

COL. RJ GORDON'S OBSERVATIONS ON SOME CULTURAL PRACTICES AMONG THE KHOEKHOEN IN THE LATE 18TH CENTURY

Andrew Smith and Duncan Bull

It is now almost 25 years since the first publication of Col. Robert Jacob Gordon's notes on the Khoekhoen (Smith and Pheiffer 1992). Here the authors present some additional notes discovered by one of them (Duncan Bull) among papers curated by the Brenthurst Library in Johannesburg. The notes stem from Col. Gordon's travels through Namaqualand.

Gordon represents a southern African explorer firmly entrenched in the framework of the Enlightenment of the late 18th century. His ability to see and record in detail activities of the aboriginal people he met on his journeys into the interior falls squarely into what Diamond (2012: 480) describes as unsystematic and unscientific observation that has a distinct advantage. 'Untrained visitors often describe broadly whatever strikes them, and thereby may discuss facets of a society that would be ignored by a scientist sent out with research support to study some particular phenomena'. Gordon also represents a fine example of behaviour described by Adams and McShane (1996: 9): 'The last years of the eighteenth century mark the beginning of the great age of African exploration. For the first time, Europeans ventured abroad with the sole purpose of collecting specific, scholarly information ... Their reports attracted increasing attention at home ... the first Europeans ... came from a broad educational background and with a universal curiosity. Their purpose was limited – to collecting botanical or zoological specimens – but they also observed African culture, often with a sympathetic eye.'

Although Dutch by birth, Gordon was of Scots ancestry, his family having served the House of Orange in the Scots Brigade. He arrived in South Africa the first time in 1773 and it is said that he travelled over 1 000 km into the interior with only a Khoe helper. He was a good linguist (he spoke Dutch, English, French and needed Gaelic to command soldiers in the Scots Brigade) and it was probably on this voyage that he became conversant in Khoekhoe.

Gordon made five voyages into the interior, but we have his journals for only the last four. These were made after he arrived at the Castle of Good Hope in 1777 and ultimately became head of the garrison. The initial publication of Gordon's notes on the Khoekhoen (Brenthurst Library MS 107/6; Smith and Pheiffer 1993) gave specific details recorded when he visited the kraal of Chief Noebbe (Wildschut) below the Kamiesberg in Namaqualand on his way to the mouth of the Orange (Gariep) River and then inland on his fourth journey in July 1779, and when he met up with Noebbe later in September of that year.

The additional notes offered here appear on the last pages of the two notebooks in which Gordon made his daily entries during his 4th journey. They appear to have been made during the journey, rather than having been added later; he may have chosen to write them at the back because the observations are of a more general nature than his usually more precise daily entries. They add important detail to the limited information on Khoekhoe customs collected by 17th century observers and surviving into the 20th century (Hoernlé 1918; Schapera 1930) and could also correct some of the available information, in particular the description by some observers of the severing of

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the little fingers of the left hands of mourners (e.g. Dapper 1668 in Schapera and Farrington 1933: 63). It is possible that Gordon's description of the binding of the little fingers of the left hands of the living with the left little finger of the dead is the correct version. The rather charming way in which the binding was severed by burning the cord gives the impression of an acute awareness among the Khoekhoen of the need for closure and saying goodbye to the person who had just died. These details of the burial customs also add life to the archaeology of Khoekhoe burial practices described by Morris (1992).

Gordon's details on a sorcerer's treatment of snake-bite when he was in the Karoo on 8 December 1778 add significantly to our information. Apart from this he also describes the extraction of disease from a person by sneezing beetles [as symbols of sickness] (Cullinan 1992: 67). There are also examples of Gordon being critical of other writers, such as Peter Kolbe, and not taking everything he has been told at face value. For example, he questions the belief that old people may have been left to die (noted in Stow 1905: 274; Schapera and Farrington 1933: xi).

The notes contain the earliest first-hand information we have on snake-doctor ceremonies among the Khoekhoen and not only add detail to the descriptions of 'poison doctors' by Laidler (1928: 438–440) and Schapera (1930: 409–410), but note the different methods used. Jacob Klaas, Laidler's Namaqua informant, reported that the snake doctor made small cuts on his body, which were rubbed with snake venom. Thereafter, he had to ingest the venom over a period of time. The Gordon version says that the 'poison-sucker' was first isolated in a hut, that scorpions were then introduced to sting him, before he had to swallow a sack of snake poison, be scarified and have some venom rubbed into the scars.

Gordon's original Dutch text, from which the translation below has been made, will be available on the website www.robertjacobgordon.nl, which is to be launched by the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam in February 2017. This will contain high-resolution scans of all Gordon's 455 drawings in the Rijksmuseum in addition to scans of all his notes in the Brentthurst Library and the national archive in the Hague. English transcriptions and translations of the more substantial MSS will be given and further transcriptions will follow.

Notes on snakes and the initiation of snake doctors among the Nama (from the end of the first notebook recording RJ Gordon's 4th journey (MS107/3/1: 63–65)

Page 63: Not all snakes are poisonous. The yellow cobra and spitting cobra [are] the worst; then the puffadder and then the many-horned adder and then the skaapsteker. The black snake and the boomslang are not poisonous; they differ according to region.

A scorpion bite (sting) does not cause the death of

people.

An initiated poison-sucker man is called *awakaïowp*; there are no women that do this.

Namaqua Hottentots have strong features and wrinkles in their faces. Broad, flat, fat noses, though not so depressed in profile as that of a Bushman.

And like the others they have high bones (high cheek bones) under the eyes and very hollow jaws, a protuberant mouth and flat lips, a large mouth, dark brown eyes that are not large, well-formed small hands and feet, and strongly muscled arms, legs and bodies.

Beautiful white teeth, in particular the two first upper teeth are wide, but as they get older the teeth get very ugly from all their smoking. They do not have a large forehead, though it is broad, and are also fairly broad-shouldered with a good chest but thin in the lower torso. They have a pleasant and smiling countenance. The eyes are far apart and the corners almost horizontal; being somewhat watery at times and not very lively. Their hair is thickly smeared with fat and buchu, though not with cow manure, so that it seems to form a natural cap; they actually also wear a leather cap in all sorts of shapes, some with two hanging side-pieces and a peak for the sun; others don't wear one. The elders have a fair amount of beard, also hair, or rather tightly curling wool, under the arms and in the pubic regions. They smear their heads with fat and buchu to keep them cool, saying that when it is dry they get headaches.

Women are small and mostly ugly.

Page 64: The *awkaïowb* or, according to the lore of the Namaquas, the initiated poison sucker or witchdoctor who is immune from poison (some say that he is indeed affected if he is injured or bitten by a snake, but does not die) is inducted in the following way: first, a sheep, or even three or four sheep, are slaughtered – this kind of slaughter is called *áuw áap* – and [the man is] put in a hut on his own. Then they cause him to be stung by many scorpions, first digging many out of the ground and throwing them in the evening onto the pelt on which he must sleep, so that when he turns the scorpions sting him. He then becomes so drunk that he does not feel anything anymore; then they pour hot broth down his throat. He must keep a whole sac of the poison of the most poisonous yellow snake in his mouth, on one side along his jaw, and suck it for as long as anything remains in it. And when he is thus strongly bitten, they cut him very finely on the front of his chest, along the cheeks and between the eyebrows, and smear the poison of the same snake mixed with charcoal into the cuts. He has to survive all this and in truth none die as a result. And every morning he must drink the urine of the old slaughterer. And then, after several days, he is initiated and he helps the others when they are bitten or shot with poison.

A snake will not be inclined to bite such an induced person. NB: as far as I can discover there is much superstition mixed up in all this.

Nevertheless, they assure Kasaap, and Klaas Basterd has seen it for himself, that when he encounters a snake, even the strongest yellow poison snake (*kába káwb*), he takes his stick with the jackal tail, called a *lam*, and pulls it two or three times under his armpits to impart his smell; and then he sprinkles red buchu and throws it with the jackal tail onto the snake. Then the snake becomes as weak or as tame as during the squeezing out [of the poison] so that he can take it very slowly together with the buchu and the jackal tail up to his head, turning them and entwining them together. And he puts them under his cap and thus on top of his head [added in the lower margin]. He also allows it to climb up his body until it goes and lies on top of his head by itself.

And if a snake comes creeping into a straw hut and one of these initiated men happens to be sitting there, and the others are frightened of it, he calls the snake, saying 'Come to me', and then the snake comes to him and stays with him, and he sprinkles it with buchu, after which the snake goes away of its own accord without biting anyone. If a person lies asleep a snake will not bite him even if it walks (crawls) over his whole body, but if a person begins to move or turns over, it will indeed bite him. He wears it thus [on his head] sometimes for quite a time without the snake moving; and then when he finds it appropriate he takes his cap off and puts the snake back in a bush and allows it to go its way. And, thus, a slaughterer (or priest) will never strike a snake dead. If he has need of poison others must deliver it to him.

A bushman eats all sorts of snakes, though not the heads, but the other Hottentots do not eat snakes. The scorpions (*kóes*) will also not bite (sting) such an initiated man.

The puffadder (*kéis* in the Namaqua language) is in this land the only [snake] that is viviparous, while the other snakes lay their eggs in the scrub and the warmth hatches them. All mongooses (*ichneumons*) catch snakes; they stalk the snake, spring onto it and take it in the neck. Then the snake winds itself around the mongoose, but it nevertheless holds his bite firm until the snake is dead; sometimes the mongoose itself dies in the process, and sometimes the snake and the mongoose lie dead next to each other. The genet, so they say, does not catch snakes, and no one has seen it so, but lives off mice, rats, birds, etc.

Page 65: War-song of the Namacquas

Uplanders say *bieb*

Naine means to sing

Tais means milk

Tixa kórobe [with the accent on the 'ro'] *hai*, *tixa kórobe* (sic) *hai*, *hai*, *hai*, *hai* *hai* means 'we are many

and strong'. That is all, and is repeated again. They first shoot with poisoned arrows and then [throw] with assegais. They kill everyone they take, men, women and children; they take no prisoners of war and bury no-one but their own dead.

The Bushmen come at night and bury their own dead. Sometimes the Namaquas win and sometimes the Bushmen. They fight with their group without rules or order. Sometimes it lasts from morning to evening, and in the dark they do not lie still. Thus the Bushmen sometimes stalk the Namaquas by night and steal their livestock, yet mostly when the livestock is at pasture; and while they are holed up in the rocks they must do it by day.

In wars the Namacquas use large cattle skins as shields. Though the Bushmen do not use these, they are cleverer and more cunning, if not as prompt to act as the Namacquas. The Bushmen hide themselves everywhere in ambush.

Notes on Nama decorations and customs (from the end of the second notebook recording RJ Gordon's 4th journey (MS 107/3/2: 50–54)

Some names for the small pieces of wood are *sooyquaab* or *sousen*, which is also how the scratching of their bodies is called. An inch-and-a-half long [36 cm], the Namaquas wear them around their necks as a necklace.

They carve them from the root of a bush.

The first is called *gáragoe*, [the second] *comcá* [and the third] *cánoe*.

They sometimes slaughter when they first put them on and sometimes not. When they use it they scratch there with something sharp and rub it against the body; the scratching is called *sousen*.

gáragoe stimulates her and guards against the dangerous occurrences in life such as war, lions, rhinoceroses.

comcá helps her against evil words.

cánoe is mostly for vicious game-animals.

Captain Nóebe did not have one round his neck, but had a sous [sousen] on his tobacco pouch, which was called *námé*, to turn people who wished him ill into friends.

When a man dies, he is bound in a kaross or animal hide, sometimes into his own one, but when that is very beautiful another will wear it, but not his nearest relatives, his knees almost up against the breast, the heels against the back of his legs, the right fist closed beneath his ear, lying with his head bent slightly forwards over it. He rests his cheek near the mouth on his left fist. When he is thus securely bound into the hide, two or three older Hottentot men dig a hole four or five foot [1,2 to 1,5 m] deep, narrow at the top and wide at the bottom, with his head towards the dawn or

the east and thus the feet towards the west. They do not know why, though they say their belief is thus from their forefathers. They say in this way *sike co mi bahe keis*, or 'this has thus been said for us'.



Gordon's depiction of a male corpse readied for burial

The men are lain on their right side (with uncovered heads) and the women on their left since a woman is worse than a man.

A male child is also bound in this way and a girl is laid similarly.

They take down the hut when someone has died there and place it somewhere else. When someone is ill, they ask the patient where he has the keenest pain, and cut and anoint him then. A slaughter is also made and also magic.

Page 51: They do not leave the corpse long above ground; however, if he dies shortly before sunset he stays so overnight. As soon as he is dead they bind him at once; and to establish that he really is dead they look at his eyes; following their belief these must be closed and they bind him at once in that posture otherwise he becomes stiff; and he is watched over and wept over by his nearest relatives. When old Pluto (the old Namaqua captain called Cabaab in the Hottentot language) died, his son Nóebè bound him with one other; yet they don't always do that even out of belief; Nóebè was very afflicted even though his father was immensely old, as I clearly learned from our Secretary, more than a hundred years.

They have heard it said that one puts old people into small kraals to die, yet they have never seen this happen.

They have also their blood-lettings; they shoot him all over with a small bow and specially prepared little arrows so that he bleeds. They say they do this to make him live long. The witchdoctors did this, but they are now dead, and thus these Namaquas could not do it anymore. According to the other account they still do, and they do not ever do it to a woman.

When a dead person is thus bound into the hide, they

lay him on a hide and four or six persons carry him together, carry him with both hands. If it is far, then as many as eight make it rather far from the kraal, three to four hundred yards [275 to 365 m], and then all the people in the kraals go with them to cry, men, women and children. When they have reached the grave, the little finger of the corpse's left hand (and again, when asked why they do so, they say *sike co mi bhe keis*) is pulled out and the thread from a sinew is tied round it and then tied to the little finger of the left hand of the eldest child, whether son or daughter, so close that they can sit in the circle, thus only onto the little fingers of their left hands; then an old man of the kraal comes and with some fire burns off first the thread from the finger of the dead man and thereafter from that of each of the others, beginning with the eldest. And when that has been done they go further with the burial. And when they close the ground over the hole with flat pieces of wood and bones, they throw a pile of stones onto it, and bones from the wild animals, singing mourning songs and crying all the while that they shall not get him back again etc. And then it is over. Yet if a woman sees the grave of her friend from close by, she begins to cry, but a man does not. They then go home together and a slaughter is done the next day [in the margin: 'this slaughter is called *saukà*']. On that day they make themselves clean [smear themselves] with grease and buchu, and then they give the wife and children the blood of the sheep boiled with buchu, and they rinse out their mouths with it.

Page 52: Then they stick some old arrows and a whole bow onto the man's grave, as well as an old mat and a clothes prop (on which they hang things) onto that of a woman, and the pole of a straw hut to be able to recognise it. And when someone is dead, he always stays dead. I asked them if it was not better to believe, following our faith, in a resurrection. They laughed and said that if I said so they could believe, but not otherwise.

Kàmi is what most of the Hottentots call the slaughter when someone is 'made other'. The Namaquas say *kàiga á*.

She sits in the straw hut herself, with at most two of the friends on the other side of the body, and thus not as Kolbe says. And they bring him out by the front door, pushing the mats to the side.

The burning off of the threads with the children from the fingers of the dead is done with men as well as women. And when someone dies within a straw hut they take that one down and rebuild it, using the same mats, in another place, but the rest remain standing. They do this because they would otherwise be plagued with dreams. With *gauwatsi* [sentence incomplete].

(The large and small Namas were previously a single people. Noebe's Namaqua who told me everything

was called *kásaap*.)

The [ritual] slaughter to make a man (in Namaqua *auweten*, in other Hottentot languages *dòró*, with the accent on the 'auw' and the 'ró') begins at different ages, the rich while they are still small, the poor when they are big.

On two consecutive days, two sheep are slaughtered; they cut them open through the breast and pull off the cardiac artery; it swiftly bleeds to death. But when they make a sickness-slaughter (*áw áw ta* or bringing blood on the body), they take the small bloodvessels and then the animal must live longer, so that the sick person also shall still live longer. One of the elders from the kraal does it; and when he dies another elder always does it again. The person who must be made a man must stay in the straw hut. And the elder always remains with him. Then they all eat [meat] from the sheep together, mixed also with blood and buchu. Women may neither taste any nor come close; and if a woman must come in order to bring some buchu or milk that she must bring from all the cows of the kraal [added in the lower margin: the first day; yet the second day the milk is for the women], she must herself bare her head and give that only to the elders. They then also used to play and to dance at the man-making ceremony.

When they have thus slaughtered four sheep, then they slaughter either a cow or an ox that is also consumed. The caul [omentum] of the sheep are rubbed with buchu and when half cured are hung around his neck and one of the phalanges is bound

others remain sitting by the straw hut.

The sheep is first slaughtered outside the hut that has been made for him. During the pissing the elder says: *I piss on you because you must come away from children and amongst men*. Before he is made a man, he is permitted to eat a hare. A jackal or tiger or lion will also never eat someone who has been made a man.

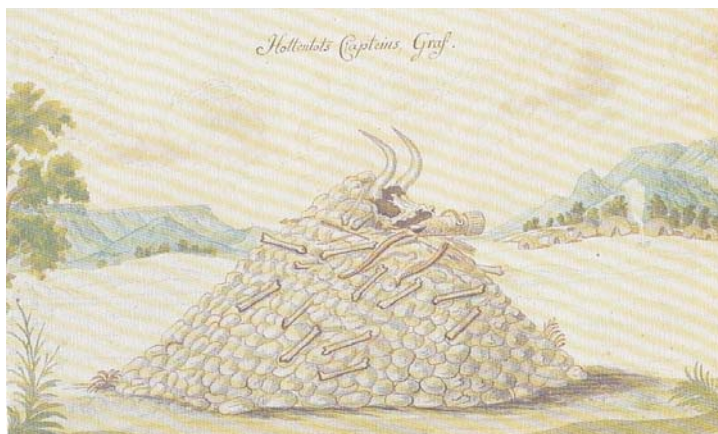
The upland Hottentots do the pissing every morning for as long as the ceremony continues. That lasts until the meat is all-consumed, and sometimes as long as ten days. On the other hand, the Namaquas do that only on the first day; and no-one is pissed upon except the newly-made man. He stays in the hut to eat with the old Hottentot and the others eat among themselves. This lasts until the meat is finished, and then he becomes a man, and then on the last day he is washed with grease and smeared with red buchu by the elder; and he is brought around to all the straw huts and exhibited. And then every one is happy, and then they dismantle the hut.

And it is not always that the woman may not eat; they do indeed do so except during those ceremonies.

The elder also wears a piece of caul around his neck as a sign that he has slaughtered.

[Gordon has here inserted a small drawing: ]

The elder gets something for his trouble, a knife or a tinderbox or something else.



Gordon's depiction of a Khoe Captain's grave, showing remains of a slaughtered ox and personal goods.

around his right hand above the joint by an old slaughterer, and also a large piece of the caul around his neck. And every morning the elder pisses on his body, to piss away the childishness and wickedness of his body. They take no water because their belief or custom is such.

On the first of the sheep-slaughtering days he is brought out from the hut by the elder and goes a considerable distance away with him in order to piss on him properly, though not on the head, and the

Exhibition at the Rijksmuseum

An exhibition entitled 'Good Hope?', which examines the history of Dutch involvement in southern Africa, is to be shown at the Rijksmuseum from 17 February to 21 May 2017. This will include a substantial number of drawings from Gordon's collection.

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WORLD ARCHAEOLOGY

Kennewick Man a Native American after all

The long-running debate over a skeleton known as Kennewick Man has been reignited. The discovery of the skeleton along the shores of the Columbia River in Washington State in 1996 sparked a bitter legal battle. For its age, the skeleton was one of the most complete ever found, and scientists said it could provide an unprecedented insight into America's early inhabitants. However, local Native American tribes, who call the skeleton the Ancient One, said the remains should not be studied. Under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act they asked government to seize the bones and return them for reburial. This in turn prompted a lawsuit, with researchers arguing that the specimen had European features and could not be closely related to Native Americans. In 2004, the scientists won – and began to study the remains. These studies revealed that while Kennewick Man had similarities to Europeans, he also shared features with groups such as the Ainu in Japan and Polynesians.

Genetic advances have now shed new light on the Kennewick Man's ancestry. DNA was extracted from a hand bone and compared with genetic data from around the world. Prof. Eske Willerslev, from the Centre for GeoGenetics at the Natural History Museum of Denmark, University of Copenhagen, then reported as follows: 'It is very clear that the genome sequence shows that Kennewick Man is most closely related to contemporary Native Americans. We got Ainu genome-wide data from a Japanese chief and we also had Polynesian [data] for comparison, as well as what is available across the world, and Kennewick Man did not show any significance in terms of having more Ainu or Polynesian DNA than other contemporary Native Americans.' Further detail revealed that the genome was most closely related to DNA from the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, one of the five tribes who originally claimed Kennewick Man as an ancestor.

It is not yet clear what will happen to the remains. They are currently held by the Burke Museum at the University of Washington, which was designated as a neutral place to keep them. *BBC News, 18/06/2015*

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Artist: **Cilla Williams**

Title: **Blue Porcelain**

Vessel I

Porcelain: 33 x 23 x 21 cm

Cilla Williams has received several awards for her porcelain works. An interest in ceramics in the early seventies led to an inspirational tuition at the Ruth Prowse Art Centre. Subsequently, Angelique Kirk, Maxie Hyeman and the late Marietjie van der Merwe were instrumental in developing her work.

'I use a porcelain clay body which can be wheel-thrown and turned. Form, clean lines and symmetry are a priority. The completed pots are sprayed with metallic sulphates and oxides prior to being subjected to pit firing' – Cilla Williams

The Cape Gallery deals in fine art work by SA artists and stocks a selection of paintings depicting South African rock art.

NEW INVESTIGATIONS AT KLASIES RIVER MAIN SITE

Sarah Wurz

On the coastal rim of South Africa, the link to our early *Homo sapiens* ancestors is exceptionally powerful as an anomalously high number of caves, repeatedly chosen for occupation since ca. 160 000 years ago (ka), occur here. The Klasies River landscape on the Tsitsikamma coast with its breathtaking scenery and high biodiversity is one of the hotspots in this area. Situated about 100 km west of Port Elizabeth (Fig. 1), this landscape encompasses four separate sites on a 2,5 km stretch of coast and has recently been redeclared as a National Monument. Main site is the westernmost occurrence and consists of four tightly clustered recesses, Caves 1, 1A, 1B, 1C (Fig. 2). Clearly this was a good place to be – the 21 m high depositional cone is one of the largest early shell middens in Africa, having built up intermittently between 120 and 2,3 ka through multiple visits by hunter-gatherer-fishers.

of archaeological remains formed. Initially, groups lived atop the earliest sediments (LBS member), but their refuse eventually blocked caves 1 and 1B and occupation continued higher up against the wall of cave 1A until the shell middens almost reached cave 2. During this phase the sea levels regressed significantly, but because of the steep topography of the coastal platform at Klasies River, the sea was never further than 2 km from the landscape (Deacon & Wurz 2005).

After a hiatus, represented by the Rock Fall (RF) member, the 1,5 m thick Upper member, dating to between 70 and 55 ka, formed in the upper part of cave 1A until cave 2. Thickly vegetated dunes sheltered main site during periods of lower sea levels. Currently cave 5, the easternmost cave on the Klasies River landscape, is situated behind such dunes. Exactly how the enigmatic White Sand (WS) member

in cave 1 fits into the depositional sequence must still be determined, but in the mid-Holocene, around 4 800 years ago, hunter-gatherer-fisher groups again occupied cave 1, leaving behind around 2 m of Late Stone Age (LSA) deposits above this member (Singer & Wymer 1982; Deacon & Geleijnse 1988).

Singer & Wymer (1982) undertook the first excavations at main site in 1967 and 1968. This was followed by two decades of investigation by Deacon (2004). These scholars and their collaborators left an invaluable legacy and established main site as a highly significant Middle Stone Age

(MSA) occurrence that offered exceptional potential for understanding the origins of early modern humans. The extensive deposits are an archive (Deacon & Wurz 2005) that reflects the changing environmental and climatic conditions and cultural expressions through most of the Marine Isotope Stage (MIS) 5 (130 to 75 ka), MIS 4 (74 to 58 ka) and the later part of the Holocene (the last ca. 11 700 years).

Repeated visits by hunter-gatherer-fishers to main site resulted in superimposed shell middens (Singer & Wymer 1982: 120) that contain food sources from this

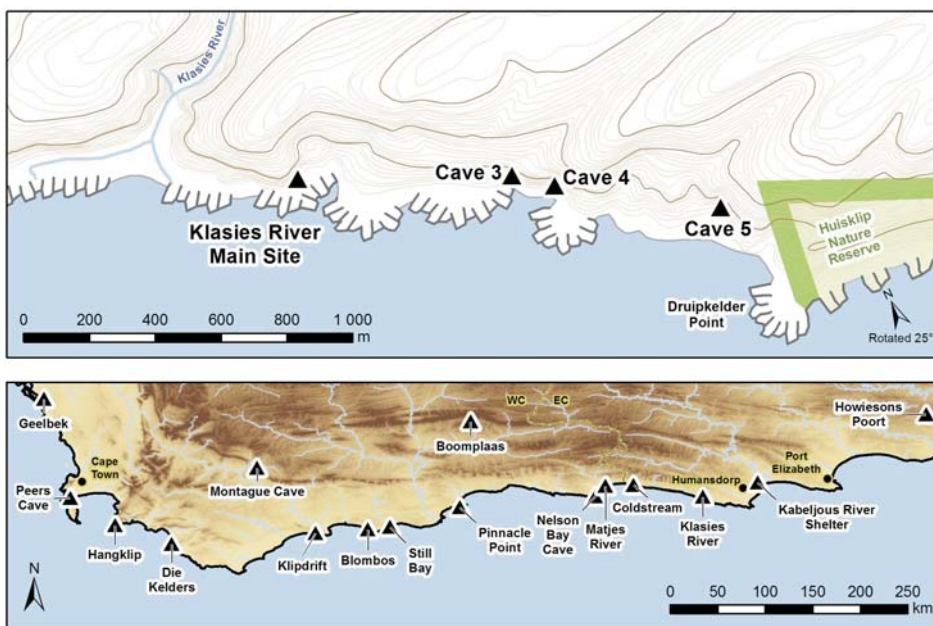


Fig. 1: Map of Klasies River, compiled by Steven Walker

The earliest groups visited caves 1 and 1B around 120 ka and left what is stratigraphically known as the 1,5 m thick Light Brown Sand (LBS) member shown in Fig. 3. At this time, main site would have been very close to the beach, comparable to its current position. The Shell and Sand (SAS) member that overlies the LBS member represents the second cumulative phase of occupation. Conditions must have been extremely favourable between 110 and 85 ka as 10 m

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Fig. 2: Klasies River main site

In 2013, I started a new phase of research at main site with the incorporation of newer analytical methods, e.g. 3D spatial recording, geoarchaeology, microstratigraphy and additional dating in collaboration with specialists. The current excavations are focused on the 100 ka-old layers of the witness section not excavated by Wymer in cave 1 (Fig. 4). The integration of the MSA results from Klasies River main site with those of other contemporaneous sites, such as Blombos Cave, Pinnacle Point, Klipdrift Shelter,

productive coast. Coastal resources always formed a significant part of the diet – even when the sea was furthest away from the site, around 5 km, between 65 and 55 ka. The middens contain the remains of shellfish, fish and sea mammals mixed with the remains of bovids and microscopic plant material, as well as stone and bone tools, ochre and many distinctive hearths. The early regular consumption of coastal resources at Klasies River led to the site being dubbed ‘the earliest sea food restaurant in the world’. The significance of Klasies River main site for modern human origins research is augmented by the more than 50 *Homo sapiens* fossils dating to between 120 and 90 ka (Fig. 3) found there.

Sibudu Cave, Florisbad, Border Cave and Bushman Rock Shelter, is vital. Linking data from as many sites as possible is what is most needed to obtain new insights in the field of modern human origins. The well-preserved LSA deposits in cave 1 form an integral part of this phase of research. Apart from its importance in understanding the environment and lifeways of Late Holocene coastal groups, it is also an outstanding benchmark for interpreting the MSA deposits at main site. Some of the research objectives and initial results of the current project are discussed below.

The refinement of the stratigraphy, geo and micromorphological analyses, and further dating are in progress. The Zamani research group (www.zamani-project.org) captured main site digitally, using specialised techniques, including laser scanning. These results, the excellent figures of Wymer (Singer & Wymer 1982) and Hilary Deacon’s unpublished meticulous stratigraphic drawings spearhead the process of refining the details of the stratigraphic succession. Micromorphological and geomorphological analyses are essential to understand the site formation processes at main site.

Given the extent of the deposits, it is not unexpected that depositional change occurred often. Multiple episodes of alteration, compaction and erosion can be identified. The microscopic characterisation of the deposits confirms that main site formed through recurrent visits interrupted by episodes of non-occupation (Deacon & Geleijnse 1988). It can be demonstrated that sterile deposits alternate with units that consist of trampled shell overlain by hearths with intact ashes, plant and animal remains (Mentzer 2015). Initial uranium series dating results indicate that the current

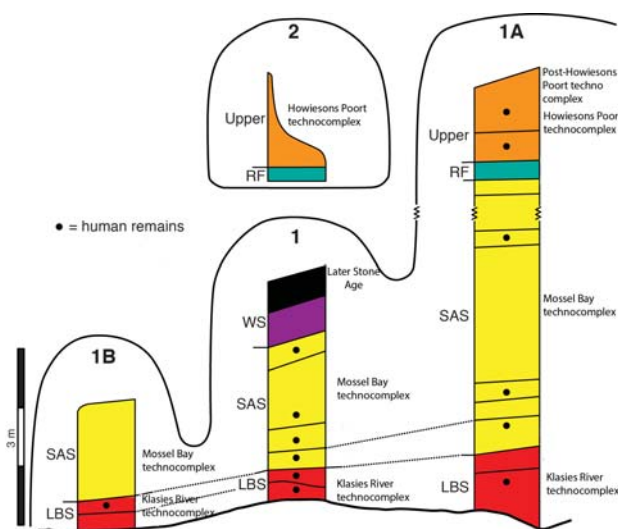


Fig. 3: Generalised stratigraphy of Klasies River main site (after Grine et al. 2017, as adapted from Deacon & Geleijnse 1988)

age estimates for the first occupation of cave 1 of between 115 and 108 ka can be considered minimum ages, as will be published in the near future.

New single grain OSL dates for the WS member and accelerator mass spectrometry radiocarbon dates for the LSA deposits confirm and extend previous age determinations (Nami et al. 2016), putting the former at ca. 65 ka and the latter between ca. 4,8 and 2,3 ka. The direction and intensity of the geomagnetic field (GMF) of these deposits were also determined and anomalous directions were observed in the lower portion of the WS member and LSA midden. The LSA directions may suggest that the GMF excursion observed during the late Holocene in other parts of the earth, known as the Etrussia or Sterno-Etrussia excursion, might also be present in southern Africa, but that it might have started earlier here at $\leq 3,5$ ka.

Previous generations of research at main site showed that the MSA and LSA groups were expert foragers and that marine resources such as seal, the brown mussel and alikreukel continued as favourite food sources throughout the Late Pleistocene. The people were proficient hunters who successfully obtained prey, from very large mammals to very small mammals, such as the extinct giant buffalo and the dune mole rat respectively. Current knowledge forms a solid base for further research into subsistence behaviour at main site.

Collaborative palaeoenvironmental analyses are also continuing to develop the pioneering work of Deacon and colleagues (e.g. Deacon et al. 1986). A new research initiative, inspired by Deacon (1993), is to obtain archaeobotanical data for the LSA and MSA. Charred seeds and parenchyma have been identified thus far for the Upper member (Howiesons Poort technocomplex) and the LBS member (Klasies River technocomplex). The optimal identification and interpretation of past vegetation and its usage requires a high-quality reference collection and a comprehensive taxonomically valid botanical database of the vegetation of the Klasies River landscape was therefore created (Van Wijk et al. in press).

In the current literature, Klasies River is often associated with Fynbos vegetation. However, it was found that there are relatively few Fynbos species represented in the core area surrounding the sites. Thus, even though the landscape is located within the broad Fynbos Biome, the vegetation cannot be classified as such. The vegetation is a complex mosaic of interdigitated thicket, forest and coastal species, providing a wide variety of useful culinary and medicinal resources. It is likely that the present occurrence of this combination of vegetation has ancient roots. It has been hypothesised that the southern Cape Fynbos environment as such played a key role in the evolution of 'behavioural modernity'. However, 'modern' or, more aptly, complex behavioural expressions may have been related to resource

density rather than the Fynbos environment *per se* in the early chapters of human evolution.

At the heart of the current project is a renewed investigation into the life histories of early *Homo sapiens*. The human fossils from main site, dating to between 120 and 85 ka, comprise one of the largest collections of our ancestors from this time range. Numerous analyses have already been conducted on the human remains and it is known that they exhibit a mosaic pattern of modernity, that cannibalism was practised and that, in contrast to contemporaneous sites such as Die Kelders, Blombos and Pinnacle Point, infants were under-represented (Grine et al. 2017). New research underway promises a closer description of the fossils, taphonomic processes, genetic relationships and diet.



Fig. 4: Excavation of the Witness Baulk, Cave 1

Detailed analyses of the artefacts are furthermore crucial to understanding the life histories of the Klasies River populations. Unpacking the chains of operations related to the production and use of the stone and bone tools may provide information on cognitive capabilities and inter-group relationships, amongst others. A 'modern' level of complexity of thought is, for example, demonstrated by the techniques and procedures followed in making the stone tools. Fabricated predominantly from quartzite, the tools were hafted as part of projectile weapons and were also used for cutting, scraping, pounding and piercing. Even though the raw material used and the tasks carried out remained the same through time, there were conscious changes in the procedures chosen to make the tools. In the 120 to 100 ka Klasies River (MSA I) and the 65 to 55 ka Howiesons Poort technocomplexes, quartzite was more intensively knapped than in the other occupational phases at the site. The cores were frequently elaborately prepared to obtain relatively thinner elongated blades and repeatedly knapped until very small. In the Howiesons Poort this strategy was accompanied by a microlithisation of the whole technology and a marked increase in the use of fine-grained raw material, such

as silcrete and quartz.

In contrast, in the Mossel Bay (MSA II) and post-Howiesons Poort technocomplexes (Fig. 3), the cores were designed to produce fewer flakes and ones that were often pointed (Wurz 2010). Interestingly, the LSA quartzite stone tools were made more expediently, with much less forethought than their MSA counterparts. Comparatively, much more effort was put into producing the numerous well-made bone tools associated with the LSA at main site (Singer & Wymer 1982: 125–128). Bone tools, even though they were also well-made, occur more rarely in the MSA (Singer & Wymer 1982: 115–116) and, when present, in the 100 and 65 ka levels.

Two further promising avenues into understanding the cognition of Late Pleistocene modern humans is through analysis of their pyrotechnology and ochre processing techniques. A variety of methods, including experimentation, indicate that even in the earliest layers at main site fire was manipulated in a variety of complex ways (e.g. Bentsen et al. submitted). A pilot study into ochre processing from the Howiesons Poort phase applied non-destructive microscopic, colorimetric and chemical analyses (SEM-EDS, XRD) to the raw materials of a selected sample from the Singer and Wymer ochre collection (Dayet et al. in press). Red and yellow ferruginous rocks (shale, ferri-crete, siltstone and sandstone) along with probable whitish pigment lumps (calcium phosphates), possibly man made, occur. It is also a distinct possibility that some of the red ochre pieces were heated.

These and the other studies discussed here bear testament to the markedly successful adaptation of our early and Holocene ancestors. The ongoing studies at Klasies River will add to the growing body of evidence showing that South Africa as a region played a key role in the evolution of *Homo sapiens*.

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ARCHSOC NOTICES

Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given in terms of section 8(a)(i) and (ii) of the Constitution that the Annual General Meeting of the Society will be hosted by the KwaZulu-Natal Branch at 10h30 on Saturday 13 May 2017 at the KwaZulu-Natal Museum in Pietermaritzburg. Professor Jan Boeyens will present his Presidential Address after the AGM.

Members should submit items for the agenda in writing to the Secretary, PO Box 15700, Vlaeberg, 8018, or to archsoc@iziko.org.za, before 10 April 2017. Proposals must state in specific terms the resolution to be put to the meeting and the reasons therefor.

Janette Deacon, Honorary Secretary, 20 December 2016

Subscription rates 2017

Membership subscription rates for the SA Archaeological Society for 2017 are as follows:

South Africa

Ordinary members	R 290
Joint members	R 310
Junior members – up to age 25	R 200
Institutions	R 590

Africa

Ordinary members	R 350
Institutions	R 590

Overseas

Ordinary members	R 590
Institutions	R1 200

Subscription rates may be paid by EFT or by credit card (please supply the necessary details).

IGNORING THE WOOD FOR THE TREES

Considering the many meanings of rock art painting

Jean-Marie Dederen and Jennifer Mokakabye

The purpose of this article is to share with the reader some of the insights that we have gained over the past 18 months whilst recording and analysing San paintings at two rock art sites in the Capricorn District, Limpopo. Our thinking and writing about the art have been structured or shaped by a general literature survey and, more particularly, by two intriguing suggestions from *Discovering Southern African Rock Art* (Lewis-Williams 1990). This popular publication introduced and promoted a leading theoretical perspective in rock art studies, the so-called shamanic theory. For almost 40 years its supporters have argued that the paintings and engravings of the San mostly portray the visions that healers (shamans) have experienced during a prominent community ritual known as the trance dance.

The first proposition states that important or radical scientific advances – such as the shamanic theory – tend to be sudden and that new ideas or methods will often be incompatible with older ones. Elsewhere in the same book it is argued that hunting scenes are rarely encountered in San rock art. Whilst we admit that a new perspective is often created in opposition to older ones, we underwrite the widely accepted tenet that by ignoring previous or competing approaches the researcher will almost unavoidably mask important data or insights. The second proposition is equally intriguing. Why, one might wonder, would the art of hunter-gatherers *not* display the hunter and his prey?

The shamanic perspective originated in the late 1970s. During the next decade, the founders and their associates refined and explored further its underlying principles, field techniques and research methodology. More recently it has influenced rock art analysis in Australia and North America, as well as having inspired the interpretation of paintings from the European Palaeolithic. It has even made possible radically new understandings of Neolithic artefacts and monuments.

Many meanings

A critical look at the archaeological literature indicates that the field of rock art studies has come close to being transformed into a monologue that is dominated by the shamanic theory (e.g. Mitchell 2002). Some of

the alternative meanings that have been suggested are said to be only of secondary interest, whilst others are simply ignored or rejected (Lewis-Williams 1998). Images depicting visual details of San rituals related to, for example, marriage, rain-making or female and male initiation have been defined as merely providing the ‘background’ for the expression of shamanic beliefs and activities. Needless to say, discussions pertaining to the different meanings of the paintings routinely end with a friendly reminder to the reader that shamanism permeated *all* aspects of San thought and life.

In addition to the shamanic approach, we have identified 11 theoretical windows or perspectives on the art during our literature survey (Fig. 1). Our referencing has been kept minimal. Additional bibliographical data is available on request.



Fig. 1: Many meanings: twelve approaches to San rock art

George William Stow, a pioneer of rock art study, had a keen interest in the technology of the hunter-gatherers of the Cape. The paintings of bows, arrows and other subsistence equipment provided him with useful documentary evidence for the reconstruction of this aspect of daily life. Others, like Sir John Barrow, emphasised the artistic quality of the art and encouraged the viewer to look affectively at the paintings. These two early perspectives – aptly labelled the **narrative** and **aesthetic** approaches – have been discarded by the founders of the shamanic theory. We will demonstrate later in this article that they are not without merit for the purpose of analysis.

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The **sympathetic (hunting) magic** perspective constituted the first serious attempt at theoretical interpretation in rock art studies. Supporters of this approach suggested that the artists painted hunters and their prey as part of a ritual means of controlling the outcome of the hunt and the movements of the game. Rock art researchers Francis Thackeray and David Whitley maintain that this theory still holds some interest for the rock art research community, even if it was rejected many years ago.

Like their counterparts in the natural sciences, **empiricist** rock art researchers have produced rigorous descriptions of data using tables, graphs and statistics. Tim Maggs, Harold Pager and Patricia Vinnicombe are routinely mentioned as the major representatives of this perspective. Their admirable efforts should remind us of some of the quintessential characteristics of the archaeological trade: objectivity, attentive observation, fastidious description and perceptive comparison.

By proposing that rivalry amongst the rainmakers of the Ukhahlamba-Drakensberg is reflected in their paintings of rain serpents, Thomas Dowson has convincingly pointed out the **political** dimension of the art. In Dowson's understanding, hierarchy, competition and power are issues that are worthwhile considering in the analysis of San rock art, even if they are not commonly associated with the egalitarian nature of the hunter-gatherer communities.

Peter Jolly, on the other hand, believes that he has discovered evidence in the paintings that the San may have borrowed religious concepts and practices from their Sotho and Nguni-speaking neighbours. In doing so, he makes us aware of the importance of culture change and interaction, i.e. of the **historical** dimension of the art.

Peter Garlake's **art-historical** study of San paintings in Zimbabwe emphasises the primary importance of intimate and intensive contact. The study of form, we are told, will lead the researcher to the identification of the underlying rules and principles (the 'canon') of the art. Pippa Skotnes has invited followers of the shamanic approach to reconsider their negative attitude towards the art-historical methodology by highlighting issues that are generally overlooked, such as the orientation and composition of the images.

Mathias Guenther has advised researchers not to look for analogies between San **mythology** and art. Anne Solomon, in contrast, insists that many of the paintings can be explained with reference to the spiritual beings and beliefs that are contained in cosmological narratives.

Solomon has also produced a most comprehensive essay on the **gender** dimension of San rock art. Her interpretation of selected paintings revolves around the basic premise that humans create meanings in

their lives through gendered relations. In addition, it is suggested that the paintings indicate that even small-scale societies like the San are troubled by social tension between men and women.

Practitioners of the **landscape** perspective try to establish how people have imprinted their cultural behaviour and beliefs on their natural surroundings, and also how the landscape has shaped culture. Geoffrey Blundell has cautioned researchers that without the knowledge of San environmental perceptions our attempts at interpreting the art from this perspective must fail. An exciting study by Sven Ouzman has proved his pessimism wrong. Ouzman has pointed out how engraved stones have been carefully arranged by San artists in ordered geometrical structures, possibly to mark places in the landscape where the spiritual world could be entered or approached.

The **individual** dimension is not usually associated with the study of prehistoric artefacts or with archaeology in general for that matter. Yet a study by Dowson evidences clearly that paintings could be approached from this perspective. He has interpreted rare or unusual depictions of eland lifting their tail, extending a hind leg or defecating as expressions of particular artists' visions.

The supporters of the shamanic perspective consider about half of the above approaches to be counter-productive for the purpose of analysing the paintings. The remaining half has been declared to be expressive of shamanic rituals and beliefs. In our understanding a variety of interpretations is as welcome as it is unavoidable.

A hunting idiom

Whenever it is noted that the hunt does not constitute an important rock art subject (second proposition) reference is made to Harald Pager's admirable work in the Drakensberg (1971). Seemingly, only one per cent of several thousand paintings has been classified as being hunting scenes. Moreover, we are told that these images, in addition to being rare, do not necessarily represent *real* hunting events. Careful analysis is said to reveal that they include 'non-real', symbolic or metaphorical elements and features. The same applies to those paintings that more subtly or indirectly *imply* hunting, such as images of large game or of men carrying bows and arrows. Lastly, animal paintings are said not to reflect the actual diet of these hunter-gatherers. In sum: the artists did not intend to picture food and ways of getting food, and the painted or engraved references to hunting, it is concluded, should rather be explained in terms of shamanic rituals and beliefs.

Evidently, mainstream researchers are reluctant to conceive paintings in shelters as the art of the hunter. Instead, the images are interpreted as the art of the shaman. This reluctance, we presume, relates closely

to the rejection of the sympathetic magic approach, a theory which generally has been perceived as being an obstacle to progress in rock art research. We argue instead that all 12 theoretical windows on rock art are closely associated with, and couched in the idiom of the hunt, humankind's oldest and longest mode of subsistence.

The cosmological significance of the hunt and the close rapport between humans and animals in which it was grounded constitute two pre-eminent features of traditional hunting societies. This may be difficult for us to grasp. Our urban life style and modern worldview do not cater for an integrated understanding of nature and culture. On the other hand, the members of hunter-gatherer bands and of small-scale societies that practised hunting, we contend, made sense of their existence through the mediation of animal and hunting-based metaphors and beliefs. Housing, clothing, food, body decoration, name giving, visual art, music, song, dance, folklore, rites of passage, healing and other cultural features were conceived, expressed or patterned in terms of hunting ideology.

It underscored all critical issues of being human in traditional society: life and death, health and illness, happiness and sorrow, co-operation and dissent, communal and individual identity, balance and tension, good and evil, logic and irrationality, success and failure. Two paintings from our research sites illustrate how the concept of a hunting cosmology can be used as an analytical backdrop against which a richer and deeper understanding of the art can be developed by using a wide range of approaches (Fig. 1). The discussion of the images is work-in-progress and our analysis is therefore only tentative.

Many meanings in practice

The two headless figures placed next to a dead antelope in Fig. 2 can be explained as healers capturing potency for medicinal purposes (shamanism). We propose that several alternative interpretations, more akin to the idiom of the hunt, seem equally plausible. The lines that connect the hunter and his arrows to the animal possibly depict the bodily sensation or the 'connection' that San hunters have been said to experience when tracking their prey (Bennun 2004). The image could simply have been intended to celebrate and remember an unusual event: a sable hunt and the ritual division of its meat (history, narrative).

Or perhaps the hunters were young male initiates who had completed their first kill rites? If so, the image could have emphasised the prowess of these hunters-in-the-making (gender, politics). Or maybe the painting was a representation of the dream that predicted the sable killing? Lastly, the image could have been a ritual means to make the sable killing happen (hunting magic). In addition, the beauty and quality of the painting (aesthetics) expressed its spiritual meaning



Fig. 2: Butchered antelope with hunters

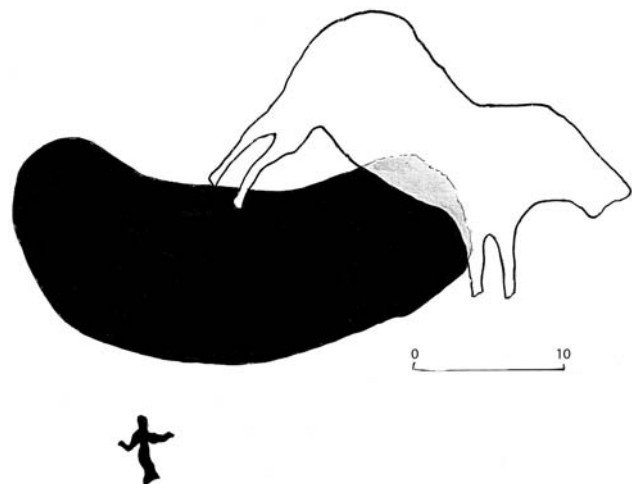


Fig. 3: Oval shape with white beast and humanlike figure

or function and underlined the social importance of the event that was portrayed.

The painting from the second shelter (Fig. 3) seems like a textbook example for the shamanic approach. The oval shape is a common occurrence in trance vision. It has been interpreted as an icon representing supernatural power or potency (e.g. Garlake 1995). Further, the humanlike figure in front of the oval could be a shaman who is perhaps floating or flying towards it. Flight is believed to be a common metaphor for trance experience. Lastly, the supporters of the mainstream view would interpret the quadruped as a non-real animal being that the shaman must face (during his hallucinatory journey) to obtain potency for healing.

We do not refute the visionary appearance of the painting. Neither do we deny the spiritual nature of both the animal and the oval shape. In fact, the white colour in which the beast was painted evidences, in our opinion, its association with the 'other world'. However, anybody familiar with the cosmological beliefs of small-scale traditional communities will appreciate the fact that one does not have to be a shaman or participate in a trance dance to experience a vision. Dreams offered a means of communication with the realm of supernatural beings and were also believed to explain the past or predict the future.

More importantly, spiritual forces could manifest themselves in animal form and interfere with the lives of individuals and with the community as a whole, as is probably depicted in this painting. The size of the beast and its large feline-like head betray a threatening appearance. Therefore, the narrative or the event that is being described in this visionary image was most likely some kind of misfortune. The image is both didactic (it illustrates or defines the nature of the misfortune) and historical (this particular event has been recorded to become part of communal memory). The painting has been executed with great care and

its quality is expressive of the significance of the subject matter.

In conclusion, we argue that (i) by 'foregrounding' the shamanic beliefs and rituals the researcher risks to lose sight of the wider analytical picture; (ii) a wide range of vantage points from which the art can be approached avails itself to the open-minded researcher; (iii) the different perspectives and resulting meanings are not necessarily contradictory or competing; and (iv) our multi-vocal understanding of the art can be enhanced when it is analysed in terms of the ideology of the hunter.

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THE SA ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

APPLICATIONS FOR 2017 RESEARCH GRANTS FROM THE KENT BEQUEST

The late Dr Leslie Kent, a long-time member of the SA Archaeological Society in Johannesburg, left a generous bequest to the society in 1992. The terms of this bequest are that the proceeds must be invested and the income, which currently amounts to about R10 000 per year, will be distributed from time to time at the discretion of the Society for –

- the financing of field work or expeditions to undertake research according to guidelines laid down by the society;
- grants to individuals or groups of individuals engaged upon research, the subject of such research to be approved by the society;
- publication or to support the publication of research results, whether or not the research has been financed by the Kent Bequest; and
- awarding prizes for meritorious work in archaeology, especially by young researchers.

The Kent Bequest Committee, comprising Dr J Deacon (Secretary), Mr RC Boers, Prof. TN Huffman, Dr T Maggs, Prof. I Pikirayi and Mrs L Wynne, invites applications for awards in all categories.

Application guidelines

1. The work must be conducted in South Africa.
2. The subject matter may include archaeological work of any kind that enhances our knowledge of the lifestyle of humankind in southern Africa, such as excavation, rock art recording, site recording,

artefact or faunal analysis, identification of plant or animal remains, dating, surveys, physical anthropology, analysis of archaeological collections in museums, experimental archaeology, and archival or bibliographic work.

3. Proposals may also include publications for public education and community awareness projects that popularise archaeology.
4. The Kent Bequest will contribute fieldwork or printing expenses only, not costs involved in analysing results or writing or editing reports or publications.
5. Applications for publication must be accompanied by two quotations from printers.
6. Preference will be given to researchers domiciled in southern Africa and researchers who are starting a career in archaeology.
7. Successful applicants will be required to donate one copy of reports or publications to the society's library, one copy to the *South African Archaeological Bulletin* for review, and, in the case of publications, one copy to each of the society's five regional branches.

Application forms are available from the Secretary of ArchSoc at archsoc@iziko.org.za or 021 762 7347, and must be submitted **before 30 April 2017**. All applications will be refereed by specialists. The applications and referees' reports will be evaluated by members of the Kent Bequest Committee. The successful applicant/s will be notified by 30 June 2017.

NDUKWANA, SOCWATSHA, THUNUNU AND STUART, AND THEIR LIVING ARCHIVE OF HISTORY

John Wright

The James Stuart Collection of papers, now lodged in the Killie Campbell Africana Library in Durban, has since the 1970s become recognised among scholars as the most important single source of written evidence on the history of African societies in the KwaZulu-Natal region before the 20th century. The core of the collection consists of the notes made from 1897 to 1922 by James Stuart, a Natal colonial official, of his conversations on the past with some 200 interlocutors, most of them elderly African men. Since 1976, edited renderings of these notes, with passages originally recorded in isiZulu translated into English, have been published in a still unfinished series of volumes titled *The James Stuart Archive of Recorded Oral Evidence Relating to the History of the Zulu and Neighbouring Peoples* (Webb and Wright 1976–2014).

Outside academia, both the James Stuart Collection and the *James Stuart Archive* (JSA) are still relatively unknown. A handful of members of the public use the six large volumes of the JSA so far published to research their family histories, or simply to dip into for interesting anecdotes on the history of the Zulu kingdom. But for most people with an interest in South Africa's past, these volumes are closed books – literally. As a historian who has been one of the editors of the JSA since 1971, I want to use this opportunity to introduce the JSA to those readers of *The Digging Stick* who do not know it. For those readers who are aware of it, I aim to give a picture of how scholars today are bringing new approaches to reading it as a source of evidence on the history of the KwaZulu-Natal region in the three or four centuries before the establishment of colonial rule.

Colonial researchers and their African assistants

If I had been writing this article half a dozen years ago, I would probably have made it a simple update of an article I published in 1996 titled 'Making the *James Stuart Archive*' (Wright 1996). In that essay I briefly discussed the life of James Stuart (1868–1942) and how his collection of papers had come into existence and had ended up in the Killie Campbell Africana Library; the launching of the James Stuart publication project in 1970 by Colin Webb, a senior lecturer in history at the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg; my appointment as co-editor in 1971; the development of our method of editing, annotating and



James Stuart
in 1906 (Killie
Campbell
Africana
Library)

indexing; and the publication and reception of the first four volumes of the JSA. I said virtually nothing about Stuart's interlocutors as co-authors of the historical evidence that appears in these volumes.

Twenty years on, there has been a major turnaround in how scholars view the nature of the work done by researchers like Stuart. The writings of these researchers are now seen less as the products of single individuals, in the persons of colonial scholars, and more as the products of the collective work of the scholars and the African amanuenses, interpreters, intermediaries, interlocutors and labourers on whose assistance they intimately depended. Some scholars now suggest that collections of such writings should carry the name not only of the researchers but also of their assistants.

Many readers of *The Digging Stick* will know of the recorded oral materials, mostly from /Xam interlocutors, by Wilhelm Bleek and his niece Lucy Lloyd in Cape Town in the 1870s and 1880s. They will appreciate the roles played by these interlocutors, whose work with Bleek and Lloyd has been graphically brought to our notice by researchers like Pippa Skotnes (2007) and Janette Deacon (Deacon and Skotnes 2014).

Similarly, Patrick Harries (2007) has written on the relationships between missionary ethnographer Henri-Alexandre Junod and the African assistants who aided him in his work in southern Mozambique and the eastern Transvaal in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Andrew Bank and others have described the roles played by African helpers in the anthropological fieldwork done by Monica and God-

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frey Wilson in the Eastern Cape and Tanganyika in the 1930s (Bank and Bank 2013). Nick Shepherd (2015) has brought to our attention the almost entirely unsung work done by African labourers in the archaeological excavations conducted by John Goodwin in the 1930s and 1940s (and, by implication, in the excavations conducted by many other archaeologists in Africa). Outside the social sciences, Nancy Jacobs (2006) has examined the roles of Africans in the making of colonial knowledge of ornithology.

James Stuart and his interlocutors

In Stuart's case, the first scholar to examine the roles played in his researches by certain of his interlocutors was Carolyn Hamilton (1998). More recently I have written biographical articles on two of Stuart's most important interlocutors, Ndukwana kaMbengwana and Socwatsha kaPhaphu, and have joined Cynthia Kros in writing on a third, Thununu kaNonjiya (Wright 2011, 2015, 2016; Kros and Wright 2016). Kros and I hope to do more work of this kind on Stuart's other interlocutors.

In writing on these individuals, we depend for source material almost entirely on Stuart's notes on what they told him about their lives or, more accurately, on what

Stuart chose to record of what they chose to tell him about their lives. This point exemplifies the more general issue that Stuart's notes of his conversations on the past with his interlocutors were shaped partly by his own ideas and partly by those of his interlocutors. This in turn leads to the following questions: what were the sources of his lines of questioning; what were his agendas in recording his conversations with his interlocutors in the particular ways that he did; what were the sources of his interlocutors' ideas on the past; and what were their agendas in narrating the past as they did to Stuart?

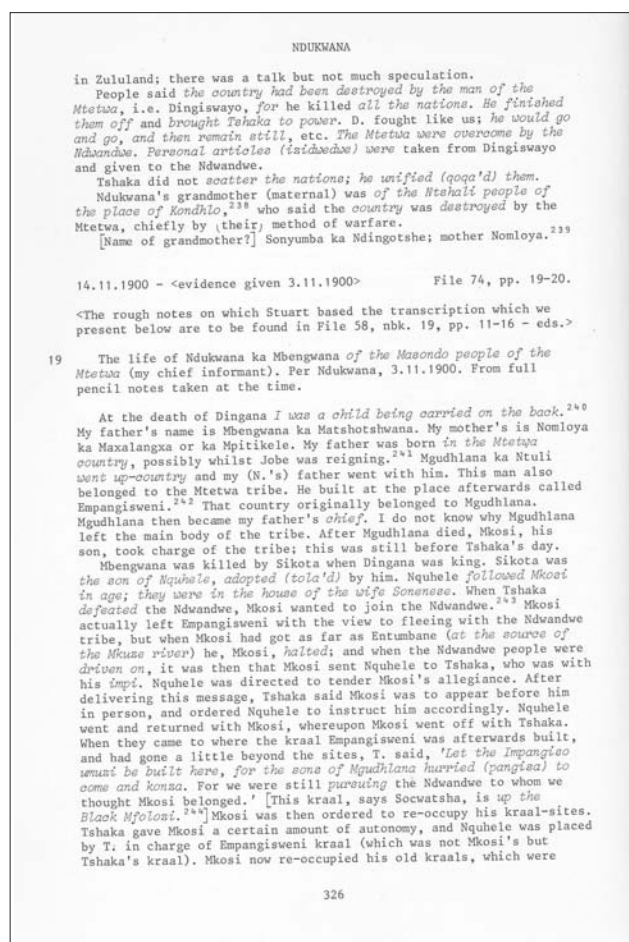
The outlines of Stuart's career as a colonial official and as a private researcher into the history of African societies in Natal are reasonably well known (Hamilton 1998: 130–167; Hamilton 2011; Wright 1996, 2011, 2015). He was born in Pietermaritzburg in 1868, the son of a magistrate, and grew up speaking isiZulu as well as English. From 1888 he held posts in the administrations of native affairs in the colonies of Zululand and Natal, and, later, the newly formed Union of South Africa. He took early retirement in 1912.

From the late 1890s to 1922, when he left with his family to go and live in London, Stuart devoted much of his spare time to researching the history and customs of local African societies. The detailed notes he made of his conversations with his interlocutors, both black and white, fill hundreds of notebooks. These notes are seen by informed scholars as being faithful in many respects to what Stuart's interlocutors told him (Hamilton 1998: 142–52). He shared many of the racial prejudices of the British settlers who dominated the politics of Natal, but from about the late 1890s onward he more and more came to think that the making of native policy in the colony, in what was a time of deep-seated political and social change in Natal and South Africa more generally, was based on dangerously ignorant and prejudiced notions of African political practices. His prime motive in his researches was to establish as clear and detailed a picture as possible of the 'Zulu traditional' system of government to try to influence the making of colonial policy on more informed lines.

Conversations on the past

There is no space here for a detailed account of Stuart's research work and I therefore focus on his engagements with the two interlocutors mentioned above and a third, Thununu. These three have drawn particular attention from researchers, but there are many others who deserve similar attention.

Stuart met both Ndukwana and Socwatsha in 1888 at the beginning of his career as an official. Both of them were policemen in Zululand, where Stuart was posted as a clerk and interpreter to a local magistrate. From their different perspectives, all three men shared a deep interest in the past, and Ndukwana and Socwatsha had a major influence on Stuart's thinking



A page of Stuart's notes of a conversation with Ndukwana, as published in the James Stuart Archive (James Stuart Archive, Vol. 4 (1986), p. 326)

when he began researching systematically.

Ndukwana seems to have been in Stuart's personal service from about 1900 to 1903 as his *induna* or headman, while Socwatsha remained as one of Stuart's colleagues in the Natal Native Affairs Department until the latter's retirement in 1912. Stuart continued to turn to him as a source of historical information for the rest of his time in Natal. For his part, Thununu was one of several dozen individuals with whom Stuart held lengthy discussions on the past after he had settled in Durban in 1901 as assistant magistrate.

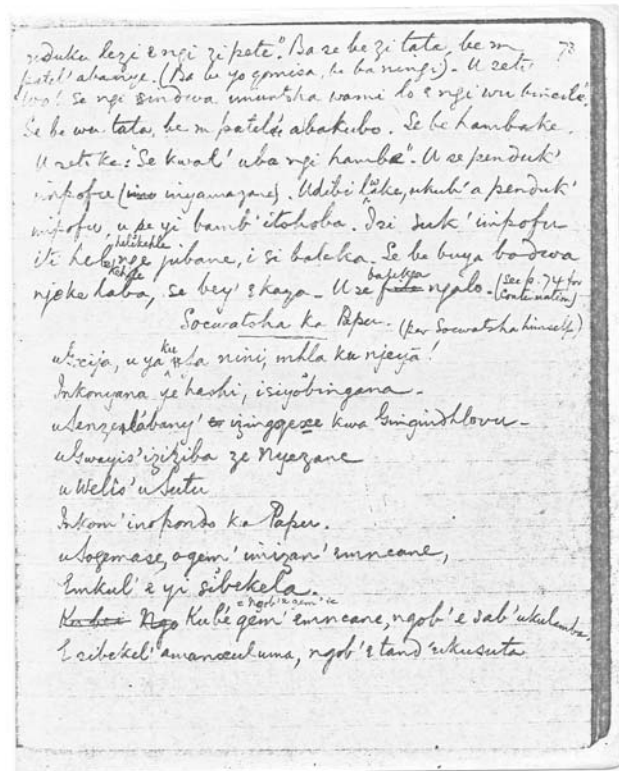
The three men had led what were in many ways quite different lives and had different motives for engaging in conversations about the past with Stuart. Ndukwana, who was of the Mthethwa people, was born in the Zulu kingdom in about 1838, at the end of Dingane's reign. He grew up in the reign of Mpande and, in his capacity as a messenger for the leaders of his community, made numerous visits to Zulu royal homesteads, where he came into contact with some of the leading figures in the kingdom.

It is not clear if he fought against the British on their invasion of the Zulu kingdom in 1879, but his community became caught up in the civil wars that broke out in the early 1880s as the kingdom disintegrated. In 1881 Ndukwana sought to secure a future for himself by joining the British colonial service in Zululand as a messenger and policeman. Stuart found him to be a knowledgeable and reliable informant on the past and a perceptive commentator on the present. Most of the historical information that Ndukwana imparted to Stuart was based on his own experiences in the reigns of Mpande (1840–72) and Cetshwayo (1872–79), and on what he learnt from fellow workers during his time as a policeman. His statements were largely about the workings of the Zulu political system. They were very probably shaped mainly by a desire, as he approached old age in a time of political and social uncertainty, to point up the value of the 'tribal' ways that sustained his access to land and his position as a homestead head.

Socwatsha, who was of the Ngongoma section of the Ngcobo people, was born in about 1852 and brought up in the colony of Natal. Here he lived and worked until 1883, when he made his way to Zululand and, like Ndukwana, joined the colonial police. He was able to acquire land under official auspices near the graves of the ancestral Ngongoma chiefs and here he had his home for the rest of his life, though his work as a policeman and later as an agent in the Natal Native Affairs Department took him to many parts of the colony.

Unlike Ndukwana, Socwatsha had no first-hand knowledge of life at the Zulu court and his knowledge of Zulu history seems to have been a product of his own enquiries. He also gave Stuart detailed information on the history of the Ngcobo people. He too

retained strong connections with the world of 'tradition', but, much more than Ndukwana, he was a product of the world of colonial Natal and to safeguard the rights of homestead heads like himself he looked not to the Zulu monarchy but to the colonial governments served by him.



A page of Stuart's rough notes of a conversation with Socwatsha in July 1918 (James Stuart Collection, Killie Campbell Africana Library)

Thununu was of the Gcabashe offshoot of the Qwabe people. In 1903 Stuart heard of him as a man with a great knowledge of the past and invited him to travel from his home near eShowe in Zululand to Durban. Though he was 89 years old, Thununu seems to have been keen to do so. There is not enough evidence in Stuart's notes for us to know exactly why, but it seems clear that Thununu invested great importance in wanting to have his historical knowledge put into writing by an important colonial official.

Travelling with a companion on foot and by train, he made his way to Stuart's home. Here he stayed for three weeks, holding often tense conversations with Stuart before and after Stuart's office hours and at weekends. Tense, because Stuart tried to get Thununu to tell him what he knew on early Zulu history and the reign of Shaka, while Thununu insisted that he knew little on these subjects. He made clear that he much preferred to talk about his own experiences as an *inceku*, or household attendant, in the court of Dingane in the 1830s. Fortunately for later historians, Stuart found Thununu's accounts interesting enough to record them in detail. They form one of the few

'insider' sources of evidence that we have on Dingane's reign.

28.5.03 (cont.). Dingana was mpofo, somewhat of the same build as Magidi (chief) but rather stouter & larger. He had turgid - of the iMlombi regiment of Senzangakhona. Was good-looking. He spoke the Quabed dialect, he said eg. inkonana for inkonyane, inama for inyama. He had a temper. He once beat me all over with a stick for sleeping with iingo thlo seikotani in the daytime. He, on one occasion, caused about 20 of his brothers to be put to death. Among these were: Ngogjana, Ndunge, Sompunga (not Jwides son of that name), Nziwe (I think Mpande), Ngugge, Nankwayinbo, Sondo, Mhlengana, Kilekile. These men were killed when I was 20 or 25 years old. He paid taxes to the Boers with izimpando ze zindhlovu, ie after he had been citised by the Boers. He was killed by the Swazis & Bonjeni. (Query, was not Mhlengana killed at a different time - earlier?). I did not follow him but Mpande. Dingana gave me 30 neimango skins and Mpande added 10 to these all of which were used for the purchase of umvelo. I had gone to Mpande to say my ingebula and was then advised not to rejoin Dingana as I would be killed at Mhlathuze before I could reach him. Consequently I stayed in my lot with Mpande. Mpande liked me. He gave me presents of cattle.

A sample from Stuart's transcription of his rough notes of a conversation with Thununu (James Stuart Collection, Killie Campbell Africana Library)

Moving beyond 'oral traditions'

Until quite recently, most people using recorded oral materials like those made by Stuart referred to them unproblematically as 'oral traditions'. Today many scholars still hold to this notion, but others are increasingly challenging it. The conventional view of 'oral traditions' is that they are bodies of more or less codified knowledge of the past handed on, often by specialists, from one generation to the next. They are seen as containing a 'core' of unchanging knowledge about the past that can be mined in the present for 'nuggets' of 'fact'.

Since the 1980s, critically-minded scholars have pointed out that in many African societies knowledge of the past is to a large extent not enshrined in formal narratives, but is made and remade in discussions between ordinary people in everyday social and political interactions (Cohen 1989; Hofmeyr 1993; Hamilton 2002; 2015). Some forms of 'history', like praise poems, may be made and transmitted by specialists, but many others are shaped and reshaped in often contested discourses about politics in the present.

Different 'versions' of the past are not just products of faulty memory or over-active imaginations, as scholars used to think. They are more the product, made within socially and politically set limits, of the different political agendas of narrators in both the past and the present. The particular agendas of the person who puts spoken knowledge of the past into writing also need to be taken into account.

Oral statements about the past made by African individuals to researchers like Stuart are coming to be

seen less as bodies of agreed 'facts' than as *ideas* about the past produced by the narrators under specific circumstances. Such individuals were once described as 'native informants' who purveyed established 'traditions' to the researcher; now they are regarded as producers of ideas about the past in their own right. Their discussions with researchers are seen as taking place not only in structured 'interviews', but also in less structured conversations in which they operated as autonomous interlocutors rather than as 'informants' bound by 'traditional' knowledge.

From this perspective, the notion of 'oral tradition', like the linked notion of 'tribe', stands in the way of understanding African history in the period before colonialism. It fits into the colonial view that the actions of Africans in the past were shaped primarily by their adherence to long-held, unchanging tribal beliefs and customs and that, apart from a number of remarkable Big Men like Shaka and Moshoeshoe, they were incapable of independent political action. Scholars are now beginning to read the record of the past made by James Stuart and his interlocutors for evidence that suggests otherwise. His collection of notes emerges less as a repository of fixed 'traditions' than as a living archive of active history.

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LIFE MEMBERSHIP FOR PROF. TREFOR JENKINS

Professor Trefor Jenkins has been made an Honorary Life Member of the SA Archaeological Society. He has been a loyal supporter of the society's Northern Branch for many years and was a popular speaker. He gave memorable lectures on the results of the Human Genome Project (HGP) and the Lemba people's claims to a Jewish identity.

Trefor was born into a coal mining family in Wales in 1932. He studied medicine at University of London's King's College and Westminster Hospital. In 1960 he emigrated to Zimbabwe (then Southern Rhodesia) to take up a post as medical officer at the Wankie Colliery Hospital. There he first came across sickle-cell anaemia, which stimulated his life-long interest in both haematology and genetics. He later moved to South Africa to work at a Durban hospital before accepting a position at the University of the Witwatersrand Medical School.

In 1965 he joined the SA Institute for Medical Research (SAIMR) as a pathologist. The transition to human genetics came in 1969, when he was appointed the head of the Human Sero-genetics Unit at the SAIMR and lecturer in human genetics in Wits' Anatomy Department. He was awarded an MD in 1973 and became a specialist pathologist (haematology) in the same year. When the new Chair of Human Genetics was created at Wits University in 1975, he became its first incumbent. He retired in 1998, becoming an Emeritus Professor and an Honorary Professorial Research Fellow in the Division of Human Genetics. He took an active interest in medical ethics and was appointed to a part-time post in the discipline at the Wits Medical School. He also played a major role in the establishment of the Institute for Human Evolution and acted as interim director from 2004 to 2009.

Pamela Küstner

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

During September 1888, Messrs Rudd and Stephens of Oudtshoorn found in the entrance chamber of the Congo Caves some ancient bones that have since disappeared. The bones did not find their way to the museums in Oudtshoorn, nor to the South African Museum [Iziko]. Does any reader know what may have happened to them?

It is interesting to note that 10 000 km to the north, in Derbyshire, England, some ancient bones were found contemporaneously in Rains Cave near Brassington. This find was reported in local English newspapers and a report found its way to the *Oudtshoorn Courant* the following month. Does any reader know of any 1888 connection between Derbyshire and Oudtshoorn?

Stephen Craven, Newlands. sacraven@mweb.co.za

ARCHAEOLOGY IN BRIEF

Ancient Roman cult temple. Archaeologists have uncovered what may be the oldest known Roman temple. The finding was made at Sant'Omobono church, which lies at the foot of Capitoline Hill, one of the most remarkable and least understood archaeological sites in Rome. Previous work has uncovered multiple layers comprising Middle and Late Bronze Age materials dating back to the 7th century BC, as well as substantial evidence of continuous cult activity beginning in the late 7th and early 6th centuries BC. The archaeologists dug down 5 m below the water line to reach the ruins of the temple, within which they found large numbers of votive offerings such as miniature versions of drinking vessels left by foreign traders. Today, the Tiber River is about 100 m away, but when the city was being created it flowed close to the temple and a bend in the river provided a natural harbour for merchant ships. *Ancient Origins*, 30/01/2014

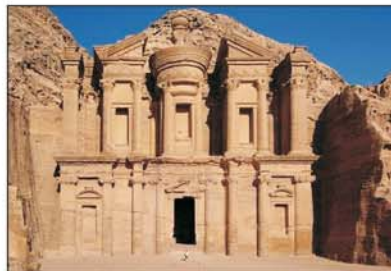
Mystery pharaoh found in Egypt. The remains of a previously unknown pharaoh who reigned more than 3 600 years ago have emerged from the desert in Abydos. The skeleton of Woseribre Senebkay, who appears to be one of the earliest kings of a forgotten Abydos Dynasty (1650–1600 BC), was found by a University of Pennsylvania expedition. The tomb dates to about 1650 BC, during Egypt's Second Intermediate Period, when the collapse of central authority gave rise to several small kingdoms. The tomb was found close to a larger royal sarcophagus chamber belonging to king Sobekhotep of the 13th Dynasty. The kings of the Abydos Dynasty placed their burials near the tombs of earlier Middle Kingdom pharaohs. *Discovery News*, 16/01/2014



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HISTORY'S LARGEST CONFRONTATION OVER ROCK ART PROTECTION

Or how to save our archaeological heritage

Robert G Bednarik

The Dampier Archipelago, located in a very thinly populated part of Australia, had been unoccupied up to 1964, ever since the terrible massacres of the Yaburara people in 1868 that resulted in their genocide. When mining companies proposed the establishment of a harbour and other facilities on another island in the region, Depuch Island, a party from the Western Australian Museum conducted an impact study, reporting the presence of about 5 000 petroglyphs (Ride and Neumann 1964). They also took a brief look at the Dampier Archipelago, finding only 200 motifs there (Crawford 1964: 56). This fateful mistake prompted the mining companies to establish a port (the largest in Australia), a pelletising plant, a town and an industrial estate on the main island of the archipelago, Murujuga. It has cost the Dampier rock art dearly, causing the destruction or removal of about 95 000 petroglyphs over the next 50 years (Bednarik 2006a). It ultimately led to the Dampier Campaign that has cost Western Australia in excess of \$30 billion.

The massive rock art and stone arrangement concentration at Dampier – the largest such monument on the planet – was rediscovered by me from 1967 to 1970, when I recorded 572 petroglyph sites, some of them numbering well in excess of 10 000 motifs. In all, the Dampier Archipelago is home to well over a million petroglyphs, but despite dozens of millions of dollars spent on archaeological surveys since 1980, no comprehensive estimates exist apart from my original work in the 1960s. This is because these surveys were conducted for corporate clients and dealt only with specific parcels of land. Besides, nearly all the results are unpublished and remain commercial property, negating the principles of academic freedom.

Witnessing the destruction of thousands of petroglyphs by industrial and other development, I began lobbying the Western Australian Museum in 1969, requesting the introduction of protection measures for the rock art. Rather than backing my proposal, the museum participated in the destruction by approving requests to demolish sites. For the next two decades I also found no support whatsoever for my strange notion that the country's largest cultural monument should be preserved. When around 1980 archaeologists began to profit from this destruction by working with or for the resource companies, I realised

the need for an organisation advocating the preservation of rock art in Australia, and in 1983 I founded the Australian Rock Art Research Association (AURA). It became the world's largest rock art organisation within five years, and with the establishment of the International Federation of Rock Art Organisations (IFRAO) in 1988, an independent and international agency was born that promoted the extraordinary idea that rock was worthy of protection – even in darkest Australia.

The establishment of these advocacy groups transformed the underlying conditions over the subsequent years, mainly by influencing public opinion in Australia, and during the early 1990s political views changed significantly in favour of the Dampier rock art and rock art protection generally in Australia. The



Fig. 1: Aviform petroglyphs in Gum Tree Valley, Murujuga, photographed at time of rediscovery in 1968

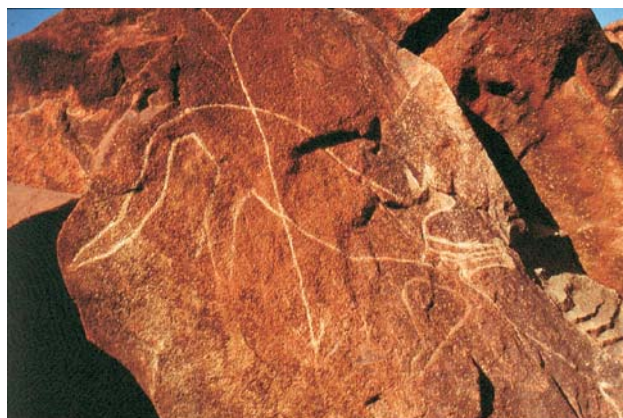


Fig. 2: Macropod, February 1968, Happy Valley. According to a traditional custodian, the animal is shown with a spear across the body and is dying.

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Fig. 3: Spirit being, Deep Gorge complex. The meaning of this is not available to uninitiated people, but they are permitted to view it.

country began to catch up with those regions of the world that had long been far advanced in that respect, such as France or Saudi Arabia. After I petitioned four federal ministers over Dampier, the Western Australian State Government decided that all future development at Dampier would take place at an alternative site called Maitland Heavy Industry Estate, west of Karratha. At last the rock art seemed safe from further losses. But in 2002 a new government reneged on the agreement and decided to place the largest industrial hub of the southern hemisphere on Murujuga Island.

By that time, IFRAO had already gained much experience in opposing governments around the world over rock art vandalism. In response to a plan for large international companies to establish 18 new operations on Murujuga, I launched the Dampier Campaign. Over the following years, I wrote hundreds of letters to Aboriginal communities, state and federal governments and their agencies, trade unions, embassies, proponent companies, major shareholders of those companies and the banks underwriting the greatest part of the development costs. This drove away 17 of the 18 companies that had planned to establish major operations at Dampier. I found that banks especially are most susceptible to the threat of public pressure and that without their support massive developments are often not possible. The one company that did establish an ammonia plant has recently been bankrupted by an Australian bank.

More importantly, the Dampier Campaign has had significant effects on government policies and public perception in Australia. It led to the formation of several advocacy groups for rock art and to extensive media awareness, fostered further by my book on the

campaign (Bednarik 2006b) and the documentary film *Sacred Stones*, which was seen by 12 per cent of the Australian population. The time was ready for the next step and I submitted the Dampier rock art for a National Heritage listing in March 2004. It took 39 months of wrangling and bitter struggle to overcome the opposition of a few companies (one of which threatened my assassination) and a recalcitrant Western Australian government, but in July 2007 Dampier was at last inscribed on the National Heritage List.

But still the future of the monument was not entirely secure. I had long been pursuing the establishment of a national park and nomination for World Heritage status (Bednarik 1994). For the latter, with the support and collaboration of Jean Clottes, the French rock art

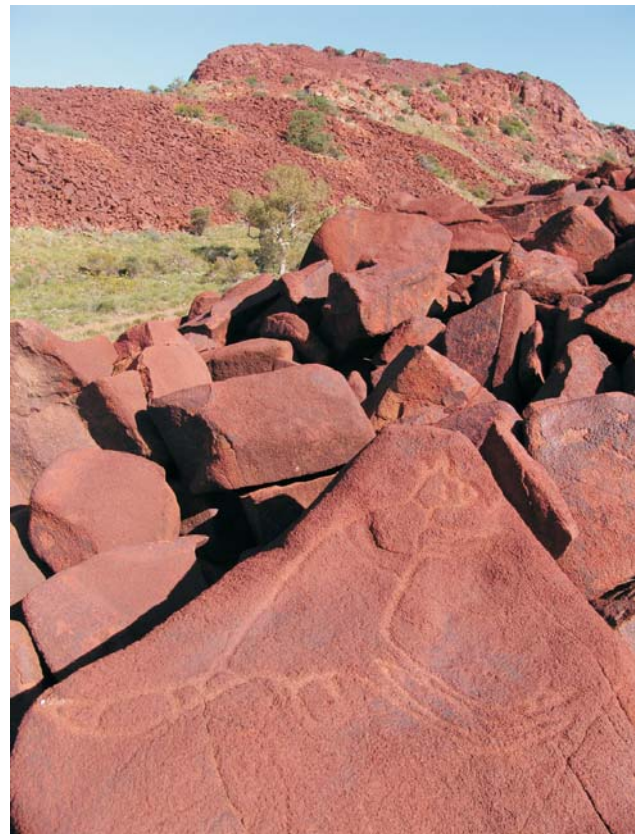


Fig. 4: Macropod petroglyph seen against the Pistol Range.

specialist, I met several times with the Cultural Heritage Branch of UNESCO in Paris. In 2008 a new government was elected in Western Australia led by Premier Colin Barnett, who, as leader of the opposition, had long supported my calls for protection of the Dampier rock art and megalithic monuments. I met with him in February 2009 to discuss the future of Dampier and presented my requests: that the unencumbered land of the archipelago be declared a national park, that the park be given an Aboriginal name, that it be managed and administered fully by Aboriginal officers, that the thousands of decorated boulders removed from their sites be repatriated, and – most importantly – that the land be given to the local indigenes.



Fig. 5: One of a small number of 'negative petroglyphs' at Murujuga, which is a rare technique of production. Kangaroo Valley.

It took almost another four years for these important changes to be implemented, but in January 2013 the government of Western Australia declared the Murujuga National Park. Occupying 44 per cent of Murujuga Island it would be managed by the Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation. The exiled rock art boulders were repatriated in 2014 at a huge cost to the corporate culprits. The covenant also includes the transfer of all non-industrial land at Dampier to the Aboriginal organisation as freehold land as part of an historic native title agreement. That agreement is already

perceived as a model for future issues concerning the ownership of cultural properties of great Aboriginal significance. Although the rest of Murujuga still needs to be incorporated into the national park in future years, this development met one of the principal objectives of the Dampier Campaign, as first outlined by me 20 years earlier (Bednarik 1994).

With these developments, the Dampier Campaign was concluded. It ended with a complete victory 12 years after its inception. I am no longer pursuing a World Heritage listing because the monument has been greatly compromised and the inevitable tourism such listings generate is unwelcome in this instance. However, other issues do remain, such as the need to contain and eventually phase out existing industries, and the vexatious acidic and particulate emissions those installations inflict on the monument.

The consequences of the confrontations over Dampier reverberated far beyond the immediately obvious outcomes. In purely monetary terms, the effects of the Dampier Campaign were in the order of 150 to 200 times greater than the Côa issue in Portugal in 1995, the first major confrontation between IFRAO and a government. Dampier therefore represents a particularly significant victory for IFRAO, as it demonstrates, in no uncertain terms, that the organisation has acquired the capability of defeating vested interests of almost any magnitude at apparently impossible odds. The experience gained in the protracted Dampier Campaign can now be applied to the next major confrontation over rock art protection, wherever in the

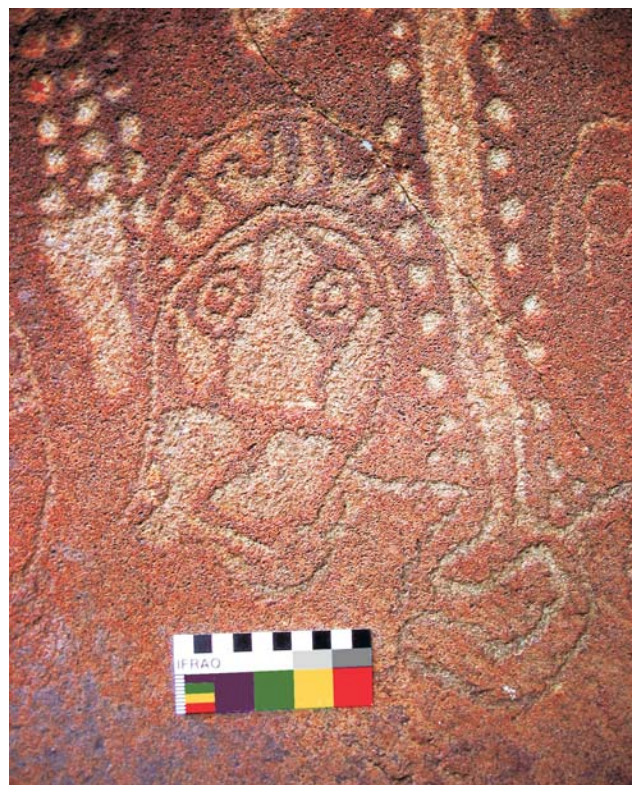


Fig. 6: The petroglyph called 'the face of genocide', another 'negative petroglyph', Withnell Bay.

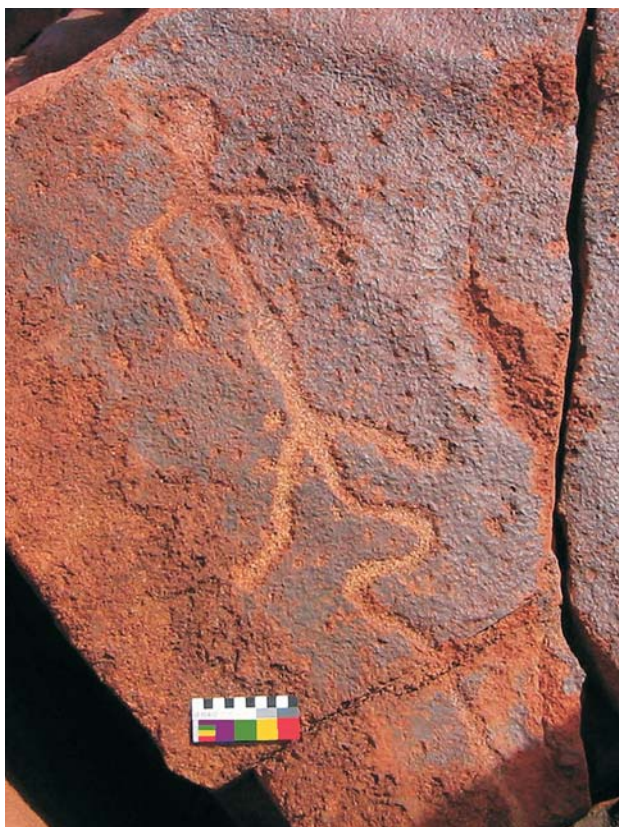


Fig. 7: Anthropomorph with extraordinarily long penis, Deep Gorge complex. The meaning is well known to initiated people but not available to others.

world it may occur. Today, IFRAO is the only international agency that pursues the protection of rock art effectively because it is entirely independent of any vested interests, unlike the member states of UNESCO. Indeed, IFRAO is the only effectual international organisation safeguarding rock art worldwide.

Acknowledgement

An earlier version of this article appeared in the *International Newsletter on Rock Art* (INORA), No. 70, 2014. This version has been updated by the author. It is being republished in *The Digging Stick* because the Dampier Campaign is a superb example of heritage protection.

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The South African Archaeological Society

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