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CAVE HOUSES IN LESOTHO AND SOUTH AFRICA

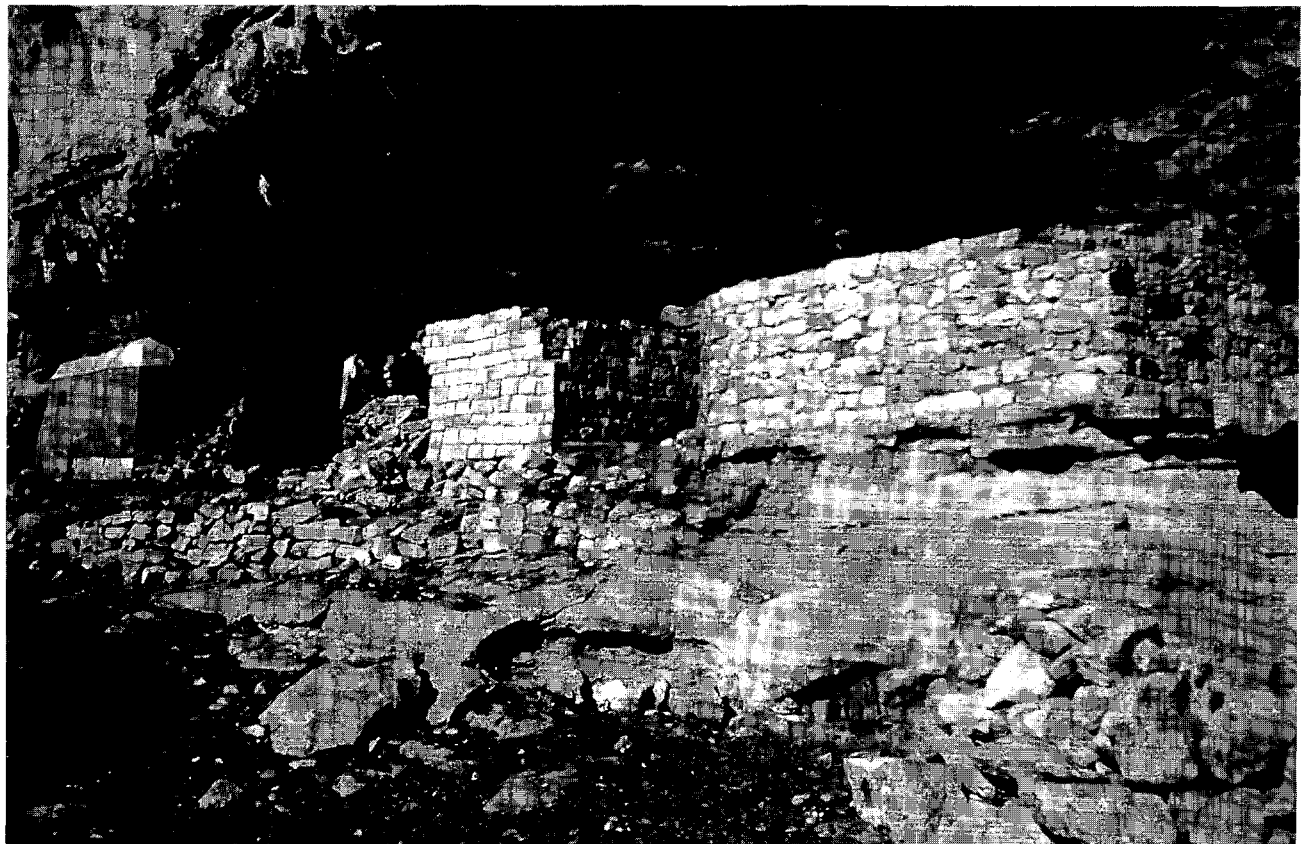
Pieter Jolly

The fact that for thousands of years San hunter-gatherers made their homes in rock shelters and caves in South Africa and Lesotho is well known to many people presently living in these countries. What is perhaps less well known is that some black people as well as Europeans built huts or houses in caves in South Africa and Lesotho. Caves were commonly occupied for longer or shorter periods by pioneer Sotho who moved southwards into present-day South Africa, and a few caves in Lesotho are still inhabited today. While travelling in Lesotho and the Drakensberg I came across a number of these cave dwellings or their remains.

One of the most interesting of these sites is at Ntlo-Kholo in Lesotho, near Moshoeshoe's mountain stronghold, Thaba Bosiu. This cave was formed when wind and rain excavated a narrow ledge out of the soft red beds underlying the sandstone of the rock face to form a very long continuous rock shelter of varying depth (see Walton 1951). It is not known when Ntlo-Kholo was first used by people as a shelter, but when Walton visited the site he found many stone tools of the

Wilton tradition there indicating that it had been used as a shelter over a long period of time.

The first black farmers to occupy the caves at Ntlo-Kholo were the Phetla (an Nguni, later Sotho, group) under Matelile. San were still living there when Matelile arrived with his people, and he married one of them. His wife refused to leave the cave, however, despite the fact that some of her fellow San had already gone to live with the



Ruins of Sotho cave huts at Ntlo-Kholo

Phetla in huts close by. She said she had been born and raised in the cave and was used to living there. According to one version of a Sotho tradition, Matelile, who was clearly something of a diplomat, suggested a compromise whereby he would build a number of huts within the cave itself. His wife agreed to this and from that time the cave was known as Ntlo-Kholo, or "Great Hut", since it was occupied by the chief wife.

After the Phetla left the area the cave huts were occupied by other Sotho groups. When I visited Ntlo-Kholo, I was told by an informant, Tseliso Ramakhula, that cannibals had lived there during the Difaqane. Quite a number of people who were on the verge of starvation at this time resorted to cannibalism, and Moshoeshoe's grandfather, Peete, was captured and eaten by cannibals when the great Sotho chief moved to Thaba Bosiu in 1824. There is a Sotho tradition, perhaps apocryphal but quite in accord with Moshoeshoe's statesman-like character, that when the cannibals at Ntlo-Kholo were attacked and captured by Sotho warriors they were taken to Thaba Bosiu to be put to death, but Moshoeshoe refused to do this, saying: "Rather than destroy the grave of my grandfather, I will strengthen it". After slaughtering an ox, he made the cannibals lie on their backs and sprinkled the entrails of the beast on their stomachs, instead of on the graves of his ancestors as was the custom when one wanted to sacrifice to them. In this way he is said to have not



Entrance to one of the cave huts at Ha Kome

only showed respect for his ancestor but also reformed the cannibals. It is still possible to see the remains of a number of the huts built in Ntlo-Kholo, and some later huts in the cave were still occupied by a traditional healer when I visited the site. She performs a variety of rites which combine Christian and traditional elements of worship for the people who come to seek her out.



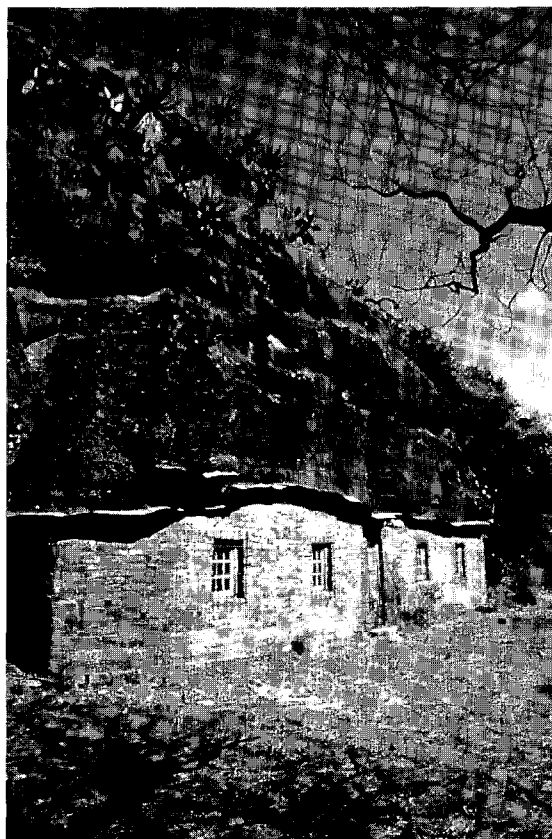
Hut built in the lee of a rock face at Masoeling

The ruins of huts built into a rock face can also be seen at the village of Masoeling, and not far from Ntlo-Kholo, at Ha Kome, there are a number of families occupying huts built in a large cave. These huts are beautifully crafted and have a flowing, moulded appearance. A long low stone wall adjacent to the huts and parallel to the cave wall forms a convenient enclosure for the occupants' cattle.

According to an informant at Ha Kome, houses were first built in the cave a long time ago and there are old people in the adjacent village who were born in the cave huts. They are now occupied by people who do not have houses or are waiting to build one. One of the occupants had been living there for about 25 years. It was Sunday when I visited and it was both interesting and strange to see a woman inside one of the huts, situated in this ancient place of shelter, ironing clothes for her children and herself before leaving for church. When they stepped out of the cave hut, dressed in spotless white, I had a vision of their San predecessors looking on in amazement at the scene!

One of the best known cave houses in Lesotho was built at Masitise and occupied by the Paris Evangelical Society missionary, Reverend Frédéric Ellenberger. Ellenberger was ministering to the Sotho at Maphutseng in 1865, when the second war between the Sotho and the Free State (the Seqiti War) broke out. Many of his congregation fled south of the Orange River to the territory of the Phuthi chief, Moorosi. Moorosi invited Ellenberger to settle amongst his people and he set up a mission at Masitise in the Quthing district in the following year. Since funds were scarce, he decided to convert a cave in the area into a house for himself and his family rather than incur the cost of building a freestanding structure. The cave was partly dug out and a wall built to enclose it, complete with windows and doors. It was only intended to be a temporary shelter but it served as the Ellenbergers' home until 1883 when a proper manse was built.

The Masitise Cave House was declared a national monument in 1934 and a small museum was established there. It is a remarkable structure with the whitewashed top of the shelter forming the ceiling of the house, so low in places that one can barely stand upright. In the early 1990s it contained photographs and other material related to



The cave house at Masitise



The cave house on Grant Sephton's farm, Glengyle. Warwick Frost is standing next to the entrance.

the history of the Ellenberger family and the P.E.M.S. mission, as well as a large collection of stuffed animal heads (including rhino heads and horns), a python skin, and other miscellaneous but fascinating items of historical interest.

Aside from the Masitise cave house, I visited other cave houses, or rather the ruins of cave houses, in the Drakensberg. One of these was a ruin in Zamenkomst Cave, famous for a fine panel of elands which was removed many years ago and is now on display in the South African Museum. Not far away from Zamenkomst is the site from which the Linton panel, also in the South African Museum, was taken. There are still some paintings on the walls of the Zamenkomst cave, and below these there are the remains of the walls of a stone house.

The present owner of Zamenkomst, Ronnie Moore, told me that the farm was given its name, which means "coming together", because East Griqualand farmers congregated in the area when they moved their livestock seasonally, both to take advantage of the spring grazing and to avoid certain animal diseases prevalent at that time of the year. He thought that a family called Coetzee had built a house in the cave and that they had lived there from about 1880 until the early 1900s. The farm Grotto in the same area as Zamenkomst has ten caves and in earlier years was occupied periodically by farmers who moved from Barkly East into the Maclear district to take advantage of the spring grazing there. As a result, it became known to the farmers as "Kamer-tien" ("Room-ten").

Close to Moshesh's Ford, in the Barkly East area, there is a cave which was occupied by Moorosi, apparently at the time of the Difaqane. Rob

Turnbull of the farm Holderness informed me that his grandmother had pointed out this cave to him and told him its name - "Mooi Rosie's Cave". In fact, Rob Turnbull's grandmother and grandfather had themselves lived in a cave while they were building their house on the farm on which they had settled, and other people were said to have occupied this cave for several years before them.

Other early European farmers in the foothills of the Drakensberg and adjacent mountains also built houses in caves while they were establishing themselves. Warwick Frost, of the farm Balloch in the Barkly East district, took me to see a cave house on the farm, Glengyle, in the same area. This house, on Grant Sephton's farm, was built and lived in by Warwick Frost's great grandfather, John William Sephton, and his family. Most of the stone walls of the house, including an interior wall, are still standing, and part of the cave wall, which forms the back wall of the house, is even adorned with a few very faded paintings – the creations of the original hunter-gatherer

inhabitants of the cave. When the house was first built they may have been clearer, in which case they would have formed a remarkable backdrop to the decor of the Sephtons' new home. Next to the house, as at Ha Kome, a cattle kraal was built by enclosing the remainder of the cave with a stone wall. On the cave wall above this kraal there are a number of rock paintings, some of which are finely painted and well preserved.

Only a few of the homes of the later cave-dwellers of South Africa and Lesotho have been discussed here. Doubtless there were many other caves which were occupied by Nguni, Sotho and European troglodytes and it would be interesting to know whether readers are aware of any others.

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A PAINTED FRAGMENT OF BUSHMAN HISTORY FROM QWA QWA NATIONAL PARK, SOUTH AFRICA

Sven Ouzman

Introduction

One hundred and twenty years of archaeological research in southern Africa's south eastern mountains has focused principally on linking artefacts with well-established theory in order to gain a better understanding of hunter-gatherer or 'Bushman'¹ history. Archaeological artefacts are best understood as fragments, not necessarily of a whole, but which nevertheless have the potential to represent a reality that is not confined to the physical dimensions of the artefact. This is especially true in the case of rock paintings – an artefact that seems to speak most fully of the Bushman world-understanding. Unfortunately, many rock paintings are themselves fragmentary, the victims of weathering and vandalism. In October 1996 I chanced upon a painted rock shelter in which not only the rock paintings were fragmentary, but the shelter was itself a fragment. The rock shelter is located at 28.29.20 S; 28.44.50 E in the Korfshoek section of Qwa Qwa National Park (Fig. 1)². Korfshoek is a 52,7 m long lobed, east-fac-

ing rock shelter situated in Stormberg Series Clarens Formation sandstone at an elevation of 1880 m. The site has a commanding view of the surrounding grassland, montane and *vlei* biomes that support a variety of animal and plant life. Fine-grained chalcedonies used for manufacturing stone artefacts are abundant in the nearby Klerkspruit and Perskeboomspruit. Within the shelter and in its shallow (<0,5 m), gritty and leached archaeological deposit there is a diffusion of post-Classic Wilton stone artefacts comprising cores, flakes, flake waste and thumbnail scrapers. Small, <50 mm thick shards of grit-tempered, undecorated pottery; historic and modern stone walling and rock paintings complete the site's visible archaeological signature. More visible, glaring even, is the recent and extensive rock-fall that has destroyed 5 - 6 m of Korfshoek's painted wall. Painted sandstone fragments lie shattered throughout the shelter (Fig. 2). Amazingly, one such fragment survived the rock-fall (Fig 3). This fragment measures



Figure 1. Location of Korfshoek.

670 mm x 240 mm x 360 mm and weighs 76 kg. Inspired by the rescue of the Suikerbos painted fragment (Johnson *et al.* 1960), the Korfshoek painted fragment was taken to the National Museum's Rock Art Department on 7 March 1997 and subjected to five episodes of custodial care.

Custodial care

- On an acid-free surface and under ultra-violet filtered light excess carbonates, dust, mineral salts and *Sphecidae* wasp cocoons were brushed off the fragment's surface.
- The fragment's imagery was recorded on black & white, colour slide and infra-red film and by standard tracing techniques (*cf.* Loubser & Den Hoed 1991).
- Residue resistant to brushing was removed with a rolling poultice using distilled water and toluene as solvents; avoiding pigment-bearing areas.
- The fragment's fractured bedding plane was repaired with six 50 mm nitro-cellulose adhesive patches.
- The fragment has been placed in a stable storage environment.

The Korfshoek fragment

Korfshoek presents the challenge of linking together fragments literal and conceptual. This process of linking begins with the description and sequencing of the fragment's imagery. The process then continues with a consideration of the paintings remaining in the Korfshoek shelter and beyond, which helps us to understand the material and the chronological contexts of the Korfshoek fragment.

Material context

Tracing under optimal conditions has resulted in a high quality visual recording of the fragment's imagery - compare for example, Figures 3 & 4. The fragment bears at least two painting episodes that I distinguish according to the visual appearance of the pigment and the sequence of superpositioning.

First, the basal painting episode consists of up to seven motifs painted in 'muted' hues. The majority of a >455 mm long beautifully shaded recumbent red and white bull eland dominates the fragment and fine detail such as a large dewlap, ear, hocks, hooves, a delicate penis sheath and the remnants of a red forelock is visible. Infra-red photography suggests that the double neck line may be part of an earlier painted eland. Below the fragment's upper edge is a partial red ?female figure bearing a stick-like object and two black human figures in the 'mythic woman' posture. Up to three painted legs are also visible.

The fragment's second painted episode consists of 25 motifs painted in 'bright', powdery pigment. A bichrome eland, also with a red penis sheath and forelock, is painted on top of the recumbent eland's dewlap. Ten ochre and eleven red daubs



Figure 2. General view of Korfshoek. Solid circles mark the fragment's probable original position in the wall and its subsequent position on the shelter floor.

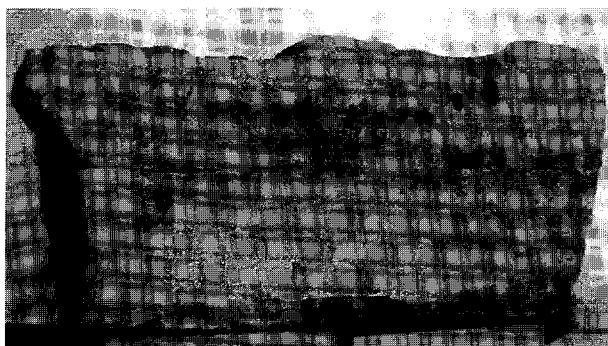


Figure 3. Photograph of the Korfshoek fragment's faded imagery.

may also belong to this episode as four of the ochre daubs are superimposed on top of the recumbent eland's dewlap. Three running quadrupeds are painted on top of the recumbent eland's body. The body shape of these three quadrupeds suggests caprines, probably goats. A 'muted' red stick-bearing human figure painted on top of the recumbent eland's nuchal hump is a cautionary reminder of the 'hidden' palimpsests that exist in even the simplest painted sequences.

Once the fragment's imagery has been described and sequenced, it is possible to compare and contrast this imagery with that remaining in the Korfshoek shelter. Diffusely placed along the surviving 46 m of shelter wall are at least 127 identifiable painted motifs that have accumulated in at least three episodes.

Korfshoek's first painting episode comprises at least 74 well-preserved 'muted' motifs including 25 eland; three red ?cattle; three red upside-down rhebuck and one red upside-down human figure; one ungainly red ?eland; one red human figure in the 'mythic woman' posture; one red and black attenuated human figure; a cluster of 19 red 'v' and lozenge-shaped motifs and four red discs. There is a constellation of 36 unidentifiable motifs.

Korfshoek's second painting episode consists of at least 44 'bright' motifs. At least five 'bright' motifs are superimposed on top of 'muted' paintings. Contained within this episode are at least twelve eland; three red felines trailing three pug marks; one red running human figure with arrows in a bandeau and whose arm transforms into an antelope head; eight red canids and one human figure in the 'mythic woman' posture.

Korfshoek's third painting episode is enigmatic –

five horses drawn in charcoal and four indistinct, off-white meandering motifs executed in a thick, coarse slurry. The four meandering motifs are associated with finger paintings of horses, human figures and geometric imagery encountered in shelters in the region.

Chronological context

The age of the Korfshoek paintings is difficult to determine though the three ?cattle painted in the shelter and the three caprines painted on the fragment hint at a landscape in which hunter-gatherers had knowledge of agriculturists. In addition, the use of 'bright', powdery pigment which is locally abundant, instead of the 'muted', fine-grained pigment obtained from Lesotho's basaltic Drakensberg Formation suggests hunter-gatherer mobility was compromised, perhaps by agriculturists inhabiting and owning parts of the landscape. Support for this hypothesis is provided by the subject matter of the 'bright' paintings - cattle, horses, shields and spears - that are part of a broader regional tradition of 'contact' rock paintings. Hunter-gatherer/agriculturist contiguity in the Korfshoek area is not more than 500 years old and some of the Korfshoek imagery relates to this period.

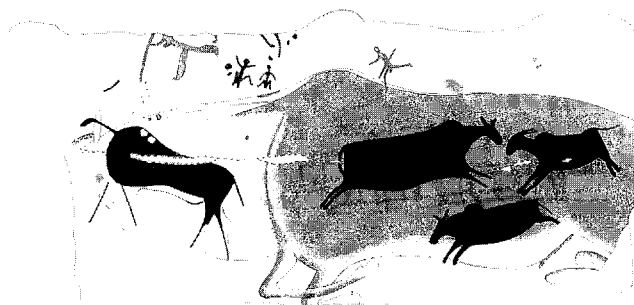


Figure 4. Redrawing of the Korfshoek fragment's faded imagery. Fine stipple = 'muted' red; coarse stipple = black; white = white; black = 'bright' red; dashed line = bedding plane and solid line = fragment's outline. Scale bar 30 mm.

Conclusion

The key to understanding the Korfshoek fragment's imagery is to adequately describe and sequence it; to link it with the imagery remaining in the Korfshoek shelter and then to link the Korfshoek imagery with other images encountered in the area. The particularistic imagery encountered at Korfshoek resonates with the idiosyncratic

character of the rock paintings in the area. Similarly, the recumbent eland (Fig. 4) and a recumbent human figure (Fig. 5) painted in a shelter 1 km to the south-east of Korfshoek, share a known but uncommon posture and have similar painted contexts. These two images may be related and they may even be part of the same painted panel though they inhabit different sites.



Figure 5. Redrawing of a 'wounded' game shaman, Qwa Qwa National Park. Black = 'muted' red; stipple = black; white = white; and dashed line = flaking. Scale bar 30 mm.

But the most challenging linkage is one that links the artefact of the past with the imagination of the present. An attempt at such a linkage will be made when the Korfshoek fragment is installed at Oliewenhuis Art Museum, Bloemfontein, from July 1998 to July 1999. Thereafter the fragment will be installed near its home at the Qwa Qwa National Park Interpretive Centre. In these installations the Korfshoek fragment will become an apt metaphor for the imperfectly understood hunter-gatherer history it represents. Though we cannot know everything about this painted fragment, this space of 'unknowing' is not a vacuum into which any interpretation may be placed. Rather, it is a benevolently structured space that both promotes informed interpretation and provides the freedom to imaginatively and seamlessly link past and present.

Acknowledgements

I thank David Brace, David Maboea, Daniel Nhlapo and Emile Smidt for their brawn, Sharon Crampton for enabling the Oliewenhuis installation; Janette Deacon for the NMC removal permit; and James Brink, Paul den Hoed and Jannie Loubser for their comments.

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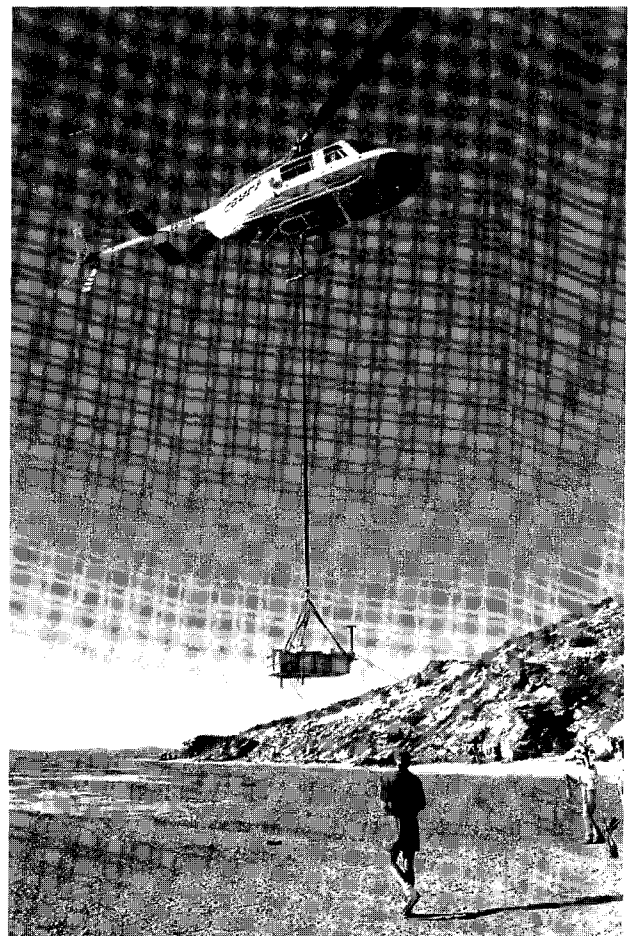
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email: rockart@nasmus.co.za

Notes:

1. I reject any negative connotations that the term 'Bushman' may have.
2. Access to the Korfshoek painted rock shelter is by the Qwa Qwa National Park permit only.



Conserving "Eve's Footprints": The 117 000 year old Langebaan Lagoon fossil footprints, discovered by geologist Dr Dave Roberts in 1995, were stabilised and hoisted to safety in June. The find captured unprecedented public and media attention following its announcement in August last year - so much so that they were under threat of being damaged. A sandstone block with the footprints was carefully cut and taken out under a permit from the National Monuments Council. Sponsored by *National Geographic*, the project cost some R120 000. The footprints are to be stored at the South African Museum in Cape Town until a suitable display facility has been built at the West Coast National Park.

Photo by courtesy of *The Cape Argus*.

Jinmium redated...

Spectacular early dates for engraved cupules and artefacts at Jinmium, a rock shelter in Australia's Northern Territory, were from the outset "controversial and...caused a media and archaeological frenzy" (Ouzman *et al.* *The Digging Stick* 14(3) Nov 1997). Thermoluminescence (TL) dating had suggested ages of 50-75 thousand years (kyr) for the engravings and 116-176 kyr for the lower-most artefact-bearing layer at the site. These early dates worried the research team, Richard Fullagar told *Science* last year, but they published the results anyway.

High profile dating controversies can spur development and refinement of the methods in question - a point made concerning luminescence dating when serious doubts over the Jinmium dates crescendoed last year (Gibbons 1997).

Dating expert Richard "Bert" Roberts collected fresh sediment samples from Jinmium and applied a newer form of luminescence dating known as OSL (optically stimulated luminescence). OSL can be used to tease readings from tiny samples - even single grains of sediment - as opposed to the thousands of grains usually needed for the TL signal. TL and OSL provide an estimate of the time since minerals such as quartz were last exposed to heat or sunlight (the basis for the

technique is explained in *The Digging Stick* 14(3) Nov 1997). One potential problem is the weathering of buried bedrock or rubble, releasing grains into the deposit that had not been exposed to sunlight or heat since the time of rock formation. Presence of such grains in multiple-grain TL analysis would give falsely old ages, as would grains which had been exposed to insufficient sunlight before being buried. The single-grain OSL technique now applied by Roberts *et al.* could detect insufficiently bleached grains and exclude them from the age calculations.

The results, reported by Roberts *et al.* in *Nature*, in May this year, show that the archaeological deposit at Jinmium is less than 10 000 years old. This finding is in agreement with the late-Holocene ages obtained for the upper two thirds of the deposit by way of radiocarbon dating, and the lack of stratigraphic evidence for long breaks in sedimentation. The authors write that "the oldest (luminescence-based) ages for human colonization of Australia remain those of 50-60 kyr from Malakunanja II and Nauwalabila I. These sites are currently under investigation using single-grain optical dating methods to test evidence that the sediments were bleached sufficiently before burial" (Roberts *et al.* 1998:362).

* Roberts, R., Bird, M., Olley, J., Galbraith, R., Lawson, E., Laslett, G., Yoshida, H., Jones, R., Fullagar, R., Jacobsen, G. & Hua, Q. 1998. Optical and radiocarbon dating at Jinmium rock shelter in northern Australia. *Nature* 393:358-352; Gibbons, A. 1997. Doubts over spectacular dates. *Science* 278:220-222. See also Ouzman, S., Taçon, P., Fullagar, R. & Mulvaney, K. 1997. The world's oldest rock art? Cupule engravings from the top end of Australia. *The Digging Stick* 14(3):4-7.

One of several rock-surface dating techniques developed by Ron Dorn during the past two decades is being questioned, most recently over the dating of rock engravings in sandstone cliffs in the Arizona Desert, USA.* The theory behind the method is that microscopic quantities of carbon-rich organic material - such as remains of plants and bacteria growing on the rock surface - become trapped beneath a thin layer of natural rock varnish. Scraped from beneath the varnish and extracted with acid, samples containing small but measurable quantities of radioactive C¹⁴ are dated by means of accelerator mass spectrometry (AMS). When the sample comes from beneath the varnish veneered across a rock engraving - a class of archaeological phenomena notoriously difficult to date - this method should provide a minimum age for the art. Attempts by independent researchers to replicate Dorn's

...and mounting doubts over rock-surface dating

results, however, revealed serious problems with the samples he processed. The samples have been found to contain granules of coal and charcoal of widely differing age, rendering any AMS results meaningless. More mysteriously, new samples collected from Dorn's original site did not contain the granules. Although Dorn has lately acknowledged "fatal flaws" in his method, some researchers are hinting at possible manipulation of samples. Dorn, with support from other researchers, dismisses the charge as "utterly false". Whatever the case, there are problems with the technique and this casts doubt on dates that have been published in more than 20 papers. These include age estimates of more than 15 000 years for rock art in southwestern USA, and in turn have implications for debates on the early peopling of the Americas.

* Beck, W., Donahue, D.J., Jull, A.J.áT., Burr, G., Broecker, W.S., Bonani, G., Hajdas, I. & Malotki, E. 1998. Ambiguities in direct dating of rock surfaces using radiocarbon measurements. Reply by Dorn, R.I. *Science* 280:2132-2139; Malakof, D. 1998. Carbon dating: rock dates thrown into doubt, researcher under fire. *Science* 280:2041-2042.

EXTINCT SOUTH AFRICAN KHOISAN LANGUAGES ON CD

In three centuries almost all South Africa's Khoisan languages have become extinct. They succumbed rapidly to processes of linguistic attrition which accompanied the destruction of Khoekhoe and San societies. With the exception of Nama, the sounds of these ancient and once widely spoken click languages are almost entirely silenced, their vestiges surviving mainly in mute manuscripts and meagre linguistic descriptions.

A unique archival source does exist, however, in the form of 75 rpm vinyl records at the Department of Linguistics, University of the Witwatersrand, which preserve examples of speech from the two major South African Khoisan language families, Khoekhoe and !Kwi (San). Most of the recordings were made at the time of the 1936 Empire Exhibition in Johannesburg, while a ||Xegwi recording was made some 18 years later.

This precious part of South Africa's neglected linguistic heritage - the intangible sounds of Khoisan languages no longer spoken - is now being brought to a wider audience. A selection from the records has been made by Prof Tony Traill and put together on a CD with accompanying booklet. The fifteen tracks feature monologues, stories and lullabies in ||Xegwi, Ku!khaasi, ǀKhomani and !Ora. Two of the stories are also given in unique varieties of spoken Afrikaans, with clicks and distinctive grammatical features, representing a phase of language shift, the process by which Khoisan languages have become extinct.

"||nǎu ||nǎu |uiba kao na ||nau i hamtin na gowa !khari kao ||khawa an ǀ?tama."

"Listen! Listen! Just listen for once how they speak so that you should not again be ignorant."

- Part of the !Ora message to the Third World Congress of Phonetic Sciences, 1938.

The CD and booklet are available at R150 from:

Prof A Traill,
Department of Linguistics,
University of the Witwatersrand,
P.O. Wits,
2050.



RIDDLE OF A ROCK ART STAMP

Elwyn Jenkins

On 5 March 1931 South West Africa issued a definitive series of stamps which included what was probably the first postage stamp to portray prehistoric rock art. Since those early days, hundreds of stamps on this theme have been issued by countries around the world, including many more from South West Africa (later Namibia) (Jenkins 1997). Nevertheless, interest focuses on the 1931 stamp because of its status as the first.

The stamp is the 1d indigo and scarlet (Fig. 1). Like all twelve values in the series, it is part of a se-tenant pair, one in English and one in Afrikaans. The stamps in the series are attrac-

tive, made up of glowing vignettes inside frames of contrasting colours ('chocolate and blue', 'carmine and grey', 'sage-green and red-brown', 'lake and blue-green'). The 1d has a

dark blue picture inside a red frame.



The series resembles many other issues for countries of the British Empire of the period, presenting a picture gallery of exotic scenes or objects that are typical of the country. Their official designations, listed in an old Stanley Gibbons catalogue (1949:409), sound quaint (and in one case, repugnant) today: *Gompauw*, *Cape Cross*, *Bogenfels*, *Windhoek*, *Waterberg*, *Luderitz Bay*, *Bush Scene*, *Elands*, *Zebra and Wildebeeste*, *Kaffir Huts*, *The Welwitschia Plant*, *Okuwahaken Falls*. The designer of the stamps is not recorded. The series remained the definitive issue until November 1954, while interrupted by various special issues and the war stamps. What is noticeable about the 1d stamp is just how colonial it was. The official title refers

only to the main picture, of “Cape Cross”, which depicts the stone padrao of Bartolomeu Dias and his ship - an icon of colonialism in Southern Africa. However, inside the red frame are little figures in red edged with white to set them off from the background. These are almost certainly bushman paintings. They are literally ‘marginalised’, symbolising the subordination of indigenous cultures to metropolitan European culture.

The mystery about these little figures is whether they are authentic copies of bushman paintings or stylised inventions of the artist who designed the stamps. The only catalogue reference is that of Van der Pas (1983:25), which lists the stamp as showing “fictional drawing in margin”. I have recently had inquiries about the nature of these drawings from collectors in Norway and Germany. If anyone can shed light on them, I should be glad to hear from them.

It is significant that on the next known postage stamp purporting to depict rock art, the drawing was definitely designed by a white person, whose identity is known. This was the 2/- stamp issued by Australia in 1948, which has a picture of a crocodile captioned in large letters “Aboriginal Art” (Fig. 2). It was designed by G. Sellheim and, according to the Australian speleologists Hamilton-Smith and Ellis (1984:11), “is not truly Aboriginal art, and not related to any specific cave site”.



It is understandable that the designer of a stamp has to modify the original rock art to meet the exigencies of the stamp format. However, many stamps to this day portray what is politely called ‘stylised’ rock art, which can only be said to have been inspired by the art in general, rather than based on a specific site. Nowadays this is probably because of concepts of ‘modern’ stamp design, and the general popularisation of rock art motifs as decoration for anything from pyjamas and socks to fridge magnets.

The two early stamps remind us that indigenous art is ideologically contested. It

certainly took some time before stamp issuing authorities plucked up courage to trust authentic indigenous rock art to their stamps. South West Africa's next definitive issue, in 1954, made amends by including four stamps that depict known rock art, including the 2d one featuring the 'White Lady of the Brandberg'. Rock art from the Brandberg, Erongo Mountains and Twyfelfontein has now appeared on the stamps of South West Africa and Namibia. Australia has also subsequently produced several issues depicting authentic Aboriginal rock art.

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Rock art and heritage community workshop at Wakkerstroom, Mpumalanga.

From a report by Ansie Steyn

The Wakkerstroom Heritage Association and Town Council last year invited Rocustos to visit local rock art sites, to assess tourism potential and to determine what protective measures were needed before sites could be opened for visitors. The resultant four day community workshop last September was sponsored by the Arts and Culture Trust, and a follow-up workshop is scheduled to take place in August this year. Aimed at increasing local awareness of the value of rock art and archaeological heritage among land owners, the broader community and schools, the workshop included not only visits to several nearby rock painting sites, but also programmes on rock art at schools, and a series of talks and evening slide shows.



Farmers and members of Rocustos during a site visit, Wakkerstroom, Mpumalanga.

Photo: Dr Warwick Tarboton.

Part of the privilege of studying rock art, apart from the fascination of the images themselves, is that it brings you to such wonderful places. Take Wakkerstroom, with its rounded grassy hilltops rolling into wide and generously green marshlands rich in bird life, the origins of four rivers. This is a paradise for waterbirds and grassland birds alike, set in the last of the remaining high lying grasslands.... It was an unexpected bonus to find that the updrafts were just right for para-gliding, which took Rocustos members to heights not previously attained!

The trail of vehicles which set off on site visits looked like a 4x4 safari - just as well, considering that it had rained solidly for about a week before! We thoroughly enjoyed the input by all participants, and especially



Malika Jonase, Proseletso, Ansie Steyn and Mohau Tseleli discussing rock art with Warwick Tarboton near Wakkerstroom. Photo: Dr Warwick Tarboton.

the interpretation sessions on site, where we could benefit from expertise in many fields, from natural history (Warwick and Michele Tarboton, John MacAllistar, Albert Driescher, Glen Ramke, among others); local history (Chris Smit is as good as a walking encyclopaedia on local history) and the symbolic meaning of animals (Mohau Tseleli, Proseletso and Malika Jonase from Lesotho).

Apart from site visits, there was occasion for many talks and discussions around local rock art, archaeology and San history, which took place at schools, on farms and at the community events arranged for this purpose. Discussions focused on the meaning, value, preservation needs and development potential of these cultural resources.

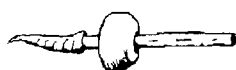
Rock art programmes were presented at both the

Wakkerstroom combined school at Esizameleni township and GuTaka High School in Wakkerstroom on the Friday morning. The enthusiasm of teachers and learners was such that the team decided to develop further education programmes, to be presented at a follow-up visit to the area in August 1998. The school visits were followed by excursions to rock art sites, arranged by Chris Smit and local land owners. A rock art slide show by Malcolm Pearse was particularly well supported.

Threats to the sites include natural weathering of rock art and the impact of increasing visitor numbers. Photographic documentation needs to be undertaken as a matter of urgency. Follow up activities should also be aimed at strengthening the significant role of teachers and learners at schools, since they are the people in a position to influence the attitudes which a community demonstrates towards its cultural wealth. Future programmes will focus on the needs of teachers towards bringing local history into the curriculum at Wakkerstroom schools.

Through the opportunities for communication, and especially during site visits, land owners and other role players were strengthened in their custodianship of the rock art and other sites.

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