

The Music Returns to Kai-as (Seminar & Film Screening)

Sian Sullivan

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Sian Sullivan will present and discuss the film 'The music returns to Kai-as', part of the community project 'Future Pasts: Sustainabilities and cultural landscapes in West Namibia'.

The Music Returns to Kai-as' is an outcome of oral history research in a particular area of north-west Namibia. With Welhemina Suro Ganuses, recently appointed Councillor for the Namidaman Traditional Authority, Sian has worked mostly with families in a settlement called Sesfontein. They have formed a cultural group called the Hoanib Cultural Group, after the main ephemeral river that flows through the area in which they now live.

Photo shows: Hoanib Cultural Group at screening of 'The Music Returns to Kai-as' in Sesfontein, 26 December 2020. Photo by Fredrick ||Hawaxab

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m1fn3snEGeE>

Introduction

Camilla: We're really delighted to welcome back to radical anthropology Sian Sullivan. It's now Professor Sean Sullivan from Bath Spa University, professor of environment and culture is the her title combines in implies and topology geographer political ecology. So kind of wonderful kind of actual and Sean has three decades worth of field work with Namibian communities researching their connections documenting their connections to a memory in history of landscape and community and this has been vitally important work for those communities. She's been an expert witness to the ancestral land commissions for the Namibian government and I'm going to hand over to Sean who's hand.

The complex media here and she's going to be yeah talking to the room but also into the zoom camera, that would be fantastic if you want to just yeah just be so that you are visible there and you deal with yeah. Fantastic. Okay.

Seminar

Sian: Thanks very much Camilla, and it's really exciting for me to be here and thanks to you all for coming and thanks for everybody checking in vazoom. So mostly this evening, we're going to be screening a film that I've been involved with making called the music returns to Gaius, but I wanted to just give you a little bit of context for why this film was made so I'm going to show you a few slides. I hope that people

online can see the slides and I hope you can sort of see me and I'm gonna be kind of bouncing in and out here.

So there is some resources here that you can also look at after the screening if you want to so basically we made two versions of this film one is 52 minutes long and then we've made a shorter edit which is 30 minutes, which is the one that we're going to watch today. And there's a Blog as well that gives you some background to the film so you can also look at that.

It was made through a project that I've been involved with called future pasts.

It was funded by the ahrc, and basically it's Focus was on sustainability's or perceptions of sustainability and practices of sustainability and cultural landscapes and conservation landscapes in Northwest Namibia. Where as communist said, I've been working for some years now and as part of this project, I've been involved with a kind of cultural landscapes mapping initiative with local people that Just has become it's sort of.

Well, it's just become larger than I had could ever have anticipated basically following lots of threads about people's memories of places where they used to live in the past that they can't actually access now in the presence. So this is just I'm not sure how clear it is, but we've been basically putting all of this information on to a Google map.

So the information is generated through Journeys that we've been doing back into places that are now pretty much set aside as conservation areas.

Some of the very key sites in this process have been Graves. So one of the things that people have wanted to go back to is to Graves of known ancestors people who were buried in throughout this landscape in the past that this map just shows some of those Graves that we've been able to refined and map in the last few years.

This is a one of my the key people that I've been working with Ruben sanib at a grave of a relative of his that he told us about and about hadn't been able to visit for several decades and I should say that this area that we've been working in is about 500,000 Square hectare hectare. Sorry, so it's quite large and when back to this grave he, he he was able to basically find it almost immediately having not even been to this locality for several decades. So it's quite an amazing experience to refine this grave with him in the present.

As Camilla said some of this work has been part of a submission made by the namadama traditional Authority which is the traditional Authority. That's that in play in this area to namibia's recent Commission on ancestral land which was published. This huge report is about 700 pages long and it was published in 2020. So this was the report of the commission of inquiry into claims of ancestral land rights and restitution. It's quite unknown how much restitution might actually happen as an outcome of all of the submissions that were put into this report. But at least now there is a document that that names people's concerns about land that they lost in the past and creates includes some record of places that people considered they have some claim to And so that's sort of the recent layer of work that has is behind this film that I want to share

with you tonight, but I wanted to mention that it started a long time ago because I did my PhD here in anthropology. It was submitted in 1998 and basically this current layer of work connects with this past layer.

So my PhD was called people plants and practice in dry lands and when I was doing this work and then post-op work subsequent to it people started to talk about places that were not mapped on any official map of the area. So for example, this is from an all all history with Cairo Harbor House. She says I was born at seahori in Horowitz we moved around Moved around my father was really from this place this from town which is one of the largest settlements in Northwest Namibia and my mother was from herberts. Really. She's from kurabears She's power, Dameron.

This is seahori. This is sogam. This is ongwari. This is the home of the homes here is the field. I moved to a sleep at the places where the rain falls because the food is there now this list of places as I said, none of these places are only official maps of the area and most of these places are not places that people can go to now in the present.

This term rubez.

It was incomprehensible what that actually meant to me at the time and this label I am powered.

Amara is subsequently has become clearer to me that there are lots of different lineages in this area that see themselves as connected with different land areas and in the area, but they've lost access to that land in quite a significant ways. So here's a another one from someone called Andrew who was the headman of a settlement called kovaribney. He talks about he says there are many places whose names I haven't said yet. There's football order.

How about her and there are more places where people lived in that area how of course and Gaius where the places where people were living the people traveled like that between these places now through a whole Is a historical events over the last few decades which included land being taken for commercial farming by sector farmers and the expansion of atosha National Park to the West for a period of about 12 years people being told that they couldn't keep their Livestock in this area because of Veterinary requirements meant that people were sort of basically removed from these settlements that they had lived in and knew in the past.

His that another transcript from France coeb. Um who is part of a group of people who used to live or used to access. What's now the skeleton Coast National Park and they would utilize Nara which are melons from an endemic plants that grow on the coast. So they would access these areas in the skeleton coast and move Inland and towards the coast at different times of the year.

So he says I was born alsis where there are Nara I grew up in the juanib Hawaiian River and from there. We moved took all year a different River in this system and in really every collected the maras and if the Maris is finished, then we moved to Gaius and we collect the honey and the grass seeds there and then Aaron in States the north of the Hawaiian open Stone.

Oh, yeah, and we know that after them are as a ripe, then we come together and Marilyn and the problem and collect Danny.

Money and the seeds together. So in these transcripts people are talking about a diversity of lineage groups of people A diversity of resources food resources that they utilize and I diversity of areas that they can't have that they don't have access to anymore. And so what we've been trying to do is really kind of piece these histories together again and draw them into Focus. So there's at least a record of these these realities that people lived in the past. So here are some of the places through this whole area that so people basically would move in between all of these different places through this large landscape and utilize different foods that were found in different parts of this landscape and these are some of the sort of lineage groupings that were located throughout this landscape and the the land areas that they were situated in now if we look at this map.

You can did with the area that I'm really talking about is this tourism concession called panova and then it's connections with the skeleton Coast to the West the settlement that people are mostly living in is here assessment time and you can see so all of these black dots are places where people where there are settlement sites today and this whole area doesn't have any of those black dots but in fact if we go back to the previous slide, it was full of Dwelling Places.

In the past within living memory for elderly people at least so this is what we've been trying to kind of bring back into the into visibility if you like.

what you tend to find in terms of descriptions of this landscape is that it's now described as a pristine Wilderness. I mean, this is a very common theme so you have these sorts of statements feel the freedom of the Northwestern corner of Namibia one of Africa's last wildernesses. I mean in one sort of fell through All of this cultural complexity is kind of removed.

So we've been trying to tell a different kind of story about this landscape, really.

So those transcripts that I mentioned they they often speak about a place called Gaius. So I was very intrigued by this particular place because it seemed to come up over and over and over again. This is actually what's it's a spring within this concession area. You can see the plants here that the greenery that's around this permanent threshold spring so you can imagine in a dry land landscape a permanent freshwater spring is going to be absolutely critical for people's survival. So when people were moving through this landscape guys was often a place that was part of these roots through the landscape.

Yeah, and so we've been going back. This is one of the places that we've been going back to his or even sign him again talking about different places. This is at guys itself. The spring is in the background and sometimes when we've gone back to these old dwelling sites that you can see these are sort of hot circles people have been able to say this is where this particular family lived in this Hut Circle that remains in the landscape now archaeologists go to this landscape and they don't necessarily understand that there's actually people alive today who might remember these very

specific sites and the specific heart circles at these sites because they're part of their own family history.

So one thing that came up when we visited this particular site Gaius is that it was a key place where people met because it's got this permanent water source, and they would dance their prey songs, which are called case and healing songs, which are called a ruse.

So this this was when we the first trip back to this site this was one of the things that was said, so in the past it was good and the rain was also falling and there was a lot of food now when they are told all the people had to move from here.

Some of the people were dying because of the Heartbreak the sorrow.

When he remembers his great-grandfathers who were living here some of whom were buried in this at this site and the way sorry. I have spot that one there, but the way how they were eating and the way how they would dancing and playing Taurus arose and Pace. He is feeling sad our hearts were happy here.

So this visit and this invocation of how people in the past used to meet at this site and play their roots and then Place their led to the idea to try and bring the current there's a cultural group in setting back to this site.

To play their songs they get once again at Gaia. So that's basically what led to the film being made. So I think oh, yeah. I just wanted to mention that so we we did the filming for this film. We organized this guy as Festival it became known as and so we organized a trip back to this site with the current Hawaiian cultural group some of whom the oldest members of whom had Direct memories of living at this site and we were so excited about this filming and about this experience and we had all sorts of ideas and plans for things that would come next and then of course covid hit so we edited the film. I've worked with a film maker called Oliver Halsey who was who took the footage we edited the film in the UK.

in 2020 and we had our first screening where we had to sort of dual screening at basketball my University online, of course, and then simultaneously I managed to send the film to set something I get quite emotional when I think about this actually because At that point everything was so upside down. I had no idea if I would even be able to return to Namibia or when I would be able to return and pursue this this work even though I had a a new project that started.

So yeah, it was just really crazy. It's almost it's almost difficult to remember how crazy it was and I managed to Send the film by DHL.

On a memory card, and I it had to go all the way.

It was yeah, I was tracking it. It was going to all these different places and it finally got successful take.

in Northwest Namibia and this felt this image was sent to me by one of the members of the traditional Authority there who organized the screening for the cultural group who were involved with the film and Actually, some of these key people are no longer with us and you can see they're all having to wear their masks.

Yeah, it was just so such a strange situation and here they are with the DHL and Globe. That's Reuben sanib on the left and Jacob was poip who you'll we'll see in the film on the right. So in session tone was I was very Sort of committed to them seeing the film and being able to confirm that it was okay for me to share it before we had our screening but it was really quite a process to be able to make that happen. Yeah, so they had their screening assessment team almost simultaneous with ours. I mean you can see how covid.

It was obviously very disruptive for us, but it's been really significantly disrupted for people there as well.

Okay, I just have to mention the the person who was behind the camera for this film is called Oliver horsey. He's based in Bristol and we're actually about to return to Namibia to do some more filming but we're also currently working on a film with footage from 2019. It's going to be a film of three Journeys with specific individuals going back to different places through the landscape that they were each that were important to them in the past. So with France cohab Ruben sanib and Julia daros, they're on the right. So maybe in the future I can come back and share this film hopefully. All right, that's the end of the slides I think.

The Music Returns to Kai-as

A Spring in West Namibia

In the soul name now good Mama did that we take it.

Oh Anna in their Roofing.

Team a day.

I wish you could.

Hear Johnny coming here.

Now we're gonna get dinner over here.

Won't you come to you Queen around here? He is added to give me he.

know what is Adida Soviet again. Yo cow what again? About who knock it here again.

Okay you I don't know.

Almost here, honey.

Thank you so far here.

here you must are you? ultimate you he went over here.

you here you Hey.

you you so if you are Maybe Hi, that's what I know you.

here you come here.

Not again, not good.

you know Causey Yeah you.

know didn't ? here now coming here.

here you over here This one. It's a holy.

So this one is a wooden ball that they are using for Holly collecting the holy so the way how he doing is cleaning the horis salvadora. So when they finish cleaning then they make like this like a ball and they eat so see right now the clean one and the dirty one.

Being in there. It is thinning boy.

cheated now Didn't you? Taking running over here.

You don't want to soon I didn't sound monitor won't you? Nothing that I can't.

Okay.

Guys soon cheetah not a king.

How are you? girl you Queen because he will soon hear I'm happy that I could say turkey tit.

Do you? here you Oh, yeah.

you are did again ha he you when you canara Monique here near here it here you here alright if You coming taking is a video here? He he.

Ard again oh God, we see the one that I made that I use you.

I'm several on home. I born excess Fontaine and I am schooling.

It's so spending.

when I growing up a going to choreographers.

When I saw when I meet a Black Flute it and I talk to life 55 and tell him I'm interested in there. I know.

In there, I know.

conservation she told me this he quoted accelerating game cards, which is already employed by a community and they start doing us how to do track.

Terranos in the behaviors of terranos those old salaries, none of them. They all hang out now and we take over it the positions.

So I like conservation. I like culture.

Because there was more important in this this country for tourism activities. One thing I remember is when we go into the culture.

I remember that we are doing patrols and I never know that that side is for for for the culture inside of those old people so I remind for myself so we were sleeping here, but we don't know exactly and The day we coming I remember all this side was a very important side for people now.

It made me happy when I understand of those sides where people are coming coloring together and dancing and so on.

so I like.

nature I like culture and I like animals.

My name is Philomena suro ganouses. I was born here at cesundane growing up here and schooling also here at this one day and my dream that I have for many years was.

to build up a museum excess hunting for the future Generations so that the future generation can see what the people who are sleeping in the past.

Eat sleeping in use.

That one was my dream and today my dream come true.
So when rupen Sunny told us about the Gathering of the people it.
Kayas, playing toys and arrows I make for myself a video in my mind.
To see how it was good there when the people Gathering and sharing the food and
playing the choice and the arrows and I talked to Sean to help us to make this dream
of Ruben Sunny through.
It was very tasty for me in really it was my dream and I feel very happy.

The Ted K Archive

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<www.vimeo.com/799459500>

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