sebastian Kamwanga (1985-1999) who qualified as a teacher from Döbra Teacher Training School in 1951<sup>4</sup> wrote and published a book on Vagciriku history. His book co-authored with Franz Josef Haushiku entitled *Tu Vamanyo kushakare* is one of the most important historical works on the Vagciriku. Kamwanga has taken down oral accounts of the Vagciriku royalty in the 1960s and managed to publish them in 1996. It is in this book, entitled *Tu Vamanyo kushakare* that we learn about the power struggles amongst the Vagciriku royalty in the past, including that between Hompa Nyangana and Princess Kunyima in the 1870s. Despite the book's bias, especially regarding royalty, it provides a tremendous amount of information regarding the past of the Vagciriku. It also helps in understanding the relations of the Gciriku kingdom with its neighbours during the reign of Hompa Nyangana.

Another local scholar is Karl Peter Shiyaka-Mberema who also qualified as a teacher at Döbra Teacher Training School in 1956. As can be seen from his

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<sup>4</sup> Sebastian Kamwanga interviewed by Peter Nanyemba of NBC Rukavango Radio Service in a programme Uhoro waNkumbi. (Date of interview:Unknown)

various publications in the local language, Rumanyo, Mberema is one of those local scholars who made important contributions to the Vagciriku historiography. In the view of the present author, Shiyaka-Mberema is an unrivalled expert in the history of the Vagciriku. For many years from 1957 when he served as a teacher and a principal at Nyangana Senior Primary School and later as an inspector of schools in the Kavango Region, he has collected a wealth of knowledge regarding the Vagciriku and for the rest of the Kavango communities. Until today in his retirement, he continues to play a crucial role in contributing to the various publications regarding the Vagciriku and the Kavango communities in general. This study had benefited from his publications namely: *Rugciriku Orthography* (1988), *Ngandu I* (1991), *Matongorangombe* (1996), *Mbeli Dimutango daRugciriku* (1992) and *Shitungarongo* (1995). Though most of this body of literature was aimed for learners, they contain very important historical information regarding the Vagciriku. This includes migration history of the Vagciriku, praise songs about Vagciriku kings, and other important events, including those on Hompa Nyangana.

It is important to note that on the history of the origins of the Vagciriku, Kamwanga and Shiyaka-Mberema's publications are not necessarily primary written sources. However, the oral sources the two eminent local scholars, Kamwanga and Shiyaka-Mberema used to write their books were both of a primary and secondary nature. For example, Princess Shiromba shaMakanga ( also known as Princess Mavandje), who was the main source for Hompa

Kamwanga's co-authored book, often personally experienced events that took place during the reign of Hompa Nyangana. At her death in 1987, she was estimated to be hundred years old. This means she was born around 1887 and thus, one can estimate that by 1894 when the Vagciriku-Lishora Massacre took place, she was a minor of about six to seven years old. Her fourth child, Prince George Mukoya whose interview is also a main source for this study, is estimated to have been born around 1910. Thus, it is reasonable to regard the reliability and validity of the books that tapped into Princess Shiromba's [*alias Mavandje*] oral historical knowledge as credible.

Reputable scholars and academics from other countries had also written books, papers and articles regarding the Vagciriku, in particular, and the Kavango Region in general. Thus, their various publications were found crucial for this study and evidently for future works regarding the Vagciriku history. For example, Professors Wilhelm Möhlig and Axel Fleisch's (2002) book entitled the *Kavango people in the past* has filled the big gap that existed in Kavango's historiography for many years. Before the publication of this book, the Kavango historiography was disjointed and fragmented as it was difficult to find a book that detailed the history of the entire Kavango communities. The strength of the book is that it was written in the voices of the elders who narrated the stories, thus eliminating the element of distortion and misinterpretation by the authors. The book has now made it possible to compare the various oral histories of the Kavango communities and thus helping to authenticate some historical assertions

made by some informants in the various Kavango communities. Another strong quality of the book is that it is written in English and has footnotes. The book introduces the Kavango history to a wider readership.

However, for chapter five and six some of the written sources consulted were of a primary nature as hunters, traders and missionaries who encountered Hompa Nyangana wrote them. For example, *The Narrative and Journal of Gerald McKiernan in South West Africa, 1874-1879*, published in 1954 and edited by P. Serton, is one of them. It is in this book that we learn about the shooting of an American trader, Chas Thomas in 1878 by the Vagciriku led by Hompa Nyangana. Gerald McKiernan himself was a member of the hunting party that Chas Thomas led to the Kavango River where the Vagciriku warriors killed Thomas. Despite the typical Euro-centric nature of McKiernan's narrative, the book was of great value to this study as it made it possible to verify this incident with other sources written by other writers. Two years after the Thomas shooting incident, William Worthington Jordan (1880) wrote *The Journal of the Trekboers* and he also referred to the Thomas shooting incident in more or less the same manner. Writers such as Postma (1897) who also wrote on the Trekboers' experiences, referred to the incident, helping to authenticate the story. In his book entitled *The Bushman Myth*, Robert Gordon (1992:33-55) has also thrown much light on the activities of the European hunters in Kavango area, which included interaction with the Vagciriku.

The book by Professor Thomas Tlou (1985) from Botswana, entitled *A History of Ngamiland-1750 to 1906: The formation of an African State* had greatly contributed to the emergence of new perspectives on Vagciriku history. For many years before the discovery of the book by scholars in Namibia, oral history had been the sole source regarding the Vagciriku-Lishora Massacre of 1894. However, the book by Tlou re-directed scholars on the subject [massacre] to look in Botswana's National Archives in the hope of finding primary written sources. It has to be noted that this exercise has proved fruitful because several primary documents regarding the massacre have been found there. Thus, knowledge about the Vagciriku-Lishora Massacre that took place in 1894 during the reign of Hompa Nyangana is available not only from oral, but also in documentary sources. With these newly found sources, it has been incontrovertibly shown that the Vagciriku-Lishora Massacre took place in 1894 not in 1893 as Tlou (1985:127) wrote in his book. Owing to the influence of Tlou's book, the present author entitled his 2002 undergraduate mini-thesis, *The Lishora Massacre of 1893 and its effects on the Vagciriku community*. Many other scholars who in the past referred to the Vagciriku-Lishora Massacre also had misgivings about the date/year it took place.

Earlier writers such as Professor Siegfried Passarge (1905) and Major Hill Gibbons (1904) had also referred to the Vagciriku. Siegfried Passarge's collection of articles from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries republished in an English version entitled *The Kalahari Ethnographies (1896-1898) of Siegfried*

*Passarge* by Edwin Wilmsen (1997) contains important comments about the Vagciriku's relations with the BaTawana. It is in Major Hill Gibbons' (1904) book entitled, *Africa: From the South to North through Marotseland* in which it was explicitly stated that Kgosi Sekgoma of the BaTawana was encouraged by whites at Ngamiland to massacre the Vagciriku in 1894. August Hammar and Aurel Schulz (1897) in their book entitled *The New Africa: A Journey up to the Chobe and down the Okavanga Rivers, a Record of Exploration and Sport*, had also made important references to the Vagciriku, especially regarding their 'warlike' nature. The two authors visited the Hambukushu territory in 1884 with the intention of travelling further north-west through Vagciriku territory. Fumu Ndara I of the Hambukushu and some Tswana emissaries advised them not to enter the Gciriku territory, as they were likely to be attacked by the Vagciriku who by then had vowed not to allow any white man in their country. These three books, especially the ones by Passarge and Gibbons, aroused interest to investigate further assertions regarding the Vagciriku-Lishora Massacre of 1894. The books contain enlightening information about events that took place at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in areas around Ngamiland and eastern Kavango. Passarge and Gibbons in their different publications at different times and locations had for example, hinted at the fact that the Vagciriku-Lishora Massacre of 1894 had been caused by white people at Ngamiland. They reasoned that Kgosi Sekgoma was led on by whites in Ngamiland who sought revenge for the 'murder' of a European trader 'Wiese' or 'Weisel' by Hompa Nyangana of the Vagciriku. Until the discovery of the primary sources in the Botswana Archives, which seem to

support this particular version, the assertion by Passarge and Gibbons appeared controversial, as they did not provide evidence to back up their claims.

For chapter six of this study, Father August Bierfert's two publications have been relied upon. These are; *Die Diriku* (1913) and *25 Jahre bei den Wadiriku am Okavango* (1938). Together with Bishop Josef Gotthardt, Father Bierfert was a founding father of the Nyangana Roman Catholic Mission Station during the reign of Hompa Nyangana in May 1910. Thus, his account helped to gain first-hand information regarding the encounters between the missionaries and Hompa Nyangana and other important persons within the Vagciriku royalty. For example, it is in Father Bierfert's article *Die Diriku* that the confusion regarding the year of the Vagciriku's relocation to the southern bank of the Kavango River is clarified. Some observers had repeatedly argued that the Vagciriku only crossed the river to settle on the southern bank after the Catholic Missionaries had settled at Kandenga [present Nyangana] in 1910. Father Bierfert wrote that the Vagciriku relocated *enmasse* to settle on the Namibian side of the Kavango River in 1908. Since Hompa Muhera usurped power from Shirongo [the regent] around 1864, the Vagciriku's main population lived on the Angolan side of the Kavango River. Father Bierfert's version of the date of relocation appears to be authoritative, considering that he has lived among the Vagciriku since May 1910. In his book *25 Jahre bei den Wadiriku* important aspects regarding the role Klemens Mbambo played during the initial establishment of Nyangana Roman Catholic Mission station are revealed.

Regarding the establishment of Nyangana Roman Catholic Mission Station, John Mutorwa (1996) has also made an important academic contribution. He made this in his publication entitled the *Establishment of Nyangana Roman Catholic Mission Station during the Reign of Hompa Nyangana*. The strength of his book lies in the Afro-centric perspective that informs his argument.

It can be seen in the bibliography to this study that many other secondary sources were also used and most were of great value. The study also benefited from primary sources in the form of letters and reports by Bechuanaland British Protectorate Officials kept in Botswana's National Archives and Record Services. These documents cover the period from 1893 to 1904.

### **Methodology.**

A qualitative approach was mainly followed in collecting and recording information for this study. The study was conducted from November 2005 to May 2008. However, due to the lack of first-hand informants, the present author went to look for recorded interviews regarding Vagciriku history. Thus, it can be seen that some of the interviews used in the study predated the timeframe of the study. The recorded interviews mostly came from the NBC archives and personal interview collections of Mr. Karl Peter Shiyaka-Mberema and Kletus Likuwa. Only those interviews deemed critical to the study were included and the personal

details of those interviewed are provided in the reference section of the study. Those who were interviewed or whose information was used came from the royal families or grandchildren of Homba Nyangana. Non-royal knowledgeable elders of the Vagciriku's various clans were also interviewed. Some additional interviews came from the elders of the other communities in Kavango. In this study, some of the elders' accounts that are included are: Mudumbi ShaMurarero<sup>5</sup>, George Mukoya<sup>6</sup>, Kandambo kaMunkanda, Mpingana waMonyo, Shidona shaKamutuva<sup>7</sup>, Susana Mate waKamwanga, Wayera waShihungu, Nerumbu waShitarara, Mavandje waLincororo, Rudolf Haushiku<sup>8</sup>, Simon Nzamene Kandere, Johanna Mayinga waShiremo, Annafrugencia Mudi waKamenye, Maria Elizabeth Katiku waKandjeke, Muyenga waUnengu (alias Shintunga) and Kampungu waMudumbi.

One needs to make a few remarks regarding some of the oral sources relied upon in this study. Firstly, a group of Rumanyo teachers led by Mr. Karl Peter Shiyaka-Mberema and the late Mr. Frans Josef Haushiku interviewed Mudumbi ShaMurarero in 1998. The recorded interview was critical to this study in matters of the Vagciriku's early migration, more especially regarding the early relations and interactions between the Vakankora and the Vakafuma clans. The interview is of good quality. When Dr. Samuel Mbambo did his doctoral research for his

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<sup>5</sup> Recorded interview obtained from Mr. Shiyaka-Mberema's personal collections.

<sup>6</sup> Recorded interview obtained from NBC Rukavango Radio Service's Archives.

<sup>7</sup> Transcribed interview obtained from Mr. Kletus Likuwa's personal collections.

<sup>8</sup> Published oral transcript by Professors Möhlig, W. and Fleisch, A. (2002) **Kavango Peoples in the Past: Local Historiographies from Northern Namibia.**

dissertation entitled; *'Heal with God': Indigenous Healing and Religion among the Vagciriku of Kavango Region, Namibia*, Mudumbi ShaMurarero was one of his main informants. Indeed, Dr. Mbambo commented in his published dissertation as follows - *Mudumbi shaMurarero is a respected elder who served as chief advisor of Hompa Muyeghu of the Vagciriku in Angola and a highly respected traditional historian.*<sup>9</sup> Mudumbi ShaMurarero belonged to the Vakankora Clan and he died in early 1999.

Secondly, Prince George Mukoya was interviewed in 1989 by NBC Rukavango Radio service, on matters relating to the Vagciriku history starting from the early period to the time of Hompa Shampapi's abdication of the throne, in December 1944. Prince George Mukoya was one of the well-travelled members of the Vagciriku royal family. In addition to the oral evidence, he as a member of the royal clan had access to, he also obtained additional information during his visits to Botswana. As a young man, he fought in the Second World War on the side of the Allies. At one point, between the 1950s and the 1960s, he lived in Ngamiland and there he learned more about the places where the Vagciriku captives were held after the Lishora Massacre in 1894. It is clear from the interview that Prince Mukoya spoke some Setswana, the language of the BaTawana who massacred the Vagciriku. Prince George Mukoya belonged to the Vakafuma ruling clan and was the uncle of Hompa Sebastian Kamwanga (1985-1999). He was a son of Princess Mavandje (*alias Shiromba*) and he died in the early 1990s.

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<sup>9</sup> Mbambo, S.K (2002) **'Heal with God': Indigenous Healing and Religion among the Vagciriku of Kavango Region, Namibia.** p.294

Evidently, Princess Kandambo kaMunkanda is one of the few living authorities on matters relating to the Vagciriku royalty and history. Princess Kandambo kaMunkanda is the mother of Hompa Kavera waMuhembo, who is the present Vagciriku king on the Angolan side of the Kavango River. She was the daughter of Rukunde, another daughter of Princess Kandambo. Princess Rukunde was the younger sister of Princess Mavandje (already mentioned above). However, Princess Rukunde died early in her life, leaving five minor children, which included Kandambo kaMunkanda. Thus, Kandambo kaMunkanda grew up in the care of her aunts, namely Princess Shidona shaMakanga, Princess Shiromba shaMakanga and Princess Muku waMakanga. She admitted to this author during an interview in 2006, that she acquired her historical knowledge about the Vagciriku royal history from her aunts mentioned above. In recent years, she has been interviewed on the subject of the Vagciriku history by various researchers and commentators, which includes well-known academics such as Meredith McKittrick (2008), the NBC Rukavango Radio Service and many others. Thus, her oral narratives on the subject can be crossed-checked for consistency.

Mate Susana waKamwanga and Shidona shaKamutuva are sisters of the same mother. They were children of Tunapu, the daughter of Hompa Nyangana. They are authorities on the Vagciriku history in their own right. For this study, Mate Susana's interview had been relied on to provide information on Hompa Nyangana and his relationship with his son, Mbambo before and after the arrival

of the Catholic Missionaries in 1910. Since Mbambo was Mate and Shidona's uncle, as he was an elder brother of their mother, Tunapu, their accounts were deemed necessary on the Mbambo subject. It became clear that whereas the royalty profess ignorance on the death of Klemens Mbambo, the two sisters are open about it, and they shift blame to the royalty and Hompa Nyangana himself as having been responsible for his death. Both sisters are still alive (at the time of writing the thesis); albeit in advanced old age and they belong to the Vakankora clan.

However, the oral narratives of Mpingana waMonyo, Wayera waShihungu, Nerumbu waShitarara, Mavandje waLincororo, Johanna Mayinga waShiremo, Annafrugencia Mudi waKamenye, Muyenga waUnengu (alias Shitunga) and Kampungu waMudumbi were mainly used in this study, when it concerned their various clans. One need to point out also that apart from Rudolf Haushiku's Matjaube narrative, the Vakangombe and the Vakayovhu's oral narrative on the history of their origin had never been recorded anywhere prior to this study. These oral sources were treated as authoritative concerning the history of the matri-clans and other specific areas regarding Vagciriku history.

An attempt has been made to provide photos for some persons, objects, and sites mentioned in the study. For example, the photo of Hompa Nyangana and his son Mbambo and the gravesites of Hompa Nyangana have been included as well as photos of some of the elders who were interviewed or whose information was

used in this study. Maps and a genealogical list of the Vagciriku rulers have also been included in the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **The Myths of Origins on the Gciriku kingdom and its people.**

#### **Introduction**

This study is about the reign of Hompa Nyangana over the Vagciriku. However, before detailing events that characterised his reign in the following chapters, this chapter will try to provide a short background about the myths on the origins of the Gciriku kingdom and its people. This is done in order to help the reader have an understanding of the polity under discussion.

This chapter will investigate the myths of the origin of the Vagciriku from the perspectives of elders of the different matrilineal-clans. Apart from the Mashi theory that is widely known, this chapter will also provide the claims of the Vakandjadi yaMatjaube, Vakayovhu and the Vakangombe yaMantjango matrilineal-clans. It will be argued that though the Mashi's myth about the origin of the Vagciriku is not necessarily wrong, there are other myths on the same subject by the other clans within the Gciriku community. The Masianic migration

account<sup>10</sup> as Kampungu (1965) terms it in his doctoral dissertation is largely the Vagciriku royal family's account about their own ancestral history of migration.

Up to now, many authors have repeatedly claimed that the Vagciriku originated from Mashi when hunters tracked an injured elephant. Mashi is a legendary place situated along the Kwando River, in what are today areas of southwestern Zambia and southeastern Angola. It is also said that while still at Mashi, the Vagciriku were known as Vamanyo and spoke a language called Rumanyo. Because of the peculiarity that characterizes the accounts of the other matrilineal-clans about the Vagciriku's origin, these accounts are also introduced in this study.

### **The Concepts of Clanship and Kingship amongst the Vagciriku.**

In order to clarify some of the issues that are discussed in detail in this chapter, one needs to understand the concepts of clanship (marudi/makoro) and kingship (uhompa). In this section, a number of clans found amongst the Kavango communities, more particularly, those found amongst the Vagciriku are listed. The nature of these clans is also explained; whether one acquires membership of the clan through a patrilineal or a matrilineal lineage. Furthermore, a short traditional overview taken from oral sources on the origins of the clans is provided. One needs to understand if these clans are structured along political, social or economic lines. Questions that seek to establish the positions of the clans

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<sup>10</sup> Kampungu, R. (1965) **Okavango Marriage Customs investigated in the light of ecclesiastical legislation.** p.196

as land-holding units, if members intermarry or settle following certain land-tenure patterns are also explored.

In addition, one needs to understand the institution of kingship (Uhompa) amongst the Vagciriku, especially during the reign of Hompa Nyangana. We need to understand from where a king/hompa derives his /her power and whether these powers have material, political or social foundations.

### **The Vagciriku and other Kavango clans.**

As the table below shows, there are approximately nine clans found amongst the Vagciriku. The Vagciriku people acquire affiliation to clanship through their mothers and not through their fathers. Thus, like all the other Kavango communities the Vagciriku are matrilineal people. See table below by Shiremo (2009) and Mbambo, S.K. (2004:315)

<b>Names</b>	<b>Vagciriku</b>	<b>Vashambyu</b>	<b>Vakwangali</b>	<b>Vambunza</b>	<b>Hambukushu</b>
<b>1. Cattle</b>	Vakangombe	Vonkwangombe	Vakwangombe	Vakwangombe	Hakathimu
<b>2.Falcon-Hawk/Rain</b>	Vakandjadi	Vonkwandjadi	Vakwanzadi	Vakwanzadi	Hakamvhura
<b>3. Lion</b>	Vakanyime	Vonkwanyime	Vakwanyime	Vakwanyime	Hakanyime
<b>4. Parrot/Frog/</b>	Vakankora	Vonkwankora	Vakwankora	Vakwankora	Hakayembe
<b>5.Famous/Frog</b>	Vakafuma	Vonkwamfuma			
<b>6..Buffalo</b>	Vakanyashi	Vonkwanyashi	Vakwanyatji	Vakwanyatji	Hakanyatji
<b>7.Elephant</b>	Vakayovhu	Vonkwayovhu	Vakwanzovu	Vakwanzovu	Hakayovhu Hakambara
<b>8. Copper</b>	Vakangondo	Vonkwangondo			Hakangondo
<b>9. Hyena</b>	Vakashipika	Vonkwashipika	Vakwasipika	Vakwasipika	

<b>10. Locust</b>			Vakwambahu	Vakwambahu	
<b>11 Crocodile</b>			Vakwanangandu	Vakwanangandu	
<b>12 Zebra</b>					Hakasheya

**Figure 1.** Lists of Vakavango matrilineal clans.

With the exception of a few clans, such as the Hakasheya, Hakambara, Vakwambahu and the Vakwanangandu, the table shows that many of the clans transcend the five Kavango communities. This fact signifies the close links between the clans across the Kavango Region.

During the times when parents had the right to arrange marriages for their children, clan inter-marriages were discouraged or avoided as such relationships were seen as a breach of clan ties and traditions. It was said, that whenever a couple intermarried within a clan, their children were likely to be born deformed physically or intellectually. Thus, one could marry a child of his father's sister but not the child of his mother's sister. Marriages between cousins were allowed on the basis that though the parents of the couple were blood related as they came from the same mother and therefore the same clan, their children were not family members because they did not belong to the same clan. Children born to such a marriage were considered normal. However, in a later era when young people had taken over the responsibility to choose spouses by themselves based on criteria other than clanship affiliation, good manners or long-standing inter-family relations, inter-marriages have become acceptable. However, the exception is that these marriages should not take place with one's immediate clan relatives.

In Vagciriku society, when a woman was divorced from her husband, she was expected to go back to the village of her origin, taking her young children with her. Thus, during her stay with the in-laws at her husband's village, she was not regarded as a family member (*liro*) but as an outsider who was only there for the purpose of marriage (*mukadikwara*). One can therefore, argue that in general marriages had been and are still contributing to the migration or the translocation of the different clans to different villages and in some cases to other kingdoms.

### **Kingship (Uhompa) among the Vagciriku.**

Amongst the Vagciriku, the institution of a kingship/queenship (uhompa) is deeply entrenched in almost every aspect of their lives. Studying the royal institution over the last 200 years, we can say that it has evolved in various ways. One can argue that the importance and relevance of kingship (uhompa) in relation to its subjects has changed dramatically. Thus, in order to have a better understanding of the institution one must study it in three periods, namely: pre-colonial (from early times up to 1886), colonial (1886-1990), and the post-colonial (1990 to date). The pre-colonial kingship (uhompa) was an all-powerful institution that by current democratic standards can be equated to despotism or autocracy. The power of the King (Hompa) was final over matters of life and death of his subjects. Thus, it becomes evident that Hompa Nyangana's reign built on and continued the tradition of royal despotism.

When asked how his subjects viewed a king (*homp*a) during the pre-colonial times, most respondents equated the institution to ‘an all powerful earthly God’.<sup>11</sup> Thus, a German report of 1902 that called a Kavango *homp*a-as ‘lord over life and death of his subordinates’ was indeed correct.<sup>12</sup> The Hompa owned everything within the kingdom and the institution’s power was unfettered and absolute. Hence, many elders amongst the Vagciriku sometimes view the advent of missionaries and colonial officials as a positive development, which heralded in a new era of freedom and equality. There is a popular saying amongst the Kavango elderly generation, including the Vagciriku, which goes ‘*tudjambe shikuwa*’ meaning ‘thank God, the whites came.’ In the context of the Vagciriku’s historical background, the term ‘whites’ refers to missionaries and colonial officials, mainly Native Commissioners. It is known that Catholic missionaries and the Native Commissioners sometimes played a role of counter-balancing or even curtailing the powers of the kings/queens (*Vahomp*a). The actions of missionaries and colonial officials against the kings (*homp*a) mostly benefited the ordinary commoners who could be sold into slavery or killed for minor offences or simply on the whim of the king (*homp*a). Thus, in some cases the Vagciriku elders and evidently so amongst the other Kavango communities remember the pre-colonial era not as the era of freedom but as the period when they lived under the harsh and oppressive rule of their own leaders.

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<sup>11</sup> Shihako waSikuvu (Interview:2004), Andreas Kantana kaShiremo (Interview:2004 ) and Lydia Katiku kaSharumbongo (Interview:2005)

<sup>12</sup> McKittrick, M. (2008) **Landscapes of Power**. p.798

However, the institution of kingship (uhompa) was at the same time also abused by the colonial governments. In most cases, the kings/queens (vahompa) were bribed with material goods by colonial officials to allow their subjects to be sent as contract labourers on mines, industries and farms belonging to private companies or white settlers, or were recruited to fight in wars and political schemes of the colonisers. Thus, the independence of kingship (uhompa) ceased in fact, but became more of a useful tool for colonial manipulations. One can see, for example, that in many cases the institution of kingship willingly collaborated with the colonial powers in the oppression of its own people.

Lastly, one also needs to recognize the fact that in relation to its subjects, the post-colonial institution of kingship is politically the most emasculated. It is easy to see that the post-colonial institution, not only amongst the Vagciriku, but also across Namibia generally, is largely a symbolic institution with limited powers and responsibilities. The advent of constitutional democracy in African countries, including Namibia, and the adoption of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 has presented to rights and opportunities that were previously unheard of to ordinary men and women in African kingdoms. Today, it is not strange to see/hear an ordinary person publicly challenging the powers of the king/queen (hompa) without risking instant flogging, incarceration, summary execution or assassination. Thus, when reading the subsequent chapters in this study regarding the events that took place during the reign of Hompa Nyangana, one will need to locate them in the proper context relating to the space and time of

that era. However, we must recognize the important role the kingship (uhompa) institution had played over a long period and continues to play in forging identities for various groups of people.

### **Dating and periodising the Origins of the Vagciriku.**

Using the narratives by the Vagciriku elders and comparing them with the written accounts about the neighbouring kingdoms, it becomes possible to estimate years or periods of the Vagciriku clans' arrival at the Kwito and Kavango Rivers. For example, since important sections of the Vagciriku population come from Lozi territory, a comparison of the Vagciriku history of origin with genealogies of the Lozi (Aluyi) kings can reveal valuable information. It can be noted from the accounts for some of the important groups of the Vagciriku that they can trace their origins from Bulozhi (Luyi). Mashi which had been claimed (as we will learn later) by the Vakafuma, Vakankora and the Vakayovhu clans as their place of origin was a part of the Lozi (Luyi) kingdom.

The Hambukushu royal tradition also pointed to Mashi as a place of their origin. The Hambukushu are the immediate eastern neighbours of the Vagciriku. From the fact that the Hambukushu are mentioned in those Lozi sources, one is tempted to link that early history with that of the Vagciriku. One specific piece of evidence that compels one to link the early history of the Hambukushu with that of the Vagciriku is an assertion made by Mudumbi ShaMurarero (Interview: 1998). He claimed that those who are affiliated to the Vakankora and Vakafuma clans today,

while still at Mashi, were previously affiliated to one clan, and called the Hakayembe clan. Even today, amongst the Hambukushu, the two clans of the Vakafuma and Vakankora clans are known together as the Hakayembe clan. This indicates that the two clans could have been part of the larger Mbukushu community during the early period. Thus, one can conclude that it is possible that a relationship existed between the Vakafuma, Vakankora and the Hambukushu. This is established on the ground that both the Vakafuma and the Vakankora once lived at Mashi, although nothing is known about when they lived there and when they departed.

According to the information given by the BaLozi to the missionaries, the Hambukushu are said to have lived at the Katima Mulilo rapids in earlier times. For example, Major Gibbons wrote that the Hambukushu were living at Mashi at around 1750.<sup>13</sup> He added that the Hambukushu relocated from Mashi to the Kavango River approximately sixty years after 1750. Adding sixty years to 1750 brings us to 1810 as the date they arrived at the Kavango River. This makes the early 1800s as the approximate date for the arrival of the Hambukushu at the Kavango River. Oral tradition does not make it clear whether the Vagciriku or the Hambukushu arrived first at the Kavango River. It must be noted that though there are nine clans known amongst the Vagciriku, only five have their own narratives histories about the origins of the Vagciriku.

### **Competing Myths about the Origin of the Vagciriku.**

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<sup>13</sup> Gibbons, H. (1904), pp.217-218

There are various myths regarding the origins of the Gciriku. These said ‘myths’ or claims had been passed from generation to generation by elders of some clans. They argue that their particular clans were the first to settle in the kingdom. Regarding the origin of the middle Kavango, which includes the Gciriku Kingdom, Meredith McKittrick (2008) had recently shed some light on this study. McKittrick found out that though archaeological excavation alongside the Kavango River has been minimal, there are signs that the river was a crossroads whereby hunting and gathering, herding and farming communities met, interacted and exchanged goods, technologies and ideas. She further pointed out that the inflow of people continued into the area of settled communities and chiefdoms, where refugees from surrounding regions came bearing their own cultural and political traditions and identities. Some of these later settlers also came from similar riparian environments, especially the Zambezi and its tributary the Mashi (also called Kwando, Linyanti and Chobe). The findings by McKittrick largely support the various competing myths about the origins of the Vagciriku.

Amongst the Vagciriku, there are about four competing clan myths regarding the origins of the Vagciriku. These myths advance arguments of first settlement of certain clans over the other, especially vis-à-vis the ruling clan. However, apart from the Vakangombe yaMantjango clan which traces its origin from the upper reaches of the Kwito River all the other clans traces their origins from the Zambezi and its tributaries. The various reasons for the clans’ migration and settlement into the present Gciriku were given as hunting big game such as

elephants and hippopotami and in some cases, conflicts and wars were cited as causes.

Amongst the Vagciriku, the accounts of the ruling Vakafuma, the Vakankora clan, the Vakayovhu and the Vakangombe yaMantjango clans are known. However, the most publicized is the one of the ruling Vakafuma Clan, which propagates that hunters from their clan tracked an injured elephant from Mashi up to the Kavango River. When they found the Kavango River they went back to fetch the others from Mashi and at once relocated to their new settlement. Most often, this oral narrative of the Vakafuma clan do not recognise that they found the Vakandjadi yaMatjaube, Vakangombe yaTupundu and Vakayovhu clans, already settled in the land when they arrived from Mashi. Hompa Sebastian Kamwanga (1996) and Professor Wilhelm Möhlig (2002) published the details of this account. George Mukoya's (Interview: 1989) narrative on the same subject is also available on tape and has been transcribed by this author.

The oral narrative of the Vakankora clan is also of interest to the question of the myths of origin of the Vagciriku. The Vakankora claims that while still at Mashi both the Vakafuma and the Vakankora were under one clan known as the Vakayembe, but only split into two different clans once they arrived at the Kwito and Kavango Rivers respectively. They also claim seniority to the Vakafuma ruling clan. The ruling Vakafuma clan elders sometimes readily acknowledge the Vakankora clan elders' claims.<sup>14</sup> Mudumbi ShaMurarero (Interview: 1998) rejected the popular notion that the Vagciriku migrated from Mashi due to the

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<sup>14</sup> George Mukoya (Interview: 1989) and Kandambo kaMunkanda (Interview: 2006)

tracking of an elephant. According to ShaMurarero, the main reason was that Hompa Kaputungu Junior of Mashi wanted to kill his nephew Ngara whom he accused of having a sexual intercourse to one of his wife. Thus, as a family they fled at night from Mashi crossing some rivers and plains until they eventually arrived at the Kwito and the Kavango River. This same account also emphasised how the older brother ceded power to the younger brother whose clan now became to be known as Vakafuma meaning ‘the famous ones’.

Just like the Vakafuma and the Vakankora clan elders, the Vakayovhu clan elders identify Mashi as their place of origin. However, the reasons for relocating from Mashi differed altogether from the other two mentioned earlier. The Vakayovhu’s account is short and simple. Mayinga waShiremo (Interview: 2008) related that this account had been passed on to her by an old man Shinkanda and her own mother. She related that while at Mashi, the Vakayovhu belonged to the Mbarakwengo (Khwe San). The Vakayovhu clan lived in a big house but the royal establishment there targeted that house in forcing their youth folk into marriages. When all except one was already forced into those royal marriages, the Vakayovhu refused to hand over the last one, leading to a serious conflict which caused the Vakayovhu to flee from Mashi to various areas, including the present Gciriku. If the then royal establishment at Mashi accused to have committed such atrocities belonged to the present Vagciriku ruling clan, one can argue that the Vakayovhu arrived at the Kwito and the Kavango River earlier than the Vakafuma ruling clan did.

Professors Möhlig and Fleisch (2002) have published the Vakandjadi clan of Matjaube's narrative on the origin of the Vagciriku and Vashambyu. The Vakandjadi yaMatjaube claims to be the first settlers in present day Gciriku, Mbukushu and Shambyu territories. The Matjaube are also known amongst the Vagciriku as Vadjo and this term Vadjo is also used for the Mayeyi. Confirmation of this belief is an observation noted by Dr. Serton. He noted that the Makobas are David Livingstone's Bayeiye.<sup>15</sup> Thus, an analytical look at their history can give rise to the conclusion that the Matjaube group of the Kavango River splintered from the rest of the Mayeyi group in present day Botswana in the vicinity of Lake Ngami before 1750. In 1878 white hunters in the Kavango area observed the Bakoba (Matjaube) tribe was present below the present Karukuvisa in the Kavango Region. According to a map by R. Kiepert, *Deutscher Kolonial-Atlas*, the *Amakoba* were a small tribe living on the Shoshongo (correct spelling is Shishongo), below Karukuwisa.<sup>16</sup> Instead of Mashi, the Vakandjadi yaMatjaube had identified Kaghonda as their place of origin. Kaghonda is speculated to have been at the Kavango and Kwando confluence. Möhlig and Fleisch (2002:37 & 55) suggested that if the place Kaghonda ever existed, this could only have been in present-day Botswana. The Vakadjadi argue that those who came from Mashi, especially the Vashambyu group, usurped their land and even killed the Matjaube

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<sup>15</sup> McKiernan, G. (1954) **A Narrative and Journal of Gerald McKiernan in South West Africa, 1874-1879**. p.138

<sup>16</sup> McKiernan, G. (1954), p.166

King Mankoto. The main informant of the account was Rudolf Haushiku (alias Kakondo) who dictated it to Fidelius Kudumo in 1954.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, The Vakangombe yaMantjango's oral narrative point to a place in the upper stream of the Kwito River, called Tupundu as their place of origin. There is unanimity amongst the Vakangombe that their ancestors left Tupundu because the hunters were coming after hippopotami. This assertion is even confirmed by a Mukafuma ruling clan elder. On the origin of the Vagciriku of the Vakangombe clan, Kandambo kaMunkanda (Interview: 2006) had this to say;

*As for the Vakangombe clan's origin, we heard that they followed their spear-handle (rutondo) when they hunted Hippopotami. They came down the Kwito River hunting Hippopotami until they arrived at Mantjango where they found Hippopotami teeming in huge numbers, especially the class of the Cattle clan of Mantjango (Vakangombe yaMantjango). They settled at Mantjango, to subsist from Hippopotami meat.<sup>18</sup>*

The Vakangombe clan elders argue that they arrived before the Vakafuma and Vakankora who came from Mashi. They mention among others Haireka, Muhembo, Shiyauya and Kashwa as the leaders who led them from Tupundu up to the Kavango-Kwito confluence, otherwise known as Mantjango. They settled at Mantjango, except for Muhembo who continued hunting Hippopotami eastward up to the present Namibian-Botswana Border, where his name lived to this

<sup>17</sup> Thanks to the late Right Reverend Bernhard Hartmann of Shamyu Catholic Mission who kept the Matjaube account and to Professor Wilhelm Möhlig (2002) who published it with incisive academic footnotes and comments.

<sup>18</sup> Kandambo kaMunkanda (Interview: 2006). My translation.

present day. All the Vakangombe informants agree that Muhembo did not stay long at Mantjango. On the Botswana side, of the Namibian-Botswana border, the village in that vicinity is also presently known as Muhembo. The two neighbouring republics named the Border Post after Muhembo, the legendary mukangombe hippopotami hunter.



**Figure 2.**

Botswana's sign board indicating Muhembo Border Post. (Courtesy Hermes Mataya:2009)

Namibia's sign board indicating Muhembo Border Post. (Courtesy Kletus Likuwa: 2009)

According to Mpingana waMonyo and Wayera waShihungu (Interview: 2006) the Vakangombe yaMantjango were the Ntjeya people in earlier times. The Ntjeya speak a dialect of a Nyemba Language. The Vakangombe pride themselves on the fact that since time immemorial, they have had exclusive wisdom and skills in singing and beating drums at royal dances, such as kambembe and shikavedi.

Thus, confirming Sandelowsky's findings about the competing myths on the origins of the Kavango communities, McKittrick observes; "*both the royalist and indigenous tradition create fairly tidy narratives out of what was certainly a long and multilayered process.*" In addition, that such 'telescoping' is normal in oral tradition, and the symbols and characters in these accounts appear with regularity in migration traditions throughout central southern Africa.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> McKittrick, M. (2008).p.789

## CHAPTER THREE

### **The Ascendancy of Hompa Nyangana to the Vagciriku throne.**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter attempts to explain how Nyangana became the hompa of the Vagciriku. The chapter will also narrate the strategies Hompa Nyangana used to protect and consolidate his position as Vagciriku king. Similar to the preceding one, this chapter also draws largely from oral traditions and histories as adequate primary written sources do not exist, simply because writing was not yet a norm in the Vagciriku culture.

For the reasons given above, it is difficult to write about the Vagciriku's early history with precise dates and periods. This difficulty influenced early writers to estimate and sometimes merely to guess the dates of certain events. As a result, problems arise when instead of indicating the uncertainty surrounding these dates, they are presented as fixed and accurate. This kind of presentation wrongly gives an impression of exactitude and certainty. As an example, in most books regarding the Vagciriku's history, the lists of the Vagciriku rulers indicate that Hompa Nyangana's reign started in 1866. How this date is determined is unclear. Jan Vansina (1985) is therefore right when he argues that absolute measurements of time on a uniform scale exist nowhere in oral society. He argues that time was measured by the return of natural phenomena, by the occurrence of extraordinary events, by reference to human lifespan and reproduction and by reference to the

return of recurrent social events.<sup>20</sup> This is noticeable as Vagciriku oral history is largely devoid of dates. A particular case is the year 1894. This was the year, in which the majority of the Vagciriku men perished in what seems to have been a pre-meditated massacre carried out by the BaTawana under the command of Kgosi Sekgoma Letsholathebe. To the Vagciriku, 1894 is frequently referred to in conversations and speeches, termed *mwaka waShikuma* (The year of Sekgoma). Vansina points out that this kind of attitude towards chronology is found in many oral cultures. Hence, earlier writers on the history of the Vagciriku had to estimate the length of reigns and the date at which the Vagciriku arrived in their present settlement. Earlier writers, such as Bierfert, Möhlig, Shiyaka-Mberema and Mutorwa estimated that the Vagciriku arrived at the Kwito and the Kavango Rivers towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Vansina's insight can perhaps explain why the present author qualifies some of the dates projected by earlier writers. However, these qualifications should not undermine all earlier research, but rather indicate that estimated dates can change, as new information becomes known.

In order to understand events that took place prior to Hompa Nyangana's reign, one needs to briefly touch on the reigns of his predecessors. Indeed, it is evident from interviews about important events in the Vagciriku's past that the elders' memories are attached to the specific reigns of the various former rulers of the kingdom. Moreover, events that took place prior to Hompa Nyangana's reign directly and indirectly influenced his attitude and actions as a leader. For more

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<sup>20</sup> Vansina, J. (1985) **Oral Tradition as History**. p. 174

information about the kings [*Vahompa*] before Hompa Nyangana, (see annexure A).

### **The Reign of Hompa Nyangana (±1866-1924)**

Hompa Nyangana is the subject of this study. On the existing official lists of the Vagciriku rulers, he is placed as the seventh ruler. His reign lasted from 1866 to 1924, a period of 58 years. However, as indicated in the introduction above, it is not clear how those who drafted the list of the early Vagciriku rulers arrived at the 1866 date. Written sources that refer to Hompa Nyangana date to the 1870s. The diary of an American hunter, Gerald McKiernan, who came to hunt in the Gciriku area in 1878, sheds some light on the date of Hompa Nyangana's reign. McKiernan writes that Hompa Nyangana, with an estimated party of 200 to 300 armed warriors attacked and killed a member of his American hunting party, a man named Thomas.<sup>21</sup> The American hunters solicited support from a group of Boer trekkers who were hunting in the area in order to avenge the death of their companion. After the incident, Hambukushu Fumu Dimbu (Ndara) I informed McKiernan and his party that Hompa Nyangana's habit of shooting at the whites had started a few years before with a group of Portuguese.<sup>22</sup> In Kavango oral culture, the phrase a few years ago can be interpreted to mean anything between three and five years. This could imply that Nyangana was in power by the period 1873 to 1875. On the Vashambyu lists of rulers, the reign of Hompa

<sup>21</sup> McKiernan, G. (1954).pp.165-169

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p.176

Mbambangandu I is said to have begun in around 1874. Kamwanga (1995:12) writes that, in her efforts to clear a path to the vacant Vagciriku throne, a rival female candidate, Princess Kunyima sought support from Hompa Mbambangandu I of the Vashambyu to kill Nyangana.<sup>23</sup> As oral tradition and history suggests that Mbambangandu became the ruling king of the Vashambyu before Nyangana got his turn in the Gciriku Kingdom, it seems highly unlikely that Nyangana became hompa in 1866. Kamwanga even suggests that Hompa Mbambangandu was present at the ceremony celebrating Nyangana ascension to the throne. As a result, this author estimates that Hompa Nyangana's reign must have begun around 1874.

George Mukoya (Interview: 1989) has explained the ideal procedures to be followed at the election of a new king or queen amongst the Vagciriku. His explanation helps us to understand the manner in which Hompa Nyangana ascension to the throne. Mukoya explained that;

*“In the election of a new ruler, the sages [matimbi] together with their wives [vangongokadi], played a major role. After the mourning period of the late king/queen, the royal members would summon the sages with their wives to the palace. Then, the royalty would say to them, ‘Look, the ruler whom you knew has passed on. Who would you recommend from these names to be our new leader?’ Then, the sages would ask, which one would best be able to protect, feed and lead us? The royalty would then respond to their questions. Thus, a royal member who did not relate to the commoners in a positive way found it difficult to ascend to the throne as a supreme ruler.”<sup>24</sup>*

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<sup>23</sup> Kamwanga, S. & Haushiku, F.J. (1995) **Tu Vamanyo kushakare**. p.12

<sup>24</sup> George Mukoya (Interview: 1989). My translation.

If Mukoya's testimony is taken as the standard procedure for the election of a new king/queen amongst the Vagciriku, then it would appear that Hompa Nyangana ascended to the throne via a different route. This becomes evident in the evidence of both Kamwanga (1995:12) and Kandambo kaMunkanda (Interview: 2006) who state that there was a bloody power struggle to succeed Hompa Muhera. It is important to point out that at the time there were just a handful of members of the royal family in the kingdom. The majority of the royalty together with Hompa Muduva perished in the Kavango River in a suicidal act around 1860. Others were captured and taken away by the Makololos, while some especially those from Hompa Nandundu's lineage, had fled in earlier times to other kingdoms. Thus, only two candidates presented and campaigned for themselves, albeit in a fashion that was not in accordance with the Vagciriku tradition.

The two candidates were Princess Kunyima and Nyangana. Princess Kunyima was the sister of the late Hompa Muhera and just like Nyangana; she had a strong natural claim to the throne. She had two children, a boy named Kupembona and a girl named Kashekere, but it appears that her children were still young when their mother was campaigning to become the *hompa* of the Vagciriku. According to Kamwanga (1995:12) and Kandambo kaMunkanda (Interview: 2006), her campaign slogan to the people was; *'I am the rightful heir, because this kingdom is my brother's.'* Kamwanga's evidence suggests that Princess Kunyima gained the upper hand in the struggle for power. He states that the majority of the Vakankora yaKanyondo clan members backed Princess Kunyima, while in his

campaign Nyangana relied chiefly on the backing of the Vashambyu and Vakwangali immigrants within the kingdom. Importantly, Kamwanga is clear that those with a proven long record history of family connections with the Vagciriku royalty supported the Princess. A case in point is Shaduveru, the father to Princess Mavandje (alias Shiromba) an older half-sister of Hompa Nyangana. He belonged to the Vakankora yaKanyondo clan, who supported Kunyima's claim.

According to Vagciriku matrilineal inheritance rights, Nyangana was also eligible as the nephew of Hompa Muhera. However, according to the royal family structure he was Princess Kunyima's junior, Kunyima being his aunt. Nyangana's campaign slogan to the people was; *'I am the rightful heir, because my mother and my two sisters lost their lives for this kingdom.'* According to Kandambo kaMunkanda (Interview: 2006) Nyangana also added to the slogan that *'the Gciriku Kingdom cannot be headed by a woman, I am a man and therefore the rightful heir.'* While it was true that most of the Vagciriku rulers before him were males, Nyangana was aware of the laws of matrilineality that allows women as eligible candidates to ascend to the throne. Kamwanga makes it evident that those minorities, whom one could regard at the time as foreigners or immigrants within the Gciriku kingdom, sponsored Nyangana's bid for the throne. The Vakwangali, who were a minority within the kingdom, supported Nyangana probably because his father Mukuve was of Kwangali royal origin. His stepfather Hashipara, Mukuve's brother had a huge following within the Shambyu Kingdom, where he

had lived for many years and can go some way to explain why the Vashambyu also supported Nyangana.

Since the election campaign had reached a stalemate, the two rival candidates started to explore other avenues. Kamwanga writes that Princess Kunyima sent two emissaries, Katumwa and Shinyemba, to solicit support from the Vashambyu paramount Hompa Mbambangandu to kill Nyangana, sending an elephant tusk as a present.<sup>25</sup> As a result, Hompa Mbambangandu organized a group of warriors and marched towards the Gciriku Kingdom intending to execute Nyangana. However, a man only referred to in Hompa Kamwanga's co-book as the husband to Lita quickly ran to inform Nyangana about the intentions of the invading Vashambyu warriors. Kamwanga's writes that upon hearing this, Nyangana together with his brother Ngandu, decided to row their canoe to meet the invaders. Why Nyangana and his brother took this course of action is not explained; it appeared a suicidal move. However, in fact, it proved to be a turning point in Nyangana's bid for the Vagciriku throne. As the duo approached in their canoe, the Vashambyu warriors, Hompa Mbambangandu aimed at them with his gun but was dissuaded from pulling the trigger by some of his men. They advised Hompa Mbambangandu that *'you can't shoot a bird sitting on the barrel of a gun'* in other words, that it was not wise for him to eliminate an enemy who was already surrendering. When Nyangana and Ngandu gave themselves in to the Vashambyu warriors it appears that Hompa Mbambangandu had a sudden change of heart. Nyangana presented his claim and Hompa Mbambangandu decided to back him in his cause.

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<sup>25</sup> Kamwanga, S & Haushiku, F.J (1995) **Tu Vamanyo Kushakare**. p.12

According to Kamwanga, the first casualties of the power struggle were the two emissaries sent by Princess Kunyima, the two men being quickly captured and drowned in the Kavango River.<sup>26</sup>

### **The Assassination of Princess Kunyima.**

From the oral accounts recorded by Kamwanga (1995:12) and that of Kandambo kaMunkanda (Interview: 2006) it appears that when Nyangana realized the political stalemate, he pretended to withdraw from the succession race. Princess Kunyima thinking that her nephew Nyangana had accepted defeat in the battle of electioneering became over-confident. Furthermore, she was too confident of the support of Hompa Mbambangandu I of the Vashambyu and remained unaware that Nyangana had thwarted her plans by meeting Hompa Mbambangandu. Her state of ignorance can also be attributed to the fact that her two emissaries to Mbambangandu never returned to give her feedback. Kandambo kaMunkanda has (Interview: 2006) summarized the events that led to Princess Kunyima's assassination:

*“Nyangana witnessed the murder of his mother. He fumed to himself “my mother is killed.” Later on, when Hompa Muhera was no more, his sister Kunyima kwaMavandje claimed that she was going to succeed her brother because the kingdom belonged to him, as he had fought for it. Then Nyangana said “never will you rule this kingdom, because my mother has been murdered for it.” After a period of days and weeks, one evening Nyangana tasked one of his assistants to go in the early morning and summon his aunt Kunyima for reconciliation rituals. When she was told, she believed that she was going to reconcile with Nyangana*

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<sup>26</sup> Kamwanga, S & Haushiku, F.J (1995), p.12

*and then she came. When she was coming, the sound of the copper-anklets that they used to wear during those days could be heard all over like a bell and she happily thought to herself that she was going to be reconciled with her nephew. Nyangana stood in a corner close to the reeds (mats) of the palisade hiding himself. When she appeared to him at a distance he shot her and she fell on the ground. He said to her while she was dying in pain; “Yes! I killed you, just like my mother was killed by your brother Muhera.”<sup>27</sup>*

The assassination of Princess Kunyima ended the power struggle. According to Kamwanga after the assassination, Nyangana appealed for calm from the panic-stricken residents of the palace.<sup>28</sup> No one stood up for Princess Kunyima and this was perhaps because of the Vagciriku royal politics known as *Madira*. ‘Madira’ means ‘the big birds’. The ‘*Madira*’ royal politics was underpinned by a philosophy that forbade commoners from intervening in royal conflicts and duels. Whenever a royal member murdered a family member for political reasons, it was said that *madira ghakulye ghene, ghatunde po gha kulire*, that royal members could kill each other but that they could again be reconciled by mourning together for the dead. This gave royal members the right to attack each other with impunity. Fearing that Princess Kunyima’s children would seek to avenge the death of their mother if the opportunity arose, Nyangana and his siblings had them murdered too. Thus, the maternal lineage from Hompa Muhera’s mother, Princess Mavandje that was supposed to be perpetuated through her daughter Kunyima and her granddaughter Kashekere in turn, was brought to an end. Hompa Nyangana and his siblings’ genocidal actions against the family of Princess Kunyima, their

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<sup>27</sup> Kandambo kaMunkanda (Interview: 2006). My translation.

<sup>28</sup> Kamwanga, S & Haushiku, F.J (1995), p.13

own next of kins, are perhaps best understood by Kandambo kaMunkanda's (Interview: 2006) explanation that; *Uhomba kapi wa kara liro*. The saying states that 'royal politics is blind to family ties.'

### **How Hompa Nyangana consolidated his power.**

Hompa Nyangana's reign was long, spanning a period of five decades. Hence, the question, how did he manage to consolidate his rule for all those years? The answer to this question lies in the strategies Hompa Nyangana employed as king. As from the start of Hompa Nyangana's rule, two royal members offered an alternative to him for the throne; namely his elder half-sister Princess Mavandje and his brother Prince Ngandu. His two half-sisters, the Princesses Kandambo and Katiku, were then too young to be considered a threat.

His early actions suggest a deepseated sense of insecurity. He saw enemies everywhere, and he frequently behaved and acted pre-emptively to overcome any possible threat and often these threats were just figments of his own imagination. His first suspect and target was his own elder half sister, Princess Mavandje waShaduverere [also known as Shiromba]. As Princess Shiromba was an elder sister of Hompa Nyangana, her presence in the kingdom made him feel inferior and to be insecure. In order to subdue her, Hompa Nyangana came up with a foolish proposition for her that he knew very well that she would never accept. According to Kandambo kaMunkanda (Interview: 2006), Hompa Nyangana

proposed to have sexual relations with her. As that kind of incestuous relationship was seen as scandalous by Vagciriku culture, she was horrified by her half brother's approach. When she spoke out, he became outraged and accused her and her husband of all sorts of shocking activities. Kandambo kaMunkanda states that Hompa Nyangana then stabbed her with a traditional knife popularly known as *rufuro*<sup>29</sup>, in one of her thighs. This attack led Princess Mavandje (Shiromba), together with Mpareke her husband and their followers, to flee from the kingdom. They settled near the Island of Malyo on the Kwito River. The date of their exodus might be estimated at around 1880. This is because when King Lewanika [Lubosi] of the Lozi fled from his kingdom in 1884 and sought political asylum in the Shambyu Kingdom from Prince Kanyetu at Malyo Island, Mavandje had already settled there. In fact, Princess Mavandje played a role in asking Hompa Mbambangandu I to grant asylum to the fugitive Lozi king. Jalla who wrote an account of Lewanika and his son Letia had this to write about the role played by Princess Mavandje:<sup>30</sup>

*“On the Kwito River they visited a Kwangali (Gciriku), a sister of Kangungu (Nyangana), who had been attacked in the old days by the Makololo. This lady sent a messenger to Kanyetu and to the Kwangali (Vashambyu) paramount Mbambangandu telling them of Lubosi's (Lewanika's) approach. These chiefs replied that Lubosi could continue on as they were quite willing to receive him.”*<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> A rufuro is a traditional combat knife, with a blade on both sides. (*Omukonda in Oshiwambo*)

<sup>30</sup> Jalla, C.B.E (1921), **The Story of the Barotse Nation**. p.48

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p.48

From around 1880, Princess Mavandje lived in exile some distance away from her brother until her death at Mbambi in eastern Gciriku in 1919.<sup>32</sup> Katiku kaSharumbongo (Interview: 2005) both of whose parents were followers of Princess Mavandje, told this author that she was kind and generous. She said that when her parents and many others lived with Princess Mavandje, they enjoyed peace and tranquility.

With Princess Mavandje out of his way, Nyangana next suspected and targeted his own brother Prince Ngandu. Kamwanga writes that the chief consort of Hompa Nyangana, Nkayira, told Nyangana that his brother was making sexual advances to her.<sup>33</sup> On hearing this, Hompa Nyangana became furious and sent two men of Herero origin [Vatama], namely Kakusha and Shamundu, to assassinate his brother. They did not manage to kill him but instead captured his cattle. At this time, Prince Ngandu was living at the Island of Shighuru, a village at least 20 kilometers west from the royal seat of his brother. Kamwanga (1995:13) implied that in order to create a justifiable excuse to eliminate his brother, blasphemous accusations against Prince Ngandu were trumped up. According to an unwritten law of Vagciriku culture, a man is allowed to marry his brother's wife if the brother is deceased, but, it was treasonous for a man to make sexual advances on or to marry his brother's wife if that brother was still alive ( even if he was divorced from her). Thus, Hompa Nyangana had a justifiable reason in the eyes of the public to punish his brother by killing him. This event is estimated to have

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<sup>32</sup> Mberema, K.P.S. (1996) **Shitungarongo**. p.121

<sup>33</sup> Kamwanga, S & Haushiku, F.J (1995), **Tu Vamanyo kushakare**. p.13

taken place before 1890 because, according to George Mukoya (Interview: 1989), when Hompa Nyangana went to seek military assistance from the BaTawana at Ngamiland, as well as others he cited his brother Ngandu's behaviour as a motivating factor. It is known that Kgosi Moremi, from whom the military assistance was sought, died in 1890.<sup>34</sup>

Rather than satisfying his insecurity Hompa Nyangana's paranoid behaviour continued, when he included on his hit list, his half-sister Princess Kandambo, Makanga her husband and their male child Prince Muyeghu. According to George Mukoya (Interview: 1989), Hompa Nyangana wanted their execution because they were wealthier in cattle than he was. The BaTawana eventually arrived in 1894 and, under the command of Kgosi Sekgoma Letsholathebe, carried out a massacre of the Vagciriku. Hompa Nyangana himself, his son Mbambo and many other Vagciriku were taken captive in Ngamiland. Why the BaTawana set upon the Vagciriku, given that Hompa Nyangana had invited them has been a question of research. George Mukoya (Interview: 1989), and Kandambo kaMunkanda (Interview: 2006), attribute the 1894 Lishora Massacre in part to Hompa Nyangana himself, because he felt that the Vagciriku were not respectful enough of him. In chapter five, this massacre will be further looked into with the help of archival documentary sources that were retrieved from the Botswana National Archives. Hompa Nyangana was released from the BaTawana's captivity in around October 1894 and he came back to rule the remaining Vagciriku people.

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<sup>34</sup> Tlou, T. (1985) *A History of Ngamiland -1750 to 1906: The Formation of an African State*. p.139

However, according to Mberema (Interview: 2003), while Nyangana was a captive in Ngamiland, the Vagciriku had elected Mukerenge (alias ShaKavare) from the line of Hompa Nandundu to lead them. Kandambo kaMunkanda (Interview: 2006) referred to the man who replaced Hompa Nyangana during his captivity by the name ShaKavare. This author assumes that 'Mukerenge' and 'ShaKavare' referred to the same person. The name 'Sakavare' appeared on Franz Seiner's Kavango map of 1911. It is interesting to note that this name appears at a village (Muhapu) where Mukerenge/Shakavare is said to have lived. When Hompa Nyangana returned from his captivity, he was furious that Mukerenge had taken over from him and Mukerenge was forced to flee the kingdom.

Hompa Nyangana also used forced royal marriages to cement his position, mainly targeting the Vakankora clan. One can argue that Hompa Nyangana's marriages to the Vakankora clan's womenfolk were intended to achieve two aims. The first was to establish links with Vakankora clan members who felt alienated from royalty since their arrival from Mashi. In this way, Nyangana hoped to placate and appease their anger. The second was to remove any perception of blood relation that existed between the two clans because he wanted to prove that marriages between the two clans were possible. Marriages between matrilineally related clans were ideally a taboo in Vagciriku culture.

Tales of Hompa Nyangana's actions against his perceived enemies are endless. Shiyaka-Mberema (in Shitungarongo, 1995:120) and Katiku kaSharumbongo

(Interview: 2005) contend that the Roman Catholic missionaries who arrived in his kingdom in 1910 managed to reform his ruthless behaviour. However, it can also be argued that, with the arrival of a new order in the country, Hompa Nyangana merely transformed his behaviour from direct confrontation to a more cunning, clandestine approach. His new methods commenced in around 1908, before the arrival of the Catholic missionaries. In that year, Hompa Nyangana orchestrated the killing of the Kwangali Prince Siteketa by his cousin Hompa Kandjimi Hawanga zaShikongo. This assassination will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. The mysterious deaths of his son Mbambo in February 1912 and his nephew and heir apparent, Prince Tjimi in 1919 are also good examples of Nyangana's new indirect style. On these, some light will be shed in chapter six.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **Relations between the Gciriku Kingdom and its neighbours during the Reign of Hompa Nyangana.**

#### **Introduction**

It is important to point out the nature of the Gciriku kingdom's relation with its neighbouring kingdoms during the time when intertribal warfare and conflicts were rife. Thus, this chapter will examine the kingdom's relations with the neighbouring kingdoms during the reign of Hompa Nyangana. This will be done by investigating the role that Hompa Nyangana played in damaging or improving relations between his kingdom and its neighbours.

Since their arrival from Mashi, Tupundu and Kaghonda and other places of their origin, the Vagciriku had been carving out for themselves a territory in competition with their neighbours. From the early years of Vagciriku Kingdom's establishment, they have been bordered by the Shambyu Kingdom on its western side. Oral history of both the Vagciriku and the Vashambyu maintain that the royal families of the two kingdoms share a common ancestry as they migrated as one family from Mashi and this naturally made them as sister kingdoms. On its eastern side, the Mbukushu Kingdom has always bordered the Gciriku Kingdom. For centuries, the Hambukushu kings were revered as great rainmakers and other kingdoms including the Gciriku Kingdom depended on them for rain. On its northern side, in today's Angola above the Kwito River, the various Nyemba communities have bordered the Gciriku Kingdom. The Nyemba were expert

woodcarvers and blacksmiths as they forged hoes, axes, spears, knives etc. Mudumbi ShaMurarero (Interview: 1998) contended that the Vagciriku people lacked those skills and that they used to obtain those tools from the Vanyemba through barter. Mberema and Bierfert wrote that the Vagciriku only learnt blacksmithing skills from a Munyemba old man, Karunga during the reign of Hompa Muduva.<sup>35</sup> The Gciriku kingdom's relation with the kingdoms of Mbunza and Ukwangali during the reign of Hompa Nyangana will also be investigated. It will be shown that though the two kingdoms are not direct neighbours with the Gciriku kingdom, there is a lot of shared history, especially during the reign of Hompa Nyangana.

On its south, in today's Namibia, the Ovaherero bordered the Gciriku Kingdom. The Ovaherero had cattle and from the 1850s onwards, they frequently played a role as intermediaries between the Vagciriku and the white traders, explorers and missionaries from the south and central Namibia. Within the kingdom, on both sides of the Kavango River, the San people lived independently from the Vagciriku's authority but related to them through intermarriage and exchange of foodstuffs. Apart from the Ovaherero neighbours, it is intended to examine the relations of the Gciriku Kingdom to each of its neighbours mentioned above during the reign of Hompa Nyangana. This perhaps can help the readers understand the context and circumstances of some of the conflicts and wars that took place during that period.

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<sup>35</sup> Bierfert, A & Mberema, K.P.S (1991) **Ngandu 1**. p.44

### **The Gciriku Kingdom's relation to the Shambyu Kingdom.**

It is undisputed in oral history amongst the Vagciriku and the Vashambyu communities that the royal members of the two respective communities share a common matrilineal ancestry. Commenting on the Gciriku-Shambyu kingdoms' relations during the reign of Hompa Nyangana, George Mukoya (Interview: 1989) refused to acknowledge that the two were independent kingdoms. He pointed out that the two kingdoms were united and that today's distinct identity concepts namely Gciriku and Shambyu, that are widely reinforced, are new or pseudo-identities. He explained that the only distinctions between them depended on the loyalties of individual households, but that there was no clear border between the two kingdoms. Though this view by Mukoya can be considered controversial today, it can help one to understand that the two were sister kingdoms. Apart from their royal houses sharing common ancestry, the people of the two kingdoms shared a common Rumanyo language.

Studying the oral history and tradition from both the Vagciriku and Vashambyu, one can conclude that prior to Hompa Nyangana's reign the relationship between the two kingdoms was largely cordial. However, during the reign of Hompa Nyangana the good relation that existed between the two peoples became complicated and strained. There were various reasons for this. The major cause could be attributed to the nature of leadership of the ruling incumbents in the two kingdoms. On the one hand, within the Shambyu Kingdom, Mbambangandu I

succeeded his mother and became the Supreme hompa, but his younger brother, Prince Kanyetu always undermined his authority as he also asserted himself as the Supreme hompa.<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, in the Geiriku Kingdom, Hompa Nyangana who came to power around 1874 through violent means had a controversial and vindictive character. Another factor contributing to the hostile relationship between Hompa Nyangana and Prince Kanyetu were their pride and arrogance. Prince Kanyetu was well known as an expert hunter of elephants and excellent hunter of game. He nicknamed himself as *Kalyafunda* meaning the one who eats gunpowder or sometimes used to praise of himself as *Shimpanda* meaning rhinoceros.<sup>37</sup>

On the other hand, Hompa Nyangana was known as an expert hunter of hippopotami and as an excellent sniper. He gave himself the name *Kagcara murondangombe* meaning the yellow-billed oxpecker (*Buphagus Africanus*). These nicknames expressed their beliefs in their own physical and intellectual strengths when dealing with opponents. The name ‘gunpowder eater’ and ‘rhinoceros’ demonstrates that Prince Kanyetu was a fierce fighter in battle. Whereas the name ‘yellow-billed oxpecker’ reveals the fact that as a fighter, Hompa Nyangana possessed a shrewd character. This African bird is often seen riding and pecking for lice on all sorts of animals including dangerous predators such as lions.

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<sup>36</sup> Richard Mavara Hashipara (Interview: 1991)

<sup>37</sup> Rugciriku Committee (1992) **Mbeli dimutango daRugciriku**. pp.135 &137

During those times when firearms were few those who were privileged to possess them became very powerful, respected and feared. Thus, naturally there was a struggle for supremacy between Hompa Nyangana and Prince Kanyetu. The struggle for supremacy among peers is well known in Kavango culture as '*kukututura*'. The '*kukututura*' struggle is fought continually by testing each other's physical strength until one of the two finally succumbs to the other. However, both were afraid to confront each other directly in a battle, as they both knew of the dire consequences. For that reason, their conflict became a war merely of words and provocative actions, as neither was willing to risk firing the first shot at the other.

It appears in most oral accounts of both the Vagciriku and Vashambyu that the power conflict between Hompa Nyangana of the Vagciriku and Prince Kanyetu of the Vashambyu reached critical proportions when they both competed for a woman named Katiku kaSheshere. Richard Hashipara (Interviewed: 1991) and George Mukoya (Interview: 1989) pointed out that this woman was a consort of Hompa Nyangana. For reasons that are altogether not well known, she fled from Shitopoho<sup>38</sup> to Shiyana in the Shambyu kingdom. When Prince Kanyetu saw Katiku kaSheshere at Shiyana he took her as his own concubine against the advice of his elder brother Hompa Mbambangandu I. George Mukoya (Interview: 1989) said that when Prince Kanyetu saw Katiku kaSheshere, he apparently boastfully remarked; *You fled from Nyangana, a hippopotami expert-hunter? Come over here I will now have you as my concubine.* Richard Hashipara (Interview: 1991)

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<sup>38</sup> Shitopoho was the royal seat of Hompa Nyangana from around 1874 to 1894.

pointed out that when the elder brother of Prince Kanyetu, Hompa Mbambangandu I advised him not to marry Katiku kaSheshere, Prince Kanyetu rejected that advice. He apparently boasted; *what will Nyangana do to me, I am going to marry her*. At the time, Prince Kanyetu still lived with his brother, Hompa Mbambangandu I at Shiyana village. Given the fact that Prince Kanyetu lived at Shiyana together with his brother when Katiku kaSheshere fled from Shitopoho, one can estimate that the feud between the two dates from before 1884 because in that year King Lewanika took refuge with Kanyetu who was then already living at Malyo Island.

As a great-grand child of Katiku kaSheshere, Kandambo kaMunkanda (Interview: 2006) presented conflicting evidence against the assertion in most oral accounts that Katiku kaSheshere was in the first place Hompa Nyangana's consort. She argued strongly with supporting evidence that Katiku kaSheshere was in fact Prince Kanyetu's concubine in the first place before she went to Gciriku kingdom where Hompa Nyangana took her as his consort. Kandambo kaMunkanda strongly argued that when Katiku kaSheshere fled from Hompa Nyangana, she merely went back to her first husband, Prince Kanyetu. She explained that what worsened relations between Prince Kanyetu and Hompa Nyangana was the dishonest role Katiku played between them. By implication, Kandambo kaMunkanda's version disputes the claim that Hompa Nyangana invited the BaTawana in 1894 to eliminate Prince Kanyetu merely because of his anger over Katiku kaSheshere, whom Prince Kanyetu took from him. Kandambo

kaMunkanda's version is supported by George Mukoya (Interview: 1989) who listed at least two other motivating factors of Hompa Nyangana's 'invitation' of the BaTawana. One factor was that his brother in-law, Makanga had grown very rich in cattle and this made him jealous and insecure as he felt his authority as a *hompa* was undermined. Apparently, in Hompa Nyangana's imagination, Makanga's wealth in cattle meant that the Vagciriku polity's loyalty within the kingdom shifted from him as a ruler to his half-sister Kandambo and her son Muyeghu. Thus, as a way to teach the Vagciriku polity to obey or honour him at all times he treacherously ordered a section of the Vagciriku population to be killed by the BaTawana. Contrary to the oral evidence, at least one document retrieved from Botswana's National Archives indicates that Hompa Nyangana and his brother in-law Makanga indeed had a working relationship two years before the Lishora Massacre of 1894. This took place in 1892 when at a Chief's Council meeting; Hompa Nyangana motivated his men to kill a German trader, Phillip Wiessel. It appears that Makanga was at the meeting and collaborated together with Hompa Nyangana to carry out their plan.<sup>39</sup> It also becomes evident in the document that the Vagciriku were still loyal to Hompa Nyangana because they still followed his orders.<sup>40</sup> The strange view that Hompa Nyangana ordered a massacre of his people was also propagated by the Vagciriku whom Gibson (1981:164) interviewed in Botswana in 1953. Newly found archival documents accessed from Botswana's National Archives challenge the assertions that the Vagciriku and Vashambyu elders had provided as the causes of the Vagciriku-

<sup>39</sup> BNARS. File no: HC: 144. John MacDonald's report dated 10<sup>th</sup> December 1895 to Magistrate of Ngamiland, Lieutenant Barre Phipps.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

Lishora Massacre of 1894. This issue can be a classical example that highlights the controversy that can exist between oral and written sources. The archival documents reveal other causal factors for this massacre. It is hinted in some of the archival documents that Kgosi Sekgoma could have been instigated or influenced by BSACo and German agents to attack the Vagciriku. Chapter Five, will attempt to investigate the possible role or involvement of the BSACo and other colonial powers [Britain and Germany] in the Vagciriku-Lishora Massacre of 1894. Despite the newly found archival documents, the accounts that the elders have narrated are still important. Those accounts by the Vagciriku and Vashambyu elders help to explain the hostility that existed between Hompa Nyangana and Prince Kanyetu and how the polities of the two kingdoms were affected. Thus, it is the view of the present author that the oral accounts by the local elders and the written accounts by the Bechuanaland British Protectorate officials are equally important in ascertaining assertions regarding the Vagciriku-Lishora Massacre of 1894.

Surveying the oral accounts by the elders from the two kingdoms, it appears evident that the relations between the two kingdoms were normalised after the BaTawana Raid/Lishora Massacre of 1894. The Vagciriku-Lishora Massacre of 1894 resulted in the death of large numbers of both Vagciriku and Vashambyu men, including Prince Kanyetu. This can only be understood if the view is taken that Prince Kanyetu of the Vashambyu was not only a thorn in the flesh to Hompa Nyangana of the Vagciriku but also of his own Brother Hompa Mbambangandu I

whose authority he always undermined. Thus, Prince Kanyetu's physical elimination by the BaTawana was also a blessing in disguise to his brother Hompa Mbambangandu I of the Vashambyu. After 1894, a decade of good neighbourliness between the two kingdoms was observed.

However, in 1903 the fighting between Hompa Nyangana and the two families of German traders, namely Paasch and Arndt, spilled over to the Vashambyu territory. When a group of armed white farmers from Grootfontein had to avenge those who were killed in the skirmish and to reclaim a captive, the Vashambyu's entire population was at the receiving end. Because of fear of further repercussions, nearly the entire Vashambyu populations fled to inaccessible areas in present-day northeastern Angola [Shikambakamba] and southwestern Zambia [Lukona].<sup>41</sup> It was not until 1915, after the German colonial army's capitulation in Namibia to the South African troops that some of the Vashambyu people started to return from areas of their exile. In improving the bilateral relations between the two kingdoms, Hompa Nyangana played an active role in ensuring a smooth repatriation and resettlement of the Vashambyu exiles. Hompa Mbambangandu I of the Vashambyu died at Shikambakamba in southeastern Angola while in exile. According to Richard Hashipara (Interview: 1991) Hompa Nyangana invited Prince Ndango from exile and did all the preparations to instal him as the first Vashambyu ruler after exile. From 1915, Hompa Nyangana and Hompa Ndango ruled the two kingdoms in peaceful co-existence until their deaths in December 1924 and January 1925 respectively.

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<sup>41</sup> Kamwanga, S. & Haushiku, F.J. (1995) **Tu Vamanyo kushakare**. pp. 33-35.

### **The Gciriku Kingdom's relationship with the Mbukushu Kingdom.**

Since the establishment of the Mbukushu Kingdom, it had bordered the Gciriku Kingdom on its eastern side. When critically analysing oral history from the Vagciriku, there seems to be strong indications that some sections consider their history of origin to be the same as the Hambukushu. There also seems to be enough evidence from oral history that prior to Hompa Nyangana's reign the bilateral relations between the two kingdoms was cordial. This is truer during the reign of Hompa Muduva (±1830-1860) and Hompa Muhera (±1865-1874). One can argue that during the reign of the two respective Vagciriku rulers the 'international relations' or 'foreign policy' of the Gciriku Kingdom was pro-Mbukushu. Apart from the historical and family linkages, the relationship was also based on trade. Across southern Africa, the Hambukushu kings were widely believed to be great rainmakers and many communities, including the Vagciriku, depended on them for rain.<sup>42</sup> Thus, during those times, endangering the good relations with the Mbukushu kingdom was considered a suicidal undertaking. It was feared that any aggressive behaviour to the Hambukushu kings and their people would result in retaliation that would deprive the belligerent of rain for a long period. During those times when people mainly depended on nature and cultivation for their survival rain was considered a life and death issue.

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<sup>42</sup> Gibbons, H. (1904) **Africa: From South to North Through Marotseland**.pp.214-217

However, it appears in oral history and in written records that immediately from when Hompa Nyangana ascended the throne around 1874, the relationship between the two kingdoms became strained. As early as 1878, Dimbu I (Ndara), then king of the Hambukushu, is on record decrying Hompa Nyangana's behaviour towards the white hunters and travellers.<sup>43</sup> The report by Fumu Dimbu I to the travellers indicates that all was not well between the heads of the two neighbouring kingdoms. Reasons for the tension between the two leaders are not easy to discover. However, one can point out some factors that contributed to the strain. One is connected to the death of Hompa Muhera, Nyangana's predecessor. Hompa Muhera was a son-in law of both Fumu Diyeve I and Dimbu I, for he married their daughters Nandjira and Maneko.<sup>44</sup> Kandambo kaMunkanda (Interview: 2006) tells how Hompa Nyangana and his younger brother Prince Ngandu murdered Maneko, the consort of the late Hompa Muhera because she was accused for having plotted the death of her husband to whom they were related. If this story is correct, then there is enough reason to believe that Fumu Dimbu I of the Hambukushu was angered by Hompa Nyangana's murder of his daughter. This feud could have been exacerbated when Fumu Dimbu I refused to grant a temporary asylum to Hompa Nyangana when he fled from Boer trekkers' firepower in 1878. Gerald McKiernan further reports that;

*Nangani (Nyangana) sent to ask permission of Ondaro (Andara) to settle in his country, as he had been driven out of his own, and all his corn destroyed. Ondaro sent him little food, but would not let him stop in his country.(...) Ondaro(Andara) also said that Nangani had made trouble*

<sup>43</sup> McKiernan, G. (1954).p.176

<sup>44</sup> George Mukoya (Interview: 1989)

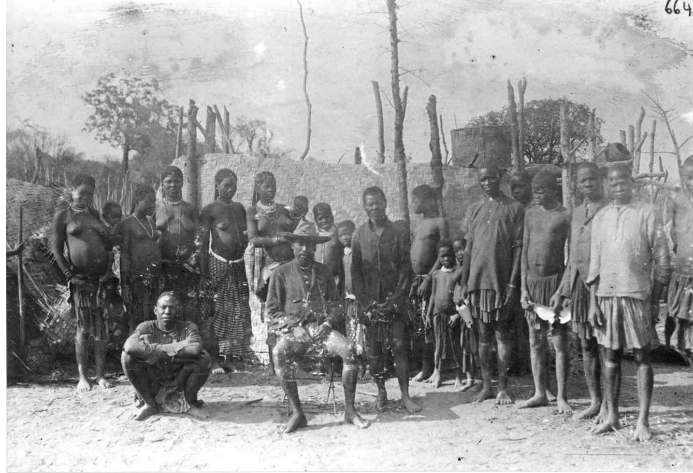
*with a Portuguese a few years ago and had to pay for it, and that he had warned him that he would go too far with white men...*<sup>45</sup>

In most writings by white hunters, explorers and traders from the late 1870s to the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century indications are that the relationship between the heads of the two kingdoms was hostile. Some oral sources have it that while en route to Ngamiland; Hompa Nyangana managed to escape from his BaTawana captors and fled to Prince Diyeve at Biro or Thipanana islands. However, instead of giving him asylum, the latter arrested him and handed him over to his captors.<sup>46</sup> Even around 1895 when a change of leadership took place within the Mbukushu Kingdom and Fumu Diyeve II succeeded the late Fumu Dimbu I, the relationship between the two leaders did not improve.

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<sup>45</sup> McKiernan, G. (1954).p.176

<sup>46</sup> Karl Peter Shiyaka-Mberema's notes to the present author (2007)



Captain Kurt Streitwolf expedition. Source: NAN

**Figure 3.** Fumu Diyeve dyaKushamuna at his palace, 1909. Photo taken during the

This strained relationship reached a climax when Hompa Nyangana encouraged a Kwangali fugitive, Prince Siteketa with his warriors to attack the Hambukushu in around 1900.<sup>47</sup> The hostility and mistrust that existed between the two kings could also be seen in the accounts of the Catholic missionaries when they first arrived in the Mbukushu Kingdom in 1909 and the Gciriku Kingdom in 1910. Reading the accounts of the Catholic missionaries, one can clearly see that the two kings did not trust or like each other. For example, Beris writes that while the Catholic missionaries were still in Mbukushu in 1909, Fumu Diyeve II impressed upon them that they should stay without fear.<sup>48</sup> Among other things and most importantly, Fumu Diyeve II made sure to let the missionaries know what a ‘murderer’ of white people Hompa Nyangana was. Clearly, Fumu Diyeve II was perpetuating the Hambukushu kings’ thirty-five years’ foreign policy to isolate the Vagciriku leader. Thus, when the same Catholic missionaries arrived in Gciriku in 1910, Hompa Nyangana encouraged them to stay. He told them that evil rumours had been spread about him, but that they should stay and judge for themselves.<sup>49</sup> Though Hompa Nyangana did not specifically mention those

<sup>47</sup> Van Tonder, L.L. (1966) *The Hambukushu of Okavangoland*. pp.50-52

<sup>48</sup> Beris, A.P.J. (1996) *From Mission to Local Church*. p.221

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, p. 225

responsible for spreading the evil rumours, given the background between the two kingdoms during his reign, it becomes easy to assume he was referring to the Hambukushu kings based at Thipanana and Tanhwe Islands.

It seems that until his death in 1924, Hompa Nyangana did not try to improve relations with the Hambukushu kings based at Thipanana and Tanhwe Islands. Instead, he allied himself with the Hambukushu splinter royal faction headed by Fumu Mukoya waMayinga and his successor who were settled in Ruyana, further to the north east of the Gciriku kingdom in present day Angola. Whenever, his kingdom was in need of rain Hompa Nyangana used to solicit help from Fumu Mukoya and later on from his successors, namely Fumu Mbamba waKare. However, relations between the two kingdoms improved significantly after the death of Hompa Nyangana, through various royal inter-marriages. In the 1930s, Princess Muku, a niece to Hompa Nyangana was married to Fumu Ndara II, a ruling king of the Hambukushu

### **The Gciriku Kingdom's relationship with the Nyemba Kingdom.**

During the reign of Hompa Nyangana, the Nyemba populations to the north bordered the Gciriku kingdom. The fact that the Kwito River is known amongst the Vagciriku as *mukuro waNyemba*, which means 'the river of the Nyemba people', can perhaps help to explain that the Nyemba lived on its northern bank. Just as in the case of the other neighbouring kingdoms, there is a significant

section of the Vagciriku, who can trace its origin to the Nyemba. Thus, it can be argued that from the very time of its establishment the Vanyemba people formed part of the Gciriku kingdom. However, during the reign of Hompa Nyangana the Vanyemba who lived on the northern bank of the Kwito River were independent as they had their own rulers. For this study, we are concerned with the relations with those who were independent of the Gciriku kingdom.

So far, there is no evidence in oral history or in written records that the Vanyemba and the Vagciriku were at loggerheads during the period before the reign of Hompa Nyangana. There seems to be an indication that peace existed between the two peoples during the reign of Hompa Nyangana's predecessors. For example, Mberema and Bierfert wrote that an old Munyemba man, Karunga, used to travel from his kingdom through the Gciriku kingdom to Dampundja where he collected iron ore to forge farming and hunting tools.<sup>50</sup> Apparently, he taught the Vagciriku men the skills of forging farming tools and hunting weapons during the reign of Hompa Muduva (±1830-1860). The case of this blacksmith, points out that a reasonably good relationship existed between the Vanyemba and the Vagciriku at this time.

However, during the reign of Hompa Nyangana there seems to be sufficient evidence that relations were not cordial between the Vagciriku and their northern neighbours. Around 1898/99 when Major Gibbons travelled through Nyemba

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<sup>50</sup> Bierfert, A & Mberema, K.P.S (1991) **Ngandu 1**. p.44

country he heard many complaints against Hompa Nyangana of the Vagciriku by the kings of the Vanyemba. Gibbons wrote down the complaints by the two Vanyemba kings, namely Kativa kaMutuva and his half-brother Shilima, against Hompa Nyangana. They reported that Hompa Nyangana together with his people made periodic raids into his kingdom.<sup>51</sup> Apparently, during those raids that were mostly carried out at harvesting time, Hompa Nyangana's men carried off everything they could, killing the men and selling the women and children to slave traders. The seriousness of this hostile relation can be seen when Mwene Shilima pleaded with Major Gibbons to request King Lewanika of the BaLozi on his behalf to intervene in the issue urgently.

The oral history of the Vagciriku elders seems to support the assertion that relation with their northern neighbours was sometimes not cordial. There is a well-known story amongst the Vagciriku elders of a raid that the Vagciriku men carried out against their Vanyemba neighbours. It would appear that Hompa Nyangana sanctioned the raiding party because it consisted of prominent members of his ruling class. Two of those were Prince Shampapi<sup>52</sup>, a nephew of Hompa Nyangana, and Linyando, his nephew-in law. It is told how Linyando was shot and killed by the Vanyemba men during that raid. This event can be estimated to have taken place before 1910 as the Vagciriku's raiding activities ceased when the Catholic missionaries arrived in May 1910.

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<sup>51</sup> Gibbons, H (1904) **Africa From South to North through Marotseland** pp.225-228

<sup>52</sup> In fact, after Hompa Nyangana's death on the 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1924, Prince Shampapi succeeded him as the Vagciriku King in 1925.

Kandambo kaMunkanda (Interview: 2006) also points out that relations were not well between the Vagciriku and their Vanyemba northern neighbours. She points out that when the BaTawana raided the Vashambyu at Malyo Island and massacred the Vagciriku at Shantjefu in 1894 they also killed and captured a large number of Vanyemba. When Mwene Kativa kaMutuva of the Vanyemba learnt that the BaTawana plundered and murdered his people because of Hompa Nyangana whom they had taken to Ngamiland as their captive, he vowed to exact revenge. On several occasions, Mwene Kativa kaMutuva sent many delegations to Fumu Dimbu I of the Hambukushu who sheltered Princess Kandambo, Hompa Nyangana's half-sister and her children. Mwene Kativa kaMutuva's plan of revenge was to kill off the remaining close relatives of Hompa Nyangana in order as to inflict the same pain and suffering on Hompa Nyangana. According to Kandambo kaMunkanda (Interview: 2006), on his deathbed Fumu Dimbu I of the Hambukushu hesitantly agreed to Mwene Kativa kaMutuva's request. However, as the latter was about to execute his plan by drowning Hompa Nyangana's half-sister, Princess Kandambo and her children, a message was received that Hompa Nyangana together with BaTawana were approaching on horseback. Upon hearing the news, Mwene Kativa kaMutuva and his people had to run for their lives, but Hompa Nyangana declared that if he was to find his half-sister and her children killed, the hostilities between him and the Vanyemba were to resume. This declaration by Hompa Nyangana can be interpreted as showing that hostile relations already existed before 1894 between these two neighbouring peoples. This incident is estimated to have taken place around October 1894, as this was

the year, Hompa Nyangana is said to have been released from BaTawana captivity.

However, on the other hand, there is also evidence that Hompa Nyangana had a cordial relationship with Mwene Ndumba yaChimpulu, who headed one of the Vanyemba kingdoms to the north-west of the Gciriku kingdom in present-day Angola. Mudi waKamenye (Interview: 2006) points out that the two leaders were friends. She narrated the historic visit of Ndumba yaChimpulu to the Gciriku Kingdom. As a token of appreciation and friendship when Mwene Ndumba yaChimpulu visited Hompa Nyangana, the latter gave away Mate, a relative to him, in marriage along with a large group of people. Some who went to Mavengi with Mwene Ndumba yaChimpulu only came back to the Gciriku kingdom after Mwene Ndumba had passed away. However, this cordial relationship between Mwene Ndumba yaChimpulu of the Vanyemba and Hompa Nyangana of the Vagciriku is an exception. Though Mwene Ndumba yaChimpulu ruled over one of the sections of the Vanyemba scattered communities, the territory he reigned over did not border the Gciriku kingdom. Thus, it can be argued that during most of the reign of Hompa Nyangana, relations between the Gciriku kingdom and their Vanyemba northern neighbours were hostile. However, the hostility cannot be attributed to mere tribalism but evidently to economic factors. This fact can be seen in the testimony of Mwene Kativa kaMutuva and his half-brother Shilima who complained to Major Gibbons that Hompa Nyangana's raid mostly took place during harvesting time.

### **Gciriku Kingdom's relations with the San.**

The San are the original inhabitants in a large part of southern Africa including the area where the Vagciriku had established their kingdom. It is therefore important to examine the nature of the relations between the San and the Vagciriku. It is also important to note from the start that it is a complex matter to assess the relationship of the Vagciriku with their San counterparts at a leadership level. This is so, because the San did not have permanent and central leadership structures. However, at a family and individual level, it becomes easy to indicate the nature of the relationship. Oral and written sources have pointed out both the good and the bad nature of the relationship that existed between the two peoples. Though they lived independently of each other, the Vagciriku and the San shared the same territory on both banks of the Kavango River since time immemorial. Thus, the new notion that the San had occupied the southern bank of the Kavango River while the Vagciriku occupied the northern bank and that the San had been dispossessed of their land and pushed from their settlements to less favourable places is debatable.<sup>53</sup> Arguing that the San people regarded the territory on the southern bank as their homeland and the Vagciriku regarded the northern part as theirs is against the popular theory that the San have lived all over southern Africa. Oral history from the Vagciriku acknowledges the presence of the San on both banks of the Kavango River since the time of their arrival. It also appears in

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<sup>53</sup> Mendelsohn, J. & El Obeid, S. (2004) **Okavango River: The flow of lifeline**. pp.51-53.

oral history that even at the time a section of the present Vagciriku lived at Mashi, the San people (Khoe-San) were also there. In fact, a section of the Vagciriku belonging to the Vakayovhu clan, proudly relate that before their exodus from Mashi they were Khoe-San (Mbarakwengo).<sup>54</sup>

However, at the same time, it is undisputed that sometimes relations between the Vagciriku and some local San groups were strained. For example, in 1878 when Hompa Nyangana's people shot and killed an American hunter, Chas. C. Thomas, the San people also participated in revenge attacks on the Vagciriku. McKiernan states that when mobilized, the twenty 'Bushmen' were willing enough to fight the *Ovampos* (Gciriku) who had made slaves of them.<sup>55</sup> The statement that the Vagciriku made slaves of the San people is indicative of the nature of the relation, which existed between them. However, the fact that the San cited slavery (serfdom) rather than the dispossession of their land speaks volume that prior to the colonisation of Namibia which allowed the fencing system and privatization of large tracts of land, land dispossession was not yet an issue. In oral history amongst the Vagciriku elders, there are also a few accounts of shooting incidents between the San and the Vagciriku during the reign of Hompa Nyangana. A well-known incident is the shooting of Muyenga (alias Kanca) with a poison arrow by the San men on the southern bank of the Kavango River, at Kangweru shortly before 1908. However, Thomas Katuvambwa (Interview: 2005) attributed that incident to the San's insatiable desire for tobacco and dagga. A group of the San

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<sup>54</sup> Mayinga waShiremo (Interview: 2008)

<sup>55</sup> McKiernan, G. (1954), p.167

(men) demanded that Kanca gave them tobacco and dagga, but when he indicated that he did not have any they shot him with a poisonous arrow that was not fatal as his arm recovered well. Katuvambwa's point about the San's insatiable desire for tobacco and dagga is in line with what various others had observed. As for example, Gordon writes what white hunters and travellers observed about the San concerning their legendary weakness for tobacco.<sup>56</sup>

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1918, Major Frank Brownlee wrote the following to the Secretary for the Protectorate in Windhoek;

*Apart from the men who have come from Kanjimi's country some 50 have come from Chief Jangana (sic)-men of very fine physique. The men from Jangana (Nyangana) who travelled along the Omatako Omuramba via Karakuwisa state that they met large numbers of Bushmen en route who stated that they would wait for the return of the labourers when they would attack and rob them. The Bushmen will in all probability attempt to carry out their threat as Jangana's men will probably have to return unarmed. It is very strongly recommended that these people (be) given a firearm and ammunition for their protection and that it be placed in charge of the foreman in charge of each batch of labourers. This firearm if handed over could be considered to satisfy the promise alleged to have been made by Lieutenant Lawson that he would present a gun to Chief Jangana (Nyangana). In German times such labourers as travelled between the Okavango and Grootfontein were generally accompanied by a police escort on their return but in certain instances where the labourers returned unarmed they were way laid by Bushmen, robbed of the goods bought with their earnings and even murdered...<sup>57</sup>*

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<sup>56</sup> Gordon, R.J. (1992) **The Bushman Myth: The Making of a Namibian Underclass**.p.37.

<sup>57</sup> NAN. File no: ADM. 95-2794/8. A letter dated (02-03-1918) by Major Frank Brownlee to the Secretary for the Protectorate.

It may be that fear of similar attacks was behind Hompa Nyangana's decision to inform Magistrate Gage in 1919, that he would not send anymore workers. Hompa Nyangana told Magistrate Gage during his tour of the Kavango in that year that he would not send any more workers to the Police Zone because of 'Bushmen' attacks on returning workers.<sup>58</sup> It is against this background that Kanyinga, also known as *Langhans*, was appointed by Hompa Nyangana and the authorities at Grootfontein to act as the escort-chief of the contract labourers returning from the Police Zone. In around 1916, Wilhelm Mattenklodt met Langhans Kanyinga and another Mugciriku man returning from Grootfontein.<sup>59</sup> However, it is not clear whether Langhans Kanyinga went to Grootfontein in 1916 to escort contract labourers or for other reasons. In 1924, it was reported that Foreman Langhans Kanyinga, whose house was located twenty miles from the Kavango on the Omuramba Omatako, had a San bodyguard of between fifteen and twenty men.<sup>60</sup> The fact that Langhans Kanyinga had San bodyguards to protect him from potential attacks by other San bands is again an indication of the complexity of the Vagciriku-San relations at the time.

On the other hand, it cannot be denied that the Vagciriku and the San had enjoyed good and long-standing relations. Family type relations existed with the two peoples. The two families would at times visit each other and they exchanged food, herbal medicines, beads and other household utensils. The family-to-family

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<sup>58</sup> Gordon, R.J. (1992). *The Bushman Myth*. p.111

<sup>59</sup> Mattenklodt, W. (1931) *A Fugitive in South West Africa*. p.216

<sup>60</sup> Gordon, R.J. p.126

and individual-to-individual relationship were known between the two people as *ushoko/umbusha* meaning counterpart or namesake.<sup>61</sup> Lawrence Green observed during his visit of the Kavango Region in around 1939, that each Kavango family had a long-standing arrangement with a 'Bushman' family. He further noted that the 'Bushmen' bring in this food, and thus earn the right to take part in the harvesting.<sup>62</sup> It is from this kind of relationship whereby the two peoples had developed a naming system where an individual usually had two names, one being a bantu name and another, Khoisan. This practice was in place until recent years as it is still noticeable today among some elders of the two peoples who reside in Gciriku. In fact, the name 'Gciriku' which the people have adopted since time immemorial, to identify themselves has roots in the !Kung-San language. This explains the positive observation by Dr. Anton Krause, the first medical doctor who worked at the Nyangana Roman Catholic Hospital, in connection with the Vagciriku-!Khung-San relations. He characterized the San-Kavango relationship as being symbiotic and with no violence.<sup>63</sup>

It is evident that when Hompa Nyangana returned from BaTawana captivity in October 1894, the San people came in to replace the massacred Vagciriku men in the kingdom. In his effort to rebuild the kingdom and to take revenge against Kgosi Sekgoma of the BaTawana, Hompa Nyangana turned to the !Khung-San for help and they responded positively. Edwin Wilmsen states that when Sekgoma

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<sup>61</sup> Mberema, K.P.S. (1996) **Shitungarongo**. p.37

<sup>62</sup> Green, L.G. (1945) **Where Men Still Dream**. p.222

<sup>63</sup> Gordon, R.J. (1992), **The Bushman Myth**. p.125

pursued a policy of extensive raiding into the region north of the Okavango River as far as the Luiana for ivory hunting, tribute and tax collecting and cattle raiding, he had gone effectively unchallenged.<sup>64</sup> In retaliation, Hompa Nyangana enlisted the Zhu [San] as accomplices in his attempts to avenge Sekgoma's raids and to recapture some of his cattle. Wilmsen contends that the raids that followed were not simple cattle rustling. Far too many cattle were captured for that, and substantial numbers were driven to Andara, and turned over to Nyangana.<sup>65</sup> These raids resulted in Sekgoma complaining in vain to the Bechuanaland British authorities to help him in retrieving the cattle. On one occasion in 1903, Kgosi Sekgoma complained that he lost 160 cattle from his cattle posts at Ncama (*Ncame* ?) and Karukuvisa through those raids carried out by the San people.<sup>66</sup> All the BaTawana cattle herders were killed during those raids.

Intermarriage between the Vagciriku and the San is another aspect that contributed to the existing good relations between them. In the early 1900s, Hompa Nyangana added a San speaking woman, Shigcende (alias Makena) to his wives. Shigcende bore him two children a girl who died while infant and a boy, Kamanga who lived to his old age. This alliance cemented the long-standing good relationship between the two peoples. Kamanga, the son of Hompa Nyangana, died in either the late 1990s or early 2000s and is buried next to his father in the

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<sup>64</sup> Wilmsen, E.N. (1989) **Land Filled with Flies. A Political Economy of the Kalahari.** pp.138-139

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, p. 137

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, p.137

Vagciriku Royal Cemetery. The historical marriage between Hompa Nyangana and Shigcende has become a point of reference for the Vagciriku and the local San people even today. Another prominent Mugciriku man reported as having been married to a San during the reign of Hompa Nyangana is Langhans Kanyinga.<sup>67</sup>

### **The Gciriku Kingdom's relations with the Kwangali and Mbunza Kingdoms.**

Though the Ukwangali and Mbunza kingdoms did/do not border the Gciriku kingdom, it is important to discuss the relationship that existed between them during the reign of Hompa Nyangana. It appears in oral history that Hompa Nyangana had an excellent relationship with the two kingdoms until around 1908. This can be attributed to the fact that Hompa Nyangana's father, Mukuve hailed from the royal family of the two sister kingdoms. According to Kamwanga, Mukuve, the father of Hompa Nyangana, was sent to visit Hompa Muduva of the Vagciriku by Ukwangali Hompa Mpasi.<sup>68</sup> It was during this visit that Mukuve married a royal woman Princess Wayera and from this union Hompa Nyangana and his brother, Prince Ngandu, were born. However, Mukuve died shortly after the birth of Prince Ngandu and according to ancient Kavango culture, his brother Hashipara came from Ukwangali and inherited the widow of his brother. It is said that shortly before the Makololo raid on the Vagciriku in 1860, Hashipara took

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<sup>67</sup> Wüst, J. **Manuskript über Buschleute (Hazu oder Wazu) Am Okawango-SWA.** Unpublished. p.22

<sup>68</sup> Kamwanga, S & Haushiku, F.J (1995) **Tu Vamanyo Kushakare.** p.10

Wayera together with all her children except for the first-born to Ukwangali where they lived. They stayed on in Ukwangali and only returned to Gciriku after Hompa Muhera took the Vagciriku throne in around 1865. Thus, it can be argued that Hompa Nyangana grew up in Ukwangali, as it can be estimated that they lived in that kingdom for more than five years.

It is against this background that it can be said that the period before 1908, Hompa Nyangana got along better with the Ukwangali and Mbunza kingdoms than with any other kingdom along the Kavango River. McKiernan states that when Hompa Nyangana fled in July 1878, from the firepower of a combined force of American and Boer hunters, he found a temporary refuge in the Ukwangali kingdom under Hompa Sikongo.<sup>69</sup> In McKiernan's book, the name Sikongo is wrongly spelt as Ochacongo. It is also possible that the actual ruler of Ukwangali in 1878 was either Hompa Mpepo or Mpande zaHaimbili.

Except for Hompa Sikongo of Ukwangali, it appears that all the other neighbouring kings refused to give Hompa Nyangana asylum. One can see this in the account by Fumu Dimbu I of the Hambukushu. The acceptance of Hompa Nyangana in Ukwangali by Hompa Sikongo despite the high risk of a reprisal attack by white men on horseback and with enough firepower is indicative of the close blood relationship that existed between them. The good bilateral relation that Hompa Nyangana of the Vagciriku had with Mbunza and Ukwangali

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<sup>69</sup> McKiernan, G. (1954), p.176

kingdoms is epitomized in a song that was sang in those two kingdoms as recently as the 1970s. It contains these lines;

*For you who haven't seen Nyangana,  
Eee! You who haven't seen Nyangana.  
Look with numerous horses, he comes.*

*{Anwe mwapuro Nyangana,  
Eee! Anwe mwapuro Nyangana.  
Kenga ukambe una ya.<sup>70</sup>}*

This song was a friendly expression or admiration of the Vakwangali and Vambunza populace towards Hompa Nyangana. The fact that, this song was sang in Ukwangali and Mbunza kingdoms, but not in Gciriku where Hompa Nyangana was a *hompa*, says much about the excellent relations with the two kingdoms.

In addition, after the Vagciriku-Lishora Massacre of 1894, one of Hompa Nyangana's two half sisters, Princess Katiku, together with her husband and family, fled to Ukwangali. It is known that they were well protected in Ukwangali and Mbunza. This compares with her sister Princess Kandambo who fled to the Mbukushu kingdom. Later, Princess Katiku married Hausiku, an important member of the Vambunza royal family, and they had a son, Mungenyu (alias Nturumba). According to Kampungu, Hausiku was to Hompa Nampadi what Kandjimi Hawanga was to Hompa Himarwa.<sup>71</sup> This means that Hausiku was an

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<sup>70</sup> Source: Notes given to this author by Mr. Karl Peter Shiyaka-Mberema (2007). He had himself witnessed at an occasion where this song was performed in Ukwangali in the 1970s.

<sup>71</sup> Kampungu, R. (1965), p.93

influential member of the Vambunza royal family and thus heir-apparent to the throne after Nampadi.

One can ask why the excellent relationship became strained after 1908. The answer to the question lies in the royal politics of Ukwangali and Gciriku dating back to the mid 1890s. Kampungu (1965: 222-226) wrote about the cause of the division in the Vakwangali royal family. A major factor contributing to the bickering and infightings stemmed from the royal politics of succession. As Hompa Himarwa of the Vakwangali was getting old, his three nephews, Princes Sirongo, Siteketa and Kandjimi Hawanga, competed for the throne. When the descendants of Princess Mpande led by her daughter, Princess Nasira, and her brother, Prince Siteketa realised that their lives were in danger they fled from Ukwangali. Initially, they fled to one of the Nyemba kingdoms but later to Gciriku kingdom where Hompa Nyangana gave them asylum as political refugees. It might also be possible that Hompa Nyangana invited them to his kingdom. Kampungu estimated that the Vakwangali political refugees settled in Gciriku before 1897.<sup>72</sup> It definitely could not have been before March or April 1894 as the families of those Vakwangali who were in Gciriku do not have any accounts based on their ancestors' personal experiences regarding the Lishora Massacre. In actual fact, in his 'ridicule' of Hompa Nyangana as we will learn later, the fugitive Prince Siteketa used to cite the Lishora Massacre of 1894 as a case to point to the stupidity of Hompa Nyangana's and his people. His attitude tried to show that if he and his people were around at the time when Kgosi

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid. p.222

Sekgoma tricked the Vagciriku to be massacred in 1894, Prince Siteketa would have none of it.

Initially, Hompa Nyangana did not have any problems with the Vakwangali political refugees as they came at the right time when he needed able-bodied men. This was because, most of his own men had perished in the Vagciriku-Lishora Massacre of 1894 and without them, and his kingdom was vulnerable from warlike kingdoms. Thus, the arrival of a large group of Vakwangali political fugitives, which consisted of many men, filled the gap in the Vagciriku kingdom. Hompa Nyangana started to rely on this group, so much so that he once encouraged Prince Siteketa to organise his men to attack his archrival, Fumu Diyeve II of the Hambukushu in around 1900. Hompa Nyangana had earlier given one of his daughters, Mavandje, to Prince Siteketa in marriage. It is common knowledge that in Kavango culture, a father in-law and son in-law relationship is one of the most sacred. The son in-law is generally expected to submit to his father in-law with utmost loyalty.

The extreme reliance and dependence of Hompa Nyangana upon Prince Siteketa for the role the latter's men played by regenerating the nearly exterminated Gciriku nation, protecting him and his kingdom created arrogance in the fugitive Prince. Fleisch and Möhlig (2002:236-271) recorded an interview with Kativa Micheal Sirongo who was a second-generation descendant of the Vakwangali political fugitives in Gciriku. In fact, when interviewed by Axel Fleisch in 1996,

Kativa Sirongo acknowledged that the traditional dance [nongoma] that took place in Prince Siteketa's homestead during the night of Hompa Kandjimi Hawanga's attack at Gciriku was performed for his mother, Lyankova.<sup>73</sup> One can therefore see that Kativa Michael Sirongo got his account from his mother who was present when the attack on Prince Siteketa's homestead took place. According to Kativa Michael Sirongo, Prince Siteketa became arrogant and started to undermine Hompa Nyangana's authority. He started to assert himself as a hompa as he started doing things without asking permission from Hompa Nyangana. For example, Kativa Michael Sirongo related that Prince Siteketa started to disregard Hompa Nyangana's policy that forbade people other than the ruling hompa to hunt big game, such as elephants.<sup>74</sup> He became so rude to Hompa Nyangana that he apparently declared himself the paramount Hompa of the Vagciriku and the Vashambyu people. He said to Hompa Nyangana that he did not see the need for him to return and fight with Kandjimi Hawanga for the Kwangali throne as he had already become a Hompa of the Gciriku and Shambyu territory. Prince Siteketa proudly said to Hompa Nyangana that in the near future Kandjimi Hawanga would rule Ukwangali and Mbunza territory while Siteketa would rule Gciriku and Shambyu territory. The view that Prince Siteketa begun to undermine Hompa Nyangana's authority was also told to Dr. Kampungu in the 1950s by Hompa Mangondo who herself was a fugitive together with Prince Siteketa in Gciriku. Kampungu wrote that Hompa Nyangana found Prince Siteketa difficult to deal with. He used to ridicule Hompa Nyangana and his

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<sup>73</sup> Möhlig, W.J.G. & Fleisch, A. (2002) p.263

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. p.259

people. Thus, Hompa Nyangana threatened to send for his fellow Kwangali to come and take him away.<sup>75</sup>

In 2004, Joseph Shikusho from NBC Rukavango Radio Service interviewed an old woman, Nepemba zaMburu from Kayengona who narrated in detail the treacherous deeds of Prince Siteketa while he was at Gciriku. Nepemba zaMburu was still alive at the time of writing this thesis. She narrated how Prince Siteketa sold her family to the BaTawana slave traders that included her mother, Kaharu, her uncle Sivoko with his daughters Nangura and Mantengo and a small baby. The other family that was sold by Prince Siteketa while at Gciriku included Sirengesa, Masingano and Nangoro who belonged to the Buffalo clan. The account by Nepemba zaMburu attests to the fact that Prince Siteketa asserted himself as the king of the Gciriku territory as the activities he was doing could only be done by a ruling king.

It can therefore be argued that with the attitude Prince Siteketa displayed, Hompa Nyangana imagined himself being overthrown and had to take drastic action to pre-empt Siteketa's plans and to reclaim his authority. In order to deal with Prince Siteketa, Hompa Nyangana came up with a well-orchestrated plan that would end in the elimination of Siteketa. As Hompa Nyangana did not have enough men of his own to deal with Prince Siteketa, he had to exploit the excellent relations he had with Ukwangali Kingdom. According to Kativa Micheal Sirongo, Hompa Nyangana bribed some men visiting from Ukwangali to give false reports back

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<sup>75</sup> Kampungu, R (1965), p.224

home to his counterpart, Hompa Kandjimi Hawanga. In order to create fear and anger in Kandjimi Hawanga, the message sent to Ukwangali was designed in the form of riddles. Hompa Nyangana told those men to report back at home that Prince Siteketa had a dog-named '*Vanakuru*' meaning they have grown. The name *Vanakuru* was meant to send a message that Prince Siteketa and his nephews who left Ukwangali as young men and thus were weak to fight against Hompa Kandjimi Hawanga at the time, were now old enough and ready to challenge him. That the dog was as huge as a calf and could eat such big quantities of food that it would even eat up all the food stored in Hompa Kandjimi Hawanga's palace. He also added that Prince Siteketa was boasting that a ground hornbill (*Bucorvus leadbeateri*) had grown feathers so much that it was about to fly. Hompa Mangondo, another descendant and a member of the Vakwangali political fugitives in Gciriku told the same story to Dr. Romanus Kampungu in the 1950s. When these messages were critically analysed by Hompa Kandjimi Hawanga's wise elderly men, they concluded that Prince Siteketa was preparing for war against his archrival. Upon learning this, Hompa Kandjimi Hawanga quickly mobilized his own warriors to pre-empt Prince Siteketa 'war plans'. Hompa Nyangana's role in scheming and plotting the assassination of Prince Siteketa makes it understandable when Nepemba zaMburu (Interview: 2004) attributed the latter's death to Hompa Nyangana rather than to Hompa Kandjimi Hawanga. She narrated as follows;

*My mother and her family were captured and sold away to slave traders. The one who captured them was Prince Sitekeka and he sold them away. But, when he returned*

*from that trip he was killed by Hompa Nyangana in order for him to rule freely over the people in his kingdom.<sup>76</sup>*

*[Kwa kwatere onane, makura ta va vatwara oko. Ogo ga va kwatere Siteketa, yige ga va kwatere, makura aka varandesenye oko. Makura po katengura, makura ne yipo nye va ya mudipagere Nyangana, a guseko vantu.]*

However, the fact is, Hompa Kandjimi Hawanga marched with his warriors from Ukwangali up to Gciriku where they assassinated Prince Siteketa. By listening to Hompa Mangondo's account who stated that it took place a year before the settlement of the Catholic missionaries at Nyangana, Kampungu estimated that the Siteketa's assassination in Gciriku took place in 1909. This author estimates it to have taken place a year or two before 1908. This is because at the time of Prince Siteketa assassination, Hompa Nyangana's royal seat was still on the northern bank of the Kavango River. However, Father Bierfert wrote that the Vagciriku relocated to the southern bank of the Kavango River in 1908.<sup>77</sup> It can be argued that Prince Siteketa's assassination contributed to the straining of relations between the two kingdoms. It is evident in the Vakwangali oral history that after killing Prince Siteketa, Hompa Kandjimi became very cross with his counterpart, Hompa Nyangana. Hompa Kandjimi Hawanga became very angry after he realised that the war he fought with his cousin Prince Siteketa was in fact Hompa Nyangana's war against Siteketa.

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<sup>76</sup> Nepemba zaMburu (Interview: 2004) My Translation.

<sup>77</sup> Bierfert, A (1913) **Die Diriku**. p.44



**Figure 4.** Hompa Kandjimi Hawanga seated on a chair, with his councillors at his palace, 1909. Photo taken during a Zawada expedition. Source:NAN.

Kampungu stated that Hompa Kandjimi Hawanga angrily remarked to Hompa Nyangana; “*it is your fault that I have killed my brother Siteketa.*”<sup>78</sup> He therefore started to accuse Hompa Nyangana of treachery. After the threats he received from Hompa Kandjimi Hawanga, Hompa Nyangana became wary of him.<sup>79</sup> It is said that Hompa Kandjimi Hawanga demanded cattle from Nyangana for the mourning ceremony of Prince Siteketa and threatened to shoot Hompa Nyangana’s trusted men. He also let his horse with the name ‘Mbambi’ eat the crops in the Mahangu field of Hompa Nyangana. It is possible that Hompa Nyangana became more wary of Hompa Kandjimi Hawanga, after the latter participated in the assassination of Hompa Nampadi of the Vambunza in around 1909. Hompa Kandjimi Hawanga helped to install his friend Karupu as the

<sup>78</sup> Kampungu, R (1965), p.226

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, p.226

Vambunza king. Analysing oral and written evidence, one can argue that Hompa Nyangana's invitation to the Catholic missionaries in 1910 to start evangelizing work in his kingdom could have been motivated by the threat Hompa Kandjimi Hawanga of the Vakwangali posed to him. Another reason for Hompa Nyangana's wariness could have been the threat posed to him by Naironga, one of Hawanga's prominent lieutenants who stemmed from the matrilineal line of Hompa Nyangana and could have staked a claim to the Vagciriku throne if he was ambitious. He stemmed from the matrilineal line of Hompa Nandundu who voluntarily relinquished power to the junior lineage in around 1830.

Thus, Nerumbu waShitarara (Interview: 2004) remembered that she used to be told by an uncle, namely 'GiyaPoroto' that Hompa Nyangana with his trusted men once travelled to Windhoek where he made a plea to the colonial authorities against Hompa Kandjimi Hawanga. She listed GiyaPoroto, Shindere, Kushokosha and Kanyinga as the four men who went with Nyangana to Windhoek to submit a petition against Kandjimi Hawanga. It is also possible that Nerumbu lyaShitarara confused Windhoek with Grootfontein as during that period the latter served as the colonial magisterial seat for the entire Kavango Region.

It is not on record that Hompa Nyangana had in his lifetime travelled to Windhoek but the story by Nerumbu waShitarara cannot simply be ignored. However, what is written is that when the Catholic missionaries first arrived in Gciriku in 1910, Hompa Nyangana insisted that they take along some of his

people to Windhoek to hand over a petition on his behalf.<sup>80</sup> In fact, the Catholic missionaries had to take four of Hompa Nyangana's emissaries to Windhoek.<sup>81</sup> Though it is not known what Hompa Nyangana's petition contained, one can speculate that it included the incursions his kingdom faced from rulers of neighbouring kingdoms, and Hompa Kandjimi Hawanga of Ukwangali was one of them. Hompa Kandjimi Hawanga died mysteriously during a visit at Grootfontein on 19<sup>th</sup> March 1923.<sup>82</sup> Except for the current Hompa Daniel Sientu Mpsi of Ukwangali, it is widely believed amongst the Vakwangali, that while at Grootfontein, Hompa Kandjimi Hawanga was poisoned by German 'officials'. When asked by Josef Shikusho of NBC Rukavango radio service, Hompa Daniel Sientu Mpsi (Interview: 1999) rejected the view that Hompa Kandjimi Hawanga died due to poisoning, but rather attributed his death to natural causes. However, Möhlig and Fleisch recorded an interview by Karl Kasiki (now late) on 27<sup>th</sup> April 1996 and on the 1<sup>st</sup> May 1996 and he attributed Hompa Kandjimi's death to poisoning by the Germans at Grootfontein. It must be mentioned that Karl Kasiki's view is the popular one amongst the Vakwangali. From the 1980s until his death in around 2005, Karl Kasiki was a real right-hand man and most trusted lieutenant of Hompa Daniel Sientu Mpsi.

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<sup>80</sup> Beris, A.P.J. (1996) **From Mission to Local Church**. p. 225

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, p. 225

<sup>82</sup> NAN. File no: ADM 30. 243/3 (vol. 2) NAN.

Though the cause of death of Hompa Kandjimi Hawanga is now not easy to establish, the fact that some sources link Hompa Nyangana to his death is indicative that since 1907/8 relations between the two rulers were not amicable.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Violent Encounters between Hompa Nyangana and Europeans.**

#### **Introduction**

It appears from the written sources of hunters, explorers, missionaries and European traders that Hompa Nyangana had a bad reputation for killing white people in his kingdom. In most of the existing historical literature written by Europeans, Hompa Nyangana's actions are unfairly depicted. In most cases, no details or explanations are provided for these violent encounters, leaving readers with the view that Hompa Nyangana had murdered white travellers to his kingdom for no apparent reason.

This chapter will relate some of the violent encounters between Hompa Nyangana and European hunters and traders in his kingdom. The focus will be on the incidents, which took place in 1878, 1892 and 1903. It will be shown that Hompa Nyangana was not a 'notorious murderer' of white travelers for the sake of it, but a man with reasons to do so because his relations with Europeans will also be put into context. Hompa Nyangana, like most of his counterparts at the time, can be judged by today's political standards as despotic. Evidence for this is demonstrated adequately in the last two chapters. However, not all of Hompa Nyangana's actions against the European traders can be attributed to his 'despotic' tendencies. In the incidents detailed in this chapter, one can see that he was simply acting to defend his authority as ruler and sovereignty of the Vagciriku. Hompa Nyangana's violent encounters with the European hunters and traders need proper contextualization.

The chapter will present new information about events that were fully investigated by the author of this thesis. The chapter will also document for the first time, using archival sources, the circumstances of the deaths of a German trader, Phillip Wiessel and a Scot, Robert Arthur Faraday, in 1892. These deaths suggest not merely “savagery” by Nyangana, but possible European intrigues in the affairs of the BaTawana and Vagciriku kingdoms. Finally, the chapter will briefly document the unfortunate events that led to the killing of Mr. Mauritz Paasch and his family at the order of Hompa Nyangana in June 1903. Unlike the 1878 Thomas shooting incident, the 1892 and 1903 incidents, which involved the killing of German traders took place during the German colonial era.

### **The Vagciriku’s Pre-colonial economy.**

According to oral testimony, the Vagciriku’s economy during the pre-colonial period was characterized by hunting and gathering, but they also cultivated the land to produce crops such as millet, sorghum, beans, etc. To a lesser degree, the Vagciriku kept livestock, such as cattle and goats. For example, in 1878 when the Vagciriku fought with the American and Boer trekkers, it is reported that huge quantities of their corn (mahangu) were confiscated whereas loss of livestock is not mentioned. This fact might explain that at the time the Vagciriku did not keep huge numbers of cattle. From the rivers (Kavango and Kwito Rivers), lakes and streams the Vagciriku relied on fishing, hunting small game and even big game such as hippopotami. From the land, they hunted game and gathered wild fruits.

It is also known that the Portuguese traders from the Angolan coast of Luanda, popularly referred to as *Vimbali* (OviMbundu), had dominated trade with the Kavango population, which includes the Vagciriku, until the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>83</sup> Professor Wilhelm Möhlig states that the OviMbundu traders originated from the Atlantic coast or the coastal hinterland of Benguella.<sup>84</sup> He mentioned that the first European trade goods, which reached the Kavango were in particular rifles, ammunition, glass beads, other ‘gewgaws’ like cloth and alcohol. These items were bartered against ivory and slaves. For example, a Portuguese man who lost four of his assistants in a war that Hompa Nyangana waged against the white traders in 1878, demanded 20 elephant tusks (ivory) from Nyangana as payment for his people who were killed in that war.<sup>85</sup> It is known in the Vagciriku oral history that the immediate predecessor of Hompa Nyangana, Hompa Muhera who ruled from around 1864 to around 1874, traded almost the entire Vakankora Clan of Shiwe Village to slave traders. They were accused of stealing beads and clothing from the bodies of those who drowned with Hompa Muduva in around 1860. It appears evident from the various sources that European trade activities with the Vagciriku increased during the reign of Hompa Nyangana. By the time of Hompa Nyangana, European items such as rifles and ammunitions were highly prized not only amongst the Vagciriku, but also across southern Africa generally. Thus, the Brussels Act of 1890 was proclaimed and it brought about the

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<sup>83</sup> Möhlig, W.J.G (2008) **Naming Modern Concepts in RuManyo**. p.79

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, p.79.

<sup>85</sup> McKiernan, G. (1954) **The Narrative and Journal of Gerald McKiernan in South West Africa, 1874-1879**. p.176

prohibition of the sale of guns and ammunition to Africans. When the British and German imperial authorities enforced the act within their colonies, rebellious and even violent behaviour amongst Africans against the European traders occurred.<sup>86</sup> The demand for horses amongst Africans also increased, as horses were seen as modern form of transportation and useful for hunting and wars.

**Activities of the European hunters and traders in the Gciriku Kingdom during the reign of Hompa Nyangana.**

Robert Gordon has written that Galton's visit to Owamboland in the early 1850s was symptomatic of a new era in which white [European] hunters and traders trekked north in large numbers in search of ivory.<sup>87</sup> Gordon attributes the invasion of present-day northern Namibia by white hunters and traders to industrial changes in Western countries, especially the United States of America. This brought about a rise in demand for exotic and luxury items, for example, ivory for use in pianos that symbolized status and wealth after the American civil war. Gordon further argues that while most of the ivory exported to Europe and America came from East Africa, Namibia supplied a large proportion of ivory in the early period before its herds were depleted. The white hunters and traders of that time, despite the high risk involved in the hunting business, also made huge profits sometimes estimated at 2 000 per cent. Gordon, who surveyed the figures and records of that era notes a grim march of environmental denudation in the

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<sup>86</sup> Von Francois, C. (1899) **Deutsch- Südwest-Africa**. p. 163

<sup>87</sup> Gordon, R.J.(1992) **The Bushman Myth**. p.33

northeast, the Bushman heartland. It should be realised, however, that though the area is nominally referred to as the Bushman heartland, during the same period the Kavango royal heads, including Hompa Nyangana, regarded them as within their sphere of influence (or simply as their own territories). Thus, the profiteering activities of the European hunters during that era conflicted with the power of the Kavango kings.

This was particularly true because the authority of Kavango rulers, including those of the Vagciriku, was embedded in land and everything to do with it. They were regarded as the owners of the land and all its creatures, both those in the air and those in the water. Subjects of the Kavango had been obligated for centuries to seek permission from their rulers for hunting and the clearing of land. Manfred Hinz discovered when he interviewed representatives of the Gciriku Traditional Authority that before the introduction of game parks and the legislation surrounding them, the Gciriku already had laws on game hunting.<sup>88</sup> For example, the Gciriku did not allow the hunting of giraffes and hippopotami and this was true for all big game including elephants and rhinoceri. Hinz was further informed that only the *hompa* was allowed to hunt these animals; people who hunted animals reserved for the *hompa* could be fined up to fifteen head of cattle.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Hinz, M.O. (2003) **Without Chiefs there would be no Game: Customary Law and Nature Conservation.** p. 58

<sup>89</sup> Hinz, M.O. (2003), p.58

According to Andreas Kantana kaShiremo (Interview: 2004) those who exploited the natural resources of the Vagciriku, their plant or animal species, were controlled through two separate payment (billing) methods well-known as *ntupu* and *mpaku* by the royalty. *Ntupu* is an equivalent of what is known today as a deposit or a first installment. For example, during harvest time each subject was expected to take a portion of his/her crop to the King's palace. This practice extended to the collection and gathering of specific wild-fruits that were regarded as specialities by the royalty. *Mpaku* is an equivalent of what is referred today as tax revenue. Each hunter, farmer, angler or person of any other professions was expected to hand over a portion of what they took in income to the King/Queen during a visit to the palace. Both *ntupu* and *mpaku* may also mean a tribute.

Those who did not adhere to these traditional revenue collection systems were usually punished in accordance with the laws of the land. Kavango rulers expected from foreigners and visitors to obey the same system as their subjects. Kavango tradition expects foreigners and visitors to conduct themselves in the same manner as locals, an expectation well illustrated in a Rukavango saying: *ntjene wa ya wana vaunyoye kushitondo valyeranga, nove ronda nkoko*. Literally, the saying can be translated as 'if you come to a country where people climb on top of the trees to eat their meals, you too must learn to climb up those trees.' An English equivalent of the saying is: *when in Rome do as the Romans do*.

However, when we read about the activities of the European hunters and traders, it becomes obvious that they undermined and ignored the core principles on which the Kavango kingship was founded. It is from this viewpoint that we must start judging the actions of Hompa Nyangana. Gordon reveals that the favourite hunting ground of the white men was in the area the Gciriku rulers regarded as their territory. He writes that the upper reaches of the Omuramba Omatako, a dry river with lush vegetation, was popular and an area much frequented by hunters, who based themselves at Karukuvisa in the present-day Shامbyu district to the southwest of the Gciriku kingdom.<sup>90</sup> It can be deduced from Gordon's description that it was in part of that area that the renowned hunter Frederick Green killed between 750 and 1 000 elephants. In fact, Gerald McKiernan writes that the number of rhinoceri, hippopotami, giraffes and other animals Green killed in his lifetime were innumerable.<sup>91</sup> It is of historical interest to take note of the 1861 accident, which happened in the Kavango River near Fumu Libebe's Island. A hippo overturned a canoe Frederick Green was travelling in and Green's colleague, George Bonfield lost his life when a crocodile took him.<sup>92</sup> In 1862 or 1863, Frederick Green's brother, Charles Alexander Green also drowned in the Kavango River by accident.<sup>93</sup> In order to help us understand the problems white hunters posed to the local kings, it must be mentioned again that Hompa Nyangana himself specialized as a hippopotami hunter.

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<sup>90</sup> Gordon, R.J. (1992), **The Bushman Myth**. p.38

<sup>91</sup> McKiernan, G (1954), p.93

<sup>92</sup> Tabler, C.E. (1973) **Pioneers of South West Africa and Ngamiland**. pp.14 -15.

<sup>93</sup> Tabler, C.E (1973) p.45.

Gordon has revealed that another famous hunter, the Boer, Hendrik van Zyl, quickly discovered the area north of Gobabis to the Kavango River and described it as a “true hunter’s paradise.”<sup>94</sup> According to Gordon, it was in that area that Van Zyl established a world record for killing over 103 elephants in one day and over 400 elephants in 1877 alone.<sup>95</sup> Edward Tabler wrote that the 103 elephants were killed at Oliphants Pan.<sup>96</sup> According to a German war map, Oliphants Pan is located north of Leew Pan/Khaudom, an area in present Gciriku territory, [See German war map, Annexure B]. However, in around 1916, Fumu Disho of the Hambukushu informed Willem Mattenklodt that the place where the elephants were killed was at Chamatura (Shamaturu).<sup>97</sup> Gordon has described the activities of white hunters and traders during this period as ‘booty capitalism’.

### **The Chas Thomas shooting incident of 1878.**

As an eyewitness, Gerald McKiernan dedicated about five full pages of the published version of his travellers’ journal to the events that led to the shooting of

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<sup>94</sup> Gordon, R.J. (1992). p.38

<sup>95</sup> Ibid, p.38

<sup>96</sup> Tabler, C.E (1973) **Pioneers of South West Africa and Ngamiland**. p.144.

<sup>97</sup> Mattenklodt, W. (1931), pp.210-211

an American hunter and trader, Chas Thomas, on the 27<sup>th</sup> July 1878 by Hompa Nyangana and his Vagciriku warriors. Though the name Ovampo [Owambo] is used throughout in McKiernan's book, there is little doubt that he was referring to the Vagciriku. In his book, McKiernan referred to Hompa Nyangana as '*the Ovampo chief –Nangani*'.<sup>98</sup> In addition to descriptions of places where the event took place, McKiernan provided a map of the places he referred to in his book [Please, see annexure C]. Corroborating his story, William Jordan (1881) has described the role played by the Boer trekkers in the war of 1878 between the Vagciriku and the white hunters. In his book entitled *De Trekboeren*, Postma also briefly discussed the role the trekboers played in avenging the shooting of Thomas in 1878 by the Vagciriku.<sup>99</sup> Jordan and Postma's stories strengthened the reliability of McKiernan's account.

According to McKiernan, Chas Thomas, the leader of their hunting expedition, together with a party of the Boers arranged with Hompa Nyangana to allow them to hunt on the northern bank of the Kavango River.<sup>100</sup> Jordan (1881) stated that Mr. Thomas had paid the *homba* two valuable guns and one ox for the privilege to hunt there. However, as the hunters were crossing the river, it appears that Hompa Nyangana reconsidered. On Saturday morning, Thomas' party was bringing their last wagon across the river. Three or four Boers and Thomas were in the wagon,

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<sup>98</sup> McKiernan, G. (1954) **The Narrative and Journal of Gerald McKiernan in South West Africa.** p.165

<sup>99</sup> Postma, D (1897) **Eenige schetsen voor eene geschiedenis van de Trekboeren.** p.39

<sup>100</sup> McKiernan, G. (1954), pp.165-166

Jacobus Redlinghuys on a horse, when about halfway across, the Vagciriku on the northern bank called out to them to turn back as they had no permission to cross with a wagon. Thomas then got onto the horse to ride ahead and parley with them.

*Only 2 or 3 Ovampos (Vagciriku) were seen standing on the bank but as was afterwards seen, between 200 and 300 were concealed behind the bank and in the reed. When Mr. Thomas got within 20 or 30 yards of the bank, they opened fire on him with guns and arrows. They also fired on the wagon. Mr. Thomas fell from the horse, but only wounded in the thigh, evidently from (as evident from) the bullet-hole in the saddle. The horse also fell, crippled by the same shot. The water not being very deep, Mr. Thomas was seen to support himself above water, until two Ovampos (Vagciriku) rushed into the water and killed him with spears. The people in the wagon were doing their best but, the oxen being restive, no good shooting was made, and the oxen were cut loose from the wagon.<sup>101</sup>*

The 28-year-old, Chas. C. Thomas, a native of Boston Massachusetts who had been in Africa for at least 8 years was a casualty. The Vagciriku's killing of Thomas led to the mobilization of European hunters and traders in the Gciriku territory on the southern bank of the river, to carry out a full-scale offensive against the Vagciriku and their leader, Hompa Nyangana. A Commando of about 50-armed riders, including twenty San-speaking men, plus an unknown number of Bantu servants of the white hunters, set out to avenge the killing of Chas Thomas. Postma wrote that this small army was under the command of J. Greyling and G. Alberts.<sup>102</sup> McKiernan proudly acknowledged that they sacked and burned all the villages they came across and carried away 15,000 lbs of 'kaffir'-corn

<sup>101</sup> McKiernan, G. (1954), pp.166-167

<sup>102</sup> Postma, D (1897), p.39

[*mahangu*].<sup>103</sup> Still McKiernan relates that despite the tremendous firepower of European hunters and traders, the Vagciriku put up fierce resistance before they retreated. One example of this occurred when five men on horses crossed the river in pursuit of the retreating Vagciriku warriors and Hompa Nyangana came to meet them after they had crossed the open flat plain. It is apparent from McKiernan's account that skirmishes between the two sides, lasted for at least five days. In the end, Hompa Nyangana was forced to flee from his kingdom to western Kavango where he was granted asylum by the king of the Vakwangali. His *mbara* [palace] was sacked and burned to ashes. Hompa Nyangana is reported to have acknowledged that twenty-two men were killed on the Vagciriku side and that many more were wounded.<sup>104</sup> However, it seems that the Thomas shooting incident of 1878 was not in fact the first attack by Hompa Nyangana on the white hunters and traders in his kingdom. According to information, Gerald McKiernan's hunting party got from Fumu Ndara I (Dimbu) of the Hambukushu, Hompa Nyangana had already clashed with Portuguese traders a few years before.<sup>105</sup>

Although no detailed oral account of the Thomas shooting incident has survived on the Vagciriku side, the accounts by D. Postma and William Jordan bring a few insights to light. Postma describes a tense atmosphere between the Vagciriku and

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<sup>103</sup> McKiernan, G. (1954), p.167

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, p.176

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, p.176

the Trek Boers shortly before the shootings.<sup>106</sup> Already both sides had threatened to open fire on each other. Jordan describes a similarly fraught atmosphere between the Trek Boers and most African native chiefs in the present vicinity of Eastern Namibia and North-Western Botswana during the period.<sup>107</sup> This reality appears evident in letters the native chiefs wrote to the Trek Boers. Native chiefs such as Kido Witbooi, Kamaharero, Andries Lambert and Moremi were hostile to the idea of the Boers settling in their territories. Kgosi Moremi Letsholathebe of the BaTawana was at the time a great friend of Hompa Nyangana. Oral accounts of the Vagciriku allude to the cordial relationship between Kgosi Moremi and Hompa Nyangana. George Mukoya (Interview: 1989) and Kamwanga (1995) state that Hompa Nyangana had made frequent visits to Ngamiland to visit Moremi and Moremi had paid a visit to Hompa Nyangana. On the 16<sup>th</sup> May 1877 Kgosi Moremi wrote this text to the Trek Boers:

*I received your message from Roberts, and I do not know what is the meaning of it. You accuse me of turning some of your people back from here; this I have certainly done, but I do not know what you have to do with it, if I like to turn people back, considering it is my country. In your message to me by Roberts, you threaten me with war if I dare to turn your people back. Now if you wish to fight with me I'm your Moses, ready I am; the reason I turned the men back was because they wanted to buy ground from me, and I did not wish to sell, now if you do not wish to make any disturbance in the country, I advise you to inspan your wagons, and go back to where you came from.<sup>108</sup>*

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<sup>106</sup> Postma, D. (1897), pp.37-38

<sup>107</sup> Jordan, W.W. (1881) **Journal of the Trek Boers**. pp.168-170

<sup>108</sup> Jordan, W.W. (1881), p.170

When trying to establish the causes of the Thomas shooting incident of July 1878, the above-mentioned factors should be considered. In 1884, while Aurel Schulz and August Hammar were in the Mbukushu area, they were strongly advised not to travel through the country of the Vagciriku. Fumu Ndara I of the Hambukushu informed them that the Vagciriku were still hostile to Europeans because of an incident that took place in 1879.<sup>109</sup> In fact, as seen above, the cited incident took place in 1878 not 1879, as Schulz and Hammar asserted.

### **The Wiessel and Faraday shooting incident of 1892.**

According to written primary sources kept in Botswana's National Archives, Phillip Wiessel and Robert Arthur Faraday were both killed at the order of Hompa Nyangana in 1892. These sources corroborate oral reports of the Vagciriku which mention a certain white trader named '*Mpundja*' who was killed at the order of Hompa Nyangana.<sup>110</sup> The written sources had confirmed the name *Mpundja* as the indigenous name given to Wiessel. Whereas the oral reports do not provide specific details about the incident, the archival written sources contain a considerable amount of information. It is in the latter that we learn specific personal details regarding the two European traders, their full names, nationalities and professions. It was confirmed in all the correspondence between Bechuanaland British Protectorate officials that Phillip Wiessel was a German

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<sup>109</sup> Schulz, A. & Hammar, A. (1897) **The New Africa: A Journey up to the Chobe and down the Okavanga Rivers, A Record of Exploration and Sport.** p.237

<sup>110</sup> See, Mberema, K.P.S. (Interview: 2003) AACRLS. 056: NAN

subject, while Robert Arthur Faraday was of Scottish origin and thus a British subject.

It appears that although the two traders were killed in 1892, the Bechuanaland officials only started investigating the case in 1895. This can only be explained by the fact that Ngamiland was not effectively brought under the Bechuanaland British Protectorate until 1894.<sup>111</sup> The British colonial authorities only posted a Magistrate at Nakalachwe, Ngamiland in September 1894. In fact, the first investigation Magistrate A.B. Walsh conducted in Ngamiland concerned the alleged land and mineral concessions rights given to the BSACo, a chartered company under the Chairmanship of Cecil Rhodes. Cecil Rhodes had alleged to the authorities that Kgosi Sekgoma Letsholathebe of the BaTawana gave exclusive land and mineral concessions rights to the BSACo in December 1893. It was also because of the affidavits sworn by Kgosi Sekgoma and those of his headmen that the alleged murder of the two traders came to the attention of the British authorities in 1894. In their sworn affidavits, Kgosi Sekgoma and his headmen refuted the claims of Isaac Johan Bosman of the BSACo that they gave him land and mineral concessions rights in Ngamiland in December 1893.

The Bechuanaland British Protectorate colonial officials were alerted by the report of Magistrate Walsh (18<sup>th</sup> October 1894) and began enquiries. In 1895 and 1896, there was an extensive correspondence between the British colonial

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<sup>111</sup> Tlou, T. (1985) **A History of Ngamiland-1750 to 1906: The Formation of an African State.** Macmillan Botswana. Gaborone. p.114

officials about the deaths of the two traders. This correspondence was exchanged between the Bechuanaland Border Police, the Resident Commissioner, the High Commissioner of Botswana, South Africa, and the Foreign Affairs' Office in London. It was because of this correspondence that the Resident Commissioner asked Captain Fuller, John Pieter Macdonald, Major Hamilton Goold-Adams and Trooper Poynton to investigate the case on the ground. It is most likely that the John Macdonald mentioned here is the same man who actively assisted King Lewanika, in 1885, in a war to reclaim his throne from the rebels who ousted him in 1884.<sup>112</sup>

It seems that during the same period, the German Imperial authorities in Namibia carried out their own inquiries and investigations on the Faraday and Wiessel case. This is evident from the Western Daily newspaper article published in Cape Town, in either 1895 or early 1896. In May 1896, W. Faraday, a brother of the late Robert Arthur Faraday, used this newspaper article to back up his complaints to the English authorities for their reluctance to institute a commission of inquiry.

The article read:

*The German authorities are now instituting inquiries into the murder of a German named Weisel and of an Englishman named Faraday. They are supposed to have been murdered and robbed by a native chief to the north of Lake Ngami.*<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> See Gibbons, H. (1904) **Africa from South to North Through Marotseland**. p.154

<sup>113</sup> BNARS. File no: HC 144. Western Daily Newspaper article (Exact date unknown).

However, the information regarding the enquiries conducted by the German authorities into the deaths of Wiessel and Faraday is yet to be found. Thus, the information relied upon in this study is mainly that which has come from the British colonial authorities based in Botswana and South Africa.

The details of the deaths of the two traders became known in December 1895 through an enquiry conducted by John Pieter Macdonald on the 4<sup>th</sup> September 1895. In late 1895, Macdonald reported to Lieutenant Barre Phipps that Phillip Wiessel left Molepolole in the former Bechuanaland British Protectorate in March 1891 for Lake Ngami. At the same time, Macdonald left for Mashonaland. From Okwa, Wiessel went to Ghanzi on horseback and there he met a man from Vryburg who had a wagon, namely Robert Arthur Faraday. This fact agrees with a report Trooper Poynton gave to the police in charge at Mafeking on the 11<sup>th</sup> May 1896. Poynton had been asked to provide further details of the murder of Faraday by contacting a Mr. Goodwin, stationed at Rietfontein. As instructed, Poynton interviewed Mr. Goodwin who provided him with the following information;

*“Mr. Faraday left Rietfontein in September 1891 with a wagon load of goods with the intention of trading in Damaraland, at Lehututu( in the Kalahari Desert) he met a Mr Weisel a German who persuaded him to proceed to Ovampoland. Mr Weisel had two horses and a small quantity of goods. When they arrived at a part of the country ruled by a Chief Lechulathebe (of the Mangwato tribe) a Dutch boy who accompanied them was taken prisoner, but released in a few days and allowed to return home. Mr. Faraday and Mr Weisel continued their journey*

*to Ovampoland. Mr. Goodwin has no further reliable information, but native rumours are that the wagon was attacked in the night [probably on the Ovango River (Kavango River) in February or March 1892] and that Messrs Faraday and Weisel and a Barolong were murdered.....”<sup>114</sup>*

The specific details of Hompa Nyangana’s warriors attack on the two traders are found in Macdonald’s report. Macdonald had interviewed some Gciriku nobles at the Kavango River, at an unspecified village. One of the people he interviewed was Princess Mavandje, the elder sister of Hompa Nyangana and a man named Cooma. Cooma was allegedly present at the occasion of Wiessel’s death. It is not clear at this stage as to who Cooma was. Unfortunately, the Rugciriku orthography did not exist at the time. Macdonald summarized what was told to him by Princess Mavandje and Cooma as follows:

*Wiesels passed our station and we sent Bushmen after him as we wanted to buy Martini Henry Rifles. Wiesels declined to sell us any. The Bushmen then fired on Faraday who was wounded and died next day. Wiesels being then out shooting but returned when the shooting was going on, and shot three of the Bushmen. In the meanwhile some Bushmen had taken some of Wiesels oxen as his herd boy had been killed. Then Wiesels turned back towards Nyangana’s station being quite ignorant of the fact that it was he who had sent these Bushmen to attack him. Wiesels then met Nyangana and asked him if he could hire him a boy to drive on his herds. Nyangana replied. “Yes, I will help you, bring your wagons close to my station and you must pay me with one Martini Henry Rifle for loan of a boy”. That night Nyangana held a meeting amongst his men and said to them. “This man ‘Mpundja’ is only by himself. We must murder him and take his goods. So Cowli (sic) one of Nyangana’ relations said “that is not good, the white men will turn on us and the Lake natives.” Nyangana replied to this, “I don’t know much about the white men,*

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<sup>114</sup> BNARS. File no: HC. 144. A letted dated ( 11-05-1896) by Trooper Poynton to the Resident Magistrate at Mafikeng

*but I am sure the Lake natives (i.e Sekgoma's) will be satisfied. Cowli then said "You can do as you like but I shall go away if you do.".....We settled however to murder him which we did next morning as follows. Nyangana's order being that when I shake with Wiesels, you Makanka<sup>115</sup> (Makanka being a very powerful man) and those who are with me must seize him from behind." This we did. Wiesels broke away and tried to get up into his wagon for his rifle, but someone stabbed him in the back with an assegai and afterwards knocked him on the head with a battle axe.....<sup>116</sup>*

According to the report compiled by Major Hamilton Goold-Adams' commission of inquiry, the Bushmen who fired at Mr. Faraday belonged to the Bombankanto tribe (Mbambangandu). This refers to the Vashambyu. Major Goold-Adams conducted his inquiry in Ngamiland with Kgosi Sekgoma as his main informant. Major Hamilton Goold-Adams added that Wiessel was already wounded when he returned to Hompa Nyangana's village after the shootings.<sup>117</sup> Macdonald claimed that Cooma had taken him to the scene where Wiessel was killed, which, according to Macdonald, was situated at the confluence of the Kavango and Kwito rivers, a place within the borders of German South West Africa Protectorate. Through his investigations, Macdonald established that Hompa Nyangana had been encouraged and aided by Kgosi Sekgoma of Lake Ngami in the act. This is suggested by the fact that, after killing Wiessel, Hompa Nyangana was quoted by his elder sister Mavandje as having sent the following message to

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<sup>115</sup> Probably his brother in-law Makanga.

<sup>116</sup> BNARS. File no: HC 144: A letter dated (10-12-1895) by Lieutenant Barre Phipps to the Resident Commissioner.

<sup>117</sup> BNARS. File no: HC 144. Commission of Inquiry Report dated (09-07-1896) by Major Hamilton Goold-Adams to the Resident Commissioner, at Nakalachwe.

Kgosi Sekgoma; *“The elephant is dead, I send you the tusks.”* Princess Mavandje told Macdonald that it meant that the Vagciriku had killed Wiessel and were sending Sekgoma some of the rifles. Moreover, Macdonald discovered that Kgosi Sekgoma had been in Hompa Nyangana’s country only about a month before the Faraday and Wiessel’s incident. Macdonald’s sources claimed that it was during this visit that Kgosi Sekgoma and Hompa Nyangana conspired to kill the traders. Kgosi Sekgoma’s motive is well established. The previous year, in 1891, when Wiessel and Faraday were in Ngamiland, Sekgoma was angered by their refusal to accept sixty cattle from him in exchange for Martini Henry rifles.<sup>118</sup> There were reports by 1893 that identify Kgosi Sekgoma as partly responsible for the deaths.<sup>119</sup> While in captivity in Ngamiland in 1894, Hompa Nyangana is reported to have confirmed Kgosi Sekgoma’s complicity. Hompa Nyangana is quoted as stating: *“Yes, I have killed white men, but I only did so by the command of my paramount Chief, Sekgoma.”*<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> BNARS. File no: HC 144. Statement (dated, 04 -09-1894) sent by Sekhome, Chief of the BaTawana, Lake Ngami to Bathoen, Chief of the BaNgwaketse. p.5

<sup>119</sup> BNARS. File no: HC 144. A letter dated (29-12-1893) by Khukhwi Mogodi to John Moffat.

<sup>120</sup> BNARS. File no: HC: 144. Statement sent by Sekhome, p.4

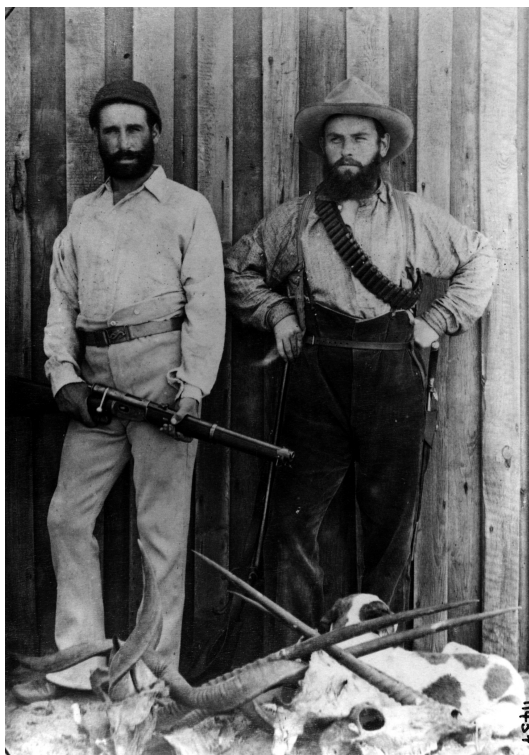


Figure 5. Traders Sichel and Wiessel (on the right), 1885. Source: NAN.

It is interesting that the first person alleged to have accused Kgosi Sekgoma of the murder was Franz Müller, a German trader at Lake Ngami, who a few years after 1892 became his ‘good’ friend. Tlou writes that Müller provided Sekgoma with advice during a dispute over the Ghanzi area with the Bechuanaland British Protectorate officials in 1895.<sup>121</sup>

If, as it seems evident from the primary sources, the killing of Wiessel and Faraday was caused by their refusal to sell Martini Henry breech-loading rifles, one might wonder why the traders, who had traded these rifles to the natives before 1891 without any problems, would all of a sudden refuse to trade them to natives in 1891 and 1892. The truth is that, during this period, the British and

<sup>121</sup> Tlou, T. (1985), p.124

German colonial authorities had imposed a ban on gun sales to Africans within their ‘protectorates’. No trader was allowed to trade guns and ammunition to Africans without obtaining a licence/permit from the relevant government. The Bechuanaland British Protectorate Proclamation on the ban of gun and ammunition sale specified harsh punishments and fines to any trader who did not observe the ban. For example, clause 37 of the High Commissioner’s proclamation dated 9<sup>th</sup> May 1891 reads as follows:

*No person shall deliver to any other person any gun or pistol, any lock, stock, barrel, or other part of a gun or pistol, or any percussion caps, or any gunpowder or cartridges, or any lead, without the written sanction of a Resident Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner or Magistrate, under a penalty not exceeding five hundred pounds sterling, or under pain of imprisonment for any period not exceeding seven years.*<sup>122</sup>

This legislation seems to explain Wiessel and Faraday’s refusal to trade the rifles to Africans. The Brussels Conference of 1889/1890 had brought about the proclamation on gun sales within the various colonial territories in Africa. The Brussels’ Act recommended that all colonial powers in Africa effect the ban on gun and ammunition sales to the natives.<sup>123</sup> Professor Tlou argues that the Act itself reflected a European fear of the military modernization that was taking place in Africa.<sup>124</sup> One could also argue that the ban redefined European-African relations, and especially the relations of African natives with European traders.

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<sup>122</sup> **Bechuanaland Protectorate and B.S.A Company’s Territory**: High Commissioner’s Notices & Proclamations. pp.33-34.

<sup>123</sup> Miers, S. (1967) **The Brussel Conference of 1889-1890: The Place of the Slave Trade in the Policies of Great Britain and Germany**. In Britain and Germany in Africa. pp. 108,109 &110

<sup>124</sup> Tlou, T.(1985), p.78

The natives were angered by the ban and became mistrustful or simply acted violently towards the European traders who came to their land. Curt von Francois' writings reveal a broader picture of the general outbreak of violence against traders as the ban was effected in GSWA. Von Francois (1899:161) wrote that the ammunition import prohibition turned the natives against the German government and that rebellion was just a step away.<sup>125</sup> For example, he described the Herero-German traders' relations in the year 1892 and 1893 as follows:

*In December 1892, the trader Krebs, who travelled from Windhoek to the Mbanderu, had £ 17 confiscated on the order of Chief Nikodemus, (with the motivation that this was done) because the Germans had stopped trade in ammunition. This should be done to everybody who came from Windhoek – all traders were recalled from Hereroland in December 1892 and January 1893, on the order of Samuel Maharero. In February 1893 Maharero ordered the closure of all shops in Okahandja. Shameless begging, blackmail and robberies by the chiefs created intolerable conditions for the traders in Hereroland.<sup>126</sup>*

Thus, the Wiessel and Faraday's killing must be placed within the context of the general deterioration in attitudes and relations between native chiefs and European traders during this period. Doing this enables us to understand that the Wiessel and Faraday case was not an isolated incident in an otherwise harmonious region that can simply be attributed to Hompa Nyangana's 'rooted' hostility towards white people.

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<sup>125</sup> Von Francois, C. (1899) **Deutsch- Südwest-Africa**. p.161. (Translation)

<sup>126</sup> Ibid, p.163.

### **The Response of the British and the German colonial authorities to the 1892 shooting incident.**

Since Wiessel and Faraday were subjects of the German and British colonial powers in southern Africa, one could expect a strong reaction to their murder. At this stage, the available written sources do not provide explicit evidence that there were official military responses from the two colonial powers. There is, however, enough evidence to suggest that the British colonial officials did not have any plans to attack the Vagciriku. For example, Anthony Sillery argues that the British government felt no particular tenderness towards Nyangana, because of the attack, but was not willing to act with the risk of international complications. It can be seen from a letter written on the 7<sup>th</sup> May 1895 by Goodenough, Acting High Commissioner to the Secretary of State in the British Colonial Office, Marquis of Ripon that the British administration instead proposed measures to soften Kgosi Sekgoma's attitude towards the inhabitants of the German Protectorate.<sup>127</sup> The reference 'inhabitants of the German Protectorate' included the Vagciriku, who Kgosi Sekgoma had raided, massacred and captured in March/April 1894.<sup>128</sup> Regarding the implementation of the instruction to restrain Kgosi Sekgoma, Captain Fuller who was asked to execute this order had the following to write:

*I have ascertained that Nyangana, the Chief who was captured by Sekgome within German territory, has been released and allowed to return. I questioned Sekgome as to whether any of Nyangana's people are still here and*

<sup>127</sup> Sillery, A (1965) **Founding a Protectorate: History of Bechuanaland, 1885-1895**. pp.187-188

<sup>128</sup> Ibid, pp.187-188.

*working as slaves for the Bechuanas, he replied that there were none here with his knowledge. I shall find out for certain before long, and I think if told to do so Sekgome would release any that may be found. I explained to him that Nyangana's territory is in German Protectorate and must not be entered by his people for the purpose of making war. He said he did not know where the line between the English and Germans was at the time he fought Nyangana, but he would take care not to allow his people to cross their borders again.<sup>129</sup>*

There are pieces of evidence that raise questions about the part of the Germans. These questions, as to whether the Germans really planned revenge attacks on the BaTawana and the Vagciriku arise because of statements allegedly made by BSACo's agents to the BaTawana. For example, we learn from a letter of Khukhwi Mogodi, a native evangelist, dated 29<sup>th</sup> December 1893, what the four white men representing the BSACo said to the BaTawana headmen in the presence of Kgosi Sekgoma. The four white men were Isaac Johan Bosman, Mattys Andries Joubert, Georg Reinhardt and Frederick Scheepers. According to Khukhwi Mogodi, who was present at the meeting, they told Kgosi Sekgoma and his headmen that:

*The Germans are fighting with the Namaquas and their army will go further. They are looking at the Damara[Herero] also and the BaTawana. There is a certain trader here whose name is Muller. He has written to the Cape to say that Sekhome (Chief of the BaTawana) has killed white people at Botserekwe [Gciriku] and Nyankana [Nyangana]. And, the Germans say- If our army begins to fight it will not cease. Even if you regret it and ask for peace-there will be no peace. And, the question is-*

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<sup>129</sup> BNARS. File no: HC. 144. A letter dated (05-06-1895) by Captain Fuller to the Colonial Secretary.

*do you make friends with us or do you not? This you will know yourselves.*<sup>130</sup>

It is not clear where the four white men had obtained the information that the Germans were planning an attack on the BaTawana, as they came from South Africa and not from GSWA. However, their assertion that the Germans were at the time engaged in a fight with the Namaqua was factually correct as the Germans were at war with the Nama clan of Hendrik Witbooi, which started with a German attack at Hoornkranz on the 12<sup>th</sup> April 1893.<sup>131</sup> In fact, on the 07<sup>th</sup> December 1893, the German army attacked the Nama at Hoornkranz for the fourth time in a year at which the Nama were finally defeated. Thus, the BSACo agent's information of December 1893 that the Germans were at the time engaged in a war with the Nama was indeed accurate. In fact, in a sworn affidavit to Magistrate, A.B. Walsh on the 4<sup>th</sup> October 1894, Khukhwi Mogodi had repeated the statement on the allegations made by Isaac Bosman and colleagues regarding 'Germans plans of war' on the BaTawana. In a sworn affidavit, Khukhwi Mogodi stated as follows;

*I Khukhwi A. Mogodi do hereby certify the following statement to be true: It is a fact that I was present at the meeting of Bosman and Sekhome when Bosman stated he was sent by the Queen's Government at the Cape. He said (Bosman) "that the Government told him to make haste and that he had come as quickly as possible to make the treaty of friendship, as the Germans who were fighting the 'Hottentots' would most probably come into Sekhome's*

<sup>130</sup> BNARS. File no: HC 144. A Copy of an extract from a letter dated (29-12-1893) of Khukhwi Mogodi to John Moffat, the Assistant Commissioner stationed at Palapye.

<sup>131</sup> Dierks, K. (1999) **Chronology of Namibian History**.p.76

*country, to make Sekhome answer for the murder of Germans by Nyangana. He ( Bosman) then went on to state if Sekhome signed this treaty of friendship the Imperial government would protect him from the Germans....<sup>132</sup>*

It is noticeable that two of the BSACo representatives, Georg Reinhardt and Frederick Scheepers, were themselves of German origin. The German Ambassador in London was also quoted as saying that Reinhardt had written a statement in January 1895 to the authorities in GSWA to inform them of the Wiessel affair of 1892.<sup>133</sup> It appears in a letter of Sir Percy Anderson that the German Ambassador in London was informed of Reinhardt's statement by authorities in GSWA. What is not clear at this stage is whether Reinhardt sent the report to the GSWA authorities on his own account or as feedback from an assignment, he was asked to carry out by the same authorities. This remains a mystery because Reinhardt's actual statement to the authorities in GSWA is yet to be found. However, by January 1895, the time of Reinhardt's report, the Vagciriku were already been severely punished on two occasions in 1894. A military response from the German Schutztruppe may not have been deemed necessary.

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<sup>132</sup> BNARS. File no: HC 144. A sworn affidavit dated (04-10-1894) by Khukhwi Mogodi to Magistrate A.B. Walsh at Nakalachwe.

<sup>133</sup> BNARS. File no: HC 144. A letter dated (20-06-1895) by Sir Percy Anderson from Foreign Office to Colonial Office.

### **The 1894 attacks on the Vagciriku by a Boer Commando Unit and the BaTawana of Sekgoma.**

There were two attacks on the Vagciriku in 1894. The first was by a Boer Commando Unit from South Africa led by Axel Eriksson (locally known as Karwapa) on their way to the new envisaged settlement at Mossamedes, in Angola. The report by Major Hamilton Goold-Adams on the Wiessel and Faraday 'murders' mentions that the BaTawana army attacked the Vagciriku shortly after the Boers' attack. Eriksson wrote that the Boers were themselves responding to the large numbers of white travellers who were killed along that route.<sup>134</sup> Major Goold-Adams was also of the opinion that the main reason for the Boer Commando Unit's attack on the Vagciriku was probably to punish them for the murder of Faraday and Wiessel.<sup>135</sup> Seeing that the Boer Commando Unit was crossing the river towards their villages, the Vagciriku warriors are said to have opened fierce fire on the commando but they fled shortly afterwards.<sup>136</sup> Eriksson's statement makes it evident that the Boer attack was planned beforehand. After all, crossing the river without asking for local help clearly constituted an act of aggression. Thus, the opening of fire by Vagciriku warriors can be interpreted as an attempt to fend off the aggressors. The Boers then searched the Vagciriku homesteads and managed to find the personal belongings of the two traders.

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<sup>134</sup> Johansson, P. (2007) **The Trader King of Damaraland: Axel Eriksson, A Swedish Pioneer in Southern Africa.** p.68

<sup>135</sup> BNARS. File no. HC 144. A letter dated (09-07-1896) by Major Hamilton Goold-Adams to the Resident Commissioner.

<sup>136</sup> Johansson, P. (2007). p.68

Specifically, Swanstrom wrote that the Boers found a number of letters sent by friends in England to Mr. Faraday.<sup>137</sup> After the search, five of the homesteads were torched.<sup>138</sup> However, neither side reported any casualties during the skirmish. At least one of Axel Eriksson's letters seems to indicate that the Boer attack on the Vagciriku in which he participated took place during the first half of 1892 and not in 1894.<sup>139</sup> By reading his letters, it becomes clear that as from April to July 1894, Axel Eriksson was on a visit in Europe. However, the assertion that a Boer Commando attacked the Vagciriku in 1894, cannot simply be ruled out for three main reasons. Firstly, Fritjof Swanstrom who was a former good friend of the then late Axel Eriksson noted in 1903, that this attack by a Boer Commando on the *Niangana tribe* in which Axel Eriksson played a leading role took place in 1894.<sup>140</sup> Secondly, since the BaTawana's attack on the Vagciriku is estimated to have taken place in March or April 1894, one can still argue that the Boer Commando's attack led by Eriksson could have taken place before Axel Eriksson left for Europe. Thirdly, because when Sekgoma's BaTawana massacred the Vagciriku in March/April 1894 they found that Nyangana's village was already been raided and burned by a party of Boers from their settlement of Mossamedes and that Hompa Nyangana himself was a refugee on the far side of the

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<sup>137</sup> BNARS. File no: RC 10/8. A letter dated (15-11-1903) by F. Swanstrom to the Resident Commissioner.

<sup>138</sup> Johansson, P. (2007). p.68

<sup>139</sup> Ione & J. Rudner (2006) **Axel Wilhelm Eriksson of Hereroland (1846-1901): His life and letters.** Pp.153-155

<sup>140</sup> BNARS. File no: RC 10/8. A letter dated (15-11-1903) by F. Swanstrom to the Resident Commissioner.

Okavango.<sup>141</sup> This suggests that the said attack on the Vagciriku happened shortly, probably a few weeks before the BaTawana's attack on the Vagciriku rather than two years before as it is proclaimed in a published letter of Axel Eriksson.

It is also notable that other dates had been incorrectly entered in this letter of Axel Eriksson. As for example, the year Chas Thomas was killed by the Vagciriku is written as to have been in 1887 instead of 1878. The date 1892 of which the two traders, Wiessel and Faraday were killed by the Vagciriku is also incorrectly written as having occurred in 1882. Ione & Jalmar Rudner (2006:279) attributed this misrepresentation of dates to a misprint by Waernemann who quoted this letter in 1955. This might also cast doubt on the date 1892 when Eriksson's letter is said to have been written by Axel Eriksson.

Surprisingly enough, the second attack on the Vagciriku in 1894 came from none other than Kgosi Sekgoma of the BaTawana, a man who was at the same time being accused for complicity with Hompa Nyangana in the deaths of the two traders. During this attack, almost all of the able-bodied men of the Vagciriku were massacred. This incident is well known in the history of the Vagciriku as '*Vita vyaLishora*' translated as the Lishora Massacre. After the BaTawana's return from a raid of Prince Kanyetu of the Vashambyu at Malyo Island on the Kwito River, Kgosi Sekgoma asked Hompa Nyangana to assemble all his men in one place. In Kgosi Sekgoma's own words to Hompa Nyangana; *tommorrow you*

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<sup>141</sup> BNARS. File no: HC 144. Major Hamilton Goold-Adams' report dated (09-07-1896) to the Resident Commissioner.

*must all be gathered together; bring all your people with their arms; leave no one behind.*<sup>142</sup> The reason he gave Nyangana for his request was that he had a special magical treatment to administer to them that would make them resilient fighters and bullet proof in battles. One can see that, given the Boer Commando's attack on the Vagciriku a matter of weeks before, Hompa Nyangana may have viewed Kgosi Sekgoma's offer as a quick solution for his warriors' shortcomings on the battlefield. Annafrugencia Mudi waKamenye (Interview: 2006) stated that Hompa Nyangana was excited by Sekgoma's request. He sent messengers across the length and breadth of his kingdom to order all able-bodied men to appear at his palace at a set time and date. When they arrived at Shitopoho, they were all taken to a place called Shantjefu near the Kwito River where the magical treatment was to be administered. All the Vagciriku men were told that unless they disarmed completely the magical treatment would not have any effect. Apart from Makanga, who refused to surrender his battle knife, all the men obeyed. The Vagciriku's oral history has it on record that, in the height of the massacre, Makanga gallantly resisted and was able to kill a number of the BaTawana soldiers before he was finally gunned down. According to Baetsile, a man called *Wetsho Otsile* administered the so-called magical treatment by means of a wildebeest's tail dipped into a bowl of water and mixed with charcoal and fat.<sup>143</sup> It needs to be noted that Baetsile was one of Sekgoma's soldiers who descended upon the Vagciriku. In fact, Baetsile and Sekgathole, Sekgoma's own half-brother

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<sup>142</sup> BNARS. File no: HC:144. Statement dated ( 04 -09-1894) sent by Sekhome, Chief of the BaTawana, Lake Ngami to Bathoen, Chief of the BaNgwaketse. p.3

<sup>143</sup> BNARS. File no: HC:144. Statement dated (04-09-1894) sent by Sekhome (Sekgoma), Chief of the BaTawana, Lake Ngami to Bathoen, Chief of the BaNgwaketse, Kanye, P.3

were Sekgoma's own messengers to Hompa Nyangana when they returned from the raid of Prince Kanyetu at Malyo Island.

According to Thomas Tlou (1985:131) and G.E. Nettelton (1934:352), *Wetsho Otsile* was the son of Dithapo who acted as the BaTawana Kgosi upon the death of Kgosi Moremi II in 1890. *Wetsho Otsile* is also known as *Thabeng Mogalakwe*. It should be noted that Thabeng Mogalakwe [*Wetsho Otsile*] was an archenemy of Kgosi Sekgoma from the very beginning of Sekgoma's reign until 1906, when his father Dithapo managed to install Mathiba as a new BaTawana Kgosi, at the time of Sekgoma's stay in Kimberley because of ill health.<sup>144</sup> Thus, an investigation is warranted as to what could have been the motivating reasons, which prompted a rare show of unity between Kgosi Sekgoma and Thabeng Mogalakwe [*Wetsho Otsile*] in their military expedition against the Vashambyu and the Vagciriku on the Kavango and Kwito Rivers. The Vagciriku elders recall the name of this false magic as *peku*.

The following is from Baetsile's own account of how Kgosi Sekgoma managed to trick Hompa Nyangana:

*You are a Chief, so you cannot be washed with others; you and I must have the charm together. Then a rheim with a slip knot was prepared. Sekgoma first passed through the slip-knot, saying, 'I pass through the opening of the stomach.' Next Nyangana's little son passed through the slip-knot in a similar manner. Thirdly, Nyangana himself*

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<sup>144</sup> Tlou, T. (1985), pp.85, 86, 130, 131 & 132

*entered the slip-knot to do the same, but was caught by the slip-knot and made a prisoner. Sekgoma, having secured Nyangana, instructed his followers to open fire on the unarmed men of Nyangana and they killed them to a man. Then the BaTawana seized the women, children and cattle of Nyangana and his people, gathered them all together and travelled home with them, Nyangana and his son being prisoners of Sekgoma...*<sup>145</sup>

There are various conflicting reasons as to explain this attack. Vagciriku oral history consistently identifies two main possibilities. The first is that Hompa Nyangana himself had invited Kgosi Sekgoma to assist him against his archrival Prince Kanyetu of the Vashambyu. The second is that Hompa Nyangana had grown jealous of his brother in-law Makanga, who owned so many cattle and much material wealth, and had decided on his assassination. While Hompa Nyangana was undoubtedly a controversial and vindictive character, these explanations for the Lishora Massacre are not beyond scrutiny. Indeed, there are a number of points, which undermine them. Firstly, if Hompa Nyangana invited Kgosi Sekgoma to assist him against Prince Kanyetu, why would Sekgoma then turn on the Vagciriku and Hompa Nyangana? Secondly, if Hompa Nyangana was jealous of his brother in-law, why did Sekgoma not execute Makanga and leave the rest of the Vagciriku men who had nothing to do with Makanga's wealth? As one can see from the written records on the BaTawana side, including Kgosi Sekgoma's own statements, it becomes evident that Hompa Nyangana did not ask for any assistance against Prince Kanyetu from him.

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<sup>145</sup> BNARS. File no: HC:144. Statement dated (04-09-1894) sent by Sekhome (Sekgoma), Chief of the BaTawana, Lake Ngami to Bathoen, Chief of the BaNgwaketse, Kanye. p.4

Vagciriku elders informed Hompa Sebastian Kamwanga that Hompa Nyangana together with Makanga had sought assistance from Kgosi Moremi.<sup>146</sup> Kgosi Moremi died in 1890 and was succeeded by Sekgoma in 1891. Hompa Nyangana's former wife, Katiku kaSheshere, who is most often cited by the Vagciriku and Vashambyu elders as having been the motivating factor for Hompa Nyangana's outrage against Prince Kanyetu, left him before 1884. The marriage between Katiku kaSheshere and Prince Kanyetu at Shiyana village after she left Hompa Nyangana is cited in oral accounts as the immediate reason for Nyangana to request Kgosi Sekgoma to punish his arch-rival, but written records dispel this possibility. By 1884, Prince Kanyetu was already living at Malyo Island on the Kwito River after he left Shiyana where he lived with his elder brother Hompa Mbambangandu I. However, oral history has it that Katiku kaSheshere got married to Prince Kanyetu at Shiyana. This will then mean that Katiku kaSheshere left Hompa Nyangana before 1884. The date 1884, is well established because when King Liwanika of the Lozi sought political asylum in Kavango in that year, he lived near the Malyo Island under the protection of Prince Kanyetu. This would suggest that it took more than ten years for Hompa Nyangana to react against the stealing of his wife. Thus, a dispute between Hompa Nyangana and Prince Kanyetu over Katiku kaSheshere does not seem to explain the Vagciriku-Lishora Massacre of 1894.

It is also striking that Kgosi Sekgoma's description of the Vagciriku-Lishora Massacre does not mention or allude to any invitation by Hompa Nyangana to assist him against Prince Kanyetu. In fact, when Kgosi Sekgoma and his soldiers

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<sup>146</sup> Kamwanga, S & Haushiku, F.J (1995), p.14

passed Hompa Nyangana's village to attack Prince Kanyetu at Malyo Island, they told Hompa Nyangana that they were proceeding in that direction merely for hunting. Baetsile states that Hompa Nyangana was suspicious of Kgosi Sekgoma's movements and sent a message to the village of Prince Kanyetu saying: "*Sekgoma is coming with an army, but states that he is not going to attack people, but I Nyangana have my doubts.*"<sup>147</sup> Baetsile suggested that it was because of this message that Sekgoma found the people prepared, the women and children sent away and only the men at home. He added that Sekgoma's army surrounded the town during the night and at dawn opened their attack on the town, killing a great many men and seizing their cattle. Three of Sekgoma's men were killed on this occasion. Why then would Hompa Nyangana send a warning message to the village of Prince Kanyetu his archrival if it was he who had invited the BaTawana's to attack Kanyetu in the first place?

Vashambyu oral history has consistently suggested that Sekgoma's army set upon the Vagciriku able-bodied men because of their heavy casualties at the hands of Prince Kanyetu at Malyo Island. It is suggested from the Vashambyu oral history that Sekgoma's men vented their anger on the people of Hompa Nyangana, because he was the one who invited them to fight Prince Kanyetu. However, if, as the BaTawana admitted, only three had been killed during the fight with Prince Kanyetu, one wonders, if so small a loss could justify the BaTawana's merciless slaughter of so many hundreds of the unarmed Vagciriku men.

<sup>147</sup> BNARS. File no: HC:144. Statement dated (04-09-1894) sent by Sekhome (Sekgoma), Chief of the BaTawana, Lake Ngami to Bathoen, Chief of the BaNgwaketse, Kanye, p.1

Major Hill Gibbons (1904:212-213) and Professor Siegfried Passarge (1905) asserted that Kgosi Sekgoma had been persuaded to carry out the Vagciriku massacre by white men at Ngamiland. Gibbons was well acquainted with Ngamiland affairs as he had worked as a soldier for both the British Cape Colony government and the BSACo in the areas of present-day Botswana, Zambia, Angola and Namibia in the late 1890s and early 1900s. He had the following to write about the event:

*It appears that in '95 at the instance of white men living at Ngami, Sekome [Sekgoma], had organized a punitive expedition against the Makwengari [Vagciriku] chief Nyangana, at whose village Mr, Weisel, a trader, was treacherously murdered. Niangana was made prisoner, his village sacked and his people slain. After trial at Ngami he was released and allowed to return to his home.<sup>148</sup>*

The written primary sources, however, set March or April 1894 as the date of the Vagciriku-Lishora Massacre, not 1895 as Gibbons thought. While in the Hambukushu area in 1898, a German Geographer Siegfried Passarge noted about the then tribal relations between the BaTawana and the Kavango populations and specifically between the Hambukushu and the Vagciriku as follows:

*Meanwhile, an important change in political relations had occurred. BaTawana had subjugated all the Okavango tribes up to Gciriku Chief Nyangana, and had made them subject to payment of tribute. The murder of a Boer, Wiese, by Nyangana was the cause of the war.<sup>149</sup>*

<sup>148</sup> Gibbons, H. (1904) **Africa From South to North through Marotseiland**. Pp. 212-213.

<sup>149</sup> Wilmsen, E. (1997) **The Kalahari Ethnographies (1896-1898) of Siegfried Passarge: Nineteenth Khoisan and Bantu-speaking peoples**. P.286

Siegfried Passarge worked in Ngamiland for the British Westland Chartered Company prospecting for minerals from 1896. It appears that Passarge's sources thought that Wiessel was a Boer while he was of German origin just like Passarge. However, a critical question is why Passarge would and Gibbons easily accuse other white people of encouraging black people to massacre one another? On a number of occasions, Kgosi Sekgoma himself stated that he attacked the Vagciriku and arrested Hompa Nyangana because they killed Wiessel, Faraday and BaTawana.<sup>150</sup> The puzzling question is what or who changed Kgosi Sekgoma's heart to carry out an expensive retributive attack on the Vagciriku because they killed Wiessel and Faraday?

It is well known that Kgosi Sekgoma was a sworn enemy to the two mentioned white traders. It is known that he wished them to be killed in September 1891, because they refused to sell Martini-Henry rifles to him. Whilst, Kgosi Sekgoma's explanation of the killing of Wiessel and Faraday by Hompa Nyangana's people was factually correct, however, Sekgoma's assertion that the Vagciriku shortly after also killed his own people is questionable. One boy, who was killed with Faraday by the 'Bushmen' sent by Hompa Nyangana, was a Morolong belonging to the Barolong group of Petere Sebege who settled at Okwa in the Ghanzi area. We can surmise from the writings of Tlou (1985:93) that by 1894 Kgosi Sekgoma did not have good relations with the Barolong group, as he was jealous of Petere

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<sup>150</sup> BNARS. File no: HC 144. For example see, a letter dated (09-07-1896) by Major Hamilton-Goold-Adams to the Resident Commissioner.

Sebego's hunting success. In fact, in 1897, Kgosi Sekgoma's army kidnapped women and children of Sebego's Barolong whom he only released after a ransom of hundred head of cattle was paid to him. It is, therefore, unimaginable that Kgosi Sekgoma would at that stage be so altruistic as to carry out an expensive military expedition because of one Morolong killed by Hompa Nyangana's people. Surveying the oral history from the Vagciriku, Vashambyu, and the written primary sources from Botswana's National Archives, one can argue that the BaTawana-Vagciriku relations were excellent before the Lishora Massacre of 1894. This can be seen by the courtesy visits the two rulers paid each other and the manner in which Hompa Nyangana blindly trusted in Kgosi Sekgoma's request to assemble his men for the 'special' magical treatment.



**Figure 6.** Kgosi Sekgoma Letsholathebe (in dark suit) Source: **History of Botswana** by Tlou, T and Campbell, A (2007: 238)

However, is there any evidence that Kgosi Sekgoma attacked the Vagciriku because of persuasion by or pressure from the white men at Ngamiland. The records of Gibbons and Passarge seem to suggest that without an external pressure exerted on him, Kgosi Sekgoma would not have attacked the Vagciriku. Thus, there is a need to establish if there really were white people who persuaded him and what interest they had in doing so. As far as the primary written sources are concerned, the only white people who spoke to Kgosi Sekgoma regarding the Wiessel and Faraday deaths before the Lishora Massacre of 1894 were the agents of the BSACo. On the 20<sup>th</sup> December 1893, Isaac Johan Bosman, Georg Reinhardt and colleagues urged Kgosi Sekgoma to sign a ‘treaty of friendship’ with the BSACo in order to avert a looming German incursion against the BaTawana. They told Kgosi Sekgoma and his headmen that the Germans were coming to ask for the heads of the white people that Hompa Nyangana had killed.<sup>151</sup> In addition, the BSACo’s agents presented to Kgosi Sekgoma ‘five’ smuggled Martini Henry breech-loading rifles and a wagon as gifts. In his letter to the High Commissioner, John Moffat suggested that Bosman and colleagues smuggled the guns into the country because they never received any permits from the Bechuanaland British Protectorate when they entered the country. Moffat argued that Bosman and colleagues’ conduct of giving breech-loading rifles to Sekgoma was in breach of the Brussels Convention.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> BNARS. File no: HC 144. Affidavit sworn by J. Mashabbi to Magistrate, A.B. Walsh on the 4<sup>th</sup> October 1894, at Nakalachwe.

<sup>152</sup> BNARS. File no: HC.144. A letter dated (06-02-1894) by John Moffat to the High Commissioner in Cape Town.

Even though Bosman was later able to produce two documents, namely the land and mineral concession rights bearing Kgosi Sekgoma and his headmen's signatures, the latter maintained to Magistrate Walsh that these documents were forged. The BaTawana refuted Bosman's claim stating that the only discussion that they ever had with the BSACo agents concerned the 'treaty of friendship'. Kgosi Sekgoma and his headmen argued that when they signed the papers from Bosman and colleagues they were under the impression that they were signing a 'treaty of friendship' with the BSACo.<sup>153</sup> In fact, Tlou established that in December 1894 when Magistrate Walsh reported to the High Commissioner that the Bosman concessions were fraudulent, the Colonial Office rejected them.<sup>154</sup> It is also known that Bosman, who represented the BSACo in negotiations with the BaTawana at Ngamiland in December 1893, was of dubious integrity.<sup>155</sup> In early 1890, Bosman had failed to get his land and mineral concessions rights for the Gobabis area approved by the GSWA authorities. At the time, he represented himself as Secretary of State of Chief Andries Lambert of the Khauas Khoi in the Gobabis area.<sup>156</sup>

In clear reference to the BaTawana-Vagciriku instigated hostility, the Deputy High Commissioner of the Bechuanaland Protectorate directly accused Bosman of

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<sup>153</sup> BNARS. File no: HC 144. Affidavit sworn by Kgosi Sekgoma to Magistrate A.B. Walsh on the 4<sup>th</sup> October 1894, at Nakalachwe.

<sup>154</sup> Tlou, T (1985), p.123.

<sup>155</sup> Microfilm no:1570: NAN. A Letter by Frielinghaus (dated: 1891) of the Imperial German Mining Office to Chancellor Von Caprivi. [translation]

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

stirring native chiefs against each other. Already in February 1894, the Office of the High Commissioner received complaints from the Assistant Commissioner, John Moffat regarding the misconduct of Bosman and colleagues in their dealings with Kgosi Sekgoma at Lake Ngami. In his complaining letter to the High Commissioner, amongst other matters, John Moffat reported about the said murdered white men on the boundary line between the Germans and the Portuguese by Nyangana and Bosman's misconduct of giving Martini Henry breech-loading rifles to Kgosi Sekgoma.<sup>157</sup> A letter by Khukhwi Mogodi dated 29<sup>th</sup> December 1893 was appended to John Moffat's letter of 6<sup>th</sup> February 1894 to the High Commissioner stationed at Cape Town. Thus, in a letter dated 28<sup>th</sup> June 1894, the Deputy High Commissioner, Sir Sidney Shippard, warned Bosman to cease with his activities in the area by citing section 1 of the High Commissioner's Proclamation dated 30<sup>th</sup> June 1891.<sup>158</sup> Section 1 read as follows:

*“It shall be lawful for the High Commissioner to grant his warrant for the apprehension and deportation or expulsion of any person from the said territories upon information that such person's proceedings endanger the peace of the said territories; and also to grant his warrant for the apprehension of any person in the said territory, upon information that there are reasonable grounds of suspicion that such a person intends to leave or endeavouring to induce or assisting others to leave the said territories for the purpose of taking military service with or giving military aid to any native chief beyond the borders of the said territories, or of stirring up strife between native chiefs either within or beyond the said territories, or of*

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<sup>157</sup> BNARS. File no:HC 144. A letter dated 6<sup>th</sup> February 1894 by Assistant Commissioner, John Moffat to the High Commissioner at Cape Town.

<sup>158</sup> BNARS. File no: HC 144. A letter dated 28<sup>th</sup> July 1894 by Administrator & Deputy Commissioner, Sir Sidney Shippard to Isaac Bosman.

*doing or attempting to do any act whereby the peace of any neighbouring state or territory may be disturbed.*<sup>159</sup>

Sir Sidney Shippard wrote this letter one or two months after Kgosi Sekgoma had attacked the Vagciriku in a manner that Passarge and Gibbons had described as being instigated by white people. One can thus see a basis for their assertion. Anthony Sillery suggested that it was later discovered that Sekgoma was given by ‘Bosman’ to raiding neighbouring tribes. He wrote that compared with the whole-hearted activities of the Matabele, Sekgoma’s raids probably did not amount to much, but one such expedition, in which a chief named Nyangana had been captured, had violated Germany territory.<sup>160</sup>

It is well established that Hompa Nyangana’s name and the Vagciriku’s killing of white traders featured prominently in the ‘treaty of friendship’ discussions that were spearheaded by Isaac Johan Bosman. One can imagine Kgosi Sekgoma’s reaction to the news that he was to be attacked by the greatly feared German army because he was implicated in the Wiessel murder together with Hompa Nyangana. It has to be noted that only two months after the so-called ‘treaty of friendship’ discussions between Bosman, Reinhardt and colleagues who represented the BSACo and Kgosi Sekgoma Letsholathebe, the BaTawana army embarked upon a military expedition against the Vagciriku. It seems as though Kgosi Sekgoma exploited the excellent BaTawana-Vagciriku bilateral relations to achieve his hidden agenda. It is written in the statement of Kgosi Sekgoma to Kgosi Bathoen

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<sup>159</sup> **Bechuanaland Protectorate and B.S.A Company’s Territory: High Commissioner’s Notices & Proclamations.** BNARS. pp.33-34

<sup>160</sup> Sillery, A. (1965) **Founding a Protectorate: History of Bechuanaland, 1885-1895.** pp.187-188

that the attack on the Vashambyu of Prince Kanyetu was a pretext to make Hompa Nyangana and his people not suspect anything. It is evident that Kgosi Sekgoma was aware of the enmity that existed between Prince Kanyetu and Hompa Nyangana. Thus, attacking the Vashambyu of Prince Kanyetu, in the first place would persuade Hompa Nyangana in thinking that Kgosi Sekgoma came to assist him. However, Baetsile revealed that when Kgosi Sekgoma told Hompa Nyangana that his army had conquered Prince Kanyetu who used to give Nyangana trouble in the past, the *Hompa* expressed mixed feelings. Hompa Nyangana remarked to Kgosi Sekgoma; *I am glad, Chief, although you have been wounded; yet as you have conquered them I rejoice; but I ought to go with you, for if I remain those tribes will attack me.*<sup>161</sup> This expression, compounded with the fact we learned earlier that Hompa Nyangana had warned Prince Kanyetu about the advance of the BaTawana vindicate the view that Nyangana had never sanctioned Sekgoma's attack. Why would Hompa Nyangana be worried about the decimation of the people who was 'a thorn in his flesh' for so long if that was his wish? That Hompa Nyangana wanted to go with Kgosi Sekgoma to Ngamiland, to avoid revenge attacks by the tribes that the BaTawana had attacked, provides us with some understanding about the relationship between the two rulers. It is clear that Kgosi Sekgoma and Hompa Nyangana were good friends who had known each other for sometime. It is also evident that Hompa Nyangana fully trusted Kgosi Sekgoma because he was willing to go with him to Ngamiland in order to be protected.

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<sup>161</sup> BNARS. File no: HC 144. Statement dated (04-09-1894) sent by Sekhome (Sekgoma), Chief of the BaTawana, Lake Ngami to Bathoen, Chief of the BaNgwaketse, Kanye. p.2

However, it also appears that Kgosi Sekgoma had other plans because despite Hompa Nyangana's willingness to go with him, Sekgoma insisted that he stay behind. It is at this stage that Kgosi Sekgoma suggested the idea of the special magical treatment to Hompa Nyangana and his men. It appears that Kgosi Sekgoma's plan was to break Hompa Nyangana's military strength by killing his men-because eliminating Hompa Nyangana alone would still leave the kingdom's military strength intact. Thus, he insisted that Hompa Nyangana stay and his men be treated with special magic to make them bulletproof. Given the Vagciriku's military record in wars since 1860, which involved heavy losses against foreign invaders, the latest being a result of the Boer Commando Unit's attack, bullet proof special magic proposal would have sounded attractive.

There are even suggestions in the oral history of the Vagciriku that it was in Ngamiland that Kgosi Sekgoma planned the Vagciriku massacre. George Mukoya (Interview:1989) mentioned that when the BaTawana army passed at Hompa Nyangana's village en route to attack Prince Kanyetu at Malyo Island, a Mueyeyi man, Shankadi, who was part of the BaTawana soldiers warned the Vagciriku. Shankadi told Makanga, that Kgosi Sekgoma and his army planned to attack the Vagciriku on their return. This explains why Makanga was the only Mugciriku man who refused to disarm completely when they were asked to do so by Kgosi Sekgoma. Hompa Nyangana was told about the information leaked by Shankadi, but he chose to place his trust in his supposedly excellent relationship with Kgosi

Sekgoma.<sup>162</sup> It was due to this misjudgement that Kgosi Sekgoma and his army succeeded in obliterating the abled-bodied men of the Vagciriku in a few hours. The only Vagciriku men who survived were those who did not turn up or those who faked death when they were shot at. For example, Shidjukwe and Kaveto survived by faking death. Ludwig Mudumbi (Interview: 2002) a grandson of Shidjukwe, explained that his grandfather had survived by lying still under the dead bodies and escaping at dusk. Kaveto, a personal assistant to Makanga who gallantly resisted the BaTawana's onslaught also survived this way. Men on horseback pursued all those who tried to run away when the shootings began and shot them with Martini Henry breech-loading rifles. Muyeghu, the great-great grandfather of this author was shot from a distance while trying to escape in a canoe with his family.<sup>163</sup>

One can argue that Kgosi Sekgoma attacked the Vagciriku in an attempt to clear his name in the eyes of the Germans who were rumoured to have plans to attack him and his people for collaborating with Hompa Nyangana in the killing of Wiessel. Georg Reinhardt who, in December 1893, was one of those white men who informed Kgosi Sekgoma of the German retribution plans on the BaTawana was camping at the time of the Lishora Massacre at Kgosi Sekgoma's palace. Sir Percy Anderson, from the Office of the Under Secretary of State in the Foreign Office, wrote that the German Ambassador had drawn attention to a statement

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<sup>162</sup> Shiremo, R.S. (2002) **The Lishora Massacre of 1893 and its effects on the Vagciriku Community**. UNAM (Unpublished BA thesis report) p.30 (available at NAN).

<sup>163</sup> Source: Leopoldine Murarero waMudumbi. She is a paternal grandmother of the present author. Still alive at the time of writing the thesis.

made on the 30<sup>th</sup> January 1895 to the Imperial Government of South West Africa by Georg Reinhardt. The letter by Anderson continued to say:

*It appears that during a journey which Reinhard made last year to the Zambesi, he was informed that a German subject of the name of Phillip Wiesels formerly living in Damaraland and an Englishman called Farranty had, about three years before, been murdered and their bodies thrown into the river by the 'Kaffir' Chief Niangana, probably in concert with Chief Sekgome of Lake Ngami. In consequence of the subsequent encroachments of Niangana, Sekgome is said to have made a raid on him and to have captured amongst other properties 3000 head of cattle, 2 horses and several guns belonging to Phillip Wiesels which were brought into Sekgome's camp where Reinhardt asserts he was at the time staying.<sup>164</sup>*

In fact, John Pieter Macdonald recognized one of the two horses mentioned in the text above as belonging to the late Phillip Wiessel because Macdonald sold it to him in 1891. The Bechuanaland Border Police man, Barre Phipps, sold the horse at auction for £16. This money eventually reached the German Ambassador in London and he had to pass the money to an heir of the late Phillip Wiessel in Germany.<sup>165</sup> It is at this point that critical questions regarding the involvement of the Imperial Government in GSWA arise. Given the evidence about the collusion between Kgosi Sekgoma of the BaTawana and Georg Reinhardt since December 1893, it could imply that Kgosi Sekgoma was persuaded to massacre the Vagciriku men. As to whether Georg Reinhardt was tasked to carry out what he did at Ngamiland by the Imperial government in GSWA is still a mystery.

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<sup>164</sup> BNARS. File no: HC 144. A letter dated ( 20-06-1895) by Sir Percy Anderson for the Foreign Office to Sir Edward Fairfield in the Colonial Office.

<sup>165</sup> Main, E. (1996) **Man of Mafeking: The Bechuanaland years of Sir Hamilton Goold-Adams 1884-1901.** p.137

One startling piece of evidence that supports a conspiracy theory that some white people at Ngamiland instigated Kgosi Sekgoma to attack the Vagciriku comes from a statement of Baetsile who was Kgosi Sekgoma's messenger. Baetsile recalled that, while the BaTawana's army was marching back to Ngamiland, Kgosi Sekgoma at one point suggested that the BaTawana kill Hompa Nyangana. At this suggestion, one of his men, Chaune remarked; *No, is he not your witness? Will you not point to him as the man who killed the white people, and tell the white people, "here he is"?*<sup>166</sup> The intervention by Chaune to Sekgoma implies that the BaTawana's military expedition to Kavango, and especially to the Gciriku area, had a particular mandate. The mandate could be to avenge the deaths of the white people and to bring the culprits to justice. It is also clear that Chaune's intervention with Kgosi Sekgoma meant that there were white people in Ngamiland who needed evidence on who killed the white traders. At this stage, one can only point to Georg Reinhardt who was waiting for the BaTawana's return from Gciriku to ascertain what evidence they brought from that expedition. It then becomes understandable as to why Hompa Nyangana was arrested and brought to Ngamiland. Despite the fact that at one point Hompa Nyangana managed to escape from the BaTawana and was only returned to them by Fumu Dimbu I, the BaTawana spared Hompa Nyangana's life and took him alive to Ngamiland. What purpose Hompa Nyangana alive would serve in Ngamiland can only be understood in terms of Chaune's intervention to Kgosi Sekgoma.

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<sup>166</sup> BNARS. File no: HC 144. Statement dated (04-09-1894) sent by Sekhomo, Chief of the BaTawana, Lake Ngami to Bathoen.p.4

Many writers, including Gibbons (1904:212-213), wrote that Hompa Nyangana was arrested by Sekgoma and was brought to Ngamiland to stand trial for the ‘murder’ of Wiessel.<sup>167</sup> Thus, it is logical to conclude that Kgosi Sekgoma was tasked to massacre the Vagciriku men and arrest Hompa Nyangana. It must be stated, however, that Hompa Nyangana never had his day in a competent court of law while in Ngamiland because Kgosi Sekgoma quickly released him as soon as he heard that the British officials were coming to Ngamiland. Barre Phipps, Resident Magistrate and successor to A.B. Walsh stated in a letter that Nyangana as Sekgoma’s prisoner was released before the advent of his Police detachment.<sup>168</sup> The hurriedly release of Hompa Nyangana in October 1894, seem to suggest that Kgosi Sekgoma never wanted the British officials to know the plight of his captive. This also disproves the widely held notion that while in BaTawana’s captivity, Hompa Nyangana was put on trial by the British officials. If Hompa Nyangana was ever trialed, then this trial could not have been conducted by the British Protectorate officials, but by the agents of the BSACo and some German men who were reported to have camped at Sekgoma’s palace at the time of the massacre. For example, on the 28<sup>th</sup> June 1895, when Hompa Nyangana was already released by Kgosi Sekgoma, Sir Edward Fairfield from the Colonial Office in London wrote the following about the Wiessel case;

*It seems probable that the murder took place within the German Protectorate, and, if so, the proper course would seem to be to send Nyangana, if he is still in Sekhome’s custody, to the German authorities on the Damaraland*

<sup>167</sup> Gibbons, H. (1904), pp.212-213.

<sup>168</sup> BNARS. File no: HC. 144. A letter dated (09-04-1896) by Barre Phipps, at Nakalachwe, to the Imperial Secretary at Cape Town.

*border, if they can arrange to receive him, so that his alleged crime may be inquired into and dealt with..<sup>169</sup>*

The letter of Fairfield, further confirms Major Hamilton Goold-Adams' finding that Kgosi Sekgoma never handed over Hompa Nyangana to the Bechuanaland British Protectorate officials.<sup>170</sup>

### **The Paasch-Arndt incident of June 1903.**

On the 17<sup>th</sup> June 1903<sup>171</sup>, Hompa Nyangana was once again embroiled in a violent encounter with European traders in his kingdom. The end result of the encounter was the massacre of Mauritz Paasch and his entire family. Axel Wedberg who was once in the company of Paasch and family up to Botswana border on the Kavango River had the follow to report to Magistrate Marwyn Williams of Ngamiland;

*I consider it my duty to report to you what has happened up here lately. As you know I left Damaraland last March month with 778 head of cattle belonging to the late Mr. W.A. Eriksson' estate which cattle I have undertaken to deliver on the estate's farm on the Crocodile River near Palla Camp. At the same time there was another party in my company by the name of Mauritz Paasch with family leaving Damaraland with 185 head of cattle bound for Transvaal. But on our arrival on the border of the Batawana Reserve on the Okavango River we received your notice that a Proclamation was issued prohibiting*

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<sup>169</sup> BNARS. File no: HC 144. A letter dated (28-06-1895) by Sir Edward Fairfield from the Colonial Office to Sir Percy Anderson of the Foreign Office.

<sup>170</sup> BNARS. File no. HC 144. A letter dated (09-07-1896) by Major Hamilton Goold-Adams to the Resident Commissioner.

<sup>171</sup> Bruchmann, R.D.K. (1997) **Wetterleuchten am Okavango**. p.48

*cattle to pass through the protectorate excepting they enter by elephant's Kloof, proceed to Lehututu where there is a government veterinary Surgeon. Receiving this said news Mr. Paasch altered his intended journey and at once returning, not to Damaraland which route he would bot travel on account of scarcity of water. But, he followed the Okovango River and from there into Portuguese Colony, Angola where he was intent to settle down but which country he never reached because on the road along the Okovango River he was attacked by the vicious native Chief (Yangana) and his followers who brutally murdered Mr. Paasch and his whole family with him, numbering all in all eight souls besides 3 natives servants, and afterwards looting everything consisting of 185 head of cattle, 10 horses, 1 wagon and 2 carts.....<sup>172</sup>*

Another trader killed in the encounter was Wilhelm Arndt and his son. According to oral reports, the Vagciriku and the Vashambyu natives also suffered a number of casualties. There was one survivor, an eight-year-old daughter of Mauritz Paasch, named Selma, who was kept in captivity in the palace of Hompa Mbambangandu I of the Vashambyu where the fight spilled over. However, an armed group of white farmers from Grootfontein managed to rescue her in October 1903. The German Colonial Newspaper described this incident as an uprising of the natives against the German Imperial government in Namibia.<sup>173</sup>

Reports indicated that the cause of the incident was the manner in which Mauritz Paasch behaved towards Hompa Nyangana and his people. It is unfortunate that Hompa Nyangana's descendants had been unwilling to talk about the incident, thus the difficulty of balancing the account. For example, Shidona shaKamutuva

<sup>172</sup> BNARS. File no: RC 10/8. A letter dated (08-08-1903) by Axel Wedberg to Magistrate Marwyn, G. Williams, Tsau.

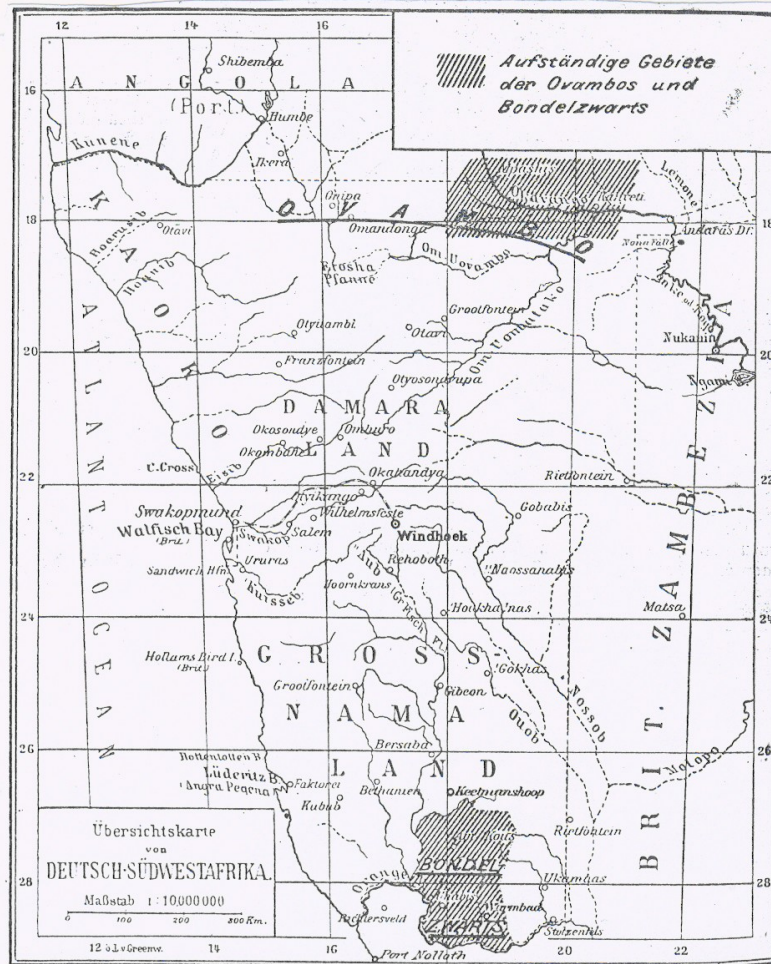
<sup>173</sup> Deutsche Kolonial Zeitung (11 November 1903)

(Interview: 2001), Maria Elizabeth Katiku waKandjeke (Interview: 2005) and Kandambo kaMunkanda (Interview: 2006) all being grandchildren of Hompa Nyangana citing various reasons were unwilling to talk about the Paasch incident. Reports given by people who knew Mauritz Paasch well indicate that he was not possessed with a good character. Georg Hartmann, the manager of the South West Africa Company who knew him well pointed out that Mauritz Paasch was ‘a difficult person’. Paasch had a track-record of serious conflicts not only with Africans but with the government, other white settlers and including his own family. Georg Hartmann situated the cause of the killing of Paasch and his family in Paasch’s bad conduct.<sup>174</sup> A German author, Rainer Bruchmann established that the violent encounter occurred not because it was motivated by robbery on the part of Hompa Nyangana and Mbangangandu I as proclaimed in many European written sources.<sup>175</sup> Bruchman points out that Paasch fired the first shot and the Vagciriku responded to it.

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<sup>174</sup> Bruchmann, R.D.K. (1997) **Wetterleuchten am Okavango**. p.50. (Translation)

<sup>175</sup> Ibid, pp.50-52



**Figure 7.** This map shows two areas in GSWA where the natives were up in arms against the German Colonial government. It was published on the 11<sup>th</sup> November 1903 by the Deutsche Kolonial Zeitung. Source: NAN.

However, what is clear is that Hompa Nyangana had resisted Europeans just as he did with the Africans, who violated the cultural code of the Vagciriku or those whom he rightly or wrongly perceived as a threat to his position as ruler. Thus, according to one of his grandchildren, Hompa Nyangana always used to remark that the country belonged to him because it has been bequeathed to him by his ancestors and could never give it away to any one.<sup>176</sup>

<sup>176</sup> Mate Susana waKamwanga (Interview:2008)

### **The Contextualisation of Hompa Nyangana's Relations with Europeans.**

Given the violent encounters between Hompa Nyangana and the Europeans in his kingdom, one needs to make a brief critical evaluation of that relationship from the Hompa's perspective and the Europeans' view of the Hompa. It appeared in many European and African sources that Hompa Nyangana could kill any white man on sight, without any good reason. For example, by the late 1890s Hompa Nyangana was branded in some African and European circles as 'a slayer of white men'.<sup>177</sup> Informed by King Liwanika of the Balози about this 'notorious behaviour' of Hompa Nyangana, Major Gibbons avoided meeting him even when the former sent messengers to ask the Major to accord him an audience because the Hompa wished to send a message with him to King Liwanika.<sup>178</sup> Even by the year 1910, the belief that Hompa Nyangana was 'a white men's murderer' was still prevalent amongst some sections of both the African and European communities. For example, a medical doctor at Omaruru exclaimed that Father August Bierfert was insane when he stated his wish to travel to Gciriku where he was going to be a founding father of a Catholic missionary enterprise. The medical doctor pleaded with Father Bierfert to stay giving among other reasons the fact that 'the evil Hompa Nyangana, had by then, murdered all the whites who set foot

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<sup>177</sup> Gibbons, H. (1904) *Africa: From the South to North Through Marotseland*.p.175

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid*, p. 221

into his territory.’<sup>179</sup> Evidently, that view labelled Hompa Nyangana as a mere ‘racist’ or ‘a savage’ who could kill white people just because they were white. Thus, one needs to investigate whether Hompa Nyangana was ‘a racist’ of that magnitude.

There are traces or indications that Hompa Nyangana had contacts and experiences with white people as early as the late 1850s. It seems likely that when the Swedish explorer, John Charles Andersson arrived in Ukwangali in 1859, Hompa Nyangana was probably amongst those ‘crowds’ that came out to have a look at him. It is estimated that at that time Hompa Nyangana, together with his mother and stepfather, Hashipara, lived in Ukwangali. It is known that they only returned to Gciriku shortly after Hompa Muhera took the throne in around 1864.

It becomes evident from some written sources that Hompa Nyangana was part of an international web of commerce and communication. It is well known that Hompa Nyangana and the royals had bartered slaves and ivory for rifles, gunpowder, and other goods with Portuguese traders from Luanda for decades, at least until the 1920s. For example, shortly before the Thomas shooting incident of 27<sup>th</sup> July 1878, a Portuguese trader is said to have camped near Hompa Nyangana’s palace.<sup>180</sup> It seems that this ‘Portuguese trader’ had good relations with Hompa Nyangana as no conflict or violence is reported to have taken place.

In fact, four men called in the text as *Bengaros* belonging to this Portuguese

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<sup>179</sup> Bierfert, A. (1938) **25 Jahre Bei den Wadiriku**. p. 6.

<sup>180</sup> McKiernan, G. (1954).p.176

trader fought on Hompa Nyangana's side when the Boer trekkers' subsequently attacked the Vagciriku. Even Gerald McKiernan himself does not attribute the Thomas incident to a pre-meditated racial attack on the side of Hompa Nyangana and his people. However, he suggests that; *Chas Thomas had been killed by Ovampos (Vagciriku) in the river, while attempting to cross on horseback, in opposition to their (Vagciriku) wishes.*<sup>181</sup> In fact, in the editor's notes of McKiernan book, it is stated that; *in the case of Thomas's trouble on the Okavango, no objection was made against the crossing of the River by white men as such, but against the crossing it with wagons.*<sup>182</sup> It needs to be noted that some Boers and Thomas himself had personally met Hompa Nyangana a few days previously and 'presents were exchanged and all agreeable'.<sup>183</sup> Thus, it becomes clear that the attack was not racially motivated but the result of a misunderstanding as the European traders pushed their way through the river, despite being warned to turn back. The fact that Thomas and others had been allowed to cross the river before and during the day of the shooting without any trouble up to the time they started to cross the river with a wagon gives the impression that Hompa Nyangana and his people could have taken this as a breach of their previous agreement. However, it seems as though the Thomas shooting incident of July 1878 created bad publicity for Hompa Nyangana in many African and European circles, which led to him being castigated as 'a killer of white men'.

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<sup>181</sup> McKiernan, G (1954), p.166

<sup>182</sup> Ibid, p.19

<sup>183</sup> Ibid, p.166

However, it needs to be noted in addition that the well-known trader Axel Eriksson had a friendly and working relationship with Hompa Nyangana. Axel Eriksson relates that before 1887, he had carried on considerable trade with a number of local settlements along the Kavango River and that he had established friendly ties with several chiefs. Eriksson is also on record to have said that by 1890, he was not sure whether the ties of friendship still remained as many white men, including his employees were killed in the area, but his courage was tested when he together with his interpreter crossed the Kavango River. Eriksson reports that though he was surrounded by ‘a mass of craft, fully laden with armed and bloody thirsty Negroes’, not one hair on his his head was touched, and from the chiefs he received the desired rights.<sup>184</sup> In fact, on 4<sup>th</sup> September 1890, Eriksson signed his first contractual agreement with Hompa Nyangana. These agreements gave Axel Eriksson sole right to all extraction of minerals and gemstones in the area.<sup>185</sup> In a letter, dated 29<sup>th</sup> November 1898, to his brother in-law George Robb, Eriksson said that ‘he was thinking much on the rubber trade in the far interior at the Quetho (Kwito) River. In Eriksson’s own words :

*I have a great part of the Okavango and the whole of Otjimbora, got it in 1890 but the Portuguese won't recognize my right although the curs (sic) dare not tell the chiefs that they claim the country.*<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Johnsson, P. (2007) **The Trader King of Damaraland**.p.65

<sup>185</sup> Ibid, p.65

<sup>186</sup> NAN. File no: A. 489. A Letter from Axel Eriksson to George Robb, Aukas-12 miles North of Grootfontein dated, 29<sup>th</sup> November 1898.

It is, therefore, clear that Eriksson had maintained good relations with many royal personages along the Kavango River, including Hompa Nyangana. However, one needs to take note that in early 1894 a skirmish occurred between the Vagciriku and a Boer Commando Unit that Axel Eriksson was conducting to Mossamedes in Angola. It is probable that Eriksson enjoyed good relations with the Africans in order to further his trade activities. It is doubtful that the Vagciriku were aware of Eriksson's role in the skirmish of the Boer Commando Unit of 1894. Otherwise, it is difficult to understand how by 1898 he could still plan to extract rubber in Hompa Nyangana's country without expecting a fight caused by his participation in the skirmish with a Boer Commando in 1894. Even amongst the Vagciriku, as amongst the Ovaherero, Axel Eriksson was known as *Karwapa*. This indicates that even the Vagciriku held Eriksson in high regard as a trader and hunter.

The archival documents from the National Archives of Botswana, in particular the report of the investigations into the deaths of Wiessel and Faraday in 1892 by John MacDonald can shed some lights on the issue. It appears from that source that Kgosi Sekgoma had a personal vendetta against the two traders, thus he instigated Hompa Nyangana to kill them. The facts that the Vagciriku already knew Wiessel by the name *Mpundja* also indicate that he too had enjoyed good relations with Hompa Nyangana previously. It also appears in Macdonald's report that after the shooting of Faraday by the 'Bushmen' sent by Hompa Nyangana, Wiessel moved closer to Hompa Nyangana's station where he hoped to get protection. The same report also contains a 'conversation' that took place between Hompa Nyangana and Wiessel upon his arrival at the former's station. From this

conversation, it can be inferred that the two knew each other well. Thus, Kgosi Sekgoma's role in inciting Hompa Nyangana, as Macdonald concluded, might well be the reason why Hompa Nyangana killed the two traders. While in Ngamiland, Hompa Nyangana himself is said to have affirmed this possibility. Hompa Nyangana was quoted as stating: *"Yes, I have killed white men, but I only did so by the command of my paramount Chief, Sekgoma."*<sup>187</sup> However, one can also argue that Wiessel and Faraday would not have been killed if they had agreed to sell the Martini Henry firearms as was demanded by both Kgosi Sekgoma and Hompa Nyangana. Thus, the case of Wiessel and Faraday may also be explained in the context of the Brussels Act of 1890 and its subsequent enforcement in British Bechuanaland in 1891 and German South West Africa in 1892.

The Paasch and family shooting incident is of all the violent encounters of Hompa Nyangana against the European traders the simplest to explain. Reports given by people who knew Mauritz Paasch well indicate that he was not a person with a reputable character. Georg Hartmann, the manager of the South West Africa Company, who knew him well pointed out that Mauritz Paasch was 'a difficult person'. Paasch had a track record of serious conflicts not only with Africans, but also with the government and other white settlers including his own family. Georg Hartmann attributed the cause of the killing of Paasch and his family to Paasch's bad conduct.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> BNARS. File no: HC 144. Statement dated (04-09-1894) sent by Sekhome, Chief of the BaTawana, Lake Ngami to Bathoen, p.4

<sup>188</sup> Bruchmann, R.D.K. (1997) **Wetterleuchten am Okavango**. p.50. (Translation)

It appears that Hompa Nyangana attempted to counter negative views about him by being the first Kavango *Hompa* to allow a German Catholic enterprise in his kingdom. Thus, he made a point during deliberations with the Catholic missionaries at their first meeting that *evil rumours had been spread about him, but that they should stay and judge for themselves*.<sup>189</sup> Thus, he encouraged the missionaries to stay in his kingdom so that they could see for themselves. From the onset, the Nyangana Roman Catholic Mission developed smoothly without any serious conflict that involved Hompa Nyangana. The reputation of Hompa Nyangana improved on the international level and more especially within German circles as from 1910.<sup>190</sup> In 1911, a large contingent of German troops, led by Major Hirsch arrived at Hompa Nyangana's palace with machine guns to avenge the deaths of German Missionaries at Nyangana and the Imperial Resident of the Caprivi Zipfel who were rumoured to have been killed by Nyangana forces.<sup>191</sup> The reports proved to be false as both the missionaries and the Imperial Resident of the Caprivi Zipfel were found to be alive. Thus, in reactions to this unfounded rumour, Bishop Josef Gotthardt is reported to have said *it has become habitual here to blame everything that goes wrong in the area on that presumed villain without further examination, but yet in this case the man is decidedly superior to his reputation*.<sup>192</sup> Andreas Eckl further reports on the positive comments made by

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<sup>189</sup> Beris, A.P.J. (1996) **From Mission to Local Church**. p. 225

<sup>190</sup> Eckl, A. (2004) **German and Portuguese ambitions as mirrored in early pictorial documents from the Kavango area**. p.199-200

<sup>191</sup> Bierfert, A. (1938). p. & Eckl, A. (2007) **Reports from Beyond the line'** p.14

<sup>192</sup> Eckl, A (2004).p.200

First Lieutenant von Hirschberg of the German Schutztruppe about Hompa Nyangana.<sup>193</sup>

After 1910, Hompa Nyangana cooperated with both the German and the subsequent South African Mandate Government. However, it appears from some sources that he sometimes did not enjoy good relations with the Portuguese officials on the Angolan side of the Kavango River as some serious conflict between them were reported. For example, in his report of 1918, Major Frank Brownlee reported:

*The Portuguese Authorities should be informed that as the Native Chief Jangana(Nyangana) at Dirico lives on British Territory and has sent a special Messenger to state that he wishes to remain there he should not be interfered with. It appears that portion of Jangana's people live in Angola and portion in the Protectorate and that the Chief has been in the habit with Portuguese concurrence of moving to and fro from one territory to the other.*<sup>194</sup>

On the 6<sup>th</sup> April 1918, a Headman of Hompa Nyangana, Hendrik Kamanoka gave a sworn statement to Commissioner of Oaths, Charles C Pietersen at Grootfontein reporting about the serious conflict between Hompa Nyangana and the Portuguese. The conflict was about the six tusks of three elephants shot by the the !Khung-San men on the Angolan side of the Kavango River and a Gciriku

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<sup>193</sup> Eckl, A (2000), p.200

<sup>194</sup> NAN. File no: ADM 30. A report dated (24-04-1918) titled Patrol to Kuring Kuru by Major Frank Brownlee to Lieutenant Cocky Hahn.

lady Martha Kayesuko(sic) who crossed into Portuguese territory and married a man there without Hompa Nyangana's permission.<sup>195</sup>

Lawrence Green reports that in mid 1916 Wilhelm Mattenklodt, the well-known German fugitive, together with his four friends hid themselves near Hompa Nyangana's palace. Wilhelm Mattenklodt was 'wanted' by Union authorities for attempting to help German officers to escape from an internment camp. However, Mattenklodt escaped arrest and fled with others to the Kavango Region, specifically to the Roman Catholic Mission. It is reported that Hompa Nyangana helped Mattenklodt and his four friends. Hompa Nyangana and his people helped to dismantle their wagon and ferry it across to Angola by canoe, where the five Germans started to feel safer.<sup>196</sup> In Mattenklodt's own words;

*We selected the drift where I had crossed with the Boers in 1911, about twenty kilometers down stream, close to the kraal of the Ovambo (Vagciriku) chief Niangana, for crossing. The latter again furnished us with boats to put across, and one or two men who were to escort us to the shooting grounds. We began ferrying across at sunrise. The Owambo (Vagciriku) boats came gliding up and loaded up with stores and with the waggon, which we had to take to pieces and put together again on the other bank.<sup>197</sup>*

Against the context of this historical background given above one will miss the point if Hompa Nyangana's relations with the Europeans are portrayed in terms of 'violent encounters' only.

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<sup>195</sup> NAN. File no: ADM 30. A report dated (24-04-1918) titled Patrol to Kuring Kuru by Major Frank Brownlee to Lieutenant Cocky Hahn.

<sup>196</sup> Green, L.G (1945) **Where Men Still Dream**. p.237-238

<sup>197</sup> Mattenklodt, W. (1931) **A Fugitive in South West Africa**. p.135

## CHAPTER SIX

### **The Last Phase of Hompa Nyangana's Reign during the time of the Roman Catholic missionaries.**

#### **Introduction.**

This chapter will explore major events in Vagciriku history between the arrival of the Roman Catholic missionaries in 1910 and the death of Hompa Nyangana on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1924. It will be shown that Hompa Nyangana's decision to invite missionaries was not an 'act of God' as believed by the missionaries, but the result of strategic calculations. For example, Hompa Nyangana is said to have been a vassal of the Tawana king 'with the obligation to pay an annual tribute'. Thus, by bringing the missionaries in, he hoped to gain protection from external enemies and regain his independence.

The chapter will also focus on the deaths of Klemens Mbambo, the son of Hompa Nyangana, in 1912 and Prince Tjimi, the heir-apparent, in 1919. It will be argued that, Mbambo was a threat to his father, Hompa Nyangana because of his collaboration with the missionaries and his anti-slavery policies. There is every likelihood that Mbambo was killed 'on the verdict of the royal clan' as many royal chronicles do not mention his name. It will also be concluded that Hompa Nyangana wanted missionaries to assist him with his external relations and activities, not to hinder it. It is clear that with Mbambo out of the way, this aim

was achieved. In conclusion, the chapter will briefly touch on the development of the Vagciriku Royal Cemetery.

### **The Arrival of the Roman Catholic Missionaries in 1910.**

In May 1910, the Roman Catholic Missionaries established themselves in Gciriku, the land of Hompa Nyangana. Given that Hompa Nyangana was a fierce opponent of the Europeans, it appears ironic that he became the first Kavango ruler to allow a permanent settlement of Europeans in the form of a missionary enterprise. Thus, Professor Wilhelm Möhlig correctly points out that before the Tawana incident (Lishora Massacre of 1894), the Gciriku chief had been famous for his hostility towards European traders and missionaries. However, in 1910, he altered his former policy towards the colonial power and therefore, to the amazement of all, he invited European missionaries to build a station near his residence.<sup>198</sup>

It is difficult to give explicit reasons based on empirical evidence as to why he decided to accept missionaries in his kingdom. Given Hompa Nyangana's protracted violent encounters with Europeans, the Roman Catholic missionaries who had attempted to establish themselves in Kavango in 1903 deliberately avoided him. Andreas Eckl affirms this assertion when he wrote; *because of his grim reputation, German colonial officials as well as missionaries had always*

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<sup>198</sup> Möhlig, W.J.G. (2008) **Naming Modern Concepts in RuManyo (Bantu Language of the Kavango)**: In Heritage and Cultures in Modern Namibia-In-depth Views of the Country. -A TUCSIN Festschrift (Eds. By Limpricht, C. & Biesele, M.) p.81

*avoided contact with Hompa Nyangana.*<sup>199</sup> However, all written and oral sources have attributed his change of heart to his son, Klemens Mbambo. Mbambo had benefited from the years of the Vagciriku's captivity in Ngamiland since he received formal education at a missionary school. Thus, according to Bierfert (1938:13) and Mutorwa (1996:16-18), Mbambo played a major role in the first phase of the establishment of the Roman Catholic Mission. There are indications that Mbambo had gone to look for the missionaries and invited them to his father's kingdom. For example in 1907, while in Tsau, Ngamiland, Mbambo approached the Roman Catholic missionaries. In 1909, when the missionaries were attempting to establish themselves in the Mbukushu Kingdom of Fumu Diyeve II, Mbambo is reported to have gone to Andara to trade with them.<sup>200</sup> This suggests that the Catholic Missionaries came to Gciriku at the invitation of Hompa Nyangana through his son Mbambo. An interview with one of Mbambo's nieces, Mate Susana waKamwanga (Interview: 2008), confirmed the supportive role Mbambo played when the missionaries came to settle at Kandenga (now Nyangana). As shown in chapter four, all signs indicate that Hompa Nyangana's acceptance of the Roman Catholic missionaries lay in the potential threat posed to his kingdom at the time by his neighbours, the BaTawana and the Portuguese.

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<sup>199</sup> Eckl, A (2004) **German and Portuguese colonial ambitions as mirrored in early pictorial documents from the Kavango area:** In Hues between black and white: Historical photography from colonial Namibia. (Ed) Hartmann, W. p.200

<sup>200</sup> Beris, A.P.J. (1996) **From Mission to Local Church: One Hundred Years of Mission by the Catholic Church in Namibia, with special reference to the development of the Archdiocese of Windhoek and the Apostolic Vicariate of Rundu.** p.210 & 224

Father Bierfert wrote that the Vagciriku had been moving between the northern and southern riverbanks of the Kavango and that in 1908 they made their home on the German side of the river, because of Portuguese military encroachment on the northern bank.<sup>201</sup> Thus, Father Bierfert agrees with oral reports, which contend that Hompa Nyangana and his people were already settled on the southern bank of the Kavango River when the Catholic missionaries arrived in 1910.<sup>202</sup>



**Figure 8.** Hompa Nyangana with his son, Klemens Mbambo. Source: **25 Jahre bei den Wadiriku am Okavango** by Father August Bierfert (1938:13).

### **The Death of Klemens Mbambo in 1912.**

According to Mission reports Mbambo, the eldest son of Hompa Nyangana with his principal wife Nkayira, died on 24<sup>th</sup>February 1912. Bierfert wrote that Mbambo's illness only lasted for four days and it was thought to be caused by

<sup>201</sup> Bierfert, A. (1913) **Die Diriku**. p.45-46

<sup>202</sup> Annafrugencia Mudi waKamenye (Interview:2006), Murora waShandengu (Interview:2006) and Mate Susana waKamwanga (Interview:2008)

poisoning.<sup>203</sup> Mate Susana waKamwanga's (Interview: 2008) oral reports attribute Mbambo's death to *marove*. Marove means a royal assassination plot. This involved a prominent royal member/s who secretly bribe a person/s to carry out an assassination on someone they perceive a threat to their power or ambitions. The position that Mbambo occupied during the early years of Catholic missionaries' settlement in Gciriku was so conspicuous that it exposed him to envy and ill will. At that time, Mbambo was the only local person alongside the river in the present Kavango Region who was literate. He could also speak some English and Otjiherero. These two foreign languages were at the time well known to the missionaries and this made them close to each other. Thus, his links to the missionaries, who were viewed by the locals as the source of many desirable European goods, was his unconscious sin. The other thing that made Mbambo unpopular amongst the royal family, including with his own father, was the manner in which he collaborated with the missionaries to combat the slave trade. It appears in many oral accounts that Klemens Mbambo was a strong opponent of his father on the issue of the slave trade. One particular case, where Mbambo is reported to have opposed his father was the selling of Chrysanta Namvhura waHaingura to the BaTawana.<sup>204</sup> It is said that upon hearing that Namvhura, who is said to have been a 'school girl' at the Mission at the time, was sold into slavery, Mbambo rushed at the Mission to inform Father Augustine Bierfert. Father Bierfert immediately rushed to Hompa Nyangana's *mbara* [palace] and strongly reprimanded Hompa Nyangana to return the girl. Namvhura was saved

<sup>203</sup> Bierfert, A.(1938), p.13

<sup>204</sup> Lidia Katiku kaSharumbongo (Interview:2005)

when the BaTawana who bought her were pursued by a group of men sent by Father Bierfert and demanded her back.<sup>205</sup> It is possible that Hompa Nyangana did not take this issue lightly. Thus, the possibility of poisoning Mbambo mentioned by Father Bierfert need not be far-fetched, because according to Mate Susana waKamwanga (Interview: 2008) *marove* is only carried out through poisoning or murder. Father Josef Gotthardt also suggested that Mbambo was poisoned because of ‘his friendship with the Mission’.<sup>206</sup> Though it cannot be determined who poisoned Mbambo, there is every likelihood that he was killed ‘on the verdict of the royal clan. Mbambo’s death in 1912 at age 36 was one of the darkest moments in the history of the Vagciriku. One can argue that if Mbambo had lived longer, he might have written down some of the important events in the Vagciriku history and this would have benefited later generations. Mbambo was buried near his homestead at Kangweru Village. His gravesite can still be spotted today. One may argue that with Mbambo out of the way, Hompa Nyangana continued to rule unhindered. However, Hompa Nyangana achieved his objectives as the missionaries’ presence in his kingdom helped to improve his image in international circles.

### **The Death of Prince Tjimi in 1919.**

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<sup>205</sup> Lidia Katiku kaSharumbongo (Interview:2005) & Nerumbu waShitarara (Interview:2004)

<sup>206</sup> Eckl, A (2004) **German and Portuguese colonial ambitions as mirrored in early pictorial documents from the Kavango area.** p.198

Prince Tjimi was the nephew of Hompa Nyangana. He was the son of Princess Kandambo [*Hompa Nyangana's younger half-sister*] and her husband Makanga [*a martyr of the Vagciriku*]. As Princess Kandambo was senior of Princess Katiku [*the other half-sister to Hompa Nyangana*] her children had priority in succession to the throne. This is why Tjimi was preparing himself to succeed the ageing Hompa Nyangana. However, it was taboo in the Vagciriku culture for a ruling Hompa to appoint his successor while he was still alive. The reason was that the chosen one would be exposed to jealousy and bad intentions from other ambitious candidates. Another reason was that the chosen one might behave arrogantly, as he would do things which only the ruling Hompa is entitled to do. Hompa Kamwanga wrote that Prince Tjimi was usually not on good terms with his uncle, because he wanted to rule jointly with him.<sup>207</sup> During his doctoral research in the late 1990s, Samuel Mbambo was informed while in areas around the former royal seat of Hompa Nyangana, about a particular incident at which Prince Tjimi's evil plans against his uncle was publicly exposed.<sup>208</sup>

According to Susana Mate waKamwanga (Interview: 2008) the reason why it is taboo for a ruling Hompa to appoint his successor is because succession is connected with inheritance. For a ruling Hompa to appoint his successor to the throne is tantamount to announcing that the appointed candidate is the one who will inherit his wives and no Mugciriku man is on record to have done such a

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<sup>207</sup> Kamwanga, S & Haushiku, F.J (1995), p.15

<sup>208</sup> Mbambo, S.K. (2002) **'Heal with God': Indigenous Healing and Religion among the Vagciriku of Kavango Region, Namibia**.p.156

thing. However, Hompa Kamwanga writes that when it became clear that Nyangana was getting very old, the Catholic missionaries asked him to appoint his successor.<sup>209</sup> Even though it is taboo in the Vagciriku royal tradition to ask the incumbent questions on the issue of his/her succession, Hompa Nyangana hesitantly anointed his stubborn nephew, Prince Tjimi. This was despite the fact that Prince Tjimi was not in the good books of his uncle. Even oral sources indicated that Prince Tjimi had always harboured ambitions to wrestle power from his uncle.<sup>210</sup> According to Mutorwa, the Catholic missionary at Nyangana refused Prince Tjimi baptism in around 1913 because of his bad character.<sup>211</sup>

In 1919, Hompa Nyangana organized a royal kambembe dance in his palace at which his nephew Prince Tjimi was present. Immediately, after the dance, Prince Tjimi decided to travel to his other homestead at Ndonga Linena in a canoe. All oral reports indicated that both his mother, Princess Kandambo and his uncle Hompa Nyangana tried to persuade him to stay at least for the night and leave the next day.<sup>212</sup> However, Tjimi refused to listen to them and went ahead with two of his canoe rowers [Karunga and Ndjona] to Ndonga Linena. According to oral reports, the canoe capsized at Mbarwena just as Prince Tjimi was approaching his homestead at Ndonga Linena. His two assistants in the canoe swum to the banks whilst Prince Tjimi drowned and his body was never found. It is important to note

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<sup>209</sup> Kamwanga, S & Haushiku, F.J. (1995), p.15

<sup>210</sup> Mate Susana waKawangwa (Interview:2008)

<sup>211</sup> Mutorwa, J. (1996), p.32

<sup>212</sup> Kandambo kaMunkanda (Interview:2006) and Kamwanga, S. (1996:15)

that most of the people from the Kavango Region who live alongside the river, especially the men are competent swimmers, even in strong currents. The death of Prince Tjimi in this manner raised questions. There were various accusations about who caused the death of the heir-apparent Prince Tjimi, but up to now, his death remains a mystery. Hompa Nyangana and Tjimi's cousin, the actual successor to Nyangana, Hompa Shampapi waMashika, were not spared from the accusations. However, after the death of Prince Tjimi, Hompa Nyangana continued to rule the Vagciriku for another five years until his death in 1924.

#### **The Death of Hompa Nyangana in 1924.**

Hompa Nyangana died in old age ( $\pm 90$  years old) of natural causes on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1924. He was buried in his bedroom at Mamono at dusk on the same day of his death.<sup>213</sup> The following people have been identified in oral interviews as the actual attendants at Hompa Nyangana's burial ceremony: Shikombero shaMate, Muhena, Mupininkuru and Kushokosha.<sup>214</sup> Hompa Nyangana was buried in accordance with ancient Vagciriku royal tradition. According to Mate Susana waKamwanga (Interview: 2008) his body was smeared with fat/oil and decorated with beads. He was buried in a seated position facing the east. From the early rulers of the Vagciriku up to the burial of Hompa Nyangana only a few distinguished persons could attend a hompa's burial. During the mourning period

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<sup>213</sup> Mberema, K.P.S. (1996) **Shitungarongo**. p.122.

<sup>214</sup> Mate Susana waKamwanga (Interview:2008) and Annafrugencia Mudi waKamenye(Interview:2006)

of one month, all residents of his palace remained there before they moved away to the palace of his successor.<sup>215</sup>

What is clear, however, is that Hompa Nyangana is the first ruling Hompa of the Vagciriku whose grave is marked. All his predecessors had been buried according to royal tradition in the marshes and on islands, which caused their graves to disappear in a few years because of the annual floods. Hompa Nyangana was buried on land, in his palace. Most oral sources seem to indicate that this was not deliberate. It happened because his corpse became too heavy to carry to the riverside where his predecessors were buried. Given that Hompa Nyangana was a small man, the account that his body was too heavy to carry is attributed to magic. One could also argue that since Hompa Nyangana received baptism shortly before his death, a burial in the marshes could contradict Christian values. The Christian name given to him on his deathbed was Thomas. Even on the plaque on the tombstone at his grave, his name is written as Hompa Thomas Nyangana.

### **The Development of the Vagciriku Royal Cemetery.**

Apart from the Roman Catholic Mission Station, a hospital and a government school that bears Hompa Nyangana's name, there is also a cemetery that developed around Hompa Nyangana's grave. At Nyangana, there are two cemeteries, at Kandenga and Mamono, one belonging to the Roman Catholic Church and the other one belonging to the Vagciriku Royal Family. The first one

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<sup>215</sup> Lidia Katiku kaSharumbongo (Interview:2005)

is where the non-royal members, mainly of the Roman Catholic Church congregation, are buried and the second one, situated more than a kilometre to the east of Nyangana Roman Catholic Mission, is where the royal members [Christian or non-Christian] of the Vagciriku are buried. But, the question is, how did the royal cemetery develop? The first person to be buried in the royal cemetery was Hompa Nyangana at a time when it was his *mbara* [palace]. The people moved away from his palace about 600 metres to the west where the new Hompa had settled.<sup>216</sup> It seems that from the 23<sup>th</sup> December 1924, Hompa Nyangana's was the sole grave in the cemetery until 1944 when his son Muduva Nyangana was buried there. In the early period Hompa Nyangana's grave was marked with a palisade made of tree poles. Now, there is a small tombstone made of bricks and cement that has been erected in the mid 1990s.



*Grave of Hompa Nyangana of the Gciriku. Photo. 5.*

**Figure. 9.** Grave of Hompa Nyangana of the Vagciriku: Courtesy Dr. Jeremy Silvester. Source: The Heritage Hunt Report of 2007 (MAN)

According to Lidia Katiku kaSharumbongo (Interview:2005) her father Kornelius Sharumbongo together with his son Kandjimi [*alias Watjeka*] had been looking

<sup>216</sup> Lidia Katiku kaSharumbongo (Interview:2005)

after the grave from around 1925 until when he died in around 1981. Kandjimi, a second-born of Sharumbongo and his wife Shidona was born in 1927. Sharumbongo's first-born, Jacobus Ntjinano was born in around March 1925.

From a young age until December 1944, Sharumbongo had served the Vagciriku royalty with distinct honour and loyalty. He started this career when he served at the palace of Hompa Nyangana's half-sister, Princess Mavandje. From 1919 until 1924, he served as a security guard to Hompa Nyangana. From 1925, he served as counsellor and later rose to a position as one of the most trusted Lieutenants to Hompa Shampapi. Sharumbongo's illustrious career with the Vagciriku royalty only ended when Hompa Shampapi was forced to abdicate the throne by Native Commissioner, Harold Eedes, in December 1944.

However, today what started as an unplanned cemetery has grown so large that the fence had to be extended twice to make room for new gravesites. This demand had arisen because all ruling Vahompa of the Vagciriku from both sides of the Kavango River, wished to be buried there. This excludes Hompa Kamutuva who was buried on the Angolan side in the 1960s. Thus, though feared by his royal next of kin during his lifetime, in death Hompa Nyangana united all the royal members coming from his mother's line.

There have been several occasions during the reigns of Hompa Shampapi waMashika (1925-1944), Linus Shashipapo waMashika (1945-1984) and the early years of Hompa Sebastian Kamwanga waNdunda's reign (1984-1999) when

the Vagciriku's honourable elders [*Matimbi*] congregated at Hompa Nyangana's grave to pray for rain. Evidently, the practice was a recognition of Hompa Nyangana as one of the principal ancestors of the Vagciriku. It would appear that the cemetery has acquired a politically symbolic value in the royal politics of the day. Thus, attempts were made by the royalty to define who should be buried in that cemetery.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **Conclusions**

This study had focused on the reign of Hompa Nyangana of the Vagciriku. It attempted to explore the period from the time Hompa Nyangana assumed the chieftaincy in around 1874 until the time of his death on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1924. Apart from the introductory chapter that dealt with methodological issues, the study also touched on the complex question of the origins of the Vagciriku. This question is discussed in detail in chapter two. This was done in order to expand knowledge about the people over whom Hompa Nyangana had reigned for an approximate period of fifty years. Research from the past indicates that the question of the origins of the Vagciriku has not been critically approached from the different clan's perspectives. For example, it was commonly accepted by academics that the Vagciriku originated from Mashi. Even though this view is not necessarily incorrect, but it is only one version of the ruling clan of the Vakafuma and a few other clans.

In the third chapter, an attempt was made to explain the ascendancy of Hompa Nyangana to the Vagciriku throne. A brief summary of recorded knowledge about the reigns of Hompa Nyangana's predecessors has been provided. This is aimed at creating an understanding about important events that took place before Hompa Nyangana's reign. It is believed that some of those events had a psychological effect on the way Hompa Nyangana dealt with his real or perceived contenders to the throne during his own reign. The struggle for power between Hompa Nyangana and a female candidate, Princess Kunyima, is explained in detail. It is shown in chapter three that in the struggle for power, Hompa Nyangana took the

throne through violence by assassinating Princess Kunyima who at the time seemed to have garnered sufficient support within the kingdom. It was shown how Hompa Nyangana and his two siblings dealt with the children of Princess Kunyima. Thus, this chapter showed how Hompa Nyangana consolidated his power when he started to view his own siblings as a threat. The conflicts that ensued between Hompa Nyangana and his two siblings, first with Princess Mavandje and then with Prince Ngandu, was documented.

The fourth chapter dealt with the question of the Gciriku kingdom's relations with its neighbouring kingdoms during the reign of Hompa Nyangana. It is here that a picture of the 'international relations' and 'foreign policy' of the Vagciriku during the reign of Hompa Nyangana is painted. Though this study is mainly about Hompa Nyangana's reign, the chapter demonstrates the fact that it is only fair for a history of the Gciriku kingdom to be written in the context of relationship with its neighbours. Thus, chapter showed how as a ruler Hompa Nyangana contributed to regional peace and stability. In this study, the focus has been on the various kingdoms, especially those alongside the Kavango and the Kwito Rivers or the so-called Kavango kingdoms as well as the Nyemba and the San people. The chapter demonstrated that the history of the people who inhabit the areas alongside the Kavango River is in many aspects interconnected.

Since the reign of Hompa Nyangana covered the period when European imperialism and colonialism gained momentum in Africa, how Hompa Nyangana responded to those developments has been shown. In chapter five, the question of

the violent encounters between Hompa Nyangana and the European traders and hunters in his kingdom is dealt with. It was shown that Hompa Nyangana was a fierce and sometimes violent opponent of Europeans and their activities within his kingdom. Some of the violent encounters between Hompa Nyangana and the European traders and hunters were presented in order to provide a picture of what actually took place as Hompa Nyangana has often been branded in European literature as a mere robber and savage. This chapter has benefited from the newly discovered primary written sources that are kept in Botswana's National Archives. Thus, some perspectives introduced in this chapter may appear controversial or totally new to many readers. What oral historians has related as the causes of the Vagciriku-Lishora Massacre of 1894 is totally in contrast to what appears in the written sources. The written statements from the BaTswana and the Bechuanaland British Protectorate officials point at other factors as the causes of the Vagciriku-Lishora Massacre of 1894.

Chapter six, explored the last phase of Hompa Nyangana's reign and the legacies of his long reign for the Vagciriku. This is a period that begun with the arrival of the Roman Catholic Missionary in Gciriku in 1910. Hompa Nyangana's acceptance of the missionaries in his kingdom after a protracted period of violent opposition to Europeans in his kingdom in the earlier years was explained. The deaths of Hompa Nyangana's influential son, Klemens Mbambo, and Prince Tjimi waMakanga, the heir-apparent to the Vagciriku throne, are detailed in the chapter. The two were destined to play a major role in the history of the Vagciriku if they

had lived longer. Hompa Nyangana's reign had left some significant legacies to the Vagciriku. One of these legacies is the Vagciriku Royal Cemetery that had developed from his gravesite. This chapter briefly showed how the cemetery developed and the burial politics that characterised it, during the reigns of three successive rulers of the Vagciriku (1925-1999).

In summary, the whole study is about Hompa Nyangana, his decisions and actions during his reign. It must be noted that this study does not make any pretension that it is a comprehensive analysis of the reign of Hompa Nyangana. The problem was, at the time of conducting the study, there were no living persons who could be primary sources for the period Hompa Nyangana reigned over the Vagciriku. Thus, in assessing whether Hompa Nyangana was a good or a bad ruler of the Vagciriku, mixed responses were received. Princess Mavandje whose account had been published by both Kamwanga (1996) and Möhlig (2002) was the only primary source for the events that took place shortly before and after the arrival of the Roman Catholic missionaries. At her death in 1987, she was estimated to be 100 years old.

Given the qualitative nature of the study, it is difficult at this point to achieve consensus in assessing Hompa Nyangana's leadership. However, despite the violence that often characterised his reign, there can be no doubt about the significance of his reign in Vagciriku history. Indeed, even today, it is difficult for the Vagciriku elders to talk about the history of the Vagciriku without referring to

events that took place during the reign of Hompa Nyangana. Thus, Hompa Nyangana has become a central focus of Vagciriku history. In today's democratic environment, it is easy for one to point out that Hompa Nyangana was a despot, however, one can argue that during those times 'despotism' was the norm for most traditional rulers in Africa.

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**Microfilm no:1570.** A Letter by Frielinghaus (dated: 1891) of the Imperial German Mining Office to Chancellor Von Caprivi. [translation]

**File no: A. 489.** A Letter from Axel Eriksson to George Robb, Aukas-12 miles North of Grootfontein dated, 29<sup>th</sup> November 1898.

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**HC: 144.** Correspondence on Ngamiland Affairs and the Ghanzi District and Lake Ngami Police detachment. Boer Trekkers, Isaac Johan Bosman acting on behalf of the BSACo and papers relating to the murder of a German subject, Phillip Wiesels and Robert Arthur Faraday by Nyangana and the capture of Nyangana by Sekgoma's men (1894-1898)

**RC: 10/8.** Correspondence relating to the murder of the Paasch family in 1903 by Nyangana. (1903-1905)

**Oral Sources: Interviews with photos of interviewees available**



Photo 1

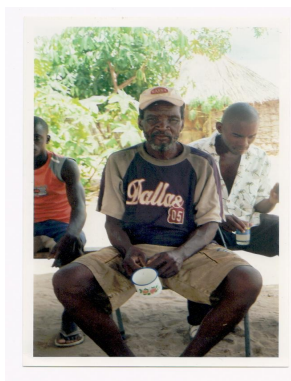


Photo 2



Photo 3

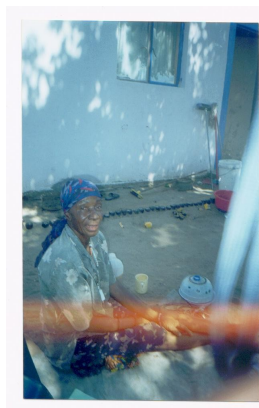


Photo4



Photo 5

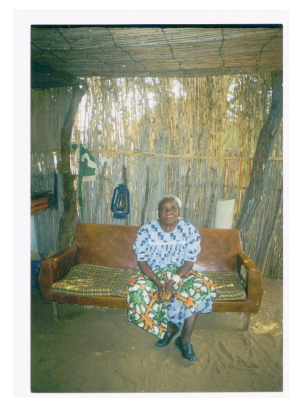


Photo 6



Photo 7



Photo 8



Photo 9



Photo 10



Photo 11



Photo 12



Photo 13

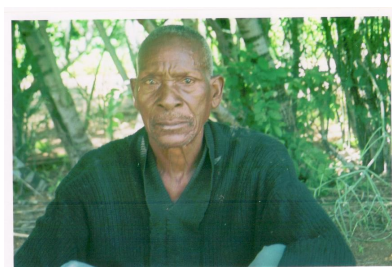


Photo 14

**Photo 1**

Name: Wayera Shihungu  
 Date of birth: ±1925  
 Date of death: Still Alive  
 Date of interview: 09-07-2006  
 Place of interview: Hoha  
 Name of interviewer: Shampapi Shiremo

**Photo 2**

Name: Kampungu Mudumbi  
 Date of birth: ±1940  
 Date of death: Still Alive  
 Date of interview: 15-04-2006  
 Place of interview: Mamono  
 Name of interviewer: Shampapi Shiremo

**Photo 3**

Name: Shidona Kamutuva  
 Date of birth: ±1915  
 Date of death: Still Alive  
 Date of interview: 2001  
 Place of interview: Gumma  
 Name of interviewer: Kletus Likuwa

**Photo 4**

Name: Shihako Sikuvi  
 Date of birth: ±1930  
 Date of death: Still Alive  
 Date of interview: 11-12-2004  
 Place of interview: Guma  
 Name of interviewer: Shampapi Shirem

**Photo 5**

Name: Mavandje Kupembona(Lincororo)  
Date of birth: ±1930  
Date of death: Still Alive  
Date of interview: 14-12-2004  
Place of interview: Utokota  
Name of interviewer: Shampapi Shiremo

**Photo 6**

Name: Leopoldine Murarero Mudumbi  
Date of birth: ±1930  
Date of death: Still Alive  
Date of interview: 16-10-2004  
Place of interview: Tutungenu  
Name of interviewer: Shampapi Shiremo

**Photo 7**

Name: Nerumbu Shitarara  
Date of birth: ±1925  
Date of death: Still Alive  
Date of interview: 20-11-2004  
Place of interview: Nkarapamwe  
Name of interviewer: Shampapi Shiremo

**Photo 8**

Name: Ludwig Mudumbi (on the left)  
Date of Birth: ±1920  
Date of death: Still Alive  
Date of interview: 26-08-2002  
Place of interview: Mamono  
Name of interviewer: Shampapi Shiremo

**Photo 9**

Name: Mate Susana Kamwanga  
Date of birth: ±1918  
Date of death: Still Alive  
Date of interview: 10-05-2008  
Place of interview: Guma  
Name of interviewer: Shampapi Shiremo

**Photo 10**

Name: Simon Nzamene Kandere  
Date of birth: ±1917  
Date of death: Still Alive  
Date of interview: 31-07-2005  
Place of interview: Nkarapamwe  
Name of interviewer: Shampapi Shiremo

**Photo 11**

Name: Katuvambwa Thomas Muyenga  
Date of birth: ±1920  
Date of death: Still Alive  
Date of interview: 18-09-2005  
Place of interview: Karuci  
Name of interviewer: Shampapi Shiremo

**Photo 12**

Name: Kandambo Munkanda  
Date of birth: ±1925  
Date of death: Still Alive  
Date of interview: 01-04-2006  
Place of interview: Katere  
Name of interviewer: Shampapi Shiremo

**Photo 13**

Name: Wayera Shiremo  
Date of birth: ±1925  
Date of death: Still Alive  
Date of interview: 18-03-2008  
Place of interview: Kayova  
Name of interviewer: Shampapi Shiremo

**Photo 14**

Name: Murora Shandengu  
 Date of birth: ±1930  
 Date of death: Still Alive  
 Date of interview: 04-06-2006  
 Place of interview: Karuci  
 Name of interviewer: Shampapi Shiremo

**Interviews with elders whose photos are not available**

Name: George Mukoya  
 Date of birth: ±1910  
 Date of death: ±1992  
 Date of interview: 1989  
 Place of interview: Shinunga  
 Name of interviewer: Joseph Shikusho (NBC Rukavango Service)

Name: Richard Mavara  
 Date of birth: Unknown  
 Date of death: ±1995  
 Date of interview: 23-05-1991  
 Place of interview: 1990  
 Name of interviewer: Joseph Shikusho (NBC Rukavango Service)

Name: Hompa Daniël Sientu Mpasi  
 Date of birth: ±1930  
 Date of death: Still Alive  
 Date of interview: 11-10-1999  
 Place of interview: Mayara (?)  
 Name of interviewer: Joseph Shikusho (NBC Rukavango Service)

Name: Mudumbi ShaMurarero waNgondera  
Date of birth: ±1910  
Date of death: 1999  
Date of interview: June 1998  
Place of interview: Mamono  
Name of interviewer: Kornelius Maghoma Muyamba and group

Name: Nepemba zaMburu  
Date of birth: ±1910  
Date of death: Still Alive  
Date of interview: 2003  
Place of interview: Kayengona  
Name of interviewer: Joseph Shikusho (NBC Rukavango Service)

Name: Katiku Lidia Sharumbongo  
Date of birth: ±1930  
Date of death: 2006  
Date of interview: 02-01-2005  
Place of interview: Mamono  
Name of interviewer: Shampapi Shiremo

Name: Shintunga Unengu  
Date of birth: ±1920  
Date of death: Still Alive  
Date of interview: 18-03-2008  
Place of interview: Shikoro  
Name of interviewer: Shampapi Shiremo

Name: Dickson Muyeghu Kayoka  
Date of birth: ±1970  
Date of death: Still Alive  
Date of interview: 27-08-2002  
Place of interview: Mukekete  
Name of interviewer: Shampapi Shiremo

Name: Annafrugencia Mudi Kamenye  
Date of birth: ±1924  
Date of death: Still Alive  
Date of interview: 18-04-2006  
Place of interview: Kangweru  
Name of interviewer: Shampapi Shiremo

## **Annexure A**

### **The Reign of Hompa Shimwemwe (±1785-1805)**

Apart from Sebastian Kamwanga who mentions Hompa Kapata<sup>217</sup> in his booklet, most oral accounts and genealogies on the Vagciriku rulers place Shimwemwe as the founding king. His royal seats were at Mpupa on the Kwito River and at Uvara Wantjefu on the Kavango River. George Mukoya (Interview: 1989) suggest another seat at Ndonga Linena. Not a lot about his reign is known. However, in the oral account of Mudumbi ShaMurarero (Interview: 1998) it is suggested that it was during his reign that the separation of the Vakayembe clan into what is known today as the Vakankora and Vakafuma clans occurred. Evidently, that split influenced the royal politics of the Vagciriku during the succeeding reigns. Since the reign of Hompa Shimwemwe, the royal Vakafuma clan practiced politics of exclusion and inclusion towards the Vakankora clan, through strategic royal marriages, politically-motivated assassinations and the banishing of opponents.

The Vakangombe clan's oral tradition point out that it was Hompa Shimwemwe who married a woman of their clan, named '*Mwambu waMakunku*' or '*Mukanungu*'. They relate that it was during Shimwemwe's reign that the kambembe dance were taken from them by the ruling Vakafuma clan. Since then, kambembe has become the official royal dance of the Vagciriku. Against this,

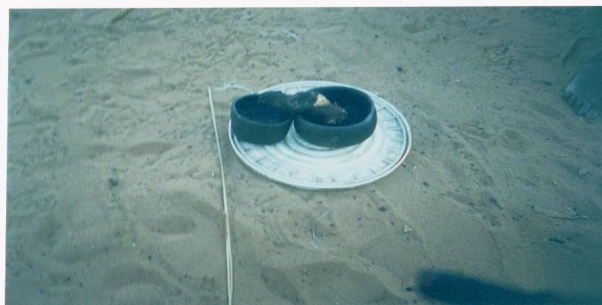
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<sup>217</sup> Kamwanga, S. & Haushiku, F.J. (1995) **Tu Vamanyo kushakare**. Gamsberg Macmillan (Pty) Ltd: Windhoek. p.4

Karl Peter Shiyaka-Mberema who had collected oral accounts, epic poetry and traditional songs since 1957 wrote;

*“According to the oral traditions of our elders, kambembe royal dance was first performed during the reign of Hompa Shimwemwe when our ancestors were still at Mpupa. ... ..That is where, through the spirits of their ancestors, the kambembe-shikavedi censer<sup>218</sup> was brought to them and handed to a woman of the Cattle clan. Thus, from the very beginning kambembe dance was exclusively known by and the property of the Vakangombe clan (Cattle clan) but as we know usually a good thing is never owned by a commoner. For this reason, the censer for kambembe was appropriated from them and they were only left with the censer for shikavedi.”<sup>219</sup>*

The event quoted above which took place during the reign of Hompa Shimwemwe, also influenced royal politics and power relations during the various successive reigns of the Vagciriku kings. Kambembe royal dance in many aspects symbolized and represented the power of the Vagciriku royalty and history.



**Figure 3.**  
Censer for

shikavedi/kambembe dance: Photo taken by Shampapi Shiremo in 2004.

### **The Reign of Hompa Kayengoma (Murara nangara) (±1805-1812)**

<sup>218</sup> According to Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary a censer is a container for holding and burning incense ( a substance that produces a pleasant smell), used during religious ceremonies.

<sup>219</sup> Mberema, K.P.S. (1996) **Matongorangombe**. Gamsberg Macmillan Publishers (Pty) Ltd: Windhoek. p.8 [my translation]

On most genealogical lists of the Vagciriku rulers, Kayengoma is placed as the second Hompa of the Vagciriku after Hompa Shimwemwe. However, Mudumbi ShaMurarero (Interview: 1998) states that Kayengoma, otherwise known as Ngara or Murara nangara, ruled simultaneously with Shimwemwe. He said that while Shimwemwe was at Mpupa and Malyo on the Kwito River, Ngara established his authority at the Kavango River. In ShaMurarero's account, Ngara is depicted as a troublemaker with a bad character. In the same account, the cause of the Vakankora and the Vakafuma's migration away from Mashi and the separation of their clan is also attributed to Ngara's bad manners. One must point out, however, that these views are at odds with the oral accounts on the same subject from the ruling Vakafuma clan.

However, even within the ruling Vakafuma clan, Hompa Ngara's position as the Vagciriku ruler is ambiguous. Some of the oral accounts suggest that Hompa Ngara was not of the lineage of the current ruling Vakafuma clan of the Vagciriku but rather belonged to the Vashambyu ruling lineage of the Vakankora clan. This is clear in George Mukoya's (Interview: 1989) account. Though, Mukoya detailed the chronology of the Vagciriku rulers, he did not acknowledge in any form that Ngara was ever a ruler of the Vagciriku. Shiyaka-Mberema (Interview: 2003), with reference to some of his early oral sources indicates that Hompa Ngara was married to Hompa Shimwemwe's daughter. Upon Shimwemwe's death, Kayengoma (alias Ngara) was put forward to succeed his father-in-law as Hompa

because there was no one from Hompa Shimwemwe's lineage who was fit enough to take the reins at the time. In most of the kambembe songs in which the past kings of the Vagciriku are exalted, Kayengoma or Ngara's name is visibly absent whereas Hompa Shimwemwe's name is found frequently. In all the cassettes, of kambembe songs, accessible to this author not one of the songs mentions the name Kayengoma or Ngara. Karl Peter Shiyaka-Mberema (1996), who published a collection of kambembe royal songs in a book entitled *Matongorangombe*, does not mention the name Ngara. Even in a song titled *liromba lina yuru*,<sup>220</sup> in which the early rulers of the Vagciriku up to Hompa Nyangana's reign are named chronologically, the name Kayengoma or Ngara is not mentioned.

A possible reason for this as suggested by Shiyaka-Mberema's sources, is that Ngara's rule was shortlived because of Matjaube's witchcraft- a people who resented the Mashi immigrants for having usurped their power and land.<sup>221</sup> This perhaps explains why his reign is estimated to have lasted just seven years. Sebastian Kamwanga (1995:4) argues that Hompa Ngara was the first to establish his royal seat at Ndonga Linena, but George Mukoya's oral account credits Hompa Shimwemwe for this instead. It is likely that Hompa Ngara did rule but that the royal members who have narrated Vagciriku history regarded him as an outsider and therefore not an authentic Vagciriku King.<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>220</sup>Mberema, K.P.S. (1996) *Matongorangombe*. Ibid.p.68

<sup>221</sup> Bierfert, P.A. & Mberema, K.P.S. (1991) *Ngandu 1*. Windhoek: Gamsberg Macmillan Publishers (Pty) Ltd. p.44

<sup>222</sup> According to Mr. Shiyaka-Mberema, reliable oral historians from the Vagciriku royal families such as Princess Shiromba shaMakanga, Hompa Shampapi waMashika and even Prince George Mukoya regarded Ngara as an outsider to the Vagciriku royal establishment.

### **The Reign of Hompa Mulyata (±1812-1839)**

In all the lists of the Vagciriku rulers Hompa Mulyata is placed as the third ruler. On the Vagciriku genealogical list of rulers, Hompa Mulyata's reign is estimated to have lasted for a period of 27 years. However, there are doubts about this because it goes against the assertion of the Vagciriku's oral tradition and history, which suggests that his reign was also shortlived because of Matjaube witchcraft.<sup>223</sup> It also goes against oral accounts and musical materials gathered by this author in which Hompa Mulyata's name is either notably absent or is only mentioned in passing.

Both George Mukoya (Interview: 1989) and Kamwanga (1995) agree that Mulyata's royal seat was at Ngumbo, the place where the farmstead of Shitemo's agricultural irrigation scheme in the Ndiyona Constituency stands today. It is important to note that Ngumbo is one of the few places regarded by the Vakafuma royalty as an oracle. In the past, whenever the Vagciriku kings and their next of kin were sick, or whenever they were preparing for kambembe royal dance, they used to consult the oracle at Ngumbo. If the high regard shown by the royalty of the Vagciriku for Ngumbo is associated with Hompa Mulyata, then one can conclude that he was a kind and generous ruler. This is because, in the Vagciriku

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<sup>223</sup> Mberema, K.P.S. & Bierfert, A. (1991).p.44

culture, an oracle is only associated with wise people who were of good character throughout their lives.

Kamwanga (1995:5) has written about the border conflict that took place between the Vashambyu and the Vagciriku during the reign of King Mulyata, suggesting that Hompa Mulyata's easterly relocation from Ndonga Linena to Ngumbo was a result of it.<sup>224</sup> This argument is, however, notably absent from most other oral accounts that this author had gathered. Little more is known about Hompa Mulyata's reign.

### **The Reign of Hompa Nandundu (±1838-1839)**

Hompa Nandundu is placed as the fourth ruler of the Vagciriku by Mberema (1988), Mutorwa (1996) and Möhlig (2002). The official list of the Vagciriku rulers suggest that Hompa Nandundu only ruled for a period of one year. Bierfert and Shiyaka-Mberema (1991) suggested that Hompa Nandundu's reign begun in 1830 not in 1838 which appears on the official lists. Oral sources indicate that his reign did not last long because he gave it up voluntarily to another candidate. Hompa Nandundu is first and the only Vagciriku ruler to have voluntarily vacated his throne without violence or bloodshed. If around 1830 is indeed the approximate time of his assumption of power, then at least ten years can be deducted from Hompa Mulyata's reign. Though not perhaps complete, this

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<sup>224</sup> Kamwanga, S. & Haushiku, F.J. p.5

deduction leaves Hompa Mulyata at only about seventeen years bringing it closer to the assertion found in oral tradition that his reign was quite brief.

According to Dickson Kayoka (Interview: 2002), Hompa Nandundu relinquished power because of a personal disability. Apparently, he had a kind of a hump on his back that he feared commoners and royalty alike would make fun of. To avoid this, he stepped aside. Today, most of Hompa Nandundu's maternal descendants are found in Ukwangali and Mbukushu districts, where their ancestors emigrated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Reverend Ludwig Hausiku speculates that while in Ukwangali some of the maternal descendants of Hompa Nandundu were captured by Ovakwanyama warriors during a cattle raid.<sup>225</sup> Perhaps, it is because of the brevity of his rule that most oral accounts do not seem to remember him. His name is notably absent from kambembe royal songs.

### **The Reign of Hompa Kangungu (Muduva) (±1839-1858)**

Hompa Kangungu was nicknamed Muduva to liken his kindness, honesty and open nature to a fish-trap that welcomes every species of fish. Despite this good nickname, Hompa Kangungu is largely remembered for the tragic events that took place during his reign. Bierfert and Shiyaka-Mberema (1991), estimates that Hompa Nandundu relinquished power in around 1830. If so, rather than 1839, the date that appears on the official lists of the Vagciriku rulers then approximately

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<sup>225</sup> Hausiku, L.S. **Shingeve shaMakena**. ( Unpublished manuscript) P.27-28

that date can be marked as the year he took the reign. It becomes evident when doing oral interviews with the Vagciriku elders on the history of royal successions, that a more detailed memory is evident from the reign of Hompa Muduva (Kangungu). This is well epitomized in a statement by Kandambo kaMunkanda (Interview: 2006).

*“As to how this kingdom had been ruled? From the very beginning it was Hompa Muduva who ruled. The very person who had brought a curse on the royal members making them few in number today.”<sup>226</sup>*

The above statement by Kandambo kaMunkanda does not mean that Muduva (Kangungu) was the founding king of the Vagciriku, but rather that her memory of royal history begins with the reign of Hompa Muduva. The emphasis on Hompa Muduva’s reign is perhaps as a result of the effect that his reign had on the royalty and the Vagciriku populace at large. It was during Hompa Muduva’s reign that squabbles about succession began. In most oral traditions and histories of the Vagciriku it appears that there were smooth transitions of power before Hompa Muduva came to power. The Makololo Raid of 1860, that brought his reign to an abrupt end is said to have been invited by a sworn enemy within the royal family itself.

Hompa Muduva’s name and some important events that took place during his reign have been recited by generations in kambembe songs. Shiyaka-Mberema

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<sup>226</sup> **Kandambo kaMunkanda** ( Interview: 2006)

who collected epic songs and praise poetry since the late 1950s on the early years of the Vagciriku Kingdom, managed to collect a praise poem about Hompa Kangungu (Muduva).<sup>227</sup> Though the names of his wives are not specifically remembered as are those of his successors, oral research of some elders indicates that one of his wives belonged to the Vakankora clan and another to the Vakanyashi clan respectively.

Hompa Muduva persuaded some royal members to drown themselves with him from a canoe named 'Sharughombo'. However, before the suicidal act took place he announced in a loud voice, while in the middle of the Kavango River, that Shirongo his son should take over his place as Hompa. He added that Sikeletu, the leader of the Makololo, could never claim to have killed him and, because he was a proud man, he deemed it better to take his own life than to be captured or killed by a small boy.<sup>228</sup>

Mr. Mberema (Interview: 2003), indicated that Shirongo was installed by the Makololo because at the time the rightful successor Muhera had fled the kingdom. This argument is plausible, because the Makololo are a patrilineal people and it was in accordance with their culture to install Shirongo, the son of Hompa Kangungu. However, Muhera was rightful heir in accordance with matrilineal laws of the Vagciriku. In actual fact, Shirongo ruled for a short period before

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<sup>227</sup> Bierfert, A. & Mberema, K.P.S. (1991) p.48.

<sup>228</sup> This alludes to the fact that Sikeletu was hardly thirty years old when he attacked the Vagciriku in around 1860.

Muhera came back to claim the throne.<sup>229</sup> When asked to elaborate in May 2008, Shiyaka-Mberema provided to this author some information that he had learned from some reliable earlier sources.

*Shirongo wanted to join his father and company in committing suicide but that his father refused to allow him to do so, and that when the dug-out canoe, which his father and company were in began to founder, Shirongo allegedly wept bitterly like a baby. When Sekeletu asked who was crying so much, he was told that it was Hompa Kangungu's son. Sekeletu allegedly inaugurated him as Hompa and told the crowd to accept him and informed them that from time to time he (Sekeletu) would come to pay a visit to ensure that nobody was interfering with Shirongo's chieftainship.*

This explains why Muhera did not take over the throne immediately after Kangungu's death. This might also explain why those who drafted the list of Vagciriku rulers did not allocate the two years in between Hompa Muduva's reign and that of Hompa Muhera to any one. This gap gives the impression that the Vagciriku were leaderless for the period; in fact, Shirongo the son of Hompa Muduva ruled.

### **The Reign of Hompa Muhera waMaghoma.**

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<sup>229</sup>. Mberema, K.P.S. (Interview:2003) AARCLS.056: NAN

George Mukoya (Interview:1989) has narrated Hompa Muhera's life from the time he lived in the same palace as Hompa Muduva<sup>230</sup> up to his succeeding the throne. As others, Mukoya informs us that, as a young man, Muhera fled into exile to the kingdom of the Hambukushu where he was granted political asylum. This proved necessary when his uncles, Mushishara, Mahupe and his cousin Makongwa were killed with the full sanction and blessing of Hompa Muduva at Rutco. Prince Mahupe was assassinated at Biro Island in Mbukushu where he had taken refuge with his Kwangali wife, Karungu. With his own life also in danger, Muhera sought asylum in the Mbukushu kingdom in which his uncle Mahupe had been killed as a result of diplomatic messages sent to Fumu Diyeve I by Hompa Muduva. Hompa Muduva again sent messengers to Fumu Diyeve I to have Muhera assassinated, but this time Fumu Diyeve I refused, reasoning that Muhera was a good man and did not deserve to die. Perhaps it is from this refusal by Fumu Diyeve that the well-known saying *Kangungu kughamba, Diyeve pore* developed. This saying is common amongst the Vagciriku and the Hambukushu. It literally mean, 'While Kangungu speaks, Diyeve is quiet (acts ignorant).' Metaphorically it is interpreted as 'whereas the branches from tree shake from the blowing wind, the tree trunk is still.'

It is believed that during the time of Muhera's exile in Mbukushu, he persuaded Fumu Diyeve I to approach the Makololo of King Sikeletu to seek assistance in toppling his rival, Hompa Muduva. The Makololo accepted this invitation because they thought that they would solely benefit from the spoils of the raid.

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<sup>230</sup> Hompa Muduva's real name was Kangungu.

All early writers seem to agree that the Makololo raid on the Vagciriku took place in 1858. However, the date of 1858 is based solely on an extract of a book written by the Swedish explorer Charles John Andersson. While at his palace in 1859, Hompa Sikongo of the Vakwangali apparently told Andersson that in the previous year the Makololo had robbed him of his cattle.<sup>231</sup> However, new evidence is now available that points to other cattle raiding groups. It is possible that it was not the Makololo who stole the cattle of the Vakwangali, but, rather the combined warriors of the Aandongga of Shikongo shaKalulu and a commando of Oorlam Afrikaners led by Jonker Afrikaner.<sup>232</sup> This may corroborate the testimony of Kampungu (1965:38 & 121) who refers to a war remembered among the Vakwangali as *Yita yoVasimba* meaning ‘Ovatjimba war’. Peter Johansson (2007:126) in his book entitled *The Trader King of Damaraland*, explained the origin of the people called Ovatjimba as follows: *When the Hereros suffered from Oorlam/Nama cattle raid in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, certain groups ended up with no cattle at all. These groups then had to support themselves through hunting and gathering, and became the so-called Ovatjimbos.* The connection between Ovatjimba and Oorlam/Nama raid compounded with what is contained in the Vakwangali, Ondonga and Oukwanyama oral history, we can be certain that the said war are connected to Jonker Afrikaner’s raiding parties.

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<sup>231</sup> Andersson, C.J. (1968) **The Okavango River: A Native of Travel, Exploration and Adventure.** p.194

<sup>232</sup> Williams, F. (1991) **Precolonial communities of Southern-Western Africa.**p.24. Also see, Namuhuja, H.D. (2002) **The Ondonga Royal Kings.** p.20-21

As one can see on the maps of the Kavango Region, the Vakwangali are one of five Kavango communities, but they do not border the Vagciriku. The neighbouring communities of the Ukwangali kingdom to the south and western side were and are the Aandonga and the Ovakwanyama. Even Andersson himself had misgivings about the said Makololo raid on the Vakwangali, because, while he was at Omanbonde (sic) in 1858, he received a message reporting that a party of white men had stolen cattle from the Vakwangali.

More evidence casting doubt on the 1858 date for the raid comes from the notes of the explorer and missionary David Livingstone. In May 1860, on leaving a place called Tete in order to return his escort of Makololo men to Sekeletu's place, he reports that the Makololo had sent an army to Damaraland.<sup>233</sup> This is important because it is likely that Livingstone confused or substituted Damaraland with/for Geiriku.<sup>234</sup> This is against the background that apart from the Caprivi Strip, the whole of the present northern Namibia down to central Namibia was in earlier years (1850s-1880s) sometimes referred to as Damaraland by white explorers and travellers

However, there is no doubt that the event took place because there are accounts of it even on the Caprivian side. This is clear in the account of Francis Munduba Mungu, a resident of Sibinda village in the Caprivi Region in 1982, who had this to narrate:

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<sup>233</sup> Jalla, A. (1921) **The Story of the Barotse Nation**. p.32

<sup>234</sup> See Gibbons, H (1904) p.179.

*While still at Linyanti, Sebitwane's son Sikeletu had heard about a Magciriku chief called Nyongano (Nyangana)<sup>235</sup> who had a lot of cattle, more than Sebitwane himself. Sikeletu formed an army out of his own people to raid Nyongano. The army walked from Linyanti to Andara. There they met chief Diyeve of the Mambukushu. He informed them about the distance to the country of the Magciriku. Then Sikeletu defeated the Magciriku, captured their cattle and brought them back to the Caprivi.*

*Chief Diyeve got a fright and made a plan. When Sikeletu came back from his raid, he and his army slept near Andara at the place Chief Diyeve had allocated to them. Diyeve did not greet them himself, but only sent an induna. Sikeletu asked him: "where is your chief?" The reply was: "He is still coming." But Chief Diyeve took his time. The sun was going down and he hadn't come yet. Sikeletu started worrying, he could not sleep and his whole body was itching. Then, he sent a message to Chief Diyeve to tell him that he was ill. Diyeve's answer to that was: "I told you not to fight the Magciriku, because they are dangerous. I will come, however, and see your chief." But, he didn't go until the next morning came. When Chief Diyeve arrived at the Chief Sikeletu's camp, he said again: "I told you not to go to the Magciriku! You see now what is happening!" At that time Sikeletu's whole body started to rot from leprosy. Chief Diyeve ordered his people to make a stretcher to carry Sikeletu back to his residence. So, it happened. They walked for many days until they came back to the Caprivi. After his return to Linyanti, Sikeletu was informed that his father Sebitwane had died. He is buried there, Sikeletu passed away shortly afterwards.<sup>236</sup>*

Comparing the account of Mr. Mungu with the notes of David Livingstone, one can conclude that the Makololo-Vagciriku Raid took place not in 1858 but in 1860. Though, perhaps not fully substantiated yet, the information presented

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<sup>235</sup> Nyangana was not a ruler of the Vagciriku at the time of Sekeletu. The ruler was Hompa Kangungu well known as Muduva.

<sup>236</sup> Statement by **Mr. Francis Munduba Mungu** (19-02-1982) Sibbinda Village: Caprivi Region. National Archives of Namibia.

above does bring in new information that was lacking in the calculation used to arrive at the 1858 dating.

The Makololo Raid on the Vagciriku of 1860 marked the end of Hompa Muduva's reign and the beginning of Shirongo's four-year regency/rule before Hompa Muhera took over. Thus, Hompa Muhera's rule can be estimated to have begun in around 1864 rather than 1861, the date that appears on official lists of Vagciriku rulers. The Makololo protected Shirongo's rule and opposed Hompa Muhera's ambitions to take over, but, with the death of Mbololo, the successor to Sikeletu in August 1864, and the resulting collapse of the Makololo's military supremacy in the region, Hompa Muhera usurped power from Shirongo

From Hompa Muhera's reign onwards, the history of the Vagciriku royal family as remembered by the elders is fairly detailed and of fairly good quality. This is evident in the praise poem exalting Hompa Muhera, which has been published in a co-book entitled *Ngandu I* collected by Mr. Shiyaka-Mberema. The elders also remember names of most of his wives and even those of their fathers.

It is also reported by most royal oral accounts that Hompa Muhera was personally responsible for the death of Princess Wayera, the mother of Hompa Nyangana. Most accounts also agree that she was murdered in front of her sons, Nyangana and his younger brother Ngandu. They were too young to defend their mother and silently watched their uncle's cruel act. Judging by his later life, one can conclude that the death of his mother in these circumstances had deepseated and everlasting

psychological effects on Nyangana. The elders who relate the Vagciriku's history state that Hompa Muhera's reign was brief. This could mean a rule of anything from five to ten years. In this case, one can estimate that Hompa Muhera's reign, began at around 1864 and ended by 1874.<sup>237</sup>

**The genealogical list of the Vagciriku rulers as modified by R.S.Shiremo.**

Name	Period of Reign ( As on official list)	Period of Reign (as modified by Shiremo)	Royal Seat	Bank of the Kavango River
1.Shimwemwe	1785-1805	±1785-1805	Mpupa, Uvara wantjefu and Ndonga Linena	Angola, Namibia, Namibia
2.Kayengoma. [Murara nangara]	1805-1812	±1805-1812	Ndonga Linena	Namibia
3. Mulyata	1812-1839	±1812-1830	Ngumbo	Namibia

<sup>237</sup> . Mr. Karl Peter Shiyaka-Mberema fully supports this date shift.

4. Nandundu	1838-1839	±1830-1832	Ngumbo	Namibia
5. Muduva [Kangungu]	1839-1858	±1832-1860	Rutco	Namibia
6. Shirongo [Regent]	He is not listed.	±1860-1864	Rutco	Namibia
7. Muhera	1861-1866	±1865-1874	Ngurungu	Angola
8. Nyangana	1866-1924	±1874-1924	Shitopoho, Matumba, Mamono	Angola, Angola, Namibia
9. Shampapi	1924-1945	1925-1944	Mamono	Namibia
10. Shashipapo	1945-1984	1945-1984	Ndiyona (Rutco)	Namibia
11. Kamwanga	1985-1999	1985-1999	Mamono	Namibia
12. Shiyambi	1999-present	1999-present	Kadedere	Namibia