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Re-investigating Significantly Differentiated Figures in the rock art of the south-eastern Mountains



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

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

NRF

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DECLARATION

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



Alice Mullen

Johannesburg, 30th May 2018

ABSTRACT

Within the corpus of Bushman-authored rock art in the south-eastern Mountains of South Africa there exists a category of highly embellished, oversized anthropomorphic figures termed Significantly Differentiated Figures (SDFs). These figures are understood as being a regionally and temporally specific product of changing socio-political, and economic, relationships between hunter-gatherers (specifically ritual specialists) and their non-Bushman neighbours after the advent of contact. Drawing on new data gathered during surveys of the Matatiele region in the Eastern Cape, South Africa and the Sehlabathebe National Park in Lesotho, which have brought to light incongruities in the SDF category, and on recent developments in dating technology, this dissertation tested, and challenged, the hypothesis that these images are a recent, localised phenomenon relating to embodied experiences of ritual specialists who had ascended in social status within their communities. The category, as a rigid classification, does not withstand rigorous testing. An alternative interpretation of some of the images is offered, which places emphasis on Bushman ontology as animist, and concerned with the relationships between humans and non-human entities occupying the world. The dissertation found that such interpretations may better account for the creation of some of the images previously called SDFs.

To Ntate Puseletso, Ntate Tsepo, Ntate Bongani
and all those who came with you,
including the dogs.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Professor David Pearce, for his support in this endeavour, and to him and the National Research Foundation for providing me with a studentship, without which I would not have been able to further my studies.

To all of the members of the MARA team who were involved in surveying and documenting new sites discussed in this thesis I offer my most sincere thanks. Paramount Chief Jerry Dipuoa Moshoeshoe of Queen's Mercy in Matatiele gave his consent for us to work within his jurisdiction. Mme Nomsa Situ and Ntate Tsepo Lesholu of the Mehloding Community Trust facilitated our stays in Matatiele. To Ntate Puseletso Lecheko, thank you for always looking after us so well. I am grateful also for the permission given by landowners in the Maclear district to access their farms in order to visit Blundell's Maclear sites.

Sam Challis traced rock art site RARI-RSA-MS6 with me. Thank you. Thanks also to Jeremy Hollmann for sending your pictures of eMkhobeni shelter, Brent Sinclair Thompson for your pictures of RSA-LAB7, and to James Pugin for producing and giving me permission to use the map of the survey of the Sehlabathebe National Park.

My family members Diane, Emma, Jack, Jo, Ryan and Wendy all offered much-needed support and understanding during this time. It means very much to me. Finally, thank you to my fellow archaeology friends (past and present) Amoret, Kate, Keneiloe, Kelita, Maria, Tamsin and Tarquin for moral support and light-heartedness. Thanks, Kate, for reading drafts and helping with the final formatting of this work.

CONVENTIONS USED IN THE TEXT

This work cites the original notebooks that make up the Wilhelm Bleek and Lucy Lloyd |Xam archive. The form citations take is as follows: LL.II.9.935–966 (Lucy Lloyd) and WB.XI.1030-1032 (Wilhelm Bleek). The first portion represents the initials of the recorders, either Lucy Lloyd (LL) or Wilhelm Bleek (WB). The Roman numerals that follow represent, for Bleek's collection, the notebook number, and, for Lloyd's, the number corresponding to a particular contributor or narrator. Therefore, the following number in the Lloyd notebooks represents the number of the notebook. The final range of numbers refer to the corresponding page numbers in the notebook. This dissertation draws on a wholescale transcription, by Mark McGranaghan, of the original notebooks that, in 2007, were digitally scanned and can be found at: http://lloydbleekcollection.cs.uct.ac.za/ or in Skotness (2007).

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1 CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Bushman[1]-authored rock art of southern Africa is made up of innumerable symbolically-rich image-types, some of which are well understood, while others remain, as yet, enigmatic. Rock art research aims to provide insights into the production of, motivation for, and meanings embedded in the paintings that accord with indigenous knowledge, perspectives and world view. While no painters remain, ethnographic data from the nineteenth century |Xam Bushmen of what is now the Northern Cape in South Africa, and from 20th Century Botswanan groups in the Kalahari have provided invaluable information concerning their beliefs and practices, many of which can be discerned in the paintings themselves. The efficacy of this analogical method is considered axiomatic. As part of the interpretative project, researchers have identified in the art certain categories of images, from which they have been able to garner meaningful information about both the art and the artists who produced them. After all, Archaeology loves a category. From typologies to temporal separations, we tend to divide the past by type. Often, the process of classification and categorisation, as a methodological tool, can make clear previously opaque connections between our objects of study. However, in order for a category to prove meaningful, it must be in line with the world view of the people to whom the category relates.

This dissertation concerns a recognised category of images thought to have been 'deciphered' – large, often highly detailed and 'strange' human figures – many of which incorporate animal features, that appear in the rock art authored by Bushmen of the Maloti-Drakensberg in South Africa and Lesotho. Termed 'pre-eminent shamans' by Thomas Dowson (1994, 1998) and later Significantly Differentiated Figures (SDFs) by Geoffrey Blundell (2004), these images were classified as a distinct category in the art.

[1] I use the designation 'Bushman' throughout the dissertation to refer to groups alternatively called 'San'. I reject any negative, denigrating or pejorative connotations the term may have.

Following the broad academic programme of dispelling damaging perceptions created by colonial and Apartheid histories of indigenous groups, Dowson used some of the images discussed in the following chapters to 'give back' histories to those that had been denied agency in colonial metanarratives that had dominated academic discourse in the past. The paintings, Dowson argued, could 'speak for themselves', dispensing with the need to rely on Western concepts of history in order to write the past of the Bushmen. In the art, but restricted to the south-eastern Mountains in an area previously known as Nomansland (Figure 1.1), Dowson found evidence for the increasing social and political rank of ritual specialists as a result of contact and trade in their 'spiritual labour' (Lewis-Williams 1982) with Bantu-speaking agropastoralists who moved into the landscape 2000 years ago (Sadr 2015) – in the form of 'pre-eminent shamans'. Dowson's hypothesis was accepted and the category of images came to represent a triumph in rock art research, influencing multiple theoretical interpretations of the art (e.g Lewis-Williams 1995; Lewis-Williams and Pearce 2004a, 2004b, 2009).

Most significant, however, was the adoption of the category by Blundell (2004) in his seminal PhD thesis *Nqabayo's Nomansland: San rock art and the somatic past.* Blundell sought to hone in on the authorship of the images and linked them to a band of Bushmen and Bushmen descendants led by a man by the name of Nqabayo. Importantly, Blundell (2004) argued that the images were both geographically and temporally constrained to a small area he called the Nomansland Core Study Area (Figure 2.4: 15) in the now Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. Blundell's work has been equally, if not more, influential than Dowson's. The thesis was well-received by the academy at large, being described as conveying "an unparalleled sensitivity to the profundity of rock art as part of a historical mode of existence" (Weiss 2005: 128). It is, in addition, included in the Oxford Bibliography *Southern Africa to c. 1850* (Hall & Wright n.d.), demonstrating its continued relevance to the understanding of southern Africa's history. In Chapter Two, both Dowson's and Blundell's categories are explained in detail, and their interpretative conclusions discussed.

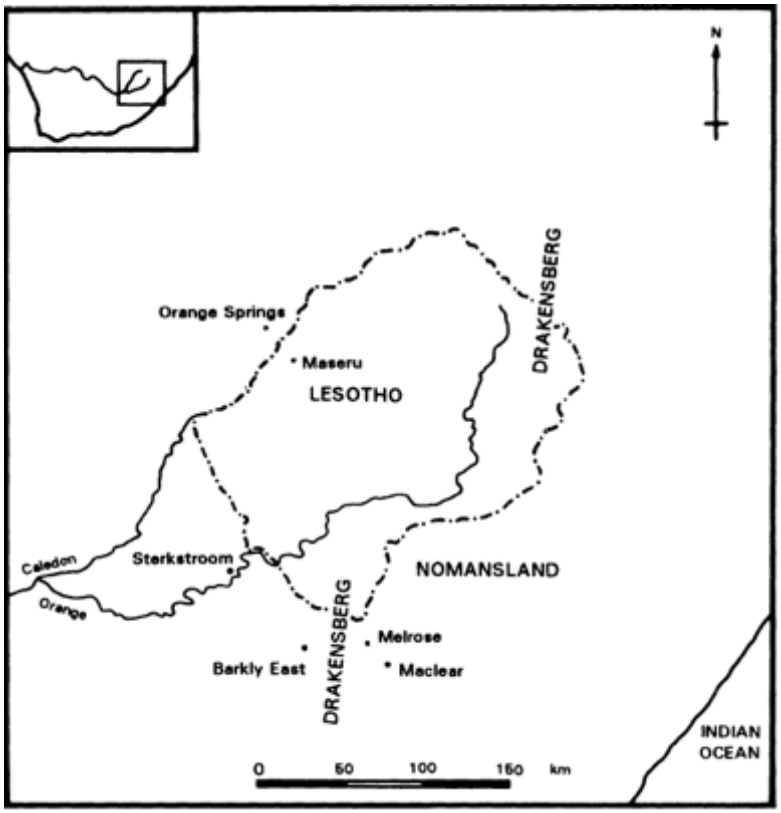


Figure 1.1: Map showing Dowson's and later, (although slightly reduced in geographical range), Blundell's area of study, focussing largely within Nomansland. Map: after Dowson (1994: 334).

During two surveys of the Matatiele District of the Eastern Cape Province in South Africa, and the Sehlabathebe National Park in Lesotho in 2014 and 2015 respectively, previously unpublished sites containing images that conform to Blundell's criteria for inclusion in the category of SDF, were recorded. On the basis of the new data, questions began to arise concerning the efficacy of the category, which led to the project described in this work. The aims, therefore, of this dissertation are two-fold: first, to test the hypothesis, advanced by Blundell (2004) (and to a lesser-extent Dowson), for the appearance of large, detailed and strange anthropomorphic figures in the art and their meaning, and, second, to offer possible alternative interpretative ways forward. Testing the hypothesis requires examination of salient aspects of the constructed category: (1) their spatial distribution, (2) their proposed temporal range, (3) the images themselves and, (4) the images in the context of a panel.

It finds that all four aspects of the category exhibit numerous inconsistencies which, either separately or taken together, undermine the hypothesis. Following this, the second objective was to offer possible avenues of investigation that may better fit some (but by no means all) of the images classed as SDFs. The dissertation concludes that new animisms, with their emphasis on the animacy of non-human persons[2] and the relationships which are fostered between humans and non-humans, it transpires – coupled with well-established 'shamanistic' theory – can more convincingly account for the indigenous motivation for making the strange figures.

[2] Non-human beings, non-human-persons, or indeed non-human entities can be understood as anything in existence in the world, be it living, spiritual or elemental, that is understood in a worldview to have some form of personhood, some active and animate agency that allows for such an entity to affect the functioning of society.

2 CHAPTER TWO. PREVIOUS LITERATURE: THE CREATION OF A CATEGORY

Paintings produced by Bushmen of southern Africa constitute one the best understood rock art traditions in the world, owing to five decades of research into their meaning. Erstwhile discussions of the art were that it was unlikely produced by the Bushmen at all (Breuil 1948: 11), or that it was produced as art-for art's-sake (Willcox 1978). These statements were largely prosaic and mercurial, vacillating to reflect various colonial perspectives and prejudices. Conducting quantitative studies in the Drakensberg mountains in the late 1960s and early 1970s (e.g. Vinnicombe 1967, 1972, 1976; Pager 1971, 1973; Lewis-Williams 1972, 1974, 1981), in conjunction with the first concerted effort to use Bushman ethnography, led Patricia Vinnicombe (1976) and David Lewis-Williams (1980, 1981) to conclude that the art was unlikely referencing merely the mundane but rather it concerned the realm of the sacred – signifying a ritual context of production. This necessitated investigation into the beliefs of the Bushmen.

The exegetical, or interpretive, method of deciphering Bushman rock art is well understood, arising from the application of ethnographic and historical analogical data to rock art imagery (e.g. Lewis-Williams 1974, 1981; Vinnicombe 1976). As a consequence, earlier damaging interpretations were summarily dispelled. 'Triangulation' of ethnographies from northern Bushman groups in the Kalahari (e.g. Marshall 1962, 1969; Lee 1967; Katz 1982; Guenther 1975a, 1975b, 1986, 1989), nineteenth century |Xam in the Northern Cape (e.g. Bleek & Lloyd 1911) and an account given by Joseph Millerd Orpen (1874) of his conversations with a Bushman man, Qing, in the Drakensberg Mountains, identified that paintings concerned the complex cosmology of the Bushmen, showing symbolic references to their spirit world and activities of ritual specialists (known also as shamans) in this spirit world accessed through a trance performance (Lewis-Williams & Biesele 1978; Lewis-Williams 1980, 1981, 1992, 1995, 1998, 2015; Dowson 1988, 1994, 1998; Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1994; Lewis-Williams & Pearce

2004a, 2004b, 2009; Hollmann 2004, 2005; Jolly 2002; Lewis-Williams & Challis 2011). To this was added neuropsychological data, examining the process by which visions in trance were achieved (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1988; Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2004a). The knowledge of this informs most, if not all, southern African rock art studies.

2.1 Taking back Bushman history: Social change and the rise of the powerful shaman

From the late 1970s, at a time when academia was becoming increasingly self-aware, researchers explored ways of redressing unjust assertions about indigenous populations made during the colonial past. Rock art interpretation was a vehicle to critique and deconstruct Eurocentric metanarratives and concepts of magic realism. Colin Campbell (1987) charged previous interpretations of rock art of being guilty of the colonial gaze — adhering to Western ideology that "denigrates the Bushmen and reduces them to helpless victims of an immutable process" (Campbell 1987: 4). In 'Art in Crisis: contact period rock art in the south-eastern mountains of South Africa' (Campbell 1987) used so-called contact imagery to re-imagine Bushman experiences in history. Influenced by Guenther's (1975a, 1975b, 1986) work on the Ghanzi Bushmen in Botswana, Campbell argued that contact rock art images reflected an overarching process of social negotiation between Bushmen and Bantu-speaking farmers. Far from being helpless victims of the whims of more powerful groups, he argued that ritual specialists employed their 'spiritual labour' (game control, healing, and rain-making) (after Lewis-Williams 1982) as a means to gain influence and material goods. Campbell (1987: 22) argued that "changes in the social and economic life of the artists must have influenced their ideology and therefore their art". Consequently, the history he produced was a structural Marxist one, one of power and prestige, but power and prestige couched in terms of process and group, rather than agency and individual.

However, Campbell's interpretations included, as Smith (2010: 347) puts it: "tacking from rock art to evidence from historical records, to evidence from Bushman ethnographies". In particular, although the work identified new insights into the processes of social change throughout the contact period, without historical records to fall back on, the paintings themselves would probably not have yielded such rich interpretive data.

During this period (and before, see, for example Wright 1971 and Marks 1972) other southern African academics were making their voices heard in protest of the disingenuous picture painted of hunter-gatherer life and the apparent lack of agency they possessed in response to influxes of Bantu-speaking farmer populations. Most notable of these, for my purposes (for it was the first of its kind to focus directly on the production of history in the area which concerns me) was Aaron Mazel's (1992a) paper 'Changing fortunes: 150 years of Bushman Hunter-gatherer History in the Natal Drakensberg, South Africa'. In it, Mazel traced the production of Bushman history in the Drakensberg back through time, with emphasis on how their past was variously manipulated and mistreated according to historical/political circumstance (Mazel 1993:758). More socially-responsible histories of the Bushmen were needed; ones which would do justice to their past and would be a source of pride and hope for their descendants who were still being subjugated by the Apartheid system (Mazel 1992a:766; Smith 2010: 345). Increased absolute dating samples being taken from excavated material in the Drakensberg gave Mazel a sense of optimism about the possibility of achieving those socially-responsible histories. Surely, techniques such as these, he argued, gave archaeologists a better grasp on the timeframes in which hunter-gatherers occupied the Drakensberg, the material culture used to procure sustaining food-sources and some inkling of how their societies worked (Mazel 1992a: 764). The means by which to correct the past injustices and its methods our key to producing coherent socially, politically and morally sound pasts for those who had been denied this, was the archaeological record itself.

Surprisingly, according to Benjamin Smith (2010: 345), such a progressive, anti-prejudice call-to-action for archaeologists almost immediately received a scathing reply from Thomas Dowson (1993). It was, perhaps, the fact that Mazel (1992a), despite mentioning it at the beginning of the piece, pays little to no attention to the historical value of rock art that sparked the flame for such a vociferous response from Dowson (Dowson 1993: 641). Complex images of social change were evident in the art and its 'dismissal' was unforgivable (Dowson 1993:642). Moreover, Dowson (1993: 644) went as far as to claim that a history that does *not* take into account "the artistic tradition of the Bushmen, thus silencing the only significant Bushman voice we have left in some areas, is merely perpetuating the prejudices of the past". The Bushman had already created their history, by painting it. Accordingly, for a genuine and responsible history, rock art must be able to stand on its own; this was Dowson's mission.

2.2 Size does matter: painted human figures, individual agency, power and control

Images that would later be classed as SDFs were first used specifically in an interpretative context by Dowson (1994, 1998), as part of the wider theoretically-driven project that drove the rebuke of Mazel. He, like Campbell and Mazel, disagreed with the previous trajectory of studies into the contact period in southern Africa. But Dowson wished to eschew absolute chronologies and reliance on excavated material. Consequently, he sought a way for rock paintings to speak for themselves, to elevate their 'evidential status' so that they became not merely representations of the past, but "items of evidence in their own right for historical processes" (Dowson 1994:332). Intensive study of Bushman ethnographies had brought to light the religious nature of the images and, in addition, their own agentive, supernatural qualities. Dowson's hypothesis was that the paintings played an active role in maintaining, negotiating and changing the socio-political status quo, and their production should be understood as implicating not only Bushmen, but Bantu-speaking farmers and later, European colonists (Dowson 1994: 333, 336, 1998:338).

In similar fashion to Campbell (1986, 1987), Dowson (1994: 332) questioned contact rock art analysis that portrayed the Bushman as "incapable of resisting the impact of migrating pastoralists and agropastoralists". Getting closer to a "new concept of 'history'" was fundamental to Dowson (1993: 642) – "'insider histories' that broke from emphasising chronology of only certain kinds of events and accepted other evidence and other kinds of statements and constructions".

Focussing on the south-eastern mountains of southern Africa in the area formerly known as Nomansland (Figure 1.1: 3) where the most intensive interaction between hunter-gatherers and Bantu-speaking farmers took place, but where also there is an abundance of painted sites that are connected with rainmaking, Dowson used such places as examples of how relationships between Bushman hunter-gatherers and farmers were implicated in the production of rock art (Dowson 1994: 334). As a result of prolonged interaction, Bushman ritual specialists came to provide ritual services including rainmaking, to farmers. Rainmaking services were rendered possible owing to shared beliefs about rain and how weather can be manipulated in order for it to fall. Thus, rock art referencing rainmaking pointed to both hunter-gatherer and farmer beliefs, making it likely that farmers were intended to view the art and, to some degree, understand it (Dowson 1994: 334). Recognition of shared beliefs and interactions was a significant step for Dowson – it allowed a "more integrated, less sectional history", using rock art as evidence, which in turn would help to lessen the impact of colonial records on indigenous history (Dowson 1994: 335).

In helping to create 'insider histories' by means of the art, Dowson hoped also to overcome the discipline's tendency to 'marginalise the individual social actor' (Dowson 1988; Dowson *et al.* 1994: 218). Employing Anthony Giddens's (1984) theory of structuration to discuss how *individual* Bushman ritual specialists, on contact with Bantu-speaking farmers, developed a pronounced sense of self and asserted this agency in novel ways. Certainly, rock art *was* capable of bringing to light the agency of individuals without the need to rely on strict chronology.

Having become fewer and itinerant, ritual specialists used their spiritual and ritual powers to ascend politically, socially and economically within Bushman society (Dowson 1994: 337).

In the case of the southern Bushmen, the relationship of exchange of ritual practices for material goods fundamentally shifted social organization (Dowson 1994, 1998). Amassing wealth (and with it social power), ritual specialists ascended to 'pre-eminent' status in society – akin to chiefly status. The process of negotiation and power-restructure, Dowson argued, was demonstrable in the paintings. He identified three 'stages' of depictions of ritual specialists in the art of the south-eastern mountains. Firstly, his 'communal groups' are sites where groups of human figures were painted uniformly, no single figure appearing more detailed or larger than the next (Figure 2.1). Here, ritual specialists can be identified only by evidence of nasal haemorrhaging, therianthropy, animal-eared caps or postures typical of trance performance (Dowson 1994: 336). Representing the earliest paintings, communal groups were painted during a time when Bushman society was largely egalitarian: no differentiation was made between ritual specialists and other members of society (comparable to what members of the Harvard school observed among the northern Bushmen of the Kalahari in the mid-twentieth century). Themselves active in the maintenance of social order, uniformly-painted groups acted to limit increases in individual power (Dowson 1994: 336). However, as outside groups advanced into the landscape, changes began to occur within Bushman society.



Figure 2.1: An example of Dowson's 'communal groups'. Although there is evidence of trance experience like the clapping figures and dancing sticks, no human figure features more prominently than others. Image: RARI

As Nguni-speaking agropastoralists moved into closer range of Bushman living sites, interaction occurred between the communities, leading to mixed marriages, shared living spaces and trade in spiritual labour and material goods (see Stanford 1910; Jolly 1986; Prins 1990). What occurred within Bushman society was a realization that a ritual specialist's 'abilities' could be traded for material goods (Gibson 1891), thus changing the amount of social power they had in the community. However, Dowson argues that during this time the tenets of an egalitarian society still held sway, constraining individual upward mobility within the community (Dowson 1994: 338).

Further development in the art was the production of 'consortia' of ritual specialists. These consortium groups were painted in the rock art, showing groups of more detailed figures exhibiting classic trance identifiers, distinguished from other, less detailed human figures (Figure 2.2). While ritual specialists negotiated their increased power more successfully the formation of society was altered and, as a result, they were elevated in status.



Figure 2.2: An example of a shamanic consortium used by Dowson. From outside Nomansland, in the Free State province at rock art site RSA-STK1. Image: RARI. Edited for contrast and brightness by author.

At this stage, when ritual specialists controlled resources, and were in positions of power both in relation to their community members and their Bantu-speaking 'customers', that the last stage of the development occurred – the appearance of the 'pre-eminent shaman'. These images are larger, more detailed and highly visible within a shelter (Figure 2.3).



Figure 2.3: RSA-MEL6, Dowson's type-site for his pre-eminent shaman category. The central figure is larger and more detailed than all others in the site. RSA-MEL6 would prove an important site for Blundell in the future. Image: RARI

Notwithstanding his confidence that rock art could speak for itself, that it need not rely on chronological data to tell the story of Bushman history, without any concrete dating evidence, the sequence simply does not stand up to scrutiny – his entire explanation lacked a provable time-frame, making it, though an important step towards creating 'insider histories', subject to serious critique (cf. Smith 2010: 348-349). Lack of chronological order weakened the overall success of his endeavour. While Dowson (1994: 340), states: "probably, the social responses to which the categories of painting refer happened at different times in different places and, moreover, did not necessarily take place along a linear and irreversible chronology", when speaking of the immediate research area, he posits that the sequence is, in fact, intact. Citing the rate at which the paintings have faded, he contends the pre-eminent category is undoubtedly the latest addition to the sequence. As a result, one is left with the distinct impression that Dowson *is* advancing a linear sequence and therefore a rather historical materialist[3] interpretation of Bushman society, as much as he wished to evade such analysis (Smith 2010; Blundell: 2004 69). Unfortunately, the lack of dates makes the 'evolution' of the depiction of ritual specialists in response to their shifting status difficult to accept.

2.3 Embodying the past: Blundell's Significantly Differentiated Figures in their individual contexts

Undoubtedly the most in-depth study of this class of imagery is contained in Blundell's (2004) *Nqabayo's Nomansland.* In it he attempted, in a similar fashion to Dowson, to write a history of the Bushmen that was unencumbered by colonial

[3] Historical materialism (Marx & Engels 1970), as a historiographical approach of Marxism, first codified by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in 1846 is, in its most simple form, the examination of the development of human societies across time and space. It presupposes a number of observable trends when applied to disparate cases. It examines the production capacity of societies and the social relations that are involved in production as a means of advancing social life. In the context of Dowson's hypothesis, ritual specialists' spiritual labour, used as a means by which to gain social and material status is the cause for change in their society.

perceptions of what history *should* entail (indeed the concept of history itself is problematised), legitimized by concepts such as strict chronology. While previous attempts at doing so had had their merits, they were nonetheless constrained by their attention to "abstract concepts such as society, structure, class and function" which were not necessarily "helpful when it comes to San society" (Blundell 2004: 74). Rather, Blundell attempted to formulate a history conforming to four principles he identified of postcolonial writing: (1) emphasis on hybrid identity, (2) stressing the perspective of the colonized, (3) attention to the 'mechanisms of expression' used by the colonized and, (4) employing a theoretical framework that does not manipulate those mechanisms to fit established concepts of social structure (Blundell 2004: 28). The most effective way to go about the task of writing postcolonial history, therefore, was by means of a theoretical framework that freed the mechanisms of expression (paintings) and the people by whom they were made from these constraining binds of structure (Blundell 2004: 75).

More work had been published on the subject of interaction post-Dowson (e.g. Jolly 1998, 1999, 2002; Prins 1996; Hammond-Tooke 1999; Mitchell 2002), providing Blundell with a larger data-pool from which to draw. Consequently, a large portion of the work concerns the rich history of interaction between Bushmen and their Bantu-speaking neighbours (the Bacha, Thembu, Mpondo, Mpondomiso and Phuti) and the Khoekhoen during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and extending backwards to before the time of European colonization. In addition, and of much import to the hypothesis, are in-depth discussions of the movements of Bushmen or part-Bushmen groups in the area of the south-eastern Mountains he termed the 'Nomansland Core Study Area'. This area, in what is now the Eastern Cape Province, was demarcated by the Pitseng Valley to the north, the town of Elliot to the south, Ngcegane Shelter to the east and the Drakensberg escarpment to the west (Blundell 2004: 29) (Figure 2.4). There is not sufficient space in this dissertation to disseminate all historical events

and interactions taking place in this area[4], as the focus here is on the SDFs themselves. However, the question of whether they are recent, and whether they were produced by a single group, is of importance, and therefore I will be focussing, in Chapter Four, on the historical sources pertinent to this category of image.

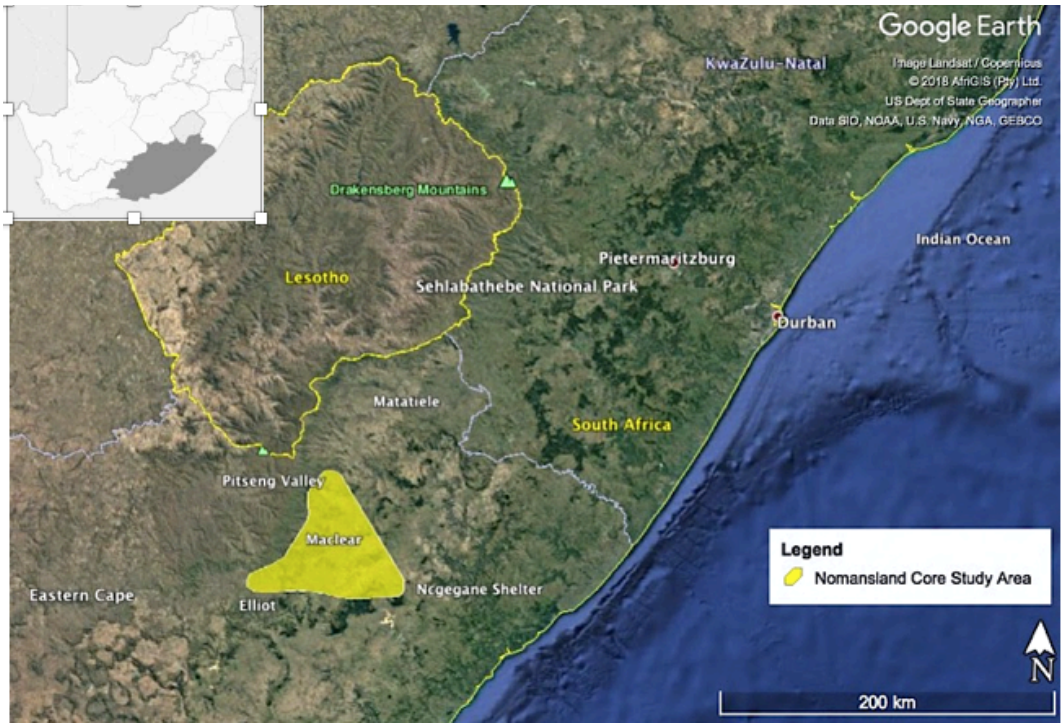


Figure 2.4: Map of the northern Eastern Cape of South Africa showing the location of Blundell's Nomansland Core Study Area.

Employing the phenomenological theory of embodiment, Blundell attempted to identify and explain the socio-political contexts in which images exhibiting marked embellishment and detail in painted humans (Dowson's pre-eminent category) were produced. Figures were described as SDFs, if they contained a suite of characteristics defined by Blundell (2004: 131), thus codifying what

[4] See Blundell 2004: 34-40 and 119-127

individual figures fit into the category that was initially created by Dowson.

These characteristics are:

- Anthropomorphism, and often therianthropy
- Nasal haemorrhaging
- Figures are marked out by their large size: not only compared to other figures painted in the site, but are larger than the majority of figures throughout the Drakensberg
- Presence of exaggerated anatomical features – most commonly genitalia and heads
- Parts of the figures are painted in great detail. The upper portion of the body is given most attention, although other features may also be complex
- Close association with accoutrements (bows, arrows, fly switches), often in unusually large numbers
- SDFs frequently hold, or have their arms stretched out toward staffs[5] or sticks
- Headdresses often reference material goods
- Not possible to identify a particular SDF at more than one site — each is unique
- In cases of multiple SDFs in a single site, there will exist 'primary' and 'secondary' SDFs

There are a number of items on this list that Blundell uses to a greater degree than others to make the category conform to an interpretation. One of these is the presence of sticks in association with individual SDFs. Many images described as SDFs hold, or have their arms stretched out towards, white (and white and red) sticks. In the belief that the images were recent, Blundell made use of historical references to staffs coming from the Cape. Citing instances where colonial authorities issued Khoekhoen men (nominated by the authorities themselves) with staffs as an indicator of their 'chiefly' status, during the late 18th century (Blundell

[5] Staff is Blundell's term and not representative of either |Xam or Ju|'hoan parlance. The word 'stick' is preferred and thus I choose to use this term over 'staff, unless directly referring to Blundell's designation.

204: 153), Blundell equates staffs with political, social and symbolic power. In apparent accordance with this, Blundell offers a Bushman example – Diä!kwain (Bleek 1935: 11-12) interpreted a painting (Figure 2.5) of a dance scene thusly (I reproduce the text used by Blundell 2004: 153):

> They seem to be dancing, for they stand stamping with their legs. This man who stands in front seems to be showing the people how to dance; that is why he holds a stick, for he feels that he is a great man. So he holds the dancing stick, because he is the one who dances before the people, that they may dance after him, for the people know, that he is the one who always dances first, because he is a great sorcerer.

To Blundell, Diä!kwain's above comment was proof enough of 'staffs' being demonstrative of authority (as elevated social status held by 'potency-owners'); particularly because it was made on a rock painting in the Drakensberg. Unfortunately, as we shall see, the link between Khoekhoen staffs and sticks in |Xam text becomes difficult to accept when we scrutinise how sticks are used and understood by Bushman from both the north and the south. Using direct ethnographic accounts from these areas, distinctive beliefs come to light and placing Blundell's conclusions on unstable ground.

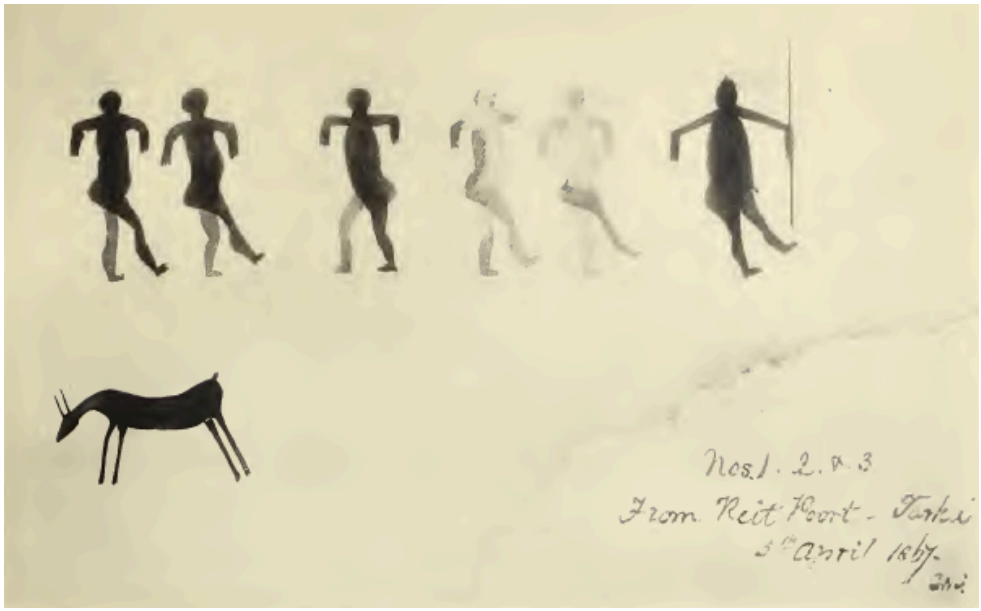


Figure 2.5: Copy of the painting, made by George Stow, and shown to Diä!kwain. Image: after Stow & Bleek 1930: plate 2A.

Another salient aspect of individual SDFs is their uniqueness. Firm on this point Blundell emphasises that it is *not possible* to identify an SDF at more than one site; "each SDF is unique to a particular shelter" (Blundell 2004: 131). Furthermore, if there are multiple SDFs in a single site, one will be more prominent than any others. It will be larger and identifiable as the 'primary' SDF, while others are classified as secondary SDFs (Blundell 2004:140). The primary SDF represents the most powerful individual. My investigation into the category has found that there are some fundamental problems with this assertion. These concerns will be aired in Chapter Five.

Blundell argued that these paintings were likely linked to, if not wholly produced by, a band of Bushman peoples led by Nqabayo during the nineteenth century, emphasising their limited geographical range within the Nomansland Core Study Area (sites most highly concentrated in the Maclear District of the now Eastern Cape Province) (Figure 2.6). Twelve sites are located within the area. Nqabayo's band was known to frequent these valleys, compelling Blundell to ask whether the band was responsible for producing the paintings. Discussed in depth in Chapter Four are the accounts of Bushmen and Bushman-descendent informants in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries whose testimonies on sites in the area were of great interest to Blundell. From these accounts Blundell constructed his argument for both SDFs' regional, and temporal specificity. There are, however, four sites that were included in the category that do not fall within the Core Study Area. Figure 2.7 illustrates all SDF sites known to Blundell at the time of publishing. There are, in addition, the four new sites I mentioned in the introduction and that I will detail in the next chapter. All contain a suite of the characteristics necessitating inclusion in the category. Whether these eight sites further afield are a hindrance or a help to Blundell's hypothesis will be explored later.

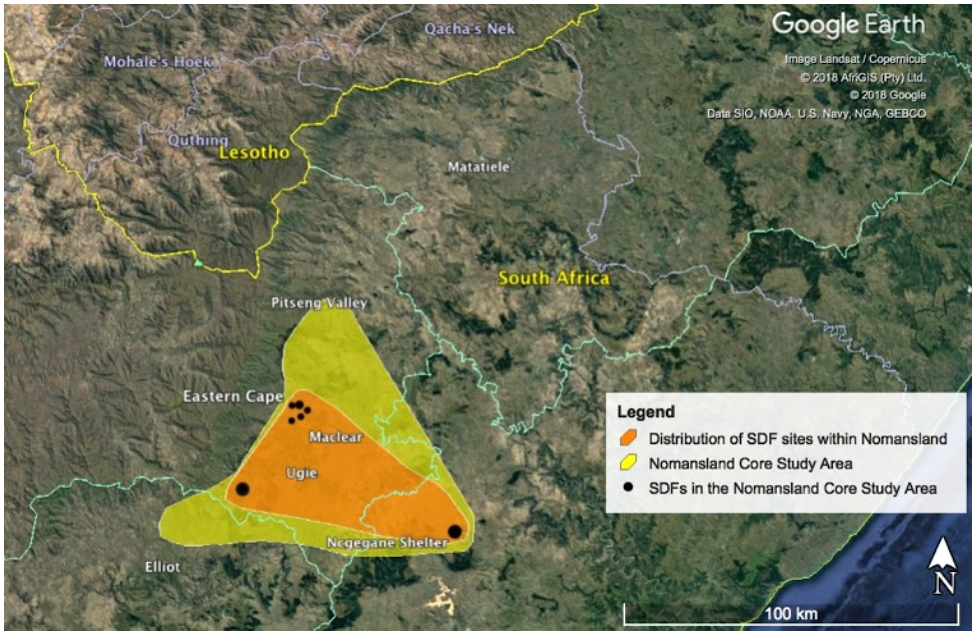


Figure 2.6:Google Earth Map illustrating the distribution of SDF sites documented by Blundell inside the confines of the Nomansland Core Study Area. Black markers indicate rock art sites with SDF imagery in them. The sites are most densely concentrated in the valleys surrounding Storm Shelter.

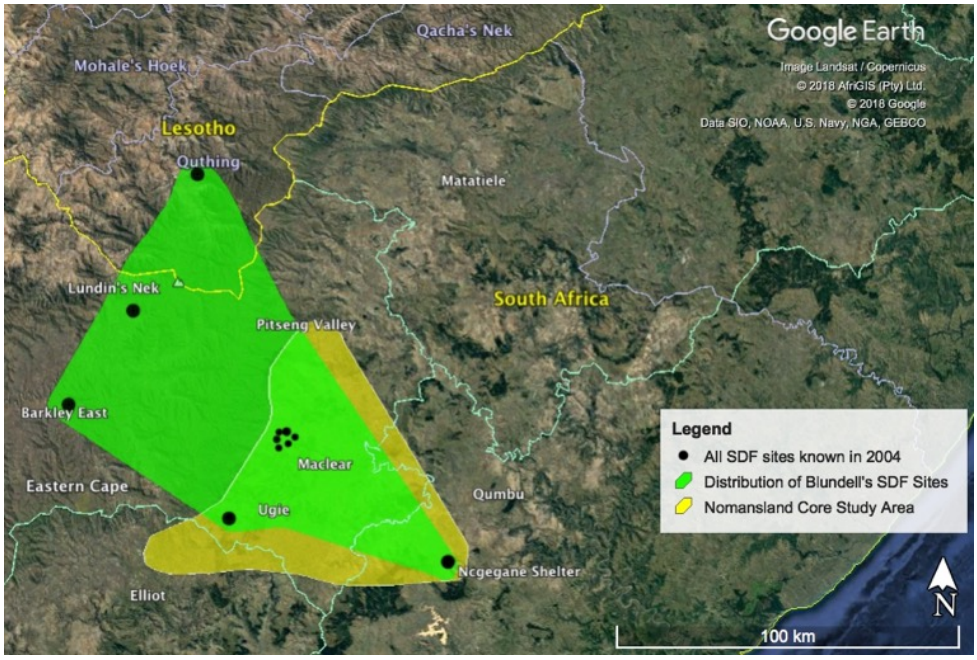


Figure 2.7:Google Earth image showing SDF sites described by Blundell in 2004, both within and without the Nomansland Core Study Area. Black dots represent SDF rock art sites.

Nevertheless, Blundell astutely applied concepts of the self, in embodied experiences, shaping how ritual specialists, in contact with and engaged in relationships with outside groups such as Nguni-speakers and European colonists, conceptualised themselves bodily. Unlike Dowson, who does not specifically reference trance performance in the *creation* of these images, but rather as a tool to gain higher social positions and material wealth, Blundell (2004: 84-87) argues, in addition, they specifically reference the formidable power ritual specialists possess in their performance of trance or healing dances (referred to by Blundell as the Great Dance).

Well-established is the argument that the art references aspects of the dance and its associated meanings. A feature of real dances not explored by rock art researchers before Blundell is that it "promotes social differentiation, and that discrimination is based on bodily performance" (Blundell 2004: 85). As such, the implication is that rock art is active in the 'production of social inequality' in specific reference to the 'Great Dance's' role in producing social hierarchy and as a process in the construction of identity. With the increasing power of ritual specialists over interactions with other groups, Blundell argued that they began to consider themselves different to other members of society and wished to represent that. The most 'customisable' part of the body that could be painted was the head, and as such, powerful ritual specialists began to emphasise that area, leading to the emergence of Large-Headed Significantly Differentiated Figures (LH-SDFs) in the art. LH-SDFs are differentiated from SDFs in that they have oversized, detailed heads. According to Blundell (2004:141) the detail on the face usually accompanies a lack of detail in the post-cranial portion of the figure. While Blundell discusses these figures at length (greater length than he does the 'classic' SDFs) he does argue that SDFs were an immediate precursor to LH-SDFs; SDFs are then likely to be recent (Blundell 2004: 144). Categorised as being made up of the identifying criteria listed above, themselves being powerful 'potency-owners', SDFs in fact exerted this power and agency over what elements made up the wider panel as well (Blundell 2004:173). Therefore, it is necessary to include in the creation of the category, what Blundell calls the 'pattern' of SDF sites.

2.4 Patterns in SDF sites: panel imagery present alongside SDFs.

There exists, according to Blundell, a pattern to the imagery in a site where SDFs are present. This pattern does not involve any special distribution trends; it applies only to the likelihood of certain images being present *somewhere* in the panel. Blundell (2004: 45-48) noticed at Storm Shelter (effectively the type-site) that certain images were present along with the LH-SDFs (Figure 2.8). The list included: (1) Eldritch images[6], (2), clapping/dancing figures, (3) 'run-run' or dynamic, running figures, (4) felines, (5) a thin red line fringed with white dots or a long line that manifests itself slightly differently, (6) a numerical arrangement of antelope imagery where eland are most prominent, followed by rhebok and finally, hartebeest, which he called the '1-2-3 arrangement', (7) rain animal and, (8) Type 2 imagery. His scrutiny of Storm Shelter prompted an examination of the Nomansland Core Study SDF sites to see if any similar images repeated themselves there. Table 1 reproduces Blundell's (2004: 198-202) observations at all of the known SDF sites in Nomansland. Blundell's list includes all 134 sites surveyed in the Nomansland Core Study Area whereas I have extracted only those sites said to contain SDFs. Satisfied that the results of his comparative investigation had confirmed the existence of a pattern, Blundell considered the implications the pattern had for both the production and the 'consumption' of the art.

In the pursuit of interpretative implications, Blundell took inspiration from ethnographic material relating to rain making from the Bleek and Lloyd |Xam archive, and on the possession of waterholes amongst the Ju|'hoansi (then referred to as the !Kung) of Botswana (e.g. Marshall 1962). The concept of owning a waterhole, or of ritual specialists possessing a specific rain animal, which would then have been painted, led Blundell to conclude that sites with SDF/LH-SDFs were likely to have been owned by the ritual specialist whose identity was

[6] Eldritch images (known otherwise as 'weird whites'), according to Blundell, represent spirits-of-the-dead embodying concepts of disease, hunger and malnutrition. They are identifiable by their distorted bodies. They often have claws, teeth or emaciated forms and are usually painted in white.

reflected in the only, or primary SDF painted. Adding credence to this postulation, Blundell had observed that no SDF was repeated in more than one shelter, and, one informant had emphasised a site in the Tsolo District of the Eastern Cape, Ngcegane[7] Shelter (containing an SDF), as the place her father and uncle had returned to time and again to make rain (Blundell 2004: 172) indicating a sense of ownership of the site.

Ownership of sites affected what images could be painted there, thus explaining why some types of images were likely to be present alongside SDFs. Potency-owners controlled interactions people wishing to visit a site had with the paintings. Furthermore, non-Bushmen living alongside them were, according to Blundell, not permitted to paint in close proximity to the SDF panels – which explained the presence of Type 2 imagery[8] (Figure 2.9). While Bushmen maintained their fine-line, complex tradition, others expressed themselves in a stylistically distinct manner. Maintaining their fine-line painting tradition in the face of changing identities around them, allowed them to maintain their "Sanness" (Blundell 2004: 179).

[7] Blundell (2004) uses the spelling Ncengane, but I refer to the shelter by its updated spelling, as Ngcegane
[8] Space does not permit an exhaustive explanation of Type 2 imagery. For this see Blundell (2004: 113-130).

Table 1: Blundell's SDF site patterns

Site	SDF/LH-SDF	Eldritch	Dance/ clap	Run-run	Line	1 – 2 -3 Arr.	Feline	Rain-animal	Type 2
RSA BAE 2	1 SDF	Yes	Yes	Ind.	Ind.	Ind.	Yes	Ind.	No
RSA LAB 1	2 LH-SDFs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
RSA LAB 3	1 LH-SDF	Yes	Yes	Ind.	Yes	Yes	Ind.	Yes	Yes
RSA CHA 1	3 SDFs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
RSA MEL 6	1 LH-SDF	Yes	Yes	Ind.	Ind.	No	Ind.	Ind.	No
RSA MEL 8	1 LH-SDF	Yes	Yes	Yes	Ind.	No	No	No	No
RSA MEL 9	1 LH-SDF	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	yes
RSA MIE 1	1 LH-SDF	No	Yes	Ind.	Ind.	Ind.	Ind	Ind.	Yes
RSA RON 1	1 SDF	Ind.	Yes	Ind.	Ind.	Ind.	Ind.	Ind.	No
RSA WID2	1 SDF	Ind.	Yes	Ind.	Yes	Ind.	Ind.	Yes	Yes
RSA INX1	1 SDF/1 LH-SDF	Yes	Yes	Ind.	Ind.	Ind.	Ind.	Ind.	No
RSA TYN2	1 SDF	Yes	Yes	Yes	Ind.	Ind.	Ind.	Ind.	Ind.

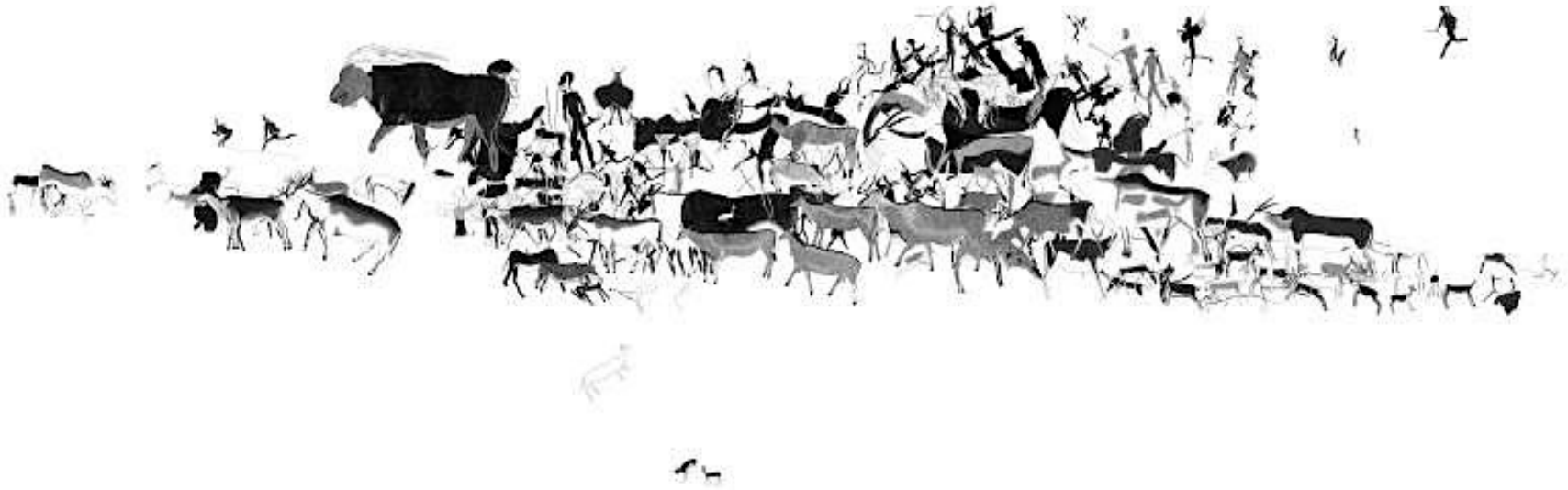


Figure 2.8: Main panel of Storm Shelter (RSA-LAB1). Blundell considered the site as the type-site for his hypothesis. The concepts of primary SDFs, LH-SDFs and image-patterning stem from Storm Shelter. Image: RARI

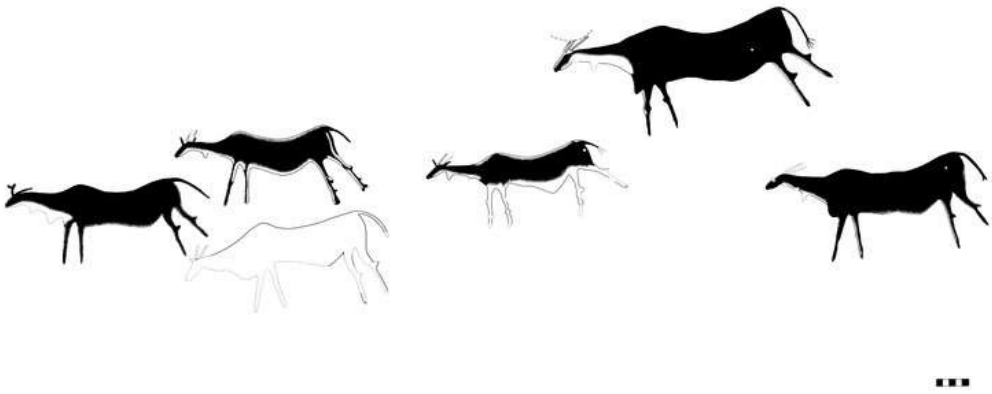


Figure 2.9: Type 2 eland from RSA-LAB3. Monochrome or bichrome paintings, mainly of eland with knobbly knees and block colour, with more contrived dewlaps, constitute the Type 2 'style' of painting. Blundell assigns the authorship of Type 2 imagery to non-Bushmen living with or in close proximity Bushman groups.

Having identified seemingly startling commonality between SDFs in both their individual components and the images likely present alongside them, Blundell considered the category incontestable. It seemed to confirm Blundell's interpretation of the figures based on findings on the social upheavals and change in Bushman society during the last three hundred years. However, with the passage of time, we have been able to identify new sites that contain what Blundell would call SDFs. These sites pose a problem for the regional specificity argued by Blundell and, importantly, to the category itself. I describe these sites in the next chapter and will go on to 'unpack' what issues arise, and how these affect the cogency of Blundell's argument.

3 CHAPTER THREE: DOCUMENTING NEW SITES

During the years 2013 and 2015 respectively, members of the MARA programme and the Rock Art Research Institute (RARI) of the University of the Witwatersrand (WITS), documented during the course of two separate survey projects four sites of great interest. Each one contains images that, using Blundell's classifying features (on page 16) as a basis for identification, contain SDFs. The first of these, called Malithethana Source 6 (RSA-MTS6) is located high up in the Maluti (in relative proximity to the basalt peaks that divide South Africa from Lesotho) in the Alfred Nzo District (Matatiele District) of the Eastern Cape Province. It was documented in May 2013 and traced by myself and the principle investigator of MARA the following year in April. The remaining three sites were documented in July of 2015 by the MARA team during the archaeological and rock art baseline survey of the Sehlabathebe National Park (SNP) in the Kingdom of Lesotho (Challis *et al*. 2015) (Figure 3.1).

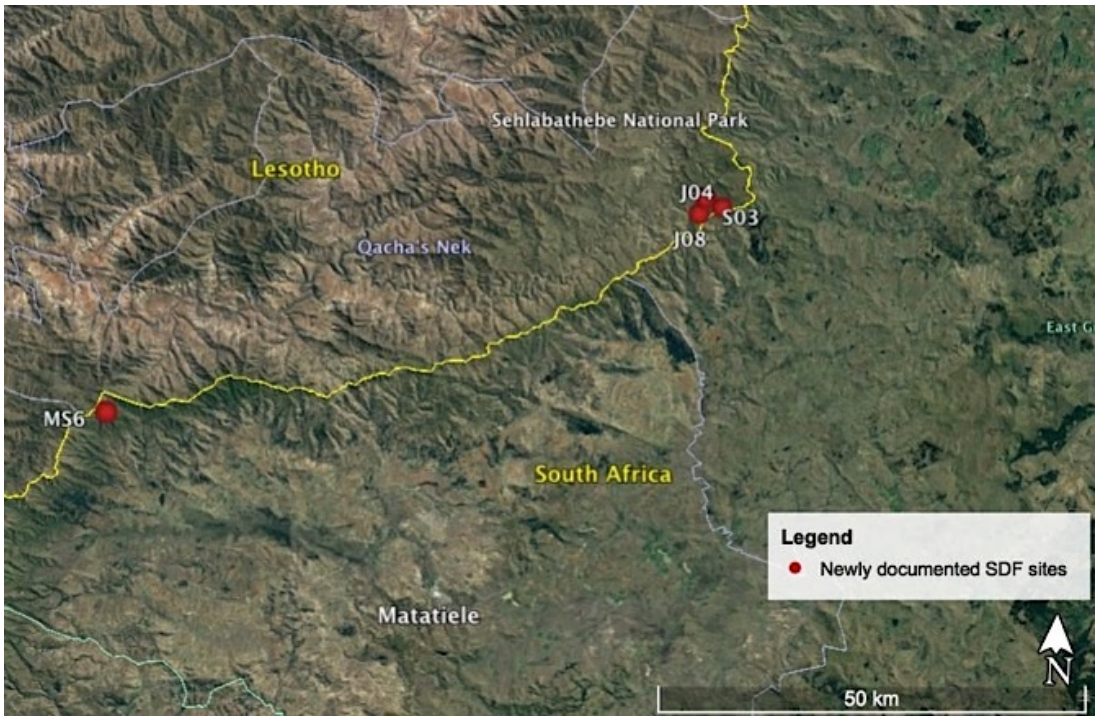


Figure 3.1: Google Map showing approximate locations of newly documented sitesRSA-MTS6 in the Matatiele District of the Eastern Cape, South Africa, and LES-J04, LES-J08 and LES-S03 in the Sehlabathebe National Park of Lesotho

These four sites extend the geographical range of known SDF sites by approximately 130km (as the crow flies) north-northeast of the Nomansland Core Study cluster (Blundell 2004: 29) and 125km east-north east of the most northerly known SDF site (outside of the Nomansland Core Study Area) close to Thaba Moroosi in Lesotho. In the section to follow I describe briefly, for context, the purposes of both surveys, and provide descriptions of each site. The descriptions of the paintings necessarily focus on the imagery I am concerned with.

3.1 The MARA programme: redressing imbalances of the past.

The MARA programme was begun officially in 2011 by Dr Sam Challis of the Rock Art Research Institute. This multi-disciplinary project aims to focus archaeological, historical and heritage-management research in the Matatiele District of the Eastern Cape Provence, South Africa. Forming part of the former 'Transkei' homeland during the Apartheid era in South Africa, Matatiele was, as a result, neglected by researchers doing historical and archaeological work (Challis in press). MARA aims to redress that imbalance and to place the area's past where it belongs amongst the rich histories of the indigenous populations of South Africa.

Over the last six years two excavations have been completed (see Pinto *et al*. submitted), multiple post-graduate dissertations (focussing on different aspects of heritage and archaeology) produced (e.g. Regensberg 2012; Siteleki 2014; Mokwoena 2016; Johnson 2016; Sinclair Thomson 2016; Zulu, 2016) and much unsurveyed ground covered. The survey has yielded over 200 rock art sites to date, a number of which have been traced. In addition, and integral to it, the programme has a strong transformation agenda, training local community members to become field technicians and working in conjunction with the community-run Mehloding Trust (King *et al.* in press). Ntate Puseletso Lecheko, a member of the MARA team, leads surveys throughout the year when other members are unable to go into the field.

It was in the context of the wider aims of the project, adding to the knowledge of Matatiele's past, that RSA-MTS6 was recorded during a survey.

3.2 RSA-MTS6 rock art site, Matatiele District, Eastern Cape, South Africa

Situated in the highest band of Clarens Formation sandstone below the basalt layers that rise to form the border between South Africa and Lesotho, in the Malithethana River Valley is hidden rock art site RSA-MTS6. A relatively small shelter, RSA-MTS6 faces southeast, measures 4 m in length, 4 m in width and 3 m in depth but with a level floor and decent overhang. Indigenous forest conceals the shelter as one approaches from any direction (Figure 3.2). As a result, it is only accessible via a narrow 'path' between the trees at the west-southwestern end of the shelter. With an altitude of 1733 m, it is high for this portion of the Maluti Mountains.



Figure 3.2: Views across RSA-MTS6. Thick indigenous forest encloses the shelter on three sides. Beyond the drip line the floor drops away steeply into a narrow gully. Image: MARA

3.2.1 Archaeological features and finds

RSA-MTS6 contains only sporadic lithics—a small surface collection of LSA material was observed (Figure 3.3). Cryptocrystalline silicate (CCS) dominates the lithic assemblage. Although a portion of the shelter has a level floor, the deposit depth is shallow, with bedrock protruding in places. Nevertheless, deposit remains, and appears satisfactorily preserved. Beside collapsed walling, there was no evidence of recent human occupation of the site. No fireplaces were observed, nor was there any historical or contemporary material in the shelter. It appears the site is not commonly used, despite herders frequenting the Malithethana River Valley caring for their stock.

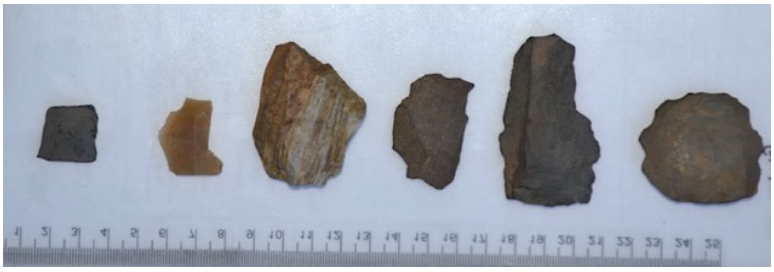


Figure 3.3:Sparse lithic surface collection from MTS6. Photograph: MARA

3.2.2 Rock Art

Exclusively in a single panel, the paintings occur at the far-right end of the shelter approximately 2.2 m above the shelter floor. Unfortunately, extensive wash and subsequent flaking have damaged the panel severely. Still, the images that remain whole, or in part, are remarkable. In the centre of the panel are four bichrome anthropomorphs measuring between 40 and 50 cm in height, painted next to one another (Figure 3.4). These figures are painted in dark red and white. Two are seated with knees bent, one is upright in a dynamic, possibly dancing posture, while the fourth may also be seated but wash and flaking obscure this detail. Present on at least three of the figures is nasal haemorrhaging. Two figures hold sticks out in front of them and a third is very likely doing the same. Several have bands on their legs and arms. The dancing figure carries a quiver horizontally across the shoulders, while the least damaged anthropomorph carries a bag on its

back, or a kaross draped over the shoulders. A highly striking feature shared by all four figures are the thin, elongated, partially curved emanations or headdresses from their heads, which are once more echoed on an indeterminate quadruped in a crouching posture (Figure 3.5). These figures are all undoubtedly in close symbolic relationships with one another. A small female figure stands between two of the large, detailed figures (Figure 3.5). Below and to the left of this main concentration are at least six smaller (<10cm), monochrome human figures in red, standing. Again, they are all faded and damaged by wash and flaking.

3.2.3 Comparison with Blundell's category

We can identify all four of the large human figures as SDFs by Blundell's criteria as they have a suite of characteristics he lists: they are larger than other human figures in association with them and have been afforded more detail, particularly in the facial areas. Also, the images are theriathropic, and bleed from the nose, carry sticks, and wear headdresses/have unusual emanations from their heads. In Chapter Five the significance of these features, and others, will become apparent.



Figure 3.4: Large anthropomorphic figures in red and white. Smaller red female figure in centre. Note the strange emanations from their heads. Photograph: MARA



Figure 3.5: Close-up of strange creature with identical lines from head (left). Close-up of small, red human figure below four large figures. (right). Photograph: MARA

3.3 Rock Art and Baseline Archaeological Survey of the Sehlabathebe National Park, Kingdom of Lesotho

In 2013, an extension of the uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Park World Heritage Site (uDP) to include the SNP was proposed to the World Heritage Committee of The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The proposal was approved, on the condition that work be undertaken to inventory, and produce a management plan for, heritage resources within the Park. These requests were stated in Decision 37 COM 8B.18 (UNESCO 2013: 171; Laue *et al.* 2018: 120). The MARA programme (of RARI and WITS) was approached by the Department of Culture, Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Culture (MTEC), Lesotho to carry out a baseline archaeological and rock art survey of the 68 km^2 park. The survey commenced in January 2015, and continued, intermittently, until late June of that year. Members of the transformation team of MARA (led by Field Directors Puseletso Lecheko and Rethabile Mokhachane) conducted much of the survey, joined by other MARA team members for two weeks each month from January to March to assist in the survey and collect data.

In June, the entire team spent the month completing the survey. All heritage resources in the park were recorded. The survey was conducted on foot and horseback, systematically covering the entire park (Figure 3.6). During this final stage of the survey we recorded three unusual sites, clustered together in the southernmost corner of the Park, on the border with South Africa.

The majority of sites recorded during the survey had been previously identified and recorded by the Analysis of Rock Art in Lesotho (ARAL) project which surveyed much of Lesotho in the between 1979 and 1986. The three sites relevant here were all documented and therefore have a corresponding ARAL site number which I include. None of the data was published, however. Conversing with Lucas Smits of ARAL while researching the presence of SDFs elsewhere, Blundell asked whether ARAL had encountered any of these strange images. However, Smits did not recall any images akin to what Blundell described as being documented. This is surprising, and unfortunate. Possibly Smits did not recall the images; ARAL did document hundreds of sites over a period in excess of ten years.

The sites LES-J04, LES-J08 and LES-S03 are located on the western slope of the rock art-rich Mofoqoi Valley, through which the Mofoqoi River flows north to south 200 m below. The sites cluster at altitudes between 2387 m and 2468 m above sea level; the highest altitude range in the valley, and indeed represent some of the highest paintings currently known, owing to an anomalous uplifting of sandstone in this area.

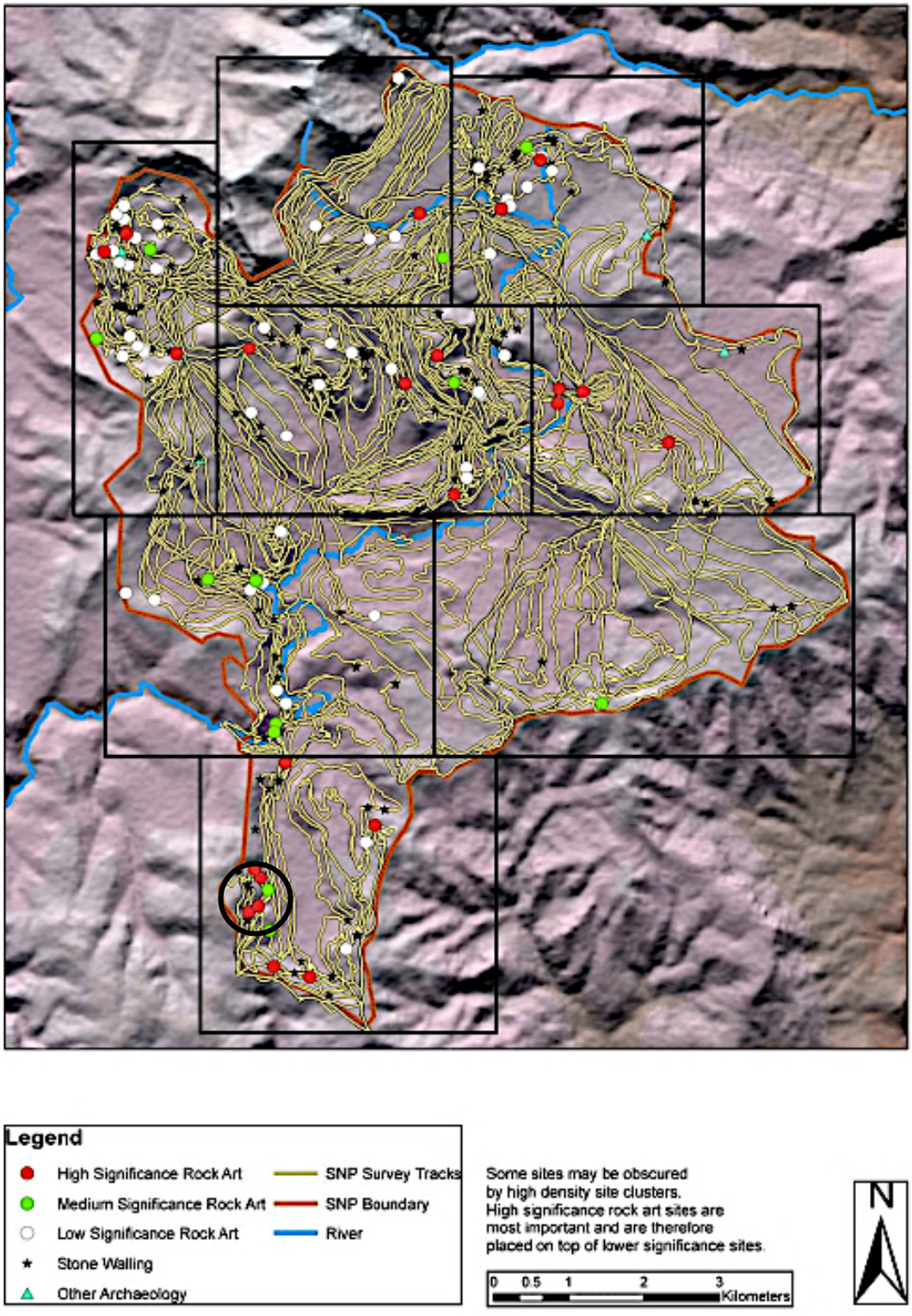


Figure 3.6: Map of the SNP showing all sites recorded during the 2015 survey and survey tracks. Sites LES-J04, LES-J08 and LES-S03 are located in the southern corner of the park and circled here in black Map.: James Pugin

3.4 LES-J04 (ARAL 227) rock art site, SNP, Lesotho

A large boulder located on the southern crest of the western slopes of the Mofoqoi valley, LES-J04 is a brief walk north from the boundary that divides the SNP with South Africa. The boulder is a distinctive feature on the landscape, measuring approximately 13 m north—south (wide) and 5 m high. The paintings are placed upon the east-facing irregular sloping surface of the boulder (Figure 3.7). This surface affords the paintings a degree of protection from the rain, but as the shelter created is < 1 m deep, are vulnerable to sun, wind and wind-blown rain.



Figure 3.7: View towards the J04 boulder with meter scale. Photograph: MARA

3.4.1 Archaeological features and finds

No stonewalled structures are present, and there is no deposit to speak of. Artefacts on the surface included 1 sherd of thin-walled pottery and LSA flakes, cores and a single adze (Figure 3.8). Artefacts may have eroded down the talus slope, as the hillside of the western slope of the Mofoqoi Valley is steep.

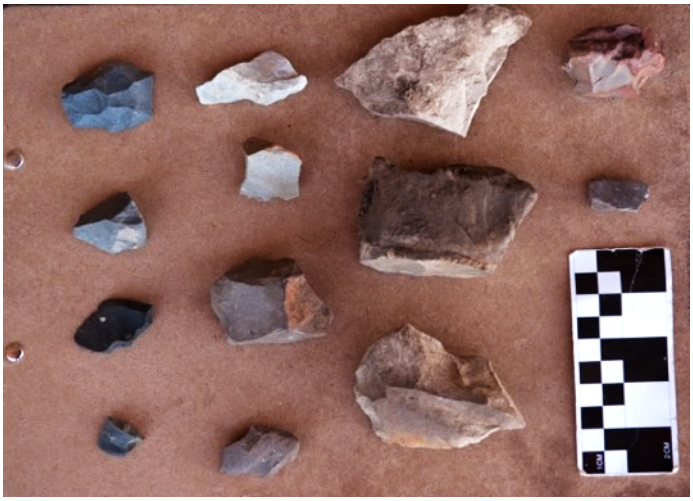


Figure 3.8: Surface collection of LSA lithics from J04. Photograph: MARA

3.4.2 Rock art

Paintings occur across much of the face of the boulder from approximately 1.5 m high, down to the shelter floor. Certain of the images are damaged by flaking as a result of natural erosion but others are still clear. Although densely painted, only a small number of superimpositions occur. For recording purposes, the site was divided into 10 panels (A – J) running left to right. The image of greatest relevance, however, is in panel G and therefore I will give general descriptions of the other panels. All images belong to the traditional corpus of polychrome fine-line art. Including black, red and dark red, orange, and white, the colours present at LES-J04 are a decent representation of the palate used by Bushmen. Panels A – F include human figures in dark red, white and black, a few with accruements and white body-decoration/bands, variously seated and standing. A 'classic' dance 'scene' appears in panel C. A group of human figures appear to dance while in association with seated figures. Above the dance 'scene' are painted a line of large, red dots. Also painted are a curled, supine human figure and a collection of bags.

Panels D – F include rhebok, largely in white, a curled snake-like coil in dark red, and possible flying and indeterminate non-real creatures, though these are gravely damaged.

Panel G contains kaross-clad human figures in dark red, carrying bows. In the centre is an 40 cm tall, unrealistically large human figure (in comparison to other human figures at the site), also in dark red (Figure 3.9). The figure's head had been emphasized both in size and detail. The face is executed in white, painted in profile. Additionally, the figure appears to have blood from the nose. On the head is possible hair or a headdress, which presents itself as red strands or tassels with white flecks coming from them. Emanating from the hair or headdress is a white line that extends > 50 cm up the rock face. The end of the line was unfortunately not visible on account of flaking. To the right of this figure is a feline-antelope conflation, which is more feline than antelope: it has a feline-like face, body and tail. However, it also has antelope hooves. Panel H contains a group of four clapping figures in dark red, several of their fingers clearly visible. Remaining panels I and J have indeterminate red patches of flaked red pigment, vertical lines in thin red pigment and human figures bent forward slightly.

3.4.3 Comparison with Blundell's characterization of SDFs

The figure in panel G can be described as an SDF as it is made up of elements Blundell deems necessary for the characterization. It is anthropomorphic, exhibits nasal bleeding, is set apart by its size and high detail not only from other figures in the site but indeed from the majority of figures in the Drakensberg. Two kaross-clad figures facing the image give scale and appear to be involved somehow with the figure (Figure 3.9). The feline or canid creature appears also to be involved with it somehow. Blundell notes the ubiquity of headdresses, hats, or hair on SDFs in the Nomansland Core Study Area. The figure in Panel G conforms also to this feature (Figure 3.10). Only one of these image-types is present at this site. According to Blundell, it is far more likely that only one SDF

is painted at a site than there being multiple examples. Even though the panel and the figure are damaged and somewhat smudged, it is able still to engender a response from the viewer; it is distinctly *differentiated.*



Figure 3.9: Close-up of the large anthropomorphic figure and surrounding images in panel G. Note the clearly detailed white face and embellished headdress/hair. Karossed figures interact with the figure. Image MARA.



Figure 3.10: Detail of upper torso, neck, head and hair or headdress with a white line coming from the top of the head. This line extends diagonally up the rock. Karossed figures interact with the figure. Image MARA.

3.5 LES-J08 (ARAL 224) rock art site, SNP, Lesotho

Perhaps the most visually impressive of the Lesotho sites, LES-J08 is a small sandstone shelter facing north on the western slope of the Mofoqoi Valley, approximately 200 m above the Mofoqoi River at an altitude of 2387 m (Figure 3.11). The site, 2 m in length, 4.5m deep and 2.5 m high, commands a view across the valley and the stream below. The sandstone shelter provides a level of protection for the paintings, but a portion have nevertheless flaked away. There is also evidence of human defacement of a few of the paintings. However, comparison with ARAL photographs suggests that neither subsequent flaking nor human action has affected the site over the last 38 years.



Figure 3.11: View across LES-J08 facing east-southeast including collapsed enclosing wall. 2 m scale in shot. Image: MARA

3.5.1 Archaeological features and finds

While no artefacts were observed on the surface, the deposit in the shelter appears to be well-preserved but is unlikely to reach further than 20cm below the surface. Present in the shelter is an historical, stone-built enclosing wall (possibly an abandoned kraal dating to before the SNP was formed in the 1970s). Running for

13 m from one end of the shelter, slightly beyond the dripline, it curves to form a semi-circular enclosure at the other end and the space enclosed is 5m deep. Built without mortar, with selected irregular rocks, it abuts the terminal ends of the shelter at each side and is collapsed in places. No other archaeological, historical or present-day material was observed.

3.5.2 Rock art

Unlike LES-J04, LES-J08 is sparsely painted, containing only a few images. One of these images is, however, truly unique. The site was divided into three panels A – C, running from left to right across the back-wall (panel B containing the pertinent painting). Panels A and C shall therefore be described first. Unfortunately, Panel A is the most poorly preserved of the three panels. Only fragments of red remain. Immediately above the remnants is a large flaked area of rock. It is possible that other images existed on the now flaked area, and the red pigment alone remains. Panel C, far right in the shelter, comprises two walking human figures with white faces, wearing karosses painted in red and white and carrying hunting equipment, one striding human figure in red with a white face (much of the torso has faded) measuring 25cm in height, two red human figures with antelope-eared caps (one of these with rhebok horns), a lighter red, running figure with a bow and finally, two red and white rhebok. The rhebok have been damaged by vertical scratches.

In the centre of the shelter a single image comprises panel B. This painting is astounding. It is an *enormous* polychrome, shaded, part-human measuring a little over 90 cm from head to toe (Figure 3.12). Included in the colour palate are dark red, red, black and white that has discoloured to a beige. The figure is painted in a reclining, or recumbent posture, with legs bent and knees raised towards its belly. Painted in profile, the figure exhibits astonishing detail (the head particularly so). Its neck is painted entirely in black, and this black extends to much of the face.

From the neck outwards, and from the nose back across the face, white lines emanate. After much staring and deliberation, it is suggest that they may, in fact, be whiskers. The lines from the neck are gently nested. A red line from the nose also is painted across the face. The figure has white tusks curving slightly upwards from the mouth. The eye has been deliberately painted as a white circular outline on a background of red. Rows of white lines form a headband on the forehead. The figure wears a cap in red with three white tassels emerging at the base of the neck. From the top of the cap are painted seven red objects that appear to be brushes or fly-switches surrounded by white dots. The figure reclines, the belly either distended, or has bags resting upon it. The latter is more plausible, I would argue. Along the backline of the figure are white tassels or hair (Figure 3.13). The figure is supported by one arm, along which the same white lines run down to the hand, which is clawed. The figure has three legs, two bent at the knee and one straight, pointing downwards. All three feet are clawed and one foot has six toes (Figure 3.13). Between the bent legs and the third is a pair of red and white forms. They appear to be disembodied antelope ears, or perhaps horns.



Figure 3.12: Figure measuring 90cm from head to toe, with bags on belly or a distended belly, a headdress with seven red fly-switches or brushes, tusks, whiskers, three legs. 1 m scale on shelter floor Image: MARA

3.5.3 Comparison with Blundell's characterization of SDFs

By virtue of its sheer size and detail, one could argue the figure be classified an SDF. The criteria are met in other ways, however. If it were alone in the site, perhaps its size would not be as significant, but human figures in the panel beside it emphasise the disparity. Here, too, is only one of its kind present in the site. Its association with articles of material culture is another feature Blundell lists. Of course, that alone does not differentiate it, but the manner in which it is associated with these articles is similar to other SDFs. Finally, although the figure is decidedly anthropomorphic, it is also therianthropic (or rather it incorporates multiple non-human features such as claws, tusks, hair and whiskers). The figure at LES-J08 is certainly one of the most remarkable examples recorded to date.

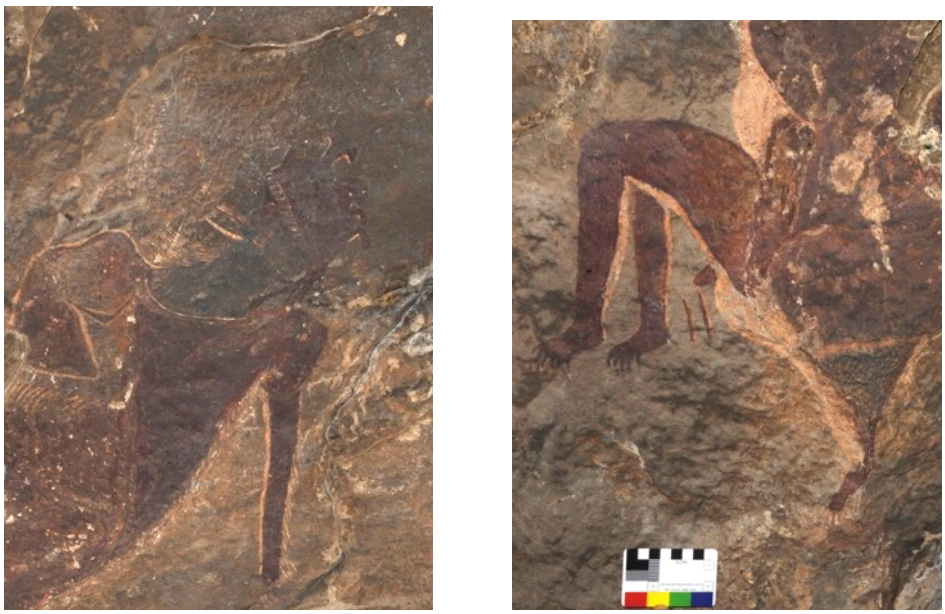


Figure 3.13: Close-up of upper body. Hairs run down the back and arms, the figure has tusks and possibly whiskers. (left) Detail of three legs with claws and 10cm scale. (right) Photographs: MARA

3.6 LES-S03 (ARAL 226), SNP, Lesotho

Situated in the same band of sandstone shelters, 170 m northwest of LES-J08, lies LES-S03, a small shelter, facing east, measuring 5 m wide, 4 m and 3 m deep (Figure 3.14). Unfortunately, the art has deteriorated to a greater degree than in either LES-J08 or LES-J04; smudged, faded, flaked or has been largely obscured by wash and calcite. Evidence of recent human occupation was observed, suggesting that a portion of the smudging may have been caused by livestock rubbing against the rock, although a comparison with ARAL records suggest this has not occurred since the Park was demarcated.



Figure 3.14: View of LES-S03 facing north with 1 m scale. Photograph: MARA

3.6.1 Archaeological features and finds

Although no stone walling is present in the confines of the shelter itself, outside and slightly downslope and to the east there appears to be an historical dry stone retaining wall that has collapsed.

No artefacts were observed either within the shelter or beyond the drip line on the slope below. Possibly, any archaeology once present has eroded downslope as the hillside is, at this point, steep.

3.6.2 Rock art

Densely painted, LES-S03 has a higher frequency of superpositioning than either LES-J04 or LES-J08, but the condition of the paintings makes several of these difficult to separate into distinct layers. The paintings are spread across much of the back wall and were divided into six panels (A - F). Two images I consider to be SDFs are present, in panel D, in the centre of the shelter close to the floor. Panels A - C are located to the left of D. Panel A contains two human figures in dark red with white faces bending forward with antelope-eared caps and a bichrome (possibly polychrome) rhebok. This rhebok is extremely faded and patinated, perhaps suggesting considerable age. Panel B contains a single, fine example of a shaded polychrome eland measuring 50cm from nose to tail. Containing only three faded bichrome eland in red and white, panel C is a relatively simple panel.

In contrast, Panel D is complex and contains a large number of figures. Unfortunately, it is not in a desirable state of preservation. However, partially visible are two large, detailed anthropomorphic figures that warrant discussion (Figures 3.15, 3.16 & 3.17). The first of these figures is partially superimposed by a strange eland-like creature with human-like feet painted mainly in white with red details. Only the head and shoulders of this figure are clearly visible, if the rest of it was painted at all. The face is painted in profile, a red line running down its white face, similar to an eland's blaze, a red eye and lips are visible. The shoulders are red and white. Coming from behind this figure's shoulders is a stick or bow in red and white. It should be noted that the eland-like figure and this figure are faded and could be difficult to see in particular light conditions. Surrounding the figure are other remnants of red images, but these are too

deteriorated to positively identify. To the left of this figure is a large polychrome eland in red, white and black facing right. The eland is painted underneath a second image that is large and detailed, with an oversized head. The figure is painted in red and white. The face is white and painted in profile, with facial features clearly visible, and holding a bow in its extended right arm, while the left clasps 3 white arrows. Visible from under the detailed, large figure, is a portion of a human figure in red holding a bow. Over both the eland and the detailed figure is a small, bright red human figure, the lower legs faded. Panels E and F contain smudged bichrome rhebok and hartebeest in red and white and faded, indeterminate figures.

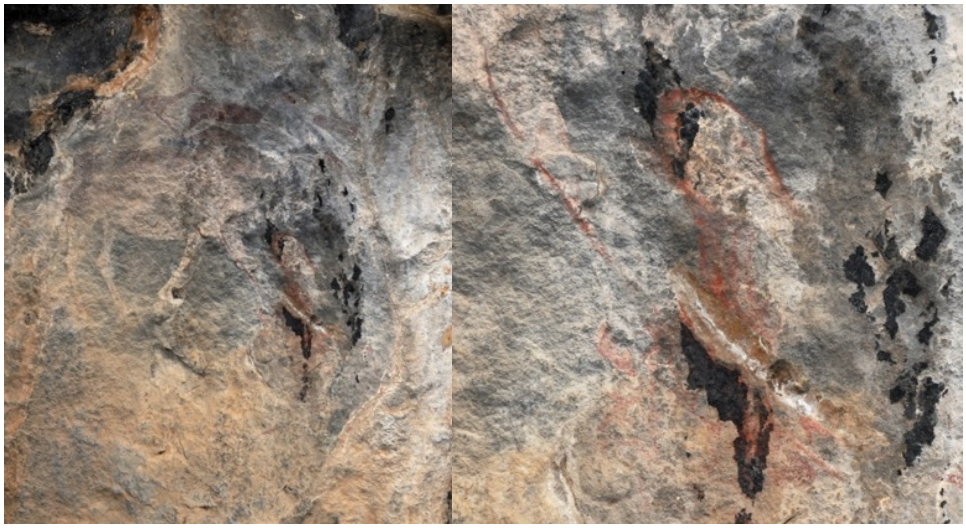


Figure 3.15: Left: one large anthropomorphic figure with head, neck and shoulders visible and a red and white stick protruding from shoulder below a faded, strange quadruped with human-like feet and bichrome rhebok. Right: close-up of image argued to be an SDF. Visible, slanted eye, red 'blaze' running down elongated face and lips painted. Images: MARA.

3.6.3 Comparison with Blundell's characterization of SDFs

Both figures, although damaged, can be identified as SDFs by their size relative to other painted human figures, their highly detailed faces and the incorporation of non-human features into their faces. The first image is associated with a stick or staff in white with red detail; something Blundell considers an important addition to several of his SDFs.



Figure 3.16: Anthropomorphic, large figure in red with oversized head and delicately detailed white face in profile. The figure holds a bow in one hand and three white arrows in the other hand. A large, polychrome shaded eland superimposes the figure, suggesting that the figure was painted before the eland. Image: MARA



Figure 3.17: Detail of second figure. The face is animal-like and bleeds from the nose. A possible ear at the nape of the neck. Image: MARA

The reader may have noticed that RSA-MTS6, LES-J04, LES-J08 and LES-S03 correspond only in certain ways to the category proposed by Blundell. Containing few of the axillary image-types making up the 'pattern of SDF sites', they still legitimately conform to Blundell's individual identifying criteria. These inconsistencies are disquieting and destabilise the cogency of the created category. Since with the addition of the four sites in Matatiele and the SNP the number of 'exception' sites falling outside of the Nomansland Core Study Area has now doubled, I consider it crucial that salient aspects of the category be subject to scrutiny. Figure 3.18 illustrates the current distribution of SDF sites, (both within and without the Core Study Area) showing their significantly increased range. Not only does the presence of inconsistencies render this scrutiny valuable, but so do recent technical/methodological and theoretical advancements in the discipline of rock art research. We are now able to test the hypothesis on multiple levels – (1) spatially: by exploring the implications of a wider spatial distribution attested by the new sites recorded, (2) temporally: using new data published on the age of paintings in both Lesotho and the Nomansland area and (3) visually: by examining representational evidence used to validate the category and that examination's interpretative implications.

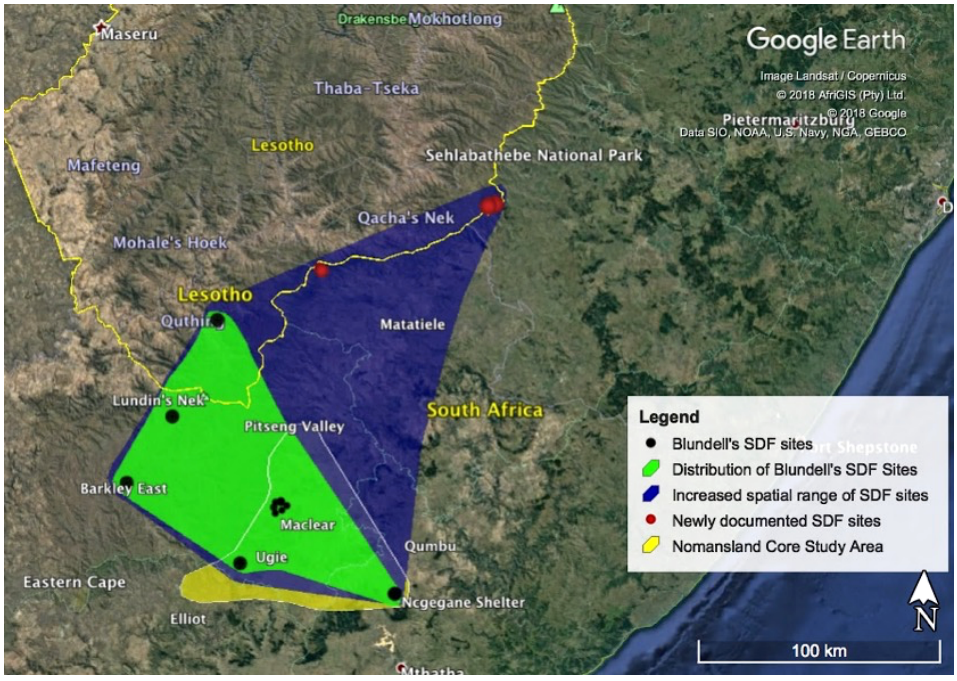


Figure 3.18: Google Earth Map showing the current distribution of SDF sites in the Eastern Cape of South Africa and in Lesotho.

4 CHAPTER FOUR: SDFS AS A RECENT, LOCALISED PHENOMENON?

Having discussed how the category of SDF arose, the political and theoretical motivations behind their use by Dowson and Blundell, and the documentation of four new SDF sites detailed, what is now needed, is an explication of certain concerns I have about Dowson's and Blundell's interpretative conclusions. These concerns arose when the sites described in the previous chapter were documented. The first, and most immediate concern, was their spatial distribution. To reiterate, these new sites extend the (currently) known geographical range of SDF sites by 130 km north-northeast of the Nomansland Core Study area and 125 km east-northeast of the most northerly known SDF site, in Lesotho[9] (Figure 3.18: 46). Some may ask why this is significant, considering the range of Bushman-authored art in southern Africa. In the case of this category, however, it does present an obstacle to interpretative conclusions reached by both Dowson and Blundell.

4.1 Limited geographical range: SDFs as spatially restricted

For Dowson and, later, Blundell, physical locations of sites containing pre-eminent shaman or SDF imagery were of particular interest. Both argued that their clustering in a relatively small area of the south-eastern mountains in Nomansland was a direct result of, or response to, historical processes occurring during the last two millennia. The sequence of development from egalitarian to a stratified society in which ritual specialists held great social, economic and political sway were attested by historical records (and by comparisons to socio-political changes in Bushman society in the Kalahari in the middle of the twentieth century), and (it seemed) present in the art itself. The question of whether an extension of

[9] This site is one of Blundell's four 'outliers' or 'exceptions' that do not fall within the Nomansland Core Study Area. To this point I shall return.

geographical range destabilizes either argument can be answered by examining how integral the category's limited distribution was to each author's conclusions. I turn, first, to Dowson.

4.2 Archetype or anomaly?

There was available to Dowson a relatively rich archive of historical evidence and accounts relating to Bushmen and Bushmen-descendants and their interactions with other groups specifically in the Nomansland area in the recent past (e.g. Gibson 1981; Stanford 1910; Jolly 1986; Mazel 1989; Prins 1990). It was the 'last refuge' for Bushmen during a time of great turbulence (Dowson 1994: 339). These sources provided invaluable insight into the complex nature of hunter-gatherer/famer interaction, something that had, for a long time, been viewed as unidirectional in favour of agropastoralists. That is to say, Bushman communities were influenced by farmers, and little of Bushman culture was taken up by agropastoralists. However, 'cultural borrowing' (Hammond-Tooke 1999) had occurred on both sides. Bushmen had more agency than previously supposed and interaction altered the nature of both groups in multiple ways. As late as the 1890s, Alan George Sumner Gibson, former Coadjutor Bishop of Cape Town, commented in reference to Nomansland, that there were a group of Bushmen "who are considered the great rainmakers of their country and derive their subsistence mainly, if not entirely, from the offerings or fees they receive in return for the rain they are supposed to make" (Gibson 1891: 34). Such a statement illustrated that Bushman life had indeed altered, but that some traditional pursuits were still carried out. Ritual specialists were at the centre of this exchange.

Nearly a century later, Pieter Jolly (1986) came across a first-generation Bushman descendant, 'M' (later identified as Manqindi/Maqoqa Dyantyi), who provided him, Lewis-Williams (1986) and later Frans Prins (1990), with testimony on 'Bushman matters' (Jolly 1986: 6). Her father, Jolly suspected, had lived in the same area of which Gibson had spoken in 1891. Dyantyi was able to corroborate

evidence from ethnographies elsewhere about Bushman hunting, painting and spiritual activities. She was one of only a few people, including Qing, Silayi (a Thembu man who had spent time living with Nqabayo's band itself) and Mapote (a Sotho man who had lived with Bushmen and seen them paint), with first-hand knowledge of traditional Bushmen practice. Although some of her accounts were contradictory (Jolly 1999b:8), they still formed one of the most detailed explanations of 'Bushman matters' from someone who was of Bushman descent. There was sufficient equivalence between what she described and other ethnographic data to place on more stable ground some theories about Bushman in the realm of painting. That there was evidence that attested to painters still active in the early 20th century, was especially efficacious.

Dowson used such accounts to justify his explanation of the progression, in the art, from communal groups to pre-eminent shamans. The link between the two was significant. All three 'stages' of development were present in the art of Nomansland, more so than elsewhere (he had examples from outside Nomansland), and thus it followed that in reality there was occurring the same shift in the art as in society. Historical records seemed to prove the timeline. Also, Dowson observed few superimpositions that would disrupt the sequence. The concentration of the sequence in the area led him to believe that, even if social relations and their responses to those relationships in the art differed elsewhere, it was almost certain that the sequence was intact, and linear, in Nomansland (Dowson 1994: 340). All told, then, in terms of geographical location, Dowson comes away relatively unscathed. He does not insist that the sequence be the same everywhere, only in that small area, nor does he associate it with any specific group: his conclusions are general. The presence of pre-eminent shamans elsewhere is not explained, which is somewhat disconcerting, and the question of whether these paintings are archetypal or anomalous remains opaque. Dowson's conclusions were to have considerable impact on Blundell's work a decade later.

4.3 Regional specificity in Blundell's *Nqabayo's Nomansland*

Importantly, the assumed age of SDFs had already been accepted — Dowson's explanation had been well argued and therefore Blundell had already in his mind a contact-era timeline for the paintings. It was his mission to get even closer to their age, and to the people who made them. As such, Blundell (2004: 132) places somewhat more emphasis on SDFs' physical locations, stating: "the most striking characteristic of the SDFs is their apparent limited distributed". At the time of writing, Blundell had identified 12 sites containing SDFs within the Nomansland Core Study Area, and four "outside of, but close" to it (Blundell 2004: 132). Considering the density of sites in such a small area – indeed the majority in the Nomansland area occur in valleys immediately surrounding Storm Shelter, a hypothesis that all sites had either been painted by a single group of Bushmen (or groups closely associated with one another), seemed attractive.

Certainly, incontrovertible evidence exists that bears witness to the existence of Bushman groups living in specific places in Nomansland over a period of 150 years, from 1837 – 1990 (Jolly 1999a; Blundell 2004: 35). It would be disingenuous to contend that Blundell insists Nqabayo's band authored SDFs. Rather, Blundell inserts a caveat: lack of absolute chronology for any of the SDF images, prevented him from being *certain* of their authorship. If Nqabayo and his band-members did not make the art, they were undoubtedly aware of them. Having said this, however, Blundell follows Dowson's line and relies on historical evidence to argue that it was indeed likely that the paintings are a recent phenomenon, and all his sources are used in such a way as to convince us of the close link to Nqabayo.

Blundell cites three historical instances instrumental in legitimizing the hypothesis that Nqabayo's band had some involvement in making the paintings. These accounts are geographically specific. The first involved two colonial officials: Henry Francis Fynn and Walter Harding. First, Fynn's 1848 account of his mission, on behest of the Crown, to live with the Mpondo under Faku and investigate relationships between them and Bushmen living in the area (Blundell 2004: 35). He established that three district groups of Bushmen occupied the area in question. It was these groups Fynn suspected of involvement in stock theft in the Natal Colony (Blundell 2004: 36). Fynn wished to punish the Bushmen, but missionaries, who did not support this idea, succeeded in having Fynn removed from his post.

Harding replaced Fynn (Harding 1850 in Blundell 2007: 36). He was able to confirm that three groups did indeed inhabit the landscape: the allegedly large Thola group and two smaller bands under Mdwebo and Nqabayo respectively. The Thola were numerous and engaged in raiding over large areas and they were hostile to Nqabayo (Blundell 2004:45). Mdwebo's band, Harding (amongst others) observed moving consistently southwards, away from the mountains themselves (Wright 1971: 126). Thus, it was unlikely that either the Thola or Mdwebo's band were responsible for the paintings executed in Nqabayo's territory. This led Blundell to lean towards Nqabayo's band as authors of the art.

More supporting evidence of Nqabayo's active presence in the area came in the form of interviews conducted by the magistrate in charge of the Transkei in the 1880s — Sir Walter Stanford. Stanford (1910) interviewed three Bushmen, Mamxabela, Mkahlila and Luhayi, whom he met on the Umnga River, and Silayi, who lived with Nqabayo for a time. These informants gave accounts of activities of Nqabayo's band in the 1850s, until, in 1858, the Thembu attacked the group in retribution for cattle-theft. All men present were killed in the attack. Nqabayo survived, as he had been out hunting with a few other men. Of the women and children, Mgudhlwa (the Thembu chief who was himself responsible for the

incident) said in 1908, that they were simple taken captive, but before the Thembu reached home with their hostages some of the victors killed them as well (Stanford n.d in Blundell 2004: 37). Just one woman and two boys survived. Nqabayo sought refuge, for a time, with the Mpondomise and the last that Silayi knew of him was that he had moved towards the source of the Mzimbuvu river.

Two of the three Bushman with whom Stanford spoke had definitely been present at the 1858 attack at Gubenxa or were part of Nqabayo's group but elsewhere at the time. This revelation was valuable to Blundell, as Mamxabela, the female of the group, was one of the survivors. She had told Stanford that her husband, who was no longer living, had made paintings. Stanford came away with the impression that she "had a high opinion of his skill as an artist" (Maquarrie 1962: 29). For Blundell (2004: 45 emphases added), evidence was mounting up for Nqabayo being involved in the creation of SDFs: "Almost certainly the images discussed here come from Nqabayo's Nomansland and while we cannot say with certainty exactly which images they made, Nqabayo's people probably made many, *if not most of them*". Mamxabela's words to Stanford would impact Blundell's interpretation, but I that shall discuss in coming sections.

Finally, Dyantyi was to prove invaluable to Blundell's investigation. Dyantyi identified her father as Lindiso, who was a painter and rainmaker. He made paintings in Ngcegane shelter, to which she took archaeologists (Blundell 2004: 40). Dyantyi's testimony would have been intriguing but not necessarily that useful to Blundell if her lineage had not come to light. In letters to Stanford in 1913, Mamxabele was sought for her knowledge about painting and her son, Lindiso, was mentioned. Dyantyi's father was Lindiso, making her Mamxabela's granddaughter and therefore a direct descendant of Nqabayo's people (Blundell 2004: 41). Thus, her knowledge on matters ritual and artistic were directly handed down by that group.

All that I have described added to the importance of sites containing SDFs' apparent limited distribution. Nqabayo could be traced only to specific locations, and in those locations these sites were concentrated. This may have been why Blundell consigned sites outside of the areas known to be inhabited by the group to the status of 'exception'. Unfortunately, the new data I have covered suggests that the concept of exception is not a useful one, and that the images may not be linked to Nqabayo at all, that rather more demonstrably recent paintings were authored by them. I would contend that the images are older, or that the tradition of painting them stretched back much further than the lifespan of Nqabayo. In furtherance of the argument, I shall need to turn to what I perceive as limitations in Blundell's temporal arguments.

4.4 Temporal Specificity

Considering that the historical evidence was particularly striking — indicating unequivocally that painters remained until as late as the early twentieth century, it is no surprise that Blundell strove to place SDFs firmly in the hands of Nqabayo or his immediate antecedents. It seemed natural to do so, following from (and attempting to overcome some of the limitations of) Dowson's claim as to the motivation for and time of painting of this type of image. Blundell turned to proving that the paintings conformed age-wise – that they were a recent phenomenon and result of the turbulent social conditions Bushmen experienced during the last 500 years of increased contact with not only agropastoralists but also with European colonists. In *Nqabayo's Nomansland* he cites four arguments that "mitigate against the great antiquity of most of the rock art of Nomansland: subject matter, preservation, direct dating and historical information" (2004: 49). Scrutinizing specific examples in his thesis, as well as incorporating some aspects from the new sites documented, I shall now discuss concerns I have with Blundell's 'mitigating arguments'.

4.4.1 Subject Matter

Many paintings within the Nomansland Core Study area and beyond depict imagery and items of material culture relating to contact. These are well documented and have been discussed on various levels, through differing theoretical lenses (see, for example Jolly 2006; Sinclair Thompson 2016). A particularly well-known panel, Beersheba, in the Mount Currie District of KwaZulu-Natal (outside of the Nomansland Core Study Area) has been the object of much debate. The site contains irrefutable evidence of colonial contact (Figure 4.1). First documented by Patricia Vinnicombe, she captioned her copy "The commando scene…Irate farmers fire on Bushmen who have raided horses and cattle" (Vinnicombe 1976: 24). Colin Campbell (1987) and Dowson (2007) used the panel to argue for Bushmen agency in the face of colonial forces while others have recently argued that it contains no actual Europeans, but rather creolized raiders who have taken on colonial material culture (Challis 2008).



Figure 4.1: Patricia Vinnicombe's copy of the 'commando' panel at Beersheba. Image: RARI

In point of fact, there are instances where contact-imagery sites have been successfully tied to particular groups who were engaged in interaction and mixing with non-hunter-gatherer groups. None of these studies rely on absolute dating. I must emphasise that I do not believe it to be essential to carbon date every site. Certainly, if other methods or factors are mutually strengthening, there is no need to date the paintings absolutely (it is, of course, a costly and time-consuming endeavour). It is largely on the strength of subject matter, used as a form of relative dating, that the arguments to follow, succeed. When the subject matter does not necessarily link definitively to contact, it is then that as a chronological control, it falls short.

To the north of the Nomansland Core Study Area, in KwaZulu-Natal, Jeremy Hollman (2015) discussed a site, eMkhobeni Shelter, (Figure 4.2) where paintings that appear to be of hunter-gatherer origin incorporate imagery synonymous with traditional Nguni cultural and ritual practice. Most notable are images identifiable, Hollmann argues, as concerned with the first-fruits ceremony carried out by Nguni agriculturalists (Hollmann 2015: 525). Evidence for interaction between hunter-gatherers and agropastoralists in this more northerly region was, again, abundant, reaching far into the past and traceable to at least the nineteenth century (e.g. Mazel 1990,1992b,1992c, 1993a, 1995). With this in mind, Hollmann (2015:506, 512-524) describes a concentration of approximately 200 images stretching across 20 m of rock face at the northwest end of eMkhobeni shelter.



Figure 4.2: Colour-corrected panel shot of eMkhobeni where images associated with agriculturalist ceremony and belief are found. Photograph curtesy of Jeremy Hollmann.

The images are brush-painted and executed in red and white, yellow and white and black. Black pigment appears to have been increasingly used during the contact period, and is often associated with images of cattle, sheep, and horses. eMkhobeni itself does not contain any horses or items of material culture that would indicate production after the arrival of white colonists in the area (i.e. wagons, guns or horse). It contains, rather, images that are linked to Bantu-speaking agriculturalist practice and ideology such as sheep, cattle and items of apparel.

Close to eMkhobeni, excavated material indicates the arrival of Bantu-speaking farmers at AD 1300, where before the region had been almost exclusively the territories of hunter-gatherers (Davies 1974 in Hollman 2015: 509-510). Therefore, Hollmann suggests a tentative date range between AD 1350 and 1800 (Hollmann 2015: 510) for the images. In the paper, he discusses noteworthy figures, within the 20 m section of panels all making up a coherent (if episodic) 'panorama'. This 'panorama' was created incorporating aspects of farmer culture and ritual (particularly fertility and rain-control) (Hollman 2015: 512). For my purposes, I need only mention two aspects that directly relate to the subject matter (and in this case colour) informing the age of the paintings.

The first is one of the most striking elements of the panel: the killing, by a figure in Nguni dress, with an axe, a large bull with large, curled horns, painted in black. Hollmann is convinced that this 'scene' depicts the killing of a black bull with an axe (something that had great symbolic value to Nguni and other agriculturalists) during the first-fruit ceremony, a Nguni ritual that assured the growth and protection of crops, and which was connected with fertility (Hollmann 2015: 525). eMkhobeni painters incorporated the axe as an indicator of power (Figure 4.3). Secondly, Hollmann pays extra attention to images of cattle and sheep that are executed in black pigment, such as a black fat-tailed sheep whose body has been adorned with yellow dots (Figure 4.4). Hollman (2015) posits that the decision to paint these domesticated animals in black was a direct reference to black sheep and cattle in Nguni cosmology: black animals are used in rain-making rituals. Axel-Ivar Berglund (1976 cited in Hollman 2015: 542) emphasises the importance of the colour, and indeed weight, of animals used in Zulu rain-control images – they needed to be black and also fat. While colour may not always have been used 'factually', Hollmann's argument is nevertheless strong in this case.



Figure 4.3: Colour-corrected Human figure wields a ceremonial axe dripping in blood, as if to strike the black bull already covered in blood. This image depicts, according to Hollmann, the ceremonial slaughter of a black bull during the Nguni first-fruits ceremony. Image courtesy of Jeremy Hollmann.



Figure 4.4: Colour-corrected Black sheep with white and yellow dotted detail. Black animals were associated with Nguni rain-making ceremonies. Photograph courtesy of Jeremy Hollmann.

For Hollmann, then, the choice to depict black animals references rain-making, and the painters' power in that sphere, seeing as they were in the employ of their neighbours to make rain. Using symbols recognised by those neighbours, helped to augment the power of rainmakers. Hollmann's hypothesis of *motivation* for painting elements of the first-fruits ceremony and farmer rain-control practices was much the same as Blundell's: the paintings served to augment and increase the political and social standing of the Bushmen in response to relationships of exchange with Bantu-speaking farmers.

They are "a reality on the rock face that extended the ambit of Bushman hunter-gatherer control over fertility and rain-making into the realm of their powerful Nguni neighbours" (Hollmann 2015: 529). The images were not executed as evidence of cultural belief-mixing nor indeed of a multi-ethnic or creolized society. The subject matter of the paintings shows, without question, contact, but contact restricted to Bantu-speaking agriculturalists and not Europeans. In this way, Hollmann has been successful in arguing for their young age and the posited

authorship. Unfortunately, in Blundell's case, the link between SDFs and contact imagery is much more tenuous.

Sam Challis (Challis 2008, 2012 2014, 2017) interpreted specific paintings within the Maloti-Drakensberg as being authored, in the mid-nineteenth century, by a creolized group of raiders (the AmaTola, of whom Blundell makes mention). Members' ontologies had merged to create hybridized practices arising from mutually-intelligible cultural beliefs and epistemological similitude. As a consequence of the creolization process (whereby Bushmen[10], Nguni-speakers, 'Coloured' people from the Cape, escaped slaves and the occasional white army deserter intermarried and procreated), disparate traditions came together. Things in the world that had similar symbolic import in the original populations were employed to 'bind' the new group together (Challis 2008, 2014: 249). An example of a 'binding belief' was in a certain category of root medicine known to have protective qualities. It was termed *so-|oa* in the |Xam archive, and *U-mabope* in Bantu-speaking populations. It was believed to have had magical qualities – it could debilitate enemies and make the wearer invisible when raiding or invulnerable to projectile weapons (Challis 2014: 252). This shared understanding of a category of plant's properties was a cohesive force when disparate groups began to merge and form novel, unified groups.

Challis argued that the creolization process, and the incorporation of new, or merged shared beliefs was evident within the art itself. The paintings, produced mainly in unshaded reds, yellows and much black, are fine-line but 'stylistically' different from the traditional corpus of Bushman rock art (Figure 4.5). They

[10] During the nineteenth century, the term 'Bushman' was a complex designation. No longer was it understood as an exclusively ethnic designation, but an economic one. The term referred more to those people who had abnegated settled lifeways and taken to either raiding or foraging to survive (King & Challis 2017: 216).

exhibit subject matter which allowed for relative dating, to a surprisingly short period of some 30 years in the mid-nineteenth century (Challis 2008). The presence of horses, guns, colonial-style hats, previously interpreted as showing colonists (cf. Vinnicombe 1976), were shown to have been worn by the AmaTola themselves, as well as Xhosa-inspired feathered headdresses (Challis 2012: 277), creating a thoroughly culturally-mixed aesthetic.



Figure 4.5: An example of Amatola horsemen. Note the block colour and lack of shading. They exhibit non-Bushman attributes such as the top-knot. Image: RARI

Challis (2008, 2012, 2014) used historical sources that document the AmaTola and their activities to demonstrate that the art he discussed was indeed a product of the temporal range he suspected, and that this group of "Bushmen, Hottentots and runaway slaves" (Fynn 1850 in Challis 2012: 266) were the authors. They had taken on multiple belief-systems while maintaining the importance of Bushmen trance. The argument is compelling and, aided by the relative dating of the subject matter in conjunction with historical records, Challis succeeds in placing paintings within a temporal range and identifying their authors at once.

Attempting to place the paintings of which he speaks (including SDFs) within a firmly historical context, Blundell expounded upon the subject matter present within the wider area of Nomansland. He refers again to Stanford who, speaking

of his return to Nomansland, "found that many of the Bushman paintings were obviously of a modern time" (Maquarrie 1962: 26 cited in Blundell 2004: 50). He made this assessment based upon the subject matter alone — in Nomansland there are indeed many sites that contain within them riders on horseback, guns, wide-brimmed hats, wagons and the like.

Instances of 'white men', however, have been argued not to represent colonists at all, but 'Bushmen' who had adopted aspects of colonial dress during the nineteenth century (Blundell 2004: 50; Challis 2012: 265). That Stanford was so enthralled by the inclusion of contemporary material culture and apparent representations of colonists themselves interacting with the Bushmen was significant. Added to this was the fact that, at Ngcegane shelter (the site at which Lindiso is known to have painted), colonial imagery is present, proved that "many paintings were made during the colonial period" (Blundell 2004: 50). Of course, such a statement is true: many paintings in Nomansland *are* contact/colonial era. An issue arises, however, if one equates contact imagery at *some* sites, with fine-line, polychrome images that happen to be within those sites and subsequently extend that association to sites in which no contact imagery exists at all.

Mamxabela and Silayi both commented on the skill of Bushmen painters. During his interviews with the three Bushmen whom Stanford encountered in the late 19th century, he was told by Mamxabela that her husband had been a painter. Stanford came away with the impression that she "had a high opinion of his skill as an artist" (Maquarrie 1962:29). Silayi, too, commented upon Bushman art. He was of the opinion that they were adept artists and painted well, also attesting to the fact that they used brushes to paint. Lindiso was Mamxabela's son and Manqindi Dyantyi's father, so it is possible that Mamxabela's husband painted at Ngcegane shelter as well. Blundell inferred from the two accounts which paintings may have been made by Nqabayo's band. In the shelter, along with the images of contact mentioned above, is an image Blundell terms an SDF, painted in the fine-line tradition. This type of image, showing much 'skill' must then have been the type

of painting to which Silayi and Mamxabela referred. This strengthened the link between Nqabayo's people or their immediate antecedents and SDF sites on a more general scale (Blundell 2004: 132).

Coming to this conclusion is somewhat troubling, for it implies what is, and is not, 'skilful' painting, and smacks of a distinctly Western art-historical scale of 'beauty' or expertise. Skill may have had a different meaning to the interviewees; it may have denoted power, or pace. We do not have the resolution in historical accounts of painting to identify what was understood as 'skilful' or aesthetically pleasing to Mamxabela or Silayi. Within the shelter there are contact images (indeed the supposed SDF is superimposed by more recent white quadrupeds). Such a presumption cannot be verified, and thus is better discarded.

There are two more instances where I take issue with Blundell's supporting evidence (in the form of subject matter) for a recent date of the paintings. One of these is a passing comment in the thesis, but one of which I feel I must make mention. Although Blundell places a maximum age of SDF imagery at around 2000 years, he is inclined to think that they are much more recent, with an age of within the last 500 years (when the first Europeans were encountered by Bushmen and during the period of intense interaction with Bantu-speaking neighbours). This was a time of cultural mixing, hybridization and creolization (Blundell 2004: 129). Indeed, we know that creolization and hybridization was occurring during the period he discusses. However, Blundell emphasizes both essential 'Sanness' and hybridization, two concepts which are incompatible with one another.

What strikes me as jarring is Blundell's assertion that some LH-SDFs — which are, he argues, the last phase of the decreasing importance of the post-cranial body as embodied experiences were altered in this new and tumultuous social environment — possess facial features that are non-Bushman (Blundell 2004: 177). He characterizes them as being amalgams of non-Bushman identities,

including Asian, European and Bantu-speaking peoples, and as a form of portraiture showing the very real processes of creolization. At the same time, they were "an attempt by individual potency-owners to manipulate their personal identities to be more appropriate for the diverse and complex creolized milieu during the colonial period" (Blundell 2004: 77). For Blundell, the example that typifies this milieu is the LH-SDF at RSA-MIE1 (Figure 5.6). He (Blundell 2004: 155) describes the LH-SDF having "a straight nose and a large, rounded eye which are facial features characteristic of Europeans" and therefore representing "a transforming San potency-owner in the spirit world, who has incorporated aspects of European facial physiology".

The problem with this is quite an obvious one. Without the luxury of being able to ask someone who themselves painted the images, it is almost impossible to assess what these faces are intended to show. It is an example, again, of an assumption based on a Western ideology where the impulse is to categorize, and perhaps to overemphasize Western influence- we cannot assume incorporation into cosmological and ontological systems or their representational forms. Blundell posits that potency owners were 'refashioning' their identities to incorporate the 'other'. Surely this somewhat elevates Europeans? In addition, without chronological control, we cannot be sure they were painted after the time of contact with non-African settlers. It may be that adding chronological control could assist in testing this. Many SDFs have not only unusual faces, they are often distinctly *non-human*. Instead of assigning ethnic identity to each SDF, I suggest that the incorporation of non-human elements may indeed be of more interpretative value.



Figure 4.6: LH-SDF at RSA-MEI. Blundell interprets this as a potency-owner incorporating European identity into his own. (left) Blundell's redrawing of the LH-SDF at RSA-MEI1. After Blundell (2004:140). Scale in centimeters. (right) Images RARI

Secondly, Blundell argues that association with contact imagery is a feature of most SDF sites. This contact imagery is not to be confused with the Type 2 paintings for whom Blundell credits hybridized or non-Bushman groups living with them in shelters (Blundell 2004: 129). The contact imagery Blundell associates directly with SDFs is painted in the same fine-line, polychrome style as the traditional corpus. Having scrutinised Blundell's SDF sites, I find only a small number that could *possibly* be argued as contact. Even these I would be hesitant to interpret definitely as belonging within contact-range. The most well-known example of this occurs at the RSA-MEL6 sites in the Maclear District. Blundell interprets a strange figure (Figure 4.7) to the right of the cluster of paintings including the SDF as having cattle horns. While it is possible that they represent cow horns, they are not diagnostic enough to make that judgement, and considering that it is the only image of its kind or of contact-material, I find it

unlikely to be so. In the case of the newly documented sites, none of the four contain any identifiable contact imagery, and I believe them to be of a greater age than that to which Blundell assigns the category.

In addition, sites that *do* have contact imagery within them usually contain many more than simply one image, as during the contact period animals like cattle and sheep became interwoven into Bushman ontology, and came, often, to replace symbols like the eland. LES-MTM1, close to Thaba Moroosi in Lesotho, contains an anthropomorphic figure Blundell argues is an SDF and this figure has on a headdress that is more convincingly cow-horned. But, Bushmen came into contact with cattle almost 2000 years ago (Henshilwood 1996; Sadr: 2015), and having cattle painted simply puts the painting within that time-frame. It could be that the tradition of painting SDFs was simply a long-lasting one, as most sites with SDFs do not contain any diagnostically-contact imagery. There are no knobkerries, no shields, no spears, no sheep, no horses or guns painted at any of the SDF sites.



Figure 4.7: Dowson's re-drawing of the panel to the left of the SDF at RSA-MEL6. Blundell calls the horns cow-horns. It is possible that they are. Image: RARI

4.4.2 Preservation

Second on Blundell's list of 'mitigating' evidence is 'preservation'. Blundell argues that most of the Nomansland imagery he is concerned with is in good condition. He is able to make this statement on account, mainly, of white pigment, which in most cases for SDFs and LH-SDFs is clear and bright (Blundell 2004: 51). According to Blundell in South Africa and elsewhere "only a few images show traces of white as the pigment is fleeting" (Blundell 2004:51). As such, the Nomansland images must be relatively recent. Blundell declares that the south-eastern mountains are not suited to the long-term preservation of white pigment as a consequence of climactic conditions and geology. The Drakensberg/Lesotho escarpment and mountains are a large catchment area, receiving between 700 and 800 mm of rainfall in the summer months (Nel & Sumner 2008: 104), which is detrimental to preservation. The soft, porous nature of sandstone and the lack of significant protection from the elements inside the relatively shallow sandstone shelters in which the images are painted also affect the rate at which pigment deteriorates (Blundell 2004: 51). Unfortunately, there are a number of problems with the statement. Firstly, at the time, only few studies had been conducted on characterizing pigments and paints (Bonneau *et al*. 2012).

These studies were small and unsystematic (e.g. Solomon & Hughes 2000). That meant Blundell had little to base this assertion on. It was largely untestable, and normally, an untestable hypothesis is discarded out of hand. It is puzzling that Blundell chose to emphasize the point. It is observable that white is often absent from images as it has indeed faded, but by no means do only a *few* images maintain their white pigment. It is common for white to remain — I myself have seen hundreds of images with distinct white pigment visible. However, my observations do not prove anything either. What is needed is rigorous testing of paintings containing white paint. We are fortunate, then, that this has recently been carried out.

In 2010, Adelphine Bonneau, David Pearce and colleagues embarked upon an ambitious project to improve direct dating protocols in order to advance our understanding of painting chronology. A consequence of the programme, aside of course from obtaining dates, was the development of more sophisticated characterization of the pigments themselves, and the identification and subsequent removal of contaminates (Bonneau *et al*. 2011, 2012). The project has grown extensively over the last seven years, and we have available to us a much-improved dataset of pigments that have been characterized. The protocol includes *in-situ* removal of a 'barely visible' paint sample which is then cleaned and characterization done on the sample (Bonneau *et al*. 2017a: 663). By taking the initial minute sample the viability of the paint can be tested without removing too much paint. If the sample is viable the image is sampled once more. Following this are a number of processes (for a detailed explanation see Bonneau *et al.* 2017a): microscopic observations show eolian deposits, homogeneousness of the layer, over-painting and thickness of the paint, Raman spectrometry detects what the paint and any adjacent layers are comprised of, Scanning Electron Microscopy with Energy Dispersive Spectroscopy (SEM-EDS) allows for elemental analysis, and Fourier Transform Infrared Spectroscopy (FTIR) confirms whether any ^{14}C contaminates are present. The project also managed to improve the initial (Bonneau *et al* 2011) pretreatment process. (Bonneau *et al* 2017a: 668-667).

Currently available data from the project serves to illuminate a possible answer to the question of whether white paint is consistently fugitive. A good proportion of the samples that yielded these results came from rock art sites that were to be destroyed by the creation of the Metolong Dam in Lesotho. In 2008, a much-needed heritage management program called the Metolong Cultural Resource Management project began (MCRM), on the proposed site of the Metolong Dam in Lesotho, the Phuthiatsana Valley (Arthur *et al*. 2011: 232). Over a period of four years archaeological sites to be flooded were meticulously recorded, excavated and for some of the rock art sites, removed for curation. The dam project provided archaeologists with an opportunity to gain more insight into the history of the Lesotho lowlands (for publications relating to excavated material

and the mandate for community 'capacity building' from Metolong see Mitchell & Arthur 2010; Arthur *et al* 2011; King *et al*. 2014; King & Arthur 2014; Mitchell & Arthur 2014). It was fortuitous that sites were to be flooded because it provided Bonneau *et al.* with an opportunity to collect pigment samples. It was found that there exist, at four sites in the Phuthiatsana Valley in Lesotho at least three distinct white pigments made from different materials: gypsum, calcite or white clay (Bonneau *et al*. 2014: 319). This correlates with previous small-scale studies conducted in South Africa (e.g. Solomon & Hughes 2000). These pigments were identified using SEM-EDS and their use in the paintings analysed.

The results of this analysis revealed that the same pigment was used to paint a single figure (i.e. no eland painted were found to contain more than one white, all white features contained the same pigment). Different white paints were present within a shelter, and there seemed to be some pattern indicating which of the whites certain types of images were painted with. The authors (Bonneau *et al.* 2014: 321) cite ARAL 154 as the best example of this, as all three pigments were used in the shelter. It appears that, in ARAL 154 at least, animals were painted in calcite and human figures in gypsum. Admittedly, the authors are not able to tell whether the images are contemporaneous or not, but both have interesting implications: either different subjects were intentionally separated by pigment, or calcite and gypsum were, for some reason, used at disparate points in history (Bonneau *et al*. 2014: 321-322). Although more research is needed before any hypothesis can safely be proposed, the work has nevertheless added significantly to our knowledge of Bushmen's use of white paint.

The ramifications the work has for Blundell's use of white as an indicator of young age are significant. It showed that different pigments have been used in paintings over a wide area, implying that different pigments must have been used in the Nomansland area as well. If white pigment is made with different materials, then it is likely that these pigments deteriorate at varied rates. In the future, it may

be possible for researchers involved in the dating project to get closer to an answer to the question of rates of deterioration.

Finally, and most importantly, paintings containing white were dated. One example, the hoof of an eland from the Maseru District in Lesotho, returned a date of 2326–965 cal. BP (Bonneau *et al*. 2017c:16). Although the date was acquired from a small amount of carbon, and therefore should be 'treated cautiously', it accorded well with other dates obtained in the area (Bonneau *et al*. 2017b). Within the Nomansland area as well, paintings with white have been dated. Black paint from the face of a polychrome eland (red, white and black) at RSA-TYN2 returned the earliest date for the shelter at 2998-2381cal. BP (Bonneau *et al* 2017b: 331), revealing the longevity of at least the specific white that was used to form the eland. A sample (CHA1-C1) was taken also from a shaded polychrome eland at RSA-CHA1 (Figure 4.8) as part of the Maclear data. The eland, though somewhat damaged retains its white pigment. Black pigment from the leg of the eland was removed and returned a date of 2848–2352 cal. BP (Bonneau *et al*. 2017b: 331).



Figure 4.8: Polychrome shaded eland from which sample CHA1-C1 was removed. Dated to 2848 - 2352 cal. BP. RSA-CHA1 contains an SDF as well. Photograph: RARI.

It is clear from the data obtained by Bonneau *et al*. that white pigment was not a homogenous paint, that multiple materials were used to manufacture it. Also, images with white elements that have been dated have proven to be 2000 years old or older. Therefore, I contend that the deterioration rate of white pigment is not a valid argument for a recent date of the Nomansland art.

4.4.3 Direct Dating

In the early 2000s, there were few direct dates for paintings in southern Africa. Indeed, only a handful were available. The first ^{14}C age determination obtained by the use of accelerator mass spectrometry (AMS) was published in 1987 (van der Merwe *et al*. 1987). Later Mazel and Watchman published two separate sets of dates in 1997 and 2003 (Mazel & Watchman 1997, 2003), taken from calcium oxalate crusts, which provided *post quos and termini ante quos* dates for the paintings, and not dates for the act of painting itself (Bonneau *et al.* 2017a:673).

The first of these dating projects returned recent dates of 507-297 cal. BP and 690-50 cal. BP in the Drakensberg (Mazel and Watchman 1997: 448). Subsequent dates published in 2003 were considerably older: between 3000 and 4000 BP. At the time, the validity of the 2003 dates had not yet been examined, being published only a year before *Nqabayo's Nomansland* was published and Blundell appears sceptical of them when he says "*If* the techniques used for extraction, preparation and dating of these eight samples survive critical scrutiny, then the age of some of the paintings in the south-eastern mountains is between 3000 and 4000 BP" (Blundell 2004: 51 my emphasis). The impression one gets is that Blundell was more comfortable with the younger dates. Luckily today, we have the luxury a large-scale ^{14}C dating project led by Pearce and Bonneau.

4.5 Recent developments: building a timeline for Bushman art in southern Africa

As mentioned above, in 2010 Pearce and Bonneau embarked upon an ambitious project to improve direct dating of Bushman paintings in southern Africa. They aimed, before the actual dating, to economise on the damage done to paintings from extraction of samples, and to develop protocols that ensured removal of all contaminants which may affect the reliability of the date (Bonneau *et al* 2011, 2012). From RSA-TYN2, in the Maclear District of the Eastern Cape (a site containing an SDF) they collected 154 fragments of fallen, painted flakes that had spalled from the back wall of the shelter. Thirty-three of these were used in analysis (Bonneau *et al* 2011: 420, 2012). FTIR and Raman spectrometry were used to assess contamination and composition respectively. Black pigments were identified as carbon black. It was an important discovery, as it indicated the dates obtained from black samples containing carbon black likely reflect the actual painting event or a short time before, as carbon black (e.g. soot) does not survive for long periods (Bonneau *et al* 2011: 422). Three samples (from RSA-TYN2), having been pretreated, were dated. The samples date to between 2111-1882 cal. BP. What this suggested was a longevity of paint on the rock face that had not been certain before this time. Success led the authors to expand the project significantly over the next six years. However, it was important that some of the protocols used at the start of the project needed to be improved. In order to achieve this goal, large paint samples were required (Bonneau *et al* 2017a: 660). The future flooding (discussed above) of the Phuthiatsana Valley and its rock art, was the perfect scenario in which to take them (after the art had been thoroughly documented and traced).

Another dam project provided Pearce and his colleagues with an additional opportunity to collect paint samples. This was the Thune Dam in the Kalahari Desert, Botswana. Six rock art sites were to be flooded and another 18 possibly affected by future, serious natural flooding (Bonneau et al. 2017a: 660) and therefore similar management and recording strategies were needed, as at

Phuthiatsana, in order to keep, for posterity, the data from the sites that were to be destroyed. Further samples were taken from sites in the Maclear District, South Africa, bringing the total samples to be used to 41 from the three areas (Bonneau *et al*. 2017a: 659). Each was subjected to the protocols I have described above and from them were obtained dates that can indeed stand up to closer scrutiny. Results of the dating project can, and will in the future, improve our understanding of the chronology and development of Bushmen art in southern Africa. The oldest dates so far published come from the Thune Dam samples, with sample TD12-2012-6 returning a calibrated age (95.4% confidence) of 5723-4420 BP, which is the oldest known date from the rock face itself, in all of southern Africa (Bonneau *et al* 2017b: 331).

I am more concerned in this study, however, with the dates obtained from the Maclear District in South Africa, because these dates represent part of the chronology of Nomansland Bushman art and come from some sites in which there are SDFs painted. All the imagery sampled, bar one site, is of the fine-lined, 'colour-gradient' (Bonneau *et al* 2017b:327) Bushman tradition and are therefore all relevant to me. The most exciting thing about the results of the project is that they indicate, in all likelihood, the precise time of paint production – a concern with absolute dating that has dogged the discipline for many years.

Initial samples for dating were from RSA-TYN2 in 2010, from the spalled flakes of which I have already made mention. Samples TYN2 RP/2009/0003/13, TYN2 RP/2009/0003/29 and TYN2 RP/2009/0003/14 returned dates with a calibrated range from 2120-1890 cal BP (Bonneau *et al*. 2011: 426). Although they could not be matched to any particular painting, it was at the time an exciting result (the oldest direct date thus far). RSA-TYN2 has an SDF, so subsequent dating of the panels themselves have been of particular interest to me. Although the SDF itself was not dated, in 2017 the sample size had increased to 8 and reflected a calibrated range between 2748-1585 BP. (Bonneau *et al*. 2017b: 330-331).

The date range of RSA-TYN2 indicates that many of the paintings were executed before contact with Bantu-speaking farmers, or very soon afterwards. It would be difficult to argue that such a complex set of social and political responses to contact with Bantu-speaking famers had taken place over that time, and certainly strongly indicates against the paintings (including the SDF) being produced during the last 200 or even 500 years. Furthermore, there are no demonstrably contact images in the fine-line, shaded polychrome tradition present at RSA-TYN2. Type 3 images are present but are finger-painted and not in association with the fine-line imagery (Mallen 2008).

Another site in the Maclear District to be dated was Storm Shelter (referred to by its catalogue name LAB1). As stated in Chapter Two, Storm Shelter was the catalyst that propelled Blundell to write *Nqabayo's Nomansland* and as such, I am very fortunate that it was chosen by Pearce to be dated. All samples from RSA-LAB1 come from the main panel on the northern end of the shelter (Bonneau *et al* 2017c: 30). Although some difficulty was experienced with a few of the samples, once those were discarded the calibrated range from Storm Shelter is 1189 – 2998 BP. The most recent dates (for example LAB1-2013-C3, the horn of a polychrome eland, dating to 1585-1189 cal. BP), show that parts of Storm shelter were painted more recently than RSA-TYN2, and are well within the range of contact with Bantu-speaking farmers.

Yet, if one follows Blundell's argument, the SDFs in Storm Shelter (Figure 4.9) should have been painted still later than this because they are LH-SDFs, a later development within the alleged sequence. LH-SDFs only appeared in the art sometime after the time Nomansland became part of a 'global colonial system' from the mid-eighteenth century when colonial interactions intensified (Blundell 2004: 146). The loss of the post-cranial body and the diminished detail below the neck on LH-SDFs was a result of Bushman understanding, manipulating and incorporating themselves into the increasingly hybridized world in which they lived (Blundell 2004: 55). Blundell posits that an effective way to do this was to

include non-Bushman facial features into the SDFs — this was a means of 'refashioning' their own identity (Blundell 2004: 156). I have already expressed my worry about assigning ethnic identity to the faces of LH-SDFs so I need not repeat it. Suffice to say I do not think it attestable. Dates from Storm Shelter do not accord with this theory either.

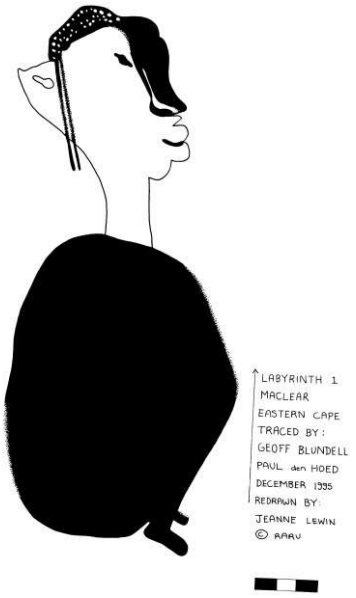


Figure 4.9: 'Secondary' LH-SDF at Storm Shelter. Colours: Clear represents white, black red. Traced by Blundell and Paul den Hoed, redrawn by Jeanne Lewin. Image: RARI.

Finally, there is one more site that was dated in the Maclear District which produced some interesting, and pertinent information. The site in question is RSA-LAB7, located on the same property as Storm Shelter. What is intriguing about LAB7 is the fact that out of the six sites dated in Maclear, it was only one that returned a date within the last 300 years. Two samples were taken from a large, entirely black elephant image and from these a calibrated range of 273-10 BP was derived. Of particular importance is the 'style' and subject matter associated with the elephant.

Many figures are black alone. Not only this, but LAB7 contains numerous contact images, Sotho shields in particular (see Sinclair Thompson 2016).

Here we have an example of a contact site much like the sites Hollmann and Challis are concerned with: sites that can indisputably be tied to specific times in the contact era and that do not, like some of the SDF sites, contain only single examples of *possible* contact imagery but abound with it. Most importantly we now have the date to back up the visual, relative-dating evidence. The question then becomes: if we have sites in such close proximity to Storm Shelter and the Melrose sites proving unambiguously that they belong to the contact era, but painted in a different style (although still fine-line), then is this yet another group of people painting in the exact time *and place* Nqabayo's band were here? Evidence suggests that the groups who did exist at the time were hostile to one another: does this not pose a problem? Could it be, rather, that Nqabayo's band painted LAB7? I do not presume to have an answer to that question, and of course this is only one date but it is a vexing point that will need further investigation.

The overall picture given of dates produced by Pearce and Bonneau is of a tradition of painting (that is the fine-line 'LSA' Bushman tradition) extending back to some 3000 years. The majority of images sampled were produced between 2500 and 1500 years ago. Two sites of the six dated contain SDFs and neither of these produced dates within the last 500 BP range, suggesting that perhaps neither SDFs nor LH-SDFs were painted as recently as (and, by extension, for the purpose) Blundell hypothesizes. Of course, there is the possibility that, as more dates are produced, more light will be shed on the matter. There remains in Blundell's arsenal only one facet used to support the 'SDFs as recent' argument.

4.6 Historical Sources: SDFs in the recent past?

The historical material supposedly supporting the claim that SDFs are a recent phenomenon is the same used to legitimize their regional specificity and I therefore shall not repeat much of it. Blundell (2004: 51) emphasises in this section that historical records prove in Nomansland there were painters still active from the 1850s through to the very early twentieth century. We know this from Silayi's, Mamxabela's and Manqindi's testimonies. Mamxabela's husband and son, Lindiso, were both painters (Lindiso painted in Ngcegane shelter itself, we are told by Manqindi Dyantyi) and Silayi witnessed painters in the 1850's. There is nothing controversial about this information, and we are privileged that these records were taken, but despite this, there is no definitive link in the material between the artists we *know* were painting during that period and the fine-line, polychrome tradition to which the SDFs belong. Blundell builds the hypothesis that there *is* a link from comments made by Mamxabela and Silayi about the painters being adept at their work (which I have already argued is distinctly Western art-historical). Without direct dates to conclusively prove the connection, we cannot accept the hypothesis. Moreover, at Ngcegane shelter there are demonstrably contact-era paintings that are fine-line but bichrome and without shading (Figures 4.10 and 4.11). It is far more likely that these images were painted by Dyantyi's forebears.



Figure 4.10: Equid, antelope and canid imagery present in Ngcegane shelter. The horse image in particular places the painting of images within the timeframe that Lindiso was painting at the shelter. Image: RARI.



Figure 4.11: Antelope and remains of a wagon painted at Ngcegane Shelter, both painted in the same pigment. The wagon attests to the recent age of the paintings, as wagons only reached this part of South Africa after the mid-1830s (Tylor 1893 cited in Ward 1997: 83)

Evidence relating to subject matter, preservation, direct dating and historical material falling somewhat short of the mark, it may be fruitful to suggest alternative avenues of investigation. Indeed, if a re-examination of the material points to disagreement between evidence and interpretation in terms of both geographical and temporal range then the category itself must be examined in greater detail.

5 CHAPTER 5: WHEN IS A CATEGORY NOT A CATEGORY?

Blundell's hypothesis of the context in which images termed SDFs were created was well-formulated and justified using strands of evidence apparently in agreement with one another: the rock art itself and historical records viewed from a seemingly postcolonial perspective. However, images very much like Blundell's SDFs are painted over a wider geographical area than previously assumed. A number of sites at which previously known SDFs are painted have been sampled, returning dates predating contact with Bantu-speaking farmers. Considering that regional and spatial specificity were substantial components of Blundell's argument, taken by themselves these developments cast some doubt upon the hypothesis that these images were produced by a particular group of socially-stratified Bushmen or Bushmen-descendants of mixed or multi-ethnic cultural backgrounds. Admittedly, regional and spatial specificity were not what ultimately brought the argument together: it was the apparent solidity of the category itself.

The category was created, first by Dowson (1993, 1994) based both on empirical observation of the differences in execution between anthropomorphic 'shaman' figures present in the rock art of the south-eastern Mountains, and on historical evidence for change in Bushman society during contact with Bantu-speaking farmers. In essence Dowson, followed by Blundell, created a rock art typology that was traced to a specific period in time. However, if these images were *not* painted recently (or not tightly bound only to a recent timeframe), the images are likely to mean different things. If the category holds, we may be able to 'model' an alternative, general interpretation. If it crumbles, then the category, as it stands, must be dissolved and images interpreted based on other criteria. In order to assess which alternative is likely the case, I have undertaken a thorough examination of all salient elements of the category, as I suspect that it does not represent an emically-produced category but one constructed from an etic

perspective based on Western concepts of historical materialism, as much as Blundell railed against such analysis. Before I expand on the results of this endeavour it may be useful to explore first how categorization and classification is understood, carried out, and what criticisms have been levelled against its use in archaeology.

The *Concise dictionary of social and cultural anthropology* (Morris 2012: 34) defines 'category' as a "division within a system of classification", which is understood in the same text (Morris 2012: 39) as "the arrangement of things or concepts into categories organised by common characteristics". In an archaeological context, the term 'classification' is defined as "the ordering of archaeological data into groups (e.g. categories, classes, types) using various ordering systems" (Darvill 2009). Archaeologists have been placing things into categories for as long as the discipline has been in existence, and indeed debating the appropriateness of the endeavour as new theoretical perspectives come to prominence (e.g. Rouse 1960; Hodder and Hutson 2003; Palicas 2015). Relatively recently there has been a shift in approach to typologies in post-processual archaeology, where defining types has become less important than "describing multi-dimensional surfaces of variability on which the 'type' can be seen to vary in context" (Hodder & Hudson 2003: 208). However, the human impulse to classify and categorise is not confined to archaeology. It has been a concern since the age of Aristotelian philosophy, and while there is no place here to discuss the sometimes-vociferous debates that have sprung up in this arena through the ages, the fact that thinkers have been grappling with the concept for thousands of years is certainly worth mentioning. The appropriateness of categories and classification as an organising principle of epistemology has received much attention. In reference to the manner in which Blundell uses categories to understand people, a short discussion of Foucauldian philosophy is relevant.

Michel Foucault (1970) in his topically-named work *The order of things: An archaeology of the human sciences*, traces the historical 'knowing of things' and the ways in which knowledge acquisition was constructed along varying organising principles in the fields of linguistics, biology and economics. Dealing with three periods in history (the Renaissance, the Classical and the Modern periods), Foucault introduces and examines the concept of epistemes, the organising principles of truth that exist in each of these. The Classical Period, operating during the 17th and 18th centuries (also the period in which Cartesian epistemology predominated), is characterised as a preoccupation with taxonomia, the biological classification of things into orders (Foucault 1970: 73). Where the Renaissance period had been concerned with simple similarities and difference, it was during the Classical Period that categorisation of all things became canonised – it was the governing system of knowledge. While evolution was yet to be understood, the concept of change over time was (Major-Poetzl 2017: 80), and therefore, modelling the progression of a taxon over time did take place. Although Foucault would have us believe that when one episteme replaces the other, no vestige of its predecessor remains, José Merquior (1985 36-39), a staunch critic of Foucault, argues successfully that, unlike Kuhnian paradigms, epistemes do not wipe one another out, nor are they unable to 'communicate' with one another. According to Foucault (1970) the Classical Period was replaced by Modern Period (from the late 18th century to the 20th century) in which the modern episteme was distinctly focussed upon man himself and not on objects – humans began to "historicize life, labour and language" (Merquoir 1985: 51). However, it seems as if categorisation (although focussed less on natural history and biology) was still a preoccupation. The contemporary episteme, starting from 1950, was supposed to have broken from anthropocentrism. Unfortunately, this has not been the case. What is useful about Foucault is that in *The Order of Things,* it is clear that historical Western society has been systematically preoccupied with the categorisation of things into boxes. What is also clear, however, is that one episteme can span much longer periods of time than Foucault theorises. The desire to categorise is, in a sense, an episteme of its own. It is seemingly an unconsciously-validated form of knowing things – in order to better understand a

group of objects or subjects, categorization by similitude and difference paves the way for comparative analysis and interpretation. It is in this way that Blundell is Foucauldian in his use of the category.

Further, the classification of the form of images used by Blundell can be said to be polythetic and hierarchical - that is, that it "allows overlapping subsets of attributes to be used in defining membership of a defined class" (Morris 2012:199) and that it supposes that SDFs are hierarchically superior (both in literal and symbolic form) to other types of anthropomorphic figures. An SDF is not required to be made up of every identifying characteristic in order for it to be included in the category (although some characteristics, at least, are essential). Those fundamental characteristics distinguish, and therefore elevate SDFs above other images. Because the interpretation of SDFs as a class in southern African rock art had already been attempted by Dowson, the typological characteristics of the category fed into the interpretation for Blundell, rather than vice versa. There is some value in organising artefacts by types into typologies – to describe, but not interpret, archaeological material, for example (Voorrips 1982: 108). Problems arise when using a type to advance theories that do not take into account emic perspectives or the multitudinous variation in human experience. Therefore, what is concerning is whether this classification is one based mostly on a Western desire to put 'things' into boxes, or whether the category does speak to indigenous epistemology. By breaking the category down into its constituent parts and testing them against both the new data and Bushman ethnography, we may solve the problem. To begin, we start with an item of material culture Blundell associates closely with SDFs: the stick.

5.1 Associated material culture: Sticks from a Bushman perspective

Several of the images referred to as SDFs, as discussed in Chapter Two, are associated with sticks. Blundell treated these as 'staffs' indicating social authority and 'greatness'. There are a number of problems with this position, however. One example is Blundell's use of Diä!kwain's comments on a painting (Figure 2.5:17) Taken on its own the extract (on page 17) seems to suggest that the stick is representative of 'greatness', and therefore plays a similar role to that of the Khoekhoen 'chiefs'' staffs.

However, when one examines what Diä!kwain (Bleek 1935:12) says next, the meaning shifts:

> That is why he dances first, because he wants the people who are learning sorcery to dance after him. For he is dancing, teaching sorcery to the people. That is why he is dancing first, for he wants the people who are learning to dance as he does. For when a sorceror [sic] is teaching us, he first dances the *Ilke:n* dance, and those who are learning dance after him as he dances.

The stick, in this instance, is used by a teacher to teach sorcery and dancing to those who want to learn. Those ritual specialists who are elders are held in high regard, not by virtue of their differential status in the community, but for their knowledge and experience in ritual matters (e.g. Katz *et al.* 1997; Keeney & Keeney 2015). Although Diä!kwain uses the phrase 'great man', and 'great sorcerer', the reference appears to relate to ritual prowess and knowledge, and not indicative of social stratification. The ritual specialist or 'sorcerer' does not dance in front of everyone because he is more important; he dances in front as instruction. 'Authority' is earned with experience and, as such, I would suggest that greatness is more appropriately understood in terms of eldership. What sticks themselves signify needs to be understood from an emic, Bushman perspective.

Luckily, we have recourse to Bushman ethnography from both the |Xam archive and the Ju|'hoansi ethnographies for the problem of how sticks are used and understood. In the *Bushman Dictionary* (Bleek 1956: 759) of the |Xam language, the word 'stick' has 69 translations, and therefore doubtless had multiple meanings and multiple contexts in which it occurred – all of which had different implications. However, one iteration that is pertinent to us here, is the context of the dance, where either Bleek or Lloyd understood that the stick in question (referred to in the passage as ||*kha)* was a dancing stick. The word *o !k?õä/k?õä-ka* precedes ||*kha* and references the dance (the *Bushman Dictionary* provides variants of this word including: |*kõ, |kõ-o, ǂk''oa)*. Accordingly, the stick Diä!kwain speaks of cannot be a 'staff' in the sense Blundell assumes, since dancing sticks had specific uses and nowhere in the |Xam texts are sticks equated with social stratification. Other beliefs about sticks *are* referenced in the |Xam archive. One of these is an interesting epistemological position held by the |Xam, and made clear to us in the transcriptions of the |Xam archive: the agency of sticks. Indeed, they are, in some Early Race Narratives, described as being able to speak and move of their own volition (WB.II.391-420) While not commonly referenced in the archive, the agency or *animacy* of sticks does play a role in certain narratives. I shall not delve further into this point here, but return to it in Chapter Seven when I discuss in what alternative ways we may interpret strange, large, and detailed human figures. From this brief foray into the Bleek and Lloyd archive, it is clear that the presence of a stick in association with an SDF simply cannot be reduced to a single interpretation.

Moreover, these various uses and implications are not unique to the |Xam but are evident in the ethnographies of the northern Ju|'hoansi of Botswana in the mid-twentieth century. Sticks serve multiple purposes in ritual contexts for the Ju|'hoansi. In some cases, ritual specialists hold sticks as dancing aids to support the torso (Lee 1967: 31) (Figure 5.1). During the dance, the stick may be simply for balance, or (pertinent to what is observable in the rock art) be held out in front of the dancer (Marshall 1969: 363). Additionally, they 'accentuate dance moves', and act as supports for the dancers as they bend forward (Katz 1982: 39).

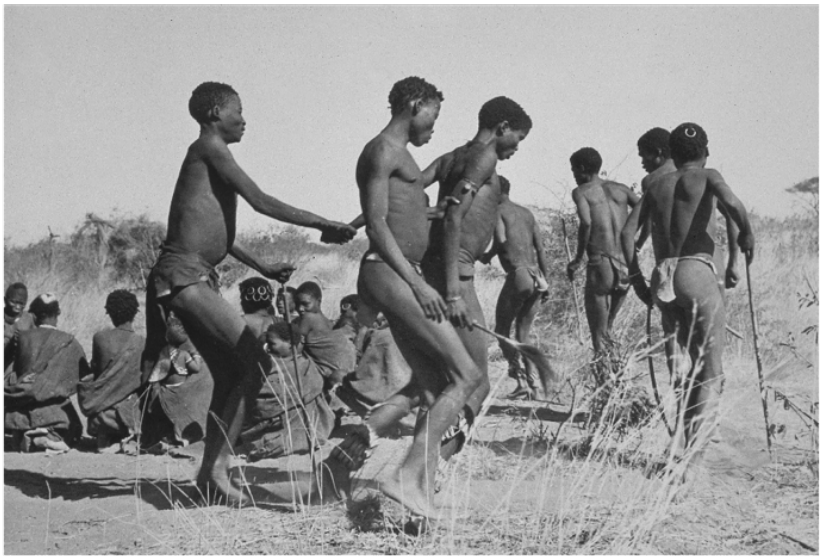


Figure 5.1: A Ju'/hoansi healing dance underway in the 1950s. Three dancers are visibly carrying their sticks. Photographer: Lorna Marshall, image: RARI

Alternatively, sticks are employed in the service of spiritual tasks that ritual specialists undertake during trance experience. Richard Katz (1982: 205) recounts an event, during a dance when Chuko, a female healer, utilises a burning stick from the fire to facilitate a ritual 'fusion' between her and her son, Dua. Taking the smouldering stick, she passes it repeatedly under Dua's neck, after which she collapses and the two, bound together in the spirit world, mutually heal one another. If the task is to combat the evil intentions of the spirits-of-the-dead (known as the ||*gauwa-si*); occasionally ritual specialists will, after unsuccessfully imploring the spirits to depart, throw sticks at them. In this way they protect the community from the malevolent objectives of the ||*gauwa-si* (Marshall 1969: 50). Indeed, to this day sticks are ubiquitous to the dance, as I observed when

attending the Kuru Dance Festival[11] held 40 kms north of the Botswanan town of Ghanzi (Figure 5.2) in August of 2016.

Finally, dancing sticks may be imbued with *n|om* (supernatural potency present in ritual specialists, animals, songs and elsewhere) during the dance (Katz 1982: 182) and consequently have their own 'power', which may further attest to their ability to assist in the spiritual tasks specialists perform. Thus, the link between the Khoekhoen staffs and Bushman sticks is not appropriate, as it accords neither with the |Xam nor the Ju|'hoansi uses and significance of sticks. By extension, then, Blundell's case for sticks galvanising Bushman ritual specialists' status as superior to others and their association with SDFs an intentional referent of that status, should be discarded.



Figure 5.2: A group of Naro men dance with sticks and fly-switches while women clap rhythmically. Two men entered trance during this particular dance. Kuru Dance Festival, August 2016. Photograph: author.

[11] For more information on the festival, supported by the Kuru Development Trust, visit www.kurudance.org.

5.2 SDFs as unique: a critical review

Another aspect of individual SDF images Blundell described that requires examination is the assertion that each SDF is unique – there will never exist two identical SDFs at a single site, nor will an image with identical attributes be found in *other* shelters. In addition, the "distinctive nature of each of these figures is further enhanced by the exclusive headdress of each image" (Blundell 2004: 139). The reason for this is that each SDF or LH-SDF represents a single individual who is made immediately identifiable on the rock face. While it is true that oftentimes they *are* unique, it has come to light that the assertion cannot be made that they will *alway*s be so.

Two sites contain images remarkably similar to one another: RSA-MEL6, located in the valleys in the Maclear district where the majority of Blundell's SDFs are found, and one of the newly documented sites, RSA-MTS6 in the vicinity of the Malithethana River sources in the Matatiele District. The discovery of a site containing images similar to known SDFs would be less impactful if the similarity was in features commonly appearing in the art (say, for example, an eland eye or ear), or if there were only small components in common. However, the original LH-SDF at RSA-MEL6 exhibits a never-before-seen emanation from its head, and carries a bag on its back that is a distinctive shape, with possible fly whisks protruding from them. Amazingly, one image at RSA-MTS6 is almost identical to RSA-MEL6 (Figure 5.3). It has precisely the same emanations, carries a pack on its back that is the same shape from which a fly whisk also protrudes. Moreover, both figures have blood smeared across their faces and white details on their arms. The fact alone that these two images display such exceptional similarity is problematic for Blundell's argument. It could, perhaps, be argued that the two images reference a particular individual or indeed were painted by the same hand, but as it is impossible to obtain that level of resolution, I do not wish to speculate. One of the painters of the two images may have seen the other example and decided, for whatever reason, to reproduce the image, but this is also purely speculative. Either case would be challenging to prove. Nonetheless, the existence

of this figure at RSA-MTS6 demonstrates that one *can* identify a particular image at more than one site. Yet, it does not, on its own, definitively disprove that SDFs or LH-SDFs depict socially important and powerful individuals.



Figure 5.3: Comparison between two large, anthropomorphic figures at RSA-MTS6 (left) and RSA-MEL6 (right). Note the emanations from the heads, the protrusions from the backs, lines smeared across the faces. Images: MARA and RARI.

Significantly, however, this is not the only instance of similarity between RSA-MEL6 and RSA-MTS6. In fact, at least three of the large figures have long, thin emanations from their heads (Figure 5.4). All four figures are within a close size range one to another and are painted in the same pigment. Crouching, its legs tucked under the body, below the four figures is a strange zoomorphic creature on whose head the emanations appear, in addition to whisker-like protrusions from the nose. Immediately the anthropomorphic figures are unequivocally linked to this creature, which is in itself intriguing. The non-real 'beast' presents us with yet another similarity between RSA-MEL6 and RSA-MTS6 – it has features in common with three non-real part-anthropomorph-part-zoomorphs in the adjacent panel to the SDF (Figure 4.7: 65). All are painted in the similar crouching positions with heads that cannot be identified as any particular species (although

one of the figures may possibly have cattle horns). While I am, at this stage, unwilling to speculate as to what precisely the emanations from the heads of the SDFs RSA-MEL6 and RSA-MTS6 and the creature below them refer to, the anthropomorphic and animal figures engage in some kind of symbolic relationship, certainly.

Whether the SDF at RSA-MEL6 is involved in a similar relationship with the crouching figures is a slightly more challenging problem since they are not in direct association with it, nor do any of the zoomorphs have protrusions from the head displaying likeness to the SDF's. Nevertheless, a connection between them has been made by Dowson (1998: 340). Three of the part-anthropomorph-part-zoomorphs are striped, and similar stripes have been painted on the 'pack' of the SDF, which Dowson considers a direct link between them, and I am inclined to agree. Consequently, at both sites, the anthropomorphs are engaged in relations with non-real creatures, the importance of which will come to light in Chapters Six and Seven.

At RSA-MTS6, there are four large, detailed anthropomorphic figures, of similar size (three of which have the same headdress or protrusions from the head). What problem, if any, does this pose for the category of SDFs as proposed by Blundell? Such striking similarities between the figures suggests that these depictions cannot be 'portraits' of a single individual, but rather that the group of separate individuals are in some way linked to one another (much like Dowson's consortia) and connected to the zoomorph below them by virtue of their similarities. While the question of why the figure at RSA-MEL6 is almost identical cannot be definitively answered I suggest that, rather than the headdress or emanations being the mark of the owner of a site, they refer, in some way, to whatever task the ritual specialists are engaged in, and that task is directly related to the non-real beings linked to the SDFs, whether that relationship involves 'dealing with' these beings, or whether they are aids to the task.



Figure 5.4: Four large, anthropomorphic figures in dark red, light red, red and white at RSA-MTS6. Three of the figures have thin lines emanating from their heads ringed in red. The fourth (seated, centre) figure's head has partially flaked away. Redrawn by author.

Documenting RSA-MTS6 has brought to light another problem with the interpretation of SDFs as powerful individuals who take ownership of a site.

5.3 Primary SDFs

Connected to the uniqueness of each SDF (or LH-SDF), is their size relative not only to other human figures at each site, but also to each other (if more than one exists in a single shelter). As mentioned earlier, Blundell argued that should this situation arise, it will be possible to identify which SDF is prominent by its size – it will be larger (but not necessarily more detailed) than all others (Blundell 2004: 139). The 'owner' of the site needed to mark his image as immediately identifiable to anyone who visited the site. Interactions with the site were controlled by said owner. In certain cases (such as at Storm Shelter), (Figure 5.5) one anthropomorphic figure is indeed larger than other SDFs but this is not always the case. RSA-MTS6, illustrated in Figure 5.4, clearly contains four anthropomorphic, part-animal, large, detailed figures that cannot be divided into 'primary' and 'secondary' designations. Granted, the central, seated figure is larger than the others but it does not set it apart from them. At least in this case, the concept of ownership does not appear discernible and subsequently, it is not possible to assign a hierarchy to the images within RSA-MTS6.



Figure 5.5: 'Primary' LH-SDF at Storm Shelter. The figure behind the feline is markedly larger than other distinctive anthropomorphs, and contributed to Blundell's hypothesis that primary SDFs or LH-SDFs represent the portraits of potency-owners who also have control over the site at which they are painted. Colours white and shades of red. Image: after Blundell 2004: 41.

The same is true of three other SDF or LH-SDF sites in both the Nomansland Core Study Area and sites outside of it. The two detailed, large, figures at the SNP site, S03, (Figures 3.16 and 3.17: 45) do not show primacy of one over the other; there is no impression of one being intended to draw more attention than the other. In addition, RSA-CHA1 supposedly contains 3 SDFs but no anthropomorphic figure appears dominant over others. Finally, a puzzling example manifests itself in RSA-PEL4, located in the Lundin's Nek[12] District of the Eastern Cape Province, just south of the border with Lesotho and 70 kms north-west of the Maclear District, where most of Blundell's SDF sites concentrate (Figure 2.7: 19) According to Blundell, the site contains a single LH-SDF (Figure 5.6). To be sure, the figure is itself remarkable, and certainly is describable as an LH-SDF by Blundell's standards: the head is emphasised at the expense of the post-cranial body, it is associated with a stick and has an

[12]The pass may also be spelled as Lundean's Nek.

extraordinary headdress. As such, there is nothing curious about the LH-SDF itself.

What *is* curious is Blundell's decision to assign SDF status to this anthropomorph alone. Figure 5.7 shows other unique images in the same panel, indeed in the same cluster of images. Granted, the rock face is flaking, but it remains possible to clearly identify the images. There are at least four other images that I believe would have been given the designation SDF as they are made up of a number of the criteria required. They have: (1) intricate, white faces, with (2) eyes, noses and, on two of the figures, ears painted, (3) each face is in profile and, (4) the heads more detailed than other parts of the body. Each has either ears or a headdress and at least one, highlighted in Figure 5.7, is extremely unusual. There seems no logical reason why these figures were not called SDFs. The LH-SDF, although having a larger head than others, it is only its head that *is* larger. It cannot be viewed as more prominent than the other figures. Therefore, it cannot be seen as the 'owner' of the shelter either.



Figure 5.6: LH-SDF from RSA-PEL4 in red, white, dark red and black. Associated with a stick, wearing a unique and detailed headdress, the figure's head is unrealistically large. More detail has been afforded the head than other parts of the body. Image: RARI. Colour-corrected by author

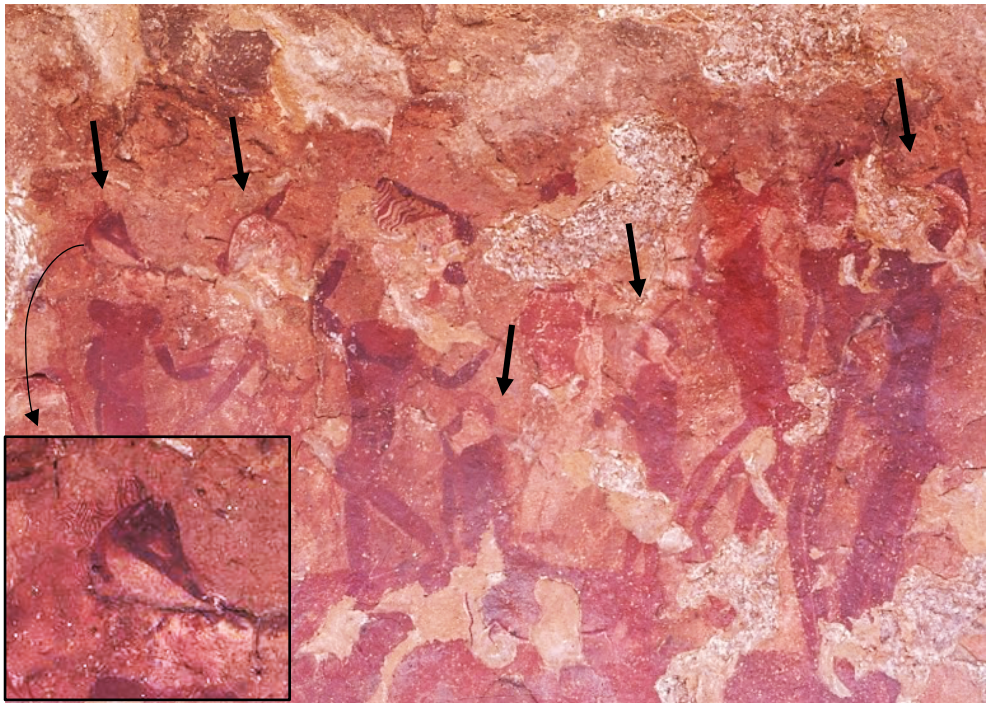


Figure 5.7:Surrounding the LH-SDF are at least five detailed figures (indicated by black arrows) with unique headdresses and defined facial features. The headdress of one of the figures is highly detailed. Detail of the headdress is shown at the bottom left of the image. These images, according to Blundell's criteria, should be classed SDFs, but are not on his list of SDFs. Original photograph: RARI

The concept of ownership and primary SDFs or LH-SDFs, is problematic in itself. If interactions were restricted, it is difficult to accept that there would be multiple SDF or LH-SDF painted at all. Why would a 'potency-owner' allow another socially-powerful individual to place their 'portrait' in his or her shelter? The only feasible explanation, in my mind, is that smaller SDFs were painted first, and, subsequently, another individual took 'control' of the shelter. As such, said individual, having taken 'ownership' of the site, would need to displace the supremacy of other images by painting his or her likeness larger. In order to test the strength of this hypothesis, it would be necessary to obtain dates for all known SDFs and LH-SDFs. Since Blundell did not have the technology available to him, as we do now, such a task could not be attempted. However, even *with* improved dating procedures at our disposal, not all SDFs or LH-SDFs contain datable material and therefore it is impossible, at this stage, to prove *definitely* the sequence in which SDF imagery was painted. It may be possible to obtain an idea

of the sequence by means of relative dating in the form of sequencing the layers of paint, but this is by no means a fool-proof method and is unlikely to provide a complete picture of the concatenation of painting events.

Perhaps more concerning, for Blundell's interpretive conclusions, is the fact that only the two above-mentioned sites in the Nomansland Core Study Area (Storm Shelter and RSA-CHA1) were identified by Blundell as containing primary and secondary SDFs. Extrapolating so much meaning from just two examples Blundell appears to have been over-eager to link the paintings with historical evidence relating to social change, and as a result, the data has been somewhat manipulated to fit the hypothesis. The fact that two new examples, containing four and two distinctive, large anthropomorphic figures respectively, do not accord with Blundell's assertions, further destabilizes the significance of the category. There exists too much variation to model any pattern governing in what contexts, individual SDFs appear.

5.4 When an SDF is *not* an SDF: inconsistencies in classification

Since Blundell defined so stringently what marks SDFs out as unique and distinctive, it was necessary to check each image categorised as such to assess whether they conformed sufficiently to the category. While an image is not required to contain all possible components, Blundell asserted that certain criteria were fundamental to the designation of a particular figure as an SDF or LH-SDF. Surprisingly, however, he appears to have given a number of images the status of SDF when some of those fundamental criteria did not pertain to them.

For example, RSA-BUL1[13] in the Barkly East District of the Eastern Cape and coming from the list of 'exceptions' outside of the Nomansland Core Study Area – contains two large, (90 cm and 85 cm tall), therianthropic figures walking one behind the other, superimposed by polychrome eland (Figure 5.8). The two figures are extremely similar in 'design' and once again, neither can be said to be 'primary' or secondary. Somewhat telling is the fact that these two figures are not mentioned by Blundell in relation to primary and secondary imagery, suggesting that perhaps they caused an interpretative inconvenience. Neither of the images have unique headdresses, nor are their heads any more detailed than their bodies, they hold bows but are not associated with sticks or unrealistic numbers of items of material culture. The panel in which they are painted contains no other human figures and thus it is impossible to draw conclusions about their relative size. Granted, they are oversized in comparison to animal subjects in the panel, but as those in direct contact with the figures superimpose them, it is unlikely that they were produced during the same painting episode and as such, we cannot assume any connection between the images. RSA-BUL1 is an enormous site with much of the available surface covered in art, and it is likely that there occurred several painting events across time (Figure 5.9). To be sure, the two figures are remarkable in their size, but amongst the images painted are multiple examples of large figures – be they animal, therianthrope or human (Figure 5.10), and whether this is a consequence of the size of the site itself, or of something more symbolic, it is difficult to tell. In the case of the two figures, then, I suggest that their size has been accorded too much significance. As they lack too many of his identifying criteria, I propose that they do not belong in Blundell's SDF category at all. There are a number of additional images in Blundell's list of SDFs that do not even meet his own requirements.

13 Referred to by Blundell (2004: 132) as BUR1

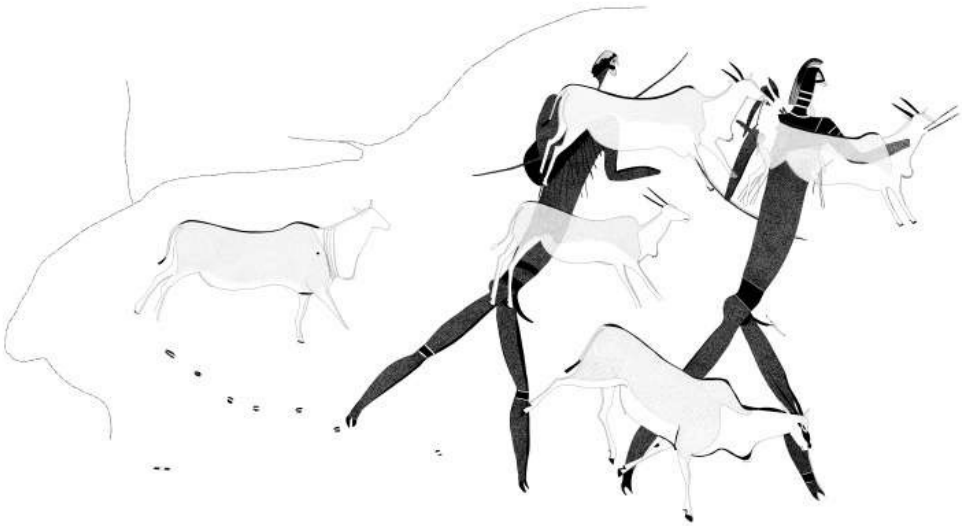


Figure 5.8: Two large, polychrome (red, black and white) anthropomorphs with antelope hooves at RSA-BUL1. Neither figure is distinguished in size or decoration from the other, nor or are their heads more detailed than their post-cranial bodies. Image: RARI



Figure 5.9: View from the back of RSA-BUL1. The cave is exceptionally large for the Barkly East District. Much of the surface of the walls has been painted. Image: author.

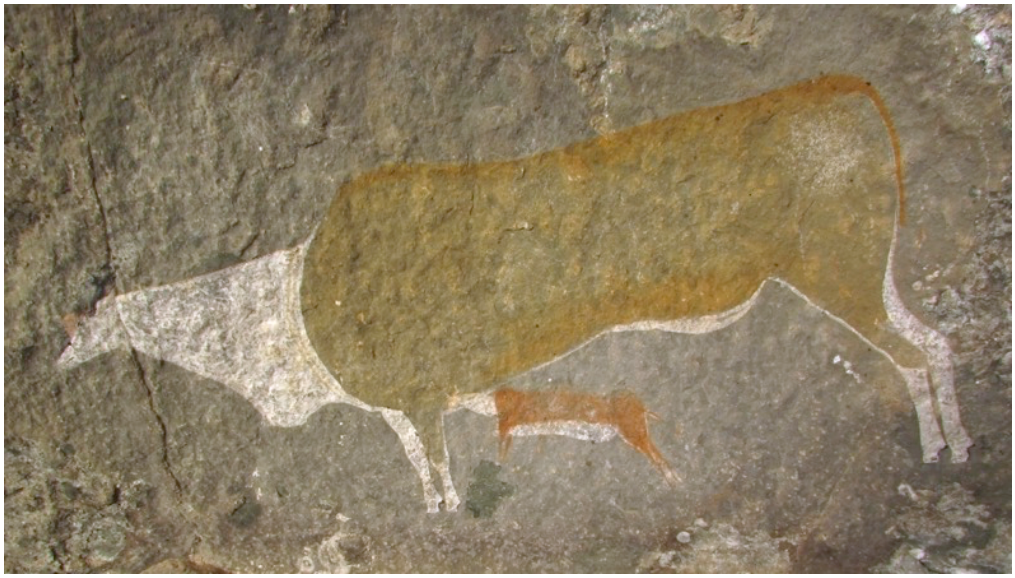


Figure 5.10: Two bichrome eland painted at RSA-BUL1. The images are painted differentiated in size from one another. Large depictions of both animal and human subjects are common at this site. Image: author.

Another example can be found in LES-MTM1 (Figures 5.11 and 5.12) also located outside of the Nomansland Core Study Area, in the Quthing District of southern Lesotho, approximately 1 km south-west of Thaba Moorosi (Mokhanya 2008: 3). LES-MTM1 represents an important site for the understanding of Bushman cosmology during contact, as it contains images of cattle in contexts previously reserved for eland, the most symbolically-important antelope (Mokhanya 2008: 40). Jolly (1998, 2000), argues that cattle appearing in traditional, fine-line Bushman paintings (in contexts that are distinctly ritual or trance-related), evinces historically-attested changes in Bushman cosmology. As hunting waned in importance, cattle became not only economically, but symbolically significant. As cattle share certain traits with eland (their docility, for example), they came to replace eland in ritual contexts.

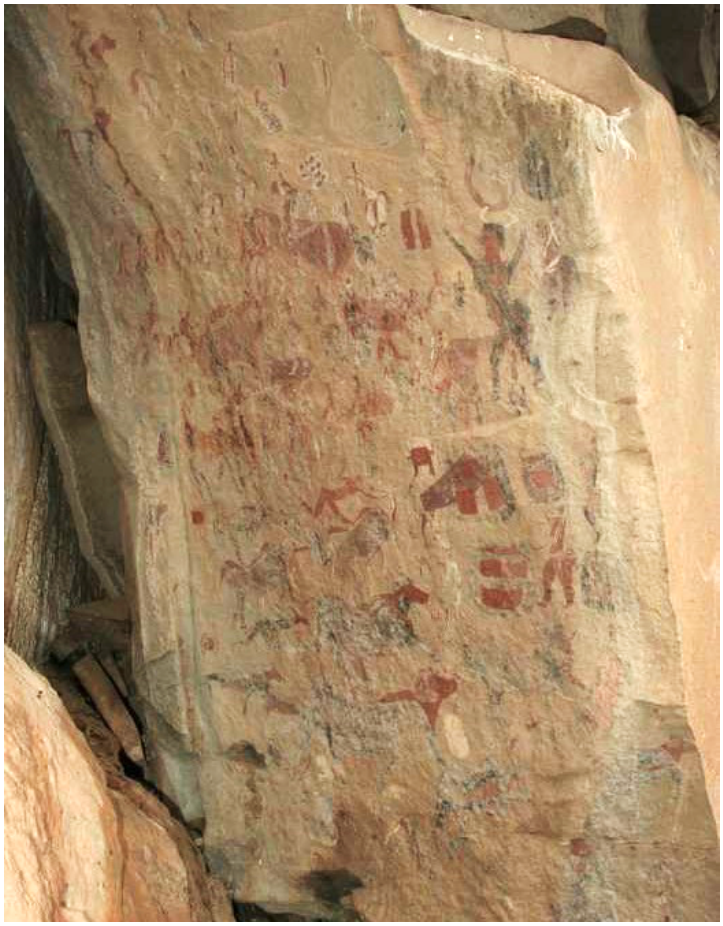


Figure 5.11: LES-MTM1. The figure at the top left of the panel was assigned SDF status by Blundell. However, figures below this image are also therianthropic and detailed. Image: RARI

There are a number of problems with the designation of the image as an SDF, however. Granted, of the therianthropic images at LES-MTM1, Blundell's 'SDF' is the 'most human' – all others have bovine-like heads. However, several are largely human, with human torsos and arms, standing upright on human legs. All of these figures are larger than 'purely' human figures in the panel. Not only is the figure indistinguishable in size from the other therianthropes, it lacks other classifying criteria, making it an unsuitable candidate for SDF status: (1) it exhibits no nasal bleeding, (2) is not painted in any finer detail than its bovine-like counterparts, (3) shows no less detail in the post-cranial body and, (4) is not associated with a 'staff', nor any other item of material culture. Indeed, there is little about the figure at LES-MTM1 that conforms to Blundell's category.



Figure 5.12: Therianthropic figure in black, red and white described by Blundell as an SDF from LES-MTM1. (left). Scale in centimetres. A second therianthrope at LES-MTM1, not considered an SDF by Blundell (right). Images: RARI. Upright orientation arrow added.

Blundell's student at the time, Sello Mokhanya (2008) wrote his MSc dissertation exclusively on LES-MTM1, in which he focused on Basotho (although mainly Baphuthi) influences upon the Bushmen in south-eastern Lesotho. While playing a relatively minor role in the work, Mokhanya retains Blundell's interpretation of the figure as an SDF, and accepts its concomitant interpretation. Moreover, instead of challenging the categorisation of the image, Mokhanya cites the figure's difference to other SDF images as a reason to place it within a sub-category of SDF, Type 2 SDF, thus masking its (serious) incongruities and falling into the same historical-materialist trap as Blundell. Given these points, I suggest that the image at LES-MTM1 cannot be identified as an SDF.

The final example I choose to highlight comes from within the Nomansland Core Study Area and is, arguably, most poignant of all. Blundell (2004), placed much emphasis on the importance of Ngcegane Shelter in helping to bolster his argument for changing social relations in Bushman society, as it was Ngcegane Shelter that Dyantyi named as being the place that her father, Lindiso, painted.

Further back in time, Lindiso's father painted there and he was part of Nqabayo's band. Therefore, the presence of an SDF at Ngcegane Shelter was significant. Even though Blundell does not insist that Nqabayo's band (which included Lindiso's father) *definitely* painted the SDFs, he links their presence at sites to the band and its social organisation. Lindiso painted and made rain at Ngcegane repeatedly, in secret; and consequently, Blundell made the link between these actions and the concept of ownership of sites (Blundell 2004: 171-172). However, after studying the site, I have found that the image described as an SDF cannot be termed as such, even according to Blundell's own criteria.

Unfortunately, Ngcegane Shelter has been subjected to much damage over time, and this damage is largely anthropogenic. As a result, multiple figures have been scratched, or paint removed (possibly for muthi[14]), and graffiti covers large parts of the rock face. As such, some of the imagery is difficult to discern fully. The panel in which the 'SDF' is placed contains a procession of some 22 walking figures in dark red, of which the 'SDF' is one. To be sure this particular image does have some traits of an SDF – it has a slightly oversized, white face painted in profile. However, this face does not have any of the 'trademark' detail usually present on this type of image – it has no headdress, and no clear facial features. The figure does not conform in other ways: (1) it carries a quiver, but only two arrows emerge from it, where one would expect an exaggerated number, (2) nor is it therianthropic, (3) there is no difference between the detail afforded to the head and post-cranial body, (5) it does not bleed from the nose and significantly, (6) it is not differentiated in either size or detail from the figures immediately either side of it. In fact, although severely damaged, it is possible to discern white heads on at least two of the figure's neighbours. These two figures, if examined superficially, appear to have black heads with long, black horns. I suggest that the

[14] For more on the practice of paint-removal for medicinal and ritual purposes, see Regensberg 2012 and Siteleki 2014

black pigment has been added subsequently and as a result, has partially obscured the white heads (Figure 5.13). Ngcegane Shelter cannot be included in those sites described above that contain more than one SDF image, as none in the procession of human figures have features that would identify them has SDFs and as we have seen, neither does the 'SDF'. The image cannot be seen, on the basis of these observations, as more prominent than any of the others in the procession and *ergo*, should be excluded from the category of SDF.

Three sites of Blundell's original 16 do not contain SDFs at all. Thus, the area containing images classified as SDFs shrinks to exclude, most importantly, the only site where Nqabayo's band and their descendants definitely painted (Figure 5.14). If no SDF is present at the shelter on which Blundell based much of his hypothesis, then the category and the contexts in which images were painted become weakened further.

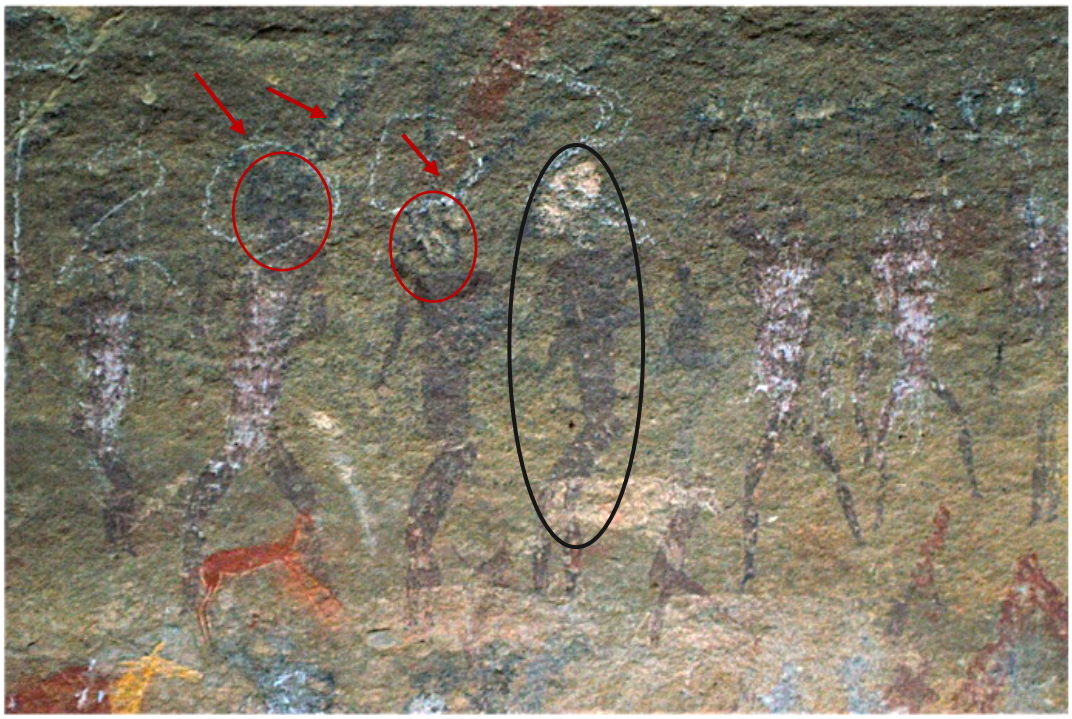


Figure 5.13: A portion of the panel containing the procession of human figures. Note the image categorized as an SDF (circled in black), the white remnants of heads (circled in red) partially obscured by black pigment creating horns (shown with red arrows). Image: RARI

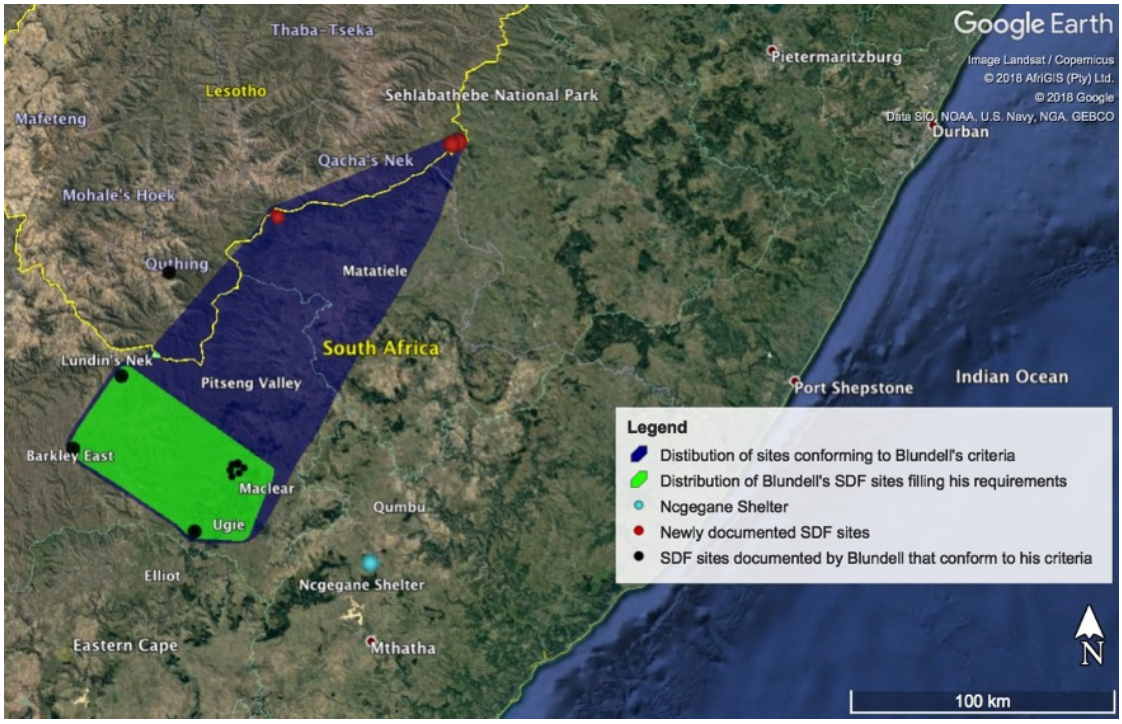


Figure 5.14: Google Earth map showing the current distribution of sites containing images fitting Blundell's criteria, in green and dark blue. Ngcegane Shelter is no longer included in the list of 'SDF' sites.

5.5 A caveat: LH-SDFs

Before moving on to the patterning of an SDF site, it may be appropriate here to insert a note about LH-SDFs. I am confident that testing the validity of the category has revealed that the images are unlikely to have been painted as recently as Blundell suggests. It may also be proposed with confidence that LH-SDFs cannot represent ritual specialists who were 'refashioning' their identities in order to take their place in a global colonial system operating within the last 300 years. However, the 'sub-category' of LH-SDF does appear more regionally-constrained than non-LH-SDFs. The decision to emphasise the heads of certain images is likely to represent something specific, but it cannot represent what Blundell suggests, taking all the evidence examined into account. Further research needs to be focussed upon these large-headed figures, to better understand the context of, and motivation for, their production. The following section will test whether there is a discernible pattern of image-types at sites containing either 'SDF' or 'LH-

SDF' imagery. SDFs and later LH-SDFs (or rather, the 'potency owners represented by the SDF or LH-SDF), being the last development in Blundell's historical trajectory, are argued, by him, to have controlled what images were present at a site. Whether the pattern holds or not, will help, or hinder, this assertion.

5.6 The pattern of an SDF site: efficacy of Blundell's model and consequent implications

As an investigation into SDFs themselves had brought to light certain inconsistencies, it was necessary to carry out a similar check of the patterns of SDF sites. Of particular interest was the 'indeterminate' classification in the data appearing in Table 1 (on page 23). Blundell (2004: 202) claimed that the term was used when preservation was poor at sites, or when they were densely painted, causing some images to be obscured by superpositioning. Having visited several of the sites, I was familiar with their state of preservation, and it did not ring true that such a high number of images could have disappeared at these sites. Consequently, it was necessary to methodically examine each site.

Fortunately there was, available to me, the rich database that is the Rock Art Research Institute's paper archive, where tracings and re-drawings are kept, as well as the African Rock Art Digital Archive (SARADA), a storehouse of photographs taken when researchers visit and document sites. Some sites have been periodically visited for over thirty years and thus the archive is an excellent source of data. Where a site had been re-drawn or traced, these were examined, image-types present in the panel marked off Blundell's list as a 'yes' and highlighted in green. Where image-types were not present, these were marked as a 'no' on the updated table and highlighted in red. If there was any uncertainty, SARADA was referenced, going through every image stored on the database from

that site. Where sites had not been traced, SARADA formed the reference database. Again, each image was examined from the database.

Throughout the process, where my findings did not accord with Blundell's positive identification, or when images were not present where they had been marked 'indeterminate', the motif was given a 'no' and highlighted in red. Although I do not deny the possibility that images have disappeared from view, using this method I am confident that it has been possible, in most cases, to identify the existence (or lack thereof) of image-types currently at each site tested by Blundell (and reproduced in Table 1). RSA-TYN2, however, is the most fragile of all sites, being badly affected by spalling (Pearce 2010). Its condition necessitated management of the collapsed areas and removal of painted flakes from both the shelter floor and spalling areas on the rock face (Pearce 2010). In 2012, I assisted with further removals of paint and with a portion of the then-incomplete tracing. On the basis of my knowledge of the site, I consider that it is more likely than at other sites that images have disappeared and as such, I have retained some of Blundell's 'indeterminate' markings. The findings of this exercise are shown in Table 2.

Although Blundell constrains his analysis to the 12 Nomansland Core Study Area sites, I thought it useful to apply his model to the sites known at the time that are located outside of the Nomansland Core Study Area as well as to the sites newly-documented by MARA programme and myself, the results of which appear in Table 3. The motivation for doing so is based purely on Blundell's hypothesised interpretation of SDF sites – that they represent places controlled by 'potency-owners', and at which the range of imagery was restricted by said person. If this was the case, then one could, feasibly, expect some similarities between the sites in and outside of the Nomansland Core Study Area.

Table 2: Blundell's findings on the patterns of SDF in comparison to findings obtained from systematic checks of sites

Site	SDF/ LH-SDF	Eldritch	Dance/ clapping	Run-run	Line	1 – 2 -3 Arr.	Feline	Rain-animal	Type 2
RSA BAE 2	1 SDF	Yes	Yes	Ind.	Ind.	Ind.	Yes	Ind.	No
RSA BAE 2	1 SDF	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No
RSA LAB 1	2 LH-SDFs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
RSA LAB 1	2 LH-SDFs & 1 SDF	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
RSA LAB 3	1 LH-SDF	Yes	Yes	Ind.	Yes	Yes	Ind.	Yes	Yes
RSA LAB 3	1 LH-SDF	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
RSA CHA 1	3 SDFs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
RSA CHA 1	3 SDFs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
RSA MEL 6	1 LH-SDF	Yes	Yes	Ind.	Ind.	No	Ind.	Ind.	No
RSA MEL 6	1 LH-SDF	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
RSA MEL 8	1 LH-SDF	Yes	Yes	Yes	Ind.	No	No	No	No
RSA MEL 8	0 LH-SDF 1 SDF	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
RSA MEL 9	1 LH-SDF	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
RSA MEL 9	1 LH-SDF	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Ind.	Yes
RSA MIE 1	1 LH-SDF	No	Yes	Ind.	Ind.	Ind.	Ind	Ind.	Yes
RSA MIE 1	1 LH-SDF	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
RSA RON 1	1 SDF	Ind.	Yes	Ind.	Ind.	Ind.	Ind.	Ind.	No
RSA RON 1	1 SDF	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
RSA WID2	1 SDF	Ind.	Yes	Ind.	Yes	Ind.	Ind.	Yes	Yes
RSA WID 2	0 SDF	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
RSA INX1	1 SDF/1 LH-SDF	Yes	Yes	Ind.	Ind.	Ind.	Ind.	Ind.	No
RSA INX 1	0 SDF/0 LH-SDF	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
RSA TYN2	1 SDF	Yes	Yes	Yes	Ind.	Ind.	Ind.	Ind.	Ind.
RSA TYN 2	2 SDF	Yes	Yes	Yes	Ind.	Yes	Yes Part-feline	Ind.	No

Table 3: Testing the pattern of SDF sites outside of the Nomansland Core Study Area – known and newly documented sites

LES MTM 1	1 SDF	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
LES MTM 1	0 SDF	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
RSA BUL 1	2 SDFS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
RSA BUL 1	0 SDFs	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
RSA PEL 4	1 SDFs	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
RSA PEL 4	4 SDFs	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
RSA DIN 1	1 SDF	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
RSA DIN 1	1 SDF	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
RSA MTS 6	4 SDFs	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
LES J0 4	1 SDF	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
LES J0 8	1 SDF	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
LES S0 3	2 SDFs	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No

5.7 Results: patterns of SDF sites

A number of interesting things were revealed by the testing of the image patterns at SDF sites. Firstly, three sites are said to contain all images within the pattern. However, I have found that for only two of these is this true. RSA-MEL9 does not contain either a feline or a long, red line. Although there is a strange non-real creature painted in orange, it does not contain any diagnostic features that would allow me to identify it with confidence as a rain-animal. Other possibilities are a couple of quadrupeds in black and red, but they are not demonstrably rain-animals either. Consequently I have amended Blundell's 'yes' to an 'indeterminate'. Of the two remaining 'complete' sites, one is Storm Shelter – Blundell's Type Site. Being the Type Site, one would expect all motifs to be present here. Examination of the re-drawing, tracing and SARADA have confirmed this. The main panel, in

which the majority of images are found, is densely painted with “as many as five layers of paint in places” (Blundell 2004: 45). Comprising more than 230 identifiable images it is not surprising that, considering the superpositioning of layer upon layer, a wide variety of image-types are present. Returning to dates obtained from Storm Shelter: two polychrome eland are separated in time by over a thousand years, returning dates of 2998–2381 and 1585–1266 cal. BP respectively (Bonneau *et al.* 2017: 330-331). These dates are testimony to the extended period over which images built up within Storm Shelter and it is unlikely that all of the images making up the pattern would have been painted in close temporal proximity, nor that the painting of those images were controlled by an individual.

Secondly, RSA-CHA1 contains the full complement of images Blundell expected to see alongside SDFs. Measuring approximately 20 m in length and containing 424 individual images (Bonneau *et al.* 2017b: 26), the site is, like Storm Shelter, densely painted with superpositioning prevalent. Accordingly, a wide variety of image-types is likely to appear. Despite the fact that only a single sample was dated (Bonneau *et al.* 2017), the date that was obtained from RSA-CHA1 (2848–2352 Cal. BP) indicates at least the great antiquity, for the area, of one image at the site. While it is impossible to test via direct methods whether the image-types Blundell believed are associated with SDFs were contemporaneous, or whether the SDFs were painted before, or after, any of them, it may be possible to get some idea, as the superpositioning at RSA-CHA1 was recorded by Pearce (Pearce 2018 pers. comm.).

Of the types of images in the pattern, a number are less significant than others, owing to their ubiquity in Bushman art in general. While there *is* a strong relationship between dance or clapping imagery and SDFs (11 of the Nomansland Core Study Area sites include them, and they are present at six of the eight outside of it), the correlation proves less significant than Blundell may have wished. Clapping and figures clearly associated with dancing are common motifs.

Ritual dances, via which ritual specialists are able to reach trance states, are well understood ethnographically as being both socially and ritually important to diverse Bushman groups (e.g. Bleek & Lloyd 1911: 353-375; Marshall 1969, Biesele 1978, Katz 1982). Postures observed as being assumed during dance performances are readily identifiable in the fine-line traditional corpus of Bushman rock art across southern Africa. Such postures include, but are not limited to, bending forward, standing or bending forward with arms back, leaning forward supported by sticks, or processions of human figures in one or a combination of these postures. Some human figures portrayed in dance postures may also bleed from the nose, identifying them immediately as 'trance-related'. Indeed, Qing himself made mention of dances appearing in the paintings: "They were men who had died and now lived in rivers, and were spoilt at the same time as the elands and by the dances of which you have seen paintings" (Orpen 1874: 2). Harold Pager (1971), Lewis-Williams (1972) and Vinnicombe (1976) all consider dance postures common in the paintings of the Maloti-Drakensberg.

Another example – the 1-2-3 numerical arrangement of eland, rhebok and hartebeest – can be observed throughout the corpus of Bushman art in the Maloti-Drakensberg Mountains. Indeed, both Vinnicombe (1967: 140, 1972: 156) and Lewis-Williams (1972: 52), who conducted expansive and thorough surveys resulting in quantitative analysis of the art, observed this arrangement. Blundell offers no interpretation of the arrangement and no reason why a potency-owner would enforce this order specifically at sites with SDFs if they are ubiquitous elsewhere (and most likely related to the relative symbolic importance of each antelope species to the Bushmen). Finally, statistically, the arrangement cannot be seen as a legitimate component of a pattern– five of the twelve sites within Nomansland, and only a single site (S03) from beyond, contain it. I therefore see no way that the presence of the arrangement advances Blundell's overall hypothesis regarding the production, or indeed consumption of SDF sites.

Less common imagery, which may have been significant if the pattern held, are felines and rain-animals. Both are relatively uncommon motifs. Rain-animals were present at three of the twelve SDF sites within the Nomansland Core Study Area, and at only one site (RSA-PEL4) outside of it (Figure 5.15). The animal depicted at RSA-PEL4 is a demonstrable hippopotamus. Often rain-animals resemble hippopotami, and therefore it is feasible that the individual painted here references rain-making. Blundell's tally was five out of the twelve sites, although I was unable to locate a rain-animal at RSA-LAB3, and as mentioned above, I could not determine whether a strange, orange quadruped painted in orange was, or was not, a rain-animal. Of the feline motif Blundell noted their presence at four sites, absence at one (RSA-MEL8). Post-examination, felines appear to be present at only at three of the original SDF sites, with a feline-lion-antelope conflation present at RSA-TYN2, and of the sites outside of the Core Study Area, three exhibit feline imagery (although one of these is at LES-MTM1, which has been excluded from the list of sites containing SDFs). Rain-animals and felines cannot, legitimately, be argued to appear as part of a pattern of SDF sites – there is simply too weak a correlation between the them. Where they *are* associated with images said to be SDFs it may be possible to interpret the relationships between them and the possible significance of these, symbolically, based on Bushman ontology but this should be attempted on an exclusively case-by-case basis.



Figure 5.15: Polychrome (red, white and black) hippopotamus at RSA-PEL4. Although not as enigmatic or non-real as other rain-animals found within the corpus of Bushman rock art, this example may reference rain-making activities. Photographer: Neil Lee. Image: RARI.

While other motifs in the supposed pattern do not appear consistently across sites (see Table 2 and 3), there is one motif that is, at least within the Nomansland Core Study Area, strongly associated with SDFs – Eldritch Images or spirits-of the-dead (Figure 5.16). Spirits-of-the-dead could be positively identified at ten out of the twelve sites, although are only present at RSA-DIN1 to the north in the Barkly East District. Their association with Blundell's SDFs is suggestive of a regional trend. Extensive literature exists concerning Bushman ritual specialists' relationships with, and responsibilities to deal with, spirits-of-the-dead, some of which have already featured in this work (e.g. Marshall 1969). They represent, largely, malevolent beings wishing to do harm to the community, going so far as to have murderous intentions. When they appear at the dance it is a ritual specialist's duty to mitigate the danger posed by these beings, to chase them away and prevent them from doing harm. Indeed, Dowson's (1998: 335) suggestion of RSA-MEL6 (where the large anthropomorphic figure is in association with strange, ghastly creatures and the panel appears to have been created during a single event) as a painted representation of such an occurrence, is particularly convincing.

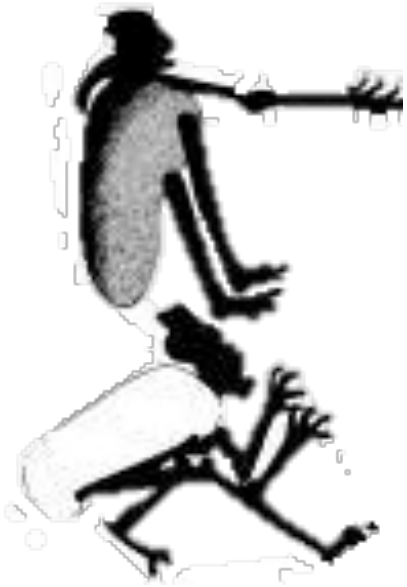


Figure 5.16: Two Eldritch Images or spirts-of-the-dead present at RSA-MEL6. Image: RARI. Edited to remove surrounding figures

Taken by itself, without the label of 'pre-eminent shaman' or 'SDF' and their attendant interpretations, I believe Dowson's interpretation of the large figure and its dealings with spirits-of-the-dead accords significantly better with Bushman ethnography. The relationships between images resembling that at RSA-MEL6 and spirits-of-the-dead require more detailed examination, however. Their interrelation one with another at sites is observable to be sure, but a superpositioning study conducted by Pearce (2002) at three sites in the Maclear District (two of which contain SDFs), found that spirits-of-the-dead imagery post-date the SDFs (Pearce 2002: 134). While no further work was conducted in a similar vein at other SDF sites the study implies that even when the association between a particular motif and SDFs at sites is strong, *direct* and *contemporaneous* symbolic bonds cannot be assumed.

In summation, testing the pattern proposed by Blundell of motifs likely to be present with SDFs has proven that there is too great a degree of inconsistency and variation in the types of motif associated with images termed SDFs for the pattern to hold. Because large, detailed anthropomorphic figures had already been argued to be socially and ritually important individuals, Blundell's aim was to concretise the category, prove their recent date and to demonstrate social and ritual stratification in a fast-changing political landscape. Unfortunately, the presence or lack of images cannot be linked to the control of rock art sites by potency-owners – the data simply does not support the theory. Hence, although there is likely a link between some of the LH-SDFs, that link cannot be that the images present are 'portraits' of powerful ritual specialists that control what images are painted, and who has the right to access the site itself. Blundell appears to have modelled the production and consumption of his SDF sites in order to prove his interpretation rather than observing the pattern and attempting to find a motivation for it. Therefore, the pattern of SDF sites must be discarded fully.

5.8 Dispensing with categories: where to next?

Finding that images termed SDFs are not as spatially constrained as previously thought, are likely to be of greater age than argued by Blundell, and that the concept of SDFs and SDF sites as a distinct category is problematic, the interpretative conclusions reached by Blundell appear not to hold true. Blundell has, by forcing data to fit a predetermined category, unintentionally advanced a historical-materialist interpretation. As a consequence, the term SDF does not appear to be an appropriate one for figures that show such a degree of diversity in their forms and associated imagery. The images themselves are invulnerable to *strict* categorisation, something which accords well with southern African hunter-gatherer lifestyles and ontological systems in the past. Indeed, Guenther (1999:243-246) suggests that both the lifestyle and ontological system of Bushman existence are resistant to immutable categorisation and do, on the whole, operate in a state of ambiguity, and fluidity.

An exploration into possible ways forward is now necessary. Recent developments in social theory hold attractive possibilities for re-investigating what some of the images, those that incorporate non-human features, may mean. Without the strict boundary of a category to constrain the images, a focus on emically-produced interpretations – that do not rely on temporally-constrained evidence and that take into account Bushman ontology (one in which 'shamanism' can be understood as a component of an animist cosmology) – has proven efficacious. In the following chapter I discuss how concepts of new animism developed within social theory, how Bushman ontology can, and has been, argued to concern aspects of new animism, why it has encountered resistance in southern African rock art research and how that resistance may be mitigated. New animism does accord well with Bushman ontology and has been successfully applied to the rock art.

6 CHAPTER 6. NEW ANIMISM AND THE SHAMANIC MODEL: A WAY FORWARD

The classification of large, detailed human figures into a discrete category has been unable to withstand testing. Too many inconsistencies have been noted, creating severe limitations to the interpretation of the images as an historical phenomenon occurring on contact with cultural groups moving into the landscape – both African and European. It may be argued that rock art research discourse in the late 1990s and early 2000s was subject to a degree of inertia that had developed in the field. Those working within the purely shamanistic paradigm tended to build from one attitude or theoretical standpoint to another, working on the same emic principles. Following Guenther's discussion of hierarchy amongst the Ghanzi Bushmen of the Kalahari, Campbell, Dowson and finally Blundell seem to have followed suit, although employing altered theoretical lenses. Consequently, there developed a linear progression not only in scholarship (from Guenther to Blundell) but also in the interpretation of 'SDFs' themselves. If we remove the linear progression and view the images in the context of Bushman rock art as a product shamanic in character, created by a society in which relationships between human and non-human persons inform aspects of life both mundane and spiritual, the yield of investigative avenues may increase dramatically. Thus, by applying concepts of new animism, such as the emphasis on relationships between humans and non-humans, it may be possible to overcome the limitations of previous explanations.

Some scholars (Dowson 2007, 2009; Robinson 2013) contend that applying the shamanic model to rock art traditions around the world obscures their meaning; however, I disagree with them. Unlike these scholars, I am not of the opinion that the shamanic model obscures the meaning of rock art traditions around the world, nor do I think that the shamanic model is contradictory to new animism. It has been argued successfully by other scholars that certain ritual behaviours by Bushman individuals facilitate trance experiences and that not all members of

society are able to achieve trance states (Guenther 1975a, 19765b; Lewis-Williams 1981, 1988, 1992; Dowson 1988; Jolly 2002; Hollmann 2004; Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2004; Lewis-Williams & Challis 2011) and there is thus no need to reproduce the arguments here.

Suffice to say that by achieving trance states, ritual specialists are able to achieve certain goals and outcomes that are required by society as a whole – healing, resource acquisition and so on. That the shamanic model and new animism are antithetical theories has not been convincingly argued. Rather, shamanism, as discussed within the context of Bushman rock art, falls neatly under the 'umbrella' of animism, and therefore there is no reason why discussions on Bushman beliefs and practices cannot be couched in new animist terminology. Consequently, we need to examine how both terms are defined and deployed in anthropological literature, determine how they might intersect, and then apply this to both Bushman and other non-Western belief systems.

How is shamanism as an ontological position defined? The term 'shamanism' was first made popular in cultural anthropology by Mircea Eliade (1972), from the Tungusic *śaman* denoting a "technique of ecstasy" (Eliade 1972: 4), achieved by specialists within magico-religious contexts. The term has been widely applied to other non-Western societies that contain, within their communities, people with the ability to transcend the boundary between the 'real' and 'spiritual' worlds. Distinguished from 'magicians' or healers, shamans are able to engage in specific 'magical' pursuits such as flight, or control of resources (Eliade 1972: 5). Importantly, a shaman is also distinguished by his or her ability to achieve a form of trance state in which his or her soul exits the body to ascend (or descend) into another world (Eliade 1972).

Notwithstanding criticism of the blanket use of the term to define ritual specialists across widely divergent cultures (e.g. Tomášková: 2013), it can – and has been – convincingly applied to those within Bushman communities, most unequivocally from ethnographies of the Ju|'hoansi collected by Katz, Lorna Marshall, Megan Biesele and Richard Lee amongst others (Marshall 1962, 1969; Lee 1967, 1979; Katz 1982; Biesele 1978, 1993) and the Bleek and Lloyd archive of |Xam ethnography (e.g. Bleek & Lloyd 1911; Lloyd *et al* 1923; Bleek 1931). Contained within these accounts are numerous descriptions of the trance states experienced by ritual specialists in which their spirits are said to exit their bodies through the base of the neck, after which they are able to transcend into the spirit realm in order to achieve certain tasks, such as healing the sick, combatting malevolent beings and so forth.

Three and a half decades after Eliadee's 'shamanism' was defined, Dowson (2007: 51) weighed in, describing it as:

> a mythico-religious or cosmological construction of the environment in the context of trance rituals and beliefs necessary for the reproduction of society in that environment. Shamanism is then a cultural construct, or cosmology of certain non-Western societies.

Dowson's definition appears to be in line with that of Eliade but the context in which he uses it is to subvert its applicability to Bushman rock art interpretation. Dowson (2007, 2009) argues that shamanism is not an appropriate interpretative lens through which to view Bushman rock art as it denies the role of non-shamans (human and non-human) reproduction of society. I fundamentally disagree with Dowson's position; it appears to be a political statement rather than a theory based on extensive consideration of interplay between shamanism and animism. I shall return to this further into the discussion.

Here, the question of whether or not it is useful to couch the study of Bushman beliefs in animist terminology, when the use of shamanism as an interpretative model has been so successful, arises. Foremost to stress, is that the terminology is *not* animist but *new animist*. Sir Edward Burnett Tylor, so-called Father of Anthropology, in his (1871) *Primitive Culture*, defined animism as "a belief in souls or spirits" (Tylor 1871) present in all religions. Tylor's aim in this classification was to assert that all religions hold the erroneous view that there exist souls or spirits, or any animate qualities, in things that are not human. This, Tylor assured us, is a mistaken belief that causes humans to insert life into things that have no life at all, and that leads, inevitably, to a false belief in the existence of spirits and their immortality (Harvey 2010: 16). The aim of Tylor's exploration into religion was to enforce the idea that rationalism, logic and science were in opposition to religious belief, and, perhaps more importantly, superior to it.

Consequently, humans, with their ability for rational thought, were privileged above nature, and non-Western systems of belief were seen as inferior or as 'failed epistemologies' (Bird-David 1999: S67). These assertions have been utterly refuted in the new manifestation of the theory of animism, which uses the term animist to imply nuanced understandings of the world that are by no means inferior to Western thought; it is a theoretical tool by which scholars can attempt to understand and progress closer to indigenous epistemologies and to redress the imbalance of the past that privileged Western over non-Western ideology. New animist theory will positively contribute to the understanding of the Bushman idiom, and in particular the ritual specialists depicted in the images with which this dissertation is concerned. In order to carry out tasks entrusted to them on the basis of their affinity with things spiritual, ritual specialists must interact with certain non-human beings. Certainly, 'shamanic'/ritual trance practice is pivotal to the maintenance of a properly functioning society, but I would argue only possible with the 'consent' of and in collaboration with non-human beings. New animist concepts of relational interaction find ground here.

A study of the relational nature of Bushman ontology is necessarily situated within the realm of 'new animisms'. New animisms, focussed on personhood, human-to-non-human relationships and general discussions on ontology have contributed to what Ernst Halbmayer (2012: 9) terms the "ontological turn in the social sciences". They work on the emic principle that all things are in some way animated (Ingold 2000), that they share a "relational frame of interaction" and these interactions occur via the medium of shared understanding, a form of communication between these human and non-human-persons and, in some cases, transformation from one form to another (Halbmayer 2012:12). Hence, these new ways of conceptualising world-views of largely non-Western populations are in opposition to the animism of Tylor (1871) which pervaded anthropological studies well into the twentieth century. (Bird-David 1999: S67). Such beliefs based on the Cartesian, axiomatic split between body and mind have been decentred by new theories.

As a reconsideration of Tylorian animism, New Animism is associated with Irving Hallowell's (1960) writing on the Ojibwa in Canada. It was he who coined the term 'non-human-person' as a designation of personhood in beings that are not human. His work with members of the Ojibwa community constituted a major shift in our understanding of non-Western ways of 'being in the world'. Animists' 'ways of being in the world' involve the recognition that "the world is full of persons, only some of whom are human, and life is always lived in relationship with others" (Harvey 2006: xi). 'Non-human-persons' as a designation of personhood typifies the broad framework of new animism (Harvey 2005: 15). This reconsideration was developed, notably, by Nurit Bird-David (1999). Conducted with the Nyaka of India, ethnographic studies led her to view hunter-gatherer animisms as relational epistemologies; knowing the world by means of 'relatedness' (Bird-David 1999: S69). Dealing with the subjective lived experiences of human and non-human beings in the world, Perspectivist approaches have dominated discussions of Amerindian societies (Viveiros de Castro 1998, 2004; Stolze Lima 1999; Ingold 2000; Descola 2012a, 2012b, 2013).

However, new animist literature does not always include discussions on shamanism. It may be this that leads several scholars to reject animism, believing it to be a theoretical 'usurper' of shamanism. Philippe Descola (2013), whose main scholarly focus is the ontology of Amerindian societies, separates different ontological positions present in both Western and non-Western systems into four distinct 'schema': naturalism (as experienced by Western societies), animism, totemism and analogism. These schemas are the organising principles that govern understanding of the world, shaped by differing 'modes of identification': "deeply internalized…cognitive and corporeal templates that govern the expression of an ethos" (Descola 2013: 92) allowing human beings to make comparisons between themselves and others occupying their world, by virtue of their similarities and differences (Descola 2013: 112).

On the strength of a division within themselves, humans are able to engage in such comparisons – the divide between 'interiority' (understood in this context as the 'soul', emotions, and intentionality) and 'physicality' (action, physical makeup and occupation of the world) (Ingold 2016: 309). According to Descola (2016), animism as an ontological system is premised on the understanding that within the universe there are non-human entities that differ in physicality but are identical in interiority to humans. That is to say, other things occupying the world have souls, agency and consciousness similar to humans. In contrast, totemism is defined as a schema wherein the subject sees both physicality and interiority in a specific group of other as similar, yet not identical to their own (Descola: 2016: 40-41). Analogism supposes that both interiority and physicality are entirely different between a human subject and not only non-human beings, but in all things comprising the cosmos (Scott 2014).

In his discussion of analogism in Mexico, Descola describes this state as the "grouping within every existing entity of a plurality of aspects the right coordination of which is believed to be necessary for the stabilization of that entity's individual identity" (Descola 2013: 212). Finally, naturalism, the

ontological scheme ascribed to Western ideologies, may be seen as a state in which the physicality of the object and humans can be deemed in some ways similar, but the object is 'devoid' of interiority (Descola 2016: 40). Importantly, naturalism typifies the notion of culture's superiority over nature. While these schemas share certain thematic concerns, they are nevertheless separate systems of ontological comprehension within societies and cannot exist covalently. If we accept Descola's strict division, then shamanism (analogism) would operate separately from animism. Moreover, there are a few fundamental problems with Descola's classifications, and perhaps these also contribute to a tendency of scholars to reject discussion of animism.

Articulated succinctly are Tim Ingold's comments on Descola's arguments within *Beyond Nature and Culture* (Ingold 2016). Ingold charges Descola with creating in his classification of ontological schemas a 'relative Universalism' that "strains to limit the number and variety of cognitive solutions to the conundrums that all humans face… in coming to terms with their own existence and that of both human and non-human others" (Ingold 2016; 303). Pressing the point, Ingold argues that Descola's comparative analysis gives inherent supremacy to naturalism, while "other pretenders for ontological supremacy –animism, totemism and analogism- remain imprisoned" (Ingold 2016: 306). Consequently, it denies the possibility that within non-Western ideologies, a proliferation of variants can exist, a hybrid of parts of these rigid ontological categories. Here the intersection between shamanism and animism could and, I would assert, *does* occur within Bushman epistemology.

To this end, a useful exploration into differing ontologies is that of Marshall Sahlins (2014). Sahlins (2014: 281-282) offers an alternative reading of Descola's ontological schemes. According to Sahlins, animism, totemism and analogism should be considered as three forms of animism, which may operate simultaneously, though in all likelihood unequally, within a given non-Western society. He reimagines these forms of animism as communal (Descola's

animism), where all human persons share the same relationships with non-human persons, segmentary animism (totemism) in which specific non-human persons are identified with groups of human persons, and hierarchical animism (analogism). Although in the case of analogism or hierarchical animism, there is emphasis on "cosmocratic god-persons" (Sahlins 2014: 282), ritual specialists who are endowed with cosmological abilities and who are able to commune with such god-persons, may also be incorporated into hierarchical animist worldviews. Accepting, then, Sahlins's reformulated ontological scheme, communal animism and shamanism may operate in tandem within Bushman society. Shamanism, forming part of hierarchical animism, then falls under the larger umbrella of animism that incorporates communal, segmentary, and hierarchical animism.

To lend 'explanatory force' (Willerslev 2011) of 'SDFs' as being bound up in animist beliefs that form the basis of Bushman worldview, we can begin with a simple question: if, as the new sites and the inconsistencies in Blundell's data seem to suggest, it is unlikely that they are the result of changing relationships with Nguni farmers and European colonists (or rather, that they are representations of ritual specialists' increased socio-political status as a result of trade with these peoples in their spiritual labour) then what *do* they represent? Focussing not on arguments based on a temporally specific hypothesis, but rather on the particular images themselves, it may be possible to understand this. It is not contentious to point out that 'SDFs' often are made up, in part, of non-human features (i.e. tusks or hooves). Accordingly, does it not follow that this aspect deserves attention? A brief reading of Bushman ethnography from both the north and south highlights the 'relatedness' of all things in the Bushman idiom, and the importance of non-human beings in the spiritual labour of ritual specialists is well documented (Bleek & Lloyd 1911; Lewis-Williams & Biesele 1978; Guenther 1988, 1989, 2014, 2015, Biesele 1996; Katz *et al.* 1997; McGranaghan 2012, 2014a, 2014b).

In a world where animal-human relations are as important as human-human relationships, why has research focused mainly on the latter? The ontological turn had yet to fully materialise, let alone have an impact on rock art research in southern Africa. Because the shamanic model accorded so well with emic world views, and allowed complex interpretations of rock panels, it did not seem necessary to change something that was not broken. However, more attention is being paid now to the role non-humans play in the Bushman idiom than in the past. Two names loom large when thinking about Bushman ontology as relational: Guenther (2014,2015) and McGranaghan (2012, 2014a, 2014b, McGranaghan & Challis 2016). Both have dissected much of the |Xam and Kalahari ethnographies with the view towards understanding the construction of personhood in Bushman world views and the relationships between humans and non-humans. They have provided invaluable insights into both. Following this new direction, by using new animist concepts of relational ontologies and their effect on the working of society, we may be able to begin to unravel the meaning of large, detailed part-human, part-animal painted figures.

While Bushman hunter-gatherer ontology will necessarily exhibit differences to other animist societies in other parts of the world (Guenther's (2015) identification of ontological flux in Bushman ontology is an apt example), there are similarities between the basic tenets of new animism that may be identified in divergent cultures across the world. Therefore, in order to *better* understand the relationships ritual specialists have with other non-humans, it is useful to explore how animism operates within other non-Western societies across time and space. There is value in this endeavour; it assists in bringing to light thematic similarities between cultural phenomena that may, in turn, produce greater understanding of Bushman society in itself. Southern African rock art researchers are no strangers to the concept of comparative analysis or indeed the use of analogy. In truth, our dataset is made up of three distinct ethnographies relating to Bushman peoples separated both temporally and geographically from the painters themselves (Orpen 1874; Bleek & Lloyd 1911; Marshall 1962, 1969; Lee 1967, 1979; Katz 1982). In these we find phenomena thematically similar to those appearing in the

paintings. From these thematically similar observations we make our argument for the symbolic import of the art. Without the use of analogy and comparative analysis our comprehension of the art would be limited to the long discredited 'art-for-art's sake' interpretation.

Rane Willerslev (2011) champions the use of comparative analysis. He takes umbrage at anthropology's pre-occupation with the presumed "concreteness of ethnographic facts" (Willerslev 2011: 504), direct observation and first-hand experience when exploring the social lives of people. These pre-occupations cause anthropological knowledge to be defined along those lines triggering, Willerslev believes, a particularism dangerous to interpretation. Therefore, Willerslev is in favour of comparative methods. When advocating the self-sufficiency of ethnographic knowledge, anthropology underplays the interpretive component of enquiry (Willerslev 2011: 505).

Comparative scholarship should seek to identify cultural/social customs and ideologies that are thematically similar cross-culturally, so that new insights into what recondite material may signify may be found. Robert Segal (2001: 347) makes a similar point by arguing that comparison between cultures is not ultimately causal, it is thematic and therefore finding parallels is no explanation itself. It falls to the scholar to use what Willerslev (2011: 504) terms 'speculative imagination'[15]. Willerslev's search for the animist soul among the Yukaghirs and Chukchi of Northern Siberia involved comparisons with other 'thematically

[15] An anthropologist's speculative imagination is understood as his or her ability to draw from disparate but similar cultural practices evident across different cultures in order to make clearer those practices within the sphere of his or own ethnographic study. The 'speculation' allows one to escape preoccupation with the concreteness of ethnographic facts achieved only by direct observation.

similar' phenomena present in other societies; making "undisciplined raids on ethnographic descriptions from all over the world" (Willerslev 2011: 511).

The value of comparative analysis is also demonstrated by Alison Wylie in her 1985 paper 'the reaction against analogy', where she posits that the use of limited analogy is a creative process that is "complex, thoroughly inductive of continual adjustment between theoretical frameworks that allow you to…interpret archaeological data as evidence of the cultural past and the facts about that past that they bring into view" (Wylie 1985: 88). By employing "relational forms of analogical inference" (Wylie 1985: 105), one can discriminate between sources that have similarities, even on the most basic level to reconstruct the elusive elements of the subject one is investigating. The addition of other analogical sources of information implying the same technique allows one to build "by appeal'' (Wylie 1985: 106) an interpretative framework for one's subject, each of which brings to the subject a new perspective. Rock art researchers in southern Africa are intimately familiar with the use of comparative analysis and the use of analogy (cf. Lewis-Williams 1991). The rather disciplined raids made upon northern and southern Bushman ethnography to explain painted images have had such profound explanatory force that it stands to reason that if we are looking at the formation and execution of Bushman ontology within an animist framework that it may be possible to make use of other demonstrably animist societies' beliefs as a means of bolstering what we understand already.

6.1 Predator-prey relationships

A common theme running through much animist ontology is a predator/prey relationship that exists between human persons and animal persons. The Chukchi, Yukaghir and Eveny of northern Siberia understand all beings as having a particular viewpoint forming part of a mutually intelligible whole (Willerslev 2004, 2007, 2011). Animals perceive of themselves in the same way that humans do *themselves*, which allows all beings to engage in social interactions with one

another. However, those social interactions are defined exclusively in terms of predation (Willeslev 2011: 11). For instance, to a Yukaghir hunter, a reindeer is a prey animal that must be hunted down so that the needs of the community may be met (unfortunately, in contemporary Yukaghir communities this translates as monetary gain from the sale of reindeer skin). There is nothing alien about this statement: hunters hunt. However, an evil spirit or *ke'let* perceives a human hunter as prey in turn. If Yukaghir hunting parties do not observe the correct respect behaviours, the *ke'let* will punish them by hunting them down as prey (Willeslev 2011: 11). When Yukaghir hunters hunt a predator animal, such as a bear, and kill it, there is an immediate danger of the enraged spirit of the bear identifying them as its killer. If this occurs, the hunters immediately become prey. To avoid revenge being taken on them, the hunters engage in what Willerslev (2007:129) calls "tactics of displacement and substitution". The hunters first 'blind' the carcass so that the spirit cannot see them. Thereafter, the hunters enquire of the bear who it was that killed it, effectively deflecting attention away from themselves. The jaw of the bear skull is, as a final safety precaution, bound with twigs (Figure 6.1). These measures are vital – if they fail to carry out the 'displacement' ritual, they will likely be killed (Willerslev 2007: 129-130). Such behaviour is just one example of the kinds of relationships humans can have with non-humans in northern Siberia.



Figure 6.1: Bound skull prevents hunters falling prey to the vengeful spirit of the killed bear. Image after Willerslev 2007

Even a cursory reading of either northern or southern Bushman ethnography provides ample evidence for concepts of predation informing human interactions with non-humans. Awareness of the dangers predators pose to hunter-gatherers is of course an obvious necessity: there is a real possibility of one encountering a dangerous animal in the course of daily life. Lions, in particular, are often discussed. Biesele's (1996: 149) Ju|'hoansi informants described lions as their "ancient dark enemies". McGranaghan (McGranaghan 2012: 159) identifies lions as the apex of the 'beasts of prey' category. Moreover, predator *intentionality* is expressly emphasized within the ethnographic texts. Take for example, a tale told to Dia!kwain by his sister |a-kkum[16] concerning the actions of a lion (LL. V.11. 4869-4889; Bleek, D.F. 1932: 47-50).

When |a-kkum walked home alone one evening, an owl warned her that a lion would follow her, as the owl is a beast that understands the actions of the lion. On this occasion the owl saw that the lion had made the sun set quickly and knew that he would come after the girl. |a-kkum was afraid and became aware of the lion following her. The lion had been attempting to follow her footsteps. |a-kkum was aware that she could not cross the open veld since the lion would surely follow her easily and consume her. Climbing a steep, rocky hill, she lay down so as to conceal herself from the lion's shining gaze. While she lay in the dust, she heard the lion calling to her while he searched for her footprints in the veld below. The lion called "sounding like a man" (Bleek, D.F 1932: 49) as he wanted to trick |a-kkum into revealing her position so that he could kill her. He was able to 'sound like a man' because when he searched for human prey, he placed his tail across his mouth and in this way, concealed his true identity. The lion asked her where she was, suspecting that she was on the hillside and asking her to pull him up. However, |a-kkum was not fooled, because her mother had told her that the lion

[16] The name is spelled thus in the original Bleek and Lloyd collection, but spelled |a:kum in *Customs and Beliefs* (Bleek, D.F 1931)

would do this, and she did not reveal her hiding place. This example, from one of many tales concerning lions in both southern and northern Bushman folklore, illustrates Bushman perceptions of lions as possessing distinct personhood and intentionality, an identity which is almost exclusively predatory towards humans.

Unlike Yukaghir, Chukchi and Eveny hunters, the relationship Bushmen hunters have with their *prey* is one of utmost respect. Consequently, hunters carry out certain suites of behaviour in order that prey animals give themselves willingly. 'Shamans-of-the-game'– or *Ɵpwai:tən-ta-!gi:tən* in |Xam (McGranaghan & Challis 2016: 590) – need to foster a special relationship with the animals whose movements he will attempt to control. However, it is not the exclusive reserve of 'shamans-of-the-game' to interact with prey animals. All members of society must adhere to certain codes of behaviour and speech so that prey animals will behave 'nicely', become 'tame'. McGranaghan's and Sam Challis's recent (2016) paper on 'taming' practices illustrates how 'taming magic' plays an important role in the maintenance of favourable relationships between humans and prey animals. In addition, it plays an important role in the production of rock art, as we will see.

6.2 Relationships with other-than-animal entities

Recent new animist discourse has focussed its attention upon certain specific animals and, while this is changing to a degree, such focus tends to downplay relational interactions with objects, elements, spirits, plants and entities such as the moon and stars (Halbmayer 2012:12). While relationships with animals (prey and predator) form a large part of the Bushman idiom, the animacy of other categories of non-human things may assist in providing a further nuanced picture of Bushman ontology, and by extension, rock art. Foremost, it is abundantly clear from the ethnographies of both northern and southern Bushmen that a wide range of non-human entities contribute to the functioning of society: the maintenance of social order, resource acquisition and spiritual activity. Embarking on another undisciplined raid upon cosmologies and practices of hierarchical animist

(shamanic) societies from across the globe, we may see how the strict divide between natural and supernatural, body and mind, human and non-human, is not appropriate for the study of Bushman belief.

A category of natural things perceived as animate by non-Western societies that remains relatively elusive to cultural anthropologists is that of plants. One exceptional case is the popular knowledge of Amerindian use of hallucinogenic plants such as the psychotropic drink ayahuasca during shamanic rituals (Pendell 1995; Vitebsky 2001; Znamenski 2007; Brabec de Mori 2011; Luna 2011) (Figure 6.2). Among the mestizo of the Peruvian Amazon, however, ayahuasca is understood not only as a means by which to achieve altered states, but as *doctores* or plant-teachers (Luna 2011: 14). *Vegetalistas* (or plant-inspired shamans) (Vitebsky 2001: 68) may achieve certain goals by harnessing knowledge given to them by plant-teachers. Plants are animate, able to pass on knowledge to shamans via the medium of *icaros*, or songs. These songs enable shamans to learn how to heal the sick, protect the community, without them, these abilities would not be available to the community. Thus, the animacy of plants within Peruvian mestizos forms an invaluable part of the functioning of society.



Figure 6.2: A Shipibo shaman during an ayahuasca ceremony. Image after Brabec de Mori 2011: 190

References to plants in the |Xam archive seem largely to concern their practical and ritual uses (Hollmann 2002: 277). McGranaghan (2012: 252) suggests neither

Bleek nor Lloyd appear to have been interested in, nor knowledgeable about, plants – even when they are mentioned in the archive, the descriptions given by Bleek and Lloyd are equivocal, even vague. Guenther (2015), however, in his discussions of ontological flux as forming an important part of Bushman ontology in all three arenas of the Bushman universe – the Early Race or Primal Times, the here-and-now and the permeable, intersectional world of trance and ritual – discusses the possibility of some natural things, such as sticks and arrows, to transform back into the plants that they came from. Seeking further evidence that plants in their natural, un-manipulated form (i.e., not items of material culture that have been produced from plants, for we shall see that such items can possess agency) having a degree of animacy, I turn to data relating to the twentieth century northern Bushman groups in Botswana.

A monograph by Hans-Joachim Heinz and Brian Maguire published by the Botswana Society in around 1973 (the date is not given), describes the ethno-botanical knowledge and plant lore of the !kõ Bushmen to the south of Ghanzi. When one sifts through the highly pejorative, colonial rhetoric one finds several intriguing references to the animacy of plants. Within the section concerning *metabolism and the functions of plant organs,* Heinz and Maguire (1973:7, emphasis in original) relate a description given by one of their !kõ informants:

> Plants **breathe**, as do animals and humans, but they only do so while they bear leaves. When the leaves turn brown they stop. In the following growth season they begin to breathe again through the leaf buds. Plants **drink** water with roots and stem. When it rains, the water runs down the branches and stem and it reaches the roots. The water enters the root and rises through the bark. The bark sucks the water up. The water does not leave the stem again. When a root is cut the water runs out and the plant dies. Plants not only drink rainwater but also dew.

Regarding sexual activity of plants, Namkwa, Heinz and Maguire's main informant, distinguishes between male and female plants. Male and female trees stand beside one another and are sexed by their relative 'beauty' (female trees are 'prettier' and stouter than males). They cannot move and consequently cannot directly copulate. Intercourse, according to Namka, is a service rendered to the trees by the rain occurring between the tree stem and the water. From this union seeds are born (Heinz & Maguire 1973: 8). As with other animist idioms, "not every entity is endowed with such interior spiritual quality [animacy], nor is it necessarily present in an entity at all times" (Pederson 2001: 414). Although to the !ko certain plants breathe, they do so only when they bear green leaves (Heinz & Maguire 1973: 7). They fall somewhere on the lower spectrum of Bushman animistic ontological understanding, possessing human-like consciousness, but not engaging in other animate activities such as seeing or smelling (Heinz & Maguire 1973: 7). It is not necessary for *all* non-human entities to possess equal consciousness for the Bushman idiom to be unequivocally animist.

Considering the accounts given by Namkwa, her fellow !kõ informants and evidence in support of Bleek and Lloyd's disinterest in plants in general, it is eminently possible that the |Xam possessed some belief in the relative animacy of certain plants. It may be useful to further investigate this. The ritual use of plants such as the *so*-|*oa* root by the |Xam to protect from poison and illness, or from attack has been well documented (Bleek 1911; Hollmann 2004; Challis 2014) but whether the plant was perceived as explicitly animate is less clear. Taking into consideration the animacy of ritually-used plants by *vegetalistas*, this may well apply to |Xam Bushmen as well.

6.3 Causality

Animist ontologies are often structured around the notion causality. In other words, in order for the world to function correctly, actions of humans and non-humans are in many instances structured around the concept of cause and effect.

Hallowell (1960) illustrates the importance, in Ojibwa society, of recognising the effect one's actions have on future events. Many of their myths have this concept as a basis. Hallowell (1960: 28) is at pains to emphasise that, unlike the Western idea of myths implying non-reality, Ojibwa myths are real, true events that occurred beyond living memory. Ojibwa myths tell of the consequences, negative or positive, of a person's actions. An example of such a myth is the story of the Four Winds, reproduced by Hallowell (1960: 29):

The Four Winds and Flint are quintuplets

> The Winds were born first, the Flint 'jumped out', tearing her to pieces. …This, of course, is a direct allusion to his innate stony properties…Later he was penalized for his hurried exit. He fought with Misábos (Great Hare) and pieces were chipped off his body and his size reduced. 'Those pieces broken from your body may be of some use to you human beings some day' Misábos said to him. 'But you will not be any larger as long as the earth shall last. You'll never harm anyone again.

The myth typifies the concept of causality. Additionally, it serves as an example of how stories are reminders to members of society what codes of behaviour are appropriate and what are not. Causality, propriety and impropriety present strongly in the Early Race Narratives of the |Xam. These narratives share with the Ojibwa 'myths' the understanding that the events within them *actually* occurred, they are not non-reality, but they did occur in the long-distant past.

Bushman psychological construction of a worldview is based largely on causality and consequence - both everyday action and mythology or folklore are structured in terms of human and non-human beings' actions as a cause of an event. Take, for example, the Early Race Narrative concerning the baboon's short, crooked tail (LL.V.24.5974 - 5994). Baboons are unlike most other animals – they speak |Xam

and take wives. When baboons were yet more like people, in the Early Race times, a baboon went hunting and broiled meat on the hunting ground. When they returned to a group of people, the baboon told them he had brought them gemsbok meat to eat. The meat did not smell like gemsbok and was dark, but the baboon insisted that it was just that. The baboon said it was burnt and that was why it looked and smelled different. Becoming suspicious, the people asked a child, who had been hunting with the baboon, what type of meat the baboon had provided. In answer, the child responded that it was, in fact, human flesh. The people, angry that the baboon had lied, resolved to punish him. They prepared a pile of burning coals. The baboon was called to 'chat' to the people, but when he came, they forced him onto the fire and the tip of his tail was burnt off. Henceforth he was a baboon, and his tail was small, hard and bent because of the fire. He would not eat much meat from then on, for he remembered the fire. The tale is an example of how each act has a purpose, a consequence. Ideally, the purpose is to behave 'nicely' (McGranaghan 2012). However, as with the baboon, when the intention is wicked or the act foolish and this leads to the propagation of negative events or behaviours, there will be negative consequences.

6.4 The construction of personhood: behaviour-evaluation discussed in non-human terms

From the inception of the world during the Early Race Times, Bushmen have understood non-humans as animate, having intentionality, being able to transform in some cases in other non-humans or indeed to humans, and as behaving oftentimes like humans – either 'nicely', 'foolishly', 'greedily' or 'angrily/violently' (McGranaghan 2012). It is therefore possible to discuss animal behaviour in human terms: a lion who was 'foolish' (without understanding), who hunted and ate people was described as an 'angry man' (McGranaghan 2014a: 13), and conversely a cheetah who was not cowardly but hunted its prey 'like a human' was understood as behaving 'nicely' (McGranaghan 2012: 196). The evaluation of behaviours played a pivotal role in Bushman society, as in order for the world to function properly, correct codes of behaviour had to be followed or,

as discussed above, the consequences would be negative. Animals, such as 'beasts of prey' (*ǁkeǁke* in |Xam) were understood as mostly behaving inappropriately – they were violent and greedy, and did not follow accepted patterns of behaviour, like not sharing meat or killing wantonly. Because predatory animals behaved in certain (undesirable) ways, words associated with them were used to describe humans when they were behaving in antisocial manners.

An important part of the regulation of society was controlling the distribution of resources fairly amongst community members and limiting one's own consumption (McGranaghan 2012: 183). Should one not adhere to this code, then one would be referred to in terms of animals who were infamous for their greedy consumption. If someone, for example, did not share their resources with others, they were referred to as *!gwaĩ* (hyena) (McGranaghan (2014a: 12, 2014b: 676). Referring to people in these animal, antisocial terms, was a potent reminder of the inappropriateness of the particular behaviour, employed in order to exhort the subject to behave appropriately. Positive and negative associations with animals in terms of human personhood were understood throughout Bushman society, and therefore any reference to these commonly-understood tropes would be poignant. As such, when such references appear in the rock art, they may speak to specific aspects of behaviour and identity. Incorporation of particular non-human features into images termed by Blundell as 'SDFs' will be discussed in Chapter Seven, emphasising the importance of concepts of propriety, impropriety, 'sameness', difference/monstrosity, 'niceness' and violence in Bushman ontology in understanding what some of the images may represent. McGranaghan's discussions on the construction of personhood have given researchers the opportunity to revaluate certain aspects of our use of the archive as an analogical resource in the decipherment of rock art. The application of new animist theory to Bushman rock art is a relatively new academic concern, but one that is fast gaining traction.

6.5 Animism in art

While new animism is taking over anthropological discourse, it has yet to have a wide-spread impact on rock art literature in southern Africa. David Morris (2002, 2012), followed shortly thereafter by Dowson (2007, 2009) was the first to make explicit the connection between Bushman animist ontology and the art itself. Morris's (2002, 2012) work dealt largely with rock engravings in the Northern Cape province of South Africa, while Dowson was concerned with painted examples. As his area of interest is somewhat closer to my own (and the conclusions he reached somewhat more controversial), I focus here on Dowson's new animist writing.

Dowson (2007, 2009) suggested that the shamanic model was guilty of perpetuating Cartesian dichotomies by separating the body and mind and privileging the role of the 'enigmatic' ritual specialist over other members of society. Consequently, he argues that by applying the shamanic model 'wholesale' to rock art imagery, a false image of the primacy of ritual specialists is created, which ignores the role of non-ritual specialist persons in sustaining society. In doing so, Dowson implicitly rejects his own interpretation of 'preeminent shamans' as concerning *exclusively* the primacy of ritual specialists and their exclusive roles in the maintenance and regeneration of social order, made further salient by the coming of Bantu-speaking farmers. Questioning the validity of this rock art interpretation, Dowson has implicated himself in the 'crime'. Nevertheless, he does not, in this (2007) paper, explicitly reject his work on 'pre-eminent shamans'. Instead Dowson takes the somewhat less awkward route of reimagining the classic 'dying eland' paintings so prevalent in Bushman rock paintings in the Drakensberg mountains, not as a metaphor for the 'dying shaman' entering trance, but as the representation of the reciprocal relationship between a human and non-human being – a relationship based on respect in the arena of hunting (2007:56).

The role of the ritual specialist (or rather, I would say, the role of a ritual specialist entering a trance state) *has* been overstated in a portion of rock art analysis. However, Dowson (2007), it seems, wants to replace one theoretical position with another without apprehension of their equivalence. He ignores the complexity of the animist condition. Marshall Sahlin's 'hierarchical animism', the admixture of Descola's analogism and animism, seems to accord well with what we know about 'spiritual stratification' within Bushman worldview. Bernd Brabec de Mori (2013) expounds this stratification in reference to shamans of the Shipibo of Peru. Here, other non-shaman community members do not share the exclusive spiritual access accorded to ritual specialists. Ritual specialists have tasks which it is their duty to perform, and that other members *cannot* perform. However, since community members share relational frames of interaction between human and non-human persons in everyday life, it is also the duty of the ritual specialist to relate what he/she has achieved to the people, who fully appreciate the kinds of interactions that may be had with non-human persons. A statement such as this is not new, nor is it surprising. For example, both Megan Biesele (1978) and Lewis-Williams (1988) emphasize Bushman ritual specialists (once a trance state has been achieved and necessary tasks undertaken within the spirit-realm) recounting their experiences to the members of their community. These recollections "*no matter how bizarre or unusual*" (Lewis-Williams 1988: 3, emphasis in the original) are understood to be 'authentic' accounts. Peruvian shamans do this with music and singing. I suggest that a similar duty was fulfilled by ritual specialists in the form of rock art.

My aim throughout this chapter has been to show that Bushman ontology is at once shamanic *and* animist, forming, as Sahlins (2014: 282) terms it, a system of 'hierarchical animism'. The two epistemological positions are not in opposition to one another. Dowson fails to convey that rock art imagery concerns the complex interplay between animist beliefs and shamanic practice. I reiterate my point regarding Shipibo shamans' duty to recount their experiences within the spirit world to non-shamans – shamans enjoy a larger range of interactions with other non-human persons than others in their communities. In part, then, southern

African Bushman rock art seems to be a means by which ritual specialists give access to their spiritual encounters to those who do not have the ability to have any of their own.

McGranaghan and Challis (2016) put forward more a convincing argument than Dowson for the applicability of new animism to southern African Bushman rock art studies. Their focus is on 'taming' of game animals for the practice of hunting. 'Tameness' is said to have been desirable in prey; that ritual specialists could manipulate relationships between themselves and other species in order to exact from them this quality (McGranaghan & Challis 2016). The process of taming made up a not insignificant portion of rock art production and can be demonstrated in the art itself. A common theme in Bushman rock art is human and antelope interaction. Often, images occur that show humans with their arms stretched out towards antelopes, touching parts of the animal (many times the nose or tail). Indeed, one of the most well-known panels at Game Pass (sometimes called the 'Rosetta Stone' of southern African rock art because it helped Lewis-Williams 'break the 'code') contains an example (Figure 6.3) (Lewis-Williams 2002).

The authors (2016) argue that these interactions illustrate the practice of taming, inculcating the animal to behave 'nicely'. Because relationships between humans and non-humans have a direct effect on how the world operates, it is desirable that these relationships be favourable. The reasons one may want to engender good relationships with animals are not confined to hunting, but may include obtaining power from them, or indeed transforming into an animal, which may require acquiescence from the animal. Therefore, the appearance of indicators of taming magic is argued as another means by which favourable relationships are maintained with non-human persons. Far from being in opposition to the broad shamanic model, McGranaghan & Challis (2016) argue that animic relationships (and the carrying out of taming magic) form an integrated part of this framework. As a result, McGranaghan and Challis succeed in linking animism to the art in an

effective way.



Figure 6.3: Transforming ritual specialist engaging in taming behaviour, Game Pass. Image: RARI

Animism and shamanism are not two incompatible worldviews, in fact they are complimentary. It is clear that many animist societies around the world likewise operate within a shamanic framework. Answering Dowson's call to 'animate' rock art, it is apt that the subject is that of 'SDFs' in the rock art of the south-eastern mountains. Following Harvey (2010), I am convinced that by re-examining what it is that ritual specialists do, in relation to other beings in their universe, a clearer vision will be achieved of what role other beings play in facilitating the successful conclusion of their ritual duties, such as healing and rainmaking. In turn, this I believe will assist in elucidating what large, detailed anthropomorphic figures mean individually by virtue of their incorporating non-human features. The exercise removes any dependence on the notion of linear progression or increase in power of ritual specialists as a result of interaction with others. It remains, thus, to provide a number of suggestions as to how to go about interpreting some of the sites in question.

7 CHAPTER SEVEN. APPLYING NEW ANIMISM AND CONCEPTS OF RELATIONAL ONTOLOGY TO LARGE ANTHROPOMORPHS

In recent years, emphasis in rock art research has begun to shift from purely shamanic interpretations of Bushman world views onto Bushman ontology, which has been proven to be relational and animist in nature. An understanding of this may provide –for at least some of the images described by Blundell (2004) as SDFs – interpretations that are aligned better with indigenous perspectives. While the images share some common traits, it is unlikely that together they represent a distinct category with an over-arching symbolic meaning. Some we may connect in a number of ways, while others share only minor similarities and likely represent 'events' or outcomes in ritual contexts entirely divergent one from the other. With these final thoughts, I do not propose to 'solve' the 'problem' of large, detailed anthropomorphic figures appearing in the rock art. More work needs to be completed in order to reach perhaps a more nuanced understanding of them. Here I simply wish to highlight, working within a new animist framework (alongside a return to a more 'traditional' interpretation of the paintings that does not rely on historical sources that cannot be linked to the art in any convincing way), certain aspects of their make-up that may provide a wider range of research possibilities in the future. I therefore restrict myself to brief discussions of three sites: RSA-MTS6, RSA-MEL6 and LES-J08. These sites provide evidence for the variety of meanings embedded into the figures previously understood as forming a distinct category referencing the elevated social status and ritual power held by ritual specialists during contact with other groups in the landscape.

7.1 Oversized Anthropomorphic ritual specialists: possible significances

There are, however, certainly commonalities shared between images that Blundell called SDFs, or neither he nor Dowson would have identified them as being part of a category. It would be a mistake to ignore these, as they are likely to have some kind of significance to the makers and viewers of the art. First, then, it is necessary to examine those features that *do* appear regularly either in the images themselves, or in close association with them. Firstly, most images share the characteristic of being relatively large in comparison to other human subjects, and the detail with which they were painted is often remarkable. The juxtaposition of 'normal sized' human figures with these large ones indicates intentionality on the part of the painter to emphasise this feature. The animistic 'system' in which Bushmen operate can be said to be 'hierarchical', not in a social-hierarchy sense, but in terms of access to relationships with non-human beings in the world. All members of society have access to relationships with non-human persons, but the range of those relationships is not as wide as those afforded to ritual specialists, who, by virtue of the duties they must carry out (such as healing, controlling and working with game animals, alleviating tensions – be they human, spiritual or elemental, or controlling the rain) have access to a plethora of non-human relationships.

Therefore, because the art most often refers to the space that is the "betwixt-between, liminal world of ritual" (Guenther 2015: 278), it is likely that in some instances – not *all*, as I do agree with Dowson (2007) that the role of non-ritual specialists has been underplayed in the past – it was appropriate that ritual specialists be emphasised in the art. The emphasis cannot, however, be put down to an historical increase in social and political power accorded to ritual specialists by virtue of their trading with non-Bushman groups because the images were not proven to have been painted at that time. I do not suggest that no social change occurred in Bushman society, for the evidence exists that it did (see Mazel 1989). What I suggest is that we cannot speak of societal organisation during the

fractious and changing contact period without the dates that link them to that specific timeframe. It is, for want of a better word, ‘safer’, and more in line with indigenous knowledge, then, to look to ontological concerns rather than political ones.

The deliberate emphasis of particular identities in rock art panels may simply be because the realm of intense transcendence and transformation during the dance is the preserve of ritual specialists (Guenther 2015: 298) and the painting in question concerns the doings of those ritual specialists in the realm of the ‘spirit world’. Or, it is also possible, because we know that hunter-gather societies are not static and unchanging but dynamic, that social differentiation took place along different lines before, during and after contact with non-Bushman groups. If we view Bushman ontology as hierarchical animism where access to relationships and interactions with other beings in the universe is weighted in the favour of ritual specialists, then one might expect that this differential access to relationships and experiences was the locus of social differentiation. Painting references to interactions with other entities in the world only ritual specialists were privy to, may have concretised that dimension of social division within Bushman society. That differentiation may not have any real consequences in the ‘here-and-now’, we cannot, at this point, say for certain. But differential access to other non-human persons and their doings may be one reason why these paintings show ritual specialists as dominant.

Alternatively, perhaps the size references the amount of spiritual potency required to achieve whatever task is beings carried out by the ritual specialists. For one image at LES-J08, the exceptionally large part-human, part multiple non-human conflation, it is likely that the size of the figure is a consequence of its startling alterity, which I discuss below. Decoration and headdress are likely markers of the items used by ritual specialists, either in reality or in the realm of the spirits, during the dance and subsequent trance experiences, as a means of identifying visually the action taking place in the art.

It is likely that the motivation for emphasising size varied, perhaps not for all of the images, but certainly for some, and therefore, in the future, more interpretative work will need to be done on individual sites in order to get closer to the range of possibilities.

Their relative size in comparison to other images in the same site, and the inclusion of decoration or embellishment are the only characteristics of the figures themselves that can truly be said to be common amongst the majority of the images. However, many of the large, detailed anthropomorphic figures discussed in this work also have in common their *association* with a stick of some sort, as discussed in Chapters Two and Five. Indeed, in the newly documented images, two out of the four figures present at RSA-MTS6 have sticks in their hands, while a third stick is extended outwards in the hand of a figure destroyed by flaking on the far left of the panel (Figure 5.4: 90 and Figure 7.1: 148) and one of the figures at LES-S03 (Figure 3.15: 45) has one protruding from the back. Add to these the instances of sticks in Blundell's sample, and there is a common link between the type of image and the stick. Blundell associated sticks with societal status which did not accord well with Bushman (both |Xam and groups in the Kalahari) ethnography on the use of sticks. Having 69 different translations in the *Bushman Dictionary* (Bleek 1956), a stick is likely to reference a range of actions, producing a range of symbolic significance when painted. As we saw in Chapter Five, sticks are used at the dance not only as pure dancing aids but as supports in combatting evil that may infiltrate the dance. A stick can be imbued with *n|om,* which provides it with its own agency (Katz 1982: 182), perhaps adding to its value for ritual specialists who must perform tasks in order to fulfil their duty to their community. Considering there is evidence in both |Xam and Kalahari texts that most things in the world were considered in some way animate, or that most things were capable, in some way, of interacting with humans, a stick with its own agency may indeed have been considered animate to, at least, the Bushmen of the Kalahari. However, it would seem that the 'level' of animacy would not be comparable to say, that of a baboon, as the stick had to be *given* agency by a ritual

specialist, implying that it was not at all times powerful and unable to act on its own at will.

Interestingly, supporting evidence for the concept of sticks possessing a degree of animacy can also be found in the Bleek and Lloyd archive. An Early Race narrative tells of |Kaggən, the trickster deity (the Mantis), involved in a quarrel with !gwe:-!kweitən-tu, a monster who was known to be an angry person (something undesirable and antisocial in |Xam society) (McGranaghan 2014a: 9). The story is related in three versions in the archive, one that is relatively short (LL.II.9. 935–966), and two versions that are significantly longer (WB.II.391–420, WB.II.461–500, WB.XI.1027–1119, WB.XII.1121–1170, WB.XIX.1805–1871, WB.XX. 1872–1964, again WB.XX.1805–1816, 1872–1910, 2060–2152). In the narrative |kaggən fights foolishly with !gwe:-!kweitən-tu. |kaggən does not fare well in the initial fight. !gwe:-!kweitən-tu beats him over the head, causing |kaggən severe pain and "head scars" (WB.II.463). |kaggən flees the fight, and in order to 'cool' his wounds |kaggən flies, with feathers on his arms into a waterhole, leaving his 'things' behind. In amongst them are a kaross, a cap, a quiver, a bow and a stick. |kaggən calls to his 'things' that he calls the hartebeest's children(LL.II.9.937): "You must run after me, you and the veldscoen's children. They and the quiver; they and the bow; they and the stick, they and the cap; they and the kaross" and his things come "because they are used to listen to hear |kaggən to what |kaggən says, when he orders them. They are used to listen to what |kaggən says" (LL.II.9.939). |kaggən is angry that !gwe:-!kweitən-tu has hurt him so badly and come away unscathed. He speaks to his son, Ichneumon the mongoose, who reminds him that !gwe:-!kweitən-tu's eyes are on his feet, and not on his head, and so |kaggən will be able to get revenge upon the monster by beating dust into his eyes. The stick used in this narrative is a fighting stick and came to |kaggən's aid. The concept of ontological flux expounded by Guenther (2015) is of use here, because it is clear, from this tale and others, that |kaggən's things are not always active, nor do all items of the same kind possess such agentive powers.

Sticks appear to have had ‘sense’ at some points, and others not. In one of the longer versions of the tale the items say (WB.XI.1030-1032):

> We are those who sat behind him, we sit near the man
> (!gwe-!kweiten-ttu) who did beat him (Mantis) with a kirri
> he flew laying down the kirri, whilst this other
> One took his kirri, on account of the thing which his things
> spoke of, we speak, as we are (the) things, we are things, we
> talk whilst his fellow’s (!gwe-!kweiten-ttu’s) things do
> not talk, we are who talk, while we are things, we do not talk
> at the house, for we are silent at the house, while he alone talks
> there, while we do not talk with him.

The Early Race narratives of the Primal Time held sway amongst |Xam individuals even in nineteenth century societies. Indeed, at times the worlds merged into one another, the separation between them tenuous. It is possible that the idea that usually-inanimate objects such as sticks, when used in the liminal dimension of ritual, became in some way animate, remained salient in the minds of ritual specialists. We have evidence that sticks were used in ritual contexts (e.g. Marshall 1969: 50; Katz 1982: 205), not only in the dance but as aids to the work of ritual specialists, particularly when dealing with ‘evil’, monstrous things or, as is sometimes the case for Ju|’hoansi in the Kalahari, the powerful and dangerous God ≠*Gao!na* or his mischievous and foolish compatriot ||Gauwa (Marshall 1962: 236-231). Added to this, they may have had power placed into them during the dance. It is likely, therefore, that their appearance in the art, alongside highly detailed, large figures is suggestive of a deeper symbolic meaning than simply as a referent to trance performance. If they are associated with anti-social imagery (such as a lion, or spirits-of-the-dead) I suggest that a stick in the hands of one of these figures references the protective role ritual specialists must play in society against the monstrous and harmful entities with which they must deal.

As mentioned in Chapter Six, community members all share the same understanding of the relationships it is possible to have with non-human beings, but do not all have access to the same range of interactions that ritual specialists do and the art is therefore a way of communicating those relationships, providing evidence for the work that ritual specialists do for their community.

Sticks in association with large anthropomorphs are indeed common, but that connection along with their size, are the most significant similarities between the images, and even those are likely to represent different things on a case-to-case basis. What may be more useful, is to look instead to those aspects that they *do not* share. I focus here on different non-human elements incorporated into the figures, Bushman ethnography on the relationships with humans is rich, and researchers such McGranaghan (2012, 2014a & b) and Guenther (2015) have engaged thoroughly with the construction of personhood in Bushman ontology – something that is entwined in the behaviour and agentivity of non-humans.

7.2 Personhood and the evaluation of behaviours in reference to non-humans

The incorporation of non-human elements into some of the images is significant, taking into account the pivotal role non-humans play in the functioning of Bushman society. 'Myths' or Early Race Narratives for the |Xam and others, were more akin to histories than fictional tales and were, largely, the basis on which the world as they knew it was formed. Animals were human before they became animals. After the Primal Time they retained varying degrees of animacy– they became non-human persons. Transformation from one form into another, mostly (but not restricted to), ritual specialist-to-animal occurred regularly after the Primal Time (Guenther 2015). Some animals retained the ability to change form at will, in the here-and-now, exemplified in both northern and southern ethnographies by the lion, who could transform into both human and other animal forms in order to do harm to people. Thus, the transmutation of ontological status

was a fluid and ambiguous but accepted trope in Bushman life (Guenther 2015) and the nonliteral membrane between the Primal Time, the here-and-now and the sphere of ritual was easily penetrable, if indeed it can be said to exist at all. It is natural, therefore, to apply concepts of rational ontological world view to the images in question, as they are deeply entrenched in the world of human-to-non-human relationships, transformation and the doings of ritual specialists and others between these worlds. Concomitant with an ontology that is relational, comparisons between human and non-human behaviour, and the application of one to the other, was a fundamental part of the construction of personhood in the Bushman idiom (see McGranaghan 2012, 2014a, 2014b for |Xam and Guenther 2015 for both |Xam and Ju|'huan examples).

Both northern and southern Bushman personhood is intimately entwined with human and non-human relations – animal traits and behaviours are conflated with human behaviours and used as evaluating devices. Concepts of propriety, impropriety, 'niceness', foolishness or anger, social and anti-social behaviours are well outlined and adhered to, and if not adhered to, will bring about undesirable consequences. Therefore, the presence of one type of animal trait in a human figure in the art is likely to reference something specific and be understood by all community members. As such, we cannot lump together figures containing animal components that are understood as referencing positive behaviours or outcomes, with those incorporating features known to equate to 'nastiness', foolishness, greed, or any other anti-social behaviour. In order to demonstrate that images interpreted by Blundell as SDFs with different non-human components are symbolically divergent, I have examined, in brief, RSA-MTS6, RSA-MEL6 and LES-J08.

7.3 RSA-M6S: taming magic and the maintenance of positive relationships between humans and non-humans

The enigmatic main panel located at RSA-MTS6 becomes less symbolically confounding when the SDF hypothesis is removed, and in its place, a more traditional form of interpretation is employed to understand it. Alongside that interpretation, and fundamental to it, is a view towards Bushman ontology as both animistic and relational. The panel itself contains only six identifiable figures, with an additional figure likely to have been painted on the far left of the panel, that has, over time, been destroyed by natural deterioration of the rock face in the form of extensive wash facilitating flaking. The four large anthropomorphs were described in Chapter Three but here we may examine their features more thoroughly.

The panel in question is a quintessential example of what McGranaghan and Challis (2016) call 'taming magic'. As discussed in the previous chapter, McGranaghan and Challis (2016) argue that in the sphere of hunting, ritual specialists who 'possess' game animals must engender positive relationships with the animals they intend to hunt, and are able, by virtue of their special prowess not afforded to all community members, make game animals behave 'nicely' (tamely, docilely and accepting of their fate as prey animals). The most direct link between the paintings in the Maloti-Drakensberg Mountains and ritual specialists who are able to commune with game animals comes from the testimony of Qing to Orpen in 1873 (Orpen 1874), in which he described paintings of human figures with antelope (rhebok) heads as being representative of these particular ritual specialists. Orpen's original texts have been discussed and contextualised at length and there is not space here to discuss in full the implications of the testimony (see Lewis-Williams 2003; Challis 2005; McGranaghan *et al.* 2013 and McGranaghan & Challis 2016).

McGranaghan and Challis argue successfully that Qing's statements describe the ability of some ritual specialists to inculcate in game animals desirable, tame behaviours so that they may be hunted. The hunter, and the ritual specialist, must also observe the correct behaviour when dealing with a game animal because the relationship was a reciprocal one. The animal would not submit to being 'tamed' if the ritual specialist did not act appropriately, nor would it be hunted if the hunter was not respectful (McGranaghan & Challis 2016: 590, 594). In addition to hunting or taming matters, sometimes it was also within the remit of game ritual specialists to deal with non-human entities that were considered dangerous. As a way of negotiating the danger, the positive or 'nice' attributes or power of 'tame animals' could be invoked – if one had the attributes of an eland, for example, one could entice a dangerous entity to behave 'nicely' (McGranaghan and Challis 2016: 594; Mullen in prep). The authors (2016) argue that the production of rock art itself was a way in which to influence, and maintain relationships with non-humans, and in the case of taming magic, game animals.

The panel at RSA-MTS6, conforms to the type of imagery one would expect in a taming 'scene'. The four large anthropomorphic figures have features placing them within the realm of trance performance. They exhibit nasal haemorrhaging, a common trance-identifier in the paintings (e.g. Lewis-Williams 1992, Lewis-Williams and Pearce 2004) attested by ethnographic sources from not only the Kalahari (e.g. Marshall 1969: 374; Lewis-Williams 1981:81) and the |Xam archive but from the area with which we are concerned (Figure 7.1). In the |Xam archive, evidence for ritual specialists bleeding from the nose was given by Diä!kwain to Lucy Lloyd in reference to the copy of the painting made by Stow discussed in Chapters Two and Five. Diä!kwain commented (LL.V.22. 5760-5761): "When a sorceror (sic) is teaching us, his nose bleeds, he sneezes the blood from his nose into his hand, he makes us smell the blood of his hand".

During the 1830s two missionaries, François Daumas and Thomas Arbouset witnessed a dance by Bushman individuals, during which participants would "sink

to the ground exhausted and covered in blood, which pours from the nostrils" (Arbousset & Daumas 1846: 246-247 cited in Lewis-Williams & Challis 2011: 52).



Figure 7.1: Two examples from RSA-MTS6, showing the presence of nasal haemorrhaging, smeared across the faces of the anthropomorphic figures. The figure on the left also holds a stick. Colours: Dark red, red, light red and white. Figures not to scale in comparison to one another. Redrawn by author.

Two complete, and one almost fully destroyed figures hold sticks, (Figure 7.1 and 7.2) which I have established at multiple points in this dissertation as belonging to the realm of the dance, and the tasks which ritual specialists undertake during the attendant trance experiences.

Additionally, Qing made mention of dancers bleeding from the nose when discussing the dance with Orpen (Orpen 1874: 10). Therefore, there is little doubt that the appearance of nasal blood smeared across the faces of these figures identifies them as being trance-related.



Figure 7.2: This figure, second to the left at RSA-MTS6 holds a long stick in his hand and appears to be dancing with arms raised, one holding the stick. It also has red smears across a white face and horn-like emanations from the head. Colours: dark red, red, light red and white.

Another identifier of trance-related experience is the presence of one definite and one possible fly whisk. The running figure on the far left of the panel holds in his hand a fly whisk (Figure 7.3), while the figure on the far right has what may be a fly whisk protruding from the 'pack' on its back. Fly whisks, made from the tails of antelope, are known only to be used during the dance (Marshall 1969:358; Lewis-Williams and Challis 2011: 60). The figures are also adorned with decoration that alludes to the apparel worn by ritual specialists during the dance, such as bands across the arms and knees, which may reference the dancing rattles sometimes worn (Marshall 1969: 358). In the centre of the panel is a single female figure with her arm bent, which, while only one arm is visible, is likely a reference to clapping. That being the case, the female figure is intimately involved in the trance experience, performing a key action (creating rhythm) which catapults the dancers into trance, and by extension, facilitates transformation. From these visual markers, it is clear that the panel is concerned with the ritual activities of ritual specialists, and other markers identify those activities as involving taming or hunting magic as reconfigured by McGranaghan and Challis (2016).



Figure 7.3: The running figure at the far left of the panel in RSA-MTS6 holds in its hand a fly whisk. Fly whisks are only used during the dance. Colours: dark red, red and white

First of these taming and hunting references are the items of material culture some of the anthropomorphs are in possession of. The figure to the left, in addition to the fly whisk, has a hunting bag (Figure 7.3) and the figure to right of it has a quiver with arrows in it. These items are associated with both 'here and now' hunting and ritual. There are multiple additional clues which provide a strong argument for the panel being concerned with hunting and taming practices, however. Importantly, the figures themselves provide some of these. Three of the four figures have from their heads long, thin emanations. I suggest, that these are likely eland (*Tragelaphus oryx*) horns (Figure 7.4). The image conjured in one's mind of painted eland horns is of straight horns, like those shown in Figure 7.4. However, as one would expect, there is a degree of variation in the way in which eland horns are painted, (Figure 7.5). Therefore, the slight curve of the horns shown at RSA-MTS6 is unsurprising and does not detract from their over-all likeness to eland horns.

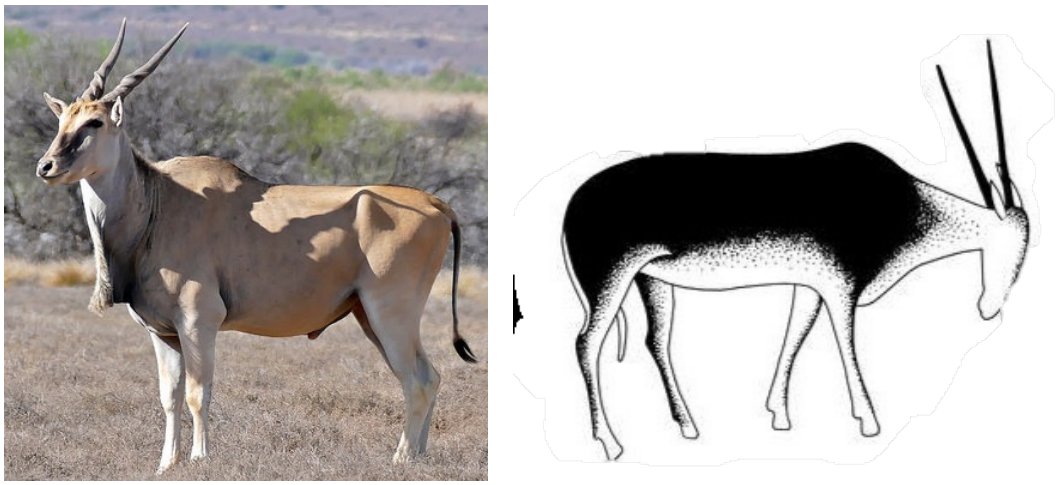


Figure 7.4: Male eland. (Taurotragus oryx) Note the horns and the characteristic dewlap. Image: 'Eland (Tragelaphus oryx) male' by Bernard Dupont. 2016. https://www.flickr.com/photos/berniedup/32708655016/in/album-72157678168943510/. Copyright 2016 by Berniedup CC BY-SA 2.0). (left). An eland from Game Pass Shelter, the 'Rosetta Stone' site. The eland horns are identifiable by their length and relative lack of curve in this panel. Image: RARI (right).

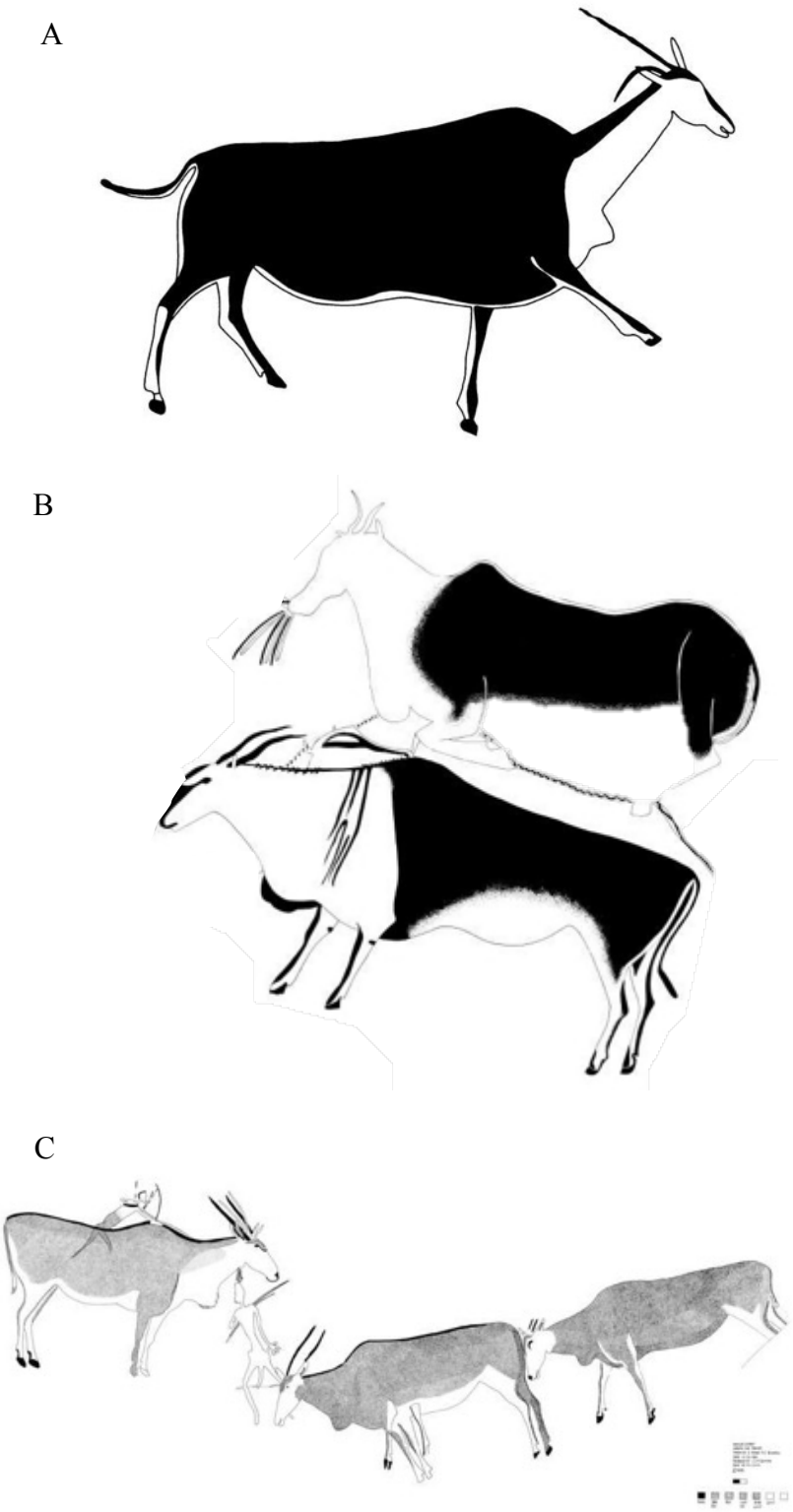


Figure 7.5: Images of eland from (a) RSA-MAT1 (Barkly East), (b) RSA-BUT1) (Barkly East) and (c) RSA-BAE2 (Maclear), showing variation in the shape of painted eland horns. Images: RARI

Eland horns are significantly longer than those of the Grey, or Vaal rhebok (*Pelea capreolus*) (Figure 7.6), the antelope most commonly associated with control or 'taming' of game in the Maloti-Drakensberg region (Challis 2005; McGranaghan & Challis 2016). Antelope-eared caps, worn by ritual specialists who 'tame' the game are usually identifiable as rhebok by their distinctive 'leaf shaped' ears (Challis 2005: 11) and rhebok horns, when they are depicted, are usually relatively short, straight or curved slightly forwards. Therefore, it is unlikely that the horns painted at RSA-MTS6 are rhebok, but eland. Further to this hypothesis, the non-human entity painted on the lower left portion of the panel not only has the same horns, but a dewlap, another eland-identifier. While the creature itself is not 'fully' eland, it certainly references eland identity, and is deliberately connected to the anthropomorphs.



Figure 7.6: Grey Rhebok. Note the horns, largely straight with a slight curve forward. Image: 'Grey Rhebok (*Pelea capreolus*) male pestered by flies…' By Bernard Dupont 2016. https://www.flickr.com/photos/berniedup/30008432970/in/album-72157678168943510/. Copyright 2016 by Berniedup (CC BY-SA 2.0).

The largest, seated figure at RSA-MTS6 has over its shoulder what may represent an animal skin. It is draped over the shoulder and on the end resting upon the figure's leg, appears to be an antelope (probably eland) hoof. However, the possible hoof is truncated by a flake and it is therefore impossible to identify unequivocally. The last reference to eland or antelope, is the single spoor painted atop the stick held in the hand of the ritual specialist second from the left in the panel. The spoor is readily identifiable as that of an eland. Figure 7.7 illustrates the similarity between the spoor painted at RSA-MTS6 and eland spoor from an animal tracks guidebook (Murie & Elbroch 2005: 74).



Figure 7.7: Left: spoor painted at RSA-MTS6. Right: eland spoor, modified after Murie & Elbroch 2005: 74. Note the similarities in form. See Figure 7.2 for the spoor's position in relation to the anthropomorph. Colour: red.

All evidence, then, points to the site being concerned with the relationship between ritual specialists and antelope (particularly eland, in this case). The part-eland non-human person at the bottom of the panel is painted in a crouching position, exhibiting 'tame' and docile behaviour, something which the ritual specialists, engaged in their own respect behaviours, would be entreating the animal to do. Whether the horns on the anthropomorphic figures are referents to transformation, or figurative 'caps' made from the horns of eland is not immediately clear. There are no other overt features of the anthropomorphs that suggest transformation (like antelope hooves, for example), therefore it is likely that that the latter is what is intended here. The panel represents the preserve of

ritual specialists in the matters concerning assurance that relationships with prey animals are kept positive so that 1.) prey animals would submit to being hunted and act 'tamely' and, 2.) ritual specialists could draw on the power of animals such as eland in order to achieve tasks within the liminal space of ritual.

It is clear that the elements present at the site RSA-MTS6, when interpreted outside of an historical framework, taking into account emic, Bushman epistemology that considers non-human beings as animate and with which it is necessary to foster good relationships, do not represent the socially superior 'preeminent shaman' that both Dowson (1993, 1994, 1998) and Blundell (2004) hypothesised. Rather, the site is a place in which the relationships between game antelope (eland particularly) and ritual specialists were fostered and manipulated. Not only is the site a *representation* of these processes but was likely to itself have been actively implicated in them. RSA-MTS6 is one example of the divergent meanings sites containing large, anthropomorphic figures may have had. As another example, I turn briefly - as the site has been discussed in the body of this work already and interpreted in length by Dowson (1994), Blundell (2004) and Lewis-Williams and Pearce (2004: 173-175), and large portions of the arguments are valid– to RSA-MEL6. My concern with the site is in shifting focus slightly, removing the historical interpretation and placing the site within a hierarchical animist context.

7.4 RSA-MEL6: mitigating the intentions of spirits-of-the-dead

RSA-MEL6 (Figures 2.3:12, and 4.7: 65), amongst the sites in proximity to Storm Shelter, was arguably the most cited in arguments concerning the social and political stratification occurring in Bushman society, in the Drakensberg and surrounds, after contact with other non-Bushman populations (see Dowson 1994, 1998; Lewis-Williams 1995; Blundell 2004, Lewis-Williams and Pearce 2004a). It contains diagnostic spirits-of-the-dead, with monstrous features such as claws and tusks, that surround a large, anthropomorphic figure in the centre of the panel.

Other, smaller human beings are also arranged in a circle (referencing the formation of the dance), mostly seated and clapping. In amongst the people are a number of items of material culture, including 'tufted sticks' (Dowson 1994: 339), and bags. In the panel to the left of this one, are a number of strange non-human beings in crouched positions. Some of them have possible cattle horns. Dowson interpreted the two panels as concerning a socially-powerful Bushman 'preeminent shaman', engaged in the task of negotiating the evil intent of the spirits-of-the-dead who come to the dance, and supported both by his fellow non-shamans and the strange creatures to the left, with whom the 'shaman' is connected. The emanations from the head of the central figure Dowson calls 'streamers' and interprets them as the lines that come from the head of ritual specialists when they enter trance (Dowson 1994: 339). Blundell (2004:107), although not spending very much time on the panel, also calls the emanations 'streamers' but considers them attached to a fez-shaped headdress.

On the whole, the interpretation of RSA-MEL6 in terms of its ritual context, are sound. It is only its social context which requires some readjustment. I suggest, that the ritual specialist here is emphasised either simply because it is his duty to deal with the spirits-of-the-dead, making him the central 'character' in the panel, or, that there is indeed some kind of social differentiation being alluded to, but social differentiation based of differential access to relationships with non-human entities rather than on 'pre-eminence' dependant on interactions with non-Bushmen peoples. Because the similarities between this figure and the crouching ritual specialist at RSA-MTS6, it is likely that the ritual specialist is, in this case, invoking the desirable traits of the eland (the emanations being another example of an eland-horned 'cap'), in order to approach the spirits of the dead with understanding ('nicely'). When discussing a panel at Phuthing 11, in the Matatiele District, in which a group of rhebok therianthrope ritual specialists 'interact' with a monstrous non-human being (a conflation between a tusked creature, a snake and an antelope), McGranaghan and Challis (2016: 594) posit that positive non-human associations were being invoked in order to mitigate the negative ones present in the part-snake-part-antelope being. Because in a world view in which

most things are animate and therefore able to relate to human beings, those relationships are of great importance to the functioning of the world, and in order to maintain good relationships, people had to observe respectful behaviour, even if the identity one is dealing with is dangerous or has evil intensions. The link between the crouching figures in the panel to the left, strengthens this hypothesis. All of the creatures are painted in the quintessential 'tame' posture – crouching or lying down. Being in that position leads me to believe that they are 'behaving nicely' and allowing the ritual specialist to take positive potency from them in order to deal with the negative power of the spirits-of-the-dead. RSA-MEL6 is a deceptively complex site, and there may be more to the interpretation than is at present clear. The crouching figures have several highly unusual elements included in their make-up (possible skins draped over them, for instance). Below these creatures is a human figure, walking along a long line, carrying an identical fly whisk to that protruding from the large anthropomorph's back, indicating a connection between it and the walking figure. The number of items of material culture is also puzzling, and will require further, more detailed study.

While RSA-MTS6 and RSA-MEL6 are similar in multiple ways, they differ in that at RSA-MTS6 there are no overt references to anything that may be considered an anti-social force. The paintings there are more concerned with the 'taming' of antelope, and with playing an active part in the maintenance of desirable relationships with prey animals. RSA-MEL6 deals also with these concepts but has at its core the emphasis on the duty of ritual specialists, by virtue of their ability to transcend the barrier between the here-and-now and the betwixt between, to protect their fellow community members from harm. Having done this, it would be efficacious for the ritual specialist to recount, to the community, his experience. At both of the aforementioned sites, the non-human features incorporated into the central anthropomorphic figures speak to positively-evaluated behaviours and traits.

However, at another site LES-J08, the non-human features reference altogether different associations, ones that were utterly undesirable. As a counterpoint to RSA-MTS6 and RSA-MEL6, LES-J08 exemplifies that sites containing large, detailed figures cannot all be understood as a unified category.

7.5 Antisocial beings: LES-J08 in the context of liminality and monstrosity

Documented first by the ARAL project, which ran from 1979 to 1986, LES-J08 was located and documented a second time during the UNESCO survey of the SNP in 2015. One of the most visually striking sites documented during that time, J08 contains a figure of enormous size and detail, described in Chapter Two. The figure contains a number of non-human features that are mixed together with human attributes to create a disturbing and monstrous being. The evaluation of human traits and behaviours in animal terms have been treated already (above, and in Chapter Six). McGranaghan (2014a & b) focusses particularly on |Xam conceptions of difference, alterity and monstrosity and the instances in which these ideas were employed as tools for "persuasion, coercion, and judgement" (McGranaghan 2014a: 10). It is to this conceptual realm that the figure present at LES-J08 belongs.

Particular physical animal features, to the |Xam, were quintessentially 'different'. Difference itself was understood as a negative trait, as in order for society to work properly, individuals needed to act the 'same' as others (that is, behave in a socially-responsible manner in all spheres of life). To be 'different' denoted a lack of understanding (without 'thinking strings'), and to lack understanding could bring with it violence, anger, greed or foolishness (McGranaghan 2014a: 10). The large part-human part-non-human is made up of these 'different' features: it has claws, tusks, whiskers and is covered in thick, coarse hair. All of these features, are characteristic of |*ke*||*ke* ('beats of prey'), who as non-human persons, are

considered antisocial[17]. Certain behavioural traits come along with these physical ones: most often greed and anger (McGranaghan 2012: 276), typical traits of the essential |*ke*||*ke:* the hyena and the lion. As the correct, fair distribution of resources, particularly meat, was a fundamental part of Bushmen life, when any person (human or non-human) behaved in a greedy or 'stingy' manner in this regard, they were considered 'different'.

Such notions of greed, anger, violence and alterity as signifiers of personhood across the spectrum of human and non-human persons (including spirits, god-persons and the elements) were well understood and permeate much of the ethnographic data from the Cape and the Kalahari. Antisocial, or monstrous beings played an important role in the Early Race Narratives, acting largely as devices used to entreat people to act in acceptable ways because they "demonstrate the dire consequences of not behaving according to normative pressures, embodying that which cannot be permitted" (McGranaghan 2014a: 6). Concepts of monstrosity (and by extension, monstrous imagery) acted, in McGranaghan's (2014a: 5) words, as "value judgements" by virtue of their liminality. When something or someone was considered different or monstrous, they were considered 'other', and not considered part, necessarily, of Bushman society. Beasts-of-prey traits and associated behaviours, moral judgments and alienation are all concepts that are made explicit to us when looking at the monstrous figure at LES-J08.

The figure itself appears to incorporate much of what encapsulates monstrosity and alterity. Its claws and hairiness speak to general ||*ke*||*ke*: attributes denoting anger and violence, while the whiskers are distinctly feline. However, anger is not the only negatively valued trait that is alluded to in this figure. Its stomach is grotesquely engorged, which speaks to greed and excess (Figure 7.8). The |Xam

17 See Lewis-Williams 1997, in which lions, as beasts of prey, in the |Xam myth 'a visit to the lion's house' are associated with social tension.

describe the lion as having a ‘great stomach’ because he “swallows bones” (LL.II.18.1670-71; McGranaghan 2014b: 675) – a reference to immoderate consumption of resources. However, more interesting perhaps, is the association between large stomachs and Early Race monsters, particularly ||kkhwai-hem, the All-Devourer. His stomach was enormous, owning to his propensity for devouring everything in his path. ||kkhwai-hem was known to eat animals, houses, trees and even humans, making him a powerful and dangerous entity (McGranaghan 2014a: 9). Early Race or mythical characters respectively, remained salient to both northern and southern Bushmen in the present, they were not bound exclusively to the Primal Time, and it was possible, during a ritual trance experience, to interact with them (Guenther 2015: 299-302). The stomach of the figure clearly and obviously refers to the ‘otherness’ of excessive consumption and greed.



Figure 7.8: The grotesque and monstrous image at J08. Note the size of the stomach (also possibly piled with bags on the upper portion of the torso). Image: MARA.

Additionally, and importantly, the figure is isolated, set apart from any other figures at the site. Although we cannot, at this stage, tell whether or not the images are contemporaneous, in this case that is of little consequence because the isolation of the large figure is significant in whichever order the paintings were executed. Firstly, if the figure was painted first, the decision to paint *only* that image is significant, and points to its identity as 'other'. Were all the images to be painted contemporaneously, the images representing Bushmen ritual activities, outcomes and intentions were deliberately painted separately from the large figure, making clear the separation between them and this 'other identity'. Finally, if the large figure was painted after other images, it was intentionally isolated and alienated from other human and animal subjects, concretising its alterity and otherness.

Taking the image's monstrous visage, its engorged, grotesque stomach and its deliberate isolation from other figures, there are two possible interpretations that accord with what is known of the understanding of Bushmen personhood. Firstly, the image may represent a ritual specialist who has severely transgressed the codes of acceptable behaviour and is considered violent, greedy and malignant (akin to the ritual specialist who wanders at night as lions in order to kill people) (McGranaghan 2014:8) and whose antisocial identity has been marked by non-human features linked to those behaviours. The representation of such a monstrous figure may have acted as a means by which to induce correct behaviour in others – 'if you behave in this way, you will become like this'. Or, it is possible that the image painted at LES-J08 does not actually represent a ritual specialist but a monstrous, spirit being or 'mythical' character, with whom an encounter was had during trance. It would therefore act as a potent symbol of the dangers ritual specialists are faced with when communing with the betwixt-between spirit realm.

In summation, RSA-MTS6, RSA-MEL6 and LES-J08, when placed within an animist, relational framework, all appear to reference the relationships between human and non-human persons both in the 'real' world of the everyday (such as hunting or taming practice) and the world that straddles myth, ritual and reality in which ritual specialists engage in transcendence and often transformation in order to achieve certain goals. By virtue of their differences, they cannot be said to be part of a coherent category that speaks to social stratification in Bushman society as a result of contact with non-Bushman populations. I do not suggest that all sites containing large anthropomorphs concern exclusively the interplay between humans and non-humans, nor do I think that all sites reference the evaluation of personhood or concepts of social and anti-social behaviour. The sites discussed above contain very particular identifiers which led me to interpret them in such a way. Those sites where these, or similar, identifiers are not present, are likely to mean different things. The complexity of sites in which these images are found varies greatly, and it is likely that where there are more intricate compositions, the symbolic meaning of the will be more complicated as well. This may be a propitious research avenue in the future.

7.6 Concluding Remarks

The belief that the images are recent, and the laudable attempt to 'give back' the history previously denied, resulted in a process whereby data were skewed to 'fit' the colonial history and the historical materialist paradigm that worked so well with observations of the Kalahari San. Even when Blundell stated that he was moving in a new direction with embodiment theory, his findings were still channelled by the well-worn tracks of the historical materialist precedent. The category as it stood depended on historical sources that cannot be linked in a convincing away to the images especially without dates to support the claim.

Blundell used a set of 'mitigating' factors to support his claim that the images described as SDFs were a recent phenomenon: subject matter, preservation, direct dating and historical information. These factors were scrutinised, finding that they could not withstand testing. Of particular importance to Blundell was the fact that, in terms of preservation, many SDFs retained white paint. Because white paint is known to fade at a faster rate than other pigments, Blundell was confident that the fact that it remained on SDF imagery indicated a young age.

However, advancements in dating and paint characterisation protocols by Bonneau *et al*. (2011, 2012, 2014, 2017a, 2017b) have produced a body of data that contributes significantly to our understanding of the age of paintings in the Ukhahlamba Drakensberg. White pigment remaining on images that were dated to beyond, or soon after contact with Bantu-speaking farmers show that using white as an indicator of recent production is not a viable 'mitigating' factor. Additionally, at the time of writing the body of directly-dated rock art sites in the Ukhahlamba Drakensberg and the south-eastern Mountains was small and, even if he had regarded absolute dating as important for writing a history of the Bushmen, Blundell was unable to date any of the associated imagery at SDF sites. Since then, and as a direct result of Bonneau, Pearce and colleagues' dating project, the chronology of Bushman rock at in the Drakensberg has been extended to nearly 3000 BP. Furthermore, as part of the project, three sites containing images said to be SDFs have been dated, suggesting pre-contact contexts for two sites (RSA-TYN2 and RSA-CHA1) and painting activity soon after contact at another (Storm Shelter). Because the dates obtained from associated imagery seem to suggest images called SDFs were painted at a period of greater antiquity, then a) the 'internal' social hierarchy argument is untenable, b) that they were a phenomenon associated with 'external' contact becomes untenable and, c) that these images appeared within a specific timeframe has failed the text.

The fact that the category of images appeared to be tightly geographically constrained was of consequence to Blundell, as it suggested that a single group

(possibly Nqabayo's band) was responsible for their creation. In the course of this dissertation, four previously unpublished sites documented during surveys of the Matatiele District in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa and the SNP in Lesotho were described. These sites have increased the geographical range in which these images occur. Therefore, the argument that a spatially-confined group of Bushmen or Bushmen descendants produced the images is significantly less likely. With these developments in mind, the category of SDF was evaluated in terms of both the characteristics linking the individual images across sites, and motifs expected to appear in association with them.

SDFs, were found not to be exclusively unique from shelter to shelter: an image strikingly similar to the well-known 'pre-eminent shaman' at RSA-MEL6 was documented at RSA-MTS6. Added to this, the concept of 'primary' and secondary SDFs was found to be problematic – at most sites where more than one large, anthropomorphic figure is painted, it is not possible to identify one as unambiguously prominent over the others. Consequently, the hypothesis that primary SDFs represent powerful ritual specialists who 'owned' a site no longer appeared to hold true. It was found that some images given SDF status by Blundell did not match his own criteria, and therefore had to be excluded from the category. Ngcegane Shelter, the site on which Blundell based much of his historically-informed interpretation was found not to contain an SDF, which further destabilised Blundell's hypothesis.

Blundell suggested that at SDF sites certain associated imagery was likely to appear. A systematic check of all sites, both inside and outside of the Nomansland Core Study Area revealed that there exist too many variations for it to be considered an observable pattern. Testing both the individual criteria for inclusion into the SDF category and the pattern of an SDF site suggests that the images cannot be grouped together into a single, discrete category, and by extension, the category itself has not proved a useful one, being derived from data that was biased to fit an already-existing interpretation.

Considering that the images were likely painted over a long period spanning pre- and post-contact with Bantu-speaking farmers and white colonists, this dissertation sought to interpret the images using emically-derived arguments that did not rely on external historical processes. The context in which the images were interpreted is in line with current theoretical approaches to Bushman hunter-gatherer ontology and its application to rock art. Bushman ontology as relational and animistic has been successfully argued as operating within both southern |Xam and northern Kalahari groups in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries respectively, and has proven efficacious to the understanding of rock art. Focus upon the relationships between human (particularly in this case ritual specialists) and non-human beings has allowed for detailed analysis of the paintings described by Blundell as SDFs that contain non-human features, an aspect previously overlooked. Three sites interpreted, RSA-MTS6, RSA-MEL6 and LES-J08, highlight the multitude of possible symbolism in, associations with, and motivations for painting, large, part-human, part-non-human figures in the rock art of the south-eastern Mountains of South Africa and Lesotho. This work provides a fresh starting point from which to move forward, and possibly gain a better understanding of these enigmatic and arresting figures.

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IMAGE ATTRIBUTIONS

Bernard Dupont (Photographer). 2016. *Grey Rhebok (Pelea capreolus) male pestered by flies.* [Photograph] retrieved from https://www.flickr.com/photos/berniedup/30008432970/in/album-72157678168943510/. Licensed under Creative Commons License: Attribution-Non-Commercial-ShareAlike 2.0 Generic (CC BY-SA 2.0). [Downloaded 15/12/2017].

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