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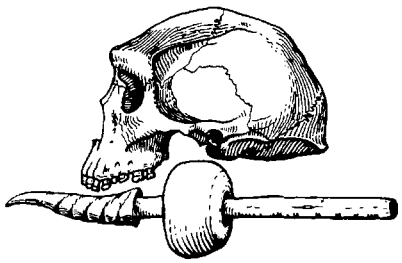


The Digging Stick

As announced in the September '85 Digging Stick, this issue is devoted entirely to rock art. For this reason articles on other subjects are being held over until September.
Arch.Soc. members are invited to please contribute articles, news and comments to the Digging Stick. Active members must have many new and interesting discoveries that they could write about. For instance, we haven't had anything on pottery yet, a subject that many readers find fascinating.
Items for the September issue should reach me by the end of July. I look forward to finding articles from new contributors, as well as from our regular authors, in my post box soon.
SHIRELY-ANN PAGER – EDITOR, PO Box 21083 Windhoek 9000 SWA.

TWO CRABS IN A BOX

J D Lewis-Williams, P den Hoed, T A Dowson and D A Whitelaw

The University of the Witwatersrand Harrismith rock art project ended in December 1985. In the course of its four years, we traced and studied a great many, but by no means all, rock art sites in the Harrismith district. Numerous fascinating and complex paintings came to light. Many of these were recognized because tracing, the recording technique we adopted, is more effective than photography in dealing with poorly preserved paintings. In some instances photography is actually misleading; in others it fails to record faded but significant details. Some of the paintings elucidated by tracing will be discussed elsewhere. Here we describe only one curious painting.

As in all other regions of southern Africa, paintings of human beings and antelope dominate the Harrismith rock art. But there are also small numbers of other creatures. The most unusual painting we came across is of two crabs. Although painted in faded black and slightly damaged, the distinctive characteristics of crabs are clearly depicted. The only freshwater genus that occurs in South Africa is Potamon. It is difficult to go beyond this, but Professor M. Kalk of the Zoology Department, University of the Witwatersrand, feels the painting's geographical location suggests P. perlatus. It would be interesting to know if equally convincing depictions of crabs have been recorded elsewhere.

Unusual rock painting of two crabs, from a site in the Harrismith district.

A significant feature of this painting is the fairly thick line almost enclosing the crabs. At first glance one is tempted to suggest it represents a pool, but it also recalls the non-realistic 'boxes' which, in the western Cape, contain elephants. Maggs and Sealy, in their paper in Volume 4 of the Goodwin Series, argue convincingly that such compositions are, like much else in San rock art, associated with the trance experience of medicine people. Other paintings too are enclosed by similar lines, and these are presently a research topic.

If the crabs are indeed related to trance performance, we can hazard an interpretation which comes from recorded beliefs about trance experience. Certain paintings, such as one from Maclear now preserved in the South African Museum, show medicine men associated with fish, and another highly unusual one associates medicine men with turtles. The explanation for such strange combinations is a San metaphor for trance experience. Trance and being underwater share a set of experiences: both involve weightlessness, affected vision, difficulty in breathing, sounds in the ears, an unusual perspective and, finally, unconsciousness. When they are describing trance experience, San medicine people therefore sometimes speak of diving into a waterhole and journeying underwater. For them being 'underwater' is as real as everyday life, but we see the concept as metaphorical. The crabs may thus symbolize trance experience or, more probably, two medicine men tranceformed by their trance experience.

Related San concepts enable us to consider a further feature of the painting: the absence of pincers on the small crab. Crabs are territorial and fight off other crabs which invade their territory. During these contests they often lose pincers, which eventually grow again (Kalk, personal communication). We may rest assured that the keenly observant San would have known this and that the omission of pincers is not fortuitous. Again, an explanation is available from San beliefs. In trance, medicine men frequently fight off threathening medicine men who attempt to shoot arrows of sickness into people. Many fight scenes between groups of human beings, between men and animals and between animals probably depict such 'supernatural' conflicts. These paintings often have non-realistic elements which place them in the realm of trance experience. The crabs may therefore represent an 'underwater' medicine man who has disarmed and vanquished an attacker.

The artists took up ideas such as 'underwater' and 'fight' and painted them by associating medicine men with aquatic creatures and by depicting various forms of conflict. One could go so far as to say that, contrary to initial impressions, San artists worked with metaphors rather than with reality. This is the most important key to understanding San rock art. Without San beliefs and concepts we can do little more than superficially describe what the paintings appear to depict.

Other San concepts also appear in the panel of which the crabs are only a small part. Indeed, this large, complex panel is one of the highlights of our Harrismith research. Unfortunately, space does not permit discussion of our full tracing.

Department of Archaeology
University of the Witwatersrand, 2001 Johannesburg

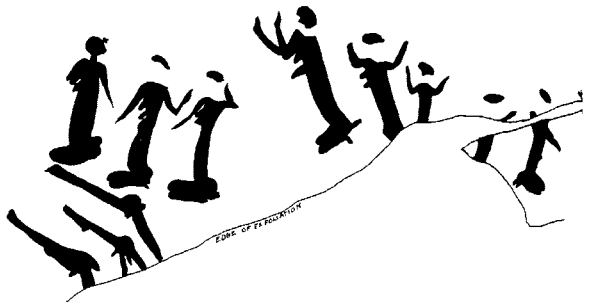
BUSHMAN PAINTINGS FROM THE WEDZA AREA OF ZIMBABWE

C E Thornycroft

J. D. Lewis-Williams's research into the beliefs and customs of the San has led to the deciphering of some of the paintings by isolating key metaphors used in them. In spite of distances in time and place, it may be that, as Lewis-Williams has said, all San in Africa "share a single cognitive system which had regional variation". This article puts forward some illustrations of San paintings from the Wedza area of Zimbabwe in support of this theory.

!Kung San still achieve a state of trance through dance, the women clapping and singing while the men shuffle round in a circle. They bend forward from the waist, often holding a stick or sticks for support.

In the South African paintings, men going into trance are often elaborately painted with rattles on their legs and sometimes white bands around the legs and torso. In Zimbabwe they are less sophisticated and often their legs are shown fused into one (Fig. 1). But there is no doubt that this fragment of art is of women clapping for the dance and the stylized figures below them are men about to go into trance.



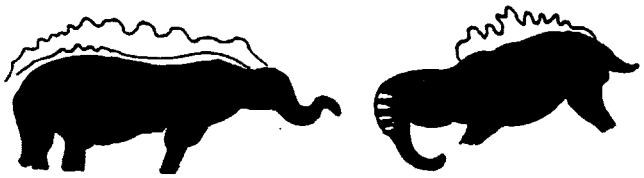
Women clapping for the men who dance.

In San metaphor heavy rain clouds are likened to animals, their legs being the rain pouring from them. Figure 2 shows a rain elephant and men going into trance to induce a downpour. The female figure in front of them may be a rain medium while a man already in trance holds onto the elephant's tail to control it. No explanation for the two-headed figure is attempted, but a similar figure occurs in a painting on Somerfield farm near Harare that is also connected with an elephant, but also with hippo and eels, both suggestive of water and perhaps the desire for rain.

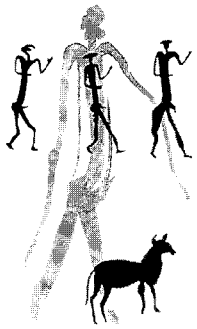
A rain elephant together with men who may be going into a trance to induce a downpour of rain.

The bird above the elephant may be thought to be out of place, but Egyptian geese are also a symbol for medicine men who are supposed, in their out-of-body trance, to be able to travel in water as well as on land. Thus the presence of the bird is a subtle addition to the rain metaphor.

Two other instances of rain elephants are shown in Fig. 3. Figure 4 demonstrates the reinforcing of an idea by superimpositioning. A man holding a stick in each hand is preparing to go into trance. Later, the zebra and the three dancing men were added to confirm the trance message and to suggest that the man is going into trance in order to control game.



Two rain elephants.



A man with a stick in each hand could be preparing to go into a trance.

Another concept from South Africa is the medicine man taking on the characteristics of a dying animal. This may be seen in Fig. 5 which illustrates the melding of the potency of the dying animal with the power of the medicine man. The man is in the trance position, his arms held out backwards and he is holding a stick. He wears the horns and ears of the wildebeest, while streams of blood from the dying animal are depicted as lines from the body of the man.

One other direct link between South African San lore and that of Zimbabwe is the legend that baboons taught the

Depiction which might illustrate the melding of the potency of the dying animal with the power of the medicine man.

One of several paintings which shows women associated with baboons.

women their songs and dances. Figure 6 is one of several paintings where a group of women is associated with baboons.

If these examples of similarity of thought between the San of South Africa and Zimbabwe come from one small area, it is certain that many more await analysis that can lend support to the theory that all San shared common beliefs and practices.

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Marondera, Zimbabwe

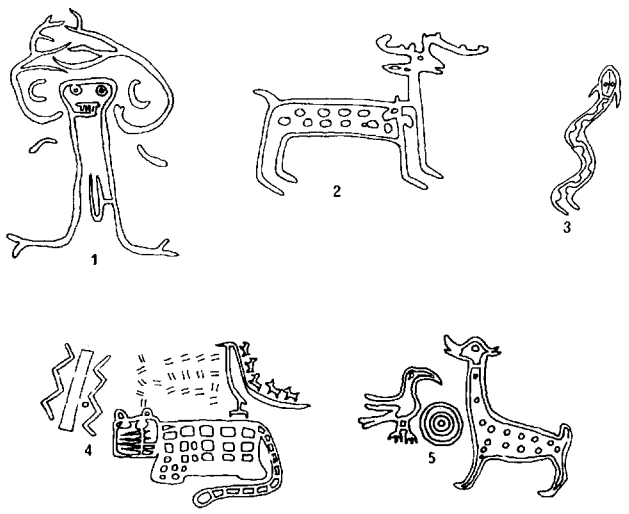
TORO: ROCK ENGRAVINGS IN THE SOUTHERN PERUVIAN DESERT

Jannie Loubser

My wife Sue and I visited the Majes River valley while we were touring through the Peruvian province of Arequipa during 1984. The melting snows of the majestic Andes mountains feed the raging rivers, such as the Majes, winding their way to the Pacific Ocean through the dry Peruvian coastal plains. The rivers eroded the desert surface into deep canyons, the bottoms of which show the only signs of life in the otherwise parched landscape. The river banks are covered in green vegetation watered by the numerous irrigation canals, both ancient and modern, that reticulate the valley bottom.

Toro Muerto is situated in a desolate valley 4 km north of the green fields straddling the river course. We would never have reached the site without the company of our experienced guide Tony Holley. It was only in 1951 that the engravings marking the massive site were first discovered and announced to the archaeological community by Dr Linares Malaga. The engravings occur on an estimated 5 000 stone blocks scattered over an area of at least 6 000 sq m. The engraved rocks are 'sillar', the soft white volcanic material originating from the past eruptions of two local volcanoes. Dr Malaga has dated the engravings by numerous painted potsherds covering the ground between the engraved rocks and concludes that different artists, from the Huari period in AD 800 to the Inca period in AD 1300, made the engravings. However, radiocarbon dates from the nearby ruins date to 80 BC and this, in conjunction with the stylistic differences existing between the engravings, may indicate a possible earlier date for some engravings.

The engravings cover a wide range of subjects including human figures, birds with talons, serpents, felines, camelids and deer. Geometric motifs include circles, squares, parallel lines, zig-zag lines, dots and cross-hatching. It is curious that the felines and deer depicted in the engravings never lived in the Peruvian coastal desert, their closest habitat being 400 km to the east. Archaeological evidence in desert settlements indicate, however, that prehistoric trade links existed between the Amazon forest, the Andes and the coast as indicated by amazingly preserved items such as blankets made from the colourful feathers of forest birds.



Some engravings at Toto Muerto, Peru.
Fig. 1: Man with arms like branches. Fig. 2: A deer. Fig. 3: Snake. Fig. 4: Geometric design, puma and a bird with small animals along its back. Fig. 5: Bird, circles and a llama.

Many of the figures and geometric designs engraved in the rocks are enigmatic. For instance, some human figures have arms like tree branches while others are 'cartwheeling' over llamas. Shamans or medicine men play a central role in the religion of all South American societies and it could be that their hallucinatory experiences are recorded in the engravings.

Department of Archaeology
University of the Witwatersrand, 2001 Johannesburg

Bert Woodhouse, popular rock art researcher, author and lecturer is the new President of ISMA.

Bert (H. C.) Woodhouse, well known and popular rock art researcher, author and lecturer, was recently elected President of The Institute for the Study of Man in Africa. This is the Institute's jubilee year so it can be expected that Bert will be planning something extra special to mark the occasion, which incidentally coincides with the Centenary year of Johannesburg.

The Institute, which has close associations with the University of the Witwatersrand, was formed on the initiative of Professor Phillip Tobias to commemorate the work of Professor Raymond Dart on the evolution of man and the subsequent development of man in Africa.

THE PUBLICATION OF HARALD PAGER'S DOCUMENTATION OF THE ROCK ART OF THE BRANDBERG

Tilman Lenssem-Erz

With the documentation of the rock paintings of the Ndedema Gorge, Natal Drakensberg, Harald Pager provided proof of his extraordinary perceptiveness and the outstanding success of his unique technique of reproduction.

That his reputation as a rock art researcher increased during the eight years that he worked in the Brandberg was no surprise to those who worked with him, providing material support and moral encouragement. His sudden death in July last year meant the end of the most extensive and intensive period of rock art field work ever to be carried out. His passing placed a heavy burden of responsibility upon his professional colleagues and friends at the University of Cologne, bequeathing them not only a scientific but a personal obligation to bring his work to fruition by the same exacting means that he would have demanded of himself.

In 1963 Professor Schwabedissen, the Director (now retired) of the University of Cologne's Institute for Pre- and Proto-history, established German archaeological research in Namibia, supported by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft. The earliest project was on rock art recording by Dr E R Scherz, followed by Dr W E Wendt on archaeology. In later years it was Dr Rudolph Kuper who took over the role of initiator and who, with Professor Schwabedissen's support, enlisted Harald Pager for the documentation of the rock art of the Brandberg.

Initially, two years was envisaged as time enough to record all the rock paintings. This estimate was based on the number of sites known in 1977. These first two years soon revealed that the Brandberg was exceedingly rich in rock art and Harald Pager's sojourn extended to eight years. During this time nearly 1 000 sites were recorded. Nearly 40 000 paintings were documented and survey plans of the sites were drawn. Even in that harsh and arid mountain, living a life of severe deprivation, nothing could restrain his enthusiasm for the work of discovering and recording more sites so that today we can say that 90% of the rock paintings in the high Brandberg were documented.

In order to ascertain how Pager's material should be treated, Dr Rudolph Kuper and Dr Peter Breunig travelled to Windhoek in July 1985 to assess how much material there was, and then went to Cape Town and Stellenbosch where all the tracings had been stored safely. They subsequently resolved to move all the material to their university in

Cologne, Germany, where it could be processed and published. This decision was welcomed by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft who granted financial support for the preparation and publication of the material at the beginning of 1986.

At present, work on the project is in progress. The necessary preliminary work of cataloguing and filing the hundreds of photographs and slides is complete. The hundreds of metres of tracings are secure in architects' hanging-file cabinets. A graphic artist is already employed (another two will be joining the team shortly) to execute in ink copies that will resemble as closely as possible Pager's pencil tracings which are of the highest standard of excellence. Later a photographer will be employed to produce photographic reproductions of the drawings to facilitate easier handling of the large metre-square sheets. A complete set of these reductions will be presented to the State Museum in Windhoek as well as to the newly established Harald Pager Rock Art Study Centre in Windhoek. The Archaeological Data Recording Centre in Cape Town will also receive a set for study by rock art researchers there.

Cologne University has also employed an Africanist/Prehistorian who, apart from participating in the publication process, will develop a system to permit a computerized analysis of the rock art collection. With due regard to the data assembled by Harald Pager (e.g the situations of the sites and the paintings within those sites), an approach will be sought where modified linguistic methods can be employed so that subjects portrayed in the paintings can be distinguished qualitatively and grouped by their peculiarities. By this means the seemingly individual subjects can also, without a larger narrative core, be fitted into a system which places them into order according to their distinctive features. This vast quantity of Brandberg material assembled for us by Harald Pager may actually be the means whereby we can reveal a definite rock art code-structure.

Towards the end of 1987, with the kind assistance of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, a scientific catalogue will be presented in which all the documentary material, i.e. all drawings and plans as well as notes and photographs, that Harald Pager made in the Amis Gorge, will be reproduced. This valley was chosen as the first for publication because it has a manageable number of sites (66), which include some of the most spectacular such as the Lufthoehle and the Riessenhoehle. Also, the excavations which Dr Peter Breunig was able to carry out during field work with Harald Pager in 1984, render some interesting data regarding the age of certain rock paintings.

Following publication of the data from the Amis Gorge, the remaining 20 valleys will be presented for publication in due course.

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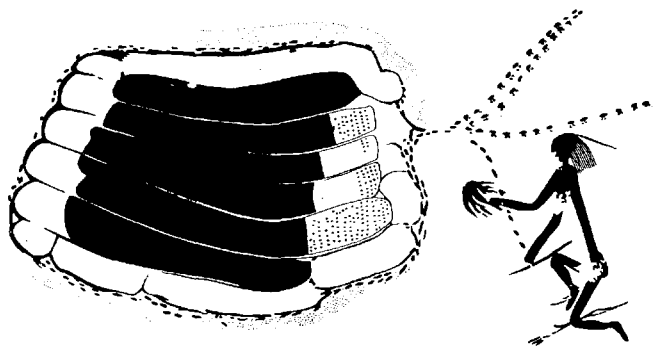
BEES, HONEY AND HONEYCOMBS IN ROCK ART: CONTINUING RESEARCH

Bert Woodhouse

The subject of toxic honey which I raised in the April 1985 issue of THE DIGGING STICK resulted in useful references from Andrew B. Smith and Alex Willcox in the September issue. This prompts me to draw attention to a recording and research project which was initiated by Dr Eva Crane, ex-director of, and now consulatant to, the International Bee Research Institute in the UK.

Dr Crane visited South Africa and Zimbabwe after attending a conference elsewhere in Africa in December 1984. She was excited by my collection of slides of rock paintings and engravings associated with bees, a small proportion of which was published in my book WHEN ANIMALS WERE PEOPLE, and we agreed that it would be worthwhile to correlate records internationally.

With her customary energy Dr Crane developed a report form and circularized it to a number of people likely to be interested and willing to cooperate. Her first progress report has just been received and it names some 200 sites of which no less than 165 are in Zimbabwe. The sterling job of going through the records at the Queen Victoria Museum in Harare has been done by our friend Peggy Izzett - for many years honorary secretary of our sister society, the Prehistory Society of Zimbabwe.



A honey hunter smoking a wild bees' nest in order to get the honey. A rock painting from the Matopo Hills, Zimbabwe. – Copy by Harald Pager.

Several 'new' sites have been brought to light in the Matopos by Peter Genge of National Museums and Monuments in Bulawayo, who writes that the dry seasons there have made walking through the bush much easier than previously.

Seven sites have been reported from India and I have reported a number from the Cape (some with the cooperation of Ludwig Abel of Port Elizabeth), three from the Orange Free State and one from the Transvaal. There must be plenty more.

If you are interested in this project, Dr Crane's address is Woodside House, Woodside Hill, Gerrads Cross, Bucks SL9 9TE, UK.

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2196 Craighall Park

PAINTS FOR ROCK PAINTINGS

G C Hoehn

The subject of paints used by the Khoisan peoples in southern Africa to produce our wealth of rock paintings is still controversial. That the basic ingredients were earth minerals seems beyond doubt but the specific materials, their processing with accompanying binders, if any, and their application to the rock faces have so far not been reproduced successfully.

Ione Rudner in her comprehensive monograph 'Khoisan pigments and paints and their relationship to rock paintings' published in the Annals of the South African Museum in 1982, has assembled all the ethno-archaeological information from historical and contemporary records on the paints said to have been utilized. In addition she noted the recorded theories and substances reported to have been used for rock paintings both in southern Africa and some other countries. She showed that no reliable information emerged and that in the records there was much plagiarism and conjecture.

Since then investigations have been undertaken in Canada and Australia but it seems that the most progress has been made in France where it was realized, not long ago, that the colouring materials present in archaeological deposits were important for the study of palaeolithic cave art. Recent investigations have centred on the importance of gathering all evidence within a deposit, the regional sources of the raw materials recovered, and their precise identification. How were these materials processed? Were any binders used? What were the methods of application to the rock face? What were the effects of superimpositions to colour changes, and crucially which types of rock surface did the palaeolithic artist find suitable to accept and preserve his paintings? Solving these problems involved numerous disciplines.

Concurrently with the preparation of Rudner's monograph, archaeologists and scientists in France were examining the colouring materials and palettes recovered from the Lascaux cave in the Dordogne and were pursuing their experiments. The detailed results and definitive findings are in two valuable papers by Arlette Leroi-Gourhan and Jacques Allain et al in the publication, apparently not well known in South Africa, 'Lascaux Inconnu' that appeared in Supplement 12 of Gallia Prehistoire published by the CNRS in Paris in 1979.

The conditions in deep caves, with varying internal climates, differ from those in rock shelters open to natural light but many of the problems relating to the decoration of all types of rock surfaces are allied. The

methods used and the results recorded in these two papers have much relevance to southern African conditions.

It is welcome news that research using electron microscopy is currently in hand in South Africa examining local pigments, the possible use of binders and their compatibility with rock surfaces. Hopefully facts will emerge to replace past conjecture.

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MEMORIAL STONE FOR HARALD PAGER IN THE BRANDBERG

During the Easter weekend a group of 20 people, family, friends and colleagues, climbed the Brandberg to install a plaque as a tribute to Harald Pager who spent eight years in that dry and hostile environment recording the rock paintings there.

The marble plaque was put in place on Easter Sunday in the Lufthoehle, situated in the Amis Valley at a height of 1 700 m. It was fixed in a natural depression low down on the rock wall just outside the painted area of the shelter. The marble slab, weighing 8 kg, was carried by each member of the party in turn as we climbed closer to the site.

The memorial service was conducted by Robert Camby, a long-time friend of Harald's, who spoke about the extraordinary contribution Harald had made to rock art research and to Namibian history. It was he who had cut and engraved the marble tablet himself.

Dr Dan Craven, who as a mountaineer got to know Harald during the first years of his sojourn in the Brandberg and who later cared for him during his last illness, spoke about Harald, the extraordinary man he knew. Dr Breunig of the University of Cologne paid tribute to Harald's meticulous and painstaking work and Angula Shipahua, who served Harald as assistant and companion for seven years, spoke (in Kwanyama) about the companionship, adventures and hardships they had shared. Johannes Toivo, who had also served Harald as an assistant for several years until he had a fall which damaged his shoulder, talked about his memories of Harald and said that those years they had shared were the best of his life.

It was a memorable weekend for everyone and although most members of the party were not at all experienced in the kind of climbing one encounters in the Brandberg and were extremely tired by the time they reached the foot of the mountain again, everyone said that it had been well worth the effort.

CALEDON RIVER ROCK ART PROJECT

Bert Woodhouse

When Van Riet Lowe published his list of rock painting and engraving sites in 1952, he laid a firm foundation for future rock art research. It should be borne in mind, however, that the existence of a site list does not mean that the sites have ever been visited by someone deeply interested in the art, nor does it mean that there are no other sites in the district. The intensive regional studies of Maggs, Pager and Vinnicombe have demonstrated this very clearly.

Having enjoyed ranging far and wide, both in South Africa and internationally, pursuing rock art studies as a hobby and recreation for some 27 years, Neil Lee and I agreed during 1984 that we should concentrate mainly, for a while, on the eastern Orange Free State and, in particular, the South African side of the Caledon River with its accompanying tributaries and their adjacent natural regions. We have pursued this self-imposed assignment for a number of visits to the area and are building up a congenial team to help - particularly with tracing and exploration. Through the kindness of a farmer, Fritz Pretorius, we have a house in which we can 'camp' as a base from which to work.

The project has received the blessing of the Institute for the Study of Man in Africa which was established 25 years ago to commemorate the anthropological work of Professor Raymond Dart and, to introduce a measure of discipline, reports are submitted to that body and to the Archaeological Data Recording Centre at the South African Museum in Cape Town. Some 40 sites have been pinpointed and fully photographed so far.

It is hoped to produce a series of publications as natural sub-regions or exploitation areas are identified, recorded and researched.

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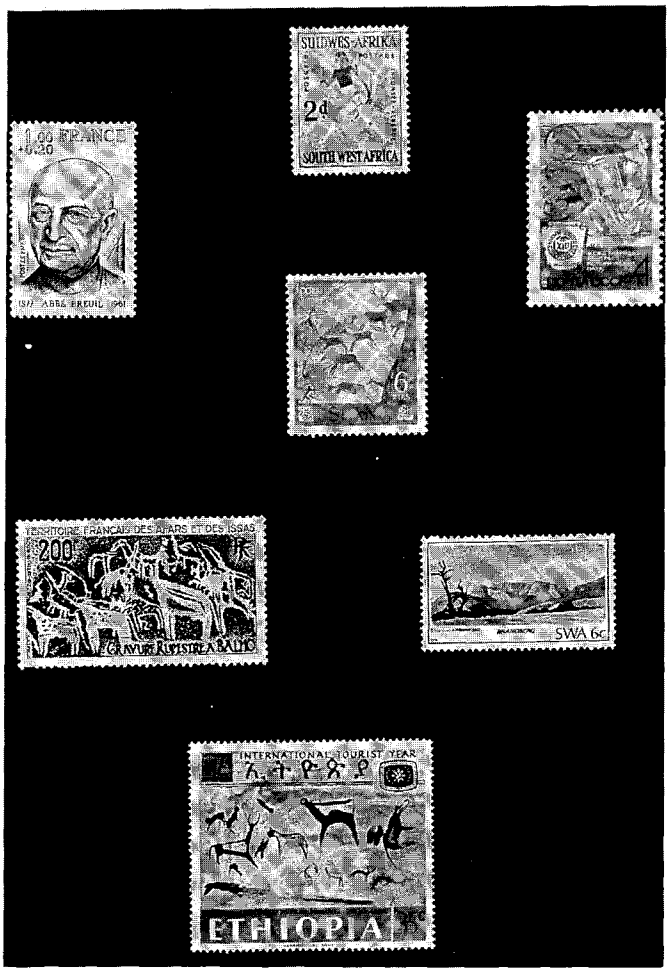
ON THE TRACK OF ROCK ART POSTAGE STAMPS

Elwyn Jenkins

The 'Checklist of postage stamps depicting prehistoric rock art' which I published in the South African Archaeological Bulletin in 1977 (32:77-84) gave details of 116 stamps and a few miniature sheets. My own collection at the time contained about 110 of the items listed, together with a few first day covers. When I gave slide shows on the subject to the Archaeological Society and the Rhodesian Prehistory Society, the audiences were amazed at the existence of so many stamps on this theme and their diverse countries of origin. They wanted to know how I had learnt of the existence of the stamps and had managed to obtain them.

At that time my source of information was limited to looking up in the Stanley Gibbons World Catalogue those countries that I knew had rock art, and going through their entire lists of issues - a tedious task especially for prolific stamp-issuing countries such as France. Some enigmatic descriptions of stamps, unaccompanied by illustrations, led me on many a wild goose chase; and I also missed some unlikely candidates such as Guyana's 'Centenary of the Ancient Order of Foresters' which incorporated rock art designs. In writing to stamp dealers who advertised in stamp magazines, or calling at their shops, I sometimes had a stroke of luck. As, for example, when the counter assistant at the august Stanley Gibbons shop in the Strand, London, on hearing my request, rather disdainfully went to a box marked 'Popular Thematics' and came up with a large, handsome rock art stamp from the Afars and Issas, a territory of which, perhaps understandably, I had never heard. (It was in north-east Africa.) On another occasion, a young man helping in his dad's little shop in Johannesburg on a Saturday morning asked me what I was still missing, and when I wistfully mentioned a large green Ethiopian stamp that I had once seen, used, in an exhibition in Earl's Court, he went straight to a 'Children's Mixed Package' where he remembered having seen it. I got it, mint, for 75c, along with the rest of the Mixed Package.



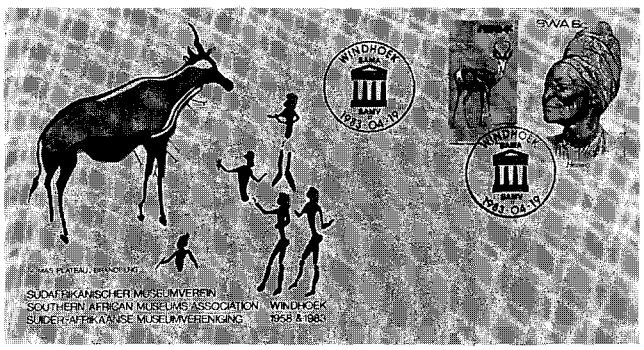
Examples of rock art stamps from countries around the world.

Since that first phase of my collection, my sources of information and supply have changed. It has been difficult always to obtain stamps of Francophone African states - I once spent two days in Paris with a carefully prepared shopping list written out in my best French, buying issues of Algeria, Tchad, Mauritania and the Central African Republic - but nowadays almost no overseas buyer will process small mail orders. However, my new sources of information have brought new sources of supply. The breakthrough came when a friend of mine, Dr Stephen Craven, who is an amateur speleologist and writer on speleological matters (he is writing a history of the Cango Caves), drew my attention to the Journal of the Sydney Speleological Society. From its pages I discovered (shudder!) that I was a subspecies of speleophilatelist, and that there were other speleophilatelists in the world, like the Australian editor, Ross Ellis, who has published two checklists of rock art stamps in his Journal.

One reference has led to another, and now I subscribe to two journals which have not only published checklists that have filled gaps in my own, but also keep me up-to-date with all developments in rock art-associated philately. One is The Speleo Stamp Collector, edited by a Hollander, written mainly in quaint English, together with original articles in other European languages. For example, it serialized photocopies of a vast prize-winning collection on caves and prehistory written up by an Italian woman. The other is a German-language magazine, Geologie Mitteilungsblatt der DMG Motivgruppe - Mineralogie, Palaeontologie, Speleologie, which has a section on prehistory.

From these magazines I have been able to add 53 new items to my checklist, though I have not actually acquired specimens of them all. In return for information and swops (notably with a Frenchman and a Spaniard), I have received a lot of rock art philatelic material which it is doubtful I could have obtained from dealers. I was requested by an American to research the 'Cave Mission House' that used to appear on Basutoland stamps, and later found my reply to him published in one of the magazines. In return, the Editor sent me a USSR stamp of whose existence I had been ignorant. One swop brought me a 'Cinderella' (unofficial) set commemorating the 'XXX Aniversario del Grupo Espeleologico Edelweiss' from Spain.

Amongst the material I have acquired since 1977 are a few earlier sets now tracked down, and many new issues both from countries bringing out further sets (those of Lesotho, Botswana and Swaziland being unfortunately far uglier than their predecessors) and from countries previously unrepresented, such as the Netherlands Antilles, Mali and Zimbabwe. There is still nothing from RSA, except the Coldstream 'burial stone' on a Venda stamp. The collection has been given added interest by such features as the appearance in the background of the 1970 USSR stamp, behind an allegorical figure representing 'History', of the same Spanish Levant paintings that are depicted on a Spanish stamp of 1967; a portrait of the Abbe Breuil on a French stamp; a magnificent 1982 SWA stamp of the Brandberg, to accompany the 1954 White Lady stamp; a first day cover of the 1976 SWA stamps, autographed by Harald Pager, the designer; and the notorious commemorative cover of the Southern African Museums Association meeting in Windhoek in 1983 on which the male figures in the rock art design were censored by the Post Office. The European magazines indicate that there have been numerous special date stamps incorporating rock art designs in countries such as Rumania, Poland, Italy and Spain, but I hold out little hope of tracking them down.



Commemorative first day cover.

Until I get around to publishing a revised checklist, anyone desiring the addresses of the speleophilately journals can write to me.

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SOUTHERN AFRICAN ROCK ART "SYMPATHETIC MAGIC" AND THE TRANCE HYPOTHESIS

J F Thackeray

Recent developments in the study of southern African rock art include the discovery that at least some paintings reflect concepts associated with trance during which medicine men were believed to control game, rain or other factors. Lewis-Williams has relied primarily on San ethnography as a basis for this trance hypothesis and has discredited the view expressed by several authors (including Balfour, Brentjes, Breuil, Frobenius and Holm) that concepts associated with sympathetic hunting magic are relevant to the study of the rock art. This opinion is based not only on his observation that hunting scenes are rarely depicted in the art of the Drakensberg where statistical surveys have been undertaken, but also on his assertion in Current Anthropology (1982:430) that "San ethnography (provides) no evidence of any belief that the manufacture of a representation or model will aid a hunter."

The apparent absence of evidence for particular concepts among modern Bushman-speaking population groups does not necessarily imply that such concepts were not held by prehistoric peoples, including prehistoric artists. Here I draw attention to evidence for the practice of rituals associated with two forms of sympathetic control, and I question whether one or other or both contributed to the development of beliefs expressed in southern African rock art.

Sympathetic control (Type I)

In 1934 Lebzelter referred to rituals which were apparently associated with a form of sympathetic magic. "Before they go out to hunt, the Bushmen draw the animals in the sand and in a range of ceremonies they shoot their arrows. The place where the figure of the animal is hit is where they believe the wild animal will also be hit."

Brentjes used this account as a basis for suggesting that rock art was associated with sympathetic magic, but the reliability of Lebzelter's account is uncertain since it was obtained second-hand from a prospector and it may have been confused with an account of sympathetic magic recorded by Frobenius in West Africa. However, this may not have been the case since in 1964 L J Botha (personal communication) observed /auni and !gomani Bushmen in the southern Kalahari shooting miniature arrows at an effigy of a small animal modelled in sand.

An example of art mobilier from Wonderwerk Cave in the northern Cape shows part of a zebra (Fig. 1), engraved on a broken piece of dolomite which is about 20 mm thick. This is one of several examples of rock art to have been discovered at the site during excavations undertaken by Anne Thackeray and myself; it came from a deposit dated around 4000 BP. Since the slab is relatively thick, the question arises as to whether it was broken deliberately, after the animal had been engraved upon it, and whether such activities were associated with sympathetic control of the kind which I would classify as Type I.

Sympathetic control (Type II)

At Teast some Bushman-speakers evidently recognized a sympathetic relationship between a dying antelope and a young boy at the time when he shot his first animal. Examples of this are reflected in the ethnographic accounts discussed by Lewis-Williams. For instance, after wounding an eland, a boy was expected to behave in certain ways; he did not hurry because "if he runs fast the eland will also run fast"; he should endure sleeping on scratchy grass because the eland "will not run far, but will also not sleep well and recover its strength". These beliefs were recorded among !Kung San, but Lewis-Williams has shown that Bleek's records of similar if not identical beliefs applied to other (/Xam) Bushman-speakers as well,

and that these applied to a boy's first kill. The sympathetic control reflected in these accounts can be classified as Type II, characterized by an association between a hunter and a wounded, dying animal.

Sympathetic control of Type II is also reflected in an account by Lichtenstein in 1812 (I:269) who provides the following description of a hunting ritual among Xhosa in southern Africa.

> Before a party goes out hunting, a very odd ceremony or sport takes place which they consider as absolutely necessary to ensure success to the undertaking. One of them takes a handful of grass into his mouth, and crawls about upon all-fours to represent some sort of game. The rest advance as if they would run him through with their spears, raising the hunting cry, till at length he falls upon the ground as if dead. If this man afterwards kills a head of game, he hangs a claw on his arm as a trophy, but the animal must be shared with the rest.

In 1857, Dohne records the Xhosa verb ukuguba as a word referring to the performance of such 'hunting ceremonies'.

There is no evidence to prove that concepts associated with these rituals were necessarily associated with rock art in southern Africa, but the verb ukuguba referred not only to a performance of the hunting rituals, but also to the behaviour of a bird struggling to escape death, flapping its wings; this concept was cited as being analogous to another sense of ukuguba, referring to a person "raising his arms" and simulating the death of an antelope. The question arises as to whether these conceptual associations have any direct or indirect bearing on examples of rock art described by Harald Pager as alites or as 'flying buck' by Bert Woodhouse, but which Lewis-Williams refers to as 'trance buck' (cf the 'arms-back' posture adopted by medicine men in trance, associated with the death of an animal).

In the light of the data presented here, one cannot dismiss the possibility that beliefs associated with sympathetic control may have contributed to the development of belief systems expressed in at least some examples of southern African rock art. Such beliefs may have been indirectly if not directly related to concepts of control associated with trance, during which medicine men identified themselves with a wounded, dying antelope.

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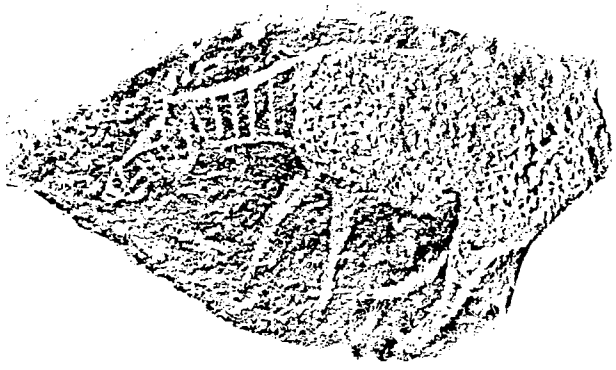
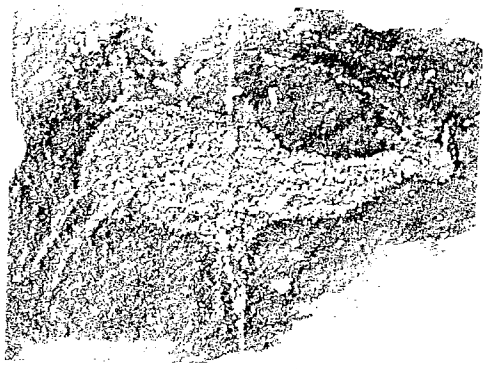
EXTINCT ANIMALS DEPICTED IN ROCK ART

Gerhard and Dora Fock

From time to time rock art researchers discover depictions on the rocks of animals that are now extinct. Here are five such cases recorded in the course of our work.

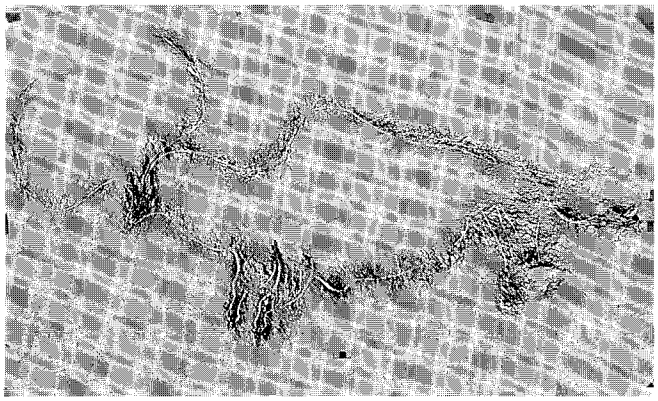


1. Sydney-on-Vaal. Quagga. The quagga became extinct about 1878 in South Africa. The last quagga died on 12 August 1883 in the Amsterdam Zoo. Representations of it on the rocks are rare. Of the 16 898 engravings counted in our research area, only 42 depict quagga.



2. Brandfontein. The only engraving found so far of the blue antelope or bloubok (Hippotragus leucophaeus), reported by early travellers. The last one seen was in about 1800, making this the first historically recorded African mammal to become extinct.

3. Bushman's Fountain. Damaliscus niro, known only from fossilized bones and horns with sheaths, which indicate that it may have roamed the northern Cape Province until about 1 000 years ago. It was related to the blesbok and bontebok. Only one engraving is known.



4. Nelspoort. Bovine, probably Pelorovis antiquus, which died out around the western Cape coast about 12 000 BP. It is not known how long it might have survived inland.

5. Kinderdam. These horns were found engraved, but no animal engraved seems to fit them. The late Dr A. C. Hoffman identified them as Gorgon latocornutus, now Connochaetes (wildebeest). He said that although the animals may have become extinct, their horns could possibly still have been found.

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MERMAIDS AND TSAMMA MELONS

Brian Johnson-Barker

Frik Bremner's father said he could have told them, right from the first. And when he thought about it, he realized that he had told them; maybe not from the first, but pretty soon afterwards. He was a man who knew what was what and, if he was unlucky enough to meet one, he would call a spade a spade. A bit embellished perhaps, but still a spade.

It was the Engelsman, Cooper, who came into town and said he had discovered a bushman cave up in the hills, near the Krapmekaar River. Logic and Frik Bremner's father insisted that the cave had actually been discovered by the bushmen, but Mister Cooper sat down and wrote a long letter to the Museum, telling them about his find and asking them to send an expert to inspect the unusual painting inside the cave. It looked, he wrote (as the postmistress later confided to a few friends), as though the long-dead little artist had tried to draw spirits of the water - mermaids from the nearby Krapmekaar River, perhaps. Something to do with their culture.

Now there Frik Bremner's father agreed: something to do with their culture. He knew the cave well; had known it since he was a little boy, looking after his father's goats. And what that painting showed, he said, was nothing more than a 'groot boesman-babelas'. Those figures all spread out - they were not a bunch of watermeide going for a swim; nonsense, they were just a couple of the manne who had, as he put it, omgekap. There was even one, he remembered, who seemed to be doing the ostrich trot and reminded him of Albert Hockley on mornings when Albert said the sun was too bright and that the oak leaves falling on the lawn made a noise that hurt his head.

To a man of discrimination and experience, the answer was clear. That is what the man from the Museum said, and it is also what Frik Bremner's father thought, although in different words and to a different conclusion. He had some trouble finding out about mermaids, though. Not even Hester Visagie would tell him, and she, as postmistress, was a woman of the world who handled letters from all over the country and even one or two from England especially in December month.

It was young Frik Bremner who was finally able to produce a picture of a mermaid. It was in colour, in a book called The Golden Treasury of Classic Tales, and showed a sort of girl-thing swimming under the sea. For a fish, she was perhaps not too ugly, although her hair hung down in front so a person couldn't see if she - and also, from about where she should have had her, no, from even above there downwards, the rest of her was like the back end of a makriel. Privately, Frik Bremner's father considered that the compiler of The Golden Treasury of Classic Tales had been taken for a ride but, as a civilized man, he kept this quiet. One did not argue against the printed word, or even, picture. Mister Cooper and the man from the Museum, though, were another matter.

For one thing, it was they who actually started the argument. Not content with their foolishness about watermeide, they said that the thing in the middle of the painting was a representational execution of a tsamma melon, upside down, showing fine attention to naturistic detail but of unknown significance except as an object of positive veneration in the linking of water with the eternity of sustenance. En nog meer. Frik Bremner's father said it was not a tsamma melon, not even upside down, but 'n outydse wynbottel, right way up. And probably empty, looking at the way the people had been painted lying around like that.

But Mister Cooper came up with unanswerable logic. The painting was at least 200 years old and where, in about the year 1700, was a bushman going to find a bottle of wine to drink in a cave by the Krapmekaar River where, according to the records, no white man had ever set foot? To Frik Bremner's father, the question was unanswerable because it simply did not deserve an answer. That a grown man could ask such a thing - where would they get a bottle of wine. 'Boer maak altyd 'n plan,' said Frik Bremner's father as he stalked away, then stopped and turned as an afterthought struck him. 'Boesman ook, seker,' he added, for he believed in giving credit where due.

Those of the townsfolk who took any notice of it were divided on the issue - an attitude that many communities adopt when faced by a common problem. Miss Christina planned an outing for the children of her little school, so that they too might see this cultural link with a vanished past. However, they were forestalled, and the link itself nearly vanished after the dominee had inspected it. He inspected it closely, and gave it as his recommendation that what the painting really needed was a thick layer of pitch that would hide it forever from the eyes of the righteous. Whether the figures were waterdinge or drunkards was irrelevant, he said, but what offended the civilized mind was that they had been painted unashamed in their nakedness. It was not a thing to be seen by children, so Miss Christina cancelled the visit and the children all saw it after school anyway. The influences of religion are unpredictable.

Eventually, the man from the museum left, promising that he would keep in touch with Mister Cooper (who, in later years, acquired the nickname of Toemaak because of the notices about closing the gate and using the dip). And in the little cave near the Krapmekaar River, nothing happened except that perhaps another layer or two was added to the bokdrolle on the floor and the painted people on the rock hung in frozen suspension as they had done for centuries. There came a paper for Mister Cooper - a copy of a talk read to some people who called themselves the Royal Society of something-or-other. Triumphantly, Mister Cooper brought it to show to Frik Bremner's father, and deliberately handed it to him upside down.

Fortunately, Frik Bremner's father was a man of learning, and he knew the heavy print is usually at the top of the page, so he turned the report right way up and carefully studied the mess of incomprehensible lettering before blowing his nose with the elegance achieved only by practice and an absence of handkerchiefs.

Nouja, and also, so what. At great length Mister Cooper went on about the significance of his (Mister Cooper's) find, and how it had contributed to a better understanding of the lives and beliefs of primitive peoples. For instance, there had been read before this Royal Society a lecture on the significance of spirits who guarded river-crossings, based entirely on the interpretation of the painting in the cave of the Krapmekaar. Of course, all this just went to show that Frik Bremner's father was a prejudiced old fool, which was by no means new information, anyway. People had always laughed at him. Now, they had a new joke.

Frik Bremner's father was philosophical. He didn't know that word, but nevertheless, that's what he was - philosophical. And he used to say that one day people would see that he was right. Now there, of course, he was wrong, because it happened far too late. We must remember that he died in 1921, and that his grave is there where the - well, anyway, its there somewhere under the new road. Nobody remembers. He has not passed into legend, even. He just, as they say, passed away. But not so the watermeide: oh no, they are enshrined in fact and history, and all because of one stupid painting in one stupid cave that not even the stupid goats will go into unless the wind happens to be particularly cold and from the south-west.

They excavated that cave recently. There were people from the University, with long hair and dirty clothes; clever people, and they scraped away at the cave floor with trowels and even with paint brushes. About in the middle of the cave they found fragments which, when glued together, formed a shape something like a tsamma melon, upside down. Only the fanciful would have thought that, of course, because what the thing really was, was a wine bottle, of late 17th century design. No particular significance was attached to it. It was just another find in Die Grot Van Die Watermeide.

There used to be foolish people who said that the bump in the road was because Frik Bremner's father had turned over in his grave.

(This article first appeared in Wynboer, August 1983, and is reprinted here with the kind permission of Henry Hopkins, Editor.)

ROCK ART FOR AFRICA

Alex Willcox has made his latest contribution to the subject with ROCK ART OF AFRICA published by Macmillan (South Africa) in 1984. Mary Leakey's VANISHING ART OF AFRICA, also published recently, describes the rock paintings of Tanzania.