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The Power Brokers:

Potency-collection in the spirit realm, with special reference to the site of Cradock

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Science, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science.

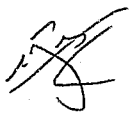
Abstract

San shamans are 'power brokers' — they manipulate and broker supernatural potencies or energies when interacting within the material realm and spirit world. Rich and varied ethnographic accounts show that these supernatural potencies permeate to the core of San cosmology yet some of them are not well understood in terms of their characteristics, their relationship to one another and their association with San rock art. There is also the problem of interpretation from what is meant by supernatural energy in the ethnography to what interpreters take it to mean.

Through the context of social and spiritual interaction, the characteristics of supernatural potency are explored and placed within San metaphorical 'states of being'. These four themes of supernatural energies, spiritual interaction, social interaction and metaphorical 'states of being' are brought together to explain the rock images at the site of Cradock.

Declaration

I declare that the content of this thesis is my own original work unless otherwise acknowledged or referenced. This thesis has been undertaken for the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg and has not previously been submitted for any other degree or examination at this or any other university.



31st January 2000

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Explanatory Notes

I have chosen to use the word 'San' throughout this dissertation, although I reject any pejorative associations the term might have. Many anthropologists working among the contemporary peoples of the Kalahari now use the term 'Ju/'hoansi' instead of !Kung. This causes some confusion among readers of the ethnographies who are not aware that that terms 'Ju/'hoansi' and '!Kung' refer to the same group of people. I maintain the use of the term !Kung in the text to avoid such confusion, although when quoting from authors I have used whichever term appears in the publications.

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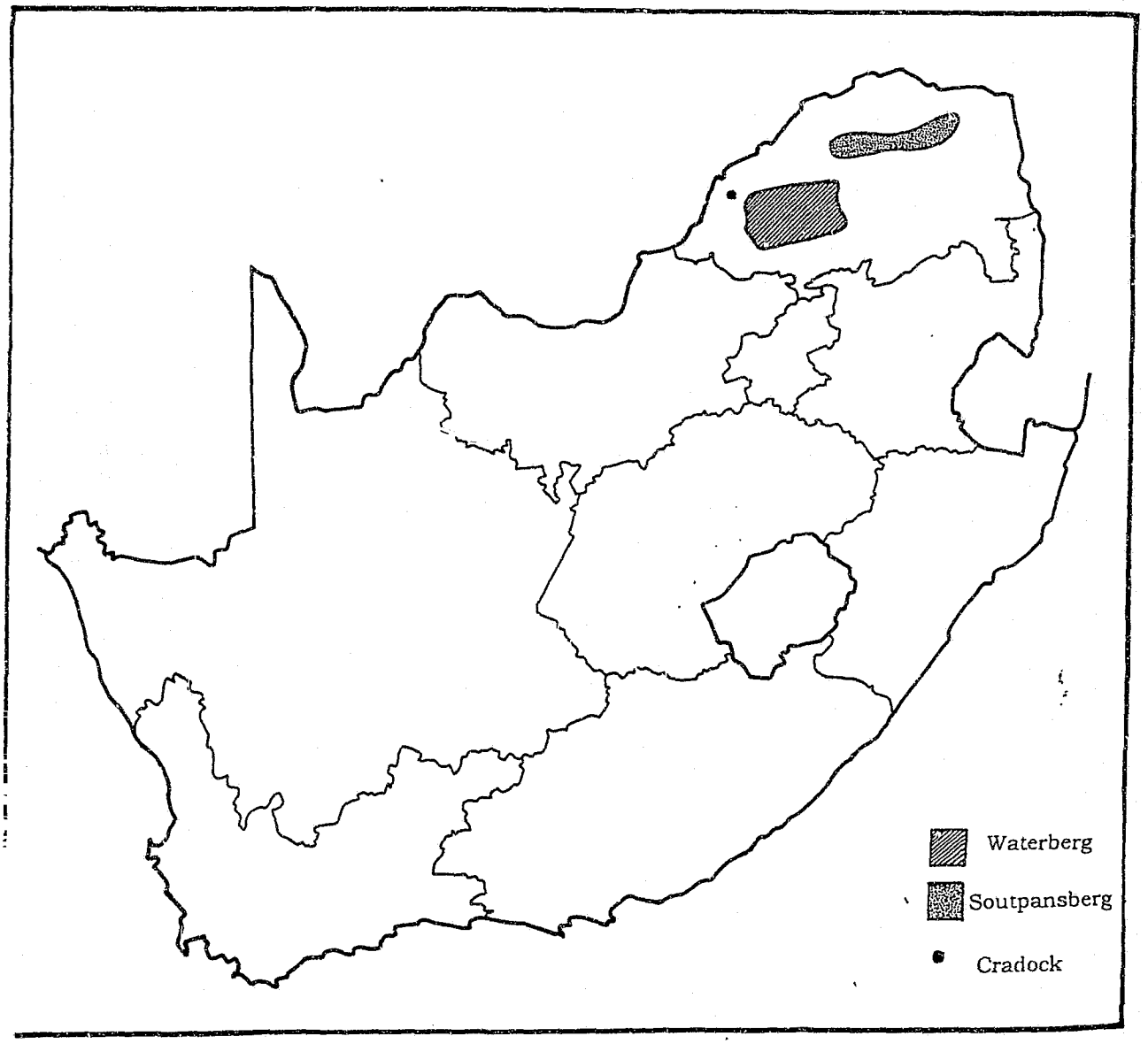
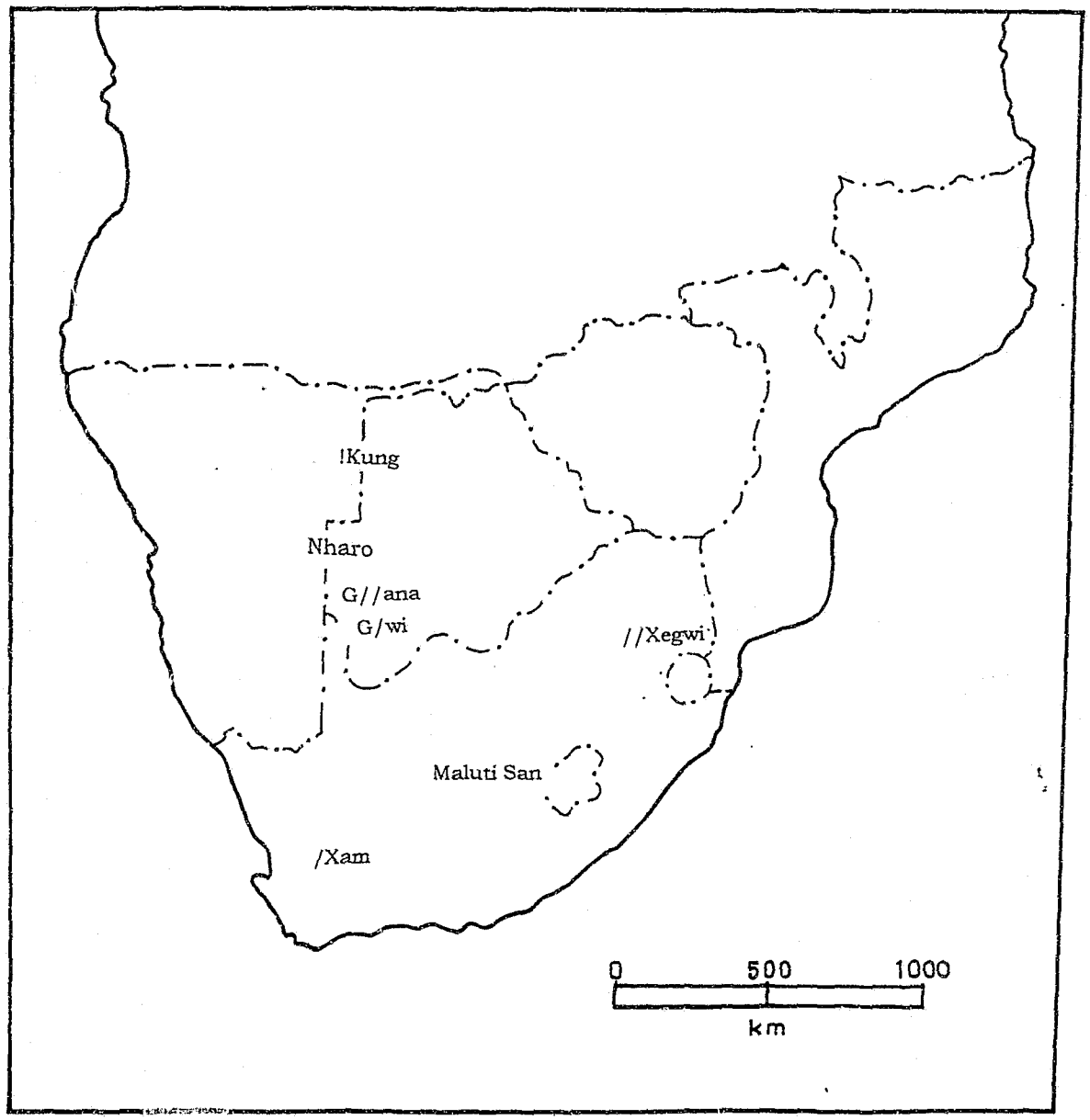


Map 1: Map of Southern Africa showing the Research Area



Map 2: Map of Southern Africa showing San groups mentioned in the Text

Chapter 1

Structure & Theory

The end is to build well. — Sir Henry Wotton (1992:749).

A common Christian theme is found in a line of the prayer Christ delivered in his sermon on the Mount "... on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). In many ways this line encapsulates the theme of this thesis. This phrase suggests a connection and unity between heaven and earth. The barriers between natural and supernatural are broken down; in Christian thought existence on earth is to a large degree determined by events in heaven, and events on earth influence how one approaches heaven. The link between heaven and earth today is seen by many Christians and certainly all Catholics to be embodied in the Pope. The Pope is, through the Holy Spirit, the source of spiritual and political power of all Catholic Christians. The Pope can decree people healed of their sins, bless harvests and people. He is the spiritual bastion for good against evil, and all of this is due to his spiritual connection with Christ, the Holy Spirit and the apostles. Owing to the numerous Popes of the past, political decrees have been set, wars have been fought, kings supported and dethroned. All of this through virtue of the spiritual powers and connections the Popes possessed.

In many ways the San shaman was similar to the Pope: the shaman provided a link with the spirit realm. The shamans healed people of their illnesses (both social and physical), made rain in times of need, and provided protection against the evil spirits, who preyed upon 'Sankind'. This was all done through the skillful manipulation of supernatural power or energy; thus the shaman wielded spiritual power. When interacting with the Bantu-speaking agro-pastoralists, the shaman negotiated for political power in the form of autonomy and economic benefits by way of this spiritual power.

This thesis is not just a re-iteration of prior research on San interaction. To understand the phenomenon that is the Pope and Catholicism, one must also understand Christianity, Christ, concepts of the trinity, hell and heaven, most of which is found in the Bible, the scriptural writings and

religious art. Similarly, when trying to understand the San and their interaction with farmers, their cosmology becomes a vital component of such an analysis.

Still, one cannot focus just upon the Pope; attention must also be paid to the Cardinals who elect the Pope as well as to the internal workings of the Church and kings, queens, presidents and other religious leaders with whom the Pope interacts. Interaction is not a simple equation with a simple answer. In history, events are not linear, and the effects of events are not always so direct, even though historical accounts make it appear so. At each point of interaction there were other human elements, each with its own social and background motivations. There were also other events and actions affecting the subjects of the interaction, each originating in other humans' actions, which were in turn, affected by the social norms and events which affected others. At which stage one gets lost in a messy web of social-human-action and interconnectedness.

In short, the explanations and descriptions of interaction proposed in the past have provided only a simple one-sided account, focusing upon either the San or Bantu-speaking farmers' sides of the story. Of course I cannot give a highly explicitly detailed and nuanced description of all the variables in San hunter-gatherer and Black farmer interaction; such a task is impossible even for one in the midst of the interaction (the number of variables and personal motivations are mind-boggling). None the less I can provide more of an in-depth telling of how and why interaction took place in certain instances.

Interaction, as conceived in this thesis, is not merely a two-way phenomenon between San and Bantu-speaker. It involves at least five elements: 1) San people interacting with the powers and denizens of their spirit world; 2) San people interacting with the Bantu-speaking farmers; 3) farmers acting upon Bantu-speaking cosmology; 4) San people acting upon Bantu-speaking cosmology; 5) farmers incorporating aspects of San cosmology. These five elements are explored in this thesis.

The focus of this thesis is spiritual power and how it is brokered and manipulated by the San shamans. Therefore part of the aim of this project is to make explicit the terminology and relationships between the different concepts of supernatural energy as they relate to the rock art and ethnography. Although these different concepts of supernatural energy underlie the whole of the San spiritual and belief system (including myths), they are not well understood in terms of their characteristics, their relationship to one another and their usage. Special attention is paid to the supernatural energies of *n/om* and *n!ao* (!Kung terminology) and a mutually inclusive polysemic interpretation of *n!ao* is suggested.

The concepts of San cosmology were expressed in myths, folktales, and beliefs as well as in their rock art. Just as in the case of 'The Last Supper' by Leonardo da Vinci whereby the biblical writings help decode the meaning of the painting, so too do the beliefs of the San elucidate the meaning of much of the rock art. Certain aspects of 'The Last Supper' give an indication of how Christian belief changed during the Renaissance. The painting is also a social commentary of the Renaissance and therefore adds to the historical information of that period. And so it is with the paintings at Cradock, the site with which I am principally concerned: combined with San ethnography, they provide insight into the spiritual and social dynamics of the Waterberg. The linking of theory, ethnography and rock art images at Cradock is the ultimate goal of this study in understanding the characteristics of San and farmer interaction at Cradock.

Structure of the Thesis

I have ordered the chapters in this thesis as if building a structure or sewing a tapestry. As in building or sewing, one needs the required materials and equipment first before going on to the greater product. Thus the initial chapters provide the conceptual support (premises) needed to understand the conclusion — the paintings at Cradock.

Chapters 2 and 3 provide the generally accepted understanding of San cosmology, as well as new interpretations of existing concepts, such as San supernatural energies. The fourth chapter briefly introduces the site of

Cradock and surrounding area as the geographical locality of this thesis, and also gives a brief description of the paintings. The fifth chapter provides historical and anthropological information on the site and the area, as well as introducing more variations on the concepts outlined in Chapters 2 and 3. Chapter 6 brings together all the concepts and arguments of the previous Chapters under the rubric of the site Cradock and the paintings it contains.

Theoretical Models

I employ as a foundation for this project, the shamanistic explanation (as put forward by Lewis-Williams (1998:87) for South African San rock art:

> The making of San rock paintings was essentially ('or principally') associated with a range of shamanistic beliefs, rituals and experiences and was situated within a tiered shamanistic cosmology and complex social relations. The images comprise symbols (or, more emically, concentrations) of supernatural potency (e.g., paintings of eland), images of trance dances, 'fragments' of trance dances (e.g., single figures in the arms-back posture), 'processed' (recollected and formulized) visions (e.g., the capture of a rain-animal), transformed shamans (including the so-called therianthropes), monsters and beings encountered in the spirit world (e.g., fighting off malevolent spirits of the dead), and 'scenic' groups (loosely called 'compositions') made by one or more painters, and complex groupings, including superimpositions, of many images that, in a range of ways, show the interdigitating of the spirit realm with the material world. The spirit world was, in some conceptual circumstances, believed to lie behind the walls of rock shelters (Lewis-Williams 1998:87).

Unfortunately, many researchers have focused on only one component of the shamanistic explanation, that of trance (what has come to be known as the 'trance hypothesis'). For many researchers, the trance hypothesis has become synonymous with the shamanistic explanation, and as a result of this conflation, the same researchers have criticized the shamanistic explanation as being too narrow. Part of this project will show that the explanation can account for a broad range of shamanistic experiences and beliefs, not simply for trance.

I must add that I find such criticism confusing. To use an analogy, it is like Christian theologians and scholars being chastised for placing too much emphasis upon Christ! A rather ridiculous notion, since Christianity is defined by the belief and presence of Christ. It is true, that there are a great many other elements and concepts in Christianity that do not directly involve Christ (for example the history of the Church). Christ provides the unifying element for all these components. In a very similar vein, the trance experience for the San is a central unifying element of their beliefs. The trance state allows for the necessary healing, control of their environment and interaction with the spirit realm. Indeed, not all components of San rituals have trance states (for example the puberty rituals) but, a lot of the concepts incorporated into these aspects and rituals have their origin or have derived from trance states.

In this thesis, it will readily appear as if I disagree with structuralism, and wish to relegate that social theory (or more correctly mental theory) to the theoretical graveyard. I do not attack or undermine structuralism as a whole. In fact, I agree with many of the tenets of structuralism, and to avoid confusion as to what my position on structuralism is, I state what structuralist principles I agree with. First, structuralists (and Durkheim before them) claim that it is possible for mental representations to exist outside of the human mind (Badcock 1975; Leach 1970; Leach 1973). This I take to be almost self-evident, especially in the field of rock art research, for surely rock art derives from mental images that are 'projected' onto the stone wall. Furthermore, mental notions can be projected upon the material realm and then reflected back on the mental collectives of a society. Lewis-Williams (1981, 1982) and Dowson (1994) have both proposed that San rock art was used as a means by which San shamans communicated and expanded a personal experience to that of a group experience.

Secondly, it is the abstract nature of the material entities in which the structuralist is interested and how this abstract element shapes the external world. Essentially for Levi-Strauss, Leach and other structuralists, all forms of human cognition, like speech, follow implicit but nonetheless general laws. Myths, social structures, religions, politics all are symbols that communicate a message at various levels of consciousness (Leach 1970;

Leach 1973). All humans impose a structure on the world in the form of analogies and association (often in the form of metaphors. Wiseman & Groves 1997:70). To quote the great English philosopher Hume (in Copi & Cohen 1994), "In reality, all arguments from experience are founded on the similarity, which we discover among natural objects, and by which we are induced to expect effects similar to those, which we have found to follow from such objects". In essence, we stereotype the world in the way we experience the world through cultural mediation. We come to associate certain experiences with other experiences and derive meaning of the experiences due to the contiguous nature of the experiences. Psychology and neuropsychology have corroborated this process; mnemonics, for instance, works on the principle of repeated association in memory (Davies & Houghton 1995:137) and recent neurological discoveries are revealing the physical mechanics behind associative memory (Lemonick 1999:51).

It is the claim that the mental is organized according to binary opposites, that I believe is a fallacy. According to Lévi-Strauss, humans make sense of the world around them through binary opposition relations that are innate: the associative memory is compiled by processing incoming sensory data according to the physical structural rules of the neurological system (Badcock 1975; Leach 1970; Wiseman & Groves 1997).

The question here is how physically innate are some abstract notions, such as that of binary oppositions? Certainly, it is true that the visual cortex discriminates between upward and downward movement as well as luminous and dark sources of light and that our hearing differentiates between high and low frequencies (Wiseman & Groves 1997:168). It is equally true that our visual sense distinguishes a wide spectrum of colors based on extremities/gradations, not on oppositions, and our hearing modality differentiates an 'A-flat' musical note from a 'C' musical note, not because one is high and the other low, but because these notes simply sound different. Furthermore, to move from the premise that our senses pick up information in one way does not imply the conclusion that the information is processed or stored in that same manner. The degree of perceptual innateness is still being debated, and there is no indication that the concept of oppositions is innate; if anything the idea of delineating the

world according to oppositions is cultural (Badcock 1975; Harland 1987).

Certainly, in Chapter 2, I provide numerous examples to show that the San do not order their world and cosmology according to oppositions. Rather I suggest another theoretical model that is more complementary to their worldview based on states of extremes and means.

In the fifth chapter of the thesis, I discuss briefly the characteristics of hunter-gather and farmer interaction in terms of a Dialectical Marxist analysis. Let me quickly define what I mean by Dialectical Marxism, since there are so many variations on Marx's writings. According to Dialectical Marxist theory, there is an underlying relationship composed of contradictions within society. When these contradictions are in the process of being resolved, social change is taking place. Society is layered and divided into two main spheres- the infrastructure or the economic sphere (which produces the material necessities for sustaining life) and the superstructure which comprises the rules, norms, identities and contracts of society (i.e. beliefs, laws, ethics, cosmology, etc. Friedman 1974:445). A society at a specific time and place is governed by the relationship between the infrastructure and superstructure. It should be noted that this division of society is not an exact account of social reality but a heuristic device used to gain insights into a society. To understand further how this model works, one must first consider the infrastructure in isolation. The vital distinction within the infrastructure is between the forces of production and the relations of production. The forces of production are those elements which humankind use to extract a living from the earth (the means by which the earth is made usable by people) and the way in which humankind is organized to do this. The relations of production are the social relations, which govern the forces of production (Friedman 1974:447, Godelier 1978:763-765). For instance each society determines who owns the resources, how and by whom the resources shall be worked, and how the resulting labor products will be distributed (Friedman 1974, Hodder 1992, McGuire 1992).

Change occurs when a contradiction arises between the forces of production and the relations of production. Humans do not act under conditions of their

own choosing, but under conditions inherited from the past (i.e. the forces of production and relations of production are handed down from generation to generation of a society). These conditions are shaped and shape behaviour within a society. How is such a system maintained? The ideology of a society mystifies the social relations and masks the underlying contradictions of the relations. The ideology arises out of the superstructure (or in my opinion is the foundation of the superstructure. Ethics, laws, religion, cosmology all form a part of the ideology and help maintain the ideology). Material culture is also an element of this ideology as it communicates unconscious ideas that mask the inequality of social relations. Often these ideas have reference to the past (i.e. the social relations have been "that way since the dawn of time") or nature (subconscious message of "it is natural that such social relations exist") (Friedman 1974, Giddens 1994:655-656, Godelier 1978, Hodder 1992, McGuire 1992).

I am aware of the criticisms leveled at Dialectical Marxism. Marxism claims that it recognizes the individual, yet ideology seems to be extremely deterministic. Individuals view the material culture in exactly the same manner with the same connotations. If the ideology is so persuasive and has such control of society, how then is change possible? Furthermore, it appears that the ideology masks the presence of individuals in society (Giddens 1994:656). The flip side of this question is, if change is possible, then is the ideology really that convincing? It may be the case that the people (the upper social classes) who maintain the ideology are the only people who believe it. All the other social classes may have their own ideologies, which are suppressed by the dominant ideology. It is claimed that Marxists also cannot explain why a particular ideology is used by a particular society at a given time and why that society developed that special ideology (Hodder 1992, McGuire 1992).

To overcome these problems I use a subsidiary of Marxist theory, structuration theory, as proposed by Anthony Giddens (1984), and also Mead's (1934) symbolic interaction theory. According to structuration theorists, change is the result of human actions and the intended and unintended consequences of those actions. The human individual is an active and fully aware component of society and has knowledge as to how

society works (i.e. know the rules and resources of interaction in a society). It is at this point that symbolic interaction theory, as first suggested by George Herbert Mead in the 1930s, is introduced. This theory posits that the individuals of a society interact through a series of shared symbols and metaphors in the form of words, gestures, signs (under which representation and art fall) and other socially observed actions and behaviours. Mead believed that the mind emerged in this sphere of social interaction and behaviour, and that the mind was the result of social symbols (or shared symbolic meanings. Giddens 1994:716; Lloyd 1986). In a sense symbols mediate the behaviour of people because the symbols are the 'social mind'. From a Marxist perspective the social mind is ideology. There is also a twist: people actively alter and develop new symbols to deal with new social circumstances by re-acting to a past set of symbols. The new set of symbols provides the motivation (conscious and unconscious) for new action. One could say that the social symbol is the proverbial 'mind map' on which the social sea is navigated.

The combination of these two theories is applicable to the San, because of the stress their culture places on idiosyncratic experiences and symbols (such as dreams, trance experiences), as well as a shared cosmology (symbolic system). As Biesele so succinctly sums this up.

> The rendering of individual kerygmatic accounts into culturally shared images is a highly important process in the religious unity of the Ju/'hoansi and other hunter-gatherers. It is an interweaving of tradition and creativity which keeps the society itself alive, so that the individuals experience their own lives as contributions to shared reality. But how does idiosyncratic experience enter tradition and stay there? Part of the answer lies in the fact that experience itself is, from an early age already culturally informed and mediated. Initiates have certain experiences in trance because they expect to do so, basing their expectations on other accounts they have heard. A high degree of stereotyping is present in the verbal accounts of travels beyond the self which are made after a night's trancing. Yet Ju/'hoansi themselves treat these experiences as unique messages from the beyond, accessible in no other way save through trance, and they regard narratives of the experiences as documents valuable to share. The narratives are thus 'preconstrained' by tradition but they also add to it (Biesele 1993:72).

There is no fixed canon of San beliefs, yet there is a strong conceptual core that patterns and constrains the idiosyncratic beliefs and experiences of San individuals. This core is the various supernatural energies and potencies that permeate throughout the San cosmology. This belief in supernatural energies is so pervasive that some researchers (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1994:212) have been tempted to talk of a 'supernatural energy' explanation rather than a 'shamanistic' explanation. In the next two chapters I provide an indication of how pervasive this supernatural energy is, in the lives of the San.

Chapter 2

Supernatural Energy

And if you listen very hard,
The tune will come to you at last,
When all are one and one is all. — Page & Plant (1991:369).

Most researchers familiar with the literature on the San and the interpretation of their rock art (especially publications since the early 1980s) have some idea of what is meant by 'supernatural potency'. Some may associate it with the *n/om* (or *n/um*) of the !Kung in the Kalahari and the equivalent supernatural energy in other San language groups — *!gi:* in /Xam, for example. Certainly, those familiar with the phrase will connect it with the central ritual practice of the San, the trance dance.

There, are however, other forms and types of supernatural energy in the beliefs of the San, besides that of *n/om* (for the sake of avoiding confusion and maintaining general consistency I use !Kung terminology for the moment). According to Biesele (1993:88), there are no fewer than five key concepts in !Kung spirituality, of which four are forms of supernatural energy:

- *n/om*
- *n//ao*: powers residing in the back of the neck.
- *!kuigloq*: danger from felines.
- *n!ao*: belief in a power/complex that influences the weather/environment.

I consider all these supernatural energies when discussing *n/om* and *n!ao* and show how they relate to one another in the San cosmology. In so doing I reformulate the notions of supernatural energy (especially those of *n/om* and *n!ao*) in a way that facilitates a better and polysemic understanding of the images at the site of Cradock.

Supernatural Energy

I have decided to substitute the term 'supernatural energy' and/or 'spiritual energy' as a broad category for that of 'potency'. The reasons for this are twofold. First, I believe this term to be more self-explanatory and clearer than 'potency' and hence less likely to be burdened by semantic connotations caused through levels of interpretation. Unfortunately, 'supernatural energy' does not encompass to the same degree the sexual metaphor that is carried in 'potency'. Secondly, 'supernatural potency' has almost exclusively been used with specific reference to *n/om*. In this paper I am referring to other so-called types of spiritual energies and hence it would become increasingly confusing as to whether or not I am referring to *n/om* or something other than *n/om*.

Before I begin it is important to note that the San do not draw distinctions that we, as part of Western culture, may take as self-evident. I mention two. First, one must be clearly aware that the San do not distinguish between the sacred and the profane, nor the natural and the supernatural. Even to talk of these things would not make sense to the San, for their reality is so intertwined and interdependent. As Katz states,

> To say that what in the West are called the 'profane' and the 'sacred', or the 'ordinary' and the 'extraordinary', are merged in !Kung life would obscure the fact that the !Kung do not even categorize their experience in such dualistic fashion in the first place... 'Religion' as a separate enterprise does not exist for the !Kung; it is simply their way of living (Katz 1982: 28).

Theirs is very much an experiential and pragmatic society, with a fluid and dynamic metaphorical expressive culture.

Secondly, the San are, in large measure, an egalitarian society, and social distinctions (as we know them) do not exist or are very simple in comparison with those of our own society. I do not wish to enter a debate about the degree of social equality, or lack thereof, in San society at this point. I think

many would agree that the San social structure has few social divisions, and I explore these later, most notably in Chapter 5. The San, therefore would be a rigid structuralist's nightmare, and any theorists trying to analyze San society using any form of structuralist theory would have a Herculean task cut out for them.

In the light of what I have just stated, some readers may question my use of the qualifiers 'supernatural' and 'spiritual' with 'potency' or 'power'. The reason for my keeping of the terms instead of using just 'energy' is to avoid confusion. Although the !Kung would see no reason to have one of the qualifiers, the Western reader may find it confusing, and the pitfalls that I wish to avoid, through using the terms, would occur anyway. Besides, in Western culture and science the term 'energy' is a rather nebulous and undefined, and in most scientific literature it normally followers qualifiers such as 'kinetic' and 'potential'.

Bearing these points in mind, we can now address San notions of supernatural energy. It is these notions and my formulation of the relationships between them that facilitate understanding of the Cradock images. I begin with *n/om*.

The *N/om* Supernatural Energy

All *n/om* originates in the great god *Goa N!a* (or *Kaoxa*) in that he is both the creator and giver of *n/om* (Marshall 1969:351-352; Vinnicombe 1972:199). In a sense, *n/om* is an extension of the great god in that it is his own power, but he does not control its function or use, although he could easily do so (Katz 1982:93); *n/om* is therefore relatively autonomous. There can be little speculation or argument as to whether there are several types of *n/om* as all derive from one source: !Kung San themselves deny the existence of distinct kinds of *n/om* supernatural energy — Biesele (1993) and Katz (1982) seem to imply that this is indeed the case, but Marshall (1969:351) understands otherwise. Yet she contradicts herself when she quotes the !Kung as saying, "All *n/um* is the same *n/um*" (Marshall & Biesele 1969:25). *N/om* is contained in a great many things both animate and inanimate (apart from that of the original form) and to varying degrees. For instance, honey, blood,

sweat and animal fat contain a large amount of *n/om*; abstract things, such as songs and words also contain *n/om*: the word "*n/om*" itself is full of the supernatural energy (Katz 1982:93-94; Marshall 1969:351). This concept of powerful words is not far removed from Semitic belief: Hebrew words contain spiritual power, and the word of the Hebrew god itself is so strong that there is a law restricting its utterance. Furthermore, the Western idea of magic and sorcery is based on the supposition that utterances, such as "abracadabra", and symbols contain inherent power.

Having considered the great differences between many of the things listed in the work of Biesele (1993), Katz (1982), Lewis-Williams (1981, 1989) and Vinnicombe (1972:199) that contain *n/om*, I believe that it is not hard to conjecture that everything contains this supernatural energy. Garlake (1995:105) too, states that *n/om* is to be found in everything and Stevenson (1995:94) states,

> The potency described in the ethnographic accounts is used, or harnessed, by shamans, rather than 'created' or 'invoked'. It is always 'there', permeating the world, but with different loci which show various intensities of potency expression.

The fact that only certain things are listed as having *n/om* may not indicate that only these have the energy, but rather that they contain a significant amount of it, as to require notice. Marshall (1969:352) mentioned the possibilities that the !Kung informants might not have thought to mention many of the things that contained *n/om*, or that they had simply forgotten.

Ordinarily, *n/om* cannot be seen; it is invisible to the naked eye. It can be felt, often as a tingling sensation (for Westerners an analogy can be drawn up between the sensation of *n/om* and that of electricity). This supernatural energy is not personified, and it is not a thing (an entity), nor can it be completely controlled or owned by any creature, other than that of the great god. Like electricity, or other forms of energy, *n/om* can flow from one thing to another and can react with other sources of *n/om*. *N/om* is intrinsically neither good nor bad: rather its use and intensity (or more accurately the amount of energy in a thing) determines whether it is harmful or beneficial

(Marshall 1969:351-352; Vinnicombe 1972:199). For instance, healers with powerful *n/om* must not point or snap their fingers at children, for the *n/om* will travel along their arms and into the children, like a bolt of lightning, killing them. Lightning itself is a form of *n/om* and therefore the analogy of *n/om* to electricity is not inappropriate (Biesele 1996:142). In such scenarios *n/om* is a 'death thing' (Marshall 1969:352).

N/om is at the core of San healing rituals and is a fundamental part of making rain. Put simply, *n/om* combats illness and sickness, but in order for this to occur the San healer must first 'activate' or 'heat' the *n/om* that is in his/her body. The most common way to do this, and probably the best method, is the trance dance.

The healing dance begins in the evening with a few women singing bits of different medicine songs (songs that are recognized by the San to have a lot of *n/om*) and clapping while sitting around a large central fire, called a dance fire and made specially for the occasion. Slowly and surely the women's singing rouses the men, who collect their dancing paraphernalia (dancing rattles that are tied around the lower legs, dancing sticks and, fly-whisks), and begin to dance in a circle around the women. Initially, the dancers are young men and women practicing their footwork and the atmosphere is relaxed and jovial. Very soon seasoned healers and apprentices will join in the dance, stamping their feet in tight rhythm to the medicine song and clapping, while intently concentrating on their steps. Their bodies are tense with veins standing out and sweat glittering in the firelight (Biesele 1993:75; Lee 1967:31; Marshall 1969; Marshall & Biesele 1969).

The medicine songs, clapping, dance fire and dancing start to 'warm-up' and activate the *n/om* inside the healers. By heating *n/om* correctly, the energy starts to boil in their bellies. Just as heated mercury in a thermometer starts to move slowly up from the bulbous base and, if heated high enough, causes the thermometer to explode, so too does *n/om* boil out of the stomach and up the spine to a shaman's finger-tips and head where it explodes, sending the shaman into that state known as *!aia*. For a Western culture, *!aia* is an altered state of consciousness, but for the !Kung it is an enhanced state whereby they can experience the many facets of reality in a heightened sense

and even see those aspects of reality which are not readily available to the sense in a normal state (Katz 1982:40-49). Physically, the state of *!aia* is characterized by the trembling of the body, profuse sweating and sometimes nasal hemorrhaging (Lewis-Williams 1981:81). An informant of Katz (1982:98) described the physical sensation of *!aia* as,

> Your footing gets bad, your legs become rubbery. You feel very light; your feet don't touch the ground properly. It seems that you don't have any weight on the ground holding you steady. You have to work to keep your balance. You can lose control over your body because you feel as if there are no bones in your body.

As the shamans enter into deep or full *!aia*, they may leap or somersault violently into the air (Lee 1967:31). Because of the physical sensations that accompany the state of *!aia*, numerous metaphors describing the trance experience have arisen. These include flight because of the lightness of being experienced (as indicated by the above quotation), the sensation of being underwater (difficulty of breathing, blurred and distorted vision and weightlessness), and finally, death (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989:50-59).

It is this last metaphor of death which is most interesting; it is more than a metaphor, for !Kung shamans maintain that the experience of extreme *!aia* and death is the same (Katz 1982:115-116). The shamans experience out-of-body travel and they go into the spirit world leaving their body comatose in the physical realm, much as they would when dying the final death — the only difference being that one can reawaken from deep trance; in physical death there is no such rebirth. The pain of the *n/om* separating the shamans' spirits from their bodies, through the top of the head, is so intense that many fear the physical pain and psychological trauma; this fear is what separates novice healers from the seasoned serious shamans. Many experienced shamans try to regulate their boiling *n/om* in order to avoid this extreme state of trance (Lewis-Williams 1981:81), maintaining a balance between the optimum *n/om* activation required for healing and the extreme state of cataleptic trance.

Before deep trance or shortly after, when the shamans' spirits have returned to their bodies (or in the case of seasoned shamans or *!geiha*, the optimum *n/om* activation is achieved. Katz 1982:105), is the period when shamans heal the people around them. For the San, sickness is an existential state of being not necessarily just a physical illness. Social, psychological and physical illnesses all fall under the nomenclature illness, and all are therefore equally treated. Each person present at the dance gets a chance to be healed by the shamans. Healing is principally done by laying hands on the patients and drawing out the sickness into the shamans' own bodies. This is a painful process for the shamans as they claim the sickness burns them (Marshall 1969:370). Sometimes the sickness is not so easily drawn, and it must be dislodged first. This is done via the shamans transmitting their *n/om* into the patient to loosen the sickness. Transmitting is done in various ways: hair can be burnt and the resulting odour inhaled — it is believed that hair contains *n/om* and that it is released, when burned, into the smell (Marshall 1969:371). Nasal blood and sweat are rubbed into the patients bodies, as these are also considered to contain *n/om* which is released into the body via contact and the smell (Katz 1982:107; Lewis-Williams 1981:81; Marshall 1969:371).

Once the sickness has been drawn into the shamans' bodies, they expel it through a spot at the base of the neck called the *n//ao* spot (Bie..ele 1993:75; Lewis-Williams 1981:93) or from the healers' hands (Katz 1982:108). The ultimate goal of healing is to remove all sickness from all the participants at the dance. Those people who have been healed, describe their experience as such, "If my body is feeling bad or having a pain and they heal me, they will *hxobo* (meaning to 'cool down') my body and make it nice" (Katz 1982:108; parenthesis added). Indeed healing is a unifying experience and "seeks to re-establish the balance in the individual-cultural-environmental gestalt" (Katz 1982:53). To sum up the healing ritual, the !Kung say the dance and healing "makes their hearts happy" (Katz *et al.* 1997).

The /Xam and Nharo informants' account of the healing dance and trance state is remarkably like that of the !Kung. There is an identical use of metaphors, such as the 'boiling' of supernatural energy (Guenther 1986:244; Lewis-Williams 1981:78) and death. There is one difference: the /Xam

shamans sniffed out of the patients' bodies the offending sickness (a similar ritual is practiced by the Kua or the G/wi and G//anna San. Valiente-Noailles 1993:203). Although there is nothing, in the /Xam ethnography, to suggest that shamans expelled sickness through a hole in the upper neck, there is evidence that suggests that the /Xam had a similar concept to that of the *n//ao* spot (Bleek & Lloyd 1911:355-357).

What is important to note about healing, and specifically the activation of *n/om*, is the metaphors that shape this ritual. If a shaman's *n/om* is too cold or inert, there can be no healing. If there is to be healing, then a shaman's *n/om* must be boiling. Biesele (1993:79-81) explored this symbolic notion of hot and cold and the metaphors arising out of this apparent dichotomy. For example, she states,

> The metaphor of boiling links the idea of activated *n/om* with other ideas of readiness and efficacy in Ju/'hoan life...there is a symbolic association relating boiling water, cooked meat, ripened berries, and activated medicine (*n/om*). Sometimes this metaphor is extended, in a joking manner, to nubile maidens who have reached menarche. They are now considered 'ripe for intercourse and impregnation (Biesele 1993:80; Lee 1967:33; Lee 1968:434; Katz 1982:95; my parenthesis).

Obviously, through a transposal reasoning process, one can see that cold is equated with unripe, raw and dormant things as well as cold desert nights.

Although Biesele is taking an explicitly structuralist analysis of the beliefs and cosmology of the San — for example, "Ideas of hot and cold and the process for mediating between them are central to three Ju/'hoan folk concepts which are important in the folktales." (Biesele 1993:80-81) — she does implicitly acknowledge that there is more to the subject than merely binary opposite states and the mediation of these opposites. For she also states that the shamans must heat their *n/om* correctly and "coolness is the desired state of well-being, being neither hot nor cold" (1993:80; similar concepts appear in Katz 1982 and Biesele 1975). The ideas of heat, cold and coolness also permeate the ethnography of the /Xam. For example:

> When a sorcerer is teaching us, when his nose bleeds, he sneezes the blood from his nose into his hand... for he wishes its scent to enter our gorge (?)... And when his blood has made our gorge rise, our gorge feels *cool* [my italics], as if the water which has been cold in it. For however hot a place may be, the blood from a sorcerer's nose feels like cold water, because he is a sorcerer he is cold [Bleek 1935:12].

Such quotations from ethnographic material indicate to me that there are three states, two of which appear to be the binary opposition states and a third state, that of control, balance and coolness. *N/om* which is too hot and fierce is undesirable, and Katz states (1982:109) that shamans must cool themselves and their *n/om* down when it boils too much. There are at least three reasons for this.

The first and simplest reason is that, if shamans do not regulate their *n/om*, there is a possibility that they will die permanently. Secondly, people in such a state cannot heal properly and are of no use to the community because they go into deep *!aia*, and they become unconscious (Biesele 1993). When they are unconscious, no active healing can take place. A continued state of *!aia* lasting beyond the duration of the dance is not welcome, as it means that one cannot think, speak or interact with people in a usual fashion. Thirdly, there is the pain of the boiling *n/om* to contend with (Katz 1982).

A similar concept of cooling one's supernatural energy after a trance experience is also found in the /Xam literature. When a shaman returns from an out-of-body experience, the people around him

> let him smell *buchu*, for they want his veins to lie down, for his vertebral artery has risen up while he was returning...for he would not be well, he would be ill, if they did not by singing make his blood vessels lie down. The people must look out for his vertebral artery, for he would turn into a lion if they did not by singing make it lie down...he becomes a beast-of-prey, he wants to bite people (Bleek 1935:23).

The /Xam shaman's *!gi:* is so fierce that he becomes dangerous to his community; which leads us on to the fourth point of regulating supernatural energy: harm to others. Too much uncontrollable boiling energy inside a

shaman can lead to the involuntary transformation into a malevolent carnivore, such as a feline (Lewis-Williams 1981:97).

The metaphor of too hot, uncontrollable *n/om* (and *!gi:*), and the transforming of a shaman as a result of this, can be extended to other things in San life, such as the hot fire which cannot be controlled and burns as a result. Or fruit that is so ripe that it has become spoilt and rotten. The blackened overcooked meat and the hot dry Kalahari days are also linked to this metaphor. In fact, as we shall see, all elements in San cosmology can be linked to these three states.

Because *n/om* flows from one thing to another, shamans can often draw on other objects to enhance and activate their own *n/om*. Out of this belief arise other beliefs: the idea of "possession" as advanced by Lewis-Williams (1981:82-83) being one of them. Large antelope like the eland for the /Xam San are especially prized because of the large amount of potency this creature contains. For the !Kung, Kua, G/wi and other San language groups of the central and northern Kalahari, the gemsbok, hartebeest, giraffe and eland would be the potent animals. There are few eland in the Kalahari today, but the animal is still regarded as an extremely powerful creature even though it is being superseded in many rituals by other creatures such as the giraffe. Therefore animals are a source of supernatural energy which a shaman can use to heal the sick, fend off spirits and felines, manipulate the weather and enter the spirit world (Biesele 1993:88). A link is formed between a shaman and the animal from which supernatural energy is drawn — "... for the !Kung medicine men say that in trance they 'see' the animal that is linking them to the supernatural power over which they exercise control" (Lewis-Williams 1981:83). The shamans, in deep trance, may actually fuse with the animals that provide this 'link', and so perceive of themselves as taking on animal characteristics (Lewis-Williams 1981:89; Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989:68-70).

There are occasions where the supernatural energy found in the material realm may not suffice: a person may be too sick to be conventionally healed or the land may be locked in the throes of a drought. It is at such instants that the shamans have to leave the material world and enter the spirit world

through trance and experienced by means of outer-of-body travel and locate the supernatural energy necessary for the task. For example, to create rain a /Xam shaman hunted a rain-animal which is the source of the required supernatural energy to make rain. A more detailed account of the supernatural energy found in the spirit world, as well as the character and inhabitants of the spirit world, is found in the next chapter.

N!ao

I come now to the second kind of supernatural energy, one to which rock art researchers have given insufficient attention. *N!ao* (spelt as *n!ow* in Marshall's 1957) means that supernatural energy associated with the weather (particularly rain), fertility, birth death and hunting as well as the set of laws and avoidance practice's regulating diet, sexual practices, hunting practices and puberty rites. As Biesele states (1993:81), *n!ao* is "a complex of ideas relating atmospheric conditions, men's hunting, women's childbirth and the great meat animals".

One is born with *n!ao*. Similarly to *n/om*, it cannot be seen, and one can only know of its existence through its effects particularly in regard to the weather (Marshall 1957:235). *N!ao*, like *n/om*, is to be found in large animals especially giraffe, eland and hartebeest, and in the smaller creatures with varying intensity (generally of lesser degree; and some have no *n!ao* at all) as well as in human beings.

There are some differences between *n!ao* and *n/om*. Unlike *n/om*, the great god and the lesser god do not have *n!ao*. No inanimate or non-living object has *n!ao* — this includes vegetation. *N!ao* is connected with two transitive verbs, *kxani* and *//xui* which Marshall (1957:235) spelt *=gani* and *//ghui*. The verbs relate to actions that have favorable and unfavorable results respectively (Biesele 1993:107). Translated, these verbs can mean 'good' and 'bad' (Marshall 1957), or 'lucky' and 'unlucky' (Biesele 1993:107), depending on the climatic conditions which result (i.e., good *n!ao* results in cool, wet weather). It is important to note that 'lucky' and 'unlucky' are used in a number of other contexts, and can mean "'to-suit' (as a hat 'suits' a person), 'to have a good relaitionship with', and 'to be good at'" (Biesele 1993:107).

The contexts, in which, 'lucky' and 'unlucky' are used, seem to be predominately based on relations of things and are to a certain extant the terms are interchangeable. For example, the statement "they have a good relationship" can be exchanged with the statement "they suit each other".

Apart from the above information on *n!ao*, none of the !Kung informants could say exactly what *n!ao* is and Marshall (1957:238) found the whole concept complicated. It is possible that *n!ao* may not even be a supernatural energy. There is a vague sense that *n!ao* has to do with the proportions of one's limbs in relation to the body and its deformities. This also extends to animals — the comparative length of the horns on a giraffe, for instance, may give an indication as to whether the animal contains good or bad *n!ao*. Unlike *n/om*, there is a definite sense that *n!ao* is a relational complex: it pertains to interaction between the mother and the new-born infant, and the hunter and the prey. It is believed that a child gets *n!ao* in the womb, but how this actually happens is not known; it is also not known how an animal gets its *n!ao*, but I suppose that it gets it in much the same way as does a human. It appears that "when the child is born and the uterine fluid flows into the ground, it makes a *n!ao* in the child which brings rain or a *n!ao* which does not bring rain" (Marshall 1957:235).

The *n!ao*, which a person gets at birth, is unalterable and remains with/in the person through out life. The mother, or anybody else (such as shamans), has no control over the type of *n!ao* that her child shall receive, nor is it hereditary. The *n!ao* reaction will often be repeated at time of death: if soft cool rain, associated with good *n!ao*, fell when a person was born, the time of death will most probably have the same weather conditions. A hunter also has a comparable type of relationship with an animal when hunting it. A hunter with good or bad *n!ao* interacts with an animal that also has good or bad *n!ao*, when he kills it. The effect of whether the overall *n!ao* relation is good or bad is determined by the environmental and climatic conditions. It is interesting that this interaction is not constant in the way it interacts with other factors. When a hunter, who apparently has good *n!ao*, kills a giraffe with proportionately short horns, which may suggest, to the hunter, that the animal has good *n!ao* as well and the resulting weather becomes hot and dry, then interaction of the two good *n!ao*s results in an overall bad *n!ao*.

This may not be the case always; in the future, the hunter may kill another giraffe with short horns and expect the resulting weather to be again unfavorable, only to find that it rains. This suggests that there are numerous variables in the *n!ao* equation, besides that of the hunter and the prey. The !Kung do not know the precise manner or nature of the interaction of *n!ao* (Marshall 1957).

There are some ritual practices concerning *n!ao*. Such things as hair, urine, uterine fluid, blood, bone and horn are used in connection with *n!ao* to change the climate. A person with a lucky *n!ao* may be called upon, in times of drought, to urinate in the fire or burn some of his/her hair in a specially prepared fire. It is then believed that the cool rains will come. Similarly, if the *n!ao* of an animal is good, the hunter may take the horns and/or the scalp and/or upper neck bones and keep them for future dates when the weather is unfavorable. Then he will burn them to influence the weather. Conversely, if the rain is too hard and the storms too fierce, a person with so-called bad *n!ao* may be asked to throw some of their hair into the fire to make the rains stop. Another practice is to let a hunted animal's blood seep into the ground (the blood is normally eaten) as it is believed that the resulting weather will be good. The best animal for this is the giraffe, as "the forms and colors of the clouds are like the giraffes" (Marshall 1957:239).

A question and a possible contradiction arise at this point: if no inanimate things contain *n!ao*, what is the relationship of hair, urine, horn, etc, to *n!ao*? There seems to be nothing inherent in these things themselves that influence the weather. As far as Marshall understood, these things 'give' (Marshall's word emphasis 1957:237) the *n!ao* of a person, and therefore contain some of the person's *n!ao*. But my understanding is slightly different from Marshall's: these things do not contain their subject's *n!ao* — rather, they 'conduct' a person's *n!ao*.

To illustrate this point, reflect on the Christian belief/practice of the Eucharist, in which the followers of the faith, through eating the communal bread, become one with and part of the Body of Christ (Baldock 1990; Parrinder 1995:145). This is not some cannibalistic ritual, whereby those eating the bread believe they are in reality devouring the Body of Christ

(Parrinder 1995:45). Neither is the bread really just bread; nor is it simply a case of the bread's being symbolic for the Body of Christ. Rather, through a process of transubstantiation the bread becomes the spiritual essence of Christ, and through the eating the communicants achieve a mystical union with Christ. The bread serves as a 'channeling' device for one's own spiritual energy (in Christian cosmology, the soul) to come in contact with that of the spiritual energy of Christ (God or the logos). The bread does and does not contain this spiritual energy — this is not the point of the communion, rather the bread serves as a relational device through which the union can occur. In a parallel sense the hair, horns, urine, etc, that are used in *n!ao* practices, are also relational devices.

I think it is significant that although these practices are said to exist, Marshall never witnessed any of them being performed during the time that she was with the !Kung. She wondered whether these practices were remnants of some by-gone folklore and belief, and not active practices. This indicates to me that the essential aspect is not the practices themselves but the underlying belief about *n!ao.*

It is important to mention that beliefs about *n!ao,* as established here, are unique to the !Kung. The concept underlying *n!ao* is essentially similar to other San and Khoi-San language groups' beliefs about weather and fertility. The Nharo of Botswana have an almost identical belief called *//ga* (Guenther 1986:234) and the /Xam have a concept about the different winds: when a hunter killed an animal they made a wind. Some resulting winds were cold, others warm:

> When one man kills things, he is cold. When he is cold, his wind is cold. When he kills anything, he is cold, for the thing's wind is not a little cold. Therefore people wont to say, "Our brother there, his wind feels like this when he kills things, his wind is a little cold."... When he kills things, his wind is cold; it blows up dust, when he kills things. The wind is one with the man.
>
> My wind has no equal in pleasantness, as it is the north wind, for it feels warm when it blows the east wind away, after I have killed an ostrich. There is no wind so pleasant as it, it blows gently. It blows softly from the north. Then I put my kaross down, because the wind feels warm (Bleek 1932:338-339).

The 'winds' of a person are also linked to rain:

> It was really father's wind, and you can feel yourself how it is blowing. You know that whenever father used to shoot game, his wind blew like that... I had understood, when I felt the wind, when the rain water had fallen on the ground (Bleek 1932:329-330).

Hewitt asserts that only male /Xam had 'winds' (Hewitt 1986:41). This state of affairs, I believe has more to do with an ethnographic bias — Bleek's informants were almost exclusively men (Lewis-Williams 1981:27-28). The comparable Nharo and !Kung beliefs do not delineate between sexes and, therefore, I doubt the /Xam did either.

Furthermore the /Xam had a belief about the hair on their heads resembling clouds when they died:

> The hair of our head will resemble clouds, when we die, when we in this manner make clouds. These things are those which resemble clouds; and we think that (they) are clouds. We, do not know, we are those who think in this manner, that (they) are clouds. We, who know, when we see that they are like this, we know that (they) are a person's clouds; (that they) are the hair of his head. We, who know, we those who think thus, while we feel that we seeing recognize the clouds, how the clouds do in this manner form themselves (Bleek & Lloyd 1911:399-401).

This /Xam statement is rather enigmatic when taken on its own, but when considered along with a belief told by one of Bleek's informants, Diä!kwain, about 'Omens of Death' (Bleek 1932:326-330) the underlying concept of 'winds' is made apparent. In this belief, Diä!kwain dreams that his father is dead. When he awakes, he feels the wind of his father, and clouds form, obliterating the sky. Moreover, Diä!kwain refers to the clouds as the "rain's hair" (Bleek 1932:329). Thus there is a correlation between the 'winds' of a person, 'hair' and 'clouds'.

The connection between a person's death and the resulting 'winds' is found in another /Xam belief:

> While I was still a child she died. I had just become a youth, when the old woman passed away. Although she was dead people used to call her name, for they believed that if they called her name, the wind would blow. It seemed as if the wind heard when we called her name (Bleek 1932:334-335).

The Golden Mean

Before I continue the discussion of *n!ao*, let us return briefly to the issue of structuralism and San culture. In the past, there have been some attempts to analyze San beliefs, myths, material culture and society in terms of structuralism. Yet I wonder, in the light of what I have been discussing so far, whether or not structuralism is not merely a product of our own culture and not as human universal a trait as Lévi-Strauss, Leach and others would have it. In which case, do the San really view their world in terms of oppositions and the need to mediate these oppositions? At this point we are verging on a post-modernist debate of the degree of self-reflectivity in 'the other'. To avoid this discourse (which normally ends in the infuriating "Well then that is just how you perceive reality!"), I simply state that, as archaeologists and anthropologists we are (or at least should be) interested in the other (culture, society, beliefs about material remains, etc.) and not just in ourselves (Laue forthcoming elaborates on what I have just stated here).

I believe that another heuristic model for trying to understand San cosmology, one which is more compatible with their beliefs about reality, is to be found in the notion of the 'Golden Mean'. The Golden Mean was first advocated by Aristotle in his flawed work and incomplete Nicomachean Ethics (Ostwald 1962). In mathematics the mean (or median) is that which is to be found at an equidistant point from both extremes. Aristotle took this concept of the mean and transposed it to ethics. He felt that a virtue, such as courage was not the binary opposite to cowardliness, although in many respects it did oppose cowardliness. Rather recklessness was *in opposition* to cowardliness. Thus courage is to be found at the relatively equidistant point between recklessness and cowardliness (Ostwald: 48-51). Courage is the balancing of these two vices against one another and hence the harmonizing of them to create a virtue.

Is there a difference between the notion of the Golden Mean and structuralism? On the surface, the two do seem similar. Both seemingly involve oppositions and the mediation of those opposites. But there is a difference, and it is a subtle one: structuralism is concerned with *two binary oppositions* whereas the Golden Mean has *two extremes* and *one mean.* For structuralists, the binary oppositions are similar, save for one defining feature that mediates them into oppositions; for example, consider the common theme of left versus right. All humans are aware of the differences between one's left and right hand. Both hands are similar in every respect, yet are dissimilar in the fundamental aspect of being congruent and to describe congruency with precision is difficult. Therefore we feel the need to separate the two into separate realms in order to deal with this seemingly bizarre dissimilarity. In the same way, this metaphor can be extended to include individuals (we are the same yet we are different), to include societies (us::them), the sexes (male::female), and other aspects of our experience.

Whereas in terms of the Golden Mean, the two extremes are different in almost every sense: cowardliness is a lack of action based on emotions of under-confidence whereas recklessness is driven by over-confidence. Both extremes, though, are similar in a defining sense: they seldom achieve the desired result or they are not desirable as traits. Courage is the balancing of the two extremes in order to achieve the desired result or state. In structuralism an anomaly goes through a process of mediation until it fits some form of cognitive map based on oppositions. With the Golden Mean the extremes are mediated until a relative balance is achieved in the form of a new desirable state or the mean.

This is, of course, a simplified summary of Aristotle's use of the Golden Mean. It is not my purpose to give a detailed and nuanced account of the debates in the Nicomachean Ethics. Rather, I wish to take the underlying principles of the Mean and use them as a model of explanation, much in the same way that many structuralists, such as gender theorists, use the principle of structured binary oppositions to examine cultures.

The Golden Mean and *N!ao*

How, then, does the notion of the Golden Mean affect and aid our understanding of the San cosmology? Let us return to *n!ao*. As in the case with *n/om*, general dichotomies and oppositions were set up by past structural analyses. These oppositions, I argue, mask the subtle nuances of *n!ao* beliefs. The first such opposition is that of rain/cold and hot/dry (as seen in Biesele 1993, Eastwood & Cnoops 1999, Parkington 1996). The weather conditions that are seen as being undesirable by the !Kung are hot dry days and cold dry nights, as well as hard destructive thunderstorms. These are the extreme types of atmospheric conditions that harm and destroy life, cause sickness and death, and make existence miserable. In these weather conditions we see the extremes of hot and cold, wet and dry. What is required is a state of coolness, as exemplified by soft rains and warm winds.

N/om and *N!ao*

What, then, is *n!ao* in relation to *n/om*? I argue that it is a number of things. First, *n!ao* is *n/om* in a living entity. Let me elucidate this point with two analogies concerning living organisms. *N/om* is like a human cell's cytoplasm (cell fluid), while *n!ao* is the cell and the cytoplasm in the cell. Moreover, *n!ao* is the exchange of cytoplasm between two cells. *N!ao* is both *n/om* and the animate living vessel that contains *n/om*. Or consider the analogy that the energy of *n/om* being like that of electricity. The human body needs constant electrical charges to pass through the nervous system in order to function properly; for without these electrical impulses we would have no thoughts and the heart would stop beating. But too little or too much electrical charge passing through the human body results in death. Similarly too much or too little *n/om* also results in death (Katz 1982:215). In many ways, life is dependent on the electrical current passing through our bodies, but I doubt that many people would state that life is electrical current; such an utterance would be seen as bizarre, for surely that would entail all things with any electrical charge at all as constituting something alive. So it is with *n!ao*: it is in many instances dependent on *n/om*, but it is

something more than *n/om*. I hasten to add that I am not advocating *n!ao* as an equivalent to the Western idea of the soul. There is no suggestion in the !Kung (and, for that matter, the /Xam and Nharo) beliefs that the *n!ao* is the same as a person's spirit (Lewis-Williams 1981:87).

I believe that the generally accepted understanding of *n!ao* can be usefully reformated as the dynamic interaction (or relationship) of one's own *n/om* with that of the surrounding environment. This environment includes, amongst other things, the animals, the weather, hunting equipment, other people and the spirits of the dead. *N!ao* as a concept is very much a 'relationship'.

The concepts of *n!ao* and *n/om* can be illuminated through a further analogy using the Christian belief in the Holy Trinity. If one were to ask a Christian whether the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost were the same, the reply would be, "Yes and no". The terms refer to the same underlying substance, but three different *persona*, with different qualities and a separate individual reality [although each are co-equal and co-eternal]. The distinction is defined by the relations of each towards the other and towards the Christian believer. The Father is creator, the Son is the redeemer or Logos (divine word), and the Spirit is the experience of God in the believer. A believer is created by the Father, saved by the Son and experiences the Spirit. But essentially all are of the same underlying substance: that of God. *N!ao* and *n/om* are in a sense the same underlying substance but each occupies a distinct place in the !Kung reality.

In light of the above points, let us re-examine *n!ao*. Bad, or unlucky, *n!ao* is used to describe that interaction of a person's *n/om* with the environment which results in extreme conditions — this is either due to the person releasing too much *n/om* or absorbing too much *n/om*. Of course this is a slight simplification as *n/om* is dynamic, and I imagine there would be numerous variables in the equation. Likewise, the person with good, or lucky, *n!ao* would mean that his/her *n/om* reacted with that of the environment to result in cool favorable conditions.

This would further explain, for example, the practice of burning of hair in the fire. As has already been noted in the healing dance, hair contains *n/om* and when burned, the hair releases *n/om* in the smell. If the resulting aroma is not inhaled, then the *n/om* is free to interact with the supernatural energy of the environment.

Whether a person's *n!ao* is good or bad does not impinge on his/her ability (or lack thereof) to heal. To be a good shaman, one needs actively to control and regulate the boiling *n/om*, as well as endure the pain, physical and psychological of *!aia*. Neither is there a simple equation between good *n!ao* being the equivalent of a large amount of inherent *n/om*, or the other way around, as the case may be. One can alter one's own *n/om* through actively "drinking" it or shooting it at others during a healing ritual. And besides, *n/om*, when activated and boiling, expands in amount. Rather what should be stressed, is that *n!ao* is the relationship between a person's *n/om* and the *n/om* found in that of the environment. Lastly *n!ao* is a rather passive and involuntary phenomena. A person is not fully aware of the dynamics that surround the flow of *n/om*, and the *n!ao* relationship is not actively controlled by regulating one's own *n/om*, except on those occasions when in the healing rituals and the need to create rain. These rituals are concerned with actively channeling one's own *n/om* to change the environment. To do so would be impractical and would require a person be in a constant state of *!aia*. Rather, good *n!ao*, the balanced and cool relational state, is indirectly regulated through the various laws, avoidance practices and prohibitions.

My understanding of *n!ao* as a dynamic relationship of one's own *n/om* interacting with that of the environment allows for a more subtle and illuminating explanation of ritual seclusion and the various other prohibitions that color San beliefs and as I show later, in rock art images.

N!ao and Ritual Seclusion

In her 1957 article, Marshall suggested that the !Kung concept of *n!ao* might be similar to a Nama (Marshall referred to them as 'Hottentot': Marshall 1957:233-234) belief in a ritual seclusion state called *!nau*, but she dismissed the idea (as did Barnard 1992:58). But on close inspection, I

believe the two beliefs are indeed similar — if you take into account the relational concept I have defined. The ideas behind any ritual seclusion (such as that of the girl's first menstruation rite) are two-fold. First, seclusion prevents harm occurring to the person undergoing the seclusion, and, secondly, it prevents that person endangering the community. Ritual seclusion, in a spiritual sense, is a means of preventing, or at least slowing down, the interaction of supernatural energy that could result in extreme consequences. Initiation rites are a means of actively regulating and balancing supernatural energy at times when these energies have become strong, or the subject has not learnt to deal with them properly (Stevenson 1995:97).

It is during the rites of passage, be it birth, coming of age, marriage or death, that the effects of *n!ao* are strongest. The !Kung girl, for example, who is menstruating is said to have 'eland sickness' (Lewis-Williams 1981:43); sickness and menstruation are perceived by the !Kung San to be symbolically similar. A similar belief was held by the /Xam (Bleek 1956:445). There are many laws and avoidance practices followed during the girl's first menstruation, which aid in the preventing of sickness befalling the rest of the group. In this regard, with particular reference to one of the girl's puberty rites, the Eland Bull dance has associations with

> 'balance' or 'harmony' in food supply, the availability of water, the weather and the land in general. The Eland Bull dance secures this wider harmony not only for the girl, but for all the members of the band (Lewis-Williams 1981:50).

The girl menstruating for the first time carries a 'sickness' that is, an excess of supernatural energy, which is hazardous to the rest of the community, the land and all its creature inhabitants and the weather in the wider context. As Shostak (1983:149) states, "First menstruation is believed to engage powerful spiritual forces identical to those involved in trance medicine." Therefore, there is an equating of menstruation with extreme states of *n/om*; indeed in some instances *n/om* refers to menstruation (Katz 1982:93). A menstruating girl is like the shaman with 'boiling' *n/om*. The puberty rituals are designed to control and manipulate this excess of spiritual energy, and

to teach the girl how to control this energy, just as an apprentice shaman is taught how to regulate *n/om*. The /Xam seem also to have had similar practices to maintain balance: the /Xam girl was fed by an older woman whom placed food into the girl's mouth and made the girl drink through a reed straw from an ostrich eggshell water container with a very small hole. This was done to ensure that the girl ate in moderation, and if these practices were followed the rest of the camp would also have food in moderation, and excess situations (gluttony and famine) would not arise. Gluttony was feared because during times of abundance, people were said to quarrel over the bounty, and personal wealth gained, therefore disrupting the social harmony (Lewis-Williams 1981:50).

By contrast, Solomon's fertility/prosperity explanatory model revolves around there being two different types of supernatural energy: a 'good' *n/om* associated with men's activities and a negative *n/om* that she links to women, femininity, menstruation, the moon, water and rain beliefs (Solomon 1992:296; Solomon 1994). In light of what I have so far discussed in this chapter, there are two main problems arising out of her model. First, *n/om* is neither inherently positive nor negative; usage, control and regulation determine these characteristics. Secondly, the San do not see menstruating women as negative forces. Rather as Stevenson (1995) and Biesele (1993) argue, because of their procreative characteristics, women are viewed by the San to hold a large degree of supernatural energy. It is up to the individual woman to decide to follow the avoidance practices that are designed to regulate this supernatural energy and thus be a positive force in San cosmology. Furthermore, as Stevenson has argued (1995:106-141), there are numerous metaphors the San employ to achieve a state of coolness between the sexes and supernatural energy.

N!ao, the *N//ao* Spot and Felines

Like *n/om*, *n!ao* is also associated with the *n//ao* spot. Biesele (1993:109-110) recites a folktale focusing on the connection between *n!ao*, the *n//ao* spot, *!aia* and felines. But she omits any mention of *n/om*. Or does she? Although Biesele does not explicitly state them, there are, I argue, numerous references to *n/om*. I now re-examine the tale:

> In this tale, Glara tries to resuscitate his sons after they have been killed by lions. He calls a dance for rain, then uses eland horns to summon lightning to strike the lions dead. To cleanse himself of the killing he makes a tortoise-shell medicine box, sniffs smoke from it and goes into a trance for the first time (Biesele 1993:109).

First, the lions, Biesele later tells us, are killed through lightning striking their *n//ao* spots. Carnivores, particularly felines, as I have noted earlier in this chapter, are often perceived as shamans containing extreme and dangerous amounts of *n/om* and as a result have transformed into dangerous animals. Therefore the lions in this story may not be literal lions. Rather, they are probably shamans who have lost control and regulation (whether intentionally or due to lack of experience does not matter here) of their *n/om* and are now predators. To combat the felines, Glara enters into a state of trance to actively manipulate *n/om*. This might seem contradictory to the tale, as only after the felines are dead is the entering of trance mentioned. But before the death of the lions, Glara called for a dance for rain, which I take to mean a Rain Dance. Marshall explains (1957) that the Rain Dance has less to do with the weather than with healing, and thus causing *n/om* to boil, and entering trance. Lightning, as I have also previously stated, is a potent source of *n/om*, an extreme source of *n/om* that kills. This tale illustrates the dynamics of *n/om*, the extreme states of *n/om* and what happens when there are these extreme states, and the inter-relatedness of Glara's supernatural energy with that of the environment's (the *n!ao* complex). Indeed, after the felines are killed Glara has to heal himself of the deed, because he has just done a 'hot' action and is still in an extreme state. Through healing he returns himself to a 'cool' state.

There is one other very interesting aspect to this tale: the lions were killed by *n/om* in the form of lightning that 'entered' their *n//ao* spot. Previously, as I have described it, the *n//ao* spot it was primarily concerned with expelling sickness and excess supernatural energy. Now, it appears that the *n//ao* spot also absorbs excess energy and illness. If a person does not heed an avoidance practice, then a lion may come and bite that person on the *n//ao* spot (Biesele 1993:110-111). A feline/spoilt shaman (a shaman in deep

trance. Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989:32) contains an excessive amount of supernatural energy, and therefore, in a sense, the offending person's *n//ao* spot is absorbing this excess energy in the form of a feline. Furthermore, a person can have a good or bad (as for *n!ao* these terms can be substituted for 'lucky' or 'unlucky') *n//ao* spot. Should the *n//ao* spot be lucky, that person survives the feline attack. Once again, as I have discussed in terms of *n!ao*, 'lucky' and 'unlucky' are descriptions of relational states (particularly with regard to *n/om*); lucky/good is that state whereby the conditions are cool, balanced and favorable.

I argue that the *n//ao* spot is the place through which much of the involuntary interaction of one's own *n/om* takes place with that of the environment (i.e., *n!ao*). This spot acts as 'valve' of sorts, allowing *n/om* to flow from and into the human (or animal) subject. The *n//ao* spot is not something which can actively be opened or closed and is that place where *n!ao* resides. There are, though, other means through which such involuntary interaction occurred. Blood (particularly nasal and menstrual blood), semen, uterine fluid, urine and perspiration, linked to the sense of smell, were other ways in which *n/om* left the body of a person. All of these bodily substances are fluids, and are regarded by the San as containing concentrated supernatural energy.

Summary

I close this chapter by summarizing the major points that I have discussed.

- The San are concerned with maintaining a 'cool' state. This state is that of balance, harmony and control. It is exemplified by the soft rains that bring life, fertility and bounty and the regulated healing ritual. The two extremes on either side are the cold and hot states, exemplified by such things as raw and burnt foods, unripe and rotten berries, cold nights and hot days, and the fierce thunderstorms.
- *N/om* is the central supernatural energy of the !Kung, and it resides in all things. Life cannot exist without it, but is not defined by it. In excess it is dangerous, but regulated and controlled it is a great healing force.
- *N/om* is controlled, by shamans, in a hyperaware trance state called *!aia*. This state can be maintained only for the duration of the trance dance.

- *N!ao* refers to that *n/om* found in all living things and to the spiritual interaction of a living creature's *n/om* with the *n/om* of other creatures and the surrounding environment.
- *N!ao* is described as being good/lucky or bad/unlucky. Good *n!ao* is the interaction of living creatures' *n/om* with that of the surrounding environment which results in a desired cool state (bad *n!ao* results in extreme states).
- *N!ao* cannot be controlled or regulated in the same direct manner as *n/om* (except on those occasions when in the healing rituals and the need to create rain. These rituals are concerned with actively channeling one's own *n/om* to change the environment). It is indirectly maintained through laws, avoidance practices, and the awareness of the subject as to his/her relation to the creatures and surrounding environment, in order to ensure a state of coolness.
- The *n//ao* spot is the place where the involuntary dynamics of *n!ao* occur. Bodily fluids also feature prominently in the dynamics of *n!ao*.

In the next chapter, the nature of *n!ao* will be further examined with regards to the inhabitants of the spirit realm, particularly the rain animal.

Figure 1. Schematic Representation of *N!ao* Complex: Interaction of *N/om* between Two Agents

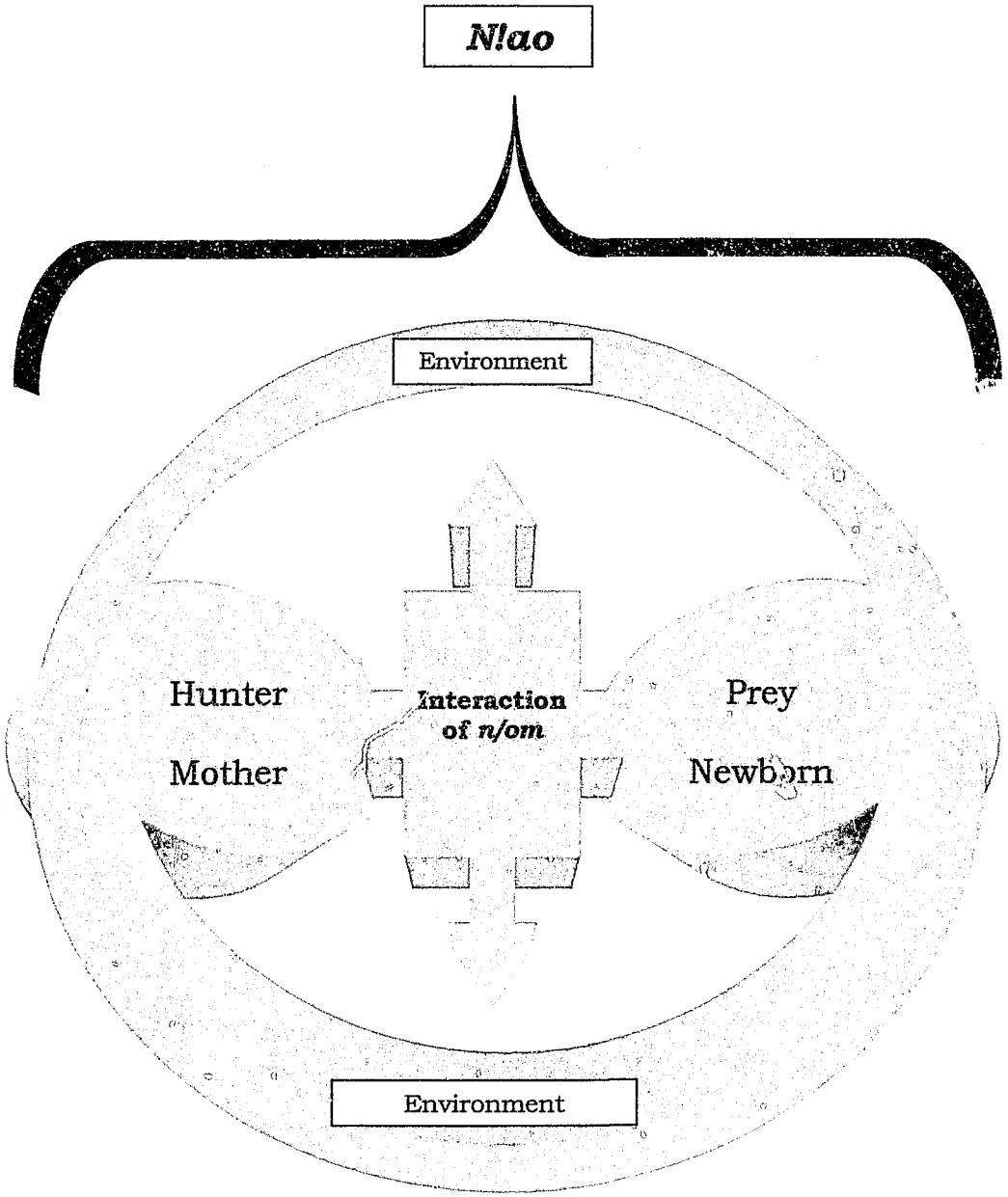
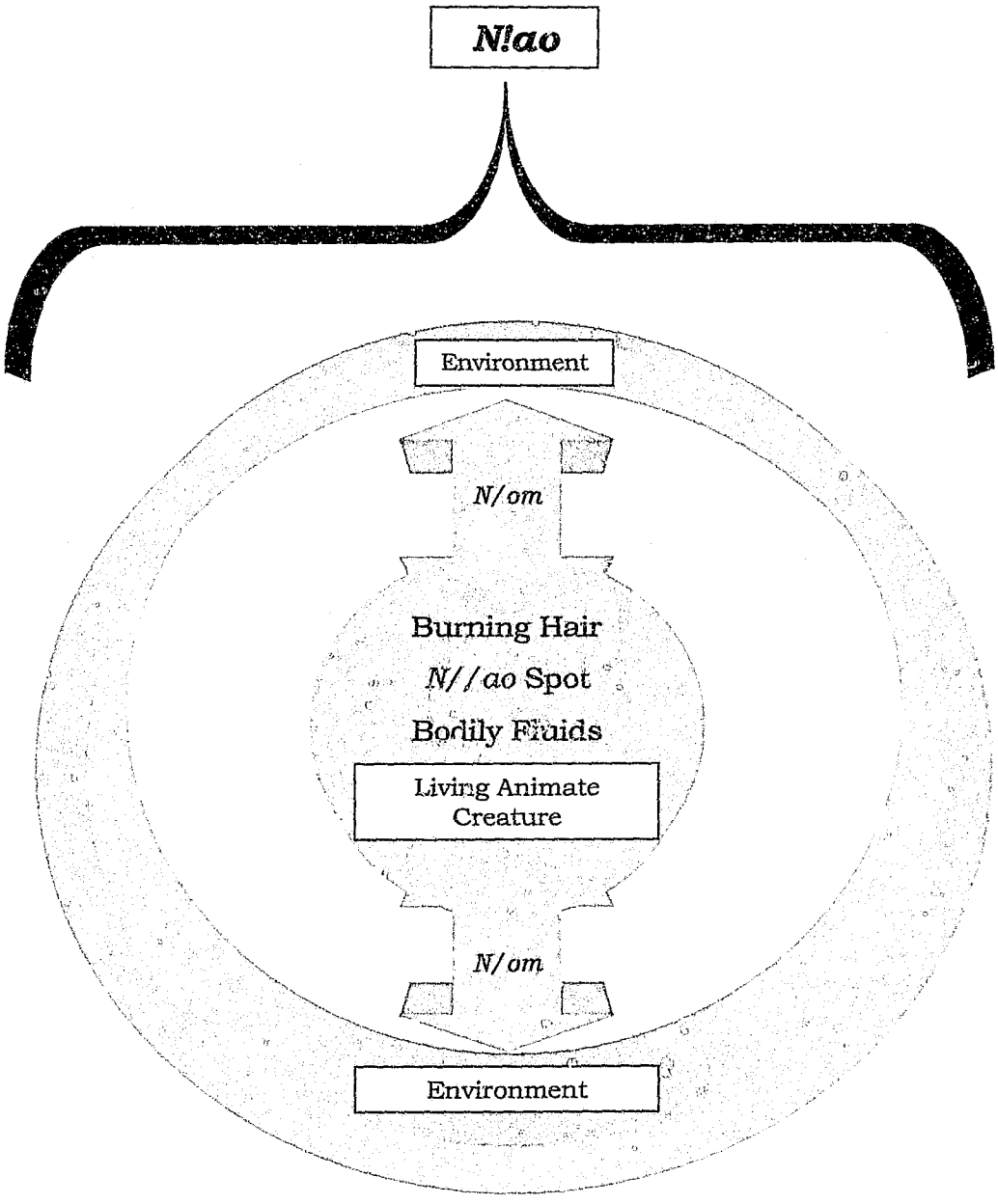


Figure 2. Schematic Representation of *N!ao* Complex: Single Agent Interaction



Chapter 3

Interaction in the Spiritual Realm

They must always be with us, or we die. — John Keats (1992:386).

In the last chapter, I mentioned that San shamans must occasionally travel into the spirit world to harness more supernatural energy and engage in other activities besides that of healing. These activities, which include the making of rain, the brokering for a sick person's soul and the control of antelope, are all forms of interacting supernatural energies and the manipulating of these energies. The same cosmological laws governed both the natural and the supernatural worlds, because the San did not make such distinctions between natural and supernatural: "The universe was regarded as an all-embracing and coherent whole" (Hoff 1998:120). The same ideas of balance and coolness, were applicable when dealing with supernatural beings and deities.

In this Chapter, I am principally concerned with those spirit entities that shamans encounter when on out-of-body travel during the process of healing and when creating rain. Often these spirit entities and aspects of the spirit world, such as the experience of the journey there, are depicted in the rock art. Certainly there are many images at Cradock that can only be explained in terms of the spirit realm and its inhabitants and therefore this chapter is essential in decoding these images and their symbolic meaning.

Journey to the Spirit Realm

There are numerous ways through which the shamans enter or interact with, the spirit world. Most of these are done through the spirit of the shaman leaving the body through the top of the head when in deep trance, while the life force (=*toa* in !Kung) remains behind (Lewis-Williams 1986:243). The journey is dangerous and terrifying and only the experienced shamans (*!geiha*) undertake such travel. This is a dangerous time for the shamans — for unless their souls can return to their bodies, they are dead (Keeney 1999:62). The shamans leave their physical bodies, and the material

world around them spins. The shamans then enter the spirit realm through passing underground (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989:34) or underwater (or both. Biesele 1975:153). These underground entrances may be rock shelters and cracks in the rock (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1990:12-15). The shamans exit out of the ground and climb long luminous threads of supernatural energy (Lewis-Williams *et al.* in press) into the sky to the spirit realm. During the journey to, or once in, the spirit realm the shamans may transform into animals (Biesele 1975:163; Katz *et al.* 1997:24; Lewis-Williams 1981:95-100). There they see god, a powerful entity (Biesele 1975:162) and all his 'possessions' (the animals, spirits of the dead and spirit animals):

> Friend that house is a bad place: People say there are leopards there. People say there are zebras. They say locusts. They say lions. They say jackals... And pythons, they say, come and go in that house... Elands are there. Giraffes are there. Gemsboks are there. Kudu are there... These things don't kill each other. They are God's possessions (Biesele 1975:162).

In the presence of such power the shamans must become small or else they are destroyed by the god's energy. The god asks the shamans why they have come to his house; the reply will invariably be to plead for the patient's life or to request that a novice shaman be given more supernatural energy (Keeney 1999). Supernatural energy can be transferred to the shaman, by god, in various forms; for example there are descriptions of god's urine (Biesele 1975:106-107) being drunk and large projectiles being shot into novice shamans (Katz 1982:215). After having accomplished the required tasks, the shamans then leave the spirit realm, go back down to the spinning earth, into the ground and merge with their bodies. The shamans will then continue healing people and dealing with the spirits and gods that cause sickness.

Spirits

When the shamans have entered into the enhanced state whereby they can actively control their supernatural energy, and have a heightened sense of awareness, one of the things they say they could see were spirits of the dead. These spirits could be both ordinary people and shamans. The spirits are the

active agents of sickness for the !Kung. As I have mentioned, sickness is an existential state involving extremes; it may be what Westerners term social, psychological or physical illness (Katz 1982:102). The spirits of the dead or as the !Kung call them *//gauwasi* — a term very similar to one of the names of the great god, *//Gauwa* — relay sickness from the lesser god, who in turn is given sickness by the great god, creator of all things. It should also be said the spirits are sometimes the conveyers of good luck/fortune, although they are primarily connected with sickness/bad luck (Katz 1982:29). The /Xam perceived malevolent shamans, especially dead malevolent game shamans or *!gi:xa*, as the sole source of sickness and did not derive from any deity (Hewitt 1986:293 & 298; Vinnicombe 1976:332). For some San groups, such as the Nharo of Botswana, sprits are generally harmless entities; "obscure, ghost-like beings that hover around graves" (Guenther 1986:218) inadvertently scaring some hapless human wandering nearby. The Nharo believed that the lesser god (*//Gāūwa*) was responsible for sickness (Guenther 1986:223).

The spirits along with the gods are said to live in the sky and/or spirit world where they serve the gods. When a dance occurs the spirits of the dead (and the lesser god) gravitate toward it, attracted by the singing and dancing and, I suspect, the supernatural energy that emanates from these activities. They wait in the darkness just outside the campfires and shoot their arrows of sickness into the people (Katz 1982:103). Sometimes these spirits are recognized as departed members of the camp or ancestors, other times they are just nameless people (Shostak 1983:292).

The spirits are generally non-preferential in terms of causing sickness and death. A generous and well-loved person (in the eyes of the San) is just as likely to be target for the spirits' actions as the person who is mean spirited and greedy. There is very little notion of divine judgement among the spirits when it comes to the actions of humankind. There are instances when this is not entirely true. A person who is treated badly or not incorporated into San society may attract the attention of ancestor spirits who feel that it would be best and kinder for that person to join them in what the spirits see as a more appreciative society (Shostak 1983:202 & 291).

At the dances in the material realm, and in the spirit realm, the shamans interact with these spirits. The interaction may take two general forms: there is pleading and verbal negotiations and, there are 'battles' and exchanges of supernatural energy.

When a patient is extremely sick, the soul of the patient is in the process of leaving the body, and the laying of hands is not working to absorb or dislodge the sickness, the shaman will then go to the spirit world, and find the reason for the sickness. Normally a god or ancestral spirit is found responsible. The shaman then pleads with the agents of the sickness to let the patient live and recover. !Kung shamans may use this chant to plea:

> Why do you bother this one?
> Go away and don't trouble us;
> We love this man.
> What have we done to you? (Lee 1967:34).

Should the shaman present a persuasive argument, the agents of sickness may reconsider and the person will live. Should the god or spirit disagree, the patient will not be cured. If the agent of the sickness is a spirit, the shaman has two options: they can do battle with the spirit for the patient, or the shaman can go to a higher authority, such as a lesser god, to plead the case. The god may refuse to help, wanting the patient's spirit to come join him (Biesele 1975:157).

In the 'battles', the shamans rush at the spirits, hurling sticks, stones and curses, driving away the spirits. A /Xam shaman may even remove the malevolent spirit causing the illness:

> Then one sorceror will do this to the other sorceror who has bewitched us, he will snore him out of us. He makes the other go from the place out of which he snores him. He kills the other who has bewitched us. He strikes him dead with a stone; as he strikes him, he says, 'This man has been going about killing people, I will kill him knocking him down, for he is a rascally person. Therefore I will kill him.'
>
> When he has beaten him to make him soft, he scoops him up with the earth on which he has pounded him soft, he beats him away. As he is beating him

> away he says, 'May that man go to the spirits who are always killing people. He has only wanted to come here, in order to kill and carry off people' (Bleek 1935:33).

The !Kung shaman will take the sickness of the person and give it back to the spirit, and tell it to go away (Katz 1982:112). But the energy of the shamans is not all-powerful and there is a very real possibility that the spirits will win, and thus the patient will die (Shostak 1983:293).

Rain Creatures

Interacting with the spirits of the dead, was an important component of the trance dance, for it was their and the gods' work, sickness, that established the need for healing. The dealings with spirits and the expelling of sickness were not the only occasions for which the shaman had to broker spiritual power. Indeed, the weather was a major source of concern for the San:

> If rain does not fall, they cannot see the wild onion leaves, for these things are bulbs, which they dig up and eat. Therefore they want the rain to fall.... So they beg the water's medicine men to make rain fall for them (Bleek 1933b:375-376).

It was during such times as drought that the people would ask shamans to find a water creature.

For most San language groups (except the !Kung) there is a belief that rain and water were not, respectively, merely a meteorological event and natural phenomenon; these things were personified into living entities or creatures. Informants have described the water, or weather animal, as a large mammal-like creature (or has mammalian attributes), an eland (Lewis-Williams 1981), a rhino (Ouzman 1992:39), a hippopotamus, a bull (of the domesticated cattle), a human and a serpent creature with a horned mammalian head (Hoff 1998:111-112). There has been debate as to whether all of these creatures are in fact the various forms of *!Khwa* (the /Xam word for rain/water and the rain/water-deity or personification of rain/water), or are separate entities. There is also the matter of sexing the rain; some ethnographic sources differentiate between a rain bull and a rain cow (for

example Bleek & Lloyd 1911; Bleek 1933a; Bleek 1933b; Hoff 1998). However, there are translation inconsistencies in the Bleek work concerning the sexing of the rain animal (Lewis-Williams 1981:104; Stevenson 1995:94). Therefore, in regards to this thesis, the emphasis (and hence importance) lies not on differentiating in terms of the rain animal itself, but rather differentiating in terms of its actions (causing rain):

> His grandson says to him, "You must not arouse a rain-bull, but you must make a she-rain, which is not angry, which rains gently, because it is a slow shower. It is one that falls gently, softening the ground, so that it may be wet inside the earth. For people are afraid of a he-rain, when they hear it come thundering, as it gets its legs" (Bleek 1933a:308).

The !Kung also differentiate between male and female rain with regards to the effect of each, even though, the !Kung do not have the concept of a rain creature (Marshall 1957:232).

There is, however, one uniform belief about the rain animal: the rain animal contains a high degree of supernatural energy. This attribution of supernatural energy is probably due, at least in part, to the realization that rain and water are the foundation for all life. With rain, vegetation grows and animals come to graze. Hard rain and other extreme associated weather conditions (high winds, lightning, hail) as well as the absence of rain are a source of concern as well: these destroy vegetation and scare the antelope away. The result of such conditions is famine, disease and increased social tension, as resources become scarce. The San believe that all these scenarios derive from the rain animal. It is this beast, which controls the fundamental resource of water and rain, and hence it must be powerful as, in a sense, it controls life and fertility in the material realm. This power was often reflected in the size and fatness of the rain creature, for animal fat is a powerful source of supernatural energy (Ouzman 1992:42) and the rain animal would have an abundance of it.

Although I have placed the water animal in the category of spirit creatures and associated it with the spirit realm, it is generally to be found, seen and interacted with in both this world and the spirit world. In this world, it

abides in all things associated with water: fountains, dams, pools and areas of mist although, oddly enough, ethnographic sources do not readily place it in rivers. It is also associated with mountain pools, particularly where there is mist, for mist is an indicator of the presence of a rain animal. The rain animal also lives in the sky, and, according to some informants (Hoff 1998:113), was continually moving from the sky to fountains and back up again in, or through, the rains and clouds.

The ontological status of the metaphor of the rain animal is confusing and conflicting. It is at once a symbol and a real thing. The clouds and surrounding weather phenomena were described by Bleek's (Bleek and Lloyd 1911, Bleek 1933a) and Hoff's (Hoff 1997, Hoff 1998) informants as being the rain animal and having anatomical features such as ribs, hair, blood and a tail amongst other things, and there were indications that it was alive (the mist was interpreted as the "rain's breath". Bleek 1933a:309, Lewis-Williams 1981:104). These atmospheric conditions were in the same instance recognized by the San as merely the physical and natural aspects of the weather, such as mist, cloud formations and rain patterns (Bleek 1933a:311). Yet, as I describe below, San people did actually perceive the rain animal as being in the clouds or weather phenomena as being the rain animal's body. The rain animal, then, must be an independent (conceptual) entity, which could fuse with the weather elements in the minds of the San beholders.

People need not enter *!aia* or any other heightened sense of awareness to see the water and/or rain creatures. San people also need not be shamans to have contact with the rain animal. There are many tales of ordinary people performing their various tasks of collecting water, or even walking home, and interacting with a rain animal. At all times, though, when dealing with the water animal, particularly the water bull and snake, respect and fear were the proper attitudes to adopt. Although the water animal was not malicious towards humans (the water snake may constitute an exemption to this; Hoff 1997), if agitated and approached without respect, it became angry. This anger was reflected in certain extreme weather conditions, such as lightning heavy rain and hail, being focused upon the offending party; or else the rain animal simply left the area ensuring that drought conditions ensued:

> This is what the old people say, the rain wants to kill us when it is angry with us. The rain attacks the hut angrily, and the hail beats down on us breaking down the huts, and the cold wind gets into the people in consequence (Bleek 1933a:209).
>
> Bushmen do not kill frogs, because the rain does not fall if we kill frogs. A drought comes if we have killed frogs, and the rain does not fall, and the place becomes dry (Bleek 1933a:301).

There are also more sinister forms of punishment such as people being turned into frogs and the things they have altered being returned to their original form (renewal):

> Then the people one after another go out and fly up into the sky, the cold wind blows them up into it. Then they keep coming out of it, floating down and falling into the pond, where they become frogs.
>
> Meanwhile the karosses become springbok which lie down and roll, thereby shaking out (the water from their skins), while the sticks, and branches (of the hut) become bushes; then the arrows (or reeds) just stand about, and so do the quivers... meanwhile the rain turns altogether into a pond, because its body goes into it (Bleek 1933a:299-300).

The rain animal's temperament meant that people approaching an area that is sacred to the rain animal or engaging in activities that might anger or interest the rain animal would have to follow certain protective guidelines to avoid and calm that anger. As with the regulations and prohibitions concerning *n!ao* and hunting procedures, these prohibitions and guidelines deal indirectly with the interaction of supernatural energy (in the symbolic form of the rain animal in the greater environment). These laws, taboos and prohibitions are indirect, because, although a person may occasionally come face to face with a rain animal, the ordinary person does not directly engage the animal. The shaman on out-of-body travel and in the spirit realm did this as indicated by the statement, "... only special people could 'work with' these phenomena" (Hoff 1998:121).

Many of these guidelines are seemingly concerned with maintaining balance and harmony with the water animal. Aggressiveness from the water animal

was caused when such harmony was disrupted — "It was implied that certain conditions of humanity threatened the power balance between entities in the universe" (Hoff 1998:116). These conditions were, as one would expect, connected to human bodily fluids: the pubescent girl who had not yet undergone the required rite of passage, menstruating women, pregnant women before during and after childbirth, and people who were perspiring heavily and thus smelt of perspiration. These conditions present various states where people exude excess supernatural energy uncontrolled and undirected in their body fluids, and therefore were threatening to the rain animal who could smell the supernatural energy.

Just as the !Kung new maiden, having gone through the puberty ritual, is linked to the eland, so too does the /Xam new maiden have a bond with the rain animal. A San girl was considered 'lucky' and could attract the rain (Bleek & Lloyd 1911:297-299; Lewis-Williams 1981:52). But the new maiden also had the ability to attract the extreme meteorological conditions as well. To ensure that only the soft cool rains were attracted, it was imperative that the /Xam new maiden underwent the ritual procedures in the proper manner (Hewitt 1986:279-286; Hoff 1998:117). This is similar to the stress placed upon the !Kung maiden undergoing the puberty ritual: if, for example, she did not use the correct respect word, the eland would run away and men would have no success in hunting (Lewis-Williams 1981:51). In both cases, if the new maidens did not obey the ritual laws, disaster would occur.

Another means of avoiding the wrath of a water animal, is to become 'associated' with the animal. This practice of 'association' casts considerable light on the concept of 'winds' and *n!ao*. When approaching the water source believed to be the abode of the water animal, a pebble should be rubbed with perspiration from the person's armpit and then thrown into the water (alternatively the person could spit on the stone). Or perspiration could be washed from the body into the water. This practice was called "giving the water your *wind* or *smell*" and was a "greeting" to the water animal (Hoff 1998:119; my italics). This statement is very interesting for three reasons: First, the 'wind' of a /Xam person is equated with their smell. Secondly, smell, as I have already shown, is believed to carry supernatural energy. Therefore by simple deduction, the 'wind' of a person carries supernatural

energy (*!gi:*). Thirdly, the /Xam person is 'giving' his/her supernatural energy, through smell, to the rain animal. In a sense then, there is a spiritual relationship or interaction of a living creature's supernatural energy with that of the surrounding environment (in the form of a rain animal). This belief illustrates what I believe the concept of 'winds' or *n!ao* as being. Furthermore these practices ensure that a cool state prevails through ensuring the rain animal does not become angry and cause extreme weather conditions.

The /Xam belief of 'greeting' the rain by 'giving your wind or smell' can be compared to the following !Kung belief about *n!ao*:

> What the !Kung believe now, Demi told us, is that there is nothing about hair itself which affects the weather. It is the *n!ow* of the person which the hair 'gives'. As we understand it, some of the *n!ow* which is in a person is in the hair. When hair is burned in the fire, the *n!ow* is released into the air in the smell. It goes into the sky and, Demi said, the rain 'fears' it. (*Koa*, the word 'to fear', means to respect, to avoid, as when something is taboo, and to be afraid of. Marshall 1957:237)

There is almost the exact concepts being expressed: *n!ao* is equated with the smell of burning hair. Hair contains *n/om* and by burning it, the *n/om* is released into the smell (Marshall 1969:371). The rain 'fears' the smell (the *n/om*) of burning hair and therefore there is a relational state between the supernatural energy of the person, through the burning hair, and the environment as expressed by the word 'fear'.

Association could also be established by using the things that 'belonged to the water animal'. Blue mud, clay, rushes, grass, and buchu (particularly water buchu) found near water sources are said to surround the dwelling place of the water animal and are therefore water 'things' (belonging to that category of water associated phenomena: Hoff 1998). An association between the water animal could be established by rubbing some mud or clay from the water source onto the forehead. The use of buchu, which is a mixture of powdered aromatic herbs, could provide a very strong association:

> When she has strewn the water with buchu, she comes and darkens the parts of the water which float on top with red haematite, because the rain loves buchu very much, for buchu is what it smells. It glides quietly along when it smell things which are unequal in scent (Bleek 1933a:300).

People could burn or sprinkle buchu onto the water source, or alternatively, they could rub the powdered buchu onto their own bodies (Hoff 1998:119). If one views the things associated with the water animal/water as being analogous to the way in which bodily fluids and hair are associated with people, then the implication of this relationship is that the water animal is 'giving' its 'smell'. There is an exchange of supernatural energy from the rain animal to the people.

When a rain animal was angry and expressed its displeasure as a violent storm or drought, the /Xam believed it could be calmed by numerous substances. Buchu, for example, could be burnt (Bleek & Lloyd 1911:192-199) or thrown into water (Hoff 1998). Interestingly enough, burning animal horn was also perceived by the /Xam as a powerful calming and cooling agent:

> Therefore they burn horn when they see that the raincloud turns green, they say, "You must really burn horn for us, that the raincloud may disperse for us, for it is turning green." Its scent does not smell pleasant, therefore they want the horns' smoke to rise up into the sky, that the rain-clouds may disperse (Bleek 1932:341-342).

Furthermore, there is an account of burning hair being used to attract rain creatures (Hoff 1998:119).

In the /Xam beliefs about the rain animal and rain, one can see that many of the !Kung *n!ao* practices are almost identical to those of the /Xam, except the !Kung do not have a rain animal. This indicates that the underlying concepts are the same, or at least similar, and that the !Kung did not develop (or the /Xam did develop as the case may be) a belief in a rain deity and/or creature.

To make rain actively was the duty of the *opwaiten-ka !gi:ten* (/Xam for shamans of the rain) as they could manipulate the rain animal. The shamans would go to the dwelling place of the water creature at night, for night was when the creature was most active. They would wait for it to emerge or return from grazing and when the moment was right, the shamans would capture the animal with a specially prepared noose made of leather that was thrown around the animal's head. The animal was then led across the area of land where rain was to fall. Should the rain animal be violent during capture then hard violent rain would result. To calm the animal, buchu was either rubbed onto the skins of the shamans or presented to the rain creature (Bleek 1933b).

Summary

In this and the previous chapter, I have prepared the conceptual framework needed to understand San notions of supernatural energy and the spirit realm. There is a constant interaction of supernatural energy between San people and spirit entities that extends beyond the duration of the healing dance, and thus certain belief practices need to be followed if the desired state of coolness is to be maintained. The practices regarding interaction with the rain creature provided the final necessary conceptual link between 'winds' and *!gi:* (and hence *n!ao* and *n/om*).

The manipulation of supernatural energy to maintain the desired state was not just confined to interaction with spirit entities though — it formed an integral part of the social interaction that took place between the San and Bantu-speaking agro-pastoralists. This notion will be explored in Chapter 5, after a brief discussion of Cradock in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4

Cradock

He prays to the spirit of the place and to Earth,
the first of the gods, and to the Nymphs and as
yet unknown rivers. — Virgil (1992:714).

The rock shelter known as Cradock is not a previously unknown site for researchers. It has a rich site history that reflects many of the trends that have characterized rock art research through the decades and even centuries.

Three previous writers have mentioned Cradock. The site was first 'discovered' in the late nineteenth century. A missionary, a certain Mr. Schlömann from Malokong, Northern Transvaal, visited the site on Thursday 1st August, 1895. In his diary, he describes the depictions in the shelter, as well as some of the local beliefs about the paintings. I describe these beliefs in the next chapter and explore their implications in terms of hunter-gatherer and farmer interaction. Locating the site can prove difficult, as it is remarkably 'ellusive'. Schlömann describes how it took some searching to find the shelter even with well-orientated guides, and Van der Ryst, a researcher familiar with the area, has said that she spent some time trying to locate the shelter in vain.

Later Van Riet Lowe, who knew of the site through correspondence published it in his inventory of southern African rock art sites. Most recently Willcox published a close-up photograph of one of the depictions in the site in his *The Rock Art of South Africa*, but apart from a small, quite arbitrary caption accompanying the picture (Willcox 1963:plate No.15), nothing more is said about the site. It seems that he felt that what was depicted was self-explanatory.

Cradock is located on land that today forms part of the Zingela game reserve. Zingela is a privately owned enterprise, which caters almost exclusively to the overseas tourist (mainly American and Italian). The Game Ranch

Manager tightly controls access to the site, and tourists can visit it only if there is a member of the Zingela staff present. This is an excellent management strategy. The site, though, is seldom visited, and as a result the paintings are in an excellent state of preservation.

Cradock is about 60 kilometers north of Ellisras, on the fringe of the Waterberg, in the Northern Province of South Africa. It is near the top of one of the hill complexes that make up much of the farm. The hill is a rich source of iron oxides, particularly ochre (a primary component in making the red painting pigments), and a wide range of ochre hues from light red to dark brown may be found along the animal trails. A great deal many images are a part of that type of art referred to by Laue and Smith (forthcoming) as the 'Waterberg style/complex'. The art of this complex is polychrome: a wide variety of reds are used as well as white and sometimes black pigment. Compared to the art of Drakensberg, the human figures as images seem somewhat cruder to the Western eye, but there are none the less numerous fine line images (an image that was painted using a fine 'brush' made from quills, feathers, sticks or very fine bone and often showing remarkable detail) especially of animal depictions.

The complex also has numerous idiosyncratic features that distinguish it from the art of the Drakensberg, Free State and the Western Cape. One of these features is a human posture: men are depicted side-on with a fat body, exaggerated penis, no or little indication of a head, and a small stubby arm that protrudes at right angles from the body. Rows of up to twenty figures in this posture can be found in some Waterberg sites. Women, in contrast, are painted in a face-on position with wide hips, stubby arms protruding at right angles from either side of the body, a breast painted under each arm and little or no head.

Depictions of giraffe, kudu and hartebeest also feature in the art, whilst the eland decrease quite considerably as one moves farther north towards the Limpopo-Shashi confluence area. Some of the images found at Cradock also differ quite considerably from the Waterberg style of art. Large elongated human figures and numerous smaller figures in animated poses characterize these images.

Overview of the Images

Schlömann's (1896) own diary account of the shelter and the paintings serves as a useful introduction (translated from German):

> After some searching by our otherwise well-oriented guides, we found the paintings at a steep cliff. The panel, approximately 30 feet long and 10 feet high, is located on smooth, fine-grained sandstone and was protected from the elements by a massive rock overhang of about 10 feet. This rock painting proves that once Bushman also lived in the northern Transvaal. One finds the kind of painting here quite often, yet I have never seen any as complete and well preserved as these in the mountains of the Pusompe. That these paintings are centuries old is proved by the fact that they are looked upon in the same astounded and puzzled way by the Massele (who have lived here before the Matabele) as by us Europeans.
>
> One wonders about the permanence of the paints used to create the paintings. The people who live here now do not have such [permanent] paints. Three different colours were used for the paintings: dark brown, red and white. One could differentiate easily between the older and the younger figures. The older ones, unfortunately the most weathered and partly covered by other paintings, were the best ones by far. Ostriches, giraffes and lions were represented in a very characteristic and realistic way. The proportions of the different body parts, as well as the line showed that the painters had quite a good technique. They even knew how to create light and shadow by using dark and light paints. The many human figures were painted with red-brown paint and were mostly 6-8 inches high and were naked. It was conspicuous that only men were represented. They were represented in all possible positions: standing, sitting, squatting, dancing and somersaulting [*bollemakiesiemakend*]. In one place, a figure twice the size of the others, is being danced around by a ring [*reigen*] of others. In another place 10 to 12 people were dancing in a well-defined circle. At the top of the rock wall there were many handprints in red ochre. In addition, there was also a remarkable, unfathomable painting. A circle about 1 foot in diameter was drawn with red-brown paint; this circle was filled with white paint. Inside the circle there was a small circle about 1 inch in diameter at the left top perimeter. From this point there was a narrow strip, about 3 feet long, marked by two red lines, which led downwards to the side and ended at a point where it seemed that

> the paint spattered [*uitmekaarespat*]. Here there was a figure that was bending forward. My companions explained the picture in different ways. Some said that it represented the sun. Others said it was a fountain/spring from which a stream flowed and the figure at the bottom was scooping/ladling water. Others said the circle meant a kraal and the narrow strip was the path to the kraal. I myself could not find a suitable [*bevredigende*] explanation.

Schlömann was remarkably observant, and his description of the paintings is generally accurate. When I visited the site, it was, as best I could tell, in the same state of preservation and integrity as when Schlömann first visited it. No new depictions were seemingly added between 1895 and 1999, although it appears that Schlömann omitted to include descriptions of several individual paintings, and made some errors in regard to identifying others. First, women are depicted at the site, although they are in the Waterberg style and in all probability were not recognized as such. I could not find the lion/feline to which Schlömann refers; I think that he was probably referring to a particular bizarre animal depiction. He also failed to remark on a series of odd "sausage shaped" depictions in a dark brown/red ochre. In addition to the other paintings found at the site by myself, was a sole late-white painting (a painting tradition associated with the Bantu-speaking agro-pastoralists), a large pachyderm type creature, numerous therianthropic figures, and a Waterberg style depiction of a person with characteristics of both sexes. What is of particular interest are numerous examples of touching. Physical rubbing of the pigment has resulted in the fading of certain paintings and the repainting of other depictions.

Unfortunately, although the paintings, generally, are excellently preserved (owing to the sandstone readily absorbing the pigments), only two thirds of the painted section can be clearly studied. On the lower segments of the shelter wall, there is salt efflorescence that has covered and obscured many images. Occasionally, when carefully studying these lower segments, one is tantalized by the odd occasional figure.

Fieldwork

I conducted fieldwork at Cradock in mid-July 1999. The site was extensively photographed using the Rock Art Research Institute's standard method (35 mm Fuji velvia color slides, and black and white film). Selected panels and images of the site were also traced. I used 50 µm single-matte drafting film and 0.3-0.35 Rotring clutch pencils. The tracing technique aids in capturing details of the imagery that cannot be adequately recorded through photography owing to the faintness of the pigment and available light. Tracing has another important advantage over photography: it forces the researcher to observe fastidiously the paintings in terms of their form, details — which are often subtle — and relationships with other images and, at a scale with which photography certainly cannot cope, the shelter as a whole.

The results of this tracing are shown in this work as black and white redrawings. Stippling is used to indicate variations in color, but I have tried were possible to include both a photograph and redrawing in order to give the fullest possible sense of the paintings.

Chapter 5

Interaction in the Material Realm

Politics is war without bloodshed while war is politics with bloodshed. — Mao Tse-tung (1992:445).

The study of social interaction and its impact on rock art is not new. A large amount of work on the forms and characteristics of interaction between foragers and herders and between foragers and agro-pastoralists has already been done, whether the study had as its primary focus rock art and the belief systems or lithics and ceramics. Before I move onto Cradock and the nature of the interaction that might have taken place at the shelter, I briefly examine some earlier ideas of how interaction might have influenced San social structure and beliefs — and, as a result, rock art as an expression of these elements.

The San were, until the last decade, seen as the passive party in interaction. As Campbell (1987) stated, the San were reduced, via eurocentric and perhaps also a bias from Bantu-speaking peoples ideology, to "helpless victims of an immutable process" (Campbell 1987:4). The San were seen as a weaker culture (or 'race' as some writers would have it), and through an Darwinian evolutionary perspective, it was viewed as being proper that they were replaced by stronger cultures such as the Bantu-speaking and white European cultures.

This perception of the San was, and still is, very much an oversimplification, both in terms of their own cultural complexity and the relations they had with other cultures. As has already been demonstrated, the San have a highly intricate cognitive and belief system. Drawing upon social theory (specifically Marxism, Structural Marxism and Functional Marxist ideas), Lewis-Williams (1982), Campbell (1987), Jolly (1994) and Dowson (1988, 1994, 1998), to name a few, demonstrated the complexity of the social relations of the San and provided a theoretical framework in which interaction might have impacted upon the San.

Previously, Lewis-Williams had used a structural-Marxist approach to place the "art in the social arena and show that this art was not simply decorative or the 'inspiration' of talented geniuses" (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1994:218). Lewis-Williams (1982) explains how the San shamanic rituals were a form of ideology that masked the tensions and contradictions that were created by the inequalities of meat sharing in an apparently egalitarian society (a contradiction in the relations of production). The art depicting this shamanic trance experience made an essentially private experience into a public one. Thus there is a 'sharing' of a trance experience. This emphasis on sharing de-emphasises the inequalities in the supposedly egalitarian society. Co-operation is also stressed in the shamanic ritual- there must be rhythmic unity in order for a trance state to be successfully induced. Rhythmic unity also creates emotional unity among the 'group'. The !Kung place men who have disagreed with one another next to each other in the dance. The need to maintain an effective rhythm overrides all emotional disputes and tensions. Similarly the *hxaro* gift giving and exchange network would have functioned in the same way.

As the relations of production and the forces of production were to change as a result of interaction, so too would the ideology (if not initially — as old ideology could be used to support new social relations — then certainly later), and hence the rock art as an expression of the ideology. Campbell suggests that a new mode of production arose which, he terms the 'shamanistic mode of production', as a result of interaction with black farmers. He then argues that intermarriage between the San and Bantu-speaking peoples, was viewed by both parties as beneficial. For the San, "the most desired marriage is one that will provide the best material returns. It is likely therefore that the San viewed marriage to a black farmer as advantageous because it provided a resource base which could be exploited on their annual round and during times of scarcity" (Campbell 1987:42).

Black farmers had access to the shamans' abilities in such a reciprocal relation. An important element (if not the essential element) in farming and animal rearing was water, particularly rain, and the rain making abilities of the San shaman were greatly valued. San shamans were employed by the Bantu-speaking agro-pastoralists to make rain (Dowson 1988, Dowson

1998). In exchange for this service, the San shamans received cattle or a portion of the crops from the farmer. As the economic importance of this payment increased, for instance when the antelope herds diminished, the social relations of production started to change. The shamans provided a means to important resources and were obviously recognized as doing so (unlike hunting; arrows are exchanged before the hunting expedition and the 'owner' of the kill is the owner of the arrow. This prevents a bias in favor of the skilled hunter). Even if the cattle or crops were distributed through the egalitarian principles of the *hxaro* network, everyone in the camp would know how the food came to be in the camp and to whom it initially belonged. Furthermore, since the shamans were the initial owners of the food source, they had say as to how it would be distributed. Meat distribution is one of the key elements in establishing (and breaking) social relations among the San. One gives the best cuts to the people to whom one is closest to and friendliest with, while the not so desirable cuts go to those whom one perceives as being unfriendly. Thus the distribution of big game meat displays social affiliations and grievances. Shamans could manipulate the distribution of food to gain a certain amount of status. Rainmaking, like healing, would form part of the ideology of the San.

Dowson (1994) has taken Campbell's work a step further by using structuration theory to recognize the individual shaman in the rock art. Dowson showed that the shamans manipulated the existing San cosmology as well as the relations with the Bantu-speaking farmers, in order to enhance their own social power. In so doing, the shamans were effectively transforming San society from being socially and politically egalitarian in nature to one with informal leadership and social distinction. This, Dowson argued, is visible in the rock art where the individual shaman becomes more prominent in the art through the use of size, colour and elaborate decoration (Dowson calls this the 'pre-eminent shaman'. Dowson 1994:339). Not only is the art the result of the new ideology, but it becomes an active part of transforming the San society.

Interaction in the Waterberg

There is no question as to whether there was interaction between San and Bantu-speaking peoples in the Waterberg. Rather, the question is: "What was the specific form of this interaction?" We know that Cradock was used as a site for rain-making rituals by the 'Massele' people, as this is mentioned in the diary accounts of the German missionary Schlõmann (a full account of this ritual is given later in the next chapter). This information might already give an indication as to what form the interaction may have taken at Cradock, in light of the summary of the prior work on interaction given above.

Using the ethnography from the Waterberg, and surrounding areas, and the interpretation of the rock paintings at Cradock, I also explore the 'power brokering' of the shamans in the Waterberg and the nearby Limpopo-Shashi confluence: the exchange of ritual services for political and economic benefits. The arrival of the Sotho-Tswana and Nguni Bantu-speaking agro-pastoralists (and even later after that, the white colonial farmers) effectively meant that there was increased competition for the natural resources and space in the area. And the San shamans would have filled a vital niche in the politics and the nature of the competition in the area.

This thesis does not present a case of simply mapping Campbell's and Dowson's work onto the area or even the shelter of Cradock. Though their work would not be grossly out of place or inaccurate at Cradock, there are idiosyncratic features of which one must be cognizant, and hence alter prior interaction theoretical models accordingly.

Archaeological evidence indicates that San hunter-gatherers/foragers were active in the Soutpansberg area during the 1st millennium AD (Hall & Smith, in press) and were at least quietly present in the Waterberg during this time (Van der Ryst 1998). The foragers of the Soutpansberg encountered a succession of Iron Age farmers from about AD 300, with increased farmer occupation and activity starting at about AD 800 (Eastwood & Cnoops 1999:4). Preliminary investigations suggest that much of the San rock art was made from AD 700 and AD 1100 (Eastwood & Cnoops 1999:4; Hall &

Smith, in press). However by the 14th century AD, traditional forager activity and identity, "as represented by early 1st millennium AD material culture, was erased from the [Soutpansberg] region" (Hall & Smith, in press; my parenthesis). The reason given for this material culture absence: the subsuming of foragers into herder and farmer culture. The questions of whether this meant the demise of San identity or of the people was left open ended, as was the question concerning the degree of San agency in the transformation process (Hall & Smith, in press).

In contrast, forager activity as indicated by the material culture, starts to increase from the 12th century AD in the Waterberg (Van der Ryst 1998:41 & Table 10). Given the corresponding decline of San activity in the Soutpansberg, it is reasonable to speculate that at least some foragers migrated south into the Waterberg as a means of dealing with the intruding farmer presence. However, Bantu-speakers closely followed the hunter-gatherers into the area, and were settled by the 14th century AD (Van der Ryst 1998:41-44). I am concerned with the six hundred years of social interaction that took place between the 14th century AD and the end of the 19th century AD when Schlömann visited Cradock.

Initially, the interaction between the hunter-gatherers (I am emphasizing both the economic mode of production and the belief systems of these people; i.e. the Marxist notions of infrastructure and superstructure respectively) and the Bantu-speaking agro-pastoralists was fairly symbiotic. Informal trade between the two cultures would have characterized this economic and social relationship: furs, game and stone tools exchanged for iron items and ceramic vessels. But as more Bantu-speaking agro-pastoralists, other hunter-gatherers and herders migrated into the area, especially during the great social turmoil of the so-called *difaqane*, there was intensification in the usage of the land and resources for crops and grazing. As a result of this increased competition for land and resources, social stress would have arisen, resulting in skirmishes and occasionally extermination. The hunter-gatherers will have been displaced into low-lying bushveld, which was inundated with malaria and sleeping sickness, or incorporated into the Bantu-speaking society, through strategies of coercion or protection from coercion (Van der Ryst 1998:13).

Owing to these controlling factors, the hunting and gathering will have given way to an economic mode betwixt and between this traditional mode of production and the newer economic and social technology of the Nguni and Sotho-Tswana farmers. Interaction will have also allowed opportunity for intermarriage between the San and farmer cultures. And thus arose the 'Vaalpense'.

The Vaalpense

The term 'Vaalpense' has traditionally in the past been assigned to denote an impoverished people of mixed origin in the Northern Transvaal; although depending on the definition of the term one used, the distribution of the Vaalpense could cover the area from the Kalahari to the Northern Transvaal (van Schalkwyk 1985:146). The literature concerning these peoples is confusing, and often contradictory as the term was also used as a synonym for other cultural groups such as the Sarwa, Kattea, Kgalagadi and San in general (van Schalkwyk 1985:147-148). These peoples were frequently in a subservient relationship with the Bantu-speaking farmers. The Sotho-Tswana did not see them as proper people (Van der Ryst 1998) but rather as a lesser race: a servant race with rights equal to or lesser than that of slaves. Sotho-Tswana and Venda people may talk of 'Vaal pense' (or 'Topnaars') as being 'ancestors' to indicate the presence of prior foraging inhabitants (Ouzman 1992:61). During times of stress, such as the wars and migrations of the *difaqane*, the San and Vaalpense were hunted down and exterminated or otherwise enslaved. The Northern Ndebele, under the leadership of chief Makopane and chief Masebe, of the Mapela Langa, killed and enslaved many Vaalpense. Those Vaalpense and San, who escaped such genocide, hid in undesirable or unreachable areas (often in high localities) and increased mobility as a strategy to avoid dangerous confrontation and remain independent (they moved as small family groups). Schlömann (1898:66-70) describes how the Vaalpense and other threatened people moved to the low-lying areas of the Limpopo confluence to escape the violence of the interior.

As resources became more tightly controlled by the Bantu-speaking farmers and hence inaccessible, and game became scarce, these remaining few

people either migrated out of the area or took refuge with more sympathetic Bantu-speaking farmers and later European farmers.

The Vaalpense therefore came to be perceived as a serf class to the Bantu-speaking farmers, most notably the Sotho-Tswana and the Ndebele but also the Venda as well as European farmers. They were utilized as cattle herders, farm laborers, building laborers as well as hunters and trackers. Owing to the predominately Bantu-speaking perception of Vaalpense as creatures below that of 'normal' man, the Vaalpense had very few rights and fewer possessions. They practiced a hunting and gathering subsistence pattern in order to survive, but had to pay tribute in the form of game meat, skins and horns — these things belonged to their Bantu-speaking masters. Should this tribute not be given freely, the punishment was severe and included death. They lived on fruit, berries, roots and the game meat. Antelope were tracked "in the manner of the Bushman" (Schlömann 1898:66) and they would make a temporary shelter at the kill site. There the carcass, such as an eland or giraffe, would be distributed and consumed.

What also emerges from the ethnographic and anthropological evidence is that these people were generally of a hunter-gatherer social economy and culture but were of "mixed Capoid and Negroid extraction" (van Schalkwyk 1985:153). The term Vaalpense did also denote poor black farmers and captured hunter-gatherers. Theal (1922:27) states that the Vaalpense were descended from hunter-gatherer captives taken by the Sotho-Tswana four or five generations beforehand. There is evidence of intermarriage between the hunter-gatherers and the Bantu-speaking farmers (normally the hunter-gatherer women married into the Bantu-speaking societies), and the physical traits of the Vaalpense indicate that such genetic mixing was a long process. The Vaalpense are described as being small statured with facial features (i.e. triangular shaped face with slight slanting of the eyes) and very little body hair, like that of the San. But their skin pigmentation was more like that of the Bantu-speaking peoples and the facial features also bore testament to their Negroid heritage.

As I have thus so far described them, the Vaalpense are not an homogenous culture — they are dispossessed peoples emerging predominately from San

society though having incorporated genetic and cultural elements from the surrounding Bantu-speaking farmers.

Given the ethnographic evidence, the term 'Vaalpense' may also be a derogatory designation for the San or any individual of San ancestry. The term itself means 'ashen or faded belly/paunch', and this might refer to the lighter skin shade of the San, though some accounts give another definition with regards to the practice of the people crawling on their bellies during a hunt (Van der Ryst 1998:14). The Afrikaans word "pense" is normally used to describe an animal's stomach, and when spoken with reference to a human subject, takes on derogatory status. One of the synonyms for 'Vaalpense', among the Sotho-Tswana and Venda people, is 'Topnaars' and is definitely derogatory as it means "very ugly". The term 'Masele' is also a derogatory Sotho-Tswana synonym for 'Vaalpense'. Besides being derogatory terms, all these phrases contain the Sotho-Tswana concept of 'alien/ancestor'. 'Ancestor' in this sense refers to the prior hunting and gathering inhabitants (Ouzman 1992:61) with the added implications that these people were not part of the Sotho-Tswana culture (Van der Ryst 1998:11).

Of interest is the similarity between 'Massele', the name of the people using Cradock as a ritual site, and 'masele'. The likeness of these two terms, is even more compelling when one considers Schlömann's statement (1896:220-221) that the Massele were in the area before the arrival of the Matabele (Northern Ndebele). It is probable that the Massele were Vaalpense and were descended from San ancestors.

The picture of the Vaalpense being subjugated and persecuted by the Bantu-speaking farmers is also not entirely true and like all accounts of history, this perception is one-sided. There are descriptions of Vaalpense and San who maintained autonomy and even won the respect and power of their Ndebele and Sotho-Tswana neighbors. Some Vaalpense were highly valued by the farmers for their metallurgic and tracking skill; one such Vaalpens was given a black woman as a wife by the chief Mapela (Marais 1928:84). Another, by the name of Klaas, lived a sedentary life and had acquired wealth in the form of goats and cattle. Most notable among these valued

Vaalpense were the magicians. Schlömann (1893:66-70) reports that these 'magicians', who were held in awe by the chief 'Mantloa' of the Sotho-Tswana speaking Babididi peoples, often disrupted the missionaries work (Van der Ryst 1998:15). The Massele people seemed to have relative autonomy, and this may have been derived from their rain making rituals.

Power Brokers: Beliefs and Customs

Before I move on to addressing the issue of how some San and Vaalpense benefited from later social interaction with the farmers, the question of their cosmology and beliefs needs to be discussed as this will impact upon the understanding of the painted images at Cradock. There are unfortunately sparse ethnographic accounts of the beliefs of the Vaalpense. There are also scant descriptions of the beliefs of the San who lived in the Waterberg, and from what I can tell by locality as well as their various names, some of these San, at least, must have been of a language group called the //Xegwi.

The //Xegwi are today found in the Lake Chrissie area, Mpumalanga (Barnard 1992:85; Potgieter 1955). The //Xegwi are often linguistically classified as 'Eastern San' — however, given the similarity of vocabulary between the //Xegwi and other southern San, Argyle (1985:19) argues that they are probably Southern San. Potgieter (1955:5), in his ethnographic monograph on the //Xegwi, gives an account of two San brothers who fled from a farm in the south shortly after 1880, and followed traces of their people to the Lake Chrissie area. The group had moved northwards to avoid "the oncoming white race" (Potgieter 1955:5). From this testimony and the linguistic evidence, Argyle concludes that the //Xegwi were:

> a group of refugees who had come from somewhere fairly far to the south... Such an emigration might well have begun in the eighteenth century... The migration of further small groups or of individuals, like the escaping brothers, could have continued intermittently down to the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Such a 'refugee' composition would mean that //Xegwi may have been of rather mixed linguistic origins, but was essentially part of the 'Southern' group (Argyle 1985:19-20).

Hammond-Tooke (1998:10) also argues, based on linguistic evidence, that the //Xegwi were originally from the southeastern Free State.

Given the evidence that Southern San language groups were fleeing northwards, there is good reason to suspect that some of these 'refugees' would have fled into the Waterberg. Furthermore the Vaalpense were sometimes called the "Masarwa" by the Sotho-Tswana, as were the //Xegwi (Potgieter 1955). The term "Sarwa" according to Van der Ryst (1998:13) and van Schalkwyk (1985:152) refer to a group of hunter-gatherers in the Kalahari. But, as stated by Barnard (1992:85) "Masarwa" is a generic term used to refer to hunter-gatherers (San) generally. What is of interest is the prefix "ma" which indicates that these people were not viewed as being on the same level as the Sotho-Tswana, and this accords with what is the known perception of the Vaalpense by the Bantu-speakers.

If one is to get an idea of the possible beliefs of the Vaalpense and the San of the Waterberg, one should consider the cosmology and customs of all the San groups that might have been displaced into the area. These include the //Xegwi and other San groups to the south of the area, such as the Maluti San. The religion of the //Xegwi San group bears some remarkable similarities to that of the !Kung: first and foremost is the belief in a great god and a lesser god. This great god */A'an* was the 'creator of heaven and earth and the bringer of many good things' (among the evangelized //Xegwi, this was also the name for the Semitic god. Barnard 1992:87). There was also a lesser god, */a'an 'e la tleni* ("*/A'an* the small"), a namesake god who aided the great god. For the //Xegwi, the souls of the dead go to join the great god in the sky. This great god is seldom prayed to, and is addressed in an informal manner (Barnard 1992:253; Potgieter 1955:29-31). The moon also played an important part in the beliefs of these people, so much so, that Potgieter, felt that the //Xegwi worshipped the moon (*klolo*. Barnard 1992:253, Potgieter 1955:29-30). The moon was believed to be connected to the rain, and hence food and states of well being. This belief was exemplified by the equating of the full moon with good fortune, and congruently the waning and waxing moon with suffering.

The //Xegwi have an interesting birth ritual. At birth, the newborn infant's head was

> smeared with medicines in order to make the soft parts of the skull close up. The infant and its mother were then secluded from men for a few days. After this, the women would take the child to a place where lightning had struck and cut its skin just above the navel, so that blood dropped on the spot. The child was brought home and given an enema, so that the 'bird of the heaven' (i.e. the lightning) would be driven out. This was regarded as necessary for the proper healing of the navel (Barnard 1992:86).

At first glance this does not appear like any beliefs the !Kung practice, but if one were to consider the deeper implications, one would realize that the same fundamental religious ideas are present. The San shamans' spirits leave their bodies to go on out-of-body travel through the top of the head. The //Xegwi ritual has, in my opinion the spiritual function of closing and preventing the new spirit from leaving the body prematurely. The ritual seclusion, as was discussed in Chapter 2, operates to prevent the person undergoing the rite as well as the rest of the San group, not in seclusion, from being 'spoilt' by supernatural energy. As I have argued with reference to *n!ao*, when a child is born the uterine fluid flows into the ground; one of the ways of actively controlling the weather is to slaughter a large antelope so that its blood flows into the ground (Marshall 1957:239). The //Xegwi ritual of letting the child's blood would perform the same active function, specially when the locality of the ritual is considered — a place where lightning was known to have struck. Lightning, is a tremendous/extreme source of supernatural energy, and a locality where lightning had touched, would be imbued with much of that energy. The navel is approximately in the same area where a concentration of the supernatural energy is to be found in the human body, and where the boiling of the supernatural energy takes place (the pit of the stomach or *gebesi* in !Kung terminology). At birth the navel is an opening to this area, and hence it is a point of access to the energy inside the newborn, a place where this energy might freely flow from or into the child and thus result in death. One of the reasons given by the //Xegwi for performing the ritual, was that of avoiding lightning (i.e. 'the bird of heaven be driven out'. Potgieter 1955:10). The /Xam have a similar belief: a girl who has undergone the puberty rite was protected from lightning (Hoff 1998:118).

Therefore all of these rituals can be perceived as a mechanism by which to ensure that the supernatural energy of the person and of the environment is maintained.

In the ethnographic account of the //Xegwi's religion, one can see concepts which are part of the Bantu-speaking peoples' (particularly Nguni) cosmology. For example, in the newborn rite, there is talk of lightning as the 'great bird of heaven' (Potgieter 1955:10). While avoidance of lightning is to be found in the belief system of the San (as I have illustrated and discussed with reference to Biesele 1993 and Hoff 1998) it is also a strong Nguni belief. When questioned about some paintings, the informant known as 'M' answered that the paintings, red and black slashes at the rock shelter of Ngcengane, were done to protect against lightning usually associated with witchcraft (Prins 1994:189). In this instance where there is a commonality of beliefs such as that concerned with lightning, there is a possibility that this commonality is coincidental. Lightning is a scary phenomenon, quick bright light associated with fierce storms, and naturally many cultures have some belief about lightning. The belief that this phenomena is some sort of bird is clearly the result of interaction. Nguni believe that lightning is a great bird (Zulu: *impundulu*) summoned by witches. Although, lightning can be summoned and controlled by the San (Biesele 1993:109-110), it does not normally take on animal characteristics. Moreover, a //Xegwi tale ("A Batwa Legend" as Potgieter 1955:31 calls it), has elements more common to Nguni cosmology than that of San. There is an emphasis on 'tame animals' or domesticated animals (i.e. cattle, goats and sheep), and the possession of these animals.

One aspect that is noticeably absent from the //Xegwi ethnography on beliefs is that of healing and explicit rainmaking, unless one takes "A Batwa Legend" as a symbolic account of a rain bull (Potgieter 1955:31). The fountain is the abode of a rain bull, just as rain and clouds are. And all of these concepts (rain animal, fountain, etc) are connected, in that they express a common feature: water. In this vein then the fountain of the 'Legend' can be perceived as a symbol for providing water for the land, plants and animals, and hence sustaining a food resource for the San. Due to the ill neglect of strangers, the great god */a'an* became enraged and the fountain

became dry. The 'Legend' element of strangers is a symbolic comment, I believe, referring to those not familiar with the //Xegwi cosmology and therefore indicating that they were not San themselves. This inference is supported by the alternative version of the 'Legend': a European farmer was responsible for the drying up of the fountain. There is, moreover, a taboo against telling the legend to strange people. The fountain drying most definitely refers to drought conditions and its associated concepts of famine, disease and social stress. The 'Legend' then can be summed up as a metaphorical account of strangers coming into the land and disrupting the land's natural state of balance. Fortunately there is an account of an explicit San rainmaking ritual in the Waterberg, although to which San language group this ritual belongs to is not established. In this account (Marais 1964:12-19) there is mention of a dance and a 'Song of the Rain', as well as, practices such as the smearing of sheep fat over the body. This is indicative of a trance related ritual, and bears some resemblance to the Rain Song of the !Kung (Marshall 1957:238).

The ethnography of the Maluti San, or more properly the People of the Eland (N//ŋ in the Southern San language. Barnard 1992:90-91), may offer more promise in eliciting the possible beliefs of the Waterberg San. The ethnography of the Maluti San is unfortunately sparse, though what is recorded is certainly important. Most of the beliefs recorded come from a singular source: tales told by the San guide, Qing, to the St John's Territory Magistrate, J.M Orpen. When considering the concepts expressed in these beliefs, it is quickly evident that the Maluti San have elements in common with the /Xam and the //Xegwi. Both the /Xam and the Maluti San have myths revolving around a central god /Kaggen, and his love for eland (Lewis-Williams 1981:32). The Maluti San, like the //Xegwi, have a belief about the phases of the moon being equated with states of well being (Vinnicombe 1976:234).

Perhaps the most important comments made by Qing, relate the paintings to trance and the healing dance (Lewis-Williams 1981:34, 112; Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989:29). Later and independently of Qing, Bleek's /Xam informants also connected San beliefs to paintings (Lewis-Williams &

Dowson 1989:29-30). Qing also recited beliefs about catching a rain creature that bears similarity to the /Xam rain making practices.

Another rain-making practice, associated with the Maluti San, is mentioned in a Natal Independent article dated 16/01/1851 (Vinnicombe 1976:52 & 232). The article describes an incident of San cattle raiders being pursued by Langalibalele petty chiefs. The San, in their desperation to escape, blew on an eland horn and immediately heavy rain descended. As I have discussed in previous chapters, for the !Kung and /Xam, there is a connection between animal horns and the weather, with regard to *n!ao* and 'winds'. It appears that the Maluti San had a corresponding belief practice, and given the other established similarities in cosmology between the /Xam and the Maluti San, there is good reason to suspect that the Maluti San would have a comparable underlying concept to that of 'winds'.

A question might arise at this point concerning my use of ethnography, particularly in my extrapolations of the beliefs of the Vaalpense. Do the Vaalpense have a similar belief as that of *n!ao*? I have already shown that many other San groups such as the !Kung, the /Xam, the Nharo and even possibly the Maluti San have comparable concepts, and it is therefore not hard to conceive that the Vaalpense would have inherited some of this belief from their San ancestors. Indeed there is ethnographic evidence to suggest that the Vaalpense may have held a similar belief concept. Schlömann (1898:70) reports that when a Vaalpens died, the magicians in the society would exhume the buried body and then place it in the desert or the Lephalala River. To do otherwise would risk the possibility of drought (the rain staying away). Such a belief linking death with the climate bears, to me, more than just a coincidental association. As I have already noted in the discussion on *n!ao* and 'winds', there is a very strong correlation between death and the weather, and I have described several rituals regarding the killing of a large antelope and the belief of *n!ao*.

What was the exact nature of the Vaalpense' cosmology? One can never know for certain, as the 'Vaalpense' was not a unified cultural and social group. One should expect the cosmology of the Vaalpense to have more aspects of both San and Bantu-speakers' beliefs, than that of the //Xegwi,

Maluti San or the /Xam. When considering what this mix might be, one must be aware that there is a problem with Campbell's and Dowson's work: they consider the cosmology of the San to remain relatively constant. In fact, the opposite is true — the San religion and cosmology is fluid and dynamic (Barnard 1992, Biesele 1993). The folktales and folklore constantly change as individuals add their own idiosyncratic nuances and features (Biesele 1993). As Biesele (1993:73) states:

> The process should be seen as a constant looping back of individuals' experiences [which are based to some extent — but not completely — upon those of their predecessors] into the tradition, where they become available to the individual again as part of a cultural repertoire he himself has helped to build... Both (the religious ideas and folklore — my inclusion) should be seen as evolving, ongoing systems of expression of meaning and experience.

Prins (1994, Prins & Lewis 1992) believes that it is this fluidity that allows for the San to readily incorporate aspects of Sotho-Tswana and Nguni cosmology into their own belief system, without detriment or contradiction to the San cosmology. Though the idiosyncratic elements of San beliefs may change, the conceptual core remains relatively constant.

Power of Interaction

How did some Vaalpense and San individuals benefit from interaction with farmers, while the vast majority were coerced into servitude or killed? Traditionally, Nguni and Sotho-Tswana societies are relatively open and have social mechanisms through which outsiders can be incorporated and, over time, fully integrated into farmer society (Jolly 1994:129). These social mechanisms would have allowed for the initial interaction between foragers and farmers. Later, though, the conservative political and social forces of the *difaqane* and the increased competition for resources would have created social barriers preventing incorporation into Nguni and Sotho-Tswana societies.

The first obstacle or social barrier any Vaalpens or San, trying to gain the favor of farmers, would have encountered is that of the Bantu-speakers'

perception of the Vaalpense and San as creatures less than human, but more than animal (Jolly 1994:100). The Bantu-speakers would have seen these people as ambivalent, between the realms of the humans and the animals, and the tame and the wild. The San and Vaalpense would have enforced this animalistic view through the practices of sleeping in termite mounds, holes in the ground and caves as well as the lack of herding, farming and iron smelting. Their amazing stone working abilities and antelope tracking skills would have compelled the human aspects of the Nguni and Sotho-Tswana perceptions. Such a Nguni and Sotho-Tswana viewpoint was clearly a general disadvantage for the San and Vaalpense. Wild creatures could be caught and utilized and this perception was extended to the San Vaalpense; more so because unlike wild antelope, the San and Vaalpense had skills which could be of use to the farmers. But such a view also had advantages as Prins states,

> In traditional Nguni world-view, diviners and other magico-religious functionaries are liminal and ambiguous persons and are therefore able to mediate between the cosmological opposites of nature and culture... San would have been ideal candidates for this position... because they would be associated with aspects linking them to both nature [caves, holes, wild animals, rain] and culture [Nguni homestead and other prized social institutions such as marriage]. In fact, the status of the southern San as great rainmakers had more to do with Nguni perceptions than San realities (Prins 1994:182).

To turn this perceptual disadvantage into an advantage, the Vaalpense and San individuals would have to make themselves appear more favorable to the Bantu-speakers through manipulation of the farmer cosmology. By assuming a role that identified more closely with the Bantu-speaking peoples' beliefs, the San individual would no longer be that alien or unpalatable to the farmers; there would be a commonality on which to forge a social contract. The farmers' perception would be of 'domesticating' the San through incorporation into Nguni and Sotho-Tswana society (Jolly 1994:101).

There are many of what appear to be parallels between the San and Bantu-speakers' cosmologies. Foremost, the San view the rock face of a shelter as a

membrane between the spirit world and this world. The water surface is similarly viewed as an access into the spirit realm, and being underwater was one of the metaphors that were used for the trance experience (Lewis-William & Dowson 1989). For the Bantu-speaking people, caves and pools were portals into the spirit world:

> Crocodiles are associated with rainmaking...and most importantly, they can communicate with the ancestor spirit world at the bottom of deep pools (Huffman 1996:29).
>
> Caves and rock shelters are said to be direct entrances to the spirit world like pools are, and hills with caves were associated with important ar · tor spirits as hills were with important leaders (Huffman 1996:43).

Indeed such parallel beliefs would have made it possible for the conceptual crossover from San cosmology to that of Bantu-speakers. In fact, all San and Vaalpense could have been viewed as intermediary creatures between the spirit world and the material world because they occasionally dwelt in caves and shelters.

There are some major differences between the San and Nguni cosmologies. The religion of the Bantu-speakers is highly ritualized and has at its core ancestor worship. The San by contrast, although recognizing and acknowledging the spirits of the dead, never prayed or worshipped these spirits (i.e. deified the dead). Rather the gods are prayed to directly and prayer is done in a casual manner as Katz illustrates,

> They pray as individuals, each speaking directly to the gods, silently or aloud, as though thinking aloud, without special postures, and at any time they feel it necessary (1982:31).

One would expect then, in the religion of the Vaalpense and San when interacting with the Bantu-speaking farmers, an increasing ritualization and ancestor worship over time. When considering the social identity of a San painter in the Transkei who had interacted and become part of a Nguni group (the Mpondomise), Prins (1994) found that the San painter's practices had indeed became increasingly ritualised. There was less emphasis on

trance (Prins & Lewis 1992:33-34) and more emphasis on ceremony and performance.

The acceptance of a San or Vaalpens into Nguni and Sotho-Tswana societies would also depend on the farmers' perception of themselves and the environment. The chief was in many instances the religious leader of the society, and was directly responsible for the creation of rain:

> According to legend, the founding father of the Shona, the first man and rainmaker, came from the spirit world at the bottom of a sacred pool of water (Huffman 1996:29).

As with many aspects of sacred-leadership, the chief or king was associated with the fertility of the land. Should there be anything that threatened the land, the farmers' animals, the crops and the people, it was the chief's responsibility to correct the problem through consultation with the ancestors. But during times of drought, the chief would also summon rainmakers in the area (Prins 1994:180). This delegation of rainmaking duties allowed the chief some leeway when in failing by simply blaming the hired rainmakers. The environment and the chief's own spiritual confidence thus played a role in San and Vaalpense being perceived favorably by the Nguni and Sotho-Tswana farmers; when the climatic conditions were erratic San would be more likely incorporated in Nguni and Sotho-Tswana society (and being blamed if the weather conditions were not corrected).

Moreover, the role of diviner is not a hereditary office. Any individual believed to have the necessary spiritual qualifications could be employed as a diviner. The Bantu-speakers' perception of the San as a 'liminal' people with connections to the spirit world, would make San individuals an obvious choice for the office of diviner (Jolly 1994:102).

Another aspect that Campbell and Dowson overlooked, is that as far as Nguni beliefs go any San person will do as a rainmaker, not just a shaman. Thus a San group, or any group claiming mixed lineage from San (i.e. Vaalpense), could become rainmakers or spirit mediums for the Bantu-speakers. Just by the San individual being present at a Nguni rainmaking ritual was that ritual guaranteed a certain amount of success. People with

no spiritual knowledge, but being of mixed San descent, have been abducted and coerced into taking part in Nguni rainmaking rituals because of their association with the San (Prins 1990:114). Obviously a shaman would have been more preferable, as he/she had direct knowledge and experience in dealing with spiritual and cosmological matters and could pass on this knowledge to the Nguni spirit mediums and diviners (Prins 1990). Although it should be stressed that a hunter-gatherer group could and did consist of many shamans (up to half of the males and a third of the females in a group could be shamans. Barnard 1992:58). With this in mind, a Vaalpens or San group could have just as likely become pre-eminent in an area as creators of rain (as well as the ability to heal, track animals and work metal), in addition to the individual shaman.

In terms of those San or Vaalpense benefiting from interaction with the Bantu-speaking farmers, the beliefs and cosmology of both the San and the Bantu-speakers would have been altered by the San to ensure a positive perception by the farmers. The farmers would have also altered their own belief system through allowing San ideas to penetrate into aspects of Bantu-speakers cosmology. The farmers would more readily accept another 'alien' people if they held similar beliefs and those beliefs could result in beneficial economic returns.

Though this is generally true, the San were the most affected by the interaction, for as Van der Ryst states:

> Although all the role players experienced some changes through exposure to the social and economic systems of their neighbours, the data suggests that it was the hunter-gatherers who experienced the most profound transformations (Van der Ryst 1998:51).

Since these social transformations will impact upon the San cosmology and belief structure, they can be discerned in the rock art of Cradock as I will illustrate in the next chapter.

Chapter 6

Bringing the Threads Together:

The Final Tapestry

'Tis true; there's magic in the web of it. — Shakespeare (1987:998).

Art and Religion are, then,
two roads by which men
escape from circumstance to ecstasy. — Clive Bell

In the first chapter, I stated that the line "... on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10) is the encapsulating theme of this thesis and indeed the rock paintings of Cradock provide the point at which supernatural energy, interaction with the spirit realm and interaction with the material realm come together. In this chapter, all these themes converge when explaining selected images.

I believe that there are loosely four 'progressions' or 'stages' of site usage that can be discerned from the paintings at Cradock. These four stages each reflect the social and spiritual beliefs of the painters when using the site, and so incorporate the elements and aspects that I have discussed in the last three chapters (supernatural energy, interaction with the spirit realm and interaction with the Bantu-speaking agro-pastoralists). I can only provide a loose relative chronology, established through the superpositioning of images, of these stages and any dates given are based upon the date that Schlömann visited Cradock and dates from prior archaeological work at other sites in the area. Furthermore these four stages are like, any category, subjective. Like most forms of change, any alteration in the beliefs of the painters would have been slowly and constantly evolving. Change is a gradual phenomena, and the dividing of history and time into chronological social units (such as iron age, Greek Hellenistic age, industrial age to name a few) marked by sudden transformations and revolutions, have more to do with the propensity of humans to categorize experience.

First Stage

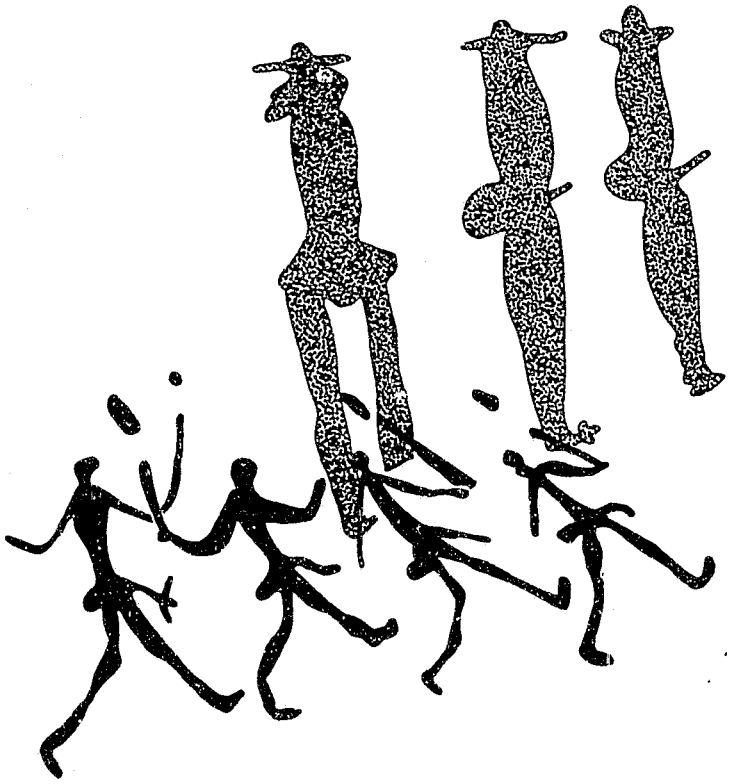
The first of these stages, is that of the early San painters. This phase is distinguished, in the paintings, by those depictions I have referred to as the 'Waterberg style' (see Chapter 4 for a brief description). In comparison to the other images in the shelter, these 'Waterberg style' depictions have undergone a greater degree of fading. They are found under the other images (i.e. have been painted over). Such evidence suggests that these depictions were the first to be painted in the shelter, and given the comparative degree of fading, a large temporal gap separates the painting of these depictions with that of later images.

It is not within the scope of this dissertation to discuss the symbolic meaning and the social implications of these 'Waterberg style' depictions (an in-depth study of these paintings is presently being undertaken by Leue, forthcoming). Needless to say, the evidence at Cradock suggests that these paintings were done some time before the major social and political upheavals in the Waterberg environs.

Second Stage

The majority of the images mark, what I term, the second stage of site usage. These images are more pronounced than, and are remarkably different in form to the 'Waterberg style'. Figure 3 gives a clear visual indication of these differences: the top row of images comprises three 'Waterberg style' human figures and the bottom row of images consists of four of these later type figures. As one can see, these later images are more naturalistic with regard to the depiction of the human form, than the 'Waterberg style' figures. In addition they show a greater degree of idiosyncrasy, variation in form and animation.

The images at Cradock are undoubtedly connected with San beliefs and practices. Many of the elements, such as posture, of the Cradock paintings have been documented in other shelters across South Africa and their symbolic meaning clarified with regard to the shamanistic explanation (Lewis-Williams 1998:87). There are other images at the shelter that are enigmatic and unprecedented. When explaining the symbolic meaning of the



CRADOCK
CRADOCK
ELLISRAS
NORTHERN PROVINCE
S.A
TRACED BY: J. HOLLMANN & B.M PETERS
: 20/07/1999
REDRAWN BY: J. LEWIN
: 25/01/2000
© RARC

DARK RED

MEDIUM RED

Figure 3: Waterberg Figures

images at Cradock, I start with those easily diagnostic elements and then move onto those that are more puzzling.

Figure 4 is a painted depiction of a San healing dance or trance dance. The figures inside the circular line are dancing and the circular line depicted is, on one symbolic level, the furrow produced by the stamping of the dancing men:

> Their stamping feet scuff up the sandy soil, and soon a groove appears which deepens with the hours... and the groove of the dance circle becomes five or six inches deep. The groove in the sand is called *n=ebe* (Marshall & Biesele 1969:8).

On another metaphorical level, the line may represent the supernatural energy emanating from the dance and binding all the dancers together.

The figures within the circle depict the dance posture of the knees bent slightly with the body erect or else hunched forward at the waist (Marshall 1969:363). The arms of the figures are in various positions, and although the men at a dance generally keep their arms at their side, the arms strictly have no fixed position:

> They may hang at the men's sides, or be extended, at shoulder level, or be bent at the elbow (Marshall 1969:363).

There are two figures, located on the left side within the circle, which seem to be in the 'splits' (a posture whereby the legs are at right angles to the body) and another figure, located bottom center within the circle, whom appears to be losing his footing. The posture of these images is signifying the collapsing of the legs and loss of coordination when the shaman begins to experience the supernatural energy exploding in the head (Katz 1982:98).

Figure 5 is slightly more complex. The human depiction, second from the left, is noticeably elongated. Elongation is a common theme in San art, and reflects a sensation originating from trance states (Lewis-Williams 1988:10; Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989:77). The shamans feel their bodies extend as



WHITE MEDIUM RED DARK RED

CRADOCK
CRADOCK
ELLISRAS
NORTHERN PROVINCE
SA
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: 19/07/1999
REDRAWN BY: J. LEWIN
: 25/01/2000
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Figure 4: Dance Scene



Figure 4: Dance Scene

the supernatural energy makes its way up or 'boils' from the shamans' stomach to their heads. Elongation is also a metaphorical device used to depict the sensation of elevation that the shaman might feel during *!aia*, for as one shaman put it:

> I see all the people like very small birds, the whole place will be spinning around and that is why we run (Lee 1968:11).

The white line running along the front of the elongated figure, and covering the head represents this boiling sensation of supernatural energy (Eastwood 1999; Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989:76-77).

To the right of the elongated figure, there are a row of numerous smaller figures in various animate poses. One of the figures in this group appears to be doing a handstand or be in mid somersault. Such actions are associated with entering deep *!aia* while dancing (Lee 1967:31). Thus the row of figures depicts shamans dancing. The topmost figure is in a bending-forward posture with his torso at right angles to his legs. The posture is the result of the shaman's stomach muscles painfully constricting as the supernatural energy starts to boil (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989:40).

Two interesting figures are found almost immediately below the topmost figure just described. Both these figures have white lines painted along their spines. Just as in the case of the elongated figure, these white lines are the metaphorical portrayal of supernatural energy rising up from the stomach to the head. Indeed, the white line, in the left image, originates in the lower torso area and ends at the base of the neck; white pigment is then found at the top of the head, symbolically indicating the explosion of supernatural energy in the head (Eastwood 1999:20). Both figures have their arms extended backwards. Shamans adopt this posture when asking god to shoot supernatural energy into them (Lewis-Williams 1981:88; Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989:44).

Most noticeably, the figures have animal features: the left figure has a short tale and its legs are articulated in the same manner as the hind legs of antelope; the right figure has an animal-type head, as illustrated by the

short horns and prognathous. As I have discussed, shamans in deep trance may become fused with animals and so take on certain features of those animals (Lewis-Williams 1981:89). Also, when shamans travel to the spirit realm they may transform themselves into animals (Biesele 1975:163; Lewis-Williams 1981:95-100). The figures' therianthropic features affirm the intensity of the supernatural energy and the deep state of trance experienced by the shamans.

Another therianthrope is depicted in Figure 6, with its arms out towards a bizarre creature. The ontological nature of this creature is clarified when one considers the associated therianthrope and the crack that runs beneath the two images. It has been demonstrated that the rock face was a 'veil' separating the material realm from the spirit world (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1990). Shamans on out-of-body travel could gain access to the spirit world through cracks and crevices in the rock 'veil'. Spirit entities could also use these rock features to access the material realm. Shamans in heightened sensory states would be able to see these creatures emerging from the crevices (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1990:15).

Although the pigment of the central image in Plate 1 and Figure 7 has been extensively smeared and rubbed off the rock, enough of the features still exist to discern that it is a depiction of a relatively large and robust creature. Several features of the image suggest that it is a rain animal. First and foremost is its size. Secondly, it appears to be a conglomeration of several animals. If one looks closely at the image, one will notice three toes per hind leg. Rhinoceroses and hippopotamuses are two large animal species that have such feet. The creature's head appears to have two horns thus negating the possibility of it being a depiction of a hippopotamus. This leaves the option that it might be a rhinoceros, though the creature's horns are too far back on the head. On further inspection of the traced image, there seems to be the remnant of a trunk. Therefore the image is undoubtedly a depiction of a spirit animal, for such a creature does not exist in the material realm. The animals, on which the depiction is based — namely rhinoceroses, hippopotamuses and elephants — all spend long hours in water and all are active at night. These are exactly the characteristics of the rain animal as described in Chapter 3. Additional support for this image as a depiction of a

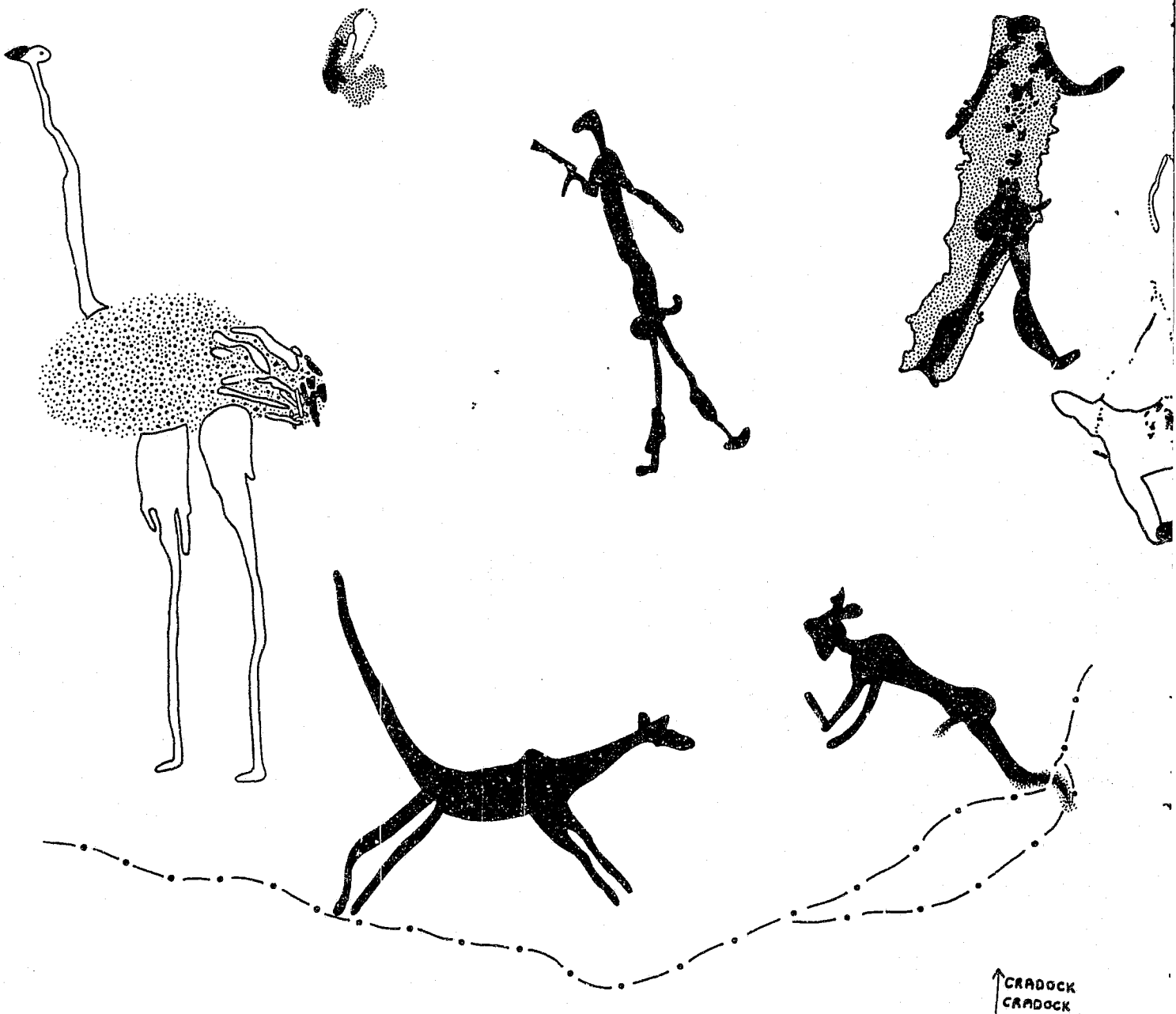


Figure 6: Therianthrope & Spirit Creature



Spirit Creature

DARK RED
MEDIUM RED
WHITE
FADED BLACK

CRADOCK
CRADOCK
ELLIRAS
NORTHERN PROVINCE
S.A
TRACED BY: J. HOLLMANN & S.M PETERS
: 19/07/1999
REDRAWN BY: J. LEWIN
©RNAC : 25/01/2000

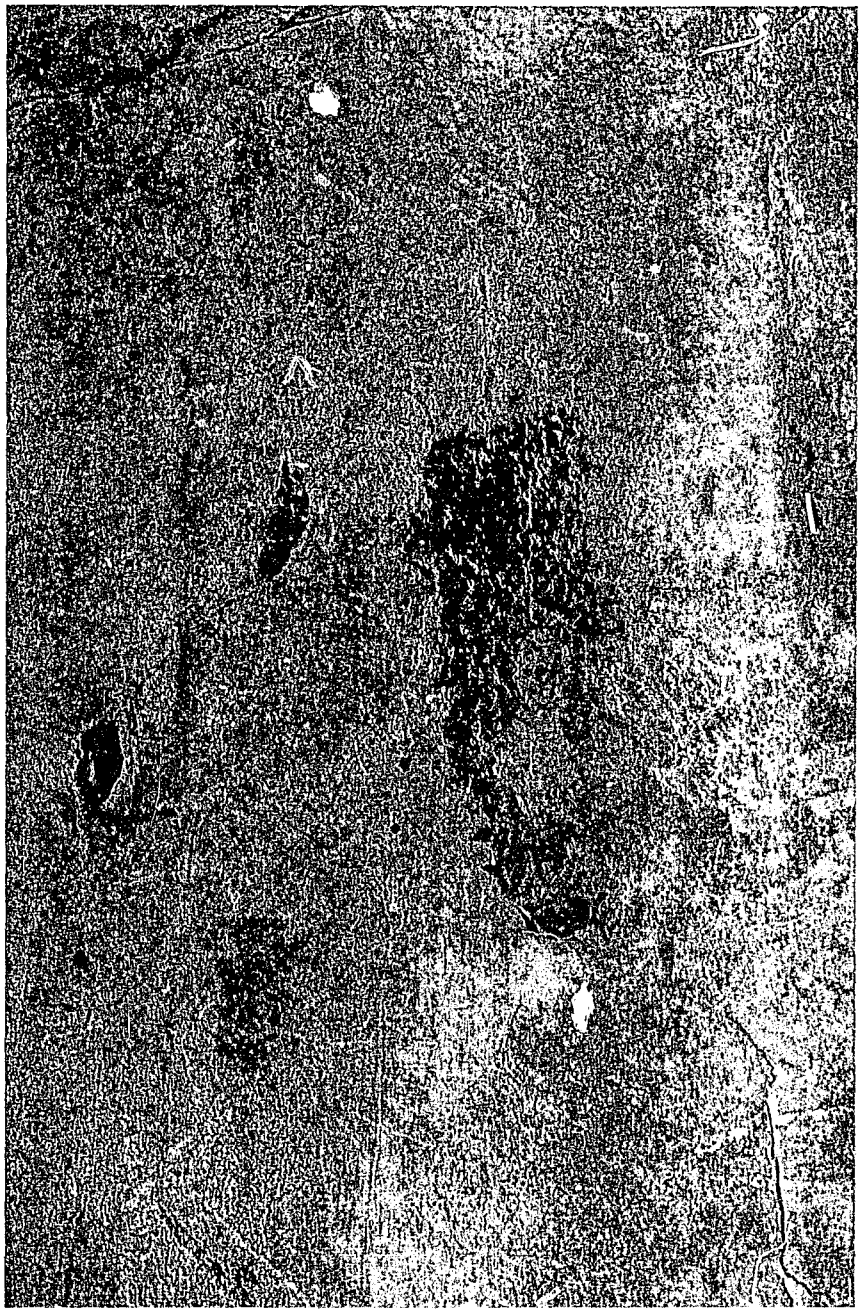
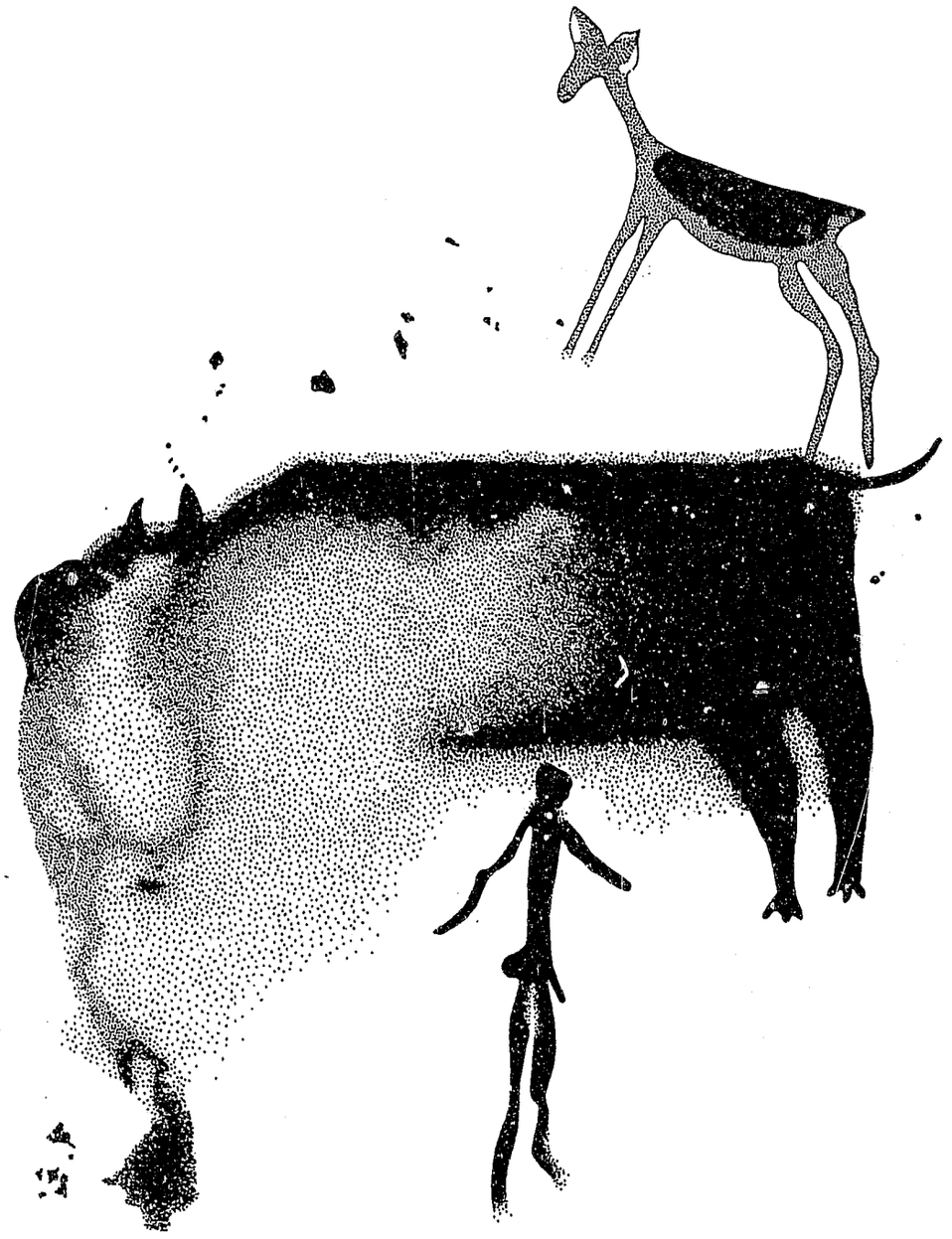


Plate 1: Rain Animal



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NORTHERN PROVINCE
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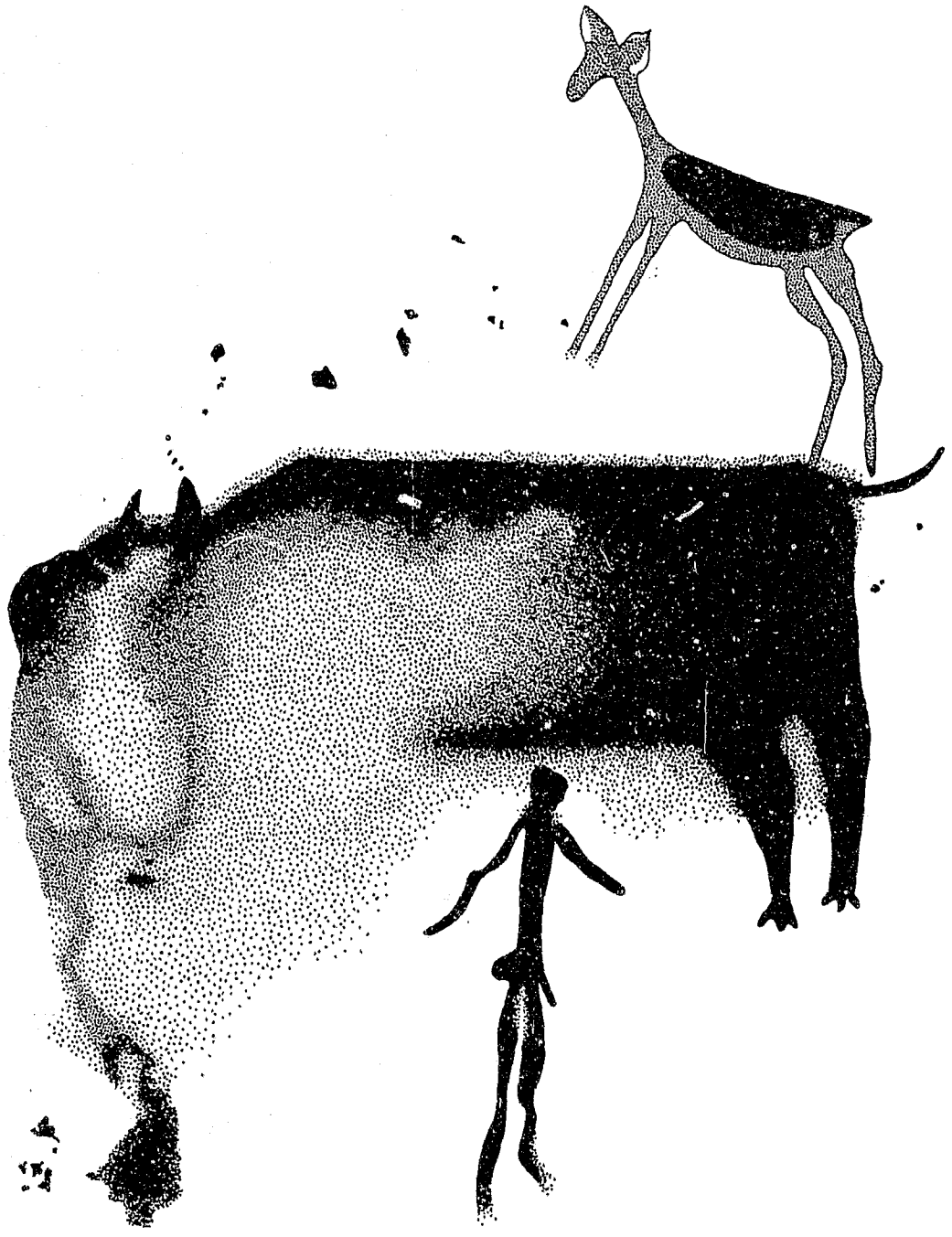
TRACED BY: J. HOLLM
: 21/07/199
REDRAWN BY: J. LEWIN
: 25/01/20
© RARC

LIGHT RED
DARK RED
MEDIUM RED

Figure 7: Rain Animal



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LIGHT RED
DARK RED
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imal

rain creature is to be found in the precedents of painted rain animals (Campbell 1987: fig 4; Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989: figs. 42, 44) that bear a similarity in form.

Another animal species associated with water and supernatural energy, in !Kung belief, are giraffes. Two giraffes (Plate 2) are painted at the shelter and they are located in close proximity to the rain animal. Giraffe are considered by the !Kung to be an important source of supernatural energy and they play an important role in !Kung beliefs. For example, the great god sends *n/om* to shamans in the form of a supernatural giraffe's urine (Marshall 1969:360) and the Giraffe Song is now the prominent trance dance form used in by the !Kung (Biesele 1993:67; Katz 1982:49). One of the tales concerning how the !Kung acquired the song illustrates the connection between giraffe and rain:

> A women named Beh was alone one day in the bush. She saw a herd of giraffes running before an approaching thunderstorm. The rolling beat of their hooves grew louder and mingled in her head with the sound of sudden rain. Suddenly a song she had never heard before came to her, and she began to sing. G//aoan (the great god) told her it was a medicine song (Biesele 1993:67).

What's more, the forms and colors of clouds are likened to giraffes by the !Kung (Marshall 1957:239). Giraffe are also the second most painted species in the Limpopo-Shashi confluence area, indicating that they were also central to the cosmology of the San in that vicinity (Eastwood & Cnoops 1999:49).

The postures and motifs so far discussed are all found in Plate 3 and Figure 8, the last panel that I consider. What is immediately noticeable when looking at the panel is the large spherical object, in the top right corner, from which two parallel lines seem to emanate. Quite frequently, researchers come across a rock art site that contains enigmatic images for which there is no ethnographic or painted precedent This is not surprising when one considers that rock art is often the product of a San individual's culturally and neurologically mediated but, none the less, idiosyncratic experiences.



Plate 2: Giraffe



Plate 3: Thread & Spherical Image

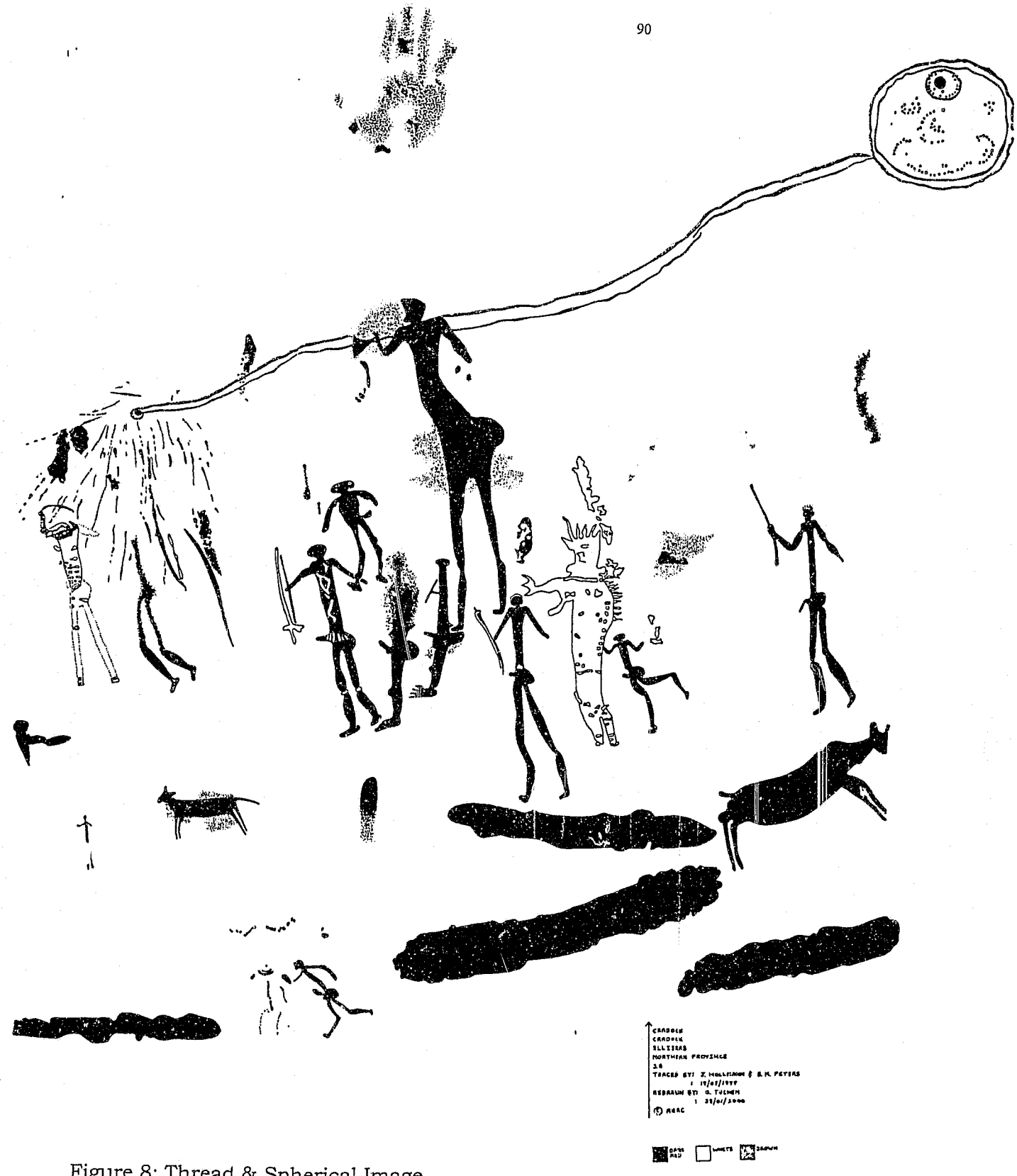

Figure 8: Thread & Spherical Image

The spherical image is one such enigmatic image. Although the image may never be fully explained, adjacent and associated images, combined with ethnography, may indicate its general nature in the cosmology of the San painters. It is to these associated images that I turn.

There are three therianthropes immediately under an elongated figure in Figure 8: two figures with reversed leg articulation stand on either side of a white figure with a horned head and cloven hooves. This white figure is especially interesting as it has two pairs of horns and, like the rain animal, it is a combination of different species to create a supernatural image. The elongated figure and the therianthropes, as discussed, are all symbols for the concept of intense supernatural energy.

The two parallel lines (which in fact may be one line as it is closed off at the left end) offer further clues as to what the spherical object might be. The line motif is found in the rock art of the Drakensburg and the Western Cape, and is commonly associated with therianthropic figures and human figures holding the line, which the elongated figure in Figure 8 seems to be doing. New research into the line motif suggests that it is the luminous threads on/through which the shamans travel into the spirit realm (Lewis-Williams *et al*, in press). A shaman living in the Kalahari, named Motaope Saboabue, describes the experience:

> When you dance and get hot, you will see a rope hanging from the sky. As you stretch and become taller, you can climb this rope... If you dance and see this rope, you don't have to grab or touch it. You just float away with that rope. That line just takes you. You become so light that you simply fly away... I feel like the wind when this happens... The rope takes you to the house where the ancestors live... They are alive in the sky. You go up and communicate with them and then you dance with them. When they are through with you, they say, "Look at that fire down there." You see the fire where your people are dancing. Then they send you back (Keeney 1999:61-62).

The thread itself is identified with supernatural energy, as an old San healer, Xixae Dxao, says:

> When you dance, it comes down to you. When it gets into you, you can see it as a string of light. The light directs you in the dance. It can take you to another person who needs healing or it can carry you to another village or to the sky. This light is *!num* [*n/om*]. It doesn't have a name other than *!num* (Keeney 1999:115; my parenthesis).

In light of the ethnography and this new research, the elongated figure can be interpreted as a shaman, in *!aia* (represented through the elongation), holding the thread that joins the material realm to the spirit world. The emanations at the closed end of the thread are either the souls of shamans, traversing to and from the spirit realm, or as a healer describes, the exploding of *n/om* onto shamans and hence sending them into *!aia*:

> During the dance I usually see a light that comes from the people around me. This light goes straight up into the sky. I begin to see this light when I start healing during the dance... When the light finally comes... it knocks me out. I fall down and must be brought back to consciousness by others (Keeney 1999:47).

What then can the suggested interpretation of the spherical image be? It is clearly associated with images relating to supernatural energy and the spirit realm, for the line or 'thread' joins with it. Furthermore the line and the spherical object are painted in the same pigments, and thus were conceived of as connected by the artist. I, therefore offer two conceptually similar explanations for the image. When describing the spirit world, the shaman Motaope Saboabue, whom I quoted above, described how he interacted with the ancestor spirits:

> ...and you dance with them. When they are through with you, they say, "Look at the fire down there." *You see the fire where your people are dancing* (Keeney 1999:62; my italics)

The spherical object may be a bird's eye view representation of a trance dance from the spirit world in the sky. The two outer concentric rings are the furrows caused by dancing men. The solid red circle is the fire. The immediate concentric circle is the portrayal of the place where women sit, when clapping and singing around the fire. The numerous little dots located

within the concentric circles represent the various groups of people at the dance. The two parallel lines depict the 'thread' or "incandescent filament" (Lewis-Williams *et al*, in press) of *n/om* that has allowed the shamans to travel from the trance dance 'up', or in terms of the panel down, to the spirit world. The numerous figures under the line probably represent the denizens of the spirit realm and other shamans on out-of-body travel. Distinguishing between the shamans and spirit entities in rock art images is a problem for interpretation (Lewis-Williams 1998:92-93); but the distinction may not have been made by the San painters, for shamans on extra-corporeal journeys in the spirit realm are, in a sense, spirits.

(It should be noted that San art is not guided by Western pictorial conventions. Therefore, because a particular San image is painted as being higher in comparison to other paintings in the panel, does not necessarily imply that the image is in fact higher in the mind of the San artist.)

The alternative explanation for the spherical image is a reversal of the proposal just suggested: it is a graphic portrayal of the spirit realm and god's house. As plate 3 illustrates, the inside of the image is white. The San shaman Motaope Saboabue describes the great god as "white — like light", and the houses of the ancestor spirits as being like normal San houses, but in the spirit realm, while the great god's abode is "a very big house" (Keeney 1999:62). It is possible then in view of these descriptions that the solid red circle is the great god's house, while all the smaller dots are the dwellings of the spirits. The figures under the 'thread' are shamans dancing.

The Cradock rock paintings portray in various image postures and motifs, the dynamic interaction of supernatural energy especially with regard to the spirit entities and the supernatural realm. The paintings also contain subtle information about the interaction with the Bantu-speaking farmers It has been demonstrated that ritual intensification often proceeded from an increase in social and economic stress (Guenther 1975/76:50-52; Walker 1994:119-130). Therefore it is reasonable to infer that the major corpus of the site's rock art was done as the area became contested and social tensions and competition for natural resources began to increase in the 14th century AD (Van der Ryst 1998). This can be demonstrated with reference to

the paintings themselves. As I have illustrated, the paintings predominately depict experiences and beliefs connected to the trance dance. The primary function of the dance is that of healing and revitalization (Guenther 1975/76) and the active manipulation of the cosmological order by shamans to achieve a state of coolness. The excavated material confirms this explanation for the rock art: increasing densities of colouring materials is found in levels dating to after the establishment of agro-pastoralism in the area (Van der Ryst 1998:54).

Although the paintings contain no direct images of interaction, such as cattle, this does not negate the possibility of direct social exchange between the San and agro-pastoralists. For example, in the Caledon River Valley area, San painters only began to depict farmer associated objects and animals in the 18th century AD, even though Bantu-speakers had been present in the area since the 15th century AD and excavated material remains indicate that there was interaction (Loubser & Laurens 1994:116). This is not surprising since rock art is "specifically focused on the observations and experiences of San religious specialists in their negotiations with the other world" (Hall & Smith, in press). This is especially true for the paintings of Cradock. The high number of therianthropic figures and spirit creatures represented suggests to me, that there is some implicit evidence of ritual service and exchange. As I have discussed in the last chapter, the farmer perception of the San was that of ambivalence. The San shamans could have manipulated this perception by painting more images of the spirit realm in order to enhance their status as ritual specialists with unique abilities, knowing that the Bantu-speaking farmers (particularly diviners) would see the art (Dowson 1998:85). But there are too many idiosyncratic images at Cradock to indicate the presence of a 'pre-eminent' shaman (Dowson 1994:339). The archaeological remains indicate that the traditional hunting and gathering lifestyle was maintained for some time after initial contact (Van der Ryst 1998:50) and therefore individual social prestige was not the primary motivating factor for interaction. Rather, I suggest, the need for group autonomy and cohesion was the impetus for both the ritual intensification and ritual service.

Third Stage

The handprints as well as the numerous examples of smudges, which indicate touching, form what I term the third stage of site usage. As I have stated, bodily fluids contain supernatural energy. The pigments used to paint were mixed from several substances, one of which was animal blood. Therefore the paint was infused with supernatural energy from its blood component (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989:36; Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1990:14). "Painted sites were thus storehouses of the potency [supernatural energy] that made contact with the spirit world possible" (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989:36). By touching the paintings, the supernatural energy contained within them was transferred to the person (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1990:14-15).

Touching and finger smears have been associated with an increase in ritualization of San belief due to assimilation into Bantu-speakers society (Prins 1994:189). Shamanistic concepts are still present, for example the belief in the rock face as a veil, but the idiosyncratic trance experiences are suppressed in exchange for more institutionalized practices. Prins' (1990, 1994:188) informant was a first generation San descendent, and she showed a lack of shamanistic trance knowledge and experience. Thus assimilation into a Bantu-speaking society could be a rapid process. With this in mind, it is not hard to conjecture that the touching of images and the painted handprints were done by a group of Vaalpense.

The touching of certain images is particularly enlightening. In Figure 8 the two figures underneath the emanations at the closed end of the 'thread', have been touched so extensively that they have all, but completely faded. The placement of these figures under the 'exploding' part of the 'thread' combined with the extensive touching indicates that these figures were conceptually connected to an extreme locality of supernatural energy.

The rain animal (Figure 7) is another image that has been touched considerably. Through touching the rain animal, the extreme supernatural energy contained within the creature would have been transferred to the

person. Perhaps there was also a conceptual connection between the touching of the rain animal image and the catching of a rain creature:

> As spirit animals are attracted in the Kalahari [by the trance dances], so the southern shaman-artists attracted spirit animals through the wall of the rock shelter and then caused them to be manifest for all to see (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1990:14).

The depiction of the rain animal perhaps was perceived as being an actual rain creature or essence of one. Thus by touching and manipulating the depiction, the rain animal could be controlled.

Fourth Stage

In the fourth stage of site usage, the rituals have become increasingly formalized and though the paintings and rock face are acknowledged, they are not actively utilized in the rituals. The rainmaking ceremonies of the Massele, a group of Vaalpense, at Cradock illustrate this fourth stage:

> It is not surprising that the heathen inhabitants of this area explained the origin of the paintings with the words "ki Modimo" — God made them. And so this wonderful place in the high, lonely mountains was once a place of worship for them. In time of extraordinary need, when it did not rain, when the locusts did not leave, or when invading enemies left them no peace, and when all magic failed, the chief called the men of his tribe together and told them: my powers are at an end, let us go [to] the gods of the mountain and pray there. Then the whole tribe, also women and children, left at daybreak to pray before the paintings. They fasted the whole day. Big and small prostrated themselves before the paintings; while lying on their left sides, they clapped their hands and called out without stopping: "Lord see us, Father we have come. See us, give us rain, we are dying, we are your children, help us, etc." After pleading like this for the whole day, they left the place in the evening and went home (Schlömann 1886).

In this ritual, the Massele might have experienced a trance state induced by the awkward position, the repetitive and constant clapping and the chanting, and the lack of food and water. Yet there is no mention of a trance state or

any of the associated physical symptoms nor is there evidence in this statement of San healing practices. The rainmaking practice is emphasized by a formal and ordered routine and there is very little spontaneity or idiosyncrasy in the ritual use of the shelter. There is little doubt that the Massele were of San origin for three reasons. First, they are described as already living in the area before the arrival of the farmers. Secondly, they are Vaalpense, indicating mixed ancestry. Thirdly they address their rainmaking prayers to the paintings by prostrating themselves before the images. Some of the painted images are symbolically linked to rain, and therefore their ritual suggests continuity in belief.

The Massele, as a people, perhaps originated from a group of prominent San rainmakers. This group of rainmakers manipulated the Bantu-speakers' ambivalent perception of the San. They brokered their rain-making powers in exchange for relative autonomy and acceptance from the farmers. Over time the interaction with the neighboring Northern Ndebele and Sotho-Tswana societies had an impact upon the beliefs of this San group. The rain making practices became ever more institutionalized and acceptable to the Bantu-speaking clients, until it reached the present ritual form described above.

N!ao and the Rock Art at Cradock

As I have illustrated above, the beliefs and practices concerning the shelter have become increasingly formalized and ritualized. However, the concept of the shelter as a powerful place has remained the same, and in all the rituals the paintings were in some way acknowledged as being connected to this power or supernatural energy. There is constant interaction with this supernatural energy and the use of it to affect the environment and weather. In a sense, the San core concepts of supernatural energies have been retained.

The paintings at Cradock express the dynamic interaction of supernatural energies, *n!ao* as I have defined it, on four levels. First, the images themselves are immediately illustrating *n!ao*: the interaction of supernatural energy between living creatures and the environment. There are numerous

depictions of human images in various states of energy activation and transformation, interacting with one another and the surrounding creatures. The luminous *n/om* 'thread' is also a symbol for the interaction that takes place between the spirit realm and the material world.

Second, there is the utilization of the site as a resource for supernatural energy: there is interaction between the energy contained in the paintings and the people touching the painting.

Third, the paintings have their origins in the shamans experiences in the spirit world to heal and create rain, as illustrated by the rain animal, and in order to undertake these tasks supernatural energy would have had to be actively exchanged. The San shamans would have to broker with the environment (including the elements, animals and plants), the spirit realm (spirits, rain-animals and the gods) as well as their own people in order to maintain the desired state of coolness (health in the people and cool soft rains for the land).

Fourth, the shamans would also have to broker political power with the neighboring Bantu-speaking farmers so that, in exchange for spiritual power in the form of rain, the farmers would give the San relative autonomy, food and protection. Good *n!ao* therefore takes on more than just spiritual and physical connotations of maintaining harmony, but also becomes a metaphor (and perhaps ideology) for political harmony as well.

Conclusion: The Power Brokers

Four themes have been developed and explored in this thesis: supernatural energies, spiritual interaction, social interaction and metaphorical states of well being. These themes, or threads, were then drawn together into the rich visual and historical tapestry that is Cradock.

The first theme is that of supernatural energies. In my discussion of supernatural energies, I suggested that the supernatural energy of *n!ao* may be reformulated as the 'dynamic interaction of a living creature's *n/om* with the *n/om* of other creatures and the surrounding environment'. This

reformulation is not a mutually exclusive explanation. The analysis of *n!ao* in terms of gender relations and metaphors (Biesele 1993; Stevenson 1995) is a case in point . Gender theorists, such as Biesele, have used the concept of *n!ao* as a basis for understanding symbolic interaction between the sexes.

The second and third themes, namely spiritual and social interaction, are reflected in the paintings and usage of Cradock. The images at Cradock show that it was perceived as being a powerful place. The ethnographic and historical sources suggest that this perception continued for an appreciable length of time. By gaining access into the spirit realm through Cradock, the San shamans may also have gained access into Bantu-speaking society.

The fourth theme developed in this thesis was the San metaphoric system concerning states of being. The metaphors of 'coolness', 'boiling', 'hot' and 'cold', to name a few, pervade San cosmology perhaps as much as the concept of supernatural energy. In the past, a structuralist approach has been used to analyze these metaphors of being into states of opposition. I believe that this approach does not reflect the true nature of this metaphorical system; therefore I suggest an alternative model, the 'Golden Mean', as perhaps being more suited in analyzing San rituals and beliefs. Based on the ethnography, it appears that the San do not think in terms of oppositions and the mediation of these opposites. Rather the notion of extremes and the relative balancing of these extremes to maintain an ideal state of being, as exemplified by cool soft rains or warm winds, seem more applicable to San thought. For as Katz states,

> In fact, establishing a more general sense of balance throughout the community takes precedence over any specific cure. Since the balance is dynamic, it needs continual attention; it is not always achieved. This balance is what allows the [San] camp to stay together, helping maintain the reciprocating network which is so important to hunting-gathering life. The establishment of that dynamic balance is symbolized in the specifics of the healing process (Katz 1982:297; my parenthesis).

Indeed it is this notion of balance that governs the use and interaction of supernatural energies and provides the impetus for San rituals. Good *n!ao*, I suggest, is one such manifestation of this notion. Other manifestations may

be found in the rituals that guided interaction with the spirit realm. The San ritual intensification noted during periods of social interaction perhaps also reflect this striving for a balance between extreme states. Certainly rock art, as an expression of San beliefs and cosmology, mirrors the continual attention needed to maintain this balance.

In light of this, the 'power' which a shaman brokers is not supernatural energy — rather it is the ability of maintaining a state of well being, a state of 'coolness'.

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