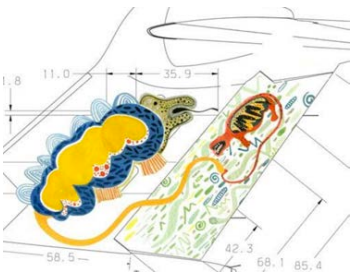
8. He and She Rain

The rain was personified as an animal by most San groups. In the sky could be seen the rain's legs and hair as water fell on distant horizons. The breath of the rain was seen in the mists that hung over water holes and in the hills. Soft soaking rain was known as the she-rain and electric storms were the work of the he-rain. In engravings and rock paintings all over the country rain animals take different forms. At times they resemble eland, at other times hippo. Often they assume the characteristics of 'the rain's things', such as tortoises, frogs, snakes or fish. Amongst the |xam of the Northern Cape, rain-makers hunted the rain, their actions bringing rainfall to parched land. Today in the Northern Cape, Afrikaans speaking |xam descendants still remember stories told in the 1860s. In these there are constant battles between violent he- and the gentle she-rain animals, and in some places it is said that young rain bulls – identified by their white bodies with red ears and hooves – still wander in amongst the dolerite boulders near waterholes at dusk.

There are very many stories about the rain that come from the northern Cape. These include many different forms of personification as well as supplication.

Lucy Lloyd, for instance, recorded the following story:

> *An old woman is out digging, and asks a chameleon for rain because she and her children have no water or food. The chameleon looks to see if she speaks the truth, and then assents and becomes white to show that rain will fall. The family smells the rain coming, and they find rain plants for the old woman to throw on the ground to make moisture. The two children find a great tortoise and cook and eat it. Then the rain comes and they collect water in the tortoise's shell to drink, and the plants come out for them to have food.*

In another story ≠kasin describes the association of the chameleon with the rain:

> *The chameleon is our father's man - it comes out of the sky and must not be killed or father would be angry. The chameleon became white - like the rain clouds - and they knew it was going to rain. A child smelt the rain smell and then smelt the "springbok bush" – gambro – and began to bleed from the nose. The little boy wiped his younger sisters blood. They catch a great female tortoise and roast it and eat it, looking out for the rain. They 'espy' lightening, and 'a rain drop fell upon the little boys hand; he went to look at it by the fire's light and he perceived the raindrop on his hand,'*