

**Engendering San rock art: masculinity and femininity in the rock art of Zimri
Shelter and the Cederberg region, Western Cape, South Africa**

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DIVISION OF ARCHAEOLOGY
SCHOOL OF GEOGRAPHY, ARCHAEOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other University.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'S' followed by a horizontal line and a small cross at the end.

(Signature of candidate)

21st day of January 2020 at Durban.

ABSTRACT

The San rock paintings at Zimri Shelter and those of nearby sites in the Cederberg mountains form the focus of this investigation. The aim of this thesis is to interpret the images at Zimri Shelter and other sites in terms of gendered social relationships. The thesis draws on the theoretical insights of third wave feminism and considers a range of socially constructed gender categories amongst diverse San communities and how these might be represented in the rock art of the Cederberg. In doing so, the thesis seeks to find meanings in the images beyond those developed by the dominant paradigm, which consider the religious symbology of the rock art. It also seeks to advance current gendered understandings of San rock art beyond a narrow search for women in the rock art to a position where we can consider the mutual construction of masculinity and femininity in the iconography. To accomplish this, I interrogate illustrated human and animal bodies at Zimri Shelter and other Cederberg rock art sites and expose how the art is concerned with bodily transformations, liminality and ambiguity. These three elements are encapsulated in San life-cycle rituals and are deeply intertwined with San ideas of supernatural potency. I argue that these social processes are metaphorically represented through embodiment in the rock art at Zimri Shelter and elsewhere.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

Words for hunter-gatherer and pastoralist groups

Hunter-gatherer groups such as the |xam, G|wi and Ju|'hoansi are referred to as either San or Bushmen. Unfortunately both these terms has been viewed as derogatory. 'Bushman' derived from the term 'Bosjesmans'—a post-colonial construct which includes a diverse group with different languages and with pejorative, racist and sexist connotations. 'San' is the Khoekhoe word *sonqua* for 'Bushman' or 'foragers'. The use of the word 'San' however implies a group of lower status than those who own livestock and in some instances referred to, for example, as 'vagabonds'. Different hunter-gatherer groups have preferred different terminology. Neither of these names appears to be ideal, however I use the term 'San' in this thesis and reject any derogatory connotations (see Barnard 1992; De Jongh 2012; Mitchell 2002). Similarly, pastoralists have been referred to by various words such as 'Khoi', 'Khoikhoi' or 'Khoikhoin' which derives from the Nama word for 'person' or 'people'. In this thesis I use the more modern spelling: 'Khoe' for singular; 'Khoekhoen' for plural; and 'Khoekhoe' when used as an adjective (Mitchell 2002: 8; Smith 1998). I am also cognisant of the fact that written representations, including the use of symbols and punctuation, of San and Khoekhoe languages are Western interpretations of oral communication that had not been in the written form before.

Referencing

References to the unpublished notebooks of the Bleek and Lloyd collection is indicated by a letter that refers to the author ('L' for example refers to Lucy Lloyd); followed by a roman numeral that refers to the informant (II for example refers to ||kabbo); the first number that follows indicates the number of the notebook, and the second number indicates the page. Notebooks of the Bleek and Lloyd Archive has been digitally publicised at <http://lloydbleekcollection.cs.uct.ac.za/>.

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‘Thembi’

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CHAPTER ONE:

DISCOVERING ZIMRI SHELTER

Interpretation is a voyage of discovery in the field of human emotions and intellectual growth, and it is hard to foresee that time when the interpreter can confidently say, "Now we are wholly adequate to our task"—Freeman Tilden 1954: 60

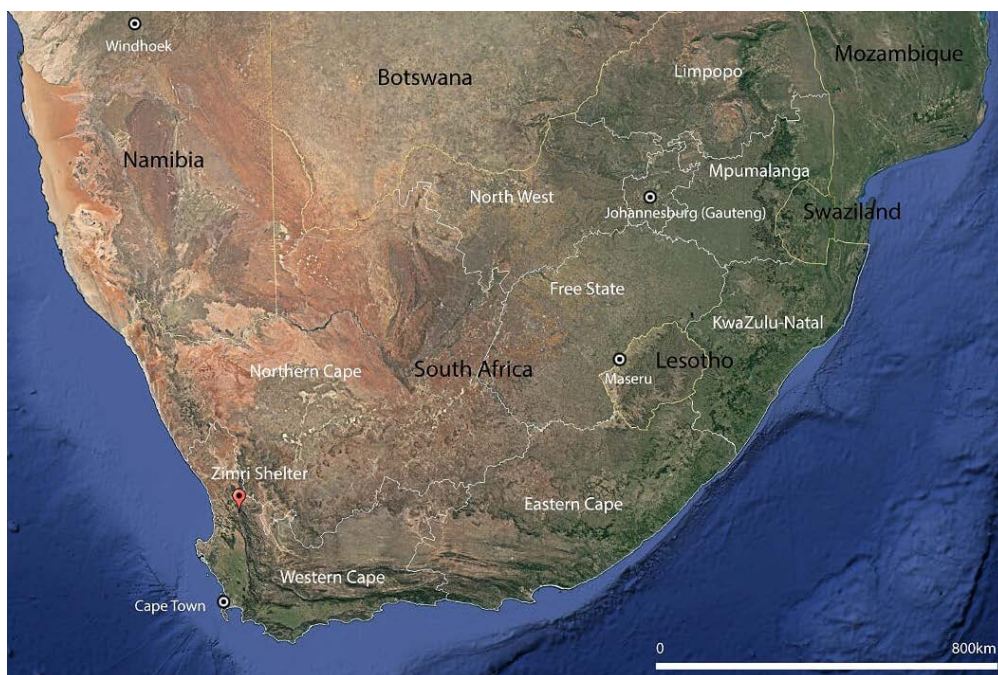
1.1. FINDING ZIMRI SHELTER

Described as one of the most special sites in the Cederberg and as a secret site, Zimri Shelter sparked my interest. I was told that it had spectacular polychrome shaded images of eland, which is not typical of Cederberg rock art, but rather more like the art of the south-eastern mountains. Having lived and worked in the Cederberg region and having done rock art research in the uKhahlamba Drakensberg, I have always considered these two geographical regions to be different in terms of rock art; hence my curiosity.

Cederberg rock art, other than the Maloti-Drakensberg mountains, has limited shamanistic images—the main interpretive paradigm for southern African rock art— but numerous, often single-sex, processual and intended nude images with sexual features. Typical Cederberg depictions also include elephants, sheep and eland. The many well-preserved images at Zimri Shelter are not only representative of the rock art of the Cederberg region, but also includes exceptional and unique paintings in subject and style that do not normally form part of the typical Cederberg repertoire. Such paintings include shaded polychrome eland, an ‘emanating’ eland, a ‘mythic woman’, male wildebeest therianthropes, and detailed clothing and decoration.

The rock art of the Cederberg has enjoyed interpretative efforts on the meanings of the images but has experienced less theoretical attention than the Maloti-Drakensberg mountains’ imagery (but see Hollmann 1993; Parkington 1989, 1996, 2002; Yates *et al.* 1985; Yates & Manhire. 1991). Only a few scholars have explored aspects other than shamanistic elements in San hunter-gatherer culture such as gender, sexuality, initiation and the weather that may be represented in the south-western Cape art (Anderson 1997; Parkington 1989, 1996, 2002; 2008; Parkington *et al.* 1996; Solomon 1989, 1992, 1994, 1995, 1997). Alternative readings established the abundant presence of females and female

rituals, life-cycle performances and initiation rituals documented in San ethnographic accounts. These invaluable contributions provided a springboard for gender identity interpretative considerations for Zimri Shelter's rock art. The rock art at Zimri Shelter that have bodies of human and animals with sexed gendered signatures and other that lack gender features, raised questions that required another platform of understanding: sex or gender; the social dynamics and transformation of identities; the relationship between gender and power; and does the embodiment of gender in material culture structure gender ideology? The images at Zimri Shelter, painted in association with familiar images, many of which have sex and gender undertones, offer an extraordinary context from which to explore gendered lives and gendered worldviews, and understand a gendered social production and consumption of rock art in the rest of the Cederberg. The discovery of Zimri Shelter presented the opportunity for me to investigate and expand on an alternative course of gender identities in this 'interpretive voyage'.



Map 1. Rock art regions referred to in the thesis, and Zimri Shelter.

In 1991 Stephen Townley Bassett was tracing rock paintings in a shelter north of Clanwilliam as part of a survey for the purpose of developing a management plan for the area. The survey lasted from 1991-1993 and included the Cederberg (CWA) and Groot Winterhoek Wilderness Areas (GWWA). Funded by the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, the project resulted in a report titled 'Management Guidelines for rock art sites in

nature conservation areas and forestry reserves in the Western Cape' (Deacon 1993). On this particular day, however, all that was still far in the future and the project was still in its infancy. Bassett asked his assistant and local field ranger Jan Zimri (Fig. 1.1) if he would scout a ravine north of their position and look for rock paintings. Late that afternoon, Zimri returned saying that he had found a site with many paintings. When Bassett asked him what was there, Zimri replied, "a lot of yellow eland and other creatures with wildebeest heads". Zimri was describing a site that would soon be eponymous. Bassett was intrigued, but time had run out, and he asked Zimri if he would remember the site's location so that they could return on a future trip. Zimri affirmed that he could, and they departed the field.



Figure 1.1. Jan Zimri (courtesy of Stephen Townley Bassett).

They returned to the area on 27 May 1991. After traversing rough Cederberg terrain and pushing through some thick undergrowth, they eventually re-located the site. Bassett described how dumbfounded he was when he first saw the images (Fig. 1.2 & Fig. 1.3):

I remember gazing around the site and being amazed at seeing shaded polychrome yellow eland on the rock. I thought of the Drakensberg and the shaded polychrome eland that I had seen there and how surprising it was to see similar paintings in the Cederberg. This was new to me. We found the remains of what looked like bedding (grasses and dried bush), charcoal, small pieces of pottery and stone flakes on the cave floor. The attenuated wildebeest-headed images and the bent-over karossed figures totally intrigued me and I remember thinking that

I could not wait to get back to Cape Town to tell my project leader, Janette Deacon. I remember arriving back in Cape Town and telling Janette all about the site and at a later date after she visited the site, she asked me what we should call the site, and I said to her, 'well, Jan found the site so let's call it Zimri's Shelter'. Jan was a wonderful field ranger and help to me over the two and a half years of the rock art project (Bassett pers. comm. 2019); (Map.1).



Figure 1.2. Zimri Shelter.

This remarkable discovery was supported by another painting of a single shaded polychrome eland at TBK 15 (in close proximity of Zimri Shelter). In the official report of the survey, Deacon (1993:41) wrote:

The finding of the shaded polychrome paintings at Zimri Shelter and TBK 15 is the most important rock art discovery in the Western Cape in decades and this alone has made the survey worthwhile. The paintings are of national and international value not only for their artistic achievement, but because they record the history of Later Stone Age people in the region in a way that has not been done by European observers.



Figure 1.3. Eland frieze, Zimri Shelter (tracing courtesy of Stephen Townley Bassett).

The report was not published in a scholarly journal, but soon enough rumours of the discovery circulated in academic corridors and Zimri Shelter began to garner attention. The precise location of the site was kept secret and helped to fuel the rumours of spectacular shaded polychrome eland and fantastic therianthropic (part-human, part-animal) figures. According to conventional wisdom, such images did not occur in the Cederberg, and this is what sparked scholarly attention and made the discovery of Zimri Shelter so significant. Indeed, no compelling evidence had ever been found there that suggested that the complex technique of shaded polychromes—associated with the better-known rock art of the Maloti-Drakensberg mountains—had ever been used in the Cederberg. Curiously, while rumours circulated about the magnificent images and images of the site were shown at academic conferences, little comprehensive scholarly work was undertaken on the site.

Then, in 2012, an article was published on the site in *The Getaway Magazine* (March 2012); I felt it necessary to consider Zimri Shelter for my PhD. At that stage I was fortunate to work for Dr Janette Deacon who had planned and coordinated the project that led to its discovery. The publication of the site in a popular magazine prompted the need for a more scholarly investigation of Zimri Shelter because of the potential damage to the site once its existence was in the public domain; this thesis is the result of that investigation.

1.2. ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE CEDERBERG

Rock art surveys have been conducted in the Cederberg as far back as the 1950s with the first formal records being published by Ginger Townley Johnson (uncle of Stephen Townley

Bassett), Hyme Rabinowitz and Percy Sieff (Johnson *et al.* 1959). The geographical area north of Clanwilliam that includes the famous Pakhuis Pass and the densely painted farms of Sevilla and Boontjieskloof became popular with rock art enthusiasts in the 1960s. Over time, more systematic surveys and investigations were undertaken, not only on the rock art but also on the hunter-gatherer archaeology of the south-western Cape (e.g. Deacon 1993, 1998; Hollmann 1993; Johnson & Maggs 1979; Johnson & Rabinowitz 1955; Johnson *et al.* 1959; Maggs 1967a, 1967b; Maggs & Sealy 1983; Manhire 1998; Manhire *et al.* 1983; Manhire *et al.* 1985; Parkington 1977a, 1977b, 1987, 2008; Parkington & Manhire 1997, 2003; Parkington & Poggenpoel 1968; Sealy *et al.* 2000; Smith & Ripp 1978; Smith *et al.* 1991; Tredgold 1955; Van Rijssen 1984; Wiltshire 2011; Yates *et al.* 1985; Yates & Manhire 1991; Yates *et al.* 1994). Despite the many surveys and research of this well-known region by rock art scholars, it is exciting that discoveries such as Zimri Shelter (Fig. 1.3 & Fig. 1.4) are still made.



Figure 1.4. Zimri Shelter rock outcrop.

The archaeological sites in the Pakhuis region where Zimri Shelter is situated are predominantly small overhangs, with many rock paintings, that appear to date to between the last 3000 to 4000 years (Sealy *et al.* 2000). Zimri Shelter is large —being 30m wide, 5.5m deep and 6m high—located in the sedimentary rock of the Table Mountain Group (Deacon

1993: 19). Despite its size, the shelter is fortunately difficult to locate. It is north-east facing and located in a valley close to a river. While artefacts are found on the surface of Zimri Shelter, the floor is not conducive to excavation as it is predominantly covered by large, spalled rocks and has little in the way of a deep deposit that archaeologist's desire for excavation. The artefacts found on the surface are typical Later Stone Age implements found throughout the Cederberg region (Fig. 1.5 & Fig. 1.6). Later Stone Age archaeological sites and assemblages age range is from the recent colonial past to 20-40 thousand years ago (Lombard *et al.* 2012: 128, 131). General artefactual characteristics from this time period in southern Africa include a wide range of formal tools similar to Smithfield and Wilton industries, particularly scrapers (microlithic and macrolithic), backed artefacts, evidence of hafted stone and bone tools, borers, bored stones, upper and lower grindstones, grooved stones, ostrich eggshell (OES) beads and other ornaments, undecorated/decorated OES fragments, bone tools (sometimes with decoration), fishing equipment, ochre, rock art, and ceramics in the final phase (Lombard *et al.* 2012: 128, 131). Surface scatter at Zimri Shelter included scrapers, blades, ceramics, ochre and upper and lower grindstones (Fig. 1.5 & Fig. 1.6). In addition, Bassett found the remains of what looked like bedding (grasses and dried bush) and charcoal.



Figure 1.5. Late Stone Age artefact assemblage from Zimri Shelter.



Figure 1.6. Upper and lower grindstones from Zimri Shelter.

1.3. THE ROCK ART IMAGES

The rock art at Zimri Shelter is interesting and important beyond the unusual shaded polychrome images and spectacular therianthropes. The predominant rock art style at Zimri Shelter is the San hunter-gather fine-line tradition, however, other styles such as crude fine-lines, finger dots and smears and a handprint are also present. Vivid paintings span the 30m shelter wall with only one metre not having any evidence of art (Fig. 1.7). The images are depicted on all the sandstone bands from the lowest to the top point some 4m high. Due to the excellent preservation and clear imagery, it is in many ways a model for what other sites might have once looked like and for the symbolism that pervades the rock art of the area.

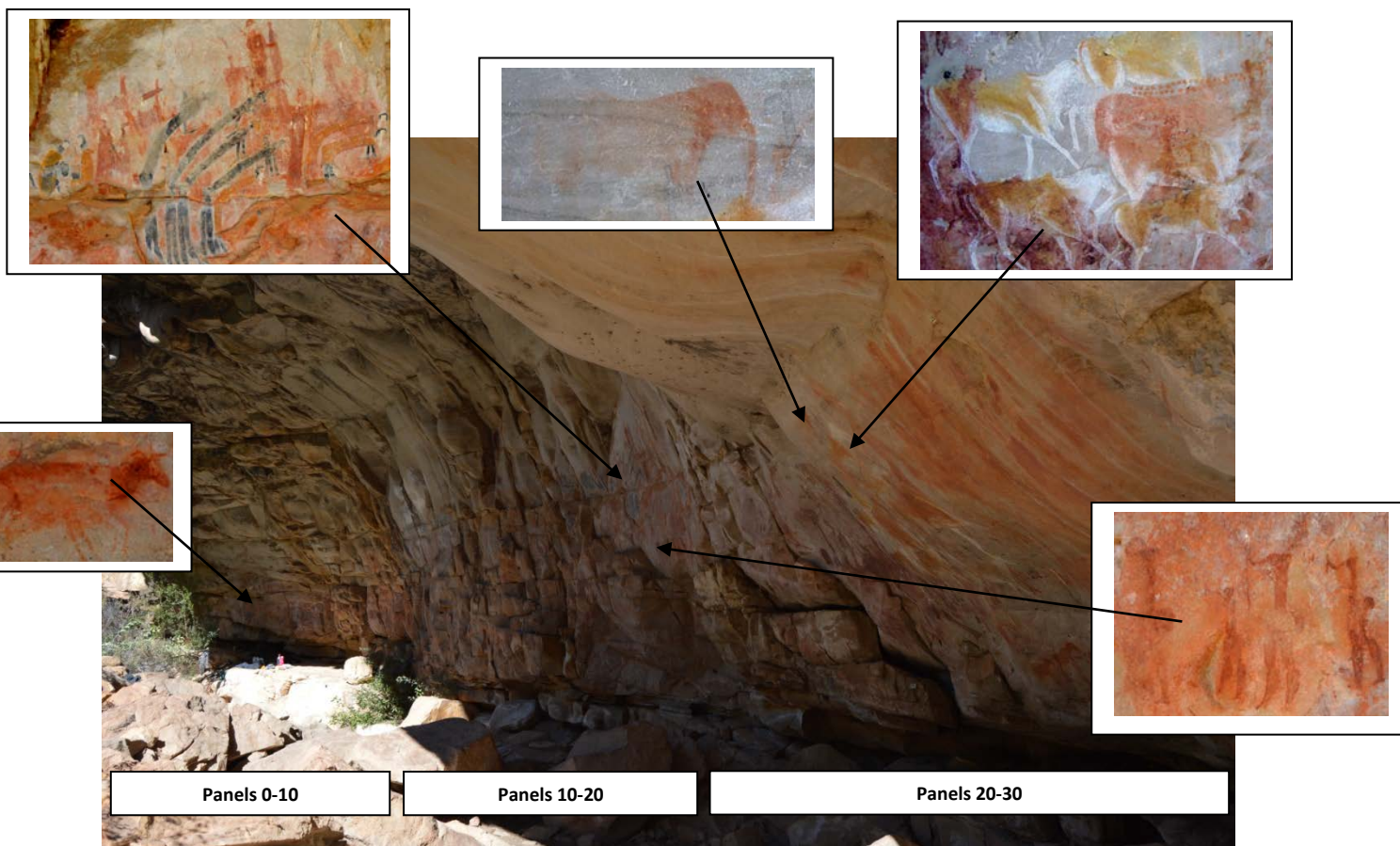


Figure 1.7. Side-view of Zimri Shelter indicating panels and representative images of each chapter.

Moving from the left of the shelter on the lower levels, faded red images are followed on by clearer images and viewers can discern red paintings of females in lines and paintings of red sheep. These panels merge into more faded red images, as well as red finger smears and

yellow paint remains, some of which appear to depict kaross-clad figures. More lines of humans become visible in these panels. The panels to the right seem to be either intensified painting episodes with many more, clearly visible, images, or better-preserved images. Paintings are depicted on the highest to the lowest levels of the shelter with detailed seated humans with yellow karosses and white faces as well as large red human figures. At approximately 17m from the left-side termination of the shelter the superimposed images are astonishing: more seated humans—some with black and some with yellow karosses with intricate, red crosshatching; standing humans in long, red karosses; bags; large red humans; lines of females; and spectacular large wildebeest-headed black therianthropes. Further to the right of the shelter more extraordinary images follow with an ambiguous female figure painted in association with male hunting equipment and a herd of shaded polychrome eland. Above this herd, a large elephant and large red humans are depicted. On the far right of the eland panel is another spectacular cluster of images on the shelter wall with various groups of human images— some of which have white faces and appear to face the viewer—as well as bags. The last couple of metres on the right terminus of the shelter have faded human and eland images and a lone elephant, under a rock (see Appendix 1 for a complete rock art description).

From left to right the painted surface of Zimri Shelter has an overwhelming display of San rock art—some of the images are familiar Cederberg images, other images present challenges for a researcher. For example: a) on closer inspection one of the shaded polychrome eland emanates a fluid from a raised tail; b) the black human figures with wildebeest heads are painted in a region where therianthropes are rare and where wildebeest never historically occurred; c) a feminine figure is depicted with male hunting equipment; and d) sheep paintings have decorative markings. These images require broader research approaches. Even though it is unusual, there are themes and motifs that make Zimri Shelter very much part of the Cederberg corpus of rock art. The CWA project report raises an important point that requires consideration: “The theme most common in the rock art of the CWA and the GWWA is that of groups of people engaged in social activities probably connected with gender-based rituals” (Deacon 1993: 41). The rock art of Zimri Shelter hence raises an opportunity for a gendered approach.

1.4. PREVIOUS INTERPRETATION

Current interpretations of the iconography and understandings of the social production and consumption of San rock art focus heavily on the rock art of the Maloti-Drakensberg mountains (Challis 2005; Challis 2008; Challis 2014; Lewis-Williams 1980, 1981, 1987, 1992, 2003; Lewis-Williams & Challis 2011; Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1988, 1989; Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2004, 2012; Swart 2004). From the 1980's David Lewis-Williams' shamanistic approach came to dominate and the researchers moved from empiricist approaches to ethnography-based research. Based on the Wilhelm Bleek and Lucy Lloyd manuscripts and anthropological research from the Kalahari, Lewis-Williams (1981) and Patricia Vinnicombe (1976) applied San ethnography to the interpretation of San rock art and found it to be representative of San religion, ritual and myth. San beliefs and rituals based on the 'shamanistic model' are postulated to be representative of all San over southern Africa—a pan-San cognitive system that can be applied to all southern African rock art (Lewis-Williams 1980, 1998; Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2012; Yates *et al.* 1985; Yates & Manhire 1991). Lewis-Williams' 'shamanistic model' has demonstrated that the rock art of the south-Maloti-Drakensberg is linked to San ritual specialists—shamans—who can harness potency through the trance experience to perform certain supernatural tasks such as healing, the control of rain and game, and travels to the spirit world (Lewis-Williams 1981; Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989). Lewis-Williams and Dowson (1989) identified many metaphors that relate to shamanism in the rock art of the Maloti-Drakensberg such as death, being underwater and flying. These metaphors were represented in the rock art through, for example, the eland as a central symbol of potency; therianthropic representations of transformed shamans; figures bleeding from the nose; hand-to-nose postures; pointed fingers and raised knee postures; figures with arms back and bent-over postures; dancing figures; clapping humans, *etcetera*. The strength of the well-established shamanistic interpretations has laid a platform for research into the social context of southern African rock art.

The rock art of the south-western Cape has also been interpreted within the shamanistic model (Hollmann 1993; Maggs & Sealy 1983; Manhire *et al.* 1986; Parkinson 1989; Yates *et al.* 1985). Tim Maggs and Judith Sealy's 'Elephants in boxes' paper opened south-western Cape rock art to possible shamanistic interpretations by linking elephant therianthropes and geometric images to trance-related experiences. Royden Yates and colleagues (1985: 71), in

agreement with Lewis-Williams, believe that the underlying concepts of trance experiences are culturally controlled and ever-present and argued that:

... in the logic of the trance hypothesis, the art of Boontjieskloof and Sevilla [two kloof systems in the Cederberg in the south-western Cape] should show conceptual correspondences with the art of the Drakensberg and, for that matter, with the art of the rest of southern Africa, despite material cultural differences between !xam, Maluti San and groups in other parts of the subcontinent.

They continued to find corresponding trance metaphors such as a figures with a bleeding nose, with arms back, and figures bending forward; therianthropes (although also highlighting their rarity in the south-western Cape); hands to face postures; eared caps; erect hair; squatting figures, an antelope with its head down; legs crossed; and emanating lines. Although Anthony Manhire and colleagues (1986) in their investigation of domestic animals in the rock art and the occurrence of sheep in the south-western Cape, stated that “overt trance associations are much less demonstrable in the western Cape than in the Drakensberg”; they still, however, believe, based on Yates and colleagues (1985) findings, that “the tradition of the art is undoubtedly shamanistic”. Jeremy Hollmann (1993) followed suit by identifying typical trance-related characteristics such as elongation, emanating lines, a therianthrope *etcetera* in the rock art from the Koebee region in the Western Cape. This discussion includes sheep and although they are viewed as part of “magical practices”, Hollmann (1993: 21) refers to Anne Solomon’s suggestion that they may also be linked to female fertility beliefs. Even though Hollmann interprets most of the paintings within the trance model, he states in his conclusion that “over and above these associations, the art seems to have been implicated in the negotiation of gender relations” (Hollmann 1993: 23). Although interpretations of the rock art of the south-western Cape were viewed from a shamanism perspective, researchers recognised the lack of trance symbolism in the paintings and noted the presence of possible gender representations.

1.5. THE CURRENT MODEL—ARCHAEOLOGICAL SUSPENSION?

The aim of this thesis is not to contest the existence of trance metaphors in the rock art of the south-western Cape, as its presence has in some cases been demonstrated. However, as pointed out by the researchers mentioned above, trance images that can ‘overtly’ be

demonstrated as trance related images are less. Hollmann (1993) recognises trance characteristics but suggests that gender aspects are also present. I therefore believe that trance is not the exclusive paradigm to be applied as it suspends the goal of archaeological studies. Geoff Blundell (2004: 61) highlighted three aspects of the pan-San cognitive system that limit rock art research: “chronology, regionality and a focus on image”. These limitations are due to the anthropological nature of the interpretive work. The difficulty in dating the art that would be able to indicate change and variability over space and time fell out of favour with the pan-San cognitive system. The interpretation of the distant past through the recent past limits the role played by historical processes and supports an uniformist view (Yates *et al.* 1994). Yates *et al.* (1985: 70) went as far as to say “the trance hypothesis frees rock painting interpretation from the constraints of time and space”. The projection of shamanistic similarities in certain images over space obscure variation and regional differences in the interpretative possibilities of rock art. Blundell (2004: 62) dubbed this “suspension of chronology and the uniformitarian treatment of space” as “somewhat anti-archaeological”. As Blundell (2004: 62) rightly states, “[a]fter all, southern African archaeology was—and still is—concerned with change over time and variation across space”. Despite the difficulties posed by the archaeological approach in rock art studies, researchers have started making inroads into demonstrating time and diversity in the art. Rock art images suggesting relative age sequences from the uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Park region were compared to existing sequences and integrated with absolute dates (Mazel & Watchman 2003; Swart 2004). These studies that showed diversity in sequence and subject matter highlight the importance of the archaeological method of investigating time, space and meaning in rock art research. Ideally, absolute rock art dates should be accompanied by context and supported by excavation (see Bonneau *et al.* 2017; Mazel 2009; Mazel & Watchman 2003).

Cederberg rock art would benefit from more regional sequence studies (see Mguni 1997, 2013). Although the Western Cape might have fewer sites with superimposed subjects and sequential overlays compared to the Maloti-Drakensberg, a site like Zimri Shelter with its multiple superimposed images would contribute to understanding the relative chronology of the Cederberg better. Basic chronological indicators have been established such as the study done by Siyakha Mguni (1997) at Diepkloof Kraal Shelter (also see Mguni 2013). The

fine-line tradition is assumed to be the oldest as it is not superimposed on any other styles. It consists of detailed, finely executed art in various colours (red, white, black, yellow and orange), in some cases depictions are shaded, and it is associated with San hunter-gatherers (Mguni 2013: 43). The fine-line style appears to be succeeded by 'coarse' fine-line depictions predominantly executed in red. This art style is less refined than the original fine-line tradition (Mguni 2013: 43, 44). Following on are handprints (plain and decorated), finger smears and dots (Manhire 1998; Mguni 2013: 44). Another known Western Cape rock art style is finger paintings which are images that appear to be executed using fingers. These images are painted in red, chalky red and brick and in some instances painted in association with more recent colonial subject matter (Mguni 2013: 44). Studies have shown that within these main temporal sequences, as suggested in the Western Cape as well as for the uKhahlamba-Drakensberg, there are also subsequences (Mguni 1997; Swart 2004). The images at Zimri Shelter are predominantly fine-line images with various subjects painted in a variety of colours which would make it a good potential site for studies on subsequences. Also present are crude fine-line images, as well as finger dots, smears, and a handprint. A study on the relative chronological sequence, from a gender perspective, would add important information regarding the construction of identities and change over time.

Dating by association in the south-western Cape has produced some valuable information. Antonieta Jerardino and Natalie Swanepoel (1999) dated parietal art at Steenbokfontein Cave in the Western Cape (Fig. 1.8) to a minimum date of 3 600 years ago. The slabs with rock art that cracked and fell from the shelter wall became part of the archaeological stratigraphic deposit. Although this art is from the coastal region and not the immediate vicinity of Zimri Shelter, the art is typical, in style and subject, of the fine-line tradition of south-western Cape rock art representing a line of humans of which some are wearing karosses.



Figure 1.8. Slab with rock art from Steenbokfontein Cave, Western Cape (from Jerardino & Swanepoel 1999).

This suggests that the fine-line painting tradition is of some antiquity in the south-western Cape region. Fallen Rock Shelter's lowest layer at Boontjieskloof (close to Zimri Shelter), produced ochre in support of the painting tradition at an approximate date of 2090BP. Nikolaas Van der Merwe and colleagues (1987) dated crude images of humans at Sonia's Cave Upper, also at Boontjieskloof, that were painted over red fine-line animals to 500 ± 140 BP, possibly indicating an approximate end of the fine-line tradition. More recently, some progress has been made in direct dating of rock art from the Eastern Cape (see Bonneau *et al.* 2011), but as the samples are painted flakes collected from the shelter floor, the art is unfortunately without context.

Archaeological excavations that can be linked to the social-cultural context of the rock art would be able to situate it chronologically and possibly highlight aspects that are not in the ethnography. Manhire and colleagues (1985) uncovered the presence of fully recurved bows and game hunting nets in rock art images—material culture items that are absent in the ethnographic record. Another interesting find from the mountainous region includes the burials at Faraoskop and Eland Cave (Pakhuis region). Fragments of leather with incised designs were found in association with burials and dated to approximately 2000BP at Eland Cave (Sealy *et al.* 2000). Similar rectangular scoring on leather fragments were also found at Faraoskop (Manhire 1993). The linkage between these archaeological deposits and rock art will be discussed further in Chapter Six.

Yates and colleagues (1994) investigated chronology and context by recording the art and excavating in the south-western Cape. They investigated changes that played a role in the

art and the archaeological record and the metaphoric representation thereof through material culture (i.e. art, stone tools and ostrich eggshell beads). The material record reflected change over time and space. Handprints over illustrative images have a linkage to the changes that appear in bead-making patterns and the utilisation of formal tools. These examples of related changes, as a result of the archaeological approach, are indicative of regional differentiation which should caution us against a search for all-encompassing continuity.

The general shamanistic model applied in rock art research, however, masks possible regional variations, as indicated by the archaeological approach, in rock art. Before Yates and colleagues' (1994) consideration of chronology and context, their pan-San uniformist 'search for trance' in the south-western Cape overshadowed the importance of other possible interpretations for the myriad, more common, images that occur in that same research area of Boontjieskloof, Sevilla and adjacent kloof-systems (see Yates *et al.* 1985). Examples include lines or processions of human figures, seated group scenes, naked humans, cloaked figures, elephants, sheep, and the rarity of therianthropes. Besides the common occurrence of the most 'potent antelope' in southern African rock art, the eland, are typical depictions of trance-related metaphors limited in the rock art of the south-western Cape. The CWA project recorded therianthropes at only two of the 90 sites (Deacon 1993: 31). If I were to base my research on the shared shamanistic model alone, a fleeting glance at Zimri Shelter would confirm a fit with the dominant shamanistic model with a 'no questions asked'-approach due to the impressive herd of eland depicted and the exceptional wildebeest therianthropes (Smith 2008). Such an approach would, however, limit a complete understanding of the social production and consumption of the site as a whole and as part of a specific region far removed from the Maloti-Drakensberg mountains.

That there are other possible interpretations besides the shamanistic approach for southern African rock art, and globally (see de Beaune 1998), have been argued. Although the "neuropsychological model" (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1988) has provided a universal interpretive application for rock art even beyond southern Africa (see Clottes & Lewis-Williams 2001), it has been criticised for not allowing diversity, different subject matter and varying contexts (Solomon 2008). Anne Solomon (Solomon 1992, 1994, 1997, 1998), for example, has shown in her research on gendered images that not all rock art is trance

related. Solomon (2008) also advocates a mythological based explanation which leads, I believe, to a binary dichotomy. I do not intend to position myself exclusively in the shamanistic or mythological camp, but rather support Barnard's (2008: 77) view of "a more complex possibility which includes history and agency as central but also allows for multiple readings, including shamanic". He also suggests the possibility that individual San may have had varying interpretations for rock art, including multiple readings. Similarly, from an art historian view, visual meanings and diversity is highlighted, as well as artistic praxis (see Skotnes 1994, 1996; Solomon 2008: 59). In reference to myths as illustrative of art, Lewis-Williams (2006:106) views the paintings as "parts of a conceptual nexus" that among other things includes rituals that relate to rituals that are connected to female puberty as well as shamans.

Although Zimri Shelter has no absolute dates, chronological indicators such as associative dates from sites in the area, painting styles and dated artefactual material that resemble depictions at Zimri Shelter, add the archaeological aspect of time. However, rock art is not only understood in terms of its formal qualities such as style and technique, but also in terms of the contextual relationships that reveal meaning and symbolism in rock art (Brady *et al.*). I, therefore, investigate and analyse outside the uniformist box—based on the gendered theoretical framework discussed in Chapter Three—with an emphasis on the social production and consumption of the art of the Cederberg region. An analysis of Cederberg rock art presents the opportunity to extend investigations of the social role of San rock art through a pluralist approach that requires a gender theoretical lens beyond the Maloti-Drakensberg mountains.

1.6. RE-VISITING GENDER

I am not the first to advocate that gender is implicated in southern African San rock art (Anderson 1996; Hollmann 2011, 2013; Parkington 1989, 2002; Solomon 1989; Stevenson 1995). By no means do I favour theory over fieldwork as it is fieldwork that brought the realisation that geographically different areas in southern Africa have different art, which surely 'could' have different meanings. Due to gender theory's exposure of the need for scientific rigour I was motivated to explore the thoughts regarding rock art I have had for

many years—surely there is more to rock art than the existing interpretations and why are researchers not venturing out and exploring other paradigms (see Dowson 2000). The fear of critique of seeking an alternative might be the grounds for acceptance of existing interpretations. To be clear, my research is not seeking an alternative; the aim of this thesis is not to critique shamanism as current theories and interpretations are strong and well-grounded. My aim is to extend interpretive frameworks to include images unexplained by existing understandings and consider other views on known image characteristics. It is about looking at San life from a different perspective and investigating a human structuring principle—gender—and how it played out in rock art. Gender studies might come across as destabilising and reconstructing (Gellar 2009: 76), but gender studies, or any other theoretical approach, could lead to growth in a discipline. As a result I do not position myself solely in the ‘gender camp’ as not only am I steering away from any binary positioning as that hinders research development, but also, the complexities of San life and cosmology allow a “conceptual nexus” with various connecting parts.

Archaeological research has shown variation over time and space, and generalising interpretations need to be addressed to avoid anti-archaeological and limiting approaches. The emphasis on religion and ritual in the interpretation of the symbolism of the art within the pan-San interpretive framework, have sometimes partially obscured other possible important aspects of the social role of the art, including gender (Stevenson 2000). A gender approach could circumvent limiting interpretations. Doing research through a gender theory lens does not imply a marginal or specialised field within archaeological research; it compels researchers to have an all-inclusive research approach, to continue asking questions and to keep re-evaluating research especially in the field of southern African rock art where research became ‘finding another image to fit the framework’ scenario, whilst there is so much more to understand and question.

Some research has shown the vital role gender plays in studies of San rock art due to genders’ prevalent presence in San beliefs and practices, as well as the prominence of gendered and naked imagery in the rock art (Hollmann 2011, 2013; Solomon 1992). Solomon (1992) highlighted female initiation and female potency as an avenue to explore an alternative to the trance model. Hollmann’s (2011, 2013) work on the Gestoptefontein-Driekuul Complex (GDC) reveals that rituals related to womanhood and female initiation are

expressed in the rock art. Zimri Shelter offers an opportunity for a regional, contextual approach which looks at images and gender. The subject matter at Zimri Shelter requires more than just a feminist influenced gender theory. I therefore extend my approach to include more recent gender theory considerations such as masculinity, ambiguity and bodily experiences (see Chapter Three). Zimri Shelter is thus a potential 'Rosetta Stone' for the Cederberg region to achieve a more nuanced understanding of the differences (and similarities) of southern African rock art as a corpus.

1.7. OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

Megan Biesele (1976: 303) points out that the fundamental narrative themes of ethnography "include some of the fundamental problems of living, such as marriage and sex, the food quest, sharing, family relationships, the division of labour, birth and death ...". The solutions to these 'fundamental problems of living' surely not only include, for example, rituals such as the trance dance as established by the 'shamanistic model', but also initiation and transition rites, and life-cycle aspects that may be highlighted through additional theoretical frameworks and imagery in other regions such as the Cederberg. Lewis-Williams (1981) investigated these rituals – girls' puberty rituals, boys' first kill rituals, and marriage rituals— only to 'find' that the art of the Maloti-Drakensberg mountains weren't preferred depictions of these rites, but rather images that relate to shamanistic practices and the representative symbol of the San belief system, the eland. His focus-shift reduced the importance of these life-cycle rituals. However, the small number of trance-related imagery and the presence of 'other' images in the rock art of the south-western Cape require a review of the role played by these rituals to understand difference and variation in the art.

In order to accommodate previously obscured themes represented in the rock art, I discuss the methodology of current rock art research in Chapter Two. The representation of people, their past and the pictures, requires a cautionary approach. Issues such as the Revisionist Debate and the use of ethnographic analogies, androcentric ethnographers and researchers, and displaced subjects, are considered. Some of these issues are addressed by the appropriate theoretical orientation. However, theories are not created in a vacuum, and existing ideas are projected onto subject matter. Another methodological concern is the

manner in which rock art images are presented—is there such a thing as the ‘perfect, unbiased representation’?

In Chapter Three, I explore gender as an appropriate theoretical discourse with the adoption of embodiment and contextualism to avoid a limited understanding of the San hunter-gatherers of the Cederberg region. This allows a review of ethnography of the San of southern Africa through the lens of masculinity and femininity to understand the possible role gender played in the construction and consumption of rock art. I explore identity-markers for San masculinity, femininity and gender interplay within San groups while guarding against concerns raised in Chapter Two. This sets the stage for the chapters to follow that explore the Cederberg’s various displays of sexual and gender indicators in the rock art.

Ethnographically, animals are well-studied aspects of San belief. “Animals are used as metaphorical operators to mediate ... away from undesirable states and toward desired ones of coolness, maturity, individual and social well-being, safety, and hunting and gathering success” (Bieseke 1993: 88). From early on anthropologists were interested in the role non-human animals played in human culture. Tylor’s *Primitive Culture* (1871) introduced the concept of animism (Bird-David 1999). Animals were believed to have souls. The non-human world was filled with spiritual forces which motivated animism for Tylor as the foundation of religion (Tylor 1871). The idea of animism has been extended to be viewed in terms of relational epistemology of the relationships between humans and their environments and led to the abandonment of the nature-culture dualism (Bird-David 1999; White & Candea 2018). An animistic hunter-gatherer worldview is however a very specific way of viewing the world (see Dowson 2009). Further studies have considered the sentience of animals (Steiner 2005); viewing “animals as parts of human society rather than just symbols of it” and treating them as persons (Knight 2005: 1); and the possibility of reciprocity between humans as hunters and animals (Nadasdy 2007). Though I do believe that there is no clear nature-culture divide in San hunter-gatherer society and that animals have certain forces/powers that could resonate with ideas surrounding animism, I do not identify with animals having moral status or intentionality and do not engage with reciprocal human-animal behaviour research. I rather look from a gendered platform at the associative and constitutive roles of animals in San society. Animals are employed as metaphors that

surpass human abilities and intercede between humans and supernatural powers, therefore having the ability to ‘bridge worlds’ (Biesele 1993:89). I further investigate forces or potency known as *n/um* and *n!ow* associated with animals and gender in San rock art in Chapters Four to Seven and follow Claude Lévi-Strauss’ (1969: 161-162) viewpoint that animals are not only “good to eat”, but they are “good to think”.

Chapter Four considers the impressive cluster of polychrome shaded eland at Zimri Shelter as well as the broader context of meaning for paintings of eland in the Cederberg region. Drawing on third wave feminism, I investigate other interpretations for eland depictions in the Cederberg that include femininity, androgyny, fat, rain, fertility and procreativity. The eland, as a creature in possession of *n/um* and *n!ow*, plays an important role in life-cycle rituals and is regarded as a metaphoric symbol of life-giving power and well-being for the San.

These aspects are worth considering in another commonly painted animal in the Cederberg—the elephant as discussed in Chapter Five. Maggs and Sealy’s (1983) seminal paper on ‘elephants in boxes’, boxed elephants into the shamanism framework, but I investigate a feminine association with elephants in terms of biophysiology, social structure and fertile power. From a gender platform the art, its context, and ethnography reveal other avenues of interpretation.

Gender archaeology includes the social construction of not only femininity but also masculinity. In Chapter Six, I deconstruct the binary categories of gender and sex and study masculinity as a cultural construction in reference to the paintings of human-like figures with wildebeest heads at Zimri Shelter. As research on wildebeest is limited in rock art studies, I consider wildebeest biophysiology and behaviour and investigate ethnographic links between the word ‘wildebeest’, rituals and aspects of masculine behaviour within San society.

A more widely researched subject in archaeology is sheep, discussed in Chapter Seven. Sheep has been the subject of many debates surrounding contact between San hunter-gatherers and Khoekhoe herders. In terms of rock art, the presence of images of sheep has been viewed as a chronological marker. I extended my research beyond sheep as an environmental indicator and explored the meaning of sheep in rock art as a cultural choice

and considered the relationship between sheep, fat and fertility issues. With my focus on paintings of eland, elephants, wildebeest and sheep at Zimri Shelter, I look into gendered animal symbolism and how it relates to life-cycle rituals such as initiation (Vinnicombe 1976: 319). Rituals and bodily transformations marking these transitional phases could be revealed by human bodies.

Chapter Eight explores masculine, feminine and 'other' bodies as depicted in the rock art of the Cederberg region. From a gender platform, I had a re-look at ethnography in terms of socially regulated activities such as gender-based rituals that culturally construct identities and potentialities that may be revealed in the rock art. In Chapter Eight, I conclude the argument that human bodies depicted in the rock art, similar to animals depicted in the rock art, metaphorically represent social issues in San society.

1.8. CONCLUSION: EXPANDING OUR UNDERSTANDING

Freeman Tilden's quote at the beginning of this introduction is a useful reminder. Although southern African rock art research has benefitted from wide overarching interpretations, there is significant scope and potential for additional views. Focussing on Zimri Shelter and Cederberg rock art exposes variances and differences geographically in local rock art that requires understanding before trans-continental extrapolation. Examples of this are paintings of male and female bodies and their signified sexuality and identity through gendered and ritual clothing, equipment and bodily practices (Chapter Eight), as well as gendered symbolic representations of eland (Chapter Four), elephants (Chapter Five), sheep (Chapter Seven), and wildebeest (Chapter Six). We can never reach a point of fully adequate interpretation (this is not to say that all interpretations are equally valid). We can, however, endeavour to expand our understanding of the past. Existing pan-San rock art research has limitations of which some are addressed in this thesis by investigating the art in a specific geographical region. The images at Zimri Shelter and surrounding sites present the opportunity for an investigation, from a gender theoretical orientation, of the social production and consumption of the art of the south-western Cape.

CHAPTER TWO:

REPRESENTING PEOPLE, REPRESENTING PICTURES: METHODOLOGY OF CURRENT ROCK ART RESEARCH

2.1. A THREE-PRONGED METHODOLOGY

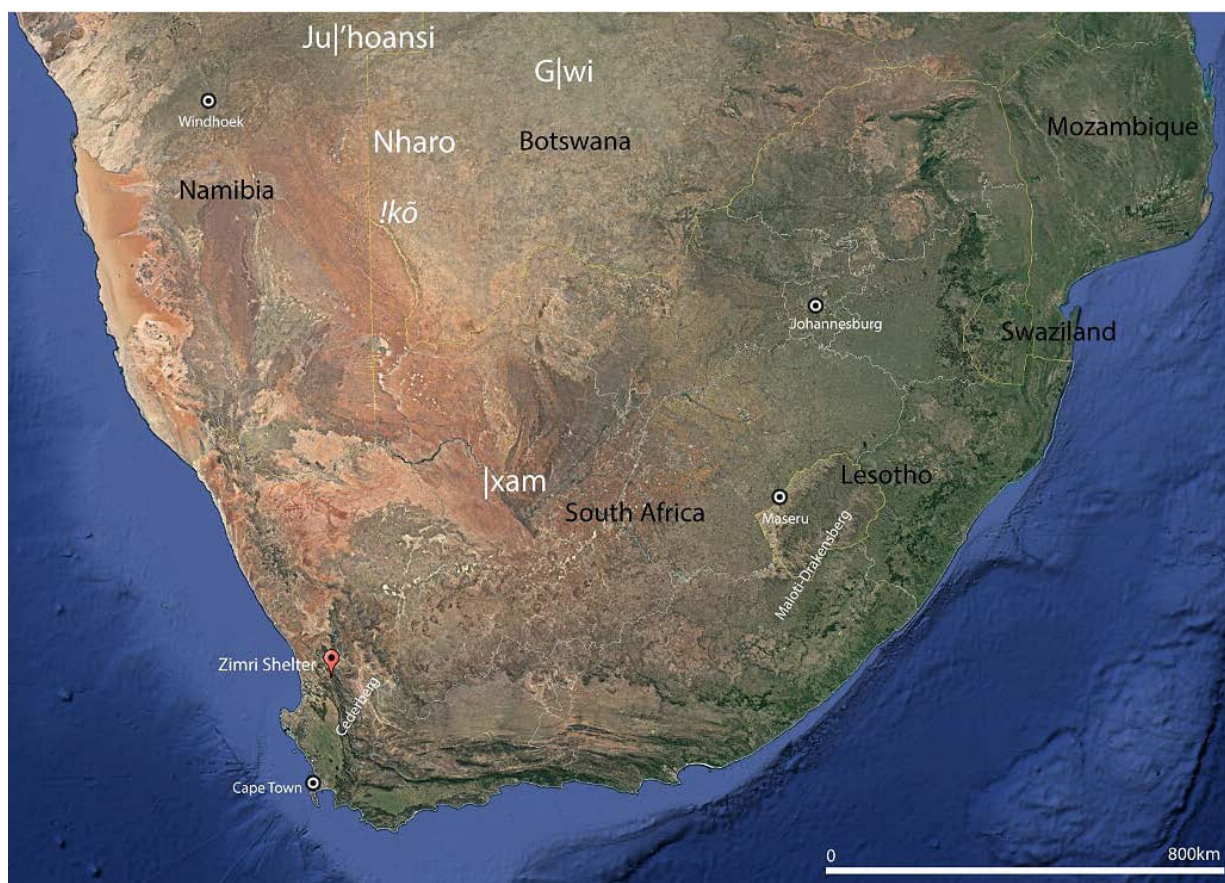
The methodology used in this thesis centres on ethnography, theory and rock art. Zimri Shelter has the potential for a way to look at evidence of gender constructs contextually in combination with surrounding rock art sites. This approach is in alignment with Lynn Meskell's (2009) idea of 'contextualism', which incorporates as much information as possible from a certain locale to generate an account of past communities in space and time. To strengthen this approach, I use the 'informed method' (Taçon and Chippindale 1998:6) that includes the use of ethnographic and ethno-historical sources to explore links between Cederberg rock art imagery and the past communities. However, ethnographic analogy should be used with caution because of its limitations (Binford 1985; Gould 1980; Gould & Watson 1982; Humphreys 2003/2004; Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1994; Lewis-Williams *et al.* 1993; Manhire *et al.* 1985; Mitchell 2005; Orme 1981; Wylie 1982). Of particular concern to rock art researchers is the Kalahari Revisionist Debate, which demonstrates the dangers of treating contemporary Kalahari San communities as isolated and timeless peoples for purposes of establishing analogies with the deep past (Lee & Guenther 1992; Schrire 1984; Solway & Lee 1990; Suzman 2017; Wilmsen & Denbow 1990). While rock art research is reliant on ethnographic analogy for explanatory frameworks (as is all archaeology—see Wylie 1985), and since there are very few direct accounts of the art's meaning by San peoples responsible for making them, researchers need to take into consideration the issues raised by this debate.

In this chapter, I re-evaluate the way ethnography is used as an interpretative tool and discuss the Revisionist Debate. I also consider the methodological approach in the use and application of theory as well as rock art methodology and the representation of rock art.

2. 2. ETHNOGRAPHY

Context plays a significant role in the formation of material culture (Hodder 1982: 24-26). In order to widen the theoretical lens I follow Meskell's (2009) idea of contextualism, I consider as much information as possible and apply the informed method. This method requires the use of analogy where information is transported from one source of information and projected onto another based on comparable relations between the two (Hodder 1982:16).

Since the initial move to using San beliefs and practices by Vinnicombe (1976) and Lewis-Williams (1980, 1981), southern African rock art research has been inseparable from ethnography. Researchers have been reliant on three main ethnographic sources. The first of these being the Bleek family records compiled by a German linguist Dr Wilhelm Bleek and his sister-in-law Lucy Lloyd of the narratives and beliefs of six !xam prisoners who lived with the Bleek family at their Mowbray home in Cape Town (Deacon 1996; Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989). The second source of information is a report compiled by Joseph Millerd Orpen who interviewed Qing, a young Maloti San, on rock paintings (McGranaghan *et al.* 2013; Orpen 1874; Vinnicombe 1976). The third source of information consists of research done by anthropologists (i.e. Barnard, Bieseke, Lee and the Marshalls) in the Kalahari from the 1960s onwards on the cosmology and rituals of predominantly the Ju|'hoansi San as living examples of hunter-gatherers of the past (see Map 2 for different San groups). Research has found that these sources of information provide a basic structure in the belief-system with strong similarities over time and space (Deacon & Deacon 1999).



Map 2. San groups.

However, as mentioned before, ethnographic analogy should be applied with caution. In *Writing Culture: the poetics and politics of ethnography*, James Clifford and George Marcus (1986) consider how objectivism and ethnographic authority have been constructed. They raise issues about who did the field research, how it was done, and how ethnographic research is presented. A ‘danger’ involved in using ethnographic analogy is that of biased ethnographers and the use of single parallels (Orme 1981: 27). One needs to keep in mind that all researchers are products of their social circumstances, and they themselves are “historically situated and specific” (Lewis-Williams *et al.* 1993: 277). Susan Kent (1992: 61) states that researchers’ viewpoints are dependant on “where and when research is conducted”. Clifford and Marcus (1986) point out that issues such as gender play a role and that ethnographies, such as those produced by the Marshall family, are not objective texts. This is especially of importance in gender theory where for example androcentric bias could have clouded investigations. It may be worth reconsidering that southern African rock art researchers, until recently, were mostly male. The females in the field of rock art, such as Patricia Vinnicombe, Anne Solomon and Judith Stevenson, focused on gender issues to

varying degrees. Vinnicombe (1976: 245–247) most probably followed the most ‘exposed’ approach in recognising gender aspects. One section in her Human Subjects chapter is titled ‘Sex’ and refers to exaggerated genitalia and sexual acts in the imagery. The lack of discussion of these aspects by male researchers resonates with Wilhelm Bleek’s avoidance of !xam sexual terms translating text in Latin rather than English—it is the only Latin recorded in the notebooks (Bank 2006:98). This is seemingly odd as Bleek’s dissertation looked at gender as grammatical and cultural categories (Thornton 2014: 101). Andrew Bank (2006:98) suggests it masks Bleek’s “discomfort” with matters of sex. Bank, on discussing the Victorian views of the time, refers to a medical journal that stated that it is not unusual “to veil sexually explicit passages in the decent obscurity of a dead language”. Robert Thornton (2014: 102) argues that to understand the Bleek and Lloyd archive, researchers must understand the context of Bleek’s enquiry. Thornton (2014: 103) points out that Bleek was informed of Native American and the Asian religious rituals—possibly also of their shamanistic practices—which possibly influenced his !xam San texts, which forms the basis of interpretation of southern African rock art. Thus, as the revisionists have argued, the San are not ‘pure’; early ethnography is not an objective enterprise. As sexual characteristics are evident in the rock art of the Cederberg, in this thesis, I will refrain from any use of Latin references and attempt to follow a more ‘exposed’ approach.

Most certainly, moments of discomfort were not only experienced by the ethnographers, but also by the people who were interviewed by them. Janette Deacon (Hollmann 2004: xiii) challenges the reader of the Bleek documents to imagine displaced !xam thoughts. The !xam San interviewed by the Bleek’s were moved to foreign surroundings, exposed to a foreign culture and a language barrier, and yet they were expected to communicate aspects about themselves. Researchers should be aware that the ethnographic resources, though valuable documented ‘first-hand’ accounts, should be viewed “as contextual and imperfect as archaeological data, and to accord them more weight simply because they have been written down seems dangerously naive” (Manhire *et al.* 1985: 163). Therefore, when relying on ethnographic analogy, one should apply these models only as guidance frameworks that offer direction in our research process and give rise to ideas.

In *Writing Culture*, Clifford takes his analysis further and considers anthropological norms in ethnography. He (1988: 10) begins from the position that ethnographic texts are subjective

and politically embedded. For him, there is always a degree of “in-authenticity” in ethnography as it deals with a particular time and place, but it is presented as timeless and near-placeless because one is intervening in an interconnected world (Clifford 1988: 11). Rock art researchers are mindful of the limitations of early ethnographic writing and the use of analogy. As Lewis-Williams and colleagues (1993: 277) point out, “the art does not ‘illustrate’ the ethnography, nor does the ethnography ‘explain’ the art in any direct sense”. Lewis Binford (1985: 581) highlights one of the pitfalls involved in using ethnography to talk about archaeology– “the simple faith that similar forms have similar causes seems to be a very naive position ...” Archaeologists should thus also take the dissimilarities into account and not assume similarity in all aspects based on some known similarities between objects (Swart 1999: 4). An appropriate theoretical approach could assist in this research methodology.

Of particular concern to rock art researchers is the Kalahari Revisionist Debate, which demonstrates, for example, the dangers of treating contemporary San communities as static, isolated and timeless peoples for purposes of establishing analogies with the deep past (Denbow 1984; Lee & Guenther 1992; Sadr 1997; Schrire 1980, 1984; Solway & Lee 1990; Wilmsen 1989; Wilmsen & Denbow 1990). Anthropologists of the ‘Harvard Project’ (for example Lee 1979), also known as the ‘traditionalists’ (Kent 1992), hold opinions that the San are a unique cultural entity and are independent hunter-gatherers. Their cultural autonomy is believed to be unaffected by their interaction with their agro-pastoralist neighbours, and thereby the traditionalists imply that the San were an isolated society (Barnard 2007: 97). Traditionalists, therefore emphasise cultural continuity and an unchanging society (Barnard 2007: 103, 110).

Edwin Wilmsen (1989) in his book *Land filled with flies: a political economy of the Kalahari* argued against this view:

Their appearance as foragers is a function of their relegation to an underclass in the playing out of historical processes that began before the current millennium and culminated in the early decades of this century. The isolation in which they are said to be found is a creation of our view of them, not of their history as they lived it (Wilmsen 1989:3).

He also states that “they are permitted antiquity while denied history” (Wilmsen 1989:10). Wilmsen and other revisionists argue that relations between hunter-gatherer groups and agro-pastoralists over time have altered their cultural foundation (Kent 1992). Revisionist scholars suggest that instead of viewing the San as isolated in time and space, researchers should consider San interaction with other cultural groups such as Khoekhoe pastoralists, Bantu-speaking agriculturalists and European-language colonists. Carmel Schrire (1980), for example, questions reports of the ‘pure’ San who stole livestock and kept it in the 19th century. In another example, the Nguni culture infiltrated San culture and subsequently San ethnography which shows the measure of culture absorption and ‘borrowing’ between these groups (Hammond-Tooke 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000; Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2004; also see Prins 1996). Pieter Jolly (1996) also highlights interaction between the San and the Nguni- and Sotho-speaking farmers in the Maloti-Drakensberg mountains. He argues that paintings in this area reveal the influence of the farmers on the San. The ‘pristine San’ should possibly rather be viewed as products of interaction and of changing social, economic and political circumstances (Blundell 2004: 24). The revisionists, therefore, place the San within a wider political economy (Barnard 2007: 97). Unfortunately, this necessary review, although granting them historicity, also portrayed them as lacking autonomy. In addition, this integrated social interaction framework did away with a pristine San image and following on from the Revisionist Debate many people viewed the San as ‘underclass’ as they were placed at the bottom of the social hierarchy.

Whatever issues the revisionist position has, it has raised questions about the soundness and strength of universal models and understandings. The idea of continuity and ‘sameness’ between cultural groups and their predecessors creates problems with aspects of archaeological importance such as historicity, diversity and change (Solomon 1994). The Revisionist Debate cautions us on the use of ethnography and also emphasises the importance of looking for difference instead of ‘sameness’ across diverse geographical regions.

A further matter of importance for this thesis raised by researchers (Blundell 2004: 24; Kent 1992: 56) is that the San should not only be viewed as a macro-language/economy group, but also in terms of the various smaller-San groups. Their different language interactions with each other over space and time should also be considered. San languages, although

having clicks (as do other cultural groups), are from different linguistic groups that have a diverse vocabulary, word formation and sentence structure (Traill & Köhler 2016). Kent (1992) argues that San groups should, instead of being viewed through culturally-uniform spectacles, rather be analysed as variable—not only in language but also regarding kinship, belief systems, settlement models, economy and historical conditions. Kent (1992), however, cautions researchers that it is an oversimplification to suggest that all San groups are different, similar to it being an oversimplification to focus on ‘sameness’. Parallels to be noted among the itinerant (or recently itinerant) groups are the prominence of social, political, and gender equality; a predominantly hunting and gathering lifestyle; click languages; widespread kin categorisations; joking and avoidance partners; and the importance of reciprocity and sharing (Kent 1992). These parallels have however created a macro-San group that, unfortunately, masked possible differences, resulting in projections from one or two San groups to all other separated in time and space. “It is important to recognize and study both temporal and spatial diversity, and not mask it with generalization” (Kent 1992: 60). The treatment of ‘the San’ as a singular, all-encompassing culture has raised concerns about the dependence on the Ju|’hoansi from the Kalahari (Humphreys 2003/2004) and the !xam from the Karoo in rock art studies. The Kalahari San of which many ethnographic records have been compiled, analysed and applied to rock art interpretation, were not descendants of the San who painted in the south-western Cape and the Maloti-Drakensberg mountains; they were linguistically a different group altogether whose relationship to rock art is unclear. Even though researchers have focused on in-depth work, they should be mindful that it culminated from a limited number of San groups (Mitchell 2002: 225). This extrapolation of ethnographic information from a few San groups to a pan-San interpretation based on some similarities, possibly, limited cultural variability—an issue that will be considered in this thesis. As Peter Mitchell (2005: 67) suggests, researchers should “reach beyond the Kalahari” and increase the numbers of San groups and possibly cultures. Similarly, rock art researchers should reach beyond the Maloti-Drakensberg. Paul Taçon and Christopher Chippindale (1998: 7) view the meanings of rock art to be “variable and historically idiosyncratic”, making it difficult to understand in broad, generalised frameworks. I believe rock art research has fallen victim to uniformist methodology and requires additional approaches, such as a gender perspective, to remedy the lack of variation.

While rock art research is reliant on ethnographic analogy, since there are very few direct accounts of the art's meaning by San peoples responsible for making them (see How 1962: 32-33), researchers need to take into consideration the issues raised by this debate. Even the widely accepted interpretations of the art of the Maloti-Drakensberg mountains are based on ethnographic records, rich in information, but still limited and fragmentary. And though the !xam San interviewed by the Bleek and Lloyd were themselves no longer 'pristine' but rather products of colonial impact, change and exposed to over a millennium's contact with Khoekhoe pastoralists, the over 11 000 pages documented of their language, myths, beliefs and lifestyle is still a valuable contribution for researchers to engage with. As is Orpen's information based on questions guided by him to a young San man not yet as knowledgeable. John Yellen (1977: 1) states that the relationship between archaeologists and ethnographic data is both a "close and an unavoidable one". To make this relationship work, archaeologists should base their analogical reasoning not only on the closeness of fit of source and subject but also by broadening the interpretation base (Wylie 1982: 98, 99). Alison Wylie (1989) refers to the 'cabling' approach that involves applying and combining various strands of evidence to make a strong case for relations of relevance.

2.3. THEORETICAL APPLICATION

The relationship between archaeologists and ethnographic data cannot be avoided and therefore requires an appropriate interpretation base. Finding the right interpretation base is no simple task as Clifford and Marcus (1986) revealed in their critique of anthropology. By questioning the who, how and what of ethnographic representation, *Writing Culture* ultimately questions anthropological norms. The use of theory in research orientations could offer guidance in ethnographic representation and overcome some of the ethnographic issues. However, Conkey (2007), from a feminist perspective (see Chapter Three), cautions against the production of theory and the masculine and feminine way of doing theory. She argues that female theory authors are under-represented and that a re-gendering of theory should be considered that is aware of contextual issues. The use of theoretical approaches automatically applies intellectual background to an interpretation. James Whitley (2002:20) argues that when students 'apply' theory, they are in actual fact applying existing interpretations, which avoids proper contextual analysis. Homi Bhabha

(1994) further states in *The location of culture* that the intellectual background of academics is earthed in Eurocentrism and Western neo-colonialism. As a solution for this ethnographic dilemma Bhabha's (1994) post-colonial critique motivates for a movement away from fixed cultural groups based on certain traits, but rather to view cultures as hybrid and changing, and to look for the differences. He suggests that we go 'post' current interpretations to grow our discourse and accept that single, 'original', ethnic identities are non-existing; and rather understand different and changing identities shaped by social experiences, histories and relationships.

Achille Mbembe (2001) takes these ideas and applies them to the manner in which Africa is portrayed. He highlights that text encompasses aspects such as power and subjectivity and colonial rationality that is embedded in violence and domination. Similarly, Jean and John Comaroff's *Theory from the South: or, how Euro-America is evolving toward Africa* (2012) refers to theories being constructed of the 'Global South'—that include the non-European, postcolonial peoples normally associated with development, economies and politics fraught with failure and uncertainty—by the 'Global North'. They highlight the sites of production of theory and the ethnographic sites and suggest that theory constructed in the 'Global South' should be used to understand current problems of our time in the Northern hemisphere. Following on from Mbembe and the Comaroff's, Western social theories of the meaning of cultures in different geo-spatial contexts is what should be viewed with scepticism. The ever-evolving interpretive approaches (see for example Fiddian-Qasmiyeh & Daley 2018), however, ends up being circular, as new 'post-post' theories are built on pre-existing theories founded in Western intellectual backgrounds. For our discourse to grow, we need to keep evolving. Ofelia Schutte (2009), for example, argues for a postcolonial feminism of difference in her research on cultural alterity, yet she cautions against Western feminism within the North-South context. Her focus is on how to communicate with "the other" where often it has been cross-cultural communication between a dominant and a lesser subject. Although one possibly can only have a partial understanding of meaning between culturally different subjects, one can improve cross-cultural communication by being attentive to the impact of western colonialism and its continuous consequences.

Theoretical methodology has been burdened in the past due to Western intellectualism projected onto the "other" cultures. The North-South scenario and post-colonial critiques as

pointed out can however not rectify existing ethnographic text produced within these theoretical contexts. The key is to be cautious in one's use of ethnographic text and pre-existing theories, and be aware, as argued by Bhabha, that cultures are not fixed, but relatively fluid. A feminist approach, following on from Schutte that includes difference, widens the theoretical lens and is a theoretical, methodological approach that could overcome previous limitations or restraints. Ethnographic representation is however not the only aspect that forms the basis of interpretation. Archaeologists are dependent on their artefacts—for rock art researchers it is the painting or the engraving and the methodology applied in the representation thereof. As with ethnographic application and theoretical orientation, rock art representation suffers similar pre-existing social contexts of production impacting on the interpretation thereof.

2.4. ROCK ART REPRESENTATION

Copies are never exact replicas of the original. They will always capture data selectively and these selections are meaningful, as are the methods and materials chosen for rendering. They both add and subtract visual information in translation from the original (Leibhammer 2009: 43).

Current recording of images with modern technology aims to be non-invasive, all-encompassing and accurate. Recording methods include photography, digital enhancement, drawings, tracings, 3D (Fig. 2.1) and virtual recordings (see Hollmann 2019).

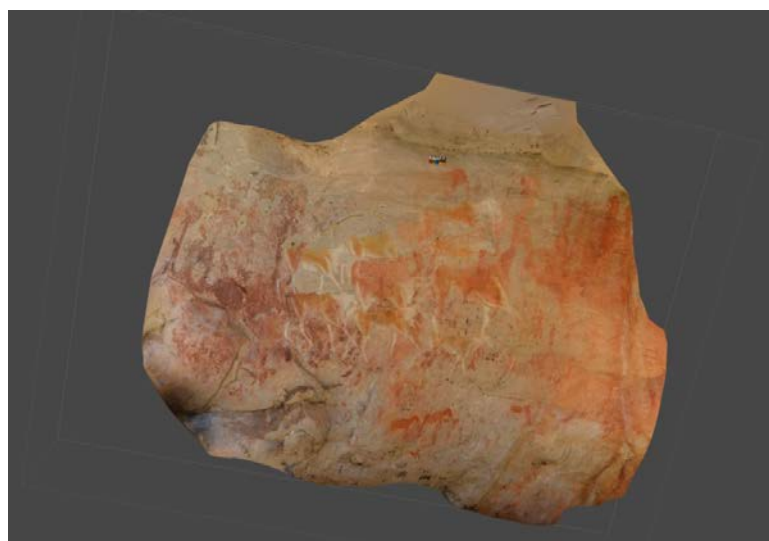


Fig. 2.1. 3D built of the eland panel, Zimri Shelter (courtesy of Geoff Blundell).

The recording of rock art is not only aimed at research purposes anymore but also as a monitoring and conservation tool in the degradation of rock art. Detailed recordings will include the location of the art in a site, the relationship between images and between images and the rock surface, as well as individual images in terms of technique, colour, size and subject (Domingo Sanz 2014).

Photography is the preferred, non-invasive, 'objective' method of recording. Nessa Leibhammer (2009:44) writes that photography has in the past been viewed as "the perfect tool for capturing unmediated 'truth' about the world". However, as it is only a representation of the art, factors such as lens magnification, perspective and the lighting conditions at the time of recording, can impact on the recorded product. Also, photographers have been prone to photograph certain pre-selected categories of subject-matter or well-preserved images (Lewis-Williams 2014:136). Thus, though possibly the most objective method, the skill, ability and perspective of the photographer/recorder determines the result. Tracing however still plays a significant role in rock art recording as it aids the researcher in image identification (Domingo Sanz 2014). Direct tracing has been argued to negatively impact on fragile rock surfaces (Hollmann 2019: 347, 348) as well as that the tracing paper obstructs the recorder's view. There are also various indirect drawing and tracing methods (Domingo Sanz 2014). Digital enhancements can aid a researcher to enhance images that would normally be difficult to see or identify (Hollmann 2019: 348). Whatever the case may be, tracings and drawings, in addition to photographic and digital recording, allows the recorder/researcher to familiarise him/herself with the images—the more time spent with the images, preferably in a rock shelter, the more one sees.

Photographic and digital recording should ideally be accompanied by textual descriptions. Various field record sheets have been compiled over the years to try and create the most inclusive and objective site data. It has however been difficult to escape culturally and theoretically implied terms as well as assumptions in verbal descriptions of rock art. For example, non-gendered images described as male due to associated hunting equipment, or motifs described as therianthropes, or as shamans, instead of just animal-headed figures. In these cases, motifs are pre-classified and therefore automatically convey meaning—consequently impacting on interpretation. A classic example is Abbé Henri Breuil's interpretation of the 'White Lady of the Brandberg' based on his recording of the

physical characteristics of the Namibian images and his projection of his existing knowledge of non-southern African images onto the southern-African images (see Leibhammer 2009: 48, 49; McGranaghan 2017).

In addition, recordings of rock art sites should include a site description. Rock art is not an archaeological feature outside of mainstream archaeology. The people who painted the art did not only live through their art but also through their artefacts. A detailed feature and artefact recording of the site and surrounding area is necessary for a complete understanding of hunter-gatherer life, as well as for future research or excavations and conservation measures. Rock art researchers are after all archaeologists, and as I used to say to anyone accompanying me to a rock art site—do not just look up at the rock face; look down at the floor too.

Representing rock art images through various methods have also proved to be based on the recorders' intellectual background. As ethnography is influenced by the observer, so is copying rock art influenced by the recorder (see Hollmann 2019; 343, 344). It is thus a matter of choice for the recorder of how and what he/she will record which impacts on the representation of the images—different things are emphasised by different recorders. Dipuo Mokokwe (2012) points out the various aspects that have impacted the recording of rock art and that no recorder or researcher is free from his/her social or political context. In addition, ethnography has influenced rock art researchers' thinking and consequently informed methods are applied in the recording and analysis of the art (see Taçon & Chippindale 1998). Certain formal methods can apply to rock art if one takes into account for example aspects such as art history and the composition or relations in the art (i.e. superimposition). However, southern African rock art research has been more anthropological than archaeological, and the focus has been more on the commonalities than the differences in the art (Solomon 1998:281). This research approach has 'informed' researchers, in some cases unwittingly, and impacts on recording choices, for example it is easy to recognise eland, therianthropes, and trance-related postures in rock art recording. Lesser known subjects or images are more likely to be 'background noise'. I would like to think that from a gender platform, rock art recorders would be more susceptible to recording the 'differences' in the art on a similarly elevated level. Broadened knowledge can impact on the method of rock art recording: "The accuracy and fine detail on tracings by

Pager, Dowson, Loubser, Smits, Yates, Manhire and others has developed as a result of a greater understanding of the meaning of signs and symbols used by the San artists” (Deacon 1993: 10). It will aid rock art representation if recorders’ intellectual background includes not only ‘sameness’ and familiarity, but also the differences.

When recording Zimri Shelter, I attempted to not focus on only certain panels, but rather the whole shelter (see Appendix 1). With help from Rika du Plessis, a conservation manager at Cape Nature with extensive rock art experience, we recorded Zimri Shelter from left to right and top to bottom. Our recording included digital photographic recording of the whole shelter on two separate visits as well as a complete written recording of all images and paint remains. We divided the shelter into one-metre panels which we photographed as panels followed by individual shots and descriptions of the images. This allowed us to discover ‘other’, interesting images that might not have been noticed and a detailed analysis of human and animal bodies in terms of postures, dress, nudity, and the decoration of the bodies within a gender framework in reference to age, status, implied sexuality and ambiguity. In Chapter Eight I use the panels as a tool to discuss the various depictions of human bodies as the numerous human images span the length of the shelter. My photographs of Zimri Shelter and surrounding sites are used throughout the thesis, unless stated otherwise. I am fortunate to also have access to tracings and drawings of various images and scenes by Stephen Townley Bassett. I used Bassett’s drawings, some of which are in the chapters to follow, to compare with the actual depictions at the site.

I do not believe there can ever be ‘the perfect representation’ of rock art sites and images. Moreover, even if the representation is ‘close-to-perfect’, the researcher does not operate in a vacuum, unaffected by social or political theories that guide and direct research orientations. However, as long as the recordings are well done, subsequent researchers can ask different questions over time. I do however feel, no matter how many or detailed images one has of a site, I always wish to study the original as well. A balance between the research of recorded images and multiple site visits will offer the best interpretations.

2.5. CONCLUSION: AN EVOLVING METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

This chapter makes claims as to what the ideal methods are for studying rock art. Almost all rock art research is obliged to use ethnography, theory and representation; it is imperative to be mindful of the issues inherent in using those three. In all methods applied using ethnography as reference, the theoretical approach and the way rock art is represented, the informed method is unavoidable. In all of these methodologies, objectivity is problematic. Ethnographers and subjects are both products of spatial and temporal social circumstances and consequently do not allow for 'pure' accounts of the past. To find remedy in the appropriate theoretical approach could assist in less biased text, yet still, all such theory originates from a Western intellectual background and as a result also impacts on research outcomes. As researchers, we should nevertheless identify and accept these challenges and keep evolving our research methodology. This includes the way in which we represent rock art images, as the same pre-existing intellectual backgrounds apply in the recording and representation of rock art images. Evolving methodological approaches in rock art research by the use of ethnographic text, theoretical alignment and rock art representation are necessary for the growth of scientific paradigms. In order to overcome some of the concerns and dangers raised in this chapter, a three-pronged approach of rock art, ethnography and theory have been methodologically woven together by using the philosopher Wylie's (1989) 'cables and tacking' technique, offering a new interpretation of gender in the rock art of Zimri Shelter and of the Cederberg.

CHAPTER THREE:

A GENDER LENS: RE-LOOKING AT ETHNOGRAPHY AND ROCK ART

3.1. TOWARDS A MORE NUANCED UNDERSTANDING

While ethnography and representation have issues, they are inescapable aspects of rock art research in southern Africa; one has little choice but to be cognisant of the issues and to construct arguments as best one can within the limitations that I have discussed in the previous chapter. Social theory, on the other hand, typically underpins archaeological investigation of any aspect of the past that deals with human behaviour and belief. One has some choice in the use of social theory but this is not to say that social theories are simply fashions that one can choose on a seasonal basis. The historical development of social theory shows a cogent progression of issues in the way that scholars have come to understand human behaviour and belief systems. As I have mentioned in the previous two chapters, gender forms the central theoretical framework for this thesis. Several scholars have criticised the androcentric focus in rock art studies globally (e.g. Hays-Gilpin 2004), but also in southern Africa (Solomon 1992; Stevenson 2000). Some efforts have been made to provide a female *foci* to counter-balance this androcentrism. I draw on these feminist-influenced approaches to gender but, crucially, extend them to encompass third wave feminism where masculinity, femininity, and ambiguity are inter-related and key aspects of identity construction. Recently, gender theory has also intersected with studies that emphasise the body and bodily experiences—what is often spoken of in the literature as ‘lived experience’ (e.g. Meskell 2002). Viewed within this framework of lived experience, I argue, a more nuanced understanding of the role of rock art in the construction of gendered identities is possible. In this chapter, then, I lay out the core elements of the gendered approach that underpin interpretations of the images at Zimri Shelter and at other sites in the Cederberg.

I begin with a discussion of the development of gender archaeology, noting its historical origin in feminism, and its spread into academic thinking and finally into archaeology. The use of gender theory in southern African archaeological research has been tentative and even more so in rock art research. As southern African rock art research is reliant on

ethnography for interpretation, ethnographic information also requires a re-investigation through a gender-lens, but with the necessary caution, as discussed in Chapter Two. I finally suggest a strategy for a gender-based approach to ethnography and rock art. In the chapters that follow, I consider both the ethnographic sources and the rock art iconography through this theoretical lens.

3.2. THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF GENDER

3.2.1. History of feminism

Gender theory is grounded in the feminist movement, which originated from a political platform that aimed to transform unequal power relations between men and women (Carter 2009: 95). The feminist movement progressed in three waves. The first wave—at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century—was characterised by the suffrage movement, where women claimed more rights in politics, the work environment and education. The second wave—in the 1960s—focused on broader issues of inequality, most notably regarding sexuality, reproduction, employment and the domestic space. More recently—during the 1990s—feminism came under the influence of postmodern ideas that centre on the creation and maintenance of difference; this so-called third wave of feminism considers the unequal power relations prevalent throughout society, not just those affecting women, and emphasises the constructed nature of all genders and sexualities (Carter 2009: 95).

3.2.2. The history of gender studies in academia

Feminist ideas began to appear in academia in the mid-1900s after the suffrage movement's development in the 1880s. These initial ideas were, however, a-historical and more pragmatic than scholarly, and singularly focused on Western societies. It was the scholarship of Simone de Beauvoir, a feminist thinker and philosopher, that prompted second wave feminism. In *The Second Sex* (1949) she famously wrote: "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman". This foundational idea, which holds that sex is culturally constructed and not biologically ascribed, has formed the core principle of much academic research and debate around gender over the past seven decades. In the same year as de Beauvoir's seminal text was published, the anthropologist, Margaret Mead (1949), differentiated between sex and gender in her work among Samoan communities. She identified biological

and cultural ascriptions as independent determining factors. Mead highlighted the differences and similarities between human bodies that form the foundation for relationships between different sexes. Derek Freeman (1983) controversially critiqued Mead's original field research (published in *Coming of Age in Samoa*, 1928). Mead's work has nevertheless continued to spark anthropological thought regarding gender. Both de Beauvoir and Mead would influence academia and activism for parity between men and women in the wider world. Indeed, they became icons of the counter-movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Their work, particularly that of Mead, encouraged a younger generation of anthropologists to study gender issues.

Feminist anthropologists investigated aspects that led to female subordination such as symbolism and cultural classification (Gilchrist 2007: 145). Sherry Ortner, for example, researched gender asymmetry through a structuralist approach. Ortner (1974) asked the question: "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?". She viewed women as symbolically-linked to nature in cultural systems of thought across the world; women, she thought, were thus 'natural creators' as opposed to men who were 'cultural creators' (Ortner 1974: 77-78). She postulated that biological differences between males and females have meaning within cultural value systems (Moore 1995:14). In making this point, Ortner moved anthropological thinking toward a more social constructionist view of gender, as opposed to the biologically determined categories of sex, which were still prevalent at the time, and notably still so within archaeology (Gilchrist 2007). Gender construction implies a culture–nature dichotomy, in that 'active' culture acts upon 'passive' nature (Butler 1993). In this sense, culture controls and transcends nature (Moore 1995:14). Furthermore, Henrietta Moore (1995:14, 15) suggests that females are symbolically associated with nature due to the creative power of their biophysiology, and males are associated with culture. Second wave feminist anthropologists, however, studied females as a universal single cultural category with no distinction being made in terms of the historical or cultural situation, or even between that of age or class (Gilchrist 2007: 145).

Third wave feminism developed as a response to the issues in the so-called second wave. A shift of emphasis on inequality to a consideration of difference characterised this move to third wave feminism. In particular, the construction of gender difference was now linked to the social manufacturing of aspects such as age and status. Accompanying this broader

intellectual palette was an interest in the historically created body. Michel Foucault's (1981) work on the human subject—the body— and Pierre Bourdieu's (1984) theory of habitus influenced the development of third wave feminists' thinking. Foucault postulated that the human body constitutes changes during its life course and therefore it is historically created, yet individually experienced. Similarly, Bourdieu (1984: 170) views history as shaping the body and mind and that 'habitus' is a physical embodiment of life experiences — "a structuring structure, which organises practices and the perception of practices" and impacts on everyday life. This understanding of how the world works was thus not grounded in specific rules, but based on principles that determined practice. Within this context agency comes into play, as the individual performs actions and engages with certain social structures that leads to transformation (Díaz-Andreu & Lucy 2005). Within third wave thinking, the human body and its categories of biological sex are seen as unstable and changeable and are viewed as "elusive, fluid and uncontrollable" (Laqueur 1990, quoted in Lock 1993: 134). Picking up on these ideas, anthropological research on 'personhood' especially in Melanesia and Africa connected the body to that of life-cycles. The forming role played by relationships, cosmologies and material culture considered the complete living person (Strathern 1988: 268-274, in Gilchrist 2007: 147). A person is defined as a category of being in a certain context and is culturally variable (Fowler 2004:4). Different levels of personhood exist which are marked by life-cycle rituals, rites of passage and other cultural markers. The level or status associated with certain parts of a life-cycle requires certain roles and responsibilities that are necessary for personhood attainment (Appell–Warren 2014). Maureen Schwarz (1997), for example, shows that the Navajo body is implicated in concepts of control over influences throughout a person's life-cycle. In another example of personhood, Gilbert Herdt (1987) found that the Samia create 'maleness' during initiation. Herdt's study had a direct influence on the archaeological research of Tim Yates as discussed below. In another study, Pamela Gellar (2009: 71) follows a similar approach: "Ultimately consideration of individual's repetitive bodily performances or habitual practices, as transgression or reiteration of the dominant ideology, facilitates interpretations about internalisation and (re)formation of gender identities". Consequently "[p]ersons are constituted, de-constituted, maintained and altered in social practices through life and after death" (Fowler 2004:4). It therefore involves transformations and change. Similarly, gender exists in different forms and is in constant process. Bodies can therefore take on different

forms as being single gendered; multiple gendered or genderless—in essence gender can be viewed as "mutable" (Fowler 2004:25).

Feminist philosopher Judith Butler linked anthropological approaches to the body through third wave feminist viewpoints. Butler in two seminal books *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies That Matter* (1993) made an influential shift by challenging how female gender is defined. She states that gender should not be viewed as a binary category but rather as fluid and that identity categories are the result of practices. Butler (1990: 6) argues that "...the sex/gender distinction suggests a radical discontinuity between sexed bodies and culturally constructed genders." She further argues that gender is performative—an essential aspect of third wave feminism. "[T]he regulatory norms of "sex" work in a performative fashion to constitute the materiality of bodies, ... to materialize the body's sex, to materialize sexual difference ..." (Butler 1993:2). Butler connects the body and the material world through the concept of performance (ritual) based on the repetition of gendered norms, the formation of identities and differences. Through Butler's third wave feminist approach, gender emerged as a roleplayer in the development of the body and personhood (Gilchrist 2007: 147).

Third wave feminist thinking in academia developed the concept of performance that aligns with life-cycle rituals/activities. Rituals and bodily transformations of rites of passage mark the transitional phases in the life-cycle (separation, marginality and reincorporation) (Turner 1969; Van Gennep 1960), exposing the body as fluid and not fixed (Gilchrist 2007). This makes both social and biological categories unclear, and with the result masculine/feminine ambiguous states are associated with danger and power (Douglas 2002; Jolly 2002; Whitelaw 2013). Gender symbolism relating to these liminal states is apparent in behavioural taboos and restrictions (culturally-induced) connected to beliefs of pollution such as menstruation (nature-induced) that is indicative of females' natural creative power. The creative power of women, for example, can therefore be viewed as ritualised. These beliefs reveal the categorisation of people regarding sexual ideologies about the body (Moore 1995: 16). The process of materialisation creates the effect of boundary. This is viewed in the Foucauldian sense that materialising something creates a regulatory power. However, gender construction is a temporal process and functions through repetition or rituals (Butler 1993). Gender constructs are thus 'ritualised statements' (Moore 1995:37). As

a result, the body, as a culturally constructed potentiality, is realised and actualised through a variety of socially regulated activities, and acts as metaphor for social issues (Blundell 2004; Turner 1996, 2003; Wessels 2010). Therefore, gender, rather than a biological given, is politically, socially, culturally and symbolically constructed indicating fluidity rather than in stasis (Sørensen 2000). The body serves as a “metaphor for society, as instrument of lived experience, and as surface of inscription” (Joyce 2005:140).

3.2.3. Gender in archaeology

It is often claimed that archaeology suffers from theoretical lag and that influential theories within the humanities and social sciences are only taken up years—sometimes decades—after they have emerged. While the postprocessual movement of the 1980s onwards improved this situation, feminist thinking came late to archaeology. The archaeology of gender, in symbiotic relation with feminist movements, evolved from a critique of the androcentric ‘gaze’ that dominated the discipline for much of the twentieth century. Second wave feminism, with its concern of issues of patriarchy and inequality, was influential early on (see Conkey & Spector 1984; Gilchrist 1999; Meskell 2002; Wylie 1991; Wylie 2007).

Margaret Conkey and Janet Spector initiated this new research direction in feminine approaches in the archaeological record in 1984, motivating colleagues to ask new questions about women and gender (Wylie 2007: 102, 103) and questions regarding cultural and gender diversity. Their argument that men had been at the centre of archaeological research has been criticised for replacing an androcentric bias with gynocentrism (Hodder 1997). Feminist archaeologists, however, retorted that women in the past need to be ‘found’ first to repair the prevailing androcentric imbalance (Carter 2009: 96). In an attempt to restore the imbalance, Conkey and Ruth Tringham (1998) applied this theoretical orientation to archaeology and investigated the Venus figures and goddess figures from ancient Europe. These figurines represented human bodies and were viewed as metaphoric representations of houses and house-life and consequently ultimately as symbols of life.

At the turn of the twenty-first century, third wave feminism began to influence archaeological research, and gender construction and variation became central research questions (Voss and Schmidt 2000 in Carter 2009: 98). Today, gender archaeology focuses on the cultural and symbolic aspects of gender construction. A significant part of gender

construction is that of 'difference', a shift shared by feminism and anthropology where the focus moved from 'sameness' to 'difference' (Moore 1995:11). "In this context, gender difference may be understood as the social and symbolic metaphors that create the complementarity between men and women that is necessary for the functioning of a particular society" (Gilchrist 1999:8). Within this new regime of thinking, gender is viewed as fluid over space and through time and is thus a part of identity construction. This feminist movement has contributed to archaeological studies on gender and has opened up new avenues of research, such as the archaeology of identity and masculinity (Carter 2009: 99, 100). Gender research is thus not the isolated study of women only, but also of men. The study of masculinity, for example, re-examines biased views of what it means to be 'a man' (Carter 2009: 100; see Knapp 1998). The evolution of a masculinist viewpoint in archaeology, though a possible reaction to female-focused gender archaeology, is a product of the third wave's focus on 'difference'. Considerations of social differences, gender being fluid and performative contexts are new approaches "necessary for illuminating the complexity of past people's practices of identity in daily life and extraordinary events" (Gellar 2009: 67, 68).

Third wave feminism inspired a more inclusive approach to gender and identity construction in archaeology that included interest in, for example, age, status, kinship, sexuality, and the body. These categories, as role players in identity constructions, are considered through the concept of life course and the multiple facets of the embodiment of lived experience (Crossland 2010; Gellar 2009: 70; Gilchrist 2007; Joyce 2008; Meskell 1999). Third wave feminist researchers followed this more inclusive approach in their case studies and found embodiments of lived experience in material objects (see Crossland 2010). Rosemary Joyce (2000), for example, drawing on Butler's theory of performance, has shown how ritual practices of life-cycle transitions were marked on the bodies of Aztec children. The experience of the life-cycle was therefore expressed through the materiality of the body of Aztec children, and consequently, the experience of embodiment was socially reproduced (Joyce 2000). Life-cycle rituals' repeated actions, together with ornaments and dress, shaped Aztec children's gender (Joyce 2000). Joyce (2000; 2008) also investigated women's lives as represented through Classic Maya figurines and argued that Formative period figurines did not only represent gender and sex but also age. Another case study by Roberta

Gilchrist (2007) refers to Mesoamerican representations of women for example regarding different life-cycle stages. A further example of Formative period figurines from Central Mexico was viewed by Ann Cyphers Guillén (1993) who recognised specific stages in the life course of females in this sample. These case studies reveal the importance of categories such as age, sex and the body in gender research and identity construction. The fluidity of gender construction is revealed in Mary Whelan's (1991) research on mortuary data of a 19th century Dakota cemetery, the Black Dog Burial site. She found that the artefact groupings did not reflect gender categories based on biological sex and that prepubescent individuals, children, were possibly viewed as part of a genderless category. Archaeological research, inspired by third wave feminism, therefore reveals categories of social difference that have not been explored before.

Third wave feminist archaeology, as I have mentioned already, is not only concerned with 'finding females' in the past; it also recognises the importance of understanding the social construction of masculinity and difference. Gender archaeology's pluralist aims of investigating not only females but also males, in past societies have led to the masculinist perspective. Masculinity is considered a relational construct, social and cultural, that is in constant flux (Knapp 1998; Meskell 1996 in Gilchrist 1999:8, 9; Yates 1993). Yates (1993), inspired by Herdt's study of the Sambia, investigates Swedish Bronze Age rock carvings as an example of the body's signification of masculine (or not-yet-masculine) status. Yates looked in particular at phallic and non-phallic figures as possible indicators of being male or 'not-yet' male. He argues that exaggerated physical features such as large calf muscles could be indicators of masculinity. The body has played an increasingly important role in gender archaeology as displayed in the art (see Gilchrist 2007 for examples of gender representation through the body in ancient art). South African rock art in the Cederberg region has images depicted of masculine bodies with over-exaggerated calf muscles. In the light of third wave feminist thinking and Yates' study, new avenues of research have been generated through gender archaeology which could be applied to rock art research in southern Africa. One such example is "Our gendered past" (1997) edited by Lyn Wadley (see also Wadley 2018)—a valuable contribution to the growth of gender research in South Africa. The book investigates gender variability in the past and how gender roles impacted on society. New questions were being asked such as "was gender believed to exist after

death in the Stone Age?” (Wadley 1997: 132). As part of the concept of life course in terms of feminist thinking, Wadley (1997: 132) asks the question whether death did not initiate a new gender unbeknownst in the living world, where age, sex and reproduction were irrelevant. Gender archaeology has inspired new avenues of research throughout Sub-Saharan Africa (see Wadley 2018). Societies are not limited by the number of different genders that exist as gender is based on cultural orientation (Carter 2009: 94). Such questions widen the theoretical lens where the third wave feminism’s underscoring of ‘difference’ becomes a research tool that could be applied to understanding rock art images—including ambiguous images.

3.2.4. Gender in rock art

Southern African rock art stands to benefit from feminist perspectives to better understand many under-researched images. Globally, early ideas regarding gender in rock art emerged in the structuralist work of Alexander Marshack. Marshack (1972) undertook microscopic studies of engraved bones from the Upper Paleolithic. He identified rows of grouped markings, possibly sequences. These notations were considered to be ‘time-factored’ stories that may have represented the phases of the moon and possibly even menstrual cycles that could be linked to rite and ritual. More recently, following on from Conkey’s (1993, 1997a; 1997b) feminist perspectives and application of gender theory to rock art in the re-interpretation of Paleolithic images, Kelley Hays-Gilpin took the standpoint that in order to *engender* the past one should first deal with androcentrism and *degender* the past. Hays-Gilpin’s important contribution to gender studies in rock art, *Ambiguous Images: gender and rock art* (2004), investigates the role gender plays in the rock art of North America. Hays-Gilpin views art as a product of social surroundings, but that it also plays a role in influencing society’s ideas and behaviour. As such rock art presents insight into ritual practices and the roles played through gender and ultimately of cosmology. Moreover, third wave feminism’s deconstruction of categorical thinking facilitated the study of masculinity as a cultural construction as well as the study of ambiguous, multiple, and non-gendered images in rock art. Progressively hence, gender studies have produced new insights in rock art research.

In Australia, Jo McDonald (1995; 2012), in her work on Aboriginal rock art, looked at the gendered role rock art played in social messages and information exchange. She analyses

stenciling in rock art to establish who participated in making the art and who might have been the audience. McDonald measures the sizes of hand stencils and identifies females and babies (also indicating female presence) hands in association with digging sticks which conveys the presence of women. Male stenciled subject matter included axes, clubs and boomerangs. Hays-Gilpin (2004) suggests that it not necessarily about who made the art, but what the art can tell us about gender arrangements of Australian Aborigines. For example, at Murujuga (McDonald 2012), it is not clear whether males or females painted the rock art, but humans receive attention in terms of physiological features and social relationships. Julie Drew (1995) surveyed Australian rock art sites to establish the possible presence of gender separation. Drew found that previous researchers merely ascribed masculinity based on the absence of female features and that the figures were predominantly gender-neutral. Drew also discovered that various regions portrayed varying male/female proportions, as well as varying features and contexts and therefore concluded that males and females were in complimentary relationships.

In southern Africa, though agency, gender, and embodiment were part of post-processualist theoretical frameworks since the 1980s (see Blundell 2004; Dowson 1994; Lewis-Williams 1982; Ndlovu 2009; Parkington 1989, 1996; Solomon 1989, 1992, 1994, 1995), gender studies, for example, have not lived up to the full promise they have to offer for new insights into rock art. Dowson (2000), through his argument for alternative approaches such as queer theory, criticizes current archaeological practices and encourages thinking processes outside the norm, as post-processualism has failed to do so. Such an approach permits gender constructions.

Gender is a generating and causal principle which is capable of producing certain motifs in the art which may not have been recognized through past investigations, mostly because we, as Westerners, have not understood or recognized the role of gender in San cosmology and worldview, and how it applied to their art (Stevenson 2000: 47).

Vinnicombe (1976) in *People of the Eland* led the way in southern African rock art research, and possibly unwittingly sparked new movements in theory as well. Vinnicombe's research included aspects such as the somatic self and sexuality, hinting at more recent discussions of embodied archaeology (Meskell 2009: 29). Vinnicombe highlighted aspects such as the masculine body and genitalia which have, subsequently, received little attention in rock art

research. She also considered body decoration and ornamentation (including scarification and tattooing), headgear, and clothing aligned with gender. She further investigated links with puberty rituals. Vinnicombe also addressed bodily fluids in her work, incorporating the extra-somatic self (Meskell 2009: 39). Vinnicombe's enterprising work on gender, the body and ritual strongly resonate with the aim of my thesis.

Vinnicombe's research was overlapped and followed-up by the ground-breaking work of Lewis-Williams. Although life-cycle rituals were initially viewed of importance (Lewis-Williams 1981), the overarching interpretation for southern African rock art became that of shamanism, with a strong androcentric slant culminating in a study of "Man-the-Shaman" focus (Stevenson 1995). Many researchers attempted to establish the presence of trance-related imagery within their studies. Archaeologists such as Anne Solomon, John Parkington and Judith Stevenson, however, looked beyond the trance framework and accentuated the under-researched, vital role gender plays in studies of San rock art based on genders' omnipresence in San beliefs and practices (see Parkington 1989, 2002; Solomon 1992, 1994, 1997, 1999; Stevenson 2000). Stevenson (2000) indicated the importance of rites other than the trance dance and the role that gender, specifically females, played in San cosmology as documented in historic recordings of San myths. Solomon's (1992) research on gender, for example, shows relations between San rock art and female initiation ceremonies, social organisation and the ideology and practices that revolve around feminine gender and female sexuality. Stevenson and Solomon's research was a necessary step in rectifying a long-standing bias toward androcentric interpretations of southern African rock art imagery.

Following third wave feminist thought, gender theory opens up avenues well-fitted for understanding southern Africa's complex rock art. For example, 'difference' creates an intellectual space for not only non-gendered/genderless images that comprise the dominant number of southern African rock art, but also ambiguous images. Most San rock art images are non-gendered, or, at least, sexually indeterminate (Deacon 1999) due to the lack of traditional interpretive features such as genitalia, breasts, or traditional gender-ascribed material objects such as bows and arrows. Lenssen-Erz (1997) refers to these images as "zero-marked" humans that should be conceptualised as an independent cognitive category that occupies a specific social role. For example, categories such as children and old people do not require a sexual distinction whereas an 'adult' is either male or female (see

Parkington 1996: 285). This suggests that 'zero-marked' humans do not have traditional gender ascriptions. Ambiguous images, such as feminine figures holding masculine weapons (Solomon 1992, 1994), or bodies (human or animal) that display masculine as well as feminine characteristics (Blundell 2004: 111, 112; Dowson 2007) are also a feature of the art and highlights the fluidity and mutability of gender. Power and Watts (1997) explores the existence of a "third gender" as termed by Solomon (1992: 303) which they view as "a residual class of anomalies" (Power & Watts 1997: 552). These images are possibly gendered metaphoric representations that resonate with the central role sex and gender plays in San worldview and ritual (Stevenson 2000). Therefore, our simple binary categories of male/female dichotomy when discussing gender and sex, may not apply to social organisation in the past, but can only be ascribed within a value system and is thus a social construction (Joyce 2008; Moore 1995:14). Although Ortner (1974) had a social constructionist view, it lacked the fluidity present in San conceptualisation and the "merging and confusion of roles" (Power & Watts 1997: 553) which underscores gender as performative (Butler 1993). In this thesis, I view gender as the social construction of difference between masculinity and femininity and as a metaphor for relations between males and females—a metaphor that is manifested in social beliefs and practices, and represented in the rock art (Gilchrist 1999: x).

3.3. CONCLUSION: A 'STRIPPED-DOWN' STRATEGY

The feminist movement's contributions to gender archaeology have necessitated re-evaluations of previously accepted research. My theoretical motivation in evaluating the rock art of Zimri Shelter and surrounding sites stems from the feminist movement's contribution: "... a feminist standpoint, if anything, enhances a commitment to empirical rigour ..." (Wylie 2007: 103). This thesis adopts third wave feminists' pluralist concerns about identity and difference by focusing more comprehensively on the construction of masculinity and femininity in the rock art of the Cederberg. This approach will explore processes of activities that constitute the embodiment of identity. These processes, such as life-cycle phases exercised through ritual performances, involve gendered power relations and norms that are symbolically expressed in rock art through embodiment. Zimri Shelter and its surrounding rock art sites offer the potential for contextual, gender constructional

research with paintings of masculine and feminine bodies. Through a gender lens, human or human-like images symbolise identity categories through gendered and ritual clothing, equipment and bodily practices. Other images at Zimri Shelter also present in a new light through a gender approach, such as paintings of ambiguous eland, elephants and sheep linked with femininity, and wildebeest as masculine metaphors. With caution noted in the application of ethnographic research within the field of social anthropology, despite the androcentric slant, women were visible in the ethnographic record. The presence of females and female rituals are richly documented in San ethnographic accounts. A wider theoretical lens allows a re-analysis of the records taking into consideration feminine, masculine and other roles played and expressed in San cosmology. Ultimately, I aim to investigate Zimri Shelters' symbolic and metaphoric representations of potency and power, and the control thereof, situated within the framework of gender. Feminism has created an avenue not for a different or more subjective interpretation of the past, but rather "a *better* understanding of past societies and events" (Webley 1997b: 170). As Wylie (1992) concludes, feminism influenced archaeology to focus on localised empirical detail.

In order to 'focus on localised empirical detail' from a gender perspective, a strategy is required to 'find' femininity, masculinity and difference in the rock art of Zimri Shelter and San ethnography. My strategy involves a 'stripped-down' approach to avoid previous analysis that may have suppressed other possible understandings of the rock art. My strategy has five points:

- A re-reading of the pertinent ethnography—mindful of androcentrism—to ensure a broader interpretive platform that potentially reveals more on intersectional aspects previously overlooked. Specifically, I re-consider various San ritual processes and life-cycle performances.
- An analysis of this ethnographic material for San bodily experiences that might reveal liminal states such as initiation rituals, bodily fluids and transformation and a consideration of how those might map onto rock art.
- An investigation of the ethnographic material on the metaphors that connect animals to gendered concepts and life-cycle experiences.

- The discussion on the ethnography links to rock art through a focus on the visual depiction of bodies of humans, animals, and human/animal-like at Zimri Shelter and elsewhere in the Cederberg; here I draw on Butler's (1993) famous formulation that the "body in the mirror does not represent a body that is ... before the mirror". Rock art images are often not realistic and are widely agreed to be embodied metaphors of ritual processes and life-cycle performances. In focusing on illustrated bodies of both humans and animals I seek to identify the symbolic indicators of performed rituals and their gendered projections.
- A search for identity markers such as genitalia, clothing, equipment and bodily practices in the images at Zimri Shelter and elsewhere in the Cederberg. I investigate illustrated bodies for feminine identity, masculine, and ambiguous identities.

This five-point strategy underpins the writing throughout the thesis, even when not explicitly stated. For rock art researchers, existing and dominant ideas and interpretations regarding subject matter are unavoidable and present a challenge to 'strip down'. This strategy, I believe, allows us to begin this process of looking for additional readings of San rock art images. As Lewis-Williams (2006:369) states:

The real test of a new theoretical approach is to stand in rock shelter after rock shelter and to see if it reveals new insights into familiar images and draws attention to overlooked painted details and conceptual associations. Often the expectation is not realized.

I believe that this five-point strategy will realise the expectation of finding new insights into the rock art of Zimri Shelter and the Cederberg.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ELAND AS SYMBOL OF FEMININITY IN SAN BELIEF AND ART

The prominence of the eland in San thought is suggested by the frequency with which this antelope was depicted in rock paintings and also by the myths and rituals in which it features

(Lewis-Williams & Bieseke 1978: 117).



Figure 4.1. Herd of eland in the Cederberg.



Figure 4.2. Herd of eland, Zimri Shelter.

4.1. ELAND: MULTIPLE METAPHORIC MEANINGS

The widespread occurrence of eland in South African rock art (Fig. 4.1 & Fig. 4.2), south of the Limpopo (Eastwood & Cnoops 1999), suggests similar worldviews among San groups (Vinnicombe 1976; Lewis-Williams 1981; Wiltshire 2011: 88). Zimri Shelter is no different with a herd of vivid shaded eland as well as single eland depictions (Fig. 4.2). Previous rock

art research on eland has, androcentrically, emphasised the animal as a symbol of hunting, hunters, and its association with trance and “man-the-shaman” (Stevenson 1995). Within this framework, Lewis-Williams (1990: 83) argues that the eland’s trance associations “were in the foreground and that the other meanings were in the background”. For him, eland are the *animal de passage* (Lewis-Williams 1981)—a concept expressed in widespread use of eland in therianthropic forms. In the Cederberg mountains, however, therianthropic images are not commonly illustrated, and even less so eland therianthropic images. Those paintings that do display therianthropic images at other sites in the region are clearly female and possibly more likely to be rhebuck or other antelope (see Challis 2005) (see Fig. 4.3 & Fig. 4.4).



Figure 4.3. Two therianthropes with their tails up, exposed buttocks and one with breasts (courtesy of Rock Art Research Institute, University of the Witwatersrand).



Figure 4.4. Therianthrope with a kaross, exposed breasts and holding a digging stick (courtesy of Tony Manhire, Rock Art Research Institute, University of the Witwatersrand).

The herd structure and physiology of the eland depicted at Zimri Shelter also suggest a feminine alignment. Drawing on the strategy outlined in the previous chapter, I argue here for additional interpretations of eland in the Cederberg that consider femininity, androgyny, fat, rain, fertility and procreativity. The focus of this discussion is the cluster of eland at Zimri Shelter (Fig. 4.2), but I also consider other images of eland in the Cederberg region. First, I review existing interpretations of eland and then I review the meaning of eland in performance rites such as initiation that socially construct boys into men and girls into women and ultimately in their dichotomous roles of production and reproduction. I further consider the relationship between eland and hunting, and the role played by eland in ethnographic stories of creation and rain. Finally I conclude by assessing feminine attributes, and elements of difference such as ambiguity in eland in San thought and rock art.

4.2. ELAND IN ROCK ART

Paintings of animals in southern African rock art are dominated by large, herbivorous animals. The eland (*Taurotragus oryx*), a member of the Bovidae family, is the most frequently painted animal in many parts of South Africa (Deacon 1999; Lewis-Williams 1981; Maggs 1967a; Vinnicombe 1972, 1976). Eland are the largest of all antelope species, with males being larger than females. The colour of their hair is relatively accurately depicted in some paintings as greyish brown, fawn or orange-brown. In some instances they are depicted as red or yellow (Fig. 4.5), or in black and white (Fig. 4.6). Often in the Maloti-Drakensberg mountains, eland are carefully depicted in the polychrome, and the shaded polychrome, technique. Other accurately depicted elements include the horns of males and females, their forelocks (tufts of hair between their ears toward their foreheads, especially the males) and their dewlaps (a skinfold that hangs below their necks). Normally, black is only used for the elements such as the dorsal line of hair, hooves, the tuft of the tail, but also sometimes for hair in the ear, and eyes; white is used for the stomach, neck and legs. In many cases those parts of eland bodies that were painted in white have disappeared, as white is the most fugitive pigment. Of all animals in the rock art, the eland is treated with the most complex techniques such as shading, perspective and foreshortening. Eland are often depicted in groups, and are illustrated in movement or are in a diverse range of postures including standing, running, and lying down. Eland, an antelope relatively easy to hunt, were eradicated in the Western Cape by 1775 and still naturally occurred in the Maloti-Drakensberg mountains until 1899 (Spaarmann 1789: 92 & Bryden 1899: 420, in Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2004: 218).

4.2.1. Eland depictions in the Cederberg

Groups of eland and superimposed images of eland are common in Cederberg rock art sites (Fig. 4.5). The Cederberg eland are predominantly painted in the fine-line tradition in red, orange and yellow ochreous colours. White is also discernible in some images, with black pigment being rare. There is one example in the Cederberg region of an eland depicted in black; although there may be more, it is certainly uncommon (Fig 4.6).



Figure 4.5. Eland herd, Rietvley, Cederberg region.



Figure 4.6. Black and white eland, Die Mond, eastern Cederberg.

Eland are also sometimes painted in the Cederberg in what appears to be a line of a few individuals walking one behind the other (Fig. 4.7); similar to lines of humans in Cederberg paintings.



Figure 4.7. Line of eland, Salmanskraal, Cederberg.

The Cederberg paintings also differ from the Maloti-Drakensberg mountain paintings in that they are less detailed and less varied in technique. Most of the Cederberg paintings are monochrome. There are also many bichrome paintings (Fig. 4.8), but polychrome paintings and shaded images are rare.



Figure 4.8. Bichrome eland, Hoek-sonder-koffie, Cederberg.

4.2.2. Eland depictions at Zimri Shelter

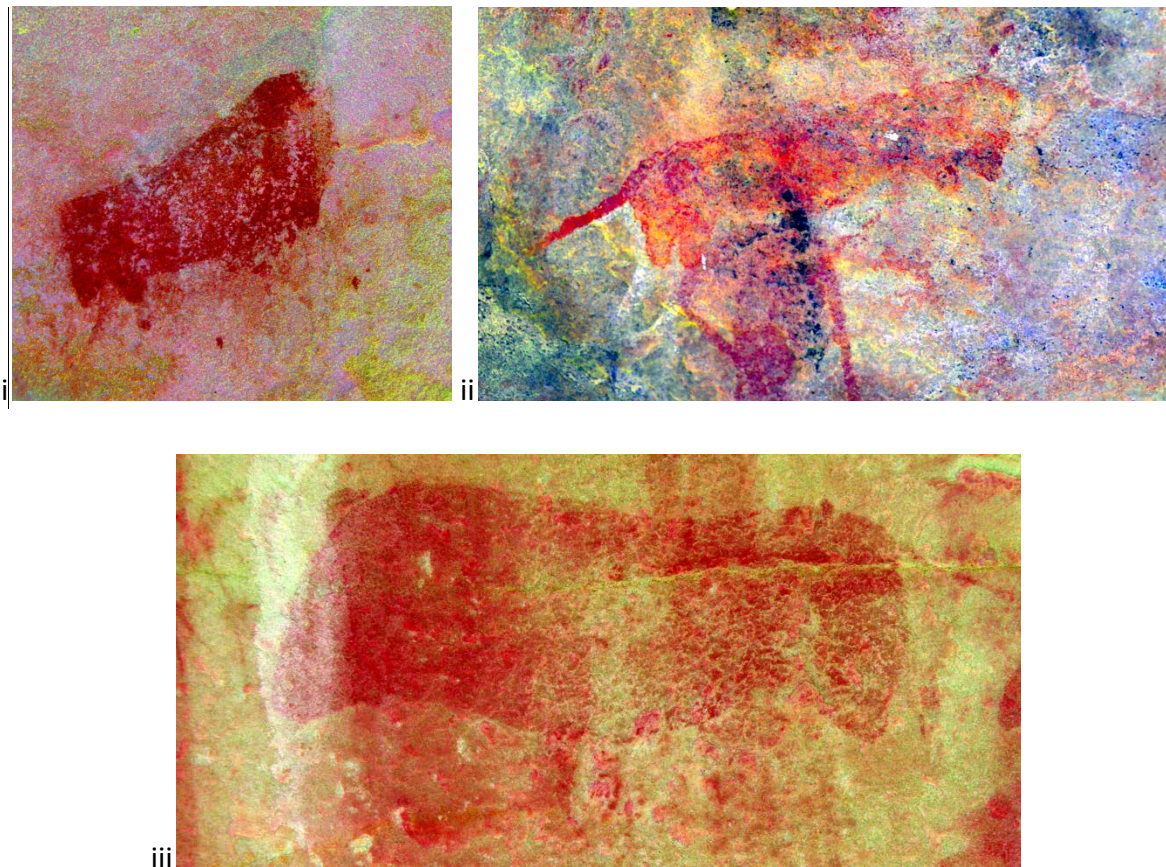
At Zimri Shelter, eland are also the most frequently depicted antelope. One of the most striking features at this site, however, is a polychrome shaded group of eland (Fig. 4.9), an unusual occurrence for the Cederberg.



Figure 4.9. Herd of polychrome shaded eland, Zimri Shelter.

The group of eland at Zimri Shelter consists of ten eland of which eight are painted in the shaded polychrome technique and two are faded red eland torsos. They are all painted in yellowish ochre except for the two that are painted in a darker reddish ochre colour. One of these darker eland also appears slightly more robust. Unfortunately these two eland are not as clear as they are painted under the lighter eland. Male eland become darker with age and develop dense hair on their foreheads (Pappas 2002). In addition older eland develop folds in their necks. The tufts of hair, the folds in the neck as well as male robust eland bulls are often portrayed in the art. All of these features are not visible at Zimri Shelter. The eland also appear to have rather under-exaggerated dewlaps which could indicate a feminine rather than masculine characteristic as bull eland are associated with large dewlaps (and

even if they were large, they would still be indicative of the ambiguous feminine association with the importance of fat in hunter-gatherer society). In addition one of the eland is painted with its tail up and appears to be expelling fluid (see Fig. 4.16 for a close-up). Zimri Shelter also has single eland depictions that include the remains of red torsos, one yellow torso and one small red and white bichrome eland. Unfortunately these images are faded and not as clear as the main cluster of eland (see Figs 4.10 i, ii & iii for some examples). I do not think that the red torsos were originally shaded polychrome eland as the monochrome shape of the torso is distinct which would not have been the case with shaded depictions.



Figures 4.10. (i, ii & iii) Examples of single eland depictions at Zimri Shelter (altered by DStretch).

4.3. INTERPRETATIONS OF ELAND IN ROCK ART RESEARCH

Eland have enjoyed the attention of many rock art researchers, and images of the animal are widely understood to symbolise supernatural power. The size of eland made it a sought-after source of meat and fat for the San (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989). Quantitative studies in the 1960s and 1970s (Lewis-Williams 1981; Maggs 1967a; Pager 1975;

Vinnicombe 1967a, 1967b) highlighted the numerical dominance and importance of paintings of eland and their symbolic associations (Solomon 1997: 3). San creation stories regarding the eland (Bleek 1924: 1-5; Bleek 1932; Orpen 1874) suggest a complex relationship between the San, eland and their deity, |kaggen (Vinnicombe 1972: 195). In addition, the fat of eland was believed to be a component of the paint used by San (see Vinnicombe 1972 & 1976). Marion How's (1962: 38) now famous encounter with the rock painter, Mapote, in 1930 is one source of evidence for this interpretation. From Mapote's statements to How, Vinnicombe (1976: 353) surmised the relationship between the San and the eland:

The eland epitomised more than the regulated unity of the Bushman band: it served also as a link between the material and spiritual worlds. The eland was the medium through which the oppositions of life and death, of destruction and preservation, were resolved. The eland was connected with the practical here and now as well with the less tangible concepts of fertility, regeneration, eternity. The eland was the focus of the Bushman's deepest aesthetic feelings and of his highest moral and intellectual speculations. The Mountain Bushmen were known to be people 'of the eland', and in sharing the eland's name, they partook of the eland's entity. As the wind was one with man, so man was one with the eland.

Rock art researchers have focused on understanding this link between eland, the San and rock art. The next section explores existing interpretations of eland as symbols of shamanism as well as extending research to focus on gender ideologies.

4.3.1. The standard model

The potency associated with eland is believed to be the reason for the predominance of eland paintings as well as the aesthetically beautiful and detailed depictions of eland in many parts of southern Africa (Lewis-Williams 1972, 1974; Maggs 1967a; Pager 1971; Vinnicombe 1975, 1976). Vinnicombe's (1976: 353) observation that "[t]he eland epitomised more than the regulated unity of the Bushman band: it served also as a link between the material and spiritual worlds" was extended by Lewis-Williams. Based on the ethnographic record he (Lewis-Williams 1981) viewed paintings of eland as representing rites of passage and associated the eland with life-cycle rituals, such as the male and female initiation rites (boys' first kill and girls' first menses) as well as marriage rituals. Lewis-Williams (1981)

viewed the eland as a unifying symbol of San culture in rock art that gave cohesion within San thinking through its symbolism in different rites. However, he found that images of boys' first kill rites, girls' puberty rites and marriage rituals seem to be lacking in the rock art (Lewis-Williams 2012). Instead, according to Lewis-Williams, the eland is most prominent in the shamanistic images in the Maloti-Drakensberg mountains. The many images painted that related to the trance dance led him to argue that the art was shamanistic in the first place and that paintings of eland symbolise the potency shamans require to go into trance (Lewis-Williams 1981: 75-101; Lewis-Williams 1987: 171). This potency was released in death and there was a symbolic link between dying eland and shamans entering altered states of consciousness.

Lewis-Williams' initial reading of the eland as symbolising diverse rites of passage gave way to an emphasis on the eland as central to ideas of supernatural power and the spirit world fundamental to shamanistic belief and shamanic practice (Lewis-Williams 1998). Lewis-Williams (1998) draws on San ethnography to argue that shamanism permeates San thought. Within this paradigm Mapote's (How 1962: 38) statement that the San were 'of the eland' and therefore he will paint an eland, is interpreted as implying that shamans had a close relationship to eland and that they could acquire the power of eland, and control eland and their potency (Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2004). The most common attributes of the standard model portray the eland as a reservoir of potency and a metaphor for trance. The eland is viewed as a polysemic symbol within the context of trance. It positioned the eland in a pivotal position in the shamanistic framework in San beliefs and rock art.

4.3.2. More meanings of eland

Researchers other than Lewis-Williams have investigated the eland from different perspectives within the shamanistic model as well as outside the framework. One such area is gender ideology. Two researchers that have contributed to an understanding of the eland in terms of gender are Parkington and Solomon. Parkington (1996:282) focuses on the rock art of the south-western Cape and accentuates the sexual role of the eland in hunting and sex, and the part it plays in the definition and construction of societal roles. In his view the eland does not represent, as Lewis-Williams argues, a dying shaman, but rather a hunter being born (Parkington 2003, but also see Parkington *et al.* 1996). According to Parkington "hunting means the killing of a large game animal such as an eland and eland form the basis

of an extended metaphor that links food to sex” (Parkington 2003: 144). He argues that the eland—or any equivalent large game animal—“embodies the system of understanding the world” and that the metaphor of hunting (a sole male activity), highlights the differences between male and female responsibilities (2003: 146).

Parkington’s hunting metaphor has been argued on the basis that paintings of humans with karosses represent hunters that have killed their first eland, and who are initiated men and therefore eligible for marriage (Parkington 1989, 2003: 144). Paintings of karosses, most likely made of eland skin, are therefore in his view visually related to paintings of eland (Parkington 2008: 96).

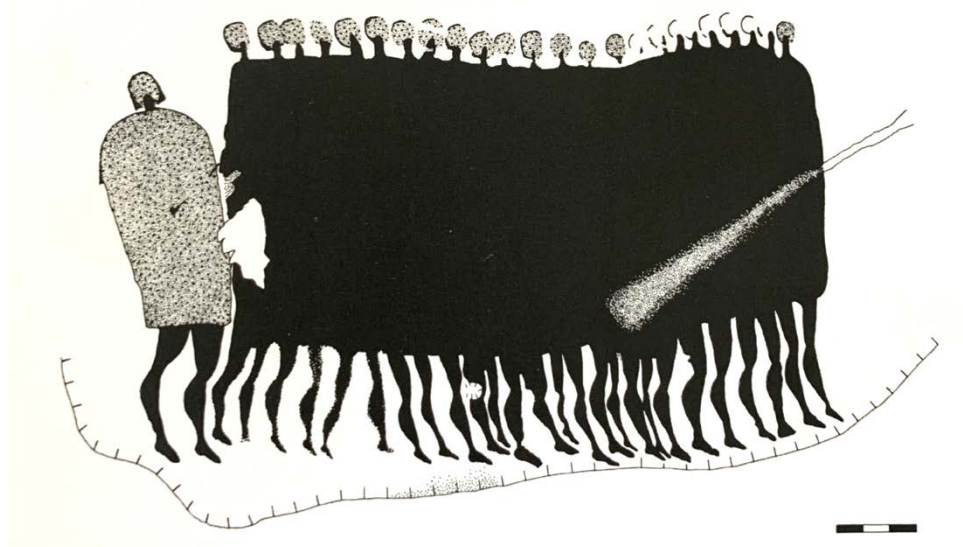


Figure 4.11. Group of karossed figures, Keurbos, Cederberg (tracing from Parkington 2008 fig.101b).

Parkington interprets these groups of karossed figures (Fig. 4.11) to be intentionally fused to look like an eland torso (2008: 97). He further argues that karossed figures are male even in the absence of sexually definitive attributes due to the presence of hunting equipment which is associated with the male domain. Hunting therefore defines the transformation of identities from a boy who has successfully hunted a large meat antelope to the identity of a male hunter and as a sexual male (Parkington 2008: 89). Extending this, Parkington argues that karossed figures are initiated men that became hunters through initiation and by wearing a kaross they are wearing an eland (Parkington 1996: 287).

I agree with Parkington that initiation can be viewed as a rebirth as the young hunter experienced change and he is now ready for marriage. The boy becomes a man and undergoes a reclassification within society—a categorical change. New identities are constructed during the process of initiation and initiates are expected to play new roles in society. Although the hunting-sex metaphor seems to be apparent, I do not think the eland should be at the centre of the interpretation, but rather the focus should be on the lived experience of transformation. A cloak signifying a hunter and representing an adult male person is speculative. Dorothea Bleek (1928:9) does point out that “the boys now wear an apron like those of the men, but no cloak of any sort till they are in their teens and are taken out to learn hunting”, which resonates strongly with Parkington’s suggestion. However, females are also known to wear karosses. Parkington only recognises two categories—that of being an eland or a hunter of eland (Parkington 1996: 289). This has an androcentric slant to it as the role of the female domain receives very little attention and does not leave room for gender ambiguities or agency.

While Parkington’s androcentric slant does not allow for female elements in the symbolism of painted eland nor for gender ambiguity, Solomon’s work, however, falls outside the shamanistic framework, and focuses on gender as the basis for San beliefs and rock art symbology (Solomon 1992). She argues for a link between female menarcheal rites (when a girl menstruates for the first time) and the concept of *n!ow* potency that influences the weather (a potency released through spilt fluids on the ground at childbirth and blood during hunting) with certain female images in the rock art, including female eland in mating postures (cf. Eastwood 2005/3: 2). Solomon suggests an analogous understanding of the

blood of a menarcheal girl and the blood of a prey animal. The menarcheal girl is described as having “shot an eland” (Solomon 1992: 298). Solomon views Mapote’s (How 1962) request for eland blood to paint as a linkage between the blood of prey animals (as associated with femininity) to ochre conceptualised as blood. I suggest Mapote’s story further supports Solomon’s argument in that he explicitly stated that it had to be a female that prepared the red pigment at full moon, a time known to be a cyclical indication of female menstrual cycles. The menarcheal girl is also linked to eland because both are regarded as fat. Fatness in females is linked to well-being and fertility (see discussion in 4.4.1). Her fatness causes her to be more sexually desirable as fat antelope are more desirable to hunt (Solomon 1992: 301, 302).

Although Solomon (1992: 303, 304) highlights the feminine symbolism of eland she mentions also the presence of gender ambiguity associated with eland. She interprets the eland creation stories as a case in point; in the stories the bull eland is the creator of all eland (Orpen 1874). The epitome of femininity is the ability to procreate. In the story it is a ‘bull’ eland that takes on the feminine role of procreation (discussed further in 4.4.3). Another known feminine characteristic is fat. Lewis-Williams and Biesele (1978: 119) state that an eland bull has so much fat, especially around its heart, that one man could not put his arms around it. Unlike other antelope, the eland is the only antelope where the male has more fat than the female (Hays-Gilpin 2004: 173; Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989: 122). This makes the eland gender-ambiguous as fat and fatness is strongly and positively associated with females. The ambiguity of the eland is possibly portrayed in an engraving Thomas Dowson (1992) investigated of an eland that appears to have both male and female characteristics—the large dewlap and a belly line with a penis of a male eland, as well as the higher and smaller female dewlap and a plain, lower belly line of a female eland (Fig. 4.12). This eland engraving could highlight this sexual ambivalence as it mediates between masculinity and femininity associated with transitional states such as girls and boys initiation rituals (Dowson 1992: 109; see also Dowson 2009).

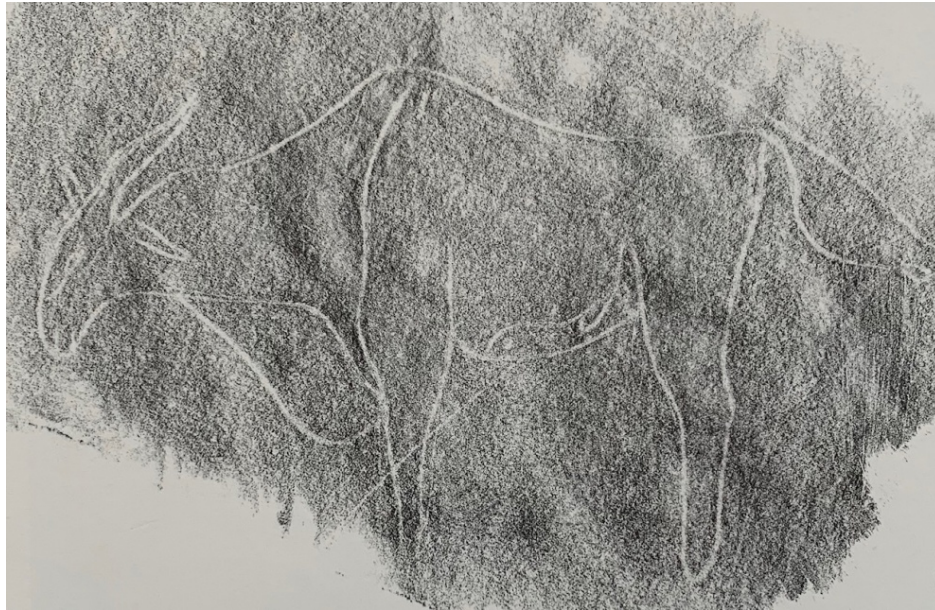


Figure 4.12. Eland with male and female characteristics, Krugersdorp District, Gauteng (from Dowson 1992, nr 158).

Solomon (1992: 306, 311) argues that gender and sexual-related images are important aspects of the art and therefore gender should be considered as a significant role player in San society. The eland forms part of these images with depictions of foreshortened images of eland where the rear view of the eland can be associated with displays of female buttocks at initiations which are regarded as highly erotic. These paintings are among other paintings of female initiation, animal copulation and possible human birth and copulation scenes that support Solomon's 'centrality of gender' approach (see Solomon's 1992 paper for examples). Hollmann (2011: 354) furthers this line of argument in that the eland serves as a transformative symbol during the Girl's Puberty dance (see 4.4.1). He points out that the Jul'hoansi females expose themselves during the dance and their behaviour mimic eland in oestrus. This leads him to question whether images of eland are not in fact transformed females—similar to Edward Eastwood's (2006) argument that painted images in the Limpopo basin of female kudu (kudu being the numerically more dominant antelope in the Limpopo region) in oestrus and females with animal back legs could be representations of transformed females. Edward Eastwood and Cathelijne Eastwood (2006: 103) identified female kudu that have been painted in a mating posture, as well as kudu that appear to have genitals that are red and swollen. They interpret these images as possibly being indicative of female sexuality and feminine potency. Hollmann (2011) also identifies a

Gestoptefontein-Driekuul Complex image as a female eland based on its slenderness and small dewlap. He further investigates the contextual images, such as female pubic aprons, which suggests a feminine milieu and supports Solomon's gender approach.

Even hunting-related images form part of the gender and sexuality framework with the link between sexuality and hunting being displayed by normal taboos of females not being allowed to touch hunting equipment (see Silberbauer 1981: 119). Yet, during liminal periods such as menarcheal rites the Ju'hoansi menarcheal girls are said to have "shot an eland" and !kõ girls shoot an arrow at a skin as part of their menarcheal rite (Solomon 1992: 313). This illustrates a role reversal where the menarcheal girl becomes the 'hunted' and 'the hunter' and highlights the mutability of gender in liminal periods (see Power & Watts 1997: 542, 543). Solomon (1989, 1992) therefore views the eland as a symbol embedded in a wider set of beliefs regarding sex and as a socially constructed concept of gender that allows ambiguity. Menarcheal ritual performances link strongly with the gender-ambiguous engraving as discussed by Dowson (1992) as a metaphor of transformation. These alternative interpretations associate eland with gender-related aspects and have in common conceptual views that have a strong feminine association with the eland and resonates with Vinnicombe's (1976) description of the relationship between the San, eland and fertility. Some depictions of eland, following these ideas, can be better understood within the embodiment of this feminine association.

4. 4. THE ELAND AS SYMBOL OF FEMININITY IN SAN ETHNOGRAPHY

Eland are not the only animals with the ability to "bridge worlds" in San cosmology. The gemsbok, for example, played such an important role in southern Kalahari San puberty ceremonies, dances and rituals that Maingard believed it to be " ... the focal point of their lives, the centre round which hinges all their philosophy, all their habits and customs" (Bieseke 1993: 96). Zimri Shelter has depictions that also support the argument that other animals had ideological significance (see Chapters Five, Six and Seven). Eland are thus not the only central image in Cederberg rock art but they, nevertheless, play an important role as there is a cluster of shaded polychrome eland at Zimri Shelter. For contemporary researchers, eland are easily identified and are often assumed to be easily understood

because of previous research. This could obscure multiple metaphoric meanings that may be evident if the ethnography and the art is looked at through the additional lens of gender.

San ethnography reveals that the eland was respected as one of the great meat antelope. It was one of the animals with potency. As owners of *n/um* and *n!ow* potency, eland were sources of life-giving or life-threatening powers—similar powers owned by post-menstrual girls. In some instances eland played a role in ritual contexts such as menarcheal initiation rites, and boys' hunting and first kill rituals (Bieseke 1993; Lewis-Williams 1981; Marshall 1999). It has been inferred that the most important aspect of the transitional phase of initiation rites has been metaphorically and spiritually represented by an animal, of which the eland is an example (Guenther 1999: 174). The following section has a re-look at the role eland play in San ethnography and San stories in order to explore these aspects further.

4.4.1. Rethinking the eland 'bull' dance as an aspect of the menarcheal rite

In Chapter Two I highlighted the need for a cautionary approach in the use of ethnography. In this section I investigate how an uniformist methodological focus on sameness overshadows difference in two essential aspects of my argument: female puberty rites and eland. Two aspects seem to have become resistant myths in the application of ethnography to San rock art interpretation. The first is an assumption of a pan-San association between the female menarcheal rite and the "Eland Bull Dance", for example: "the San girl's puberty ritual, the so-called Eland Bull Dance" (Lewis-Williams 2002: 187); and "The Great Eland Dance, which is closely associated with female initiation, is recorded from all known San groups" (Solomon 1992: 295) (also see Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989: 119; Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2004: 153; Vinnicombe 1976). Isaac Schapera (1951: 119) goes as far as to put the focus of this female rite on the bull: "[t]he motif of this dance clearly is the courtship of the eland bull". Rock art research has relied on ethnography to link eland and menarcheal rites based on the performance of the Eland 'Bull' Dance as a central part of the initiation rite. Mathias Guenther (1999: 166) refers to it as the "apparently pan-Bushman eland dance". The menarcheal girl stays in a specially constructed hut during the day, and at night the Eland 'Bull' Dance is performed every night until her menstruation period is over. Schapera (1951: 119) gives a typical description of the dance as it occurs among the north-western San groups (Nharo, ǀau||eisi, Ju|'hoansi):

All the men and boys leave the camp, save two old men, who tie elands' horns or wooden imitations thereof to their heads, and wait in the bushes. The older women stand in a line, singing and clapping their hands. The girl is brought from her hut, and sits or lies on the ground by them. The younger women then circle round before them, or make a figure of eight. They dance with their arms outstretched before them, and have a peculiar slow, swaying step. As they dance they lift their karosses and aprons to one side, and expose their buttocks, which they waggle from side to side. The two "bulls" stamp up, holding their karosses pulled well down over their shoulders, and presenting a hunched-up appearance. They join the line of dancers, sometimes leading it, sometimes in the middle of it, and dance with a slow, jogging step. The song accompanying their movements is full and low in tune, but without words. The motif of this dance is clearly the courtship of the eland bull, and although as seen by Passarge and Miss Bleek it was kept within bounds, they say that it can easily become indecent (Schapera 1951: 119).

Schapera (1951) includes the Jul'hoansi as part of this pan-San ritual occurrence even though no ethnographer has ever observed female initiation among the Jul'hoansi (Barnard 1992: 60). According to Dornan, the San were hesitant to dance in front of foreigners (Barnard 1992: 131) and as Bleek (1928: 23) noted: "It is a dance of an intimate nature". Other San groups also performed the Eland 'Bull' Dance. The #au||eisi female initiation rite was in alignment with the Nharo's ritual (Bleek 1928: 23). The Hai||om performed a complex version thereof; their menstruation dance was danced during the day and only by women. The men were not even allowed to watch (Barnard 1992: 60, 216). Guenther (1999: 172) also mentions that the eland in this puberty dance can be replaced by another animal such as the gemsbok or a type of bird. In Bleek's (1937) notes on !'auni female initiation, reference is made to known elements of the ritual such as seclusion, the role of the grandmother, tattooing, and men dancing, but with no mention of the 'eland bull' (Barnard 1992: 89). Although female menarcheal initiation rituals among the !xam were never observed by ethnographers, the Eland 'Bull' Dance is believed to have been the central rite during a girls' first onset of menses (see Barnard 2007: 90).

Interestingly, in some San groups, the 'Eland Dance' played no role whatsoever and in others another animal takes centre stage. In the south-west of Namibia, the !nullen, do not use an 'eland bull' but rather a man who dances with a bird's beak on his head (Schapera

1951: 120). The G|wi do not have any dance as part of their girl's puberty ceremony. In an entire article on the girl's puberty ceremony (Silberbauer 1963) the Eland 'Bull' Dance is but mentioned twice and only in surprised reference that it does not form part of the G|wi ceremony. The article rather highlights the importance of so many other aspects of the puberty ceremony such as cleansing, haircutting, tattooing, *etcetera* that play a role during the rite. Lorna Marshall (1999: 321) makes reference to her "embarrassing error" in Lewis-Williams' *Believing and Seeing* (1981) that the G|wi had the 'Eland Dance' as part of their menarcheal rite, when they in fact never came across the 'Eland Dance' in their visits to the G|wi. Marshall's error is possibly as a result of the 'pan-San' assumption of an Eland 'Bull' Dance. There is also no record of the 'Eland Dance' among the |xam or the Maloti San. Similarly, the Great Eland Song (as recorded by Nicholas England), that is associated with the menarcheal rite, is not sung at all the San groups. The Marshalls found it at a few Ju|'hoansi groups, and at groups south of the Ju|'hoansi such as the Nharo, Tsau, and !kǃ (ǀxǃ), but not among the G|wi or more northern groups such as the Kxoe and the Tsexa. The Marshalls heard it at dances only four times (Marshall 1999: 78, 195).

Rock art researchers, based on ethnographic glossing then, have created a link between girl's puberty rites and the eland due to the performance of the Eland 'Bull' Dance but this is far from a pan-San universal aspect. The link between female puberty rite and the Eland 'Bull' Dance (Lewis-Williams 2002: 187) is thus misleading. Moreover, as eland were not always the central symbol in San puberty dances: the name of the dance—the "Eland Bull Dance" (see Marshall 1999: 197)—is thus also a misnomer. This accepted, symbolically loaded, name is not what San women called their dance. Rather, they said "we are dancing eland" (Marshall 1999: 197). The Ju|'hoansi never mentioned 'bull' or 'male' (Marshall 1999).

San ethnography shows that the eland forms one of many aspects in the female puberty rite. Although I agree that the eland is viewed as an animal with potency and power, I find the placement of the menarcheal rite within the shamanic framework problematic (see Lewis-Williams 2002: 187). Lewis-Williams (1981: 41-53; Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2004) states that any possible depictions of girls' puberty rites would be shamanistic, because where possible, San shamans were used as the 'bulls' in the Eland 'Bull' Dance. Lewis-Williams' statement is based on Barnard's (1980: 118) paper on Nharo hunter-gatherers

where he indicates that the man playing the role of the eland bull is “preferably a shaman”, but he continues to stress that this male cannot be marriageable as “he is necessarily old”. As Marshall (1965: 271) states about her research on the Ju|’hoansi: “... it is rare to find a man who is not a medicine man”. Bieseles (1980: 55) research supports this where she writes that over half of the Ju|’hoansi males are curers as well as many females. Marshall also makes no mention that the males need to be shamans, but rather that they must be old (Marshall 1999: 198). I would suggest that the presence of a shaman at any ritual does not make it shamanic as many males, and females, are shamans. The age of the men, when present, seem to be the most important prerequisite as they had to be old and well beyond hunting age. It implies that they pose no sexual threat to the initiates, and they are not susceptible to the latent danger imbued in the menarcheal girl, and therefore they could possibly be viewed as asexual or genderless figures (see Chapter Eight for representations of age-status figures). This takes the sex-hunting metaphor out of the equation. In cases where there were no elderly males fitting the requirements, the role of the eland bull was left out. In the case of the Hai||om, for example, the men are not even allowed to watch the initiation dance. Therefore, the ‘bull’ (as suggested by Schapera 1951: 119) is not the focus (see Bleek 1937:257-258). Although the bull or males can play a role in the dance, it is rather the role of the females that are of importance. Derrida’s deconstructionist theory comes to mind in this case where implied meaning in text suppresses other aspects of interpretative importance. Possibly, androcentrism could be the reason for such a masculinist title for a ritual that is essentially a celebration of femininity. A more fitting name for the dance is the Girl’s Puberty Dance. Barnard (1980: 118) states that this puberty ritual is about a girl becoming a sexually ready woman/wife. The focus of the menarcheal rite is the females and where dances do occur as part of the rite, it is the mimicking of the mating behaviour of an eland or another animal that is relevant.

Nevertheless, eland did play a role in some groups’ female initiation dances. An elderly San woman explained that the reason they do the dance is:

[S]o that she will be well; she will be beautiful; that she won’t be thin; so that if there is hunger, she won’t be very hungry and she won’t be terribly thirsty, and she will be peaceful. That all will go well with the land and that rain will fall (Lewis-Williams 1981: 50).

Another woman told Marshall (1999: 199): “We dance eland because the eland is a happy thing”. To Marshall’s experienced eye the Eland Dance was a “happy thing” and she thought it made “a vivid affirmation of femaleness” (Marshall 1999: 199). Eland is the symbol of good things, of “health, strength, plenty, and well-being” (Marshall 1999: 195). The well-being of the menarcheal girl is related to her not being ‘thin’. In reference to the Eland Dance, !kun|obe stated that it “is danced because the eland is a good thing and has much fat. And the girl is also a good thing and she is all fat; therefore they are called the same thing” (Lewis-Williams 1981: 48). ‘Fatness’ or ‘fat’ therefore symbolises well-being and fertility with the potential of procreation. At the end of the girls’ menstruation period, she is bathed or anointed in fat, and preferably the fat of an eland (Marshall 1999: 200). Sexual intercourse is described as ‘to eat or drink fat’ among the Jul’hoansi (Bieseke 1978: 927). Eland can therefore be linked to well-being, puberty, female fertility, and procreativity.

The Girls’ Puberty Dance is part of a transitional period when a girl who menstruates for the first time approaches a new phase of maturity, but also of potentiality to procreate. This is to be regarded as a liminal phase which allows for certain social categories to be inverted and behavioural rules to be transgressed. The San females never expose their buttocks in daily life as it is highly erotic and they should be covered. Power and Watts (1997: 554) suggests that the exposure of buttocks could be symbolic of “maleness” and a metaphoric reversal of sex. Exposed buttocks during the ‘Eland Dance’ therefore affirm the liminality of the rite; as does the inversion of age and gender categories. The older performers of the dance imitate eland mating behaviour and are of an age where procreation is most probably not viable to them anymore placing them in an ambiguous category. A gendered approach broadens the interpretation and highlights the importance of fat and fatness that is directly linked to procreation, and consequently the initiate’s possession of very strong *n/um* that links eland symbolism to that of the female initiate and her well-being. The Girl’s Puberty Dance, a symbol of female virility, forms part of a process of feminine sexual social categorisation which in some cases is symbolised by the eland.

4.4.2. The eland and hunting

In addition to the female puberty rite, the eland also plays a role in one of the male rituals, the First Kill Rite. Hunting eland was ritualised with certain rules and behavioural taboos

that applied. Lewis-Williams and Bieseke (1978) highlight the eland, where other ethnographic references highlight the initiation of a hunter, which involves killing a large antelope. Although the eland appears to be a sought after antelope in the First Kill Rite, it could be replaced among the Ju|'hoansi for example with gemsbok, kudu, wildebeest, roan antelope, hartebeest and giraffe (Guenther 1999:177 citing Lee). This initiation creates the view of men as "the strong virile hunters" that need to provide for the rest of the band (Marshall 1999: 144).

Lewis-Williams and Bieseke (1978) point to comparisons between the |xam (Bleek 1932: 233-249) and the Ju|'hoansi in reference to the customs of the First Kill Rite. A Ju|'hoansi boy after shooting his first eland is not allowed to touch the shaft of the arrow that shot the eland as this could cause the eland not to die. An older man can pick up the shaft and put it back in the boy's quiver. Similarly the |xam also practised this avoidance. Further, the Ju|'hoansi believed that when an animal has been shot, not exclusively eland, the hunter may not run, otherwise the wounded animal would also run (Lewis-Williams & Bieseke 1978: 124, 125). This was also the case with the |xam: "On his way back he does not hurry, but goes quietly along; he does not look around, but gazes quietly at what he sees, for he thinks that otherwise the eland would not look as he does, but look as if it felt that its heart were not afraid" (Bleek 1932: 233, 234). The fact that the hunter of the eland was for example not allowed to hurry home implies a close relationship. This bond between the boy and the eland is emphasised by the boy staying in the bush and using ash from a fire to make a circle on his forehead and a line on his nose representing the eland's tuft of hair on his forehead. When the boy returns to camp he is not allowed to speak. The markings on his face signal to his band members that he has shot an eland. The hunter is not allowed to have contact with anything associated with females, such as their pots. The |xam also displayed avoidance behaviour by not entering the camp until being asked by an elderly man whether he had shot an eland. After the elderly man established that the boy has shot an eland by looking at his shaft for eland hair, he builds a hut for the boy away from women and children where he takes care of the boy as if he were ill. Similar to Ju|'hoansi behavioural taboos, a young |xam hunter also had to avoid "women's things" as it could cool the poison. Part of the avoidance behaviour is certain food bans. Any transgressions could cause the eland not to die (Lewis-

Williams & Bieseke 1978: 125, 126). The close relationship between the hunter and his prey is clear and powerful as any of his behaviours may affect the eland.

“The Eland’s Story” (Hollmann 2004: 68-75), a !xam story narrated by Diä!kwain, is essentially a hunting story that outlines *!nanna-se* (‘respect’) behaviours of the hunters towards the eland. The hunters act in a manner that mimics the behaviour of the shot eland: “The old men tell him he must not pass water freely, for if he did so, the eland would also pass water freely, ... then the poison would hold and kill the eland ...” (Hollmann 2004: 70). Further prohibitions included actions that would impact on the fatness of the eland. The Ju|’hoansi’s loincloth had to be tucked in as any flaps hanging down could cause the eland to be lean (Lewis-Williams 1981: 60; Lewis-Williams & Bieseke 1978: 127). Among the !xam, the hunter may only go near the eland once its heart has been removed. According to Diä!kwain the hunter’s smell could cause leanness. A ritual was performed by the !xam to ensure the eland’s fatness. They would cut off the eland’s tail to beat the dead antelope: ‘When they beat the eland with its tail, it seems to sigh just as they are used to sigh; when they eat eland’s fat then they sigh like that, so they beat the eland with its tail to fatten it’ (Bleek 1932: 238). They also believed that their shadow could cause the eland to be lean (Lewis-Williams & Bieseke 1978: 127). According to Lewis-Williams and Bieseke (1978: 128) the Ju|’hoansi First Kill Rite celebrates the amount of fat by dancing, with only the hunters participating and with no women present. There are parts of an eland believed to have *n/um* which are roasted separately and some of which are eaten by the older men, but not the boy. They include the dewlap, the tail, forelegs, part of the back legs and a section of the neck. Women are not included in this part of the ritual (Lewis-Williams & Bieseke 1978: 128). After the successful hunt, the hunter is scarified with the fat from the potent parts of the eland mixed with eland hair and medicine, whilst sitting on the eland skin. Cuts are then made on the hunter’s right arm for a male eland and on his left arm for a female eland (Lewis-Williams 1981: 61). The scarification of the initiates is very important as it makes sure that he is a successful hunter—giving him the ability and willingness to hunt (Marshall 1999: 154, 155). All these practices create an ‘oneness’ with the eland and ensures successful hunts in the future, and that the hunted animal will be fat.

The First Kill Rite is partially transformative as the rite indicates not as much the transformation of the boy to a hunter as he may have hunted successfully many times

before. The performative rite rather indicates the attainment of manhood upon killing a large meat antelope—a categorical change. He now has the ability to provide for a wife by successfully killing large meat antelope and having undergone the First Kill Rite (Marshall 1999: 154). The First Kill Rite revolves around a lot of rules of behaviour, and through the categorisation of masculine identity status, societal roles and responsibilities, especially toward females, are established.

One of my strategies when looking at the rock art and existing rock art interpretations was not to be clouded by literature dominant animals. A broader view alludes to The First Kill Rite not centring around the eland, but rather on the ability to kill any of the great meat antelopes. I found little reference to the eland in this rite in ethnography. For example, Lewis-Williams and Bieseke (1978) relate the rite in terms of the eland based on their interviews, though only one of their informants had killed an eland. They refer to the other informants as having knowledge of the rite. Although they mention similar avoidance behaviours with the !xam killing of a hartebeest, they state that the Ju|'hoansi did not apply these avoidances to wildebeest and some other animals (Lewis-Williams & Bieseke 1978: 126). Marshall (1999: 154), however, narrates the rite based on the killing of a wildebeest, with no reference to an eland. It seems it is not the numerically dominant animal in rock art, the eland, or any of the great meat antelope species that are pan-San in the First Kill Rite, but rather the performance of the ritual, its avoidance behaviours and implications in terms of masculine attainment.

Third wave feminist approaches come to the fore in the First Kill Rite. Gender and age seem significant in the ritual taboos associated with the ritual. Avoidance behaviour plays an important role in the First Kill Rite, such as having no contact with women and children and the impact it will have on the prey's behaviour. The hut that is built to care for the hunter is built by an elderly male as if he were ill—this echoes the performance of female puberty rituals. There appears to be a structural similarity between male and female ceremonies in general which points to the gender fluidity during this liminal period (see Power & Watts 1997: 547). However, young women seem to be excluded from most of the post-hunting rituals. The taboos of young females at the rites prevent them impacting on hunting success due to their latent power/danger. The Ju|'hoansi believe that the procreative powers of

females can destroy or weaken male hunting powers (Marshall 1999: xxxiv). Only the elderly males are allowed to eat certain parts of the hunted animal, and not the hunter who is young and virile, and therefore in a liminal state and may be susceptible to any power and/or danger.

The eland, I believe, plays a symbolic representative role in the First Kill Rite. The feminine aspects such as the fat and tails of eland are of importance in the First Kill Rite and both make reference to female ritual symbolism. Many of the taboos performed by the hunter are to ensure the fatness of the eland—an important aspect for females to enhance procreativity. The metaphor is extended in the ritual of beating the animal with its tail to ensure that it is fat (Bleek 1932: 238). As mentioned earlier, ‘eating fat’ has been used as a euphemism for having sex (Bieseke 1978: 927) and by using the tail of the eland, associated with mating behaviour of eland and eroticism during the ‘Eland Dance’, the link with feminine symbolism is implied. This alludes to the significance of paintings of eland with their tails-up in rock art. The importance of the fat can therefore be directly equated to the importance of the females to be well-provided for by the hunters and to ensure that they are fat to enhance procreativity. The First Kill Rite is materialised through the scarifications (Marshall 1999: 154). It embodies the masculine ascription of successful hunting ability equated with production and as provider to a potential wife—a performative rite based on an achievement of the act of hunting a large antelope. However, the ritual symbolic alignment of the fat of eland with the fat of females, could metaphorically represent that women are like meat for men to hunt and upon completion of the First Kill Rite they are in a position to ‘eat fat’ (see Bieseke 1993). The differences in the roles and responsibilities associated with the newly constructed identities of the masculine sphere of production and female sphere of reproduction are categorised through these life-cycle rituals—some of which are metaphorically represented by eland in rock art.

4.4.3. Stories of eland

The role played by eland in San society comes to the fore in various stories with the eland as one of the characters. The stories reveal information about the power and importance of the eland, as well as aspects of the mythological past. This section investigates the function

of the stories where social and biological boundaries are constructed through repetitive gendered categorisation—functioning in a similar way as performance rites.

There are great similarities in creation stories in South Africa from the northern Cape |xam (Bleek 1924) to the Maloti San in Lesotho as told by Qing (Orpen 1874). In these stories, eland are the favourite animal of the San trickster-deity, |kaggen (also referred to as the Mantis or Cagn) (Lewis-Williams & Bieseke 1978: 120, 121; Solomon 1995: 106, 109). The |xam believed that |kaggen sits between the horns of an eland and that he made the first eland; the eland is described as a ‘thing of |kaggen’ and therefore has magic power (Bleek 1924: 10). Similarly, the connection between |kaggen and eland is apparent among the Maloti San. Orpen (1874: 3) asked the question: “Where is Cagn?” Qing responded: “We don’t know, but the elands do. Have you not hunted and heard his cry, when the elands suddenly start and run to his call? Where he is, elands are in droves like cattle.”

The story of the creation of the eland (Appendix 2) was told by three |xam narrators: ||kabbo, Dǎ!kwǎin and |haŋʒkass’o. The different versions of the creation stories as recorded by Bleek (1924) refer to the creation of eland by |kaggen from a shoe. The transformation of a shoe, made of skin of presumably an antelope, into an antelope, reminds one of the powers associated with menarcheal females where things return to their original state. The eland is then hidden by |kaggen in the reeds where he raises it and feeds it honey. Similarly eland hide their young in the bush for a while until they are strong enough. |kaggen comes across as a mothering figure, however by feeding the eland honey, a serious transgression may be implied.

Honey is more than just a valuable food source to the San. Bees are associated with potency as Marshall (1999: 76) writes “[b]ees and honey both have *n/um*”. According to Lewis-Williams and Dowson (1989: 64) San dance when the bees are swarming because “they believe they can harness their potency for a particularly effective dance”. Lewis-Williams (2010: 9) believes this view is supported by images of shamans dancing with some bleeding from the nose in association with bees and a hive (see Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989: fig. 28). He concludes that “the close association between bees, honey, potency and trance dancing is indisputable” (Lewis-Williams 2010: 9). However, I think what needs to be

investigated is what type of potency is associated with bees and do shamans want to harness it or maybe rather control this potency? An interesting parallel can be drawn between fat, strongly associated with young females' beauty and health, and honey. Both are food substances that are greatly desired by the San. In San ethnography honey is viewed similarly to how fat is perceived. ||kabbo, a !xam San man, stated: "They will eat the honey's liquid fat " (Bleek & Lloyd MS:L.2.14.1365, in Lewis-Williams & Challis 2011: 165). Honey, like fat can be 'drunk' or 'eaten', and "are symbolic of the great mediation between men and women—sexual intercourse" (Bieseke 1993: 86). Therefore to "drink fat/honey" or "eat fat/honey" are euphemisms for sexual intercourse (Bieseke 1993: 86)—an action that requires the acquisition of a female by a male. Similarly to kill and eat an animal is equated to the 'hunting' of women by men. Interestingly, the procurement of honey was classified as hunting and therefore part of the male domain (McGranaghan 2012: 9).

Lewis-Williams (2010: 9) supports Bieseke in that 'to eat fat' and 'to eat honey' can be interpreted as having sexual intercourse and point to the shared male and female actions in the trance dance. He consequently argues that the San painted honeycombs because to procure honey was like hunting eland in terms of acquiring potency. However, the type of potency falls by the wayside. It is apparent that the potency longing to be acquired is sexual potency which in many cases needs to be controlled or avoided as it is ultimately a procreative potency held by females and desired, avoided or controlled ultimately by men. Procreative power can therefore be aligned with honey. In the creation story, when !kaggen fed the eland he created honey, he came across as a nurturing figure. However, honey has been equated with sex and by feeding the eland honey, a serious sexual transgression may be implied. The procreative power of honey is further revealed in a story told by D!a!kwain of how various animals, including the eland, received their colours through different types of honey being applied to them (Digital Bleek & Lloyd 2014: L.V.3: 4071–4074, in Hollmann 2015a: 365). In addition the Ju!'hoansi refer to the wife of ǀgao N!a, the main god of the San, as the 'Mother of the Bees' (Marshall 1999: 31). It appears beehives and honey's potency lies within its procreative power and take on a feminine character. Interestingly, a young healer who has received his *n/um*, has to avoid honey (Marshall 1999: 55). This avoidance is parallel to hunters avoiding menstruating girls who hold a powerful creative potency during this period as honey is also equated with sexual potency. Young healers are

therefore expected to avoid sexual intercourse and thus females. Honey can also impact negatively on a hunter's poison and consequently a hunter must refrain from eating honey (Marshall 1999: 158). A parallel can be drawn between hunters, honey, fat and menstruating females in terms of sexual avoidance.

Hollmann (2015a: 367) highlights the following |xam story:

And the people take honey to the women at home...that the women may go to eat, for they feel that the women have been hungry at home; while they [the men] wish that the women may make a drum for them, so that they may dance, when the women are satisfied with food. For they do not frolic when they are hungry (Bleek & Lloyd 1911: 355).

This story places honey firmly in the sexual domain—the men are feeding the women honey, an act of engaging with powerful procreative potency celebrated by dance. The reference to “[f]or they do not frolic when they are hungry” could indicate avoidance of moral transgressions of sexual relations if the women are ‘owned’ by the men. As a result the ownership of a beehive by a San man as pointed out by Lewis-Williams (2010: 8) and the possibility of being killed if anyone would steal it, could indicate the ownership of sexual potency of a San female. Vinnicombe (1976: 177) references the work of Lévi-Strauss where he equates honey with menstrual blood and semen in his work on South American Indians, and points to Freudian symbolism where shoes are linked to the female vagina. If applied to the San creation stories, then the feeding of honey to the shoe would imply the shoe of |kaggen's son-in-law would symbolise |kaggen's daughter and therefore |kaggen was committing incest with his daughter. Parkington (2003: 138) also identifies the honey that |kaggen takes to the eland as an act of adultery as ‘eating honey’ is a known metaphor for sex with the San. The feminine milieu of this story is further underscored by the creation of the moon which has strong associations with feminine aspects.

The transgression of ‘feeding the eland honey’ is followed by the killing of the eland. An interesting question is why would |kaggen, according to |hanʒkass'o ‘not love us, if we kill an Eland’ (Bleek 1924: 12)? According to Lewis-Williams and Bieseke (1978: 121) a feature of the story not made known in the published accounts is that the eland |kaggen was creating was a ‘male creature which is not small’ (L.II.4.492, quoted in Lewis-Williams & Bieseke 1978: 121). They feel it highlights the importance of the fat of an eland bull. Understandably, eland being one of his favourite animals, he would be upset, but for the San it was a sought

after prey due to its fat. I believe the reference to |kaggen being upset relates to the metaphorical killing of eland and the social transgressions implied as revealed in Qing's creation story. |kaggen's wife used his knife that formed part of his male equipment, and as a result she transgressed a taboo as females, especially menstrual females, are not allowed to touch men's equipment (Marshall 1999: 146–147). The danger of the transgression of this taboo is demonstrated in the resulting act of procreation. Although |kaggen was at the time making all animals, it was Coti, his wife, that conceived the eland calf, possibly indicating the power of females being able to create eland. Of interest in this story is that |kaggen himself then tried to kill the eland, unsuccessfully. If the hunting-prey-wife metaphor (see Parkington 2003: 138) is sound, this would indicate that he was unable to secure the eland for himself. One of his young sons, Gcwi, possibly uninitiated and without knowledge, managed to kill the eland—most probably his first large meat animal. He thus overstepped the social boundaries as he was possibly not yet in a position to 'hunt for a wife'. This is an indication of the role played by categorical status ascribed by age. The blood |kaggen saw on the ground of the killed eland could imply a life lost as menstruation blood would indicate the potentiality of life not actualising. The role of gender is emphasised in |kaggen and his son's attempt to re-create eland in order to "undo the mischief". They failed and |kaggen's wife had to procreate using the blood and the fat of the first eland. Her conception of the eland with the blood, associated with menstruation and procreation from the paunch (stomach/uterus?), and the fat associated with females were used together with 'sprinkles' from |kaggen resonates with the conception of humans. The fact that bull elands were created first, before the cows, emphasises the importance of the masculine affirmation. That Gcwi thereafter struggled to have a successful hunt indicates that if taboos were transgressed, it would impact negatively on hunting. As a result, when killing eland, hunters had to take certain precautions as it was viewed as a wrongdoing that could upset |kaggen and release his anger (Lewis-Williams & Challis 2011: 168, 169). Eland in this story are not only symbols of gender and uninitiated boundary transgressions, but also the procreative power present in the fat and blood of females.

There are more to these stories than certain aspects that have been elevated to a level of importance such as the known role-players |kaggen and eland, and the importance of their relationship, and for example what the word 'spoiling' means. Qing, referring to paintings of

therianthropes with rhebuck heads, said: “They were men who had died and now lived in rivers, and were *spoilt at the same time as the elands* and by the dances of which you have seen paintings” (Orpen 1874:2; original emphasis). This statement has received some attention. Solomon (1997: 4, 5) believes that Qing's reference to the spoiling of the eland refers to the San mythological past, to a time when humans and animals were separated based on Qing's statement that “[t]hat day game was given to men to eat, and this is the way they were spoilt and became wild”. Solomon points out that eland were the subject of the ‘spoiling’ and not the people. Dǎ!kwāin also commented on the Orpen copies of the paintings and aligned the therianthropes in the paintings to the mythological past. Lewis-Williams (1980: 477) argues that Qing rather referred to the use of the eland's power by medicine men in trance. According to Lewis-Williams' (2002:62) personal communication with Biesele, the Ju'hoansi word *kxwia* can mean “spoil”, but also “to enter deep trance”. He supports his argument with Orpen's notation that “[t]he men with rhebok's heads ... are people spoilt by the [*moqoma*] dance, because their noses bleed” (Orpen 1874: 10).

Qing's story can however be viewed differently (Appendix 3); the ‘spoiling’ took place when |kaggen's son Gcwi killed the eland. The eland was the child of Coti, |kaggen's wife and therefore Gcwi killed his own sibling. This act disturbed the social cosmos of Qing's world. As did Coti's use of |kaggen's hunting equipment to sharpen her gathering tool. Coti's cross-gender tool-use ‘spoilt’ |kaggen's knife. Qing also commented elsewhere that |kaggen was originally “very very good and nice, but he got *spoilt* through fighting so many things” (Orpen 1874:2, own emphasis). In this case spoilt infers a movement across boundaries of categories that ordered Qing's world, and therefore a change in state took place. Spoilt can as a result be interpreted as ‘transformation’ (see Swart & Escott 2003: 83, 84 for a discussion).

In another story, the Ju'hoansi told Marshall (1999: 15) about ǀgao N!a, the Great God, raping Te, his son Kxoma's young wife (initially taking on the form of a baby wildebeest). Marshall interestingly describes this act as ǀgao N!a “spoiling” Te. |kaggen's eland was not ‘fit for use’ yet, possibly metaphorically meaning not sexually ready. |kaggen told Gcwi: “Now begin to try to undo the mischief you have done, for you have spoilt the elands when I was making them fit for use”; “You see how you have spoilt the elands,”; “Go and hunt them and try to kill one, that is now your work, for it was you who spoilt them”. Marshall's

“spoiling” could be applied here to Gcwi who took sexual advantage of a young girl, unbeknownst to him as he was uninitiated. In the story of the beautiful python girl (see Chapter Five) the jackal seems to have performed a similar transgression: “‘Oh, what has that trash Jackal done to my beautiful daughter, since she no longer sparkles as before?’ He got all his medicines and washed her and cleansed her ... After the cleansing, Father Elephant called everyone together and became very serious. ‘This Jackal affair has spoiled my heart’” (Bieseke 1993: 124-138). Though ‘to spoil’ can mean ‘to enter deep trance’, it also appears to have a general reference to social change and/or transformation. Qing’s creation story indicates that knowledge and social norms (rules of social behaviour) are introduced through transformation (spoiling). The ‘spoiling’ took place when |kaggen’s son became game at the time of the second creation (Solomon 1997). This event is grounded in a breakdown of gender categories with Coti’s use of male equipment (Swart & Escott 2003: 84). Similarly the other stories also point to a movement across social boundaries rooted in gender categorisations.

The stories told by different San groups could have been tools used to instruct—in a similar way as the rituals—on social behaviour and boundaries in the gender roles of production and reproduction. Parkington (2003: 139; 2008: 87) has argued that the stories of the creation of the eland relate to questions of “whom to marry” and “what to eat.” This perspective on myth has a Malinowskian approach in which myths are viewed as moral charters: “Myth fulfils in primitive culture an indispensable function: it expresses, enhances, and codifies belief; it safeguards and enforces morality; it vouches for the efficiency of ritual and contains practical rules for the guidance of man” (Malinowski 1954: 177). It touches on suggestion that the story is there to indicate rules of behaviour and the consequences should the rules not be adhered to. Parkington (1996: 282) surmises that the role played by eland in these stories has to do with beliefs regarding the link between hunting and sex. He therefore interprets the |xam eland creation story (Bleek 1924: 1-9) as “the creation of the social category of the hunter rather than of people and animals in general” (Parkington & Manhire 1997: 303). However, Bieseke (1993: 41) notes that “[m]en’s hunting is often symbolically opposed not to the complementary female activity of gathering but rather to women’s reproductive capacity ... necessary to the ongoing life of society” (Bieseke 1993:41). The stories about the creation of the eland (as well as the moon, which as a part

of the story seems to have fallen by the wayside) illustrate the social construction of the rules of behaviour based on gender and age that accompanies the male-female dichotomy of production and reproduction. I would therefore argue that these stories of the eland as symbol of femaleness linked through fat, blood and honey serve as repetitions of gendered norms and establish social and biological boundaries.

4.4.4. Rain and eland

Female initiates are believed to be in possession of very strong *n/um* and the magic power of the rain. David Lewis-Williams and David Pearce (2004: 154) deem it to be the same magic power that is imbued by the eland as the animal with the most potency, highlighting a strong relationship between fat and rain, as rain brings on well-being/fatness of the land. Both 'rain' and 'eland' are life-giving forces: rain is associated with water, plant growth, food, plenty and fertility; and eland are associated with fat, meat, plenty and well-being. The eland-rain link is affirmed in the myth told to |haŋ#kass'o by his grandmother:

A man – I do not know his name, but he was one of the “Early Race” – once hunted the rain, as the rain was grazing there. The Rain was like an eland. He hunted, approaching the rain, and he came and lay down (Lewis-Williams 2000: 222-223).

The large antelope are the meat givers and therefore the givers of life (Marshall 1999: 169). Both eland and rain therefore similarly represent fertility and abundance. The rain and the eland for that reason share a symbolic link of life-giving attributes. Lewis-Williams and Pearce (2004:155) argue that rain, and all of its associations, is part of the eland symbol's many meanings. They go as far as to say that “The eland is rain, its flesh being water ... the eland is !khwa”.

The rain being !khwa (see also Chapter Eight) is the embodiment of rain to the |xam, and when angered—for example when menstrual taboos are transgressed—he is linked to dangerous weather conditions (Barnard 1992: 84; Schapera 1951: 194; Solomon 1997: 5). !khwa, often attracted and associated with female initiates, appears as a rain bull or rain animal, and also as an eland (Bleek 1933a; Bleek & Lloyd 1911; Hewitt 1986; Solomon 1989, 1992).

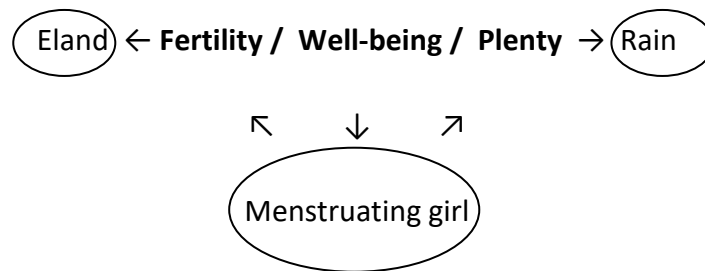


Figure 4.13. Diagram of procreative powers shared by a menarcheal girl and the rain.

This diagram (Fig. 4.13) illustrates the procreative/life-giving powers shared by a menarcheal girl and the rain; both encapsulating the power of life and the power of death. The eland, to be equated with rain, is one of the symbols therefore that represent the latent power of females. This power is realised within the social organisation of San societies and experienced in life-cycle rituals by menarcheal girls.

The eland emerges predominantly as a symbol of femininity in San ethnography and stories. Although it materialised that eland are not the only large antelope of importance in San cosmology, they feature in some female puberty and first kill rites. It is the metaphoric representation of the animal and its performative value that is of importance. As a symbol of life-giving power, the eland represent and instruct on social and categorical changes in San cosmology. The eland's alignment with procreative powers of females is further explored and applied in the rock art of Zimri Shelter.

4.5. THE ELAND AT ZIMRI SHELTER



Figure 4.14. Herd of eland, Zimri Shelter (tracing courtesy of Stephen Townley Bassett).

The group of vivid, shaded eland painted at Zimri Shelter (Fig. 4.14) is not only distinctive to the Cederberg region, but it highlights additional interpretations and associations of eland.

This technique of painting is uncommon in Cederberg rock art and only four other sites have been identified (all within a nine kilometers radius) in Nicholas Wiltshire's (2011:209) spatial analysis of archaeological sites in the Western Cape that might have shaded polychrome eland. The Maloti-Drakensberg mountains on the other hand are known for their well-preserved, shaded polychrome and detailed eland (see Mazel 2009) (Fig. 4.15). Mazel (2009) proposes that the shaded polychrome tradition emerged around 2000 years ago in the Maloti-Drakensberg mountains as a ritual response by the San hunter-gatherers to the arrival of the agriculturalists. In my detailed study of superimpositioning at a northern and a southern Drakensberg site, I found that the introduction of shaded images corresponds with the introduction of other animals in the rock art (see Swart 2004). This occurrence could align with Mazel's (2009) suggestion that transformation during this time period led to an increase in exchange and networking systems, which in turn led to social change among the San hunter-gatherers.

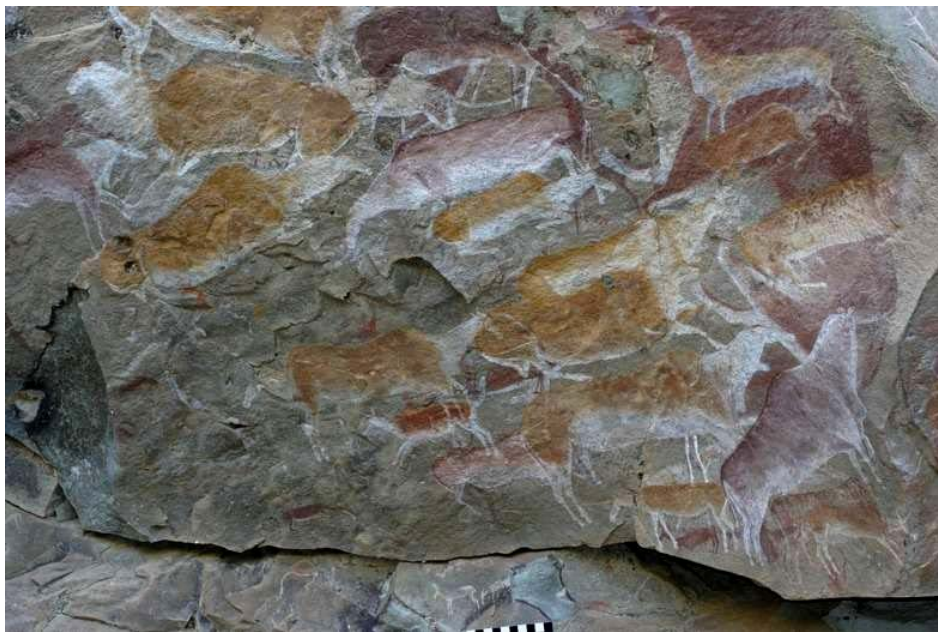


Figure 4.15. Eland Cave, Maloti-Drakensberg (courtesy of KwaZulu-Natal Museum).

Zimri Shelter's shaded polychrome eland is approximately 750 km from other known paintings in the same technique. Aron Mazel (2009: 111) raises the question whether Zimri Shelter's eland should be interpreted as an independent development or can a link be established between the Cederberg mountains and the eastern part of South Africa. Mazel (2009:11) also asks the question whether shaded polychrome paintings of eland are evenly

distributed throughout the KwaZulu-Natal Drakensberg as well as the Maloti-Drakensberg mountains, or whether they occur in places that are special and filled with potency. In the south-western Cape shaded polychrome paintings are definitely not evenly spread, but rather a rare occurrence. Zimri Shelter could possibly have been a place of importance or special power, or the eland were the result of an independent stylistic development of the artist. As an alternative explanation, in Chapter Six and Seven, I explore the possibility of ritual (and stylistic) exchange beyond known boundaries. However, to further understand this rare occurrence, detailed chronological frameworks need to be developed for rock art sites in the Cederberg region.

The eland at Zimri Shelter are painted as a definite group that could be representative of a herd. Zimri's herd, predominantly eland cows, could be aligned with San social structure as suggested by Vinnicombe (1976: 163). Herds of eland have seasonal structures, with scattered groups of bulls, independent from the cows and yearlings during the winter months, gathering into larger groups during rain periods. Vinnicombe (1976: 163) argued that these seasonal eland movements aligned with San social structure. She suggested that in the summer months, San groups aggregated and then dispersed into smaller bands during the winter months, much as the eland do. It is during the rain period that eland mating takes place which results in births at the end of the dry season, nine months later (similar gestation period to that of humans). The females only bear one calf and hide the calf in the vegetation for the first two weeks after birth (Stuart & Stuart 2000: 184). Another feminine alignment is the eland feeding habits. Eland, although known to eat foliage, also eat fruits and seeds. Their survival sometimes depends on their ability to dig up roots and bulbs from the ground (Stuart & Stuart 2000: 184). Their eating habits therefore resonate with San female economic responsibility of gathering plant foods that involve digging up roots and bulbs.

Besides the seasonal structures, herds also mostly form when female eland are in oestrus (Hillman 1979 in Pappas 2002). The painting of a possibly mostly female herd of eland at Zimri Shelter resonates with this occurrence. In addition, one of the eland is painted with its tail up and appears to be expelling fluid (Fig. 4.16) similar to menstruating—a feminine state filled with gender symbolism. Eland, however, do not have a menstrual cycle, only humans and primates do. Eland have oestrus cycles and the endometrium is not expelled (Solomon

et al. 2011). Female eland do however urinate to alert male eland to their state of oestrus (Pappas 2002). Female eland flick their tails “violently from side to side as the male approaches her, and then, when the male mounts, she raises her tail...” (Lewis-Williams 1983a: 62).



Figure 4.16. Tracing of an eland with a raised tail expelling fluid, Zimri Shelter (courtesy of Stephen Townley Bassett).

Dowson (1988: 118) has argued that when an eland has been darted or shot by an arrow its tail would lift due to affecting the muscles of the back leg and portrays “a more generally accepted death posture—its head is lowered”. He also adds defecation as a characteristic of a dying antelope. The Zimri Shelter eland however have no indication of being shot or in the process of dying. They rather appear to be moving/walking to the right.

The Girls Puberty dance and Eland Songs performed at some female initiation rites (Marshall 1999) have elevated eland to a place of importance and are essentially feminine focused. The feminine focus is emphasised by the exposure of their buttocks, which has a powerful sexual association. When eland cows are in oestrus, their tails are held to one side (Hollmann 2011: 310). The initiands mimic this behaviour of the eland cow’s communication through visual display by swinging the ostrich eggshell beads that hang between their buttocks—their tails—from side to side. In some instances they may lift their front aprons, exposing their genitals (Shostak 1981: 355) which is a clear confirmation of their femininity. Some foreshortened paintings of eland with an exposed rear view echoes this act and the

readiness to procreate. The importance of the tail of an eland is extended during the First Kill Rite when the tail of the eland is used to beat the dead antelope to ensure that the antelope is fat (Bleek 1932: 238; Lewis-Williams 1987: 171). I therefore suggest that eland tails are associated with fat, females and access to females and procreativity.

Images from sites within the region of Zimri Shelter, such as the female therianthrope eland paintings mentioned in the introduction as well as Figure 4.17. (Sevilla, Cederberg), can now be comprehended within context. The two therianthropes painted in the 'tails-up' posture and exposed buttocks reveal the meaning of the images. These therianthropes are representative of liminal states mirroring the physical and social transformative states of menarcheal girls and resonates with Hollmann's (2011) transformed females (see also Eastwood 2006). Liminal and ambiguous alignment between eland and initiates are apparent as well as their link to feminine potency.



Figure 4.17. Therianthropes with 'tails-up', Sevilla, Cederberg (colour contrast modified).

The depiction of the eland expelling fluid from beneath its raised tail depicted at Zimri Shelter (Fig. 4.16) could be a female eland urinating indicating her state of sexual readiness. Similarly the urinating eland could be a metaphoric representation of menarcheal females, which also indicates sexual readiness, that can now join the 'herd' where she symbolically becomes an eland and consequently she becomes 'meat' (Bieseke 1993). The 'Eland Dance' is metaphorically danced by older women to "welcome her to the herd" (Parkington 2003: 144). To be part of the 'herd' is a categorical transformation that marks her fertility and readiness to procreate and consequently fills her with a special feminine potency. Menstruation is the procreative potential of females and therefore strongly associated with a state of power. Initiands find themselves between categorical states of being between a girl and a woman. This liminal status fills the menarcheal girls with sacred power that can be

equated with the power of a shaman (Jolly 2002: 97). It also places them in a dangerous state as they are beyond the normal rules of behaviour, imbued with power that leads to certain avoidance behaviours especially among receptive young hunters when killing something associated with females like an eland. Similarly eland are displayed as ambiguous figures due to the bull eland having more fat than the cow eland. Feminine attributes have been ascribed to the male eland. In addition, the stories support this ambiguity with the male eland giving birth. Zimri Shelter's eland could be representative of gender and age representations of transformed females (Hollmann 2011; see also Eastwood 2006).

Painted immediately to the left of the eland expelling fluid is a translucent image of what appears to be a juvenile antelope (Fig. 4.18). This image serves as a reminder of the *n!ow* potency released during birth with the release of amniotic fluid (Solomon 1992). The eland could further symbolise the reproductive power of females and their link to weather, life and death through a depiction of the release of fluid.



Figure 4.18. Translucent image of a juvenile antelope, Zimri Shelter (altered by DStretch).

Confirming the feminine orientation of the Zimri Shelter eland are the contextual associations of the images. To the top right of the herd is a painting of an elephant which has feminine associations (discussed in Chapter Five) (Fig. 4.19) as well as the splay-legged figure to the left of the 'urinating' eland (discussed in Chapter Eight) (Fig. 8.22) (see panel 23-24 in Appendix 1 for image relationships).

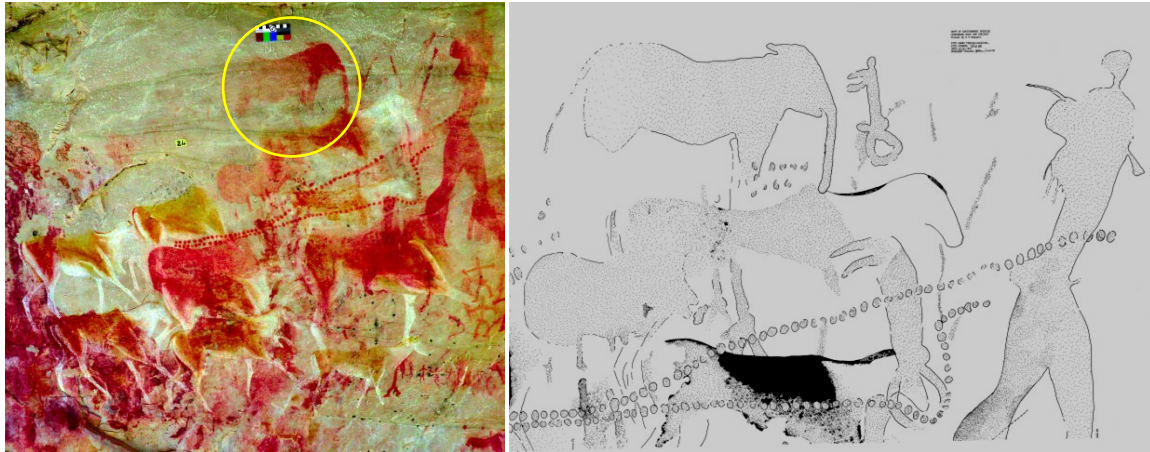


Figure 4.19. Elephant painted in association with the eland herd (altered by DStretch; tracing courtesy of Stephen Townley Bassett).

Although the herd of eland was painted by artists to make a powerful feminine statement, the presence of other eland images at Zimri Shelter affirms the symbolic associations with eland in San cosmology. Importantly though, the images at Zimri Shelter are of eland, most probably female, painted within the artist's cosmological orientation of the performance value of San ritual.

4. 6. CONCLUSION: EPICENTRE OR ELEMENT

I would caution against theories based on limited ethnographic instances that fit the mould. The focus on the Eland "Bull" Dance grew into the base for interpretation related to shamanic activities and other theories, whilst it was never a pan-San fixture and where it did take place, the 'bulls' or shamans were not a necessity. Initially the eland was possibly portrayed from a masculinist viewpoint. This view overshadowed the possible true purpose of a ritual that celebrated and instructed on femininity, of which only some included dances. Through a broader ethnographic analysis of eland, concepts that became apparent had a feminine inclination such as menarcheal rites, fat, fertility, procreation, life, rain, blood and female power (*n/um* and *n/ow*) which linked to images of naked females, 'urinating' eland and 'tails-up' postures. The third wave's focus on difference also opened up aspects such as sexual ambivalence as displayed through the eland. Identities and differences are constructed and represented through the materiality of the body and installed through ritual performances and repetitions of regulatory norms relating to gender. These

regulatory norms are strengthened through stories and rules of behaviour as portrayed in ethnographic sources. Restrictions and behavioural taboos are based on the natural creative power of females and their liminality and expressed through gender symbolism. Transitional female bodies are fluid and uncontrollable and cause normal social and biological categories to be blurred. In some cases, such as the eland and certain structurally similar ceremonies for example, a unified gender—or third gender—category can be represented (Power & Watts 1997: 549). However, ritual performativity through rites, taboos, and stories manages this hazardous ambiguous state filled with power and danger by constructing boundaries.

A regional approach diffuses the eland emphasis and it becomes one of many elements of religious importance. However, it is not the eland, the gemsbok or any other animal that provides cohesion in San societies; the epicentre of San culture is rather the rites and the performance thereof. Lewis-Williams (1990: 83) admits to the presence of gender ideology, however, he proposes that he can't envisage the San "consciously" depicting art that communicates ideas about gender relations. In this chapter I have shown that the eland is an element in San culture that embodies the process of social gendered constructions of identity. Identity markers that embody femininity at Zimri Shelter are eland with small dewlaps, executed as part of a herd, with an emanating eland and painted in association with a juvenile antelope, and raised tails. In rock art, the eland as a symbol has performative value; it represents and instructs on social and categorical changes. The eland especially comes to the fore in life-cycle rituals such as the girls' menarcheal initiation rite where the body experiences physical transformation through menstruation which is associated with social transformation. The female transformation impacts on the boys' first kill. As such it becomes part of the lived experience.

CHAPTER FIVE:

ELEPHANTS AND FEMININITY



Figure 5.1. An elephant.

5.1. ELEPHANTS AS GENDER SYMBOLS

Images of elephants (Fig. 5.1) in the rock art of the Cederberg —as with the eland images discussed in the previous chapter— are widely understood within the shamanistic model. Elephant images, however, are also useful symbols discussing the role of gender in San society. In this chapter, I begin by critically assessing existing interpretations of elephants in San rock art. I then consider the social structure of elephant herds and discuss the evidence that San communities understood the social structure of elephant herds by analysing stories of elephants. From here, I develop a gendered perspective of elephant images generally before putting forward specific interpretations for elephants at Zimri Shelter and nearby sites, and how they relate to aspects of femininity.

Zimri Shelter has four depictions of elephant: a large red elephant, two small red elephants painted together, a small yellow elephant and a red elephant painted under a slab of rock (Fig. 5.4). Within the immediate vicinity of Zimri Shelter there are many elephant

paintings—not only individual depictions but also paintings of elephants in various scenes, sizes, colours and painted in lines. Elephants were historically abundant in the Piketberg/Clanwilliam region (Skead 2011: 88) around Zimri Shelter. On Jan Dankaert's exploration journey in 1660 he noted, in the area today known as the Olifant's River in the Citrusdal region, 200-300 elephants on the slopes of the mountain (Thom 1952 III: 315 in Parkington 1977a: 150). Subsequently, many travellers recorded the presence of elephants in this area during the 1600s (see Leibbrandt 1902: 298; Rookmaker 1989: 14; Theal 1882: 240, in Skead 2011: 88). Elephants then are not an 'exotic' in the rock art, as maybe the case with some images at Zimri Shelter, as we shall see in the next chapter.

5.2. ROCK PAINTINGS OF ELEPHANTS

San paintings and engravings of elephants occur in distinct regions of southern Africa. Engravings of elephants are, for example, numerous in the Karoo regions (see Morris 1988; Parkington *et al.* 2008). The Klein Karoo also has paintings of elephants (Rust & Van der Poll 2011). However, elephant paintings are much more prolific in the Cederberg region than in the Maloti-Drakensberg mountains, despite the presence of herds of elephants in the nearby sub-tropical forests of KwaZulu-Natal in historical times (see Hollmann 1993: 19-20; Maggs 1967a: 102; Maggs & Sealy 1983: 44 table 1; Vinnicombe 1976: 6; Yates *et al.* 1985: 73, 79). The Cederberg therefore lends itself to a regional investigation of elephant symbolism due to the widespread occurrence of elephant paintings (Wiltshire 2011: 86).

5.2.1. Elephant depictions in the Cederberg

Elephants appear to have been an important feature in the rock art of the Cederberg as a subject, even when 'styles' changed (see McDonald 1999) from fine-line to coarse fine-line and then to finger-painted images (Mguni 2013: 206). Elephants in the Cederberg region are painted as single images, as part of groups, or painted in lines. They are painted in colours that include red, yellow and white (Fig. 5.2 & Fig. 5.3).



Figure 5.2. Herd of red elephants, Stadsaal, Cederberg.



Figure 5.3. Large yellow elephant, Zooridge, Cederberg.

The Maloti-Drakensberg mountains have an example of a small elephant painted in black on a fallen rock at Main Caves (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1992: 51). Interestingly, according to the Jul'hoansi's colour classification, elephants are extraordinary as their meat is believed to be red, black and white. Conceptually, they see elephant meat as comprising human, gemsbok, carnivore, and eland meat as well as a lot of fat (Bieseke 1993: 149). Elephants and eland are the only two animal subjects in the Cederberg that are painted in large sizes. The images are often painted with coarse paint in white and yellow pigments that are visible on the rock surface. Elephants are mostly painted in naturalistic form, not only in dimension and shape, but also in terms of herd structure, seemingly illustrating adults with their young or in family groups. There are also paintings that appear to illustrate elephants being hunted. Some elephants are painted in association with handprints, with groups of females in a line, and with denticulated or wavy lines.

5.2.2. Elephant depictions at Zimri Shelter

Zimri Shelter has four elephant paintings that include (Fig. 5.4):

- a) a large faded red elephant, high up on the shelter wall, above the herd of large polychrome eland,
- b) two small red elephants with a raised tail painted close to the bottom-left of the eland (see panel 23-24 in Appendix 1) with a rear-end emanation (discussed in the previous chapter) and to the bottom-right of a splayed-legged human,
- c) a small yellow elephant,

- d) an elephant painted in red to the right of the shelter located under a fallen slab in an apparently isolated position (see Fig. 5.19).

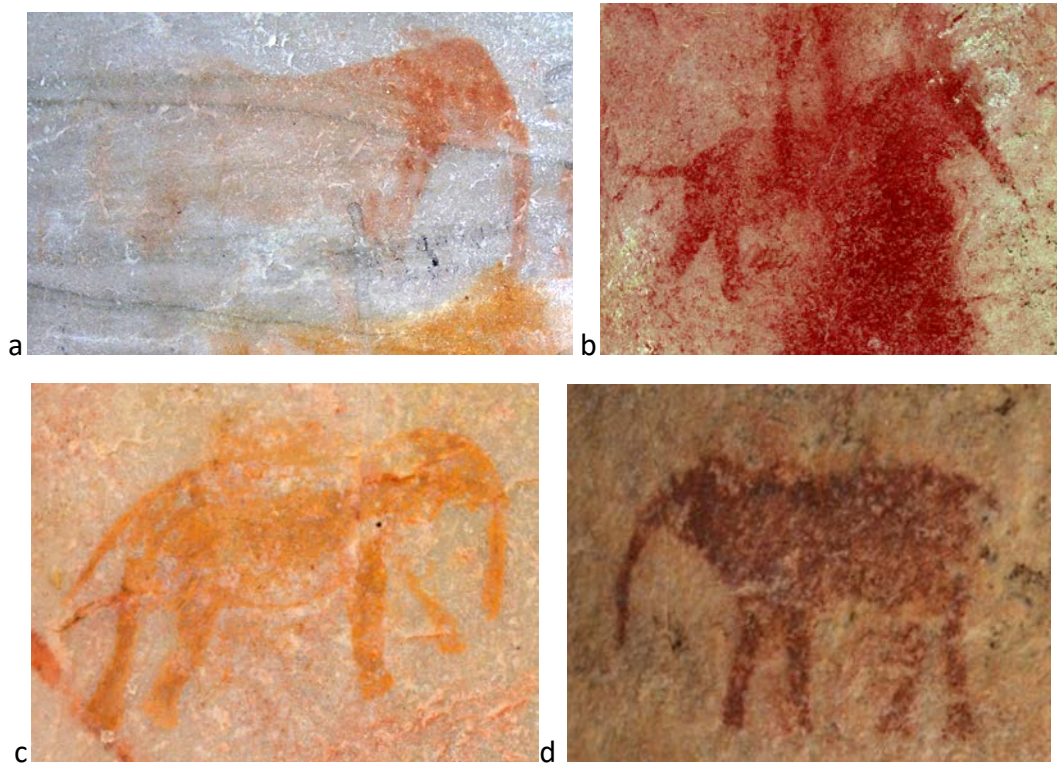


Figure 5.4. (a, b, c & d) Elephants depicted at Zimri Shelter.

5.3. ELEPHANTS (Loxodonto Africana)



Figure 5.5. The African elephant.

The African elephant (Fig. 5.5) is the largest extant land mammal. Besides being impressive in size, it is intelligent, adaptable and has a complex social structure (Wittemeyer *et al.* 2005). Elephants have a matriarchal and matrilineal social organisation that consists of a family unit of related females, and their infants (Ross 1992: 53). Elderly female elephants lead units of about ten individuals, but in some cases two or more family units combine to form a matrilineal kinship group or clan of up to 70 elephants. Females interact with other clans and bonding between two families may occur. Dry seasons cause elephant families to group together for protection. Groups can also split up for foraging purposes, after which they reunite again. Elephant groups are thus dynamic as the size and composition of the group can change and therefore elephants are known to have a fission-fusion societal structure based on environmental and social conditions (Wittemeyer *et al.* 2005; Wittemeyer & Getz 2007; Couzin 2006).

A large female elephant is the authoritative figure and is called the matriarch—a position she holds until she dies. On death, the matriarch's position is filled by her eldest daughter. When male elephants reach puberty between 8-20 years, they leave the kinship groups and form small male groups. Reproduction is the cardinal factor for adult male and female elephants to come together. Male elephants will become part of the kinship group when the females are in oestrus. Similar to menopause and post-menopausal females in humans, female elephants have an extended post-reproductive period (Ross 1992: 57).

Calves are dependent on their mothers for up to three years and form a central part of the structure of the family group (Fig. 5.6). In most instances, a breeding female elephant is associated with her juvenile offspring for most of the time (Wittemeyer *et al.* 2005: 1359). Elephants often form a protective formation around young calves. Elephants will touch their calves as a form of communication, either with their trunks, or with their feet when they are alongside each other or by using their tails if the calf is behind them when they are on the move. Elephants have remarkable communication abilities. They can communicate over long distances using infrasound (low frequency sound) and seismic (vibrational) communication (Shwartz 2005).



Figure 5.6. An elephant family group.

Elephants can travel from 10 to 20km a day, but there are recordings of 90-180km covered by elephants on seasonal migrations or in search of water (Sukumar 2003). They are viewed as a super-keystone species in the ecosystem and are water-providers to other species as they dig holes for water in dry riverbeds (Haynes 1999; see Shoshani 1992 for more behavioural aspects of elephants).

In the sections to follow it becomes evident that the San acknowledged the elephant as a key-stone animal. Not only do elephants display human-like characteristics such as a high level of intelligence, communication, care for their young, and have empathy for the dying; they have a complex social structure which includes fission-fusion adaptability akin to that of the San society. The behavioural traits of elephants that stand out, however, are the roles performed by females in elephant societal structures that are based on matriarchy.

5.4. ELEPHANTS IN ROCK ART RESEARCH

In rock art research, elephants have been interpreted as representing rain animals in the rock art (Deacon 1988; Lewis-Williams 1983a; Maggs & Sealy 1983; Pager 1975; Solomon 1989, 1992; Woodhouse 1985, 1992), linked to hallucinatory imagery, thus trance (Deacon 1998), and found to be painted in association with 'mythic women' and with possible feminine connotations (Solomon 1992, 1994, 1995). Maggs and Sealy's (1983) seminal paper "Elephants in boxes" considered elephant therianthropes and elephants enclosed by various abstract lines in the south-western Cape. Maggs and Sealy look at the role played by the eland and its trance association; they extrapolate this work and apply it to elephant

paintings of the Western Cape. They conclude that elephants played a similar role in south-western Cape rock art to that played by eland in other parts of southern Africa. In other words, images of elephants were powerful symbols of supernatural potency. Images painted in a line with elephant heads and wearing karosses at the site of Groothexrivier in the Cederberg (Fig. 5.7), for example, are described as “therianthropic elephant men”.



Figure 5.7. Elephant therianthropes, Groothexrivier, Cederberg (from Parkington 2008 fig. 70a).

The ‘elephants in boxes’, are a group of elephants depicted at the rock art site known as Monte Cristo (Fig. 5.8) in the Cederberg region with lines extending from some of them and circling other elephants. Some of the lines are zigzag and others are denticulate.



Figure 5.8. Enclosed elephants, Monte Cristo, Cederberg region (from Maggs & Sealy 1983 fig.3).

At another site, Floreat, paintings of elephants are surrounded by lines described as 'boat-shapes' as well as zigzag lines (Fig. 5.9) and paintings at Klipfonteinrand have elephants enclosed by parallel lines, and also with zigzag lines. Both these sites are in the south-western Cape.



Figure 5.9. Reproduction of elephants in 'boat shapes', Floreat, south-western Cape (courtesy of Stephen Townley Basset 2001 plate 10).

Maggs and Sealy (1983: 46) align the elephant paintings, especially the Floreat paintings, with more abstract 'boat-like' shaped geometric paintings in the south-western Cape at Salmanskraal, Sevilla, and Brakfontein. The Salmanskraal images (Fig. 5.10) are painted in association with a line of large, yellow elephants which fades to the right.



Figure 5.10. Salmanskraal 'boat-like' images, Cederberg.

Maggs and Sealy's argument is based on the relation between these abstract shapes and elephants as they could not find any other paintings associated with the abstract depictions at other sites. They interpret the meaning of the shapes with reference to the trance framework and certain patterns people observe in trance:

The combination of elephants with zigzag lines and other shapes suggests a stage of San trance performance in which the elephant, a culturally controlled and highly emotive symbol of trance power, was superimposed upon physiologically controlled hallucinatory forms (Maggs & Sealy 1983: 48).

They argue that the link between elephants and trance is underscored by the elephant therianthropes at Groothexrivier, referred to as "elephant men", and that there was a "special link between man and elephant" for the artists (Maggs & Sealy 1983: 47). The therianthropes and abstract shapes are thus linked through the association of elephants and trance. Maggs and Sealy further suggest that this relationship may even exist where abstract images are depicted without elephants.

Various researchers have reiterated the idea of a link between elephants and shamanism; some extending the link to rainmaking. Yates and colleagues (1985: 79) suggest that the San viewed elephants in terms of "potency and possession". Taking Maggs and Sealy's work as a starting point they argue that these "elephant men" with elephant feet have a close "conceptual unity" with therianthrope paintings from the Drakensberg (Yates *et al.* 1985: 73). Parkinson and Manhire (2003: 44), also describing the therianthropes as "the elephant-headed men", interpret this phenomenon as exhibiting the ambiguous nature of these depictions. According to them, these images could therefore be part of hallucinatory experience. Siyakha Mguni (2013) argues that the earlier depictions of elephants, such as the "elephants in boxes" could be related to shamanism and related rituals such as rainmaking—another known framework of interpretation for the San of the Western Cape region (see also Rust & Van der Poll 2011). They may have viewed the elephants as being representative of the rain animal (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989: 138). Rain animals are often depicted as large in relation to other images in rock art and therefore elephants could have been associated with rituals that involved rainmaking (Lewis-Williams 1981, 1983b, 1984). Deacon's (1988: 135, 136) research in the Strandberg region, Northern Cape, where elephants are the dominant subject in engravings, suggests that rain symbolism was also

important there, as in the case of eland and rain bulls. Elephants may have travelled through this region during periods of increased rainfall indicated names such as ‘Olifantvlei’. Deacon (1988) draws the connection of the metaphoric power of the nose (‘sniffing’ out sickness by shamans whilst curing—see Bleek 1935: 1, 3, 4, 12, 19, 21, 34) between the elongated trunk of an elephant with the role played by the ‘nose’ of the medicine man and the thong of a rainmaker. This argument is supported by an engraving of an elephant with an elongated trunk on the North Strandberg. In addition, the location of the elephant engravings in the region of the lizard’s head of the Strandberg, suggests a relationship with rain based on the lizard’s symbolic link with rain. Future investigation of contextual images that relate to rain in association with elephant depictions will possibly shed more light on this metaphorical link. I aim to explore approaches other than existing interpretations in an attempt to understand how elephants fitted into the gendered worldview of the San.

5.5. CONNECTING ELEPHANT PAINTINGS AND ELEPHANT STORIES

The behavioural traits of elephants is evident throughout Africa, where elephants feature prominently in stories either as females or in association with origin potency (e.g. see Ross 1992 on Kenyan Samburu; Whitelaw 2015 on South African Nguni). Southern African San see a parallel between the anatomy of female elephants and humans; both have two breasts — “[w]hen she’s young they stick out and when she gets old they fall”; “[a]lso her crotch is like a women’s with long labia”; “elephant hide ... is like human skin” (Bieseke 1993:149-50). A further link is established between elephants and humans: “When it’s dead, an elephant smells bad like a dead person” (Bieseke 1993: 149). “It has all kinds of meat in it—eland, human—it’s the father of meat” (Bieseke 1993: 150). The parallels between humans and elephants are evident in a range of San stories. I discuss a selection of stories below.

The first story, ‘The elephant carried on her back the little springbok’, concerns a female elephant who swallows a little springbok.

The Mantis was digging a hole for honey for the little Springbok when the Elephant carried the little Springbok away on her back. When the Mantis enquired whether the little Springbok was eating the honey, the Elephant calf replied. The Mantis, not recognizing this

voice, decided to look and found the Elephant calf sitting there. With the digging stick he was using to dig out the honey, he killed the Elephant calf. He grabbed his quiver and started to follow a herd of elephant spoor, but then decided to turn back to inform his sister. The Mantis' sister was upset that he was not aware of the big herd of elephants and claimed that he must have been asleep. She demanded he bring her child back. He followed the Elephant's spoor and found the little springbok playing with the Elephant's children at their houses. When the Elephants spotted the Mantis, the Mother Elephant took the little Springbok and swallowed it. The Mantis said he would get the child by climbing into the Mother Elephant's mouth or by getting under her fingernail. She replied that she would either spit him out or pick him out. The other Elephants moved in on him and he jumped into her navel. They tried to stab him as he entered.

"Then the Mantis reached the little Springbok in the Elephant's inside and with a skin he slung it on his back in her inside. The other Elephants stood round ready to stab him to death when he should bring the little Springbok out. The Mantis cut the Elephant's whole inside to pieces, while the Elephant's were watching for him at the other Elephant's navel, where he had gone in, he came out at the Elephant's trunk, came out above her head carrying the little Springbok on his back, while the Elephant fell down dead."

When the Elephants tried to stab the Mantis, he flew away home to his sister with the little Springbok referring to himself as an "enchanter" (Bleek 1924: 41-44).

A similar |xam story, the story of !gwa !nuntu whose grandchild is carried off by the elephants was told by |hanʒkass'o (L VIII.-4. 6334-6413, 5. 6414-6455, quoted in Mguni 2013: 184).

Researchers have analysed these stories with varying conclusions. Mguni (2013: 185, 186) interprets the elephants in the stories as strangers who make off with the grandchild of a person from the Early Race and equates this person to the San group opposed to the elephants who represent groups such as the Khoekhoen. Although Mguni (2013) places elephants within a historical context, he also highlights their peacefulness and social organisation which is matriarchal, and noteworthy in San cosmology. Solomon (1992) interprets the same story from a different angle. In the known context of the 'elephants in boxes' depiction, Solomon (1992: 319) interprets the images of elephants as rain animals with reference to the "rain's navel" which connects feminine anatomy and the rain without

orientating it within the altered states of consciousness framework. Solomon rather places it within gender symbolism arguing that some of the lines that zigzag or enclose the elephants originate from the navel/stomach region (1992: 321). She establishes a link between elephants and birth with the Mantis that rescues the stolen Springbok child from the Elephant's stomach through her navel. Based on the !xam narratives of the rain's navel, it also supports the idea of elephants as rain animals. "Elephants in boxes" therefore symbolise beliefs connected with femininity and rain. Solomon further motivates that the elongated trunk of one elephant resonates with rain animals and the "boxes" may symbolise the rain animal's waterhole. Although Solomon chose to link this story to the 'elephants in boxes' painting, what is evident, are the feminine and gender factors that are present. The elephant is strongly associated with feminine aspects such being referred to as 'mother', swallowing the little springbok—having a juvenile inside her as if pregnant—and the Mantis using the navel—the essential link of life between mother and child—as point of entry. Further, gender ambiguity also comes to light as the Mantis referred to as 'he' (thus male) used a digging stick, normally associated with females, and reached for his quiver, which aligns generally with males.

The second story—a story of Pishiboro (a Gikwe tale)—strengthens the presence of feminine and gender aspects associated with elephants in San thought.

Pishiboro, as God was also called, had an elephant as a wife. The elephant wife rolled Pishiboro and his younger brother between her thighs one night that was very uncomfortable for them. This caused them to try and get away from the elephant wife out of fear. The younger brother tricked her and managed to kill her (Thomas 1959: 58-79).

In Marshall's version of the same story from the G!ui in 1955 the close link with femininity is even more pronounced. The younger brother tells the older brother that:

'You are a lazy man. You are married to meat and you think it is a wife'. After been convinced to eat the meat, the older brother replied, '[y]ou are right: I was married to meat and thought it was a wife'. The younger brother, after eating the dead wife's breast (an anatomical feature which does appear to link elephants closely with human beings), cuts open her uterus. The foetus walks out, accompanied by a flood of uterine fluid. The trickster, Pishiboro, fearing that the fluid will go to warn the elephant girl's parents, tries to catch it by

digging a hole. But it flows past him and indeed continues on to alert his in-laws that their daughter has been murdered (in Bieseke 1993: 151).

Feminine features and sexuality are highlighted in this story. The elephant is referred to as 'wife'—female—supported by mention of biological female features such as breasts, uterus and foetus. A certain amount of feminine and sexual power is also symbolised through the elephant wife's rolling of the brothers between her thighs. In addition, through an elephant metaphor the power of the uterus and uterine fluid is represented. The uterine fluid that is released is described by Bieseke (1993: 151) as "female essence". Together with menstrual blood, these fluids are associated with the latency and potency of new life as well as death (Bieseke 1993: 153).

A third story, from Botswana, concerns 'The elephant girl' and was told by !unn|obe N!a'an in 1972 (Bieseke 1993: 139-147):

In the story of the elephant girl she marries and has a "girl-child" and lives at her parent's camp. While her husband visits his parent's camp to request gifts for his wife and child, his pregnant mother's child abnormally jumps out of his mother's stomach, talks, and demands to go with his older brother—the people called him a "sky-thing". After fetching his wife and child and upon their return to his parents, the younger brother tricked his older brother into following vultures to find meat whilst he tricked the elephant girl in removing a thorn in his foot when he killed her. The elephant girl suspected that something might happen and told her grandmother the following before she left:

"The little wind will come to you with something in it. It will bring you some droplets of blood. The blood will come to lodge inside your groin. Take that bit of blood and put it into a container" (Bieseke 1993: 141).

The grandmother proceeded as told by the elephant girl. Meanwhile the younger brother was eating the meat and fat of the elephant girl while her daughter was standing by watching. When the older brother enquired about his wife's whereabouts, his younger brother replied: "Why do you look at a piece of meat and start calling it a woman?" The older brother replied: "you big-penis ... you've ruined me" (Bieseke 1993: 142). The younger brother convinced him to eat the meat by saying it is eland meat and not the meat of a human. The older brother however realised what he has done. His mother also realised upon their arrival at their camp and sent the elephant girl's child back to her people. In the meantime the

droplet of blood grew back into a woman—into the elephant girl. The grandmother let her sit on a skin, covered her face in ochre, gave her new skin clothing and put ornaments on her. “She fixed her up so that she was the beautiful elephant girl again” (Bieseles 1993: 144). The other women and her daughter recognised her. “Her daughter cried, ‘Mother, mother, mother,’ and ran to her, flopped down, and began to nurse” (Bieseles 1993: 145). When the two brothers came to the camp and saw the elephant girl, they decided to take her to their camp. The old grandmother gave the elephant girl a gemsbok horn to take with her which made the brothers and their camp’s people fall dead by blowing on it.

Bieseles (1993: 147) notes that the girl in the story is brave, young, married, with children, beautiful and capable. Depicted as a good natured, fertile female, she is tricked and tested, but with supernatural assistance she manages to survive and conquer. Throughout the story, femininity and beauty, and the power of the female are accentuated through references such as girl, girl-child, pregnant mother, marriage, and birth. As well as the prominent role played by an elephant—she is referred to as an elephant, and she married an elephant. Further, a close association is made between elephants, females, fat and beauty. She grew back again from a drop of blood, indicating the life-giving procreative power of blood and the potency that resides within menstruating females. This resonates with the way the grandmother ‘beautifies’ the elephant girl after her ‘rebirth’ which compliments human ceremonies associated with female puberty rites and marriage (see Marshall 1959: 356). Amid the dominant feminine tone an overtly masculine statement is made where the older brother refers to his younger brother as ‘you big-penis’. This strong masculine affirmation underscores the significant presence of gender constructions in San thinking.

In a fourth story that relates to elephants and female puberty rites, Bieseles (1993:148-150) mentions the ‘slip’ that was made in storytelling replacing the python girl with the elephant girl: “She glided beautifully along and sat down, because she was a person, an elephant girl. Because a python is an elephant” (Bieseles 1993: 149). One of the respect words for ‘python’ is ‘elephant’ (Bieseles 1993: 147). Bieseles (1993: 124-133) tells three versions of the story of the beautiful python girl being rescued after the jackal tricked her to fall into the spring. She then further discusses the story in terms of the ‘female’ creation story and female visions of order. Bieseles (1993: 134) suggests that “[t]he python is all a woman should be—slow and

sedate of gait, acquiescent and helpful, beautiful, sophisticated, quiet, married, and pregnant". To restore social order the python is ritually secluded when giving birth. The jackal, who is viewed as the opposite of a woman (but not a man), is infertile and can't menstruate, is described as making "a hollow mockery of menarcheal seclusion which culminates in her being eaten by her own grandmother and sister" (Bieseles 1993: 135; Marshall 1959: 336). This story exposes that only menstrual individuals are viewed as female, therefore if a girl does not menstruate she is not a woman—she is different/other/ambiguous. The claim that the jackal made a mockery of menarcheal seclusion shows the importance of initiation as a requisite for the establishment of the appropriate relationship to the adult social world (Bieseles 1993: 138). Bieseles (1993: 136, 137) refers to "correct" and "inverted" femininity and highlights in these stories that the rescue and return of the python girl implies the restoration of order in society.

One of the versions of the story collected by Lee, after the python girl was rescued from the spring, was followed by disappointment:

... But when they came back to the village, Python's father, Old Elephant, was grave.

'Oh, what has that trash Jackal done to my beautiful daughter, since she no longer sparkles as before?' He got all his medicines and washed her and cleansed her and blew in her eyes and blew in her ears to erase the awful memories of the evil that she suffered at the hands of Jackal in the cold darkness of the well.

After the cleansing, Father Elephant called everyone together and became very serious. 'This Jackal affair has spoiled my heart. You, Kori, I trusted my daughter to you and you let her get into this mess. Now go away and just be a bird who flies around and eats gum off the bark of trees. And you, my daughter Python, who used to be so beautiful, you will just be a snake and lie around coiled in the shadows. And I too, will just go away and be an elephant tearing up and throwing up trees looking for food to eat. Let this camp be split up forever. Let us all live separately. We are no longer related.'

And so they all split up, went their separate ways and became the animals they are today" (Bieseles 1993: 137, 138).

The femininity of the python, and by extrapolation the elephant, which lies in her beauty and fertility, seems quintessential. The interplay between animals as animals and animals

as humans is directed by the “spoiling” that takes place at the spring. The link between elephants and waterholes as metaphoric places of origin and regeneration is reinforced in stories told by |asa N!aan of elephants who were the first creatures to find water (see Bieseke 2009: 11-15) and the Knee Knee None people who threw an elephant clavicle bone which regenerated into the sun after falling into water (Marshall 1999: 247). The section on elephant behaviour referred to elephant’s ability to find water. Water and seclusion are associated with females and the origin of women and ultimately their fertility. This association with the menarcheal rite is according to Bieseke (1993: 138) a way of creating social order. It is the process of beautiful girls becoming fertile females and thereby becoming ready to marry and procreate. Throughout these stories there is a certain amount of gender power play between males and fertile females, and a need for order. In the Little Springbok story the mother elephant is killed by the male mantis; the elephant wife is killed by the younger brother in the Pishiboro story; the elephant girl is also killed by the younger brother, but she retaliated by being regenerated and killing the brothers; and in the python girl story the jackal, viewed as being opposite to women, was eaten by the grandmother, but in another version the python girl suffered at the hands of the jackal. The elephant and python metaphorically represent the give-and-take of power between males and females in these stories and reveal a gendered “polarity” (see Bieseke 1993: 195).

Many of these stories reference the killing and eating of elephants. Ethnography indicates that elephants were not to be eaten or even hunted. Guenther (1999: 74) states that some animals such as elephants are viewed by the Ju!’hoansi as *kaoqkoaq*—“a thing to be feared” and *tci dore*—a “bad, strange thing” (Bieseke 1993:150). The reason is that elephants are in intelligence and physiology too similar to humans (Lee 1979: 234). Elephants seem to be human and animal simultaneously as they have according to |ukxa N!a’an “... people’s flesh and bush-animal’s flesh...”, consequently, “you don’t eat it because it’s like a person” (Bieseke 1993:150). Vinnicombe (1976: 301), in reference to Chapman’s travels in the interior of South Africa, writes of certain San taboos regarding elephants. Only certain parts of an elephant could be eaten and also only by certain people. Ritual practices involved throwing sand into the eyes of dead elephants, burning their eyes, and cutting off and

cooking the tips of their trunks. It was believed that this would safeguard them against elephant charges and give them power over elephants.

Why then the repeated reference to the killing and eating of an elephant? The answer is two-fold and lies within the symbolism embedded in the stories. Elephants are often depicted in the stories as females, wives, as beautiful, fertile, with young, and of an age that they can marry. All of these aspects are viewed as being part of 'femaleness'. The Ju|'hoansi describe femaleness as "strong" and as having potency (Marshall 1999: 146)—in some instances negative potency, for example a menstruating female can negatively affect a hunt (see Chapter Eight). By killing the female elephant, the potential danger her liminality holds, is controlled. Female elephants are also viewed as 'meat' (Bieseke 1993) and men 'hunt' young, fertile women to marry as they hunt meat. The killing of fertile female elephant—'meat', shows a societal structuring principle of males and the potential fear and threat females pose during liminal phases. Based on this extensive ethnographic data, then, elephants embody metaphoric interpretations such as feminine potency and creative power, and metaphorically represent the power play and polarity that exists within gender.

Elephants seem to continue to play an important social role in contemporary San societies indicated by a recently-recorded story, 'The Elephant Wife', by Marlene Winburg (told by a !xun speaker Lalilo Rumao 2008) through her e-mail story-telling network. The story once again portrays the elephant as the wife with a baby, who is killed by her brother-in-law and pointed out to be an animal, not a wife, and therefore meat. It resonates with Bieseke's "Women Like Meat" theory which refers to the balance between physical needs and social responsibilities; sex and food (Bieseke 1993: 1). However, an additional point of importance is the reference to the economic role of the female elephant as gatherer and as supplier of food when the hunt has been unsuccessful: "*When a man is unsuccessful in hunting for the pot, the woman brings home veld foods. This way, the family always has something to eat*". This established a long-standing connection between elephants and females. Other behavioural aspects of elephants in these stories that seem to resonate with the San are the large female authoritative figures, the importance of family units, and female elephants' close association with their young.

5.6. THINKING OUTSIDE BOXES

Mguni's (2013: 207) approach to elephants in rock art considers "social histories of past painters to be formulated across imagery sequences and even through different traditions of painting". Although the social history of the San is important to decipher, I would argue that a cosmological understanding of elephants in prehistoric San lives requires a broader base of understanding before change over time can be understood.

The elephant therianthropes at Groothexrivier (Fig. 5.7) have been described as elephant 'men' and as representative of the link that exists between 'man' and elephants. A historic androcentric approach underlies this semantic ascription. The therianthropes wear karosses with no clear indication of gender (see discussion in Chapter Eight)—in contrast to the many references of them being elephant 'men'—and are depicted in a line with one smaller (possibly a juvenile) therianthrope. The line of elephant-headed beings depicted with a juvenile resembles family units similar to paintings of groups of elephants with their calves. Further, as discussed before, elephants were perceived of as females in most of the stories. This suggests that San thought of elephants as female; a point supported by the fact that we have matriarchal herds depicted in rock art rather than lone eland bulls. Also, in the stories elephants are referred to as if they were humans: they have puberty rituals, marry, give birth, the elephant girl is referred to as growing into a 'woman', and the elephant girl was said to have been a 'person'. The Groothexrivier therianthropes should therefore be considered within San cosmology as beings, elephants merged with humans, that existed/exist as part of broader San conceptual frameworks that include females.

However, when looking at the clearly gendered 'elephant man' from Ebusingata in the Maloti-Drakensberg (Fig. 5.11), painted in association with bees, the 'elephant and man-link' interpretation as suggested by Maggs and Sealy seems plausible.



Figure 5.11. Ebusingata elephant therianthrope, Maloti-Drakensberg (courtesy Geoff Blundell).

The image of the Ebusingata elephant therianthrope has a human body, antelope-like hands and feet and an elephant trunk and elephant tusks. The bag on the therianthrope's back indicates equipment often associated with the male domain as it includes a bow. Further support for its masculine status is its human penis with what has been described as an 'infibulation' (see Chapter Six). On closer inspection, what distinguishes this therianthrope from other therianthropes is the nested u-shape (red and white) depicted between the thighs of the elephant therianthrope. The presence of this possible honeycomb is enhanced and confirmed by the many images of bees surrounding the therianthrope. As discussed in Chapter Four, the type of potency represented by honey is sexual potency—a procreative potency desired, avoided or controlled by men. Honey and fat are viewed in the same light in San ethnography and both are connected with feminine fertility and sexual potency. Hollmann (2015a: 367) interprets the Ebusingata 'elephant man' as "the quintessential 'owner' of honey" and more specifically connected to "primal potency". I would argue further that the elephant therianthrope could be symbolic of this ownership and control of female sexual potency—the ability to produce life—as underscored by not only a honeycomb nested in the figures' "seat of sexuality" (Hollmann 2015a: 367) and surrounding bees, but also the fact that the choice of animal symbolism is an elephant that

is strongly associated with feminine and procreative aspects. The owner of the honey can be equated with the acquisition of a female by a male that echoes Bieseles' "women like meat" theory—the hunting and eating (by males) of meat (females). The Ebusingata therianthrope is a liminal figure portrayed through feminine elephant symbolism, yet with male biological characteristics. It appears, from a third wave feminism's perspective of a possible 'third gender', to take on masculine and feminine potency and create a unified gender—a gender of power (Power & Watts 1997: 556). Therefore this image more likely symbolises the male—female mediation in the acquisition of sexual potency and metaphorically represent the gender power play. The elephant therianthropes, therefore, could indicate potency relations of a gendered kind in alignment with females.

As mentioned earlier, rock art images form part of a conceptual nexus which may require a conflation of interpretive approaches. These normally 'clearly' trance-related images, viewed from a third wave gendered platform take on new levels of meaning (also see Chapter Six). Even within the shamanic framework there seems to be a female connotation to elephants. According to Bieseles (pers. comm. in Lewis-Williams 2002: 114) elephants are in some instances viewed as spirit animals in the Kalahari, for example if shamans are dancing elephant potency, the elephants are attracted to the place. Reference is made of a female shaman who is believed to have elephant *n/um* who goes away from the dance to the elephant and is held in the tusks of the elephant (Bieseles pers. comm. in Lewis-Williams 2002: 60). As much as shamanism has permeated into various aspects of San cosmology, so should researchers consider the role gender plays within shamanism. I would suggest that Maggs and Sealy's (1983: 47) "special link between **man** and elephant" could possibly be more of a feminine kind.

Maggs and Sealy (1983) further argue that based on the "elephants in boxes", a strong relationship exists between the denticulate abstract shapes, elephants and trance. Their suggestion that abstract images painted in the absence of elephant paintings are still related to trance led me to consider wider contexts. Although I agree with Maggs and Sealy that this shape (denticulate) was intentionally painted as a specific form, their interpretation thereof is limited as there are similar paintings in different contexts. John Parkington and Andrew Paterson (2017) suggested an alternative interpretation for the denticulate abstract shapes in the Western Cape. They aligned the undulating lines, painted in association with

elephants, as possibly being somatogenic elements—sound lines—based on the extraordinary communication system of elephants. For example, elephants communicate to females when they are in musth, as do females communicate with oestrus calls (Parkington & Paterson 2017: 138). Their localised approach broadened interpretive possibilities other than universal paradigms.

A broader contextual and theoretical analysis directed me towards a link that exists between elephants and the denticulate abstract shapes which appears to be femininity. Yates and colleagues (1985: 79) recognised that: “Paintings of women, like elephants, are a familiar element...” in the Cederberg region which made me consider a relationship between these two subjects in the art and the denticulate shapes. The images at Salmanskraal for example painted in close proximity to the abstract shapes, as mentioned by Maggs and Sealy, are not only a procession of large yellow elephants—it is a procession of elephants superimposed over a procession of prominent female figures and a line of non-gendered kaross-clad figures (Fig. 5.12). Vinnicombe (1967a) and Lewis-Williams (1972) both viewed the placement of one set of images over another as deliberate intent of the artist and a metaphoric suggestion of an association between the images. The Salmanskraal set of images therefore implies an association between females and elephants and a possible association with the abstract images.



Figure 5.12. Elephants superimposed over females, Salmanskraal, Cederberg.

At another site in the Cederberg region, Charlie Brown, zigzag and denticulated shapes are painted in the absence of elephants, but in association with another group of females (Fig.

5.13). A zigzag pattern is painted over the three females on the right in red, and a yellow denticulated shape is painted over the second female from the left. To the bottom right of this panel another group of females in procession are painted (Fig. 8.30).



Figure 5.13. Line of females with denticulates, Charlie Brown, Cederberg.

Rock art from different regions support this idea. For example images from the Soutpansberg (Fig. 5.14) discussed by Eastwood and Eastwood (2006: 184) highlight the feminine representation in elephants and denticulates—strengthened by the strong symbolism of the female apron. The shape of these denticulates are very similar to the ‘boat-like’ shape of the denticulates at Salmanskraal, also painted in association with elephants and females. Hollmann (2011: 351) found that the association of an apron image painted in close proximity to an elephant image could metaphorically imply the matriarchal and maternal aspects of elephants with "desirable qualities of women". These desirable qualities are reflected in the male hunters that form part of the scene (to be discussed in section 5.7).

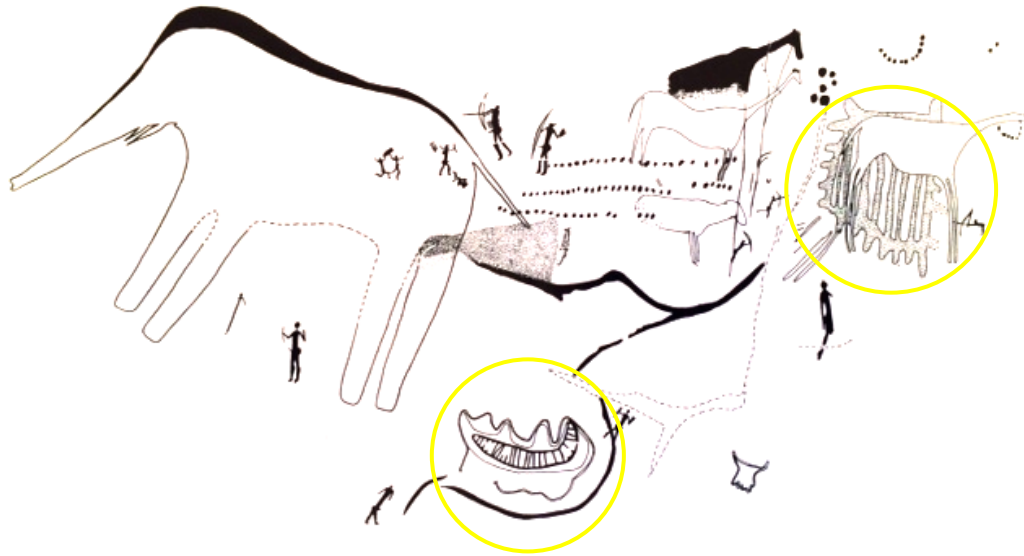


Figure 5.14. Elephants and denticulates, Soutpansberg, Limpopo (from Eastwood & Eastwood 2006: 184).

Elephants, denticulate forms and females appear to all be strands of the same cable. A further suggested strand is that the actual shape of the denticulates resonates with water surfaces and pools, which supports the idea of females and elephant's connections with water and metamorphic places of origin (Bieseke 2009; Rust & Van der Poll 2011). Elephants are known to be providers of water in the ecosystem and thus providers of life. Similarly, females in their reproductive role can also be viewed as providers of life. Elephants are associated with women in ethnography, and rock art depictions of elephants portray feminine associations (Solomon 1989, 1992; also see Van Rijssen 1980). By thinking outside the box elephant therianthropes, originally interpreted as male, has revealed feminine characteristics—as supported by the stories. Previous interpretations of therianthropes viewed as filled with shamanistic potency requires reconsideration in terms of sexual potency. This section also highlighted the liminal status of gendered therianthropes; and denticulates, viewed as shamanistic entoptics, appear to be aligned with feminine aspects in the Cederberg (see Chapter Eight). Based on these findings, I further explore elephants' association with females by looking at the rock art of Zimri Shelter and surrounding Cederberg sites.

5.7. THE ELEPHANTS AT ZIMRI SHELTER

The elephant paintings at Zimri Shelter are isolated images in that they do not form part of groups or lines of elephants. As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, Zimri Shelter has four individual depictions of elephants.

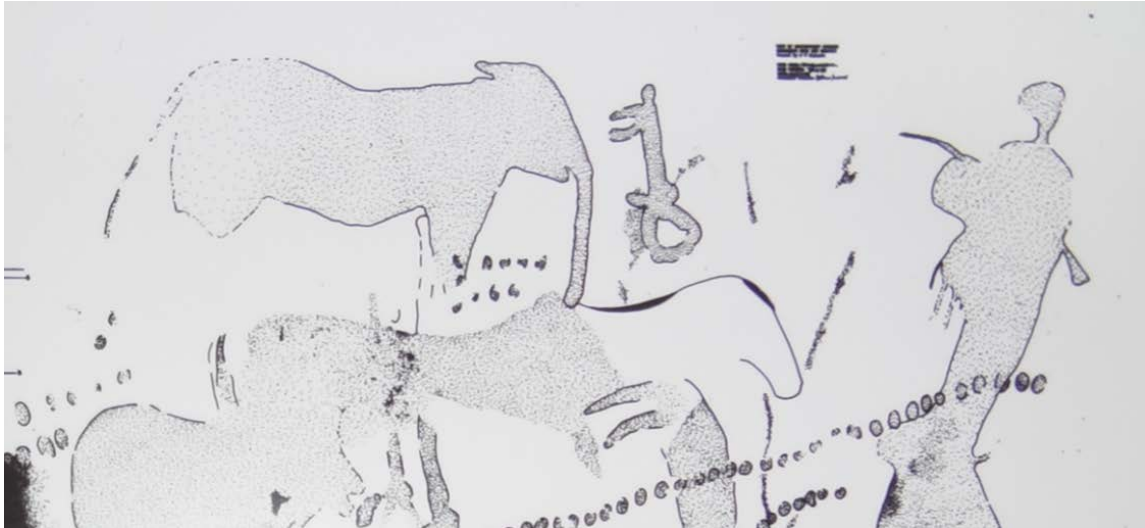


Figure 5.15. Tracing of the big red elephant at Zimri Shelter (courtesy of Stephen Townley Bassett).



Figure 5.16. The big red elephant (as traced above), Zimri Shelter.

The large red elephant (Fig. 5.15 & Fig. 5.16) placed in an elevated position on the shelter wall, above the eland herd, possibly signifies a matriarchal position held by elephants. Solomon (1995: 173) suggests a potential link with the matriarchal organisation of elephants in the art though there is no direct reference thereof in San ethnography. A link between elephants and femininity has however been established in San stories. The prominent role played by the matriarch in the social structure of elephants would have been notable.

Matriarchy is not a controlling power, but rather a power from within and in unity with nature—"a realm where female things are valued and where power is exerted in non-possessive, non-controlling, and organic ways that are harmonious with nature" (Adler 1979: 187, quoted in Eller 1991). The large red elephant could symbolise this inherent matriarchal power of femininity. The feminine milieu is supported by the herd of eland cows below, which have been interpreted as transformed, sexually ready, females (see Chapter Four). To the right of the red elephant is a finger-painting of a male human figure. Finger paintings are viewed as more recent depictions and as elephant-female associations have been established in recent recorded stories, this image could form part of the male-female power-play and the need to establish social order.

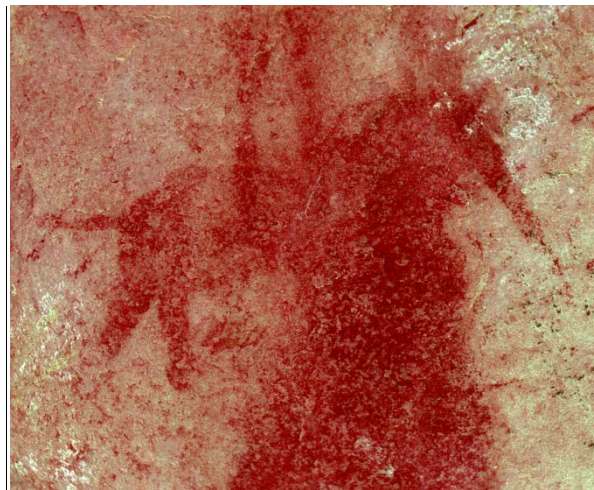


Figure 5.17. One of two small red elephants, Zimri Shelter (altered by DStretch).

The small red elephants (Fig. 5.17), below the emanating eland, seem to strengthen the argument of a statement of femininity with their tails-up postures. Dowson (1988: 118, 120) viewed paintings such as these as animals that appear to be defecating. If he, however, considered an interpretation outside of the shamanistic box, he might have considered that the suggested defecation of elephants with tails lifted may not necessarily be representative of the metaphoric trance death, but rather in alignment with the 'tails-up' posture associated with female emanation and ultimately has a gender platform, as discussed in the eland chapter (Chapter Four). In addition, as it is painted in close association with the eland herd (see panel 23-24 in Appendix 1) that has a feminine connection (see Chapter Four), it underscores the feminine interpretive orientation as established in this chapter.



Figure 5.18. The small yellow elephant, Zimri Shelter.

The small yellow elephant (Fig. 5.18) painting resembles a juvenile physical form with a slightly bulging back and small head. The maternal instincts of elephants are elevated and the way they care for their young are characteristics that could be represented in the art. The juvenile elephant resonates with the depiction of the translucent depiction of a juvenile antelope (Chapter Four) that possible represents *!now* potency released at birth and symbolises reproductive power. The fertile feminine component associated with reproduction and offspring, as illustrated in the stories that relate to elephants, is represented in the rock art.

Similarly, the isolated red elephant painted under a rock (Fig. 5.19 & Fig. 5.20) resonates with fertile females' menarcheal seclusion. The strong feminine aspects associated with elephants as illustrated in this chapter provide a gender platform for the metaphoric representation of femininity through depictions of elephants in the rock art.



Figure 5.19. Slab of rock with a red elephant, Zimri Shelter.

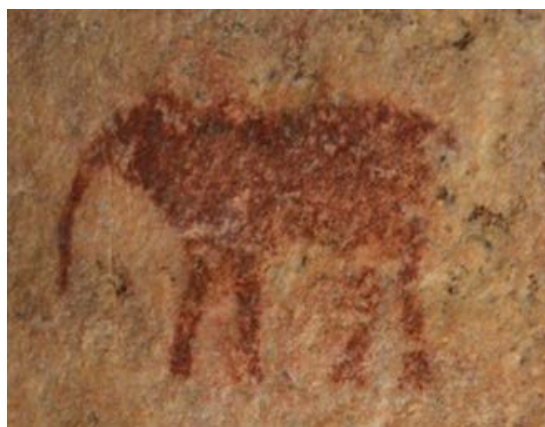


Figure 5.20. Red elephant painted under the rock, Zimri Shelter.

The Zimri elephant painted above and below the eland herd are in close proximity of a splay-legged image (Fig. 8.22) (see panel 23-24 in Appendix 1). These types of paintings with similar postures have been interpreted by Solomon (1994) as 'mythic women' (see Chapter Eight). Solomon (1994: 364, 365; 1995: 172) links 'mythic women' with elephants in the art. At many Zimbabwean sites, 'mythic women' are associated with elephants (Solomon 1995). The connotation lies in the fatness of the elephant and its feminine character. Large herbivores have a lot of fat and therefore are owners of *n!ow*—the power that influences the life-giving and life-taking effect of the weather—and consequently have an association with rain (Solomon 1994: 364, 365). Solomon's argument thus associates elephants with rain, but not within the shamanistic framework, but rather as owners of potency based on feminine characteristics. Peter Garlake (1987) also links paintings of elephants with images in Zimbabwean art of figures with swollen bodies with zigzag lines running between their legs. Whilst acknowledging that most of the figures are female, he rather attributes the swollenness to the generation of supernatural energy in the abdomen than possible female pregnancy – "[t]he San of Zimbabwe clearly envisaged the elephant as sharing the same powers as the swollen human figures and the animal equivalent of them". The zigzag lines emanating from the swollen bodies, which I assume to be menstrual blood, resemble similar patterns to the denticulates. This would indicate a clear association between females, denticulates and elephants. The images of elephants at Zimri Shelter, painted in association with 'mythic women', therefore reveal the procreative link between elephants and females.

Elephant paintings at other sites in the Cederberg

To broaden my understanding of elephant paintings in the Cederberg, I further explore and extrapolate from sites in the immediate geographic region with reference to the gender association of elephants that has been established. A site in the Cederberg, Keurbos, demonstrates this close association between San females and elephants. A family group with young elephants is painted together with various naked female depictions of which many display splayed-legs and a hand-to groin-posture (Fig. 5.21, Fig. 5.22 & Fig. 5.23). As with the Ebusingata therianthrope and the story of the elephant girl, the groin is linked to sexual potency and procreativity. The female figures painted in these postures signify female sexuality and power. Interestingly, across the valley from this female and elephant site (Solomon 1995: 173), is a site discussed in Chapter Six where a strongly male dominant

scene is depicted. It may be that some painted sites reflect specific gender-segregated ritual occasions or areas, such as female or male initiations. Jo McDonald's (1995) use of information exchange theory (see Wobst 1977) in terms of the communication of social boundary information should be considered in potential gender-segregated sites.

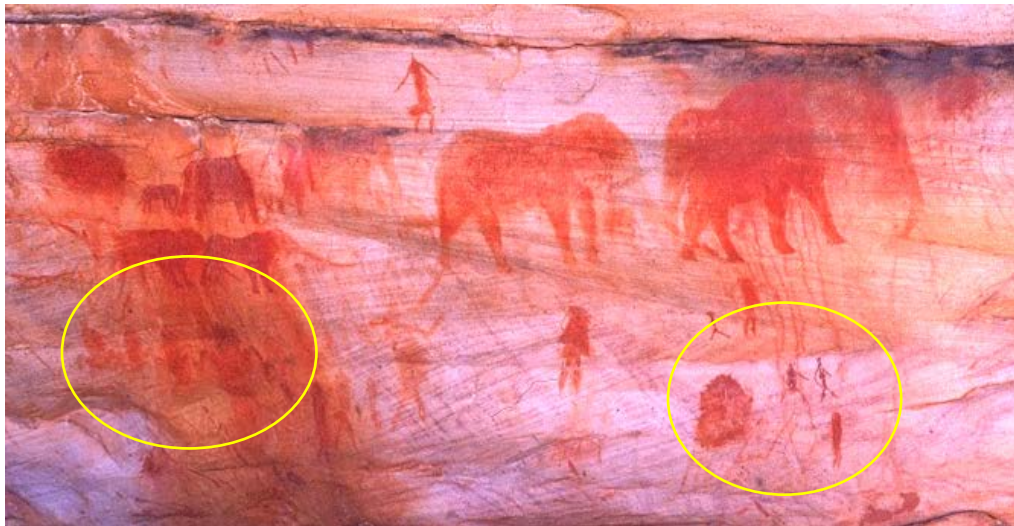


Figure 5.21. Family group of elephants with females, Keurbos, Cederberg (courtesy of Tony Manhire, University of Cape Town) (colour contrast modified).



Figure 5.22. 'Hand-to-groin' figures, Keurbos, Cederberg (courtesy of Tony Manhire, University of Cape Town) (colour contrast modified).



Figure 5.23. Figures with splayed-legs, Keurbos, Cederberg (courtesy of Tony Manhire, University of Cape Town) (colour contrast modified).

Elephants are often depicted in the rock art of the Cederberg in a line and with their young (Fig. 5.24). The elephant processions are accurate representations of the matrilineal and matriarchal social structure of elephant herds (Fig. 5.25). These depictions can be aligned with paintings of processions of females (Fig. 5.26), another frequent scene painted in the Cederberg region. Elephant calves are well protected and cared for by the herds that are

predominantly female. They are a central part of the social structure of the family group. Hollmann (2011: 351) suggests that the maternal behaviour displayed by matriarchal elephants may be a symbolic representation of feminine features expected from females. Bassett (2001: 36) comments on the Salmanskraal depictions of a procession of females painted in such a close association with a line of elephants (Fig. 5.12) and point to the importance of this relationship in San belief. He also suggests a close relationship between elephants and females and motherhood based on the matriarchal herd structure of elephants. In Chapter Eight, I discuss paintings of females painted in processions further. It does appear that paintings of lines of elephants and lines/processions of females both symbolise femininity.



Figure 5.24. Line of elephants with their young, Bushman's Kloof, Cederberg.



Figure 5.25. Mirror image: line of elephants with their young.



Figure 5.26. Line of females, Truitjieskraal, Cederberg.

Some paintings of elephants in the Cederberg region have hand prints that have been printed on or around the fine-line elephant paintings (Fig. 5.27 & Fig. 5.28), or finger dots as in the case of Zimri Shelter's big red elephant (Fig. 5.15) (see also Parkington 2008).

Handprints, together with finger dots, in San rock art have been interpreted as "symbolic reifications of the potency acquired in trance and manipulated in the hands of shaman healers" (Dowson 1989: 13). This creates a conundrum as the region prolific in trance-related paintings, the Maloti-Drakensberg region, has very few handprints. In the Cederberg, where trance images are limited, handprints are abundant in the art and at certain sites printed over images of elephants. This regional difference indicates the trance paradigm to be limiting. Handprints and finger dots have also been associated with a later phase of painting linked to pastoralist arrival and pastoralist authorship (Anderson 1996; Mguni 2013). Gavin Anderson (1997) argues that handprints and finger dots are related to female Khoekhoe puberty rituals such as the menarcheal rite based on ethnographic accounts (see Hoernlé 1923; Rudner 1982; Waldman 1989). Eastwood and Eastwood (2006: 177, 178) refer to finger dots that are applied to women's bodies during Khoekhoe female rites. Similarly, as mentioned by Rudner (1982: 210), "Bushman groups" use dots and stripes for rituals, especially for female initiation rites. Anderson (1997) also states that finger smears form part of these expressions and that the smearing of elephants is relatively frequent in the Cederberg region. Khoekhoen and San are very similar in their thought (see Schapera 1951), and they especially have similar religious ideas and symbolic values (see 7.4.1. and Hoff 1990, 1995). There appears to be an ongoing link between females and elephants in the rock art. The placement of Khoekhoe handprints on elephants, a continued

symbolic expression of femininity, and finger dots superimposed on the elephant, as well as on the eland at Zimri Shelter, which have been linked to menarcheal rites, affirm the feminine platform from which these images should be interpreted and underscores Anderson's suggestion. Mguni (2013: 185, 186) suggests the Khoekhoen link to elephants in San rock art, and the assimilation in stories, is evident of the social histories of painters and places it in a historical context. The possibility that ontology regarding females and elephants could have been shared by these groups might be revealed by the Khoekhoen's later interaction with San paintings.



Figure 5.27. Handprints on a yellow elephant (courtesy of Janette Deacon, Rock Art Research Institute, University of the Witwatersrand).



Figure 5.28. . Red handprints and a group of elephant (courtesy of Janette Deacon, Rock Art Research Institute, University of the Witwatersrand).

The Cederberg region also has paintings of elephants that resemble 'hunting' scenes. Rock art is not a mirror image of San life and hunting an elephant with a bow and arrow would have been very difficult (see Mguni 2013; Skead 2011). Garlake (1989) raises an interesting point regarding scenes of humans hunting elephants with reference to rock art in Zimbabwe. He views these scenes as unrealistic seeing that in the images where arrows are stuck in the 'hunted' elephant, long shafts are depicted. This is not the case with San arrows, as they use composite arrows of which the shaft falls away. These depictions thus suggest that rock art scenes of hunting elephants are not realistic. A scene depicted in the eastern Cederberg has an elephant with her young depicted (Fig. 5.29), surrounded by naked humans of which most have penises. Some of the figures appear to be kaross-clad, with no legs—either purposefully not painted or the paint has subsequently faded or exfoliated. At another site in the Cederberg, a female elephant (note the breasts) is depicted with her young calf (Fig. 5.30). Her tail is raised and the calf's trunk is raised—possibly an indication

of alarm or excitement or another example of the tail-up posture. Long shafts are protruding from the elephant, and as pointed out by Garlake, are non-realistic. Both figures are naked male hunters. This scene emphasises the feminine qualities as represented by elephants, not only physically, but also in social structure and nurturing as well as the essential male aspect of hunting.



Figure 5.29. Elephant and calf hunting scene, Zooridge, Cederberg.



Figure 5.30. Hunters and elephant with calf, Elephant Hunt, Cederberg.

In most of these hunting scenes it appears to be men, often naked and visibly male, hunting elephants. Similarly, some of the hunting scenes referred to by Garlake (1989), have naked male figures, with large tufts on their penises, surrounding the elephants. There are nearly no scenes in the Cederberg depicting men hunting large game, such as eland. In addition,

San males were not likely to hunt naked. This reiterates the idea that these scenes are not realistic depictions. I would argue that the Cederberg depictions are rather a gendered metaphoric representation of men 'hunting' female elephants. The metaphor lies in elephants as representations of San female essence and male hunters 'hunting' females to be wives (Bassett 2001:53) as has been discussed in the stories section. The killing of 'meat'—elephants—is a necessary societal structuring principle of males.

An interesting comparison comes from a Northern Sotho group, the Pedi who perform a ritual during boys' initiation that may resonate with the central role played by females as represented through elephants. The Pedi plant a pole at boy's initiations around which the boys chant every day. This pole is viewed as the 'elephant' and the pole is pushed over after the circumcision rites (Eastwood & Eastwood 2006: 44). Though we do not know what the exact meaning of the 'elephant pole' is as it is protected, we do know it has a central place within a male context, similar to the elephants that form a central point in the hunting scenes. It is positioned as central within a life-cycle ritual such as initiation. Although this example is ethnographically too far removed from San hunter-gatherer cosmology to be a viable analogical consideration, it demonstrates that elephant symbolism regarding male initiands played a role amongst other African groups and could broaden our gendered thinking.

With most contextual evidence of elephant depictions in the Cederberg region pointing towards expressions of femininity, it positions the Zimri elephants to be interpreted from a gendered platform. With a large elephant painted in a dominant position above a herd of eland, another in a tail-up posture and in close proximity to a splayed-legged figure, it directs interpretation of these images within a regional approach to aspects of matriarchy, sexuality and ultimately feminine creative power. Where males are painted in context with elephants it is often in a position of attempts to acquire dominance over elephants/females and their creative strength.

5. 8. CONCLUSION: ELEPHANTS AS EMBODIMENTS OF FEMININITY

This chapter highlights through elephant depictions in the Cederberg the social role played by rock art as well as the role played by gender as a structuring principle. Although aspects

of social history and pastoralist interaction with San rock art are displayed, and hints of shared ritual and thinking revealed that requires further investigation, San cosmology regarding elephants formed the focus. The San identify not only with the biophysiology of elephants, but also with their social structure. General elephant behaviour was considered and compared to the way in which elephants are displayed in the art. It has been suggested that in the south-western Cape, elephants may be the symbolic counterpart of the omnipresent eland painted in the Maloti-Drakensberg mountains (Parkington pers. comm. in Solomon 1995). Where reference, however, has been made in the ethnography to elephants and shamanism, a female shaman is described to be the owner of elephant *n/um* (Bieseke pers. comm. in Lewis-Williams 2002: 60, 113, 114). Their association with other images, and typical elephant characteristics indicated a link between elephants and femininity. The focal point as revealed in this chapter is not on elephants as a symbolic replacement of eland, but rather on the inherent power within elephants that can be aligned with matriarchal power and ultimately femininity. Previous conceptions of links between 'man' and 'elephants', and abstract images and elephants, have been shown rather to be grounded within a feminine gendered paradigm. The depictions of elephants with their juvenile offspring represent the inherent maternal and fertile power female elephants have. The art possibly implies a metaphor that equates the maternal behaviour of elephants symbolically with attractive traits and creative power of women—characteristics that are underscored by the stories in the ethnographic record. Elephants are the key characters and play the roles of Mother Elephant, elephant wife and elephant girl. Maternal and physical feminine characteristics are central concepts in these stories and include references to children, navels, swallowing (pregnancy), foetus, breasts, uterus, uterine fluid and fat. The creative power of females is also associated with menstrual blood and the groin as a drop of blood is lodged in a female groin to develop into the elephant girl. Rock art images of females with hand-to-groin postures painted in association with elephants accentuate this concept and the power of female sexuality. The stories also metaphorically relate to female initiation and males 'eating elephant meat' that symbolises fertile and productive females. The pseudo-hunting scenes depicted around elephants as the central figure confirm the assumption of males hunting for meat/wives.

Elephants painted in the rock art of the Cederberg allude to aspects of female power, social organisation, an ideology of feminine gender, and female sexuality. This regional investigation therefore revealed that elephants embody femininity. As set out in this thesis, a contextual approach to gender and identity constructions allows the investigation of age conceptions, status, kinship, sexuality, and the body for example. This leads to further avenues of exploration such as the role played by menopausal San women who have a similar extended post-reproductive period as matriarchal elephants who hold their authoritative positions until they die (Ross 1992: 57). I found that analysing elephants through a gendered lens allows access to these factors and presents meaningful indicators to social organisation, the ideology of feminine gender and female sexuality—factors and indicators that contribute actively to identity construction (Gilchrist 2007; Joyce 2008; Meskell 1999). Elephant depictions that indicate femininity include elephants with breasts; painted in family groups or with young; painted in lines; as part of metaphoric hunting scenes; in ‘tail-up’ postures; and painted in association or superimposed on images of females, denticulates, handprints and finger dots. The San’s beliefs regarding these indicators reveal the role played by sexual ideologies in relation to the body (Moore 1995) and as a result the body acts as a metaphor for social issues (Blundell 2004). The feminine characteristics, such as fertility and latent creative power, as symbolised by elephants in the rock art, are celebrated in life-cycle performances, such as puberty rituals (to be discussed further in Chapter Eight).

CHAPTER SIX:

THE WILDEBEEST AND 'BECOMING' MASCULINE



Figure 6.1. Blue wildebeest.



Figure 6.2. Reproduction of wildebeest therianthropes, Zimri Shelter (courtesy of Stephen Townley Bassett).

6.1. THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF MASCULINITY

So far, I have considered the implication of images from Zimri Shelter and at other sites in the Cederberg in the construction of femininity. Zimri Shelter however also has images of a masculine nature. Painted high up and to the left of the eland herd are four therianthropes painted in black with wildebeest heads (Fig. 6.2). Their bodies, painted in upright positions, are naked human bodies with infibulated penises. As I pointed out in Chapter Three, third wave-inspired gender archaeology considers the social construction of both masculinity and femininity and the creation of 'difference'. We can study masculinity as a cultural construction (Butler 1990, 1993; Gellar 2009; Gilchrist 1994, 1999; Joyce 2004; Knapp 1998; Meskell 2002; Moore 1995; Yates 1993). 'Becoming masculine' therefore implies liminal periods of 'not yet being' either masculine or feminine, or, rather, periods of difference. These phases of liminality could be viewed as a 'periodic third gender'. Men, however, have been treated in a simplistic fashion, even if archaeology's focus has traditionally been androcentric. Lisbeth Skogstrand (2011: 61, 62), for example, criticises Johannes Brøndsted's (1960) work on the prehistory of Denmark, especially the Early Iron Age, as

Brøndsted makes 'the warrior' the only male role. The warrior becomes a single static category into which weapons and any other related objects are placed. In Brøndsted's approach, 'the warrior' becomes a universal label rather than something that is understood as a social construct in a specific spatio-temporal context. Men, then, have always been visible in archaeology but their gender has gone as "unmarked" (Alberti 2006, 2007). Similarly, androcentric approaches in hunter-gatherer ethnography placed San males into the category of 'man-the-hunter' while referring to 'woman-the-gatherer'.

Such notions have been transferred onto rock art. As mentioned earlier, Stevenson (2000) argues that there has been an overemphasis on 'man-the-shaman' in San rock art studies despite the marked presence of female shamans as well. I argue in this chapter that Zimri Shelter offers an opportunity to cast a more nuanced light on the social construction of masculinity among the San. Key to the argument is wildebeest and the images of wildebeest therianthropes at Zimri Shelter (Fig. 6.1 & Fig. 6.2). In another route to 'man-the-shaman', I consider the concept of 'being a man' and begin by investigating wildebeest biophysiology and behaviour. I then reflect on ethnographic material that suggests links between the word 'wildebeest', rituals and aspects of masculine behaviour within San society as lived experience (Meskell 2002).

6.2. WILDEBEEST IN ROCK ART

The rarity of wildebeest in southern African rock art has been noted by many researchers (see Eastwood & Eastwood 2006; Garlake 1995: 117; Lewis-Williams 2013; Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989: 126-127; Loubser & Brink 1992; Pager 1971: 321; Smits 1971; Vinnicombe 1976: 364; Woodhouse 1984: 107–109) and research on their symbolism has been limited. Except for four paintings of wildebeest at Zimri Shelter, and a few unconfirmed depictions of wildebeest at other sites in the Cederberg (site names: DK7 TRUE; K16MA TRUE; DIEM8a TRUE; DIEM9 TRUE; TBK9 TRUE), the small number of rock art images of wildebeest are in regions outside of the south-western Cape. Figures 6.3, 6.4 and 6.5 are a few examples of images of black and blue wildebeest in regions outside of the Cederberg. Wildebeest occur more frequently in engravings in the northern Cape region. In most instances where wildebeest are painted, they are illustrated in a naturalistic form, typically painted from a

lateral view. Of interest is the colour variance in the painted depictions, which includes red, black and white.



Figure 6.3. Copy of a wildebeest engraving, Klerksdorp District, North-West Province (after Dowson 1992, fig. 145).



Figure 6.4. White wildebeest, Aliwal North, eastern Cape (courtesy of Neil Lee, Rock Art Research Institute, University of the Witwatersrand).



Figure 6.5. Black wildebeest, Cathedral Peak, Maloti-Drakensberg (courtesy of John Hone, KwaZulu-Natal Museum).

At Zimri Shelter, wildebeest features are associated with therianthropic figures; the figures are painted as elongated, black part-wildebeest, part-human figures (Fig. 6.6). The bodies of these therianthropic figures are human and male, painted with penises, but they have

wildebeest heads. The only other known paintings of wildebeest therianthropes are from the Makgabeng region in the Limpopo Province (Eastwood & Eastwood 2006) (Fig. 6.19).

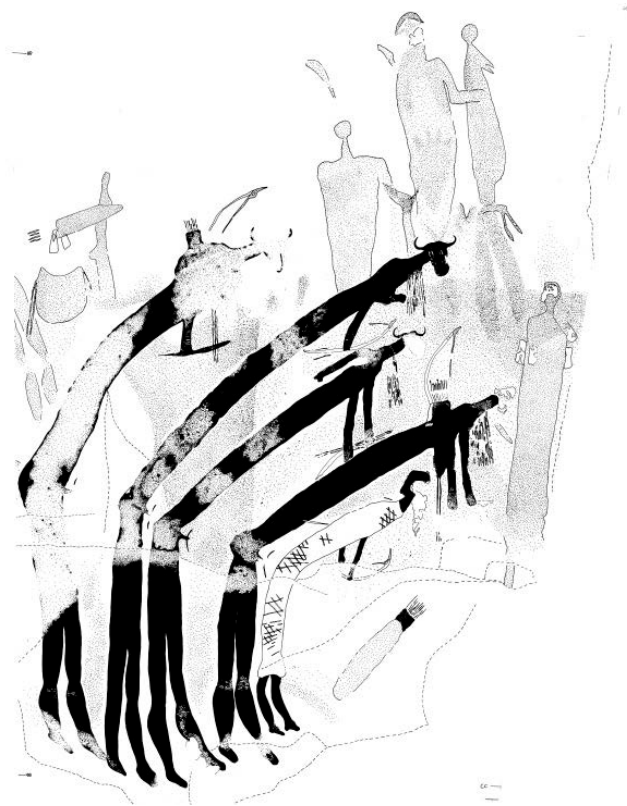


Figure 6.6. Tracing of wildebeest therianthropes, Zimri Shelter (courtesy of Stephen Townley Bassett).

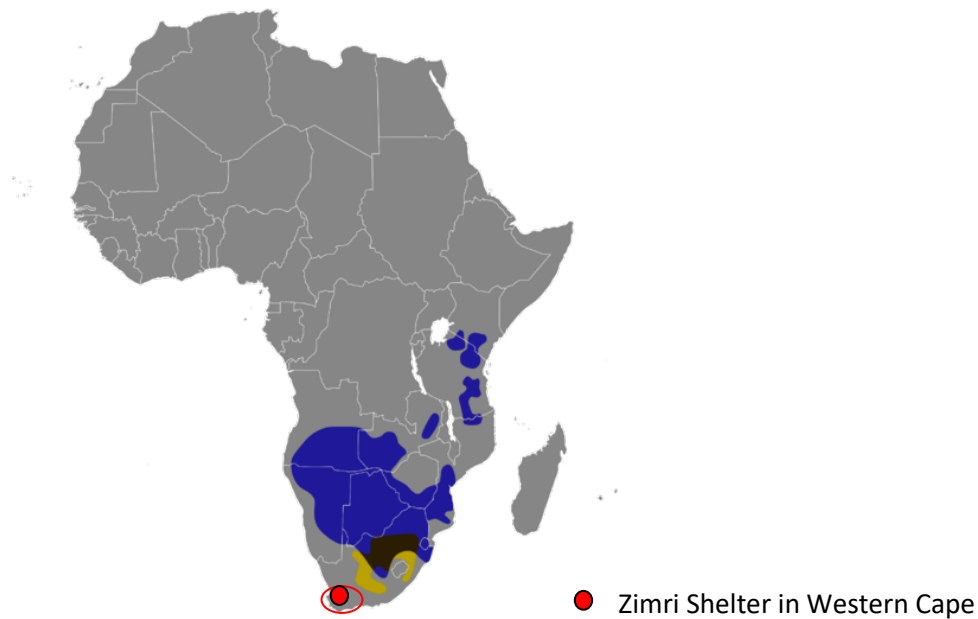
Due to the rarity of wildebeest images in the rock art and the limited research available, further ethnographic reading is required to shed light on possible meanings of wildebeest images.

6.3. WILDEBEEST

There are two types of wildebeest—the black wildebeest (*Connochaetes gnou*), known for its white tail, and the blue wildebeest (*Connochaetes taurinus*)—also called the common wildebeest, white-bearded wildebeest or brindled gnu—that has a black bushy tail. A clear difference between the black and the blue wildebeest is that the horns of the black wildebeest face forward and downwards with the tip twisting upwards. The blue wildebeest is larger than the black wildebeest and its horns turn outwards rather than downwards (Stuart & Stuart 2001: 202, 204; Von Richter 1974: 1).

Wildebeest have reduced sexual dimorphism; both males and females have horns and are almost indistinguishable. In fact, wildebeest have a more masculine appearance to the human eye as both species have beards and from afar the similarity in appearance between males and females is enhanced by the presence of a fake penile tuft of the female wildebeest (Estes 1991: 133). Wildebeest yearling males leave their herds, sometimes rejected by their mothers and other females, and join bachelor herds before the rut begins. Mating time is synchronised and coincides with full moon. Wildebeest behaviour during the rut is not completely understood. Bachelors and territorial males create a calling sound like continuous humming or frogs croaking (Estes 1991: 154, 155). Richard Estes describes it as follows: “[t]he rut is one of the greatest mammalian events.’ The cumulative effect rumbles ‘like waves against a headland,’ creating perhaps the loudest noise of any assemblage of antelope in the world” (Boroughs 2005). Along with the peculiar sounds, sexually-excited bulls often froth at the mouth and rear up on their hind legs in front of a female to show their erections in a “dramatic copulatory display” (Estes 1991: 154, 155).

The blue wildebeest is a migratory animal and moves seasonally from one place to another, whereas the black wildebeest is nomadic, but returns to a home range. The black wildebeest prefers grassland regions and in the past naturally occurred south of the Orange River, in the Highveld temperate grasslands, arid Karoo and Drakensberg montane grasslands, but not west of 22 degrees longitude (Estes 1991: 156; Skead 2011) (Map 3). Historically black wildebeest occurred predominantly in the central inland plateau of South Africa (Von Richter 1974: 2). According to Louis Peringuey (1918: 3 in Von Richter 1974: 2, 3), fossilised black wildebeest horn cores were found in sand dunes close to Hermanus (approximately 300 kilometres south of Zimri Shelter) in the southern Cape. This region is out of the recorded range for black wildebeest and the vegetation is not suitable, but there is a possibility that the wildebeest may have migrated so far south from the Karoo region.



Map 3: Approximate distribution of wildebeest: black wildebeest shown in yellow; blue wildebeest shown in blue; overlapping range shown in black (from Wilson & Mittermeier 2015; amended).

The blue wildebeest, on the other hand, preferred open woodland or savanna regions that were flat or with slight rolling terrain. Historically, blue wildebeest were recorded in regions from the Kalahari Bushveld to the north-east of the Orange River (Skead 2011: 331) (Map 3). It apparently did not occur south of the Orange River except for one reference by R. Gordon Cumming (Estes 1991: 151; Skead 2011: 328) who in 1843 identified a blue wildebeest 85km south of the Orange River.

Early travelers noted the presence of wildebeest in the landscape with reference to great numbers of wildebeest that used to roam the southern Highveld (Arbousset & Daumas 1846: 367). Black wildebeest were also prolific in the KwaZulu-Natal region with large migrating herds. Mention was made of sightings of herds of gnu by Gardiner during his travels in 1835, as well as by the early settlers (see Vinnicombe 1976: 6, 209). The black wildebeest was so prolific in the KwaZulu-Natal region that it formed part of the Natal coat-of-arms and it was a great source of meat and hides for whips for the first settlers (Vinnicombe 1976: 209). The presence of wildebeest in the South African landscape is furthermore notable as in more recent times the wildebeest was symbolically represented on the old coat of arms of South Africa, South African postal stamps and minted on the two cent coin (Von Richter 1974: 5).

There are no records of wildebeest in the Western Cape—neither black nor blue—yet Zimri Shelter has wildebeest paintings (Skead 2011). Clearly then, paintings of wildebeest are not simply depictions of what the San rock artists saw in their immediate vicinity; wildebeest were prolific in the Drakensberg region but there are relatively few paintings of them in that area and in the Cederberg, where no actual wildebeest were present, there are some paintings of the animals. This concurs with the established view that the San selected animal motifs to make particular statements rather than simply paint what was visible in their surroundings (Parkington 2008: 67-73). But what might these statements be? To answer this question, we first need to consider ethnographic references to wildebeest.

6.4. ETHNOGRAPHY

In this chapter, I examine more motifs and consider ethnography regarding these animals to offer an interpretation of wildebeest images.

6.4.1. Words for wildebeest

‘Wildebeest’ is an Afrikaans name that means ‘wild’ and ‘beast’, possibly referring to a ‘wild’ version of the domesticated bovine. The blue wildebeest, also known as the ‘brindled gnu’, was named ‘baas’ by the Khoekhoen, a term that means ‘master’ (Skead 2011: 329). The other known name for ‘wildebeest’ is ‘gnu’, sometimes spelled ‘gnoo’ or ‘gnou’ in early manuscripts. The origin of this name resonates with the San word for ‘wildebeest’ ‘!nu’ (SI – see San language reference chart below) (Skead 2011: 325). The word ‘gnu’ is also believed to derive from the Khoekhoe name T'gnu, that refers to the sounds wildebeest bulls make during the mating season (Von Richter 1974: 5). In further analysing the meaning of ‘wildebeest’ in San languages, with reference to Dorothea Bleek’s (1956) *Bushman Dictionary*, potential clues to the meaning and identities of Zimri Shelter’s wildebeest therianthropes relate to masculine aspects. Alternative words for wildebeest such as *gnu*, *|gi*, *!ge:* and *|ko* have meanings such as ‘penis’, ‘dance for men’, and ‘cutting between the brows’ at boys’ initiation ceremonies—all indicative markers of masculinity (Bleek 1956: 720, 771, see below).

Gnu: page 720

gnu (wildebeest SIIId); !nu (black wildebeest SI; egg NI; penis NII; palm of hand NII)

Wildbeest: page 771

|gi (to cut between eyebrows, ceremonial dance NI; people cut him between the eyebrows and dance the ... dance NIII; a little boy is cut on the forehead CII; not all men dance the ... I danced the ... I saw nothing ..., the ceremonial dance ...; blue wildebeest, gnu CII; aardwolf NI; aardvark NII)

!ge (to stand up, rise, arise NI; sheep – usually !gei SI; person, people SII)

!ge: (wildebeest SV; to wish SI; to moan SI; cut between brows given at boys' initiation ceremony, dance for men, magic NIII ... a boy's cut; snake NI; winter SV)

|ko (to cut SII; sinew, husk SI; language SIII; face, forehead, front NI; village, home NI; bull CII & CIIa; gemsbok)

(see Bleek 1956 for regional references to the origins of the words)

Bleek, D.F.: A Bushmen Dictionary

A confirmation of a masculine alignment with wildebeest in the Bleek dictionary is the meaning of the word wildebeest '*!nu*' that means 'black wildebeest' or 'penis' (NII) (Bleek 1956: 720). A penis being the embodiment of masculinity places the wildebeest firmly within the male domain. There appears to be a connection, then, between San words for wildebeest and ideas of maleness. This connection is apparent, and possibly rooted, in other aspects of San culture beyond just semantics such as boys' transformation rituals as indicated by some of the San words for wildebeest.

6.4.2. Wildebeest and boys' transformation rites

Ethnographic material on boys' transformation ceremonies presents a link in the chain to understanding the masculine connection to wildebeest. The Tshoma Rite among the Nyae Nyae Ju|'hoansi was practised to initiate boys into manhood by instilling the boys with Tshoma *n/um*. This variation of *n/um* is described by Marshall (1999: 206) as "the strong male power" called "*n/um n!a n!a*" (big, big *n/um*). John Marshall was included in a practise session of the *Tshxai !go* (the Men's Dance), the most important part of the Tshoma rite, and interestingly the name of his sponsor was ||ao Wildebeest (Marshall 1999: 211).

The Tshoma (“bush-camp”) ritual (Lee 1979; Marshall 1999) appears also to have been practised by groups south of the Ju!’hoansi (Marshall 1999) and sounds similar to the western Nharo’s long group initiation rites as recorded by Bleek (1928: 23-25). The rite seems to have been shrouded in secrecy and therefore all of its details cannot be ascertained. In some cases, the Tshoma was combined with the First Kill Rite which involved the killing of boys’ first large antelope that would indicate adult male status and readiness for marriage (Lee 1979; Chapter Four). The Tshoma ritual took place only every few years and involved a group of boys of appropriate ages. It may include boys of various ages as some may have missed the previous Tshoma. Some boys may have already undergone the First Kill Rite and may even be married (Marshall 1999). The Tshoma ritual takes place away from the camp and involved tattooing/scarification (|gi cuts), dancing, hunting and teaching/instruction about various aspects to boys as an introduction to manhood (Schapera 1951). A significant aspect of the rite is the boys’ hair being cut after sunset, before the Tshoma rite, by a female relative after which they have ritual baths and then the group of boys go away from the main camp to the secluded Tshoma site. Certain food limitations and avoidance behaviours apply (Marshall 1999: 154), and dancing and singing dominate the ritual (|gi, men’s dance) (Schapera 1951) (The Tshxai !go – Marshall 1999). The rite gives the boys *Tshoma n/um*, the strong power of males, as part of their journey to manhood, after which the initiated men are referred to as Tshoma-owners. Tshoma men have strong *n/um* in their heads to the extent that if young men and boys were to eat food that was close to the head of an old man with Tshoma *n/um* then it is believed that they could get sick and bleed from the nose and even possibly die (Marshall 1999: 111). Bleeding from the nose is normally associated with trance potency, but it appears to be a general side effect of *n/um*.

Marshall (1999) noted that the Tshoma has aspects of secrecy not to be discussed by the uninitiated. With dances, known as the |gi men’s dance (Schapera 1951: 123) and the Tshxai !go (Marshall 1999: 211) dominating the Tshoma rite and being such an important part of it, one should reconsider Qing’s response to Orpen’s question whether he knew the ‘secrets’, to which Qing replied: “No, only the initiated men of that dance know these things” (Orpen 1874: 3). As Mark McGranaghan and colleagues (2013: 140) state that when using the word ‘initiated’, Orpen could have used the word to mean various ‘rites de

passage' such as becoming an adult or becoming a ritual specialist and both may involve 'secrets'. McGranaghan and colleagues (2013: 140) also suggest that the San seem to generally have "individuated forms of initiation". The Tshoma ritual contradicts this statement as it appears that the Tshoma was a formal group gathering where restricted knowledge was shared. Moreover, Orpen's footnote (1874:3) highlights a strong masculine factor associated with initiated men and 'mysteries':

It will seem, however, as if beside this worship of a beneficent maker, they have, in case of sickness, something which seems like pythonic and phallic worship in dances conducted by men initiated in certain mysteries.

It has been convincingly argued that the initiated men refer to shamans (Lewis-Williams 2003: 80), however as the term "spoilt" has been re-examined (see Swart & Escott 2003; Chapter Four & Five), similarly the presence of words such as "dance", "initiated men" and "secrets" deserve reconsideration, especially as the Tshoma was an initiation ritual with secretive aspects. It is apparent that a parallel can be drawn between aspects of the Tshoma rite and aspects of the trance ritual such as the role dancing plays and the receipt of potency that takes place at both the rituals. George Silberbauer (1965) mentions that young men undergo ritual tattooing after their first trance performance; Alan Barnard (1992) views this tattooing as part of the initiation process into manhood. There appears to be a ritual overlap which could cast doubt over the trance interpretations. Could the trance ability have formed part of the Tshoma instructive ritual process? Was becoming a trance ritual specialist part of masculine categorical classification? For now, these questions must remain unanswered, but they raise intriguing possibilities for future research.

An important part of the Tshoma rite is the scarification of the initiates which appears to be linked to San words for wildebeest. A vertical line consisting of small horizontal cuts in the middle of the forehead confirms the boy as a Tshoma owner. To ensure good hunting abilities, similar cuts are made on the arms and shoulder blades (Marshall 1999: 210). Bleek (1928: 24) also writes of cuts being made between the eyebrows of the Nharo boys and on the backs of the Auen boys during this month of boys' initiation. According to the Bleek dictionary there appears to be a strong connotation between the word for wildebeest ' | gi' and the following meanings: "to cut between eyebrows, ceremonial dance (NI); people cut him between the eyebrows and dance the ... dance (NIII); a little boy is cut on the forehead

(CII); not all men dance the ... I danced the ... I saw nothing ..., the ceremonial dance ...” (Bleek 1956: 720). Another word for wildebeest also relates to the Tshoma: ‘!ge’: “wildebeest (SV); to wish (SI); to moan (SI); cut between brows given at boys’ initiation ceremony, dance for men, magic (NIII) ... a boy’s cut” (Bleek 1956: 771).

Dorothea Bleek (1928: 24) writes of events that take place at these boy’s initiation ceremonies. She refers to “the |gi dance” as “the men’s dance” where Hife (Hishe), a supernatural being, presents itself in various forms according to the Nharo and Auen. This being is said to have lived in the times when the trees and animals were people (Schapera 1951: 182). Hishe is described as having the features of a female, but in other cases it has a black body, red eyes, wings and claws. Interestingly, rock paintings from Harare, Zimbabwe, resonate with this description of black winged creatures and appear to be male wildebeest (Fig. 6.7). In some instances, it represents a lion-like male and female. Referred to as ‘her’, Bleek (1928: 24) said that she had to be driven away by medicine men.



Figure 6.7. Black winged creatures, Zimbabwe (from Garlake 1995: 82).

Another being, Gaua or ||gǃuwa, viewed as a negative or bad being, is interpreted by the Auen and Naron in reference to someone who has died (Schapera 1951: 168). Bleek was informed by her male informants that when people die they become ||gǃuwa (Schapera 1951: 168). The Nyae Nyae Ju|’hoansi also believed that when a person dies, the ||gauwasi come to take “his” (as referenced by Marshall) spirit and the spirits of dead people are “transmuted” into ||gauwasi by ǀgao N!a. The spirit of the dead person is pulled through its head by the ||gauwasi (Marshall 1999: 27). However, the females claimed that “only men

who have been cut between the eyebrows (at the puberty ceremonies) become ||gǃuwa, and only such men can see them” (Schapera 1951: 168).

The ethnographic record indicates that there is a rite to initiate boys into manhood—to become men—and there seems to be a link with wildebeest. Words associated with ‘wildebeest’ appear to be associated with aspects of masculinity and events that take place at transformation ceremonies of boys entering manhood such as scarification and the dances. Wildebeest therefore play a metaphoric role in the social construction of masculinity. In the next section I further investigate ethnographic records for links between masculinity and wildebeest within the male domain of hunting.

6.4.3. Wildebeest, hunting and power



Figure 6.8. Ju|'hoansi woman with wildebeest head (from Marshall 1976: 90).

Thomas Arbousset and Francois Dumas (1846: 256) documented a San prayer to |kaggen, the southern San trickster deity, addressed here as ‘lord’:

Lord, is it that thou dost not like me?

Lord, lead me to a male gnu ...

I like much to have my belly filled;

My oldest son, my oldest daughter,

Like much to have their bellies filled.

Lord, bring a male gnu under my darts.

The request for a wildebeest by a hunter may be due to the prolific presence of wildebeest in the landscape. However, the hunter specifically asks for a male wildebeest twice. This may indicate a connection between a hunter as part of the male domain and his masculine ability to hunt for his family.

The wildebeest was sought after hunting prey (Fig. 6.8) and was a regular part of the San diet (Arbousset & Daumas 1846: 351; How 1962: 11; Marshall 1976: 128; Vinnicombe 1976: 209). Different parts of the wildebeest were utilised by the San. For example they roasted the meat and made a brush from wildebeest hair which was used to absorb fat and fluids. Both Victor Ellenberger (1953: 87, 148) and Walter Stanford (1910) cite San using wildebeest tail hair to make brushes for painting rock art. Vinnicombe (1976: 209) also refers to a Mosotho woman who saw San using the horns of a wildebeest to make a spoon.

The abundant presence of wildebeest in certain regions and the extensive utilisation thereof made Vinnicombe question the absence of wildebeest in the art. Vinnicombe (1976: 210) considered ritual avoidance or taboos to be possible reasons. As a result Vinnicombe (1976: 212) argues that the wildebeest may have been a taboo animal to be avoided by the San of the south-eastern mountains, or that the wildebeest did not possess *n/ow* and was therefore not a ritual attribute. Lewis-Williams and Dowson (1989: 126) similarly reasoned that the rarity of wildebeest depictions in contrast to the fact that the San did eat wildebeest implies that there is little relation between the art and what was hunted and eaten based on Bieseke's (1975: 153-154) colour classification and the wildebeest's limited potency. According to the Ju|'hoansi wildebeest were 'black meat' animals, opposed to eland, hartebeest and kudu that were 'red meat' animals. The red meat animals have potency and were suitable for use in rituals like the boys first kill. The black meat animals

have less potency and are only used in rituals when red meat animals are unobtainable. Lewis-Williams and Dowson (1989: 126) therefore argue that because there are more red meat animals painted than black meat animals, hunting and subject matter depicted in the art are separate entities. Zimri Shelter, however, then presents an anomaly, as images are depicted of not only wildebeest, but of therianthropic wildebeest—therianthropes normally seen as beings imbued with potency.

However, more recently Lewis-Williams has changed his perspective on wildebeest's lack of potency due to being a black meat animal (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989), and views wildebeest as part of the supernatural animal world. In Lewis-Williams' (2013: 8) more recent work he lumps wildebeest with the many other animals that can be associated with having supernatural potency within the San cosmology and refers to the transformative powers of wildebeest. He briefly mentions the Ju!'hoan tale (Marshall 1962: 232) of one of the deities #Goa!na that transforms into a little wildebeest to "trick some women". This tale is however not about transformative powers alone, but, as we shall see shortly, involves a gross moral transgression of attempted rape.

Lewis-Williams and Challis (2011: 88) further relate a story of a Ju!'hoan hunter and a wildebeest to argue that hunting is not only an economic exercise, but is rather part of the San's "conceptual milieu that is related to 'sorcery'" and that hunting is embedded within San beliefs and rituals. They highlight a reference by Elizabeth Marshall Thomas of a Ju!'hoan hunter who emulated a hunted wildebeest as a sympathetic supernatural connection that exists between the hunter and the antelope. Marshall Thomas writes:

... unconsciously making a gesture with his hand representing the head and horns of a wildebeest. He moved his hand in time with their running, saying softly: 'Huh, huh, boo. Huh, huh, boo', the sound of their breath and grunting as they ran (Lewis-Williams & Challis 2011: 88).

Although initially highlighted by Lewis-Williams and Dowson (1989: 126) that according to Bieseke the wildebeest as a 'black' meat animal had limited potency, Bieseke also wrote that wildebeest is one of the great meat animals and as a large antelope it metaphorically has the power to go beyond human boundaries (Bieseke 1993: 95). The wildebeest is believed to have *n!ow*, the power according to the Ju!'hoansi that influences the weather. Two verbs are associated with *n!ow* power and its effect: *#gani* which is related to a positive *n!ow* and

//ghui which is related to negative *n!ow* such as cold and dryness. When a hunter kills an animal and there is good weather thereafter then he has *≠gani*ed the animal, but if the weather is cold and dry after the hunt then he has *//ghui*ed the animal. There is no control over the power of *n!ow*. The length of the horn within a species may be related to good or bad *n!ow*. It is however not clear as a hunter with good or bad *n!ow* can *≠gani* or *//ghui* the animal he has killed and the animal may have good or bad *n!ow* and short or long horns (Marshall 1999: 169-171). Marshall (1999: 172) relates the occasion when John Marshall went hunting with a group of men. The first little clouds appeared after John *≠gani*ed a wildebeest he shot. When a hunter is certain whether he has *≠gani*ed or *//ghui*ed the animal he killed, he can put the skull of the animal with the horns in a tree where it can be appropriated within a ceremony by burning the horns, pointing to the sky and ‘speaking *n!ow*’ to bring rain or stop rain (Marshall 1999: 172). This may be similar to a reference by Ellenberger (1953: 80) that the San from the Maloti-Drakensberg mountains in order for a fountain to dry up, put a wildebeest skull in it—a display of wildebeest power’s ability to take away an origin of a life-giving source.

Initial interpretations of wildebeest lacking potency and not ritually represented animals in the art are re-considered. It is evident in the ethnography that hunting and power, linked to weather, are closely related and played a significant role in San cosmology with the wildebeest, an antelope imbued with potency, as one of the role players. I explore the position of wildebeest in San cosmology further by reviewing stories and the roles played by wildebeest.

6.4.4. Wildebeest in San narratives

A key to San thoughts is often revealed in the stories told. There are a few stories in the ethnography that signify meaningful associations with wildebeest. Some stories clearly place wildebeest within a context of power due to its association with *n/um*. The creation story of the wildebeest is not nearly as elaborate as that of the eland; however the creation of the wildebeest is linked to the creation of *n/um*:

Today we’ll create n=om ka n/om, and we’ll use it to give a different design to each animal. From today people will no longer be people but will have markings and be animals. So they

created n|om... Then they made the wildebeest. They marked him and put a little beard on him. They created the wildebeest, then they said, 'Mm, now this one is the wildebeest' (told by Tci!xo N!a'an, Gloce, Botswana, 1972 in Bieseke 1993: 116-121).

A story of a black wildebeest—"Why the wildebeest has a white/light-coloured tail"—affirms the strong metaphorical link between wildebeest, hunting and power. I analyse existing interpretations of the story and consider a possible link to the San construction of masculinity. The |Xam informant |Han#kass'o dictated the following story (L.VIII.30.8651–67; Bleek 1924: 58–59):

The Black Wildebeest used once to do as follows: when the Longnosed Mice were sticking up ostrich-feather brushes on the hunting-ground to drive the Quaggas, he came up to a Mouse as it sat watching, he untied the Mouse's bowstring and swallowed it, and he strung on his own entrails for the Mouse; he blunted the Mouse's arrowheads. The Longnosed Mice were foolish people; he wished the mouse to grasp and break the entrails when the mouse tried to shoot.

And he arose, he went to take a piece of (a certain) grass, he made a tail for himself of this grass, he went in among the Quaggas. When the Mice startled the Quaggas, and the Quaggas ran, and the Wildebeest ran in front of them, he came looking as he ran, and he saw the Mouse's screen of bushes. He ran up to it, he went and stamped on it, crushing the Mouse, as he trod it down. And the Quaggas ran past and away, while the Mouse died. And he went and took out the piece of grass and laid it down, because he was a man. Therefore he used to go and take a piece of this grass (which is white when dry), and make his tail of it, whenever he wanted to kill a man. When he meant to kill people, he turned himself into a Quagga (by means of this tail which was like theirs), as he wanted to kill people.

And the Mice were driving the Quaggas again with feather brushes stuck in the ground. He came to a Mouse, came to blunt the tips of the Mouse's arrowheads. He untied the Mouse's bowstring, he strung on his own entrails for the Mouse. He arose, he went to take a piece of grass, he made himself a tail of this grass. He ran on in front, looking as he ran, he saw the Mouse's screen of bushes, he ran up to it. He reached the screen of bushes, he went and trampled on the Mouse, trampled crushing the Mouse, while the Quaggas ran on to a place where no man was, and the Mouse lay dead. He went and took out the piece of grass, he laid it down.

Then the mantis dreamt about it. He told the Striped Mouse that he was the one who should hunt at the place from which the Longnosed Mice did not return; the Longnosed Mice did not come home, they altogether remained away. Therefore the Striped Mouse was the one who should hunt, he would not let the Wildebeest remove the tips of all his arrowheads; he must hide other arrowheads and a bowstring.

So the Striped Mouse went out hunting with the Longnosed Mice. They went and saw Quaggas, they put up ostrich-feather brushes to drive the Quaggas. The Wildebeest came up to the Striped Mouse; the Wildebeest came and took off tips of the Striped Mouse's arrowheads. He untied the Striped Mouse's bowstring; he strung on his own entrails for the Mouse. He arose, he took a piece of grass, he made himself a tail of the piece of grass. Meanwhile the Striped Mouse took out a new bowstring, he untied and took off the entrails, he strung on the new bowstring. He took out arrowheads which were in the bag, he mounted them. (The arrowheads were fastened to wooden shafts, ready for mounting on the reeds. They were in the arrows' bag. The quivers are left at home, bags are what they keep a few arrows in. When it rains, then they take the quiver). He made a screen of bushes which was not small. That screen of bushes was plainly visible. He made a little screen of bushes which was not visible, which the Wildebeest did not see.

The Wildebeest ran on in front, he came looking as he ran, he saw the (larger) screen of bushes there. He ran up to it, and the Striped Mouse shot him right through the armpits. He snatched out the grass of which he had made himself a tail, he hurled it away, he went and lay down to die, while the Striped Mouse lay shooting the Quaggas, as the Quaggas ran past.

The Striped Mouse was a man. The Striped Mouse made his people of the Longnosed Mice; he was strong, because he was clever. But the Mantis was the one who dreamt that that man had been killing the Longnosed Mice, and the Longnosed Mice did not come home.

Vinnicombe (1976: 210) interpreted wildebeest in reference to the story as an obstruction, as it prevents the hunting of quagga. The wildebeest's behaviour is thereby viewed as "symbolised hindrance and interference, or that which thwarted plans and sapped strength ... the wildebeest was an animal which resorted to subterfuge; it lived among other animals under false pretences" (Vinnicombe 1976: 210). Lewis-Williams (2013: 12), however, felt that Vinnicombe's (1976: 210) understanding of the wildebeest as being a hindrance and interference was limited and that it ignored various other aspects mentioned in the story.

Lewis-Williams (2013) points out that in the ethnography wildebeest were viewed as aggressive and that the myth implies that the Wildebeest was detrimental to hunting—the Wildebeest dulled the Longnosed Mouse’s arrows and stamped on the bushes that screened the Longnosed Mice from the Quaggas. The San viewed this behaviour as anger and in a Jul’hoansi story, Bieseke has heard an angry man being described as a wildebeest (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989: 126). Lewis-Williams (2013:1) claims to go beyond “the supposed moral ‘lessons’ dramatised in the tales” and focuses on what he calls “nuggets” (indicators of meaning) such as the place the Wildebeest was shot, the “armpits”. The healing power of sweat from the armpits of shamans protects their patients from the arrows of malevolent spirits that cause illness (Lewis-Williams 2013: 11). Also the Mantis applies sweat from his armpits to heal his child (Bleek & Lloyd 1911: 27). The potency of sweat cannot be denied. Lewis-Williams (2013) argues that the shooting of the Wildebeest through the armpits, resembles the killing of enemies by trancing shamans such as the *//gauwasi* (as for the Jul’hoansi), the spirits of the dead, or spirits of malevolent shamans. Based on the assumed responsibilities of shamans to protect their people from malevolent beings, Lewis-Williams views wildebeest as prowling spirits or malevolent wildebeest shamans. The Wildebeest in the story is, as a result, interpreted as a malevolent shaman who is shot ‘through the armpits’ as a direct assault on his shamanic power (Lewis-Williams 2013:11).

Within the San shamanic framework, the wildebeest as main character is replaced and this status is awarded to the mantis in Lewis-Williams’ interpretation of the story. Viewing the Mantis’ dreaming as the crucial moment in the story, Lewis-Williams interprets dreaming as a form of trance (Lewis-Williams 2013: 9). He concludes that this information would be “incomprehensible to anyone unfamiliar with San thought and ritual” (Lewis-Williams 2013: 11). But, I contend, that this analysis leaves us with little information about the wildebeest itself. Instead, the Wildebeest man—which is the actual main character in this story—is demoted in importance and viewed as a marauding shaman, thereby reduced to a metaphor of the more known trance-related shamanic relationships.

San ethnography expands on the significance of the story of “Why the Wildebeest has a white tail”. As Lewis-Williams has highlighted, the fact that the Wildebeest was shot through the ‘armpits’ is a noteworthy indicator of meaning in relation to the potency of sweat. However, ethnography informs us that sweat is not only a source of *n/um* used by healers or

shamans as confirmed by Vinnicombe (1976: 210). Vinnicombe does not relate the story to trance, but rather in reference to the use of sweat in rituals and makes an interesting suggestion that “certain categories of kin were symbolically likened to wildebeest, and that both were subject to rules of avoidance” (Vinnicombe 1976: 210). Vinnicombe discusses the food and meat avoidances among the G|wi and !kõ based on the age group: “A major part of [!kõ] puberty ceremonies are devoted to acquitting the candidates with the restrictions imposed upon them, and the consumption of meat is entirely forbidden during the period of ceremonial seclusion” (Vinnicombe 1976: 210). [Interestingly, according to Marshall (1999: 106) where the udders of animals like eland, gemsbok, giraffe and duiker should be avoided by menarcheal girls as well as by boys, the udders of wildebeest seem to pose no threat and need not be avoided. This may be due to the apparent lack of sexual difference between wildebeest sexes and a general masculine ascription to all wildebeest]. Certain of these taboos are lifted after initiation periods through performance ceremonies. Vinnicombe (1976: 210) refers to such a ceremony where two girls, in order to lift a hartebeest taboo, received meat from the animal which they may now eat. The meat was mixed together with what Vinnicombe describes as “herbal charms” and passed around and rubbed under the pubescent girl’s left arm-pit and between the breasts. She briefly mentions the male ceremony that also relates to the potency imbued in sweat. Vinnicombe (1976: 212) thus argues, that if avoidance rules are transgressed, then hunting could be negatively affected as the Wildebeest had a negative effect on the story of hunting the Quaggas.

Vinnicombe’s reference to sweat, as a form of *n/um* associated with life-cycle performances, prompted an investigation into the role it played in the Tshoma rite. Tshoma *n/um* emanates through sweat and is transferred to the boys by the men during the Tshoma rite (boys’ initiation) by rubbing it onto their bodies. Hereby they receive the Tshoma *n/um* (Marshall 1999: 210). During the Tshoma, certain food avoidances apply and the Tshoma rite is performed when the boys are allowed to eat the avoided food again. All food that was avoided during the Tshoma must be “*tshoaed*” before the boy can eat it for the first time. A Tshoma owner or sponsor prepares the meat and while the boy eats he rubs *n/um* from his armpits on the boys’ throat and stomach. It is believed that Tshoma *n/um* aids the men in hunting (Marshall 1999: 219, 220). Another context where sweat plays a role is hunters that throw sweat from their armpits onto the spoor of the animal they are tracking during their

hunt (Eastwood & Eastwood 2006: 86). Sweat from the armpits undeniably has potency; the context of application can however vary. It does appear to have some alignment with the male domain of boys' initiation and hunting.

The story of "Why the Wildebeest has a white tail" therefore has more than one possible interpretation. I have demonstrated a strong link between the word 'wildebeest' through the Bleek and Lloyd dictionary with masculinity and male initiation. Lewis-Williams highlights the shooting through armpits of the //gawasi which I have established had a connection with male initiates. The fact that the main role player in this story is the Wildebeest—described as a 'man', and the main storyline being that of hunting, with the method of killing the main character through a reservoir of Tshoma potency, allude to an alternative revelation of the meaning of the story. It established various aspects of significance that point towards an initiative period of knowledge of hunting, the potency involved and being male.

Another story that involves wildebeest as a person and related to hunting was recorded by Marshall (1999:246). Marshall writes of the Ju|'hoansi belief in Wildebeest People that apparently look like animals with wildebeest horns and feet and their spoor look the same as wildebeest spoor. The following story was told by |qui:

A man named !gai Goro went to the place where the Wildebeest People live. When he got there he saw spoor. It was exactly like wildebeest spoor and !gai Goro said this is wildebeest spoor. He followed it thinking he would get an animal for meat. As he followed the spoor, !gai Goro saw a big tree and a very old man sitting by it. The old man said to !gai Goro, "I am an old old man. Go on following the spoor. You will find your friends there." !gai Goro replied, "No. I have heard what you told me. The spoor is of a Wildebeest Person. I shall go back." !gai Goro thought in his heart, "I thought this was wildebeest spoor. Now I find it is people's spoor. Do I want to kill people like myself?" As he turned away through the bushes, he looked back. The old man had disappeared. !gai Goro went straight back to his own people. When he got there he said, "Oh, I nearly killed myself. I was following the spoor of a wildebeest. I thought it was an animal wildebeest. All the time it was the spoor of a person" (Marshall 1999: 246).

The person that instructed !gai Goro was an 'old old man'. The Old Old people are the first ancestors of the Ju|'hoansi and although human, they have certain supernatural

characteristics such as special *n/um* and power, and extraordinary wisdom. They were believed to have all knowledge and were taught everything about San life by the great god. It was the Old Old people that taught the younger generation (Marshall 1999: xxxvi). I would like to consider the possibility that this story was part of the instruction of male initiation. As pointed out earlier, it is during the dances of the boys' initiation rite that the boys are introduced to supernatural beings such as Hishe. Within this context this story could form part of !gai Goro's instructions on hunting and initiation. Possibly once a man and hunter, one would have the ability to identify real spoor and recognise supernatural beings. Only men that have been 'cut between the eyes' (initiated) can see these supernatural beings (Schapera 1951: 168 in reference to Bleek 1928). Also, when Joseph Orpen (1874) asked Qing whether he knew the "secrets", he replied "No, only the initiated men of that dance know these things." This could be a reference to the men's dance similar to that of the Tshoma. Schapera (1951: 123) states that rituals such as the boys' initiation "introduce the initiates to the mysteries of tribal religion".

A supernatural being that has also been associated with wildebeest in Ju|'hoansi stories is one of the two very powerful male sky deities. In a story told by the Ju|'hoansi, the more powerful of the two, *ǀgao N!a*, changed himself into a baby wildebeest and pretended to be dead in order to attempt to rape his son Kxoma's attractive young wife, Te (Marshall 1999: 15):

ǀgao N!a tried to be away with the women alone while they were gathering plant food. First he changed himself into a baby wildebeest and pretended that he was dead. Te picked him up and tied him to her back to carry him as she would carry any meat. As she carried him along, he slid down her back and tried to rape her. He did not succeed, so he made another plan.

ǀgao N!a did manage to rape Te in an alternative disguise, as his sister, which caused great upset when it was discovered to have been *ǀgao N!a*. The women however kept silent as they feared that his sons would kill him if they knew (Marshall 1999: 15). *ǀgao N!a* seems to have undergone a transformation; where he was normally viewed as a trickster, he also had taken on the role of power of the creator and had the ability to control everything. He has characteristics in common with the creator beings of other groups such as Hishe. *ǀgao N!a* is viewed as the one who taught men how to hunt, what to hunt with and how to dig for food

with sticks. He also instructed men and women to marry and have children. He is in control of people's actions (Marshall 1999: 17-20). The gross social transgression performed by #gao N!a, first attempted in the form of a wildebeest, could be an indication of the masculine sphere of this act. His second attempt in disguise as his sister could indicate the gender physical ambiguity as displayed by wildebeest. Although the women kept silent, the moral and social transgression is clearly known. The story could display masculine power, but also establish the boundaries of such power that accompanies a boy in becoming a man. The biophysical dimorphism of wildebeest lends it to gender ambiguity. This feature provides the liminal characteristic necessary for understanding initiative periods.

A strong link is evident between wildebeest, men, hunting and the liminal power that suggests a process of becoming masculine and changing roles in different times. 'Becoming a hunter with knowledge' and receiving Tshoma *n/um* is 'becoming a man' and indicates a masculinist social construction, symbolically embedded in wildebeest.

6.5. WILDEBEEST THERIANTHROPE AT ZIMRI SHELTER

Besides Zimri Shelter there are only five other sites that have unconfirmed wildebeest-like paintings in the Cederberg. The wildebeest paintings at Zimri Shelter (Fig. 6.9) are, moreover, depicted as therianthropes in bending forward postures. Therianthropic figures are infrequent in Cederberg paintings. The limited research on wildebeest and the scarcity of images of the species, make the wildebeest therianthropes at Zimri Shelter important.



Figure 6.9. Panel with wildebeest therianthropes, Zimri Shelter.

They have been interpreted as trance-related therianthropes by Ben Smith (2008) but this does not address their full semantic spectrum. As therianthropes they embody ambiguous beings in transformative states, beyond social categories and norms. Their power to go beyond the basis of social structure imbues them with potency (Jolly 2002: 97). Smith's (2008) link between Zimri Shelter's wildebeest therianthropes and trance is viable as at first glance they tick some of the characteristics associated with the trance experience and therianthropic elements of the shamanistic approach that are well understood: blending of human and animal forms; bending forward posture; and elongation (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989: 68-77). There are, however, other aspects here that prompt additional interpretation. The liminality of therianthropes places them between categorised states of being—a description that not only fits San shamans, but also initiands at life-cycle rituals. As such, the therianthropes at Zimri-Shelter demand an in-depth analysis.



Figure 6.10. Three of the four therianthropes and one mimicking karossed figure, Zimri Shelter.

Zimri Shelter has four wildebeest therianthropes painted in black. Three of the therianthropes have wildebeest heads of which one is not well preserved and another has been purposefully smudged with yellow paint (Fig. 6.10 & Fig. 6.11) (an occurrence I have observed on the heads of eland in the eastern Cederberg) (Fig. 6.12). Anderson (1997) interestingly argued that paintings of animals that form part of the big-game animals that have been smeared can be linked to hunter-prey mythological associations and male identity. Smearing is interpreted by Anderson as a way for San males dealing in a socially creative way with changing times to construct and increase not only social identity, but also gender identity and positive self-esteem. By smearing, males control the magico-religious realm in time where their male hunter status has been affected by pastoralist arrival. In addition he relates smearing to Khoekhoe menstruation ceremonies and the threat it poses

to men. Smearing emphasised the male-hunter versus female-prey categorisations in rock art.



Figure 6.11. Smeared wildebeest head, Zimri Shelter.



Figure 6.12. Smeared eland head, Die Mond, eastern Cederberg.

The fourth therianthrope has the same features as the three painted above it, except for its head not being clear and showing possible remnants of white paint. White faces are typical of human faces in Cederberg rock art and therefore the fourth therianthrope could possibly have been more human-like than the rest. This figure could be the link in the ‘becoming masculine’ process discussed below. The curvature of the horns of the therianthropes at Zimri Shelter resembles that of blue wildebeest, which as I pointed out earlier, is a species that was not found in the Cederberg. How then was it possible for the San of the Cederberg to have painted wildebeest images? One needs to consider the possibility of San travelling over great distances. As suggested by Mazel (2009) in reference to shaded polychrome eland paintings, the emergence of new subjects and style could be the result of social change and the extension of trade networks that reached beyond known boundaries. The rutting of wildebeest, one of the greatest mammalian events, would have impressed on minds. Could wildebeest heads (Fig. 6.8.) have been ‘prestige items’ in these extensive trade networks (see Chapter Seven and Sadr 2004b for a discussion on ‘prestige’ items and trade networks)? There is also the possibility that the role played by wildebeest as spiritual beings were known through stories. The detail in which animals, which would not have been in the immediate area, were depicted stands testimony to the great artistry and mind-mapping of San hunter-gatherers. In Chapter Seven, in reference to the presence of images of sheep at Zimri Shelter, I discuss the idea of exchange networks and ‘travel-knowledge’ further.

All four therianthropes seem to have human characteristics. They are depicted naked with infibulated penises as well as with hunting equipment. Many paintings have been recorded of males with one or two bars across their penis. There is however very little ethnographic information to illuminate the significance of this feature in the art, but it has been speculated to be possibly associated with puberty and initiation, or a taboo indicator for sexual intercourse or urinating, as would be the case in hunting practice (Vinnicombe 1976: 258; see also Schapera 1951: 70-71). The semi-upright depiction of the wildebeest as well as their erect penises, echo the way wildebeest bulls practise copulatory displays (Fig. 6.13 & Fig. 6.14). As discussed earlier, sexually-excited wildebeest rear up on their hind legs in front of a female to show their erections (Estes 1991: 154, 155). These indicators associated with the male domain are strengthened by the images that surround the wildebeest therianthropes.



Figure 6.13. Wildebeest copulatory display (from Estes 1991 fig. 8.18).



Figure 6.14. Tracing of wildebeest therianthropes (courtesy of Stephen Townley Bassett).

Images with aspects associated with masculinity painted in close association with the wildebeest therianthropes underscore the male domain of their context. To the right of the wildebeest therianthropes, three human images wearing karosses with cross-hatched motifs are painted in postures mimicking that of the wildebeest therianthropes (Figs 6.15a, b & c). The three figures are painted in a similar bending forward posture, holding bows and arrows

similar to the hunting equipment of the therianthropes and have beards resembling the 'trademark' beards of wildebeest—a clear masculine indicator.



Figure 6.15a. Bent-over mimicking figures; Figure 6.15b. Digitally enhanced image of two of the three bent-over mimicking figures; Figure 6.15c. Tracing of two of the three bent-over mimicking figures (courtesy of Stephen Townley Bassett). Figures 6.15a-c, are good examples of recording methodology. The location of these images is high up and might be more complicated to trace as more details are evident on the photographed and the digitally enhanced images than on Bassett's initial tracings. However, Bassett's expertise and time spent at the site benefited researchers interested in the gender perspective. Although the cross-hatchings on the karosses are more visible on the digital images and artistically and aesthetically impressive for San artists, Bassett managed to identify and trace the masculine hunting equipment associated with these images more clearly.

The three figures to the right of the wildebeest therianthropes, although mimicking the therianthropes in various aspects, do not have wildebeest heads and are wearing long karosses. This could be an indication that these figures are not liminal beings and further in

the process of ‘becoming’ categorised individuals—this scene could thus symbolise a progression from one state to another. Parkington (1996, 2008) aligns the depiction of karosses with that of initiated males and Schapera (1951: 66) noted that karosses are only worn by teenage boys when they learn to hunt. The cross-hatched motifs on the karosses may be viewed as ‘representational’ as argued by Hollmann (2014) in his work on the Gestoptefontein Driekuul Complex engravings. He established an association between initiation rituals and designs and that certain geometric images used in people’s body painting, ornaments and clothing can be linked to female initiation rites (Hollmann 2011, 2013; also see Hoff 1990: 177–179 & Hoff 1995). In some cases it can serve as protection against dangerous powers for newly initiated women as well as their husbands (Marshall 1999: 200–201). The cross-hatch design on the karosses could be viewed as such a protective design. The power embodied by the therianthropes associated with the liminality of the initiation phase warrants some form of protection, possibly offered by the cross-hatched design on the karosses. Leather fragments with incised designs similar to the karosses depicted at Zimri Shelter were discovered in close proximity of burial sites at Faraoskop (Manhire 1993) (Fig. 6.16 & Fig. 6.17). Eland Cave’s leather fragments found in association with burials, date to approximately 2000BP (Sealy *et al.* 2000). The Eland Cave fragments lined the grave of juveniles. Hollmann (2011: 60) suggests that designs protect ‘new women’ from dangerous powers, which raises the possibility that the cross-hatched design might have been indicative of a protective power. This clarifies the need for the figures at Zimri Shelter to wear a form of protection due to the potency that resides within them as initiates.



Figure 6.16. Leather fragments with incised designs, Faraoskop, Cederberg region (from Sealy *et al.* 2000 fig. 6).

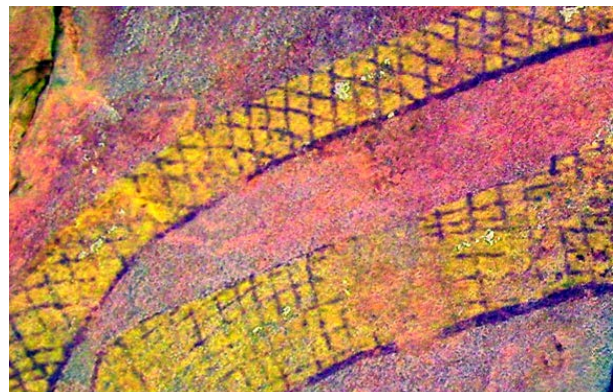


Figure 6.17. Altered image of the karosses of the bent-over figures, Zimri Shelter.

At another shelter in Lesotho, geometric motifs have also indicated a ritual significance of wildebeest. The paintings of wildebeest with zigzag lines and herringbone patterns allude to wildebeest potency (Loubser & Brink 1992) (Fig. 6.18). Further interpretations regarding geometric motifs depicted on animals are discussed in Chapter Seven and suggest a link to initiation practices.



Figure 6.18. Wildebeest with geometric motifs, Lesotho (from Loubser & Brink 1992 fig.3).

The liminality intentionally depicted through the therianthropes as transformative beings and the more human-like images displaying wildebeest characteristics, illuminate the process of ‘becoming’. The images surrounding the wildebeest and the impersonators appear to be masculine, painted in association with male hunting equipment and many wearing long karosses. The gender ambiguity of wildebeest with its blurred biological boundaries, yet its masculine overtones, present the metaphoric characteristics required for understanding the liminal period of initiands in the process of becoming men.

Depictions of wildebeest and wildebeest therianthropes in other parts of southern Africa

To reach a better understanding of wildebeest images at Zimri Shelter, it is necessary to compare them with some of the other depictions of wildebeest in southern Africa. The site that resonates most with Zimri Shelter is situated on the Makgabeng Plateau, central Limpopo (Eastwood & Eastwood 2006) (Fig. 6.19). The Eastwood’s (Eastwood & Eastwood 2006: 129) argue that the wildebeest at this site were viewed as one of the main sources of supernatural power for the Limpopo San. These wildebeest paintings are therianthropic figures in a region where there are also not many paintings of therianthropes as is the case

in the Cederberg region. To be noted of the Makgabeng paintings is that all four of the wildebeest therianthropes' bodies are predominantly human, intentionally painted with visibly masculine features, including one figure with an infibulated penis. They are accompanied by humans that are also male together with a large hunting bow that is normally associated with male hunting equipment. Cazungu, a Khwe shaman interviewed by the Eastwood's (2006:124), interpreted the wildebeest therianthropes as ancestral spirits who aid the shaman with his healing ritual. Cazungu also noted that the word *nei* is used for both supernatural potency and spirits of the dead (Eastwood & Eastwood 2006: 126). It appears that these therianthropes could be aligned with stories of the ||gauwasi, spiritual beings associated with masculine initiation. The Makgabeng wildebeest therianthropes encapsulates therefore not only masculinity, but also potency similarly to the Zimri Shelter images.



Figure 6.19. Wildebeest therianthropes, Makgabeng, Limpopo (from Eastwood & Eastwood 2006: 124).

The role played by masculine indicators in the Makgabeng paintings appears to be as intentional as at Zimri Shelter. A further investigation of wildebeest depictions and surrounding paintings supports this thematic depiction.

A site in the Cederberg region, Keurbos East, is known for a row of antelope depicted on a line and has been referred to as “the starving hartebeest” (Parkington 2008: 57) (Fig. 6.20). I would argue that, based on the single inward curvature of the horns, compared to hartebeest that have a second curvature, these antelope are more likely to be wildebeest. If

these wildebeest were to be viewed in context of the surrounding paintings, then a clear masculine theme comes to the fore. Figures 6.21, 6.22 and 6.23 are just a few of the examples at the site.



Figure 6.20. Line of wildebeest, Keurbos East, Cederberg region.



Figure 6.21. Group of kaross-clad figures, Keurbos East, Cederberg region.

Figure 6.22. Feline, Keurbos East, Cederberg region.

Figure 6.21 represents a conflated figure of a group of kaross-clad individuals that has been argued as symbolising initiated men (see Parkington *et al.* 1996). Figure 6.22 is a feline, possibly a lion, painted over the antelope. The fourth image (Fig. 6.23) at Keurbos East is a depiction of a therianthrope-like being with a pronounced penis. Its long tail and small round ears also indicate a possible feline association. Deacon (2014: 221) interprets an engraving of a lion therianthrope with a pronounced penis (Fig. 6.24) near Vosburg in the Northern Cape as “a metaphor for transformation to male sexuality and power”.



Figure 6.23. Masculine therianthrope figure, Keurbos East, Cederberg region.



Figure 6.24. Lion therianthrope, Northern Cape (from Deacon 2014 fig. 4).

The masculine theme becomes evident in wider regions of southern Africa once a gendered approach is followed, for example the paintings at Stapelbergskloof, in the Stormberg region (an outlier of the Maloti-Drakensberg mountains). The naturalistic painted wildebeest are surrounded by males with hunting equipment (Fig. 6.25). Their exaggerated penises have been accentuated by having red paint on the tips—it is highly unlikely that San males would have hunted naked.



Figure 6.25. A reproduction of wildebeest and males hunting, Stapebergskloof, Stormberg (from Bassett 2001 plate 33).

The Stapebergskloof images resonate with another engraving site of Deacon's (2014: 219) at Sprinkbokoog. The human figures are predominantly male with exaggerated penises with similar large rounded ends. Also forming part of the engraving is a lion (Fig. 6.26).



Figure 6.26. Masculine hunting scene with a lion, Sprinkbokoog, Northern Cape (from Deacon 2014 fig.2).

Deacon (2014: 210-223) explores the possibility of a connection between sites where men were active and masculine power. Known as the 'Brinkkop men' associated with the

Brinkkop dolerite hills according to |xam texts, in analysing the meaning of the words, it points to 'young men' and 'penis', and could possibly imply a place where male initiation took place. The contexts of wildebeest paintings, as discussed, reveal similar masculine alignments and possible places of masculine power, as do the wildebeest therianthropic paintings at Zimri Shelter.

6.6. CONCLUSION: FROM ENIGMA TO MASCULINE METAPHOR

The wildebeest therianthropes at Zimri Shelter has highlighted the complexity of interpretive frameworks. The 'myth-ritual' debate between Solomon (1997, 2008) and Lewis-Williams (2006) questions whether rock art depictions are motivated by myths or trance, or are myths motivated by trance—which determines which? I would not reject the idea that the wildebeest therianthropes were possibly conceptually determined by altered states of consciousness experiences which possibly impacted on stories of Wildebeest People and possibly resulted in a conflation of myth and trance. However, my extended investigation found that whether originating in trance or mythology, the wildebeest therianthropes possibly serves and instructs at Zimri Shelter as a gender structuring principle.

A review of paintings of wildebeest together with their contextual images and ethnographic readings on wildebeest has illuminated the idea of masculinity as representational in the rock art. Together with "one of the greatest mammalian events" (Estes 1991) being bachelor and territorial wildebeest males rutting, the associative male status of wildebeest are pronounced—surely knowledge that would have travelled great distances. The Zimri Shelter wildebeest painted in such detail as therianthropes in a region wildebeest never used to occur and where trance-related images are limited, highlighted the need for broader frameworks of understanding. Vinnicombe (1976) touched on wildebeest as presenting a facade and being linked to avoidance actions presented within the hunting domain to avoid any negative impact. However, Vinnicombe attributed this to the wildebeest's potential lack of *n!ow* and consequently low impact on ritual performances. The wildebeest has since moved up from having low potency status based on being a 'black meat' animal and limited depictions to being understood as an animal associated with potency and powers of

transformation. This interpretation would be a perfect fit for the wildebeest depicted at Zimri Shelter.

Masculinity in this chapter was identified by the presence of paintings of wildebeest as a metaphoric animal for liminality based on its sexual dimorphism but also its therianthropic representation; an animal with masculine semantic associations; with masculine appendages; associated with facial smearing and geometrics; and its strong contextual association with masculinity, i.e. naked male hunters and hunting equipment. Frameworks have been broadened and the wildebeest appear to have meaning within category construction phases of initiation performances of San males such as the Tshoma rite. A rite that only took place every few years resonates with the male wildebeest rutting gatherings. With words such as 'penis', 'men's dance' and 'cutting between brows' associated with the word 'wildebeest' according to the Bleek dictionary (1956), together with the context of wildebeest images and ethnographic research, point towards a masculine association. The context of paintings revealed zigzag (Lesotho) and crosshatching (Zimri Shelter) designs associated with male protective powers against female potency; naked male images alluding to boys' initiation; and hunting equipment related to the male domain. In addition, ethnographic records has shown the role wildebeest as an animal with *n!ow* and *n!um* plays in influencing the weather and hunting. In the stories of wildebeest they are described as males or men—a theme that is resonated in the San prayer asking for a 'male' wildebeest. Wildebeest are not only referred to as male in stories, but often as ancestral spirits, such as the Makgabeng therianthropes, *//gauwe* and the Wildebeest people. In the stories wildebeest are repeatedly disguised, and only to be identified by initiated men. Therefore, once a boy has been initiated into the male domain and has been instructed on life, he is able to hunt and provide for the family. That masculinity is constructed, is personified in the paintings at Zimri Shelter of beings appearing to be wildebeest, in a process of becoming, set within a male context. It reveals gender symbolism that relates to the liminal status of boys becoming men during their initiate period. The three figures mimicking the wildebeest therianthropes are more advanced in the process, possibly fully masculine as indicated by their long karosses.

Though objects in the art may be actively involved in the formation of masculine identities, such as penises and hunting equipment, it is the "configurations of practices" (see Connell

1995, 2000) that disclose the process of 'becoming masculine'. The formation of masculine identities are directed by culture opposed to the biology of 'being male'. Wildebeest, with features masking their dimorphic biophysical sexuality, are symbolic of undefined categories and liminality. Rituals and bodily transformations of rites of passage marking the transitional phases in the life-cycle (Turner 1969; Van Gennep 1960) exposed the body as fluid and uncontrollable (Gilchrist 2007). As such during these phases, from a third wave feminism viewpoint, a periodic 'other' gender is formed. Therianthropic figures as transformative beings between categorical states and gender-ambiguous wildebeest align symbolically well with initiands in uncategorised states of being. Ritual performances such as boys' initiation where knowledge is shared and preserved, serve to create categories and boundaries within these liminal spheres. Whether the wildebeest therianthropes were symbols of trance or 'teaching' originally, at Zimri Shelter it embodies a structuring role in gender. The wildebeest is not an enigma; it is an embodiment of shared knowledge, however distant, in the social construction of masculinity. Consequently it was not a symbol for general consumption (see McDonald 1995), but rather played a role in a limited category possibly explaining the limited presence of wildebeest in the painted record.

Third wave feminism created an avenue for research into masculinity. At Zimri Shelter the wildebeest therianthropes were the catalyst into an investigation of the presence of male power in ethnography. Moving forward, caution should be applied to not create a new 'man-the-initiate' universal label. The wildebeest therianthropes at Zimri Shelter is viewed as a social construct in a specific spatio-temporal context. However, it has created awareness to a masculine gender construct depicted in rock art and the presence of 'strong male power'. The secrecy surrounding masculine practices such as the Tshoma ritual limits our understanding, but rock art from other regions show the presence of masculine construction such as the Makgabeng site, Stapelbergskloof and Springbokoog by extension. This indicates that other San communities might also have actively depicted masculinity in the rock art. Limited images that relate to certain rituals, as in the case of shamanistic images in the Cederberg region, does not indicate an absence of related rituals. Future investigations in other geographical regions, now cognisant of the presence of masculine rituals in ethnography, may illuminate further masculine gender construction characteristics.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SHEEP IN SAN COSMOLOGY

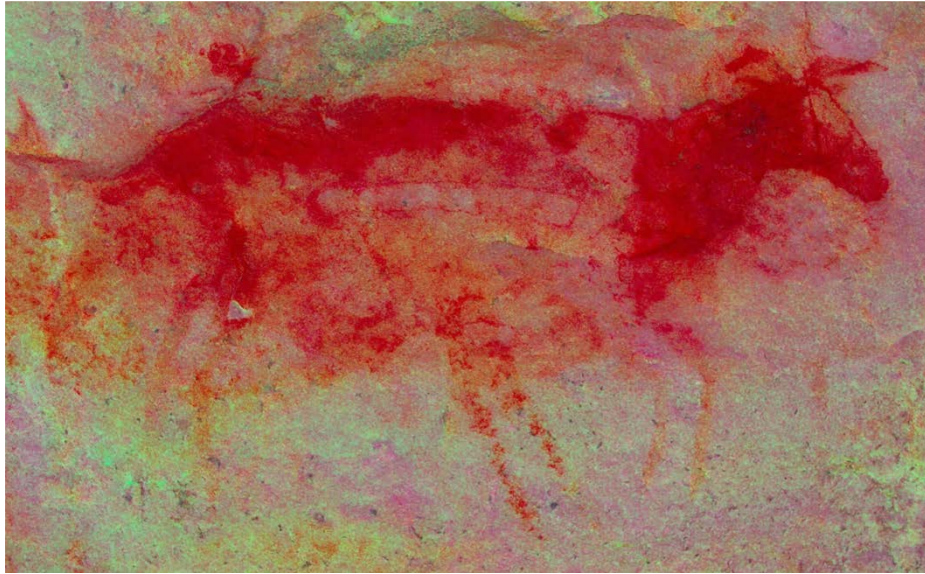


Figure 7.1. Sheep depiction, Zimri Shelter (altered by DStretch).

7.1. SHEEP AS SYMBOLS

In previous chapters I have considered eland, elephants and wildebeest images and how they interdigitate with San concepts of femininity and masculinity. All three are wild animals but there are also domestic animals in San rock art. While cattle and horses are common in the rock art of the Maloti-Drakensberg mountains, sheep are the most frequently illustrated domestic animal in the Cederberg and they are the only domestic animal painted at Zimri Shelter (Fig. 7.1). Zimri Shelter has a large number of sheep depictions—at least 29 identifiable pictures painted in different colours and probably a few faded images also depicting sheep. The paintings appear to depict a flock (Fig. 7.4.) and some of these images are superimposed over a row of females (Fig. 7.10). Paintings of sheep are rare in the Cederberg. Manhire and colleagues (1986), for example, mentions 11 sites with sheep, while Hollmann (1993) recorded a further three sites in the Koebee region. Jerardino (1999) observed the presence of paintings of sheep at one coastal site, to the west of the Cederberg. Before her observation, scholars thought that the coastal region was devoid of images of sheep. The sheer number of sheep then at Zimri Shelter makes the site remarkable.

Southern African rock art researchers debate sheep vigorously as they have implications for issues of contact between San hunter-gatherers and Khoekhoe herders. Parkington and Manhire (2003: 45) argue that the limited numbers of sheep images are a result of only a few hunter-gatherers being present in the Cederberg when the Khoekhoen arrived. As the hunter-gatherers disappeared, so did their art. Sheep thus signify the final stage of the hunter-gatherer tradition of painting in the Cederberg. Consequently, images of sheep have ended up being an essential chronological marker in rock art. As no paintings of sheep are dated, the age of the images is correlated with the earliest archaeological visibility of real sheep. Archaeological deposits from sites in the south-western Cape with sheep remains have been dated to approximately 2000 years ago (Parkington 2008:24). As a result, it is widely believed, by extrapolation, that paintings of sheep in this region could not be older than 2000 years and that they were painted by hunter-gatherers (Parkington 2008: 24, 50).

In this chapter, I argue that this argument is problematic and that paintings of sheep cannot be correlated directly with the appearance of actual sheep in the immediate environs of the images. Sheep have largely been studied for their significance to the hunter-herder debate and little effort has been made to establish the symbolic connotations of the images. In this chapter, I endeavour to fill this lacuna. I start with a discussion of archaeological remains of sheep in the south-western Cape before considering images of sheep in the rock art; I discuss existing interpretations of the meaning of sheep images as well as related ethnography. I conclude by considering the paintings of sheep as a cultural choice in terms of the relationship between sheep, gender and fertility issues and I point to symbolic qualities of sheep that some researchers might have touched upon, but not ascribed to images of sheep.

7.2. SHEEP PAINTINGS

7.2.1. Paintings of sheep in the Cederberg and the Maloti-Drakensberg

Paintings of sheep in the Cederberg are typical representations of *Blinkhaar Ronderib* fat-tailed sheep. Their rounded oval bodies, droopy ears and fat tails are clearly recognisable features in the rock art. Sheep are mostly painted in the fine-line tradition and are similar in technique to antelope images. They are typically associated with San fine-line subject matter (Manhire *et al.* 1986). There are some paintings of sheep made in the coarse fine-

line style as well as some finger-painted examples (Mguni 2013:18; Parkington 2008: 115). The coarse and finger-painted images are believed to be more recent than the fine-line images of sheep and are attributed to the Khoekhoen. Though many images of sheep in the south-western Cape are painted in red ochre (Fig. 7.2. & Fig. 7.3), some were painted in yellow and white pigments. There are also a few images of sheep painted in black outline (Manhire *et al.* 1986: 25).



Figure 7.2. A flock of sheep, Cederberg region (courtesy of Janette Deacon, Rock Art Research Institute, University of the Witwatersrand).



Figure 7.3. Painting of a red sheep, Cederberg region (courtesy of Janette Deacon, Rock Art Research Institute, University of the Witwatersrand).

The Maloti-Drakensberg mountains of southern Africa also have paintings of sheep, although they are fewer in number there than cattle. Mazel (1982:67) divided these

mountains in KwaZulu-Natal, that extend into the Eastern Cape, for research purposes into a northern and a southern region with the boundary being at latitude 29°15'S which runs through the Giant's Castle Game Reserve. Didima Gorge, in the northern region, has a high concentration of fat-tailed sheep images painted predominantly in white as well as in red compared to the limited number of sheep paintings in the southern regions—Vinnicombe (1976: 155, 157) recorded only two sites with sheep. Hollmann (2015b) recorded a rare depiction of a black sheep painted in association with agriculturalist subject matter at the site of eMkhobeni. This northern region of the Maloti-Drakensberg has no recorded images of horses and fewer images of cattle than the southern region. And like the south-western Cape paintings of sheep, they fit into the San fine-line tradition and are similar to depictions of antelope (Russell & Lander 2015:319-321).

7.2.2. Paintings of sheep at Zimri Shelter



Figure 7.4. Flock of sheep, Zimri Shelter (altered by DStretch).

Zimri Shelter has a variety of sheep paintings, all painted in the San fine-line tradition and part of the bigger corpus of paintings (Fig. 7.4). The depictions of sheep at Zimri Shelter echo the sheep depicted in the rock art of the south-western Cape and strongly resemble the *Blinkhaar Ronderib Afrikaner* sheep traits such as hanging ears, oval bodies and fat tails. Paintings of sheep at Zimri Shelter are executed in red or in white monochrome (Fig. 7.4 & Fig. 7.5), with the exception of a single painting of a black and white sheep (Fig. 7.18), which could represent the earlier multi-coloured *Blinkhaar* sheep that were more than one colour. The sheep are painted either in groups or as isolated images and seem to be more dominant on the left-hand side of the shelter.



Figure 7.5. Painting of a white sheep, Zimri Shelter.

7.3. SHEEP IN ARCHAEOLOGY

Fat-tailed sheep were described by James Alexander who traded sheep in what is now known as Table Bay from the Khoekhoe herders in 1591, as “... very big and very good meat; they have no woll on their backs but haire and great tailes like the sheep in Syrie” (*sic.*) (Raven-Hart 1971a: 15, quoted in Mguni 2013: 173) (Fig. 7.6).



Figure 7.6. Khoekhoe herders and Dutch settlers (© National Library of South Africa, Cape Town—permission request submitted).

The Khoekhoe pastoralists introduced the *Blinkhaar Ronderib* (shiny-haired, round-rib) Afrikaner sheep to the south-western Cape about 2000 years ago (Deacon & Deacon 1999: 181). These are commonly referred to as Cape fat-tailed sheep. The sheep originated in the

Middle East and North–East Africa and migrated southward, either with the pastoralist movement or through a process of diffusion or both. Initially, the sheep were multi-coloured but in the 18th century, Dutch farmers opted against coloured coats (Snyman 2014) and thus selected mono-coloured individuals. The *Blinkhaar Ronderib Afrikaner* has characteristic drooping ears, an oval-shaped body with thin legs (which allows for long-distance travel) and a light cream coat of soft wool with smooth, glossy hairs. Their fatty tails weigh from 2 to 3 kg but can weigh as much as 5kg (Snyman 2014).

Archaeologists have dedicated extensive research to the first occurrence of domesticated animals in southern Africa. Two chronological markers pivotal to this investigation are the occurrence of domestic sheep bones and pottery (associated with herders) emerging around 2000 years ago in the archaeological record (Wiltshire 2011: 23). However, the immediate archaeological context seems to have a few discrepancies. As sheep are not indigenous to southern Africa, research as to when these domesticated animals arrived in the Later Stone Age has received widespread attention. Archaeological excavations during the late 1960s and early 1970s at De Kelders, south-east of Cape Town were the first to record sheep remains (Schweitzer 1974). Many Later Stone Age sites have since produced sheep bones, for example, Spoegrivier (Webley 1992), Byeneskranskop (Schweitzer & Wilson 1982), and Nelson Bay Cave (Inskeep 1987). Researchers have warned against the effect of taphonomic processes involved in the post-depositional movement of sheep remains within an archaeological context and the affect of its migration on ascribed dates based on association (Jerardino 2016; Sealy & Yates 1994). Sheep bones have also been misidentified in the southern African archaeological record; they are morphologically similar to springbok and other wild fauna, and it is only with genetic testing that they are separable (Horsburgh *et al.* 2016). Direct dating of sheep remains would be a better option (see Gowlett *et al.* 1987; Inskeep 1987) but, thus far, few sheep bones have been directly dated. Direct dating applied on sheep bones from Blombos Cave in the southern Cape support the 2000 BP arrival of sheep together with the appearance of pottery in associated stratigraphic levels (Henshilwood 1996). More direct dates are however necessary from analogous sites. Also, we need to be wary of conflating pottery and sheep into a single migratory model. The same problems of depositional movement within an archaeological context may apply to pottery. Even though secure dates established for the presence of sheep contribute to our

knowledge of sheep in the landscape, it remains precarious to extrapolate the dates to images of sheep painted on the rock face.

Were sheep introduced to the south-western Cape with the arrival of pastoralism? The models for the emergence of pastoralism in southern Africa have opposing views for migration of pastoralist groups versus cultural diffusion of sheep (and cattle) and pottery. The first model is based on the demic diffusion of Bantu-speaking agriculturalists along the eastern side of southern Africa in accordance with the high summer rainfall regions necessary for crop cultivation (Hall & Smith 1986). Another migratory model recognises the demic diffusion of Khoekhoe pastoralists based on the presence of sheep and ceramics in the archaeological record and the keeping of livestock (Lander 2014; Smith 1986, 2005). Rock art images of handprints, finger paintings and geometric depictions form part of this pastoralist migratory movement (Smith & Ouzman 2004). Sheep paintings and linguistics formed the basis for earlier suggested migratory models of Khoekhoe herders (see Cooke 1965; Elphick 1985; Westphal 1996). Migratory models have been disputed and a local indigenous and independent development of sheep herding in southern Africa has been proposed (see Deacon *et al.* 1978; Sadr 1998, 2008). Sadr (2004a, 2015) suggests a model of cultural diffusion and that sheep were adopted and exchanged through a possible gift-giving system as prestige items, and eventually herded. Sheep as a prestige item (Sadr 2004b) could be aligned with special qualities of sheep of importance to the San (see Lander 2014: 170, 171). The exchange of goods, possibly over great distances, would have established contact between herders and foragers that would be difficult to detect in the archaeological record. Such a cultural diffusion opposed to a demic diffusion could have informally introduced changes in hunter-gatherer society and not necessarily instilled dramatic ideological and socio-structural shifts (Sadr 2003, 2004a). Recent studies has shown, based on ceramics, stone tools and livestock remains in dated Late Stone Age Sites, that the emergence of sheep into southern Africa 2000 years ago was by small groups of hunter herders on two separate fronts and that infiltration can happen ahead of demic diffusion, and individual frontier mobility can happen ahead of infiltration (Sadr 2015). Lander and Russell (2015: 138, 190) consider the possibility that sheep depictions in the northern Drakensberg are records of journeys of San and their first encounters with other groups or people and sheep potency in the north-west of KwaZulu-Natal. San hunter-gatherers were

thus not isolated groups. With no direct dates available for sheep images, one can only speculate. However, from a third wave feminist viewpoint one needs to consider wider conceptual frameworks.

In the south-western Cape, the presence of sheep in the rock art is as problematic as their presence in archaeological contexts. Yates and colleagues (1994) argue that the coastal Sandveld and the interior mountains of the Western Cape display different frequencies and episodes of varying subject matter in the rock art of these two regions. Paintings of fat-tailed sheep have until recently only been found in the interior mountain regions. Based on this distribution and the archaeological data that provide chronological markers, scholars have argued that the fine-line painting tradition came to an end in the coastal Sandveld region earlier than in the interior mountains, probably due to cultural and economic changes in hunter-gatherer lifeways resulting from the pastoralists' arrival. Jerardino (1999) has however discovered two paintings of fat-tailed sheep at the Steenbokfontein coastal site. This could be viewed as an anomaly, but Jerardino (1999) suggests that poor preservation of rock art sites along the coastal region should be considered. Consequently, chronological and geographical interpretations will have to be re-thought.

Archaeology suggests that there was a movement for the San hunter-gatherers from the more pastoralist-friendly low-lying grazing regions towards the Cape Fold Belt mountains of the south-western Cape. Therefore Manhire and colleagues (1986:27) argue that images of sheep in the more mountainous region possibly represent an earlier contact period between hunter-gatherers and pastoralists and the movement of hunter-gatherers away from the low-lying areas could have been due to the dominant pastoralist groups moving in and occupying these areas for their domestic stock. Archaeological evidence also shows an increase in domestic animal bones and pottery and a subsequent change in settlement pattern. Open sites appear to have been abandoned after 1700BP—the same time that pottery appears in the archaeological record. An increase in ash and bedding occurs in the shelters in the mountain region during this period (Manhire 1984; Manhire *et al.* 1984; Parkington *et al.* 1986). Manhire and colleagues (1986: 28, 29) argue that the arrival of pastoralists led to hunter-gatherer relocation. Therefore the impact of pastoralism in the mountain region was less, allowing the fine-line painting tradition to continue (Yates *et al.* 1994).

7.4. SEARCHING FOR THE MEANING OF SHEEP

The presence of sheep in rock art makes them important in San cosmology and more than mere geographical and chronological markers. Researchers have variously interpreted images of sheep as representing increased stress levels, politics, identity markers, and part of the shaman's repertoire. I discuss each of these.

7.4.1. Sheep and shamans

The first interpretation to be considered is paintings of sheep with reference to the trance paradigm.

[S]heep paintings are not likely to be simple scenes of new people, but complex statements about the control of potency ... the general explanation of sheep paintings concerns trance and medicine men (Huffman 1983: 51).

Sheep have been viewed as reservoirs of potency due to their high-fat content and as a source of potency. Shamans believe that potency resides in fat, and if harnessed, they could utilise it to perform many tasks, such as healing. Thomas Huffman (1983: 51) equates the well-known symbol of power, the eland, with its large amounts of fat and thus potency, with sheep. Some of the fat-tailed sheep in the Zimbabwe rock art have exaggerated fatty tails (Fig. 7.7).



Figure 7.7. Fat-tailed sheep, Zimbabwe (from Manhire *et al.* 1986 fig. 3).

Huffman (1983: 51) points out that the Zimbabwean paintings of sheep are in one case painted over a beehive. He refers to Bieseke's (1978) work on the Ju|'hoansi, who view fat

and honey as both eating and drinking foods and consequently he relates this characteristic to its potency. The link between potency, trance and honey is supported in the Bleek and Lloyd archives as discussed in Chapter Four. Later in this chapter, I will further explore the link between fat and honey from a non-shamanic perspective.

Manhire and colleagues (1986: 26), after investigating sheep paintings in the south-western Cape, also place the meaning of these paintings within the wider shamanistic interpretation and view them as a ritual reaction to the appearance of herders. Similar to Huffman, Manhire and colleagues (1986: 26) highlight the fat of sheep as a reservoir of potency comparable to the eland male's great amount of fat that positioned the eland as the most important animal for the San and shamans. In addition, by looking at the images of humans painted in association with the sheep, it is suggested that the elongated appearance of images corresponds with the shaman's experience of physical hallucination (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989). Manhire and colleagues (1986: 26) argue, from a tacit functionalist perspective, that the arrival of pastoralists led to hunter-gatherer relocation and increased their stress levels, which in turn led to an increase in painting as part of ritual behaviour. Shamans may have played an even more important role in group cohesion during these unsettling times. This argument is predicated on the idea that ritual functions to alleviate stress—a classic (but erroneous) functionalist position (see Bell 1997). For Manhire and colleagues rock art is viewed as a “device to reinforce ritual maintenance of threatened values” (Parkington 1986 *et al.*: 326). Consequently they are in accordance with an en masse single Khoekhoe pastoralist migratory model.

7.4.2. Sheep – the ‘who’ and not the fat

While shamanism is, undoubtedly, a key element in the interpretation of sheep images, Anderson (1997:42) argues that there are other elements as well. He disagrees with the suggestion that sheep fat was important and played a similar role to that of eland fat (Anderson 1997: 43). Within the context of hunter-gatherer and herder interaction, the art of the south-western Cape is studied by Anderson through the lenses of gender and social identity, moving the focus away from the animals themselves. He refers to sheep as “indicators of salient intergroup relations” and views sheep paintings as representing and maintaining San customs as a reaction to San-pastoralist contact (Anderson 1997: 44, 45).

Contact periods cultivate and enhance gender identities. Anderson (1997:47) argues that the fine-line painting tradition came to an end between 1500 and 1000 BP; it suggests that the period of interaction between the San and Khoekhoen, and in particular the males, was not a period of integration or acculturation. Gender is a social construct and Anderson (1997: 46) view sheep as “stereotypic depictions of outgroup material culture—a result of salient intergroup categorisations, and thus identity”. Therefore, according to Anderson, the contact between the San and the Khoekhoen was an interaction of different social identities and not of integration or assimilation.

Anderson argues a good point in that not all images are related to shamanism. Animals have played a fundamental role in San hunter-gatherer cosmology, and the incorporation of an animal with lucrative characteristics such as fat would have been vital in their hunter-gatherer existence. Although Anderson’s alternative interpretation disallows the importance of fat, I agree that the direct comparison of sheep with eland and the meaning encompassed or ascribed by this equation based on fat, might not be salient. I, however, would like to consider other possible associations with fat. Also, Anderson makes the important theoretical shift of exploring gender identity in the art—an approach I further explore in the next section.

7.5. FEMINIST ASSOCIATIONS OF SHEEP IN THE ROCK ART

The alignment between sheep, fat, potency and shamanism seems to be self-evident. However, as there are many sites with sheep painted in association with non-shamanistic aspects, it is an avenue that deserves further attention and their symbolic significance requires further exploration. Viewing sheep through the gender lens may offer additional revelations.

7.5.1. Sheep, fat and puberty

Ethnography and archaeology

The *Blinkhaar Ronderib Afrikaner* sheep had a high-fat percentage and San valued fat as a reservoir of potency. Also of importance—as discussed in Chapter Four— is the relation of fat to female puberty (Manhire *et al.* 1986: 26). Fat is an indication of the girl’s well-being.

The fat of male eland is associated with female puberty rites as Ju|'hoansi women equate girls with eland in the 'Eland Dance'; both are fat and fat is "a good thing" (Lewis-Williams 1981: 48). The 'Eland Dance' is ultimately a celebration of female well-being, symbolised by females not being too thin, which would possibly complicate the onset of menses as well as the possibility of procreation (see Chapter Four). The importance of fat and female well-being is therefore directly related to fertility. Solomon (pers. comm. in Hollmann 1993:21) proposes that sheep played a role in the fertility beliefs of San hunter-gatherers. A painting in the Koebee region of the Western Cape of a steatopygous female painted in association with four fat-tailed sheep could therefore be linked through both the sheep and the female's desirable quality of being fat (Fig. 7.8).

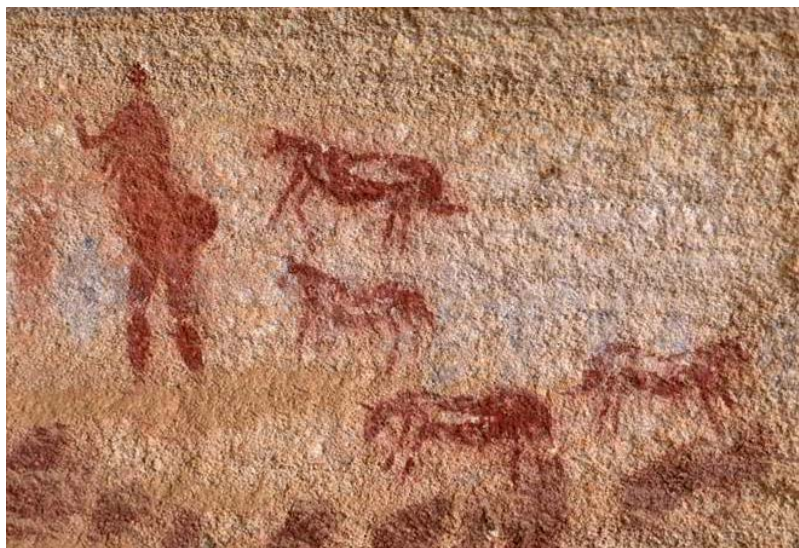


Figure 7.8. Feminine figure with fat-tailed sheep, Koebee region, Western Cape (courtesy of Jeremy Hollmann, Rock Art Research Institute, University of the Witwatersrand).

The Khoekhoe pastoralists and San hunter-gatherers had a "close cultural relation" (Webley 1997b: 207). The Khoekhoen had puberty ritual connotations to sheep and fat based on ethnography. In some instances, these rituals still played an important role recently (Hoff 1995:29) and seem to have endured through time. Ansie Hoff (1995) did extensive research on Khoekhoe puberty rites. Puberty rites of girls played a significant role in Khoekhoe culture, as puberty is a transitional phase that required control. This transitional phase is imbued with potency that can have a negative effect on natural resources and food. The girl's transitional phase could aggravate snakes, predators, rivers, lightning and she could have a negative effect on hunting. She is placed in isolation during her menstruation period

and looked after by a caretaker, who is no longer fertile and therefore cannot be negatively affected by the girl's transitional potency. A corpulent woman was viewed as beautiful and healthy and therefore the girl had to become fat, and she had to 'grow' during isolation. Also, her skin had to be bleached to appear desirable. An animal was slaughtered on two occasions—at the start and end of the puberty ritual. The animal slaughtered at the onset of the ritual, normally a sheep or a goat (Hoff 1995:35), had to be female and had to be fat to ensure the girl was fat too. The hip bones of the animal, believed to have magical powers (Hoff 1990: 111), were the most important and they were not allowed to be damaged in the slaughtering process to guarantee the girls' successful pregnancies in the future. The hipbones were covered in fat and ochre (Hoff 1990: 166) and hung up. After the period of isolation, the girl was ritually cleansed, as her childhood was symbolically 'washed' away. During her childhood she was viewed as a 'boy'—"axab", but she emerges after her puberty ritual as a 'new' person—a woman (Hoff 1995: 34, 36, 37).

Archaeological sites have revealed interesting clues that link up with the ethnographic record of pastoralist groups. At the Later Stone Age pastoralist encampment site in the Northern Cape, known as Jakkalsberg B, occupied during the seventh and eighth centuries AD, Lita Webley (1997a: 7; 1997b: 193-194) found a large quantity of ochre and ochre on a sheep/goat pelvis. The concentration of ochre uncovered at this site, together with the use of ochre as evidenced in the artefacts, and Khoekhoen links to fertility, menstruation and the red colour of blood, led Webley (1997b: 203) to argue that Jakkalsberg B served as a gender-specific site. In addition, the sheep/goat pelvis with ochre discovered at this site and the known association between female puberty rites and ochre-stained pelvis' of slaughtered animals, supports the view that Jakkalsberg B was used for female ritual activities.

The strong association with femininity becomes apparent with fat and sheep being the animal used in female rites. Among the Khoekhoen, a pregnant ewe or cow has also been associated with rainmaking ceremonies (Webley 1997b: 180). The animals were eaten, but the uteri were pierced so the fluid could be released into the fire, together with milk and fat that was thrown into the fire. This ceremony was performed to ensure rain (Webley 1997b:181). Of importance is the strong feminine link between sheep, pregnancy, milk, fat and rain. All of which could be equated with the latent power that resides in feminine

fertility that could be life-giving or detrimental. These aspects resonate significantly with San hunter-gatherer views.

Rock art

Some archaeologists have touched on feminine-related issues regarding depictions of sheep in the rock art. Eastwood and Eastwood (2006: 142-143) interpret a painting from the Makgabeng Plateau that includes a depiction of a female with a long apron and presumably a girl with a short apron, holding digging sticks. The length of the apron could be indicative of pre- and post-puberty rites. These images are superimposed over earlier depictions of females. Forming part of the scene is a zebra and a fat-tailed sheep. They argue that the abundant fat of the sheep would have been used instead of eland fat to ritually 'wash' or cleanse the girl on completion of her puberty ritual. It is believed that the fat that is scraped off the girl contains potency associated with females, known as *tsau n/om*. This female power is feared during menstruation periods as it can have harmful effects. *Tsau n/um* is also a fundamental life-giving power upon completion of the rituals. The Eastwood's (2006: 143) describe the combination of females and sheep in this painting as having "a great deal of symbolic force" that represents "the rich symbolism of girl's transition rites". Another site in the Mapungubwe region supports this interpretation with a depiction of a fat-tailed sheep painted on a boulder and three Khoekhoe aprons painted in the background (Eastwood & Eastwood 2006: 183).

Hollmann (2015) links images that appear to be San paintings in the northern uKhahlamba-Drakensberg at eMkhobeni Shelter to fertility. He observed that some of the images at this site are paintings that signify the first-fruits festival historically carried out by Bantu-speaking agriculturalists and customs associated with Nguni-speakers' rainmaking rites (2015b: 505). One of these motifs is an image of a large black fat-tailed sheep. This image is also one of the rare sheep paintings with decorations—it has groupings of yellow dots on its back and back legs as well as short white lines (Hollmann 2015b: 512). The black colour of the sheep is of significance as Hollmann (2015b:528) discusses the association of black animals such as black sheep with rain-making among the Nguni, the fact that they were slaughtered to ensure rain, and the role played by black sheep in modern-day Zulu (a Nguni language) rainmaking rituals. He refers to the rainmaker interviewed by Berglund (1976: 59)

who commended the merits of sheep fat in rainmaking. Consequently, Hollmann (2015b: 505) views these images as symbols of fertility of San artists who lived beside the agriculturalists, particularly regarding rainmaking, and suggests that it may have been a means for San expressing power over fertility.

The eMkhobeni sheep are not unique. Faye Lander (2014:142, 144) discusses two images of sheep at Battle Cave, in the Maloti-Drakensberg, that are also decorated and painted in association with females. These fat-tailed sheep have round and rectangular markings on their face and neck areas and chevron patterns on their back areas (Fig. 7.9).

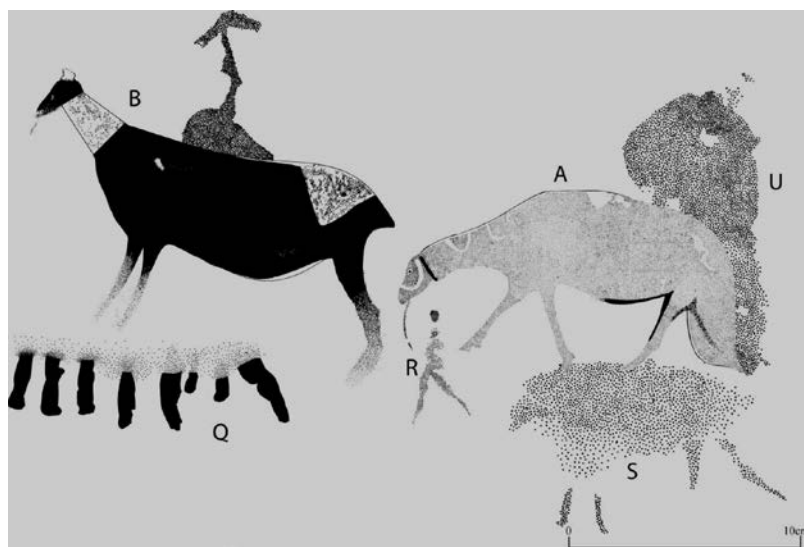


Figure 7.9. Decorated sheep, Battle Cave, Maloti-Drakensberg (from Lander 2014 fig.5.26).

Other animals at the site are also decorated and depicted with diagonal lines on their bodies. Lander (2014: 176) discusses the symbolic markings of animals regarding branding—a common custom among East African pastoralists. For the Turkana and the Nuer respectively, marking of the animals resonate with the responsibilities and relationships of the people in terms of ritual practices and as with the Nuer, the importance of age-sets and the initiation from boys to adults (Lander 2014: 186). Although, mindful of the use of ethnographic analogy far removed from San hunter-gatherers and the complexity of historicity, Lander's (2014) reference to the ritual practices of these east African groups, cultivates broader analytical approaches to 'find' genders through a third wave feminist lens. The markings on the Battle Cave sheep could be considered to be symbolic ritual markings linked to initiation practices. In Chapter Six, I discussed the context of paintings

that revealed zigzag and herringbone designs on paintings of wildebeest in Lesotho (see Loubser & Brink 1992) and crosshatching designs at Zimri Shelter to be associated with male protective powers against female potency. Surely it would not have been possible to brand wildebeest, and a more productive explanation would be designs added to paintings of animals to communicate certain aspects of San culture. Though geometric designs have in some regions a shamanistic interpretation and have been well supported by the three-stage neurological model (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1988), due to the limited depictions that relate to shamanistic aspects in the Cederberg region, I extend my investigation to consider gender as an avenue of meaning. Conceptually the iconography could have a trance origin, but I would suggest that the geometric designs depicted on the Battle Cave sheep also have a strong association with aspects of femininity as symbolised by sheep images in rock art, and more specifically with the potency that resides with newly initiated females from which others require protection (see Marshall 1999: 200–201). Similarly, paintings from the Makgabeng Plateau, for example, show sheep painted over depictions of denticulates. Denticulates viewed as geometric designs have been associated with stages of the shamanistic experience (Eastwood & Eastwood 2006; Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1988, 1989), but denticulates are also associated with the female domain and possibly signify femininity as discussed in Chapter Five.

7.5.2. Sheep, bees and elephants

In the section on shamanism in this chapter, I referred to sheep that were painted over a beehive (Huffman 1983: 51). Similarly, images of sheep in the uKhahlamba Drakensberg are painted in association with paintings of bees (Russell & Lander 2015: 319). The Didima Gorge sheep images are painted in association with approximately 1500 bees with red bodies and white wings. Thembi Russell and Faye Lander (2015: 326) refer to the Bleek and Lloyd archives that have many references to honey, and some to bees and honeycombs. Furthermore, they quote Sommerville (1979: 187) who states that the San did not steal from each other's bee's nests and that "bees are our sheep" (Russell & Lander 2015: 330). They link bees with sheep as both provide important and scarce resources for hunter-gatherers as well as the strict ownership of beehives with the ownership of sheep (Russell & Lander 2015: 330). Importantly, the connection of honey and fat with ideas regarding sex and fertility accentuates its procreative power and feminine character. The ownership of

beehives (see Lewis-Williams 2010: 8 in reference to Hahn 1870: 120; Marshall 1960: 336; Stow 1905: 86) could therefore metaphorically be extrapolated to the ownership of sexual potency of a San female. In Chapter Five, I suggested a strong link between elephants and bees and that elephants are strongly related to feminine aspects and therefore bees and honey, representative of the procreative power that resides within females, can be viewed as a metaphor of female potency. The fact that bees are also painted in association with images of sheep again suggests the feminine correlation with sheep.

The role played by sheep and elephants in San rituals and mythology seems to resonate with feminine qualities. This relationship is accentuated in the San story below as sheep are substituted by elephants in another version. Sheep, featured in this |xam story of the Early Race, are interesting in that an animal associated with pastoralists and domestication found its way into stories of the mythological past of the San, a time when there was no distinction between animals and people.

|kaggen leaves his home and goes to the home of the Ticks. These people are not relatives or friends but “black people who keep sheep”, and he goes not on a social visit, but with the intention of stealing their sheep. The Ticks see him coming and hide in their sheep’s wool. When |kaggen approaches they drop from their hiding places and beat him severely so that he is forced to escape by magically getting feathers and flying back to his home, his possessions flying faithfully behind him. Having soothed his wounds, he admits to |kwammang-a where he has been, and |kwammang-a does give him advice on how he should approach stealing their sheep if this is what he wishes to do. He tells |kaggen that he should creep up on the Ticks’ sheep, pick the Ticks one by one and drop them in the fire; then he will be free to drive the sheep away...|kaggen sleeps overnight and at dawn goes and does just as |kwammang-a advised. The ticks argue with him and say he has learned this method from |kwammang-a...He then drives away the sheep and takes them back to his home (|haŋʔkass’o’s story in Hewitt 2008: 187–188).

Mguni (2013: 185) makes a metaphoric equivalence between elephants and sheep as this story is also told by ||kabbo whose version includes elephants instead of sheep. |kaggen sets out to steal the sheep, thereby to ‘own’ the sheep. If sheep are considered as feminine metaphoric representations, could this story imply that |kaggen set out to ‘own’ or ‘possess’

females or the power they embody, similar to the ownership of honey or beehives as centres of production? The fact that |Haŋʼkass’o and ||kabbo told the same story but substituted sheep with elephants could be indicative of the feminine linkage between these two animals. A further link in the chain is the close association between paintings of sheep and elephants, both painted in the fine-line style, at some sites. Mguni (2013: 153) argues that “these images are unified in chronological and ... probably conceptual and graphic contexts”. He highlights that both sheep and elephants were painted in association with their young, i.e. cow-calf and ewe-lamb. Another site displays elephants painted in line mirrored by sheep painted in a line (see Mguni 2013: 153, 224, 225).

It appears a circular connection exists between sheep, bees/honey and elephants that all centre on feminine potency. Although fat would have been a vital food source to San hunter-gatherers, it has an array of symbolic connotations in rituals, as a source of power, and also as a metaphoric representation of fertility within female reproductive potency. The high fat content of sheep, the equation made in “bees are our sheep”, and alignment of sheep with elephants, could have been symbolic representations of these aspects of feminine power. From this gender orientated perspective I discuss the images of sheep painted at Zimri Shelter.

7.6. ZIMRI SHELTER’S SHEEP

7.6.1. Zimri’s sheep a product of ritual knowledge?

Before I investigate the different sheep images at Zimri Shelter, I explore the reason for the presence of sheep images in the region apart from them being mere indicators of pastoralist arrival. A direct correlation between the arrival of pastoralists in the south-western Cape, the presence of sheep in rock art paintings, and their immediate environment is problematic. Ultimately we need direct dating of sheep paintings to place them within the first contact period between hunter-gatherers and pastoralists to be able to use them in conjunction with archaeological evidence as chronological markers. Could hunter-gatherers not have observed sheep beyond their geographical region even before the arrival of pastoralists in the south-western Cape? Lander and Russell (2015) have gone beyond this direct correlation and explored the possibility of hunter-gatherers having contact over long distances, either through exchange systems or through the acquisition of certain items from

different regions. The presence of ostrich eggshell (OES) beads and fragments in hunter-gatherer sites in the Thukela Basin is one such example. Mazel has argued that OES was obtained from areas far away from where they were excavated (Mazel 1989). Another example cited by Lander and Russell (2015) are marine shells excavated in the mountainous region approximately 200km away from the coastal region (Mazel 1990). Sven Ouzman and Lyn Wadley (1997) also recorded marine molluscs from the Indian Ocean from the late Holocene phase at Rose Cottage Cave. The presence of these artefacts demonstrates that hunter-gatherers moved far and wide and that they were not constrained to local areas only. The movement of foreign artefacts could also imply trade and the exchange of knowledge. Knowledge and information also appear to have been distributed over great distances (see Mitchell 2002: 215, 216). Ouzman (1995) suggests that images of mormyrid fish painted at Rose Cottage Cave, approximately 200km from their natural habitat, indicate long distance ritual-knowledge exchange. Rock art could well be a conduit that reveals such exchanges. Sheep depicted in rock art could be a product of these long-distance exchanges or travels before the arrival of pastoralists to a region (Lander 2014: 92). Sadr's (2015) proposed individual frontier mobility and cultural diffusion model includes the possibility of long distance exchange networks. Lander and Russell (2015) argue for herders to paint sheep based on their first encounters with sheep on their journeys. The presence of wildebeest painted at Zimri Shelter attests to the possibility of painting a species that did not naturally occur in the area.

The association between the presence of sheep in the rock art and the arrival of pastoralists is also problematic as it implies that San hunter-gatherers were static and largely stationary, only depicting what they observed in their immediate environs. Moreover, it assumes that images of sheep were painted almost immediately upon being observed; sheep could have been in the region for a long time before the artists decided to illustrate them. Importantly, although colonial observations point to large numbers of cattle in the Western Cape from at least the 15th Century, there are only two equivocal images of cattle in the rock art of the Cederberg (see Mguni 2013: 18, 164). This would suggest a different motivation for painting sheep and not cattle than their mere presence on the landscape. Some researchers suggest the reason is that the fine-line tradition was still present when sheep moved into the Cederberg region but declined before cattle arrived (Parkington & Manhire 2003: 45).

Therefore, cattle and sheep paintings belong to different painting periods or different circumstances. I believe chronocentrism has clouded potential interpretations and that this disparate representation of sheep and cattle cannot simply be due to presence or absence in the environment; numerical quantities in the rock art are not correlated to any processes on the ground and numbers more likely indicate a cultural choice of image to depict. Sheep as a potential prestige item underscores this idea. Geographical occurrence and region-specific subject matter become questionable when one considers the possibility of disparate preservation, cultural diffusion, ‘travelling knowledge’ and exchange systems.

If sheep in the rock art are not necessarily correlated to any processes on the ground, such as pastoralist arrival (as suggested by Manhire *et al.* 1986: 26), then one should consider cultural choice in the depiction of images. Russell and Lander (2015:319-321) raise an interesting point that there is no indication in the art that the sheep were being herded. This leads them to make the compelling point that “the painters seem to have been interested in the animal, not the humans associated with it” (Russell & Lander 2015:321). If this were the case, then the cultural diffusion model of pastoralism seems appropriate as sheep could have been introduced to San hunter-gatherers through trade, before pastoralist groups arrived in the region. Zimri Shelter is one of many sites with sheep painted in association with non-shamanistic aspects and as images of sheep could have been based on cultural diffusions and extensive exchange networks, and not necessarily historic processes, the paintings of sheep require a culturally embedded interpretive approach.

7.6.2. Sheep at Zimri Shelter

Viewing sheep images through a gendered lens and a wider reading of ethnography highlighted the importance of fat, puberty rituals and fertility—all aspects of femininity. I suggested the potency held by fat and honey is rather a procreative power embodied in females than trance related potency. Similarly, as discussed in this chapter a strong link exists between sheep and honey.

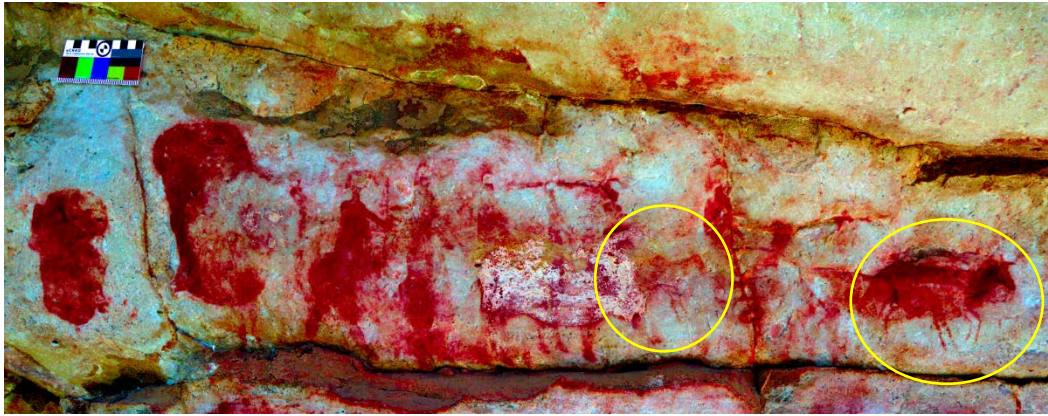


Figure 7.10. Sheep painted in association with females, Zimri Shelter (altered by DStretch).



Figure 7.11. Sheep painted in association with females, Zimri Shelter (altered by DStretch).



Figure 7.12. Digitally enhanced image of sheep moving to the right painted over feminine figures, Zimri Shelter (altered by DStretch).

In three instances at Zimri Shelter, sheep are either superimposed or painted in close association with lines of steatopygous females (Fig. 7.10, Fig. 7.11 & Fig. 7.12), presumably

linking the promise of fertile potency that resides in fat. This occurrence is mirrored by paintings in the immediate region where large yellow elephants, also strongly connected to feminine aspects, are painted over a line of females (see Chapter Five). This superimposed scene is painted close to a denticulated shape which I argued in Chapter Five was of a feminine nature, as denticulates were often depicted in association with females. Similarly, a denticulate (Fig. 7.13) is painted just below the line of superimposed females and sheep at Zimri Shelter (Fig. 7.10)—thereby strengthening their association with the female domain and possibly signifying femininity.



Figure 7.13. Denticulate depicted below images of sheep and females, Zimri Shelter (see fig. 7.10).

Some of the paintings of sheep at Zimri Shelter are depicted in close association to finger dots and smears (Fig. 7.14 & Fig. 7.15) which have been ascribed to Khoekhoe pastoralist authorship (Eastwood & Eastwood 2006: 61, 62; Smith & Ouzman 2004: 508).

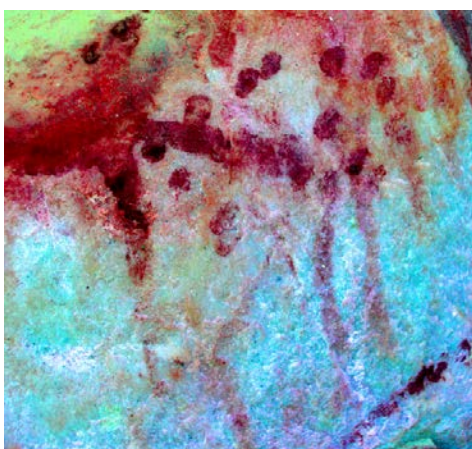


Figure 7.14. Concentration of finger dots and smears, Zimri Shelter (altered by DStretch).



Figure 7.15. A sheep depicted in association with a crude fine-line image of a hunter and dots, Zimri Shelter.

Eastwood and Eastwood (2006: 177, 178) discuss geometric depictions of the Khoekhoen, which include finger dots, that are applied to women's bodies during Khoekhoe female rites. Rudner (1982: 210) refers to "Bushman groups" where men and women use dots and stripes to make them look 'beautiful' for rituals, in particular for female initiation rites. The importance of female transitional rites and the cultural symbolism of fat as well as archaeological excavations at Jakkalsberg B, as discussed earlier, indicates an analogous relationship between the Khoekhoen and the San. The amount of cultural borrowing or integration between these groups may never be known, but the common thread entwined in female transitional phases that provides females with life-giving powers when becoming women is evident. The finger dots painted in association with sheep at Zimri Shelter therefore further allude to the feminine qualities highlighted in this chapter.

One of the sheep images at Zimri Shelter is a painting of a red sheep with facial markings (Fig. 7.16). The artist appears to have intentionally depicted diagonal lines across the face of the sheep.



Figure 7.16. Markings on the head of a sheep, Zimri Shelter (altered by DStretch).

As discussed earlier, geometric markings in rock art could arguably fit into the entoptic origin design box. However, as Zimri Shelter is in a region where paintings that relate to aspects of trance are limited and requires multiple readings (as suggested by Barnard in Solomon 2008: 76), I explore a further avenue of interpretation. I would suggest that Zimri Shelter's sheep (viewed as a feminine metaphor) with geometric designs resonate with

designs depicted on the Battle Cave sheep that are linked to initiation practices (Lander 2014). The facial markings on the sheep could be aligned with the potency that resides with newly initiated females and, as suggested by Hollmann (2015), it could be an expression of power over fertility. Consequently, this image strengthens the strong association between depictions of sheep with aspects of femininity and as symbols of fertility.



Figure 7.17. Large, white sheep, Zimri Shelter (altered by DStretch).

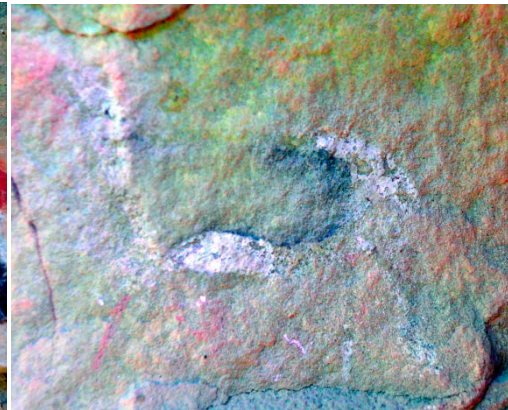


Figure 7.18. Black and white sheep, Zimri Shelter (altered by DStretch).

Zimri Shelter also has two images of sheep which are extraordinary: one large white sheep, and a black and white sheep (Fig. 7.17 & Fig. 7.18). The black and white sheep could be representative of the earlier multi-coloured *Blinkhaar* sheep as suggested, but colour, and size, of the sheep may be of significance. Hollmann (2015b: 528) highlighted the possible significance of the black colour of a large painting of a sheep as related to rain-making among the Nguni and the role black played in modern-day Zulu rainmaking rituals. Based on this he views images of black sheep as symbols of fertility of San who lived in close proximity with the agriculturalists. Solomon (1994) links size and rain; she argues that large herbivores for example have a lot of fat and are therefore in possession of *n!ow*—the potency that affects the weather. The large white sheep could metaphorically represent this life-giving and life-taking power—similar to the power possessed by fertile females.

In addition, Zimri Shelter has paintings of two sheep facing an eland in a tail-up posture (Fig. 7.19). I have argued in Chapter Four that this posture could be a possible indication of the readiness of the eland to procreate—an analogous symbolisation of the potency present within San initiates. Raised tails can therefore be associated with females and access to females and procreativity. The sheep, which represents fertile potency, depicted in

association with the eland enhances this argument. The eland and the sheep mirror the productive potency that resides within them and ultimately within females.

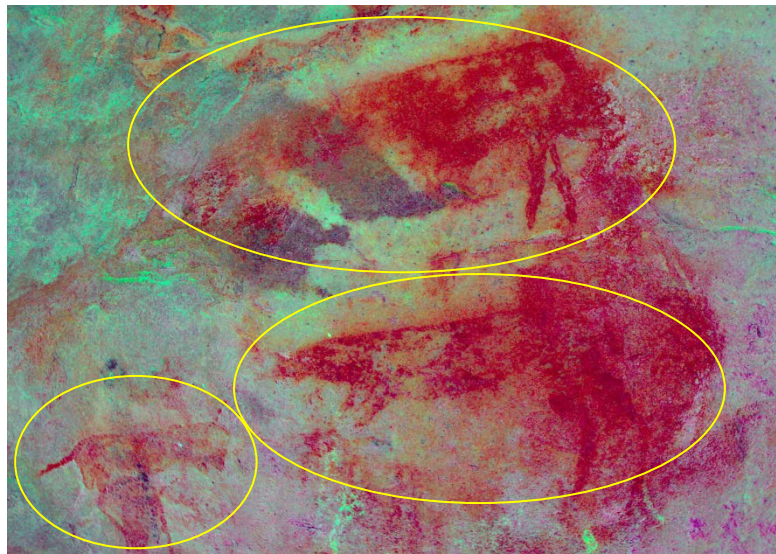


Figure 7.19. Large sheep with eland in tail-up posture, Zimri Shelter (altered by DStretch).

Sheep and eland echo each other in another aspect. The male eland, as discussed in Chapter Four, has more fat than the female eland indicating gender unification (see Power & Watts 1997: 549). Russell and Lander (2015: 323) point out that with sheep, as in the case of the eland bull, it is the ram that has the most fat and that a male lamb has more fat than an adult ewe. Sheep therefore could be viewed as sexually ambivalent as fat is normally associated with females in San thinking (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989: 119). Conceptually there is thus a movement between femininity and masculinity which through a third wave feminist viewpoint can be viewed as ‘another’ gender category. Khoekhoe pastoralists viewed girls as boys during their childhood and it is only after their puberty ritual that their femininity comes into play. This ambivalence is indicative of the liminality associated with transformational rituals such as initiation and puberty rituals that highlight the mutability of gender and “ritual metamorphosis” (Power & Watts 1997: 556). I propose that girls are possibly gender ambiguous, or viewed as a ‘third gender’ until their puberty initiation, when they are filled with feminine fertile potency.

The association between sheep, fat and gender-related aspects consequently form a strong link as supported by Khoekhoe ethnography—aspects that resonate with the San. At Zimri Shelter sheep are painted in close association with feminine related images. It appears on

various levels that sheep play either a direct or associative role with female fertility and in female-related rituals and activities.

7.7. CONCLUSION: SHEEP AND 'FEMALENESS'

The presence of fat-tailed sheep in the landscape and as rock paintings on the shelter walls, are correlated in archaeological scholarship on the Cederberg. However, knowledge of the ritual and symbolic associations of sheep could have travelled great distances, even before sheep accompanied the pastoralists to a new area. Therefore the preoccupation with the limited numbers of sheep (and cattle for that matter) in the rock art, compared to the prevalence of these domesticates as observed during colonial contact times, to be viewed as discrepancies I find rather curious (see Mguni 2013: 164). It would only be a discrepancy if we believed hunter-gatherers painted representations of what they observed in their immediate surroundings, which has been established not to be the case in the hunter-gatherer fine-line tradition. Earlier, I noted that Russell and Lander (2015:321) made the point that “the painters seem to have been interested in the animal, not the humans associated with it”. The opportunity of subject matter such as sheep offering us a possible chronological indicator in a discipline struggling to award dates to rock art, may have overshadowed the interpretation of the actual meaning of these images. Archaeologists have focused on identifying pastoralists’ arrival in the landscape as indicated by the presence of sheep and their impact. To the San, the authors of the sheep images, it may rather have been predominantly about the animal and not the pastoralists. The special qualities of sheep as a potential prestige item to be traded ahead of pastoral migration indicate a cultural diffusion that was not accompanied by dramatic ideological shifts that led to ritual reactionary painting of sheep. Archaeologists have focussed on expected change brought on by the pastoralists to the world of the hunter-gatherer, but rather than the glaring economic difference, inevitable change should not be assumed—at least not initially. I rather consider, based on the rock art evidence and ethnography, a possible natural assimilation of sheep into San culture and mythology. As a ‘cultural choice’, sheep symbolism may have changed over time and space. Anderson (1997) pointed out that styles of painting changed over time that could be indicative of changing relations between San hunter-gatherers and Khoekhoe pastoralists. The sheep images at Zimri Shelter are painted

in the San fine-line style which indicates they may have been depicted before the arrival of pastoralists. Finger dots and smears appear to be added at a later stage to the rock art panels. However, ethnography hints at a certain amount of cultural diffusion in fertility beliefs regarding sheep between the San and Khoekhoen.

The idea that there was a substitution of eland by sheep because of similarities in fat is appealing, but too simplistic. There is no ethnographic reference for sheep replacing eland. However, the valued characteristics of both eland and sheep as imbued with life-giving potency would have awarded both with ritual status. The close proximity of sheep to images of females at Zimri Shelter and other sites in the Cederberg; the images of sheep painted with feminine decorations or painted in close juxtaposition with female symbols (such as denticulates and aprons); and their close positioning to images of elephants and bees all emphasise a link between sheep and 'femaleness'. As pointed out by Hollmann (2015) and the Eastwood's (2006) for other sites, from a gendered platform, images of sheep at Zimri Shelter could well have been symbols of fertility and female transition rites.

Lander (2014: 174, 175) makes a noteworthy suggestion that the fact that sheep could be herded and 'controlled' could have powerful connotations for the San hunter-gatherers. If sheep were equated to females, then the San's 'control' of sheep would ultimately imply control of fat and the potency it holds. It is therefore not the actual herding of the animals that was significant, but rather what the animals represent, their inherent power. Having sheep, means the potency resident within sheep due to their fat is always present to be harnessed, acquired and controlled, not like having to wait and hope for an eland kill to have its potency present. The liminality associated with transitional phases encompasses a potency that could be dangerous and needs to be controlled; therefore a powerful potency resides within newly initiated females. This line of reasoning implies a strong alignment with the ever-present latent potency of females' procreative power. Therefore I would argue that the sheep with fat tails depicted at Zimri Shelter in association with lines of females, with dots and denticulates, with eland in the tails-up posture, and with facial markings, firmly places the cultural choice of this animal within the female fertility domain.

CHAPTER EIGHT:

MASCULINE, FEMININE AND OTHER BODIES



Figure 8.1. Male with a bow (i) Zimri Shelter (ii) Sevilla, Cederberg.



Figure 8.2. Female figure with a stick (i) Zimri Shelter (ii) Fallen Rock Shelter, Cederberg.

8.1. EMBODIMENT OF GENDER

So far, we have explored how issues of femininity and masculinity are intertwined with images of animals—both wild and domesticated—at Zimri Shelter and elsewhere. San rock art is notable for the fact that images of human beings and transformed human beings vastly outnumber images of animals, and this is also the case at Zimri Shelter. The high

incidence of nudity and attention to the sexual features of men and women is a significant but poorly understood aspect of San rock art. The common depiction of naked males and females, including the illustration of penises (some detailed and emphasised), breasts, buttocks and thighs (also often overstated), as depicted at Zimri Shelter and other sites in the Cederberg region (see Fig. 8.1 & Fig. 8.2), is viewed by Parkington (1989: 15) as “an intent to emphasize and draw attention to the sex of human painted images” and to be unequivocally identified as either male or female (Parkington 2002). Ethnographic accounts indicate that men and women wore breech cloths and front and back aprons respectfully. Nudity was not the norm (Schapera 1951: 65). The depiction of nude human bodies therefore implies a metaphoric representation outside the mundane sphere that requires exploration. Many San rock art images, including images at Zimri Shelter, are also non-gendered, or sexually indeterminate (Wiltshire 2011), for example human figures wearing karosses. Ambiguous images, such as feminine figures holding masculine weapons, or human or animal bodies with masculine as well as feminine characteristics (Blundell 2004: 111, 112; Dowson 2007; Solomon 1992, 1994) are also a feature of the art. According to Ouzman (1997: 73):

... there are people who are feminine or masculine or who are ambiguous, honorary, indeterminate, third or other gender. Gender identities and allegiances vary greatly in their biological and cultural manifestations, through time and also in their material culture signatures.

In this chapter, I implement third wave feminists’ pluralist concerns (discussed in Chapter Three) that include identity and difference—moving beyond binary, biologically determined categories of gender and sex. I investigate the feminine, masculine and ambiguous aspects of human images at Zimri Shelter and within the Cederberg, not only in terms of biological sexual characteristics, but also gender performativity and the embodiment of gender identities. First, I re-consider the ethnographic information concerning masculine and feminine rituals as well as gender-interpretive markers such as dress and decoration. I then consider existing gender interpretations in rock art together with paintings of human bodies at Zimri Shelter and surrounding sites in terms of gendered and ritual signatures to further understand the role played in the social construction of identities in San societies of the Cederberg region. Zimri Shelter has a variety of human bodies dominating the subject

matter (Maggs 1967a; Manhire 1981). It is not possible to show all of them, but I have selected a few in the San fine-line style to demonstrate Zimri Shelter's diversity in gendered human bodies (discussed in section 8.3).

8. 2. MASCULINE AND FEMININE INDICATORS IN ETHNOGRAPHY

The complexity and variability of socially constructed categories of 'male' and 'female' are better assigned as 'masculine' and 'feminine' (Moore 1995:30). By focusing on activity, or rather the performativity of individuals, we can see masculinity and femininity in rock art (see Butler 1990, 1993; Dowson 2007: 58; Dowson 2009: 383). In this chapter, I explore how the rock art images embody the symbolic dichotomy between becoming hunters and becoming male; and between femininity, fertility and procreativity (see Bieseke 1993: 41). This gendered division between food production and reproduction of life plays out in the performativity of life-cycle rituals of San communities based on sex and age (or what I would prefer to refer to as sexual readiness). As Bieseke (1993: 41) puts it "... production as an idea is symbolically parallel to reproduction". 'Production' and 'reproduction' are realised in initiation and transformation rites and rituals that have been richly documented in the ethnography (Barnard 1980, 1992; Bieseke 1993; Bleek 1928; Guenther, 1989, 1999; Heinz 1975; Heinz & Lee 1978; Hewitt 1986; Hoff 1995; Lee 1979; Lewis-Williams 1981; Lewis-Williams & Bieseke 1978; Marshall 1969, 1976, 1999; Schapera 1951; Shostak 1981; Silberbauer 1963, 1965, 1981; Valiente-Noailles 1993; Vinnicombe 1976). These rites instruct initiates on behavioural norms for males and females that have reached a reproductive age (Wadley 2018). The preceding chapters have discussed these rites in detail; I briefly refer here to some aspects of the female and male initiation rites.

8.2.1. Masculine rites and rituals

Marshall (1976: 177) commented on the construction of masculinity in Ju|'hoansi society as resting on two factors. One of the factors is the strength of San males, despite being small and slender individuals. The second is hunting, which is solely a male activity. Prowess as a hunter is highly regarded. Females are not allowed to be part of hunting or hunting rituals performed by men. Marshall (1976: 177) makes a statement that Ju|'hoansi beliefs place 'femaleness' in direct opposition to hunting ability. Avoidance behaviours are thus set in

place, such as females not being allowed to touch arrows; men not being allowed to have intercourse with their wives at certain times prior to or during the hunt; a lactating wife's milk is not allowed to touch her husband as it would affect the hunt negatively; and females are not allowed to be in the vicinity of hunting rituals. This differentiates the hunt as a male domain, but also accentuates the potency resident in females as discussed in the next section. Males' productive quality lies within their ability to hunt and provide for a wife and the band. Consequently, male identity is closely associated with their productivity—a man's hunting competency (Bieseke 1993: 165).

San male rituals are generally equated with boys and their hunting ability, which established their male identity as well as their readiness for marriage (Lee 1979). In Chapter Four and Six, in reference to the eland and wildebeest paintings, I discussed male initiation rites that consisted of two rituals that were practised by some San groups; the First Kill Rite and the Tshoma ritual. Both rites were underscored by scarifications and avoidances, as well as food prohibitions (Marshall 1999:154). The Tshoma ritual was an isolated instructive ritual that involved a group of boys' introduction to manhood, where the First Kill Rite was an individualistic rite.

On the boys' journey to manhood, they receive Tshoma *n/um*, the strong power of males. The initiated men are referred to as Tshoma 'owners' (Marshall 1999). As hunting, cutting of hair, tattooing and scarification played important roles within these rites (Schapera 1951), some rock art images could be viewed through the lens of masculine power. The men's dance was the dominant factor in the Tshoma ritual and being entirely male, it resonates with depictions of groups of males. Another element of these group depictions of importance, as mentioned earlier, is the many naked images of males, because the Ju|'hoansi—as are other San groups—are careful to cover their genitalia (Marshall 1976: 244). It is thus extraordinary for so many rock art images to illustrate male genitalia so explicitly. I would argue that some of the sites in the Cederberg where male groups or processions are depicted, as well as bows, arrows, and hunting bags, form part of a ritual, similar to the Tshoma ritual, that represents the receipt of masculine power.

8.2.2. Feminine rites and rituals

The presence of females and female rituals are richly documented in San ethnographic accounts, more so than the male rituals. Female rituals involve female initiation, which commences with a girl's first menstruation, as discussed in Chapter Four. According to ethnographic accounts, dances were performed in lines and with the initiands' buttocks' exposed during initiation rites. The exposure of buttocks is associated with female pubescence and fertility. Exposed buttocks can also be linked to negative potency associated with 'femaleness'. John Marshall tells a story of a girl who exposed her buttocks to men returning from the hunt; the men being aroused by this blamed the act for their subsequent loss of the wildebeest carcass to hyenas (Marshall 1999: 147). The rock art of the Cederberg region has many images of humans with breasts and exposed buttocks (no aprons), which should be considered deliberate indicators of femininity. In some cases, this femininity is supported by female images with digging sticks and attached bored stones. Bored stones are round stones with a hole that was made through its centre. They have been inferred to be weights that were affixed to digging sticks to increase the digging force of the stick. Although it could have been used by males as well, digging sticks are viewed as being part of gathering equipment and is mostly depicted in association with females (Ouzman 1997). Ouzman (1997: 73, 96) recognised bored stones as gendered material culture signatures in the rock art. He suggests, based on ethnographic sources that bored stones could reveal aspects other than just technology, which relate to gender and social relations. The story relayed earlier regarding a !xam female who was beating the ground with a bored stone to communicate with the spirit world, revealed her access to power calling on the game spirits to enhance her husband's hunting fortune (Bleek 1935: 40-43). This act would raise the productivity of her husband, which does not make the association of bored stones with the vagina—associated with reproduction—as proposed by Danel Esterhuyse (1964), as far-fetched as suggested by Ouzman. It symbolises the relationship between 'femaleness' and hunting. Moreover, bored stones may have had religious and symbolic value. An archaeological excavation discovered a bored stone in a grave, surrounded by red ochre and with fish vertebrae affixed in the hole of the bored stone. Ouzman (1997: 90) interprets the symbolic value of the bored stone as representing the

passage between the underground and spirit worlds—reaffirming the potent feminine link with the spirit world.

Menarche is related to a period of liminality; it is a transitional state which is dangerous. “A menarcheal girl not only inhabits the margin that menstruation represents, but also the margin between girlhood and womanhood. The danger she embodies is thus especially potent” (Wessels 2007: 312). A menstruating female thus occupies a liminal space between categories and has an ambiguous status. The potency that resides in females during this period also has links between the living and ancestral world. As a liminal being, she has positive and negative energy (Wessels 2007: 314). Avoidance rules apply during this period with dire consequences if they are not followed (Schapera 1951: 119; see Chapter Four). Michael Wessels (2007: 315) suggests that in this space there is a symbolic reversal of gender roles. Due to the menarcheal girl’s potency and sexual availability, the general association of women as prey inverts the position of men to being prey due to their exposure to feminine danger posed by her liminal state. Certain gender inversions that form part of this liminal period are, for example, menarcheal girls touching male weapons (see Schapera 1951: 121; Silberbauer 1981: 119). The danger of the menarcheal girl’s potency is controlled by ritual that serves to re-establish societal rules and structures (see Chapter Five on the restoration of social order). The Cederberg has many rock art depictions of females with exposed buttocks, some with digging sticks, often painted in lines, which could be considered as a projection of feminine power and the necessary control thereof by rituals.

8.2.3. Gender indicators in ethnography and rock art: dress and decoration

Looking at rock art through a gender lens requires identifying more than physical sexual bodily characteristics, but also material culture items or ritual practices that might be indicative of aspects of femininity or masculinity. Rites of passage in gendered social transformations are sometimes accompanied by symbolic ‘markings’ (Wadley 2018). Dress and decoration are two such symbolic indicators that shape gender.

Karosses and aprons are material culture items illustrated in rock art. Many humans in the south-western Cape rock art are depicted with karosses. Karosses have been aligned with initiated males (see Bleek 1928:9; Parkington 1996, 2008; Schapera 1951: 66; and Chapter Four). Wiltshire (2011: 97) argues that karosses on human images painted in side profile and

hanging down their backs are “female karosses” as they only occur on female images and are commonly painted on females that appear to be in processions. Schapera (1951: 66) noted that young girls wear small karosses that hang from their shoulders, which supports Wiltshire’s suggestion. The female image at Bushman’s Kloof, east of Zimri Shelter, painted in side-view with a short kaross hanging from the shoulders appears to be a young girl with a short kaross (Fig. 8.3). Her femininity is further suggested by her well-rounded body and exposed steatopygous buttocks representing well-being and sexual readiness.



Figure 8.3. Female figure with a short kaross, Bushman’s Kloof, Cederberg.

Large karosses were worn by women who were married (Marshall 1976: 244; Schapera 1951: 66). As breasts and penises are covered in kaross-clad figures, researchers have often ascribed gender, based on hunting equipment or digging sticks (Parkington 2002, 2003; Parkington & Manhire 2003: 360). I would suggest that a kaross-wearing individual with no gendered equipment is intentionally sexually ambiguous, being neither masculine nor feminine. Whether the human was male or female may have been irrelevant based on age and status categories. Gender roles are not fixed and individuals may undergo different gendered social transformations throughout their lifecycle (Wadley 2018). Post-menopausal females, for example, do not hold powerful creative potency anymore and therefore may not be strongly associated with feminine identity. Similarly, old men were allowed to partake in female puberty dances (see Chapter Four). I would consider non-gendered kaross-clad humans to be part of an age-status category (see also Lenssen-Erz’s discussion on “The third gender” 1997).

An essential part of female dress is aprons. Aprons are important cultural indicators of female status change among the Central San. Girls wear small fringed front aprons where older girls and women wear back and front aprons, indicative of the status change that takes place after menarche. Aprons could serve as material culture indicators and visual categorical changes in rock art concerning female age-set status. Depictions of aprons are also symbolically loaded. Front aprons are symbols of female sexuality (Marshall 1999: 147). Men are not allowed to touch front aprons as it may deter them from hunting. The back apron covers the buttocks, which is also strongly associated with sex (Marshall 1999: 147). Aprons, similar to buttocks, therefore have sexual connotations. As a result, aprons have supernatural potency—some Kalahari shamans, for example, may wear female aprons during medicine dances to harness the potency with which the apron is infused (Eastwood & Eastwood 2006: 154).

Ornaments are worn by all women, children and younger men among San groups (Schapera 1951: 66). Body decorations were in some instances possibly decorative, but in other instances they were closely associated with ritual activity (Rudner 1982; Silberbauer 1981:151-52; Vinnicombe 1976: 254). San men and women wore decorations made of animal skins or beading (made from ostrich eggshell) in the form of bands around their legs, just below their knees, or around their ankles, as well as around their waists, arms and heads (Schapera 1951: 66; Vinnicombe 1976: 252-253). San women, for example, wore strands of beads around their waists, as well as necklaces, bracelets and hair ornaments for which ostrich eggshell beads were often used (Bleek 1928; Schapera 1951: 66-67).

Facial and body painting, scarification, and hair-cuts were often related to initiation and marriage rituals (Vinnicombe 1976: 253). Female initiates are ritually marked on their bodies and faces (Marshall 1999: 200). Schapera (1951: 67) wrote of young women, girls and in some instances young men, who painted their faces and bodies, particularly before dances. The facial and body paintings included dots, stripes and zigzag patterns (see Hoff 1990: 180; Rudner 1982; and Chapter Seven). Marshall (1976: 41) noted that all Jul'hoansi women were scarified on their thighs and buttocks (Fig. 8.4) which Marshall believes to have formed part of the fertility ritual as scarification took place when girls were approximately twelve (see

also Schapera 1951: 70-71). Similarly, many of the men's scarifications relate to puberty and hunting, as discussed in Chapter Six. As we have seen, Hollmann (2014) argues that certain designs possibly offered protection for the new initiate (Chapter Six). Figure 8.5 is a rock art depiction that could represent such ritual markings.



Figure 8.4. Ju|'hoansi woman with scarifications (from Marshall 1976: 40).



Figure 8.5. Possible ritual markings depicted in the rock art, Maloti-Drakensberg (courtesy of Rock Art Research Institute, University of the Witwatersrand).

Another ritual practice that can be linked with transitional rituals is the cutting of hair. In some cases, husband and wife had their heads shaven in similar patterns (Silberbauer 1963: 20). Among the Khoekhoen a young girl's head was shaved after her first menstruation (Schapera 1951:278). The *n!ow* of a person has a strong presence in the hair of individuals and has been associated with clouds. The hair of a person with, for example, "rain-bringing *n!ow*", will be burnt to influence the weather (Marshall 1999: 170-171). Knowing the link a menarcheal girl has with *n!ow* power supports the shaving of their heads.

So far I have explored whether masculine and feminine indicators can be detected in the ethnography, which embodies a 'production'-'reproduction' dichotomy. This dichotomy, rooted in male hunting versus female procreation, is realised in transformational rites and is metaphorically represented by the human body (Joyce 2005: 140). The human body thus represents lived experience through, for example, the Tshoma and girl's puberty rites associated with exposure of penises, buttocks, group gatherings and dancing. Some features

associated with these rituals are visible in the rock art on human bodies as surfaces of inscription, such as markings, decorations and dress. In some instances, animals have served as surfaces of inscription that indicate a “ritual relationship” between these animals and humans (Vinnicombe 1976: 257; see also Chapters Six and Seven). Previous chapters also revealed the engendered roles played by animals in San narratives. The next section further explores whether transformational rites and the masculine-feminine dichotomy is extended to San stories.

8.2.4. Gender in stories

Gender is a central theme in narratives concerning the First Order—a mythical time that precedes the present San order of existence when the people of this distant time, the ambiguous Early Race, had human and animal characteristics with no species separation (Bleek & Lloyd 1911; Guenther 1999; Jeursen 1994; Marshall 1962). During the First Order boundaries weren’t set and current social norms such as eating, sharing, marriage, kinship, and rules associated with menstruating females were contravened (Guenther 1999). Stories of the First Order serve to underpin social beliefs and practices (e.g. menarcheal danger and taboos) (Hewitt 1986).

The Bleek and Lloyd collection has at least 16 initiation-related narratives that include references to the ‘new maiden’ and the deity !khwa. !khwa is a mythical being that embodies rain and is associated with weather conditions (Bleek 1933a&b; Bleek & Lloyd 1911; Hewitt 1986; Hollmann 2004; Jeursen 1995; Wessels 2010). These narratives indicate a special relationship between !khwa and females, of which many tell of ‘new maidens’ disrespecting !khwa and as contraveners of taboos associated with a girl’s first menstruation and the devastating outcomes (Bleek 1933a: 299-300; B-XXVII.2609-2618 & LVI-1.3930-3958, quoted in Solomon 1995: 110; Guenther 1999). It is believed that menstrual blood attracts the malicious rain animal as bodily fluids are potent and can affect the weather (Marshall 1957; Solomon 1995). The ‘new maiden’ is taught to respect !khwa as well as her own power and how to protect her people from !khwa’s wrath (Hollmann 2004). Other narratives allude to the creative power of the ‘new maiden’, for example when rebelling against her menarcheal seclusion and food taboos she created the Milky Way by casting ashes up into the sky (Bleek & Lloyd 1911: 72-79; LII-28.2505-2524, in Solomon 1995: 109; Hewitt 1986: 280-281). Menarcheal girls are believed to be imbued with potency likened to

the power of !khwa (Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2004). Diä!kwain, a !xam San, said that “when she is a maiden, she has the rain’s magic power” (L.V. 13.4989 in Lewis-Williams 1981; and see Bleek 1933a: 309). The feminine rain can be compared to menstrual blood; as the rain will fertilise the land with soft rain; similarly, the blood is a sign of female fertility. It symbolises the acts of creation and procreation. The ‘new maiden’s’ potency may also negatively impact on hunting successes and are therefore not allowed to look at hunters, or handle their weapons as it could anger !khwa (Hollmann 2004). Menarcheal girls, therefore, have an impact on production due to their powers of fertility and reproduction.

These stories do not just highlight the powerful role played by feminine aspects in San cosmology, but also the feminine-masculine interplay between the female initiate and masculine-ascribed beings such as !khwa, and phenomena such as “male” rain. Based on these and other ethnographic records that relate to the strong connection that exists between women and rain, and their creative powers, young menarcheal girls are in possession of high levels of potency during their first menses that could potentially be very dangerous (Bleek 1933: 297-299; Lewis-Williams 1981; Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2004: 153-154). This “strong negative potential” (Solomon 1992: 296-297) of a menarcheal female and the close association between this negative potency and rain is dangerous if uncontrolled (Stevenson 1995: 92). The need for boundaries during this liminal period becomes clear in these narratives.

Gender markers seem to be an important element in San narratives. Narratives, for example, include references to a pubic apron being thrown by a female hare to the male moon; the birth of the male trickster by a ‘new maiden’ who impregnated herself; a female ant-eater transforming therianthropes into animals; the masculine status of !khwa; and the San trickster deity portrayed in most instances as male and named ‘penis’ (Guenther 1989: 52-54; Guenther 1999: 105). However, the narratives also reveal the role liminality played. For example, |kaggen may disguise himself in some cases as a female carrying a digging stick (normally associated with femininity) and visits a ‘new maiden’ in seclusion, which is taboo for males and therefore another feminine act (LVIII-3.6271-6303, quoted in Solomon 1995: 114). The stories thus affirm that gender plays a prominent role in San society and is purposefully ascribed to characters and mythical beings; sexual ambivalence and gender fluidity are also present conceptually. San narratives with engendered and ambiguous

characters are indicative of the richness of the ethnography concerning femininity and masculinity. The many references, especially to menarcheal females and their potential procreative power, and the negative effect it can have on the masculine domain of hunting, highlights the social beliefs and practices necessary to underpin categories and boundaries, which are often blurred during transitional states. Gendered divisions and interplay between the productive (hunting) and reproductive spheres are evident in the ethnography and narratives. The next section investigates its extension to rock art.

8.3. ZIMRI SHELTER

Researchers have identified aspects of gender in the art, but not this dichotomy between hunting and reproduction. Parkington (2002), for example, identifies initiation practices in south-western Cape rock art, but focuses on ‘man the hunter’ rather than the mutual construction of masculinity and femininity. Solomon (1992, 1995), on the other hand, focuses predominantly on the presence and power of feminine images. Zimri Shelter presents the opportunity to consider evidence of both masculine and feminine gender constructs contextually in combination with surrounding rock art sites through gendered and ritual signatures. I describe the various human images at Zimri Shelter in terms of the recorded panels that they occur in due to the numerous depictions of human bodies. I also refer to sites in the region that support the representation of gender constructs and ritual signatures in the Cederberg, but are not present at Zimri Shelter.

Panels 17-21 (Fig. 8.6) have an exceptional array of masculine and feminine bodies represented in many different images: naked males, naked females, karossed humans, seated, standing and walking figures, as well as processions, including the naked wildebeest therianthropes (discussed in Chapter Six). Generally, the centre to the top region appear to be masculine, painted in association with male hunting equipment, and the bottom right depict more feminine orientated images with processions of naked females (some faded).



Figure 8.6. Panels 17-21 of masculine and feminine bodies, Zimri Shelter.

Zimri Shelter, as in the adjacent kloof-systems of the Cederberg, has many human images that appear to be intentionally naked. Another common depiction in south-western Cape rock art, and painted at Zimri Shelter, are humans in processions, lines or groups and are normally single sex with some examples of both males and females (Parkington 2002). In reference to these depictions in the rock art of the south-western Cape, Parkington and Manhire (2003: 38) identify ritual performances that include boys and girls initiation rites.

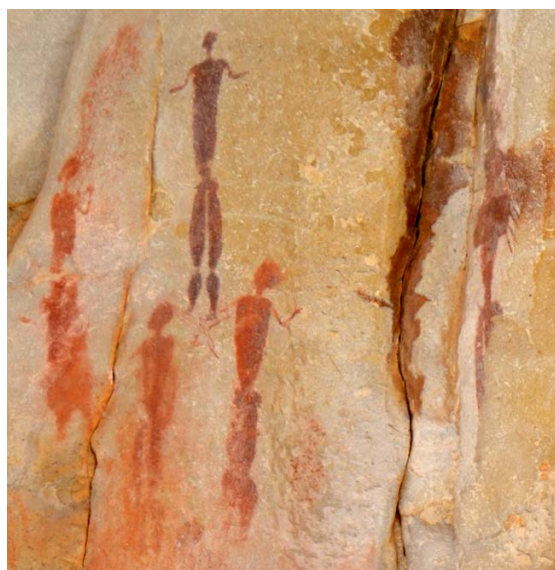


Figure 8.7. A grouping of naked human figures with penises (panel 20-21), Zimri Shelter.



Figure 8.8.



Figure 8.9.

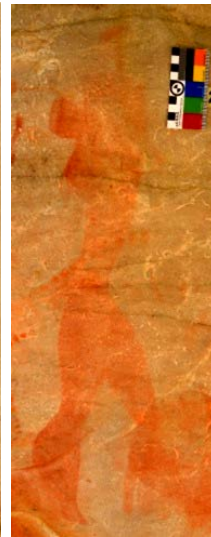


Figure 8.10.



Figure 8.11.

Figure 8.8. A male figure (panel 4-5); Figure 8.9. Two male figures (panels 5-7); Figure 8.10. Figure with masculine characteristics (panel 24-25); Figure 8.11. Male figure with a triple-curved bow (panel 22-23) (all images from Zimri Shelter).

The images in panel 20-21, as well as additional images in panels 4-7 and 24-25, are images of naked humans that are explicitly male in terms of biological ascription as penises are depicted (Figs 8.7-8.11). Marshall's (1976: 177) impression of San males portraying physical strength is possibly underscored by the images appearing elongated, slender (see Solomon 1994, 1995) and in some instances with exaggerated calves as statements of their masculinity (Yates 1993; Chapter Three). The dark-red image in panel 20-21 wears ritual decorative bands around his knees (Fig. 8.7). Panel 22-23 has a naked male human shooting a triple curved bow (Fig. 8.11)—hunting being the second masculine indicator (Marshall 1976: 177). The human image in panel 24-25 is an example of a painting of a human without a sexual biological ascription, but which portrays typical masculine characteristics such as being large, with big calves and carrying a hunting bag (Fig. 8.10). Contextually panel 20-21 of the rock art shelter has a strong masculine overtone and as a single sex grouping could be indicative of masculine initiation ritual (Fig. 8.7). Based on Butler's (1993) argument that gender identity categories are constructed through performative rituals, this depiction of a male initiation rite aligns with third wave feminism's masculinist viewpoint of bodies signifying 'what it means to be a man'.

Zimri Shelter's panel 20-21 also has a procession of naked females with exposed buttocks holding sticks (Fig. 8.12). These images fit Solomon's (1994, 1995) description of humans with feminine characteristics which include fatness, roundness and exaggerated calves. Eastwood and Eastwood's (2006:142, 143) informants—who were Nharo and Khwe women—referred to puberty rites when they were shown processions of female images. Also, Anderson (1997) argued that the smearing of fine-line big-game animals (see Chapter Six) and females, as is evident in this panel, relates to hunter-prey symbolism and are linked to San males' construction of social and gender identity. He also highlights a connection between smearing, Khoekhoe menarcheal rites and the possible dangers it holds. This scene of a procession of single-sex females is almost certainly a representation of the powerful menarcheal rite. As one of the life-cycle rituals, the menarcheal rite exposes the body as fluid. The performativity of this ritual constructs feminine identity categories and through the process of materialisation, boundaries are created.



Figure 8.12. Procession of naked females with exposed buttocks holding sticks (panel 20-21), Zimri Shelter (altered by DStretch).

Panels 17-21 offer more than just the array of masculine and feminine human bodies; it also includes the wildebeest therianthropes and associated images (Fig. 8.13). Besides the strong masculine association with wildebeest as discussed in Chapter Six, these bodies display clear ritual adornment around their, necks, arms, waists and knees, including masculine ritual “adornment”—infibulated penises which, as suggested, are associated with initiation rituals and possibly play a role as taboo implementations for males to refrain from sexual intercourse (to avoid female potency) and urination that could negatively affect the

outcome of their hunt and ultimately their productivity (Vinnicombe 1976: 257, 258; see also Schapera 1951: 70-71). The images also appear to be in a procession that would align them with a ritualistic representation.



Figure 8.13. Wildebeest therianthropes, Zimri Shelter.



Figure 8.14. Kaross-clad humans mimicking the wildebeest therianthropes (panel 19-20), Zimri Shelter.

Three of the kaross-clad humans in panel 19-20 seem to be mimicking the wildebeest therianthropes in terms of posture, holding hunting equipment, ritual adornment and even having beards as wildebeest do (Fig. 8.14) (see Chapter Six). Their karosses display detailed crosshatching, which is linked to initiation rituals and protective designs during transformative periods (see Hollmann 2014 and Chapter Six). Parkington (1996, 2008) asserts that initiated males who are successful hunters are implied through kaross-clad figures projecting readiness for marriage. The symbolism implied is that of identity transformation that links hunting and sex (Parkington *et al.* 1996: 228). The three humans with large karosses, especially painted in association with the wildebeest therianthropes (Fig. 8.13 & Fig. 8.14) as part of the process of masculine transformation, affirm their symbolic link to masculine ritual and the creation of masculine identity. Among them is one tall upright figure wearing an exceptionally long red kaross without cross-hatching and has a white face. This human has no clear gender markers, and in line with third wave feminism's more inclusive approach, is more likely an age-status representation (see section 8.2.3).

Panels 17-19 present a collection of human figures that reveal interesting scenes (Fig. 8.15 & Fig. 8.16). On the right, next to the wildebeest therianthropes, are two more tall, red-

karossed figures with one displaying detailed, beaded decoration around its neck—ornaments being ritual signatures closely associated with ritual activities as discussed earlier. The figure on the left is holding something similar to a flywhisk. Above their heads are bags and hunting equipment which could be indicative of a masculine ascription. Also, these images are painted over what appears to be a male procession. To the left of these images are two seated figures wearing yellow karosses, of which one is incised in a cross-hatched pattern. Both figures have extensive neck decorations and detailed hair. The image on the left also has arm and neck decorations. The two figures appear to be busy with bags. To the left of the yellow karossed figures are three black seated figures. The two on the left are wearing karosses, and the one on the right appears to be naked, unless the white paint residue to the left of its body indicates a type of kaross. This image is holding a flywhisk. The centre figure is wearing neck decorations, holding a bow and has a detailed hunting bag painted on its back. The figure is painted over a red human figure that could have formed part of the male procession in the background. The third black figure on the left is not as clear and has possibly been smeared or scratched over. A small red human with a bow is painted over the centre figure's hunting bag. The human is aiming at an antelope that is facing back towards the human (Fig. 8.17). The antelope is depicted in a tail-up posture which has been associated with feminine sexual readiness and could therefore be a metaphoric representation of 'women as meat' and gender difference. More black figures extend to the left as well as red figures (of which one is a male with a bow), but exfoliation and weathering have unfortunately impacted on some of the images.

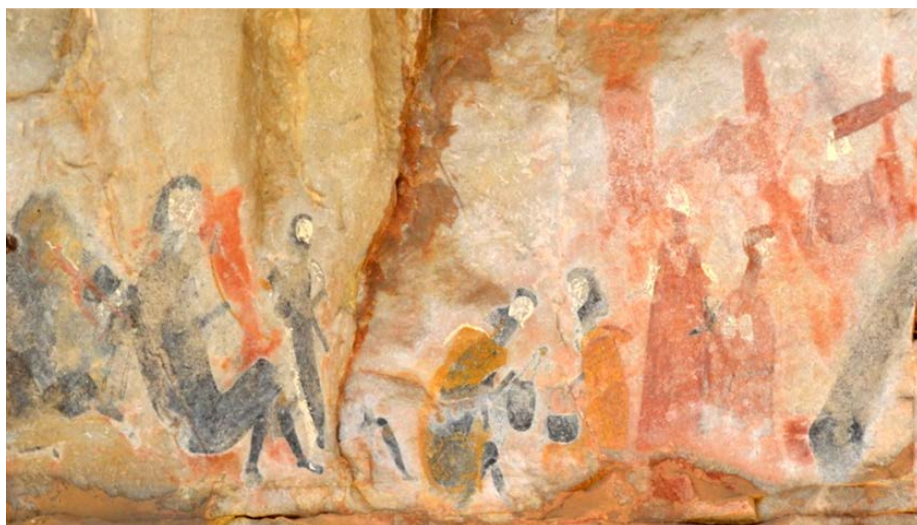


Figure 8.15. Collection of human figures (panels 17-19), Zimri Shelter.

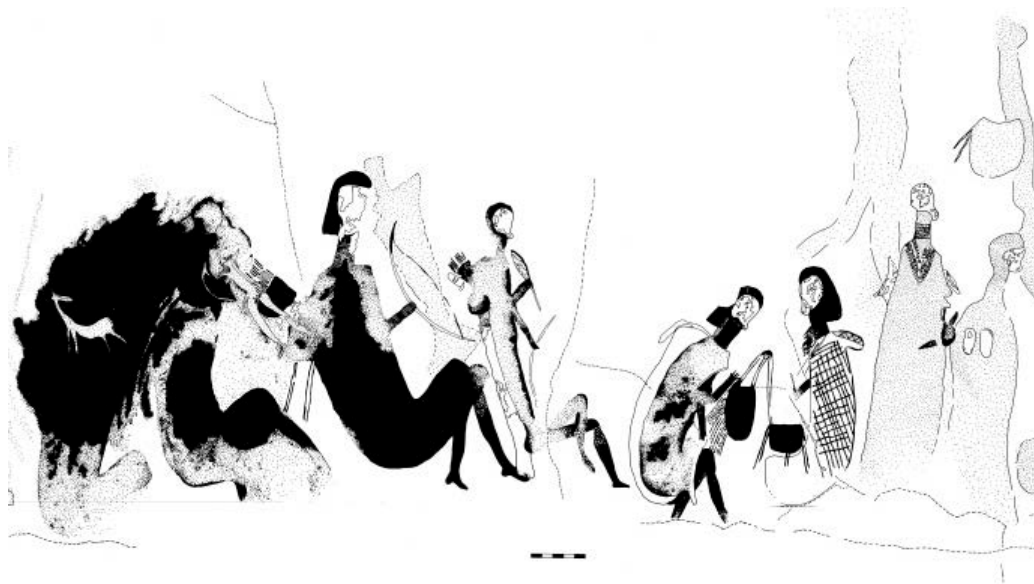


Figure 8.16. Tracing of panels 17-19, Zimri Shelter (courtesy of Stephen Townley Bassett).



Figure 8.17. Hunting figure and antelope in tail-up posture (panel 17-18), Zimri Shelter.

This scene across panels 17-19, I suggest, has dominant masculine overtones due to the presence of male hunting equipment being in close association with the masculine wildebeest therianthropes as well as being superimposed on a possible male procession in the background. The karossed figures, seated and standing, clearly have no biological sexual ascription, but due to the masculine overtone are most probably also male and could indicate men who have already been initiated. The one smeared figure could represent an affirmation of masculine identity, as discussed by Anderson (1997). However, it is important that the identity of these karossed figures does not rest on their masculine status alone as they may represent a variable other than an initiated individual who has received their Tshoma *n/um*, such as an 'elder' status. 'Age' status, or 'experience' status, should strongly

be considered and not only gender, as gender may become irrelevant in advanced age and different social categorisations come into play. Third wave feminism enables the consideration of different levels of personhood. The images also display a certain amount of decoration, which is indicative of the ritual nature of this masculine scene. The collection of images—naked humans, transformative beings, karossed figures, the hunter—all with a strong masculine association, resonate with the Tshoma instructive ritual as discussed. The performative value of a masculine ascriptive ritual creates gender identity categories.

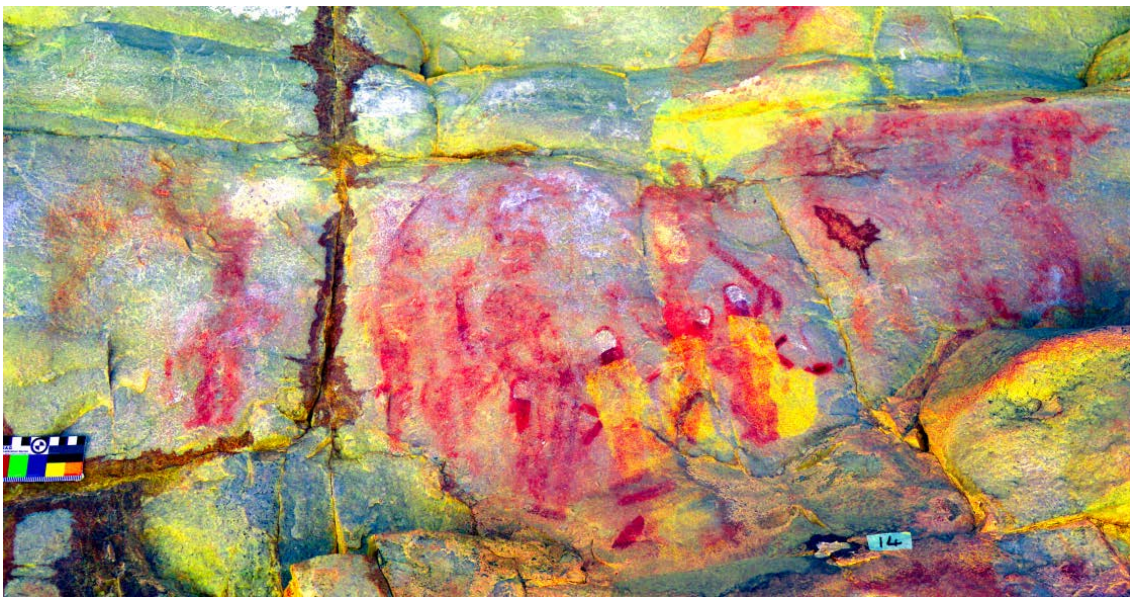


Figure 8.18. Kaross-clad seated figures and a procession of humans (panels 13-15), Zimri Shelter (altered by DStretch).

In panels 13-15 a similar scene as in panels 17-19 occur with yellow karossed seated figures, some facing each other, painted over a procession of red humans moving to the right (Fig. 8.18). One of the large red figures resembles other masculine images. The figure on the far left is separated from the group and facing left and is almost certainly a female due to the shape of the body and the presence of steatopygia. The red figures are however all faded. This variety of human figures continues on the panel below the seated karossed figures.



Figure 8.19. Naked females holding sticks, Zimri Shelter.

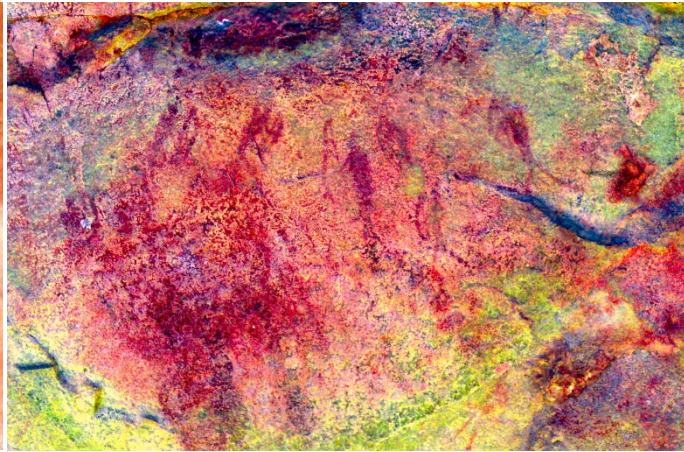


Figure 8.20. Procession of human figures with bows, Zimri Shelter.

Painted in red immediately below these images, are naked females holding sticks, of which the left image has a bored stone attached to the stick (Fig. 8.19). Depicted further below the females is a procession of hunters holding bows (Fig. 8.20). The red images are not very clear and have possibly been smeared. This panel appears to be representative of gender interplay within the San masculine-feminine dichotomy and symbolises a mutual construction of identity.

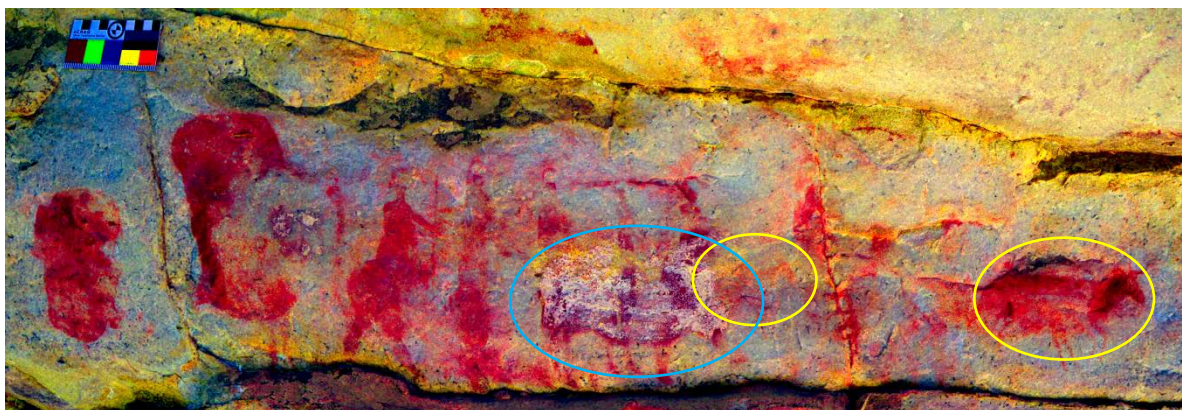


Figure 8.21. Feminine figures painted in association with eland and sheep (panel 5-6), Zimri Shelter (altered by DStretch).

Panel 5-6 is a panel which I believe is a powerful feminine representation linked to the menarcheal rite. Depicted to the left of the panel are humans wrapped in large karosses next to naked females with breasts, steatopygia and digging sticks. Painted in association with these images are eland and images of sheep (Fig. 8.21). Besides the biological sexual characteristics, the large karossed images and equipment, of interest are the eland and

sheep that form part of this panel. In Chapter Four, I argued that eland have a strong feminine association and are linked to the menarcheal rite as a symbol of fat, rain, fertility and procreativity. Sheep, as discussed in Chapter Seven, are similarly associated with fat, puberty rituals and fertility. As a result, this scene makes a strong statement of feminine identity construction and the reproductive quality that resides within fertile females. The transformational feminine body requires control, and categories that create boundaries are materialised through menarcheal rituals and rock art.

Feminine potency is further expressed in a depiction at Zimri Shelter of a figure (Fig. 8.22 & Fig. 8.23) that resonates with Solomon's (1995) ambiguous 'mythic women' (Fig. 8.24) (see also Thorp's 2015 interpretation). Bodies are represented in different forms, and the broadened interpretive approach of third wave feminism provides a framework to consider ambiguity. The figure is splay-legged and appears to be wearing a decorated apron that resembles a nested design. The ethnographic section indicated the role aprons play as cultural indicators of feminine status change and its powerful sexual connotations. The feminine characteristics are counteracted by the masculine quiver with arrows on its back, and the figure is painted in close proximity to a hunting bag which forms part of the masculine domain.



Figure 8.22. Splay-legged figure with hunting equipment (panel 23-24), Zimri Shelter.



Figure 8.23. Tracing of the splay-legged figure, (courtesy of Stephen Townley Bassett).

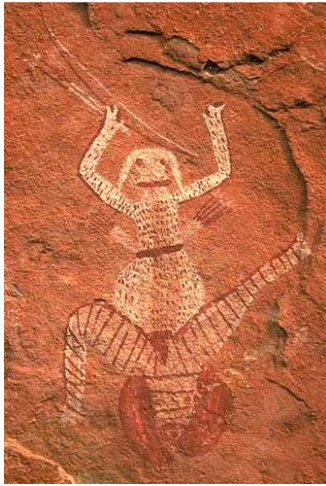


Figure 8.24. 'Mythic woman', Willcox Shelter, Maloti-Drakensberg (courtesy of Rock Art Research Institute).



Figure 8.25. Splay-legged figure with emission, Prins Willemsklip, Western Cape (courtesy of University of Cape Town).

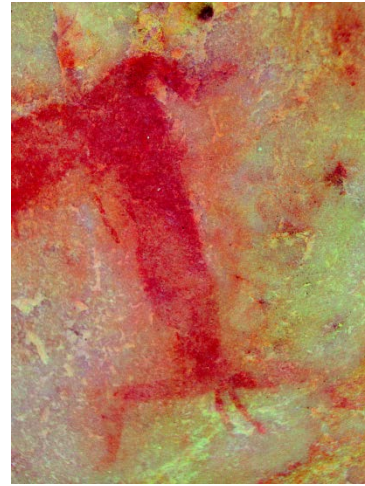


Figure 8.26. Splay-legged figure with enlarged genitals, Zimri Shelter.

This image could be representative of female initiation and the associated 'negative potential' (Solomon 1992: 296). As mentioned earlier, menarcheal females were not allowed to touch hunting equipment as a taboo to control feminine fertility, but during times of liminality, categorical inversion occurred (Solomon 1995). It could also be a symbolic representation of a female initiand as 'the keeper of the arrows' before she infuses it with potency. Ethnographic records reveal a close association between rain, hunting and this negative potency imbued in females. The ability of females to reproduce and release *n/ow* potency, also linked to large herbivores (Chapter Four), with the discharge of amniotic fluid during birth spilt on the ground, has a strong connection to beliefs of good and bad weather, and birth and death (Solomon 1992; 1994). Solomon reinterprets south-western Cape images in terms of these gender metaphors (Fig. 8.25). She (1992: 313; 1995: 178) argues that images of rounded splay-legged figures, referred to as 'mythic women' and some with emissions (menstrual or amniotic), enlarged genitals and 'hand-to-groin' figures are symbolic of female initiation, and ultimately of feminine gender and sexuality. Another image (Fig. 8.26) of Zimri Shelter is firmly positioned within this argument. The splay-legged figures at Zimri Shelter are therefore depictions of ambiguous human bodies associated with female initiation and liminal states.



Figure 8.27. A collection of human bodies with masculine gender overtones (panel 22-23), Zimri Shelter (altered by DStretch).

Panel 22-23 demonstrates the rich gender symbolism that Zimri Shelter displays (Fig. 8.27). To the left of the splay-legged figure are two figures wearing big karosses with detailed neck decorations, which are potential non-gendered humans—a ritual display of age-category status. These figures are flanked to their left by a naked male holding arrows. The male has neck decorations, a chevron-patterned waist band and knee bands. He also has a white face and detailed hair. Nudity, together with the hunting equipment and ritual decorations aligns this body symbolically with initiation events and signifies its masculine status. The images of human bodies at Zimri Shelter express intentional gendered messages—masculine, feminine and other—based on gender signatures (or the absence thereof), activities, and associations.

Gender symbolism at other sites in the Cederberg region

Much of the gender symbolism in the art of the Cederberg region is embedded in masculine and feminine performance rites that relate to hunting and fertility, and in some instances to a dichotomous powerplay. Sites surrounding Zimri Shelter indicate a link between the art and the menarcheal rite. The Salmanskraal humans are naked females, painted in procession, with exposed breasts and buttocks and the prominent feminine characteristic of steatopygia (Fig. 8.28). In addition, they are clapping which underscores the ritualistic

nature of this depiction. The feminine identification is enhanced by the females being superimposed by large yellow elephants (refer to the link between females and elephants in Chapter Five). Other sites represent the masculine-feminine dichotomy. A scene depicted at Truitjieskraal in the Cederberg is a procession of females clapping, with breasts and some have back aprons. To their right is a human figure with an exaggerated penis (Fig. 8.29). At another site, Charlie Brown (east of Zimri Shelter), a procession of naked females with exposed buttocks, moves towards a male hunter (Fig. 8.30). These metaphoric representations illustrate Bieseke's (1993) 'women like meat' and the symbolism of the menarcheal rite embedded in the rock art. The masculine-feminine dichotomy represented at these sites act as metaphors for third wave feminism's construction of gender difference to create complementarity between males and females for society to function (Gilchrist 1999: 8).



Figure 8.28. Female procession with superimposed elephants, Salmanskraal, Cederberg.



Figure 8.29. Female procession painted in association with a figure with an exaggerated penis, Truitjieskraal, Cederberg.



Figure 8.30. A procession of naked females moving towards a male hunter, Charlie Brown, Cederberg.

Zimri Shelter is also not unique when it comes to masculine performance rites; other sites in the Cederberg region resonate with the idea that male initiation rituals were depicted. For example, Sonya's Cave's (east of Zimri Shelter) humans are depicted in processions of naked males. The one set (Fig. 8.31) has exaggerated tall males with big calves, which appear to be a typical stylistic masculine depiction within this region. The sense of a masculine ritual is accentuated by another procession of naked males painted over the procession of large males. Two yellow karossed figures also form part of this scene. Elephant Hunt Shelter, within the same region, has a large procession of naked males moving towards the right (Fig. 8.32). The large number of grouped males echo aspects of the masculine Tshoma ritual that involved a group gathering (and dances) of only males, where elders would instil Tshoma *n/um* into the boys. Also, the larger karossed figures are possibly representative of the male elders that lead this masculine instructive ritual. The Tshoma initiated boys into manhood—a construction of gender difference metaphorically represented through these images.



Figure 8.31. Procession of males painted over a procession of larger males, Sonya Lower, Cederberg.



Figure 8.32. Large procession of naked males, Elephant Hunt, Cederberg.

Two sites within Zimri Shelter's geographical region have examples of depictions of human bodies that stimulate new research approaches and interpretations based on the findings in this thesis.



Figure 8.33. A feminine scene, Sevilla, Cederberg (altered by DStretch).



Figure 8.34. Close-up of seated naked females, Sevilla, Cederberg (altered by DStretch).

This first shelter at Sevilla includes two rows of seated figures (Fig. 8.33). The top row is comprised of naked females with their legs pulled up (Fig. 8.34), and a row of bags that is painted above them. Below them is another row of similarly seated figures that appear to be wearing karosses. The artist made a clear distinction between the naked seated figures and the karossed seated figures below, however, both groups are painted in a similar fashion. I would argue that the artist depicted a feminine scene, possibly a puberty ritual, with an age-set categorical difference where the naked females depict the young, productive female initiates and the karossed figures represent the female elders. As such, this scene is a metaphor for social issues that relate to feminine categorisation.

Painted in the right section of this scene is a procession of tall red human figures with large calves, which would potentially categorise them as masculine. The tall figure on the left is also painted over a procession of eight karossed humans moving to the left. Although this scene was initially painted as a feminine representation, it has subsequently been dominated by the superimposed strong male figures. This could be an indication of the masculine control imposed on the feminine creative power represented by the feminine ritual scene. The polarity between the masculine and feminine categorised domains, created through difference, and the need for social order is potentially expressed in this scene.

South of Zimri Shelter is the second shelter known as Kriedouwkrantz that has some of the most extraordinary images in the Cederberg. Kriedouwkrantz has many human images wrapped in karosses (Fig. 8.35 & Fig. 8.36). None of these images have any feet illustrated.

In addition, some have emanating lines and decorations. Of particular interest are some of the distinct white faces with detailed facial decoration as well as prominent hairstyles. All of these aspects resonate with feminine characteristics, as discussed above, during the menarcheal period where girls are wrapped in karosses during their menses, a rite accompanied by facial and hair decoration. Among the one group of wrapped humans is an image of a snake (Fig. 8.36)—an animal closely associated with menstruating girls (refer to the strong feminine link in the story of ‘the python girl’ in Chapter Five; see also Hoff 1990). The snake appears to have a similar hooked head as the human images which suggests that it would have also had a white face similar to the menarcheal images—a possible characteristic of the menarcheal rite.



Figure 8.35. Wrapped karossed figures with emanating lines, Kriedouwkrantz, Cederberg.



Figure 8.36. Grouping of wrapped karossed figures and snake-like figure, Kriedouwkrantz, Cederberg.

One of the paintings with facial decorations and a distinctive hairstyle at Kriedouwkrantz resonates with a photograph of a G|wi girl (Fig. 8.37) after her puberty ceremony. This image sheds some light on a painting at Fallen Rock Shelter, close to Zimri Shelter, that has been an enigma to me and that fits the mould of a denticulate image (see Chapter Five for a discussion on denticulates). The girls are beautified after their menarcheal seclusion. Their hair plays an important role as does dress, decoration and markings. In the images below, there seem to be a resemblance between the hair of an initiate and the similarly decorated facial markings and hairstyle of a painting at Kriedouwkrantz (Fig. 8.38). The shape of the hairstyle at Kriedouwkrantz echoes the denticulate shape at Fallen Rock Shelter (Fig. 8.39) and other denticulate shapes associated with femininity.



Figure 8.37. G|wi girl after her puberty ceremony (from Silberbauer 1965: 85).



Figure 8.38. Facial decoration and detailed hairstyle of kaross-wrapped figure, Kriedouwkrantz, Cederberg.



Figure 8.39. Denticulate image at Fallen Rock Shelter, Cederberg.

In another scene at Kriedouwkrantz, an emission from a splay-legged figure is depicted connecting all the wrapped karossed figures (Fig. 8.40a & Fig. 8.40b). Among these images are depictions of masculine bodies and hunting bags. This appears to be another scene filled with dichotomous potency. The emanation from the splayed figure represents either menstrual blood or amniotic fluid (the release of *n!ow*) imbued with 'negative' potential that can affect hunting and therefore requires containment (Solomon 1992, 1994).



a

Figure 8.40a. Scene of wrapped karossed figures in association with a splay-legged figure, Kriedouwkrantz, Cederberg.



b

Figure 8.40b. Close-up of the splay-legged figure with an emission.

A further symbolically loaded scene at Kriedouwkrantz that offsets the strong feminine overtones, is a procession of masculine bodies that represent all the typical masculine characteristics, painted over a body that represents all the feminine characteristics—including the shorter shoulder kaross worn by young girls as referred to by Schapera (1951: 66) (Fig. 8.41). It exudes a certain amount of masculine power over feminine fertility.



Figure 8.41. Procession of males painted over a female figure, Kriedouwkrantz, Cederberg.

The Kriedouwkrantz images display powerful metaphors for the embodiment of gender identities through life-cycle rituals. The female transformational stages, symbolised through

paintings of emanations and ritual, is underscored by ritual indicators such as facial markings and hairstyles; and bodies signifying masculine status represents the complementarity necessary for establishing boundaries.

Other paintings in the region of Zimri Shelter that might have been enigmas, can also now be viewed from a third wave feminist platform that includes difference within a gender framework. Hunter's Cave has a dark red painting of a human that appears to be chasing an antelope. The human has both male and female biological characteristics—breasts and a penis—and is engaged in the male activity of hunting (Fig. 8.42 & Fig. 8.43). This image could represent the sexual ambivalence and gender inversions present during initiation rituals of boys and girls. When discussing female initiation, a !xam informant mentioned that "... a young man, he also, when he is a young man, he also resembles a girl" (LV-6.4386', quoted in Solomon 1995: 143). The boy is treated similarly to a menstruating girl during initiation periods. Female initiates are referred to as if they were hunters. During these liminal periods and rituals, the initiands mediate in their transitional states between masculinity and femininity (Lewis-Williams 1981:72). Then there are also mythological beings to consider. The Jul'hoansi of Angola have a spirit, Huwe, that appears during boys' puberty rites and Huwe comes "sometimes as a youth, sometimes in double form as a man and woman" (Schapera 1951: 123). The binary sexuality highlights ambiguity and liminality in the art and the consideration of a 'periodic third gender'. This human image illuminates gender as a social construct in San society with a certain amount of categorical gender fluidity (see Butler 1990, 1993) within liminal phases between femininity and masculinity.



Figure 8.42. A figure with breasts and a penis approaching an antelope, Hunter's Cave, Cederberg.



Figure 8.43. Close up of Hunter's Cave human figure, Cederberg.

In another example, Hollmann (1993) found rock art in the Koebee area, north of Zimri Shelter, of humans that are masculine as they are depicted with semi-erect penises with what appears to be infibulations. However, these humans also have strong feminine characteristics such as roundness, steatopygia and detailed back aprons (Fig. 8.44). Such attributes do not fit Solomon's (1994) masculine category of 'slender' males, but rather the category of gender ambiguity. From a third-wave feminism base, these multiple-gendered bodies again points to gender being mutable (see Power & Watts 1997) and a social construct, possibly even a third gender, that played a role within San cosmology.

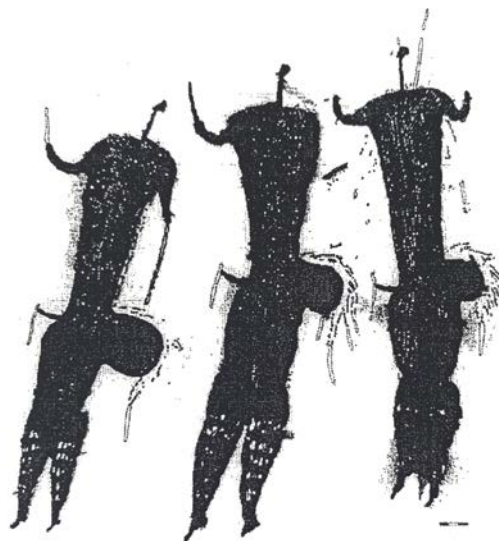


Figure 8.44. Masculine figures with feminine characteristics, Koebee, Cederberg region (from Hollmann 1993 fig. 4).

These images seem to be not only depicted in the south-western Cape, but also elsewhere. Ouzman (1997: 100-101) aligns an engraving from the Free State with what he refers to as the 'gynandromorphs'—human images that have both biological sexual aspects. In this example, two human figures are engraved with prominent breasts, steatopygia, and back-aprons, which place them firmly within the female domain. However, in addition, both these figures have penile protrusions below their waists. This dual sexual ascription is not limited to humans in rock art, but extends to animals as well (see Chapter Four). Therefore, these depictions were deliberate and as argued by Solomon, expose alternative and 'other' gender identities besides the normative gender categorisation.

8.4. CONCLUSION: PRODUCTION AND REPRODUCTION FOR CONSUMPTION

Depictions of human bodies at Zimri Shelter are not simple scenes, but complex gendered statements of production and reproduction. There appears to be a masculine-feminine division in the groupings of humans in rock art which leads to a reconsideration of their related ritual activities. Becoming masculine (associated with hunting) or becoming feminine (associated with fertility) resides in ritual practice and lived experience. Ethnographic records reveal that the San had many ritual practices of which the male initiation and female puberty rites played vital roles (Schapera 1951: 202). During the menarcheal rite young males were not present (only in some cases male elders) and at the boys */gi* dance at the Tshoma rite females were excluded (Marshall 1999: 63). The exclusion of either males or females at the puberty rites and dances stands testimony to the dangerous powers that need to be avoided or contained. I would suggest that the many processional and grouped paintings in the Cederberg of same sex groups, of either males or females, many of whom are naked, are expressions of the powers associated with initiation and puberty rituals, and the need for social order. Also, besides the processual and intended nude images, the paintings of human bodies at Zimri Shelter and surrounding sites strongly support the important role played by rituals involved in gender construction. Images of bodies revealed gender and ritual markers in ritual adornment, dress and decoration; hairstyles; patterning and protective designs; intentional over-painting; smearing; gendered body characteristics (i.e. females: breasts, steatopygia, roundedness, emissions, aprons, short karosses and digging sticks with bored stones; males: penises, elongation, exaggerated calves and hunting

equipment); human bodies of single sex in lines or groups; postures associated with females i.e. 'hand-to-groin' and splay-legged; and gendered contextual associations with animals examined in previous chapters. Some human bodies revealed 'other genders' or a 'third gender' such as karossed figures indicating an age-status categorisation opposed to a masculine/feminine ascription, and ambiguous gender bodies with masculine and feminine characteristics. These elements of importance open additional avenues of research for the fluidity of human bodies depicted at rock art sites for which third wave feminism provides the appropriate framework.

CHAPTER NINE:

CONTINUING THE VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY

9.1. EXPANDING INTERPRETATIONS

The discovery of Zimri Shelter and the predominance of gendered images in the Cederberg region, presented challenges for the interpretation of rock art. Though some of the images at Zimri Shelter are familiar Cederberg images, other extraordinary images required broader approaches. With the main focus in southern African research on the rock art of the Maloti-Drakensberg and shamanism, and limited interest paid to gender, my main research concern was to expand on current interpretations of the social production and consumption of rock art through a gender lens. Following on from the work of Solomon and Parkinson, a more regional, contextual approach was followed in this thesis by focussing on the rock art at Zimri Shelter and other Cederberg sites in the immediate surroundings. This approach required a three-pronged methodology that centred on ethnography, theory and rock art. My 'stripped down approach' focussed on re-reading and analysing pertinent ethnography, especially in terms of life-cycle processes and metaphoric connections between animals and gendered concepts, and how they might map onto rock art. This included focussing on illustrated bodies of humans and animals in relation to identity markers, and identifying gendered symbolic indicators. The use of ethnography—cognisant of androcentrism, subjectivity and limitations—provided the springboard for the expansion of interpretations. Gender theory provided the appropriate interpretative base for ethnographic investigation. My approach was aided by new developments in gender theory that consider masculinity, femininity and ambiguity. These key aspects intersected with the body, and bodily experiences, referred to as lived experience.

9.2. CONSTRUCTING GENDER: BODIES AND ROCK ART

Ethnography, viewed from a gender perspective, highlighted the important role life-cycle rituals plays. It is during these transformational states, that form part of lived experience, that gender identity such as the masculine hunter and feminine procreator, is formed. This study showed that a person's position in society or category of belonging based on their

identity determines the relationships and roles individuals play or perform within their cultural group and therefore creates social order. Identity, however, as revealed in this thesis, is not static, but rather dynamically constructed. Individuals undergo different stages of development, which determines the formation of identities and temporal gender constructs. The different stages of development are underpinned by culturally-determined rituals that create and confirm identities. Supernatural potency constitutes the driving force behind this transformation. Masculinity, femininity and 'otherness' are filled with *n!ow* and *n/um*—powers which operate freely and are difficult to control (Marshall 1999: 169) and therefore the body has been exposed as fluid and uncontrollable as proposed by third wave feminists (i.e. Butler 1990, 1993; Gellar 2009; Gilchrist 2007). Ultimately, reproductive menstruating females have the power to take away the essence, they can take away well-being and consequently—life, but they can also be the creators of life with their inherent power connected with nature which explains the Jul'hoansi's understanding of the word femaleness as "strong" (Marshall 1999: 146). According to Bieseke (1993: 93), a menstruating female "is in a state of extra-ordinary power" because of her female procreative power. Guenther (1999: 154, 156) extends female power to that of women's sexual power over men and describes females as having "awesome elemental powers over society and culture". The power of reproductiveness can have detrimental effects on productiveness (hunting), if rules or avoidances are not adhered to. The constant potential of latent uncontrollable danger in young males and females of procreative age is why avoidance behaviours are put into place and social categories defined. Therefore, ritual and lived performance as repetitions of gendered norm create the boundaries necessary to define the changing social categories and to establish the social and sexual responsibilities of initiates in terms of production and reproduction. These social processes are not only metaphorically represented through embodiment in the rock art, but the rock art plays an active role in controlling threatening powers. As gender is a temporal process which functions through ritual, rock art plays an active role as one of the socially regulated activities that constructs the necessary boundaries. Therefore, the making of rock art itself may have played a significant role as a performative act. According to Lewis-Williams (2006: 108) the painting of rock art was a ritual itself. He suggests it was predominantly shamans that were involved, but third wave feminism has enlightened us to more categorical classifications than 'shamans' or 'not shamans'; categorical classifications such as elders

(assuming many shamans were also elders) might be a more appropriate classificatory category concerning gender-based rock art. Solomon (2008: 78, 79) suggests an instructional aspect and considers that “ritual coherence eventually is expressed as enduring textual coherence” that forms “cultural memory”. As a result both the production of the rock art as well as its presence and power played a daily role in San life. The images at Zimri Shelter are not a mere narrative but a constitutive process of the performativity of humans (see Dowson 2007: 58).

My investigation of the ethnographic material and paintings at Zimri Shelter revealed metaphors that connect humans and animals to gendered concepts and these social processes (Fig. 9.1). The human bodies, often depicted with biological sexual characteristics, in ritual activities and with ritual signatures and identity markers, served as reminders of gendered norm in the social construction of identities. Zimri Shelter’s images of human bodies project multifaceted statements of production and reproduction, of masculine and feminine power and the necessary control thereof. Animal paintings of eland, elephants, sheep and wildebeest at Zimri Shelter revealed embodied depictions of social constructions of femininity and masculinity. The eland emerged as a symbol of femininity in San ethnography. Its life-giving powers through its association with fat, fertility rites and rain, aligned the eland with female procreative powers and represented and instructed on social and categorical changes. Similarly, elephant depictions appear to have played a role as symbolic representations of the inherent matriarchal and fertile power of elephants that aligns with femininity—aspects that are underscored by the stories. Elephant hunting scenes reveal the masculine hunting and female procreativity dichotomy where females are hunted by males like meat. Another animal symbol associated with femininity, and elephants, and linked to life-cycle transitional rituals at Zimri Shelter, are depictions of sheep. Sheep were painted as a culture choice that was strongly associated with fat, fertility, the potency it holds and the control thereof. Paintings of sheep are thus expressions of ‘femaleness’. Adoption of third wave feminist concerns broadened my investigation to not only ‘find’ femininity, but also the social construction of masculinity. The wildebeest therianthropes at Zimri Shelter exposed liminal periods of difference of bodies of ‘not yet being’, but in the process of becoming masculine—a categorical construction. The biophysiology and behaviour of wildebeest, supported by ethnographic semantic links, stories and initiation

rituals exposed wildebeest as powerful metaphors of masculinity and hunting. Paintings of eland, elephants, sheep and wildebeest are representative of potency filled states of feminine and masculine social constructions embedded in the rock art.

Image	Characteristics	Gender
Eland	• Small dewlaps • Part of a herd • Emanating eland • In association with a juvenile • Raised tails	Femininity
Elephants	• With breasts • As part of a family group • In association with young • Painted in lines • As part of metaphoric hunting scenes • Raised tails • In association or superimposed on images of females, denticulates, handprints and finger dots	Femininity
Wildebeest	• As therianthropes with beards and penises • In association with facial smearing and geometrics • Strong contextual association with masculine aspects i.e. naked male hunters and hunting equipment	Masculinity
Sheep	• With fat tails • With facial markings • In association with lines of females, dots and denticulates, and eland with raised tails	Femininity
Human bodies	• Human bodies of single sex in lines or groups • Ritual adornment, dress and decoration • Hairstyles • Patterning and protective designs • Intentional over-painting (i.e. males over females) • Smearing • Gendered contextual associations with animals	Indicators of masculine or feminine identity construction rituals
	• Breasts • Exposed buttocks • Roundedness • Emissions • Aprons • Short karosses • Digging sticks with bored stones • 'Hand-to-groin' posture • Splay-legged posture	Femininity
	• Penises • Elongation • Exaggerated calves • Hunting equipment	Masculinity
	• Long karossed figures • Bodies with masculine and feminine characteristics	• Age-status • 'Third' gender

Figure 9.1. Table of gendered indicators at Zimri Shelter

A third wave feminism inspired approach revealed new categorisations in rock art to be considered in terms of gender and identity construction. Life-cycle changes are based on age—not ‘actual’ age, but rather an age-status such as pre- and post menstrual/puberty, readiness to hunt, readiness to marry, and post-menopausal. For example, young pre-pubescent boys and girls possibly have not been categorised as masculine or feminine yet, which could thus be represented in the art through dual sexual ascriptions and are possibly representative of third wave feminism’s ‘difference’ or ‘other gender’. Similarly, females cannot just be labelled as women, as their different age-sets such as pubescent girls, married women with children and the post-menopausal females have different functions (see Webley 1997b: 208). An older, post-menopausal female poses no danger and can interact with young hunting males. Such a human body is defunct of femaleness or maleness, since due to age, is sexually irrelevant. I believe identity construction and social categorisation are based within these age-status and life-cycle categories and expressed through the materiality of the body. This understanding opened the window to comprehend ‘other’ figures in the rock art through the gender lens of third wave feminism.

Zimri Shelter presented the opportunity to build on earlier gender approaches. Where previous researchers might have only hinted at the presence of gender characteristics in rock art, or focussed on either only masculine—man the hunter—aspects or only feminine features, this study revealed the importance of the mutual construction of masculinity and femininity as well as ‘other’ genders. The ritual interconnectedness of humans and animals, and the role rock art plays in the presentation of these subject matters in gender construction, should be future considerations in rock art studies in other regions.

9.3. CONCLUSION

Zimri Shelter and surrounding Cederberg rock art sites highlighted regional differences in subject matter and style compared to, for example, the Maloti-Drakensberg sites—an aspect of southern African rock art research that has received little consideration (Solomon 2008). Zimri Shelter revealed even intra-regional differences occur such as the polychrome shaded eland that is a rarity for the Cederberg region. Southern African rock art has different arts and the ‘visual diversity’, as highlighted by art historians, should be considered (Skotnes 1996; Solomon 2008). Through new avenues of exploration, Zimri Shelter

introduced new meanings in rock art interpretation. Third wave feminism provided the platform for gender identity interpretative considerations. My stripped down approach allowed me to find femininity, masculinity and difference in San ethnography and in the rock art of Zimri Shelter and other sites in the Cederberg region. Questions raised regarding sex and gender, the social dynamics of gender, the relationship between gender and power, and gender as structuring principle came to the fore in the rock art of this region.

Ethnography and rock art revealed that sex is not linked to a definitive gender and that 'other' genders exist. Gender is dynamic, as the body is, and can consist of different stages. Ultimately, my investigation disclosed symbolic and metaphoric representations of potency and power driven by transformation, and the control thereof, situated within the framework of gender. Rock art depictions of gendered human and animal bodies are metaphoric statements about the inherent latent power that lies within gender interplay between production and reproduction, hunting and fertility, masculinity and femininity, liminality and danger, and the necessary control and ritual to create social categories, boundaries and responsibilities. The embodiment of gender in material culture through human body and animal depictions, are thus used in rock art as a medium of meaning that recollects social structuring and expresses power and control to maintain social order. Masculine, feminine and other bodies as depicted in the rock art of Zimri Shelter, and the Cederberg region, are culturally constructed potentialities that reveal to us the related socially regulated activities. Rock art, therefore, as a social and ritual symbol structure gender ideology in a similar way rituals create gendered norm.

Exploring different avenues of meaning adds to the complex conceptual understanding of San cosmology. The shamanistic framework formed the basis for rock art interpretation in southern African rock art from which further investigations can follow. The role gender plays as an important structuring principle in the social construction of masculinity and femininity in San hunter-gatherer society at Zimri Shelter and surrounding Cederberg sites, cultivates new research grounds. My research has shown, as stated by Dowson (2007: 58), that "the art does not centre exclusively on shamans" and that "the manipulation of supernatural forces ... is not the exclusive preserve of shamans". Moving forward future studies can consider broader aspects such as a gendered view of shamanism, and more categorical classifications, for example where do shamans fit into the age-status category, or is a

shaman a category unto its own with no feminine or masculine alignment, and who were the artists of these engendered images if not shamans? As San life-experience has many liminal aspects and a certain amount of categorical fluidity, so do we as researchers need to open our minds when looking at rock art through the gender lens and to consider masculine, feminine and 'other' aspects in rock art research and continue the journey of discovery.

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