A site-specific approach to interpreting rock art and interaction in the southern region of the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa: The case of Xoro Gwai rock shelter

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DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed .....

Date ..15/11/2011

This research report is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of ..M.Sc. (Cw + Rr).....

Signed .....

Date...15/11/2011.....

I hereby give consent that my research report is the result of my own independent work/investigation, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by giving explicit references. A reference list is appended.

Signed.....

Date...15/11/2011

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Abstract

Studies of San rock art in southern Africa have appealed to researchers for specificities of individual rock art sites in order to counter the prevailing practice of conceptualising San rock art as a homogenous entity. This research attempts to analyse social interaction through looking at diverse ethnographies and how such ethnographies can reveal information regarding one rock art site. Individual rock art sites like Xoro Gwai can start to unravel the nuanced, diverse and complex nature of San religious beliefs and rites and how these beliefs were affected or influenced by social contact with other social formations.

Guide to the pronunciation of the click symbols

IPA- International Phonetic Alphabet

/ dental click: tip of the tongue is pressed against the front of the teeth and quickly withdrawn.

≠ alveolar-palatal click: tip of the tongue is pressed against the alveolar ridge and adjacent palate; then released sharply downwards.

! palatal click: tongue is pressed against the upper palate and released sharply downwards, something like when a cork is pulled from a bottle.

// lateral click: click sound produced at the side of the tongue when tongue is held pressed against the palate.

(Le Roux & White 2004: ix).

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The site I call Xoro Gwai is the focus of this research report. The site contains three panels. The largest panel, panel A consists of fine-lined naturalistic imagery characteristic of what researchers have termed 'San' rock paintings. It is my intention in this study to use an ethnographically informed approach to understand the meaning of the images depicted in these panels. It will be argued that panel A was painted during the contact period due to the simultaneous occurrence of clear cow-eland conflations and a cow in the right hand corner of the panel. It will be demonstrated that Khoe-San[1] speakers interacted intensely with Bantu-speakers during the contact period and that iconography and religious beliefs were shared as reflected in this panel.

Figure 1: Map of South Africa with demarcated study area in the Eastern Cape

Xoro Gwai is situated in the Cathcart area, in the Amatola district of the south Eastern Cape (formerly the Ciskei). The name Ciskei is used here in this study as a geographical demarcation rather than a political marker.

[1] Khoe-San is used as outlined in the *South African Archaeological Bulletin*

Figure 2: Map of research area with site demarcated

The Ciskei is broadly divided into two distinct geographical areas: the coastal area and the inland area of undulating hills and mountains (Starkey *et al.* 1995: 102-103). It is in these undulating hills and mountains that one finds Xoro Gwai rock shelter. It is situated in what Robin Derricourt (1977) calls the Ciskei midlands, south of the Stormberg mountain range and north of the Amatola range and the Swart Kei, one of the tributaries of the Kei River (see Figure 3). Today, the Ciskei midlands area lies within a mixed woodland biome and consists of dry grassveld with some *Acacia karoo* (Derricourt 1977: 22; Mitchell 2002: 18).

Paleoclimatic reconstructions and the high distribution of painted sites mark this area as once being the most attractive ecologically and the most accessible in terms of available rock shelters for hunter-gatherer occupation during the post-Pleistocene (10,000 BP to present) (Derricourt 1977: 214). Furthermore, the archaeological evidence suggests that the Ciskei midlands are where San hunter-gatherers lasted longest into historic times (*ibid.*). The archaeological evidence in the Ciskei is scarce but excavations in this area by Derricourt have provided a chronological sequence.

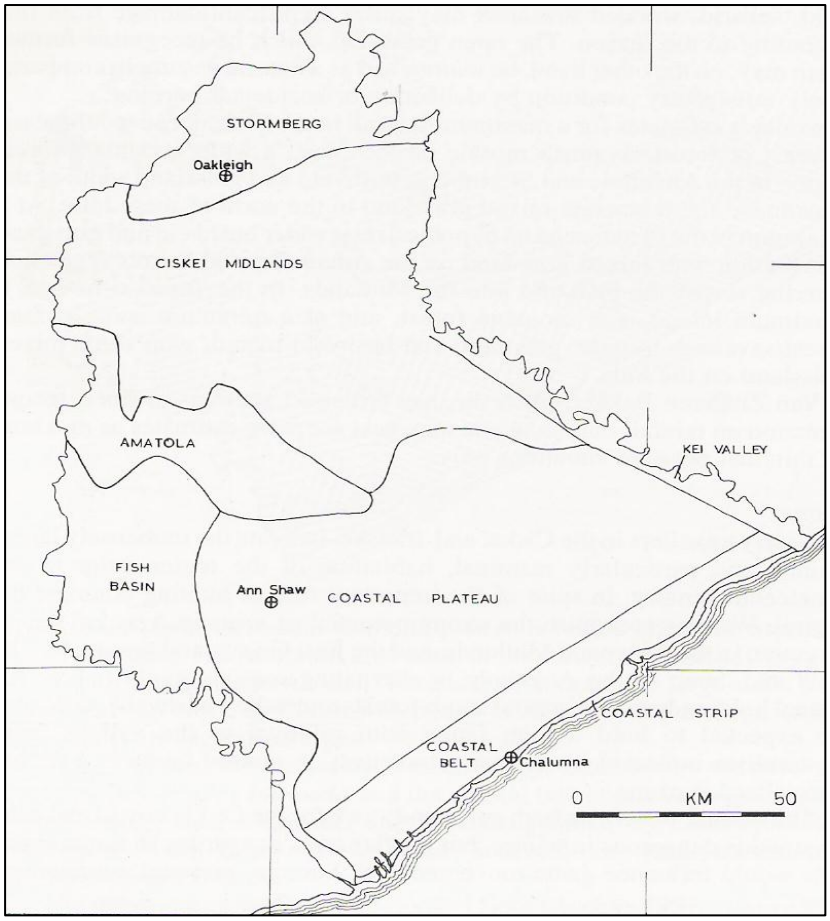


Figure 3: Ciskei regions and excavated sites (Derricourt 1977: 24)

Research at what is now Oakleigh Farm, Queenstown, infers how the QOB-9 industry used lydianite for tool manufacture and has some similarities with the Howieson's Poort complex of the late Pleistocene in the Eastern Cape Province and beyond (Derricourt 1977: 215). However, the absolute time range of this industry in the Ciskei is unknown (*ibid*.). After the QOB-9 industry, the area was under-exploited and unoccupied. Janette Deacon (1974: 9, 17) and Derricourt (1977: 215) have found this to be a general trend throughout South Africa with no sites yet recorded in more arid inland regions or dating to the Smithfield Later Stone Age complex between 9500 and 4600 BP. The sequence at Oakleigh Farm shows the emergence of the QOB-4 industry there before 2090 ± 55 BP. This date falls within the broad Smithfield complex, which is distinct from QOB or the Wilton complex (Derricourt 1977: 215). Between 1450 and 950 BP, iron-using agriculturalists settled on the KwaZulu-Natal coast and inland (Derricourt 1977: 216). During this period domesticated cattle, possibly sheep, and a well-crafted ochre-burnished pottery were introduced south of the Amatola range, as evidenced at the Middledrift site (*ibid*.).

Derricourt attributes the introduction of domesticates and this distinct pottery tradition to a group culturally distinct from the makers of the Smithfield and Wilton complexes, a group

that in a cultural rather than linguistic sense may be seen as ancestral to the Khoekhoen pastoralists in the area (1977: 216; but see Sadr 2008 for an alternative interpretation). Domestic livestock of Later Stone Age pastoralists may have been present around the Great Kei River at around 1700 BP and in the remaining areas by 1500 BP in farmer contexts (Feely 1987: 104).

Marginal to these developments was the Ciskei midlands sequence of the Oakleigh shelter, which seems neither influenced by the Middledrift tradition of stone artefacts, nor by the ochre-burnished wares associated with it and its successor pastoralist groups (Derricourt 1977: 217).

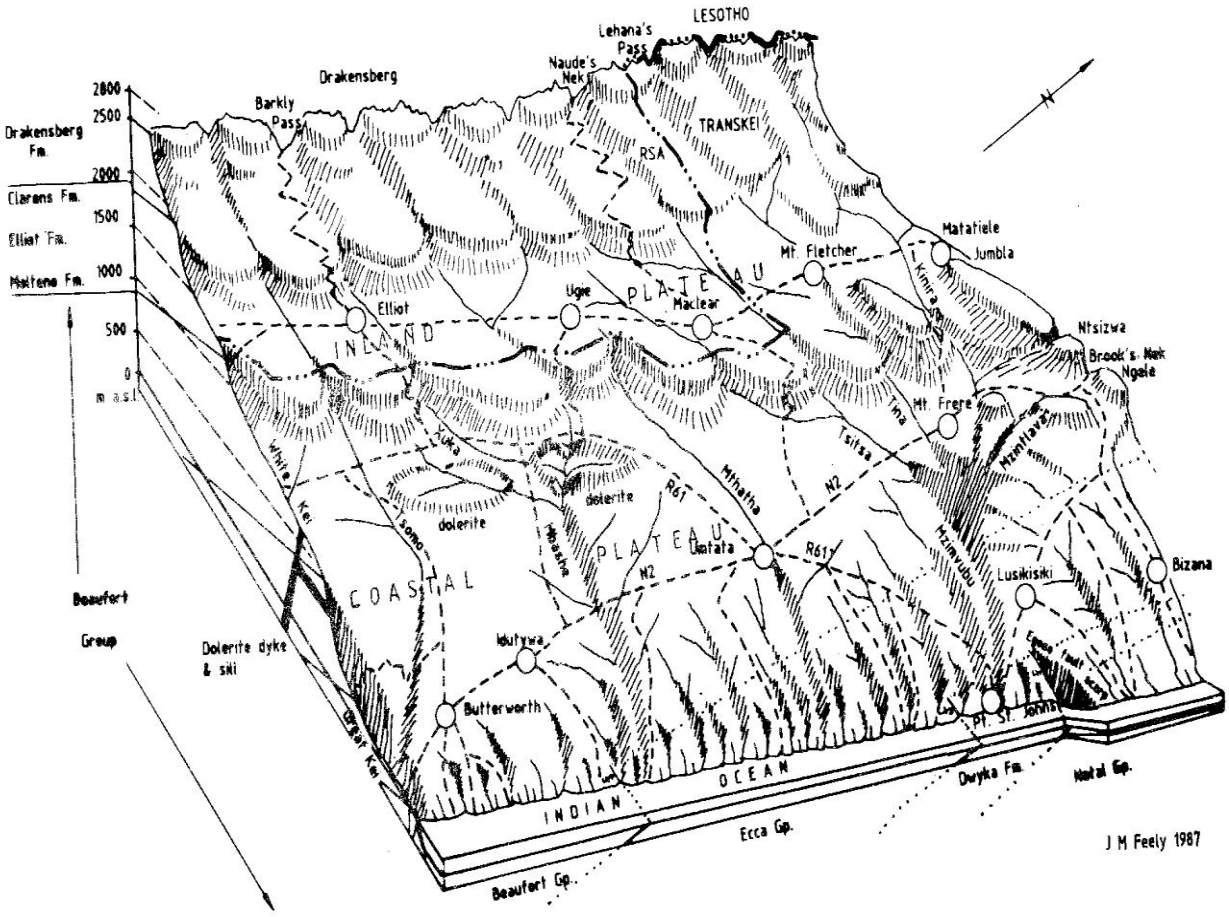


Figure 4: Diagram illustrating the major topographic features of the Transkei and a part of the northeast Cape Province (not to scale). East of the research area (Feely 1987: 20)

When the inhabitants of Oakleigh acquired pottery around 1050-950 BP, the type used was distinctive, with closest links to the Orange River in the north, or possibly to the east with the stable LSA groups at the base of the Drakensberg Mountains. These LSA groups responded to the changes around them by raiding cattle (*ibid*.). Cattle raids occurred to the east of the Kei but Derricourt cannot be sure if those raided were 'Gonaqua Khoekhoen' or Nguni-speaking agriculturalists (1977: 217).

Derricourt (1977: 218) postulates that San hunter-gatherers remained in control of the Ciskei north of the Amatola until the 19th century. Derricourt (1977), Michael Cronin (1982) and Jim Feely (1987) have found that during the last 2000 years, hunter-gatherers occupied the area below the primary escarpment, while Iron Age Bantu-speaking peoples mainly inhabited the more coastal regions below the secondary escarpment and did not occupy the inland plateau until more recent times (see figure 4). Historically, archaeological remains at Mpame illustrate that Iron Age settlements, as they were known in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, were extant "by the middle of the first millennium AD and were not altogether the product of later movements by Nguni-speaking societies" caused by better rainfall and climate change alone (Cronin 1982: 39).

Archaeological and historical evidence indicate that interaction was frequent during the long chronological sequence in this area. Therefore, it is likely that the meanings and motivations underlying paintings created by hunter-gatherers changed in this area, at least in part, as a result of such interaction.

The question of whether researchers can directly link the archaeological with the historical evidence and with the rock art is not a new one. This research project does not aim to force a direct link between these three connected fields of study. Rather, I use the archaeological and historic evidence as a springboard, from which to use diverse ethnographies in order to grapple with the ritual beliefs of the differing groups that were interacting in this area. From this departure, I attempt to show how cultural influences due to interaction influenced both the religious beliefs of San-speaking groups and their rock art.

Three inter-connected methodological problems are posed in the research. These are:

1. For all the ethnographic records obtained on the San and related groups in the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries that help illuminate rock art, many people, researchers included, tend to think of San rock art as 'the art', a vague, all-encompassing and highly generalised concept (Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2009: 428). To counter such a prevailing belief, several authors (Skotnes 1994; Solomon 1997; Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2008, 2009) appeal to researchers to gain specificities by discussing individual panels. In doing so, researchers can tackle novel questions regarding the multiple meanings paintings had and the conventions of San image-making (Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2009: 428). Since each panel is simultaneously unique and cumulatively meaningful, each warrants detailed study (Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2008). Anne Solomon (1997: 10) argues in the same vein that site particulars are crucial to understanding the temporal, historical and regional diversity in the art. In order to diverge from prior perceptions that pictured the art as a homogenous entity, studying individual rock art sites like Xoro Gwai may start to unravel the nuanced, diverse and complex nature of San religious beliefs and rites and how these beliefs were affected or influenced by social contact with other social formations.

2. However, can such a site-specific approach provide information on interaction? The south Eastern Cape has seen multiple cultural groups interacting with the San for over 1600 years. Researchers (Blundell 2004; Challis 2008) have argued that San societies became increasingly hybridised and creolised in this area through time. It is expected that the study of Xoro Gwai will not reveal essentialised timeless San identities, but hybridity and creolisation in the symbolism of the rock art, resulting from socialisation and regionalisation.

3. Lastly, the methodological problem of using the ethnographic approach is pertinent to this research. Too often writers make simplistic analogies between nineteenth century South African San narratives, based on one informant's view under particular socio-historical conditions, and the rock art (Wessels 2010: 43). To counter this, I use multiple ethnographic analogies with texts from what researchers call Khoe-San groups and Bantu-speaking groups so as to engage in complex discussions of symbolism that embraces interaction and history. Hence, I make use of ethnographic analogies using not

only ethnographies from the Ju/'hoansi of the Kalahari and the Wilhelm Bleek and Lucy Lloyd /Xam collection but also from the Khoekhoen and modern /Xam descendants in the Northern Cape and Namibia (Hoff 1997, 1998, 2007). Furthermore, I will discuss the relevance of Sigrid Schmidt's research (1975, 1997) on the Nama-speaking peoples of Namibia and the ethnographies of peoples closely related to the regional history of the Eastern Cape area under study, namely the Xhosa, Mpondomise and Thembu peoples of the former Ciskei and Transkei and surrounding areas (Macquarrie 1962; Hall 1994; Jolly 1994; Prins 1996b). In order to interpret the panels at Xoro Gwai, the relevance of these ethnographies will be demonstrated not assumed. I am critical of researchers' ascriptions of closed and absolute identities and attempt to problematise such notions of essentialised identities.

Along with these methodological challenges, there is the practical component of this research. The data to be interpreted was collected during a seven-day visit to the site. The site and its surroundings were mapped by a detailed site plan. The locations of individual rock art elements as well as the basic dimensions of the site were plotted on these maps. Moreover, the two complementary techniques of photography and tracing were used to record the site. Photography provides the context while tracings reveal the details and unnoticed aspects of the art that are not immediately distinguishable using the naked eye.

Lastly, a comparative analysis of the Xoro Gwai rock shelter and rock art sites in the surrounding areas was conducted using the SARADA.co.za digital database. An advanced search was conducted on the SARADA website for sites with similar features to Xoro Gwai. This technique is obviously limiting due to the fact that not all the rock art sites in the surrounding areas have been documented and/or placed on the SARADA database. Furthermore, I did not visit these sites, thereby risking missing crucial elements. However, due to the brevity and duration of this research project a digital search must suffice.

This research report is structured by moving from theory to method to data analysis to interpretation. This chapter introduces my research topic and the inter-connected methodological problems posed in the research. Chapter 2 discusses the relevant theories and approaches that have preceded, and inform, my research. The 'Kalahari debate' and the problems with ethnography, oral traditions and interaction will be discussed. Chapter 3 outlines the theoretical framework used in this study based on post-colonial strategies and

demonstrates its applicability to the project. Chapter 4 provides a full description of the site and the recording technique. Chapter 5 describes the history of the area in which the Xoro Gwai site is located, the convergence of diverse ethnic groups that were present at certain times, and the nature of interactions that occurred. Chapter 6 critically discusses the history of and trends in rock art interpretation. Moreover, the rock art panels of Xoro Gwai are interpreted using the ethnographies and oral traditions ranging from Khoe-San groups and Bantu-speaking peoples that may be pertinent to the iconography of the site. This chapter also presents the results of a comparative analysis of Xoro Gwai with other sites in the surrounding area with similar characteristics. Lastly, Chapter 7 discusses the arguments made regarding iconography, change and interaction in this area and the methodological implications of this research for future rock art studies.

Furthermore, the chosen research will provide insights into an area of great historical interest largely unstudied by rock art researchers. This research attempts to focus specifically on one rock art site holistically rather than conducting research encompassing many rock art sites that overlooks the particularities of one site. A micro-strategy is important since it attempts to address the methodological problems that arise in rock art research, especially the issue of how to link historical accounts including ethnography with one rock art site. All rock art sites are important and meaningful; for researchers merely to select the grandiose or awe-inspiring rock art sites (e.g. Storm Shelter) for study is problematic. Smaller sites are just as meaningful and need to be given as much attention (e.g. Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2008). Each rock art site can provide information as to how the artists were utilising sites as places of religious and ritual importance (*ibid*.).

It is through mapping sites such as Xoro Gwai upon the landscape that researchers and diverse publics can begin to diverge from current perceptions of ‘the art’, a vague homogenous entity, and begin to understand the nuanced temporal, regional and hermeneutic differences between sites.

Chapter 2: Past approaches

This chapter outlines the intellectual milieu in which this research report is situated. First, the relevant theories and approaches that have preceded and inform the current research will be discussed. Second, 'The great Kalahari debate' or 'revisionist debate' will be used as an example to demonstrate the unaddressed issues of certain approaches and the broader issues in the extensive and growing field of Khoe-San studies. Third, recent social approaches to interaction will be discussed, including whether such approaches provide possible solutions to problems with previous approaches, and how they deal with the issues raised during and after the 'revisionist debate'.

Since the early 1980s authors of Khoe-San studies and rock art research have debated the role of interaction in the formation of Khoe-San identity and whether such interaction influenced rock art production and consumption (Dowson 1994; Blundell 2004). Early approaches that dealt with interaction assumed that San-speaking peoples were passive recipients, merely adopting the dominant culture, while others wrote San-speakers out of history completely. In these approaches San-speaking individuals had no agency and merely succumbed to 'dominant' forces (Harinck 1969: 146).

Prior perceptions of San-speaking peoples

The perception of San-speaking peoples in historical texts prior to the mid-1970s was not a positive one. For instance, Gerrit Harinck (1969) documents the relationships between what he identifies as Khoi and Xhosa people in the Cape colony and surroundings from 1620 to 1780. Although San-speaking people are not his focus, the overall impression Harinck presents of them is that they had no agency, posed slight resistance to farmers and European colonialists and were marginal in the major historical events of the time. Furthermore, Harinck explains how San-speaking people were eradicated and dispersed at this time. For instance, he refers to Khoi- and Xhosa-speaking people as being plagued by cattle raids and constantly robbed by San-speakers (Harinck 1969: 155). Moreover, Robin Derricourt (1974: 48) refers to San-speaking people in the area under study as weak in organisation and thus easy prey to expanding pastoralists and agriculturalists. Derricourt (1974: 48) finds that rock art and "excavations at Oakleigh Farm, Queenstown, confirms a pattern of stock theft which was part of the adaptation and, finally, resistance of the San to their loss of territory"

(*ibid*.).What is clear in most historical texts, prior to Patricia Vinnicombe's epic study (1976) on the rock art of the Eastern San, was that San-speaking peoples were seen from a colonialist or 'settlerist' point of view.

Fortunately, rock art provided researchers with a path to avoid such colonialist readings (Dowson 1994, 1998; Smith 2010). San rock art provided a way to rewrite the histories of San-speaking peoples from their own perspectives. The challenge to rock art researchers was to develop arguments using rock art that allowed an *emic* perspective on San-speaking peoples.

Approaches utilising theoretical frameworks contra empirical studies

Prior to discussing past approaches to contact rock art, we need to discern between two types of arguments. Firstly, there are arguments that make use of a substantial theoretical framework to explain change, and attempt to historicise San rock art during the contact period. The second type of argument exhibits a paucity of theory and Geoff Blundell (2004: 69-70) calls these approaches interactionist approaches since they lean more towards the empirical and less towards explicit social theory. I am concerned here with contextual studies of both types of arguments regarding contact rock art.

Approaches using social theory

Many of the social theories and approaches regarding rock art and social change have focused on regions within the Drakensberg Mountains. Rock art imagery from this area dates from approximately 3000 years before the present to about 100 years before the present (Mazel 2009: 91). Although the site examined in this study is not in the Drakensberg, the time-frame is approximately the same, and theories have accumulated to illustrate how rock art researchers understand rock art symbolism and in particular contact imagery during the changing 'contact' period. The terms 'contact imagery' and 'contact period' have recently been scrutinised because previous studies focused predominantly on explicit colonial imagery such as soldiers on horseback, guns and uniforms (Blundell 2004; Challis 2008, 2009). However, contact imagery does not necessary have to display such material culture to be part of that time or involved in various forms of interaction. In this study, the contact period refers to the interaction of San-speaking social formations with pastoralists, agriculturists and colonists and imagery of contact may be subtle or implicit in many cases (*ibid*.).

Some authors (Dowson 2000; Blundell 2004; Mazel 2009: 105) argue that change during the 'contact' period was slow, gradual and indirect. Others (Lewis-Williams 1982; Campbell 1987) suggest that contact (with both farmers and colonialists) was abrupt and prompted a growth in ritual activities and trance performance as a way of ameliorating stress and tensions. These authors' approaches attempted to account for change in San societies and their rock art.

One of the first authors to deal with this subject was Patricia Vinnicombe. Vinnicombe (1976) draws extensively from colonial accounts in the first part of *People of the Eland*. She gathers her information from the KwaZulu-Natal governmental archives in order to write a history of the Eastern San. However, she also provides information of San–farmer–colonist interaction around the Kei River in the Eastern Cape. Vinnicombe uses imagery gathered from Lesotho and the Underberg region, which is just outside of 'Nomansland', an area in the southeast Drakensberg famous for its imagery of colonial settlers, soldiers on horseback, horses and guns (Blundell 2004: 62; Challis 2008, 2009). Vinnicombe (1976: 33) implies that such imagery provides evidence of historical events. In the second part of her text, she uses an ethnographic approach to interpret the 'traditional' imagery, but she does not refer back to images showing 'contact' and she points to the difficulty of incorporating contact imagery into ethnographically based interpretations (Blundell 2004: 63). Blundell (2004: 63) argues that an important dichotomy emerged from Vinnicombe's research – that of 'contact' imagery and seemingly 'traditional' subject matter in the art. Vinnicombe was aware of the need to represent the images from a San perspective but she did not know exactly how, and leaned towards a functionalist argument (*ibid*.).

The 'traditional subject matter' was, later, to be understood by reference to ethnography and neuropsychology (see below). The 'contact' images proved more complex to understand than traditional ones; at best, they provided evidence of actual events (Blundell 2004: 63).

Early Marxist approaches

Since the 1980s, Marxist approaches to southern African rock art have irrevocably altered the way researchers understand San rock art in terms of social change. Bruce Trigger (2006: 332) refers to how Karl Marx stressed that technological change is best understood within a social context. While new technologies result in "social and political changes, they themselves are

the products of specific social contexts that [affect] what innovations are likely or unlikely to occur" (*ibid.*). A focus on social change and specific social contexts appealed to rock art researcher David Lewis-Williams, heavily influenced by Maurice Godelier and Jonathan Friedman. Lewis-Williams (1982) introduced a structural-Marxist approach to southern African San rock art studies. He urged researchers to understand the social context in which the art was made (1982: 429).

Unlike previous approaches to understanding the social aspects of rock art-making, mainly functionalism (Vinnicombe 1976) and innatism, Lewis-Williams's structural-Marxist approach did not perpetuate the conception of the San as "cogs in a mindless social process" (1982: 430). Additionally he argued that San-speaking artists did not paint for aesthetic reasons as the innatists claimed, but rather for social purposes of which they were well aware. The art was the product of the consciousness of the artists, who were influenced by a nexus "of relationships, all of which had an economic or potentially economic component" (Lewis-Williams 1982: 431). Researchers, therefore, needed to "analyse the articulation between art and the economic base of the San social formation" (*ibid.*). Lewis-Williams referred to the economic base in San societies as consisting of two types of relationships, those between people and groups of people and those between people and nature.

Lewis-Williams (1982: 431) referred explicitly to how certain social relationships in San-speaking societies controls, not only the "exploitation of resources and the distribution of products, but also marriage practices and the social framework of religious activity". Here, the relationships are part of both the economic infrastructure and the ideological superstructure (*ibid.*). As Godelier (1978: 763) states, religious observance and economic activity have both a material and a political function. In short, the creation of rock art, a religious and ritual activity, is part of the socio-economic activities of San society and both infrastructure and superstructure make up the social relations of production. Religious beliefs, resources and the supernatural are interconnected in San-speaking societies.

In San-speaking peoples' beliefs, game, rain and plant foods were erratic and this was due to supernatural powers and beings, which controlled these resources (Lewis-Williams 1982: 433). It was the ritual task of shamans to deal with the contradictions and tensions that arose from such unstable conditions. Shamans would thus perform a number of activities. Three areas of shamanistic expertise are known from ethnographic records – shamans of the game,

shamans of the rain, and shamans that were curers who could perform in trance dances to heal the sick and/or reduce built-up tensions. Lewis-Williams (1982: 433) calls these activities performed by shamans, 'symbolic labour'. Shamanic symbolic labour attempted to maintain the normal functioning of a San community. Shamans directly operated "on the conditions of social cooperation and on the renewal of nature" (Lewis-Williams 1982: 433). According to Lewis-Williams (1982: 434), the technique they used to achieve these activities and outcomes was altered states of consciousness.

Importantly, Lewis-Williams (1982: 434) argues that shamans were most likely also the painters that produced the art, chiefly because San ethnographies refer to non-shamans as having no access to the implicit symbolism of the paintings. It is therefore more probable that shamans, having access to trance experience, painted their trance experiences after experiencing altered states of consciousness.

As opposed to structuralism and functionalist approaches, Lewis-Williams's structural-Marxist approach considered "intentionality and the social reproduction of reality as [salient], which prevented him from treating San behaviour as the passive result of social forces or structures" (Trigger 2006: 333). Lewis-Williams's structural-Marxist attempt was revolutionary, since it allowed rock art researchers to think of the ideological aspects of the art as inseparable from the socio-economic aspects of daily life. Furthermore, the idea of symbolic labour was useful since it treated shamans as active mediators in the process of social reproduction and the renewal of nature.

Yet, Marxist approaches were given saliency in archaeology *because* they explained social change, but Lewis-Williams's structural-Marxist approach accounted for no change, but rather placed San society and rock art in one timeless vacuum. In his approach, the art is treated as maintaining the current status quo, as opposed to changing it. This is directly opposed to what classical Marxist and structural-Marxist approaches originally set out to achieve. Moreover, Whitney Davis (1982: 440) and Blundell (2004: 64) state that it is extremely difficult to apply Lewis-Williams's structural-Marxist approach to interpret particular motifs, techniques, themes or styles by reference to the often vague and generalised notions of production and reproduction of the social formation. In the same vein, the larger processes were given saliency as opposed to the specificities of the rock art itself. San society

did not exist in a timeless vacuum but rather change occurred gradually and quickly, sometimes over time and both spatial and temporal changes were expressed in San rock art.

Colin Campbell's Marxist approach

Colin Campbell, one of Lewis-Williams's students, attempted to answer some of these concerns in his new Marxist approach that attempted to understand so-called contact-period San rock art in the south-eastern Drakensberg mountain area. Campbell (1987: 22), like Lewis-Williams (1982) uses the shamanistic explanation to understand the contact period art. Diverging from Lewis-Williams, Campbell (1987: 22) argues that changes in the socio-economic existence of the artists/shamans must have affected their ideology and thus their art. The contact-period would certainly have been a time of major socio-economic change for the San. In Marxist terms, in order for change to occur, a contradiction must exist between elements, between the forces and relations of production. A crucial element in such changes, according to Campbell (1987: 29), must have involved shamans for it was through their ritual activities that ideology and therefore myth, ritual and art were articulated within the infrastructure.

Campbell (1986,1987) like Lewis-Williams (1982) uses three areas of shamanistic expertise, rain-making, game control and healing, to demonstrate how the contact period would have changed the relations of production in each case. According to Campbell (1987: 30) the symbolic labour of these three areas of shamanistic expertise was expressed in the art in unique ways. Campbell (1987: 37) claims that each component of this shamanistic symbolic labour was affected by the impact of the contact with both Bantu-speaking farmers and European colonists.

By the 19th century, ethnographic reports from the south-eastern Drakensberg mountain region and the Eastern Cape Province refer to certain San-speakers being considered experts in 'magical' matters, especially rain-making, by their Bantu-speaking neighbours (Whitelaw 2009). San shamans of the rain, or 'rain-doctors', would supply rain for Bantu-speaking farmers who relied upon rain for their subsistence. In return for rain, shamans received cattle and/or the right to a small store of their harvest (Campbell 1987: 42). San shamans controlled the farmers' means of production. Farmers were thus reliant on the San shamans for rain. Campbell (1987: 44) goes so far as to say that farmers "conceded ideological dominance to

the San". The dominant position rainmakers possessed in turn increased the value of the rain-makers' symbolic labour (*ibid*.). At first, the 'payment' or small percentage of the farmers' harvest had little economic importance to San-speaking peoples, but this probably changed dramatically when herds of antelope rapidly disappeared towards the end of the 19th century (Campbell 1987: 44). For example, Campbell (1987: 44) refers to an ethnographic record from the Tsolo district, Eastern Cape, recalling a band of San-speaking people living almost entirely off cattle appropriated through rainmaking for farmers. Campbell theorises that such 'payments' to rainmakers gradually had an impact on the social relations of production in San society.

The shamanistic relation of production

Campbell is careful not to push his Marxist approach too far. He refers to how such a change in the egalitarian mode of production created embryonic class inequalities but not strict hierarchic power relations or property relations. Shamans gaining surplus resources would have given them more power, prestige and status but this would not change the whole mode of production. Rather a new relation of production was introduced. Campbell (1987: 46) calls this new element the 'shamanistic relation of production'.

Lewis-Williams (1982) argues that rock art served as a statement to the broader San collectivity since it was the shamans' symbolic work that was essential to their survival. Similarly, Campbell (1987: 47) argues that the art had to convince not only the San community, but also agriculturists so that they knew their cattle payments were being used to good end. Oxen and cattle could have even replaced the importance of the eland or could have been used in the art to show Bantu-speaking farmers the importance of their payments in rainmaking ceremonies. "The conflation of cattle with wildebeest or eland is related to the practice of very carefully superimposing cattle on top of eland at a number of rock painting sites […] as part of a process in which cattle took over much of the importance of eland in some regions" (Ouzman 1997: 246).

Furthermore, the San-speaking peoples' expertise in raiding during the contact period could have been facilitated by the supernatural activities of shamans of the game. Their increased importance in such raiding expeditions would have been reflected in their status and prestige (Campbell 1987: 63). Thus, the development of the shamanistic relations of production from

rainmaking payments in turn provided "an expansion of the game shamans' symbolic labour" (*ibid.*).

The curers' activities were also affected by the stress, tensions and conflicts over resources that arose during the contact period. Artists/curers were reminding the camp of the dangers that surrounded them and the dependence non-shamans had on healers to protect them from maleficent beings and illness. Thus, the art was seen as a way to legitimise the new relations of production, the shamanistic relation of production. In concluding, Campbell (1987: 91) argues that paintings were an overt ideological reaction to the impact of the contact period on the southern San-speaking peoples.

Importantly, Campbell's thesis shows how San-speaking peoples were not despondent victims during the contact period but resisted domination. Furthermore, Campbell's Marxist approach successfully, although selectively, applied Marxist theories to the art in terms of subject matter and the shamanistic explanation. Additionally, Campbell managed to demonstrate how the art was used to engage with changing circumstances.

David Lewis-William's approach to structural-Marxism initiated a profound interest in the relationship between the art and its religious significance and the social actions of the economic base. His pioneering work allowed researchers to think of both an economic base and an ideological superstructure as intrinsically linked. Although Lewis-Williams' work did not extend beyond previous functionalist explanations, it did act as a springboard for Colin Campbell's thesis. Campbell took Lewis-Williams' work further and improved on many of his assertions. Campbell's specific concern with the contact-period art in the Drakensberg demonstrated how social change occurred and how such change can be read in the art. Benjamin Smith (2010: 347) argues that Campbell exposed broad processes occurring within San society that were unrecorded in the historical record. However, the nature of the application of his Marxist theoretical framework limited Campbell's ability to look beyond processes that were occurring at a general level throughout San-speaking peoples' societies during the contact period (*ibid.*). Moreover, Campbell (1987) does "not deal with regional diversity, historical specificity nor contextually specific" variability and social change within the superstructure (*ibid.*). Smith (2010: 347) strongly argues that at the core of these approaches is the issue that all constraints on a true attempt at rewriting San-speaking

peoples' histories seemed to be due to "the model's marginalisation of the individual social actor".

Social agency and structuration theory

To address this issue, Thomas Dowson turned to practice theory and the structuration theory of Anthony Giddens. As theories of human action and agency through action, they offered the means to access social actors and their roles in structuring and changing San society (Smith 2010: 347). With structuration, rock art can be explored to find out how it was used to negotiate, on an individual basis, the kinds of positions of power, prestige and potency identified at a more general level by Campbell. For Dowson, the rock art site thus became a site of struggle and tension between interest groups and active individuals both within and without San communities and the art took on an active role in the daily social relations of these individuals (Smith 2010: 347-348).

Shared beliefs and an extended viewership are implied by the large corpus of paintings and their symbolism that were created during the contact period with Bantu-speaking agropastoralists (Dowson 1994: 333). Rain-animals, in particular, are concentrated in certain areas of the southern African interior where the most intensive interaction with Bantu-speaking agropastoralists took place. This concentration can be best explained by the fact that "shamans made rain not just for their own people but also for their agropastoralist neighbours" and were in return rewarded (*ibid.*). The art therefore does not "point exclusively to San-speakers' beliefs during the contact period [but rather the art] must [reflect a] set of [widespread] non-ethnic beliefs that were […] expressed differently in different communities" (Dowson 1994: 334). The socio-political circumstances in the historical record in terms of long-term interaction between San-speaking peoples and Bantu-speaking farmers suggests that the farmers were, most probably, "the intended viewers of the paintings and that they would have understood at least part of their significance" (*ibid.*). The broader social processes that are implicated in the production of rock art and the images themselves can be "used as evidence for the development of these processes" (*ibid.*). One of the historical processes that this new, more integrated history examines is the changing and historically situated socio-political roles of shamans.

The changing ideas concerning shamans were "associated with the production of at least three categories of paintings that depict shamanic groups in different ways: communal groups, consortia groups and pre-eminent shaman groups" (Dowson 1994: 335). The first "consists of communal shamanic groups in which all figures are uniformly painted" with no single individual standing out of the crowd (Dowson 1994: 335). The second "category comprises shamanic consortia in which [one or two shamans] are distinguished from adjacent figures by elaborate decoration, dress and so forth" (Dowson 1994: 338). The final category consists of pre-eminent shaman groups. This group displays a prominent shaman figure "painted larger and more elaborately than its adjacent figures" (Dowson 1994: 339).

For the first time, Dowson's work identified "a phased development in the complexity with which the human body was" depicted (Smith 2010: 348). Yet, Smith (2010: 348) posits that Dowson's three phases were still presented as a uniform historical trajectory relevant to much contact-period San art. Moreover, the imagery Dowson gathered to illustrate his argument were sourced from a large area, from areas in the eastern Free State to areas in the Eastern Cape. Furthermore, Dowson's new understanding of shamanic relations and power did not help much in the creation of more intricately detailed San histories; rather the rock art provided "further evidence for the kind of processes of growth in shamanic power", prestige and potency that were argued by Campbell (Smith 2010: 348). The difficulty of accounting for change in rock art depends on a number of factors, including how authors structure their arguments, which model or theory they used, their sources and where they were gathered.

Interactionist approaches

In contrast to the theoretically-informed approaches and the great Kalahari debate, Blundell (2004: 60-70) argues interactionist approaches emerging from the mid-1980s share an emphasis on the empirical, but do not draw explicitly on social theory.

To counter perceptions of homogeneity in the art and a lack of the awareness and implications of interaction, researchers of interaction have argued that cultural exchanges of both religious beliefs and material culture occurred between social groups. However, researchers have been mainly preoccupied with which way the direction of cultural influence occurred, namely, whether San-speaking people borrowed material culture and/or elements of religious rites from Bantu-speaking farmers or whether the farmers borrowed from San-

speakers. This superfluous debate about cultural borrowing assumes that both the San and the Bantu-speaking farmers were bounded entities that passed cultural ‘packages’ or totalities between each other (Hammond-Tooke 1999: 128; Blundell 2004: 70).

Pieter Jolly (1996), on the other hand, argues that a symbiotic relationship existed between the San and Bantu-speakers, particularly San–Basotho and San–Nguni interactions. Yet, due to a weak theoretical framework, Jolly (1996) leans towards earlier approaches of cultural borrowing. He mentions how the San adopted religious concepts and rituals from the neighbouring Bantu-speaking farmers (Jolly 1996: 280).

An author that has avoided the debate over cultural borrowing is Simon Hall (1994). Hall (1994) used excavation, analysis of rock art and ethnography in the southern region of the Eastern Cape Province to reveal a more nuanced exchange between San and Bantu-speaking neighbours, one that involved client–patron relations. Blundell (2004: 70) credits Hall with emphasising the particularity of interactive processes between people from small areas, which demonstrates how interaction was not merely a one-way process of acculturation (Blundell 2004: 70). Rather, constructive economic interactions and exchanges occurred between San-speaking people and their Bantu-speaking neighbours (*ibid.*). For instance, Hall (1994: 65) mentions how the Xhosa in the Eastern Cape hired San ‘medicine men’ to create rain and in exchange the rainmakers would collect stock as payment for their prowess. However, like past attempts to analyse interaction (Campbell 1987), Hall (1994) only looks at explicit images of contact, such as herds of cattle and horses, rather than looking at the broader corpus of art that would be affected by such contact.

Jolly (1996: 277) argues that there is a prevailing assumption in rock art studies of a ‘pan-San’ cognitive system which assumes homogeneity from at least 2000 years before present to the present all over southern Africa. This assumption led to insufficient attention to the possible influence of the ideologies and ritual practices of encapsulating farming communities on the cosmologies and ritual life of their San neighbours or vice versa and the expression of this influence in the rock art. In the case of San-speaking peoples, it is argued, these religious concepts and rites were expressed in their rock art and hence rock art panels are interpreted in terms of the religious symbolism of southern African farming communities (Jolly 1996: 277). Jolly (1996: 277) argues that symbiotic San–farmer relationships occurred and such relationships need to be placed within the context of the wider debate concerning

the effects on hunter-gatherers of interaction with other societies and larger economic systems. Altered "states of consciousness are integral to many of the rites of Bantu-speaking agriculturalist societies in southern Africa [and] people with different physical, linguistic and economic traits often have similar cultures" (Jolly 1996: 278). The production of rock art changes through "outside pressures as well as through internal historical change" and develops within a larger system (Jolly 1996: 298). Importantly, as opposed to Lewis-Williams (1982) and Campbell (1987), Jolly (1996: 298) refers to how this "larger system can just as easily be ideological as economic" (*ibid*.). Jolly (1996: 298), argues that instead of focusing on structure as something that can be played upon and altered by historical changes in the modes of production of San societies, researchers need to see structure as not fixed but as dynamic.

However, Jolly (1996) does not take cognisance of the fact that "ideas, material cultures, religious beliefs and even people themselves could become creolised all at the same time to form new identities" (Challis 2008: 302-303). These populates during the contact period were not necessarily culturally incoherent to one another (*ibid*.). The approaches mentioned above all point to the fact that an essentialist view of cultural identities is no longer tenable. Researchers need to move "beyond naturalised conceptions of spatialised 'cultures' and to explore instead the production of difference [and the] common shared and connected spaces" (Gupta & Ferguson 1992: 16). If we query a pre-given world of separate 'wholes' "and discrete 'peoples' and 'cultures' and see instead a difference-producing set of relations, we turn from a project of juxtaposing pre-existing differences to one of exploring the construction of differences in historical processes" (*ibid*.).

The great Kalahari or the revisionist debate

At the same time as these approaches were being argued, the great Kalahari debate was raging. Two camps of researchers were contesting whether a specific San society, the Nyae Nyae *Ju/'hoansi*, which is a branch of people that make up the Ju/'hoansi in the Kalahari, was unchanging, isolated and fixed, or if it was fluid, changing and part of a web of relationships that was part of a broader capitalist economy.

Authors Lorna Marshall, Richard Lee and Edwin Wilmsen all hold different views of Ju/'hoansi society, not only in specific details but in their basic "understandings of what the

Ju/'hoansi think, do and how they relate to" the external world (Barnard 1992: 296). These diverse views are primarily independent of the changes in Ju/'hoansi society, rather reflecting the broader theoretical orientations of the ethnographers themselves (*ibid*.). For instance, revisionists such as Carmel Schrire (1980, 1984), Robert Gordon (1984), James Denbow (1984) and Wilmsen (1989), examine the historical and continuing contact between the Ju/'hoansi and outsiders. Wilmsen (1989) challenges the classic primordialist view of San society, which emphasises San-speaking peoples' abstract 'antiquity' at the cost of their history (Barnard 1992: 296). The popular materialist bias towards environment and economy has led primordialists or traditionalists such as Lee to overemphasise "subsistence and has limited the scope of inquiry" (Kent 1992: 54). Revisionists, on the other hand, present a far "more accurate description of the place of [San] groups in the southern African economic system as a whole" (*ibid.*). Yet, they focus on those aspects of culture which are most susceptible to outside influences – those related to production and trade, which are easier to discern from the historical records (*ibid*.). Wilmsen (1989) demonstrates that San-speaking people have been in continuous interaction with other groups for as long as we have evidence. Therefore, political and economic relations linked the supposedly pristine "Kalahari with a regional political economy both in the colonial and [pre-colonial] eras; that San-speaking people have often held cattle; and that no strict separation of pastoralists and foragers can be sustained" (Gupta & Ferguson 1992: 15-16). According to Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (1992: 16), the revisionists argued that the Ju/'hoansi have never been a classless egalitarian society and that if they gave such an impression it was only due to them being integrated "as an underclass in a [broader] social formation […] and that the cultural conservatism uniformly attributed to these people by [many] anthropologists […] is a [result], not a cause, of the way they have been integrated into the modern capitalist economies of Botswana and Namibia". In conclusion, it is "just as much of an overgeneralisation to claim that all Botswana groups are different as it is to claim that they are all the same" (Kent 1992: 52). The similarities have sadly "overshadowed the differences, thereby forcing researchers occasionally to generalise uncritically from one particular group of people at one time to all others (*ibid*.). Though Wilmsen (1989: 10) may be justified in criticising those anthropologists who have granted the Ju/'hoansi antiquity he himself can be criticised for providing them with a history but denying them authority (Kent 1992: 56). Traditionalists can be faulted for wearing evolutionary blinders while the revisionists can be faulted for overemphasising political economy. The reality probably lies somewhere in between, but the overall methodology of both groups fails to account for cultural and temporal diversity and

social agency (*ibid*.). Moreover, contact and the contact period does not "automatically entail the domination and exploitation of people that" practise a hunter-gatherer mode of production (Kent 1992: 56). In terms of the available archaeological evidence, Karim Sadr (1997: 105) argues that Denbow's model is based on a dozen excavated sites of which only three have been published. Denbow's conclusions are also largely based on assumptions and inferred assertions from the archaeological record. According to Sadr (1997: 111) there is little "evidence for encapsulation and herding to be seen in the debated Kalahari LSA sites". Interactions between San and Bantu-speaking peoples "varied from place to place and time to time. If in some places, the San may have been encapsulated, in others they dominated. In others they may very well have retained their autonomous hunting and gathering way of life until historic times" (*ibid.*)

The great Kalahari debate shows how varied interaction can be and that the resulting ramifications of contact can be equally varied (Kent 1992: 55). Moreover, groups that are categorised in terms of modes of subsistence can move and interact across those modes. The revisionist debate has exposed many of the assumptions and orientations ethnographers may hold about San-speaking peoples and this suggests that the influence of different societies on each other needs to be revised. The same can be said of prevailing theories of southern Africa rock art, which Jolly (1996: 279) argues do not adequately deal with the complexities of cultural and ideological change brought about by marriage, friendship and economic ties between San-speaking societies and other communities. Another issue that arises from the 'interactionist debate' is that authors fail to grapple with the complexity of the historical and spatial dimensions that framed the multiple occasions of interaction.

New approaches

In the past ten years, authors such as Geoff Blundell (2004) and William Challis (2008) have avoided conceptualising ethnic groups in the past as essentialised bounded entities, but rather posit that such groups were fluid and permeable to change.

In archaeology, phenomenological studies of the body have radically altered how researchers perceive individuals in the past. Prior structural approaches have downplayed the importance of the individual and the body, arguing instead for organising principles and patterns that

orchestrate society. The body and embodiment provides a route of social enquiry that diverges from extant structural models.

There is no single consolidated social theory or model for the conceptualisation of the experience of the physical body within the social constraints of society. Brian Turner (1996: 26) argues that it is possible to be critical of the knowledge around the human body and at the same time to commit to the foundationalism of the body, that is, the ontologically given nature of the human body. Turner (1996: 26), following a tradition that conceptualises the body as merely a set of practices, adopts a foundationalist approach to the human body. This allows him to develop an understanding of how social practices and cultural constructions are elaborated upon the human body through continual social relations founded on endless reciprocity (Blacking 1977: 4; Turner 1996: 26). Societal constraints on the body are secondary in this tradition. It is concerned with the sociology of praxis and begins "with an assumption about the embodiment of the agent and the role" embodiment plays in the endless reciprocities of daily life (Turner 1996: 26). Rather than looking at what is done to the body generally, researchers need to have a greater focus on the phenomenology of experience.

A nuanced study of embodiment that takes account of time and space is Blundell's (2004) treatment of the body and embodiment in the San rock art of an area in Nomansland. The historical records mark this area as among the last refugia of the southern San-speaking people (Vinnicombe 1976). Blundell (2004: 29) aimed to take the initial steps towards a writing of the history of the Nomansland San during the turbulent colonial period, taking cognisance of the complexity of their interactions through time, instead of reducing the Nomansland San to merely isolated artefacts archaeologists find or treating them merely as a subordinate class amongst their more influential Bantu-speaking neighbours. In order to do this, Blundell (2004: 29) draws on the rock art of the area, ethnographies and historical records. Between the years 1992 and 2004, Blundell visited some 134 sites in Nomansland as well as 16 sites in the adjacent areas. Furthermore, he expands on Thomas Dowson's image base and utilises ethnographic material including the Ghanzi ethnographic material that Colin Campbell (1987) used in his Marxist approach.

Blundell (2004) also uses embodiment to overcome three problems that plagued structural models of San rock art. First, embodiment does not attempt to map social theory, which is largely based on diverse ethnographies, onto the data. Second, prior structural theories

inserted rock art into a conceptual model of how society operates. For instance, in the structural models of Marxism and structural-Marxism, rock art was intellectualised into these models. Blundell (2004) does not merely insert the rock art into a pre-conceived model but studies the rock art itself to see changes in somatic experiences. Lastly, in terms of the colonial period and change, Blundell (2004: 156) argues that a convention arose during this final period of art-making in the Drakensberg which he describes as a nuanced depiction of shamans. Blundell (2004: 156) argues that Nomansland provides evidence to suggest an evolution in somatic depiction, passing from Significantly Differentiated Figures (SDFs) to the Large Headed Significantly Differentiated Figures (LH-SDFs) and ending with images of heads without bodies (post-cranial bodies). If this is confirmed, it is quite probable that this evolution is linked to the progressive 'creolisation' of the region (due to the arrival of Bantu-speakers, runaway slaves, explorers and shipwrecked people) (Blundell 2004: 156). Social agency through the body shows how during intense social interaction and colonialism, the body depicted changed from a depiction of a full body of a shaman to the depiction of just the post-cranial body, in which only the heads were depicted (*ibid*.) This form of 'portraiture' arose due to the shamans' rise in socio-economic and political power. Furthermore, this change in representation mirrored the social changes over time and in space and allowed powerful shamans to represent themselves in new ways that reflected the arising social status of these shamans (*ibid*.). Shamans were now attributing a type of authorship to the art.

The use of the body and embodiment demonstrates how the data, the rock art, is primary in theorising the role of individual agency and the political milieu in the past, not the structure. Second, structural approaches had downplayed the role of the individual (Hodder 1982: 8). However, the role of the individual is salient in case studies that use embodiment. Moreover, structures are often seen as static constraints on societies and as preventing change (*ibid*.). Ian Hodder (1982: 8-9) argues that structural approaches are incapable of explaining "particular historical contexts and the meaningful actions of individuals constructing social change within these contexts". Embodiment, thus, seems to offer archaeologists a closer emic perspective of the San.

In the same vein, William Challis (2008) refers to how groups sometimes creolised to form new group identities, which could include the San, Bantu-speaking farmers and Khoekhoen pastoralists. These creolised groups may have adopted new symbols and beliefs, as identified by Challis (2008) with the symbol of the 'baboon' for the AmaTola, a creolised group, which

is similar to the adoption of the horse by new groups of mixed hunter-gatherer, herder and farmer descent (Challis 2008: 1). That people from diverse cultures supposedly remained mutually distinct from one another for millennia should suddenly find themselves living together, opting for a new lifeway to cope with, and exploiting "frontiers is testament to the imposition of extreme change brought about by" colonisation (Challis 2008: 2).

Following Blundell (2004) and Challis (2008), this research explores the intricate spatio-temporal background that foregrounds the art-making process. Moreover, I reject top-down theories of interaction that treated the San as passive recipients of more 'dominant' farmers in the area (Harinck 1969: 146). Researchers cannot assume that the direction of cultural influence moved from farmers to the San or vice versa, nor can researchers assume 'symbiotic' relationships between the two groups since both approaches essentialise cultural identities. A strong theoretical framework derived from 'post-colonial studies' should address such concerns and provide nuanced insights regarding inter-relations in the past.

Chapter 3: Postcolonial theory

A strong theoretical framework is important to possessing a cohesive argument. As Christopher Tilley (1990: 334) reminds us, data should not be used as a means to an end but rather to clarify an argument. Texts need to integrate a genuine dialectic between data, practice and theory. Instead of regarding data, practice and theory as separate, they should be thought of as mediating or assisting so as to inform each other (*ibid.*). Furthermore, theoretical orientations are essential in discerning which data an author favours and what data s/he ignores. This is especially true of rock art research theories on interaction, as the revisionist debate exposed. Alyson Wylie (2002: 16) argues that, to avoid empiricism, data should stand "as evidence relevant to the evaluation of knowledge claims, only under context and theory-specific" interpretations.

There is still much debate regarding social change and cultural contact and many approaches and theories have been proposed. Marxist approaches tended to emphasise the economic and political aspects of the colonial contact period and the fundamental "facts of economic exploitation and dispossession" as well as forms of capital accumulation that may have operated in prehistory (Gosden 2001: 243). In contrast to these approaches, this research uses a theoretical framework provided by postcolonial theory and in particular Homi Bhabha's concepts of 'hybridity' and 'third space' (Bhabha 1985, 1990, 1994) to understand better the complexities of social change and cultural contact.

What is postcolonial theory?

Traditional generalising models of culture contact in archaeology have recently been challenged by ideas and notions from so called 'postcolonial theory'. Postcolonial studies cover a great variety of approaches and do not constitute a single coherent strand of thought. A general and broad definition of a postcolonial approach is the political standpoint of social and humanist scholars that seek to deconstruct traditional bipolarised views of the coloniser and the colonised (Fahlander 2007: 17). Given this definition one might question the relevance of postcolonial studies to prehistory and archaeology, but, despite the data and social circumstances differing, the main issues raised within postcolonial discourses have profound implications for archaeological analyses of 'cultural relations' (*ibid.*). In fact they are indispensible to any archaeological study such as this that is situated in a setting of

colonial contact. Specifically, postcolonial theory began discussions around the diverse types of cultural forms and identities established through colonial encounters (Gosden 2001: 241).

Postcolonial issues

One fundamental issue tackled in postcolonial studies is archaeology's common usage of a simplified notion of culture, and of social formations as homogenous entities. Moreover, such cultural homogeneity tends to increase when discussing peripheral small-scale societies (Fahlander 2001: 43; 2007: 18). Postcolonial theory, which is in line with broader trends of Western academic thought, attempts to move away from any essentialised notion of culture. The concern with archaeological writings that homogenise cultures initially derives from concerns evident in structuration theory and the problems of agency (Gosden 2001: 242). Furthermore, and in accordance with Jacques Derrida's deconstruction of 'texts', Bhabha focuses on exposing the development of reductive and stereotypical views and terminology of the colonial world (Gosden 2001: 246-247). Bhabha argues that complexity existed at the level of identity and also in the domain of knowledge, where contradiction was common (Gosden 2001: 247).For instance, in the subjectivating terminology used in colonial times, terms such as Bushman or San were often employed by colonial administrations as a strategy to deny the social diversity of the 'Other'. Contradictions and ambiguity exist in terms such as Bushmen, who to colonialists were simultaneously the epitome of raw licentious sexuality and at the same time the face of a harmless people (see Gilman 1985; Thomas 1989). As this example shows, constructed colonial tropes dealt inherently with contradictions and power relations.

In order to avoid simplified notions of identity, Bhabha developed the notion that colonialism is not solely about the meeting of coloniser and colonised, who sustain their own distinct identities, but the creation of hybrid cultures emerging from sustained colonial contact (Gosden 2001: 241). Researchers thus need to recognise the hybrid nature of social practice and material expression (Fahlander 2007: 18). Social collectives are heterogeneous and consist of a series of individuals and groups with different means of agency and power (Fahlander 2007: 19). The hybridity of culture should not be misunderstood as a simple fusion of new and old elements into a crossbreed or ideology or practice, as portrayed in some approaches to contact period rock art using creolisation (such as the adoption of ethnic markers and material culture) or cultural blending. Such a simplification neglects the

inequalities of power and the very basis of human interaction as well as the agency of the people involved (*ibid*.).

Bhabha argues that all social collectives are caught in a continuous process of hybridity. They are all developed in relation to a larger context and therefore consist of elements of different origins which they have in common to a varying extent (Fahlander 2007: 19). The process of hybridity thus makes the idea of cultures and ethnic collectives as homogenous entities inconceivable. To Bhabha social collectivities or 'cultures' are specific temporal constellations, which to a large extent consist of elements that they share with others (Fahlander 2007: 22). A culture contact can thus never be reduced to a clash between two totalities such as culture, race, ethnicity or religion but is rather constituted by a series of encounters between individuals and groups in different social circumstances. The hybrid character of a colonial culture implies that all agents in that culture, be it colonisers or colonised, have essential "inputs into the structures of power, domination, and resistance that result" (Gosden 2001: 243). Michel Foucault argues that power is inherent in all human relationships and this view lies at the centre of the notion of hybridity; all participants in a colonial culture provide something of their own culture, all have agency and the power to shape their world, although this is often nuanced and constrained in various ways (Gosden 2001: 243). Instead of the colonial culture merely being imposed on the colonised, colonised and coloniser are created through the relations of colonisation (Gosden 2001: 247). The colonial experience was "much more contradictory and complex than" is presented in simple histories that emphasise either domination and subversion or resistance (Gosden 2001: 247).

Moreover, instead of arguing about cultural borrowing and the search for origins, such as which way the direction of cultural influence occurred, via Bantu-speaking to San-speaking people or vice versa, Bhabha's theories point to all cultures having hybrid origins. Chris Gosden (2001: 248) therefore refers to Bhabha's notion of hybridity as having the capacity to disrupt older more unitary notions of culture in archaeology. For instance, a simple dichotomy of 'Xhosa' meeting 'San' or Christianity meeting Islam would not adequately deal with the nuanced relationships that are created as well as the power relations inherent in specific interactions between individuals or groups of individuals. Instead, I advocate for a micro-strategy looking at the agency of individuals or groups of individuals in different social circumstances in diverse encounters. The agency of these individuals is essential since it is their inputs that result, in the end, in the structures of power, domination and resistance. San-

speakers did not fully adopt the Xhosa culture as a 'package' but both were altered irrevocably through the relations of the contact period.

Homi Bhabha's 'third space of enunciation'

According to Bhabha, a culture may only be identified as such by its difference from other cultures (Fahlander 2007: 4). Thus, the 'cultural' has "no inherent essence but is articulated in [relation] with an 'other' and its 'location' is [situated] in the gaps, the third spaces, between diverging subject positions" (Fahlander 2007: 4). Social collectives are to some degree disordered by conflicting ideas, many voices, and interpretations, however Frederik Barth posits that we should nevertheless expect to uncover some "functional imperatives, some normative pressures" and some deep structural patterns (*ibid.*). Furthermore, we can expect to find some "effects on the relations of production on life changes, and some shared cultural themes in ranges of local institutions" (Fahlander 2007: 4).

With his emphasis on hybridity, Bhabha argues that social encounters often result in contradiction, ambivalence and misunderstanding, where social identities and ideologies are questioned and negotiated. This effect Bhabha calls the 'third space of enunciation'. The 'third space of enunciation' is employed as a metaphor for the ambiguous virtual field that emerges when two or more individuals interact (Fahlander 2007: 4). The hybrid nature of societies and their social diversity (heterogeneity) thus also implies that misunderstandings and uncertainties do not just occur between social agents of different traditions or cultures but also characterise much interaction between individuals within the same social formation (Fahlander 2007: 6). As much as this study deals with Bantu-speaking peoples interacting with San-speakers, it could equally apply to San-speaking groups with other San-speaking groups.

Additionally, a social encounter may result in radically new practices and ways of thinking about things that cannot be derived from any specific origin (Fahlander 2007: 6). The majority of such hybrid effects are however rarely radical and revolutionary, as Marxists argue. Social encounters "with incompatible social practices, ideologies and differing material worlds often have unforeseen effects far beyond the intentions of the involved individuals" (Fahlander 2007: 15-16). There is therefore a strong prospect that such encounters actually result in something new and substantially different than just

conglomerates of new and old elements. Rather, hybrid effects often consist of small displacements or glitches in the social fabric. Most alterations of this sort are temporary, but linked with others, "they can result in important substantial social changes of the long term" (*ibid*.). These hybrid effects force researchers "to look quite differently at social change and the [appearance] of new practices and materialities of any given time period" (Fahlander 2007: 6).

The real potential of the concept of the third space rests in perceiving features 'of the archaeological record as possible' *results* from third space encounters (Fahlander 2007: 7). Confrontations "with other people or materialities can have a variety of outcomes, of which not all are necessarily" foreseen or intentional – or can be derived from any origin in time or space (*ibid*.). We need to explore diverse reasons "for the appearance of new or 'foreign' materialities and practices at a" specific time and place (Fahlander 2007: 19). The notion of the third space of enunciation provides researchers with a theoretical perspective that accepts difference without sweeping over or normalising differential ideologies. Moreover, it allows researchers to envisage social and material developments enhanced by difference and misunderstanding (Fahlander 2007: 19). Lastly, the third space of enunciation avoids generalised and formalised views of social encounters by positioning small-scale perspectives as a basis for departure (Fahlander 2010: 19). Thus, a localised single rock art site can reveal broader social patterns of interaction while still grappling adequately with the specificities of the art.

The post-colonialist strategies reviewed in this chapter allow for the consideration of small-scale and nuanced social encounters without sacrificing the broader social effects of interaction in the area. These concepts embrace a greater variety of strategies and responses during social encounters (Fahlander 2010). Fahlander (2010) refers to such concepts as having great potential for archaeological contexts of interaction that show unexpected results. Bhabha's framework provides researchers with strategies for discussing encounters and social change in a more intricately nuanced way than was possible using older, more traditional, models of acculturation and diffusion (Fahlander 2007: 11). In terms of archaeology as a whole, "Bhabha's work is a devastating critique against much mainstream archaeology as it makes it difficult to maintain general fictions of the past as consisting of homogenous cultures […] rather than heterogeneous intersecting collectives" (*ibid*.). Following Bhabha's third space that uses small-scale perspectives as a place of departure, the next chapter outlines

the specificities of the rock art site of Xoro Gwai and the techniques used in analysing and recording the site.

Chapter 4: Technique

My interpretations will be focused on a single rock art site that I term Xoro Gwai. This site is next to a small tributary of the Kei River in the hills and valleys of the Cathcart district of the Eastern Cape, South Africa (see Figures 5 and 6). The site is on a private farm and is not accessible to tourists. The site became known when it was photographed by Victor Biggs and shown to Neil Lee and Bert Woodhouse in the 1970s. Previous researchers that have visited the site include Biggs, Lee, Woodhouse and Sven Ouzman. The site has not been traced, published or interpreted previously. The site's ID is RSA-SCR1 on the SARADA.co.za website. The site is likely to have been known earlier than the 1970s, however, I did not find reference to this specific rock shelter in the historical records (Huss & Mäeder 1925; Hewitt & Stapleton 1931).

My field data was collected during a seven day visit to the site conducted from 12 September to 19 September 2010, in which I traced the rock art panels with the help of Chrissy Chiumia and my supervisor Professor Benjamin Smith. Moreover, the site and its surroundings were mapped into a site plan (see Figure 10). The locations of the rock art panels, the surrounding environmental features and the basic dimensions of the site are plotted on this site plan. The basic dimensions of the site were measured using a measuring tape: shelter length along the drip line; "shelter depth at the midpoint from the back wall to the front edge of the" drip line (Vogel 2007). Other features in the site plan include the estimated size of the water-pool during the rainy season, the estimated depth of the forest to the west and the location of the waterfall. During the seven day visit, the pool and waterfall were dry as the area and most parts of the Eastern Cape Province were experiencing a severe drought (see Figure 7).

The complementary techniques of photography and tracing were used to record the site. The photographs provided the context of the rock art as well as a record of the site. The tracing, on the other hand, aided us in deciphering elements of the rock art that were not easily discernible to the naked eye or the camera lens. Johannes Loubser and Paul den Hoed (1991: 2) argue that the combination of photography and tracing is still the best way to make detailed recordings of sites in their entirety. The site was photographed with a *Nikon D300*™, a single-lens reflex digital camera. All images were shot at ten megapixels resolution or more and saved as TIFF files. This, therefore, provides the best clarity of image and adequate size

to inspect smaller elements when zooming in on a computer. Tracing, as opposed to photography, is time-consuming but is a reliable technique to capture the many faded details that are vital to a proper understanding of the paintings (Lewis-Williams 1996). Following the Rock Art Research Institute's technique as outlined in Lewis-Williams (1996), we traced the rock art panel with a *Rotring*™ 0.35 millimetre clutch pencil on single-matt, 0.003 micron quality drafting film. Great care was taken to record all elements at the site without damaging the paintings. Flakes are drawn in as dotted lines on the original copies. Where painted boundaries are unclear or where there is shading, the region where the transition is most apparent is demarcated using a dotted line (*ibid*.). As the shelter was domed and the paintings of panel A were painted on a curved uneven surface, three smaller sheets were used and marked where the overlaps occurred, making sure that the sheets lined up exactly. However, since we were reproducing a two dimensional image from a three-dimensional rock wall, some small degree of distortion is likely. The colours white, black, red and orange were the four colours represented in the tracing. Tracing was used since it provides a full-scale representation of rock art panels and often more precise depictions of the relationships between elements at a site than can be achieved by drawing or photography alone (Vogel 2007). Importantly, tracing allows researchers to immediately view all the fine details, whereas recovering such intricate details on photographs would take hours. Once back in the Rock Art Research Institute, I redrew the panels using a combination of 0.35mm and 0.50mm *Rotring*™ pens (see Appendix A).

Description of the Site

Xoro Gwai is located in a small kloof. The site is ten metres from a seasonal waterfall and water-pool in a small deep, dome-like shelter that measures two metres wide, up to two and a half metres deep and up to three metres high on the 980 metres contour. The shelter faces north-north-east and has a rock floor and small inner cave. A few trees grow around the shelter, obscuring it from view, which has probably accounted for its pristine condition. No large animals can easily access the shelter due to the foliage hiding the shelter (see Figure 11).

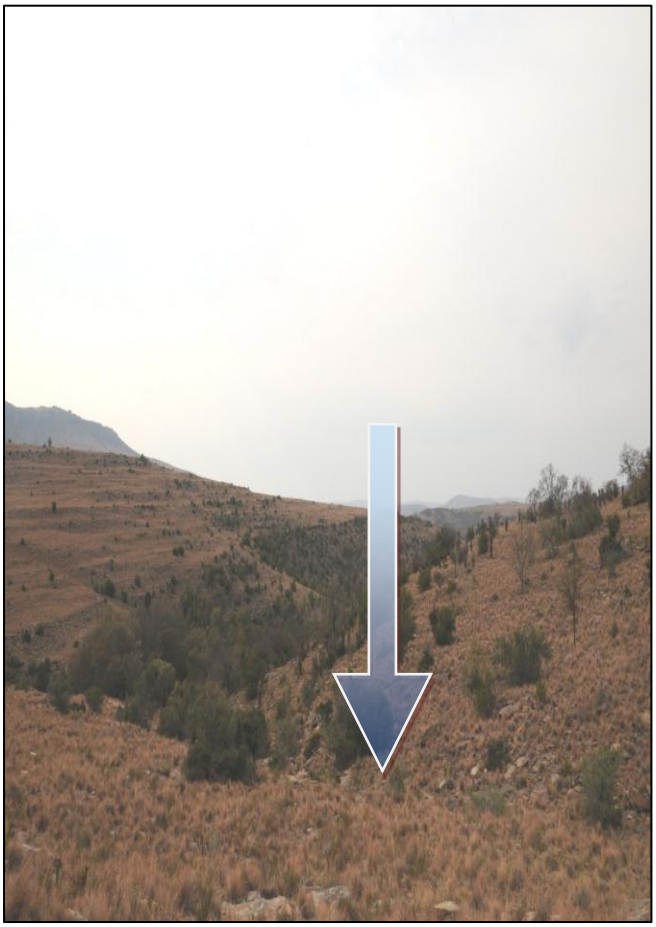


Figure 5: Photograph marking the location of the site as seen from afar

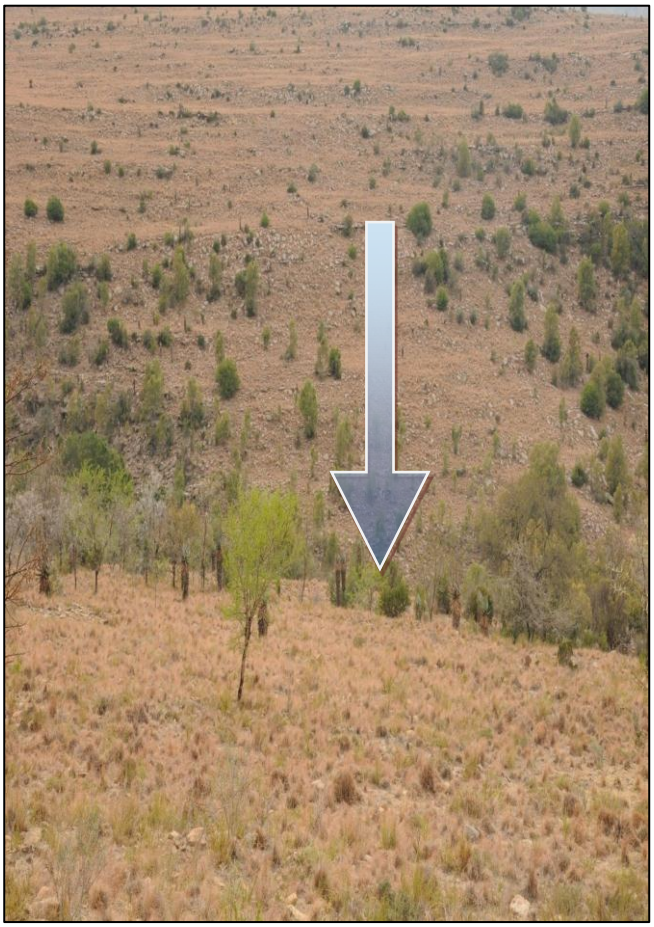


Figure 6: Photograph marking the location of the site taken from the end of the gravel road

Figure 7: Photograph taken looking out from the shelter displaying the almost barren waterfall

Figure 8: Photograph marking the location of rock art panels A, B, and C

Figure 9: Rock art panel A with swallow's nest damage

The site is flooded periodically which, together with the rock floor, means that there has been no build-up of archaeological deposit. No artefacts were visible on the floor except for one possible grinding/preparing patch on a rock originally recorded by Neil Lee.

There are three rock art panels in this one site, which I term panels A, B, and C. A swallow nest seems to obscure panel A, yet the mud build-up is not severe and most of the details of the paintings are discernible under closer inspection through the mud stain. Dassie (rock hyrax) urine and faeces and a corpse of a dassie were found at the base of the shelter, although not directly damaging the paintings, these could lead to the build-up of ammonia and should be kept in check. The rock surface of panel A is not entirely stable. The periphery of the panel is flaking due to water-deposited salts and this has caused some damage to the paintings in this area of the panel. Furthermore, some damage has been caused owing to water wash. In all three panels there is no evidence of superpositioning. In terms of continuity of style, colour usage, patina and lack of superpositioning, panel A was in all probability painted in a single session.

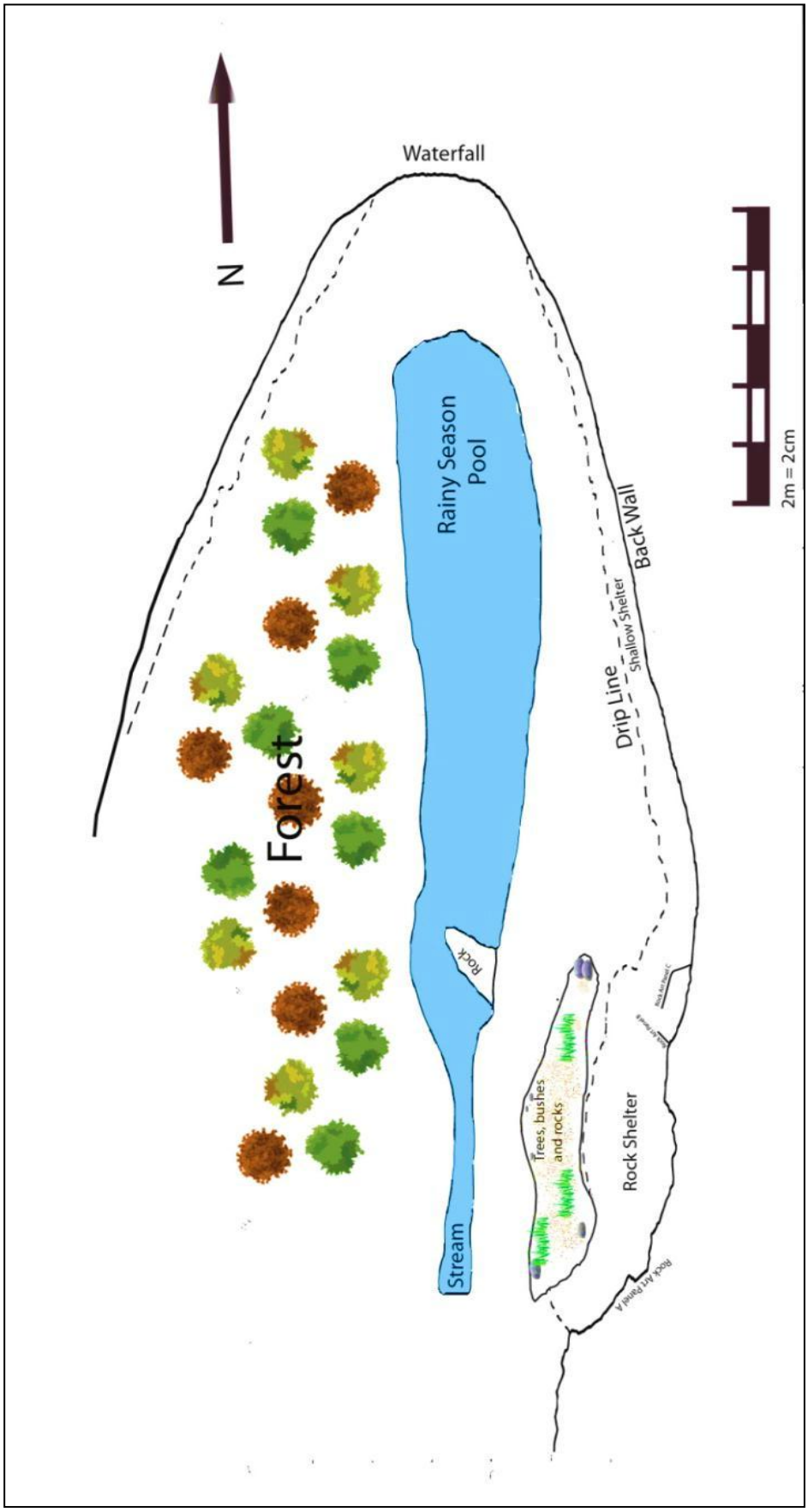


Figure 10: Site Plan of shelter Xoro Gwai and surrounds

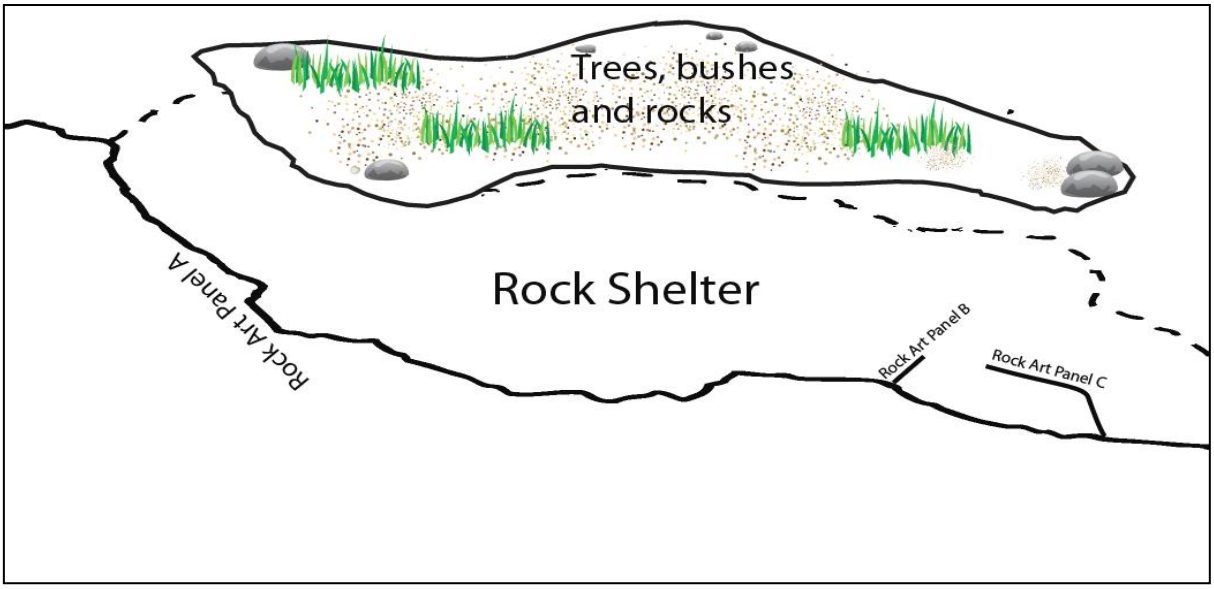


Figure 11: Detail of site plan showing positions of panels A, B and C. Notice the trees, bushes and rocks obscuring the shelter from view

Description of Panel A

Panel A, near the domed ceiling of the shelter, is a 1.4 metre by 0.75 metre image cluster of approximately 51 images that all seem to have been painted at the same time and constitute a 'scene' that has a common theme. Lewis-Williams' (1990: 131) definition of a scene is a panel of "similarly painted figures that appear to be performing a common action". Panel A is of San tradition since it constitutes what researchers term San fine-line paintings, which are brush painted polychromatic representations that are often highly detailed and naturalistic with careful shading. Dominating this image cluster are three bizarre slug-like animals painted in black and white with many differing red, white and orange 'dots' or circles of paint on the animals' bodies. Care was taken to find most if not all these circles of paint on the animals. The longest of these animals is five hundred millimetres. These creatures have rudimentary front legs, and slug, eel-like or serpentine bodies, antennae and sting-like tails, suggesting complex composite creatures. All three slug-like animals have black bodies with 'hairs' along the back/spine. Two of the creatures have white tusk-like mouth protrusions.

The creatures' heads are almost bovine in shape but with very square muzzles. Above these three creatures are two black bovids, probably very stylized cattle–eland conflations or what Sven Ouzman (1997: 246; pers. comm.) terms *elows* covered in white dots with ears and certain contours of their bodies outlined in red paint. The largest elow is 360 millimetres long and is deliberately only partially in-filled with black paint. The red painted contour line is a feature in all five of these supernatural creatures albeit in different positions of each animal's body.

This panel can be divided into supernatural motifs and natural motifs, although that is not to suggest that natural elements reflect actual events. The elows have red rings around their eyes and trails of zigzag lines, emanating from the rings, running along their bodies. These zigzag lines along with red, white and orange dots of the slug-like creatures imply that these five animals are of a supernatural character. Next to the cow is a large, 250 millimetres tall, fat black human figure with a penis additament or 'infibulation'. Other supernatural elements include therianthropes and the composite character of the slug-like animal (the exact form of which I have never seen in any other rock art panel). Two of the male figures have serpentine-like emissions emerging from above their stomachs. A supernatural interpretation of perhaps an everyday item of clothing wrapped around the midriff as captured by Brother Otto at Xolobe, not far from Xoro Gwai (see figure 26 and 27).

Two figures with a 'cloth' are shown as if presenting it to the creatures or leading them with the cloth. This cloth, possibly steeped in the smell of *buchu*, an aromatic herb is presented to them from a slight distance and directly in line with their snouts.

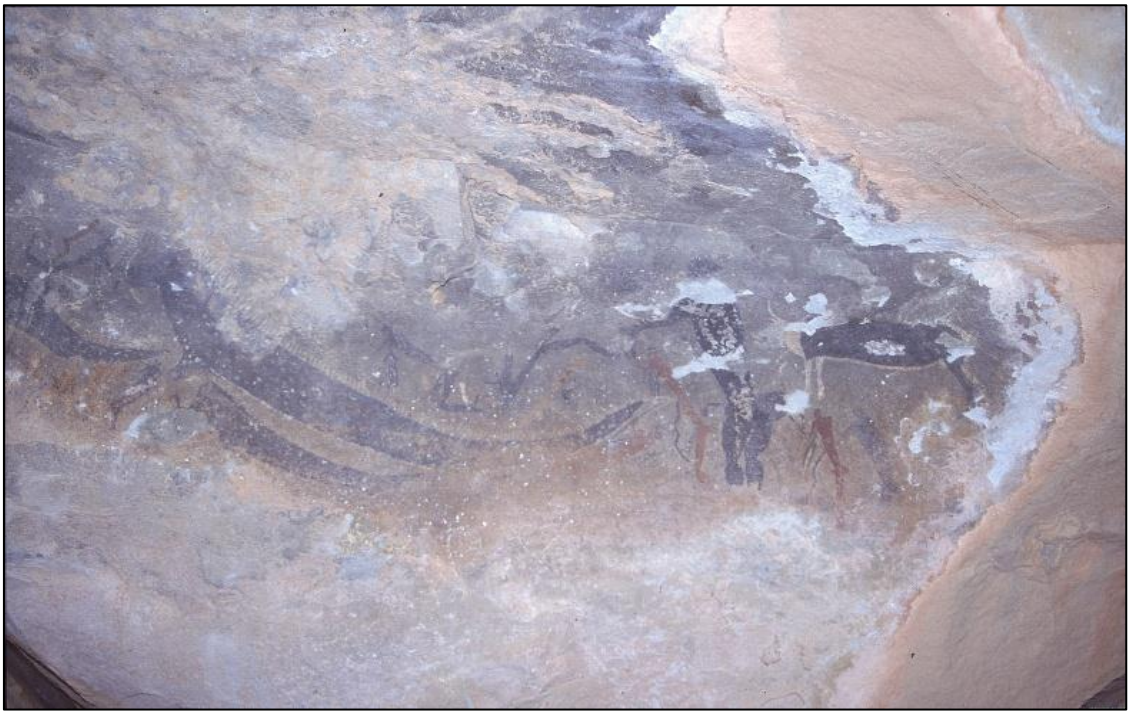


Figure 12: Photograph of the right hand side of panel A. Notice the diaphanous nature of the mud stain and the flaking on the periphery of the panel

The figures with black sticks, many of which are therianthropes, are significant since they are used in various ways to restrict the supernatural animals' movements. Movement is

important, since we often look at these rock art panels as static, two-dimensional representations but they are, in fact, reflections of the spirit realm, a changing, often fearful place that only shamans could enter (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1990).

The movement of figures around the two upper rain-animals is indicative of swimming postures underwater. This links to the fish-like characteristics of the tails of the lower animals (see Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2004b). The sensation of being underwater in the ethnography has been shown to be an apt metaphor for trance (Lewis-Williams 2001).

Along with these supernatural elements appear natural motifs which I argue are representations of objects and/or people in the real world. Natural motifs include clapping women indicated by figures with breasts and headdresses or coiffures. Clapping is typical in a trance dance (see Marshall 1969). Other natural motifs include a cow, possibly of Nguni variety (although the tail is rather elongated for *Bos taurus*), and the men in the upper left hand corner walking with black sticks. These figures are painted on the part of the rock surface which rises at approximately thirty degrees, which gives the illusion that these two figures are on another plane. They differ somewhat from the rest of the figures in the panel (see Figure 13).

Figure 13: Figures with black walking sticks

Around each of the five creatures are human figures in combinations of red and black, black, orange and black and black and white and red. Many of these figures have bag-like objects dangling from their chests, possibly representations of tortoise shell medicine boxes or bags with beaded tassels hanging down filled with *buchu*. Moreover, some of these figures are wearing front aprons and some have red and black flywhisks or switches.

The rest of the figures are in swimming postures, reaching under the upper two rain-animals. The motifs of figures reaching up with one arm and lying prostrate under the animals are common motifs seen in many similar paintings with eland-cow conflations (see below). What are the possible meanings of such postures?

Figure 14: Therianthropic figure deliberately unfilled; in the body cavity is a clapping figure in orange

Both natural and supernatural elements are important in this panel since the interplay of natural and supernatural elements, I argue, was deliberate. The interplay of natural and supernatural features is exceptionally apt in the figure in the central lower part of the panel seen in Figure 14. This person has long ears and horns but, unlike the other therianthropes, this black figure's body is deliberately unfilled and instead occupied by another orange clapping figure.

This indicates the interplay of both real and supernatural elements witnessed by the shamans. For San shamans the spirit realm represented by the supernatural and the earthly realm represented by natural everyday objects were not distinct but simultaneously co-existed. Shamans' alternative reality "is interdigitated with the world of daily life" (Lewis-Williams 1994: 278). The proximity of this panel to an actual water-pool is also significant as discussed in Chapter 6.

Description of Panel B

Panel B is located on a small part of the rock outcrop of the krantz looking into the shelter (see Figure 15). Panel B is approximately 40 centimetres long and 30 centimetres high and consists of two images – an orange and white eland with black horns and a fat black animal without a head, perhaps a hippopotamus.

Figure 15: Photograph demonstrating position of panel B

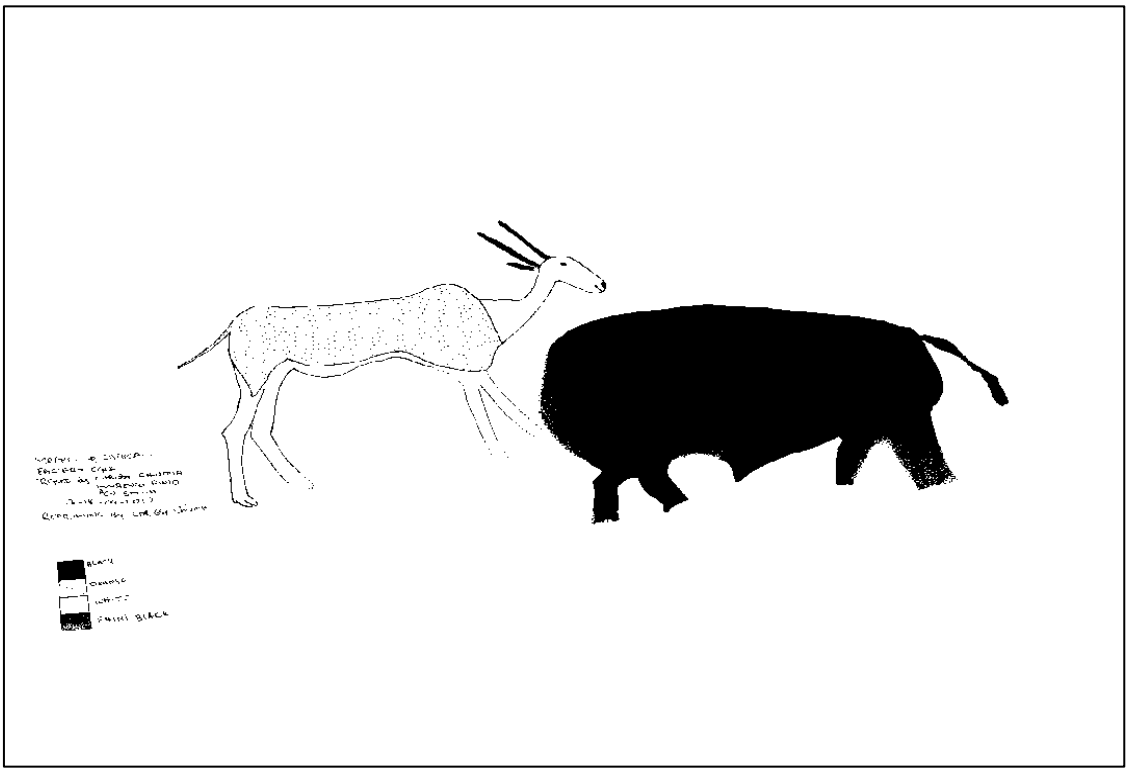


Figure 16: Panel B. Redrawing done by Chrissy Chiumia

A third image was identified by Neil Lee in 1997 as a human figure but has since disappeared. All imagery in panel B is rather faint. The fine line paintings in panel B are characteristic of San naturalistic paintings. However, the styles and colours are quite different from panel A, implying possibly a different artist and/or timeframe.

Description of Panel C

Panel C is located on a rock surface made by a large boulder falling off, facing out from the shelter. Panel C is approximately 20 centimetres long by 25 centimetres high and has a rough black finger-painted animal, possibly a sheep.

Figure 17: Photograph demonstrating position of panel C, with panel A in the background

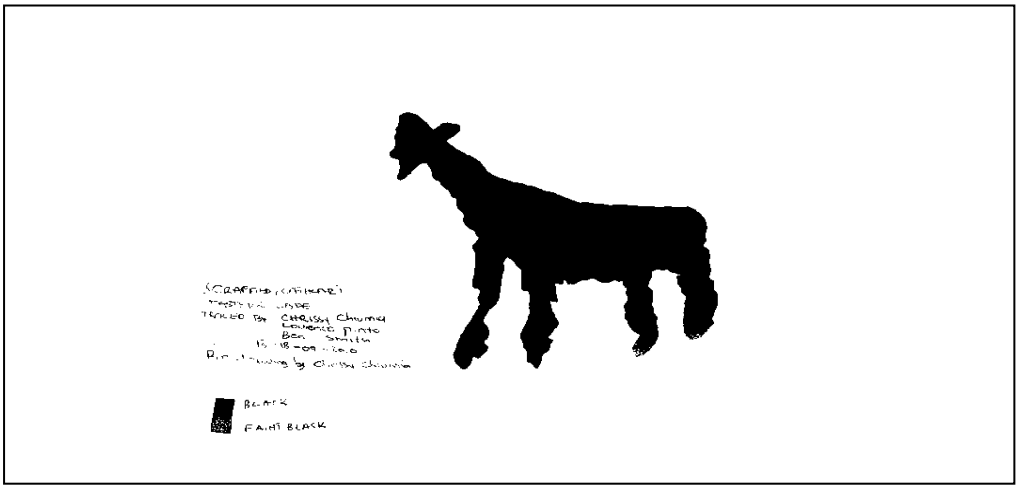
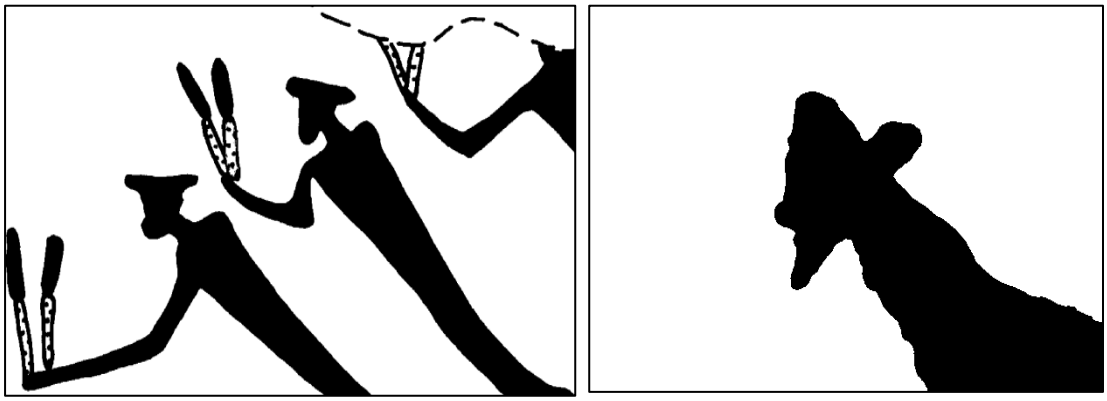


Figure 18: Panel C. Re-drawn by Chrissy Chiumia

The style of the image is not of the San fine-line tradition but is finger-painted, characteristic of Bantu-speaking traditions of art-making. This sheep, however, does have some similarities

with panel A. The shape of the sheep's head is similar to the heads of certain therianthropic figures.



Figures 19 and Figure 20: Section of panel A (Left) demonstrating therianthropes with strange sheep-like heads, compared to the detail of the head of sheep in panel C (Right)

Could there have once been a relationship between the painters and these panels? The occurrence of domestic livestock in these panels possibly indicates that these paintings were completed during the contact period. Historically, San-speaking groups have interacted with a number of other social formations. It was through these historical interactions that a range of third spaces of enunciation were created. The next chapter outlines the historical information related to these third spaces and what forms of interactions occurred.

Chapter 5: History

This chapter presents a brief general overview of the significant events involving interaction between Khoe-San speakers and Bantu-speakers in this region of the Ciskei over the 1600 years until the early 20th century. This chapter follows on from the archaeological evidence presented in Chapter 1 and assists in my interpretations of the panels at Xoro Gwai.

It is frequently difficult to discern whether early travellers and early historians were writing about San-speakers, Khoekhoen-speakers or creolised individuals, as to many of these authors, San-speakers were people that lived a nomadic life and of course this differed from case to case. Using the historical reports to reconstruct a history for the Ciskei carries the danger of presenting the history of Europeans since no writers stayed long enough to document traditional histories (Derricourt 1974: 42). It is with these biases in mind that I attempt to gather a San perspective of these many diverse encounters. The history of the Ciskei and in particular the Cathcart district can be divided into periods and significant people. This chapter is divided into 'prior to 1820-1830' and 'post 1820-30' due to the events of the *Mfecane*. Supposedly, during "the 1820s the entire region of southern Africa was affected directly or indirectly by tremendous demographic upheaval and revolutionary social and political change" (Eldredge 1992: 1, but see Etherington 2001 on the impact, or lack thereof, of the *mfecane* on the Nguni)

Prior to 1820-1830

Prior to 1820, records are scarce, and a combination of historical records, linguistics and archaeological evidence is used to reconstruct the history of the Ciskei around the site Xoro Gwai.

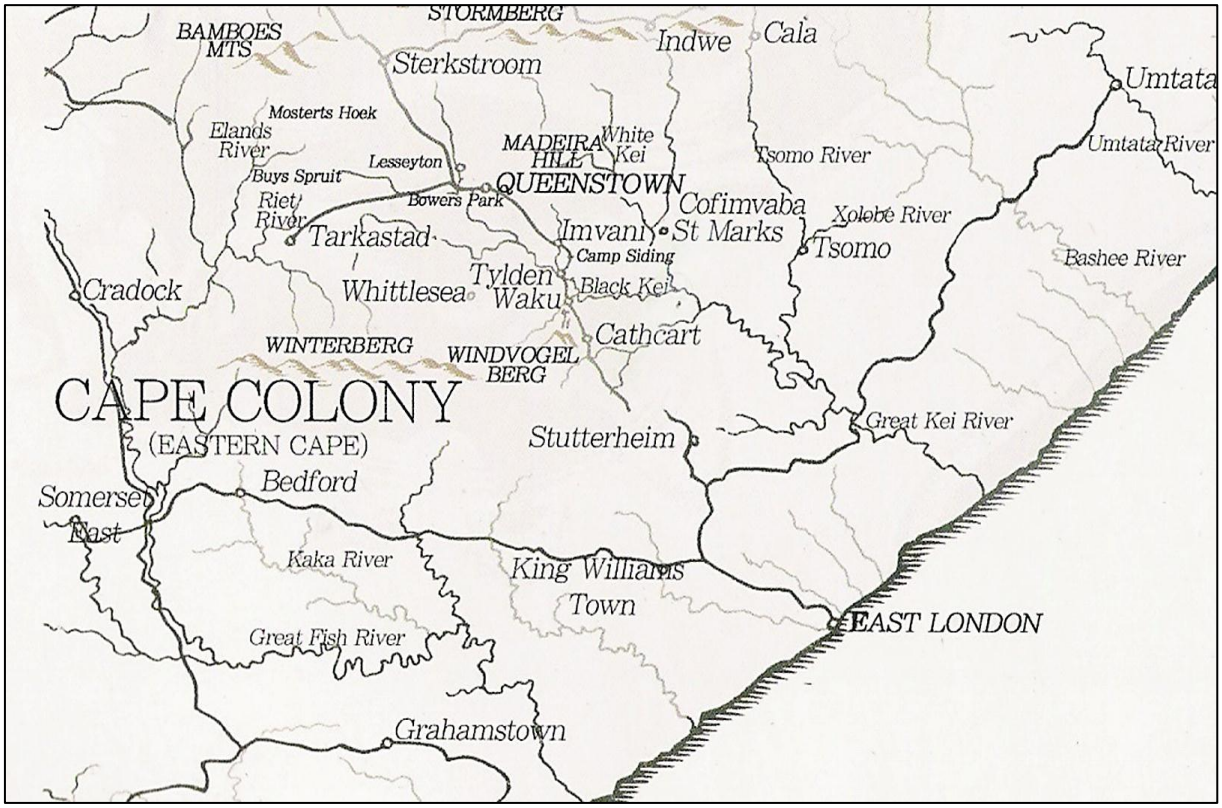


Figure 21: Section of the map showing the locations of the paintings Stow copied. Drawn by Cara van der Westhuizen, based on Dorothea Bleek's map of 1930 (Skotnes 2008: 80)

Archaeological evidence from Middledrift point to pastoralists (Gonaqua) being present in the middle of the Keiskamma in the Ciskei (Derricourt 1974: 51). Khoekhoen "place-names are known to occur 164 km "to the east of the Kei and it seems" plausible that their area of exploitation reached this far (Derricourt 1974: 52). This is based on conjecture from the records of Robert Godlonton (1965: 206), the editor of the Grahamstown Journal in 1835, who referred to Koboqaba (or Kobonqaba) as the furthest stream of the Kei to the east of the Cape colony with a Khoe place-name.

A long period of interaction between San- and Khoekhoen-speakers is attested by the linguistic evidence and a period of before 1300 AD is suggested (*ibid*.). This predates the Nguni movement of farmers into this area. Between 500 AD and 1000 AD, iron-using agriculturalists settled on the KwaZulu-Natal coast and inland (Derricourt 1977: 216).

In terms of cattle, however, we only have clear evidence of cattle in the Ciskei by the 16th century (Derricourt 1977: 18). Nguni-speakers were settled south of the Mthatha River before the end of the 16th century. According to tradition, the Xhosa, Pondomise and Thembu lived

in the foothills of the Drakensberg before moving to the coast (Hodgson 1982: 6). They are then thought to have gradually moved westwards over a period of three hundred years from about 1550 to 1850. Monica Wilson (1959) argues that George McCall Theal described this movement in detail and checked his evidence with the Xhosa chief, Sarili. We have eye witness reports with oral traditions describing how these groups crossed the Kei at around 1850. Evidence suggests that this movement was a fragmentary expansion into the area over time rather than a full-scale migration (Hodgson 1982: 6). Xhosa expansion, in particular, met with little resistance until it reached the Kei River, where the Xhosa encountered San-speakers since the land east of the Kei River (what was termed Fingoland, in the 19th century) was occupied by roving bands of San-speaking hunter-gatherers. As the Xhosa penetrated further, San-speakers were forced off their hunting grounds to find refuge in the Drakensberg mountain strongholds (*ibid*). Yet some San-speakers established close relationships with the Xhosa and continued to occupy the same area. Intermarriage took place between Xhosa and San-speakers. For instance, Xhosa traditions record that, during the 17th century, Sithomo was the first chief to marry a San-speaking woman but that she ran away to her home on the Orange River after the birth of a son (*ibid*.).

Documentary and oral sources from survivors of shipwrecks in the 17th century mention what were probably San-speakers east of the Fish River (Derricourt 1974: 48). Survivors of the wreck of the *Stavenisse* mention 'Batwa' west of the Xhosa, saying that some travellers were put to death by them.

Eighty four years after 1652, when Jan Van Riebeeck had arrived at the Cape in service of the Dutch East India Company (VOC), the Gonaqua proper were west of the Xhosa, but east of the Fish River under 'Babbelaan' (Derricourt 1974: 52). Just prior to and during the 1750s the whole region north of the Winterberg and Amatola mountains were known as Bushmanland (Hewitt & Stapleton 1931: 48). South of that range a few isolated bands were still to be found; but the main body had been driven out or exterminated by Bantu-speakers. San groups are said to have been numerous in the south between the Kei and Keiskamma rivers until their destruction by order of the Xhosa paramount leader Rarabe, who was allegedly highly incensed because they had killed his favourite racing ox (*ibid*.).

Ensign August Frederik Beutler

On 29 February 1752, an expedition under Ensign August Frederik Beutler was dispatched from the headquarters of the Dutch East India Company at the Castle of Good Hope to explore the Eastern Cape (Wilson 2005: 9). He was sent to establish whether the people living there were hostile or friendly and whether there was a possibility of trade with them. Anything else of possible interest or advantage to the Dutch East India Company was recorded in the expedition journal kept by Beutler's assistant, Carel Albrecht Haupt. Haupt recorded how, in the same year, Beutler met 'Hottentots' or Khoekhoen on his journey to the Kei River who had been robbed of their cattle by 'Bosjesmans', presumably San-speakers, and who lived by hunting and gathering (Jolly 1996: 201). Beutler reported San-speakers settled between the Fish and Keiskamma rivers but many were reported further east in a client relationship with the Xhosa (Wilson 2005: 9).

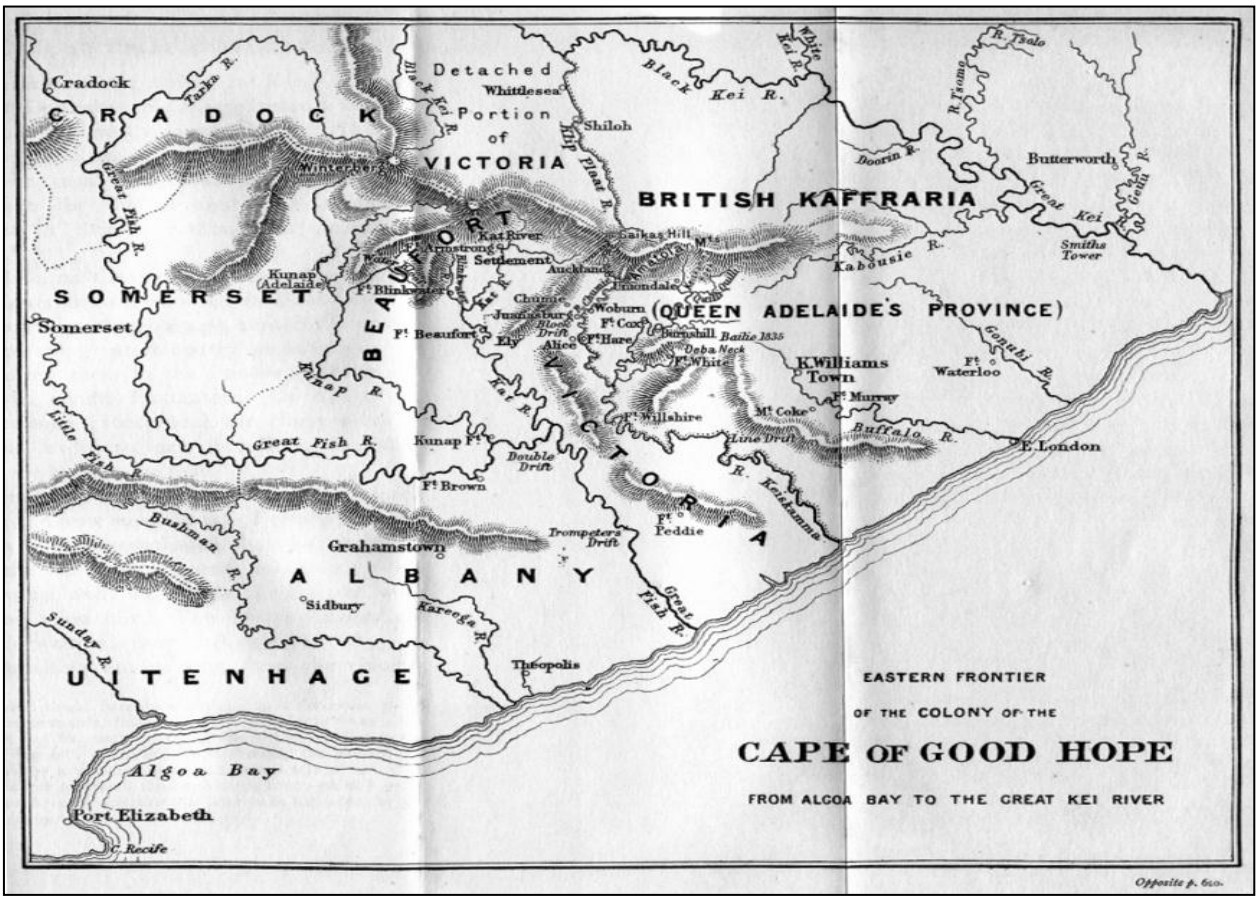


Figure 22: Map of the Eastern Frontier of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope in 1837 (Smith 1903: opposite page 620)

In the 1760s, Rarabe surrounded San-speakers in their "caves and wherever they could be found; he hunted them like wild beasts" (Schweiger 1912: 157). Rarabe at that time occupied the country between the Great Kei River and Tsolo, about 19 kilometres from Keilands (*ibid.*).

In 1775, the Tsomo River marked the boundary of a San-speaking group and the Thembu, with the Mbo beyond the Thembu (Derricourt 1974: 62). According to Derricourt (1974: 49), at this time, San-speaking peoples were the only inhabitants of an area covering the Winterberg and Amatola mountain range and at around this time were beginning to traverse Kaffraria, the south-eastern part of what is today the Eastern Cape Province (see Figure 22).

By 1790, San groups were seen between the two Kei Rivers and the Thembu at the Tsomo River (Derricourt 1974: 62).

Figure 23: Painting of a Xhosa settlement. *View of a Kaffir Village, 1803,* by Alberti (Crais 2002: 17)

Stability during this "period of frontier contact and conflict was such that fission or movement from population growth or political conflict could be accommodated" (Derricourt

1974: 71). The Cape Nguni seem to have lived in stable settlement patterns "until increasing disruption occurred in the 18th century" (Derricourt 1974: 72).

Not even a hundred years later, Henry Lichtenstein (1803-1806) recorded hostility between Xhosa and San-speakers (Derricourt 1974: 49). The influences of change were felt by all the pre-1820 Cape Nguni and Khoekhoen-San-speakers. The Xhosa, Thembu, Bomvana Mpondomise and Mpondo felt change even more intensely because of the bottleneck context of the communities enclosed by the Drakensberg to the north and the Indian Ocean to the southeast (*ibid*.).

From the east and northeast the incursions in the 1820s, of the Mfengu and other refugees of the *mfecane* together with communities of Natal Nguni displaced directly or indirectly by the military activities of Shaka Zulu, added to the instability. The immigrant populations were variously dispersed from the Mpondo westwards (Derricourt 1974: 39).

Post 1820-1830

The colonial frontier and Bantu-speaker frontier – exacerbated by the *mfecane* – characterised an era which brought about changes to which Khoe-San speakers would have had to adapt in their own way. As Gordon (1992: 11) puts it: Khoe-San speakers emerged as one of many "people operating in a mobile landscape, forming and shifting their political and economic alliances to take advantage of circumstances as they perceived them".

Madolo

One of many Khoe-San speakers, who adapted to the changes that surrounded him, was Madolo or Madoor as the Boers called him, of the Eastern Cape. Madolo, who was closely associated with San painters in rock shelters, was always described as a 'Bushman' (Saunders 1977: 145). "In the early 1850s he continued to live in the series of rock shelters, facing south-west, which lie along the left bank of the White Kei, about 1,5 km from" St. Mark's Mission (Saunders 1977: 152). It was here in the rocky shelters that he and his compatriots resume their paintings.

Madolo demonstrated a remarkable ability to adapt to a new way of life as a colonial collaborator, only to cast it off and live the remainder of his life much as he had in his youth

(Saunders 1977: 145). At the end of the 18th century there were a small number of San-speaking bands, in each of which were anything from several people to one hundred and fifty people, scattered throughout the Eastern Cape. According to Christopher Saunders (1977: 146), these bands moved over wide areas since they were dependent on hunting game. Moreover, they were dispersed territorially. In the days before land grew scarce, relations between San-speakers and the southern Nguni were not homogenous. At times San-speaking bands were hunted down and treated with much cruelty or killed. However, other evidence suggests relatively peaceful contact over long periods of time (Saunders 1977: 146). The Thembu, for instance, had adopted from the San the custom noted among Madolo's people in 1849 of removing a section of one finger. Yet, from the early 19th century, if not before, such peaceful relations were put under strain by the incursions of Bantu-speaking groups onto the old hunting grounds of bands such as the one to which Madolo belonged. Some bands were absorbed into the southern Nguni while others were pushed back into the mountains or disintegrated. Many San-speakers died and the survivors lived a precarious life. A few individuals made successful adaptations, marrying Nguni partners or becoming rainmakers, a respected specialty in Nguni chiefdoms (*ibid*.). Madolo took another approach – he became an ally of Christian missionaries.

The records on Madolo's life are drawn from a number of travellers to the Eastern Cape. George William Stow "was a poet, an historian, a medical man, a geologist, a map-maker, an oral historian and prolific writer, and he laboured to create a record of the creative work of" Khoe-San speakers (Skotnes 2008: 37). He became interested in many aspects of South African history and landscape, undertaking extensive geological surveys, taking up various posts, publishing poetry, and researching and writing an extensive history of the 'Native Races' of southern Africa. In 1867, Stow (1905: 201) visited various rock shelters on the Kei River and its tributaries that had been inhabited by Madolo's people, and Stow spoke to several people who had known Madolo.

Madolo's group was at one time considered the most powerful in this part of South Africa. Stow records how Madolo was the great chief of a San group in the country around Klipplaats and the upper Black Kei Rivers. This area is where Xoro Gwai rock art site is situated.

Where Madolo originally lived was near the present town of Whittlesea, Hewu region, thirty kilometres from Queenstown. According to Stow, it was here that Dr Van der Kemp visited him (Stow 1905: 201). Saunders (1977: 146) realised, however, that there was no record of Madolo in Van der Kemp's diary. He thus infers that Stow probably confused the London Missionary Society missionary Van der Kemp with his colleague James Read Senior.

During a journey to England in 1836-37, James Read became aware of his discontentment working within the Kat River Settlement at Philipton, where he ministered to Khoekhoen groups and people of mixed descent. He longed for new pastures of work outside of the settlement (Saunders 1977: 147). In Read's eyes San-speakers were on the lowest rung of the scale of civilisation and thus needed uplifting more than any other group of people (Saunders 1977: 147). It was to San-speakers that Read wished to extend the blessings of Christianity and civilisation. In 1838 Read returned to the Eastern Cape and expressed his concerns to his mission station at Philipton. One of the members, who was allegedly of San descent, told Read that he had relatives who were living a nomadic hunter-gatherer lifestyle to the north (*ibid.*). Read took this as an answer to his call to commence his new work. An exploratory party was sent out from Philipton to the north (*ibid.*). The party found Madolo north of the Black Kei River.

Madolo told the party that he had been raised in the mountains, where he had dwelt, through fear of Bantu-speaking peoples and other groups of people. According to Read Senior, Madolo lived in the 'wild' where he remained ignorant and barely considered himself 'human' till he visited Kalaghal, a neighbouring Thembu chief, who treated him humanely and kindly (Saunders 1977: 147). Read reported how Madolo's encounter with Kalaghal together with the party coming across him enabled him to feel more resolute in his affirmation as a human being (Saunders 1977: 147).

About the time of or shortly after the Sixth Cape Frontier War of 1835-1836, Madolo retired from the more immediate border towards 'Bushman School' or Glen Grey, north-east of Queenstown (Stow 1905: 201). Saunders (1977: 146) argues that this retreat towards the tributaries of the Kei was dictated by the movement of Bantu-speaking groups onto Madolo's old hunting grounds. Some of these groups were pushed eastwards by the expanding frontier of colonial settlement, others went westwards in the aftermath of the mfecane, including large

groups of Thembu who were forced out of the Transkei and settled in the Queenstown district (Saunders 1977: 146-147).

James Read and his party invited Madolo to visit their mission in Philipton. Madolo accepted the invitation and arrived at the mission in May 1839. It was then "that two members of the congregation" went north to establish an out-station among Madolo's people (Saunders 1977: 148). Read himself travelled the ninety kilometre road in September 1839 to supervise the out station. Creating a mission among Madolo's people meant persuading the San-speaking peoples of Madolo to abandon their nomadic hunter-gatherer lifestyle and settle down in order to engage in agricultural pursuits (*ibid.*). Once they had settled in one place, missionaries could instruct them on the new religion. However, the mission experienced a number of conflicts. The station found itself embroiled in a conflict with the Mfengu chief Makelima, "who settled under Cape government auspices on" allegedly 'vacant land' near the station (*ibid*.). Moreover, a Mpondomise group under Myeke laid siege to the mission and Madolo's people only succeeded in escaping this conflict by attacking the Mpondomise. In this skirmish, lives were lost on both sides (*ibid*.).

The station not only survived, it prospered in the years after the conflict. However, conflicting land claims continued but no attempted armed expulsion of Madolo's people occurred (Saunders 1977: 148). Read and his son, James, repeatedly pleaded with the Cape government to acknowledge the San-speaker's rights to this land around the mission, to no avail.

The settlement continued to grow rapidly after January 1842 (Saunders 1977: 149). Read reported that there were fifteen families of San-speakers there. By 1845, there were three hundred heads of families, yet not all were San-speakers. Many of Madolo's people were Khoekhoen, of mixed descent or Bantu-speakers (Saunders 1977: 149). According to Saunders (1977: 149), Madolo ruled this community with what only can be described as tremendous powers of leadership.

Read's first converts were a group of San-speaking women who were baptized in September 1840. "Madolo himself was never converted but was receptive to Christianity and often attended services in the small chapel which the Reads erected" (Saunders 1977: 149). By 1845, the station was called New Bethelsdorp. However, Madolo's prosperous community

was not to last since some of the people at the mission continued their hunting activities, which unfortunately brought them into conflict with surrounding groups.

"In April 1846, a month after war broke out between the Cape [Colony] and the Xhosa, Madolo was requested by the Cape" frontier commissioner to assist the colony by sending a group of men to assist in the defence of the Kat River Settlement (Stow 1905: 202; Saunders 1977: 149). Joseph Read Jnr., who had been overseer of mission duties at the mission station since 1840, agreed to take charge of this armed group (Saunders 1977: 149). A motley group of two hundred San, Khoekhoen, Mfengu and Thembu men served for about fifteen months without compensation. The same group also came to the aid of the Shiloh Mission when the Moravian station was besieged by Maphassa's Thembu who had joined the Xhosa against the colony (*ibid*.).

In August 1846, Madolo and his men went with Sir Andries Stockenstom on his expedition across the Great Kei River to visit Sarhili to the West, the Xhosa paramount leader who was not directly involved in the war (Saunders 1977: 149). On their return to the Ciskei the men helped scour the Amatola Mountains (Saunders 1977: 149). After the war, Madolo was summoned and publicly thanked by the Queen on 7th January 1848. It was during this time that Stow witnessed Madolo still having three hundred men under his jurisdiction including San-speakers, Khoekhoen, Mfengus and several others who had fled to him after adjacent groups accused them of witchcraft. There were still occasional invasions and occupations of his country by other social formations in the vicinity (Stow 1905: 202). Constant land claims and invasions were caused by the problem of Madolo's country being proclaimed to be within the bounds of the Cape Colony. Madolo argued that the land belonged to his forefathers, and that the Thembus were intruders who had forcibly taken possession of a large portion of it. His pleas fell on deaf ears and his country was absorbed without the slightest reservation being made for the original occupants (Saunders 1977). To add insult to injury, the Cape Colony demanded one pound a year for the head of each family as a quitrent (Stow 1905: 203).

Madolo and his people were living in a land that had belonged to San-speakers from time immemorial. They had not made war upon the Colony, "on the contrary, Madolo and his people had defended colonial territory for three years and aided in recovering cattle and other stock captured by the enemy" (Stow 1905: 203). They were now meant to pay rent on the

land that was originally theirs (*ibid*.). Such bewilderment and disappointment probably caused Madolo to question the success of the mission and the benefits of allying himself with missionaries. Madolo grew introspective and nostalgic for his old way of life. Reports of Madolo from Thomas Baines and J.J. Freeman of the London Missionary Society present the man as wistful of his old life of passionately hunting game (Saunders 1977: 150).

About the time of the Eighth Cape Frontier wars of 1850, Madolo retreated from the Glen Grey region to a great cave on the banks of the White Kei, opposite the site of the present St. Mark's mission station. The cave became known as the 'cave of the springboks' since it held one hundred and fifty painted springboks (Stow 1905: 203). George Stow found that these were just a few "of very many buck, the others, he [believed were] painted by different artists" (Skotnes 2008: 94; see Figure 24).

Figure 24: Cave on the banks of the Cacadu or White Kei, opposite St. Mark's mission station. 24 April 1867. George William Stow (Skotnes 2008: 95)

In 1856, when Madolo was approximately eighty years old, he again fell back with his then shattered group towards the strongholds of the Drakensberg Mountains. It was in the relative safety of the Drakensberg that he lived out the rest of his life (Stow 1905: 204). Stow's record is not terribly reliable and Saunders (1977) has tracked Madolo's movements more closely

than Stow (Blundell 2004: 151). Madolo was last heard of in 1856, apparently Madolo was approximately eighty years old, when he fell back with his then crippled group and moved still closer towards the strongholds of the Drakensberg Mountains (Stow 1905: 204; Blundell 2004: 152).

Sir Walter Stanford

Long after Madolo's disappearance, Sir Walter Stanford (1850-1933), Chief Magistrate of East Griqualand in 1886, documented the testimony of a 'refined painter's' family. Stanford recorded Silayi, a Thembu of the Jumba tribe under Chief Umgudhlwa. Silayi recounted his story to Stanford on the 7 May 1884:

Silayi went to live by the Tsitsa River at about the time of the War of Umlangeni (1850) or the Eighth Cape Frontier War (1850-53). The chief of his group was then Jumba, Umgudhlwa's father. They had previously lived on the White Kei River (Xonxe). In that part of the country there were still San-speaking families and clans and they were on comparatively friendly terms with Silayi's clan and other Thembus. Silayi became acquainted with them through Hans, a Khoekhoen man, and Ngqika, who was the nephew of Hans on his mother's side, his father being a San man of Madolo's group named Qako. It was with Ngqika and a son of Hans that Silayi first visited Ngqabayo, the leader of a San group in the Drakensberg Mountains (Macquarrie 1962: 31; for a history of Ngqabayo, see Blundell 2004). Silayi under Ngqika with a band of Khoekhoen and San-speakers made many expeditions into the Colony to the inland districts. Silayi reports how the Boers inland were not as defensive as the Boers on the frontier on the White Kei (Macquarrie 1962: 33).

San-speakers were friendly with the neighbouring communities although they frequently stole stock from them (Macquarrie 1962: 34). Sometimes an expedition would visit an Nguni kraal, and while a few of the party members asked for milk, the young men would follow from the mountain and steal a large ox or fat cow from the herd. Silayi reported how they would then pretend to assist in the search for the stolen animal(s) and throw them off the scent (Macquarrie 1962: 34).

Stanford asked Silayi whether San-speakers had witch doctors, to which Silayi answered no, the San had rain doctors and that the Bantu-speaking farmers in the dry season *always* employed San-speakers to bring rain to them (Macquarrie 1962: 35; my emphasis).

Koegal-man or Koegal-been

Koegal-been had his headquarters among "the rocky ledges of a hill in the Queenstown district, now named Koegal-been's Kop after him; and it was in defending this stronghold that he received the wound — a bullet" lodged in his leg which could not be removed, thus giving his Dutch name (Stow 1905: 198). "Little is known of him, except that he offered a desperate resistance to the" Thembu and Boers that invaded his country (Stow 1905: 198).

Windvogel

Another leader of whom there is very little information was Windvogel. He was the chief of a group of San-speakers "around the mountain which was named Windvogelberg after him, in the same district. His territory extended from the Wa'cu, or Wa-'Ku, to the Thorn River on the Bonteboks Flats" (Stow 1905: 198). The closeness of the Xhosa provided a refuge to many Khoe-San who sought to avoid slavery. Thus, in Hintsa's territory, Colonel Richard Collins, Commissioner of the Eastern Districts, met Windvogel, who had been with Lynx, a Bushman Chief, in a place nearer the colony, and had sought Hintsa's protection after Lynx went to live in the Tarka, near Queenstown (Newton-King 1980: 174).

Mada'kane

According to Stow (1905: 199) Mada'kane, whose native name is unknown, was chief of a San group inhabiting the country from the Black Kei Poort below Tylden to the Gwatyu and Indwe, and along the valley of the 'Neiba or Lower Black Kei, to a little below its junction with the 'Ca'cadu or White Kei. "Mada'kane's brother, 'Gcu-wa (an old San man) was the family painter of the family and in 1869 still carried two or three of his horn paint-pots swung at his belt" (Stow 1905: 199). He was supposedly the artist who "painted the representation of a Boer commando, which adorned the wall of his brother's rock-shelter, and was said to have been intended to commemorate the first attack the Boers ever made upon their" group (Stow 1905: 199). However, given the errors in Stow's records, I am sceptical of this account (see Challis & Lewis-Williams 2010).

This attack, by Thembu and Xhosa groups on the one hand and Boer commandos on the other, reduced the once powerful and formidable group of Mada'kanes' "to a miserable remnant, consisting of the old man 'Gcu-wa […], a younger man, a nephew of the same chief, three women and about five little children" (Stow 1905: 199-200). According to Stow (1905: 201), Mada'kane' remaining people "never ventured into the open country but always remained in the wildest parts of the river valleys, migrating from spot to spot, according to the seasons, sustaining a precarious subsistence by eel-fishing, digging roots, and obtaining honey from the various" inaccessible krantz nests.

Rev. Albert Schweiger and Brother Otto Mäeder at Keilands Mission

Keilands Mission, first founded by Jesuit missionaries, is located on the Great Kei River about 103 kilometres from the Indian Ocean. The mission was then taken over by the Marianhill missionary fathers in 1908 (Flett & Letley 2007: 104). At this time, Father Bernand Huss took charge of the mission. In the same year, Father Albert Schweiger joined Father Huss. Schweiger was "responsible for teaching at three mission schools in the district" (Flett & Letley 2007: 104). Rev. Schweiger (1912: 108) stated that the "district where the White Kei and the Black Kei […] meet, was the seat of the Bushmen".

Schweiger recorded from oral sources how the Xhosa chief Rarabe, having initially obtained his land from the Khoekhoen chief, Hoho, in exchange for skin, tobacco and dogs, then set about exterminating San-speakers (Flett & Letley 2007: 104).

There is an interesting story of San-speakers holding as hostage some of Rarabe's men who had killed game in their territory. They also made reprisals on Xhosa stock. This evoked vicious counter-action from the Xhosa, who began slaughtering them mercilessly (Vinnicombe 1976: 65; Flett & Letley 2007: 108). Despite this antagonism, there were still aged Nguni agriculturists living on the Kei River between 1908 and 1912, who had seen San-speakers and who said they had traded with them.

Furthermore, Schweiger included accounts of various San-speaking families who had lived in the area and commented on their poor treatment by the Dutch settlers and the Cape Colony Government (Flett & Letley 2007: 108). San-speakers who had "settled amongst the Mpondomise, towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, not

only intermarried with the Mpondomise and largely adopted the Xhosa language" but also abandoned their hunter-gatherer way of life in lieu of a more settled existence (*ibid*.).

Some of these settled San-speakers maintained regular contact with their San-speaking neighbours in the mountains (*ibid*.). Yet, it appears that settled San-speakers became fully dependent on the Mpondomise (*ibid*.). Towards the end of the 19th century the Mpondomise, through their chief, Mditsha or Mditshwa, also used to send San-speaking peoples livestock or 'blood money' to show that he looked upon them as the original occupants of the country (Prins 1994: 5). The last San-speaker is said to have died in this area in 1913 (Derricourt 1974: 50).

Brother Otto Mäeder went to the Kei River, Eastern Cape valley in 1913-14 to copy the rock paintings found by Schweiger (see Figures 25, 26 and 27). Br. Otto was a far better and far more objective recorder than Schweiger. At this time, the Abbé Breuil and Raymond Dart were advocating for the theory that San rock art was painted by foreigners. Interestingly, Br. Otto stated that there was no "reason to object to the conclusion that the paintings were made by" the indigenes of South Africa (Flett & Letley 2007: 116).

Summary

It was within this approximately 400 year timeframe that the panels at Xoro Gwai were painted. The interactions that occurred during this time are markedly varied. Prior to the 1820s, reports of San-speakers refer to encounters between the San- and Xhosa-speakers with close relationships existing between them including client relationships. Other reports after the 1820s refer to a melting pot of cultures and mixed groups of people such as Madolo's, which once had 300 heads of families. Madolo's group consisted of immigrant populations from the *mfecane*, which included Khoekhoen, people of mixed descent and Bantu-speakers. Furthermore, the Mfengu and several other groups fled to Madolo to escape accusations of witchcraft. In the early 19th century, a few individuals made successful adaptations, marrying Nguni partners or becoming rain-makers, a respected specialty in Nguni chiefdoms. The Thembu in particular are said to have adopted the San custom of removing one section of their finger. And in 1886, Silayi, a Thembu man, reported how San-speaking families were on friendly terms with his clan as well as with other Thembu groups.

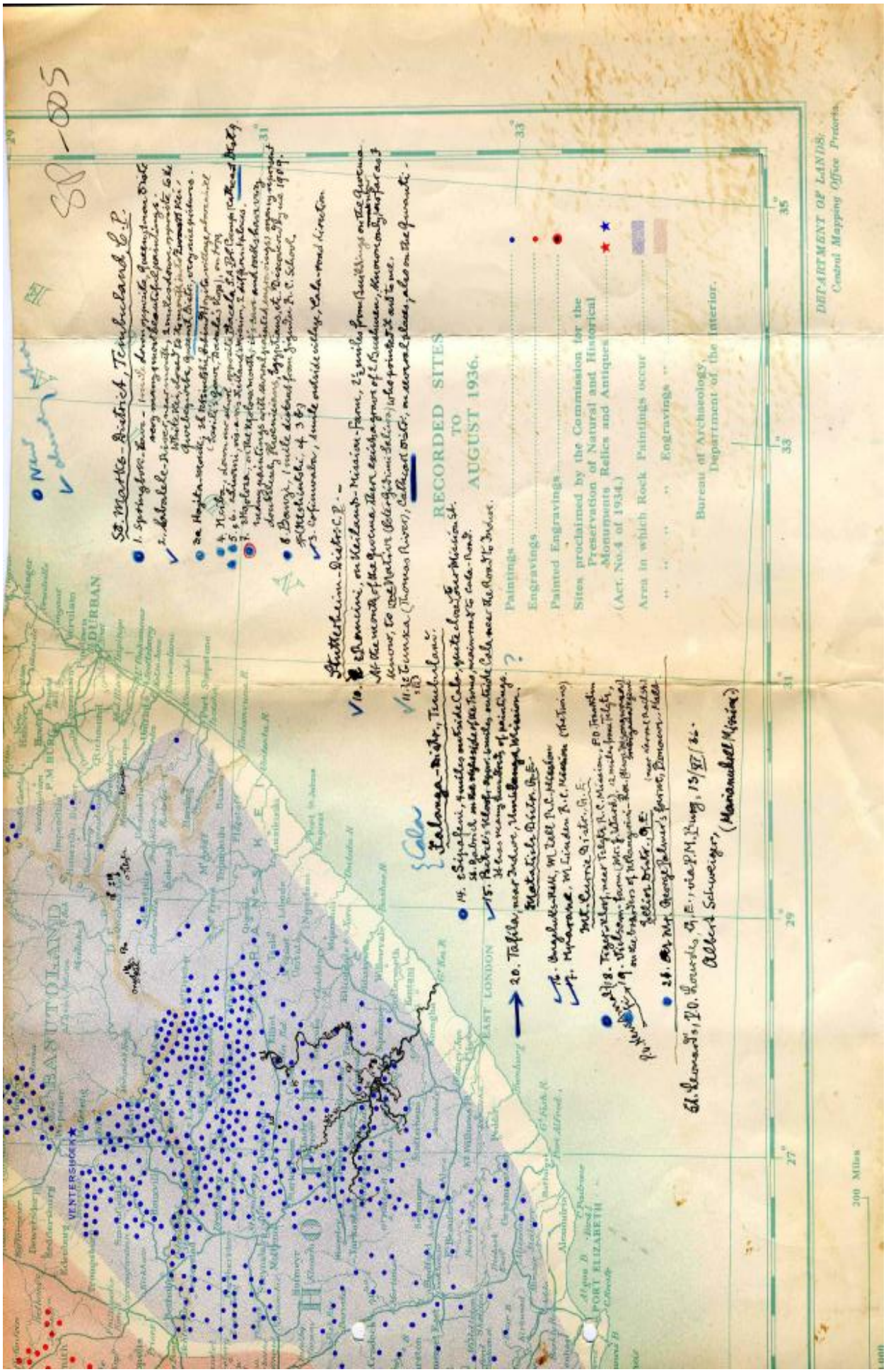


Figure 25: Albert Schweiger's map of rock art sites found in the Ciskei and Transkei. Image courtesy of the SARADA website

Figure 26: Brother Otto's watercolour of Xolobe rock art shelter (Tsomo District). Notice the black bands around the mid-drift and stomach. Image courtesy of the SARADA website

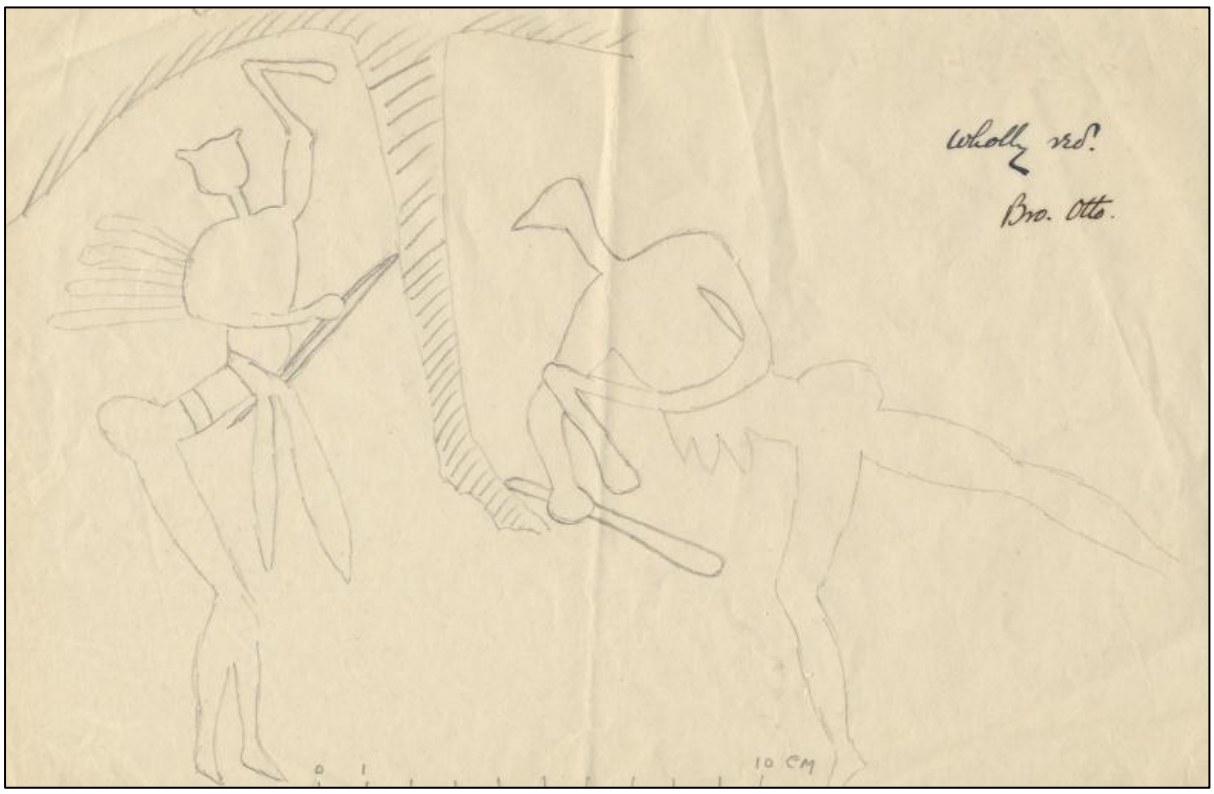


Figure 27: Brother Otto's drawing of several Tsomo District paintings with ox in the same rock art site. Notice the tied cloth around the middriff. Image courtesy of SARADA website

David Chidester (1996: 51) adapting Bhabha's 'third space of enunciation', argues that Khoe-San beliefs are "fluid because symbolic resources are deployed and adapted to meet the challenge of changing historical, social and economic situations; it lacks [standardization and] is open to inter-cultural exchanges and inter-religious interchanges" (Chidester 1996: 51). It "is the 'inter' – the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the in between space – that carries the burden of the meaning of culture". The in-between space of frontier relations is also the location of Khoe-San beliefs (Chidester 1996: 52). A virtual zone of religious exchanges occurs (Chidester 1996: 54).

Many of the interactions mentioned above occurred close to the site Xoro Gwai. The bottleneck context during the contact period in this area with the Cape Colony enclosing on San-speakers to the West, the Bantu-speaking groups fleeing from the impact of the mfecane and the boundaries of the Drakensberg to the North as well as the Indian Ocean to the southeast would have meant that many San-speakers would have encountered a number of groups for an undetermined duration at any given time. Historical reports refer to many Thembu and Xhosa groups engaging with San-speaking groups during the historical period.

Let me turn now to the ethnographies of both Khoe-San and Xhosa-speakers' ethnographies to discuss whether elements of their religious cosmology were shared. Interaction between these groups could have resulted in a change in the iconography of the rock art. The production and consumption of rock art, itself, is a ritual practice intimately inter-connected with the fluid and changing spirit realm as well as shamans acting as mediators in that realm. Regardless of where these beliefs originated from, the hybrid origins of such beliefs are affirmed in the iconography of the rock art of Xoro Gwai. The iconography and the interpretation of rock art is the starting point of the next chapter.

Chapter 6: Rock art interpretation

The informed ethnographic method extended by Patricia Vinnicombe (1976) and David Lewis-Williams (1991, 1992) is used in this study to attempt to gain an emic approach to understanding rock art. Informed approaches such as symbolic and ethnographic interpretations are commonly combined because together they strive for "an understanding of the meaning of rock art" (Chippindale & Taçon 1998: 79). Like all symbolic systems, rock art has social functions; one such function was "to communicate ideas and concepts to other people in the absence of its creator" (Chippindal & Taçon 1998: 80). All symbols have multiple levels of meaning that change according to who created them and who is viewing them. That certain rock art sites in a given region share similar motif assemblages or are stylistically equivalent demonstrates their shared temporal and social origin and nature. The only way truly to understand these shared motifs from a San or any hybridised perspective is through ethnography.

The process of using ethnographies to interpret rock art has generally become known as the ethnographic method. This process commonly involves the use of ethnographic analogy. Ethnographic analogy comprises the painted data on the one hand, and the ethnographic instance on the other. The argument then proceeds by induction and probability statements to suggest that the two may have correlations (Wylie 1982). In areas where the original artists have now gone, ethnographic analogies have been crucial in moving rock art studies beyond mere descriptions and speculative explanations. David Lewis-Williams (1990, 1991, 1992), for example, took San rock art studies to another level of interpretation by using ethnographic analogy. Unprecedented at the time, Lewis-Williams used recent northern Ju/'hoansi San ethnographies taken from the Kalahari and /Xam ethnographies to interpret San rock art of southern Africa. Since then, authors (Jolly 1986, 1994, 1996; Prins 1996a, 1996b; Hoff 1998) have used a range of recent ethnographies from Khoe-San descendants, which have dramatically expanded the wealth of extant ethnographies on Khoe-San-speaking peoples.

Yet, too often writers make simplistic analogies between one nineteenth century South African San narrative, based on one informant's view under particular socio-historical conditions, and the rock art (Wessels 2010: 43). To counter this, I use multiple ethnographic analogies with texts from various Khoe-San-speaking and Bantu-speaking groups so as to

engage in complex discussions of symbolism that embrace interaction and history. Hence, I make use of ethnographic analogy using not only the ethnographies from the Ju/'hoansi of the Kalahari and the Wilhelm Bleek and Lucy Lloyd collection but also those of the Khoekhoen and modern /Xam descendants in the Northern Cape and Namibia (Hoff 1997, 1998, 2007). Furthermore, Sigrid Schmidt's research (1975, 1997) on the Nama-speaking peoples of Namibia and the ethnographies of peoples closely tied to the regional history of the Eastern Cape area under study (Macquarrie 1962; Hall 1994; Jolly 1994; Prins 1996b) are also used. In order to discern relevance between these ethnographies that are set apart in time and spatial location, I choose cognitive structures and narratives that I argue are shared.

The 'classic' approach (Shamanism): Background

Prior to assessing the relevance and applicability of the diverse ethnographies mentioned above to the site Xoro Gwai, I briefly discuss the classic approach to interpreting rock art. A background to the classic approach will provide an understanding of the fundamental methods and arguments used. The classic approach makes use of multiple threads of evidence, which when combined create a strong and convincing argument, albeit with a number of unresolved issues.

This approach aids researchers in explaining elements within rock art panels that are not likely to be explicable using ethnography alone. It was during "the 1980s that southern African interpretations of San rock art began to concentrate on shamanism" (Blundell, Chippindale & Smith 2010: 2). There were two reasons for this. One, as researchers found imagery further and further afield it became apparent that a handful of images could be confidently associated with certain ritual aspects of San life; many of these concerned their shamanic beliefs and practices (Blundell, Chippindale & Smith 2010: 3). Two, researchers became cognisant of the neuropsychological research regarding imagery experienced in altered states of consciousness. This gave them a further interpretative tool for understanding the many inexplicable images in the art that, at first glance, might not appear directly explicable by ethnography. Over the course of the last two decades, "this dual ethnographic-neuropsychological approach has [gained global] acceptance as the most productive way of analysing San rock art: it has become known as the 'classic' approach" (*ibid.*).

David Lewis-Williams made the initial breakthrough in this approach when he drew an analogy between /Xam ethnography from the southern Cape and that of the Ju/'hoansi. The corpus of narratives allowed Lewis-Williams an 'insider's view' from "which to draw interpretations for the patterns of rock art" (McCall 2006: 225). Lewis-Williams also drew upon another historical record. Important accounts on other non-/Xam San-speaking people's beliefs were obtained by Joseph Millerd Orpen (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1999). Orpen's (1874) informant, Qing, provided explanations of rock paintings in the Maluti Mountains. Orpen's copies of the paintings were sent to Cape Town to the Cape Monthly magazine but the editor decided to send them to the Bleek family before publishing the magazine (Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2004a: 139-140). "Qing was the expedition guide and his words, translated by a Sotho interpreter and recorded by Orpen (1874), have proven a cornerstone in the ethnographically informed decipherment of San rock art" (Challis & Hollmann 2011).

Over a long period, Bleek and Lucy Lloyd had San informants, /Han≠kass'o, Diä!kwain and //Kabbo, to name a few, living with them and translated and documented "12 000 pages of verbatim accounts of daily life, folklore and myths" (Lewis-Williams 1990: 41). These narratives and translated scripts are vital to the understanding of San thought, metaphors and idioms.

Figure 28: The medicine dance of the *!Kung* in the Kalahari studied by Lorna Marshall (Mallen, Namono & Pearce 2009: 69)

Four informants from the Upper Karoo, including Diä!kwain and his sister !Kweiten ta //ken from the Katberg as well as //Kabbo and /Han≠kass'o from the Strontbergen personified the rain as !Khwa (Hoff 1998: 109). Sometimes, specific facets of the weather were personified. Examples include references to rain-water, falling rain, mist and clouds, which were described respectively as the 'Rain's Blood', the 'Rain's Breath' and the 'Rain's Hair' (a possible reference to the spikes of hair on the lower rain-animals at Xoro Gwai) (*ibid.*). However, the rain was also personified as a being, which could take the form of a bull or an eland (*ibid.*). As already mentioned, /Han≠kass'o referred to the rain as resembling a bull. Similarly, !Kweiten ta //ken told the story of three girls caught in a rainstorm. As the rain fell it formed a pool in the shape of a bull. The great waterhole formed and engulfed one of the girls and she transformed into a frog (*ibid.*). Meanwhile, the two other girls quickly sprinkled

buchu between the horns of the bull, walked along the bull's back and landed safely back on dry ground (*ibid*.). Diä!kwain, too, referred to the rain as the water- or rain-bull.

Another source Lewis-Williams drew upon was the ethnographies around the medicine dance of the Ju/'hoansi, which were key in understanding the paintings and trance. Ethnographers such as Lorna Marshall (1969) recorded the medicine dance of the Ju/'hoansi or the Ju/'hoansi San (see Figure 28). The most important element in the dance is *n/um* or *n/om*, which is likened to potency. *N/um* is also in the medicine men's stomachs (Lewis-William 1990: 28). The women sing and clap in a circle around the men. The act of singing the medicine songs is essential since it activates *n/um*. Medicine men say that the *n/um* should be heated so men clasp and roll hot embers in their hands and throw them onto their backs (Marshall 1969). During trance the *n/um* becomes so hot it boils up the shamans' spines and into their heads where it explodes and overwhelms them, whereupon they lose their senses and start to stagger. This is usually when they go into trance.

Figure 29: The alleged 'rain-capture scene' explained by Qing to Joseph Orpen (Lewis-Williams 1980: 474)

The medicine dance and associated conditions such as epistaxis (nasal bleeding) can be recognised as a common feature in the art. Most importantly, analogy allowed Lewis-Williams to recognise that the trance dance of the Ju/'hoansi shares many features with Qing's testimony.

The ethnography and the trance dance assist in explaining a considerable number of paintings. Qing spoke about a painting depicting what we now know as a 'rain-capture scene' (Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2004a: 139; see Figure 29). Referring to the bovid in the picture, Qing told Orpen that the animal was a snake and that the men were trying to capture it (Orpen 1874: 10). They were doing this by "holding out charms to it and catching it with a long reim" or thong (*ibid.*). Furthermore, and most probably to Orpen's confusion, Qing spoke about the men being underwater and about 'strokes' as things growing underwater (*ibid.*). Qing, referring to paintings that resembled a trance dance, mentioned nasal haemorrhaging caused by what Qing calls being 'spoilt' by the dance (*ibid.*). Later, Lewis-Williams (1990) interpreted spoilt to mean entering deep trance (but see Solomon 1997 for an alternative interpretation).

However, much of this ethnography needs to be translated and deciphered and this leads to some problems. The use of these ethnographies is problematic for several reasons. One, the ethnographers who write ethnographies are not neutral observers but rather subjectively select information that is essential to their research and ignore information that they consider irrelevant. James Clifford (1986: 10) argues that researchers cannot seek out one truth, only partiality. Two, anthropologists and the people or things under study are polysemic. Within a given context, there are many voices of representation and explanation. In many cases, ethnographers, as social and cultural agents, have pre-conceived ideas of what they will find in their fieldwork and thus report only those events or particularities that correspond to their pre-conceived ideas. In many cases another ethnographer who conducts similar fieldwork will draw completely different conclusions. Lastly, Clifford (1986: 10) refers to how cultures can be captured within a single frame or moment but this ultimately contains with it a process of exclusion, simplification, selection of a temporal focus, and the creation of a specific self-other relationship.

In rock art studies these problems are commonly overt, since many researchers attempt forcibly to 'fit' the ethnography to the data (paintings and/or engravings). Arguments are often weak since they use a form of 'ethnographic snap' and thus utilise ethnographies without critical reflexivity. Solomon (1998: 281) argues that, as a result, the use of ethnography in rock art studies typically emphasises commonalities and downplays disparities in the rock art and its contexts through time and in space. This chapter outlines a

few of these arguments in relation to rock art interpretations using ethology (or the study of animal behavioural patterns).

This is further problematised because many of the older ethnographies were written ‘out of time’ or in an ethnographic present. This, in effect, immortalises one ethnic group or people in time and space. Much criticism (Solomon 1997, 1999; Lewis-Williams 2006b) of South African San rock art research has concerned researchers allegedly applying ethnographies to their data without taking into account how changes in time and space have followed closely alongside changes in the meanings and symbolism of the art.

Figure 30: Photograph of panel A in its entirety

For instance, in Orpen’s account, Qing and Orpen spoke different languages and therefore the accounts needed to be translated. Other problems were that the text was filled with racial biases, and the fact that Orpen had to string Qing’s disjointed and jumbled statements together to form a complete narrative, after the encounter occurred. Moreover, Qing spoke the Phuthi language and had lived with the Phuthi, a Bantu-speaking society, for a long time prior to meeting Orpen. Qing stayed “with Nqasha; son of the Phuthi chief, Moorosi and a

San woman, when interviewed by Orpen" (Jolly 1996: 254). Moreover, Qing mentioned 'milking' a rain-animal that was referred to as a cow. These terms indicate an understanding of animal domestication and therefore signify changes in belief that had come about from interaction and/or creolisation. Such interaction, also, points to changes in beliefs and the concept that many of these strikingly similar beliefs in ethnographies have hybrid origins.

To increase the probability that ethnography can aid us in explaining rock art, researchers should provide more than one parallel (Lewis-Williams & Loubser 1986: 263). For example, with regard to nasal bleeding, we can link epistaxis with the historical accounts, the ethnography and the rock art itself. A study that provides further explanation for nasal bleeding and a range of imagery seen in the art is the study of altered states of consciousness.

Ethnography gives us a clue into the meanings of the art, for the artists themselves and the general community that would have seen it, but it is also limiting since explanations of paintings are often laden with San idioms and idiosyncratic artists' impressions that are often confusing to Westerners (Lewis-Williams 1990). Therefore, researchers try to find common features in the biology of the mammalian brain in order to understand the art. Neuropsychology is the study of altered states of consciousness and tells us about unusual, often obscure aspects of rock art that are not easily recognisable from the ethnography alone. This abundance of evidence led Lewis-Williams and others to begin arguing that most if not all San rock art was in some way associated with shamans in altered states of consciousness or shamanism.

Lastly, the classic approach explored the immediate context of the rock art, the actual rock surface. The rock art itself is fundamental to understanding the meanings of the imagery since it reveals the context in which the other threads can be applied. We know from the rock art itself that the rock surface is important since it acts as a veil between the real world and the spirit world (Lewis-Williams 1995). In San art and thought there is no such notion as a *tabula rasa* or a blank canvas upon which to paint. Shamans painting on the rock surface would act as mediators between worlds (Lewis-Williams 1995: 78). Looking at these images in trance would have added to and become part of their hallucinations (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1990: 15). Through the veil one could enter the spirit world and leave the spirit world through cracks, crevices, waterholes, 'bags' or termite hills (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1990: 5). Importantly, Xoro Gwai is situated less than ten metres from a waterhole, a potential portal to

the spirit world. Moreover, snakes with horns or antelope heads are not uncommon meandering in and out of cracks (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1990: 6). Shamans state that they travel to the spirit world through holes (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1990: 9). The tunnel vortex between stages two and three of altered states of consciousness is sometimes felt like delving into an opening in the ground or holes in the rock surface (*ibid*.).

The classic approach has managed to explain a large mass of the art such as threads of light, dots, zigzag lines and u-shapes while other explanations fail to account for these. Specific features of the art itself, with the aid of the neuropsychological approach and the ethnography, can uncover what the art could have meant for San-speaking peoples. The classic approach thus can help to reveal much more about the shamanistic context in which the art was made and consumed. Turning to panel A at Xoro Gwai rock shelter, we can discern a number of non-real elements that can be explained using the classic approach.

Step 1: Interpreting select elements using the classic approach

The elements of this panel that are more difficult to explain or 'non-real' will be discussed using the ethnographic-neuropsychological method.

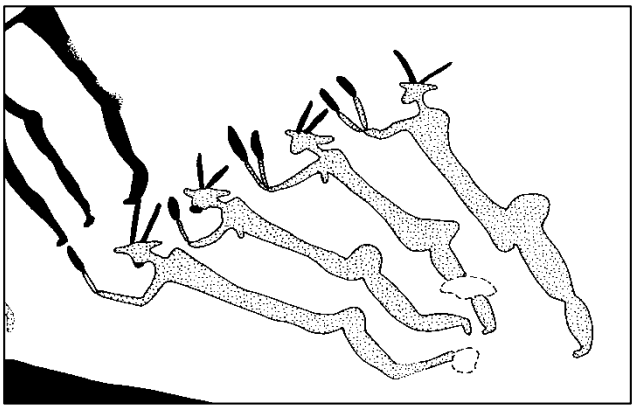


Figure 31: Female and male therianthropes with antelope horns, ears and nose and carrying one or two fly-switches

Focusing on the human figures, viewers can recognise how elongated the upper torsos and many of the figures' legs are. The figures appear to be stretched. At least twenty of these stretched figures are therianthropes (humans with antelope horns). A rare occurrence of both male and female therianthropic figures are represented in this panel. Although not a focus of this research, gender and the social relations between the sexes could have played an important part in the 'readings' of this panel (e.g. see Solomon 1997, 1999 for a 'reading' of San rock art using gender theory).

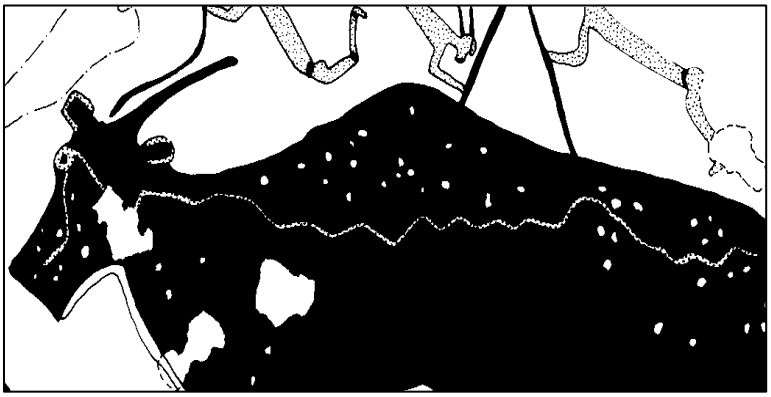


Figure 32: Red zigzags emanating from the eye of one water-bull

Red zigzags are seen coming from the eyes of the two upper black animals (see Figure 32). Painted zigzags derive from "entoptic mental imagery perceived during early stages of trance" (Dowson & Holliday 1989: 46). In later and deeper stages of trance iconic imagery of people, animals and "so forth are perceived, but not to the exclusion of entoptic imagery: iconic hallucinations are often seen against a backdrop of entoptic forms" (*ibid*.). The combination of zigzags (entoptic forms) with elows (iconic elements) thus probably originated in a hallucination experienced by a San-speaking shaman-artist.

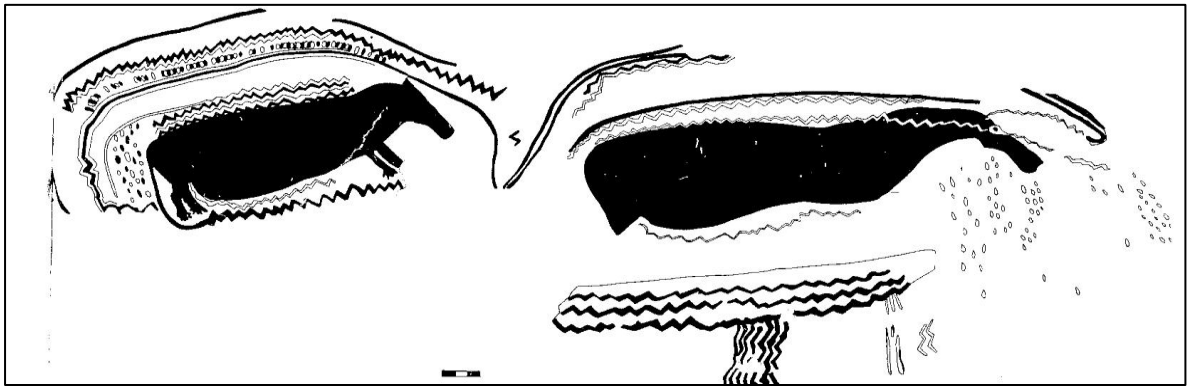


Figure 33: Hallucinatory rain-animals and zigzags painted in red and white, Bethlehem District. Notice the painted zigzags passing through the eye of the eland rain-animal to the right (Dowson & Holliday 1989: 47)

Yet neuropsychology does not explain what the zigzags signified to the shaman-artists. We know from ethnographies that shamans-of-the-rain entered trance to capture rain-animals and to make rain. This is linked to the rock art panels of rain-animals with zigzag motifs. The eland linked with these zigzags may be associated with rain-making because, in one of the myths Lloyd collected in 1878, /Han≠kasso said that a very long time ago a man hunted *!Khwa*, the rain (Dowson & Holliday 1989: 46).

/Han≠kasso said the rain was like an eland. By killing this eland it was said men caused rain to fall (*ibid*.). At a rock art site in Bethlehem in the Free State, Dowson and Anne Holliday (1989: 47) have found rock paintings of two rain-animals both with zigzag lines encircling their bodies (see Figure 33). Additionally, the left rain-animal's tail ends in a zigzag line while the rain-animal to the right has a zigzag line that merges with its eye. A similar rain-animal and zigzag motif is identified in panel A at Xoro Gwai. According to Dowson and Holliday (1989: 46), the zigzag represents supernatural "potency 'seen' only to shamans during rain-making and other trance activities".

Figure 34: Large black figure displaying a form of infibulation

The rain-animals in panel A partly resemble elands and elands are believed by the Ju/'hoansi to contain more supernatural potency than any other creature. When an eland has just been killed Ju/'hoansi men like to 'dance eland n/um' next to the carcass so they can exploit the supernatural potency that is released when it dies (Dowson & Holliday 1989: 46). These zigzags probably represent this strong released potency. I will return to the zigzag motif later in this chapter.

I now turn to another seemingly inexplicable phenomenon in rock art that of the large black figure's penis. In panel A the penis of the large black creature has a short thin line hanging from it ending with a bobble. San rock art includes a large number of male figures with lines across their penises (Woodhouse 1979: 106). Woodhouse (1979: 106) has identified several variations on this line. In some images, thinner lines hang down from the penis, while others display lines ending in bobbles. Alas, there is no recorded observation of this possible item of adornment in use among living people in Africa. Its purpose cannot be inferred from

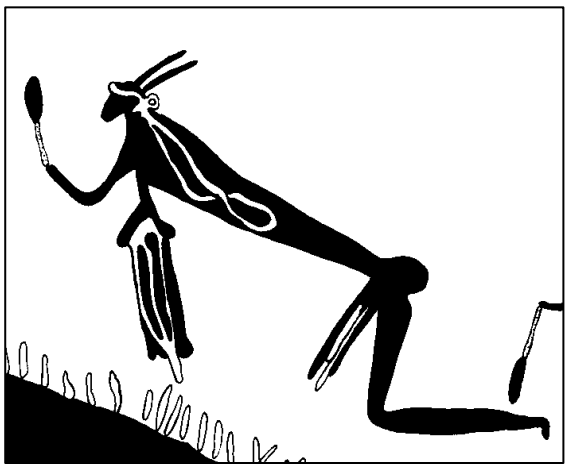


Figure 35: Paraphernalia worn by shamans during the medicine dance. Notice the 'bag' or medicine box hanging down from the figure's shoulder

any historical source. Recent attempts (Blundell 2004; George 2009) at explaining this motif regard it as symbolic or related to the sexual potency of powerful shamans in altered states of consciousness. For instance, Leanne George (2009) argues that, in the volatile context of historical Nomansland, the representation of large and unusual penises have something to do with the interplay between sexual secretions, fat, power and potency. The assertion that these were produced during the contact period is largely based on conjecture and no dates.

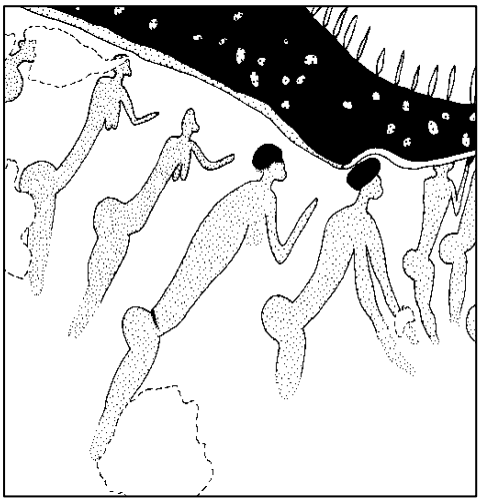


Figure 36: Women clapping. Notice the breasts and coiffures

Apart from infibulation, all the phenomena mentioned above are said to be experienced by test subjects during altered states of consciousness. These non-real phenomena point to the panel being of a shamanistic nature and to do with shamans in trance during out-of-body experiences, either entering or already within the spirit world.

Moreover, other elements point to the ethnographic medicine dance and medicine men and women. In the lower left hand corner, women signified by breasts and headdresses or coiffures are seen to be clapping (see Figure 36). Therianthropes and other figures such as the lower centre figure are holding flywhisks painted in black and red. Paraphernalia seen in this panel occur in the ethnographies of the Ju/'hoansi in the Kalahari and include front aprons, dancing sticks, dancing rattles and medicine boxes. The objects hanging from the figures on the lower right hand side are probably tortoise shell medicine boxes with tassels made from many strands of ostrich eggshell beads, used in the trance dance, or they could also represent bags with tassels (see Figure 35).

Natural modelling

Another method that has gained popularity of late is natural modelling. Whitley (2005: 81) argues that among "traditional peoples many symbols are in fact based on natural models". These are "natural phenomena, like animal behaviour, that served to structure the logic underlying aspects of religious symbolism and ritual, usually by some form of analogical reasoning" (Whitley 2005: 81). Natural modelling refers to the inclusion of certain features

and behaviours of animals in belief systems in order to elucidate a variety of social and spiritual phenomena. San-speakers, it is argued, would have incorporated their keen observations of animal behaviours and attributes into their cosmology and rock art (Mallen 2005: 5). Following this argument, the art is said to make reference to details of animal behaviour that can still be observed today, and this offers a link to the past. However, the subtext in such a case is that symbolism is highly empirical (Whitley 2005: 82).

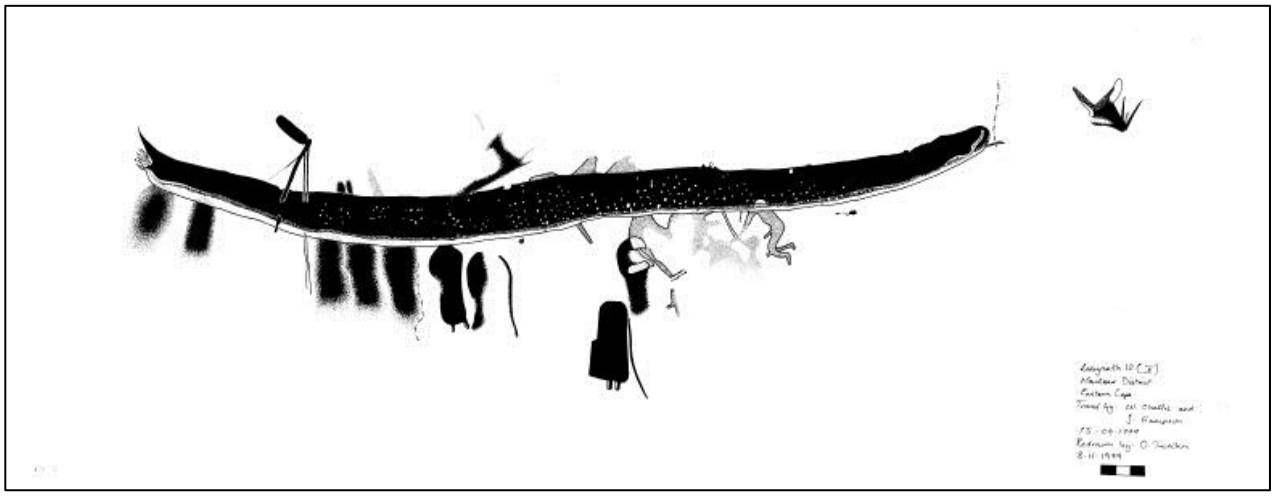


Figure 37: Redrawing of serpent-like creature at LAB X, Nomansland (Mallen 2005)

Thus, what are seen as salient "characteristics and behavioural traits in the biological sciences of the present will not necessarily correlate with the past observations of the San-speaking people" (Mallen 2005: 5). The borrowing from Western biology thus would be akin to creating our own ethnography (*ibid.*). It is for this reason that "ethology and ethnography need to be closely interwoven in order for natural models to be employed as a means of insight into San rock art" (*ibid.*). Natural modelling should be used with caution.

I argue that many authors have used natural modelling to direct their research, and relying on natural modelling can be problematic, especially in cases where very little relevant ethnographic information is used. I cite two examples, those of Lara Mallen (2005) and Jeremy Hollmann (2005). Lara Mallen (2005: 5), looking at a panel in Nomansland, uses ethnology and ethology to identify characteristics of a serpent-like creature painted in LAB X rock shelter (see Figure 37). She argues that the representation of the serpent-like creature is modelled on a specific snake species (Mallen 2005: 5). Although Mallen admits the imagery is clearly supernatural, she argues that the serpent-like animal is modelled on a 'real' snake,

citing other examples of snakes identified by Lewis-Williams (1988: 7) and Slingsby: a rhinkals (Hemachatus hemachatus) and a cobra respectively.

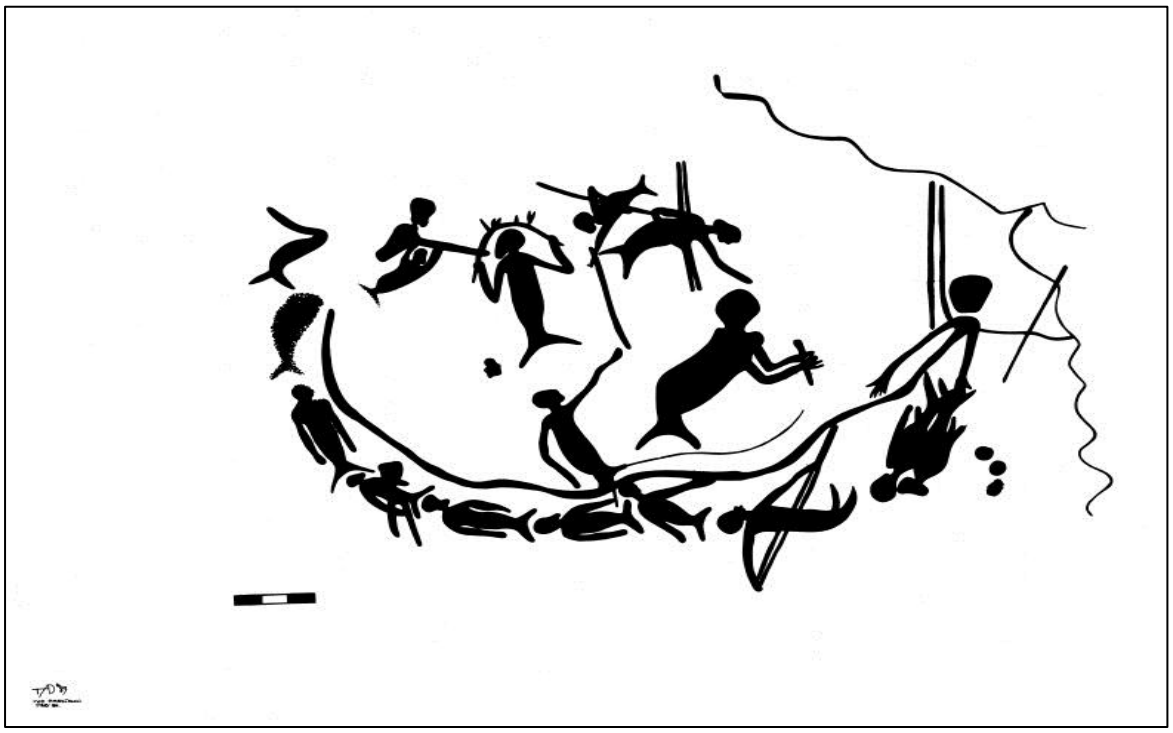


Figure 38: Ezeljagspoort, Western Cape. 'Mermaid scene'. RSA EZE1. Redrawn by Thomas Dowson. Image courtesy of the SARADA website

However, these species were deduced from secondary characteristics such as the behaviour of the rhinkals acting dead. In Mallen's case, she observes that one of the primary morphological features of this serpent-like creature is a tapering tail that is short and narrow in relation to the rest of the body. This, she argues, is a characteristic of a female adder. Furthermore, the white stripe which rises at an angle near the snake's head is a feature displayed on puff adders (*Britis arictans arictans*). Mallen, having consulted an expert on snakes, confidently identifies the sex of the supernatural serpent-like creature by the single morphological feature of a tapering tail.

This is not problematic in itself. What is problematic, by her own admittance, is the relationship between ethology and ethnography, in the case of the puff adder. The ethnography states that the puff adder is one of the 'rain's things'. That is the only reference to a puff adder.

Turning to another example, Jeremy Hollmann (2005) identifies swifts as specifically selected by painters as a natural model for several of their motifs. He argues that they selected these birds because they considered the specific arrangements and features concerned with the flight of swifts – "circulating, wing-clapping, mating, as well as aspects of their habitat – especially significant and meaningful" (Hollmann 2005: 25). Swift postures and arrangements, according to Hollmann, can be identified in the rock art shelter of Ezeljagspoort. However, his argument, like Mallen's, is based on very little ethnographic detail. The swallow was identified only by Diä!kwain as belonging to the rain. Hollman (2005) however, creates a more convincing argument by linking this ethnographic reference to the G/wi San from central Kalahari in Botswana, general beliefs surrounding birds, flight and altered states of consciousness.

I do not reject natural modelling as an approach that can aid researchers to be directed towards ethnography on a certain creature or rock art motif (see, for instance, Mguni 2006 for an argument using natural modelling and the 'formlings' motif). However, when used uncritically with a paucity of ethnography, we are making our own Western ethnography and we could be diverging into directions that are not delineated by ethnography but rather speculation.

I showed panel A to two zoologists at the University of the Witwatersrand to discover whether they in fact could identify any specific species or behaviour of species. Dr Marshall and Professor Norman Owen-Smith identified the two top animals as eland-like by the distinct hump below the neck and the horns. They also referred to these animals as demonstrating cow-like qualities.

The zoologists considered that the heads of the therianthropic figures were too vague to be identified as those of any one specific species, while the animal in the right hand corner of the panel was identified as a cow by Professor Owen-Smith. Owen-Smith recognised distinct cow-like horns and udders. On the other hand they identified the three slug-like creatures as having features in common with warthogs. To Dr Marshall the arc across the muzzle suggests tusks, and warthogs have a mane of hair that looks somewhat like the spikes down the spines of the creatures in the panel. According to Marshall, warthogs are frequently seen wallowing or seated (like dogs); the absence of hind legs in this representation could be a reflection of

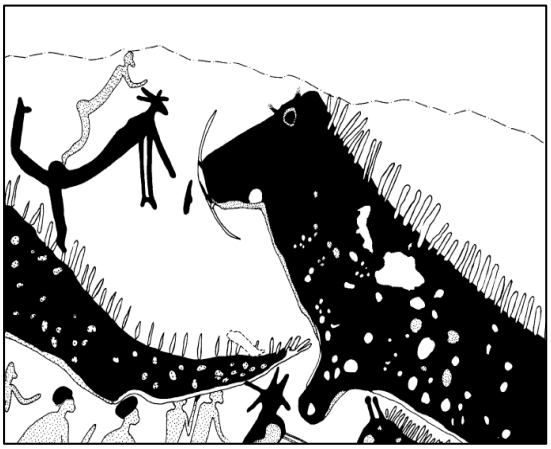
this. Professor Owen-Smith suggested that the largest creature was a female warthog due to the lack of large warts below its eyes.

Fascinatingly, warthog tusks have been uncovered at a rock shelter not far from Xoro Gwai by Simon Hall. Working some eighty kilometres to the south-west of Xoro Gwai rock shelter, Hall (2000: 141) unearthed the incomplete remains of Burial 6 at Welgeluk nestled in the Cape Fold Belt, which included a desert warthog (*Phacochoerus aethiopicus*) tusk as part of its grave goods. This grave goods pattern is regionally significant and is repeated in burials at the nearby sites of Spitzkop and Middelkop in the Cape Fold Belt. Hall (2000: 141) is yet to date these burials, but states that a consideration of the behaviour of warthog indicates "that the essence of the animal provides an [apt] symbol in the context of death". Firstly, warthogs prefer well-watered habitats, and they frequent waterholes to drink throughout the day. Warthogs are also found wallowing in mud in waterholes for long periods. Most importantly, warthogs recycle aardvark burrows, where they remain through cold nights and where they rear their young (Hall 2000: 141). In winter, warthogs stay underground until midday and when they emerge, they move straight to the waterhole to drink. Warthogs are constantly moving between diverse contexts; from the subterranean realm, across open terrain and into waterholes (Hall 2000: 141-142). Their inhabitation of these liminal zones correlates with the spirit realm and shamans, who are said to enter the spirit realm through water holes and termite hills. Moreover, in panel A, the way warthogs sit in these aardvark burrows with their fronts facing outwards from the hole may have provided the impression that the creature has no hind legs. In line with Hall (2000), in a three tiered cosmos, ritual practitioners or shamans in altered states of consciousness may envision the aardvark burrow as a portal into the spirit realm and see the warthog as a creature that encompasses terrestrial and aquatic or underworld activities. Thus, the warthog transgresses these two tiers. The warthog with its front out of the burrow would take the form of an actual warthog, however its hind legs are hidden and in trance the underworld elements and abilities of the warthog could be conflated with subterranean or aquatic imagery such as a serpentine tail.

It is possible that warthog symbolism is particular to this area. In fact, desert warthogs formerly inhabited South Africa, in the south-eastern parts of the former Cape Province and apparently adjacent parts of KwaZulu-Natal, but are long since extinct there (d'Huart & Grubb 2001). Their extinction is possibly due to the desert warthog population succumbing to the rinderpest outbreak of the 1860s (d'Huart & Grubb 2001: 157).

However, we have no record of warthogs in the Bleek and Lloyd ethnography. This could be the result of a regional disparity between warthog habitats in the Western and Northern Cape and the occurrence of warthog in the Eastern Cape.

It would thus be interesting if local Bantu-speaking peoples or descendants of Khoe-San-speakers from the area under study have any insights into warthog symbolism.



Figures 39 and 40: Left: Seated common warthog (Phacochoerus africanus). Right: Head of lower right rain-animal

This would be intriguing since the knowledge of desert warthogs might have been passed down and filtered into the symbolism of rain-animals prior to or around 1860 but until ethnography is obtained on warthogs we can only speculate.

Change and interaction

Neither the classic approach nor natural modelling account for overt change and we need to assess ethnographies and elements in the rock art panel that could signify changes and interaction.

So far I have nit-picked and selected individual elements to link to ethnography and neuropsychology. This approach is limiting since researchers pinpoint selected motifs as if they are unchanging. Moreover, Schmidt (1979) argues that the elements of San beliefs should be seen in a larger context, as part of a range of beliefs around a theme.

Fortunately, panel A seems to present a cognitive structure or 'scene'. Assuming we have identified a series of potential meanings for a series of rock art symbols, how can we determine which symbols were intended by the artist(s)? The answer lies in the "context and association of different kinds of symbols that play" diverse roles in a specific symbolic system (Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2009: 43). According to David Lewis-Williams and David Pearce (2009: 43) it "is scenic relationships, instances where actions [hold] images together in, for instance, depictions of dances or hunts" that are such symbolic systems. It is through scenic relationships that we can begin to track changes in rock art. These conceptual relationships are how the San made sense of panels and thus offer an avenue for rock art researchers to gauge whether change occurred due to interaction. A widespread theme in Khoe-San-speakers' beliefs is knowledge of shamans or doctors working with the water-bull[2] and water-snake.

Step 2: Interpreting scenic relationships associated with the theme of shamans working with the water-bull and water-snake.

Derricourt (1977: 18) found evidence of cattle in the Ciskei only from the 16th century. The introduction of cattle from pastoralists or Bantu-speaking farmers and/or the osmosis of the knowledge of cattle-keeping saw cattle being incorporated into the religious beliefs and cosmology of San-speaking peoples and the rock art. Many authors (Jolly 1996; Hammond-Tooke 1999) have argued how this knowledge was disseminated.

Close contact over extended periods of time can result in cultural and ideological change due to marriage, friendship, and economic ties (Jolly 1996: 279). Such interaction can also involve power relations between groups. As Ian Hodder (1982: 104) remarks, hunter-gatherers usually had a lower status compared to their agriculturalist and/or pastoralist neighbours. This, according to Hodder usually resulted in hunter-gatherers adopting the dominant culture. However, this top-down interpretation is problematic since it leaves no space for a more nuanced exchange between groups, as we have seen in the history of this area. For instance, Xhosa groups in the Ciskei used rain-specialists since the Xhosa, in this case, recognised the San-speaking people as the autochthonous 'first people' of the area and

[2] Water-bull and rain-bull are used inter-changeably in this research report.

therefore gave them a privileged role in that society (Jolly 1998). Furthermore, cattle were sometimes given in exchange for such services.

One possibility argued by Campbell (1987: 47) was that Bantu-speaking farmers providing cattle to Khoe-San-speaker rainmakers had to be convinced that they were not wasting their cattle. Thus, San-speaking communities might have used an ox or cow to represent the rain-animal in actual rain-making rituals. This would have been even more likely as eland became more and more scarce (Lewis-Williams & Loubser 1986). Significantly, the /Xam word *xoro* translated as 'animal' in rain-animal is also "translated as 'ox', 'cattle' or 'bull', both in rain-making and other contexts" (Campbell 1987: 51). Cattle must therefore have fitted their image of a water-animal. This concurs with Lewis-Williams' (1989: 147) suggestion that cattle became symbols of potency. Moreover, Ansie Hoff (1998: 123) refers to how cattle would have been equated with the eland as an image for the water-animal. Eland and cattle have prominent features in common such as dewlaps and humps, which the San connected to potency. Furthermore, beef and eland are similar in taste, both have large amounts of fat which are associated with potency, and they have similar spoor. This could be why panel A displays rain-animals with cow-like qualities. The muzzle-like square jaw together with the block-like shape of the rain-animals as well as the actual cow in the right-hand corner could illustrate this change in progress.

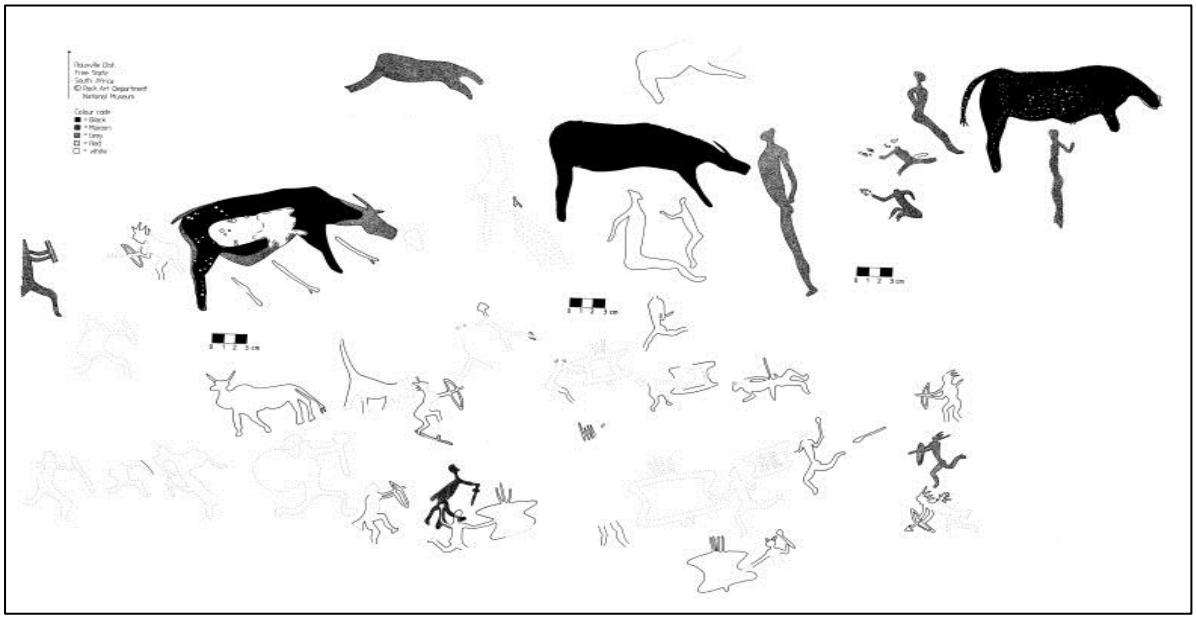


Figure 41: Free State painting of contact imagery with rain-animal (NASMUS-RSA-MRR1). Redrawn by Jannie Loubser. Originally recorded by George William Stow

Figure 42: Free State painting contact imagery with rain-animal. Photograph supplied by William Challis. Originally recorded by George William Stow

In fact, Campbell (1987: 51), Schmidt (1997) and Jolly (1998) suggest that *all* rain-making scenes belong to a final period of art-making. Indeed the concept of the rain-bull may have even been brought to southern Africa by Bantu-speaking farmers, replacing the water-snake or eland in San rain-symbolism (Jolly 1998). However, replacement may be an extreme interpretation; I argue that panel A suggests hybridity rather than replacement or adoption. As we shall see later into this chapter, San spirituality and cosmology was far more flexible and adaptive than some researchers allow. Cattle, I argue, were incorporated alongside beliefs of the water-snake in the Eastern Cape and did not replace previous associations of eland with rain.

Rain-making scenes illustrating shamans interacting with a water-bull or many water-bulls are seen in a number of paintings that have explicit contact imagery, thus reaffirming the attribution of the rain-bull to later periods of art-making.

For instance, a fine line painting from the Free State has a similar configuration of figures interacting with a very similar rain-animal or water-bull to that seen in panel A. Moreover, as shown in Figure 41, this scene has three definite elows (cow-eland conflations) or water-bulls depicted in profile with square-muzzles and sharp straight horns pointing backwards.

Figure 43: Photograph displaying the water-bull in connection with figures that have looped earrings. Originally recorded by George William Stow

Figure 41 or site MRR1 has a water-bull with fish or strokes swimming under or around the creature and within the same panel are depictions of figures with spears, assegais and Basotho shields. All three animals have figures engaging with them in specific ways. Many figures seem to be restricting or controlling the movements of the water-bulls in various ways. Figures are represented standing in front, seated behind or under the water-bull. Moreover, figures are depicted reaching up with one arm under the animals which is similar to the actions of the figures in panel A.

Another image from the Free State (Figure 43) depicts an eland-cow conflation with several figures engaging around it with a similar 'arm reaching up to the rain-animal' motif. This panel has several depictions of explicit contact imagery including red looped earrings and long red throwing assegais.

Furthermore, Jolly (1998: 263) has found that San groups in the south-western Cape hardly ever painted cattle or snakes, even though there is evidence that hunter-gatherers shared this area with pastoralists for some one thousand years. Yet, within the south-eastern mountains and adjacent areas of the Eastern Cape, there are a considerable number of paintings of cattle and of snakes. The occurrence and distribution of these paintings, Jolly (1998: 263) argues, closely mirrors the occurrence and distribution of settled Bantu-speaking farmers of this area. However, this is not to say that interactions were homogenous, for the historical records document many regional and temporal disparities occurring between areas and across time. It appears that the rain or water-bull is widespread among Khoe-San-speakers as well as Bantu-speakers (Hoff 1997; Schmidt 1997; Hoff 1998, 2007; Deacon 2010). Accounts can be read from groups of Damara- and Nama-speakers of Namibia, /Xam speakers in the Western and Northern Cape, and the Khoekhoen of the Northern Cape as well as many Bantu-speaking groups (see Figure 44). Furthermore, images of the cow-eland conflation are found on engraved rocks in the Free State (Deacon 2010) and in rock paintings in the Free State and

the Eastern Cape. In this study, Xhosa-speaking groups will be the focus as these were the main social formations that had continued and intense contact with the Khoe-San over a prolonged time during the contact period in the area around Xoro Gwai (see Chapter 5).

A corpus of ethnography focusing on both the water-bull and water-snake was collected by Sigrid Schmidt (1975, 1997) and Ansie Hoff (1997, 1998). Since 1991, Hoff conducted her study among the /Xam descendants of Bushmanland and the Upper Karoo and the Khoekhoen of the Northern Cape and Namibia. Hoff (1998: 109) interviewed twenty-five informants of /Xam descent and twenty-five Khoekhoen. Most were over seventy years old. Similarly, Sigrid Schmidt's literature (1975, 1997) on the /Xam and the Nama-speaking peoples and the Damara in Namibia provides invaluable information about these two forms of rain-animal. Importantly, both /Xam descendants and the Khoekhoen had been subjected to substantial culture change. In San rock art as in religious beliefs, certain motifs or beliefs remain the same while others are more prone to change. Interaction and the historical events of the area affect the ethnographic material gathered and researchers cannot assume that cultural groups remained the same.

Can the ethnographies on the water-bull and the water-snake explain more of panel A? Let us now turn and delve into the contents of the beliefs around these two forms of rain-animals to discern whether the iconography of panel A correlates with the descriptions and actions of doctors and rain-animals recorded in these ethnographies.

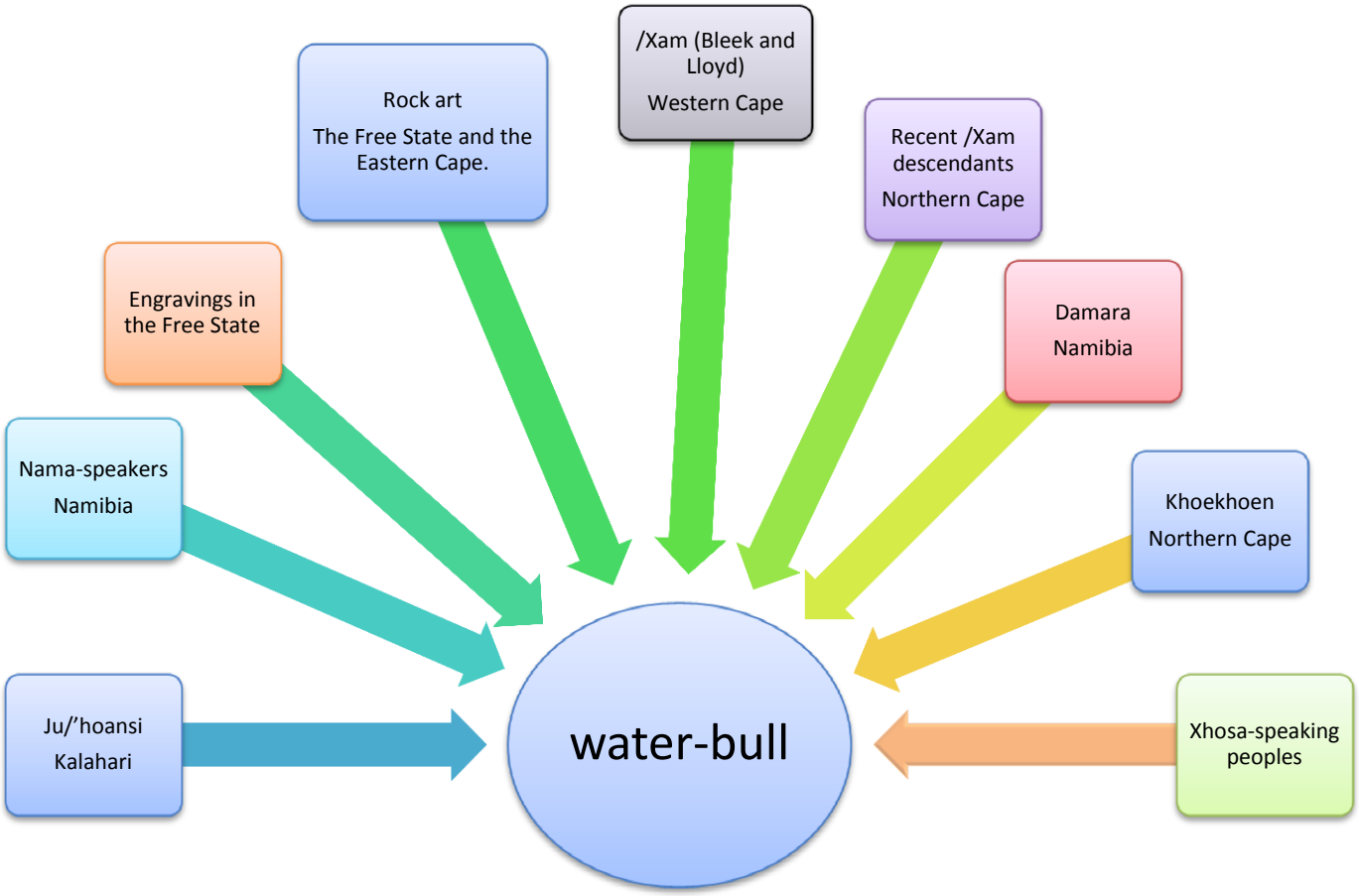


Figure 44: A diagram reflecting the diverse forms and widespread beliefs of the water-bull

Description of the water-bull

Most of Hoff's informants referred to the water-bull as being small in size (the size of a calf) or between one and three feet high (Hoff 1998: 112). The colour of the water-bull was usually given as red or brown, with two informants referring to it being black (*ibid.*). The elows in panel A are black. The water-bull's horns were described as curved and white or red in colour. Most informants referred to white rings around the eyes or red eyes, and a red ring around the mouth or a red mouth. In panel A, we see red rings around the eyes and zigzag motifs emanating from the eyes of two of the rain-animals.

While seven informants referred to the water-bull as having a prominent hump, indicating male water-bulls (Hoff 1998: 112; see Figure 45), the word 'bull' in water- or rain-bull here does not necessarily mean the bull was male, but rather of indeterminate sex.

Most informants mentioned the water-bull being a ‘medicine thing’ and that a ‘doctor’ could obtain water-bull parts such as its horns for medicine or purposes of divination (Hoff 1998: 112). Most informants mentioned the rain-animals having thongs or halters.

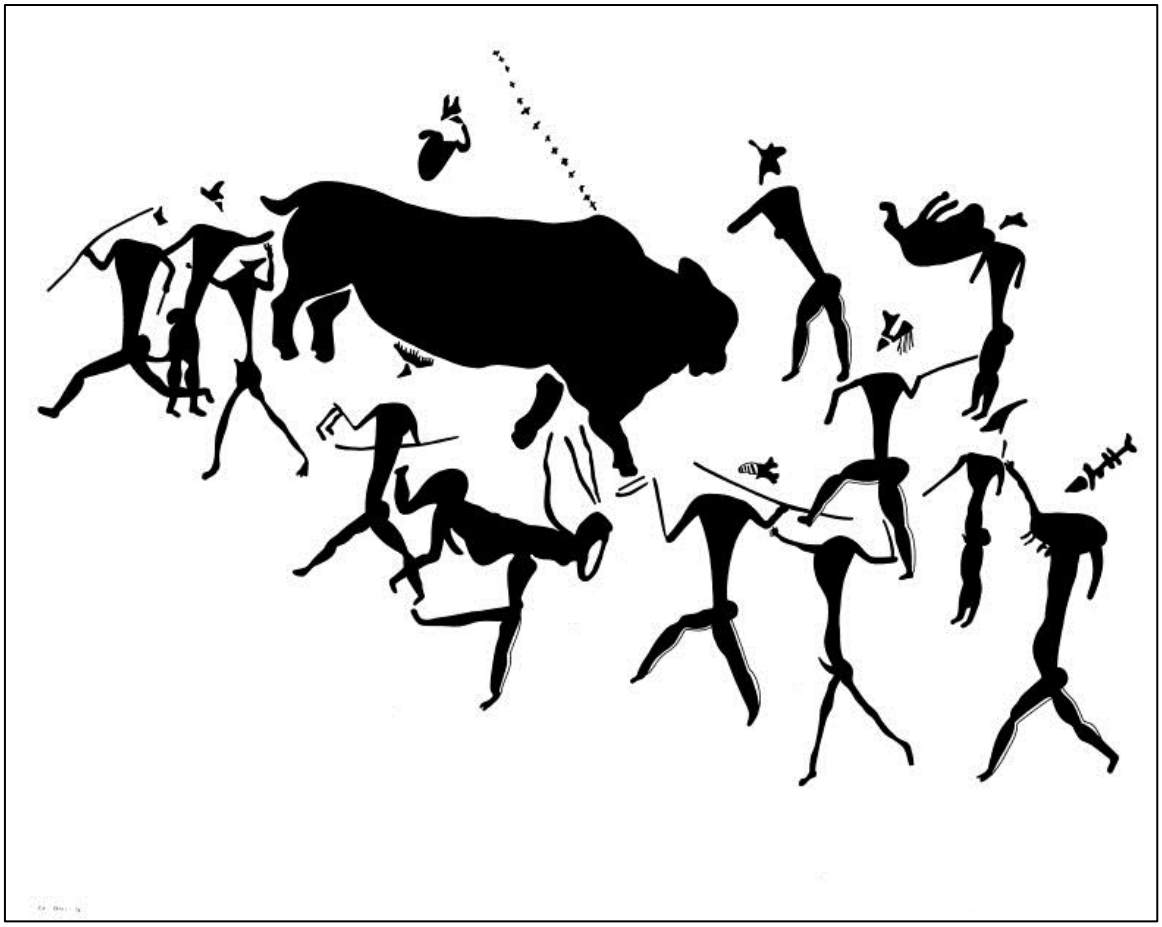


Figure 45: A possible male water-bull indicative of the prominent hump. RSA-BAM1, Estcourt District, KwaZulu Natal. Image courtesy of the SARADA website

Both /Han≠kass’o and Hoff’s informants refer to mist as the ‘rain’s breath’ (Hoff 1998: 112). Mist hanging over fountains was indicative of the water-bull’s presence. Mist and fog (dense mist) occur in high densities around the Amatola mountains. Mist in the area around Xoro Gwai would be common during the rainy season.

Dwelling places of the water-bull

Hoff’s informants claimed that the water-bull inhabited specific fountains or springs. According to one woman, it went with a river or a cloud from one fountain to the next (Hoff 1998: 112). Deep, large and permanent fountains were emphasised. However, one should not

visit these fountains since they are considered extremely dangerous places (Hoff 1998: 113). According to Hoff (1997: 24) the home of the water-bull and water-snake was said to be underwater but always dry. Seven informants stated the water-bull prefers fountains in the mountains. All informants were in agreement that the water-bull lived in quiet places. /Xam descendants referred to its dwelling place as a *gora* (a waterhole where seepage water collects), while the Bleek and Lloyd informants mentioned 'pits', which refers to a waterhole or water-pool as the dwelling places of water-bulls (Deacon 2005: 47). Most informants believed the water-bull's abode was amidst plants such as grass, reeds and flowers in addition to certain medicinal plants and substances (Hoff 1998: 113). Blue mud, blue clay, water-*buchu*, kalmous and rooivergeet were some medicinal substances and plants found around water-pools that were considered very potent (Hoff 1998: 114).

The water-bull was considered *Kwaai* (fierce and formidable) and thus, potentially dangerous (Hoff 1998: 114). Ordinary people could collect medicinal plants around the water-pool as long as they were above water and as long as the person was 'associated' with the water when they were children (Hoff 1998: 116). Association refers to preventative acts performed to create a bond with a source of danger, since it is the Khoe-San view that any force with which one has made a bond could not be dangerous (*ibid*.). In the past, doctors took children at around three years old to the water-pool to introduce them to the water (Hoff 1998: 118). Other acts of association included rubbing oneself with the mud from a water-bull's water-pool (Hoff 1998: 116). According to the Khoekhoen, the victim of the water-snake that is being pulled into the water-pool with the water-snake's threads can associate with the "snake even at this late stage by giving the snake something of the person in exchange, such as a piece of clothing" (Hoff 1997: 32). The sweat of the person on the clothing will act as a substitute for the real person. In panel A, shamans are holding out, what looks like a, cloth positioned at the water-bull's snout. I argue cloth smelling of *buchu* was used to associate the shamans with the water-bull and placate the water-bull in order to obtain medicines.

Children were warned not to wander close to the water-pool since the water-bull could hurt them. Fear of the water-bull was one reason why people never lived at or near a water source (Hoff 1998: 118). Informants claimed "that one should not look the water-bull in the eyes, for fear, according to two of them, that it might pull you" into the water-pool with its eyes (*ibid*.). The associated fear attributed to the water-bulls eyes could explain the reason for the depiction of red zigzag lines emanating from the water-bulls eyes in panel A. Entoptics

experienced in trance, as outlined by Dowson and Holliday (1989; see above) would have fed into and supported these beliefs.

Behaviour of the water-bull

During the night the water-bull was said to graze near the water source. According to Diä!kwain, the water-bull's nocturnal grazing meant that medicine men could catch it by night, before the water-bull dived back underwater before daybreak (Hoff 1998: 113). The sound of the water-bull was said to be 'roaring' (Hoff 1998: 114). This could be a possible reference to altered states of consciousness, in which subjects are said to hear a roaring sound when moving between phases two and three. Roaring is also said to be associated with the experience of being underwater (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1999).

Importantly, one of the actions of the water-bull was the manipulation of water in the water-pool by putting it back or blocking it, thereby either creating rain falling into the water-pool or leaving the land dry and barren (Hoff 1998: 118). The rise and fall of the water level of a fountain would indicate the water-bull's discontent and anger (*ibid.*). The behaviour of the water-bull was dictated by a person's actions. Thus, rituals followed in accordance could cause rain to fall, while breaking a taboo such as going to the water source while menstruating could cause the water-bull to become very angry and thus cause drought (*ibid.*). Mentioning the water-bull's name would anger it, as would teasing the beast by throwing stones in the water source. Lastly, killing one of the rain's animals, such as a frog, would be dangerous (*ibid.*).

Water-bulls were aggressive towards each other and, thus, never shared a water source. However, bulls were 'mutually aggressive' when they walked one behind the other in a cloud (Hoff 1998: 118). According to Hoff's informants, this behaviour, when water-bulls were not fighting but were mutually aggressive, would result in rain. This could explain the two elow water-bulls in panel A as walking one behind the other. Therefore, panel A presents a representation of water-bulls in a cloud working co-operatively with the help of shamans or doctors, making rain. In contrast, water-bulls that fought or locked horns would result in a cloudburst and heavy destructive rain (Hoff 1998: 118). On the other hand, water-bulls and water-cows in a single water-pool did not fight but rather mated (*ibid.*).

Yet, the water-bull was also considered benevolent (Hoff 1998: 114). The water-bull played "an important role in the worldview of /Xam descendants where it served as a symbol for rain/water and formed part of a category of Water Things" (Hoff 1998: 109). The /Xam descendants speak lovingly of the water-animals, particularly the water-bull (Hoff 1998: 121-122).

Doctors' interaction with the water-bull

According to Hoff (1998: 119), in the past, doctors played a role in protecting people from the water-snake and water-bull. /Xam descendants referred to *!khwa-ka !gi:ten*, or what some of Hoff's informants (1997, 1998) call rain doctors, entering the underworld through a fountain or river or urging the water-bull to emerge so that they could ride it for rain (Hoff 2007: 54). However, Hoff (2007: 55) states that *!khwa-ka !gi:ten* were active in areas with sufficient rainfall and fountains. The rock art site Xoro Gwai in the Ciskei has on average high volumes of rainfall. Thus, causing rain would not have been as crucial as protecting people against dangerous storms and the underworld (*ibid*.). To enter the underworld, many informants of /Xam descent referred to shamans of the rain either parting the water or diving "through the water until they reached dry ground" (*ibid*.). *Buchu* was also used, in an act of association, to disguise the smell of perspiration and on arrival at a water source *buchu* was burnt or sprinkled over the surface of the water-pool (Hoff 2007: 10). This was done to 'greet' and appease the water-bull. /Han≠kass'o referred to how in /Xam belief the rain loves water-*buchu* very much for *buchu* was what it smells (Hoff 1998: 119). It glides along when it smells things which are unequalled in scent. *'Buchu* was said to belong with him, those are his things' (*ibid*.). Doctors or shamans rubbed the forehead of the water-bull with *buchu* in order to calm it. Once it was calm, the doctors could then obtain medicine from it.

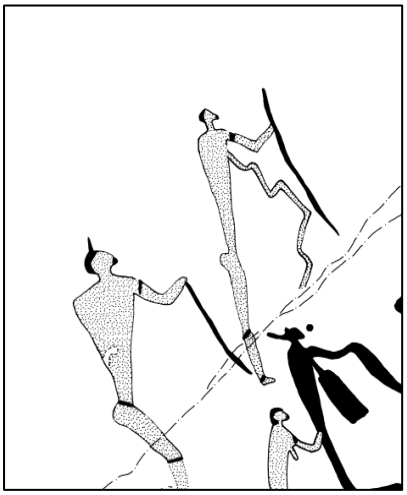


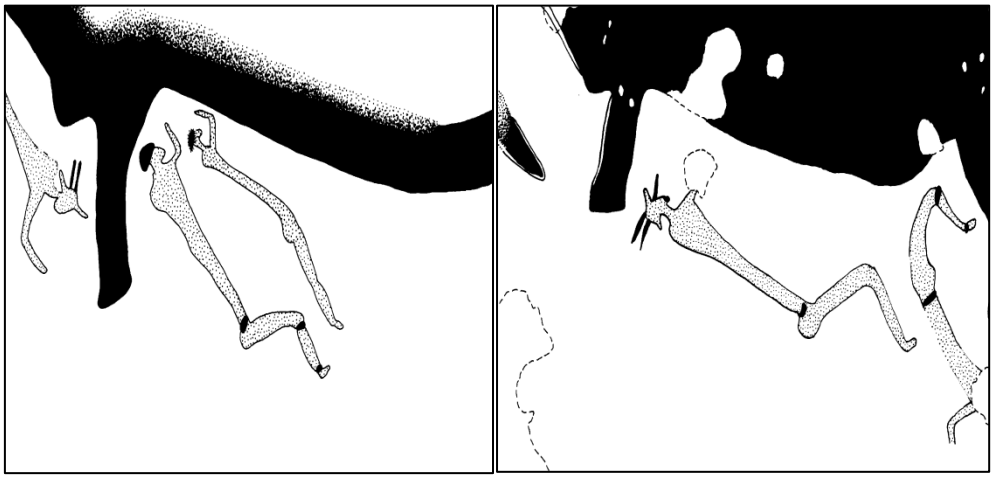
Figure 46: Shaman figures beating sticks upon the ground, the 'roof' of the underworld

A disparity however exists between these beliefs around the water-bull and Diä!kwain's narrative, in which the medicine men kill the water-bull and 'cut' the rain-animal where it is said to rain (Hoff 1998: 119). Yet, Hoff's informants also referred to the belief that the water-bull can *never* be killed (*ibid*.: emphasis mine). According to Hoff's informants, killing

the rain-animal would result in the opposite effect of what is described in Diä!kwain's narrative, that is, the water source would instantly dry up. Moreover, if a doctor attempted to kill a water-bull, lightning would strike him/her. Another disparity exists between Khoe-San beliefs recorded by Hoff (1997,1998), whose informants mainly spoke of a single rain-animal in a water-pool, and panel A. Panel A shows two water-bulls and three water-snakes.

Moreover, when the water-snake caught a person, the doctors had to obtain something, such as a stone, from the water-bull in order to free the victim (Hoff 1998: 115). If a freed person fell ill, the doctor called the water-bull, which then jumped over the patient and back into the water, curing the patient (*ibid*.). Similarly, a water-bull is said to lick a sick patient in order to heal that person (Hoff 1997, 1998). Likewise, /Xam informants stated that shamans of the rain could "enhance their potency by contact with underworld phenomena and by obtaining underwater medicine" (Hoff 2007: 55). The reaching up of one figure's arm in panel A could indicate shamans reaching up under the water-bull to obtain potency and/or medicine from the water-bull (see figures 47 and 48).

Allegedly, water or the submergence in the water-pool and thus entry into the underworld induced clairvoyance (Hoff 2007: 59). Underwater "phenomena such as the hair of the Water-People, as well as 'rain things', such as gemsbok horns, were used in divination" (*ibid*.).



Figures 47 and 48: Left: Figures reaching up with one arm under the water-bull in panel A. Right: A therianthrope reaching up with one arm under the water-bull in panel A

Doctors also used to protect people from aggressive water-bulls, whose mood was revealed in threatening weather. Doctors were said to hit the water with medicated sticks and strew

buchu over the water. This could be linked to the concept of tapping or beating in /Xam thought. Frequently, “Bleek and Lloyd’s informants referred to arousing spirits by beating on the ground[,] metaphorically on the ‘roof’ of the underworld” (Hall 2000: 141).

In panel A, the outer or peripheral elements appear to depict the ritual activities conducted around a water-pool rather than what is ‘seen’ in trance or hallucination (see figure 46). The beating of the ground with black sticks of these figures could be assisting in revealing the underworld. In a similar way, for the /Xam, tapping within oneself can forewarn you of impending danger and coming events. This inner sense tells people which way not to go, which arrow not to use; it informs people where they can find the person for whom they are searching (LII. -28. 2531-2565).

Differences between the water-bull and the water-snake

In their physiological descriptions of the water-bull and the water-snake many informants clearly distinguished between the two. In this sense, the ethnographies parallel the rock art, the water-bull is quite established in terms of description and specificities, while the water-snake’s descriptions vary and are often ambivalent and sometimes contradictory. The imagery of the water-snake is varied, while the water-bull seems to be a convention in later rock art rainmaking scenes. However, ethnographies do not mirror rock art depictions as Orpen (1874: 10) found with Qing’s comments on the bovid rain-animal as a snake. Likewise, Hoff (1997; 1998) heard informants within the /Xam area refer to the water-bull as a snake.

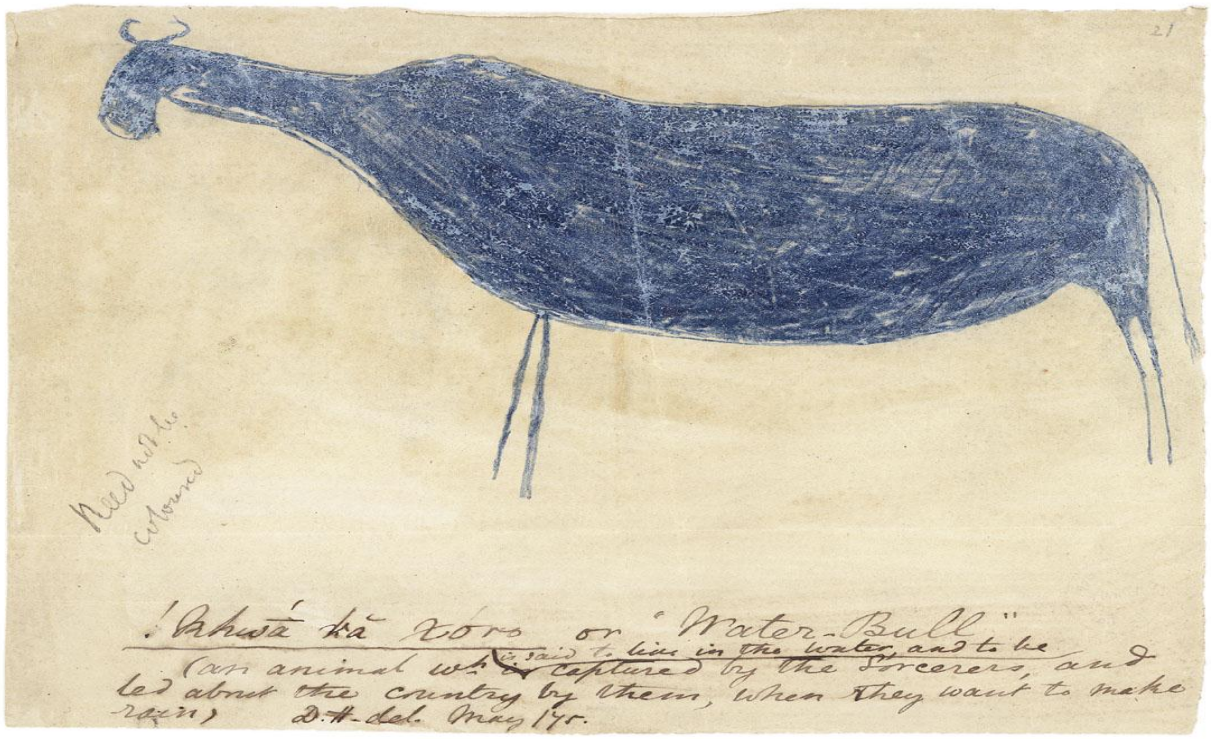


Figure 49: '!khwa ka xoro or "water-bull", (an animal which is said to live in the water, and to be captured by the sorcerers, and led about the country by them, when they want to make rain)'. Drawing by Diä!kwain. May 1875. http://lloydbleekcollection.cs.uct.ac.za/drawings/UCTLB_D_ä010.html

According to Hoff (1997; 1998), the water-bull was considered a higher force than the water-snake. The water-bull was termed the 'king of the water-snake'. Despite this, informants believed both water-bull and water-snake were in harmony and that they were friends. Moreover, they lived together for they are both things of the water (Hoff 1998: 123). /Xam descendants regarded lightning as connected with both water-bull and water-snake (*ibid.*). The water-snake is said to have prominent long teeth which have threads that can catch people. Some Griqua refer to the water-snake as having a mane of hair and the head of a horse or a hippopotamus (Hoff 1998: 123). Similarly, panel A's three serpentine creatures have manes of hair.

The Nama and River Khoekhoen describe the water-snake as malevolent towards people while the /Xam descendants are inclined to speak lovingly of the water-animals, particularly the water-bull. The water-bull and, according to a few /Xam, even the water-snake were approached for rain and ground water (Hoff 1998: 121-122). In /Xam belief, the dualistic view attributed to "rain/water, namely that it could be destructive as well as […] beneficial, was more pronounced in the case of the water-bull than in the water-snake" (Hoff 1998: 109).

/Xam puberty initiates, in an act of association, were licked by the water-snake so that in future the creature would not be aggressive towards them (Hoff 1997: 30).

Importantly, Hoff (1998: 110) has found that in southern Africa today "knowledge of the water-bull is absent towards the west and north". However towards the east, where the focus area lies, knowledge of the water-bull "tapers off and becomes fused with other beliefs" (*ibid*.). Such fusion or hybridity of beliefs between Khoe-San and Bantu-speakers is common, but the intense and prolonged contact between Xhosa and Thembu people with Khoe-San speakers near Xoro Gwai directs my research closer to Xhosa-speakers. Could such hybrid origins of the water-bull and water snake during the contact period explain more of the panel as such cognitive structures were negotiated in specific third spaces of enunciation? How are their beliefs similar or dissimilar to Khoe-San beliefs regarding the water-bull and water-snake?

Step 3: Incorporating Xhosa-speaking ethnography to elucidate additional elements depicted in the panel

As stated above, the Xhosa ethnographies are used here because of the intense interaction that took place in the area. Furthermore, elements of the theme of the water-bull and the water-snake are shared by Xhosa-speakers (Broster 1981; Hirst 1991; Mabona 2004). We know that Xhosa–San interaction occurred in this area and that many similarities exist, but how did this interaction affect the cosmologies of San-speakers and San rock art? I argue that this panel can provide clues.

Most scholars agree "that Nguni divination was influenced by San practice and belief" (Whitelaw 2009: 143). "Some of this influence is obvious, for [instance] the Xhosa term for diviner is *igqirha* (pl. *amagqirha*) derived from the /Xam [word] *!gi:xa* (medicine man or shaman), and women diviners are sometimes addressed as *mthwakazi*, meaning Bushwoman" (Whitelaw 2009: 143). Furthermore, "many southern Nguni diviners claim to have apprenticed themselves to San shamans rather than Nguni diviners" (*ibid*.). Khotso, a renowned Xhosa diviner around Mt. Ayliff in the Eastern Cape, was said to be apprenticed by a 'wild' San-speaker (Wood 2007). "Indeed, much of the Nguni divinatory paraphernalia (rattles, sticks, [switches], flywhisks) appears" to be shared with San shamans (*ibid*.). Trance

and altered states of consciousness were elements of both Xhosa- and San-speaking healer practices (Broster 1981: 46; Jolly 1998).

Historically, in the early 19th century Lichtenstein, a naturalist by profession, recorded that Xhosa-speakers in the Eastern Cape attributed disease to three causes (Hirst 2005: 14): the enchantment of an individual by an enemy, evil spirits or "the anger of certain beings, whose abode" was in the rivers (*ibid.*). Medicines were used as cures, but recourse was also made to appease "the wrath of the being in the river" (*ibid.*). The being in the river could be a possible reference to the water-bull or the water-snake.

Importantly, we still find references to eland, killing and rain in Xhosa ethnographies. A confirmation of the ancient origins of the diviner's vocation and a shared connection to Khoe-San beliefs around rain "is furnished by the forms of language and ideograms used in connection with diviners' séances" (Mabona 2004: 293). The word most used in the Xhosa language in connection with divination is *camagu*. This word, *camagu*, consists of two morphemes: *cama/cwama* (water) and *gu* (to fall) (*ibid.*). Mongameli Mabona (2004: 293) argues that *camagu* originally expressed the desire for rain/water to fall. Nowadays, *camagu* means 'be propitious/bless you'. Moreover, a desire for rain that was often expressed in the form of prayer was *imvula mayine* (let rain fall) (Mabona 2004: 195). Mabona (2004: 195) has found that the full expression of this prayer was *makuf' impofu, imvula mayine* (let the eland die, let rain fall).

With regard to the rain-bull and doctors, certain Nguni, especially the Xhosa, speak of the 'people of the river' (*abantu bamlambo*), possibly a connection to beliefs in shamans of the rain or doctors. The 'people of the river' are believed to reside "in deep pools, to work harm on victims, [to] cause illness, blindness, or mental derangement" (Hammond-Tooke 1974: 322). To appease them sacrifices "of maize, sorghum and tobacco are made at intervals at the deep pools associated" with them (*ibid.*). In the past, sacrificial cattle were thrown into the river or water-pool for *abantu bamlambo* (Hirst 1991: 11). Panels B and C could indicate other San and bantu-speaking groups representing such sacrificial animals. Diviners or *igqirha* are frequently believed to be "initiated by the 'people of the river', being called into the river for several days and emerging as fully-fledged specialists" (Hammond-Tooke 1974: 322). "The candidate diviner is supposed at the outset to feel an irresistible impulse […] to enter a deep pool in a river" (Mabona 2004: 322). In the pool "the candidate was thought to

be brooded over by *ichanti* (an enormous water-snake) and to be endowed with the" skills of healing by the *abantu bamlambo* (*ibid.*). Neophyte diviners enhance their potency by contacting the underworld and its associated phenomena. The Xhosa also refer to entering the water-pool and coming to a place that is completely dry. The people of the river are said to have their own cattle and settlements beneath the water pool (Broster 1981; Wood 2007: 10).

When the candidate diviner enters the water, it is said s/he has been called or *ubiziwe* (Mabona 2004: 322). The calling or vocation is "constituted both by the urge the candidate felt to go and by the intent of the river people […] that the candidate should come to them and be initiated" (*ibid.*). Moreover, the candidate may be told in visions or dreams to submit to training under a particular famous diviner. And these "instructions have to be followed [otherwise] the candidate [will be] haunted by constant illness for a long time" (*ibid.*). This illness or *ukuthwasa* generally does not respond to any ordinary cures (*ibid.*). The illness is said to be caused by the entering or invasion of one or more ancestral spirits. These spirits ordinarily appear *amatyala* (in animal form) in dreams or waking life (Mabona 2004: 324). Candidates who were in the process of becoming diviners have spoken about having lucid dreams about the river people and the whole world under the water-pool (Hirst 1991: 143). The training of the diviner is thus both a cure and a maieutic process.

During the apprenticeship, the neophyte undergoes a number of rituals. One such ritual ceremony typically takes place at a water-pool, where participants sit together, "sing traditional songs to the accompaniment of hand-clapping and beating the ground with sticks" (Hirst 1991: 143). A few participants may dance but no formal dance is called (*ibid.*). Like the trance dance, many elements of these ceremonies can be found in panel A.

One other prominent feature in the diviner's séances and is connected to Khoe-San beliefs is the use of black sticks by the diviner's clients to beat the ground so that the doctor may be able to see *umhlola* (hidden secrets) (Mabona 2004: 293). This must be of quite ancient provenance. The term *umhlola* consists of two morphemes: *hlo* (-eye) and *-la* (ground/reason). The basic meaning of the word "*umhlola* is, therefore 'something that attracts earth, or grounds the vision' as well as 'that which has to be seen'" (Mabona 2004: 293).

In Xhosa belief, three water entities are associated with water-pools and diviners, namely, *abantu bamlambo*, *Ichanti* and *uMmamlambo* (the mother of the river) (Broster 1981). *Ichanti*, the protector of the water-pool, typically takes the form of a snake and is associated with rivers or caves and also with women. It is also mutable and, in the guise of a snake, by licking, it can make its curer beautiful (Wood 2007: 6). These beliefs are strikingly similar to Khoe-San beliefs around the water-snake. *uMmamlambo*, on the other hand, is a mythical snake that diviners controlled, which could gain them great wealth but at a high cost. The diviner would sometimes have to sacrifice one of their relatives to the snake (Wood 2007). Moreover, *uMmamlambo* would appear as an object of your greed, a beautiful woman, or money. Felicity Wood (2007: 65) suggests that the beliefs in *uMmamlambo* came about recently with migrant miners, modern-day wealth and greed. These changes in the traditional, communal way of life are reflected in the fears associated with *uMmamlambo* at that specific time.

Another creature that sometimes takes the form of a snake with a horse's head is the *inkanyamba*. The *inkanyamba* is said to belong to a powerful diviner, who can send it out to torment or sometimes kill his/her enemies in tremendous storms (Wood 2007: xxiv). The *inkanyamba* is said to be controlled by a diviner. The practice of 'steering' an *inkanyamba* through the sky during a storm by using two sticks is said to originate from San-speakers (Wood 2007: 44). The reference to steering could reflect the Khoe-San beliefs around controlling the water-bull's movements in order to bring about rain.

Summary

The similarities of the beliefs of diviners entering an underworld that is dry, their skills of healing, divination and clairvoyance being obtained from the entities beneath the water and the fear for such creatures parallels many of the Khoe-San beliefs discussed above concerning the shamans of the rain or doctors' interaction with the water-bull and water-snake.

Discussion

Importantly, the information gathered concerning the water-bull clearly refers to the fact that the rain-animal cannot be killed; this is in accordance with Xhosa-speakers' beliefs that refer to both *inkanyamba* and the water-bull as extremely dangerous and rarely harmed or killed.

However, these ethnographies are in direct contradiction with Qing's testimony, which referred to the rain-snake possibly in the form of a bovid to be dragged by a thong to the area where the shamans wanted it to rain and then being 'cut', pieces of flesh falling (Orpen 1874). Why did it change?

Historically, during the contact period, San-speakers lived on the fringe of Bantu-speaking communities. To acquire prestige and wealth, San individuals exploited the profession of divining (Whitelaw 2009: 147). The historical record refers to rain-making as an interaction arena "in which San-speakers wielded considerable power, [which] also had political and economic advantages" (Whitelaw 2009: 148). Lewis-Williams and Pearce (2004b) refer to how rain-makers commanded respect and were even feared, with some influential rain-makers probably claiming a leadership role. In a time of uncertainty and thus of highly ritualised behaviour during the contact period, I argue following Campbell (1987), that the notion of the rain-animal changed, from what was an utilitarian conception of shamans on a hunt, hunting a rain-animal and killing it to ensure rain for everyone, towards a conception of a fearful mythical creature within a more elaborate supernatural realm. The creatures in this realm became so fearful that killing them was impossible and that the fear associated with them was palpable. Such elaborate ritual and fear around the creatures came about as a result of shamans' authority. These rain-animals, according to what Lewis-Williams and Pearce (2004b) have argued, became deliberately less and less a reflection of everyday life but more eccentric, elaborate and complex, reflecting the rain-animals of a very powerful shaman or group of shamans, that they owned and controlled. These individual expressions would have been quite a late development especially in areas when shamans had to convince Bantu-speaking neighbours such as the Thembu or Xhosa of their prestige and power.

Xhosa-speakers in the area around Xoro Gwai had long and intense interaction with San-speakers. Mabona (2004: 163) maintains that Xhosa and Khoe-San mythologies are complementary to each other to the extent that one cannot be fully understood without the other. Lewis-Williams (1981a: 831) found that among both northern and southern /Xam San, the shamans are seen as "intermediaries through which they receive special powers and experiences" from the spirit world (Lewis-Williams 1981a: 831). Following Dowson (1994), I argue that the notion of entering the spiritual realm to obtain powers, potency or medicines or in order to create rain is a notion that acted as a mediatory belief between these groups,

which allowed Xhosa-speakers and Khoe-San-speakers to have specific third spaces of enunciation, in effect, to exchange beliefs around these supernatural creatures.

Many ideas and notions of both Xhosa-speakers and Khoe-San-speakers were strikingly similar, while other beliefs were utterly unknown to their extant beliefs. Such beliefs could have conflicted with their own beliefs and such beliefs had to be negotiated and manipulated. Shamans on the fringe of Bantu-speaking societies manipulated their situation to demonstrate their power to Bantu-speaking people and this would have fed into the extant beliefs of the latter. This would not necessarily have changed the Bantu-speakers' ideologies and beliefs but slowly, over time, the beliefs of both groups would have altered. This would be reflected in the rock art. However, specific religious iconography could change temporally, while one powerful shaman or a group of shamans, and their specific rain-animals, such as water-snakes, were salient.

The water-snake is more mutable, ambivalent and susceptible to change than the water-bull. This conception is mirrored in the vague, often contradictory beliefs of water-snakes in both the Khoe-San and Xhosa communities. The water-snake possibly had to change, as mediators of the underworld owned their signature individualised water-snakes. Thus, not only were beliefs questioned and negotiated but resulted in new ways of conceptualising rain-animals. The iconography of a hybridised water-snake in panel A at Xoro Gwai, perhaps using a warthog as a natural model, could have been a novel way of representing the rain-snake regionally and temporally. Therefore, in a complex panel such as panel A at Xoro Gwai, the possibility of one or many shamans owning many rain-animals is tenable. We need to explore diverse reasons "for the appearance of new or 'foreign' materialities and practices at a" specific time and place (Fahlander 2007: 19). Additionally, a social encounter may result in radically new practices and ways of thinking about things that cannot be derived from any specific origin (Fahlander 2007: 6). Social encounters often result in contradiction, ambivalence and misunderstanding. Cultures are specific temporal constellations, which to a large extent consist of elements that they share with others. The fact that these rain-creatures are unique in rock art depictions could indeed be a situation when a specific encounter between individuals or a group of individuals developed a shared iconography that created something unexpectedly new. However, since the rain-animals could be owned, it is possible that shamans were creating rain-animals to evoke fear in their Bantu-speaking neighbours. If this is the case, then multiple rain-animals could imply multiple rain-shamans or one rain-

shaman possessing multiple rain-animals, a feature common in Xhosa belief. The notion that diviners can provoke fear and be great entrepreneurs is indicative of the Xhosa diviner's trade.

On the other hand, some beliefs would have had such hybrid origins that the iconography would have stayed the same, perhaps even become a convention in some areas. This is what I argue occurred with the iconography of the water-bull. The water-bull in the Eastern Cape became a conventionalised motif, as did the scene of doctors working with the water-bull. During the contact period, these scenes would have been recognisable to a large group of people, both Khoe-San and Xhosa.

Regardless of origins, the ethnographies regarding the water-bull and the water-snake are wide-spread, implying that such beliefs influenced both Khoe-San- and Bantu-speakers. Hybridity could be one way of answering these questions. As seen in Hoff's ethnographies, Xhosa ethnography parallels Khoe-San beliefs, which indicates a level of interaction that irrevocably changed the two groups. Rock art paintings of rain-making were interaction arenas which provided open portals for the cross-fertilisation of beliefs, albeit with inherent power relations.

The micro-strategy of analysing one rock art site can thus counter the prevailing conception of San rock art as a vague, often homogenous entity. Moreover, mapping rock art sites like Xoro Gwai on the landscape can tell us more about the regional and temporal specificities of San religious beliefs embodied in the rock art and how specific interactions brought about change in both the beliefs and the rock art. Furthermore, the chosen research will provide insights into an area of great historical interest largely unstudied by rock art researchers. This research attempts to focus specifically on one rock art site holistically rather than conducting research encompassing many rock art sites that overlooks the particularities of one site. A micro-strategy is important since it attempts to address the methodological problems that arise in rock art research, especially the issue of how to link historical accounts including ethnography with one rock art site. All rock art sites are important and meaningful; for researchers merely to select the grandiose or awe-inspiring rock art sites (e.g. Storm Shelter) for study is problematic. Smaller sites are just as meaningful and need to be given as much attention (e.g. Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2008). Each rock art site can provide information as to how the artists were utilising sites as places of religious and ritual importance (*ibid*.).

It is through mapping sites such as Xoro Gwai upon the landscape that researchers and diverse publics can begin to diverge from current perceptions of ‘the art’, a vague homogenous entity, and begin to understand the nuanced temporal, regional and hermeneutic differences between sites.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Post-colonial theory and in particular Homi Bhabha's notions of hybridity and the third space of enunciation have provided the framework to gauge to what degree a specific rock art shelter, Xoro Gwai in the Eastern Cape, can be used to discern specific changes in beliefs through interaction between Khoe-San individuals and Xhosa-speakers. The use of hybridity exposes as inadequate traditional archaeological methods of presenting people as static unitary cultural 'wholes' without agency. An emic approach to San rock art is used that avoids closed identities, both in the analysis of the historical records and the iconography of the rock art.

Hybridity does not argue that interaction was the cross-breeding of old elements with new, as some authors argue of creolisation. Instead, hybridity is open to seeing new elements that possibly came about through misunderstanding and ambiguity, and mediates the diverse beliefs of Khoe-San-speakers and Bantu-speakers. This analysis avoids seeing generalised totalities or generalised change.

The study has looked at the specificities of one rock art shelter in the Eastern Cape. In terms of rock art methodology, it is suggested that the role of the water-bull was widespread in Khoe-San ideology, which is demonstrated by the panels at Xoro Gwai. This analysis of Xoro Gwai uses Thembu and Xhosa ethnographies, which are pertinent because of the long-term interaction that occurred in this area between these groups and Khoe-San-speakers. This hybridised iconography demonstrates the striking similarities between the Bantu-speaking and Khoe-San speaking groups during the contact period, particularly as regards the role of shamans or doctors.

Moreover, individuals or groups of individuals could have possessed great power, which is suggested through the quantity and changed form of the rain-animals in panel A. The shaman(s) that controlled these rain-animals were manipulating their individual situations within Xhosa-speaking societies.

The methodological implications of this work for future rock art studies are numerous, for one it is no longer tenable to regard identities as closed and fixed. Two, post-colonial studies

allows researchers to grasp the nuances of social interactions in the past. Three, a micro-strategy study of one small rock art site is possible and can be immensely beneficial to understanding individual nuances of the rock art. Lastly, studies using multiple ethnographies allow researchers to better understand religious beliefs from a holistic perspective rather than relying on single ethnographic accounts. A piece of material culture from another social formation seen in San rock art cannot to be taken to mean that interaction occurred. There is not one element in panel A that suggests positively that Xhosa-speaking people had an impact on the rock art; this would be looking for ethnic markers, which can be misleading. Rather, we have a plethora of beliefs with hybrid origins about the water-bull, the water-snake, *abantu bamblambo* – the water people – and the water-pool. Using multiple sets of ethnographies around a theme in areas where interaction between groups can be demonstrated aids us in this site-specific approach. The ethnographies of each group are mutually reinforcing.

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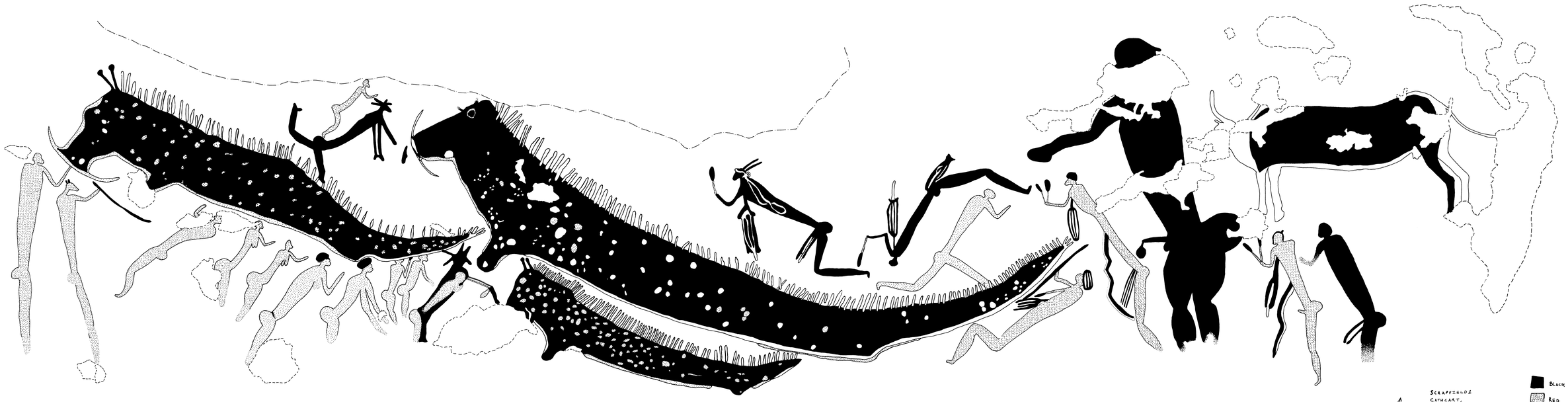
Appendix A: The re-drawing of panel A, Xoro Gwai



Vertical

SCRAPERGLOOF
CATHCART,
EASTERN CAPE
TRACED BY: DENSMITH
LOURENÇO PINTO
CHRISTY CHUMIA
13-12-09 - 2010

RE-DRAWN BY: LOURENÇO PINTO

Black
Red
Orange
White