# Recomposing the archive? On sound and (hi)story in Damara / ‡Nūkhoe pasts, from Basel to west Namibia

by Sian Sullivan and Welhemina Suro Ganuses

**Abstract**: We explore interconnected texts in a 'coloniser archive' of stories, songs and historic narratives in Khoekhoegowab, recorded by German linguist Ernst Dammann and his wife Ruth in Namibia in 1953-1954 and housed in Basler Afrika Bibliographien, Switzerland. We outline the 're-ordering' strategy enabling us to 'release' information caught by the Dammanns, and work towards culturally contextualised understandings of the pasts spoken of by their interviewees. We engage with a specific recording as a multivalent object prompting recall of both autobiographical and cultural/collective memory, sharing an initial recomposition of a song from this recording as an initiative to amplify its content and reach through a contemporary mix drawing on electronic music-making possibilities. We close by reflecting briefly on pragmatic copyright issues arising through this reworking of the archived Dammann recordings.

#### Key words: Khoekhoegowab; sound recordings; recomposition; music; Namibia

In an archive in Basel, Switzerland, sits a series of neatly written transcripts in Khoekhoegowab, the language spoken by Damara / ‡Nūkhoe and others in Namibia. Although the identity of the transcribers is sometimes obscure, the source of the texts is clear: a collection of twelve cassettes containing recordings in Khoekhoegowab (literally, the Khoekhoe language),1 of Damara / ‡Nūkhoe ('Berg Dama') and Nama stories, songs and historical narratives (detailed below). The original reel-to-reel tape recordings were made in 1953 and 1954 on a mobile Magnetophon by the German linguist Ernst Dammann and his wife Ruth Dammann, and donated by Ernst to the Basler Afrika Bibliographien (BAB) in 2000.3 We reflect here on a multi-year, and incomplete, process of following leads in this collection, introducing our own 're-ordering' strategy to enable us to 'release' information caught in the 1950s by the Dammanns. Our research and practice is comprised of a long-term and multi-faceted listening collaboration between a UK-based anthropologist (Sullivan) and a ‡Nūkhoe-Nama woman from rural west Namibia (Ganuses). We have worked together on and off since 1994, and have engaged with the Dammann recordings since Sullivan first encountered them while participating in a workshop at BAB in 2014.4

In this article we consider some possibilities for opening up and recomposing (hi)stories of the colonised, through exploring the rich array of interconnected documents in what is arguably a 'coloniser archive'. Our proposal is that the materials in the Dammann Khoekhoegowab archive are hard to approach as records in themselves without culturally specific reference points to hook them to and interpret



Ernst Dammann and interviewee being recorded on a Magnetophon between December 1953 and January 1954 at Engela, north Namibia. Source: BAB PhotoArchive D84\_0549, photographer Ruth Dammann. © Basler Afrika Bibliographien.

them with. In order to arrive at a place of being able to work at all with the sound recordings captured in this archive, we engaged in our own ordering and disciplining processes of the archived material itself. This process of reworking recordings and transcriptions generated multiple prompts and associations with our wider corpus of oral histories and collaborative research, enabling a contextualised interpretation of the pasts experienced and spoken of by the Dammanns' interviewees.

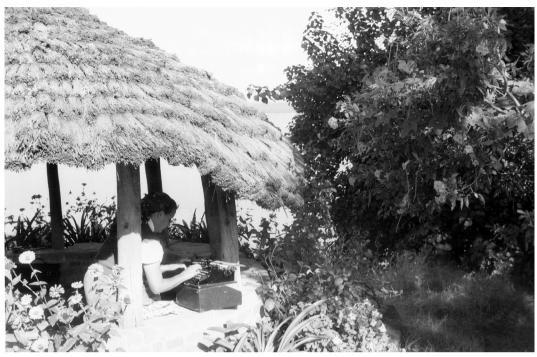
We work here with one recording in particular, of a Viktoria IlHoeses, identified by the Dammanns as a 'Berg Dama Frau', and thus as a ‡Nūkhoe woman sharing language and cultural identity with Ganuses.7 Following post-memory scholar Marianne Hirsch, we probe this 1954 recording as a multivalent object: an object with multiple values and meanings.8 We situate the two songs Viktoria chose to sing for the Dammanns as an example of a specific and widely known ‡Nūkhoe song form (lgais), outlining ways this recording prompted recall of both autobiographical and cultural/collective memory. We also share an initial contemporary recomposition of one of these recordings that took on a specific resonance as we encountered it: 'Danis (!Habugu ams)' / 'Honey (Song of the bees)', becoming 'A Bee Song' made with recording artist and composer Toby Marks/Banco de Gaia.9 Below we include links to both the archived recording of 1954 and the recomposition, and urge readers to listen to these recordings as among the 'oral history data'

informing our paper. Our hope and intention with this 'recomposition' initiative is to mobilise the potential power of this multi-faceted collaboration to thaw recordings somewhat 'frozen' in the archive, in ways that may generate new and renewed understandings and audiences. We close by reflecting briefly on the complex copyright issues arising in any reworking of the archived Dammann recordings as these become enmeshed with readings, projections and skills of an array of actors in the present.

Language note: many of the Khoekhoegowab words in this paper include the symbols |,||, ! and  $\dagger$ , denoting consonants that sound like clicks and which characterise the languages of Khoe and San peoples who live(d) throughout southern Africa. The sounds these symbols indicate are as follows: |= the 'tutting' sound made by bringing the tip of the tongue softly down from behind front teeth (dental click); ||= the clucking sound familiar in urging on a horse (lateral click); ||= a popping sound like mimicking the pulling of a cork from a wine bottle (alveolar click); ||= a sharp, explosive click made as the tongue is flattened and then pulled back from the palate (palatal click).

## The composition of the Dammann Khoekhoegowab archive

Professor Ernst Dammann (1904-2003) was a German theologian, Africanist and linguist, succeeding linguist Diedrich Westermann as Chair of African Languages and Cultures at the University of Berlin



Ruth Dammann at typewriter in Mupini, north Namibia, between March and April 1954. Source: BAB PhotoArchive D85\_0506, photographer Ernst Dammann. © Basler Afrika Bibliographien.

(later Humboldt), and leaving when the Berlin Wall was constructed to become Professor of History of Religion and African Languages at the University of Marburg from 1962 to 1972.10 His wife Ruth Dammann (née Scholtisek, 1911-1995) from Wrocław (then Breslau and part of the Imperial State of Germany), left her medical career in Hamburg to assist her husband's linguistic field research, funded by the German Research Society (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, DFG) in what was then South West Africa." Their research and writing partnership was reportedly structured along rather conservatively gendered lines.12 Ernst Dammann later wrote that Ruth 'substituted for an assistant and a secretary', compensating for his 'technical shortcomings' regarding 'sound recordings, the photography as well as the driving of a car'. 13 Most publications were in Ernst Dammann's name only, even though Ruth Dammann 'played a decisive role in the creation of the Namibia collection', and particularly in creating the photographs.14

Casting a shadow over the Dammann archive is the knowledge that in the early 1930s both Dammanns became early members of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP, the Nazi Party), paying 'tribute to the new political zeitgeist' and bringing to their research 'very conservative' perspectives. Prior to the Second World War, Ernst Dammann worked as a missionary of the Bethel Mission in the city of Tanga in the former German East Africa of Tanganyika (now Tanzania), from which he was later

removed, reportedly for activities linked with being a *Landesgruppenleiter* (regional leader) of a foreign organisation branch of the NSDAP. He spent five years in prisoner-of-war camps, becoming a camp pastor in Fort Sam Houston (USA) and head of the Theological School for German prisoners of war in Norton, England.

This problematic political history notwithstanding, the Dammanns also cultivated and sustained long-term relationships 'not only with the conservative settler society [of South West Africa] but also with well-known African priests and educators', including 'opponents of apartheid and colonisation'. 19 The Dammanns' journey to South West Africa was at the invitation of German colonial 'missionary ethnographer' Dr Heinrich Vedder, 20 who at the time was 'the political representative for the African population' of the territory.<sup>21</sup> Their purpose was 'to document African languages and literature – orality in its widest sense' in the territory.22 In this post-Second World War moment, 'South West Africa' was administered from Pretoria as essentially a fifth state of the Union of South Africa under the Afrikaans-dominated National Party.

The outcome of these multi-directional relationships for contemporary Namibia is a unique collection of 'over 750 separate sound documents', accompanied by 'additional statements and photographic material relating to the many African interlocutors who spoke, recited, narrated, sang and recalled their lives in 1953/54'. <sup>23</sup> The resultant 'colonial-apartheid archive'



Map of central Namibia showing locations of Khoekhoegowab sound recordings made by Ernst and Ruth Dammann in 1953-1954. Created by Sian Sullivan using Google Maps.

thus consists of an extensive collection of voice and music recordings exemplifying languages spoken in Namibia, as well as photographs of those recorded and transcripts of many of the spoken word audio recordings. While an archive of great historical and ethnographic value in the present, its very existence is symptomatic of the relationships of power and dominance shaping Namibia's pasts, folding the territory and its inhabitants into especially British and German imperial projections and desires.<sup>24</sup> The fastidious metadata announcements included at the start of each recording, in which the identity of the speakers and the content of their contribution is pronounced in the clipped, authoritative spoken German of Ernst Dammann, seems to inscribe – even to (un/wittingly?) summon – these colo-

nial relationships into each recording. Immediate tensions thus arise: between working with material generated by individuals with allegiances to problematic historical political structures whose power brutalised so many, and acknowledging possibilities for empowerment in the present through reconnecting historic recordings with the contexts and descendants of those recorded.<sup>25</sup>

Khoekhoegowab, the language spoken by the Dammanns' Damara / ‡Nūkhoe ('Berg Dama') and Nama interlocutors, is present in three separate collections of the Ernst and Ruth Dammann archive in BAB: (1) as written transcripts in Inventory PA.39, Carton F (Khoekhoegowab), Folders 1-9; (2) as recordings in Cassettes 32B to 41 (cassette 33 is partly missing), 43A (one recording), 46B (three recordings); and (3) as the



Detail of 'Würdige Herren. Herero und Bergdama' ('Worthy gentlemen. Herero and Bergdama'), Okahandja, 11-18 October 1953. Eliphas Eiseb is third from right. Source: BAB PhotoArchive D01\_0241, photographer Ruth Dammann. © Basler Afrika Bibliographien.

'Ruth Dammann photographic collection' in the BAB PhotoArchives.<sup>26</sup> At the time of these recordings the orthography for Khoekhoegowab was still being established, and the 'ecclesiastical orthography' based especially on Krönlein was generally used.<sup>27</sup> The Dammann recordings and their transcripts played a role in establishing a modern orthography through being worked on by individuals who asserted critical agency in consolidating Khoekhoegowab as a Namibian national language (see below).

Between October 1953 and May 1954 Ernst and Ruth Dammann made over forty recordings of Khoekhoegowab language speakers in five localities: Okahandja, October 1953 and January, March and May 1954; Okombahe, January 1954; Omaruru, February 1954; Gobabis, February and March 1954; and Swakopmund, May 1954. As elsewhere in their travels, it is clear that they worked primarily in connection with churches (especially the Rhenish mission) in these localities, gaining access to their interviewees through an African Christian elite with some mobility privileges in an apartheid context in which travel was highly controlled.<sup>28</sup> Mention should be made here of Pastor Eliphas Eiseb, teacher (prior to 1955), church leader in Okahandia and Otitiwarongo (from 1975) and elected Vice-President of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (from 1980),29 who contributed audio recordings and transcripts of his life history and who later worked tirelessly with linguist Professor Wilfrid Haacke on producing a Khoekhoegowab-English dictionary.30

The Khoekhoegowab recordings break down more

or less into those of adult male speakers forming the largest set (some twenty-four recordings), with twelve recordings of adult female speakers, one recording each of a boy and a girl, four recordings of grouped school children, four of church choirs and one of a women's group singing indigenous songs. The types of recorded oral expression include seven church songs, eight lifehistory narratives, three bow songs ( $kh\bar{a}s$ ), three praise songs (|gaidi, singular |gais) and twenty-three 'traditional stories', that is, narratives on familiar cultural tropes involving, for example, the ancestor-hero-trick-ster Haiseb (two stories and one bow song), the feared trickster ||Gâuab (three stories) and multiple stories and allegories involving the antics of personified animals.

The stories and songs that follow Ernst Dammann's metadata clarifications take the listeners into a cultural world often very different to that understood through modern European colonial structuring. This is a world where a mythical sun-sheep (sore- $g\bar{u}s$ ) interacts with a cast of other agency-enacting animal-persons; where the often fearsome character ||Gâuab deceives human actors and is conveniently transformed into Satan by evangelical missionaries; and where entertaining stories of the ancestor-trickster-hero Haiseb remind us of the mysterious and unpredictable, as well as the often unfathomable and funny, natures of existence. The Dammann recordings and their transcripts sometimes also offer windows to historical experiences of disruption. They include stories telling of the displacements, conflicts and jealousies lingering from historical disruptions to ‡Nūkhoe existence in central and west



The teacher Richard ||Garoëb (left) and Rhenish missionary Ernst Esslinger (right) in Omaruru's Lutheran church, February 1954. Source: BAB PhotoArchive D01\_1245, photographer Ruth Dammann. © Basler Afrika Bibliographien.

Namibia, associated with expansionary pastoralist pressure coupled with the northwards and Atlantic coast openings of the frontier of the British Cape Colony.

In working with this collection we embarked on four main intersecting processes. We organised the recordings, their transcripts and accompanying images into a chronology based on the date and place of their recording,31 simultaneously creating a chronology of who worked on the Khoekhoegowab material and when.32 What arises from this latter chronology is a sense of disruption running through this history of work with the recordings since they were made in the 1950s, combined with some struggle over claims to 'ownership' of the recordings and their transcriptions, as well as how they might, or even should, be engaged with in the present. These frictions seem to run through the found structure of the Dammann Khoekhoegowab archive itself, which to us proved somewhat intractable until we spent multiple hours drawing out the correspondences and chronology of the three collections and then spent further hours working on and through Khoekhoegowab to English translations and interpretations.

This third layer to translate and interpret the fortyplus Khoekhoegowab recordings in the Dammman archive involved primary translations from Khoekhoegowab to English by Ganuses, working with both the recordings and their existing transcriptions in

Khoekhoegowab (by Pastor Eiseb, mentioned previously, and Johannes Boois, employed during the 1970s to 1980s by the Native Language Bureau in the then Department of Bantu Education in Windhoek). Interpretation of these translations is ongoing and iterative. It has been carried out by both of us over several years and in a range of places: Ganuses' farm !Nao-dâis and place of work Mai Go Hâ in southern Kunene Region, Namibia, elsewhere in Namibia in Windhoek, Gobabeb and Swakopmund, and in Bath (UK) and Basel (Switzerland) through a shared research trip in November 2017. We mention these localities because at times they had a bearing on what we were able to focus on and clarify. As Lindsey Dodds notes in her article in this issue, we listen in place. For example, when we were working on stories about the mythologised characters of Haiseb or ||Gâuab at !Nao-dâis, we could talk to Ganuses' aunt, Emma Ganuses, and her uncle, the late Salmon Ganuseb, to clarify our understanding of the stories recorded by the Dammanns. The settings of our work were significant for our ability to formulate understanding of themes in the archive, making our process very much a team effort drawing contingently on perspectives beyond ourselves.

While this process has seemed to somehow 'release' the speakers and voices of those 'captured' in the recordings – drawing the different speakers into focus as

specific, connected and emplaced human beings - we are aware that this engagement also re-inscribes and appropriates the recordings in specific ways. Gesturing to Deleuze and Guattari, 33 a question we return to below thus regards the extent to which our simultaneous rhizomatic 'release' and reterritorialisation of the recordings might recuperate rather than 'recolonise' the agencies and voices of those recorded. We consider this question throughout the next section, which concerns the fourth intersecting layer of our research practice, namely working on interpretations of the narratives, stories and situations embodied in these multi-layered

#### Contextualising the Dammann Khoekhoegowab archive? A journey with two songs

In this section we explore one recording that includes two songs sung for the Dammanns by a Viktoria ||Hoeses. The recording is dated 2 February 1954 and thus sits in the middle of the full set of Khoekhoegowab recordings. In the authoritative metadata announcement in German by Ernst Dammann at the start of the recording, Viktoria is identified as a 'Berg Dama' woman speaking Nama at the Rhenish Mission in Omaruru.34 With permission from the Basler Afrika Bibliographien, the recording of Viktoria || Hoeses singing 'i. Lied von den Bienen: ii. Lied von den Hühnern' (i. Song of the bees; ii. Song of the chickens) can be heard online, and are translated in the table below.35

Although a number of women are photographed in the Khoekhoegwab collection of the Dammann archive. unfortunately there is no image in the archive that can be definitively linked with Viktoria || Hoeses and little contextualising information exists regarding the circumstances of the recording. The one other Khoekhoegowab recording from this February 1954 visit to Omaruru by the Dammanns is of a teacher called Richard ||Garoëb, photographed in apparently earnest conversation with Rhenish missionary Ernst Esslinger<sup>36</sup> in an empty church setting, which is in stark contrast with the jackal and lion 'trickster tale' he relates for Dammann to record as well as with the songs sung by Viktoria.37

Damara / ‡Nūkhoe create music in several forms. In contextualising these specific songs sung for the Dammanns by Viktoria | Hoeses in 1954, we can identify them as |gais songs (plural: |gaidi). |Gaidi have a syncopated clapped rhythm differentiating them from the very straight 2/4 rhythm created through the striking of sticks and the beating of a drum in arudi healing songs (singular: arus). We have facilitated a film, The Music Returns to Kai-as, including performances of these different musical forms, and shared here with the

#### The two songs sung by Viktoria ||Hoeses in Omaruru in February 1954 have the following words:

#### i. Lied von den Bienen / Song of the bees Khoekhoegowab **English** 'Danis (!Habuqu ams)'

He, danisa ta ra ||nae Hihe, heho... Daba te so re: Mû‡an ta go xuige

Hihe...hihe...

Ai, nā te go hō, ai, nā te go.

lehe..., lehe... Ahe, nā te go hō. !Habu, nā tes go. He, hieho... ||Nā te, ta oa re!

Hihehe...hie... !Habus go nā te

Hie... Apa te so re!

Hie...Hie...

Aie, nāhe ta go iehe...iehe Hie...Hie...

Mûbasen re, khoen oado re!

[Song by Viktoria ||Hoeses 2 February 1954, Omaruru, Namibia; handwritten transcription in Khoekhoegowab and translation into Afrikaans by Johannes Boois]

#### 'Honey (Song of the bees)'

He, I am singing (about) honey Hihe, heho...

Turn me around:

As I realise that the bees sting

Hihe...hihe...

Ai, that they bite me, ai, they bite me.

lehe.... lehe... Ahe, they bite me. Bee, you bite me. He, hieho...

Leave me, I want to go back!

Hihehe...hie... The bees bite me!

Hie...

Can you carry me! Hie...Hie...

Aie, I was bitten...iehe...iehe

Hie...Hie...

Be careful, children of the people!

[Translation from Khoekhoegowab to English by Welhemina Suro Ganuses,

25 January 2018]

#### ii. Lied von den Hühnern (Song of the chickens)

#### Khoekhoegowab

Hunguri, ti anitse, ||goasa ra -‡gai‡gaitse a kham tsai habu!

Transcription in Khoekhoegowab by Welhemina Suro Ganuses, 25 January 2018]

#### English

My cockerel who wakes us up as it gets light - [summons me saving] let's go to get food to eat [just as the chickens do]!

[Translation from Khoekhoegowab to English by Welhemina Suro Ganuses, 25 January 2018]



In 1995 Nathan †Ûina Taurob, a 'Purros-Dama' man from north-west of Sesfontein, shows us how he harvests honey from his hive north-east of | Giribes plains. Source: Sian Sullivan, May 1995.

permission of the Namidaman Traditional Authority and the Hoanib Cultural Group of Sesfontein in northwest Namibia.<sup>38</sup>

|Gaidi are praise songs, created and sung to celebrate a specific theme, for example, a person, an event or something of value, such as specific animals — like bees — with which people negotiate a close relationship. As Jacobus ||Hoëb, leader of the Hoanib Cultural Group and known locally as the 'king of the | gais', says:

My grandparents taught me to play the | gais. The springbok are playing. The zebra are playing, the gemsbok are playing. All the animals are playing when the rain falls. And the people say, 'how can we make something to praise the animals?' <sup>39</sup>

|Gaidi have also been described to us as sung 'for happiness and the heart'. Elderly people in Sesfontein today remember a long list of |gaines, celebrated leaders of |gaidi played in celebratory dances that lasted through the night. Accompanied by complex clapped rhythms and collective polyphonic vocal arrangements, the songs allow(ed) participants to recursively and affectively (re)experience places, events and values expressed in the songs. The act of singing praise songs (|gaidi) and healing songs (arudi) thus is described as re-living and re-seeing the events, people, places and entities invoked by a song.

Both | gaidi sung by Viktoria | Hoeses to the Dammanns prompted personal recognition when first

heard by us in Basel in November 2017. Following Marianne Hirsch, they acted as 'points of memory', <sup>41</sup> returning us to direct experiences in the past that are themselves woven with broader cultural values and understandings.

The first |gais took us both back to experiences we shared in 1995-1996 of going to draw out honey (danis) with elderly honey harvesters living in Sesfontein. The first of these shared experiences involved being taken by the late Nathan ‡Ûina Taurob, a 'Purros-Dama' man, to harvest honey from a hive north-west of the |Giribes plains from which he had been pulling (sam) honey for around twenty years. 42 This hive was positioned in a 'honey-cave' inside a deep crevice in a wall of rock. As ‡Ûinab smoked the bees (!habun), talking to them all the time, they started buzzing inside the rock face, their hum gaining volume until it was as if the whole rock face was vibrating with the sound made by bees. Pulling honey from this honeycave left ‡Ûinab stung several times by the bees, but brushing away their stings did not seem to diminish his pleasure at the honey he had retrieved.

The 'honey |gais' sung for the Dammanns in 1954 by Viktoria ||Hoeses clearly praises bees for the sweet honey their activities provide while also warning of the need to protect oneself from the sting of the bees, analogous perhaps with the encouragement to be clever to avoid being 'stung' more broadly: as in the last line of the song – 'be careful, children of the people!' This particular recording was further situated for us when

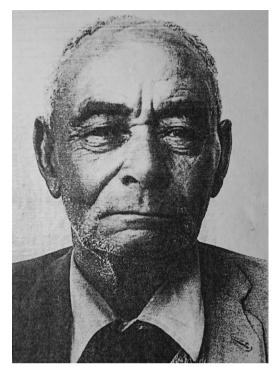
we played it to Jacobus ||Hoëb (mentioned above), who recognised and identified it as a Dâureb Dama song he was familiar with. In doing so, Jacobus invoked cultural connections beyond specific localities, as well as the historical administrative changes that led to a number of Dâureb Dama families — ‡Nūkhoe families associated with the Brandberg mountain or Dâures — being moved northwards to concentrate in the Sesfontein area in the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>43</sup>

The second song in the sequence offered to the Dammanns by Viktoria ||Hoeses invokes chickens and their example in working hard to acquire food. This song acted as an especially powerful and personal 'point of memory' for Welhemina Suro Ganuses. On first listening to the song through headphones at BAB in Basel in 2017, she began singing along to the song. It was a |gais directly familiar to her, having been sung by her maternal grandfather Otto Ganuseb in Sesfontein: 'this is a song that Otto was also singing!' Suro exclaimed on first hearing the song, remarking too that 'She [Viktoria], is singing and clapping very beautifully'.

It happened that in building up towards leaving Namibia for the UK and BAB in Switzerland in November 2017, Suro travelled to different members of her extended family in Swakopmund and Walvis Bay, seeking the one image of her grandfather Otto she knew existed. She eventually tracked the image down, finding it buried under accumulated possessions in a different relative's house to where she thought it would be. This striking photocopied image of Otto travelled with us to Basel. We could both bring the image of Otto to mind as Suro sang along to Viktoria's 1954 singing of the song he had sung to her growing up in the 1960s and 1970s, in a locality hundreds of kilometres away from that of the Dammann recording.

As invoked by his name, Suro's grandfather Otto was himself indelibly entangled with the German colonial period that decades later drew the Dammanns to 'South West Africa'. Otto's father was a German Schutztruppe soldier stationed at the military fort built by the colonial administration in Sesfontein (Zeßfontein) in the early 1900s during Namibia's short but shattering period as Deutsch Südwestafrika. German colonial forces had been present in the northwest of the territory since at least 1886, intervening in the activities of Khoekhoegowab-speaking Nama and ‡Nūkhoe of Sesfontein.⁴ As Germany under Bismarck began to extend its grip over the resources, peoples and land of 'Südwestafrika', a consolidating Khoekhoegowab-speaking leadership (of especially !Gomen or Topnaar Nama, including the family of Otto Ganuseb's wife Susanna née ||Gaubes) increasingly sought to both gain from and resist German exploration, commercial interests and colonial 'protection treaties'.

This emergent indigenous north-west elite was encouraged in 1894 to recognise German 'patronage' by a representative of the Kaoko Land and Mining Company (Kaoko-Land-und-Minen-Gessellschaft, KLMG), a London-based company represented by



Suro's grandfather, the late Otto Ganuseb (died 2 May 1990), who also sang the second | gais shared with the Dammanns by Viktoria ||Hoese. Source: Welhemina Suro Ganuses, personal archive.

German geographer Georg Hartmann in strategic alliance with German colonial governor Leutwein.45 Hartmann travelled repeatedly through Sesfontein between 1894 and 1896, drawing on local 'Hottentot' (Nama-Damara) guides in his search for guano resources and a potential coastal harbour where a railway line might carry appropriated inland mineral resources to international markets.46 Prompted by the rinderpest pandemic of 1897, the German colonial administration asserted control over the movement of people and livestock in part by building a 'cordon' of military stations from east to west across the northern part of the territory, in which a fort in Sesfontein eventually formed the most north-westerly point.<sup>47</sup> Resistance to colonial control was the focus of a crushing German military campaign in the north-west in 1898, culminating in the 'Battle of Grootberg' in the mountains south-east of Sesfontein. 48 Additional impacts included increasing 'sale' of land by local elites and the KLMG for farming by German settlers, state appropriation of livestock and the establishment in the early 1900s of a permanent Schutztruppe force in Sesfontein that clearly interacted in multiple ways with local inhabitants, until reportedly closed as a military base in 1909.49

In this moment of indigenous disruption and decline, it is said that Otto Ganuseb's German father left livestock he had accumulated there with the family

of Otto's ‡Nūkhoe mother ||Hūri Juligen |Awises, with whom the child Otto lived following the departure of Schutztruppe from the area. 50 All this complexity becomes distilled in the trace left as a lgais, sung to German scholars by a 'Berg Dama Frau' and shared by a ‡Nūkhoe man discouraged (by his elders) from following a calling as a |nanu-aob (or healer)51 for fear his mixed genealogy would bring a damaging potency to what is understood as a specifically ‡Nūkhoe capacity. Adding to the generative mimesis and alterity<sup>52</sup> of this indigenous-colonial web, we learned later that, like Suro's grandfather Otto Ganuseb, the Khoekhoegowab-speaking Pastor Eiseb who facilitated the Dammanns' encounter with Viktoria | Hoeses in 1954. was himself fathered by a Schutztruppe soldier repatriated after the First World War.53

The suggestive and multivalent tangle of proliferating connections tracked above illustrates the possibility of varied and disruptive recognition in the present when listeners sharing the language and cultural milieu of those recorded by the Dammanns hear their 1950s recordings. The autobiographical and shared cultural dimensions of memory related here offer information for which public scripts may be limited<sup>54</sup> (indigenous performance and curation of songs and stories notwithstanding), demonstrating the perhaps obvious potential of connecting archived materials with those able to bring personal, cultural, ethnographic and historical knowledge to bear in contextualising their interpretation. The 1950s recordings held in the archive in Basel become vital again in the present when shared with ‡Nūkhoe in the west Namibian contexts of their recording. In connection with the theme of 'power and the archive' guiding this Special Issue, and as recognised in initiatives by BAB such as the 1953-1954 online platform aiming to make the 'vast material' of the Dammann archive 'more accessible to a broader Namibian public and families in particular',55 there is perhaps also an urgent ethical duty to reconnect these and other recordings with the contexts of their making.

### Recomposing the archive? Introducing 'A Bee Song'

The Dammann recordings have already fascinated a number of artists and researchers. In 'Listening to a listening at Pungwe', for example, Namibian historian and sound artist Memory Biwa, in collaboration with Zimbabwean artist and DJ Robert Machiri, utilise Khoekhoegowab 'orature' in a live remixed sound installation. In doing so they purposefully deploy sound technologies 'to split sound from source', remixing multiple sounds and sources to 'interrogate the preservation impulse of hegemonic archives and permit the notion of an un-originary sound or speakerly texts connected to source'.56 Similarly, Namibian performance artist Nashilongweshipwe Mushaandja utilises found 'ethnographic sound documents from the 50s by Ernst and Ruth Dammann' in juxtaposition with contemporary recordings to generate 'a multi-layered aural picture of "Africa's radical power of imagination" that

'examines the conservation and extinction of cultures and the underlying balance of power'. 57

In these (re)presentations the Dammann recordings are dislodged from the contexts of their generation to both decolonise the archive and engender new understandings of pasts, presents and possible futures through radical juxtapositions of found recordings with contemporary sounds. There appears to be a tendency to use the Khoekhoegowab Dammann recordings specifically to evoke the silencing disruptions of a toxic colonial history that draws to mind the genocidal past of a century ago, even though the recordings themselves were made in the 1950s. These reuses and recompositions of the Dammann recordings in sound installations and events are both generative and provocative, speaking to contemporary, post-memory desires to make visible past trauma and silenced voices.58 The 1950s speakers themselves, however, are sharing rich details of their lives, as well as culturally relevant music, songs and stories whose presence at the time of recording denotes continuity and resilience in the face of disruption and political marginalisation. By decontextualising the recordings from the temporal, geographical and social specificities of their recording, is there a risk of foreclosing the agencies, concerns and resiliences of the individuals contributing the recordings?

As noted above, it became clear to us that the tales told and the songs sung in the Dammann Khoekhoegowab archive are not of the past only. They are recognisable and known today, but consolidating this recognition – making it work in the present – requires connecting the archive with those for whom it is perhaps most relevant, namely descendants and family of those recorded and those whose cultural understanding is conveyed and portrayed in the recordings and transcripts. This may not necessarily be as simple as copying or transferring the material from one archive to another in the hope that the material will be taken up elsewhere: BAB has already deposited copies of the recordings in the National Archives of Namibia, Windhoek, but (as far as we know) with little engagement with the recordings in this context despite BAB's efforts to generate awareness about the recordings in Namibia.59

Amid these present contexts, and again inspired by Hirsch's meditation on 'the generation of postmemory', or our enquiry here becomes: is it possible to 'recompose' recordings in the archive in a way that recuperates the voice and agency of those recorded, without indulging in utopian, paranoid or retraumatising recreations? In responding to this question we introduce here an experiment that brings to bear the skill of an experienced recording artist known to Sullivan in recomposing a song in the Dammann Khoekhoegowab archive in a way that might reach broader (and younger) audiences while remaining respectful to the form and contexts of the song. The idea is to engage in a collaboration that explores artistic re-interpretations/recompositions of recordings such

as (but not limited to) the Dammann Khoekhoegowab archive, which mesh with and honour the cultural and historic contexts of the recordings while also mobilising the possibilities of electronic technology, artistic skill and access to broader audiences to add contemporary vitality to old musical forms and performances. Through negotiation with BAB, we have begun this experiment with one song, the honey lgais sung by Viktoria | Hoeses shared above. We have encouraged a new interpretation of this song that is set within the specific cultural context of its recording, but further filtered and refracted in several ways to connect and mix Suro's specific experiences of growing up as a ‡Nūkhoe-Nama woman in north-west Namibia. Sian's experiences of ethnographic learning and observation in these contexts, combined with her own music and dance training, 61 and the musical and technical skills of a professional recording artist and composer.

In introducing the song to composer Toby Marks for this 'recomposition experiment', we specifically described the experience outlined above of hearing the bees in ‡Üinab's honey-cave start to hum, this hum amplifying until it sounded like the whole mountain was vibrating with the sound of the bees. Our recomposition opens with this potent sound so as to foreground aurally the role of the bees in inspiring the gais shared in 1954 by Viktoria | Hoeses. Her strong clapped rhythm and powerful voice anchor the composition, which builds into an electronic dance track run through with Viktoria's haunting voice and clapped rhythm to amplify the beat of the song beyond the archive. This recomposition can be listened to online.62 To date it has been played publicly, and apparently appreciated, in one dance event in the UK.63 It will also be available alongside the original song by Viktoria || Hoeses in a forthcoming sound installation at an exhibition in 2021 to celebrate BAB's institutional history.

As noted above, our hope and intention with this recomposition initiative is to thaw a song that has been frozen in the archive such that it may live and reach beyond the archive. Part of this initiative is the potential to generate a new flow of support to the ‡Nūkhoe Hoanib Cultural Group in Sesfontein, who are living in very marginalised circumstances but who have been inspirational, even essential, in enabling us to begin to approach the Dammann archive, even though the Dammanns' Khoekhoegowab recordings were not made in Sesfontein specifically.64 Of course, these gestures towards releasing and recomposing the power of the archive bring new power dimensions, appropriations and complexities. These complexities are linked in particular with questions around the legal property and copyright dimensions of the different layers of any recomposition, particularly in relation to any income from both recordings and performances that may thereby be generated. They bring their own brakes on possibilities, creating new frictions and constraints alongside new opportunities and creative dimensions, as discussed in the following section.

## Intersecting 'old' and 'new': frictions and possibilities in recompositions of found recordings

Making something new from something created previously can be fraught with legal and ethical complexity. Potential concerns range from possible future accusations of cultural appropriation to legal contestations over copyright and how this is understood. These issues are compounded in the case of 'A Bee Song' by the possibility of creating new commercial income sources from older musical forms and recordings, which raises complicated issues of ownership and rights due to perceptions of the privatisation of customary and collective musical praxis this may provoke. On the other hand. such concerns might be allayed by additional opportunities for potentially commercialising reconstitutions to support and revitalise local heritage as well as livelihood concerns (although we would be the first to observe that distortions can arise if and when money comes into play to shape or determine previously unpriced materials). Below we briefly trace some issues arising in relation to the specific recomposition transforming 'Danis (!Habugu ams)' into 'A Bee Song', noting that our concern here is with identifying copyright parameters in this specific case rather than with offering a critique of copyright per se (on which there is a wide critical legal studies literature).

The main issues here revolve around who has which rights to what in relation to recordings that might be reinterpreted and recomposed, and who has what rights to any potential future flow of income from recompositions and their performances. Multiple types of copyright are (potentially) linked to a recomposition such as 'A Bee Song'. For example, Viktoria || Hoeses might be considered simultaneously the author and performer of the honey |gais, although this copyright normally lapses after fifty years (for example in Swiss and Namibian law). The 1950s Dammann recordings archived at BAB are no longer subject to this copyright, although any recomposition of Dammann recordings is governed by a Memorandum of Understanding between the Future Pasts research project initiating the recomposition and BAB,65 signed in January 2019, stating that

[b]oth parties share the conviction that re-compositions from the Dammann Archive stimulate research and accessibility of African audio archives to wider audiences and should reflect the traditions of those Namibian communities involved/affected by the original recordings as closely as is possible.

Viktoria ||Hoeses might, however, be considered to hold writer's copyright, which is normally for fifty years after the writer's death, so could potentially be valid for any writers, that is, authors of songs who died after about 1968 (or who are still alive). Since we have not (yet?) been able to locate Viktoria or her

family, we do not know exactly what the status of writer's copyright might be in this case.

At the same time, notions of 'authorship' and 'performer' of 'a song' are perhaps more complex than this for the contexts we are talking about. For example, a |gais song (as per the 'Danis (!Habugu ams)' / 'Honey (Song of the bees)' sung for the Dammanns by Viktoria ||Hoeses in 1954) can be thought of as a kind of spirit song that might come to a particular person in association with a significant/memorable event they have experienced. It might then be sung to family and community, eventually becoming part of a collectively sung and 'owned' repertoire, that might be sung repeatedly in collective lgaidi song-dances, embellished each time it is sung. Additional questions thus arise. Is the original song the property of the spirit world, the original 'author' or a community (or more broadly a culture) that might itself be fluid and difficult to define? Who becomes constructed as the legal person disaggregated for copyright purposes? If/when it is recorded in a single contingent moment (as in Viktoria || Hoeses' singing of 'Danis (!Habugu ams)') potentially there is copyright in her performance, but it is almost impossible to know to what extent she 'owns' that particular song. Since her performance was recorded in 1954 and she was an adult woman at this time, it is perhaps unlikely (although not impossible) that she is still alive today (she would be in her nineties at least). But it might be feasible to trace her descendants and return the original Dammann recording to them, and efforts in this regard should at least be made. It might then arise that any found descendants feel they have a claim to a share of any possible income arising from future sales/performances of a recomposition of their ancestor's performance of this song.

To complete this picture, and given the multiple threads of research and recordings informing any new recomposition of an archived sound recording, we need to acknowledge the new powers that become vested in a recomposition which may add more layers of copyright. In the case of 'A Bee Song', a multiplicity of knowledges has come together to permit this recomposition, ranging from the original recording of Viktoria ||Hoeses in 1954 and the knowledge brought together by BAB in holding the Dammann archive, to the contextual information and situating ideas shared by us both, and the additional and significant technical and musical skill brought to the recomposition by Toby Marks. All these dimensions bring their own territorialising powers and potentials to any possibility of 'recomposing the archive'.

#### **Concluding remarks**

We have considered some possibilities for opening up and recomposing (hi) stories of the colonised through exploring the rich array of interconnected documents in what is arguably a 'coloniser archive',66 the Dammann Khoekhoegowab material housed in Basler Afrika Bibliographien in Switzerland. In working with this material, we have been drawn to connect an array of seemingly disparate histories, engaging with the archive 'as a site of creative artistic production' rather than as a store of historical data only.67 As Hirsch invites, our approach seeks to recuperate and recompose minoritarian 'counter-histories' through creative engagements with sound recordings collected and collated in circumstances structured by colonial and apartheid prejudices. These are interpretive gestures that may raise more queries than they settle regarding the implications of new appropriations of archived information. In doing so, they are fully resonant with the latent vitality captured in recordings made in the past, whose potency in the present may be both unpredictable and remarkable.

#### **Acknowledgements**

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https://disrupdhist.hypotheses.org (AH/N504579/1).

#### **NOTES**

1. Shortly after Namibia's independence in 1990, and as stated by German-Namibian linguist Wilfrid Haacke, the glossonym (language name) and former endonym Khoekhoegowab was 'officially reintroduced for the language that had become known as Nama or Nama/Damara'. Wilfrid Haacke, 'Khoekhoegowab (Nama/Damara)', in Tomasz Kamusella and Finex Ndhlovu (eds), The Social and Political History of Southern Africa's Languages, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, pp 133-58, pp 133-34.

2. Dag Henrichsen and Aurore Schaff, Ernst and Ruth Dammann: Personal Papers and Sound Collection, African Literature and Languages in Namibia and Southern Africa 1953-1997, Registratur PA.39, Basel: BAB, 2009, pp 45-54, 56, 58.

- 3. Henrichsen and Schaff, 2009, p xiv. According to Wilfrid Haacke (personal communication, 12 January 2021), these were the first reel-to-reel recordings made in Namibia.
- 4. Sullivan gave a presentation on '(Fragments of) text, sound and corporeality in recording KhoeSan contexts: a preliminary sharing of past and present ethnographic research in Namibia', at the workshop on 'The Histories and Politics of Audio Archives: Trans-disciplinary Trajectories of Audio Recording, Audio Archives and Hearing Cultures in South(ern) Africa', Basler Afrika Bibliographien, July 2014.
- **5.** Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2012, p 246.

- 6. Sian Sullivan and Welhemina S Ganuses, 'Understanding Damara/ ‡Nūkhoen and ||Ubun indigeneity and marginalisation in Namibia'. in Willem Odendaal and Wolfgang Werner (eds), 'Neither Here Nor There': Indigeneity. Marginalisation and Land Rights in Postindependence Namibia, Windhoek: Legal Assistance Centre, 2020, pp 283-324; Sian Sullivan and Welhemina S Ganuses, 'Densities of meaning in west Namibian landscapes: genealogies, ancestral agencies, and healing', in Ute Dieckmann (ed), Mapping the Unmappable? Cartographic Explorations with Indigenous Peoples in Africa. Bielefeld: Transcript, 2021, pp 139-91. 7. The term 'Berg Dama' (literally, 'Hill Dama' / '!hom Dama' / and the derogatory 'klip kaffir') was used in the past to distinguish those known today as Damara or ‡Nūkhoe (i.e. 'Khoekhoegowab-speaking blackskinned people') from speakers of the Bantu language Otjiherero (referred to as 'Plains Damaras' or 'Cattle Damara' / 'Gomadama').
- **8.** Hirsch, 2012, p 197.
- 9. 'Banco de Gaia' [web page]. Accessed online at http://banco.co.uk/, 10 May 2021. We anticipate that 'A Bee Song' will also be available on this site in due course.
- 10. For details see Karla Poewe, 'Politically compromised scholars, or what German scholars working under Missions, National Socialism, and the Marxist-Leninist German Democratic Republic can teach us', American Anthropologist, vol 103, no 3, 2001, pp 836-37; Herrmann Jungraithmayr, 'Ernst Dammann (1904-2003)', Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, vol 157, no 1, 2007, pp 1-6, p 2; Henrichsen and Schaff, 2009, p xv; also personal communication with Wilfrid Haacke, 12 January 2021.
- 11. Henrichsen and Schaff, 2009, pxv.
- 12. Henrichsen and Schaff, 2009, p.xv.
- **13.** Ernst Dammann, 70 Jahre Erlebte Afrikanistik. Ein Beitrag zur Wissenschaftgegsichte, Berlin: Verlag von D Reimer, 1999, quoted in Henrichsen and Schaff, 2009, p xv.
- 14. Henrichsen and Schaff, 2009, pxv.
- **15.** Jungraithmayr, 2007, p 2.
- 16. Henrichsen and Schaff, 2009, pxv.
- 17. Where his father had worked for three years from 1908 as a surveyor for the construction of the so-called Mittellandbahn railway, in what was then German East Africa (Deutsch-Ostafrika):

- see Jungraithmayr, 2007, p 1, translated from German by Sian Sullivan with the assistance of DeepL Translate.
- 18. Poewe, 2001, pp 834-37.
- 19. Henrichsen and Schaff, 2009, pxv.
- **20.** For example, Heinrich Vedder, *Die Bergdama*, 1 Teil, Hamburg: L Friederichsen & Co. 1923.
- 21. Henrichsen and Schaff, 2009, p xv.
- 22. Henrichsen and Schaff, 2009, p xiv.
- 23. Henrichsen and Schaff, 2009, p.xv.
- 24. Jan Hendrik Esterhuvse. South West Africa 1800-1894: The Establishment of German Authority in South West Africa, Struik: Cape Town, 1968; William Coates Palgrave (with introduction by Ernst LP Stals), The Commissions of WC Palgrave Special Emissary to South West Africa 1876-1885, Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 1991; David Olusoga and Casper Erichsen, The Kaiser's Holocaust: Germany's Forgotten Genocide and the Colonial Roots of Nazism, London: Faber and Faber, 2010; Marion Wallace, A History of Namibia: From the Beginning to 1990, London: Hurst & Co, 2011.
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- **26.** For details see Henrichsen and Schaff. 2009.
- 27. Johann Georg Krönlein, Wortschatz der Khoi-khoin (Namaqua-Hottentotten), Berlin: Deutsche Kolonialgesellshaft, 1889; personal communication with Wilfrid Haacke, 12 January 2021.
- 28. Henrichsen and Schaff, 2009, p.xvi.
- 29. Wilfrid HG Haacke, 'In memoriam:
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  Rüdiger Köppe, 2008, pp 11-14.
  30. Wilfrid HG Haacke and Eliphas Eiseb,
- Khoekhoegowab–English English-Khoekhoegowab Glossary/Mîdi Saogub, Windhoek: Macmillan Education, 1999; Wilfrid HG Haacke and Eliphas Eiseb, A Khoekhoegowab Dictionary with an English–Khoekhoegowab Index, Windhoek: Gamsberg Macmillan, 2002.
- **31.** 'Correspondence table for manuscripts, sound recordings and images in the Dammann-BAB Khoekhoegowab collection' [web page].

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- **32.** Transcription history for the sound recordings in the Dammann-BAB Khoekhoegowab collection' [web page]. Accessed online at www.futurepasts.net/transcription-hist-dammann-bab-kkg, 10 May 2021.
- **33.** Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (translated by Brian Massumi), *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, vol 2, London: Athlone Press (1988 [1980]).
- **34.** BAB, PA.39 *Portfolio / Mappe 1*, transcript IV.1.3: recording TPA.36B.14.
- 35. 'BASLER 36B14 Viktoria Hoeses, Bees, Chickens' [web page]. Accessed online at https://soundcloud.com/ futurepasts/basler-36b14-viktoriahoeses-bees-chickens/s-x8LVoqL1wrC, 10 May 2021.
- **36.** 'Biographies of Namibian Personalities' [web page]. Accessed online at www.klausdierks.com/ Biographies/Biographies\_E.htm, 11 May 2021.
- **37.** BAB soundfile TPA.36B.13, 'Geschichte vom Löwen' / Story of the lion / 'Xamoâgura xa' (Female lion and her child).
- **38.** 'The Music Returns to Kai-as' [web page]. Accessed online at https://vimeo.com/486865709, 10 May 2021.
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- **44.** Esterhuyse, 1968, pp 95, pp 113-14.
- **45.** Lorena Rizzo, Gender and Colonialism: A History of Kaoko in Northwestern Namibia, Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2012, pp 63-64.
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- 58. Hirsch, 2012.
- **59.** Dag Henrichsen, personal communication, 14 January 2021.
- **60.** Hirsch, 2012, pp 227-30.
- 61. Prior to attending university as a mature student, Sullivan trained professionally in dance, gaining teaching qualifications from the Royal Ballet School and the School of Benesh Dance Notation, and subsequently teaching dance in various contexts. See Sian Sullivan, '(Re-)embodying which body?

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- **62.** 'A Bee Song' [web page]. Accessed online at https://soundcloud.com/future pasts/a-bee-song/s-JdLDL, 9 June 2021. 'Danis (!Habugu ams)' and 'A Bee Song' can be heard side by side at 'A Bee Song 1954/2021' [web page]. Accessed online at https://soundcloud.com/futurepasts/sets/a-bee-song, 10 May 2021.
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- **64.** The Future Pasts Trust' [web page]. Accessed online at www.futurepasts.net/future-pasts-trust, 10 May 2021.
- **65.** 'Future Pasts' [web page]. Accessed online at www.futurepasts.net, 10 May 2021.
- 66. Hirsch, 2012, p 246.
- 67. Hirsch, 2012, pp 329-20.

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