



## IMAGES OF LOSS AND ABUNDANCE: A READING OF THE !KUN CHILDREN'S MATERIAL IN THE BLEEK AND LLOYD COLLECTION (1879–1881)

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### Introduction

On 15 September 1881 the teenage !kun boy !nanni sat at the drawing table in Charlton House in the Cape Town village of Mowbray. Next to him was the 44-year-old linguist and ethnographer, Lucy Lloyd. With pen and pencil in hand, the two of them focused on a small sheet of paper on which they were constructing a map of !nanni's home.

!nanni made symbols on the paper in small circles, dots and lines to represent the centre of the world he had been taken from – his 'Bushman country' and family home in what is now known as northern Namibia.<sup>1</sup> Lucy Lloyd also made marks on the paper while they talked, with corresponding annotations.

This 132-year-old map now lies in the archives of the National Library of South Africa, at the foot of the botanical gardens in Cape Town, where Lucy Lloyd once worked. It is a part of the Bleek and Lloyd Collection,<sup>2</sup> an archive of interviews, stories, drawings, paintings and photographs of and by !xam and !kun<sup>3</sup> individuals, collected by Wilhelm Bleek and Lucy Lloyd between 1870 and 1881 in Cape Town.<sup>4</sup>

Until very recently, the collection of 17 !kun notebooks, and more than 570 paintings and drawings, had been largely ignored and remained a silent partner to the larger, !xam part of the collection. Indeed, in a major exhibition and publication<sup>5</sup> it was declared that nothing is known about the boys and it was stated that 'there is no information on their families of origin, the conditions they had previously lived under, or the reasons why they ended up in custody' (Szalay 2002, 21). Pippa Skotnes's essay in *Claim to the*

*A pencil drawing by !nanni representing 'The Bushmen country' (Iziko\_D\_In007). It names !nanni's country to the east, the Makoba country to the north above the Shonongo (Okavango) River, the Berg Damara country to the north-west, a country of fruit trees, elephant country and the country of !nanni's maternal grandfather's people. The map indicates a number of pathways, roads and trading routes that were used by the different people in this place. All !kun drawings and paintings in this essay can be found in the Digital Bleek and Lloyd (2007) under the references given with each image.*

