



NO TIME NO MIND ONLY NOW

**Ancient to
future**

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based on actual events, it is
entirely a work of fiction.

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This book was inspired by Elmer and
Pieter.

I dedicate the book to Milinda.

1.

Prologue

The Monomotapaⁱ people go back many centuries when they sought new land and moved from the North-West region in Africa Southwards to the region between the Limpopoⁱⁱ and Zambeziⁱⁱⁱ rivers. It was and is a flourishing civilization rich in gold and copper ornaments, soapstone carvings and glass and porcelain of Arabic, Persian, and Chinese origins.

The history of the region between the two rivers was founded in the tenth or eleventh century by Shona-speaking people, and it became a large and prosperous state between the late thirteenth and late fifteenth centuries. The knowledge about this kingdom is based on the archaeological remains of approximately 150 settlements as well as Portuguese sources.

However, the recorded history of the Monomotapa people who were part of the region did not start in the thirteenth century, but goes back to the period between 450 and 900 A.D. The period pre-dates the Mapungubwe discoveries as the Monomotapa people for unknown reasons moved from the Klein Bolayi^{iv} region to the Mapungubwe region around 900 A.D.,

before settling over centuries later at the Great Zimbabwe^v region (around 1100 to 1300 A.D.). Only the history of the latter region was known until recently when the spirits from the former period wanted to cross-over to the afterlife.

That crossing-over, however, had some conditions attached and had to be fulfilled before there could be peace in the spiritual realm. Peace in the afterlife for the roving spirits would bring order and peace to the physical life and restore proper matriarchal rule to the Black people of the Southern African region.

A prosperous people cannot live without order. That order will emanate from a matriarch system. The matriarch would rule along with her advisors. Modjadjivi^{vi}, the rain queen had that obligation to softly rule over her people like a mother would care for her children.

The Monomotapa kingdom stood its ground for around 450 years before the history died with the people. All that is known are bits and pieces of discoveries, findings, and artifacts to give a glimpse into that time capsule. The history of these Black people lay dormant from around the tenth century, before the spiritual world had a break-through and could contact the physical world in the twenty-first century.

Irrespective of the person to be the messenger, the spirits from the era between the fifth and the tenth centuries sought a willing and able person or people in

the twenty-first century to convey the message to the Monomotapa people in the modern day. It would be a person to start a process and be supported by other instructed people for harmony to be restored.

The spirits claimed they have been stuck in the "*forecourts*" of the afterlife and could not cross-over into the afterlife. They probably tried to contact many living people to assist and maybe those people either ignored their plea or were not in tune with the spiritual world to hear their calls.

Though spirits have no colour, the form the people had before they passed away stays in the physical life. Calls on the people of the "same" colour may have fallen on deaf ears, but when one person started meddling into the history of a specific farm and unknowingly disturbed/awoken the spirits, they found an opportunity to reignite their endeavour to be "helped" across from the forecourts into the afterlife.

Before being able to cross-over, the spirits had to complete their responsibilities in the realm and time they were stuck in. That transfer could only happen during a festive event where a succession ceremony would be held. Once those tasks have been completed, the spirits would be free to cross-over and live in the afterlife.

However, the task at hand was not a simple verbal message only. The restoration of a whole culture had to be actioned and set in place. The rulers of the future world had to be appointed and their tasks given along

with the region where the whole restoration had to take place.

The Monomotapa people did not only live in the most Northern region of South Africa. They also had relationships with a wider area and based on what the spirits conveyed; the region may be as broad as the whole Southern African region.

A lost history is a lost culture, and a lost culture is a lost reign. A lost reign is a lost people. And where you find lost people, chaos reigns and people are unruly.

How would one then restore order?

The "*people had to come back to their roots*" to restore the culture and customs of the traditional people, the ancestors.

2.

Settlement

The Monomotapa people were happy people in the area they lived. They went about their own routines day-by-day, year after year.

Over time they developed their skills and became skilful craftsmen and smiths – some gold, others copper, and others iron smiths.

Their existence was humble yet content as far as it was for their daily needs.

The Monomotapa people craved own land. They did not have land of their own where they could practice their customs and traditions. One of their notorious practices was the ability to make rain. They would call on the ancestors and those ancestors, if they were content by the offers, would let it rain on the Monomotapa land.

The Monomotapa people felt an urge to obtain and be owners of their own land. That was not allowed to be their destiny then.

The Modjadji of the time called her advisors and said:
"We have been share-croppers for too long. We must have our own land where we can live and prosper."

"That is a great idea, my queen," Azwianewi^{vii}, the eldest of the advisors exclaimed. Confirmation came from the other advisors when they one by one said: "You are very wise, our queen."

"But where shall we go?" enquired the queen.

"My queen, the stories being told by our neighbours want it to be that in a far land, just off from where the sun rises, there are no occupants," the eldest advisor responded.

"Send a troop of 12 men to go and explore that land," the queen instructed. "They must be the best warriors we have, and they must go quick and come back fast to report what they found. They must seek unoccupied land."

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A year later the convoy of Monomotapa people were instructed by the advisors on behalf of the Modjadji, that they are moving to a new land. They had to upload all their possessions and get their livestock ready for a big trek.

"Come on people, you need to pack all you household items. And do not forget your tools. If need be, pack those fire stones you use in the making of the iron implements." Azwianewi said.

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The people migrated from the North-Western part of the African continent to the Limpopo Valley in the Southern region of Africa many years ago after being sent by the rain queen to find a new home.

A group of like-minded people of around 2 178 people started trekking in the direction of the unoccupied land which the twelve warriors reported on.

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On the way to ensure safe passage, the leaders of this group, called the Monomotapa kingdom, sent their scouts ahead to find the best route to follow and where there were already people on that route, the scouts had to become representatives of the Monomotapa empire.

The representatives had to buy the favour of those people to ensure safe passage – the Monomotapa people were skilled craftsmen and had many goods to offer to the people enroute. They even offer their own animals – the herds were huge, and grazing started to become a challenge.

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The group must have trekked for many months and possibly years considering the distance from where they came, the terrain they had to cross, and the possessions they had – wives, children, livestock, and tools of trade. Survival was the focus on the way to a more affluent land, thus food and water had to be sourced along the way.

Little is known as to what led the scouts to look for in a South-Eastern direction and how they landed up in the Limpopo Valley region where their history restarted.

Since they were spiritually inclined, the spirits of their ancestors may have been the direction-givers and the people merely followed.

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In the group of the Monomotapa people, there were the queen, she was the rain queen, the advisors to the queen, the spiritual priest, the traditional healer, chieftain or elders, the people, the children, and the livestock, consisting amongst others of cattle and goats. The Modjadji was transported in a luxurious chair, while the advisors used horses or donkeys. The majority of the populus had to walk as their possessions were loaded onto their animals.

Besides the living creatures, some of the people were artisans with skills to craft artifacts, personal decorations (such as bangles and anklets), and utensils for daily use – their skills included the forming and reforming of gold, copper, iron, ivory, and horn.

Some of the men were skilled hunters and could harvest various animals not only for their meat, but for other features such as their skin or horns.

Competent men armed with spear, knobkierie, and catapult had to protect the group of trekking people. These fighters could face most dangers or attackers without fear – they were trained in the use of their weapons and were nimble when facing an enemy. Some of these fearless men were selected to be scouts for the Monomotapa people.

The scouts had to consider the interests of their people, search for a new region to live in, and survive the conditions nature sent their way while scouting. A group of twelve men who did the original scouting, were selected to spearhead the rest of the people into the unknown territory.

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A year before the great trek, around the year 449 A.D. the scouts came across a region where they did not find other inhabitants. It was desolated for large distances in any direction when looking East, South, or West.

The men were far away from their home, and nearly gave up hope before finding the area they were to occupy later.

The place the scouts found, was just across a wide river. The water stream they had to cross was not strong as the trees and plants just started blooming. Rain was probably still coming as they were used to during summer.

They have crossed many rivers on their journey, but on the Southern side of the Limpopo River they felt at peace.

"This is the ideal region to live. Look at all the fruit and vegetation. There are many wild animals to hunt for food and there is plenty of water in the river," Livhu^{viii}, the leader of the scouts announced after spending the first day on the Southern side of the river and having explored the area somewhat.

"We must go back and tell the queen of our discoveries" Mashudu^{ix}, the second in command of the scouts, reasoned.

"No, wait. We must first ensure that this is habitable land before reporting. We must see what we are letting us in for before exposing our relatives to this region. We must stay another night or two before reporting back. We have come too far to not be sure of our report," said Livhu.

One of the scouts climbed in the tallest tree they could find to scout the area. *"I think we need to camp near that big rock in the distance. That will give us enough protection and we would be able to see the surroundings around the rock for any emanating danger."*

The scouts made their way to the rock and saw a bunch of rock-rabbits sitting on smaller rocks around the big rock. They saw a very steep side of the rock to the North and East faces.

"This is going to be a huge challenge. Look at the rock, we are going to struggle to get to the top," said Thilivhali^x, one of the younger scouts. He was well muscled and taller than his peers, and skilled fighter.

'He is a formidable warrior, but still lacks some experience. He may become a bit discouraged if he doesn't get proper guidance, but he will be good warrior,' the leader of the scouts thought. To the troop he announced: *"Let us go around the rock and see if we cannot find an easier route to the top. I heard some male baboon earlier alerting his troop of*

our approach, and the alarm seemed to come from the other side of the rock."

As the scouts walked around and came to the South-Western side of the rock, they saw that there was a surmountable path to the top. They even found some baboon dung at the bottom and reckoned: *"If a baboon or monkey can get to the top, then we should be able to do so as well."*

Livhu, however, said. *"Do not try and climb straight to the top. You may have to start here at the bottom climbing diagonal before reaching the top."*

When they crested the top of the rock, the scouts stood in awe. It was summertime and the trees and grass stood tall in their green shoes.

"What a magnificent view. Look at the antelope roaming under those trees. And there are few giraffes nibbling the treetops," Thilivhali verbalised what the other scouts also saw.

The view none of them had seen before or which no-one could see on the ground was nearly unbelievable.

As far as they could gaze into the surrounding area, they just saw mopani trees, grass, baobab trees, impala, kudu, and the giraffes.

Those baobab trees kept on impressing the viewer as there were some with hanging branches and others with erect branches – *'could that be female and male trees of the species?'* Livhu thought.

The hot summer's day was losing its grip on the region as the temperature was cooling off with the sun soon going to sleep until the following day.

"The rock surface may be knobby, but it is relatively flat. It will be suitable for us to sleep, away from any potential or lurking danger," the scout leader observed. "The guards for the night will be able to see far into the surroundings, since it is a full moon evening, and they would be able to hear any approaching danger."

"You two," Livhu pointed to the younger men of the scout troop, "go down and get us some firewood. It might become cold during the night. We need to protect ourselves from predators and scavengers as well. But after all, we need to fry the Guinee fowl we harvested earlier."

The younger scouts moved down the rock away from the campsite into the veld. They did not have to go far before having a whole stack of wood to use.

The small group then came across unknown strange orange fruit in the shape of an oval stone, and about half the length of one's forearm.

"If the baboons are enjoying the fruit, surely we could try it as well." The scouts saw that the baboons were eating the fruit with enjoyment. *"Let us take some for dinner."* Surely, they are going to try this fruit.

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That evening while the men were waiting for the fowls to cook, the leader of the scouts cautiously dug his spear into the new unknown fruits' flesh.

Livhu was surprised how easy the spear went through the fruit, and nearly punctured his hand.

When he opened the fruit halves in his hand, he saw many black and a few smaller white pips inside with some spilling out and said: "*Pe... pe...pe*" to give an indication of all the seeds and Mulalo^{xi}, the youngest scout nearly echoed the leader's sentiments by saying "*Ja...*" (to confirm the leader's observation). And suddenly it came to them to name the fruit '*pepeya*' (papaya).

Some of the fruit juice seeped onto the scout leader's fingers and he licked the juice. Upon tasting the juice, the leader proclaimed: "*This is nice!*" and popped some of the flesh of the fruit in his mouth, and it tasted sweet, smooth, and strange on his pallet. "*Take, eat*" he said with his mouth full of fruit.

The other scouts took pieces of the fruit and started enjoying themselves.

Khathu^{xii}, one of the other younger scouts spat something from his mouth which did not taste as the inside of the 'papaya'; "*What is this? Oh, it seems like the skin.*"

The rest of the group burst out with laughter when Kathu pulled a funny face.

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While the birds were cooking over the fire, the leader said to Zwanga^{xiii}, the official drummer (and musician)

amongst them: *"Bring your drum and come and entertain us."*

The first few songs passed uneventful while they were eating and singing, until the leader of the scouts said to the drummer: *"Send a general friendly message so that we can hear if there are any neighbours around. Maybe they would be able to tell us a bit more of this region."*

Zwanga thought to himself: *'Let us see if the neighbours are alive and would understand the drum rhythm intended for the ancestors to send rain – just for the fun of it.'* He started beating his drum to the same beat of the rainmaking process.

The leader of the scouts recognised the rhythm and wanted to warn the drummer not to do so, but as he opened his mouth to speak to the drummer, a thunderous sound cracked over their heads with accompanying illumination of the sky. A lightning bolt struck the rock to the Eastern side.

"STOP immediately," Livhu shouted. *"I heard you using the rainmaker's drumbeat. Do not agitate or anger the ancestors!"*

As he was giving the instruction to stop the drumbeating, the rain fell in droves down on the rock and surrounding area.

The scout leader realised that the ancestors were everywhere, even here with them, and were smiling on these few men unintentionally calling for rain.

"Where did the rain come from – the skies were a moment ago still clear from any clouds," the men argued. The scouts did not even see that the sky above them became overcast. Even when the sun went down, the sky was clear.

Besides the cooling of the air, which was still heavy with humidity, the scouts got their first out-of-a-river bath since crossing the Limpopo River. They craved the relief from the humidity.

'I need to alert the rain queen and spiritual priest of this magic', Livhu, the leader of the scouts thought. 'They will be able to bring us rain for our crops and water from the people and their animals.'

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"You must see the region. The plants are flourishing as far as the eye can see, the fruit are ripe for harvesting, and the wild animals are well-fed, ready to be hunted. The land is unexplored, ready for agronomy," Livhu nearly shouted as he excitedly reported to the elders upon the scouts' return to the bigger group.

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When the scouts led the tribe to the area around the rock a few months later, nearly all the adults inhaled sharply as they drew air into their lungs in awe of the region where they could be living.

'This is the ideal place to settle and live for generations to come' Modjadji, the rain queen, thought. Her advisors echoed her sentiments insistently when they said to the

spiritual priest: *"The ancestors will be able to provide us with plenty of rain."*

"Yes, that may be true. But we should not anger the ancestors. You know we brought their bones with us, and they are also new to this region. Maybe we will now be prosperous as an independent tribe," the priest cautioned the people.

'That's true', the Modjadji confirmed to herself in her mind. *'We first need learn of this land.'*

All the people around bowed their heads in respect of the ancestors and their queen, before going back to their possessions to find a suitable resting and camping site.

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"Our priority is to get the queen's home up and ready for her use this evening," and with that the advisors jumped into action to first erect a home for their queen before they dealt with their own needs.

Before the sun was midway through the day, the rain queen's quarters were habitable.

Azwianewi stepped up to the queen where she was resting on her carry chair in the shade of a young baobab tree giving enough protection against the sun: *"My queen,"* he said. *"We have constructed a temporary residence for you. It will serve you while your final home is built. You will be escorted around the area to allow you to choose where you want to live permanently."*

"Thank you, my trusted man, I will certainly take you on your word tomorrow," the queen said, and she stepped

forward from her carriage to her new home. " *This will serve my purposes for now. Please thank all the men who built this home; they are excellent at their job.*"

As the queen entered her new dwelling to rest, she could hear branches cracking and the thumping sounds of axes. Before long, green mopani trees were torn to serve as protection against the elements and predators. The dry mopani trees would be the source for heat to cook food.

The people started chatting with great anticipation as it dawned on them that they finally reached their destination.

The people of this Empire in the Limpopo valley, the Monomotapa Dynasty, have founded their royal court. They would set up this court and call it Maulwe^{xiv} – little did they know how prophetic the city's name would be.

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Over the next four centuries, the Monomotapa empire flourished in its customs and practices. The customs and practices became part of each household.

Generation after generation subjected themselves to the matriarchal rule under the rain queen. The elders or chieftain could advise the queen and execute her wishes and instructions. All the people heeded to her judgement, and they prospered.

The Monomotapa people multiplied and practised the rainmaking ritual every year. The queen once said and

that stuck in their minds: *"We need to seek the favour of the ancestors to get proper rainfall."*

The traditional people will still say that they must please their ancestors since the ancestors are in the spiritual realm and can control the natural elements and the multiplication of people, animals, and plants.

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Part of a nation's existence is the opulence of its history. If that history cannot be recorded in hieroglyphs, painted pictures, or in writing, it must rely on storytelling.

For example, if there was a father with five children, and he told them all the same story at the same time, and they had to retell the story sometime later, there may be five (*or even six*) versions of the same story. Differences of opinion and interpretation about such a story could have led to family feuds, and the significance, value and facts would be lost.

History is best recorded in a way for future generations to understand and honour. Emotion, passion, and facts all contribute to the way history is captured and portrayed to future generations.

Lost history is a lost nation!

3.

Awe of Africa

Daybreak on the African continent is unlike any other place in the world. It cannot be described to the full extent of its beauty – it must be experienced.

The initial silence might be overwhelming but when one would concentrate and focus on the different sounds individually, the sounds of the different birds, insects, large and small animals could be heard, and even the wind blowing through the trees would bring its own '*song*'; a daybreak announcement which only a Creator could accomplish.

The announcement had its own message – a message saying "*look around you and see if anyone created anything on Earth or in heaven other than Me.*" Every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that God is the Lord of all powers.

Only the Almighty God, the holy Father with his Son, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, could have created such a phenomenal and formidable creation – *who is man to question Them?*

...

It was the year 900 A.D.

The first birds called the daybreak into being from the treetops. They were chirping away as if they found freedom for the first time and wanted everyone around to share in their newfound life.

On the ground the Natal Spurfowl started the day scrambling for the next protection. They ran from bush to bush as if a predator was chasing, just to walk lightly under the protection of the bush.

In the trees, the barbets were looking for food and the woodpeckers were opening their nests to go out to find food for their young. The young must be fed, and the parents must adhere to the hunger calls of the chicks.

The mopani trees, with their rattling winter leaves and seeds in the wind, gave their usual protection to the prey animals as they roamed the savannahs. Kudu, nyala, impala, and duiker alike must be alert all the time to stay alive – there are no second chances. A relaxed moment could mean *'someone else's meal'*.

A male leopard sniffed the cool air and roared at the antelope in the veld as he returned to his den from his nocturnal adventures. He lived in an enclosure naturally formed by the shrubs close to one of the smaller dry riverbeds.

Once a year, the leopard came across a natural scent which drove him to seek his mate and she had borne him several offspring already. This male liked to roam

the area and see the rock named after him, '*Leopard Rock*'.

He was, however, cautious of the humans living around '*his rock*' as they have slaughtered his siblings for their skins, nails, and claws. The humans were also so arrogant that they dared to make a crown from the leopard skin and claimed they were the royalty of the region.

Thirst drove most animals to the watering holes early morning, but their survival instinct kept them all the way alert for predators.

The watering holes were crevasses on the rock plates where dew normally accumulated overnight to form puddles. The immediate area surrounding the rock plates were barren from any vegetation, but danger lurked just beyond that perimeter in the tall grass, especially when rain had fallen, and the thankful plants absorbed the water and sprouted.

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Mopani trees were spread across the veld and the savannas filled the areas in between. Some large areas were not covered by any vegetation as plants would not grow easily on rock plates – several rock plates were visible across the area where the Monomotapa people lived. The odd fig tree or clump of grass may sprout on the rocks, but survival was harsh as the sun would burn down with intensity.

The mopanis and the grass formed the main source of sustenance for most antelope, and they were always thankful for any rain as the mopanis would sprout soon after the rainfall, bringing soft succulent leaves forth. Mopanis are such "*thankful*" trees.

The majestic baobab trees, the giants of the tree world and the veld, were spread over a concentrated area, unlike further away in the region where fewer trees were found further apart. The young trees seemed to be growing around the Maulwe settlement as a sign of acknowledgement of the people living close to each other.

Unknown to the Monomotapa people they were instrumental to the spreading and planting of more baobab trees. They dropped the baobab seeds around the settlement area and later those seeds sprouted and would turn into giants of the veld in a few centuries to come.

The sunrise-horizon silhouetted the baobab trees in view. Large and small baobabs found their place in the sizzling summer sun, but the most interesting ones were two opposing trees.

One was out of sight for the normal observer. This baobab tree was growing on the rock plate a few hundred meters away from the big rock, the sacred place where the Monomotapa people called on their ancestors for rain and other blessings. This miniature baobab tree did not get proper chance unlike the others

around him to grow a few centimetres each year – the kudu's enjoyed his leaves too much when they quenched their thirst, and that kept him from becoming taller. But would the miniature baobab tree ever grow tall or remain a bonsai forever?

In contrast, a tall baobab tree spread its branches and roots proudly on the other side of the same rock plate – this baobab tree later became known as the *octopus* baobab tree among the people. The roots had crawled a few hundred meters to find water in the ground. But the branches grew in all directions. The branches were still young, but one could see their eagerness to become thick and strong.

Seemingly the giants and dwarfs have a contrasting stance in life – the one is ambitious and wants to progress in life by becoming a giant tree whilst the other is happy to be admired for its bonsai status, shying away from the wide world.

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The whole area became busybodied, like when an ant's nest is kicked open. Animals and humans moved around, each on its own mission, while the veld vibrated at an accelerating pace with the daily activities. The animals were quenching their thirst and then sought comfort in the shadows of the trees to rest and care for their young.

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The women started fires and went to the Sediba^{xv} well to bring back water for consumption.

The men started off in the direction of their crops to see how desperate the plants were for rain. Carrying water continuously from the well to nurture the plants, is not as effective as rain from the heavens.

The children started running around, the boys mimicking their fathers and the daughters mimicking their mothers.

Despite the wishes from man, animal, and plant, it was going to be another hot summer's day in the Limpopo Valley – a minimum of 40° Centigrade was common for summer days.

Crops were planted but the rain was much needed for the plants to flourish. *"The queen and the spiritual priest must put their act together, and pray and offer for rain,"* many of the people murmured.

4.

Thandi

One of the usual early birds of the people was a middle-aged woman despite her complex which made her looking still in her twenties.

She had but one set of clothes she lived in day and night. Thandi^{xvi} rose with sleepy eyes from her night's rest. She stretched and yawned a few times before rising from her bed.

"I am so glad I could have had my home built here. My home is well protected from nature's elements below the overhanging rock face, especially the sun," she said. Thandi adored the sleeping spot since it was lower on Leopard Rock close to her queen, and she could in a flash deal with the queen's needs when needed.

"The people elsewhere will never see such beautiful sunrises." The pale orange of the spring-sunrise was still blueish dark in the East allowing Thandi to see around her – daybreak was jumping to life.

"Spring and summer daybreaks are exceptional when there are no clouds, but the clouds and accompanying rain would rather be welcome at this time of the year," Thandi concluded predicting a cloudless and sweltering day.

As the personal servant and confidant to Shevha^{xvii}, the rain queen and matriarch in the Monomotapa kingdom, Thandi had to ensure that everything was ready for her queen to be in good spirits when she rises. She was a mature and experience woman, and the queen trusted her to, amongst others, prepare each meal without any directions.

"I must get going. There are ample fruit and vegetables along with some mature meat I must prepare to the taste of my queen," Thandi chided herself. The queen did not consume any strong brewages as other members of the Monomotapa tribe, but she enjoyed fresh milk from the goats under the care of the herdsman. The cow's milk was more for the general population.

The Sediba well, a bit away from the rock, provided ample fresh water and could be drunk for refreshment. But the water had to be collected from the well daily, and that task is part of the final day activities on the previous day of the ten- to twelve-year old boys of the tribe. *"These boys must bring enough water for the queen to be refreshed in the morning, but also to quench her and my thirst. I must remind the elders to reprimand them as they did skip their duties yesterday,"* Thandi made a mental note.

Thandi and the queen shared the same stature – lean body structure with a length of around 120 centimetres – typical of the people of that era.

'My clothes are starting to look aged but are still fit for my duties to the queen.' The thought that her clothes needed replacement crossed her mind for a split moment, but then duty called, and suddenly her intention of replacing the outfit was lost in her mind.

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"I love these beads from the East." She was proud of the shiny beads she had traded by one of the elders on her behalf from the traders. *"I feel so special when I am wearing this jewellery."*

Without thought she started to pull the beads and bangles around her wrists and ankles to be as prominent as possible to any of the men in her tribe.

Her position and tradition as confidant to the queen, however, did not allow her to marry at all – she had to dedicate all her time to her queen, and she found honour in that task. As servant to the queen, her mind had to be focussed on her mistress and ignore her physical desires.

When she rose, her ears picked up that Berimba^{xviii}, the royal musician and entertainer, was playing his berimbau, a one-snare musical instrument, and he started to sing to his queen.

The song was light-hearted in the melody and words. *'The rain queen was always in good spirits when she arose at sunrise with the entertainment from Berimba. The rest of the day would be a breeze if she started the day on the right footing,'* Thandi smiled.

People from far places told Thandi and her fellow Monomotapa tribe's people that the Limpopo Valley is very prosperous especially when there is water in the Limpopo River to the North of their Maulwe settlement. Fruit and vegetation were part of their daily diet, but the fruit from the baobab trees had magical powers which the traditional healer could use to treat many ailments of the people. *'Now we just need rain,'* Thandi murmured to herself.

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Thandi hastened herself to the storage baobab tree where the surplus food was kept.

"One cannot believe how cool it is inside our storage tree", Thani exclaimed. The temperature^{xix} inside the big baobab tree remained constant throughout the year, summer, and winter alike.

Many years ago, the old people discovered that they could store their food away from scavengers – *'out of sight, out of mind'* was the attitude.

However, due to some activities of the people many years ago, some surplus food was forgotten in the storage tree. And when the food was taken out a week later (*'to be thrown away', so they thought*), it was discovered to the people's surprise that the food was not spoiled. The food was preserved and appetising.

Some of the food even tasted better after such a long time, especially the meat. The meat matured but did

not spoil – the loss of moist made the meat a bit tastier despite the extra effort to chew the meat.

From then onwards, the ancestors and the tree were honoured for such a gift and for the tree's ability to keep the food preserved and fresh, and usable for some time until needed. Naturally, the food had to be guarded to ensure that no unauthorised person or animal could get access to the storage facility. *"The young children were chancers, and wanted to grab something to eat when no-one is around,"* Thandi smiled to the guard. He just nodded his head in affirmation.

Thandi extracted mature meat and fruit from the storage area, and artfully arranged it on the queen's plate. *'The queen is going to enjoy this morning's breakfast. The goat's milk has matured and is now eatable with a spoon. I must just get around to the herder for fresh warm milk.'* Thandi weighed the ideas and the time restriction against each other: *'I will have to hurry, but luckily the herdsman is always ready with a flask of milk.'*

The ceramic plate on which Thandi intended to arrange the breakfast was a special gift from the craftsman who made the pottery. *'The potter was an incredibly talented man who could bring the people's culture and customs in pictures onto the pots, flasks, and other vessels for special occasions and daily use. He is a highly respected person for his craft,'* Thandi thought as she admired the ceramics in her hands.

The potter also counted amongst the craftsmen, who created various gold paraphernalia, and many animal

figures to display the animals in nature around Maulwe. These artisans could replicate any of the predators or antelope exactly as one would see them in the nature. Their art was illustrated on the ceramics.

"Surely, the queen is going to enjoy this morning's breakfast," Thandi repeated to herself. The breakfast table was decorated with young mopani shrubs and flowers from the impala lily plants and the baobab tree.

Anticipation for the rainmaking ceremony was bringing excitement to all the people and the queen was no exception. *'Rain forms the lifeline of our society and we need to ask the ancestors for their blessing to send rain,'* it milled in Thandi's mind. *'And who are the best to lead the ceremony than the spiritual priest under leadership of Modjadji, the rain queen.'* The rain queen and the priest had been instrumental to many earlier good rain seasons for their region.

5.

Shevha

Shevha, rain queen of the Monomotapa people and Modjadji to her people, was a soft-spoken woman. Her stature echoed her status in the community – she was a short person of around 120 centimetres, but her size should not fool the outsider.

Her minions were expected to be bold since they would be the gatekeepers to and defenders of the borders of the city, Maulwe, and the community at large, but kind and respectful to her as queen.

'I must start thinking of my successor. How beautiful would a princess be in my arms, and to raise her in one of the best-kept secrets in our spiritual world.' The queen had no children yet. One of the elders, Nduvho^{xx}, recently suggested that he would be honoured to sire a daughter with her and to ensure the future existence of the Modjadji. Nduvho was not only an affluent *man*, but he was a skilful warrior and have defeated many enemies. *'He would make a great father, and he would be able to take diligent care of his children. He is one of the more sensible advisors I have; great blood for bearing a child,'* Shevha pampered the idea.

As a relatively young queen, of early thirties of age, she could still bear many kids and when the time is ripe, she would let Nduvho in her bed. Her hormones stirred at the thought.

...

Shevha's assistant, Thandi, had been her confidant for many years and understood her thought process and desires. Very little words had to be exchanged between these two women. *'I glad Thandi is my confidant. She understood exactly each of my eye or facial expressions, and even understood each hand gesture. Sometimes the advisors as men did not grasp the matriarchal passion I have, and Thandi is so observant, she sometimes relay me thoughts to the men better than I can express them,'* Shevha thought light-heartedly. *'To lead a nation is not in anyone ability and the governance and personal matters of all the people require a lot of consideration and a lot of passion.'*

Thandi and Shevha shared many secrets, but the secrets of the rain queen were carefully protected by Shevha herself. *'No person who is not the reigning queen or queen-in-waiting could ever know these secrets,'* her mother's words echoed in her ears. The former queen passed away about five years ago, but she knew that *'the Modjadji ancestors would severely punish me if I dared to slip any of those secrets.'*

The queen's appetite and preferences for meals were no more any challenge to Thandi. Over the past 450 years the Monomotapa people became skilled farmers in the

region and planted many crops over the years, and Shevha through Thandi had access to the cream of the crop. *"I am pleased that we have fresh fruit and vegetables that could be harvested during the spring- and summertime. But the women of old were even more skilful in preserving surplus fruit and vegetables when they were abundant for use during autumn and wintertime,"* Shevha said aloud in appreciation of her skilled people and ancestors.

Shevha liked the fruit and vegetables alike from the veld or cultivated. *"The water from the Sediba well is sweet, but a little cup of water does not trump a cup of fresh warm goat's milk in the morning,"* Shevha said to Thandi as she drained that 'nectar from the ancestral spirits' into her stomach.

...

'Berimba's music at sunrise was each day like refreshing and soothing cool water on the body,' Shevha pondered. *'The musician had the ability to produce such magical music and songs that I am in awe of it each morning – he, even, had the ability to surprise me, the queen, from time to time with a new composition.'*

A new song for the first time brought a soft smile to the queen's face when she heard it. Her favourite, however, stayed the song, *Nda Wana^{xxi}*, she learned as a young princess when Berimba played next to her mother, the Modjadji, while she was lulling the princess when she had stomach pain. *'It felt like the music notes infiltrated the cramps and slowly but surely diluted them so I could fall asleep without realising it.'* As young girl, Shevha only

became aware that she was cured when she woke up – refreshed and pain-free.

The music and songs came across the veld directly from the baobab tree under which Berimba sat. That music tree was hollowed to amplify the sounds – it sounded anyway if he was standing right next to her though he was two hundred meters away. *'The one who discovered this natural amplifier was a genius. It must have been a gift from the ancestors to Berimba to honour and constantly entertain me, the queen,'* Shevha considered.

Whenever the grass grew tall, Berimba would cut the grass short. Shevha saw him keeping the *'sound path'* also free of any trees which may interfere with the travelling sound. The pure sound was played softly but was clear and audible when Berimba played.

Shevha's mother was a very gentle person, though strict in her ruling. While she was the ruling queen, she brought Shevha along from an early age to learn the traditions and customs of the rain queen. Shevha was born into the succession position of the Modjadji, as first-born and specifically as eldest daughter to her mother.

Part of these traditions was the rainmaking process, and the past few mornings excited the queen as she felt enthusiasm in the build-up to the next rainmaking ritual.

'It is three days away from the full moon of the current cycle then the ritual will be held. It is going to be great to bring

rain to the people.' As rain queen, Shevha had a prominent and dedicated role and seat on top of the rock to lead the rituals executed by the spiritual priest. *"The priest is a sweet old man. His obscure looks keep him isolated from any distractions – look at his long fingernails, the head cover he uses to disguise his face during the ritual, the ceremonial staff he carried and the pouch full of pinkies he wore around his neck. No wonder so many parents scare their children into submission by this boogiemán."* Shevha said to no-one in particular, just thinking aloud. *"Despite his appearance, the old man had been successful in the rainmaking ritual most of the time. It was only the odd occasion where he had to resort to follow the second and rarely the third phase of the offering ritual."*

The priest came across as a scary character, with the missing teeth in his mouth, his bent-over posture, the sluggishness of movement, his over-size coat, mopanicut walking stick, large head-cover, and pouch full of magical bones. He clutched these bones in his small, rippled hands with prominent long dirty fingernails, for the bones were collected from the pinkies of earlier sacrificed human offerings, and seemingly the ancestors appreciated the sacrifices because they sent extra rain when the bones were used.

...

From an early age of around four years, Shevha's mother taught her that she had to bear a daughter to take her place when she grew old. The rain queen may never marry, but she had to allow one of the senior

advisors to sire an offspring. That procreation must happen until a daughter is born. The daughter would then be taught in all the traditions and customs of the Modjadji.

Shevha considered the process of transfer of power and pictured the ritual in her mind as told by her mother: *'When the time is ripe for one Modjadji to transfer her power and duties to her daughter, the elders had to gather when the moon was full for the inauguration ceremony to take place.*

'The feast had to be prepared when the new rain queen had become of age and had been groomed for the transfer of power. The feast is known as the "beêrr" ceremony, at which the powers could be transferred to the new Modjadji queen. Besides the normal food and drinks to be offered to the Modjadji ancestors, a young cow (heifer) would be slaughtered with beer as symbol of the respect and transfer of the power. The heifer selected could not have borne any offspring to prove the purity of the ceremony.

'The skin colour of the heifer had to be light brown with no blemish. The heifer had to be between the ages of two to four years old. The people also believed that the heifer was a symbol of purity to please the Modjadji ancestors. The flesh, and especially the heart, of the heifer along with the traditional beer would quench the ancestors' appetite and thirst when they 'visited and participated in the ceremony'. No-one dared to bring an inferior sacrifice to the ancestors, as they would not only strike the guilty with tragedy but hold back on the rain which would be devastating to the people since they relied on the water from the heaven for survival.'

The secrets kept by the Modjadji can only be revealed and transferred from mother to daughter – no son of the Modjadji may become a "Modjadji". It was reserved for the females in the Modjadji bloodline only, and any "crowned male-Modjadji" will suffer the brunt of the ancestors and an excruciating death will befall him for his transgression even though he was an offspring of the Modjadji.

Up to Shevha, *'thankfully no male dared to take the rain queen's place and all generations so far have honoured that tradition. But one never knows what might happen in the future.'*

...

Shevha was brought back to the present time by the shrill sound of a baboon barking his warning to his troop of eminent danger – *'probably from a lion roaming the veld'*. From time to time the lion, as king of the animal kingdom, had to satisfy his physical needs in terms of food, but now it was the turn of Shevha, queen of the Monomotapa people, to enjoy a festival breakfast. She came earlier than expected to the breakfast table with a smile on her face. *"You make me so happy, Thandi. You just know how to spoil your queen. Thank you so much."* *"My queen, you honour me so much, thank you. And it is my privilege to serve you. I feel so much closer to the ancestors when I am in your presence,"* Thandi shyly said. Shevha enjoyed the fruits in season, and especially the papayas. Those orange fruit was overly sweet on the

pallet, and Shevha sometimes felt that she could only eat papaya. *"Why don't you bring me some more papaya this evening at dinner, Thandi?"* asked the queen.

"My queen, I must look after your mental and physical health. I will bring you more of the papaya this evening, but you must also keep your strength. What if I mixed some of the nuts and seeds into the bowl for you to eat?" Thandi carefully dared to ask.

"That would be great. Then you can bring me some fresh warm milk and some mature meat" Sheva responded. Sheva's favourite drink is the warm milk which only the herder knew how to milk the she-goats so that the milk would be tasteful when drunk.

"Did you convey my gratitude to the potter for the magnificent plates, pots, and cups he made for the royal use?" Shevha admired the crockery made by the potter. He was such a formidable artisan who knew how to decorate the crockery and he brought a smile to Sheva's mouth as she admired the story he told on the plate and cup from a hunting event some time ago. If one took care and looked after the crockery, one could enjoy the crockery for generations to come. *'Our children's children could appreciate these stories, because most of the captured events had an element of laughter or edification in them – what an interesting way of teaching the young people when they understood the message,'* Shevha realised.

"Absolutely, my queen, I did convey your gratitude" Thandi responded as she approached Shevha with respect and

bowed before her queen. She served the queen from a humbleness position on her knees, and the queen enjoyed every moment of eating and drinking.

Shevha looked at Thandi intensely. She considered a moment asking Thandi if she could let the royal tailor make a new set of clothes for Thandi, but then she remembered that the tradesmen have not been around for some time to swapped Monomotapa products for material fitting for a queen's assistant.

...

While Shevha was having breakfast, the queen's mind was captured and redirected to messages from the priest: *'There are ancestral spirits stuck in the spiritual forecourts, and they cannot cross-over into the afterlife. This type of situation poses a threat to any of our people and mostly you, my queen – anyone caught up in such situation must have done something sinister to upset the ancestors not to be allowed to cross-over from a physical life to a spiritual afterlife.'*

'If I would be caught in an analogous situation, I would have to rely on Thandi to seek help from the natural or physical world to help with the cross-over process. The real and spiritual worlds would have to cooperate to make the cross-over a reality.' Shevha became scared of her own thoughts.

'Wait, let me finish my breakfast and get on with my daily tasks. The advisors are coming soon to discuss the priest's latest conduct and I need to be ready for them. They claim he

has become quite 'bossy'. Besides, the rainmaking ritual is not far away, and I must ensure that all preparations have been completed,' Shevha pushed herself to stop daydreaming and finished her meal.

6.

Priest

The cultivation season was on hand and the spiritual priest, responsible for making rain along with his queen, called all the elders for the rainmaking ritual and its preparations. He did not have to get a fresh instruction from the rain queen, as he already knew what had to happen.

Ngaka^{xxii} was a bit concerned. *"The rain has not poured from the heavens, and the ancestors may not be happy with some of the tribe members' recent conduct,"* the priest mumbled to himself. *"Some men and women took their ancestral bones and traded them for beads, bangles, and shells from the East, and that is a slap in the face of the ancestors. The ancestors are not only going to punish these people, but they are also going to bring grief to us all."*

"Those merchants came from Sofala^{xxiii} near the big waters to the far East of our land where the sun rose, are greedy to lay their hands on the local soft tanned leopard skins, tortoiseshells, ivory, horn, gold, and copper, with many of these already fashioned into sought-after pieces."

Unknown to the Monomotapa people, the Sofala merchants became rich in their dealings with people

'riding on ships' – the Arabic, Persian, and Chinese people – but the Monomotapa people fancied the beautiful shiny beads and other goods the merchants had to offer. *'My hands are tied with these people's conduct,'* the priest became agitated by that thought.

...

The spiritual priest, known as Ngaka, now had to focus on the rainmaking ritual laying ahead. He called the elders and said to them: *"Give instruction to the maidens chosen for the ceremony that they can gather fruit, vegetation, wood, meat and other offerings so that we can start the rainmaking process. The maidens must ensure that there is enough beer brought to the top – remember the last season! We angered the ancestors because there was not enough beer for them to drink. And remember, do not anger the ancestors and me. Bring the best offerings and bring them first to me as I will only allow the top choice of what the people considered offering. Those maidens who defy me will suffer the brunt of the ancestors and I will be the instrument to apply the sanction. Be careful not to anger me as I will not spare any punishment."*

The rainmaking process had to take place in three days' time when it is full moon. The priest mumbled by himself: *"These hard-headed people keep on bringing inferior offerings, and that angered the ancestors the last few years. The ancestors were not happy with earlier offerings and that is why I had to resort to stricter measures – the elders think I am just difficult. If everything went according to plan, the ancestors will be happy with the offerings this time around,*

and the queen and I will appease them and make them content."

Ngaka picked up his walking stick, cut from a mopani tree, and leaned on it to stabilise him – he has become an old man. He started walking around the rock to the Eastern side to ensure that the path to the staircase^{xxiv} is unrestricted for use by the maidens – they had to focus on climbing up the rock and not be hampered by the shrubs and thorns.

"The path also has to be unrestricted for the serpent man since he is the protector of the treasures of the ancestors hidden in the rock. The serpent man would swallow any maiden slipping on the rock – he would then turn the "fortunate" maiden's life into an ever-lasting life and the maiden could live for ever." Ngaka said to himself as he contemplated the home of the "serpent man" high on the rock.

...

As Ngaka rounded the Eastern side of the rock, several rock-rabbits scrambled for cover. *'These rock-rabbits have a very interesting relationship with the serpent man,'* the priest recalled the ancient stories told by the old people. *'I have no relationship with them. That old python living next to the fig tree growing from the rock face on the Southern side is apparently extra-ordinary large'.*

It was told that *'there was an agreement that said that the serpent man would protect the rock-rabbits but in return the serpent man feeds from the offspring of the rock-rabbits.*

Thus, the rock-rabbits offered their young voluntary to the serpent man to uphold the agreement, and when the rock-rabbits were in any danger the "head" rock-rabbit would go and call on the serpent man. The head rock-rabbit would use the entrance on the flat part of the rock where the fig tree was growing from the rock to call the serpent man to address the danger.'

The incline on the Eastern side of the rock was very steep, nearly vertical, and the maidens had to treat carefully when bringing the offerings to the top of the rock.

Ngaka, the priest, smiled just a wink as he normally got up before any of the other people would rise on the day of the rainmaking ceremony. He would then walk to the Western side of the rock and though the climb was still steep for an old man like him, it was much easier than the Eastern side. His walking stick would also provide stability on the way up to the ritual and later down after the ceremony when he descended from the sacred platform.

The priest was contemplating the three phases of the ritual he and the queen had to perform to ask the ancestors to send the rain. *'The fresh water in the well had to be extracted deeper at this time of the year as the wintertime is normally a dry season and the people use water despite my warnings not to waste. Wasting a scarce resource is a very dumb move as one would only jeopardise oneself and allow everyone else, including oneself, to die of thirst. One can still*

go for some time without food, but water is essential and cannot be wasted.'

As Ngaka touched the bottom of the staircase with his walking stick, he suddenly he felt a shockwave through his hand and arm and realised the correlation and similarities between the sacrifice of the human children and the rock-rabbit sacrifices – they were quite clear. *'I will never relay this revelation to anyone else – first the listeners would not believe me, and secondly, I would lose "spiritual face" in the eyes of the people.'*

After seeing the area around the bottom of the staircase to be a bit overgrown with grass and young mopani trees, the priest raged at an elder passing by: *"Get those lazy young men to clear this area! Had I not instructed them to do the work? Do they want to tempt the ancestors with their disobedience?"*

'Some people only learn the hard way and did not want to listen to the ancestors speaking through me', the priest thought – 'that is why these hard-headed people suffer from so many ailments and even died prematurely.'

The priest made his way to the Sediba water well to see that the water was uncontaminated and useable on the day of the rainmaking ceremony. *'One cannot bring contaminated water and then expect the favour and approval of the ancestors when asking for the rain.'*

The well was dug many years ago in the time of Ngaka's great-great-grandfather and had been a source of life for many over the years.

On his way to the well, his attention trickled to the rituals he and the queen had to perform in the rainmaking process. *'Hopefully this time around we do not have to go to the third phase. But as gruesome as it may be to others, the parents involved were honoured exceptionally when the ancestors smile on us.'*

...

In his mind he reviewed the first phase – as he stood on top of the rock and the rain queen presiding over the ceremony, he would hit the rock with his ceremonial staff to signal for the proceedings to begin. The drummers would be in place and the maidens would stand ready with the food, liquids, and other sacrifices, have the foodstuff on their heads and stood straight in front of the rock staircase. The food and liquids all had to be carried in the ceremonial clay pots and flasks specifically made for these offerings. The clay was sourced from the Limpopo River North of the Maulwe settlement. The texture was finer than other obtainable clay in the area to make high quality pots – the young girl-artisans decorated the pots under supervision of the potter with illustrations from the rainmaking process. *'People in the far future may appreciate the effort put into decorating the pots and flasks as they portrayed the whole ceremony,'* the priest thought about future generations.

The maidens had to be dressed in clothes specifically made for the ceremony as normal day attire would not suffice. The clothes consisted of a skirt skilfully

decorated with gold and copper chains, a loose-hanging top which was not tied down but open on the sides and decorated with beads displaying animal motifs of each maidens' choice, a headdress for the pots to be carried on their heads and colourful bangles and anklets. The maidens had to wear at least ten anklets around each leg to produce music to the audience seeing the maidens' ascend.

The maidens had to be barefoot in respect of the ancestors, as they were treading on sacred ground. Tradition called for each of the maidens to decorate the clothes with those glass beads exchanged with the Sofala merchants.

Green, blue, and black beads had to cover the top, along with fine chains and string made from yarn spun from goat hair. The beads reflected the fire light in such a way that one could think that there were small stars on their faces. Red beads were very scarce and only the older and experienced maidens could wear red beads amongst the other coloured beads. The older maidens rarely lost their grip on the staircase and were not prone to the appetite of the *serpent man*.

Once on top of the rock, the maidens could unload their head packs and place the offerings at the altars in front of the priest and the rain queen, *and the ancestors*. Due to the knobbly surface on top of the rock, each maiden had to ensure that her pack was carefully placed with the others and by instruction of the priest. The younger ones sometimes just wanted to drop the offerings on the

ground after the exhausting climb, but the priest held a firm hand on these actions. He would not tolerate any contempt or disrespect showed to the ancestors.

Open fires would already be burning which the priest ordered the helpers to pack the wood and which he lit. The heat radiating from the altars was of such intensity that no-one dared to come too close, but the fires were cool enough for the priest to place the sacrifices on the altars.

The rain queen would start the offering process by casting some '*magic*' powder in the fire and it would burn off with a '*whoosh*'. Then the priest would place the offerings on the open fires on the altars, and the drummers could start beating the drums in a ritual rhythm. The drumbeat had to have a specific resonance which had to penetrate right into the inside circle of the ancestors.

The lone voice of the priest calling on the ancestors in song, praise, and prayer would bellow above the drumbeats – he and the queen were the only ones entitled to communicate with the ancestors. Other people were not worthy of that function due to their lower status in the community and distance away from the ancestors.

After a while, when the priest had spoken to and called on the ancestors, he would motion the drummers to stop and be very silent – that termination had to be immediate with not even a scuffle. The rain queen

would also allow a while in that silence to hear whether she could hear any thunder and see lightning bolts in the air.

When the offers had burned off, and no clouds appeared in the heavens, the rain queen would signal the priest, and he would declare that the ancestors may not have accepted the first offering. *'Could they have been elsewhere busy with more important duties?'* is normally the priest's first thoughts.

The priest then had to end the first phase of the rainmaking process and instructed all non-drummers to return to where they came from. The maidens had to go back and bring the same offerings as the first round, and more.

The whole ceremony had to be repeated but this time a ten-day old goat kid had to be slaughtered too to call on the ancestors – *maybe they did not hear or were sleeping during the first round of the ceremony and had to smell the fresh blood of the goat. The burnt flesh of the goat would rise above the rock and touch the sky – that would surely awaken the ancestors.* The priest had to select the goat kid the day before the ceremony. That goat could not have any deformity or blemish on its skin – it had to have a pure white fur.

The priest would be up and about during the second phase of the rainmaking ceremony. The rain queen would be back on her throne, awaiting the proceedings to start.

Ngaka would slowly be losing credibility in his own eyes, because *'why were their calls and prayers to the ancestors not answered during the first round?'*

The anxiety of the priest would spill over to the populous because he wanted his prayers answered. He would be quite aware that the rain queen's temper would be rising as she is the direct link with the ancestors, whereafter the priest would come.

The priest would start chasing the elders to hurry up, and the elders hastened the maidens and the other members of the community to collect all the fruit, vegetation, and liquids for the second phase of the rainmaking process.

One resolute elder would go off to the herder of the flock of goats and instructed him to bring forward the ten-day old goat kid as previously shown. The goat may not have any blemish or deformity as the priest could not offer an inferior goat kid. Besides that, the queen could put a spell on him and that would be detrimental to any priest, especially when considering his status and credibility.

The elder would take the goat kid off the hands of the herder and hurry back to the chain of maidens who were already lined up for the second offering. The most senior maiden would then have to take the goat kid in her arms and carry it up the rock along with her head pack.

The ritual proceeding would be started afresh for the second phase. The priest would be waiting, a bit more anxious than before but still with anticipation that it would rain. The throat of the goat kid would quickly be cut to get the blood flowing. The priest would have to cut the heart from the chest and put the warm heart on the altar.

The Modjadji would cast her spell on the ceremony by throwing the magic powder in the fire and the priest would start a more intense song, as the drummers started to beat the drums. They had to be more coordinated in beating the drums and stop when he signalled them to do so.

The sacrifices on the altar had to be scorched more urgently as the goat blood would quench the intensity of the fires and that could not be tolerated. *'The ancestors would even laugh at me if I dared to allow the fires to be put out during the ceremony'*, the priest pondered – he surely would be in trouble with the ancestors and the Modjadji.

Precisely after singing the song ten times, the beating had to cease, thereby raising the anxiety and anticipation level to hear whether there was thunder or whether they could see lightning bolts.

The priest would become annoyed if the rain did not come after the second attempt – he dared not show his anger as the rain queen would not tolerate his behaviour – he had to let the ceremony go to the third phase of the rainmaking process. The queen would

probably ever so slightly raise an eyebrow for the failed second attempt.

The third phase would entail the same food and liquid sacrifices as in the first two phases of the rainmaking ritual. However, the third phase would require a human sacrifice as a substitute of the animal sacrifice.

...

Parents of all the ten-year old boys had the opportunity to please the ancestors. Their sons had to line up on top of the rock. Ngaka had the task to select a suitable candidate who would satisfy the ancestors.

It would seem to an outsider to be a simple but awkward selection process, but the priest's task was to select the best candidate. The priest had to sniff the boys up and down to smell whether the boy-to-be-selected smelled fresh and had no illnesses. Illnesses always had a foul odour and Ngaka could smell it very easily.

After the "*sniffing*" process, all but the chosen boy had to leave the ceremonial place. Even the queen would come forward to put her hand on his shoulder as sign of appreciation. Little did the boy know that he had to relinquish his life for rain – blood for water – whether it rained or not, he would be sacrificed.

...

When all the sacrifices were in place for the third phase, and the selected ten-year old boy was tied on top of a

wood-stack, the queen would step forward and await the priest to ignite the wood on the altars.

Once the fire was going, the queen would again throw her magic powder in the fire, and the wood-stack below the boy would burst in a fireball. With a feather step and swift action of his hand, the priest would cut the boy's neck artery. The blood would pour into the fire and again the fire could not be allowed to be dowsed. The whole body of the child had to be cremated, but the priest first took the righthand pinkie of the boy whilst the body went up in smoke. He would then drop the pinkie in his bone-pouch and bow to the queen in respect of her position and as medium of communication with the ancestors.

His songs and dances had to follow the same pattern as in the second ritual, and again the drummers had to bluntly stop the drumbeating at the priest's signal.

Surely, by this time and with the expectation the whole tribe had, there ought to be clouds over the rock, thunder would sound all around, and lightning bolts would strike the earth around the rock.

The tribe would be celebrating as the rain poured down and the parents of the sacrificed boy would be treated as royalty for the time being until the next successful ritual where a boy had to be offered.

BUT, if the parents were instrumental to no rainfall, they would have to run for their lives. The community did not have to wait for the priest to give the signal –

they would stone the parents and other siblings, if any, if they were still around after the ceremony and no rain fell on the earth. They would have become a disgrace to the community in the eyes of the ancestors – and that could not go unpunished.

...

Ngaka's focus was back on the upcoming ritual on the evening of the full moon.

There were preparations to be made for the rainmaking ceremony and the process had to go as smooth as possible.

The bones around his neck, the righthand pinkies of previously sacrificed boys, made a hollow dried-bone sound when he grabbed the pouch and shook it to ensure that the bones were still there. The pinkie phalanxes from the boy who was sacrificed four seasons ago were with the others in the pouch and hopefully it can bring favour again with the ancestors that season.

7.

Berimba

The musician was known as "*Berimba*", and he was playing his one-snare musical instrument with passion. He had the natural feeling and ability for the instrument. The songs poured from his mouth ever so smoothly. The words came from within his soul, and he never had to think of the story telling in the song.

As the royal musician, he had to entertain the royalties, every day like heartbeat. The rain queen wanted to rise every morning at sunrise with his beautiful music and story-telling songs. She said through Thandi that the music soothed her soul, and the songs brought her happiness. The queen's favourite was *Nda Wana* which Berimba heard many times, and he could easily relate to the story being told – he also was once a boy who liked to play all day, and he and his gang only started enjoying themselves when the sun was about to go down. They had many scoldings from parents when they came back home after the sun had set.

The greatest musician of all time, or so the current Berimba thought, was his father. That man could enchant with the musical instrument. He mixed not

only the snare instrument with drumbeat but improvised with a mix of tortoise shell and antelope horn – kudu horn was his favourite as it had a more bass sound than the horns of other smaller antelope. His father was a genius music maker and taught his son that the best material to use in making the snare of the berimbau was twisted goat guts – and if one could lay one's hands on a ten-day old goat kid's gut, one could do magic.

...

On the side of the musician's tree, one could not imagine the powerful volume the berimbau sound would create while just playing peacefully and softly. Berimba grew up with the power of the tree – a Berimba ancestor carved the shape of an upright halfmoon on the side of a baobab tree many seasons ago and the royal musician used it ever since.

The baobab tree, which served as amplifier for the music and songs, stood tall, facing Leopard Rock where the rain queen had her royal residence.

...

Berimba found to his dismay one season that the sound did not reach the queen as other mornings. Thandi brought the message and Berimba was very embarrassed: *"Berimba, the sound of your music is becoming dimmer and dimmer the past two weeks. Is there anything wrong? The queen wanted to know as she hears wavey sounds."*

Berimba at once recalled his lack of maintenance; and just wanted the earth to swallow him whole.

He neglected to clear the 'pipe' area between the musician's tree and Leopard Rock after a heavy rainfall. Small mopani trees filled gaps in the grass, and Berimba had to spend two days to clear the "pipe" area between his tree and Leopard Rock. He had to work tirelessly the two days to prevent any false note or suppressed sound to reach the queen.

His father never warned him to keep the area free of grass and trees, but after that experience, Berimba would never forget to clear the area ever so often. He would instruct his son, unlike his father, to be vigilant and keep the grass short and trees out of the pipe area – *'the Modjadji will even love me more for that action'*.

It did not cost a lot of effort on Berimba's side every so often, but he merely had to do the clearing after each rainfall.

'Apparently the priest was busy preparing for another rainmaking ritual this coming full moon.' Berimba heard the elders saying that Ngaka had them running around with preparations for the ceremony and they started becoming agitated with his self-proclaimed superiority. *"He thinks he is the queen herself, the way he bosses us around"* the elders mumbled. Berimba just smiled.

...

Berimba's own daughter was already of age to start taking part in the ceremony. He had her climbing trees

and some of the smaller rocks around his house to strengthen her ability to climb the rainmaker's rock unaided on the day of the ceremony. Berimba was immensely proud of his daughter as she could easily climb the trees and some smaller rocks unaided, but he was not fully sure she would make it up the rainmaker's rock when the time comes.

During the last visit by the merchants from the East, Berimba was called by his daughter and wife. *"Please dad, buy some of those beads. We need them for the next rainmaking ceremony to affix to my clothing. I am coming of age, and I cannot be the only one with no beads on my ceremonial clothes,"* his daughter eagerly said.

He exchanged some of the small artifacts he had made for some beautiful beads and material for his daughter's dress. He was surprised to get red beads in the bunch of beads he exchanged for his artifacts. He heard that the red beads were exceedingly rare, and he treasured the beads with all his might.

He felt that *'the musician's tree was the ideal place to hide the red beads from preying eyes and that I would have the beads on hand when my child becomes the eldest maiden in a future ceremony.'*

"I must stop daydreaming and prepare for my song and music to the queen," Berimba reprimanded himself. *"Daybreak was coming quickly over the treetops,"* and Berimba did not dare to disappoint his queen by not bringing her song and music.

As he assessed the strength of the snare on the berimbau, Berimba remembered: *"I have a new song to sing to the queen today and I can bring it to her a few times this morning."*

A spare snare was always available should the current snare snapped – which has happened on a very chilly morning some time ago, but fortunately he had a spare on hand. *"Rather safe than sorry, my boy"*, as his father taught him to be prepared whenever entertaining the royalty – *"she had huge power to bring evil over any of her subjects who did not live up to her expectation,"* his father warned.

The queen's expectations were not unreachable but were of a high standard for the royal household. And Berimba did not want to disappoint his queen – he had seen the fate which fell on other royal entertainers who dared to disappoint the queen. She was a small person in stature, but the respect she demanded from her subjects exceeded her posture tenfold and fitted her confidence.

He started playing the berimbau and the words of the first songs echoed towards Leopard Rock. Berimba felt content with his achievement that morning as the day seemed to be bright and promising.

8.

Runup

On the day of the full moon, the region became more alive and busier than usual. Anticipation filled the air.

The maidens were hurriedly gathering fresh fruit, vegetation and the beer made two days ago. The beer smelled fantastic and foamed when it was poured into the flasks.

'The ancestors would be proud of our efforts,' Akonaho^{xxv}, the senior maiden made herself believe.

The goats bleated in the veld under the care and protection of the herder – he had to have the flock close by in case a ten-day old goat kid was to be sacrificed that evening.

The ceremony could be over after the first phase of the rainmaking ritual as the beer was well-brewed and the fruit and vegetation were picked just that morning. There were plenty fruit, vegetation and beer should there be a second phase of the rainmaking process. However, a third round of sacrifices could prove to be a challenge as the rain had not fallen for some time, and the crop was small at that point.

Akona, as her friends liked to call her, lived up to her name which meant "*be prosperous*". She was eagerly looking forward to the ceremony as she could for the first time wear her ceremonial dress this time around decorated with the red beads from the merchants from the East. Akona was prosperous in all she did, and she and her mother spent a few days embroidering the top she was going to wear during the rainmaking ritual – she was enormously proud of herself. Busi^{xxvi} and Takalani^{xxvii}, the other senior maidens that year, and her best friends, may be envious of her because her top was unique and exceptionally artistically decorated with a python in honour of the *serpent man* – a similar motif had not been seen before.

"Has your mother embroidered the red beads into your motif on your ceremonial top?" Busi asked Akona.

"No," was Akona's response, *"I did it myself and you must see how fantastic it turned out. I used some of the green and blue beads to create a python on my top, and the red beads on it stands for the snake's eyes. It just looks like those eyes would hypnotise you and you would be in its spell."*

Takalani laughed with excitement because her mother got creative and embroidered some of the rock-rabbits on her top. Her mother also used the red beads to make eyes for the rock-rabbits. *"It is so beautiful you won't believe how nice the motif turned out to be,"* Takalani giggled.

Busi was silent at that moment because her top was not complete. Her mother could not afford the red beads

and only used the green, blue, and black beads to depict a leopard as motif.

"What did you say, Takalani?" asked Akona. "Did you say Busi did not have red beads to add to her design?"

"Yes," Busi added in a shy and soft voice.

"Why didn't you say something earlier, girl?" Akona scolded friendly, "I still have a few red beads spare. Bring your top so we can quickly correct that problem."

Busi jumped with joy and started singing a happy song as she ran in the direction of her parents' house.

"You are such a good friend to us all!" Takalani exclaimed as she hugged her lifelong friend very tightly.

"Thank you kindly, my friend, but we need to continue our preparations for tonight's ceremony," Akona said.

Akona and Takalani turned to continue with the preparations, but before they could walk a few steps Busi was back with the top and softly pushed her top in Akona's hands.

"The leopard motif looks nearly alive, Busi; you and your mother did a great job. Alright, let us go and quickly fix your top, but we must hurry. You don't want the priest's brunt on you before the ceremony," Akona smiled. *"Because he will use any excuse to blame any of us if it doesn't rain tonight."*

...

The wild animals were already seeking shelter against the sun as it was an extremely balmy day. Though the

heat was not exceptional to the region, people from elsewhere occasionally remarked that they could not bear the heat. They felt as lazy as the animals.

The rock-rabbits which normally sat in the sun for warmth, even sought cover as the sun was boiling down on them. Here and there were courageous and curious rock-rabbits sniffing the air from the tree branches they were sitting on, as they saw the humans running around – *'what were these humans up to?'*

The predators were also lazily resting in the shades of the mopani trees – panting and longing for some cooling off. The rainwater would quench their thirst, but also help against all the itching from the dust and insects bothering them all day long – the flies would bother them especially when they were breathing. The lions and leopards alike had to constantly shake their heads to try and whisk the flies away from their faces.

The mopani trees were at least giving some protection against the sun. It was at least cooler there than under the baobab trees. The mopani trees seemed to have some magical powers in their leaves as the wind dusted the leaves when they were green and became cool air. The brown leaves from the earlier season were hanging on the branches for dear life and would only be releasing their grip when the rain fell.

For the moment, humans, animals, and plants were all craving rain – maybe the priest could go up the rock and make some rain.

...

Ngaka nearly ran on his route to get the elders to come to the party – he was very anxious and seemed the only one to be in a hurry. *'No-one else had fire in their pants'*, went through his mind but his walking stick barely touched the ground, so much was his hurry.

"There are so many things still to be done before this evening's ceremony," Ngaka hissed under his head cover. He did not wear a hat like the commoners – he wore a "HEAD COVER". The head cover gave that extra mystery nuance to him so that most of the tribe members stayed out of his way – that is what he wanted anyway, especially when it came to those annoying children continually mocking him. They were told *'he had magical powers and would sweep an offender out his way with one sway of his hand,'* but still the children took their chances.

It was still early in the morning, but the sun was already scorching down. It was a bright sunny day in the Limpopo Valley. There was no relief from the wind and the cicada were reiterating the hot temperature by rubbing their wings together. Their deadening sound superseded all other sounds in the vicinity, and one had to carefully listen *"around"* that *"cacophony"* to find whether there were sounds other than that of the cicada.

...

The elders of the tribe were slowly but surely playing their part.

Tshilidzi^{xxviii} was the elder responsible for the fruit and vegetation. As food expert he had the fruit and other food arranged in such a fashion that the maidens would easily pick up their individual loads and put them in the carrying baskets.

They first had to carry the fruit and vegetables from the storage tree and place the food stuff on baskets reserved for the ceremony only. *"Man, that tree is a blessing from the ancestors,"* Tshilidzi expressed his gratitude to the ancestors as he placed the cool fruit and vegetables in the baskets. The content of the baobab tree was always cool to the touch, whether it was summer or winter. The fruit and vegetables were always fresh and did not rot or become spoilt – Tshilidzi could not explain why, but he was only glad that they had such storage facility. *'The ancestors would have been very upset if we did not have this facility because we would have to run around to collect the fruit and vegetables on the day of the ceremony and that could spell disaster',* Tshilidzi thought. *'No-one wanted to upset the ancestors so that they had reason to withhold the rain, despite the fact that the ancestors themselves created this facility and gave it to the tribe.'*

"Come on, girls, you are particularly slow today", Tshilidzi voiced his dismay with the younger maidens. The more experienced maidens knew what to do and they continued without the food expert's directions.

The carry vessels could not be put on the ground before they reached the top of the rock – that would desecrate the vessels and make them unfit for that ceremony.

Anyone who dared to put a vessel on the ground had to be stoned to death – that was the tribe's belief.

"Maybe that evening's ceremony could honour him for being such a great food master", Tshilidzi smiled to himself, "and bring blessings to the community." He turned to continue with his grotesque task at hand.

...

Matimba^{xxix} lived up to his name – he managed the beer. He brewed the beer exactly according to the instructions he received from his father, who was the earlier royal brewmaster until his death in the last wintertime. Only the brewmaster was allowed to taste the beer to ensure that the beverage was tasteful and would please the ancestors.

The pots, in which the beer was prepared and left to ferment, were all decorated skilfully by the potter. The potter seemingly understood the ritual of beer brewing and captured the brewing process accurately. If the brewmasters of the future would be able to interpret the decorations, they would also have the recipe and they would be able to brew beer fit for the ancestors and the royalty.

...

Ngaka was happy with the clearing of the pathway in front of the rock staircase. Now he had to ensure that the water in the well was pure and fit for use during the ceremony – as per his instruction three days ago.

As he arrived at the Sediba well, the warthogs scattered from the trough where they were allowed to drink. *'Maybe the warthogs, as horses of the spirits, would be able to carry the sacrifices to the ancestors and make them happy,'* it came to the priest's mind.

The priest inspected the purity of the water and saw contamination in the water.

"Who dared to contaminate the water!" he yelled to no-one but everyone in hearing distance. As his spirit dropped to the floor, he knew this was a bad omen that something would be going wrong that evening at the ceremony.

Ngaka became even more agitated when a crow screeched above him in the trees. *"What did I do wrong to anger the ancestors?"* he loudly mumbled with a clenched fist in the air. He was innocent in his own eyes. *"One omen would imply something small would go wrong at the ceremony, but a second omen is more serious. A third omen would be devastating!"* Ngaka blurted through his teeth.

As Ngaka turned around to continue his journey to ensure that everything for the ceremony was in place, he stepped on a stone the size of a man's fist and twisted his ankle. He stuck his walking stick in the ground for support, and fortunately felt that his ankle did not hurt too much. Ngaka just felt relief when he stepped on one of those long white and sharp thorns. The white thorn popped out at the top of his foot with a red head – *'blood was drawn!'*, and Ngaka became very scarred. Three

omens in a row meant he was not enjoying favour with the ancestors and the evening's ritual may not go as normal.

He wanted to yell at the young boys always playing around the water well, as they surely were reckless in leaving the thorns stuck in clay they played with.

'Never mind,' Ngaka comforted himself. 'I was also a young boy once, and I led my friends on many journeys with our imaginary cattle.'

Ngaka slowly sat down on the ground and started pulling on the thorn to get rid of it. The foot flesh was clutching the thorn with the grip of a lion.

Ngaka was just about to surrender his efforts to get the thorn moving when he saw a scorpion running his way from nowhere. Fright, the pain and the thought of the omens made him paralysed – Ngaka could not move!

The next moment the scorpion swung his tail over his head and stung Ngaka on the same foot which was punctured by the thorn. With one sweep, Ngaka grabbed the scorpion by the tail and ripped it to pieces and then ripped the thorn with a succession motion from his foot.

"What did I do to upset the ancestors for them to bring all this hardship over me?" He cannot think of anything out of the ordinary what he did to give reason to the ancestors to punish him.

His walking stick had to become a crutch as he could not feel his foot or step on it. He called the boys playing

around, but because of earlier experiences with the priest, the boys started to scream and ran away.

Fortunately, Matimba heard the commotion and Ngaka's distress calls and came running from the brew area to help.

"What happened to you, Ngaka? You look devastated. How can I help? It sounded you came across a lion here at the well and was fighting for your life," Matimba blabbered.

"Look at my foot! I just got stung by a scorpion. The ancestors are terribly upset because the water is contaminated, and a crow laughed at me from one of these trees". Ngaka was upset because his foot started to swell, and he did not know if he would be able to climb to the top of the rock that evening for the rainmaking ceremony – that could be overwhelming to try.

"Get me some help. Send one of these rascals to go and fetch Thandi and let the medicine man bring his medicine to come and fix my foot. I must be fit for tonight's ceremony otherwise the ancestors will not give us any rain. Matimba, hurry up! Get moving!" he shouted. *"No, wait, first help me to my house."*

If he did not lead the ceremony with his queen, it would upset the ancestors even more and the rain would not fall. That would be even more detrimental to the tribe's survival as the rain was needed to ensure a good harvest and enough water during the wintertime until the next summer season.

Matimba called one of the boys who was curiously seeing the whole incident wide-eyed and sent him to Thandi. *"Go and tell Thandi that Ngaka got stung by a scorpion, and she must come and help to treat his wounds. And ask her to bring the medicine man along with the muti he used some time ago to treat that other child who was stung."* The boy ran off in Thandi's direction at Leopard Rock.

"Come old man, let me help you home," Matimba mocked Ngaka. Then he helped the old priest up and supported Ngaka in his stride to his home. Matimba knew Ngaka did not trust anyone with his health besides his queen and Thandi, and maybe the medicine man.

...

Thandi was just clearing the breakfast area of the queen, when the child came running with eyes as big as the moon itself. *"Ma, ... you ... must ... come ... quickly,"* he panted.

Thandi's heart missed two beats as she thought the queen, who just left the area a while ago to relieve herself, was attacked by a wild animal or bitten by a snake. *"It ... is ... the ... priest,"* the boy spitted the words out.

Thandi had the ability to act in the most electrifying moment. She formed a picture of the priest in her mind where he lay completely still, not moving an eyelid, possibly dead – that would be devastating to the people

if the ancestors on the day of the rainmaking ceremony took Ngaka's life.

Before Thandi could blur out any question, the boy somewhat regained his composure and said: "*A scorpion has stung the priest. You must come quickly as he was asking for you. And I must also get the medicine man to heal his wounds.*"

"Where is Ngaka now?" asked Thandi.

"Matimba took him to his house," the boy answered.

After the child regained his composure, Thandi instructed him: "*Go to the patch a mopani trees next to Berimba's tree and tell the medicine man what happened. Also tell him to bring the muti he used the other day on Alu's foot.*" And off the child ran in the direction of the traditional healer.

Thandi alerted the queen of the priest's fate: "*My queen, Ngaka had been stung by a scorpion and I must go and help to treat him. If he is not fit for tonight's ceremony, the ancestors may become upset and hold the rain back.*"

Shevha was shocked because the priest was her righthand man during the rainmaking ceremony, and there was no replacement or alternative for Ngaka. A replacement had not been selected or trained since the old man had no son, or children for that matter. "*Go and assist Ngaka and stay until he is well. We cannot have the rainmaking ceremony without the priest; the ceremony can definitely not be postponed.*"

Thandi turned on her heels and went into her house. She grabbed some cloth and a flask with water and started running in the direction of the priest's house. The words – *'It would be disastrous if the priest does not attend the ceremony with the queen tonight. People's lives are at stake'* – kept on turning in Thandi's head as she ran.

...

'Fortunately, it was not a black or green mamba which bit the priest – he would have been dead even before the sun had moved in the sky,' were the last words on Thandi's mind as she entered Ngaka's home.

When Thandi stepped into the priest's home, Ngaka was in agonising pain. He mumbled disorientated that *"I still have to get all the things for this evening's ceremony in order, and now this!"*

Thandi approached him in her usual humble caring way and that seemed to somewhat calm the priest. The traditional healer arrived just behind Thandi to deal with the priest.

"Let us see where the scorpion stung you, Ngaka". With those words, the traditional healer jumped into action, took the injured foot in his hand, and started treating the wound. He poured powders and grounded leaves on the wound and slowly wrapped the priest's foot in a tanned snakeskin.

He and Ngaka understood each other as the priest relied on the traditional healer to mix some herbs for the

rainmaking process. *(The traditional healer also supplied the queen with some muti to mix her own magical powders for use during the rainmaking ceremony, but he is not allowed to talk about that responsibility.)*

Thandi drew water from her flask in a cup to calm the priest. She saw that he was terribly upset and in shock, and said *"Come, drink some water. I brought some water reserved for the queen. You will soon feel better,"* but she wondered whether he would be able to lead the ceremony that evening.

With that, Thandi supported Ngaka to lift his head to drink water.

The traditional healer stuffed some herbs into Ngaka's hand and said: *"Swallow this. It will help for the pain and with the swelling."*

Without much resistance, the priest took the grounded powder from the traditional healer and stuffed it in his mouth. Thandi brought the cup with water back to Ngaka's mouth and allowed him to swallow the powder.

After a short while, the intense ache subsided from Ngaka's foot, but he felt his heart still throbbing in his foot. *"Will I be able to lead the ceremony tonight??"* the priest inquisitively wanted to know.

"I sure hope so, Ngaka", the traditional healer said with uncertainty. The medicine worked its magic the previous week on that other child's foot but whether it

is still potent enough for the priest is a question of *'wait and see'*.

"We cannot only rely on 'hope', we cannot miss this opportunity!" the priest blurted. *"You know as well as I do that the rain is already late and if the ancestors do not send the rain now, we are bound to die of thirst."*

"I hear you, Priest, and I cannot agree more. What else can we do but wait?" the traditional healer asked.

"Well, send Matimba in, I want to talk to him. The others must leave now," the priest barked.

'Ngaka is getting better if he can talk like that. But he was probably at the back of the row when manners were dished out,' Thandi thought relieved as she returned to her home. *'Under all that bravado is an accommodating person when he spoke to his peers. The other people lower in the status circles were another story.'*

...

When Matimba entered the residence of the priest, he was ever so slightly taken aback.

He had never seen the inside of Ngaka's home before – it was sparsely decorated with some relics from the ancient times and probably from priests before Ngaka. The priest had no wife or children.

Matimba's eyes first had to adjust to the darkness on the inside of Ngaka's house.

"Matimba, you must help me tonight. My foot is very swollen, and I do not know whether I would have recuperated

in time for the start of the ceremony. You must walk with me up the rock and remain by my side. I cannot fall in front of the ancestors otherwise they will become annoyed. You must help with the offerings but remember – DO NOT DARE TO TOUCH THE SACRIFICES when they are to be laid on the rock. You must only assist me by keeping me standing and support me when my feet do not want to cooperate anymore." Ngaka's eyes narrowed when he spoke about the touching of the sacrifices, and *'they looked like snake eyes'* to Matimba – or that is the only way Matimba could describe what he saw.

"Are you sure the ancestors will not punish both of us if I participate?" Matimba became very uneasy with the thought that he had to help the priest and he, as Matimba, had not been born into the position or received the blessing from the ancestors to take part at that level.

Matimba knew he could endure the process even if he was not born into that duty, but just to become a substitute unexpectedly may be something else.

"I am certain the ancestors will not be upset – they should understand." Ngaka said, though he did not fully believe what he just said. *"I will talk to the queen, and I will petition the ancestors on your behalf once we are on top of the rock."*

He was never in such situation before, and neither did his father tell him of such event which happened in the past.

"Alright, when must I come to join you?" Matimba asked uncertain of what might happen.

"When the antelope start wandering to the water holes, you must come. But first, you must ensure that all your own preparations are in place. Get Alu^{xxx}, the son of Humbelani^{xxxi}, to work in your place tonight. I have seen Alu doing his duties and Alu has potential just as his name says. Go, and do not delay or hesitate – there is still a lot to be done," the priest said. *"Or maybe you should come just after you handed over your duties so that they can be fulfilled by Alu. My foot is still sore, and there are many tasks to execute before the ritual can take place tonight."*

9.

Dressing up

The sun started to draw on the orange colour of the papaya as it was going down. The moon seemed like the other side of a balance as it rose in the East whilst the sun set in the West.

The rain queen was dressed in her ceremonial attire. Her dress was made entirely from black silk material embroidered with tanned leopard skin, and the skirt part reached her calves. The large and small buttons were made from ivory covered in leopard skin. The smaller buttons were affixed at the collar and the cuffs, whilst the larger ones were affixed down the front securing the two panels.

Covering the dress was a purple silk cloak braided with seashells, ceramic beads traded from the merchants, and which came from a far country, glass beads in green, yellow, red, and blue depicting different royal scenes such as her birth, the rainmakers rock, and a hunting scene. Polished ivory pieces etched the form of a rhinoceros on the back of the cloak as main motif.

At the top end of the cloak, the royal tailor made a hood which could be worn over the crown when necessary.

The hood gave Shevha privacy and mystery when needed. She also needed protection from the rain when the ancestors smiled on the people by letting the rain fall during the rainmaking ceremony.

The cloak was a full-length garment and a young girl had to follow the queen to keep the cloak from gathering dust until the queen reached her destination. The girl had to stand guard at the bottom of the rock, and in waiting until the ceremony was completed and the queen had to reach her carry chair. The queen should not and was not allowed to walk distances which may fatigue her.

Around her wrists and ankles were broad and narrow gold bangles and anklets, and as she walked, the bangles clanged in rhythm with her stride. It formed its own mini orchestra announcing her presence.

The upper half of her arms had helix gold bracelets in the form of snakes each facing outwards to warn any attackers of eminent danger and the venomous nature of her personal protectors.

Each finger was decorated with a gold ring depicting different animals of the veld and birds from the sky. No cost or creativity was spared during the making thereof, and all the rings intertwined to form a seemingly solid plate on the surface of each hand across the fingers.

On Shevha's head rested a golden crown decorated with various precious stones, such as opal and diamonds, and sculpted miniature figures of lions, and

elephants. At the front were two giraffes looking forward, with their necks and heads forming imaginary horns of the crown. The queen's black hair was shiny and formed the perfect background to emphasise the crown and its decorations. All the gold was polished to its highest shine. The sunlight, and later the moonlight, would reflect their light away from the queen's head to give the impression that she wore a corona or small fire sparkles.

The royal sceptre in her hand, made of teak wood from Zimbabwe, was decorated with gold twisted chains hanging in scallops below the handle halfway the length of the shaft; the horn of the biggest kudu her hunters ever came across (*it had seven and a half turns when the bull was hunted*) was affixed to form the handle of the sceptre; carvings of baobab trees; rhinoceros which roamed the bush and stood proud in the veld when the hunters saw it; and hornbills. The shaft of the sceptre was coloured black and shined to such an extent that the queen would be able to see her reflection in it. Above the handle, a miniature replica of the queen's crown was placed to reflect the status of the sceptre and to whom it belonged.

One of the artisans made her a pair of soft fitting shoes. The shoes were made of leather cut from tanned leopard skin and had hippopotamus skin as soles – comfortable but durable.

Her transport was a big carry chair made of teak wood obtained from the woods in Zimbabwe when her

grandmother visited a neighbouring ethnic group North of the Limpopo River many years ago. As gift, the host tribe sent so many trees to use in the making of the royal carriage, that the craftsmen could make a bed, table, and chest for the queen – those furniture Shevha was still using up to the day.

To distinguish the royal transport from any other transport, the craftsmen used gold leave to cover every nuke and cranny.

For illumination at night, each carrier held a torch in the unoccupied hand. The torch was made of reed cut from bushes in the Limpopo River and covered in gold leave. The top was split to form a holder for a ceramic cup. Animal hair and fat were ignited to illuminate the way.

The first team of carriers consisted of four selected and well-trained warriors who could also defend the queen in case of any life-threatening situation. There was a relay team of carriers escorting the first team in case a member or members of the first team had to be relieved or the royal carriage attacked. The queen did not even know that a fresh team had taken over the load when she travelled long distances – she sometimes even fell asleep on longer journeys. The carriers moved swiftly with no disturbing motion – the queen experienced each ride like a ride on clouds.

The carriers were well-dressed to reflect the royal responsibility they were tasked with. Each carrier was clothed in the traditional hunting attire with

headbands, shorts and ankle decorations made of leopard skin to depict the royal treasure they were carrying.

The feet of the carriers had been tanned over time to ensure that they did not flinch when running over rough terrain. The tanning had to be done regularly to avoid softening of their feet – cobble and rough stone, and thorns were used in training.

...

Thandi was dressed in her ceremonial dress, something she permitted herself only to use when the rainmaking ceremony was occurring.

Her dress mimicked the design of the queen's dress and was also made of the same black, shiny silk material as the queen's dress but was embroidered with tanned python skin. A few adult pythons had to sacrifice their skins to allow the tailor to cover the outline of the ceremonial dress. The buttons were made of plain polished ivory.

The cloak was also of the same black silk material as her dress. The top also featured a hood to keep the face of the wearer in clandestine to the people around. The main motif on the cloak was a leaping leopard about to tackle its prey. Real leopard nails were used in the expression of the motif with green, yellow, blue, and red beads forming the body of the animal.

Thandi's shoes were made from tanned kudu skin with soles made from hippopotamus skin. Thandi had to

follow the royal carriage on foot as she did not share royal status despite serving the queen.

Thandi loved her jewellery and wore the same ones she wore during her normal days. She took, however, time to polish the bangles and anklets, first to clean them from the daily dust and dirt, and secondly to shine them so that they could sparkle in the fire and moon light that night.

Thandi had to carry a ceremonial staff made of teak wood and coloured black. The animal suet, the staff was smeared with, allowed Thandi to shine the staff, and she was equally proud of that part of her attire.

Just before Thandi stepped out of her home to join the procession, Thandi thought of something. One small matter tickled Thandi's mind since that morning and started to grow in concern, or maybe it was just her imagination. That morning, when Berimba played, there was a false note and silence for some time, before Berimba continued his entertainment. *'Did he break a snare? If so, was it any sign of any omen?'* Thandi pondered for a moment and then put it in the backroom of her mind before leaving her home.

...

Ngaka's foot was still swollen when he had to get ready for the ceremony.

'I am going to struggle up the rock', he thought. 'But luckily Matimba will be close to help me. I just need to be cautious

that he does not touch any of the ceremonial sacrifices otherwise his blood will be on my hands.'

The priest struggled to get dress. His aching joints were protesting the many movements Ngaka executed which made it even more cumbersome to dress.

Ngaka wore a hooded cloak to also be one of the mysterious participants in the rainmaking ritual. The ceremonial cloak was decorated minimalistic with ivory figures carved to stand for different events of the rainmaking ceremony intertwined with blue, green, red, and yellow beads. His cloak was impressive but not on the standard of the queen's – it can never be.

The priest had to now decide what to wear as footgear. He would not be able to put on both shoes. *'Well, I will just wear my daily sandals and explain to whomever asks about my footwear. The ceremony is more important than the footwear,'* he argued with himself.

At that very moment Matimba arrived. Matimba was dressed in the ceremonial dress of a leopard skin pants and a python skin banner over the shoulder. He had a shiny spear in his hand and headgear cut from leopard skin on his head. He was barefoot as expected of an elder warrior.

"What must I do for you? Is there anything I need to take anywhere?" Matimba enquired.

"No, not yet" the priest replied. *"First help me to finish dressing so that we can take my ceremonial gear up the rock. The sun is setting and there is a lot to do."*

...

Most of the more than four million strong tribe had been dressed in their ceremonial attire.

All had to wear one green bead bangle around the right wrist to show their association with the Monomotapa people and Modjadji, the rain queen. Green stood for the colour of prosperity, the mopani trees and the grass of the veld around them – and due to its common nature, the '*commoners*' had to wear it as depiction of their status.

Some of the pregnant women, small children and guards did not attend the ceremony. The queen allowed only these people to miss the ceremony, but all the others had to be present around the rock. Oh yes, and the herder was expected to be close to the rock if a goat kid had to be sacrificed, but far enough that the people were not bothered by the bleating of the goats.

The people started gathering closer to the rock as they were only allowed around the rock once the rain queen and the priest arrived and ascended the rock.

It sounded like a celebration gathering such as the birth of a prominent child the way the people chatted to each other. They had to be careful not to be too loud as a loud voice near the rock was only allowed for the spiritual priest. The priest had to call on the ancestors and any other loud voices could agitate the ancestors.

10.

The ceremony

Ngaka was limbing to his usual spot at the top of the rainmaker's rock.

Matimba was close behind him as it was Matimba's first time during a ceremony at the top of the rock. He was a bit scared and unsure what to do. He wanted to support the priest in his stride and was hesitant to do so. *'One never knew where you stood with the old priest. Was he in a good or bad mood? Does he need help or not? Should I help him with the wood or not? Where must I stand? Can I walk where he walked, or should I just await his instructions?'* milled through his mind.

Matimba was still daydreaming when the priest poked him with the ceremonial staff. *"Why do you stand there, doing nothing? You are my assistant today and you must execute some of my tasks. Come, come, get a move on. Take the wood and bring it to the altars,"* Ngaka instructed.

As if bitten by a snake, Matimba jumped into action. He grabbed a whole bunch of wood and dropped it at the first altar and was on his way to grab a second load when the priest nearly shouted at him: *"You cannot just drop the wood! You must put it down – do you want to*

agitate the ancestors? Go, go, and get the next load and put it down. Don't throw it down! And after you have put wood at each altar, you must pack it in a stack so that the sacrifices could be charred. Each fire must be able to burn at an extremely feverish temperature. Come, get a move on," scoffed the priest.

As Matimba walked away from him, Ngaka was reminded of his negligence to inform the ancestors of Matimba's presence. *'I have sinned against the ancestors. I am doomed!'* he realised.

Ngaka forgot about his sore foot and dropped to his knees on the rock. *"Forgive me my lords and ladies, I have sinned. I brought a non-priest in your presence. I did not sanctify him to come in your presence,"* he bellowed with his head bowed to the rock. *"But as you may see, I am injured and required some help with the ceremony this evening. Matimba is a very dependable elder in the tribe and he will be a great help to me during the ceremony."*

Matimba was bringing the third bundle of wood to the altars when he saw the old man on his knees, mumbling some stuff. *'I thought his foot was sore, but the way he fell to his knees, I would have guessed that he had no stung and swollen foot.*

Ngaka realised it was too late to beg forgiveness for Matimba's presence as the man was already on sacred terrain. *'What can I do to restore my relationship with you, the ancestors?'*

Matimba started to light the wood. Ngaka saw what he was doing, and a darkness befell him at that moment. *"The rain queen has not arrived yet. What are you doing?! You are upsetting the ancestors. They are going to kill us!"* Ngaka roared.

Matimba tried to kill the fires, but it was too late. The fires were already high in temperature. At that moment, Shevha arrived at the top of the rock. The drummers were in place and bowed their heads and greeted the queen.

Ngaka heard the greeting and swung around. Shevha's left eyebrow was raised when the priest looked at her face. The queen did not acknowledge the drummers' greeting and that brought a new thought of concern to the priest's mind.

"Why are the altars alight? And what is Matimba doing here? This is no place for 'outsiders'," Shevha asked in a soft but urgent voice.

'Two transgressions are already in place and a third one would bring bad luck to the Monomotapa people,' the rain queen argued in her mind.

"My queen, please forgive me. I already begged forgiveness from the ancestors," Ngaka's voice trembled as he spoke to the queen. *"A scorpion stung me at the water well this morning, and my foot got swollen and I had to bring help to assist"*

A raised hand from the queen cut the priest short in his explanation. *"You know it is not permissible. And you did*

not even consult me. You are the one who is bringing a premonition over us. The ancestors are not going to send rain tonight the way things are. And the people will all know it is your fault."

Ngaka wanted to say something in his defence, but the rain queen interrupted him. *"Bow down and offer your prayers to the ancestors. Maybe they will show you favour and forgive your transgressions."*

The rain queen covered her face with the hood of her cloak and offered a prayer to the ancestors on behalf of the priest. She said: *"My lords and ladies, honorary ancestors of our people, we honour you for your status. Please hear my prayer and accept my plea. The priest was foolish in his conduct by bringing an 'outsider' in your presence. The fool did not think of you when he brought the 'outsider' to light the fires before we greeted you, our lordship. Please forgive the priest because he is a fool as he did not have the 'outsider' dress appropriately – the 'outsider' is dressed like a peasant. Should you grant us grace, we will honour you with ten heifers, ten 10-day old goat kids, lots of fruit and beer. Please listen to my plea and answer me. I beg you!"*

A complete silence fell upon the rock, and the rain queen and the priest thought: *"Thank goodness, the ancestors heard us. We can continue."* Contrary to their belief, the ancestors did not answer the rain queen or the priest. Not even a trickle of wind moved in the trees or over the rock.

"Let's get on with the ceremony, priest. Boost the fires and let the ceremony start." The rain queen was confident that the ancestors heard her, and that she had the approval from them to continue with the ceremony.

Ngaka drew his ceremonial staff into the air, around head high, and tapped three times on the rock. The bush message reached the ears of the elders at the bottom of the rock staircase, and they pushed the maidens forward.

...

Akona, Busi and Takalani each had a full load on their heads, feeling honoured to be the senior maidens of this year's rainmaking ceremony. *"Be careful and just follow in my footsteps,"* Akona whispered to her friends.

"Be quiet," Tshilidzi hissed. *"Do you want to land in trouble?"*

"I am sorry, Pa, please forgive me," Akona said in a soft humble voice.

Tshilidzi had already turned away to see that the other maidens were in line to move when the signal of three taps on the rock was heard again.

At that very moment that Tshilidzi heard the taps, he said to the maidens: *"Now is the moment to make us and the ancestors proud. Go forward and climb up the rock to the priest. You cannot stabilise yourself with your hands and do not put the pots and flasks down before the priest does not instruct you. And put them down with caution; do not upset the ancestors with your conduct."*

The daughter of Berimba and her friend formed the tail end of the maidens in the row. The maidens had to walk in seniority of age with the eldest at the front and the youngest at the back. Berimba's daughter was the second youngest and felt particularly proud to be able to take part for the first time in her tribe's customs and traditions.

The climb up the staircase was very demanding and strenuous as the load on their heads tilted left to right and swayed forward and backwards as they moved.

'It is quite difficult to do this,' Berimba's daughter thought. 'I hope we can make it to the top without any spillage or someone falling off.'

...

The frontend of the maiden chain crested the rock.

Ngaka sighed with relief that none of the maidens were caught by the *serpent man*. That would have been the ultimate of this ceremony if the priest had to go and pay respect to the parents of such maiden – he just hadn't the stomach to do so today.

The priest signalled the drummers, and the loud beats welcomed the maidens to the top.

Shevha stepped forward from her stone throne to be able to throw her magic powder into the fire and pray to the ancestors. *'Hopefully they are now ready to hear our prayers and smell the sacrifices,'* Shevha argued with herself.

Ngaka directed Akona towards the first altar and instructed Matimba: *"Take the pots and flasks from the maidens and place them in front of the altars. The fruit at the first altar, the vegetation at the second altar, the meat at the third altar and the beer in front of the fourth altar. Do not spill any of the content. And be aware as the floor is uneven – make sure the pots and flasks can stand upright without support before you let them go. I will make the offerings just as the queen cast her magic powder into each fire."*

'What is Matimba doing here? He is no priest.' Akona was puzzled by the presence of the elder. *'Let me not say anything. If the rain queen allowed him and approved his presence, surely the ancestors would be happy with Matimba. Maybe he is prepared to be the priest's successor.'*

Matimba stepped forward and adored each maiden's body as she placed the pot or flask in his hands. Without thinking he rubbed the roundness of the pots and flasks. He was more interested in the girls than the ceremony at that moment.

The priest saw that Matimba was not paying attention to his tasks and prodded the elder in the side with his ceremonial staff.

'Ouch, old man, what are you doing?' Matimba was brought back to reality. He first wanted to voice his discontent with the priest, but then realised that Ngaka saw the lust in his eyes – and yes, he was not concentrating on the tasks at hand.

Shevha pushed passed Matimba and nearly shoved him out of the way. *'This type of craving cannot be tolerated in this sacred moment,'* and with that she cast the magic powder in the fire.

Matimba did not realise how close he was to the fire or what the size of the fireball would be when the queen casted her powder in the fire. The fireball licked him, and Matimba smelled burning chicken feathers.

'Who brought chicken feathers to this ceremony,' Matimba wondered before realising that the fire reached the hair on his body and burnt his eyebrows. *'Eish, I am too close to the fires, maybe I should stand back.'*

With that the drummers started the rhythmic beating of the drums as the priest taught them many years ago. Matimba was still in awe of the drumbeats when silence surrounded them.

"What is ...?" Matimba was about to voice aloud.

"Keep quite!" the queen reprimanded. *"You are not to talk – you are an 'outsider' and not the priest. You will be the reason that the ancestors become agitated and withhold the rain."*

Matimba was paralysed into silence as he has never heard the queen raise her voice nor spoken to him directly. His next motions were automatic movements as the instructions of the priest rang in his ears.

Ngaka came forward and placed the fruit, vegetation, meat, and beer individually on the different altars. The heat of the fires seemed to increase as the fires consumed the material

placed on top. Only the beer-fire sizzled when the liquid met the flames.

The first three offerings all went up in smoke and smelled like burnt wood, but the beer generated a pleasant odour.

"Is the beer smell ...?" Matimba tried his luck again but this time the priest smacked him over the head with the ceremonial staff.

"Ouch, that is ..." Matimba could get out before a next whipping came down on his body. *'Maybe I should keep quiet now.'* And with that Matimba stepped backwards to remove him from the frontline of the ceremony. His head started throbbing with pain where the staff struck. He felt deeply sorry for himself and started sulking.

"Shush," Ngaka instructed the sulking man. *"There are bigger matters to deal with, and if it did not rain, it would be devastating to the Monomotapa people."*

The silence on top of the rock could nearly be touched.

'What are the queen and the priest waiting for?' Matimba's curiosity again got the better of him.

Shevha and Ngaka remained motionless for quite a long time, occasionally peeking at the sky.

'What are you looking at in the sky? There are no birds this time of the evening in the sky – they are all in the trees. Look down, that is where you will find them,' Matimba wanted to shout at them, but decided against that urge. His head was still sore from the beating.

"Start over" came Ngaka's voice to Matimba's ears. With that, the priest stomped six times on the rock to alert the elders and maidens on the ground that the second phase of the rainmaking ceremony had to start.

Matimba did not even realise that the maidens had left the ceremonial area and were back on the ground.

...

Tshilidzi urged the maidens to reload their pots and flasks with fresh goods. *"Come on girls, you must hurry. The queen and the ancestors should not be kept waiting. Akona, go to the herder and ask for the ten-day old goat kid. He knows which one was selected."*

Akona found the herder of the goats in the direction she heard the bleating. *"I am here to collect the goat kid for the ceremony."*

The herder turned nearly white and struggled to hold his composure. As big and brave as he was in the veld, the herder started to shiver in Akona's presence. *"An eagle swept in a few moments ago and took the selected kid. It flew away with the baby goat, and I do not know what to do now."*

"Didn't the priest select a backup goat. Don't you have a backup kid?" Akona asked.

"No," the herder shook his head. *"The priest forgot to select one, and who am I to question his actions. He might put a spell on me if I dared to remind him."*

"Show me the ten-day old kids," Akona demanded.

"You are not entitled to select a goat for the offering," the herder protested.

"There is no stop to the pace of the ceremony. Besides, the priest is on top of the rock and will not come down for a fresh choice of a goat kid for the one you lost to the eagle," Akona was adamant that the ceremony should go ahead.

"Well then, I will heed to your demands, but I do so under duress. Come, let me show you the ten-day olds," the herder said and motioned for Akona to follow him.

When they reached the flock, Akona was attracted to one particular kid. *"That is the one I will take," Akona proclaimed.*

"No, it has a slightly crooked tail; it is not fit for the ceremony," the herder protested.

"The priest won't know as I will not tell. And neither will you say anything, or I will reveal your dark secret with the goats," Akona threatened.

The herder got frightened as he thought no-one knew his secret. He stepped forward and scooped the goat in his arms and pushed the animal into Akona's waiting arms. The she-goat was pleading for her offspring to be freed, but her pleas went by unheard.

"I won't tell if you don't," Akona winked to the herder and skipped away, back to the maiden-group for the second phase of the ceremony.

...

Tshilidzi was anxiously awaiting Akona's return. *"Where have you been? The priest has already sent the*

message for the second phase to begin. Here, let me help you with your load. Hold still the goat."

"I struggle to hold him still. Wait, I will press it against my chest, then you can place the pot on my head," Akona said.

Finally, Tshilidzi could place the pot on Akona's head and help her back in line.

"All ready? Go! Remember, no hands are to be use in your climb," Tshilidzi commanded.

The maidens all lined up and started their second journey up the staircase.

...

As the maidens crested the brim of the rock, the goat kid expressed its dismay with its captivity in the arms of Akona.

A last attempt to get back to its mother was successful and it freed itself from Akona's arms. With a '*plump*' it struck the rock face and started dashing away from the humans in the direction of the bleating flock.

"What the heck is going on," the priest exclaimed in surprise. "This is not the kid I selected for the ceremony. How did this goat get in this ceremony?"

Matimba stepped forward to catch the goat, but it sidestepped the elder and ran straight into the rain queen. When it reached Shevha, it tried to jump up against the queen. As it went up, the goat's hooves got entangled in the scallops on Shevha's sceptre and it yanked her down.

Shevha was taken by surprise and came tumbling to the ground. Her magic powder spilled from the pouch she kept it in, creating a big dust cloud and it drifted towards the altars.

"Priest, watch out! The cloud of magic powder is about to be set alight. And it might burn you," Shevha tried to warn Ngaka, but the dust cloud had already reached the fire.

With a *'whoosh'* the priest got roasted on the side of his face. He screamed in agony and tried to regain his composure. *'This is the second big event happening to me today'*. Ngaka shot a glance at the queen who was still struggling with the goat to get it untangled.

Matimba rushed forward to offer his aid and grabbed the rain queen by her shoulders to help her up.

"How dare you touching your queen without permission. You are a peasant who cannot come close to royalty," she snapped at him in disgust.

"My deepest apologies, my queen, I was just trying to help you up. Let me grab the goat," and in one swoop the kid was untangled by Matimba, and he pushed the goat in the arms of the priest.

Ngaka was so disgusted with the events and the fact that it was not even the selected goat kid, that he snapped the goat's neck with a single motion without offering a prayer to the ancestors.

"Pick up the other offerings," the priest instructed Matimba *"and put them on the altars."*

Matimba was caught off-guard by the instruction that he did not recall the earlier prohibition that he may not handle any sacrifice directly. He tossed the food on the altars because of the heat and unknowingly dowsed the first two fires.

Ngaka ripped the goat kid's heart with his bare hands from the chest cavity after slitting the skin, and unceremoniously chucked the flesh on the altar. He did not see what happened next to him.

When he started to smell the burning flesh, he looked sideways and just saw smoke coming from the first two altars. The fires were dowsed and that meant but one thing – *'the ancestors are going to be mad!'*

Chaos reigned on top of the rock and the maidens scrambled to get away from all the commotion. They even ran the wrong direction to get away from the fireballs and two of the smaller maidens tripped and fell. They rolled a distance before they could regain control over their bodies.

All the maidens were screaming, and the smaller ones even cried in between. They ran down the rock on the Western side and around to the staircase side on the Eastern side.

Ngaka completed the ritual with song and prayers, but not with the same enthusiasm as all other times before. He motioned the drummers to stop the drumbeating, and he and the queen waited in anticipation.

"*Why is this ceremony turning into a disaster?*" Shevha asked herself.

The priest and the queen both dared to glimpse at the sky, but they could not see any clouds anywhere around them.

At that moment they realised the ancestors were upset. They would have to go to the third phase of the ritual.

"*Get yourselves together, you two. Ngaka, get the people to start the third phase of the rainmaking ritual.*" Shevha either did not care or did not realise all the wrongdoing.

...

None of the people realised what happened on top of the rock.

The maidens came screaming around the rock and Tshilidzi brought them to calm with a stern warning: "*You are the chosen ones. Act accordingly.*"

"*But there ...*" Akona tried to explain.

"*Keep quiet. And do not speak. Do you want the agony of the queen over you?*" Tshilidzi stopped Akona in her verbal stride with a hand gesture. "*The priest has already tapped nine times on the rock to motion the boys to go to the top. The ten-year old boys are being escorted to the top. Get the offerings that we can be ready for the next phase when the second tapping from the priest comes,*" and with that Tshilidzi shoved the maidens in the direction of the baskets where the food and beer were awaiting them.

...

The ten-year old boys were escorted to the bottom and then directed to the top of rainmaker's rock on the priest's path. The boys could not be bewildered when they arrived at the top by going through the trauma of climbing the staircase. They should smell acceptable to the priest and the queen, AND the ancestors.

Ngaka was carefully touching his face where he got seared but focused his attention to the boys as they arrived at the top of the rock. *"Walk this way. I need to choose the best offering, ... ugh ... the best boy for the ceremony. Move forward to the altars!"*

Shevha got her composure back and stepped forward, closer to the group of boys. *'Which one is to sacrifice his life for the rain? Maybe the skinny one or maybe the tall one? No, it should rather be the smaller one,'* the queen selectively argued in her mind.

The priest moved forward and started to sniff the boys one by one from top to bottom, front and back. As he finished sniffing the one, he moved to the next boy.

When he had sniffed all the boys, he motioned to the queen, and she touched the smallest boy's shoulders to show that he was the chosen one.

"The boy the queen touched must stay, the rest – turn around and go back to the rest of the people. You are not worthy to be offered," Ngaka said sarcastically.

A silent sigh of relieve went through the boy group. Noticeably relieved that they were not selected, the boys started pushing each other in the direction they

came from. Each boy thanked the ancestors silently that he was not "*the one*".

The chosen boy stood bewildered before being shoved in the direction of the third altar. "*Go and stand there with your arms at your sides,*" Ngaka ordered. "*Do not move or speak a word.*"

The numbed boy was still staring at the altar with only a wood-stack and no fire. The next moment, he felt a rope around his chest as the priest started to tie him up for the ceremony.

"*Stay here!*" The priest let the boy stand bound and tapped aggressively nine times for the second time to signal the people on the ground that the proceedings should start for the third phase.

...

On their way up, one of the smaller girls who fell on her way down the rock earlier was also the friend of Berimba's daughter, and she formed the tail end of the maiden row. She limped with pain as the rock tore the skin of her right leg and it was oozing blood.

The little maiden suddenly felt she is losing her foot grip and started falling. "*I am losing my foothold. Help, I am going to fall,*" she shouted and tried to grab her friend for stability. Her fingers merely grazed the skirt of Berimba's daughter.

"*Oh, my goodness,*" Berimba's daughter expressed her surprise and jerked her head around just in time to see her friend '*being swallowed by the serpent man*'. With that,

she stepped in the direction of her friend to help. She slipped on the moisture of her friend's blood and with that, her load of offerings fell to the ground.

Berimba's daughter tried to keep her grip on the rock. "*Dad, where are you? Help me. You have strong arms*," but she also tumbled to the waiting mouth of the *serpent man*.

The *serpent man* swallowed both girls and seemingly satisfied his appetite with his portion as the rest of the maidens continued their journey.

'Berimba is going to be incredibly sad, and that will reflect in his music to the queen. Then she will become depressed, and the tribe will so suffer for a long time during the mourning period,' Akona thought as she pushed forward to the top.

...

As the maidens came over the crest of the rock, they did not see anything out of the ordinary.

'That is interesting. A few moments ago, there was chaos here. But look, the altars are alight with high-burning fires.' It was Busi's turn to be surprised, but she did not dare to speak up.

The rain queen sat on her throne and the priest with Matimba behind him were waiting for the maidens to bring the sacrifices.

The queen and the priest looked like mysterious figures with no faces under the hoods besides the white of their eyes reflecting in the fires.

In front of the third altar stood a tied up dark figure. Tear-marks ran down his face and were reflecting like snail trails the fire from the third altar.

"There should be twelve maidens, and you are only ten. Where are the other two maidens?" Ngaka demanded from Akona as the head maiden. The part of the offerings the two absent maidens carried were the meat sacrifices and those would not reach the ancestors now.

"The serpent man swallowed them just before we reached the crest of the rock," Akona replied.

"The little one at the tail end of the row fell earlier when we fled the chaos during the second phase. She slipped and hurt her leg. As we were climbing up the staircase, she must have twisted her foot and fell. Berimba's daughter was taken aback by her friend's fall and tried to see what happened. She too slipped and was swallowed by the serpent man," Akona started to quiver as she said: "The serpent man must have satisfied himself with this meal because no-one else suffered the same fate."

Ngaka motioned to Matimba to start placing the pots and flasks in front of the altars. *"Leave the third altar open. We will offer the boy there."*

The priest found his composure and motioned the drummers to start the drumbeating rituals. *"Start the drumbeating. Follow the rhythm of earlier."*

The queen stepped forward and followed the sacrifices with her eyes while Matimba placed them in front of the

different altars. Then she motioned the priest to send the maidens away.

Ngaka shoved the girls to the path for the decent with the words: *"Go, go quickly. You cannot see any of what is to happen next. GO NOW!"* With that he lifted and swayed his ceremonial staff as part of his eagerness to get rid of them. *'Once these infidels are gone, I can please the ancestors and the queen,'* he thought.

The chosen ten-year old started to shiver despite the heat from the altars. He knew his life had end but found comfort that his parents would be treated as royalty once the rain came down. *'My father will get ten cows to start his own herd.'*

Ngaka started to sing, praise, and pray. *'I hope the ancestors will now answer our prayers as there are no more sacrifices to bring after this third phase, and the rain is desperately needed'.* He raised his voice above the sound of the rhythm of the drums to put in extra effort to please the ancestors.

Shevha's mind was back at the ceremony in front of her and the rituals she had to perform. She casted smaller amounts of her magic powder into the non-human sacrifice fires, and the expected fireballs consumed the material on top of each altar. The charred remains of the food and beer were the only sign that sacrifices were made.

'I will cast a double amount of magic powder on the boy's altar to make it even more spectacular for the ancestors,'

Shevha thought to herself. *'Anyway, nobody knows how much I must cast besides the Modjadji ancestors.'*

The priest carefully placed the tied-up boy on the third altar. He lit the fire below the boy and stepped aside for the queen to stand in front of the boy. The child started screaming as the flames licked at his flesh: *"I AM HURTING. IT IS SORE. GET ME OFF!"* and he skirmished to get loose.

Ngaka trumped the boy's screams of pain and agony with a roaring voice to call on the ancestors to accept the sacrifice. *"OUR LORDS AND LADIES, PLEASE TAKE THESE SACRIFICES AND FORGIVE US. WE HAVE SINNED AGAINST YOU. WE ANGERED YOU. PLEASE, DO NOT WITHHOLD YOUR GRACE. PLEASE, SEND US RAIN!"*

A moment later the rain queen was at his side to cast a significant larger amount of her powder than normal into the fire. As she raised her hand to cast the powder, the priest flicked his knife and struck the boy's main artery in the neck.

The boy's eyes sprang fully open as the blood spewed out in a stream. The priest grabbed the boy's righthand and cut the pinkie finger off. He hastily dropped the finger in the bone-pouch around his neck.

"It is all yours, my queen," the priest then bowed to the rain queen in respect of her status and that she was now instrumental in the rainmaking process of the day.

Before the fire on the altar could sizzle of the spewing blood, the queen casted the powder into the fire. *'Take that, you lazy fools. This might bring you from your sleep. You always sleep and we must always go through all these rituals just to get your attention,'* she cursed the ancestors silently.

She and the priest both hastily stepped back out of reach of the upcoming fireball.

A big fireball, extra-ordinarily hot and in the excess of 1 000° Centigrade, engulfed the boy's body on the altar. His body was being cremated transitorily.

Shock drew the boy's yelling to a silence before his body was consumed by the fire.

Sooner than expected the commotion on top of rainmaker's rock was dosed by the sounds of thunder and lightning bolts.

...

Contrary to their expectations, the sounds of thunder were not bringing rain.

Suddenly a whole electrical storm ignited the air, and it looked like the sun was shining.

Lightning bolts struck anything and everything on and around the rock. Pieces of rock and tree stumps were flying all over the terrain. People got struck by the lightning bolts and were at once incinerated.

The rain queen and the priest both admired what is happening. *'This is more than we expected. Are the*

ancestors now happy with the offerings despite the small hick-ups or what?' both simultaneously thought.

Both Shevha and Ngaka were raising their arms in praise of the ancestors when a double lightning bolt incinerated them, using the sceptre and staff as conductors.

The ensuing electrical storm had never been seen before and started an all-consuming fire on and around the rock. Hailstones the size of a big warrior's hand came flying down on the people, and, if the lightning did not kill them surely the hailstone did.

None of the tribe who were in a radius of 800 metres around the rock escaped with their lives. Man, and beast were treated alike.

The grass and the trees around the rock ignited with such intensity that they were charred in seconds of being struck.

Most of the tribe suffered demise.

Only the people such as the pregnant women, the warriors on the perimeter of Maulwe and the small children, who did not attend the ceremony, were spared.

...

The people who stayed at the residences, heard the thunder, and saw the lightning, and thought that the ancestors smiled on them. *"Surely the whole area would be covered in rain very soon,"* the experienced women guessed.

The exceptionally intense thunderstorm, however, did not move away from the rock. The electrical storm ironically "*rained*" down on the area and was nearly too bright to observe.

The hailstones could be spotted from a distance as they bounced around like newborn calves or goat kids on the playing field.

The onlookers then realised that the ancestors did not smile on the Monomotapa people but sent their brunt to avenge them for all the transgressions associated with that day's ceremony and earlier rituals.

"How are we going to survive?" one of the pregnant women bemoaned her fate while staring at the destruction playing off in a distance. She tried to comfort the crying small children in her care.

Some women were shouting profusely with others confirming: *"WE ARE DOOMED! The ancestors are angry with this people! We are going to die today!"*

The warriors started to arrive at the homesteads of the Monomotapa people. Despite their stature and bravery in defence of the community, these warriors were trembling in sight of what was playing out at the rock.

"What happened? Why all the thunder and lightning? Where are all the people? What are those things flying?" Thikhathali^{xxxii}, the commander of the guard warriors asked after realising it was not welcomed rain but anger coming from the rock.

All survivors sought protection against an emerging and unseen '*enemy*' who is out to destroy the Monomotapa people.

Small children, with eyes wide open, were anxious and kept on crying, calling on their mothers. Even the adults were unsure who this enemy is. "*Who is attacking us and where did they come from? Did you see anything?*" the commander of the warriors demanded.

Everything lay in chaos as the women and children fled to seek refuge under the rocks near the village. All emotions were running amok, and no-one knew what would happen next. But the enemy, the electric storm, dwelled only on one place.

After what seemed like a millennium, the electrical storm ceased. Everything went exceptionally quiet – probably in deep respect of the ancestors and the devastation they brought on the people.

Looking in the direction of the rock, the sky was still clouded, and it was dark around that area. In contrast, the bright moon light was shining outside of that.

Silence came over the village. Babies and small children alike were quiet, and the adults were in shock.

Everyone grouped together at the queen's house since it was the biggest house in the village. Adults and children alike assumed the foetus-position to protect themselves from any further danger. They all pushed against each other and that is the position they found comfort in and fell asleep.

No-one was watching over or protecting them.

11.

Aftermath

Early the next morning close to sunrise, the commander of the warriors was up and kicked each of the other warriors awake.

"Come on. Let us go and see what happened at the rock," Thikhathali instructed. He was driven by an urge he could not explain. He had to go and see, especially considering what they saw last night. He did not sleep much in the night and felt something was very wrong, but he could not lay his finger on that pulse.

"We cannot go there. The ancestors may still be angry," his second-in-command tried to avoid going near the rock. He was a very superstitious person.

"We have to go and see what happened there. I did not see or hear anyone yet. Nearly all the Monomotapa people attended last night's ceremony. I need to know, we need to know," said this youngish commander.

The women were anxiously watching the warriors walking off in the direction of the rock – armed to the bone.

Even the animals in the veld were silent.

"Who is going to guard us against any danger?" one of the pregnant women asked.

"Stay here," the commander instructed the second-in-command and two other warriors. "The rest, follow me," and off they went.

...

The closer the troop of warriors came to the rainmaker's rock, the heavier the smell of charred grass and wood became.

Suddenly they were in an open area. All the grass and trees were burnt to smithereens. Only small stumps of once majestic trees were visible; the rest was just ash. Smoke danced from thicker stumps but there was not wind to take those dances into eternity.

As they stepped forward into the unsecured area, their eyes were drawn to the first cremated bodies of animals and humans.

"What happened here? I cannot believe my eyes. Look at all the devastation," Thikhathali barely got out.

"I do not recognise anyone. They are too burnt," said one of the other warriors. "How will we know who is who? We cannot bury non-relatives together. They will not be able to find each other in the afterlife if we bury them unrelated."

The fear for the ancestors came over the warriors there and then. They were caught in the grip of not only fear but also respect and were stunned for a moment.

Thikhathali stepped forward to try and touch the first charred body. As he touched the body, he jumped back as if bitten by a snake. *"Whoa, look! This is only ash; I cannot pick the remains up."* He fell to his knees to pay respect to the dead.

The other warriors curiously came closer to see for themselves, and they too fell to their knees as well.

"Look, this must be the herdsman. It can only be him amongst all the charred bodies of the goats," pronounced one of the warriors.

The warriors rose slowly with deep respect and started walking through the destruction and devastation systematically closer to the rock.

The commander of the troop was looking around if he could see, Mosimo^{xxxiii}, his general. *'The general must be somewhere. I hope he survived,'* and with that he called out: *"Chief, where are you? MOSIMO, WHERE ARE YOU? Please answer me!"* No response.

Everywhere they went, they could only find charred bodies, incinerated humans, and animals alike.

The warriors walked around the rock and could not believe their eyes.

"The ancestors must not have taken pleasure in any of the rituals which took place here last night," Thikhathali said. *"That is clear from what I see. Let us find the rain queen and other prominent people. We must give them a proper burial to send them off into the afterlife. If we do not bury them,*

they will be stuck in limbo and would not be able to enjoy the afterlife."

They went ahead further around the rock and found more bodies. There were too many to count; because most of the village attended the ceremony – that was the expectation anyway.

"The six of you," the commander pointed at the younger men in the group. "Go back to the village, and bring the tools that you can dig graves. Ask the women for burial cloth as we cannot put the bodies of the dead just uncovered in the ground. Hurry up, go now!"

The six warriors ran off in the direction of Leopard Rock to do as they were instructed.

...

The rest of the troop started canvassing the rest of the terrain in the hope to find any of the bodies. The bodies were all so incinerated that only a small heap of ash remained where the different people were standing.

One of the warriors shouted in anguish: *"Commander, come and have a look. This must be the queen. The ancestors must have spared her body because she had not been incinerated."*

"Do not touch her – do not go closer to the queen," the commander warned the young man. "I will first have to go through a cleansing ritual before I can touch her, and then only I can handle the body. The queen is too sacred to be handled by anyone who does not have status in the community. And at this stage, it seems as if I am the one in

the community with the highest status." With that, the commander marked the spot by stomping his spear into the ground next to the body.

The body of the *queen* was the least burnt but still not identifiable, and because of that Thikhathali assumed that it must be her body due to her attire. Next, he said to one of the warriors: "*Stand here and guard the queen's body. Nobody and nothing must come near her body.*"

The young warrior came forward with anticipation as he never came this close to the queen and now, he had to guard her body. He stood next to the body, looking straight ahead.

The commander and the rest of the warriors canvassed the area. Curiosity got the most of Thikhathali and he wanted to go up the rock to see if there were any survivors.

"Keep on searching for survivors around the rock. I am going up the easy route to look for survivors. Call me if you find a living person," the commander instructed his men.

...

Thikhathali started up the rock. It was a windy walk up the rock. He did not realise the wind was blowing until he was halfway up. Clouds of dust came from the top and swirled past him.

When he crested the peak, black dust was laying all over the rock. First, he wanted to walk on his knees in respect of the ceremony which took place the previous

evening, but then he realised there were nothing and no survivors. He saw no bodies; only rocks lay scattered. Thikhathali walked around at the top of the rock, looking over the edge on all sides. He only saw the stairs leading from the steep side of the rock where they ended on the Eastern side edge.

The area, about the length one could throw with a slingshot, was charred in black in all directions around the rock. There was not a green sprout or living animal to be seen from the top.

'Something devastating must have happened last night. Someone or something must have upset the ancestors. Just look at the destruction,' the commander stood in awe. *'I have never seen such destruction before, not even during the great drought of some years ago.'*

He bent down to rub some of the dust between his fingers and felt a shivering going through his spine. The image of the priest danced for a split moment in front of him. *'The priest must have stood here, but I do not see his body,'* the thought quickly crossed Thikhathali's mind. *'He must have gone down to the bottom for some reason. These ashes must be from the sacrifices.'*

"I cannot waste more time here. There is nothing to collect here. Let me join the other warriors and let us get the graves ready for the burial ceremony," the commander instructed himself.

He respectfully walked bowed down the rock; why, he did not know himself. *'Was it respect for the ancestors, the rain queen, the priest, or the dead?'*

...

When Thikhathali arrived at the bottom of the rock, the six warriors he sent to fetch the tools just arrived.

"The graves cannot be near the rock or the village. We need to dig graves near those other rocks across the veld, just on the edge of the burned area," the commander pointed to some rocks to the Southern side of the rock he saw as he descended from the top. *"There is only dust at the top. The ceremony must have been interrupted and the queen and the priest probably came down for one or another reason as I found no bodies at the top."*

The six warriors trotted in the direction the commander showed and started digging graves next to some rocks.

...

The commander addressed the other warriors: *"Did you find any survivors?"*

"Not even one," came the response.

"Did you see the general?" the commander asked.

"No, we did not find the general either. The bodies are burned beyond recognition," said one of the warriors.

"You three men, keep on searching the area. I must know if there are any survivors. The rest of the warriors, start collecting bodies, wrap the bodies carefully and then bring them to the graves. Come, we must finish these tasks as soon

as possible. And pay your respect to the bodies of the people you collect – if you mistreat them, they will be stuck between this life and the afterlife," the commander instructed.

"But we must first pay our respects to our queen. Her body must be the first to be buried before anyone else may enter their graves. So, let's go," Thikhathali said.

He took six men and went to the site where the queen lay. *'The queen was a bit sparsely dressed, and only the leopard nails on her dress survived the fire,'* Thikhathali thought to himself. *'Surely, if the ancestors destroyed all this and spared the queen from destruction, some of her clothes could have burnt off.'*

Amongst the material, Thikhathali found fine cloth, woven finer than the rest, and he decided to use that for the queen. Thikhathali took his time to wrap the body carefully and skilfully in the cloth sent by the women in the village for the burial ceremony.

Again, Thikhathali remembered a significant custom which went amiss in his haste to have the bodies buried. He called three of the warriors and instructed them: *"Go back to the village and get pots with food and flasks with water and beer for our queen, and brothers and sisters. Our people are going to be hungry and thirsty on their journey to the afterlife. They cannot survive the journey otherwise. And ask the women to give you beads, bangles, anklets and other decorations and gifts so that our people can look presentable to the ancestors and pay their dues to enter the afterlife. Go,*

go quickly. You must not hesitate along the way – the queen must be buried before the sun goes down."

The young warriors ran off in a cloud of black dust.

...

So, the gruesome task to bury all the remains started. One by one, bundles of remains were brought to the graveyard. Many bodies were but a handful of ashes with maybe a splinter of bone in between.

The grave of the queen was dug next to some big rocks to protect her remains from scavengers. The body of the queen was placed in a foetus position in the grave, along with pots full of food and flasks full of water. Inside the wrapping, Thikhathali placed jewellery, beads, and bangles to be decorations and gifts on the queen's journey.

When the queen's grave was ready to be closed, Thikhathali instructed the warriors: *"First stop your other activities. It is now time for the royal burial and we all must pay our respects to the queen. Wash yourself and come back for the ceremony."*

...

Once the men had cleaned themselves at the water well, they stood guard at the open grave to pray to the ancestors and pay their silent respects to the queen.

Thikhathali led the proceedings and when the prayers were said and the respects paid, he took a shovel and started closing the first trench. Spade by spade the dirt was thrown in the hole until it was filled.

"Now bring those big flat rocks and stones that we can cover the queen's grave," Thikhathali instructed while pointing to nearby rocks. "No scavenger must be able to desecrate the grave." Rocks and stones were placed on and around the grave to mark it.

Tears were running down the faces of the warriors, and they were crying softly as they were working. Nobody cared about the public display of their mourning – they just wanted to get this disheartening task over.

After completion of the royal burial, Thikhathali turned to the warriors and said: *"Now it is the turn of all the other people. Since it is unknown who is who, let us put bundles of remains together and bury them in trenches. It will take us too long to dig individual graves."*

Bundles of remains were laid in front of the different graves. Trenches instead of individual graves were dug that day, and all the remains were put in the ground with the necessary respect.

The gruesome task could not be left for anyone else but the warriors, because the normal undertakers were themselves charred.

The warriors worked the entire day and when the sun started setting, their task was complete.

...

"It is time for us to rest. Let us go home and not eat tonight in respect of our fellow tribesmen. No man may sleep with a woman tonight," Thikhathali said.

All the men nodded in acknowledgement of the instruction.

"There had been too much destruction for one lifetime for any of us. We must not agitate the ancestors anymore," and with that Thikhathali picked up his warrior weapons and started to walk in the direction of the village. The other warriors followed in silence with the tools and their weapons back to their homes.

That evening, the lone hoarse voice of one of the men could be heard bemoaning the rapture of his tribe members and the fate that befell the Monomotapa people.

More than four million lives were wiped out in this one event. Such an event was not heard of in any of the nations on Earth since the great flood in Noah's time.

...

The next morning just after breakfast, Thikhathali called the handful of people to gather in front of his house. Less than 200 adults stood in anticipation of his address.

"Nothing being told by our ancestors has relayed a story like we saw yesterday. Something must have happened on and around the rainmaker's rock which made the ancestors so angry they destroyed everybody and everything at the ceremony," Thikhathali said. *"We will never know what happened, as there are no survivors to tell. We can only guess if necessary – the real story will remain a mystery."*

"At least we found the Modjadji and we were honoured to bury her though it was no proper royal burial," Thikhathali continued. "I do not think we can stay here much longer – this place has been desecrated and through the recent events the ancestors have indicated that we cannot stay here much longer. To try and call for rain from this rock again, may not be for us in our lifetime. The ancestors will not listen to us again from this place. We must find a new home from where we can seek the ancestors' blessings. We must move at least a week's travel by foot from here. As the most senior person in this tribe, I will take the leading role which the royalty was assigned. Until we can crown a new queen, we will be delivered to the elements of nature.

"Whether we will survive, will all depend on our obedience to our customs and traditions told to us by the old people. We have enough men, women, and children to remain the Monomotapa people.

"One day, when the ancestors lead us back to the area, we shall rebuild the city of Maulwe and bring the people together from the past and the present," Thikhathali concluded.

"We hear you, Thikhathali. I agree and propose we appoint you leader of the Monomotapa people until a new Modjadji is appointed," the second-in-command of the warriors said.

"I confirm," said each of the men.

"So, with the formalities out of the way, let us each go back to our homes and start packing. We have lost all the goats, but the cattle are still here. The children will just have to learn to appreciate cow's milk," Thikhathali said. "We will trek in

the direction where the sun sets. I heard there is a good place to settle near the waters of Mapungubwe^{xxxiv}. That is, as I also heard, where the three rivers come together."

With that, Thikhathali said: "We all lost family members in the destruction of two days ago.

"Go back to your houses and prepare for a day of mourning. We cannot afford to spend more than a day mourning. We have to start packing the day after tomorrow so that we can move away from this place as quick as possible."

12.

Departure

A week later the trek Westwards started.

Thikhathali and his household were at the head of the whole trek. The convoy moved slowly but surely in the direction where the sun set.

Two weeks later, the procession arrived at Mapungubwe, the place which Thikhathali spoke of.

Thikhathali walked ahead of the convoy and came across nomads.

"Nda, I see you and I greet you," said Thikhathali. *"How are you?"*

"We see you, and we try to survive" one of the nomad herders said. *"Where are you from?"*

"We come from the direction where the sun rises," Thikhathali replied.

"Are you the people who came from the rainmaker's rock?" another one of the nomads asked.

"Yes, we are the Monomotapa people," said Thikhathali and asked: *"Are there any settlements of other people living in this area?"*

An inaudible chatter ensued after the confirmation came and the nomads all started to rise. They started to pack their belongings and chase their animals Southwards.

'Are these men suspicious of us? Is it because of any stories they heard of what happened at the rock?' Thikhathali became worried that the nomads might do something to him and the Monomotapa people.

"No, it is only us feeding the animals," they replied. *"We can move further away. Then you can settle here. We just need access to the water."*

"No problem. You can have all the access you desire. If you don't disturb us, we will not disturb you," Thikhathali agreed.

"Then welcome to the hills of the jackals, Mapungubwe. We will move on and not disturb you." With that the nomads turned away from the convoy to their animals. *"We need to get away from these people who are under a spell,"* they whispered muffled to each other.

13.

Oom Paul

It is the late 1880s, early 1890s.

...

Paul Krüger was resting on one of the hillocks near Leopard Rock. His Mauser lay across his knees, a beautiful rifle and gift from Otto von Bismarck, German statesman and Chancellor, during Paul's state visit to Germany.

It was mid-morning, and Paul was resting from the first hunting expedition of the day. *'What a pleasure to be in nature.*

'Our God is a formidable God who keeps on surprising me' Paul thought to himself. *'Look at all these healthy animals He has given us to eat from. I enjoy so much the kudu and impala biltong^{xxxv}. There is not nothing more enjoyable than cutting small pieces of the biltong with one's pocketknife while sitting in the veld or elsewhere and wanted to have a quick snack.'*

Paul Krüger was known for his love of God and his Word. Paul took his Bible along wherever he went – one cannot live without spiritual food "*eaten*" from the

Bible. *"It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God',"*^{xxxvi} he argued.

His leather hat was sitting skew after he pushed it back on his head to cool off from the heat – saltpetre was sitting white on the brim giving the hat character.

Paul was a skilful hunter and could easily put down an antelope or other wild animal at 500 metres. Paul knew how to grip a rifle with a steady hand, despite losing a thumb during an earlier hunting expedition at the age of twenty-five. *'If a man wants to shoot, a small thing like a missing thumb should not stand in his way,'* he argued.

Though it was wintertime, the temperature in the Limpopo Valley was much different from the Highveld region he had his home. The Highveld was much colder this time of the year. The winter day temperature in the Limpopo Valley was nearly the same as the summer day temperature on the Highveld.

...

The farm *Evelyn*^{xxxvii} he received as part payment for services given as President of the *Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR)*^{xxxviii}. Before gold and diamonds were discovered on various farms in the Republic, the burghers were not affluent that they could pay enough taxes to allow the *Volksraad*^{xxxix} to pay the President a full salary.

"Mr President, the House cannot compensate you to the full extent for the services you render to the Republic. There is

land available which we can transfer in your name if you would take that as part payment," the State Treasurer said. "That is a mighty good offer the Volksraad is making to me," Paul said. In his mind he thought: 'That would allow me to have enough farmland across the Republic to give to my children and their children, and the odd burgher who may be extremely poor. I would then also have undeveloped country as game land where I can go during the winter to harvest meat to eat during the summer months or on my journeys to the far ends of the Republic.'

"Hear, hear," it echoed in the large hall of the Parliament. "We will record the decision was official in the Hansard of Parliament. Thank you, Mr President, for accepting our offer as we did not know how we would compensate you otherwise and thank you Members of Parliament for your support of the proposal," the Speaker of the Volksraad concluded.

The *Volksraad* once offered the President the farm, Evelyn in the Limpopo Valley, in exchange of his services. Evelyn was more than six thousand^{xl} acres and bordered the Limpopo River on the farm's Northern side – the river also formed the Northern border of the Republic. The President knew the farm well, as he used to hunt there regularly during wintertime.

'Besides, Evelyn is way out of the view for most people there next to the Limpopo River and could be very handy in the future,' Mr Krüger thought to himself.

...

Paul was sucking on his pipe and reflected on the antelope they came across that morning. *'It was a bit of a chilly morning, but also the best time for hunting. Then the meat would not spoil so quickly, and we would have time to debone the meat and cut strips for biltong.'*

'Those were perfect shots. Each impala ram stood sideways. The rams were healthy specimens of their kind.'

'Both heads will make good trophies. And we will be able to cut lots of biltong from their meat.' Paul thought.

"Oubaas^{xli}, shall we keep on looking for more kudu or nyala or maybe a few more impala to hunt?" David, his tracker, cut Paul's thoughts short.

David was a young Tswana boy who was born on Paul's farm *Boekenhoutfontein*, near Rustenburg, and was basically raised in his house after David's father was attacked by a lion during a hunting expedition when David was a small toddler. David must have inherited his father's skills as a tracker because at an early age he could name which animal's track he saw, which direction the animal went, and how long ago the animal passed by. Paul used him with remarkable success during countless hunting expeditions.

"A bit later in the afternoon, David," Paul responded in Tswana, David's native language (*Paul was fluent in Dutch, English, and a few African languages*). *"It is now first time that we go and have some breakfast and then hang the two impala carcasses to bleed out. If the meat is cool tomorrow, we can then debone the meat and make biltong."*

"Maybe we can go this afternoon to that water hole where the small baobab tree is growing on the rock plate. We can wait for that big kudu bull which has been alluding us for a few years now." Paul turned his pipe upside down and knocked the tobacco ash from it.

"That would be great, Oubaas, I am craving kudu liver for a long time now and the cook, who we brought on this expedition, cooks liver just the way I like it. And if he adds phuthu pap^{xlii} then I can eat forever," David added whilst rubbing his stomach.

Paul laughed at the gestures David was making showing the way he liked to eat with his hands and showing satisfaction after a healthy meal and a full stomach.

Paul put another pinch of tobacco in his pipe and lit the tobacco. *'Sometimes the pipe tastes like bad breath, but today the pipe somehow tasted fresh; maybe it is because I cleaned the pipe yesterday and did not smoke it since.'*

...

With the discovery of gold on the farm *Vogelstruisfontein* on the *Witwatersrand*^{xliii}, people from all over the world swamped to the Johannesburg area. This small town now had more 'outlanders' than burghers.

"We have 6 000 burghers and 50 000 outlanders in Johannesburg according to the last census. These foreigners are going to eat the land dry, oom Paul^{xliii}" deputy president Piet Joubert said to Paul during a lunch they had together.

"We must look after our people, Piet," the President said. "The damn English are pressing for citizenship, and they get all these fancy ideas from those greedy money-grabbers in the Cape Colony. What will happen to our people if we grant citizenship to these foreigners?"

...

Paul had an affection for his people. To illustrate the affection, he had for his people, the following was told: One day, a burgher came and complained that Isaac, the Jew merchant, did not want to pay him for the produce he delivered.

"What did Isaac say?" oom Paul asked.

"The Jew initially said he would pay me the following week. When I came to him the following week and asked for my money, he said he already paid me. And when I argued, he said I had no witnesses to the contrary," Koos the farmer said. "I am very upset. Isaac is a very sly Jew."

"Well," oom Paul said. "Do you have another load of produce?"

"Yes, I actually have a load on my wagon, but I did not want to deal with a thief," Koos said.

Oom Paul said to Koos: *"Let's go back to the Jew and then you sell him your produce. I will then be witness to the transaction. He will have to pay you."*

Koos was sceptical and initially reluctant, but oom Paul convinced him to go. *"You will get paid twice for this one load," oom Paul said.*

Together they went to the Jew, and in oom Paul's presence, Koos sold the produce for five guilders, the same amount as for the earlier load.

"You can collect your money next week as soon as I have sold the majority of the produce," Isaac said. Isaac was careful in his choice of words since the President was witness to the transaction.

Oom Paul took Koos by the arm and led him back to his office at the *Raadsaal*^{xlv}. At his office, oom Paul said to Koos: *"Go home. And next week you go and ask for your payment. Since Isaac now knows that I was witness to the transaction, he will have no choice but to pay."*

The following week Koos came around to the President's office.

"Have you collected your payment?" oom Paul enquired.

"Not yet oom Paul," Koos responded.

"Go now, get your money and come back here," oom Paul instructed.

"But why, oom Paul?" Koos was curious.

"Just do it, Koos, you will see why later," the President urged the farmer. *"And tell him you are here for your payment for the load of last week."*

Off Koos went and came back with the money in his hand.

"Look, oom Paul, I got my money for the produce," Koos smiled as he waived the money in the air.

"Now, let us go back and get your money," oom Paul said.

"But I got payment for last week," Koos argued.

The President grabbed Koos by the elbow and basically dragged him to the Jew's store.

"We are here for Koos' payment for the produce of last week," oom Paul said.

"But I already paid you, Koos," Isaac argued.

"Where are your witnesses that you made the payment?" the President demanded. "I saw Koos selling you his produce, but I did not see you paying him. So, pay up!" oom Paul demanded.

Isaac, the Jew, had no choice but to pay the farmer as he had no witnesses to the earlier payment.

And as such justice prevailed. Oom Paul did not like seeing injustice.

...

'These buggers just want to steal the gold for themselves. They have been avoiding paying taxes to the Exchequer and that is why the Volksraad cannot pay me,' Paul mentally recalled some of the recent events. 'My people need to be free of any foreign rule and oppression, just as I told queen Victoria during my last state visit to England. She agreed but seemingly has done nothing to change those gold bugs' lust.' Paul thought.

'Those blood suckers, Rhodes, the Oppenheimers, the Rothchilds, and Barnato are all just sending their agents to the Republic to wring the country dry of its treasures.

'The English once tried to annex the Republic, but they failed dismally. There is nothing stopping them from trying again.

'I need to find a secret hiding place far away from Pretoria where the treasures of the Republic could be protected from those money-grabbers. I think this area would be just the place where the treasures could be hidden from preying eyes," Paul thought to himself here on his farm, Evelyn.

'People have been referring to the ZAR treasures as the Krüger millions but that is not my money. The gold and diamonds must get the people of the ZAR back on their feet once they are rid of foreign rule which is lurking the way those money-grabbers are going. They have the whole Cape Colony and Natal, why do they also want the ZAR?' Paul felt deeply sorry in his heart for the Boere as they did not deserve to be treated in such way.

'When I am back in Pretoria, I need to talk to the State Advocate. Adv. Jan Smuts can set up a meeting with that backstabbing Milner. Milner keeps on colluding with those people from the financier house Wernher-Beit and the Oppenheimers.

'They want to buy the votes of the Volksraadslede^{xlvi} by financing their campaigns during the voting time. I must get my allies in the Orange Free State to side with me, especially in a time of eminent war. There are just not enough burghers to fight against an army of the British Empire.

'The British are all cowards anyway. If they can't smuggle the treasures of a country to that small dismal island, they

invade it and steal the government from its rightful electorate – all under the cover of bringing betterment to that country. 'What a bunch of rubbish – do they think we are fools? We are seeing exactly what they are doing.' Paul was furious with those excuses for human beings.

...

After President Krüger was exiled in Switzerland, the leaders and burghers who were sworn to secrecy loaded a freight train one night at Pretoria station.

The British were about to invade the city and take control of the government and its treasures.

The men loaded the train with many secured crates labelled as farm equipment and sent a whole company of troops in civilian clothes. A decoy train was loaded with similar crates and escorted by troops to *Delagoa Bay*,^{xlvii} in Mozambique.

The real treasure was securely protected on its way past Pietersburg^{xlviii} and the train followed the extended railway line which would end in Salisbury,^{xlix} the capital of Southern Rhodesia.

The value of the Krüger Millions was more than a few hundred million US dollars, which would help the Boer nation to restore their government rule after the foreign rule was ended.

14.

Field Marshall

"I was writing for the Cape Times on politics when my father introduced me to Mr Jan Hofmeyr, the leader of the Afrikaner Bond. He in turn made my acquaintance with Sir Cecil John Rhodes, the owner of De Beers Mining Company," Jan Smuts introduced himself when asked to do so during the interview for the position of State Advocate.

The interview was taking place in one of the larger offices on the first floor of the *Raadsaal* building on Church Square¹.

It was a misty morning. Mist clouds made it nearly impossible to see the Palace of Justice across the Square; and that building is around 100 metres away.

"What?! Did you work for that scoundrel?" oom Paul interjected, and nearly swallowed his tongue.

"Oh, yes, Sir, I sure did, but nothing to be proud of. And just for a short few months. After I joined Sir Rhodes in 1895, he launched the Jameson Raid. How could I as an Afrikaner keep on supporting a person who wanted to steal from a foreign country without any remorse?"

"I resigned from my position in that company and gave up my law career and politics," Jan boasted, as he knew of the sentiments of the President. He took a sip from the glass of water placed in front of him when he sat down. "And then?" the President wanted to know brushing with his hand over his beard.

'Interesting to see such prominent person with a missing thumb' Jan thought to himself but continued audible: "I heard of the vacancy of State Advocate here in the Republic and applied."

"What other skills do you have besides politics, law and journalism?" Mr Krüger shifted in his chair as he asked later during the interview.

"Well, Mr President, I know how to infuriate the British as I know their demeanour. One of stature must just ignore them during an official meeting and leave the discussions to a more junior person in the party. They cannot stand it that they cannot speak directly to the leader of the delegation or that such leader cannot speak English. And specifically, Sir Alfred Milner cannot stand such blatant arrogance," the young man said. Jan could feel excitement building.

"We surely can make use of the skills of a man like you, Mister Smuts. You are hired," the President concluded the interview. He stood up to shake the hand of the latest employee to the Republic.

...

On a sunny day in the year 1897, the young Jan Smuts stepped into oom Paul's office in the *Raadsaal* on Church

Square. It was easily accessible and just off the main entrance to the government building.

People from all levels (*from common to high society alike*) in the *Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek* had access to oom Paul, as president and otherwise.

Jan was a qualified lawyer, but, according to him, did not make a living existence. "No, oom Paul, the people in the Cape Colony just wanted advice without being willing to pay for my services. I cannot live on water and promises alone," was his explanation once asked to why he did not keep on pursuing his law career. 'On the contrary, I became State Advocate to the Republic and thus continued my law career,' Jan thought upon entering the President's office.

"Since you are acquainted with Lord Milner, you must accompany us to the next meeting with him," the President said to Adv Smuts. "The Lord just became the High Commissioner for the Cape Colony. I do not appreciate his call to the British Empire to send more troops to the country to suppress the corruption in their own ranks. It is only an excuse to bring more troops to the Cape to rise against our Republic.

"Though the Empire never sent the requested troops, I am sceptical of the Lord's intention. I am sure his ulterior motive is to overrun the *Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek*.

"You will be the main spokesman and I will pretend to not understand English. You will translate to me, and I will keep you informed of my opinion on each matter under discussion.

Let's see how best this Englishman can hold his composure if I ignore him."

The president winked at Jan, because they both knew that the president was fluent in English, but they wanted to tempt the British.

...

At the meeting in Bloemfontein at the Parliament of the Orange Free State, the State Advocate from the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republic led the discussions.

Shortly into the meeting, Jan Smuts sneered at the Lord *"How can you as a foreigner demand that this country's government grant citizenship to foreigners? They have not been born here and are only here to enrich themselves."*

"I do not want to hear it from your mouth, but from your President," Lord Milner demanded, slamming his fist on the table.

"He cannot express himself properly in English, therefore I am his spokesman," Adv Smuts continued without a blink.

"I am not taking this nonsense from a pipsqueak like you!" the Lord burst into anger. Foam was forming around his mouth showing how infuriated he was.

"Well, I have the power of attorney from the big man himself. I will now draft the agreement in which the ZAR will grant foreigners residency," Mr Smuts said undeterred.

'I will show this back-stabbing Englishman that he cannot always win,' Jan thought to himself.

Jan Smuts hastily drafted the agreement and included a paragraph saying that foreigners would be recognised by the ZAR government and that they would be granted residency. He concluded the agreement by saying that foreigners will accept all conditions and not demand any citizenship or voting rights.

When Lord Milner read the draft, he nearly blew his top: *"Are you mad, dutchman, I am not signing this preposterous nonsense!?"*

The Englishman grabbed his belongings from the table, leaving the crumbled draft agreement on the table and stormed out of the venue. *'These stupid dutchmen think they can take me for a ride. This will cost them dearly. I am now going to call on the queen to send more troops to this rebellious country. She must know that these hard-headed rubbishes are rebelling against her and the empire, and that such rebellion must be quenched as quickly as possible with all the power available to us.'*

...

Two years later the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republic and the Republic of the Orange Free State were invaded by the British and the Second Anglo-Boer War took away the two Republics' independence.

The scorched-earth policy of Lord Kitchener during the War led Adv Smuts to fulfil the wishes of the exiled President to hide the ZAR treasures for future use.

A cargo aeroplane had been fuelled up and the crew was standing around on the airstrip at Pretoria.

General Jan Smuts said to Captain Van Niekerk, the pilot of the plane: "*We must get these crates to my farm at Dongola. Let's get going.*"

The locked crates were loaded into the loading area of the aeroplane by the troops. "*Six troops, you, one, two, three, four, five, six, climb onboard,*" the general instructed the men.

General Smuts was also Field Marshall in the British empire and had access to all the official resources of the Union of South Africa.

With his screeching voice he instructed the pilot: "*Get this aeroplane off the ground. We must be on the farm before 10 o'clock, have the crates unloaded onto the waiting trucks, and be back in Pretoria before the sun sets.*"

...

When the freight of crates was offloaded, two trucks came from nowhere and stopped next to the crates. The cicadas were calling each other, announcing that the temperature is still to rise beyond this sweating conditions here on this gravel airstrip.

"*Load these crates on the trucks,*" the military commander instructed the troops. The troops jumped into action and very quickly the load was transferred from air to road transport.

After the crates were loaded on the trucks, General Smuts walked up to the driver of the first truck: "*Come here,*" and motioned to follow him.

He took the driver aside and whispered to him: "*Chrisjan, we nearly have the same names and I trust you with my life. Take*

these crates to the place we arranged. And store them secure. Only you will know where these crates are hidden. Do not open or try to open the crates. The content must remain sealed and secret.

"And remember, go back to this first storage place tomorrow and take the crates to the second storage place. You can only take one Black helper to move the crates from the one to the other facility. And make sure the man is trustworthy – he must keep his mouth shut. Here, give him this ten-pound note and let him have the ten cattle I showed you. It is a small price to pay for such a big secret."

The driver just nodded to acknowledge the instruction.

With that, both men turned in their respective directions – the driver to his truck and the general to the aeroplane.

'At least I can trust Chrisjan with this treasure. It needs to be safe for the near future until a proper government can be restored to this country,' and with that the Field Marshall boarded the aeroplane to return to Pretoria.

"It is going to be a bumpy flight back home with all these clouds in the air," the man with experience said as he strapped himself to his seat.

The pilot revved up the engines of the aeroplane, assessed the rudders, and pushed the throttles full open to get the steel bird into the air back to where it came from.

15.

New owners

"We are exposed to seasonal fluctuations and the exchange rates, and the import control measures of the European countries for our fruit," Grandpa Piet said to his son, Elmer.

The pressure of keeping a citrus farm afloat though they had 'blue flag' status allowing them to export their prime quality fruit to certain countries in Europe, did not ease the stress on the farmers.

It is the end of winter and the end of the growth season for their oranges.

"You know, Dad, Janetta said she treated the owner of a game farm, twenty kilometres West of Messina, which he indicated is for sale," Elmer said. "This German couple apparently said they have become too old to manage that farm and they wanted to sell. If we can sell this farm, we should have enough money to buy that farm and have some capital to improve the lodges and the amenities. And we can do something new – away from oranges to game."

"That seems to be a solution," Grandpa Piet said. "Let us pray to the Lord in heaven for guidance. And then you can set up a meeting with the German couple for next week. My

spirit will be at ease if the Holy Spirit would want us to continue. But before we go much further, we need to get this harvest packed, boxed and loaded for export."

"Sure, Dad," Elmer said and turned to execute his duties. "Pieter, come, son, let us get the show on the road. Grandpa wants the boxes out by the end of the week."

...

A week later the two groups of farmers were sitting at the dining table in the farmhouse on Klein Bolayi having some refreshments. The air conditioner was blowing at full speed to provide some relief from the heat to the people in the house.

"We heard from Janetta you are interested in selling this farm," Grandpa Piet kicked started the negotiations. "We like the citrus farming, but the frequent change in the overseas market is just not doing it for us. As game farmer, I think you can understand. A change of focus from fruit to wildlife may just bring cheerfulness back to our days."

"Yes, but the game farming business is a different life. At this stage in my life, the wife and I have concluded that every task on the farm becomes cumbersome. Like I said to Janetta, I have no children interested in taking over this jewel and keep on farming – it is a pity," Mr Gunter said with a somewhat heavy German accent.

"What is the size of this farm? I mean, how many hectares? And what amenities are here?" Grandpa Piet asked.

"The farm is around 700 hectares. We have encamped the whole farm with 21 strand game fencing. Here are 15 chalets,

a kitchen and restaurant area, a bar under that big old baobab tree, a sauna, massage room, and an office. Dirt roads are all over the farm and there are inspection roads all along the perimeter. And then this big old rock behind the main house. There are a few other big rocks on the farm, but not to the stature of this one. It has been somewhat of a tourist attraction, but not much. People are more interested in the somewhat 200 baobab trees and hunting. A similar concentration of trees cannot be found elsewhere in this region." The German farmer wanted to sound excited whilst describing his property but sounded more aged than eager.

"Which game species are on the farm?" the farmer curiosity of Grandpa Piet kicked in.

"Oh, we have kudu, nyala, impala, and smaller antelope on the farm and several warthogs. The odd leopard roams the farm, catching a buck here and there but nothing sinister," the nonchalant response came.

"That sounds good," Grandpa Piet said, trying to hide his enthusiasm. *"What is your opinion, Elmer?"*

"Dad, this sounds all good and well," Elmer said, also not trying to show the seller his eagerness to buy the farm. *"We must first jump through a few hoops before concluding this deal. The Americans wanting to buy our farm are somewhat reluctant to pay the asking price; but we should have an answer soon. Mr Gunter, can you hold on to this farm a bit longer so that we can conclude our sale?"*

"You know," the German negotiation skills kicked in, "there are a few other interested buyers and if we cannot strike a deal today, I might sell the farm to another buyer."

'Nice try, Mister! There are not that many buyers lined up to buy farmland. Actually, the buyer's market is relatively dead at this stage.' Grandpa Piet thought, but said: *"As it may be, we will let you know as soon as possible. Thank you for the audience and the entertainment. The tea and cake were quite nice. But we need to get back to our own duties."*

"We want to go on our road trips, but we must first sell," Mr Gunter tried to keep any possible sale alive. "Let me know when the money had been released to your bank account. We can always work out a deal. Like I said, the wife and I are looking forward to taking our retirement to the road. We had been denied too long some unencumbered vacation and we want to get behind the steering wheel of our touring vehicle and hit the road as soon as possible."

...

In the Mahindra-bakkie on their way home, Grandpa Piet pulsed Elmer: *"So Son, what do you think? We drove through the farm, saw the facilities, and this seems to be a great deal."*

"Dad, I did not want to show my excitement of buying into new prospects. I saw your slight smile when Mr Gunter was talking about all the game, and I know you are just as excited as I am – you just don't show it as easily." Elmer answered.

"You are quite correct, Son. But what about the land expropriation that might affect this farm – what is the farm's

name again; 'Klein Bolayi'?" Grandpa enquired. "I would rather want to avoid a similar case here than what we had on Joan, our farm. You know that Black guy tried to mislead the Land Claims Commissioner with his claims of ancestral connections to graves on the farm there near Sopieslaagte. And I became so furious when that liar started with his claims that his ancestors owned the farm even though his parents were merely farm labourers.

"The translator we had did not even translate half of what the man was saying. I just refuted the man's claim in Tshivenda, his mother tongue. And the Commissioner was at first taken aback how fluent I verbally tackled that man, but agreed with me and denied the claim."

"I remember that ridiculous claim," Elmer said. "Let me talk to our lawyer. I think we should set up a trust and let the trust buy the land. We would be relatively safe against any future land claims on Klein Bolayi."

...

A year later, in 2011, the family moved to their new farmland.

Grandpa Piet's 5-ton Isuzu truck was entering through the side gate to the main entrance, loaded with furniture and other household equipment, ahead of the bakkie Elmer and Janetta were travelling in.

"Klein Bolayi has great potential, it just needs to be exploited," Elmer said to his wife as they drove through the gates onto the farm for the first time as owners.

"Janetta, I am so glad you had your ears peeled when Mr Gunter indicated that he wanted to sell."

"I agree, Elmer," Janetta said. "I have a good feeling that great things are going to happen here."

They pulled in under the shaded carport in front of the main house.

'There is no difference in temperature between Joan and Klein Bolayi,' it came to Janetta as she wiped the sweat from her face.

"We will have to stay in one of the chalets until we can settle in a more permanent home on the farm," Elmer indicated.

Their kids, Eljané and Pieter, were just as excited and couldn't wait for the wheels to stop turning to hop out of the car.

"Wow, look at this magnificent baobab tree. Its colossal and so close," Pieter exclaimed. "Look at all the fruit. I will easily be able to grow trees from the seeds."

"Just ask Grandma Joey how to do it," Elmer said. "She had been successful in growing baobab trees in the past. I remember there is a small trick to letting the seeds germinate."

"Grandma, Grandma, what must I do to" Pieter shouted excitedly as he ran off in the direction of Grandma Joey's new house.

16.

Gôgô

One fine morning, less than a year after arriving on the farm, Elmer was pondering on the history of the farm.

'There must be some sort of history to this place. I can feel it in my spirit,' Elmer thought as he looked around and at the rock behind the main house. *'My spiritual inclination wants me to believe there are roaming spirits on this farm. I just cannot lay my finger on what it is.'*

"Dad," Elmer was addressing his father where he was busy sawing a pipe. "You know I can feel when something is stirring in the spiritual world. There must be something peculiar about this farm."

"What gives you that idea, Elmer?" Grandpa Piet asked.

"Since I am conversant in Tshivenda and quite curious about the history of the farm and surrounding area, I started speaking to the labourers and asked them about the history of the farm. Some said they heard about the "Modjadji" and the "Monomotapa Empire" and of a city by the name of "Maulwe".

"I also spoke to some of the people in town at the cooperation and at the filling station to try and obtain some history titbits.

Someone said there is an old gôgô,¹¹ around 85 years old, who knows a lot of the history of Klein Bolayi. She lives next to the school on the farm, Evelyn, across the road from us." Elmer explained.

"Did you fix the leaking faucet in chalet 13? And is there someone fixing the barbed wire on the fence on the western perimeter?" Grandpa Piet asked.

"I have done that yesterday already. And I sent William on his bicycle to go and fix the fence. He should be back anytime now," Elmer said.

"Well, then I assume there is not much more to do at the moment," Grandpa Piet said. *"When you see Elina, tell her she must go and tidy the vacant chalets. The guests have left, and new guests are arriving this afternoon. The place must be five-star quality."*

Elmer acknowledged the instruction and went off to find the maid. *"You must clean chalets 8, 9, and 10,"* Elmer instructed in Tshivenda. *"Don't forget to put some of the complimentary chocolates on top of the towels on the beds before you leave."*

"I will do so, Boss," Elina confirmed her understanding of the instruction.

...

Elmer turned around and walked to his Jeep. Janetta was already off to work – she is a homeopath doctor with consulting rooms in town. While going to town, Janetta would also drop the kids at school and bring them home in the afternoon when she closed her

practice for the day. Elmer did not have anyone else to inform of his departure, but he called two of the farm labourers to go with him to the gôgô.

He drove the short distance to the school.

At the school, he asked the people present of the whereabouts of the gôgô.

"She is there at her house around the corner at the back of the school. She is having breakfast in the shade on her stoep," one of the teachers informed Elmer.

"Thanks," Elmer said, and he and the two labourers walked around the back of the school and found the gôgô on her rocking chair in front of her house.

"Nda, Ma," Elmer greeted the woman in Tshivenda.

"Good day to you, young man," the gôgô responded.

"How are you doing, this fine morning? I see you are enjoying your tea here in the shade," Elmer said while pointing at the rocking chair and cup, as he exchanged pleasantries.

"I am alive," said the woman. *"And how are you doing?"*

"I am well. By the grace of our Creator, I am alive too."

"I am glad to hear that. Yes, we need to be thankful every day here on Earth. But what brought you here to my humble home? The spirits told me that there are new owners on Klein Bolayi," the old woman inquisitively said.

"You heard correct. I am Elmer, one of the new owners of Klein Bolayi, and these are my labourers David and Masudu. I have been asking around about the history of our farm and

the big rock. I saw potholes on the top of the rock. I am not sure how they were fashioned, surely not by hand. There must be another explanation. Can you shed some light on the matter?" Elmer said.

"First sit down, my boy, pull that chair closer. And you, young men, can sit here next to me. I do not get that many visitors anymore, especially a group of such nice young men as you," the gôgô chuckled as she directed everyone where to sit.

"The spirits told me you were coming. They have been looking for someone to talk to for the last couple of centuries..." the gôgô said.

"Are you sure it is not years?" Elmer rudely interrupted. When the woman raised her hand ever so slightly, Elmer at once said: "My apologies for brutally interrupting you, Ma. Please, go ahead."

"As I was saying, the spirits have been roaming this area for many centuries. The spirits of our ancestors are very troubled. They have not revealed to me what the trouble is, but they said a white man will come here and ask about the history of the Monomotapa Empire. I was instructed to convey certain messages they gave me."

Elmer suddenly became more excited. 'This is precisely what I felt,' he thought.

The woman continued: "The old people lived here around the rock many centuries ago. They prospered and had a successful life for around four hundred and fifty years. Then one day during one of their rainmaking rituals, the people

apparently angered the ancestors to such an extent that they brought fire and brimstone on the people.

"According to the tales of the old people, nearly four million people were wiped out that evening. Only a small handful of people survived, mostly warriors, pregnant women, and small children.

"The survivors understood that they could not stay where the great city of Maulwe was standing. The eliminated people upset the ancestors too much and they first had to cool off. The surviving people took the treasures of the people and buried them inside the rock.

"Then they packed their possessions and moved to Mapungubwe where they stayed the next two hundred years. After the two centuries, they heard of better prospects at Great Zimbabwe and moved there.

"Their stay at Great Zimbabwe lasted for many years until around 1760 when the Portuguese colonised the area, overpowered the Mutapa^{lii} people and made them slaves. Some of these Mutapa people escaped and came back to Mapungubwe.

"That part of the history has been recorded, from Mapungubwe around to Great Zimbabwe and back, but nothing is known of the history of the Monomotapa people on Klein Bolayi.

"The spirits of the ancestors told me that you would come and bring them dignity. You were to be instrumental to get their spirits into the afterlife. They have been stuck in the forecourts of the afterlife for too long and needed someone to

open that portal – and that person is YOU,” she pointed with her crooked finger at Elmer.

“And besides,” she continued. “The Krügers^{liii} are also hidden in the rock. You cannot see it because your spiritual eyes are still blind. There is a door to the inside of the rock – you need to find it and then you will find the treasures of the old people and the Krügers.”

“What a phenomenal story this is,” Elmer exclaimed. “You have just inspired me to do more research on the history of our farm.”

Elmer had no knowledge at that stage who owned the farms in the area in the past or any background to the situation as being referred to by the gôgô.

Elmer asked the gôgô: *“If you had knowledge of the Krügers, why have you not removed the treasure?”*

Her response was: *“The Krügers and the treasures of the old people are being protected by the serpent man.”*

The *serpent man* was an unknown concept to Elmer, and he thought: *‘I need to find out more about this ‘serpent man’. But this is a good starting point.’*

“You need to open your spiritual eyes. Otherwise, you cannot see to talk to the spirits. And if you don’t help the spirits, they will be stuck in the forecourts and must wait again for another physical person to unlock the forecourts. And who knows, it might take another few hundred years before that happens.” The old woman was adamant that Elmer must help the spirits to be rid of the shackles they have

been bound since that fateful evening nearly 1 200 years ago.

"That is all that had been revealed to me by the spirits. They said the white man will discover the rest or they will reveal it to him when he speaks to them," the gôgô added.

"I hear you, Ma. I will do my utmost best to help where I can," Elmer said and thought: 'Well, I don't know about all this stuff you just told me, but there is no harm in trying.'

"It was a privilege to talk to you, Ma. If you remember any other parts of the old people or the history, please let me know," Elmer requested. "I will come and listen to what you have to say."

"It was my privilege to find a physical person willing to help the spirits. I have been waiting for you for the last 60 years," the gôgô said. "With your help, they will be able to find peace and rest in the afterlife."

Elmer and the two labourers got back in the Jeep, and went home; Elmer excited, and the labourers scared of what they heard.

17.

Dongola connection

After approximately two months after Elmer's visit to the gôgô, Elmer one day arrived back on the farm from running errands in town.

As he drove closer to the offices on the farm, he saw a bush trailer hitched to a Unimog truck parked on the farm. Elmer asked the office administrator, named Shorty: *"Who are these people?"*

"There is an old man waiting for you at the restaurant, Boss," Shorty said.

Elmer walked up to the restaurant and saw a stranger sitting at one of the tables and approached him.

The man saw Elmer approaching and got up from his seat. *"Good morning. I am Mike Fogg. How are you?"* he extended his arm to shake Elmer's hand.

"Pleased to make your acquaintance. I am Elmer Uys, and I am well. How are you?"

"Just hot from the travels, but otherwise fine. Are you the owner of this farm?" Mike asked.

"Sure I am. How can I be of assistance? Are you looking for accommodation? Did Shorty not help you?" Elmer asked.

"No, no, I am not looking for accommodation. I have my own mobile accommodation," Mike said, pointing in the direction of the Unimog.

"Let me first start by telling you a bit more about myself and why I am here," Mike said. "I am the former owner of the internationally renowned Kyalami Racing circuit, near Johannesburg, and a retired motorcycle champion."

"Whoa, I am privileged to be in such pristine company," Elmer expressed his surprise and appreciation to receive such a renowned person. "I saw the Unimog in the parking area. Are you travelling to Zimbabwe then?"

"No, on the contrary. I specifically came to Klein Bolayi as I am retired, and I am following the trail of the Krüger-millions," Mike indicated.

Elmer was flabbergasted but initially did not want to reveal what the gôgô relayed to him. "Just a minute. Where are my manners? My mom will punish me if I am not a proper host," Elmer teased and burst into laughter. "Did you have something to drink?"

"Yes, thank you. The guy in the office sorted me," Mike expressed his gratitude.

"Then tell me more of your adventures." Elmer was becoming inquisitive.

Mike continued: "There is a koppie^{liv} named after President Paul Krüger, former President of the ZAR here on the farm, but I don't need to tell you that.

"The farm Evelyn, opposite the road here, as well as the Proefplaas^{lv}, comprising of around 12 000 hectares of which

Klein Bolayi forms part, was the property of President Krüger which he used as hunting grounds. The koppie, currently known as Krügerkop, is where the President used to meditate and consider matters of life in the silence nature presented."

"That's right," Elmer confirmed the fact.

Mike further showed: "The farm Dongola, just east of Mapungubwe National Park belonged to General Jan Smuts and he had a camping site just next to the airstrip."

"Okay..., those are still well-known facts. But do you have evidence of what you are saying? Elmer at once wanted to know from Mike.

"Sure enough, I have evidence," and with that Mike produced an old map of Dongola. "Here are the camping site and aeroplane landing strip used by General Smuts." Mike pointed to the farm Dongola on the map.

Elmer had an idea of the history of Dongola, but here was a man to fill the gaps, it seemed. "Let me contact my neighbour, Mr Chris Limbach. He is the current owner of Dongola. If he is available, we can go and talk to him and then you can see the terrain for yourself."

Elmer excused him for a moment and phoned Chris. Chris was equally surprised by these events, and said: "Elmer, by all means, bring Mike and I will show you all that he is showing you on a map in person."

"Thanks, Chris," Elmer said. "We are on our way."

Elmer rejoined Mike at the restaurant. *"Chris says he would very much like to show us around. Would you first like to drink something cold before we go to Dongola?"*

"That is how a thirsty traveller should be treated," Mike wrung his hands together.

...

After downing cold drinks, Elmer, Mike and Elmer's son, Pieter, boarded the Jeep and off they went in the direction of Dongola.

On their way, Mike continued their conversation of earlier: *"It was on Dongola that General Smuts and a certain Mr Pole-Evans spent a lot of time to consider the borders of a game park where the current Mapungubwe National Park is situated, and which would be a cross-frontier park. It encompassed parts of Bechuanaland (currently Botswana), South Rhodesia (currently Zimbabwe) and the Union of South Africa (currently the Republic of South Africa)."*

"It was also at Dongola where General Smuts drafted the Constitution of the United Nations as it is known today. Further, General Smuts had a dream of a United States of Africa. However, the politics at the time during the 1948 elections presented a challenge at the polls for General Smuts. He was of the South African Party, known as the Sappe, whilst his opponent, General JBM Hertzog was of the National Party, known as the Natte."

"General Smuts wanted to use his symbol of the United States of Africa as a focal point. The Natte were not opposed to the idea of a United States of Africa, but did not want to be

part of another combined English colony situation which would include Bechuanaland and South Rhodesia since South Africa had just ended its participation in the Second World War from 1939 to 1945 as part of the English Empire and the not forgotten Anglo-Boer War, or the Second Boer War or the South African War of 1899 to 1902 as it was known. All the atrocities by the British Empire against the Boers and their allies during the latter war, was probably still fresh in the minds of the conservative Afrikaner in the 1948 elections.

"General Hertzog and the Nette were of the opinion that General Smuts was a traitor and he merely wanted to place South Africa under another yoke of the British Empire which was completely unacceptable.

"General Smuts' whole dream was lost after the 1948 elections which was won by the National Party. He passed away in 1951.

"This information was apparently never recorded, and the area was placed under the curatorship of the South African Defence Force. The area was known then as Vhembe and a defence force base was established on the terrain of the current Mapungubwe National Park during the Bush war."

Mr Fogg further showed: "President Krüger instructed General Smuts to bury the Krüger-millions. Apparently the Krüger-millions were taken Westwards when the British troops entered Pretoria, the capital of the ZAR, during the Anglo-Boer War in 1900, whilst another believe was that the Krüger-millions were taken in an eastern direction from Pretoria and not taken North as an alternative possibility."

Elmer asked Mike: *"Why do you believe the gold was brought North?"*

Mike responded by asking *"Where would you have taken the gold?"* And continued: *"The gold could have been taken anywhere in the country, but it would have been odd not to bring the gold to an area where both President Krüger and General Smuts had neighbouring land. The possibility cannot be excluded that General Smuts intended to use the gold to finance his vision of a United States of Africa or even a United States of Southern Africa as the tendency is at present."*

'These two overlapping stories of the gôgô and Mike seemed very interesting,' Elmer thought to himself while continue driving. 'But the two stories also sounded very convincing. It encourages one to take part.'

18.

The entity

"We need a home to our own liking," Elmer remarked to Janetta during one of their sundowners enjoy-moments. They were sitting with liquid refreshments in their hands bidding the sun a 'good night's rest'.

"Yes, we have been on the farm for two years and I would just like to get distance from the guests sometime during the week," Janetta agreed. "There are staff to deal with the needs of the guests and we do not need to stumble over each other twenty-four-seven." She took another sip from her glass of beer shandy.

"What if I build a house on the banks of the Klein Bolayi River?" Elmer enquired, pointing in that river's direction. "I have come across the ideal spot."

"But we do not have money to build a house now, Elmer," Janetta cautioned. "Won't we be isolated from the main campong?"

"Don't worry, my love," Elmer wanted to protect his idea from failure. "We have vehicles to drive to and fro. You are going to town every day of the week anyway, so you will not be isolated. And we can build the house as and when we have

the resources. I can use stone from the surroundings – there are nice tennis ball size pebbles we can use – and then we only need to buy cement, the doors, and windows along with their glass. The roof will be thatched. The sand is readily available on the farm and labour is no challenge.”

“You need to ask your dad if you can just use the labourers for your house building purpose,” Janetta said.

“That is the least of my worries at the moment. My dad will have no objection, provided the work on the farm is done when I want to use them,” Elmer counter argued.

...

One day Elmer roamed the banks of the Klein Bolayi River on foot to set up the exact spot where the house should be located.

Opposite to a natural bed of rocks on the riverbank, Elmer jerked his leg upwards as if a snake attacked him. *‘That is a weird experience,’ Elmer nearly said out loud. ‘It nearly felt like I stepped on someone’s grave. Maybe this is a sign that I should build our house on this side of the riverbank,’* he further argued by himself. *‘Yes, that would be perfect with a beautiful view of the river, especially when it is in flood.’*

...

Elmer and his helpers worked whenever the opportunity presented itself and when he had money to spend on building materials.

It took him months to complete the project, but before long he and his family would be able to occupy their new house.

...

"Dad, look at our cats. They seem to enjoy our new home," Eljané called out excitedly. "Look, Dad, Sharky is running ahead of the bunch."

"That's nice, Eljané, but you and Pieter must now stop playing and first help us unpacking the vehicles. We need to get the whole load under cover in case it might rain tonight," Elmer warned.

Elmer and Janetta were already onto their umpteenth trip to get everything in the house and them settled.

"I am so glad you and the labourers brought all the white equipment yesterday. It will just make settling so much easier," Janetta expressed her appreciation.

"Just remember, we do not have electricity at this home. Everything will have to run off gas, batteries, or the generator," Elmer said.

"Oh yes, that's true. We will just have to adapt to this new, independent lifestyle," Janetta confirmed.

With that, the family could sit down and enjoy the first night at their new home.

...

On that very first night the family slept in their new home, Elmer woke up at around 01:00 in the morning. He at once sat up in bed.

'What the heck is that?' shot through his head. Elmer thought he saw someone standing in the corner of the main bedroom. *'But it cannot be – Janetta is asleep next to me, and the children are in bed in their rooms.'*

As his mind was adapting to the circumstances and realisations, an entity moved closer to him.

Elmer became aware that the image of the "entity" was growing brighter. She was clothed in her traditional attire. Her presence was also very traditional – she appeared to wear the typical traditional ancient black woman clothes, but her clothes seemed to be dirty.

She was looking over Elmer, as he sat up; he was not shocked at her presence. His emotions at once alerted him that he must have built his house on an important site, probably a graveyard or something sacred to the people who may have lived there before.

Elmer stood up from the bed and the entity walked up to Elmer.

'Don't be afraid, Elmer,' the dark figure communicated telepathically. *'I know who you are. What is a light-skinned person, such as you, doing here on this land?'*

The entity approached Elmer and started circling him, sniffing him all the way around. He stood still whilst

she was sniffing him like a dog would. She probably has never seen or interacted with a white person before.

'We own this land. But who are you?' Elmer enquired telepathically.

She stood back around two metres from Elmer and where she stood, she was surrounded by a misty grey background mixed with some blue shading.

'My name is Thandi. I am the confidant and servant of Shevha, the Modjadji, the rain queen. She is the queen of the Monomotapa Empire.'

'This must be a spirit' Elmer thought to himself. He did not experience any anxiety or fear but felt very calm.

'Yes, I am probably according to your standards a spirit or ghost. To me I feel that I am in the real world,' Thandi responded, and Elmer realised that his thoughts were not secret – she could *'hear'* everything he thought.

'So, what do you want from me?' Elmer asked after regaining some composure.

'I need you to deliver a message to my people,' the entity said in her language, but Elmer could understand each word in English. *'We have seen that you are inquisitive and susceptible to collaborating with us. Your enquiries about who we are, make us believe that you are the correct person to deliver our message to the Monomotapa people.'*

'And what might that message be, if you don't mind me asking?' Elmer dared.

'You must go and tell my people to come back to their roots,' Thandi said. 'This is by instruction from our queen, Shevha.'

Elmer's sinical response was: *'They will never believe me.'*
And she enquired: *'Why would they not believe you?'*

Elmer pointed with his right-index finger to the skin colour of his left arm and said to her: *'Due to my white skin colour your people will not believe me. If you want me to do this, you will have to go with me on this journey.'*

'Do not fret, they will listen to you. And I will be with you all the way to ensure that they listen to you,' Thandi said.

She then stepped back more and progressively disappeared in the dark.

Immediately when the "entity" disappeared, Elmer woke Janetta. With the strong presence hanging in the air, Elmer said: *"Janetta, you will not believe what happened to me just before I woke you up,"* and he relayed his total experience to her.

19.

Pots and fragments

Around a week prior to Elmer's first experience with the entity, his wife, Janetta, and his son, Pieter, were walking in the veld on the Southern side of *Leopard Rock*.

"The veld is very dry," Janetta stated. "There is about no grass left for the game, let alone the mopani trees. They will die if it doesn't rain soon - it would be nice to receive some rain. We must keep on praying to God and trusting Him that He would send some rain."

A moment later Pieter exclaimed: *"Look, Mom! Where do these pots come from?"* Pieter was pointing at freshly excavated soil at a hole dug by warthogs. Clay pots and fragments of other pots were laying at the entrance to the hole.

"What are you talking about, Pieter. There are no people living here. Maybe it is those smugglers using our farm as corridor on their smuggling routes," Janetta responded.

"No, Mom, these are old clay pots and fragments thereof." Pieter reacted. *"Come and have a look."*

"Whoa, that is nice," Janetta expressed her surprise. "Sure enough, these are old clay pieces. It looks like the warthogs unearthed these pots. We need to go and call dad so he can see them as well."

"I guess the warthogs were digging for water. There must be some source of water here," Pieter announced. "I did not think there would be water on this side of Leopard Rock."

...

"Dad, Dad, you will not believe what we found," Pieter nearly shouted when they arrived home. He ran forward from the bakkie.

"What are you talking about, Pieter?" Elmer asked nonchalantly. He was more interested in the midday news on the TV and on his cell phone.

"Look, Dad, we found pots and pot fragments," Pieter exclaimed anxiously.

"It is probably those bloody smugglers who are camping on the farm on their way from Zimbabwe with illegal cigarettes," Elmer said still not much interested in the commotion. 'Why is Pieter bothering me?' Elmer thought while looking down on his cell phone screen.

Pieter decided to drop the fragments on his dad's lap. "Here, take a look for yourself if you don't want to believe me," Pieter pronounced, shoving fragments onto Elmer's lap.

Elmer looked down at the stuff on his lap and got a shock. *"Where did you get these?"* Elmer nearly shouted.

"Calm down, Elmer," Janetta said in her calming voice. *"Go on Pieter, tell your dad where we found the pots and fragments."*

"You know there on the Southern side of Leopard Rock, the South-eastern side where one can easily climb or drive up the rock, that is where we came across excavations by warthogs."

"Mom and I were still talking about the lack of rain and how welcome it would be if some rain would fall, when I first saw the moist earth on a heap and then I saw the pots and fragments," Pieter was so anxious to tell the story he nearly swallowed half of the sentence.

Suddenly Elmer's interest was much more triggered. *"Come and show me where you found it."* Elmer said. *"Janetta, Pieter and I are quickly going back to Leopard Rock to see what more we can find. Pieter, get the pick and shovels, we need to go and see what is going on."*

"Go ahead, Elmer, I will get lunch ready for when you return. Off you go!" Janetta shoved them away.

"Thanks, my love, we will be back in a jiffy. Pieter, have you loaded the equipment on the Jeep?" Elmer asked.

"Yes, Dad, it is done. I am waiting for you," Pieter responded from the Jeep.

"Take some water and biltong along, Elmer, because I know you will not be back in a 'jiffy'. Janetta smiled. *"Your 'jiffy'*

can be anything from a minute to a few hours. Pieter, take a hat, the sun is quite hot and will give you sunstroke if you are not careful."

"Sure, Mom. Come on, Dad, you need to see our discovery."
Pieter urged Elmer to move on.

...

"This is unbelievable!" Elmer expressed his surprise at the spot where the warthogs dug a hole. "Let us look further to see if we can find more. Bring the shovel and pick, Pieter. We need to explore further."

When Pieter returned with the equipment, Elmer took the shovel and carefully stuck it in the dry ground at the mouth of the hole. *"Man, the earth is dry. I am struggling to stick this shovel in here. The warthogs are much better diggers than me."*

"Careful, Dad, you nearly hit that clay pot," Pieter cautioned.

Elmer looked down and saw a piece of pottery peeking out. He bent down and started to push the earth aside with his hands. *'Farmer hands are just the tools for this excavation,'* Elmer thought to himself.

To their surprise, Elmer did not unearth a pot or a fragment; he unearthed a nearly complete pottery flask; it had only one ear missing, probably broken off.

"I wonder what they used this flask for," Elmer said. He put his nose to the neck of the flask but did not expect to smell anything. "Nothing to smell here."

"It must have been for some or another special liquid," Pieter said as he took the flask in his hands. "Look at all the nice pictures decorating it. Here are goats, and a herdsman, and look – this looks like Leopard Rock."

"Let me see," Elmer said as he took the flask from Pieter's hands. "This must then be very old. I bet you these must be at least a century or two old. I must go and do some research and see if I can find someone who may be interested in these findings or knows more about them."

"Do you think we stumbled on something old?" Pieter asked.

"I don't think it is only old but probably of archaeological value," Elmer responded. "Let's close the hole and take this stuff home. And do not tell any of the people what we discovered or where before we have not had some experts here. This may be of historical significance."

...

Elmer surfed the internet to see who he can contact about their findings. *'I am sure both the University of Witwatersrand and the University of Pretoria have archaeological departments. The one at Wits may be better known as the former Prof Errol Tobias lectured there and he was involved with the discoveries at the Cradle of Mankind,'* Elmer considered his options.

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"Good day. You have reached the archaeological department of Wits. You are speaking to Mary. How may I be of help? A voice came over the telephone after ringing several times.

"Good day, Mary, my name is Elmer Uys from the farm Klein Bolayi here in the Northern parts of the country. I would like to speak to someone regarding discoveries we made on our farm."

"What kind of discoveries are they, Mr Uys? That will tell me to whom I can direct your call," Mary said.

"Well, our farm is located around 50 kilometres east of Mapungubwe. We came across a few pots, flasks and fragments thereof made of clay. The clay seems to be a finer version of the clay we have on the farm. Thus, the clay must have been sourced from elsewhere," Elmer said.

"Then I think you may want to talk to Prof Tom Huffman. You are fortunate – he just stepped in from his last lecture," Mary announced. "Please hold the line, I will transfer your call. And may you have a pleasant day. Goodbye, Mr Uys."

Moments of that annoying jingle music are heard before the tune is interrupted.

"Good day, Mr Uys, this is Tom Huffman speaking. How are you?" the voice came over the phone.

"Good day Prof Huffman, I am fine. How are you?" Elmer responded.

"If I can keep busy with archaeology, I am happy." Tom said.
"How can I help you?"

"I have seen on the internet that you are responsible for the archaeology discoveries at Mapungubwe. Well, we have a farm around 50 kilometres east of Mapungubwe. Warthogs recently unearthed pots, flasks, and other pottery pieces whilst they were looking for water," Elmer kicked the conversation off.

"Okayyyy..... what makes you think they have any archaeology value?" Tom asked sceptical.

"Well, I have visited Mapungubwe National Park several times, and I had a close look at the artifacts on display in their museum. The pottery discovered here seems to have the same decorations, shapes and clay they were made of." Elmer indicated. *"The one flask we pulled from its grave was decorated with drawings depicting goats, their herdsman, and a rock, Leopard Rock, on our farm."*

"Now that sounds interesting, Mr Uys," Tom said.

"Please call me Elmer. And I would like to invite you to visit our farm to come and see for yourself," Elmer continued. *"I have a feeling you may be pleasantly surprised. When would you be able to come and visit?"*

"Not so fast, Elmer. Would it be possible to send me some photographs of your findings? I will have a look at them and then let you know what I think. I am going to put you back to Mary for you to exchange details, and once I had a look at

the evidence, I will contact you," Prof Huffman tried not to sound sceptical.

...

An hour after Elmer sent the photographs via email to the email address Mary provided, his cell phone rang.

"Mr Uys, please hold for Prof Huffman. He would like to speak to you urgently," Mary's voice came over the speaker.

And a moment later: *"Elmer, I am able to come and visit on Monday."* Tom said.

"That sounds great," Elmer started feeling excited. *"Don't worry about accommodation, we have plenty of chalets and I will give you food as well."*

"After looking at the evidence, I seem to have no further excuse not to come," Tom chuckled. *"Could I drag my colleague, Dr Johan Verhoef, at Tuks along? He is the coordinator of Mapungubwe internationally to draw Botswana, South Africa, and Zimbabwe into the cross-border park. He may be of value as well."*

"The more the merrier," Elmer laughed. *"I will have accommodation for both of you."*

"I will see you then on Monday." Tom said.

Elmer felt an excitement building – he just didn't know why.

...

The Monday afternoon, the two academics arrived on Klein Bolayi.

"I take it you are Prof Huffman and Dr Verhoef," Elmer greeted the new arrivals on the farm. He was enjoying some icy water in the office when he heard a vehicle coming to a stop. The vehicle pulled in under the carport in front of the office.

"Yes, we are. I am Tom and this is my friend and colleague Johan whom I told you about," Tom greeted, brushing some sweat away.

"I trust you travelled without incident," Elmer further welcomed the men. *"Surely it was hot on the way here. But you city guys drive the big Mercedes Benzes with the nice air conditioners, keeping the cars cold in this hot weather,"* Elmer laughed.

"Fortunately, without incident," Tom said. *"We are just excited to be here and even more so to see what you discovered."*

"True," Johan confirmed after exchanging pleasantries with Elmer.

"Let me show you to your rooms, then you can unpack. I will show you all the other amenities," Elmer said.

"That would be great. Then we can unpack and relax before all the expected excitement tomorrow," Tom said.

"Can I offer you something to drink?" Elmer asked while unhooking the chalet keys from the key cabinet.

"That would be a nice relieve from the heat," Johan said appreciatively.

"Shorty, please arrange with the kitchen for some cold water and juice," Elmer instructed the office manager, and to the two guests: "Please follow me. I will take you to your rooms."

The two archaeologists followed their host to the chalets.

"Dinner is between 18:00 and 20:00 in the restaurant just up the path to your left," Elmer pointed to the restaurant as they passed it. "And I will meet you here at the bar tomorrow morning after breakfast."

...

The following morning, after breakfast, Elmer met up with the two men at the bar area. The bar was found under a large baobab tree. A whole entertainment area was constructed around the tree, making it an ideal meeting venue as well.

"Did you sleep well? And did you get a proper breakfast?" Elmer's host curiosity kicked in.

"It has been long since I have been to this part of the country, unlike Tom who comes here more regularly," Johan said. "I forgot how nice it is to sleep in complete silence. Thank you, I enjoyed a delectable meal."

"Thank you," Tom confirmed. "I enjoyed my meal as well."

"I am glad to hear that," Elmer said. "I brought some of the smaller artifacts for your viewing. The terrain where we found these ones, we tried to keep undisturbed." Elmer put the flask, a pot, and fragments of pottery on the table.

When Tom picked up the first pot fragments, he was very amazed and emotional to have such important Africana in his hands. He turned to Johan and said: "I have held many artifacts found at Mapungubwe. But you know, Johan, I am most probably holding the oldest artifact ever found in Southern Africa. This probably dates to 400 to 450 A.D."

"You are absolutely correct, Tom," Johan said as he turned the pottery in his hands. "Just think about it; these artifacts are more than 1 500 years old. And they still seem to be in a great condition for their age."

"How did you come in possession of this history?" Johan excitedly wanted to know from Elmer.

"Well, we had a few tough and dry seasons the past couple of years. My wife and son were out in the veld last week when they came across holes the warthogs dug in searching of water. That is at a place we call Leopard Rock," Elmer started to tell enthusiastically. "If it wasn't for the warthogs, these artifacts would still have been buried. But I think your archaeology curiosity is calling for us to go and visit the site. If you have any gear, maybe you want to collect it. I will meet you at the office and then we can drive down to the site."

Their curiosity prompted the archaeologists to jump up from their seats to gather their gear from their vehicle.

...

"This is phenomenal," Johan called out after they arrived and inspected the site. "This calls for excavations and further study of the findings."

"Such treasures cannot be kept hidden. The world must know," Tom added.

"I have seen smaller fragments up here at Leopard Rock," Elmer contributed to the conversation.

"Show us," Tom urged Elmer.

"Let's go this way," Elmer pointed to a place halfway up the rock.

The two archaeologists followed Elmer and after a short climb, Elmer showed to some gravel below an overhang on the rock. *"Here we are."*

He knelt and picked some pieces of pottery out of the dust. *"Look at the décor on these pieces. I am sure you would be able to piece more than one piece together and form a bigger fragment."*

Johan was overly excited to become involved in the archaeology part of the findings but expressed reservations. *"I must caution you before you get your hopes up high. The lack of funding from the University of Pretoria may hamper the excavations, but a plan can be made."*

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Johan must have been successful in his attempts to obtain funding, because three groups of students from the archaeology department of the university came around to do excavations.

Three sites were named for excavations. Excavations were done on three different occasions. Some of the students even used material they unearthed in their master's theses.

...

One day, during one of the excavation expeditions, one of the students excitedly called Dr Verhoef to an enclosure where she was carefully digging, brushing, and dusting earth away. This site was on the Southern side of the rock, across the road on the farm Evelyn.

"Doc, come and have a look. I think we have come across a grave as I seemed to have found a skeleton," Belinda, one of the master's degree students announced.

"Let me see," Johan said as he came closer to where Belinda was clearing the site. *"Whoa, look at this!"*

"It seems like a female skeleton," Belinda said. *"Do you remember those beads and ceramic artifacts we collected last year in this area, Doc? Those we traced back to the trade period of Arab, Persian and Chinese origin. What was the period again?"*

"I do," said Johan. "We estimated them to be 900+ years old."

"With that in mind, Doc," Belinda continued, "have a look at these blue, green and red beads, bangles and anklets. Not only is the body well preserved, but her clothes as well. Someone must have gone through a lot of trouble to wrap the body and bury it this way. I bet you she must have been from royal decent." Belinda took one hand of the skeleton in her gloved hands and look at it in awe. "The remains were exceptionally well-preserved up to her phalanxes."

Another student, Gloria, said surprised: "Look at the quality of her garment. It has the texture of silk – I guess they got it from India or one of the Persian countries. It is just a bit difficult to name the strips of skin sown onto the border of the garment – it has a spot motif on the leather; I just cannot name it as leopard or phyton. We will have to go and analyse the skin in the laboratory back at the university."

"What is the length of this small body? In that foetus position one cannot guess what the length of the body is," Johan enquired.

"Doc, it is 1,2 metres," Belinda responded. "I estimate the woman's age to be between 25 and 35 years of age. My guess is that she did not bear any children based on the clothes and jewellery she wore."

"I wonder what Elmer would say of this discovery?" Johan asked. "But let's find out."

Elmer was hastily called to the site, and upon seeing the discoveries he said: *"Unbelievable!! I am almost certain that it may have been the Modjadji – only royalty was buried the way this skeleton had been buried. The rain queen and her people apparently stayed in this region many centuries ago. I spoke to some of the local Black people, and they had many stories about the Monomotapa people who roamed this region."*

...

Whilst busy with the excavation site at Leopard Rock, one student of the team looked a baobab tree over in that region.

"There is something strange about that baobab tree," John said. "It seems different from the others. Let me have a look. My dad is an environmentalist and he told me about these gigantic survivors of the tree world."

John moved closer and started tapping on the tree trunk. *"It sounds hollow at some places. Oh whoa, look at this – the tree must have been cut in the past. Look at the scars and there seems to have been a door at this part."*

"Hey, woodpecker, I have heard about bars being built on the inside of these trees," Mark said – he was always fooling around.

"You may have a point, but I doubt whether it was a bar," John said undeterred. "Bars would have been a bit way out and away from any civilisation around here. I rather think it may have been used as a storage facility."

John tapped further on the trunk now that he had an idea what to listen for. *'There is a distinct difference in sound on the hollow parts. I am going to see if we can cut the tree open.'*

...

"Cutting the tree open?" the professional archaeologist asked.

"Yes," John anxiously said. *"I have a feeling that it may have been some sort of chamber on the inside. Maybe a storeroom or living quarters, or something."*

"Let me first get permission to do it before we desecrate anything," Johan volunteered.

...

"Sure, you can go ahead," Elmer said when asked by Johan whether they could cut open the tree. He was busy repairing some chairs in the workshop. *"Did you bring any type of saw?"*

"No, I didn't think we would require a saw," Johan responded.

"I have a chainsaw if you want to use it," Elmer offered.

"That would be great, thank you. It will make the job at hand so much easier and quicker." Johan took the chainsaw and went back to Leopard Rock.

...

Upon arrival, John took the chainsaw from his professor and got it fired up. Carefully to follow the scars on the tree trunk, John cut an entrance in the trunk. The trunk was not the expected thickness – John cut relatively easy through it.

When he pulled the 'new' door away, John exclaimed: *"Doctor, you must see this!"* and with that he reached into the trunk and took out pots.

Johan was as surprised as the student was. *"This must be one of those ancient storage trees. I heard food could even be stored in water since the tree's secretion protects itself and the content on the inside against any bacteria. After the food was placed on the inside the tree, the entrance was sealed with mud or "dhagga" which is like cement being used as a type of construction aid in a building process. Probably during difficult times or perhaps for normal daily use, the food was stored and taken out of storage and used."*

"What did I tell you, Mark?" John said. *"Man, you take me too much for a fool."*

"I was just pulling your leg, John, but for a change you were right in your guesswork," Mark kept mocking.

"You guys seem to not stand each other, neither can you live without each other,". Johan saw and continued: *"Do you know that the average temperature on the inside of the tree is 18°C during summer and winter, making it ideal for storage facility for food?"*

The group's focus was back at the tasks at hand, and they continued with their excavations.

'Archaeology is a magnificent science. One learns so much from the history of what happened many years ago,' Johan pondered over the discoveries.

20.

Rainmaking ritual

After the discovery of the artifacts on Klein Bolayi, Elmer and Tom were having coffee on the stoep of the main house.

It was a fine summer's day, with the temperature soaring above 35° C.

"Tom, I would like to know more about the age of the artifacts and other discoveries you and Johan made," Elmer said, curiously wanting feedback on the artifacts taken back to the universities.

"Well," Tom said while blowing smoke from his pipe. "We have concluded that most of the artifacts date as far back as 450 A.D. Some could even be older, as you must keep in mind that, for example, the beads were made in the East, probably by the Chinese, and were probably transported over a period of months or years by ship along the East coast of Africa down to ports as far South as Sofala in Mozambique. The merchants from Sofala would still then have to transport

their merchandise via pack animal inland to trade with the locals."

"Is there any significance to the rock behind the house?" Elmer asked. "I saw what looks like stairs on the eastern side, but the incline seems to be very steep, and one could probably only go up that way with assistance. Climbing from the Western side is much easier and doable."

"Now you are opening another can of worms, Elmer," Tom said after taking a sip from his coffee mug. "The rock played a significant role in the lives of the Monomotapa people. I did some research at Mapungubwe and heard many mythologies. One such tale is the one about the rainmaking process."

"The stairs are visible on the eastern side of the rock, especially when the sun and associated shadows make them prominent. The mythology fitted in with the retellings by the local Black people confirming the existence of an ancient water well, but which I could not find at Mapungubwe, though gold was discovered. I did research as the head archaeologist on the Mapungubwe and the Great Zimbabwe archaeology projects," Tom stared far into the distance as if he was reminded of something.

"Apparently during a drought or very dry season," Tom continued, "all the people gathered around the rainmaker's rock and the water pit along with the witch doctor. The

queen, probably the rain queen or Modjadji, would have observed the ritual from the rock from a specific spot on the rock.

"The women of the community collected shrubs, food and other plants cultivated during the year and potted these whereafter the sacrifices were carried via the ancient stairs to the top of the rock. The stairs symbolise the road one had to walk through life – the path was exceedingly difficult, and sometimes some of the women fell off. They tumbled to their death, and it was then said that the serpent man caught and swallowed those women.

"The women who made it to the top then placed the pots on the rock. The actual placements where the fires were made on top of the rock can clearly be seen, and obviously a festival time started with song and dance. Prayers were offered to the gods and drums were beaten – the drums played a very central and significant role in these festivities as the drums resonated at a certain frequency leading to a certain vibration. It is being said today that those vibrations were the cause of the rain.

"If the rain did not fall the first time, the process was repeated but now a 10-day old kid or baby goat also had to be slaughtered on top of the rock accompanied again with song and dance, and drum beating.

"If it did not rain after the second ritual, a third ritual was to be performed. This part required all 10-year-old boys of the community to gather in front of the ancient stairs and they

had to climb to the top of the rock. Upon arrival, the witch doctor/priest/"nyanga" sniffed all the candidates – like the process of a dog sniffing a person. The witch doctor then selected the proper candidate, and this child was then sacrificed on top of the rock, accompanied again by song, dance and drum beating.

"It was said that the ritual was accepted by the ancestors when the rock was struck by a thunderbolt – the rain then apparently poured down. Some people may have perceived the ritual as unacceptable, but the parents of the sacrificed child obtained high status in the community," Tom concluded.

"Very interesting," said Elmer. "I think I am going to surprise you now. Come along, I want to go and show you something related to what you just told me."

Elmer and Tom rose from their chairs and started walking in an eastern direction.

They followed the road past the office and then on the way to the jacuzzi area. Near some thorn trees growing off the road, Elmer turned into the veld.

"This is what I wanted to show you," Elmer said, pointing to the Sediba well.

Tom's heart missed a beat, and his mind was racing. *"Is this what I think you are trying to show me?"*

"Absolutely, Tom, you are at an ancient water well. We named it Sediba well," Elmer helped the academic out of his predicament.

"I seem to be surprised numerous times on this farm. You are eradicating many of my theories now. I must reconsider my conclusions because without a doubt, there is only one conclusion to be drawn.

"This fitted rather with the mythology of the rainmaking process, and then this must be the "original Mapungubwe" considering the stairs and the water well here," Tom said in awe. "This means the history of this area predates Mapungubwe by a few hundred years. To take an educated guess – I must say that the people who lived here existed between 450 and 900 A.D."

"The archaeology and history books must be rewritten now, it seems," Elmer laughed. Again, he thought: 'This is unbelievable. The old gôgô seemed to be correct when she said she had spiritual contact with her ancestors.'

21.

Serpent man

"I have another rather interesting story I came across during my research," Tom said to Elmer over lunch on another day.

"Do tell," Elmer was interested what the academic would relay today.

They were drinking coffee, when Tom started: "An important story of a relationship between the dassies or rock-rabbits living on and around the rainmaker's rock and the serpent man has been told, and it has direct bearing on the rituals which took place on the rock.

"Apparently, an extra-ordinary large python lives next to a fig tree growing from the rock on the Southern side. The agreement said that the serpent man feeds from the offspring of the dassies but in return the serpent man would protect the dassies. Thus, the dassies offered their young voluntary to the serpent man to uphold the agreement, and when the dassies were in any danger the "head" dassie would go and call the serpent man. The head dassie entered at the flat part of the rock where the fig tree is growing from the rock to call

the serpent man to address the danger," Tom ended his storytelling.

"What an immense story," Elmer said. "Do you see the correlation and similarities between the sacrifices made by the human children and those made by the dassies?"

"You don't say," Tom concluded. "This myth must have some bearing on something the old people wanted to hide or protected. I just haven't found that linkage."

'Besides this tale Tom is telling, I now discovered a linkage with the old gôgô's story of the serpent man as protector of the rock.' Elmer realised. 'I will have to do more research on this whole matter. Maybe I can find the entrance to the chamber where the treasures are hidden.'

22.

Next experience

The day after his experience with the entity, Elmer was drawn to the archaeology sites where the pots were discovered. Smaller pot fragments were discovered around a week prior to his experience with the entity.

Jack and Cooper, his two dogs, went with Elmer as he travelled by Jeep to the area where the pots were discovered – those pots unearthed by the warthogs.

At the site he just sat down to meditate, whilst the two dogs sought cover under some shrubs due to the heat. The dogs were panting.

Suddenly Elmer became aware of the presence of an entity, different from the previous evening's experience.

The dogs started to growl and stood up. The hair on their backs were upright and they were very anxious when the entity revealed herself. As protectors of their master, they came running towards Elmer. They circled him and sniffed him up and down as if he was a stranger to them.

The sun was very bright at that stage.

Elmer telepathically indicated to the entity: *'I am aware of your presence, but I cannot see you due to the bright light of the sun. Last night I could see you when you appeared more in a blue light.'*

Thandi then instructed to him: *'Follow me.'*

Elmer called the dogs to jump on the vehicle and followed Thandi in his vehicle. He was still trying to figure out what Thandi wanted, when suddenly she instructed him: *'Stop!'*

Elmer slammed on the brakes and parked the Jeep and disembarked.

Again, he heard: *'Follow me'.*

Elmer started walking in the direction of some baobab trees.

The entity then told him: *'Look down.'*

'I don't see anything extra-ordinary,' Elmer said. *'What do you want me to see?'*

'Look again, you haven't looked,' Thandi said.

Suddenly he saw more pot fragments and the entity went around a tree and motioned Elmer to follow. *'There are more sites where you can find pots.'*

'But come, let me show you further,' the entity said. *'Look there on the side of the hill – there are graves of the old people.'*

When Elmer took another look, he was amazed. He initially saw eight or nine marked graves. The entity pointed to the hill, and he saw another four marked graves – to the untrained eye it would appear to be heaps of random rocks, but the rocks marked graves in a graveyard.

The entity disappeared as quickly as she appeared.

'Am I dealing with something from another world, maybe a spiritual world?' Elmer asked himself. 'It seems I must treat these events with the greatest respect and humbleness.'

Elmer then turned around, called his dogs and they got back in the Jeep to head home. At that moment he realised: *'These events seems to be the start of a relationship between Thandi and me, the two of us.'*

23.

Incorporation of Klein Bolayi

The University of Pretoria allowed three groups to do excavations and each time they focused on a different site.

Unbelievable archaeological findings were made which included Chinese, Arabic, and Indian/Percian articles. Many bowls, literally by the handful, were unearthed on the sites and taken back to the university to be "*clean up*" and sorted according to the university's criteria.

The discoveries and artifacts were placed on display at the University of Pretoria next to the findings from the Mapungubwe area.

During one of the exploration missions, Dr Verhoef came to the owners of Klein Bolayi.

"We need to enter into an agreement to include Klein Bolayi into the greater Mapungubwe area," Johan said. "Your farm has significant archaeological value and forms part of the Mapungubwe heritage."

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Grandpa Piet, Grandma Joey, Elmer, and Janetta got together to discuss the matter.

"I am of the opinion that we will only benefit from this agreement," Elmer took the lead. "Considering that we will be part of a bigger conservation area, the fences between the national park and the neighbouring farms will be taken down, making the dream of Jan Smuts to become reality. You remember the story I told you of the Dongola sanctuary?"

"I agree with Elmer," Grandpa Piet said. "Then we can be part of the tourism attraction as well. It will benefit us in the long run and augment our income."

"That is then done and dusted," Grandma Joey and Janetta contributed to this discussion.

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The owners of Klein Bolayi were informed a few months later that a festive ceremony would be held at the Mapungubwe Nasional Park (*part of the South African National Parks' proclaimed parks*) to inaugurate Klein Bolayi into the greater Mapungubwe area.

Between 80 and 100 dignitaries from across the country and as far as Cape Town, attended the inauguration.

Food of all tastes and fruit of the region filled the tables. The dignitaries were chatting away when they were called to order.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we have requested your attendance to mark a very special day," said the master of ceremonies. "We are privileged to welcome amongst us, the Uys family from the farm Klein Bolayi. Klein Bolayi is well-known to many of you, but those who don't know it, the farm is located around 50 kilometres East of Mapungubwe on the Pont-Drift Road to Musina."

Applause of appreciation and welcome went up in the venue.

"To mark the occasion," the host continued when the applause quieted down, "we drafted a map of the greater Mapungubwe conservation area including Klein Bolayi. Operator, please show us that map."

When the map of the area was projected on a screen reflecting the inclusion of Klein Bolayi, Elmer said aloud: *"Look, the inclusion of Klein Bolayi portrays a rhinoceros facing to the right, with Klein Bolayi forming the horn of the animal."*

Everyone was flabbergasted because suddenly the map's outer line of all the land as part of the greater Mapungubwe portrayed the head of a rhinoceros facing East.

With shock, the people present at the meeting, realised that forming a rhinoceros, with Klein Bolayi included, was destined to be – nobody planned the figure being portrayed on the map, it just manifested itself.

The discovery of a miniature golden rhinoceros in 1942 and the figure on the map outlining a rhinoceros astonished everyone. The head of the statue and the figure of the screen had the same shape.

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The realisation of the spiritual value seemingly indicated that the ancestors wanted the restoration of the Monomotapa kingdom.

24.

First meeting

During the same period as the entity's first appearance to Elmer, the entity promised that she would be driving the process from her side as well.

The implication was that hopefully she and Elmer would have an understanding.

"How is it possible that I, as academic with two tertiary degrees, am so confused?" Elmer asked himself. "Is the task entrusted to me to go and tell this story to other people, too good to be true?"

"Well, if Thandi would be willing to drive the process from her side on a spiritual level, surely I can do it on a physical level," Elmer argued with himself. "I am going to take it easy and go with the so-called "wait and see" approach to see what will happen next. If she sends the relevant people across my path, I will go with the flow."

On a random basis, people would come to the farm and Elmer would share his experiences through individual stories and the revelation of the entity with them, though he had nothing tangible to show the visitors.

"I just hope and pray that all my stories would not fall on deaf ears, but come to the correct people's attention," Elmer wished.

And so, many more stories were told, and people would come and go with whom Elmer shared his experiences.

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It was a sunny day, a day where one would get sunstroke if care were not taken. Elmer was just taking his lunchbreak and was sitting in the bar area under the big old baobab.

A big black Mercedes Benz S500 with dark tinted windows pulled in and the driver parked the car under the carport in front of the office. Visitors had to report to the office to confirm their bookings and payment of deposits before they were escorted to their respective rooms.

On this day Elmer thought to himself: *'Who are these people? I am not aware of any new guests arriving.'*

The next moment, men in black suits wearing pilot-style sunglasses popped out of the vehicle and intensely looked around. *'No-one must be any threat to our boss'* attitude radiated from them. They were first standing with their dominant firsthand their hips looking around the area in front of the office. Satisfied that there is no immediate threat, the bodyguard-driver opened the left rear door.

'This must be an especially important person if he or she has bodyguards, and they are looking for any danger on the farm. What danger would there be on a farm to an unsolicited visitor?' Elmer thought to himself.

An older Black man stepped out of the Mercedes and pulled on his clothes like a bird shaking its wings after a bath under running water.

Then the group started walking in Elmer's direction after they saw him rising from his seat under the baobab.

Elmer did not recognise any of these visitors but saw that the vehicle registration was from another province. *"Good day, gentlemen. How are you?"* he greeted. *"Welcome to Klein Bolayi."*

"Nda, Sir," the response came from the older man without realising that he was greeting the white man in Tshivenda, and then continued in English. *"I am fine, how are you?"*

"Are you travellers? Are you looking for accommodation?" Elmer's business sense kicked in.

"Not at all," the response came. *"May I introduce myself? I am Dr Mathole Motshekga, spouse of Dr Angie Motshekga who is the Minister of Basic Education in the Cabinet of the Republic of South Africa."*

"Please to meet you, Dr Motshekga. I am Elmer Uys, proprietor of Klein Bolayi," Elmer said as he made his acquaintance. "What brings you then to Klein Bolayi?"

The bodyguards initially formed a semi-circle around their boss, but when they sensed no danger, they turned their backs to the two men to look for any threads from outside that circle.

"Well, I do not know why I am here, but I felt pressured in my spirit to come here," Mathole indicated. "On the contrary, I was led here all the way from Pretoria, around 500 kilometres away."

Elmer at once realised that Thandi is playing her part. *'Thandi, are you sending people to me?'* He tossed the possibility in the air. *'Or it must be someone from the groups of people I told stories of Klein Bolayi who told this man in front of me. And now I need to play my part.'*

"I am curious to hear what led you here. Please have a seat," Elmer invited the men to the chairs under the baobab. *"Can I offer you any refreshments, maybe tea, coffee, cold drink or water?"*

The bodyguards moved off a distance from the other two men and sat down, still alert to any eminent danger but they saw none.

"Tea would be lovely for us all. Maybe I should take some ice-cold water if you don't mind, please," Mathole said, speaking on this entourage's behalf.

"Let me get you both," Elmer offered.

The office assistant was already next to Elmer after he saw the men walking past the office and greeting Elmer. *"Shorty, please get us some tea and ice-cold water. And let the kitchen staff add some of those small savoury pies. Thank you."*

Shorty disappeared as quickly as he arrived.

"This pressure you mentioned a moment ago, what did you mean?" Elmer cautiously enquired.

"You white people may not understand us Black people's cultures and customs," Mathole started. *"As it may be, I had the same dream several nights in a row. It was every time the same dream. After the fifth night, I realised the ancestral spirits were speaking to me."*

"Try me for the 'non-understanding part'," Elmer said. *"I may know a little bit. But do tell me your dream."*

Mathole wiggled in his chair to find a comfortable seating position. *"I have been dreaming that I was standing on top of this rock behind us,"* Mathole started explaining his dream while pointing to the rainmaker's rock. *"Every time, I saw the Modjadji standing there along with another woman, waving me closer. As soon as I got closer, I could see her mouth move and her lips forming words, but I couldn't hear a word she was saying."*

"When I asked the woman to speak up, she pointed me to a white man's spirit which suddenly appeared from nowhere,

but which stood next to us. And then she and the Modjadji disappeared. I didn't know or have seen this white man's spirit, but I realised that it must be the owner of the farm.

"I was then lifted up from the rock and transported back home to allow me to see where I had to go. I did some research and realised that the place I had to visit is here, on Klein Bolayi."

Elmer was surprised at how Thandi kept her promises. *'She surely appeared in a dream to get this man to assist. I must get more information.'*

"First tell me more of yourself," Elmer requested. 'I need to determine this man's authenticity before taking it to the next level.'

"I am involved with the Land Claims Commission; I am the chairperson of a Parliamentary Committee," Mathole started his own story. "I have been interested in our heritage from a very young age. I kept on asking my mother about the culture and customs of the Venda and Tsonga people. I even researched the Shona people who live across the Limpopo River in Zimbabwe.

"I came to the realisation that I need to discover more of the Modjadji, the rain queen. I have the queen-in-waiting in my care; she is living in my house. There is a disconnect between our customs and traditions, and the crowing of the Modjadji. The little princess' mother passed away when she was five years old and before she could understand what her role should be and what she should be doing in reigning over our people.

"I have been asking our ancestors to guide me as I did not know where to start. I was lost and felt helpless to get the rightful ruler on the throne.

"Then suddenly I had this recurring dream after spending a long-time seeking guidance from the spirits. I recognised the Modjadji, but I don't know who the woman with her was.

"I saw a white farmer in spirit but could not see his face clearly. However, now I recognise the farmer's stature in you; therefore, it must be you who I had to come and see.

"Have you been talking to the spirits?" Mathole enquired.

"For the "non-understanding" part I must disappoint you," Elmer said. "A few years ago, we acquired the farm from its previous aged owners.

"A while after being on the farm, I felt that I wanted to know more of the history of the farm. I started talking to the local people and started hearing many stories, especially stories of rainmaking around the rock.

"I came across an old gôgô on the farm across the road and she told me of the history of the area and the serpent man. She also told me that she had visitations from the spirits and that, since I started meddling in the history of the Monomotapa people, I would be instrumental in aiding the spirits of the ancestors of the people who lived in this area, into the afterlife. I didn't think much of it at that time, though my curiosity was tickled.

"Recently I built a house near one of the rivers on the farm. On the very first night, I had a visit from a spirit of a Black woman. She introduced herself as Thandi."

"How did this woman look?" Mathole asked curiously.

"Well, she had all black clothing which looked aged and a bit dirty," Elmer answered Mathole's question. "She stood in a blueish haze when she spoke to me."

"That's it. That is the woman I saw next to the Modjadji" Mathole became excited. *"Did she say anything, anything at all to you?"*

"You may not believe me, but she did speak to me. She gave me a message from her queen. She said I must go and tell her people that they must come back to their roots. Do you recognise the words "come back to your roots"? Do those words have any meaning for you?" Elmer inquisitively wanted to know.

Mathole nearly fell off his chair. *"Those are the exact words I saw the woman saying – exactly!!"* Mathole's mouth dried up. Fortunately, the refreshments arrived and Mathole could take a sip of water. *"As white man and I assume someone not believing in ancestral spirits, I did not think our spirits would be talking to you."*

The bodyguards were oblivious of the shock Mathole experienced and were munching on the treats and downing liquids.

"I am going to tell you of my other experiences over the past couple of months," Elmer said with a shy smile. 'Will Thandi come through for me and honour her commitment?' Elmer wondered.

Then Elmer went ahead and told Mathole of all his experiences, from the time they bought the farm to Thandi's visit, to her instructions, to the discovery of artifacts, to that day.

Elmer captivated Mathole's attention for more than three hours. Mathole didn't realise his jaw was hanging on the floor while he was absorbing all the stories Elmer was relaying.

All the while, Mathole made furiously notes of all the different tales and stories Elmer was verbalising and he nearly could not keep up with what Elmer amazed him with. *"I initially thought this white man doesn't know much, but as you continued, I just became a believer. You are unbelievable! All the stories fit perfectly with my knowledge and research of the Monomotapa people, as well as our customs and culture. I am astonished. This is amazing,"* Mathole exclaimed.

'Am I forming a new relationship with someone to get Thandi's message to the Monomotapa people?' The thought jumped to Elmer's amazement, in his mind. *'Will there be a relationship between Mathole and me regarding the heritage of Klein Bolayi?'*

When Mathole was ready to leave, he said to the two bodyguards: *"It has been long since I had been surprised like this. This trip was not in vain. I must come back to hear more. But let's go home."* And off they drove back home.

As Elmer watched the vehicle leave and the dust settle, he concluded: *'Mathole is the main person I need to work with.'*

...

Not long after Mathole's first visit Elmer experienced that the entity had critical issues to ask Mathole, and she wanted to talk to Mathole.

"If these spirits want to come onboard, how would they communicate with Mathole?" Elmer asked himself. *"I do not know of any medium who would function as mediator between Thandi and Mathole."*

Contemplating what he should do, Elmer realised: *'If there is no-one to do the job, maybe I would have to be that go-between.'*

Elmer experienced approval from his spiritual guardian so that the questioning could go ahead through him, and that the entity could come onboard.

...

Soon afterwards, about a month later, Mathole arrived again on the farm.

Elmer had phoned him with: *"The spirit wants to talk to you."*

"Surprisingly, I got the same message," Mathole said in response.

And now Mathole with his assistant were sitting in front of Elmer on the same spot where they first met – under the big baobab in the bar area.

Elmer was still looking at Mathole, thinking what to say or how to start the conversation with Thandi, when he had an out-of-body experience.

He had no direct knowledge of the events as Thandi took possession of his body – she used his body and voice. Elmer had to rely on video recordings of the events taken by Mathole's assistant to see and hear what happened between Thandi and Mathole.

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"I am Thandi," she started the conversation. "I am the confidant and representative of my queen, Shevha.

"We are, in your terms, millions of beings from a kingdom which was destroyed in the fifteen hundreds, as you would call them in your calendar years.

"I do not have all the means and tools at my disposal which you have in the modern world, but I will tell you what happened to us." She talked of the journey from the North-western side of Africa to their arrival in the Limpopo Valley and ultimately the destruction of their Monomotapa kingdom. And all Thandi's descriptions

made it possible to trace her stories back to actual historical events.

All the individual stories told started to form a unit and the history of the Monomotapa people. The group of people lived in the city named "*Maulwe*" and they migrated from the Klein Bolayi area to Mapungubwe before going to Zimbabwe.

Mathole, at that moment, realised that the conversation revolved around the Monomotapa kingdom which was destroyed in the 1500s.

Thandi said: *"Mathole, the kingdom must be restored – the Monomotapa Empire must be rebuilt. You have been chosen to bring all the loose ends together. Your gut feel was not a gut feeling when you were little – you had been chosen and prepared at that age to lead the process. You must use your political influence to restore the kingdom."*

After handing down her instructions, Thandi's spirit left Elmer's body and disappeared.

Mathole could not believe what he experienced.

"What happened, Mathole? Elmer asked. "I have no recollection of what just happened."

"You are in luck, Elmer," Mathole comforted Elmer. "I had the whole conversation video recorded and we can watch the recordings to hear what was said. The moment was exhausting; therefore, I have to see them myself again to absorb the instructions."

...

Later, after watching the interaction between Mathole and Thandi, Elmer said: *"Mathole, I now realise that you and I are at a turning point in your history. I get the feeling that the restoration process is taking form."*

"You and I are the main drivers in this process. You will have to drive it from a cultural perspective, and I will have to drive it from practical perspective."

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Fragmented information was confirmed afterwards with the help of Mathole which showed that a tribe under leadership of the rain queen became extinct in the early 1500s.

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Around a week after the first meeting with Mathole, in one of the storerooms on the farm, Elmer came across a dust covered old map in a frame of the area highlighting the kingdom of the Monomotapa – the map was left behind by the earlier owners of the farm. The map was drafted in Portuguese, but Elmer realised that Thandi wanted to show him the Monomotapa kingdom and which area it covered.

25.

Three tasks

Mathole returned home after his first meeting with Thandi.

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Thandi then started communicating more with Elmer and she said to him: *'You need to do three important things. You must build a quarry to make stone available for construction and to have control over the developments in the area.*

'Next you must build a dam in the Limpopo River to have control over the mining development.

'And lastly, you must restore the palace, the palace from where the kingdom of the Monomotapa would be ruling.'

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"Monomotapa" also translates to "spider" with specific reference to the associated "female energy" – a meek motherly ruling, like that of a mother caring for her children. Thandi showed Elmer: *'This is the way that the Monomotapa kingdom was always ruled.'*

Maulwe was the city of the Monomotapa people; it was in existence from 450 to 900 A.D., whereafter the centre of trade moved to the Mapungubwe region between 900 to 1300 A.D. Trading took place between the Monomotapa and the merchants of Sofala in Mozambique, and between the Sofala merchants and the Arabs, the Chinese, and the Indians/Asians.

The trade hub then moved over to *Great Zimbabwe* from 1300 to 1500 A.D. during which time the Portuguese people had contact with the local population. It was also during this time that the local population was nearly annihilated, but some escaped back to their previous settlements – one can nearly call it "*this is where Africa lost all*"; the people lost their momentum.

26.

Pressure on Monomotapa

Elmer, at one of their other conversations, warned Mathole of the current pressure on the Monomotapa people, not only from the Zulu nation, which is a patriarchal system, but also from the Arabic world.

"The Arabs are already having a significant influence on the Northern part of Africa," Elmer said. "They want to shift their focus to the Southern part of Africa which is under control of Black groups."

"What do you mean, Elmer?" Mathole wanted to know.

"The trade routes of the Monomotapa, which consists of parts of eight countries, namely Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, and Zambia/Zimbabwe, considered as one country, are under pressure from the Arabs." Elmer said.

He continued: *"Seemingly, the Arabs want to capture the trade routes by establishing a truck-stop near Waterpoort just off the N1-route, the main national road route between the Northern and the Southern points of South Africa. Waterpoort is found between the towns of Louis Trichardt*

and Musina, here in the Limpopo province. The truck stop would be able to accommodate 10 000 trucks.

"The intention is to have an inland port, in other words a control point, where all trucks going North or South have to report before moving on. The truck owners will have to pay a "toll fee" before the trucks can move on.

"The Arabs have already built a palace on that ground in order to take control of this trade route. They already spent billions of Rands. The irony is that the Black people have not yet realised or seen what is happening in front of them!"

Mathole looked with shock in his eyes at Elmer: "But I am responsible for land reform in South Africa. We need to find something to counter that action."

"You must realise something very important" Elmer further warned Mathole. "The Arabs wanted first to establish a palace, then progressively take control over the mines and then the development in the country.

"The Monomotapa approach should just be the opposite – first start with the development by building a quarry, then build a dam to have control over the mines followed by the palace.

"The next step would be to gain control over the Southern Africa region.

"How do you not see this?" Elmer asked.

"The way you put it, opened my eyes," Mathole said shakingly. "There must be a way we can halt this."

"Sure, there is, but it is in your hands and influence circle, Mathole," Elmer said.

27.

Cross-over

After a second or third meeting between Thandi and Mathole, Thandi concluded: *"Mathole, you have to fulfil another role. You must prepare for a ritual for my queen, Shevha."*

"What will happen at that ritual? Why must it be held?" Mathole asked.

"At this ceremony a ritual will be performed during which the transfer of power from Shevha to the new rain queen, Modjadjji, will take place. The young princess is in your care," Thandi said.

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It was during this time that Mathole and Elmer came across a young woman from Zimbabwe who was willing to act a medium in the spiritual world to help Elmer to manage the communication matters.

Thus, another opportunity was then created where Mathole could now speak with Shevha *directly*.

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At that next occasion, Shevha spoke through the Zimbabwe medium to Mathole and said: *"All the ancestral spirits wanted to cross over to the afterlife. But in order for me to be part of that group, a ritual must first be held during which I must transfer my powers to the young princess."*

"How would such ritual look like and what must happen? Who should attend the ceremony from my world?" Mathole questioned Shevha.

"One thing at a time, young man," Shevha continued laughingly. *"You must prepare a feast known as the "beêrr" ceremony, during which I will transfer my powers to the new Modjadji queen. I see she is in your care now – keep her safe."*

"Besides the normal food and drinks to be offered to the Modjadji ancestors, a young cow must be slaughtered with beer as symbol of respect for and transfer of the power. The heifer selected must not have borne any offspring to prove the purity of the participants at the ceremony."

"The skin colour of the heifer must be light brown with no blemishes. The heifer must be between the ages of two to four years. We believe that the heifer is a symbol of purity to please the Modjadji ancestors."

"The flesh, and especially the heart, of the heifer along with the traditional beer would quench the rain queen ancestors' appetite and thirst when they participated in the ceremony."

...

Mathole jumped into action after leaving the conversation with Shevha.

"This ritual must take place two months from now at the full moon. That will allow me ample time to arrange for a young cow to be brought to Klein Bolayi," Mathole said to his assistant.

"We must send invitations to the royal houses in South Africa and Zimbabwe, and all the chiefs of the region. These dignitaries must attend without failure. You must get us proper security detail to protect all 300 dignitaries at the ceremony and on the farm – speak to Captain Vilakazi from the VIP Unit at the Police.

"Get blessers from our community to finance this auspicious occasion. Ask chief Tshepiso to contact me about a cow for the ceremony and more meat for the after party," Mathole could not hold his anxiety to have a ceremony held of this significance. 'People will respect me even more for what I am doing for the Modjadji and her people.'

...

"What are you doing?!" Shevha was utterly annoyed when Mathole reported on all the arrangements so far, a week later.

"What is wrong, my queen?" Mathole enquired.

"I do not want 300 people at the ceremony! There must only be eight people including Elmer to partake in this ceremony and no-one else!" Shevha spat, highly upset.

"But my queen, all these people will come and honour you and give recognition to the new queen. They will take note who you are and kneel in front of your queenship" Mathole tried to justify his conduct.

"We are not interested in the "fame" you planned," Thandi said, with Shevha nodding her head in confirming.

"Furthermore, we are not interested in your political agenda, Mathole," Shevha said. "This is a sacred ceremony not to be desecrated by intensions to gain glamour. This is a ceremony purely about the transfer of power and nothing else!"

"I will then reduce the number of attendees and we can go ahead with the ceremony at Leopard Rock, here on Klein Bolayi, as planned," Mathole tried to save face.

"Oh no, you won't!!" Shevha said angrily. "The ceremony must be cancelled immediately. And should you go ahead with the ceremony, a snake would come and bite an important person on Leopard Rock."

Mathole was taken aback. 'This is much more serious than I thought.' Aloud he said: "My humble apologies my queen and Thandi. I will not continue with the ceremony as per your instructions. I just wanted to have a ceremony fit for royalty."

Mathole realised he does not want to manage the demise of any important person through his disobedience. He will then also suffer at the hands of the ancestors.

"Apology accepted. And yes, this is profoundly serious – do not take our instructions lightly. It seems you do not realise with whom you are dealing with," Shevha said.

"The ceremony can go ahead," Thandi said. "But not on the date you planned. And now you must bring eight young cows and eight times the volume of beer to the next ritual. It is anyway not up to you how to brew the beer. The spirits of the brewmasters will give you instructions how to brew the beer. And it needs to be brewed in those pots and flasks found by Elmer in the ground. He found the house of the brewmaster who lived here many years ago."

"Now go and do as we instruct. Come back and report to us before you finalise all the arrangements. We do not want another fiasco," Thandi said.

The atmosphere suddenly changed with the disappearance of Shevha and Thandi.

...

Mathole planned another ceremony on a different date.

He, however, did not come to the ceremony with the goods as instructed.

"Do you want to lose your life and land in a dark place in the afterlife?! TELL US!!" The spirits were furious.

"I was not able to get the necessary funds to finance the cost of the ceremony; I am sorry," Mathole bemoaned his situation.

The other seven attendees became uneasy.

"That is not good enough! We are going to burn and destroy everything here. You have disgraced us. And we will not tolerate it!" The attending spirits shouted.

"Get out of our sight! We cannot trust you anymore!" Thandi shouted. *"We will arrange everything from our side!"*

And with that, Thandi and Shevha disappeared again, leaving the ceremony in limbo.

...

Elmer met up with the spirits afterwards and expressed his dismay with the spirits. *"You are no different from the Black people of today who want to get their way through destruction and fire – it seems as if the blacks of that time and today are the same."*

Elmer had very intense arguments with Thandi and Shevha.

"We cannot tolerate disobedience! We gave proper instructions to Mathole, but those were ignored! He seems to do things his way while disobeying our traditions and customs. We just want to wipe all these miniscule attempts off the ceremonial table," Thandi was adamant.

Janetta then stepped up to the plate and said: *"Elmer, calm down. I will deal with the spirits from a feminine perspective."*

"Shevha and Thandi, would you do me a favour and let us meet eye-to-eye in a feminine way," Janetta turned her attention towards the two female spirits. "I am sure the three of us can sort these matters in a calm manner."

...

Two nights later, Janetta shook Elmer awake and said to him: *"Shevha and I had a long woman-to-woman discussion in a dream. As we were walking down the gravel road in my dream, I recommended to Shevha that the spirits should cross to the spiritual world."*

"That is fantastic news, Janetta," Elmer said in a calm tone. "Hopefully the spirits can be put to rest in the afterlife."

...

The next morning Elmer experienced an extra-ordinary feeling when he walked out on the stoep to enjoy his coffee with Janetta.

"Can you feel the atmosphere in the air is different?" Elmer asked Janetta.

"Yes, Elmer, it feels as if a whole train load lifted around us. One can actually now breath properly." Janetta responded. "We are to say nothing to the children of last night's events."

"I agree" Elmer said just before Eljané walked onto the stoep with a mug of coffee in her hand.

"Something is different this morning. There is a different silence," Eljané observed.

Only then Elmer and Janetta told her what had happened the previous evening. *"Most of the spirits crossed over with only two remaining to assist with the processes in the physical world.*

"Finally, the cross-over of most of the spirits clears the atmosphere to such an extent that the progress of the project can now start to flow much quicker and more effective without all the spiritual influences," Elmer concluded.

28.

Three essential elements

Elmer was expecting all the events of the past few months and years.

Slowly but surely, he realised that Thandi's promises are coming to fruition.

'There are three important elements at play at this stage from my perspective,' Elmer understood.

'The first element is the rain-making rock with the fire-holes at the top.

'The second element is the ancient stairs on the Eastern side of the rock which formed part of the ritual.

'And the last element is the ancient water well to the North-Eastern side of the rock.

'These elements are central to the ancient Maulwe civilisation. The one cannot exist without the other.'

29.

Stone birds

'There are more at play,' Elmer appreciated.

He read in one of the newspaper internet platforms that *'the president of Zimbabwe, Dr Robert Mugabe, made it one of his goals in life to find the eight "stone birds" of Great Zimbabwe.'*

At the Zimbabwe ruins, or known as the site of the *Great Zimbabwe*, there were eight points or pedestals where a stone bird was placed, like the function of flags these days, and these stone birds had an idol purpose.

Elmer further read that *'Apparently, one of the stone birds was taken to England by Mr Cecil John Rhodes and it was brought back to Zimbabwe after spending some time in the South African Parliament. Dr Mugabe made it his mission to collect all these stone birds (or maybe stone reptiles) as that would embody the restoration of the Monomotapa – for the black groups to be "one" again, referring to the Southern African Development Community (SADC).'*

'Dr Mugabe could only collect seven of the eight statutes during his lifetime – the missing one, was the one representing the Modjadji.'

Excavations went on and suddenly, one day, Elmer was called to one of the sites on the farm.

"Elmer, look at what we found. You won't believe your eyes," Johan said eagerly.

"Is it more pots or flasks? Maybe another golden rhinoceros?" Elmer asked jokingly, trying to predict the answer.

"None of that. We found a carved bird made from stone," Johan said while showing to a large stone bird next to the 'grave' it was taken.

"What! I don't believe you," Elmer said in response to what he heard. "I just read last week of these stone birds and that Dr Mugabe passed away without him being able to bring all eight stones back to Zimbabwe. He could only find seven of the birds and brought them back to Great Zimbabwe."

"Then, if this bird is returned to Zimbabwe, the set would be complete," said Johan.

"You are absolutely right, Johan," Elmer continued. "All the theories and information of Prof Huffman were proven to be correct by all these events. This will then also form part of the restoration of the Monomotapa as Dr Mugabe wanted. The set of the eight birds is now complete, and a concerted effort must be made to bring these stone birds together in remembrance of the Monomotapa."

Elmer went home and started a process to hand the stone bird back to Zimbabwe.

30.

Eight blue lights

Elmer and his family liked to host visitors. All sorts of accommodation are available, from single accommodation to family accommodation.

The visitors came from everywhere, from all over the country, and even the world.

One evening after dinner, the family was hosting a young foreign woman from the Netherlands.

Elmer was in his element relaying some of the tales he could tell of the farm and its history.

The part the young woman found most interesting was the story of the rainmaking ritual. *"Could you show me the rock now?"* she begged.

"Do you want to go there now? It is already around 20:00," Elmer asked.

"Yes, now! Pretty please," she begged more. *"I have been studying the spiritual world for a long period, and I have a strong feeling that we should go there now."*

"Alright, we can go," Elmer conceded.

...

The company were walking along the top of the rock.

"Look there," Eljané said suddenly. "Look to the North of the rock around three hundred metres into the veld."

Everyone gazed in the direction Eljané pointed and were amazed at the eight blue lights in a semi-circle in the veld to the North. All eight were focussed on the lodge area.

"Like I said, I can feel stuff in the spiritual world. If you do not mind me saying, I sense these lights stand for spirits," the young woman said.

Elmer quickly responded and said: *"That perfectly fits with all the other stories and events. These eight lights must be the legs of a spider, which is also the meaning of "Monomotapa". It also stands for the eight nations involved in the restoration of the empire. It is further confirmation of the urgency of the processes surrounding Monomotapa to be pushed forward. The spirits want the people living in the lodge permanently to speed up with the restoration of the Monomotapa Empire."*

The lights then faded away and the people completed their tour.

31.

More visitors to the rock

Elmer started talking to more Black people in the area and with local Black church leaders in Musina to try and obtain more information.

Samson, one of the workers at the NTK cooperation, a farmers' association, at Musina, was an elder in his local congregation which had a big following.

Samson liked to talk to Elmer because Elmer understood the way he thought and always joked around. Like the one time when Elmer came to do business at the cooperation.

"The shovels must be very tired," Elmer said to younger colleagues of Samson as they were loading manure for a client.

"No, they are not. We are just resting from all the challenging work, can't you see?" came the response.

"Oh, I thought the shovels were tired, and you were just keeping them upright, so they don't fall to the ground," Elmer mockingly said.

The older men at once noticed the joke and started laughing.

Only when the older men laughed, the younger men realised the joke was on them and quickly and with renewed eager started to work.

...

"Please tell me more of the customs and the rainmaking processes of the Monomotapa people. What more did you discover?" Samson asked after Elmer told him of the ancient Sediba well.

"You must come and see for yourself. The rock on Klein Bolayi has significant magical powers in the rainmaking process. People hearing of it will not believe until they experience it," Elmer explained.

...

Sometime later, on a specific Sunday a busload of people, around 80 in total, arrived on the farm. All the people were dressed in blue and white traditional clothes, like the Zionist Christian Church (ZCC).

The group sat down with their drums on the lawn in front of the main house in respect of the owner of the farm.

"We hear from Samson that you know of the ritual associated with the rainmaking process. Is that true?" the spokesperson of the group started.

"Yes, I know a little of the process. I know what had been told to me by the spirits and the local people," Elmer responded.

"Our group's belief system is a mix of about 50-50 between traditional faith and Christianity."

Elmer then explained to the group in Tshivenda how the rainmaking process worked.

Afterwards, the spokesperson asked: *"Can the group go up the rock and practice the process?"*

"You can go on condition that that you do not sacrifice any person." Elmer jokingly said.

"Oh no," the serious response came. *"We do not want to upset any ancestors or spill any blood."*

"Alright, then you can go," Elmer said.

...

The group went to the top and started their rituals, consisting of song, dance and beating of their drums. Upon completion of their proceedings, they descended from the rock, thanked Elmer for the opportunity and left.

The evening following the group's visit the rain came down contrary to a drought preceding the visit. Approximately 50-millimetres of rain was measured.

The people on the farm were surprised by the rainfall but could not link it to the rainmaking ritual and therefore it was considered as *"by chance"*.

...

The following Saturday after the first group's meeting, four taxi vehicles arrived at the main gate to the farm.

The elders in the group walked from the main gate and approached Elmer to request permission to ascend to the top of the rock to investigate the situation as relayed by the earlier group's visit.

"Thank you for respecting my kingship on the farm." Elmer was very appreciative of the way the group respected him and said: *"You may go to the top of the rock."*

Most of the people were elderly and some spent up to an hour to reach the top. They followed the same ritual as the group on the previous Sunday.

Elmer and others jeeringly said: *"We hope the rain would not fall on these people."*

But before the whole group of elderly could reach the bottom of the rock, it started to rain.

Around 68-millimetres of rain was measured that day.

This created a big turmoil amongst the community and many perceived Elmer and his family with holy respect. Even the farm workers maintained silence at that time.

No further rain came down in the week following the Saturday-event.

...

Around two weeks later, the first group and added people arrived in two busses.

'This must be an important event playing off here,' Elmer thought to himself. 'I need to be utterly cautious specifically with my spiritual experiences with Thandi in mind.'

"We are back to visit the ancestors. Can you show us to the ancient gravesites?" the leaders asked.

"Sure. If you would follow me, I will take you there." Elmer turned and led the leaders of the group to the gravesites. The rest of the group remained behind.

Elmer realised that he was facing a much more intense spiritual situation this time around than just ordinary events.

...

The Black tradition requires that a visitor to gravesites should "hook" a spirit.

Elmer offered: *"Here is a tree branch for the eldest amongst you to "hook" the spirits to take them up the rock."*

The leader of the group accepted the branch and "hooked" spirits at the gravesites. The group then rejoined the rest of the entourage before they started ascending to the top of the rock. Once there, the group began to sing, dance, pray and follow other traditional motions.

It was a big event and as it would be, it started to rain heavily to such an extent that streams of water flowed around the buildings on the lodge.

No-one could deny the fact that something holy was evident. Even the Black people were shocked and realised that the rainmaker's rock is a very holy place in their tradition.

...

Sometime later, another professor from the University of Pretoria visited the area to speak on global warming and the contribution of the mopani trees to global warming.

"I am of the opinion that the mopani trees contributes to global warming. The veld must be returned to its previous savanna state." The professor concluded his address.

"We beg to differ, professor," one of the attendees argued. *"As farmers we can see where more mopanis grow, the cooler the environment is. And besides, the animals are in a better condition of health when there are more mopanis to feed from."*

...

After the conference concluded, Elmer approached the leading professor on global warming and the processes as relayed by Prof Huffman on the rainmaking processes. *"You may be sceptical of what I am about to tell you and think I lost my marbles."*

"On the contrary, Mr Uys," the professor said. "I am busy at this stage writing a book on the subject matter of rainmaking; do tell me more of what you know."

Elmer relayed what he knew about the matter to the academic.

The professor was extremely interested in the complete process and said: *"I believe the sound and frequency of the drumbeats would cause a dampening effect on the granite rocks. The rainmaking process is not only a spiritual process but could be explained scientifically."*

...

Elmer wanted to see whether he could also replicate the rainmaking process.

He invited a friend: *"Come with me, Jan. We can drive up the rock to the top and beat on a drum to a rhythm in a sort of code. The resonance of the drumbeats should do the thing."*

The sky was clear when they drove up; they prayed and meditated for around an hour with their eyes closed.

After an hour's rituals, there was a mist surrounding the rock with seemingly weak lightning towards the edges.

The two *white men* considered the possibility that they may be able to also *make rain*.

32.

The general

Another foreign woman, this time from Switzerland, Emilia, was visiting Klein Bolayi.

She showed: *"I have been around the world helping lost spirits to go into the afterlife. I see these spirits and the portals through which they must pass into the afterlife. I would love to see your portal on top of the rock. Can we go there at nightfall?"*

"That is possible," Elmer said. *"We can go after nightfall."*

...

Elmer was escorting his family and the foreign visitor up the rock that evening. The group of six people were chatting away and started the ascent to the top to enjoy the view.

About 50 paces from ground level, Elmer and Emilia simultaneously saw three blue lights descending from the top. When the lights were closer, Elmer and Emilia could recognise a bold, militaristic-looking spirit, as leader. He was escorted by two other equal impressive-looking male spirits.

The three spirits did not step out of the way but halted in front of Elmer and Emelia.

'Nda,' Elmer greeted telepathically, in Tshivenda.

The lead spirit at once responded by saying 'Nda'.

'Who are you? And what are you doing on the rock?' Elmer demanded from the spirits.

'I am Mosimo, the general in the army of the Monomotapa Empire. These are my lieutenants. Who are you?' the spirit militaristic responded.

'I am Elmer, owner and king of this farm,' Elmer said.

'My apologies, my lord,' Mosimo bowed, and continued.

'I did not recognise you immediately. I am at your service.'

'Why are you patrolling the rock?' Elmer wanted to know.

'We are in service of Shevha, the rain queen. We have been instructed by Thandi to carry messages from the queen to you. Thandi would select certain messages she wished you to hear from me and tell them so I would be able to communicate with you,' Mosimo said. *'We were also instructed to convey instructions from you, especially concerning escorting lost spirits into the afterlife, back to the spirits.'*

'I will keep that in mind, Mosimo,' Elmer said. *'But first my guest would like to see the portal into the afterlife. She says she must help some lost spirits, who sought her help, into the afterlife.'*

'You are welcome to proceed to the top,' Mosimo said, and he and the other two stepped aside.

"Let's go," said Elmer to his group.

"Interesting the way that the general gave recognition and honour to you once you indicated who you are," Emelia said while striding next to Elmer.

"Oh, did you hear him?" Elmer asked.

"I did not only hear him but saw and understood him. The three of them presented quite impressively," Emelia said.

The group reached the top of the rock and started peering over the horizon of the rock into the dark distance.

"Look! There are blue lights," Emelia said in awe. "There must be a portal on that spot."

"Those are all spirits manifesting as blue lights in the veld. They all need to cross into the afterlife." Elmer said.

"Could you take me to that portal tomorrow?" Emelia asked excitedly.

"Sure, we can visit the portal. It is just behind the water well," Elmer agreed.

With that, the group wrapped their visit to the top of the rock, descended and went home.

33.

Berimba graves

Elmer was one day busy deforesting the vegetation and trees for a new road going North from the rock plate, on which the *big octopus* and the *small bonsai* baobab trees are found, to Krügerkop.

While he was working alone, he had another intense experience like the one he had with Thandi.

Exiting his vehicle, he was drawn to a specific place near a baobab tree in the *veld*.

He saw a "*malilo*"^{lvi} and in the baobab tree above, an owl was looking down at Elmer.

The owl said telepathic to Elmer: "*Look behind you. There are my graves.*"

When Elmer turned around, the owl raised from the one branch and flew to another branch on the other side of the tree.

Elmer walked around to the same side as the owl but did not see anything at that moment.

Elmer turned back in the direction which the owl showed the graves were.

"What are those stones doing packed together under that bush?" Elmer raised his surprise when he saw stones packed neatly.

Elmer walked closer to the stones. They looked like those placed to mark graves. It seemed to be two graves side by side.

"I will get a labourer to clear the site and make it worthy to pay respect to the deceased. I must put up signage to mark the spot for visitors to easily identify when they do their walk-arounds."

...

Following the discovery of the graves, he had another episode where he just heard, *"follow me!"*

Elmer experienced the same communication as with Thandi, but at first, he did not know who was speaking to him – all he knew he had to follow *"them"*.

Elmer got into his vehicle.

'Go to Leopard Rock. I will show you the specific spot,' Elmer telepathic heard a male voice instructing him.

When he arrived at the directed spot at Leopard Rock, Elmer turned off his Jeep's engine and climbed out.

"Go to the baobab tree you see right in front of you," The voice commanded.

Upon arrival at this baobab tree, Elmer saw that the tree was hollowed facing South in the direction of Leopard

Rock. *"Strange, I have never seen this baobab hollowed as I see it now."*

At that very moment, the entity communicated with Elmer telepathic. *'I am Berimba, the royal musician of the Modjadji.'*

Elmer was unfamiliar with the name and walked back to his Jeep to get a pen to write down the name. As he could not find a pen, he wrote the word with his finger in the dust on the dashboard of the Jeep.

At first, Elmer stood around since he had a similar experience with Thandi, but he was not spoken to again at that stage. *"I do not understand the significance of this Berimba bringing me here. What was his purpose? And why did he bring me to a hollowed baobab tree trunk?"*

In the absence of any answers, Elmer eventually got back in his vehicle and drove home.

...

He researched the word "Berimba" but could find any definition/explanation of the word "Berimba" on the internet.

Elmer "rolled" the word "berimba" over and over in his mind. *'Surely, there must be an explanation for this word,'* Elmer thought.

Later it came to Elmer that there was a similarity with the "berimbau", which is a one string musical

instrument being used to make music for the king or queen.

When he typed "berimbau" on his cell phone while surfing the internet, he found his answers. *"The berimbau (Portuguese pronunciation: [berĩˈbaw]) is a single-string percussion instrument, a musical bow, originally from Africa, which is now commonly used in Brazil."*

...

Elmer returned to the spot where he communicated with the entity, Berimba, the following day.

Along the way he stopped to drop William, one of his labourers, off at the gravesite he discovered the previous day: *"Come with me that I can show you where to clear the site."*

Elmer took William to the gravesite and said: *"Do you see those stones packed together under these bushes?"* Elmer asked while pointing to the stones he had in mind.

"Yes, Boss," William replied.

"Do not disturb the stones. You must leave them as they are lying there. But you must clear all the bushes and grass around these stones. Ten paces in all directions. When I came back, I will show you what to do next." And with that, Elmer turned around and boarded his Jeep.

Upon arrival at the hollowed baobab tree, Elmer again found the entity.

"Nda," Elmer greeted. "Tell me the reason you brought me here."

The entity indicated: *'I am the one who made music for the reigning queen.'*

Berimba showed Elmer the hollowed baobab tree: *'The tree formed an amplifier directing the musical sound directly to Leopard Rock where the queen was. I could play normal and sing softly, but with this tree, the queen heard the music as if I was standing next to her.'*

The hollowed tree only then made sense to Elmer as he realised that the tree served as a "speaker" or "amplifier" for the music.

'I would get up early in the morning, at daybreak, to play my musical instrument and sing to entertain the queen. She loved to rise in the morning from her night's rest with the music and my singing. Her favourite song was Nda Wana.

"But now I see that the purity of the music is being influenced by trees and grass," Berimba said. "I am going to ask you a big favour – would you mind clearing the area in a straight line from this baobab tree to Leopard Rock?"

"It is no longer in my ability to clear the site. I am an old man now and cannot do the physical work," he chuckled.

...

A week later the whole area around Leopard Rock was abuzz and the sounds of heavy machinery had all the animals in that region alert.

Elmer hired heavy equipment to clear the area.

In a brief period, the area was cleared of trees and vegetation to again have an open channel to the rock.

...

After clearing the Berimba sound area, Elmer and William visited the part where William cleared the graves which Elmer was led to.

"You did a great job, William," Elmer praised his labourer.

"It was easy, Boss," William said. "What are these stones for?"

"These are gravestones of the old people who lived here many years ago," Elmer said.

"No way," William said amazed. "Who were these people?"

"The ones buried here are the last Berimba and his ancestors. They entertained the Modjadji every day until a very fateful day when the Monomotapa Empire ceased to exist," Elmer responded.

"What happened to that empire?" William asked.

"I do not know at present. The ancestors will have to tell us what happened to them," Elmer answered.

Elmer walked around the gravestones several times and thought to himself that he should restore some dignity to these passed away people. *"I am going to name these graves the Berimba graves in honour of the musicians for*

their role in the community at that time. We need to make signage to indicate the location and name of the graves for tourists when they visit."

34.

Octopus versus bonsai baobab tree

A group of environmentalists came to the farm to study the grouping of the baobab trees in the region of Klein Bolayi and Evelyn.

"Mr Uys, we studied satellite imagery of the area and saw an interesting concentration of baobab trees," the leader of the group said. "Would you allow us to do some studies on the ground?"

"Sure," Elmer said. "But are you aware that we have a television star on the farm?"

"No," the puzzled response came.

"Yes, this star had been on television on three different occasions in the past," Elmer said with a smile. " But let me relieve you of your mystery.

"Despite the nearly 200 baobab trees on the farm and surroundings, we have the octopus baobab tree which is the second largest baobab tree on this farm, and the bonsai baobab tree which is the smallest. Both grow on the same rock plate.

"The bonsai baobab tree already had three television exposures over the recent past. It was only in probably the last 60 odd years that a dam was built on the rock plate, but the tree originally started growing on the rock face with very little water at its disposal.

"In a former Afrikaans television programme, known as "50/50", the late professor Kristo Pienaar, a well-known botanist, environmentalist, and king of gardening, drew the attention of the viewers to this small tree.

"Tests to figure out the age of this bonsai tree proved that the tree is of the same age as the surrounding "big" baobab trees.

"The tree's size may have been influenced by its location on the rock plate and when it produced leaves during summer, the game roaming in the region ate its growth and thereby also limiting its stature. The height of the bonsai baobab tree is around 30 centimetres.

"In complete contrast to this bonsai baobab tree, is the octopus baobab tree, standing far above most of the other "normal" baobab trees in the area. Its branches remind one of an octopus, therefore the name.

"This tree also stands on the same rock as the bonsai tree but has its roots wandering off approximately one kilometre to find nutrition and water. I don't need to tell you that it is not uncommon for baobab trees to have their roots wandering as far off as three to four kilometres to find nutrition and water. The octopus baobab tree measures around 20 metres in height.

"The value of contrast between the two trees may also have a spiritual significance. The Trinity Almighty God, in their wisdom, have created man and gave them talents, mental and physical abilities, to live their lives. Some people, those who see beyond the obvious, go ahead and use what they have and multiply their talents, whilst others, those seeing only their immediate circumstances, would cry foul and bemoan to all around them how they drew the short stick in life.

"Life has the same routes. One can say that some people's lives are like the bonsai tree: it flourishes under all the attention of visitors and the photographs taken but stays small and has no ambition of becoming big and strong. It feels sorry for itself because of all the hardship and that it grows on this big rock; sort of "I am the victim here". The bonsai baobab tree has clamped its roots around the rock, claiming to be "anchoring and carrying" the rock.

"Meanwhile, other people would say: "I am like the octopus tree. I go out and seek the opportunities by growing, flowering, and bearing fruit" in contrast to the bonsai tree which has probably never flowered or borne fruit.

"People over the ages have all been in one of the two camps – some content with the environment where they started off but keep on complaining of all the challenges life has brought them. Meanwhile others, having the same starting point, go ahead and concur their circumstances and triumph in life."

"Whoa, I never thought of life the way you describe it," said one of other members of the group.

"I think we need to see this for ourselves before we go to the bigger task at hand," said the leader of the group. "We want to record all details of the trees we can find."

"Maybe another thing or two you may want to take note of," Elmer said.

"What would that be?" the leader enquired.

"Around 1 500 years ago people started living here on the farm and were around for 450 years before they departed," Elmer said. "I suspect the concentration of baobab trees is the result of those people dropping seeds of the baobab tree just where they were and then the seeds sprouted to become the trees we see today."

"That is one theory which we may consider," came the answer. "Is there something else we need to take note of?"

"Not much," said Elmer. "We only have other trees with unique features such as "grandpa's pipe" named due to its shape looking like a smoke pipe from the side. And then just the normal vandalism where people scratched their names and dates of their visits on the trees closer to the road going past the farm. But let me get you booked in, and then I will take you to the bonsai baobab tree."

35.

Zimbodza

During June 2022, Elmer *received* another message from the *other side* while dreaming, telling him that the process needs to be done progressively, step-by-step.

Thandi said: *'The first step is to unite the Mapungubwe area which stretches across the borders of the three countries, namely Botswana, South Africa, and Zimbabwe.*

'The Mapungubwe dream, the unification of the three areas, must be named "Zimbodza". The meaning in the Shona language is "something, for example some fruit, which must still ripen" like an orange on a tree which has not yet ripened. "Zimbodza" also points to an abbreviation of the three countries involved: "Zim" for Zimbabwe, "Bod" for Botswana," and it is interesting that a "d" is used instead of a "t" but that is intentionally to justify the meaning of the word) "and "Za" for South Africa.'

She continued: *'An agreement must be put in place between the three countries to activate the dream. It will be a formal step to unify the three countries and where the borderline comes down.*

'Once that has happened, the "Zimbodza Agreement" will automatically lure the other five countries involved to join the agreement and drop their borderlines. The agreement still needs to be drafted/written, but it will be an unbelievable document.

'The ripening process of the fruit also points to the initial steps which will be followed and only when the other countries have joined will this fruit be ripe.'

'But how will this process unfold and when must it happen?'
asked Elmer.

'You will know. The right people will step forward at the right time,' Thandi said, and with that the dream ended.

Elmer woke up, and wondered: *"How will this whole puzzle be built? I cannot do it all alone. Anyway, I have other tasks as my daily tasks here on the farm. The agreement will just have to wait and then we can see what should happen next."*

36.

The Big Question

Elmer sat on the stoep of the main house, drinking coffee. He was relaxing with his family after a hard day's work.

The events of the past couple of years up to 2022 must be reviewed.

Unexpectedly he was confronted with the thought of what his role in the Monomotapa restoration is. The big questions milling in Elmer's mind are: *'Did the people of Monomotapa lose their roots?*

'Would the answer lie within the affected people of the eight areas involved in the Monomotapa, namely Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, and Zambia/ Zimbabwe?

'Most of the said Black people were influenced by the Western lifestyle which colonialism brought. A strong presence by the Portuguese, and to a lesser extent the Dutch and English, played a significant role in the Black people moving slowly away from their cultural roots and traditions. With that, the

Black people lost their history and mainly lived under the European influences.

'If the words of the spirit of Thandi is to be believed that "tell my people to go back to their roots", a significant mind shift must be invoked amongst the Black tribes. The matriarchism way of reigning over the people must be restored. That is where the Modjadji is queen over her people, with headsmen/advisors being the "mediators" between the queen and the people.

'The building of a palace for the Monomotapa Empire on the farm Dongola for the queen, and residences for the headsmen to advise her continually, would be the start of the process of restoring the Monomotapa Empire.

'However, to achieve this project, a crusher or quarry must be opened to provide stone (as part of the concrete mix) to construct the infrastructure.

'A dam must then be built to provide water to the mining activities which will start with the restoration of the Monomotapa.

'These latter steps are essential to the process as a kingdom is built from the bottom up (finding stone for development, opening mines, and building a palace) to prove the importance with which the rulers perceive their subjects.

'This seems to stand in stark contrast with the view of the Arab people infiltrating the Venda community by first building/setting up the palace (the "me first" ideology) and

then the rest will follow for the people (local people as an afterthought seemingly).

'There are two areas to play a key role in the restoration of the Monomotapa. The first area is the Dongola area where around 400 hectares of land are to be purchased to build a palace and the headsmen residences.

'The second area is the area currently consisting of the farm Klein Bolayi around 700 hectares and the "proefplaas", an experimental farm in State-ownership, of around 8 000 hectares which must be combined.

'On this land, the city of Maulwe will arise with each of the eight countries having a cultural village specific to the relevant country, but which would also have the modern facilities to attract tourism to each village. The tourists could then enjoy each country's culture without direct contact with the surrounding cultural villages.

'Since the "spider" forms the structure of this community, the "body" will be the "assembly point" or administrative centre where visitors will start their adventures, and the visitors could then choose which culture they would like to experience.

'The future of the Monomotapa people is in their own hands and how they will have to manage that part to the benefit from, all will depend on the participation and attitude of the people. No-one outside of the Monomotapa circle can help or

prescribe how the activities should take place – that would be the choice of the Monomotapa people.

'That would bring the message "tell my people to come back to their roots" to a conclusion.'

37.

Bridging the history gap

'Do the people belonging to the Monomotapa culture have the ability and willingness to look for their "lost history" and bridge the gap between the 10th and the 21st century? Are the people "strong" enough to revive their cultural history and embrace their "lost roots"?' came to Elmer as he was rethinking the task entrusted to him.

'It can only be possible if strong leaders step forward to take on the tasks at hand.

'The matriarchy of Modjadji needs to be restored and along with her advisors they must again take control of their heritage.

'Each of the eight groups must revitalise its culture and live as intended by their ancestors. Influences and over-lapping with other neighbouring cultures are inevitable.

'As Africans, they need to go back to THEIR ROOTS to reignite their proud African Cultural Heritage and awake their AFRICAN CONSCIOUSNESS, on the values that lie at the heart of their spirituality. They need to imprint this Character in their Youth and Children.'

38.

Moving into the 21st century

Elmer considered several ideas and ideologies about the Monomotapa people stepping into the 21st century. He thought: *'No pressure is placed on the affected people to live as their ancestors.*

'Modern cultures and practices, think of the internet as one, have influenced every culture across the world, but each culture can embrace its past by living in the present, their roots anchored in their own culture/habits.

'Space must be given to diverse cultures to live their lives as they inherited them. That goes for all races, and not only one specific group. The traditions of these cultures need to be respected, but those need to be kept aside from other cultures and traditions.

'Each people must be afforded the time and opportunity to develop, practice and live their culture.

'Surely, cross-influences will occur, but if each people are proud of their history, so will be the next.

'The eagerness to reach into the future and develop oneself, must happen at the pace which is acceptable for that specific culture or people.

'The element of jealousy or envy must be taken out of the equation.

'God did not create all humankind with the same abilities, talents, power, or intellect. He made humans different in colour, gender, language, belief, etc. and who is man to question his or her Creator?

'Once the "penny dropped", the people in Southern Africa, and a lead example to the world, will realise there is space for everyone in the sun.

'However, one cannot live in the future or in the past; only in the "now" (present).'

The end

39.

Endnotes

These endnotes endeavour to give some explanations where needed in my opinion. Every reader may not be familiar with terminology used in the text and would want to understand these words in context.

Names were used to describe the character of the person, as many of them became leaders.

ⁱ Monomotapa = "Ravager of the lands" or "Spider".

ⁱⁱ Limpopo = "strong gushing waterfalls".

ⁱⁱⁱ Zambezi = "Great River".

^{iv} Klein Bolayi = "small magicians".

^v Zimbabwe = "stone houses".

^{vi} Modjadji = "Rain Queen".

^{vii} Azwianewi = "Unspeakable" or "Something that cannot be told".

^{viii} Livhu = "Thankful" or "Grateful".

^{ix} Mashudu = "Luck".

^x Thilivhali = "One who does not forget".

^{xi} Mulalo = "Peace".

^{xii} Khathu = "Forgiveness".

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- xiii Zwanga = "Mine or that which belongs to me".
- xiv Maulwe = "great city of the python god".
- xv Sediba = water well.
- xvi Thandi = "Beloved One" or "Beautiful".
- xvii Shevha = "Mankind" or "Great Lover" or "Optimistic".
- xviii Berimba = "versatility, enthusiasm, agility and unconventional methods".
- xix The average temperature on the inside of the tree is 18°C during summer and winter, making it ideal for the storage of food. The outside temperature during summer is between 35 and 45°C during the day and between 20 and 25°C at night, whilst during winter the day temperature is between 25 and 30°C and at night between 12 and 18°C.
- xx Nduvho = "Praise".
- xxi *Nda Wana* told the story of small children playing by the river, enjoying so much that they didn't want to go and sleep.
- xxii Ngaka = "spiritual priest".
- xxiii Sofala = "go and cultivate".
- xxiv The staircase on the Eastern side of the rock symbolises the road one had to walk through life – the path was very difficult and steep, and sometimes some of the travellers fall off. They tumbled to the ground, and that is when the serpent man caught and swallowed those poor people. The serpent man also indicates to the devil.
- xxv Akonaho = "Be prosperous, Grow up".
- xxvi Busi = "Blessed one".

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- xxvii Takalani = "Happiness".
- xxviii Tshilidzi = "To be blessed".
- xxix Matimba = "Power or strength".
- xxx Alu = "Be prosperous".
- xxxi Humbelani = "Ask".
- xxxii Thikhathali = "One who does not worry".
- xxxiii Musimo or Masimo = "Great"
- xxxiv Mapungubwe = "hill of the jackal".
- xxxv *Biltong* is spiced dried meat cut in strips around 6 centimetres wide, and 3 centimetres thick whilst the length will depend on the cut of meat. It is also a delicacy. It is said that *biltong* should not be confused with *jerky*. *Biltong* is the superior.
- xxxvi Luke 4: 4, New King James Version of the Bible.
- xxxvii *Klein Bolayi* forms a part of the farm *Evelyn*.
- xxxviii *Zuid-Afrikaansche Republic* (ZAR) = one of two independent Boer states annexed by the British in the Second Anglo-Boer War and incorporated under the Union of South Africa to become known as Transvaal, one of four provinces in the Union.
- xxxix "*Volksraad*" was the assembly of the representatives of the nation or the Parliament of the ZAR.
- xl 6 000 acres = $\pm 2\,428$ hectares or 24,281 km².
- xli "*Oubaas*" is a form of address for an older man.
- xlvi "*phuthu pap*" is a traditional ground maize meal dish. It has a crumbly structure and is enjoyed in a variety of ways.

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- ^{xliii} "*Witwatersrand*" is a 56-kilometre-long, North-facing scarp in South Africa, from Johannesburg in the East to Krugersdorp in the West.
- ^{xliiv} "*Oom Paul*" was the affectionate name burghers of the ZAR liked to call the president. He was a man from the people for the people. He always had their best interests at heart.
- ^{xlv} *Raadsaal* (or Council Hall) was the Parliamentary building of the ZAR located on Church Square.
- ^{xlvi} *Volksraadslede* = members of the ZAR Parliament.
- ^{xlvii} Delagoa Bay, later known as Lourenço Marques before becoming Maputo in Mozambique.
- ^{xlviii} Pietersburg is currently Polokwane, the capital city of the Limpopo Province.
- ^{xlix} Salisbury (now Harare), the capital of the then South Rhodesia (currently Zimbabwe).
- ¹ "Church Square" so named after the area where a church once stood to the Northern side of the Raadsaal.
- ^{li} "gôgô" = a black grandma.
- ^{lii} "mutapa" = "Monomotapa".
- ^{liii} "*Krüngers*" refers to the Krüger millions that had been missing since President Krüger's demise.
- ^{liv} "koppie" = "small hill".
- ^{lv} "proefplaas" = "experimental farm".
- ^{lvi} "malilo" = Venda for 'fire being radiated by a spirit'