

**The role of the International
Library of African Music (ILAM)
at Rhodes University in South
Africa in the archiving of
Khoesan performance heritage**

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Project title

Sounding Indigenous in South Africa: Music and Performance Heritage in
Khoesan Revival

Keywords

Indigenous music, South Africa, Participatory ethnographic research, Community archiving, Indigenous movements, Khoesan ("first people"), Cultural performance heritage, Cultural revival and conservation

Partners

- International Library of African Music (ILAM, Rhodes University, South Africa).
- Lyndsay Copeland (Carleton University, Canada).
- Sharon Gabie (Nelson Mandela University, Port Elizabeth, SA).
- James Mapanka (South African Nama Development Association – SANDEVA), Riemvasmaak, SA.

Research questions

- What is the role of the music archive in general, and what is the role of the music archive within the specificity of its geocultural space?
- How does one navigate the dominance of oral traditions and translate them into archivable possibilities?
- What past/s are there in contemporary Khoesan performance traditions?

Background

- Since 1994, there has been considerable effort to revive distinct indigenous cultural practices and, simultaneously, to galvanize a multi-cultural and multi-lingual “Khoesan” identity for political cause.
- This project supports the conservation, restoration, and mobilization of indigenous Khoesan musical knowledge. The project’s unique initiative is to collaboratively establish a digitized community archive of Khoisan heritage performances.
- The archive will be co-hosted by Khoesan communities and partner academic institutions (ILAM and IAS) and managed via their secure servers and digital archival software.
- One major output will be an open access digital archive of Khoesan performance heritage.

Context: Khoesan Revivalism and Opportunities for Music Performance Research

- The 1990s language, and culture, and strategies for managing endangered (in)tangible heritage. And the National Khoesan Council, led by Cecil Le Fleur, regularly lobbies the South African government for policy reform and implementation.
- The Council spearheaded the 2019 Traditional and Khoe-San Leadership Act, the first national legislation to recognize the status of Khoesan and their laws and customs.
- Indigenous communities today seek to rebuild “Khoesan” identity and restore heritage through several epistemological and decolonial moves, including the restoration of language, naming practices, dress, musical performance, dance, and plastic arts.
- Studies focus on Khoesan identity as revived and enabled through land claims, language education, traditional leadership (re)formation, and the public narration of Khoesan history.

Objectives: Recognize, Produce, and Reciprocate

ILAM holds no recordings of Khoesan performance heritage.

- To recognize, sustain, and promote the surviving performance heritage of indigenous people in South Africa who identify as Khoesan or the “first people”, to produce new knowledge about how people in South Africa construct and mobilize Khoesan identities through performance and musical expression, and to develop and test participatory research models in ethnomusicology that enact the ethical principle of reciprocity.

To address those objectives, a community-centered ethnographic investigation of Khoesan heritage performances within multiple communities across the Cape region of South Africa was initiated.

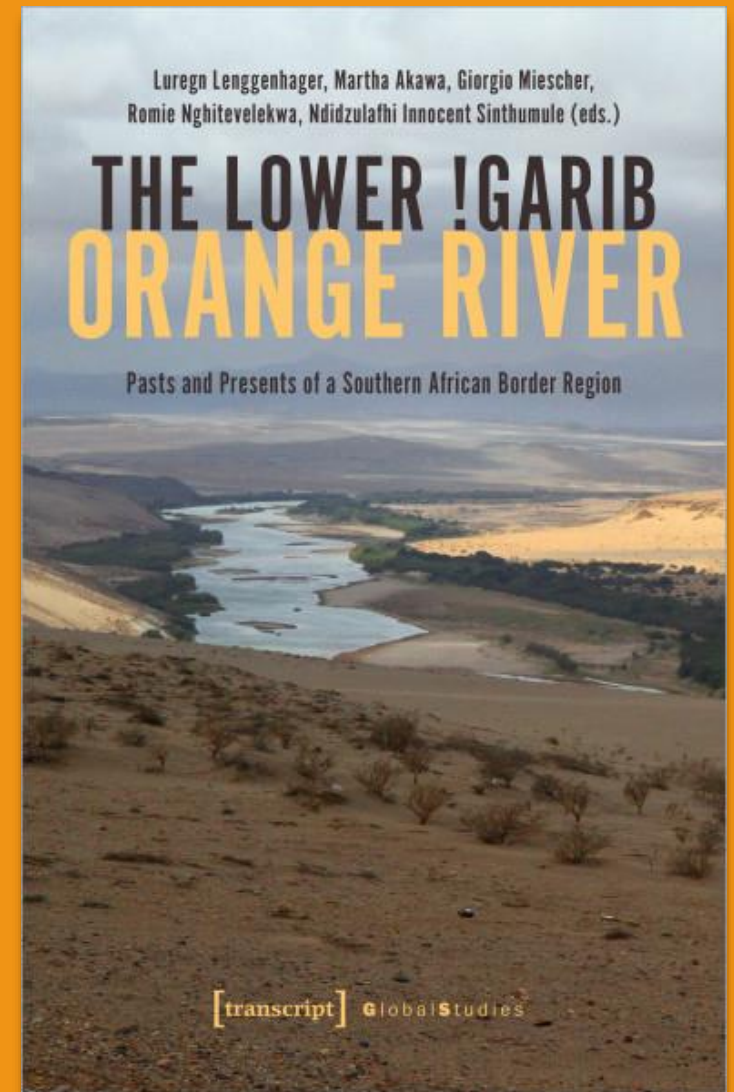
Methodology: Developing Participatory & Collaborative Models for Music Scholarship

- The research tests several decolonial methodologies and knowledge-sharing strategies in the humanities and social sciences, including participatory research design, digital and collaborative archiving, co-authorship, multi-lingual research communications, and multi-media outputs.
- This project's primary methodology is team ethnographic research.
- These participatory methods will test and develop ethical practices for indigenous music research.

Methodology: Developing Participatory & Collaborative Models for Music Scholarship

- These community archives will be collaboratively managed, and copies of archival data held by the communities and our partner organizations, Rhodes's ILAM and Carleton's IAS.
- Promote Khoesan Activism by Producing Recordings, Project Blog, and Open-Access Book.
- In Y2, the research team will support the promotion and circulation of indigenous knowledge by producing and exhibiting audio-visual recordings and research on the open-access project website, and by working toward a collaboratively authored book manuscript for open-access publication.

<https://www.transcript-verlag.de/978-3-8376-6639-7/the-lower-garib-orange-river/>



Benefits to Potential Target Audiences

- The target audience is the Khoesan communities of South Africa.
- The research team supports participants by offering recording equipment and technical guidance.
- We establish infrastructure for at least six community archives in communities with strong Khoesan cultural presence.
- Our efforts in community archiving develops the technical skills of all participants, including graduate students.

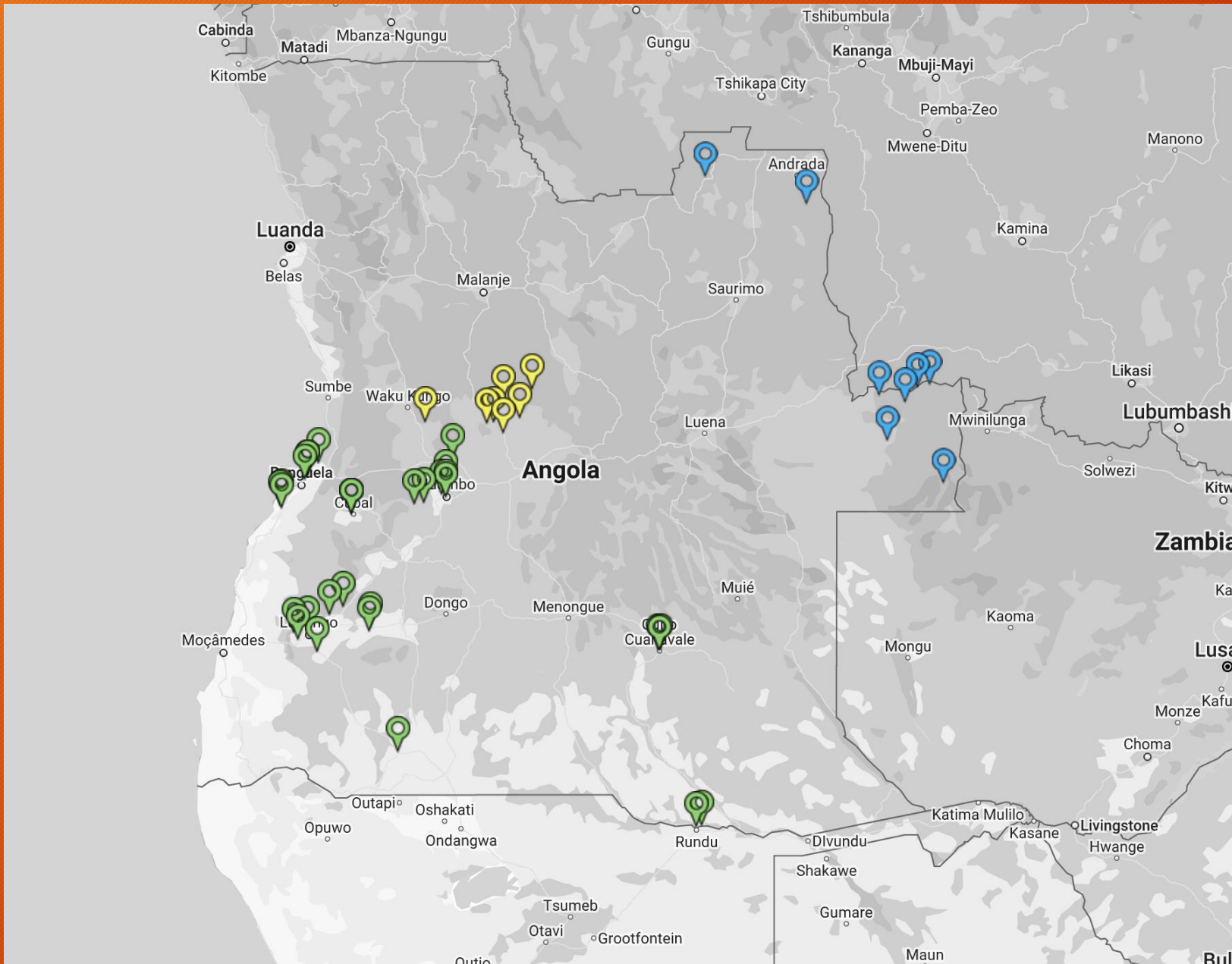
Benefits to Potential Target Audiences

- Khoesan collaborator such as Mr. James Mapanka identified the lack of public knowledge about Khoesan history, absence of collaboration between different Khoesan groups, and struggle to obtain legal indigenous status as pressing issues for their communities.
- This project's expected outcomes have the potential to address these and other issues by creating opportunity for intercommunity collaboration via participatory research (see Watkins et al 2021; Madiba 2021; Johnson 2012) and producing multi-media outputs for use by both Khoesan activists and academics.
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Contributions to Knowledge and Reciprocity with Khoesan Communities

- The outputs were conceived in consultation with the Co-Applicant and indigenous Collaborators Mapanka and Gabie.
- Our foremost outcome will be building relationships between Khoesan community representatives, indigenous culture bearers, local non-profit organizations, educational institutions, and academics.
- We are committed to conversing openly with Khoesan participants and thinking together how to design research activities that serve their interests.
- This project recognizes the importance of Khoesan musical and performance heritage to southern African culture and invites Khoisan-identifying musicians to record and archive their contemporary performances of heritage practices.

Ntsikaya project initiated by Victor Gama





Name of item/entry:	
Date:	Location:
Description:	Recording number(s):
	Consent form number(s):
Name of interviewee/performer:	Name of accompaniment:
Name of composition(s) performed:	Name of composer(s):
Interviewer:	Translator:
Videographer:	Photographer:
Audio recorder:	Other persons present:
Archive location:	Archival entry number:
Biographical information of interviewee/performer	
Gender:	Age:
Ethnicity/identity:	Language(s):
Other biographical information:	
Contact information of interviewee/performer	
Cell phone:	Email:
Home address:	Alternative contact:
Notes	



Challenges

- Distances
- Communication – different languages; mismatched competencies
- Managing resources - equipment
- Data management – from field card to metadata to access
- Cultural differences – of academic and non-academic worlds - notably speed

Challenges

- Finances – assumptions
- Amorphous – Khoesan community
- Participatory discrepancies
- Music style – instruments
- The notion of tradition, revivalism

Conclusion

- Participatory research emphasized.
- Participatory archival practices emphasized.
- Remove binary of inside and outside the archive/institution.
- Remove prejudice – all musics important while archive emphasizes only certain genres.



THANK YOU

