

11. Eyes-on-feet

These images depict a story about a man called !gwe-!kweiten-ttu. (Eyes-on-feet). The story was told to Lucy Lloyd by Dia!kwain who heard it from his mother.



When |kaggen was a man (in the early times) he went about the world causing trouble. At one time he saw a strange man, whose name was walking back from the hunting grounds and who appeared to have no eyes. His name was !gwe-!kweiten-ttu. |kaggen engaged him in conversation creeping behind him, perplexed that, even though there were no eyes in his eye sockets, he appeared to see |kaggen and turn each time to face him, darting and diving like a bird. |kaggen became infuriated, taking out his knobkerrie, trying to bash the fellow over his eye-less head, convinced he must be some kind of sorcerer who can see without eyes. !gwe eventually turns on |kaggen giving him a whack on the head, and distressed, |kaggen runs home, his bag and shoes following behind him.

At home his family is concerned that he has been beaten, he tells the story and |kua tells him that !gwe's eye is on his foot, between his big toe and the next. |kaggen sleeps that night and has a bad dream. When he wakes, |kua tells him to find !gwe and kick dust into his eye, then when he sits rubbing it, that will be his chance to strike. This comes to pass and a distraught !gwe demands to know how |kaggen found out about the location of his eye. !kaggen claimed to have always known, and that it was merely a bad dream that had allowed !gwe to attack him. !gwe derides and ridicules |kaggen telling him that he is not, as he thinks he is, a clever person, but a fool who needs others to solve his problems.

The interesting thing about this story is that it was said amongst the boers of the time that there was a little fire that could be seen on the ground in the distance, that they called "mum backis" which is like the other name of !Gwe. The boers said that when they approached the little fire, there was nothing to be seen. More amazing is that when I was talking to farm labourers on the farm what was once Dia!kwain's home recently, and I asked an old woman whether there were stories she remembered that her grandmother might have told her, she said yes, and told me many including one about the man called Eyes-on-his-feet (ogies-op-sy-voete), who she still, she said, saw sometimes running away in the distance.



13. What we thought of the White Man's Wagons

What we thought of the wagons.

The first time we saw the wagons was when the Trek Boers went up to Lake Ngami. We thought the wagons were big animals. There were many oxen going before, and these big animals were going after, as we thought. Some of the old Bushmen had seen such things before. They looked like elephants, but they were white. We watched them a long time and we saw that some of them stopped.

There was not much rain that year and the grass was not good. The oxen were thin and then they died. Many died before they got to the lake, and sometimes we had some of the flesh.

At last one day we saw some of the Trek Boers take all the cows out of the wagon and leave it on the veld. We were afraid to go near it. We thought they had left it to graze, but we saw that its feet did not move. Some got near them, and we looked in. There were lots of things inside but we Bushmen did not know their uses, and so we left them.

We found some dry meat which we took. Then we went on after the others, and by and by we were near to the wagons, so the Trek Boers got their horses and they galloped after us. Three of us were caught. They tied up our hands, and they told us to take them to the water. I was young then. They tied us up at night, but one of us got away in the darkness.

After a time all the cattle died of sickness, and the Trek Boers got sick and died too. They left the wagons. At first when we saw them they were living in the wagons. Many of the Trek Boers were killed, many died, and others went away. Some of the women were taken by the Bechuanas, but I don't know what they did with them. We Bushmen never killed any of these people, but we took their cattle and ate many of them.

The wagons died on the veld, and some of them were burnt. That is what I knew of the Trek Boers. It is the end of the tale.

Collected by Samuel Shaw Dornan

