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IDENTITY ENGRAVED

Artistic Endeavour and Ethnic Entities in Central South Africa

Riaan F. Rifkin

A research dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, School of Geography, Archaeology and Environmental Studies, University of the Witwatersrand in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Archaeology.

Johannesburg 2006 - 2007

Declaration

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

……

Riaan F. Rifkin (050 9919 H)

June 5th 2008

For Jonathan and Jennifer

Archaeologists should always be seeking to extend the domain of their discipline - exploring how new aspects of the past can be examined, and how the past has bearing on further aspects of the present than have been previously considered.

The main problem we all face is that of artificial disciplinary boundaries created by the history of our subjects and the nature of our institutions … archaeologists need to make greater efforts to engage with the theories, data, and ideas within the cognitive sciences.

Mithen (2001:98-99)

ABSTRACT

Ethnicity has been a focus of socio-scientific research for at least three decades, but for the greater part of that period it has been virtually ignored by archaeologists. As a result, many researchers remain committed to an essentialist approach to ethnicity. The reluctance to respond to such views by taking up more explicitly the dynamic and situational approaches to identity, as is currently underway in anthropology and sociology, arise from several sources, which undeniably also include the political. Ultimately, though, the essential reason is practical. The literature demonstrates that ethnicity and ethnic identity are slippery concerns in contemporary societies, let alone in pre-historic social contexts.

Rock art presents an opportunity for assessing assumptions about identity-consciousness. It provides a category of material culture for the establishment of historical and chronological records of multi-cultural interaction and ensuing episodes of adaptation and change. Engraved art is a source of information on past societies, subsistence strategies and, most importantly, on the development of cohesive social systems and social consciousness. Artwork is the most obvious example of symbolic storage outside the human mind, yet it is not universally practised by hunter-gatherers and it cannot therefore be used as the sole criterion for recognising modern symbolism, modern behaviour, and ethnicity. Given this ambiguity with regards the function of rock art in the demarcation of territorial boundaries and in the construction of social and ethnic identities, an exploration of additional spheres of ethnic conception and assertion may illuminate the question of how San hunter-gatherers conceived and conveyed their respective identities.

This investigation into the association between art and ethnicity is founded upon the conviction that the complexity of social identity must be explored on a dynamic continuum that allows for interface between varied social factors. Notions concerning the ethnic orientation of social groups are represented, either unconsciously or purposefully, in socio-cultural spheres as diverse as territoriality, subsistence economy, language, religion, and also aesthetic and artistic cultural patterns. This study of the relationship between conceptions of identity and engraved art aspires to augment the existing understanding of the origins of processes of identity-formation, how such processes operate, and how they may be manifest in material cultural contexts.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I am grateful for the time, insight, and guidance provided by my supervisor, Benjamin Smith. I furthermore express thanks to David Lewis-Williams, who acted as senior mentor for this project, and to Geoffrey Blundell, Karim Sadr, David Pearce, and Claire Turner for their time in discussing variable aspects of my research. I also thank Jeremy Hollmann, who accompanied me in the field, and whose insights and enthusiasm further motivated my own research. I am thankful for the assistance of researchers at the National Cultural History Museum in Pretoria, and to Shiona Moodley who provided information on the locations of several engraved sites. I thank all the landowners who kindly allowed access to engraved sites on their properties and to their staff who frequently showed me to the sites.

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INTRODUCTION

The primary focus of this investigation, the assessment of the association between engraved rock art and social consciousness, ethnic identity, and ethnicity, is presented in seven chapters. Central to this inquiry is a substantial portion of the engraved art of the southern African interior region and the premise that the complexity of social identity should be explored on a dynamic continuum that allows for interface between factors as variable as social context, social identity, artistic expression, and language. The chapters are arranged to optimise the exploration and discussion of a broad range of subjects from varied anthropological, archaeological, and linguistic spheres of investigation.

Chapter One introduces this enquiry into the association between engraved art, identity-consciousness, and the theories and methods by which these associations may be elucidated. Identity and ethnicity have received considerable interest in archaeology and anthropology since the 1960s, especially in terms of the role of colonialism in identity-production and the relevance of identity within contemporary society and social practice. In this exploration, both the ethnographic anthology and the rock art itself provide explicit insights into human sociality. Rock art is one of the most visually perceptible and impressive components of the archaeological record, providing insight into the conceptual worlds of the people who created the art. While it is generally stated that the range of depicted subject matter is essentially similar for both paintings and engravings, and that the primary distinction between the two art-forms is arbitrarily grounded in technique, the engraved arts exhibit both a more limited and a very specific range of depictional and conceptual categories. There are a number of unique relational features characteristic of many engraved sites which suggests that engravings are implicated in similarly unique relationships with regards the range of activities performed at, and identities inherent in, such locations.

From a theoretical point of view, it is well-known that the interpretative theories, theoretical concepts, and particular lines of enquiry that we adopt are deemed to influence the selection, description, and interpretation of the archaeological facts that we intend to study. The primary theoretical position that I adopt is that which revolves around the concept of social identity. In addition to the analytical focus on art and ethnicity, and given that this investigation attempts to address several interrelated phenomena, three further theoretical schemes also require consideration; interactionist theories, theories concerned with ethno-linguistic identity, and, to a lesser extent,

theories concerned with style and theme and their respective capacities to elucidate particular social affiliations. These concepts will be introduced in Chapter One and recurrently referred to throughout the investigation.

The objective of Chapter Two is to provide an overview of the environmental and cultural character of the interior region of South Africa. The attainment of insight into the demographic character of the research region is dependent on several categories of source material from which information on the presence and identities of different cultural groups in the region may be gained. These are archaeological, historical, ethnographic, and also linguistic, and will be discussed successively and in terms of how the insights derived from archaeological excavations and ethnographic and historic written sources may contribute to a better understanding of the steady increase in social and cultural complexity in the central interior region. The encounter between newcomers and San resulted in several alternative outcomes: first peoples, in addition to being employed as rain-makers, healers, or ritual specialists, could furthermore have been absorbed as either kinsmen or subjects, or could have been incorporated as clients in relationships of mutual inter-dependence. In more recent terms, the period from 1815 to 1854 is of fundamental importance to the history of South Africa. With regards the intensity of impact and influence, the two events generally believed to have had the most devastating effect on San foragers, Khoekhoe pastoralists, and also Tswana agro-pastoralists is that of the *difaqane* and *mfecane* population movements which occurred from 1822 onwards, and the so-called Great Trek which commenced in 1836. In addition to these two mass-population movements into the interior, the Rolong, in 1823 and due to increasing pressures from communities fleeing the brutality of advancing Zulu forces, also embarked on a wholesale relocation of an entire community.

Chapter Three will explore the variable dimensions of ethnicity and social identity and the ways in which the conceptions of identity amongst San hunter-gatherers were constructed and how these may have been expressed in social, economic, territorial, or linguistic terms. The current focus on ethnic inquiry relates to the existing ethnic revival as manifest since the early 1990s. While some authors perceive a possible measure of political neutrality in terms of investigating ethnicity in academic studies, others draw attention to the fact that archaeologists are ever cautious in ascribing specific material cultural identities to particular ethnic entities. Recent theories of identity and social interface emphasise the fluid and situational nature of ethnicity and the diverse and heterogeneous ways in which material culture is used in the expression of identity. It is,

furthermore, believed that our employment of existing archaeological categories as primary units of analysis, such as *cultures*, *types*, and *ethnic identity* requires to be reassessed, and that, instead, we need to focus on a contextual approach to social interaction and social practice. Such an advance necessitates a fundamental shift in approaches to archaeological evidence and not merely new interpretations of the distribution of particular cultural types and styles. Thus, and in recognition of the complications involved in any study of ethnicity, this study adopts a constructivist approach to the term, emphasising the existence of diverse preferences within ethnic groups, and the fluidity of boundaries of such groups. It does not view ethnicity as primordial, which assumes it is static, homogeneous, and built solely upon cultural, religious, and territorial roots. Instead, ethnicity is considered to be an alterable resource which can be managed to achieve certain ends. Accordingly, it will be noted that there are several aspects of ethnic focus or differentiation which may be termed *ethno-gnomonic*, or cultural traits characteristic of one group in contrast to others, at once emblematic of the group's solidarity and of the contrasting identity and relation to the groups within its ambit of comparison. Cultural features that may be imbued with ethnognomonic qualities typically include art, but language, geographic location, social organisation, subsistence economy, and religion comprise additional ethnognomonic features, all of which are integrated to constitute the fundamental basis of social identity and ethnic allegiance.

Subsequent to the exploration of *ethnicity* and *identity* in Chapter Three, Chapters Four and Five will tend to the engraved rock art of the central interior region. Since the question of ethnicity is essentially a question of authorship, the examination of a selected sample of engraved depictions constitutes an essential part of this study. Chapter Four will focus on the geographic distribution of particularly distinctive engraved features. It is generally believed that by plotting the distribution of thematic sets or stylistic traits, an indication of the core territory inhabited by a particular group may be obtained. Consequently, recurrent themes can be attributed to either individual artists or *agents*, or to a group of artists with analogous cultural controls. Thematic patterning is an important indicator of cultural variation amongst groups, and in some instances this has even been shown to correlate with specific and seasonally dependent social activities. Chapter Five will explore the potential causes for the occurrence of such localised sets of engraved images. These may range from the influence of charismatic individuals, the subsequent conversion of assertive stylistic or thematic elements into themes emblemic of particular social groups, or as a product of contact and interaction with *other* peoples. It is generally believed that intercultural

contact invariably leads to changes in ethnic perceptions and symbolism, and that radical changes in the social context may bring about changes in the form of social interaction resulting in the construction of new cultural meanings and reassessments of ethnic identities. Such transformations may also have resulted in the addition of foreign artistic elements to the existing base of forager-authored engraved arts, and in the simultaneous development of transitional forms of engravings exhibiting the fusion of religious beliefs and social identities. The implications that the actions and influence of these agents and instances of change may hold for the detection of, in artistic terms, prehistoric identity-conscious groups, will be explored. In addition, the process by which individually-based assertive elements come to embody, by way of social acceptance, a type of *style* emblemic of the larger social group, will also be tended to. Thus, these two chapters will address three important questions. First, do engravings provide a comprehensive rationalisation of the various cultural groups who inhabited and traversed the landscape? Second, can the exact social and cultural dynamics of these ever more complex relational situations be deduced from engraved art alone? Third, how effective is engraved art in conceiving and asserting social identity or ethnic affiliation, and are there other, more proficient means by which southern African foraging peoples could have signalled their respective ethnic affiliations?

Of further significance is the archaeological, ethnographic, and historical evidence for fused or amalgam social, economic, and ethnic groups such as those involving Twa foragers and Bantu-speaking farmers, Khoe pastoralists and San foragers, San and Tswana farmers, and the groups comprising San, Tswana, and !Ora as noted by several early travellers. Given these instances of socio-economic amalgamation, and the tendency, in religious terms, of San and Khoe to readily blend the numinous with the ludicrous, it is to be expected that at least some components of the engraved art of the interior should reflect the fusion of identities and the revision of religious doctrine and practice. In particular, the exploration of a distinctive set of geometric motifs will serve to illustrate the difficulties involved in correlating seemingly unique engraved images with specific ethnic entities.

Because this investigation intends to explore the relationship between engraved rock art and social identity, it is imperative to also consider these issues in terms of the millennia preceding contact between San foragers and pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities. Accordingly, the association between engraved art, language, territoriality, and ethnic identity will, in the context of pre-2000 BP forager sociality and identity-consciousness, be tended to in Chapter Six. The question of whether rock art

was in any way implicated in the conception of social identity and in the differentiation between in-groups and out-groups, and whether engraved art fulfilled any function in terms of establishing or marking territorial boundaries, will be seen to. It will be also be illustrated that discovering social boundaries in a coarse-grained archaeological record remains a complicated task that may not always materialise, even when well-defined ethnic distinctions did indeed exist and are known to have existed in the past. It is therefore believed that the social and cultural dynamics of these complex relational situations can not be deduced from rock art alone, but that it requires an exploration of additional social, cultural, and ideological means by which identity-consciousness may have been conceived and communicated. Language is a potentially very informative ethnognomonic trait, which, in the literature dealing with ethnic groups, is often held to be one of the most important indicators of belonging to a particular ethnic group. Whilst there is no uncertainty about the capacity of language to symbolise group identity and develop into emblems of that identity, especially when there is contact with other groups whose ways of being are different, precisely how this is accomplished in contexts of ethno-linguistic identity-formation has not been explained adequately. It is believed that a focus on the ethnicisation of language is likely to yield insights into the workings of language ideology. It is therefore of interest to enquire whether it is possible to ascertain the temporal extent of such socio-linguistic-territorial relations: when humans became conscious of themselves and of others, and how this is manifest in the archaeological record. This subject raises several important questions: Firstly, how does engraved rock art fit into the ambiguous, regionally diverse, and supernaturally ubiquitous arrangement of ethno-linguistically differentiated (yet religious-cosmologically-united) scatter of foraging peoples? Furthermore, did ritual centres, in the form of engraved locations, serve as places where social partnerships were reaffirmed, and did such episodes of social congregation present an arena conducive to the comparison, adjustment, and affirmation of forager social, religious, linguistic, and ethnic identities? Secondly, and since our understanding of ethnicity and our ability to recognise ethnicity in the archaeological record clearly hinges on how we define the concept, we must also raise the question of whether current definitions and applications are relevant. Is a simple awareness of us and them to be considered sufficient in constituting ethnicity? Thirdly, and as for an ethno-linguistic premise as an analytical category for exploring ethnicity as evident amongst southern African hunter-gatherers, how far back in time does such instances of social consciousness extend? For how long have southern African foraging peoples been aware of *others* and of ethnicity, and how may we determine the extent of something as ethereal as social consciousness? Is it possible that the human recognition of cultural distinctions specific

to other populations, perhaps based in large part on language differences, had its origins among the first anatomically modern humans?

In brief, and because this study is concerned with the prospect of ascertaining the broad ethnic affiliations of pre-historic and, to a limited extent, also historic instances of engraved rock art, this investigation focuses upon the original inhabitants of southern African interior region, the San hunter-gatherers. This study concerns San forager social identity and ethnicity; how it was conceived, how it may have been transformed, how it was articulated, and, most importantly, how engraved rock art fits into our current understanding of southern African forager sociality, interaction with *others*, and *ethnicity*. This analysis of the relationship between art and identity will, in Chapter Seven, conclude with a brief synopsis of the issues discussed within and the conclusions reached by the thesis.

CHAPTER ONE

Art, Theory, and Palaeoethnicity

Identity and ethnicity have received considerable interest in archaeology and anthropology since the 1960s, especially the role of colonialism in identity production and the relevance of identity within contemporary society. In Khoe-San studies issues around interaction and identities have been at the heart of the Kalahari Revisionist Debate (see Denbow 1986; Wilmsen 1989, 1996; Kent 1992; Jolly 1996a, b, c; Lewis-Williams 1996; Barnard 1997; Jones 1997; Sadr 1997; Lee 2003; Blundell 2004; Smith 2006). Set in motion by Edwin Wilmsen's *Land Filled with Flies: A Political Economy of the Kalahari* (1989), the degree to which the San are and were isolated, pristine, and egalitarian and unchanging peoples amidst the influx of and contact with Khoekhoe pastoralists, Bantu-speaking agro-pastoralists, and colonial settlers and authorities, is intensely investigated and contested. In southern Africa the revisionist debate has focused on the nature of inter-cultural contact and the consequent social transformation of various groups of San hunter-gatherers, who have also been a major source of inspiration for current interpretive paradigms in rock art studies. The debate has centred on whether, at the time they were studied by ethnographers, these groups were largely independent from farmers (Solway & Lee 1990) or instead a social underclass created by over 1 500 years of contact with farming populations (Wilmsen 1989; Wilmsen & Denbow 1990).

As is typical in such polarised debates, reality likely lies between the two extremes. Ethnographically documented San groups are unlikely to represent either pristine foraging societies or completely acculturated shells of their former sociocultural selves (Marlowe 2002). Both traditionalists such as Richard Lee, and revisionists such as Edwin Wilmsen agrees that ethnographically documented San groups are not archaic snapshots of forager life in the past (Humphreys 2005). Researchers disagree mostly on how and to what extent various San groups were incorporated into and influenced by the socioeconomic web of predominantly Bantu-speaking farmers at the time of colonial contact. Debates around forager identity, forager autonomy, interaction between foragers and other peoples, and the degrees of change in autonomy and identity concepts resulting from interaction with differing subsistence economies are, however, by no means particular to the San (Narroll 1964; Barth 1969; Geertz 1973; Cohen 1978; Young 1983; Horowitz 1985; Bentley 1987; Hutchinson & Smith 1996; Jones 1997; Fearon & Laitin 2000a; Fearon 2003; Chandra 2005).

It has been established that the predominance of southern African engraved rock art was produced by the San, hunter-gatherers or foragers whose subsistence revolved around the selective exploitation and sustainable utilisation of a variety of natural resources (Mason 1962; Butzer *et al.* 1979; Lewis-Williams 1983; Morris 1988; Ouzman 1998; Deacon & Deacon 1999). It has furthermore been ascertained that the earliest forms of mobiliary and parietal art can be traced back to the Middle Stone Age (Wendt 1976; Thackeray 1983; Lewis-Williams 1984a; McBrearty & Brooks 2000; Henshilwood *et al.* 2002) and that these are at least as ancient as the painted and engraved arts in Europe and Australia. The entire body of southern African rock art can not however be ascribed San authorship. Commencing some two millennia ago, the demographic composition of southern Africa experienced rapid transformation as pastoralist economies entered the region. With the gradual influx of these peoples, who introduced pastoralism and domesticated livestock, new social, cultural, and political elements were also introduced. Recent research has shown that pastoralists also manufactured rock art and that their artistic tradition is significantly different from that of the San (Rudner & Rudner 1959; Fock 1979; Beaumont & Vogel 1984; Van Rijssen 1984; Wadley 2001; Smith & Ouzman 2004a; Eastwood & Smith 2005). As time progressed a number of additional artistic traditions were either introduced or developed within the region, namely those of the Bantu-speaking agro-pastoralist groups (Malan 1955; Mason 1962; Fock 1969; Fock & Fock 1984; Manhire *et al.* 1986; Prins & Hall 1994; Maggs 1995; Masson 2002; van Schalkwyk & Smith 2002; Namono & Eastwood 2005), European settlers (Fock 1969; Butzer *et al.* 1979; Ouzman 1999), and groups of mixed ancestry such as the Koranna (Ouzman 2005). Although, in some cases, these arts are clearly differentiated, consisting of culture-specific choices of subjects and manners of depiction, the integrative nature of interaction between human groups is believed to have also resulted in the appearance of transitional forms of rock art exhibiting fused and hybrid or amalgam artistic characteristics. These indeterminate and artistically liminal engraved forms may be utilised to explore the relationship between rock art and changing perceptions of identity in the central interior during the last two millennia. In a few instances, such as those involving the Northern-Sotho of Limpopo, the Kalanga and Chewa of Eastern Zambia and Malawi, and the San of Nomansland in the Eastern Cape, direct links between the arts and contemporary ethnicities have been established (Smith 1995; Blundell 2004; Namono & Eastwood 2005; Smith 2006). Although these particular arts can be linked to specific, and modern, ethnic groups, the establishment of such links between older arts and peoples, those palaeo-ethnic entities of the archaeological record, remains challenging.

Perhaps the earliest attempt to establish associations between engraved art and the artists themselves was that by Maria Wilman (1933). Prompted by the research of Dorothea Bleek in the Langeberg region north of the Orange River during the period from 1910 to 1918, Wilman evaluated the prospect of establishing a direct relationship between the ||N-!k'e or "home people" who inhabited the region during this time, and the engraved arts of the Northern Cape north of the Orange. These people, who "are now chiefly found on farms in the Langeberg, but formerly they ranged from the Vaal River to the east, to the Molopo in the north and the west", appeared to have some linguistic affinity to /Xam further south, but their language was described as "… very like the /Kham tongue, but much too distinct to be classed as a dialect" (Bleek 1927: 56). Apart from the linguistic disparity between the better-known /Xam to the south and the ||N-!k'e of the Langeberg some two-hundred kilometres to the north, Wilman acknowledged the existence of broad cultural similarities and direct associations between San inhabitants and engraved arts of north-western South Africa. Accordingly, she speculated, almost certainly correctly, that it was indeed the ||N-!k'e and their immediate ancestors who were responsible for the more recent engraved arts in the region (Wilman 1933; see also Güldemann 2000).

Since the 1980s there have been several efforts to establish relationships between rock art and historically-known sequences of events (*e.g.* Manhire *et al.* 1986; Campbell 1987; Dowson 1994, 1998, 2000; Hall 1994; Mazel 1993; Loubser & Laurens 1994) and between rock art and contrasting yet contemporaneous cultural entities (*e.g.* Botha & Thackeray 1987; Thackeray 1993; Jolly 1994; 1996a, b, 1998, 1999). While many of these primarily interactionist efforts to place rock art into the relevant historical contexts are remarkable because of the establishment of explicit links between art and archaeology and between art and history, they are also characterised by several short-comings (*e.g.* Prins 1999; Jolly 2000), with a lack of adequate theoretical structure capable of addressing social interaction and change in a sufficient manner cited as the most pressing deficiency (Blundell 2004:75; Humphreys 2005:37).

The palaeoethnic dilemma

The search for "palaeoethnicity" (Dolukhanov 1994:267), identity-conscious groups or ethnic entities during pre-historic and historical times, has generally been described as a problematic, archaeologically impractical, and overly idealistic venture (DeCorse 1994). Some scholars have gone as far as to suggest that archaeologists would be better off if they avoided the "fruitless quest for palaeo-socio-political epiphenomena such as ethnicity" (Atherton 1983:96). This rather pessimistic observation is also

echoed by others (Arutinov & Khazanov 1981, as cited in Shennan 1994). According to these anthropologists the identification of ethnic entities depends on (or should) self-conscious identifications and emic classifications. But for archaeologists the limited degree of insight offered by pre-historic remains may render it impossible to discover or gain access to people's "self-conscious identifications" (Shennan 1994:14). Shennan (1989) implies the greatest operational difficulty in considering ethnicity in prehistoric contexts is that it did not exist in pre-state societies. In his summary of arguments put forward by Gellner (1983), Smith (1986), and Bentley (1987), Shennan (1989:14) argues that ethnicity first appeared with the development of large complex states. This position is based on the fact that the process of ethnic identity formation only comes to have its power in a situation in which pre-existing forms of identity creation and maintenance, kinship for example, are being destroyed: this is often seen as a key feature at the root of the origins of states (Shennan 1989:16). Shennan notes that Gellner's (1987) work strongly suggests that "outside of state societies and their spheres of influence the formulation of collective interests is very much a situational phenomenon". Shennan's perception of Gellner's comments, and his use of Bentley (1987) and Smith (1986) to find the origins of ethnicity in state societies, results from what appears to be a straightforward primordialist perspective on the nature of ethnicity. The very existence of ethnic categories prior to the ages of industrialisation and capitalism is therefore questioned, with some (*e.g.* Clifford 1988; Comaroff & Comaroff 1992; Friedman 1992) situating the emergence of ethnicity in the context of European colonialism, and others (*e.g.* Muga 1984) stating ethnic groups to be the products of particular racial and ethnic categories intrinsic to the capitalist world system (see Jones 1997).

Some archaeologists have argued that the emergence of ethnicity and ethnic consciousness can be traced back to the time of the emergence of the first city-states and larger-scale stratified societies (*e.g.* Fried 1968; Smith 1986; Bentley 1987; Huffman 2005; Calabrese 2006), effectively relating the communication of cultural differences and ethnicity to the unequal distribution of material, symbolic and essentially political power between communities (Jones 1997). This need not be so: ethnicity is just as likely to have been embedded in intra-personal socio-cultural and political relations and negotiations in the past as in the present, and need not necessarily be confined to within the contexts of complex social hierarchies, European colonialism or capitalist expansion (see Ranger 1983; Kopytoff 1987; Jones 1997).

When searching for ethnic entities in pre-historic, pre-colonial, and archaeological contexts it is essential to consider and explore the perception and negotiation of ethnicity by individuals in different circumstances and from different perspectives (Wallman 1977; Cohen 1978; Jones 1997; Blundell 2004). In southern Africa such conceptions and the changing natures thereof must be placed within the milieu of measured yet continuous and increasing degrees of contact between first foraging peoples, pastoralist groups, agro-pastoralist peoples and colonial forces (*e.g.* Campbell 1987; Jolly 1994). Upon each stage of contact and interaction people may have been either coerced into, or simply desired and opted to, re-define, re-situate and realign themselves according to the newly prevailing socio-political circumstances. Such realignment or "choosing of sides" often had disastrous effects on the foraging population. A case in point involves the afore-mentioned ||N-!k'e of the Langeberg who opted to side with Griqua intent on opposing advancing Thlaping: the Griqua-||N-!k'e alliance crumbled under the Thlaping advance, and the remaining ||N-!k'e were forced to seek refuge in the Langeberg mountains (Güldemann 2000). There must certainly have been a measured progression of identity consciousness and ethnic awareness which correlates with simultaneous increases in social and cultural complexity resulting from interaction. As the demographic complexity of social systems become increasingly multifaceted it becomes necessary to adapt and adjust oneself accordingly.

With regards the extent of cultural and ethnic diversity amongst southern African indigenous groups, Carmel Schrire (1980) and John Parkington (1984) have drawn attention to the ambiguous nature of "identity" in the historical accounts from the Cape. This awareness may have prompted some researchers to conduct more inclusive and personalised research, especially in terms of the emically-ascribed identity terminologies which may be gleamed from ethnographic and historical sources, in order to discover the identities of the artists responsible for the respective artistic traditions concerned. Such emic-ethnic categories are, in many instances, readily available and clearly warrant employment by archaeologists. Our understanding of ethnicity and our ability to recognise ethnicity in the archaeological record obviously hinges on the definition of what ethnicity is. As argued by Jones (1997), our employment of existing archaeological categories as primary units of analysis, such as "cultures", "types", and "ethnic identity" requires to be reassessed (Widlok 1997), and instead we need to focus on a contextual approach (Jones 1997:125; Kent 2002a:15) to social interaction and social practice. Such an advance necessitates a shift in approaches to archaeological evidence, and not merely new interpretations of the distribution of particular cultural types and styles. The first step in the construction of such a context necessitated the

reconstruction of the past demographic character of the study region. It is necessary to establish the exact demographic character of all the cultural-economic groups and the array of what may be termed identity-conscious social groups, and also to recognise that much of the cultural variability can be ascribed to the frontier-like environment (*e.g.* Sampson 1986; Kopytoff 1989; Eaton 1993, 2005; Lightfoot & Martinez 1995; Elton 1996; Parker 2002) which characterised the region over the past two millennia. It is highly likely that ethnicity is linked to cultural identity, since, and in order to categorise people, it is necessary to refer to cultural, economic, linguistic, or religious specificities. One of the prerequisites of such classifications is that all "ethnic" groups interact and maintain a relative degree of contact within the same broad social structure. Incidentally, it has been established that southern African hunter-gatherers lived in groups of between fifteen to fifty individuals (Conkey 1985; Barnard 1992; Biesele & Royal-/o/oo 2004; Tanaka & Sugawara 1999), who aggregated into larger groups on a by and large seasonal basis (Lee 1979; Parkington 1980; Bartram *et al.* 1991; Wadley 1992) during which much attention was afforded to various social activities such as alliance-formation through gift exchange (Wiessner 1984; Wadley 1989; Barnard 1992) and also religious and ritual activities such as the performance of trance- or curing-rituals (Marshall 1969; Katz 1982a; Guenther 1986, 1999). In the context of forager sociality, ethnic identity also operates as a way to gain access to, or be alienated from, some economic, political or cultural resources (Cashdan 1983:47). Ethnic identity is thus strongly linked to politics, and, in the context of foraging, can be defined as the power to control and regulate the availability and distribution of resources.

Southern Africa engraved

Rock art, whether painted or engraved, constitutes one of the most visible and visually perceptible and impressive components of the archaeological record. A primary consequence of the prominent visual and representational nature of engraved art is that it provides a measure of insight into the world of the people who created the art. Even in modern times people from all walks of life and variable cultural backgrounds are able to recognise and partially interpret many of the figurative representations produced by pre-historic societies (Morphy 2005). Rock art provides a rich source of information into the nature of past societies, cultural subsistence strategies and, more importantly, on the development of cohesive social systems (Deacon 1997; Heyd 1999; Mitchell 2005; Morphy 2005). Artwork is the most obvious example of symbolic storage outside the human mind, yet it is not universally practised by hunter-gatherers and it cannot therefore be used as the sole criterion for modern symbolism and modern behaviour. In this regard, anthropomorphic art, which combines reality with fantasy, fits

perfectly with Sperber's (1974:4) criterion for symbolic activity. Wadley (2001:215; see also Deacon 1997) argues that, in addition to painted and engraved art, personal ornaments, artefact style, and formal spatial patterning also fulfil this role. Although symbolic behaviour may have been adopted rapidly when cognitive and social conditions became ripe for this change, it seems that the traits believed to characterise modern behaviour did not develop in a single instance or appeared as a single package in southern Africa. Nevertheless, and as stated by Terrence Deacon (1997: 374) the earliest engraved and painted arts provide us with the first direct expression of an innovative symbolising mind. In addition, and although painted and engraved art mark a fundamental change in human socio-cultural structure, they do not correlate with any significant advances in human biology or cognitive ability. Prehistoric representational art also does not demonstrate the origins of symbolic communication or spoken language: these essential traits, so characteristic of modern human behaviour, are merely representative of the shift in communicative strategies that also implies significant change in social relationships.

The visual prominence of rock art has also led to the common assumption that pre-historic art, as a visual cultural product, fulfils a communicative function parallel to language and that it can be "read" in a manner akin to reading texts (Hodder 1986; Tilley 1990; Whitley 1998; Janik 1999; Rozwadowski 2001). While rock art does communicate, it is however not to be "read" in a straightforward literal or textual sense. An attempt at post-modern text-based interpretation has been undertaken with regard to figurative rock art by Christopher Tilley (1991), with remarkably unconvincing results. According to Gell (1998:6), "Visual art objects are not a part of language ... nor do they constitute an alternative language." Since rock art is fundamentally metaphorical in intent as it does encode particular ideologies and religious views within its respective associated iconographic contents, an understanding and consideration of an array of evidentiary phenomena, such as ethnographic and archaeological sources, enables researchers to "read", in a metaphorical sense, the intrinsic and inadvertently "communicated" meaning of pre-historic art (Lewis-Williams & Loubser 1986; Ouzman 1998; Whitley 1998; Janik 1999).

In order to grasp fully the fundamental nature of rock engravings, one has to consider the presumed restricted expressive capacity of engraved art, as opposed to the better-known painted imagery from the Drakensberg and Cederberg regions. The primary dichotomy between paintings and engravings, the difference in technologies of manufacture, was first alluded to by John Barrow in 1779 (as cited in Axelson 1954;

Mackenzie 1971), who stated that “for accuracy of outline and correctness of the different parts, worse drawings have passed through the engraver’s hands.” George Stow (1905) interpreted the differential distribution of engravings, which are usually to be found exposed atop rocky outcrops or hills, and paintings, which are generally found in more mountainous regions in caves and large shelters, to indicate that the *koppie dwellers* (engravers) and the *cave dwellers* (painters) were in fact two very different groups of people. The Basotho also, according to Ellenberger and McGregor (as cited in Wilman 1933), recognised two very distinct groups of San, the carvers or engravers, and the painters. The painted arts, by their very nature as painted images, have a greater and more proficient capacity for detailed portrayal and accurate representation than do pecked or incised engraved images. The rock art of the Drakensberg region (Pager 1975; Vinnicombe 1975, 1976; Lewis-Williams 1981, 1985) is characterised by brush paintings using a rich array of colours which results in vibrant and detailed painted imagery of human figures in an assortment of postures and sizes, a range of animals such as eland antelope, and also of supernatural- and spirit-beings. Although it appears that the representational competence and visual impact of engravings are limited by its technology of manufacture, these apparent inadequacies do not severely limit the expressive capacity and interpretive potential of engraved imagery. For example, depictions of eland, black- or white-rhinoceros or even blue- or black-wildebeest, whether simply outlined or depicted in the classical three-dimensional technique, can most generally be identified as such. The point is that while detailed engravings are indeed possible, and while rudimentary paintings do occur, the manner of depiction does not fundamentally affect the positive identification of the subject. This is true even for most contemporary observers who, albeit having only slight knowledge of southern African indigenous game animals and animal ethology, may still correctly identify the various game-animals depicted in the art to species level. Deregowski (2005) has addressed this issue and advances an argument based on the notion of the “typical contour”, a perceptual feature of most objects which is commonly used by artists. The typical contour of any solid object is defined as the line of salient curvature of the surface of the object. Mathematically speaking, such lines are described as curves connecting points of maximum curvature (Deregowski 2005; also see Marshack 1972; Bahn 1997; Chippindale 2001). Larger mammals have a dominant horizontal plane on which the critical contour rests, the spine. In ornithological terms, this equates with the notion of “jizz”, the general outline or silhouette of the profile according to which variable species of birds may be identified (Newman 1983; Tarboton & Erasmus 1998). Even when artists decide to omit finer outline details such as tusks, manes, or horns, the basic horizontal contour remains sufficient in rendering the animal

identifiable. Although this effect of typical contours is especially strong, to the point that depictions often require only a segment of the outline to render them identifiable, there is a limit to how abstract an artist may choose to depict an animal if he or she wishes to portray and convey accurately exactly what he or she had in mind. The intention of the artist clearly plays an important role in the formulation of depictions.

It is, in addition, well-known that colours possess a range of conceptual associations in Africa (Turner 1967; Knight *et al.* 1995; Deacon 1997), and that the symbolic use of particular colours is a feature of the painted arts of the San (*e.g.* Yates & Manhire 1991). The fact that engravings do not comprise vibrant and potency-rich paints made from eland fat, blood and special ochres (Vinnicombe 1976; Lewis-Williams 1981), also do not necessarily limit their visual impact and religious eminence. There appears to be no clear differentiation in San thought between the real and the non-real world (Guenther 1994; Solomon 1997; Deacon 2001), and, in addition, the spirit-world which existed beyond the rock surface was in fact believed to be very real and also accessible (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1990). Consequently, it is conceivable that the brilliance and vivaciousness afforded to engraved imagery during events of, for example, sunrise and sunset, may well have been perceived as indicative of the transformation of the engraved subject matter into vibrant depictions of humans, animals and supernatural beings which were in fact alive (Ouzman 2001). A further characteristic of the engraved arts is that the process of manufacture is more performative. All pecked engravings are essentially created by means of percussive action. While this is obviously a necessary activity, the removal of the external patina for the purpose of creating an image may not have been the exclusive function of such percussive actions. The significant role of sound and especially percussive sound in ritual activity has received some attention in the spheres of anthropology and rock art studies (*e.g.* Needham 1967; England 1968; Marshall 1969; Scarre 1989; Waller 1993; Devereux 2001; Ouzman 2001; Arsenault 2004; Barac 2004; Rifkin 2005). Worldwide, ritual acts are accompanied and characterised by the production and fundamental presence of sound, be it in the form of singing, clapping, the stamping of feet, or through creating percussive sound by means of beating or banging a diversity of objects of both organic and inorganic substance (Crawley 1912). Percussive sound is easy to produce and not bound to any specific culture: percussion, aside from diverse forms of vocalisation, presents the most effortless and most frequently employed means of producing sound (Needham 1967; Alvarez & Siemens 1988). Sound may also facilitate the movement between mental states, assisting shamans to enter the spirit world. This function of sound is substantiated by neurological and psychological research. Percussive sound

acts as an analgesic: it blocks overriding pain and as the percussive rhythms approach the 10-hertz alpha cycle of the brain, the percussive rhythms assist in inducing a trance-like state (Eliade 1964; Eibl-Eibesfeldt 1989; Devereux 2001; Fachner & Rittner 2004). Analogous to the way in which the clapping of hands, the stamping of feet and the sound of rattles assist shamans to cross the threshold between mental states during trance performances (Marshall 1969), the incessant percussive noise which results from the manufacture of pecked engraved images may have had a similarly trance-inducing effect (Needham 1967; Waller 1993; Ouzman 2001). Whereas the manufacture of painted imagery is dependent on the recollection of visions and encounters after trance experiences, engravings, through their process of manufacture, may in fact have formed an integral part of trance performances and ritual activity.

Although engravings share with paintings a number of essential conceptual and expressive characteristics, they have not received the same degree of scholarly attention. Perhaps their situation in the harsh arid interior, or their perceived simplicity and visual unattractiveness may account for this deficiency in vigorous research. Notwithstanding these negativities, several scholars (*e.g.* Wilman 1933; Butzer *et al.* 1979; Fock & Fock 1984; Deacon 1988; Morris 1988, 2002; Dowson 1992; Ouzman 1996, 2001; Walker 1997; Hollmann in press; Morris in press) have focussed their attention upon engravings. Apart from a few obvious differences between painted and engraved rock arts, there appears to be an essential degree of thematic, conceptual, ideological and pervasively shamanistic correspondence and unity between the two, primarily technologically distinct, art-forms (Lewis-Williams & Biesele 1978; Thackeray *et al.* 1981; Lewis-Williams 1983, 1984a; Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1988; Dowson 1992). It is significant that it is the landscape of the engravings, and not the paintings for which the largest body of South African San oral testimony, the /Xam informants of Bleek and Lloyd (Bleek & Lloyd 1911; Bleek 1924, 1933; Deacon 1986; Hollmann 2004), namely Diä!kwain, ||Kabbo, |Han≠kass'o, |A!kunta and ≠Kasin, is directly relevant. The practice of engraving, although of great antiquity, is not necessarily limited to the distant pre-historic past. Diä!kwain had told Lucy Lloyd that his father, Xa≠tin, had made "chippings of gemsbok, quagga and ostriches" at a place called "/kann where these animals had formerly come to drink" (Deacon 1986:147). This may have occurred as early, or rather as recently as the 1830s and places the practice of engraving well within the historical period during which Europeans had already advanced across the Orange River and settled most of the Cape Province.

Distribution and manufacture

Southern African rock engravings are located principally on the semi-arid central plateau, with primary concentrations occurring in the Gariep-Vaal basin, the Karoo, and in Namibia. The region surrounding Kimberley and the Magaliesberg are also well known for their abundant engraved sites, and numerous sites have been recorded from the upper Vaal and Limpopo basins and the eastern Free State (Wilman 1933; Morris 1988; Lewis-Williams 2000). At a few sites engravings and paintings occur in close proximity: in a south-western gorge of the Brandberg, Namibia, several engravings are covered in both representational and geometric brush- and finger-painted depictions, and there are a handful of recorded cases in which engravings were also painted (Wilman 1933; Van Riet Lowe 1945; Willcox 1963, 1965; Cooke 1969; Morris 1988; Walker 1998). Engravings are perceptibly more typical of the semi-arid interior regions of South Africa, whereas paintings are confined, although not exclusively, to the more sub-humid and humid environments of the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal provinces (Butzer *et al.* 1979). Whilst some degree of overlap between the primary engraved and painted regions do occur, the two techniques are generally separated spatially and no exact geological or topographical correlations exist (Morris 1988). Engravings may be positioned on both horizontal and vertical rock surfaces and tends to occur in the open on either large boulders, flat or glaciated rocky pavements, in stream-beds, or in shelters or semi-sheltered sites atop low-lying hills or rocky outcrops (Butzer *et al.* 1979; Morris 1988; Dowson 1992). Although the bulk of the engraved arts are to be found on the andesites and dolerites of the interior, dolomites, quartzites, pyrophelites, and gneisses were also engraved. The clustering of engravings on the igneous outcrops and boulders in the interior has been ascribed to the discontinuous patterning of the Tertiary Kalahari system of aeolian sands which leaves few areas in which rocky outcrops are exposed and therefore suitable for engraving activities (Butzer *et al.* 1979). However, even within this extensive “engravable” andesite-dolerite zone there exist a degree of site-patterning and clustering which may relate to particular locational, territorial, aggregational and religious preferences and patterns as exhibited by the socio-artistic entities that inhabited the region.

There are certain practical difficulties when working with engraving sites. For example, engravings are often spread across many boulders at a single site. A few clusters of images may occur on individual boulders, but numerous images appear alone on a surface. This makes it even more difficult to determine relationships between different images than for paintings (Lewis-Williams 1998:94), and one therefore needs a new set of criteria by which to consider relationships in engravings. The typical occurrence of

engravings on scattered, isolated and seemingly unrelated rock surfaces provides the impression that engraved images are disjointed and lacking in structural and relational coherence and continuity, perhaps rendering them prone to equivalent measures of structurally incoherent and disassociated reading and interpretation. The conceptual wholes of painted and engraved locations are however very different. There are a number of unique relational features characteristic of many engraved sites which suggests that engravings are implicated in similarly unique relationships with regards the range of activities performed at such locations. An obvious example of the unique contexts of engraved sites includes a close association with water. In the arid regions in particular, it is unusual to find engraved locations more than a kilometre away from seasonal water-courses. In many instances engravings are situated right next to water sources or even within streambeds so that they are in fact submerged during the rainy season. This close association between geometric engravings in particular and sources of water was noted early on (Fock 1969). Fock also stresses the fact that, in the arid regions of the central plateau, all rock engravings occur in relatively close proximity to water. These sources, whether in the form of springs, pans, water holes, fountains, or river beds, are frequently flooded in the rainy season during which the engravings become at least partially submerged. Engraved sites are also frequently associated with rhinoceros rubbing-stones (Ouzman 1996). These are always located adjacent to water sources, and in many instances they are either engraved or occur in close proximity to engraved surfaces. In addition to noting the existence of engravings of animals and humans in the Bloemhof-Taung region, Anderson (as cited in Wilman 1933) also remarks that in 1866, north of Taung, he encountered a number rhinoceros rubbing stones which were covered in faded engravings of humans, animals, and also geometric forms and cupules. Such engraved rubbing stones are still present in the region today.

In addition to the above, many engraved sites bear non-representational marks which may or may not be associated with representational engraved imagery. The physical appearances of such marks have prompted interpretations ranging from touching and rubbing (see Ouzman 1996; Yates & Manhire 1991 for rubbing of rock paintings), to percussive actions involved in activities not related to the manufacture of engraved imagery. Abraded and smoothed surfaces are commonly found on horizontal rock faces and in conjunction with other forms of engraved imagery. While many appear to correspond with the polished engravings referred to by Butzer and Fock (Butzer *et al.* 1979), determining the precise mechanisms by which such surfaces were produced remains difficult. The rubbing and smoothing of certain engraved rocks by human

tactile action has been reported from a number of sites (Ouzman 2001). Rubbing or touching powerful places and engraved depictions of supernatural beings allowed people access to the potency inherent to such places (Lewis-Williams 1995a; Ouzman 2001; Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2004a). Finally, engraved locations are regularly characterised by the presence of rock gongs, many of which display clear signs of percussive activity. Rock gongs, or lithophones, are an interesting component of the relationship between rock art and sound and between sound and ritual. Rock gongs are naturally occurring boulders of varied geological origin that rest on larger rocks and which emits a harsh metallic and often ringing sound when struck. The sound produced by such gongs is generally limited in tone and timber, but some appear to have a wider three-octave range (Kirby 1972). Akin to drums and most other percussive instruments, the sound-waves produced by gongs have definite neural and organic effects on human beings, regardless of their cultural and religious orientation. The low-frequency reverberations produced by percussive instruments not only appeal to humans because of aesthetically pleasing and aurally pleasurable effects, but also because of the more profound and generally subconsciously experienced physiological effects which result from the intensity of the repetitive sound-waves. The percussive marks on such gongs are in most cases clearly discernable and appear to coincide consistently with the most suitable places from which to coax the hollow metallic sound in the event of being struck (Goodwin 1957; Fock 1972; Ouzman 2001; Rifkin 2005). It is these resonant “sweet-spots” which, because they represent the visual residues of aurality, are indicative of the function of such gongs. Many gong rocks are also engraved and display imagery consistent with what is generally believed to be San authored art. Thus, and while the “conceptual wholes” of painted and engraved sites are certainly different, the endeavour to first construct and then manipulate and utilise powerful places remains a mutual one.

It must be noted that although the methods and tools implicated in the manufacture of engravings have never been observed, the technological character of the images provide sufficient information on how they were produced (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1990). The pecks, hacks, and incisions of which the bulk of the engraved imagery is comprised could only have resulted from a limited range of percussive and incisive actions. Engravings were produced using three primary techniques: pecking, incision, and scraping. The pecked engravings include a large and variable group of seemingly intermediate age (Butzer *et al.* 1979; Deacon 1988; Beaumont & Vogel 1989) and in which images were produced percussively with a pointed stone tool. Emil Holub, who passed through the region during the 1880s, describes an assortment of large and

small stone tools which were used in the production of these pitted or pecked images (Wilman 1933). Vertical percussion generated dots of variable sizes and depths, and slanted strokes produced dashes of varying extent and concentration (Fock & Fock 1984; Morris 1988). The percussive marks range in size from the coarse and irregular hacked engravings where the holes exceed 10 mm in size, to the much more controlled and so finer peckings of the so-called classical engravings which are characterised by their presentation of the engraved figure in three-dimensional form (Fock 1979; Butzer *et al.* 1979; Morris 1988). Pecked engravings were either produced in outline (profile), in silhouette (fully pecked), or in a combination of both techniques (Butzer *et al.* 1979; Fock 1979; Beaumont & Vogel 1985). The second technique, namely incision, is believed to precede both pecked and scraped engravings in the Karoo (Deacon 1988; Beaumont & Vogel 1989), and incorporates the categories of fine-line or hair-line engravings which are produced through cutting into the darker patina with a sharp pointed stone (Butzer *et al.* 1979; Lewis-Williams 2000). This technologically distinct type of engraving occurs most frequently, but not exclusively, in the Karoo (Deacon 1988), the Magaliesberg region (Steel 1988) and at the Driekuil-Gestoptefontein engraved complex in the North West Province (Van Riet Lowe 1945; Mason 1962; Fock & Fock 1984; Steel 1988; Hollmann in press). The third and generally accepted to be the most recent engraving technique entails the removal of the patina through scraping (Butzer *et al.* 1979; Beaumont & Vogel 1989). A fine and sharp stone is used to scrape a number of very closely positioned lines to form whichever figure the artist desired to create. This method is to some extent related to hairline engravings, but is distinguished from these by the fact that human, animal, and geometric motifs are not merely outlined but entirely scraped and that they tend to be much less patinated than the hairline engravings (Deacon 1986; Morris 1988). The process of scraping allows for variable degrees of penetration into the outer patina which in turn results in the production of shaded or polychrome-like engravings (Fock 1969). It has been observed that the three engraving techniques are not mutually exclusive and that they may in fact occur within single sites and even as part of single engraved episodes and images (*e.g.* Busby *et al.* 1978; Whitley & Annegarn 1994; Deacon 2001). The three techniques have thus been found to overlap, both spatially and temporally, although the occurrence and apparent preference of particular methods in specific regions may relate to wider temporal or spatial cultural entities. It is also apparent that in the more recent instances of engraving, which may be identified as such by means of specific thematic elements or cases of superimpositioning, the fine and controlled pecks so characteristic of forager imagery are replaced by more crude, rough-pecked and "hacked" instances of depiction.

Theme and context

The subject matter depicted in engravings can be divided into three main categories: zoomorphic figures (indigenous, domesticated, and fantasy species), anthropomorphic figures (male, female, intermediate depictions and also transformed "therianthropic" figures) and geometric designs (which may be of either a representational or non-representational nature). While it is generally stated that the range of subject matter is essentially similar for both paintings and engravings and that the primary distinction between the two art-forms is arbitrarily grounded in technique (Stow 1905; Lewis-Williams 1984a, b; Dowson 1992; Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1999), the engraved arts simultaneously exhibit both a more limited and a very specific range of depictional and conceptual categories. For example, kaross-clad figures (Jolly 2002), "trance-buck" (Lewis-Williams 1981) and depictions of mythical horned or antelope-headed snakes (Pager 1971; Vinnicombe 1976) which are so commonly seen in the painted arts, are virtually absent in the engraved arts. Conversely, and while practically absent in the painted artistic repertoire, engravings are characterised by depictions of eland, black and white rhinoceros, giraffe, buffalo, hippopotamus, geometric imagery, and human and animal spoor motifs (Butzer *et al.* 1979; Fock & Fock 1984; Morris 1988). Accordingly, and while depictions of human figures are rare, there appears to be an amplified degree of interest in zoomorphic and geometric categories in the engraved arts.

The first category of depiction is that of zoomorphic or animal figures, which includes mostly larger indigenous species such as eland, rhinoceros, zebra, giraffe and ostrich, and to a lesser extent also fish, reptiles, birds and fantasy animals. Exotic and domesticated species such as horses, cattle, goats, and dogs also occur, albeit in limited numbers and contexts. The engraved species do not entirely reflect the faunal assortment which might have been present in the interior region at any particular time. For example, depictions of the ubiquitous springbuck, which as the renowned "trek-bokken" occurred in greater numbers than any other species, are rare or even absent from most engraving sites. An account of the masses of migrating springbuck is provided by Cronwright-Schreiner, who in 1896 witnessed such a trek and who, after attentively observing the migration, finally computed an estimate of some 500 000 springbuck (Lovegrove 1993). On the contrary, it is the eland, although in nature they occurred in less significant quantities, which are the most commonly depicted animal in engravings (Fock 1966). The relative numbers of eland have however been noted to decrease from east to west, to the point that eland are numerically less common than giraffe, ostrich, and zebra in Namibia, while in the Richtersveld, depictions of elephant

are found to the nearly total exclusion of eland (Fock 1966, 1979; Morris 1988). There are three basic means by which animals could be depicted in pecked engravings: as a simple outline image, as a filled-in silhouette, or as a relatively naturalistic portrait (Butzer *et al.* 1979). In the South African interior, the larger outline depictions of eland and rhinoceros appear to occur as localised sets and exhibit substantial traces of weathering and patination. Filled silhouettes are relatively common with a wide distribution and exhibiting variable contexts and stages of weathering and patination. Naturalistic portraits, or the classical three-dimensional engravings of eland, rhinoceros, buffalo and hippopotamus, although rather limited in numerical occurrence, occurs throughout the region. The distribution and positioning of these images within sites do however indicate some sort of intra-site patterning as they occur, not in close association with outline or filled engravings, but are more generally isolated, in many cases on the peripheries of sites, and some distance from the bulk of the engraved depictions.

The second category is that of anthropomorphic or human depictions. Human figures may be depicted singly or in groups or in association of animal figures, with males occurring most frequently. As opposed to their abundant presence and virtual dominance in paintings, depictions of humans, although more than 700 engraved figures have been identified, occur much less frequently in engravings in both South Africa and in Namibia (Wilman 1933; Fock 1979; Morris 1988; Steel 1988). Human figures also hardly ever occur at sites with less than 25 engravings (Morris 1988), and are especially poorly represented at sites with abundant geometric depictions (Fock 1979). In the majority of instances, engraved localities exhibit a clear clustering of human figures towards one end of the engraved area, and in such cases there is no obvious degree of spatial delimitation of male, female or therianthropic figures. Whether such clustering of human depictions corresponds with or relates to particular activity areas or the expressive preferences of specific, and perhaps more identity-conscious social-artistic entities, remains a pressing but intriguing issue. Equipment such as bows, arrows, clubs and digging sticks, items of clothing such as aprons, karosses and stretched-out animal skins, and ornaments are occasionally portrayed in the art. Ascribing gender to human figures is also not as straightforward as one might think. The bulk of human depictions are generally sexually unmarked, or zero-marked (*e.g.* Lenssen-Erz 1997), leaving the remainder of depictions to be categorised as “male” or “female” based on the presence of the sexual or bio-morphological characteristics of “breasts” or “penises”, or per gender-based and subsistence-related indicators of “bows” or “digging-sticks”. This is however problematic as it implies a

literal or realistic relationship between person-and-object, and, as a result, also between image-and-reality. In mythological contexts gender-anomalous figures abound (Solomon 1994) and in the ethnographies there are ample instances in which women are known to make use of bows and arrows as part of a ritual such as in the girl's initiation ceremony (Solomon 1995). Although gender is a universal structuring process, there are no gender universals (Hays-Gilpin 2004). Some societies recognise a third gender (*e.g.* Herdt 1996), for instance the *two-spirit people* of some indigenous American peoples, and *hijras* of India and Pakistan (Nanda 1998), or the liminal and sexually-unmarked third gender concerned with altered states of consciousness as discerned by some in San rock art (*e.g.* Lenssen-Erz 1997), and others even consider there to be a fourth (Reddy 2005) or fifth (Graham 2001) gender.

The category of human depictions also includes human foot- and hand-prints. In the interior, the distribution of human footprints and animal spoor motifs is limited to a single site near Bronkhorstspruit in north-eastern Gauteng (Geldmacher 1967; Tobias 1967), a few sites south of the Gariep River and a few in the Vryburg-Kuruman districts (Morris 1988). In Botswana there are two primary types of engraved footprint sites, namely those which are dominated by the hoof-prints of large herbivores, and those at which a combination of human footprints and carnivore spoor are the most prominent. The Matsieng creation site is one such site at which engraved human and carnivore prints are the most dominant. Sites which have been extensively engraved in human and animal footprints have also been recorded in Angola, Zimbabwe, and in Namibia (Walker 1997). The Twyfelfontien engraved site in Namibia contains an estimate of more than 2500 engravings, of which a large proportion is made up of human, carnivore, and also large herbivore spoor prints (Dowson 1992). There is obviously a substantial amount of variability involved in the distribution and content of engraved sites containing human and animal footprints. Human figures may also be depicted in an assortment of postures or as engaging in a number of activities, such as running, dancing, flying, swimming, fighting, hunting, lying down or simply standing. Great care should however be taken when attaching such activity-related labels to painted or engraved imagery as a substantial amount of additional features and qualities, many of which may not be outwardly apparent, should also be taken into account.

The third category of images depicted in the art is that of geometric designs. Fock (1979) refers to this group as a mixed class of geometric forms and inanimate objects which includes a wide range of essentially non-representational shapes such as circles, of which some are connected to form groups and some forming concentric rings, ovals

which may be cross-hatched with vertical or horizontal lines, asterisks, stars, zigzag lines, wavy lines, rectangles, spirals and so forth. Painted geometric forms are restricted to regions along the Kalahari margins, primarily in those areas bounded by the Orange-, Vaal-, and Harts-Rivers (Butzer *et al.* 1979). Interpretations of geometric engravings have varied from functioning as emblematic signs (Stow 1905), as proto-alphabetic communicative forms (Van Riet Lowe 1955; Slack 1962), as depictions of natural objects such as flowers (Wilman 1933), to interpretations as symbolic phenomena (Fock 1969; Vinnicombe 1972) and as depictions of geometric forms perceived during altered states of consciousness (Lewis-Williams 1986; Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1988). It appears as if the manufacturers of the engraved art were, in general, "more frequently interested in isolating the geometric imagery of an early stage of trance than were rock painters" (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989:61; Lewis-Williams 2002:141). This prominence of geometric imagery amongst engravings may indicate that either those engravings deemed San or forager-authored have limited visual iconic properties but an increased and more pronounced polysemic or symbolic character, or, that the geometrics in engraved imagery were in fact produced "primarily by a single people at a time of drier climate when demographic concentration centred about permanent water sources" (Butzer *et al.* 1979:1205). Recent research instead suggests that a large proportion of geometric depictions were in all probability produced by Khoe pastoralists, or Khoekhoen (Barnard 1992; Smith & Ouzman 2004a). This predominantly non-entoptic tradition is comprised of a large number of geometric forms, which although irregular, appears to possess some representational images of material cultural objects such as tasselled food bags, pegged animal skins, karosses, and leather aprons (Wilman 1933; Mason 1962; Fock 1969; Morris 1988).

Central to the "geometric problem" outlined above is the distinction between entoptic and non-entoptic geometric forms. Basic geometric forms have been shown to occur in many variable contexts which, for example, may range from girl's initiation amongst the Chewa of Malawi (Smith 1997), the foraging San along the Riet River (Morris 2002) and the Northern Sotho of Limpopo Province (Namono & Eastwood 2005); to notions concerning astronomy and weather-divination as amongst the Wagogo of central Tanzania (Smith 1997; Ruggles 1999); as calendrics (Marshack 1972); as means of establishing and asserting group identity and territorial boundaries such as amongst the Pueblo Hopi of Arizona (Layton 2001; Whitley 2001) and the Walbiri of Australia (Singer 1982); and as manifest in the rock art of the Khoekhoen pastoralists of northern South Africa (Smith & Ouzman 2004a). These types of geometric forms are termed non-entoptic or unalloyed (Smith & Ouzman 2004a, b), as opposed to the entoptic and

construed or alloyed geometrics which are so common in the San forager painted arts (Lewis-Williams 1988; Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1988; Dowson 1999; Smith & Ouzman 2004a, b; Eastwood & Smith 2005).

The existence of entoptic imagery in southern African forager arts is not contested by the argument provided by Smith and Ouzman (2004a:506), according to whom the "restricted and distinct iconographic range is dominated by angular zigzags, nested catenary curves, microdots, flecks and grids". These primarily iconic forms are generally categorised as stage two hallucinations, the stage during which the subject attempts to make sense of the perceived entoptic forms by elaborating or construing them into recognisable and iconic shapes and forms (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1988). Depictions of elements from the non-iconic and unalloyed category of geometric imagery ascribed Khoekhoen authorship by Smith and Ouzman are described as "not integrated with representational imagery" and characterised as "rare in if not absent from San rock art" (*ibid.*:506). Although unalloyed geometrics are common in the engravings of the central interior, alloyed or entoptic geometric forms also occur with representational imagery. The ascription of authorship to a category of art which has been shown to have an extensive cross-cultural occurrence, which occur in numerous social and cultural contexts, and which has been subject to at least two millennia of interaction between foragers, pastoralists and agro-pastoralists, is not an un-complicated matter. Variable degrees of forager-pastoralist interaction could certainly have led to the transmission of a number of cultural and artistic traits to and from the respective groups, and the possibility that the artistic repertoire of the two entities should be radically different or exclusive is decidedly unlikely. The nature and possible ethnic affiliations of a particular type of geometric form, namely engraved circular and rayed circular designs, will be afforded further attention in Chapter Five.

Interpreting engraved art

The interpretation of rock art has developed considerably since the first attempts at discovering the meaning of the art were made more than two centuries ago. Initial interpretations emerged during the early Colonial Period when Europeans first encountered the San and their rock art (Lewis-Williams 1984a; Deacon & Dowson 1996; Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1999). The artists and their art were viewed as primitive and crude, and much of the art was subsequently ascribed to more advanced near Eastern civilisations such as the Phoenicians and the Sabaeans (Breuil 1955; see also Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1999; Lewis-Williams 2006a) who were presumed to have visited southern Africa before San or Bantu-speakers inhabited the region. Such

exotic explanations suited the nature of colonial expansion and were used to justify the occupation of South Africa by colonial powers (Deacon & Dowson 1996). A noteworthy exception, amongst many others, to these generally Eurocentric explanations can be accredited to Wilhelm Bleek, who, in 1874 concluded that the art of the San comprised "a truly artistic conception of the ideas which most deeply moved the Bushmen mind, and filled it with religious feelings" (Bleek 1874:13, as cited in Lewis-Williams 1999:141).

In the early 1980s it became clear that two primary opposing positions towards the meaning of rock art had emerged (Lewis-Williams 1984a). The first became popular during the 1950s and argued that there was no meaning behind the art and that it was made purely for enjoyment. Art was thus made for art's sake alone (Burkitt 1928; Willcox 1963; Cooke 1969) and the engraved and painted imagery was nothing more that pretty pictures. The second view was that the art was associated with the attempts of hunter-gatherer groups to exert some form of control over the surrounding environment through the appeasement of supernatural forces and through the depiction of their prey in rock art (Balfour 1909; Breuil 1931; Holm 1961; Brentjes 1969). These explanatory schemes, commonly termed the "art for art's sake" and "hunting magic" approaches were largely circular, speculative and thus inappropriate as the manufacturer's state of mind, or the emically ascribed meaning and socio-religious substance of the depictions, was inferred from the art itself and consequently employed to gain insight into the art (Lewis-Williams 1984a, 1986; Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1999). Rock art was, in addition, analysed by means of formal quantitative studies in which the art was enthusiastically classified according to a number of visually observable variables. Such quantitative analyses, which took on the form of lengthy formal typologies and extensive quantitative categories could not however provide any insight on the meaning of the art, and were subsequently abandoned (Vinnicombe 1967; Lewis-Williams 1984a; Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1999; Blundell 2004). By the late 1960s and early 1970s researchers realised that rock art research would not progress unless some insight into the religious beliefs of the artists could be gained. Consequently, some turned to the ethnographies collected by Thomas Arbousset and Francois Daumas (1846), Joseph Orpen (1874), Wilhelm Bleek and Lucy Lloyd (1870s), and the twentieth-century ethnographic material gathered by Richard Lee (1968), Lorna Marshall (1969), Megan Biesele (1978), and Richard Katz (1982a, b) from the Kalahari (Lewis-Williams 1998, 2002). The Bleek and Lloyd collection (*e.g.* Bleek & Lloyd 1911; Bleek 1933, 1935, 1936) and the Kalahari material comprise the principal corpus of San ethnography.

Cognitive enquiry and cosmology

There is little uncertainty about the religious nature of forager and other rock arts in southern Africa, and that the study of rock art is in fact a study of religious phenomena, an archaeology of religion, is generally acknowledged. The shamanistic nature of the forager arts, as established by Lewis-Williams (1981) and Lewis-Williams and Dowson (1988), calls for the treatment of San rock art as a form of artistic religious expression with significant social and cognitive undertones and associations. This places rock art studies within the sphere of cognitive archaeological enquiry, with cognitive archaeology defined as "the study of all those aspects of ancient culture that are the product of the human mind" (Flannery & Marcus 1998:36), or as "an approach that seeks explanations of human behaviour at least in part by explicit reference to the human mind" (Whitley 1998a:6). In this particular case both the ethnographic anthology and the rock at itself provides such explicit references to the human mind: the state or condition of the human mind is embodied by the art, which in turn is substantiated and further elucidated by both the ethnographic texts and neuropsychological research (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1988). The remainder of the definition offered by Flannery and Marcus (1998:37) lists and deals with four of "those aspects of ancient culture that are the product of the human mind", namely cosmology, religion, ideology and iconography. These four epitomising aspects of cognitive inquiry are central to any interpretation of rock art, and although these are especially relevant to the arts created by San forager peoples, the later arts may also be addressed according to these four cognitive categories.

Cosmology is generally defined as "a theory or philosophy which concerns the origin and general structure and functioning of the universe" (Flannery & Marcus 1998:37). How the cosmos is structured affects both religion and ideology. Religion may be defined as "a specific set of beliefs in a divine or superhuman power or powers whom are to be obeyed as the creators and rulers of the universe" (Flannery & Marcus 1998: 39). The religious component of this equation facilitates both passage into the spirit-world, the cosmos, and interaction with or experience of the supernatural beings by which it is inhabited. Religion thus serves to both explicate and facilitate experience of the cosmological realm as it is constructed according to the cosmology of the particular group. Ideology is defined as the "body of doctrine, myth, and symbolism of a social movement, institution, class, or group of individuals, often with reference with some political or cultural plan, along with the strategies for putting the doctrine into operation" (Flannery & Marcus 1998:40), or "the set of ideas that legitimises the form and functioning of any society" (Lewis-Williams 1984a:230). Ideology relates more to social

and political concerns than it does to religious concepts and activities, although in practice this distinction is often ambiguous. As ideology is always specific, it is associated with a particular, and conceivably identity-conscious and ethnically oriented, social group. In the case of the southern African San as a somewhat homogenous macro-community, the greater San foraging population appears to comprise a widely dispersed and diverse yet coherent cultural entity with a collectively shared ideological scheme, namely egalitarianism. The egalitarian character of San existence, as an ideological system, functions primarily to mask inequalities and foster a condition of situational leadership, thus promoting social harmony and rendering the existence of small disseminated and occasionally concentrated social groups viable (Lewis-Williams 1984a; Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2004a). Closely related to ideology are religious symbols, the iconographic content of and as manifest in rock art, and religious rituals such as the trance or healing dance performance (Lewis-Williams 1984a). In archaeology the term “iconography” generally refers to the ways in which pre-historic people represented cosmological, religious, and ideological notions or concepts in their respective artistic traditions and to how these concepts are studied by archaeologists (Flannery & Marcus 1998:43).

More importantly still is the fact that the ideological system with which we are dealing can confidently be afforded an origin of perhaps 26 000 years ago (Lewis-Williams 1984a). The remarkable antiquity of and apparent continuity in forager ideology provides immense insight into the ancient and persevering nature of San cosmology, religion, and societal practice. However, reliable dates for painted and engraved rock art remain to be inadequate and contested, and the presence of extensive gaps in chronology is highly problematic in terms of the recognition and accurate reconstruction of past ethno-artistic social groups.

Ethnography and shamanism

The consultation of ethnographic sources is central to the interpretation and understanding of rock art for most of the leading rock art researchers in southern Africa (Lewis-Williams & Biesele 1978; Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1994; Lewis-Williams 1998; Blundell 2004), the United States (Whitley 1998; 2001; Boyd 2002; Keyser & Poetschat 2004; Loendorf 2004), Australia (Layton 1992; Taçon 2001; Morphy 2005; Clegg 2002; David 2002), and South America (Berenguer & Martinez 1989). While there is certainly an increasing awareness of the potential problems associated with the application of limited ethnographies to the interpretation of painted and engraved rock art (Parkington 1984; Mitchell 2005), it is still acknowledged that without an awareness of the socio-

cultural context within which rock art was created and in which it functioned, the probability of failing to appreciate fully the significance and meaning of the art is high (Lewis-Williams 1980; Heyd 2005). Such awareness is, although to a limited degree, indeed facilitated by the ethnographies of the /Xam, the Ju/'hoansi (also known as !Kung), and the G/wi of the Karoo and the Kalahari. The most renowned application of ethnography to attain meaningful insight into rock art involves the research of David Lewis-Williams (1981), who revolutionised the study of San rock art via a systematic analysis of available ethnographic sources. The insights obtained from these enabled Lewis-Williams to argue convincingly for a "common cultural foundation" (Layton 2001: 318) for both extinct and extant San foragers across southern Africa. The striking correspondence between the historically documented southern (/Xam) and the contemporary northern (!Kung) San ethnographies, despite prominent linguistic dissimilarities, significant spatial and temporal divide, and an absence of a northern rock art tradition, revealed the existence of traditions and beliefs that were surprisingly similar (Lewis Williams & Biesele 1978). The recognition of these remarkable similarities in turn led to the postulation of a "pan-San cognitive system" (McCall 1970; see also Lewis-Williams & Biesele 1978; Lewis-Williams 1981). Subsequently a comparable degree of correspondence between the ethnographies and the rock art was also detected (Lewis-Williams 1998, 2002), which in turn resulted in the development of a "shamanistic model" (Lewis-Williams 1981, 1982; Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989; Dowson 1992; Lewis-Williams 2002) which greatly assisted in the interpretation of San rock art.

The use of the terms "shaman" and "shamanism" (Eliade 1964:4) within a southern African context which, although in a strict sense actually relates to religious phenomena in Siberia and Central Asia (from the Tungusic *šaman*), has become something of a semantic football (see Bourguignon 1989; Dobkin de Rios & Winkelman 1989; Winkelman 1990; Lewis-Williams 1992, 2003, 2004 for further details on the origins and use of the term shaman). There are those who vehemently criticise the use of "shaman" and "shamanism" within southern Africa San contexts (*e.g.* Hromnik 1991) and those that argue that the terms are used too freely and in undesirable contexts (*e.g.* Kehoe 2002). "Shaman" and "shamanistic" have however been applied to portray the ritual specialists of the San ever since 1975 when Matthias Guenther used the term to describe the activities he witnessed at ritualised curing-dances in the Ghanzi district of Botswana. Ideally, and as stated by Blundell (2004:56), accepted anthropological practice calls for the use of the emically ascribed terminologies employed by the members of the society in question. Accordingly, and seeing that all these terms refer to a measure of ownership of supernatural potency by an individual, the terms

n/omkxoasi as used by the !Kung of Botswana and Namibia, *!gi:xa* as used by the /Xam of the Northern Cape, and *tsho khwe* as used by the Nharo of Botswana may well be more appropriate (Barnard 1979; Lewis-Williams 1992). It can, conversely, also be argued that the use of these two terms may in turn lead to a degree of orthographic bias towards certain San entities, favouring the emic terminologies of the !Kung and the /Xam while depriving some thirteen lesser-known dialect groups of an essential religious and ethnic-specific linguistic expression. So long one uses San ethnography as the basis for interpretation the term is somewhat irrelevant. “Shaman” is therefore used simply as a term of convenience to describe those owners of supernatural potency, variously termed *!gi:ten* (singular *!gi:xa*) or *n/omkxoasi* in the San ethnographies.

In due course, the shamanistic nature of the rock art turned the attention of some researchers to “altered states of consciousness” or trance experiences with which shamanistic activities are closely associated (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1988; Lewis-Williams 1998). Developed by Lewis-Williams and Dowson (1988), the “neuropsychological model” is based on the apparent universality of entoptic phenomena (those visual sensations which, during altered states of consciousness, are derived from the structure of the optic system) and its subsequent manifestation and prominence in engraved and painted arts across the globe (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1988). In consequence of the recognition of ethnographically-highlighted cultural and religious unity across the forager population, the incidence of southern African shamanism and the explanatory value of neuropsychological research, the search for meaning into the engraved and painted imagery of southern Africa were awarded tremendous progress. For the primary part at least, the production of forger rock art is believed to have been associated with a range of shamanistic beliefs, rituals, and experiences. The painted and engraved images are reminiscent of and capture the shamanic experiences of San ritual specialists and include symbols and metaphors of potency and images of the spirit-world experience (Lewis-Williams 1998).

The explanatory worth of the shamanistic and neuropsychological models, although focussing on shamanistic beliefs and activities concerned with altered states of consciousness, and although it has been described as partly “irrefutable” (Solomon 1989:146, Deacon 2001:243), neither purports the hallucinations experienced during trance to account for the entire corpus of San rock art, nor does it deny the existence and validity of *other* meanings and explanations for rock art (Lewis-Williams 1998:87). The existence and validity of such *other* explanations have been afforded an increasing

degree of attention since the start of the 21st century, and so have the degree of "pan-ness" of forager arts and cognition (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1994; Lewis-Williams 1998; Morris 2002). Thus, and although some general features of forager rock art appears to be universal as they tend to permeate the whole of southern Africa, "these should not obscure the marked differences at regional and even sub-regional scales" (Yates *et al.* 1994:30). The matter of thematic and stylistic variability in engraved art will be further explored in Chapter Four.

Dating engraved art

Issues pertaining to stylistic and thematic variability and the vast temporal span of engraved art also relate to the relative and chronometric dating of engraved imagery. The temporal depth of engraved depictions, whilst frequently stated to be notoriously difficult to attain, is nevertheless of fundamental importance: it is archaeology's "first problem" (Trigger 1989), if not its "defining purpose" (Chippindale & Taçon 1998:107). As noted by Humphreys (1971:86),

> It is very largely true to say that rock art studies are at the 'pre-stratigraphic' stage. This is not because the principle has not been recognised but because no way has yet been devised to give art dimension through time ... until the art can be spread out through time and studied in this dimension rather than as a flat manifestation on shelter walls and rock surfaces its archaeological use will be severely limited.

The dilemma is particularly evident in comments such as those by Russell (2000:61), that the absence of a relevant chronology effectively consigns nearly the entire corpus of rock art to the same status as a heap of unprovenanced artefacts (see Butzer *et al.* 1979; Dorn 2001; Layton 2001; Chippindale & Nash 2004; Chippindale & Taçon 1998; Morris 2002 for discussions on dating rock art). To this it may be added, as noted by Rosenfeld and Smith (1997:409) that "Ultimately what is of primary relevance about dating in archaeology is not the age as such, but the temporal positioning of the thing dated in relation to other archaeological material." This is precisely why the absence of chronology is so problematic: how are we to establish unequivocal correspondences between ethnic groups and engraved art if we cannot determine the sequence of production of engraved imagery within a single site? It is furthermore worth noting the comment by Trigger (1989:409, in citing Wylie 1985:77), namely that "only insofar as

archaeologists understand the order in which cultural factors change, do they have a basis for beginning to understand the causal relations linking them".

The range of dating techniques used in contemporary rock art studies fall into two broad categories, namely relative dating methods and absolute dating methods. While the former involves the determination of relative ages of painted or engraved imagery according to, for example, degree of weathering, superimposition, stylistic analysis, and inter-site patterning, the latter involves the determination of the ages of imagery as per the subjects depicted, consistent association with datable deposits, the dating of stratified deposits associated with rock art and the direct dating of the art itself. Relative methods (see Keyser 2001 for a comprehensive discussion) generally comprise analyses of degrees of weathering, superimpositioning, stylistic differences, and spatial analyses. With regards weathering, once an engraving has been pecked or abraded into the rock immediately becomes subject to chemical and physical weathering. If this proceeds at a steady rate the degree of weathering can be used as an indicator of absolute age, and differential weathering of art has also been used to suggest relative age differences (*e.g.* Lorblanchet 1992). This is based on the notion that a less weathered engraving will be younger than an engraving with greater signs of weathering. However, there are other factors which affect weathering rates, such as micro-environment, depth of engravings and so forth. Even so, there are some instances where significant differences in weathering clearly indicate significant differences in age.

The basis of dating rock art according to superimposition is stratigraphic in that a design occurring over another was made later in time. Straightforward as the idea sounds on paper, there are several problematic complications. For example, an artist may deliberately superimpose motifs for ideological reasons (Lewis-Williams 1974). Stylistic chronological sequences (Thackeray 1983; Whitley & Annegarn 1994) are established on the basis of the differential weathering and superimposition of motifs as well as their formal attributes and consistent associations. This information is used to produce a chronology in which rock art styles are established in relation to other rock art styles. A classic stylistic sequence is that proposed by Leroi-Gourhan (1968) for European Upper Palaeolithic art. In some circumstances, parts of the sequence may be anchored to absolute dates through the depiction of items of material culture dated in excavated contexts, the depiction of extinct fauna or contact items (*e.g.* Fock 1972; Butzer *et al.* 1979; Fock & Fock 1984; Morris 1988), or by relating changes in the art to environmental changes, such as the Australian Arnhem Land rock art sequence (*e.g.*

Butzer *et al.* 1979; Chaloupka 1993). While style is recurrently noted to be of little value with regards being a secure marker of age (*e.g.* Bednarik 1995a, 1995b; Watchman 1995, 1996; Dorn 1997; Chippindale 2001), viewing content as suggestive of secure chronologies is also problematic, posing problems for the dating of engraved rock art according to certain types of images which are presumed to reflect the intrusion of pastoralists into the region some 2000 years ago (Mitchell 2002:195). With regards spatial analysis, differential weathering and superimpositions may indicate that bursts of artistic activity occurred over considerable time periods, and that in such cases intra-site patterning can reflect chronological patterning. Accordingly, there may be sites which were used for a short period only in which techniques, motifs and colours in use at one time have been stranded by previously held cultural values determining site significance. If so, trends in the inter-site distribution of artistic variables can also provide evidence for sequence, assuming other determinants of such patterning can be monitored and taken into account (Morwood 1980).

As for chronometric methods (see Dorn 2001 for a comprehensive discussion), a number of dating techniques are based on measuring the time it takes for rock coatings and varnishes to form on exposed engraved surfaces. Although the most common relative dating technique was based on the notion that the deeper the colour of patination, the older the engraving, a better understanding of the way rock coatings form clearly shows that patination colour is not a reliable indication of relative age. Additional factors affecting the formation of new patinas include the type of rock, water flow and ponding dynamics, presence or absence of organisms such as lichen, corrosion, surface roughness, and proximity to soil (Dorn 2001:174; see also Butzer *et al.* 1979:1201; Morris 2002:46). Cation-ratio dating is another dating technique based on changes within a rock coating. In basic terms, the mobile elements Potassium and Calcium in rock varnish leach at a steady rate relative to the immobile element Titanium. The Cation Ratio dating of desert varnish is based on differences in the mobility of different chemical constituents of desert varnish with some cations like potassium (K+) and calcium (Ca+) leaching out of the varnish faster than others like Titanium (Ti+). If the cation-leaching curve can be calibrated using such techniques as K-Ar dating of basalt flows, tandem accelerator mass spectrometry radiocarbon dating of organic fractions, and ratios from surfaces of known age, the varnish can be dated to provide a minimum age for underlying engravings (Whitley & Dorn 1987; Nobbs & Dorn 1988; Whitley & Annegarn 1994). This technique has been applied to geomorpho-logical and rock engraving contexts in Australia, China, Peru, Russia, USA and South Africa, and a major key to its success is establishment of a reliable local leaching

curve. Dorn (2001:175) suggests that its low cost and performance in blind tests lends it utility for preselecting samples for radiocarbon or cosmogenic nuclide analysis, and as an inexpensive cross-check on other methods. Cation-ratio dating was applied to rock engravings at Klipfontein (Whitley & Annegarn 1994), but this dating method is still controversial at present.

In some cases it is possible to directly date the art itself. This can be done with pigments containing organic materials, such as charcoal, plant fibres, and protein binders (*e.g.* Van der Merwe *et al.* 1987; Cole *et al.* 1995; Taçon 1996; Mazel & Watchman 1997). However, some studies have shows that, with the small samples required for Accelerator Mass Spectrometer (AMS) dates, the question of provenance is crucial. For instance, McDonald *et al.* (1990) recently obtained inconsistent radio-carbon dates from charcoal taken from the same motif at a rock art site in the Sydney Basin, Australia. The important point to be drawn from this study is that micro-contamination may not be identified in those cases where only one sample is taken (McDonald 1996). Taking samples of rock art for direct dating is problematic since the sampling procedure necessarily damages the art to a certain extent. Moreover, it is not always possible to be certain in the field when sufficient organic material for dating purposes has been collected. The dilemma for archaeologists is the necessity to minimise sample sizes in order to protect the art versus the futility of collecting a sample which is too small to contain sufficient organic material for dating. This highlights the necessity for sampling to be undertaken only with expert technical assistance. Recent advances in dating technologies have significantly increased the number of dating opportunities for rock art relative to standard radiocarbon dating. In particular, the development of the AMS radiometric dating means that milligrams of organic material can now be dated (van der Merwe *et al.* 1987). Other new techniques include Optically Stimulated Luminescence (OSL), micro-erosion dating, and also lichenometry. Optically Stimulated Luminescence measures the number of electrons trapped in micro-fissures in quartz grains. This is correlated with the length of time that the quartz has been removed from sunlight, which bleaches out any trapped electrons. This technique can be used to date mudwasp nests and termite tracks, which contain buried quartz grains. When such nests or tracks cover, or are covered by rock art, this allows assessment of a maximum or minimum age for the art (Roberts 1996). Micro-erosion analysis uses the weathering of individual crystals in different rock types to determine the age of surfaces exposed when engravings were produced (Bednarik1992). Lichenometry depends upon the development of a species-specific, lichen-growth curve by measuring lichen thallus diameters on dated rock surfaces: this

can then be used to calculate the minimum age of rock surfaces by measuring the thallus diameters of the same lichen species growing on these surfaces (*e.g.* Joubert *et al.* 1983).

Theorising arts and identities

The interpretative theories, theoretical concepts and particular lines of enquiry that we adopt profoundly influence the selection, description, and interpretation of the archaeological "facts" that we intend to study (*e.g.* Jones 1997:139). As noted by Clottes and Lewis-Williams (1996:137), "Researchers are realising that empirical work without some explicit guiding theory or hypothesis is problematic." Moreover, and whilst evidence is not free from theoretical and interpretive influences, it also imposes constraints on the kinds of interpretations and theories that can be built up, and at times forces us to reconsider interpretive possibilities and perhaps even deep-seated assumptions about the nature of archaeological social phenomena (Jones 1997:139). Theory therefore operates to either facilitate the formulation of ideas about certain prehistoric archaeological social conditions, or to re-orientate our ways of looking at and interpreting certain archaeological phenomena (Barrett 2001:142; Wylie 2002:184). However, and even though theory is essential to archaeology, a particular theoretical position should not become a religion (Lewis-Williams 1999:141). Researchers must also beware of over-theorising rock art research and of allowing currently popular "catch-phrases" to generate reformulations of both what we know and what we do not know (Lewis-Williams 2001a:35). In the case of theories of ethnicity, traditional assumptions about ethnic groups as culture-bearing entities have, in part, been challenged on the basis of ethnographic evidence that there is no one-to-one correlation between culture and ethnicity (Jones 1997:139). Consequently, there has been a significant shift in the understanding of group identity in anthropology. For example, traditional definitions of ethnic groups has generally entailed the extraction of cultural "types" from ongoing social practice in different social contexts and at different times, and the placement thereof onto a single plane for the purpose of analysis. This process of "methodological objectification" (*ibid.*:140) has tended to substitute an often patchy, discontinuous, and overlapping and contextualised praxis of ethnicity with a coherent, seamless whole. Such an approach denies the existence of any active engagement with ethnic consciousness in social practice, and serves to obscure the processes involved in the reproduction and transformation of ethnic identities.

In order to grasp the concept of "ethnic identity" it is essential to comprehend the processes involved in how identity develops through people's categorisation of their

own and of other social groups. As a process, ethnicity involves a consciousness of difference which involves the production and transformation of basic classificatory distinctions between groups of people who perceive themselves to be, in some respect, culturally distinct (Eriksen 1992:3). Ethnicity serves an important role in organising individuals into cooperative groups for inter-group social interactions and competition, and, as a result, the ethnic cultural structure that develops between groups of people has an enormous impact on human behaviour. An ethnic group is therefore defined as "any group of people who set themselves apart and/or are set apart by others with whom they interact or co-exist on the basis of their perceptions of cultural differentiation and/or common descent" (Jones 1997:xiii).

In light of the above, it must be noted that the primary theoretical position adopted for this research project is that which revolves around the concept of social identity (Tajfel 1974, 1978, 1984; Tullberg & Tullberg 1997; MacDonald 1998a, 2001; Fishman 1999; van der Dennen 1999; Bucholtz & Hall 2005). Social identity theory (after Sumner 1906:13) offers a great deal of insight into the evolution and structure of sociality in human groups, and proposes four main processes involving the conception of social identity in an inter-group context (McNamara 1997:562):

i) the social categorisation of selves and of others;

ii) the formation of an awareness of social identity;

iii) social comparison of selves versus others;

iv) a search for psychological distinctiveness.

For Tajfel (1978, 1981), a given social context, involving relations between salient social groups, provides categories through which individuals, by learning to recognise linguistic or other behavioural cues, allocate others and themselves to category membership and learn the valuation applied by the in-group (*us*) and salient out-groups (*them*) to this membership. Material and psychological cultural features that may be imbued with such "ethno-gnomonic" qualities (after Schwartz 1982) typically include language, geographic location, social organisation, subsistence economy, artistic creation, and religion, all of which are integrated to constitute the fundamental basis of identity and ethnic allegiance (Jones 1997; Padilla 1999; Meskell 2002; Crawhall 2005). In social identity theory, a social group entails a set of individuals who hold a common social identification or view themselves as members of the same social category: a social identity is a person's knowledge that he or she belongs to a social

category or group (Hogg & Abrams 1988). Through processes of social comparison, individuals who are similar to the self are categorised with the self and are labelled the in-group: persons who differ from the self are categorised as the out-group. The concept of social identity also relate to concepts about ethnicity and ethnic identity. For that reason, this investigation will also draw on theories concerned with ethnicity and ethnic identity, as proposed by Jones (1997), and Isajiw (1992). Hammond-Tooke (2000), however, discourages the use of the term "ethnic group", stating that it is "now too much loaded with theoretical baggage to suit archaeological purposes." (*ibid.*:421). Instead, he suggests the use of an alternative phrase, namely "material-culture units" to refer to "a collectivity of people who a) share some patterns of normative behaviour, and b), form part of a larger population, interacting with people from other collectivities within the framework of a social system" (*ibid.*). The theoretical perception of "ethnic group" as defined by Jones (1997) and Isajiw (1992) is nonetheless largely analogous to the "material-culture units" as proposed by Hammond-Tooke (2000). Both descriptions encapsulate what an "ethnic group" is understood to encompass with regard to this research project.

It has been established that the concept of "palaeoethnicity" (Dolukhanov 1994:267) is a problematic one. Many scholars consider it to be an impractical and idealistic venture (DeCorse 1994), and some have even suggested that archaeologists would be at an advantage if they avoided such a "fruitless quest" (Atherton 1983:96). The very existence of ethnic categories prior to the ages of industrialisation and capitalism is also questioned (*e.g.* Gellner 1983; Muga 1984; Clifford 1988; Comaroff & Comaroff 1992; Friedman 1992; Jones 1997). Some scholars (*e.g.* Fried 1968; Smith 1986; Bentley 1987; Huffman 2005; Calabrese 2006) have traced the origins of ethnicity to the emergence of the first city-states and larger-scale societies. Further back in history, others (*e.g.* Ranger 1983; Jones 1997) have argued that ethnicity is likely to have been embedded in socio-cultural and political relations and negotiations in the past. When we consider the persevering nature of southern African forager ideology, as attested to by the ethnographic studies and the rock art and as noted above, the latter conclusion, namely that conceptions of ethnicity do in fact extend into distant history, appears most satisfactory. As George De Vos (as cited in Schwartz 1982:107) notes, "ethnicity is like religion, people seem to need it." This conclusion does seem to offer some optimism with regards the recognition of ethnic or at least identity conscious entities in pre-historic and archaeological contexts.

In addition to the analytical focus on ethnicity and identity, and given that this investigation will attempt to address several interrelated phenomena, three further theoretical schemes also require consideration: interactionist theories, theories concerned with ethno-linguistic identity, and, to a lesser extent, theories concerned with style and its capacity to communicate social affiliation. As clarified by Hogg and Abrams (1988), the social categories in which individuals place themselves are parts of a structured society and exist only in relation to other contrasting categories. As a result, this study depends profoundly on historical sources for the attainment of insight into the sequence and nature of interaction between differing cultural groups in the region. Interactionist studies offer valuable insights into both the advantages and limitations in adopting interactionist approaches to rock art and to the importance of recognising the historical circumstances responsible for the perceptible changes in the thematic and stylistic components of the art. The realisation that the past two millennia of San history have to be understood as the product of interaction between peoples of variable social and cultural backgrounds (Ouzman 1995, 1996; Blundell 2004; Humphreys 2005, 2007) is central to this research project.

For some time, linguistic anthropologists have argued against equating a population that shares a linguistic code with the status of an ethnic unit (*e.g.* Eisenlohr 2004). Boas (1995) stressed the need not to conflate race, language, and culture, while Hymes (1984) and Gumperz (1968) demonstrated that the use of common linguistic varieties, held to be evidence of “linguistic communities”, did not necessarily turn the populations concerned into ethnic units, tribes, or communities of any kind. Although long dismissed in linguistic anthropology, the assumption that shared language leads to the creation of socially cohesive entities or groups has made an influential comeback in contemporary theories of nationalism. It has long been claimed that language can be a vehicle of ethnic and national values, yet the means by which this is accomplished in contexts of ethno-linguistic identity-formation has not been explained adequately. More recently, theorists such as Gellner (1983) and Anderson (1991) have emphasised the role of language as a channel of communication through which ideas of belonging can be spread among a particular population knowing a particular language. The boundaries of distribution of a particular linguistic code also represent boundaries of communication that limit the spread of a particular religious cosmology. The link between social identities and language is not based on its function of providing a medium of linguistic interaction through which people receive the ideology of the nation. Instead, language becomes the focus of ethnic orientation and identity-consciousness because of its association with religious beliefs and cosmology (Irvine &

Gal 2000; Eisenlohr 2004). As regards style and the capacity of style to communicate particular ethnic affiliations, the uniformity of perception in group-based identities reveals itself in several ways (Hogg & Abrams 1988; Oakes *et al.* 1994): in artistic creation and technology, ornamentation and dress, economic strategy and subsistence practice, in kinship structure and alliances, in language, and also in rock art. The research on ceramic style as a marker of identity-conscious social groups by Garth Sampson (1988) demonstrates the relationship between people and territory and how the ranges of single identity-conscious groups may be recognised through an analysis of ceramic style. Stylistic and thematic components in rock art may also provide an indication of a relative chronological sequence to which respective artistic traditions relate: forager arts are characterised by specific sets of subject matter and manners of depiction (*e.g.* Lewis-Williams 1984a; 2006), and differences between the arts of foragers and that of pastoralists, which are in turn characterised by differing thematic and contextual associations, can also be recognised (*e.g.* Morris 2002; Blundell 2004; Ouzman 2005).

Evidently, correlating rock art or any form of material culture with a specific social or cultural entity is not a straightforward matter (Smith 2006:78). There are multiple strands of practice involved in the reproduction and maintenance of ethnicity in the past, all of which requires to be recognised within the specific contexts in which they occurred and functioned to fulfil this purpose. It is therefore not surprising that the intangible and fleeting nature of the relationship between ethnicity and material culture has been a particularly problematic issue for archaeologists (Jones 1997) and that several academics (*e.g.* Trigger 1977; Buchignani 1987) have adopted somewhat sceptical stances with regards the feasibility of ethnicity as a topic of archaeological enquiry, citing a deficiency of insight, owing to a lack of direct links, into the perceptions and ideas of pre-historic people as a primary and most problematic limiting factor.

With regards the establishment of the identities and ethnic affiliations of artistic entities, the state of affairs in southern Africa does not present such dire prospects. Southern African rock art research is informed by a wealth of ethnographic and historical records (*e.g.* Arbousset & Daumas 1846; Orpen 1874; Bleek & Lloyd 1911; Bleek 1933, 1935, 1936; Lee 1968; Marshall 1969; Biesele 1978; Katz 1982a, b; Guenther 1999) which provides insight into the perceptions and ideas of pre-historic people, enabling researchers to interpret rock art attain valuable and emic insight into the meaning of the art. Such an “informed approach”, which is dependent on the availability of archaeological sources (*e.g.* Mason 1962; Humphreys & Thackeray 1983; Sadr 1998;

McBrearty & Brooks 2000; Wadley 2001; Sadr & Plug 2002), historical information (*e.g.* Engelbrecht 1936; Legassick 1969, 1989; Elphick 1977; Hammond-Tooke 1974; Comaroff 1985; Cashdan 1986; Barnard 1992, 1997; Brink 2004), ethnographic studies (*e.g.* Arbousset & Daumas 1846; Orpen 1874; Bleek & Lloyd 1911; Bleek 1933, 1935, 1936; Lee 1968; Marshall 1969; Heinz 1972; Biesele 1978; Katz 1982a, b; Vierich 1982; Barnard 1992; Guenther 1999), and also linguistic research (*e.g.* Traill 1974, 1979, 2002; Ehret 1982, 2002; Vierich 1982; Gülldeman 1997, 2000, 2003; Irvine & Gal 2000; Blench 2006; Crawhall 1998, 2006a, b; Sands 2006), provides for "some source of insight passed on directly or indirectly from those who made and used the rock art" (Taçon & Chippendale 1998:6). These sources will be attended to in Chapter Two, after which the concept of ethnicity and ethnic identity will be explored in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER TWO

The Central Interior

The objective of this chapter is to provide an overview of the environmental and cultural character of the interior region of South Africa. Although the significance of the natural environment has long been understood, the relationship between environment and culture has been interpreted in several ways (Inskeep 1978; Conkey 1984; Kusimba 2003; Fagan 2004; A.B. Smith 2005). Forager behaviour has generally been viewed as determined more by biological and ecological factors than by socially constructed frameworks, but it has also been acknowledged that only part of the behaviour of foragers can be accounted for by ecological factors. Since the environment determines the availability and distribution of natural food sources, for both foragers and pastoralists, social groups are obligated to adapt their dietary range and residential patterns and schedule their mobility accordingly (Marshall 1957; Sampson 1988; Lee 1998; Tanaka 1998; Humphreys 2005; A.B. Smith 2005). Residential mobility is generally higher if resources are scarce and unpredictable (Cashdan 1983) or highly variable seasonally (Humphreys 2005). Such responses to seasonal resource pulses in turn resulted in the characteristic hunter-gatherer subsistence pattern of aggregation and dispersal (Lee 1979; Parkington 1980, 2001; Wadley 1987; Bartram *et al.* 1991; Silberbauer 1994; Lee & Daly 2004) according to which kin-related groups may either congregate during times of optimal resource availability, or disperse as smaller individual units during periods of environmental stress (Katz 1982a; Bartram *et al.* 1991; Silberbauer 1994; Lee 1998; Tanaka 1998; Tanaka & Sugawara 1999; Biesele & Royal-/o/oo 2004). Although approaches to human adaptation and evolution based on behavioural ecology have been criticised for their inability to incorporate and elucidate concerns about ideological, cosmological and cultural motivations for human behaviour (*e.g.* Stiles 1994; Kusimba 2003; Lee & Daly 2004), the relationship between foragers, and pastoralists, and the environments in which they live is undeniably one of fundamental interdependency.

The environmental setting

Geographically, southern Africa is characterised by the sandy expanse of the Kalahari Desert in the north, the elevated central plateau, and the rugged escarpment which separates the plateau and the narrow coastal belt. The high interior plateau, a dominant physical characteristic of South Africa, is also somewhat isolated as access is hampered by the Drakensberg Mountains in the east and south and the arid Kalahari in the north (Lye 1970; Inskeep 1978; Humphreys & Thackeray 1983). Geologically, the

interior plateau includes some of the earliest rocks deposited during the Archaean and Proterozoic eras 3100 million years ago. These are in turn overlain by younger deposits of the Cenozoic era, the Kalahari group, and the most recent depositional events of the aeolian sands of the Kalahari which occurred during the Holocene (Heine 1990; McCarthy & Rubige 2005). The region is characterised by rocky outcrops consisting of andesites of Precambrian age and dolerites of the intrusive Karoo systems (Butzer *et al.* 1979). The clustering of engravings on the igneous outcrops and boulders in the interior has generally been ascribed to the irregular patterning of aeolian sands which results in the restricted availability of rock surfaces into which imagery could be engraved (*ibid.*). Where suitable surfaces are indeed available, engravings are most generally found on the Karoo dolerite and Precambrian andesite outcrops scattered across the region. It has also been noted that within this presumably very suitable andesite-dolerite zone there exists a certain degree of site-patterning and clustering. Such patterning may relate to locational, territorial, aggregational and religious preferences, and the spatial distribution of engraved locations, which are often inclusive of particular stylistic and thematic sets, may in turn designate “social regions” or the spatial extent of alliance networks (*e.g.* Mazel 1989:35; see also Manhire *et al.* 1983).

Hydrologically, the region is characterised by the Vaal and Harts Rivers and their many tributaries. Whereas the lower Harts River Valley, formerly known as the Malalareen (Campbell 1974) and the Kolong (Mackenzie 1971), may be described as a well-defined narrow gorge, upstream the river flows within a broad alluvial floodplain of 100 to 600 meters wide (Partridge *et al.* 1989; Kuman 2001). The Harts River is a northern tributary of the Vaal River, which in turn is the largest tributary of the Orange or Gariep River. It rises on the far south-western slopes of the Witwatersrand and flows for 320 km in a south-westerly direction through the even areas of the North West Province before flowing into the Vaal River about 100 km above the confluence of that river with the Orange. Natural river flow in the region is predominantly episodic and dependant on sufficient rainfall in the catchment areas to the north and east. There is a close association between the availability and distribution of water and the occurrence of engraved sites in the region. Apart from some engraved locations in the drier and sandier north-west, it is considered unusual for engravings to be located more than a few hundred meters away from perennial and ephemeral water-courses. For the most part, engravings are situated right next to water sources or even within stream-beds so that they are in fact submerged during the rainy season. It is necessary to consider the impact that modern-day farming practices may have had on the spatial arrangement of

engraved sites in the region. Whilst the majority of sites are situated in close proximity to water sources, it is conceivable that, prior to the extraction of surface- and especially ground-water sources for agricultural and domestic purposes, the mean level of the local water-table must have been significantly higher than it is today. Many, if not all, engraved sites would therefore have been partially or perhaps entirely submerged during the summer months, significantly altering the locational contexts of the engravings: this may have important implications for how archaeologists view the placement and positioning of engraved sites.

Ecologically, the research region spans three primary environmental zones: the Grassland biome in the east, the Savanna biome in the central regions, which also forms part of the Kalahari / Highveld transitional zone (Low & Rebelo 1998; Kusimba 2003), and the Arid Savanna biome in the west. In the east, the Dry Sandy Highveld Grassland biome is characterised by a gently undulating landscape of 1370 to 1460 meters above sea level and which is comprised primarily of open grasslands with large trees and dense vegetation limited to the margins along water-courses. Summer rainfall is highly erratic and averages some 450 mm per annum. In the central districts the region includes the Kimberley Thorn Bushveld and the Kalahari Plateau Bushveld biomes (Low & Rebelo 1998). These biomes are found at altitudes of 1000 to 1200 meters above sea level with rainfall ranging from 250 mm per annum in the south to 500 mm per annum in the north. In the west, the vegetation of the Korannaberg Mountains is classified as Kalahari Mountain Bushveld and found on shallow soils on hills with an altitude of 450 to 1250 meters in the vicinity of Olifantshoek, Kuruman, and northwards to Sonstraal. Rainfall is extremely erratic with only some 350 mm falling in summer (Low & Rebelo 1998). The surrounding landscape is classified as Kalahari Thornveld 16 (Acocks 1988) or Shrubby Kalahari Dune Bushveld and is comprised of undulating linear dunes with calcrete pans of varying sizes scattered throughout the region. The region is also intersected by the 400 mm isohyet, a line that serves to indicate the margin along which rainfall decreases to less than 400 mm per annum and which delineates the western semi-arid and the eastern sub-humid biomes. The entire southern African subregion west of this line is therefore considered part of the desert biome (Lovegrove 1993; Liversidge & Berry 1998). Key environmental parameters include sandy plains which are underlain by calcretes and dolomites. Presently, temperatures vary between -10°C and 45°C with an average of 20°C. Rainfall figures are provided as some 200 mm falling between November and April, with a peak in precipitation reached during March (Low & Rebelo 1998).

Palaeo-environmental conditions are frequently inferred from marine sediment and ice-core studies, and from biological and geological sources from archaeological excavations, and these provide substantial insight into past environmental conditions (Lindesay 1998). Variations in temperature and precipitation during the Holocene were considerably smaller than those that occurred during the Late Pleistocene. The gradual rise in temperature continued until the Holocene Climatic Optimum was reached between 9000 and 6000 years BP, a period during which the greater portion of southern Africa experienced substantially warmer and drier conditions than today (Parkington 1990; Kusimba 2003). It has been posited that the increasing aridity in the interior may have dissuaded extensive settlement and resulted in the redistribution of the bulk of the population to the better-watered escarpment region (Humphreys & Thackeray 1983; Parkington 1990). For example, in discussing the density of Holocene populations in South Africa, Humphreys (1979) is of the opinion that the interior was essentially depopulated during the period 8000 to 4000 years BP and that this may be attributed to a lack of diversity and concentration of reliable resources as is characteristic of grassland zones during severe conditions (Mitchell 1990; Humphreys 2004). While there are indeed few sites in the interior which were occupied during the mid-Holocene period there is ample archaeological confirmation for human inhabitance in the Kuruman-Vryburg area (Wadley 2000). Current evidence suggests that the southern African interior may not have been uniformly dry during mid-Holocene times and that differential population densities are to be expected (Partridge 1997; Wadley 2001). It is only after 4000 years BP that the interior became warmer and wetter (Lindesay 1998) and that a substantial influx in forager numbers may have taken place (A.B. Smith 2005). The Late Holocene environments which existed from 4000 to 3000 years BP and onwards are believed to be essentially similar to those conditions experienced during historical times (Humphreys & Thackeray 1983; Lindesay 1998; Kusimba 2003). During this time warmer and cooler intervals occurred, with the Medieval Warm Epoch occurring between the 5th and 11th centuries AD and the coldest period, the Little Ice Age, spanning AD 1450 to 1850.

Along with climate, soil type and topography also exert strong influences on the vegetation of the region. Vegetation is however dynamic (Van Rooyen *et al.* 2001) and has persistently reacted successfully in response to changing human land-use patterns. John Acocks (1953) has proposed that the Nama Karoo biome has expanded significantly towards the north and east since historical times (Lovegrove 1993), and that there is clear evidence for the extensive degradation of vegetation, environment and water-quality in the sub-region. According to Acocks (1953), and prior to AD 1400,

the arid Nama Karoo biome did not extend markedly beyond the Orange and the Vaal rivers. The expansion of this desert-like zone may relate to the concurrent expansion of indigenous and colonial pastoralists moving north and east from the Cape. Plug and Sampson (1996) have tended to the differential impacts of forages and European farmers on the Karoo fauna during the 19th century. Surprisingly, and contrary to the belief that excessive hunting by farmers, hunters and pastoralist trekboers gradually eliminated the primary food-source of resident San, indigenous people with access to firearms participated energetically in the slaughter. It was also established that while the floral component certainly experienced deterioration, the faunal assemblage actually increased and achieved higher rates of accumulation than during pre-contact times. This did not however last long, and by the end of the 19th century the game population was so decimated that it collapsed completely (Plug & Sampson 1996). In addition to subsistence, which is only one component of a multifaceted dimension of hunter-gatherers, social organisation, cosmology, and world-view are further components which necessitate consideration in any discussion on forager life-ways (Lee & Daly 2004).

Cultural complexity

The attainment of insight into the demographic character of the research region is dependant on several categories of source material from which information on the presence and identities of different cultural groups in the region may also be gained. The primary categories are archaeological, historical and ethnographic. These will be discussed successively and in terms of how insights derived from archaeological excavations and ethnographic and historic written sources may contribute to a better understanding of the increase in socio-cultural complexity in the region.

The extent of human existence in the immediate study region is truly remarkable and extends back at least some 3 million years (Mason 1962; Humphreys & Thackeray 1983; Deacon & Deacon 1999; McBrearty & Brooks 2000; Kuman 2001; Kusimba 2003; Jurmain *et al.* 2004; Wadley 2001, 2006). Although such early finds are of immense interest, it is with the existence more recent human forms, *Homo sapiens sapiens* in particular, with which this inquiry is concerned. It has previously been noted that a close relationship exists between early human inhabitants and the environments in which they lived and that views rooted in environmental determinalism is deemed inappropriate: nature offers both opportunities and limitations to human subsistence and socio-cultural development. From Kusimba (2003) it may be inferred that human adaptation to the environment is multi-dimensional and in constant flux, and that

economic practice and social institutions do not of necessity relate to or reflect environmental constraints or opportunities. The principal relationship between nature and culture appears to manifest in high degrees residential mobility, which may be understood as an adaptive subsistence strategy designed to deal with the seasonal availability of plant foods and water (Yellen 1977; Silberbauer 1994; Lee 2003). The ability to be flexible and to maintain and select from a number of subsistence-related alternatives is an extremely beneficial trait for mobile foraging groups. In the Kalahari, the !Kung refer to those individuals who excel at maintaining favourable relationships with several individuals in various environments as *t'xudi kaus*, "masters of cleverness" (Yellen 1977:47). I will return to this observation shortly.

Insights from archaeology

Archaeology, although it does not offer an inclusive view of many aspects concerned with the presence of human groups the research region, nevertheless provides a broad foundation to which particular details may be added from the information obtained from ethnographic, historical, and also linguistic sources. It must be noted that, for the most part, archaeological research is limited to the fringes of the research region and that the discussion that follows is based mainly on such peripheral archaeological enquiries.

In southern Africa the transition between the final Middle Stone Age (MSA) lithic assemblages and those of the Later Stone Age (LSA) is roughly contemporaneous with the Last Glacial Maximum which occurred during Marine Isotope Stage 2 some 18 000 years BP (Deacon 1990; Deacon & Deacon 1999). The MSA is characterised by the absence of handaxes and cleavers and the appearance and prevalence of prepared cores and large numbers of flake-blanks with faceted striking-platforms struck from such cores. The most common formal tool types include unifacial and bifacial points, blades with secondary trimming and scrapers with steep trimming or retouch (Wadley 1993; Clark 1997; Deacon & Deacon 1999). Of particular significance are the ground and engraved ochre pieces form Blombos Cave (Henshilwood *et al.* 2002) dated to 77 000 years, and the seven painted slabs from Apollo 11 (Wendt 1976) which may be as old as 27 000 years. These objects are symptomatic of the existence of symbolic behaviour and symbolic thought during MSA times (Lewis-Williams 1984; Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2004a; Wadley 2006) and demonstrate a gradual accumulation of traits characteristic of modern hunter-gatherers (Kusimba 2003).

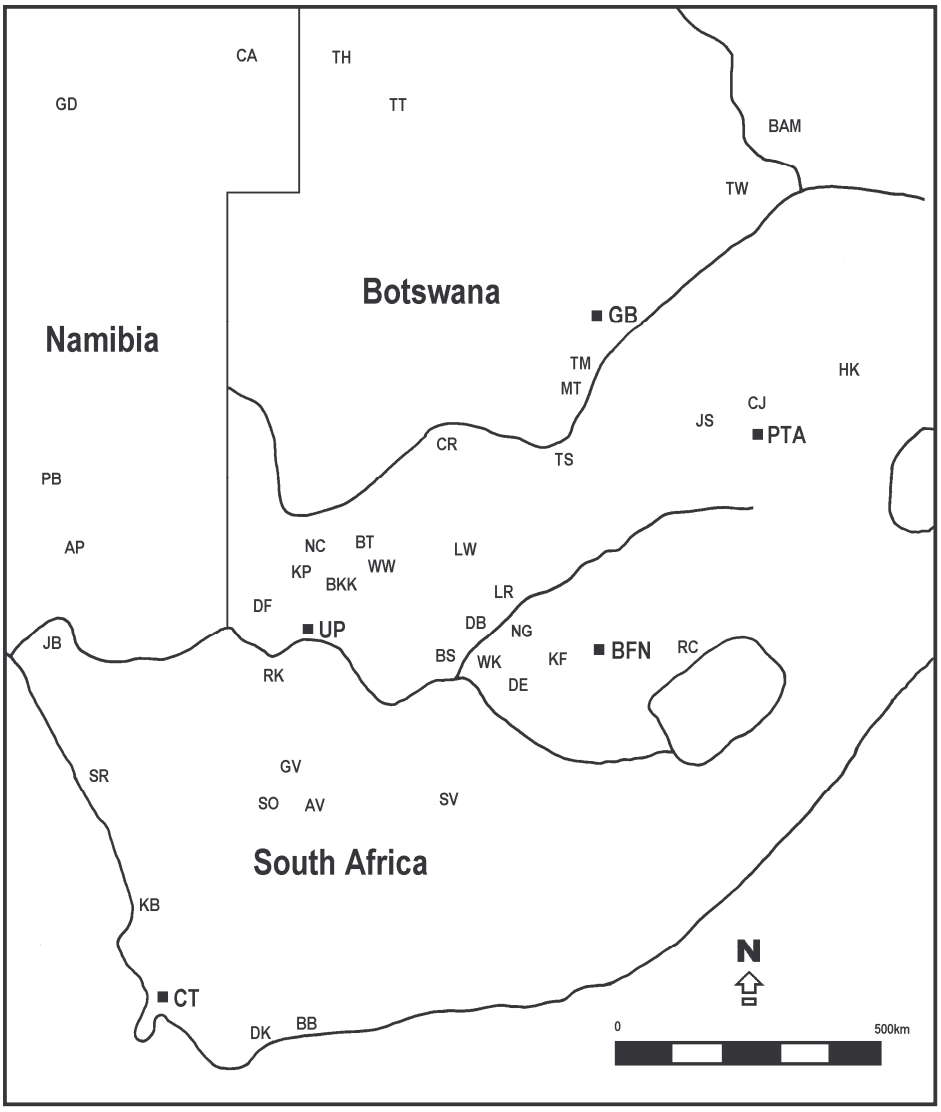


FIG.2.1. Map indicating the approximate distribution of archaeological sites from which relevant information on past subsistence groups may be gained. Large urban centres are indicated as: PTA Pretoria, BFN Bloemfontein, CT Cape Town, GB Gaberone, UP Upington. Archaeological sites are indicated as: AP Apollo 11, AV Arbeidsvreugd, BAM Bambata, BB Blombos, BKK Blinkklipkop, BS Burchell's Shelter, BT Bathlaros, CA Cho/ana, CJ Cave James, CR Catharina, DB Dikbosch 1 and 2, DE Driekopseiland, DF Doornfontein, DK Die Kelders, GD Geduld, GF Gifvlei, HK Heuningnestkrans, JB Jakkalsberg, JS Jubilee Shelter, KB Kasteelberg, KF Klipfontein, KP Kathu Pan, LR Limerock 1 and 2, LW Little Witkrans, MT Moritsane, NC Nchwaneng, NG Nooitgedacht, PB Pockenbank, RC Rose Cottage Cave, RK Renosterkop, SO Springbokoog, SR Spoegrivier, SV Seacow Valley, TH Tsodilo Hills, TM Thamaga, TS Thaba Sione, TT Toteng Sites, TW Toutswe, WK Wildebeestkuil, WW Wonderwerk. Map adapted from Humphreys & Thackeray 1983; Walker 1983; Beaumont & Vogel 1989; Wilmsen 1989; Deacon 1990; A.B. Smith & Jacobson 1995; A.B. Smith & Lee 1997; Sadr 1998, Sadr & Sampson 1999; A.B. Smith & Webley 2000; Campbell *et al.* 2001; Morris & Beaumont 1994; Sadr & Plug 2001; Whitley & Annegarn 2001; Mitchell 2002.

There is ample archaeological evidence for continuity in human occupation of the interior region from 34 000 to 18 000 BP, as indicated by excavated materials from several sites in Namibia, the Orange Free State, the Northern Cape, and in the former Transvaal (Humphreys & Thackeray 1983; Deacon 1990; Mitchell 1995). The painted slabs excavated from Apollo 11 (Wendt 1976) are of particular interest and have been construed as suggestive that relations of social production and ideology at that time were essentially similar to that of the ethnographic present (Lewis-Williams 1984a; Deacon 1990). Further east, Wonderwerk Cave (Thackeray *et al.* 1981; Humphreys & Thackeray 1983) has yielded 11 engraved stones dated to between 10 200 and 3 990 years ago. While five of these undoubtedly depict representational figures, the remaining six display incised geometric lines and utilisation scars (Thackeray *et al.* 1981:66). The occurrence of representational and geometric art-forms at a single site is also a characteristic of more recent San rock art and has been explained in terms of religious practice and altered states of consciousness (Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2004a). While these early finds are of notable importance to the study of the origins of symbolism and early social and religious practice amongst southern African foraging peoples, the numerous finds dated to the early, middle and late Holocene period, during which the bulk of the engraved art in the region is believed to have been manufactured, are of greater relevance to this study. Archaeological material indicative of symbolic expression, ritual practice and general subsistence strategies will now be discussed in terms of the former and current forager, pastoralist, and agro-pastoralist inhabitants of the region.

Forager archaeology

Archaeological excavations along the Ghaap Escarpment in the Northern Cape Province constitute a primary source of evidence for forager inhabitance of the region during the Holocene period. The Ghaap Escarpment is situated immediately to the east of and between the Vaal-Harts Valley and the Ghaap Plateau which includes the Langeberg and Korannaberg Mountains and the Kuruman and Asbestos Hills. Extensive archaeological research has been carried out in the region since 1973 and the excavated materials of some eighteen sites have subsequently been published in the edited volume *Ghaap and Gariep: Later Stone Age Studies in the Northern Cape* (Humphreys & Thackeray 1983; see also Humphreys 1979) and numerous additional scientific journals. The Holocene archaeology of the region is therefore reasonably well-known and a broad reconstruction of human occupation for the last 10 000 years have been generated from excavations at Wonderwerk Cave, Blinkklipkop, Little Witkrans Shelter, Dikbosch 1 and 2, Limerock 1 and 2, Burchell's Shelter, and

Powerhouse Cave. In addition to these sites, those excavated by Garth Sampson in the Orange River Scheme area (Sampson & Sampson 1967; Sampson 1970, 1974) provide the most detailed information on the Holocene occupation of the interior of South Africa. Whereas Wonderwerk Cave, Little Witkrans Shelter and Dikbosch 1 have yielded evidence for continuous human occupation during the entire Holocene period, the remaining sites have yielded only limited samples of late Holocene remains. Dikbosch 1 was one of the first Ghaap escarpment rock shelters to be excavated (Humphreys 1975). The long duration of human occupation to approximately 8000 years BP is greatly augmented by an array of non-lithic cultural material excavated from the site: ostrich eggshell beads, flask mouths, bone artefacts, and 21 decorated ostrich eggshell fragments were recovered. In addition to the engraved slabs from Wonderwerk Cave, charred and un-charred and plain or decorated ostrich eggshell fragments, complete and incomplete beads, flask-mouth fragments and pendants representative of some 139 individual eggs were also recovered (Humphreys & Thackeray 1983). Some complete eggs may have originally depicted representational designs similar to those on the engraved stones, but most are fragmented and display only linear geometric designs. Lithic and non-lithic materials recovered from Wonderwerk include red and yellow ochre nodules and specularite which are present in almost all layers, grindstones and an ochre-stained ostrich eggshell pendant dated to 7430 and 4890 years BP respectively, six stone-ring fragments dated from 3990 to 7430 years BP, four palette fragments of 7430 years BP, and three chert pendant fragments form 3990 years BP. Non-lithic artefacts include bone beads and incised decorated bone fragments ranging from 3990 to less than 7430 years BP, and a number of fragmentary and complete bone points ranging from historical times to less than 7340 years BP.

The nearest source from which specular-haematite could have been obtained is the Blinkklipkop specularite mine near Postmasburg. Apart from the presence of specularite at Wonderwerk, the site itself has provided sufficient evidence for the extensive mining of this mineral prior to 1200 years BP (Thackeray *et al.* 1981; Humphreys & Thackeray 1983). Ochre has been interpreted in both symbolic and utilitarian contexts (Watts 2002; Wadley 2006) and has received increasing attention in terms of what the presence of ochre may reveal about the development of early symbolic culture (Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2004a). Whereas some researchers have considered the role of ochre in terms of hide-preservation (Watts 2002), and the hafting of stone points (Wadley 2006), interpretations concerned with symbolic use and ritual application have appeared increasingly persuasive (Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2004a).

The symbolic and utilitarian importance of specularite for groups other than San hunter-gatherers and the subsequent struggles for control over the Blinkklipkop quarry will be further explored shortly.

Excavations at Little Witkrans Shelter commenced during the late 1940s (Peabody 1954) and was continued by Peter Beaumont in 1978 (Humphreys & Thackeray 1983). In addition to a single grooved stone, two upper grindstones, and 9250 lithic artefacts, numerous small chunks of red and yellow ochre, worked bone, shell, and ostrich eggshell beads were also retrieved from layers dated to 7470 years BP. The 17 decorated ostrich eggshell fragments recovered from Little Witkrans are limited to stratigraphic layers dated to 4710 years BP. In terms of the linear incised geometric motifs and age-range, these decorated fragments appear to be identical to those pieces recovered from Wonderwerk. The primary conclusion to be reached from the Wonderwerk, Little Witkrans, and Dikbosch 1 cultural material is that, and apart from a notable decline in some material cultural objects in upper and more recent stratigraphic layers (such as that noted for decorated ostrich eggshell from Wonderwerk at 1210 years BP and at Little Witkrans at 1490 years BP), there appears to be no obvious interruptive events or abrupt changes as regards the extent of human occupation in the interior, and that the capacity for artistic creation extends back at least 10 000 years: the archaeological evidence therefore point towards a marked increase in artistic endeavour commencing some 10 000 years ago. These changes have been explained in terms of and related to a change in lithic industry, namely that involving the replacement of the Oakhurst Complex by the Wilton Complex at 9500 to 8500 years ago (Humphreys & Thackeray 1983; Wadley 2000). The Oakhurst / Lockshoek industries are represented in the region by Wonderwerk Cave and Dikbosch 1 and 2 (Humphreys & Thackeray 1983), Florisbad (Kuman & Clarke 1986), Jubilee Shelter (Wadley 1987), and Rose Cottage Cave (Wadley 1995). Although ochre, engraved stones, and ostrich eggshell beads are indeed associated with both industries it is evident that, from an artistic and decorative standpoint, the Wilton is the more elaborate of the two industrial complexes. The Wilton furthermore includes decorated ostrich eggshell, stone-rings, decorated items and pendants manufactured from bone and ostrich eggshell, and also shell and tortoise carapaces. There appears to be hardly any archaeological evidence for a measured transformation from the Oakhurst to the Wilton in the region, as indicated by the lack of a stratigraphic unit indicative of such changes at Wonderwerk Cave.

By around 4000 years BP sites in the interior begin to exhibit increasing numbers of small scrapers and backed tools and fewer segments. While these are the hallmarks of the Wilton, there is a considerable degree of variation from the standard set by the Wilton type site (Wadley 2001). Though the majority of these assemblages have been labelled Interior Wilton (as the sites in the interior display a lack of the mid-Holocene sequences so characteristic of those sites in the coastal zones), many sites in the region display a growing presence of longer scrapers and backed bladelets, and have consequently been labelled Smithfield (Deacon & Deacon 1999). This change in technology has been correlated with changes in climate and ecology and interpreted as indicative of changes in population density in the interior around 4000 years BP (Butzer *et al.* 1979). At approximately 2000 years BP further changes become increasingly apparent: assemblages may now either occur without or include a ceramic component. Whereas those archaeological remains inclusive of informal tools on coarse-grained rocks are generally associated with Khoekhoe pastoralists, those industries which are characterised by formal tools on fine-grained rocks are generally associated with San hunter-gatherers (Phillipson 1993; Deacon & Deacon 1999; A.B. Smith 2005). While these industries are generally known as post- or post-classic Wilton, many of the later industries, although described as Wilton-like (Morris 1988), have been labelled the Swartkop Industry (Beaumont 1985; Beaumont & Vogel 1989; Wadley 2000). This industry was named after the Swartkop, a hill situated between Springbokoog and the Strandberg from which //Kabbo, /Han≠kass'o, and /A!kunta came (Beaumont *et al.* 1985; Deacon 2001). The Swartkop is characterised by a high incidence of backed flakes, retouched points and blades and low frequencies of coarse ceramics (Morris & Beaumont 1994), and it is from the context of this very distinct regional late Holocene industry that several portable and dated engraved stones have been recovered (Beaumont *et al.* 1985; Beaumont & Vogel 1989).

Remarkably, Wadley (2001) notes that the diversity within both the Wilton and post-classic Wilton may in fact relate to inter-regional stylistic variability and intra-regional activity difference. Stylistic variation on inter-regional scales and manifest in the distribution of distinct lithic tool-types may relate to or even correlate with distinct ethno-linguistic or economic social units. In this regard, burial style (Binneman & Hall 1987), burial goods (Rudner 1971), distinctive forms of ornaments (Goodwin 1938), portable painted slabs (Deacon *et al.* 1976; Jerardino & Swanepoel 1999), and engraved stones such as those from the Springbokoog sites (Morris & Beaumont 1994) may, in a stylistic sense, have been used to affirm inter-group affiliation and signal identity on an intra-group scale.

Despite a remarkable degree of variability in archaeological associations and signatures there exists ample evidence from which to reconstruct the basic nature of the prehistoric demographic character of the region. The archaeology of the sub-region points to a remarkable degree of artistic, social and religious continuity between the earliest art forms and those arts produced during the early, middle and also later Holocene period. However, from approximately 2000 years ago the archaeological record chronicles a new cultural type in southern Africa, based primarily on the practice of pastoralism and on the occurrence of related material cultural artefacts. This is construed to correlate with a distinct linguistic entity, namely the Khoekhoe, or Khoekhoen (Barnard 1992; Smith & Ouzman 2004a). These newcomers had variable impacts on resident foraging populations: they introduced a new economic strategy, a new ceramic technology, and novel social concepts concerned with the ownership of livestock and possessions which stood in contrast to the egalitarian lifeways of the San. Khoekhoe pastoralists also hunted, gathered, performed ritual ceremonies, and manufactured painted and engraved rock art. These similarities between pastoralists and hunter-gatherers, which may have been manifest in the occurrence of hunters with sheep (Sadr 2003:208) or pastoro-foragers (Galaty as cited in Fauvelle-Aymar 2004:4), will be further explored in Chapter Five.

Pastoralist archaeology

There is sufficient evidence to suggest that pastoralism in Africa originated in the upper Nile Valley around 6000 years ago (see Kusimba 2003; Gifford-Gonzalez 2005 for discussions) and that domesticated stock spread southwards from this region. Domesticated sheep and cattle, along with small spouted wares appear in northern Kenya and further south down the Rift Valley by some 4800 to 4000 years ago (Marshall *et al.* 1984; A.B. Smith 2005). It is presumed that the ancestors of the Khoekhoe acquired at least some of their stock from either East African pastoralist migrants or from Bantu-speaking pastoralists prior to the large-scale migration of Bantu-speakers south (Elphick 1977; Barnard 1992; Sadr 1998; Ehret 1982, 2002).

Pastoralist archaeology is greatly dependent on the discovery of sites that have been occupied repeatedly (A.B. Smith 2005), and most generally include caves and shelters. Apart from not being typical locations for pastoral encampments (Gifford-Gonzalez 2005), very few caves and rock shelters exist in the region with which this enquiry is concerned. As well as the problematic invisibility of herders in the archaeological record, further problems are created by the fact that domestic stock and ceramic wares may be associated with Khoekhoe pastoralists, Bantu-speaker agro-pastoralists, and

also hunter-gatherers who may have occasionally taken to herding as a secondary economic activity (Sadr 1998; Gifford-Gonzalez 2005; A.B. Smith 2005). Remains of small domesticated animals and associated material cultural objects may therefore occur in mixed contexts in which it is impossible to determine whether pastoralism was practiced as a primary or mere secondary economic strategy.

Evidence for early pastoralism in southern Africa, although sparse, show that pastoralists were present in a large proportion of the region by 2000 years ago (Wilmsen 1989; Sadr 1998; A.B. Smith 2005). The earliest evidence for sheep is from Spoegrivier on the Orange River at 2105 years BP (Vogel *et al.* 1997; Mitchell 2002) and at Blombos Cave near Mossel Bay at 1960 years BP (Henshilwood 1996; Mitchell 2002). Goats and cattle appear to have been introduced later, perhaps due to disease challenges encountered by the Sahelian triad of cattle, goats, and sheep in the more humid savanna environments (Gifford-Gonzalez 2005). Goats are present at Bethelsklip in Namaqualand throughout the last millennium and are known from Iron Age farming contexts further east at 1400 years BP (Voigt 1986; Mitchell 2002). At Kasteelberg cattle appear at 1300 years BP (Klein 1989), but are known from earlier Iron Age contexts (Plug 1996). Although the identification of dogs poses problems as they may be confused with jackals (Blench 2006), they are however present by 1150 years BP from Cape St. Francis (Voigt 1983) and Kasteelberg (Cruz-Uribe & Klein 1994).

In many instances two distinct archaeological identities are visible. The presence of foragers or pastoralists may be determined by taking into account several archaeological features as indicative of either subsistence group (A.B. Smith 1991). For example, whereas forager sites are characterised by the remains of small indigenous species of game, fine-grained raw materials, higher percentages of microlithic tools, smaller sized ostrich eggshell beads and very few ceramic sherds, pastoralist sites most generally include the remains of domestic stock such as sheep, cattle, or goats, coarse-grained raw materials, lower percentages of microlithic tools, larger sized ostrich eggshell beads and higher percentages of ceramic remains. In Namibia, the Geduld (A.B. Smith & Jacobson 1995) and Falls Rock and Snake Rock (Kinahan 1986, 1991) sites span the introduction of domestic stock. Seeing that ceramics predate the arrival of domesticates by between 200 and 1000 years, these sites have raised imperative questions as regards the degree to which the inhabitants were true pastoralists (A.B. Smith & Jacobson 1995). For instance, at Geduld identifiable remains of domesticates are overshadowed by a predominantly wild component comprised of

large to medium-sized bovids, hares, and hyrax - no new lithic technology appears to accompany the arrival of ceramics or small stock. This markedly large wild faunal component lies in stark contrast to “pure” pastoralist sites in East Africa, where 90 to 100% of the fauna consist of domesticates (Gifford-Gonzalez 2005:207). The data from Geduld is reminiscent of a situation in which pottery and small domesticated animals may have been acquired by foraging groups who may not have been members of a fully fledged pastoralist society (A.B. Smith *et al.* 1996). At Toteng 1 in Botswana (Campbell 1992) the appearance of domesticates in association with Bambata ceramic wares at 1800 years BP provides for a more convincing argument that livestock and ceramic technologies were introduced by people for whom pastoralism was a primary economic concern.

In the interior region there are various archaeological contexts from which ceramics and remains of ovi-caprids have been recovered. Along the Ghaap Plateau the earliest evidence for sheep and ceramics come from Little Witkrans and Limerock 1 (Humphreys & Thackeray 1983). The Little Witkrans shelter provides an indication of the earliest appearance of thin-walled ceramics and a single ovicaprine tooth in the Harts River region at around 1860 years BP (Beaumont & Vogel 1989). From Limerock 1, remains of ovi-caprids and fine grit-tempered ceramic sherds have been dated to 1620 years BP (Humphreys 1983). These finds are associated with large amounts of specularite and red and yellow ochre throughout the deposit which may signify a ritualistic facet to the site. From Blinkklipkop a single lug and some 71 undiagnostic sherds were recovered and dated to 1200 to 1100 years BP (Thackeray *et al.* 1981; Sadr 1998), and at Doornfontein two lugs were recovered from a stratum dated to 1120 years BP (Beaumont & Boshier 1974). At Wonderwerk Cave remains of ovi-caprids were recovered from levels 1 and 2a, and may be somewhat younger than the date of 1210 years BP obtained for level 2b (Humphreys & Thackeray 1983). Although no ovi-caprid remains have been recovered from Little Witkrans, 15 grit-tempered and blackened ceramic sherds form a level dated to 1490 years BP were excavated. Further south, at Lame Sheep Shelter in the eastern Karoo sheep bones have been associated with stratigraphic layers dated to 1350 BP (Sampson & Vogel 1995; Bousman 1998), and at Boomplaas Cave in the Karoo layers of calcined dung, remains of sheep and ceramics have been dated to 1700 years BP (Von Den Driesch & Deacon 1985). Further east at Rose Cottage Cave the earliest sheep and goats have been dated to approximately 1100 years BP (Plug & Engela 1992).

It may therefore be concluded that there were both earlier and later introductions of sheep and ceramics to the interior. An earlier presence of sheep and ceramics may be inferred from those layers of calcined dung, sheep and ceramics from Boomplaas Cave (at 1700 years BP), ovi-caprid remains and fine grit-tempered ceramic sherds from Limerock 1 and 2 (at 1620 years BP), and thin grit-tempered and blackened ceramic sherds and ovicaprine tooth (at 1860 and 1490 years BP) from Little Witkrans. These sites, although demonstrative of the early presence of ceramics and sheep, do not however provide conclusive evidence that these finds are in fact connected and that any lugged wares are represented by the ceramic component. It is only later, from about 1300 to 1100 years ago, that a more complete pastoralist package inclusive of lugged ceramics and sheep appear in the interior. The simultaneous appearance of lugs and ovi-caprid remains at both Blinkklipkop and Doornfontein at approximately 1200 to 1100 years BP suggest that these pastoralist items were introduced, perhaps along with the arrival of cattle as a primary livestock resource, around 1200 to 1100 years ago by established pastoral peoples and not by way of diffusion-based acquisition and barter as may have formerly been the case (see Klein 1986; Sadr 1998; Mitchell 2002; Masson 2006).

Much debate revolves around the question of whether it is the actual migration of pastoralist groups (*e.g.* A.B. Smith 1990; Boonzaier *et al.* 1996) or, instead, a more gradual and inter-cultural southwards diffusion of ceramic technology and herder practices (*e.g.* Sadr 1998; Sadr & Smith 2001; Sadr & Plug 2002) which accounts for the emergence of these new cultural elements. Elphick (1985) has proposed that foragers acquired livestock from Bantu-speaking pastoralists in northern Botswana and western Zambia and that this new cultural entity, the Khoekhoe, moved into South Africa. Sadr (1998) has argued that, initially at least, the arrival of pastoralist peoples in the region is unlikely to have occurred as a distinctly single and coordinated large-scale migratory event. The seemingly unsynchronised first appearances of sheep and of pottery, together with the lack of a “clear stylistic chain” linking southern ceramics with those in acknowledged areas of migratory points of origin (Sadr 1998:114), provides evidential support for this notion and contests the hypothesis that livestock and ceramics initially arrived by means of migration. Sadr points out that prior to 900 years BP sheep and pottery did not form a single cultural package but that, apart from the great degree of regional variability in ceramic wares, sheep and ceramics most often appear to have been introduced separately. A frequently cited obstacle to the proposed spread-by-diffusion scenario has been the theoretical contention that the sharing ethic amongst hunter-gatherers is inclined to prevent the adoption of herding as a means of

economy and subsistence (Hitchcock 1978; Ingold 1980; A.B. Smith 1990). In sum, it is believed that hunters can only become herders once they have been incorporated into a strongly hierarchical society (A.B. Smith 1990). On the contrary, it has been illustrated that one of the few traits common to all Kalahari San groups is that of flexibility, in both social and political spheres as well as in way of life and subsistence (Sadr 1998; Guenther 1999; Barnard & Taylor 2002), and that such flexibility and opportunism would have permitted hunter-gatherers to adopt and maintain livestock if circumstances made this desirable or necessary. Evidence from Thamaga in south-eastern Botswana (Sadr & Plug 2001) and from the Kintampo sites in Ghana (Anquandah 1993; Stahl 1993) indicate a situation in which foragers may well have regarded small livestock as equivalent to socially unimportant smaller game, rather than to the meat of significant large and medium game, suggesting that the sharing ethic would not necessarily need to be compromised by herding on this scale. Kinahan (1996) also cites evidence in favour of unproblematic adoption of pastoralism by former hunters in Namibia where a prominent association between ceramic vessels and extensive plant food exploitation is seen as indicative of continuity in the transition from hunting to herding. More recently, the ease with which 19th century San acquired horses (Wright 1971), or during the 1960s, adopted goat-herding (Yellen 1984), present further doubts as regards the perceived difficulties involved in the adoption of livestock by egalitarian societies.

The trajectory of the pastoral expansion in the archaeological record nevertheless indicates that pastoral peoples entered the southern and central regions of South Africa from a northerly rather than an easterly direction. This newly-arriving pastoralist package is characterised by lugged pots, changes in lithic technology such as the occurrence of higher macrolithic and lower formal tool percentages, coarser raw materials, grooved grinding stones, and ostrich eggshell beads of a comparatively larger diameter (Sadr 1998; Kinahan 1986; Jacobson 1987a; 1987b; A.B. Smith 1990b, 2005; Yates 1992). As proposed by Beaumont *et al.* (1995), there exists evidence for an earlier influx of pastoralists into the Northern Cape and Vaal-Orange drainage regions at around 2100 years BP. On the basis of two distinct archaeological signatures for hunters (the Swartkop Industry) and herders (the Doornfontein Industry) along the middle Orange River and Bushmanland, it has been postulated that the most likely route to have been taken by southward-moving pastoralists is that from Botswana, through the Northern Cape and North West and on to the Vaal-Orange drainage region (Beaumont *et al.* 1995). From here domestic stock and ceramics may once again have been dispersed southward to the Cape coastal region (A.B. Smith

2005). Whereas the precise routes of dispersal are problematic and debatable, there is no question about the early presence of pastoralists in the Orange River and Namaqualand regions. It is important to note that the new pastoralist package described above only appears at 1400 to 1300 years BP at Jakkalsberg A and B on the southern banks of the Orange River (Webley 1997; A.B. Smith & Webley 2000; Mitchell 2002). The use of the characteristic Nama *matjiehuise* have been inferred from the presence and close proximity and spatial patterning of hearths, and decorated lugs, spouted wares and abundant traces of red ochre have also been recovered (A.B. Smith & Webley 2000; Mitchell 2002). In addition, ritual practice have been inferred from the ochre-stained pelvis of a young male caprine which recalls the historically-known Khoekhoen practice of hanging an ochre- and fat-stained pelvis of a young sheep or goat in the hut used during girl's initiation (A.B. Smith & Webley 2000; Mitchell 2002). The Kasteelberg complex (Sadr 1998; Mitchell 2002; A.B. Smith 2005) also provides key evidence for the practice of pastoralism in the south-western Cape, documenting the arrival of a new pastoralist package some one hundred years after its arrival at Jakkalsberg. At 1200 years BP Kasteelberg and Jakkalsberg are the only sites in the region at which unequivocal evidence for a complete pastoralist package, inclusive of livestock-dominated faunal assemblages and lugged ceramics, is present (Sadr 1998: 125). It is of interest to note that the Kasteelberg, Jakkalsberg and Spoegrivier sites are in fact connected by a comparable ceramic sequence which includes similar decorative motifs on the rims and necks of the vessels (*ibid.*).

It has been established that one proposed route of migration comprise a split in southern Botswana after which one branch reaches the southern Cape via the Namibian Atlantic coast, while the other passes down from southern Botswana and into and through the central interior towards the Karoo and the Eastern Cape (Sadr 1998; Sadr & Sampson 1999). Sadr and Sampson (1999) have shown that the while the pastoralist ceramic sequence in the upper Seacow Valley is comparable to that from the south-western and Western Cape, it is remarkably different from the ceramics in the Northern Cape, Botswana and Namibia. While this conclusion lends support to the models proposed by Stow (1905) and Cooke (1965), the later dates for lugged wares from Namibia (Kinahan 1991) may in fact support a scenario in which pastoralists entered South Africa from southern Botswana and via the interior plateau (*e.g.* Sadr & Smith 1999). Evidently the introduction of pastoralist lifeways may have taken place at different times and by way of a variety of routes (Walker 1985; Sadr 1998; A.B. Smith 2005). The presence of both tentative and definite pastoralist packages at sites such as Bambata Cave (at 2140 years BP), Spoegrivier (at 2105 years BP), Jakkalsberg (at

1300 years BP), Kasteelberg (at 1200 to 900 years BP), and Blinkklipkop (at 1160 years BP) have only confused the matter further. It has also been acknowledged that there are problems associated with dating the remains of small domestic animals (Sealy & Yates 1994; Deacon & Deacon 1999), and that the use of ostrich eggshell bead sizes as a criterion for distinguishing between archaeological signatures associated with either pastoralists or foragers also poses a number of problems (see A.B. Smith & Jacobson 1995 and Kinahan 1996 for insight into opposing opinions).

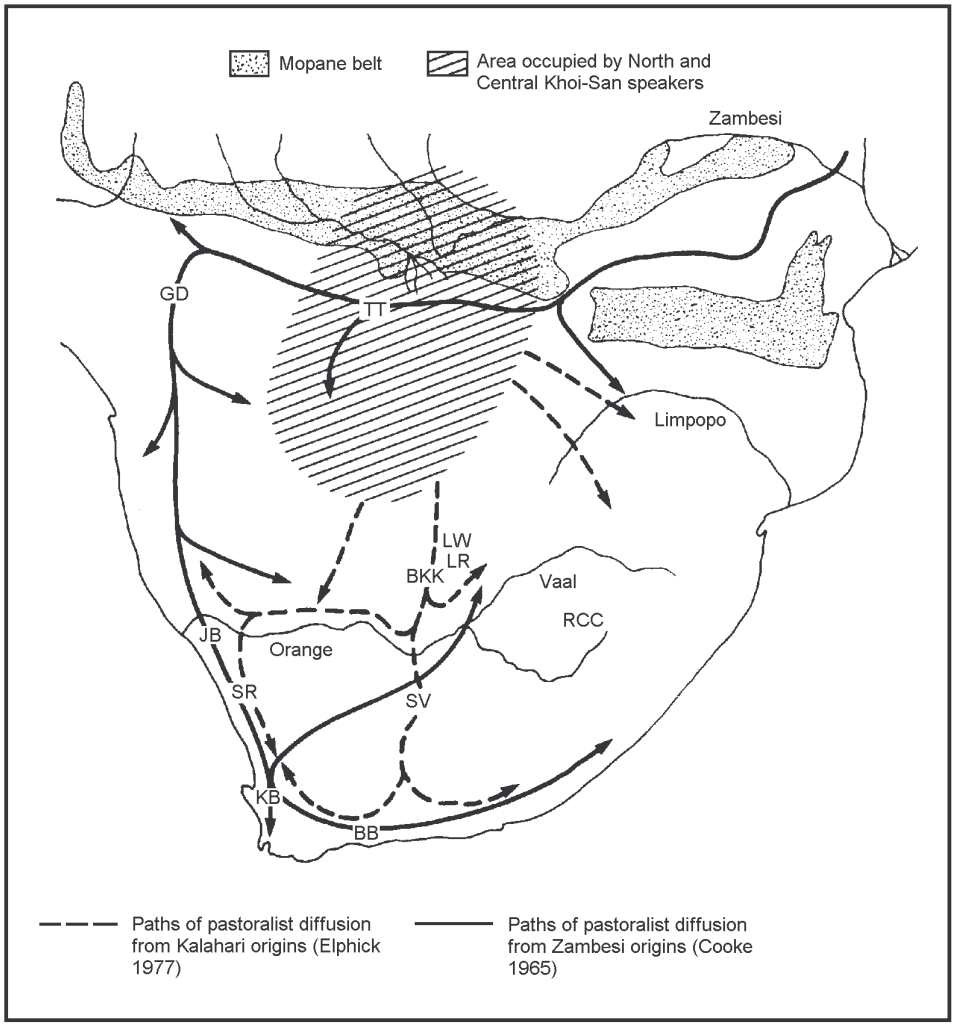


FIG.2.2. Map indicating the possible routes of migration followed by pastoralist peoples into South Africa. Archaeological sites are indicated as: BB Blombos Cave, BKK Blinkklipkop, GD Geduld, JB Jakkalsberg, KB Kasteelberg, LR Lime Rock 1 and 2, LW Little Witkrans, RCC Rose Cottage Cave, SR Spoegrivier, SV Upper Seacow Valley, TT Toteng Sites (adapted from Elphick 1977; Ehret 1982; Humphreys & Thackeray 1983; Nurse *et al.* 1985; Klein 1986; Bousman 1998; Deacon & Deacon 1999).

In terms of how rapidly pastoralist groups could have moved from the coastal zone to the interior, the gradual increase in the antiquity of lugs and ovi-caprid remains from west to east allows for the arrival of pastoralists with stock and lugged ceramics at sites in the interior some one hundred years after their arrival at Orange River near the coast. There exists ample ethnographic evidence in support of an eastward migration along the Orange River into the interior (*e.g.* Maingard 1932; Engelbrecht 1936). There is, on the contrary, also sufficient ethnographic (Engelbrecht 1936) and linguistic (Ehret 1982) evidence in support of a central route of migration into South Africa, such as that proposed by Wuras (1929), Westphal (1963), and Elphick (1977).

Agro-pastoralist archaeology

The arrival of Bantu-speaking agro-pastoralists in the southern African interior region during the 3rd century AD (Hall 1987; Phillipson 1993) marks the inception of what is known as the Early Iron Age. Archaeological indicators of Early Iron Age settlement to the north of the study region is provided by several archaeological contexts from the landscape surrounding the Matsieng engraving site (Denbow 1981; Campbell *et al.* 1991; Walker 1997) and also by the Eiland ceramics recovered from the Thamaga rock shelter sites (Denbow 1986; Sadr & Plug 2001). Revil Mason (1969) perceives a degree of cultural continuity between these early settlers and is of the opinion that the Sotho-Tswana can trace their origins to the Early Iron Age inhabitants. To the contrary, Evers (1981) and Huffman (1989; see also Klapwijk & Huffman 1993) argues for a cultural break between the Early and Late Iron Ages, citing the appearance of a new ceramic style, the Moloko, as indicative of the arrival of a new cultural group, the Sotho-Tswana. Evers (1981) defines the decorative components of the Moloko ceramic style as comprised of bands of hatching or multiple incisions, un-textured red or black bands, and triangular and arcade or chevron motifs. The first appearance of the Moloko ceramic sequence occurs at around AD 1250 to 1300 and is represented by the Icon ceramic facies (Huffman 2005). The Moloko is further divided into an early and later phase. The early Moloko lasted from AD 1450 to 1650 (Miller *et al.* 1995) and is represented by Olifantspoort near Rustenburg (dated to AD 1510), Rooiberg near Thabazimbi (dated to AD 1580), and Rietfontein near Zeerust (dated to AD 1590). The dating and distribution of these early settlements have led to the inference that the Moloko and the Sotho-Tswana entered South Africa from the north-east and that they spread across the interior in a south-westerly direction (Huffman 1989, 2005). The later Moloko dates from AD 1650 to 1820 (Evers 1988; Miller *et al.* 1995; Vogel & Fuls 1999) and is characterised by the appearance of large stone-walled settlements inclusive of stone-walled stock enclosures and bilobal dwellings. Moloko ceramics have also been

recovered from the Thamaga rock shelter sites and these provide evidence for Late Iron Age settlement immediately to the north of the study region (Denbow 1986; Sadr & Plug 2001). Although a few sites in the arid north-western portion of the interior have provided dates earlier that AD 1640, those from Buffelshoek north of the Vaal (dated to AD 1650) are accepted as the earliest evidence for Sotho-Tswana advances into the Highveld (Vogel & Fuls 1999).

A date of approximately AD 1635 have been obtained for archaeological remains from a typical Type Z settlement from the Kuruman area (Humphreys 1976), and it therefore appears that Bantu-speakers did not settle the western arid regions before AD 1600 (Humphreys & Thackeray 1983). There is however those Early Iron Age ceramics recovered from archaeological contexts close to the Matsieng engraving site (Denbow 1981; Campbell *et al.* 1991; Walker 1997) and the Eiland ceramics recovered from the Thamaga rock shelter sites (Denbow 1986; Sadr & Plug 2001). These finds are suggestive of both earlier and later Iron Age influxes and suggests that the interior may have been settled by Iron Age peoples as early as the 3rd century AD. Some of the better-known stone-walled settlements and former Sotho-Tswana capitals are Molokwane near Rustenburg (Pistorius 1992), Kaditshwene near Zeerust (Maggs 1993; Miller *et al.* 1995), and Dithakong north of Kuruman (Maggs 1972). More recently constructed stone structures, many of which are in fact built in an angular and not circular style are also present at later Tswana settlements such as Makokskraal, Basothokraal, and Massouwskop. The primary source of evidence for Iron Age Bantu-speaker settlement in the study region is from the large stone-walled site of Dithakong north-east of Kuruman (Humphreys & Thackeray 1983) and a number of stone-walled ruins near Taung (Humphreys 1976). For the most part, information on the western Sotho or Tswana inhabitants of the region is obtained from early eye-witness accounts and historical sources dating from around AD 1800. The oral histories and royal genealogies of the Kgalagadi, Thlaping, Rolong, and Hurutse (Lye 1970; Mönnig 1983; Comaroff 1985; Etherington 2001) also provide extensive insight into the origins and arrival of these groups in the interior. These will be considered in the section dealing with ethnographic and historical sources of information.

European contact and culture

The arrival of Europeans in South Africa marks the advent of the historical period during which written documentation constitutes the primary source of knowledge about the more recent past. Because of the relatively recent arrival of Europeans in southern Africa there is only a limited archaeology of European settlement, and most of the

information on European settlement and interaction with indigenous groups is derived from written and eyewitness accounts. These include the journals of Dutch officials and accounts by early hunters, explorers, naturalists and missionaries who explored the interior of South Africa and who first encountered and interacted with the San, Khoekhoe, and Bantu-speaking inhabitants of the region.

While much of the earlier European items present in the archaeological record may derive from bartering, trade, and diffusion from the south and east, many of these items also entered local trade networks through direct contact with hunters, traders, and missionaries. To the south of the research region, in the upper Karoo, European items such as glass beads and iron knives entered the region as part of an effort to establish favourable relations with the foraging inhabitants of the region (Saitowitz & Sampson 1992). Such items are present in the archaeological record, and occur in upper stratigraphic layers with decreasing numbers of Smithfield artefacts. Firearms were acquired by means of either theft or desertion and were used by the Seacow Valley San against trekboers as early as the 1770s. There could not however have been a great deal of muskets in circulation during this period as these only become prevalent in the archaeological record as the numbers of colonial settlers increase from around 1825 onwards (Westbury & Sampson 1993). To the west of the research area, at Renosterkop near Upington (Morris & Beaumont 1991), no glass- and metal-beads have been recovered, suggesting that these sites predate the appearance of these items. Nearer to the research region, material cultural remains of European origin have been excavated from a number of sites along the Ghaap escarpment. From Wonderwerk Cave metal fragments, porcelain fragments, and retouched and plain glass fragments have been excavated. These finds are associated with disturbed contexts (layers 1a to 3a) and secure dates have not been established (Humphreys & Thackeray 1983). From Dikbosch 1 and 2 a single iron- and three glass beads (Indian reds on green core and opaque Indian reds), and three porcelain fragments have been recovered. The beads are comparable to those found in the Seacow River sites (Westbury & Sampson 1993) and are also associated with post AD 1500 and 17th to 19th century Iron Age sites in Zimbabwe (Humphreys & Thackeray 1983).

In many instances the arrival of Europeans is signified by a change in the composition of archaeological sequences. At some sites the arrival of Europeans is indicated by the gradual addition of European artefacts to the existing presence of forager archaeological remains. This is the case with the Limerock 1 and 2 rock shelters which are located on the edge of the Ghaap escarpment near the confluence of the Vaal- and

Harts Rivers (Humphreys & Thackeray 1983). Several ostrich eggshell discs, an upper ochre-stained grindstone, and numerous specularite fragments were also recovered during excavation. Ostrich eggshell beads, perforated bone fragments, and decorated ostrich eggshell fragments were recovered from all levels at both sites. Glass beads and porcelain and glass fragments are present on the surfaces and in levels 1 at Limerock 1 and 2. The decorated porcelain fragments suggest that the occupants had access to European crockery and that the European groups must have been relatively settled. This took place in the region after about 1860, after which Limerock 1 and 2 was not again occupied. Other sites, such as Burchell's shelter just south of Limerock 1 and 2, appear to have been abandoned abruptly and soon after European contact (Humphreys 1976; Humphreys & Thackeray 1983). The fact that no glass or porcelain was found at this site may indicate that the shelter was abandoned soon after European contact and the establishment of the Mission Station at Campbell in 1811 (Humphreys 1976).

To the south-east of the research region, Rose Cottage Cave provides evidence for a gradual change in artefact frequency from traditional to European items. Although the San of the surrounding landscape experienced an increase in social stress and a decrease in mobility, the influx of European trekboers and hunters into the region during the 1830s had little influence over their post-classic Wilton toolkits (Wadley 1992). Apart from the appearance of glass- and metal-beads, ceramics, ovi-caprid faunal remains, and a number of European items (Behrens 1992), the stone artefacts of the contact period remained unchanged: the only significant changes in the lithic industry is the increasing recycling and use of MSA artefacts. Whilst this and the lack of items suitable for gift-exchange and increasing unselective collection of firewood may indicate a loss of mobility due to increased territoriality by local farmers, the presence of a variety of hunted animals suggests that mobility may not have been severely restricted. The ability of these San to continue hunting and manufacturing standard post-classic Wilton tools during the period of contact illustrate the fact that farmers do not necessarily displace foragers (Moore 1985) and that there may be a pattern of synchronous and interspersed farming and hunting which may be archaeologically recoverable. The potential forms and outcomes of farmer-forager contact is of great relevance to this study, especially in terms of how such relationships may be manifest in forager and farmer, and perhaps also amalgam forms, of rock art.

Ethnographic and historical insights

Southern African rock art research is informed by a wealth of ethnographic and historical records which provides insight into the perceptions of pre-historic people and which enables researchers to interpret and gain access to the meanings of rock art. Such an informed approach, which is dependent on the availability of ethnographic, ethnohistoric or historical data, provides for "some source of insight passed on directly or indirectly from those who made and used the rock art" (Taçon & Chippindale 1998: 6). For the most part archaeological interpretation depends, either directly or indirectly, on information derived from present materials, such as ethnographic data, to understand and interpret archaeological remains, such as rock art (Watson *et al.* 1984). Whereas geologists may employ the "principle of generic similarity" (see Wylie 1982), cultural systems are much more complex and simplistic one-to-one correlations between analogues and past material remains should be avoided (Wylie 1985; Hodder 1987; Mandt 1995). Ethnographic analogy facilitates the ascription of meaning to objects from the prehistoric past, and involves using a known, identifiable phenomenon to identify unknown ones of a broadly similar type. Analogy itself is a form of reasoning that assumes that if objects have some similar attributes, they will share other similarities as well. According to Salmon (1982) the purpose of ethnographic analogy is to provide archaeologists with alternative modes of behaviour that would have been difficult to arrive at by logic alone. Most simple analogies are based on technology, style, and function of artefacts as defined archaeologically (Lewis-Williams 1980; Mandt 1995). Analogies, founded as they are on people's beliefs, can however be unreliable. Although arguments by analogy are prone to produce false conclusions from true premises (Copi 1968:352, as cited in Lewis-Williams & Loubser 1986:262), not all analogies are of necessity fundamentally flawed, an assumption frequently accepted by archaeologists (Lewis-Williams 1998a).

Despite an increasing awareness of the potential problems associated with the application of limited ethnographies to the interpretation of painted and engraved rock art (see Parkington 1984; Mitchell 2005), it is still accepted that without an awareness of the contexts in which rock art was created and in which it functioned, the probability of failing to appreciate fully the significance and meaning of the art is high (Lewis-Williams 1980). Mitchell (2005:67) has addressed the problems associated with the application of limited ethnographies to wide-ranging artistic contexts in southern Africa. He refers to the use of a "holy trinity" of ethnographies, namely those of the Ju/'hoansi (also known as !Kung), G/wi and /Xam San groups and views the emphasis on a small

fraction of insight into the total sample of San cultural variability as problematic. Mitchell in addition argues for the “de-!Kunging” of the Later Stone Age and the incorporation of all the available ethnographic materials in order to attain a more balanced and realistic view of hunter-gatherer life-ways (Parkington 1984; Humphreys 2005). There are many questions concerning the establishment of generalisations and the feasibility of applying these to archaeological interpretation, and many researchers are of the opinion that anthropologically-known foraging societies provide poor and even misleading analogues for prehistoric foraging lifeways (Wilmsen 1989). To a large degree, this is due to the long history of interaction between hunter-gatherers and farmers now documented archaeologically in most areas of the world, especially in southern Africa where it has been the focal point of revisionist debates for several years (Schrire 1984; Cashdan 1986; Wilmsen 1989; Wilmsen & Denbow 1990; Köhler & Lewis 2002). Hunter-gatherers had most probably been exposed to outside cultural influences over many centuries and might themselves have influenced other cultural groups. To claim that San testimonies can serve as the basis for an interpretive model for the rock art of other forager groups (Clottes and Lewis-Williams 1998) may, for that reason, be a rather dangerous assumption to make (Riel-Salvatore 2000). While some similarities are prominent and while continuities in the material culture and religious views between archaeological and ethnographic San do exist, Mitchell (2002) warns that these apparent continuities in lifestyle and beliefs may in fact limit our considerations of change and lead to an erroneous assumption that modern San can be directly equated with those people who were responsible for the rock art of the archaeological record.

Be that as it may, the striking correspondence between the historically documented southern (/Xam) and the contemporary northern (!Kung) San ethnographies, despite prominent linguistic dissimilarities, significant spatial and temporal divide, and an absence of a northern rock art tradition, is indicative of existence of roughly similar traditions and beliefs amongst southern African foragers (*e.g.* Lewis Williams & Biesele 1978; Lewis-Williams 1992). The presence of such notable correspondences undoubtedly point to a universal cognitive-religious system of substantial temporal depth and which is shared by most forager groups in southern Africa (see McCall 1970; Lewis-Williams & Biesele 1978; Lewis-Williams 1981, 1984a). Extensive use will be made of these and other ethnographic sources in the analysis of forager rock art and in the recognition of changes in belief systems as manifest in stylistic and thematic transformations in the rock art.

In addition to those well-known ethnographies of the Kalahari Ju/'hoansi and the /Xam of the Karoo, there are numerous accounts by early European hunters, explorers, naturalists and missionaries which may also be employed to gain insight into the drastic changes which took place during the historical period. The use of historical accounts is not entirely unproblematic (Deacon 1996; Alexander 1998; Etherington 2001). Our understanding of historical colonial interaction is based primarily on historical accounts, most of which were recorded by early Europeans who explored the interior during the late 18th and 19th centuries. This in itself is problematic, as these were produced by literate individuals of the dominant society, providing us with essentially Eurocentric views from "above" and not from within indigenous societies (Alexander 1998). There is also the problem of correspondence between archaeological and historical sources: archaeological and historical data often refer to very different spatial and temporal scales, as is evident in the noticeable decline of archaeological evidence as we near the period of European and indigenous contact (Humphreys 2005).

Of fundamental importance is the realisation that the past 2000 years of San history have to be understood as the product of interaction between peoples of variable social and cultural backgrounds (Ouzman 1995, 1996; Blundell 2004). While allowing for their limitations and shortcomings (see Blundell 2004), interactionist studies (after Rowlands 1994) offers valuable insight into both the advantages and limitations in adopting interactionist approaches to rock art and to the importance of recognising the historical circumstances responsible for the perceptible changes in the thematic and stylistic components of the art. Interaction, especially in terms of foragers and farmers, obviously also relate to the Kalahari "revisionist debate" (Wilmsen & Denbow 1986; Wilmsen 1989). Approaches concerned with interaction are of obvious relevance to revisionist arguments. Ideally suited to this study are the investigations into the variable relationships between rock art and changing social relations by Manhire *et al.* (1986), Campbell (1987), Hall (1994), Loubser and Laurens (1994), Dowson (1994, 1995, 1998, 2000), Jolly (1996a, b, c, 1998), Blundell (2004) and Murray (2004). These works offer insight into the nature of interaction and the variable outcomes of contact between different social groups, and will be employed in conjunction with supporting historical syntheses such as those provided by Schapera (1930), Maingard (1932), Engelbrecht (1936), Lye (1970), Wilson and Thompson (1982), Templin (1984), Comaroff (1985), Nurse *et al.* (1985), Kopytoff (1989), Waldman (1989), Barnard (1992), Penn (1995), Szalay (1995), and Etherington (2001).

An additional concept which is of pertinence to both the revisionist debate and theories of interaction is the notion of the existence of a pre-colonial internal African frontier (*e.g.* Legassick 1969; Giliomee 1979; Kopytoff 1989). In general terms, the development of frontiers is a characteristic feature of contact between colonial and indigenous groups (Turner 1922; Legassick 1971; Thompson & Lamar 1981; Alexander 1984; Kopytoff 1989), and is usually understood in terms of a cartographic "line" along which contact between expanding colonials and indigenous peoples takes place (*e.g.* Legassick 1989). Marks and Atmore (1980) characterises a frontier as being a spatio-temporal area of interaction "between people either subject to different political authorities and / or engaged in different modes of production, or indeed recognising no formal authority at all, and therefore perhaps as individuals marking the precise point of articulation and exchange between different modes." The key attribute that makes the concept of the frontier an interesting frame for anthropological research is the idea developed by Hugh Elton (1996b, as cited in Parker 2006) that frontiers are composed of various types of boundaries. In his exemplary study of the Roman frontier, Elton defines frontiers as zones of variously overlapping, but not congruent, political, economic, and cultural boundaries (Elton 1996b:3). The varied types of boundaries, and the fact that many scholars emphasise the interconnectedness of such boundaries in the make-up of frontiers (Lightfoot & Martinez 1995) supports Elton's view of a frontier as a zone where various types of boundaries intersect and overlap (Eaton 1993, 2005; Alconini 2005; Aron 2005). This corresponds with Sampson's (1986:55) conclusion that frontier contact most generally takes place in the form of "jerks", like zigzag lines on a map, from one socio-political unit of recipient hunters to the next, rather than spreading evenly and steadily across the landscape. Frontiers are therefore conceived to involve and constitute hybridised landscapes (Alexander 1984; Kopytoff 1989; Rice 1998) in which individuals and groups interacted by either peaceful cooperative trade or intermarriage, or by conquering, subjugating or gradually incorporating individuals or groups. Thus, and if "frontier" is taken to imply instances of contact, interaction, and hybridisation across cultural boundaries (Marks and Atmore 1980; Kopytoff 1989; Eaton 1993, 2005), the gradual southward movement of pastoralists and agro-pastoralists undoubtedly resulted in the development of several "tidal frontiers" (Kopytoff 1989) across the sub-continent.

Over the past two millennia in particular, southern Africa was characterised by the emergence of several contact zones or areas of hybridisation between first foragers and advancing herders and farmers (Alexander 1984). Frontiersmen generally encountered societies fairly similar to their own, and contact and interaction across

indigenous boundaries may not have been as intense and disruptive as was the colonial encounter (Kopytoff 1989). The encounter between newcomers and San could have resulted in a number of alternative outcomes: first peoples, in addition to being employed as rain-makers, healers, or ritual specialists (Schapera 1971a, b; Kopytoff 1989; Prins & Lewis 1992; Hammond-Tooke 1998), could have been absorbed as either kinsmen or subjects, or could have been incorporated as clients in relationships of mutual inter-dependence.

In 1685, while leading an expedition to Namaqualand, Simon Van Der Stel became the first European to witness the performance of music and dance by San hunter-gatherers (Kirby 1936; England 1968; Wilson & Thompson 1982). In 1707, upon visiting the Cape, Kolb also provides an account of San and Khoi relations, providing the first account of the Khoi and San *clientship* model of interaction and dependence (Wilson & Thompson 1982). In 1778 Wikar travelled all the way to the Orange River, and offers some of the most descriptive accounts of the inhabitants and the nature of interaction between the different groups of the interior (Mossop 1935; Lye 1970; Morris & Beaumont 1991; Wilson & Thompson 1982; Penn 1995). A year after Wikar, Gordon visited the Orange River region (Raper & Boucher 1988; Morris & Beaumont 1991; Wilson & Thompson 1982; Penn 1995). These travelogues are rich in ethnographic detail and provide insight into the economies of and interactions between different socio-cultural and subsistence groups in the interior prior to the occurrence of intense instances of colonial contact. This section will focus on the differential impacts that interaction between foragers, pastoralists, agro-pastoralists and frontier communities such as Korana, Griqua, and trekboers of European origin had on the social, cultural, and economic facets of each of these groups. Intra-forager interaction will be further explored in Chapters Four and Five when questions pertaining to variability and regionality in rock art and to the spread of religious concepts amongst such pre-contact foraging groups will be attended to.

Herders and farmers

With regards interaction between first foragers and Khoe pastoralists and Sotho-Tswana agro-pastoralists, the late 18th century accounts provided by Wikar (Mossop 1935; Nienaber 1963) and Gordon (Raper & Boucher 1988) are of immense interest. These comprise the principal source of ethnographic and historical evidence of a linkage between the early archaeologically-known “Gariep Khoekhoen” and historically-known Khoekhoe, Namaqua, Nama, and Korana pastoralists of the region (Arbousset & Daumas 1968; Barnard 1992; Smith & Webley 2000; Ouzman 2005). During their

travels along the Orange River both Wikar, in 1778 (Mossop 1935), and Gordon, in 1779 (Raper & Boucher 1988) encountered a situation in which the colonial impact on these peoples was as yet insignificant and in which foragers and farmers interacted both local and regional spheres of trade. Wikar describes the trade in beads, iron, copper, ivory, tobacco, cattle, and hides along and north of the Orange River in which the Nama, Korana, the Tswana-speaking Barolong and Bathlaping, and San hunter-herders participated. Wikar also encountered groups of mixed Thlaping-Khoekhoe / Korana, the Geissiqua or “twin-folk” who participated extensively in the regional traded networks with both the Thlaping to the north-east and the Einiqua to the west (Mossop 1935; Nienaber 1963; Humphreys 1976; Morris & Beaumont 1991). That many San herded their own stock is clear, as referred to by both Wikar and Gordon. Later references to San stock-keeping are also provided by Burchell in 1824, Thompson in 1853, and Livingstone in 1857 (Lye 1970; Wilmsen 1989), and it is evident that the phenomenon of hunters-*cum*-herders predates colonial contact. There is thus a very long history of interaction between San foragers, Khoe pastoralists, and Bantu-speaker agro-pastoralists, and while similarities between the languages, cosmologies and ritual practice of San and Khoe have been acknowledged (Ehret 1982; Wilmsen 1986; Barnard 1992; Hoff 1997; Guenther 1999), the implications this may hold for engraved rock art have not yet been fully explored. In addition to the observations by Schouten in 1655 (Raven-Hart 1971), Gordon (Raper & Boucher 1988), in 1779, also recognised the artistic skill with which Khoekhoe decorated their clothing and with which they created beads and other decorative ornaments. Wooden milk containers, soapstone pipes, and ceramic vessels were decorated in a variety of manners, including geometric and linear designs, zigzags, and cross-hatching (Smith & Webley 2000:87). For the most part, pastoralist artistic ability and expression appears to have been focussed upon light and portable material-cultural objects and clothing in particular, and not on the painting or engraving of such designs on rock surfaces.

The earliest accounts of the Sotho-Tswana derive from explorers who came into contact with Nama pastoralists in Namaqualand in 1661, and later by Nama who visited the Cape in 1681 (Wilson & Thompson 1982). In 1681 Nama chiefs informed Simon Van Der Stel that there were people in the interior from which they obtained metal objects and specularite (Humphreys 1976). Mention of the *Brijckje*, *bliqua*, or *birikwa* are also made in the reports of Hop and Brink in 1761, Roos and Marais in 1762, and by Wikar in 1778 (Mossop 1935; Nienaber 1963), but all these were based on unconfirmed reports and hearsay. The first official instance of direct contact between Europeans and Sotho-Tswana, apart from those early interactions between the

Thlaping and Rolong and European hunters and trekboers, took place when the British government at the Cape sent an official expedition to acquire cattle from the Tswana, or Bechuanas, under Truter and Somerville in 1801 (Saunders 1966; Lye 1970; Van Warmelo 1974; Humphreys 1976; Penn 1995). From 1801 onwards several colonial officials and missionaries made contact with the Tswana of the interior: Lichtenstein in 1804, Burchell in 1812, Campbell in 1813, Kay in 1821, and Broadbent and Hodgeson in 1823 (see Lye 1970; Humphreys 1976).

Archaeological (Maggs 1972; Humphreys 1976; Evers 1981; Vogel & Fuls 1999) and ethnographic (Lye 1970; Van Warmelo 1974; Mönnig 1983) research indicate that the first Tswana groups arrived in the western parts of the Highveld interior at around AD 1640. According to oral traditions (Lye 1970; Van Warmelo 1974; Wilson & Thompson 1982; Mönnig 1983) the Kgalagadi and the Fokeng arrived first, followed closely by the larger migrations of Rolong and Thlaping. Calculations based on genealogies trace the Rolong, of which the Thlaping is an offshoot and which claims descent from one Malope, the son of Masilo, as far back as AD 1270 (Mönnig 1983). The Sotho-Tswana were once settled in the region to the west of the Ghaap Plateau, in the Langeberg and Korannaberg Mountains of the south-eastern Kalahari (Humphreys 1976; Nurse *et al.* 1985), and may only have retreated further east, to their current positions, because of increasing aridity in the region (Maggs 1974) and a growing prevalence of attacks by Korana (Humphreys 1976). Tswana society is characterised by the large stone-walled settlements such as Dithakong, formerly known as Lattakoo, and which was visited by early explorers such as Daniell in 1801, Burchell in 1812, and Campbell in 1813 (Maggs 1972; Wilson & Thompson 1982). Dithakong, situated to the north-east of Kuruman, is one of the largest stone-walled settlements in the region. The Tswana origins of most of the walling at this former Thlaping capital is contested by some local Tswana traditions which claims that these were built prior to the arrival of the Thlaping in the region, perhaps by the Hoja, the Rolong or even Khoe pastoralists (Lye 1970; Humphreys 1976; Wilson & Thompson 1982). Comparable stone-walled settlements were also encountered by Bain in 1834, Smith in 1835, and Arbousset in 1836, and as early as 1856 Tswana migrant labourers were constructing similar structures for farmers in the Clanwilliam area near Cape Town (Wilson & Thompson 1982).

In analogous fashion to the appearance of herders, the appearance of farmers on the Highveld also conforms to the “tidal frontier” model proposed by Kopytoff (1989; see also Marks & Atmore 1980; Alexander 1984; Sampson 1984; Rice 1998). However, and since these newcomers arrived in larger and more cohesive and politically-

organised groups than did the Khoekhoe, they may have exerted a more dominant influence over the hunter-gatherers and herders of the region. Moore (1985) has argued that, initially at least, the impact agro-pastoralists had on hunter-gatherers was indirect and gradual. When farmers first enter areas inhabited by hunter-gatherers they do not necessarily threaten the hunter-gatherer resource base, but they do influence patterns of movement which may impact on social and ecological familiarity and therefore threaten social relations. This may lead to a situation where the social environment becomes crowded prior to a decrease in the availability of local food sources. Thus, early contact between small transhumant groups of San and Sotho-Tswana are likely to have been amiable (Alexander 1984), and conflict may not have been a feature of initial relations. Schoeman's (2006) review of interaction between such politically-cohesive groups and foragers in the Limpopo River region of northern South Africa is also of interest. Archaeological evidence points to the initial incorporation of foragers into farmer ritual spheres such as healing and rain-making in particular. Over time the need for forager ritual expertise appears to have decreased, and formerly-forager rain-making sites were transformed, by the construction of grain-bins and gravel-floored structures, into farmer rain-control and social spaces.

The situation in the interior may not have been much different, as indicated by the engraved rock art at Thaba Sione near Mmabatho (Ouzman 1995, 1996). In addition the fact that the art is characterised by a marked degree of variability in thematic and stylistic features, there are also a number of striking correspondences between the rain-making beliefs of the San and the Tswana-speakers of the interior (Schapera 1971a). Although the exact nature of the relationship between San shamans, as rain-makers, and their Tswana-speaking neighbours is uncertain (Loubser & Laurens 2001), it is well-known that the eland features prominently in the rain-making rites of the Tswana (Schapera 1971a). The southern Sotho frequently employed San as rain-makers (Prins 1991; Jolly 1994, 1996b; Ouzman 1995), and some Sotho even cite the San as the source from which they acquired knowledge about rain-making (Jolly 1994, 1996b). The fact that Bantu-speaking farmers have been present in the eastern Kalahari for at least 1500 years (Wilmsen 1989; Wilmsen & Denbow 1990) suggests that religious beliefs and cosmological concepts may well have diffused from and were adopted by both San and western Sotho, or Tswana. Jolly (1994) refers to the prevalence of San in the initiation- and praise-songs of the Sotho and the close and mutually-beneficial relationships that existed between these groups in the southern Drakensberg Mountains. In fact, the memory about San also survives in the short didactic texts and verbal formulas transmitted over several generations in north-

western Zambia (Kubik 1988). Lucazi children learn the riddle "*Kasekele wamana hacana*", *a Bushman is standing still in the river grasslands*. The word *kasekele*, "people of the porcupine", is the term with which Ngangela-speakers used to call the !Kung. In riddles learned by children far away from any present-day contact with San-speakers it is still transmitted, although no longer understood. Mackenzie (1971), who travelled to through the Harts-Vaal region in 1859, also noted the common practice of San participating in the initiation ceremonies of the Tswana: San generally used the Tswana term *rupa*, which actually refers to the circumcision ceremonies of the Tswana, to explain their induction into manhood, not by being circumcised, but rather by having the cartilage of their noses pierced.

In contrast to the above, some aspects of interaction between San and Sotho-Tswana in the interior may have been very different from the relations which existed between San and Nguni-speaking agro-pastoralists of the Drakensberg region. Prins and Lewis (1992) and Hammond-Tooke (1998, 1999) provide broad discussions on the influence of San on the mediumistic and divinatory practices of the Xhosa and Zulu in particular, and argue that selective borrowing from San ritual practices accounts for both the presence of trance experience as a form of divinatory practice, linguistic clicks, and also terms such as *igqirha*, from the /Xam term *!gi:xa* for shaman. To the contrary, trance performance activities and the terminologies associated with San ritual practice does not seem to have been adopted by the Sotho-Tswana of the interior (Prins & Rousseau 1992; Ouzman 1995). Rather, individuals who may formerly have functioned as shamans within San society, took on the practice of interpreting the "fall" of divining dice or bones, a characteristic system of divination practiced by many southern African Bantu-speaking, but not by the San. Mackenzie, in 1859, also refers to the customary employment of San diviners by both European and Tswana hunting parties, referring to these San as the "seers" of the party who constantly seeks advice from their "dice or charms" and which are always referred to in Tswana religious and linguistic terms. Even when not guiding an expedition or hunt, "no party of Bushmen would consent to take the field without these charms" (Mackenzie 1971). This acceptance of the role of diviner may represent one way in which former San shamans, without a loss of status and consequent relegation to the marginalised underclass, may have been incorporated into Sotho-Tswana society (Prins 1991; Jolly 1994; Loubser & Laurens 2001). Guenther (1986) and Lee (2003) have also addressed the increasing prevalence of notions concerned with Tswana witchcraft and medicine amongst Kalahari San, confirming the notion that many San healers may have incorporated several foreign religious concepts and practices into an increasingly diverse medico-

religious repertoire. Globally, and although first peoples were generally assigned special status, they usually tended to adopt the cultural guise of the dominant group (Van Zwanenberg 1976; Hodder 1982; Turnbull 1983; Hoffman 1984). This was also the case in southern Africa (Prins & Lewis 1992; Hall 1994; Jolly 1994, 1996a; Ouzman 1995) where, during episodes of sustained symbiotic interaction, San ritual practitioners may have opted to adapt both their ritual appearance and religious details to better suit that of their new dominant neighbours. Such instances of customisation of religious beliefs and activities also impacted on the rock art of the San (Campbell 1987; Dowson 1994; Jolly 1994, 1996a; Ouzman 1995), and the ways in which such changes are manifest in the engravings of the interior will be explored in Chapters Five and Six.

An additional way in which San were incorporated into the Sotho-Tswana socio-economic sphere includes relationships of cattle-clientship or *mahisa* (Comaroff 1985), or *mafisa* (Wilmsen 1989; Guenther 2002). First alluded to by Kolb in 1707 (Wilson & Thompson 1982), this system of long-term loans of cattle, and less frequently also goats and sheep, to impoverished townsmen or small vassal communities of San served to extend the patronage of the wealthy owners to less-favoured kin or vassals in exchange for political support and labour (Comaroff 1985). Yellen (1977) also reviews ethnographic data provided by Marshall (1965) and Lee (1972) which deals with the impact that the arrival of pastoralist Bantu-speakers had on the territorial arrangements and seasonal movements of the !Kung of the Kalahari. The appearance of goats and cattle significantly altered the accessibility and yield of both faunal and water sources in the region, forcing San to adjust their seasonal rounds and adapt their organisation of *n!oresi* or territorial ranges. Over time, San goat-herders also adapted their intra-settlement pattern in order to accommodate and eventually incorporate goat kraals as a central feature of their camps (Yellen 1984). According to Moore (1985), the reduction of mobility and an increase in sedentism is a characteristic feature of forager-farmer relations within a mosaic frontier, and may have led to the client relationships described by historical sources. The loss of economic autonomy does not automatically translate into the isolation of forager groups, since, as in the Kalahari (Wilmsen 1989; Guenther 2002; Kent 2002a; Lee 2002) and along the Orange (Beaumont *et al.* 1995; Penn 1995), many groups managed to maintain foraging modes of production while also participating in trade and exchange with farmers of various cultural backgrounds (Barnard & Taylor 2002). The Blinkklipkop specularite mine illustrates how economic sources may have been appropriated by Tswana groups. Blinkklipkop was once hailed as one of the “most celebrated places” north of the Gariep (Thackeray *et al.* 1983) and, as indicated by the presence of ostrich egg-shell and pottery containers in archaeo-

logical contexts across the region (Humphreys 1974), specularite was also involved in long-distance trade (Beaumont *et al.* 1981:2). The utilisation of specularite for cosmetic and religious purposes is well documented for San foragers (Bleek & Lloyd 1911), Khoe pastoralists (Engelbrecht 1936), and Tswana farmers (Stow 1905; Burchell 1922; Arbousset & Dumas 1968; Campbell 1974). At Doornfontein the mining of specularite, or //*hara* (in /Xam) or *sibilo* (in Se-Tswana), commenced some time before 4000 years ago, and evidence from Blinkklipkop suggests that mining here commenced well before 1200 years ago (Bleek & Lloyd 1911; Thackeray *et al.* 1983). Some time after the arrival of the first Tswana groups in the western interior around AD 1640, the sources of specularite formerly freely available to the foragers of the region came to be controlled by the more dominant Tswana. Humphreys (1976) and Morris and Beaumont (1991) refers to historical evidence (*e.g.* Burchell 1822; Campbell 1835; Mossop 1935) which indicates that, already by the 1780s, as in 1820, the Thlaping, later under chief Mothibe, controlled the source of specularite and received payment from all who collected the sparkling mineral. Wilmsen (1989) interprets the participation of San foragers in regional trade networks and the exploitation and control of sources of specularite in particular, as indicative of the entrepreneurial skill and economic status of pre-colonial San groups. Since trade formed a primary component of the frontier (Legassick 1971), the loss of control over such economically viable resources must have adversely affected the relative autonomy enjoyed by foragers in the regional socio-economic network.

Of much greater impact on local foraging groups was the introduction, in conjunction with contact with Tswana agro-pastoralists in the south-eastern Kalahari, of slavery. The capture and enslavement of San, in the form of the *bothlanka* / *bolata* system of servitude, may have commenced as early as AD 1600 (Morton 1994). The forced subjugation of San foragers, as hunters and domestic servants, by Tswana farmers in the south-eastern Kalahari was characterised by extreme violence and dehuma-nisation, effectively setting the standard according to which San, in most cases, would be viewed and treated for the next three centuries. It is clear that interaction between San and Bantu-speakers took on diverse forms and had similarly variable effects and impacts. The situation in the interior appears have been characterised neither by comprehensive cultural assimilation, as in the case of the Cape Nguni-speaking peoples, nor by total domination and relegation of local foragers to an underclass, such as in the Kalahari. Rather, interaction between San and Tswana in the interior is characterised by instances of selective and measured socio-religious assimilation and of socio-economic collaboration and also subjugation. San admixture rates, as

calculated by the frequency of the serum protein allele Gm $^{1, 13}$ (Tobias 1974) and Gm $^{1, 13, 17}$ (Nurse *et al.* 1985), offers some insight into the extent of assimilation of San into Bantu-speaking society. The rate of San admixture in contemporary Tswana-speaking populations is estimated at 53% to 64%, and a rate of 37% to 45% San admixture in Nguni-speaking populations have been calculated (Jenkins *et al.* 1970). This offers interesting insight into the process of San assimilation into Tswana and Nguni society: whereas San were primarily absorbed genetically and only slightly incorporated culturally and linguistically by Tswana-speakers, Nguni-speakers appears to have incorporated San mainly in terms of their cultural, religious, and linguistic traits, and markedly less so in terms of their inheritable genetic characteristics. These differential rates of cultural incorporation and genetic assimilation may relate to different Tswana and Nguni kinship structures (Hammond-Tooke 1998), or to more extensive periods of contact between groups.

Raiders and traders

The northward expansion of the colonial boundary during the mid 18th century resulted in the concurrent expansion, from the Cape, of various groups of mixed ancestry. These included, amongst others, the Korana and the Griqua. In order to gain an understanding of who these people were and why they had decided to leave the Cape, we may once again turn to Kopytoff's (1989) model of an internal African frontier and the processes involved in the establishment of frontier conditions. Just as Khoe pastoralist and Bantu-speaker agro-pastoralist migrants, as frontiersmen, were produced by the metropoles from which they had migrated, so were the northward migrations of Korana and Griqua fuelled and inspired by socio-economic conditions at the Cape. The most general motivation for the social inception and construction of frontiers is "the need secure as way of life that is culturally legitimate and in which the socio-cultural characteristics of the metropole may be replicated to better suit oneself" (*ibid.*:23). The type of society constructed by these first frontiersmen was thus based on the pre-existing conceptions of social order they had brought from the Cape.

Although there exists considerable debate as regards the origins of the Korana or !Kora, there are several historical and ethnographic sources from which a fairly accurate history of the Korana may be constructed. The major disagreement revolves around whether the Korana constitute an indigenous socio-cultural group or whether they were a product of racial intermixing at the Cape (Barnard 1992). The term "Korana" has generally, and indiscriminately, been used to denote various bands of mixed genetic heritage and ethnic origins that roamed and raided along the frontier in

the interior. An excellent example, and perhaps the earliest of several trend-setting stereotypes of the disdain with which these people were viewed, is provided by the French reverends Arbousset and Daumas (1968), according to which the Korana, although “superior to the other Hottentots in stature and muscular strength, are greatly inferior to them in moral character.” The primary source for !Kora history and origins is the ethno-historical synthesis by Engelbrecht (1936), in addition to which those anthologies by Stow (1905), Maingard (1932), and Barnard (1992) are also of considerable value. Engelbrecht (1936) cites several orally transmitted ethnographic accounts concerning the origins of the Korana, most notably those of Massouw Ryt Taaibosch, Willem Blou, Andries Bitterbos, and Benjamin Katz. According to Katz, and prior to the presence of any Europeans in southern Africa when the country was “one great Bushmanland”, the first !Kora had come over “the water” and had travelled down to the Cape, which was named */i-k$^{?}$xab*. Katz’s account is substantiated by that of a !Kora man, nearly a hundred years of age, interviewed by Wuras (1929), who stated “they came from the interior of the continent, following the course of the ancient river, now called the Hart River, till they reached the Vaal River into which it flowed in past ages.” Engelbrecht (1936) interprets these sources of evidence as pointing towards different migratory events: an earlier migration from the central interior to the southern Cape, and a later migration from the Cape back into the interior. Clearly, and as stated by Jan Hanto Taaibosch in 1836 (Wuras 1929; Arbousset & Daumas 1846), !Kora groups moved into the interior both before and after 1652 (Barnard 1992). Whether or not the interior !Kora are descended from the Cape peninsula clan, formerly known as the !Gora-//xaukwa or Tobacco Thieves and headed by a certain chief !Ora or !Gora (Stow 1905; Wuras 1929; Meinhof 1930; Maingard 1932; Engelbrecht 1936) remains questionable. Conversely, linguistic relationships and temporal extent indicate that this may in fact not be the case, and these will be explored in Chapter Three.

The first instance of ethno-historical evidence for !Kora groups along the Orange River is that provided by Wikar in 1778 (Mossop 1935; Engelbrecht 1936). Wikar mentions the Nameiqua or Kaross-wearers, a branch of the Einiqua Khoe, the Kouringais or Hooge Kraals, a !Kora group, the Anoe eis, a San group, and also the Geissiqua or “twin-folk”, a group of mixed Thlaping-!Kora (Mossop 1935; Nienaber 1963). The presence of these groups, living in relatively close proximity along the Orange, is indicative of the socio-political complexity that characterised the region by the late 18th century. It is also suggestive of substantial intergroup-interaction and intermarriage, and may relate to the common notion that the !Kora were in fact a loosely defined and non-cohesive multi-ethnic group. While this is true, since most historically-noted !Kora

raiding bands were comprised of individuals from variable cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds (Legassick 1969; Strauss 1979; Penn 1995), there is also evidence for a former, more unified !Korana identity. When Maingard (1932) and Engelbrecht (1936) conducted their research in the 1920s and early 1930s, and although the culture they described existed only as reminiscences of old men and women who were then classed as “coloureds”, they nevertheless detected elements suggestive of a core !Kora identity. The individuals they interviewed shared a common memory, oral history, language, and culture, and, as indicated by Barnard (1992), this single cultural and ethno-linguistic phenomenon may only have been interrupted during the 1770s, when a period of warfare ensued along the ever-expanding northern frontier. Social disturbances and conflict, in the form of the mfecane-difaqane disturbances in the 1820s, the large-scale influx of trekboers in the late 1830s, and the Anglo-!Kora wars of the 1870s continued to disrupt the lives and cultures of the inhabitants of the region. Many groups were unable to recover from these events and resume their traditional cultural character, and were subsequently absorbed into newly emerging tribal configurations.

Of particular relevance to this investigation is the presence and distribution of Korana groups along the Vaal and Harts Rivers. The account provided by the elderly !Kora man interviewed by Wuras (1929), namely that “they came from the interior of the continent, following the course of the ancient river, now called the Hart River, till they reached the Vaal River into which it flowed in past ages”, provides conclusive evidence for the presence, during pre-colonial times, of !Kora groups in the research region. During the late 18th century the Korana themselves recognised the Taaibosh as the original inhabitants of the region, and that the arrival of the Springbokke and several other Griqua and Bastaard groups took place at a later stage (Lye 1970). These Khoekhoe-derived Korana and Griqua were the first frontiersmen of the expanding Cape Colony, and are in many ways analogous to those multi-ethnic “social bandits” produced by similar historical processes in Europe, Asia, and also the Americas (Hobsbawm 1969; Lye 1970). As frontier groups the Korana and Griqua were however unique: they included members of Khoekhoe, European, Bantu-speaker and mixed Khoekhoe-European-Bantu-speaker heritage, they recognised these ethno-linguistic differences, and they organised themselves into several politically-oriented and militarised groups under formal leadership.

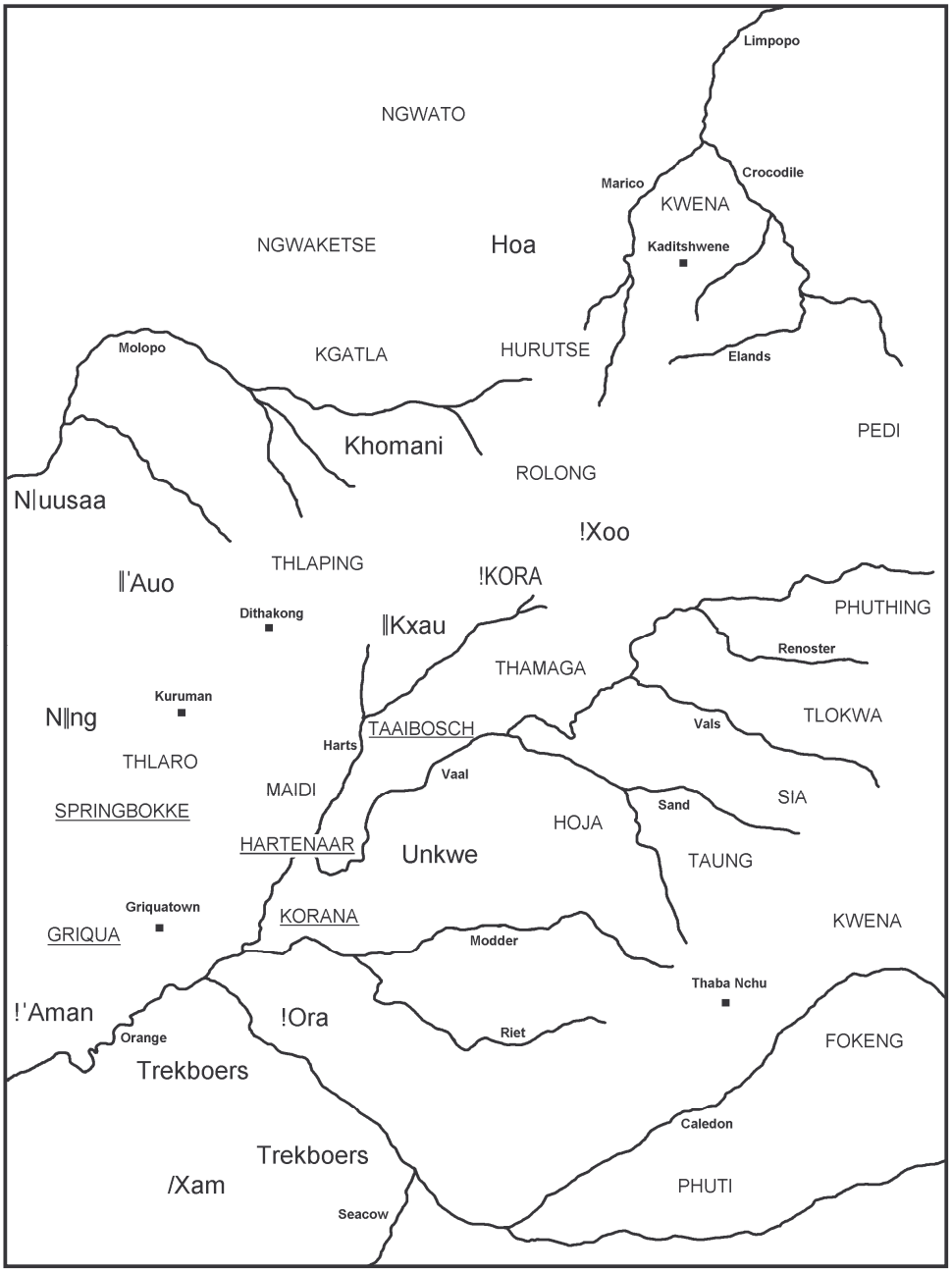


FIG.2.3. Map of the Central Interior and Harts-River region indicating the presence and distribution of historically-known groups prior to AD 1790. Khoe-San languages are shown in bold, Bantu-speaking groups in uppercase, politically-organised groups of mixed ancestry are underlined (adapted from Lye 1970, 1975; Butzer *et al.* 1979; Nurse *et al.* 1985; Güldemann 2003).

Although at least thirty Korana and Griqua groups are known to have inhabited the region north of the Orange (Schapera 1930; Maingard 1932; Engelbrecht 1936; Campbell 1974), the Taaibosh, Springbokke, Hartenaars, and Bergenaars are of

relevance to this study. Originally known as the Kei!orana or Kei Taaibosh (Engelbrecht 1936), the Taaibosch are believed to have been the first of the Khoe-Korana groups to have settled in the region. The Taaibosch, a division of the Hoogstaanders or High Standing tribe, the Khuremankeis or !Uri-mã-//ʔēis, are mentioned as early as 1762 by Roos and Marais who encountered the Korikambes at the Vaal-Orange confluence (Engelbrecht 1936). Later, after defeating the Rolong and the Thlaping and killing their chief, Tau, the Taaibosh occupied Taung, north of the Harts-Vaal confluence. This occurred around 1764, after which they remained raiding in and plundering the region until the early-mid 19th century (Lye 1970; Penn 1995). In 1778 Wikar (Mossop 1935; Engelbrecht 1936) also encountered the Kouringais or Hooge Kraals along the western reaches of the Orange. By the time Gordon (as cited in Penn 1995) first heard of the Kei!orana or Kei Korana in 1779, they were associated with the Toupkwa or Hartenaars, and both groups were reported to have lived in the vicinity of the Harts-Vaal confluence (Penn 1995). This later move downstream, according to an observation by Smith in 1834 (Lye 1975) took place around 1786 and just before the arrival of the Springbokke under Jan Bloem in 1790. By this time, the emic !Kora designations for the inhabitants of the Harts-Vaal-Orange region, namely Kei!orana, Kouringais, Toupkwa, and !Uri-mã-//ʔēis had been replaced by the Dutch-derived terms Hartenaar and Hoogstaander (Engelbrecht 1936), effectively rendering the precise determination of the names of the !Kora groups in this region near impossible. There is little doubt that the Harts !Kora, formerly known as the !Uri-mã-//ʔēis, are in fact the decedents of the original Khoekhoe pastoralist migrants of the region. This conclusion, in addition to having been arrived at by Engelbrecht, is also reinforced by linguistic data (Gruber 1975; Ehret 1982).

According to early accounts the Griqua, as they were known in the interior, originated in the Cape as a result of the union of European colonials and Khoekhoe and San women (Lye 1970; Barnard 1992). The name Griqua is said to derive from that of a Khoekhoe group, the Chariguriqua or Grigriqua who, in 1713, inhabited the region north of Cape Town. The founding father of the Griqua, Adam Kok I, left his farm in the Piketberg area in 1771 and relocated to the Orange River (Penn 1995). From the early stages of the colonial presence at the Cape many Griqua groups had migrated either to the open expanses of the eastern frontier, now known as Griqualand East, or towards the north along the Orange River frontier, known today as Griqualand West (Penn 1995). The Griqua and Korana were however not alone in their quest for sovereignty, and colonial explorers, hunters, and farmers also embarked on northward migrations.

The process of frontier-expansion did not occur as a distinct, controlled and structured event. The earliest Europeans reached the Orange river as early as the 1730s (Penn 1995), and even prior to these instances of direct contact the presence of colonial explorers further south, such as the expeditions led by Van Der Stel in 1685 (Wilson & Thompson 1982) must have caused at least some degree of unease amongst indigenous groups to the north. It was only from the 1770s that extensive colonial expansion invaded the arid regions inhabited by indigenous Khoe and San (Szalay 1995).

By the 1790s the Orange River region had been transformed into a zone in which Khoe pastoralists, San hunter-gatherers, renegade colonial hunters and traders, runaway slaves, and militarised Korana and Griqua groups roamed free and without any intervention and control from the Cape colonial government (Penn 1995; Szalay 1995). The absence of colonial influence and constabulary created an environment in which lawlessness, clandestine conduct, and the raiding for and trading in slaves prospered (Eldredge 1994).

Meanwhile, on the eastern colonial “frontier”, many Xhosa-speakers also acquired horses and firearms, and consequently raiding and pillaging became a widespread phenomena on both the northern and eastern frontiers. By 1795 scores of Xhosa speakers had begun to move north towards the Orange (Etherington 2001:55), and in 1803 Lichtenstein met a certain Xhosa-speaking renegade leader named Dantser along the river. Dantser and his followers had left the Eastern Cape in 1794 and made a living by hunting, herding stock, and raiding. Their existence was characterised by perpetual conflicts with San and Korana (Lye 1975; Penn 1995; Etherington 2001), and Dantser’s recollection of “the murderous deeds which he had committed” horrified Lichtenstein. By 1805 there may have been as many as five hundred Xhosa-speaking raiders and refugees along the southern Orange River (Etherington 2001:56), many of which attached themselves to Korana and Griqua raiding parties. That the Orange River did not present an impenetrable periphery for expansion is also substantiated by linguistic data collected by Lichtenstein (1967:356, as cited in Güldemann 2006b:33), who, around 1805, reports an encounter in the Karoo south of the Middle Orange with a group of San men who stated that they came from north of the river and had crossed it on a hunting expedition. This suggests that there was a reasonable amount of mobility of San and other peoples across the Orange, perhaps because of the increasing pressures exerted by the presence of Korana, Griqua, Sotho-Tswana, and also colonial farmers and traders in the region (Humphreys 1976).

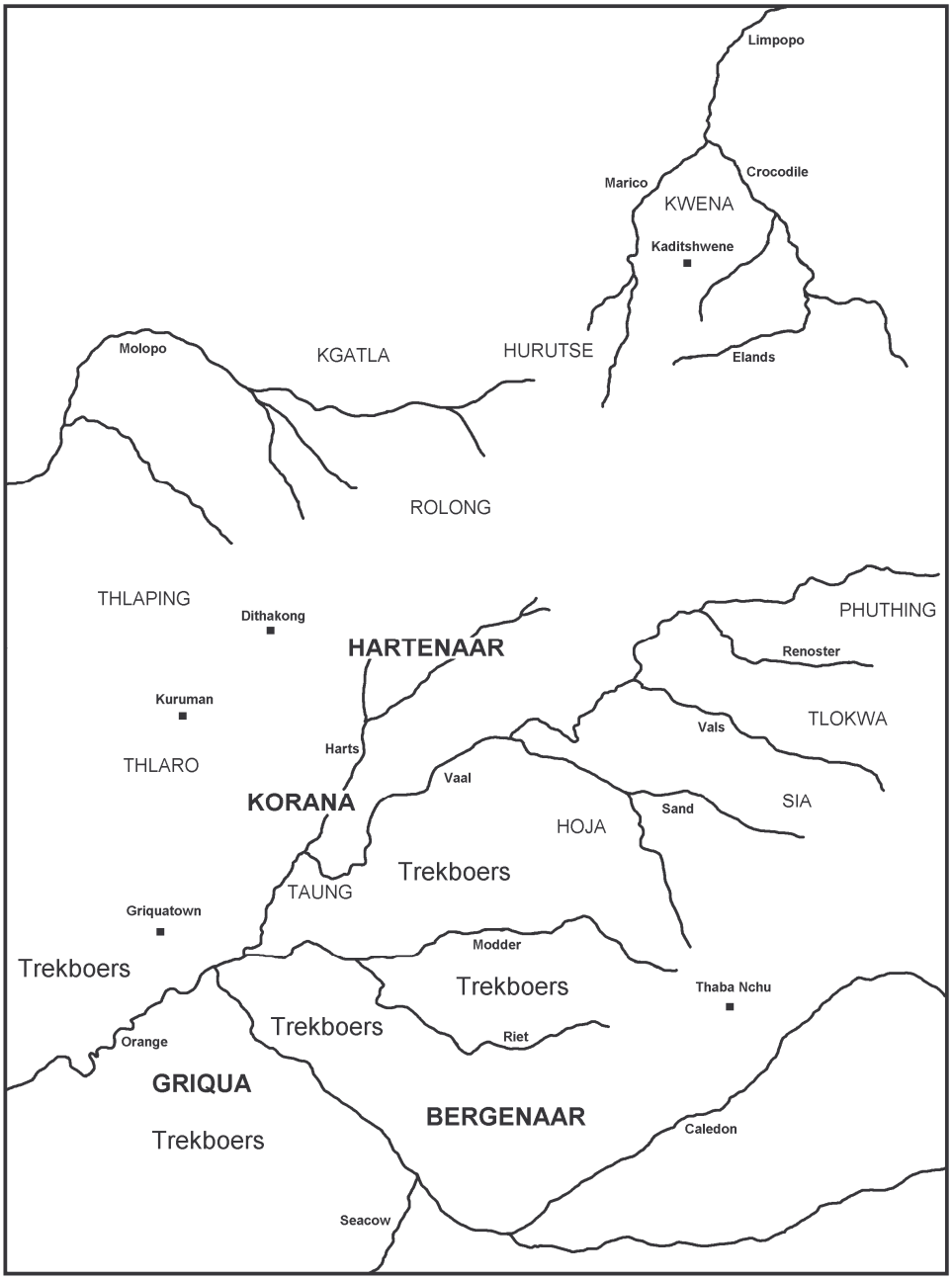


FIG.2.4. Map of the Central Interior and Harts-River region indicating the presence and distribution of the most dominant historically-known politically-organised and militarised groups after AD 1830 (adapted from Lye 1970, 1975; Wilson & Thompson 1982; Etherington 2001; Güldemann 2003).

The presence of Xhosa-speakers in the interior exposes a fundamental link between the violence which so characterised the Xhosa western and the Sotho-Tswana southern frontiers - the meeting of Xhosa, Korana, and Sotho-Tswana and the fusion of

individuals from diverse socio-cultural and ethnic backgrounds into coherent raiding parties marks the convergence of the two South African frontiers (Etherington 2001). In 1814 Coenraad de Buys, a renegade trekboer, managed to convince a large number of Griqua that they would ultimately be betrayed by the newly-arrived missionaries at Griqua Town. Many Griqua, in addition alarmed by the attempts of British authorities to conscript them into military service, followed de Buys to the Harts River where they organised marauding raids against San, Korana and Tswana (Lye 1970; Morton 1994; Etherington 2001). Although the Hartenaars under de Buys were finally subdued by a combined Griqua-Boer commando in 1818, they continued their raids from the vicinity of Griqua Town. Dantser subsequently retreated back to the Caledon River where he remained until his death some time after 1852 (Etherington 2001). By 1824 another renegade Griqua offshoot, the Bergenaars, made their appearance in the region (Lye 1970; Eldredge 1994). After internal division, resulting from whether or not to cooperate with British authorities and whether Andries Waterboer was an appropriate choice for the Griqua command, the Bergenaars moved to the mountainous terrain south of the Harts River. Here they attracted a following of former Hartenaars and numerous San and Korana, and this renegade group raided for cattle, wives, and also slaves and children to be sold as apprentices to trekboers. In 1824, John Melvill (as cited in Eldredge 1994:107) characterised the Bergenaars as a "lawless horde" who used their rifles against fellow Africans who had none and who committed "dreadful depredations" by "murdering hundreds" and "reducing thousands to misery and want". In addition to the general disorder caused by Bergenaar raids, the Sotho groups fleeing the brutality of advancing Zulu forces in the south provided the Bergenaar marauders with a new and easy target on which to focus their attacks. With the advent of these events, the devastating socio-political upheavals caused by the so-called *mfecane* / *difaqane* population movements had arrived in the interior.

Three great treks

The period from 1815 to 1854 is of fundamental importance to the history of South Africa (Etherington 2001:1). In terms of intensity of impact and influence, the two events generally believed to have had the most devastating effect on the San hunter-gatherers, Khoekhoe pastoralists, and also Tswana agro-pastoralists is that of the *difaqane* and *mfecane* population movements which occurred from 1822 onwards, and the so-called Great Trek which commenced in 1836 (see Wilson & Thompson 1982; Templin 1984; Comaroff 1985; Penn 1995; Etherington 2001 for discussions). In addition to these two mass-population movements into the interior, the Rolong, in 1823 and due to increasing pressures from communities fleeing the brutality of advancing

Zulu forces, also embarked on a wholesale relocation of the entire community (*ibid.*: 203; see also Lye 1970:49; Wilson & Thompson 1982:393). To be brief, attacks by Shaka on Matiwane set off a chain-reaction of attacks and counter attacks from Matiwane, who in turn attacked Mpangazitha, who attacked Sekonyela, and who in turn attacked Moshweshwe (Etherington 2001:335). The *mfecane* or "time of troubles" had such a marked impact on the Sotho-Tswana that it was even given a name in Ba-Sotho: the *lifaqane* or "time of uprooting" and "time of migration by whole communities" (*ibid.*). There was hardly a community who was left untouched by these events (see Lye 1970, 1975; Wilson & Thompson 1982; Penn 1986, 1995; Eldredge 1994; Szalay 1995; Etherington 2001 for comprehensive discussions). The disintegration of San society is also evident in linguistic terms. In addition to pointing out that "The death of /Xam was the linguistic response of its speakers to the wholesale destruction of their societies and the subsequent loss of a /Xam identity." Traill (1996:182) furthermore notes that, with regards the last speaker of //Xegwi, "… it seems that language, in having ceased to be a vital means of communication, must have assumed a powerful symbolic value which maintained the speaker's identity in defiance of the forces that had consumed all the other !Kwi languages of South Africa." (Traill 2002:44). Intermarriage between San and Korana had taken place well before 1870s (Deacon 1986:149) and may have added to the deterioration of San-specific cultural and linguistic traits in the region. This may also have corresponded with the arrival of European settlers in the region in which the /Xam San lived around the early 1850s, and may have prompted foragers to expand their social networks to include other peoples who also began to struggle for survival. The loss of language also coincides with the closing stages of the San engraving tradition in South Africa. For example, Diä!kwain had told Lucy Lloyd that his father, Xa≠tin, had made "chippings of gemsbok, quagga and ostriches" at a place called "/kann where these animals had formerly come to drink" (Deacon 1986:147). This may have occurred as early, or rather as recently as the 1830s and places the practice of engraving well within the historical period during which Europeans had already advanced across the Orange River and settled most of the Cape Province. The primary objective of the preceding discussion was to illuminate the agents of change in the central interior over the past two millennia, and to expose the effects that such an internal and hybridising frontier may have had on the lives and identities of San foragers, and also on pastoralists, farmers and colonial trekboers. These changes undoubtedly impacted on the perceptions of self and of identity and affiliation to particular ethnic groups, and the ways in which ethnicity was conceived, communicated, and transformed will be attended to in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER THREE

Artistic Endeavour and Cultural Identity

The identification of past peoples, variously referred to as “cultures”, “tribes”, “nations”, and “ethnic groups”, has played a central role in the production of archaeological knowledge throughout the history of the discipline (Jones 1997; Meskell 2001; Ehret 2002). Recent theories of identity and social interface (Eriksen 1991; Barnard 1997; Jones 1997; Guenther 1999; Meskell 2001; Harrison 2002; Kent 2002a) emphasise the fluid and situational nature of ethnicity and the diverse and heterogeneous ways in which material culture is used in the expression of identity. As argued by Jones (1997), our employment of existing archaeological categories as primary units of analysis, such as “cultures”, “types”, and “ethnic identity” requires reassessment (Geertz 1993; Widlok 1997), and instead we need to focus on a contextual approach (Jones 1997: 125; Kent 2002a:15) to social interaction and social practice. Such an advance requires a fundamental shift in approaches to archaeological evidence (Humphreys 2005), and not merely new interpretations of the distribution of particular cultural types and styles. The first step in constructing such a context involves the reconstruction of the past demographic character of the central interior region of South Africa. It has been established that the region hosted various cultural-economic groups and an array of what may be termed identity-conscious social groups, and that much of the cultural variability can be ascribed to the frontier-like environment (Sampson 1986; Kopytoff 1989; Eaton 1993, 2005; Lightfoot & Martinez 1995; Elton 1996; Parker 2002) which characterised the region over the past two millennia. With the demographic background securely established in Chapter Two, this chapter explores the dimensions of ethnicity and identity and the ways in which conceptions of identity amongst San hunter-gatherers were constructed and how these may have been expressed in social, economic, territorial, or linguistic terms.

The enquiry into the association between rock art and identity is essentially a question of authorship, or determining which socio-economic group manufactured which stylistic or thematic set of engraved art. According to Morphy (2004:443), and in relation to hunter-gatherer (rock) art, there is “inevitably some correlation between economic and social factors, ecology and technology, the complexity of material culture, and the nature of art”.

Unravelling the mystery of ethnicity

Phinney (1990:500) has noted that there are "widely discrepant definitions and measures of ethnic identity, which makes generalisations and comparisons across studies difficult and ambiguous". Although this extensive array of potential interpretations and application of the notion of "ethnicity" is viewed as simultaneously limiting and beneficial (Gosden 1999:190; Haarmann 1999:60), it is necessary to acknowledge the range of research that has informed the view of identity and ethnicity as advocated in this thesis. Such work includes social identity theory (*e.g.* Tajfel & Turner 1979; Meyerhoff & Niedzielski 1994; Meyerhoff 1996; Bucholtz & Hall 2005) and speech accommodation theory (Giles *et al.* 1991) in social psychology, theories of language ideology (Silverstein 1979; Irvine & Gal 2000) and indexicality (Silverstein 1976, 1985; Ochs 1993) in linguistic anthropology, theories of style (Eckert & Rickford 2001; Mendoza-Denton 2002) and models of identity (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller 1985; Abizadeh 2001) in sociolinguistics, and psychological studies of language (Liebkind 1999; Padilla 1999).

In order to grasp the concept of "ethnic identity" it is essential to comprehend how identity develops through people's categorisation of their own and of other social groups. Social identity theory (after Sumner 1906; see also Tajfel 1974, 1978, 1984; Tullberg & Tullberg 1997; MacDonald 1998a, b, 2001; van der Dennen 1999; Bucholtz & Hall 2005) offers a great deal of insight into the evolution and structure of sociality in human groups. An early form of social identity theory was formulated by Sumner (1906:13), who concluded that loyalty to the group, sacrifice for it, hatred and contempt for outsiders are all common products of the same situation: all this is sanctified by a connection with religion. The classic study by Sherif *et al.* (1961) found that when randomly selected groups of boys engaged in between-group competition, group membership became an important aspect of personal identity despite the lack of systematic genetic or phenotypic differences between the individuals or the groups. Individuals developed negative stereotypes of each other and were transformed into groups of "wicked, disturbed, and vicious children" (Sherif 1966:85). Fear and dislike of strangers are easily developed, and group differences, especially when marked by obvious physical differences such as skin colour or language, are swiftly registered in consciousness. Levine and Campbell (1972) evaluated theories and anthropological evidence related to the "ethnocentric syndrome" of positive perceptions and behaviour toward "in-groups" (us) and negative perceptions and behaviour toward "out-groups" (them). Social identity research shows that people are highly prone to identifying

themselves with groups and that there is a tendency to conceptualise both in-groups and especially out-groups as more homogeneous than they really are. The stereotypic behaviour and attitudes of the in-group are positively valued, while out-group behaviour and attitudes are negatively valued (Tajfel 1974; Hogg & Abrams 1988; Abrams & Hogg 1990; Brewer & Brown 1998; Fiske 1998). While negative attitudes and behaviour toward out-group members are subdued by normative prohibitions against harming out-group members (Hewstone *et al.* 2002), such norms are not in place in many societies, so that "in one country after another, other ethnic groups are described in unflattering or disparaging terms" (Horowitz 1985:7).

The empirical results of social identity research imply that social identity processes are a psychological adaptation designed for inter-group interaction. Current evidence indicates that the minimal group findings can be generalised across subjects of different ages, nationalities, social classes, and a wide range of dependent variables. Anthropological evidence also illustrates the universality of the inclination to view one's own group as superior (Vine 1987). The tendency for bias in favour of in-groups arises automatically and implicitly, even in minimal group experiments (Otten & Wentura 1999). Social identity processes occur very early in life, prior to explicit knowledge about the out-group, and they also occur among some animal species. Russell (1993:111) notes that "chimpanzees, like humans, divide the world into us versus them", and van der Dennen (1991:237) proposes, on the basis of his review of the literature on human and animal conflict, that advanced species have "extra strong group delimitations" based on emotional mechanisms. The data derived from social identity theory indicate that perceptions of in-groups and out-groups have been the focus of natural selection (MacDonald 2001). Mutual ethnocentrism is therefore a widespread and conceivably also an ancient way of maintaining cultural autonomy and affirming group identity (Kent 2002b:57).

Ethnicity, identity, and ethnic identity

In searching for a fitting definition of identity, or "social identity" as it concerns us here, we may follow Tajfel (1978:63), who describes social identity as "… that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his [or her] knowledge of his [or her] membership in a social group [or groups], together with the values and emotional significance attached to that membership." Ethnicity is thus understood to involve the conscious identification of group membership based upon perceived common origins and relationships with other people. More specifically, ethnicity may be defined as (Jones 1997:xiii):

> All those social and psychological phenomena associated with a culturally constructed group identity … The concept of ethnicity focuses on the ways in which social and cultural processes intersect with one another in the identification of, and interaction between, ethnic groups.

As a process, ethnicity involves a consciousness of difference which involves the production and transformation of basic classificatory distinctions between groups of people who perceive themselves to be, in some respect, culturally distinct (Eriksen 1992:3). Ethnicity serves an important role in organising individuals into cooperative groups for inter-group social interactions and competition, and, as a result, the ethnic cultural structure that develops between groups of people has an enormous impact on human behaviour. An ethnic group is therefore defined as “any group of people who set themselves apart and/or are set apart by others with whom they interact or co-exist on the basis of their perceptions of cultural differentiation and/or common descent” (Jones 1997:xiii).

There are two primary interpretive approaches to ethnicity (see De Vos & Romanucci-Ross 1982; Eriksen 1991; Banks 1996; Barnard 1997; Jones 1997 for comprehensive discussions on ethnicity and ethnic identity). The first accounts for the bonding power that shared historical relations have in defining a group of people. Shils (1957:122) and Geertz (1963) argue an ineffable significance exists between people that are not just the result of social interaction. Jones (1997:65) describes this aspect of ethnicity as “bonds between individuals result from the givens of birth - blood, language, religion, territory, and culture - which can be distinguished from other social ties on the basis of the ineffable and unaccountable importance of the tie itself”. This primordial bond assumes that cultural traits acquired early in life are fixed and immutable (*ibid.*:69), and that, externally, prior cultural knowledge has an enormous impact on how individuals are acculturated into society (Bourdieu 1977:72; see also Boyd & Richardson 1985). However, the primordial bond alone does not take into account how ethnicity develops and is maintained through the interaction with other groups of people. The second component of ethnicity focuses on the interactions between social groups. Barth (1969:14) observed that overt signals such as dress, language, and customs are commonly discernible as markers of ethnic affiliation. Further, individuals could marry across ethnic boundaries, and were able to take up the others’ ethnic group symbolism. This allowed for ethnic borders to persist through time even though individuals within the groups would not. From these observations Barth concluded that ethnicity was more situational in nature instead of being fixed, and that ethnicity is also self-ascribed

by individuals rather than being determined solely by historical processes. From this instrumentalist perspective it becomes clear that ethnicity does not develop in a vacuum, but that it is always defined in relation to other peoples (Cohen 1974; Hammond-Tooke 2000). Instrumentalists examine how ethnic groups are formed and maintained when political, social, economic, and historical situations create competition and conflict (De Vos & Romanucci-Ross 1982:4). When resources are scarce, ethnic affiliation will become more important, resulting in marked symbols to facilitate group identification for access to shared resources and to exclude outsiders (Weber 1968). In such situations individuals can decide to either emphasise or conceal their ethnicity according to the advantages or disadvantages of belonging to a particular group (Cohen 1978). Therefore, historically developed identities based upon blood, language, religion, and so forth become marked in relation to other groups during periods of either positive social interface or during times of competition and conflict. Identity is not defined in isolation, but is created and maintained in relation to interaction with other people. For hunter-gatherers, the development of ethnicity may, although perhaps not implicitly, be correlated with the development of concepts about territoriality so as to simultaneously secure and alleviate conflict and competition over resources. This interplay between ecology and ethnicity, as manifest in territorial behaviour, will be discussed shortly.

The theoretical construct “ethnic identity” can best be understood through an examination of its etymological origins. The term ethnic has Latin and Greek origins, *ethnicus* and *ethnikas*, both meaning “nation”. *Ethos*, in Greek, stands for custom, disposition, or trait. *Ethnikas* and *ethos* taken together therefore designate a band of people living together and who share and acknowledge common customs (Fishman 1999:446). The second part of the construct, namely “identity”, has Latin origins and is derived from *identitas*: the word is formed from *idem* meaning “same”. Thus, the term is used to express the notion of sameness, likeness, and oneness. More precisely, identity implies “the sameness of a person or thing at all times in all circumstances: the condition or fact that a person or thing is itself and not something else” (Simpson & Weiner 1989:620).

There are countless definitions of ethnic identity as proposed in the literature (see Chandra 2005), and De la Gorgendiére (1996:1) refers to the “conundrum” anthropologists are faced with when attempting to define what ethnicity really entail, citing the complexity of human existence and behaviour as the prime cause of the impossibility of defining ethnicity as a single observable and explicable “thing”.

According to Weber (as cited in Hutchinson & Smith 1996:35), “ethnic groups are those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonisation or migration.” Horowitz (1985:52) defines ethnicity as “based on a myth of collective ancestry, which usually carries with it traits believed to be innate. Some notion of ascription, however diluted, and affinity deriving from it are inseparable from the concept of ethnicity.” Fearon and Laitin (2000b:20) perceive an ethnic group as “a group larger than a family for which membership is reckoned primarily by descent, is conceptually autonomous, and has a conventionally recognised natural history as a group.” In a subsequent refinement, Fearon (2003:7) defines a “prototypical” ethnic group as one that exhibits as many of the following features as possible: membership is reckoned primarily by descent, members are conscious of group membership, members share distinguishing cultural features, and these cultural features are valued by a majority of members, the group has or remembers a homeland, and the group has a shared history as a group that is “not wholly manufactured but has some basis in fact.” Finally, Smith (Hutchinson & Smith 1996:6) defines an ethnic group as “a named human population with myths of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more elements of a common culture, a link with a homeland and a sense of solidarity.” What is of significance here is that virtually all definitions agree that descent is important in defining an ethnic group. The apparent disparities in distinction are concerned with how exactly to specify the role of descent, and whether and how other features should be combined with it in defining ethnic groups (Chandra 2005:7). The nature of social networks, systems of descent, and the configuration of kinship structures in hunter-gatherer society will be explored shortly.

The correlation between ethnicity and identity is further clarified by Haarmann (1999: 61), according to whom ethnicity, in terms of the construction of human social identity, is to be regarded as the most elementary dimension of identity (Chandra 2005:4). Likewise, Liebkind (1999:140) describes ethnic identity as the ethnic component of social identity, which in turn, is that part of an individual’s self-conception which derives from his or her membership in social groups. These views are summarised by Jones (1997:xiii) who characterises ethnic identity as “that aspect of a person’s self-conceptualisation which results from identification with a broader group in opposition to others on a basis of perceived cultural differentiation and/or common descent.”

At variance with Barth (1969), who argues that ethnic boundaries are, although not impermeable, still enduring and stable, Cohen (1978:387) notes that ethnic boundaries are "multiple and include overlapping sets of ascriptive loyalties that make for multiple identities." Evidently, "ethnic groups are not neatly packaged territorially bounded culture-bearing units in the present, nor are they likely to have been in the past" (Jones 1997:104), and there are no "essential characteristics common to all groups" (De Vos 1982:9). In recognition of the complications involved in any study of "ethnicity", this thesis adopts a constructivist approach to the term (see Sokolovskii & Tishkov 1991; Barnard 1997; Annan 2003), emphasising "the existence of diverse preferences within ethnic groups, and the fluidity of boundaries of such groups" (Chandra 2001). It does not view ethnicity as primordial, which assumes it is static, homogeneous, and built upon cultural, religious, and territorial roots. Instead, ethnicity is considered as a public good, or an alterable resource which can be manipulated. This does not imply that it is not created out of nothing. A person's ethnicity is ascribed in the sense that one cannot choose the group into which one is born, but it is achieved to the extent that the meaning it acquires for one's total identity can also be a matter of choice (Fishman 1999). Yet, while ethnicity is fluid and has flexible boundaries, people's understanding and identification with their ethnicity plays a significant role in many intergroup conflicts. As stated by Wilmsen (1994:350), "The broader lesson is that ethnic authenticity, what it means to be a *real* Nama or any ethnic '*x*', has to be seen in relation to time, place, and audience." (see also Moerman 1965; Cohen 1978).

Ethnicity and archaeology

Although the term "ethnicity" appears in modern anthropology as early as 1942, the archaeological enquiry into ethnicity and ethnic identity is a relatively recent phenomenon (Bekker 1993; Banks 1996; Jones 1997; Gosden 1999; Meskell 2001; Wilmsen 2005). The current focus on ethnic inquiry relates to the existing "ethnic revival" as manifest since the early 1990s (Haarmann 1999; Meskell 2002). While some authors (*e.g.* Haarmann 1999:66) perceive a possible measure of "neutrality" in terms of investigating ethnicity in academic studies, others (*e.g.* Meskell 2002:280; Berzborn 2003:326; Wilmsen 2005:9; Smith 2006:78) draw attention to the fact that archaeologists are ever cautious in ascribing certain material cultural identities to particular ethnic entities. In southern Africa, studies of ethnicity and identity face the problem of being seized and exploited as part of politically motivated episodes of ethnic mobilisation. To some, this is perceived as posing a major threat in terms of destabilising the already fragile socio-political unification of a country which has experienced more than three hundred years of fierce racial discrimination, and nearly

forty years of institutionalised racially-based segregation. There is no doubt that any enquiry into ethnicity, and particularly so in South Africa, is faced with numerous threats and pitfalls. There is, however, a need to address the “poverty of identity” (Smith 2006:77) created by former political regimes, and this is precisely where archaeological enquiry has found a niche in which to address, in both pre-historic and historical terms, the tremendous diversity in peoples and cultures of this fledgling rainbow nation.

Given that this study is concerned primarily with the ethnic affiliations of pre-historic and historic engraved rock art, I commence with the original inhabitants of the region, the San hunter-gatherers. In following Barnard (1992:238; see also Wilmsen 1989) three distinct aspects of the representation of San identity may be distinguished: San are represented either as an underclass, or in terms of emic self-designations, or as a cultural category defined by analysts according to scientific criteria. Whereas the first category is concerned primarily with San status in modern society, the second and third are of greater relevance to this enquiry: a combination of emic self-designations (as derived from ethnographic and historical sources) and, even though artificial, etic anthropological and linguistic categories will therefore provide the foundation according to which San identity-consciousness is explored (see Barnard 1997; Jolly 1996c; Barnard & Taylor 2002; Kent 2002 a, b; Crawhall 2005 for general discussions on emic and etic categories of classification).

It is important to remember that ethnicity reveals itself differently and to different degrees in various historical situations and socio-cultural environments, that it makes sense only when opposed to or confronted by other ethnicities, and that it may share some of its characteristics with other socio-cultural groups that are simultaneously functioning in a given society and may even coincide with them formally (Khazanov 1983:406). This obviously influences the degree to which material culture may be used to discern ethnicity and detect ethnic groups in the archaeological record. Accordingly, Jones (1997:100) notes that “… there is rarely a one-to-one relationship between representations of ethnicity and the entire range of cultural practices and conditions associated with a particular group.” Meskell (2001:190) also draws attention to the fact that “… ethnicity is not always synonymous with a single language, race, location, or material culture.” (see Eidheim 1969:39; Hodder 1982:186; Denbow 1984:179; Hammond-Tooke 2000:421; Pluciennik 2002:226 for analogous views). Although these conclusions illuminate doubts concerned with the recognition of ethnic groups in archaeological contexts, ethnicity is just as likely to have been embedded in intra-

personal socio-cultural and political relations and negotiations in the past as in the present, and that it need not necessarily be confined to the contexts of complex social hierarchies, European colonialism, or capitalist expansion (De Vos 1982; Ranger 1983; Kopytoff 1987; Jones 1997; Brooks 2002).

Ethnognomonic traits and ethnic affirmation

De Vos (1982) and Schwartz (1982) recognise several aspects of ethnic focus or differentiation which may be termed "ethno-gnomonic" traits, that is "cultural traits characteristic of one group in contrast to others, at once emblematic of the group's solidarity and of the contrasting identity and relation to the groups within its ambit of comparison." (Schwartz 1982:108). Cultural features that may be imbued with ethnognomonic qualities typically include language, geographic location, social organisation, subsistence economy, artistic creation, and religion, all of which are integrated to constitute the fundamental basis of identity and ethnic allegiance as discussed above (see Jones 1997; Padilla 1999; Meskell 2002; Crawhall 2005 for discussions on the multiple strands involved in the construction of identity).

In terms of the observable socio-cultural and economic diversity in San society, Kent (1992:52) argues that "it is just as much of an over-generalisation to claim that all San groups are different as it is to claim that they are all the same." Diversity, according to Kent (*ibid.*), should not surprise anthropologists since one of the few existing pan-San characteristics is a general degree of socio-cultural flexibility (see Vierich 1982 on variable subsistence strategies; Wiessner 1983 on differences in material culture; Deacon 1986 on /Xam San cultural and linguistic diversity; Guenther 1986 for a general discussion on San socio-cultural flexibility; Barnard 1988a on kinship diversity; Kent & Vierich 1989 on variability in mobility and spatial patterning). However, and before I continue to explore the diverse range of San social, economic, linguistic, and cultural-artistic features, it is important to note the many corresponding similarities which exist within San society. Significant parallels include an emphasis on social, political, and gender equality (Guenther 1999), click languages that are reasonably closely related (Barnard 1988a), a universal kin categorisation and a clear distinction between joking and avoidance partners (Barnard 1978, 1987; Wiessner 1983), a strong emphasis on reciprocity and sharing (Kent 1992, 1995), and a somewhat standardised religious cosmology (as discussed by Guenther 1999). These seemingly obvious similarities have unfortunately overshadowed the differences, so that researchers frequently generalise "uncritically" from one particular group of San at one particular point in time to all others (Kent 1992:52). This is echoed in those admonitory statements by

Parkington (1984), Humphreys (2005), and Mitchell (2005) with reference to the "holy trinity" (*ibid.*:67) of ethnographies, those of the Ju/'hoansi (!Kung), G/wi and /Xam San groups. They view the emphasis on a very small fraction of insight within the total sample of San cultural variability as problematic. The issue of variability and uniformity also pertains to rock art and is further attended to in Chapter Four.

I will now examine four principal ethno-gnomonic categories (De Vos 1982:10; Schwartz 1982:108) which could, to varying degrees, have been employed by San hunter-gatherer groups to differentiate themselves from "others". As stated above, these include language, geographic location, social organisation, and economy. A fifth potential ethno-gnomonic trait, namely artistic expression, is introduced at the conclusion of this chapter and further explored in Chapters Four and Five.

Language and ethnicity

Several authors have noted the close association between language and culture (Barth 1969; Ambrose 1982; Dolukhanov 1994; Osborn 1994; MacEachern 2001; Terrell 2001) and also between language and ethnicity (Eidheim 1969; Haaland 1969; Haarmann 1986; Linn 1998; Liebkind 1999; Irvine & Gal 2000; Traill 2002; Berzborn 2003; Eisenlohr 2004; Alexander 2005; Crawhall 2005; Slabbert & Finlayson 2005). For example, Fishman (1999:22) argues that language "plays a central part in most definitions of ethnicity, mediating common cultural elements, claims of common origin", and refers to language as "one of the central elements in any human society." As stated by Haarmann (1999:64), "Language is a major marker of ethnicity for many local groups around the world, and there have been historical periods when language was assigned an ideological role as the marker par excellence of ethnic identity." Simply put, language is consistently taken as an indicator of ethnic identity and a common culture, and dialectical differences frequently distinguish one group from another (Ambrose 1982:107; Osborn 1994:144; Widlok 1996:154; Terrell 2001:1).

An analysis of linguistic data and the reconstruction of the distribution and pre-historical presence of linguistic entities in southern Africa suggest that historically-known hunter-gatherers and pastoralists all spoke similar dialects derived from the Khoisan or Khoe-San language group (Westphal 1963; Klein 1986). However, and as pointed out by Inskeep (1978) and Deacon (1984), the relevance and applicability of linguistic reconstructions may be problematic as numerous linguistic entities in fact disappeared before they were adequately documented. This obviously raises the question of how to attend to the problems associated with the lack of certainty over the temporal depth

and former spatial distribution of prehistoric socio-linguistic groups (Ambrose 1982; Eggert 2005; Slabbert & Finlayson 2005). As a result, the linguistic evidence for the distribution of linguistic and presumably also the ethnic entities with which linguistic group frequently correlate, appears as potentially inadequate and only marginally accurate (Schrire 1980). Nevertheless, there is in most instances a close correlation between language, material culture, and the boundaries within which these are confined (Ambrose 1982:107). Blench (2006:14, 33) also points out that historical linguistics can provide insights into the proto-historic distribution of and relationships between certain languages and the speakers of such languages. In view of the above, Barnard (1992:17) notes that "the only useful definition of Khoisan ethnic divisions are those which are designed for a specific purpose or which employ a single or coherent set of criteria." Accordingly, and whilst aware that the diversity of cultures and languages are not amenable to simplistic explanations, the reconstructed distribution of linguistic entities will be used here to ascertain the degree of pre- and proto-historic linguistic variability in the region (Barnard & Taylor 2002:231).

The study of Khoe and San languages has developed significantly since the first Europeans encountered their speakers nearly five hundred years ago. Early explorers held that the indigenous peoples of the sub-continent lacked true linguistic ability and frequently described their languages as animal sounds rather than human speech. In addition to those comments by Arbousset and Dumas (1968:242), who referred to the language of the Khuai of the southern interior as analogous to the "clucking of turkeys", similar statements abound in the early literature. Commenting on the click-sounds so characteristic of Khoe-San languages, Mueller, in 1855, (as cited in Irvine & Gal 2000: 40) expressed his optimism that, perhaps, "… by the influence of Missionaries, these brutal sounds will be in time abolished … though it may be impossible to eradicate them in the degraded Hottentot dialects" (see also Nienaber 1963; Chidester 1996a, b; Brink 2004 for further discussions on the views of early explorers).

Khoe-San languages

This language group comprise three primary language families, namely Ju (Northern Khoe-San), Khoe or Khoe-Kwadi (Central Khoe-San), and !Kwi, Tuu, or !Ui-Taa (Southern Khoe-San) (Traill 2002; Güldemann 2004; Crawhall 2006a). It is also the smallest phylum of African languages and today is spoken only in the arid regions of south-western Africa and in a limited area in Tanzania (Ambrose 1982; Ehret 1982).

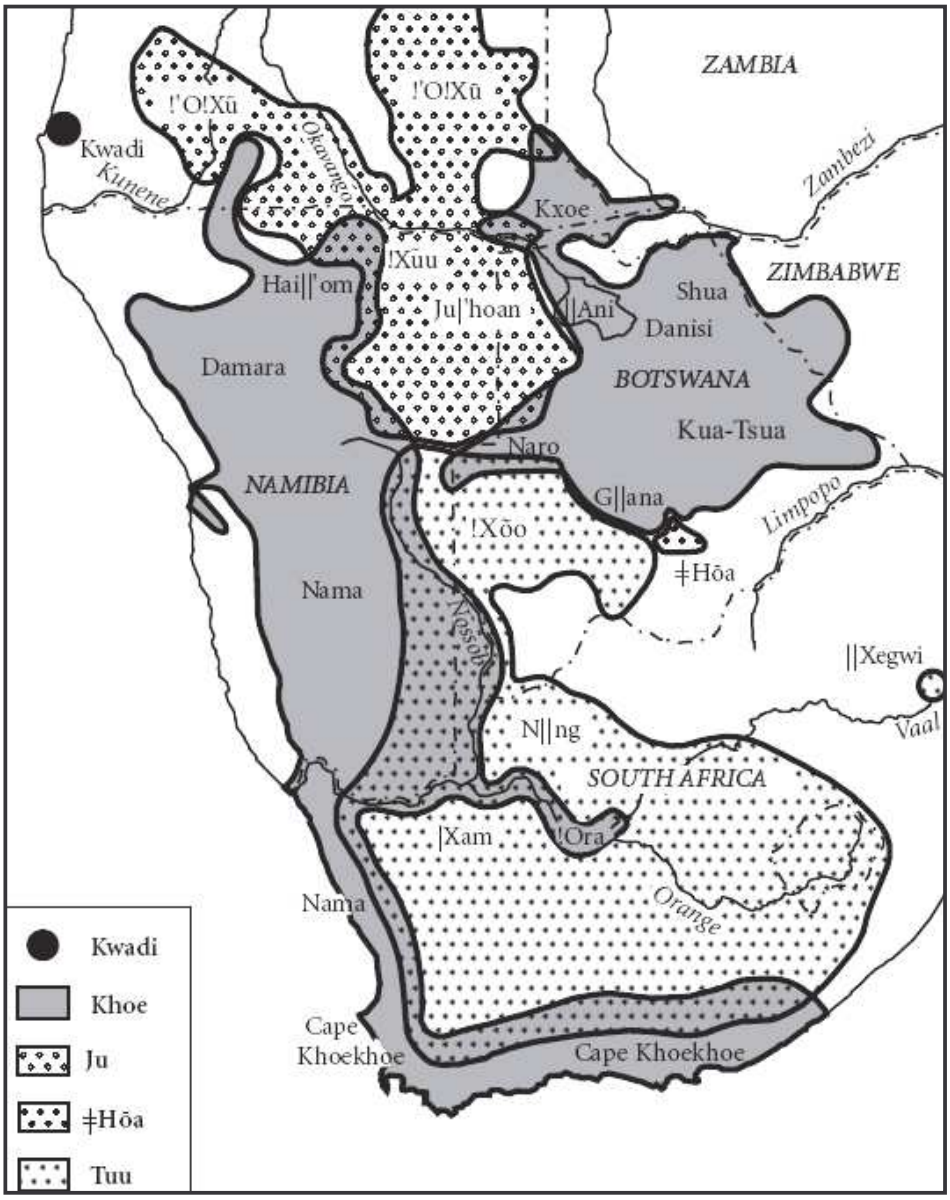


FIG.3.1. Map indicating the reconstructed distribution of and known relationships between Northern (Ju), Central (Khoe-Kwadi) and Southern (Tuu) Khoe-San linguistic groups in southern Africa (from Güldemann 2004).

Khoe-San languages are renowned for the use of click consonants as phonemes, and although clicks are widely used in human communication, their use is mostly restricted to interjections in which they are not combined with other speech sounds: only in southern and eastern Africa is clicks are used in phonemic function (Traunmüller 2003:1). Though all the languages of the Khoe pastoralists and San foragers of southern Africa employ click sounds, the precise nature of the relationships between linguistic groups is still somewhat uncertain (Traill 2002; Güldemann 2005; Blench 2006; Crawhall 2006a). For example, Northern Khoe-San, which includes Ju/'hoansi, is

only distantly related to Central Khoe-San, which includes Nama and !Ora, and there are two southern groups, !Xõo (Traill 1985) and ≠Hõa (Barnard 1992; Güldemann 2005; Crawhall 2006a) that have not been convincingly shown to be related to any of the other language groups. Sandawe and Hadza are click-languages spoken by a small number of people in separate regions of central Tanzania (Ambrose 1982). Hadza has not been convincingly shown to be related to Sandawe or any other language (Sands 1998), but there does appear to exist a similar set of mutual loan-words from neighbouring languages. Similarly, there are also noticeable similarities in grammar and vocabulary between Sandawe and the Central Khoe-San languages, which suggest a prehistoric connection and perhaps even a common origin (Köhler 1973, 1974; Traunmüller 2003; Blench 2006). A striking example is the numeral "four" which is manifest in Nama as *Xiri hàká*, in Nharo as *hàkà*, in Korana as *haka,* and in Sandawe as *haka-x*. It is assumed that this mutually utilised verbal utterance for the numeral "four" is derived from two extinct Southern Cushitic languages, namely Asá and Kw'adza (Rosenfelder 2003; see Haarmann 1986 for the borrowing of numerals; Ehret 1982, 2002 for the incidence of core vocabularies connecting languages; Sands 1998 and Crawhall 2006a, b for problems associated with lexicostatistical reconstructions and glotto-chronological analyses).

Historically, and with particular relevance to this study, it is essential to note that the wider south-western and central region hosted dialect clusters of two very different Khoe-San language families, namely that of Tuu or !Kwi (Southern Khoe-San !Ui, Taa, and Lower Nossob branches) and that of Khoe or Khoe-Kwadi (Central Khoe-San) and its Khoekhoe South and Kalahari East branches (Traill 2002; Crawhall 2005; Güldemann 2006a). In each respective instance, the names of the languages, such as *!Xu*, *Ju*, *Khoe*, *!Ui*, *Taa*, *≠Hoã*, and *N//n!u* may be translated into "a person" or "a human" (see Snyman 1979; Barnard 1992; Traill 2002; Güldemann 2003a; Crawhall 2005, 2006a).

The Tuu (Southern Khoe-San) language family comprise the !Ui and Taa language branches, each of which contains several fairly distinct dialect clusters (Traill 2002; Güldemann 2003, 2006b; Crawhall 2005). Tuu languages are extremely interesting because of their unique consonant and vowel inventories, which are among the largest in the world (Traill 1985; Ladefoged & Traill 1994; Boden *et al.* 2005). For example, there are five different types of cavity in N\u, which correspond to different click types: labial, dental, central alveolar, lateral alveolar, and palatal. N\u joins !Xõo, ≠Hõa, and Khoe (Kalahari West Kxoe) as the only four languages containing these five click types

(Miller *et al.* 2007). The predominant portion of South African San languages fall into the !Ui language branch (Traill 2002:36). Of these, and owing to the work of Wilhelm Bleek and Lucy Lloyd (Bleek & Lloyd 1911; Bleek 1933, 1935, 1936) /Xam is undoubtedly the best-known. /Xam, or */Xám-ka-!ei*, an emic term meaning "bushmen" in a general sense (Bleek & Lloyd 1911:144), included several dialects (Deacon 1986; Barnard 1992; Deacon & Dowson 1996; Traill 2002) and appears to have been the first language in this branch to have become extinct (Traill 2002:36). Deacon (1986:139) refers to the distinction Bleek (Bleek & Lloyd 1911:xi) made between two dialectically distinctive groups, namely the Flat Bushmen from the Strandberg and the Grass Bushmen from the Katkop Mountains. These dialects differed only slightly (Deacon 1986:149; Traill 1996:164, 2002:36), hence the statement by Bleek (1873:2) that "the different Bushmen dialects spoken within this colony vary little from each other … one language … is spoken by all these Bushmen." To the north of the /Xam dialect cluster, in the region of the Langeberg and Korannaberg, another dialect cluster, namely N||ng (Bleek 1927; Wilman 1933; Güldemann 2000a, 2003a) occurred. This cluster, which formerly may have extended as far as the Vaal River in the east and the Gariep in the south (Traill 2002:37), represents a northern limit for the distribution of !Ui languages (Güldemann 2000:9) and contain several dialects generally labelled ≠Khomani, ||N!k'e, N|huki, and possibly also ≠Ungkue (Crawhall 2005). To the south, on the southern banks of the Vaal River, an additional language referred to as Khuai (Arbousset & Daumas 1968:242) or ||Kxau (Butzer *et al.* 1979:1210), possibly with close affiliations to N||ng (Güldemann 1997, 2000; Traill 2002), has also been documented. Further north of the !Ui branch lies the Taa language branch of the Tuu or Southern Khoe-San family (Traill 1974, 1975, 2002; Barnard 1992). For our purposes we need only focus on the !Xõo (!Xoon, !Xõ, or Koon) dialect cluster since the predominance of languages and dialects in the study region have been categorised as belonging to this group.

Anthony Traill's *The Compleat Guide to the Koon* (1974), and the publication *Phonetic Correspondences in the !Xõ Dialects* (1975), in which 24 dialects covering an area in excess of 40 000 km² are examined, provides the seminal resource for this dialect cluster. The earliest reference to any of the !Xõo dialects is found in Dorothea Bleek's (as cited in Traill 1974:9) study of a dialect at Khakhea in southern Botswana in 1913. Apart from a few subsequent references made by Bleek (*e.g.* 1928, 1929), this dialect group elicited limited interest until 1973, when Traill commenced his research in south-eastern Namibia and southern Botswana. !Xõo is renowned for its linguistic complexity: it has more phonemes (speech sounds) than any other language in the world, with no less than 80 click-sounds, 39 non-click consonants, and some 44 vowels (Traill 1974,

1975, 1979; Barnard 1992; Boden *et al.* 2005). A major distinction may be drawn between Western and Eastern !Xõo: these variant clusters may well be considered separate languages since they diverge remarkably in grammar and lexicon, up to the point of mutual non-intelligibility (Boden *et al.* 2005). !Xõo-speakers use an extra-ordinarily diverse range of emic terms to refer to others and themselves, and, although variations of "!Xõo" are most widely used, the use of Tshasi and ≠Hõa (*e.g.* Vierich 1982; Walker 1997), in addition to approximately 30 epithets mentioned by Traill (1974: 9), have resulted in a great deal of confusion as to who exactly is represented by which particular term. ≠Hõa, an isolate occurring in south-eastern Botswana, may relate more to the Ju dialect cluster, which includes !Xũ and Zu/'hõasi (Snyman 1979) than it does to !Xõo (Güldemann 2006c). There is, however, a remarkable degree of linguistic uniformity in !Xõo - as noted by Traill (1974:39), "It is a striking fact that the !Xõ dialect area exhibits such homogeneity at all levels of linguistic structure, phonetic, phonological, morphological and syntactic, despite its largeness …" (see also Güldemann 2003b).

Of interest to this enquiry is the fact that it is highly probable that !Xõo-speaking foragers were responsible for much of the engraved art in the region. In July 1813, the reverend John Campbell (1974) made contact with a group of San along the upper reaches of the Harts or Malalareen River. These people, who had never encountered Europeans, nor owned much more than a few karosses and traditional hunting-bows, lived along the Harts River near current-day Delareyville, a small town situated roughly between Vryburg, Schweizer-Reneke, and Lichtenburg. This area is rich in engraved art and no more than thirty kilometres from Kinderdam, a site renowned for its large amount and detailed engravings. The "chief" of the group encountered by Campbell was known as Makoon or Ma'-ku-une (Stow 1905:181), a name viewed by Traill (1974:38) as exhibiting an "uncanny resemblance" to the term !Xõo, and which may perhaps have resulted from "… some systematic mutilation of !Xo by Campbell and the Tswana …" through replacing the alveolar-palatal click "!" with a "k" and adding the familiar Bantu noun prefix "ma" to formulate the construct "Makoon". Further north, near the engraved site of Matsieng, Vierich (1982) has also documented the existence of ≠Hõa- and Tshasi-speakers, many of whom had formerly lived and still has relatives in the North West province of South Africa. !Xõo-speakers, along with N||ng-speakers in the west, therefore appear to have comprised the dominant socio-linguistic constituent group in the study area, since at least the early 19th century and quite possibly for several centuries preceding contact with Campbell in 1813.

The Lower Nossob branch is the third and final language division of the Tuu language family. Within this branch, |'Auni, the dominant dialect cluster, is somewhat problematic as it exhibits close affinities to dialects in both the N||ng and the !Xõo dialect groups. This may have resulted either from the geographic location of |'Auni dialects, which are sandwiched between the N||ng and the !Xõo clusters, or, due to the extinction of most of the dialects and, consequently, a lack of linguistic information and sufficient word-lists to facilitate comparison with other language groups (see Güldemann 2003, 2006b for further insight into this matter). N\u is generally categorised as a dialect from the |'Auni dialect cluster (Traill 2002). N\u-speakers are a small part of the disparate group of people now known in South Africa as ≠Khomani (Crawhall 2005; Sands *et al.* 2006). Although thought to be extinct until recently (Traill 1999), N\u (or N/uu) is the only surviving language in the !Ui branch of the Tuu family and is still spoken by a handful of individuals in the Northern Cape Province and in south-western Botswana (Crawhall 2005; Güldemann 2005; Miller *et al.* 2007). The languages in this cluster, which include, for example, |Haasi, Xattia, and |'Auo, appears to have more in common with the N||ng dialect cluster as discussed above (Bleek 1927; Wilman 1933; Güldemann 2000, 2003a) than with the /Xam dialects (Traill 2002). Additionally, and according to Crawhall (2005:72), some languages, especially |Haasi, Masarwa, and |'Auo, actually seem to have closer affinities to !Xõo than to N\u.

The eastern-most Tuu language was //Xegwi (Potgieter 1955; Lanham & Hallowes 1956; Traill 2002), a linguistic isolate with close affinities to either the /Xam (Güldemann 2006a) or the N||ng (Traill 2002; Crawhall 2006a) dialect clusters. Interestingly, Steyn (1984) notes that several //Xegwi-speakers currently inhabit parts of the south-eastern Kalahari in which N||ng dialects are most dominant, and Traill (2002) refers to the existence of several //Xegwi lexical terms in ≠Khomani and N\u, dialects from the |'Auni dialect cluster more than 1000 kilometres to the west. Güldemann (2000a) and Traill (2002) have also noted the similarities between /Xam, formerly spoken in the arid south-western interior, and Seroa, formerly the dominant Khoe-San language in the eastern Free State and the KwaZulu Natal Drakensberg region. Qing, the young San man who acted as Joseph Orpen's guide in the area and from whose statements so much insight into the cosmological foundation of the painted arts have been derived (Orpen 1874; Lewis-Williams 1980), was bilingual and proficient in both Seroa and Baputi (Traill 2002:41).

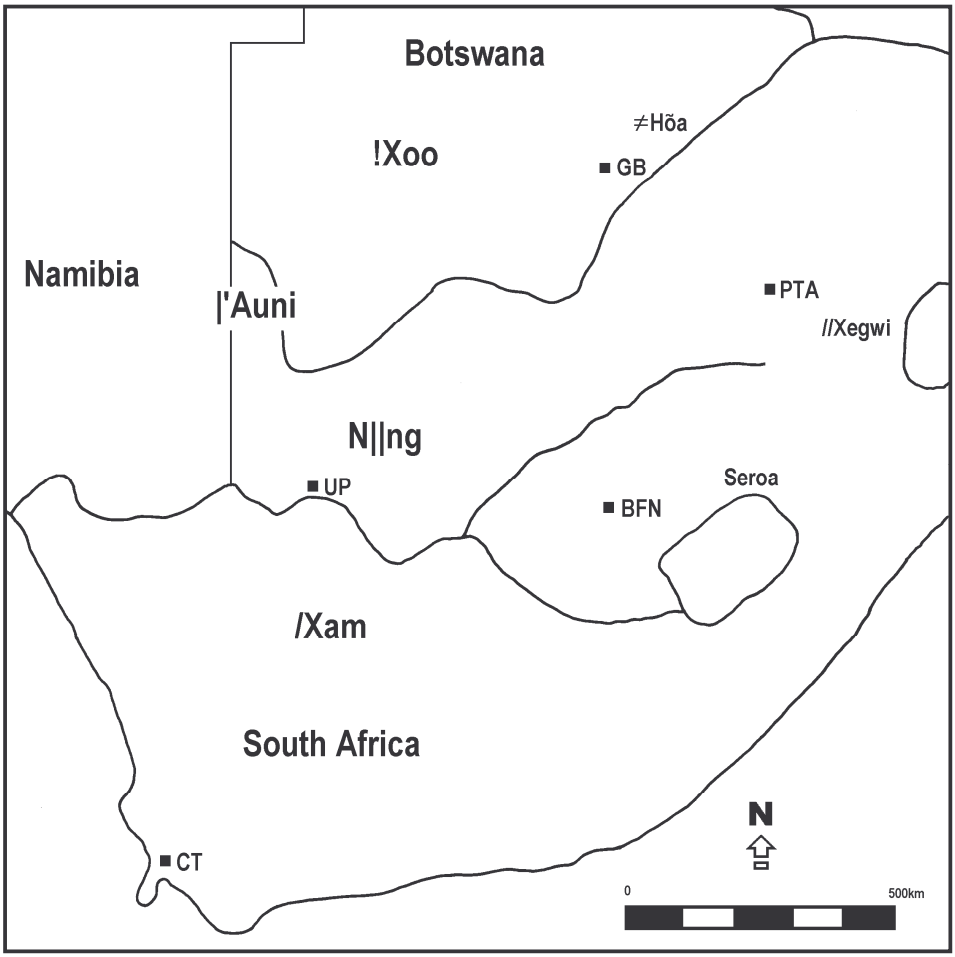


FIG.3.2. Map of southern Africa indicating the distribution of and relationships between the primary Tuu (Southern Khoe-San) dialect clusters in the region, namely /Xam, N||ng, |'Auni, and !Xõo. Languages with uncertain affiliations include Seroa and the isolate groups ≠Hõa and //Xegwi. Large urban centres are indicated as: PTA Pretoria, BFN Bloemfontein, CT Cape Town, GB Gaberone, UP Upington (compiled from Traill 1974, 1979, 2002; Barnard 1992; Güldemann 2004; Crawhall 2005, 2006a).

Seeing that this investigation does not derive from an exclusively linguistic background I will not endeavour to re-classify Khoe-San languages and dialects. It is with the linguistic diversity and the approximate distribution of languages and their speakers during historical times that I am concerned here, and these have been sufficiently explored. From the discussion above it is apparent that !Ui-Taa (Southern Khoe-San) language family is characterised by a palpable degree of linguistic uniformity (Traill 2002:42; Crawhall 2005:70), which is equally matched in terms of subsistence and economy, notions concerned with cosmology, and also the highly standardised thematic content of both the painted and engraved rock arts. According to Traill (2002:43), "… there must have been mutual intelligibility between !Kwi [!Ui-Taa /

Southern Khoe-San] languages and dialects." Additionally, many of the known dialects do in fact appear to relate to several larger linguistic assemblages (*e.g.* //Xegwi, Seroa, ≠Hõa, ≠Ungkue, and ||Kxau). Crawhall (2005:80) points out that prehistoric foraging groups managed to stay in close contact, often over vast geographic distances (Güldemann 1997). Such intra-linguistic zones of contact generally manifest as "dialect chains", areas in which dialects of a single language are spread along a geographic continuum of contact and inter-dialectical communication. The chaining of dialects is a widespread phenomenon, and has been identified in the Eastern Andes (Osborn 1994), Mesoamerica (Hill 2001), Malaysia (Endicott & Lampell Endicott 1986), New Guinea (Terrell 2001), Australia (Yallop 1982), Central Africa (MacEachern 2001), Kenya (Heine 1981, 1982), and in southern Africa in the Eastern Cape (Ehret 1982), and the interior region for the /Xam, N||ng, and !Ora language groups (Traill 2002; Güldemann 2003a). The Khoe-San language family or "stock" (Crawhall 2005:70) is, at the same time, also characterised by an extraordinary degree of linguistic diversity. What is even more remarkable is the fact that the number of dialects per language group is so high that, in several but certainly not all instances, neighbouring communities are known to have spoken mutually unintelligible languages (Traill 1996; Güldemann 2003a; Crawhall 2006a; Smith 2006). For example, and although all San speak click languages, the different linguistic groups are not mutually intelligible: a Nharo-speaker may not necessarily understand a !Xõo- or Ju/'huan-speaker, and a !Xõo-speaker may not understand a /'Auni-speaker. As stated by Traill (1978:137), "the one thing we can be sure about is the astonishing linguistic diversity amongst these (Sesarwa) languages." Such noticeable linguistic diversity is to be expected, especially in light of the realisation that the causes of stratified phonological differentiation within speech communities also relate to ideology (*e.g.* Kroch 1998:246), and that it is generally accepted that, as stated by Weinreich *et al.* (1968, as cited in Milroy 1998: 647), "… the absence of [linguistic] variation would be dysfunctional." In addition, it would have been near impossible, given the isolated nature of dialect groups and the absence of written language, for any standardised form of language to have developed (Traill 1974:39).

Besides the !Ui-Taa languages and dialect clusters as discussed above, the region also hosted languages from the Khoe-Kwadi (Central Khoe-San) language family. In the literature, reference has been made repeatedly to an origin for the Khoe languages outside their present territory and to the northeast. For example, Bleek (1927:63; see also Güldemann & Elderkin 2002:5) wrote that:

> I think it is likely that the territory of the Northern and Southern Groups [the Ju and Tuu family of Southern African Khoisan] joined right through the Kalahari, not only in the west as at present; that the Central Group [the Kalahari branch of Khoe] occupied the land to the northeast of the Kalahari, probably extending to the Great Lakes and East thereof; that the original Hottentots [the Khoekhoe branch of Khoe] were members of this group.

Köhler (1974:189) also viewed the Khoe family as having originated far to the north-east, stating that "the hypothesis of an origin of the Khoe language group from the northeast of the continent stands on a more solid basis" (as translated by Güldemann & Elderkin 2002:6). The presence of the closest relatives of Khoe at the very periphery of the Southern African Khoe-San area, such as in the case of Kwadi and Sandawe, can be taken as an indication that the centre of the original linguistic unit might have been located outside southern Africa, and that the common "ancestor" might ultimately originate from the north of the contemporary focus of Khoe-San, possibly even in eastern Africa (Güldemann & Elderkin 2002:46). Likely reasons for the similarities between Khoe and Kwadi, such as coincidence, universal trends, and language contact, offer little tangible evidence for such a theory. Conversely, and on account of the possibility of reconstructing a list of proto Khoe-Kwadi markers of person, gender, and number (*ibid.*:6), Güldemann (2002:7) argues for a genealogical relationship between Khoe and Kwadi, viewing the two languages as sister branches deriving from the assumed common ancestor language Proto-Khoe-Kwadi (see Ehret 1982 for similar conclusions).

For the purpose of this enquiry, the occurrence in the study region of two languages from the Khoekhoe South group, namely !Ora (Korana) and Xiri (Griqua and Cape varieties) is of key importance. The Khoekhoe language family is comprised of three primary language groups, namely Orange River Khoe (!Ora, Xiri, Nama, and Einiqua), Cape Khoekhoe (*e.g.* Guriqua, Hessequa, Attaqua, Gamtoos, Gonaqua, and Inqua), and Limpopo Khoekhoe (Ehret 1982:159; Mitchell 2002:230). These languages form part of the Tshu-Khwe language family which developed in northern Botswana and which slowly commenced a southwards movement around 2000 years ago (Westphal 1962; Ehret 1982). Orange River Khoe may be further divided to include two primary dialects, namely !Kora, which was spoken in the central interior region along the Harts-, Vaal-, and Orange-Rivers, and Nama, which was spoken along the Orange River region to the west (Ehret 1982; Traill 1996). Cape Khoe comprised the dominant dialect

group in the southern and south-western Cape, and it is with these speakers that Europeans first made contact in the mid-17th century. According to Ehret (1982), Limpopo Khoekhoe was the first dialect group to have diverged from the Proto-Khoekhoen language group around 2000 years ago. Soon after, the Proto-Cape-Orange society also diverged from the Proto-Khoekhoen family, and around AD 1000 Orange River Khoekhoe diverged into the Nama and !Kora dialect groups. As discussed in Chapter Two, these !Kora are believed to embody an approximate emic label for pre-frontier interior Khoekhoen, whereas the term Korana is viewed as indicative of such individuals and groups whom, after the 1770s, formed multi-ethnic conglomerates of raiders, traders, pastoralists, and frontiersmen of assorted socio-cultural and ethno-linguistic character. Prior to the southward expansion of the !Kora and Nama socio-linguistic groups, early Cape Khoekhoe-speaking pastoralists had already commenced their southwards trek - it may well be these groups which are to be accredited with the earlier archaeological occurrences of sheep and ceramics in the interior. The reconstructed distribution of Orange River-, Cape-, and Limpopo-Khoekhoe (Fig. 3.1) is of great interest in terms of gaining insight into the differential degrees of interaction between foragers, pastoralists, and agro-pastoralists in these respective regions, and also in ascertaining how interaction may have influenced the artistic traditions of these regions.

Snyman (1979:11) offers humorous insight into the confusion experienced by early linguists and ethnographers, stating that “It has been jokingly remarked that the Bushmen think out these … intricacies because they have all the time in the world to do so.” Hypotheses concerning the particularly high degree of dialectical diversity amongst Khoe-San-speakers have not proved illuminating or sufficiently adequate. This matter will be addressed in Chapter Six when the function of language in the conception and affirmation of group identity / ethnicity will be seen to.

The striking degree of Khoe-San linguistic diversity and the widespread incidence of mutually unintelligible dialects spoken by neighbouring groups contrasts strongly with the socio-linguistic situation of the si-Ntu or Bantu languages. These languages, although distributed over a much larger geographic area, are nevertheless more closely related (Mönnig 1983; Comaroff & Comaroff 1992; Herbert & Bailey 2002; Eggert 2005; Slabbert & Finlayson 2005; Huffman 2005). Linguistic click phonemes, principally alveolar-palatal clicks, also occur in the Nguni-branch of the Bantu languages, which includes Xhosa, Zulu, Ndebele, Swazi, and the pidgin language Fanagalo (Traunmüller 2003:1). It is well-demonstrated that Bantu-speakers adopted

the clicks from Khoe-San speakers who lived in the region into which they migrated and whom they absorbed in the course of inter-cultural contact (Güldemann & Vossen 2000; Huffman 2005; Finlayson 2006). In the light of the evidence for cases in which the use of clicks and also terminologies associated with pastoralist activities have spread into unrelated languages, we can assume that such instances of linguistic transfer may also have occurred during prehistoric times. Accordingly, the presence of click phonemes in languages does necessarily imply a common origin, and may instead point to contact between different cultural and linguistic groups (Haarmann 1986; Traill 1996; Güldemann 1997; Terrell 2001; Mesthrie *et al.* 2003).

Geographic location and territoriality

In addition to language and ethno-specific dialects, geographic location and territory are indispensable to the formation and maintenance of personal and group identity. Locality and kinship, which will be discussed in the following section, are viewed as "twin pillars of identity" (Barnard 1997:57, see also Wilmsen 1989:187).

In 1883, Frere (*ibid.*:259) wrote of the southern African San:

> It would seem of little use to inquire regarding the land tenures of the Bushmen, the least civilised … of all the aboriginal tribes of South Africa. Subsisting by hunting, and by such animal food, including reptiles and insects, as the wilderness affords, on honey, and on roots, fruits, gum, and other wild vegetable products, they require, in the condition in which they are now known to us, no land for culture or pasture … they offer, in fact, an almost unique instance of a people without visible territorial rights, or even a shadow of land tenures.

In 1915, Speck (as cited in Peterson 1975:57) became the first to assert, with detailed evidence from the Canadian Algonquian, that hunter-gatherers do not wander aimlessly across the landscape. Steward (as cited in Peterson 1975:57), in his discussion of the economic and social basis of primitive bands, further substantiated Speck's data by arguing that the hunter-gatherer groups he considered were all characterised by bands occupying "exclusive estates". The central importance of closely controlled spacing is obvious when one considers a minimal definition of a society, such as that proposed by McBride (1971:39) as "a non-random distribution of animals in space, arising from the spacing behaviour of animals to neighbours rather than from discontinuities in the physical environment." A sociological definition of

human society (McIver & Page 1959:5) relates the ordered use of space to "creating and re-creating an organisation which guides and controls … [man's] behaviour in myriad ways." Whether or not one accept this particular definition of society, the notion of ecological management is fundamental and, in turn, implies some kind of non-random spatial organisation of human social groups. It is therefore not surprising that we find territorial behaviour in modern hunter-gatherer groups (Myers 1982; Williams 1982; Barnard 1992; Bhanu 1992) and that most foraging groups occupy a definable space on the landscape that can be referred to as a "territory" (Service 1962:52; Wobst 1974:153; Kelly 1995:185). The possible exception to this rule is the initial colonising of forager or pastoralist groups expanding into new environments (Kelly & Todd 1988; Smith & Ouzman 2004a). Ambrose (1982:109) points out that, in terms of hunter-gatherer and pastoralist relations, a standard land-tenure pattern is discernable and that first peoples tend to remain closely tied with their traditional hunting grounds. Even when traditional territories are populated by a new group people, and although the former inhabitants may change linguistically and culturally, first peoples continue to be closely tied with their traditional hunting grounds (Cashdan 1986; Barnard 1988; Kopytoff 1989; Hall 2000).

The attachment of human groups to familiar places or particular geographic features has been expressed in terms of phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty 1962; Teather 1999) and also humanist geographies (Tuan 1976) and *topophilia* (Tuan 1974:92). These theoretical constructs have, although not equally effectively, illuminated the pervasive attachment of human beings to specific places in the landscapes of the natural environment (Endicott & Lampell Endicott 1986; Deacon 1988; Bender 1993; Tilley 1994; Teather 1999; Layton 2001; Thomas 2001; Smith & Blundell 2004). Although there is substantial disagreement as to the precise mechanisms involved in place-affiliation (see Wilmsen 1989:169 for a broad discussion on the matter), most San individuals (as interviewed by Marshall 1976:184; Wiessner 1977:50; Lee 1979:338) tend to identify primarily with their *n!ore* or place of origin or birth. Access and rights to different territories or *n!oresi* are generally gained through inheritance, which may be either unilateral or bilateral (Marshall 1976; Lee 1979), but marriage may also bring about admission to additional *n!oresi* (Wiessner 1977). As a result, natural naming is a widespread phenomenon, both in southern Africa and elsewhere (*e.g.* Peterson 1975; De Vos 1982; Singer 1982, Vinnicombe 1986). San forager bands are frequently named after prominent features in the landscape: Traill (1974:8) notes how !Xõo-speaking bands are regularly named after pans, Silberbauer (1994:132) notes that, although identity is wholly connected to social setting, geographic locations are often

used in naming or labelling G/wi-speaking groups, and Guenther (1986:171) notes the naming of Nharo bands after the pans at which they reside during winter-time. In a similar fashion, Deacon's (1996b:245, 1997:5) reference to the Flat, Grass, and Hardast River /Xam San also point towards a connection between topography and the conception of group identity. According to Stow (1905:103), individuals were often named after a geographic feature, such as a river or cave near the place at which they were born. Differentiation between individuals and groups are often measured and expressed in terms of geographic origin and duration of occupation of certain stretches of land, as is evident in the following statement recorded from a !Xõo-speaking individual by Boden (2005:3):

> *In die ou tyd 'N|ohan en !Xoon mense het nie met mekaar gekommunikier nie. Die 'N|ohan mense kom van Botswana af. Hulle het eers gekom as die boorgat by Kongoa [Okongowa] gemaak was.*
>
> In the past the 'N|ohan and !Xoon people did not communicate with each other. The 'N|ohan came from Botswana. They only came [to this area] when the borehole at Kongoa [Okongowa] was drilled.

Such statements by !Xõo-speakers are expressions of origin and are intended to de-legitimise the rights and influence of 'N|ohan-speakers in the region, reifying the fact that since the 'N|ohan originate from Botswana, they are not the original inhabitants of the region. Wilmsen (1989:279) refers to the emergence of a collective social identity in the Central Kalahari - both foragers and farmers eagerly identify with the same place, such as the inhabitants of Caecae (also referred to as in the literature as Cae Cae or Xai Xai) who persistently state that "… we are all CaeCae people." This accords with Bleek and Lloyd's (1911, as cited in Deacon 1997:5) identification of //Kabbo, Diä!kwain, Oud Bastaard, and Adam Fix as "Brinkkop men" (Deacon 1988:138) and also with the comment by Diä!kwain that "I am a Brinkkop man" (Deacon 1997:5). Deacon (1986:140) furthermore mentions //Kabbo's reference to the Bitterpits as "my place" and also refers to the narrative by /Han≠kass'o, *The death of the !Kháü* (Bleek & Lloyd 1911:215), as to how the two hills near which he lived came into existence. Stories and legends of topographical features are common (Silberbauer 1994; Deacon 1997), and prominent landmarks are often interpreted in terms of mythological events. Place is obviously at the centre of identity-conception and maintenance, so much so that, as amongst numerous !Xõo-speaking bands (Traill 1974:8), people label themselves and are referred to by others in terms of place, and not language or dialect.

The close association between people and place is aptly summarised by Barnard (1992:232), according to whom the notion of group membership, which consists of the ideological premise of belonging to a specific band, band cluster, or social unit, clearly "… implies a territorial identity or notion of 'citizenship', in that such groups may be associated with particular localities."

It does however appear as if, in some instances, the territorial organisation of hunter-gatherers is by no means as rigid as Carr-Saunders (1922, as cited in Peterson 1975:59) and others believed (see for example Hiatt 1962 on Australian Aboriginal groups, Lee 1966 on the Kalahari !Kung, Woodburn 1968 on the Hadza, and Turnbull 1968 on the Efe; Silberbauer 1994 for the G/wi). For Lee (1966:137) the Kalahari San are not territorial in the zoological sense as they do not defend exclusive territories at the band level. Conversely, Heinz (1972:414) argues that they are territorial because their spatial behaviour entails protecting, guarding, or withholding something of value - resources - from other individuals or groups. Heinz stresses the fact that territoriality among San has been undervalued, and subsequent research (*e.g.* Cashdan 1983, 1985; Barnard 1986, 1992) has shown that territoriality may in fact become more pronounced in certain socio-ecological situations (Humphreys 2004). Clearly, the ways in which territoriality is conceived ultimately depends on the definitions of the concept. For example, Barnard (1992:233) refers to the employment of "territoriality" in terms of observational, ideological, and ecological constructs, and cites Guenther's (1981:115) multi-level analysis of the concept as the most elaborate treatment of the subject.

Cashdan (1983, 1985) discovered from her studies of the !Xõo, Nharo, G/wi, and Ju/'hoansi San that strictly defined territories tended to develop when resources were not abundant and predictable: territorial boundaries became critical in maintaining the distribution of people in relation to scarce resources. Eibl-Eibesfeldt (1972:206) points to numerous accounts of active territorial defence in the literature on the San and argues that the act of defending a specific area is only one of the various forms which territoriality takes. In his view the idea that hunter-gatherers are not territorial and aggressive (Woodburn 1968) arose because many researchers equate being aggressive with being warlike, whereas ethnologists designate acts, be it a threat or any other behaviour that results in the submission or withdrawal of the other person, as aggressive. From this perspective there are no societies lacking aggression, although there are societies that are not warlike (Peterson 1975:64). As noted by Lee and DeVore (1968:8), the adaptive advantages offered by territoriality, such as the ability to adjust group size to resources, to level out demographic variance, and to resolve

conflict by processes of fission, are excellent ecological reasons for this lack of socio-spatial rigidity (Kusimba 2003:97). There are two key mechanisms available to hunter-gatherers for controlling access to territorial resources: i) perimeter defence, characterised by active defence of territory boundaries; and ii) social boundary defence, in which access to the social group itself, and therefore to its resources, is controlled (Peterson 1975; Cashdan 1983; Endicott & Lampell Endicott 1986). Instead of an overt perimeter defence of territorial boundaries to protect access to resources, reciprocal altruism, a mechanism which takes the form of permission granting behaviours between forager groups, is more important in the maintenance of boundaries. Hunter-gatherers generally tend to exercise this second type of territorial defence when the first becomes too costly, that is, when resources become less abundant or less predictable or when ranges become larger. The !Xõo, Nharo, G/wi, and Ju/'hoansi San employ social boundary defence, since Cashdan (1983:51) argues that "the admittance of outsiders to the social group typically involves the expectation that access will be reciprocated when circumstances permit", it may also be viewed as an example of reciprocal altruism.

There are three important features of permission granting behaviour that makes social boundary defence a viable strategy (Cashdan 1983; see also Peterson 1975, 1979; Endicott & Lampell Endicott 1986). First, the process of asking permission ensures the continued reciprocity between the groups. This is critical in an environment when resources are not predictable every year since, in a resource-poor year, it permits groups access to surrounding territories (Smith 1988:250). Second, important information about the location of resources in the host's territory are passed to the outsider's group. Cashdan (1992:255) provides an example of a //Gana informant stating that permission is never denied into a territory, but that visitors are told "which side to use and which side not to use". Due to the higher cost of moving around in a larger territory, and the possibility of not locating the required resources, it becomes more important to acquire this information in larger territories. Third, it is likely the outsider group will be detected while traversing the host's territory. Even in a large territory, it is more likely that the intruders will spend a greater amount of time in the territory to acquire resources and thereby increase their risk of detection by the host group (Cashdan 1983:50). Myers' (1982) ethnographic study of the Pintupi Aborigines from Australia highlights the workings of the social boundary defence system. Pintupi individuals rarely live their entire lives within a single bounded territory, and people constantly move back and forth across permeable social boundaries. Even though permission to enter another group's territory is generally granted, asking for permission

is important for the continuation of territorial reciprocity and maintenance of resources. The Pintupi do not view the use of resources as exclusive to any particular group, but the host group must know where the visitors are going to be so they can better plan their foraging strategies (*ibid.*:184).

Similar systems of socio-ecological management have also been noted for the southern African !Kung, /Xam, and !Xõo San hunter-gatherers. Kalahari !Kung territoriality is based on a core resident group which is usually comprised of related individuals and their spouses and offspring (Marshall 1976). The geographic region of Nyae Nyae (located south-east of Dobe and to the north-east of Cae Cae, Caecae, or Xai Xai), for example, is partitioned into relatively distinct territories, known as *n!oresi* which are occupied by separate bands or *n//abesi* (Marshall 1976:71). Each territory contains sufficient resources, and all members descended from the original inhabitants are known as *kxai k"xausi*, the "owners" of the *n!ore* (Marshall 1975:184). Further south, the /Xam band or camp (Lee 1979:56; Lewis-Williams 1982:432) appears to have had as its nucleus a number of related siblings and their marriage partners and offspring (Bleek 1924:viii). Such social cores or bands generally inhabited specific geographic areas within which sufficient resources were available to sustain the inhabitants. In times of dire environmental conditions, social allegiances with neighbouring bands guaranteed access to resources, and there are numerous /Xam tales mentioning the frequent visiting which maintained constant circulation of people and information (Lewis-Williams 1982). Although Lewis-Williams (*ibid.*:432) considers the term "band" to be too closely associated with the notion of a territorial, patrilineal, virilocal, and exogamous group, he also notes that it would be erroneous to assume that all San groups had the same degree of socio-geographic fluidity. As noted by Barnard (1979:141), dissimilar environmental conditions and unequal distribution of water resources may well have affected the seasonal rounds and the incidence of aggregative social events. In light of these observations, the socio-territorial organisation of the !Xõo-speaking San of Namibia, Botswana, and South Africa will now be explored.

The !Xõo are unique among the southern African hunter-gatherers since, in addition to the basic social units of the family and the band, they are organised into a third social unit, the band cluster or band nexus. Territoriality operates not only at the level of the band, but also at the level of the band nexus, a group of three to seven bands related to each other by ties of friendship, kinship, and ritual bonds (Heinz 1972; Wiessner 1977; Barnard 1979, 1992; Cashdan 1983). Among the !Xõo, the band nexus, which is

only vaguely developed among the !Kung (Wiessner 1983:255), and the G/wi (Guenther 1986:173), is “a true territorial group” (Barnard 1979:137). There is a strip of “no-man's-land” between the territories of adjacent nexuses in which foraging is avoided, and “members of a band would never hunt on the land of an adjoining nexus” (Heinz 1972:408).

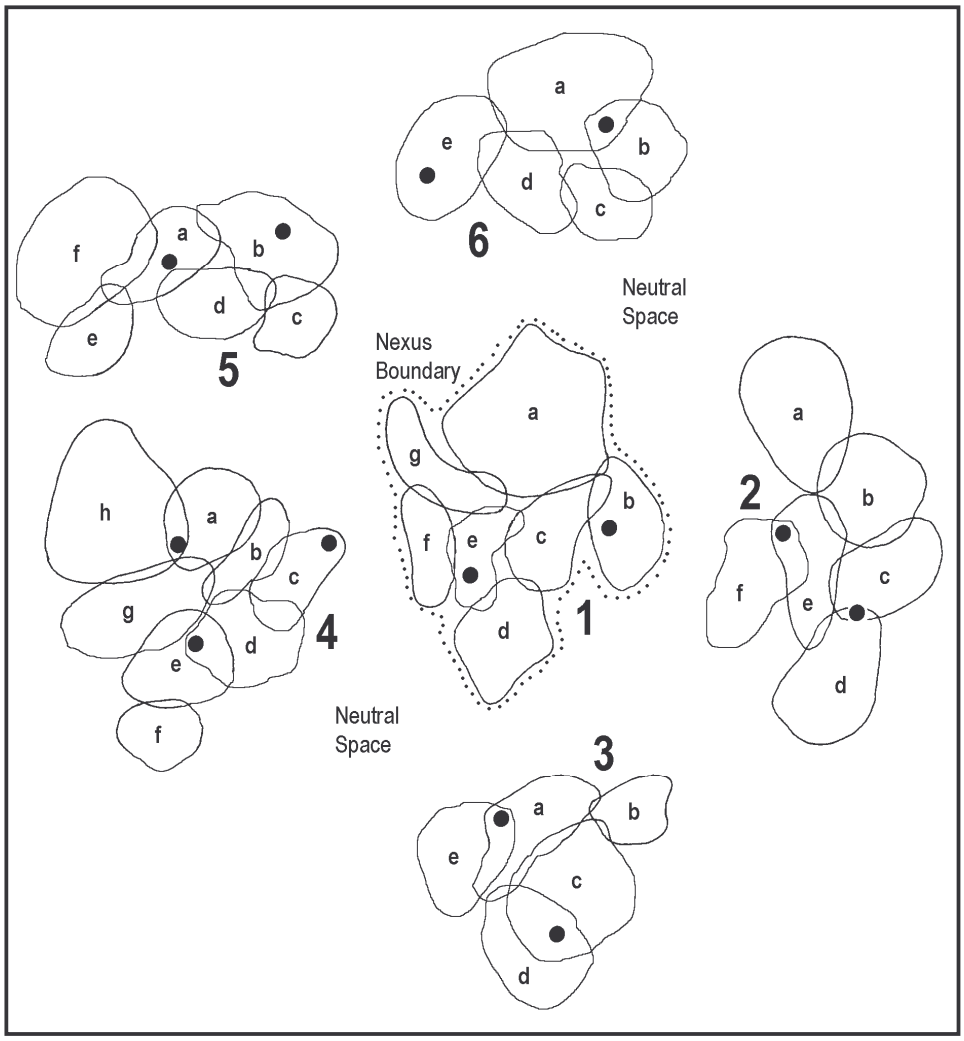


FIG.3.3. Hypothetical map indicating the organisation of and relationships between different !Xõo bands (a-h) within band-nexuses (1-6) and the open space or strips of “no-mans-land” between nexuses. Water sources are indicated as black dots. Scale is omitted since such an area may easily span in excess of 500 km across.

According to Heinz (1972:407), permission to forage in the territory of another band within the nexus, while it must be sought, is usually granted. Relationships between bands within a nexus, therefore, are very much like inter-band relationships as they have been described for the !Kung. Even though the boundaries between bands and

band-clusters / nexuses are relatively permeable, with individuals and groups moving in and out of territories, some social differences inevitably become marked to aid in the identification of group membership related to territory: it is from here that ethnic differences between hunter-gatherer groups are derived (see McElreath *et al.* 2003). In this respect ethnicity is linked to cultural identity since it is necessary to refer to some cultural, economic, linguistic, or religious specificity when categorising "the other" (Hodder 1982:54; Cohen 1993:200; Jones 1997:120). Ethnic classifications may also be based upon non-cultural criteria, such as physical appearance or place of origin (Traill 1974; De Vos *et al.* 1982; Deacon 1986; Wilmsen 1989; Barnard 1992; Dorais 1994; Silberbauer 1994; Smith & Blundell 2004).

Goertz and Diehl (1992) cite two principal types of values a territory can have to human groups - intrinsic value related to its resources (see Deacon 1986; Silberbauer 1994), or relational value, in which a geographic area is connected to a deeper meaning as it exists "in the eyes of the beholder" (Goertz & Diehl 1992:14; see also Teather 1999:4). Whereas intrinsic importance refers to material assets or resources that are present regardless of whose perspective is taken into account, relational importance refers to its functional or immaterial aspects such as centrality, or "homeland" (Norlen 2003). This dualistic perception of the significance of territorial ranges need not be viewed as in opposition to each other, since there is a close connection between access to economic resources and access to ritual resources (Vinnicombe 1986:279; Sampson 1988:16). While associations between territory and mythology, ritual activity, and rock art is clearly perceptible amongst Australian groups (*e.g.* Peterson 1979; Layton 1986), both Vinnicombe (1986:279) and Humphreys (2005:37; see also Marlowe 2002) suggest that this may also be the case amongst the southern African San.

Social organisation and kinship structure

As seen in the preceding discussion, geographic location occupies a central position in the construction of both individual and collective identity. In addition to place, kinship constitutes the second pillar of identity (Barnard 1997:57; see also Wilmsen 1989:187). Wiessner (1983:255) cites several factors which hold social groups together, namely exchange networks, intermarriage, initiation rites, ceremonial events, a shared language, and universal systems of kinship categorisation. Of these, Barnard (1992) considers kinship to be of central importance in Khoe-San society. Kinship is especially significant for regional comparison because it is the area which exhibits most differentiation amongst the diverse Khoe-San societies. At the same time, at a deep-structural level, shared core principles are evident within Khoe-San kinship as a whole.

The recognition of kinship relationships between individuals is an important factor in determining behaviour in all human societies. In recent years, several social scientists have contended that ethnicity is fundamentally related to kinship (*e.g.* Keyes 1981; van den Berghe 1981; De Vos 1982; Horowitz 1985; Bentley 1991; Yelvington 1991; Connor 1992; Whitmeyer 1997). This is a logical approach, given that ethnic groups frequently emphasise biological similarity and common origins (Barth 1969; Jones 1997; Whitmeyer 1997). The most obvious difficulty with this approach is that the ethnic group typically consist of much more than just kin. Different scholars have resolved this in different ways: Van den Berghe (1981) refers to ethnicity as “putative kinship”, Keyes (1981) speaks of “cultural kinship”, and Yelvington (1991) and Bentley (1991) assert that ethnicity is “fictive kinship”. Others also include affiliations through place, language, religion, and customs as fundamental factors creating ethnicity (Geertz 1973; De Vos 1975; Smith 1981; Wiessner 1983). Whitmeyer (1997:164) argues that it makes evolutionary sense for people to have, among other incentives, a particular motivation that gives rise to behaviour that is beneficial to a particular set of people, the endogamous set of people with whom such individuals most closely associate. When several members of such a set exhibit similar behavioural traits, we have what is called an ethnic group or “ethny”. Furthermore, it is also believed that it may be advantageous not only to assist individuals who share genetic interests with you in the next generation, but also to help those with whom genetic interests are shared in subsequent generations. This is accomplished by the existence of several unique social mechanisms which functions to link individuals from different kin-groups together, and these will be discussed shortly.

In terms of San social structure, anthropologists generally discern five broad levels of social organisation: i) the nuclear family; ii) the band; iii) the band cluster or nexus; iv) the dialect group; and v) the language group (*e.g.* Heinz 1972; Barnard 1992; Wiessner 1983; Guenther 1999). Although the nuclear family relies heavily on relatives in its own and other bands for assistance in food sharing, hunting, gathering, and so forth, it is the unit that is expected to provide itself with the basic daily subsistence. The band or camp among the San is made up of one or more such nuclear groups or cores of siblings who are linked by marriage and also their respective families (Silberbauer 1972; Heinz 1975; Yellen 1977; Lee 1979). Band size and seasonal patterns of aggregation and dispersal vary between groups according to the distribution of food and water in different areas (Barnard 1979). The !Kung band has an average size of 25 members (Marshall 1976; Lee 1979) and inhabits an area of 300 to 600 km² (Lee 1979). The G/wi band numbers some 22 to 60 members and inhabits a range of 450 to

1000 km² (Silberbauer 1972). The average !Xõo band numbers 35 to 45 members (Heinz 1975), and inhabit an area similar to that of the !Kung band (Heinz 1979). !Xõo band clusters or nexuses generally form cohesive units with which members of all bands closely associate, and each nexus also has a group name or miate (Barnard 1992:65). Although these generally refer to location, some names are suggestive of well-defined instances of identity-consciousness, such as “People of the soft sand” for some Okwa groups, and “People that follow the eland” for groups near Takathswaane (Traill 1974:24). In all San groups, frequent extended visiting brings about regular short-term changes in the composition of groups: a ten-year perspective on band membership among the /Xai /Xai !Kung indicate that band composition is relatively stable except when demographic events result in a band becoming too large or too small to be economically, and perhaps also biologically viable (Wiessner 1977).

Among the Ju/’hoansi, several unique social mechanisms exist to link people from different bands and band clusters together. The two best known systems are *hxaro* (Wiessner 1982:68), a system of gift exchange partnerships which link individuals, and the use of namesakes (Kent 1993:304). Both are quite different from the sharing networks found among Central Kalahari groups which bond families or camps together (*ibid.*:481). *Hxaro*, exchange relationships which involves the balanced but non-equivalent delayed exchange of gifts such as pots, shoes, arrows, karosses, and even dogs, are at the centre of !Kung San reciprocal relations and social networks (Wiessner 1986:105; Lee 2003:119). Although a great variety of items are implicated in exchange, Wiessner (1986:113) cites some evidence for ostrich eggshell beads and beadwork having been the only, and perhaps the original, type of gift to have symbolised *hxaro* relationships: the term *hxaro* is derived from the word //ri, meaning sewn beadwork. *Hxaro* may therefore have instigated and subsequently expanded into a system of social exchange in which other items became acceptable substitutes for beadwork, in turn facilitating the development of extensive trade networks across vast regions during the past 2000 years. This suggestion, together with the fact that ostrich eggshell beads have been retrieved from archaeological contexts dated to 45 000 years in Kenya (Ambrose 1998), 38 000 years at Border Cave in South Africa (Beaumont 1978), and 32 000 years at ≠Gi in northern Botswana (Robbins 1999) are significant in terms of the potential antiquity of extensive interaction and reciprocal social relations.

Two features of *hxaro* networks suggest that it facilitated access to resources of surrounding populations while also preserving a certain degree of autonomy (Wiessner 1986; see also Lewis-Williams 1984b). The first is that individuals maintained *hxaro*

partnerships with between two and 42 people up to 200 kilometres away (Lee 2003: 120), as well as with people nearby. Such long-distance ties were not necessary to provide alternative residences in the face of environmental failure, and several !Kung individuals have stated that such ties are maintained simply "to keep up with what was going on in other places" (Wiessner 1990:136). Secondly, !Kung engage in *hxaro* relationships with other San only, mostly with other !Kung. The exchange of goods with agro-pastoralists such as the Tswana and Herero took the form of more balanced and immediate trade. Some !Kung also mentioned that, in the past, distant *hxaro* ties had provided access to desired trade goods, such as metal and beads, and that such items would be passed on from partner to partner across the Kalahari or obtained during visits to partners who lived closer to the source. Thus, through *hxaro* exchange, !Kung participate in the broader trade network and yet maintained some freedom to choose their degree of involvement with the groups that produced or controlled desired trade goods. *Hxaro* is therefore not only social in nature but also economic, reducing risk by creating relationships with people who live in different areas with different resources. As a result, the majority of Ju/'hoansi *hxaro* partners do not live next to each other but are spread across the north-western Kalahari region, including consanguinal, affinal, and fictive kin (Guenther 1999:28). While these mechanisms organise the Ju/'hoansi San economically, similar to the way sharing networks organise other central Kalahari San socially, they are more formal than Central Kalahari sharing networks and operate somewhat differently: *hxaro* therefore appears to represent a Ju/'hoansi-specific trait that is not generalisable to other hunter-gatherers (Kent 1992:49). Wiessner (1990:136) cites some interesting indications that the *hxaro* network may not have been the only system that united !Kung in a region, and that, in the past, young men were initiated together with those from other areas to create a common bond between men from different places: !Kung were divided into named groups that may have been part of a larger clan system (Lee 1979). Although older !Kung can describe the initiation and named groups, they can no longer tell how they functioned because the importance of these social institutions has dwindled within their lifetimes.

Since *hxaro* does not occur amongst !Xõo-speaking groups (Mitchell 2002:221), systems such as those described above may have served to link individuals over long distances. Barnard (1992:64) notes that although relations between !Xõo individuals from different areas are generally amicable, they are characterised by formality and reserve. Members of different bands within a nexus recognise their common kinship through marriage and through descent from common ancestors, and whereas individuals from the same nexus refer to each other as *n/u tu* "my people", individuals

from different nexuses are referred to as *a/u tu*, “your people” (Barnard 1992:66). At the same time, all !Xõo “have the feeling that they have common ties” (Heinz 1966:11). Thus, !Xõo band clusters constitute the range of social relations between different families and between different bands, and since the area covered by a band cluster may readily span some 500 kilometres across, reciprocal relations with neighbouring bands within the same nexus indeed provide sufficient support in terms of eco-geographic extent, or resources, and hospitable relatives. This system may perhaps represent the former social partitioning of !Kung into large clan-like systems which were, in turn, subdivided into smaller named groups (Lee 1979; Wiessner 1990).

The use of a system of relationships based on namesakes (see Kent 1993) constitutes an additional social strategy by which individuals across vast distances may be linked. First noted by Marshall (1957), !Kung naming relationships impart certain rights and obligations onto individuals who share the same first name, effectively establishing a fictive kin relationship between such individuals (Barnard 1992:44). In the Dobe area in 1964, only 36 men’s names and 32 women’s names were in use (Lee 1986:87), resulting in the situation of having 25 males named ≠*Toma*, 14 named *Twi*, and nine named *!Xam*. Such name-relationships function as a mechanism that extends territorial rights and obligations beyond those established by consanguinal and affinal ties (Yellen 1977:44; Lee 1986:88), allowing !Kung access to resources, *hxaro* partners, and potential spouses over distances not usually covered by interaction with more directly-related relatives (Wiessner 1986:118). Lee (1978:108, as cited in Lewis-Williams 1982:436) has noted that the !Kung name-relationship network extends for some 800 kilometres from Angola to Ghanzi in central Botswana, and the extensive social ties brought about by such name-based social networks undoubtedly facilitated the reproduction of San social formation over vast distances. Because an isolated camp may not be able to cope with severe fluctuations in local conditions, such relationships, which are also reflected in the fluid composition of camps, relates all people to a sufficient resource base. Although the !Xõo do not have a !Kung-type naming system, individuals are, in addition to sex-specific first names inherited from parents and grandparents, given nicknames and, more importantly, band-cluster names (Barnard 1992:69). Band cluster names are added to first names and are generally derived from the band cluster name of a relative with the same name. Moreover, such “nexus-names” formerly also defined exogamous units (Heinz 1966:155), adding another dimension to the distinctively cohesive relations between individuals within !Xõo band nexuses.

Of primarily interactional interest is the fact that there is sufficient evidence for the diffusion of the !Kung naming system to Western Khoe-speaking San (Barnard 1988a: 42). This naming system has allowed the transformation of Khoe egocentric terminology to its logical extreme, namely complete or nearly complete reciprocity. The system of name transmission from grandparents to grandchildren occurs throughout !Kung territory, from the land of the !Xũ of Angola to that of the ≠Au//eisi of the Ghanzi district (Lee 1972:356). Of all the Khoe-speaking San, only those whose territories border on !Kung territory use the system: the Nharo, the Ts'aokhoe, the ≠Haba, and possibly also several smaller groups in southern Ngamiland. Universal kin classification affords many hunting and gathering societies the mechanism for allocating and sharing movable property and rights to natural resources (Barnard 1992:265). Among the southern African San, and according to a universal system of kinship classification, every person may be categorised as a member of some kin category by every other person. All individuals are therefore classified as kin (Barnard 1988a:45). Although Liebkind (1999:140) argues that ethnic membership differs from kinship primarily because it is a presumed identity, the pervasiveness of close relationships based on fictive kin relations all but contradicts the notion that kinship differs substantially from and is more important than "presumed" affiliations based on ethnicity: fictive kin are ethnic kin, and in the case of the !Xõo, "fictive kinship" (Bentley 1991) may very well be equated with ethnicity.

In Chapter Two it was established that social flexibility is an extremely beneficial trait for mobile foraging groups, and that the !Kung refer to those individuals who excel at maintaining favourable relationships with several individuals in various environments as *t'xudi kaus*, "masters of cleverness" (Yellen 1977:47). This reference to socio-economic resourcefulness accords with Guenther's (1999:134) view of foraging as "more than a subsistence strategy", since, and as stated by Barnard (1993:33), San are "foragers in many ways", not just in terms of subsistence, but also because they "forage for relatives". A more extensive social network presents an individual with a greater range of alternatives in terms of access to territories in which ecological and social resources are available. Access is generally facilitated by links derived from *hxaro* partnerships (Wiessner 1982) and namesake affiliations (Marshall 1957; Lee 1978). *Hxaro* functions as both a risk-reducing strategy and a facilitator of marriage (Wiessner 1986:107), and partners are selected from diverse socio-economic and geographic environments. *Hxaro* partnerships are also inherited (Wiessner 1986:117), greatly increasing the numbers and geographic range of kin on which to call during times of ecological stress. Additionally, namesake relations enable individuals to extend their primary kinship ties

far beyond their everyday social spheres, effectively increasing to range of locations to visit during times of hardship and of kin with whom to initiate new *hxaro* relationships (Yellen 1977:44; Wiessner 1986:119). As argued by Guenther (1999:26), reciprocal access to resources, and not territorial exclusivity, is the basic ethos regulating social relations in San society (see also Deacon 1999:379). It must however be noted that such seemingly open and "unconditional" reciprocal relations may not in fact extended too far back into pre-history, and that the "much vaunted egalitarianism" of San society may instead be symptomatic of the marginalisation of a hunting and gathering existence (Humphreys 2007:3). As noted by Donald (1987:483), "there is the very real possibility that !Kung 'harmless-ness' is the result of !Kung 'helplessness'".

The wide geographic spread of *hxaro* partners and consanguinal, affinal, and fictive kin nevertheless appears to facilitate the movement of individuals and groups across territorial boundaries and the participation in a variety of social spheres and activities. Of these, and given that the majority of bands visited fall into the established and permitted range of the visiting individual's social network, access to potential marriage partners may also be obtained. Although marriage prohibitions are generally not clearly defined (Guenther 1999:30), it is important to select prospective spouses from appropriate social settings (Wilmsen 1989:178). The link between ethnicity and endogamy is well-established (see De Vos 1975; van den Berghe 1981; Connor 1992), in consequence affording marriage central importance in the definition and analysis of ethnic populations (Abruzzi 1982:16). Continuity and distinction among ethnic populations is ultimately maintained by the fact that marriage between members of the same population occurs more frequently than marriage between members of different populations. Such instances of "ethnic endogamy" (see Light 1981; Whitmeyer 1997) reduces the opportunities for choice in ethnic identification and preserve the differential distribution of unique ethnic characteristics within a community (De Vos 1982:9; Wilmsen 1989:178). Conversely, complete intermarriage among ethnic populations eliminates local ethnic distinctions, since marriage functions to transfer a population's distinct adaptive characteristics from one generation to the next. In the case of ethnic populations, the adaptive characteristics transferred through marriage and threatened by inter-ethnic marriages are material and behavioural and include wealth, access to resources, subsistence strategies, child-rearing practices, and participation in specific economic, political, social, and religious activities and organisations (Goody 1977). Intermarriage among interacting ethnic populations has the same diluting effect upon differentiation within human communities that interbreeding among local species populations has within multi-species animal communities. The extent of ethnic

endogamy is therefore believed to signify the degree of ethnic differentiation within a community. Although endogamy has generally been taken as an indicator of ethnicity (Light 1981:71), Whitmeyer (1997:170) claims that endogamy, a group-level characteristic, is a fundamental cause of pro-ethny behaviour, an individual human-level characteristic, including ethnic identity. Of course, there is a feedback relationship in that marriage within the ethnic group may be in part pro-ethny behaviour or an effect of ethnic identity.

Although there are no strictly exogamous or endogamous groups in San society (Guenther 1999:30), some linguistic groups may be inclined more towards one strategy than the other. For example, the !Xõo band cluster, which is generally comprised of three to seven bands, is considered to be the ideal pool for wives (Heinz 1979). Seventy to eighty percent of all marriages take place within the cluster, in contrast to about fifty percent among the !Kung (Wiessner 1983). There is considerable inter-marriage between bands within a nexus (Heinz 1972:407), but not between bands from different nexuses. For that reason, foraging is avoided within the stretches of neutral ground between adjacent nexuses, and “members of a band would never hunt on the land of an adjoining nexus” precisely because the absence of kinship ties between them deprives them of such access (*ibid.*:408). Through the establishment of a balance between strictly endogamic and exogamic marriage behaviour, the !Xõo, like most San groups, appear to have reached an acceptable compromise regarding the potentially challenging issue of finding suitable marriage partners: whereas individuals within bands tend towards band exogamy, bands within a nexus are inclined towards nexus endogamy. In summary, it has been suggested that human populations respond to conditions of resource availability in much the same way as non-human communities do (see Abruzzi 1982:41; Ouzman 1995:15; MacDonald & Hewlett 1999). Through competitive exclusion, human populations will, to the degree that it is selectively advantageous, develop more or less discrete adaptive strategies within the same community. The greater the selective advantage of distinct adaptations within local communities, the greater is the likelihood that socially discrete ethnic populations will be associated with those adaptations. The evolution of numerous, legitimised isolating mechanisms within human communities enhances ethnic distinctions by reducing the incidence of intermarriage between members of interacting ethnic populations. By minimising the incidence of intermarriage, isolating mechanisms protect the advantageous position of the dominant population. At the same time, clear and stable ethnic boundaries provide security and predictability in inter-ethnic relations.

Subsistence and technology

For the most part, ecological theory in anthropology has developed independent of advances in related fields. Many anthropologists have rejected the extension of general ecological theory and methods to human populations on the grounds that ecology is a biological science, based upon research on populations whose principal adaptive mechanisms are inherited genetically. Human groups, critics argue, employ culturally acquired adaptive mechanisms whose operation cannot be accounted for by ecological and biological principles (Netting 1968:11). Two distinct bodies of ecological theory and method have therefore materialised (Abruzzi 1982:13): one for human populations, and one for the remainder of the organic world. This division of ecological approaches has been increasingly called into question, and several researchers have suggested methods for applying general ecological concepts and principles to the analysis of human populations (see Rappaport 1968; Hardesty 1975, 1980; Yellen 1977; Abruzzi 1981 for discussions).

Ecology undoubtedly influences the extent and allocation of territorial ranges. For example, Seiner (1910, as cited in Cashdan 1986:307) reports that the hunting territories of the //Kanikhoe, the “river people” of the Botletli River in the Okavango region, are smaller than those of desert-dwelling foragers, extending only some forty kilometres into the savanna. The smaller territorial ranges is also stressed by Stigand (1923:411, as cited in Cashdan 1986:307), who states that because the //Kanikhoe are not permitted to fish outside their own territories, “as guides … they are useless outside their little radius, as a rule. In the swamps you have continually … to hunt out generally reluctant fresh pilots every 10 to 15 miles.” It is therefore evident that economy and ecology are additional ethnognomonic elements which may be used to communicate differences and similarities in terms if inter-ethnic relations, and that there exists a close relationship between economic practice, often referred to as ecological type (Schwartz 1982:108), and identity. However, and although populations are often referred to in terms of the ecotype or habitat they occupy (Schwartz 1982:119; see also Traill 1974; Deacon 1986, 1997; Barnard 1992; Silberbauer 1994; Marshall 1999 and the discussion on people and place above), differentiation according to ecological specificities is most effective in environments where ecozones are markedly different. It must be noted that “markedly different” does not necessarily entail exceptionally different ecotypes inhabited by, for example, the //Kanikhoe of the Botletli River and the G/wi of the Central Kalahari. The close relationship between foragers and the environments they inhabit suggest that even ecozones in seemingly homogeneous

environments would have been experienced as distinctive. The identification in the central Kalahari of some !Xõo groups with “soft sand” and others with places where eland are plentiful (Traill 1974), and the distinctions drawn between the “berg”, “grass”, and “flat” bushmen in the arid Karoo (Deacon 1986) illustrates this point. The /Xam testimonies also indicate that distinctions may even be based on what people eat and how they acquire and process their food (*ibid.*:151). For example, whereas the Grass Bushmen used skin sieves to extract termite eggs and made arrowheads of white quartz, the Flat Bushmen used mat sieves, manufactured arrowheads from metal, did not make or trade in ostrich eggshell beads, wore skins from dassies and jackals, and did not eat baboons - the Berg Bushmen manufactured and bartered ostrich eggshell beads, wore cat skins, and also did occasionally eat baboons. On a different scale are the distinctions drawn between foragers, pastoralists, and agro-pastoralists. These are based primarily on subsistence economy, namely hunting and gathering, herding, and farming, and also involve obvious differences and close correlations in terms of physical appearance, language, material culture, social organisation, and also favoured ecological exploitation (De Vos 1982:12; Barnard & Taylor 2002:232). The relationship between people, environment, and culture is fittingly summarised by Eibl-Eibesfeldt and Hitchcock (1991:55), who state that:

> By different specialisations animals exploit their environments in different ways and can therefore coexist with little competition. People adapt culturally to different subsistence strategies in a similar way; tapping different resources permits them to coexist. The adaptations are reflected in their material cultures, skills, customs, and ideology, which are interlocked in a functional system that takes time to develop.

Among the social adaptations to the hunting-and-gathering way of life in the arid savannah habitat, the reciprocal exchange system documented and analysed by Wiessner (1982) and the well-established land rights and nexus systems described by Lee (1979) and Heinz (1979) are significant - these are precisely the types of cultural adaptations Eibl-Eibesfeldt and Hitchcock refers to above, in addition to which the occurrence of collective healing or *trance-dance* performances may also be added.

Style and identity

In consideration of the above, technology, especially in terms of material culture and environmental specialisation, may also have functioned as an indication of social identity and ethnic affiliation. It is generally accepted that cultural objects are not

manufactured in isolation, but are made by individuals who are part of their larger social community. This is fluently articulated by Dobres (2000:128), who notes that

> … even when single technicians work alone to fabricate, use, and repair material objects for some explicitly functional end, they are still part of their social community, a collectivity within which they develop their technical skills, learn to value them, and within which they display gestural competence and practical knowledge in acceptable or challenging ways.

As a result, and since artefacts are crafted within cultural context, material culture can provide archaeologists with some insight into the development of social boundaries. In addition, and given that it is recognised that ethnic groups manufacture tools in culturally specific ways (Sackett 1973; 1977; 1985; Close 1978), it is to be expected that, once the in-group recognise these differences consciously, such unique forms assume a significant meaning to the group (Wiessner 1983). Conscious style has symbolic ethnic meaning to individuals in the group, while unconscious style is elucidated by the investigator (Clark 2004:43). This implies that at least some aspects of material culture will be ethnically marked and have meaningful importance to the group.

The introduction of “style” to southern African archaeology was facilitated by the arrival of Miles Burkitt in South Africa in 1928 (Lewis-Williams 1995b:70). Burkitt advocated that the methods employed in the study of geology and lithic technologies also be applied to rock art. Thus, typology became “style”, and stratigraphy became super-positioning. Restricted by this empiricist geological paradigm, Burkitt (1928:156) was at a loss when faced by questions of meaning, stating: “As regards the motives which prompted the execution of the paintings and engravings, little can be said.” (see Lewis-Williams 1983:4). Although style remains a “key concept” in rock art research (Whitley 2001:25), the utility of style as an analytical scheme continues to be debated. Style nevertheless offers a convenient starting-point for systematic research, and the creation of typologies. Indeed, the classification of imagery into stylistic and relative chronological sequences is often based on stylistic features. Stylistic sequences are also frequently established on the basis of the differential weathering and super-imposition of motifs as well as their formal attributes and consistent associations. This information is used to produce a chronology in which rock art styles are established in relation to other rock art styles. In some circumstances, parts of the sequence may be anchored to absolute dates through the depiction of items of material culture dated in

excavated contexts (Wendt 1976; Thackeray *et al.* 1981; Thackeray 1983; Morris & Beaumont 2001; Henshilwood *et al.* 2002), the depiction of extinct fauna or contact items (Fock 1979), or by relating changes in the art to environmental changes, such as the Australian Arnhem Land rock art sequence (Chaloupka 1993).

Ethnographic studies indicate that aspects of material culture frequently correlate with the spatial distribution of ethnic groups (Wiessner 1983; Hodder 1985; Larick 1986; Sampson 1988). In addition to the differentiation in raw materials used for arrowhead manufacture amongst the /Xam (Deacon 1986), the study by Wiessner (1983) offers much insight into the potential functions of material culture in terms of signalling ethnic affiliation. Wiessner conducted an extensive survey of reactions to stylistic variation in artefacts amongst !Kung, !Xõo, and G/wi San groups. In the Kalahari, arrows are widely exchanged as part of *hxaro* gift-exchange systems, and approximately forty percent of arrows owned by any !Kung individual may have been acquired from as far as 100 kilometres away (*ibid.*:261). Most individuals interviewed were of the opinion that they could in fact identity the arrows belonging to other hunters within the group, either by distinctive attributes of barbs or by body shape (*ibid.*:262). The narrative by /Han≠kass'o entitled *The marking of arrows* (Bleek & Lloyd 1911:360) describes how individual hunters mark, by incising linear designs into arrow-shafts and colour-coding them with *tto* or red ochre, their arrows so that hunters may identify their own when hunting. Whereas such assertive artefact style is believed to transmit information about and therefore reflect individual identity, emblemic style may communicate norms, values, goals, and objective social attributes of collective social identities (Wiessner 1983:257). Body shape differences are generally more marked amongst different band clusters, and therefore also dialect groups. When asked to comment on arrows made by !Xõo from the Lonetree area, !Xõo from Bere recognised them as coming from !Xõo "who are not our people" (*ibid.*:267), a phrase, as discussed above, frequently used to refer to individuals from different band nexuses (Heinz 1975; Barnard 1992). When confronted with arrows from different San groups, !Kung individuals would express their concern since unfamiliar arrows would obviously signify the presence of strangers. If however, the arrows are unknown but stylistically and technologically analogous to those of the resident group, "one could be fairly sure that he shares similar values around hunting, landrights, and general conduct" (Wiessner 1983:269). Thus, and in addition to signalling information regarding the individual identity of the owner, arrowheads and arrows also communicate clear messages to members of dialect clusters or band nexuses as to whether they derive from a different group and whether those individuals hold similar values to the resident group.

Although additional aspects of material culture may vary according to ethnic group and communicate norms and values, these may not necessarily be recognisable to individuals from different groups (Jones 1997:122). Conversely, and even though these attributes may not have any emically-ascribed ethnic connotation, they can still be used to map, in archaeological terms, the distribution of ethnic groups (Clark 2004:45). Styles may however also crosscut social boundaries (*e.g.* Hodder 1985), and instances in which items that are manufactured locally are traded across social boundary lines consequently obscures the existence of ethnic groups (Dietler & Heirbech 1998). Thus, discovering social boundaries in a coarse-grained archaeological record remains a difficult task that may not always materialise, even when well-defined ethnic distinctions did or are known to have existed in the past. For example, and in addition to extensive social links, via either consanguinal or affinal kinship relations, *hxaro* partnerships, or name-sake relationships, Wiessner (1983:255) points out that the !Kung, G/wi, !Xõo and the Nharo are in fact

> … remarkably homogeneous in their economic base, technological level, ideological systems and social organisation, considering that they come from three mutually unintelligible language groups spread out over an area about half the size of France. They share about 90% of each others material culture …

Although this statement offers a fitting summary of the problems faced when attempting to recognise and define archaeological ethno-cultural regions, several researchers have managed to achieve some success in this regard (see for example Evers 1984 for the association between Bantu-speaker ceramics and identity; Ningsheng 1994 for bronzes and ethnic groups in China; Nietzel 1995 for Chacoan ceramic diversity and identity; Kratz & Pido 2000 for correlations between Okiek and Maasai material culture and ethnicity; Smith & Webley 2000 for Khoe ceramic diversity). With reference to correlations between rock art and specific ethnic or identity-conscious groups, it was noted in Chapter One that, in a few cases, such as those involving the Northern-Sotho of Limpopo, the Kalanga and Chewa of Eastern Zambia and Malawi, and the San of Nomansland in the Eastern Cape, direct links between the arts and contemporary ethnicities have been established (Smith 1995, 2006; Blundell 2004; Namono & Eastwood 2005). In terms of engraved rock art, Wilman (1933), in drawing from research by Bleek (1927), also established a direct correlation between the ||N-!k'e-speaking San of the Langeberg-Korannaberg region and the engraved arts of the Northern Cape north of the Orange. Although not explicitly searching for links between

identity-conscious groups and rock art, the spatially-oriented research by Manhire *et al.* (1983) also provides insight into the association between seasonal movements and social activities and the occurrence of specific stylistic and thematic categories of painted imagery in the rock art of the south-western Cape.

It is generally accepted that, by mapping the geographic extent of cultural objects, insight into spheres of interaction, territorial dimensions and boundaries, and intensity of interaction may be gained. With reference to engraved rock art, the question of whether similar conclusions may be reached through an analysis of the geographic ranges of particular image-types will be explored in Chapter Four. In Chapter Five the possible impact that the both the individual agent and interaction between San and pastoralist and agro-pastoralist peoples may have had on the artistic repertoire of foragers will be explored. Furthermore, the question of whether the distribution of particular image-sets may be viewed as suggestive of the former territorial ranges of identity-conscious groups will also be attended to. Chapter Six will explore the association between rock art, language, territoriality, and ethnic identity. Thus, in the next three chapters three important questions will be asked. First, do engravings provide a comprehensive rationalisation of the various cultural groups who inhabited and traversed the landscape? Second, can the exact social and cultural dynamics of these ever more complex relational situations be deduced from engraved art alone? Third, how effective is engraved art in affirming and communicating social identity or ethnic affiliation, and are there other, more proficient means by which southern African foraging peoples could have signalled their respective ethnic affiliations?

CHAPTER FOUR

Engraved Data and Method

The preceding chapter established that ethnic consciousness and affiliation is recurrently expressed in terms of geographic location, place of birth, kinship affiliation, language, and also material culture. Objects and artefacts present a convenient and efficient means of mediating social relations and of constructing and expressing ethnicity (Jones 1997:118), and in this chapter I will focus on an especially expressive component of San forager culture - engraved rock art. As noted in Chapter Three, and in spite of its interpretative complexity, rock art is a potentially sensitive indicator of ethnic affiliation (*e.g.* DeCorse 1994; David & Lourandos 1998; Pluciennik 2002; Quinlan & Woody 2003; Smith 2006). There is little doubt regarding the capacity of rock art to communicate messages and meanings (Lewis-Williams 1998a). What is contested are the precise meanings of the messages communicated by the art, and also of how to attain insight into the world-views and cosmologies of the artists. Rock art may convey both intended (by the artists) and perceived (by archaeologists) information, and without an emic understanding of the spheres in which the art was created, prehistoric imagery may easily be construed to “mean” something entirely different from what the artists actually intended (Lewis-Williams 1980; Heyd 2005). I will return to the matter of “meaning” in a moment.

This project draws data from a field-survey of a portion of the North West Province and the Northern Cape Province between the towns of Klerksdorp in the east and Olifantshoek in the west. An initial survey schedule was drawn up from publications by researchers who have conducted investigations in the region (*e.g.* Wilman 1933; Van Riet Lowe 1952; Fock 1972, 1979; Fock & Fock 1984, 1989; Mason 1962; Slack 1962). The bulk of the fieldwork was carried out during the months of January, March, June, and October of 2006. As the project progressed, several engraved locations were revisited during February and May of 2007. Whereas most of the fieldwork was carried out without assistance, Jeremy Hollmann from the Natal Museum assisted me during the final research expedition.

The primary data source for this project comprises 25 engraved sites from the central interior and approximately 20 engraved and painted sites to the north and south of the region upon which this investigation focuses. Although the majority of known engraved sites were visited, several sites could not be accessed and not all engraved images could be recorded.

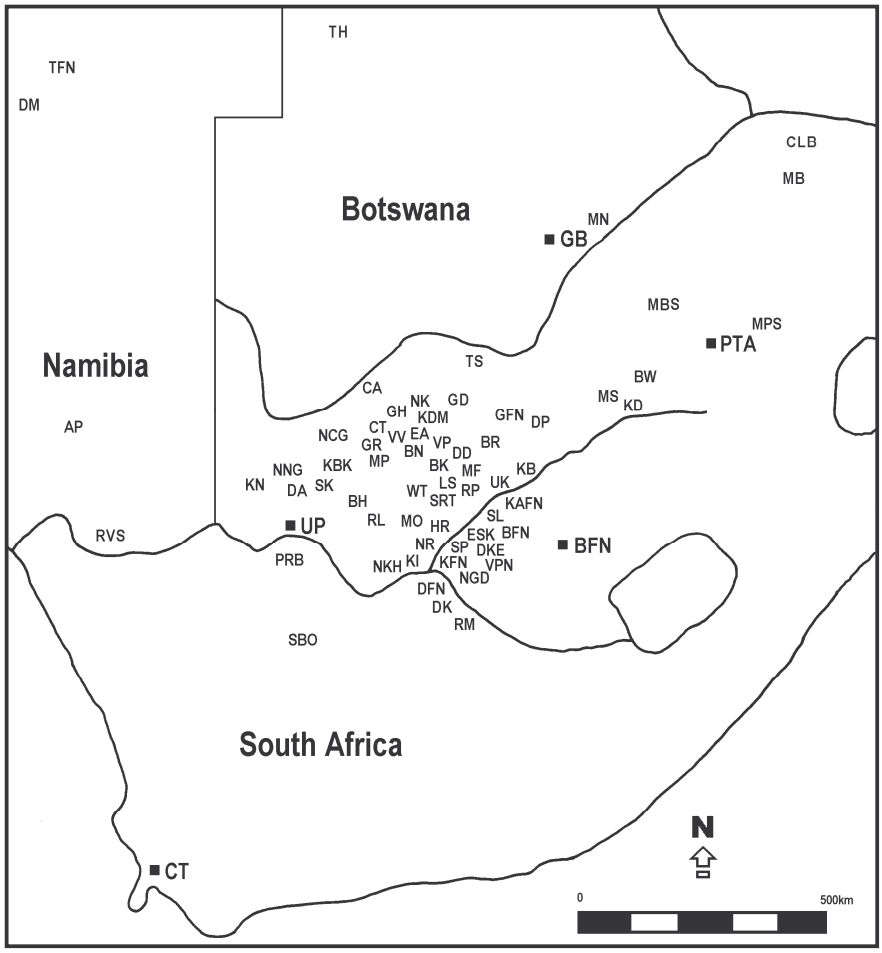


FIG.4.1. Map of study region indicating the locations of rock art sites as discussed in text. Urban centres are shown as: PTA Pretoria, BFN Bloemfontein, CT Cape Town, GB Gaberone, UP Upington. Engraved sites are shown as: AP Apollo 11; BFN Brandfontein; BH Beeshoek; BK Basoetoekraal; BN Bernau; BR Boschrand; BW Bosworth; CA Catharina; CLB Central Limpopo Basin; CT Content; DA Delela; DC De Kalk; DD Diewedraai; DFN Disselfontein; DKE Driekopseiland; DM Dâures Massif; DP Doornpoort; EA Elwina; ESK Eilandshoek; GD Geduld; GF Gestoptefontein; GH Gemsbokhoek; GR Gruisrand; HR Home Rule; KB Kareeboom; KBK Klipbak; KD Klerksdrift; KDM Kinderdam; KFN Klipfontein; KAFN Kalkfontein; KI Katlani; KN Klapin; LS Lot Six; MB Makgabeng Plateau; MBS Magaliesberg Sites; MF Maraetjiesfontein; MN Matsieng; MO Modimo; MP Maruping; MPS Mooiplaas; MS Matjiesspruit; NCG Ncweng; NGD Nooitgedacht; NNG Nchwaneng; NK Niekerksrus; NKH Niekerkshoop; NR Nazreth; PRB Piet Rooiberg; RL Rocklands; RM Ramah; RP Rietput East; RVS Richtersveld Sites; SBO Springbokoog; SK Steenkamp; SP Schoolplatz; SRT Schweizer-Reneke Townlands; SL Stowlands; TFN Twyfelfontein; TH Tsodilo Hills; TS Thaba Sione; UK Uitkyk; VP Vlakplaas; VPN Vaalpan; VV Verdwaalvlakte; WT Weltevreden.

Access to engraved locations was refused in only two instances. This occurred in the western areas of the interior where recent land-claims on what appears to involve only the most profitable farms in the region seems to have made landowners wary of strangers, especially researchers showing interest in the archaeological features of their properties. As a result, some use is made of the publications mentioned above, with several illustrations derived from re-drawings of rubbings or photographs as published in Fock (1979, 1983), Fock and Fock (1984, 1989), and Dowson (1994).

Apart from problems pertaining to site access, it must also be taken into consideration that differential preservation and post-production damage to engraved imagery may also result in a somewhat skewed sample of the art in the region. For example, once an engraving has been pecked or abraded into the rock it becomes susceptible to both chemical and physical agents of weathering. Differential weathering has also been used to estimate relative age differences (Lorblanchet 1992), and is based on the notion that a less weathered engraving will be younger than an engraving with greater signs of weathering. However, there are other factors which affect the rates of weathering, such as the micro-environment, depth of engravings, seasonal inundation, differential vegetation cover, and so forth. Even so, there are some instances where significant differences in weathering clearly indicate significant differences in age. It is generally assumed that the more weathered and deteriorated a depiction, the older it must be, and that one can use such visual differences to say which art is younger or older. An early attempt to date southern African rock art on this basis was made by Stow (1905:30), who suggested that an engraving of an eland near Riverton could be at least 2500 years old. Willcox (1963:67) also attempted to establish and use an estimated dolerite weathering rate of 1 mm per 500 years to infer that some engravings were not older than 500 years. Physical and chemical changes in the condition of rock art depend on local conditions which may result in rapid weathering in one case and extremely slow weathering in another, even on a single rock-surface. It must furthermore be noted that a significant portion of engraved imagery may in fact have been removed from engraved locations, with classical depictions seemingly comprising the most popular candidates for removal. In some instances the scars of removal can still be seen, but in most cases it may be impossible to identify the positions from which imagery have been removed. Mining activities, especially along the Harts River, and the alteration of former water courses, such as in the case of the Wentzel Dam at Schweizer-Reneke, may also have led to the disappearance and inundation of many engraved sites. Post-production human use may have also resulted in the differential preservation of some engraved images. Rubbing is an unusual engraving technique

and in most cases it is an additive, post-engraving mark that focuses on select imagery. For instance, at Thaba Sione, the foreleg, back, nuchal hump and horn of an engraved white rhinoceros and the belly of an adjacent, finely engraved eland bear smooth, finger-width rubbed lines (Ouzman 2001: fig. 4). One of these rubbed patches has been carefully placed on the eland's nuchal hump, an anatomical area considered significant in San shamanistic practice (Lewis-Williams 1981:95). An engraving of a dual-sex eland, also, has two precisely incised rectangular outlines that circumscribe patches of human rubbing (Ouzman 2001: fig. 3a). Similarly, a nearby incised eland has a glossy, very noticeably rubbed forelock (Ouzman 2001: fig. 3b), the area where the powerful /Xam trickster deity /Kaggen liked to sit (Bleek 1924:11). Comparable instances of engraved depictions having been rubbed or smoothed are widespread. For example, at Klipbak and Nchwaneng eland have been rubbed smooth, to the extent that, in some instances, the depictions are hardly visible, and at Kinderdam an entire engraved panel, which also includes several geometric designs seemingly juxtaposed with representational figures, have also been rubbed smooth. It is therefore apparent that differential preservation and post-production damage to and the removal of engraved imagery may certainly have resulted in a somewhat skewed sample of the art in the region, justifiably causing some concern as to how representative the remaining portion of the engraved art in the central interior really is.



FIG.4.2. Scars from the removal of engraved images at Kinderdam.



FIG.4.3. Partially removed engraved rubbing-stone from Kareeboom.



FIG.4.4. The Schweizer-Reneke Townlands engraved site with the Wentzel Dam in the background.



FIG.4.5. Large numbers of removed engraved boulders are stored in the basements of museums and universities across South Africa. National Culture History Museum, Pretoria.

As regards recording engraved imagery, the creation of some form of facsimile of existing rock art is clearly desirable, allowing further scientific study, detailed non-contact measurement and, via archiving, partial protection against loss in the event of destruction. There are three primary approaches to the recording of rock engravings, namely photography, through tracing engraved images onto clear plastic or polythene sheets, and by means of making rubbings of engraved images (Stanbury & Clegg 1990). According Gerhard Fock (1979) there are no hard and fast rules for the recording of engraved imagery. Each site and each engraving present unique challenges and opportunities as per the variables related to the preservation and visibility of the art, the particular lighting conditions and the colour and texture of the rock surface, and the quality of the stone itself. Apart from photography and tracings, Fock made extensive use of the rubbing technique for the copying of engraved images, while some of the more prominent images were copied by means of latex casts.

Photography is an easy, affordable, non-intrusive, and therefore the most obvious technique of documenting engraved imagery, but not all engravings are sufficiently photographable as to allow the capture of an accurate representation of the image (*e.g.* Dowson 1992). Many engravings are severely smoothed and weathered and as a result it is difficult to distinguish between the surrounding rock surface and the actual

engraved image. Much success has however been achieved by photographing engraved images at night, during which the source of light can be manipulated as to provide the most suitable lighting conditions and the most optimum visibility of the imagery. Although the tremendous visual impact of high-quality photographs is undeniable, it is not always possible to obtain ideal and fully representative images. The rubbing technique, by which copies of engraved imagery are acquired through the rubbing of the image onto clear paper or film sheets, although visually attractive, is also rather limited in nature. If the rock surface is not completely smooth the irregularities tend to obscure the finer details and exact outline of the engraved image, and in the case of superimposed depictions it becomes impossible to determine which image overlies another. There is also much concern, and with good reason, about the damage excessive contact with the rock surface, through rubbing, can cause to engraved imagery (Dowson 1992; Simpson *et al.* 2004).

In light of the above it is clear that the tracing technique is the preferred technique for the documentation of rock engravings (Johnson 1957; Dowson 1992). The recreation of accurate representations of engraved imagery is however greatly dependent on the decisions made by the individual researcher. Erroneously selecting some features for inclusion while others are excluded, and the wrong impression of which images are superimposed by others, may result in imprecise representations of images. Large amounts of exposure to and experience in tracing engraved imagery are almost certainly the best means of optimising the levels of objectivity and therefore also accuracy. Recent experimentation with computer-aided laser scanning techniques and three-dimensional modelling from photographs for the recording of engravings has thus far provided reasonably pleasing results (see Chandler *et al.* 2005). Although these methods do overcome the limitations presented by the two-dimensional representation of engraved imagery, and although they are not nearly as invasive and potentially damaging as tracing and rubbing, the high cost of the equipment and the specialist expertise required results in the restricted use of these new methods. For the purpose of this study, and alongside the use of photography, tracing constitutes the principal technique by which engraved imagery was recorded. Sheets of clear plastic ranging from 50 to 100 microns in thickness and measuring 480 mm by 3 m were placed directly on top of the images and secured with strips of 50 mm white adhesive tape.



FIG.4.6. Photograph of a complex engraved panel at Bosworth.



FIG.4.7. Traced and re-drawn version of the photograph illustrated above.

The images were then systematically traced in black with Pilot Ultra Fine permanent markers, the natural features of the rock surface in blue with Pilot Extra Fine permanent markers, and any subsequent and more recent scratches and lichen growth in red with Sanford Fine Point permanent markers. Each tracing sheet was given a sheet number matching the numbers allocated to each site as per the site-record sheets. The plastic tracing sheets were subsequently reassembled and the images were redrawn, with Pilot Fineliner and Unipin Fineline pens, onto A1 and A3 size 60 gsm tracing sheets. These were scanned and printed out in A4 size sheets and ultimately re-scanned, at a resolution of 200 to 300 dpi, into an allocated file in the Windows Paint Programme. The digital image processing of engraved imagery significantly reduce the amount of time required for the redrawing of such images and adds generously to the options available with regards the illustration of imagery. Images may be illustrated in any colour, in the more traditional outline depiction (*e.g.* Stow 1905; Wilman 1933; Fock 1969; Bahn & Vertut 1997; Deacon 1988; Ouzman 1995, 1996), in inverted filled silhouette depictions (*e.g.* Fock 1969; Dowson 1992; Coulson & Campbell 2001; Ouzman 2001), or in the more ideal finely stippled or "airbrushed" form (*e.g.* Wilman 1933; Dowson 1992; Ouzman 1995, 1996; Walker 1998; Arca 2004; Hyder 2004; Loendorf 2004; Taçon & Ouzman 2004; Whitley *et al.* 2004). For the purpose of this study all images are illustrated in the form of filled silhouettes (see Stow 1905; Wilman 1933; Morris 1988; Dowson 1992; Maggs 1995; Ouzman 1995; Walker 1998; Ouzman 2002; Hyder 2004; Whitley *et al.* 2004).

In addition to documenting the engraved imagery by way of photography and tracing, a number of additional site-details were recorded on site record sheets (Fig. 4.8). Each site was allocated a unique site number (*e.g.* 01, 02 etc.) and the unique numbers of the 1:50 000 topographical maps on which the sites may be located were also recorded. This would enable future researchers to revisit sites without much difficulty, since these sheets will be stored at the Rock Art Research Institute for future reference and research. Additional information recorded includes the date of the first visit, the name of the farm, the district in which the farm is situated, and the site coordinates. The elevation of the site, it orientation or compass bearing, and its position in the landscape were also recorded. Space was provided to note initial impressions with regards the potential artistic traditions present at the site, characteristic elements, and to provide a rough sketch of how to access the site, and any significant hydrological and acoustic characteristics were also noted. All photographs taken and tracings made at the site were also noted on the sheets. The contact details of landowners, residents, and staff were also recorded.

Site No **Map No**

Rock Art Recording Sheet

North West Province

R.F. Rifkin MA Research 2006-2007

Date of visit ……

Farm name ……

Site Name ……..

District ……

Map reference South ……

East ……..

Elevation ……..

Orientation ……..

Position

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Tradition / s

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Hydrology ……

Acoustics ……

Shelter ……..

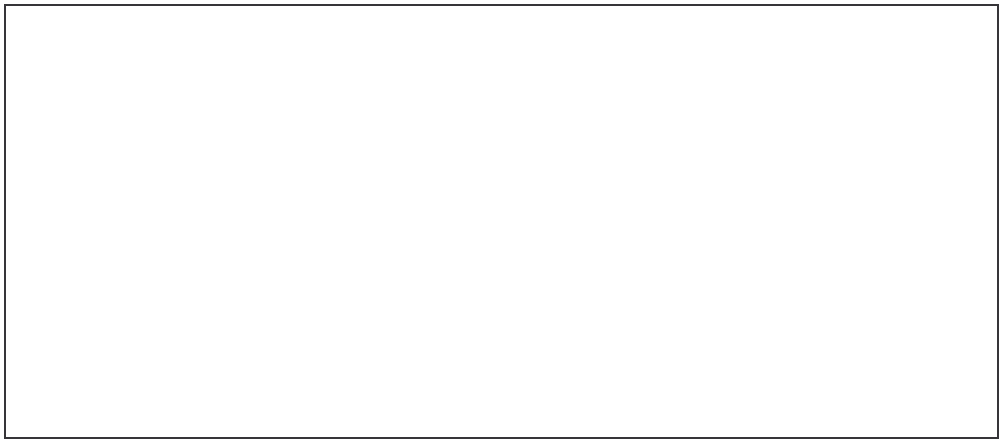
Characteristic elements

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Photographs

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Tracings

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Contact details

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FIG.4.8. An example of the site record sheets used to record the positions, characteristics, and contact details of engraved locations during this study.

In order to classify rock art into units that can be easily described and compared with one another and with similar rock art units in other areas and periods, the concepts *tradition* and *style* are frequently used. Traditions and styles are descriptive, organisational units based on traits shared by a group of images. These traits include

characteristic subject matter, the forms used to illustrate these subjects, the compositional relationships typically noted between them, and to a lesser extent, the technique used to produce the designs, and the specific landscape setting in which they are found. Taken together, these criteria produce an overall distinctness of expression that enables us to recognise a characteristic pattern of depiction for each rock art style or tradition.

With regards the meanings of painted and engraved images, ethnographic analogy has always played an important role in archaeological analysis and in the study of pre-historic art, with ethnohistory and ethnography currently regarded as providing the "key" to rock art interpretation (Lewis-Williams 1981). The danger of over-reliance on ethnographic data to model the social and cultural processes of prehistory is that "we can never discover in the data of the past any generalisations that we do not already know" (Bailey 1983:174, see also Humphreys 2005; Mitchell 2005). Moreover, "over millennia, the postulated relation [between ethnography and art] grows more tenuous" (Lewis-Williams 1984a:229). Ethnography and anthropological theory offer an essential starting point for archaeological interpretation, since behaviour in the present provides our only data for modelling the social dynamics that create archaeological records. I will return to the question of "meaning" shortly. For the moment, I will explore two key analytical concepts through which insight into the social or ethnic affiliations of the artists, as individuals, and the meanings they intend to convey via their art may be achieved, namely style and theme. As noted by Lewis-Williams (1995b:78; see also Dowson 1988:116), "… the hand of the individual can be discerned not just in 'style' but also in content". Stylistic and thematic components in rock art may also provide an indication of a relative chronological sequence to which respective artistic traditions relate: painted forager arts are characterised by specific sets of subject matter and manners of depiction (Lewis-Williams 1984, 2006), and differences between the arts of foragers and pastoralists, which are in turn characterised by differing thematic and contextual associations, can also be discerned.

Interaction, style, and social identity

The study of ethnic interaction is generally dependent on the identification of style (Kusimba 2003:103), with stylistic differences and similarities believed to signify the degree of cultural affinity among social groups through time or in terms of shared cultural traditions. Consequently, the most frequently employed approach to explaining stylistic variation is explicitly interactionist (Franklin 1994; Voss & Young 1995). Simply put, style may be defined as a way of doing something, and in relation to rock art, may

also be referred to as “manner of depiction” (Layton 1992:183). Social interaction theory (Barton *et al.* 1994:186) defines style in a normative way as repetitive behaviour that acts as a kind of psychological “filter” to constrain variety and reduce information overload. More specifically, the social interaction model of style stresses two aspects of style which are of most relevance to inferring prehistoric social organisation and interaction (Franklin 1994:279). To begin with, similarities between stylistic attributes from different regions or from areas within respective sites are ascertained. Corresponding attributes, in turn, are believed to signify the extent and intensity of interaction between social units: the higher the degree of stylistic similarities between sites, and the lower the degree of stylistic homogeneity within sites, the greater the degree of interaction between social units (Plog 1980). Style has thus been assumed to be diagnostic of specific cultural units which are in turn associated with corresponding temporal spans (Lewis-Williams 1986:96; Francis 2001:223). However, and whereas clearly distinguishable styles are generally assumed to be restricted to a specific time and place, and in many cases may indicate a specific cultural or ethnic group, traditions, in contrast, comprise a set of related styles for which a spatial, temporal, and cultural continuity can be demonstrated. Flood (1997:179) prefers to use the term tradition, as it “... implies culture contact and continuity but not necessarily close similarity or uniformity”. Use of this term is appropriate, as it covers “... long-term continuity in either individual technologies or attributes” and “a temporally ordered series of archaeological phases or cultures that show cultural similarities to each other” (*ibid.*; see also Bahn 2001:452; Franklin 2007:11). Furthermore, and as noted by Clegg (1987:237), tradition involves continuity of activities over both a considerable time, and many instances of the activity. Conversely, style involves change in the form of activities over time or space. Style changes are “accidents” in the philosophical sense (Mill 1961:85) because style modifies form, but not content. Accordingly, one tradition may continue through many changes of style: one style may apply to many different traditions, through the associated artefacts. Traditions cannot be separated into perfectly distinct entities because some of their defining criteria vary continuously over space and time, as motifs, subject matter, compositional structures, and techniques increase or decrease in popularity. Geographic groups of artists often favour some forms and compositions over others, thereby giving the art of a particular tradition distinctly local flavour, much like regional dialects in a language. Such variants may constitute styles within the tradition. In addition, some blending almost always occurs among traditions that are geographically and temporally associated. Artists may even have borrowed designs from sites seen during travel to distant places, or from much older styles and traditions, thereby bridging large gaps in space and time. This blending

does not preclude defining specific traditions and styles, since precise boundaries in any multidimensional classification scheme dealing with such a flexible subject are always somewhat arbitrarily fixed. Evidently, more than one art tradition can coexist within a single cultural group.

The social interaction approach to style has received considerable criticism (Voss & Young 1995:81), which is aptly summarised by Hill (1985:366) who argues that, in addition to the apparent inability of theories of social interaction to reliably predict the distribution of stylistic attributes, interaction probably plays a minimal role in the explanation of stylistic diversity. It is furthermore argued that (*ibid.*:382):

> Social interaction cannot explain stylistic variability and change because 'interaction' is simply the means by which ideas are diffused - and diffusion alone never accounts for adoption or nonadoption of any cultural trait. There are independent material reasons why traits, including elements of style, are adopted or not.

While this may be true, it can also be argued that because interaction facilitates social comparison, and seeing as the communication of ethnic affiliation through style is obviously dependent on the recognition of stylistic attributes within social spheres of interaction (Wobst 1977; Gamble 1998), one should be careful not to thrust aside the social interaction approach to style too hastily (Voss 1982:42). In contrast to the criticisms presented by Hill (1985), interaction, as will be seen shortly, may frequently have been the very driving force behind stylistic diversity. In recognition of the limitations of interactionist accounts of stylistic variation, the focus of stylistic theories shifted towards that of the transmission of information by means of stylistic attributes (Voss & Young 1995:82). The information exchange theory of style (*e.g.* Wobst 1977; Wiessner 1983) views art as an act of social communication defined by style. Wiessner (1983, 1985, 1989) developed the notion of style as a means of active communication during her research on the expression of social identity amongst Kalahari San. Accordingly, it is believed that both individual- and group-identity is based on the universal human cognitive process of social comparison through which "the self is differentiated from others and the in-group from the out-group" (Wiessner 1983:191). Style is therefore viewed as one of many channels through which identity may be projected for others to see. Following Wiessner (1983), one may furthermore distinguish between *assertive* and *emblemic* style. Portable art almost certainly represents assertive style, or formal variation in material culture which is "personally-based and which carries information supporting individual identity" (*ibid.*:258). It

functions on an idiosyncratic level to differentiate individuals from similar others. Parietal art, on the other hand, most likely expresses emblemic style, or "normal variation in material culture that has a distinct referent and that transmits a clear message to a defined target population" (*ibid.*:257). By definition, emblemic style always carries a symbolic loading, whereas assertive style does not necessarily do so (Clark 1989). Although emblemic style does not reflect degrees of interaction across group boundaries, it does communicate information about such boundaries (Jones 1997:114): emblemic style is therefore expected to manifest as distinct and discreet patterns of distribution representative of the extent of contact and interaction between different socio-cultural groups. The question of whether this is in fact the case with engraved art will be addressed later in this chapter. Attributes of style related to group affiliation should be expected to occur almost exclusively on artefacts that are visible and used in contexts that ensure their visibility to potential observers (Wobst 1977). Gamble (1998:433) has also proposed that material culture displaying style is least prominent in the spheres involving the immediate household, relatives, and friends where daily contact makes coding and stylistic transmission of information unnecessary. Instead, it is in the context of extended social networks, in which stylistic attributes would be particularly observable, that symbolic or stylistic resources are most effectively used (*ibid.*:440).

As asserted by Hodder (1986, see also Wiessner 1984:194, 1985:161), style is used to manage the context by manipulating the message. With regard to artefacts, stylistic attributes reflect decisions about the social context of production and utilisation. Style may therefore be called "anti-normative" from the information exchange perspective: it emphasises, rather than constrains variety and uses the exposed dissimilarities to monitor the volume of information flow both within and between societies. For example, and as seen in Chapter Three, *hxaro* exchange relationships lie at the centre of !Kung San reciprocal relations and social networks (Wiessner 1986:105; Lee 2003:119). *Hxaro* networks facilitate access to resources of surrounding populations while also preserving a certain degree of autonomy (Wiessner 1986; see Lewis-Williams 1984): *hxaro* is therefore not only social in nature but also economic, reducing risk by creating relationships with people who live in different areas with different resources, and the wide geographic spread of *hxaro* partners permits individuals and groups to journey across territorial boundaries and participate in a variety of social spheres and activities. Aside from the obvious social and economic functions of *hxaro* gifts, the stylistic decorative attributes of such items may have fulfilled a crucial role in the constitution of San sociality. In this regard, Braun and Plog (1982:510) notes that,

> Decorating, in fact, may be viewed as but one of many types of activity which, through their visibility, constantly transmit information about individual social identities to the participants in a network … Such forms of communication make social intercourse more predictable, by reducing uncertainties about social identity relationships … among directly interacting parties, and by providing clues to expected patterns of behaviour.

The exchange, between individuals, of decorated arrows, karosses, bags, and ostrich eggshell pendants and containers may therefore be viewed as the exchange not only of objects, but also of assertive individual stylistic traits which may concurrently also signify the social groups to which the individual participants belong. By the addition of assertive stylistic decorative elements, the physical object, while undoubtedly valued in practical terms, is transformed into a personalised pledge of socio-economic collaboration, and this constitutes the true significance of the gift. Gell (1998:160), in referring to the correlation between Maori art style and the exchange networks through which personal identity is negotiated (Hanson 1983), rejects the suggestion that decoration is valued for its own sake, stating that decorated artefacts instead communicate certain aspects of their owner's personhood. Equally, Wiessner (1983) suggests that there would certainly have been some advantage in creating a positive self-image in terms of natural selection, since it would have encouraged others to engage in advantageous social relations with agreeable individuals. Assertive style may have been one way of achieving this, and Wiessner (1983:258) cites the desire to present a positive image to prospective partners in reciprocity and to members of the opposite sex as the most frequent motive for stylistic effort given by San informants.

Style and engraved art

The different ways in which the engravings of the interior are rendered offers some indication for stylistic sequences that may have temporal and perhaps also social connotations (Butzer *et al.* 1979:1203). Although Burkitt (1928) and Wilman (1933) distinguished several engraved "classes" and "styles", subsequent classifications have tended to merge the categories of content, style, technique, and chronology (*e.g.* Goodwin 1936; Van Riet Lowe 1937; Willcox 1963; Rudner & Rudner 1970; Deacon 1994; Walker 1998). Gerhard Fock (1979) developed a typology based primarily on technique, discerning six methods by which engravings could have been produced, namely: i) scraped engravings produced by scratching multiple, closely spaces lines; ii) polished engravings produced by rubbing and grinding down the rock surface to create

shallow forms; iii) incised engravings produced by pressure grooving; iv) pecked engravings produced by controlled, uniform impact points that form dots or dashes depending on whether the blows were vertical or inclined; and v) hacked engravings produced by uncontrolled, vertical or inclined irregular blows. Fock further recognised a special, “classical” technique (vi), that produced engravings of animals, most frequently eland, rhinoceros, buffalo, and hippopotamus, pecked in silhouette to give a three-dimensional effect by either leaving colour markings, skin folds, or bony protuberances un-pecked, or through deeper incision of partial outlines that terminate in sharp, deep external profiles. Stylistic attributes can also be correlated with this technological classification: whereas pecked engravings are depicted in either outline, as fully pecked silhouettes, or in combinations of the outline and silhouette techniques, with partial pecking of the enclosed surface, hacked engravings are generally “fresh”, un-patinated, and characterised by depictions of abstract goat- and cattle-like figures and human figures in postures atypical of forager art (Lewis-Williams 2006b).

However, and because superpositioning, on which stylistic-chronological sequences are most often founded (Thackeray 1983:21; Lewis-Williams 2002:41), is both atypical of and very much undetectable in the engraved art of the central interior, there is an impression of incoherence in terms of clearly distinguishable sequential styles. While up to five individual superimposed painted layers have been discerned at, for example, Storm Shelter in the south-eastern Drakensberg Mountains (Blundell 2004:116), and whilst there is indeed some sort of patterning with regards the placement of specific images over other images (Lewis-Williams 2002:29), engraved images are recurrently placed adjacent to instead of over one another. Furthermore, and despite the fact that images comprise either outline, filled outline, classical, or hacked styles and techniques, it remains difficult to determine the precise relationships between individual images. In general terms, pecked engravings in the classical technique are viewed as intermediate in age and younger than many rough outline engravings but older than outlined animals that are simplistic or poorly proportioned. Although “classicals” are limited in number, they are linked in both style and technology to other, more common representations that lack the unmistakable three-dimensional effect, namely animals and humans in silhouette and profile, as well as naturalistic silhouettes that leave various character marks un-pecked (Butzer *et al.* 1979:1202). These “classical and related” engravings may not be of the same age at every site, but they do provide a conveniently broad category of intermediate antiquity.

In subjective terms, the interior engravings show more continuity than disjunction in terms of style, technique, content, and physical condition (Butzer *et al.* 1979:1210; Thackeray *et al.* 1981:66; Beaumont & Vogel 1989:73). There is, nevertheless, also a degree of systematic temporal and spatial variation in the engravings. This may well be indicative of processual change and of distinct identity-conscious groups, which may in turn relate to particular material-cultural systems, perhaps represented by the Oakhurst, Wilton, or Smithfield lithic industries. It is, as noted by Thackeray *et al.* (1981:67), difficult to correlate particular technological or thematic engraved traits with the Oakhurst, Wilton, or the Smithfield lithic industries. For example, the engraved stones from Wonderwerk are associated with both the Wilton and the Oakhurst complexes represented in the Holocene sequence. Moreover, the fact that rock paintings can also not be associated with specific lithic-cultural traditions has also been demonstrated by the observation that paintings are found not only in association with the Wilton Complex dating to the Holocene but also in association with different and older material dating to the Upper Pleistocene (Wendt 1976; Butzer *et al.* 1979). The mobiliary engravings from Wonderwerk Cave strongly suggest that there were no drastic changes in the content and technique of expressive art during some 8000 years of engraving practice in the region. All engraved depictions were made by the fineline incision technique, with enigmatic line designs, grid patterns, and animal representations occurring throughout the local sequence. It is only when larger samples of dated rock art become available that it may become possible to make explicit stylistic distinctions between cultural traditions.

These observations suggest that style may not always be a secure marker of age (Chippindale 2001; Francis 2001) or ethnic affinity (Hodder 1979, 1982; Lewis-Williams 1986b; DeCorse 1994). For example, researchers with a background in geological sciences place the Côa Valley engravings (Zilhão 1997) into a recent era, suggesting that dating by style must be false (Bednarik 1995a, 1995b; Watchman 1995, 1996; see Francis 2001:226). The debate is further complicated by doubts as to the reliability of chronometric ages obtained by new geo-scientific methods (Dorn 1997; Clottes 2002). Reminiscent of the Great Basin of North America (Francis 2001:230), traditional uses of the style concept does not seem to wholly facilitate a comparative analysis of southern African prehistoric engraved rock art within or between areas over time. When Lorblanchet and Bahn (1993) announced the death of style as a concept with value in rock-art studies, Chaloupka (1993) declared that this new “post-stylistic” era would necessitate an analytical concept essentially equivalent to style (Chippindale 2001: 250). As this does not appear to have materialised, with no *new post-stylistic scheme*

according to which the ages and ethnic affinities of engraved art can be determined, it is believed that theme, content, or subject matter may offer more pertinent insight into the world-views, cosmologies, and, consequently, also the identities of the artists.

Theme and identity

In contrast to the stylistically-founded methods of establishing the ages and ethnic affinities of painted and engraved arts, the content of the art itself has proven especially useful for ascertaining the identities of the artists from the historical period in southern Africa (Thackeray 1983). Theme is believed to be more reflective of particular identities because thematic elements obviously represent culture-relevant subjects and activities (Campbell 1987; Lopes 1996; Chippindale 2001; Francis 2001; Lewis-Williams 2006b). Thus, the cultural affiliations of at least some of the painted and engraved rock art may be easily ascertained since subject matter such as goats, cattle, horses, and ox-wagons are subsistence-specific and, in the local historical context, also culture-specific. With regards San forager art, Vinnicombe (1967:284; Lewis-Williams 1972) suggested as early as 1967 that the high percentage of eland depictions in the art indicated “the important part this animal played in both the economy and religious beliefs of the painters”. Independent research in the Western Cape also alluded to the possibility that the prominence of eland in the art suggested “some particular importance of a religious nature” (Maggs 1967:102). Given the absence of most of the species generally hunted by the San, Vinnicombe (1976) and Lewis-Williams (1981) both concluded that the art did not function as a mere record of subsistence activities, but that it was, instead, representative of the associative relationships between eland and humans (Vinnicombe 1976:151; Lewis-Williams 1981:20). Lewis-Williams also detailed the numerous contexts in which San drew parallels between human and eland behaviour, further substantiating the human-eland association by pointing towards the occurrence of depictions of eland-headed humans, a technique of representation termed “conflation”. Conflation, in which elements of different models are combined in a single motif, is indicative of a perceived analogy between man and animal reflecting a theme in San cognition (*ibid*.:22).

It is, furthermore, by and large accepted that rock art is a valuable indicator of ethnic affiliation as identities are typically reproduced through the medium of religious ritual (*e.g.* Lewis-Williams 1984a; DeCorse 1994; Quinlan & Woody 2003; Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2004a; Smith 2006). Since prehistoric rock art is most often tied to ritual institutions (Lewis-Williams 1984a, 1989; Layton 2001; Jolly 2002; Morris & Peatfield 2002), we would expect its characteristics to vary accordingly, and, consequently, any

changes in religious ideology, either through the incorporation of foreign elements or changes within ideologies (Katz 1982b:345; Jolly 2002:264), *should* also be manifest and therefore recognisable in the art. Thematic patterning can therefore be an important indicator of cultural variation amongst groups (Jolly 2002:263), and in some instances this has even been shown to correlate with specific and seasonally dependent social activities (Manhire *et al.* 1983). However, although it is recognised that there are chronological variations through time, each engraved site was examined as a whole (see Franklin 1992, 2007) rather than separated into purported chronological groupings. Given the problems involved in ascertaining the temporal depth of engraved depictions, this investigation does not attempt to establish a chronology for the engraved art of the interior. To this, as noted above, may be added that what is of primary relevance about dating in archaeology is not the age as such, but the temporal positioning of the artefact dated in relation to other archaeological material (Rosenfeld & Smith 1997:409). This is precisely why the absence of a reliable chronological sequence is so problematic: how are we to establish unequivocal correspondences between ethnic groups and engraved art if we cannot determine the sequence of production of engraved imagery within a single site? As noted by Trigger (1989:409), it is only insofar as archaeologists understand the order in which cultural factors change that they have a basis for beginning to understand the causal relations linking them. Furthermore, the typical occurrence of engravings on scattered, isolated and seemingly unrelated rock surfaces provides the impression that engraved images are in fact disjointed and lacking in structural and relational coherence and continuity, perhaps rendering them more prone to equivalent measures of structurally incoherent and disassociated reading and interpretation. Thus, and when viewed from a regional perspective, the engraved art of the southern African central interior presents a confusing array of images engraved over a period of several thousand years. Understanding this vast body of art is rather complicated, and often the variation at a single site, or group of related sites, is nearly as great as that of the region as a whole.

Since, as archaeologists we generally approach our understanding of the past through the representational metaphor of an “archaeological record” (Barrett 2001:143), archaeological remains are viewed as constituting a sort of present-day representation of past social, economic, and religious phenomena. This record is furthermore regarded as partial which, in opposition to anthropologists who have access to the first-hand and detailed experiences of living peoples from richly contextualised cultural settings, results in a degree of contextual poverty in terms resources and knowledge available to archaeologists. However, what the archaeological record lacks in

contextual detail it gains in geographic breadth and historical depth, with broad spatial material cultural patterning which in turn encourages analysis of the past in terms of historical processes in particular. One “strength” of archaeology is therefore its ability to generalise in terms of large-scale spatial regularities and to trace long-term trends and transformations as represented by the material remains which cumulatively form generally coherent patterns traceable over time and space (*ibid.*:143). While such patterns may simply represent the material regularities of physical survival, it is generally believed that the spatial patterning of archaeological remains result from and consequently represents regularities in the organisation of human behaviour (*ibid.*; see also Shennan 1994:6).

Accordingly, this investigation focuses on a selected sample of especially conspicuous engraved images, with the primary aim being to illustrate that regionality in themes and styles is indeed recognisable. Engraved sites were surveyed for instances of particularly noticeable themes or styles which are shared between different sites and which could be ascertained to relate, either stylistically or thematically, to each other. In this regard, Humphreys (2007:4) have urged researchers to pay more attention to the “exotic” and the “exceptional”, further noting that the recognition of *unique* artefactual, and conceivably so also artistic, occurrences may in fact reveal subtle behavioural variations. This need to identify regional variations in rock art in order to distinguish differing social processes undergone by foraging groups in different areas is furthermore reiterated by Parkington (1996:289), who notes that “some comparisons of the kinds of imagery favoured in the different geographic concentrations of paintings in southern Africa would now seem required”. Addressing these issues obviously involves some degree of selectivity, and given the tremendous amount of and diversity in engraved imagery across the central interior, it is virtually impossible to include all sites and all imagery in this evaluation of the association between engraved art and identity. Even though the corpus of art may indeed be described as a blurred mass of depictions of variable styles, themes, contexts and therefore temporal and ethnic affiliations, there is nonetheless a recognisable degree of regional variation in imagery. Within the extensive engravable andesite-dolerite zone there exist a degree of site-patterning and clustering which may relate to particular locational, territorial, aggregational and religious preferences and patterns as exhibited by the socio-artistic entities that inhabited the region (Fock 1966, 1979; Butzer *et al.* 1979; Fock & Fock 1984, 1989; Morris 1988). It is therefore apparent that the expectation that unique engraved features are manifest in clear spatial patterns across the landscape is not entirely irrational. Furthermore, the larger the scales of analysis, the clearer such

patterns become. In brief, and as noted by Butzer *et al.* (1979:1205), the spatial variability as noted above argues for the presence of functionally discrete sites or site segments, a degree of correspondence between site location or size and demographic patterning, and a cultural identity and territorial delimitation for at least those engravers producing the full range of geometric designs. Whether these distributional patterns do in fact reflect the former ranges of particular individual artists or identity-conscious or *ethnic* groups forms the focus of this investigation, and will be tended to now. This matter will also be afforded further attention in Chapters Five and Six.

Artistic regionality and identity

Although the prospect that unique engraved features are manifest in clear spatial patterns across the landscape does not seem entirely irrational, such expectations are easily ruined by a complex set of social, temporal, and spatial factors which are frequently not given adequate consideration. The question of whether such distributional zones are representative of the ranges of individual artists (as assertive style), or of the ranges of specific bands or identity-conscious groups (as emblemic style), will be addressed shortly.

Most detailed studies of rock art in southern Africa have recognised that there are indeed consistent themes or repetitive associations between certain types of imagery (Vinnicombe 1986:279). It is therefore generally believed that by plotting the distributions of particular thematic sets or stylistic traits, an indication of the core territory owned or used by a particular group may be obtained (*ibid.*:280; Van Rijssen 2001:160). Consequently, these recurrent themes can be attributed to either individual artists or agents, or a group of artists with similar cultural controls (Vinnicombe 1986: 280; see also Dowson 1998; Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2004b). Thematic patterning can also be an important indicator of cultural variation amongst groups (Jolly 2002:263), and in some instances this has even been shown to correlate with specific and seasonally dependent social activities (Manhire *et al.* 1983).

I will now turn to the geographic distribution of a few selected engraved motifs. These will be explored in terms of content (human figures, human feet, therianthropes, avian figures, embryonic figures, cupules, linked circles, and engraved X's), associations (humans and geometric motifs and eland, rhinoceros, giraffe, and elephant), and manners of depiction (classic, anterior, and mirrored). This is by no means an exhaustive rendition of the distributional patterns of the engraved classes as listed above: apart from the fact that the scope of this investigation does not allow for an in-

depth exploration of the distributional ranges of all thematic and stylistic categories in the engraved art of the region, each and every known site is not included in the comparison. Consequently, the subsequent addition of these sites may in fact slightly alter the patterns as identified below.

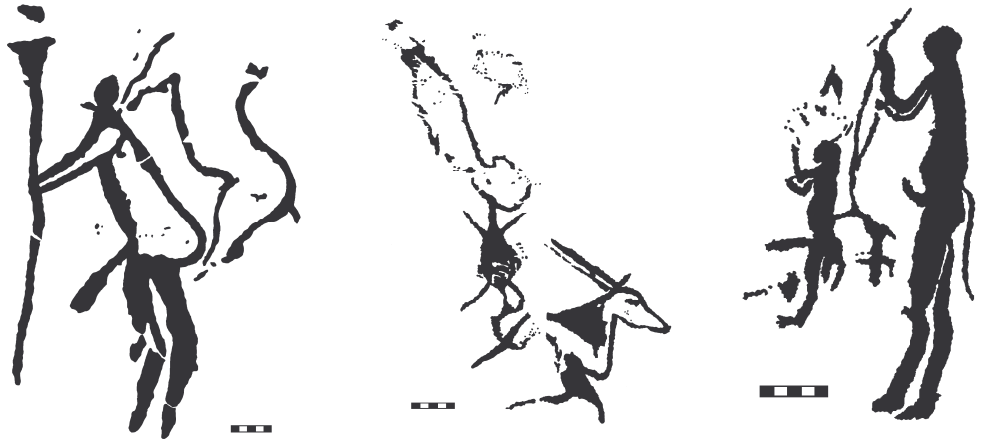
Anthropomorphs

In Chapter One it was noted that there are approximately 700 human figures in the engraved art of the central interior. Human figures have a wide distribution across the region, and vary in occurrence from two figures (>1% of total images) at Klipbak, to 12 (5%) at Vlakplaas, 13 (4%) at Nazreth, 15 (5%) at Stowlands, 25 (16%) at Alicedale, and 30 (6%) at Schoolplatz, to as much as 42 (8%) at Content, 53 (28%) at Home Rule, 63 (11%) at Bosworth, and 379 (16%) at Kinderdam (Fock & Fock 1984, 1989; Morris 1988). Human figures are either pecked, hacked, or scraped and occur in a variety of anthropomorphic, zoomorphic, and geometric associations.

In addressing the fundamental physicality of gesture and posture as a conduit, not to ritual, but to religious experience, Morris and Peatfield (2002:115; see also Turner 1996:6; Keeney 2003:150) argue that particular body postures are just as effective in inducing trance states as is sensory deprivation, repetitive rhythmic movement, sound, and hallucinogens (Eliade 1964; Furst 1972; Harner 1973; Bourguignon 1979; Lewis-Williams 1984a). Goodman (1986) observed that the trance experience was often initiated from deliberately restricted postures, and subsequently went on to identify several categories of trance experience associated with specific postures (*ibid.*:1990). The body itself may therefore be viewed as an effective vehicle for the achievement and experience of altered states of consciousness, and such mystical experiences are in turn embodied in the arts of many shamanistic societies, including that of the San. As stated by Blundell (2004:81), “the art was something that was bodily experienced rather than simply intellectualised.” More specifically, embodiment (Merleau-Ponty 1962) refers to the emphasis on the diversity of bodies as *lived experience* (Blundell 2004:78), or as “the notion of making and doing the work of bodies - of becoming a body in a social space” (Turner 1996:xii). Since embodiment offers a useful tool for understanding rock art as an indispensable form of identity-construction (Blundell 2004: 81), an exploration of the engraved human form, as derived from and symptomatic of religious experience and its associative contexts, is of much relevance to this enquiry.

Discussions of rock art as a corollary of shamanism have all tended to emphasise the central role of the San trance- or curing-dance (Lewis-Williams 1987:166; see also Lee

1967, 1968; Marshall 1969, Biesele 1975, 1978; Guenther 1975; Katz 1982a, b; Keeney 2003). The primary role of the trance or healing dance in San society is well-documented and ample reference to the dance is made in the painted and engraved arts (Lewis-Williams 1982, 1992, 1995, 1999; Deacon 1986, 1988; Hewitt 1986; Dowson 1990, 1992; Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1999; Ouzman 2001; Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2004). A trance dance could be performed for a number of reasons, and according to Richard Katz (1982a:36), the trance dance provides a focal point for San culture: “The dance is the Kung’s primary expression of religion, medicine, and cosmology. It is in fact their primary ritual.”



A **B** **C**

FIG.4.9. Engraved human figures from Klipbak (A), Bosworth (B), and Kinderdam (C).

Anthropomorphic depictions occur at Kinderdam, Home Rule, Bosworth, Boschrand, Gemsbokhoek, Maraetjiesfontein, Delela, Klipbak, Nchwaneng, Gestoptefontein, Bosworth, Boschrand, Weltevreden and numerous other engraved locations (Fig. 4.12). Depictions of human feet or foot-prints (*e.g.* Fig. 4.10) also occur over an extensive part of the interior and as far north as Angola, at Twyfelfontein in Namibia and Mamuno in Botswana (Walker 1997:100), Bumbuzi in Zimbabwe (*ibid.*) and Mooiplaas in Mpumalanga Province to the east (Geldmacher 1967; Tobias 1967), at Piet Rooiberg in the south (Fock & Fock 1989), and at Klapin and Nchwaneng in the west. Depictions of human feet are rare in the south, and tend to occur most abundantly in the Vryburg-Kuruman region (Fock & Fock 1989:151). Human feet are also associated with, for example, geometric designs at Klapin (Fig. 4.10 B), eland at Kinderdam (Fig. 4.11 A), and ostrich at Steenkamp (Fig. 4.11 B).



A B C D

FIG.4.10. Selection of engraved human feet from the central interior region. From Kinderdam (A), Klapin (B), Steenkamp (C), and Matsieng (D). Note the associations with geometric forms (B) and feline spoor (D). Matsieng figure redrawn from Walker 1997.



A B

FIG.4.11. Engraved examples of human feet as associated with eland from Kinderdam (A), and ostrich from Steenkamp (B).

A particularly interesting association is that between human feet and feline, most probably lion, spoor at Matsieng (see Wilman 1918; Walker 1997 for comprehensive discussions). It is known that San shamans regularly transformed into lions (Katz 1982a: 101; Lewis-Williams & Loubser 1986:269; Guenther 1999:197; Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2004a:119), and that in such transformed states, they may even roar and bite people (Bleek 1935:2). Moreover, a !Xõo man claimed that a shaman in feline form is able to “mix with” a pride of lions (Heinz 1975:29), and the Ju/’oansi use the word “pawed creature” or *jum* to refer to those shamans who “… go on out-of-body travel in the form of a lion” (Biesele, as cited in Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2004a:119). Evidently, the connection between lions and shamans is so salient that, as noted by Lewis-Williams (1985:55), “… no clear distinction was drawn between lions and medicine men.” Lions are, although not commonly, depicted in both the painted (see Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2004a: figs. 6.3 and 6.4) and engraved arts: lions occur at Nchwaneng, Kinderdam, and Bosworth, and felines, which may represent male lions, lionesses, leopards, or cheetahs are found at numerous additional sites in the region.

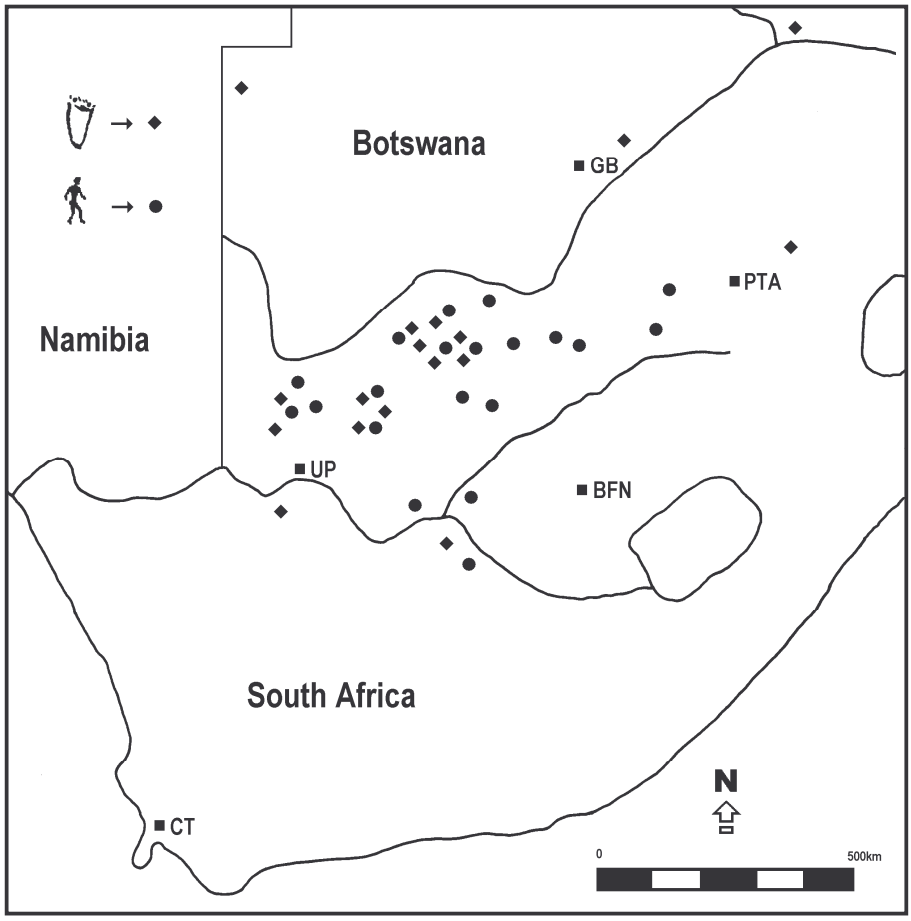


FIG.4.12. Map indicating the distribution of depictions of human feet and human figures in the engraved art of the southern African interior region. Urban centres are indicated as: PTA Pretoria, BFN Bloemfontein, CT Cape Town, GB Gaberone, UP Upington.



A **B**

FIG.4.13. Engraved examples of close associations between human foot-prints and lion spoor from Matsieng. Redrawn from Walker (1997).



A B

FIG.4.14. Engraved examples suggestive of conflations of anthropomorph-feline characteristics as single foot-prints or spoor. Note the outlined heels which are similar to those in human feet, and the positions and shapes of the round toes reminiscent of those in lion spoor. Redrawn from Walker (1997).

The numerical prominence of close associations between feline spoor and human foot-prints at Matsieng is striking. Human feet or foot-prints are juxtaposed with those of large felines (Fig. 4.13 A and B), and in some cases (Fig. 4.14 A and B) engraved tracks actually appear to conflate human and lion features (Walker 1997:99). These conflated human-lion prints may be viewed in terms of a comment by Wa Na about shamans who travel at night in the form of lions of god and who were "… real lions, different from normal lions, but no less real" (Katz 1982a:115). It is conceivable that, in similar fashion to the abilities of the /Xam shamans at "the place at which //Kabbo lives" and who were noted to "… turn themselves into little birds" (Bleek 1956:119), the shamans who frequented and engraved Matsieng were renowned for their ability to "become" lions. The conflated human-lion spoor at Matsieng may have functioned to represent the presence and activities of potent and influential leonine shamans who inhabited the region. These individuals and their distinctive mode of trans-cosmological travel may have come to epitomise the social unit to which they belonged, perhaps presenting a clear case of an agent's assertive style being converted into a group's emblemic style (Biesele 1978a:170, 1993:72; see also Deaux 1992).

One final implication of the wide distribution of engraved human foot-prints is that, and perhaps analogous to hand-prints in the painted arts (Van Rijssen 2001), these may embody assertive statements pertaining to whom a particular territory belonged and to the supernatural supremacy of the shamans who resided in the area (see Layton 1992:124 for an Australian example). San are famous for their ability to track animals and, with remarkable accuracy, to also identify species of mammals, birds, reptiles, and even insects by the traces they leave in the sand. It is to be expected that San could also identify human individuals from their foot-prints. /Han≠kass'o (Bleek & Lloyd 1911: 381) recalls how, by dragging long lines in the sand or by placing green branches along

paths, people informed each other of the directions in which they walked during hunting or foraging excursions. The statement “Our brother must be (the one who) comes yonder; for, he is the one who walks in this manner …” hints at the ability of people to also recognise each other by their foot-prints (*ibid.*:383).

Therianthropes

Tylor (1979:10, as cited in Guthrie 1980:182) defines religion as the “belief in spiritual beings”, a view which appropriately characterises religion as a kind of conception which involves attempts to understand the world at large and which entails the attribution of human-like features, such as language and ethics, to non-human natural phenomena. The observation that religion in general includes anthropomorphism has often been made (see Guthrie 1980 for a detailed discussion). For example, Aristotle (see Evans-Pritchard 1965:49) declared that “all people say that the gods also had a king because they themselves had kings … for men create the gods after their own image”; Hume (1957:29) noted that “there is a universal tendency among mankind to conceive all beings like themselves and to transfer to every object those qualities with which they are familiarly acquainted, and of which they are intimately conscious”; and Feuerbach (1957:118) said that deities are projections of the human mind’s self-awareness and that gods and supernatural beings are projections of the mind’s perception of its own infinity. Guthrie (1980:185) refers to the fact that in Japan, the term for “supernatural” - *chõshizenteki* - is actually perceived as simply denoting that which is “extremely natural”. Evidently, the interpretation of the supernatural in terms of anthropomorphic qualities is a virtually universal human characteristic.

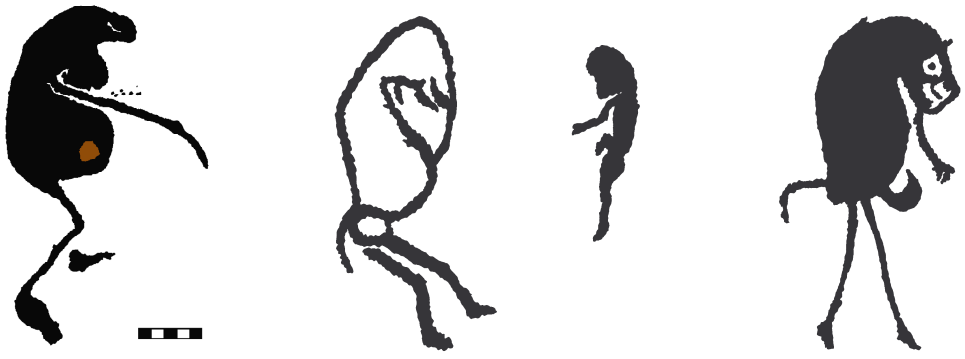
In San cosmology the metaphorical interaction between man and animal is regularly expressed in rock art (Lewis-Williams & Loubser 1986:274): the blending of human and animal form, and the depiction on the rock face of beings encountered during spirit-world experiences comprise the essence of attempts by humans to structure and make sense of the world. The therianthropic element that pervades San myth, ritual, and art reflects an “entrenched sympathy, affinity, and kinship between man and animal” (Guenther 1988:197). Therianthropes (Figs. 4.15 to 4.17) have been interpreted as people disguised as animals (Lee & Woodhouse 1974; Thackeray 1983), as depictions of spirits-of-the-dead (Pager 1975:404; Vinnicombe 1976:330; Solomon 1997:9), as people of the early race (Solomon 1997:4, 1999:56), or as transformed shamans (see Lewis-Williams 1981; see Jolly 2002; Hollmann 2003; Blundell 2004; Lewis-Williams 2006b for current discussions on therianthropes). In the painted rock art of the south-eastern mountains transformation into an eland or other antelope is often expressed by

the artistic amalgamation of human and antelope features (Lewis-Williams 1987:172). Such human-antelope conflations are rare in the engraved arts of the interior, and unequivocal examples are yet to be discovered. The engraved therianthropes instead comprise a wide variety of creatures with human characteristics but which are of an unidentifiable nature, human figures which appear to be only slightly transformed but which may in fact be wearing caps or head-gear, human-like figures which may represent spirits-of-the-dead, human-giraffe conflations, blends of human and avian forms, and distorted but human-like forms termed “embryonic” figures (Fock & Fock 1984:111).



A **B** **C**

FIG.4.15. Avian-therianthropes from Bosworth (A), Kinderdam (B) and Weltevreden North (C). Note the arms-back posture and human articulation of the legs in figure A and the numerous attenuations radiating from the head of figure C.



A **B** **C**

FIG.4.16. Engraved depictions of embryonic figures from Weltevreden South (A) and Content (B and C). Figures from Content have been redrawn from Fock & Fock (1984). The grey circular form in A represents a small natural amygdalous hollow. Figure C, originally from Content, is currently housed at the Cultural History Museum in Pretoria and is redrawn from a photograph.

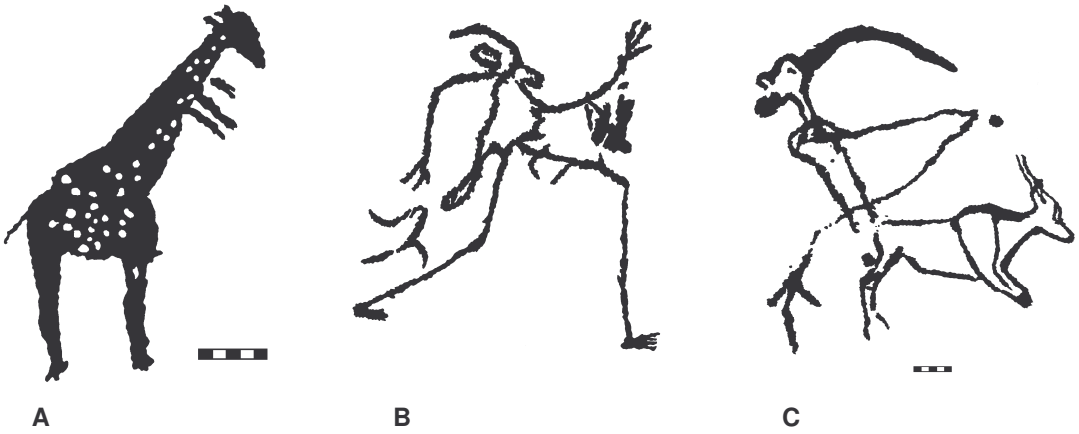


FIG.4.17. Engraved giraffe-therianthrope from Kinderdam (A), therianthrope from Kinderdam (B), and from Bosworth (C). Kinderdam figure redrawn from Fock and Fock (1984).

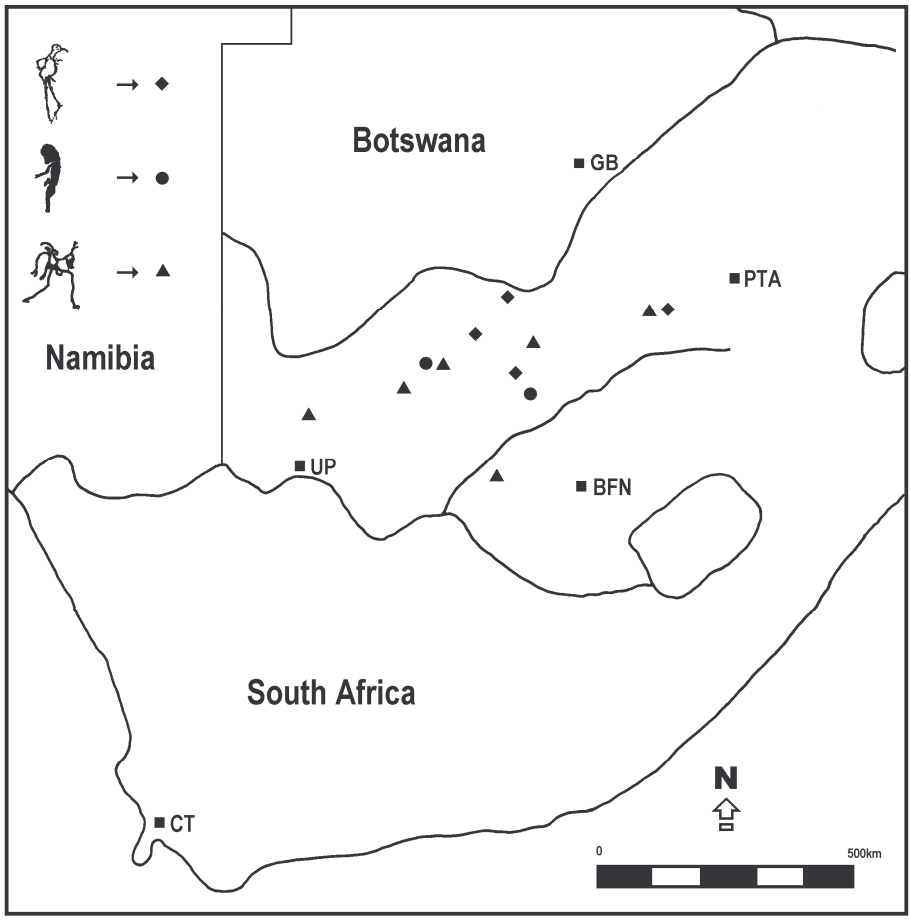
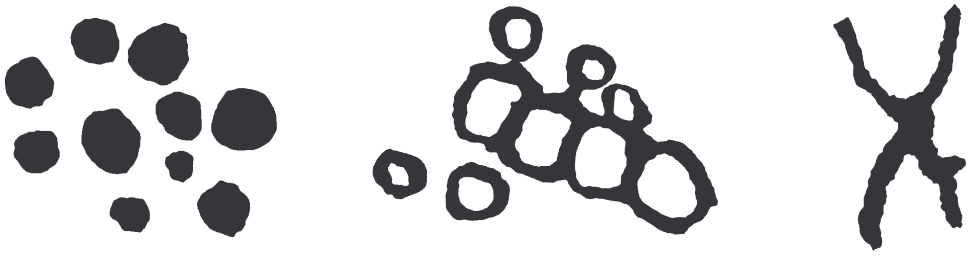


FIG.4.18. Map indicating the distribution of depictions of avian-therianthropes, embryonic figures, and therianthropes in general in the engraved art of the southern African interior region.

Depictions of transformed humans or therianthropes exhibit a remarkable pattern of distribution in the study region (Fig. 4.18). While therianthropes are fairly widespread across the interior they are not as abundant as in the painted arts. Whereas some figures display only slight indications of transformation, others appear to be completely transformed. Of key interest is the distribution of avian-therianthropes and embryonic figures. Avian figures occur at four sites only, namely Bosworth, Kinderdam, Weltevreden, and Thaba Sione. Interestingly, there are two remarkably similar depictions of a human and ostrich "dancing" at Bosworth and Thaba Sione (Ouzman 2002:12), undoubtedly suggestive of a connection between these two sites. Embryonic figures are found at only two engraved sites, namely Content and Weltevreden. The depictions of human-struthianthrope conflations are approximately one hundred kilometres apart, and the locations at which embryonic figures are found are some eighty kilometres apart. These distances are not extreme and fall well within the annual seasonal ranges of ethnographically-known foraging groups (Eibl-Eibesfeldt 1972:206; Wiessner 1990:136; Cashdan 1992:255; Lee 2003:120, see also Silberbauer 1972; Heinz 1975, 1979; Yellen 1977 for the geographic ranges of San social groups).

Abstract designs

Non-representational engraved designs selected for this enquiry include cupules, linked circles, and X-shaped forms (Fig. 4.19). Although the ranges of these images overlap, there is a clear focus towards the north-western parts of the study region. Whereas cupules are widely distributed and found numerous sites including Bernau, Klipbak, Nchwaneng, Klapin, Beeshoek, Ramah, Content, Piet Rooiberg and Gestoptefontein, linked circles are less common and occur at Klipfontein, Steenkamp, Diewedraai, Driekopseiland, Klipbak and Nchwaneng, and engraved X's are limited to only two locations, namely Klapin and Nchwaneng.



A **B** **C**

FIG.4.19. Selection of engraved cupules from Nchwaneng (A), linked circles from Klipbak (B), and X's from Klapin (C).

All three abstract designs are found at the latter engraved locations, and this may perhaps be indicative of a source-region from which these forms may have spread towards the east (see Taçon *et al.* 1997; Flood 2004; Taçon & Ouzman 2004; Rifkin 2005 for further discussions on cupules).

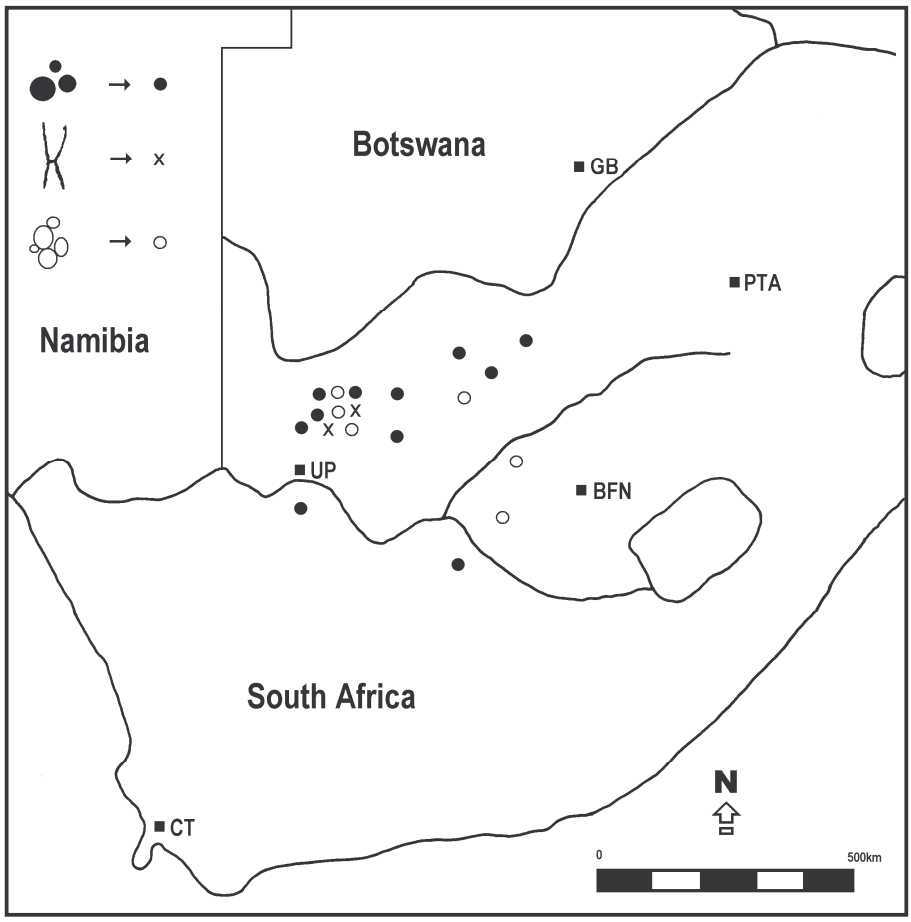


FIG.4.20. Map indicating the distribution of cupules, X's, and linked circular forms in the engraved art of the southern African interior region.

Anthropomorphic associations

San expressive culture abounds with animals, and along with a trickster figure, animals dominate the mythical and religious landscape of foragers (Guenther 1988). The most common animal motifs comprise naturalistic depictions of various species, including, in addition to the obvious eland, rhinoceros, giraffe, and zebra, species as diverse as buffalo, wildebeest, hippopotamus, flamingos, antbears, and tortoises (Fock 1966; Fock & Fock 1984, 1989). As with the painted arts of the Drakensberg, it is the eland which is the most frequently depicted animal in engravings (Fock 1966). Eland are not however the prevailing species at all sites in the region: although eland dominate at 63% of sites (n = 25), rhinoceros are dominant at 14% and giraffe at 11%. Buffalo,

wildebeest, and ostrich dominate at only 4% of sites respectively. In relative terms, the numbers of eland appears to decrease from east to west, to the point that eland are numerically less common than giraffe, ostrich, and zebra in Namibia, while in the Richtersveld, depictions of elephant are found to the nearly total exclusion of eland (Fock 1966, 1979; Morris 1988). It is of interest to note that geometric designs are more numerous than eland at 32% of engraved sites (*n* = 25), and in several instances eland and geometric forms are closely associated.

In Chapter One it was established that the high percentage of eland in the art exemplify "the important part this animal played in both the economy and religious beliefs of the painters" (Lewis-Williams 1972:51-52; see also Vinnicombe 1976:284; Maggs 1967:102). Depictions of eland are generally interpreted as symbols of the potency shamans harness to enter trance and to *heal* (Lewis-Williams 1981:75). Contemporary Kalahari San name this potency and its associated medicine songs after various "strong" things of which eland are particularly significant. Eland are considered so potent that hunters frequently "dance eland potency" next to the carcass of a freshly killed eland, believing the location to be suffused with released potency (Lewis-Williams 1987:171).



FIG.4.21. Engraved depiction of humans and eland from Maraetjiesfontein. Note the "speckled" appearance of the human figure on the right and the thick stream of what may in fact represent blood running from the mouth and nose of the eland.

This close association between humans and eland, or the *human-eland-dance nexus* (Lewis-Williams 2002:70) is recurrently illustrated in the painted and engraved arts. In the engravings of the interior there are numerous examples of the close association between humans, therianthropes, and eland, and many engraved depictions are strongly reminiscent of the well-known painted scenes at, for example, Game Pass Shelter and Main Caves in the Drakensberg Mountains. Such “scenes” occur throughout the interior, from Bosworth in the east as far as Nchwaneng on the edge of the Kalahari in the west. Artists frequently represented the analogy between dying eland and “dying” shamans by juxtaposing dying antelope, characterised by lowered heads and bleeding noses, next to shamans with analogous postural characteristics. Although eland fulfilled a central religious role (Heinz 1966; Lewis-Williams 1981, 1984b, 1987, 1998; Lewis-Williams & Loubser 1986; Biesele 1993), humans in postures suggestive of supernatural associations are also juxtaposed with other species: giraffe feature prominently in the religious rites of the Kalahari San (Katz 1982a, b; Lewis-Williams 2002; Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2004), rhinoceroses were spiritually superlative animals (Ouzman 1996), and elephant, although little is known of how it is viewed in terms of supernatural attributes and potency (Guenther 1999:74; Deacon 2001:251), is associated with rain (Maggs & Sealy 1983). Engraved depictions suggestive of close associations between humans and eland, giraffe, and rhinoceros are found at Kinderdam, and humans and eland, elephant, and rhinoceros at Bosworth.



A **B**

FIG.4.22. Engravings suggestive of close religious-cosmological associations between humans and giraffe (A) from Nchwaneng, and between humans and rhinoceros (B) from Bosworth.

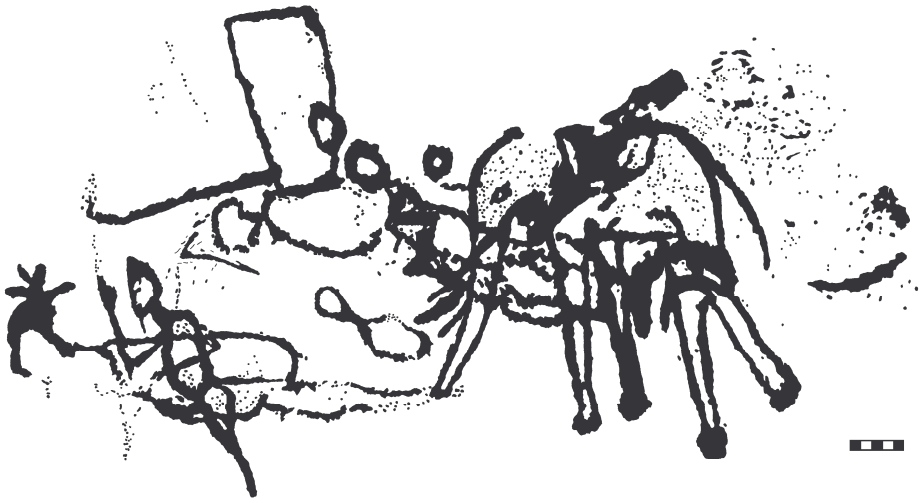


FIG.4.23. Engraving suggestive of intimate religious-cosmological associations between humans and elephant from Bosworth.

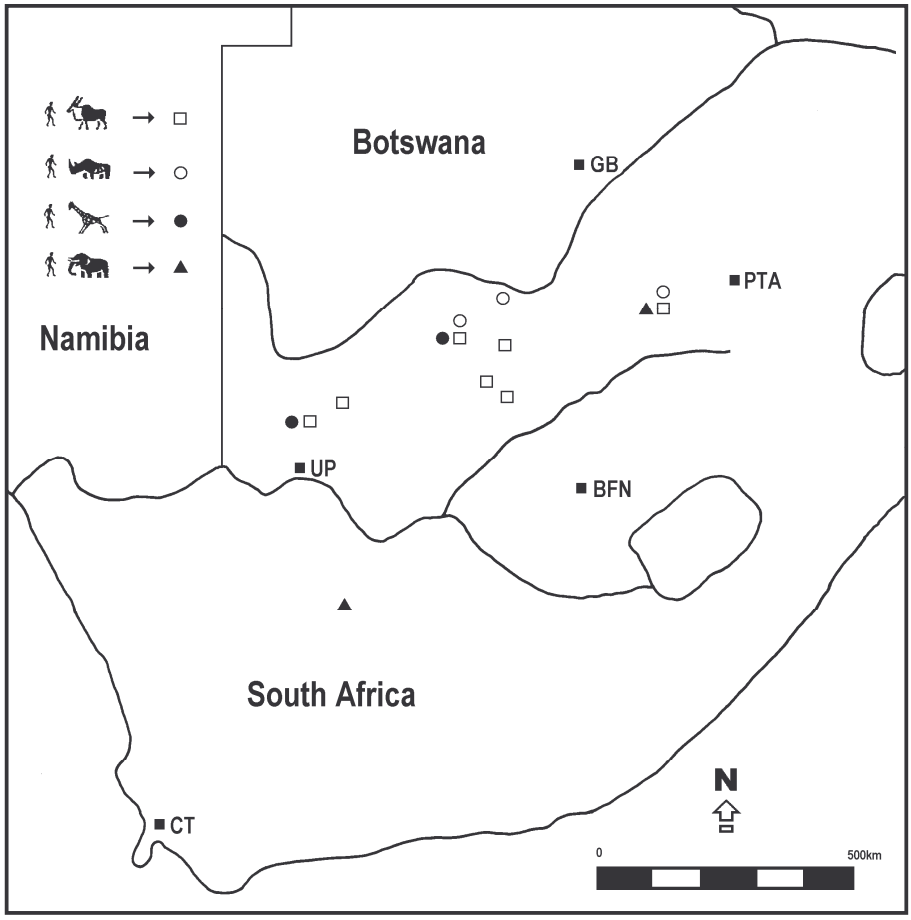


FIG.4.24. Map indicating the distribution of depictions involving humans and (from top to bottom as indicated by icons) eland, rhinoceros, giraffe, and elephant in the engraved art of the southern African interior region.

Associations between humans and eland are uniformly distributed across the study region (Fig. 4.24). Such portrayals occur at Kinderdam, Nchwaneng, Klipbak, Bosworth, Lot Six, Maraetjiesfontein, and Gestoptefontein. Conversely, associations between humans and giraffe and humans and rhinoceros tend to be clustered in the west and east respectively: human-giraffe portrayals occur at Nchwaneng and Kinderdam, and representations suggestive of close associations between humans and rhinoceros are found at Bosworth, Kinderdam, and Thaba Sione. Associations between humans and elephant have a rather wide range of distribution, and are found from Bosworth in the east to Springbokoog in the south-west (see Deacon 2001: fig. 6). The diversity of species associated with supernatural themes suggests that there must have been a wide range of animals from which potency could be obtained, and that this may well explicate the occurrence of local emphases on particular species (Maggs & Sealy 1983; Ouzman 1996; Guenther 1999; Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1999).

Geometric associations

The geographic ranges of particular geometric-representational associations (Fig. 4.25) are of interest since, although some degree of overlap is discernable, there are nevertheless clear distributional ranges for particular associations (Fig. 4.26). Whereas giraffe-and-geometrics occur in the west and south-west, rhinoceros-and-geometrics and elephant-and-geometrics are clustered to the east and south of the Vaal-Orange confluence. Ostrich-and-geometrics appear to be focussed towards the west and south-west, and zebra-and-geometrics are limited to two sites in the western regions. Associations between geometric motifs and hartebeest and hippopotamus are limited to single sites respectively.



A **B**

FIG.4.25. Selection of engraved associations between geometric designs and zebra (A) from Steenkamp and eland and rhinoceros (B) from Kinderdam.

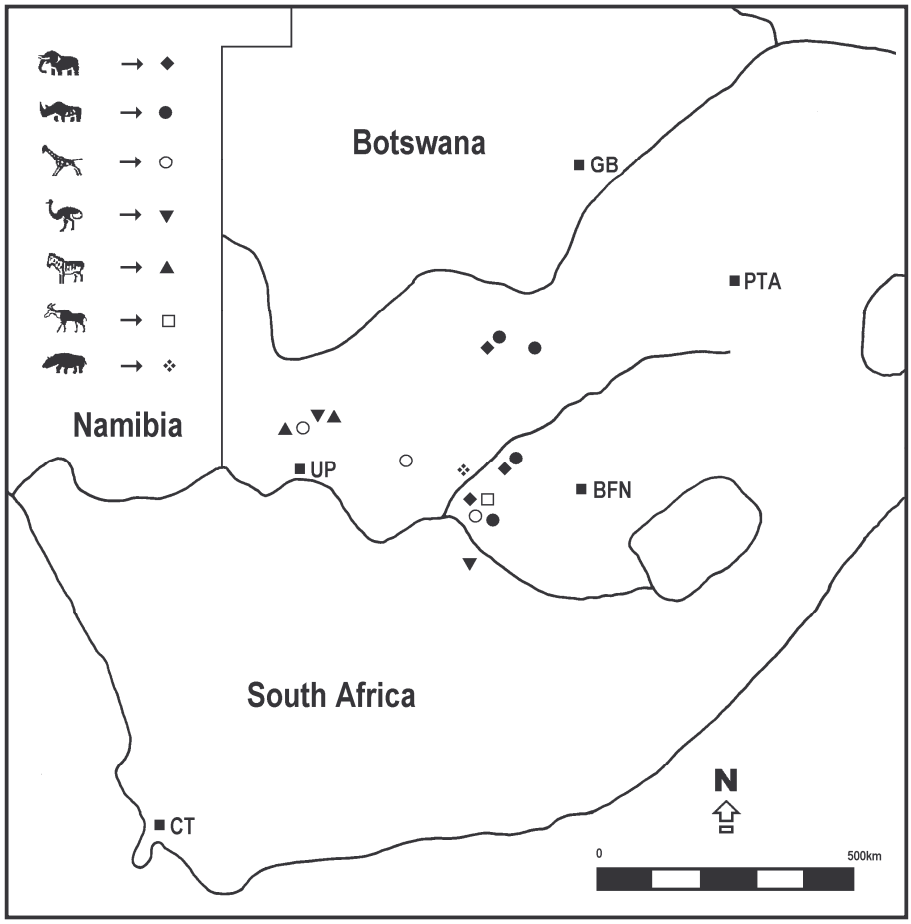


FIG.4.26. Map indicating the distribution of associations between geometric designs and (from top to bottom as indicated by icons) elephant, rhinoceros, giraffe, ostrich, zebra, hartebeest, and hippopotamus.

Comparable delineations in the distribution of eland and rayed circular, internally-divided circular, and linear geometric associations are also discernable (Figs. 4.25 B and 4.27). Such distributional patterns may correspond to, though not precisely map, the former distributional ranges of charismatic shaman-artists, the geographic ranges of particular identity-conscious or ethnic groups, or the distribution of religious-cosmological notions as shared between different or perhaps limited to single ethno-linguistic groups. Eland and rayed-circular designs are found at Klipfontein, Bosworth, Modimo, Schoolplatz, Doornpoort, Vlakplaas, Gestoptefontein, and eland with internally-divided circular designs are limited to two sites in the far west, namely Steenkamp and Geduld. Associations between eland and incised linear geometric designs appear to be restricted to sites in the Magaliesberg to the east (Steel 1988).

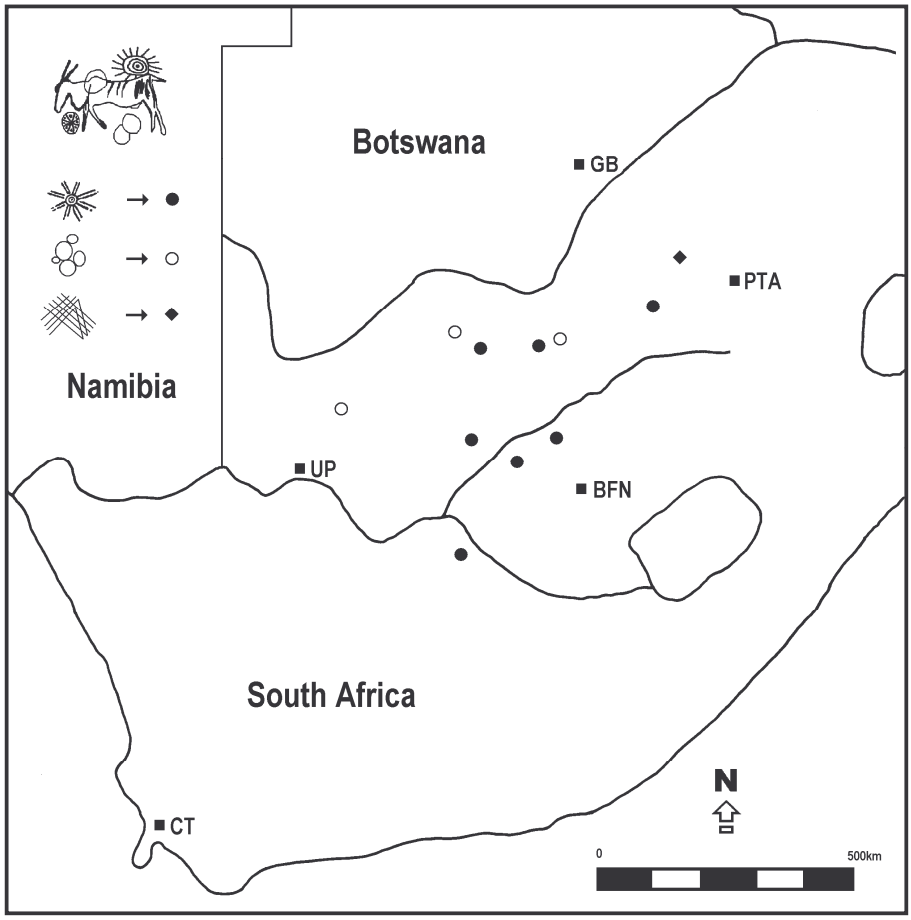
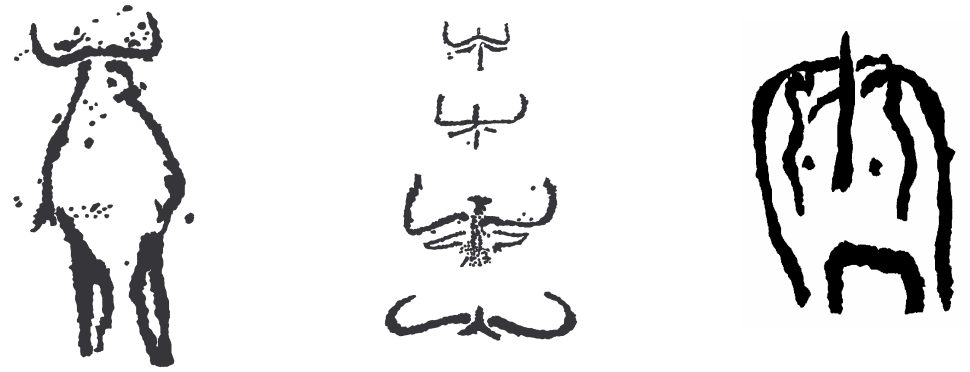


FIG.4.27. Map indicating the distribution of associations between eland and sunbursts or rayed circles, linked circular designs, and angular geometric designs.

This distributional pattern may, analogous to local emphases on particular animals (*e.g.* Maggs & Sealy 1983; Ouzman 1996; Guenther 1999; Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1999), also relate to locally-perceived significances concerning the association between animals and particular, possibly trance-derived, geometric motifs. Conversely, the juxtapositioning of eland and geometric depictions may indicate interaction between foragers and pastoralists and the assimilation and reinterpretation of religious-cosmological beliefs and associated imagery. If this is so, the addition of herder geometrics to forager imagery suggests that supernaturally-relevant visions were not restricted to forager shamans: a large proportion of presumably pastoralist geometrics are classic entoptic images, somewhat disrupting the often-cited “pastoralist art equals non-entoptic” equation (Wallace 2004:519). The question of whether pastoralists are likely to have been acquainted with shamanistic experiences and activities will be further explored in Chapter Five.

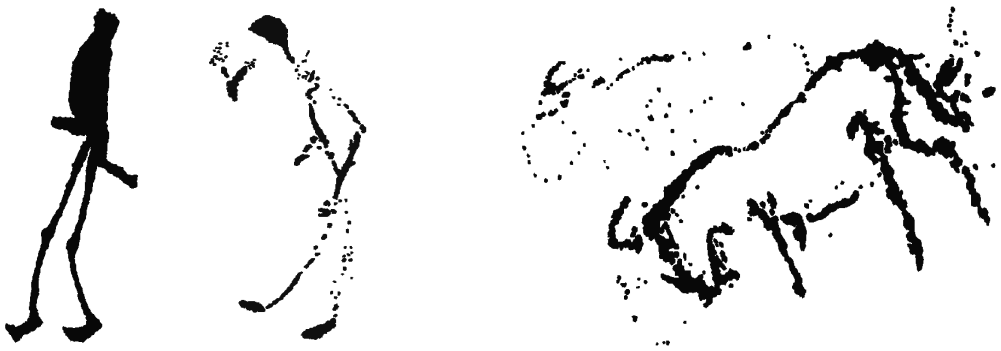
Stylistic elements

Manners of depiction or unique stylistic elements include anterior or foreshortened depictions of various species (Fig. 4.28), the “classic” or three-dimensional naturalistic portraits of eland, rhinoceros, buffalo, and hippopotamus (see Fock & Fock 1984, 1989; Dowson 1992), and imagery termed “mirrored” as per which any image may be replicated by only slight pecking of the outline of a fully-pecked image adjacent to it (Fig. 4.29). Classic engravings are widely distributed and found at Kinderdam, Niekerksrus, Lot Six, Vlakplaas, Content, Thlaping, Klipfontein, and Bosworth. Frontal depictions are limited to only three locations, namely Content, Kinderdam, and Klipfontein.



A B C

FIG.4.28. Selection of engraved instances of frontal or anterior depictions from Klipfontein (A), and Kinderdam (B and C).



A B

FIG.4.29. Selection of engraved instances of “mirroring” from Maraetjiesfontein (A), and Bosworth (B). Ample additional examples of this particular stylistic feature are to be found at these two engraved sites.

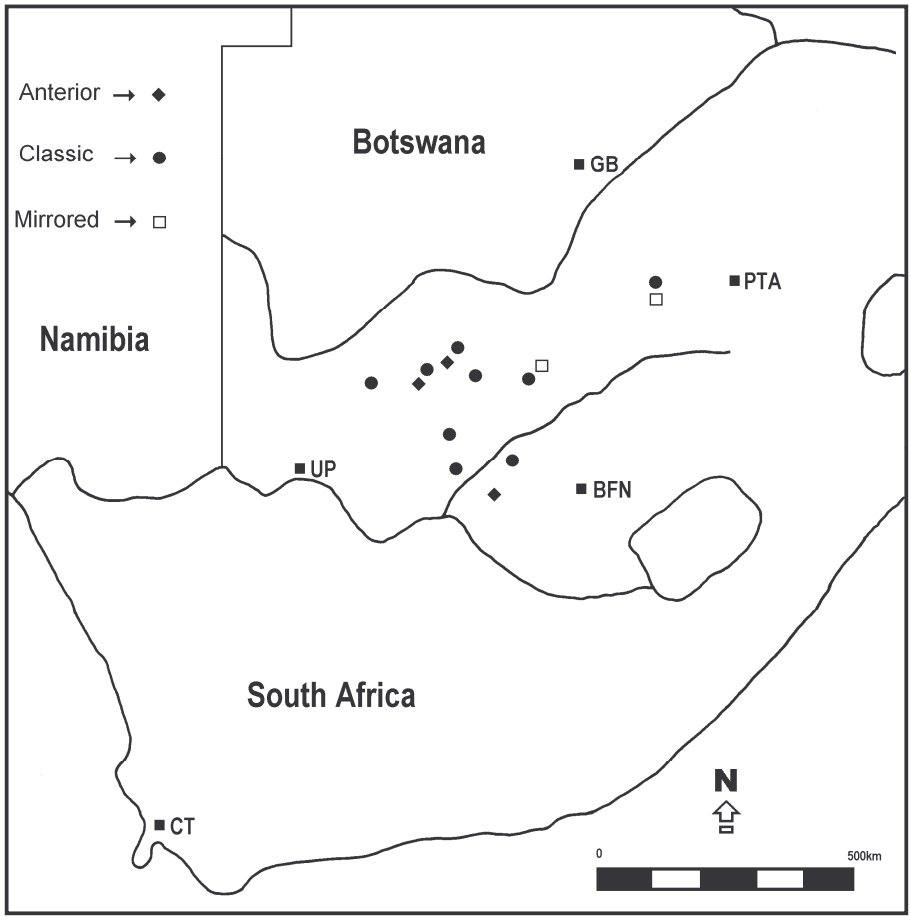


FIG.4.30. Map indicating the distribution of anterior, classic, and mirrored depictions in the engraved art of the southern African interior region.

Vinnicombe (1986:279) notes a comparable situation for a set of complex shaded polychrome eland in the south-eastern mountains, with images painted on the underside of the ceilings in only three rock shelters. Remarkably, and in addition to careful attention to particular details, these depictions are also characterised by the frontal or foreshortened manner of depiction. Mirrored depictions are limited to only two locations, namely Bosworth and Maraetjiesfontein. In the latter two cases the limits of distribution are approximately two hundred kilometres.

Space, place and people

Although there are no essential characteristics common to all groups and there are no clear correlations between identity and material culture (*e.g.* Eidheim 1969:39; De Vos 1982:9; Hodder 1982:186; Denbow 1984:179; Jones 1997:104; Hammond-Tooke 2000:421; Meskell 2001:190; Pluciennik 2002:226), patterns in the distribution of thematic and stylistic features are discernable and these may indeed relate to, though not necessarily precisely map, the former distributional ranges of charismatic shaman-

artists and / or identity-conscious or ethnic groups (Vinnicombe 1986:280; Shennan 1994:20; Jones 1997:131). Remarkably, such patterns have also been identified in archaeological terms (see Humphreys 2007 for an inclusive discussion). For example, in addition to the study on arrowheads by Wiessner (1983), Deacon (1984:317) notes that even today San in Namibia and Botswana fashion beaten wire arrowheads into shapes "unique to their groups". Furthermore, Beaumont and Vogel (1989:79) suggests a direct distributional correlation between the Swartkop Industry and the historical /Xam; Leslie (1989:25) posits that "…Kasouga flakes are a stylistic marker with social correlates"; Close and Sampson (1999:81) remark that, with regards bifacial tanged and barbed arrowheads, "their small numbers and frequently dubious contexts are out of all proportion to the attention they have received in the archaeological literature"; and Mitchell (1999:94) has suggested that pressure-flaked backed bladelets might well have "acted as a stylistic marker for some kind of social group or alliance network." The significance of these artefactual strands of evidence is, as noted by Humphreys (2007: 4), that they may in fact serve to substantiate those conclusions reached by Sealy and Pfeiffer (2000) and Sealy (2006), pertaining to the fact that studies of skeletal remains and site features are strongly suggestive of territorial behaviour pre-2000 years BP. Sealy *et al.* (2000:41) notes, based on the isotope analyses of three juvenile skeletons from inland sites, that these people "ate diets based on terrestrial foods, clearly separating them from coastal skeletons with similar dates." An equivalent study on diet and landscape use in the southern Cape has elicited similar comments from Sealy and Pfeiffer (2000:654), namely that "The isotopic contrasts are clear indicators of economic differences between adjacent groups of hunter-gatherers and, we believe, evidence for territorial boundaries in the past." This brings us to the statement by Barnard (1992:232), according to whom the notion of group membership, which consists of the ideological premise of belonging to a specific band, band cluster, or social unit, clearly "… implies a territorial identity or notion of 'citizenship', in that such groups may be associated with particular localities."

There are, however, no less than five issues at stake with regards straightforward interpretations of artistic regionalism as representative of the former geographic ranges of either particular individual artists or specific identity-conscious groups:

i) the incidence and nature of intense, long-term and widespread instances of inter-group interaction in both prehistoric and historical terms;

ii) the lack of secure dates for different thematic and stylistic sets of engraved art;

iii) the fact that changes in style and artistic focus are often interpreted as indicative as changes in world-view and conceivably also in identity and ethnic orientation;

iv) the potential impact of hunter-gatherer mobility on the distribution and visibility of material cultural characteristics indicative of identity-consciousness and ethnicity;

v) the role of emblemic style as an indicator or marker, in the form of parietal art, of particular identity-conscious or ethnic groups.

In Chapter Three it was ascertained that !Kung San camps are linked by kinship, name relationships and *hxaro* exchange networks, all of which establish reciprocal access between the territories of numerous groups (Lewis-Williams 1982:436). Lee (1978: 108) notes that the !Kung name-relationship network extends from Angola to Ghanzi, some eight hundred kilometres to the south in central Botswana. Whereas the outer peripheries of these particular relationships are difficult to define as they are not as rigorously maintained as the traditional notion of a band implies, social relations between !Xõo-speaking bands and band nexuses may however have been more rigid. This discrepancy in social interaction relates to the question of the possible impact that hunter-gatherer mobility may have exerted on the distribution and visibility of material cultural characteristics indicative of identity-consciousness and ethnicity. If patterns of group affiliation are short-term and fluctuating, as they generally are amongst foraging peoples (Shennan 1994:21), then any material aspects of such patterns will, most probably, be difficult to detect, especially at the low levels of chronological resolution normally available to archaeologists. This said, the relative longevity and permanence of engraved art, and the organisation of !Xõo-speaking foragers into comparatively stable social units in the form of band nexuses, which also comprise dialect-clusters, suggests that, for at least some engraved styles and themes, the establishment of distributional patterns may indeed reflect the existence of artistically- and linguistically-distinctive identity-conscious groups. However, and as argued by Jones (1997:123), ethnicity must be distinguished from mere spatial continuity and discontinuity in that it refers to self-conscious identification with a particular group of people. By the same token, and as noted by Lewis-Williams (2003:169), “One cannot induce the ‘meaning’ of an art from its geographical locations. To attempt to do so would be to fall into the well-known trap of empiricism: one cannot logically induce rock art explanations from supposedly theory-free data.” These statements will be revisited in Chapter Six when the association between language and identity is afforded further attention.

The lack of secure dates for much of the engraved art in southern Africa is, as noted in Chapter One, highly problematic (see Whitley & Annegarn 2001; Mitchell 2002; Morris 2002 for comprehensive discussions). The assumption that certain types of imagery are in fact culture-specific has led to the construction of relative chronologies which may in truth be flawed: it has already been noted that geometric designs, whether angular, linear, or curvilinear and whether incised on mobiliary items or pecked on parietal surfaces, are problematic precisely because of their variable cultural affinities. Similarly, much of the engraved representational depictions in the interior display a remarkably variable range in patterns of weathering and patination. Yet, and because it is assumed that, for example, eland, are always associated with San foragers, all eland-depictions are routinely ascribed San authorship. In light of the confirmed reality that the interior region hosted numerous socio-economic identity-conscious groups which may have been of either successive or intrusive origins, the temporal juxtapositioning of the engraved arts associated with these groups have not been tended to adequately. It is only when convincingly secure dates for these different engraved sets can be obtained, that we may be able to overcome the problems raised by the essentially "flat" manifestation of extensive and diverse cultural-artistic temporal depth (Morris 1988:117). Maps illustrative of the spatial distributions of artistic elements are especially inadequate when we consider how rock art informs visions experienced during trance and how such visions, in turn, informs the continued production of similar images (see Lewis-Williams 1982:438; Lewis-Williams & Loubser 1986:280; Dowson 1988:117 as cited above). This mnemotechnic function of engraved depictions may well have resulted in some images, for example the embryonic and the human-struthianthrope depictions, having been re-appropriated and re-created decades or even centuries after the initial figure was "seen" and subsequently "communicated" in engraved form. Conversely, and although older images may have provided some inspiration for later depictions, engraved styles may have either changed substantially, or not at all.

Such changes in style and artistic focus are often interpreted as resultant of changes in world-view and conceivably also in identity and ethnic orientation (Lewis-Williams 1984: 227; Jones 1997:129; Kent 2002b:84). DeCorse (1998:369, as cited in Kent 2002b:85) however argues that changes in artefact inventories, and in this instance also styles and themes, "… should not … be viewed as *ipso facto* indicator of changes in world-view." This is so because the production and consumption of particular styles of material culture involved in the expression of a single ethnic identity may vary qualitatively as well as quantitatively in different social contexts (Jones 1997:129). This,

in turn, leaves us with two contrasting yet interrelated scenarios. Firstly, ethnicity may disrupt regular spatio-temporal stylistic or thematic patterning, resulting in an untidy and overlapping temporal web of spatially-manifest stylistic or thematic boundaries. Secondly, and perhaps more relevant to this investigation, ethnicity may frequently be obscured by a generalised set of expressive components (engraved art in whichever style and inclusive of variable themes) which are related to a commonly-held cosmological (shamanism) and ideological (egalitarianism) system of social functioning (Lewis-Williams 1984:227). It is apparent that distinguishing between genuine and derived traits in San religion and art is a complex undertaking (Guenther 1999:87), a matter I will return to in Chapter Five.

As seen above, it is important to recognise that although spatial patterns in the distribution of material cultural aspects are discernable, the territories of identity-conscious hunter-gatherer groups undoubtedly expanded, contracted, and shifted with time (Butzer *et al.* 1979:1210). With this in mind, there must have been certain points in time when particular social groups inhabited specific geographic areas and during which at least some features within such natural landscapes were transformed into culturally-relevant and cosmologically-significant places. For example, in Arnhem Land in northern Australia, Morphy (1991) has argued that named moieties and clans own particular songs, ceremonies and artistic motifs, and that “Paintings are part of the ancestral … inheritance of clans. They are as much the property of clans as the land itself.” (*ibid.*:57). In the Kimberley region of Western Australia, Layton (1985, 1992) has shown how Wandjina and associated paintings are linked to local clans and groups descended from those very *dreaming* beings. In south-eastern Cape York, Trezise (1969, 1993) recorded oral traditions from local elders showing that rock paintings identify local ancestral beings and sorcery figures, both of which are grounded in the local landscape. Taçon (1994) has also ascertained that specific rock art styles delimit land ownership and its relationship to particular ancestral *dreamings*. As in Australia, changes in the distribution of specific markings across the landscape in southern Africa should also reflect broader issues concerned with people and their relationships with each other and with the land, be it through a broadening or narrowing of the distribution of specific rock art styles or themes. For example, Butzer *et al.* (1979:1210) have pointed out that certain engravings may well have defined the operational area of an identity-conscious population during a specific time, and, as a result, “… sites with engraved geometrics may well delimit one such group during the last millennium or so … the restricted occurrence of classical engravings in the Kinderdam-Klipfontein area may represent another such case.”

The implications of these studies are that regionalisation, a process that is visible archaeologically, is rooted in broader socio-demographic processes relating people and their numbers to land, and also that, since change is manifest in the art, the formal expression of behaviour was indeed subject to change (Yates *et al.* 1990:37, 1994:30). For example, Morwood (1992) notes that rock art boundaries reflect both geography and the nature of group relations. Thus "the distinctive Wandjina style of the Western Kimberleys coincided with the extent of the *wunan* exchange system between linguistically related and culturally similar groups" while abrupt changes in rock art reflected boundaries between hostile interaction spheres (*ibid.*:4).

It must however be taken into account that emblemic style, in the form of parietal art, may have played a relatively minor role in low-density, open systems, resulting in the fact that, in instances where such systems prevail, emblemic style in parietal art is generally not visible in the archaeological record (Barton *et al.* 1994:192). However, increased population density and social network closure would tend to select for emblemic style and parietal art. Emblemic style, as manifest in parietal art, facilitates inter-group communication and messaging across social unit boundaries. An increase in more dispersed population systems and open social networks may have prompted a renewed emphasis on assertive style (expressed as mobile art), while selection for emblemic style (as expressed in parietal art) was relaxed (*ibid.*:201). Conversely, the transformation of elements of personal assertive style into markers of public, collective emblemic style (*e.g.* Deaux 1992) may have lead to an increasing emphasis on emblemic style. Such processes have been documented in chiefdom contexts (Barker & Pauketat 1992), where stylistic elements associated with individuals or lineages come to represent collectivities of lineages, and this might be one of the ways in which corporate groups markers could develop. This process would also be selected for by aggregation, with the need to strengthen intra- and inter-group alliances and to legitimise spatially extensive social units within aggregated, non-kin-based groups. Emblemic art created by means of such a process would, over time, come to be associated more with elements of social organisation than with features of the landscape.

In general terms, the conclusions reached above appear to corroborate those arrived at by David and Lourandos (1998), who address the distribution of rock art in north-eastern Australia in terms of socio-demography and the relations between people and between people and their natural environments. The authors view rock art as a behavioural product that is more or less permanently fixed in the landscape. Activities

that are grounded in specific locales, such as rock art, are also subject to ideological processes linking people to land and to each other. Accordingly, engravings are viewed as "implicitly territorially-based, not so much because rock art is necessarily a means of marking territory, but because the individuals who mark the land are linked to it politically in a variety of ways." (*ibid.*:193; see Vinnicombe 1986; Hartley & Wolley Vawser 1998; Arsenault 2004; Flood 2004; Smith & Blundell 2004 for further discussions on rock art and territoriality).

The aforementioned "strength" of archaeology (Barrett 2001:143), or its ability to generalise in terms of large-scale spatial regularities and to trace long-term trends and trans-formations as represented by material remains, certainly result from and represent regularities in the organisation of human behaviour (*ibid.*; see also Shennan 1994:6). For that reason, and even though the corpus of engraved art may indeed be described as a blurred mass of depictions of variable styles, themes, contexts and therefore temporal and ethnic affiliations, there is nonetheless a recognisable degree of regional variation in imagery: there exist a clearly-discernable extent of site-patterning and clustering which may relate to particular locational, territorial, aggregational and religious preferences and patterns as exhibited by the socio-artistic entities that inhabited the region (Fock 1966, 1979; Butzer *et al.* 1979; Fock & Fock 1984, 1989; Morris 1988). As noted by Butzer *et al.* (1979:1205), such spatial variability argues for the presence of functionally discrete sites or site segments, a degree of correspondence between site location or size and demographic patterning, and a cultural identity and territorial delimitation for at least those engravers producing the full range of geometric designs.

Given the increasing degrees of social interaction and influence during the past two millennia, it is to be expected that the resultant social and political transformations should also have impacted the manufacture of rock art. It is generally assumed that intercultural contact invariably leads to changes in ethnic perceptions and symbolism. Radical changes in the social context may bring about changes in the form of social interaction resulting in the construction of new cultural meanings and reassessments of ethnic identities (Jones 1997:81). Such transformations may also have resulted in the addition of *foreign* artistic elements to the existing base of forager-authored engraved arts, and in the simultaneous development of transitional forms of engravings exhibiting the fusion of religious beliefs and social identities (Smith 2006:93). One view of inter-action has essentialised hunter-gatherers by focusing primarily on intra-cultural exchange (*e.g.* Sahlins 1965; Hawkes 1993). In the literature on forager exchange, the

archetypal hunter-gatherer society practices generalised reciprocity and is characterised by isolation and timelessness (Bird-David 1995:17). Little attention is given to how foragers actively interact with pastoralists and agro-pastoralists and to the diversity of forager responses to pressures by sedentary societies. Wobst (1978:304) has argued that anthropologists tend to "reinforce the overwhelming ethnographic stereo-type that hunter-gatherers articulate exclusively with local variability, and that regional and interregional process among hunter-gatherers is a symptom of degeneration and culture contact." While such "filtering" may in fact have resulted from the selective focuses of particular lines of ethnographic enquiry (see Guenther 1999:232 for a discussion), the failure to expound the range and complexity of forager political and economic exchange relations have nevertheless resulted in a romanticised image of hunter-gatherers as simple, honest, and sharing. This, as will be observed in Chapter Five, has made it difficult to comprehend the capacity of foragers to accommodate and resist the hegemonic ambitions of sedentary peoples. Intercultural studies of hunter-gatherers and sedentary cultures illustrate a multitude of strategies employed by hunter-gatherers that are designed to elude assimilation, including tactics of impression management, alliance building, flexibility, adaptability, negotiation, accommodation of the dominant society's rules, along with such concrete manoeuvres as lying and deceit, fleeing, and begging (*e.g.* Gordon 1984; Cashdan 1986; Guenther 1986; Biesele 1989; Myers 1991; Rushforth 1994; Gardner 1995; Woodburn 1995; Prins 1996; Barnard & Taylor 2002). As the ethnography of shared landscapes often shows, autochthones live within nature but can also control it, and consequently, foragers are either revered or detested by farmers (Bahuchet & Guillaume 1982; Moore 1985; Cashdan 1986; Hall & Smith 2000). Thus, in the next chapter the array of possible causes for the occurrence of different and habitually localised sets of engraved images will be explored. These may range from the influence of charismatic individuals, the subsequent conversion of assertive stylistic or thematic elements into themes emblemic of the social group, and as a product of contact and interaction with *other* peoples. The implications that the actions and influence of these agents and instances of change may hold for the detection of, in artistic terms, prehistoric identity-conscious groups, will also be tended to.

CHAPTER FIVE

Agency, Interaction, and Social Transformation

In the preceding chapter it was concluded that although stylistic regions are indeed perceptible, overlapping boundaries and shared thematic sets suggest that there is nevertheless some degree of uniformity in the cosmology and rock art of southern African San foraging peoples (Lewis-Williams 1984a:227, 2002:52, 67; Smith 2006:86). Widely shared themes, from the Cape to Zimbabwe (Lewis-Williams 1984a: 227), Zambia (Smith 1997), and Tanzania (Lewis-Williams 1986) are evident in the distribution of depictions and combinations across the southern African region of postures, imagery, and contexts symptomatic of altered states of consciousness (Lewis-Williams 1984a; Dowson 1988). However, Guenther (1999:228) notes that San society, albeit within the context of egalitarianism, also tend to produce individuals who "do and think their own thing". This in turn fosters a fragmented, fluid, flexible, adaptable, and heterogeneous world-view (Guenther 2001:265) in which a wide range of ideas and practices are expressed and transmitted by socially equal yet culturally individuated men and women. It is this complex and ambiguous blend of *individuality-within-social-structure* which typifies and also greatly problematises the study of San religion, sociality, and expressive culture (*ibid.*; see also Barrett 2001:147-150).

Notably, several conceptual approaches to ethnic identity emphasise an individual level of analysis where notions of identity formation and development are linked to an individual's *self-concept* (Trimble 2000). Much of the work in this area relies on Tajfel's (1982) theory of social identity, according to which one's social identity strongly influences one's self-perception. Consequently, the individual should comprise the central locus of any evaluation of how concepts of ethnicity are initially conceived. The strength and weakness of the self is largely determined by the status of the individual within their reference groups and how individuals assess members of out-groups: when ethnicity forms the nexus of an in-group, *self-identity* will be correspondingly influenced. Individual distinctive ethnic characteristics can also be restrictive as a person may reject external judgments and opinions of their own ethnic group and in turn establish their own criterion to challenge and refute those of the dominant out-group. Other responses may entail the withdrawal or disassociation of individuals from the referent group, thereby creating added psychological complications for themselves. Tajfel's theory has generated considerable influence on ethnic identity research, and many researchers prefer to conduct their research under the ethnic self-identification rubric. For example, Cheung (1993) defines ethnic identification as "the psychological

attachment to an ethnic group or heritage" (*ibid.*:1216), thus positioning the construct of ethnic identity within the domain of *self-perception*. Saharso (1989) extends the definition to include social processes that involve an individual's choice of friends, a future partner, and the reactions of others in their social environment. An individual may strongly identify psychologically with an ethnic group, however, the strength and authenticity of the identity is contingent on the acceptance and acknowledgment of in-group and out-group members. There are therefore two distinct levels of ethnicity (Bekker 1993:12). The first refers to the individual and ethnic identity, and the second to ethnic communities. Although the first can not, on its own, be used to discuss ethnicity comprehensively, any study of ethnicity invariably entails the simultaneous analysis of individual and collective identities (*ibid.*:13). Evidently, an exploration of the *individual*, as agent, is imperative to the attainment of a clear understanding of how ethnicity and ethnic identities are conceived, communicated, and also transformed. Thus, and in asking whether it is in fact possible to "discern the hand, the agency, of individuals as, by making images they reproduced and subverted their own society" (Lewis-Williams 2002:217), I will now explore the influence which the individual, as a social agent, may have exerted in San society.

Agency and identity

Like other aspects of San religion, rock art is not entirely restricted in its subject matter and also has an individualistic component (Dowson 1988; Lewis-Williams 1995a; Guenther 1999). As indicated by Dowson (1988:116), the recurring themes so evident in forager rock art tend to derive from two interconnected modes of conveying the trance experience, namely verbal accounts and pictorial depictions. It has therefore been argued that rock art may have played a role similar to modern verbal accounts, and that visions of the "other" world may constantly have reminded people of the nature of the spiritual world (Lewis-Williams 1982:438; Lewis-Williams & Loubser 1986:280; Dowson 1988:117). With regards this mnemotechnic function of rock art, Lewis-Williams and Loubser (1986:280) have proposed that the hallucinations of southern shamans may have been more uniform than those of their northern, non-painting counterparts, precisely because rock art acted as a stabilising agent of the range of visions experienced during trance.

Although archaeologists draw on the theoretical source materials of Giddens (1979, 1984) and Bourdieu (1977) when making use of practice theory, concepts of agency are generally manifest as two distinctive types. According to the first, social agents are assumed to act strategically and intentionally to advance their own interests (*e.g.*

Blanton *et al.* 1996; Joyce & Winter 1996; Cowgill 2000). Individuals in these interpretations tend to be portrayed as autonomous and rational actors who take full advantage of some aspect of economic, political, or symbolic resources. A more extreme version of this type of individual action informs some evolutionary approaches (*e.g.* Hayden 1995), but this type of individual agent has been adeptly criticised (Gero 2000; Barrett 2001). At the other end of the continuum are those who view the meaningful actions of individuals in historical and social circumstances as only partly of their own making (*e.g.* Johnson 1989; Hodder 1991; Dobres & Hoffman 1994; Barrett 2000; Pauketat 2000; Wilkie & Bartoy 2000). In this scheme, individual actions are contextualised within an array of rules and resources that govern them but which also present them with opportunity for action. The dialectic is one between structure and agency (Giddens 1984; Barrett 2001; Silliman 2001), and social agents are viewed as equally constrained and enabled by social structure. Gell (1998:16) defines agency as

> Attributable to those persons (and things …) who / which are seen as initiating causal sequences … events caused by acts of mind or will or intention … An agent is the source, the origin, of causal events, independently of the state of the physical universe.

Although social agents frequently do act with explicit intent and strategies for accomplishing their objectives, they also act in ways that allow them to "go on" in the world (Giddens 1984; Barrett 2001). In addressing the universals and specifics of shamanic beliefs, visions, and experiences, Weil (1986:29; see also Siegel 1985:248; Lewis-Williams 1997:813) emphasises the importance of "set" or individual expectations and personality, and "setting", the physical and social environment, in determining how an altered state of consciousness is experienced. Shamanic experience is generated by an interplay between neurological universals and cultural and personal realisations. For the human agent, both the universal and the cultural components of altered states of consciousness have the potential to become a resource capable of manipulation for personal and group ends. In some shamanic societies the making of art that is associated with and that in some ways define altered states is one of the most important resources available to human agents (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989; Dowson 1989, 1994; Solomon 1994; Lewis-Williams 1997). As is now widely accepted, material culture, which includes rock art, does not merely reflect culture and society, but, in the hands of human agents, also constitutes culture and society (Miller 1987; Shanks &Tilley 1987, 1992; Conkey 1991; Gell 1998). Most importantly, individual image-makers or rock-artists "… actually did things and achieved

ends with material culture." (Lewis-Williams 1997:813). The notion of art and artistic items as social agents is not new (Layton 1981:43, 2003:5; Wolff 1981:24), as is evident in the claim by Appadurai (1986:4) that "… in many historical societies, things have not been so divorced [as in contemporary Western thought] from the capacity of persons to act." Although some engraved images are startlingly alike, no two are identical. The rather peculiar engraved depiction (Fig 5.1) provides one example of an especially idiosyncratic artistic portrayal.



FIG.5.1. An example of a highly idiosyncratic engraved depiction, the so-called "aeroplane" panel from Bosworth. The extent of weathering and patination suggests that this engraving predates the arrival of aircraft in South Africa by centuries.

Biesele (1978a:170) suggests that the apparent culture-cosmological diversity in San society derive from the influence of "extraordinary individuals". Shamans narrate distinctly idiosyncratic accounts of the supernatural world after a religious experience (Biesele 1978b:938), and some of these personal reports become generally accepted as accurately representing the other world. Biesele (1993:72) furthermore writes of the Ju/'hoansi San:

> Initiates have certain experiences in trance because they expect to do so, basing their expectations on other accounts they have heard … The hallucinations of actual *n/omkxaosi* become, by a process at once highly individual and highly social, conventionalised vehicles facilitating trance for the uninitiated.

In the Kalahari today, San listen attentively to reports of trance visions and experience (Biesele 1978b:938; Guenther 1999:186), and these reports create an expectation of what might be seen in trance. Although subsequent versions of trance experiences do vary as time passes, the understanding of the religious experience and related revelations remain constant (Biesele 1993:70). Shamans tend to experience hallucinations of culturally pre-constrained objects, images, and experiences, and this may account for the visual and experiential equivalence of visions (Lewis-Williams & Loubser 1986:280). Thus, and because expectation partially determines trance experience, analogous visions are eventually experienced by other trancers. Obviously, not all accounts enjoy such widespread success, and these merely remain as idiosyncratic revelations. Similarly, and even though not all individuals manage to achieve some enhanced measure of social standing, some certainly do. Gulbrandsen (1991:99, see also Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2004b:218) identifies three conditions in which authority-figures are likely to develop:

i) when historical circumstances create communities significantly larger than a band;

ii) when wide-ranging nomadism is restricted and people are confined to a site;

iii) when resource- and social problems are created by external agricultural groups.

To this observation Guenther (1999:41) adds that even under “normal” circumstances, San social organisation leads to “the delineation of the individual as an exceptionally sharply profiled actor and agent.” In fact, and as noted by England (1968:416) some four decades ago, the origin of San social differentiation and leadership lies in their recognition of different degrees of the effectiveness and stature among shamans, even if they are not “paid” for their services.

> Bushmen know particularly big (*n!a n!a*, big, big) medicine men by their reputation; they call them *gaoxa* (chief) and fear and respect their powers even though the medicine men dress, eat, sleep, and otherwise pursue their lives just as any other member of the community.

More recently, Shennan (2002:224) also argues that the prime locus for the generation of social inequality in forager societies was the cultural transmission of ritual knowledge: the sharing of ritual knowledge may be “the only legitimate locus for the generation of inequality” (*ibid.*:223). This, according to Lewis-Williams and Pearce (2004b:218) appears to have frequently been the case in San communities. It is

therefore apparent that at least three parallels may be drawn with the observations by Gulbrandsen (1991:99):

i) !Xõo bands are indeed organised into larger social units, namely band clusters or nexuses (Heinz 1972; Wiessner 1977, 1983; Barnard 1979, 1992; Cashdan 1983; Guenther 1986);

ii) wide-ranging nomadism is definitely restricted as, and in light of the persistent maintenance of strips of “no-man’s-land” between the territories of adjacent nexuses, individuals certainly do not hunt on the land of an adjoining nexus (Heinz 1972:408);

iii) the increase in social complexity during the past two millennia unquestionably impacted on the socio-political organisation of the !Xõo-speaking foragers of the western regions of the southern African central interior.

In modern times, Nharo San healers in Botswana move between communities and settle on white-owned farms. Unsurprisingly, it is also these healers who have emerged as Nharo political leaders (Guenther 1999:195). As a consequence of interaction with farmers and their capitalist ideologies, there is, in addition to changes in social structure and a “simplification and rationalisation of belief”, also a shift towards an increasingly perceptible “differentiation and professionalism in the status and role of the trance dancer” (*ibid.*:246; see also Lee 1993:123). It is apparent that the incidence of higher social standings amongst shamans does not necessarily derive from interaction with other socio-economic groups (England 1968:416; Guenther 1999:41). Katz (1982a:59) also offers insight into the social status of shamans amongst contemporary Kalahari San. One particular shaman, Toma Zho, has surpassed all healers to become the “… biggest healer at Xaixai. He is big, big! There are others who do num, but they are far behind him.” Toma Zho confidently offers a similar evaluation of himself, stating that “At Xaixai, I’m the only one with strength.” (*ibid.*). Like many other healers in the Kalahari today, Toma Zho endeavours to diverge from “traditional” healing within his own camp, to instead become a “professional” healer who receives cash payments for his services. Although payment in any form, whether food, gifts, or cash, is undeniably well received, there is another form of imbursement which may incite even more fervour to become a popular healer: sex. Toma Zho, upon reminiscing about his former competence as a dancer and healer, offers some explicit insight into the excitement the prospect of sexual intercourse may have held for many shamans (*ibid.1*86):

> These dances would go on all day, and people would be lying all over the place. By night time I'd go to sleep. I'd go to sleep with one women on my left side and one on my right side … both would start after me, and each one wanted to have sex first … We used to do it, but now I'm too old for that sort of thing. I used to really like it.

Toma Zho continues, stating that

> The women used to love me. They were crazy about me, because I was a healer, because I was a dancer, because I was good at everything … Yes, the women really liked the healers. Whenever I see one who is just getting num, I say 'Think of the sex that guy's going to get!' I remember all the sex I used to get as a healer.

In both myth and in real life, women are in fact in control of sexual relations (Guenther 1999:153). One myth, set in an early time of the First Order, relates how men and women "came together" (Guenther 1989:43). After offering some clues to the men as how to go about satisfying their "unaccountable new appetites", they finally managed to have their way with the women. That accomplished, "there was much pleasure in the village" (*ibid.*:154), and to this day men consider what they receive from women as "very nice food", "delicious fat", and "as sweet as honey" (*ibid.*). In reality also, women retain control over the allocation of sex. While they may reject the advances of either lovers or husbands, they usually do not, as they enjoy sex themselves and as they have engaged in sexual play since childhood (Shostak 1976:272; Lee 1993:90, as cited in Guenther 1999:154). As described by N/isa (*ibid.*155), female sexuality is to men what male healing potency, *n/um* (!Kung) or *tssõ* (Nharo), is to humankind. Thus, apart from the purely congenial nature of sexual intercourse, and a possible but as yet unexplored connotation to reproductive and socio-subsistence strategy, there is a deeper, more spiritual relevance of sex. Guenther (1999:184) refers to a Nharo informant equating the ability to achieve an altered state of consciousness with the "staying power" of a man during intercourse. This accords with a comment by Lee (1993:120) that, amongst the Ju/hoansi, *!kia* or trance appears to be "connected with sexual arousal and orgasm." During trance, the shaman also goes through a process of personal transcendence which significantly alters his or her "sense of self, time, and space" (Katz 1976:288). What is important is that this takes place in the context of the social community: all members share in the personal transformation of the healer, and this adds an explicit public element to the *passage* of the individual (Guenther 1999: 186). As emphasised by Katz (1976:284), the shaman's personal experience brings

“transcendence into ordinary life and ordinary life into transcendence.” In other words, and by bringing “the benefits of the other world - healing and insight” to the community (Biesele 1993:70), shamans perform an essential public service. It is therefore not surprising that some healers achieve “celebrity” status: they are admired for their sexual prowess, respected for their brave transcendental deeds, and valued for their ability to cure and restore to health. Such charismatic individuals, who certainly also excelled at maintaining favourable relationships with scores of people over wide expanses, are indeed *t’xudi kaus*, those “masters of cleverness” referred to by Yellen (1977:47). Accordingly, it should be expected that the insights and opinions of such “extraordinary individuals” (Biesele 1978a:170), whether pertaining to matters spiritual, social, economic, political, or artistic, are equally sought after and valued: these individuals were also masters of social transformation.

Deaux (1992), in attempting to ascertain the link between personal and social identity, argues that while some features of social identities are consensually based and will be expressed along normative lines, other aspects may be based on personal feelings and values and will be expressed along those lines. Thus, and as clarified by Biesele (1978a:170, 1993:72), idiosyncratic characteristics, as related to an individual’s personal identity, are added to normative characteristics of social identities, and, over time, certain idiosyncratic accounts become part of accepted tradition (Lewis-Williams 2006c:13). Deaux further indicates that particular personal identities may be linked to specific social identities, creating unique ways of expressing membership in particular groups: some personal identities may even come to embody and pervade the membership groups to which the individual belongs. In San society individuals are known to have initiated long-lasting trends by altering particular images, motifs, or themes in art and expressive culture (see Rudner & Rudner 1968, 1970; Wiessner 1984; Guenther 1999), and some have even transformed entire expressive genres such as styles of painting or beadwork, or forms of song and dance (Biesele 1993:67). At the same time, and even though individual agency is a force that directly influences social processes (Guenther 1999:40), egalitarianism is maintained by several levelling mechanisms that curb the desires and ambitions of the individual (*ibid.*:42). For instance, and by “insulting the meat” (see Bleek 1932:240 for the incidence of this custom amongst the /Xam and Lee 1993:54 for similar behaviour amongst the !Kung) skilled hunters concede their “levelled” status and verify their recognition of the egalitarian ethos of equality and sharing (Guenther 1999:43). Ethnographic and historical studies have shown that shamans do indeed play active roles in social and political change (Guenther 1975; Hitchcock 1982; Aldenderfer 1993; Lewis-Williams

2002), and Hodder (1982, 1986; as cited in Dowson 1988:125), rightly advocates that the role of the individual should be afforded a central position in archaeological theory. Even though we shall never know the name of the potter, he stresses we must not forget that each pot was made by an individual (Hodder 1986:7). In the same way, engraved images were made by individuals: they were not made by "society" (Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2004b:220).

Although there were undoubtedly conventions as to what could be engraved and what was inappropriate for depiction, there are images that appear to contravene normative artistic values (*e.g.* Fig. 5.1). Many engraved "panels" or "scenes" expose the subtle interplay between normative and idiosyncratic contributions: the classic dichotomy between society and the individual, structure, and agency is clearly evident in the art (*ibid.*; see also Lewis-Williams 2002:113). Biesele (1983:56) notes that the engraved images of the medicine men are regarded in terms of the truth-value accorded to them: they are "pre-constrained" by tradition but they also add to it, and the assimilation of new material takes place concurrently with the reinforcement of the old. Such "new material", whether derived from the insights and influence of charismatic individuals or from interaction with *other* groups, must certainly have been juxtaposed with the old, and it is these gradual and often abrupt instances of change which are of prime relevance to the exploration of inter-ethnic interaction as manifest in the engraved art of the South African interior region.

Intercultural contact and social transformation

One view of interaction has essentialised hunter-gatherers by focusing primarily on intra-cultural exchange (*e.g.* Sahlins 1965; Hawkes 1993). In the literature on forager exchange, the archetypal hunter-gatherer society practices generalised reciprocity and is characterised by isolation and timelessness (Bird-David 1995:17): little attention is given to how foragers actively interact with pastoralists and agro-pastoralists and to the diversity of forager responses to pressures by sedentary societies. Wobst (1978:304) has argued that anthropologists tend to "reinforce the overwhelming ethnographic stereotype that hunter-gatherers articulate exclusively with local variability, and that regional and interregional process among hunter-gatherers is a symptom of degeneration and culture contact." In summary, Wobst argues that anthropologists have filtered out behaviours involving interaction between foragers and their neighbours, and therefore "the ethnographic literature perpetuates a worm's-eye view of (hunter-gatherer) reality." Although such "filtering" may in fact have resulted from the selective focuses of particular theistic, sidereal, animistic, prosaic, shamanic, or

gender-symbolic lines of ethnographic enquiry (see Guenther 1999:232 for a discussion), the failure to explicate the range and complexity of forager's political and economic exchange relations have nevertheless resulted in a romanticised image of hunter-gatherers as simple, honest, and sharing. This has made it difficult to comprehend the capacity of foragers to accommodate and resist the hegemonic ambitions of sedentary peoples.

It has previously been noted that the intricacies of intercultural relations have received more attention in recent literature (*e.g.* Bahuchet & Guillaume 1982; Morris 1982; Endicott 1983; Gordon 1984; Cashdan 1986; Headland & Reid 1989; Wilmsen 1989; Grinker 1990; Spielmann & Eder 1994; Gardner 1995). For example, Bailey and Peacock (1988) have argued that the Efe Pygmies of Zaire cannot be understood as an isolated population since "… virtually every aspect of Efe existence is affected by and has effects on Walese villager life." (*ibid.*:91). This is indeed true for most foraging peoples: the Twa-Pygmy farmer-foragers are known to have been involved in such close symbiotic relations with surrounding agro-pastoralist peoples (Blench 1999; Hitchcock 1999; Köhler & Lewis 2002) that there is no longer a true Pygmy language (Blench 2004:12). In countless instances, intense degrees of social interaction and mutually beneficial economic relations between San foragers and Khoe pastoralists appears to have resulted in a situation analogous to that of the Twa and their agro-pastoralist neighbours. In Chapter Two it was ascertained that the earliest evidence for sheep in South Africa is from Spoegrivier on the Orange River at 2105 years BP (Vogel *et al.* 1997; Mitchell 2002) and at Blombos Cave near Mossel Bay at 1960 years BP (Henshilwood 1996). Of additional significance to this investigation are the finds from Jakkalsberg and Bloeddrift in the lower Orange River valley. Domestic faunal remains from Jakkalsberg, dated to 1400 to 1300 years BP, constitute some 90% of the deposit (Brink & Webley 1996; Webley 1997), and 70% of the faunal remains from Bloeddrift involve domestic small stock (A.B. Smith *et al.* 1991). These markedly large domestic faunal components accords with those "pure" pastoralist sites in East Africa, where 90 to 100% of the fauna consist of domesticates (Gifford-Gonzalez 2005:207). In addition, the Little Witkrans shelter may provide an indication of the earliest appearance of thin-walled ceramics and ovi-caprines in the Harts River region at around 1860 years BP (Beaumont & Vogel 1989). The appearance of ceramic wares and domesticated stock marks the advent, in southern Africa, of the Neolithic period. Karim Sadr (2003:208) defines the Neolithic as:

> A period starting at about 2000 years ago, just before the arrival of iron-using, Bantu-speaking farmers and herders, when ideas of food production, domesticated small stock and new technologies such as the manufacture of clay vessels, spread rapidly through the subcontinent. A period when these new ideas and animals were adopted in a variety of ways by many (but not all) local hunter-gatherer groups, some of whom assimilated more of these incoming traits than others, and most of whom changed little as a result to become what I have called hunters-with-sheep.

The term *Neolithic* therefore refers to a set of processes that commenced more or less concurrently over the whole of southern Africa some two millennia ago. In the same way, the arrival of Bantu-speaking agro-pastoralists in the southern African interior region during the 3rd century AD (Hall 1987; Phillipson 1993) marks the inception of what is known in archaeological terms as the Early Iron Age. In a critical review of the earliest evidence for sheep in southern Africa, Bousman (1998) suggests that there are no clearly discernable patterns in the diffusion of domestic stock. Given the roughly simultaneous arrival of Khoekhoe pastoralists and Bantu-speaking agro-pastoralists in the region, it is furthermore proposed that these dates, which tend to cluster to either the western or the eastern margins of the Kalahari (see Bousman 1998: fig. 4), should in fact be viewed within the context of the entire southern African region. Fauvelle-Aymar (2004), in merging the views of Bousman (1998) and Sadr (2003), points out that even though these Neolithic transformations are indeed pan-southern African, the absence of agricultural practice in the west, and the presence of metallurgical technologies in the east suggest two very different Neolithic scenarios: "… the west side Khoesan story and the east side Bantu story, which are so conceptually separated as to allow us to envisage their contemporaneousness only in terms of 'exchanges' and 'contacts' and not in terms of similar processes." (Fauvelle-Aymar 2004:3). With this eastern and western delineation of contact and interaction in mind, I will now explore the nature of relations between foragers and pastoralists and farmers.

Processes of persistence

Intercultural studies of hunter-gatherers and sedentary cultures illustrate a multitude of strategies employed by hunter-gatherers that are designed to elude assimilation, including tactics of impression management, alliance building, flexibility, adaptability, negotiation, accommodation of the dominant society's rules, along with such concrete manoeuvres as lying and deceit, fleeing, and begging (*e.g.* Gordon 1984; Cashdan

1986; Guenther 1986; Biesele 1989; Myers 1991; Gardner 1995; Woodburn 1995; Prins 1996; Barnard & Taylor 2002). Such intercultural exchange tactics are likely to have been employed for a very long time, since hegemonic pressure by agriculturalists is arguably an enduring cross-cultural phenomenon (Woodburn 1997). As the ethnography of shared landscapes often shows, autochthones live within nature but can also control it, and consequently, foragers are either revered or detested by farmers (Bahuchet & Guillaume 1982; Moore 1985; Cashdan 1986; Hall & Smith 2000). Despite the impact of agriculture and political integration, which are believed to cause the role of the shaman to change and subsequently be subsumed under other types of magico-religious healing practitioners such as traditional healers and possession-trance mediums (Winkelman 1990:308), and although newly-populated peoples may change linguistically and culturally, foragers habitually manage to maintain close associations with traditional hunting grounds (Ambrose 1982; Taylor 1997). There are four general outcomes of inter-ethnic contact (Kusimba 2003:101; see also Brink 2004:94):

i) the establishment of symbiotic and mutually beneficial relationships;
ii) situations of conflict in which parties actively contest claims to resources;
iii) avoiding contact and competition by simply moving away;
iv) a condition of segmentary opposition where closely related but competing groups erect strong cultural boundaries in order to prevent interaction.

This last outcome of inter-ethnic contact is not limited to relations between widely divergent social or economic groups such as foragers or pastoralists: the !Xõo-speaking foragers of the central interior appear to have established similar measures to curb interaction between !Xõo-speaking groups. Haarmann (1986) offers a more complex explanatory scheme for the processes involved in ethnic fusion and fission. Although based on language as a salient constituent of ethnic identity, the reality that contact between languages routinely entails the exchange, between individuals, of social, cultural, and religious concepts, renders this definition extremely useful for understanding ethnic synthesis and segregation. Whereas amalgamation, incorporation, and conglomeration are phenomena of ethnic fusion which indicates processes of assimilation and integration, profilation, separation, and proliferation are variants of ethnic fission indicative of processes of differentiation and segregation (*ibid.*: 41). Accordingly, and although assimilation and integration are the principal outcomes of contact, these are situated at the extreme ends of a range of strategies intended to deal with the threats and opportunities offered by inter-cultural contact. Even so, any

contact between foragers and other peoples must have resulted in the re-evaluation of individual and group identities, in the development of vague ethnic entities, and in slight alterations to concepts of identity which in turn may have resulted in the revision of individual and group identities (Barth 1969; Rasmussen 1992; Jones 1997). Such changes in identity may also have led to changing conceptions about the meanings of formerly unaffected emically-relevant activities and symbols (*e.g.* Francis 2001; Layton 2001; Jolly 2002). As noted by Smith (2006:95), and if it is assumed that changes in rock art can in fact be tied to concomitant changes in perceptions about identity and ethnicity, then regionality, of which some patterns were noted in the preceding discussion, may be used to both infer and predict broader cultural relationships between groups. Change, as will be demonstrated, does not necessarily involve the wholesale conversion of foraging groups into serfs or socio-artistic sub-assemblies of newcomers.

Cultural synthesis and social amalgamation

Opinions about southern African prehistoric identities vary considerably: pastoral peoples are viewed either as a distinct ethnic group that migrated southward about 2000 years ago into a southern Africa occupied by multiple forager communities ancestral to contemporary San (*e.g.* Westphal 1963; Ehret 1982, 1998; Elphick 1985; A.B. Smith 1997), or as foragers who had gained access to domestic stock and ceramics from Bantu-speaking farmers by exchange, diffusion, and acculturation (*e.g.* Barnard 1992; Schrire 1992; Kinahan 1995; Sadr 1998, 2003; Fauvelle-Aymar 2004) before the arrival of immigrant herders bringing with them a distinctive package of material culture some 1400 years ago. Most researchers accept that individuals and even some groups crossed the forager-herder divide. However, relations between pastoralists and foragers are difficult to determine: whereas some writers have argued that the distinction between San and Khoekhoe was minimal and that San with stock was in fact Khoekhoe and vice versa (Marks 1972:57, as cited in Schrire 1980:20), others believe that the differences were more marked (Elphick 1977:23). There are numerous indications of instances of amalgamation of forager and pastoralist socio-economic practice, linguistic features, and also religious-cosmological views, and these will now be attended to.

Foragers and pastoralists

Note that the focus of this discussion is on the pastoralist groups speaking languages from the Orange River branch (!Ora, Xiri, Nama, and Einiqua) of the Khoe or Khoe-

Kwadi (Central Khoe-San) language group, and on foragers speaking languages of the !Kwi, Tuu, or !Ui-Taa (Southern Khoe-San) language group.

Socio-economic integration

In terms of economy and subsistence, pastoral Khoekhoe are similar to San groups in a major aspect: traditionally, pastoralists relied heavily on the gathering of wild food plants and on hunting, and this strong foraging component made them one of the few pastoral populations in Africa, possibly the only one, that used to be entirely independent from agricultural food production (Güldemann 2000, 2006c; Ehret 2002). Fauvelle-Aymar (2004:4) notes that since the overall impression is that Khoekhoe relied so heavily on hunting, they are generally considered as "halfway between hunters and 'real' pastoralists". This conclusion certainly appears accurate, hence the suitability of the label "pastoro-foragers" for southern African Khoekhoe (Galaty, as cited in Fauvelle-Aymar 2004:4; see also Wilmsen 1991).

A.B. Smith (1986:40) points to several alternatives by which foragers could have negotiated the impact of competition for grazing by herds of domestic animals. Foragers could have opted to move into areas where lower-ranked food resources were abundant, attach themselves to a patron who would use their skills as fighters and trackers in return for food, utilise a combination of these first two alternatives, relying on patrons, especially during hungry periods, or to restructure their transhumance cycle to fill any spatial vacuum that may have been left by the more coherent pasture strategy of the cattle herding Khoe when they moved away from the coast. With the first and fourth alternatives the hunting way of life could be maintained and stock theft would occasionally occur, and with the other two alternatives a gradual movement toward the pastoral "ideal", namely the experience in herding and the future orientation of herders, could be gained. Patron-client relationships between pastoralists and foragers are widespread (A.B. Smith 1997:1; Hitchcock 1999:181), as is evident from the confirmed existence of mutually-beneficial economic relations between, for example, the Okiek and Maasai, Kipsigis, Nandi, and Kikuyu of Kenya (Kratz 1999:220) and the /Gwi and //Gana of Botswana and their neighbouring Tswana farmers (Tanaka & Sugawara 1999:195). Such close relations between foragers and pastoralists may have resulted both from and subsequently in linguistic similarities, shared economic practices, and similar conceptions of space (A.B. Smith 1992:29, 2001:375) between groups. For example, the practice of using oxen in battle, and of insufflation, a technique by which cows are prompted into delivering milk by blowing air into the vagina, either with a tube or directly with the mouth, is limited to only a few African

pastoralist groups (Fauvelle-Aymar 2004:6). War oxen have been reported from amongst the Bororo Fulani of Niger (Dupire 1962), the Fulani of Massina in Mali (Bâ & Daget 1984), and, remarkably, also the Cape Khoekhoe and the Namaqua. Insufflation is found amongst pastoralists in East Africa, Somalia, in southern and western Sudan, and in Chad, Niger, and Mali (Fauvelle-Aymar 2004:6). Significantly, this practice has also been reported for the Cape Khoekhoe and the Namaqua of Namibia (Schapera 1930:295). In brief, and as argued by Fauvelle-Aymar (2004:7), air-insufflation and war-oxen, which are limited to specialised cattle-pastoralists only, can confidently be regarded as cultural markers of cattle herders with a strong social and ideological investment in cows and oxen. This in turn suggests that the pastoralist peoples along the western margins of southern Africa (the Cape Khoekhoe and the Namibian Namaqua) should be viewed, from the end of the first millennium AD (Elphick 1977:12; Sadr 1998:101; Fauvelle-Aymar 2004:8), as in possession of a “complete pastoral package”.

In Chapter Three it was noted that the extent of ethnic endogamy (Light 1981; Whitmeyer 1997) is believed to signify the degree of ethnic differentiation within a community and that endogamy has generally been taken as an indicator of ethnicity (Light 1981:71; see also De Vos 1975; van den Berghe 1981; Connor 1992). Whereas instances of ethnic endogamy reduce the opportunities for choice in ethnic identification, complete intermarriage eliminates local ethnic distinctions because marriage functions to transfer a population’s distinct adaptive characteristics from one generation to the next. Affinal kinship ties established by intermarriage therefore constitute a prominent dimension of hunter-farmer social interaction (Spielmann & Eder 1994:308). In some areas intermarriage is prohibited (Milton 1984), in other areas hypergyny is common (Bailey 1991; Speth 1991) and men from farming villages marry hunter-gatherer women. This pattern has been noted among the Hadza (Woodburn 1988), the Efe (Bailey & Aunger 1989), and the Okiek (Blackburn 1982; Kratz 1986). In contrast, it is unusual for women from agriculturalist communities to marry male foragers. An additional kinship-affiliated aspect suggestive of substantial San-to-Khoe influence is the occurrence of the !Kung naming system amongst Western Khoe-speaking San (Barnard 1988a:42). This system of name transmission from grand-parents to grandchildren occurs throughout !Kung territory, from the land of the !Xũ of Angola to that of the ≠Au//eisi of the Ghanzi district (Lee 1972:356). Of all the Khoe-speaking San, only those whose territories border on !Kung territory use the system: the Nharo, the Ts'aokhoe, the ≠Haba, and possibly also several smaller groups in southern Ngamiland (Barnard 1992:265). An important factor in promoting inter-ethnic

marriages might have been the role of stock posts in the periphery of pastoral settlement areas. These would have been occupied chiefly by men tending the stock and looking for new pastures. In such an environment, the role of San women might even have been greater than in the normal contact situation (Güldemann 2000). In consideration of more recent social relations in Khoe-San interaction as well as patterns of pastoral food production in southern Africa, it is quite probable that San women in particular were incorporated into Khoe ethnic units. These individuals would have acted as major mediators of features which the historically attested Khoekhoe and !Ui groups have in common. In terms of socio-cultural fusion, an important factor would have been the cultural prestige of pastoralists in general and the frequent status of San as their clients. In attested cases of intermarriage between foraging and food-producing groups, this and other factors lead to a pattern in which San women become espoused in the prestige group and are integrated there together with their children, but not the other way around. As a result, gene-flow is predominantly unilateral, namely from the San population into the population of the other group, in this case the Khoekhoe (see Soodyall & Jenkins 1997; Barkhan & Soodyall 2006 for current discussions on genetic similarities between San and Khoe). Hahn's (1870) metaphorical view of "Bushmen and Hottentots as siblings of one mother, but ethnically entirely different characters" would seem to have a very real background in history.

Linguistic assimilation

As seen in Chapter Three, the presence of the closest relatives of Khoe at the very periphery of the southern African Khoe-San linguistic region, such as in the case of Kwadi and Sandawe, can be taken as an indication that the centre of the original linguistic unit might have been located outside southern Africa and that the common "ancestor" might ultimately originate from the north of the contemporary focus of Khoe-San, possibly even in eastern Africa (Güldemann & Elderkin 2002:46; A.B. Smith 2005:180). More than a century ago, Wilhelm Bleek (1927:63) perceptively wrote:

> I think it is likely that the territory of the Northern and Southern Groups [the Ju and Tuu family of Southern African Khoisan] joined right through the Kalahari, not only in the west as at present; that the Central Group [the Kalahari branch of Khoe] occupied the land to the northeast of the Kalahari, probably extending to the Great Lakes and East thereof; that the original Hottentots [the Khoekhoe branch of Khoe] were members of this group (parentheses by Güldemann & Elderkin 2002:5).

Köhler (1974:189, as translated by Güldemann & Elderkin 2002:6) also viewed the Khoe language family as having originated far to the north-east, stating that “the hypothesis of an origin of the Khoe language group from the northeast of the continent stands on a more solid basis.” It is clear that even early observers noticed some degree of differentiation between the peoples inhabiting the western and eastern parts of southern Africa, particularly in the regions of north-western Namibia in the west, and north-eastern Botswana in the east (see Fauvelle-Aymar 2004:3). Vossen (1984, as cited in Wilmsen 1989:102) also posits that some sort of separation between Kalahari Khoe languages in the east and Khoekhoe languages in the south and west occurred approximately 2000 years ago. In addition, Güldemann (2003a:1) notes that the unique structures in Khoekhoe appears to be very similar to some aspects of the Tuu family, particularly its !Ui branch.

	Khoekhoe		**Tuu**			
	North	South	!Ui			Taa
Lexeme	**Nama**	**!Ora**	**N||ng**	**|Xam**	**≠Ungkue**	**!Xõo**
again, also	||xa-	||xa-	-	||xa(m)	-	||xale
beard	n|om	n|um-	n|um	n|um	-	n|um
cheetah	!'aru-(ru)-	!'aru-ru-	!kx'aru	!kx'auru	-	-
come, go to	sii	sii	si, sa	si, saa	see, saa	sii, sa-
do, make	dii	dii	-	di	tii	-
help	hui	hui	-	nhu'i	uie	uhi
knock	!hũu *pound*	!hũu	-	-	!hun'a *hit*	!hũu-!hũu
monkey, small	||'ore-	||xori-	||kx'ore	-	||hore	-
mosquito	ts'uru-ru-	ts'uru-ru-	-	ts'utu	-	-
sense, feel	tsã	thã	tjha'n	tãa	thã	tãa

FIG.5.2. Probable Khoekhoe (Nama and !Ora) lexical borrowings as derived from Tuu (N||ng, /Xam, ≠Ungkue, and !Xõo) languages (after Güldemann 2003a).

This observation has led to the hypothesis that the contrasting linguistic character of Khoekhoe (the southern variants including Nama, Xiri, and !Ora) with reference to Kalahari Khoe (the eastern variants inclusive of Hietshware, |Xaise, Danisi, and Tsua) is to a considerable extent the result of contact with Tuu (southern Khoe-San - N||ng, /Xam, ≠Ungkue, and !Xõo) languages, which have been in the relevant area for a longer period. Moreover, the region in which Khoekhoe occurred appears to have been enclosed almost entirely within the confines of the Tuu-speaking area, and this may have resulted in the assimilation of numerous linguistic features from Tuu languages. In

view of this, it seems that whereas there was an amplified degree of contact between Kalahari Khoe-speakers (Nama, Xiri, and !Ora) and South Khoe-San-speakers (N||ng, /Xam, ≠Ungkue, and !Xõo), the intensity of contact, as suggested by shared linguistic features, between the Eastern Khoe variants, which includes Hietshware-, |Xaise-, Danisi-, and Tsua-speakers (who may possibly have resided in the Limpopo region and who may have authored the rock art ascribed to Khoekhoe pastoralists), and South Khoe-San-speakers, was not as extensive. In summary, Güldemann (2003a) argues that in its distribution area south of the Kalahari, Khoekhoe was subject to linguistic interference from Tuu which, as a family, has been present there for a much longer period. That this can be read as suggestive of social, economic, and religious amalgamation between foragers and pastoralists, with a considerable and perhaps even prevailing influence from the forager-side, appears decidedly feasible.

Linguistic similarities between Khoekhoe (Khoe-Kwadi) and Tuu (!Ui and Taa) languages have generally received explanations different from that proposed by Güldemann. It is frequently argued that similarities are due to the transfer, or through borrowing, of Khoekhoe (pastoralist) linguistic features into San (forager) languages. As a generalised interpretation, the opposing San-to-Khoe linguistic transfer scenario emerges to have been unpopular and perhaps even inconceivable primarily because of influences resulting from the prejudice that foragers are unlikely to have exerted any substantial impact on a presumably culturally superior pastoral society, be it linguistic or cultural (Kroch 1998:246). Güldemann provides sufficient evidence in support of the contrary, namely that hunter-gatherers certainly did have a profound influence on the language, and culture, of pastoralist newcomers. There are, however, also strands of linguistic evidence pertaining to the adoption, by !Ui-Taa speakers from Khoe-speaking pastoralists, of terminologies concerned with pastoralist activities. Initially, Khoe-speaking forager-pastoralists appear to have borrowed pastoral terms such as the words for *ram*, *milk ewe*, *young ram*, *grain*, and *porridge* from Eastern Sahelian languages (A.B. Smith 2005:180). Words for *cattle* and *goats* were also adopted, from Khoe, by !Ui-Taa-speaking foragers, and in !Xõo, most probably only the eastern variants (as these terms are absent in Nama which occurs to the west), so did the terms for *sheep* and shepherding activities (*ibid.*:181). Finally, it must be noted that although there are problems associated with the use of loanwords to ascertain degrees of interaction between different groups (see Ambrose 1982:111; Ehret 1982:162; Barnard 1992:20; Blench 2006:64 for discussions), the close association between language, material culture, and the boundaries within which these are confined (Ambrose 1982:107; Blench 2006:33) renders the employment of lexical features for

determining relations between groups valuable. The merit of loanwords and the correspondences between the distributions and relative temporal spans of linguistic terminologies and archaeological data will be further attended to shortly.

Religious-cosmological amalgamation

From various ethnographic and historical accounts it is evident that interaction between the San and the Khoekhoen was extensive and not superficial. One such account describes what must surely be San shamans performing curing rituals for Khoekhoen people living at the Kat River settlement in what is now the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa (Kay 1833:474). In more general terms, both Schapera (1930) and Barnard (1988, 1992) have noted "striking resemblances" in religion across the Khoe-San spectrum. Barnard (1988b:217) notes that "religious ideas, including concepts of God, the spirits, and the dead, as well as myths and ritual practices, are held in common across ethnic boundaries", and that "a characteristic feature of Khoisan mythology is the tendency of ideas … myths or stories, to travel across linguistic, cultural, and environmental boundaries." (*ibid.*:228). To these observations Biesele (1993:34) adds that San and Khoekhoe oral traditions are "practically indistinguishable", and Guenther (1999:128) notes how histories of contact may have resulted in myths permeating and blending across boundaries. One particular example is the story of *The Moon and the Hare*, which Bleek (1875:10, as cited in Guenther 1999:128) characterised as a "veritable Hottentot myth" because of its apparent preponderance in Namaqualand and also because nine versions of the same myth were collected from the /Xam San. What is more, Bleek was unable to differentiate Khoekhoe from San elements in these latter versions. Lewis-Williams (1981:105) and Prins (1991) have also drawn attention to the close correspondences between Korana rituals and beliefs and those of the /Xam. Significantly, these correspondences in myth and religious views are also manifest, amongst Khoe-speaking foragers (see Barnard 1992:25 for a discussion on western, central, and eastern divisions), in the attainment of altered states of consciousness as associated with communal trance-dance rituals. For example, although the Nharo, which includes Ts'aokhoe-, Qabekhoe-, and N/haints'se-speaking groups (Barnard 1992:26) are not linguistically related to the !Kung, who live to their immediate north, there are many aspects of their medico-religious belief system that resemble those of the !Kung (Guenther 1999:83). The "superiority" of !Kung medicine is also recognised by the Nharo and indeed by other Bushman peoples as well. The medicine dance of the Nharo is remarkably similar to that of the Ju/'hoansi !Kung as recorded by Lorna Marshall (1962, 1969) and other ethnographers (Lee 1968; Katz 1976). The G/wi and G//ana, who are generally

classified as central Khoe-speaking Bushmen (Barnard 1992:26), also perform trance-dance rituals which are practically identical to those of the !Kung and other San-speaking forager groups (Guenther 1999:182; Tanaka & Sugawara 1999:198; see also Prins & Rousseau 1992). Chidester (1996b:51) appropriately describes Khoe and San religion not as a system, but as a religious-cosmological "frontier" in which religious concepts are readily adopted, transformed, and re-adapted according to prevailing social-political circumstances: the development of such religious frontiers may be viewed as, unsurprisingly, ensuing from socio-cultural frontiers as "cultural mosaics of interspersed communities" (Moore 1985: 94). For example, and in addition to the emergence of religious notions which conflates //Gauwa with Satan (Guenther 1999:114), some elements associated with the concept of Jesus Christ has also materialised in a new trickster god which appears to embody an amalgamation of //Gauwa and *Jesso Kriste* as a potentially malevolent, but predominantly benevolent, supernatural entity (*ibid.*:120). Equally, Guenther (1999:88) also distinguishes a "Khoisan Religious Tradition" as an elaborate amalgamation of religious views and supernatural entities initially restricted to various southern African foraging, pastoralist, and agro-pastoralist groups. Accordingly, the "core" elements of Khoe-San religion, which are abstracted from this "multifaceted, fluid, and highly variable complex of beliefs", may be described as consisting of (*ibid.*; see also Barnard 1992:252):

> [A] dual notion of divinity; a trickster figure who is both protagonist and god; vaguely defined spirits of the dead; a cosmogonic notion of an early order of existence and race of people, and its transformation into the present order; a closeness to animals, who are significant economically, mystically, and symbolically; ritual trance, both as a curing technique that draws on a mystical force or potency and as a means for transformation and transcendence; and male and female initiation rites.

Furthermore, it has been established that change is a universal characteristic of all religious systems (Van der Leeuw 1964:609), and, as noted by Katz (1982b:345) in the context of the Kalahari !Kung,

> Healing systems are among those parts of a culture most sensitive to change. Dealing as they do with points of crisis, confusion, and opportunity - transitions which are the essence of culture change - healing systems often function as the barometers of, as well as the responses to, such change.

Thus, and despite the fact that time and loss of original perspective may result in the replacement of original meanings with suitable alternatives (Jolly 2002:253), over-lapping ethnic boundaries may also result in the ascription of variable conceptual meanings to visually analogous imagery (Jones 1997:129). This fluid, ambiguous, and seemingly structure-less arrangement of religious views greatly problematises the delineation of Khoe and San artistic elements, particularly so in the engraved arts. In addition, the systematic addition of engraved images derived from either "ancient" and unaltered, idiosyncratic, innovative, or amalgam socio-religious contexts, and the accumulative and preserving disposition of the surfaces into which they are engraved, renders the endeavour of recognising temporal trends, establishing authorship, and ascertaining ethnic affiliations extremely complicated (see Schrire 1980:19; Brink 2002:95).

Foragers and agro-pastoralists

A long history of forager-farmer interaction in sub-Saharan Africa is borne out by archaeological data (see Denbow 1984; Solway & Lee 1990; Phillipson 1993; Vansina 1995 for discussions), and recent re-evaluations of linguistic evidence which also supports an enduring web of interaction between variable economic groups (Vansina 1995). It is also argued that agriculture, sedentism, iron technology, and pottery were not uniquely associated with populations of north-western African genetic descent. Alternatively, ideas, technologies, and languages often dispersed without associated population movements or replacements, instead being adopted and propagated by "autochthon" populations, some of which had no direct contact with the original Bantu-speaking food-producers (*ibid.*). This notion accords with the "bow-wave" notion of contact proposed by Sampson (1986:52), which entails the process by which selected ideas and / or items move ahead of the expanding pastoralist or agro-pastoralist frontier into adjacent areas inhabited by recipient forager groups. Ideas and items more likely to impart technical and social advantages to recipient groups may be expected to diffuse earliest and most rapidly. Also, as the distance from the donor frontier increases, the impact of these ideas and items will diminish. In theory, these events should be visible in the archaeological record, but in practice they seldom are. Most recipient groups are eventually overrun by the donor frontier, so that the selected items on recipient sites in the diffusion front are later masked by the full repertoire of donor items. This process was not uni-dimensional, and there are documented cases of farmers adopting foraging lifeways in environmental contexts where it proved to be more favourable to survival (Vansina 1995:191).

For a variety of reasons, however, forager-farmer interactions often take place at the expense of forager cultural traits (Spielmann & Eder 1994; Riel-Salvatore 2005). In Chapter Two it was observed that, in contrast to the relations which existed between San and Nguni-speaking agro-pastoralists in the south-eastern mountains (Campbell 1987; Prins & Lewis 1992; Dowson 1994; Jolly 1994, 1996a, b; Hammond-Tooke 1998, 1999; Blundell 2004), interaction between San and Sotho-Tswana in the interior appears to have been somewhat restricted: trance activities and the terminologies associated with San ritual practice does not seem to have been adopted by the Sotho-Tswana of the interior (Prins & Rousseau 1992; Ouzman 1995), and instead the acceptance of the role of diviner represent the prime means by which San shamans were incorporated into Sotho-Tswana society (Prins 1991; Jolly 1994; Loubser & Laurens 2001). The seemingly reduced extent of Tswana-San fusion may be ascribed to the fact that, as indicated by archaeological data (*e.g.* Maggs 1972; Humphreys 1976; Evers 1981; Vogel & Fuls 1999) and ethnographic sources (*e.g.* Lye 1970; Van Warmelo 1974; Mönnig 1983), and although the Sotho-Tswana appear as an ethno-linguistic unit around AD 1400 (Nurse *et al.* 1985; Ouzman 1995; Eggert 2005), the first Tswana groups only arrived in the western parts of the Highveld interior at around AD 1640. These groups also never occupied the far-western regions, around the Langeberg and Korannaberg Mountains, for extended periods of time (Humphreys 1976). Furthermore, as noted by Solway and Lee (1990:111) and in light of the socio-economic relations between the !Xõo-speaking San of Western Kweneng and Tswana farmers at Dutlwe, north of current-day Vryburg - and the Kinderdam, Content, Verdwaalvlakte, Gemsbokhoek, and Catharina engraved sites - a straightforward "Tswana-centric" model does not "fit" everywhere with the same precision, nor does it fit equally well through time. The historical record reveals a variety of linkages between San and their neighbours, with a corresponding assortment of consequences: San encapsulation within the orbit of Bantu-speaking peoples and loss of autonomy has been neither automatic nor complete. Moreover, the San of Western Kweneng have not always worked for their Bantu-speaking neighbours, nor is there anything "natural" about the state of affairs that exists today (*ibid.*:112). There was, nonetheless, a substantial degree of mutually-beneficial socio-economic interaction and, in all probability, also socio-religious amalgamation between San and Tswana. This is attested by the accounts of Wikar, in 1778 (Mossop 1935), and Gordon, in 1779 (Raper & Boucher 1988), who describe the trade in beads, iron, copper, ivory, tobacco, cattle and also hides along and north of the Orange River in which the Nama, Korana, the Tswana-speaking Barolong and Bathlaping, and San hunter-herders participated. Wikar also notes the existence of groups of mixed Thlaping-Khoekhoe / Korana, the

Geissiqua or “twin-folk” (Mossop 1935; Nienaber 1963; Humphreys 1976; Morris & Beaumont 1991). Campbell (1812, as cited in Stow 1905:427) refers to mixed San-Tswana groups he encountered near present-day Dithakong as a “mongrel race between the Bachoana and Bushmen”. These people were subjects of Mothibe, the Bathlaping chief whose capital was located near modern Kuruman. While they are said to have been bound to pay tribute to the chief with “all the jackal-skins they could procure” (*ibid.*:429), they were also free to hunt as much of the other species of game as they required.

Although the nature of relations between San shamans, as rain-makers, and their Tswana-speaking neighbours is vague (Loubser & Laurens 1994), it is evident that the eland features prominently in the rain-making rites of the Tswana. Arbousset and Daumas (1968:47) recount a praise song for the *canna* or eland antelope as performed by *Basutos* or Southern Sotho between the Orange and Vaal Rivers in 1836: the passages “It is a cow that conceals its calf in the unknown fords of the rivers”, and “An ox which one presents as food to his uncle or his aunt” illustrate the likely analogies drawn between eland, as revered by the San, and domestic cattle. Further north, the engraved art at Thaba Sione near Mmabatho (Ouzman 1995, 1996) confirms that San and Tswana interacted in the spheres of religion and cosmology: the art is characterised by a marked degree of variability in thematic and stylistic features, and there are also a number of striking correspondences between the rain-making beliefs of the San and the Tswana-speakers of the interior. Schapera (1971a:52; see also Comaroff 1985:84) offers an informative account of a Tswana rain-making ritual, during which the *tshitlho* or rain-medicine is prepared and prayers are sung:

> Shoulderers, shoulderers of chiefship, carry well the people of the crying horns, the people of the goat’s horns, rainmakers who fought the Matebele. Molebedu, intercede for the youths, intercede for those of the crying horns, intercede for the chiefs, I am speaking, I speak about rain, let the eland die.

More striking, however, is the phrase chanted at the conclusion of the inauguration of a new chief (Schapera 1971a:2):

> Let it rain!
> Let it rain!
> Let the eland die!
> Eland!

Schapera furthermore notes that the Kgatla believed that the killing of an eland was an omen of good luck, and that this would ensure “plenty of rain that year”. More recently, Guenther (1986) and Lee (2003) have noted the increasing prevalence of notions concerned with Tswana witchcraft and medicine amongst Kalahari San, confirming the notion that many San healers incorporated foreign religious concepts and practices into an increasingly diverse medico-religious repertoire. Comaroff (1985:119) refers to the adoption of foreign religious elements by Tswana-speakers as “a process of reorganisation; a *bricolage* which not only alters existing relations between signs but also integrates them with others bearing forms and forces of external origins”. Moreover, such “complexes of signs are thus disengaged from their former contexts and take on transformed meanings in their new associations” (*ibid.*).

With regards the adoption of linguistic terms related to particular socio-economic activities, it has been established that Khoe-speaking forager-pastoralists initially borrowed several pastoral terms from Eastern Sahelian languages (Ehret 1998:216). Due to subsequent contact, words for *cattle*, *goats*, and *sheep* were also adopted, from Khoe, by !Ui-Taa-speakers and by Bantu-speakers (Ehret 1982:163). These three domestic species, for the most part cattle and to a lesser extend also goats, comprised the bulk of Tswana herds (Comaroff 1985:68). In Chapter Two it was established that the earliest accounts of the Sotho-Tswana derive from explorers who came into contact with Nama pastoralists in Namaqualand in 1661, and later by Nama who visited the Cape in 1681 (Wilson & Thompson 1982). These visiting Nama chiefs informed Simon Van Der Stel that there were people in the interior from which they obtained metal objects and specularite (Humphreys 1976). Mention of the *Brijckje*, *Bliqua*, or *Birikwa* is also made in the reports of Hop and Brink in 1761, Roos and Marais in 1762, and by Wikar in 1778 (Mossop 1935; Nienaber 1963). The term *Birikwa*, as the Tswana of the interior were referred to by San and Khoe, appears to derive from the Orange River Khoe (!Ora) term for *goat*. More specifically, the etonym Birikwa is constructed by affixing “goat” as *brii* (Campbell 1974:389) to “person” or *khoe* (Ehret 1982:164), resulting in *Brii-khoe* or “goat people” (Van Warmelo 1974:76; Mönnig 1983:11). It is evident that such instances of linguistic assimilation also result in the dislocation of language and once culture-specific terminologies from formerly distinguishing ethnic features and ethnic identities (Haarmann 1986:45). This observation will be further explored in Chapter Six when the association between language and identity will be attended to.

San contact and trade with Bantu-speakers clearly has a long history, as has been conclusively demonstrated (Denbow 1984; Denbow & Wilmsen 1986; Wilmsen 1989; Wilmsen & Denbow 1990). Denbow (1984:188) points out that although several anthropologists have indeed searched for independent foraging groups to study in the Kalahari, "… in fact there has probably been no such thing here, in an historical or processual sense, for almost 1500 years." The reviews by Hitchcock (1987) and Denbow and Wilmsen (1986) also maintain the suggestion of centuries of San inter-ethnic symbiosis, and, as a result, we may well accept Vierich's (1982:213) proposition that "if the hunting and gathering way of life has survived in the Kalahari, it is not because of isolation." Hunting wild game was undoubtedly a basic economic strategy practiced by pastoralists and agro-pastoralists: apart from the lack of documentation, the underlying assumption that wild game was not hunted by Bantu-speaking farmers is incorrect since hunting is equally important among agro-pastoralists (Shaw 1974; Comaroff 1985; Campbell 1995). This assumption is also supported by archaeological evidence: the Early Iron Age site of Qogana in northern Botswana contains only the bones of wild fauna (Turner 1987; Denbow 1990a). Accordingly, and if there were non-San Early Iron Age hunters in northern Botswana, then the wild game at other Early Iron Age centres need not necessarily have been supplied by San hunters (Sadr 1997: 105). It is therefore not surprising that proponents of the revisionist school contend that twentieth century southern African hunter-gatherer groups are, and have been, locked in an intimate relationship with agro-pastoralists that has irrevocably changed the very foundation of their culture (Kent 1992; Sadr 1997). For example, Wilmsen (1989:3) insists that

> The current status of San-speaking peoples on the rural fringe of African economies can be accounted for only in terms of the social policies and economies of the colonial era and its aftermath. Their appearance as foragers is a function of their relegation to an underclass … and this has a long history. The isolation in which they are said to have been found is a creation of our view of them, not of their history … This is as true of their indigenous material-social systems as it is of their incorporation in wider spheres of political economy in southern Africa.

Kent (1992:55) however identifies the misinterpretation of inter-ethnic interaction as an additional and perhaps principal cause of the revisionist controversy, arguing that along with diversity, there is also much variation in the type of interaction that occurred

between hunter-gatherer and non-hunter-gatherer societies (see Haarmann 1986 as cited above). Generalisations about contact with neighbouring people can be as inaccurate as the notion of there being no contact at all. As suggested by Bird-David (1988:29), some hunter-gatherer social systems may incorporate agro-pastoralist economic and social resources in ways which actually maintain their hunting and gathering way of life rather than obliterating it. Thus, not only has the intensity and kind of contact between foragers and their neighbours been variable, but its consequences may have been equally variable. Silberbauer (1989:206) also challenges the view that hunter-gatherer interactions with other societies automatically preclude autonomy:

> [The] concept of coexisting states, tribes, and hunter-gatherer bands can be found accurately documented in any authoritative history of the appropriate part of Africa. It does not require that any of the coexisting societies be in a state of compulsory, day-to-day mutualism with all others. Interaction can occur at sufficiently low intensity and be of such a quality as to allow hunters and gatherers (for instance) to retain cultural, social, and political, and economic autonomy (i.e., in the philosophical sense, not in that of isolated, complete independence). At least in southern Africa and Australia that state of affairs persisted only when the hunter-gatherers were able to retain control of enough resources of sufficient variety to be largely … self-sustaining.

The primary conclusion to be drawn from the above discussion is that whilst some foragers were certainly profoundly influenced by their neighbours, whether pastoralists or agriculturalists, others were not. This does not imply that some San groups ever existed as islands in a sea of Bantu-speakers, but rather that the nature of the contact has been varied and the resulting ramifications of that contact have been equally varied (Hitchcock 1982; Vierich 1982; Biesele *et al.* 1989; Solway & Lee 1990; Köhler & Lewis 2002). One should therefore not assume that all contact, including trade, has had the same impact on all San groups, if for no other reason than that the nature of the contact between groups has not been isomorphic through time (Wiessner 1990:135; Yellen 1990:138).

Of particular relevance to this inquiry is the archaeological, ethnographic, and historical evidence for fused or amalgam social, economic, and ethnic groups such as those involving Twa foragers and Bantu-speaking farmers (Estermann 1976:32; Vansina 1990:65; see also Köhler & Lewis 2002: fig. 11.1; Blench 2006: fig. 6.1), Khoe pastoralists and San foragers, San and Tswana farmers, and the groups comprising

San, Tswana, and !Ora as noted by Wikar in 1778, Gordon in 1779, and Campbell in 1812 (Mossop 1935; Lye 1970; Campbell 1974; Morris & Beaumont 1991; Wilson & Thompson 1982; Penn 1995). Given these instances of socio-economic amalgamation, and the tendency, in religious terms, of both San and Khoe to readily "blend the numinous with the ludicrous" (Guenther 1999:227), it is to be expected that at least some components of the engraved art of the interior should reflect the fusion of identities and the revision of religious doctrine and practice. Thus, and in order to further illustrate this point, I will briefly explore this notion in terms of a particularly contentious class of engraved imagery, namely rayed circular designs, maze-like depictions, and internally-divided circular motifs.

Interaction and engraved art

As noted in Chapter One, geometric motifs present a particularly interesting component of southern African rock art precisely because they are associated with all the artistic traditions in the region: geometric designs occur in the arts of the Northern Sotho-speakers (Namono & Eastwood 2005; Eastwood & Eastwood 2006), the Khoekhoen pastoralists of northern South Africa (Smith & Ouzman 2004a; Eastwood & Smith 2005), and also the engraved San forager rock art of the interior (Fock 1979; Fock & Fock 1984, 1989; Dowson 1992). Interestingly, Lewis-Williams (2002:141) have noted that "geometric motifs that are formally similar to certain entoptic elements are in fact common among the rock engravings (petroglyphs) of the central southern African plateau". The basic process by which phenomena induced by altered states of consciousness are experienced is aptly summarised by Lewis-Williams (1997:813). Briefly, during the initial stages of trance individuals experience a neurological phenomenon in which they "see" geometric shapes such as zigzags, dots, catenary curves, and vortexes (Siegel 1977:138). These forms have been termed *entoptic phenomena* by ophthalmologists, *phosphenes* by psychologists, or *visual hallucinations* by psychiatrists (McDougal 1977:392). There are a number of researchers besides Lewis-Williams and Dowson (1988) who have linked geometric imagery with shamanistic art: ten Raa (1971, see Lewis-Williams 1986b:101) with the Sandawe of Tanzania, Reichel-Dolmatoff (1978, 1981, 1987) with the Tukano of Colombia, Furst (1972, 1976) and Blackburn (1977) with the Chumash of California, and Dobkin de Rios (1984) with the Nazca of Peru. In addition, both Eliade (1960:11) and Epstein (1978:163) have noted the importance of guided imagery for the study of religious symbolism. There is therefore a large body of data linking entoptic imagery as *seen* during altered states with imagery in shamanistic art.

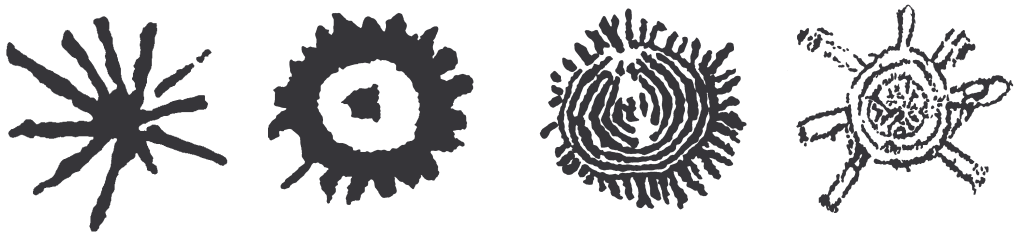
In southern African prehistoric engraved rock art, entoptic imagery are generally manifest in the form of angular zigzags, nested catenary curves, rayed circles, and grids (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1988; Dowson 1989, Dronfield 1996; Smith & Ouzman 2004; Hodgson 2006). In terms of the three-stage neuropsychological model established by Lewis-Williams and Dowson (1988), these iconic examples are generally classed as stage two "construal" hallucinations, although, in the engraved arts, the majority of elements are in fact reminiscent of stage one "entoptic" and stage three "entoptic-iconic" hallucinations. In general terms, entoptic geometric forms seldom occur as solitary, isolated, and free-floating images because their meaning relates to specific contexts known to have been supernaturally potent (Lewis-Williams 1998a; Smith & Ouzman 2004a). Such entoptic geometrics are also characterised by a restricted and distinct iconographic range, for example, human figures with zigzag necks and legs, therianthropes with geometrics, hallucinatory rain-animals surrounded by zigzags, and geometric markings on figurative depictions. There is therefore much general agreement that people do indeed "see" geometric forms under a variety of circumstances (Knoll 1958; Oster 1970; Reichel-Dolmatoff 1972; Siegel & Jarvik 1975; Siegel 1977; Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1988; Dronfield 1996; Lewis-Williams 2001). Significantly, Reichel-Dolmatoff (1972:111) notes an unequivocal association between the entoptic forms seen during trance and the painted and engraved art of the region inhabited by the Amazonian Tukano, and offers a striking comparative scheme to illustrate the close resemblances between codified geometric forms as painted and engraved by the Indians (*ibid.*: fig. 19) and the range of motifs based on phosphenes as "seen" during trance states (*ibid.*: fig. 20).

However, it would seem that even if we accept a purely neuropsychological explanation, or neurovisual resonance theory as it is termed by Hodgeson (2006:56), for the presence of geometric forms in engraved arts, we are in fact left with little insight into the identities of the artists. As will be illustrated, Twa forager-farmers and Khoekhoe-speaking pastoro-foragers also frequently partook in communal rituals involving altered states of consciousness. Given the universality of what appears to involve entoptically-derived geometric phenomena (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1988: 202), it is to be expected that, although the interpretation of such forms are culture-specific, geometric forms as perceived during the initial stages of trance are a cross-cultural phenomenon: no single design can be attributed to any particular group of people.

In their seminal thesis on Khoekhoen pastoralist rock art in northern South Africa, Smith and Ouzman (2004a) do not contest the presence of entoptic geometric imagery in southern African forager rock art (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1988; Dowson 1989), pointing out that this is indeed well-established and that such geometrics have a restricted and distinct iconographic range which is dominated by angular zigzags, nested catenary curves, microdots, flecks, and grids. It is also argued that the examples of non-ionic, unalloyed geometric forms, which generally comprise *mazelike images*, *sunbursts*, square and *circular shapes with internal divisions*, diamonds, and *meanders*, are not accounted for by the neuro-psychologically-established range of entoptic forms (*ibid.*:506). Such forms generally tend to occur alone or clustered with other rough geometrics and are not integrated with representational imagery (Smith & Ouzman 2004a: fig. 5). Of interest to this enquiry is the fact that a significant proportion of these geometrics, in particular rayed-circles or sunbursts, frequently do *not* occur alone as isolated or "free-floating" engraved images.

Before I explore the basic visual nature of these geometric forms, it is necessary to acknowledge, as noted by Wallace (2004:519; see also Eastwood & Smith 2005:65), that a regular consequence of any discussion on *entoptic* imagery is the extraction of motifs and the entabulation of these as discrete images. This in turn results in the simplification and de-contextualisation of imagery, risking homogenising the differences. The following figures are not intended as a rigid stylistic typology, they merely function to illustrate three of the many "types" of geometric forms encountered in the engraved art. As regards the de-contextualised appearance of these "extracted" images, the contexts in which they occur will be addressed shortly.

Sunbursts or rayed circular designs (Fig. 5.3 A to D) are widely-distributed across the interior region and occur most abundantly at Stowlands, Klipfontein, Driekopseiland, Doornhoek, and Catharina, and also at Niekerkshoop, Rocklands, Kalkfontein, De Kalk, Katlani, Schoolplatz, Disselfontein, Vaalpan, Nazreth, Nchwaneng, and Delela. This geometric class constitute a comparatively rare component of the painted arts of the Limpopo Khoekhoe (Eastwood & Smith 2005:67), and do not appear to occur in any numbers at or in close proximity to the well-known pastoralist sites in the Western Cape. These rayed circular designs are however, with slight variation, a prevalent component of the non-entoptic geometric tradition of Twa forager women (Smith 1997: 44, 49), in which case they have been ascertained to relate to issues concerned with weather divination and female fertility.



A B C D

FIG.5.3. Composite selection of engraved rayed circles or sunbursts from the central interior region. From west to east; Nchwaneng (A), Delela (B), Catharina (C), and Doornpoort (D).

Although these forms are not generally viewed as diagnostic of visual phenomena perceived during the initial stages of altered states of consciousness, they are classed as undiagnostic entoptic forms (see Dronfield 1996: fig. 13). Knoll (1958, as cited in Reichel-Dolmatoff 1972:111) and Kellogg *et al.* (1965:1129) notes that some motifs, as drawn by subjects under laboratory conditions, do resemble these rayed circular forms, and MacLean (2001:308; see also Siegel & Jarvik 1975:132) notes that Huichol subjects report seeing “stars” during trance. These forms also occur in the forager-authored arts of East Africa (Leaky 1983; Lewis-Williams 1986a), where they have been established to have been depicted in all, and also the earliest paintings in the region (Leaky 1983: 49). In addition to sunburst designs, spiral-like forms also occur juxtaposed with representational imagery.

Maze-like imagery (Fig. 5.4 A and B) occur in large numbers at Klipfontein, with less significant concentrations found at Maraetjiesfontein, Schoolplatz, and Vlakplaas. Such lattice designs have often been interpreted as reminiscent and perhaps representative of the vortex through which one travels during the trance experience (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1988:203; Dronfield 1996:387; Blundell 1998:10; Lewis-Williams 2001:344).



A B

FIG.5.4. Composite selection of engraved maze-like designs from the central interior. From Schoolplatz (A), and Klipfontein (B). Redrawn from Fock and Fock (1984).

Circular shapes with internal divisions (Fig. 5.5) are not widespread amongst the engraved arts of the central interior. Whereas these circular motifs have a noticeable distribution towards the west at sites such as Klapin, Nchwaneng, and Steenkamp, and a single site in the interior, namely Gestoptefontein, they are virtually absent from engraved sites further to the east. Interestingly, the circle motif is the most frequently painted geometric form, and thus the most common non-representational component, of the Limpopo Khoekhoe artistic tradition (Eastwood & Smith 2005:66).

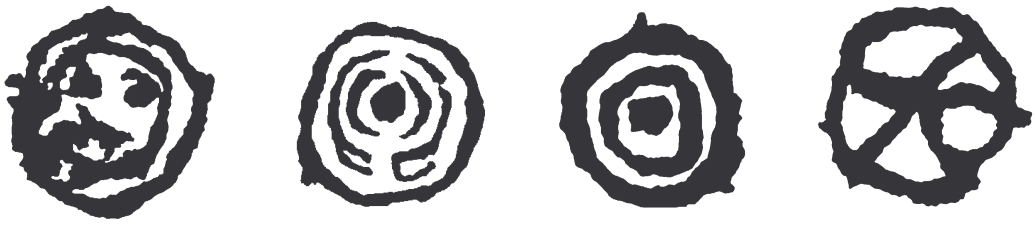


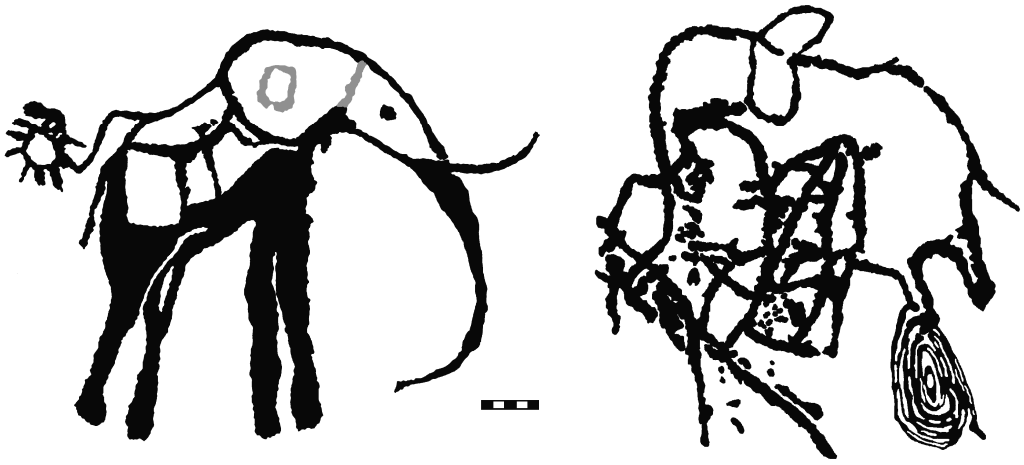
FIG.5.5. Composite selection of engraved internally-divided circular forms from Nchwaneng in the western regions of the central interior.

These three types of geometric designs are frequently associated with depictions of rhinoceros at Gestoptefontein, Klipfontein, Nooitgedacht, and Kinderdam, ostrich at Ramah and Steenkamp, and with hippopotamus at Nazreth. In the following discussion I will focus on geometric associations with elephant, giraffe, hartebeest, zebra, and the ever-present eland, and briefly explore the range of possible explanations, as may be derived from neuropsychological research and San ethnography, for the incidence of such associative contexts.

Geometric associations

Elephant

Associations between elephant and geometric motifs are found at Kinderdam, Klipfontein, and Brandfontein (Fig. 5.6 A and B). Elephant, although little is known of how it is viewed in terms of supernatural attributes and potency (Dornan 1917:53; Guenther 1999:74; Deacon 2001:251), is undoubtedly associated with rain (Maggs & Sealy 1983). A particularly interesting depiction from the Karoo, of an elephant with a grossly exaggerated abdomen and trunk, and which is surrounded by “dancing” human figures and grid-like incised designs (see Dowson 1992: fig. 26), is highly suggestive of a close association between elephant, altered states of consciousness, and rain.



A B

FIG.5.6. Two engraved depictions of elephant which are closely associated with geometric figures from Kinderdam (left) and Brandfontein (right). The grey colouring in figure A indicates recent pecking or retouch. Brandfontein figure redrawn from Fock and Fock (1989).

Giraffe

Associations between giraffe and geometric motifs occur at Rocklands, Nchwaneng, and Klipfontein (Fig. 5.7 A to C). Giraffe feature prominently in the religious rites of the Kalahari San and that “giraffe-medicine” is presently perceived as the most effective of all medicines (Biesele 1975:1-5; see also Katz 1982a:50; Dowson 1992:92; Guenther 1999: 82; Keeney 2003:89). Shamans who harness giraffe potency during trance, when entoptic grids are experienced as part of the hallucinatory nature of the experience, are almost certainly inclined to construe such entoptic grids as representative of the characteristic jagged and patched coat-patterning of actual giraffe (see Dowson 1992: figs. 84, 87, 94). The characteristic giraffe patch-work coat pattern is also perceived to represent clouds (Marshall 1957:239), thus establishing a close connection between giraffe and rain. This giraffe-rain association is further substantiated by the fact that Beh, the woman from which the potent giraffe medicine song originate, notes that it was the mingling of the hoof-beats of the giraffe, running before an approaching storm, with the sounds of sudden rain, which, in her head, developed into the revered giraffe medicine song (Biesele 1975:1-5, as cited in Dowson 1992:92). The zigzag lines associated with figure A and the elaborated tail and cranial emanations of figure B are also suggestive of the visual and somatic hallucinations experienced during trance (Halifax 1982:80; Lewis-Williams 1986b:176; Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989:76; Whitley 1992:101; Morris & Peatfield 2002:114).

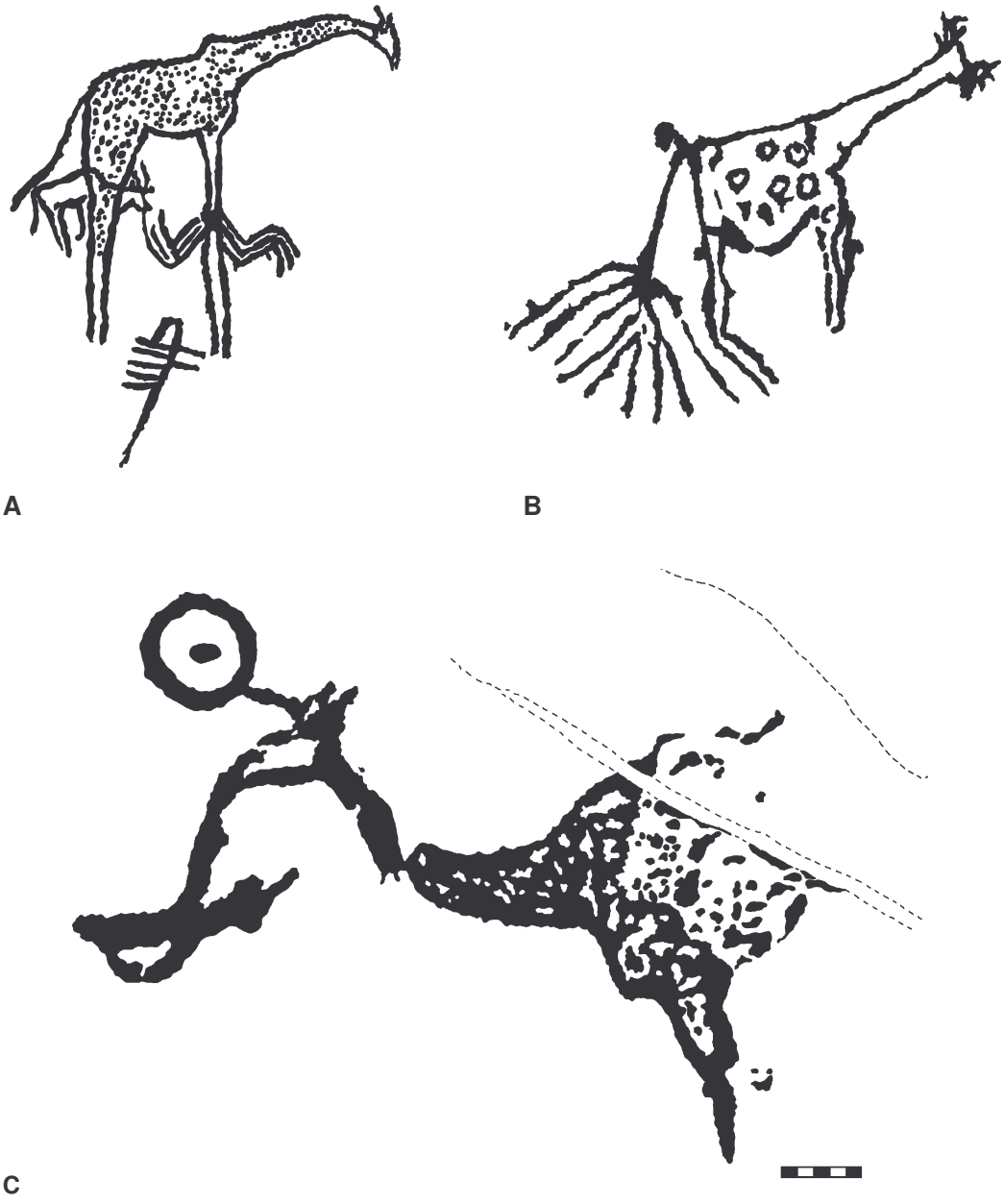


FIG.5.7. Composite selection of engravings of giraffe with close geometric associations from Rocklands (A), Klipfontein (B), and Nchwaneng (C). Rocklands and Klipfontein figures redrawn from Fock (1979).

Zigzags have frequently been interpreted in terms of western analogues as “wavy lines”, “snakes”, or simply as “zigzag designs” (see Fock & Fock 1984: plates 44, 137, 141,151). Zigzags have, however, been established to conform to diagnostic entoptic phenomena as experienced during the early stages of altered states of consciousness (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1988:206; Dowson & Holiday 1989:46; Dronfield 1996:380), and may therefore represent much more than “basic scribblings” (Cooke 1969:12).

Eland are also frequently associated with depictions of zigzag designs (see Dowson 1992: fig. 100). In figure C, the positioning of the image adjacent to a deep crack in the rock creates the illusion that the animal is in fact appearing from behind the rock face or “veil” which separates this world from the spirit world (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1990; see also Lewis-Williams 2002: figs. 5.4 and 5.5). The circular and linear forms emanating from the head of the animal are also suggestive of somatic hallucinatory experience.

Hartebeest

Depictions of hartebeest or tsessebe (Eastwood *et al.* 1999:62) and complex linear geometric designs (Fig. 5.8) are limited to a single site in the interior, namely Klipfontein. Maze-like imagery comparable to that occurring at Maraetjiesfontein, Schoolplatz, and Vlakplaas have, as noted above, been interpreted as representative of the vortex through which one travels during the trance experience (*e.g.* Dronfield 1996:387; Lewis-Williams 2001:344). In the Ju/’hoan myth concerning the creation of the animals, the hartebeest was distinguished by the black markings he received on his face. Such black markings are also painted on the faces of boys undergoing first-kill rituals (Biesele 1993), suggesting that these are potent and powerful and such power may be harnessed through the making of these markings on new hunters (Turner 2006). The elaborate linear engraved designs may correspond to and signify the potency contained by these markings. Significantly, eland are also implicated in comparable maze-like associations (see Dowson 1992: fig. 98).



FIG.5.8. Two instances of engraved hartebeest or tsessebe and complex geometric designs from Klipfontein. Redrawn from Fock (1979; see also Dowson 1992: fig. 102).

Hartebeest feature prominently in the myths and legends of the /Xam San who formerly inhabited the regions to the south of the Korannaberg Mountains. From a lengthy narrative recorded by Bleek and Lloyd (1911:3-15), */Kággen Di !K'wá* or *The Mantis assumes the form of a Hartebeest*, it is evident that these animals were of fundamental mythological and spiritual importance to the /Xam (see Turner 2006 for a comprehensive discussion on hartebeest in the south-eastern painted arts). Several additional texts also suggest that the hartebeest was of much significance to the trickster deity /Kaggen, or the *Mantis* (Bleek 1924:12). These narratives illustrate that for the /Xam, and almost certainly also for the people who engraved these images at Klipfontein, the hartebeest, like the eland, were thought of as "things of /Kaggen", and thus as filled with magical powers and potency to be harnessed and applied during individual curing and communal healing ceremonies (Lewis-Williams 2002:83).

Zebra

Depictions of zebra and internally divided circular forms (Fig. 5.9 A and B) occur at two sites on the eastern edge of the southern Kalahari, namely Klapin and Steenkamp. Whereas most circular forms are complete, forming circular O-shapes, some are partial so as to resemble C-like figures. Such O- or C-shapes are formally similar to teichoptic "fortification" images as experienced in association with "classic" migraine and occipital-lobe epilepsy (see Dronfield 1996: fig. 2), conditions which are often compared with the experience of altered states of consciousness (*e.g.* Oster 1970; Richards 1971; Siegel & Jarvik 1975; Siegel 1977) and during which comparable diagnostic endogenous visual or entoptic phenomena may be perceived (see Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1988: fig. 1; Dronfield 1996: figs. 6, 13). Alternatively, or perhaps correspondingly, such circular forms may relate to San notions concerning the moon, female fertility, "new maidens", and rain. Bleek and Lloyd (1911:56, 66, 414) recorded several /Xam myths about and prayers directed towards the moon, and notes that "worshipping the moon, sun, and stars" (*ibid.*:435) comprised important elements of (/Xam) San religion. Dorothea Bleek (1928:26) also noted that, amongst the Nharo, "the moon is still worshipped". Although the moon does not hold mystical attributes for many other San groups (Marshall 1986:180), it nevertheless features prominently in San life, especially with regards female fertility and female initiation. Briefly (see Marshall 1986; Knight *et al.* 1995; Power & Watts 1997 for discussions), the /Xam called the girl's seclusion hut "the house of illness" (Bleek & Lloyd 1911:201) and equated the menstruating girl and the moon through their corresponding powers of "cooling" arrow poison (*ibid.*:67). Among the Nharo, "moon medicine" is used to treat menstrual discomfort (Barnard 1979). The Ju/'hoansi speak of menstruation as a

sickness, sometimes called “eland sickness”, but often attributed to the moon, with the phrase “the moon torments me” used to express having menstrual cramps (Biesele 1993:93). Significantly, the /Xam, !Xu, and the G/wi and G/ana released a menarcheal girl from seclusion at the appearance of the new moon (Bleek 1928:122; Valiente Noailles 1993:94).



FIG.5.9. Engraved depiction of zebra and circular forms from Steenkamp.

Among the /Xam the new maiden presented all the women of the band with lumps of haematite for decorating their cloaks and faces: a !Kung new maiden had a red ochre design painted on her forehead and cheeks (Marshall 1959), a G/wi or G/ana new maiden would be cut during seclusion, and a mixture containing her mother’s blood would be rubbed into the cuts (Valiente-Noailles 1993:96). /Xam and !Kung new maidens painted, with ochre, zebra-like stripes on adolescent boys to protect them when hunting (Hewitt 1986:76, as cited in Morris 2002:180). Commenting on San in Namibia, Fischer (1913, as cited in Rudner 1982:218) remarked that “only the poor ones still paint themselves [with red iron oxides] and then rarely, especially at the time of menstruation.” Similar uses of red pigment are reported for menarcheal rites among several other San groups (Silberbauer 1965; Viegas Guerreiro 1968). The Nama or *Namaquas* of the northern regions of the Cape Province are also known to have decorated their bodies and faces: such designs were largely comprised of a variety of circular patterns (Rudner 1982; Waldman 1989). The maiden-moon-zebra-rain association continues with the fact that the !Kung call the heavy and fast-approaching storm-clouds */kwesi* or zebras, because they move so swiftly across the land (Marshall 1957:232), and the /Xam note that the “children of the water” were beautiful and striped like */hábba* or zebra (Bleek & Lloyd 1911:199).

Eland

It has already been noted that animals are important in San myth (*e.g.* Bleek & Lloyd 1911; Lewis-Williams 1996; Deacon 2001) and ritual (Lewis-Williams 1981; Lewis-Williams & Loubser 1986; Guenther 1999), and that like some shamans certain animals are believed to possess potency, the supernatural power harnessed by shamans to perform healing rituals (Lewis-Williams 1981:83; Thackeray 1983:42; Guenther 1988:197). It has also been established that, in terms of San belief, the eland fulfilled a central role (Heinz 1966; Lewis-Williams 1981, 1984b, 1987, 1998; Lewis-Williams & Loubser 1986; Biesele 1993; Power & Watts 1997).

Predictably, depictions of eland and geometric forms (Figs. 5.10 and 5.11) are by far the most widespread associational context for geometric motifs. As noted in Chapter Four, there is a clearly discernable pattern in the distribution of eland and rayed circular, internally-divided circular, and linear geometric associations. Eland and rayed-circular designs are found at Klipfontein, Bosworth, Modimo, Schoolplatz, Doornpoort, Vlakplaas, Gestoptefontein, and eland with internally-divided circular designs are limited to two sites in the far west, namely Steenkamp and Geduld. Associations between eland and incised linear geometric designs appear to be restricted to sites in the Magaliesberg to the east (Steel 1988).



FIG.5.10. Engraved eland and diverse geometric designs from Bosworth.



FIG.5.11. Engraved eland and internally-divided and rayed circular geometric designs from Doornpoort.

Alternative geometric contexts

With reference to the pervasiveness of geometric forms and geometric-representational associations amongst the engraved arts of the interior region, it is certainly possible that this is a result of the focus of foragers (and / or pastoro-foragers) on a particular part of the trance experience. For example, MacLean (2001:308) notes that amongst the Huichol of Mexico, *peyote*-induced altered states normally result in colourful visions of a wide range of geometric phenomena, resembling "the shifting geometric shapes and colours seen through a kaleidoscope." Many people who consume *peyote* report experiencing brilliant colours and vibrating patterns, often in geometric or lattice-like shapes (Cordy-Collins 1989:41). According to the Huichol, such an experience is only the initial stage of what may turn into a very lengthy and intense experience. Shamans in particular tend to "see" meaningful images on a more important level, rather than simply beautiful designs, and it is the geometric patterns and bright colours of these experiences which are depicted in Huichol material cultural objects (*ibid.*:306). Consequently, it is apparent that the initial stages of trance, during which geometric percepts resembling grids, lines, dots, lattices, zigzags, nested catenary curves, stars and so forth are "seen", forms the focus of the experience. Reichel-Dolmatoff (1972) also notes that, amongst the Columbian Tukano, there appears to be a similar degree of cultural standardisation of the hallucinogenic experience and the imagery seen during such experiences (*ibid.*:110). As claimed by the Tukano themselves, it is from these experiences that all the inspiration for their engraved and brightly-painted decorative arts derive (*ibid.*:104).

It therefore certainly seems as if “the people who made the rock engravings were, by and large, more frequently interested in isolating the geometric imagery of an early stage of trance than were rock painters” (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989:61). This may possibly occur as, and because expectation partially determines perception, “certain entoptics tend to be perceived at the expense of others, and a social group thus develops a characteristic repertoire of formalised, codified entoptics” (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1988:213; see also McDougall 1977:403). In addition, it has been established that iconic imagery such as eland may “often projected against a background of geometric forms”, such as entoptically-derived rayed circular motifs (Siegel 1977:134, as cited in Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1988:204). Superpositioning and juxtapositioning are two methods by which images perceived during altered states of consciousness are “brought together” (*ibid.*:203), with iconic imagery “often projected against a background of geometric forms” (Siegel 1977:134, as cited in Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1988:204). This manner of relating images to each other, or the means by which San engravers achieved the “aggregation of experience” by juxtapositioning (Lewis-Williams 2006c:16), is a characteristic trait of the engraved arts. Furthermore, and although rayed circular designs, such as those engraved at Doornpoort (Fig. 5.11), are generally classed as “undiagnostic” entoptic forms (see Dronfield 1996: fig. 13), such forms are in fact frequently “seen” by subjects under laboratory conditions (Knoll 1958, as cited in Reichel-Dolmatoff 1972:111). The Huichol, also, often report seeing “stars” during trance experiences (MacLean 2001: 308; see also Siegel & Jarvik 1975:132). The recurrent reference to rayed circular forms as “stars” by *indigenous* peoples such as the Huichol and also the Nharo (Eastwood & Eastwood 2006:158), and the habitual tendency of researchers to readily compare such forms with “stars” or “suns” may suggest an additional religious-mythological significance of these engraved forms. Marshall’s (1986; see also Bleek & Lloyd 1911:44, 56, 72) discussion on how celestial bodies are perceived by southern African San offers further insight into the supernatural and mythological prominence of the sun and of stars.

There is, conversely, also a great deal of geometric imagery present in hunter-gatherer rock art that is not unequivocally shamanistic. One example is found in Australian aboriginal art which, although composed of spots, arcs, and zigzags which are often juxtaposed with animal imagery, is not associated with shamanism or any known type of ritual trance (Munn 1973:220; Layton 2001:325) The Australian aboriginal cultures are rather different from shamanistic cultures in that ritual trance of any type is extremely rare in Australia. Bourguignon’s cross-cultural study of trance and possession found a belief in possession in a number of aboriginal groups, but only one,

the Aranda of the Western Desert, was reported to have a form of ritual trance (Bourguignon 1973b:369; see also Eliade 1964:31), described by Myers as "...a large-scale organisation of men and novices from throughout a region for sustained series of revelatory rituals." It is not that shamanism and the associated trance-states is unknown in Australia, but it is rather more the exception than the rule (Riches 1994). In fact, Dobkin de Rios reports that "Eastwell points out that the word for trance has actually disappeared from Aboriginal language..." (Dobkin de Rios 1984:28). Thus, and even when geometric forms have been established to be associated with forager arts, they may not necessarily be shamanic in that they do not exhibit features that explicitly point to the activities and experiences of shamans (Lewis-Williams 1998a:89). Such geometric forms, as all painted or engraved San forager arts are, may be viewed as shamanistic, in that they do form part of the shamanistic ideology and cosmology and that they are indeed engraved into a surface which had meaning within such a shamanistic cosmology (Lewis-Williams 1998a:89). Recently, David Morris (2002) has presented an innovative explanation for the engraved geometric forms at Driekopseiland based on the notion of non-shamanic yet shamanistic engraved art. A broadly shamanistic context is not contradicted by this line of interpretation since, and as noted by Biesele (1993:81; see also Lewis-Williams 1998a:87), Ju/'hoansi rites of passage have "close connections … to the great curing dance" and as a consequence, also to altered states of consciousness. In the same way, the art of the Central African Twa foragers include a comparable set of geometric yet non-shamanic range of motifs (Smith 1997:49): whereas the imagery painted by men is highly suggestive of altered states of consciousness, the geometric forms, which comprise concentric circles, rayed-circles, and line-and-dot patterns (*ibid.*:44), have been ascribed to women and concerns about female fertility and weather, and perhaps also menarcheal rites as noted above. Clearly then, and as noted by Smith and Ouzman (2004a:504) in referring to the "truism" that the more general a form, the greater the range of potential explanations for it, "geometric form is not in itself a denotative of an entoptic phenomenon" (see also Berger 1995; Hodgson 2006).

The supernatural-trance-related context is obviously not the only possible "meaningful" reading of geometric designs: the "meanings" of geometric forms, perhaps initially derived from altered states of consciousness, may have undergone conceptual transfer from supernatural-trance-related contexts to that of, for example, females-and-fertility contexts as amongst the Columbian Tukano (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1967, 1978), the Central African Twa foragers (Smith 1997; see also Phillipson 1972; Lewis-Williams 1986a), the San of the Riet River (Morris 2002), and perhaps also the Khoekhoe

pastoro-foragers (Eastwood & Smith 2005) and the Northern Sotho-speaking agro-pastoro-foragers (Namono & Eastwood 2005) of the Central Limpopo Basin and Makgabeng Plateau region of northern South Africa. This contextual conversion of certain key polysemic and multivocal images (Lewis-Williams 1998a:88-89) exposes that fine line (Guenther 1999:176) that separates, as so eloquently stated by Eastwood and Eastwood (2006:137), “trance-formation” in medicine dances, and “transformation” during female puberty rites.

Analogous to local emphases on particular animals (Maggs & Sealy 1983; Ouzman 1996; Guenther 1999; Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1999), the patterns of distribution as identified in Chapter Four may also relate to locally-perceived significances concerning the association between animals and particular, possibly trance-derived, geometric motifs (see Figs. 4.25 and 4.26). Conversely, the juxtapositioning of eland, giraffe, rhinoceros, zebra, and elephant with geometric depictions may indicate interaction between foragers and pastoralists and the assimilation and reinterpretation of religious-cosmological beliefs and associated imagery. If this is indeed so, the addition of pastoralist geometrics to forager imagery suggests that supernaturally-relevant visions were not restricted to forager shamans: a large proportion of presumably pastoralist geometrics are classic entoptic images, somewhat disrupting the often-cited “pastoralist art equals non-entoptic” equation (Wallace 2004:519). It is highly likely that pastoralists were well-acquainted with shamanistic experiences, as is indicated ethnographically (Bleek 1875; Schapera 1930; Barnard 1988, 1992; Lewis-Williams 1981; Prins 1991; Biesele 1993; Guenther 1999). Furthermore, as seen in Chapter Three, Ambrose (1982:109) has pointed out that, in terms of hunter-gatherer and pastoralist relations, a standard land-tenure pattern is discernable and that first peoples tend to remain closely tied with their traditional hunting grounds. Even when traditional territories are populated by a new group people, and although the former inhabitants may change linguistically and culturally, first peoples continue to be closely tied with their traditional hunting grounds (Cashdan 1986; Barnard 1988; Kopytoff 1989; Hall 2000). As stake-holders in a shamanistic landscape, pastoralist and agro-pastoralist peoples may certainly have contributed their own imagery to panels of forager rock art (Lenssen-Erz & Vogelsang 2005:59).

In light of the above it may also be posited that the Tswana-speaking agro-pastoralists of the central interior may also have appropriated and adapted at least some rites and symbols formerly restricted to foragers. Engravings of cattle have been recorded at seven sites in the interior and include at least sixteen identifiable animals (Fock 1972;

Fock & Fock 1984). Apart from two examples at Home Rule and one at Kinderdam, most of these engravings are located south of the Orange River, with two depictions of cattle at Brandfontein, three at Slypsteen, four at Disselfontein, one at Pienaarspan, and three at Eindgoed (Fock 1972). Both pecked and outline engravings occur, and the vast majority show cattle in profile with extended pointed horns. It has been proposed that at least some of these engraved bovid-like figures may in fact represent extinct bovine species such as *Megalotragus*, *Homoioceras*, or *Pelorovis* (Fock 1972; Butzer *et al.* 1979; Fock & Fock 1984; Morris 1988), and Fock (1972) has postulated an early date for petroglyphs in south-western Gauteng, based on his identification of an engraving of a bovid as the extinct *Megalotragus* or *Homoioceras*. In light of the highly exaggerated horns of the engraved depictions (see Fock & Fock 1984: fig. 76), and the antiquity of rock art in southern Africa (Wendt 1976; Lewis-Williams 1984a) such a suggestion does not seem unreasonable. Conversely, and with regards paintings of domesticated cattle in the south-eastern mountains, Lewis-Williams (1981) has noted the possibility that foragers may have perceived some sort of correlation between eland and cattle and, by extension, also a possible relationship between cattle and rainmaking. This association is represented in a painting in the western Winterberg which shows a number of cattle juxtaposed within an older eland panel (see Hall 1986: fig. 4). In addition to being juxtaposed, the central animal has been superimposed directly over an older eland, and the whole association between eland and cattle appears to have been executed intentionally. Of further interest is that the positioning of the cow onto the eland also makes use of a black zigzag line which is associated with the back of the eland and, by superimpositioning, with the back of the cow as well. The association between this line as well as a straight red line above the back of the cow may have significance in terms of San beliefs concerning the *n!au* powers focused at this particular point, and the effects this can have in influencing the weather (Lewis-Williams 1983:9): this illustrates a metaphorical continuity between eland and cattle and the importance of the latter in emphasising and maintaining traditional social values and economic norms (Hall 1986:48).

For the interior region, Comaroff (1985) provides an inclusive discussion on the significance, in both economic and socio-religious terms, that cattle held for western Sotho or Tswana-speaking agro-pastoralists. Although the Tswana also herded goats and sheep (*ibid.*:68), it was cattle that served as the medium for realising Tswana identity and social relationships. Cattle performed an essential function by providing a symbolic medium through which a range of personal identities, common values, and states of relationship could be objectified (*ibid.*:72). In short, cattle embodied “all the

strands of which the social fabric is composed" (Mauss 1966:1, as cited in Comaroff 1985:74). According to Hall (1986:85), if it can be argued that shared trance experience and rock art formed part of a system of power signification among southern African foragers which both preceded and was in part contemporaneous with cattle-keeping communities, it is to be expected that in some regions cattle may have been superseded by other forms of social and especially religious signification. To this Comaroff (1985:197, in citing Munn 1974:580) adds that "it is symbols that convert implicit social meanings into 'communication currency'", and that, as noted by Lévi-Strauss (1966), all symbolic innovations are *bricolages*, concoctions of symbols already freighted with significance by a meaningful environment. In the shifting social and religious environments encountered by Tswana upon settling in the interior some four hundred years ago, the assimilation of forager religious elements into Tswana cosmology certainly did take place. We have already noted the praise songs for the eland antelope as performed by the Southern Sotho and as recorded by Arbousset and Daumas in 1836: "It is a cow that conceals its calf in the unknown fords of the rivers … An ox which one presents as food to his uncle or his aunt". Schapera (1971a:52; see also Comaroff 1985:84) also offers an informative account of a Tswana rain-making ritual, during which the *tshitlho* or rain-medicine is prepared and prayers are sung. More striking, however, are the phrases chanted at the conclusion of the inauguration of a new chief (Schapera 1971a:2): Let it rain! Let it rain! Let the eland die! Eland!". Thus, and in contrast to the situation further to the south-east, in which foragers appear to have, in several instances and in the contexts of rain-making, substituted eland with cattle, the Tswana-speaking farmers of the interior may have, evidently also in the context of rain-making, "substituted" cattle with eland. To these observations we may add, albeit cautiously so, that since there is a Northern Sotho geometric tradition (Eastwood & Eastwood 2006:177), and since Tswana are in fact Western Sotho-speakers (Mönnig 1983:11) there may be a more deep-seated connection between eland and geometric forms: "adding together" eland and geometric designs (*e.g.* Figs. 5.10 and 5.11), in conceptual and perhaps also expressive terms, may not have been too great a leap for the Tswana farmers of the interior (see Maggs 1995).

Accordingly, and in view of the fact that geometric designs are known to occur in the arts of the Northern Sotho-speakers (Namono & Eastwood 2005; Eastwood & Eastwood 2006), the Khoekhoen pastoralists of northern South Africa (Smith & Ouzman 2004a; Eastwood & Smith 2005), the engraved San forager rock art of the interior (Fock 1979; Fock & Fock 1984, 1989; Dowson 1992), and perhaps also in the art of the Tswana-speaking agro-pastoralists of the interior, it is evident that similar sets

of geometric imagery may in fact be associated with differing economic and identity-conscious groups (Smith 1997, 2006; Smith & Ouzman 2004a, b; Eastwood & Eastwood 2006). However, and since close associations between territory and mythology, ritual activity, and rock art are clearly discernible amongst Australian Aboriginal groups (Peterson 1979; Layton 1986), both Vinnicombe (1986:279) and Humphreys (2005:37) have suggested that this may also be the case amongst the southern African San. In addition, and although it has long been claimed that language can be a vehicle of ethnic values, the exact means by which this is accomplished in contexts of ethno-linguistic identity-formation has not been explained adequately. For that reason, the association between rock art, language, territoriality, and ethnic identity (David and Lourandos 1998; Hartley & Wolley Vawser 1998; Arsenault 2004; Flood 2004; Smith & Blundell 2004) will, in the context of “pre-2000 BP” forager sociality and identity-consciousness, be attended to in Chapter Six. In particular, the questions of whether rock art was in any way implicated in the conception of social identity and in the differentiation between in-groups and out-groups, and whether engraved art fulfilled any function in terms of establishing or marking territorial boundaries, will be seen to.

CHAPTER SIX

Art and Ethnicity Reviewed

From the discussions in Chapters Four and Five it may be inferred that the notion of *San* and *Khoe* as discrete social, cultural, economic, and artistic entities, are, in many instances, not at all as clear as one would have expected. Pastoralists frequently hunted and gathered, and interaction between foragers and herders is clearly manifest in historically- and ethnographically-documented collective similarities in language, economy, and religious beliefs. Moreover, early pastoralists were hunter-gatherers *before* they became pastoralists and remained to hunt and gather even *after* they became pastoralists, hence the applicability of the term "pastoro-foragers" for southern African Khoekhoe (Galaty, as cited in Fauvelle-Aymar 2004:4; see also Wilmsen 1991). Such mixed hunting-and-gathering economies are not uncommon, and it may be envisaged that if socio-environmental circumstances change, the optimal combination of economic strategies might shift not just to more intensive pastoralism but also toward greater reliance on wild foods which already comprise a substantial ingredient in the diet (Layton 1991:260). In this regard, Schrire (1980; see also Jolly 1996c) provides convincing evidence that some San communities oscillated between foraging and pastoralist activities over several centuries and perhaps even for millennia, depending on the availability of stock and climatic conditions. Chang (1991:263) also notes that "pure" pastoralism is in fact rare in the ethnographic record (see also Jacobs 1975; Brandt & Carder 1987) and that most pastoral groups exploit multiple resources or are linked through exchange networks to cultivators or foragers.

Frequent reference has also been made to the *unstructured uniformity* of Khoe-San religious beliefs and ritual practice. This has generated a palpable degree of broad conceptual unity in the forager arts, from the Cape to Zimbabwe (Lewis-Williams 1984a:227), Zambia (Smith 1997), and Tanzania (Lewis-Williams 1986), and which is further made apparent by the presence of depictions across the southern African region of postures, imagery, and contexts that are generally viewed as symptomatic of altered states of consciousness (Lewis-Williams 1984a; Dowson 1988). San society also produce individuals who "do and think their own thing" (Guenther 1999:228), and this in turn fosters a fragmented, fluid, flexible, adaptable, and heterogeneous worldview (Guenther 2001:265) in which a wide range of ideas and practices are expressed and transmitted by socially equal yet culturally individuated men and women. It is this complex and ambiguous blend of individuality-within-social-structure which typifies San religion, sociality, and expressive culture (Barrett 2001:150).

The antiquity of San religion also conclusively point to the existence of extensive conceptual and expressive continuities in San religious ideology (Lewis-Williams 1984a:248; Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2004a:42). This observation is furthermore sustained by the antiquity of rock art suggestive of the capacity of people to have participated in communal ritualised altered states of consciousness no less than 19 000 (Butzer *et al.* 1979:1203) and perhaps even 26 000 years ago (Lewis-Williams 1984a: 243). From Apollo 11, several painted stones were recovered from a layer in association with a terminal MSA industry dated to roughly 26 000 years BP (Wendt 1976:6). These comprise the oldest dated representational rock art known in southern Africa and indicate that the time depth of rock painting in the region extends back to the Late Pleistocene (Thackeray 1983:25). The stone slabs are particularly interesting because of the conflated human-animal subject matter (see Went 1976: fig. 2) which suggests that, some 26 000 years ago, people were indeed able to achieve *some sort* of altered state of consciousness (Lewis-Williams 1984a:245). Such religious-ideological continuity also implies a degree of social continuity, with communal trance dances reaffirming kinship relations and structuring the organisation of people in geographic space. With regards engraved art, several dolomite and hematite slabs have been recovered from Wonderwerk Cave in the Northern Cape. A number of these stones exhibit finely incised ladder-like motifs, grid-patterns, and representational depictions of animals, and range from approximately 4000 to 10 000 years (Thackeray *et al.* 1981:66), and perhaps even up to 60 000 to 80 000 years in age (Mitchell 2002:98). Whitley and Annegarn (1994), by way of the geochemical cation-ratio technique, have also established ages of up to 8400 years for geometric imagery and 1200 to 10 000 years for representational imagery at Klipfontein in the Northern Cape. Of more recent origins are the engraved mobiliary stones excavated from Springbokoog in the Karoo (Beaumont & Vogel 1989; Morris & Beaumont 2001). These have been recovered from archaeological associations which range from 400 to 2700 years in age, and comprise scraped depictions of eland and human figures in postures suggestive of communal ritual activities. These dates clearly indicate that the practice of painting in southern Africa has a time depth of at least 26 000 years, and that rock engraving spans at least 10 000 years.

As previously noted, despite its interpretative complexity and whether either painted or engraved or parietal or mobiliary, rock art is a valuable indicator of ethnic affiliation as identities are typically reproduced through the medium of religious ritual (Lewis-Williams 1984a; DeCorse 1994; Quinlan & Woody 2003; Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2004a; Smith 2006). Since prehistoric rock art is most often tied to ritual institutions

(Lewis-Williams 1984a, 1989; Layton 2001; Jolly 2002; Morris & Peatfield 2002), we would expect its characteristics to vary accordingly, and, consequently, any changes in religious ideology, either through the incorporation of foreign elements or changes within ideologies (see Katz 1982b:345; Jolly 2002:264), *should* also be manifest and therefore recognisable in the art. As a result, changes in the distribution of specific types of imagery or "markings" across the landscape are believed to reflect broader issues concerned with people and their relationships with the land. However, it has been established that discerning social boundaries in a coarse-grained archaeological record is a complicated task that does not always materialise, even when well-defined ethnic distinctions did and are known to have existed in the past. This is obvious from the discussion on the regional distribution of particular engraved images in Chapters Four and Five, and appears to suggest that the social and cultural dynamics of these complex relational situations can not be deduced from rock art alone, but requires an exploration of additional social, cultural, and ideological means by which identity-consciousness may have been conceived and communicated. As argued by Jones (1997), our employment of existing archaeological categories as primary units of analysis, such as "cultures", "types", and "ethnic identity" requires to be reassessed (Geertz 1993; Widlok 1997), and instead we need to focus on a contextual approach to social interaction and social practice (Jones 1997:125; Kent 2002a:15). In this regard, Mithen (2001:98-99) aptly notes that:

> Archaeologists should always be seeking to extend the domain of their discipline - exploring how new aspects of the past can be examined, and how the past has bearing on further aspects of the present than have been previously considered … The main problem we all face is that of artificial disciplinary boundaries created by the history of our subjects and the nature of our institutions … archaeologists need to make greater efforts to engage with the theories, data, and ideas within the cognitive sciences.

Such an advance necessitates a shift in approaches to archaeological evidence, and not merely new interpretations of the distribution of particular cultural types and styles. Incidentally, Humphreys (2007:4) have long urged researchers to pay more attention to the "exotic" and the "exceptional", noting that the recognition of *unique* artefactual (and conceivably so also artistic) occurrences may in fact un-mask subtle behavioural variations. Recognising such subtle differences in San rock art is challenging, especially in light of the marked degree of conceptual unity in the forager arts. This in

turn brings into play the problematic nature of straightforward interpretations of archaeological cultures as ethnic entities (Jones 1997:106) and the fact that ethnicity may frequently be obscured by expressive components pertaining to commonly held cosmological and ideological systems of social functioning (*ibid.*:129). In brief, and although archaeological evidence, particularly in the form of painted and engraved rock art, can indeed provide access to the ideational norms of past cultures and ethnic groups, religion does not necessarily equate with ethnicity: these are phenomena of which the finer details appear to be somewhat independent of each other (Barnard 1992:255; Cohen 1993:196; Jones 1997:104).

Thus, and given the relative uncertainty with regards the role of rock art in the demarcation of territorial boundaries and in the construction of identities, although undoubtedly associated with specific groups within particular geographic regions (Butzer *et al.* 1979; David & Lourandos 1998), an exploration of additional spheres of ethnic conception and assertion may illuminate the question of how San hunter-gatherers, prior to contact with pastoral and agro-pastoral peoples some 2000 to 2500 years ago, constructed and communicated their respective emically-ascribed social identities. In following Hansen and Liu (1997), it is believed that the complexity of *social identity* should be explored on a dynamic continuum that allows for interface between factors such as social context, social identity, artistic expression, and language. Accordingly, and as seen in Chapter Three, the recognition of aspects of ethnic differentiation, termed “ethno-gnomonic” traits by De Vos (1982) and Schwartz (1982) is of significance. These are cultural features which are “characteristic of one group in contrast to others, at once emblematic of the group’s solidarity and of the contrasting identity and relation to the groups within its ambit of comparison.” (*ibid.*:108). Cultural features that are readily imbued with ethnognomonic qualities comprise geographic location, subsistence economy, expressive culture and art, religion, and also language, all of which are integrated to constitute the fundamental basis of identity and ethnic allegiance as discussed in Chapter Three (see Jones 1997; Padilla 1999; Meskell 2002; Crawhall 2005 for multiple strands involved in the construction of identity). Language in particular is a potentially very informative ethno-gnomonic trait, which, in the literature dealing with ethnic groups, is often held to be one of the most important indicators of belonging to a particular ethnic group. There is no uncertainty about the capacity of language to symbolise group identity and become emblems of that identity, especially when there is contact with other groups whose ways of being are different (De Vos 1982:15; Trudgill 1995:39). Recurrently, it is the primary characteristic of representing ethnic identity and ethnic affiliations within a particular group and it is also

a symbolic border marker differentiating between the “we” group and the “others” (*e.g.* Ardener 1972; Horowitz 1975; van den Berghe 1976; Chun 1982; De Vos & Romanucci-Ross 1982). Individuals do not just learn any language, they “construct their system of verbal behaviour to resemble that common to the group or groups with which (they) wish from time to time to be identified” (LePage 1968:19). Furthermore, and as noted by Ambrose (1982:107) and Dolukhanov (1994:267), there is in most instances a close correlation between language, material culture, and the boundaries within which these are confined. Blench (2006:14, 33) also points out that historical linguistics can provide insights into the proto-historic distribution of and relationships between certain languages and the speakers of such languages. Finally, and although instances in which language is a *defining* characteristic of an ethnic group are common on a worldwide scale, cases in which the separate identities of ethnic groups are signalled, not by different languages, but by *different varieties* of the same language, are of much greater interest to this enquiry (Trudgill 1995:42). I will attend to dialectology and ethnolects shortly.

Language and identity

As noted in Chapters Three and Five, there exists a palpable degree of uniformity in San forager economy, subsistence, cosmology, and, to some degree, also rock art (Lewis-Williams 1982; Wiessner 1983). In stark contrast to these virtually analogous material-cultural and subsistence aspects, is the remarkable degree of diversity in San languages and linguistic-dialects. Although the importance of these linguistic differences was noted early on (Köhler 1963, as cited in Trail 1979:167), the causes of such tremendous diversity were not self-evident. Traill (1974:7) refers to the “sociological” conditions in which the !Xõo dialects may have developed, and notes that it is highly probable that the !Xõo and other South Khoe-San languages did in fact increase in complexity to surpass that of the proto-languages originally spoken by southern African San (Traill 1975:96). Initially, further possible causes for such linguistic complexity included theories concerned with “outside influences” and “internal innovation” (Traill 1979:167, 175), “functional influences” (*ibid.*:183), and also “biological” reasons (*ibid.*:187). Regardless of the exact causes of linguistic variation, African languages in general, and Khoe-San languages in particular, are strikingly diverse (Blench 2006:180). This is to be expected, since, as noted by Weinreich *et al.* (1968), the absence of linguistic variation would in fact be *dys*-functional. As for the causes of linguistic change, the “actuation issue” (Milroy 1998:639; Blench 2006:55) is at the very heart of the matter. The actuation issue refers to both external and internal circumstances that give rise to language change and variation, thus providing the

linguistic resources for the correlation of language differences with an array of social and cultural variables, including ethno-cultural ones. There are several factors that may provide the foundational base for constructing a distinct language variety, ethnic or otherwise. These include differential rates of language change, language contact, and internally-derived innovation (Terrell 2001:200). Language change occurs at different rates and in different directions and this selective process may result in the correlation of the linguistic variation with different social groupings, including ethno-cultural groupings of speakers and speech communities (Traill 1974:39; Blench 2006:77; Crawhall 2006a:121). The reconfiguration of language structures may also be activated through language contact situations where the speakers of different varieties accommodate, transfer, and borrow structural linguistic elements from other languages or dialects. The products of these language contact situations range from the radical restructuring of entire language systems to the subtle transfer of structural elements from one language to another. In some linguistic situations, such as in the case of !Kung and Nharo (Barnard 1992:20) and !Xõo and /'Auni (Traill 2002:44) which are spoken by neighbouring peoples, much shared vocabulary can be assumed to have been borrowed from one language into another (see Yallop 1982:29 for a similar situation in Australia). While such close contact between groups may, in many instances, have been a prime motivator for linguistic change and the adoption of foreign terminologies, the movement of individuals between groups is not crucial for the dispersal of vocabularies. Languages also change without the movement of people (Dolukhanov 1994:275), and this renders the traditional approach which links linguistic diffusion directly with the migration of ethnic groups simplistic. Language change does however depend on its speakers: languages with no speakers can not change, thus, the role of the individual in the transformation of languages must not be underestimated (Linn 1998:645). This observation suggests that since linguistic diversity is a universal phenomenon, and since both internal innovation and the actions of individuals can bring about language change, there may in fact be a more forceful and perhaps even ideological motivation behind much of the social dialect diversity as is so evident in the Khoe-San languages (Kroch 1998:257; Liebkind 1999:143).

To facilitate the exploration of hypotheses pertaining to the relationship between engraved art, language, and identity, particularly so in societies in which and socio-economic and religious-cosmological practices are remarkably similar, I will refer to several global ethnographic analogues before considering how such relationships are manifest amongst southern African foragers. Archaeologists recurrently rely on information derived from present materials to understand the past (Salmon 1982:74;

Watson *et al.* 1984:259; Yellen 1998:50; Hodder 2004:47). Thus, and by examining contemporary and historically-documented linguistic behaviours, we may learn more of the role of language in terms of pre- and proto-historic conceptions of identity and ethnicity (Haarmann 1986:258). Essentially, the use of ethnographic analogy entails the transference of information from one society to another on the basis of similarities and differences. However, the decision of whether different cultural contexts are similar enough to allow for the transfer of knowledge from the one to the other remains central to the *relevance* and the *success* of the analogy (Hodder 2004:47). To this, Lewis-Williams and Loubser (1986:262, in citing Gould 1980:29) adds that although analogical reasoning is "peculiarly liable to yield false conclusions from true premises", the *probability* of the analogy (Copi 1968:352) increases when analogues are sourced from amongst hunter-gatherer communities (Lewis-Williams 1998b:160). Thus, and while analogies derived from random sources should be viewed simply as hypotheses (Watson *et al.* 1971:50), analogues which are more relevant to the problem in question may in fact increase the relevance, and therefore the probability of the analogy: "An argument based on a single relevant analogy connected with a single instance will be more cogent than one that points out a dozen *irrelevant* points of resemblance" (Copi 1982:399). With this in mind, the discussion that follows will endeavour to illustrate, by drawing on hunter-gatherer ethnographic analogues, that there is in most instances a correlation between language and material culture and that, in most instances, the boundaries of linguistic units frequently correlate with the boundaries of at least some material cultural objects and with the boundaries of territorial ranges.

Dialectology and ethnolects

Dialectology involves the study of the geographic distribution of languages (Hill 2001: 260; Blench 2006:55). Although there are no rigid formulations for differentiating between actual languages and dialects of languages, Yallop (1982:33) defines dialects as variations of a language which shares more than 70% of their basic vocabularies. Prehistoric foraging groups generally managed to maintain close contact over vast geographic distances (Crawhall 2005:80), and such zones of contact are manifest, in linguistic terms, as "dialect chains" or areas in which dialects of a single language are spread along a geographic continuum of inter-dialectical interface. The *chaining* of dialects (see Yallop 1982: fig. 2.1) is a widespread phenomenon, and have been identified in the Eastern Andes (Osborn 1994), Mesoamerica (Hill 2001), Malaysia (Endicott & Lampell Endicott 1986), New Guinea (Terrell 2001), Australia (Dixon 1980; Yallop 1982), Central Africa (MacEachern 2001), Kenya (Heine 1981, 1982), and in southern Africa in the Eastern Cape (Ehret 1982) and the interior region for the /Xam,

N||ng, and !Ora language groups (Traill 2002; Güldemann 2003a). Whereas a dialect may be described as a variety of a language which is different in terms of vocabulary, grammar, or pronunciation from other forms of the same language, an *ethnolect* or *sociolect* entails linguistic varieties which are characteristic of a particular social or ethnic group (Mesthrie *et al.* 2003:107). Before I explore the processes by which languages come to embody particular identity-conscious groups, or the *ethnicisation* of language, I will briefly tend to several globally-derived ethnographic analogues illustrative of the close association between language, identity-conscious groups, and geographic location.

Global analogues

For Mesoamerica, Hill (2001) offers insight into the close association between ethnic groups, linguistic dialects, particular ecological zones, and place (see Hill 2001: fig. 12.2), and for the Eastern Andes, Osborn (1994:144) notes that language and dialectical differences are a standard means by which people distinguish themselves from others. In Malaysia, Endicott and Lampell Endicott (1986:145) have shown that the geographic distribution of dialects is virtually identical to the territorial ranges of respective Batek social units, and that these dialects fulfil an essential role in social boundary maintenance. For New Guinea, the world's most complex linguistic region, Terrell (2001:205) and Laponce (1987:56) have shown that language and territory are unequivocally interrelated (see Laponce 1987: fig. 6; Terrell 2001: fig. 10.1). To this, Diamond (1998:306) adds that some of the New Guinean languages are as different from each other as is English from Chinese, and that nearly 50 % of all the languages are spoken by fewer than 500 individuals. In Australia, Clark (1983), Flood (1983), and Ucko (1983) perceive an equivalent degree of linguistic diversity, with some 200 mutually unintelligible languages spoken by some 300 000 people during the 18th century (Clark 1983:39; Flood 1983:196). Dixon (1980:17) also notes that Australian *tribes* were generally distinguished from one another by their languages; once again, 500 appear to be the optimum population size (Flood 1983:181, as cited in Humphreys 2007:3). For Central Africa, MacEachern (2001) explores the association between ethnic, linguistic, and archaeological entities, demonstrating the close correlation between the territorial ranges of ethnic groups and the ranges in which distinct dialects or ethnolects occur (see MacEachern 2001: figs. 5.2 and 5.3). In Kenya, Heine notes the close correlation between Oromo (1981) and Boni (1982) dialects and the geographic distribution of ethnic groups. Language loyalty is highly valued amongst these peoples, and for the speakers of the Oromo dialect known as Waata, children are constantly reminded not to speak any language other than their own: severe beatings,

usually to the extent that individuals bleed from the back, are readily administered should any child be caught speaking Mijikenda or Swahili (Heine 1981:10). The correlation between Boni dialects and territorial ranges are also striking (see Heine 1982: figs. 2 and 3): remarkably, the geographic distribution of modern Boni dialects remains virtually unchanged from the territorial distribution of Boni dialect-speakers as recorded prior to 1960. This clearly demonstrates that, despite a turbulent colonial history, the association between people, language, and place is an enduring one (Ambrose 1982: 109). I will return to the association between language and territoriality shortly.

In the southern African context, it was during the late 1970s, as Snyman (1979) and Westphal (1979) commenced to document the distribution of the southern African Khoe-San language groups, that it became apparent that there were indeed a correlation between the distribution of people and particular languages. The regions in which languages were concentrated were termed "phonation areas" (*ibid.*:76), and today a key feature of dialectology is the isogloss, a line drawn on a map separating areas according to particular linguistic features (Renfrew 1988:105; Mesthrie *et al.* 2003:52). Isoglosses are used to distinguish between regions in which differences in speech sounds, vocabularies, or features of grammar are marked (Kretzschmar 1998: 152), and in areas in which several dialects or languages occur in close proximity, it is to be expected that some degree of overlap will occur (see Renfrew 1988: fig. 5.2). Dialect geographies are however all approximate because isoglosses and the maps on which they are charted are merely conceptual tools and not reproductions of reality (Ambrose 1982:106; Kretzschmar 1998:151). As noted above, and in cases in which language is either a *defining* or simply an *important* characteristic of an ethnic group (Trudgill 1995:42), the language or dialect may be termed an *ethnolect* as it entails a distinctive linguistic variety which is unique to a particular ethnic group (Mesthrie *et al.* 2003:107).

19th century /Xam ethnography

The familiar sketch-map drawn by Wilhelm Bleek in 1871, on instruction from //Kabbo, is of much interest to this inquiry (see Deacon 1986: fig. 1). In addition to two dialectically distinct groups identified by Bleek (Bleek & Lloyd 1911:xi), the /Xam informants noted the presence of two further groups in the region. According to Bleek (1873:2), these dialects differed only slightly, suggesting that "the different Bushmen dialects spoken within this colony vary little from each other … one language … is spoken by all these Bushmen." From the map it is indeed possible to construct an

approximate dialect geography for the four /Xam groups in the Karoo, with the Hardast River and the Berg dialects occurring to the north and south of where the Grass and Flat dialects were spoken (see Deacon 1986: fig. 2).

In Chapter Three it was noted that the /Xam band appears to have had as its nucleus a number of related siblings and their marriage partners and offspring (Bleek 1924:viii; Lee 1979:56; Lewis-Williams 1982:432), and that such social cores or bands generally inhabited specific geographic areas within which sufficient resources were available to sustain the inhabitants. In times of environmental stress, social allegiances with neighbouring bands guaranteed access to resources, and there are numerous /Xam tales mentioning the frequent visiting which maintained constant circulation of people and information (Lewis-Williams 1982). Thus, despite unproblematic instances of social interaction and intermarriage (Deacon 1986:151, 1996:23), and even though the four /Xam groups inhabited adjacent territories with similar environmental parameters, social boundaries, based on language, and to a lesser extent also subsistence and technology, were persistently maintained. It has been shown that certain aspects of material culture and subsistence strategy frequently do correlate with the spatial distribution of ethnic groups in their territories (Ambrose 1982:107; see also Wiessner 1983; Hodder 1985; Cashdan 1986; Larick 1986; Sampson 1988). This is also true for the /Xam, whose testimonies suggest that distinctions were based on what people ate and how they acquired and processed their food, and also on specific types and the nature of manufacture of items of material culture (Deacon 1986:151, 153). It is of much interest to note that the rock art of the region in which these four /Xam dialects occurred are essentially similar (Fock, as cited in Deacon 1986:153) and that there are no clearly distinguishable differences in style or theme. I will return to this apparent lack of correlation between forager rock art and identity-conscious ethno-linguistic groups in a while.

20th century Kalahari ethnography

The Ju- or !Kung-speaking San foragers include the Sekele, the Kwankhala, and the !Xii, !O, or !Xũ of southern Angola, the Žu/'hõasi or Ju'/hoansi (!Kung) of northern Botswana and north-eastern Namibia, and the ≠Au//eisi of western Botswana (Snyman 1979:2; Barnard 1988:29). The geographic parameters of this dialect cluster was originally described by Snyman (1979), who was particularly interested in the linguistic relationship between Angolan !Xũ and the Ju'/hoan dialects of Namibia and Botswana. Notably, the marked dialectical variation between Angolan !Xũ and Ju'/hoansi further to the south (*ibid.*:3) is in fact mirrored by similarly conspicuous differences in styles of

arrowheads between the !Kung-speaking groups of southern Angola and northern Botswana (Wiessner 1983:266). Wiessner (*ibid.*:267) furthermore notes that the first level at which differences in style occur involves different !Kung dialect groups (see Snyman 1979: fig. 1), and that while stylistic differences are hardly visible at the band-level structure within dialect groups (see Yellen 1998: fig. 2.1), the most obvious differences in arrowhead and also language "style" occurs between different language groups (see Wiessner 1983: fig. 1). I will return to the notion of language as "style" in a moment.

Further south, in the Gordonia District on the south-eastern edge of the Kalahari Desert in South Africa, Crawhall (2005:76) has identified clear instances of San identity-conscious groups based primarily on language and location. I have already referred to the close association between people and place which, Barnard (1992:232; see also Teather 1999) refers to as the ideological premise of belonging to a particular band or social unit and which implies a territorial identity or notion of "citizenship". This is plainly evident amongst the San of Gordonia which, contrary to being viewed as a one-dimensional stereotype, actually comprise at least six and possibly even eight unambiguous hunter-gatherer identities (see Crawhall 2005: table 1). These are all based on combinations of linguistic characteristics, associations with particular geographic locations, and etically-ascribed ethnic characteristics.

Koon, !Ko, and !Xõo

In Chapter Three it was established that it is reasonable to assume that !Xõo-speaking foragers were responsible for much of the engraved art in the southern African interior region (Fig.6.1). In July 1813 John Campbell (1974) engaged a group of San along the upper reaches of the Harts River. The "chief" of the group was known as Makoon or Ma'-ku-une (Stow 1905:181), a name which, as noted by Traill (1974: 38), exhibits an uncanny resemblance to the term !Xõo, and which may perhaps have resulted from some systematic mutilation of !Xo by Campbell and the Tswana through replacing the alveolar-palatal click "!" with a "k" and adding the familiar Bantu noun prefix "ma" to formulate the construct "Makoon". The earliest reference to any of the !Xõo dialects is found in Dorothea Bleek's (as cited in Traill 1974:9) study of a dialect at Khakhea in southern Botswana in 1913. Apart from a few subsequent references made by Bleek (1928, 1929), the first systematic survey of a Khoe-San language in southern Africa involved the study carried out by Anthony Traill during the early 1970s.

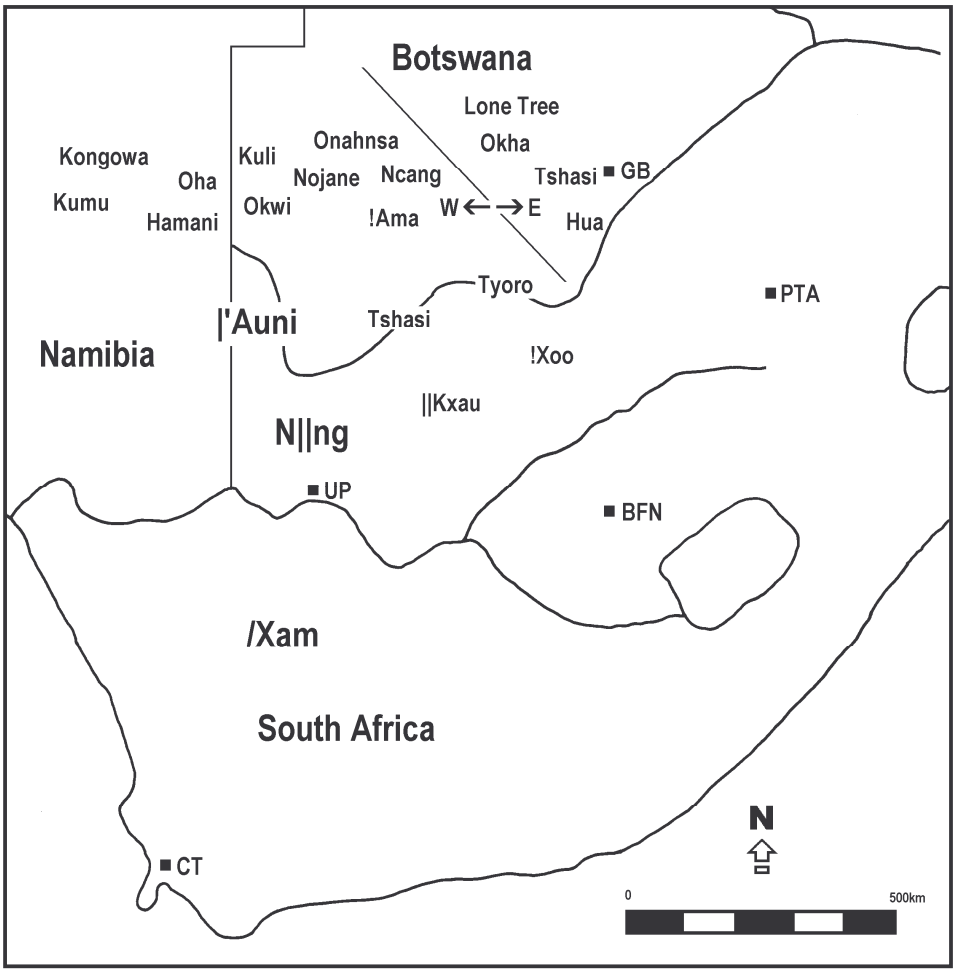


FIG.6.1. Map indicating the reconstructed distribution of !Xõo dialect groups in north-central southern Africa. The primary Eastern and Western !Xõo divisions and the positions of the |'Auni, N||ng, and /Xam dialect clusters are indicated (compiled from Arbousset & Daumas 1968; Traill 1974, 1975, 2002; Butzer *et al.* 1979; Güldemann 1997, 2004).

Traill's *The Compleat Guide to the Koon* (1974), and *Phonetic Correspondences in the !Xõ Dialects* (1975), in which 24 !Xõo dialects covering an area in excess of 40 000 km² are examined, provides the seminal resource for this dialect cluster. The !Xõo language group is renowned for its tremendous phonological complexity. Although humans can produce and distinguish an astonishing number of different sounds (Ladefoged & Maddieson 1996), the phoneme inventories of human languages show remarkable regularities. Most languages from a reasonably representative sample of 451 languages (Maddieson 1984; Maddieson & Precoda 1990), have between 20 and 37 phonemes, while the most frequently occurring number of phonemes is 25. The minimum number of phonemes appears to be 11 for the East-Papuan language Rotokas (Firchow & Firchow 1969) and for the South-American language Murà spoken

by men, and ten for Pirahã spoken by women (Sheldon 1974). The maximum number of phonemes for a language is 141 for !Xũ (Snyman 1970) while over 160 phonemes have been reported for !Xõo (Traill 1985). !Xõo also has the largest proportion of click phonemes, with some 83 (69%) click-sounds (Güldemann 2003a:11, 2003b: table 3). !Xõo therefore has a larger number of speech sounds and clicks than any other known language (Janson 2002:14; Senf 2006:96): in sheer phonological complexity, !Xõo seems to be unexcelled worldwide. It must however be noted that, given the way clicks are analysed in Khoe-San languages, these numbers might be slightly inflated, and the actual maximum number of phonemes per language might be closer to 90 (Crawhall 2006a:121; see Boden 2005 for slightly dissimilar !Xõo phoneme-counts). Certain sounds occur much more frequently than do others, and certain speech sounds also co-occur more regularly than predicted from the frequencies of the individual sounds themselves (see Schwartz *et al.* 1997b for regularities of phoneme inventories and Maddieson 1984 for more general regularities). It is however not always possible to distinguish between sequences of phonemes on the one hand and complex phonemes on the other hand. This is especially true for the complex clicks found in Khoe-San languages that are analysed as single phonemes, but that could in principle also be analysed as sequences of basic clicks and secondary articulations which incidentally reducing the number of phonemes in these languages substantially (Traill 1985). Remarkably, some of the sounds present in the !Xõo dialects are so unique that Traill (1979:181) and Crawhall (2005:69) note that it is virtually impossible for a large proportion of these to have developed *naturally*. When we consider the progressive increase in complexity of the Khoe-San languages in general and the !Xõo language complex in particular (Traill 1975:96), it becomes apparent that, since the development of such complexity could, most probably, not have occurred under *normal* or *natural* circumstances, the unsurpassed linguistic complexity of the !Xõo language-dialects may result from the intentional transformation of phonological and phonetic features of the respective !Xõo dialects: individuals tend to “construct their system of verbal behaviour to resemble that common to the group or groups with which (they) wish … to be identified” (LePage 1968:19). I will deal with the causes of *innovative* and perhaps agency-driven and ideologically-based linguistic alteration shortly.

Amongst hunter-gatherer societies such marked linguistic diversity is, although not universal, nevertheless an especially widespread and global phenomenon (Liebkind 1999:145; Humphreys 2007:3). There is, rather paradoxically, a remarkable degree of linguistic uniformity in !Xõo. According to Traill (1974:39), and with regards the intricacies of the !Xõo language complex;

> It is a striking fact that the !Xõ dialect area exhibits such homogeneity at all levels of linguistic structure, phonetic, phonological, morphological and syntactic, despite its largeness … This may argue for a relatively recent dispersal of the dialects, but it is impossible to give substance to this. What one can say, however, is that the homogeneity suggests that an unexpected degree of stability is characteristic of the language. I say 'unexpected' for two reasons. Firstly, one may be led by the nature of Bushman … society to expect sociolinguistic conditions which would favour unchecked differentiation; communities are very small, often socially isolated and there is not the linguistic self-consciousness or literacy that would lead to standardisation. On the linguistic side the language shows amazing phonetic complexity and one would expect - although there are not well-developed theoretical grounds for this - this to amount to an instability in the sense that it would lead to the rapid rise of many variant pronunciations. It is just a fact that the number of phonetic parameters a Bushman controls in speech production represents something approaching a maximum for human linguistic behaviour, and I suggest … that it is reasonable to expect such complexity to go hand in hand with instability. But this turns out not to be the case. Far from variability or simplification being the rule, the maximum phonetic complexity is retained and lexical items retain fairly standard pronunciations.

From this state of *diversity-within-uniformity* of the !Xõo language group it may be inferred that many of these dialects, especially those of neighbouring groups, were in fact never completely incomprehensible. These most probably constituted dialect chains, with intelligibility decreasing only gradually as one moved further away from particular dialect zones (Ehret 1982; Traill 2002; Güldemann 2003a). It is in fact precisely these seemingly insignificant dissimilarities between dialects which are crucial for the capacity of language to signify ethnic affiliation. Milroy's (1998) inquiry into the functional purposes of language change offers insight into the situation described above. Speakers are usually not too concerned with being especially clear and explicit, and are content if a conversation progresses reasonably successfully. Since the success of any conversation is judged in social terms, it is tacitly understood that misunderstandings, although they can be clarified, are not exceedingly problematic. Thus, and far from being random and disorganised, redundancy, vagueness, and ambiguity are in fact typical of everyday human speech. In addition, the successful

communication of information-bearing messages is not the only, or necessarily the primary, function of language (*ibid.*:649): certain aspects of verbal communication transmit a much wider range of information about the speaker, such as social orientation, place of origin, and, accordingly, also ethnic affiliation. As noted by Bakhtin (1986:67), "… language arises from man's need to express himself, to objectify himself … and if language also serves as a means of communication, this is a secondary function that has nothing to do with its essence." Thus, and since social meanings are carried in linguistic structures (Blom & Gumperz 1972), tracking down changes in linguistic structures also necessitate close attention to both linguistic and social systems (Weinreich *et al.* 1968).

Language and territoriality

Naroll (1964) lists six criteria by which an "ethnic group" or "cultunit" might be defined, namely language, political organisation, territorial contiguity, distribution of particular traits under investigation, ecological adjustment, and community structure. Although he recognises that these characteristics do not necessarily vary concordantly, he defines the cultunit in terms of the first three (Abruzzi 1982:15). Problems associated with the use of language in ethnic unit classification are representative of the difficulties of defining ethnic boundaries using socio-cultural criteria. For example, Naroll (1964:285) indicates the problem that linguistic continuums pose for ethnic unit classification:

> If, as seems to be the case, Eastern and Western Timbira are mutually unintelligible dialects but are connected by over a dozen geographically intermediate dialects, each of which is readily intelligible to its neighbour, where does Eastern Timbira stop and Western Timbira start? Where is the skin of the culture here?

Accordingly, Hymes (1968) severely criticises the one-language / one-culture notion and maintains that language is too general a concept to be of use in ethnic unit classification. Levine and Campbell (1972:99) also emphasise that the occurrence of well-circumscribed ethnic units is not the rule, but rather the exception. In southern Africa, this argument is manifest as follows: whereas Lee (1966:137) argues that the Kalahari San are not territorial in the zoological sense as they do not defend exclusive territories at the band level, Heinz (1972:414) argues that they are because their spatial behaviour entails protecting, guarding, or withholding *something of value* from other individuals or groups. As noted earlier, Heinz also stresses the fact that territoriality among San has been undervalued, and subsequent research (Cashdan 1983; Barnard

1983, 1986, 1992) has shown that territoriality may in fact be more obvious in certain socio-ecological situations. This was noted as far back as the 1950s, with Marshall (1960:334) recalling an incident involving a dispute about a hunter searching for prey in the territory of another band. *Lazy /Qui* recalled a visit to Xai Xai, during which he had gone hunting toward the east, far from the people he knew. An enraged !Kung hunter from that territory found him and said "Why are you coming to hunt in our area?" He nearly assaulted /Qui, but an old man named !Kham ran up and stopped him, saying "You must not fight for food. We are all looking for food. Nobody is going to fight about food." When /Qui was asked if he ever returned to that area again, he simply said "I was frightened. I did not go to that side any more." This, as noted by Goertz and Diehl (1992:14), illustrates that a *territory* can have two types of values to human groups: intrinsic value related to its material assets or resources, or relational and immaterial value, connected to its meaning "in the eyes of the beholder".

As noted in Chapter Three, the !Xõo are unique among Kalahari hunter-gatherers since, in addition to the family and the band, they are also organised into band clusters or nexuses. The band nexus is "a true territorial group", and there is a strip of "no-man's-land" between adjacent nexuses in which foraging is avoided. Members of a band "would never hunt on the land of an adjoining nexus" because the lack of kinship ties deprives them of such access (Heinz 1972:408). Relationships between different nexuses may also be characterised by great animosity: Barnard (1979:137) notes that the !Xõo have a well-known dislike of strangers, a notion which is also documented by Heinz's examples of hostility to intruders and lack of hospitality to outsiders (Heinz 1972:411). Dispute over the location of territorial boundaries has also been reported, causing in one instance a fifteen-year estrangement between the members of two neighbouring groups (*ibid.*:41). Remarkably, and in similar fashion to the ethnographic analogues as discussed above, !Xõo band nexus boundaries also represent dialect boundaries (Eibl-Eibesfeldt 1974:6; Barnard 1979:138; Wiessner 1983:267). The !Xõo band nexus consists of a group of 3 to 7 bands which are related to each other by ties of friendship, kinship, language, and ritual bonds. The average band numbers 35 to 45 members (Heinz 1975) and occupies an area of approximately 300 to 600 km² (Heinz 1979; Lee 1979). Band nexuses may cover between 900 to 4200 and up to 5000 km² (Heinz 1979:467), involving between 105 to 315 and perhaps even 400 individuals. Barnard (1992:232) further illustrates the socio-linguistic-territorial lines along which !Xõo-speaking foragers are organised. Firstly, the !Xõo can be seen as utilising a kinship-confederational principle according to which kinship ties are slightly more important than ties of residence. Following kinship, locality, as manifest in territorial

behaviour, comprise the second tier of !Xõo identity. This frequently takes the form of social nucleation, according to which individuals tend to remain within a definable territory over a substantial period of time: nucleation embodies the close association with both kinship and place. Territoriality, which is largely attributable to ethnicity and band-cluster nexus nucleation (Barnard 1992:235), is not wholly determined by environmental parameters (Kusimba 2003:98). Territoriality also takes the form of *social boundary defence* (Cashdan 1983:49, 62) rather than active perimeter defence. Since sharing place and language is sufficient in providing a stable reference point by which a group of people may locate their shared identity (Laponce 1987:48), social boundary defence typically utilises language as a prime measure of social, geographic, and ethnic affiliation. For example, distinctions between !Xõo-speaking groups are readily made and expressed in terms of language and linguistic dissimilarities (Boden 2005:3).

> *Die 'N|ohan se taal is skoon. Die !Gao-kx'a [!Xõo] se taal haak te baie.*
> The language of the 'N|ohan is clean, the language of the !Gao-kx'a [!Xõo] gets stuck too much.
>
> *'N|ohan mense het amper nie taal nie.*
> 'N|ohan people almost do not have a language.

The aim of such declarations is not only dissociation but also to express difference in value and social hierarchy (*ibid.*). In general, language may be regarded to be somewhat a-political, with language differences being less important than ethnic or other social differences. However, in this case, language difference is as much a vehicle for promoting social distinction as it is an actual substance of dissimilarity. When asked to assess strangers on the basis of speech, subjects from several cultures have been shown to rate their own speech variety higher than others on scales of solidarity, such as friendliness and helpfulness, though not necessarily on scales of social status or ability (see Labov 1998 for a discussion). The !Kung, for example, form gift exchange networks with other !Kung bands, but "people, even San, of a different language group … are foreign people and to be regarded with suspicion." (Wiessner 1977:xix). For the /Xam, Deacon (1986:149) and Traill (1996:182) notes /Han≠kass'o's assessment of the speakers of the Grass dialect as "those who do not nicely talk Bushmen language; they stammer the language". Further to the east, Traill (2002:45, in citing Orpen 1877:85) notes a comment by Kwa-ha, who stated that "I can speak Bushmen language well, but I cannot understand the Bushmen of the Riet River; their language is 'too double'". Rather remarkably, !Xõo-speakers can actually distinguish

the dialects spoken by and, accordingly, also correctly identify the territorial ranges of other !Xõo-speaking individuals from foreign nexuses: Traill (1974:16) recalls how the Oha !Xõo, when tested on knowledge of dialect forms not used by them, correctly identified a passage previously recorded as derived from the Ukwi !Xõo, who live some sixty kilometres to the north-east.

Evidently, language serves as an important index of social allegiance, and this indexing could well be imperative in the maintenance of group cohesion. Language enhances efficiency in cooperative foraging tasks, especially where this involves monitoring resource condition across dispersed patches at large space-scales, as "topographic gossip" (Widlok 1997), or where this involves the social transmission of categorical distinctions that enable discrimination of food items by their nutritional value (Cangelosi *et al.* 2000). Language is furthermore vital to distinguish between members of the kinship group and the importance of their relatedness to an individual and the social contracts that are entailed in relations between individuals of defined kinship categories (Dixon 1980:77; Deacon 1997:377; Buckley & Steele 2002:36). Finally, language enables the negotiation of food-sharing: Eibl-Eibesfeldt (1989:525) notes that the majority of all !Kung conversations centre on food, and many ethnographically documented food conversations are concerned with social aspects such who gives what to whom, and criticisms of those who do not share their food. Social stability is reinforced by the symbolic development of classificatory kinship terms that discriminated between degrees of relatedness and therefore degree of cooperation.

In light of the above, it seems reasonable to infer a close correlation between San linguistic diversity and religious-cosmological and subsistence-economic homogeneity: given that San rock art is, essentially, a religious art, there is only a limited degree of diversity observable in terms of manner of depiction or style and, in particular, subject matter or theme. The only available means by which San groups could have differentiated themselves from neighbouring groups and outsiders were to develop, either unconsciously or deliberately so, slight differences in speech, or *ethnolects*. The close correlation between ethnic groups, linguistic dialects, particular ecological zones, territorial boundaries, and place is further elucidated by the notion of language, in the form of dialects or ethnolects, as *style* (Chambers 1998:32). As in rock art studies (Lewis-Williams 1995b:70), the concept of *style* offers an apposite investigative format for the exploration of the capacity of language to represent specific social, economic, and ethnic entities. Stylistic variation in language is particularly typical of contexts in which much of the economic and technological base is shared by several groups

(Köhler & Lewis 2002:288), and may therefore derive almost exclusively from intense instances of interaction between different socio-ethnic groups (Hodder 1982: 55; Irvine & Gal 2000:75; Kusimba 2003:101; Fought 2006:135). To recapitulate, social interaction theory (Barton *et al.* 1994:186) defines style in a normative way as repetitive behaviour that acts as a kind of psychological "filter" to constrain variety and reduce information overload (Franklin 1994:279). Conversely, the information exchange theory of style (Voss & Young 1995:82) views art as an act of social communication defined by style: emblemic style in particular may communicate norms, values, goals, and objective social attributes of collective social identities (Wiessner 1983:257). Most importantly, emblemic style communicates information about social boundaries (Jones 1997:114). As noted by Hodder (1986, see also Wiessner 1984:194; 1985:161), style is used to manage the context by manipulating the message: it emphasises rather than constrains variety and uses the exposed dissimilarities to monitor difference between societies. Language, clearly, may also be viewed in terms of style. People tend to develop and display distinctive *styles*, whether technological, economic, decorative, artistic, or linguistic, as ways to distinguish themselves from others (Kusimba 2003: 105).

Seeing that linguistic behaviour may indeed be viewed as "acts of identity" (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller 1985:14), language is probably the most effective means by which identities (Fought 2006:20) and ethnic boundaries (*ibid.*:133) may be constructed. In his theory on ethnicity, Fishman (1999) argues that language is not a conscious factor unless it has a border marking function between groups. In everyday interactions language is a means of communication and is not an ideologically-based, loved or valued thing. In this particular case, language is not only the primary dimension of maintaining and strengthening the social and territorial cohesion of ethnic groups, but at the same time it is at the very core of belonging to a socially-cohesive entity. For example, Cashdan (1983) argues that hunter-gatherers employ two techniques to control access to territorial resources: perimeter defence, or the active defence of territorial boundaries, and social boundary defence, in which access to the social group itself is controlled. Hunter-gatherers tend to use this second type of territorial defence when the first becomes too costly, when resources become less abundant or less predictable or when ranges become larger. The !Xõo, Nharo, G/wi, and Ju/'hoansi San all make use of social boundary defence, with language dialects, or ethnolects, as style, comprising the most obvious barrier between different ethno-linguistic groups (Mesthrie *et al.* 2003: 107). Thus, and although ethnic classifications may also be based upon physical appearance or place of origin, language provides a cost-effective

and surprisingly proficient means by which particular social units, as they exist within the larger and socially, technologically, and economically homogenous hunter-gatherer macro-society, could have differentiated themselves from adjacent *other* peoples.

Since this investigation intends to illuminate the association between people, place, engraved art, and identity-consciousness, it is of interest to raise the question of whether it is possible to ascertain the temporal extent of such socio-linguistic-territorial relations: when did humans become conscious of them-*selves* and of *others*, and how, if indeed so, is this manifest in the archaeological record?

Palaeo-ethnic consciousness

The earliest intimation to some sort of relevance of language as an indicator of ethnicity derives from the power struggles and cultural rivalry of the Sumerians, Elamites, and the Akkadians (Haarmann 1999:64). Further substantiation of the validity of language as a marker of ethnicity in antiquity involves the concept of the “barbarian”, a term invented by the ancient Greeks to raise the prestige of their culture (*ibid.*:65). The foremost measure of a *barbarian* was language: the Greek term *barbaros* actually means “a person who speaks inarticulately”, or a person who does not know Greek and speaks an unintelligible language.

Ancient ethnicity has much current relevance as past ethnic identities inform not only relatively innocuous phenomena, such as the Celtic Renaissance or the African Renaissance, but they are also invoked to bolster conflicting claims in very real and bloody clashes over modern peoples and territories. In prehistoric terms, the empirical study of the evolution of language is beset with difficulties. Linguistic behaviour does not fossilise, and a long tradition of analysis of fossil skull shape and cranial endocasts has led to little consensus about the evolution of language (Lieberman 1984; Johanson & Edgar 1996; Deacon 1997; Fitch 2000). Attempts to identify the earliest signs of language, whether from studies of the brain, the speech apparatus, stone tools, or primate communication, suggest a sense of continuity, rather than discontinuity, between human and non-human primate cognitive and communicative abilities (McBrearty & Brooks 2000:486). It is furthermore notoriously difficult to correlate the archaeological record with distinct languages, and the question of precisely how far back palaeo-ethno-linguistic configurations extend remains to be a matter of speculation (Crawhall 2005:73). Thus, and whilst reasonable to infer that some form of language originated early in human evolution and that language existed in a variety of forms throughout its extensive evolution, it is also sensible to concur with those who

have pointed out the inherent un-testability of many propositions regarding the origin of language, and the silence of the archaeological record on this issue (McBrearty & Brooks 2000:486).

Briefly, there are two broadly contrasting bodies of theory concerning the origin and evolution of the human capacity for language (see Deacon 1997 for a comprehensive discussion on language evolution). The first adopts a gradualist orientation and hypothesises that the biological capacity for language evolved slowly and incrementally within the hominid line: this is called the continuity hypothesis (Parker 1985, Milo & Quiatt 1993). The second might be termed punctuational, and assumes the rapid appearance of the capacity for language coincident with the appearance of anatomically modern *Homo sapiens*: this is the discontinuity hypothesis (Davidson & Noble 1989, Bickerton 1990; Armstrong *et al.* 1994). From these analyses, two conclusions related to the human use of language may be drawn (Milo & Quiatt 1993:576). First, early anatomically modern people acquired an ability to organise their social and territorial behaviour and to respond flexibly to changing environments which their predecessors had not possessed. Natural and social selection would have strongly favoured existing morphological and neurological variations conducive to the development of rapidly spoken phonemicised language, especially as advanced cultural behaviour relaxed selection for the maintenance of long, powerful jaws and teeth. The possession of such language would greatly have enhanced the ability of modern humans to synthesise individual experiences and insights into a meaningful, and also abstracted, whole and to employ such constructions as guides for group behaviour, for example to organise and schedule seasonal rounds of subsistence activities. Second, the pace of behavioural and technological innovation following the appearance of anatomically modern *H. sapiens* is unprecedented in previous human evolution. This suggests that the capacity for rapidly spoken phonemicised language led to profoundly different and powerful ways of conceptualising the self, the social group. It also implies that the apparent changes in subsistence behaviour between pre-modern and modern populations can be explained by positing the possession of rapidly spoken language and a concomitant ability to organise both social activity and the environment into more coherent and meaningful patterns. However, precisely when the capacity for rapidly spoken phonemicised language emerged, remains a fascinating question.

In the adult modern human, the supralaryngeal vocal tract has a tongue with a semi-circular sagittal contour forming two segments, a horizontal oral cavity, and a vertical

pharyngeal cavity of almost equal length. It is possible to determine whether fossil hominids could have had matching horizontal oral cavity / vertical pharyngeal cavity proportions by examining their basicrania, which provide a measure of horizontal oral cavity, and their cervical vertebrae, which provide a measure of the length of their necks. McCarthy *et al.* (n.d., as cited in Lieberman 2007:47) established these metrics for 62 specimens of *Pan troglodytes*, *Homo ergaster*, and *H. neanderthalensis* fossils, 82 specimens of *H. sapiens*, including the Middle Palaeolithic Skhul V fossil, eight Upper Palaeolithic fossils, and 73 contemporary humans from seven different populations. The data shows that, in Neanderthals, the short neck and long horizontal oral cavity would place the cricoid cartilage behind the sternum, thus permitting human speech but precluding eating (Lieberman 1984:290). Surprisingly, a similar constraint rules out a human vocal tract in the Middle Pleistocene fossil Skhul V (McCowan & Keith 1939), which has often been thought to be fully modern. McCarthy and colleagues estimate the cervical spine length of Skhul V to be 109 mm, at the base of the adult modern human range. The long horizontal oral cavity and short neck of Skhul V undoubtedly prevented it from having a fully human vocal tract with matching horizontal oral cavity / vertical pharyngeal cavity proportions. The exact evolutionary status of Skhul V remains debatable (Johanson & Edgar 1996:242), with a most likely scenario being, as noted by McCowan and Keith (1939), that the specimens from Skhul and the nearby Neanderthal site of Tabun comprised a single but highly variable population. Nevertheless, and although considered to represent the earliest specimens of anatomically modern humans outside Africa, at around 90 000 to 115 000 years ago (Johanson & Edgar 1996:242; Jurmain *et al.* 2004:299), it appears that fully modern speech anatomy is not evident in the Near Eastern fossil record until around 50 000 years ago (Lieberman 2007:47).

This conclusion offers an interesting and perhaps somewhat unexpected twist to the generally-held view on modern human linguistic ability, especially in light of the leaps in technology purported to have occurred during the Howiesons Poort lithic Industry. The presence of the Howieson's Poort has been used to argue for early cultural modernity in Africa (Deacon 1995; Deacon & Wurz 1996; Wurz 1999), with the primary significance of the industry being that symbolic behaviour, and perhaps also fully modern speech, can be recognised in an African context significantly earlier than in Upper Palaeolithic Europe (Wurz 1999:57) and the Near East. In their socio-ecological analysis of southern African MSA people, Ambrose and Lorenz (1990) have noted both a change in hunting behaviour across the MSA / LSA boundary, and also a marked advance in the ability of MSA anatomically modern *Homo sapiens* to respond flexibly

and strategically to changing ecological circumstances. In their opinion, “the Howiesons Poort marks the first time in human history when there was a significant change in human territorial organisation”, implying increased information sharing and a home-range approach to socio-territorial organisation (*ibid.*:26; see also Deacon 1989, 1995; Deacon & Wurz 1996; Wurz 1999). The Howiesons Poort is unusual not only for its early appearance, which Vishnyatsky (1994:134, as cited in Wadley 2001:203) calls “running ahead of time”, but also because it is replaced by MSA industries that are analogous to those of pre-Howiesons Poort. According to Wurz (1999:57), other means of symbolising relationships may have ultimately resulted in the decline of the lithic component of the Howiesons Poort: perhaps it is during these concluding stages of the Howiesons Poort that rock art and fully modern and rapidly spoken phonemicised speech enters the picture. Radiometric dates from sites in South Africa such as Border Cave, Die Kelders, Diepkloof, and Klasies River indicates that the Howiesons Poort falls within the period of 80 000 to 60 000 years ago. A more precise age of about 70 000 years ago may be inferred from palaeo-environmental data from Klasies River (Klein 1976; Avery 1987; Thackeray 1988). Although not yet dated, the Howiesons Poort Industry at Sibudu Cave is believed to span at least 61 000 years (Lombard 2005). New age estimates have resulted in a consensus that the age of the industry spans 60 000 to 70 000 years (Deacon 1992; Wurz 1999; McBrearty & Brooks 2000; Wadley 2001).

Of greater relevance to this inquiry is the emergence of what appears be the structuring of extensive socio-geographic networks and novel means of social signalling (Deacon 1995:128; Mitchell 2002:87; Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2004a:11). As noted by Wurz (1999:56), and although the relationship between biology and behaviour is complex (Chase & Dibble 1990), there is no *a priori* reason why all early modem people were not behaviourally modern. People displaying symbolic behaviour make choices in selecting and changing the media of expression, and such changes in the intensity of symbol use would, in the archaeological record, manifest in different kinds of material culture. Whilst symbolic communication was “switched on” in the Howiesons Poort in a way that is obvious in lithic artefacts and in the geographic distribution of certain artefacts and raw materials (Wurz 1999:57), additional modes of communication, such as expressive culture, art, and language, were also fine-tuned. There is no reason to believe that all these components evolved concurrently (Wynn 1991:192). Modern language is not a prerequisite for symbol use, a point that has long been made by Sperber (1974:118). This does not however imply that language is not independent of symbolism. This contradiction is deliberate, and some linguists advocate that language

is not the same thing as speech: speech is only a medium for language, and it is not even the only such medium employed by humans (Trask 1998:70; Wadley 2001:206). Speech, or *talking* as Davidson and Noble (1998:86) describe it, emerged before language.

To avoid the shortcomings inherent in directly correlating *modern* culture with language and *modern* behaviour, we can utilise the behavioural corollary of language abilities and, in particular, its expression in material culture, to create a more firmly structured model on which to base their origin (d'Errico *et al.* 2003:6). It is widely accepted that a direct link exists between the highly symbolic nature of modern language and the creation, maintenance, and transmission of the material expression of symbols. The only direct evidence for the first use of symbolic language amongst humans is the recognition in the archaeological record of the material products of symbolic thinking (Wadley 2006:51). However, the mere presence of an artefact does not indicate how it was used, nor can its function be implied by supposition or simple interpretation. Instead, depictions, abstract representations, and personal ornaments are accepted as archaeological expressions of modern cognitive abilities, and also as evidence for the acquisition of articulate oral language (Aiello 1998; Davidson & Noble 1989; Deacon 1997; Mellars 1996a, b; Noble & Davidson 1991; Stringer & Gamble 1993). These behaviours are recorded at European sites dated to between 35 000 and 10 000 years BP. For Mithen (1996b) such conscious use of material culture to store information is a fundamental feature of any specialised intelligence. External memory devices, such as rock art, demonstrate the emergence of a "cognitively fluid mind" able to develop powerful metaphors and analogies which, in following Kuhn (1979), is believed to form the basis of modern scientific thought. Thus, and from an archaeological perspective, modern behaviour can be defined as behaviour in which a symbolic linguistic component, that is, symbolic communication, is irrefutably present (Davidson & Noble 1989; Noble & Davidson 1996; Mellars 1998; Wadley 2001, 2006). This is the point of view adopted here, with the understanding that the identification of a link between artefacts and symbolic communication is not an uncomplicated matter. Accordingly, it is believed that personal ornaments reflect ethno-linguistic diversity (Faris 1972; Hodder, 1979; Ray 1975; Strathern & Strathern 1971; Wiessner 1983; d'Errico *et al.* 2003). Personal ornamentation provides information about its wearer, and such information encompasses culture-specific codes (Voss & Young 1995). Ostrich eggshell beads have been reported from three MSA sites in South Africa, namely the Cave of Hearths (Mason 1962), Boomplaas Cave (Deacon 1995), and Bushman Rock Shelter (Plug 1982), and also from late MSA levels at Nswatugi in Zimbabwe (Cooke 1971), and

Mumba Rock Shelter in Tanzania (Mehlman 1989). Wiessner (1986:113) cites some evidence for ostrich eggshell beads and beadwork having been the only, and perhaps the original, type of gift to have symbolised *hxaro* relationships: the term *hxaro* is derived from the word *//ri*, meaning *sewn beadwork*. *Hxaro* may therefore have instigated and subsequently expanded into a system of social exchange in which other items became acceptable substitutes for beadwork, in turn facilitating the development of extensive trade networks across vast regions during the past 2000 years. This suggestion, together with the fact that ostrich eggshell beads have been retrieved from archaeological contexts dated to 45 000 years in Kenya (Ambrose 1998), 40 000 years at Diepkloof (Parkington 1999), 38 000 years at Border Cave (Beaumont 1978), and 32 000 years at ≠Gi in northern Botswana (Robbins 1999) are significant in terms of the potential antiquity of extensive interaction and reciprocal social relations. The antiquity of *hxaro* gift-exchange systems is especially significant because the advent of *hxaro* exchange has been connected to the archaeological evidence for the origins of modern human behaviour (Robbins 1999:14). For example, Ambrose (1998:388), who has recovered early evidence for ostrich eggshell beads at Enkapune ya Muto in Kenya, suggests that

> If ostrich eggshell beads manufactured in eastern and southern Africa 40 000 to 45 000 years ago were made for a *hxaro*-like delayed reciprocity system, then they may signify the invention of a symbolic marker for a social security system that permitted behaviourally modern humans to survive in more risky environments.

Wadley (1993:287) however points to the possibility that if “beads and arrows were used as *hxaro* gifts before the Holocene, then the practice of *hxaro* exchange was only weakly developed.” This brings us back to the claim that repetitive patterning of objects is not a necessary prerequisite for symbolic behaviour and that isolated instances of such objects may in fact represent social activities that may be widespread but that can not be detected archaeologically (Duff *et al.* 1992:214; Deacon 1997:366). The early dates for ostrich eggshell beads nevertheless suggest that, from 50 000 to 30 000 years ago, there was an increased awareness of “self” and, therefore, also of the “other”. Such forms of decoration and personal adornment may be viewed as one of many types of activity which, through their visibility, transmit information about individual social identities to participants within a social network. Such forms of communication, particularly so in terms of ostrich eggshell beads, also renders social interaction more predictable by reducing uncertainties about social identities and social relationships (Braun & Plog 1982:510; see also Voss & Young 1995:82).

Although southern African MSA art, ornaments, and decorated items are rare (Thackeray 1992:421), evidence suggests that forms of self-adornment or jewellery originated at least 70 000 years ago (Henshilwood *et al.* 2004) and that artwork dates back to at least 26 000 years BP (Wendt 1976). Many of the earlier finds may however be viewed as resembling those from the Middle Palaeolithic which, as Mellars (1996a) notes, should not be ascribed symbolic status because they are so rare that they do not incorporate information-flow and widely-shared cultural values (see also Wadley 2001:217). Conversely, it is possible to claim that repetitive patterning of such objects in the archaeological record is not a necessary prerequisite for symbolic behaviour, and that isolated instances of such objects may in fact represent behaviour that may be more widespread but that can not be detected archaeologically (Duff *et al.* 1992:214; Deacon 1997:366).

As for *style*, most discussions regard the active, communicative, and conscious aspects of style as significant in studies of human behaviour (Sackett 1977, 1982, 1986, 1990; Wiessner 1983, 1984, 1985, 1990). Assertive style, or formal variation in material culture which is "personally-based and which carries information supporting individual identity" (Wiessner 1983:258), comprise the first discernible elements of symbolic storage and seem to appear during the final stages of the MSA at approximately 40 000 years BP. The use of active (Sackett 1977) or emblemic style, or "normal variation in material culture that has a distinct referent and that transmits a clear message to a defined target population" (Wiessner 1983:257), appears to only increase in frequency during the Holocene. By definition, emblemic style always carries a symbolic loading, whereas assertive style does not necessarily do so (Clark 1989). In light of the early dates for ostrich eggshell beads, and concerning lithic technology, assertive style appeared several thousand years before formal spatial patterning as evident at southern African sites: although assertive lithic style is evident at Rose Cottage Cave at about 30 000 years BP and at Sibudu Cave at about 42 000 years BP, spatial patterns remains to be unstructured, with overprinted artefacts and cluttered hearths (Wadley 2001:206). Gamble (1998) proposes that material culture displaying *style* is least used among the immediate household, where daily contact makes coding and stylistic transmission of information unnecessary (*ibid.*:433). It is in the context of extended social networks that symbolic or stylistic resources are most effectively used, and Gamble claims that prehistoric groups did not use symbolic resources for social signalling until they had extended social networks (*ibid.*:440). If this is correct, then the first social marking of aggregation with stylistic resources may date to the time when such networks were introduced (Wadley 2001:209): between 50 000 and 30 000 years

ago. Fully modern and symbolic language should also have been present at this time because, as Byers (1999) suggests, it would have allowed geographically widespread relationships. It is, as noted above, only when technology begins to participate in the social and ideological realms of life that it takes on a symbolic role (Kuhn & Stiner 1998:155). As suggested by currently available evidence for the manipulation of material culture items for social and ideological purposes, and in accordance with the long-range gradualist view of the development of fully modern human behavioural traits, Wadley (2001:216) situates the origin of cultural modernity and human sociality in southern Africa at approximately 40 000 years ago.

Sociality and identity

As noted in Chapter One, *social identity theory* (Sumner 1906:13) proposes four processes by which social identity in an inter-group context may be conceived (McNamara 1997:562): i) the social categorisation of selves and of others, ii) the subsequent formation of an awareness of social identity, iii) social comparison of selves versus others, and iv) a search for psychological distinctiveness. Significantly, for many archaeologists the fundamental distinction between modern and ancient behaviour is in fact *social* (Wadley 2001:206; see also Stringer & Gamble 1993; Soffer 1994), with the practice of symbolically organised behaviour (Chase & Dibble 1987; Stringer & Gamble 1993; Soffer 1994; Mellars 1996a, b; Wynn 1996) viewed as the foremost difference distinguishing *modern* behavioural traits from *ancient* ones (see Wadley 2001:207, 2006:49; Henshilwood & Marean 2003: table1, 2006: table 3). All modern cultures share an underlying similarity: behaviour is, firstly, social, and, secondly, largely symbolic, in that individual cultures are identified and transmitted through the learning of these symbols (Chase & Dibble 1987; Gamble 1998).

With regards the sociality of contemporary San society, Biesele (1983:57) has noted that the importance of story-telling in the communication systems of hunting-gathering peoples implies that a level of interest in acquiring information beyond that needed for immediate subsistence may be of tremendous adaptive value. Much additional information about the behaviour of animals and the habitats of plants is tucked within the artistry of stories, and it appears to be utilised later as part of a general fund of knowledge. In discussing the growth of human intelligence in evolutionary history, Lee (1973:94) furthermore points out that language, which is “synonymous with human intelligence reduced to its essentials … becomes elaborated far beyond the adaptive needs of the organism.” For Biesele, this elaboration appears to take place or reveal itself in expressive forms, whose latitude for multiple references, expressing cultural

energies, and capacity for social communication seem to create a natural spawning ground for new meaning. Lee in fact goes on to ask whether we are to conclude that the tremendous growth of human intelligence was largely for social and recreational purposes. In reply, Biesele suggests that, although the development of language and the increase in intelligence served social purposes, it probably occurred largely in *recreational* contexts. This answer implies, in turn, that we should inquire into the nature of *recreation* by looking at linguistic and other *play* in human communication systems.

We have already explored the linguistic component of what is considered to be modern human behaviour. As for the *other* social activities as referred to above, I will now turn my attention to communal ritual activity. Identity-reduction through ritual can be either constructive or de-constructive (Koster 2002:6). This distinction is important for the evaluation of Staal's (1986) thesis about the *meaningless* nature of ritual. An example of deconstructive ritual elements are chants and recitations, for instance the mantras found in Vedic ritual (Staal 1986:342):

kā hvā hvā hvā hvā hvā
kā hvā hvā hvā hvā hvā
kā hvā hvā hvā hvā hvā

Such verbal elements are meaningless indeed, but the persistent occurrence of such elements in rituals shows that it is just too simple to say that ritual is pure action, without meaning or purpose. Rather, the question is when meaningless elements prevail and when elements with meaning prevail. According to Wallace (1966:233, as cited in Guthrie 1980:193), the essence of religion is to accustom people to close cooperation by providing practice in a non-instrumental, "ritual" activity. It produces social unity by rehearsing "stereotyped communication" that really communicates nothing more than the intent to cooperate. The most characteristic feature of communal ritual activities is the incorporation of rhythmic movement: in the form of drumming, singing, clapping, and dancing, rhythmic movement features prominently in almost all accounts of ritual (Hanna 1977:210; Durkheim 1995:218). Such performative ritual activity comes as no great surprise, since physical activity itself is both a means of directing attention (Csikszentmihalyi 1990; Baumeister 1991), and a means of producing endogenous opioids, which further induce social effervescence (Lex 1976; Prince 1982). A diverse body of research suggests that there is something profound about rhythmic movement itself that creates both belonging and effervescence. Via

multiple mechanisms, rhythmic stimuli have been found to significantly impact brain functioning and to produce these very effects (Walter & Walter 1949; Lex 1976; Hanna 1977; Prince 1982), while the music accompanying this rhythmic action in itself is known to produce changes in brain functioning, attentional focus, and subjective states. Finally, group singing and dancing are also an effective means of producing unified movement, thereby creating rapport and its subsequent sense of belonging: dance and performance, as culturally-determined expressive body movement, may also be manipulated and combined to purposefully communicate certain aspects of sociality (Hanna 1977:216).

As noted above, ritual elements influence social "identity" in two ways: it can either reduce and deconstruct the meanings constituting individual identity, or strengthen or reconstruct meaning (Koster 2002:6). In the case of collective trance dance performances of the San, ritual is instrumental in the formation and rejuvenation of both individual (Katz 1976:287; Tanaka 1996:27; Guenther 1999:83) and collective identities (Lewis-Williams 1984a:248, 1998a:47). Koster's (2002) proposal of spatial demarcation furthermore holds that ritual performances create a symbolic territorial model by filling a certain designated space with both prescribed ritual actions and also with symbols. Such symbols are tangible and portable in ways that experiences are not, therefore aiding the participant to sustain belief and belonging on a day-to-day basis between rituals (Marshall 2002). Moreover, although the power of the symbol initially derives from practice, once a symbol is so charged, it in itself becomes a means of inciting ritual anticipation. This observation brings us to the most important archaeological indicator of San sociality and ritual activity in the southern African central interior: engraved rock art. As remarked by Lewis-Williams (1995:143), both the manufacture and social consumption of rock art was "… embedded, as indeed all arts are, in the social, economic and intellectual circumstances of the community in which the images were made." The art of San foragers is therefore regarded as entrenched in rituals that had the potential to create and reproduce social affairs, and, accordingly, as reflective of the social relations and religious beliefs of the groups to which the artists were affiliated. Rock art, in terms of the communal ritual activities associated with the acquisition of imagery, the consequent placement of these images on the rock surface, and the subsequent social consumption of these socially- and supernaturally-derived metaphors (Lewis-Williams 1995a:143), fulfilled an active role in the constitution of social relations (Lewis-Williams 1994:277). It is this capacity of rock art to articulate and convey information on the socio-cultural and religious specifics of social entities which is of fundamental importance to the recognition of linkages

between rock art and identity, which, although the identities represented may not be wholly *ethnic* in nature, is surely suggestive of particular *social* and *religious* identities (Lewis-Williams 1984a:227; Guenther 1999:81). I will return to the association between people, place, and particular engraved images in a moment.

From the above discussion it may be concluded that collective ritual trance experience was the prime ideological means by which relations of production and exchange was organised, and that it was central to the achievement of social harmony and healing (Lewis-Williams 1984a:231-232). The centrality of the trance performance ritual in the construction of collective identity and in negotiating social and political change and circumstance is confirmed by both ethnographic sources and by the prominence of scenes indicative of trance activities in the engraved arts (Lewis-Williams 1984a: 227). For example, and as stated by Marshall (1969:349),

> The medicine dance is the one activity in !Kung life that draws people together in groups that are of considerable size and are not shaped by family, band, or close friendship. Nothing but a medicine dance assembles all the people into a concerted activity. And, conversely, an assemblage of people induces a medicine dance.

Marshall (1969:350) furthermore notes that few people dared to stay away from a dance, making attendance virtually compulsory.

> When a dance is in progress, every person in the vicinity must be present. If some old people or others, for any reason, are not going to dance or sing, they must still come to sit near the dance circle. The !Kung feel that they should all be together when strong n/um is present, as it is at the dances. And another reason compels their presence. If the //gauwa-si, when they come to the dance, see a person sitting alone at his own fire, apart from the dancing group, they might kill him and take him.

To this we may add that the medicine dance is concerned primarily with life, in that everybody is constantly threatened by illness and by death. Consequently, not only sick people are cured, but every person present at a medicine dance receives the attention from the trance dancer, shaman, and healer (Katz 1982b:347; Widlok 2001:170).

Of interest, especially in consideration of the fact that language is a prime means by which southern African forager identities are conceived and communicated, is the near-complete absence of intelligible words in the medicine songs of the Kalahari !Kung. England (1967:59) have noted that "… all Bushman music is sung to very few words, indeed; only key words or phrases will be interjected from time to time, and quite commonly an entire song is sung on pure vocable syllables" (see also England 1968: 374). Furthermore, *medicine songs* and *rain songs* in particular are very different from other songs in terms of thematic character and scale, isorhythmic structure, and also manner of performance. These songs represent a unique musical structure, termed the "rain-eland-scale" (*ibid.*:483), and, remarkably, are sung by San of different language groups in different parts of the Kalahari (Marshall 1969:367). The music built upon this scale is believed to represent a very old layer of San musical culture, a notion supported by the fact that many informants have stated that whilst the songs are remembered, the finer details of the rituals with which they are associated have been lost. Marshall (1969) further observed that !Kung individuals do not generally transform or express their thoughts and experiences in vocal terms: any singer may add words that has bearing on the title, or an extraneous word about something that apparently happens to come to his mind, often about hunger or hunting, but, for the most part, the singing is in syllables without meaning. The syllables are mostly vowel sounds. One man offered an example of the way in which he sang a Giraffe song: the sounds are not fixed, and he might sing them differently another time (*ibid.*:368):

á yéa, yéa á, a hóo hóo
á yéa, yéa, hóo hóo, a a
á hóo, hóo á, hí hí
yéa á hóo hóo, ≠kowa da.

The last two utterances, in this case, happen to be words, namely *≠kowa* (giraffe), and *da* (fire). Barnard (1979:74) also notes that, amongst the Nharo, medicine songs are generally named for animal species such as giraffe (*n!abe*), lion (*xam*), ostrich (*g/aro*), gemsbok (*/ko*), and impala (*//ama*). However, there are, surprisingly, no words to the songs, and instead, the sounds "u -a -he -e" or "u -a -he -e - o" are sung loudly to all medicine dance tunes. How would one explain the fact that !Kung and Nharo, and conceivably also !Xõo, /Xam, ≠Hõa, N||ng, ≠Ungkue, and Seroa medicine songs are sung in no particular language or dialect? It is likely that, if there were indeed words to these songs, they would certainly have managed to remain known through the mnemotechnic capacity of sound and rhythm, very much like in Bantu-speaker oral traditions (see Vansina 1985:3-27; Finnegan 1992:1-24). Perhaps the absence of a

palpable verbal component in San medicine songs suggest that there were never any lyrics, and that this renders medicine songs independent of any particular social, linguistic, or ethnic association. This, in turn, may have had the effect of further facilitating the aggregation of several linguistically intelligible yet ethnically distinct dialect groups, with the exclusive purpose of such aggregative periods to engage in the performance of collective ritualised healing rites (Guenther 1999:25), without creating a prejudice against any one particular dialect group in whose dialect the medicine songs are to be performed. After all, a principal function of communal trance dances is the resolution of social conflict (Lee 1979:272, 377; Katz 1982:35, 54; Guenther 1999:37). Significantly, Biesele (1993:27) notes that “metaphor permeates Ju/’hoan expressive life, which in a few words can be characterised as highly oblique, indirect, and allusive”. Moreover, people in cultures based on orality may consider communicated messages as being “the same”, despite differences in verbal content (*ibid.*:67).

Thus, and although language appears to assume an increasingly distinctive role when people share an economic base and compete for access to natural resources (Köhler & Lewis 2002:288), language distinctiveness seems to lose significance when sharing, and temporarily focussing on, matters concerned with religion and cosmology: this is so because ethnicity is contextually constructed (Fishman 1999:154), and because people can prioritise their affiliation to particular social identities as necessitate by different social circumstances (De Vos 1982:18; Banks 1996:41). Within communal religious contexts, language does not perform any significant function, perhaps precisely so because, as noted by Barnard (1992:255), belief is to some extent independent of language, and, as noted by Guenther (1999:236), religion is to a large measure an “inner state”. Shared religious views enable bands to socialise amicably - ethno-linguistic dissimilarities are obscured by expressive components pertaining to a commonly held cosmological and ideological system of social functioning (Jones 1997: 129; Irvine & Gal 2000:38), and, since the primary function of communal trance dances is the resolution of social conflict, normally divergent identities unite. The music and medicine songs associated with such communal and religious-centred phases are language- and dialect-independent, comprising an organisational level which allows neighbouring bands to aggregate amicably and without much difficulty. When bands disperse, they once again become self-sufficient and independent social entities, and, as a collectivity of smaller dialectically distinct ethno-linguistic units, comprise an organisational level in which forager bands are structured, socially and geographically, along the lines of ecological, linguistic, territorial, and ethnic parameters: during these times of dispersal, social, linguistic, territorial, and ethnic distinctions re-emerge and

regain their segregative functions, even though individuals and social units remains to be unified by what may be described as a generally similar and collectively-held belief system (DeCorse 1994:137; Osborn 1994:150).

This perplexing state of *ethnic attentiveness* versus *ethnic disregard* appears to be mirrored in the increasing importance of communal trance performances in the Ghanzi district of the central Kalahari. Shamans have grown in religious importance and social standing, and are attempting to deal with current social circumstances and the plight of all members of the community, regardless of racial, ethnic, or linguistic orientation. Among the farm San also, an ethnic identity, or a consciousness of "Sanness" that transcend the various cultural-linguistic groupings in the area, is also emerging (Guenther 1998:130; see also Wilmsen 1989:279). This offers relief from a poverty-stricken existence by way of a revitalising atmosphere in which San identity is reaffirmed and resistance to European and Bantu-speaking oppressors is articulated (*ibid*.:129). Guenther (1999:246) offers further insight into the interplay between cosmology and sociality amongst southern African San, citing the "prevailing contrapuntal relationship between religion and society" according to which

> … their religion defines for them a perception of nature, the cosmos, and divinity that is in concert with a life of nomadism and hunting and gathering, of close attachment to nature, of individualism and equality, of loose social attachment to a small community to whom each is morally tied through bonds of reciprocity, and whose company each seeks in the interest of physical survival and aesthetic gratification …

Thus, *equality*, *moral obligations*, and *bonds of reciprocity* comprise the focal points upon which San sociality is based. Moreover, San belief, "with its qualities of ambiguity and interpersonal and regional diversity that attach to all of its supernatural elements, together with its tolerance toward and interest in the beliefs, stories, and songs of others" can be regarded as "an ideology consistent with the mobility, openness, fluidity, flexibility, adaptability, and unpredictability of the forager's life." The question now becomes: how does engraved rock art fit into this ambiguous, regionally diverse, and supernaturally ubiquitous arrangement of ethno-linguistically differentiated, yet religious-cosmologically-united scatter of foraging peoples? Furthermore, did ritual centres, in the form of engraved locations, serve as places where social partnerships were reaffirmed, and did such episodes of social congregation present an arena conducive to the comparison, adjustment, and affirmation of forager socio-ethnic identities? In recalling the comment by Morphy (2004:443), that there is "inevitably

some correlation between economic and social factors, ecology and technology, the complexity of material culture, and the nature of art", I will now examine the association between sociality, identity, and engraved rock art.

Engraved art and identity

I have previously referred to the fact that, in the southern regions of their distribution, !Xõo-speaking bands from respective nexuses / dialect groups aggregate along water-courses during the summer months (Kusimba 2003:99). Although intermarriage and socio-economic partnerships do occur between different nexuses, the primary social allegiance of all bands is to their respective nexuses: this constitutes the fundamental sphere of !Xõo social, religious, ethnic, and linguistic identity. I have also shown that kinship and locality forms the basis upon which !Xõo identity is founded, and that, during periods of dispersal, territoriality, in the form of social boundary defence, is the prime means by which bands are organised in space. Finally, it was concluded that !Xõo territoriality is attributable primarily to ethnicity and band-cluster nexus nucleation, and not to environmental constraints. It is therefore conceivable that large rock art sites may certainly have been implicated in events of aggregation and social interface, perhaps even functioning as the venues at which the re-evaluation, affirmation, and the conversion of respective forager identities could have taken place. The principally social nature of engraved locations is evident at sites as far apart as Klipbak and Bosworth. For example, and apart from abundant foreign lithic materials, indications of large-scale lithic manufacture, substantial amounts of ostrich eggshell fragments, and engraved imagery suggestive of altered states of consciousness, Klipbak also exhibits a remarkable circular arrangement of nearly thirty large stones in an open sandy area below the primary engraved surfaces. The circular arrangement is believed to derive from communal trance dance performances as held here during periods of aggregation. At Bosworth, much of the engraved images are highly evocative of communal ritual activities. The site exhibits a remarkable focus on the human form, engraved either singly or in groups, with depictions indicative of the somatic sensations as experienced during altered states of consciousness, comprising the primary focus of attention. Both locations are situated atop elevated outcrops adjacent to water sources. In theory, and when we consider the geographic distribution of the larger engraved locations in the central interior, it becomes apparent that many of the more extensively-engraved places may indeed have functioned as habitually-utilised ritual centres at which bands from respective nexuses aggregated, perhaps on an annual and seasonally-determined basis.

With the renowned site of Kinderdam as the central location, the relationship between people, place, water sources, and engraved locations may be illustrated as in Fig. 6.2. The region in which these engraved sites occur spans approximately 17 500 km², an area which may have hosted anywhere between three to 19 band clusters or nexuses, ranging from as little as 900 km² to as much as 5000 km² in extent, and incorporating countless smaller band territories within its boundaries.

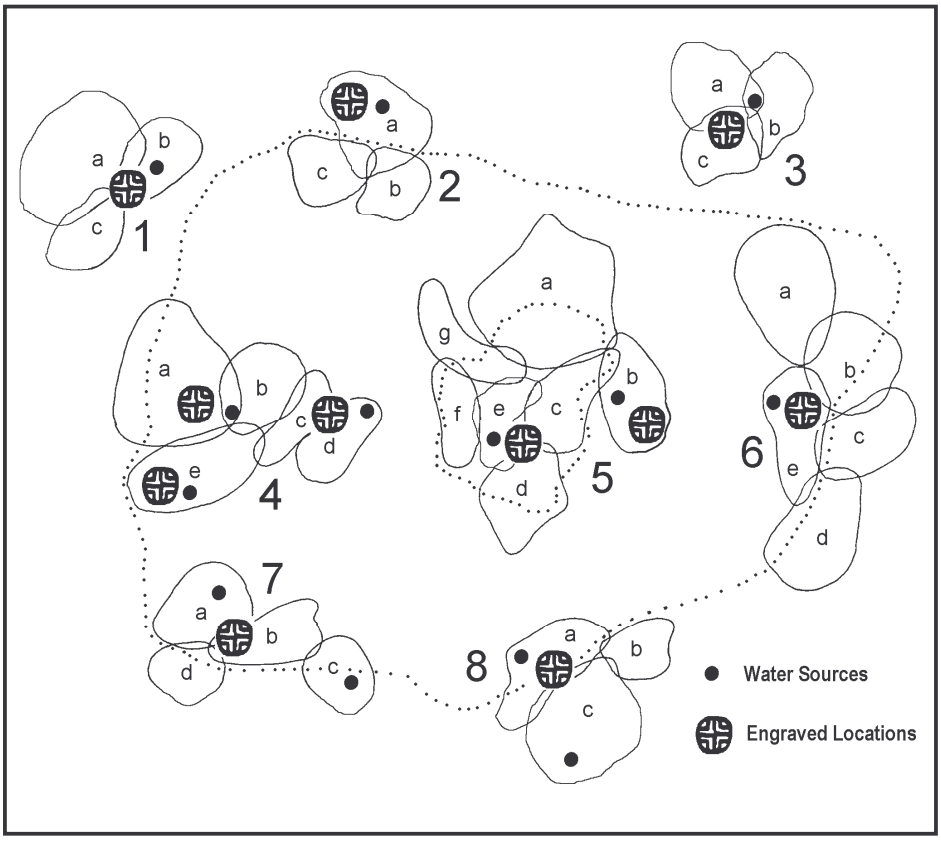


FIG.6.2. Hypothetical map illustrating the relationship between bands (a-g), as manifest in band nexuses or dialect clusters (1-8), which in turn constitute a language group. The distribution of water sources and engraved localities, and the annual and lifetime ranges (smaller and larger stippled areas respectively) of individuals from band e of nexus 5 are also indicated. The area in which these sites occur span approximately 500 km across. Engraved locations are numbered as: 1 b Catharina, 2 a Thaba Sione, 3 c Matsieng, 4 a Klipbak, 4 d Gemsbokhoek, 4 e Nchwaneng, 5 b Gestoptefontein, 5 e Kinderdam, 6 e Bosworth, 7 a Piet Rooiberg, 8 a Stowlands (map configuration derived from Sampson 1988).

In following Morris and Beaumont (2001:26), and in light of the association between the manufacture of rock art and periods of social aggregation as posited by Wadley (1989), it is conceivable that the distribution of larger engraved locations, such as Catharina,

Thaba Sione, Matsieng, Klipbak, Gemsbokhoek, Nchwaneng, Gestoptefontein, Kinderdam, Bosworth, Piet Rooiberg, and Stowlands, may well correspond with the former territorial ranges and locations of large-scale social aggregation of various bands within band nexuses. It must however be noted that, since, in prehistoric terms, the exact nature of relations between foraging bands remains principally unknown, and as changes in social relations and environmental parameters may have further transformed such relations over time (Humphreys 1987), it can not simply be assumed that these sites functioned as centres of aggregation and artistic expression concurrently. Yet, the geographic distribution of particular stylistic traits and themes as reviewed in Chapter Four is nevertheless suggestive of the existence of particular identity-conscious groups in the past, and, although the territories of hunter-gatherer groups undoubtedly expanded, contracted, and shifted with time, changes in the distribution of specific markings across the landscape are taken to reveal the changing relationships between people and place. Be it through a broadening or narrowing of the distribution of specific rock are styles or motifs, the implications are that the formal expression of behaviour changed. For example, during pre-contact times prior to some 2000 years ago, such gradual changes in distribution and theme may reflect the existence of long-standing variation in and expression of forager beliefs (Smith 2006:87). On the contrary, and during the past two millennia, such changes may reflect some sort of reaction to the “other” (Smith 2006:86), which may manifest in radical changes in subject matter and notable shifts in the geographic distribution of these “reactive” artistic sets.

Since it has been established that geographic location and territory are indispensable to the formation and maintenance of personal and group identity, and that place is at the centre of identity-conception and maintenance, such changes in the use of space and place may reflect changing and increasingly complex social relations in the interior region. Thus, and as alluded to in Chapter Four, engravings are viewed as implicitly territorially-based (David & Lourandos 1998:193; see also Heinz 1972:408; Barnard 1979:137; Wiessner 1983: 255; Guenther 1986:173), not because engraved art is necessarily a means of marking territorial boundaries (Smith & Blundell 2004:253; Smith 2006:86), but because the individuals who engrave the land are linked to it by either birth or affinal kinship (Marshall 1976:184; Wiessner 1977:50; Lee 1979:338), sharing networks (Kent 1993: 481), affiliative systems of namesakes (Lee 1986:87; Barnard 1992:44); or by band-cluster names (Heinz 1966:155; Barnard 1992:69), in terms of topophilia (Tuan 1974:92; Deacon 1997:5), notions of citizenship (Barnard 1992:232), and relational value (Traill 1974:24; Goertz & Diehl 1992:14); in terms of

subsistence economy (Lee & DeVore 1968:8; Eibl-Eibesfeldt 1972:206; Eibl-Eibesfeldt & Hitchcock 1991:55; Kusimba 2003:97), by general feelings of common social ties (Heinz 1966:11), and in a variety of other religious, cosmological, and ritually-established ways.

It is, for example, argued that shamanism is found throughout the world because it derives from the ecological adaptation of hunter-gatherer societies to biologically based altered-state-of-consciousness potentials (Winkelman 1990:308), and that the global resemblance among shamans result in part from comparable subsistence-economic adaptations to the environmentally-induced conditions associated with hunting and gathering societies (Lewis-Williams 1984a:233). The explanatory merit of the shamanistic and neuropsychological models, although focussing on shamanistic beliefs and activities concerned with altered states of consciousness, and although it has been described as partly "irrefutable" (Solomon 1989:146), neither purports the hallucinations experienced during trance to account for the entire corpus of San rock art, nor does it deny the existence and validity of *other* meanings and explanations for rock art (Lewis-Williams 1998:87). The existence and validity of such *other* explanations have been afforded an increasing degree of attention since the start of the 21st century, and so have the degree of "pan-ness" of forager arts and cognition (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1994; Lewis-Williams 1998). In following Morris (2002:12), it is indeed significant to note that Lewis-Williams and Dowson have retreated from defending the "pan-ness" of "San-ness", questioning the value of considering the "commonalities" in beliefs and rituals in the ethnography as a *system*, and doubting the legitimacy of the term "pan-San" (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1994:207). Although the "fit" between the 19th century /Xam and the 20th century !Kung ethnographies, and between the ethnographies and the art remains demonstrable, the question of "how far, geographically and temporally, this fit extends is another matter" (Lewis-Williams 1998a:86; see also Morris 2002:13). As noted by Yates *et al.* (1994:30), and although some general features of forager rock art appears to be universal as they tend to permeate the whole of southern Africa, "these should not obscure the marked differences at regional and even sub-regional scales." It would therefore seem that, regardless of a palpable degree of uniformity in southern African rock art, not all the aspects of forager religion and rock art exhibit a homogenous character (Dowson 1988). As a !Kung informant told Lewis-Williams and Biesele (1978:130), "different people do different things in different ways". Moreover, and according to Yates *et al.* (1990:37), rock art "from various regions should be seen as *differing* visual representations of *similar* religious concepts." This in turn suggests, as noted by

Guenther (1999:81), and as illustrated by the distribution of distinctive sets of engraved themes and styles in Chapter Four, that the perceived variability in engraved art may, although derived from human agency (Lewis-Williams & Biesele 1978:130), or perhaps representative of differing visual representations of similar religious concepts (Deacon 1988:137; Yates *et al.* 1990:37), in fact have its roots within, and as a result reflect, the existence of what can be termed *regional religious dialects*.

It has been established that geographic groups of artists often favour some forms and compositions over others, thereby giving the art of a particular tradition distinctly local flavour, much like regional dialects in a language. Such variants have also been noted to constitute *styles* within a *tradition*, a notion that seems reasonable, particularly in terms of the comments by Chidester (1996b:51) that Khoe and San religion appears to represent a "religious-cosmological frontier" in which religious concepts are readily adopted, transformed, and re-adapted according to prevailing socio-political circumstances. The development of such religious frontiers may be viewed as ensuing from socio-cultural frontiers as "cultural mosaics of interspersed communities" (Moore 1985:94). Guenther (1999:228) also notes that San society, albeit within the context of egalitarianism, tend to produce individuals who "do and think their own thing", which in turn fosters a fragmented, fluid, flexible, adaptable, and heterogeneous world-view (Guenther 2001:265) in which a wide range of ideas and practices are expressed and transmitted by socially equal yet culturally individuated men and women. It is, in addition to extensive and often intense instances of contact between San and *other* peoples, precisely this complex and ambiguous blend of individuality-within-social-structure which typifies and also greatly problematises the study of San religion, sociality, and expressive culture (*ibid.*; see also Barrett 2001:147-150). As for the questions posed at the conclusion of Chapter Five, of whether engraved rock art was in any way implicated in the conception of social identity, and if the art fulfilled any function in terms of establishing or marking territorial boundaries, we may conclude that the answer to both questions is a confident *affirmative*. Whilst San rock art was not used to mark territorial boundaries *per se*, it certainly played a role in the construction of social and ethnic identity. Moreover, and given that many of the engraved locations have emerged to display artistic elements which are indicative of regional religious dialects, and since *place* fulfils an essential role in the conception of individual and collective identities, the marking of a particular place with a specific type of image may, in some instances at least, certainly have functioned as statements of *ownership*. As suggested by Vinnicombe (1986:279) and Humphreys (2005:37), and analogous to the way in which Australian groups foster close associations between territory and

mythology, ritual activity, and rock art (see Munn 1973; Peterson 1979; Layton 1986), southern African San foragers may, in addition to having *owned* territories (Marshall 1975:184, 1976:71), the resources contained therein (Heinz 1972:408), and waterholes (Lee 1998:78), also *owned* engraved places and images.

In this regard, Silberbauer (1981:193) notes that "The boundaries of a territory are roughly defined by landmarks or, more correctly, in terms of areas surrounding these landmarks." In the topographically rather monotonous interior, even diminutive outcrops stand out as prominent landmarks: sites such as Kinderdam, Nchwaneng, and Bosworth are located atop geographically unimposing yet visually conspicuous outcrops. In addition, and as noted in Chapter One, an obvious example of the unique contexts of engraved sites include a close association with water. It is unusual to find engraved locations more than a kilometre away from seasonal water-courses, and in many instances engraved locations *are* in fact water sources, such as Nchwaneng, Klapin, and Kinderdam where the outcrops act as catchments for rainwater. In other instances, engravings are situated right next to water sources which, whether in the form of springs, pans, fountains, or river beds, are frequently inundated in the rainy season during which the engraved surfaces become at least partially submerged. How would the notion of *owning a waterhole* have influenced ideas about owning particular topographic landmarks, especially landmarks which were in fact waterholes and which were also engraved?

Firstly, water and water-sources occupy an essential position in San cosmology: waterholes are situated between the hunting ground and the camp (Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2004a:52), providing instant access to the spirit-world (*ibid.*:54) and possessing incredible restorative powers (*ibid.*:123; see also Bleek & Lloyd 1911:137). Even when not filled with water, the cisterns, pools, and cracks and crevices so characteristic of engraved locations continue to facilitate entry into the spirit world (*ibid.*:55). The significance of sources of water is further illustrated by the place names on the sketch map drawn by Bleek in 1871 (see Deacon 1986: fig. 1): each location is invariably placed at a water source. Secondly, as noted by Dowson (1998), the idiosyncratic nature of, for example, painted rain-animals, may be understood in terms of notions concerned with the ownership of rain: depictions of such creatures were also *owned* by their creators. Dowson (1998:82; see also Blundell 2004:171; Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2004b:22) furthermore notes that it seems probable that shaman-artists could point to specific depictions and say "That is my *!khwa-ka xoro* (rain creature)", and that people could look at an imposing potency-filled painting of a rain-creature and, with awe and

respect, identify the shaman-artist who painted that particular *!khwa-ka xoro*. Thirdly, waterholes were above all important because it was at such places where, because they provided access to the spirit world, rain-making rituals were performed. The manufacture of rain was founded and entirely dependent on the capture and slaughter of a *!khwa-ka xoro*. These frequently inhabited pools and streams (Hoff 1998:113), and the capture of the rain creature was carried out, usually at night-time, by rain-shamans or *!kwa-ka !gi:ten* (Bleek 1933:309). The rain animal, which could be either male or female or manifest as an eland (Schmidt 1979:205; Hoff 1989:111), was killed atop a high hill so that the blood and milk of the animal, which was the rain, could flow down the hillside, or fall from the sky, and nourish the parched earth below (Bleek 1933:376-378). It appears as if each *!kwa-ka !gi:xa* may have had a specific place to which he would go to capture a particular *!khwa-ka xoro* and perform the rituals associated with making rain, most probably on elevated mountains or hilltops which were closely associated with water sources (Bleek & Lloyd 1911:132-133; Schmidt 1979:206; Deacon 1988:134). Diä!kwain also stated that his father, *Xàä-ttin*, had engraved images of gemsbok, quagga, and ostriches at *!kann*, a waterhole where these animals formerly came to drink (Bleek & Lloyd 1911:xiv; Deacon 1988:131).

As noted by Deacon (1988:136), ethnography and engraved art suggest that certain places, such as elevated outcrops, perhaps with water sources nearby, and landmarks with mythological connotations for rain, may have been used repeatedly by rainmakers. The continuous addition of supernaturally-derived depictions to these already potency-saturated places reinforced the *power of the place*. Access and rights to such places could be gained either by birth or by marriage, by inheritance, which may be unilateral or bilateral (Lee 1998:78), or through reciprocal altruism (Cashdan 1983:51), by being granted access to these powerful places during phases of social aggregation. These multiple associations between people and place may have resulted in intimate and extensive associations between particular forager groups and engraved places (Lee 1998:77). In due course, continuities in religious ideology also facilitated the addition of different types of engraved imagery, almost certainly derived from similar religious-cosmological notions (Lewis-Williams 1984a:248), to engraved places. Simultaneously, and besides inheriting land and resources, individuals also inherited “a set of status positions binding an individual to a network of obligations owned between persons with respect to the land” (Wilmsen 1989:53), resulting in the conceptual fusion of people and place, with society deriving meaning from place, place being defined in terms of social relationships, and with the result that individuals and society are not alienated from the land (Sack 1980:177).

It is apparent that changes in the distribution of specific types of imagery or "markings" across the landscape do indeed reflect issues concerned with people and their relationships with the land. This, as ascertained in Chapter Three, is so because of the close association between people and place and the fact that the notion of group membership, which consists of the ideological premise of belonging to a specific band, band cluster, or social unit, clearly implies, as noted before, a territorial identity or notion of "citizenship" in that such groups may be associated with particular localities (Barnard 1992:232). This is also evident amongst the !Xõo-speaking San of the interior, who frequently label themselves and are referred to by others in terms of "place" (Traill 1974:8; see also Tuan 1974:92; Deacon 1986:140, 1988:138, 1997:5; Wilmsen 1989:169).

However, language, as noted above, also serves as an important, perhaps the most important, index of social allegiances. The fact that language is so essential to the processes involved in distinguishing between members of *in*- and *out*-groups, and that language difference, or language *style*, is as much a vehicle for promoting social distinction as it is an actual substance of dissimilarity, points to the indispensable position of language *in* (Haarmann 1986), and language *as* (Fishman 1999) ethnicity.

Language and ideology

Much recent investigation of linguistic ideologies remains focused on explicit ideological discourse about language (see for example Blommaert & Verschueren 1998; Blommaert 1999; Irvine & Gal 2000). In this regard, a focus on the ethnicisation of language (Eisenlohr 2004:59) as a set of practices involving the hierarchisation and subsumption of everyday forms of linguistic interaction, is likely to yield insights into the workings of language ideology. It has long been claimed that language can be a vehicle of ethnic and national values (*e.g.* Eidheim 1969; Haaland 1969; Haarmann 1986, 1999; Linn 1998; Fishman 1999; Liebkind 1999; Irvine & Gal 2000; Traill 2002; Berzborn 2003; Eisenlohr 2004; Alexander 2005; Crawhall 2005; Slabbert & Finlayson 2005), but how exactly this is accomplished in contexts of ethno-linguistic identity-formation has not been explained adequately. The current understanding that ethnic identities are flexible with porous ethnic boundaries (Cohen 1978:387; Jones 1997:104; McElreath *et al.* 2003:122) renders the origin and existence of such groups problematic because the movement of people and ideas between groups tend to attenuate group differences. McElreath *et al.* (2003), in arguing that certain markers function to allow individuals to interact with others who share their social norms, illustrate that such

markers and marked groups arise and persist if three empirically plausible conditions are satisfied (*ibid.*:123):

i) social behaviour in groups is regulated by norms in such a way that interactions between individuals who share beliefs about how people should behave yield higher payoffs than interactions among people with discordant beliefs;

ii) people preferentially interact with people with whom they share easily observable traits, such as language dialect;

iii) people tend to imitate successful individuals, with the result that behaviours that lead to higher payoffs tend to spread.

Such stable behavioural differences between groups usually become ethnically marked, and social interaction lead to the evolution of stable differences in behaviour between two groups. People with more common behaviours achieve higher payoffs and are more likely to be imitated. Thus if one behaviour is initially common in one group and the alternative behaviour is initially common in the other group, payoffs from social behaviour coupled with imitation of successful individuals will cause the groups to become increasingly different. In linguistic terms, the embedding issue (Woolard & Schieffelin 1994; Labov 1998) concerns the process whereby linguistic features are adopted as part of a socially constructed speech community, including those that may be defined on ethno-cultural bases. On one level, the establishment of ethnic language varieties (ethnolects) appears to be a relatively straightforward case of co-variance in which particular linguistic variants become established as ethnic markers by virtue of their association with an externally defined socially grouping. On another level, the establishment of ethnolects is a complex and selective process involving a full range of subjective and objective social and cultural variables. There are, for example, different patterns of co-variance, ranging from saturated, group-exclusive usage patterns in which only members of a group use a particular linguistic item, to systematic variable differences in which different groups share features but at different frequency levels of usage.

Current linguistic-anthropological research on language and community has tended to avoid identifying ethnic communities as populations that communicate through a shared linguistic code (Eisenlohr 2004:62). Instead, the link between language and community has increasingly been conceived as resting on ideological mediation. Within a new research paradigm of language ideology, researchers have analysed how

politically charged ideas about language have resulted in processes of ethnic and national group identification (see Woolard 1989; Gal 1993; Silverstein 1996a; Schieffelin *et al.* 1998; Irvine & Gal 2000; Kroskrity 2000). In the same way as recent scholarship on nationalism, linguistic anthropologists interested in language ideologies have treated ethnicity as processes of collective imagination and as dynamic cultural phenomena, with language viewed as a cultural site through which "communities" are conceived and membership is assigned or denied. Perceptions of linguistic differentiation or sameness are shaped in both everyday and expert discourses working through the semiotic processes of iconicity, recursivity, and erasure (Irvine & Gal 2000). More specifically, imaginations of community and linguistic difference can be linked through ideologies representing indexical links between linguistic forms and social groups as based on a perceived essential "likeness" and therefore as self-evident and "natural". Furthermore, linguistic ideologies may transpose perceived patterns of ethno-linguistic difference from one social or historical case to others, and they may entirely ignore socio-linguistic facts that are at odds with the ideological vision being promoted conceptually (Eisenlohr 2004:75). Thus, linguistic identity does not result from objective factors that constitute a certain language, but from subjective factors such as perception of community with other users of a certain language variety and perception of contrasts between one's own language and other languages, and between one's own language community and other language communities. Linguistic ideologies are also not effective simply because they embody ideas and conceptions of group identification: they also involve particular practices that produce the ideological connections between linguistic features and forms of belonging (Irvine & Gal 2000:37). That is, language ideologies should not only be understood as configurations of ideas about language that have social or political implications, but they should also be thought of as "practices ordering and classifying forms of speech with respect to ethnic valuations" (Eisenlohr 2004:76).

At the beginning of this chapter it was noted that although the importance of linguistic differences amongst southern African !Xõo-speaking foragers was noted early on (Köhler 1963, as cited in Trail 1979:167), the causes of linguistic diversity were not self-evident, with Traill (1974:7) referring to *sociological conditions*, *outside influences* and *internal innovation* (Traill 1979:167, 175), *functional influences* (*ibid.*:183), and also *biological reasons* (*ibid.*:187) as potential causes of !Xõo language diversity. With the realisation that ideology is a decidedly plausible cause of linguistic diversity, former rationalisations of dialectical multiplicity as evident amongst southern African San foragers emerge to be rather unrealistic. The bond between language and ideology is

remarkably pervasive (Laponce 1987:46), much more so than that between language and economy, race, or religion. There is also a privileged bond between language and territory (*ibid.*:48), which, since this involves the very core of social identity and of continuity in existence, further substantiates the notion that there are ideological motivations behind forager linguistic diversity (Kroch 1998:257). Ideology is generally defined as the "body of doctrine, myth, and symbolism of a social movement, institution, class, or group of individuals, often with reference with some political or cultural plan, along with the strategies for putting the doctrine into operation" (Flannery & Marcus 1998:40), or as "the set of ideas that legitimises the form and functioning of any society" (Lewis-Williams 1984a:230). Ideology relates more to social and political concerns than it does to religious concepts and activities, although in practice this distinction is highly ambiguous. However, and since ideology is always specific, it is frequently associated with a particular identity-conscious and ethnically oriented social group.

As noted above, and in instances such as those involving New Guinea (Diamond 1998: 306) and Australia (Flood 1983:181), the optimum size of a population or tribe is 500 individuals: *tribe*, as noted by Humphreys (2007:3) is the traditional term used to refer to major social and kinship groupings which are characterised by possessing a common language, territory, identity, and culture. Since the average !Xõo-speaker band numbers 35 to 45 members and occupy an area of approximately 300 to 600 km², band nexuses may cover between 900 to 4200 and up to 5000 km² (Heinz 1979:467), involving anywhere between 105 to 315 and perhaps even 400, but not more than 500, individuals. Thus, and in following Terrell (2001a:2), it is believed that the notion of an *ethnolinguistic group* (as an alternative to *tribe* as formerly used, and *ethnic group* as currently popular) as representative of !Xõo nexuses as collectivities of bands which are related to each other by ties of kinship, territory, language, and ritual bonds and which occupy a distinct tract of land, tend towards nexus endogamy, and share a particular and very distinct ethnolect, offers an apposite descriptive term for southern African San foragers in general, and !Xõo-speakers in particular, as organised according to language *in* and language *as* ethnicity. Languages do not just symbolise their associated cultures. Most importantly, the link between language and social identity, ethnicity, and culture is the fact that, in countless instances, language *is* social identity, ethnicity, and culture (Fishman 1999:444). The distinctive sounds uttered during speech are encoded with particular meaning, and, especially when the ethnic group has an extensive local history, economic activities, ritualised acts, adjacent *others*, and prominent landmarks are deemed to lose all significance when the

language by which they exist fade away. Clearly, the association between ethnic group and ethnolect becomes much more important at this level (Fishman 1999:31). This is also evident in the southern African context. Traill (1996: 182), in addition to pointing out that that "The death of /Xam was the linguistic response of its speakers to the wholesale destruction of their societies and the subsequent loss of a /Xam identity", furthermore notes that, with regards the last speaker of //Xegwi (2002:44), "… it seems that language, in having ceased to be a vital means of communication, must have assumed a powerful symbolic value which maintained the speaker's identity in defiance of the forces that had consumed all the other !Kwi languages of South Africa." To this, Berzborn (2003:329) adds that "… a whole body of inherited knowledge is lost when a language becomes extinct."

Interactional sociolinguists such as Gumperz (1970, 1982) and Heller (1987, 1988), in focussing on language in their research on social identity, believe that social identity and ethnicity are in large part "established and maintained through language" (Gumperz & Cook-Gumperz 1982:7). Heller (1987, 1988) furthermore notes that language and ethnicity interact in several ways. Specifically, ethnicity may limit an individual's ability to participate in some social situations and networks and may signal a shared ethnic background, which is reinforced by a sharing of behaviour, values, language, and lifestyles. Language may "symbolise group identity and become emblems of that identity, especially when there is contact with other groups whose ways of being are different" (Heller 1982:3). This view bears some resemblance to Gumperz's notion of a "we" code and a "they" code to signal in-group and out-group membership and identity, and reflects Giles and Johnson's (1981,1987) ethnolinguistic identity theory in which language is a salient marker of group membership and identity. As Chambers (1995:208) puts it,

> The fact that linguistic variability is universal and ubiquitous suggests strongly that it is fulfilling some essential human need … The underlying cause of sociolinguistic differences … is the human instinct to establish and maintain social identity.

Recently, Bucholtz and Hall (2005:3) have proposed a superb framework, based on four principles, for the analysis of identity as produced in linguistic interaction:

i) identity is the product rather than the source of linguistic and other semiotic practices and is therefore a social and cultural rather than a primarily internal psychological phenomenon;

ii) identities encompass macro-level demographic categories, temporary and interactionally specific stances and participant roles, and local, ethnographically emergent cultural positions;

iii) identities may be linguistically indexed through labels, implicatures, styles, or linguistic structures and systems, and are therefore relationally constructed through several, often overlapping, aspects of the relationship between *self* and *other*.

iv) identity may be in part intentional, in part habitual and less than fully conscious, in part an outcome of interactional negotiation, in part a construct of derived from the perceptions of others, and in part an outcome of larger ideological processes and structures.

Remarkably, this analytical framework offers a concise and exceptionally accurate synopsis of the issues discussed and the conclusions reached within this chapter. San forager identity, as the product of distinctive linguistic features, is largely a social and cultural phenomenon. Forager identities have also been shown to encompass both macro-level demographic categories, as a geographically-dispersed macro-community united by economic practice and a shared cosmology, and as larger temporary social aggregations marked by interactionally specific roles and events, such as during periods of aggregation and large-scale communal trance-dance performances. During episodes of socio-geographic dispersal particular identities are linguistically indexed through labels, styles, and unique linguistic structures. In conclusion, San identities are relationally constructed through interaction and through social comparison between the *self* and the *other*. Such identities are however constructed to be situationally-relevant, and may therefore be, as Bucholtz and Hall (2005:3) notes, part intentional, part habitual and less than fully conscious, in part an outcome of interactional negotiation, in part a construct of derived from the perceptions of others, and in part an outcome of larger ideological processes and structures.

In introducing the concluding segment of this examination of the association between engraved rock art and prehistoric conceptions of what we have termed *ethnicity*, we may note the introduction, by Herbert (1992:2), to *Language and Society in Africa*:

> The recognition of language as a central mark of ethnic identity in the region has been so vigorously promoted that language has often been used as the primary criterion for assignment to ethnic group. Such a

> notion has been a key element in colonial and neo-colonial policies in the region, most notably in the South African policy of apartheid.

Colonial and neo-colonial histories set aside, and with the focus on southern African foraging peoples prior to contact with pastoral, agro-pastoral, and colonial peoples commencing some 2500 to 1500 years ago, I will now revisit the association between language, engraved art, and social identity. In particular, I will attempt to discover at least some of the answers to the following questions: Firstly, and since our understanding of *ethnicity* and our ability to recognise ethnicity in the archaeological record clearly hinges on how we define the concept of ethnicity, are current definitions and applications relevant? Is a simple awareness of *us* and *them* to be considered sufficient in constituting ethnicity? Secondly, and as for the *ethno-linguistic* premise as an analytical category for exploring ethnicity as evident amongst southern African hunter-gatherers, how far back in time does such instances of social consciousness extend? For how long have southern African foraging peoples been aware of *others* and of *ethnicity*, and how may we determine the extent of something as intangible as social consciousness? Is it possible that the human recognition of cultural distinctions specific to other populations, perhaps based in large part on language differences, had its origins among the first anatomically modern humans? Finally, what is the role of *ethnicity* in contemporary South Africa? Has it found any utility amongst previously disadvantaged groups, and can it facilitate claims to rights and privileges which the existing power structures have denied them?

CHAPTER SEVEN

Engraved Art and Ethnicity

In Chapter One I stated that the primary theoretical position adopted for this enquiry is that of the concept of *social identity* (Tajfel 1974, 1978, 1984; see also Tullberg & Tullberg 1997; MacDonald 1998a, 2001; Fishman 1999; van der Dennen 1999; Bucholtz & Hall 2005). It was furthermore noted that *social identity theory* (Sumner 1906:13) offers tremendous insight into the evolution and structure of sociality in human groups (*e.g.* McNamara 1997:562). In brief, any social context involving relations between salient social groups provides categories through which individuals, by learning to recognise linguistic or other behavioural cues, may allocate others and themselves to category membership and learn the valuation applied by the in-group (*us*) and salient out-groups (*them*) to this membership. However, is such a basic awareness of *us* and *them* to be considered sufficient in constituting *ethnicity*?

Discussions of ethnicity routinely centres on the supposed primordialist (Geertz 1973; Isaacs 1975) versus structuralist / instrumentalist (Barth 1969; Bonacich 1980) debate, which, when viewed in reductionist terms, attempts to determine whether ethnic identity exists either *prior to* or emerges *from* social action. This, as noted by Solway (1994: 256), is essentially a false dichotomy. Recently, much attention (*e.g.* Stack 1986; Bentley 1987; Comaroff 1987) has been directed at merging the two approaches with the aim of exposing ethnic identity as both culturally-derived *and* subject to change with historical conditions. Ethnicity is a particular assertion of collective identity, which can be based on either self-identification or external ascription. Moreover, once established, “ethnic consciousness enters a dialectical relationship with structures that underlie it; once ethnicity impinges upon experience as an apparently independent principle of social classification and organisation, it provides a powerful motivation for collective activity” (Comaroff 1987:312).

In introducing the problem of palaeo-ethnicity in Chapter One I referred to the fact that the employment of existing archaeological categories, as primary units of analysis, such as *cultures*, *types*, and *ethnic identity* requires to be reassessed, and that, instead, archaeologists need to focus on a contextual approach to social interaction and social practice. Definitions of ethnicity and ethnic identity inevitably vary according to the underlying theory embraced by researchers and scholars intent on resolving its conceptual meanings: the theoretical notions of *tribe* (Dixon 1980), *cultunit* (Naroll 1964), *material-culture unit* (Hammond-Tooke 2000), *ethnic group* (Isajiw 1992; Jones

1997), *ethnolinguistic group* (Terrell 2001a), and, most challenging, *palaeo-ethnic groups* (Dolukhanov 1994), clearly demonstrate this point. The fact that there are only "widely discrepant definitions and measures of ethnic identity, which makes generalisations and comparisons across studies difficult and ambiguous" (Phinney 1990:500), and no generally agreed upon definitions of *ethnic identity*, is indicative of the confusion surrounding the topic. Our understanding of ethnicity and our ability to recognise ethnicity in the archaeological record obviously hinges on how we define *ethnicity*. Siân Jones (1997), in highlighting the fluid and situational nature of ethnicity and the diverse and heterogeneous ways in which material culture is used in the expression of identity, defines an ethnic group as "any group of people who set themselves apart and / or are set apart by others with whom they interact or co-exist on the basis of their perceptions of cultural differentiation and / or common descent" (*ibid.*: xiii). James Fearon (2003:7), identifies a *prototypical* ethnic group to encompass a socially cohesive unit which exhibits the following features: membership is reckoned primarily by descent, members are conscious of group membership, members share distinguishing cultural features and these cultural features are valued by a majority of members, the group has or remembers a homeland, and the group has a shared history as a group that is not wholly manufactured but has some basis in fact. David Hammond-Tooke suggests the use of an alternative phrase, namely *material-culture units* to refer to a collectivity of people who i), share some patterns of normative behaviour, and ii), form part of a larger population, interacting with people from other collectivities within the framework of a social system. These definitions, as are all those reviewed in Chapter Three, are of such broad scope that practically any group of people, who reckon group affiliation by kinship and *place*, and who share a common language, economy, and material-cultural repertoire, may be seen as *ethnic* in nature. For Horowitz (1985:53), ethnicity has become an umbrella concept that "easily embraces groups differentiated by colour, language, and religion; it covers tribes, races, nationalities, and castes."

Currently, the most widely used definition of the construct in psychology is that developed by Jean Phinney (1990, 2000, 2003), who maintains that "ethnic identity is a dynamic, multidimensional construct that refers to one's identity, or sense of self as a member of an ethnic group" (2003:63; see also Chandra 2005:2). Individuals claim an identity within the context of a subgroup that in turn claims a common ancestry and shares at least a similar culture, race, religion, language, kinship, or place of origin. Phinney (2003:63) continues, noting that "Ethnic identity is not a fixed categorisation, but rather is a fluid and dynamic understanding of self and ethnic background. Ethnic

identity is constructed and modified as individuals become aware of their ethnicity, within the large (sociocultural) setting." As for the *ethno-linguistic* (Giles & Johnson 1987) premise as a potentially enlightening analytical category for exploring ethnicity as evident amongst southern African hunter-gatherers, I need first tend to a highly contested matter: how far back in time does such instances of *social consciousness* extend?

Palaeo-ethnic consciousness

Some archaeologists have argued that the earliest manifestations of ethnicity and ethnic consciousness can be traced back to the time of the emergence of the first city-states and larger-scale stratified societies (*e.g.* Fried 1968; Smith 1986; Bentley 1987; Huffman 2005; Calabrese 2006), effectively relating the communication of cultural differences and ethnicity to the unequal distribution of material, symbolic, and, essentially, political power between communities. For example, Renfrew (1988:438) argues that "a strongly developed ethnicity is not, in fact, a universal among human societies", and that notions concerned with ethnicity are unlikely to have emerged prior to 6000 years ago. Heide (2006:2), in citing a remark by Janson (1997:16) that southern African San have no emic etonyms for their languages, even though linguists and anthropologists have collected more than 140 designations for it (see Barnard & Taylor 2002; Brooks 2002), also argues that language is not an important element in the identity of San foragers and other "pre-modern" societies. Heide (*ibid.*:3) exemplifies the erroneous perception in stating that "The San used to live in tiny groups with no contact with other groups for most of the year, and they did not trade", and that "In such a situation, it is understandable that linguistic contrast to other peoples is not an important identity factor." To this one may add the position of Shennan (1989), according to whom the primary operational difficulty in considering ethnicity in pre-historic contexts is that it did not exist in non-state societies. In his summary of the arguments put forward by Bentley (1987), Gellner (1983), and Smith (1986), Shennan (1989:14; see Lilley 1998 for a fitting summary) argues that ethnicity first appeared with the development of large complex states. This position is based upon the fact that the process of ethnic identity creation only comes to have its power in a situation in which pre-existing forms of identity creation and maintenance are being destroyed: this is often seen as a key feature at the root of the origins of states (*ibid.*:16). Shennan furthermore notes that Gellner's (1987) work strongly suggests that "outside of state societies and their spheres of influence the formulation of collective interests is very much a situational phenomenon", precisely the instrumentalist definition of ethnicity. Shennan's understanding of Gellner's comments, and his use of Bentley (1987) and

Smith (1986) to locate the origins of ethnicity in state societies, results from what appears to be a straightforward primordialist perspective on the nature of ethnicity. In brief, it seems as if Shennan may not recognise that Gellner (1989:14) *does* implicitly acknowledge the existence of "entities of the ethnic group type" in non-complex societies.

One of the prerequisites of inter-ethnic classifications is that *ethnic groups* interact and maintain a relative degree of contact within a single collective social structure, such as a number of bands within a band nexus, or a number of nexuses, perhaps manifest in dialect chains, within a particular eco-geographic region. Ethnic identity is contextual and situational because it derives from social negotiations where one declares an ethnic identity and then demonstrates acceptable and acknowledged ethnic group markers to others (Kent 2002a:4). Moreover, it has been established that ethnic identity generally operates as a way to gain access to, or be alienated from, some economic or religious resources. This point is substantiated by Cashdan (1983:47; see also Heinz 1972:414; Carpenter & MacMillan 1976:639), who views territoriality as "the maintenance of an area within which the resident controls or restricts use of one or more environmental resources." Territoriality, in the case of the southern African San, is thus a type of resource management strategy which depends on the control of access to natural, and also social and religious, resources. This, in contrast to Dorais (1994:294), who notes that "… ethnic identity (or ethnicity) only seems to occur within complex societies (i.e. societies with a state apparatus, social classes, etc.), when it appears functional to divide people into categories based upon something other than gender, age or occupation …", is precisely why ethnicity can and does materialise in less "complex" societies - all resources are *not* equally available to everyone (*ibid.*: 295), as the discussion on territoriality and access to environmental and religious resources in Chapters Three and Six clearly illustrate. Yinger (1983:ix) also defines the ethnic group as a constituent part of a larger multi-ethnic society, noting that

> An ethnic group … is a segment of a larger society whose members are thought, by themselves and / or others, to have a common origin and to share important segments of a common culture and who, in addition, participate in shared activities in which the common culture and origin are significant.

Thus, the pre-historic milieu in which southern African San foragers existed is viewed in terms of possessing such a multi-ethnic, as opposed to insular and ethnically-bounded character. On the basis of extensive research in Melanesia Yoffee (1993:65; see also

Lilley 1985) has also argued that there is no reason why ethnicity, like other purported features of complex societies, should not also be present in non-complex societies, perhaps originating in that early form of social organisation that Yoffee (*ibid.*:72) calls "bandishness", which, through time, developed characteristics peculiar to the different kinds of social structures that emerged from "bandishness" to follow their own, particular trajectories of change.

Evidently, ethnicity is just as likely to have been embedded in intra-personal socio-cultural and political relations and negotiations in the past as in the present, and need not necessarily be confined to within the contexts of complex social hierarchies, colonialism, or capitalist expansion. In a more recent context, Guenther (1986a:59) notes that the Nharo have a "positive sense of ethnic identity", with *≠au*, the term denoting different *animal species*, also used to signify both an ethnic group (Barnard 1983:56) and a band cluster territory or nexus (Guenther 1986a:173). Moreover, whereas farmers of European descent are viewed as a separate *species* in the English sense of the word, San from other nexuses are in fact also perceived to constitute distinct ethnic groups: *others*, even San who hunt and gather, harbour corresponding religious views, and speak mutually intelligible click-languages, are readily identified as *other ethnic groups*. The question now becomes, how long have the Nharo, and the /Xam, !Kung, !Xõo and other southern African foraging peoples had such a "good ethnic sense" for, and how may we determine the temporal extent of something as intangible as social consciousness?

Language and ethnicity

A popular view on click-phonemes is that there is something inherently archaic to these sounds. In linguistics this is an enduring idea, extending back to the first scientific research on click languages in southern Africa. Güldemann (2003a:22) notes a "clear conceptual continuity" in the works of, for example, Bleek (1862), van Ginneken (1938), Stopa (1960, 1977), and de Grolier (1990). Until recently, this approach could hardly be separated from the stereotypical idea that the southern African peoples speaking the core click languages are themselves archaic and primitive. For example, Köhler (1998: 267) notes that "Clicks, although very rare in the world's languages … must be regarded as being among the basic archetypal phonemic elements of sound systems."

Güldemann (2003b:24; see also Nichols 1997:365) however points out that the time-depth involved, that is to say tens of thousands of years, is incompatible with the historical evaluation of genealogical linguistic entities attested today. The rigor of even

the most ambitious linguistic methods presently available fades out from 10 000 years backwards, when chance, inheritance, and contact can no longer be distinguished. Thus, there appears to be no satisfactory reason for assuming that the oldest linguistic lineages with clicks do correlate with some linguistic entity 20 000, 30 000, or 40 000 years ago. Although, from a genetic perspective, the primary population type associated with click sounds is indeed ancient (Stoneking 2006), it is conceivable that, in southern Africa, the emergence of clicks as phonemes signifies a much more recent episode in the diversification of human speech. As clarified by Güldemann (2003b:25), the incompatibility of time-depths presents a major obstacle. If click-phonemes had, for example, an age of 20 000 years, they would comprise a relatively young phenomenon in relation to the identifiable time depths of human genetic profiles. On the contrary, and in linguistic terms, they would be exceptionally old in the sense that available methods of the discipline are incapable of identifying such an early date.

We can nevertheless attain some general idea of how far back into time the languages spoken by ethnographically- and historically-known San foragers extend. Crawhall (2005:72), while noting the difficulties involved in correlating the archaeological record with linguistic data, also reiterates the fact that we can not simply make assumptions about the rate of language change (see also Blench 2006:77; Crawhall 2006a:120). While the glottochronological school of lexicostatistics claims that genetic relations between languages can indeed be traced back some 12 000 years (*e.g.* Renfrew 1987:115), the research by Sands (1998a, b) has shown that the separation of !Ui-Taa and Khoe languages are likely to be significantly greater than 12 000 years. Thus, the lexico-statistical and glottochronological (*e.g.* Ehret 2000:392) methods of dating events of linguistic diversification do not stretch back much further than the Holocene, telling us little about what the ethno-linguistic situation may have been like prior to 10 000 years ago (Crawhall 2005:72). Perhaps there are some other insights to be derived from glottochronological and lexicostatistical analyses of San languages. A case in point is N\u (or N/uu), which is generally categorised as a dialect from the |'Auni dialect cluster (Traill 2002:37). N\u-speakers constitute a small part of the disparate group of people now known in South Africa as ≠Khomani (Crawhall 2005:70), and although thought to be extinct until recently, N\u is the only surviving language in the !Ui branch of the Tuu family and is still spoken in the Northern Cape Province and in south-western Botswana (Crawhall 2005; Güldemann 2005; Miller *et al.* 2007). From our knowledge of N\u, and by way of applying the contentious glottochronological and lexicostatistical methods of ascertaining the ages of particular languages, Crawhall (2006b:3) posits a time difference of approximately 2500 years, with only 46%

congruence, between N\u and the !Xõo dialects. !Xõo appears to be slightly further removed from N\u than Sesarwa at 2300 years, /Xegwi at 1900 years, and /Xam, with an estimated proximity of 1200 years. Remarkably, Traill (2002:36, in citing Wright 1971:1) notes that the !Kwi, Tuu, or !Ui-Taa (Southern Khoe-San) languages are believed to have been spoken in the region for at least 8000 years, while Blench (2006:179) posits that the Khoe-San language phyla have been in existence for perhaps 100 000 years.

As for the comment by Wiessner (1983:255) that the !Kung, G/wi, !Xõo and the Nharo are in fact remarkably homogeneous in their economic base, technological level, ideology, and social organisation, considering that they come from three mutually unintelligible language groups, Kusimba (2003:102) suggest that, in instances of long-term contact between foraging groups, the exchange of ecological information and the transferral of ritual behaviours may have facilitated the circulation of items of technology and material culture amongst otherwise different ethnic groups. In such situations, and since similarities may pass unnoticed when attention is focussed on socio-cultural features which are collectively accepted as emblematic of ethnic difference, such as language, dialect, or ethnolect, a reduction in cultural diversity may indeed occur concurrently with an increase in ethnic diversity (Schwartz 1982:123).

Language, in the southern African San forager context, appears to have become such a crucial means by which identity-conscious social groups conceived and expressed their respective identities. With regards the extensive time-depth of Khoe-San languages, it is important to note that even in cases where languages have been in contact for a long time, and although they may come to resemble each other in sound structure, lexicon, and grammar, they can nevertheless also retain their discrete linguistic, and presumably also ethnic, identities. Such a structural development is called convergence, and a set of languages exhibiting a somewhat unified character is called a linguistic area or *sprachbund*. Well-known examples include the Balkan Peninsula, the Caucasus Mountains, the Pacific North-west, Arnhem Land in Australia, Mesoamerica (see Nichols 1997:367), and also the Southern Khoe-San - !Kwi, Tuu, or !Ui-Taa - languages of southern Africa. The Kalahari Basin has furthermore been ascertained to encompass a *residual zone*, a geographic region resembling a *linguistic area* or *sprachbund*, and which is characterised by a considerably high degree of linguistic genetic density, high structural diversity, no evidence of any spread or succession of languages, no single centre of innovation, the accretion of languages

and long-term increases in diversity, and a complete absence of any *lingua franca* (Güldemann 1997:26).

Surprisingly, these linguistic circumstances, as established for the prehistoric context in which the Khoe-San languages in southern Africa evolved, closely mirror the ethnographically- and historically-known linguistic situation in which language is believed to have assumed and fulfilled a central position in the structuring of social relations and in the conception and expression of ethnicity. As noted by Nichols (1992:253), the study of structural and genetic diversity in languages, because it can take us further back in time, "can be useful in tracing linguistic prehistory". It is also useful in affording us with some idea of the linguistic, ethnic, and also artistic temporal spans we are dealing with.

The revisionist challenge of the notion of contemporary foragers as models of the past is directed by Wilmsen and Denbow (1990) in their criticism of Lee for describing the Ju/'hoansi as being "on the threshold of the Neolithic", saying that "Surely to remain among the few representatives of a way of life that everyone else gave up 10 000 years ago is to be a living fossil. If one has a history one is not on the threshold of an earlier time; one may forage and do nothing else without retaining an atavistic forager mentality and without being any more representative of foragers 10 000 years ago than are modern Bantu agro-pastoralists …" (1990:503). It is certainly true that, as argued by the revisionists, time has not stood still for foragers, even for those with no or little contact with *others*. However, since some foraging groups have continued to forage long after they have been in contact with agro-pastoralists and agriculturalists, we must, as noted by Marlowe (2002:248), at least entertain the possibility that many other aspects of their lifestyle may also have remained largely unaffected. Thus, and even though our frequently-utilised Kalahari analogues do not retain an unblemished genealogy of Palaeolithic behaviour, the social, economic, and linguistic ways in which they conduct themselves as hunter-gatherers may exemplify at least some part of the manners and modes of earlier hunter-gatherer behaviour (Kusimba 2003:233).

Culture, as the term is understood by most social anthropologists today, resides in language (Fishman 1999:444). In 1808, Hugh Murray (1808:33, as cited in Trimble & Dickson, in press:3), in referring to the influence of mental images on self-recognition, asserted a remarkably modern view when he stated: "But I think it evident that the characteristic qualities … are wholly unconnected with those external by races which are distinguished. Mind is more flexible substance and yields more readily to the influence of altered circumstances." Writing about individual and national differences

between 1830 and 1835 the naturalist Alexander Von Humboldt (1985:12) also maintained that “Language is the outer appearance of the mentalities of peoples; their language is their mentality and their mentality their language. One can hardly overemphasise their identity. People who share a common language develop a similar subjectivity, a *weltanschauung* (world view).” Is it possible that the recognition of cultural distinctions specific to *other* populations, perhaps based in large part on language differences, had its origins among the first anatomically modern humans?

Sociality and ethnicity

A fundamental turning point in the evolution of human cognitive abilities and cultural transmission occurred when humans were first able to store abstract concepts with the aid of material symbols and locate memory outside the individual brain. The non-figurative patterns engraved on a piece of ochre from Blombos Cave (Henshilwood *et al.* 2002) are among the earliest manifestations of this ability, on which all human cultures are based. To this, d’Errico *et al.* (2003:54) adds that the existence of regional lithic variability is also documented after 70 000 years ago (Willoughby 2001:134), within both the Middle Palaeolithic of Europe (Soressi 2002) as well as within the Middle Stone Age of Africa (McBrearty & Brooks 2000), and that such regional variability may indeed be considered to reflect linguistic borders, or, as argued by Willoughby (2001:134), the first expressions of ethnic markers in the prehistoric record. However, as ascertained in Chapter Four, assertive style, or formal variation in material culture which is “personally-based and which carries information supporting individual identity” (Wiessner 1983:258), comprise the first discernible elements of symbolic storage and seem to appear during the final stages of the South African MSA at approximately 40 000 years BP. Assertive style seems to have emerged several thousand years before formal spatial patterning as evident at southern African sites: although assertive lithic style is evident at Rose Cottage Cave at about 30 000 years BP and at Sibudu Cave at about 42 000 years BP, spatial patterns remains to be unstructured, with overprinted artefacts and cluttered hearths (Wadley 2001:206). Evidently, the first social marking of aggregation with stylistic resources may date to the time when increasingly wide-ranging social networks were introduced (Wadley 2001: 209), perhaps between 50 000 and 30 000 years ago, conveniently pre-dating the arrival of similar peoples in Western Europe by some millennia (Willoughby 2001:130). Fully modern and symbolic language should also have been present at this time since, as Byers (1999) suggests, it would have facilitated social interaction across wide geographic divides.

It is, however, only when technology begins to participate in the social and ideological realms of life that it takes on a truly symbolic role (Kuhn & Stiner 1998:155). An increasing number of scholars (*e.g.* Deacon 1993; Henshilwood & Sealy 1997; McBrearty & Brooks 2000; Ambrose 2001; Henshilwood *et al.* 2001a, b, 2002; d'Errico *et al.* 2003) suggest that symbolic cultures were first developed by anatomically modern humans in Africa. The subsequent appearance of these behaviours in Eurasia would have resulted from the *out-of-Africa* dispersal of modern populations into the Near East, with subsequent migrations into Europe some 40 000 years ago. This hypothesis appears to be supported by the widespread use of ochre in various MSA sites in sub-Saharan Africa, such as at Klasies River and Apollo 11 and by the occurrence of engraved bone and ochre pieces at Blombos Cave (d'Errico *et al.* 2001; Henshilwood *et al.* 2002; d'Errico *et al.* 2003). As noted by Terrence Deacon (1997: 374), it is however the earliest engraved and painted arts that provides us with the first direct expression of a socially full-conscious and conceptually innovative symbolising mind:

> They are the first irrefutable expressions of a symbolic process that is capable of conveying a rich cultural heritage of images and probably stories from generation to generation. And they are the first concrete evidence of the storage of such symbolic information outside of a human brain.

Although the painted and engraved arts mark a fundamental change in human socio-cultural structure, they do not appear to correlate directly with any significant advances in human biology or cognitive ability. Prehistoric representational art also does not seem to unequivocally demonstrate the origins of symbolic communication or spoken language: these essential traits, so characteristic of modern human behaviour, are merely representative of the gradual shift in communicative strategies that also implies significant, but measured, changes in social relationships. In this regard, McBrearty and Brooks (2000:513) argues that "there is no intellectual difference in the abilities of MSA and LSA hominids", and that a long-term trend in population growth led to residual crowding and a diminished resource base, rendering further intensification necessary in the LSA (see also Voigt 1982; Deacon 1989; Milo 1998; Marean & Assefa 1999). It is likely that rapidly spoken language and associated behavioural and cultural innovations presented the potential, but not the impetus, for geographic expansion. Within a few thousand, or a few tens of thousands of years the autocatalytic nature of spoken, conventional language, on the one hand, and cultural elaboration, on the other, would have produced a human lineage which was acutely conscious of the

material cultural and linguistic divisions that separated in-groups and out-groups, and also its own groups from those of other hominid populations (Milo & Quiatt 1993:577; see also Deacon 1997:349).

With fully-modern phonemicised speech evident by around 50 000 years BP (Lieberman 1984:290, 2007:47), followed by cultural modernity at around 40 000 years BP (Wadley 2001:209, 216) and, finally, rock art suggestive of altered states of consciousness, the conflation of human and animal forms, and social aggregation at roughly 30 000 years BP (Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2004a:45), a pattern, certainly symptomatic of the measured development of fully modern human speech, material culture, and socio-religious behaviour, may be discerned. The recurrent surfacing of "40 000 years" as decidedly significant in the progress towards fully modern behaviour is also reiterated by Mitchell (2002:103; see also Gamble 1994, Klein 2000), who notes that the virtual absence of art and jewellery prior to 40 000 to 50 000 years BP seems crucial in suggesting important, and perhaps even profound, differences between anatomically modern humans either side of the 40 000 / 50 000 years BP boundary. This critical stage in the development of the modern human character may also signify the point in time during which increased degrees of social interface resulted in the concurrent emergence of greater-than-ever social awareness, and, ultimately, in the origins of *ethnicity* - the "consciousness of difference which involves the production and transformation of basic classificatory distinctions between groups of people who perceive themselves to be, in some respect, culturally distinct" (Eriksen 1992:3).

As seen in Chapter Three, it is important to remember that ethnicity reveals itself differently and to different degrees in various historical situations and socio-cultural environments, that it makes sense only when opposed to or confronted by other ethnicities, and that it may share some of its characteristics with other socio-cultural groups that are simultaneously functioning in a given society and may even coincide with them formally (Khazanov 1983:406). This clearly influences the degree to which material culture may be used to discern ethnicity and detect ethnic groups in the archaeological record. Accordingly, and as may be deduced from this investigation, there is indeed "… rarely a one-to-one relationship between representations of ethnicity and the entire range of cultural practices and conditions associated with a particular group." (Jones 1997:100). Meskell (2001:190) has also drawn attention to the fact that "… ethnicity is not always synonymous with a single language, race, location, or material culture." (see also Eidheim 1969:39; Hodder 1982:186; Denbow 1984:179; Hammond-Tooke 2000:421; Pluciennik 2002:226).

Changing ethnic perceptions

Ethnicity is not impervious to outside influences and is always constructed by external social, economic, and political processes and actors as they shape and reshape ethnic categories and definitions. In sub-Saharan Africa, indigenous societies have always varied in the extent of their internal diversity, so that it is misleading to suppose that colonial rule was preceded by a pattern of culturally homogeneous small-scale societies (Welsh 1996:477). As Smith (1971:128) remarks in a survey of diversity in pre-colonial African societies,

> Rigid stratifications marked by jural and social exclusions of various types are widespread by the forcible domination of one ethnic stock over others. Besides the racially complex interlacustrine kingdoms we may cite the Ndebele, the Lozi before and since Lewanika, Nupe, Zande, Tswana, Dahomey, Wolof, Tuareg, and most Hausa-Fulani emirates. Imperial states inevitably magnify these structural and cultural differences and segregations of rulers and ruled, and are typically administered through systems of multiple domination.

With the arrival of domestic sheep, ceramic wares, iron, and cattle as early during the first century AD, southern Africa populations began to change considerably (Nurse & Jenkins 1977; Lee & Hitchcock 2001). Some foragers appear to have managed to secure a fragile existence, with many San having been the exclusive occupants of significant portions of southern Africa, living as autonomous hunter-gatherers in parts of the Kalahari and Namib Deserts (*e.g.* Solway & Lee 1990). For much of this period there is evidence of trade relations between San and their non-San neighbours (Phillipson 1985; Wilmsen 1989; Wilmsen & Denbow 1990). To the west, foragers interacted with Khoe pastoralists from whom they differentiated linguistically sometime before the first millennium AD: in fact well over half of all the San today speak Khoe languages (Silberbauer 1981; Tanaka 1989). To the east and south-east, foragers coexisted, intermarried, and were eventually assimilated into powerful Bantu-speaking chiefdoms which now form the bulk of South Africa's population. These instances of interaction led to the emergence of an ethnically plural society in which identities had to be re-evaluated and adapted to changing social and economic circumstances. As stated by Mitchell (2004:517), and as may be inferred from Chapters Five and Six, the extent to which the beliefs, practices, and expressive cultures of different groups of people affected each other is largely unknown. This obviously poses problems for the correlation of particular ethnic groups with seemingly unique sets of engraved rock art.

As noted by Morris (1988:117), "… particular expressions in art and ritual can undergo considerable change in context, meaning and implication and yet retain the same basic 'outward and visible' forms …".

Over time, formerly clearly-differentiated ethnicities came to be superseded by collective identities, particularly so in the face of the *difaqane* and the subsequent intrusion of Rolong refugees and white raider-farmers into the interior. For example, in the Kalahari today there appears to be "a definite Central Kalahari identity that transcends ethnic origins … ethnicity has at least overtly taken second place to a shared common plight" (English 1980:8, as cited in Wilmsen 1989:279). During wide-ranging social upheavals like that experienced within the interior region from 1815 to 1854 (Etherington 2001) there is little need for ethnic differentiation on the basis of language: social, economic, and physical traits such as skin-colour are easier to discern. LeVine and Campbell (1972:171; see also White & Prachuabmoh 1983) summarise studies which have observed that this evaluative principle in inter-ethnic perception leads to the formation of reciprocal stereotypes between any two groups, with each associating more positive traits with its own identity in contrast with the other. The notion of reciprocal stereotypes entails both a conceptual opposition composed of evaluatively polarised trait concepts, and a social distribution of ethnic images such that individuals of differing ethnic backgrounds hold contrastive images of themselves and of others. In short, fear and dislike of strangers are easily developed, and group differences, especially when marked by obvious physical differences such as skin colour, are effortlessly registered as *different*.

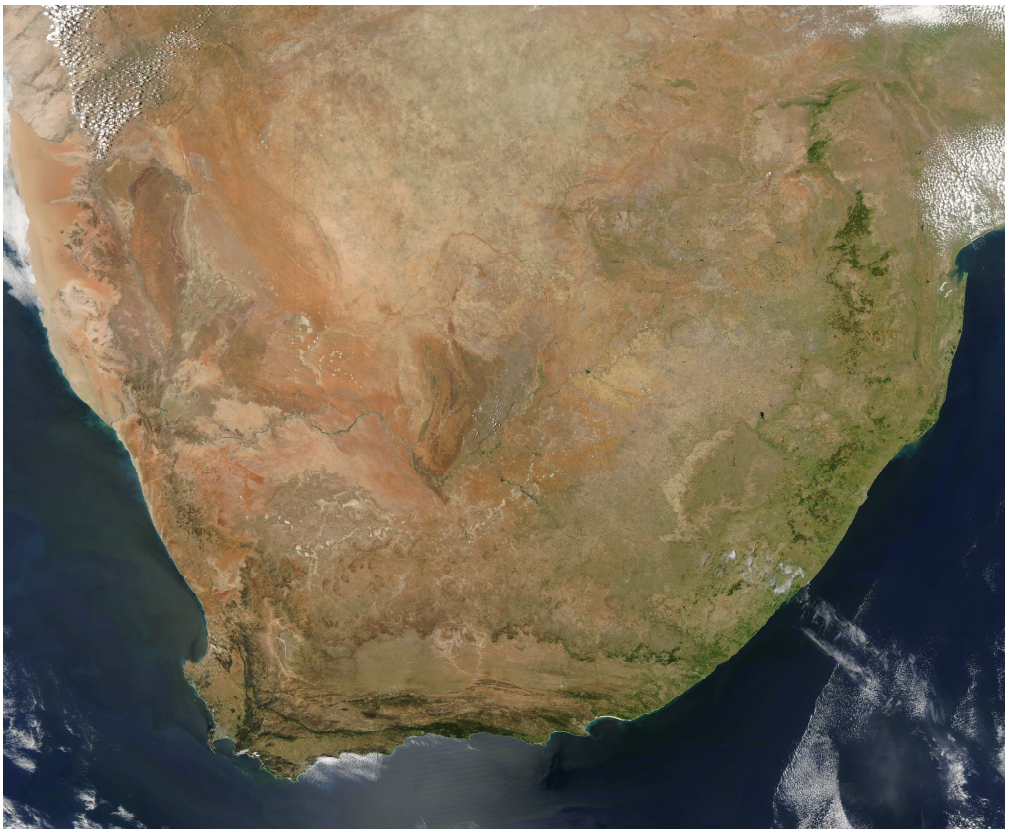
Evidently, the construction of ethnic identity and culture is the result of both structure and agency, a dialectic played out by ethnic groups and the larger society. Ethnicity is the product of actions undertaken by ethnic groups as they shape and reshape their self-definition and culture in response to changing social circumstances. At first glance, it may appear that the contemporary association of language with ethnic group membership is one of the more transparent relationships in culture. The majority of the 6000 languages of the world are strongly associated with an ethno-cultural group of some type. But this initial impression is immediately betrayed by the fact that language is not an *essential* condition for ethnic group membership (Fishman 1999). Like socio-cultural parameters, linguistic boundaries are permeable, constructed notions which are defined more adequately on the basis of sociopolitical and ideological considerations than on the basis of linguistic structures and sociolinguistic relationships. Even the dichotomy between "language" and "dialect" turns out to be

based more on cultural and political issues than on mutual intelligibility or structural linguistic correspondence. Thus, Sino-Tibetan language varieties such as Cantonese and Mandarin are commonly referred to as dialects of Chinese, even though they are not generally mutually intelligible, whereas Norwegian and Swedish are considered to be different languages although speakers usually understand each other. In the former case, there is an overarching cultural unity that transcends structural linguistic differences whereas, in the latter case, there is a national political boundary that reifies linguistic dichotomy. By the same token, socio-political struggles about language, such as those over the status of Afrikaans in South Africa, the role of French and English in Canada, and the validity of Ebonics in America as a variety of English, are ultimately not about language, but about relations of socio-political power, ideology, and culture.

Politics and ideology, as noted by Guenther (2006:17), and as situated in post-apartheid South and southern Africa, is all about identity, among various ethnic groups, with claims, after generations of oppression by the apartheid state, to rights, land and competing claims to “first people” status and standing. “Ethnicity”, maintains Daniel Bell (1975:174) “is a means (now) for disadvantaged groups to claim a set of rights and privileges which the existing power structures have denied them.” And over the past decade South Africa’s ethnic minority groups have been actively asserting their civil rights and demanding privileges heretofore denied them.

Photographic Plates

Given the absence of photographic means of illustration in this exploration of engraved art and ethnicity, the following colour photographs are intended to provide the reader with some insight into the visual nature and situational contexts of the engraved images. As concluded, engravings are viewed as implicitly territorially-based, not because rock art is a means of marking territory, but because the individuals who engraved the land were linked to it by either birth, affinal kinship, sharing networks, affiliative systems of namesakes, or by band-cluster names, in terms of topophilia, notions of citizenship and relational value, in terms of economy, by general feelings of common social ties, and in a variety of other religious, cosmological, and ritually-established ways. Thus, and reminiscent of to the /Xam-speaking *Flat*, *Grass*, and *Hardast River* San and the !Xõo-speaking *People of the Soft Sand*, it must not be forgotten that these places were formerly revered by human individuals, and that, like the *Brinkkop men*, the *CaeCae people*, and *//Kabbo's Bitterpits*, these places were also once referred to as *my place*, *your place*, and *our place*.



1. Satellite image of southern Africa. Note the Gariep River and the Gariep-Vaal confluence, north of which the primary research region, the arid interior, is discernible.



2. Rhinoceros rubbing-stone, Kinderdam.



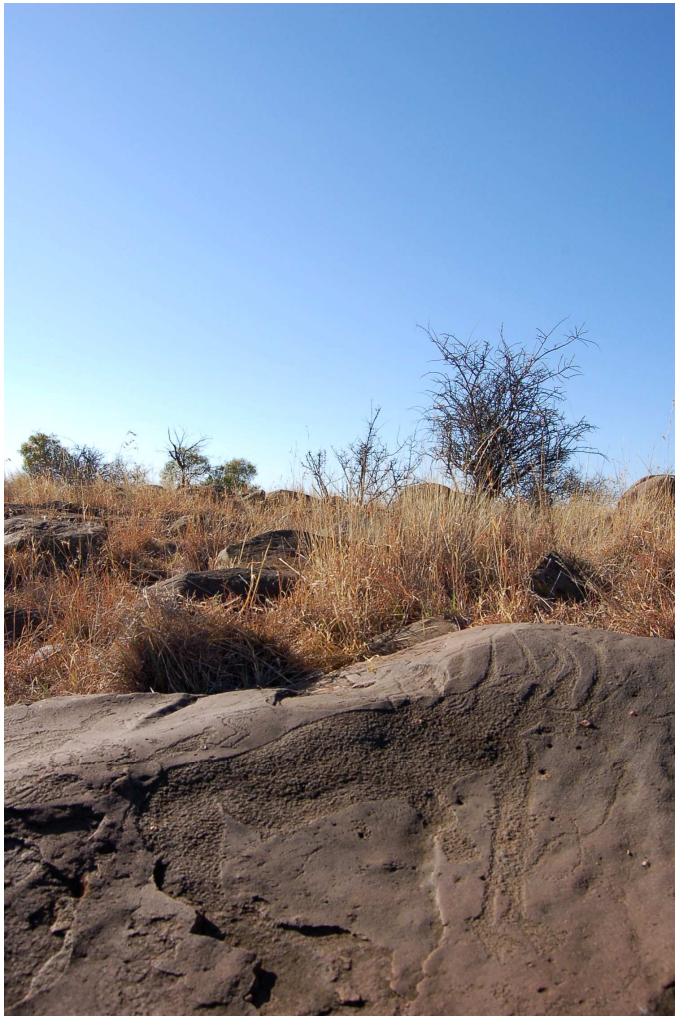
3. Engraved geometric design, Dâures Massif.



4. Eland and human figures, Lot Six.



5. Rayed circular designs and eland, Doornpoort.



6. Rhinoceros and human figures, Kinderdam.



7. Grooves and cupules, Gestoptefontein.



8. Deeply engraved eland, Klipbak.



9. Gemsbok and spoor, Twyfelfontein.



10. Engraved and painted surface, Dâures Massif.



11. Rhinoceros and rubbing-stone, Weltevreden.



12. Engraved surface and large pools, Nchwaneng.



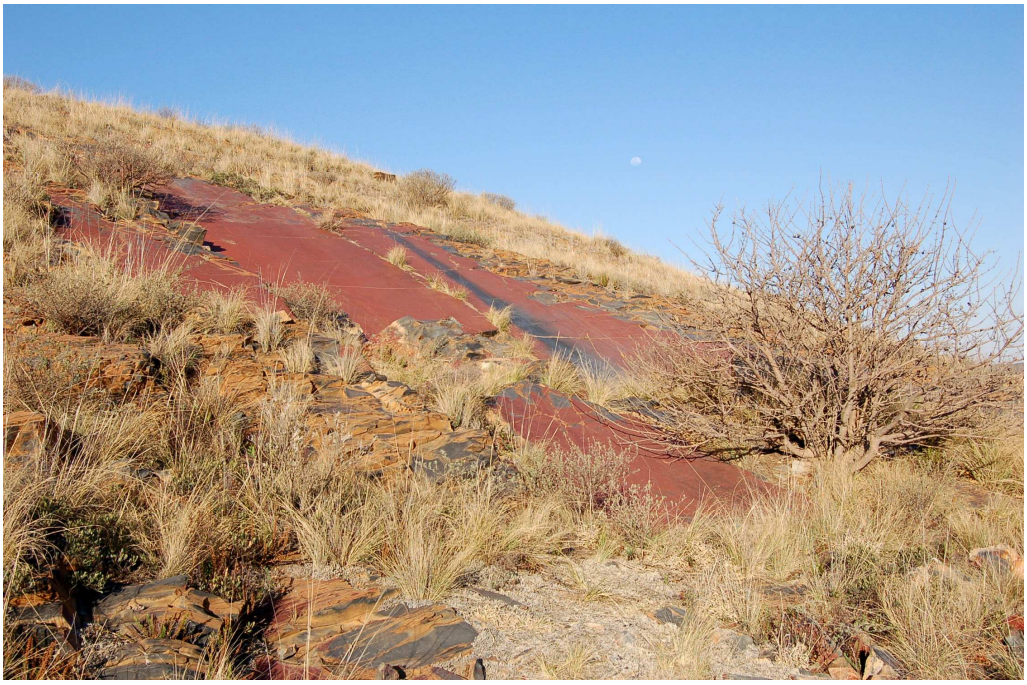
13. Giraffe, gemsbok, and spoor, Twyfelfontein.



14. Cupules and natural cistern, Klipbak.



15. Extensively engraved vertical surface, Dâures Massif.



16. Engraved surface and rock-slide, Gestoptefontein.



17. Engraved surface and pool, Sunstroke.



18. Rayed circular motif, Doornpoort.



19. Rayed and dotted circular motif, Delela.



20. Rayed circular motif, Klipfontein.



21. Rayed circular motif, Klipfontein.



22. Star-like design, Nchwaneng.



23. Rayed circular motif, Doornpoort.



24. Rubbing stone with engraved buffalo, Lot Six.



25. Rhinoceros and rubbing-stone, Schweizer-Reneke Townlands.



26. Dislodged engraved rubbing stone, Schweizer-Reneke District.



27. Engraved rubbing-stone, Boschrand.



28. Engraved hippopotamus in garden, Schweizer-Reneke District.



29. Engraved eland in garden, Klerksdorp District.

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