

Bushmen in a Victorian World: The Remarkable Story of the Bleek-Lloyd Collection of Bushman Folklore

Andrew Bank



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Wilhelm Bleek was fascinated by African languages and set out to make sense of a complex and alien Bushman tongue. At first Lucy Lloyd worked as his assistant, but soon proved to be so gifted a linguist and empathetic a listener that she created a monumental record of Bushman culture.

Their informants were a colorful cast. The teenager, /A!kunta, taught Bleek and Lloyd their first Bushman words and sentences. The wise old man and masterful storyteller, //Kabbo, opened their eyes to a richly imaginative world of myth and legend. The young man, Dia!kwain, explained traditional beliefs about sorcery, while his friend #Kasin spoke of Bushman medicines and poisons. The treasures of Bushman culture were most fully revealed in conversations with a middle-aged man known as /Han=kass'o, who told of dances, songs and the meaning of images on rocks.

The human histories and relationships involved in this unique collaboration across cultures are explored in full for the first time in this remarkable narrative.

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