

## The Return of the Sacred Stones of the Ovambo Kingdoms: Restitution and the Revision of the Past

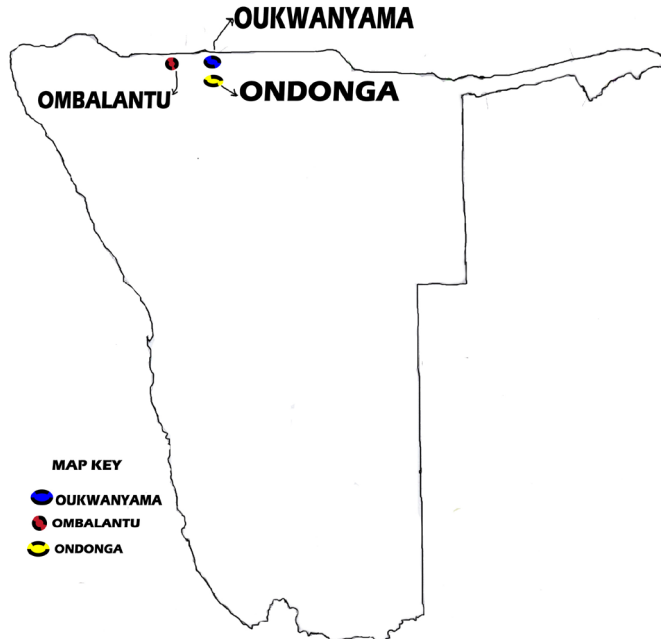
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### Abstract

The discourse of restitution often takes place within the framework of the 'ethics of collecting' with a focus on the return of objects violently obtained, which has restricted the debate. This case study of the return of two sacred stones from Finland to Namibia reflects on the cultural impact of their return. Largely Christianized communities re-encountered objects that were sacred and central to earlier belief systems. We argue that the role of the sacred stones changed over time in ways that challenge any assumption of stasis that might be assumed when deploying the concept of 'tradition'. The return of the two stones provoked renewed interest in pre-Christian rituals but also efforts to strengthen the position of 'traditional authorities' in relation to the democratic system of governance in Namibia. The ripples of restitution illustrate the wider importance of the return of cultural artefacts for stimulating contemporary cultural and political debate.

**Key words:** Namibia, Ovambo, Finland, Museums, Restitution



*Fig. 1. Map of Namibia showing the geographical locations of the three kingdoms Oukwanyana, Ombalantu and Ondonga. Source: Erasmus Stephanus, 2020.*

## Introduction

One of the central challenges of the restitution debate is that, ironically, ethnographic museums (with their broken fragments of cultures and histories) have been at the centre of the conversation. The debate has been 'museocentric'. This article's central argument is that 'decentring' the debate requires a revision of this perspective and the language that encapsulates it. The frequently cited notion of the museum as a privileged 'contact zone' overstates the influence of the institution in a globalized world in which, as Anthony Shelton has pointed out, contact zones are 'everywhere' (Shelton 2018: v).

Robin Boast argued that museums sought to redefine themselves as 'contact zones' by inviting '...source community members *into* the museum to *add* their voices to the objects' (Boast 2011: 66, original emphasis). The dynamics of power, however, are even embedded in the term 'source community'. Residents of a place that was, in the past, a source of objects are now recruited as the source of current readings of those objects. A Namibian perspective would be that the important historical collections that are held turn these institutions into 'source museums'. 'Provenance research' often concentrates on museum archives with the aim of reconstructing paper trails to provide legitimacy to 'ownership'. A converse approach should start by evaluating the cultural and historical significance of artefacts today to a 'descendant community' (we prefer the term 'descendant community' because we make the simple argument that culture and cultural identities change over time).

Boast believes that the motivation behind many collaborations with 'source communities' is the 'authorization of collections'. He argues that the goal of 'confronting the neocolonial legacy' of museums '...requires museums to learn to let go of their resources, even at times of the objects, for the benefit and use of communities and agendas far beyond its knowledge and control' (Boast 2011: 67). The return of objects, both virtually and physically, reveals cultural continuities and ruptures, and can trigger cultural revivals and debates within descendant communities. The reintroduction, and possible resurrection, of objects as part of a 'living culture' is a crucial but complex process. It will often be a challenge to identify the concerned descendant community, given the fact that European collectors and museums often homogenized several communities under one museum label (Abungu 2019: 69). It is this dynamic process of re-integration that is important from a Namibian perspective. Object biographies complicate external assumptions that 'Indigenous knowledge' and cultural practices and beliefs were fixed and immutable (or only mutated through, and were corrupted by colonialism).

The movement to 'decolonize the museum' in Germany and increasing transparency about the content of collections in 'ethnographic' museums in Europe has meant that there is going to be an increase in claims from Namibia (a former German colony) for the return of objects of spiritual and historical significance to communities. Whilst there have only been a handful of objects returned to Namibia from European museums to date, we believe it is useful to reflect on the return of two sacred stones from Finland to Namibia, which took place in the 1990s. The biographies of these stones address Jesmael Mataga's call for 'recasting such objects... as archival items, that is, as items from the past that carry histories' (Mataga 2018: 62). Significantly, the stones were returned to traditional authorities, and internal discussions continue as to whether a museum would be a suitable resting place for the stones. Time and space have been given to enable local people to 'challenge mainstream curatorial practices and reconnect with objects' (Mataga 2018: 65).

The spiritually most important objects of the Ovambo Kingdoms (situated in what is now northern Namibia and southern Angola) were sacred stones that were used in rituals, such as the coronation of a new king and rain-making ceremonies. Finnish missionaries operated in the region and, following the conversion of communities to Christianity, several of the stones became part of the collection of the Finnish Lutheran Missionary Museum. After Namibia's independence, sacred stones that had belonged to the Kingdoms of Oukwanyama and Ombalantu were returned to the relevant traditional authorities. Discussions are currently underway regarding the fragment of a third sacred stone that belonged to the Kingdom of Ondonga. The manner in which the stone was removed from Ondonga, without the consent of its custodians, will also be described to explain the reasons why a restitution claim is being made for its return.

However, this article argues that the return of the stones, whilst contributing to the ethical mandate of 'decolonizing' European museums, focused on the task of physical repatriation – the return of objects. Our article considers the impact of the return of objects that were once sacred to communities which have now, largely, embraced an alternative belief system, Christianity, by reflecting on the way in which traditions relating to the sacred stones were mediated upon their return to the descendent communities from which they originated. We argue that it is important that descendant communities are provided with time and space to consider the role of objects from the past when they re-emerge in the present, and that 'returns' should include sustained collaboration with the recipient communities. Finally, this article highlights the fact that the removal of the objects from storage in Finland left an absence and a silence about the historical connection that the stones embodied, and that 'returns' should always be accompanied by an intervention to present a new (in this case, Namibian) narrative in the source museum.

### **Restitution and Namibian Museum Development**

'Making Museums Matter'. These three words are the slogan of the Museums Association of Namibia (MAN). The slogan speaks to the fundamental challenge at the heart of our mission as a non-governmental organization tasked with supporting regional museum development. MAN operates in a context in which many Namibians feel disconnected from heritage as being packaged and presented in museums. MAN constantly reflects on the ways in which we might reconceptualize the notion of 'the museum' in Namibia to make museums matter to the communities that they serve. Our definition needs to connect museums to a broader heritage spectrum that includes cultural landscapes (where heritage is found in place names and natural features wrapped in oral histories and traditions) and many forms of intangible cultural heritage.

One of the weaknesses facing many regional museums in Namibia is the absence of objects of historical and cultural significance. Most substantial collections of cultural artefacts from nineteenth and early twentieth century Namibia are not found in Namibian museums but in the storerooms of museums overseas. Significant clusters of museums with important historical collections of cultural artefacts from Namibia are located abroad, with the largest concentrations in Finland and Germany. The recognition that many of the objects in these collections were obtained unethically has led to a recent, but significant, shift in the thinking of some museum curators and directors. One important sign is the German Museums Associations' decision to draft guidelines for museums with collections that were created as a product of German colonialism (German Museums Association 2019). The Linden Museum in Stuttgart has already returned a bible and a whip that belonged to the *!Khowesin* leader, Henrik Witbooi, on 28 February 2019. Personal items of Witbooi had been looted by German forces after a surprise attack on his village at Hornkranz in 1893. The event at Gibeon was attended by the current and first two Presidents of Namibia as well as hundreds of local residents.<sup>1</sup> In August 2019, the German History Museum in Berlin returned the Cape Cross that was erected on the Namibian coast in 1486 and removed to Germany, over four hundred years later, also in 1893.<sup>2</sup>

It is noteworthy that the first objects to be returned to Namibia from Germany are iconic items that relate to the history of Christianization in the region. However, future returns by German museums will include items whose meaning was rooted in local spiritual beliefs. Developing collaborative processes for the restitution of significant numbers of artefacts of cultural and historical importance to Namibia is an opportunity for both Namibian and German museums to reconfigure their role in society. The physical return of objects must be accompanied by the creation of substantive platforms for dialogue that do not cease once an object is returned. In Namibia, returns will generate reflection on cultural heritage as well as the contemporary relationship between Christianity and local beliefs. In Germany, discussions and displays should consider issues such as the way in which colonial history has shaped attitudes to race in contemporary German society. Future thinking about the restitution of cultural artefacts can be informed by a case study of the sacred stones previously returned to Namibia from Finland.

## The Sacred Stones of the Ovambo Kingdoms

### *Emanya loMundilo Woshilongo shauKwanyama*

The flat, sandy landscape of northern Namibia and southern Angola is devoid of large stones. Yet there are strong oral traditions about the role of sacred stones in king-making and sacred rituals in many of the Oshiwambo-speaking Ovambo Kingdoms of this region. For example, according to Laurmaa (1949: 58) quoted in Ndamanomhata (2001: 226), Jason Amakutuwa, a local historian, stated that one of the ways in which the succession to the throne was decided in Uukwambi, when there was a dispute, was for the 'stone of the country' to be hidden at liyale, a royal grave site. According to Paulus Ndamanomhata, the first of the two contenders to find it would be appointed as the ruler (Ndamanomhata 2001: 225-6).

Our article reflects on three sacred stones that are known to have been taken out of Namibia. The first sacred stone arrived from Finland in 1995 and was returned to the Kingdom of Oukwanyama. Oral traditions from Oukwanyama identify a number of cultural objects that were associated with the power of the ruler and which were passed from one leader to the next. In the 1920s, these included *omiya doshilongo* [a special garment worn around the waist], *omukonda woshilongo* [the dagger of honour], *oshiva yoshilongo* [the iron whistle of the nation] as well as a set of iron tools (Williams 1991: 105). However, the most important sacred object was *Emanya loMundilo Woshilongo shauKwanyama* – the sacred stone of the kingdom.

Oral tradition can be used to provide a biography of the stone that is said to date from the reign of *Ohamba* ('King' in Oshikwanyama) Shitenhu. The Kwanyama oral historian, Natanael Shinana narrates that Shitenhu established the Kingdom of Oukwanyama in the early seventeenth century (Shinana 2002: 31-5). The stone was originally kept at his palace at Oshihetekela. The names of some of the 'keepers of the stone' are even remembered in oral narratives (such as Kambungu kaHamuheya).

An account by Meme Mukwanime states that the stone was first found by a sister of Shitenhu in an *oshana* (pond) and that it vibrated when she touched it. She described it as a rock that was possessed by ancestral spirits (*Eemhepo dovakwamhungu*), who were associated with rain-making. The stone was believed to be essential to the political stability and prosperity of the Kingdom.<sup>3</sup> Samuel Nambili explained that the Royal Council summoned all the *Namungangas* (spiritualists) '...who concluded that the object was a 'fallen star' from the outer world',<sup>4</sup> and, today, there is a widespread belief that some of the sacred rocks of northern Namibia were meteorites.

The stone was kept in a special 'keeping place' by two *Eendudu* (spiritual healers), a man and a woman. A woman would remain in the room with the stone, which was balanced on five smaller stones, whilst the man was responsible for guarding the outside of the hut where the stone was kept. When a new *Ohamba* came to power, they would step on the stone as part of the ritual. The stone would be kept at the palace of the ruling *Ohamba*. If the king died or if the stone shifted and was no longer sitting upright, a black bull would be slaughtered and its blood smeared on the stone (Shinana 2002: 33).

Natanael Shinana has argued that there was a change in the meaning of the sacred stone during the reign of *Ohamba* Haimbili yaHaufiku (c. 1811-1858). The stone was moved to *Omuulu waNaakulunhu*, a sacred site, and then used to resolve succession disputes within the Kingdom. When there were two rivals for the throne, the stone was taken and buried under the shade of a wild fig tree, and the first contender to uncover it would be proclaimed as the new king.

A further change in the use of the stone came when *Ohamba* Mandume yaNdemufayo ascended to the throne in 1911. The stone was then not used to decide the succession dispute between *Ohamba* Mandume and his rival, a woman candidate by the name of Hanyangha yaHamutenya. After *Ohamba* Mandume's death, during a battle with South African forces in 1917, the South African authorities forbade the inauguration of a new king. The stone was rescued and removed to the palace of *Ohamba* Nyambali, a senior female member of the royal family living at Oiheke in Angola. It was from here that it was recovered by Pastor Vilho Kaulinge in 1942.<sup>5</sup>

The meaning of the stone was again altered. Pastor Kaulinge is remembered as having used the stone to illustrate his Sunday sermon at Ondobe in northern Namibia, quoting from the New Testament to contrast Christians' faith in Jesus as their 'Living Rock' with the belief in the powers of the dead stone. Kaulinge argued that its powers had failed to preserve the Kingdom as Oukwanyama had been split by the colonial border that divided Angola and Namibia. In 1947, Kaulinge gave the stone to a Finnish missionary, Erkki Laurma, known locally as *Amutse* (meaning 'Big Head' in Oshikwanyama), who took it to Helsinki in 1948. Kaulinge reported that he was able to view the stone on display at the Finnish Mission Museum when he visited Finland in 1951. A curator at the museum, Ilona Immonen, explained to a Namibian film-maker in 1999 that it had been kept on a special wooden stand to ensure that it remained upright and to replicate the way it had been stored in the Kingdom.<sup>6</sup>

Vilho Kaulinge, a Kwanyama oral historian who had served with *Ohamba* Mandume stated that the stone would be returned when Namibia obtained its independence (Shinana 2002: 34). The Kwanyama Kingdom was restored and the stone was, indeed, returned, in 1995, five years after Namibia obtained its independence. Deputy-Chairperson of the Oukwanyama Traditional Authority, Hadino Hishongwa, remembered that the return of the stone '...really motivated us when we were fighting to restore our kingdom'.<sup>7</sup> On 6 February 1996 (after 79 years without a king, following the death of *Ohamba* Mandume ya Ndemufayo), a new *Ohamba*, Cornelius Mwetupunga Shelungu, was inaugurated as the leader of the Kwanyama on the Namibian side of the border (Shiweda 2011: 225-6).

Hadino Hishongwa argues that the removal of spiritual and sacred objects was disempowering: 'Christianity and colonialism – you can only defeat a person if you destroy his culture... The first people who disarmed us mentally were Christians'.<sup>8</sup> An initiative to revitalize, but also revise, the cultural practices associated with the stone followed its return to the Kwanyama Traditional Authority. Hishongwa acknowledges that there have been changes regarding the conditions surrounding access to the stone with the stone now being displayed at traditional festivals. 'This is done so that the Ovakwanyama people can also see it and even wish to touch it... when you touch it, it gives you luck in your life. So that's why everyone wants to touch it'.<sup>9</sup> The power of the stone was harnessed to mobilize support for the restoration of the kingship, and the Oukwanyama Traditional Authority is also planning to develop a museum at Omhedi where the stone will be displayed. Discussions about the keeping place included the idea that the stone should be kept in a separate chamber underground and that access to it should be restricted.

### *The Sacred Stone of Ombalantu*

The second sacred stone to be returned to Namibia arrived in 2014 and was given to the Ombalantu Traditional Authority led by Chief Oswin Mukulu. Erikka Nehunga, a Councillor in the Ombalantu Traditional Authority, and Martha Mutambo, the Headwoman of Omufitu weelo village, explained the historical functions of the stone:

The sacred stone is the foundation on which the Ombalantu *oshilongo* [country] and its traditions stand. The function of the stone is to calm down the nation so if the nation does not have the stone then it will not be calm – it will be in chaos... during the war, warriors were made to drink from this stone before they went into battle... This was done to calm and harden their hearts during battle so that even when they see others getting killed they would not run away but continue fighting... It was also used to sharpen warriors' knives and spears before they went into battle... it was the same stone which sharpened knives used during young men's initiation/circumcision. It is believed that when knives sharpened with this stone (which carried the fire of the *oshilongo* and signified luck) were used, young men did not feel any pain and their wounds healed very quickly.

The stone had powers in calming the *oshilongo* and carries the sacred fire. When elders strike the stone and sparks are produced, these sparks mean that all houses are supplied with fire that day. The stone protects the community, their livestock and everything from danger. There is a traditional necklace called *oshilanda shogongolo* that was rubbed against the sacred stone to keep order and luck before you wear it.<sup>10</sup>

The sacred stone was, reportedly, given to a Finnish missionary, Heikki Saara, in 1932. As in Oukwanyama, the return generated debate about kingship and rituals. According to oral tradition, the last king of the community, Kamhaku ka Huhwa, had been killed in the mid-nineteenth century by his own people and replaced by a council of headmen. Abisai Heita, a claimant to the throne of Ombalantu, claimed that it should be returned to his family in the context of a campaign to revive the kingship.<sup>11</sup> Elders remembered the stone having played an important role in traditional festivals, such as the *oshipe* festival (to celebrate the harvest of crops), the *marula* festival (when people can start picking fruit from the marula trees) and the *Olufuko* (female initiation ceremony). It is notable that the request, in 2012, for the return of the stone coincided with the high-profile revival of *Olufuko* in Outapi. However, in contrast to the visibility of the returned sacred stone in Oukwanyama, the stone has been concealed since its return. Oswin Shifiona Mukulu, the leader of the Mbalantu Traditional Authority explains: 'Only the people that are entrusted with keeping the stone know where it is kept and only the palace knows who these people are'. Mukulu states that he seeks access to 'drink from the stone' when the Kingdom faces challenges.<sup>12</sup>

### *The Sacred Stone of Ondonga*

The final example of a sacred stone that was removed from Namibia is, actually, only a fragment of the sacred stone of the Ondonga Kingdom which is, currently, stored in the National Museum of Finland. Petrus Kamenye has told the story of the arrival of the sacred stone in the Kingdom of Ondonga. It was reported that a leader named 'Mbwenge' (a name also given to a community living near the Kavango River) brought a stone from the river and that it was used for sharpening his axe and believed to have special powers. The Mbwenge conquered the people living in the area under *Omukwaanilwa* ('King' in Oshindonga) Nembulungo Iya Ngwedha at the end of the seventeenth century, and a man named Shingongo sha Namutenya gwa Nguti became the new *Omukwaanilwa* and brought the stone with him. The stone was then kept at a place which became known as *Omukwiyu Gwemanya* ('the stone under a fig tree') near present day Oshigambo (Kamenye quoted in Salokoski 2002: 82).

Asipembe Eelu was interviewed by the Finnish Missionary, Emil Liljeblad, in 1931. Eelu was married to a member of the Ndonga royal family and seems not to have converted to Christianity. Eelu explained that when the *Omukwaanilwa* died, the transfer of power would include the handover of a number of sacred objects such as the 'royal necklace' and 'royal strap of your forefathers' (*omujaguoshilongo*) that manifested the authority and spiritual powers embodied in the kingship, and that a visit to the stone was part of the ritual coronation.

We are the subjects, the weeds, we give you the kingdom. We have given you the power to rule over all people. This person has the kingly insignia, do not forsake him but go with him. Do not part from these objects. May this man show you the pot of the country! May he take you to the stone of the country (Eelu quoted in Salokoski 2002: 190)

The stone and the other royal regalia were, reportedly, buried next to the royal grave of *Omukwaanilwa* Nembungu Iya Ama tundu. It is believed that Nembungu died around 1810 and that his grave subsequently became an important site for rain-making rituals (Uusiku cited in Salokoski 2002: 228).

A piece of the stone was located when photographs of the collection that had been held in the Finnish Lutheran Mission Museum were provided to the Museums Association of Namibia in 2015. The museum's caption indicated that it was a slice of the sacred stone that had been taken in 1886. Information was provided to the Ondonga Traditional Authority and the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture. It seems likely that this fragment, which is still in Finland, was actually the first sacred stone to be removed from northern Namibia. After the discovery, provenance research was done on the circumstances that led to the sacred stone being damaged and the removal of the piece. The event was documented in considerable detail in the diaries of both Finnish missionary Martti Rautanen and Swiss scientist Hans Schinz. Schinz had accompanied Rautanen on a trip to the grave to seek and sample what, Schinz believed, might be a 'big meteorite' (Henrichsen 2012: 92). We therefore know the

exact date that it was removed (on 16 February 1886), at a time when the stone was at the heart of the belief system of the Kingdom.

Hans Schinz provides a detailed account of the theft in a letter to his mother. He explains that the men were taken to the family that were responsible for maintaining the grave of Nembungu by Nambahu, one of the men undergoing baptism classes, and told that there were actually three sacred stones at the site. The first stone, in the homestead, was described as a piece of a second, larger stone that was covered in sand in the field next to the homestead, whilst a third stone was said to be kept at a site some distance to the north. Schinz chopped a piece off the stone in the homestead. He was disappointed as it was clearly not a meteorite, but a stone that was used for sharpening knives and axes, a description that resonates with the oral tradition about the origin of the sacred stone of the Kingdom.

After travelling for about fifteen minutes, they were shown a second large flat stone covered with a thin layer of sand, and hacked two small pieces from it. Schinz states that each piece was about as large as a French Franc coin (i.e. only about 2 centimetres wide). Interestingly, the narrative of the removal of the pieces is set within the context of a succession dispute with Mpingana ya Shimbu accusing *Omukwaniilwa* Kambonde KaMpingana (his son) of using the European men to try and take the stone by force. A payment, as compensation for the damage, was demanded from the men, and they were ordered to return the stones. Schinz notes that 'of course he got 2 [stones], but one I kept for myself' (Henrichsen 2012: 96). Nambahu and Schinz were condemned to death and fled. Schinz writes that he believed he would be killed to prevent a split in the kingdom. He quotes Mpingana as describing the act as 'a crime' and saying 'You saw the *ompampa* [royal grave], you visited the stone and you destroyed it' (Henrichsen 2012: 92-6). The entry in the diary of Martti Rautanen on 17 February 1886 clearly shows his sense of guilt and anxiety. He writes: 'I now realize what crime we had done against a very deep religious issue'. Rautanen describes getting 'cold and hot' at the thought of having desecrated and 'destroyed a sacred space'.<sup>13</sup> The diaries and letters of the two men probably provide the most detailed description and evidence of the illicit removal of a sacred object from Namibia during the colonial period.

## Conclusion

One of the outcomes of MAN's engagement with Finnish museums has been a mobile exhibition *Oombale dhiihaka* (A bond that cannot be broken) and catalogue that provides detailed information about objects collected by Rev Rautanen, but also an account of the removal of the piece of the sacred stone. We believe that small, mobile exhibitions and booklets such as this could be a model for stimulating public debate in Namibia around the restitution of artefacts and potential collaborative projects. Photographs and accessible inventories are essential for facilitating this process. For example, one photograph from the Finnish Missionary Archives shows two wooden 'sceptres' with carved heads that were known as *Nashikoto* and *Onaminga*, and which were also part of the royal insignia of the *Omukwaniilwa*. Such photographs might assist to identify other sacred objects that might also be found in a storeroom in Helsinki or another part of the world.

The prerequisite for restitution is transparency about the collections held in overseas museums and provenance research. However, we argue that such research should not only focus on the information obtained in museum archives, but also on the significance of objects to descendant communities. We argue that these are what Tristram Besterman has called 'communities of identity... whose sense of self is to some degree represented in the material culture held by the museum' (Besterman 2014: 28). The meaning and role of the sacred stones discussed here changed over time as culture was (and remains) dynamic. The restitution of an object will not be to the historical 'source community' but to a 'descendant community', and will involve a process throughout which the role of the object will be renegotiated by different social actors. At the time the exhibition was launched, there was a dispute between two men who both claimed to be the legitimate heir to the throne of Ondonga.<sup>14</sup> It made us aware that the return of the missing piece of the sacred stone of Ondonga will have to navigate local politics with sensitivity. A ceremonial hand-over of the stone to either man claiming to be the legitimate *Omukwaniilwa* would have been an intervention in the succession dispute.

In Namibia, the National Heritage Council Act (Act No. 27 of 2004) remains the most important legislation regarding heritage. This Act created a new body that replaced the previous National Monuments Council. It significantly expanded the powers of the new Council, as the Act indicates that the Council not only deals with monuments and heritage sites, but is also responsible for '...the protection and conservation of... objects of heritage significance and the registration of such... objects...'.<sup>15</sup> However, the perception has been that Namibia's National Heritage Council is only responsible for 'heritage places' such as the Old Location Graveyard. Instead, it offers forms that allow any individual or organization to nominate an object, which might then be 'declared' a 'National Heritage Object' of Namibia and listed on a register.

Article 5 (2) (a) of the Act indicates that once a 'heritage object' has been declared and registered, it may be entrusted to 'any museum or institution' that the Council approves. We are referencing this Act because it suggests one official channel that might be used to help structure dialogue about the historical and cultural significance of the objects in the Namibian collections stored in foreign museums. The Act seems to provide the basis to establish a system to review the lists of Namibian cultural artefacts held abroad, but also to facilitate dialogue within Namibia about the appropriate home for objects that might be returned. Our reading of the National Heritage Act suggests that there is no stipulation to say that the objects that can be nominated as 'heritage objects' of significance need to be situated inside Namibia. Thus, Namibia could proclaim objects that are in exile in overseas museums and then use the motivation for the listing as the basis for a claim for the restitution of the object to the relevant museum or heritage site in Namibia.

We believe that restitution provides a tremendous opportunity. The sacred stones were decontextualized and drained of meaning whilst in exile. For example, the sacred stone of the Kwanyama was displayed for a period of time in Finland as evidence of evangelical endeavour. Likewise, the stolen fragment of the sacred stone from Ondonga has simply been kept in a dark storage room for decades. Restitution of the stone will not only provoke a discussion in Namibia about culture, but can also provide the basis for the development of new forms of cultural exchange, Namibian authored displays and dialogue with Finland. Our challenge as museum activists is to create the platforms and structures that can facilitate this process.

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## Notes

- 1 Gibeon\_The Official Return of Kaptein Hendrik Witbooi's Bible and Whip from Germany, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Td4-v-3RQXw>, accessed 22 August 2019
- 2 German Historical Museum, 'The Stone Cross from Cape Cross: Three Countries, Three Histories, One Past', 7 June 2019. <https://www.dhm.de/blog/2018/06/06/stories-the-stone-cross-from-cape-cross-three-countries-three-histories-one-past/>, accessed 20 August 2019
- 3 Science Techniz, 'The Power Stone of Kwanyamas', 22 November 2018. <https://www.sciencetechniz.com/2018/11/the-power-stone-of-kwanyamas.html>, accessed 3 March 2020.
- 4 Science Techniz, 'Power Stone of Kwanyamas'.
- 5 Hadino Hishongwa, interview by Erasmus Stephanus, digital recording, 4 May 2019, Ohangwena.
- 6 Ilona Immonen, interviewed in Andrew Botelle and Kelley Kowalski (eds) (1999) *The Power Stone: A History of the Kwanyama Kingdom*, Namibia: Momokobo Video & Research.
- 7 Hadino Hishongwa, interview, 4 May 2019.
- 8 Hadino Hishongwa, interview, 4 May 2019.



- <sup>9</sup> Hadino Hishongwa, interview, 4 May 2019.
- <sup>10</sup> Erikka Nehunga and Mrs Martha Mutambo, interview by Erasmus Stephanus, digital recording, 24 May 2019, Ombalantu.
- <sup>11</sup> Nampa, 'Pohamba hands over Ombalantu ritual stone', *The Namibian* 17 February 2014. <https://www.namibian.com.na/119872/archive-read/Pohamba-hands-over-Ombalantu-ritual-stone>, accessed 3 March 2020.
- <sup>12</sup> Chief Oswin Shifiona Mukulu, interview by Erasmus Stephanus, digital recording, 24 May 2019.
- <sup>13</sup> National Archives of Finland, Martti Rautanen Arkisto 601.91. Diary: 'Olukonda d. 21 Okt. 1885 – 21 Juni 1886'. We would like to thank Dag Henrichsen for this reference and for the translation of texts from German.
- <sup>14</sup> 'A luta continua... A battle of titans rages on in Ondonga', Informante, 16 April 2019. <https://informante.web.na/a-luta-continua-a-battle-of-titans-rages-on-in-ondonga/>, accessed 3 March 2020.
- <sup>15</sup> National Heritage Act, 2004. <https://namiblii.org/akn/na/act/2004/27>, accessed 12 March 2020.

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### Biographies

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