



Eland Dance, PHOTO Anja Budischewski

Elisabet Jansson, member of BOTSFA since October 2012, has strong links with the Naro San in Botswana

– My interest in Africa was grounded as a 10 years old girl when my father returned from his first trip to Tanzania. His stories about this very distant country and the people he had met, in addition to the strange things he had brought as gifts opened my eyes to another reality than I was used to. It took nearly 20 years before my first trip to Africa came true. Together with my former husband, I spent my honeymoon in 1979 in Tanzania visiting friends working there and travelling on our own. I was enchanted.



Vaisaluokta 1968

As many other people in Sweden I got involved in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. My youngest brother, Anders, worked as a volunteer in Cape Town in the early eighties and I had many friends who travelled, worked and created relationships with South Africa. 2005, when Anders, together with his family, moved to Bloemfontein sent by the Church of Sweden the time had come for my first visit to South Africa. In Bloemfontein I met my first Motswana friend, Thandi, living in South Africa and working with her company from there and in Botswana and Zimbabwe.

Why Botswana?

I think I have followed three »spoor« – tracks in my life, all leading to Botswana:

THE FIRST SPOOR is my interest in indigenous people. I spent my teenage years in the sixties in »Sápmi«, i.e. Lapland, and became strongly moved by the alienation of the Sami people and their way of living. For example I noticed that the youths had to stay in boarding schools during the terms. My father worked as a pastor and we often went together with him visiting the Sami people in their homes. We also travelled in the mountains and

stayed with them in their temporary settlements during the summer. So my first stay in a hut was not in Africa, it was in the Lapland cots.

The second spoor is my interest in nature and the origin of man. My mother appreciated living near nature and spent a lot of time with non-profit work as a scout leader. I and my three brothers often joined her in the forests and mountains no matter the season. She shared her great knowledge about plants and animals with us and my interest for biology was grounded. I graduated in 1976 and worked five years as a biologist. In the end of the nighties I got the opportunity to study more biology. Then I got deeper in the biology of human beings and I also graduated with a Master's in Education. The origin of man is a subject that has fascinated me and when several research works pointed out that we can find our roots in Africa, I got a new piece to my puzzle.

THE THIRD SPOOR leads back to my childhood. I loved the circle dance round the Christmas trees and the maypoles. Dancing together in chains and circles has been an important part of my life. Of course I also participated in couple dancing and appreciated that, but the common dance, where everyone could participate was outstanding. Since twenty years ago I am a professional leader of circle dance and healing dance. I have spent a lot of time studying the History of Dance. It was not a surprise to discover that the dance began – in Africa!

In 2005 was the release of the book »Gryning över Kalahari« by Lasse Berg. I had been visiting South Africa in January and therefore I immediately bought the book and started to read. I was continuously fascinated. However I realized, as a scientist, that I had to take this with »a pinch of salt« during the reading. I don't think that you can be so sure when it is about theories, but I agree that the origin of man has a lot to do with dancing together, to move in the same rhythm and to make sounds with your voice in the same rhythm. I have read other research works about this later.

The three spoors led me to Kalahari and the Bushmen

In 2010 Anders, my brother, presented his doctoral thesis at the university in Bloemfontein. Our old father funded the trip for me and my brothers to South Africa, thanks to him. This was a chance for me to extend my trip to Botswana. But where in this big country could I find the Bushmen? It was not easy to find any information about that. I spent many hours with my computer and finally I came across information about a small farm, owned and run by Bushmen in western Botswana as an eco-tourism project: Dqae Qare San Lodge (DQ). The connection by internet and phone was a challenge but, two weeks before

my departure from Sweden, I got a confirmation of my booking at DQ.

After a wonderful week with my relatives and friends in Bloemfontein I went by air from Johannesburg to Gaborone, where I had booked a B&B just south of the city. I spent two days in Gaborone, making preparation for my tour to the Ghanzi District. Early one morning I went by bus to Ghanzi. The bus ride took eight hours and was a wonderful experience in the company of very kind people. And no delay (like SJ in Sweden ...), everything worked fine. I spent three delightful days at DQ, relaxed, rested and joined some activities like a bush walk and craft making together with my new, bushmen friends Dinah and Komtsha.



Elisabet with Komtsha and Dinah

The highlight was the healing dance the last evening. I had been very clear that my expectations were not to join a one hour performance but to take part in the healing. So they arranged the dance, which I paid for, away from the other guests and I was the only tourist. The light from the full moon, in the warm African night and the Bushmen singing, clapping and dancing in a circle in the sand round the fire, made this a magic night. I felt a warm welcome and a strong intention of sharing and being included.

In 2012 I arranged a tour to Botswana for people interested in the culture of the Bushmen and the origin of dance. We were 9 women who travelled from Sweden in the end of July and spent up to one month in Botswana. The group met in Gaborone for acclimatization and sightseeing. We were welcomed as »the Swedish delegation« at the Seabelo House by the manager Kenneth Seabelo Tlhaselo. He met us at the bus rank early in the morning and showed us the seats allocated for our trip in his bus. We were in the company of locals travelling to Ghanzi. At DQ we stayed at a beautiful campsite. First we joined the Kuru Dance festival. Thandi from Bloemfontein surprised me by coming the whole way to join the festival for the first time. She had been very envious of me for having met Bushmen in 2010!



Nero San, Kuru Dance Festival 2012, PHOTO Anja Budischewski

We spent several days at DQ and experienced the Naro San healing dance and also visited D'Kar with the Museum and Kuru Art Project. After that we travelled to Tsodilo Hills and the Okavango Panhandle. Most in the group felt that Kalahari is highly addictive!

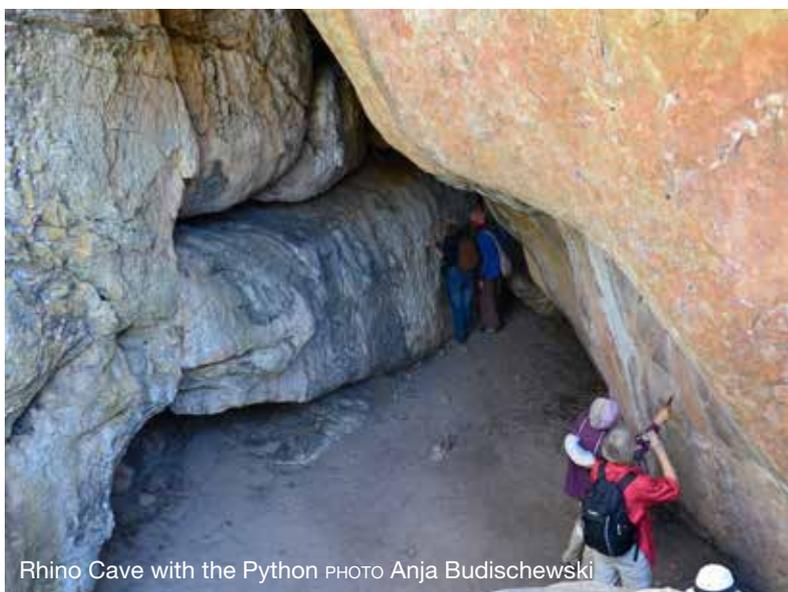
In September 2013 I made a shorter tour in Botswana together with relatives and friends as a review for future cooperation with the Swedish Tour operator »Afrikaresor«. We visited Moremi Game Reserve and Tsodilo Hills, a trip arranged together with Ultimate Africa Safaris Botswana. Of course we visited DQ; I had been longing for the reunion with Dinah, Komtsha and other friends there.

The first people in the world

One group of Bushmen in Botswana used to call themselves »The first people of the Kalahari«. A recent research work with several researches from Sweden has verified that the Bushmen in southern Africa are the oldest people in the world. Their branch at the human tree of evolution separated from the part of the tree consisted of the ancestors to all other human beings in the world for 100.000 years ago. The majority of the Bushmen in southern Africa live in Botswana. I hope that the government of Botswana and its President, Ian Khama, will one day recognize their great knowledge about a sustainable development and their deep wisdom of life and give them their land rights back.

The Kuru Development Trust (KDT)

KDT was registered in 1989 with the intention of assisting marginalised communities in southern Africa, particularly the San residing on the Church-owned freehold farm of D'kar in the Ghanzi District of Botswana, to gain control over their social and economic lives. Some 2000 people reside in D'Kar, mainly Naro San. D'Kar is one of the most marginalised communities in Botswana facing huge problems of unemployment and poverty. As a freehold farm, D'Kar does not receive government services, such as



Rhino Cave with the Python PHOTO Anja Budischewski

water or sanitation. Dqae Qare San Lodge was purchased in 1993. KDT also runs Kuru Art. Their most famous artist is Dada (1934–2008). Ann Gollifer, one of the authors of the book on Dada, visited Sweden 2012 and made a presentation to BOTSFA.

Is there anything we can do for you?

When I ask the Naro San this, the answer is: Tell your family, your friends and the world about us and our situation. Bring your friends to Botswana. I will continue with that.

In connection with my visit in September we asked the question above again and now we got the request to support the funding of the Kuru Water Project. This was a limited project with the purpose to complete the connection of water pipes to every home in D'Kar.

When I returned to D'Kar together with Ulla Odqvist in February 2014, Mangana Mangana, the project manager, gave us a fine guiding demonstrating on how the Water Project has proceeded. Now we are waiting for estimates for the completion of the project.

A greater project for the future will probably be about the installation of solar power at DQ. Hopefully, Debswana, the big diamond company, will be the main funder of that project.



Ulla and Mangana, D'Kar

Further reading at www.vilairorelse.nu

Articles, mainly in Swedish:

Gryning över Kalahari – ett möte med dansens ursprung
http://www.vilairorelse.nu/artiklar/Gryning_över_kalahari_2010.html

Bushfolket och transdansen (Publicerad i Flödet 2011/2)
http://www.vilairorelse.nu/artiklar/Bushfolket_och_transdansen.html

Bushfolkets historia
<http://www.vilairorelse.nu/artiklar/bushfolket.html>

Dansresa till Kalahariöknen i Botswana. Eva Norling och Elisabeth Jönsson skriver om Botswanaresan i augusti 2012 (Publicerad i Flödet 3/2012)
http://www.vilairorelse.nu/artiklar/Dansresa_2012.html

Photos from the 2012 trip, text in English
<http://www.vilairorelse.nu/gallery/>

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