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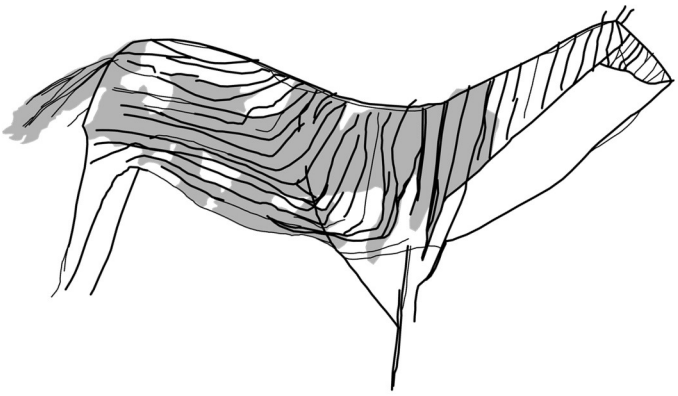
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THE CHANGER OF WAYS

Rock art and frontier ideologies on the Strandberg, Northern Cape, South Africa.



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Submitted in fulfilment of the degree of *Master of Science* (Archaeology) by research.

Rock Art Research Institute; School of Geography, Archaeology, and Environmental Studies.

2017.

Rock Art Research Institute
University of the Witwatersrand

MATATIELE
ARCHAEOLOGY
ROCK
ART

DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own, unaided work. It has been submitted for the degree of *Master of Science* at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, and has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university.

Andrew Skinner

Johannesburg, May 2017

ABSTRACT

Southern Africa's Orange River has been a frontier-zone for centuries, acting as a socially formative and often volatile expression of its surrounds. Communities of the region have competed, compounded, and admixed for as long as competing influences have obliged it, contributing over hundreds of years to a background milieu of generally-coherent beliefs and practices; 'frontier ideologies' that dealt in the expression and mediation of identity, and the configuration of responses to tumultuous social and ecological conditions. The common core of these ideologies allowed frontier societies to respond to one another in familiar terms, even if other channels of meaning were inaccessible. One of the contributors to these ideologies were the |Xam, most well-known for their contributions to the shamanistic approach to interpretation of rock art in the Maloti-Drakensberg mountains of South Africa. While analogy has allowed them to speak on behalf of the artists of this disparate tradition, they are products of the area surrounding the Orange River during the nineteenth century. Accordingly, they demonstrate the fundamental features of a frontier society; they evaluate contact with other communities relative to themselves, and formulate appropriate expressions of identity to enact in response. The application of their ethnography is somewhat burdened by their application to the rock art of the Maloti-Drakensberg, however, which casts their motivations in specific, ritualised terms. This thesis considers a very different body of rock art to the one conventionally interpreted by the shamanistic approach, but located in a historical and regional context intimately linked to the |Xam informants; specifically, the rock art of the Strandberg hills, in the Northern Cape province, South Africa. This body of art is one dominated by horses, distributed as a structure that spans much of the site, and manufactured with visibility in mind. This thesis finds that these images were products of the frontier ideologies that inhabited the region, and the adaptive practices that emerge from them. Accordingly, the art is characterised as a record of inhabitation, an expression of identity, and the mediation of contact with a changing landscape, in keeping with the behaviours that had marked interactions between communities in the region for long before many of the images were placed on the Strandberg.

A NOTE ON CONVENTIONS USED IN THE TEXT

Citations to Wilhelm Bleek's and Lucy Lloyds' original notebooks take the following form: LL.VIII.26.7826-7827. The first component of the entry represents the initials of the collector; either Wilhelm Bleek (WB) of Lucy Lloyd (LL). This is followed by a Roman numeral, which represents either a notebook number (in the case of Bleek's entries), or refers to a certain narrator (in the case of Lloyd's entries) in which case the next number corresponds to the notebook. The final part of the citation refers to the consecutively-numbered notebook pages, with ranges indicated as above. Reverso notes are indicated with an apostrophe (e.g. LL.VIII.10.6892'). Scans of the original notebooks can be found in Skotnes (2007), or online at http://lloydbleekcollection.cs.uct.ac.za/

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CHAPTER 1

1.1: Introduction— stones and horses



Figure 1: Horse engravings on the Strandberg, Northern Cape, South Africa. Image credit: Eric Wettengel.

The interpretation of hunter-gatherer rock art in the Maloti-Drakensberg contends with the absence of the artists. There is no identity to which the art can be readily attributed, nor a category beyond the catch-all 'Khoi/San'; a term which often struggles to offer specific parameters or application (Mitchell 2010b:74-75). Analogy has allowed disparate sources to speak on behalf of the artists (Lewis-Williams & Biesele 1978; Lewis-Williams 1980; 1992), but

this has had the side-effect of leaving the artists without a name and without a face, their intentions hidden behind a general account of the things they found significant.

There is no trivial reason for this; isolating a specific identity to which *millennia* of image-making can be attributed is methodologically fraught at best, and at worst impossible. Offering an interpretation that can engage with specific contexts is similarly challenging (see B. Smith 2010); the art has only a very broad resolution, but the production of local histories requires a conversely high level of detail, in some cases to an unattainable extent. I do not offer criticism on this point, but rather an observation of the consequences. In particular, that the side-effect of leaving the artists nameless and faceless has been to blur the analogous communities together, and to render them a 'stand-in' for whichever identity was responsible for the paintings of the Maloti-Drakensberg.

This is the substance of the second chapter of this project. Informed approaches, such as the shamanistic approach, have been burdened by the need to seek relevance in sources dislocated in time (and sometimes space) from the places in which they find the art. They have emerged from the correspondence between these sources and the rock arts of the Maloti-Drakensberg, but while the contributing ethnographies have known historical contexts, the art often does not. Voices taken from the nineteenth century Cape Colony and the twentieth century Kalahari (among others) speak on behalf of artistic traditions with uncertain time-depth, and little in the way of clear territorial bounds. After four decades of research, it is difficult to ascertain where the model has produced novel findings in correspondence with the art, and where the contributing ethnographies would have come to the same (or similar) conclusions *in isolation*. Could such a model apply to a place where the art bears little or no resemblance to the corpus of paintings in the Maloti-Drakensberg, but that falls within the

known historic context of one of the contributing identities? What, precisely, is the extent of the 'stand-in' that has come to speak for the artists of the Maloti-Drakensberg art?

This project seeks to consider a body of art that shares its context with the |Xam informants, who are among the primary contributors to informed approaches on the subcontinent. Their testimony is the basis of the Bleek-Lloyd archive, which speaks readily to their own, historic context, but has little to offer on the subject of image-making. The elements of the shamanistic approach which deal with this topic do so in correspondence with the art, and consultation with a broad analogy developed precisely for this purpose. It was not developed to deal with the historic circumstances of the informants, however.

The |Xam informants interviewed by Wilhelm Bleek and Lucy Lloyd were inmates of the Breakwater Prison in Cape Town during the nineteenth century, but their historic context falls just south of the Orange River (McGranaghan 2014b:670-671). These were the then northern districts of the Cape Colony, with the river as the official border (Peires 1981:161-163), but they had been a turbulent, socially formative *frontier zone* long before Europeans arrived (see Penn 1995; 2005; A. Smith 1995). This space was subject to layers of competing and compounding influences, the sum of which selected for societies that could adapt their identities and ideologies as needed. I describe the conditions of the Orange River in the first part of chapter 3, and consider the range of adaptations deployed by frontier societies in response. Chapters 3.2 and 3.3 make comparison between the |Xam and the other societies of the frontier, considering the extent to which they shared a number of identity-affirming practices that allowed them to appeal to a common body of narrative and metaphor, developed over centuries of interaction on the Orange River frontier. Combined, these 'frontier ideologies' crystallise in the |Xam ethnography. They also, I argue, take shape as the Korana,

the apex frontier society of the region, but more intimately relatable to the |Xam than is often acknowledged. Together, these two examples are used to demonstrate the essential mechanic of frontier societies; the ability to deploy and manipulate statements of identity in ways that Others could understand.

Chapter 4 is an embellishment of this point. In it, I consider the relevance of shamanistic religion to these frontier ideologies, *without* reference to the rock art of the Maloti-Drakensberg. While the shamanistic approach may not readily apply to dislocated or disconnected bodies of art, congruence with the model is not an indicator of whether or not *shamanism* is applicable. There has been considerable debate on the applicability of the shamanistic model to southern Bushman populations (rehearsed in Solomon 1997; 1999; 2000; 2008; 2011; 2013; Lewis-Williams 1998; 1999; 2006a; Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2012; 2015; among others) but this discussion is immersed in the interpretation of art in the Maloti-Drakensberg. It is apposite, therefore, to consider the extent to which related points could be made outside of such a context. In order to do so, chapter 4.1 considers whether or not it is appropriate to consider shamanism applicable to |Xam ethnography. I find that it is, but that it should not be the defining feature of an interpretation made beyond the bounds of the analogy available to the shamanistic approach, and the material culture to which it refers. In chapter 4.2, and with this acknowledgement, I argue that shamanism has much to offer a discussion on frontier societies. It is an ideology preoccupied with negotiation and mediation of identity, both common concerns of a community in a volatile, socially formative context such as the Orange River frontier.

For the purposes of this project, I evaluate a sample of rock art that is meaningfully distinct from the body of imagery in the Maloti-Drakensberg, but that falls within the historic

context of the |Xam. In particular, an engraved rock art site on the Strandberg; a trio of hilltops in the Northern Cape province of South Africa, a place known to the informants, and one of the central features of the *|Xam-ka-!xoe*— the historic heartland of the |Xam. I discuss the selection of this site in chapter 5, and consider its relevance to the |Xam, as well as to the study of frontier rock art in general.

Both before and during the nineteenth century, the Strandberg stood on a confluence of frontiers; social, political, and ecological, each one with corresponding pressures that required negotiation by the communities living in the region. Earlier chapters (2 and 3 in particular) describe the broadest elements of these frontiers, and the communities that lived within them. Chapter 6 describes the character of the Strandberg site, as it stands. Chapter 6.1 deals with the environmental parameters; the region is subject to a number of highly localised weather-patterns, resulting in conditions that range between those merely marginal and those maximally hostile to human habitation. Not only is the range wide, but it is also highly variable, forming a comparative frontier in its own right, as volatile and demanding as those imposed by the surrounding social conditions. Chapter 6.2 describes the physical nature of the site; it is a landscape 'inhabited by stones' (after de Prada Samper 2014b:615), covered in the boulders engraved by the communities of the frontier.

Recordings of rock art for this project were collected in two surveys during 2014 and 2015, and chapter 7 describes these efforts. The first part (7.1) describes the initial concerns of the project, and much of the rationalisation behind the decisions that were made going into the field. The next (7.2) deals with the methodology employed in the process, both in the physical operation of the surveys themselves, and the design of the interpretative procedure that followed.

The engravings of the Strandberg are distributed across the site, and interact as part of a larger structure than any one panel. As much of the initial logic was guided by studies done on painted art in the Maloti-Drakensberg, the design of survey and data-collection processes for this project had to factor the physical properties of the engravings into the operations that followed. This meant emphasising metrics such as 'aspect' (i.e. the primary direction of engraved surfaces) which are not commonly used in the Maloti-Drakensberg, but which form a central part of my interpretation of the Strandberg art. The last part of chapter 7 (7.3) describes the data collected during the surveys, detailing salient trends in the sample, and making broad comparison to the motifs commonly identified in the Maloti-Drakensberg. Prior discussion on the engraved art on the Strandberg (Deacon 1988) has largely remained within the bounds of the shamanistic approach as it applies to the Maloti-Drakensberg. While the conclusions reached in the process may well contribute to the understanding of hunter-gatherer art in the Northern Cape, the body of art sampled for this project has little in common with the motifs commonly cited to motivate for a ritual explanation (*cf.* Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2009).

Instead, I argue that the sample speaks more clearly to the immediate context of the Strandberg, particularly as a confluence of frontiers during the lifetimes of the |Xam informants (and others like them). The sample of art collected for this project is dominated by horses and non-representational imagery, distributed widely across the landscape, and with physical metrics that suggest that they were designed to be consumed as such; as a structure that spans the Strandberg hilltops, rather than on a panel-by-panel basis. The landscape is one 'inhabited by stones', and those stones are themselves inhabited by the things engraved upon them, made with their recognition in mind.

Chapter 8 considers these trends relative to their historic context. I argue that the landscape was not a series of territories, per se, but a series of networks, immersed in precedent and shared history (or lack thereof). In particular, that frontier ideologies assessed the landscape by the extent to which social agreements and precedent were accessible to them. The camp was the space in which agreements between individuals were the most well-articulated, but as one moved further from such a space, and onto the 'hunting-ground', common precedents waned, and understanding with it. The presence of any one community on the landscape was tenuous, and often ephemeral, subject to the variable influences of the frontier. The distribution of engravings in such a space engages with the landscape, and offers a record of identity and inhabitation that can be referenced by the common ideology of the frontier.

The art of the Strandberg is full of horses, and horses were the symbolic agents of change on the northern frontier during the nineteenth century (*cf.* Challis 2012). While the |Xam may be associated with a body of 'traditional' art in the Maloti-Drakensberg, the historic context of the informants is one more closely aligned with the conditions occurring before and during the colonial period. While there is reason to understand the Strandberg art as a product of multiple contributing identities (see McGranaghan 2016), there is also reason to consider it an example of the 'frontier ideologies' (described in chapter 3) at work. They recognised personhood beyond the bounds of human communities— animals were social agents in the same ways as people were (*cf.* de Castro 1998; Bird-David 1999; Ingold 2000; Willerslev 2004; 2007; McGranaghan & Challis 2016), requiring recognition inasmuch other frontier communities did. Accordingly, this recognition set the terms for negotiation; the horse was the harbinger of a new kind of volatility on the frontier, but it was simply *another* frontier

community, and amenable to the strategies formed by the |Xam (and others) to deal with precisely such an occurrence. When the authors of the Strandberg art depicted horses on the stones that inhabited the region, they were exercising a particular facet of their identity and ideology. They were establishing a record of their own inhabitation of the frontier, and including horses in that construction. In so doing, the artists demonstrated their own social significance, recognised it in their non-human peers, and set precedents for future interactions. In a place where relationships were the only currency, and conditions were markedly unstable, the artists demonstrated salient kinds of 'understanding' (see McGranaghan & Challis 2016), extending the social norms in their own communities to others.

Chapter 9 concludes, summarising the findings of this project, and contrasting it to methodologies employed elsewhere on the subcontinent. This project emphasises comparison with the shamanistic approach in the Maloti-Drakensberg, but does so because such a comparison is inevitable. Studying art in the heartland of the |Xam was always going to require reference to the application of |Xam ethnography elsewhere, especially one so pervasive as the shamanistic approach. In those terms, this project should be seen as supplementary, rather than combative. It retains a broad coherence with other informed approaches, and offers commentary on the use of identity and analogy within them.

It supports the finding that shamanism is relevant to the |Xam, without particular reference to the rock art of the Maloti-Drakensberg. At the same time, it offers a cautionary note on the use of the approach more generally. The shamanistic approach functions well within the bounds of the context in which it was developed, but there is a need for specific acknowledgement of that. The model is powerful precisely because it corresponds so consistently with the material it acts to interpret. Even if |Xam ethnography applies, and

'shamanistic' is an appropriate characterisation of the ideology at play, there may well be scope for explanation in other contexts that does not characterise the art as record and metaphor of ritual activities. Elements of the shamanistic approach may well apply in any case, but whether this is in whole or in part should be ascertained *first*, and primarily with reference to the body of art in question.

Frontiers of one kind or another characterise much of the subcontinent over the last few hundred years, and there is significance in recognising this as well. The history of southern Africa is entangled in colonialised, 'domesticated' (after de Prada Samper 2014b:619) commentary, but recognition of the socially-formative nature of frontier-spaces is empowering. It gives power to place and context, defining communities not by their physical or linguistic capacities, but by their demonstrated intentions *to be one thing or another*. Rock art is an assertion of identity that survives in the absence of our ability to recognise it as such, and what is identity if not a claim to a particular history? Construction of local histories from hunter-gatherer rock art remains a great challenge, and I do not purport to offer a complete account of the history of the Strandberg art. Rather, an analysis of a momentary exercise of identity, responding to the conditions of the northern frontier.

CHAPTER 2

2.1: Isolating a '|Xam' ideology

The painted, hunter-gatherer rock art of the Maloti-Drakensberg has been largely bounded by content and style; identified as a suite of broadly shamanistic symbols and material culture, brush-painted, and attributed to Bushman hunter-gatherers.

The roots of academic interest in the topic stem from colonial-era accounts of travel through South Africa's interior, which produced catalogues of painted imagery, and public discussions on their possible significance (see Orpen 1874; *cf.* W.H.I. Bleek 1874; Stow & D. Bleek 1930; Mitchell & Challis 2008; McGranaghan *et al.* 2013[1]). These discussions prompted interactions between Bleek and Lloyd and their |Xam informants (LL.V.22.5739-5742, 5755-5775; LL.VII.1.6054-6073; LL.VIII.19.7639-7641; LL.VIII.22.7969-7975, 7983-7993; LL.VIII.23.7999-8004), often referring to, or with prompts from samples collected by Orpen and Stow (see discussion held with |han‡kass'o and rock art prompt LL.VIII.26.7826-7827; *cf.* LL.VIII.22.7971). Although a developed theoretical discourse was still to follow, it is worth noting that commentary on the art at this stage considered that a "mythological meaning" was likely

[1] This is an edited version of Orpen's 1874 article in the *Cape Monthly* magazine, and includes contextualising material which helps situate these and other contributions within the research landscape at the time. A printed collection of Stow's copies of Maloti-Drakensberg art, referenced in many of these discussions, can be found in Skotnes (2008).

present, and that it may have represented "certain quasi-religious rites" (see McGranaghan *et al.* 2013:151).

While the colonial interest in Bushman art was open to a mythological (or at least metaphorical) interpretation, later positions adopted an empirical approach, assuming that any content in the art was an entirely literal account of observed phenomena. This reflected a general positivist tendency in the emerging social sciences[2], and its imitation in the (European) popular imagination (see Coombes 1994). An unfortunate corollary included newly 'scientific' formulations of race (Coombes 1994:9), which focussed on the Bushmen as pristine samples of genetic and cultural prehistory (see Gordon 1992:194-195). Perhaps correspondingly, the empirical account characterised the art as a material record of the events of daily life; depictions of a primordial human population as they engaged in subsistence, craft, and warfare (see Burkitt 1928:110; Breuil 1931:695-697; 1948; Willcox 1956:85; 1963:34, 84; Smits 1967; Ucko & Rosenfeld 1967:117-9; Rudner & Rudner 1970:210; Lee & Woodhouse 1970:28, 142).

Subsequent review of this material has been critical of its findings, considering them to be more closely entrenched in Western norms than any ideology belonging to the likely authors of the art. Specifically, it finds that the empirical approach limits the scope of intended meanings to those readily observable in the art (Vinnicombe 1972a:131; 1972b:195; Lewis-Williams 1972:61; see also Pager 1971; Lewis-Williams 1974; 1975) or attainable through statistical analyses of the body of paintings in general (see Lewis-Williams 1984 for discussion).

Curiously, the empirical approach did not consider the testimonies acquired just a few decades prior by Bleek and Lloyd, which had already featured limited interpretations by

[2] In particular, given that the founding principles of both sociology (Comte 1869[1853]) and positivism (Comte 2009[1865]) were elaborated by the same author, in the mutual interests of both disciplines.

informed individuals from a broadly coherent culture. Indeed, a number of empiricist works were published contemporaneously with collections of |Xam folklore (W.H.I. Bleek & Lloyd 1911; D. Bleek 1923; 1924; 1931; 1932a; 1932b; 1932c; 1933a; 1933b; 1935; 1936a; 1936b; 1936c; see Hollmann 2004), which had, in some cases, already been processed for ease of use and presented with accompanying annotation. This accounts for the greatest substance of the responding criticism: that the empirical approach failed to introduce any perspective other than that of the researcher.

Ensuing efforts seized on the apparent similarities between the Bleek and Lloyd material and the Maloti-Drakensberg art. These 'informed' approaches managed their initial findings through scrutiny of |Xam mythology, before applying emergent themes to the imagery (e.g. Vinnicombe 1972b; 1976; Lewis-Williams 1972; 1981). There has always been some concern to be raised in the distance (in both space and time) between the |Xam informants and any likely authors of the art in the Maloti-Drakensberg. The conditions of the |Xam are known; Bleek's interviews were conducted with inmates of the Breakwater Prison in Cape Town[3] during the late nineteenth century. By contrast, no specific identity has been isolated for the likely authors of the Maloti-Drakensberg art, while the art itself has wide and often uncertain time-depth. I return to this dislocation in more specific detail below, because it forms part of the wider point in this chapter. For now, it suffices to discuss the solutions offered by the informed approach.

The first, and most unfocussed, are the discussions held between Bleek, Lloyd, and their informants, with references to the copies of Maloti-Drakensberg rock art collected by Orpen

[3] Although their contributions largely concern life in the Northern Cape, South Africa, in an area immediately south of the Orange River (see McGranaghan 2014b:670-671).

and Stow (see above). The informants themselves had never engaged in painting in this way (McGranaghan *et al.* 2013:137), and some subsequent scholarship concluded that they were probably not aware of any specific meanings involved (see Stow 1905:123; Rudner & Rudner 1970: 207; Fock 1971:94). Although these findings would probably have eroded any chance that the |Xam material would have been used to interpret art in the Maloti-Drakensberg, they are by no means conclusive. Subsequent review (e.g. Lewis-Williams 1980:468-469) found that Bleek's informants were certainly conversant with the dominant themes and motifs present in the copies shown to them (Vinnicombe 1976:336; Lewis-Williams 1980:469; see Challis *et al.* 2013 for discussion and comparison; pp. 335-337 in particular).

A more detailed connection is made by Qing, a Bushman tracker who accompanied Orpen during his expedition into the Maloti-Drakensberg, and the only informant to have been interviewed in the presence of original, painted art. His remarks were published by Orpen (1874; see McGranaghan *et al.* 2013; *cf.* Challis *et al.* 2013), and bear remarkable similarity to comments offered to Bleek and Lloyd by the |Xam (Lewis-Williams 1980:469; Challis *et al.* 2013:336), to the degree that they may almost have been paraphrasing each other (see Lewis-Williams 1980:469 for side-by-side comparison). Although his credentials have been challenged[4], Qing appears to have been more than qualified to comment (Challis *et al.* 2013), and is perhaps the only truly informed discussion available. Beyond that, his testimony offers a basis of comparison for much of the informed approach that was to follow (e.g. Lewis-Williams 1972; 1980; Vinnicombe 1976; Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989; Challis 2005; as in Challis *et al.*

[4] Bleek considered him to be uninitiated in the mysteries of the art (W.H.I. Bleek 1874:12; see Challis *et al.* 2013:339-340), and therefore unqualified to comment. While he may not have been a ritualist himself, the actions of initiated ritual specialists were certainly not meaningless to him (Challis *et al.* 2013:340). Any difficulty in establishing his familiarity with the art is just as likely to come from issues in translation (Challis 2005:14; Challis *et al.* 2013:340) or the researchers' own unfamiliarity with what he was describing (Lewis-Williams 1980:467).

2013:332[5]), and frames the connection between colonial-era sources in the Cape, and the art in the Maloti-Drakensberg. Together, the Bleek-Lloyd material and Qing's testimony provide a "'general character' of Maloti San mythology" and suggest that it "was coherent with that obtained from other San communities" (Challis *et al.* 2013:332). This is supplemented by the existence of cognates between the language spoken by Qing, and |Xam[6] (see McGranaghan *et al.* 2013:140), which not only validates the inclusion of the Bleek-Lloyd material, but also that of Qing's essential testimony (see Lewis-Williams 1980:468-470 for technical discussion on the inclusion of this material).

With this connection established, the informed approach concluded that the art was a product of religious activity, rather than the associated mythology. First in general terms (see Lewis-Williams 1981), relating the art to a broad range of practices that included *any* religious component, and then in more specific ones, connected to the action of shamanistic ritual specialists (Lewis-Williams 1992). In this model, the imagery is described as referential to encounters during altered-states of consciousness, achieved through dance (e.g. Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1988:215; 1994:211; Lewis-Williams 1995:148; 2010:15), in which shamans would traverse the hallucinatory spirit world, acting to cure disease (e.g. Lewis-Williams 1992:56-58), control the weather (e.g. Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2004:205-207), and combat anti-social forces (e.g. Lewis-Williams 1998:94). In this model, the images are non-representational in a broad sense; they are distinct from the literal 'record' of daily life proposed by the empirical approach (see Lewis-Williams 1980:472-474; 1986:192), but still incorporating referents to the immediately observable world (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1988: 215; *cf.*

[5] Challis *et al.* (2013) is notable for making particular use of Qing's testimony, with specific reference to rock paintings at Sehonghong, a location around which Orpen's discussion centres.
[6] Although it is worth noting that they weren't necessarily mutually intelligible (D. Bleek 1927:56).

Hollmann 2002), such as the shamans' *materia medica*, and the various tools used to interact with spiritual beings. The images were also conversant with the landscape on several levels (see Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1990; Lewis-Williams 2010), a concept which I return to in more detail in chapters 6 and 8.

In this 'shamanistic' model, the integration of ethnographic sources is not limited to that collected during the nineteenth century, from either the |Xam or Qing. It has grown to encompass an expansive collection of anthropological records collected from broadly 'San' communities living in the Kalahari during the mid-twentieth century. This material contained a number of insights that made up for paucities and faults[7] in the Bleek-Lloyd collection, particularly those relating to religious experiences[8] (and more specifically, to religious *practice*; see Lewis-Williams 1992). They also offer a point of comparison to Qing's testimony; while he may have been too young to have been initiated[9] into restricted elements of shamanistic practice, his familiarity with a shamanistic worldview quickly becomes apparent in light of descriptions of trance and the spirit-world in the Kalahari (Lewis-Williams 1992:58-59).

It is worth noting that the inclusion of the Kalahari material is primarily due to perceived similarities in content (Lewis-Williams & Biesele 1978), rather than due to the perception of a 'pan-Bushman' cosmology (Lewis-Williams 1998:86-87) as some critics will later assert (e.g. Solomon 2000:77; see discussion in chapters 4.1 & 4.2). The similarities between these disparate sources are a product of the common structures of shamanistic

[7] "By modern anthropological standards, the manner in which the [Maloti] material was collected is unsatisfactory and maybe have contributed to Orpen's belief that [Qing's] tales were 'fragmentary'" (Lewis-Williams 1980:480; McGranaghan *et al.* 2013:138-139).
[8] Given that it was, foremost, a linguistic rather than anthropological project (McGranaghan *et al.* 2013:139).
[9] 'Initiated' has a number of potential meanings in the southern Africa context (see McGranaghan *et al.* 2013:140-141). It should be read here as training in religious practice.

practice, and the general neuropsychological framework onto which hallucinations are rendered (see Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1988; Lewis-Williams 1998:87-88).

From an outside perspective, however, it appears that the 'pan-Bushman' (or 'pan-San') outlook is inevitable. The ethnographies were gathered from substantially dislocated positions in time and space, with (presumably) marked differences in their historical and social contexts. As such, it seems irresponsible to assume the relevance of one to the other without some account of why so few differences appear to exist.

Literature on southern African hunter-gatherer rock arts has not done much to alleviate this concern, paying relatively little attention to the question of authorship beyond a general San/Bushman identity[10]. This contributes to an impression that a pan-Bushman cosmology is an essential (or at least, implicit) component of the shamanistic approach. That said, this is more an observation than a particular criticism.

Any attempt to mobilise a *specific identity* in connection with motifs or styles in the art would require the ability to recognise discrete units of 'Bushman' identity in the art. This would pose an immense challenge, given that composite/creolised societies incorporating a Bushman identity (but not bound by it; see Challis 2012:271-272) were engaged in the creation of identifiably shamanistic art (Challis 2012:278-280) to the extent that both |Xam and Kalahari ethnography is coherent with it (Challis 2012:276). This is despite the fact that *both* of them are removed in time and space from any likely artists in the Maloti-Drakensberg (with the exception of Qing), a point that tends to attract the most criticism (e.g. Solomon 2008:61; 2011:100; 2013:1209-1210; *cf.* Lewis-Williams 1991), but I return to this point in chapter 2.2. For

[10] Although see Blundell 2004; Ouzman 2005; Mallen 2008; Challis 2012; McGranaghan 2016.

now, it suffices to acknowledge that *any* approach contends with a vast and highly variable body of imagery (Lewis-Williams 1984), that falls within highly localized (*cf.* Bonneau *et al.* 2011:419) and often unverifiable time-depth (Mazel 1993:890; Blundell 2004:68; Pearce 2010; *cf.* Mazel 2009; B. Smith 2010:345-346). A further challenge would simply be in finding a way to connect a unit of material culture (in this case, a motif or style) to a unit of identity. This is particularly difficult in both the case of the Maloti-Drakensberg Bushmen[11], and that of the |Xam[12], in line with the challenges that pervade archaeological practice more generally. Specifically, whether a material culture 'tradition' stands to be defined at all, particularly when taken to correspond to a single identity or community (see M. Hall 1983:51, 53; 1984:267-268), and from there, to a single region (see Lightfoot & Martinez 1995:478-479).

A tradition requires that continuity of practice be assumed over a volume of time (e.g. Rouse 1957:128), and that this practice can be substantively connected to an identity *at all*[13] (Willey & Philips 1958:48). This, in turn, would require than an identity restrain its cultural markers to its immediate geographical and social context, and remain uninfluenced by its neighbours (M. Hall 1984:268; see Hammond-Tooke 1998; 1999; 2002). Indeed, there is great difficulty in attaching "discrete identities to artefacts, assemblages, and sites *despite cognisance of multiple identity formations*" (Ouzman 2005:111-2; emphasis added). This is a non-trivial problem, given that the identities which emerge from these processes are "distinct in

[11] Owing to long-standing, symbiotic interactions between bushman communities and other societies in the region, it appears likely that there was substantial transfer of material and social culture across a number of identities (including Nguni-speaking farmers; see e.g. Jolly 1986; 1995; 1996a; 1996b; 1997; 2005; 2006; Botha & Thackeray 1987; *cf.* Hammond-Tooke 1998; 1999; 2002; also Challis 2012:277) complicating any specific attribution of practice or object.

[12] Who themselves were not confined to a single identity, but rather mobilised it in the face of a number of challenges (see chapter 8.1, pp. 150-151).

[13] Unless specifically expressed by that social unit (e.g. S. Hall 2012:309-310), and then acknowledged as such.

aggregate" (Ouzman 2005:111; see Lightfoot & Martinez 1995:474, 477-8; Challis 2012:271) and would only be appropriate in historically specific (and often ephemeral) cases.

As such, it is important "emphasise that 'San-ness' as a socio-cultural construct was fundamentally historical, changing over time and space, but also that it retained [...] cohesion (or rather, that certain practices retained their significance)" (McGranaghan *et al.* 2013:146) over time. Similarly, that this cohesion has its roots in the format of experience, and in terms of consistent hunter-gatherer ritual practices, without necessarily struggling with dislocation between its sources. At the same time, this is with the acknowledgement that "'San' identity was not timeless or identical to 'San' identities elsewhere on the subcontinent" (McGranaghan *et al.* 2013:146), and that sufficient ethnographic context (i.e. that provided by Qing) is available to suggest that much of the |Xam material would have been intelligible to other Bushman populations across southern Africa, and vice versa (McGranaghan *et al.* 2013:146).

Furthermore, formulating a discrete 'Bushman' identity to match one specific example of material culture or practice would necessitate the isolation of an analytical category based on ethnographic material. This would then need to be applied as a proxy for hunter-gatherer identities in general, stripping away relevant context in favour of broad responses to the environment (see Wilmsen 1983; Wilmsen & Denbow 1990; Gordon 1992; Barnard 1992), and ignoring the impact of historical and economic forces upon informer identities (Lee & Guenther 1993; Guenther 1999:18-21, 134-135). Any attribution of behaviour or material culture would likely involve vague material culture typologies, similarly developed because of their relevance to a research question, rather than as a reflection of any 'real', empirically-accessible structure (Wylie 2002:42-43), but potentially treated as such when under critique. From there, it is a struggle to avoid Inskeep's (1971:101) concern over an 'either/or' representation of

ethnicity (Morris 2008:99; see Morris 2002; 2004), in which the assertion of distinct authorship narrows the potential scope for explanation down to those that 'fit' one particular identity or another, even if there is "little clear-cut evidence […] for distinct ethnic and/or economic contexts" (Morris 2008:99) to connect one or exclude another.

There is good reason for informed approaches to avoid identifying a discrete identity in this way. Instead, the shamanistic approach (as a focussed subset of the informed approaches more generally) refers to a community which exerted elements of an identity which was sufficiently '|Xam-like' to bear analogy with the Bleek-Lloyd material (*cf.* Lewis-Williams 1991), sufficiently 'Ju|'hoan-like' to bear analogy with the Kalahari material (Lewis-Williams & Biesele 1978), with Qing's input as a reference-point between the two. This is strengthened by the ability of the model to deploy specific imagery (see Lewis-Williams 2006a for summaries and examples; see Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2009 for discussion) in consistent and methodical correspondence with each of the ethnographies, a quality largely absent from the work of its detractors (*cf.* chapter 4.1). Even in the absence of clearly demonstrable lines of authorship, or any direct connection between the authors of the Maloti-Drakensberg art and the |Xam informants in the Cape Colony[14], the parallels between the art and the ethnographies are compelling (B. Smith 2010:352). The connection to the Kalahari is a commonly cited criticism as well (e.g. Solomon 1997), alleging the 'pan-San' cosmology discussed above. This kind of criticism tends to incorrectly identify the point of connection between the Kalahari contribution and the shamanistic conclusion, asserting that it derives from perceived similarities between the Kalahari ethnography and the Bleek-Lloyd material, rather than because of the rampant parallels between the Kalahari ethnography *and the art.* Despite these

[14] Among other concerns (see B. Smith 2010:352).

issues, the shamanistic analogy is strong, and without an alternative, it demands attention, *even if* a body of ethnography with known historical context is being applied to a body of material culture that largely lacks it.

With the shamanistic model resting on a ready familiarity between art and ethnography, it follows that any shortcomings would be most apparent in instances where the dominant themes in one were not readily accessible in the other. This appears to be the case in paintings which contain colonial-era or contact imagery (see Blundell 2004:62-63), in which a 'narrative' emphasis[15] appears to overtake the religious one relied upon by the shamanistic approach. Thus, a 'traditional' corpus has been considered distinctly from a 'post-contact' corpus (Blundell 2004:64-65; *cf.* B. Smith 2010:350-352), the division made in terms of content and style.

Insofar as content is concerned, post-contact art appears to have incorporated narratives of 'actual events' (e.g. Vinnicombe 1976:44-48) and the shamanistic approach has conceded that this may have been the case (Lewis-Williams 1982:434) despite generalisations to the contrary. As with the criticisms above, this observation does not deny the efficacy of the shamanistic explanation, but it certainly suffers from a "discrepancy [...] between aim and practice" (B. Smith 2010:352) when it comes to acknowledging contextually specific histories in the art itself (B. Smith 2010:352-353). This is with the awareness that the shamanistic approach certainly shows concern for nuance and complexity in Bushman society (e.g. Lewis-Williams 1972:61).

[15] Resembling the findings of the empirical approach described above; that the art was a record, or narrative, of daily life.

There is risk in isolating a *non-traditional* (*viz.* not easily explained) style in this sense. The most obvious is that it would require isolation in the first place, with boundaries defined by their conformity (or non-conformity, as it may be) to the explanatory model. There is a subsequent risk in conflating the boundaries of the model with the boundaries of ethnographic relevance; as the model comes to represent an application of |Xam-'ness', so too does the model come to represent its *presence*.

Some degree of isolation is necessary, as the highly variable nature of the art means that there is little basis for a style upon which to stake such a division, and so the model simply (and rightly) restricts itself to those images readily coherent with it. In this case, images with diagnostic shamanistic behaviour (nasal haemorrhaging, dance postures) and iconography (therianthropes, shamanistic paraphernalia) come to represent the coherent, traditional corpus.

The unfortunate corollary is that this requires an essential 'Bushman' identity with which one or other side of such a division would correlate, along with an attendant (and recognisable) 'Bushman' material culture package (see footnote 11, p. 28; also B. Smith 2010:353-354). Because the one kind of imagery is taken to represent anthropological constants such as religion and ontology, it presents as 'inbuilt'; inherent, rather than acquired. These motifs become 'traditional' in the sense that they are the most resilient to change, and are exhibited by (and symptomatic of) anyone sufficiently 'San' to have knowledge of them. That the model is derived from the essential trio of ethnographic locales (and the collection of 'traditional' behaviours observed in them) means that a 'non-traditional' style appears as a side-effect.

This would further suggest that post-contact art corresponded to instances in which 'traditional' motifs were absent. This is an unstable proposition, given that there is no reason

to assume that "products of interaction" (Blundell 2004:70) should be recognised only as those with *obvious markers of interaction*[16] (Blundell 2004:70-74; B. Smith 2010:353-354; Challis 2012:277).

Such a division would also pose a challenge to this project. By asserting (intentionally or otherwise) a traditional corpus, and intimately connecting it with |Xam ethnography, an assertion of identity has come to stand for authorship of the painted art in the Maloti-Drakensberg. This is evident in peripheral discussion, particularly that criticising the shamanistic approach (e.g. Solomon 1997; 1999; 2000; 2008; 2011; 2013) for its inclusion of the Kalahari material, which (for reasons uncertain) have been singled out as having a more significant spatio-temporal remove from the Maloti-Drakensberg art, relative to the |Xam informants (see Solomon 2011:100; 2013:1208-1210). It is unclear why the one would be especially more problematic than the other, given that *both* are at great and presumably unknowable remove from the original authors of the Maloti-Drakensberg art, and so it seems apparent that the issue of the |Xam 'stand-in' is more influential than theoretical concerns will admit.

Concern for the relevance of sources is certainly not without merit, and has been discussed at great length with specific reference to time-depth and historic context (see Mazel 1992; 1993; cf. Dowson 1993; Lewis-Williams 1993; Dowson 1994; Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1994; Parkington 1998; see also Mazel 2009; B. Smith 2010 for discussion), but the concerns largely focus on a question of scale. How might a researcher know the difference between a

[16] Aside from methodological concerns, this would once again place the informed approach in opposition to its stated aims (of producing an insiders' perspective; see Vinnicombe 1972a:131; 1972b:195; Lewis-Williams 1972:61). This is because it would read Bushman art in light of its reactions to contact, rather than as a product of internal cosmological and social logic (Smith 2010:350).

response to context, and an "aspect of San cosmology unchanged for millennia and therefore having no role to play in the writing of local San histories" (B. Smith 2010:351)? Beyond that, they consider the apparent, tacit acceptance of |Xam identity as a stand-in for authorship in the Maloti-Drakensberg. It appears that "[s]imply by acknowledging change, [readings such as these] do not escape from the kind of essentialised view of San 'tradition' that each of these researchers is at pains to overcome" (B. Smith 2010:352).

Even if these concerns were less salient, there remain a few, more pedantic issues. The Bleek-Lloyd archives include unmodified testimony alongside an English translation, but this is at odds with any large-scale interpretative paradigm, that would necessarily 'domesticate' it (after de Prada Samper 2014b:619) for the sake of intelligibility, or congruence with theory. Once again, these are not raised as specific criticisms of the shamanistic approach, but are rather observations made with the intention of demonstrating an underlying trend; that the authors of the 'traditional' corpus and the |Xam informants have been rendered functionally equivalent, despite concerns raised (and, admittedly, discussed; see above) about such an application.

In general, there is good reason to take a broader, rather than narrower, approach to meaning. The ethnographies were not products of the same interpretative effort that produced the shamanistic approach, but rather of linguistic and anthropological efforts elsewhere, and they stand to be acknowledged as such. Their priorities reflect their intentions. Accordingly, commentary on paintings makes up a very small sample of these resources, whereas topics relating to folklore and subsistence are extensively covered. As such, the shamanistic approach is required to seek broad parallels in discrete and dislocated sources, and to rely on analogy in order to reach any subsequent conclusion.

With |Xam ethnography implicated in the interpretation of the traditional corpus, any application of it beyond those bounds is burdened by the perception of their inherent connection. This is further complicated by the *subject* of their connection; the |Xam archive is a collection of 'traditional' folklore, practice, and belief, and is therefore the arbiter of 'traditional' art.

This apparent connection poses a challenge for any work that intends to use the ethnography, but not the approach that has come to represent its deployment in theoretical terms. At the same time, it presents an opportunity; evaluating a body of art that is substantially distinct from the Maloti-Drakensberg art (for instance) but still conversant with the ethnography allows a contribution both to understanding the specific context in question, as well as to those models and contexts with which it is coherent.

CHAPTER 2

2.2: 'Standing-in', and the problems of practice



Figure 2: View from the Groot Strandberg, overlooking the formations that include Springbokoog (top-right, horizon). Photo credit: Eric Wettengel.

This project describes a series of surveys undertaken on the Strandberg and their immediate surrounds. The Strandberg is located in the Northern Cape, South Africa; a trio of flat-topped hills, featuring prominently on an otherwise flat plain, and overlooking the formations that hold the Springbokoog rock art site (Deacon 1986:141; 1988:137; see *fig.* 1), approximately 25 kilometres to the south. ~40 kilometres to the north of them, on a farm called *Arbeidsvreugd*, are the famous 'Bitterpits' (see Deacon 1986:141-142), identified by ǁkabbo as his 'place' (W.H.I.

Bleek & Lloyd 1911:299; Deacon 1986:141). Together, these three features form significant landmarks on the */Xam-ka-!xoe*[17], or the historic heartland of the |Xam (and, by extension, the informants; see Deacon 1986; *cf.* McGranaghan 2012:98, *fig.* 4.3; 2016:158-159). As far as anthropological context is concerned, the site has much to offer. The hilltops were sketched by |han‡kass'o (one of Bleek's informants) on a diagram (see Deacon 1986:144; also McGranaghan 2016:159) describing their positions and relative sizes.

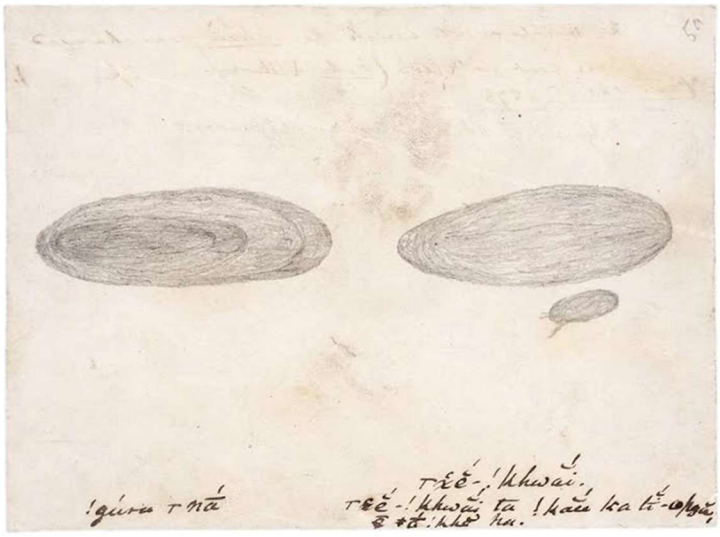


Figure 3.1 (above): |han‡kass'o's sketch of the Strandberg hilltops.
Figure 3.2 (below): Satellite image of the Strandberg, oriented south. Image source: Google Earth.



The hills themselves are implicated in |Xam folklore, featuring in the 'death of the lizard' narrative (W.H.I. Bleek & Lloyd 1911:214-219; see also Deacon 1988; McGranaghan 2016). In this story, the early-race[18] *!khau* (also *!khou*, LL.VIII.32.8822; *!kau*, D. Bleek 1956:425) became an agama lizard, and moved through a

[17] |Xam, *n.*, referring to the linguistic group (D. Bleek 1956:363); *-ka,* possessive, "following possessor, preceding the thing possessed" (D. Bleek 1956:74); *!xoe, n.*, "place, country" (D. Bleek 1956:500). Broadly translated; "The |Xam's place".

[18] *!xwe:-ǁna-s'o-!k'e, n.*, primordial inhabitants of the |Xam heartland (see LL.VIII.10.6885'); an indistinct category of figures in |Xam folklore, often the precursors of contemporary animals and actors in the |Xam cosmos. They regularly featured in didactic roles, used to portray the consequences of failing to meet social obligations or breaching taboos, amongst other "normative mechanisms of contemporary |Xam society" (McGranaghan 2012:441). From *!xwe:*, *a.* "first, in front, early" (Bleek, 1956:504); *ǁna, v.* "to stay [...] dwell, stand" (Bleek, 1956:611); *s'o, v.* "to sit, remain" (Bleek, 1956:171); *!k'e, n. pl.* "people, men" (Bleek, 1956:419). Broadly translated; 'First-there-sitting-people' (Bleek 1956:504). For comparison, see wide parallels in the Australian Dreamtime (e.g. Bradley 1988:xi; see Chippindale & Nash 2004:18-19).

mountain pass. The mountains closed around it and broke it in two. The body of the lizard, in turn, became the mountains (maintaining the primordial haze of |Xam early-race narratives more generally), with its head transformed into the easternmost hill of the Strandberg (the Great/Groot Strandberg; also *!guru |na*), while its hindquarters became the smaller, westernmost part of the formation (*|xe-!khwai*; W.H.I. Bleek & Lloyd 1911:215; see Deacon 1986:143-144; 1988:134-135). The term *!guru |na* translates as 'white-cloud head' (D. Bleek 1956:342, 389), in part because the agama was thought to 'nod' toward the north wind, 'frustrating' the rain's clouds (see LL.VIII.3.6232'-6234'). Similarly, the agama's head was notably large and bulbous, resembling both the easternmost hill (see McGranaghan 2016:159), and potentially the weather-patterns it was thought to 'bewitch'.

Both these hills and the surrounding areas possess engraved rock art (see Deacon 1988), and they are easily connected to both the practical and mythological concerns of Bleek's informants (as above). Considering the relevance (and indeed, dominance) of |Xam ethnography in the 'traditional' rock art corpus in the Maloti-Drakensberg, it seems likely that images *directly* attributable to the |Xam (such as the engravings on the Strandberg) might be amenable to a similar methodology to that applied to the paintings. Beyond this, it would be a minor victory for the shamanistic approach to demonstrate such findings without the need to appeal to analogies elsewhere. Given the significance of rain in the Strandberg narrative, it is tempting to suggest a relationship between the hills themselves and the shamanistic practices employed in rain-making, one of the accepted explanations for art in the Maloti-Drakensberg (e.g. Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2004).

There are some shortcomings to this outlook. The first is an extension of the issues raised above; that the |Xam ethnography has come to behave as the 'traditional' corpus, in the

sense that it reflects a change-resistant record of pre-colonial life and folklore. Given that it has come to act as one of a number of surrogates for the otherwise unidentified authors of the Maloti-Drakensberg art, it would seem natural to seek 'traditional' motifs in the art of the Strandberg, as Deacon does (e.g. 1988:135).

As I have noted above, the shamanistic approach is successful precisely because of its concordance with common themes and motifs in the art, and the relative ease with which the relevant iconography can be identified. As we have seen, in the absence of such a connection, there are many more reasons to be sceptical of such an approach than to embrace it. This is because not all of the principles applied by the shamanistic approach were resolved from |Xam ethnography; instead, they have come about in correspondence with other sources, the art first and foremost. Indeed, precisely because of its interpretative strength in the Maloti-Drakensberg, it is doubtful that the model would appear in its present form without its ability to confer with that body of art. This suggests that any application of shamanistic principles must be performed with caution, and above all, with concern for context.

I do consider shamanism broadly applicable to the |Xam world-view, but also as part of a belief-structure coherent among a number of frontier societies in the region (discussed in more detail below, see chapter 3). Furthermore, I consider it likely that any communities incorporating a |Xam identity may have engaged in 'a |Xam thing' by engraving, and exerting that element of themselves. This resembles the manner in which the creolised AmaTola of the southern Maloti-Drakensberg performed a 'San thing' by engaging in trance and painting their encounters with a distinct (but still mutually intelligible) 'Bushman' cosmos (Challis 2012:280). As with Challis' work on the AmaTola, however, any application of shamanism must

necessarily comply with the social and historical context in which the art was produced. Most importantly, it ought to correlate with the body of art in question.

As mentioned in the first part of this chapter, the application of |Xam ethnography is itself an assertion of the identity of the artists. Not that they were necessarily |Xam, but that their practices were sufficiently coherent to render the analogy effective. Although the |Xam certainly inhabited the same areas considered in this project, simply being present does not guarantee authorship (Deacon 1988:132), nor does it preclude authorship by another, otherwise unrecorded identity (see McGranaghan 2016). Similarly, the extent of (broadly coherent) |Xam-'ness' may well have existed beyond the physical presence of people identifiable (linguistically or otherwise) *as* |Xam, instead finding expression in hybrid identities that incorporated |Xam elements (see McGranaghan 2016; *cf.* Challis 2012; 2014).

A further complication is the fact that the informants dealt almost exclusively with the contents of the rock art copies they were presented with (e.g. LL.V.22.5739-5742, 5755-5775; LL.VII.1.6054-6073; LL.VIII.19.7639-7641; LL.VIII.22.7969-7975, 7983-7993; LL.VIII.23.7999-8004; cf. LL.VIII.26.7826-7827; also LL.VIII.22.7971) but did not go into any substantial detail beyond them. If the art had played a significant role in their lives, it is not readily evident from the ethnography, with one notable exception; Dia!kwain mentions that his father "*chipped* gemsbok, quagga, and ostriches, etc [sic] at a place where they used to drink, before the time of the boers" (LL.V.24.5963', emphasis added). While this suggests that the informants were certainly familiar with the concept, it does nothing to indicate the role rock art played in their lives, nor its significance. Given that Bleek began conducting interviews in the 1850s, more than a century after the first colonial visits to the Orange River (Penn 1995:23), it seems strange that he would be recalling a time before Europeans. Taken another way, it is certainly possible

that he was referring to the fact that the place in question was accessible before the time "of the boers", but was then less-so. With the potential connections still tenuous, it is vital to determine the extent to which a |Xam identity (and, by extension, ethnography) is *relevant* to a study of art on the Strandberg.

One of the intentions of this project is to demonstrate that |Xam ethnography will indeed be relevant, but as a function of a composite society that incorporated elements coherent with |Xam ethnography, even if it does not describe the full extent of whichever identity was applicable. In doing so, I hope to locate the Bleek-Lloyd material within a sphere of 'frontier ideologies'; that is, a body of social and ontological theory developed from a heterogeneous base, differentially integrated, and then variably deployed in response to the challenges posed by life on a frontier. This process retains referents to its (|Xam, among other) origins, and therefore a level of coherence that allows the Bleek-Lloyd material to contribute, but acts with the caveat that it ought to be considered as such; a contributor, located historically, and among a range of contributing ideologies. I consider this the best vantage-point from which to read the Bleek-Lloyd material *in general*, given that the informants were themselves products of life on the northern frontier of the Cape Colony.

The frontier, in turn, was subject to a large number of influences, which came to affect its inhabitants irrespective of their specific identities. This is an essential point for what is to come; rather than portraying the |Xam as homogeneous 'Bushmen' (*viz.* primordials), practising a 'traditional' and largely unchanging lifestyle (with accordingly traditional and timeless ideologies), it is more responsible to consider them in light of their circumstances. Any distinction between 'traditional' and 'colonial' bodies of art and cosmology must be made (or discarded) accordingly. Beyond this, the known contexts of the informants are by no means

stable or timeless, and it is worth acknowledging this explicitly. They lived on the northern borderlands of the Cape Colony during a period characterised by great upheaval. Even prior to the arrival of Europeans, these territories had a long history of socially transformative interaction (Penn 1995:21-22, 57), which was simply accelerated by the arrival of new pressures from the south (see below). Treating the informants as a representative sample of |Xam mythology seems difficult in light of the fact that (although they may have identified themselves as such) it would be very challenging to verify exactly what '|Xam' *was*, and certainly not without appealing to some notion of authenticity, extended by their prominence in anthropological and archaeological circles. This, in turn, is with the risk of refusing to use "authenticity [to mean] cultural purity" (Ellis 2014:494; *cf.* Gordon 1992:190).

If anything, the informants would have been *impure* by any such measure, but this is exactly the point I hope to make; because they came from a highly variable, heterogeneous space, any recognition of their context requires that they be treated as a point of crystallisation— a single emergent social and cultural phenomenon, formed in the cauldron of the frontier, and sampled at a single point in its evolution.

With all of this said, is there a way to explicitly recognise the historic contexts of the |Xam analogues, while retaining their general usefulness in settings that don't have access to sources of their own? I suggest that there is, but it requires the recognition that the ideology expressed by the informants was not a product either of being narrowly 'San', or of being hunter-gatherers. Rather, it is part of the construct conventionally labelled 'Khoisan', which, because of its low analytical value (and the lack of specific contextualisation in common use) could often mean just about anything (Mitchell 2010b:74-75), and whatever it did mean would have been historically contingent (as above). While not advocating for the uncritical use of this

exonym, the above point is not wholly problematic. Instead, it highlights the problem I have mentioned already; isolating an identity imposes artificial constraints that have a habit of behaving as if they reflected genuine anthropological occurrence. Allowing 'San' and/or 'Khoisan' to remain ambiguous allows us to be honest about the limits of our analogy.

In practical terms, it gives reason to consider that San-ness is many things; the product of a highly malleable social and ideology structure (*cf.* "foraging as ideology" in Guenther 1999:236; also Barnard 2002), not only able to draw from a number of sources, but dependent on it. In the long term, reflecting it. As the product of hundreds (if not thousands) of years of interaction between mobile societies (be they hunter-gatherers, pastoralists, or any number of things in-between), this 'San'-ness has variably accumulated or abandoned elements of culture. Each community (and any corresponding ethnography) may then be read as an iteration of this process; a single specimen of a background of steadily cohering beliefs, with specific elements emphasised or hidden in response to their social environs. The |Xam, then, might be taken as a 'sample' of the heterogeneous media that have made up frontier societies in the region over the process of centuries— themselves a single, historically contingent alloy of their interactions up to that point.

CHAPTER 3

3.1: Frontier conditions

By the time that Bleek and Lloyd began conducting interviews, the area which includes the */Xam-ka-!xoe* (and all of the major landmarks described in chapter 2) formed part of the northern frontier of the Cape Colony. Prior to the end of the Seventh Xhosa War (1846-1847), no specific boundaries existed for the northern districts of the colony, but at the conclusion of the conflict in December 1847, British governor Sir Harry Smith proclaimed an official boundary along the Orange River, incorporating the entirety of the */Xam-ka-!xoe* in the north, while extending eastwards to meet the Keiskamma river (see Peires 1981:161-163), annexing territories formerly controlled by (then) politically fragmented Xhosa polities (Arndt 2010:712-713).

Despite the declaration, European influence remained fragmentary, as the colonial government did not have the resources (or interest) to physically extend control the full distance to the Orange River in the north (Strauss 1979:24-26). While the advance of the frontier on paper did not necessarily include the physical presence of Europeans, communities closer to colonial population centres were displaced by settler expansionism to the south, creating pressure as these groups were forced northwards. While this is an example of colonial

influence on the region, it should not be read as the full extent of the 'frontier'. The immediate vicinity of the Orange River has greater antiquity as a frontier *zone* (Penn 1995:21-22), offering topographical features which acted as safe havens from raiding (Penn 1995:22), and advantageous conditions for the upkeep of herds (relative to the otherwise arid surrounds; Penn 1995:22-23). As such, various !Kora- and Nama-speaking communities lived along the river (Penn 2005:160-161) engaging in herding and related economies. Similarly, a large number of 'Bushman' communities cohabitated (Penn 2005:161-164), sufficiently acclimatised to have established networks of kinship, labour, and patronage with these pastoral groups (Penn 2005:158, 161-163; *cf.* Guenther 1999:20). This point is supported by contemporary colonial accounts; "on one side [of the Orange River] the Kora stations are intermingled with those of the Bachapin, on another with the Bamuchars, in the middle with the settlements of the Mixed, or Klaarwater, Hottentots; and every where [sic], with the kraals of the Bushmen" (Burchell 1822:346; see Engelbrecht 1936:75-76). Although the stereotype of Bushman social ties is loose and disorganised, there are suggestions of a 'Groot Kraal' somewhere along the Zak River, potentially including several hundred individuals— sufficiently large to impose *de facto* political control of the surrounding region (Penn 2005:244).

Power struggles in the Eastern Cape, initially between the Xhosa polities to the east of the River Kei, and later as a direct consequence of war with the British[19], created an upwell of refugees seeking sanctuary in the arid northern interior. Their inexperience with the conditions of the frontier (see Burchell 1822:268) added pressure to incorporate themselves into

[19] Easily characterised, in contemporary terms, as total war (Arndt 2010). As Xhosa military power struggled to match the resources available to the British, it adopted guerilla tactics to make up the difference (Arndt 2010:733). This had the side effect of blurring the distinction between warriors and non-combatants in the eyes of the British (*ibid.*) becoming part of a justification of scorched-earth strategies (Arndt 2010:731), both of which occurred despite protests by European jurists at the time (Arndt 2010:734).

the existing social and economic landscape, and indeed a number of hybridised societies would later include elements of these Xhosa-speaking communities (Penn 2005:162), themselves absorbing Tswana, Khoe, and Bushman influences in turn (Penn 2005:162-163). While some pressures were less pronounced, stock raiding was widely practised in the region, occurring both between indigenous societies (presumably with as much time-depth as the incidence of stock in the region; e.g. Penn 2005:108-109), and subsequently between them and incoming settlers (e.g. Penn 2005:134, 171, 178-179). Guns spread rapidly throughout these territories[20] (Penn 2005:151-152; *cf.* Challis 2012:270), along with relevant expertise in their operation (Storey 2008:89), and even techniques involved in their manufacture (Storey 2008:90). This was despite colonial attempts to regulate trade in firearms, which, owing to the vast demand for them across the interior (Storey 2008:94-95), meant that injunctions against the trade succeeded only in obscuring it from record (Storey 2008:92-93).

These developments balanced out any simple technological advantage held by the advancing colonists (Storey 2008:92; see Penn 2005:135), and as such, conflict and resistance should not be seen purely as part of a colonial subdual of the region. Raiding was pervasive, and could in some cases be considered a low-intensity conflict by modern definitions. Similarly, resistance to colonial intrusion should be seen as *war* between actors of often peer or near-peer capability (Strauss 1979:45-46; Penn 2005:134-135; *cf.* Challis 2012). In the face of continuing instability, colonial power structures instituted bounties on influential non-Europeans (e.g. Penn 2005:189), with militarised 'commando' raids instituted with the intention of prosecuting them (see Penn 2005:112; 116-119 in particular). Although their original purposes may have been relatively concise, later raids were mounted with the express

[20] Almost certainly as part of a cultural diffusion, rather than accompanying a specific demic diffusion.

intention of depopulating areas of the northern districts (see Anthing 1863:447, 449). This, along with slaving practices (also undertaken in the commando-format; Penn 2005:112, 225) solidified aspects of colonial culture and authority on the frontier through violence[21] (Penn 2005:108-112), even in the absence of direct occupation by Europeans or their auxiliaries. The militarised nature of these expeditions further reinforced any violent or aggressive inclinations their members may have expressed during 'peacetime', such as it was (Penn 2005:137, 140), and probably account for a low-level of passive violence and microaggression difficult to extrapolate from the record, but that almost certainly framed interactions in the region over long periods of time.

This is not to say that violent interactions were limited to those between the colonists and their erstwhile neighbours; Anthing (1863) emphasised the role of composite and indigenous groups in the continuing conflicts that characterised the northern districts, inasmuch as Europeans did (see McGranaghan 2012:111-112). Statements made by Bleek and Lloyd's informants reinforce this sentiment (see LL.VIII.27.8436'; LL.II.34.2960'; LL.II.36.3244'). This situation has marked parallels in the Maloti-Drakensberg (Mitchell 2010a; Challis 2012; *cf.* Ouzman & Loubser 2000), describing highly volatile conditions, effectively exploited by composite (or sometimes creolised) societies, able to deploy elements of their various incorporated identities to take advantage of certain elements of culture, identity, and proficiency which their competitors possessed only in part, but which they had drawn from a number of sources.

[21] Included in 'colonial culture' here is the enforcement of unequal relations between land owners (however tenuously that term might apply) and indigenous indentured labour— particularly in the creation of a labouring underclass delineated by race (see Newton-King 1999).

Following the advance of measurable colonial influence into the north, identities such as the Korana rose to positions of power. They were "a hotch-potch of diverse and fragmented peoples" (Penn 1995:44-46; 2005:163), who variably merged, split, and reintegrated with surrounding identities throughout the pre- and peri-colonial period (Penn 2005:162-164), often in response to specific challenges posed by the conditions on the frontier itself. These responses may have been changes in social organisation, or in the methods used to deploy specific elements of their culture, but because of the responsive nature of these adaptations, it is possible to extrapolate the nature of the challenges that precipitated them.

One response was the formation of *droster* (from 'deserters'; see Penn 2005:54) communities; the incorporation of numerous identities living within the bounds of colonial influence (see Penn 1999:147-199) into semi-formal communities, able to respond collectively to aggression or challenge that might otherwise have annihilated smaller or less organised communities. They are noteworthy for representing an alternative to colonial systems of control, which were often either through press-ganged inclusion in commando duty, or through forced labour (see Penn 2005:164), against which non-Europeans had little protection or legal recourse. *Drosters* came to form nodes of indigenous influence within colonial territories (e.g. Penn 2005:54; cf. Challis 2012:273-4), and represented a more equitable alternative to colonial categorisation, which forced low status upon non-Europeans (Penn 2005:21).

Largely formed with mobile *drosters* as their nuclei, *Oorlam* communities solidified and formalised these structures, and through collective effort achieved levels of economic and military self-sufficiency (Penn 2005:166). Although some moved well beyond the colonial frontier to avoid conflict (Penn 2005:166-167), others established themselves in closer

proximity, utilising the opportunities presented by trade and interaction with the colony, occasionally acting as brokers between Europeans and societies of the interior (Schoeman 1996:xi). In some cases, this formalisation extended as far as the development of distinct canons of law and ordinance, backed by written records (in the case of one settlement—Philipolis—both law and precedent are collected in Schoeman 1996). In turn, these organisations could exert great military, economic, and political power (Penn 2005:167-168; see Guenther 1999:18-19 for parallels in the Kalahari) on a landscape that had largely deprived them of the ability to self-determine. They offered pursuit of common interests and mutual security (*cf.* Lightfoot & Martinez 1995; Challis 2012) in ways that were otherwise unavailable to them on an individual basis. It is within these conditions that identities such as the Korana emerge.

Despite the homogeneity implied by a single ethnonym (especially in the case of the Korana), it bears more reliable application than many others, being a marker more of lifestyle than race or language (Ouzman 2005:102), and therefore more relevant to their activities. Owing to the pressures involved, it may well have functioned as an autonym for anyone compelled to adopt a particular identity in order to survive (Ouzman 2005:111; or chose to for whatever other reason; see Lightfoot 1995:206). Variations on these structures would form the genesis of 'Bastaard' identities (later Griqua[22]; Penn 2005:167), which include kindship with European settlers (Gordon 1779 in Raper & Boucher 1988:274; Penn 2005:138; 164-166). While these occurrences may appear as the ascendency of colonial culture, or of simple European dominance over colonised identities, they should not be seen as such (after Challis 2012:270-271; see Lightfoot 1995:201; Lightfoot and Martinez 1995:477-8). Instead, they are responses to a

[22] An example which foregrounded its European heritage, and was almost entirely Christianised. Griqua captaincies, of which Philipolis was an example (as above), retained greater influence by remaining within the ambit of colonial control, but formalising their own claims and systems in response (as with Schoeman 1996, above).

changing social and economic climate, subject to their own historical contexts (Stein 2005:27), but ultimately made with specific intentions in mind, and acknowledging the influence of heterogeneous and sometimes conflicting origins (Challis 2012:271-272; see Gosden 2004:26; Stein 2005:25-26).

Between them, we gain access to a number of mechanisms active on the frontier. A World Systems view of the region would suggest a core-periphery model, marking it on the passive peripheries of the colonial venture to the south, and the Bantu-speaking population centres to the east (*cf.* Lightfoot 1995:206; Lightfoot & Martinez 1995:471-472). This renders the frontier a recipient of change, rather than its catalyst, and does not account for locally-emergent social phenomena (such as the *Oorlams*) which came to characterise the region both prior to and during the period of colonial influence. By creating bastions of military self-sufficiency and political influence, they responded to instability and the threat of displacement. By adopting specific identities, and in some cases building fearsome reputations around them (as in the case of the Korana, see below), communities with disparate origins were able to tap into a distinctive metaphor, with attendant narratives that maintained stability internally and projected strength to outsiders (Ouzman 2005:101-102; Challis 2012). This makes two points simultaneously; the first is that the adoption of identity is a reflexive (and active) process, and second, that the conditions on the frontier selected for adaptability.

A post World-Systems perspective accommodates this more generously than its predecessors, allowing for internal frontiers between communities, more defined when there is competition between them, and less so when there is cooperation (see Kopytoff 1987:28-30; also Hodder 1982:58-60). It expects movement as nodes of influence lose or acquire new inhabitants (Hodder 1982:24-26; Kopytoff 1987:17-19), or as novel communities establish

themselves in regions of variable or overlapping influence (Kopytoff 1987:29-30). The regions of overlap tend to be considered 'no-man's-land' (see Kopytoff 1987:25) but this is a product of its conventional application to static population centres. Among mobile or semi-sedentary communities, pressure continues to be exerted, but in spaces relative to the (now mobile) nodes of influence (see Mazel 1989:133-134; Lightfoot 1995; Lightfoot & Martinez 1995:476, 487; e.g. Challis 2012:272). Furthermore, the nature of this pressure was potentially exerted by communities that did not conform to, or apply sedentary territorial structures (such as hunter-gatherers), and so a territorially-defined frontier is of low analytical value, and potentially misleading.

Other frontier-classifications scale them relative to their influence (as 'open' or 'closed'; after Thompson & Lamar 1981), or relative to their mobility (as 'moving' or 'static'; after Alexander 1984), but both of these models struggle to account for relations between mobile, variably structured communities because of a remaining requirement that the frontiers have defined efficacy. To accommodate further influence, it is perhaps appropriate to scale them as attractive or repulsive, their influence graded in terms of context, but potentially applicable to a range of potential factors. A region might be hostile (politically, climatologically) to one group of people, but accommodating to another. It might be the site of overlap between a number of differential pressures, each balanced against others. A region might be politically hostile, but topographical features may offer safe haven, and alleviate the consequences of non-compliance (see Challis 2012; King 2014; King & Challis *in press*). As the risk of coercion decreased, the presence of favourable conditions (trading partners, terrain capable of supporting herds of domesticates) may have overwhelmed the initial risk, producing a nett attraction.

Such an account would have the benefit of explaining social variability under frontier conditions. As pressures changed in intensity, or were replaced by others, communities were best served by responding to them in sum, rather than individually. These form historically contingent 'lattices' of attractive or repulsive influences, ranging from socio-political to purely pragmatic. In regions with the heaviest lattices would exist the most competing influences, with the most potential variables, and therefore presenting the most unpredictable conditions. Beyond this, the greater the number of competing pressures, the greater the scope for variability within it. As changing weather patterns made one subsistence strategy more viable, the presence of raiders might force the community to move elsewhere to effectively employ it, precipitating further and more micro-scale adaptations. As new technologies became available (horses, guns, and protective ideologies for example; see Challis 2012), the impact of these influences may have been mitigated, or exchanged for hitherto unfamiliar ones.

The variable nature of a latticed zone means that it would select for high degrees of adaptability, multiplying pressures on societies which retained static organisation or behaviour. Given that socially-formative pressures pre-dated colonial influx, there is reason to believe that the Orange River frontier zone was one in which adaptable (and probably composite) societies were extant, and almost certainly dominant.

Although there may be a tendency to consider the |Xam a sample of 'traditional' folklore, the above describes their historical context; one with a longstanding history of change, and prone to rewarding reflexive (and inclusive) organisation. That said, simply being present in a latticed zone does not guarantee these characteristics, and so there is a need to assess the extent to which the |Xam may have been such a reflexive community. This is a non-

trivial proposition, but there are means of demonstrating historic levels of interaction in the regions surrounding the historic heartland of the |Xam.

A relatively simple measure of interaction—graded both in terms of intensity, and in terms of time-depth—is the extent to which common (but distinctive) genetic markers can be observed in a target population and its surrounds. As I have alluded to above, there is a difficulty establishing relationships between identity and material culture, and so I do not include this as a defining part of the assessment, but instead for its suggestive qualities. Furthermore, if the |Xam were indeed products of interaction, there would almost certainly be indicators of it beyond simple physical markers. In this case: the presence of mechanisms able to manipulate or respond to changing pressures; that elements of culture, religion, or social organisation are highlighted, replaced, or differentially displayed— both as an internal process, and in presentation to outside actors (see Spitzer 2003:58-59). Genetic markers are a simple guide to interaction, and easily assessed. In order to assess the |Xam's propensity for adaptation, I contrast adaptive elements of their culture and ideology to similar practices among the 'apex' frontier community; the Korana.

Specifically, I consider a system of social indexing practised by the Bleek-Lloyd informants, and compare it to a linguistic mechanism that recorded lineage among the Korana. One places focus on the external pressures on a community, while the other focuses on internal dynamics, but as we shall see, both served as systems that guided social interactions between groups of people with highly variable identities. Similar to the origins of the *Oorlams* and *drosters* described above, I consider these systems to be markers of alloyed communities, and part of the reflexive processes that allowed them to function in dense lattices.

The roots of these practices are not limited to their conditions, but also in *responses* to those conditions, some specifically intended to evaluate, absorb, or process elements of other identities. The Korana offer clear examples of this, which can then be mapped across less salient examples in the Bleek-Lloyd material. Between these points, I hope to show that the historical context of the |Xam is one that lends itself to being evaluated as a sample of the frontier milieu, rather than as an example of a single, bounded identity. The intention is to provide a platform for what is to come— by taking common elements of both of these ideologies, and evaluating their place in negotiating frontier conditions, I hope to show that the likely origins of the engravings on the Strandberg stem from exactly one of these common elements; that they are a product of life within a heavily 'latticed' region and history.

CHAPTER 3

3.2: Points of comparison— genetics

As described in the earlier part of this chapter, the simplest point of comparison is genetics, and I begin here for that reason. A further consideration is that this is not the most conclusive, but rather the least; a framing device for later, and more detailed discussion. There are a number of limitations to the studies available on the topic, especially when it comes to the available resolution, and therefore much of the resulting conclusion is a product of inference. Efforts have been made by these studies to enhance this resolution, but without the ability to directly study the original populations (and with the acknowledgement that the relationship between DNA and identity is tenuous at best), the interpolation of these sources should not be read as an attempt to present absolute conditions, but rather to reinforce general points made elsewhere.

Considering that frontier economies variably involved domesticated stock, genetic comparison ideally focusses on the markers for lactose tolerance; or, more specifically, to the production of lactase. Lactase is an intestinal enzyme responsible for the fission of lactose into more absorbable sugars, glucose among them (Ingram *et al.* 2009:579). In all lactating mammals, this enzyme is produced by the gastro-intestinal system during the early stages of life, but

production declines rapidly during the transition to maturity. Lactase Persistence (LP) refers to the relevant alleles for lactase production remaining active during adulthood, with marginal decline. For the purposes of comparison, it is worth noting that LP alleles are not homogeneously distributed among human populations (Breton et al. 2014:852; see Gerbault et al. 2011), and that their presence generally correlates with specific selection for the mutation (Ingram et al. 2009: 580-581; Breton et al. 2014:852). Together, these two factors suggest that the presence of LP alleles indicates that the consumption of lactose is a factor in selection processes for LP mutations, and that these processes would therefore largely correlate with the exploitation of certain domesticates. As a result, it may be inferred that any population with a high occurrence of LP alleles in its genetic profile either engaged directly in herding strategies, or substantively interacted with populations that did[23].

A further consideration is that there are two relevant LP mutations in the region; one with origins in Europe (13910C>T), and another with origins in East Africa (14010G>C), from which a level of interactivity can be inferred, biased towards one source population or another. Similarly, it is possible to infer the time-depth of these interactions from the prevalence of their respective markers (as a percentage of the population). A single generation's worth of intermingling would not correlate to high percentages across the population, while significant histories of interaction with one population or another correlate to higher percentages of the corresponding allele. For example, the East African allele occurs with a high frequency[24] among the Nama[25] (50% in total) in northern Namibia (Breton *et al.* 2014:853), while European

[23] Or had sufficient history with both or either to have distributed the allele throughout the population.
[24] A high frequency, in this case, is defined as anything above 20% of the total population (after Breton *et al.* 2014:853).
[25] To the degree that the presence of the alleles among the Nama was greater than that in either Bushman or Bantu-speaking populations in the region (Breton et al. 2014:853).

markers coexist at substantially lower frequencies (6.8%; *ibid.*), broadly reflecting a history that more closely includes one than the other. Given that the mutation is *actively* selected for, it is possible to infer that the presence of *either* marker among the target communities (however they defined themselves) would correlate to the depth of their interactions with herding/farming communities[26].

In the Northern Cape, self-identified 'Coloured' communities near the town of Askham presented significant presence of LP alleles, with a predicted frequency of 45% across the population, with both variants represented (Breton et al. 2014:853), but the East African allele most prevalent (see Breton et al. 2014:854). In Colesberg (~600km to the south, near the junction of the Free State, Northern- and Eastern Cape provinces), communities with similar self-identification had an LP frequency of 15%, but with greater heterogeneity in their sources (Breton *et al.* 2014:853). Significantly, self-identified ǂKhomani San (living near Askham), and 'Karretjie' communities (near Colesberg) both present frequencies of 20%, which is considerable given that they are descendants (with recent additions filtered out, see footnote 26) of hunter-gatherer, 'San' communities[27]. The alleles are almost exclusively East African (see Breton *et al.* 2014:854) in both of these cases. Findings elsewhere (see Schlebusch et al. 2012), when taken in conjunction with these figures, suggest that 'Khoe' populations were effectively Southern San groups that adopted pastoralism from the same immigrant population that brought both domesticates and relevant genetics with them from further north in the

[26] It is worth noting that the studies referenced here have specifically accounted for recent admixture, filtering any low-frequency (corresponding to limited interaction) markers from their results (see Pickrell et al. 2012:4).
[27] Bantu-speaking communities elsewhere in the country have comparable LP frequencies to these 'hunter-gatherer' examples (Breton et al. 2014:854), which is notable considering that the stereotype of one includes herding, while the other largely does not.

continent[28] (Schlebusch et al. 2012:376). This, in turn, supports a long-term view of interaction between hunter-gatherers and herders in the region, and across a wider landscape including the Northern Cape, Namibia, Botswana, and Angola. Indeed, while language and self-identity broadly correlate among those who self-identify in the same ways (Pickrell et al. 2012:2-3; *cf.* Schlebusch et al. 2012:375), a more significant trend is visible in regional terms— specifically, that groups of people living in the same area tend to resemble each other genetically, with the resemblance more contingent on proximity than socially identifying properties.

This point is not discrete; while people are likely to interact with their neighbours, they also tend to cluster around common socially identifying properties (Pickrell et al. 2012:2-3) such as language, but this does not complicate my conclusions. Rather, it suggests while there is a general tendency to favour interactions with communities that are 'similar' (however that may be determined), communities are more likely to engage with their neighbours *in general*, privileging proximity over familiarity. Obviously, some factors would complicate interactions on any scale, such as direct competition or warfare, but the genetic evidence (and the lack of one, historically dominant population) suggests that admixture is the norm, rather than the exception.

[28] Subsequent social formations, in turn, descend in similar fashion. After a Korana *kaptein* Massouw Ryt Taaibosch: "Korana and the Hottentots [sic] were the children of one father, and that the Hottentots were the elder," (Engelbrecht 1936:3).

CHAPTER 3

3.3: Points of comparison— ideology

The admixture of identities can mean anything on a spectrum between multi-ethnic (being a cohabitating group of distinct identities) and creolised (being a novel alloy of formerly distinct identities), with a number of variations in between. Without specifically declaring the |Xam at any one point on the spectrum, there is reason to consider that they featured on it (i.e. the genetic examples described above, and the formative conditions of the frontier). A question remains as to the specific relevance this would have to the interpretation of rock art (for instance). Simply being subject to a set of pressures, or having a particular heritage does not guarantee an according set of behavioural outcomes.

As such, I consider one of the points made in the earlier part of this chapter; that mixed societies *mix* as a reflexive process, and further, as part of their general adaptations to life under frontier conditions. In order to test whether the |Xam were indeed a product of these processes, I consider whether or not they possess the mechanical properties of comparable, but openly mixed societies. By behaving in certain ways, and adopting (or abandoning) particular elements of culture and social structure, a mixed society might be known through the processes with which it adapts in the first place.

I consider two examples, the first of which derives from the Korana. This is the 'ideal' case; a society with expressed predilections, notoriously "skilled at coherent fragmentation and amalgamation" (Ouzman 2005:102), and arguably the apex frontier society of the era. This makes it suitable as a baseline for comparison to examples with less explicit tendencies.

The mechanism here is the high importance placed on lineage by the Korana, and the structural elements of their language and culture that reliably expressed it. This forms part of a complex that includes the suffix *-ǁëis* (sing. *-ǁëin*), used to identify a family, clan, 'tribe', or any number of larger or smaller, more or less well-defined social units (Engelbrecht 1936:2-3). The nebulous construction of single social units, and its apparently indiscriminate usage (see Engelbrecht 1936:24, 31, 39) is at odds with *what it does*. Every subcategory of Korana traced its origins to a 'great' house (Engelbrecht 1936:3) with each subsequent great house tracing itself back to an apocryphal 'House of Kora' (see Engelbrecht 1936:4-5) from which all true Korana descended. The line of descent of great houses followed male progeny, while offshoot houses were called 'little' in the event that women of a great house married members of another identity (Engelbrecht 1936:3). Through this process, any declaration of Korana identity included an overt claim of heritage, intelligible to others who were familiar with the system even if they weren't necessarily familiar with the content.

It is worth noting that this system extended to other communities intermarrying with the Korana, even if they didn't necessarily follow Korana convention. A member of the Ts'oa-ǁëis described himself as a descendant of "Bushmen [...] impregnated with blood from the Kats tribe" (Engelbrecht 1936:6), who then came to claim the status of a Korana house. This, together with the variable nature of the *-ǁëis* descriptor that accompanied it, gives a sense of what was important within the system. The inexact composition of communities (*viz.* 'form')

contrasts heavily with an acute awareness of lineage (*viz.* 'content'). As a whole, it offers an example of the reflexive frontier mechanisms described above; at a grammatical level, the Korana were reliant on communal narratives, variably defined by their origins (whatever they happened to be), and with automatic claim to an essential past. Given the unstable character of the frontier, it is notable for providing a 'passport' for any who decided to claim it, readily accessible to any other community who understood the system that it signified, even if they didn't understand a specific familial name or marker.

This process should be considered in light of the Korana's absorptive practices. A concerted effort appears to have been made to acquire "bush blood" (Engelbrecht 1936:66-67, 69); the systematic acquisition of both Bushman genetics and culture. They would adopt young children taken in raids (Engelbrecht 1936:70), expressly treating them no differently than they would their own. Although this may seem opportunistic, some accounts describe ambushes set using sweet, wild melons to draw children out ahead of their parents (Engelbrecht 1936:73), expressly with this intention. The Korana were also in the habit of taking prisoners of war, and commonly used them as intermediaries and negotiators (Engelbrecht 1936:71). While these examples involve raiding, others suggest more congenial terms. Some Bushmen were invited to live among the Korana on a temporary basis, with the intention of having them communicate the comfortable conditions to their kind elsewhere on the landscape (Engelbrecht 1936:72), and to acclimatise them to the Korana lifestyle more generally. In the process, the Korana acquired hunting techniques and subsistence technologies[29] developed by hunter-gatherer communities, in addition to other, less material acquisitions.

[29] Such as the digging stick (Engelbrecht 1936:73).

Considering their obsession with lineage, this suggests that the Korana identity staked some element of itself on Bushman society. Given that the *-ǂëis* system highlighted their heritage on a number of levels, they would be *specifically* invoking this, among other elements of their heritage whenever they identified themselves. A Korana identity in practice, then, would be one that explicitly connected itself to Bushmen through annexation.

Any encounter with a Korana, therefore, may well have been with what an anthropologist might identify as a Bushman, precisely as colonial observers did (see Burchell 1822:346; see Engelbrecht 1936:75-76). As Engelbrecht (1936:77) observes; although final identities may have differed, many of these communities had origins that were "not only similar [...] but quite identical." For my purposes, I note that these origins were expressly communicated to anyone who understood the structure of Korana lineage.

The |Xam did not possess a precise equivalent of the *-ǂëis* system, but that is a symptom of a less expansionist mould. The intention here is to demonstrate what a mixed community looks like under the conditions of the Orange River frontier, with examples taken from the mechanisms such a community would develop in response to those conditions. The Korana example demonstrates an obsession with identity, as well as its active *implementation*.

Although they did not possess an '*-ǂëis*'-equivalent, the |Xam did certainly obsess over the peculiarities of identity. In particular, elements of the |Xam idiom defined the conditions for (un)familiarity, and regulated responses to it. While a number of factors impact on this, the first port of call is the |Xam construction of landscape. This is because the location of social agents[30] defined their character relative to the |Xam, and from there, their relative identity.

[30] That is, anything inclined to engage in (anti)social interactions with the |Xam, be they human or otherwise.

The *!kau:xu*, or 'hunting-ground' (D. Bleek 1956:417[31]) is the most pertinent demonstration of this. It existed in contrast to the camp (*cf.* Lewis-Williams 1997:199), which was the space where social activities took place along familiar patterns, and where social agents were well known to each other. The *!kau:xu*, by comparison, acted as a "contact zone" (McGranaghan 2012:201) or "theatre" (Riley 2007:292) that offered a backdrop to interactions between agencies on increasingly unstable terms. A translation of its components supports this; *!kau* is a verb, and means 'to live' or to 'be alive' (D. Bleek 1956:410), and *-xu* is a noun, referring to a flat surface ('face, surface, head'; also 'cheek, palm'; D. Bleek 1956:261; *cf. !k'aũ, n.* 'earth, dust, ground" Bleek 1956:412). It is the *space that lives*, and in that way, it resembles a frontier-zone between a number of competing influences. Unlike the historical 'lattices' described in the earlier parts of this chapter, the |Xam did not limit these pressures to interactions between human strata, and instead extended this tenuous social environment among non-human agencies on the landscape.

They achieved this by extending coherent cultural practice into their observations of non-human communities. This is most clearly evident in *!nanna-se*[32], a suite of activities that could be used to compel animals and other non-humans into acquiescence when encountered on the hunting ground (e.g. LL.V.7.4379'), or potentially compromise human activities in the event of a breach of protocol (e.g. LL.V.17.5270). The |Xam extended culture into the landscape, and as such, non-human agencies understood both the activities of human actors and their social consequences, and could respond in accordance with their own cultural logics. In this sense, *!nanna-se* regulated relationships between humans and non-humans in similar ways to the highly formalised obligations that organised relationships between human beings in the

[31] Also given as 'veldt'; e.g. LL.VI.1.3953.
[32] *!nanna-se*; *v.* to show respect, avoid; *n.* hunting observances showing respect; Bleek 1956:473.

camp (*cf. hxaro*; Wiessner 1977; 1981; 1982; 1983; also *soxa*; Vinnicombe 1972b:201; Widlok 1999:213-21; for equivalents in the |Xam archives, see below, also McGranaghan 2012:149-50; 187-98), but with less certain outcomes.

Conformance with expectations was accorded positive evaluation, while non-conformance altered identity into more beastly formats. Conformance with |Xam norms, for instance, were characterised as 'nice' behaviour, corresponding to "moderate habits of consumption" (McGranaghan 2012:183; see *!xau:*, or 'small eater'; LL.V.3.4351), and the appropriate distribution of resources, particularly among social dependents (with which an individual had contracts/obligations; see *a:kən*; *v.* to be nice, good, to do nicely, well [to do appropriately], Bleek 1956:7; also *twai:ĩ*; *v.* to be comfortable [socially supported], Bleek 1956:243; cf. McGranaghan 2014b:677).

Excessive consumption was the simplest manner of earning a negative evaluation, with the term *!k"wakkən-ǁkũη* or 'decayed arms' (from *!k"wakkən*; *v.* to be decayed, putrid; *n.* decayed matter; Bleek 1956:509; *ǁkũ*; *n.* arm, humerus; Bleek 1956:590, 593) being applied to transgressors. Using a resource while potentially subjecting others to privation (e.g. LL.VIII.25.8216-8217) or simply being 'stingy' (see McGranaghan 2014b:677) were sufficient to earn the label, and it applied to anyone who failed to meet their obligations as well, extending beyond the bounds of formalised agreements, and into non-human communities. If hunters followed correct protocol during a hunt, game would be required to 'give' itself up (*cf.* Willerslev 2004; 2007; see below). Escaping, by this definition, would be an example of transgression; either actively by the animal (LL.VIII.16.7376'-7377') subjecting the hunters to hardship, or unwittingly by others elsewhere, who were party to the hunters' obligations, but failed in some way to support the overarching agreement (see McGranaghan 2014b:677).

The dominant theme is responsibility, but active compliance is a factor of intelligibility. By understanding (and being able to understand) and ordering behaviour accordingly, an agent signalled that their practices were coherent with |Xam norms, the property by which the |Xam measured personhood (McGranaghan 2014b:682-683). 'Different' behaviour—that is, socially unintelligible activities (see McGranaghan 2014b)—corresponded with difference. People that lived in the camp conformed to their social obligations in a general way, and were therefore the most intelligible. Social agents living further out were less intelligible, and less able to conform to |Xam norms (for whatever reason), scaling from the *largely* intelligible (the 'Flat Bushmen' for instance, who followed *most* norms; see LL.VIII.6.6590'-6594') to the more antisocial and potentially dangerous (see the portrayal of the distant 'Grass Bushmen' by Dia!kwain, for instance; LL.V.20.5537-5539; also McGranaghan 2014b:678). At the furthest edge of this scale were the |nu-sa, a group of Bushmen living on the far side of the Orange River, far from the |Xam home territories (see LL.VIII.10.6892'). I return to the |nu-sa in more detail in the next part of this chapter, but for now it suffices to mention that they were depicted in a manner appropriate to their social distance; as inexplicably dangerous and entirely unintelligible.

From the above, we might infer a conceptual map of the landscape; familiar spaces were safe, defined by security through compliance with norms held by both sides of any interaction. As distance from the camp increased, coherence and empathy tapered away, and the surrounding social agencies became steadily more capricious. The *!kau:xu* (hunting ground) was a frontier in these terms, insofar as every interaction would require negotiation, in turn achieved by demonstrating a selective element of one's identity; the capacity to 'understand'.

Coherence with |Xam norms (or the lack of it) was a marker of identity. The 'Grass Bushmen' were held to operate in certain ways (McGranaghan 2014b:678) because of their relative social proximity, and the same might be said of any other human or non-human community on the landscape. Sociality, in turn, had physical markers. *ǁkeǁke* (lit. 'beasts of prey'; D. Bleek 1956:571; see McGranaghan 2014a:10) are a good example of this. While the term describes predators in general, its usage inferred 'bestial' (after McGranaghan 2014b:674-675) such as greed (e.g. LL.II.20.1844-1846) and egregious consumption (see above; LL.II.20.1862; LL.II.30.2695; McGranaghan 2014b:675), at odds with the 'understanding' (as above) behaviours that characterised normative behaviour. This 'difference' (*viz.* strangeness; see */xarra*; D. Bleek 1956:363) manifested in foul odours (as with the 'decayed arms' above; see also LL.II.14.1442), hairiness[33] (LL.II.2.333; LL.II.30.2693-2694; LL.V.3.4127-4128; McGranaghan 2014b:674), and yellowness (*/kai:nja*; 'yellow, green, or shining[34]'; D. Bleek 1956:297; LL.II.18.165 ; McGranaghan 2014b:674). In addition to being markers of anti-social tendencies, the relationship between identity and outward appearance was a causative one. When the early-race Caracal became embroiled in the identity of a hyena, it assumed the mantle of 'beast of prey', and manifested yellowness and hairiness in the process (LL.II.18.1654-1657).

"[W]ays-of-being (or doing)" (McGranaghan 2014b:683) were inherently connected to identity by Bleek's informants. One way of reading this behaviour is as a sense-making mechanic (when applied externally), allowing the |Xam a "'way into' the difficult-to-understand behaviours of some of the non-|Xam groups that shared their [...] landscape"

[33] Colonists, who, like hyenas (a stereotypically anti-social creature), were thought to attack viciously at night, were described as having "hair like lions" (via a colonial account; see Raper & Boucher 1988:194) as a result of their stereotypical beardedness (McGranaghan 2012:205; also McGranaghan 2014b:681).
[34] This 'shining' particularly relevant to eyes (as in LL.II.18.1653'-1654)— a quality most evident at night, when firelight might pick them out against the dark (McGranaghan 2014b:674-675).

(McGranaghan 2014:683). While this certainly seems plausible, it seems strange that a system which continually appealed to stereotypes[35] would offer much benefit to understanding, given that much of what the |Xam would have been trying to understand would already have been defined by appearance and social distance. Furthermore, the extension of culture into the landscape meant that some level of understanding existed by default, even if it was to a limited extent. This is supported by McGranaghan's observation that the Korana, despite being an archetype that the |Xam characterised as violent (see below), possessed a sufficiently coherent ideology to be able to demonstrate their 'difference' from the |Xam in terms that the latter understood (McGranaghan 2014b:679).

The Korana are significant for more than their suitability as a comparison to the |Xam; they were a prime example of violence on the |Xam landscape, behaving in "strikingly 'non-|Xam' ways" (McGranaghan 2014b:678), and "overwhelmingly associated with [...] inappropriately directed or unregulated violence" (*ibid.*). In accordance with the relationship between identity and appearance, the Korana are appropriately identified; labelled *xuaken-!ku*, or 'bloody browridges' (LL.II.32.2960'), both a visceral metaphor for those engaged in violence, and a reference to the cliff-like facial structure of baboons, another community commonly associated with violence on the landscape (see LL.V.23.5931'; McGranaghan 2014b:679).

The Korana stereotype appears as just that; a categorisation which inferred certain kinds of behaviour, and the model of a certain kind of anti-social identity. This was to the extent that Korana appeared as primordial adversaries in the early-race stories (McGranaghan 2014b:679), without necessarily appealing to some sense of ethnicity. A corresponding body of

[35] The narrative archetypes of the 'early-race' stories in particular, which set precedents for behaviour, and listed consequences for non-conformance (see McGranaghan 2012:146, 182-183).

violent material culture characterised their operations, including spears (LL.VIII.21.7968'), certain kinds of knives (LL.VIII.18.7606), and guns (LL.VIII.18.7606'; McGranaghan 2014b:679), with each noted specifically as tools of war.

In line with the general sense of 'becoming' that infuses |Xam theories of identity, this "violent schema" (McGranaghan 2014b:679) of practice and material culture was something that could be occasionally undertaken by the |Xam, but was *definitive* of the Korana. The informants themselves may have had occasion to 'act Korana' (see McGranaghan 2014b:680) as their circumstances required. This point should not be overlooked; because identities were acquired (through behaviour, for the most part) rather than inherent, Korana-'ness' was an active process. As a result, there is reason to see them as a category of person in the |Xam idiom, as much as the ethnonym of an extant community. Similarly, so far as the |Xam were concerned, it seems that *|Xam* was *another category of person* inasmuch as Korana was. If personhood was a product of conformity to |Xam norms, then anyone who conformed would have had claim to |Xam identity.

Similarly, Korana were Korana as a product of their practises and lifestyles, and because of their conformity to a set of stereotypes held both by themselves and others. This process extends across the frontier. "'Khoe', 'Coloured' and 'Bantu-speaking' individuals became Korana. Even 'whites' became Korana," (Legassick 1969:358; in Ouzman 2005:102) and the operation here is in becoming. More, it is in *doing Korana things* (*cf.* McGranaghan 2014b:680). "Whenever a civilised man wishes to become a plunderer, he separates himself from his own caste and unites himself to the Corannas [sic] and takes a wife from among them; he stirs them up to all sorts of mischief" (Smith 1834; in Lye 1975: 357–8; see Ouzman 2005:102). Even the

definition of the word 'Korana', as given by the Nama, is as 'people who raid'[36] (Grobbellaar 1955:323). For the |Xam, *!giri-ǁkein* was an alternative label for the Korana (see Bleek 1956:382), but is notable because the term has connotations of stabbing, particularly with spears (McGranaghan 2014b:679). While the |Xam idiom is one for which 'becoming' is the key to identity, social formation under frontier conditions seems to follow this logic *in general*. That the Korana were so consistently identified across different sources as being those with a particular 'violent schema' (as above) suggests that the |Xam were not the only frontier society to model identity-formation in this way.

Ironically, Korana informants interviewed elsewhere (see Engelbrecht 1936) described the Bushmen as inextricably violent themselves (Engelbrecht 1936:17-18), and prone to taking immediate offence at the smallest provocation (Engelbrecht 1936:17-18, 73-74). They were able to kill rapidly with their poisonous arrows, with poison (and a certain kind of bow and arrow) being an element of material culture specifically associated with the Bushman identity by the Korana (Engelbrecht 1936:74). It is worth noting that this association between identity and material culture would not necessarily have rendered a bow-wielding Korana a Bushman, for example. In the southern Maloti-Drakensberg, shamanistic ritual practices may have been 'Bushman things' (in the sense that they were part of a Bushman suite of culture) even if they weren't being performed by Bushmen (Challis 2012:277). This is to the extent that Bantu-speaking farming groups such as the amaTolo (for example) were "seen to be skilled in rainmaking due to the well-known historical 'intimacy' between amaTolo and San" (Challis 2012:277), even if the amaTolo laid no particular claim to Bushman identity. Moreover, the fact that these were 'Bushman things' had its own significance; "it appears that [...] even though

[36] Even if the exact meaning and etymology is disputed. See above, also Maingard (1931:503).

they were not by any means all from San backgrounds, [they] considered *San practices* culturally cohesive" (Challis 2012:278; emphasis added).

In summary, then, it appears that the inhabitants of the frontier used a materialist and behavioural paradigm for constructing the identities of others. These stereotypes were then compared to an internal narrative of *who they were themselves*, and appropriate responses formulated. The materialist aspect is especially interesting given that material culture readily transits frontiers and communities, meaning that artefacts with identifying properties had a high likelihood of changing hands on a regular basis. In turn, these markers were subsumed into the identities (and their corresponding *identifiers*) of the communities that acquired them. As newly-admixed communities established new narratives through their behaviour and self-identification, they established new contextual elements and connotations for their attendant material culture.

Good examples of this trans-frontier, material-morphological process are the *|Xãu-sakwa*. They were identified as being a (non-Bushman[37]) community that *took up* a style of archery that used poison (a 'Bushman' marker, as above), as well as bows and hunting-strategies that accompanied it, eventually becoming "among the best exponents of the [shooting] art" (Engelbrecht 1936:74). While simply adopting an object of material culture is not significant in itself, their name demonstrates the reciprocal processes described above. *|Xãu* is translated by Engelbrecht (*ibid.*) as a corruption of the Korana term *ǂxãu*, which meant to shoot with a bow and arrow. As a parallel, *|xã* is a |Xam word that means 'to shoot' or to 'aim' (D. Bleek 1956:362), while *|xãu* (a direct transliteration from the Korana) means to 'shoot with

[37] Whether that be Khoi, or something else, is not immediately clear.

magic arrows'[38] in |Xam (D. Bleek 1956:363). This repeats with *!kao:* (D. Bleek 1956:408), *!kaue* (D. Bleek 1956:413), and *!kau:ξn* (D. Bleek 1956:415), all potential corruptions or transliterations.

While the first component of *|Xãu-sakwa* is suggestive of the broad extent of shooting-related identifiers among frontier societies, the latter half is suggestive of the origins of the group identity itself. The suffix *-sa* is translated as 'Bushman' by Engelbrecht (1936:74), but appears as a *general* plural suffix in the |Xam lexicon (*lit.* 'become'; D. Bleek 1956:161). This compounds with *ʃa* (pron. they, *usually*; *sa, si*; D. Bleek 1956:176) as well as si (*pron.* They; also used as *pl.* suffix to *n.*; D. Bleek 1956:168). A purely |Xam reading of *|Xãu-sa* would be 'shooting people'. This leaves *kwa*, which is a Nama plural suffix[39], playing a similar role to *-sa* among the |Xam. Together, this means that *|Xãu-sakwa* translates as 'shooting people people', and this is not as ridiculous as it may seem. In functional terms, it appears that a piece of (acquired) material culture has come to identify a community, who identity has subsequently undergone evaluation (as 'the shooting people') by one group, and then by another, without the second evaluation fully comprehending the connotations acquired before.

Given that shooting is an identifier of the *|Xãu-sakwa*, and that doing Korana 'things' is what makes one a Korana, it seems likely that similar conditions applied to the |Xam. Logically, this extends in the reverse as well; one was presumably not |Xam by default, but rather |Xam by dint of |Xam-like activities and markers. Taken with the above, this supports a reading of the |Xam practice of 'social indexing' as their own mechanism of identity regulation, and one example of many on the frontier. The |Xam weren't simply pigeon-holing their neighbours

[38] Although this term specifically described the occurrence in ritual circumstances, the suite of shooting-related mechanics were just that— descriptors for the action of shooting in itself, while also occurring extensively as metaphors for the transfer of energy across the cosmos, often through arrow-like media (see chapter 4.2, pp. 81-82).
[39] E.g. Einiqua [-kwa], being the people who lived around the Orange (Ein) river (A. Smith 1995:xvii).

(human or otherwise), but rather establishing precedents for engagement with them in future. Anti-social agencies had corresponding characteristics, and corresponding position on the |Xam social indices, able to be dealt with according to the ways in which they were *known* to behave.

Read in the context of frontier conditions, the |Xam appear to be producing indices of almost every identifying characteristic; material culture, physical features, and behaviour, all of which were given corresponding familiar (safe) or unfamiliar (dangerous) capacities. It is here that we find the equivalent of *-lïeis* among the Korana; a mechanism designed to regulate behaviour and identity-expression on the frontier, specifically able to respond to unpredictable social interactions.

The |Xam social indices are especially effective for my purposes because my theoretical construction of frontiers is mimicked by the |Xam construction of their own social boundaries. The fringes of their communities were highly variable, socially formative spaces, requiring that elements of identity be deployed in response to unpredictable social conditions. This further suggests that the historic context of the |Xam was one in which negotiation with other communities, and the corresponding two-way identity evaluation described above, were common.

For the purposes of this project, the intention is to recognise the meshing of |Xam, Korana, and other frontier societies with their surrounding contributors. This is based on the genetic data at the beginning of this chapter, which suggests a level of physical admixture was common, as well as the mechanisms that both |Xam and Korana developed to engage with the composite societies around them. This, as potentially composite societies themselves.

Given that any ethnography, then, may be a 'sample' of an admixing, reorganising community, it seems reasonable to suggest that there may have been a common register of ideologies on the frontier, of which the |Xam and Korana offer samples. Even if the |Xam and Korana were recognisably discrete entities, employing common elements of *both* ethnographies in concert would have a high likelihood of accounting for common influences on the northern frontier (and, by extension, the Strandberg), as both are contributors. Accordingly, it is responsible to use both ethnographies in correspondence with each other to make up for as much uncertainty as possible.

Despite a "radical discontinuity" (Lear 2006:65) between the longer-term historical circumstances of the informants and any modern-day interviewees, the folklore of the people currently living in the */Xam-ka-ǃxoe* (often self-identifying as |Xam; de Prada-Samper 2014a:104-105) is not only compatible with many of the tropes and mechanics common in the Bleek-Lloyd material (de Prada-Samper 2014a:106-107) but retains much of the 'narrative aesthetic' (de Prada-Samper 2014a:106; cf. de Prada-Samper 2012:202-203) of the 19th century material. This suggests that—at the very least—common narrative threads are (and were) persistent across frontier communities, themselves not easily compartmentalised.

CHAPTER 4

4.1: On shamanism

The ethnographic cross-referencing proposed in this project has precedent in rock art research, specifically within the ambit of the shamanistic approach. This approach relies on a correspondence between |Xam ethnography and anthropological records collected from Ju|'hoan communities in the Kalahari at various points in the twentieth century, with research spanning Botswana, Namibia, and Angola (see Lee 1968; Marshall 1969, 1976; Katz 1982; Biesele 1993; Guenther 1999). As alluded to in chapter 2.1 (pp. 26-27), this is one of the threads used to anchor a shamanistic interpretation to the body of painted images in the Maloti-Drakensberg, and a contributing factor to the impression that the shamanistic approach relies on a 'pan-Bushman' consciousness. The sources of the Kalahari material are certainly dislocated in time and space from the |Xam, but despite whatever other reasoning binds their use in the Maloti-Drakensberg, there is a perception that they have been rendered equivalent, as part of a "neglect of history and process" (Solomon 2000:77) by the shamanistic approach.

It is alleged that there is no evidence for the southern Bushmen (i.e. the |Xam) engaging in shamanistic behaviour (e.g. Solomon 2011:105; 2013:1210), but this is by no means a straightforward claim. There is an underlying assertion that shamanism has been *manufactured*

as an explanatory position, with convenient sources found to match. This inference is misleading; the shamanistic approach has made explicit effort to emphasise the most stable analogues (*cf.* Lewis-Williams 1991), and to restrict their use according to their coherence with the |Xam material (Lewis-Williams 1992), as well as Qing's testimony (see above, also Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2012:702-704). As already mentioned; the great strength of the shamanistic approach is not that it manages to bring disparate sources to bear on a particular problem, but rather that it has an incredibly close relationship without the art. It might not be an exaggeration to say that without the body of art in the Maloti-Drakensberg being the way it is, there would likely not be a shamanistic characterisation of the |Xam.

At the same time, the argument for continuity between these sources provides a challenge to this project. The body of art on the Strandberg is not an extension of the body of art in the Maloti-Drakensberg, and so the necessary elements of the shamanistic hypothesis (derived so reliably from the art in the Maloti-Drakensberg) cannot logically apply to the Strandberg without a mirror of that art *in situ*. If the detractors of the shamanistic hypothesis are correct, and there is no basis for shamanism in the |Xam ethnography alone, then I would have tenuous grounds upon which to incorporate the shamanistic approach into the interpretation of any disparate artistic corpus, *even if it shares a location with the source of the contributing ethnography.*

As such, it is necessary for me to consider the shamanistic approach purely in terms of the |Xam ethnography. I include elements of Korana ethnography alongside this discussion,

but they should be read as supplementary to this project as a whole, rather than an observation of the applicability of shamanism to the Korana[40].

As discussed above, the shamanistic approach presents the body of art in the Maloti-Drakensberg as broadly non-representational. Rather than being an account of 'daily life', it references encounters and phenomena that took place during shamanistic trance (e.g. Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1988:215; 1994:211; Lewis-Williams 1995:148; 2010:15). Solomon, one of the most vocal critics of the shamanistic approach, contends that this is a characterisation imported from northern Bushman populations, and that there is no evidence for the shamanistic 'trance dance' in |Xam ethnography (e.g. 2011:105; 2013:1210[41]), effectively accusing Lewis-Williams (of the shamanistic camp) of emphasising perceived similarities between the Kalahari material and the Bleek-Lloyd archive to bolster his own claims, ignorant of the cost to specificity. This misrepresentation, it appears, is owed to a failure to "distinguish adequately between the living and dead sorcerers described by the narrators, with the result that texts describing the supernatural activities of spirits have been read as accounts of the hallucinatory experiences of living 'shamans' in trance states" (Solomon 2011:101-102).

This statement refers to the practice (in the shamanistic approach) of taking references to 'death' in the |Xam ethnography to correspond to its portrayal in the Kalahari, where it did not "refer to physical death: it [was] a metaphor for entrance into the altered state of consciousness of trance" (Lewis-Williams 1980:472; 1998:93; Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2004:210;

[40] Which is certainly a possibility, but beyond the scope of this project.
[41] Although Solomon considers this theme variably throughout a number of publications (e.g. Solomon 1997; 2000; 2007; 2008), I consider her argument specifically in light of more recent formulations (Solomon 2011; 2013). This is owed to the fluid character of the running debate with Lewis-Williams (e.g. Lewis-Williams 1998; 1999; Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2012), which has resulted in a flux of revisions and clarifications which may encourage accusations of misrepresentation should earlier definitions be taken as read. In any case, the articles in question (Solomon 2011; 2013) review much of the prior argument, and can presumably be taken as illustrative of Solomon's perspective.

see Lee 1968:40; Lewis 1971:58). While the |Xam accounts could conceivably be taken to be devoid of unambiguous references to ritual activities, it could (in terms of the above) be deployed in support of a shamanistic view in terms of its references to death, and the activities attributed to those who had died or were dying.

Solomon's contention derives from a different portrayal of 'death'. This resolves most clearly when compared to her interpretation of *!gi:tən*[42] in the |Xam ethnography, a term which Lewis-Williams treats equivalently to 'shaman' (e.g. Lewis-Williams 1998:93). Although she concedes that the term was "used to describe living healers" (Solomon 2011:102), she expands the category to include (and indeed emphasise) the mythological forebears of the |Xam. More specifically, she affirms that it references spirits of the dead.

To achieve this, she seeks to establish a category of physiologically 'dead' (but still active) entities, and proposes a link between literal (physiological) death and *!gi:tən*, referencing one of Bleek's informants in particular; |Han‡kass'o's description of 'dead people who came out of the ground' and 'rode the rain' (D. Bleek 1933b:305). Ironically, passages of this kind are used by Lewis-Williams to establish the relevance of shamans, albeit with a different emphasis.

Solomon's depiction recalls the Grim Reaper of Western folklore, where a dead *!gi:xa* takes "away the people whom he has loved … [T]hese are the people whom he gets, makes them follow" (Solomon 2011:103, original parentheses; see D. Bleek 1935:29). They are depicted as having a penchant for vengeful behaviour (Solomon 2011:103), and being the root of sickness (Solomon 2011:104). That the dead feature in |Xam theories of illness is not in contest;

[42] From *!gi:*; *n.* 'magic power, sorcery'; *!gi:xa*; *n.* 'possessor of !gi, sorceror'; *pl. !gi:tən* (D. Bleek 1956:382).

they were known for a connection to dust (e.g. LL.V.20:5550-5556, as in Solomon 2011:105; see also the "haze that brings illness", LL.V.20.5557), and a resemblance to 'beastly' social antagonists such as lions (D. Bleek 1935:2-5; Solomon 2011:109-110; cf. McGranaghan 2014b).

Further emphasis is given to descriptions of battles between living and dead sorcerers (see Solomon 2008:65), but this odd if 'every reference' (e.g. Solomon 2011:103; 2013:1210) to sorcery was an unambiguous reference to being dead. Beyond that, any statement describing the action of a sorcerer on the weather (for instance) would need to be read as the action of the dead upon the weather; the dead having "gone to loosen the thong" that had "bound the rain" (D. Bleek 1933b:305) just as shamans are purported to do. Given the equivalence between the behaviours Lewis-Williams attributes to shamans, and those Solomon attributes to the dead, it certainly does not appear as the "unambiguous evidence" (Solomon 2011:102) that damns the shamanistic approach to irrelevance.

As a corollary, the Korana offer comment at this stage. The word *!gi:xa* has a particular place in Korana history, as seen in this part of a narrative detailing one of Kora's[43] immediate descendants:

> Quite as interesting was a statement made by Benjamin Kats that he had heard [old people say] that Kora has a son named *!Geixamab*. [...] Provided, therefore, that our interpretation is correct, the people were henceforward also called Sorcerers and their chief was also the founder of a clan called by that name (*!Geixa-ǁëis*). Stow had therefore been correctly informed, for he had heard "that the ancient name of the Great Korannas [sic] was a word signifying Towenaars" (i.e. Sorcerers).
> (Engelbrecht 1936:13-14)

!Geixa, here, appears as a corruption of *!gi:xa*. This statement does not demonstrate that *!gi:xa* were always living people, because the Korana standards for sorcerers may well have differed.

[43] As in, the 'House of Kora', the apocryphal origin-house of the Korana in general.

That said, it is clear Korana understood 'sorcerous practice', if specifically as a 'Bushman thing'. It is not that the

> Korana were without any knowledge of the occult; generally speaking, however, [they] treated sickness by massaging with fat, or by giving medicine made from herbs, whereas the Bushman [...] practised some form of exorcism by dancing with camel-thorn pods, etc., tied to his ankles, clapping his hands, and chanting the syllables *ho ho ho* in monotone. (Engelbrecht 1936:73-74)

This is significant, especially in light of the claim that there is no evidence for a southern Bushman trance-dance. It appears as a simple description, by the neighbours[44] of Bushmen living in the Northern Cape, of what Lewis-Williams identifies with the help of the Kalahari material. Purely in terms of the northern frontier, it gives a localised lens through which to read other claims.

When Solomon argues that 'dead' *!gi:tən* could be entreated to provide favourable weather, or to mitigate the action of disease (e.g. Solomon 2011:102), it would be just as compelling to read them as domains of expertise expected from shamans (e.g. Lewis-Williams 1992:57-59). Selecting a narrower definition here is complicated by the broad equivalence between these two categories, and the precise terms that Solomon uses to motivate for her conclusion (e.g. Solomon 2011:103-110) can simultaneously be used to demonstrate the efficacy of the shamanistic approach in much the same format as she considers them (and I do so below). Worse, once a few mechanical elements of |Xam identity-formation are introduced, isolating any *!gi:xa* as 'dead' in the biological sense becomes quite difficult.

[44] And, arguably, 'family'.

CHAPTER 4

4.2: Magic and identity

My issue with Solomon's findings is a mirror of the problem she identifies in the shamanistic approach; the translation of the term (and the associated concepts) of 'death'. Solomon (2008:64) identifies the |Xam word */nu* as the measure of this, a term she considers "particularly applied to the dead". It is translated elsewhere as a "term of opprobrium" (D. Bleek 1956:350), and, it appears, specifically one signalling social distance, and non-conformance with |Xam norms.

An example of the latter definition can be found in an early-race story where the anti-social Ticks[45] were labelled as */nu-ǃk'e* (translated as "bad people"; LL.VIII.20.7802). This is identified as a curse on the reverso note (LL.V.20.7801'), "a notion repeated elsewhere in the archive" (McGranaghan 2012:413; see LL.VIII.27.8368; LL.VIII.31.8741). One of these repeats is in the description of the */nu-sa*[46], the "name of a Bushman tribe living north of the Orange River" (D. Bleek 1956:352). Specifically, living far from the |Xam home territories (LL.VIII.10.6892'), and therefore both socially distant, and the subjects of an appropriately

[45] Potentially a caricature of Khoe (Korana?) communities (Hewitt 2008[1986]:188; McGranaghan 2012:304) as both the Ticks and the Khoe did not behave 'nicely', and were both attached to domestic animals.
[46] *-sa* being the |Xam collective suffix described earlier.

dangerous stereotype (see chapter 3.2 & 3.3). ǁkabbo identifies them by their usage of a particular variety of root-medicine, which demonstrates the cultural continuity of the landscape in |Xam theories of identity-formation. They were identified by virtue of their possessing *some* practices that were intelligible to him, and in keeping with a known suite of material culture. In this passage, he referred to them as something else; */nu-ka-ǃk'e* (LL.II.36.3242), a term elsewhere translated as "spirits of the dead" (D. Bleek 1956:350). While the appellation 'spirits' has particular connotations in the Western idiom, */nu-ka-ǃk'e* were described in much the same way as the |Xam dealt with *any* stereotype; by classification of material culture and behaviour.

The */nu-sa* were thought to have cuts on their hands called '*/nu-ka-/a/a*' (LL.II.36.3310'), and |nu, in this example, may broadly be defined as 'bad' (or antagonistic, as above), while *-ka* indicates possession (preceding that which was possessed; D. Bleek 1956:74). */a/a* conforms to translations for both */a*, as "fighting/cursing", and */ã*, as "cutting" (see "cutting off all the honey"; D. Bleek 1956:267). A possible definition of this, therefore, is "bad things' cuttings/cursings".

A similar marker was used to describe the Korana as well, as they were thought to incise their hands between the thumb and forefinger to increase their deadliness during fist-fights (LL.II.36.3244'; McGranaghan 2014b:679). As with the construction of these stereotypes in general, this practice was intelligible to the |Xam, who employed similar incisions for similar purposes (*ibid.*; McGranaghan 2012:303). The noteworthy element here is that (as with prior examples) although the |Xam were known to employ this practice, it is not a defining feature of the |Xam stereotype.

Keeping with a behavioural basis for identity, the */nu-sa* were thought to shoot arrows into the sky, which would fall down upon the |Xam (LL.VIII.22.7972-7974), consistent with the anti-social parameters of their distant existence, and the largely unintelligible nature of their identity. This behaviour resembles the depiction of arrows used by 'spirit people' to spread disease (see McGranaghan 2012:222-223; *cf.* "harm's things," Lewis-Williams 1980:471; Lewis-Williams 1992:57; "arrows of sickness," Lewis-Williams 1998:94). The dead were supposed to have lost their 'understanding' (LL.VIII.26.8310') on account of not possessing their 'thinking strings'[47] (LL.VIII.26.8310). At the same time, it was *also* the action of a stranger (*viz.* one who was 'different' in terms of the |Xam construction of such) to "shoot at people" (McGranaghan 2014b:678; see LL.II.22.1981) as part of their capricious and dangerous identity.

Taken together, this suggests that the usage of */nu*, while variably translated as 'dead', is not substantively limited to the biological sense, nor the unambiguous connotations of 'dead' in English. Rather, it appears attendant to the construction of dangerous or unfamiliar stereotypes in |Xam social indices. Accordingly, it seems unnecessary (and perhaps misleading) to declare the use of */nu* as a definitive reference to 'dead spirits'.

Instead, the application of |Xam socialisation and protocol is demonstrated. */nu* is a marker of a community being indexed as part of an anti-social stereotype, and Solomon has pre-empted this point. She references battles between living and dead sorcerers, in which she describes the (dead) antagonists as "the *other* people", and the living as "theirs", or the |Xam's "own person" (Solomon 2008:65; emphasis added; see LL.V.20.5556). Those who behaved violently were not of a piece with |Xam norms, as the */nu-sa* expressly demonstrate. Shooting

[47] A defining feature of someone who 'understood' (in the sense that they met |Xam norms) was that they possessed *ǁkauǁkaugən* (*n. pl.* thoughts, thinking strings; D. Bleek 1956:564). If these 'went astray' (as in LL.V.23.5870-5871) one would 'not seem to have ~~understanding~~ her senses" (LL.V.23.5871; original omission).

arrows was not only the domain of “spirits” (as Solomon identifies; see 2008:65), but also of members of these anti-social stereotypes, rendered capricious and violent by their otherness.

The association of the */nu* category with antagonistic tendencies further conforms to the occurrences that Solomon compares to the actions of the dead (see above): dust and lions. Dust is a manifestation of anti-social energy in the |Xam cosmos, being a medium through which spiteful influences could cause sickness (e.g. LL.V.20.5537-5546, 5557; “that ‘earth/dust’ is not a ‘good/friendly’ thing”, LL.V.20.5542). The forces mediated by dust were not confined to sorcerous activity (although they are certainly mentioned in connection with it; e.g. LL.V.20.5544), but also feature in connection to more mundane expressions of anger (as with the ‘Grass Bushmen’, who were inclined to raise dusts in when angry; LL.V.20.5537).

Lions “were the quintessential ‘angry people’” (McGranaghan 2012:446; see LL.II.20.1775), possessing a number of physical characteristics that marked them out as fundamentally anti-social; hairiness (as above; e.g. LL.II.30.2693-2694; LL.V.3.4127-4128; McGranaghan 2014b:674), which was identified as the origin of their anti-social tendencies (McGranaghan 2012:159; LL.II.3.445), and yellow colouration (see */kai:nja*, LL.II.18.1657; McGranaghan 2014b:674). Both of these features were common characteristics of ‘beasts of prey’ (*ǁkeǁke*, see above; also D. Bleek 1956:571), in turn the "epitomes of anti-social agencies" (McGranaghan 2012:159; 2014a:10; see */xarra* complex above, also 'differentness', McGranaghan 2014b:674-678).

These manifested in one notable occasion as the *ǁkhã:-ka-mumu* (“a lion ghost” WB.XIII.2190’; see also D. Bleek 1956:139) described by ǁkabbo. *Mumu* suggests a “shimmering, hazy, or mirage-like visual effect” (McGranaghan 2012:447), and in light of other associations of the term (see *!kh’o*; “n. a blue mist, haze”; D. Bleek 1956:427) it is conceivable that *ǁkhã:-ka-*

mumu meant ‘lion-dust’. This example forms a nexus of anti-social stereotypes, and offers a demonstration of multiple anti-social markers being deployed simultaneously, even if the precise subject of the description is difficult to ascertain.

In a similar fashion, ‘magic power’ (|ko:ǯoǯ-de; D. Bleek 1956:320) was attendant to sorcerous activity, and implicated in the causing of illness (LL.V.19.5484-5485), usually in the format of “invisible arrows” (as above, also D. Bleek 1956:318). Sorcerous activity, in turn, connected to a number of other dangerous and capricious elements of the |Xam cosmos (e.g. the rain's ‘magic power’, connected to New Maidens; LL.V.6.4400’; LL.V.13.4989). Indeed, the word was originally mistranslated as “evil things” (LL.V.19.5528-5529; McGranaghan 2012:409) before being changed to reference magic in particular. This suggests that the apparent co-occurrence of the anti-social or socially distant */nu* with accounts of ‘magical’ occurrences is not a relationship between the ‘dead’ and magic, but simply a product of the fact that magic was part of a suite of anti-social identifiers, and that anything marked as such would *necessarily* be */nu* as well.

Indeed, it seems reasonable to assume that *ko:ǯoǯ-de* was specifically anti-social, and would consequently be accompanied by other anti-social descriptors and occurrences, of which leonine features, illness, dust, and social distance would all be natural exemplars. By the logics that govern identity formation and evaluation among the |Xam (as a product of behaviour and appearance), it seems impossible to disentangle */nu*-‘ness’ from any identity that incorporated magical activity, even if it was not *defined* by it. Defining */nu* exclusively as physical death relies on a mechanism that would be equally compatible with the descriptions of sorcerous activity more generally, and therefore the subsequent dismissal of shamanistic practice on this

basis seems a *non sequitur*. In fact, magical activity seems as much a part of day-to-day considerations as anything else, particularly given its role in demonstrating identity.

Appropriately, the Korana have their own, direct connection between */nu* and sorcery. It appears with similar usage as the |Xam example, where "those who inhabit the northern side of the [Orange] river, are called the *Núsakwa*" (Burchell 1824:331). This with a similar construction to |Xãu-sakwa above, incorporating both Nama and |Xam (or related) plural suffixes. Engelbrecht (1936:48) uses this to infer that |nu: meant "to this side" (of the river). Beyond that, however, he makes another observation;

> [that] in addition to being */Nu:-ǁëin* [sic] the Towenaars and Regshande are more precisely the *ǂNu:-ǁ'ëis* or Swart Volk (Black Folk). The origin of this name is obscure, and the following explanation must be accepted with some reserve.
> In the old days, Bushmen belonging to the Bitterbos had become notorious by reason of murders and other offences, which they had committed within the borders of the Colony. The bad reputation they had acquired caused some to adopt European names; amongst these there was a Bushman leader who called himself Swarts or, in the Kora language, ǂnu:seb.
> (Engelbrecht 1936:48)

This passage explicitly connects sorcery to anti-social behaviour. The Afrikaans word *towenaar* here means sorcerer or magician, and is coupled with a known range of explicitly anti-social behaviour (even by Korana standards). The fact that many of the *ǂNu:-ǁ'ëis* were 'originally Bushmen' (whatever that might have meant in practice), suggests that some concepts would certainly have accompanied the transition into Korana. Beyond that, this passage suggests that the Korana had their own examples of threatening stereotypes, among which were those who practiced sorcery.

For the purposes of this project, the above discussions allow four general points to be made. The first is that frontier conditions apply in composite, forming the 'lattice' of

competing or complementary pressures, requiring adaptations on a number of levels. The second is that societies within those conditions are likely to resemble their surroundings on some level, with culture and behaviour drawn from a number of sources, and deployed in terms of the variable pressures to which they were subjected. The third is simply that shamanism is broadly applicable to anything for which the |Xam material is a stable analogy, and the final point is an extension of this; that magical occurrences had a detailed relationship with the landscape. Because anti-social capacity was a factor of distance from the camp, and magic was inherently anti-social[48], the "contact zone" of the *!kau:xu* (hunting ground) wasn't merely a frontier on a social level, but on a metaphysical one as well. Just as human communities required categorisation and appropriate response, so too did the entities which inhabited other, less apparent layers of the lattice. As the distance from the camp increased, and frontier conditions imposed themselves, another level of conceptual overlay emerged; a spiritual level to the lattice, requiring its own kind of negotiation.

Together, these points frame the discussion in the chapters to come, providing a general character of the territories surrounding the Strandberg, and the terms in which I discuss the findings made at the site.

[48] Combining in the distant */nu-sa*, who are easily mistaken for magical entities.

CHAPTER 5

5.1: Site selection

This project grew out of a concern for place, and it is worth a short intermission to discuss the selection of the Strandberg as the focus of this project. Considering that almost any hunter-gatherer rock art interpreted in southern Africa were likely to include reference to the |Xam, my initial intentions were to evaluate a sample that came from the same place as the informants did. This was partly motivated by a desire to evaluate the problem of analogy commonly posed to the shamanistic approach; would rock art from a site historically connected to the |Xam be amenable to the same analogical processes applied in the Maloti-Drakensberg?

ǁkabbo's map of the *|Xam-ka-!xoe* offered a number of opportunities, given that he was familiar with the locations it described, several of which had accompanying discussions in the Bleek-Lloyd archive, and notes by other informants. These locations (see Deacon 1986), and others mentioned in the archive, fall broadly within a 'triangle' (after McGranaghan 2012:276; see *fig.* 4 below) of towns in the central Northern Cape, South Africa; Kenhardt to the north, Vanwyksvlei in the south-east, and Brandvlei to the south-west. Each town is an average of 130km from the others, and even without taking the outlying locations into account, this

central heartland area is greater than 9000km^2, and encompasses the historic Bitterpits (see Deacon 1986; also chapter 2.2 above), and the engravings at Springbokoog (see Deacon 1988).

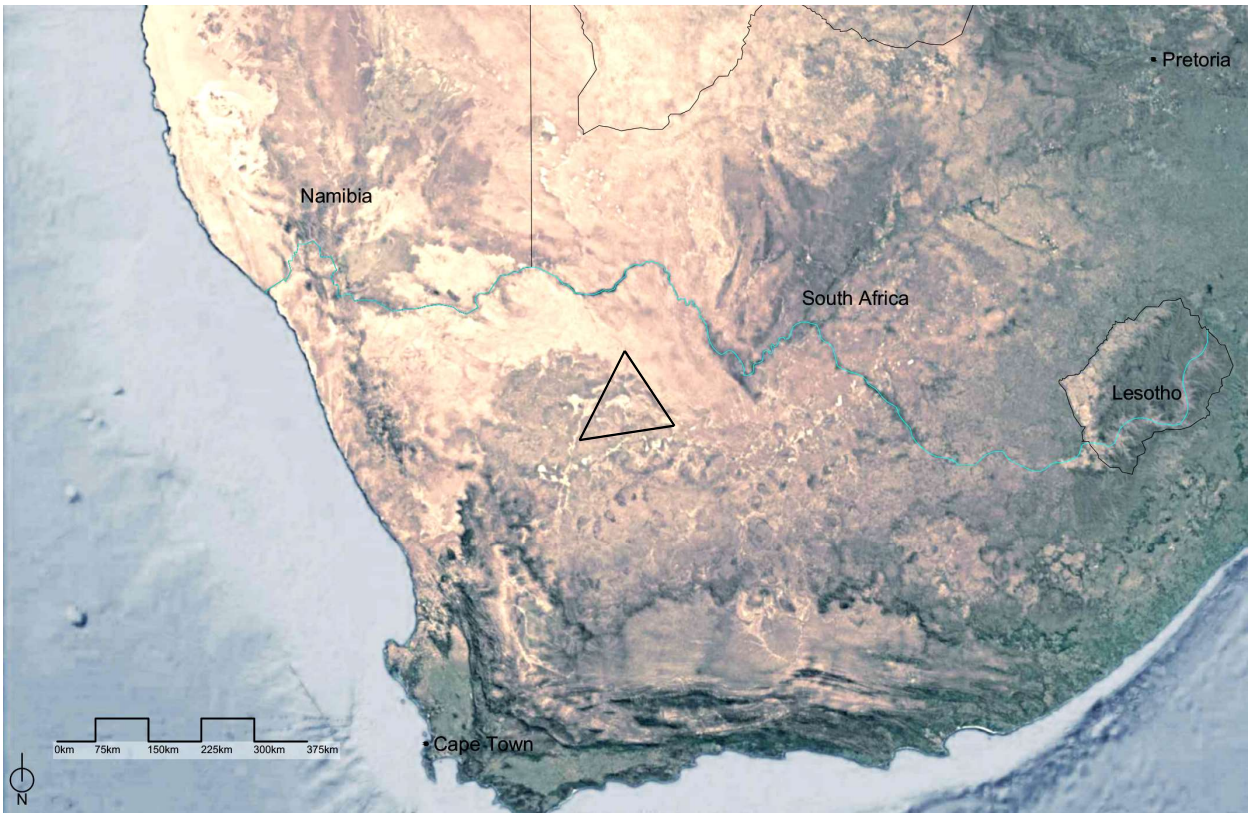


Figure 4: The Karoo 'triangle' in its regional context, with the Orange River marked in blue. Base image source: Google Earth. Labels and paths by Abi Godsell.

Any one of these sites seemed to offer an opportunity for further research; Deacon's pioneering work in the region pre-dated the proliferation of Global Positioning Systems, and so there was an opportunity to make use of GPS to provide highly detailed records which could then be interpreted at a scale not otherwise accessible. Both sites are of significant scale, with Springbokoog (in particular) having no clear boundaries, its constituent engravings spread over a number of hillsides, and filtering into the surrounding landscape.

In Deacon's view, this contributed to an account of 'place', with locations possessed of cultural significance (Deacon 1988:129) augmented further by the addition of significant symbols, themselves interacting with the landscape (e.g. Deacon 1988:134-135). My original

reasoning was that if there were patterns in the distribution (and/or content) of the imagery in either site, they might become evident when plotted in fine detail across a large area. From here, it appeared that there would be an opportunity to build on the existing work in the region, and to consider art potentially attributable to the |Xam within their historic context.

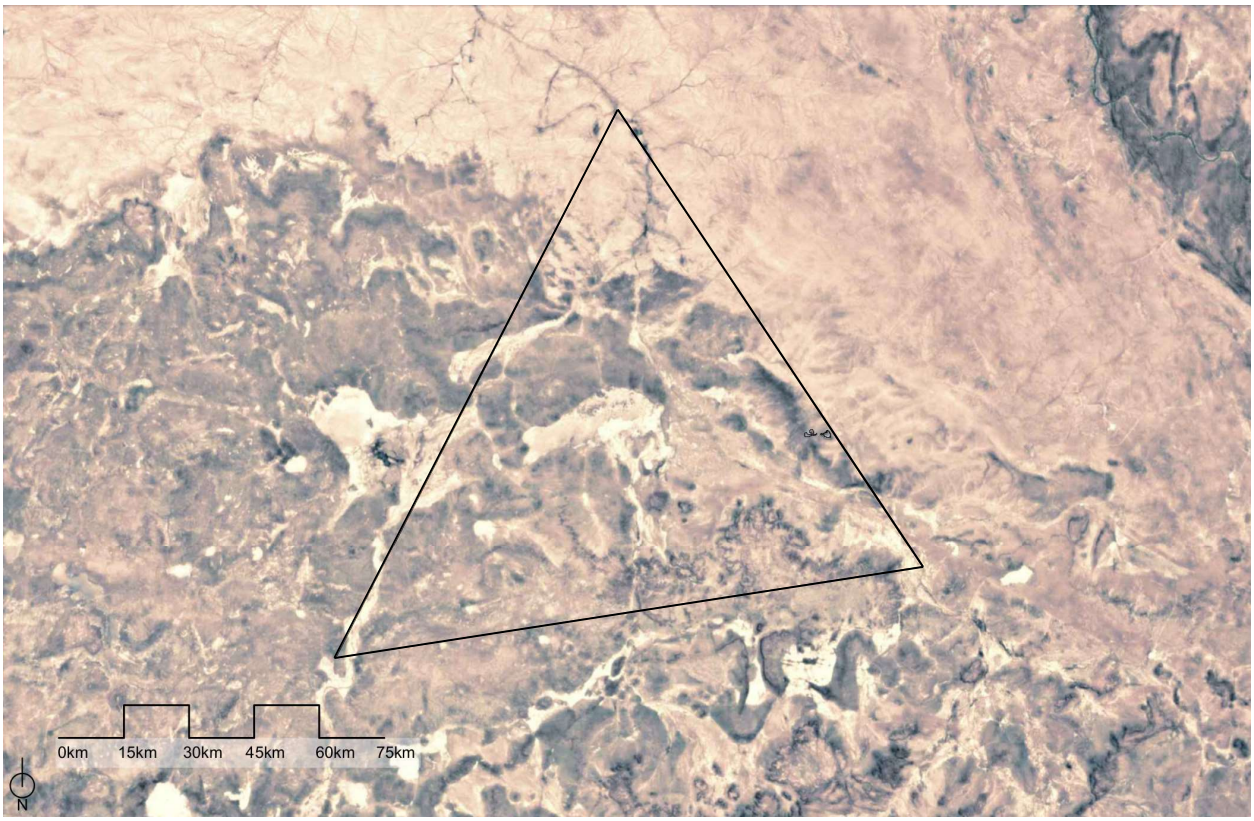


Figure 5: The Karoo 'triangle' in its local geological context. The Strandberg appears as the dark mark approximately one third of the way from the base of the eastern side of the triangle. Base image source: Google Earth. Labels and paths by Abi Godsell.

On Deacon's recommendation (*pers. comm.*) we elected to pursue a survey on the Strandberg (*cf.* Deacon 1988:134-136). This was in part because Springbokoog had been subject a level of spatial analysis already (see Deacon 1988:137), while similar discussion on the Strandberg largely focussed on its ethnographic significance. Other factors included the Strandberg's known historic context, tied into the history of the region more generally, especially during the colonial period (see McGranaghan 2014b). Its relevance to the |Xam informants is readily accessible; it appears in an 'early race' narrative (the 'death of the lizard';

see chapter 2.2, pp. 37-38; also McGranaghan 2016), and falls well within the bounds of the */Xam-ka-!koe*, falling approximately a third of the way between Vanwyksvlei and Kenhardt (along the eastern face of the 'triangle'; see *fig.* 5 above). Importantly, Deacon's examination of the site suggested large volumes of engravings (*pers. comm.*) suitable for study. The physical structure of the site was a further factor; it appeared to have clear geological boundaries, which would have assisted in keeping the scope of this project within manageable parameters.

The hilltops themselves are flat (see *fig.* 6 below), with steep, rocky sides, and are covered with large doloritic boulders which account for the engraved medium on nearly all of the sites in the region.



Figure 6: View across the centre of the Strandberg formation from the top of the easternmost (Groot) Strandberg hilltop. Photo credit: Eric Wettengel.

Together, these factors meant that a GIS (Geographical Information Systems) study of the sites would be able to examine the relationship between the engravings and the landscape

in general. Having prominent boundaries (unlike some of the other sites in the region) meant that any interactions between terrain and image-placement would be apparent over the scale of the site (rather than a larger, less defined volume of space). Similarly, the abundance of available and workable surfaces suggested that any placement was a 'choice', insofar as any authors of the art would not be constrained by obvious material restrictions imposed by the site. As such, the Strandberg seemed a natural candidate for this project; it would potentially yield a large and highly variable dataset, with known parameters, all of which could be placed within known historical and ethnographic contexts. From this point, it remains to describe the Strandberg itself, and the structure of the surveys undertaken for this project.

CHAPTER 6

6.1: Living on the Strandberg



Figure 7: View from the base of the easternmost (Groot) Strandberg, at the time inhabited by both cattle and stones. Photo credit: Eric Wettengel.

The Strandberg, and indeed, the *|Xam-ka-!xoe*, fall within a range of subcontinental environments collectively termed 'the Karoo'. They are generally arid, but account for conditions that range from merely liminal to maximally hostile to human habitation. This is due in large part to their location. Climatological[49] patterns grade toward winter rainfall

[49] The majority of climatological and ecological data referenced here come from chapters in Dean & Milton (1999), which collects findings from a number of researchers working in their individual capacities, but as part of the legacy of the original Karoo Biome Project (see Cowling 1986), and collected as such. The conditions in the region

regimes as they approach the western (Atlantic) coast of South Africa, while the eastern regions grade toward the summer regime that dominates the rest of the country's interior (Desmet & Cowling 1999:4). The position of the Karoo between these two prevailing systems results in a large number of local-scale climates which fall on the margins of one or other dominant system (Desmet & Cowling 1999:3).

The Köppen-Geiger climatological paradigm places much of the Karoo within the BWk classification (Peel *et al.* 2007:1638, *fig.* 4); a 'cold' desert[50], with rainfall averaging below 600mm *per annum*, and characterised by high temperatures during summer, but with exceptionally cold winters (see Peel *et al.* 2007:1636, table 1 for criteria). BWk areas are not necessarily continuous across the region, and are interrupted by pockets of the BSk classification; 'semi-arid' zones that retain the low rainfall patterns of B-type environments, but with less severe temperature variations, particularly as they approach the Atlantic coast (trending colder) or in the north where they border on the BWh 'hot desert' that dominates the border with Namibia (trending hotter).

Although typical rainfall patterns across the entire area of Karoo environments fall within the threshold for B-type environments (less than 678mm *p.a.*), the range is exceptionally broad (between ~50mm and ~600mm *p.a.*) and highly variable, displaying great diversity even between adjoining zones (Desmet & Cowling 1999:4, 6, *fig.* 1.1(b); *cf.* Peel et al. 2007:1638, *fig.* 4). The lack of consistent rainfall patterns is noteworthy beyond their idiosyncratic tendencies; the areas which receive less rain in general also do so less regularly, and are less inclined to fall into predictable patterns (Venter *et al.* 1986:42). The long-term result is that these regions are

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are highly localised and specific (see below), and I consider this collection an authoritative description. Supplementary examples have been included where available (and relevant).

[50] Hereafter referred to as the Nama-Karoo, the biome occupied by the Strandberg.

more prone to drought in general (Vernon 1999:57), primarily because spikes in prevailing rainfall patterns are often countered by steep declines, causing the average volumes to remain near the lower end (~50mm *p.a.*) of the B-environment scale.

These trends are derived from contemporary studies of Karoo environments (see Dean & Milton 1999), and an acknowledgment must be made on that point; any findings here ought to be contextualised within a history of fluctuating global and regional climactic trends. Hominin occupation of the region is of substantial antiquity, for instance, and can be detected in low-density lithic scatters that cover thousands of square kilometres of the Nama-Karoo (Beaumont et al. 1995:240-241). This includes heavily weathered Early Stone Age material, of which distinctive Acheulean phases have been identified, ranging to 350 – 300k BP (Beaumont & Morris 1990). Such a large timescale bounds a number of substantial climactic fluctuations, but this point can be made effectively even within the last 3000 years. Below-average 'cold' events occur at 1000 BCE, AD 850, 1350, and 1700, while above-average 'hot' events occur at 600, 400, 100 BCE, AD 100, and 1000 (Holmgren *et al.* 1999:305). The impact of more pervasive spikes can be seen in the medieval warm interval between AD 880 and 1320, and again in the 'Little Ice Age' between AD 1320 and 1760 (Holmgren *et al.* 1999:304-305).

Stratified sequences in the region (see Kiberd 2006:199; *cf.* Beaumont & Vogel 2006; Chazan *et al.* 2008; also Beaumont *et al.* 1995:241; *cf.* Sampson 1984; 1985) combine these two points, offering evidence of long-term occupation, while also suggesting that it was highly sensitive to regional conditions, 'pulsing' (after McGranaghan 2012:86; *pers. comm.*; *cf.* Beaumont et al. 1995:240) in accordance with oscillating global trends.

The margins for inhabitation are quite narrow, however. While in the majority of cases a hotter trend in temperature would generally correspond with wetter conditions, hotter

periods in the Nama-Karoo were not necessarily more habitable. This is because winter rainfall regimes contract as summer ones expand (Beaumont et al. 1995:240; also Beaumont 1986) which means that as the rest of the interior was subjected to hotter and wetter conditions, Nama-Karoo environments were subjected to a similar increase in temperature, but with a corresponding *decrease* in average rainfall, compromising any net gain in biome productivity. This is supported by observations in the region (and restricted to the last ~700 years), which found that historic vegetation assemblages *did* respond to wider-scale climactic variations, but that those responses were comparatively minor in scale (Sugden & Meadows 1989:144-145), with only *extreme* changes registering with any regularity.

In these terms, the Nama-Karoo exists as a more extreme reflection of other biomes in the region (e.g. savannah-grassland biomes), being generally less hospitable and more unpredictable, owing to its position on a 'frontier zone' between dominant weather systems. Furthermore, that any (human) occupation was subject to a number of prevailing factors that could readily complicate habitability, in addition to the already marginal conditions that characterise the region in general.

As such, the area of the Nama-Karoo should be read as unusually turbulent and combative for its size[51] and latitude (see Desmet & Cowling 1999:8), placing highly variable stresses on any extant biota (see Woodward 1987; Vernon 1999:54). Appropriately, Nama-Karoo environments are characterised by low densities of plant-life, in part due to the prevailing (and chaotic) conditions, but also to the high levels of competition between species for limited sub-surface moisture (Cowling & Hilton-Taylor 1999:48). Extant plant-populations

[51] For a sense of scale, the Karoo possesses examples of nearly the complete range of North America's 'desert/arid' (BW) zones, in a *vastly* smaller region (Whitford 1999:292; see Cowling et al. 1986 for comparison).

in the region are not especially productive, and are generally difficult to factor into human subsistence strategies. This is largely due to evolved protections against the conditions described above. As the climate trends toward aridity, Karoo environments select for species able to resist desiccation (Midgley & van der Heyden 1999:100-101), and the corresponding protections generally result in small, waxy leaves, and thick bark[52], both of which make exploitation of these species energy-intensive, and largely unsuitable for human consumption.

The production of fruits and seeds is governed by a compromise between resource-management and the requirements of procreation (as in Esler 1999:131), and this generally results in large numbers of very small, woody seeds (Esler 1999:132), which are not especially nutritious. Even if they were, production cycles are generally either highly seasonal, or almost entirely in response to unpredictable and "patchy" rainfall (Dean & Milton 1999:164), meaning that they cannot be relied upon for anything other than opportunistic subsistence.

The scarcity of resources further selects for species that area able to safeguard their own biomass against exploitation by local fauna. The resulting adaptations include simple physical deterrents (thorns, thick bark, expendable outer branches), but also include chemical defences (Dean & Milton 1999:164-165) ranging from the merely distasteful to the markedly toxic (*ibid.*).

In order to survive, animal species exercise a high degree of specialisation. Plant biomass is generally not dependable, and temperature and humidity vary greatly. One common adaptation is simply to move belowground, where conditions vary with less frequency, and to

[52] Although the stereotype of Karoo-like environments usually involves cacti and other succulents, this is not the case. The Nama-Karoo is primarily host to woody shrubs, with cacti only featuring in comparable environments elsewhere. This is because succulent species perform well at moderate levels of aridity, but are not as drought-resistant as non-succulents (Midgley & van der Heyden 1999:97).

a far lesser extent than the surface (Dean & Milton 1999:165). Reptiles and invertebrates tend to exercise ephemeral activity-spans (Dean & Milton 1999:164), either seasonally (through hibernation) or as nocturnal/diurnal cycles in which the converse conditions are spent underground.

The limitation on resources means that a comparatively large sector of the energy-economy of the region is reliant on plant detritus (see Dean & Milton 1999:165-166). Termites, wood-feeding silverfish, and long-legged *Tenebrionid* beetles feed on windblown grass-stems, bark, and leaves. These, in turn, are a primary foodsource for solifuges, spiders, lizards, chameleons, insectivorous birds, and small mammalian predators (e.g. black-backed jackals).

Grazing species do inhabit the region, but tend to employ solitary, highly territorial behaviour (Dean & Milton 1999:166) with exceptions during sporadic pulses of higher habitability (i.e. during 'wet' phases). Their diversity is impeded by a need for tolerance of plant defensive strategies (Dean & Milton 1999:166-167), and the ability to withstand sporadic water and energy availability.

Correspondingly, these environments would have placed highly specific demands on any human population. As with the detritovore example above, large sectors of the energy-economy occur 'low to the ground', in the sense that they are generally small-scale, and inclined toward burrowing. Plants are sporadically productive, and tend to resemble *r*-strategists[53], which (when considered in line with the animal examples above) add substantial labour-intensity to a number of potential subsistence strategies. Larger herbivores do inhabit

[53] That is, likely to reproduce in large volumes, with each seed/sapling having a lower chance of survival on average. This contrasts with *K*-strategists, which generally reproduce at smaller volumes, but which invest more resources in the fitness of individual offspring (see Pianka 1970). I use it here for the sake of illustration, and with the recognition that the model is both highly deterministic, and that issues remain concerning actual testing of its conclusions (e.g. Stearns 1976; 1977).

the region, but as stated above, they tend to remain either solitary or in small groups, which increases the difficult involved in detection, and limits the potential number of chances for a successful kill, should they be isolated in the first place.

There is some degree of difficulty in ascertaining the precise extent of human adaptation to the Karoo in the long term. Plant foods likely represented the largest contributions to the human energy-economy, and ethnobotanical studies in the region (e.g. Archer 1994; van Wyk *et al.* 2008) catalogue large numbers of edible and medicinal species. While they describe both collection and processing, some findings are *specifically* kept from an anthropological context (Archer 1994:53), and so the prevalence of the documented practices is uncertain. A further complication is that contemporary informants are not subsistence foragers (even if their ancestors may have been), and so a general focus on medicinal and supplementary (rather than primary) foodstuffs pervades (see van Wyk *et al.* 2008). Potential ethnohistorical comparisons exist in the Kalahari (e.g. Lee 1969:59; Silberbauer 1981:198-204; Deacon 1993:86), but the reliability of such an analogy is in question, as Archer (1994:53) observes that the criteria for selecting 'desirable' species in the Nama-Karoo differs markedly from those employed in the Kalahari (e.g. Lee 1979).

The presence of the Nama-Karoo on a historic frontier would have had further impact. Examples of subsistence strategy and practice are available in the Bleek-Lloyd archive, but at around the same time as the interviews were occurring in Cape Town, large portions of the the region were in the process of being fenced with barbed wire, severely disrupting Karoo ecosystems as the informants would have recalled them (see Roche 2008). This would have impacted human traversal of the landscape, while also diverting springbok migrations that had been common before (*ibid.*). As European farming activities later came to shape the region,

their monopolisation of water-sources appears to have played a part in the extinction of the quagga (a local variant of the zebra), while also further disrupting the life-cycles of herbivore species in the area more generally. While the impact of anthropogenic pressures such as these was more pronounced toward the end of the nineteenth century, their initial phases would have been familiar to the informants, and may well have impacted the authors of the Strandberg art.

The examples of subsistence strategies available in the archive tend toward the highly idiosyncratic, but also offer a level of anthropological context. An example is the awareness that populations of prey-species required management in order to avoid depopulation. This involved allocating regional resources to individuals (e.g. ostriches; see LL.II.22.2032; also LL.II.7.795-804; LL.II.22.2031-2035; McGranaghan 2012:233) who were 'allowed' to exploit them (from above, LL.II.22.2030-2031). In practical terms, this would have spread the load of a human population across a defined (and potentially quite large) area, and encouraged individuals to regulate their own use of those resources. This regulation ranged in intensity from a simple awareness of the appropriate scale of consumption (see LL.II.23.2034-2036) to a seasonal schedule. An example of this 'scheduling' can be seen in the practice of allowing to bee-hives to recover during the period when the "ǁkuerre's stars follow the Pleiades" (LL.II.23.2044').

Taken together, these points allow a demonstration of the general character of both the Nama-Karoo biome itself, and the requisite human adaptations. The most obvious being that specialist skills were required, and that a specific knowledge of the region's idiosyncrasies would be rewarded. There is a low tolerance for error in these environments— plant defences are potentially toxic, and resources are by no means abundant on a regional scale. When they are accessible, they require management and processing, and because of the high level of

resource localisation, long-term habitation needs to spread the load of occupation across large volumes of territory. To call it ‘marginal’ is therefore appropriate on a number of levels, particularly when it comes to interpreting human behaviour. In this way, it ties into the dominant theme of this thesis— that the Strandberg falls within a range of frontier-zones, each one placing a novel set of demands on a human population. The historic and social conditions have been outlined in earlier chapters, and the ecology has been described above, combining to produce a markedly dense lattice of pressures, notable in their intensity and complexity. From here, it remains to describe the physical structure of the Strandberg itself.

CHAPTER 6

6.2: A “landscape inhabited by stones”



Figure 8: View across the southern face of the (Groot) Strandberg. Photo credit: Eric Wettengel.

de Prada-Samper, a scholar of folklore in the immediate area around the Strandberg has described it as a “landscape inhabited by stones” (2014b:615), and there is no more appropriate a label. The Strandberg stands on the geological boundary between the Karoo Supergroup and

the Namaqualand Metamorphic Province (NMP), amidst a rift that formed when parts of the NMP's Proterozoic crust split, and drifted apart (Meadows & Watkeys 1999:30).

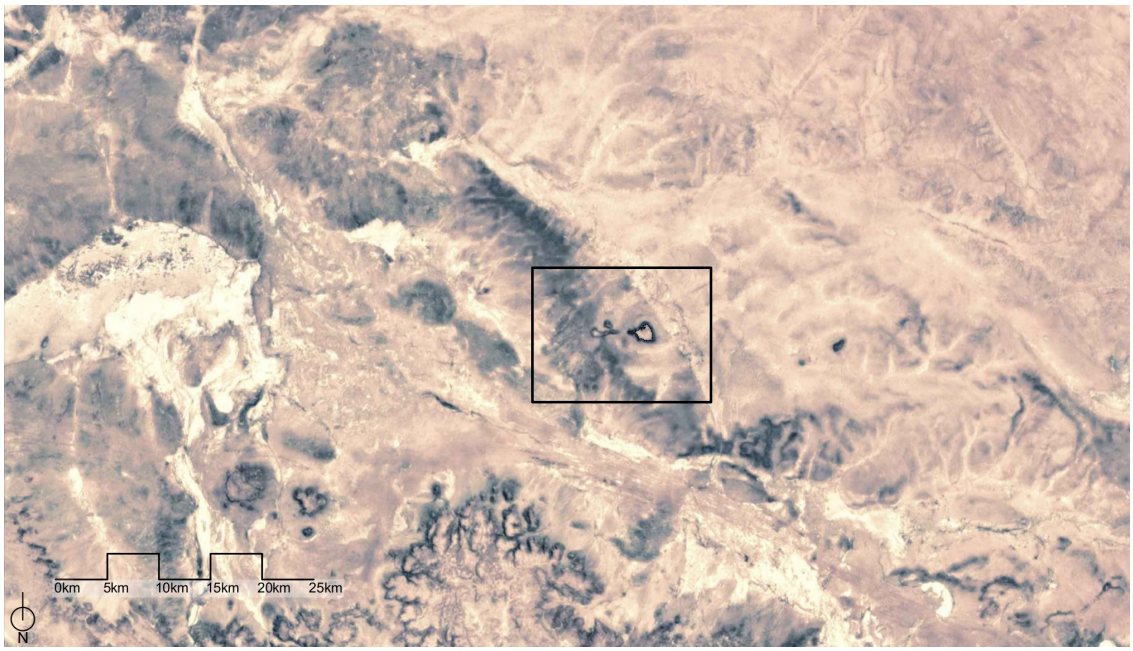
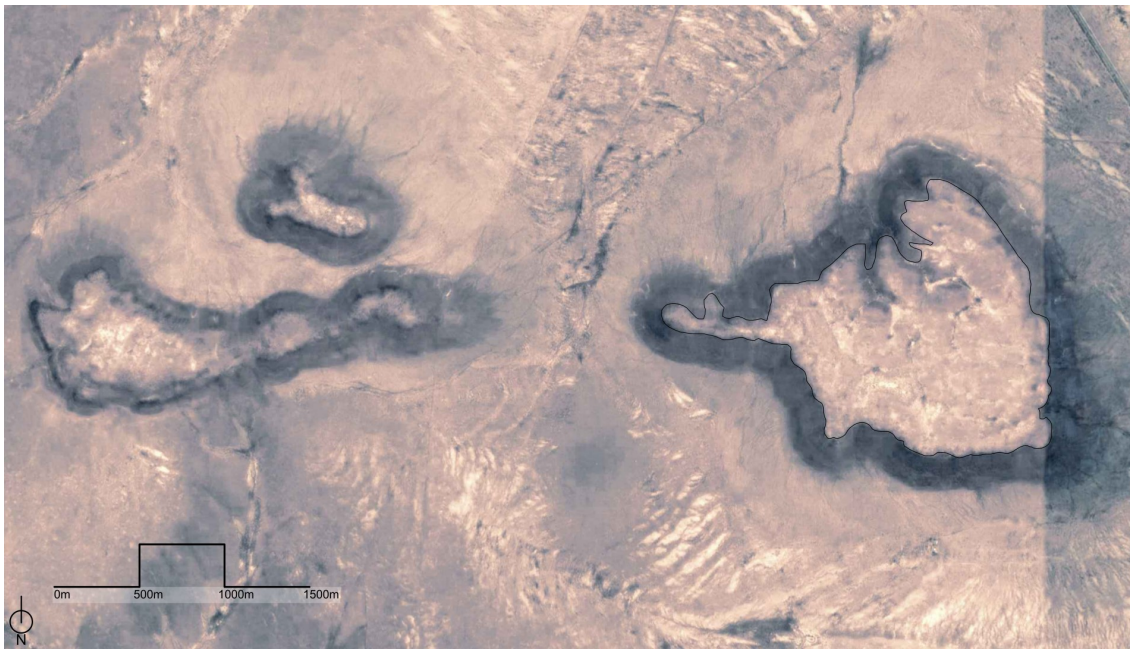


Figure 9.1: The Strandberg in its local geological context. Base image source: Google Earth. Paths and labels by Abi Godsell.
Figure 9.2: Detail of the Strandberg formation, with the geological boundary of the easternmost 'Groot' Strandberg outlined. Base image source: Google Earth. Paths and labels by Abi Godsell.



Within the resulting basin, beds of sedimentary rock are visible (*ibid.*), and from there, the Strandberg hills present as a seemingly-distinct protrusion from the edges of this exposure zone, overlooking the rift-basin described above (see *fig.* 9.1, 9.2 above). Among the upper sediments of this region, doloritic intrusions are common (Watkeys 1999:18), and the hills emerged from them through a process differential weathering (see McGranaghan 2016:160) that is still visible at present. The resulting landscape is one which reflects these processes. The hillsides are steep as a factor of their intrusion into the otherwise flat basin, and they are covered in boulders where the dolorites have decayed, scattering down the sides of the hills and into the surrounding flatlands. This is to the extent that the hillsides themselves are more or less defined by a cover of boulders, the density of which decreases only with distance from the hills themselves.



Figure 10: View across the decaying edge of the (Groot) Strandberg, taken early in the morning. Photo credit: Eric Wettengel.

The boulders themselves are coated in a dark 'desert varnish', a layer of iron and manganese oxides generally between 100 and 200 μm (0.1-0.2mm) thick (Potter & Rossman

1977:1446). On the surface, this results in a largely homogeneous patina with a near-reflective sheen, but the varnish layers are geologically distinct from the underlying dolorites (Engel & Sharp 1958:487). The varnishes largely owe their existence to the deposition of windborne iron, manganese, and other trace elements on the porous surface of the boulders, which is then dissolved in successive applications of surface moisture (almost certainly dew, in this case), and affixed as the moisture evaporates (Engel & Sharp 1958:492). Because of its relationship with evaporation, varnishing is most prevalent in areas where sources of moisture are sporadic, allowing the deposits to be fixed by evaporation before greater volumes of rainfall (for instance) can scour them from the surface (Engel & Sharp 1958:491).



Figure 11: Detail of 'desert varnish', with differential weathering apparent (right to left). Engraved antelope visible. Photo credit: Eric Wettengel.

The structure of varnish deposits is significant in this case, as the colour of the underlying dolorite tends toward a very pale brown, while the oxides are nearly black. As such,

any surface abrasion reveals a stark contrast between the two, and depending on the conditions, may be visible from some distance. This makes it ideal as an engraving medium, as the narrow oxide deposits (0.1-0.2mm, as above) don't require deep incision to produce a clearly-defined image. Together, the ubiquity of the boulders themselves and the dark oxide-patina make the Strandberg eminently suitable for large-scale engraving.



Figure 12: Shattered boulder with patina visible on outer surfaces, dolorite substrate exposed and differentially weathered. Horse engravings visible (centre-right). Photo credit: Eric Wettengel.

CHAPTER 7

7.1: Surveying the Strandberg

Surveys for this project were undertaken in two parts, with the first occurring in August/September 2014, and the second at the same time the following year. The first trip was intentionally unstructured; no specific data was available on the density of the engravings, and although the exact *size* of the Strandberg was easily verifiable from satellite imagery, the scale of the site (or sites) had yet to be accounted for. It was hoped that a full survey of all three hilltops would be viable, that locational data would yield meaningful patterns across the site as a whole, and that the body of imagery at the site would be amenable to interpretation in line with established methodologies applied elsewhere in southern Africa.

All of these expectations were challenged upon arrival. The footprint of the *Groot Strandberg* (*!guru |na*) is approximately 3.2km^2; not insubstantial, but seemingly not insurmountable in the context of rock art surveys undertaken in the Maloti-Drakensberg (*cf.* Pugin 2016). What soon became clear was that the amount of suitable 'canvas' (i.e. the boulders described above) covered nearly all of every hillside, and much of the hilltops and surrounding flatland. Without having established a clear pattern governing image-placement, a viable survey (particularly one concerned with spatial-relationships) would need to examine every

flat surface. This took considerably longer than expected, particularly when time for photography, recording, and GPS readings was factored in. It seemed clear, therefore, that any detailed effort would need to restrict itself to *one* of the three hilltops: the scale was otherwise too large for a project of this size.

I had hoped that there would be some obviously-discernible pattern to the placement of images at the site. This did not appear to be the case, though we observed that engravings appeared to cluster around the perimeter of the hilltop, and again in the bolder-fields surrounding the hillside. While I now believe that there is a reason for their placement in this way (discussed below, see chapter 7.3, pp. 146-149), the hope that some manner of relational pattern would emerge was unfounded, and in hindsight, problematic on a number of counts.

Chief among these concerns is the problem of co-occurrence. Without a general sense of the order in which images had been placed, it would be impossible to know if the existence of one image prompted another, and even more so over a large scale.



Figure 13: Detail of an engraving near the Bitterpits, with contrasting reflectivity emphasised. Photo credit: Eric Wettengel.

It may appear possible to infer a broad chronology from the state of the engravings themselves; the desert varnishing described above is part of a constant process, and while the contrast between the dark oxides and the pale dolorites produces vivid imagery (see *fig.* 13 above), re-patination is inevitable, with older images being accordingly discernible by the relative lack of contrast between varnished and engraved surfaces (see *fig.* 14.1; *cf. fig.* 14.2 below).

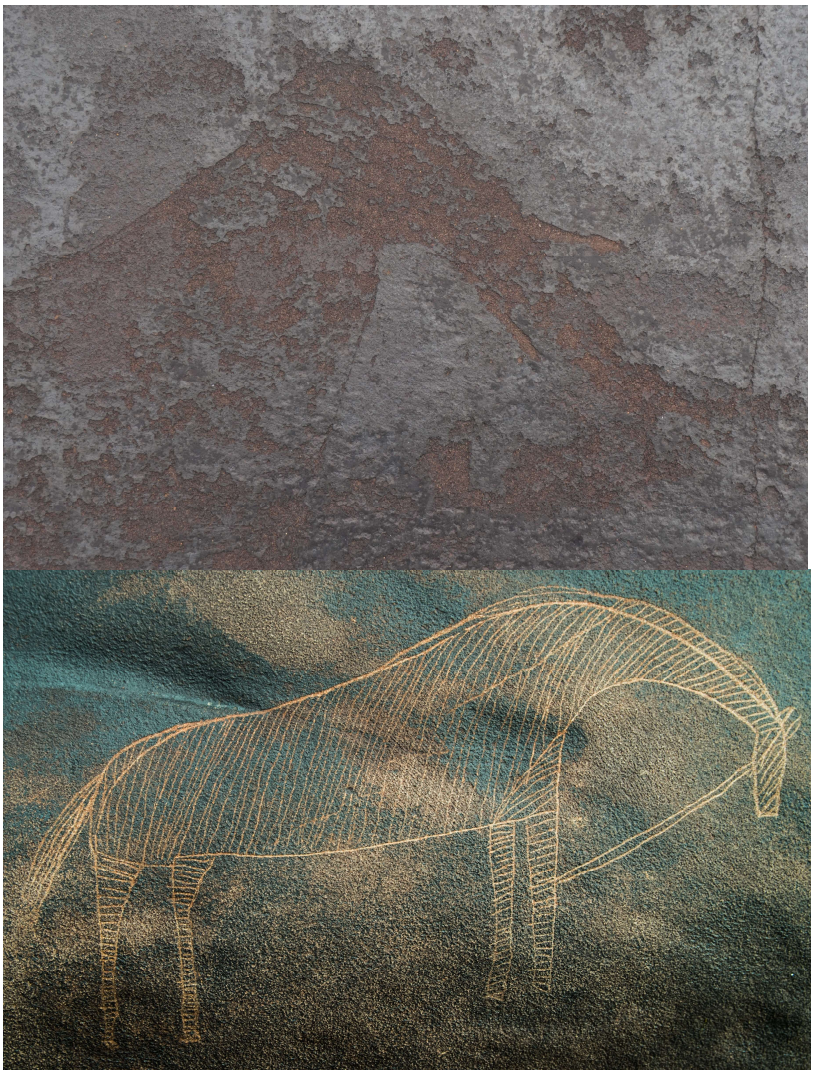


Figure 14.1 (top): Detail of an engraved elephant on the (Groot) Strandberg. Extensive weathering and re-patination have reduced the contrast between the engraved surface and the rest of the boulder.

Figure 14.2 (bottom): Detail of an engraved horse on the (Groot) Strandberg. Relatively minor weathering is present, but the contrast between the engraved surface and the rest of the boulder has been retained. A pre-existing weathering pattern is visible behind the engraving.

The process is also inconsistent, however. Re-application of the oxides is a factor of weathering, and therefore at the mercy of prevailing weather-systems, both on the macro and

micro scale. An image produced during a wet period would have more of its surface deposits scoured by consistent rainfall. At the same time, an image sheltered by its position on a boulder (for instance) would appear to age differently to one on an exposed surface of the formation.

Cation-ratio dating is, in theory, able to procure an absolute date from the varnishes themselves. It does so by measuring the ratio of more ubiquitous (but more soluble) elements in the varnish to others which are less ubiquitous and more stable (Dorn 1983:50). A contemporary varnish would have larger amounts of soluble minerals (e.g. calcium and potassium), relative to a set minor constituent (e.g. titanium), while an older varnish would have lost those soluble components to leaching, leaving a greater ratio of stable elements. In theory, the rate at which this occurs can be established, and an absolute date inferred from it. While such a methodology would certainly be possible, it would also be unreliable. Cation-ratio dating has not fared well when evaluated against relative chronologies (e.g. Loendorf 1991), it is not at all clear that the rate of leaching is consistent, or that the method used to evaluate these ratios does so reliably (Bierman & Gillespie 1991; Lanteigne 1991; Harry 1995; see Bierman & Gillespie 1994 for discussion; *cf.* Dorn & Krinsley 1991). As already mentioned, any weathering process (including leaching, in this case) is subjective, determined by whatever specific context an image occurs within, and therefore more exposed examples would appear to 'age' faster than sheltered ones.

Finally, *any* application of chronology[54] contends with the same the same difficulties encountered elsewhere in southern Africa (the Maloti-Drakensberg, in this case), notably, that

[54] Be it stylistic (e.g. Pager 1971; Vinnicombe 1976) or through stratification (e.g. Russell 2000; Swart 2004). Summaries of these, and other attempts at establishing chronologies for southern African rock art can be found in Mazel (2009).

stratigraphy cannot be extended beyond obvious cases of adjacency and superposition (see Pearce 2010). Even then, the distinctions made to establish a relative chronology are a matter of interpretation (*ibid.*), and may not necessarily be independently verified. In the case of a boulder-field such as the Strandberg, these issues are exacerbated by the lack of a common context beyond simply being in a similar location, and highly variable patterns of patination across the formation.

The net result of this is that relational properties are almost impossible to define, as there is no way to tell whether or not images are contemporaneous, and the order of their placement on the landscape is only tentatively accessible. Any relationship between the engravings, then, is in a general sense, with relationships tied to the landscape in a general sense (*cf.* Deacon 1986; 1988) rather than to a specific order of placement.

As such, a decision was taken to direct the surveys toward compiling a catalogue of images that would be broadly representative of the site, while acknowledging to the greatest viable degree their relationship with the site. This meant directing the survey along the perimeter of the hilltop, and again through the boulder-fields surrounding it. There are reasons for taking this approach beyond whatever tendencies we observed during the first trip, and they are largely pragmatic. The flat hilltop is not nearly as densely covered in boulders as the hillsides, as the majority of the decay occurs along the perimeter of the formation. Accordingly, the hillsides themselves are active, continually disturbed as the formation decays and more boulders separate from the dolorite core. As the long-term stability of the hillsides would be impossible to verify (due to the steady, long-term displacement of boulders down the hillside) data collected from them would be characterized by the effectively random context.

Seeing as the hillsides were also the places with the densest distribution of boulders, this randomly-organised data would also be the most labour-intensive to collect.

So far as content was concerned, we made two initial observations. The first was that there appeared to be substantial differences between the Strandberg engravings and the imagery associated with the painted art of the Maloti-Drakensberg. This latter body of art has clear associations with altered-states of consciousness and shamanistic activity (as described above, although see Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2015 for discussion on this topic in particular), and, accordingly, the dominant motifs relate in an appreciable way to Bushman religious practice (see Lewis-Williams 2006b). Amongst this common body of symbols is the eland (and/or ontologically equivalent animal symbols; e.g. Challis 2005), which served as a conduit for a number of religious metaphors and occurrences (see Lewis-Williams & Biesele 1978:120-121). Further references are made to the dances that brought on altered states of consciousness, and the hallucinatory experiences that succeeded them (see discussion in Lewis-Williams 1998:87; Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2015:733-734). In practice, the established explanation for the Maloti-Drakensberg art relies on catalogues of recognisably religious iconography. A comparable body of imagery was not readily discernible in the Strandberg art.

There is an issue here beyond a general lack of congruity. While there may well be images in the region surrounding the Strandberg that are amenable to interpretation by the shamanistic approach, such a methodology would be isolated from the context (i.e. the body of paintings in the Maloti-Drakensberg) that allows it to operate without the various analogical problems that would otherwise greatly complicate its implementation (see chapter 2.2). With the acknowledgement that shamanism is certainly relevant to the |Xam (and, more generally, to the likely authors of the Strandberg art; see chapters 4.1 & 4.2), there is no necessary link

between being in possession of a shamanistic ideology and making images. Similarly, there is no necessary link between |Xam-'ness' and image-making, but this is because '|Xam' is in fact a much narrower category than that applied by the shamanistic approach in general. The differences in the overall context of the images on the Strandberg then require acknowledgement in *isolation*, especially insofar as it is distinct from that which the shamanistic approach draws its interpretative underpinnings. This is irrespective of any equivalence in their contributing ethnographies; there is a need to demonstrate continuity between the bodies of imagery *before* applying any corresponding interpretative regime.

This realisation occurred relatively late in the process of this project, in part because my own preconceptions had been formed in an environment which did not emphasise it. Instead, general theoretical concerns tend to centre on the applicability of various ethnographic sources to the shamanistic approach. This, rather than considering the limits of the shamanistic approach (and its logical extensions) to various bodies of art.

There is risk in replicating errors of this kind elsewhere (e.g. Dowson 1992), in which the influence of the shamanistic approach has guided research beyond reasonable bounds. In this case, to identify shamanistic (entoptic) tropes in a geometric tradition with no specific analogy to the Maloti-Drakensberg (or any of its constituent ethnographies), and "with no further attempt made to place them in context or unpack their symbolism (e.g. Dowson 1992: figs 32, 37, 42)" (Hollmann 2007:135; see B. Smith & Ouzman 2004:504-506). The assertion of Bushman authorship (see also chapter 2.2) was sufficiently engrained to overwhelm differences in context, and to attribute to hunter-gatherers what has subsequently been identified as a 'Khoe', herder tradition (S. Hall & B. Smith 2000:40; B. Smith & Ouzman 2004:511; Eastwood & B. Smith 2005:73; see also Anderson 1997; Eastwood 2003; Hollmann & Hykkerud 2004;

Eastwood & Eastwood 2006), on little more than the basis of stylistic similarities (and tenuous ones at that; see B. Smith & Ouzman 2004:506).

The above example is a gratuitous one, and made for its illustrative purposes, rather than as a characterisation of the field as a whole. The issue is often less pronounced than this, but it remains one nonetheless. In particular, the extent to which *paintings* guide initial expectations.

Deacon's (1988:134; 1997:25-28) discussion of the engravings on the Strandberg, for example, retains the general focus of the shamanistic approach as it applies to paintings in the Maloti-Drakensberg. This, combined with my general preconceptions, gave the impression that the art in the Strandberg would be readily amenable to precisely this kind of interpretation in general.

It is difficult to recognise which findings apply in particular (to the paintings), rather than in general (to broadly '|Xam', hunter-gatherer rock art), given that a general point may apply to the ethnography, but may not be apparent in a sample of art. Similarly, a given finding may be viable *only* insofar as it applies to a sample of art, but have limited relevance to the ideology that produced it.

Beyond this, the implication of a 'traditional' corpus in the Maloti-Drakensberg[55] has had further impact. The initial surveys encountered a number of broadly 'traditional' (*viz.* representational) images that may have been amenable to a shamanistic interpretation, but these images were very much in the minority. Detailed surveys would later conclude that horses, executed in a scratched, stylised, "European" (as in Deacon 1988:137) style, were the

[55] With the acknowledgement that the shamanistic approach does not isolate it as such (see chapter 2.1, 2.2).

dominant motif in the area (*cf.* McGranaghan 2014b). Given that shamanistic motifs are not readily accessible, there was an initial inclination to describe them as part of a 'contact' corpus, and to exclude them from the body of art recognised as '|Xam' for the purposes of this project. This particularly with my original concerns that a non-shamanistic approach might be flawed on some technical level, or act with a failure to understand the general interpretative strength of the model.

These concerns were the motivation for what became the opening chapters of this project; there appears to be a need for the recognition of multiple applicable logics to the interpretation of Bushman rock-art, and an acknowledgement of the bounds of context to any resulting approach. This is because Deacon's analyses rightly flag the importance of certain animal species (elephants, in this case) to elements of |Xam ontology, and identifies a role for them in the explanation of the Strandberg art. In this case, elephants are a potential metaphor for rain, and taken in light of the significance of the Strandberg (as a rain-connected place), she considers the depiction of these tropes part of a religious/shamanistic explanation (Deacon 1988:135-136). Whether an overarchingly shamanistic approach is applicable or not, and to what extent, is no easy determination.

In the discussion of nearby Springbokoog, Deacon provides a map detailing the distribution of imagery across the site (1988:137, *fig.* 6). In the accompanying note, she describes a sample of "historic scratched" images, including horses, which are "*clearly* of European origin" (*ibid.*, *emphasis added*), without a specific recognition of *why* this may have been the case. This claim is not inherently flawed. European-descended individuals almost certainly contributed to the site as it is encountered today, but it would be quite difficult to

demonstrate such a finding reliably, and it should not be assumed of all colonial material culture.

As already discussed, recognising that there is a distinction between the bounds of the model and the bounds of any accompanying assertion of identity is non-trivial. Further, there is risk in incorrectly identifying issues in the supporting analogies. That the shamanistic approach functions robustly in the Maloti-Drakensberg context is not in question, and there is good reason to accept the validity of shamanistic analogies. The issue is one of *degree*. How does one evaluate the *precise* extent of a model with such variable contributors, and such wide applicability?

Deacon's discussion focusses on a general 'power of place' (Deacon 1988), describing the images as part of a process in which the |Xam "attached importance to some landmarks and incorporated them into their beliefs, rituals, and folklore" (Deacon 1988:130). Such a finding is internally consistent, and stable insofar as the shamanistic approach is concerned, but would have benefitted from being made in a context with stable analogy to the Maloti-Drakensberg. Engravings of rain-related animals on a rain-related site is certainly worth comment, but there is risk in privileging a recognisable/intelligible motif over a numerically dominant one (such as horses, in this case). While numerical incidence is certainly no innate measure of significance (Lewis-Williams 2006b:362), there is value in engaging with a wide sample of data where possible, *especially* when discussing a sense of 'place'.

With these concerns in mind, subsequent survey would need to provide a numerical catalogue of the site's contents that could be compared to common tropes in the Maloti-Drakensberg. While it may not necessarily have provided the grounds for interpretation (see

Lewis-Williams 1984), I had hoped that it would have given some sense of the extent to which the shamanistic approach could be anchored in the body of art at the Strandberg.

Beyond that, we made a further observation; at the earliest stage of the survey, visibility appeared to be a factor. This is not in the sense of the engravings being inter-visible— as I have mentioned, there is no way to ascertain the order in which they were deposited, and therefore no way to determine whether or not the images shared some significance beyond their immediate context. What was apparent, however, was that irrespective of whether the images occurred on the hilltop, or within the surrounding boulder-fields, a general trend was for them to have a northerly aspect.

Two potential explanations availed themselves at the outset. The first was Deacon's (1988:136-137) observation that north-facing hillsides and landmarks had "legendary connotations for rain, [and] were used repeatedly by rainmakers". This because it was "from the north that the rain [was] said to come" (Deacon 1988:134). The implication here was in line with Deacon's other findings; that the art garnered significance from its placement on the landscape, and so too fed the significance of the place.

The second option is not mutually exclusive to the first; that the placement of images on the northerly faces of the boulders on the Strandberg impacted their visibility. Considering the region's latitude (30° South) and the corresponding angle of the solar plane, the maximum solar elevation is 83°[56] to the northern horizon (on the December/Summer solstice, between 12:00 and 13:00), while a minimum elevation is as low as 36° to the northern horizon (on the June/Winter solstice, at the same time[57]. Accordingly, a northerly aspect would expose

[56] 90° would indicate the sun being directly overhead, while 0° places it on the horizon.
[57] Data and calculation provided by the University of Oregon Solar Radiation Monitoring Laboratory (http://solardat.uoregon.edu). Detailed visualisations describe this data below.

engraved surfaces to sunlight more frequently, and for longer periods during the day. In the case of heavily (re)patinated surfaces, sunlight has little impact, as both engraved surfaces and their surrounds have the same or similar levels of reflectivity. However, freshly revealed dolorite contrasts heavily against desert varnishes (see *fig.* 14.1; *cf. fig.* 14.2 above), with the lighter tones most visible in direct sunlight.

The significance of this second observation is that it appeared to apply *irrespective* of content. While it made sense that a water-animal (or metaphorical equivalent) would be placed on the rain-related face of a boulder, it seemed strange to carry this point over to other motifs that lacked the same significance but shared the same placement.

Of the two expectations that accompanied the original visit to the site, neither survived. The body of art was quite different to what we had expected, and there was no apparent relationship in the placement of images across the site. Despite this, the requirement for a numerical catalogue remained, and had to be incorporated into the design of the second survey. That visibility was a factor was not obvious until we had encountered the site in person, and similar accommodation had to be made on this point. Together, these were the primary considerations going into the second survey.

CHAPTER 7

7.2: Survey design

At the beginning of the second survey, it was clear that any interpretative approach would ideally correspond to the site as much as possible. Although it may seem like an obvious point, this acknowledgement indicates a slight departure from methodological norms elsewhere on the subcontinent, which do not necessarily recognise the value of numerical catalogues in the interpretative process (Lewis-Williams 2006b:362). I do not offer criticism of those approaches; they correctly identify limitations on what statistical generalisations can offer an informed (*viz.* ethnographically centred) interpretation (see discussion in Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1994:205-206), and any relationship between incidence and importance would require ethnographic validation in any case (e.g. Vinnicombe 1972b; Lewis-Williams 1984). That said, it would be irresponsible to discuss the Strandberg without a general sense of what constitutes the site. While the statistical models have been shown to be problematic in the case of the paintings in the Maloti-Drakensberg, this is in part a product of the physical form of the art being interpreted.

The lowest common unit of interpretation in the Maloti-Drakensberg tends to be a 'panel'; a researcher-designated frame, containing images on a (usually) contiguous rock-face.

Although general discussions are available on the development of theory and practice in southern African rock art (see Blundell 1998; Lewis-Williams 2006b; B. Smith 2010; Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2012), they tend to focus on the various issues of analogy, chronology, and historicity described at various points in the opening chapters of this project. Very little discussion touches more than fleetingly on the units of analysis, describing the 'panel' variably as "an expanse of rock bearing rock paintings" (Ouzman 1997:232; Russell 2000:61), or as 'episodes', "groups of paintings created within a particular period of time" (Pearce 2010:148; see Lewis-Williams 1992:2). How these are delineated, even in cases where the 'panel' is an *essential* unit of discussion (e.g. Russell 2000; Pearce 2010), is left to the imagination. Presumably, proximity and apparent 'interconnection' (i.e. the virtue of their sharing the same rock face) is sufficient for images to be discussed as a single unit, with interactions between them being the common format of interpretation.

This is part of the reason for statistical models often failing to demonstrate significance in regional trends; numerical inventories generally represent more than a single panel's worth, and so require that there be demonstrable relationships between sites. These generally fail to materialise.

The engravings on the Strandberg do not present as contiguous frames, but generally appear as entries on a wider-scale body. During our surveys, we located 'panels' that occupied multiple faces of the same boulder in a manner comparable to the format generally taken by paintings in the Maloti-Drakensberg. In these cases, incorporating them into single interpretative units is complicated by the physical nature of the site. The question of what constitutes a 'panel' is not especially challenging when there is only a single, isolated boulder

to consider. However, is such an arrangement any more a 'panel' than three small rocks in very close proximity?

Several examples were located on boulders several metres in diameter, with engravings on several faces. Some of these images had been differentially patinated, and included a wide range of styles and content. To isolate a single boulder as the lowest unit of analysis introduces a substantial amount of variation, as any single measure would then refer to a pebble just as readily as it did to a boulder thousands of times larger, with no better motivation than an 'apparent' connection between them, unsubstantiated by anything more than intuition.

This is not to say that there is a simple alternative. If the lowest unit of analysis is any few boulders near one another, what would be the upper limit? Should they all be within arm's reach? One cannot rely on chronology to isolate single 'panels', and the same goes for style. Similar levels of patination might obscure a decade-long disjunction between novel engraving events, and 'similarity' is a nebulous metric. By what virtue are any two 'similar' images likely to be made by the same hand? It seems that such a process would expose the biases of the researcher before it offered interpretative insights (cf. Lewis-Williams 2006b:356-357).

As such, a few practical considerations were made for the second survey. The first was that a numerical catalogue of features and content would be kept, and interpreted collectively as much as possible. In this way, the Strandberg *as a whole* would function as the 'panel', comparable to the same unit in the Maloti-Drakensberg.

That left the problem of the lowest common unit of *recording*. While the Strandberg might be the unit of interpretation, individual metrics still stood to be recorded on an entry-by-entry basis. In order to account for whatever biases the surveyors and recorders may have contributed, we elected to define a single unit as a coordinate node that included any number

of boulders within the margins of tolerance of our handheld GPS systems (~3m, on average). Although the selection of mechanical tolerances may appear an arbitrary choice, there is no meaningful theoretical delineation that is particularly well-supported (as above). By contrast, a simple practical constraint at worst retained consistency, and at best passively controlled for biases in individual surveyors. In the event that it introduced bias of its own, the extent of that bias would be quantifiable, and (ideally) affect any one entry as much as another. This, unlike a steadily fatiguing surveyor, or stylistic standards that may have been variably interpreted. Accommodation was made for commentary and observations, allowing notable examples to be flagged for individual interpretation.

We adopted a similar strategy when it came to the record-sheets themselves, dividing them into fields which could be filled consistently. Initial fields were for reference; recording a serial number for each node, with GPS coordinates and photo numbers part of the identifiers of each entry. As direction (visibility) was one of our concerns, each entry records whether or not the images fell within a dominant aspect. Marking 'yes' indicated that the engravings occurred on a face or faces with a common alignment, while marking 'no' indicated either that the images were found on a skyward-facing surface, or that the engraved surfaces had no dominant alignment. If the prior field had been marked 'yes', a bearing was taken perpendicular to the surface.

Content was subdivided in sequentially narrower categories. First, whether images were broadly 'naturalistic' (i.e. unaugmented, representational), 'augmented', or a mix of the two. Augmentation referred to any feature that required further elaboration. This categorisation was not not intended to make a specific differentiation between 'mundane' and 'spiritual' types of imagery. Rather, it was to allow the surveyors to include detailed

information beyond a broad description of the images. Recording a 'horse' was is sufficient to indicate an image of a horse, but the addition of metaphorical content (such as entoptic/geometric embellishment; *cf.* Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1988) would require that the entries accommodate appropriate fields for capture of those features. Accordingly, if the surveyor marked either 'augmented' or 'mixed', they would then proceed to a second field, in which they would indicate the presence of one of a number of augmentations. These were:

- Therianthropes— any combination of human and animal features in a single figure.
- Body morphic (human)— any distortion or pronounced exaggeration of human features.
- Body morphic (animal)— any distortion of pronounced exaggeration of animal features.
- Geometrics— any recognisable entoptic motif (see Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1988:227; also Lewis-Williams 1986:174).
- Non-representational— any imagery with no clear referent, either as a naturalistic representation, or as a product of altered-states of consciousness.

The augmentation category was intended to assist in picking up the markers used to interpret art in the Maloti-Drakensberg. During the first survey, we found no obvious 'fragments of dance'; the postures and arrangements used to identify shamanistic ritual behaviour in the art (see Lewis-Williams 1998:87). In fact, there appeared to be a low number of human figures in general, which complicated the application of an interpretative regime intent on recognising certain categories of human experience (Lewis-Williams 1992:56-57).

The absence of either obvious trance activity or humans to partake in them does not, however, necessarily indicate that the Strandberg art lacked religious motivations or origins. As already discussed, an interpretation in line with Deacon's observations on the ritual significance of the site (e.g. Deacon 1988) does not require the researcher to recognise ritual activities in the art, *per se*. Furthermore, it is not sufficient to look for literal representations of trance, but also for attendant metaphor (Lewis-Williams 1984:61-62; 1998:87), and iconography which included religious activity as one of a number of potential definitions (Lewis-Williams 1998:88). Therianthropes (see discussion in Lewis-Williams 1980:474-475; Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2004:169, 171, Lewis-Williams 2006a:107-110) are one such example, marking anything from shamanistic transformation into animals during trance (Lewis-Williams 1992:57), to engagements between shamans and animal agencies able to mediate on their behalf, either directly (Lewis-Williams 1980:475), or through their attendant energies (Lewis-Williams 1980:477; see discussion in Lewis-Williams 2006a:109). This may include human/animal juxtaposition, because even without obviously transformative imagery, animals could be taken as references to individual humans with personal connections to certain species (see Challis 2005), or as general metaphors for shamanistic practice (e.g. 'dying' as trance, see Lewis-Williams 1982:434; 1984:61).

From there, the 'body-morphic' categories are more selective markers of transformative experience during altered states, where bodily features are distended or selectively over-emphasised (see Lewis-Williams 1986:174-176) to represent physical hallucinations (elongation, flight, 'boiling'; ibid.). There is a caveat to be made on this point, however. For the purposes of ensuring consistency during the survey, any bodily elaboration was recorded as 'morphic', and the category should be understood accordingly. While these elaborations may certainly

represent somatic hallucinations in the cases referenced above, they may also have functioned to selectively differentiate individuals (Dowson 1994; Blundell 2004) by emphasising features with which they were associated.

The two remaining augmentations (geometric, non-representational) were intended to act as filters for elements of 'traditions' identified elsewhere. 'Geometric' designs were those consistent with entoptic phenomena, reflecting their origins in human neurological architecture (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1988:203, 205-210), often appearing as zig-zags, lozenges, parallel hatching, dots, grids, and 'beehives' (see Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1988:206, fig. 1). Comparable designs within herder art traditions (see B. Smith & Ouzman 2004) were also part of this definition, and flagging them *in addition to* any potentially entoptic motifs was not with the intention of amalgamating the two (*cf.* Dowson 1992), but rather with the intention of creating a distinct category for analysis, which could then be considered without specific reference to other variables at the site.

I categorise these phenomena distinctly from 'non-representational' imagery for the sake of theoretical consistency; entoptic phenomena *are* representational, insofar as they are encountered by the senses, and taken to represent elements of experience. Construing entoptic catenary curves and zigzags as beehives and snakes (e.g. Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1988:210) places their significance *in reference* to something. 'Non-representational' imagery, in these terms, has no obvious parallels with either entoptic patterns, nor any recognisable motifs established in herder art traditions (see B. Smith & Ouzman 2004:507-508). Although there was certainly a risk that this category may have incorrectly filtered geometrics, the instructions to surveyors were to look for repeated schema in particular, irrespective of whether or not they conformed *entirely* to the established basis for entoptic imagery elsewhere.

Beyond that, and in the interests of compiling a general catalogue of the site, generic categories accounted for the incidence of human figures, animals, colonial content (e.g. horses, guns, European paraphernalia), as well as written names or dates. Broad stylistic features were similarly recorded, describing the images as scratched (surface), incised (cut into sub-surface layers), or a mix of the two[58]. Fill, achieved either as a ground surface or as incised cross-hatching (or none at all), was recorded as such.

The final feature of the general catalogue was intended to be another filter, but this time for usage-patterns. 'Superposition' refers to the placement of images physically over preceding examples. This is noteworthy because the Strandberg suffers from no paucity of 'canvas' that would force the artists to re-use the same surfaces consistently. Conscious re-application of imagery would suggest that the process was 'locally additive', in the sense that single images drew importance from their immediate and proximal forebears, either on the same boulder, or across small samples of boulders. This is the closest analogue to the 'panel' in a manner comparable to the Maloti-Drakensberg application of the term; images added to the same local context. A 'regionally additive' paradigm would expand such a context across more than an immediate sample of boulders, suggesting that significance was a factor of images corresponding over the 'place' as a larger formation, rather than within a single 'panel'.

The record-sheets required a yes/no confirmation of superposition, but also included a third category. If there was superposition, were there also distinct strata? This is in the sense that the lower layers were heavily patinated in comparison to the upper ones, or that some other clear differentiation existed between layers of engraving. This would reflect a level of

[58] Pecked images were not encountered during the first survey, and a statistically insignificant number were recorded during the second (see below). The survey record-sheets did not include a standard field for recording them, with accommodation made in a 'general comments' section.

motivation in the process, allowing some sense of whether engravings interacted with the same ‘panels’ continuously over long periods of time, or were interacting with (and distributing) a greater schema across the site in novel episodes.

The entries produced by these record-sheets were then tabulated, and subjected to a number of filters and modifiers in order to highlight trends in the body of art surveyed for this project. I summarise both the resulting data and emergent trends below.

CHAPTER 7

7.3: Survey results

The second survey produced 338 entries: a facsimile of the full site record appears in *appendix 1*, but for the purposes of the discussion to come, I summarise salient data points here, beginning with content.

Table 1: Content

Naturalistic	133	% of total	39.25
Augmented	130		38.46
Mixed	75		22.19
Total	338		100.00

As we see above (*table 1*) 'naturalistic' imagery was the most common single category, but this observation is not unproblematic. If the 'augmented' and 'mixed' categories are combined (i.e. *anything including augmentation*), they account for 205 entries, or 60.65% of the total body surveyed. This may give the impression that the site contains a large number of augmentations *in general*, but this is not a stable observation either, as we see below (*table 2*).

Table 2: Augmentations

Therianthrope	5		2.22
Body morphic (human)	22		9.78
Body morphic (animal)	47	% of all	20.89
Geometric	21	augmentation	9.33
Non-representational	130		57.78
Total:	225		100.00

An initial observation is that the total here (225) does not match the total number of augmentations in general (205; see *table 1*). This is because single entries may have had more than one augmentation, contributing to a higher total number of augmentations than the number of entries recording them. This discrepancy remains significant, however, because it demonstrates that only a small number of entries (<20) recorded more than one form of augmentation.

The sub-categories in this 'augmented' sample were intended to act as markers for the presence of overtly shamanistic art in the Strandberg sample. With the acknowledgement that the shamanistic approach primarily identifies iconography and metaphor in its interpretation—entoptic geometrics (see Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1988), body morphics[59], and therianthropy (e.g. Hollmann & Lewis-Williams 2006) are supplementary markers of 'spiritual' themes in the art, being variably referential to different parts of trance experience (see discussion in Lewis-Williams 1998:87; Lewis-Williams 2006b:368). Considering the finding that less than 20 (~10%)

[59] i.e. elongations, embellishments consistent with somatic hallucinations during trance (e.g. Lewis-Williams 1981:11; see discussion in Challis 2005:13; also Lewis-Williams 1986).

of these entries recorded more than one augmentation, these numbers can be taken to be a near representation of the body of augmentations across the sample— a sample which is dominated by non-representational imagery, with supplementary examples (which may or may not have specific relevance to a shamanistic interpretation) making up minorities.

The dominance of non-representational imagery is further reinforced when compared to the body of general content types. With every other content category filtered out (including those below), 84 entries include nothing but non-representational imagery. This constitutes 24.85% of the total body of entries or 40.97% of the combined augmentation (205 entries) across the site.



Figure 15: A sample of 'non-representational' imagery. Photo credit: Eric Wettengel.

The remaining augmented material is difficult to tie to a religious orientation. For consistency's sake (as described above), the morphic categories were defined in broader, rather than narrower terms. In practice, this was intended to interact with the other filters to ascertain whether or not they had clear links to hallucinatory experience. As somatic hallucinations share some of the same visual structure as visual ones[60], it stands to reason that the co-occurrence of 'geometrics' and 'morphic' categories would give a sense of whether the bodily embellishments in the sample were hallucinatory in origin, or products of some other (potentially social, see above; Dowson 1994; Blundell 2004) process. Of the 22 entries that include geometrics, only 4 include morphics of one kind or another. This suggests that the morphics (which make up nearly 30% of the remaining augmentations) in the sample largely do not conform to the measures used elsewhere to declare similar bodily embellishment part of hallucinatory experience.

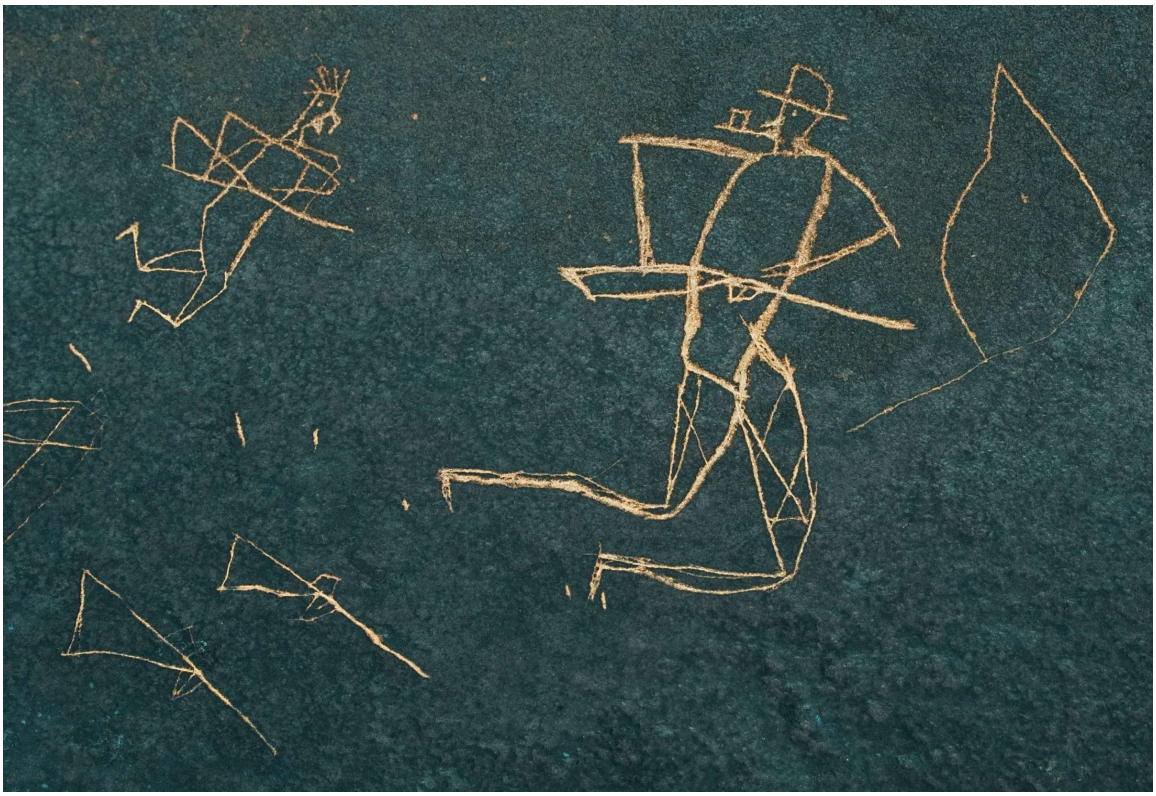
As non-representational imagery accounts for a little over 40% of the augmented sample, and the morphics another ~30%, little remains of the total sample that can be considered 'supplementary' to a shamanistic interpretation in this way. Of the remainder, the sample of 22 geometrics only offered 3 which might be described as entoptic, and only one of them less than tentatively (but still lacking other indicators; see *fig.* 16 below). Of the entries flagged as therianthropes, only one appears as such in review, and it (or *they*, depending on the interpretation of the second, larger figure; see *fig.* 17 below) seems to be a combination of human and chicken, which does not readily factor into a shamanistic interpretation.

[60] Both in the Drakensberg art (see Lewis-Williams 1986:175) and in material collected from the Kalahari (see Katz 1982:237). The latter is significant insofar as it was collected from a society without a comparable artistic practice, and therefore might be indicative of their conceptual characteristics beyond a 'traditional' construction of hallucinations in the art.



Figure 16 (above): Detail of a geometric engraving. Photo credit: Eric Wettengel.

Figure 17 (below): Detail of the 'chicken' therianthrope (top left), and guns. Photo credit: Eric Wettengel.



While I would seek to avoid the implication that numerical incidence was a measure of importance, the *very* low incidence (~1%) of augmentations that could reliably be used to supplement a shamanistic interpretation suggests that they cannot be the basis of such a finding. That said, it is worth comparing the augmentations to the other content categories recorded in the sample.

Table 3: Content (itemised)

Humans	88	% of entries[61]	26.04
Animals	217		64.2
Colonial Content	189		55.92
Writing	41		12.13

Another supplementary element of the shamanistic approach is the presence of human figures, either performing ritual activities, or demonstrating bodily responses to the altered-states of consciousness that follow. Humans are a minority in this data-set, and, significantly, have few parallels with diagnostic figures in the Maloti-Drakensberg. The surveyors were asked to note the incidence of postures and material culture associated with shamanistic practice, but none were recorded.

Animals dominate by some distance. 10 entries record antelope as a generic category[62] with a further 9 recordings of eland, 2 of hartebeest, and 4 gemsbok, for a total of 25. Eland, in

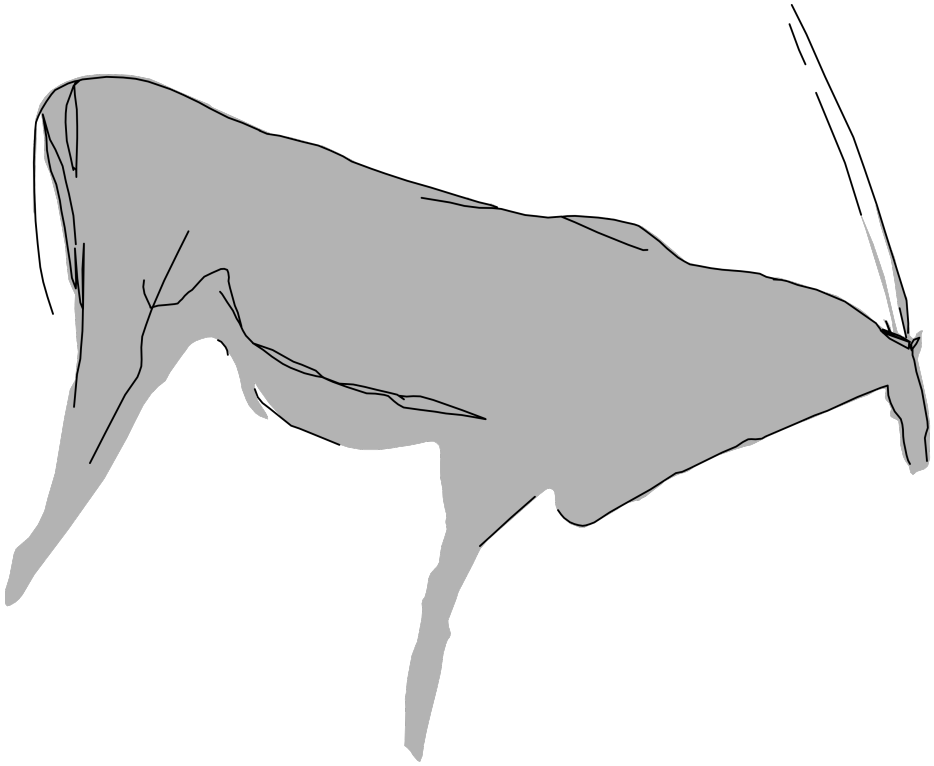
[61] These categories are not exclusive, and so the percentages reflect the number of entries that included any of these features.
[62] Where a specific species could not be identified.

particular, have relevance to the shamanistic approach, encompassing a number of religious metaphors in their semantic 'shadow' (after Lewis-Williams 1998).



Figure 18 (above): Re-drawn sample of an eland. Not to scale. Image by author.

Figure 19 (below): Re-drawn sample of a gemsbok. Not to scale. Image by author.



They are by no means common in the sample, however, and using a motif that contributes to ~2% of the sample (as with the eland), or perhaps as much as ~7% (if *all* antelope are included), to discuss the site as a body risks privileging a recognisable symbol over others, purely on the basis of intelligibility to the researcher (see discussion on Deacon 1988 in chapter 7.1). It would also fail to explain the incidence of other species at the site, including ostriches (7), dogs/jackals (6), elephants (3), oxen (2) sheep (2), porcupine (1), and a feline (1), together contributing a comparable sample.

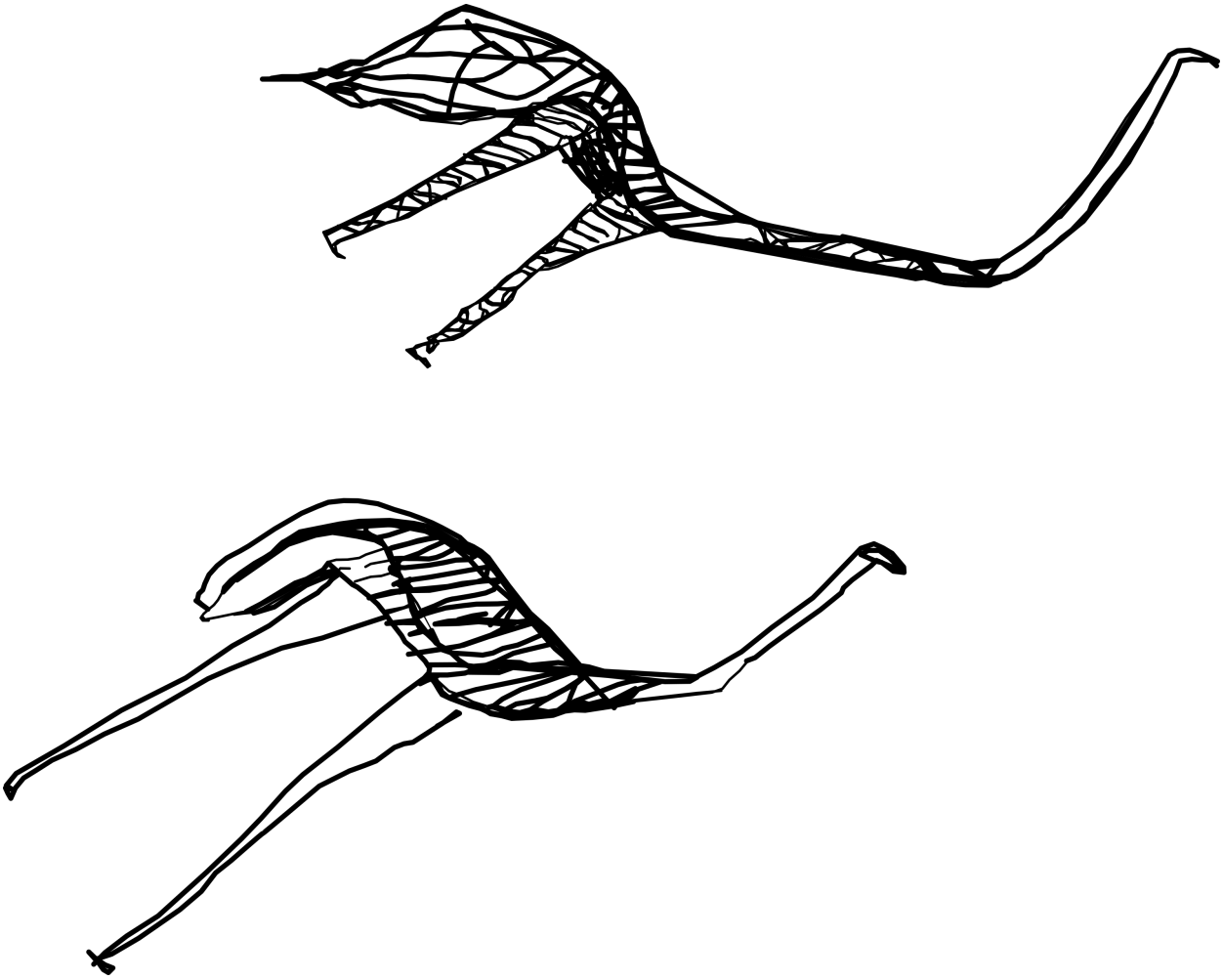


Figure 20: Re-drawn sample of ostriches. Not to scale. Image by author.

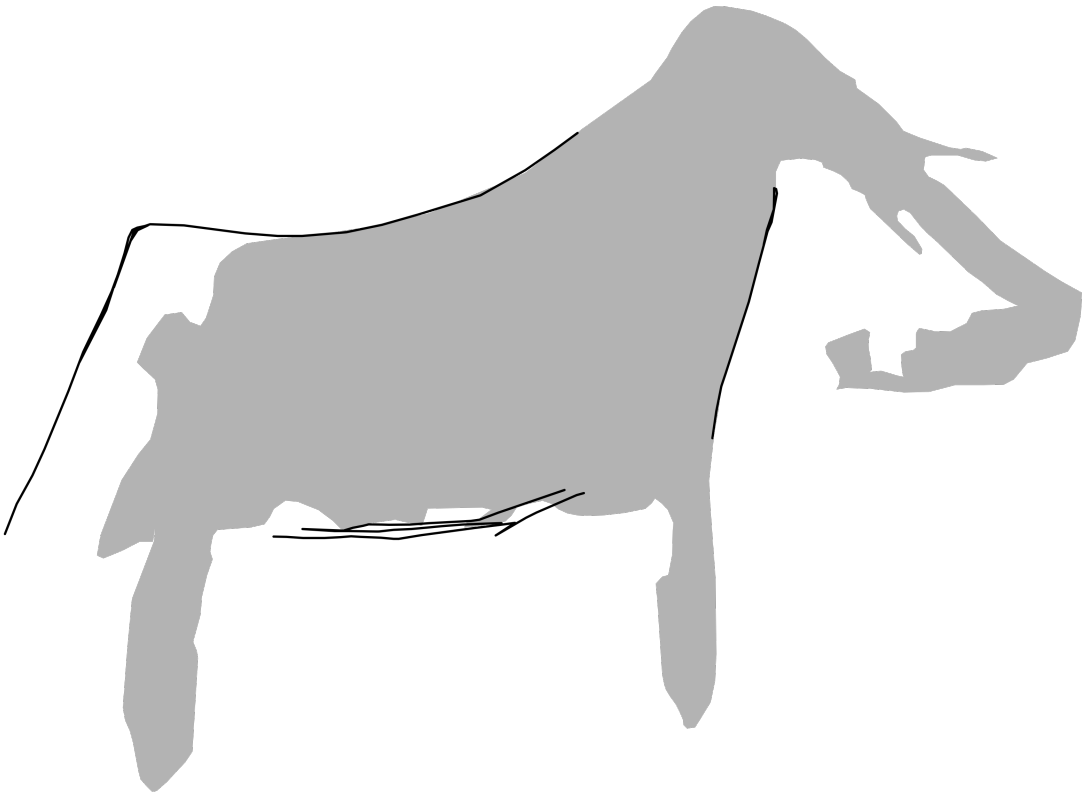


Figure 21: Re-drawn sample of an elephant. Not to scale. Image by author.

There is a further need to recognise the use-history of the site. Of the 217 entries that recorded animals as a general category, 151 of them (or 69.59%) were of horses. Beyond that, horses make up 59.44% of the *total* number of entries recording representational images[63]. This suggests a sudden florescence of image-making during the nineteenth century, significant both for its scale relative to the other classes of imagery at the site, and the implication of frontier-conditions in the content itself.

The 'life' of the site extends well beyond the presence of horses in the region (or, indeed, on the subcontinent), and this makes their disproportionate presence in the sample

[63] With *exclusively* non-representational images filtered out.

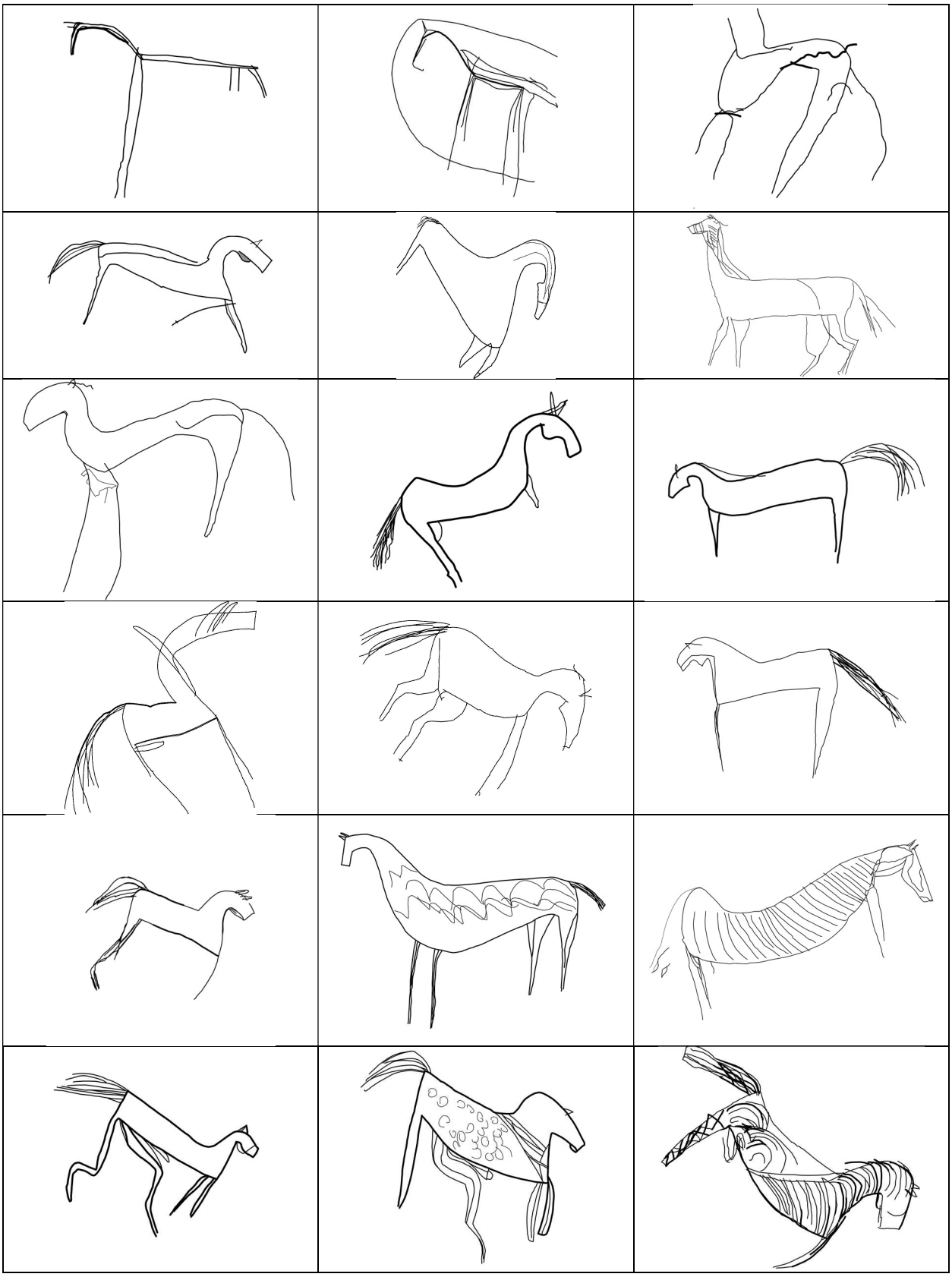


Figure 22: Samples of horse engravings on the Groot Strandberg. Not to scale. Images by author.

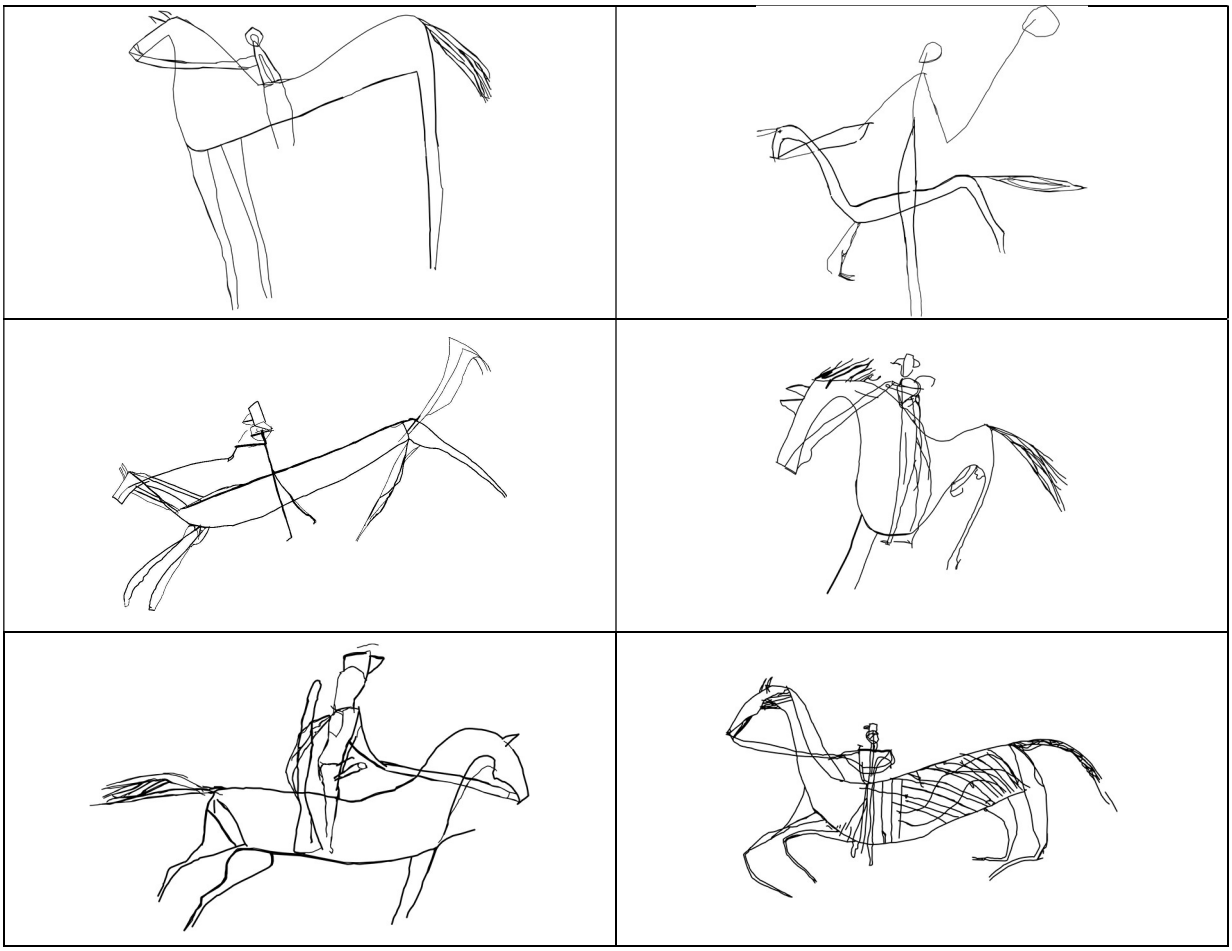


Figure 23: Samples of horses and riders on the Groot Strandberg. Not to scale. Images by author.

worth noting. While there may be a temptation to define them as part of a 'European' corpus of imagery, there is no logical reason to do so. The |Xam informants (and others with a broadly coherent ideology; see chapters 2 & 3) inhabited the region during a timescale that certainly would have co-occurred with the arrival of horses, and which almost certainly pre-dated the arrival of Europeans (*cf.* Penn 1995: 21-22; 2005:151-152; Challis 2012:270). Although peaked caps, guns, and other identifiably 'colonial' material culture are apparent in some cases, these may well have been in reference to European commandos and/or mounted police (see McGranaghan 2016) likely to have exposed the region to this suite of material culture long before the arrival of settlers (see chapter 3.1).

Beyond this, there is no specific reason to assume that Europeans are depicted in images that include European material culture. Frontier societies variably incorporated European identity, ideology, and material culture (see chapter 3.1), and indeed *highlighted* those acquisitions as part of the identities that emerged. Accordingly, the presence of horses and riders in the Strandberg art may well have pre-dated even colonial *intrusion* into the region, instead corresponding with hybrid/composite societies traversing the frontier, and exhibiting these elements of material culture.



Figure 24: Detail of horse and rider with a feathered hat. Not to scale. Image by author.

I discuss the occurrence of horses in more detail in chapter 8.2 below, but for now it is significant to note the remaining trends in the sample of art on the Strandberg. The first of these is the incidence of superpositioning (SP) across the sample.

Table 4: Superpositioning (SP)

SP (Yes)	12		3.55
SP (Distinct Strata)	12	% of total	3.55
No SP	314		92.9

As discussed above, large numbers of superimposed images would suggest that small, local nodes of imagery were being built up, a *locally additive* regime, producing samples comparable to the 'panels' in the Maloti-Drakensberg.

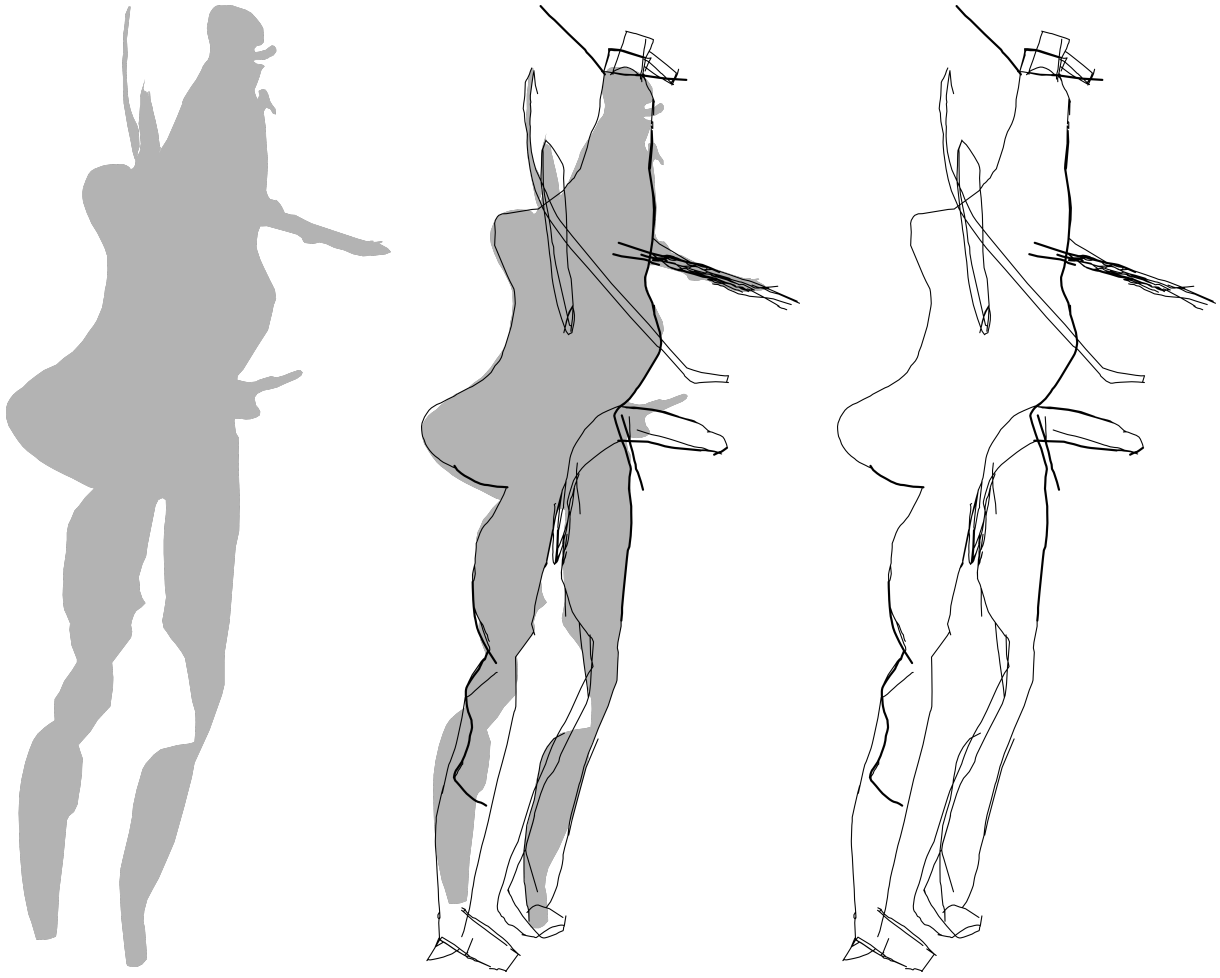


Figure 25: Detail of an image with distinct strata. The original (rubbed) engraving appears on the left, with later (scratched) embellishments detailed on the right, and the combination of the two in the centre. Not to scale. Images by author.



Figure 26 (left): Detail of an image with distinct strata (see fig. 25 above).

Distinct strata would indicate that the distribution of imagery at the site was part of a process of 'building up' nodes with specific and individual significance over long periods of time. Sufficiently long for the underlying layers to re-patinate, and to be visibly distinct from later additions.

Considering that superimposed images of *any* kind only account for 7% of the total sample, it is clear that the art does not manifest in dense concentrations, but rather as a series of contributions to the Strandberg on a larger scale; a *regionally additive* regime, resulting in the images forming part of a structure that spans the site.

This has bearing on visibility as well; the arrangement of images into

dense concentrations would compromise the visibility of individual motifs, whereas single examples would be more apparent because of the greater overall contrast of engraved surfaces to varnished ones.

The final point of discussion relates to this directly; the trend in aspect across the site. Aspect rarely enters discussion in the interpretation of art in the Maloti-Drakensberg, but then, painted sites differ physically from the Strandberg. In the case of the painted rock-surface, the imagery interacts with the medium in an intelligible way— images protrude from cracks or flow into them (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1990:11; see *fig.* 27 below), or make use of inclusions on the surface (such as calcite runs or other mineral washes) to produce novel figures (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1990:13).



Figure 27: Detail of eland 'flowing' into a crack at Kwa Baliwe in the Maloti-Drakensberg. Photo credit: Brent Sinclair Thomson.

This is because the rock-face forms a 'veil' between the physical world and the world of trance experiences (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1990), and therefore piercing the rock-face is a metaphor for trance experience, while shapes and entities emerging from it reference the agencies which live on the other side, and with which the shamans interact.

While it has been suggested that boulder-fields may represent 'bubbles' of the spiritual world breaking through into the real one, and that the engravings were similarly "Spirit World animals and beings emergent" (Ouzman 2001:245), such a characterisation stems from a finding made in a phenomenologically dissimilar location. Part of the motivation for declaring the rock face a 'veil' between different parts of the cosmos is the *axis mundi*, the vertical axis upon which spiritual travel operates (Eliade 1972:120). In this model, shamans 'climb' it into the sky, or 'descend' it into underground or underwater locales, broadly corresponding to somatic hallucinations encountered during trance (see Lewis-Williams 1986), of which flight and tunnels are common tropes (see Lewis-Williams 2004:29-30 for discussion). Isolating the rock-face as a transitional space on this basis relies on an appeal to experience— transition to the spiritual world *feels* like being underground, and therefore exposed portions of underground matter (in the cosmological sense) are metaphors for transition. To assume that all rock is thus metaphor in the same manner is to discard this original reasoning.

While I argue below that the Strandberg was a transitional space (or rather, part of a system of transitional spaces), it is difficult to maintain this point given the phenomenological differences between site-formations. I flag this point in particular, because I argue that the character of the Strandberg (and engraved sites like it) elicits a different range of responses (and accordingly, reference different elements of |Xam cosmology), but I discuss this in detail in chapter 8.1 below.

The disparity between the physical nature of painted sites in the Maloti-Drakensberg and that of the engraving site at the Strandberg is evident in the use of aspect. While it is conventionally included in survey records taken in the Maloti-Drakensberg (Challis, *pers. comm.*; see Pugin 2016), it is difficult to locate an example of its use in interpretation.

In fact, it is difficult to envision a use for aspect in these cases aside from inter-visibility, or 'landscape' study. The first offers little, as alluded to above, because it is incredibly difficult to ascertain site-chronology over a large scale, and visibility is presumably subject to the sites existing in a particular order. Phenomenological landscape study, which purports to explain the way a site 'feels', may reference "spectacular" or "prominent" features on the landscape, or themselves offer "stunning vistas" (Taçon & Faulstich 1993:81; cf. Tilley 1994; Gosden 1994; Ashmore & Knapp 1999). Taking such an approach pre-supposes the importance of certain topographical features and the experiences they may elicit (B. Smith & Blundell 2004: 259; Lewis-Williams 2010:1-2; see Barrett & Ko 2009 for general discussion), usually without an ethnographically-informed model of the landscape to substantiate such a finding.

An alternative (but approximate) approach suggests that significant locations were those 'secluded' (McCall 2010:780) from mundane spaces, where the work of religious specialists could be done far from the prying eyes of the uninitiated (McCall 2010:786). This finding interprets Western religious norms as approximately universal, placing significance in the obfuscation of certain classes of religious ritual. In so doing, it fundamentally misunderstands the nature of Bushman (and shamanistic) religion; in particular, the social and performative role of shamanistic religious practice (Challis *et al.* 2012:810-811).

To purport to offer explanation of rock art without including the imagery itself is clearly problematic. This does not preclude the analysis of landscape from rock-art research,

but highlights ever further the need for it to appear alongside material evidence and available ethnography (after Smith & Blundell 2004:259). This reflects the intention behind including aspect in this project. While it is of dubious usefulness when interpreting painted panels, some of our original observations seemed to suggest a common aspect at the Strandberg, and there are reasons for considering it as part of an informed interpretation.

Table 5: Dominant aspect

Dominant aspect	243		71.89
No Dominant aspect	95	% of total	28.11
Total:	338		100.00

Data concerning the dominant aspect on the site is meaningless without context; specifically, the extent to which engravings with a dominant aspect are representative of the character of the site. Of the full sample, engravings with dominant aspects made up more than 70%, with those either being flat, or spanning across several faces of a boulder making up a little less than 30%. That said, exclusively non-representational imagery makes up a third of those without dominant aspects. With those entries removed from the calculation, the percentage of images with dominant aspects increases to 79.15%, and those without drops to 20.85%.

While it has not been my intention to discount exclusively non-representational imagery from the record, I make this separation for illustrative purposes. My interpretation of the site (see chapters 8.1 & 8.2 below) relies on the classes of images that have clear referents,

and of the body of images that *do have* clear referents, nearly 80% of them have dominant aspects. I include these calculations in the interests of transparency.

Table 6: Direction

Direction:	Range[64] (low/high)	Frequency:	Percentage:
North	>337.5° / <=22.5°	68	27.98
North-East	>22.5° / <=67.5°	43	17.7
East	>67.5° / <=112.5°	18	7.41
South-East	>112.5° / <=157.5°	16	6.58
South	>157.5° / <=202.5°	12	4.94
South-West	>202.5° / <=247.5°	12	4.94
West	>247.5° / <=292.5°	33	13.58
North-West	>292.5° / <=337.5°	41	16.87
Total:		243	100.00

The above describes the distribution of aspects at the site. During the initial surveys, it appeared that a large proportion of the images had a northerly aspect, and this seems to have been confirmed by the data collected during the second survey. Northerly (NW, N, and NE) aspects account cumulatively for 152 entries, or 62.55% of all examples with a dominant aspect. In contrast, the same sectors with a Southerly bearing account for 40 entries, or 16.46% of this sample. Easterly and Westerly aspects account for 77 and 86 entries respectively, with the

[64] The ranges represent 45° around each cardinal and sub-cardinal point (for a total of 8 axes), or 22.5° on either side. This is a general measure for the sake of discussions here, but a more sensitive tally (to 16 axes) can be found in *fig.* 28 below.

caveat that each of these categories receives more than 50% of their totals from their North-aligned sub-cardinals (NE & NW).

During both surveys, we observed that the engravings were easier to locate when exposed to direct sunlight. This is simply a question of reflectivity; the dark oxide varnishes are reflective to a point, but the pale dolorites revealed by engraving were much more so. If the art had been *locally additive*, the resulting panels would have been dense, and difficult to consume at any kind of distance. Given the above finding that the art was *regionally additive*, it stands to reason that consumption of the art would have been as part of a structure that spanned the site. Accordingly, there is reason to take site-wide visibility into account, and aspect allows for this.

Figure 28 (below) describes the position of the sun (in blue) relative to a flat plane across the year. The centre of the graph would indicate the sun being directly above, with 12:00 on the (southern) summer solstice (21st of December) being the closest the sun comes to this point (approximately 85°, or a 5° offset from the vertical axis). This offset is caused by the low latitude of the site (30° South) relative to the equator.

The Earth's axial tilt is approximately 23.4° to its rotational axis around the sun (United States Naval Observatory 2012), and accordingly, the equator has a maximum offset that reflects this, with seasonal variations allowing for the sun to be directly overhead as the Earth rotates. Lower (and higher) latitudes increase their relative offsets as they move further from that point, and the effect is exacerbated by the curvature of the Earth, further increasing the apparent offset from the sun.

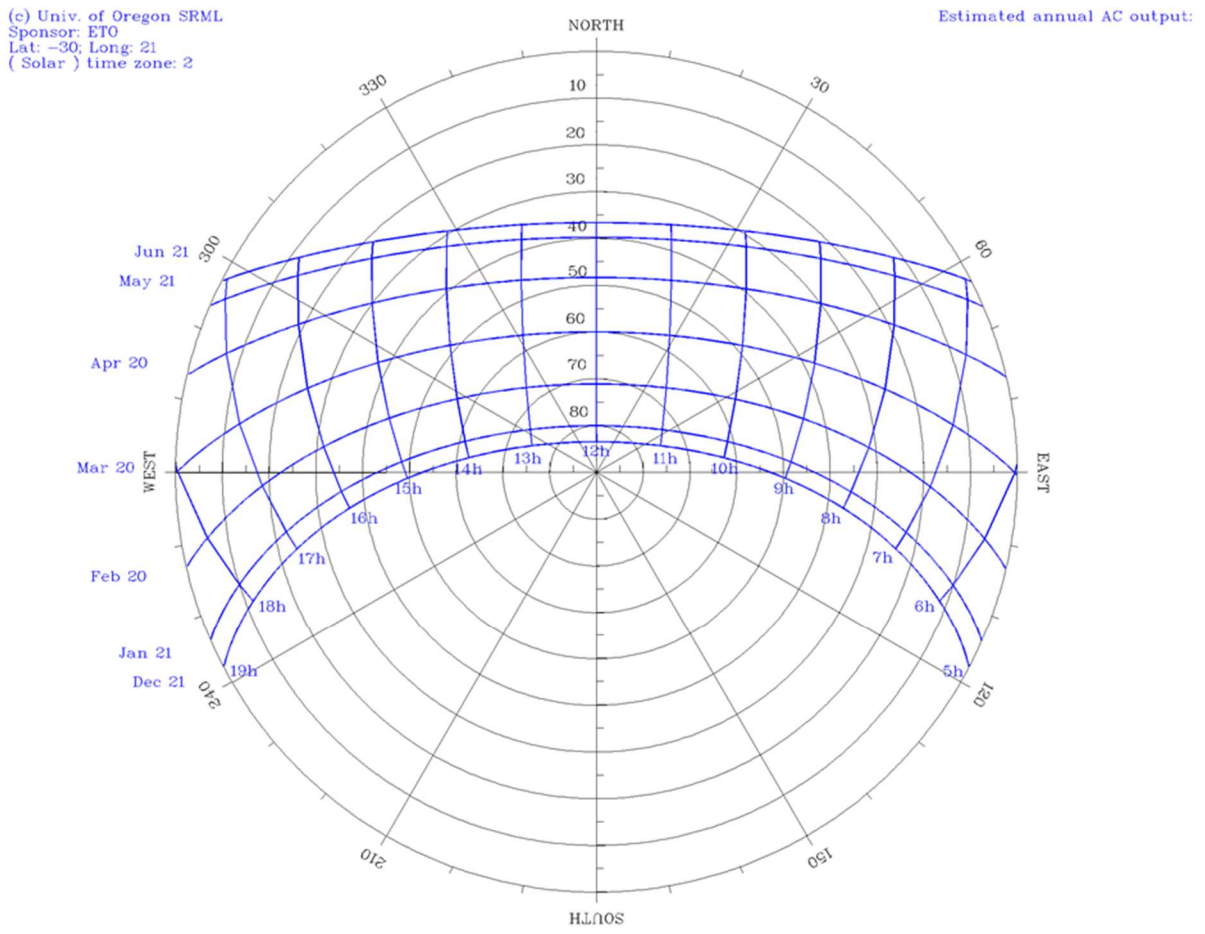


Figure 28: A solar position chart, calibrated to 30° South, 21° East. Source: University of Oregon Solar Radiation Monitoring Laboratory (http://solardat.uoregon.edu).

So far as visibility at the site is concerned, any raised surface would be exposed to sunlight according to the graph above, and be correspondingly more or less visible based on its aspect. With the exception of short periods in the early mornings and evenings near the summer solstice, the position of the sun would cast southerly aspects in shadow all year round, and apply direct light to northerly ones for the longest periods day-by-day, and across the year.

When the seasonal passage of the sun is compared to the distribution of aspects at the site, it is clear that the majority of imagery is aligned in such a way that it would be exposed to direct sunlight for the longest periods during the day, year-round.

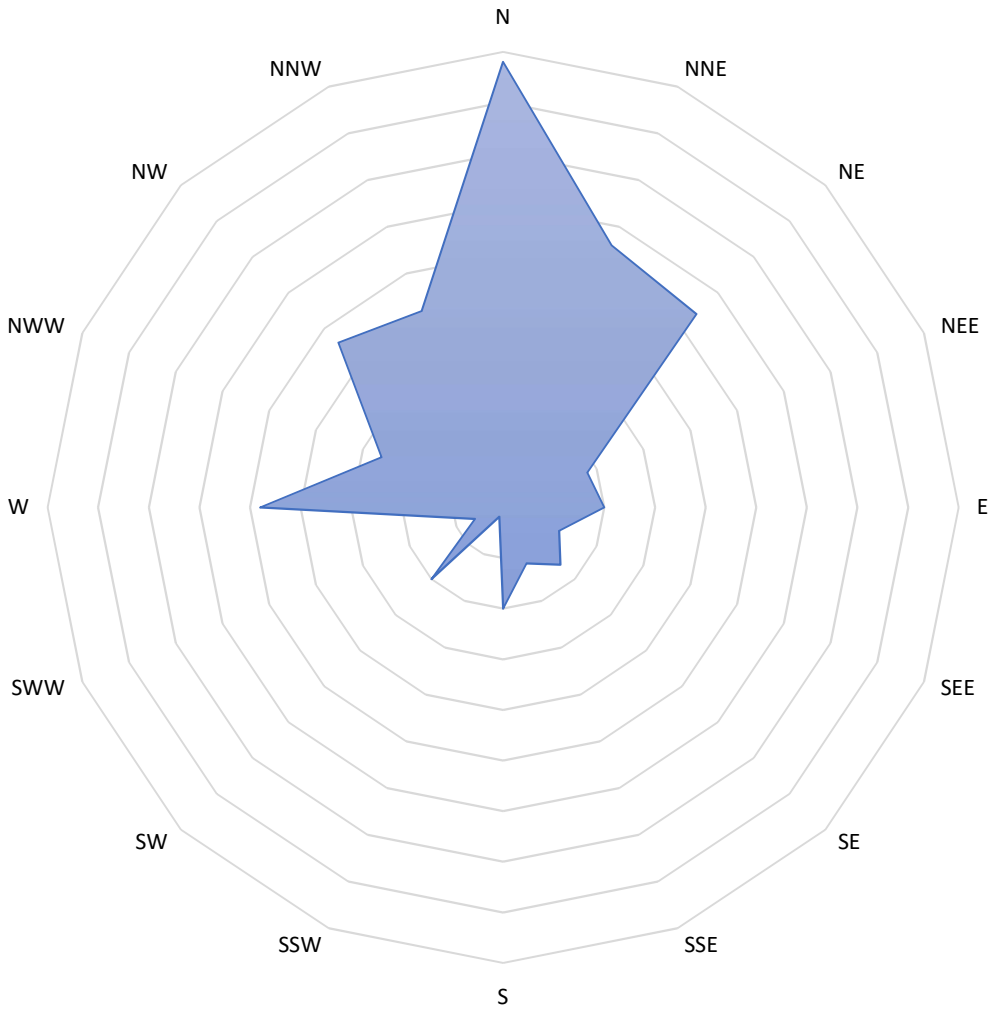


Figure 29: A polar plot of the frequency of aspects at the Strandberg, arranged to 16 axes (approximately 22.5° apart). Each gridline indicates an increment of 5.

Considering that the site appears to have been *constructed* as a large unit, rather than panel by panel, it seems likely that visibility was a motivating factor in the placement of images. The general northerly bearing of much of the site (relative to prevailing solar patterns) reinforces this, and together these trends suggest that the consumption of the site is at the regional level (i.e. when moving/walking across it), rather than panel-by-panel. Taking these two trends in combination, it would appear that the interaction between images and landscape

then is where significance would be located, given that the landscape has been ‘inhabited’ by stones, with the engravings *made to be seen and engaged with*.

CHAPTER 8

8.1: A combined and uneven frontier

The discussion in the opening chapters of this project was intended to place the Strandberg within a complex of frontiers, the 'lattices' (see chapter 3.1) of compounding (and sometimes competing) influences at play in the region. The initial concerns were with the more conventional 'frontiers' of historical discourse; the border-zones between communities of the period, a few appreciably static, but with most in constant flux, and all with highly variable influence.

Beyond this, there are others that ought to be considered in parallel. As described in chapter 6.1, the Nama-Karoo stands at a confluence of prevailing weather-patterns, which in turn creates highly localised conditions, all ranging widely in intensity and character.

Accordingly, communities living within the lattice were best served by remaining responsive to their conditions. On the social and political levels, they variably deployed elements of their identities by producing social indices (see chapters 3.1 & 3.3) of their neighbours, stereotyping other communities relative to themselves, and codifying a range of appropriate responses. To ensure a level of internal coherence, they maintained records of their heritage (as with the *-ǁëis* suffix among the Korana, see chapter 3.3) which functioned as a

touchstone against which their own (and other) identities could be tested. Subsistence strategies and social organisation were similarly fluid, with practices able to be deployed (or abandoned) in response to the ebb and flow of frontier conditions. Identity was one such adaptation, and frontier communities were able to 'act Korana' (for example) when a Korana identity became necessary, appealing to their own notions of Korana-'ness' inasmuch as they appealed to the notions held by others.

These influences are the most accessible to an historical project; they are the anthropological 'constants' of social organisation, economy, and identity-formation, inferred from observations of practice and context. They are ultimately little more than a framing device; a broad structure upon which behavioural observations can be hung.

In this chapter, I hope to give an interpretation of the surveyed material. The term 'interpretation' is misleading, however, because it weighs the project toward 'meaning', a factor that is almost entirely inaccessible without the artists at hand to offer their insights into the images. What remains, and is potentially more accessible, is *motive*. Beyond mere convenience, motive is more resilient to a deterministic view that the lattice may appear to suggest. While the layers of influence on the landscape are certainly relevant, they remain just that; influences. As has been well-rehearsed elsewhere (Collingwood 1946; Hodder 1982a; 1982b; 1987:6; 1991; 1994:50; Brumfiel 1992; Silliman 2009:215-216; cf. Binford 1962:218; 1965; 1972:205; 1983:12; Clarke 1968:85; see summaries in Dobres & Robb 2000:4, 6-10; Wylie 2002:15-17; Silliman 2009:215-217) *choice* is made in correspondence with context, rather than because surrounding pressures oblige it (*cf.* Bourdieu 1990:52-65). Human activity, then, is an emergent property of a given context. It *emerges* from a milieu of influences.

Interpreting motive, then, requires another layer in the lattice; the 'frontiers' imposed by people upon their own landscapes. These are novel pressures, distinct in form and severity from external ones, emerging from the correspondence between context and practice. Without this last addition, the lattice would seem to impose an 'objective' series of pressures, economy and politics forming a nature and a culture (e.g. Sahlins 1972:186), behaviour on one hand, and the other being the "physical framework" (Hastrup 1989:7) over which it is mapped (*cf.* Ingold 2000:54). This is inconsistent with hunter-gatherer (and, indeed, non-Western; MacCormack 1980:6) interaction with the environment, because it assigns one domain to "interpersonal relations" and the other to "organism-environment relations" (Ingold 2000:45, also 41), filling culture with people and leaving nature without. In so doing, it excises human social activity from the context in which it is constituted (*ibid.*).

This may not appear too troubling a proposition, particularly not if human and non-human spaces are envisioned in isolation. However, it remains problematic for hunter-gatherer settings because no specific divide exists between 'human' social beings and 'non-human' ones (Bird-David 1999:S68; Ingold 2000:45), rendering their concordant realms, if there were any, more or less approximate. In this model, 'human-ness' becomes a marker of species, rather than an attribution of social personhood (see 'other-than-human-persons'; Hallowell 1960:36; Willerslev 2004:629-630; 2007:2; 73-74; also McGranaghan 2015:276-277). More significantly, it allows both humans and animals to traverse the divide between familiarity and 'otherness' when certain conditions are met (Willerslev 2004:630; 2007:26-27). Instead of producing a world segmented between 'natural' (*viz.* non-human, non-intentional) and 'cultural' (*viz.* human, artificial), such a landscape is inhabited beyond the scope of human occupation, with communities (both human and otherwise) engaging variably across them.

I use the *!kau:xu* to discuss these phenomena in light of the available ethnography; the 'hunting-ground' that surrounds the camp, and the theatre for meaningful interactions with the world[65]. While this may appear to problematically segment the landscape, it acts as a range of "contextually delimited segments of a single field" (Ingold 2000:47), defined by relations between its inhabitants, rather than because any ontological separation exists.

Given that the |Xam recognised personhood in non-human communities, they evaluated animal populations relative to themselves (using the social indices described in chapters 3.1 & 3.3) inasmuch as they evaluated *any* communities on the landscape. For example; baboons, inhabitants of the *!kau:xu*, spoke the same language as the |Xam (LL.V.24.5924; Hollmann 2007:10; see McGranaghan 2012:146), suggesting continuity between two *cultures*, beyond any generic equivalence between persons and non-persons. |Xam social indices compare other communities to a catalogue of intelligible behaviours, and language is only the most pronounced. Baboons spoke "*sounding like people*" (LL.V.24.5926; see Bleek 1931:167; Hollmann 2004:10-11; *emphasis added*), took wives like people (LL.V.24.5924'), and used root medicines for the same purposes as people (LL.V.24.5924'-5925'; *cf.* Challis 2009:104-107; 2012:276; 2014:259-260). A baboon "is a thing that does not want to die" (LL.V.24.5964), and takes precautions to ensure its survival (LL.V.24.5958-5963). Not only is the comparison behavioural, but it acknowledges motive in a non-human community, and maps it across intelligible practices.

Comparisons were made between human communities and non-human ones without specific indications of a transition. Baboons and Korana, both having markedly violent associations (LL.II.32.2960'; *cf.* LL.V.24.5931'; McGranaghan 2014b:679), were (as communities)

[65] And, as briefly mentioned in chapter 4.2, with elements of the shamanistic cosmos.

assumed to share elements of personality. This offers a tantalising corollary to |Xam constructions of identity; that 'acting Korana' (i.e. seceding from |Xam-ness and taking on violent/predatory suites of behaviour and culture) had precedents outside of the historic incidence of Korana, because doing so was functionally equivalent to enmeshing oneself in the identity of baboons (Challis 2012; 2014).

From these points, it appears clear that human strategies were seen to be paralleled by other (potentially non-human) communities on the landscape. Furthermore, that the behaviours themselves aren't the only thing being compared, but the *character* of those behaviours is being taken into account, with different species being assigned stereotypical characteristics in the process, and placed in their appropriate positions on the |Xam social index. In the same way that this allowed the |Xam to deploy elements of their identity in response to a changing social landscape, dangerous non-human communities were similarly identified, and appropriate responses formulated (see McGranaghan 2014b:676, 683; see also McGranaghan 2014a).

This is the core of the point made above; that social pressures emanated from communities that do not appear on a historical record, precisely because the landscape was populated beyond its human capacity. These pressures form 'frontiers' because these communities interacted in much the same way as human social/political units did; through negotiation, and selective exposition of their own identities.

This mechanism defines life on the *!kau:xu— and the world in general*. Space is not a category "whose ontological attributes are characteristically territorial" (Jiménez 2003:139), but rather a "field of relations" (Olwig & Hastrup 1997:8; *cf.* Jiménez 2003:139); "a shifting constellation of social relationships through which 'places' are activated" (Jimenez 2003:139) by

the interactions occurring across them. These relations are not only occurrences of the present, but also composed of their precedents. The |Xam social indices recognise 'tendencies' in other communities (see above; also McGranaghan 2014b:678), and the Korana lineages do the same; they are based on prior experience or known historical trajectories, and both expect these properties to emerge when they encounter the community in question.

In this way, the landscape is not a series of territories, per se, but a series of networks, immersed in precedent and shared history (or lack thereof).

These elements might be rendered in the "paths made by animals, a fruit tree planted by an ancestor, stones which are inhabited by potentially harmful beings, fallen tree-trunks, the place where an event in a particular myth took place[66], etc." (Howell 1996:132; *cf.* Ingold 2000:140; see Deleuze & Guattari 1988:11, 21).

The camp, then, can be seen as being delineated from the *!kau:xu* on the basis of the relationships that occur (and have occurred) there. |Xam narratives are preoccupied with demonstrating "proper relationships between species [*viz.* persons]" (Hewitt 2008[1986]:92-95; see McGranaghan 2012:148; 2014a:14-15; 2014b:678, 680-681), as well as the consequences for transgression (McGranaghan 2014a:10-12; 2014b:677-678). The camp was the place where these social contracts ran thickest, were best understood by all involved, and had the most stable precedents. "*ǁkwakka*" pervades this (McGranaghan 2012:169-170); the notion of behaving with 'understanding' (Bleek 1956:596) and in accordance with social norms. Actions showing social expertise were done 'nicely' (see *twai:ĩ*; Bleek 1956:243; also *a:kən*; Bleek 1956:7; looking 'well'; McGranaghan 2012:40, 139-140, 169-171) in both domestic settings (LL.VIII.23.8081;

[66] See 'Gen' or to "give a name" (Bleek 1956:46), otherwise translated as 'nicknaming' (see LL.VIII.32.8808') in which a place (LL.VIII.14.7216) or person (LL.V.20.5506-5507) might become known by something that happened to them. This parallels with the Strandberg itself, known by its association with the agama lizard (see chapter 2.2).

LL.II.14.1336-1337) and on the hunting-ground (see LL.II.4.487'; LL.II.11.1111-1113; LL.V.11.4857). Failure to behave with 'understanding' of one's obligations[67] degraded one's social standing, and achieved comparison with "beastly" communities on the landscape (see McGranaghan 2014a:10-12; 2014b:676).

This demonstrates a primary mechanic of the world at large; communities compared themselves and others to a series of known obligations. If those obligations were met, then certain reciprocal behaviours would be expected. Hunters who treated a porcupine with 'respect' (*viz.* 'understandingly') could expect the animal to 'give' itself to them. If it did not, the hunters could infer that the relationship had been compromised by either themselves, the porcupine, or someone else with influence on the relationship (see LL.VIII.16.7376'-7377'; McGranaghan 2012:193; *cf.* Willerslev 2007; McGranaghan & Challis 2016).

Socialisation scales with distance[68], with communities becoming more 'different' the further from familiar territories an individual went. 'Strangers' came from 'different' places (e.g. LL.V.19.5512; LL.V.22.5833; McGranaghan 2014b:678), with 'strangers' being those with unintelligible practices (McGranaghan 2014b:678), and 'different' places being territories with uncertain precedents, populated by 'strange' communities (as with the areas north of the Orange River). Seeing as knowledge of one's obligations is what ensures 'proper' behaviour from the surroundings, it stands to reason that the lack of it is what precipitates 'wild' (*viz.* 'non-understanding'; see McGranaghan & Challis 2016:586) behaviour. This is because new

[67] There is a parallel here with *hxaro* among the Ju|'hoan in the Kalahari, a network of exchange and mutually-supportive behaviour (see Wiessner 1977; 1981; 1983:260), that brought "behaviour in line through [systems of] reward and punishment" (Wiessner 2005:116; see Guenther 1999:41-43; *cf.* Barnard & Woodburn 1991:25; Myers 1991:56; Willerslev 2007:36-37; McGranaghan 2014a). This included negative evaluations of non-conformance (Guenther 1999:34) particularly of uncontrolled consumption. In the |Xam example, controlled consumption (McGranaghan 2014b:676) is presented as a desirable trait, and this compares favourably to the systems regulating sharing and consumption in the Kalahari (see *soxa* in Vinnicombe 1972b: 201; Widlok 1999:213-221).

[68] As with the |nu:sa, spirits of the dead, and other socially distant communities (see chapters 3.3 & 4.2).

agreements presumably applied, and unknown precedents set the stage for interactions between communities, with both agreements and precedents becoming less intelligible the further an individual moved from their originating space. Because non-conformance 'entitles' other communities to behave capriciously (e.g. LL.VIII.16.7376'-7377'; McGranaghan 2012:193), simply moving through an unknown territory is to invite steadily more aggressive responses.

The 'frontier', in this case, is caused by the asymmetry of this occurrence. Not only is the landscape littered with communities, but all of the concomitant behavioural requirements impose themselves variably across it. Beyond that, the landscape is constantly (and intimately) aware of its human capacity; an individual may transgress by failing to show respect, be that either on the *!kau:xu*, where the relevant animal might directly sense the transgression (e.g. LL.V.17.5270), or in the camp, where the actions of a hunter's family might compromise a hunt happening far away (e.g. LL.V.6.4377'; LL.VIII.16.7376'-7377'), a notion mirrored by the Korana (Engelbrecht 1936:166). The impact of 'disrespectful' behaviours had no specific temporal limit either; a child who 'insulted' lions might expect to be attacked by one when they grew up (LL.II.21.1920-1923; McGranaghan 2015:278). As much as the |Xam understood the motives behind the activities they observed in other communities, so too were the agencies that inhabited the landscape able to identify it in them. Beyond that, as much as the |Xam built up social indices of other communities, so too did those other communities of them, forming precedents that would govern future interactions.

It is worth stressing that the landscape perceives human activity through means that are not strictly visual. "Smell [...] was a central issue shaping |Xam interactions with non-humans" (McGranaghan 2015:277), part of a 'meteorological complex' (Guenther 1999:79; Low 2007:S80; McGranaghan 2015:277) that carried (and mingled) individual identities on the wind,

and interacted with wider-scale phenomena. Foremost, smell was a marker of identity, and this is most evident in the consequences of anti-social behaviours, which arose with corresponding odours. A consumptive individual (or species with consumptive tendencies) might be considered a *!k"wakka-tukən*, or 'foulmouth' (McGranaghan 2012:435), a word derived from the same root (*!k"wakkən*, to be decayed, putrid; Bleek 1956:509) as !k"wakkən-ǁkũŋ, or 'decayed arms' (McGranaghan 2012:436), the term used to describe someone acting in a 'beastly' (see McGranaghan 2014a), consumptive or anti-social manner (or, in fact, a beastly-thing; LL.VIII.25.8216-8217).

Where scent is identity, its movement on the wind indicates interaction. The rain (!khwa; Bleek 1956:431) was one of the agents on the landscape (although not specifically a single entity), and olfactory indicators signalled its intentions (see Low 2007:S 74). Similarly, the rain reacted to burning springbok horns (LL.VIII.23.8031) by dispersing, while the Korana used an equivalent mechanism, but with "katbos" (Engelbrecht 1936:176) burnt to "bring about fine weather". At the same time, the rain was attracted to the scents of New Maidens (LL.V.6.4393') as well as buchu (see *sã:*, Bleek 1956:162; LL.V.3.4120').

In curative practices, smell might be used to actively manage other agencies. The Korana burnt bones and fat, "for it was the pleasant smell of the fat which had to ascend to heaven" (Engelbrecht 1936:175), with smoke being a medium for transfer of 'medicines' more generally (Engelbrecht 1936:177, 186). |Xam theories of illness provided that 'cold' (McGranaghan 2015:277) scents could be used to impart protective energies, or to heal the damage done by antagonistic forces (LL.V.22.5763-5766) usually through a particularly 'cold-scented' blood (LL.V.22.5765; McGranaghan 2015:277) possessed by certain healers.

Other means of identity-transfer existed, particularly related to a suite of hunting practices (see McGranaghan 2015:276-277; see *|gwaiʒn*, v. to get into the flesh, take possession of; Bleek 1956:285; McGranaghan 2012:204; also *n!ao* ; Marshall 1957:233; Vinnicombe 1972b:200-201; Biesele 1993:88; Parkington 1996; Low 2007:S74; *cf.* Guenther 1999:73), but most relevant here is the access smell gives to agencies other than oneself. The capacity of smell "to move on the wind" (McGranaghan 2015:277) is of particular concern, because not only could that communicate *who or what* you are, but also what you were intending to do. Given that other communities on the landscape were constructing social indices of the |Xam, non-conformance would be well known (and documented) by one's neighbours. This surveillance particularly applied to hunters ("an individual who 'walked about' [and was] careless of their smell was unlikely to achieve hunting success"; McGranaghan 2015:277; see LL.II.21.1899; LL.VIII.16.7407-7408), but would conceivably apply to any intrusion upon the *!kau:xu*.

I described this process as 'asymmetrical' earlier, and this is the root cause. Animal communities have an advantage over human ones when it comes to scent (and sensory capacity more generally; cf. LL.VIII.8.6730-6731)— although human beings could mark the general character (and sometimes the relevant identity) of a wind, animals are able to judge intention from it. Non-human communities are therefore not only aware of the human component of the landscape, but able to comprehend human behaviour from a distance, and constantly making judgements based on those observations. Humans, by contrast, would not always be aware of which communities were observing them, and were therefore not always aware of the obligations that might be required of them.

Put simply, the camp and *!kau:xu* are not territorial or ontological categories, but rather measures of stability. The camp is a known quality, and therefore predictable. When one enters

the *!kau:xu*, however, they are set on a social slope. The immediate areas around the camp are populated by agencies that the camp has the most interactions with; they have gained 'understanding' over the course of repeated interactions, and set longstanding (and potentially intergenerational) precedents.

As distance from the camp increases, 'understanding' wanes, and the available precedents become ever more dispersed, until there is none of either. Asymmetry arises because human movements (and intentions) are under constant surveillance, but the human component is only ever peripherally aware of the obligations they are failing to meet. This asymmetry increases in scale as the human component moves further from familiar territories, only occasionally 'tapping into' (*cf.* McGranaghan & Challis 2016; see below) familiar lifelines on the landscape, but, for the most part, transgressing unknown and progressively more unknowable requirements.

It is a 'frontier' for two reasons. The first is because these layers are socially formative, in the sense that they encourage populations to define themselves relative to other communities on the landscape, and to exhibit elements of their identities in ways that will negotiate their presence. The second is that these conditions require adaptations of their inhabitants; any passage across the landscape is passively negotiated by the actions the human community undertakes in the process, and therefore it behoves this community to adapt its behaviour to minimise (potentially catastrophic) impacts, and to set as many favourable precedents as possible.

Significantly, the nature of this frontier places it on the verges of human habitation— so long as there are agents present on the landscape, so too are the pressures they place on a human community, relative to the likely scope of their interactions (*cf.* Harré 1998:3; Bird-

David 1999:S77; Ingold 2000:112-114, 144). In this way, simply crossing the bounds out of a familiar space should be seen as traversing a frontier, with all of the concordant risk and capriciousness that entails.

The world is inherently unstable, ever more so for every layer of the lattice described above. The non-human layer simply adds a level of complexity, and an accompanying set of pressures. In the case of the 'anthropological' layers described in earlier chapters, the |Xam and Korana responded to these pressures by setting precedents, either of themselves (as with the -*llëis* suffix) or of others (as with the |Xam social indices). The solution in the non-human layers is also in setting precedents (and in appealing to the precedents set by others) just as much as would be the case elsewhere.

These findings form the basis of my discussion of the Strandberg art. The hills stand at a confluence of frontiers, the surrounding landscape deeply 'latticed' by the pressures exerted across it. Given that the art formed part of a structure that was distributed across the landscape, it is reasonable to suggest that the factors that influenced interaction with the landscape more generally would also have influenced the production of the art. Specifically, that by placing images upon it, the authors of the art were setting social precedents, and highlighting particular elements of their identities, relative to others.

CHAPTER 8

8.2: Set in stone

The above discussion frames a problem faced by any potential artists on the Strandberg, and alluded to several times already. The Strandberg stands at the confluence of social (human and non-human), political, and ecological frontiers, and existence in such an environment is tenuous by default. I avoid describing the societies themselves as 'tenuous' because they demonstrate a number of means of defying the default state. I argue that the art on the Strandberg is exactly that; an example of adaptation to a variety of pressures, made manifest in the sample of material culture that remains at the site.

The first measure of this is in the distribution of imagery across the site. As discussed above, the *regionally additive* paradigm suggests that the art was intended to be consumed as part of a site-wide structure, and this is significant, given that the Strandberg and its surrounds were variably inhabited by the |Xam (Deacon 1986:135-136). Although it has also been identified as a ritual location (see Deacon 1988:134-136) inhabitation of the hilltops extends the conceptual lattice over the area, and marks the periphery of the Strandberg with frontiers, full of agencies that require negotiation on a continual basis.

As mentioned above, this negotiation occurs through the "maintenance of correct relationships between agents" (McGranaghan & Challis 2016:586), of which 'possession' indicated an individual example (McGranaghan & Challis 2016:590). An individual might 'possess' springbok (for example) through having an understanding (see *ǁkwakka*; 'understanding') with them that was salient *even among those who behaved 'nicely' toward them* (e.g. LL.V.10.4707-4743; McGranaghan & Challis 2016:590). This relationship caused the springbok to behave in a manner that mirrored domestication— the possessor had intimate understanding of springbok life-cycles and behaviour, and was able to exploit them (*ibid.*), while the possessed springbok might allow themselves to be touched, "doing as the oxen do" (LL.V.19.5457; McGranaghan & Challis 2016:590), in opposition to the 'wild' things that populated the distant reaches of the *!kau:xu*.

'Possession' in this way generally applied to individuals, with control of different agencies[69] attributed to people who specialised in such a way (e.g. LL.VIII.7.6638-6640). The process mingled their identities to the extent (e.g. LL.V.10.4778) that even their moods and intentions may have impacted each other (McGranaghan & Challis 2016:590). Owing to the manner in which communities on the *!kau:xu* compiled indices of one another, the |Xam came to be defined as "the people who shoot springbok" (see LL.II.36.3244'-3245'; McGranaghan 2012:215; McGranaghan & Challis 2016:591) because of their longstanding precedents established with neighbouring springbok communities. This suggests that the concept of 'possession' is in keeping with the general theories of 'understanding' described above; being understanding on a long-term basis ensured amicable, predictable interactions, and it is

[69] Here in the sense of having 'influence over' (*cf.* McGranaghan & Challis 2016), rather than 'possessing/harnessing potency of' in the way that it might be portrayed in the shamanistic approach (e.g. Lewis-Williams 1998:87-88).

conceivable that one might be *sufficiently* understanding to embroil themselves in the day-to-day behaviours of the things they understood (McGranaghan & Challis 2016:591).

The scope of the "manipulations" (McGranaghan & Challis 2016:586) afforded to someone in this position, then, is broadly reliant on the history between themselves and the non-human community in question. Beyond that, it also complies with the coercive character of the systems that governed interactions between communities. This is most easily seen in *!nanna-se* (as above), being a construct that allowed hunters (for instance) to induce game-animals to observe their obligations during a hunt (e.g. LL.VIII.16.7376'-7377'; McGranaghan 2012:193; cf. Willerslev 2007:35, 43) by themselves complying with the performative processes that made these obligations known. In this way, it is a need to *compel* other communities to recognise precedent, or to observe in oneself the conditions that 'entitled' the other community to non-compliance (as with the porcupine example above).

One way of recognising precedents, especially on a landscape prone to capriciousness and variability, would be to literally mark them down. This is not as trivial a process as the above statement might appear to indicate, and I certainly do not suggest the idea in its entirety here— instead, I consider this principle in light of the prevailing observations made at the Strandberg. As mentioned above, this first observation is that the art forms part of a site-wide structure, and is consumed as such.

By physically marking a region, the |Xam (for instance) would not only have been demonstrating their affinity for the location, or necessarily acknowledging the power of the place itself (as in Deacon 1988:137-138), but establishing a record of their inhabitation. This, in turn, implies interaction with other communities. One cannot traverse the world in any capacity without acknowledging the precedents that exist there, and simply by existing in

those locations, new precedents are set. By physically marking a territory, these precedents are solidified, and accessible for reference by all parties to the agreement.

Such a finding is 'common sense', inasmuch as it appears to be an obvious point, but has no specific evidence available in the ethnography. This is, unfortunately, much in keeping with the presence of engravings in the Bleek-Lloyd archive more generally; Lloyd alludes on two occasions to discussions on engravings (LL.V.24.5963'; Lloyd 1889:19) but these examples are by no means conclusive, appearing to demonstrate the informants' "lack of interest" (McGranaghan 2012:92) in the topic. Accordingly, any support for my conclusion is derived from its compatibility with other mechanisms actively discussed by the informants, or given support through contiguity with the |Xam worldview more generally.

In this case, it is because the process of marking the landscape has parallels in the activities undertaken by animal communities. At a site in South Africa's North-West province, Ouzman observed that a number of boulders had been rubbed smooth by rhinoceroses, presumably to rid their bodies of parasites and mud after bathing in the nearby river (Ouzman 1996:58). Given the level of wear on the rocks, it appears that this may have happened over very long periods of time, deeply establishing a relationship between themselves and the place (Ouzman 1996:58-59). In a similar fashion, humans rubbed their own images into the rocks as part of a continuation of the processes begun by the rhinos (Ouzman 2001:247; Dowson 2009:381). With the caveat that there is some distance between Thaba Sione and the Strandberg, this finding is consistent with |Xam interaction with other communities on the landscape, in which the behaviour of those communities are assessed both for purpose and motive, and judged against human equivalents.

Beyond that, the process of 'understanding' is performative (as discussed above), and by re-producing interactions between human and non-human communities, the humans achieved a level of performance. In so doing, they obliged entities on the landscape to comply, and by building up a record of presence, a community could do in stone what would normally be done by continued inhabitation; it could give a depth of precedent to any forthcoming interaction. The exact mechanism through which this would be achieved relates to the continued use of a particular (northerly) aspect in the engravings, and I discuss that in more detail below.

CHAPTER 8

8.3: The changer of ways

The art on the Strandberg is dominated by representational art, of which animals are the single largest category. The presence of eland (~9 entries), although significantly smaller than the presence of horses (for example), is the most easily navigated by 'conventional' interpretations (e.g. Lewis-Williams 1998:87), and could be implicated in shamanistic activity at a site that has specifically been connected to rain-making (Deacon 1988:134). The same can be said for the more marginal presence of elephant (3), which have been interpreted specifically in this light (Deacon 1988:136).

Horses dominate the body of surveyed art, making up nearly half of all entries (and nearly 70% of all animals), but they are also the least contiguous with rock art interpretation elsewhere in southern Africa. Challis' (2012) work in the Maloti-Drakensberg is a stand-out example, but it also engages with highly specific historical data; describing the relationship of horses to a particular community, at a known point in time, and able to interpret horse-symbols in correspondence with those circumstances. In his example, a composite human community was able to draw on the characteristics of non-human communities on the landscape (horses and baboons) in the construction of their own, novel identity, and to deploy

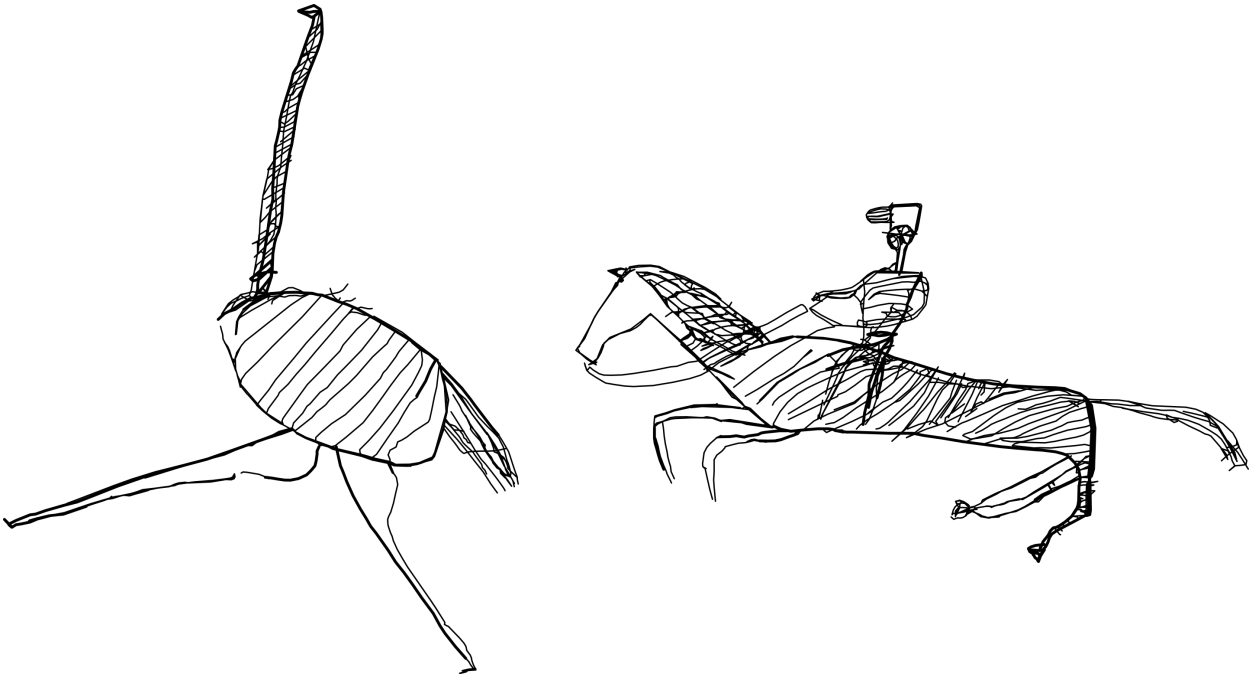
elements of that in response to frontier conditions in the Maloti-Drakensberg. Although the informants certainly demonstrated detailed knowledge of horses (McGranaghan 2016:169-170), what appears to be the most accessible interpretation of the presence of horses on the Strandberg is historically situated (see McGranaghan 2016:175) in a similar fashion, connected to the genesis of 'Coloured' identities in the region during the nineteenth-century. This combines, in part, with the presence of ostriches (7), which are largely not amenable to discussion in light of a shamanistic explanation (although see Hollmann 2001; *cf.* Low 2009), but assist in the interpretation of the other large body of content at the site; colonial material-culture, and human figures associated with it.

In this way, they compare to the horses of the Korana art identified by Ouzman in the Free State of South Africa, along the South African border with Lesotho (Ouzman 2005:103). This style includes 'magical' stylisations comparable to trance-induced entoptics, a likely marker of a ritual connection to the engravings (Ouzman 2005:110-111), but also distinct iconography "emphasising horses, firearms and 'hunt' scenes" (McGranaghan 2016:170) which it shares, to a degree, with the Strandberg art (McGranaghan 2016).

In this account, images of horses and riders chasing ostrich are an indicator of the position of the Strandberg and its surrounds in a nascent trade in ostrich feathers and meat along the frontier (McGranaghan 2016:168). The art is implicated in a negotiation of social changes brought about as hitherto marginalised communities gained economic power through trade with the Cape Colony (McGranaghan 2016:169), and saw changes amongst themselves, and between themselves and emerging farmer communities (*ibid.*).



Figure 30.1 (above): Detail of a 'chase' scene. Not to scale. Image by author.
Figure 30.2 (below): Detail of a 'chase' scene. Not to scale. Image by author.



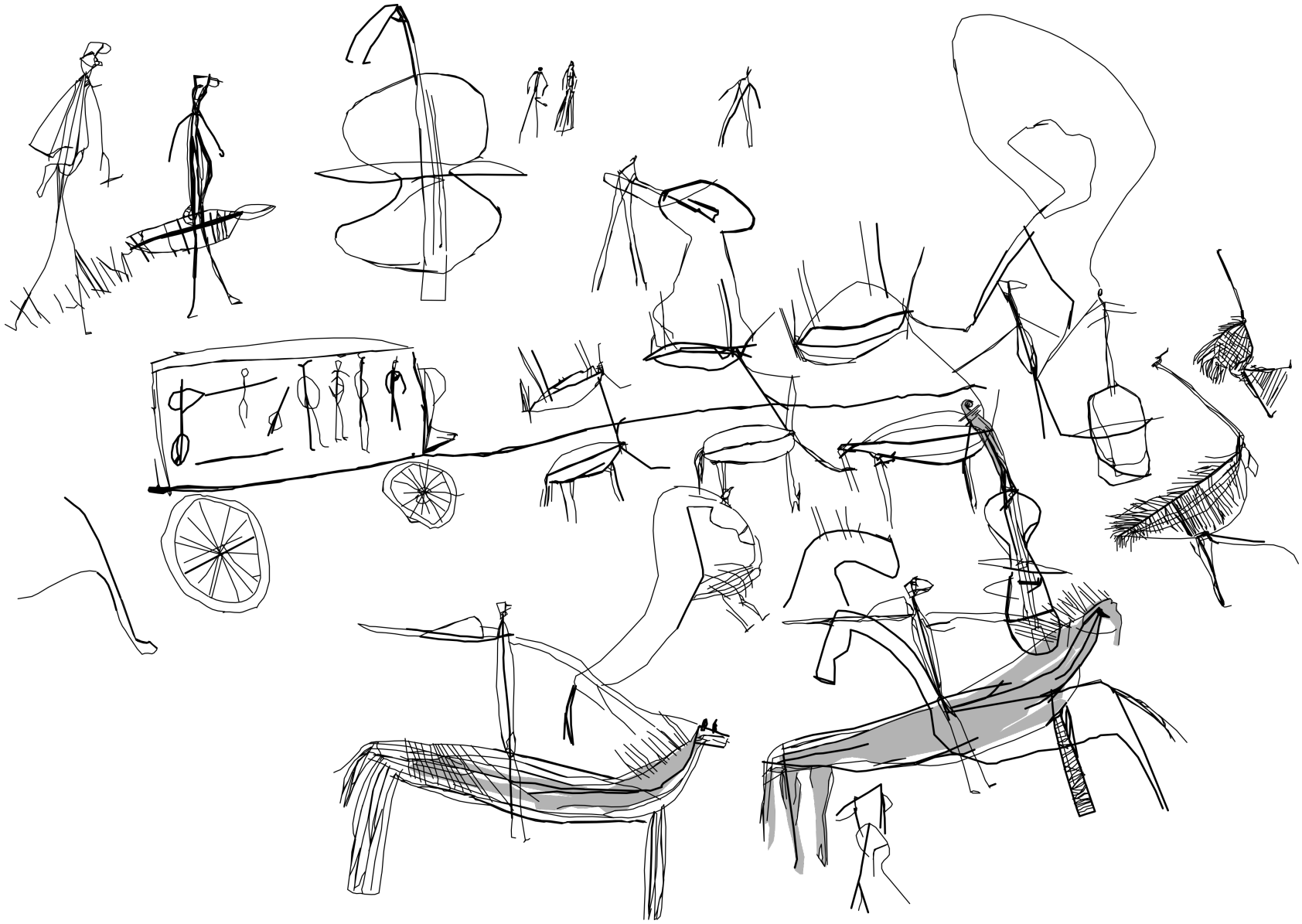


Figure 31: Detail of a panel containing various elements of colonial material culture. Not to scale. Image by author.

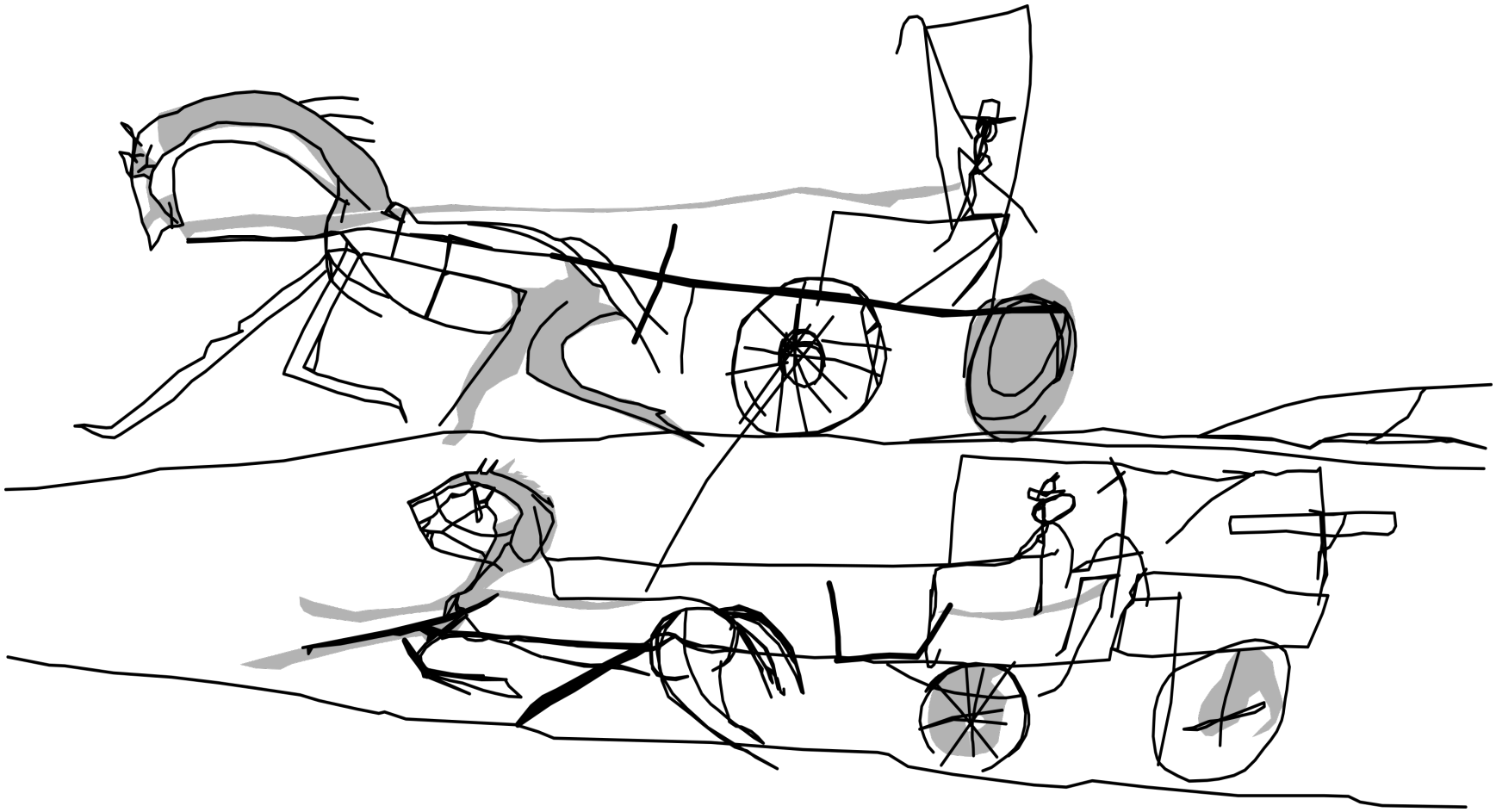


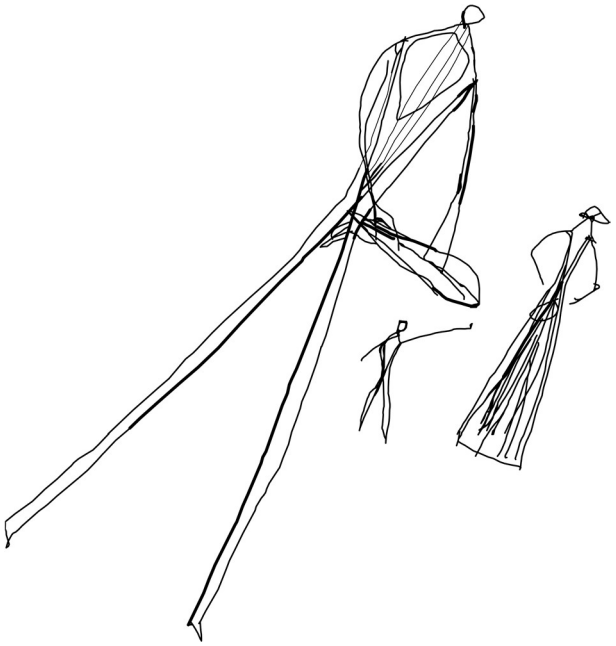
Figure 32: Detail of a panel with horses and wagons. Not to scale. Image by author.



Figure 33: Detail of a steamtrain, located on the Groot Strandberg. Image credit: Eric Wettengel.

While I have criticised a tendency to interpret *any* incidence of colonial material culture as correspondingly European in origin, Europeans almost certainly contributed to the body of art at the Strandberg. These alongside other contributors (see McGranaghan 2016) who may not have had the 'frontier' capacities I describe throughout this project. More tantalisingly is the extent to which they *may* have had such capacity. While it may be tempting to label European/settler perspectives as 'Western', in the sense that they sharply divide nature and culture for instance (*cf.* Ingold 2000:42), we lack a comparable 'ethnography of the Northern Cape colonial settlers' (somewhat ironically) that could confirm or rebut such a finding. This may obscure the potential for Europeans (however that may apply) to have themselves





contributed to the processes I describe. Accordingly, I consider it likely that local 'European' identities were entangled in the frontier ideology I attribute to others in the region, but this point deserves more detailed discussion than can be supplied here.

For now, I consider the extent to which images of wagons, muskets, and military paraphernalia tied into the increasing strategic importance of the region during the late quarters of the nineteenth century, as the colonial presence increased from the south to meet Korana incursions from the north (McGranaghan 2016:172). As the scope of potential artists almost certainly included Korana (or those who identified as/with them), some of the art may have formed part of a response to colonial advances in the area. Images of humans with oversized genitalia or placed in compromising situations (e.g. *figs.* 34.1 & 34.2), for instance, may have allowed the colonial 'others' a share of satire over their

Figure 34.1 (top): Detail of human figures, with exposed (male) genitalia, and a parted dress. Not to scale. Image by author.

Figure 34.2 (bottom): Detail of human figures, with exposed (male) genitalia. Not to scale. Image by author.

erstwhile oppressors (McGranaghan 2016:172), allowing them a measure of resistance that could not easily be overcome (Smith & van Schalkwyk 2002:254; McGranaghan 2016:172).

The bulk of the discussion leading up to this point has centred on the non-human communities on the landscape, and taking the interpretation from that point offers parallels with established interpretations, as well as elaborating on the historical circumstances of the site. The account of the Strandberg art as 'commentary' on frontier conditions is apposite here because it is not a *restrictive* one; it is a precedent set by one community relative to another, in line with the practices of frontier communities more generally, but *specifically* with one that had an interest in setting precedents, and socially evaluating new arrivals on the landscape. Considering that such a process (as well as other, more 'spiritually' inclined ones) would be one facet of a composite or hybrid community means that *any* restrictive model (in the sense that it offered one account to the exclusion of others) would likely over-estimate the extent to which it explained the body of the art in the region anyway. It is worth, therefore, considering the body of art from a vantage-point that treats the authors as 'samples' (e.g. chapters 2.1 & 2.2) of a broadly coherent ideology that may well differ in the details.

As alluded to above, the (non-horse) animal sample at the site is accessible to a shamanistic interpretation. Broadly, that it is representative of mediations between a human community and spiritually significant populations on the landscape. Shamanistic activity was almost certainly a component of the |Xam worldview, independent of specific artistic evidence in support for it at the Strandberg (see chapters 4.1 & 4.2). Such an acknowledgement does not immediately unlock the full scope of interpretation from the Maloti-Drakensberg, however. The shamanistic approach does not offer an especially clear account of motive; despite attempts to instil it with a role in negotiating power-relations within a community (Lewis-

Williams 1982; Campbell 1987), between individuals (Dowson 1994; Blundell 2004), or between themselves and other communities (Jolly 1994; 1995), amongst other things, these accounts grapple with a very general sense of 'significance' (e.g. Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2009:58) placing rock art in a position that infers power, but largely substituting its *obvious importance* for motive. I specifically hope to engage with motive here, and while a general account of the art's origins demands acknowledgement, it should not curtail an attempt to understand the reasons for making art in the first place.

Beyond this point, there is no 'veil' comparable to the rock-face (despite suggestions that the boulders might be spiritual 'bubbles', as above), and a certain amount of a typically 'shamanistic' interpretation is reliant on the consumption of art that has been projected over a spiritual medium, with the rock-face a metaphor for trance experience. On the Strandberg, the art populates the landscape, akin to the 'real' animal communities that inhabited it along with human ones, and this is where I hope to take my interpretation from in principle.

There is no reason to take an either/or approach (McGranaghan & Challis 2016:580) in which I specifically adopt an 'animated' (*cf.* Dowson 2009) methodology over a shamanistic one. Aside from anything else, the two are deeply compatible, and (arguably) one is a subset of the other, especially in this case.

This can be seen in a general equivalence between the way shamans engaged with the 'spiritual realm' and the agencies within it, and the ways that hunters (in particular) engaged with the *!kau:xu* and its inhabitants. Both hunting and trance are designated as domains of skilled behaviour, both amenable to being judged as 'understanding' or 'nice', but specifically insofar as they were desirable states of artfulness (e.g. LL.II.11.1111; LL.II.13.1308; McGranaghan & Challis 2016:588). Beyond that, judgements of this kind applied equally to

subsistence and craft activities (LL.II.14.1348) as they did to the activities during altered states (e.g. LL.V.3.4093, 4119, 4120). As much as hunters might 'possess' animal species through salient demonstrations of understanding (McGranaghan & Challis 2016:591), shamans might do so in similar terms, appealing to specific agencies (e.g. Challis 2005:12-14), thus 'taming' them (McGranaghan & Challis 2016:592, 594). Inasmuch as hunters transferred destructive energies through arrows during a hunt, so too did certain kinds of shaman (as well as other anti-social agencies) cause sickness and death through 'arrows' of their own (McGranaghan 2012:204).

This is the extent that descriptions of one share resemblance with descriptions of the other. Shamans undertook engagements and negotiation with surrounding communities as much as hunters did, heading out of familiar spaces and into those where contract and precedent were thin, coming back with observations and novel precedents of their own. The |nu were a distant and anti-social community, with a specific location on the other side of the Orange River (from the |Xam; LL.VIII.22.6892') but were also the spirits of the dead (LL.VIII.26.8309'); a danger when travelling too far on the landscape, but also a risk-factor during trance. People might experience "numinous" encounters on the hunting ground (e.g. LL.VIII.8.6713-6715), and observe similarly 'non-real' mechanisms playing out (*cf.* McGranaghan 2015:277), but remain firmly in a standard state of consciousness. Korana informants describe setting out into the distant *dorsland* (*lit.* 'thirst-land') to seek magical practitioners (Engelbrecht 1936:77-78) who could meet spiritual needs, but with the knowledge that they would be observed by animals with potentially anti-social intentions along the way (Engelbrecht 1936:180) acknowledging both the danger of distance and its associations with spiritual power.

There is a "basic contiguity between ritual and mundane activity" (McGranaghan 2012:203) that accords with observations made by commentators on |Xam ethnography (Hewitt 2008[1986]:185; Guenther 1999:104; Riley 2007:292-293; Dowson 2009:380; McGranaghan 2012:202-203, 338; McGranaghan & Challis 2016:591; *cf.* Lewis-Williams 1992:57), and in discussions of the material collected in the Kalahari (Katz 1982:52; Biesele 1993:21, 23; Guenther 1999:236; see also Silberbauer 1981:130). Accordingly, some 'mundane' mechanisms presumably apply to spiritual endeavours; *!nanna-se* respect behaviours applied to relationships between hunters and prey as much as they did between shamans and their target agencies (McGranaghan & Challis 2016:580), and so it is reasonable to assume that similar negotiations would have applied elsewhere. Specifically, the 'brokerage' of precedents and social contracts would seemingly apply as much in a spiritual sense as it would in a material one, and therefore marking the stones that inhabited the landscape would be equivalent to marking elements of the spirit-realm, both with the intention of regulating interaction with potentially anti-social agencies.

This is where the horse comes in. The |Xam informants were certainly familiar with them (McGranaghan 2012:294) to the degree that they were able to judge distance on horseback (LL.II.35.3161), and to connect them with farming practice (LL.VIII.18.7599') and military activity (LL.VIII.22.7975). Comparisons of the use of attendant material culture (e.g. bridles) to the thongs "that bound the rain" in trance (LL.VIII.27.8399'), and dances that included horselike posturing (LL.VIII.31.8737'), suggest integration of horses on a number of conceptual levels.

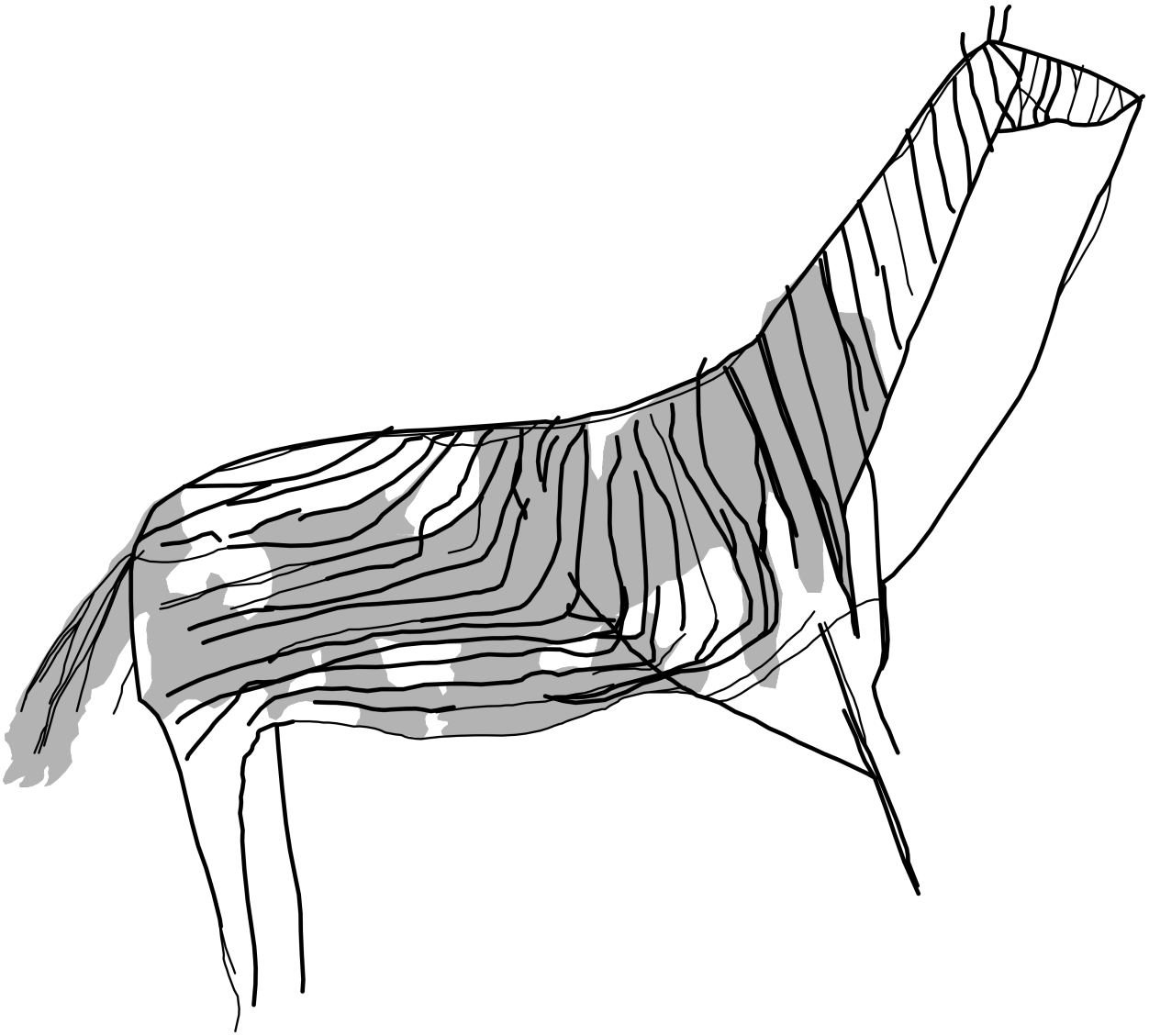


Figure 35: Detail of a horse, recorded on the Groot Strandberg. Not to scale. Image by author.

That said, the presence of horses in the Karoo was tenuous— the *|Xam-ka-!xoe* lacks reliable water-supply and sufficient pasture to meet the needs of horses (Jackson 1879:xviii), sufficiently that the |Xam never developed a comparable horse-culture to Korana-esque groups to the east (McGranaghan 2016:170; see Ouzman 2005) or to similar hybridised groups in the Maloti-Drakensberg (see Challis 2012; 2014) both of whom entangled intelligible (to the |Xam) identities with horses and mounted raiding practises.

In the Northern Cape, horses seem more closely associated with colonial intrusions than any localised horse-culture (McGranaghan 2012:294). In this case, particularly as a mode of "facilitating violent action taken against [the |Xam]" (*ibid.*; LL.V.21.5703'). Mounted 'kommandos' intruded on the region (see chapter 3.1) with raids for slaves (Penn 2005:112, 225) breaking up existing communities, or specifically aimed at depopulation (Penn 2005:116-119; see Anthing 1863:447-449). Even without immediately destructive consequences, the mobility offered by the horse allowed colonial culture to spread rapidly, and for distant European populations to enforce control over areas that they did not directly occupy (Penn 2005:108-112). Creolised societies practised similar forms of highly mobile, violent organisation (as above), contributing to the volatile state of the region, and recognised as such by the |Xam (LL.VIII.27.8436'; LL.II.34.2960'; LL.II.36.3244').

Considering the potential gains to be had in the region, and its position the paths between the Cape and the interior, horses would likely have been a common occurrence in the area around the Strandberg, but a tenuous presence. Commandos, traders, and hunters had plenty of reason to intrude, but little reason to remain, given that their horses would require supply *en route*, and the myriad of potential conflicts offered by other intrusions, as well as the communities already living in the area.

Commandos imposed control and foreign perspectives, while hunters and traders brought material culture and practice into the region, all of variable intelligibility. The period in which horses were present was marked by social upheaval) and rapid change, and their connection to the colonial project marks them as *agents of change*. More specifically, they brought socially distant, potentially unintelligible agencies to the Strandberg and its surrounds, and sometimes left destruction in their wake.

And in this case, the |Xam adapted inasmuch as they adapted to any other interaction. They formed social indices of settlers, for instance, comparing them to 'beastly' agencies on the landscape such as lions and hyenas (McGranaghan 2012:205; also McGranaghan 2014:681), and the Korana suffered similarly violent stereotyping. Horses, by comparison, do not achieve inclusion in the 'suite' of violent material culture in the way that certain kinds of knives were, for instance (LL.VIII.18.7606). As described above, horses and related material culture were included into |Xam ontology, with known capacities and stereotypes of their own (see characterisation in Hollmann 2007:380-381), and incorporated into existing systems of interaction between human and non-human communities (*cf.* Swart 2007:284), rather than as an extension of the humans that used them (McGranaghan 2012:340). Domesticated horses, then, are a subsumed community, their presence a co-occurrence with violent events, but not inherent in them. This may be in part because the |Xam understood domestication (as evidenced by their knowledge of horses in an agricultural setting, as above), but also used it as an analogy for the salient kinds of 'understanding' (*cf.* 'taming'; McGranaghan & Challis 2016:592, 594) described above. Crucially, 'understanding' is performative, and part of a process of negotiation.

Horses were only present for a marginal percentage of the total length of human habitation at the Strandberg, likely appearing during the late eighteenth century, relative to the presence of colonial influence, before expanding further during the nineteenth century either as colonists acted directly in the region, or as trade/raiding proliferated horses through other communities (cf. Penn 1995:48; Ouzman 2005:104; Challis 2012). This is compared to the vast time-depth of human habitation in general (Beaumont et al. 1995:240-241), and to any likely length of ancestral |Xam inhabitation of the region, marked by material-culture industries

ranging from a few hundred years, to between two and four thousand years old (Beaumont *et al.* 1995:242-246). Despite the low temporal footprint of horses in the region, they dominate the sample of art at the Strandberg.

Considering their tremendous social impact, however, allows interpretation both of the presence of horse-images in general, and insofar as their significant presence is concerned. While other animal species almost certainly required that the population at the Strandberg 'show understanding' during their day-to-day interactions, there was time and ability to do so in general. As mentioned above, setting precedents through art is broadly equivalent to simply living in an area; both record presence, and presence is a kind of interaction.

Horses brought rapid change, and heralded anti-social occurrences. More importantly, however, they were only ever a tenuous presence on the landscape. They came from (socially) distant locations, but offered the human community little opportunity to interpret their behaviour. In order to demonstrate 'understanding', the horses needed them to co-habitate; to allow the human community to establish precedents, and to draw up terms for *!nanna-se*.

By engraving horses on the Strandberg, the artists produced an artificial record of interaction, with horses made to inhabit the landscape inasmuch as the stones did. The engravings were distributed around the camp, their presence acknowledged, and their behaviour rendered intelligible. The motive, then, would have been the same as with any other interaction with any other community encountered on the landscape; to place one population relative to another, to selectively deploy elements of their identities, and to set the terms for future interactions in an area rendered unstable by a lattice of frontiers.

If this is the motive for creating the art in general, one further question remains; how did the people living at the Strandberg demonstrate their 'understanding'? Simply marking a

horse on a rock does not demonstrate that you 'possess' or have influence over them. It serves as a record of interaction, certainly, but simply sharing a landscape does not demonstrate understanding. To achieve this kind of connection, an intimate recognition is required between the person who possesses, and the things that are possessed (McGranaghan & Challis 2016:560), and this is where the final strand of evidence contributes to my findings in general. The artists marked out the individuals they were negotiating with directly, in this case by giving them properties associated with the animals themselves. At this site, they achieved this through the use of a particular, northerly aspect. Specifically, that the changing visibility of the engravings reflected the 'real' characteristics of significant animal representatives with which the artists intended to broker.

CHAPTER 8

8.4: Agency and substance

I use the term 'community' to describe groups of both humans and non-humans on the landscape, with the intention of keeping the description of one compatible with the other as much as possible. It may be sufficient to say that I acknowledge personhood beyond human populations, but to collect one group of agencies in 'herds' for instance, and the other in 'societies' (or worse, *tribes*; *cf.* Hamilton & Liebhammer 2016), defeats the intention by marking exactly the difference such an acknowledgement was intended to contain.

While I acknowledge this distinction for theoretical purposes, it also highly individualises mentions of non-human populations, a factor not necessarily reflected in their portrayal in frontier ideologies. By contrast, the 'possession' of springbok (for instance) was an indication of intimacy with springbok in general, rather than with a particular community of springbok. This was achieved through engagements with a notable, *individual* springbok. The animal would be singular in some way, conspicuous by its short horns for example (see McGranaghan & Challis 2016:590), and able to influence the behaviour of others, guiding herds to pre-arranged locations (LL.V.10.4724-4726). Similarly, killing an animal with an abnormally

pale hide would mark the place by its death, and make others prone to avoiding the locale (LL.VIII.22.7993').

Physical characteristics such as these were not the only manner of demonstrating agency, however. Agents could mark themselves out by interacting with humans in unusual ways, or by possessing unusually pronounced 'markers' (e.g. hairiness) of their *particular* personalities (McGranaghan 2014:674-675). These "significant others" (Guenther 1999:71; Willerslev 2007:75, 78) could express a heightened sense of their human observers, or draw attention to themselves through apparent volition (Willerslev 2007:186; McGranaghan 2012:211; *cf.* Ingold 2000:121-123). A bird that sits on a person's head, and takes a moment to speak to them and to inspect their living arrangements (e.g. LL.V.14.5072-5077) demonstrates that it is "no ordinary creature" (McGranaghan & Challis 2016:594) by deviating from a range of expected responses, while still enacting *intelligible* ones (*cf.* de Castro 1998).

In order to negotiate with horses in general, a "significant other" must be identified as the point of engagement between the human community and the horse-community. Doing so in rock art is comparatively complex, but examples of a 'constitutive logic' of this sort occurs in the discussion of art in the Maloti-Drakensberg. In the Bushman idiom, fat is a medium for spiritual potency (Lewis-Williams 1981:50), and therefore using eland fat (for instance) in paint confers the image of an eland a similar degree of power to the material eland that it is intended to reference (Lewis-Williams 1998:89). A similar process is inferred by the rock-face 'veil'; by emplacing an image on the border-zone between the camp and spiritually-active *!kau:xu*, the image gains significance by inhabiting a spiritually significant space (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1990:12-13).

By this logic, giving the *image* of a horse a degree of conspicuous agency would reference an *animal* with conspicuous agency. This renders the image a "significant other", inasmuch as it would signify such an agent in the landscape more generally. In the case of the Strandberg art, this relies on inhabitation, and the relationship between observer and observed on the asymmetrical frontier described above. The first has been described already; the surface onto which the horses have been engraved 'inhabit' the landscape alongside the denizens of the camp, inasmuch as the agencies in *!kau:xu* do.

The second relates to the 'frontiers' created as the non-human elements of the landscape are constantly aware of the human ones (as discussed above), but human beings are not equivalently aware of the non-human elements observing them. This places significance on a moment of revelation— when an agency chooses to reveal itself to a human observer, it is able to do so in a manner that indicates knowledge of its observation. Although this might appear to suggest a visual orientation to these kinds of encounters, such 'observation' could come in the form of */k"ʌmma*, or "presentiments" (Bleek 1956:340), that gave an 'understanding' hunter an intimate and bodily sense of their prey (McGranaghan 2012:197; also described as "premonition"; see Guenther 1999:73). Given that movement was a way in which species communicated with one another (see Hoffmeyer 2008:15-16; 2010:37; McGranaghan 2012:338; *cf.* de Castro 1998:470-471) a "conspicuous degree of volitional motility" (McGranaghan 2012:338) such as revealing oneself to a hunter (*cf.* Willerslev 2007:26-28) would suggest that one was 'significant' in noticeable ways.

To demonstrate that the images possessed agency in this respect, they were made to appear and disappear as the day progressed. This was an observation made at the site, during the survey; the images are etched into the dark oxides that cover the boulders in the area, and

they fade quickly when caught in shadow (see comparable example in Loendorf 2004 :203-204). Exposure to direct sunlight, by contrast, causes the pale dolorites underneath to become reflective, and as patchy cloud-cover deflects sunlight, or as the angle of the sun differentially causes engraved panels to become exposed in this way, so too do the images emerge and fade. Considering the low latitude of the site, optimal interactivity with the trajectory of the sun would be achieved by placing images on the north-facing sides of whatever formation was being engraved. This is because the sun would have the most interaction with those faces day-by-day, but also in general, considering the low angle at which the sun appears during the period immediately around the winter solstice. Southerly faces, by contrast, would potentially never emerge from the shadows.

Given that the images are suited to consumption as a site-wide structure, it stands to reason that visibility in general would be of some significance. Given the relationship between human and non-human communities on the landscape, specific kinds of revelatory visibility are comparable to a class of significant agency. The 'persons' indicated by this process would be prime candidates for the kinds of negotiation and precedent-setting that define almost all interactions between the likely artists and their surrounds. Considering that horses heralded change and violence, they were a population that required particular attention during negotiation. From there, significant individuals amongst them stood to be recognised, and included in any social contracts between horses in general and the human population at the Strandberg. This offers a motive, and a broad interpretation. Simply, that significant horses were made to 'inhabit' the landscape, put forward as negotiators between the artists and an uncertain future.

This offers one final point, interpreting one of the more problematic categories of art surveyed at the site. Exclusively non-representational imagery accounts for nearly a quarter of all of the surveyed material (84 entries, or 24.85%), but is the most challenging category to attribute significance to. There is a tendency to dismiss them as noise, 'simple scratches' with no discernible meaning or significance. This is more a product of the limits of our analogy than any likely lacuna of meaning— and motive allows a measure of interpretation here. Simply; what would the range of likely intensions be behind marking a stone in such a way?

The motive may be in continuity; in much the same way as human communities continued the processes begun by the rhinos at Thaba Sione (Ouzman 1996), some members of the human community may have included themselves in the negotiations established by others. These might have been individuals who did not 'own' animals themselves, but had a desire to appeal to precedents set by others, and by extension, to be party to the agreements reached in the process. By scratching the rock, they identified themselves as image-makers; 'significant others', signified inasmuch as their peers had been through 'understanding', and therefore party to the precedents set and agreements reached amongst the Strandberg art.

CHAPTER 9

9.1: Conclusion— or, the edges of understanding

This project set out to consider a sample of rock art that could directly attributed to the |Xam, in the hope that it would offer a point of comparison to the Maloti-Drakensberg without having to appeal to a broad, subcontinental analogy.

This proved challenging, and rightly so. Recognising of the historic context of both the |Xam informants and the Strandberg requires that a local analogy be established, sensitive to the conditions in a place where frontiers run thick, and have done for hundreds of years.

The resulting landscape is one on which social, ecological, and mythological pressures compounded and competed, each one demanding negotiation in turn. Communities responded to the highly variable conditions by adapting; by taking up new elements of ideology, identity, and practice, or abandoning them.

By selectively highlighting some or others, and 'becoming' |Xam or Korana or any number of other things, they appealed to known metaphors and narratives on the frontier— known to themselves and to others, and able to be used in the process of negotiation.

The ideology of the region reflects this, with individual examples forming 'samples' of a consistent but constantly re-forming set of beliefs and stereotypes. One was |Xam because of an appeal to one sample of this background milieu, and Korana through an appeal to another. Certain core mechanics remain throughout; reflexive, socially-formative processes that allowed these societies to gauge their surroundings, and to respond appropriately. These core mechanics assign danger to unfamiliarity and social distance, while valuing intelligibility and shared precedents.

The body of art at the Strandberg was probably authored by a 'sample' of the ideological background of the Orange River frontier, and I characterise it as such; as the response of a frontier community to its changing surrounds. The landscape has always been inhabited by stones, but additions to the stones have recorded inhabitation by others. In so doing, interactions between human and non-human communities have been given a depth of time and a range of space, implanted on the landscape in a way that belied their own, ephemeral presences. The art solidified their identities for long enough to provide a shared and intelligible history that could be referenced by either side of these interactions, or appealed to by others seeking to be party to the identities or agreements brokered in the process.

The record, therefore, was made to be visible— the images formed part of a structure that can be encountered simply by being present on the Strandberg. It was an accessible layer of the lattice of competing influences in the region, offering stability through intelligibility, and the common inhabitation of this, particular place. Moreover, the images were momentary exercises of agency; by solidifying their claims on certain elements of identity and ideology, the authors of the art were acting to change the ways in which the landscape was required to behave, and ordering the structure of interactions to come.

In light of the original intentions of this project, a comparison to the shamanistic approach appears inevitable, but is in some ways misplaced. The opening chapters discuss the limits of the analogy applied in the Maloti-Drakensberg, but the conclusion is what one *ought* to expect; the model applies readily to the material it was developed to interpret. Beyond that, there is reason to exercise caution when considering the use of this approach elsewhere.

The applicable extent of |Xam identity is a cautionary tale in more or less approximate terms. Identifying a body of appreciably '|Xam' material culture (be it art or anything else) is methodologically fraught, and likely to appeal to principles that cannot be readily substantiated. Using |Xam ethnography, then, is as reliant on analogy in their home territories as it is in the Maloti-Drakensberg. Applying shamanism is a similar process; there is a solid basis to consider |Xam-'ness' a shamanistic ideology, but there is no inherent relationship between shamanism and image-making, and the two may even coexist without a specific connection. There is no requirement that art need always remain shamanistic, or have always *been* shamanistic, even if there is good evidence that it emerged from shamanistic ideologies. Beyond this, there is risk in considering shamanistic explanations *of a sort* (i.e. equivalently to that employed in the Maloti-Drakensberg) to be applicable when other, *inclusive* explanations are available. To suggest that the art was part of a process of 'brokering' precedent and identity (as I do) *relies on a level of shamanistic ideology being present*, even if it does not mirror the full application of shamanistic ideology in the Maloti-Drakensberg. It certainly does not preclude such an application either; it is conceivable that art may have 'brokered' interactions and precedents between potency-owners (in the shamanistic sense) and potent-others (such as the rain, or eland, for example), but came increasingly to broker other kinds of relationships and precedents beyond the scope of ritual activities.

The challenge, then, is in ascertaining the boundaries of |Xam ethnography, relative to the boundaries of the shamanistic approach. The intention in this project was to consider the scope of a 'frontier ideology' that included the |Xam, but could be compared to local analogies, as well as the sample of art on the Strandberg. This, I hope, allows a certain circumvention of the problem as it stands; rather than trying to ascertain *precisely* which elements of the shamanistic approach emerged from its own historiography and context, I sought to saturate the |Xam with the *Standberg's* historic context, and to work with what emerged.

The art has been subject to an equivalent process. While there is some reason to consider rain-related motifs in light of the Strandberg's significance as a rain-making site, such a conclusion corresponds highly with a discrete body of art and theory elsewhere. The position of the Strandberg on a confluence of frontiers, I argue, is more significant, considering that it applies directly to the region in question, and to the historic context of the informants. It should therefore be the driving concern in interpretation.

I have emphasised the horse for its illustrative qualities; horse-motifs correspond to a point in the Strandberg's use-life when negotiation was a *pressing* concern to the likely authors of the art, and are therefore fluorescent in the sample of art surveyed for this project. I use the term 'likely authors' with the realisation that an opposing contention may well be that the Strandberg horses were executed by 'Europeans', uninterested in negotiating relationships with powerful horse-agencies in the manner described in this project. The response to this contention is the body of this project itself; the engravings on the Strandberg were made to inhabit the landscape in patterns significant to a frontier ideology, *whoever* may have been exercising it. These patterns rendered the *engravings* significant in terms of such an ideology, and they may be interpreted as such.

With this acknowledgement, the frontiers described throughout this project have always pre-existed to some degree. In particular, the asymmetrical frontier between human and non-human populations, which would have required negotiation for as long as frontier ideologies recognised it. Accordingly, the findings of this project could well apply to the rest of the animal sample (which dominates the overall sample). Specifically, that their inclusion on the landscape was an acknowledgement of co-habitation, and a demonstration of 'understanding' that allowed them to be brokered with. Horses are simply the best demonstration of this. This is primarily because of their ubiquity at the site, and the trends in their visibility, which together make it clear that the engravings are part of a structure that is larger than any single panel, and suggest that they were consumed as such. This would not have been possible with the rest of the animal sample in isolation, which would be too small to reliably implicate either distribution or dominant aspects as relevant factors in the structure of the site.

This project should be viewed in light of these factors; it is *supplementary* to the already detailed understanding of hunter-gatherer rock art in southern Africa, and retains a general coherence with the model employed in the Maloti-Drakensberg, even if it differs on some points of practice. It is also a commentary on elements of |Xam identity, considered in light of their historic context. It stands to contribute in these terms as well; if large samples of |Xam ideology are applicable to the Maloti-Drakensberg, then there is reason to consider that some of the findings here may supplement those made within the ambit of the shamanistic approach. This with the recognition that the Maloti-Drakensberg was itself another confluence of frontiers.

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