

A STUDY OF VAKWANGALI TRADITIONAL CLOTHING FOR FASHION
CREATION IN NAMIBIA

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MARIA A. N. CALEY

200012789

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MAIN SUPERVISOR: Dr Kletus Muhena Likuwa, (UNAM)

CO-SUPERVISOR: Dr Napandulwe Shiweda, (UNAM)

ABSTRACT

The need to explore the Vakwangali traditional clothing as an inspiration for designing fashion clothing arose from acquired knowledge and understanding that intersections exist between traditional clothing and fashion design. It also began from observations that while such intersections seem to have resulted in the development of fashion clothing from traditional clothing among, for example, Ovaherero and Aawambo of Namibia, it is puzzling as to why the same have not occurred among Vakwangali of Kavango West region. Traditional clothing of Vakwangali has a rich history that is embedded with value and meaning. However, this rich cultural heritage is not reflected in their everyday wear.

The main objective of this study was to explore various Vakwangali traditional clothing and styles over time; in order to explain the lack of transformation of Vakwangali cultural clothing from traditional clothing styles to fashion clothing. In addition this study aimed to suggest initiatives to transform Vakwangali traditional clothing into fashion through an exhibition fashion collection. Data was collected through interviews with key informants to gain in-depth knowledge regarding Vakwangali traditional clothing and its influence through a narrative style. Additional archival documents, regarding early establishment of mission work and schools, showed the influence of Christianity and colonial rule on Vakwangali traditional clothing including its transformation. Artefacts were also observed at the Maria Mwendere Museum in Rundu and Owela Museum in Windhoek to record details on craftsmanship of Vakwangali traditional clothing needed for fashion

design. In addition, the online BAB Photography archive was studied to gain visual references to guide the designing process of the *Vakwangali Fashion Collection*.

The study found that besides the various Vakwangali clothing, which included leather aprons for men and women, different hairstyles and ornaments were used to adorn the body. The study also found that there existed different styles between gender and social status. Generally, factors such as trade, Christianity and changing of livelihood contributed to the lack of transformation of Vakwangali traditional clothing into fashion. Further, the study revealed that Vakwangali are longing to restore the value and meaning that was embedded into the traditional clothing and are open to initiatives of reviving Vakwangali traditional clothing. This study created possible ideas for transforming Vakwangali traditional clothing into fashion from which Vakwangali fashion collection was created. The study recommended that different projects should adopt the suggested styles for different occasions.

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GLOSSARY

Derera: skirt made from trade cloth

Ehamberero: celebration or thanks giving traditional gathering

Ekehe: material

Epera: a celebration traditional dance.

Etembu: puberty rite of passage for girls

Ewindo: trade cloth drapes gathered in the waste worn by men.

Rukura: powder or ointment made from crushed wood pulp *Pterocarpus Angolensis* tree often used for beauty

Kasumbi: bride's maid in *etembu*

Lyosikwangali: striped trade cloth with red, navy or blue, green and white stripes.

Lyegeha: burgundy or deep brown to red trade cloth

Hompa: a chief

Makayi: bracelets made from polyvinyl chloride (PVC)

Mandengu: a name used in reference to a person who is passionate and loves to dance traditional dance.

Mbamba: big seashells disk that were attached on the necklace and only for royal people.

Mbandwa: a bundle of clothing

Mpande: giant seashell filled into a disk that is attached to necklaces (also *omba*)

Mukongo: a hunter

Mumbanda: the wife of a hompa.

Mumbandagona: a princess

Munde: a powder made from a mixture of sweet smelling grass

Muparara: indigenous tree (*Peltophorum africanum*)

Muromba: leather aprons worn by a man.

Musanga: strings of beads made from ostrich shell

Musigona: a term used to refer to commoners in a traditional society.

Mwaye: a cloth worn by women to cover the chest area like a cape

Ndjareko: a leather back apron often decorated with beads and other ornaments.

Nakanunga: striped trade cloth with red, cream and black stripes

Nondingi: rattles worn around the ankles for traditional dance made from insect cocoons filled with stones for

Nombutau: corrie shells

Nompareka: two pieces of cloth draped in front and the back of the lower part of the body

Nongondongo: copper or silver wire coils made into anklets.

Ngoma (singular) or **Nongoma** (plural): traditional drums, but also used in reference to traditional dance.

Ntjilgombe: a man of status in a traditional society

Rudeve: a traditional dancing skirt made of cut up and strung reeds.

Rufuko: puberty rite of passage for girls

Rukura: powder made from crushed wood pulp of *usivi* (*Ptercarpus Angolensis*)

Sidumba: natural perfume made from herbs and myrrh

Sihiho (singular), **Yihiho** (plural) or **Shihiho** (singular) **Vihiho** (plural): a traditional headdress of thin braids for women, made from tree roots beaten to fibre and then braided with the hair.

Sikatu or **Sikato:** trade cloth with black or navy and white stripes.

Sikundu: traditional beverage made from *mahangu* (pearl millet)

Sinaku: shrine

Simuma: small sea shells that were attached on the necklace and also attached on the centre of the *sihiho*.

Tjaya...tjaya: a rattling sound.

Udinkantu: traditional social gathering for youths

Usimba: places under then colonial police zone where men went for contract labour

Vanambongi: school going children, which resided on the mission stations.

Yimonyomonyo: soulless beings, also referred to White people

Yisamparara: bracelets and anklet made of braided grass

Yiranda: beads

Yirumbu: White people

Yiyonga: copper or silver wire coils made into **anklets and bracelets**

Yimbali or **Vimbali:** black slave traders in Kavango who came from the Province of Bie in South East Angola

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS OR ACRONYMS

BAB: Basler Afrika Bibliographien

UNAM: University of Namibia

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my late father Abel and my mother Faustina Caley for their hard work and for always inspiring me through education as a means to change my life. To my siblings; Lino, Valentin, Inoke, Time, Fermino, Vicentius, Celia and Alice, may the dreams and hopes of our late father keep inspiring you beyond this work. Thank you for believing, encouraging and always supporting me in many ways.

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

Background of the study

The study explored Vakwangali traditional clothing as an inspiration for designing *Vakwangali Fashion Collection*. The knowledge acquired through a review of literature helped to provide an understanding that intersections exist between traditional clothing and fashion design (Rovine, 2009, p. 46). Through observations, it was possible to see that such intersections resulted in the development of fashion clothing from traditional clothing among, for example, Ovaherero and Aawambo of Namibia. However, the same has not expressively occurred, or perhaps not readily visible, among Vakwangali of Kavango West region. Early adoptions of trade cloth have resulted in the development of Aawambo *ohema dhontulo* (Finnish-style inspired dresses) and *ondhelela/nonderera* among Vakwangali. These two type of garments of Aawambo and Vakwangali are mainly considered traditional dress, and are popular at special ceremonies and weddings (Shigwedha, 2004, p. 216). The transition of these traditional garments into fashions, seemingly not drastic, is common around special ceremonies and weddings. Rovine (2009, p. 44) argues that it is through clothing that cultural differences are negotiated across culture divides and that whichever the direction of borrowing and adopting; dresses with distinct cultural elements may be transformed to further become a symbol of indigenous culture. It was therefore necessary to explore how the above assertions apply in the context of Vakwangali, to highlight issues relating to why Vakwangali traditional clothing has not evolved like the others. This research therefore explored the

traditional clothing of Vakwangali as an inspiration to create a fashion collection. Previous research work by Hartevelde Becker (2008) has inspired this study in exploring arts based research methods to produce a fashion collection that attempts to resolve a design problem. However, this study does not employ methods of creating couture fashion which are exclusive and a once-off fashion. This study strived to create a ready-to-wear fashion collection that targets Vakwangali and individuals who sought after 'Afropolitan' fashions.

Existing literature and narratives state that Vakwangali traditional clothing has a rich history of traditional clothing that was embedded with meaning and value as was highlighted by Gibson, Larson, & McGurk (1981, p. 49). However, this rich cultural heritage is not reflected in their everyday wear. The current dressing among Vakwangali is Eurocentric, a modern dressing style which does not reflect their traditional clothing. Although the creation of fashion emerges out of intersections between tradition and fashion this has not occurred in the case of Vakwangali. Literature points to different factors that could have contributed to the lack of transformation of Vakwangali traditional clothing into everyday fashions, thus requiring an exploration. The main objectives of this study were to explore various Vakwangali traditional clothing and styles over time; explain the lack of transformation Vakwangali traditional clothing to fashion clothing; suggest initiatives to transform Vakwangali traditional clothing into fashion and; to create *Vakwangali Fashion Collection*.

The study was informed by literature of intersections between traditional clothing and fashion design in Africa and in general. As stated earlier, there is an overlap

between culture and fashion design, and it is within such intersections where an adoption from one or the other is made. Fashion designers make use of different sources from books to visiting places in quest for inspirations. Fashion designers further make reference of previous clothing from the high fashion, streetwear and historic or ethnic garments (Mete, 2006, p. 283). This study is useful to practitioners in the fashion realm as it demonstrate a model of how designers draw inspiration from traditional clothing. The study made use of existing literature, artefacts, photographic archives and narratives regarding the traditional clothing of Vakwangali as a source of inspiration for creating *Vakwangali Fashion Collection* which is moving beyond mere documentation. The in-depth knowledge regarding Vakwangali traditional clothing, consolidated with interviews, provided a different narrative as opposed to the existing narratives by the missionaries and colonialists which, as Gibson, Larson, and McGurk (1981) and Scherz, Scherz, Taapopi and Otto (1999) indicated, merely describe the traditional clothing and hairstyles of Vakwangali without providing the value and meaning of the traditional clothing. The abovementioned literature, provide basic information on the traditional clothing items, what it is made of, what it represented and how certain materials were obtained through traders from Angola and Botswana. However, this literature omits discussions on the cultural values and meaning of traditional clothing items in a traditional context. The brief descriptions in the abovementioned literature rather classify the items as of no importance. It is therefore crucial that other sources are consulted to gather data with a different narrative. Stoler's assertion that the archives represented a 'technology of rule' (2002, p. 92) may also be true for the museums and their representation of artefacts. This means that archives and museums mainly represent colonial perspectives on the local people and there is a need to gather new

information to enhance people centred exhibits which this study intended to do, thus adding to its significant contribution to knowledge. The exhibits that were visited did not distinguish between the different ethnic groups of Kavango and they were rather grouped as one, even though there is literature that points to differences between the ethnic groups. Furthermore, the exhibits did not have any additional information or labelling to enhance the exhibits in question.

The focus of this study was limited to Vakwangali of Kavango West region. To cover all ethnic groups, for example, was unattainable considering the vastness of the region within the limited time and budget constraints. Though the concept of *Vakwangali Fashion Collection* can be problematic in the context of nationhood building, this study is not against nation building. On the contrary, this study is in pursuit of inspiration for a fashion collection to be designed, for a specific target group that needed to be selected due to the limiting factors stated before. As explained earlier, this is how fashion designers awaken their creativity by looking at clothing from a certain era of a specific group. With the researcher being a local, it was easier to navigate research logistics in the area as there was no need for a translator. This study centrally explored Vakwangali traditional clothing for fashion design inspiration. It should be made clear however that despite the focus on the Vakwangali, there are similarities in traditional clothing with other ethnic groups of the Kavango such as Vambunza, Shambyu, Gciriku, Mbukushu and Nyemba. The above ethnic groups' similarities are in language and the use of skins for clothing and ornaments, including headdress and consequently, influences that they faced with the forces of Christianity and colonialism. For the purpose of remaining focused, interviews were limited and conducted mainly with Rukwangali speakers.

The following is an outline of the thesis: chapter one provides a general introduction of the study which includes a background to the study, the theory or models which informs the study and the study objectives. Chapter two discusses the relevant literature pertaining to the study such as those relating to the formations of African fashion, traditional clothing and changes including the colonial photographs archives. Furthermore, the review draws from Tulikki Jantunen's (1963) who has written on the livelihoods of Vakwangali since this written work remains one of the few that records craftsmanship of traditional clothing. Chapter three covers the methodology of the study such as the research design, the sample and research tools which the study applied to analyse data. Chapter four explores various Vakwangali traditional clothing and styles for males and females over time. This chapter also includes discussions on traditional accessories, ornaments and the craftsmanship of traditional clothing. Chapter five examines the lack of transformation of Vakwangali traditional clothing into fashion. The chapter further deliberated on the effects of Christianity, colonial rule, contract labour system and social, economic and identity changes among Vakwangali. Chapter six discusses initiatives to create Vakwangali fashion clothing and these include proposed ideas from research participants. The chapter also presents the creative process that the researcher employed to create the *Vakwangali Fashion Collection*. Chapter seven presents *Vakwangali Fashion Collection* and the process of presentation to the public. The chapter further discusses the response from the public on the presented *Vakwangali Fashion Collection*. Chapter eight covers the general conclusion and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER 2:

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter explore the relevant literature regarding intersections between culture and fashion, the formations of African fashion and relevant design theories that designers make use of when designing fashions.

Formations of African fashion

Transformation and adoption are a part of the fashion realm and design. Fashion designers use design research, that refers them to different sources, such as existing designs, historical costumes and past and present trends to trigger their creativity in order to inspire them in creating new products (Mastamet-Mason, 2016, p. 117). Rovine (2009, p. 134) explains the context of global fashion as a slippery relationship of practice between Western culture and that categorised as ‘African’. “The best design is no longer defined by its borders, yet it recognises where it came from. It delivers desirable, inspirational pieces stemming from an open-minded environment, whether that is in Luanda or London, Maputo or Milan, Nairobi or New York” (Jennings, 2011, p. 14). Although Jennings does not claim that fashions created out of Africa are seen as the ‘other’, the fashion realm does assert fashions created out of Africa and by African designers as the ‘other’. African fashion has been excluded from the fashion realm and is only used as aesthetic inspirations (Jennings, 2011, p. 8). Shawl (2013, p. 10) adds that things have only changed for African designers with the growth of mobile technology, energy, agricultural

markets, enabling designers to grow their businesses. Moreover, Jennings clarifies how international designers have created fashion's fantasies of the African aesthetic by cherry-picking from cultures, terrains and peoples (2011, p. 15). The 'cherry-picking' illustrates an act of superiority over the 'other'. This 'cherry-picking' of cultures does not always genuinely represent African cultures; consequently losing the meaning and value behind it. Nevertheless, African fashion designers continue to create hybrids that infuse both cultural aesthetics and Eurocentrism, either as a way of further transforming cultures or preserving them.

Fashion is a global phenomenon, however the West has continuously ignored this fact and Africa has been strung along as a source of inspiration or a backdrop of the imagined exotic 'other' (Oberhofer, 2012, p. 66). In agreement, Jennings (2011, p. 13) maintains that Africa has been an inspiration for and designers in the west, from Thierry Mugler's 1985 Spring/Summer collection to Bernard Willhelm's 2005/06 Autumn/Winter men's wear collection, African inspirations come to the fashion scenes through features of different design elements. Up until the eve of 2010 FIFA World Cup, South-Africa was preliminary scouted by fashion designers for inspirations as there was growing interest with African-influenced lines that explored African prints (Jennings, 2011, p. 13). African fashion is not so much regarded as part of the fashion realm but rather as an inspiration predominantly associated with traditions of ethnic groups in rural settings (Oberhofer, 2012, p. 66). For this reason, African designers often feel they have to step away from the 'typical' African aesthetics and blend in with global brands that are Eurocentric. Moreover, Oberhofer (2012, p. 66) argues that associations of Africa being perceived as an entity of ethnic traditions and rural setting are a Eurocentric perception that has been contested by

African fashion designers. To avoid classifications mentioned earlier, African fashion designers intentionally omit making use of certain materials in their collections for fear of 'looking' African and therefore not accepted as an international fashion brand in the fashion realm. Jules Wokam is a Cameroonian fashion designer that Obernhofer (2012, p. 80) points out is one artist and fashion designer who abandoned the use of traditional materials such as cowrie shells, calabashes and wax prints as a way of escaping being classified as typical 'African fashion'. Jules Wokam and other designers may find the use of wax prints or 'African prints' to be problematic, as these materials were trade cloths that were pre designed and printed to test the African market and then successfully traded through the African continent.

Unpacking and relating authenticity to this study is complex and multi-layered in nature. How can one then claim authenticity, when the nature of traditional clothing and African fashion is ever evolving through hybrids? In the fashion realm, authenticity is an important criterion in production that is linked to brand image and marketing. Authenticity is also understood to represent the brands' reputation in terms of quality (Choi, Ko, Kim, & Mattila, 2014, p. 234). Claiming authenticity is a marketing strategy for business gains. There are a number of propaganda occurrences which may lead to the brands not delivering what they claimed. The paradox of African wax print steers up debates around 'authenticity'. The wax prints also commonly referred to by manufacturers and the market as 'African prints', have a colonial history. Hemmings (2004, p. 2) asserts that the wax prints were an attempt to copy the hand-made Indonesian batik; but as the factory printed version was introduced to the Indonesian people it was rejected as the print did not have a good

quality print with miss registration of the motifs. However, the rejected wax prints found a new market in West Africa, where there was already an introduction of wax prints through trade, missionaries and West African soldiers returning from Indonesia who brought wax prints gifts for their wives (Akinwumi, 2008, p. 182). For this reason, some African fashion designers feel that the cloth that is popularly identified as African is in fact not a genuine representation of Africa. Some African fashion designers chose other elements from Africa seeking a more authentic representation of Africa, in a sense of making use of materials that are local. After all, fashion designers find inspiration from elements within their surroundings (Mete, 2006, p. 283). Designers in Africa's urban settings draw inspiration from their cities by incorporating elements from their cities to create new fashions for the cosmopolitan Africa. This is an effort by African urban fashion brands striving to be identified as a global brand in the effort not to be classified as the 'other'.

Early literature on fashion states that the African aesthetic was a part of the fashion realm as designers from the West have long made use of Africa as a place of inspiration. However, the rise of African fashion was ushered by African fashion designers who took the liberty to seek inspiration from local cultural elements as a means to create designs that were fitting for the 'new' Africa cosmopolitan. To dissect African fashion further recent literature regarding 'new' African fashion problematizes the notion of 'new' or 'contemporary' African fashion. Shawl (2013, p. 13) argues that the concept of 'new' or 'contemporary' African fashion is a misconception in itself, since for generations Africa has influenced fashion trends derived from early traditions and culture of African dress forms. For this reason Shawl adopts the coined term 'Afropolitan', meaning fashion created for 'Africans of

the worlds’ and that one does not need to be African to indulge in ‘Afropolitan’ fashions either (Shawl, 2013, p. 14). With this understanding in mind, most African fashion designers have to make a conscious decision as to who they seek to cater for.



Figure 1: Maxhosa Africa. June 3, 2020, retrieved from, <https://maxhosa.africa/magazine/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/2.jpg>

African fashion brands who wanted to cater for the local market, often sought inspirations from their own cultures including those from other parts of Africa. Black Coffee, (a pioneer South Africa fashion brand in the fresh frontier in South African fashion) with other successful brands such as Stoned Cherrie, were striding to create new identities for the new South Africa after the Apartheid era (Jennings, 2011, p. 70). Apart from using the Xhosa dress as an inspiration, Black Coffee also selected inspiration from other parts of Africa like OvaHimba culture of Namibia (Jennings, 2011, p. 72). Another South African fashion brand, MaXhosa by Laduma (Figure1), took a further step in creating a global brand through modern male knit wear that genuinely reflects a strong Xhosa identity. The main inspiration for MaXhosa’s brand is the Xhosa traditional beadwork and his aim, “was to create a modern Xhosa-inspired knitwear collection suitable for *amakwarla* (Xhosa initiates), who are

prescribed by tradition to dress up in a dignified formal clothing for six months” (Shawl, 2013, p. 236). Laduma explored craft heritage of the Xhosa traditional beadwork, culture, patterns, symbols and colours which he then incorporated into knit wear to form a strong brand identity.

The aforementioned fashion brands have a practice of using traditional clothing as an inspiration to create ‘Afropolitan’ (fashion for the consumption of the global market), which is a practice that is rooted in the transformation of traditional clothing. Fashion designers often used material culture either from their ethnicities or from other parts of Africa to create fashion. Black Coffee and MaXhosa are examples of African fashion designers being innovative by transforming traditional clothing into fashions for the global market. Again, this posits an argument that traditional clothing is a non-static element that changes over time due to different factors.

In positioning the Namibian fashion scene, Melanie Hartevelde-Becker, who is an academic and fashion designer, claims that since 1995, Namibian fashion designers yearn to express ‘new’ fashion identities in order to show a reconciled Namibia after independence (Hartevelde-Becker, 2008, p. 87). Fashion designers in Namibia have continued to explore inspirations from Namibia in order to create fashions that reflect ‘Namibian identities’. Furthermore, Hartevelde-Becker created a fashion collection titled *ELEVEN* (Figure 2) inspired by Namibian ethnic groups, ‘Ovambo, Damara, San, Herero, Kavango, Caprivi, Tswana, White, Coloured, Nama and Baster’ (Hartevelde-Becker, 2008, p. 3). *ELEVEN* fashion collection was a milestone in the Namibian fashion industry. The fashion collection was exhibited at the National Arts

Gallery of Namibia first, and it demonstrated how Namibian fashion designers can derive inspiration from Namibia, and collaborate with other creatives to optimize on creativity.



Figure 2: Namibia in Mode und Fotografie, June 4, 2020, retrieved from, <https://www.az.com.na/nachrichten/namibia-in-mode-und-fotografie>

Traditional clothing and transformation

Literature regarding traditional clothing transformations is necessary to enlighten how traditional clothing of different ethnic groups on the African continent has evolved. Such literature may help explain why such transformations in some ethnic groups such as Vakwangali did not result into fashion creation and it may provide a basis on which to inspire and create new fashions from the traditional clothing. Literature has presented the different factors that influenced Vakwangali into abandoning their traditional clothing, such as early trading activities, Christianity and the enforcements that came with colonial rule, which are further discussed in chapter five. Even though Vakwangali traditional clothing was abandoned, there was

transformation of traditional clothing as new European material such as trade cloth was acquired and incorporated into the life style of Vakwangali.

Maintaining Shawl's (2013, p. 13) argument positioned earlier, the formation of clothing in a societies, including in Africa, comes through cultural negotiations and transformations through time. African traditional textiles are an example of negotiation of cultures through transformation and adoption of materiality. This process of transformation is demonstrated by the creation of the famous traditional *Kente* cloth of Ghana. The very first *Kente* cloths were woven from the European silks that were unravelled and rewoven into elaborated royal cloths for the Ashanti kings (Clarke, 1997, p. 8). This prestige cloth *Kente*, did not come into existence overnight, it took major transformations and *Kente* cloths are now mostly woven out of rayon as opposed to silk or cotton which the original *Kente* were woven out of (Pickton & Mack, 1981, p. 25). A similar pattern of cloth transformation, maybe not of as high craftsmanship as *Kente* cloth, is seen in the *odelela* fabric in Namibia which was introduced to Aawambo by Portuguese traders from Angola, but has now formed a strong material cultural identity in contemporary Namibia (McRoberts, 2018, p. 194).



Figure 3: Cloth, 2008, Missionary Museum Helsinki, Photographer: Author

McRoberts (2018, p. 187) explains that *odelele* did not come in the desired colour and quality (Figure 3) and that therefore Aawambo made use of *olukula* (*Ptercarpus Angolensis*) to dye the fabric into a desired dark brown and pinkish appearance. In the past Aawambo used natural dyes to transform *odelele* (Figure 4) into the desired colour, but now synthetic dyes are commonly used to get the desired pinkish look. The use of *odelele* keeps changing and transforming through time from traditional to modern use. Historical reviews demonstrate how both *kente* cloth and *odelele* cloth seized different paths of formation and transformation, but now relevantly form part of a cultural identity for the different ethnic groups.



Figure 4: Cotton front apron with edging of brass beads. June 3, 2020, retrieved from,

<http://makingafricanconnections.org/files/large/76abfaabb01b957486a635bc33796601f3079d40.jpg>

Besides *odelela* trade cloth, western clothing was also adopted and further transformed to form part of particular cultures. During the nineteenth century as Europeans settled in Southern Africa, and the rest of Africa, goods and materials were brought in for trading with the Southern African and Namibian indigenous communities. By the twentieth century, black Southern Africans started to adopt Western dressing as they entered the urban communities or as part of a working wear (Leeb-du Toit, 2012, p. 21). Many scholars argue that this adoption may not be considered as cultural appropriation, as the Western clothing was enforced upon the indigenous people as the colonialist were of the opinion that the indigenous communities needed to adapt to Western culture as their ways were viewed to be pagan or uncivilized (Muurman, 2017, p. 62). The ‘natives’ adapted to the Western

clothing that were further transformed and encoded with meaning to represent different cultures.

Leeb-du Toit, (2012, p. 20) points out that the formation of black South African dress is complexly framed around the aspect of borrowing and adoption of western dressing. A closer look at different ethnic groups will illustrate how Western items were adopted and are still maintained to represent a particular culture respectively. One iconic item is the blanket. Blankets were traded among South African natives and they were further transformed with the use and meaning. Among Basotho, the blanket was adopted and encoded with value and meaning. According to Khau (2012, p. 97) the blanket for Basotho is symbolic and of cultural significance, as it is through the blanket that the Basotho communicate their joys and grievances. Moreover, Khau (2012, p. 99) illustrates a number of sayings in Sotho that highlights the significance of the blanket to Basotho. Khau (2012, p. 98) further states that the Seana-Marena blanket that Basotho adopted from their first encounter with Europeans has now become a common sight in Lesotho as it is also practical to keep warm from the cold weather of Lesotho. A Basotho woman would wear her blanket draped from the shoulders with the fold flap on the outside and meeting at the bosom in a way different from how a man would wear it. In the case of Ndebele, the blankets are part of women ceremonial clothing. Anawalt (2007, p. 537) clarifies that a ceremonial blanket is beaded heavily with Ndebele aesthetics and it is an important ceremonial clothing for the women, worn together with other beaded accessories. The notion of adopting blankets illustrates how indigenous people take on materials and other objects that are yet worn and adorned to represent ones' culture and pride. Ultimately, Leeb-du Toit (2012, p. 25) states that; the adoption of Western items and

their further transformations represented either a point of entry or resistance to colonial sphere and thus demanding emulation.

In Namibia, adoption of western clothing is visible among Aawambo and Ovaherero communities. Among Aawambo, missionaries taught school going children dress making and these dresses were believed to be a style that was popular in Europe at the time. Shigwedha (2004, p. 216) points out that *ohema dhontulo*, were Finnish tailored styles introduced by the Finnish missionaries and now has been adopted as Aawambo traditional dress. The same can be said about the typical Victorian-style Ovaherero dresses (Figure 5) worn with a distinctive headdress, which is now said to be an imitation of cattle horns. Hendrickson (1994, p. 45) maintains that Ovaherero women learned dress making from Emma Hahn the wife of Carl Hugo Hahn, the founder of Rhenish Mission in Namibia. Although Ovaherero were not keen to convert to Christianity, western clothing was enforced upon the 'natives'. This was a form of colonisation as the indigenous communities were encouraged to abandon their culture and adopt the Western cultures.



Figure 5: Herero Women in Blue Dress. June 3, 2020, retrieved from, [http://www.slate.com/content/dam/slate/blogs/ behold/2013/FUTURE%20\(Alyssa\)/Jim%20Naughten%20Hereros/Herero-cadet-in-cardboard-hat__Herero-woman-in-blue-dress.jpg.CROP.article920-large.jpg](http://www.slate.com/content/dam/slate/blogs/ behold/2013/FUTURE%20(Alyssa)/Jim%20Naughten%20Hereros/Herero-cadet-in-cardboard-hat__Herero-woman-in-blue-dress.jpg.CROP.article920-large.jpg)

It can be argued that western clothing was adopted by the ‘natives’ as a form of acceptance and resistance to colonial rule at the same time. Unpacking the notion of colonial resistance through clothing, Ovaherero men of Namibia show a good example of their traditional occasion wear. The Ovaherero men adopted wearing military uniforms of their oppressors as symbolism of resistance from colonialism. Hendrickson (1996, p. 227) asserts that, Ovaherero men wore clothes of their bosses, even non militant wore military uniforms. To put on clothing of your enemy is a demonstration of victory for Ovaherero, “wearing the enemy’s uniform will diminish their power and transfer some of their strength to the new wearer” (Naughten, 2013, p. 16). During the Herero>Nama Genocide, *Outoni* (animal skin) was promoted as clothing for brave men. Furthermore, Hendrickson (1996, p. 227) states the belief

among Ovaherero is that ‘a brave man is he who does not run but kills the lion’. The wearing of lion skins was also a norm for the elite and royal among Ovakwanyama kings *Ohamba* (Shiweda, 2011, p. 247). This understanding or belief that he who wears the skin of a dead animal is a brave and strong man was applied by Ovaherero men in the same way after the war with the Germans.

When different culture come into contact the people play a vital role in adopting and transforming culture. It is through such transformations that culture also proves to be a non-static element. This is visible among the previously mentioned Aawambo and Ovaherero with further examples to be discussed among the Ovahimba below. When people are exposed to new material, traditional clothing also takes different forms and shapes by incorporating this new material. An example of such in Namibia is that of Ovahimba who have managed to hold on to their traditional clothing. Ovahimba traditional clothing was mainly made up of animal skins smeared with red ochre also known as *otjize*. On close observation of a photograph (Figure 6) by blogger Leitago /Narib (2011), the image in figure 1 shows how the traditional clothing of Ovahimba women and men has changed. Contrary to popular images of Ovahimba on the internet, of women and children in skins and covered in *otjize*, it is evident in the photograph that the use of cloth has been adopted to replace the leather aprons of cloth traditionally worn by Ovahimba. Sometimes the cloth is also smeared with *otjize*. Stunningly, the modern Ovahimba men have also evolved in their dressing. They now make use of scarves for the back apron and a draped cloth for the front as seen in the photograph. Kyle Weeks photographic works (2016) have documented this change of dressing among modern Ovahimba men.



Figure 6: Himba in the mix. March 26, 2011, retrieved from, <https://leitago.wordpress.com/2011/03/26/himba-in-the-mix>

A pattern of culture transformations occurred among Basotho, Ndebele and Ovahimba and many indigenous communities of Africa as they encountered Western material. Manufacturers in the West produced items to cater for the indigenous communities all over Africa. From blankets, wax prints and beads they were all produced to cater to the markets in Africa (Steiner, 1985, p. 98). As manufacturers and designers discovered the cultural diversity of Africa, the ‘exotic’ elements were used for inspirations. This is evident in Oberhofer’s argument that “Africa served merely as a source of aesthetic inspiration and as a backdrop for the Western imagination about the ‘exotic’ other” (Oberhofer, 2012, p. 66). Several designers created collection with African aesthetics to present their imagined ‘exotic’ Africa as seen with Paul Poiret, a Parisian couturier, who became the first to present the hat he believed to be of African creations (Oberhofer, 2012, p. 66). Then in 1967 Yves Saint Laurent created a spring/summer collection of transparent mini dresses decorated with shells, raffia and beads. There after more designers in the West followed suit by creating collections representing the ‘exotic’ Africa on different

fashion catwalks. According to Harteveltdt-Becker (2008, p. 132) when a designers work results in the creation of new identities, the work goes through a process of negotiating and adopting and the demand of creating a new hybrid. It is not a swift task to create hybrids, fashion designers often go through intense research in order to understand materiality and create a cohesive collection. Unlike Western fashion designer who ‘cherry pick’ what to present as the ‘exotic’ Africa to the fashion realm, African designers have a more genuine desire to represent African cultures often rooted in transformation of traditional clothing.

Vakwangali traditional clothing

Shigwedha (2004, p. 220) argues that what may or may not be considered traditional is debatable; given the fact that many of the costumes that are now considered traditionally ‘authentic’, are actually an adoption from the Eurocentric styles that were imposed by missionaries. It can also be argued that both traditional and modern clothing have a deeper meaning and send messages about the wearer. For instance, among Vakwangali, the *Hompa* had to be distinctive by putting on certain clothing items or accessories reserved for royalty (Fleisch & Möhlig, 2002, pp. 204-205).

Due to different factors, Vakwangali traditional clothing has been gradually abandoned, losing its meaning and usage over time. Change and abandonment of traditional clothing was unavoidable among Vakwangali. Muurman (2017, p. 64) explains that Vakwangali saw traditional clothing as a thing of the past where people were in a state of poverty and the only means to create clothing was out of skins. This may have taken a slow transition, but as alternative European clothing became

available through trading routes and the contract labour system, there was a mind shift of perceiving traditional clothing as a thing of the past, and no longer suitable for the modern times.

It is the responsibility of African designers to put forth initiatives to preserve the meaning and value of the traditional clothing. A commendable example is seen through South African fashion designers; Sun Goddess, Stoned Cherrie and Strangelove who consciously created hybrids that suggest a continuous process of transculturation of traditional clothing (Farber, 2010, p. 159). This is an example this research follows by engaging traditional clothing items modified to suit the contemporary market and present these to Vakwangali as a way of transforming culture and making it relevant in the contemporary fashion. For this study, Vakwangali traditional clothing was explored to transform the traditional clothing of Vakwangali into hybrid garments representing Vakwangali culture aesthetics and Eurocentric style.

Furthermore, following the example of South African designers such as Sun Goddess, Stoned Cherrie and Strangelove, a close study of Vakwangali clothing was conducted to get an understanding of material use, the process and what it represented. According to Jantunen (1963, p. 2) traditional clothing was of high value and often took a long time to make; it took up to three days to prepare skins. A woman wore *ndjareko* made up of two leather aprons covering the front and the back. According to Caley (2003, p. 45), the type of skins that were used for the *ndjareko* also stated the family background of the woman in the society. For example a woman who was married to a hunter would wear *ndjareko* of a duiker, because the

husband can easily get the skins for her. If a woman was married to a rich man with a lot of cattle the front of her *ndjareko* would be from the cattle's tanned stomach. The back of the *ndjareko* was decorated more than the front bottom hemming of both the front and back was weighted with beads. If a woman could not afford beads, the back apron was shredded into strips resembling fringes and other found objects were attached to the back apron for decoration. The back of the *ndjareko* was never left plain and it always had to be decorated as it was highly considered beautiful the way the *ndjareko* would sway as a woman walked (Caley, 2003, p. 46). *Ndjareko* was a valued piece of clothing for a woman; it not only served as a piece of clothing, but also announced the background and status of that particular woman. As for the man, traditionally he wore loincloth made of skins. Jantunen asserts, "If your hunting dogs caught a duiker; you take the duiker, kill it, you tan the skin and then you wear it" (Jantunen, 1963, p. 4). This highlights the hard work that went into one's search for basic clothing and sometimes the endangering of one's life. All men and women had their chests bare except for the accessories that were used to decorate the body.

The choice or use of accessories depended on their availability and accessibility. For example, among the Vakwangali, the accessories worn were made out of seeds, reeds, shells and later as traders brought in glass beads, these were also acquired. A woman wore a distinctive headdress called *sihiho*; that was made out braided sisal fibres and mixed with *munde* a mixture of sweet smelling grass, finely crushed wood pieces of *muparara* tree (*Peltophorum africanum*) and fat (Scherz et al., 1999, p. 22). These braids often hung with three beads or more at the bottom with a big braid in the middle back of the head and this big braid was decorated with white beads or *nombutau* corrie shells (Jantunen, 1963, p. 2). Women also wore beads around their

necks, ankles, knees, wrists and upper arm. A woman of royal descent also wore *musanga*; strings of beads (between 40 and 45 strings) around her waist made from an ostrich egg shell (Jantunen, 1963, p. 2). A man would wear beads that go around the neck, cross over the chest and back around the neck. His head was covered with a head gear made from animal fur and he carried a knife tucked in the waist (Gibson, Larson, & McGurk, 1981, p. 50). The amount of beads and specific objects attached to the accessories communicated the background or status of the wearer. For instance, a woman from a wealthy family would have a heavily adorned back apron. A woman from the royal family would wear *mpande*; a seashell reserved for the royals that was attached to a necklace resting on her chest and another around her waist. It would cost one cattle to acquire *mpande* as they were acquired from Angola sea side (Jantunen, 1963, p. 2). Moreover, Jantunen (1963, p. 2) states that the cost of the entire traditional attire was unattainable for ordinary people without wealth, thus women of lower status would imitate those of high status, but would substitute most accessories with reeds, grass and any other object as they were unable to afford the accessories worn by people of high status. Women would also apply *rukura*, a crushed wood pulp of *usivi* (*Pterocarpus Angolensis*) or *side* (red ochre) from crushed red stone, all over their body including the head.

For traditional dancing ceremonies and other rituals, the women and men wore a reed skirt called *rudeve*. *Rudeve* is made out of reeds cut up into small pieces and strung together as fringes to make up the skirt. *Rudeve* was also uniquely decorated by the wearer by adding various burnt seeds to the fringes. Women tied the *rudeve* around their waists on top of the *ndjareko* when dancing. The *rudeve* shakes and sways as the dancer moves about during a performance. Both men and women wore *rudeve*

when going dancing. The traditional healer was recognisable within the crowd as his or her *rudeve* would also have porcupine quills strung into the *rudeve* (Caley, 2003, p. 14).

The traditional clothing described above is imbedded with value and meaning that has been discarded and little has been preserved through time as the Vakwangali have undergone social and political changes. However the abandonment of traditional clothing did not occur over a short period, as new materials became available, Vakwangali started to adopt them as part of their clothing

Vakwangali traditional clothing and changes

In the pre-colonial times, animal skins were tanned with traditional skills that made use of what was available in the environment. For instance, until today the Eskimo women chew hides to soften them for clothing (Laver, 2012, p. 10). This was the case among Vakwangali before the arrival of trade cloth, their clothing were made from animal skins including cattle skins. Tanning of skins was done through a labour intensive traditional method that required scraping and application of vegetable treatments to soften and cure the skins. These traditional methods of tanning skins are different from those adopted by the tannery industries. The traditional methods made use of a safe and non-toxic process. Currently the leather processing industry in Sub-Saharan Region is done through chromium tanning which is toxic and harmful to the ecosystem (Oruko, Selvarajan, Ogola, Edokpayi, & Odiyo, 2019, p. 370). Even though the traditional methods proved to have been safe and non-toxic,

the traditional methods were gradually abandoned among Vakwangali with the adoption of trade cloth and ultimately Eurocentric styles.

As stated earlier, Vakwangali traditional clothing was initially made up of raw materials from the environment and other materials were acquired through trading. To acquire the material for traditional clothing cost wealth and the making of the clothing items was also a time consuming process. Tuulikki Jantunen, one of the young Finnish missionaries to arrive in Nkurenkuru from 'Owamboland,' soon realised that Vakwangali speak a different language from Aawambo as she documented the livelihood of Vakwangali (Muurman, 2017, p. 30). Jantunen wrote about the livelihoods of Vakwangali that also reflected on traditional clothing and its craftsmanship which is not covered in other literature. For example, 40 to 45 strings of ostrich shell beads would cost one cattle and preparing a skin for *ndjareko* took up to three days to make (Jantunen 1963, p. 2). Given the cost and time it took to make the traditional clothing, Vakwangali started acquiring alternatives materials for their clothing. Before the missionaries came to settle among Vakwangali, traditional clothing had already started to change and other materials were already being sourced through traders from Angola. For example, traded cloth was acquired by Vakwangali to replace the skins. At this point, the acquired cloth was still worn in the same manner as the skins. A woman would then wear *nompareka* that would be made up of two aprons made out of cloth for the front and the back (Jantunen, 1963, p. 3).

Missionaries were part of the colonial groups who promoted the European culture of clothing among Vakwangali. It took time for missionaries settle in the Kavango area

as there was resistance from the day they set foot on the Kavango soil and met with Vakavango. Likuwa (2015, p. 107) states that in 1903 a third attempt was made by German missionaries based on an old agreement that was allegedly made between the missionaries and Vakwangali *Hompa* Himarwa Ithete in 1902. However, *Hompa* Himarwa denied having knowledge of such an agreement, angering the missionaries who later, together with the German troops, burned down the Ukwangali village resulting in Vakwangali casualties. This created a bad reputation of the German missionaries among the Vakavango (Likuwa, 2015, p. 107). Eventually the Catholic missionaries and later the Finish missionaries were permitted to set up schools though there was still resistance from the Vakwangali. *Hompa* Kanuni (who succeeded *Hompa* Himarwa) allowed her children to embrace Christianity and later seemed to prefer the Catholic Church, this may be due to the strictness of the Lutheran church that restricted many of the traditional ways (Kampungu, 1965, p. 281).

“Catholic missionary came to Kavango it formed part of the early stages of German imperialism because to do mission work was to colonise, just as to colonise was to do mission work” (Likuwa, 2015, p. 109). In a report by the Officer in charge of Native Affairs in Nkurenkuru (1935, p. 6) it was stated that most girls and boys in the bush schools were wearing ‘*lapies*’; small pieces of cloth and most girls still wore *yihho* on their heads. Some girls refused to come to school as they were required by the priests and teachers to shave off their ‘heathen’ headdresses. Furthermore the report stated that in some cases Bishop Gotthardt instructed priests to refuse baptising women with *yihho*, unless they shaved their heads. Kavango women and children refused to cut off their *yihho* even though the missionaries and

teachers kept stressing that their headdress was ‘heathen’ and unacceptable to the western ways and therefore needed to be removed (Department of Native Affairs, 1935, p. 6). Hartevelde-Becker (2008, p. 78) also states that cultural attire went through changes due to the fact that Christian costumes enforced the western clothing as the traditional clothing were not considered to be decent. Even though the sources mentioned indicated that traditional clothing started to change due to the pressure of colonisers, some changes had already started to appear before missionaries established themselves among the indigenous communities. The early changes of traditional clothing, is also well documented through photographic archives.

Traditional clothing in photograph archives

Photography has been a tool for documentation used by explorers, travellers and colonialists. Hayes, Silvester & Hartmann (1998, p. 3) position colonial Germany and Apartheid South Africa as being the largest archives of early body of work of early Namibia and its people. Politics made use of photography in presenting people and places. Shiweda (2011) also elaborated that when politics is at play; it leads to a bias representation of people in ‘their places’ by. Observing the archives and interpretations thereof may also vary with specialities. The photographic archive remains the biggest data that has documented much of the precolonial Namibia, and for that fact, this study also draws data from the colonial archives cautiously.

As discussed earlier, fashion designers consult archives to retrieve material culture for inspiration, this notion of retrieving from the archives is more of a creative research process of fact finding by reviewing the documented colonial past rather

than enhancing the research itself. Stoler (2002, p. 89) states that new scholars emerge through engaging “colonialism as a living history that informs and shapes the present rather than as a finished past”. Therefore, researchers including designers engaging the colonial archive need to build on to the archives and enhance the exhibits in order to inform the present. For instance, photographs in the National Archives of Namibia illustrate the early transformation regarding Vakwangali traditional clothing, however there is little literature that enhances these exhibits. Observing photographs from the archives must be done with caution because most archives that were created in the colonial era were ‘staged’ and as was explained “the depiction of artefacts in the photograph at the time was to convey a comprehensive thought of obviously selective image of ‘native’ life and objects that are associated with particular people” (Shiweda, 2011, p. 256). Furthermore, Shiweda (2011, p. 248) explains how a collection of photographs of Omhedi came about, oral accounts point out that white photographers at Omhedi normally came with ‘native’ people and directed what people should do in order for the photographers to capture what they wanted. In other words, one should question the authenticity of the photographs in the archives as they were often ‘staged’ to fit the ‘naivety’ look desired by the photographer.

Even though photographs from the archives were taken with the ‘colonial gaze’, they still serve a purpose in this research and the community itself. Shiweda (2011, p. 248) describes how some traditional dancing groups made use of photographs to duplicate traditional clothing that was seen in the photographs to create more authentic looking traditional costumes. Even though photographs may be staged and manipulated to fit ideas of the photographer, these same photographs may serve

another purpose of recreation, which is how some fashion designers engaged the past. This study employed the same method, through retrieving design elements from photographs in the archive to explore design elements and materiality regarding Vakwangali traditional clothing.

Conclusion

This review of literature highlighted how African clothing in general and its formation of traditional clothing in Africa gets transformed into modern wear which is a basis to better understand the lack of transformations of Vakwangali traditional clothing into fashion. Furthermore it discussed the literature regarding Vakwangali traditional clothing and changes to better understand the meaning and cultural value embedded in the traditional clothing. In addition, this literature also highlighted views regarding fashion created by designers on the African continent versus fashions created out of Africa by designers in the Western fashion mainstream. This review highlights an understanding of the current discourse regarding African fashion versus mainstream fashion where often fashion created out of Africa by African designers is not considered part of the mainstream fashion but the 'other'. However, the literature shows that African fashion designers have moved away from 'cosmopolitan' fashion to 'Afropolitan' fashion in order to tap into the wider market (Shawl, 2013, p. 14). The changes in cosmopolitan fashion to Afropolitan fashion means that in the past African designers in urban settings created fashions for the elite and urban settlers; however the fashion scene on the African continent has evolved to create fashions that can be consumed by the wider market all around the world. This study, after learning from a review of literature, in the same way created

a fashion collection that cannot only be consumed by the local market, but rather the wider world.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The nature of the study required data collection through qualitative tools in order to retrieve in-depth knowledge regarding Vakwangali traditional clothing. Interviews regarding Vakwangali traditional clothing was carried out to highlight narratives regarding traditional clothing in order to reveal the value and meaning imbedded. Simultaneously, archival research was conducted through objective observations of artefacts and colonial photographs to achieve visual data of Vakwangali traditional clothing in the past. Observations were conducted objectively, as the archives are colonial knowledge, which often were created to represent the collector's views on the subjects (Shiweda, 2011). Therefore highlighting that observation of the archives can be problematic but informative to the researcher.

This study made use of multi qualitative methods to collect and analyse data. A practice-led research strategy was employed by making use of qualitative research tools such as observation and interviews. The main concept of practice-led is an approach based on the relationship of the researcher who is also practitioner by making use of their own creative process and the production of artefacts produced for reflection (Mäkelä & Nimkulrat, 2018, p. 2). The reflection of the creative process and the created artworks is carried out by analysing documentation used for the study such as diaries, sketches and photographs. This study also used other research strategies such as archival research and narrative inquiry. Through archival research visual data from the observed artefacts and photographs enabled the researcher to

consolidate her views and those of the research participants to create meaning. Narrative enquiry strategy is focused on the accounts and perspectives of the research participant as a better way to understand the lives of the research participants through personal interviews (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché, & Delpont, 2011, p. 313). It is with this understanding that this research took the narrative approach in order to understand the perspectives of the research participants to collect in-depth data.

This research consisted of two components; the research component, which made use of a qualitative approach to gather data, and the practical component that made use of the collected data and observed cultural items to create the fashion collection. The Practice-led research strategy enabled the study to make use of data from interviews and observed archives to inform the creation of the practical component so as to fulfil what Stoler referred to as ‘a living history that informs and shapes the present rather than as a finished past... (Stoler, 2002, p. 89). Furthermore, the Practice-led method was employed by synthesizing the collected data to create the practical component of the study, which was the ‘*Vakwangali Fashion Collection*’. Practice-led is a unique paradigm highlighting that the creative practice is both the driver and outcome of the research and further positioning the researcher in a unique relationship with the study (Hamilton & Jaaniste, 2010, p. 32). Figure 7 below illustrates the different components that make up the research design of this study.

According to Struwig and Stead (2001, p. 133) reliability in qualitative research is assured by making use of consistent and anonymous tools throughout the research. To assure reliability of this study, various tools were employed at different stages of

the research to ensure that data is collected throughout the study from the point of researcher and designer. The collected data and the created garments were presented to the public for feedback in order to create meaning out of the observations. Furthermore, research tools employed in this study, namely; Interview guide (Appendix B), Observation Checklist (Appendix C), Creative Diary (Appendix J) and Exhibition Guest Book (Appendix K) are attached. All transcribed interviews and the created fashion collection will be kept by the author for a period of 5 years as closed files.

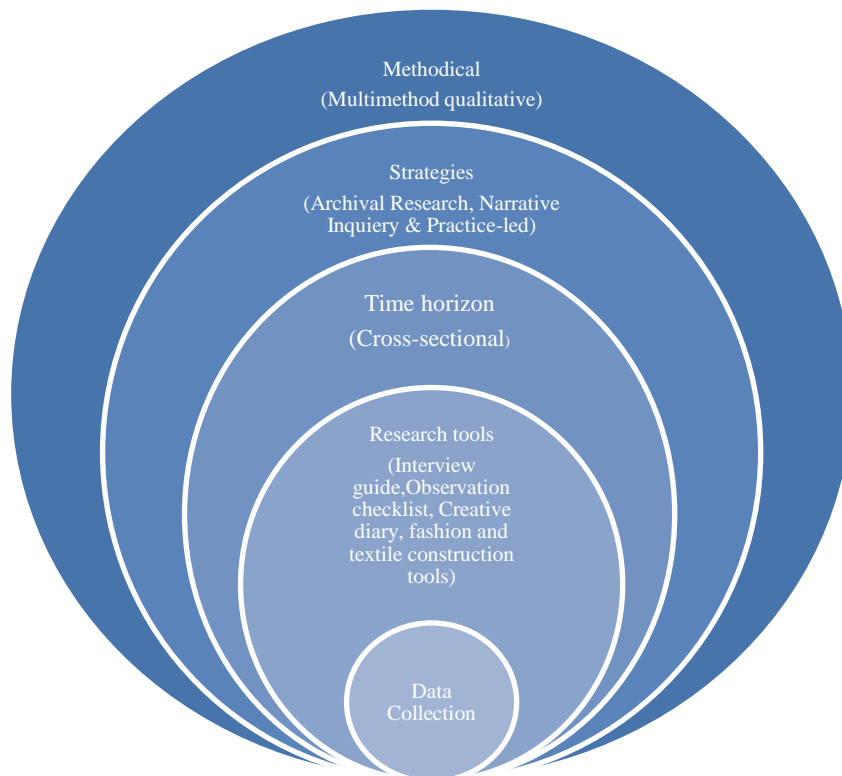


Figure 7: Research Onion. Adapted from “The Layers of Research Design”, by (Saunders & Tosey, 2013), Rapport, 59. Copyright 2011 by Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis and Adrian Thornhill.

Population

This study only focused on Vakwangali who are situated in the Kavango West region; an area of 23,166 km² populated by 89,313 people (National Statistics Agency, 2017). They are the largest ethnic group in Kavango West and East with Rukwangali as the most spoken language in both Rundu (Kavango East) and Nkurenkuru town (Kavango West).

Sample

The research made use of purposeful sampling method to select 18 key informants with knowledge regarding Vakwangali traditional clothing. The sample included two separate group discussion with elders from the royal clan; at Ukwangali palace and Mbunza palace. The research started with interviews with traditional leaders in the electoral constituencies of Kavango West; Rundu urban, Kapako, Mankumpi, Mpungu, Musese, Ncamagoro, Ncuncuni, Nkurenkuru and Tondoro. Thereafter, the researcher made use of referrals from individuals from each constituency with the knowledge regarding the traditional clothing of Vakwangali; until 18 participants were reached. The selected participants included individuals such as traditional dancers, cultural enthusiasts or promoters, craftsmen and women and individuals from the royal clan of Ukwangali and Mbunza royal linages.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

A number of instruments were employed to gather data and to further analyse the collected data. The various research instruments assisted in maintaining reliability of the study by allowing verification of the data created by the public and ultimately by the researcher. This research primarily used a digital camera to photograph artefacts

exhibited at the Owela and Maria Mwengere museums. Thereafter, a semi-structured interview guide (Appendix B) and a voice recorder were used to conduct and record interviews. A creative diary (Appendix J) was used throughout the research process for recording observations and documenting the creative process for reflection. The creative diary also consisted of photographs from the archives for guiding the creative process by drawing inspirations from the photographs as inspiration for sketching ideas for the fashion collection created. The creative illustrations extracted from the diary, are presented in figure 4. The photographs were mainly used by the researcher to gain details of the craftsmanship in traditional clothing as reference for sketching. Additionally, the photographs helped in probing further questions on the craftsmanship where the researcher picked up a certain trend. This was done to seek clarity and decide on how to creatively incorporate the techniques.

Semi-structured interviews

Semi structure interviews were used for both male and female participants to gain understanding and input on the preferred styles from the genders. This type of questioning gave room for probing further to get clarity on certain information. Each interview lasted approximately an hour. For the research schedule to be completed in the scheduled timeframe for field work, four of the interviews were carried out as focus group discussions. The interview guide consisted of four parts to probe the main objective of the study. The questions gave freedom to discuss the knowledge regarding Vakwangali traditional clothing, how it was made, what it represented, what led to its abandonment and how Vakwangali traditional clothing could be recreated into fashions. Appointments were made with participants prior to the interview in order to meet the participants in their homes during a time that was

convenient for the participants. In addition, the researcher encouraged participants to invite their peers who were willing to participate in the interviews.

Carrying out interviews with elderly participants required thorough introductions, this was done in order to build relations with participants and to make the participants comfortable to talk to the researcher. During the introduction phase, further questions regarding family were often asked to establish familiarity. After introductions there was always that sense of belonging and some research participants went on further to elaborate to ensure that all the researcher's questions were deliberated. The introduction also encouraged trustworthiness when the researcher was considered as familiar by some research participants referencing acquaintances with the researcher's parents and grandparents. The researcher was then considered as an insider and therefore to be trusted and seeking knowledge from her elders. Research conducted at 'home' comes with unforeseen challenges as one enters the field, sometimes linked to the assumptions and expectations of the researcher and from the research participants. Akuupa (2011, p. 22) deliberated one of the challenges he encountered where the research participants were sceptical that he had any knowledge on the certain traditional rituals he was enquiring on. In the case of this research, the researcher positioned herself as a Kavango woman of Mbunza descendant. All appointments were made telephonically in Rukwangali, and some of the research participants were convinced that the researcher was an insider. It was also established during fieldwork that the research participants did not make cultural differences between Vakwangali and Vambunza. This perception is supported by the histories of Vakwangali and Vambunza who originated from the same lineage (Kampungu, 1965).

At the end of each interview, the researcher requested the research participants to refer individuals who were known to have knowledge regarding Vakwangali traditional clothing. This request was in most cases met with emphasis that appointments should be made with the royal clan for further information. This also suggested that among Vakwangali, the royal clan was not just a symbol of jurisdiction, but was central regarding culture and tradition. It was therefore crucial that the study included interviews with the royals of Ukwangali and Mbunza. However, after several attempts with the Traditional Authority offices, who are considered gate keepers, appointments for interviews through the office secretary were not secured without her assistance, and she confirmed that all letters were delivered. Through direct telephonic contact, the researcher only secured an interview with Mbunza royal including *Hompa* Alfons Kaundu as *Hompa* Eugene Kudumo of Vakwangali remained unreachable.

Scheduled interview guide

The interview guide covered four major areas and had room for further probing. The first part of the interview was for introduction and background. This was vital to inform on the relevance of the study, establish any possible relations to the participants and assure that the researcher was not an outsider of the community. When the research participants perceived the researcher as a distance relative, they emphasized that they knew and trusted the researcher and therefore were open to longer discussions to assure that all questions were thoroughly discussed. Achebe (2002, p. 12) explains a similar encounter during data collection as “situating [*my*]Self within my research”, which illustrates how her upbringing and family

background placed her as a relative outsider of her research. In her research, Achebe (2002) states how her informants were able to trust her because they could relate to her through her parents or through sharing of the same culture. As the researcher introduced herself, the participants became more open and in many cases offered *sikundu*, a traditional drink usually offered as courtesy of welcoming a guest into one's homestead.

The second part of the interview established the participant's existing knowledge about traditional clothing. During this stage participants explained what they remembered about Vakwangali traditional clothing from their childhood. They pointed out that these memories included what had been narrated to them by their parents or grandparents and they highlighted the value and meaning embedded in traditional clothing. Thereafter, discussions evolved into hindrances that the participants thought may have prevented Vakwangali traditional clothing from transforming. In conclusion, possible ideas to transform traditional clothing into Vakwangali fashions were discussed. These possible ideas were explored and accommodated by the designer's creativity and ability which is presented in chapter 6 and 7.

Observation check list

To carry out research on artefacts, an observation checklist was used to record the objects observed in museums. This observation instrument was only applicable to the artefacts observed at Maria Mwengere Museum in Rundu and Owela Museum in Windhoek. It allowed the researcher to record details of craftsmanship on the

observed artefacts. The recorded details were crucial and assisted with the construction of the fashion collection. Observations in the field can be a challenging method to use as the researcher's perceptions may cause biasness (Struwig & Stead, 2001, p. 100). To avoid biasness, observation carried out on artefacts and photographs were recorded on a checklist and later brought up in the interviews for clarity. For instance, placement of decorations, style and colour were further discussed with crafts persons and these findings are presented in chapter five. The checklist (Appendix C) further made detailed notes on each object in terms of, silhouette, style, material used, the craftsmanship and the decorations on the object. This was done in order for the researcher to identify the different components of traditional clothing including ornaments and to establish design elements and techniques that were used to construct the items. Notes were made from observations on details that assisted in the design and decoration placements on garments created for the practical component presented in chapter seven. The observation list also assisted reliability to keep ideas on course with what was observed and extracted as ideas to be included in the designs.

Creative diary

A creative diary was mainly used to document ideas and possibilities for the fashion collection, until the completion of creating the *Vakwangali Fashion Collection*. This study used the creative diary (Appendix J) mainly to reflect on the creative process that covered ideas and explorations leading to the final garments created. Nimkulrat (2007, p. 8) states that "the aim of this documentation is to make the creative process somewhat transparent by capturing each step the practitioner-researcher takes in the process, both consciously and unconsciously". As a designer and researcher, this

diary was vital to document and reflect on the creative process, which was important for analysing the practical work as presented in Chapter seven. The creative diary included the following items; photographs, sketches, notes, descriptions, and design ideas. Ideas for the created fashion collection, started from analysing photographs to extract ideas that were incorporated in the fashion collection. The photographs presented materiality, silhouette, styles and techniques.

Exhibition guest book

The fashion exhibition was held in the Standard Bank Gallery at the University of Namibia in Windhoek from the 13th to 24th August, 2018, and was open to the public. A guest book (Appendix K) was provided to visitors to sign and to make comments regarding the exhibition. This research instrument was used to record the public's response to the created fashion collection. The responses assisted the analysis of the practical component of the research. The fashion collection created through this research was an attempt to answer a research problem and provide suggestions to transform Vakwangali traditional clothing into fashion. Since the fashion collection was not only created for the researcher and the designer's interest, but for the public, it was important to record the public responses in the exhibition guest book for further analysis. This is a common practice among arts based research, where a researcher is required to present the created works to the public and thereafter reflect and assist in analysing and facilitating further inquiry (Nimkulrat, 2007, p. 4). The guest book as an instrument assisted further analysis of the *Vakwangali Fashion Collection* without biasness by including views and responses from the public, which are presented in chapter 7.

Procedure

The initial data was gathered through archival research and by carrying out interviews with research participants. The collected data was synthesized to inform the creation of the practical component. With the nature of the study being practice-led, visual data from observations of the archives and the conducted interview had to inform the design practice of creating a fashion collection. All interviews were pre-arranged; however, the scheduled time for interviews was affected due to unforeseen obstructions and therefore fieldwork schedule had to change. Consolidated data from the interviews is presented in chapter four, five and six in various key themes, while the process and the creation of the fashion collection is presented in chapter seven as '*Vakwangali Fashion Collection*'.

The researcher recorded observations in the creative diary from a collection of photographs and museum artefacts that were documented during visits to the museums. The Owela Museum in Windhoek and Maria Mwingere Cultural Centre in Rundu were visited, to consolidate artefact details on craftsmanship and material manipulation. These details were crucial in the construction of the fashion collection. Though the artefacts were not classified by ethnic groupings, the artefacts shared similarities in technique and material use. The photographs and the observations inspired ideas for designing the fashion collection. After interviews were conducted, the researcher consolidated observations and oral interviews for sketching different design ideas to incorporate meanings and values that highlight social status, age and gender into the created fashion collection. The sketched designs assisted in choosing

and collecting fabrics and material to construct the fashion collection with elements representing the Vakwangali traditional clothing.

Thereafter, the created garments and accessories making up '*Vakwangali Fashion Collection*' were presented in the form of an exhibition to the public at the University of Namibia's Standard Bank Art Gallery in Windhoek. The exhibition had an official opening with live models. Following the live show, garments were hung on mannequins for the duration of the exhibition. The exhibition was scheduled to run for two weeks, from August 13 to August 24, 2018, however it remained on show until September 2, 2018. The exhibition was also accompanied by a guest book that was open to visitors to record their comments. An exhibition is crucial in practice-led research as it invites the audience to critique the work produced. The fashion collection created was targeted at Vakwangali, however it was not limited to Vakwangali but to any individual who shared interest in 'Afropolitan' fashion. In addition, since fashion is a commodity consumed by audiences residing in urban areas, it was fit to showcase the fashion collection in an urban setting and rural setting to get responses from the two different audiences in order to analyse the different responses.

After the exhibition in Windhoek, the garments were taken to the Kavango West region to be presented to the community at the Ukwangali Annual Cultural Festival that took place on September 8 2018 at the Mayara royal village. Since this event did not have facilities for exhibiting garments, the researcher had to use alternative means to display the garments. Live models showcased the female garments.

Unfortunately, no male volunteers took part in the presentation as they refused to participate when requested to. As a result, male garments were displayed on a table.

Data analysis

To organize and bring meaning to the gathered data; this research analysed data based on the research questions. A narrative data analysis and interpretation was used to group key themes and concepts and to interpret data in relation to the objectives of the study. The design process leading to the creation of '*Vakwangali Fashion Collection*' was analysed by extracting ideas from narratives obtained through interviews and also through a reflection on responses from the public recorded in the guest book and informal discussions between the designer and the audience encountered. The photographs from the archives were analysed keeping in mind what pointed out by Shiweda (2011, p. 41), that photographs from the colonial archives were often staged to depict a primitive culture viewed by colonialist and therefore not portraying an authentic image of the ethnic groups. Noting colonial influences on museum and archival images, the researcher observed the photographs through the 'lenses' of the research participants' narratives. This way of observation presented a different view and details of the photographs regarding traditional clothing as presented in Chapter 4.

Research Ethics

Research is a practice that is carried out morally by employing certain guidelines to ensure that the research is not engaged in scientific misconduct (Struwig & Stead, 2001, p. 66). To maintain quality and reliability throughout the study, ethical

measures were adopted from guidelines provided by the Centre of Postgraduate Studies and the UNAM Ethics committee. Before a field trip was conducted, ethical clearance was sought from the University of Namibia Ethics Committee through the Postgraduate Committee, which was granted in the form of a letter (Appendix E). This letter assured that certain ethical measures had been put in place to conduct the research in an ethical manner, where the participants and the Vakwangali community did not face any harm in taking part in this study.

In addition to the ethical clearance letter, the researcher contacted the Ukwangali and Mbunza Traditional Authority office as they are considered gatekeepers of Ukwangali and permission letters addressed to counsellors of the different constituencies (Appendix F), including the royal leaders of Ukwangali and Mbunza, were submitted.

The researcher also made appointments with all participants prior to the date of the interview: either telephonically or in person before the actual interviews were conducted. A consent form was read to participants as they were elderly and the participants gave verbal consent for the interview. All participants were briefed about why they were chosen to be participants in the study. Participants were well informed that all interviews were being recorded for the sole purpose of the research and that all transcripts and recording were to be kept by the researcher.

CHAPTER 4:

VARIOUS VAKWANGALI TRADITIONAL CLOTHING AND STYLES OVER TIME

Introduction

Vakwangali traditional clothing are similar to those of Vambunza as their royal families are of one lineage, but they settled in different areas which led to the two groups being classified as two different ethnic groups (Fleisch & Möhlig, 2002, p. 180). Kampungu (1965, p. 243) also posits that Vakwangali and Vambunza are of one family and that their chiefs belong to the same ancestry. In addition, Kampungu (1965, p. 244) states that the separation of Vakwangali and Vambunza can be traced in the many family quarrels between the two queens; Kapango and Mate who were sisters but due to differences separated and then settled in different areas. Although Vakwangali and Vambunza share the same culture, discussions regarding traditional clothing in this chapter are in reference to the Vakwangali only unless stated otherwise.

The culture of Vakwangali had a strong hierarchy that was majorly influenced by *vaHompa* or chiefs. This strong hierarchy enforced by the royals is not spared from the ways of life including traditional clothing. According to Kampungu (1966, p. 448), “any social organization of any African tribes cannot be well understood without reference to its kinship system with its various genealogical grouping and the patterns of behaviour involved”. Thus, it is imperative that traditional clothing among Vakwangali is discussed along the kinship system. Evidently, Jantunen (1963, p. 2) states that, commoners imitated what royal women and men of high status wore,

however they would use alternative materials. The use of material for traditional clothing among Vakwangali was also guided by sumptuary laws, meaning certain materials and adornments were only reserved for the elites to symbolize their social position, set themselves apart from commoners and announce their social status to the society (Anawalt P. , 1980, p. 33).

This chapter focuses on traditional clothing over time and discusses the different Vakwangali traditional clothing, styles, and accessories for females and males. Furthermore, this chapter discusses the skills required in the construction of Vakwangali traditional clothing and accessories to highlight the skills required in making of Vakwangali royal traditional clothing and accessories. Lastly, this chapter focuses on the value and meaning embedded in Vakwangali traditional clothing.

Various Vakwangali traditional clothing

In ancient times, Greek and Roman men and women wore tunics that were made into skirts, and so did the Scots and the modern Greeks (Laver, 2012, p. 7). The basic silhouette that made up ancient Greek and Roman costumes were very similar between the genders. Similarly, the silhouette and materiality of traditional clothing among Vakwangali were similar between the genders as they used the same basic material and shape. Though there was a clear distinction between what women and men wore, this difference was sometimes only revealed by the name of the particular clothing item. The basic silhouette and materiality for Vakwangali men remained *muromba* (singular) or *nomuromba* (plural) aprons made from skins that were tied around the waist and sometimes skin was used to make *munyambo* [this was a type

of wear which covered the front and back of the lower body]. As trade cloth was acquired through different means, Vakwangali men adopted *ewindo* (singular) or *mawindo* (plural) [skirts] and loincloths of trade cloth. As for Vakwangali women their basic clothing was made of aprons, *ekehe lyokosipara* [front material] and *ndjareko* [back apron]. The front apron was later replaced with trade cloth as they were acquired and eventually *nderera* (singular) or *nonderera* (plural) skirts were adopted. The evidence presented above shows that the silhouette of Vakwangali traditional clothing was similar between men and women; the difference was only made with decorations that adorned the traditional clothing for the women.

The traditional clothing of Vakwangali varied over different periods and was made from different materials. In pre-colonial Namibia traditional clothing was mainly made from the leather of different animal skins tanned by hand. However, research has shown that prior to colonialism Vakwangali were exposed to trade activities with other Bantu groups and Arab traders who brought trading goods including trade cloth which was integrated into traditional clothing. As stated earlier the acquired trade cloths were adopted as *mawindo* and *nomunyambo* [loincloth] for male and *makehe gokosipara* and *nonderera* (drapes to cover the front tucked in the waist) for women. The early traditional clothing [*nonjareko* and *nomuromba*] was made of skins which were tied around the waist as *nondjareko* aprons for women and as *nomuromba* for men (Gibson, Larson, & McGurk, 1981, p. 49). These types of skins used for clothing was symbolic as for instance only a hunter's wife was able to have skins of rare animals such as a giraffe. The traditional clothing of an individual depended on their age, sex, social status and ethnic group.

Vakwangali traditional clothing for men did not differ extremely between social classes, but as stated before the adornment and accessories communicated the difference. As previously mentioned, before the research was conducted, there was an assumption that the Vakwangali and Vambunza have different cultures. However, *Hompa* Alfons Kaundu, the current traditional chief of Mbunza Traditional Authority, stated that this is not the case as both groups are of the same lineage and therefore share the same culture. References to Vakwangali are to be related in the same manner for Vambunza. *Hompa* Alfons Kaundu (personal communication, March 31, 2018) explains that royal men wore similar to what other men from humble classes wore which means that the traditional clothing did not differ greatly. *Hompa* Kaundu further explained that royal men also wore skins on the lower body and that the upper body was mostly left bare, however the amount of skins that the royal men used for traditional clothing was much larger than that of common men. In addition, the sumptuary law applied to the type of skins one wore and only the *Hompa* wore leopard skins and this distinguished him from the crowd. Leopard skins were strictly reserved for the *Hompa* and no other person was permitted to wear leopard skins (A. Kaundu, personal communication, March 31, 2018).

Men of humble classes took pride in the skins they wore even though they were simple in comparison to the royals. According to Jantunen (1963, p. 4) when hunting and a dog caught a small duiker the hunter would exclaim “*muromba gwange!*” [My skin cloth], and this was a way of declaring that the skin of the duiker would now become the hunter’s skin wear. Vakwangali men wore minimalistic in comparison to what women wore. The basic skin wear for Vakwangali men was *muromba* and later loincloth. If the animal skin used for *muromba* was small the man took two skins tied

around the waist to cover the front and back. If the skin was of a larger animal the men wore it by covering the front and the back and tucked into the leather belt. A retired pastor, Marcus zaKankono (personal communication, January 20, 2018) reasoned that it was considered fancy for Vakwangali men to wear a skin with the ears of the animal hanging in front and the tail hanging at the back. There was no symbolic meaning in this other than fascination. From what zaKankono narrated and based on other literatures, this indicates that Vakwangali men's traditional clothing might had been minimal, but there was meaning and style emphasized through how the skins were worn. It can also be argued that men wore minimally due to their traditional roles that often required heavy duty work and therefore elaborate clothing may have become an obstruction. Despite being minimal in nature, accessories accompanying the traditional clothing indicated social status and ethnicity among Vakwangali men.

Vakwangali women's traditional clothing, specifically the *ndjareko*, was extensively decorated as a form of non-verbal communication of family and social standing of the wearer. This non-verbal communication was important to maintain order and respect within the community. One apron was for the front and another for the back part, the back apron is called *ndjareko*. Before girls reached puberty, they wore *munyambo* and as they reached puberty they received *ndjareko* usually prepared for them before time. The *ndjareko* would then be presented to the girl while she is going through initiation rites such as *rufuko* and *etembu* which is a traditional event discussed later in the chapter under traditional events. After a woman got married she would then receive skins from her husband and she decided which one to wear in front and which one for the back as *ndjareko*. As stated earlier, the size and type of

skins used for the *ndjareko* communicated the status position of the wearer. She would then decorate it as she wished as the *ndjareko* was always adorned and never left plain. Decorations were symbolic as they communicated something about the wearer such as social status, age and ethnicity. The wife of a *Hompa* who is known as *Mumbanda* wore the same clothing as other Vakwangali women, however her clothing was outstanding as it was always heavily adorned and smeared in *rukura* ointment. The front apron of *Mumbanda* was very large in size and not cut up into pieces. If one had to exaggerate one would say it was several meters in length (M. S. Haimbili, personal communication, March 31, 2018). In addition, Jantunen (1963, p. 2) explains that the front apron was made of a cattle stomach. This particular front apron was delicately draped in front for it was such a delicate skin of fine texture and very light. At the back, *mumbanda* would wear *ndjareko* made of animal skin and heavily adorned with *yiranda* made from beads. There was no way she would be mistaken for an ordinary woman. Martha Haimbili (personal communication, March 31, 2018) a royal descendent and a craftswoman, stressed that even a small child would take notice that indeed that was a *mumbanda* approaching as she was recognized from her long front apron and the well-crafted and heavily adorned *ndjareko*. The aesthetic of the decoration and materiality often had nothing to do with charm and magic. Crafts woman Maria Kaundu (personal communication, January 25, 2018) argued that it was necessary and practical that the *ndjareko* was decorated; if the *ndjareko* was left plain, the skins were light and the skins could easily be blown up by the wind when a person walked. For that reason, the hem of the *ndjareko* had to be weighted down with decoration so that it kept close to the body of the wearer and would not lift up while walking. Women who could not afford shell beads cut up the skins in fringe like strips to stitch on to the *ndjareko* to

weigh it down. Sometimes as the men tanned the skins they removed the fur from the skins but left about five centimetres of fur around the edges of the skins to weigh it down. Other seeds and shells were attached to the back of the *ndjareko*. The ways in which a women acquired *ndjareko*, and the craftsmanship of it including its decorations, indicated that this piece of clothing was highly valued. This may indicate as to why Vakwangali women continued to wear *nondjareko* even after adopting trade cloth. It is through the *ndjareko* that a woman could announce their family and social standing.

Though the main traditional clothing was a means of non-verbal communication some of the clothing items were for protection of the body from harsh weather conditions. In addition to loincloths Vakwangali women used *mwaye* (shawl) to cover up the upper body for protection from cold weather. This *mwaye* was a round cape like item made of patch up leather pieces sewn together with animal fibre (Gibson, Larson, & McGurk, 1981, p. 49). The detailed description by Gibson et al. (1981, p. 49) illustrates a certain aesthetic appeal of the *mwaye* draping over the body. Traditionally a *mwaye* would be wrapped around the upper body going under the one arm and then tied at the opposite shoulder or at the centre of the chest. This clothing item transformed with the adoption of trade cloth, which suggest there was perhaps an aesthetic appeal that was more valuable. Elizabeth Namutenya, a traditional dancer and craftswomen, had an early memory of her grandmother's traditional clothing before many people adopted European style of dressing. According to Namutenya (personal communication, January 19, 2018) when trade cloth became common, women wore their cloths in the same manner like the *mwaye* which matched the *nderera* skirt and was made of the same trade cloth. Trade cloth

was adopted as an alternative to *mwaye*, however with trade cloth it was mainly for aesthetic appeal and it was worn throughout all seasons. It can be argued that this switch to trade cloth from traditional *mwaye*, may have been due to suitability and convenience. The traditional *mwaye* which was previously made from patched up leather may have taken long to construct and unsuitable for hot weather unlike the trade cloth *mwaye*. Further restrictions that occurred with colonial rule on hunting in the name of protecting wild life, may have also contributed to the scarcity of skins to construct *mwaye*. History has proven that restrictions on hunting were implemented to force Vakavango into contract labour. In his research on contract labour system, Likuwa showed how the colonial rule orchestrated the tightening of laws on hunting to pressurize Vakavango into contract labour (Likuwa, 2012, p. 190). Scarcity of animal skins could also be another reason why Vakwangali women may have opted to adopt *mwaye* made of cloth.

The adoption of trade cloth was mainly out of convenience, the royal family attempted to hold on to traditional clothing made of animal skins. It seems that skin was an important aspect of royal lifestyle since the early times of King Mpande. Theresia Kamunoko, a royal descendent who is also a craftswoman and traditional dancer narrated that *Hompa* Mpande of the Vakwangali used to wear skins (personal communication, January 18, 2018). *Hompa* Mpande, ruled Vakwangali until her death in 1886 (Kampungu, 1965, p. 341). Up until then traditional clothing did not change and it was only during the slave trade activities by *Vimbali* (also *Yimbali*), black slave traders in Kavango who came from the Province of Bie in South East Angola, that trade cloth and European clothing was adopted among Vakwangali and that their royal traditional clothing began to transform (Likuwa, 2012, p. 28). To

investigate when the first trade cloth was adopted by the Vakwangali royal clan is beyond the scope of this study. However the interviewees of this study and Kampungu (1965, p. 206) suggest some possible events that led to the initial adoption of trade cloth linking it to the advent of the Portuguese during *Hompa* Hawanga's reign. Although European clothing has been traded by *Yimbali*, black slave traders long before Chief Himarwa Ithete of Vakwangali, Kamunoko shared that the first cloth that arrived in *Hompa* Himarwa's palace were from the Portuguese. She stated further that the acquisition of European clothes during the time of *Hompa* Himarwa included the use of magic, the defeat and eventual dispossession of goods from the Portuguese (T. Kamunoko, personal communication, January 18, 2018). Kamunoko's narratives are corroborated by the written assertion that in 1915 *Hompa* Kandjimi Hawanga looted the Portuguese of goods and ammunitions during the attack on Portuguese colonial officials at Port Cuangar (Likuwa, 2012, p. 45). From these events, it is concluded that more European clothing and goods were acquired by the Vakwangali royal clan. Kamunoko, (personal communication, January 18, 2018) explained that it was at that stage that the royal clan took the cloth and cut it up into pieces for everyone to wear as *makehe gokomenho* and as *nomunyambo* (loincloth). This suggests that the *ndjareko* was a valuable traditional item for Vakwangali.

Vakwangali traditional accessories and styles

The royal clan remains central among Vakwangali as their ideas and knowledge is highly regarded among the community. It is for this reason that traditional clothing among Vakwangali is discussed in reference to the royal aesthetics and standards. As

it is in the western cultures, upper circles of society uphold the public reference image (Wu, 2015, p. 420), the royal clan and those who held some higher social rank in the society were individuals upholding standards of beauty. In Vakwangali society it was no different, royal men and women were a point of reference for style and standard. For royals to maintain exclusivity and to maintain their positions of status, sumptuary laws were applied to the use of certain material and ornaments.

The missionaries referred to all traditional adornment and clothing items of Vakwangali as ‘pagan’ and not suitable for the Christianity lifestyle were inducting. In her study, *Reflection on Christianity and Traditional Religion in Western Kavango in Namibia* (2017) Muurman showed a photograph of a Kwangali bride to some of her participants and a missionary; the participants exclaimed the photograph to be beautiful, but the missionary referred to it as being ‘pagan’ and unfit for a Christian (Muurman, 2017, p. 62). Contrary to what the missionaries believed Vakwangali traditional items were constructed in the most practical manner, using materials that were available to convey non-verbal messages and to keep order in the community. These traditional clothing items did not always consist of magic and charms as the Eurocentric narratives suggests. In traditional clothing, ornaments were more than a decorative item but could communicate age, status and gender of the wearer. What men and women valued and communicated non-verbally through accessorizing and adornment was different. These accessories and ideas are discussed next.

Vakwangali men’s traditional accessories and styles

Vakwangali men and boys adorned themselves with minimal accessories not so much for aesthetic appeal in comparison to women. Men had responsibilities to

provide for their families and the community at large. As is the case with all traditional clothing, royal men had to maintain the standard of aesthetics and more so the distinct accessories reserved only for the royals by sumptuary laws.

Vakwangali men had active roles to provide for their families and for this reason they carried traditional tools with them at all times. It was important for a man to display his stature with what he was wearing and so it was common for Vakwangali men to walk around with a knife tucked in the belt (Gibson, Larson, & McGurk, 1981, p. 51). A man could also tuck under his belts other tools such as, *nzimbu*, a small axe, *rufuro*, a big knife, and held in his hands *ndamba no uta*, a bow and an arrow. Royal men always had an object with them when leaving the palace such as carrying a walking stick, which was also a common practice with men from the humble class. Kamunoko relates (personal communication, January 18, 2018) that *Hompa* Himarwa had an object that he always carried when waging war and this particular object was believed to possess powers. Though some of the tools men carried were believed to possess magic or power, this was not the case with all tools. Severinus Siteketa, a retired teacher who had a long career, (personal communication, January 24, 2018) recalled that all tools were not carried to cause trouble, but were used for personal defence and protecting others when necessary. It was reasoned that a man without protective tools risked the shame of running away from wild animals together with women. Siteketa narrated what happened to OdjaMau who met a hyena on his way and used his traditional tools to fight off the hyena (S. Siteketa, personal communication, January 24, 2018). The main reason that Vakwangali carried most of the tools was for protection from any danger that they might encounter along the way.

For aesthetic and protection, Vakwangali men had a few accessories such as hats, beads, sandals and bags. Royal men also wore one string of *nonyoka* seashells which were only reserved for the royal men (Jantunen, 1963, p. 2). Those from humble classes would wear one string of beads around their necks and sometimes two strings of beads crossing each other around the chest. Strictly, *Hompa* would wear *mpande* (singular) or *nompande* (plural) around the neck, one hanging in front and another at the back. The *mpande* hanging at the back of the necklace was attached on a square leather piece (A. Kaundu, personal communication, March 31, 2018). Even though Vakwangali men and boys often had their heads shaved (Jantunen, 1963, p. 2), they wore hats. The hats were made out of reeds and a big feather from all kinds of birds was tucked on the hat. *Hompa* also wore a hat, however this was made out of leopard skin, and that is how he was easily identified from other people (A. Kaundu, personal communication, March 31, 2018). Siteketa (personal communication, January 24, 2018) also explains that big feathers in a hat were for aesthetics appeal, it was a way for a man to announce themselves non-verbally to anyone they met, that they are a man of stature. Vakwangali men also wore sandals made of leather on their feet. zaKankono (personal communication, January 20, 2018) excitingly utters how a man who was walking with his wife would hear the sound of his steps resounding and if there were two men walking with such charisma, one could easily sing and dance along to the sound. In addition to all traditional accessories, Vakwangali men carried bags that they made from a goatskin. It was uncommon for a man to leave his house without carrying a protecting tool under his belt, let alone, a walking stick (K. J. Kankono & M. M. zaKankono, personal communication, January 20, 2018). These narratives illustrate that Vakwangali, men communicated their character in what they

carried with them and that men were expected not be cowards but rather to be brave and ready to protect themselves and others at all times.

Vakwangali women's traditional accessories and styles

Just like men, Vakwangali women adorned their bodies with various ornaments and, as stated earlier, these ornaments were a form of non-verbal communication. A woman was accorded respect based on the amount of accessories and the quality of her clothing, as this indicated her social standing and that of her husband. The earliest Assyrian law dated back to 1200 BC required married women to wear veils in public, this law seems to have persisted into modern times (Laver, 2012, p. 15). The history of sumptuary law shows that married women were set apart from the society in terms of accessories they had to wear which guided their social interactions in the community. Vakwangali women had more accessories in comparison to men and this was more so for the royal women whose accessories were of the finest quality. Kampungu (1966, p. 440) states that one could risk his life to look at *Vambanda* [*Hompa's* wives] when they passed by. Kampungu further explains that *Vambanda* in those days were heavily guarded by *marenga* [king's men] even when they went about visiting their relatives in the community, the commoners were not allowed to have affairs with *Vambanda*, and that anyone who committed such an act was heavily punished. This again highlights gender roles and status symbol attached to married women. This section looks at some of the customs attached to traditional clothing.

The most distinctive item for Vakwangali women is the traditional headdress called *sihiho* (singular) or *yihho* (plural). *Sihiho* was a sentimentally valued headdress among Vakwangali women. This particular headdress distinguished women from girls and men. Contrary to assumptions that this headdress lasted a woman's lifetime, *Yihho* only lasted a few months to a year and then was replaced (Muurman, 2017, p. 18). *Sihiho* was made of *mugoro* (*Terminalia sericea*) roots that were beaten down to make fibres for woman to braid their hair with. *Sihiho* consisted of thin twisted braids with a thick braid in the middle of the head called *sikoka* and another thick braid in front that was completely covered in fat. The big braid *sikoka*, had its ends finished off with strings of beads referred to as *sinduku so sikoka*. *Sihiho* was always adorned with strings of beads and shells placed at a particular place and each bearing a name. Crafts woman and seamstress Lydia Kandjimi (personal communication, January 20, 2018) explained the different names of the beads that decorated *sihiho*: the cluster of shells or beads in front of *sihiho* running from ear to ear is called *simbarara*, literally translated as a crown. In addition, *ereke* beads were the two strings of beads that loosely hung at the back over the *sikoka* and two more strings hung on each side of the ear called *mamporora*. All braids were finished off with three or more beads at the ends and the whole headdress was smeared with *rukura* (*Ptercarpus Angolensis*). All women, including those of humble classes, decorated their headdress with beads; the amount of beads and ornaments was what indicated the social status of the woman. In addition, to the amount of beading, sumptuary laws reserved certain ornaments for the royals. *Yihho* of Vakwangali royals were adorned with ornaments that were often rare and cost wealth to acquire. Martha Haimbili (personal communication, March 31, 2018) revealed that a very shiny silver button was attached to a *sihiho* of *mumbanda* which reflected light so that whenever she

went out, people would notice that *mumbanda* was approaching. For Hambukushu people in Kavango West region, copper buttons were attached to the *yihho* as a symbol for married women (Scherz, et al., 1999, p. 21). Narratives and supporting literature reveals that there was symbolism in the decoration of *sihiho*, the different parts bearing names suggests semiotics beyond the scope of this study. Further scrutiny of *sihiho* may reveal sentimental value that may explain the trauma and loss suffered by Vakwangali women when missionaries forcefully removed *yihho*.

As with all accessories, status was the main reason for adorning the body, the more accessories and beading the women wore the more it indicated her status. Some ornaments had greater value than others. Women who could not afford certain ornaments improvised from found material. Other ornaments that Vakwangali wore were *ekondambunda*, *nonkwatawoko*, *nonkwatampindi*, *iyiyonga* and *nongondongo*. The waist of Vakwangali women were adorned with strings of beads called *ekondambunda* that were made up of about 45 strings of ostrich shell beads and was quite heavily priced; up to the value of a cow (Jantunen, 1963, p. 2). The chest of a woman was usually left bare, however, the neck was always adorned with beads from shells called *nonyoka* or ostrich egg shell beads called *Musanga* that was often worn by royal girls and women. Likuwa (2012) has highlighted the importance of *musanga* as a means of economic barter exchange system in the Kavango in the pre-colonial period. He states that “Mushanga was used as a method of monetary payment in Kavango. The shells were made from ostrich egg and were used as compensatory payment to a person after a court hearing etc. The Bushmen made these *mushanga* which they exchanged with the Kavango communities which in turn they could exchange for loin cloths with the Vimbundu and European traders who

operated in the Kavango” (Likuwa, 2012, p. 168). As part of the accessories on the neck, royal women would attach a rare shell called *mpande* or in the case of commoners, a small shell called *simuma* was attached hanging in front of the chest. Only royal women would wear *mpande*, it was a serious crime if a servant or any woman from the humble class wore *mpande*. The *mpande* was a rare and unique large shell that was acquired through trading from Mbaka in Angola and would cost a cow (Jantunen, 1963, p. 2). Other sources also state that Aawambo acquired *omba* (also *mpande*) from Ombwenge (Kavango river) where a goat’s caul [tissue enclosing womb] is immersed in the river overnight and in the morning the seashells will be caught as the snails that provide the *mpande* shell got attracted to the smell (Silvester, Kautondokwa, & Shikongeni, 2019, pp. 54-55). In addition, the upper arms were decorated with *nonkwatawoko*, under the knees with *nonkwatampindi* beads, around the wrists and ankle with either beads or *iyiyonga* and *nongondongo*, which were made from coiled wire of copper, brass or silver. Women who could not afford to acquire ornaments from different shells and wire made their own from seeds strung together and *yisamparara* made of braided grass as bracelets. Though Missionaries dismissed these decorations as ‘paganism’ and full of magic, beads were valuable among Vakwangali and they were an indication of status. The examples described earlier also show that adornment among Vakwangali women was mainly about aesthetic, status and not an act of covering the ‘nakedness’ of the body.

Specific accessories such as *nongondongo* were protected and guarded under sumptuary laws and reserved for royal women. Around the wrists and upper arm Royal Vakwangali women adopted copper coils known as *iyiyonga* and *nongondongo*. Though the research participants suggested that these copper coils

where probably acquired from South Africa, other sources suggest otherwise. In the Zulu kingdom brass coil bracelets were very prestigious, King Shaka protected the production of it, that it was only exclusively produced in the palace by the highly skilled blacksmiths (Klopper, 1994, pp. 12-13). Other people from surrounding kingdoms had to endure tough journey to acquire the brass bracelets. Only after king Shaka's reign did the dissemination of brass coils become more accessible, but still maintaining the symbol of prestige (Klopper, 1994, p. 11). Silvester et al. (2019, p. 63-64) states that the copper ornaments for arms and legs were initially made of iron but later switched to wire, which the Europeans were producing for Aawambo and Ovaherero. Furthermore, Silvester et al. (2019, p. 65) explains that the iron ornaments were perhaps primarily used as shackles for slaves and the kings used them for wives who wanted to run away. *Yiyonga* and *nongondongo*, could have been acquired through trading at a later stage among Vakwangali. These accessories seem to have existed among other ethnic groups in Kavango East. Kampungu (1965, pp. 464-645) discusses totem or clan origins, and explains the origin of 'kinship group', where Vakangondo [iron-smith, iron-ring makers] were one of the first 'kinship group' among Vagciriku and Sambyu ethnic groups. From Kampungu's explanation, this indicates that the earliest acquisition of *nongondongo* among Vakwangali may have been an adoption of Vakangondo clan and as *nongondongo* disappeared over time Vakwangali had to acquire them from elsewhere. For Vakwangali, because the copper rods used for *nongondongo* were often brought from afar either from Aawambo kingdoms or elsewhere, trading for *yiyonga* or *nongondongo* cost Vakwangali a lot of wealth from five chickens to one goat Jantunen (1963, p. 2). For this reason *yiyonga* and *nongondongo* were mostly only common to royal women or well-off women, maintaining a similar symbol of

prestige as was the case in Zulu Kingdom. Martha Haimbili (personal communication, March 31, 2018) highlighted the arrival of a royal woman by using a sound expression of *nongondongo* rattled resounding ‘tjaya...tjaya...tjaya’ [rattling sound]. Though Silvester et al. (2019) suggests that the iron- anklets were used as shackles for slaves, other sources indicate the opposite and maintain *nongondongo* to have been a prestige accessory among Vakwangali.

To complete the adornment for Vakwangali women, they had natural skin care ointments and powders to maintain and take care of their skins. According to Hambyuka a retired teacher (personal communication, January 20, 2018) Vakwangali women would use *sidumba* as a natural solid perfume that was made from fat mixed with *edugu-dugu* or *nondago*. Seemingly, the use of *sidumba* by a woman made a lasting impression on men. Nduva Munango, who introduced herself as an individual who did not embrace Christianity but grew up most of her childhood in a traditional upbringing (personal communication, January 20, 2018) illustrated that if a woman used *sidumba* it was so strong that when she passed by a group of men, they would declare that indeed that particular woman smells pleasantly. Their skins were also moisturized by rubbing *rukura* (*Pterocarpus Angolensis*) or *side* red ochre from crushed red stones mixed with fat. It was considered a luxury for a woman to have her skin well moisturized or powdered with *side*. Women from the humble class on the other hand, did not have the luxuries of having their whole bodies well moisturized in oils. Women of humble classes would rarely smear their bodies in *rukura* as it was a valuable commodity not affordable by the poor. Similarly, among Aawambo, rich people always smeared *olukula* on their clothes for maintaining their bodies and leather clothing items, however “poor men’s leather

clothes are not as soft or as attractive as those of rich people, as they could not afford to apply the required amount of lotion to make their skins soft, attractive and lasting” (Shigwedha, 2004, p. 28). However, when there was a community gathering it was in preparation for such an event that they smeared their clothing and bodies in *rukura*. The above use of *sidumba* and *rukura*, illustrate that ointments and powders were valued and were an indication of status among Vakwangali.

Even though magic and charms were not always attached to the decorations, the decorations on the Vakwangali traditional clothing items had other hidden meanings and value. The decorations and the aesthetic were used to indicate the ethnic group and class of the wearer. Unlike women of status from the royal clan who could afford to trade wealth for ornaments, women of humble classes improvised with anything they could find to decorate themselves. Selma Hausiku a widow of the late *Hompa Sitemu Mpasi*, with knowledge regarding traditional clothing, (personal communication, January 24, 2018) explains that every woman decorated themselves with whatever they could find such as shells which they put on their *yihho* headdress or their *ndjareko*. From her explanations, it is understood that women who had the means to acquire finer adornments did so whereas those women who had no means to acquire finer materials improvised with what they could find around them.

Ultimately, adornments such as *mpande*, *musanga*, *yiyonga*, *nongondogo*, *sidumba* and *rukura* remained a status symbol among Vakwangali women due to the items being very rare and highly priced. *Rukura* was so valuable that one had to pay cattle for spilling it (Muurman, 2017, p. 61). Hambyuka, a retired teacher, draws from what was narrated to her by elders as the discussions queried on the value of traditional

clothing and adornment. Hambyuka (personal communication, January 20, 2018) explained that women of humble classes had no means to acquire ornaments to adorn themselves and that adornment was only for those who had the means and could afford it. Hambyuka exclaimed, “*Okunoyigwana yokuliwapeka, kutupu*” [where will you get it to adorn oneself, there was nothing] and this stresses the point that commoners had no means to acquire goods to adorn themselves (K. Hambyuka, personal communication, January 20, 2018). The minimalistic style of Vakwangali traditional clothing had more to do with what was available, accessible and preferred than with ‘covering the nakedness’ as assumed by Eurocentric thinking.

Skills required for making Vakwangali traditional clothing

Among Vakwangali, animal skins were mostly tanned by men; a man acquired skins from hunted animals and made clothing for himself and for every woman and child in his homestead. According to Martha Haimbili (personal communication, March 31, 2018) tanning leather was done at an excluded location by men and no women were allowed there, “*kapisi kokuza vakadi!*” [Not a place for women to go to]. This could be due to some taboos or customs that maintained gender roles within the traditional setting. Jantunen (1963, p. 2) also states that, tanning skins was only done by men. Kankono and zaKankono (personal communication, January 20, 2018) stressed that one had to be a strong man to tan all the skins by hand for the people in his homestead and that this took time. The process took days to complete. Similarly, Kamunoko (personal communication, January 18, 2018) positions that tanning of skins was never a woman’s work. Furthermore, in those days it was a man’s duty to take care of a wife and to clothe her (T. Kamunoko, personal communication, January 18, 2018).

In the case of the royal clan, it was always the responsibilities of the elders to take care and prepare the traditional clothing for the *Hompa* and *mumbanda* (Hompa A. Kaundu, personal communication, March 31, 2018). In the royal homestead, tanning was the responsibility of male servants. These servants included San men. This was also established by Kandjimi (personal communication, January 20, 20018), a royal descendant from Ukwangali royal clan, who explained that when she was growing up she saw some men especially the San people tanning skin in the palace.

As established earlier, tanning of animal skins was a long process, which required highly skilled labour. The craftsmanship of tanning skins required patience and knowledge on what oils and tools to use for tanning the skins. After hunting animals, the animals would be skinned and the skins were hung to dry before the tanning process began. The distribution of the tanning task depended on the number of men in a homestead. The men would rub the skins by hand and there after apply fat and *rukura* to the skins and continue rubbing the skin and applying fat to soften them. Martha Haimbili (personal communication, March 31, 2018) explained the process of tanning skins by stating that first the flesh is scraped off from the skin using a bladed tool and then it is soaked in hot water and castor oil (*Ricinus communis*). After the skin soaks up the oils, it is then rubbed by hand to soften the skin. According to Jantunen (1963, p. 2) the skins were also soaked with roots of *mukekete* (*Ziziphus mucronata*) or *unandwa* (*Povania Hisuta*).

As a custom, all skins were rubbed with *rukura* ointment to improve the quality of the skins and for preservation. This custom also created a particular aesthetic, which

was desired and even when trade cloth became accessible; the cloths were smeared with *rukura*. Aisambanga narrated that the first cloth he received, *sikatu*, he cut into two pieces, hemmed the edges and sent the cloth to his mother for her to smear the trade cloth with *rukura* ointment (Jantunen, 1963, p. 4). Shigwedha (2004, p. 198) also pointed out that, among Aawambo changes to cotton cloths did not mean abandonment of traditional practice such as the application of *olukula* lotion on costumes. This shows that among Aawambo and Vakwangali, a certain design aesthetic was preferred and the indigenous groups tried to hold on to certain traditional practices to maintain the preferred appearance. The construction of traditional clothing among Vakwangali reveals high skills and knowledge tailored to achieve the desired aesthetic, which is revealed in how modern materials were transformed to suit the desired look.

A commendable practice of tanning skins in precolonial times was an environmental conscious process, which was safe and did not harm the environment as described by Martha Haimbili (personal communication, March 31, 2018). As stated before, the traditional methods did not make use of toxic chemicals, unlike those adopted by the modern tannery industries. This makes the traditional process sustainable and eco-friendly. Unfortunately the knowledge regarding these traditional processes has diminished.

Skills required for making Vakwangali traditional accessories

Vakwangali traditional accessories traditionally were crafted and assembled by hand using materials that were available from the environment. However, as new materials were traded some of the accessories changed too. Jantunen (1963, p. 2) explains that

the *musanga*, ostrich beads that *mumbanda* would wear around her waist required intense labour and time. Jantunen (1963, p. 2) describes that a man would shatter the egg shell with an axe and then use a knife to shape them, there after the beads are placed onto a string and put into a calabash to file them into shape and this filing of the ostrich shell beads would take up to a month. When *musanga* beads were filed into shape, they were also smeared in *rukura* to give off a mauve hue.

For aesthetic appeal and quality preservation, all accessories were smeared in *rukura* to change the colour and quality of the accessories, which often gave off a mauve hue. Shigwedha (2004, p. 28) states that the quantity and quality of *rukura* indicated status. In some cases the shell beads were dyed using indigo plant *nkonyoto* and other natural colorants to obtain the desired look (S. Siteketa, January 214, 2018). As Likuwa (2012, p. 168) has already shown, ostrich egg shell beads were acquired from the San people by trading as only the San people had the skills of making *musanga*. In conclusion, craftsmanship of accessories in Vakwangali was not done haphazardly, but required the know-how and skills. In preparation for special gatherings women would smear all their accessories and clothing in *rukura* for aesthetics appeal.

Local traditional community events

Vakwangali as a community gathered at different traditional events for different occasions. The different traditional gatherings drew different audiences of age groups and gender, and not all gatherings were permissible to everyone. There were events relating to initiation rites such as *rufuko*, *etembu*, *udinkantu* and *epera* a traditional social dance gathering. Men had their own gatherings relating to hunting, young

people had their own gatherings and other events for celebrations such as *epera* and *ehamberero*, which were permissible to all.

Rufuko and *etembu* are events that involved rites of passage for the girls in puberty. *Rufuko* is exclusively for the chiefs daughters and was performed in the royal kraal (Kampungu, 1965, p. 332). *Rufuko* was an event for the royal girls reaching puberty as a preparation ceremony into womanhood. In addition, Kampungu (1965, p. 332) also mentions *etembu* as another pubescent rite event for girls of humble classes. According to Kamunoko (personal communication, January 18, 2018) when a girl menstruated for the first time she did not hide it and had to inform her elders right away. The girl was taken away and kept at *sitete*, a secluded place where a hut was quickly built for her and there, she was to stay alone. MuAshekele et al. (2018) confirms the seclusion during *etembu* process by stating that “at the occurrence of menstruation, the girl is immediately separated from the rest and placed in seclusion for approximately a month in what was locally known as *sitete*. During the process of seclusion, a girl is not supposed to be seen around by people especially the males” (MuAshekele, Akuupa, Kautondokwa, Shivute, Kuoppala, & Akuupa, 2018, p. 51). Kamunoko (personal communication, January 18, 2018) narrates that they also made wooden utensils for the girl to use while she was at *sitete*, she may not use other utensils from the home. Munango (personal communication, January 20, 2018) confirms the *sitete* aspect during *etembu* and that once upon a time she was also a *kasumbi* (maid) for her sister as she went through *etembu* puberty rite. The *litembu* rites included the adorning of initiates with new types of wear and accessories. For example, Hausiku (personal communication, January 24, 2018) related that as the girl stayed at the secluded area *sitete*, her hair was prepared and braided and all her

traditional clothing was also prepared in advance. Similarly, MuAshekele et al. (2018) show the centrality of adorning the initiated girl with new hair style and clothing as indicated: “the initiated girl would be adorned with a new hair style locally known as *Shihiho*, and if her parents were well-off, she could be clothed with new clothing as well” (MuAshekele, Akuupa, Kautondokwa, Shivute, Kuoppala, & Akuupa, 2018, p. 52). When the day came for her to be taken out, the parents prepared a feast and the potential husband, if any, and his family were invited to the celebration.

Siteketa (personal communication, January 24, 2018) described *sinako* or *yinako* (plural) for the boys and men going hunting. *Yiyiwo* was a gathering for young people in preparation of life and at *epera* social dance all genders were welcomed. In addition to that, Vakwangali prepared drums and traditional brew for ritual dances of healing or just a social get together for the community. All men and women attending a particular gathering wore what they already had on unless they had another *ndjareko* or *munyambo* that they kept for special occasions. Johanna Sabine a royal descendant, who was brought up in a traditional royal homestead with influence from her grandparents, *Hompa* Mangondo and *Hompa* Elizabeth Nanguronhi (Kabwetunkuru) recaps preparations for traditional gatherings. For *epera*, men and women wore *rudeve*. Johanna (personal communication, January 24, 2018) explains that women would make or prepare *rudeve*, a reed skirt for dancing. The *rudeve* was just for dancing and they would wear one over their traditional clothing just for the celebration (T. Kamunoko, personal communication, January 18, 2018). In addition, they wore *nondingi*, insect cocoons to make a rattling sound

around their ankles when dancing (K. Hambyuka, personal communication, January 20, 2018).

Furthermore, Siteketa (personal communication, January 24, 2018) stresses that when Vakwangali gathered for social traditional events, the aim was not necessarily for a traditional healer to be summoned for a healing ritual as traditional healers in those days were not consulted as is the practice today. Vakwangali would gather and in some cases, the traditional healer would show up while the celebration was going on. Some of colonial narratives have made assumptions that traditional healers were part of all traditional gatherings, which is a misconception. This is ethnocentrism where colonisers classified and demeaned indigenous cultures as ‘uncivilised’. As a result, people were compelled to convert to Christianity and abandon their traditional practices. On the contrary, the research participants interviewed for this study have narrated that these gatherings, which were platforms where social and cultural values were instilled, often had nothing to do with magic or rituals as the westerners assumed.

Value and meaning

Earlier discussions regarding Vakwangali have revealed that traditional dress for Vakwangali was imbedded with hidden meaning and value. Vakwangali had high regards for aesthetics and presentation as this was a non-verbal communication. As stated earlier, traditional clothing revealed the age, gender and ethnic group that one belonged to. Frans Kasera a traditional dancer (personal communication, January 24, 2018) explains that in the Pre-colonial a boy would dress differently from a man and while a boy would put on a loincloth; a man would put on *ewindo* or *muromba*.

Namutenya (personal communication, January 19, 2018) in agreement explains that by the look of the dress one could tell whether a woman was married or not. This helped to distinguish how one should address her.

The meanings in adornment discussed earlier in this chapter give weight to the value of traditional clothing. As explained earlier, symbolism in certain ornaments guided social interactions among Vakwangali especially when it came to marriage. Kampungu (1965) investigated customary laws and marriage customs among Vakavango, and his work supports this argument. Marriage customs were observed and adhered to as an agent of balancing relations of an individual and in relation to the community (Kampungu, 1965, p. 445). One can also argue that married women were seen as a status symbol, and were central in social interactions in a traditional society as explained by Kampungu (1965). Laver (2012, p. 15), illustrates this social interaction with how married women had to wear veils in public spaces in the period 1200 BC. The associated accessories were then reinforced with sumptuary laws to indicate social standing and status. Sometimes, sumptuary laws only applied to rare objects and accessories that required specialized skills in crafting.

The discussion on craftsmanship of traditional clothing reveals that high skills were required to make traditional clothing and that certain ornaments were rare. Those who acquired these fine clothing items already set them apart as the upper class of the community. Sumptuary laws regulated clothing items by keeping order among Vakwangali and mainly for identification purposes of the royal clan. Other sources also indicated that in cases where a commoner was caught wearing an item reserved for royals they were punished severely and sometimes sentenced to death (Schneider,

p. 412 and Silvester et al 2019, p. 55). Other sources also stated that in those days the royals were not fair, they wanted all that was good, beautiful and of wealth to belong to the royals (Fleisch & Möhlig, 2002, p. 282). Overall, the type of skin and accessories indicated social standing of the wearer.

The value of Vakwangali men was also represented in the traditional weapons they carried as it was through these weapons that men revealed their character. During the colonial era, similarly to the Zulu, Vakwangali men were prohibited from carrying their traditional weapons by law. This seems to be the case in Namibia to date, where the police officers are known for confiscating sticks, knives or axes carried by anyone in public, stressing that it is an offense punishable by law (Nampa, 2019). The article in *The Namibian* clearly stipulated that carrying of pocket knives or stick in public is still perceived to be dangerous and therefore the law enforces confiscation of such objects if found on a person in public (Nampa, 2019). At a rally in May 1990, King Goodwill Zwelethini addressed Zulu people at an event where Zulu men carried traditional weapons such as spears. The King made a statement claiming that “the call to ban the carrying of cultural weapons was an insult to the manhood of every Zulu” (Klopper, 1996, p. 63). This statement put pressure on President De Klerk to do away with the ban. The case ending in a Supreme Court hearing which resulted in the Natal Supreme Court ruling in favour of the Zulus to carry weapons for ‘traditional Zulu usage’ (Klopper, 1996, p. 63). The Zulus claimed that traditional weapons are a representation of manhood, this suggests that the value and meaning of carrying traditional tools among Vakwangali could also be linked to manhood.

It is argued that since Vakwangali men could not carry their traditional tools after the ban they sought other ways to show their stature through European clothing. Likuwa (2012, p. 160) discusses the economic and social change that came with the contract labour system among Kavango people by stating that given the low wages of contract labour, in most cases men were only able to bring back clothing for their families and the extended family members (Likuwa, 2012, p. 160). Muurman (2017, p. 60) also maintains that Vakwangali men who had been in migrant work brought back new things including clothing. Accordingly, wearing European clothing became a new status symbol among Vakwangali men, as European clothing also announced that the wearer must have travelled afar to acquire such clothing. Rovine (2011) who explores the development of fashions in the West African region discusses similar experiences with Malian men who travelled seeking work and the fashioning of Ghana boy tunics. These Ghana boy tunics came about in the mid 1920's and they referred to the young Malian men who had travelled to Ghana in search of work (Rovine, 2011, p. 62). Rovine (2011, p. 62) explains that, upon their return to Mali, they would make elaborate tunics known as Ghana Boy Tunics, embroidered with iconography that told stories about the wearer's adventures in Ghana.

Vakwangali traditional clothing also had symbolism that concealed cultural significance. This symbolism is found in certain traditional items that are often used in phrases to illustrate specific value. Vakwangali would often say '*ogo mukadi galimanga ndjareko*', meaning that the woman is strong willed. Another phrase, '*ogo kwa muvhika mohunyu za simbungu*', meaning that a person who was carried in a *hunyu* (baby carrier) made of hyena skin must be very lucky as in those days a hyena was such a rare animal to find.

Conclusion

Vakwangali royal traditional clothing set the standard of beauty and prestige. For this reason, certain traditional items were exclusively reserved for the royal and this was guided by sumptuary laws. This shows that Vakwangali traditional clothing, paying attention to the various styles, was not merely for beauty but was a way of keeping order.

Vakwangali traditional clothing did not have special items for the different traditional events and their clothing was made to last a lifetime. Traditional clothing was made with specialised skills and craft, which enabled the clothes to last long. In addition, acquiring traditional clothing also cost wealth, therefore one needed to maintain what they had. Even though the clothing had a long life span people had to preserve their clothing regularly.

CHAPTER 5

LACK OF TRANSFORMATION OF VAKWANGALI TRADITIONAL CLOTHING INTO FASHION

Introduction

This chapter will look at factors that hindered Vakwangali traditional clothing from transforming into fashion. It focuses on Christianity and its working relation with the Native Commissioner as a major factor that affected Vakwangali traditional clothing. Moreover, it will discuss early *Yimbali* (also *Vimbali*) and European traders as agents of change or transformation on Vakwangali clothing. The chapter then explores the contract labour system as another factor that affected Vakwangali traditional clothing. In conclusion, the chapter will explain the identity, cultural, social and economic changes on Vakwangali.

Yimbali and European traders

Different factors influenced the way of dressing among Vakwangali. Firstly, early contact with *Yimbali* and with European traders cultivated the desire for change through acquiring European goods including clothing and beading. Muurman (2017, p. 21) and Likuwa (2012, p. 27) point out that Vakwangali were already exposed to European and *Vimbali* traders before missionaries settled in Ukwangali. As Likuwa (2012, pp. 29-30) indicated, a white trader, Charles Andersson, observed the *Vimbali* traders during his visit to King Sikongo of Vakwangali in 1859 and saw that the *Vimbali* slave traders carried around “Makupa” (these are large containers filled with European goods) for sale. People received goods such as “nguvo da nyime” (lion

type blankets), “*Mbandwa*” (a bundle of cloths), tobacco, beads and alcohol in return for trading family members into slavery.

These early trading activities with European and *Vimbali* traders created the desire for Vakwangali to acquire European clothing (Likuwa, 2012, p. 70). The acquisition of European clothing items may also have been out of convenience. zaKankono (personal communication, January 20, 2018) stated that European clothing and trade cloth was easier to acquire than traditional clothing which required time and effort in search of animals to hunt and often one was endangered in the process. It is with this understanding that it can thus be argued that Vakwangali desired the change and adopted European clothing out of convenience.

Christianity and the colonial Native Commissioner

Christianity was another influencing factor on traditional clothing among Vakwangali. As the church gained influence in Ukwangali, it enforced regulations that were considered to be more ‘fitting’ for Christianity. All Vakwangali men and women who wanted to convert to Christianity had to abandon their traditional way of living including traditional clothing. The people of Kavango could only abandon some aspects of their cultural practices in return for compensation. Likuwa (2012, p. 104) for example, indicates that women in Kavango gave in to missionaries to cut their *vihho* (traditional braids) only in return for compensation. After the women saw that the *mumbanda* (wife of the King) whose *vihho* was cut off was compensated with a white head scarf and dress, all women then agreed to cut and wash off their *vihho*. Missionaries continued to instruct on how Vakwangali should dress and all other accessories were discouraged and had to be removed as the

missionaries found them ‘ill-fitting’ for the Christian lifestyle. According to Muurman (2012, p. 60) when missionaries arrived in Nkurenkuru the majority of Vakwangali still wore Vakwangali traditional styles. Muurman (2017, p. 60) explains that Vakwangali then dressed very minimalistically with skins that only covered the bottom part of the body and that trade cloth only became common as contact with Whites increased. Mission stations became important institutions in the acquisition of clothing. For example, girls and women were enticed to mission station with the prospects of being given headscarves and loincloths (Likuwa 2012, p. 104). Missionaries demanded that Vakwangali change their clothing and remove their headdress in order to become Christians. Missionaries often referred to traditional clothing as ‘pagan’ and the Lutheran camp was very strict and forbade all traditional dressing including wearing of beads (Muurman, 2017, p. 62) and (Kampungu, 1965, p. 281). The general belief was that paganism was not in conformity with Christian ideologies as the following was indicated, “And with the pagan hair we cannot baptise anybody into communion with the Lord, because the hair includes not only an infinite amount of parasites and dirt, but also magic” (Muurnan, 2017, p. 63, Soumen Lähetyssanomia). Vakwangali who converted to Christianity had to sacrifice their *yihho* and traditional clothing.

Hausiku (personal communication, January 24, 2018) states that the Finnish missionaries were very harsh in their instructions and forced Vakwangali to dress in European clothing at the missions. The Catholic missionaries were more lenient towards the culture of Vakwangali. Hausiku (personal communication, January 24, 2018) further explains that at Tondoro mission when a girl menstruated *etembu* ceremony was allowed and the girl would be dressed in traditional clothing. Beads

were also sold at Tondoro mission shop. Siteketa (personal communication, January 24, 2018) who was trained at Döbra Catholic Mission narrates how Vakwangali took measures to keep their culture and after deliberations with the priest *Nongoma* traditional drums were allowed during church services at Tondoro mission.

The Finnish missionaries on the other hand did not tolerate any Vakwangali cultural representations or practices in the church or at the mission station. One was not allowed to enter church with beads and any other traditional accessories. According to Kandjimi (personal communication, January 20, 20018) a beautifully decorated wooden smoking pipe, beads, *mpande*, *nombamba*, *nonkwatahoko*, *nonkwatampindi* were among her grandmother items that were confiscated by Finnish missionaries. The church took traditional items away without any explanation except that these items were ‘pagan’ practices and they should be removed. The removal of items was used as a means of promoting Christianity and European culture.

Schoolgirls and boys residing at the mission stations had to remove all their traditional clothing and were only permitted to dress in European clothing. As girls and boys arrived at the mission schools, their heads were shaved and their traditional clothing removed and had to change into European clothing given to them. Muurman argued that “The Catholics explained the hair-cut as symbolic breaking away from the previous traditions” (Muurman, 2017, p. 62). When the clothing became torn or old, the nuns made sure that they were mended or replaced. Johanna (personal communication, January 24, 2018) laughed as she shared how they would go and wash their clothes at the riverbanks near the Tondoro mission. They would hit the

clothes repeatedly on the stones to tear them so that they would get new clothes, and she wondered how the nuns never caught their mischievous behaviour.

Once a year when the learners at the missions were allowed to go home they immediately changed into their traditional clothing when they arrived home. The only other chance the learners received to go home was when the priest went to conduct a mass at their village and the children accompanied him. Children accompanying the priest still had to wear European clothes. European clothing was foreign to Vakwangali and only common to the people residing at the mission thus Vakwangali employed the term *yokombongi* for such clothing. It was a common for children coming home for holidays to pack away their European clothing (*yokombongi*) and immediately changed into their loincloths. Siteketa (personal communication, January 24, 2018) states that it was the practice that when at home one immediately changed into their traditional clothing. Siteketa made the point that at the time Vakwangali did not see traditional clothing as barbaric like it was characterized by the missionaries but rather the much preferred clothing in Vakwangali traditional homesteads. Siteketa (personal communication, January 24, 2018) states that the church influence did not give any choice for Vakwangali but for them to abandon their traditional ways. He further explained that all traditional gathering such as *epera* and *yinako* were prohibited by the church and were considered 'pagan'. Missionaries prohibited traditional rituals, such as, *etembu* and *rufuko* initiation rites, *epera* and *nongoma* among others (Kampungu, 1965, p. 374). Contrary to the argument that Christianity was the main influence leading Vakwangali to abandoning their traditional clothing and adopting Eurocentric styles, Kasera (personal communication, January 24, 2018) a traditional dancer, begs to

differ and instead asserts that Vakwangali were easily influenced to begin with. It is against this background, that it can be determined that the abandoning of traditional clothing may have been influenced majorly by missionaries, however there is also evidence of other factors that fostered the change as will be discussed further in the next section.

As the royal clan of Vakwangali became more involved with the Catholic Church, children were sent to stay at the mission where Christian rules were instilled. Siteketa and Johanna's experiences with early schooling illustrates how the royal family was inducted into Christianity, a relationship between the royal clan and the church fostered further influence of the Catholic Church among Vakwangali. The church advocated for the old traditional ways among royals to be abandoned, which later influenced the rest of Vakwangali to abandon their culture. Missionaries must have noticed the influence of the royal clan among Vakwangali, in that case conquering the royal clan meant to conquer Vakwangali as a whole. The Catholic Church and the royal clan did not always interact smoothly. Muurman (2017, p. 28), in her discussion of church development in Kavango, states that the Native Commissioner Harold Eedes had a reputation of playing the Catholic Church against the royal clan.

Restrictions enforced by the church were not easily accepted, however school going children had to abide or not attend school. With the resistance from Vakwangali, the Native Commissioner, Mr. Moris, who was a colonial representative, often assisted the churches in enforcing their restrictions regarding morality among Vakwangali (Kampungu, 1965, p. 374). Commissioners enforced more restriction on men from hunting and carrying of firearms. Likuwa (2012, p. 34) states that colonial

restrictions of firearms for Africans dates back to the European treaties of Brussel of 1890 which, in addition to its work of dealing with ending the slave trade, attempted to control the arms trade in Africa. Likuwa (2012, p. 70) further states that colonial rule prohibited the killing of wild animals and that this made it harder for Vakwangali to access animal skins for clothing. In addition to the restrictions on hunting, traditional clothing was much more expensive to acquire. Vakwangali mainly made use of animal skins for clothing, cattle skins were rarely used and only by people of high status. zaKankono (personal communication, January 20, 2018) stated that European clothing and trade cloth was easier to acquire, unlike traditional clothing one often had to travel far searching for animal to hunt, these encounters were also dangerous. As established by Jantunen (1963) traditional clothing was very costly to acquire, one often had to trade in wealth to acquire traditional clothing. It is also with this judgement that Vakwangali saw it fit to rather acquire European clothing as it was less costly than animal skin clothing. Prohibiting traditional activities forced Vakwangali to abide by the rules and regulations enforced by the missionaries and the commissioners.

All the different encounters with Europeans, *Yimbali*, Missionaries and Native Commissioner demanded change and conformity from Vakwangali. The skins used for clothing were acquired through hunting but with the colonial restrictions on hunting, skins were not easy to acquire anymore. In that process, more Vakwangali wore traded cloth and the skins were replaced by trade cloth. Women wore trade cloth as *nompareka* with *mwaye* and men *nomunyambo*. This shows that the initial adoption of trade cloth was worn in the same way the skins were worn, mainly covering the bottom part of the body with the chest left bare.

Contract labour system

After European goods were introduced to Vakwangali through *Vimbali*, European traders, and missionaries, the love for European goods among Vakwangali increased and they wanted to acquire more of the European goods for themselves. Mission stations stopped providing European cloth and the colonial rule also tighten the laws on hunting, it became challenging for Vakwangali to acquire material for clothing (Likuwa, 2012, p. 70). Likuwa (2012, pp. 70-71) further states that the lack of clothing was the main problem that obligated Vakwangali men to enter into contact labour system, not even the introduction of tribal tax in 1937 was a motivation. As Vakwangali men returned from their escapades in *usimba* as contract workers, they brought back trade cloth and other accessories as gifts for their families and communities. This occurrence was not unique to Vakwangali, other communities in Africa followed the same pattern.

In some parts of Africa young men who have travelled afar for work have demonstrated a sense of pride and achievement upon their return and announced what they have conquered through clothing. According to Rovine (2011, p. 62) for example, Ghana boy garments were tunics that were popular in the mid-twentieth century among young men of Mali who returned from working the inlands of Niger valleys. The Ghana boy tunics with typical embroideries worn by young Malian men expressed the young men's perceptions of what they encountered and experiences in Ghana through iconographic embroidery with threads that were brought back from Ghana (Rovine, 2011, pp. 62-63). Similarly, as Vakwangali men started to travel as contract labourers they brought back clothing from their encounters, which announced or signalled to the community that indeed they were coming from *usimba*.

Contract labourers returning had a new status in their communities as they felt distinct by wearing European clothing (Likuwa, 2012, p. 77). European clothing acquired by contract labourers was shown off as a status symbol, thus returning contract labourers felt it was important to announce their sense of achievement by wearing European clothing.

The communities were often happy about the returns of contract labourers and welcomed them with traditional celebration dances such as *epera*, however, the celebration was carried out after certain traditional protocols were carried out. The man returning to his home from contract labour would sleep outside his house at the fireplace for three days. Magdalena Mufenda, a royal descendent who was born and grew up at Mayara royal village, recounts the procedures carried out when men returned from contract labour. Mufenda (personal communication, January 23, 2018) clarifies that it was done in that manner to determine if the wife was faithful while he was away. According to Johanna, (personal communication, January 24, 2018) a faithful woman was referred to as '*sisindi sa vanda*' [a metaphor for a faithful woman]. A woman whose husband went for contract labour was expected to remain faithful while her husband was away as it was believed that the husband may encounter misfortune while he is away if the wife is unfaithful. On the third day the returning man and his wife went to the river to take a bath and further inspection was made to ensure that she was not impregnated in her husband's absence (M. Mufenda, personal communication, January 23, 2018). After the inspections were carried out, the community then gathered in the evening to celebrate his return. Only on that third day were the boxes of goods opened and presented to their families (Likuwa, 2012, p. 162). In most cases the trade cloth brought back would be taken out and cut up

into pieces to be shared among the rest of the family and the community. Men who returned from contract labourer also brought back other items such as, *iyiyonga*, *makayi* and European clothing such as coats that would further be traded with the people in the community. Namutenya (personal communication, January 19, 2018) narrates that in those days coats were other items often brought back from *usimba* and one coat could easily be sold for a cow, gaining them more wealth in return. The acquisition of European clothing through contract labour eventually replaced Vakwangali traditional clothing and acquiring such clothing represented a sign of achievement as traditional clothing was now seen as backwards rather than as culture (Likuwa, 2012, p. 161). Mufenda clarified that men were expected to travel in order to provide for their families and women were expected to remain faithful and keep the household in order while the men were away. In this regard it was also honourable for both genders to carry out their roles respectfully.

Vakwangali women also took pride in what their men brought from *usimba* as it made them stand out from the community. According to Mufenda (personal communication, January 23, 2018), the men brought back goods from as far as *Djwaini* (Johannesburg), goods such as leather belts with shells on them. Such unique clothing made the women stand out and people would know that a woman with such unique clothing items is married to a man who has travelled and conquered wealth from afar. A married woman dressed in *derera*, a skirt and *mwaye* (shawl), made of trade cloth, was perceived to be the wife of a man with status who could afford the cloth that his wife was wearing. This reference was the same for a man who was dressed up in *ewindo*, a gathered up cloth worn around the waist like a skirt. Only a wealthy man could afford so much cloth for wearing, a man of humble class

would just dress up in an easy drape without much gathering of the cloth. Even though Vakwangali switched to wearing European clothing, the amount of cloth and unique accessories was still linked to status.

From the 19th century Africa was becoming a lucrative market for textile producers. Textile manufacturers treated Africa like any other market on which to capitalize. The Namibian market was no different from the rest of Africa. Steiner (1985, p. 93) states that just like in Europe the decisions regarding style, taste, fashion, price and quality were determined by the manufacturer and this was a well calculated decision taken for the successful sale of the goods. Shigwedha (2004, p. 191) thoroughly discussed the influence of an early establishment of *Ondjondjo* shop in *Ondonga* by 1913, where European goods were traded including different trade cloths that were nicknamed with local names possibly for easier pronunciation and to differentiate the various trade cloths. Jaffet Kankono and Marcus zaKankono are brothers who had some memory of traditional clothing but more vital they had experience of travelling to other towns in search for work and more specific for zaKankono he had recollections of his pastoral training. The European shopkeepers were influential in appropriating different types of cloth materials and encouraging certain ethnic groups to buy certain cloths creating the perception that the traded cloth represented modern wear of a particular group. Kankono and zaKankono (personal communication, January 20, 2018) narrated that, a certain shop in Grootfontein then commonly known as Mannel's shop sold all kinds of traded cloth. All fabrics were marketed according to the area where contract labourers came from, and they would be asked whether one was of Mandume's people or Kandjimi's people and from there one would be directed to cloth. In agreement with Kankono's reminiscence of the

Manet's shop; zaKankono (personal communication, January 20, 2018) stated that he had experienced it when he entered Manet's shop and indeed that was the practice. It was already decided by the German traders which ethnic group should wear which cloth, but the cloths were also accepted by the indigenous people and were given vernacular names. If one bought the wrong cloth for his wife, she might not even accept it so one had to be diligent on which cloth to buy and bring back home. Kankono (personal communication, January 20, 2018) explains: 'They would ask, are you of Nyangana? If yes, they would show you which cloth was yours. If you would hear, are you a person of Kandjimi, they were referring to Vakwangali.' Kankono and zaKankono's experiences regarding trade cloths informs that these cloths were predetermined by shop traders by marketing them as exclusive to the ethnic groups to promote sales. The manufacturer again had the sole mandate regarding, taste, style and quality of the cloth.

Even though these trade cloths did not have a cultural representation of the targeted people as stated earlier, the different name given to the trade cloths also helped the trade cloths to be embraced. The cloths that were given local names in Rukwangali were *lyoSikwangali*, *Nakanunga*, *Sikatu* or *Sikato*, and *Lyegeha*. *Lyosikwangali* is a striped cloth similar to *odelela*, *Sikatu* or *Sikato* which consisted of thinner stripes of black or sometimes navy and white colour and *lyegeha*, assuming the name derived from the colour, is a burgundy cloth. Giving the trade cloths local names also created meaning and made it easy to identify with them. Shigwedha (2004, p. 193) explains about the *Olushikato* trade cloth was an important cloth that was especially reserved for *Ondonga* royals. Again this shows that from the beginning the different cloths

were introduced to the indigenous groups, but also marketed as exclusive to royals so as to promote sales.

In addition to giving the trade cloths vernacular names, the quality and the colour of the trade cloth was negotiated as the local communities wanted clothing that suited the various social or cultural activities. For this reason, Vakwangali smeared the cloth with *rukura* for the desired quality and look and to ensure that it swayed when one went dancing *epera* (Jantunen, 1963, p. 4). This practise of transforming trade cloth with dyes was also a common practise among Aawambo. McRoberts (2018, p. 187) and Shigwedha (2004, p. 198) discusses how trade cloth among Aawambo was transformed using natural dyes to achieve the desired quality and colour. European goods including trade cloths went through transformations to better suit traditional aesthetics of particular indigenous groups.

Cultural, social, economic and identity changes

The way of life among Vakwangali started to change with traders, missionaries and commissioners gaining control over Ukwangali. The abandoning of traditional clothing among Vakwangali was not a drastic process, the cultural transformation was a rather slow process over time without specific dates (Muurman, 2017, p. 65). Every encounter with the European demanded a change. For one, Europeans detested the traditional gatherings and labelled them as ‘pagan’ and ‘noisy’ and therefore should not to be practised around the European settlers. Likuwa (2012, p. 168) indicates that in the case of the Kavango people, the acquisition of western clothes made the local people look down on the skins worn previously and saw it as old

fashioned and backward rather than as a part of their culture. Likuwa's assertion may be helpful to explain why Vakwangali traditional clothing may have been abandoned rather than transformed into everyday fashion clothing.

The commissioners detested the 'noisy' *epera*. Kaundu a traditional craftswomen and an early settler of Rundu (personal communication, January 25, 2018) stresses that people had to relocate as *yirumbu*, the white people would constantly complain about *epera*. One such event was when her community was forced to move away from the first *yirumbu* (whites) that settled at Rundu because of the white man and his wife being disturbed by the 'noisy' *epera*. Likuwa (2015) extensively explored the history of forced removals or relocations in Rundu from Nkondo relocation in 1958 to the final destruction and removal of communities of Rundu from Mangarangandja and Sarusungu to Kehemu and Kaisosi respectively. Even though the European classified all traditional gatherings to be 'pagan' and 'noisy', the various community gatherings for different occasions had different purposes and were for different audiences. Siteketa (personal communication, January 24, 2018) described a noble event as where *ntjirigombe*, a man of status would host his peers casually and it is at such occasions where men made sure they looked presentable. Men gathering for such an occasion carried knives and other tools tucked in the waist to show that there were responsible men.

Traditionally Vakwangali did not require special traditional clothing for the different community events. However, there were accessories such as *rudeve* and *nondingi* only worn for traditional dancing such as *epera*. Komunoko (personal communication, January 18, 2018) stresses that *rudeve* and *nondingi* were only put

on for dancing not to wear anywhere else. Even though there were no special clothing for local community events Vakwangali would prepare themselves accordingly for traditional events. Women would smear *rukura* and *sidumba* on their bodies if they had any and men would pull out their best hats with feathers of different birds tucked in them and would carry traditional tools and walking sticks as they made their way to the gathering. When Vakwangali gathered at traditional events, these gatherings were also a way for individual to show their status to the people gathering so they sought to be addressed accordingly by looking presentable.

Traditional gatherings had a purpose beyond cultural demonstration. It is at such gatherings where young people were taught the value of culture. Traditional community events did not just bring Vakwangali together, different teachings regarding morals, value and character were taught at these events such as *etembu*, *yinaku*, *epera* and *Nongoma*. European settlers including missionaries prohibited such cultural gatherings and this eliminated the teachings on cultural values among Vakwangali.

Adoption of Eurocentric styles among Vakwangali eliminated distinctions between social class, gender, age and ethnic group among Vakwangali and Vakavango at large. European clothing does not clearly make such distinctions between class, gender, age and ethnicity, which came with challenges of keeping order among Vakwangali. Firstly, distinction of social status was crucial for one to be identified whether they were of a royal clan or not. Certain skins such as leopard skins were reserved for the king. Overall, royal people always had their skins well maintained with *rukura* and other ointments. Gibson et al. (1981, p. 50) states that

mumbandagona (princess) wore *sirenga*, a necklace made of ox fat that slowly melted and kept her body shiny. Earlier discussions and this example, it illustrate that the royal people always had their clothing and skins well maintained making them look distinct. *Hompa* Kaundu (personal communication, March 31, 2018) explained that as a *Hompa* one needed to look different from the crowd, easily identified and respected. *Hompa* Kaundu has experienced that whenever he went out wearing like an ordinary person no one would even notice that the *Hompa* is among them. However, when he put on a waist coat made of leopard skin or other clothing with leopard print he is ushered and accorded with respect (A. Kaundu, personal communication, March 31, 2018). This indicates that the type of traditional clothing and decorations of one's adornment determined the level of respect one received from the community members. With the adoption of Eurocentric styles the distinction between social statuses disappeared which presented challenges of royal people now perceived as individual without jurisdiction.

Vakwangali traditional clothing also made a clear distinction between the gender and age. The basic traditional clothing for Vakwangali women was *ndjareko* and men would wear *muromba* (loin skins) but later changed to *mawindo*. Kasera (personal communication, January 24, 2018) explained that young boys would wear loincloths and a man who was head of a house wore *muromba* so that even if he met people along the way, he would still be recognised as such and treated with respect. Vakwangali women always had their hair braided up in *sihiho* and the men shaved their heads with sometimes a circular patch of hair in the front of the head that was sometimes twisted (Gibson, Larson, & McGurk, 1981, p. 50). Kamunoko (personal communication, January 18, 2018) articulated her grief by asking why women were

shaved to look just like men. *Sihiho* was perceived as a headdress that dignified women and this value is revealed through the decorations on *sihiho* as discussed earlier in chapter four. The beads decorating the front *sihiho* were called *simbarara*, literally translation as a crown. One cannot help but wonder what would happen to a queen if she was ordered to take off her crown. Would that not become disgraceful as in the case of removing *sihiho*?

Vakwangali traditional clothing was a vital tool for the representation of ethnic identity. In as much as other ethnic groups from Kavango wore similar traditional clothing as the Vakwangali there was a clear distinction between the attire worn by the various ethnic groups. For instance, a headdress for Hambukushu married woman was decorated with copper buttons on the front of the headdress, which was not a practice with Vakwangali (Scherz, et al., 1999, p. 21). Hausiku, explained that it was a way of keeping order in the community, when you met someone who is not from your ethnic group you then had to treat such a person as a guest. With all ethnic groups in Kavango adopting Eurocentric dress, it became challenging for the communities to identify one another through clothing.

The research participants of this study felt that there had been a major loss to the identity, history and culture of Vakwangali because Vakwangali traditional clothing had not been preserved and there was no clear transformation into fashion. Studies in fashion reveal a deeper understanding of a particular group and the same can be seen in studying traditional clothing. “Fashion can help us understand the past, from the way people dressed, we can see how they lived and worked, what they have believed in and what has been valuable for them” (Hristova, 2014, p. 82). There are no people

without a past, states zaKankono (personal communication, January 20, 2018), but for Vakwangali it has been a challenge as not only was traditional clothing discarded but so was the culture. Kampungu (1965, p. 442) explains that customs and norms were based on traditions, magic and taboos all of which contained rules of conduct for a particular society. When missionaries and commissioners discouraged and prohibited traditional events among Vakwangali (Kampungu, 1965, p. 374), this led to the loss of disorientation among Vakwangali. Loss of norms and belief systems that governed how people conducted themselves led to the loss of Vakwangali culture. zaNkankono (personal communication, January 20, 2018) states that if they had known replacing their traditional clothing with European clothing was at the cost of losing their culture and value, other measures would have been taken to preserve the culture. The possibility of retaining the cultural values embedded in the traditional clothing is attainable through recreating Vakwangali traditional clothing. However, Siteketa (personal communication, January 24, 2018) strongly believes that the creation of traditional clothing alone will not retain the same cultural values as one cannot just recreate the traditional clothing, but one has to retain the culture as well.

Despite the colonial discouragement for traditional ways among Vakwangali, a representation of traditional clothing was preserved through traditional dancing 'costumes'. Vakwangali traditional dancers displayed a strong visual cultural symbol of Vakwangali traditional clothing through 'costuming'. The term 'costume' in the context of this study is employed to draw a clear distinction between Vakwangali traditional clothing and Vakwangali traditional dancing costumes. Most scholars avoid making use of the term costume as it rather refers to masquerades, theatrical

parts, dress from distinct historical periods, and native, indigenous clothing styles (Hansen, 2004, p. 374) which may be tied down with the past and not necessarily fit with contemporary times. In the same manner it can be argued that Vakwangali perceived traditional dancing clothing as costumes from the past and not fitting for contemporary times. Muurman (2017, p. 64) states that in modern-day Kavango, also in Ukwangali, the dance groups adorn clothing that is an imitation of true traditional clothing. Kamunoko, (personal communication, January 18, 2018) agreed that the dance costumes were created purely for entertainment, pointing out that the decorations on them were created differently as they had to create something to appeal to and fascinate the audience. For instance, the *njareko* and front apron of a dance costume has beaded decorations both in front and at the back, however traditionally only the *njareko* (back apron) was decorated. Akuupa (2011, p. 175) states that the criteria for judging cultural dancing groups included costuming. At school level, the teachers responsible for culture are responsible for writing plays, songs and designing costumes often in collaboration with elders of the community (Akuupa, 2011, p. 233). Moreover, traditional dancing groups also came up with derogatory songs such as “*olyo lina pupike momuomba taliwiza*”, which was literary translated as, ‘that one stuffed up in skin cloth is approaching/coming’, implying the barbaric and uncivilised nature or view of an approaching skin adorned man. Namutenya (personal communication, January 19, 2018) also affirmed that indeed the above song concealed insults, to shun traditional clothing. On the contrary, Akuupa (2015, pp. 141-142) explains that the composition of songs came out of social events that seemed interesting, the messages were not literally composed but concealed the meaning and that performing the songs at cultural festivals presented opportunities of interaction on the subject. These explanations

support the assertion that, Vakwangali perceived traditional dance costumes as clothing from the past, which may not be fit for any other use than performances.

Conclusion

Vakwangali traditional clothing served more of a purpose than just the covering of the body. It was part of culture and a way of keeping order among Vakwangali. It was through traditional clothing that the character of the person was revealed and through which they communicated their status, gender, age, identity and ethnicity. This status dictated how one was addressed. Vakwangali traditional clothing also formed part of traditional events and was used as a way of instilling morals and values and encouraging mutual respect among Vakwangali.

The traditional clothing and gatherings were proclaimed as ‘pagan’ by missionaries and had no place in modern society, which left no room for culture appreciation among Vakwangali. Restrictions brought on by the missionaries and the strict laws from the native affairs commissioners prohibited the use of animal skins and any other traditional material. All traditional gatherings such as *epera* were prohibited, which made it impossible for Vakwangali to gather at traditional events to appreciate their culture and teach cultural values. Due to the prohibitions on Vakwangali traditional events their traditional clothing as it was not appreciated and valued in public spaces and only resurfaced as costumes for staged traditional performances.

Therefore, it can be said that Vakwangali traditional clothing failed to transform into fashion because Vakwangali were restricted and encouraged to look down on their culture by the colonial processes and activities of *Vimbali* and European traders,

contract labour, the missionaries and commissioners. Despite limitations on transformation of traditional clothing, the chapter highlighted strong examples of class related dressing styles and accessories among the traditional Vakwangali clothing such as, *Mumbanda*, *Ntjiligombe*, *Vanambongi*, *Simuma* and *Mandengu*. This study now proposes this clothing as useful social categories for the practical aspect of Vakwangali fashion collection.

CHAPTER 6

INITIATIVES TO CREATE VAKWANGALI FASHION CLOTHING

Introduction

The research participants expressed that, the lack of transformation of Vakwangali traditional clothing led to a loss of cultural values and meaning among Vakwangali. Therefore, this chapter explores the hidden value and meaning imbedded in the Vakwangali traditional clothing as an inspiration to create fashion clothing that represents Vakwangali culture in contemporary times. The chapter explores activities involved in designing garments and accessories as suggested by the research participants. Thereafter, the chapter presents the practical process of fashion clothing design. This chapter employs the first person's perspective to emphasize ideas and the roles of the designer to implement possible designs through a creative process of synthesizing narratives from interviews and design elements.

Creating Vakwangali fashion

Kawamura (2005, p. 1) defines fashion as a collective activity and an accepted style of dress by a larger portion of people that come into being through a process of negotiation between traditions and the fashions introduced to a particular group. In this study, I targeted Vakwangali for the created fashion collection as an attempt to create an accepted fashion style for Vakwangali. This study also employed a fashion definition by Rovine (2011, p. 58) who claims that fashion is an act of innovation to explore Vakwangali traditional clothing and to innovate new styles.

Creating fashion out of Vakwangali traditional clothing items required the exploration of materiality that makes up Vakwangali traditional clothing including the adopted trade cloth. Early transformation of Vakwangali traditional clothing occurred in the pre-colonial period of trading in Ukwangali. Trade cloth was adapted and worn in the same style as the loin skins, smeared in *rukura*, cut up and worn in front and another at the back. These early adoptions of trade cloth occurred naturally which reveals that culture is a non-static element (Shigwedha, 2004, pp. 115-119). As a means of designing garments making up '*Vakwangali Fashion Collection*' I also explored the non-static elements of culture by creating a collection that illustrated the transformation through time. I emphasized the adoption of trade cloth in this collection to illustrate possible modern fashion that could be created from it.

Proposed traditional clothing items for fashion

Possibilities for transforming Vakwangali traditional clothing into fashion were endless; however as a designer I had a time frame to execute the project and also present the created garments to the public. Having a creative mind, and from the early observation of artefacts and interviews, I unconsciously and consciously came up with ideas of how some of the items could be recreated making use of alternative materials. As I reflected on the interviews daily, I contemplated on the most valued items and the meaning and value behind them. Through narratives, items such as *sihiho* were mentioned in most of the interviews emphasizing the value of the item. After such a realization, I reflected on particular narratives that placed emphasis on specific traditional clothing items and decided to create garments inspired by the narratives from the interviews. Inputs from participants were guided by specific

questions regarding traditional clothing for inclusion in the created *Vakwangali Fashion Collection*. I identified accepted traditional aesthetics and materiality perceived and identified to be part of Vakwangali ethnicity by participants. Participants also influenced how I recreated meaning of artefacts in *Vakwangali Fashion Collection*, by pointing out certain design elements that represented one's ethnicity, gender or status.

Firstly, participants expressed what they expected to be part of the designed Vakwangali Fashion Collection, in terms of material use and ornamentations. Hausiku (personal communication, January 24, 2018) discreetly pulled out the hem of her petticoat made of *lyosikwangali* trade cloth with a decorated hemming made of different striped trade cloths; claiming that these are the accepted Vakwangali fabrics. In support of this claim, Kandjimi (personal communication, January 19, 2018) further explains that Vakwangali women used to wear *nonderera*, skirts made with *lyosikwangali* trade cloth. She further made another reference to the official crowning ceremony of *Hompa* Eugene Kudumo Siwombe the current *Hompa* of Vakwangali. During the installation ceremony of *Hompa* Siwombe, all women who attended the event wore *nonderera*. Many of the female participants of the study, I realized, wore *nderera* made of *lyosikwangali* trade cloth, either as a skirt or as a petticoat for the elderly women. During the interview process, some of the women, such as Hausiku, discreetly pulled out their petticoats to show me *lyosikwangali* trade cloth. This occurrence of that Vakwangali women still wearing *lyosikwangali* trade cloth suggests a deeper connection to issues of nostalgia, which Vakwangali woman have with *lyosikwangali* trade cloth. Some trade cloths are not so common, for

example, *sikatu* has been reintroduced by the Chinese textile traders and slowly being embraced by Vakwangali.

There is uncertainty and a sense of challenge among Vakwangali men in terms of deciding what materiality and styles should be associated to their dress. Interviews carried out attest to this challenge as indicated by the interviewee below: zaKankono (personal communication, January 20, 2018) argued that, it would not be acceptable for them to go back to wearing loincloths as this would be improper. Although these are not ideas advocated in this study, today the Vakwangali society has accepted shirts and trousers to be the norm when it comes to men's fashions and therefore it would be extreme to go back to wearing loincloths. Putting his ideas forward, zaKankono (personal communication, January 20, 2018) further suggests that he has seen many modern materials that could be made into fashionable traditional clothing, emphasizing that in fact Vakwangali used to wear skins because of poverty. This may be related to the fact that in the pre-colonial age, Vakwangali made their clothing from materials that were available to them from the environment. Therefore, skins were associated with the time in the past when Vakwangali did not have a choice on materials to use for traditional clothing. Such associations of skins being a sign of *ruhepo* or hardship is in line with Likuwa's argument that contract labourers suggest that skin wearing was seen as a sign of hardship. He states, "continued wearing of skins also began to be regarded as a sign of 'poverty' rather than as '*mpo yetu*' (our culture)" (Likuwa, 2012, p. 76). zaKankono also gives an example of leather trousers that he had once seen at a cultural festival and stated that it was a creative way to represent culture, instead of going back to loincloths (personal communication, January 20, 2018). Straw hats and walking sticks were a part of

traditional representation for men that can continue to be made into modern fashion. After several interviews, I was able to consolidate and to get a clear direction on which textiles to use to embody the *Vakwangali Fashion Collection*.

The royal clan seems to enjoy central recognition among the Vakwangali in terms of making final decisions on Vakwangali affairs, such as what should represent or constitute Vakwangali fashion clothing. During fieldwork for example, several participants insisted that I conduct more interviews with the royal clan, as they would be able to give more suggestions and endorse the research project. This may have been due to what was stated in the earlier chapters that in the past the royal clan controlled what was worn. As was discussed in chapter four, the role of the royal clan among Vakwangali is beyond social hierarchy. As argued by Kampungu (1965) and supported by Jantunen (1963), Vakwangali looked up to the royals in many ways. The royal clan was a trendsetter in Vakwangali traditional communities. Given my understanding of the royal influence among Vakwangali, I pursued to incorporate the ideas from the royal clan. *Hompa* Alphons Kaundu (personal communication, March 31, 2018) stated that it had been a challenge for him to acquire traditional clothing that is suitable for a *Hompa* to wear during special occasions. He presented a few items in his possession, which included, a waistcoat made of leopard skin, *ewindo* (traditional gathered skirt) with a beaded hem and a beaded head piece. He requested that a traditional outfit be made for him to wear during special occasions; however, he did not suggest further ideas. Some Vakwangali elders believe that the reinstatement of traditional events such as rituals or dances would be a useful way to preserve and restore past cultural practices. For example, on the question of preserving culture, Siteketa (personal communication, January 24, 2018) shared his

views by stating that it is not just about restoring traditional clothing, there is a need to reinstate traditional events that used to be part of the past traditional lifestyle. It is only through participating in traditional events that people will learn the value of culture. This suggests that the older generation have an understanding that the value of culture was not only imbedded in traditional clothing, but was appreciated, instilled and passed on to the next generation through participation in traditional events. Therefore, restoring the value of culture will not be achieved solely by recreating traditional clothing.

I was enlightened by the ideas brought forward by the research participants and was made aware of challenges with regards to the revival and preservation of Vakwangali cultural values embedded in traditional clothing. As a result, I employed a creative process to create garments and accessories suggesting how Vakwangali can transform traditional clothing into fashion that carries Vakwangali traditional clothing elements. The following section describes the creative process that led to the creation of *Vakwangali Fashion Collection*.

Creative Process

I retrieved narratives with cultural significance to create the *Vakwangali Fashion Collection*, by creating characters that highlighted the selected cultural values. The first phase of the creative process thus entailed a selection of historical narratives from my interviews that highlighted the value of Vakwangali traditional clothing, followed by visual research at the National Archives of Namibia (NAN). Visual research is a process of observations leading to an analysis of extracting common or

prominent design elements from consolidated data. Au, Taylor, & Newton (2002) suggests that designers from Britain, which could be the case with other designers from elsewhere, consult historical references such as costumes and paintings to stimulate their creativity (Au et al., 2002, p. 78) Similarly, I consulted photographs from the archives and artefacts in museums to supplement data collected through interviews as a means to stimulate my creativity. After going through photographs from the archives and observing artefacts of Vakwangali traditional clothing, I constructed a storyboard (figure 8) to get a clear direction and understanding of my design aesthetics for the collection I created. In this way, I pursued a visual representation of Vakwangali traditional clothing from the past to what is visible in contemporary, by composing different images together. From the storyboard, I could extract silhouettes, colours, fabrics, trimmings and decorations used in the fashion collection.



Figure 8: Storyboard 2018 (Photographer, Vilho Nuumbala)

My storyboard shown in figure 8 included; inspirations from the pre-colonial Vakwangali traditional clothing, early use and adaptation of trade cloth and contemporary traditional dance costumes. Even though the late Maria Joachim and the late *Hompa* Matumbo Libebe were both from Vasambyu ethnic group and not Vakwangali, their images were part of the storyboard. The purpose of including images of late Maria Joachim and the late *Hompa* Matumbo Libebe was purely to draw inspiration from the traditional clothing they wore in the photographs and not to present these two individuals as Vakwangali. Another reason had to do with the *ndjareko* that I acquired from the late Joachim in 2005. The acquired *ndjareko* is very sentimental to me, but I used it to decorate the *ndjareko* for *Mumbanda* character in the collection created.

The second phase of the creative process included a consolidation of my ideas and responses from research participants. After establishing a clear visual representation with the storyboard, I went back to the interviews to retrieve some historical

references and narratives. Throughout this second phase of the design process, I found affirmation in this statement “the designer has to understand people’s hopes and desires, and express people’s individuality when creating new collections (Au et al., 2002, p. 75). Furthermore Au et al. (2002, p. 75) elaborate that a study done on British fashion designers shows that they resort to psychological satisfaction as the drive for design process to ensure that they create garments that do not only look good, but also make the customers feel good. With this understanding, I had to pay close attention to the ideas suggested by participants, and be innovative on how I presented the design ideas so that garments do not just look good but feel good as well.

My main consideration in creating ‘Vakwangali fashion’ was to revive traditional items in an innovative way. The research participants were mainly elderly men and women who have knowledge regarding Vakwangali traditional clothing. I valued their input to the collection created as they had a better understanding of what is considered acceptable as ‘Vakwangali fashion’. Seemingly, this exercise may have side-lined the youth but nonetheless they participated in the exhibitions, and were able to state their views on the fashion collection which is presented in chapter 7. From the interviews there were two views concerning what materials to use for the fashion collection. The women preferred to see the trade cloth as the main material for the collection. On the other hand, the men did not have definite material choices, but suggested that I make use of modern fabrics such as cottons and pleather that were suitable and would look presentable. I decided to consider the different material choices that were suggested as trade cloths in Ukwangali area namely; *lyosikwangali*,

nakanunga, sikatu and *lyegeha*, and I then paired them up with some modern fabrics to achieve my perceived aesthetics.

The third phase of the creative process involved putting down ideas on paper to help me decide on what fashion garments to create for the *Vakwangali Fashion Collection*. Since I already had the target market in mind (Vakwangali), the next factor to consider was the season of the fashion collection to be created. Fashion in the fashion realm is created with production cycles in mind mainly between Spring/Summer and Autumn/Winter seasons (Burke, 2008, p. 109). This is vital for the created fashion collections to be in line with production schedule in order to deliver the right merchandise in fashion stores. For this collection I chose spring/summer as the production cycle. My ideas kept changing and evolving from the first sketches, which is a norm in the design process. Nimkulrat (2007, p. 8) refers to this process as a conscious exploration of the practice using the knowhow to create artefacts. In my case it remained a conscious exploration of ideas using design skills to improve the garments created. Even though the whole process of putting ideas down on paper was directed and controlled by the design plan, I still made changes to the design throughout the creation process until the day I completed the garments. Figure 4 shows the process of my working sketches, which included the notes regarding decoration detail and textile choices. To some extent, these working sketches may seem incomplete, rough in black and white without colour rendering. I mainly used these sketches for guidance as the designs kept changing during the construction process and thereafter. To remain on course with the design plan, I created characters that made up the collection. This process involved employing a designer role to direct the creations of how I was visualizing the collection. Each

character created had a narrative derived from the interviews and was further discussed in *Vakwangali Fashion Collection* section.



Figure 9: Working Sketches 2018 (Author)

Once I had all twenty working ideas sketched out on paper as shown in figure 9, I then chose the best ten ideas to start the garment construction process. For each garment created, I made sure that the design did not just look good, but was also comfortable by making use of suitable fabrics for the hot weather. As indicated earlier the season for the collection was Spring/Summer and this also influenced material choices for the collection there are determining factors when it comes to material choices. It is important to choose fabrics that are suitable to the weather; otherwise the garments will not be wearable. Hence, I chose to work with mainly natural material such as cotton and silk to ensure that the garments would feel comfortable to wear in hot weather. Even though I had one garment that was completely made from synthetic fabrics, I made sure the pattern construction was cut with a silhouette that allowed ventilation; without sleeves and shorter in length. Since time was very limited, I started with patternmaking of the basic shape that was

altered according to the designs for the women wear. Due to my limited knowledge on men's wear, I decided to work with commercial patterns for the male garments. As soon as patterns were done, I went on to cut and construct the garments until all artefacts were completed. For the final touches, silkscreen printing and bead details were added to some of the garments.

The design process was a complex process that included my problem solving process leading to the final created garments. Recording this process also assisted with the analysis of the practical work by making use of my creative diary and notes on the working sketches. This process allowed me to move between what I intended to create, and what the created final garments were. The creative process often required a step back to review what was being created. After the first photo shoot (figure 10), I went back to rework and refine some of the designs to achieve the desired flair and fit. Figure 10 also shows the three garments, *Mukongo*, *mandengu* and *Munambongi I*, which I altered after the first photo shoot. During design development for a fashion collection, the garments were made into samples that were fitted on live models, this process allowed the production team to refine the designs and alter any faults (Burke, 2008, p. 116). Garments in this collection were also fitted on models and this assisted in improving the designs. *Mukongo* garment appeared to be over accessorized, I therefore removed the skin accessories tucked in the pocket. This was done with the understanding that *Mukongo* is an active role and the main accessories carried with it were mainly traditional tools. *Mandengu* garment seemed to have muted colours for which I sensed needed contrast. I decided to print a portrait in white on to the top to create emphasis. *Munambongi I* was created from *sikatu* trade cloth in high contrasting stripes, which created an optical illusion when looking at

the garment. I therefore decided to add an elasticated waist and *mwaye* to the garment to neutralize the compelling illusion.



Figure 10: First photo shoot (Photographer, Vilho Nuumbala)

The Vakwangali Fashion Collection

I decided to name the collection *Vakwangali Fashion Collection*, because these were modern clothing inspired by the traditional clothing of Vakwangali. My inspiration for this collection came from the data collected regarding Vakwangali traditional clothing. There was a need to create a connection between the data collected and the created garments for the fashion collection, and my audience by bringing out narratives regarding the value and meaning embedded in Vakwangali tradition in a creative manner. This collection is made up of the following characters; *Mumbanda*, *Mumbandagona 1*, *Mumbandagona 2*, *Musigona*, *Simuma Mukongo*, *Ntjiligombe*, *Mandengu*, *Munambongi 1*, *Munambongi 2*, and *Munambongi 3*. The characters are

presented to portray Vakwangali traditional social structure from the royal to the commoners. *Mumbanda* and *Mumbandagona 1* are a representation of royal women in the early times with garments making use of leather and pleather. There is a second *Mumbandagona 2* representing the early adoption of trade cloth. The second set of garments is a representation of characters from the humble class, which is *Musigona*, and *Simuma* who are women from a humble class. *Mukongo* and *Ntjiligombe* are two characters that highlight the role of male figures in Vakwangali traditional setting. *Mandengu* is another humble class character highlighting traditional social gatherings of Vakwangali. The last characters are *Munambongi (1, 2 and 3)* a representation of schoolchildren at the mission stations. Creating characters was a way for me to present the narratives more creatively and also create a collection that would be informative and inspiring. The characters are discussed below.

Mumbanda



Figure 11 ‘Mumbanda’, 2018 (Photographer, Vilho Nuumbala)

The character *mumbanda* was inspired by the wife of a Hompa who had distinct clothing that set her apart from the commoners. *Mumbanda*, has distinct clothing reserved for her and often adorned with ornaments that required trading in wealth. She wore a skin as a front apron; the skin was, large and not cut up into pieces. As described before by Haimbili (personal communication, March 31, 2018), the *ndjareko* of *mumbanda* was an outstanding item that was well-crafted and over decorated with beads. This item revealed a woman’s status depending on the craftsmanship and ornamentation attached to it.

For this design, I wanted to create a modern traditional dress suitable for *mumbanda* (*Hompa's* wife). The garment is made of *lyegeha* trade cloth with beaded hemming, *ndjareko* and *mwaye*. Since the *ndjareko* of a *mumbanda* was beautifully crafted, I also adorned the *ndjareko* with crafted beading detail. It was important to over decorate this dress with beading detail for it was through beading that a woman of status was identified among Vakwangali. I created a fashionable *mwaye* by using see-through net to make a *mwaye* suitable for hot weather and also to expose the underneath dress. I adopted the *mwaye* merely for aesthetic appeal and not necessarily to adopt its original style and use. A lighter see through *mwaye* was chosen mainly for static appeal and the fact that this was a Spring/Summer fashion collection and the chosen fabric had to be suitable to wear. The *mwaye* was beaded around the edges to weigh it down and printed with a random portrait of a woman in *sihiho*. The beading and *sihiho* print was an attempt to emphasize a representation of Vakwangali aesthetics. As stated earlier, the original *mwaye* was made of leather and used to cover up in the cold weather, but as a designer I chose to recreate a *mwaye* suitable for a warm weather.

Mumbandagona 1



Figure 12 ‘Mumbandagona’ 1, 2018 (Photographer, Vilho Nuumbala)

As stated before Vakwangali royal women were the trendsetters of the communities with traditional garments of the finest quality and rare ornaments. *Mumbandagona 1* garments derived inspiration from the fine works of leather including the delicate front apron that was originally made of a cow stomach (Jantunen, 1963, p. 2). For the designed garment, I characterised *mumbandagona 1* (princess) from the pre-colonial as someone whose clothing was mainly made of natural material. A modern garment for *mumbandagona* was created by making use of pleather, as I mainly wanted to draw inspiration from leather that was mainly used for Vakwangali traditional clothing. Since *mumbandagona* is of royal descent, the garment had to be over decorated with beading. The little pleather dress is decorated with beading at the

hem, neck and armholes. I emphasized the front apron, by making use of silk chiffon dyed with natural dye from the bird plum tree and wood block printed with red ochre. This front apron is very delicate and lightly decorated with beading detail to weight it down.

Mumbandagona 2



Figure 13 ‘Mumbandagona’ 2, 2018 (Photographer, Vilho Nuumbala)

This character was a representation of a Kwangali princess in a garment showing the early adoption of trade cloth. The research informants stated that early adoption of trade cloth among Vakwangali was also seen as a status symbol. Wealth was traded in for meters long of trade cloth that could be gathered into a skirt type of garment. I wanted to create a character of *mumbandagona 2* with a garment made of trade cloth

heavily decorated with beading as beading was a sign of status. Martha Haimbili (personal communication, March 31, 2018) explained that if the royal women passed by you, you would just hear the resounding ‘*tjaya...tjaya...tjaya*’ of copper anklets, *nongondongo* as they walked. For *mumbandagona 2* character, I designed a modern *derera* with a full beaded hem making use of *lyosikwangali* and *nakanunga* trade cloth. The look is completed with a funky top that has ostrich shell beading detail and glass beads around the neck, armholes, back and the hem (figure 13).

Musigona



Figure 14: ‘Musigona’ 2018 (Photographer, Vilho Nuumbala)

Despite the clear distinctions between classes, the royals could choose to marry anyone regardless of their status. *Musigona* literally translated as commoner is a

character representing a commoner of stature that a royal would choose to marry (M. S. Haimbili, personal communication, March 31, 2018). For *Musigona* character, I designed a garment to represent women from a humble class who has a character of elegance and flair. For this design I wanted to create a garment that was elegant but that any woman could fit and afford. Vakwangali communicated their status through accessories, for instance, the more beading the woman had, the more wealth she had. With this dress, I decided to minimize the decorations and only decorated the hem with beads, a more common practice with *ndjareko*, but now also with the modern *derera* skirts. The dress is constructed from a fitted body and a full circle skirt. Again, this cut is flattering for most body types. I manipulated the bodice of the dress to get the *lyosikwangali* trade cloth to illustrate a zigzag pattern on the waist. I wanted emphasis on the zigzag pattern in this particular design as it is a common element of design in Vakwangali crafts making. Emphasizing the common zigzag pattern was an effort to make the garment typical and not exclusive.

Simuma



Figure 15: 'Simuma', 2018 (Photographer, Vilho Numbala)

Vakwangali women had to adorn themselves at all times. A woman of a humble class was prohibited by sumptuary laws to adorn herself with certain ornaments. Such laws reserved the wearing of *nombamba* (seashells) only for royal women. However women of humble classes could put *simuma* (seashell) on necklaces and on the *sihiho* headdress (M. Mufenda, (personal communication, January 2, 2018) and M. S. Haimbili, personal communication, March 31, 2018). *Mbamba* and *simuma* are both sea shells, the only difference is the size of which *mbamba* are bigger and rare shells to find.

For this character, *Simuma*, I chose to create a princess cut navy dress with a tight bodice and a full circle skirt. I felt this silhouette would be suitable as it flatters most women's body shapes. I simply titled the dress *simuma* as I wanted to put emphasis on the small *simuma* shell that was used to adorn the front of the *sihiho* headdress. The lower part of the dress is silkscreen printed with portrait of a woman wearing *sihiho* also adorned with a white button representing *simuma* shell. A button was used as it was a challenge to acquire the authentic shells. The dress is also decorated with beading on the sheer sleeves. The character is accessorized with a chunky necklace made of alternative seashells on a few strings. The main idea for this garment was to move away from the trade cloth and rather use another colour that still fit the colour palette of the collection and for that reason I settled for navy blue.

Mukongo



Figure 16: 'Mukongo', 2018 (Photographer, Vilho Nuumbala)

My initial inspiration for this character is *mukongo*, a hunter. Among Vakwangali, a hunter was an individual with status because he provided food and clothing for his family through hunting. Jantunen (1963, p. 4) narrates how a hunter became excited when he met a catch knowing that the catch would clothe and feed his family. As discussed by Siteketa (personal communication, January 24, 2018) a man displayed his status by the tools he carried to help him along his way. It was important for Vakwangali men to carry their tools in order to equip themselves for whatever danger they may encounter.

For this character *Mukongo*, I wanted to come up with an easy-going outfit comfortable for a very active man. I wanted this look to be casual, so I settled on making a t-shirt and shorts made from with *lyegeha* trade cloth. Though this character does not physically carry his traditional tools, as an alternative, printed tools make a vivid representation of a man carrying his tools. I decided to make a silk screen design with different traditional tools that I used as a print on the t-shirt and shorts. This was a way for me to make men feel that they can still carry their traditional tools; as prints on the garments.

Ntjiligombe



Figure 17: ‘Tjiligombe’, 2018 (Photographer, Vilho Numbala)

In a traditional setting of Vakwangali, men pride themselves with being providers for their families. Each would have status in the society according to his trait such as a hunter. *Ntjiligombe*, a character I drew from a man of status, would host his peers casually and it is at such occasions where men made sure they looked presentable. Men gathering for such an occasion carried knives and other tools tucked in the waist to show that they were responsible men (S. Siteketa, personal communication, January 24, 2018).

For this character I wanted to create a garment that is suitable for a man who is respected in the community. I also wanted to create a garment that was more official but not the Eurocentric suit and tie official look. I selected a cotton material with a very fine print suitable for a short sleeve shirt and trousers made from *lyegeha* trade cloth. Such a man would still be accessorized with a hat and traditional tools. These tools were never carried to cause trouble but it was for pride and a way for a man to be dignified. I therefore printed a knife and a sling shot on the trouser.

Mandengu



Figure 18: 'Mandengu', 2018 (Photographer Vilho Nuumbala)

Mandengu is a term used in reference to a person who loves to dance, more specifically, traditional dance. Usually when Vakwangali gathered for a traditional dance such as *epera* they would put on *rudeve* (reed skirt) usually of knee length for both men and women. *Marudeve* (plural) are usually worn around the waist to emit rattling sound when dancing (Akuupa, 2015, p. 161). I was always fascinated with *rudeve* and hoped that there was a deeper meaning to it. However, the participants stated that the reed skirt was just for dancing and did not have any other value attached to it other than being a fascination as it sways and makes rattling sounds while dancing. I therefore designed a trendy garment of velvet leggings and a long sleeved net top with a portrait of a woman in *sihiho* printed on it. I added a modernized short *rudeve* made of varnished reeds. The length of the *rudeve* was

made skimpily short, just hip length, to make it practical for the wearer to enable her to sit down comfortably when wearing it. The look is completed by a choker made from ostrich shell beads that I polished into an ochre colour, another representation of status as a well off woman's accessories were always smeared in *rukura* giving off a mauve look.

Vanambongi 1, 2 and 3



Figure 19: 'Vanambongi' 1, 2 and 3, 2018 (photographer, Vilho Nuumbala)

Christianity in Kavango West region changed the way people at the mission station dressed. From the early establishment of mission schools, a Eurocentric style of dressing was enforced among the children attending school. I drew my inspiration from personal interviews with Siteketa and Johanna on January 24, 2018, who narrated their early school going experiences. *Vanambongi* was a term used in reference to school going children who resided at the mission station. I chose to

design three garments for three school going children. For these garments, I drew inspiration from the early clothing of *vanambongi*. The Finnish and Catholic missionaries taught needlework to learners at mission stations to make European clothing. Simple cut dresses with gathered waists for the Catholic missions and loose fitting dresses for the Finnish missionaries. I drew the silhouette for the designs from photographs by Dammann, E and Dammann, R (1954, April 05) of school goers taken at the Catholic and Lutheran mission stations photographed in Eurocentric style dressing.

The photographs show different styles of Eurocentric design for school going children and workers at the Catholic and Lutheran mission stations. Literature and research participants placed that the royal children were amongst the first children to be enrolled in school, for this reason I chose to make use of *sikatu* trade cloth as this was a prestige trade cloth only common to royals and individuals of high social standing. The design of *Munambongi 1* was created from a simple cut with straight silhouette and a gathered waist, a silhouetted of dresses common for Catholic school going children. *Munambongi 2* is a dress made of a silhouette that was common among women associated with Lutheran mission station; this silhouette is similar to *oohema dhoontula* among Aawambo. For the third school going character, *Munambongi 3*, I drew inspiration from the Eurocentric style for men, a shirt and trousers which made use of *sikatu* and *lyosikwangali* trade cloth. The trousers for *Munambongi 3* are patched-up as a representation of worn out trousers but also for the second hand clothing that were given to school going children.

Conclusion

The main objective of this chapter was to create a fashion collection, inspired by Vakwangali traditional clothing and to suggest initiatives of how Vakwangali traditional clothing can be transformed into fashion by taking into account ideas from the research participants. The discussions evolved from the theoretical component to the practical component of the research, which entailed creating *Vakwangali Fashion Collection* through a creative process.

Drawing ideas from research participants and from myself, a fashion collection titled *Vakwangali Fashion Collection* was created through a creative process. The preliminary research done through interviews, observation of artefacts at museums, and photographs in the archives, informed the creative process for creating *Vakwangali fashion Collection*. Ideas were consolidated from research participants and I was able to create a fashion collection that was both desirable and reflective of Vakwangali culture.

As an intervention, I created contemporary textiles that represented Vakwangali culture, by making use of selected imagery. The created textiles were used in creating some of the garments to create a literal representation of Vakwangali culture. Two cultural items were explored for textile printing, a portrait of a Kwangali woman in *sihiho* and traditional tools for men. I chose these traditional items for textile printing exploration as the research participants expressed a deep longing for the selected traditional items.

CHAPTER 7:

PRESENTING VAKWANGALI FASHION COLLECTION

Introduction

This chapter presents the created *Vakwangali Fashion Collection* and the steps that were undertaken to showcase the fashion collection to the public. The public displays of the created artefacts presented an opportunity to gain audience responses, which were interpreted for meaning. The Vakwangali fashion collection was presented to the public through an exhibition, at both a cultural festival in Nkurenkuru and the Standard Bank Art Gallery at UNAM. The exhibition provided comments that were useful in understanding the public reaction to Vakwangali contemporary fashion collection. It was hoped that the knowledge gained from the exhibition would become the foundation for further research or projects. This chapter presents my artist statement that accompanied the exhibitions. The artist statement was aimed at voicing my hopes and personal thoughts about the Vakwangali fashion collection and at highlighting the creative process that led to the final created garments and accessories.

Artist Statement

Rovine (2011, p. 58) states that fashion is an innovation of clothing. Similarly, my creative work on the *Vakwangali Fashion Collection* employs the notion of what type of fashions can be innovated from Vakwangali traditional clothing and Eurocentric styles through creating hybrids. I borrowed ideas from Vakwangali

traditional clothing and selected Eurocentric styles to innovate new garments and accessories that I felt were flattering for the collection.

I created the collection through a practice-led approach, where data derived from interviews and observations of archival photographs, artefacts, and documents from the Basler Afrika Bibliographien (BAB) online archive and the National Archives of Namibia in Windhoek were used. This initial process of filtering through data from different sources was vital for a better understanding of Vakwangali traditional clothing and in selecting narratives linked to the value and meaning embedded in Vakwangali traditional clothing. Each garment in the *Vakwangali Fashion Collection* was made up of a character derived from the narratives gathered through interviews, which I consolidated with photographs and artefacts I observed regarding Vakwangali traditional clothing.

Most of the photographs observed seemed to have been staged with many of the subjects striking a rigid pose. Some of the photographs were cropped to show detail of certain items like accessories and back apron decorations, illustrating elements that may have impressed the photographer. Although these photographs may have been taken from a colonial gaze, I used these photographs to visualize details regarding Vakwangali traditional clothing. Since the photographs observed were in black and white, I also observed artefacts from museums to gain further detail such as textures of traditional clothing; items which were inconclusive from the photographs observed. This was also done for inspiration to stimulate my ideas for silhouette, aesthetics, material and techniques used in the *Vakwangali Fashion Collection*.

The colour scheme of the created garments for *Vakwangali Fashion Collection* was derived from the objects observed. In addition, I drew inspiration from Vakwangali traditional crafts in beadwork, woven baskets and woodwork to derive technique and patterning. I used natural dyes used for traditional baskets to dyed silk chiffon and also made use of wood carved blocks to block print some of the textiles used in the *Vakwangali Fashion collection*. I chose to dye and print some of my textiles for the *Vakwangali Fashion Collection* as inspired by the notion of how Vakwangali women dyed and transformed their traditional clothing by smearing ochre *rukura* on their bodies. *Rukura* gave off a very strong red look transforming all shells and beading detail into shades of mauve.

Vakwangali Fashion Collection was made up of characters I created derived from the interviews. I collected the narratives regarding the character and presented them in my own creative way. The characters are not necessarily made of real characters, but rather my own interpretation of presenting the collection in a creative manner. This fashion collection presented possible ideas of transforming Vakwangali traditional clothing into fashion. I suggest possibilities on how Vakwangali can adopt Vakwangali traditional clothing in order to wear fashions that reflect Vakwangali culture through the created *Vakwangali Fashion Collection*.

Public presentations of Vakwangali Fashion Collection

The biggest challenge for showcasing garments created from this study was the time factor. Fitting all planned exhibition schedules within the limited timeframe, came

with settling for the venues and events that were most accommodating with these limitations. The first public presentation of the created *Vakwangali Fashion Collection* was at the Standard Bank Gallery at the University of Namibia in Windhoek. The second public display was in Nkurenkuru at the Vakwangali Annual Cultural Festival at Mayara royal village.



Figure 20: *Vakwangali Fashion Collection 2018* on Exhibition (Photographer, Vilho Nuumbala)

The *Vakwangali Fashion Collection* exhibition was scheduled to take place from August 14 to August 24 2018. However, since there were many request from the public to view the exhibition, the exhibition remained on until September 4 2018. Visitors included the local community and those from overseas. Prior to the exhibition opening, I used social media as a means of drawing visitors to the exhibition, and there was an overwhelming response on Facebook confirming attendance. Figure 20 shows a photograph by Vilho Nuumbala of the first

showcasing of *Vakwangali Fashion Collection* at UNAM Standard Bank gallery in Windhoek.

The second showcasing of the created fashion collection was on September 7 2018 at the Vakwangali Annual Cultural Festival which took place at Mayara royal village in Nkurenkuru. This invitation came through Ukwangali Traditional Authority office by *Hompa* Eugen Siwombe Kudumo. The festival was an official gathering with a keynote address by the *Hompa* and cultural performances in between the speeches. The set up included officials seated in a traditionally built shade (*utara*) addressing the event while the rest of the community sat on the opposite side in tents. Given that this was a non-conventional setup for showcasing a fashion collection, I had to come up with alternative means to present the *Vakwangali Fashion Collection* at the event. I was directed to set up my work on a table with the rest of exhibitors for the festival. However, setting up garments on a table did not give the garments a hanger appeal and therefore I decided to have volunteers wear the garments during the festival. I approached the organising committee in charge of the protocol, and many of the women on the committee offered to wear the garments and assisted on finding other women to wear the garments in case they did not fit into the garments. Though the women were eager to get dressed up in the garments, it was a challenge to convince any male volunteers to wear the garments. Considering this event was in a rural setting where people may still be in touch with their traditional roles, it may have been interpreted as unusual for a woman to directly approach a male for any request. This may be related to Vakwangali traditional roles of men of being dominant and being the provider of their family and community. I therefore resorted to exhibiting the male garments by laying them out on the table.

Public responses to Vakwangali Fashion Collection

The presentation of *Vakwangali Fashion Collection* received different responses from the public. The exhibition made use of a guest book to record responses from the visitors. Responses from the presentations at Vakwangali Annual Cultural Festival were mainly recorded and reflected in a diary. Discussions on the public's response were mainly reflected on the recorded responses in the guest book and in my diary. For transparency and to maintain quality of the study, it was important that the created garments were presented to the public and that their responses were recorded. This is a common practice within a practice-led research where one not only uses reflections on garments from the perspective of a designer but also direct certain inquiry of research interest (Nimkulrat, 2007, p. 4).

Vakwangali fashion Collection Exhibition responses

When I set up the exhibition at the UNAM Standard Bank Gallery, the main concept was to present the garments created for *Vakwangali Fashion Collection* and at the same time show where I found my inspirations and how I emulated certain traditional techniques into the fashion collection. I included photographs from archives, the storyboard, my personal sketches, beads and fabric swatches on the boards, and in glass boxes. Responses from exhibition visitors were mainly receptive of the garments and the exhibition as a whole, while comments in the guest book expressed different views depending on individual interests and background. Comments recorded in the guest book were reflective of the individual's profession by stating certain elements in the exhibition that highlighted the individual's professional skills.

Students and professionals from the fashion industry generally found the exhibition inspiring and appreciated the craftsmanship and how the concept of the exhibition was curated. Namibian fashion designer Chakirra Claasen, appreciated the fact that the exhibition showcased the creative process, to which she responded; ‘I love your creative process and how your inspiration translated into your final work’. In agreement with the previous statement, Naitsikile Iizyenda added that the work was thought provoking and inspiring. This shows that fashion designers who visited the exhibition found it inspiring and could see the creative process that led to the creation of the garments.

The visitor’s book recorded comments on specific details of the garments, such as the use of trade cloth, beads and prints. There was appreciation on the materiality of the fashion collection. Emilia Shikeenga pointed out; ‘Beautiful traditional garments, I love how you incorporated the beads in the designs and also the use of *odelela* traditional material’. There was excitement towards the silkscreen prints in the collection and to the various textiles presented in the collection. Dantago Schimming commented; ‘I love your prints’. Conversations with visitors during the exhibition also highlighted that, many were intrigued by the printed portrait of a woman in *sihiho* traditional headdress. Some assumed it was a self-portrait but I clarified that the idea of the woman in *sihiho* silkscreen print was a representation of a Mukwangali woman in a traditional headdress and not a self-portrait. Though there was a general appreciation of the use of trade cloth in the garments, there were a few concerns. The use of *lyosikwangali* trade cloth was perceived to be an Aawambo cloth, though the research proves it is a trade cloth that was introduced by traders

to both Aawambo and Vakwangali. Many individuals were very receptive towards the silkscreened designs on the garments, suggesting that the visitors were receptive to the new textile ideas presented and incorporated in the garments.

Furthermore, there was appreciation for the exhibition concept as it was seen to bring the past into the present through the created garments. Visitors could see the link between traditional clothing elements and contemporary fashion. Supporting this view, Cynthia Schimming a renowned Namibian fashion designer, stated that the collection was amazing and it is now time that we [fashion designers] revisit the past. Likewise, Ainna Vilengi Kaundu remarked 'Expression of creativity and imagination, bringing two generations, the old and the young through traditional garments and patterns, on the other hand contemporary style'. Ongero Veii also noted it to be 'Insightful'. Like a glance into a time in the past that we should not forget'. These comments show that the audience were able to see traditional clothing and how it was transformed into contemporary garments and most importantly how the traditional clothing can be modernised.

The exhibition was transparent and it can be noted from the comments in the visitor guest book that the visitors experienced the exhibition to be informative and educational. Bertha Nampila stated 'The dresses are beautiful and deep. The fashion collection is educational and I learned a lot about Vakwangali people and their tradition'. Though the exhibition was perceived to be educational, some visitors pointed out that more information was needed to enhance the viewer's experience. On the exhibition opening night I had some discussions with visitors who pointed out that from a historical background the photographs did not make much sense in the

exhibition without captions. Elanay Wimmerth and J. D. Muruti also made comments that the exhibition needed more information. For this reason, I later added captions to the photographs that were part of the exhibition.

Vakwangali Fashion Collection was well accepted and appreciated and there were requests for further interventions. Many of the visitors asked where they could buy the garments. Furthermore, there were request for the designer to make use of genuine materials including ornaments for the garments. Faustina Caley stated that further research was needed to acquire and include original materials such as the ones in photographs. However, time and finances were a major constraint in this study and therefore I resorted to making use of alternative materials. Some of these shortfalls are addressed and recommended in the concluding chapter.

Annual Ukwangali Cultural Festival Response

The second presentation of *Vakwangali Fashion Collection* took place at the cultural festival at Mayara royal village in Nkurenkuru, Kavango East region. The festival was created to promote Vakwangali culture annually through different cultural activities such as *sinyanga* (a traditional social evening around a fire), traditional dance performances and exhibition of traditional food and traditional clothing items. This event drew cultural stakeholders from the Government ministries, traditional leaders, cultural enthusiasts, craft persons and the general public of Ukwangali. It was crucial for me to present the created *Vakwangali Fashion Collection* back to the community where the study was carried out and more importantly to get direct feedback not just from the Vakwangali, but from cultural experts that were participating in this event. For this reason, this cultural festival was the most suitable

event to present the created *Vakwangali Fashion Collection* back to the community that was directly involved in the study and to get their direct responses as Vakwangali.

The festival triggered different responses between the older and younger generation. The older generation were fond of the use of *lyosikwangali* trade cloth and were very keen on *simuma* and *mumbanda* designs. Annikki Wayera Shivera and her associates exclaimed that the portraits printed on *simuma* design must be of *Hompa Kanuni*. They were convinced that the portrait is *Hompa Kanuni* and praised that this portrait printed textile was well fitting for representing Vakwangali. The younger generation on the other hand were not so keen on the use of *lyosikwangali* trade cloth, but were impressed by certain items from the collection such as the *mwaye*. They said that *mwaye* was a light, unique, fashionable and versatile and they liked the printed portraits of women on them. The younger generation also showed great interest in the modern designs, however the older generation were only fascinated with designs that looked more traditional, such as *mumbanda* garment as it made use of genuine leather for *ndjareko* (back apron). This split of appreciation can be pinned down to what the older generation appreciated, particularly the designs that were similar to traditional wear. However, the youth were relatively fascinated with modern fashion.

I was not able to get any male volunteer to wear the garments at the festival. As a result, I had to display the male garments from *Vakwangali Fashion Collection* on the table. This made it challenging to analyse any responses from the men as they were very reserved when approached for comments. I was intrigued by this occurrence and was curious to know what the reason could be. Why was it a

challenge to convince men to volunteer wearing some of the garments during the festival? Why were the men not upfront with how they felt about the garments created? Further research beyond the scope of this study may be required to answer these questions accurately.

Conclusion

The chapter presented a discussion of the created fashion garments to the public and the responses it received. The research participants were mostly made up of older people who strongly desired to see a representation of trade cloth such as *lyosikwangali*, *nakanunga*, *sikatu* and *lyegeha*. However, due to lack of information, the younger generation did not have the same appreciation on the use of trade cloth, as they thought that *lyosikwangali* and *nakanunga* trade cloth were part of Aawambo culture and not Vakwangali. Contrary to what the younger generation thought, research has shown that *lyosikwangali*, *nakanunga* and *sikatu* are trade cloths, similar in design but different in appearance, that were introduced to Vakwangali and other ethnic groups by *Yimbali* traders from Angola and later European traders.

The portrait of a woman in *sihiho*, which was initially thought by viewers to be a portrait of myself during the exhibition in Windhoek, was the same portrait stated to be of *Hompa* Kanuni at the Ukwangali Annual Cultural Festival. Kampungu (1965) stated that *Hompa* Kanuni was perceived to be a powerful *Hompa*, and this perception was embraced even more after she took over to rule Ukwangali again in 1959 after *Hompa* Sivute's death. Besides being a good ruler *Hompa* Kanuni, must have been the last female *Hompa* maybe even known by some of the research participants. This and the fact that the printed portrait of a woman consisted of a

well-crafted *sihiho* headdress with beading suggested to some exhibition viewers that this particular woman had to be royal. Even though my idea of printing portraits in the collection was simply for a literal representation of *sihiho*, the printed portrait gained new meaning of royalty when presented to the public.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study borrows from Harteveld-Becker (2008), in terms of procedure and composition of combining practical work with thesis. Harteveld-Becker (2008) created and exhibited culture fashion collection representing Namibian ethnic groups through a fashion collection titled *ELEVEN*, inspired by Amy Schoeman's landscape photographs of Namibia. Harteveld-Becker (2008)'s research is practice based, however this study makes use of a practice-led model. Meaning, the researcher had to conduct indepth research on Vakwangali traditional clothing before creating a fashion collection inspired by the traditional clothing. The focus on Vakwangali was an effort to gain indepth knowledge regarding Vakwangali traditional clothing, focused on the value and meaning embedded. Unlike the couture fashion collection *ELEVEN*, the *Vakwangali fashion Collection* is a ready-to-wear collection created for public consumption.

This study deliberated on the lack of transformation of Vakwangali traditional clothing into fashion. Vakwangali have resorted to Eurocentric styles of dressing despite their traditional clothing being embedded with value and meaning. These values and meanings were intertwined with the way of life, and of keeping order among Vakwangali communities and because traditional clothing was discarded and replaced with European clothing, there was a loss of cultural values.

This study also highlighted values and meanings represented in Vakwangali traditional clothing. A narrative inquiry was used to gather in-depth knowledge regarding Vakwangali traditional clothing, which revealed their value and meaning. The research participants were able to bring forth narratives that highlighted and celebrated Vakwangali culture. These narratives are different to those that are presented by colonial literature. The researcher engaged selected literature to broaden knowledge regarding Vakwangali traditional clothing. This study also revealed that the royal family remains central among Vakwangali. It is for this reason that Vakwangali traditional clothing was guarded and controlled through sumptuary laws which permitted and restricted the use of certain materials and ornaments. A variety of data show that clothing items and accessories brought from afar formed strong traditional values among Vakwangali as they were associated with status and wealth. Accessories such as *mpande* (seashell), *iyonga* and *nongondongo* (copper coils) became valuable accessories only fit for the royal women and women with status.

Vakwangali traditional clothing was an agent of communication as certain ornaments and accessories revealed social status, gender and age of the wearer. Individuals in Vakwangali traditional community were addressed according to what their clothing revealed. Traditional social gatherings emphasized the value embedded in the traditional clothing, but most importantly also transferred tradition to the younger generation. This further fostered the value of culture among Vakwangali but as external influences disturbed the social structure among Vakwangali the traditional clothing was discarded leading to a loss of culture. This has also highlighted the need to engage in further research in relation to cultural concepts which was beyond the scope of this study.

The study also drew attention to the different factors that led to the abandonment of Vakwangali traditional clothing and why little to no transformations occurred among Vakwangali. Despite the research participants stating that Christianity was the main reason for the abandonment, trading activities that fostered the change prior to Christianity and colonial rule. Different traders such as *Yimbali* and European traders had introduced European goods to Vakwangali, which created the desire to acquire European clothing. Christianity and the colonial ruling through Native Commissioners further enforced restrictions that prohibited Vakwangali from wearing traditional clothing. Christianity demanded Vakwangali to abandon all traditional ways including traditional clothing, and only dress in European clothing 'fit' for Christians. The colonial Native Commissioner placed restrictions on hunting which made it harder for Vakwangali to acquire skins for traditional clothing. As the contract labor system was established, it became an alternative means for Vakwangali to gain more European goods. Early establishment of trade shops, provided a variety of goods including trade cloth, which soon became the most sought after commodity by contract labourers. Trade cloths accepted among Vakwangali were given indigenous names such as *lyosikwangali*, *sikatu*, *nakanunga* and *lyegeha*, which again provided evidence of transforming cultural identities. Reviewed literature, photographs, and views from research participants established that the adoption of European goods such as trade cloth and beads were adapted and worn in a traditional style. People who had the means to acquire the goods first acquired all goods and soon the acquisition of European goods became a status symbol.

Though Vakwangali traditional clothing was abandoned, traditional dance groups recreated Vakwangali traditional clothing as costumes for their performances and this remains the only visible trace of Vakwangali traditional clothing currently. Older research participants in this study pointed out that these traditional dance costumes do not ‘authentically’ represent Vakwangali traditional clothing, but are rather recreations with modern alternative materials of what the dancers perceive to be striking. The older research participants felt that traditional dance clothing is not an ‘authentic’ representation of Vakwangali traditional clothing but it is still perceived as part of Vakwangali culture. This also shows that the older generation link authenticity to organic materiality and not alternatives. Although it was pointed out that traditional dance costumes were not ‘authentic’, the researcher still made reference to the reincarnated traditional costumes for design aesthetics.

The fourth objective of the study was to create a fashion collection that represented Vakwangali social structure by making use of narratives from the research participants. The designer extracted ideas from archived artifacts and photographs and consolidated them with ideas from the research participants to create *Vakwangali Fashion Collection*. This collection was created through hybrids of Eurocentric styles and Vakwangali traditional styles. The research participants were very clear about what ideas had to be included in the related *Vakwangali Fashion Collection* and these suggestions were accommodated to a certain degree. Research participants did not necessarily want loin skins as the basic silhouette for the collection, feeling that such clothing would be too revealing and therefore not appropriate for the society. As stated before, the participants, and more so Vakwangali, associated skin wearing with hardship and therefore recommended that other fabrics together with trade cloth

be used. In addition to using trade cloth, the designer also made use of silkscreen printing and block printing to create textile printing motives and imagery for the collection. The collection was made up of the following characters, *Mumbanda*, *Mumbandagona*, *Musigona*, *Simuma*, *Mukongo*, *Njiligombe*, *Mandengu* and *Munambongi*.

Vakwangali Fashion Collection was created and presented to the public through an exhibition at the Standard bank Art Gallery at that University of Namibia in Windhoek, as well as at the Annual Vakwangali Cultural Festival in Mayara royal village in Nkurenkuru. The two different presentations were necessary to gain responses from the different audiences in both urban and rural setting. The different generations reacted differently towards the garments created and used in the collection, especially with the material choices of the collection. As stated earlier the different reactions between the two generations could be because the creation of this collection mainly considered incorporating ideas of the research participants who were mainly of the older generation. This somewhat created a fashion collection that the younger generation could not relate to because of their lack of knowledge regarding traditional clothing. The younger generation perceived the inclusion of trade cloth in the collection as an ‘Aawambo cloth’ and therefore the collection was for Aawambo and not Vakwangali. However, the study shows that the same trade cloth was introduced to both Vakwangali and Aawambo by traders and bear different names *lyosikwangali* and *odhelela* respectfully. *Vakwangali Fashion Collection* also presented new ideas of textile prints that used Vakwangali imagery. These prints received different responses at the exhibition in Windhoek and the Annual Vakwangali Cultural Festival in Nkurenkuru. The different interpretations of the

portrait of a woman wearing *sihoho*, illustrated that the public will always translate their own ideas which are different from that of the designer. This may also suggest that the different interpretations show that the public is willing to embrace and relate to the fashion collection in their own way. Though it is never in the designer's control how the public reacts to the created collection, this study has shown that the public will always create meaning to what is presented to them in a way different from the ideas of the designer. In addition to the presentations stated earlier, a catalogue was also created to document *Vakwangali Fashion Collection*.

From the methodological perspective, the research design proved to be time consuming. A practice-led research approach was employed to translate the data gathered through literature, artifacts, photographic archives and interviews into a fashion collection. The research was majorly influenced by the experiences and design skills of the researcher to translate raw data into a practical component, the *Vakwangali Fashion Collection*. Time was a major limiting factor on the process of creating the fashion collection. The possibilities were endless, however due to the limited time only less time consuming craftsmanship could be executed. Ideas from research participants and design explorations had to be consolidated within the restricted time schedule. This study was therefore limited and it was unmanageable to create all possible ideas noted by the research participants. This research design has proposed a model of how fashion designers can draw inspiration from traditional clothing for creating contemporary fashions.

The study proved to be informative and was able to present data in a creative manner through an exhibition where guests could engage and record their reflections on the

garments showcased. Guests from Namibia and other countries responded positively to the *Vakwangali Fashion Collection*, proving that this collection is ‘Afropolitan’ and can be consumed not only by Vakwangali but also by individuals from other parts of the world. Responses from the public also proved that there is a need for further interventions in traditional clothing of Vakwangali in order to keep the culture alive.

Recommendations

- i) This study conducted observations of artifacts in Owela museum in Windhoek and Maria Mwegere Museum in Rundu and found that exhibits of artifacts of Vakwangali traditional clothing items were in a mediocre state with little information to enhance the exhibits. The study therefore recommends that the curators revise their exhibits to correct the redundancy and enhance the exhibits with supporting text as gathered and suggested by this study.
- ii) The research participants of this study who narrated their knowledge about Vakwangali traditional clothing in-depth were mainly from the older generation; however most of this knowledge has not been transferred to the younger generation. It is recommended that further case studies should be explored to include the younger generation to get their perspective.
- iii) The research has highlighted traditional craftsmanship such as leather tanning which is an ecofriendly process, although not widely practiced as such. It is further recommended that craft makers and designer study these sustainable processes for knowledge gain and cultural preservation. Documenting these processes was beyond the scope of this study; however it is recommended that further studies be conducted.
- iv) The Royal Family remains central among Vakwangali and Vambunza so there is a need for further research on royal symbolism and traditional clothing. Thus, it is recommended that further studies be conducted to document royal symbolism in traditional clothing in order to gain in-depth knowledge.
- v) The research participants also felt that to retain the value and meaning of Vakwangali traditional clothing, traditional events need to be reconstructed so that

Vakwangali can gather in order for the older generation to impart knowledge on the value of culture to the younger generation.

vi) *Hompa* Kaundu was one of the research participants who requested that traditional clothing with royal symbolism be created for him. It is recommended that a further project should be conducted to create traditional clothing for *Hompa*, with key royal design elements exploring materiality and cultural symbolism for royalty.

vii) The *Vakwangali Fashion Collection* created in this study was presented to the community at the Annual Vakwangali Cultural Festival. The researcher received overwhelming requests from local people to buy the presented garments. It is therefore recommended that the future organizing members of the protocol committee are encouraged to imitate the designs with the help of the researcher to assist with the construction process.

viii) This study was limited to Vakwangali traditional clothing which focused on Vakwangali and Vambunza as they share the same culture and including more ethnic groups in the study was unachievable. It is highly recommended that further studies be carried out with the remaining ethnic groups in both Kavango East and West regions of Namibia.

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APPENDIX A: BACKGROUND OF INTERVIEWS AND SHORT BIOGRAPHIES OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Interviews for this study were conducted with the following participants. Discussions of the findings for this study derived from information shared by the participants during the interviews as well as other literature, were consolidated to make arguments for the discussions covered in chapter, four, five and six. The following are short biographies to introduce the participants, based on what the participants shared with the researcher.

Kamunoko, T. (2018, January 18) Personal interview

Theresia Kamunoko is a traditional dancer and traditional dress maker and is a descendant of Vakwangali royal lineage. Her knowledge on traditional clothing and the changes that came was derived from stories that her grandmother *Hompa* Kanuni (who reigned from 1958 until her death in 1972)

Kandjimi, M. L. (2018, January 19) Personal interview

Lydia Kandjimi was born in 1963 at Mayara but now lives in Nkurenkuru. She is a royal descendant but also a business woman who sells and makes Vakwangali traditional clothing. She is a committee member of a taskforce involved in cultural activities such as festivals together with the Ukwangali Royal Clan and the Ministry of Education Arts and Culture.

Elizabeth, N. (2018, January 19) Personal interview

Elizabeth Namutenya was born at Ngone in 1958, she went to school at Tondoro mission and later married and moved to Mayara Village. She has now settled at Nkurenkuru. Her early life was influenced by Christianity as she went to school at Tondoro Catholic mission station where she also met her late husband. She shared knowledge regarding traditional clothing from what was narrated to her by her grandmother and shared some views on how Christianity shunned traditional clothing, especially among school going pupils. Namutenya was interviewed at her homestead in Nkurenkuru.

zaKankono M.M., Kankono K.J., Hambyuka K., Munango N. and Hamyuka K.H. (2018, January 20) Personal Interview.

The third series of interviews were conducted at the homestead of Marcus zaKankono and Kloteria Hambyuka at Keni village. The interviews were joined by close relatives of the couple with the male participants mainly discussing Vakwangali traditional clothing for males as narrated to them by their elders.

Jaffet Kayayuka Kankono born 1948 and Marcus Muduva zaKankono born in 1936 are brothers both born at Sihurungu near Nkurenkuru. Seeking better farming and grazing land their elders relocated to Keni village where they currently reside. Both brothers who have travelled quite often for different reasons, Kankono into contract labour and zaKankono to Owamboland for pastoral training share their encounter with trade cloth in the Grootfontein area. Kloteria Hambyuka is a retired teacher who for many years taught at Nzinze village. She was born in 1941 at Siyandeya and now

lives at Keni village. Hambyuka shared her knowledge regarding Vakwangali women traditional clothing and adornment

Munango was born at Sihurungu, but due to her mother's ill health she lived with her elder sister. Munango then settled at Keni when she got married to Gabrielle. She considers to her upbringing to be pagan because she only embraced Christianity when she was older and only got baptized when she got married. Her upbringing exposed her to many traditional ways of living as she only embraced Christianity much later.

Hambyuka, was born in 1971 at Nzinze and now lives at Silikunga. She worked as a shop attended in Rundu and later became a literacy programme trainee and then a facilitator. She moved to Keni in her desire to stay close to her ancestry. She was keen to participate in the interview stating that she is interested in learning from the discussions regarding Vakwangali traditional clothing and possible projects to come out of this.

Mufenda N. M. M. and Sikongo R. (2018, January 23) Personal interview

After making interview appointments at Sihurungu and Nkurenkuru, the next interviews were at Mufenda residence at Sihurungu with three women.

Magdalena Mufenda a royal descendant was joined by her friend Rosa Sikongo. Both Mufenda and Sikongo were born at Sihurungu after their parents moved from Mayara. Both women were dressed up for the interview in dresses that are now commonly referred to as Aawambo dresses with strings of beads hanging around their necks and their heads tied with headscarves. Mufenda clarifies that her *mpande*,

a royal shell that was hanging on her beads was inherited from her father after his passing. The participants share narratives regarding traditional clothing as they have heard from their parents. These two women also share their memories regarding European clothing that were traded and brought back by contract labours after their endeavours.

Hausiku N. S. S. (2018, January 24) Personal interview

The interview appointments for the second week were delayed due to the passing of honourable Rosalia Nghindinwa. Most of the participants were engaged in the preparations for the state funeral. Despite the participant's engagement in the state funeral arrangements, some participants rescheduled to meet at another convenient place and time. Unable to meet Hausiku at her village home at Gava, we were informed to meet her at Nkurenkuru as she was at the house of mourning of the late Honourable Rosalia Nghidinda. Hausiku, wife of the late Hompa Sientu Mpasi, was born at Rupara but now resides at Gava. She shared her knowledge regarding traditional clothing as she used to make traditional clothing in her younger days.

Siteketa S. and Johanna S. (2018, January 24) Personal interview

The next interviews were with royal descendants siblings, Severinus Siteketa born in 1943 and Johanna Sabine born in 1939 both at Mukekete. The interviews took place at Rupara the homestead of Siteketa. Johanna started school in 1947 at Nkurenkuru Catholic mission where her father was a teacher. In 1955 she and several other girls from Nkurenkuru Catholic School were taken to Valfreeden Catholic Girl's School

in Omaruru. However in 1958 Johanna was not allowed to go back to school at the end of the holidays as their royal grandmothers *Hompa* Mangondo, *Hompa* Elizabeth Nanguronhi (Kabwetunkuru) were not pleased with Johanna for going back to school stating that, what the father was doing was barring the advancement of the royal clan. After that, there was an intense family meeting where it was decided that only the male children must be allowed to leave Nkurenkuru for school. After the family meeting Siteketa was then sent to Döbra Catholic School in Windhoek. Siteketa narrates his adventurous journey while at school. He made sure to get contract work in Walvis Bay factories every school holiday to provide for himself and his brother who had then also joined him at Döbra. Siteketa was a teacher at Tondoro Catholic Mission for 10 years, thereafter he established a school at Ekuli. After being there for 7 years he then joined the South African broadcasting radio in 1962. With his long teaching career and his work in translating Dr Romanus Kampungu's work, Siteketa shared his knowledge regarding Vakwangali culture.

Kasera K.F. (2018, January 24) Personal interview

The last interview for the day was conducted at Kulikusuka at the homestead of Frans Kasera. Kasera a traditional dancer was born in 1969 at Kakora village on the other side of the river, in Angola. He moved to Mpungu in 1970 and then settled at Kulikusuka village. As a traditional dancer and cultural promoter, Kasera has knowledge regarding Vakwangali traditional clothing and culture he was willing to share, especially with the younger people

Kaundu G. M. (2018, January 25) Personal interview

Maria Kaundu is a crafts woman highly skilled in basket making and knitting. She has a vast knowledge on Vakwangali traditional basket making as well as the use of natural dyes. She was born in 1947 in Rundu, her elders was then settled at the river bank but later moved towards Sarusungu in the area now known as Kaisosi

***Hompa* Kaundu Alfons and Haimbili Sitoka Martha (2018, March 31) Personal interview.**

Participants of the study strongly recommended that interviews be conducted with the royal clan of Vakwangali and Mbunza royal clans to get in depth knowledge regarding royal traditional clothing. For this reason an interview was conducted with *Hompa* Kaundu the current *Hompa Hompa* Kaundu was joined in the interview by Sitoka Haimbili because, she has more knowledge on royal woman traditional clothing and she enriched the discussion.

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE

A STUDY OF VAKWANGALI TRADITIONAL CLOTHING FOR FASHION CREATION IN NAMIBIA

By Maria A.N. Caley UNAM

- What are your full names?
- When and where were you born?
- How did your family come to live here?

- What Vakwangali traditional clothing do you know or remember? What is your earliest memory about Vakwangali traditional clothing?
- What kind of clothing did you wear when you were growing up?
- What was your favourite traditional clothing and why?
- Where did Vakwangali get materials to make the different types of traditional clothing?
- Why did Vakwangali make different types and styles of traditional clothing?
- How were traditional clothing made? (Please describe the process).
- Could anyone make traditional clothing, was it a skill every one possessed?
- What differentiated men's traditional clothing from those of women?
- How is the dressing today different from when you were a child?

- What local or community events had the most impact on you when you were growing up?
- Did any of the local or community events personally affect your way of dressing?

- What problems (reasons) do you think have prevented (stopped) the transforming (changing) of Vakwangali traditional clothing into a Kwangali fashion clothing?
- What impact did the lack of fashion clothing have on Vakwangali in terms of their identity, history and culture?
- Why is creating Vakwangali fashion clothing important or necessary?
- What should be done or put in place to create Vakwangali fashion clothing that retains the value and meaning from the Vakwangali traditional clothing?
- Who should be involved to help the researcher to create Vakwangali fashion clothing and what should be the role of each one of them?
- What items of traditional clothing do you suggest should be created into fashion clothing?
- What styles should be included in the proposed fashion clothing?
- What past meaning and values do you suggest should be retained in the proposed fashion clothing?
- What must be done to ensure that the culture or heritage of Vakwangali is not lost within the proposed fashion clothing?
- Who do you think should be the target group or persons for creating Vakwangali fashion clothing and why?
- What materials or fabrics should be used to make Vakwangali fashion clothing and why?
- How should the proposed Vakwangali fashion clothing be created? (please suggest the process)

- Who should wear the proposed Vakwangali fashion clothing and why?
- When and where (or for what occasion) should one wear the proposed Vakwangali fashion clothing?

APPENDIX C: OBSERVATION CHECK LIST

Checklist for the observations of artefacts and photographs at museums and archives

Date:

Place:

Collection:

Photographer/collector:

*NB. The observer will look at different items found in museums and archive and will record details regarding the **silhouette, styles, material, craftsmanship and decoration.***

APPENDIX D: CONSENT FORM

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT FORM

ANNEX 5



TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT: A STUDY OF VAKWANGALI TRADITIONAL CLOTHING FOR FASHION CREATION IN NAMIBIA

REFERENCE NUMBER: 20012789

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Maria A.N. Caley

ADDRESS: P. O. Box 20695, Windhoek

CONTACT NUMBER: 0812603196

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this project. Please ask the researcher any questions about any part of this project that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you clearly understand what this research entails and how you could be involved. Also, your participation is **entirely voluntary** and you are free to decline to participate. This interview will take place in your homestead. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. This interview will be recorded with a voice recorder and a notebook. It is still

acceptable if you wish not to be recorded and in such a case the researcher will make use of note taking. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point without consequences, even if you had agreed to take part.

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee at The University of Namibia and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of the international Declaration of Helsinki and Namibian National Research Ethics Guidelines.

1. What is this research study all about?

- a) This study will be conducted within the 8 constituents of Kavango West region; that is Kapako, Mankumpi, Mpungu, Musese, Ncamagoro, Ncuncuni, Nkurenkuru and Tondoro. All interviews will be conducted within the home stead of the participants with minimal distraction. If participants are not comfortable to be interviewed in their homes, an alternative space will be considered. A number of fifteen (15) participants will be recruited for this study. This study will also make use of the photographic archives and observations of artifact in the museums.
- b) This study aims to explore the Vakwangali traditional clothing styles over time, its transformation and the lack of its transformation into everyday wear. This study will derive the meanings and value embedded into the Vakwangali traditional clothing to inspire a creation of a fashion collection as an initiative to transform the traditional clothing into fashion. The created fashion collection will be exhibited in Rundu area.

- c) This study will retrieve photographs from the archive, observe artifact at the museum and conduct interviews with participants to gain knowledge and understanding regarding the traditional clothing of Vakwangali.
- d) This study will record all interviews using a voice recorder and a notebook. All participants in this study are protected and will have their identities concealed unless they choose to reveal their identity. Participants will be required to answer questions according to their knowledge and understanding of the Vakwangali traditional clothing. Participants may be required to look at photographs to trigger memory and expand on discussions. All recordings will be shared with participants upon completion of the study.
- e) In occurrence of unplanned interruption call of duty, the participants are allowed to call for a reschedule of the interview.

2. Why have you been invited to participate?

- a) You have been invited to partake in this study with reference to your knowledge and understanding regarding the Vakwangali traditional clothing, value, meaning and its transformations. Your participation in this study will contribute to gathered in-depth data regarding the traditional clothing and the meaning and values embedded with it.

3. What will your responsibilities be?

- a) As a participant in the study you are invited to participate in this study to answer a few questions to your knowledge and understanding regarding the Vakwangali

traditional clothing. The researcher may use photographs to trigger, expand and clarify discussions.

- b) The interview will take up to maximum of 1 hour.

4. Will you benefit from taking part in this research?

- a) This study will benefit all participants and the Vakwangali, in documenting and gaining insight regarding the value and meaning of Vakwangali traditional clothing beyond a mere documentation. This research will also create a different narrative regarding the Vakwangali traditional clothing that may inspire similar studies within the Kavango region.

5. Are there any risks involved in your taking part in this research?

- a) This study does not envisaged risk in participating; the data gathered is beneficial to historians and designer in retrieving narratives regarding Vakwangali traditional clothing.

6. If you do not agree to take part, what alternatives do you have?

- b) Participation in the study is voluntary and all participants may decline or withdraw from the interview at any time without any consequences.

7. Who will have access to your medical records?

- a) Not applicable to this study.

8. What will happen in the unlikely event of some form injury occurring as a direct result of your taking part in this research study?

a) Not applicable to this study.

9. Will you be paid to take part in this study and are there any costs involved?

a) This study does not carry any participation fees and there are no payments for all participants.

10 Is there anything else that you should know or do?

a) To participate in this research you are required to sign the consent form. Your interview will be recorded with a voice recorder and a notebook; this will allow for all data gathered to be transcribed. You will receive a copy of the recordings and the transcripts upon completion of this study. All recordings and transcription will be kept for a period of 5 years.

11. Declaration by participant

By signing below, I agree to take part in a research study entitled A STUDY OF VAKWANGALI TRADITIONAL CLOTHING FOR FASHION CREATION IN NAMIBIA

I declare that:

- a) I have read or had read to me this information and consent form and it is written in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
- b) I have had a chance to ask questions and all my questions have been adequately answered.

- c) I understand that taking part in this study is **voluntary** and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- d) I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- e) I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the study doctor or researcher feels it is in my best interests, or if I do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.

Signed at (*place*) on (*date*)

2017.

.....

Signature of participant

.....

Signature of witness

12. Declaration by investigator

I (*name*) declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- I did not use an interpreter.

Signed at (*place*) on (*date*)
2005.

.....

.....

Signature of investigator

Signature of witness

APPENDIX E: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

Ethical Clearance Reference Number: FHSS/375/2018 **Date:** 13 March, 2018

This Ethical Clearance Certificate is issued by the University of Namibia Research Ethics Committee (UREC) in accordance with the University of Namibia's Research Ethics Policy And Guidelines. Ethical Approval Is Given In Respect Of Undertakings Contained in the Research Project outlined below. This Certificate is issued on the recommendations of the ethical evaluation done by the Faculty/Centre/Campus Research & Publications Committee sitting with the Postgraduate Studies Committee.

Title of Project: A Study Of Vakwangali Traditional Clothing For Fashion Creation In Namibia

Researcher: MARIA A. N. CALEY

Student Number: 200012789

Supervisor(s): Dr Kletus Muhena Likuwa (Main) Dr Napandulwe Shiweda (Co)

Faculty: Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Take note of the following:

- (a) Any significant changes in the conditions or undertakings outlined in the approved Proposal must be communicated to the UREC. An application to make amendments may be necessary.
- (b) Any breaches of ethical undertakings or practices that have an impact on ethical conduct of the research must be reported to the UREC.
- (c) The Principal Researcher must report issues of ethical compliance to the UREC (through the Chairperson of the Faculty/Centre/Campus Research & Publications Committee) at the end of the Project or as may be requested by UREC.
- (d) The UREC retains the right to:
 - (i) Withdraw or amend this Ethical Clearance if any unethical practices (as outlined in the Research Ethics Policy) have been detected or suspected,
 - (ii) Request for an ethical compliance report at any point during the course of the research;

UREC wishes you the best in your research.

Dr. E. de Villiers: UREC Chairperson

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "E. de Villiers", written over a horizontal line.

Ms. P. Claassen: UREC Secretary

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "P. Claassen", written over a horizontal line.

APPENDIX F: PERMISSION LETTERS TO REGIONAL COUNCILORS

MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH CENTRE (MRC)

Social Sciences Division

University of Namibia, Private Bag 13301, Windhoek, Namibia

340 Mandume Ndemufayo Avenue, Pioneers Park

☎ +264 61 206 3051/2; Fax: 061-206 3684/3050; URL: <http://www.unam.edu.na/mrc/>



UNAM
UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA

11 January 2018

Hon. S. Kudumo

Regional Councilor

Musese Constituency

Re: request to support Ms. Maria Caley (200012789) to carry out her study on **VAKWANGALI TRADITIONAL CLOTHING FOR FASHION CREATION IN NAMIBIA**

Dear Sir

Ms. Maria Caley (200012789) is a registered student in MA (Visual Arts) under the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science at University of Namibia (UNAM). She is expected to undertake research in Ukwangali area of Kavango west region from **15 to 29 January 2018**.

Her research which will focus on **VAKWANGALI TRADITIONAL CLOTHING FOR FASHION CREATION IN NAMIBIA** is part of her MA degree studies at UNAM. The study will significantly contribute to the heritage preservation and transformation of Vakwangali traditional dress into fashion clothes designing. Moreover, the gathered knowledge will contribute towards academic debates on intersection between cultural wears and fashion design.

We therefore ask you and your goof office to give Ms. Caley all the necessary support she needs by identifying key people in your area who holds knowledge on Vakwangali traditional wear and dressing for oral interview and group discussions. We shall be thankful of any further unforeseen logistical support from you as may be required by Ms. Caley to help her achieve her field work.

For any further information or clarity, please do not hesitate to contact me by telephone at +264 61 206 3286 or cell number at 0818389293 or by email at klikuwa@unam.na.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Kletus Likuwa, Deputy Director:
Multidisciplinary Research Centre, UNAM, Windhoek

MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH CENTRE (MRC)

Social Sciences Division

University of Namibia, Private Bag 13301, Windhoek, Namibia
340 Mandume Ndemufayo Avenue, Pioneers Park
☎ +264 61 206 3051/2; Fax: 061-206 3684/3050; URL.: <http://www.unam.edu.na/mrc/>



11 January 2018

Hon. Muha L.
Regional Councillor
Mankumpi Constituency

Re: request to support Ms. Maria Caley (200012789) to carry out her study on
**VAKWANGALI TRADITIONAL CLOTHING FOR FASHION CREATION IN
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Dear Sir

Ms. Maria Caley (200012789) is a registered student in MA (Visual Arts) under the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science at University of Namibia (UNAM). She is expected to undertake research in Ukwangali area of Kavango west region from **15 to 29 January 2018**.

Her research which will focus on **VAKWANGALI TRADITIONAL CLOTHING FOR FASHION CREATION IN NAMIBIA** is part of her MA degree studies at UNAM. The study will significantly contribute to the heritage preservation and transformation of Vakwangali traditional dress into fashion clothes designing. Moreover, the gathered knowledge will contribute towards academic debates on intersection between cultural wears and fashion design.

We therefore ask you and your goof office to give Ms. Caley all the necessary support she needs by identifying key people in your area who holds knowledge on Vakwangali traditional wear and dressing for oral interview and group discussions. We shall be thankful of any further unforeseen logistical support from you as may be required by Ms. Caley to help her achieve her field work.

For any further information or clarity, please do not hesitate to contact me by telephone at +264 61 206 3286 or cell number at 0818389293 or by email at klikuwa@unam.na.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kletus Likuwa', is written over a horizontal dashed line.

Dr Kletus Likuwa, Deputy Director:
Multidisciplinary Research Centre, UNAM, Windhoek

MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH CENTRE (MRC)

Social Sciences Division

University of Namibia, Private Bag 13301, Windhoek, Namibia
340 Mandume Ndemufayo Avenue, Pioneers Park
☎ +264 61 206 3051/2; Fax: 061-206 3684/3050; URL.: <http://www.unam.edu.na/mrc/>



11 January 2018

Hon. Shiudifonya T.
Regional Councillor
Mpungu Constituency

Re: request to support Ms. Maria Caley (200012789) to carry out her study on **VAKWANGALI TRADITIONAL CLOTHING FOR FASHION CREATION IN NAMIBIA**

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Dr Kletus Likuwa, Deputy Director:
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MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH CENTRE (MRC)

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340 Mandume Ndemufayo Avenue, Pioneers Park
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11 January 2018

Hon. Nakambare D.

Regional Councilor

Nkurenkuru Constituency

Re: request to support Ms. Maria Caley (200012789) to carry out her study on **VAKWANGALI TRADITIONAL CLOTHING FOR FASHION CREATION IN NAMIBIA**

Dear Sir

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Dr Kletus Likuwa, Deputy Director:
Multidisciplinary Research Centre, UNAM, Windhoek

APPENDIX G: AN NUAL VAKWANGALI CULTURAL FESTIVAL INVITATION LETTER



Ukwangali Traditional Authority

Kahenge Royal Office,
P.O. Box 6039,
Nkurenkuru

Tel/Fax: 264-66-257954

Enq. M. Haingura @0812800635

Email. mpasih@yahoo.com

04 September 2018

Dr. Kletus M. Likuwa
Deputy Director
Multi Disciplinary Research Centre
University of Namibia

**RE : INVITATION TO ATTEND THE UKWANGALI TRADITIONAL AUTHORITY'S INAUGURAL
CULTURAL FESTIVAL, 08 SEPTEMBER 2018.**

The Ukwangali Traditional Authority will be hosting a Cultural Festival from the 07th – 09th September 2018 at Mayara in Nkurenkuru. The official ceremony will be held on Saturday September 8, 2018.

It is against this background that I have the pleasure in inviting you to grace the occasion and witness the inaugural Cultural Festival for the Ukwangali Traditional Authority. Kindly extend also this invitation to Maria Caley to come exhibit the Fashion Collection of the Vakwangali the exercise she carried out as of her MA Research supervised by yourself. Attached hereto is the draft tentative program for your attention.

Kindly accept the assurance of my highest consideration of your presence.

Yours Sincerely



Eugen Siwombe Kudumo
Chief of the Ukwangali Traditional Authority



Date

APPENDIX H: ARCHIVE PHOTOGRAPHS COPYRIGHT



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, ARTS AND CULTURE
NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF NAMIBIA

Tel: (061) 293 5222/11
Fax: (061) 293 5217
Enquiries: Ms Albertina Nekongo
Email: Albertina.Nekongo@nlas.gov.na

Private Bag 13250
Windhoek
29 June 2018

User Agreement

Ref: 16/4/3

The agreement is entered between the National Archives of Namibia and Ms. Maria Caley.

Contact Details

Tell. No: 0812603196
Postal address: P O Box 20695, Windhoek
Nationality: Namibian
Email: mcaley@unam.na
Project Name: A Study of Vakwangali Traditional Clothing as an inspiration for fashion design
Country/ Region of distribution: Worldwide
Number of images: 8
Fees Paid: N\$ 160.00

Permission is granted to the above mentioned person to use the materials for Academic Research/ fashion exhibition. These images may not be used in any other publications without permission of the National Archives of Namibia. The Archive holds the copyright of all images.

I have read and agree to all Terms and Condition.

Name of Organisation/ Individual Person: Ms Maria Caley

Signature: 

National Archives of Namibia
Head of Archives: Mrs Beauty Matongo

Signature: 

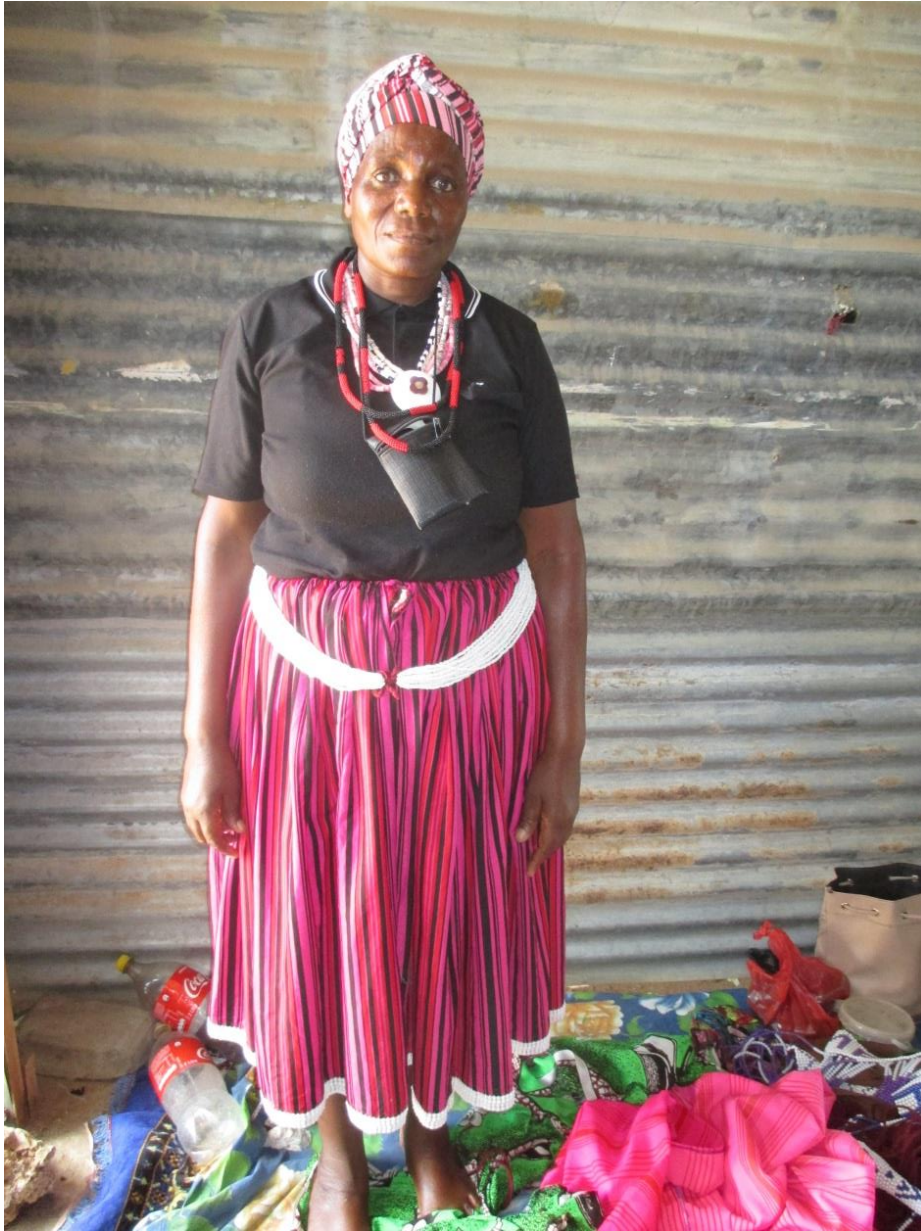
Terms and Condition

1. In this agreement the term pictures or images cover all visual items & Sound recordings which the national archives may offer for reproduction.
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3. Pictures/images are supplied for use and not the property of the user thus not allowed to distribute the images to third parties nor uploaded on social media. The copyright still remains with the NAN.
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5. Reproduction rights granted are personal to the Client and may not be assigned, or transferred to third parties.
6. Reproduction rights is granted when full payment is made.
7. Any reproduction made or re-use of pictures /images is infringement of copyright and the agreement, thus the Client is liable for the payment of damages.
8. The acknowledgement should read as follows: National Archives of Namibia.
9. Two proof of any publication or the relevant pages thereof containing any pictures supplied by the Archives are to be furnished to the Archives by the Client free of Charge within two months of publication.
10. If pictures/ images are used in the production of a film, a copy of the programme should be furnished to the Archive for free within two months of production or transmission.

APPENDIX I: PHOTOGRAPHS OF INTERVIEWEES



Theresia Kamunoko (2018, January 18) Photographer: Author



Lydia Kandjimi (2018, January 19) Photographer: Author

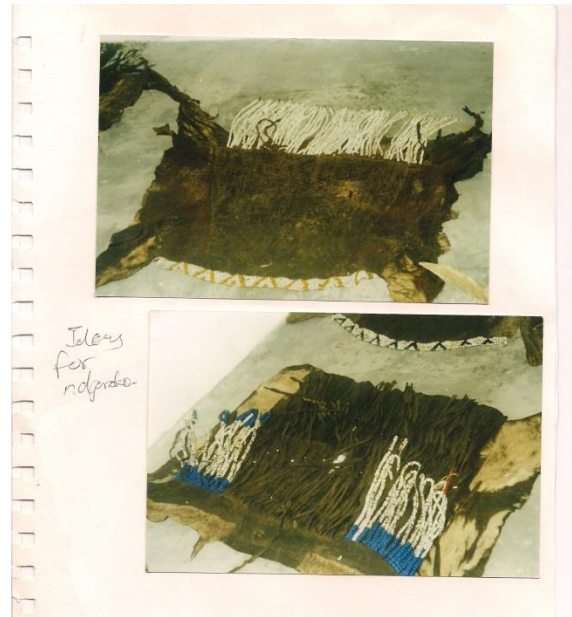
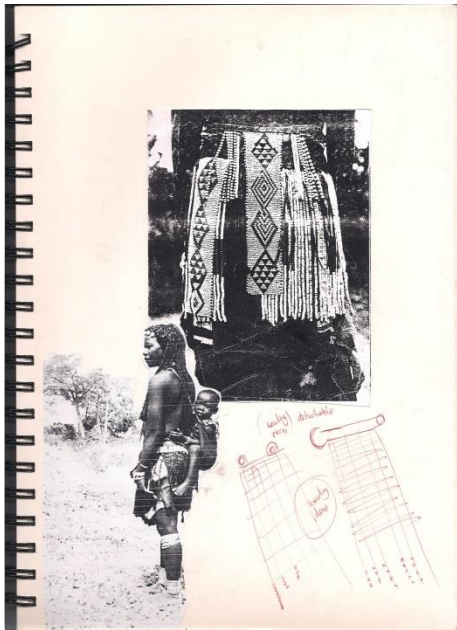


Rosa Sikongo (2018, January 23) Photographer: Author



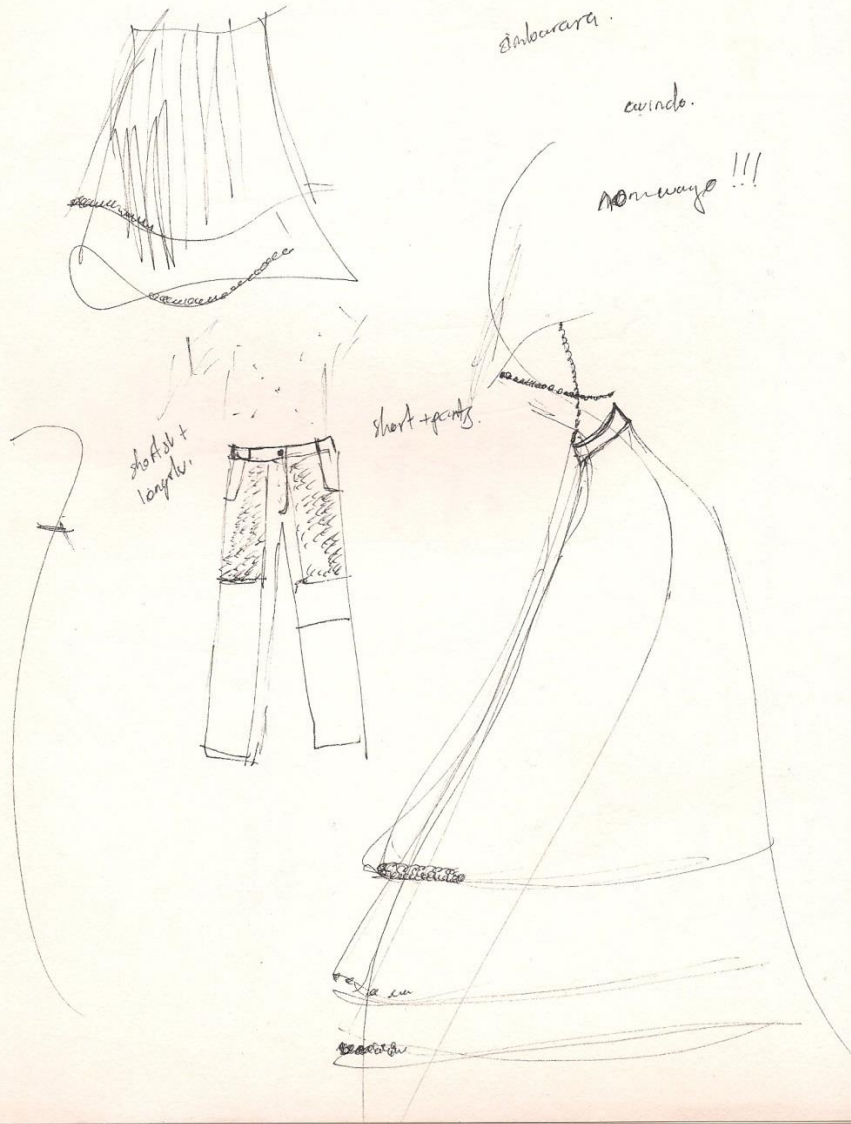
Magdalena Mufenda (2018, January 23) Photographer: Author

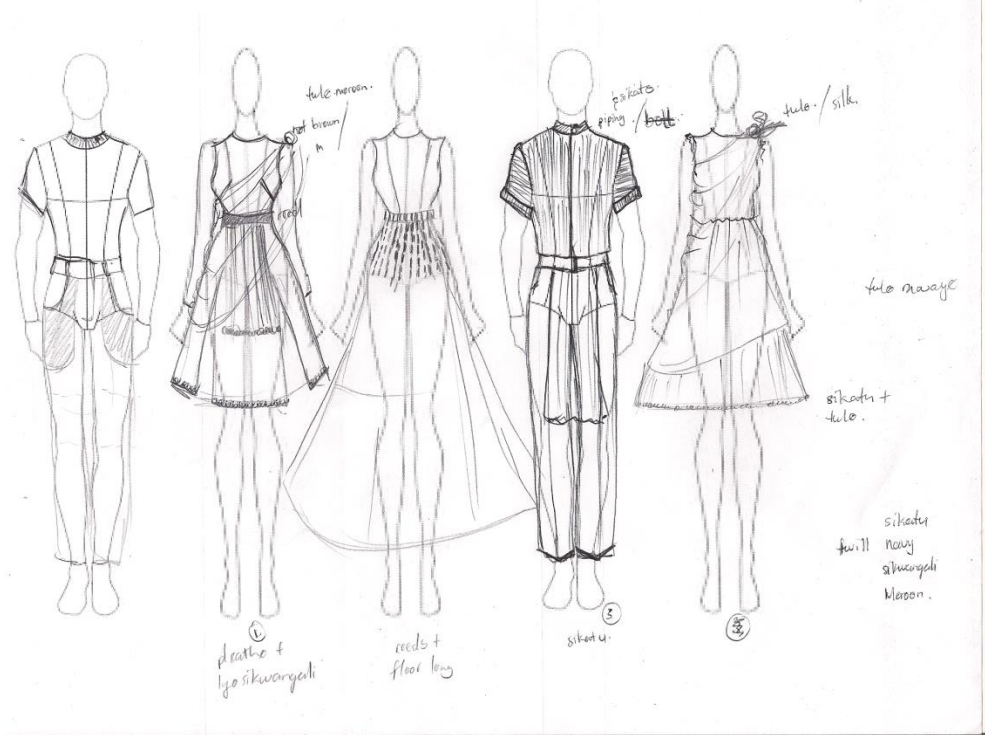
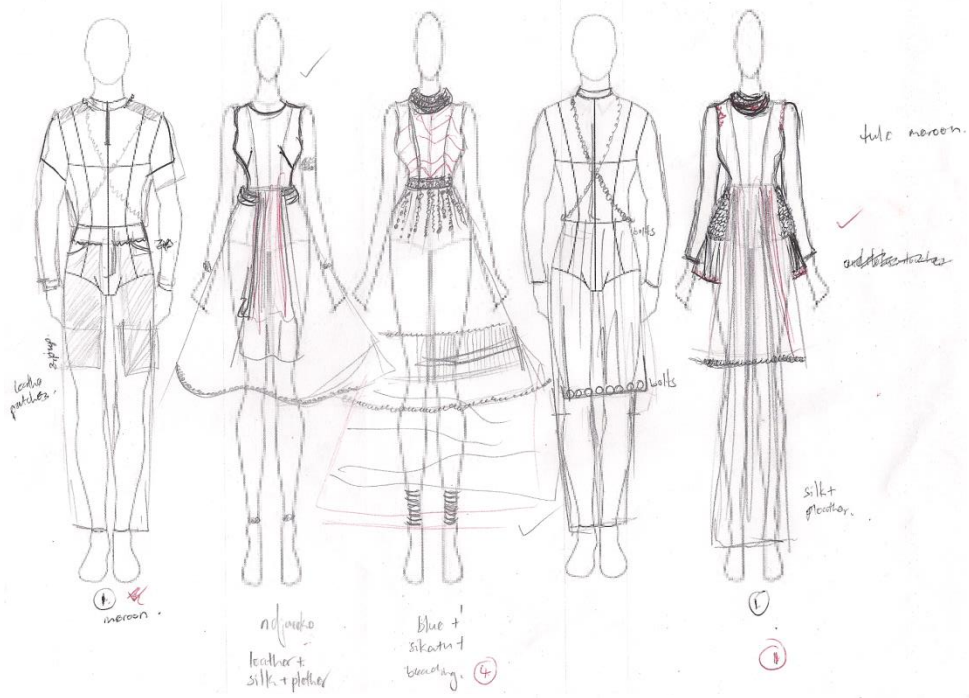
APPENDIX J: CREATIVE DIARY



Possible materials.

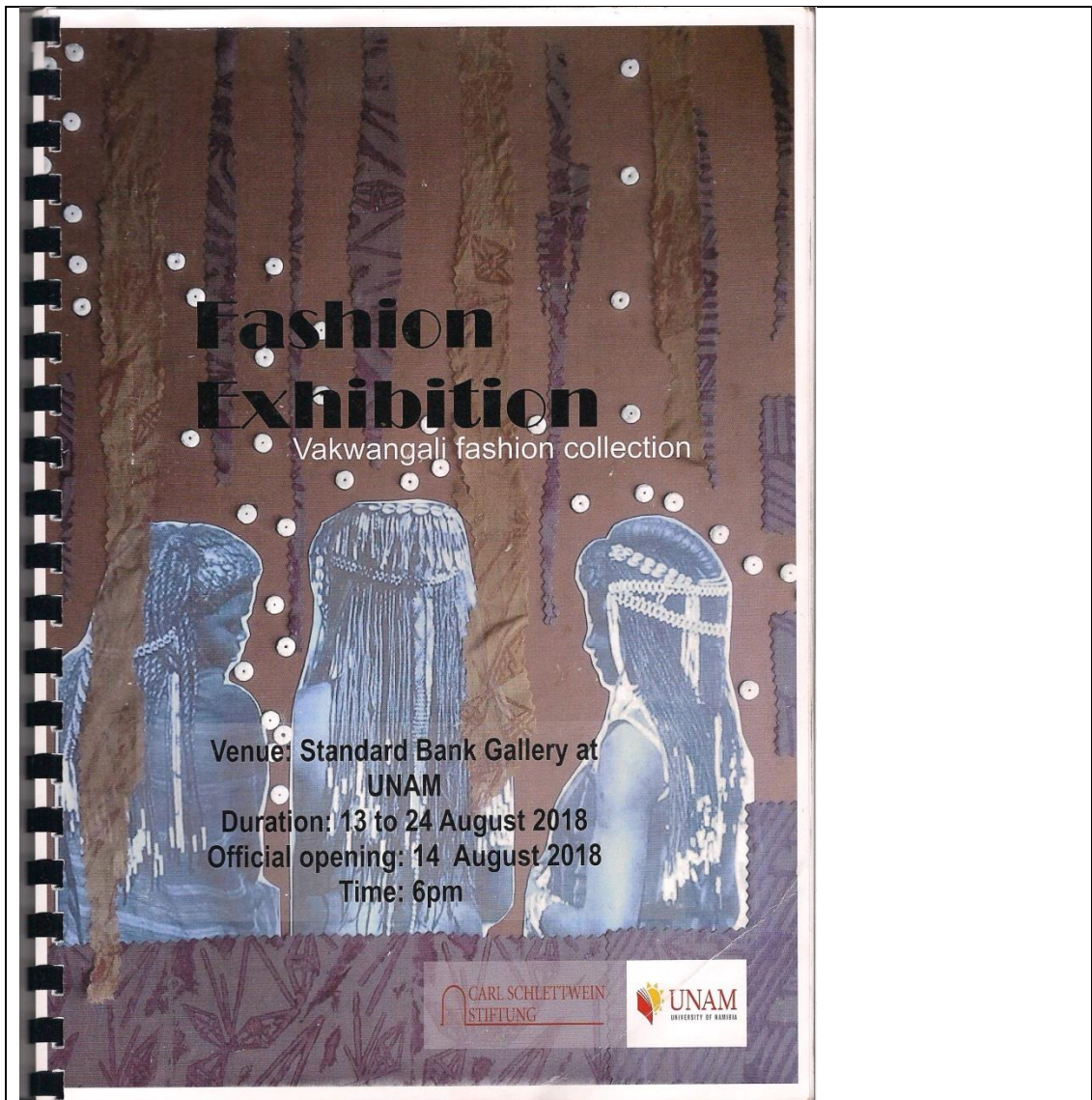
Cyosikwangadi, Iyegeha; leather/fur.







APPENDIX K: EXHIBITION GUEST BOOK



Vakwangali Fashion Collection

NAME	REMARKS	City/Town	E-mail Address
CHAKIRRA CLASSEW	Excellent!!! I love your creative process and how your inspiration translated into your final designs!	Windhoek	chakirraclassen@gmail.com
Trefina Kachana	Beautiful designs. => Love	Windhoek	trefinak354@gmail.com
Ndaporitosa Heta	I'm so inspired by both the culture and modern designs	Windhoek	ndaporitosa@gmail.com
Fuerman DAWUNA R.N.	I enjoy the simplicity and complexity of each piece.	Windhoek	pfellenand@gmail.com
Conelia MURASUA	I loved it!!!	Windhoek	zenobia.murasua@gmail.com
Uene	Absolutely amazing work!! Love it	Windhoek	uene.ene@gmail.com
Ndikwa	Beautifully done	W	ndikwa@gmail.com
Anna Vilergé Kavudu	expression of creativity and imagination, bridging two generations - the old and the young through traditional garment and pattern on one hand and contemporary style on the other. This represents identity, culture, history and yet relevant to the new generation. This tells me that traditional wear can be tailor-made for contemporary fashions. That's what I appreciate with this unique collection. Revival of the old, expressed in the new.		vilergi@gmail.com

Vakwangali Fashion Collection

NAME	REMARKS	City/Town	E-mail Address
Fatene TAMBWE	Congratulations, very inspiring and deep work.		
Mildred	Very interesting, and eye catching, and advanced fine piece of arts.		
Muruti J.B	Interesting, More information is needed on the clothing.		
MURINDA David	Amazing and still the best to the next level		
Vincentius Muzungu	This is really indeed innovation at its best.	WTK	vincentiusm@gmail.com
Cynthia Schwimmg	Amazing Work. Maria. keep up the spirit. The time is now		
Implemndy!!!	What we start revisiting our past.	WTK	
U Daboy's Schwimmg	So pure and full in your design. I love the prints -		
Elonay Wimmerth	Very deep. More detail in explanations needed	WTK	

Vakwangali Fashion Collection

NAME	REMARKS	City/Town	E-mail Address
Emilia Shikwasa	Beautiful traditional garments I love how you incorporated the beads in the designs & also the use of the adelela traditional material	WTK	emilia.shikwasa@gmail.com
Bertha Nampila	The dresses are beautiful and so deep. The fashion collection is educational and I learned alot about the Vakwangali people and tradition.	WTK	berthannampila@gmail.com
Nopadine Khimoch	This is a beautiful exhibition and the information in the captions is interesting, especially since it is based on oral narratives - well done Mama!!	WTK	nshwmedeunam@gmail.com
Michael Shirungu	Amazing designs of a different & amazing take on our traditional wear	WTK	mshirungu@unam.na
Betty Asika	This is wonderful exhibition and keep it up to promote tradition	WTK	abarbarab@gmail.com
Lilia M Shaningos	It was nice and beautiful we need more of these events	WTK	shaningos@msn.com
Helma P. Wilkinson	I am impressed there is still room to research and find the original ornament and beads which are shown on the photos.	WTK	ndimbawilkinson@gmail.com
Sheena Nghtundika	Very impressive, keep up the good work. W	WTK	nsheena victorino@yahoo.com

Vakwangali Fashion Collection

NAME	REMARKS	City/Town	E-mail Address
Florence Wilkinson	Love the designs, very original, something I would proudly be willing to wear	WTK	florencewilkinson@gmail.com
Peter Iiyamba	I am very impressed by this breathtaking art work. Best wishes	Windhoek	piiyamba@unam.na
Hainyura Lydia	Amazing and very impressive I love it more than everything	WTK	njone
Maria Mbereshu	was very impressed with the fashion design mixed with contemporary and beautiful. I loved the designs & art	WTK	kwetebaboto@gmail.com
Cannie Bopoto	The designs have a unique design of our culture and history that I don't know much of yet. I love it.	WTK	carrie_arn90@hotmail.com
Angero Veii	Insightful. Like a glance into a time in the past that we should not forget. Beautiful!	WTK	veii
Mukwe Bambara	Very impressive designs and very detailed. Inter-presented remain	WTK	bmukwe@unam.na
Christoph Hamureng	The mumbanda and mutijigani designs catches focus out at it really captured a unique mumbanda	WTK	chamureng@unam.na
Wilhard Shpileyi	Impressive artwork Ms Maje impressed by the cultural descriptions and clothes design very fit.	WTK	shw97boickey@gmail.com
John Noel. Hauerel	I love how there is so much variety in this garments interesting!	WTK	noeljohn@yahoo.com
Tacavisiva Katuwo	well integrated.	WTK	bettykatuwo@gmail.com
Laurinda	love your work and I did not see much news about vakwangali fashion	WTK	twakahifwa@gmail.com
Muslundange Patrick	Beautiful work, where can we buy?	WTK	pkbynamibia@gmail.com

The detail and thoroughness of the research that has gone into garments reflect this work and history

Vakwangali Fashion Collection

NAME	REMARKS	City/Town	E-mail Address
Jody Claassen	Exceptional Work	WTK	jodyclaassen@yahoo.com
Sophia Kasera	Mikadi great job. Mpandu	Wtk	kaserasophia@gmail.com
Kay Cowley	Congratulations!	Wtk	kercin.cowley@gmail.com
Magnus Mpaai Sitoketa	Impressive work. Well done	Wtk	magnus@nablint.net
Tala Buti	No Beer	WTK	
Theresia Shivera	L	WTK	
Justina NASINI	Excellent work. Impressive	WTK	nepebenasini@gmail.com
M. MOSKA	Wow! Congratulations MOSKA How can I get myself one like?	WTK	mmoska@unam.na
TomTham Fine	Excellent	Tseu 1	J.Sun@sub.spt-bertu.de
Lanika Fofa	Super!	Bertu 2	
Wemas Hilker recht	!!	Wtk	
SYBOM FERRACUT	CONGRATULATIONS!	SWITZER	FERRACUT@INDE.NMUSEUM.DE
Rosa David	Good work	WTK	rdavid@mc.com.na
Conda David Hwosa	Stunning & Inspiring !!!	Kasera 3	conda@mc.com.na
Collin K. Tjewis	Impressive work.	WTK	ctjewis@unam.na

Vakwangali Fashion Collection

NAME	REMARKS	City/Town	E-mail Address
Essi Huuhka	Very interesting!	Turku 4	eshuuh@utu.fi
Leila Korvunen	excellent exhibition, thank you!	Turku 5	leikoi@utu.fi
Marjo Kaartinen	wonderful - thank you!	Naantali 6	mkaar@utu.fi
Maggie K.	Awesome work! LOVED IT	WTK 7	
Kertu Kauma	Very well detailed, inspirational and beautiful art work!	Reundu 8	kertukauma@gmail.com
Jeremy Sireker		WTK	msireker@img.vic
Naiskile Jizyenda	Thought provoking and inspiring Keep the culture alive!! 😊	WTK	nizyenda@unam.na
MARCELLINUS SWARTBOOI	Authentic, Original, Innovative, coherent Credited!! xxx	WTK	marcellinuswartbooi@gmail.com
Markowitz Seidel		WTK	76unamarkowitz@gmail.com

