



**MT MOOROSI'S PAST AND PRESENT:
INTERPRETING SAN ROCK ART AT
MTM 1 SITE IN
THE QUTHING DISTRICT OF LESOTHO**

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DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. Where I have used other peoples' ideas or quoted from their work, I have given them due credit by citing them. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Science in the Department of Archaeology in the Faculty of Science, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any examination or degree in any other University.

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30 September 2008

ABSTRACT

The most significant challenge facing rock art research in Lesotho is to provide meaning to San rock paintings that abound in the country. In the past rock art researchers in Lesotho appear to have focused on site identification and documentation. While there are many sites that needed to be interpreted, this challenge was made more difficult by the Euro-centric approach of many researchers. In the absence of reliable interpretive theories, the challenge of finding meaning in San rock paintings remains a forlorn hope. Drawing on San ethnography and neuropsychological research, approaches that have been demonstrated as useful interpretive tools in southern Africa, I take up this challenge of interpreting a San rock art site from Lesotho.

While concerned with one site known as MTM 1 in south-eastern Lesotho, in the Quthing District, I use an ethnographic approach and neuropsychological research as tools for understanding paintings at MTM 1. In using these two approaches to interpret rock paintings, it becomes evident that San rock art in this region can best be understood through the use of these approaches. This work, then contributes to the few efforts by previous researchers to interpret rock paintings in Lesotho.

In loving memory of my late grandmother,

M.A.M

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INTRODUCTION:

THE SAN (*BAROA*) OF SOUTH-EASTERN LESOTHO

The south-eastern Mountains of Lesotho and South Africa were once populated “exclusively” by Stone Age hunter-gatherers (Ellenberger, 1912:34), who inhabited the area for at least 29 000 years (Opperman, 1996). They are the ancestors of those who are now more commonly known in Lesotho as *Baroa*, and in South Africa as the San. These peoples have left their memorial in fine rock paintings and engravings scattered throughout southern Africa (Lewis-Williams, 1990:2; Blundell, 2004:16) (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Map of southern Africa

Although some rock art was made by Bantu-speaking agro-pastoralist people, the vast majority of the images in southern Africa were made by the San (Blundell, 2004). The archaeological material excavated from numerous and widely-distributed sites show that San were once spread over most of the sub-continent (Mitchell, 2006,2002). The south-eastern mountains of South Africa and Lesotho represent the nexus of southern African San occupation. Historical records and archaeological excavations show that the San in this region existed as small communities under clearly defined leadership.

While Marion How (1962) wrote about San groups in this region collectively as the “*Maloti San*”, subsequent researchers were able to identify groups of San by their respective leaders. For example, there were three famous groups of San that inhabited the Nomansland in the Drakensberg in the 19th Century. These were the Thola, and two other groups under the leadership of Mdwebo and Nqabayi (see Blundell, 2004:36). “The Thola were the largest of the three groups and appeared to have occupied both sides of the Drakensberg mountains” (Blundell, 2004:36).

In 1850, the Mdwebo and Nqabayi groups mounted an attack on the Thola on the banks of the Senqu River, deep inside Lesotho. Archaeological records show only the group of Thola in the area. This suggests that the Thola might have been the earliest San group in this area. While the authorship in this area could immediately be attributed to the Thola, as I discuss later, it is highly unlikely that they executed the images I am concerned with here. Nevertheless, it is in this region that MTM 1 site is located, within the Mt Moorosi area.

Situated in southern Lesotho in the Quthing District, Mt Moorosi is an area of important historical significance (Figure 4). It was in this region, that Chief Moorosi, the 19th Century leader of the Phuthi people, conducted his “campaign of resistance” against colonialism throughout the 19th Century (Ellenberger, 1912:15-16). This area is also home to some spectacular San rock paintings. It is in this area that a remarkable site, known, as MTM 1 is located. MTM 1 was first recorded in the early 1980s by ARAL (Analysis of Rock Art of Lesotho) and later, in 1988, the site was fully documented and redrawn by the Rock Art Research Unit of the Witwatersrand University (now RARI). However, the site has never been published and comprehensive interpretation of the images has never been undertaken. This project

the research work thus far in south-eastern Lesotho. I show that while relatively much work has been done in Lesotho, very few initiatives have been made in order to find the meaning behind San rock art. However, it is not only the corpus of much better preserved rock art that makes the MTM 1 site so significant but also the fact that this region provided a safe haven for the last remnants of the *Maloti* San. Just as in many areas across Lesotho, there are places within and adjacent to Mt Moorosi that still retain their (*Seroa*) names or are considered as San places. I describe here the MTM 1 site, which is locally known as (*Baroeng*), that is, the place of the San.

The MTM 1 site is particularly important because of the unique images found there. However, other images at the site are also seen in some surrounding sites. Almost all the images are detailed and are shaded polychromes reflecting what researchers would label as ‘classic’ San rock paintings. However, the occurrence of another type of image in the MTM 1 panel, which is uncommon in the rest of Lesotho, is another element that makes the site so outstanding. The mere appearance of this type of image in relation to other images in the panel prompts the viewer to ask “whom in particular, amongst the San groups was responsible for these paintings?”.

Chapter 2 situates the MTM 1 site in its social context while drawing on the past archaeological work done in the south-eastern Lesotho. I consider in this chapter, the Prehistoric through to the present inhabitants of this region, based in part on the findings of archaeological excavations undertaken in the south-eastern mountains. Particular emphasis is placed on the last 500 years. This is the period in which, it has been argued that some of the paintings at MTM 1 were most likely made (Blundell, 2004). I also consider the fortuitous events that might have influenced the content of San rock art of MTM 1 and also that might have brought about change in San identity in the Mt Moorosi region. It is well known from archival and oral sources that Chief Moorosi had a very close relationship with the San living in his area (Jolly, 1994,1996a,1996b). Thus, I look at the historical co-existence between the San and the Phuthi under Moorosi in this region. This is important as I situate MTM 1 in the broader corpus of rock art found in south-eastern Lesotho, particularly at sites that are found in the immediate vicinity. In Chapter 2, being one of the introductory chapters, I also found it appropriate to discuss in this chapter some of the methods used in the

project to collect data. One of these methods involves interviews (Appendices B and C). While this project is mainly on interpretation of San rock art, interviews are meant to answer yet another significant aspect of this project: I wish to find out whether the memories of *Maloti* San still exist amongst the present communities. This part of the project is answered in Chapter 5.

Chapter 3 considers the historical period in southern African rock art research from the late 1960s to the present. This period is considered as the turning point from the older “gaze and guess” approaches to ethnographically-informed ones. The late 1960s heralded the introduction, in the 1970s, of new approaches in rock art research that brought about new understanding of San rock art. The period between the late 1960s and the 1990s was characterised by heated debate, with researchers arguing about the meaning of rock art. I critically evaluate the interpretive theories and models that developed during this period. However, in spite of the insights of some of these theories and models, I choose the presently dominant and well established interpretive theories in San rock art as suitable for this project since San rock art at MTM 1 site is shamanistic.

Due to the occurrence of unusual cattle images at MTM 1, I begin with discussion in Chapter 4 of the bovine symbolism in Lesotho as not only an endeavour to reflect on the apparent cultural influences between the black farmer communities and San communities, but also to cast new light on the meaning of San rock art in this region. The occurrence of cattle therianthropes (part human part animal) in the MTM 1 panel is a true reflection, I argue, of cultural exchanges and adaptations that happened in the past between San and Phuthi societies. I also argue that cattle symbolism appears to have replaced that of eland in this region. This chapter also offers an interpretation of selected images at MTM 1, drawing on widespread San ethnography and neuropsychological research. I pay special attention to certain selected motifs and discuss them in turn. I show what certain human and animal body postures represent in this context, drawing as indicated earlier, on San ethnography and neuropsychological research. The use of these two interpretive approaches here is influenced by the nature of San rock art in the MTM 1 panel. There are no other methods or models that I intend to use here.

In Chapter 5, drawing mainly on the recorded oral accounts and my personal observations, I look at the current situation between the Phuthi and San descendents in Mt Moorosi, particularly the views that the Phuthi hold about the San and try to highlight the impact these new perceptions have on the descendents of the San in the Mt Moorosi region. Significantly, the memories of the *Maloti* San are being highlighted in this chapter in the form of a discussion over the present situation. Indeed, this situation is a true reflection of what Mt Moorosi is today. I show how the past socio-cultural state of affairs has significantly contributed to San social change producing the current state of San “mis-identity” in the area. The consequence of this San social change manifests in some of MTM 1 images. These images show items that are normally associated with black farmers. The depiction of these motifs shows in part, the acknowledgement of a changing social environment on the part of the San. Importantly, I provide an overview of the current management of cultural heritage resources in Lesotho. Finally, I discuss the potential of Mt Moorosi as a tourist destination. Protected under the Lesotho Historical Relics, Flora and Fauna Act of 1967, *Thaba Moorosi* received national recognition as an historical landmark. It is currently one of the most widely-known tourist attractions in southern Lesotho.

Finally, in discussing the various motifs at MTM 1, I show how complicated were the processes involved in rock art production at the height of interaction between San and black farmers in south-eastern Lesotho. Drawing on three sources of evidence: the varied published and unpublished material about the area and the oral accounts provided by the elderly Phuthi in the Mt Moorosi area, I argue that MTM 1 must be understood within the changing social circumstances of the last 500 years.

This is necessary because, as we saw earlier, while rock art at MTM 1 appears to be of typically San tradition, there are certain elements in the panel such as bandoliers (see Jolly (2005) for discussion of “bandoliers”), cattle and knobbed sticks that are indisputably associated with black farmers. These elements, together with an idiosyncratic arthropod image, add to the complexities of San rock art in south-eastern Lesotho, and I conclude that an understanding of such elements provides a key to interpreting San paintings in south-eastern Lesotho.

Furthermore, there is another image that falls into a category of images that have been termed SDFs or significantly differentiated figures by Geoffrey Blundell (Blundell, 2004). It has been argued that these usually large images portray powerful, individual shamans (see Dowson, 1994). All other known SDF images occur in a small area in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa and are attributable to a particular San group who had occupied that area. Intriguingly, MTM 1 is the only site in Lesotho that has so far been found to have SDFs.

In discussing these images in this project I show the extent to which the interaction between individual groups of San and black farmers in the south-eastern mountains has subtly been reflected in San rock art. This process appears to be a complicated one and I conclude that to understand it, it is necessary to take cognisance of the San as a cultural and religious entity, as we do with the black farmers in this region, so we can better understand the complexity of San rock art in the south-eastern region.

CHAPTER 1:

MT MOOROSI, MTM 1 AND ROCK PAINTINGS

Mt Moorosi is a term that to Basotho, and particularly BaPhuthi, evokes strong memories of the famous 19th Century Phuthi chief, Moorosi. In the last years of Chief Moorosi's reign, Mt Moorosi served as an anti-colonial administrative capital of south-eastern Lesotho. As the Phuthi administrative capital on top of the mountain, it later retained the name Mt Moorosi, named after the illustrious chief. From here, Chief Moorosi led his people in an armed struggle against the Cape colonial administration throughout much of the 19th Century. However, the 1879 Anglo-Phuthi War resulted in the fall of this Phuthi stronghold.

The Moorosi War of 1879, or 'rebellion' as David François Ellenberger (1912) terms it, was the first anti-colonial war in Lesotho and this was subsequently followed by the Gun War in 1880-81 which divided Lesotho into two factions. The one faction fought against the British while the other one supported the British Cape Colony. However, it was in this remote and deeply incised landscape, south-west of the basalt peaks of the Drakensberg mountains that the last remnants of the San lived. It was also in this area that probably the last San paintings were made and it was from this area that the San launched their final resistance campaigns against the rapidly encroaching farmers (Blundell, 2004). The white farmer encroachment on the other side of the Drakensberg mountains below the escarpment eventually bred intensive interactions between (black) farmers and the San in the heart of Drakensberg mountains.

Mt Moorosi in particular, subsequently provided a platform for these intensive interactions between San and black farmers. As the oral and historical data show, the San have interacted with Bantu-speaking peoples for "at least the last 500 years and probably longer" (Blundell, 2004:34). This interaction took on many forms and eventually produced a hybridised community in south-eastern Lesotho. This process of 'acculturation' appears to have taken a long period of time as the San paintings reflect some of the black farmer objects and 'stories'. While I discuss these issues extensively

in the ensuing chapters, I first provide the description of the study area; MTM 1 and its environs.

Geographic Location

Completely outside the tropics, between latitudes 28 and 31 degrees south and longitudes 27 and 30 degrees east, Lesotho is set high in the mountains of southern Africa and is completely surrounded by the Republic of South Africa.¹ South-eastern Lesotho (where the study area is situated) constitutes part of the country's region which is entirely mountainous. MTM 1 is located about 25 km north-east of the town of Moyeni, in Quthing District, southern Lesotho. The site is situated about a kilometre from the confluence of the Sebapala and Senqu Rivers along the eastern bank of the Senqu River (Figure 3). Pieter Jolly (2005) and Taole Tesele (1994) refer to this site as “Woodlot”, because of the occurrence of the artificial exotic pine tree forest towards the hill overlooking this site (T. Tesele 2006²: pers. comm.). However, I employ RARI's database name for this site.³



Figure 3: A view of MTM 1 site

¹ UNESCO's Project Summary on safeguarding Lesotho's Cultural Heritage 2005.

² Mr T Tesele, Conservation Planner, Maloti-Drakensberg Transfrontier Project, Maseru, Lesotho. Discussion in 2005.

³ The site was fully documented by Rock Art Research Unit (RARU) [currently RARI] of the University of the Witwatersrand and subsequently given this standard database name MTM 1.



Figure 4: A view of *Thaba Moorosi* from the east

About a kilometre north-east of MTM 1, lies *Thaba Moorosi*, an isolated mountain whose relatively flat top appears inaccessible at face value because of the cliffs and very steep slopes around it (Figure 4). The Mt Moorosi area is in the Senqu Valley Zone ecosystem of Lesotho (Figure 5) (Lesotho Government, 2000:9). Far north-east of Mt Moorosi lies *Thabana Ntlenyana*, a mountain which rises to 3482 m above sea level and is the highest point in southern Africa (*ibid.*: 7).

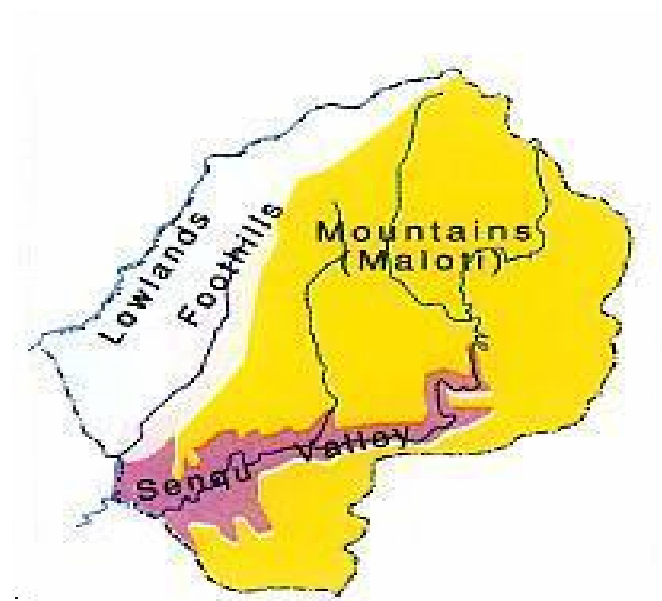


Figure 5: Map showing Lesotho's eco-systems

Geology and Vegetation

The MTM 1 panel is painted on Clarens Formation sandstone. The Clarens Formation underlies the whole of Lesotho, with outcrops as Plateau surfaces and cliffs especially in the Senqu Valley as far north as Sehonghong and in the Tsoelike Valley as far upstream as Sehlabathebe (Schmitz & Rooyani, 1987:29). Lesotho has mountainous to steep rolling topography with altitude ranging from 1000 m to almost 3500 m above sea level. The Mt Moorosi region, on average, lies at an altitude of 2884 m above sea level. Because of such variations in slope and altitude, most of the rock art sites in Lesotho occur on steep slopes. MTM 1 is an example of this. It lies on a steep slope about 300 m above the eastern bank of the Senqu River.

While a large part of Lesotho falls within the Maloti-Drakensberg ‘hotspot’ – an area where 29.3% of the plant species are found nowhere else in the world,⁴ the Mt Moorosi area appears semi-arid, overgrazed and degraded with traces of scattered grass species such as Thatch grass (*Hyparrhenia hirta*) (Sesotho: *Mohlomo*), Red grass (*Themeda triandra*) (Sesotho: *Seboku*) and weeping love grass (*Eragrostis curvula*) (Sesotho: *Molula*). This area is also home to some invader shrub species such as *Felicia filifolia* (Sesotho: *Sehalahala*), and exotic tree species such as Pine, Blue wattle, Blue gum (*Eucalyptus globules*) and Sweet Prickly Pear (*Opuntia ficus-indica*) (Sesotho: *Torofeie*) (Figure 6a). The area is also rich in indigenous trees and shrubs such as White Stinkwood (*Celtis Africana*) (Sesotho: *Molutu*), Kuni-bush (*Rhus burchellii*) (Sesotho: *Mokhoamphiri*) and Broom Karee (*Rhus erosa*) (Sesotho: *Ts’inabele*).

Although degraded, the area is rich in medicinal plants such as *Dicoma anomala* (Sesotho: *Hloenya*) and Bitter Aloe (*Aloe ferox*) (Sesotho: *Lekhala la Quthing*). *Hoodia gordonii*, though rare, also occurs here (Figure 6b). I walked around the site but spotted only one Hoodia plant. However, according to Acocks (1975) Karoo-type vegetation abounds in eastern Lesotho. The wide spread of *Aloe ferox* (Sesotho: *Lekhala la Quthing*), “prickly pear”, and Hoodia confirms the environmental scenario for Lesotho as outlined by Acocks (1975).

⁴ National Environment Secretariat 2000. Maseru, Lesotho.

The site has brown, stony soil. The soil is usually covered with sparse grass. The largest tree species in the area are exotic. Blue gum trees are found in abundance on the hill around the site (Figure 6c). Second to the blue gum trees are woodlot pine species which were planted in part to curb the spread of gullies in the area (Figure 7).

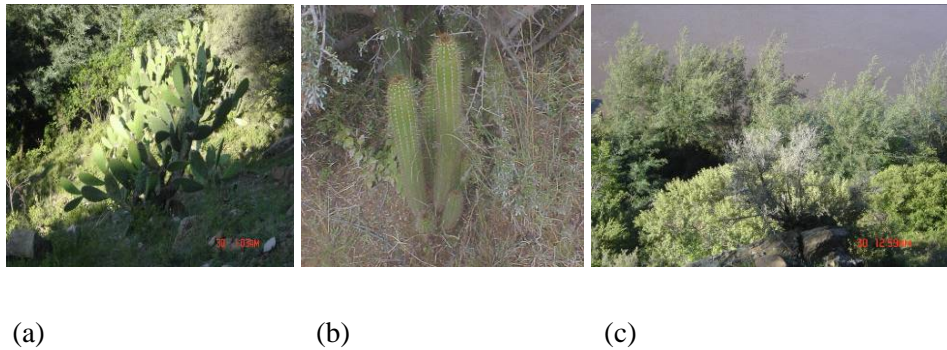


Figure 6: Examples of different plant species found around MTM 1

Previous Research in South-eastern Lesotho

The Maloti mountains of Lesotho constitute the most part of the western Drakensberg mountain range. The Maloti mountains of Lesotho have been archaeologically under-researched in comparison to the Drakensberg mountains of South Africa, although they are of the same mountain group. This shows that national boundaries really do impact negatively on research. Nonetheless, Patricia Vinnicombe's (Vinnicombe, 1976) research in the area was a rare example of rock art work being conducted in this region that was not restricted by modern political boundaries (Hobart, 2003:90).

Based on Vinnicombe's work, eastern Lesotho appears to be as rich as the South African Drakensberg in terms of San rock art, and the fact that more than 70% of Lesotho is mountainous and had previously almost entirely been occupied by San, suggests that the country may have the greatest corpus of San rock art in southern Africa. Archaeological records and tradition point to the fact that the country was once almost entirely occupied by San groups. Indeed, Lesotho appears to have been the last safe haven to the typical roving San groups, which were dispersed in the last quarter of the 19th Century (Sekese, 1907). Importantly, the *Maloti* San left behind a wealth of rock paintings that present a testimony of their occupation of the area (Arbousset & Daumas, 1846:58).

The earliest recorded rock art sites in eastern Lesotho, however, were documented in 1873 by Joseph Millard Orpen (Orpen, 1874; Hobart, 2003:88), the British official in East Griqualand, on an expedition into the Maloti mountains in pursuit of Chief Langalibalele (Hlubi) and his followers to face charges for defying the Natal colonial authorities. Orpen published these sites – Melikane and Sehonghong – in the following year (Orpen, 1874). He recorded a couple of scenes from these sites as well as Qing's explanation of their meaning (How, 1962; Lewis-Williams, 1980).

According to John Hobart (2003:88) this is the only surviving account containing an indigenous explanation of the meaning of Lesotho's and/or the Drakensberg's rock art and it served as a pioneering interpretive work in the southern African region because it is upon this that many currently well-established and widely recognised theories of rock art are based, for example, Lewis-Williams (1981,1984,1992,1995,1998). It is this ethnographic account, together with comparative material from the !Xam and the !Kung that led Lewis-Williams & Loubser (1986) to conclude that the San people over most of southern Africa shared an underlying cognitive system, since this ethnography accorded well with the growing body of data on the modern Kalahari San (Lewis-Williams & Loubser, 1986:265). Orpen's (1874) publication thus heralded subsequent rock art research in this area.

Rock art research in Lesotho perhaps began around this time with the recording and publication of the Melikane and Sehonghong rock art sites by Orpen (1874). Thereafter, the development of rock art research in Lesotho was a slow process, lagging behind that of other southern African countries despite early recognition of the richness of its surviving San rock art (Mitchell, 1991:29).

The 20th Century, however, saw an increase in rock art research especially in eastern Lesotho. Amateur and professional archaeologists demonstrated an interest in writing about the state of rock art in Lesotho. Marion Walsham How (1962), an early amateur researcher, published an informative book: *"The Mountain Bushmen of Basutoland"* in which she collated the accounts of probably the last Phuthi artist, Mapote, and an interesting history of the *Maloti* San. How's interest however, appears to have been in the painting technique, not in finding the meanings of rock art motifs. For example, she accepted the meaning of rock art as self-evident and hence did not ask Mapote about its

interpretation (Lewis-Williams, 1988:204). Some subsequent researchers however, took a different direction, which was characterised by the recording of sites. This approach was later widely accepted as the order of the day. While some parts of the country received relatively less attention, eastern Lesotho became the key research area.

In the early 1960s, Patricia Vinnicombe located rock paintings in south-eastern Lesotho along the Tsoelike River, which depicted fishing-scenes. Similar scenes were recorded further north of Lesotho at Ha Rampai (Smits, 1971:60). Lucas Smits (Smits, 1971) recorded three more fishing-scenes in a small rock shelter along the slopes of the Berea Plateau. The occurrence of fishing-scenes in the south-eastern mountains led Vinnicombe (1960:16-17, 1961:114-115) to hold the view that

fishing-scenes of Bamboo Mountain and Tsoelike River in Lesotho are post-Bantu and probably contemporaneous with the cattle and horse-painting era on the basis of the presence of modern objects often in the same colour and comparable state of deterioration as the fishing-scenes (Smits, 1971:65).

The focus here appears to have been on the identification of sites and finding chronology other than meaning. Vinnicombe conducted further rock art survey in south central Lesotho especially from 1969 to 1976 (Hobart, 2003:89), stimulating more research interest for other researchers.

In the early 1970s, Lucas Smits (Smits, 1973) and a team of research assistants documented and re-located rock art sites which included Sehonghong, a significant and fairly well-known cave in the Sehonghong River Valley (Dornan, 1909:445-456; Ellenberger, 1953:160; Germond, 1967:421-422; Mitchell, 2002). The recording of rock art sites, however, intensified towards the late 1970s, when Lucas Smits carried out extensive surveys under the auspices of “Analysis of Rock Art of Lesotho” (the ARAL Project). This was the biggest rock art project ever in Lesotho. Close to one thousand rock art sites were recorded by Smits and his colleagues. The ARAL Project documented a number of sites including the famous Melikane site but no interpretive analysis was given.

Melikane, however, consequently caught the attention of many researchers because of its therianthropic figures. Both David Lewis-Williams (1980) and Pieter Jolly (1994) provide interpretation of these Melikane therianthropes. Jolly employs a rather black-farmer oriented approach. He associates them with Basotho traditional functionaries as well as Zulu ritual specialists, while Lewis-Williams employs a San ethnographic approach and calls them San shamans in a trance state. Nonetheless, of all the sites recorded in south-eastern Lesotho, only a small fraction has been interpreted.

Britt Bousman's (1988) archaeological work on prehistoric settlement patterns in the Senqunyane Valley in central Lesotho included rock art. He identified and recorded several rock art sites. Bousman, like his predecessors, did not focus on the meaning of San rock art. He, nonetheless, observed that many rock art sites are rapidly disappearing in the hands of vandals and through natural exfoliation. "Without doubt, Vinnicombe's photographs, tracings and records of these paintings would be the only lasting document of their existence" (*ibid.*: 34), if no further conservation measures are taken anytime soon. Few of his successors, nevertheless, showed more interest in finding meaning in San rock art.

Jolly (1994) undertook intensive rock art research in south-eastern Lesotho. His work is one of the largest research works undertaken with the explicit aim of providing meaning to the rock art in Lesotho after Vinnicombe (1976). Other researchers like Lewis-Williams & Loubser (1986) have also undertaken some extensive rock art surveys for the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority (LHDA) in the north west of Lesotho (Loubser & Brink, 1992; Hobart, 2003). Towards the central mountains and the upper part of the Senqunyane Valley, Aitken *et al.* (2000) carried out a survey of rock art sites. They provided a brief interpretation of some paintings in their report. However, given a substantial number of recorded rock art sites in Lesotho to date, it is only a few of them that have been adequately interpreted. This suggests that rock art research in Lesotho is still dominantly based on mere recording.

Even though the statutory heritage body in the country (the Lesotho Department of Culture) has so far identified and kept a list of many rock art sites, it appears that meaning was primarily not so important but only site identification, which is a good initiative though. The Maloti Drakensberg Trans-frontier Project (MDTP) Cultural

Heritage Consultant also identified and recorded some spectacular rock art sites in eastern Lesotho since 2005. Most of the rock art sites known to researchers are found in the central and eastern areas of the Maloti mountains.

At present, the Quthing Wildlife Development Trust (under the tutelage of DED – German Development Service) contracted the department of rock art of the National Museum in Bloemfontein to document and provide interpretation of San rock art in the Upper Seapala River (Tsatsane Valley) east of Mt Moorosi (Mrs N.J. Khitsane⁵: pers. comm. 2006). The largest site so far visited, the Sheep Kraal site, is discussed in this project as “Sheep Kraal” site. The project took off a while ago with basic documentation at the Sheep Kraal site.⁶ While rock art research appears to be gradually receiving more attention locally, I intend, with my study to build on the broad understanding of rock art, especially in Lesotho. My study, being one of the rarest of its nature in Lesotho, will undoubtedly be one of the few interpretive works so far undertaken. I turn now to one of the biggest and most stunning sites in south-eastern Lesotho, which is central to this project.



Figure 7: Erosion gullies around MTM 1

⁵ Mrs N.J. Khitsane, Director, Department of Culture, Maseru, Lesotho. Discussion in 2004.

⁶ Source: email communication between Wigbert Vogeley (DED advisor) and Mrs N.J. Khitsane (Director, Department of Culture, Maseru, Lesotho) 2006.



Figure 8: A view of the Sheep Kraal site

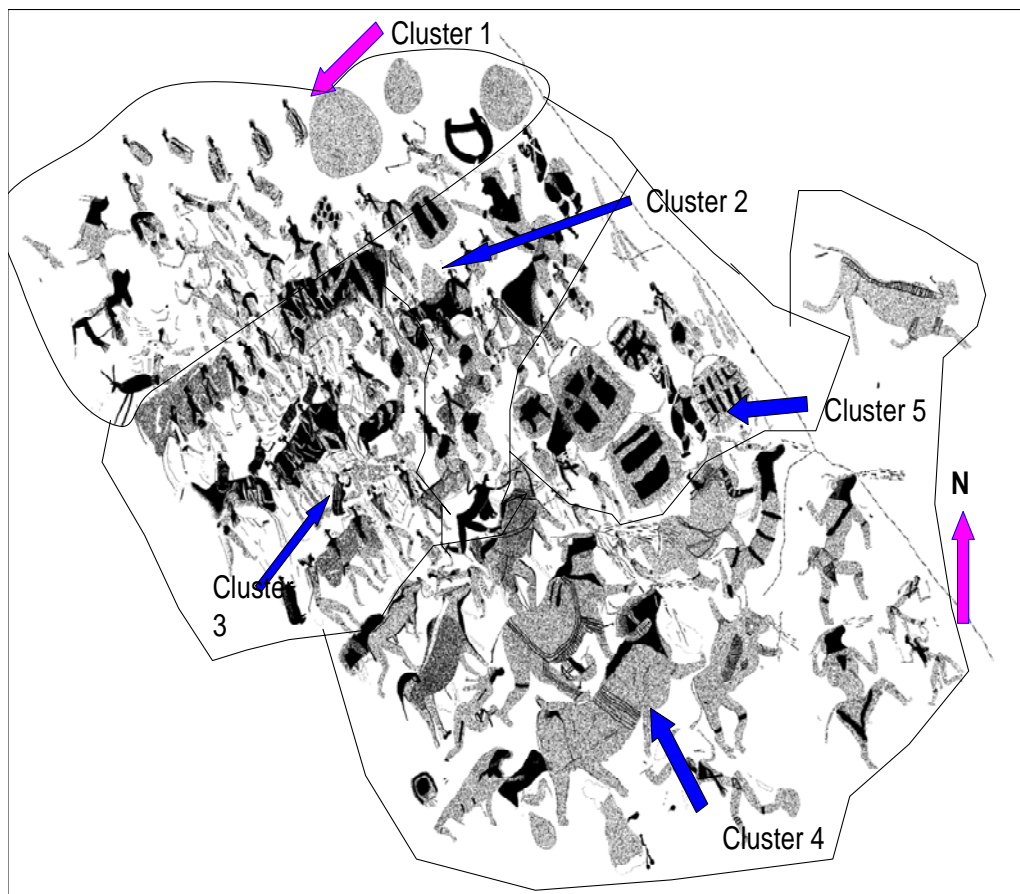


Figure 9: The clustered MTM 1 panel

MTM 1 Rock Art Site

It was in 1982 when the construction of the Southern Perimeter Road between Mophale's Hoek and Qutha's Nek Districts started. It was preceded by the survey of sites in the areas along this proposed road. During this contracted survey that was carried out by Lucas Smits (Hobart, 2003:91), MTM 1 was identified and in part documented. In the late 1980s, a joint Lesotho-South African team recorded the site through the direct tracing method and comprehensive photography as part of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project Survey. The MTM 1 site was subsequently redrawn over a two-year period by Anne Holliday (Geoff Blundell⁷: pers. comm.) at the Rock Art Research Institute of the University of the Witwatersrand (RARI).

While most paintings are no longer visible, the digitised copy at RARI still bears many details about the site. There are about 133 recognisable images in the panel that stretches 2.70 m in length and is 1.47 m in height. There are as many as three superimposed layers of paintings with a variety of pigments. This is evident towards the top of Cluster 3 where an eland figure provides the lower layer. A female human figure is superimposed on this eland while a snake-like motif is superimposed on the leg of this female figure.

While there is a great variation in colour, red and black are dominant colours in the panel. The imagery is typical San rock art with unique and stunning figures, some of which have never been seen before. These unique images shed important light not only on the meaning and significance of San rock art in this region but also serve as an efficient communication tool between the present and the past of this region. The imagery includes human, animal, therianthropic figures, "handbags" and other unidentifiable motifs. I thus provide their description here.

MTM 1, unlike most sites in eastern Lesotho and the Drakensberg mountains, depicts relatively few antelope figures that are identifiable as eland. There are seven eland figures that are depicted in the panel in various postures, but many in upright positions.

⁷ Dr G. Blundell, Curator, Origins Centre, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. Discussion in 2005.

Almost all eland images are found in the centre of the panel where there is also the greatest concentration of activity and superpositioning. Some are depicted without horns, in fact, their most visible parts are torsos. In San cosmology the eland is central to the San belief system and to the culture of painting. While eland figures appear to be few at MTM 1, their depiction reflects the ‘authenticity’ of the San culture of paintings and types of rituals shown on the panel. The eland remains ethnographically important in San rock art regardless of the occurrence in large numbers of other animal species that may probably have some social significance to the San. The other identifiable species of antelope in the panel is rheboks (*Pelea capreolus*) with only two images present.

While human figures constitute the greatest number of figures in the panel – fifty-seven identifiable human figures – they are depicted in a variety of postures. These figures appear to be male and female. There are more than thirty-three male figures in the panel, but only twenty-four female figures. I used the following criteria to find the gender of the figures: clapping, roundness, steatopygia (having big buttocks) are all female attributes, while slender, unusual postures sometimes concomitant with some objects – presumably dancing sticks or flywhisks held aloft – are associated with males (Solomon, 1989).

I have divided these figures into two groups: upright figures and squatting figures. I describe each in turn. However, many of the human images are depicted in upright dancing postures. Dancing appears to be the greatest activity here. Almost all human figures in the panel are depicted in various dancing postures: women appear to be clapping hands, while men – also in dancing postures – are depicted holding some objects aloft. Clusters 1, 2, 3 and 5 are characterised by such figures. Glancing at all these human figures in the centre of the panel, they appear to have formed what appears to be a semi-circular pattern. Inside this semi-circular pattern there are some standing figures, which should be males as per my classification criteria.

This pattern, if it were a complete circle, appears to be the largest one. Within this semi-circular pattern, there are three processions of people (Cluster 3). The crouching figures also appear to be partaking in one of these processions. Another procession towards the bottom consists of four bi-cephalous (two-headed) figures and amongst them one

ordinary human figure (Figure 11). The human figures appear to gather around two eland that are joined by the large snake-like figure. When looking at all the human figures again, wherever they occur in the panel, there is one common thing about them: they appear to be in an “unusual” mood.



Figure 10: A view of MTM 1 panel

While the clearly identifiable and perhaps “normal” human figures abound in the panel, very few (other than the “unusual” therianthropes) are depicted with nasal emanations. This is evident in a figure in Cluster 4 towards the bottom of the panel. This figure is holding a knobbed stick aloft while in a bending-forward posture. Another human figure in Cluster 4 is carrying what appears to be a “knobkerrie”. Nevertheless, the emanation appears to be common not only amongst the therianthropes, but also with the bi-cephalous figures in Cluster 3 (Figure 11).



Figure 11: Bi-cephalous figures



Figure 12: Nose-bleeding cattle therianthropes

All the cattle therianthropes in the bottom of the panel in Cluster 4 have blood spurting from their noses (Figure 12). This nasal haemorrhage appears to be terrible given the apparent quantity of blood coming out. These figures are for the most part cattle and there are five in number. They are finely detailed and all shaded in profile. Intriguing about them is their postures that appear “lively”. Many of these figures have a black knee band and their anklets are depicted in black and some in white like in human figures. Furthermore, they have got ‘systematic’ lines around certain parts of their bodies: neck, chest, stomach and waist areas.

There are also other types of cattle therianthropes (Cluster 4). These cattle therianthropes are for the most part human and appear to be bipeds. The line pattern is different here. One therianthrope has a thick black line across its sternum from the left shoulder to the area below the right armpit. There is another therianthrope figure in Cluster 2, which appears to be the most pre-eminent of all the human figures in the panel. Blundell (2004) terms this figure an SDF – a significantly differentiated figure. This figure measures 360 mm and just like other human and therianthrope figures, it has got knee bands, anklets, bangles and what appears to be a thigh band.

Although it is for the most part human, its back part on one hand resembles that of a cow because of its shape and the tail and, on the other hand, it appears Steatopygous. This figure, which is depicted in profile, has a head-dress of what appears to be the horns of a cow. There is another human figure in Cluster 5 next to two “handbags” that also appears to have a pair of antelope horns protruding from its head. It is bending forward, holding an object in one hand. The object appears to be a flywhisk. However, the pre-eminent figure together with the other cattle therianthropes immediately catch the eye when glancing at the MTM 1 panel because they stand out from other images in terms of their size, ‘strategic’ location and their unusual cow-human therianthrope nature. Almost all of them are located towards the bottom of the panel with the exception of this shamanistic figure, which is located towards the centre of the panel.

There are other human figures in the panel that appear to be ‘squatting.’ Seven of them are polychrome-shaded and are situated on top of the panel in Cluster 1. The other four figures in Cluster 3 appear to be ‘crouching’. There are altogether twenty-one squatting or crouching figures in the panel. Six of the figures are fringed with white dots over

their totally black shaded bodies. One figure appears to have a white necklace – probably ostrich eggshell beads – while another one is wearing a white arm band. The latter figure appears to be attending to the other figure lying supine and superimposed on the snake motif (Cluster 3) (Figure 13).

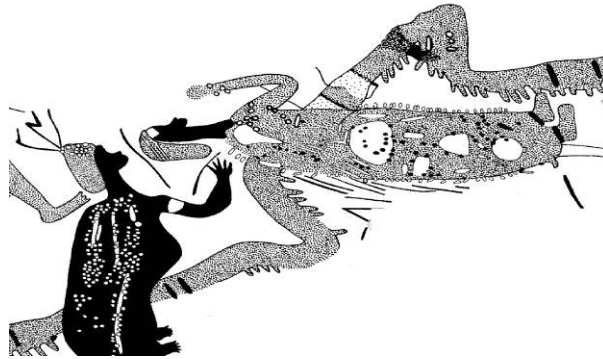


Figure 13: Probable healing scene

Common between the human and therianthropic figures is the attire. All human figures appear to have aprons around their waists. Their patterns appear to have been designed with the purpose of drawing the distinction between the females and males. Almost all aprons I associate with men here appear to be short, while covering the back and front parts (Cluster 3). However, some of these waist aprons appear to have loose appendages. Some figures appear to have only the speckled hangings that also appear to expose the area around the waist. For example, Cluster 1 shows two human figures wearing “danglings” which, however, do not convincingly appear to be aprons.

Aprons associated with women appear to extend downwards to cover adequately the large part of the body. They however, appear to be in different patterns: some covering both the front and back parts while others cover only the front part (Clusters 1, 2 and 3). What appears to be common between males and females’ attire is a criss-crossing material overlapping and dangling down the shoulders. This feature is apparent not only on human but also on therianthropic figures. Jolly (2005) refers to this kind of attire as “bandoliers”. According to him, bandoliers are typically black farmer ceremonial attire. The wristlets, knee bands, armlets and bangles are found in all human and therianthropic figures in the panel.

Another feature that appears outstanding in the panel is the bags (Cluster 5). These bags appear to have handles and additional decorative frills. While there is a great variation in decoration, their designs appear basically the same. They are painted in black and red. There are altogether seven bags in the panel plus one female apron in Cluster 1.

There is another interesting feature in the panel: Cluster 1 shows three oval to circular unidentifiable objects. They are totally shaded in red. While it is difficult to tell what these figures represent, they might, however, constitute an integral part here. There are altogether five of them in the panel.

Equally intriguing is the representation of two identifiable felines. One of them appears isolated and galloping on the extreme right-hand side in Cluster 4. This feline has for the most part, the appearance of a leopard but its broad-faced head resembles that of a cow. It has lines on its back from the tail across the back up to the head, which appear to resemble those in cattle therianthropes. Other lines around its forelimbs appear to fuse the forelimbs with the torso. The second feline appears to be a therianthrope (with a human leg knee band) and is, for the most part, a lion. It has a protruding neck that may suggest a lion's mane. This lion's forelimb is painted over a totally black enigmatic figure that appears in part to be an eland's torso (Cluster 4).

The MTM 1 panel is very big and has many interesting scenes such as this one involving an entirely black human figure that appears stretching out his hand to a therianthrope figure towards the centre of the panel (Cluster 4). Another figure in Cluster 4 appears to be in an arms-back posture while bending forward like a flying or falling object. There are also enigmatic representations that appear to be 'foot prints'. They emanate from an eland figure in Cluster 3 and are depicted in detail in Cluster 1.

There are also idiosyncratic images at MTM 1. They include cattle therianthropes, a snake-like motif and a figure that appears to be antelope and human figures fused together (Figure 14). Cattle are common features in Drakensberg rock art (Campbell, 1986,1987). But, the depiction of cattle therianthropes appears very unusual and it is something that requires explanation on the role of cattle in the evolving San culture. These figures appear to occur at the MTM 1 site and nowhere else. The snake-like

motifs and cattle are common in the rock art of the Maloti-Drakensberg mountains, but this particular snake-like motif is unusual.



Figure 14: A composite image antelope and human figures

While this “snake” appears far bigger than a centipede or millipede, it has numerous legs resembling those of a centipede, a feature that is not found on big snakes. Furthermore, it is difficult to state which end is which in terms of head and tail. However, the arrow-shaped end could be the tail while the other, bifurcated, end could be the head. This figure has not been documented anywhere else.

In Cluster 1, there is an odd combination of antelope-human figures; the human and animal parts are apparently fused at the waist. The two figures fused together appear impossible under normal circumstances. The fact that something like this is impossible in real life, suggests that it represents something not of this world. The idiosyncratic nature of these images, however, is important in obtaining insights into the MTM 1 rock art as I discuss in subsequent chapters. While we have in south-eastern Lesotho a corpus of rock art as evidence of prehistoric occupation in this region, I discuss in the following chapter, the possible earlier inhabitants of this region.

CHAPTER 2:

SITUATING MT MOOROSI IN ITS CHANGING SOCIAL CONTEXT

While Lesotho has been the focus of attention for a relatively small number of archaeologists (see Hobart, 2004 and Mitchell, 1992,2001 for an overview of past research in the country), much detailed research has been carried out along its borders with South Africa by, amongst others, Tim Maggs (1976,1980) in the Free State and KwaZulu-Natal, Aron Mazel (1989,1997) and John Cable (1984) in KwaZulu-Natal and Lyn Wadley (1992,1995) in the Free State. Within Lesotho, Patrick Carter undertook the first systematic excavation orientated research in the eastern part of the country in 1969 (Carter, 1977). This, as Mitchell (1991:29) argues, marked the first archaeological exploration of the highland region of the country. Carter's principal objective was to investigate the ways in which the area's prehistoric inhabitants had exploited the landscape and the plant and animal resources that it offered (Carter, 1977).

Carter subsequently excavated a number of sites in the Lesotho highlands. These sites include Melikane and Sehonghong (Carter, 1977). The evidence from Sehonghong revealed a sequence of occupation by successive Middle Stone Age (MSA) and Later Stone Age (LSA) assemblages which may extend back as far as 75 000 years (Carter *et al.*, 1988; Mitchell, 1991). This evidence from Sehonghong, however, casts more light on the deep past of eastern Lesotho.

Some fragments of ochreous paint were found in this site and dated to AD 450, suggesting that painting was being undertaken in Lesotho at least 1 550 years ago (Vinnicombe, 1976; Ambrose, 1983:8). The most important question now is "Who were these prehistoric people who appear to have exploited this part of Lesotho around this time and even much earlier in the Middle Stone Age?". However, Lesotho's past

beyond 2 000 years ago still remains a moot point. What appears to add to this situation is the fact that

much understanding of the last two millennia in Lesotho relies mainly on oral and historical sources, as well as inferences from the archaeology of neighbouring parts of South Africa. The oral and historical sources by their very nature cover only a relatively recent period” (Hobart, 2004:2).

Nonetheless, I discuss below, the settlement sequence of MTM 1 from the prehistoric to the present. I use historical sources and archaeology in spite of their limitations because together they offer a combined strand of evidence.

Previous Inhabitants

Archaeological sources show that the earliest people to have settled in Mt Moorosi were hunter-gatherers ancestral to the modern *Maloti* San. It appears that these people settled the Upper Drakensberg mountain region for a long time before the intrusion later on by agro-pastoralists and other people. While it is clear that agro-pastoralist settlement of this part of southern Africa is very recent, Mitchell (2006) asserts that the Maloti Drakensberg mountains of Lesotho and South Africa are well known as one of the last areas of Africa south of Kalahari in which San hunter-gatherers were able to pursue an independent existence.

When mixed farming, iron-working (Bantu-speaking) communities began entering southern Africa shortly after the start of the Christian era and started settling the coastal belt of KwaZulu-Natal around AD 400, the Maloti Drakensberg region remained beyond their reach (Mitchell, 2006: 4). Thus, hunter gatherers continued to enjoy their monopoly and independence beyond the reach of farmers. However, Mitchell argues that the hunter-gatherer communities in the Maloti Drakensberg were able to maintain a diverse set of interactions with farmers during the past 2 000 years.

His argument may also confirm the Prehistoric Land-use model that was proposed by Carter for eastern Lesotho and southern Natal (Carter, 1970; Higgs & Vita-Finzi, 1972). In this model, hunter gatherers were expected to have moved seasonally between the Thornveld towards the Natal coast (occupied during winter) and areas of Highland Sourveld along the Escarpment, including the Sehlabathebe Basin – exploited

during the spring and summer (Carter *et al.*, 1988:4). Cable (1984) also applied the model in his fieldwork in southern Natal where he argued that sites within the Orange River Valley, such as Sehonghong, are likely to have formed part of a single exploitation system with those in Natal. Hobart (2004) argues that the Lesotho highlands appear to have developed extensive and diverse trade and exchange networks, which led to the development of a 'new Stone Age'. These new networks may have included the practice of small scale pastoralism by Stone Age herder-hunter-gatherers in Lesotho, prior to the arrival of Basotho farming communities in the late 19th Century.

Hobart indicates that at the end of the first and start of the second millennium AD, San in the Lesotho highlands were pushing geographical, subsistence, and social boundaries (Hobart, 2004:8). This is confirmed by the following evidence:

The evidence from eggshell and the trace-element analysis of pottery points towards movement between the highlands and the Caledon valley; but the finds of glass beads, Cypraea shells, domestic fauna and the Sotho sherd take this far further by indicating trade or exchange links to northern agriculturalists; meanwhile, the questions raised by the numerous pieces of metal and faceted points indicate ties to the metal-producing areas of either the Eastern Cape or Thukela Basin (ibid.: 8-9).

Regarding rock art, excavated data from eastern Lesotho show the occurrence of numerous painted rock shelters, which are frequently associated with Later Stone Age debitage (Carter, 1977:37). According to Carter, rock-painting sites appear to have provided a platform for key LSA activities (*ibid.*: 48). In particular, occupation in Sehonghong was more than ephemeral (Mitchell, 2002:109), which may confirm that the Late Stone Age period is linked directly to hunter gatherers ancestral to the modern San (Mason, 1962). In general, the Lesotho highlands appear to have been at the centre of LSA activity, which led to the area being the permanent San settlement until black farmers joined them later.

The unfavourable climatic conditions of the Maloti mountains nonetheless, appear to have delayed occupation of this region by farmers (Huffman, 1996). For example, when the second millennium farming communities who were ancestral to the modern Nguni and Basotho began settling higher altitudes after AD 1300, they did not settle along the Escarpment itself or in the Maloti ranges beyond (Mitchell, 2006:4; Mitchell

& Whitelaw, 2005). As historical and oral sources show, occupation of the Maloti mountains and of the Senqu Valley by Sesotho-speaking farmers was a 19th Century phenomenon. According to Mitchell, this was precipitated by population growth, military conflict and the loss of much of Lesotho's lowland territory to the Afrikaner Orange Free State Republic. While the evidence so far examined shows multiple subsistence strategies in the Lesotho highlands: hunting and gathering, exchange and trade activities, no other groups of people, be they farmers or pastoralists, appear to have settled this region other than hunter gatherers ancestral to the modern San until the mid-to-late 19th Century (see Mitchell 2006).

Examining Change in the Painted Context

When social relations or institutional arrangements deny people access to what they need, tension is created (Ashton, 1995:5).

The excavated sequence suggests that over the last 1 800 years, hunter-gatherer mobility was "progressively curtailed" in the face of pastoralists and later farmers grazing their stock in traditional hunter-gatherer areas (Hall, 1994:81). Archaeological records reveal that initially this situation did not favour hunter-gatherers because of its dramatic and mostly violent nature. Although this process of adaptation was violent, it was not an easy task to accomplish because it took compromises on all sides. This is evidenced by the fact that some San groups launched their resistance struggles against foreign and intruding cultures.

In the beginning, Bantu-speaker occupation of the Maloti mountains appeared to have been in favour of the Bantu-speaking people, with the San being overwhelmed by the newcomers (Jolly, 1994). However, the subsequent appearance of both animal and plant domesticates in the hunter-gatherer sequence suggests that alternative strategies to mobility were sought; one of these was to enter into exchange relationships with farmers (Hall, 1994). A decade later, Hobart (2004) confirmed this when he argues that at the end of the first, and start of the second, millennium AD, the San in the Lesotho highlands were pushing geographical, subsistence, and social boundaries. The implication is that the San, of course, developed more subsistence strategies to complement hunting and gathering activities that were dwindling at the hands of encroaching farmers.

According to Hall (1994:82) the rock art and early traveller records indicate that one of the services supplied to the farmers by the San was rain making. Rain making appears to have been one of the key ritual activities which, as reflected in their art, also involved the use of cattle. The use of cattle as not only elements of interaction but also as trance metaphors in the changing San cosmology confirms that much rock art was indeed produced for ritual purposes. Rain making, therefore, appears to have been one of the key social activities that kept these two competing and evolving societies together. It was not surprising for me, therefore, to locate many presumably rain-making sites around Mt Moorosi as it was the area of intensive interaction and also the last safe haven for the *Maloti* San.

Along the Tsatsane Valley, I recorded three probable rain-making sites; two with cattle motifs (Figure 15) and one with an amorphous quadruped, probably a hippopotamus) (Figure 16). Whilst the subject matter in rock art appears to have changed as a result of circumstances (sometimes) beyond the San's control, it appears that the 'painted context' (meaning behind the art) remains the same. Importantly, in some cases where cattle are painted, the traditional San ideological frame of reference appears to have been retained, with the newly introduced animal (the cow) taking on the "symbolic load associated with its predecessor" (the eland) (Jolly, 2000:79). Hall remarks that new economic and social relations within San society were underwritten in the supernatural sphere and this is most clearly expressed in the rock art, particularly through cattle motifs (1994:82). Although cattle now are expressed as objects of San culture, we still need to examine the way in which they penetrated the San socio-economy.



Figure 15: Cattle figure with an unusually long nose

Throughout the course of the 1980s and 1990s,

efforts were made to integrate the art into what was known about the development of San history in the south-eastern mountains” (Blundell, 2004:63).

Campbell (1987) is one of the early researchers to have made such an effort. It became clear that in order to integrate the art into San history, it required that some new components of San rock art (for example, contact images) be understood as part of “the broader shamanistic understanding of the art” (Blundell, 2004:64). It has also become apparent that a social theoretical framework is essential in order to appreciate changes over time in the art.

Campbell (1987) in his commendable work used a structural-marxist approach to understand change in southern African San rock art. He focused on contact images, which included depictions showing interactions not only between the white colonists but also between the San and Cape Nguni-speaking peoples. Although his research was done on Nguni-speaker/San interaction, archaeological records and oral traditions have shown that *Maloti* San had kept their regular cultural contacts with their *Cape* San counterparts. However, Campbell, with his historical materialist model, indicates that the key to contact art lies in three areas of San shamans’ symbolic labour: rain making, control of animals and healing (1987:37).

He states that because the art was associated with the shamans' symbolic work on the social relations of production, any changes in these relations should be reflected in the nature of shamans' symbolic labour and in the art (*ibid.*: 37). In this way the symbolic labour provided the basis for change in San communities affected by interaction. The change in the nature of shamans' symbolic labour and also the apparent change in the art is the result of interaction.

Whilst Campbell (1987) is cautious not to disclose the basis of his argument (egalitarian San society), he suggests that

only a new element in the relations of production: access to certain resources and distribution of the product came to be controlled by the shamans (ibid.: 46).

Campbell (1987) refers to this new element in the relations of production as the shamanistic relation of production. The shamans entered into exchange relationships with black farmers, and this new relation of production required that the rain makers, in particular, increased their services (ritual activities) to meet the increasing farming requirements and also to convince the farmers that they were not wasting their cattle when exchanging them for rain-making services (*ibid.*: 47).

The increase in rain-making activities probably led to an increase in rain-making sites. The fact that cattle later came to be considered as ritually important to San it may have been in situations like these that the San began to use an ox or cow to represent the rain animal in actual rain-making rituals. The occurrence in large numbers of cattle paintings may support this idea. Hall (1994) realised the importance of cattle in rain-making activities. He indicates that new economic and social relationships of the San in the contact period emphasise the "importance of cattle and the role of a shaman in rain-making rituals" (1994:75).

The occurrence therefore of cattle motifs in rain-making scenes may suggest social change in the production of rock art. Initially rain-making scenes were reflected in San rock art in various ways (Campbell, 1987:47): first, some rain animals were associated with symbols and hallucinations of trance experiences, while others were, at one level, apparently narrative depictions of the capture of a rain animal. Depictions of cattle however, could be seen in any of the two.

Importantly, the use of an ox in rain-making activities provided an additional, dramatic communication to the San camp and black farmers of the importance of the rain makers' symbolic labour (*ibid.*: 47). In addition, the use of an ox had implications in the art because any change in the shaman's symbolic labour brings change to the art. It is clearly depicted in the art that the San used to perform rain-making activities using hypothetical/hallucinatory animals (Figure 16) (see also Dowson, 1994:333). The acquisition of cattle from black farmers contributed to this apparent change in San ritual arrangement. The San acquired the cattle from black farmers in part as payment for bride wealth. And of course they also raided livestock from colonial and black farmers. Importantly, this acquisition appears to have had a remarkable effect on their rock art, regardless of the manner in which cattle came into their possession. Of course, San also obtained cattle from black farmers in exchange for their rain-making services (Hall, 1994; Jolly, 1994).



Figure 16: Capturing of rain animal

According to Campbell (1987:61) the exchange of cattle between San and black farmers represents an important change in the San means of production. It might have been at this time when the San started to change from being a society that for a long time raiding was functionally equivalent to hunting. This also brought a significant change at the inter-camp level as San probably began exchanging cattle amongst themselves. This resulted in an increase in the material wealth to various San camps and even to individuals within camps. Campbell (1987) observed that the vast increase

in the number of cattle created, for the first time, a large potential surplus product, which may have heralded the beginning of property relations. Furthermore, such development would ultimately result in a breakdown in the egalitarian inter-camp relations of production because the ownership of stock facilitates the growth of individual wealth and the consequent formation of a class system incompatible with the traditional relations of production (1987:62), in part confirming the assertion that

when social relations or institutional arrangements deny people access to what they need, tension is created (Ashton, 1995).

The ultimate development of class society amongst the San is what was anticipated by Campbell's (1987) model. He offers a more elaborate view of interaction between the San and black farmers. Campbell shows that each group was active during the process of interaction struggling for their survival. Nevertheless, his argument was not without limitations. First, the selection of cattle, horses, guns and other motifs obviously associated with interaction was

limiting because there were other motifs in the art that could be related to interaction even though they lacked obvious elements of contact (Blundell, 2004:66)

for example, bandoliers (see Jolly, 2005 for discussion of "bandoliers") and knobbed sticks. Second, Campbell (1987) based his argument on the assumption that San society was egalitarian when interaction with farmers began. But, excavated evidence shows that San were not egalitarian at least 2 000 years ago when black farmers arrived in southern Africa. However, further efforts were taken by subsequent researchers to show social change in south-eastern mountains as is reflected in rock art.

Thomas Dowson (1994), for example, used structuration theory to understand the social change of San in the south-eastern mountains. Structuration theory appears to offer a way of understanding change in society as an ongoing process happening gradually over a number of decades rather than the radical change that structural Marxism emphasises. Indeed, structural-Marxist approaches implied a sudden and revolutionary change in socio-economic structure.

Dowson (1994) argues for a more gradual progression in the changes of the rock art of south-eastern mountains and his argument is not only established from the ethno-

historical sources but also the art itself provided crucial illustrative evidence and constituted a pivotal strand of his argument. Just like Campbell (1987), he accepted the historical trajectory of the San in the south-eastern mountains as laid out by John Wright (Wright, 1971) and Patricia Vinnicombe (Vinnicombe, 1976). But, where Campbell highlighted the emergence of a shamanic mode of production, Dowson emphasised the gradual progression that he argued could be seen in the art. The progression was presented in three phases: egalitarian, consortium and pre-eminent (Dowson, 1994:335-340).

Dowson, like Campbell (1987), based his argument on the assumption that San social structure was egalitarian at one point in time. He argued that paintings representing the egalitarian phase were largely monochromatic, showing very little differentiation in size, colour and detail. These uniformly painted images, it is suggested, point to social circumstances in which a number of people in a community were shamans (Dowson, 1994). This period is referred to as a “communal” phase. With increasing colonial expansion, social practices began to change, encouraging individuality amongst the San. This was the time in Dowson’s argument that saw the emergence of ‘specialised’ individual shamans. These shamans came together to form a consortium.

The paintings representing this phase are still of the same size but showing variation in colour and detail, and were made at a time when the hunter-gatherers’ “social environment was changing” (Blundell, 2004:67). This took place apparently during the first decades of the 19th Century. The social and economic circumstances in the south-eastern mountains prompted individual members of the consortium to vie for dominance and eventually rise to the last pre-eminent stage. The paintings associated with this phase depict the rise of powerful individual shamans. These paintings, as argued by Dowson (1994:339), show an individual shaman who appears to be performing a ritual, while encircled by seated women figures in clapping postures. Along the same circle but on the other side lie frightening figures (because of their exaggerated claws), which may represent spirits-of-the-dead that often take on the form of lions. Nevertheless, structuration theory appears to have offered a theoretical framework that allows for more “interpretation of San rock art as opposed to a colonial

perspective of the historical processes in the south-eastern mountains” (Blundell, 2004:67).

In spite of his efforts to show social change in a more paced manner, Dowson came under strong criticism from some scholars. It has been observed that Dowson’s argument is constructed in such a way as to imply that all change in San social life and art comes about only through interaction with other peoples. Furthermore,

Dowson’s argument creates the impression that San rock art throughout the south-eastern mountains moves slowly through a three-stage progression (Blundell, 2004:68).

Indeed, Dowson’s model becomes more problematic when all his categories of paintings occur in one panel. That is, they are highly unlikely to occur in one panel. Furthermore, Dowson’s model is limiting in terms of understanding the broad and evolving rock art subject matter.

While social change as reflected in rock art was shown in ways that are discussed above, the latest archaeological evidence in the south-eastern mountains suggests that the San were a changing society long before they interacted with black farmers. This evidence comes from San burials, which show great variation in terms of the goods found in the graves (Blundell, 2004). The burials often have grave goods; in some cases the bodies appear to have been covered in ochre and ostrich eggshell beads while, in other cases, burials warthog tusks are found (Hall & Binneman, 1987). According to Blundell this latest finding suggests that the San communities of these excavated areas, if not hierarchical, certainly singled out individuals for special treatment (2004:69). This indeed, shows how San experienced social change long before the arrival of other people in southern Africa.

Towards the late 1990s it was apparent that a number of researchers have attempted to understand rock art from the perspective of the Bantu-speakers. They were inspired in part by certain unusual motifs in San rock art that had been considered atypical of San but generally associated with black farmers. For almost a decade, Francis Thackeray (1984,1988,1990,1993) made efforts to analyse San rock art from the perspective of Bantu-speakers. Almost a decade later after him, Pieter Jolly (1994,1996a,1996b),

drawing on the archival material, oral traditions and rock art itself developed these non San-centric ideas to follow the example of Thackeray.

Jolly argues that symbiotic relations were established between San and Bantu-speakers in the south-eastern mountains and these relations, it is suggested, resulted in the San adopting some of the religious concepts and ritual practices of black farmers (Jolly, 1996b:280). He also suggests that

we may therefore need to interpret the symbolism and religious ideology underlying some of the art in terms of the dynamics of ideological change resulting from interaction between San and others (ibid.: 280).

While Jolly argues that San adopted some religious concepts and ritual practices of black farmers, which however, may have been the case, I find it difficult to rely solely on his one-sided approach, which has the potential of ambiguity in terms of understanding San rock art. Jolly makes the point that he concentrated on transmission of rites and beliefs from black farmers to the San, since it is this process, rather than the reverse, which would have had an influence on the imagery and symbolism of some San paintings (Jolly, 2000:86). The reverse, I suggest, may have also influenced the production of the art.

Although he admits that it is unlikely that cultural influences would have been completely uni-directional (Jolly, 1997:120), the depiction in San art of human figures wearing and holding typical farmer objects may suggest that these were farmers partaking in this activity, not necessarily San who adopted black farmer objects. So the amount of farmer-cultural influence on San cosmology as implied by his argument seems much more than enough to have totally influenced the tradition of painting. Although he argues that the traditional San ideology appears to have been retained after these cultural influences, the implication suggests the other way round. Jolly strongly argues that the direction of cultural flow was from Bantu-speakers to San. He justifies his approach thus:

many hunter-gatherers have taken on the cultural clothing of the farming communities by whom they are encapsulated and have been drawn into the ritual life of their agriculturist neighbours and share much of the cultural identity of the farming communities with whom they are in contact (Jolly, 1994:108).

This inference may have been drawn from only oral data and not from rock art, as the rock art evidence from the south-eastern mountains does not imply this overwhelming influence of black farmers on the San. In this specific point, Jolly (1994) draws on the evidence from some parts of Africa and outside the continent where hunter gatherers and farmers have interacted. In these cases, it appears that the flow of information has been from the farmers to the hunter gatherers, thus prompting Jolly to inductively conclude that the same has happened in the south-eastern mountains.

Jolly (1994) however, rightly argues that many hunter gatherers have taken on the cultural clothing of the farming communities, given the current situation in south-eastern Lesotho, where *Maloti* San no longer exist as a political and cultural entity. This fact led some researchers to write that the San painters have long since died (Lewis-Williams, 1982,1990). This statement should be understood properly. It refers to the “original” [actual] painters and not their descendents as, in the case of Lesotho and some parts of South Africa, there are still some remnants of San descendants who have now acquired a non-painting culture.

Since San and Bantu-speakers intermarried over a long period of time, not only black men took San wives but also San men appear to have taken black women. Technically we can argue that the San are still in existence but wearing the ‘cultural clothing’ of the farming communities as Jolly (1994) argued. Furthermore, Mtuakazi (Jolly’s informant) states that the identity of children of mixed San-Nguni marriages was determined according to whether such marriages occurred between a San woman and an Nguni man or between a San man and an Nguni woman. “Children resulting from the marriages between San men and Nguni women were considered to be San” (Jolly, 1994:96). However, Jolly talks about cultural exchanges between San and Bantu-speakers, the process, as stated earlier, he finds favourable to Bantu-speakers. He writes that we can expect cultural and cosmological changes induced in San society as a result of contact with other groups to be reflected in their art. While this latter statement sounds more convincing, the available evidence so far does not support Jolly’s argument regarding the flow of cultural influences.

According to Azariel Sekese (1905), the Basotho learned how to make rain and prevent lightning from the San. Furthermore, Blundell shows that where evidence exists for

cultural borrowing, it is overwhelmingly in favour of the movement from the San to Bantu-speakers. For example, linguistic studies show that the Nguni groups with whom the San had such a long and close interaction have a “number of clicks in their language, and they adopted the clicks from the San” (Blundell, 2004:72). These are some of the things that may suggest that the flow of cultural borrowing was not largely from Bantu-speakers to San as Jolly (1994) has argued but may have been the other way round. Although Jolly is of the idea that researchers should employ a less San-centric approach to San rock art, he prefers to say little about authorship. He seems to be cautious about arguing this out. However, rock art appears to have been and remained one cultural component of San society that was not totally absorbed by black farmers, that is, it does not appear to have been part of Bantu-speakers’ religion or ritual system.

The two Phuthi artists, Mapote and Masitise (How, 1962), appear to have painted simply because their San friends were doing so. They had neither cultural nor religious attachment to rock art. Thus, Jolly’s (1994) interactionist approach overlooks the fact that there is no adequate evidence to date that directly associates San rock art in the south-eastern mountains with Bantu-speakers’ rituals. The implication, however, from this argument is that since interaction took place between San and black farmer communities, social change was predictable in a particular direction. The problem appears to lie in part with the application of social theories that researchers use across the disciplines.

Problems of using social theories to explain social change appear to be a multidisciplinary phenomenon. Maureen Hallinan (1996) calls for a new way of thinking about social change. She points out that most sociological theories assume that social change is a continual process and also assume that change is linear and predictable (1996:1). Due to their reliance on the assumptions of continuity and linearity, contemporary models of social change typically describe only certain periods in the life of a social system and only inadequately address other critical phases. For example, we do not know whether a system, in the aftermath of a disruption, can be expected to collapse completely, regenerate in a form resembling its former structure, or emerge as a totally new social structure (*ibid.*: 1). According to Hallinan, social

change is extremely complex and the interrelationships accounting for change are too intricate to be specified. Another argument is that patterns of change are superimposed on events by the observer, that is, change is in the eye of the beholder (Hallinan, 1996:3).

In rock art we have seen how different social theories have been applied in an attempt to explain social change as reflected in rock art, yet all of them, though offering some insights, have shortcomings. Thus, we need explicit theories that would adequately address social change especially in relation to rock art subject matter. Blundell (2004) consequently argued for the use of body in the analysis of rock art. This theoretical framework offers a potentially rich new mode of analysis for rock art research (Weiss, 2005). According to Blundell

[the] body offers a much looser, but theoretically informed, framework from which to approach the various strands of data that can be drawn upon to write San history (2004:76).

“Body” also appears to be a diverse concept, for example, Lynn Meskell (1999) suggests that body should be regarded as the political, social and cultural object par excellence, not the raw, passive body, which is overlaid and inscribed with culture.

While it is argued that body can also reflect social processes (Meskell, 1999:43), it is however important to draw on ethnographic evidence to explain these social processes reflected in the body. Otherwise the explanation of these social processes would be theoretically uninformed, falling into the same trap as the previous approaches. Hence it would confirm one of Hallinan’s (1996) arguments that change is in the eye of the beholder. However, body theory is another important approach to understanding various rock art representations at MTM 1 site and also to show social change as experienced by the *Maloti* San.

I turn now to social change in Mt Moorosi, in terms of modern San and Phuthi. I provide an overview of their co-existence and possible events that may have influenced the production of rock art. Importantly, I also consider why San in this area came to be known as “*Moorosi* San”.

The Phuthi and the Moorosi San

*You would not kill him (Moroa), it was the greatest offence, much more than killing a 'person'...my informant in Mt Moorosi.*⁸

According to the oral tradition, around the early 19th Century, some Nguni-speakers referred to collectively as “*Phuthi*” had entered Lesotho from across the Drakensberg and occupied the north-eastern part of Lesotho (Omer-Cooper, 1966:99). The Phuthi, who were initially known as “*Bahalanga*” (the people of the sun) brought “farming implements and red ochre to exchange for pelts” with Basotho (Germond, 1967:330). These Bahalanga were of the “*Amazizi* tribe”, who claim their origins in the Giant’s Castle area on the banks of the Tugela River (Ellenberger, 1912:24). For a period of some fifty years, these groups stayed with the “*Maphuthing*”, adopting the name “*Phuthi*” (meaning “*duiker*”) and since then were known as “*Baphuthi*” [“people of the *duiker*”]. A schism appears to have taken place that prompted the Phuthi to migrate southwards down the Caledon River Valley (Ellenberger, 1912). Another group settled at Korokoro about 30 km south-east of Maseru Bridge, where they appear to have met some groups of San.

The history of the Phuthi and San appears to have perhaps started here with the Phuthi under the leadership of Mbulane (Jolly, 1996) who came before Mokuane (Chief Moorosi’s father). Nevertheless, Mbulane does not feature in the genealogy of the Phuthi as arranged by Ellenberger (1912), which causes uncertainty about the genealogy and Mbulane’s relation with Moorosi. Indeed, the archival records run short of explanations about Mbulane and his descendents. According to Ellenberger’s genealogy, “Mokuoane was the eldest son of Mokhoebi, who was the youngest son of Thibela” (Ellenberger, 1912:26). Although it is not clear how Mokuoane took over as a Phuthi leader, he probably had the support of his father-in-law, Tsosane, who had a large following. Tsosane was already a headman or chief under whom Mokuoane served as a “herd boy”. However, Mbulane was said to have been guided by the San on long expeditions into the mountains to view the land where the Phuthi had settled temporarily at Korokoro (Sekese, 1905; Jolly, 1996a:35).

⁸ My informant was responding to the question “Why were these San known as ‘*Moorosi* San’?” So my informant demonstrates how important they were to Moorosi.

Since then, nothing further concerning the relations between the Phuthi and the San appears to have been recorded until the time of Mokuoane (Jolly, 1994:53). Mokuoane, as Jolly points out, had a San wife (Jolly, 1996a:35). It is likely that he had one, as was the common practice by Phuthi chiefs who came before and after him. But this statement appears to have led other people into thinking that Moorosi himself was a “half San by his father’s San wife” due to lack of clear explanation. Moorosi’s mother (Maili) was a daughter of Chief Tsosane of “*MaPolane*” (a major Phuthi clan) (Ellenberger, 1912:28). The Phuthi traditions also confirm this and Moorosi was raised and circumcised by his uncle Nqe. In Basotho culture, the maternal uncle plays a pivotal role in raising a child, including taking responsibility for the rites of passage for the child.

It appears that southward migrations of the Phuthi continued under Chief Mokuoane until they met some bands of San who had settled along the Tele and Blekana Rivers (How, 1962:11) on the southern border of present Lesotho (Vinnicombe, 1976:92). It appears that conflicts between the Phuthi and the San prevailed, especially in the Dordrecht area, and the San appear to have been politically and militarily superior to the Phuthi at that time. After Moorosi had taken over as chief, things changed for the better on the part of the Phuthi,

the San were given to understand that the Phuthi, whom they had previously considered their servants, had now become their masters (Vinnicombe, 1976:92).

From that time on, the Phuthi and the San purportedly remained on amicable terms (*ibid.*: 92).

Unexpected and sometimes warring events of the time also forced Moorosi to look for a less vulnerable area. While exploring the extreme southern part of the present Lesotho, Moorosi had amongst his people some groups of San. Strong fraternal relations between San and Phuthi may have started around this time. Moorosi was later, while already in Mt Moorosi, referred to as the “Chief of the San” in the statement taken from Dinilapo (a subject of Chief Moshoeshoe stationed in Moorosi’s territory):

Our law does not permit us to kill anyone unless they have committed some great offence. San are included in the law I refer to, ... I mean to say their

chief would be angry if I interfered with them without reason. Their chief is Moorosi (Vinnicombe, 1976:92).

Dinilapo's accounts were later confirmed during my research work at Mt Moorosi by one of my informants. This informant, when replying to the question "Why were these San known as '*Moorosi San*'?", he indicated that the San were reported to have been close friends of Moorosi. Oral tradition reveals that around the time when Moorosi took over from his father as chief of the Phuthi, relations between the two groups were not amicable. Although the supremacy shifted from the San to the Phuthi, Moorosi did not pay revenge to their former masters instead, he incorporated them into the solid Phuthi nation. The unfolding evidence shows that the Phuthi under Moorosi and San were not only on good terms as cultural entities but the latter also had a special place in the heart of Moorosi.

In the quotation cited at the beginning of this section, my informant pointed out that "it was the greatest offence to kill a San, much more than killing a 'person'". There is something intriguing about this statement. It reveals that killing a person was the worst offence possible. Indeed, it is even so today. But killing a San was even worse to Moorosi because he [Moorosi] was a friend of the San people. It appears that Moorosi was not just a friend to them, but he respected them as the vulnerable cultural entity that, to him, required protection from other stable farming communities. The San did not only run away from the wrath of white farmers in the south and east of the Drakensberg, but were also chased away by black farmers in the north-western Drakensberg. During all these events they sought refuge with Moorosi. I posit that the tradition of referring to the San as "*Moorosi San*" in this region strengthened around this time.

Chief Moshoeshe was also reported to have been sympathetic towards the San and intolerant of any discriminatory acts against them. Historical and oral traditions show that shortly after Moshoeshe had moved to *Thaba Bosiu* (about 1825), he sent a herd of cattle to San groups who had occupied the Qeme Plateau west of *Thaba Bosiu* (Ellenberger, 1912). Chief Letsie 1, who succeeded Chief Moshoeshe, continued with his father's love towards the San. Basotho traditions show that he was not impressed by the killing incident of the San by Linare (Chief Jonathan's men) in a fashion that was

later known as the “Sehonghong assault”. It appears that great chiefs had great attachment to the San as was also the case with Moorosi.

Whereas the San were notorious for stock theft across southern Africa, there were no cases reported of the San stealing stock from Moorosi (Vinnicombe, 1976). However, Phuthi tradition shows that some groups of *Maloti* San at one stage stole Moorosi’s cattle from *Thaba Linoha* (Mountain of Snakes) in what is now the Moleheshoek district. They drove the stolen cattle up the Seapala River to Likolobeng where they lived. The tradition further reveals that Moorosi asked Lekhutla (one of his chief warriors) and other men to fetch the cattle stolen from *Thaba Linoha*. Lekhutla praised himself on that occasion in the following verse:

*Pheetsa meru ea ba ha Pheana, Tjamela,
O na rongoe, likhomo a lilata,
O phemme metsu ea Baroa mahaheng mola,
O phemme metsu ea Baroa Likolobeng.*

Which may be rendered thus in English:

The first phrase “*Pheetsa meru*”, however, appears to have been used metaphorically to mean “someone who clears forests”, and this person names himself “Tjamela” who relates to Pheana.

*Forests-clearer of the family of Pheana, Tjamela,
He was asked to fetch cattle, he brought them back
He evaded San arrows there at the caverns
He evaded San arrows at Likolobeng.*

While this event may have brought to light some intolerable behaviour by the San, and given some provocative signs to Moorosi, there is no evidence about Moorosi ordering their arrest or destruction. Instead, Moorosi appears to have created a sympathetic environment and a sense of unity between the Phuthi and the San. The San appear to have been regarded as an integral part of the Phuthi. The San began to adopt some Phuthi culture and the Phuthi adopted some San practices.

There is evidence that some Phuthi individuals painted alongside their San friends in rock shelters (How, 1962). The question is “What exactly did they paint?... human or animal figures?”. On the basis of what Mapote and Masitise had painted for Marion

How (1962), I posit that they painted mostly animal figures and war scenes (Figure 17). Although these paintings, it is argued, are not easily distinguishable from the many other contact paintings ascribed to San artists (Jolly, 1996a), the quantity and quality of domesticates in rock art in this region suggest that there had been a change over time in terms of subject matter. In addition to the culture of amicability that Moorosi cultivated, painting appears to have maintained good relations between these two groups.

In some areas in the Cape, nonetheless, it appears that such friendly relations also existed between San and other black farmer groups. However, the kind of relationship between the Khoekhoen and the San as described by Smith *et al.* (2000:44) was that of “patron” and “client”. The hunters served the herders as shepherds and mercenaries in return for food and protection.

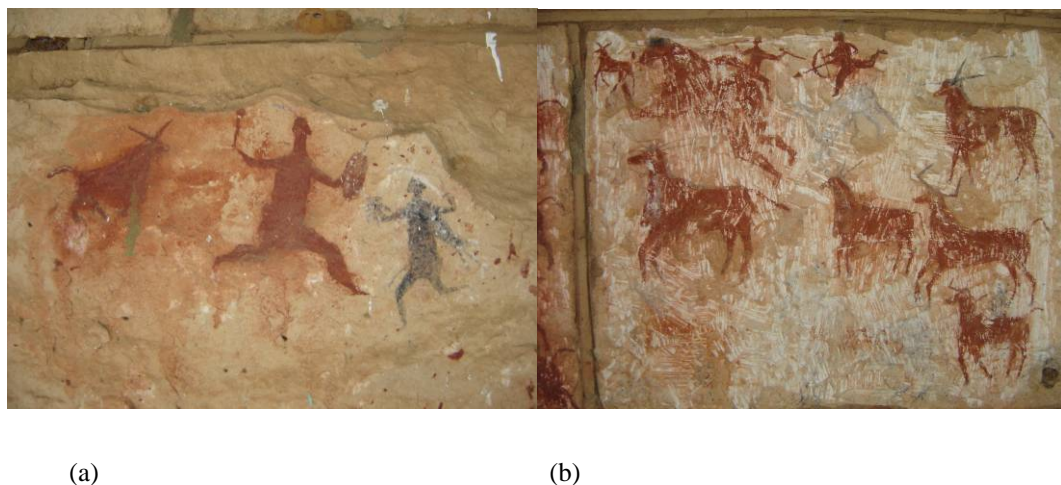


Figure 17: Paintings executed by a Phuthi artist on the east wall of the former British residency at Moyeni

The San, however, who were staying with the Phuthi, “lived in huts, owned cattle and sheep and cultivated crops” (Jolly, 1996a:59). This is confirmed by Phuthi traditions and material remains of “San ruins” *lithakong tsa Baroa* as the place is called in Pokane, about 15 km south-west of Mt Moorosi. The San occupied this area until the time of the Moorosi War in 1879 when colonial forces dispersed them. It appears that some of these groups fled to Mt Moorosi while others ran for safety towards the far east of Lesotho in the heart of the Maloti mountains. After the San had left Pokane, the

colonial forces established their camp and military hospital in this area, which was subsequently named Fort Hartley (after Dr Hartley). As at 2008, this name has remained unchanged.

A socio-economic change occurred in San society, with the San establishing permanent settlements and rearing animals in Moorosi's territory. Moorosi is reported to have co-operated with the San in raiding farms in the Cape and Natal colonies. This mutual co-operation continued until the fall of Chief Moorosi. The interaction between these two groups has not only involved the economic aspect of their lives, but also the socio-cultural aspects (Jolly, 1996a).

While there are no more San artists left in Quthing, memories of them remain in their paintings and also in their descendents. It is through consultations with local people that these memories could be revived. I turn now to the research work that I undertook in this region.

Research Work Undertaken in Mt Moorosi

I started this research work in Mt Moorosi in July 2005 during the research break at the University of the Witwatersrand. The research commenced with familiarising myself with the research area, establishing a rapport with the local people, local chiefs and also identifying potential knowledgeable elderly people around Mt Moorosi for interviews. I also undertook basic inspections of the site (MTM 1) because I had neither been to the site nor knew about it until early 2005. However, I managed to reach the site on my own, with instructions from Mr Taole Tesele.

Fieldwork was conducted during most of December 2005. My research involved no direct contact with the paintings, that is, no tracings were drawn by me during the course of my research. I neither removed any cultural material nor excavated any cultural deposit. While the Lesotho Department of Culture provided me with assistance (transport) and human support, I, nevertheless, secured throughout the research the services of a local tour guide – Mr Telang Sekotlo. The components of the research included: non-destructive (photographic) site recording, interviews, and reconnaissance surveys.

Site Recording

The site had already been fully documented. Nevertheless, I photographed the paintings specifically to document their present state of conservation. I also photographed the site and its environs to complement the existing evidence about the site and also in order to situate it in a broader context.

Interviews and Ethics

It is now a common concern among the research community that consent and cooperation have to be obtained by the researcher from the research institution with which the researcher is affiliated and, most importantly, from the people to be interviewed. In this regard, the University of the Witwatersrand and the Quthing community were consulted and informed before I could begin my study. I sought permission for undertaking this study first from the University of the Witwatersrand by submitting my proposal. A request was also made to the Quthing local chiefs as representatives of their respective communities during my preliminary visits to the site to undertake my study within their communities. While the language barrier was not a problem for me, I explained the objective and nature of my study firstly to the local chiefs and later to the respondents. The next step was to complete the consent form and obtain permission to conduct my research in the subsequent days that I came to the site. As regards confidentiality, I made no mention of the names of the participants (either by pseudonyms or real names). However, I used “ward” names in preference to citing specific villages that I dealt with.

I interviewed 18 people from separate areas of Mt Moorosi, Tsatsane and Phamong. The criteria I used to select informants for interview were based on: first, family relationships with Chief Moorosi; second, relationships with the *Maloti* San, and third, any other knowledgeable elderly people over the age of seventy-five years. I succeeded in interviewing people representing all these categories (Appendix C). The most challenging interviews were those that involved the descendants of the *Maloti* San.

Although all these people were Phuthi, the medium of communication was *Sesotho*, so there was no language barrier. The interviewees shaped the progress of the free-flowing

interviews and open-ended discussions. The data obtained from these discussions cast new light into the cultural sequence in the region and also revealed the 'changing' perceptions the Phuthi hold about the San. I initially anticipated that discussions about the San would be an easy and enjoyable topic. I was surprised to discover that being associated with the San was a "disgrace" in that region. The 125 years since the fall of Chief Moorosi has significantly changed their perceptions of the relationship between the San and the Phuthi, making it difficult for me to carry on with the discussions.

Defeated in part by this problem, I had to reassure two local chiefs where San descendents were found that I already knew about the situations in their communities. The communities had difficulty with sharing what they regarded as "private" and "embarrassing" information with strangers. I could see thereafter, that the chiefs were more comfortable with my presence and provided the required information about the San descendents. However, they were concerned that most of their people were miserable with their status. Permission to talk to these people was granted by each local chief.

In subsequent interviews with the San descendents, I enjoyed the company of chiefs' men who did most of the work for me: introducing me to the informants and asking for their cooperation during my interview. As a result our discussions gained momentum with free and happy people. The openness of my interviewees (mostly women) showed me that they were willing respondents, let down only by their status as women. In Basotho culture, a man is considered the head of the family. Most of the family issues directly require the consent of a man rather than of a woman.

While I acknowledge some problems in my interviews, the information obtained from different informants confirmed in part what has been written about the region so far and also revealed new evidence about the region. I can confirm that while there are no more San hunter gatherers left in Mt Moorosi, memories of them remain. It is also important to note here that while I gathered this information about San in this region, for interpretation of imagery at MTM 1 I will rely almost entirely on Bleek's 19th Century San ethnography (Bleek, 1874,1933,1935).

Reconnaissance Survey

I conducted a survey of more sites around Mt Moorosi on both sides of the Senqu River: in Phamong north-west of Mt Moorosi and along the Sebapala River and Tsatsane Valley east of Mt Moorosi (Appendix A)⁹. The main purpose of the survey was to find sites which might have paintings similar to those at MTM 1. In this course of action, I benefited from the services of my well-informed guide who was pretty *au fait* with the whole region. We managed to record a total of eleven sites (Appendix A), some of which had been recorded by ARAL (1979 to 1985) (see Smits, 1983).¹⁰



Figure 18: Pre-eminent cattle figure from the Sheep Kraal site

Of the sites that I recorded, cattle and eland motifs were ubiquitous across the region. Intriguing about the cattle figures was that they occurred in various and unusual representations (Figure 12 and Figure 15). I recorded Figure 15 from a site across the river from the Sheep Kraal site – the biggest site I recorded which is currently used as a sheep kraal, hence the name “Sheep Kraal”. It is at the Sheep Kraal site that I recorded the most pre-eminent cattle figure (Figure 18). This figure measures 2.14 m in length. In a panel that stretches 12 m in length and about 4 m in height, full of detailed and

⁹ The map in Appendix A shows the spatial distribution of the sites visited from Moyeni through Fort Hartley (Pokane) to Mt Moorosi. Some of these sites occur east and south-east of Mt Moorosi in the Sebapala and Tsatsane Valleys.

¹⁰ The co-ordinates for these sites have not been provided because the sites occur on public land where they are not protected. Researchers who require this information can obtain it from RARI.

polychromatic images, this figure immediately catches the eye because it stands out from the rest. This figure, together with other ubiquitous cattle motifs in this region, may confirm my argument that cattle symbolism replaced that of eland in this region.

At most sites that I visited, however, cattle figures are depicted in their normal postures. It is at this other site (Figure 15) and MTM 1 that cattle images suggest something “not of this world”, not only because of their peculiar postures, but also their out-of-the-ordinary and perhaps exaggerated features. While size of an image may suggest a special significance about that figure (Dowson, 1994), I posit that the pre-eminent cattle figure at the Sheep Kraal site may represent something “beyond the ordinary cow”. Thus, it has special significance in relation to other images on the same panel.



Figure 19: Dancing human figures from Qomoqomong

Some images at MTM 1 may also be seen at some rock art sites that I recorded. The Qomoqomong site (also recorded by ARAL) south-west of Mt Moorosi shows steatopygous human figures that resemble those at MTM 1 (Figure 19). They appear to be a group of women clapping hands in dancing postures. There are other figures that appear to be squatting that also resemble those at MTM 1 (Figure 20). This figure appears to have been wet [perhaps by local people or tourists trying to enhance the visibility of paintings]. This is one of the sites that I talk about later that is threatened

by tourism. While some images at MTM 1 also occur at some other sites, there are remarkable figures that were not seen anywhere else during my survey: first, an arthropod figure that I argue is peculiar to MTM 1; second, a therianthrope figure or an SDF that was not seen in any of the other ten sites I visited. The rarity of these figures adds more significance to MTM 1. Indeed, the figures at MTM 1 appear to be unique and, in the next chapter, I discuss the principal attempts to decode San rock art.



Figure 20: Squatting rounded-body figure

CHAPTER 3:

THE QUEST FOR MEANING IN SAN ROCK ART

San rock art is one of the most informative and evocative aspects of southern Africa's material culture. Long viewed narrowly through Euro-centric eyes (Mitchell, 2002:192), employment of more sophisticated ethnographically centred interpretations in the mid-1970s (Blundell, 2004:53) "revolutionised understanding of San rock art". Thus, the mid-1970s is considered as the turning point in San rock art research from the older "gaze and guess" approaches to ethnographically-informed ones. Previously, San rock art research was also characterised by what Blundell views as an "uninformed colonial approach that was tarnished by its arrogant guesswork and racist underpinnings" (2004:53). However, positive efforts to remedy this situation came initially in the form of quantitative studies of rock art pioneered by Vinnicombe (Vinnicombe, 1967a,1967b), Maggs (1967) and Lewis-Williams (1972,1974).

It did not take long, however, before these researchers – particularly Lewis-Williams – realised that numerical studies could not lead to the finding of meaning in rock art. He then introduced an ethnographically verifiable interpretive approach. This approach as it became apparent later, had established firm foundations for more research in San rock art. It also led to some researchers arguing that southern African rock art research had undergone a paradigm shift (Blundell, 2004). While this approach did not immediately appeal to all researchers, the period from the mid-1970s to the 1990s witnessed heated debates around this approach. I thus discuss developments in San rock art research since the late 1960s to the present.

Paradigm Shift in San Rock Art Research

The history of rock art research has been widely studied, nonetheless it needs some description here. At the start of the 20th Century, researchers tried to decode rock art in various parts of the world, and southern African San rock art has not escaped these

interpretive enterprises. A wide spectrum of explanations from the bizarre to the plausible has been offered (Lewis-Williams & Loubser, 1986:253). On the one hand, a survey of literature published before 1970 reveals very little, if any progress in understanding southern African rock art (*ibid.*: 253). Nevertheless, towards the late 1960s, southern African rock art research started to take shape with publications by Patricia Vinnicombe (Vinnicombe, 1967) and Tim Maggs (Maggs, 1967) both introducing quantitative methods in rock art research. The use of quantitative methods meant that recording became less selective as was the case previously. Vinnicombe realised that collections of data on rock art were largely unsystematic and subjective and, because of the incomplete nature of evidence, valid analysis or comparison was difficult.

Researchers such as Vinnicombe (1976) were able to demonstrate that San artists were highly selective in the range of subjects portrayed in rock art assemblages. That is, they did not just paint anything that came across their minds. Soon after the beginning of the 1970s, enthusiasm for extensive numerical data inventories “diminished sharply” (Dowson & Lewis-Williams, 1994:3). Quantitative methods, it is argued, did not answer interpretive questions; instead, they provided statistical and classifications of data.

While it was true that all paintings should be copied, it was also true that the paintings could be quantified and prepared for computer analysis only by selecting specific attributes (Lewis-Williams & Loubser, 1986:258). Data were classified with no ultimate intentions of interpretation in mind. As a result, so many features relevant to interpretation of the art were not recognised when the art was classified and quantified and therefore do not appear among the data (*ibid.*: 258).

Although selection must inevitably be governed by some preconceived view of what might be significant, Harald Pager (1971), for example, does not give reasons for choosing certain attributes and ignoring others (Lewis-Williams & Loubser, 1986:258). Thus, quantification of data proves not only an unsuitable avenue to make sense of the art but, as Lewis-Williams & Loubser remark, it also cannot of itself provide either an objective set of data or any explanation, in other words it lends data a deceptive aura of objectivity (*ibid.*: 258). Quantification seemed to offer an incontrovertible method for

demonstrating complexity and it did not have the wide impact for which some researchers hoped (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1994:203).

Consequently, after 1970, two distinct schools of thought developed in the attempt to further understand rock art. A newer group of researchers on one hand challenged the older views of rock art with novel methods, techniques and interpretations (Lewis-Williams & Loubser, 1986:253). On the other hand, the older writers remained loyal to traditional Euro-centric views of rock art. For example, until the late 1970s there were still some researchers who regarded southern African San rock art as no more than a source of entertainment. These rock art researchers continued to cling to the view that the art was little more than primitive art for art's sake, executed for pure pleasure. This approach raised a lot of concern amongst certain researchers because it reproduced and perpetuated a racial stereotype of the San as simple, childlike people (Lewis-Williams & Dowson, 1994). This stereotype of the San as childlike and not fully human had to be vigorously challenged if rock art research was to emerge from this unacceptable situation (*ibid.*: 203).

So, the introduction of an ethnographic method in the mid-1970s was vital as it reshaped San rock art research. This new avenue utilises ethnographic and historical material to establish close and multiple correlations and commonalities in the practice, imagery, material culture, and oral tradition of San speakers, past and present, particularly for the purposes of iconographic and contextual explication (Lewis-Williams, 1980).

Towards the end of 1970s, an emphasis on both 19th Century and 20th Century San ethnography at the expense of purely western aesthetics produced unexpectedly rich results (Dowson & Lewis-Williams, 1994:3). And, indeed, it became increasingly apparent that an ethnographic approach did not necessarily produce a huge view that is incapable of development (*ibid.*: 6). Several papers show that there is considerable room for innovation within an essentially ethnographic research programme (for example, Walker, 1994:130; Thackeray, 1994:221; Guenther, 1994:257). This improvement shows that San ethnography, as seen by Lewis-Williams & Dowson (1994), continues to elucidate the art.

Exponents of the ethnographic method saw a new avenue to understanding rock art research. These new theoretical developments opened up research in ways that were never thought of in the early 1970s. Rock art began to take its place as an important part of southern Africa's history and research in this field, and it is not only about the past but also about the future (Dowson & Lewis-Williams, 1994:6-8). With this theoretical development, many people started to realise the importance of San rock art as a reliable avenue to access the past.

Interpretation of San rock art began to be acknowledged as a major challenge by a growing number of researchers who shifted from the traditional western perception (for example, art for art's sake). Knowledge of San worldview became a prerequisite to understand San art (Lewis-Williams, 1998). This approach yielded more plausible results and appeared to be a reliable interpretive tool for some rock art motifs. Thus the period between the early 1970s and the present has seen an increasingly detailed ethnographic approach, and has laid a firm foundation for a change in the evidential status of southern African rock art (Dowson, 1994:332). The images need no longer be seen as simply pictures from and of the past; more importantly, they are items of evidence in their own right for historical processes (*ibid.*: 332).

Although current knowledge of San rock art is immensely indebted to the ethnographic approach, the process of ethnographic analogy has come under some critical scrutiny (for example, Gould & Watson 1982; Wylie, 1982,1985). The ethnographic approach has been criticised for its universalising nature. According to Anne Solomon (Solomon, 1994:336) the problems of ethnographic method in southern African rock art research include an implicit assumption of uniformity, which tends to be reproduced in explanation. Solomon argues that archaeologists have long relied on Kalahari ethnographies to make analogies over vast stretches of space and time.

While some of these critiques might probably be valid for some places, it is necessary to examine them against my area of study. From the mid-19th Century onwards, there has been active observation of San people in Lesotho. Arbousset & Daumas (1846: 246-247) had written about the San rituals that they witnessed in the Maloti mountain area. Archaeological records and rock art itself also show that the San in the Drakensberg area used to dance and perform related rituals just like their counterparts

in the Kalahari. This is confirmed by the depiction of segments of healing dance at MTM 1, thus making the ethnographic approach appropriate as a tool for rock art analysis in this project.

The neuropsychological model, introduced by Lewis-Williams & Dowson in 1988, complemented the ethnographic model. Initially meant to explain European Upper Palaeolithic art, the model has been widely used throughout the world to explain certain geometric motifs.

The fundamental principle underpinning this model is that the human nervous system is universal. Under certain circumstances the visual system generates a range of luminous percepts that are independent of light from an external source. These percepts, when viewed under laboratory conditions appear to have form (Klüver, 1942:177), and they take geometric forms such as grids, zigzags, dots, spirals and catenary curves. Medical researchers often described these images as phosphenes or endogenous percepts, but Lewis-Williams & Dowson (1988) labelled them “entoptic”, meaning within vision, because they appeared to be experienced even if subjects “closed their eyes” (Blundell, 2004:59). As they occur in the optic system, these entoptics are experienced cross-culturally. Lewis-Williams & Dowson observed that because the model was largely constructed from people’s descriptions of their experiences in altered states, it is more phenomenological than psychological and these descriptions showed remarkable similarity cross-culturally and seemingly independently of the method of induction used.

People having these experiences tend to interpret images from cultural and individual backgrounds. A San person, for example, may interpret a grid seen in the entoptic stage as a “honeycomb” while someone from a Western perspective may interpret it as a “bank of television screens” (Blundell, 2004:59).

These geometric visual percepts can be induced by a variety of means which include laboratory conditions, electrical stimulation, flickering light, and altered states of consciousness (Lewis-Williams & Dowson, 1988). The model can be effectively used when dealing with figures associated with the altered state of consciousness (for example, geometrics, entoptics) for the interpretation of rock art.

Jeremy Dronfield (Dronfield, 1993) is one of the scholars who used this model although he later criticised it. Dronfield and others have observed that the model appears to provide solutions to some rock art problems, so according him, it is defective since it deals with shamanistic art only. However, we can no longer take this as defective since the model is specifically meant to resolve certain rock art problems.

The so-called defectiveness of the model appears to be an advantage at MTM 1. We should not expect one model to address all rock art problems. Each research model is like a new research direction designed to answer specific problems as they are perceived at the time, and those perceptions are constituted in a complex way and not always fully appreciated by those who hold them (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1994:201).

The mid-1970s marked what was widely known as the paradigm shift in southern African rock art research by the introduction of an ethnographic approach which a decade later was supplemented by the neuropsychological model. Indeed, it was a paradigm shift as rock art research subsequently took another direction with the ethnographic model being applied all over the Drakensberg with remarkable results. The neuropsychological model also came as a requisite interpretive tool in rock art. These two approaches appear to correlate well in explaining San rock art. Since the introduction of these two paradigms, rock art research advanced from simplistic “gaze and guess” approaches to a more informed study.

Determining the Context

It was not until the mid-1970s when researchers argued that production of rock art was almost entirely influenced by socio-religious aspects of San society. Patricia Vinnicombe (Vinnicombe, 1976) in her seminal work – *People of the eland* – shed more light towards understanding San rock art. Vinnicombe, although cautious, appears to have employed a range of approaches to analyse San rock art. She often implied that San imagery possibly related to actual events (Blundell, 2004:62), which could be seen as an ‘historical approach’. But, most importantly, drawing on a number of concepts: symbolism, ritual and metaphor, she emphasised that the art must be understood as part of the broader social and cognitive system of the San (Vinnicombe, 1976:350).

Vinnicombe (1976) presents a notion that some of the ubiquitous eland imagery was produced for psychological and social harmony. This probably is one of the reasons that prompted a split between the understanding of the meaning of images – the hermeneutic approach (which I address later) – and an understanding of the social production and consumption of the art – the social approach (see Blundell, 2004:63). It is with the latter approach that this chapter deals.

Since the late 1980s, efforts have been made to integrate the art into its social context. It appears that after Vinnicombe (1976), Lewis-Williams (for example, 1982) made a considerable contribution to the social approach. He was greatly discontent with the *art pour l'art* approach; which implied that the art was executed for the pleasure of the artist in the work and the reciprocal pleasure of the beholder (Lewis-Williams, 1982:429). This perception of San art ultimately placed the production and consumption of the art at an individual's psychological level, thereby denying the possibility of understanding the social context of the art, as well as the simplistic functionalist argument of the sympathetic magic hypothesis. Consequently he undertook to explain the social aspect of San rock art.

Lewis-Williams thus introduced a structural-marxist model into southern African San rock art studies. This model articulates the shaman's symbolic labour (Lewis-Williams, 1982). It appears that Lewis-Williams was primarily concerned that, in spite of the abundance of hunter-gatherer rock art in many parts of the world, very little was known about its social context. In his paper – *The economic and social context of southern San rock art* – Lewis-Williams argues that while perhaps there are one or two notable exceptions to this despondent generalisation, the rock art of southern Africa is certainly not one (1982:429), instead, it is one of the most affected probably because of the formerly dominant schools of thought in southern African rock art research: *art pour l'art* and sympathetic magic.

This situation, coupled with an avoidance of theoretical issues, has relegated San rock art study to the level of the sumptuously illustrated “coffee table” book (Lewis-Williams, 1982:29), without any special significance other than its plain ‘self-explanatory’ nature that ‘this is an animal’ while there was no further explanation behind the production of images.

Lewis-Williams' model explained the social roles of such shamanic activities as curing the sick, warding off sickness from people, controlling the movement of the game, controlling rain and going on out-of-body travel to visit camps with access to resources (Lewis-Williams, 1982:433). Importantly, it is argued, these social roles are in the end reflected in the art. In addition, the San do recognise the value of social cooperation and harmony, and would occasionally hold a ritual curing dance to secure the desired state – social cohesion – (*ibid.*: 430).

In his attempt to show the social aspects in the production of San rock art, Lewis-Williams highlights that

The San were not cogs in a mindless social process turning out works of art for unknown reasons; they painted for purposes of which they were well aware (1982:430).

It is stated that the paintings were certainly a product of the consciousness of men, but this consciousness was stimulated somehow. According to Lewis-Williams the consciousness of the artists was influenced by a web of social relations, all of which had an economic or potentially economic component. It is on these grounds, I believe, that Lewis-Williams (1982) explains the relationships into which people enter to exploit a variety of resources. In the light of his extrapolations, the key context within which rock art was made was social. It served the purpose of keeping the society in lively and good relations.

The social context had an economic aspect that served to strengthen the social relations of production (Lewis-Williams, 1982). These social relations are in turn, embedded in shamanic activities. Lewis-Williams explains these shamanistic activities in terms of symbolic labour. In order to explain shaman's symbolic labour, Lewis-Williams has divided shamans and medicine men into their specialised responsibilities (*ibid.*: 433.).

Some medicine men were recognised as curers and they were said to draw sickness from the bodies of their patients and then sneeze it out of their noses (Lewis-Williams, 1982:433). This could either happen as part of a curing dance or in a special curing ritual which did not require a full dance (*ibid.*: 433). This curing procedure often induced a nasal haemorrhage, and the blood was rubbed on the patient in the belief that its smell would keep evil away. The curer also had another task of keeping the social

relations within the production process in good repair (*ibid.*: 433). These activities shape what we may label as the religious aspect.

In addition to curers, the southern African San recognised two further categories of medicine men: the medicine men of the game and medicine men of the rain. The former were believed to control the movements of antelope herds so that they would run into the waiting hunters' ambush, whereas the latter were said to outwit and capture an often dangerous rain animal so that they could lead it over the parched land where they finally slaughtered it, its blood and milk becoming precipitation (Bleek, 1933: 375-376; Lewis-Williams, 1982:433). These two categories of medicine men pursue an economic role that, in a broad sense, keep the society in good relations and sometimes helped their group to remain harmonious.

Important and common to these three types of medicine men is their social role in the production of rock art. These multiple components add up to the socio-religious context of the art. It is confirmed by the widely accepted view that the paintings and engravings of southern Africa are no longer seen as simple reflections of day-to-day life activities but as an active component of socio-religious practices (Dowson *et al.*, 1994:188). However, the occurrence of contact images (for example, domesticated animals) in San rock art was, on one hand, seen as a sign of social change (Campbell, 1987; Jolly, 1994,1996a,1996b). On the other hand, the depictions of cattle, in particular, show rain-making scenes and that they functioned to embed new economic and social relationships in the contact period which emphasised the "importance of cattle and the role of a shaman in bringing them to the group" (Hall 1994:75). While the subject matter appears to have changed a bit, the context within which the art was produced remains the same. In this way, Lewis-Williams (1975) rightly argued that San rock art was religious. Thus, cattle representations in San rock art have not changed the way rock art should be understood.

While cattle eventually constituted an important aspect of the socio-economic system of the San, they had to be grafted on to the existing ritual metaphors underpinning productive relations, thereby rationalising these relations and providing the basis for economic and social form in the contact period (Hall, 1994:81). This suggests that

cattle have not only come to play an important economic role but also an equally important cultural role as trance metaphors in the changing San worldview.

Hall points out that cattle paintings are a clear expression by the San to manage new forms of economic and social risk (1994, 81). Although cattle motifs were initially alien to San rock art, it is argued, they came to be considered by shamans as important for ritual purposes. However, detailed interpretation of images continued to be a challenge to researchers who resorted to widely established methods.

Hermeneutics

It was not until the 18th and 19th Centuries when the term ‘hermeneutics’ was used to suggest an interpretation, which discloses something hidden from ordinary understanding (Namono, 2004). However, the modern use of the term includes a combination of empirical investigation and subsequent subjective understanding of human phenomena (Woodward, 1996:555). The classic modern usage of the term is evident in Victor Turner’s seminal works (Turner, 1966,1967,1968).

Turner provides an essential framework for the sophisticated interpretation and integration of symbolism and ritual within San society and “then within the rock art” (Blundell, 2004:54). These works provided the basis for further research especially in rock art. Turner explains three levels of meaning to understand symbols in context: the exegetical, the operational and the positional meaning that infer structure and properties of ritual symbols. In the subsequent interpretive part I however, focus on an exegetical meaning.

Lewis-Williams (1981) drew on the works of Turner to elucidate the semantic spectrum of key symbols in San ritual, such as eland (*ibid.*: 54). Thus, he explored new avenues toward a thorough understanding of San rock art. Lewis-Williams brought about more appealing change in rock art whereby San images were no longer seen as simple narrative but as a complex system of metaphors and symbols. Blundell (2004:54) labels this approach by Lewis-Williams as a hermeneutic approach in a sense that it fundamentally deals with San rock art in a manner that is “consistent with the way in which the makers of the images and their communities interpreted them”.

The hermeneutic approach therefore made significant strides in rock art research throughout the 1980s and 1990s in establishing the symbolic associations of particular images. Images in the south-eastern mountains were now interpreted in terms of the activities of San ritual specialists – shamanic symbolic labour as I showed earlier. Nevertheless, the hermeneutic approach was not without limitations. It was criticised for its failure to find chronology in rock art (dating the art) and also for its treatment of space as uniform, that is, its wide applicability across time and space. However, its proponents justified its inability to date rock art as the art is very difficult to date and both the small number of existing dates and their poor resolution mean that they are not good enough for the purposes of understanding detailed change in the art in a specific location (Blundell, 2004).

On the question of treating space as uniform it is argued that regional differences were played down in favour of a broad-based general meaning. While these aspects were considered weaknesses, “they eventually appeared to be strengths as well” (Blundell, 2004:62) because they allowed a hermeneutic approach to provide a broad-based interpretive framework for the art.

Ethnography

The ongoing ethnographic research in the Kalahari Desert and the subsequent use of ethnography in archaeology, significantly contributed useful information towards our understanding of the symbolic associations of the images (see Lewis-Williams *et al.*, 2000). In addition, it is argued that ethnography provides the basis for valid interpretation (Layton, 2001).

While various Kalahari groups had no tradition of rock art themselves, it is argued that they practised the great circular dance, which was important to their ritual and symbolic lives. Thus, the ethnographic insights into the dance added more value to the existing body of southern African ethnographic evidence as collected by Wilhelm Bleek and Lucy Lloyd in the 18th Century (Bleek, 1874). Bleek and Lloyd’s material formed the basis of ethnographic interpretive framework. In San rock art research, researchers rely almost entirely on published and unpublished literature and also on Kalahari ethnography to obtain ethnographic evidence because there are no San artists who can

be questioned about their rock art. I do the same here by drawing entirely on archaeological records. In the early 1980s, ethnographic material was supplemented by anthropological and medical literature on the neuropsychology of altered states of consciousness (Blundell, 2004).

With the ethnographic and neuropsychological approaches now put in place, different types of images were interpreted. According to Blundell (2004:55),

Anthropomorphic figures that bend forward, sometimes with arms back, now came to be understood as people adopting postures that were important to the dance. People in hand-to-nose postures or that were depicted with nasal bleeding came to be interpreted as participants of a dance. Paintings of eland were now understood to be the most powerful symbols of supernatural potency, a substance that pervades the San universe and that is essential to the success of the dance. Therianthropic images were interpreted as San ritual-specialists who were in the process of transforming or had already transformed into animal shape in order to travel to the spirit world.

While the relevance, reliability and production of ethnography are threatened by its inadequacies (Namono, 2004:50), San ethnography is widely established and proved highly reliable as an interpretive tool for most of San images especially in the south-eastern mountains of Lesotho. However, one of the inadequacies of ethnography is that ethnographic accounts were often recorded not only under ambiguous but also complex interactive conditions between ethnographers and subjects. I, nonetheless, use ethnography in this project not only because it is the only source of information for my study but also because of the quality and reliability of southern African ethnography. Bleek (1874) was a renowned linguist, thus the problems of translation and misrepresentation of data should be minimal.

Neuropsychological Research

Apparent also in San rock art are geometric designs that are investigated through neuropsychological research. Neuropsychology studies the hallucinations people experience in altered states of consciousness (Lewis-Williams, 1990:55). As it complements the ethnographic approach, neuropsychological research can provide more evidence in terms of clarifying some aspects of depictions of those experiences on which the ethnography does not touch.

The development of the mental imagery occurs in three stages. This project is particularly concerned with imagery developed in stage three. One of the interesting features of the third stage of mental imagery is that images are combined (Lewis-Williams, 1990). For example, an animal may be combined with an entoptic phenomenon or a person may be combined with an animal. Entoptic phenomena entail visual percepts, that is, what a person sees while in the temporary altered state of consciousness or in the spirit world. An eye is therefore an area of activity, that is why we may see unusual and exaggerated eye balls on some figures. These features occur at MTM 1.

There are therianthropic figures and animal figures combined with entoptic signs. Intriguingly, MTM 1 contains more cattle therianthropic figures than any other therianthropes. However, it has been established that the specific content of many visual hallucinations is controlled by the beliefs and experiences of a person's cultural background. For example, Lewis-Williams provides an example of the Inuit (Eskimos) who, he argues, do not hallucinate eland but they see polar bears (1990:55).

By the same logic, it is reasonable to suppose that although San shamans would have experienced something very similar, the content of their hallucinations would have derived largely from their way of life, and the animals that surrounded them (see Lewis-Williams, 1992:25). I go beyond this and suggest that the *Maloti* San shamans hallucinated cattle. This argument is substantiated by the evidence of many paintings of transformed cattle motifs in the Maloti mountains compared to other adjacent areas.

MTM 1 is no exception to this. It contains a considerable number of cattle motifs in shamanistic appearances and showing entoptic phenomena. The nature of this imagery requires me to refer to both neuropsychological research and San ethnography to explain them. As Lewis-Williams & Dowson (1988:201) contend, in southern Africa shamanistic images can be approached simultaneously from two directions; neuropsychological research and ethnography. In the first place, neuropsychological research explains the forms of certain depictions and, second, the meanings of some of these depictions can be established from directly relevant ethnography (*ibid.*: 201). In the following chapter I approach the MTM 1 imagery from these two perspectives.

CHAPTER 4:

SNAKES, ARTHROPODS:

IDIOSYNCRATIC CREATURES AT MTM 1 SITE

Prior to the introduction of ethnographic-based interpretation and the neuro-psychological models, a search for meaning in rock art was a difficult process but now it is undertaken for the most part through the use of ethnographic data.¹¹ In some regions, this can be done through working with indigenous people in order to identify and explain the specific meanings of images. For example, Paul Taçon (1988) conducted ethnographic research in northern Australia with Aboriginal people.

In southern Africa, Wilhelm Bleek, together with his sister-in-law, Lucy Lloyd, collected and compiled San ethnography that was later published after his death (Bleek, 1874). In the Kalahari similar research was also undertaken, for example, by Richard Lee (1968), Lorna Marshall (1969), and Richard Katz (1982). In the south-eastern mountains of Lesotho and South Africa, some pioneering researchers (Vinnicombe, 1976; Lewis-Williams, 1980) started to use the Bleek and Lloyd records of San ethnography together with the Kalahari material to understand San rock art. From this material, it became apparent that the trance dance and shamanism were the key to understanding San rock art in southern Africa. The so-called shamanistic model developed by Lewis-Williams is currently the most widely accepted explanation of San rock paintings and has as its central role the San trance dance. Almost 150 years ago Bleek (1874:13) concluded that San rock art was “a truly artistic conception of the ideas which most deeply moved the San mind and filled it with religious feelings”. It appears that he was indeed right to have concluded so and, as Lewis-Williams

¹¹ Source: <http://www.une.edu.au/arch/ROCKART/Ethnography.html>
website accessed : 27 March 2006.

(1999:141) points out, there are today few researchers if any, who would disagree with him.

Indeed, ongoing research in southern Africa shows that shamanistic elements are widespread in San rock art (*ibid.*: 6). According to Dowson (1989:84), it also became apparent that, whatever the differences between the art in various regions, southern African rock art throughout the subcontinent was essentially shamanistic (see also Huffman, 1983; Maggs & Sealey, 1983; Lewis-Williams, 1984,1987a; Yates *et al.*, 1985; Manhire *et al.*, 1986; Garlake, 1987a,1987b; Deacon, 1988; Dowson, 1988). Thus, whatever the explanation one may give, we must remember that San rock art is not a “simple portrayal of the real world” (Lewis-Williams & Dowson, 1989:105). Intriguingly, the occurrence of domesticated animals and their associated meaning in San rock art has been a moot point in the past two decades. Cattle figures in particular, now occur in transformed shapes, probably suggesting something more culturally and religiously informed. Nonetheless, whilst I argue that cattle symbolism has replaced that of eland in the south-eastern mountains, it is necessary to first discuss eland symbolism in terms of San worldview.

Eland Symbolism

The eland is the most frequently depicted animal in many parts of southern Africa (see, for example, Maggs, 1967; Vinnicombe, 1976; Pager, 1971; Lewis-Williams, 1972, 1974). Lewis-Williams (1992:14) observed that although it must have been desired as a source of food, San ethnography and the art taken together show that the artists were principally concerned with its symbolic associations. As a major symbol in San thought, the eland resonated in a number of ritual contexts, three of which were rites of passage: boys’ first kill, girls’ puberty, marriage and the other one was trance dance (Lewis-Williams, 1981,1992:14-15; Lewis-Williams & Dowson, 1989:118).

To obtain some understanding of what the eland meant to the San, I will briefly look in turn at the part it played in each of these rituals. A San boy becomes an adult when he kills his first large antelope – an eland. The elderly men remove its skin and, while the boy sits on this skin, they scarify him with fat from that eland which is believed to have much potency (Lewis-Williams & Dowson, 1989:119). It is believed that the cuts

create a new hunter. While there is a high representation of eland figures in San rock art, their various postures may depict some San rituals. Dying postures may demonstrate the scene of the boy's first kill and not necessarily dying from an arrow of any hunter.

In the girls' puberty rituals, a girl is, at her first menstruation, isolated in a hut. Of great importance in this occasion is the performance of the Eland Bull Dance by women. As they dance around the hut, they imitate the mating behaviour of eland cows (Lewis-Williams & Dowson, 1989:119). An old man in this dance plays the part of the eland bull. Throughout the dance there is a close association between the eland and the girl in the hut. According to Lewis-Williams & Dowson, while the eland is considered a good thing and has much fat, the girl is also considered a good thing and she is all fat (1989:119).

As part of the marriage rituals, a San man hunts an eland and gives the fat of the eland's heart to the girl's mother and at a later stage when other marriage rituals are being performed, the bride is anointed with eland fat (Lewis-Williams & Dowson, 1989:119). In the trance dance, the eland is considered the most potent of all animals, and shamans seek to possess eland potency so that they can perform shamanic and especially healing activities. The association between the eland and the trance dance is so close that the !Kung use the word *tcheni* (meaning "dance"), as a respect word for eland (Lewis-Williams & Dowson, 1989:120). With regard to eland figures at the MTM 1 panel, I suggest that in line with well-established arguments about San rock art, they are associated with the trance dance. Therefore, they are symbols of potency that shamans harness to enter a trance. The depiction of eland figures in this panel is therefore a sign of potency. I turn now to the discussion of bovine symbolism in the context of Basotho worldview, in part due to the occurrence of unusual cattle motifs in the MTM 1 panel.

Bovine Symbolism in Lesotho

The representation of cattle motifs in San rock art, particularly in south-eastern Lesotho, and their superimposition on eland figures does not only appear symbolic but may also suggest the replacement of eland symbolism with that of cattle (Figure 18).

Fundamentally, cattle resonate in a number of Sesotho rituals. Indeed, cattle are highly valued in Basotho culture for “religious, social, and symbolic reasons as well as economic reasons” (Ferguson, 1994:136). James Ferguson learned that it was for these reasons that Basotho “kept so many cattle and were so reluctant to part with them” (*ibid.*: 136).

Nonetheless, whilst cattle are so valued in Basotho culture, they neither are totemic animals nor linked to any particular clan. In Sesotho culture, people who use as their totem, a certain animal, cannot slaughter and eat that particular totemic animal. There is also a belief amongst Basotho that a totemic animal cannot harm a person from the clan that adore that particular animal. So, cattle are used in cultural ceremonies; for example, no animal other than a black bull is used during boys’ initiation in Lesotho (Ashton, 1967:48). Cattle thus occupy an “important and highly embedded place in Sesotho culture” (Ferguson, 1994:141).

This appears to have been the same with the San and eland. Since cattle images are a prominent feature in the MTM 1 panel, it suggests that cattle symbolism replaced that of eland. I suggest that these cattle figures are considered the most potent of all animals, and shamans aspire to possess cattle potency. This is in line with suggestions made by Campbell (1987) and other researchers (see Dowson *et al.*, 1994; Hall, 1994). This shift of symbolism is very significant and may also be a turning point in San cosmology. While I try to explain this shift in the context of both San and black farmer communities, who co-existed in south-eastern mountains, I believe that further research will bring to light more intriguing issues about this shift. On the basis of the apparent peaceful co-existence between these two parties, chances of a cultural shift from either party were high (see Jolly, 1996b). So a shift from eland to cattle symbolism was not predictable from the outset and does not imply that the San were culturally weak when they eventually embraced cattle symbolism. Since the San worked as shepherds looking after cattle and other domesticated animals belonging to black farmers, it might have been that they developed love and respect for cattle just the same way black farmers did. Thus, cattle ultimately gained more significance in San societies.

Interpretation of the Imagery

I have already established in the previous sections and chapters that rock art motifs in the MTM 1 panel are shamanistic in nature. They reflect some of religious practices and belief systems of the San. Almost all of these motifs on the panel invite one not only to look at them as merely paintings on the rock face but to understand each motif as a reflection of the experiences of San spiritual realm. To do so, it is necessary to refer to the San cosmology and belief systems. Indeed, the MTM 1 panel appears to be a true reflection of the experiences of the trance dance.

In San cosmology the great (trance) dance is undoubtedly the central ritual, a social occasion and also a time for healing (Malherbe, 1983:50), that brings all categories of people together and the principal one that gives them access to spiritual realms and powers (Bieseke, 1978; Lewis-Williams, 1999:281). As stated earlier, the “trance dance appears to be the dominant feature” in this panel and it is not unusual though, because in San rock paintings, dance symbolism is often dominant. Mathias Guenther (Guenther, 1994:257) observes that the evidence for the connection between art and ritual is either explicit or implicit as some panels show actual trance motifs, at times in the form of dramatic group scenes depicting the healing ritual. I now explain this San ritual dance as depicted in the MTM 1 panel.

Dance

There are fifty-seven distinctive human figures in the panel. Their various postures all suggest that they are partaking in a ritual dance. Indeed, this panel depicts fragments of the trance dance. While most paintings at MTM 1 undoubtedly show fragments of trance dance, there are other paintings that show a different ritual dance as I show later. I will now identify these elements of the ritual dances as they occur in the panel and provide their equivalent interpretation. Steatopygous female figures are all seen in clapping postures. These figures are not organised in a clear circular dancing pattern but this is not unusual though, since not all dances are circular (Lewis-Williams & Dowson, 1989:38).

In the actual dance, shamans sometimes dance in the centre, while women standing or sitting around them, clap the rhythm of the dance usually with their hands not across one another (*ibid.*: 42). They hold their hands parallel with the fingers splayed out and bent slightly backwards that is why one is able to count the fingers that appear to be four in each hand in this panel. This may confirm the cultural practice (of finger joint amputation) among the San and now the Thembu (see Jolly, 1996b:43).

Some dancers are seen holding what appear to be dancing sticks probably suggesting the intensity of the dance and the degree of altered state of consciousness. Dancers use dancing sticks to support themselves at the height of a trance experience. Dancing sticks explain the nature of the dance depicted in the MTM 1 panel. Importantly, there are key features of trance dance in this panel. When a shaman enters a trance state, he often experiences nasal haemorrhage (Arbousset & Daumas, 1846). This incidence is shown in the panel by lines coming out of the nose of trancing figures (Figure 12). Nasal blood is one of the key features with which one can identify a trancing shaman (Lewis-Williams & Dowson, 1989:40). Another important gesture of the trance dance is the bending-forward posture. In Clusters 1 and 5 there are four figures in bending-forward postures. When a shaman's "*n/om*" begins to boil, his stomach muscles usually contract, causing abdominal pain and he/she bends forward, sometimes his/her torso is at right angles to his/her legs (Lewis-Williams & Dowson, 1989:40).

It has, however, become apparent that dance in San rock art is not only expressed by groups of human figures in stylised postures but also expressed by a range of subtle elements and implications (Lewis-Williams, 1999:281). These may be single images that by ethnographically verifiable postures, gestures or accoutrements, refer to the San shamanic dance (*ibid.*: 281). The MTM 1 panel shows a range of these shamanic elements that Lewis-Williams (1999) prefers to call 'fragments of the dance'.

In addition, dress codes also suggest the nature of the dance being depicted. For example, San women usually wear front aprons during the Eland Bull Dance. It is only in the Eland Bull Dance of girls' puberty rituals that women remove their back aprons (Lewis-Williams & Dowson, 1989:119). Figure 21 shows a female figure wearing a front apron. This may suggest that there is more than one ritual dance being depicted in this panel, the other one being a girls' puberty ritual dance.



Figure 21: Female figure wearing a front apron

Another intriguing dress item in this panel is a “bandolier”. Bandoliers are a form of attire, probably leather, sinew or beaded cloth which criss-crosses the chest and dangles down the shoulders of a person wearing them as shown in many human figures in this panel (see Jolly, 2005 for a detailed discussion of bandoliers). This item of dress, as Pieter Jolly has established, was brought by black farmers as they moved southwards from West and Central Africa. Black farmers used bandoliers as a form of ritual accoutrements. Bandoliers were subsequently introduced to some south-eastern San groups with whom they had established close and symbiotic relationships (Jolly, 2005:86).

The San appear to have adopted bandoliers as ceremonial attire for their great dance, and probably to make this ritual dance more appealing, even to black farmers. Jolly convincingly argues that bandoliers were adopted by San groups exposed to the rites and beliefs of black farmers (2005:95). This may also suggest that, in the face of new inclusions, the trance dance was not confined to San people but even black farmers probably participated in this dance. The bandoliered figures may represent either black

farmers partaking in San dance or the San dancers who have adopted this black farmer attire.

So, in this panel, it is apparent that bandoliered figures are partaking in a ritual performance. These figures appear to have employed trance gestures. The fact that bandoliers as a form of attire do feature in San ritual dance, means that they have gained symbolic significance in San cosmology as part of their ceremonial dress. Knee tassles and armlets, which were used as dress accoutrements by Bantu and Nguni speakers' warriors, also form part of the new San ceremonial attire. The typical San used rattles when they danced. Now tassles appear to have complemented or replaced them.

While paintings are equally important in understanding shamanic and ritual experiences, I intend to show the significance and relevance of the rock on which these images are placed with regard to the San spiritual world. The rock face is understood as a 'veil' between the material and spiritual worlds of the San (Lewis-Williams & Dowson, 1990). Thus, the paintings play a significant role of mediating between these two cosmological realms (Lewis-Williams, 1999:282). They depict insights into the experiences of the spiritual world as depicted in the MTM 1 panel. In other words, what is depicted in this panel is by and large not of this world.

'Squatting' Human Figures

The other eye-catching feature in the MTM 1 panel is the depiction of 'squatting',¹² human figures. There are altogether twenty-one of these figures in the panel (see Clusters 2 and 3). These figures appear to be unusual. Most of them appear to have no hands with the exception of four figures. These four figures have a maximum of four fingers per hand and they appear to be in clapping postures. Nonetheless, during the trance dance, women and children often sing healing songs from a sedentary position or sometimes standing in dancing postures while clapping their hands.

¹² Not clear whether they are squatting but they appear to be in squatting positions.

I suggest that these figures may in part represent women and children sitting around a nocturnal fire participating in a healing dance. Alternatively, they may represent shamans as we can see a figure with streamers issuing from its head is laying hands on the another figure lying supine (see Cluster 3). Nevertheless, in the light of Lewis-Williams's (1998) theory of polysemy, these figures may also represent malevolent shamans or spirits-of-the-dead. Malevolent shamans and frightening spirits-of-the-dead usually hover in the darkness beyond the light of the fire during the actual trance dance (Dowson, 1994:339). Benevolent shamans while in trance, they usually fight off these evil spirits (Katz, 1982). So they may alternatively represent malevolent shamans squatting in the darkness waiting for their chance to shoot arrows of sickness into people.

Remarkably, some of these squatting human figures are fringed by microdots in their bodies. According to Dowson (1989:84) dots and flecks probably depict "supernatural potency" while microdots appear to be associated with "potency in a shaman's body". This may suggest that malevolent shamans also have supernatural potency and may also use that power to harm and bring sickness into people. They usually shoot arrows of sickness into people while benevolent shamans intercept them. I suggest that a nose-bleeding human figure wearing bandoliers is a benevolent shaman wielding a knobbed stick to fight off malevolent shamans (Cluster 5).

Felines

Cluster 4 shows two feline figures, a feature that is very rare in Drakensberg rock art. One of them, which is situated on the extreme right-hand side of the panel, has for the most part, the appearance of a "leopard". While the other feline appears to be a therianthrope, it is for the most part a "lion". Lions in general were believed to have some of the shamans' accomplishments: they knew things that ordinary people could not possibly know, they could become invisible, and they could cause things to happen by supernatural means (Lewis-Williams & Dowson, 1989:132). The San were also said to believe that shamans could turn themselves into lions. I thus suggest that these feline figures are representations of shamans who transformed into felines.

Malevolent shamans often take on the form of “lions” (Dowson, 1994:339). When they come marauding in feline form, the benevolent shamans in the camp also enter trance and chase them off (Lewis-Williams & Dowson, 1989). The “leopard” figure on the extreme right of the panel that appears galloping, I suggest, is a representation of a malevolent shaman being chased away during what, as I argued earlier, is a trance dance. Thus, the panel probably depicts a hallucinatory combat between benevolent and malevolent shamans.

A Significantly Differentiated Figure

There is a therianthropic figure that is prominent in the panel. The figure appears to have cattle horns issuing from the head or they are part of the headgear. These horns have been identified as typical of indigenous African cattle (Job Kibii¹³: pers. comm. 2006) that were brought from the north by the first pastoralists in southern Africa.

This figure is distinguished from the rest of other human figures by its size and its therianthropic nature. Due to its unusually large size, Geoffrey Blundell (Blundell, 2004) terms it an SDF or significantly differentiated figure. SDFs occur in small numbers in Nomansland, just south-east of Mt Moorosi. These figures represent transformed powerful shamans that I suggest have great potency. In the case of MTM 1, the SDF’s size probably highlights its importance in relation to other human and therianthropic figures in the panel. The human-cattle therianthropic nature of this figure suggests that it is different from other SDFs that Blundell has talked about. While Blundell (2004) states that one of the features with which to differentiate SDFs from other figures is through their therianthropic nature, an SDF at MTM 1 appears to be of a different type of SDF. I suggest that while it appears that there are different types of therianthropes; antelope-human (most common), now cattle-human in the case of MTM 1, SDFs should indeed, be classified in types. For instance, Type 1 should consist of the most common combination – antelope-human. Type 2 should be the rare combination. As regards the MTM 1 SDF, this is a Type 2 SDF.

¹³ Job Kibii, PhD student, Department of Archaeology, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. Discussion in 2005.

Bags

Bags are also obvious motifs in this panel. There are eight carrying bags in this panel. According to Lewis-Williams & Dowson (1989:116) San beliefs suggest that bags had special significance beyond everyday use. Their depictions along dancers suggest that they may have a crucial role in a trance dance. Lewis-Williams & Dowson argue that bags painted next to a dance – ‘fragment of a dance’ or indeed by themselves, probably signify trance experience. Thus, these bags I suggest do not only imply a trance dance but also provide insights into trance experiences.

Idiosyncratic Snake-arthropod Creature

According to Dowson (1988:127-128) there are “rare paintings and engravings that show that some idiosyncrasy does exist”. Dowson establishes that idiosyncratic depictions appear to derive from the impulse of individual artists. He argues that to understand the significance and importance of these rare depictions, we must first examine the principles that “informed the widely painted and engraved subject matter for the idiosyncratic depictions” (Dowson, 1988:116). Dowson identified certain features in San rock art that he believed were explicable in terms of death metaphor in San worldview. However, there are other idiosyncratic features that require more explanation than these ones.

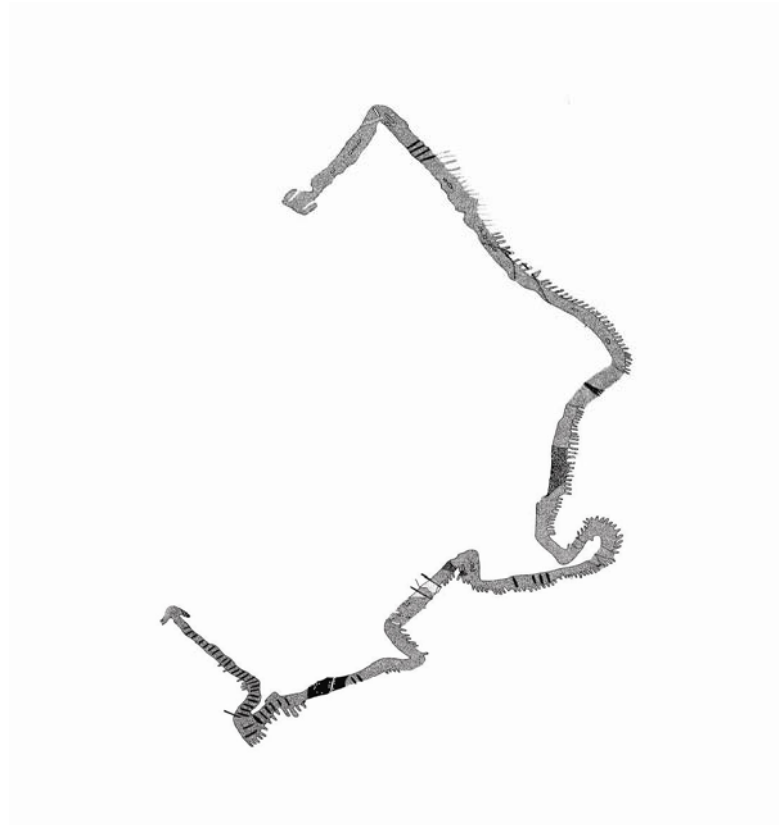


Figure 22: An idiosyncratic arthropod motif

At MTM 1 there is one idiosyncratic image that at face value appears to be a snake. Nevertheless, snakes are common in San rock art. They are often associated with rain (Rust, 2000; Mallen, 2005). Female puff adders, in particular, are specifically associated with rain (Lara Mallen¹⁴: pers. comm.). The association between going under water, snakes and shamans suggest very strongly that many of the painted serpents, especially those that bleed from the nose, are shamans in snake form (Lewis-Williams & Dowson, 1989:131). Like snakes, shamans go underground and then surface again when on out-of-body travel, and this probably explains why painted snakes often seem to slither in and out of the rock face (*ibid.*: 131). According to some //Xegwi San beliefs, for a man to become a shaman he had to go under water to capture a snake. Then he had to kill it and perform a public dance with the neck of the skin tied to his forehead and the rest trailing behind him (*ibid.*: 131). However, close inspection

¹⁴ Ms L Mallen, MA student, RARI, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. Discussion in 2006.

of the snake motif at MTM 1 reveals that it is possibly more than a depiction of a real snake.

It has legs, a bifurcated head and an unusual arrow-shaped tail (Figure 22). It appears to have features that are more descriptive of a worm than of a snake. To the best of my knowledge, there are no observed images of worms in southern African San rock art to date. This image appears to be an enigmatic occurrence. It has an arrow-like shaped tail that resembles that of terrestrial flat worms (Phylum *Platyhelminthes*). Platyhelminths usually have arrow-like tails (Graham Alexander¹⁵: pers. comm.), and they are usually found in rock cracks. In San worldview, a rock bearing art serves as a veil that separates the spiritual world and real world. The paintings, therefore, are often the reflections of the activities in the spiritual world. Cracks in such rocks therefore may suggest a passage into the spirit world. The depiction of creatures with the natural ability to go through rock cracks may indeed serve as a communication mechanism between these two worlds and also reflect the connectivity between these worlds in question. Nonetheless, based on the numerous legs of this idiosyncratic creature at MTM 1, Alexander suggested that this image would probably be a velvet worm (Phylum *Onychophora*) because velvet worms have over fifteen pairs of legs. Its segmented body also suggests a worm rather than a snake. But, some of its features suggest something more than a worm.

Its segmented body and numerous legs may also suggest that it is an exo-skeletal creature. A good example may be that of a millipede (*shongololo* [isiZulu/isiXhosa] or *lefokololi* [Sesotho]) (Class *Diplopoda* of the Phylum *Arthropoda*) with numerous pairs of jointed legs and body segments. Such longitudinal creatures with numerous feet [and legs] are usually classified as *Myriapoda* (having many feet) (Prof. Marcus Byrne¹⁶: pers. comm.). From this big taxon emanate two other taxa, namely centipedes and millipedes. The latter is the category of any of numerous herbivorous nonpoisonous arthropods having a cylindrical body of 20 to 100 or more segments, each segment

¹⁵ Graham Alexander is a specialist herpetologist at the School of AP&ES, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. Discussion in 2007.

¹⁶ Professor Marcus Byrne is an entomologist at the School of AP&ES, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. Discussions in 2007.

having two pairs of legs. The former consist chiefly of nocturnal predacious arthropods having a flattened body of 15 to 173 segments each with a pair of legs, the foremost being modified into poison fangs. A close look at this idiosyncratic image suggests that it has both features of a centipede and a millipede (Figure 22).

Prof. Byrne confirmed that centipedes have one pair of legs per body segment, while millipedes have more than one pair of legs per body segment. The image at MTM 1 has one pair of legs per body segment in some places and, in others, has two pairs of legs per body segment. Remarkably, the image in Figure 22, appears to have more legs even between the body segments, suggesting something very unusual with this image and also in the animal kingdom. Another significant feature of this image is a bifurcated head. Creatures with many legs usually have one pair of antennae. This bifurcated head may suggest a pair of antennae. However, there is a collective term that is used to refer to exoskeletal creatures with characteristics of this idiosyncratic MTM 1 image. That term is “arthropod”. I suggest that this is a depiction of an “arthropod” creature, a rare and idiosyncratic occurrence in southern African rock art. Arthropods¹⁷ consist of other small similar creatures like insects, spiders, and crabs to mention but a few. These creatures are often classified as “insects”. While insects rarely occur in southern African rock art, there are certain features that have been associated with them.

For example, as an effort to interpret formling motifs, researchers have in the past, suggested that formlings depict bees’ nests and honeycombs (Cooke, 1959; Guy, 1972; Pager, 1971:151,347-352,1973,1976; Crane, 1982; Woodhouse, 1990), and compelling motifs that are often attended by insects (Mguni, 2005) or rather termites. Furthermore, Harald Pager (Pager, 1976:6) suggested that formlings could be depictions of stingless bees’ nests while Nicholas Walker (Walker, 1996:73) speculated invertebrate forms or insect cocoons (see Mguni, 2005:39). Nevertheless, while the association of formlings with termites appeared a promising effort, there is indeed, evidence about the

¹⁷ Definition of *Arthropod*: “Any of numerous invertebrate animals of the Phylum *Arthropoda*, including the insects, crustaceans, arachnids, and myriapods, that are characterised by a chitinous exoskeleton and a segmented body to which jointed appendages are articulated in pairs”. Source: <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/arthropod>, website accessed: 18 September 2007.

occurrence of termites in rock art especially of the Matopo Hills (Cooke, 1959; Walker, 1996; Parry, 2000; Mguni, 2002,2005).

As regards the arthropod motif at MTM 1, its association with certain aspects of the subject matter in the panel requires more research given the occurrence of ovoid features and patches at MTM 1. Although these patches occur as outlines, they might have once had more detail before they faded with time (probably before the site was documented). But, if they originally occurred as mere patches, then they reflect some complex processes involved in San painting culture. Nonetheless, Mguni also talks about ovoid features that occur in the Matopo Hills similar to those at MTM 1. He indicates that the egg-shaped forms or features are often constructed by one species of termites (Genus *Apicotermes*). Termites often construct well-defined internal galleries that are regular and symmetrical in arrangement (Mguni, 2005:40). Could this arthropod motif be of this *Apicotermes* genus? However, careful consideration of various termite species shows that some species of termites can be distinguished by the architecture of their nests rather than by the anatomy of the termites themselves.¹⁸ At this stage, while it is beyond the scope of this research to confirm this, it is also difficult to speculate whether these patches are formlings due to lack of detail on the motif. But the association of this arthropod motif with eland in the MTM 1 panel sparks some interest. I believe additional research on this aspect would yield more insights.

Importantly, Dowson (1988) has argued that the depiction of idiosyncratic features derive from the impulse of individual artists. So the depiction of this arthropod figure may suggest the frame of mind that influenced that particular shaman artist.

As regards the San belief, it is clear that the San lived a highly dynamic and complex life. Some idiosyncrasy in rock art demonstrates the evidence. While this arthropod figure appears to be unique and peculiar to the MTM 1 site, I suggest it had a significant association in San worldview in south-eastern Lesotho.

¹⁸ <http://vivisimo.com/search?tb=vivisimocom&query=apicotermes+species>, website accessed: 18 September 2007.

Cattle Therianthropes

Almost all the therianthropic figures in San rock art are believed to represent trancing shamans fused with particular animals (Lewis-Williams, 1981). At MTM 1, there are predominantly cow shamans (Cluster 4), a situation that is peculiar to MTM 1 and not common in San rock art. While cattle and eland figures have a lot in common, I provide here some of their distinctive features as an effort to demonstrate that these are cattle figures rather than eland. First, I looked at the size of the dewlap. An eland bull has a more diverging neck and a large dewlap that hangs down with a “large quantity of fat” (Dowson, 1988:122), while a bovine bull has a comparatively smaller dewlap than that of an eland bull. In this regard, the size of dewlap on these figures appears very small, making it more reasonable to conclude that these are figures of cattle.

Second, I looked at the size of the hump. An eland’s hump, while rounded like that of cattle, is usually more prominent than the hump visible in cattle. African cattle usually have a straight neck all the way from behind the head to the hump, which is usually a bit higher than the neck. Third, the size and shape of the horns is also important. An eland bull usually has short and slightly back-facing horns that resemble those of other antelope. While some African cattle have somewhat short horns, they mostly point forward. The cattle figures at MTM 1 have long and forward-pointing horns (Figure 22).

Most of these figures have lines around their torsos. I suggest that these are transformed shamans harnessing cattle potency, and this potency is emphasised by the depiction of lines around their torsos. Since south-eastern San had co-existed with black farmers for a considerable period of time, they hallucinated cattle instead of eland. During the trance dance when the “*n/om*” is activated shamans begin to experience an enhancement of their consciousness which culminates in them transforming into unusual (shamanistic) forms (Katz, 1982:34). In this regard, they transformed into cattle. It is only when they are in this altered state of consciousness that they can see malevolent shamans and can also heal.

Three of these figures have unusual lines around their eyeball areas and one figure, that appears terribly nose-bleeding, has an unusual eye ball (Cluster 4), suggesting a

combination of visual and somatic experiences (Figure 22). Importantly, it has been argued that uniformity in southern African rock art was not solely due to culturally determined expectations but neurologically controlled visual and somatic hallucinations played an important role (Dowson, 1988:117). Thus, this may suggest that these ‘cattle shamans’ have reached stage three of the altered state of consciousness.

The images in this stage are the first spontaneously produced hallucinations of people, animals, houses and other things. This stage is also associated with powerful emotional experiences. For San, animals are the most emotionally charged things, and it is therefore not surprising that animals are a prominent feature in their visions (Lewis-Williams & Dowson, 1989:66). The pre-eminent cattle therianthropes at MTM 1 show elements of trance experience established by neuropsychological research. That is, entoptic phenomena are combined with cattle imagery (Figure 23).



Figure 23: Entoptic phenomena shown on cattle imagery

Cattle therianthropes add to the idiosyncrasy of the MTM 1 site. These are rarely painted features that are associated with shamanistic activities and they are unlikely to be found elsewhere.

Oval Shapes

Adding to the complexity of the MTM 1 panel is the depiction of oval-shaped patches. There are altogether five of these motifs in the panel. Looking at their shapes, I suggest these patches may be outlines of formling motifs that abound in Zimbabwean rock art and also occur in some parts of the Maloti-Drakensberg area (see Mguni, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2005).

According to Siyakha Mguni (Mguni, 2005:35) the term ‘formlinge’ was originally coined by Leo Frobenius (1931) to describe a specific range of composite motifs with forms or shapes difficult to define because of their complexity. However, formlings are generally understood as depictions of natural and cultural phenomena (Mguni, 2005:37). Previous research in the Drakensberg has associated formling motifs with bees’ nests and honeycombs.

At MTM 1, while these motifs show no details other than their distinctive oval shapes, I suggest that they may also be depictions of entoptic phenomena. As entoptic phenomena, they may be produced in stage two of the altered state of consciousness. It is argued that in this stage people tend to see indeterminate objects and they try to make sense of these entoptic phenomena by elaborating them into objects with which they are familiar. They may represent either honeycombs or bees’ nests, especially because bees in San cosmology are associated with potency and, given the overall activity in the panel – trance dance – this view may indeed be plausible as bees are symbols of potency to dancers.

Other Notable Scenes

I have already established that the MTM 1 panel shows evidence of more than one ritual. Indeed, it is evident that at least three rituals are depicted in this panel. I have identified and discussed trance dance and the Eland Bull Dance. Now I wish to argue out another ritual – rain making. Cluster 4 shows two similar scenes of two human figures depicted in profile stretching out their hands to the lower jaws of two indeterminate animals (Figure 24a, b). These gestures may signify capturing of these animals.



(a)

(b)

Figure 24: Similar hand-to-nose scenes from two different sites

In San cosmology, the shaman of the rain, while in trance, captures an amorphous quadruped that in some ways resembles a hippopotamus but it could also look like an antelope or an ox (Lewis-Williams & Dowson, 1989). He then leads this animal to a wilderness where the animal is slaughtered and its blood becomes rain. I suggest that these figures show elements of rain-making activity. These human figures are shamans of the rain performing their symbolic duty.

There is another remarkable figure (Cluster 2) that appears to be fused with an antelope figure at the waist. This is extremely an unusual depiction of a therianthrope which I argue is a rare occurrence and adds to the idiosyncrasy of the MTM 1 paintings. It is an incredible figure that under normal circumstances would be impossible to occur. It represents something not of this world. The shamans, while in trance, have their own ways of harnessing potency from their visualised powerful animals. I suggest that the human figure is a shaman harnessing antelope potency. This is possible only in a trance state.

Discussion

The possible influence of the southern Nguni and Basotho on San cosmology and ritual practice in the south-eastern mountains appears to have not only varied considerably, depending on the forms of relationships developed between farming communities and

San groups (see Jolly, 1994:109), but also had much effect on their art. Around Mt Moorosi it appears that the San communities there experienced a process of direct interaction with the Phuthi. Oral traditions and archival materials confirm these close relationships.

The San communities around Mt Moorosi owed allegiance to Chief Moorosi and, in turn, they were taken as chief's subjects. This appears to have ultimately created a favourable environment between the Phuthi and the San. It also appears to have offered an avenue used by the Phuthi in this area to access San society, and such access allowed some Phuthi who were related to San to participate in the painting tradition of the San (How, 1962; Jolly, 1994,1996b). In the height of interaction, some Phuthi individuals emerged as famous artists because they used to paint alongside the San. Marion How (1962) was fortunate enough to have come into contact with two of the Phuthi artists: Mapote and Masitise whose paintings have been recorded.

MTM 1 significantly shows much evidence of change in San rock art. The depiction of cattle motifs at MTM 1 suggests the degree to which the process of interaction affected San and Phuthi communities in a changing scenario. Cattle therianthropes may also strongly suggest not only new experiences in the San spiritual world but also a change in the perception and display of a shaman from traditional to recent understanding of a shaman – cow shaman. This is a unique and, indeed, an idiosyncratic feature at MTM 1.

A consideration of how the *Maloti* San perceived a shaman in terms of how it should be displayed greatly advances the limited informative contexts. Importantly, the representation of cattle motifs and their superimposition on eland figures (Figure 18) (see also Figure 6 in Dowson *et al.*, 1994:183) is not only symbolic but may suggest a replacement of eland symbolism with that of a cow. I argue that this may also suggest that the San who executed these paintings had been exposed to the black farmer culture.

South-eastern Lesotho is one of the few areas so far that shows considerable evidence of San social change and idiosyncrasy in rock art. The occurrence of a rare arthropod image also bears evidence on the importance and uniqueness of this site. Another most notable change at MTM 1 has to do with an unusually large figure – an SDF, which is

also rare in San rock art. It is this figure that principally caught the interest of Blundell (Blundell, 2004) at this site. However, I suggest that this figure should be considered as an SDF Type 2 since, of all the SDFs that Blundell discussed, this is the only human-cattle therianthrope.

Although Blundell (2004) focused on this particular motif at MTM 1, he managed to establish a link between the MTM 1 paintings and Nomansland rock art. This link sheds more light into the understanding of rock art at MTM 1. Drawing upon a series of previous fieldwork done in the south-eastern mountains by Patricia Vinnicombe, Lucas Smits and David Lewis-Williams, Blundell (2004) points out that MTM 1 is the only known site in south-eastern Lesotho where an SDF motif occurs outside the Nomansland core SDF area. Indeed, south-eastern Lesotho has been well surveyed and, in the recent survey that I undertook, no other SDF figure was found. The limited distribution of SDFs enabled Blundell to suggest that they may have been made by a single group of San or San groups “living next to one another that were in close contact” (Blundell, 2004:132).

SDFs in both Nomansland and Mt Moorosi have great similarities. They often occur along with other motifs such as eland figures, snake motifs, bags, and therianthrope figures. All these features, together with some segments of dance – women clapping and men dancing – typify most SDF sites. However, the MTM 1 site has many exceptional scenes and figures that qualify its SDF as a different type.

The depiction of an SDF at MTM 1 provides important evidence regarding the possible date at which the site was executed as well as the authorship of the art. Given the subject matter at MTM 1, the site may date to the utmost not more than 500 years ago. The oral traditions suggest that the site predates the fall of Mt Moorosi [Chief Moorosi’s stronghold]. In comparison with other surrounding sites, MTM 1 appears to be quite recent, but it also appears contemporaneous with the Sheep Kraal site far east of Mt Moorosi. The greater variation of colour and size of figures at MTM 1, and the depiction of some elements of interaction – cattle figures and some objects associated with Bantu-speakers (knobbed sticks, domesticated animals) – suggest a more recent date, probably during interaction with the Phuthi.

Archaeological excavations in southern Africa confirm that cattle first entered the sub-continent about 2 000 years ago (see Mitchell, 1996,2004; Hobart, 2004). They appear to have been known from the onset of agropastoralist settlement in south-eastern southern Africa around AD 400 (Huffman, 1998), and may have been kept in the Lesotho highlands only a few centuries thereafter (Mitchell, 2006:16), after “moving slowly into the interior” (Blundell, 2004:133).

It is thus highly unlikely that MTM 1 would have been painted earlier than 2 000 years ago. Blundell (2004) proposed a timeframe not exceeding five centuries ago. While I’m aware of the possible earlier cultural influences between *Maloti* San and *Cape* San (who experienced interaction much earlier) I suggest a much more recent date of less than three centuries as the time in which interaction should have happened between the *Maloti* San and Phuthi in this area. Indeed, the Phuthi and San first met about four centuries ago in western Lesotho (Ellenberger, 1912) and probably occupied the highlands in the subsequent three centuries. Traditions and archival records point to the Phuthi as the first farmer groups to settle in this area on the upper Drakensberg escarpment.

The MTM 1 site might have been executed by one of the San groups which inhabited the Nomansland core SDF area. Blundell (2004:128) points out that around 1850 members of Mdwebo’s and Nqabayo’s groups “went up the escarpment and followed the Senqu River upstream to where they attacked the Thola San group”. Drawing on Phuthi traditions and archival records, this site probably dates to around the same time (mid-19th Century). The possibility of this site being executed by the Thola is ruled out on the grounds that they appear to have been in the Mt Moorosi area for a long period of time and they should have, for that reason, executed more SDF sites.

While I discussed in this chapter the meaning of San rock art at the MTM 1 site, I provide in the next chapter yet another discussion about the *Maloti* San. The focus is now on the reflections of the memories of the San as there are no more San but only the people who happened to have inherited knowledge of the San from their elders or some of who probably lived at the time when there were still some remnants of the *Maloti* San.

CHAPTER 5:
MT MOOROSI TODAY:
CHANGING PERCEPTIONS ABOUT *MOOROSI* SAN

While I discussed the nature of relationships that prevailed between the Phuthi and the San in Mt Moorosi at the time of Chief Moorosi, I now explain the current situation in this region. It appears that Chief Moorosi had created a favourable environment and a sense of unity between the Phuthi and the San. As Jolly (1996) indicated, the Phuthi were clearly seen as allies and protectors by the San. The San who stayed with the Phuthi lived in huts, owned cattle and sheep and also cultivated crops (Jolly, 1996a:59). This situation appears to have been conducive for a profound socio-economic interaction.

During my research work around Mt Moorosi, I noted the remains of abandoned houses that were reported to have been inhabited by San – *Lithakong tsa Baroa* as the place came to be known. But the village was later known as Ha Masoinyane, named after the chief who later settled there after the Moorosi War of 1879. However, the situation in Mt Moorosi, as I discuss later, appears to have changed considerably.

Changing Perceptions

A number of people were interviewed from Phamong, Mt Moorosi, Seapala and Tsatsane. These places were selected because San descendents purportedly were still living in these places. Thus, interviews included both Phuthi and San descendents. What was more important was to glean information from these two distinct perspectives. Interestingly, my informants often mentioned Seapala and Phamong during the course of the interviews as being areas where residual San could be found until recently (see also Jolly, 1994, about residual San in Seapala).

East of Mt Moorosi along the Seapala River, I interviewed individual descendents of *Maloti* San. I learnt from the interviews that most of the San in this area came to stay with the Phuthi because of the so-called intermarriages. It appears that Phuthi chiefs usually took San women as wives or ‘concubines’ as Jolly (1994:143) stated because they did not pay lobola for San women. This marriage system was unbalanced in that only San women could marry Phuthi men but Phuthi women could not marry San men (Jolly, 1994:148). As I argue later, this is in part one of the factors that led to the current Phuthi-San situation in Mt Moorosi.

Currently it appears that being associated with the San is stigmatic. This situation started long ago with some San individuals who did not like themselves to be called “San” in public. My informants told me about an old San woman, ‘M’aqhoeng, whom I think was mistaken for ‘M’ajeri by Jolly (1994), because it appears that ‘M’ajeri was a daughter-in-law of ‘M’aqhoeng by her son Adamo. ‘M’aqhoeng is an example of *Maloti* San who did not like the idea of being called a “San”.

Phuthi tradition reveals that Adamo was culturally considered as the last-born son of one Phuthi local chief. When he was ready to marry, his step-father (a local chief) sent out his men to what is now the Eastern Cape, to fetch him a San woman. Children who were born in that family were technically pure San but culturally Phuthi as they took on the culture of the Phuthi.

My informant, an old man over seventy years of age, was a direct descendent of Adamo and explained that he undoubtedly descended from a San man but could not stop becoming Phuthi because their San culture had long since died out. Owing to the fact that there are no longer typical San people in this region, the current situation is that of stigmatisation and mis-identity on the part of *Maloti* San descendents. The situation is totally different from the time when both San and Phuthi recognised each other as allies. It is presently overwhelmingly unfavourable towards San descendents.

This situation appears to have been generated by the nature of marriages that occurred between San and Phuthi. Although this point requires more investigation, it appears that Phuthi chiefs had a common practice of taking San women as ‘concubines’ (see also Jolly, 1994), not as respected wives. It is therefore reasonable to suppose that this

stigma resulted from the memories of how the San were treated. Several of my informants referred to them as “*ntho tse sa tlalang, bane baeja le bohloa tjee*” – that is, ‘useless things’, they even ate ants’ larvae and termites. The current view of San in this region is now the opposite of what has been written about San and Phuthi relations in the past.

I have indicated in the previous chapters that San existed in Mt Moorosi most probably in large numbers. However, there are factors, as my informants revealed, that contributed to the reduction in numbers of the San in this area and also which contributed to the current situation. One informant pointed out that the arrival of the sons of Chief Moshoeshe (*Bakuena*) east of the Senqu River in the Mt Moorosi area after the fall of Moorosi, appears to have been one of the key causes for the disappearance of the San.

The *Bakoena* directly started to rule this area after the fall of Chief Moorosi, with Chief Nkoebe Letsie permanently placed in Sebapala about 10 km from *Thaba Moorosi*. So the fall of Mt Moorosi then dealt San communities in this region a great blow. Nevertheless, San descendents (though a new hybrid now) still exist in this area in small numbers but not as a cultural and political entity.

This new hybrid (of San descendents) has taken on a non-painting culture. Rock art is something that they now admire from a distance just like the ‘outsiders’. They have no attachments to rock art other than accepting that their ancestors executed these ubiquitous rock paintings. I believe this situation regarding rock art will not change. However, the perception other people have about the San and the current stigmatisation towards the San’s descendents can be redeemed. I suggest it is up to the local chiefs, the Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Culture (MTEC) of Lesotho and Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) which deal with the rights of minority groups, to take up this challenge.

There is a need to de-stigmatise this situation. One informant, who is married to Adamo’s “great-great-grandson”, pointed out that sometimes they felt like coming together as descendents of Adamo to reclaim their San culture. This problem seems to grow with time as new generations of people are born. She pointed out that their

children are made to feel that they are not Phuthi but San – despised people. This situation is more like that of initiates in a Christian community where initiation school is considered a seriously bad thing (paganism). This is not only a challenge to the cultural institutions that I talked about but also to the research community, especially in this region. Nonetheless, the current responsible Cultural Heritage management body may be in a position to address this issue.

Cultural Heritage Management in Lesotho

In 1967, the Lesotho parliament enacted legislation making provision for three separate bodies to be constituted in place of the national interim committee on Museums and Archives (Ambrose, 1983:7). That Act came to be known as “The Historical Monuments, Relics, Fauna and Flora Act (Act 41 of 1967)” which provided for the constitution of the Protection and Preservation Commission (PPC) or the Commission. The Commission was thus formed and became the statutory body responsible for cultural heritage. The Commission practically became the Heritage authority until the inception of the Department of Culture in 1995.

The Department of Culture henceforth took over full responsibility for managing cultural heritage in Lesotho. It is now responsible for the protection, promotion and dissemination of the national cultural heritage of Lesotho (Lesotho Review, 2003:37; 2004:34). All aspects of Cultural and some of Natural Heritage are protected and managed by the Department of Culture. These include National Monuments and Shrines such as *Thaba Bosiu* and Mt Moorosi, and rock art sites.

To date, a number of rock art sites have been identified and recorded by the staff of the Department of Culture. While this recording exercise covers almost the entire country, it has been sporadic and incomplete. There were some intrinsic factors that influenced this exercise, and they eventually led to the inadequate management of rock art sites by the Department. The Department faced at least two challenges: an incoherent site recording system and the problem of understaffing, coupled with a lack of appropriately skilled personnel.

These challenges have for a long time dealt the Department of Culture a great blow in terms of adequately meeting international standards for managing cultural heritage. However, the current restructuring exercise at the Department, which was initially influenced by its ineffectiveness, shows great potential for the Department to take up new challenges. Staff members who have acquired more skills through formal training have been instrumental in this regard.

Under proposed new structure, an archaeology unit will be set up. It is also envisaged that upon the implementation of this structure, this unit will comprise various sections whereby rock art will constitute one. Rock paintings, as I showed earlier, constitute the most fragile and highly threatened cultural resource in Lesotho. This aspect of cultural heritage abounds in the country but it is being damaged at an alarming rate and I suggest requires more attention than any other aspect. Training of more personnel in this area would probably enhance management of cultural heritage in general. Proper management of cultural heritage resources will, in turn, inform a flourishing tourism industry. To date Lesotho has nine sites that are frequently visited on unguided tours while there are only four regulated sites. The unregulated rock art sites are rapidly being destroyed directly as a result of damage being inflicted by unmonitored tourists to the area.

Mt Moorosi as a Potential Tourist Destination

South-eastern Lesotho is renowned for its historical places and its rock art sites. This heritage does not only manifest itself in rock paintings but also in the names of places and rivers, for example, Qhoali, Qhoasing, Qaqatu, Qomoqomong and Senqu. According to my informant, these are *Seqhanku* (San language – *Seroa*) names. South-eastern Lesotho has great potential as a centre of Cultural Tourism in Lesotho. Cultural tourism appears to have been neglected across almost the entire country. In the south-eastern part of the country, many intriguing rock art sites have been identified and opened to the public though there is no directly responsible body regulating tourism at those sites.

While there is generally no clear tourism mechanism in south-eastern Lesotho, Mt Moorosi is one of the most visited areas. I have already established that rock art in

this region attracts probably over sixty percent of tourists, especially from abroad. *Thaba Moorosi* as a National Monument also has the potential to attract visitors from all over the globe. It is a well-respected local historical landmark.

There are other attributes that make south-eastern Lesotho unique and appealing as a tourist destination. Visitors usually come in large numbers to the Dinosaur foot prints' site in Moyeni south of Mt Moorosi. From that site they move to rock art sites while viewing and enjoying the experience of travelling across Lesotho's deeply incised valleys. With appropriate publicity Mt Moorosi has the potential to become the leading tourist destination in Lesotho and unlock the cultural and economic value of the area.

CHAPTER 6:

CONCLUSION

TOWARDS A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF SAN ROCK ART IN SOUTH-EASTERN LESOTHO

The development of research in southern African rock art has not been an easy one. The prevalence of Euro-centric schools of thought in the past dealt southern African rock art research a great blow. While some researchers insisted on their old Euro-centric ways of approaching San rock art, others explored new avenues to understand it. The introduction of the ethnographic approach in the mid-1970s saw new resolutions to San rock art research problems. The neuropsychological model, introduced in the late 1980s, considerably complemented the ethnographic approach in interpreting San rock art.

At MTM 1, the use of these models yields considerable results. The MTM 1 panel shows various motifs and individual scenes herein interpreted as fragments of different San dances. Human figures are depicted in dancing postures that display different San rituals. First, trance dance appears to be a prominent feature. Second, another San ritual is shown by certain female figures that are depicted wearing only front aprons. According to San ethnography this often happens during the Eland Bull Dance. Nonetheless, during the trance dance shamans have various experiences while in the spirit world that are not easily understandable. Thus, recourse to San ethnography and neuropsychological research provides important insights into the meaning of often complex and sometimes idiosyncratic rock art motifs.

At MTM 1 there is an idiosyncratic image that at first glance appears to be a snake. While this image appears to be an enigmatic creature at face value, it has physical features of different worm species. I have therefore named it an idiosyncratic *arthropod* image after a generic term referring to a group of exoskeletal animal species that have

many feet (*Myriapoda*). While this occurrence is indeed rare in southern African rock art, it takes appreciation of individual motifs like this one for researchers to develop a better informed understanding of the broad corpus of rock art in south-eastern Lesotho. I have tried to find out how and where else arthropod species (including termites and insects) occur in San rock art and their association with rock art. Where they do occur, they occur with some typical insect features like wings, though they hardly ever occur without wings. This one is indeed peculiar to MTM 1.

While rock art motifs at MTM 1 are overshadowed by cattle therianthropes, I discussed cattle symbolism in Lesotho in order to correlate what is happening locally with my argument that paintings at MTM 1 were executed by San who were also exposed to black farmer culture. I found out that cattle in Basotho cosmology play a similar role to eland in the San worldview. Cattle are used when performing rituals and rites of passage. Intriguingly, while cattle are highly valued by Basotho people, they are not totemic animals. This is another commonality with eland in San society. The exploration of this new dimension of cattle symbolism in San rock art provides valuable information towards understanding San rock art, not only at MTM 1 but also in south-eastern Lesotho. I have argued that cattle figures at MTM 1 are symbols of potency, as cattle symbolism appears to have replaced that of eland in the Mt Moorosi area. Nevertheless, I still considered eland figures in this panel as being symbols of potency – a dying culture as cattle took precedence over eland in this area.

While eland are widely understood across southern African rock art as being the highly respected ritual animal, more research into the transformed cattle figures in south-eastern Lesotho could be another avenue towards understanding rock art in this region. I have argued that these are cattle images rather than eland images. I considered the following distinctive features: size of the dewlap; size of the hump, and size and shape of the horns. I found out that cattle dewlaps are smaller than those of eland, while the neck and size of the hump of African cattle are quite different from those of eland. The hump of African cattle is usually slightly grown above an often straight neck. The horns of African cattle are usually long and often protrude forward.

There are also squatting human figures that I suggested may, on one hand, represent women and children who often, while sitting down around the fire, clap and sing

“*n/om*” songs as they back-up the dancers. On the other hand, these figures may represent transformed shamans. Human figures attaining altered states of consciousness are usually depicted in various unusual postures. Importantly, MTM 1 and another site in this region, Qomoqomong, show depictions of these figures that appear to be squatting on their rounded bodies with their feet emanating from their bodies. The depiction of a probable healing scene (Figure 13) provides evidence that the understanding of shamanic activities in south-eastern Lesotho poses a new challenge. There are other gestures and postures that are also significant in understanding rock art in general.

These include bending forward; an arms-back posture and even postures of human figures holding aloof dancing sticks. Most of these postures result from the impact of the explosion of “*n/om*” which is often activated by singing. When “*n/om*” is activated, people enter trance and ultimately acquire different levels of altered states of consciousness. This can be depicted by various and mostly unusual figures. In Cluster 1, I suggested that a composite figure that appears to include an antelope and human figures represents a shaman harnessing antelope potency (Figure 14). This is another classic example of shamanic activities in the spiritual world. Human figures usually tend to take on in part, forms of animals that they harness, hence the depiction of therianthropic features.

At MTM 1 there are some motifs that are associated with black farmers. They include bandoliers, knobkerries and cattle figures. The flywhisks, though associated with shamans, also feature in black farmer cosmology as objects used by traditional healers (Tesele, 1994). Bandoliers are taken as ceremonial accoutrements among the black farmer societies (Jolly, 2005), and they appear to have been integrated by the San in their ritual performance with the same purpose of being ritual attire.

The Basotho use knobbed sticks as traditional weapons as opposed to the San who used bows and arrows. The appearance of knobbed sticks in this panel, I argue, serves the same purpose as arrows in the context of the trance dance. A human figure wielding a knobbed stick probably represents a benevolent shaman fighting off malevolent shamans (Cluster 5). The depiction of all the more farmer-related objects may suggest that the San existed in the Mt Moorosi area as the cultural entity though, as a result of

‘too intimate’ interactions with black farmers, which appear to have favoured the latter, they eventually lost their cultural independence to black farmers.

A decade ago, Jolly (1994) argued that the San communities in the south-eastern mountains have taken on black farmer cultural clothing. Indeed, as I also indicated earlier, the San descendents in Mt Moorosi do not want to be associated with the San. Neither do they want to be called “Phuthi-San” but just “Phuthi”. As the situation is now they are totally Phuthi culturally with regard to language and clans, although there is still evidence connecting them to their San ancestry. However, there are factors contributing to this state of ‘mis-identity.’

Key amongst them is the stigmatisation of the San. Several of my informants referred to them as “*ntho tse sa tlalang, bane baeja le bohloa tjee*” – that is, useless things, they even ate ants’ larvae and termites. Nonetheless, the importance of termites in San cosmology in this region is highlighted in the oral accounts that my informants provided. The occurrence of termites in rock art is recorded elsewhere in Zimbabwe and some parts of the Drakensberg. In Lesotho there occurs an idiosyncratic arthropod image that appears for the most part from the same family of termites. While earlier San ethnography does not adequately account for insects in San worldview, in this part of Lesotho the *Maloti* San are described as people who ate insects, an incidence that is totally unacceptable to the present inhabitants.

Under normal circumstances no-one who grew up in this region where some people were referred to as “useless things” would like to associate himself/herself with them. It was not surprising, therefore, to see the direct descendents of the San – grandsons – still found it difficult to publicly proclaim themselves as *Baroa* – San. It was mostly the daughters-in law from such families that I interviewed who had the courage and determination to relate the story, presumably because they were not born with that stigma. One of them was quoted as saying

we want this to be officially known because we want to be reunited with our people – San. Our children are tired of always being told that they are Baroa.

This situation separated the community into two groups: sympathisers and those who basically do not care. As to when it will stop being stigmatic, nobody knows, but I

think it is a challenge to the local chiefs and government ministry that deals with cultural issues. It was also a difficult task for one local chief to disclose in his community the families who drew their ancestry from the San. Although he ultimately disclosed them, he did not associate them with the *Maloti* San but with the eastern Griquas (Adam Kok's people). But, based on their purported characteristics: short stature and how they subsisted (hunting and gathering), I conclude that they are descendents of the *Maloti* San. While there is evidence that they draw their ancestry from *Maloti* San, they appear to have no idea what rock paintings mean to them. This may confirm again Jolly's (1994) argument that they have taken on black farmer culture.

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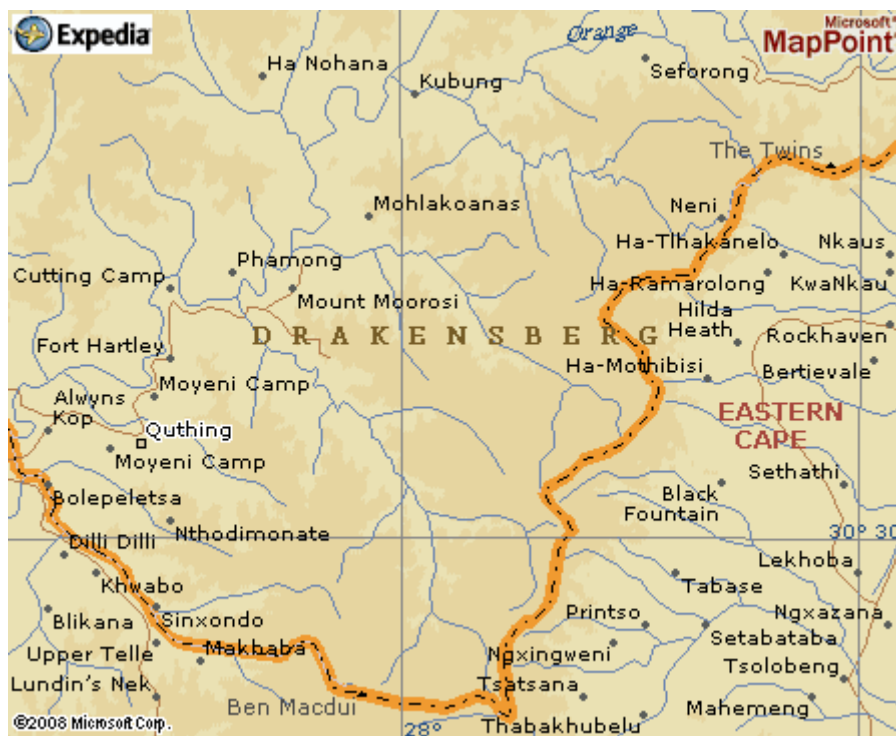
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APPENDIX A: MAP AND GAZETEER OF SITES VISITED

1. Qomoqomong
2. Pokane
3. Mundia
4. Koali (MTM 1)
5. Theoheli
6. Sheep Kraal
7. Liphapang
8. Sekonyela 1
9. Tsekong
10. Sekonyela 2
11. Likolobeng



APPENDIX B:

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Do you know of any San descendents living here?
2. Do you know anything about the history of the San?
3. What were the relations like between the San and the Baphuthi?
4. Do you know of any San painting sites around Mt Moorosi?
5. What can you say about them (the San paintings)?
6. Do Baphuthi still visit these rock art sites?
7. Why do they visit these sites?
8. Were there other people who also painted with the San?
9. Other than the paintings, what else do you know about the San?
10. What can you tell me about Chief Moorosi?
11. Was Moorosi's attitude to the San typical of Baphuthi attitudes to the San or not?
12. Where did the San go after the fall of the Mt Moorosi stronghold?
13. Any idea how the San lived with the Phuthi after Chief Moorosi's death?
14. Between the San and Phuthi, who do you think arrived or occupied Mt Moorosi before the other?
15. Do you know any grandchildren of Chief Moorosi?
16. What family name are they using now?
17. Are they still chiefs?
18. Any idea where Chief Moorosi was buried?

APPENDIX C:

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTIONS

A total of 18 informants was interviewed. The majority of them could read and write Sesotho and Sephuthi. Some of these informants claim to have seen and lived with some *Maloti* San and they continue to live now with descendents of the San though, due to intermarriages, the physical attributes of the San have changed greatly in favour of the other parties (Basotho). They are no longer vertically challenged but have acquired the Basotho stature and a slightly darkish, yellowish complexion. The interviews were done in a number of villages between Mt Moorosi and Tsatsane.

A set of 18 questions was prepared for the interviewees (Appendix B). The interviews took a free-flowing pattern. It must be noted that I was dealing with a sample group of elderly people some of whom were directly descended from the *Maloti* San. Some questions that they were not comfortable with, I would skip. Because of their great age some informants preferred to be interviewed together with their wife or husband so that they could remind each other of the answers to the questions. In this case I recorded two people instead of one. I do not mention the names of the informants in this document for reasons of confidentiality and because the fact that being associated with the San in this region is still highly stigmatised. I will use alphabetical letters from A to R to indicate the names of the informants.

Mr A

Asked about whether he knew of any San descendents living in his area, **Mr A** showed difficulty in pointing out who he could associate with the San. The only thing that he recalled was that there were San people in the area long ago. He also confirmed that he had heard people talking of intermarriages between the San and the Basotho but in terms of which families descended from the San he said he was not sure. Instead, he alluded to intermarriages between the Thembu and the Basotho in the area. According

to **Mr A**, if a Thembu boy had taken a Mosotho girl, the Thembus would make a plan to expel that Mosotho girl. He reported that it was the same with the Basotho: they did not support such intermarriages on the basis of their culture and belief systems. But with the San no such incidence was reported.

Mr A reported that the San were purported to have inhabited the region much earlier than the Basotho, Phuthi or Matebele who currently live in that area. He reported a number of rock art sites in the area of Mt Moorosi that he had seen. According to him the paintings were a form of communication amongst the San as they moved from place to place. The Phuthi had no special association with the paintings. They admire paintings as San heritage with no significance to them. Importantly, **Mr A** mentioned three types of San groups that he knew about: the Hottentots, bushman and coloureds. In Lesotho anyone with these physical attributes is referred to as *Moroa* (San) after the real *Baroa*. However, he made it clear that he referred to the bushman as the first inhabitants of the area.

Asked about Chief Moorosi, he said that he was not sure what to say about him. The only thing that he had heard people saying about him was the war that he fought with *Makhooa* (the whites) in his mountain. Asked whether he knew where some groups of San went to after the Moorosi War he said that he did not know and there was no area known to have been occupied by only the San. The San individuals had been seen in the company of the Basotho and their culture might have been “eaten” by that of the Basotho now that there are no signs of them as a cultural group.

Mr A stated that he was not sure if Moorosi had grand children: “Neither do I know what happened to him after his war. I don’t know how his death came about”.

Mrs B

Asked whether she knew anything about the San, she pointed out that she had been told that some San people had occupied a certain cave known locally as “*Lehaheng le leholo*” – the big cave. She confirmed that intermarriages occurred between the San and other ethnic groups in the region but could not connect any family as having

directly descended from the San. According to her there were San paintings in Mt Moorosi. They were often asked by teachers to visit them as pupils.

Asked about Chief Moorosi, she pointed out that the only thing that she could remember about him is the war that he fought on top of his mountain with the British. After the war people went in different directions and she could not tell exactly where the San went to. She believed that the San found the Phuthi in the area that is why they disappeared. She had been told of the San but she had never seen them herself.

Mr C

Mr C was interviewed at the place called “*Lithakong tsa Baroa*” – San ruins. He indicated that while the area was so called, there were no descendents of the San in the area. What he had heard about the San was that they were nomadic, never cultivated land nor kept stock but was amazed by the fact that the place was called “San ruins” as and that the San did settle and built houses there. According to him San groups who used to occupy the area were dispersed by Chief Moorosi and some groups of them went up the Maseteli’s Nek towards Kokstad. He alluded to three rock art sites in the area.

Mr C pointed out that rock paintings are so important even in the Phuthi society because it shows the San lifestyle and how it influenced the lifestyle of the Phuthi. The San used bows and arrows as a means to earn their livelihood, the Phuthi, too, came to use bows and arrows until recently. However, the Phuthi no longer visit rock art sites as our land is now divided into wards ruled by different chiefs some of whom are not Phuthi. **Mr C** indicated that he had heard people saying that the San had good relations with Chief Moorosi but he could not confirm it. He believed that the San arrived before the Phuthi in the area because the Phuthi reportedly found the San already at the area when they were chased into the area by the British.

He pointed out that Chief Moorosi still had grandchildren across the Senqu River. He was not sure whether they were still chiefs but he recalled that one of them died recently at the time when he was negotiating with the government of Lesotho to regain

their principal chieftainship. According to him, no one knows what happened to Chief Moorosi.

Mr D

Mr D indicated that the Phuthi first met the San in what is now called “Quthing District”. The Phuthi were migrating from an area still known today as “*Lefikeng la bo-Khiba*” near Aliwal North. The intermarriages began at this time. In the ensuing ethnic classes, the San appear to have sided with the Phuthi. There are San paintings in this mountain. The Phuthi used to value these paintings because they were close friends with the San. After the wars the Phuthi and the San were dispersed and the conditions might have changed wherever they sought refuge. But I believe they continued to live peacefully thereafter. “There are no longer San people around here, I have seen the same San that we are talking about in Port Elizabeth”. It is not known what happened to Moorosi, whether he disguised himself as an ordinary person and escaped... it is still an issue of research.

I believe the San arrived earlier than the Phuthi in this area because the names of Rivers and places have been named by the San and they still retain such names (for example, Quthing, Senqu, Qaqatu). The San language was called “*Seqhanku*”. Asked whether he could speak the San language, he instead mentioned how difficult the language was. He pointed out that Moorosi still had grandchildren across the Senqu River in Phamong Ha Nte. They still call themselves after Moorosi. There are other descendents of Moorosi in Ha Mafura, far east of Mt Moorosi. These descendents are now local chiefs and one of them, by the name of Masakhala, died during the process of negotiating to regain their principalship in the Quthing region.

Mr E

Mr E was very old. He could not talk for five minutes before becoming totally exhausted. He indicated that his grandfather had reared the San. They did not paint but “*ene ele ntho tse senang kelello*” they were crazy things. “*Ntho tse jang bohloa*” they ate termites. If you found them in a cave you would choose the one you wanted and it

would follow you. “Across the gorge in that village, the chief there had also reared some San and the descendants of those San are still there”.

Mrs F

Mrs F was asked about the descendants of the San in the village and she indicated that there were San descendants in the village. These people have taken the culture, family names (surname) of the local chief. The story goes that the local chief found their “grandfather¹⁹” [that is, “great-great-grandfather”] who was called Adamo. He was found amid the wars between smaller chiefdoms during the process of amalgamations in the region. When Adamo was ready to marry, the local chief instructed some of his men to go to what is probably known today as Matatiele to find a San woman for Adamo. Adamo and his wife gave birth to children who took the culture of the local chief and they became totally Phuthi though biologically they remained San.

Asked about rock paintings in the area, she pointed out that there were paintings in the Likolobeng gorge. The current Phuthi people do not take painting sites seriously, they just admire them like any other people from different parts of the world. Even these San descendants do not especially value them and they certainly don’t have a special connection to the paintings like their ancestors. They refer to these sites as “San places”, not “our ancestral sites”. The local teachers, however, take their pupils to these sites to teach them about this San heritage.

Mrs F indicated she had nothing to tell about Moorosi except that he was the greatest Phuthi chief of his time. “I don’t know if he had any particular relations with the San”, added **Mrs F**. She further indicated that they lived and they continue to live with the descendants of Adamo as brothers and sisters using the same surname. There has never been any recorded discrimination.

¹⁹ In Basotho culture, all generations prior to one’s grandparents are referred to as “ancestors” or “grandparents” as there is no Sesotho term for “great-grandparents” or their antecedents.

Mrs G

Mrs G was interviewed together with **Mrs H**, **Mrs I** and **Ms J**. The first three women were great-great-granddaughters-in-law and the **Ms J** was a great-great-granddaughter of Adamo. Asked about how they felt about being associated with the San, they confessed that the situation there was different as some people, even those who were supposed to be their closest relatives, often refer to them as *Baroa* (San). “We are made to feel that we do not belong here but somewhere else” added the great-great-granddaughter. We learn that the San were not taken as equally important as other members of the society. But the great chief (our great-great-great-grandfather) appeared to have had great love for the San such that he took our great-great-grandfather Adamo as one of his sons. The thing of pointing fingers at us saying we are San is recent and it has come about with this new generation of children.

“At times we feel like coming together as descendants of Adamo and institute Adamo as our family name and stop using the current one”, indicated one of the women. The major problem so far is the San culture that we do not know. We understand certain rituals have to be performed. Asked where they thought they would find that required cultural information and rituals of the San, they indicated that the relevant authorities (Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Culture of Lesotho) should assist and the researchers. They asked some researchers who came to their area before the present researcher and they wish to voice it again.

Asked about a direct male descendant of Adamo who could be found in the vicinity of the area, they pointed to the next village and provided the name of **Mr R.M**. The surname is the same as theirs. However, they cautioned that he might not be comfortable talking about these issues with us since being associated with the San in the area was still highly stigmatised. Another reason he might feel uncomfortable was that he had never been told about his situation when he was young. It is only now that he is old that he has been told. People who are disclosing this information are some members of the chief’s family. They tell this confidential information to their kids who in turn pass it on. Although the truth has been told, Adamo’s descendants still perform cultural practices that they inherited from their fathers.

Mr K

Mr K, while giving an account of the San in his area, made a specific reference to the descendants of Adamo. Asked how Adamo came to be one of the sons of the local chief, he indicated that the great chief apparently came home with Adamo from one of his series of raids in other chiefdoms. Adamo was then brought up as one of the chief's sons. It was reported that the chief made all the necessary arrangements when Adamo was ready to marry. A team of men was sent out to find a San woman for Adamo. They brought her home and she officially married Adamo. "However, they since then took over my culture and we belong to the same clan of Mapolane," said the old man.

Asked about what he knew about Chief Moorosi, **Mr K** indicated that Moorosi's mother (Maili) was of the Mapolane clan. That was what his elders told him. But he did not know how Moorosi lived with the San. Generally, Adamo's experience with the Phuthi might be a good story to tell of the relations between the Phuthi and the San. He mentioned some descendants of Chief Moorosi across the Senqu River in Phamong. These people are still chiefs there in a village called Ha Qacha. Asked about the grave of Chief Moorosi, **Mr K** stated that the only thing that he knew was "Moorosi's mountain". According to him no one knew where Moorosi was buried and it was unknown if he died during the 1879 war against the colonial forces.

Mrs L

Mrs L, when asked about the San, indicated that there were San individuals in her village when she was growing up. According to her, one San man called Stefane stayed for a long time in that village. However, she did not know where Stefane had come from, but he stayed with the local chief (pointing at the fallen ruins). They were wondering where he had come from and where were the other San people. He spoke a broken Sesotho. He was a real San (*Moroa hantle*), short, yellowish and his language as well. Asked about what happened to Stefane, she indicated that he left the village but they never knew where he went to.

Asked about the rock paintings, she pointed to the area known locally as *Baroeng* (San place). They used to visit such sites and even now they still go and look at them. Asked about Chief Moorosi, she indicated that she read about him in history books when she

was still a primary school pupil but could only remember his mountain stronghold called Mt Moorosi and the wars that he fought there. It was not clear where he was buried.

Mr M

Mr M is a chief and his great-grandfather was the one who had adopted San. He grew up with these San descendants in his family knowing them as full brothers who would perform the same rituals as sons from the same man. Asked where the San were taken, he recalled stories that his grandfather used to tell them that, at the height of raiding activities in the region, his great-grandfather brought home a San woman who was called 'M'aqhoeng. 'M'aqhoeng gave birth to Qhoeng (Adamo).

It was not clear however, whether 'M'aqhoeng was already pregnant or not when she came to my home but it was unlikely that she was since she gave birth to a typical San boy, Adamo, immediately after her arrival here in Sebapala

asserted the old man. Her son, Adamo, was adopted and became another son of my great-grandfather and performed rituals that we still perform even today. When Adamo was ready to take a wife, all necessary arrangements were done to ensure that he got married.

Men were sent out to Matatiele to find a San woman for Qhoeng. They came back with a woman who was named 'Makana' (Sesotho) / 'Labokana' (Phuthi). She gave birth to Jeri. Jeri got married to another San woman just across the Sebapala River who was given the name of 'Makhotso'. This family apparently gave birth to a number of children whose descendants are still there and some of whom hold high-ranking positions in the Lesotho government. They use different surnames now. **Mr M** indicated that the Phuthi and the San had good relations in his area. According to him what contributed more towards good relations was the practice of intermarriages. The San were also known for their bravery in war. The Phuthi used them in their wars with other ethnic groups. It was reported that even Chief Moorosi was a good friend of the San. However, the arrival of the missionaries saw the disappearance of the San in the region.

According to **Mr M**, Chief Moorosi still had well-known descendants some of whom living in Maseru and they still call themselves after their grandfather, Moorosi. Across the Senqu River some of Moorosi's descendants are still there and they are chiefs though they call themselves in different surnames. Asked about where Chief Moorosi was buried, he indicated that the Phuthi tradition had it that Moorosi had ordered some of his men that should he fall during the war, they should take his corpse and hide it so that his enemies would not see him.

Mr N and Mrs O

Mr N was a direct descendant of the San. He was very old and partially deaf so his wife was there to assist him. Asked about his ancestral line, he stated that he descended directly from Adamo. Adamo was a famous San in Seapala region. According to **Mrs O**, the San people were sometimes referred to as the people of *Qhalinkho* (*ba Ha Qhalinkho*). She was not sure whether this collective term was derogatory or not. In response to the question that sought to know how Adamo came about to Seapala, **Mr K** indicated that one Chief Masitise went to the east of the Quthing District in what is now known as the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa for the usual raid there. He came back with Adamo to another chief who became Adamo's father. Apparently he told stories about how Adamo rescued them in a desperate situation in the war, so they would like the chief to take him as one of his sons. When Adamo was ready to marry, this chief found a woman for him. However, it was said that their lifestyles were difficult to understand as they would do "very unusual things like eating termites", said **Mrs O**. This was associated with "laziness", added **Mrs O**:

"Just imagine when a person was expected to work on the fields and she was busy digging termite mounds, what time would she get to work?"

Asked about the relations between the Phuthi and the San, **Mrs O** indicated that as a sign of appreciation and belief in San power, one chief made a strong 'cultural' decision that Adamo would be the first one to scarify (*ho phatsa*) and shave his head (*ho kuta*) before his biological sons in the case of rituals and deaths in the family, respectively. The idea was to harness the power from Adamo's blood so that it could go in the form of blood to his other sons. This is cultural in the sense that no other person is allowed to break the family pattern of shaving heads in the case of deaths as sons of a

man shave heads in the order of seniority but Adamo was made a senior son so that his blood would mix with those of the sons of the chief.

Adamo since then became a real son of the chief. He took up the culture of the Phuthi and he set the precedent to his descendants. **Mr N** grew up knowing that he was a Phuthi. Nonetheless, he came to know that he descended from the San just before he got married. Asked if he could speak San language, he said he could speak only Phuthi, Sesotho and Xhosa. **Mrs O** indicated that there was harmony since then. And there are San paintings not far from where they stayed but she was not sure whether they were executed by some of Adamo's descendants or not.

Mr P and Mr Q

Mr P and **Mr Q** were interviewed together as they were very old. The former was a direct grandson of Chief Moorosi and he could no longer hear properly because of his great age. They asserted that they knew and had seen the San before. The San used to come to visit the then local chief who was the father of **Mr P**. They would normally come riding on horses. **Mr P**'s father was one of Chief Moorosi's sons. **Mr P** and **Mr Q** were young boys then. One of those San bands was the famous Stefane who was also a guitarist. Asked about the nature of relations that existed between the Phuthi and the San, they both reported that there were good relations and no "apartheid". It was reported that the San were good friends of Moorosi and after the Moorosi War, they sought refuge in what is now called Sekhutlong. "The San appeared to have constituted another part of the Phuthi nation", added **Mr Q**. He alluded to intermarriages between the Phuthi and the San in the village. One famous Phuthi by the name of Pheana had married a San woman from Tulumaneng near Zastron. Their grand children are now living in one village in the area. A San family that they knew about in the village had just ended as all the family members had died. In this family apparently the man was a San.

Asked about rock art sites in their area, they stated that there were some good paintings in the nearby caves but the young herd boys of today damaged them. According to them, the paintings were a sign that the San had occupied that area. They also reported that some Phuthi individuals painted with the San. They recalled the name of a famous

Phuthi by the name of Masitise who reportedly painted with the San. Asked whether there were some grandsons of Chief Moorosi who were still alive, **Mr P** gave two more names in addition to his and mentioned that one of them had just died.

Mr R

Mr R was interviewed on his bed with his wife assisting him. **Mr R** had a hearing problem. He pointed out that he had seen the San when he was still a young boy. The San appeared to have lived peacefully with the Phuthi. But his grandfather had told him that some groups of the San who had occupied an area called Likolobeng in Tsatsane had been reported to have stolen Moorosi's cattle in his cattle post in *Thaba Linoha* (Mountain of Snakes). Lekhutla, who was one of Moorosi's chief warriors, was ordered to find and drive back those cattle. According to **Mr R**, it was in this incident that Lekhutla praised himself in the following words:

*Pheetsa meru ea ba ha Pheeana, Tjamela,
O na rongoe, likhomo a lilata,
O phemme metsu ea Baroa mahaheng mola,
O phemme metsu ea Baroa Likolobeng.*

Mr P indicated that while the good relations dominated in the co-existence between the Phuthi and the San, people tend to overlook this incident. According to him, this incident showed that the San were still leading their lifestyle that was different from that of the Phuthi though they did not clash on a number of things. They started to disappear in the region after the Moorosi War meaning Moorosi was their closest friend.