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Source: *Goodwin Series*, Vol. 5, Prehistoric Pastoralism in Southern Africa (Jun., 1986), pp. 22-30

Published by: South African Archaeological Society

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3858142>

Accessed: 20-05-2019 18:58 UTC

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# CATTLE, SHEEP AND HORSES: A REVIEW OF DOMESTIC ANIMALS IN THE ROCK ART OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

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## ABSTRACT

*The distribution of rock paintings of cattle, sheep and horses in southern Africa is reviewed. Two areas, the south-western Cape and the Natal Drakensberg, are used as case studies to examine the impact of agropastoralists and pastoralists on hunter-gatherer communities. Paintings of domestic animals are shown to be not only shamanistic in conception but also the product of stressful conditions brought about by competition with immigrant groups.*

## Introduction

Paintings of domestic animals have long been recognized as an interesting, albeit enigmatic, feature of the rock art of southern Africa. Although widely distributed from Zimbabwe to the southern Cape, domestic animals are by no means common and are heavily outnumbered by paintings of wild animals. Their importance lies not in their actual numbers but in their pattern of distribution and in the fact that they undeniably mark the presence of pastoralist peoples in southern Africa. Whilst this has been recognized by many authors there has been a tendency in the past to regard paintings of domestic stock as a separate issue and to treat them as curiosities unrelated to the mainstream of southern African rock art. This paper sets out to demonstrate that far from being isolated phenomena, the paintings were an integral part of the social and cognitive system of the artists and relate specifically to situations in which hunter-gatherers interacted with herders, agropastoralists and, at a later stage, European settlers.

Several authors writing in the 1960s and early 1970s (for example Cooke 1965; Willcox 1966; Seddon & Vinnicombe 1967; Rudner & Rudner 1970) pointed to the uneven distribution of domestic animal paintings as evidence for the spread of a pastoralist economy. Similarly, the presence of domesticates in what is justifiably regarded as a hunter-gatherer painting tradition stimulated debate on the question of who was responsible for the art (see Rudner & Rudner 1959; Willcox 1960; Johnson *et al.* 1963). Furthermore, the patterning observed in the distribution of these paintings contributed substantially to theoretical models describing the arrival and dispersal of herders and their livestock in southern Africa. The most influential theory was proposed by Cooke (1965) who, using both painted and linguistic evidence, suggested that sheep herders migrated across Zimbabwe and Botswana to Namibia and then journeyed southwards to the Cape of Good Hope.

Despite these interesting speculations there was little else that could be gleaned from the paintings themselves and this line of research has been largely superseded by more conventional archaeological techniques and by information derived from historical and linguistic sources. With the increase in the number of excavated sites with dated horizons containing the remains of domestic animals, rock art virtually ceased to make any further contributions to understanding the origins of pastoralism in southern Africa. In the light of recent advances in the field of interpretation of rock art (see Lewis-Williams 1983a) and the current interest in 'frontier' studies (see Alexander 1984) it is useful to re-evaluate the role of domestic sheep, cattle, and horses in the rock art of southern Africa.

This paper reviews the distribution of paintings of domestic ani-

mals in southern Africa and discusses the art as a record of the interactions of people with different social and economic systems. Two areas where intensive site recording programmes have been undertaken are used as regional case studies. In the south-western Cape the impact of herders on the indigenous hunter-gatherer population is examined with reference to the paintings of fat-tailed sheep. In the Natal Drakensberg, paintings of cattle and horses are used to examine the different kinds of social relationships that hunter-gatherers may have experienced in their contacts with iron-using agriculturalists and immigrant Europeans.

## Distribution of Domestic Animals

At the sub-continental scale, any review of distribution patterns must rely almost entirely on published sources. Whereas some areas have been subjected to intensive recording programmes, many lack detailed records. Similarly inherent in the nature of rock art is the problem of the identification of the images as well as the consistency of the recorded information. With domestic animals the problem is particularly acute because of the difficulty of distinguishing them from wild species. Bearing this in mind we have only included those records that can be reasonably well authenticated. Our concern here is less with actual numbers of sites than with establishing, on a regional scale, those areas where paintings of domestic animals occur and, where possible, the reasons for such patterning.

## Sheep

Within the boundaries of the southern African subregion, that is to the south of the Zambezi and Kunene river systems, sheep paintings are restricted to certain broadly defined areas (Fig. 1). Even allowing for these localized concentrations, sheep paintings are by no means common and, more importantly perhaps, there is no area where paintings of domestic animals outnumber those of wild animals.

In Zimbabwe, only six sites with definite sheep paintings have been described (Goodall 1946, 1959; Cooke 1965; Tucker & Baird 1983). These are all confined to north-east Mashonaland and no sheep paintings have been located at Zimbabwe's other major rock art focus, the Matopos (Walker 1980). The lack of sheep paintings in the Matopos is interesting as in the model proposed by Elphick (1985), the formative area for dispersal of 'Khoi' herders is placed in nearby Botswana. Not all of the Mashonaland sheep paintings show the familiar fat-tailed variety. At Ruchero Cave in the Mtoko district (Fig. 2), there is a frieze with human figures alongside sheep with small tails, drooping ears and incurved horns (Goodall 1946, 1959). In contrast, the paintings at Ndobe Hills in the Mazoe district (Fig. 3) depict hornless sheep with enormous fat tails (Goodall 1946, 1959).

Suitable painting locations are scarce in the sandy terrain of Botswana and although scattered sites do exist in the eastern hardveld regions the only area with a substantial number of rock paintings is Tsodilo in north-western Ngamiland. Rock art surveys of this area (Rudner 1965, 1971; Cooke 1970; Rudner & Rudner 1970; Campbell *et al.* 1980) have not, however, revealed the presence of any sheep paintings although several sites with cattle have been recorded.

There are numerous rock art sites in Namibia but again very few

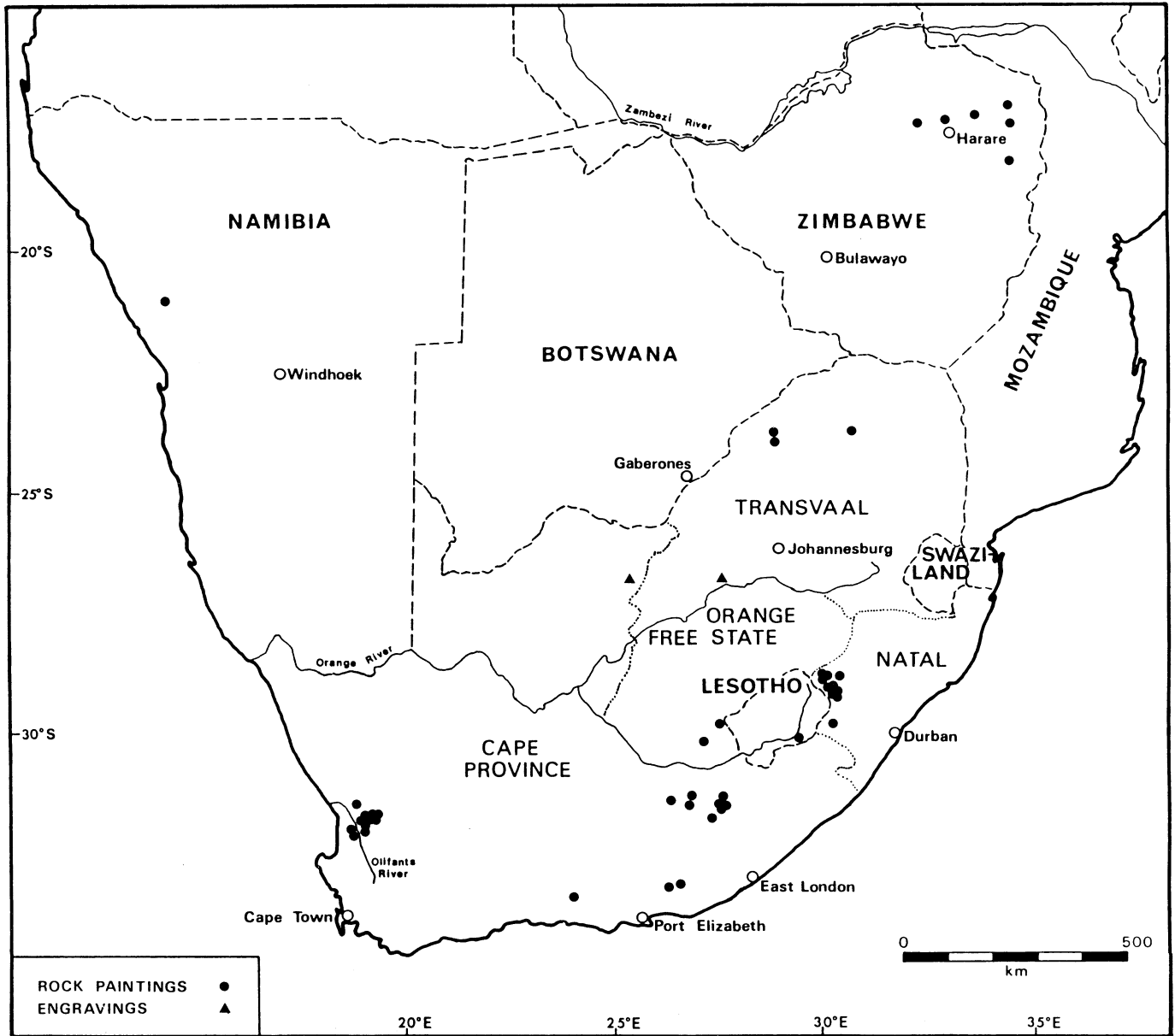


Fig. 1. Map showing the location of rock art sites with sheep in southern Africa.

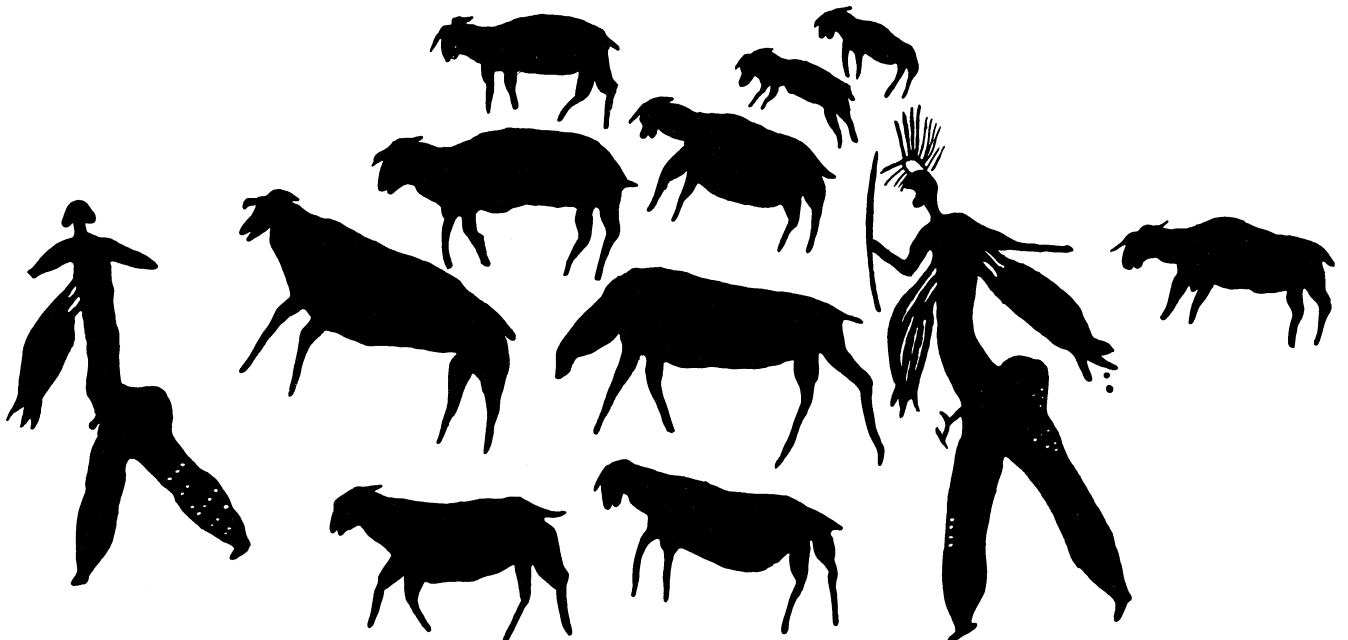


Fig. 2. Human figures and sheep with small tails. Part of a long frieze at Rucheru Cave, Mtoko, Zimbabwe. Redrawn from Goodall (1946:59).

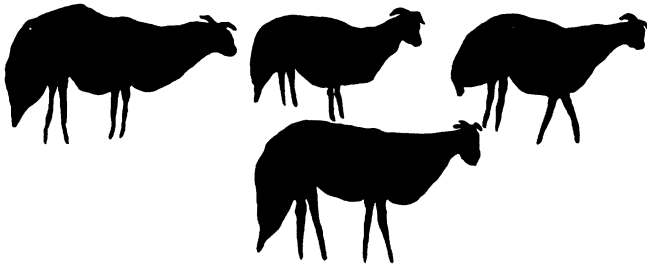


Fig. 3. Fat-tailed sheep at Ndobe Hills, Mazoe, Zimbabwe. The length of the group is 860 mm. Redrawn from Goodall (1946:60).

paintings of sheep. The only well known site is 'Sheep Shelter' in the Brandberg (Rudner & Rudner 1959, 1970; Viereck 1968). This shows a bichrome sheep with a fat tail together with a human figure apparently wielding two short sticks.

In the south-western Cape sheep are found in greater numbers with a total of 11 sites so far confirmed. In relative terms, however, they are a rare motif when one considers that they have been culled from a total of more than 2 000 recorded sites. The distribution of the images is of note as they are restricted to mountainous areas and no verifiable sheep paintings have been located in the coastal foreland where, historically, sheep were most commonly pastured.

Along the Fold Belt of the southern Cape as far east as Grahamstown the situation is much the same. Scattered through the area about a dozen sites with fat-tailed sheep are known (Tongue 1909; Van der Riet *et al.* 1940; Bleek & Stow 1930; Battiss 1948; Willcox 1963; Rudner & Rudner 1970). However there may be many more sites as this region has not been well explored.

Further east again, the Drakensberg region also has scattered paintings of fat-tailed sheep. More than a dozen sites are known, some of which have large numbers such as the 28 or more at Boschman's Klip (Pager 1975), 39 at Junction Shelter (Pager 1971) and the largest number known from any southern African site — 50 or more at Andover in the Dordrecht district (Battiss 1948; Willcox 1963; Cooke 1965). In the areas of the Drakensberg that have been intensely sampled, sheep comprise a very small proportion of the paintings as can be seen in Table 1 which lists the sheep as a percentage of the total number of animals recorded. However, in contrast to other regions, cattle and even horse paintings in the Drakensberg far outnumber those of sheep, a fact that will be discussed below.

Table 1. Frequency of sheep paintings in the Drakensberg area (shown as a percentage of the total number of animals recorded).

AREA	% SHEEP	REFERENCE
Barkly East	0,01	Lewis-Williams 1981
Natal Drakensberg	0,05	Mazel 1981
Ndedema	0,30	Pager 1971
Southern Drakensberg	0,08	Vinnicombe 1976

Paintings of sheep are also scarce in the Orange Free State and in the Transvaal. Where they do exist, they are often found in association with cattle paintings. This is true of sites at Ventershoek near Wepener (Battiss 1948) and at Kwartelfontein near Smithfield (Willcox 1963). Most of the Transvaal sheep sites are restricted to the Waterberg, an impressive example being the site at Dwaalhoek in the western Waterberg, which contains a frieze of large, white fat-tailed animals (Lee & Woodhouse 1970).

#### *Cattle and Horses*

Although paintings of cattle are far more numerous than those of sheep, the actual geographical range over which they are found is much smaller and they tend to be confined to more specific areas (Fig. 4). We estimate that over 75% of all cattle paintings in southern Africa are in fact located within an area of the eastern subcontinent between 28.33 S and 26.30 E. This area is centred on the Drakensberg and Lesotho but also includes parts of Natal, the north-eastern Cape and the southern Orange Free State.

Outside this area there are no large concentrations of cattle paintings and only isolated sites or groups of sites occur. In Zimbabwe, only five sites are known from Mashonaland, all in the vicinity of Harare (Izzett 1980) and, as yet, no sites have been confirmed in the Matopos (Walker 1980). Cattle paintings are rare in Botswana with the exception of the Tsodilo Hills where at least 12 sites are known (Campbell *et al.* 1980). In Namibia, only two definite sites have been recorded, both of which are located in the Brandberg (Viereck 1968).

Apart from the concentration in the Drakensberg and adjacent areas, very few cattle paintings have been recorded within the boundaries of South Africa. No verifiable paintings of cattle have been found in the south-western Cape. Some do exist in the Transvaal, notably in the Waterberg along with depictions of sheep (Rudner & Rudner 1970).

As well as cattle and sheep, there are also paintings of horses in the eastern block of the subcontinent described above (Vinnicombe 1976; Mazel 1981). As is discussed in some detail later, horses are in fact more numerous than cattle in the southern Drakensberg and East Griqualand although their numbers drop off sharply outside of these areas.

Another point of interest is that in the north-eastern Cape and the southern Orange Free State, paintings of cattle are often associated with what appear to be conflict scenes. Characteristic of these scenes are the hourglass-shaped Sotho shields carried by one or other of the groups of antagonists. These 'conflict' scenes may well relate to the Difaqane when large areas of eastern southern Africa experienced periods of upheaval and strife. Horses are notably absent from these scenes. When horses do occur in this area, they are primarily painted in association with what are obviously depictions of Europeans. While it may be tempting to suggest that the paintings associated with horses were executed at a later date than the conflict scenes, it is pertinent to note that horses were seen at hunter-gatherer camps in the southern Orange Free State and north-eastern Cape in 1809, well before the Difaqane period (Moodie 1838:42).

No obvious reason exists for the presence of cattle paintings in the Drakensberg area and their virtual absence elsewhere. Early travellers in the Cape Colony frequently mentioned large herds of cattle, while Smith (1985) suggests that cattle were present in small numbers in the western Cape before AD 850. The lack of paintings cannot, therefore, be attributed to the absence of domestic livestock in the area. It is worth noting, however, that the paintings of cattle are in areas where hunter-gatherers lived in large numbers well into the 1800s. These areas also experienced tremendous upheavals and periods of stress with the arrival of white settlers and the onset of the Difaqane in the first half of the 19th century. But again, while this may help to explain why paintings of domestic animals are persistently painted in some areas it does not shed any light on their absence elsewhere. Hunter-gatherers in the Cape certainly experienced periods of heightened stress in their relations with indigenous herders and, later on, with European settlers. The reaction to societal stress is discussed further in the case studies of the Natal Drakensberg and the south-western Cape.

#### *Engravings of Domestic Animals*

Although rock engravings of domestic animals are extremely rare, some examples have been recorded on the central plateau of South Africa. One of the few recognizable engravings of a sheep is located near Vryburg in the northern Cape (Willcox 1963, 1966; Fock & Fock 1984). This pecked engraving of a fat-tailed sheep is unusual in that it shows the animal in a frontal view. There are at least five more possible sheep engravings in the same area as well as a good example of a fat-tailed animal from near Klerksdorp (Willcox 1966).

Engravings of domestic cattle have been recorded at six sites in the northern Cape and include at least 15 identifiable animals (Fock 1970, 1972). They are all located south of the Orange River apart from one example in the Taung district. Both pecked and outline engravings occur, the majority showing cattle in profile with long pointed horns.

#### **Discussion**

In this section two case studies are presented. The first deals with paintings of fat-tailed sheep in the south-western Cape, and the second with paintings of cattle and horses in the Natal Drakensberg.

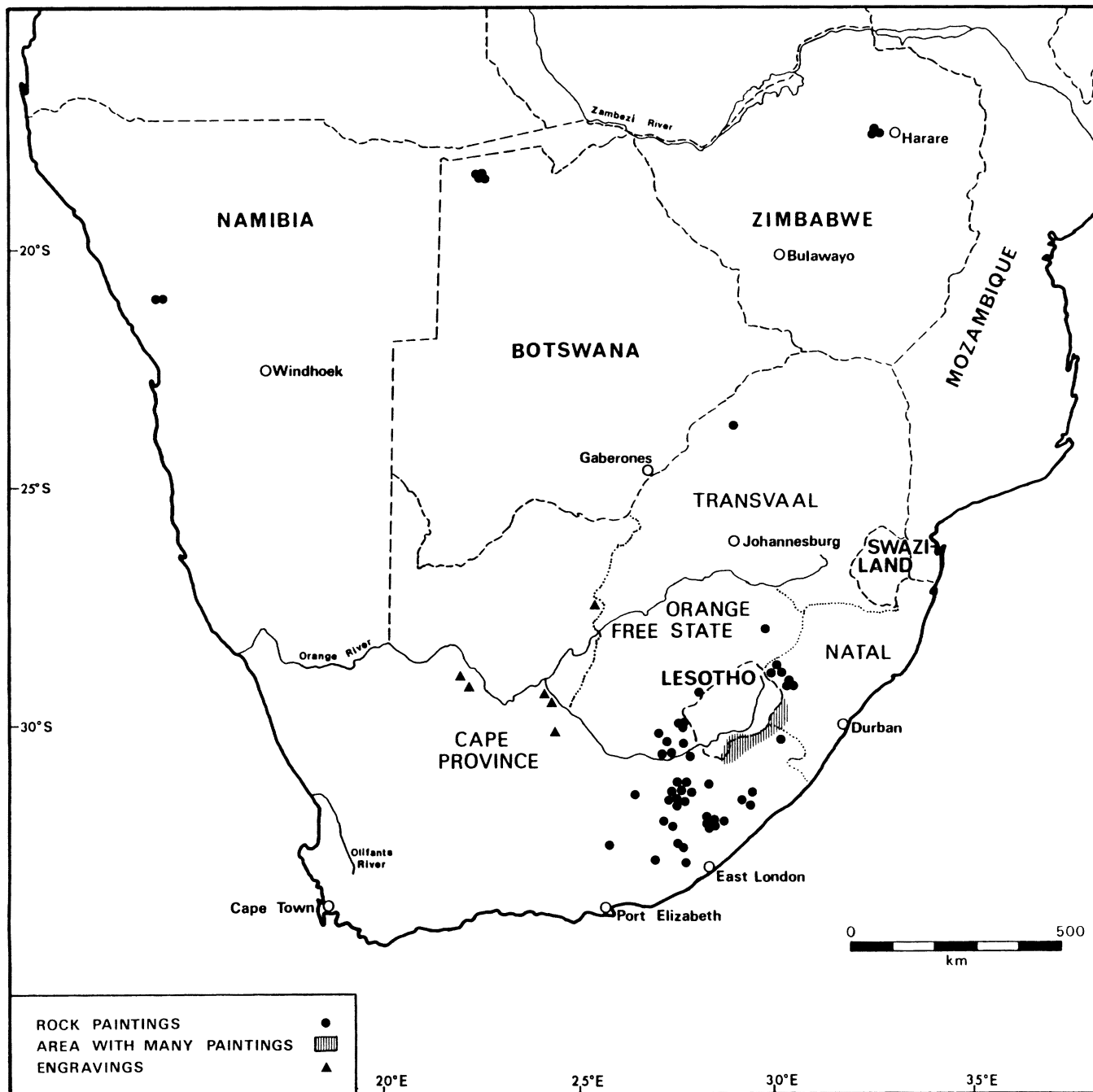


Fig. 4. Map showing the location of rock art sites with cattle in southern Africa

#### *Fat-tailed sheep in the south-western Cape*

To date, only 11 sites containing clearly identifiable paintings of fat-tailed sheep have been recorded in the south-western Cape. The sites are widely distributed with no particular focus, although many of the paintings are located in the vicinity of the Olifants River and the Pakhuis Pass, both of which are areas notable for their high density of rock paintings.

The majority of sheep are painted in monochrome red although examples of both yellow and white monochromes are also present. At Kriedouwkrans, on the Olifants River, there is an interesting exception to this rule. Several black paintings of sheep, drawn in outline only, are placed alongside the more common plain red animals. More typical of the south-western Cape sheep paintings are the examples from Kransvlei (Johnson 1957), also on the Olifants River, and from the Putslaagte near the Doorn River (Fig. 5). Characteristic features shown in these paintings are the floppy ears and the distinctive fat tail. The most spectacular site in the south-western Cape is undoubtedly at Boskloof, near Clanwilliam, where a group of more than 20 sheep are depicted in fine detail (Johnson & Maggs 1979).

Apart from their importance as markers of a pastoralist presence, the sheep paintings are often less informative than the human figures

grouped with them. Some of the human figures have unusual, but very specific, lobed objects hanging from the upper parts of their bodies, usually at the front. These are clearly visible on the human figures shown in Fig. 5 from the Putslaagte and are duplicated in another site on the Watervalsrivier in the western Cape. More remarkable, however, is the close similarity between these figures and the ones shown in Fig. 2 from Zimbabwe.

It could be argued that these objects represent an unusual form of kaross or a sheepskin cloak but Goodall (1946) suggests that the Zimbabwe paintings actually document herders carrying heavy skin bags. Whereas this attractive notion is hard to substantiate, it is intriguing that human figures associated with sheep, from widely separate localities, appear to display similar items of material culture. The idea of skin bags may not, however, be entirely misplaced as there are several reports by early travellers of 'Hottentots' using skin containers to curdle milk. Schreyer, writing of the Cape of Good Hope in 1668, describes how "they put the milk into a leather sack with the hair inside, in which there is a small hole below, which they tie up" (Raven-Hart 1971:130). Similar observations regarding the use of animal skin bags are also found in the 18th century accounts of Kolb (1968:172) and Sparrman (1977:35).

One question that has to be addressed is why the artists recorded



Fig. 5. Putslaagte, Doorn River, south-western Cape. Part of a panel with human figures and fat-tailed sheep. The predominant colour is orange-red; areas bounded by solid lines are in white; stippled areas represent parts of images which have been degraded.

the presence of domestic animals. If, as Lewis-Williams (1981, 1983a) has convincingly shown, rock art is a reflection of a widespread cognitive system, then domestic animals must presumably be a part of this system. Huffman (1983) does in fact make this connection when discussing the paintings of sheep in Zimbabwe. Referring specifically to the paintings at Ruchero Cave, Mtoko (Fig. 2), he suggests that meanings other than people simply driving sheep are present and that features displayed by some of the human figures, such as hairiness, snout faces, lines from the head and erect hair, are more likely to indicate a trance component.

None of these features are obvious in the south-western Cape sheep friezes. However, some of the human figures in association with the sheep display pronounced elongation of the arms or the torso. These exaggerated body proportions probably symbolize the feeling of attenuation said to be experienced by medicine men in trance (Katz 1982; Lewis-Williams 1983b).

The Watervalsrivier panel also includes a remarkable human figure whose legs are shown as two splayed zigzag lines (Fig. 6). Katz (1982:235), discussing self portraits of trance healers and non-healers among the !Kung, notes that "in sharp contrast to the non-healer's drawings, the healer's violate the ordinary rules of anatomy." Further, experienced healers used spiral and zigzag forms in their self portraits, "reminiscent of the descriptions of rapidly boiling and rising n/um" (Katz 1982:236). Such an explanation seems particularly appropriate for the Watervalsrivier figure, as suggested by Lewis-Williams (1986) for similar paintings elsewhere.

Early travellers record that the sheep encountered in the Cape were notable for their fat tails and hairy coats. Epstein (1971:Vol. 2) considers most of the southern African sheep of pre-colonial times to have been of the fat-tailed variety and stresses the importance of a fat producing animal to the pastoral peoples of Africa. The sheep themselves may have had symbolic significance to the painters by virtue of their high fat content emphasized by the anomalous amount of fat contained in their tails (Huffman 1983). Fat is a symbol of potency for the !Kung who consider that one of the most important attributes of the eland, especially the male, is the large quantity of fat stored around its breast and heart (Lewis-Williams 1981). Furthermore the !Kung make a direct association between the 'fatness' of the eland and that of a girl at puberty (ibid.), underlining the equation of fatness and well being.

It could of course be argued that sheep paintings are the work of herders rather than hunter-gatherers. Whereas this is not impossible,

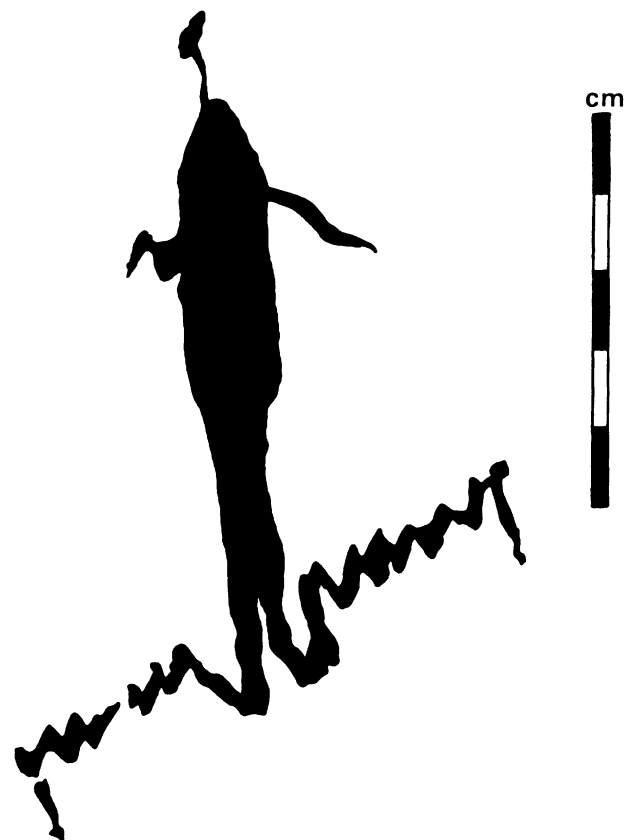


Fig. 6. Teekliphuis, Watervalsrivier, south-western Cape. Human figure from a panel which also includes fat-tailed sheep. Colour, mustard yellow.

the evidence suggests that images of domestic animals are not separable from the general corpus of paintings. At all sites so far discovered in the south-western Cape, sheep are painted using the fine line technique normally used to depict wild animals. They are often painted in similar manner to small antelope, using the outline and infill technique described by Johnson (1957), and are never

found in isolation but are incorporated within panels containing a range of other motifs including wild animals. Furthermore, as Van Rijssen (1984) points out, the majority of sheep paintings in the south-western Cape do not occur in places suitable for grazing flocks of animals and are not found in areas where herders were encountered from the 17th century onwards.

A similar situation applies in the southern Cape where the majority of sites with sheep paintings are spread along the Cape Fold Belt towards the eastern Cape. The distribution of these paintings conforms approximately to the area occupied by pastoralists during the early colonial era. Again there is a dearth of cattle paintings in this region in direct contrast to the Drakensberg where both cattle and horses are relatively common. Although sheep paintings are spread fairly thinly over a large part of the subcontinent, cattle paintings are concentrated within a clearly defined area. S. Hall (this volume) clarifies this pattern. Paintings of cattle are found in the Winterberg and Elandsberg area and further north in the vicinity of Bamboesberg and Queenstown. There are, however, no cattle paintings recorded south of the Adelaide-Fort Beaufort road where the majority of sheep paintings are found.

This suggests that sheep and cattle paintings relate to different periods of painting or were a response to different sets of prevailing conditions. The most plausible explanation for the sheep paintings in the southern and western Cape is that they reflect an earlier contact situation when hunter-gatherers were living in the same general area as herders. Sheep must have been an attractive proposition to hunter-gatherers as an easy source of meat and conflict situations probably developed. Interestingly, no scenes of conflict that include sheep have been recorded in the art, although scenes of aggression do exist in other painted contexts.

In the south-western Cape it is suggested (Manhire 1984; Manhire *et al.* 1984) that a move away from open veld locations occurred as a direct result of the introduction of a pastoralist economy and the domination of low lying areas by people with domestic stock. After about AD 100 (A. B. Smith, pers. comm.) coincident with the appearance of pottery, the focus of hunter-gatherer settlement shifted towards the Cape Fold Belt mountains; a change which is registered by the appearance of numerous bedding and ash deposits in small cave and shelter sites. Almost without exception these sites are complemented by paintings. The majority of sheep paintings are found in the mountains, in these types of context, and are best viewed as belonging to this period.

#### Cattle and Horses in the Natal Drakensberg

Earlier, the concentration of horses and cattle in the Natal Drakensberg and adjacent areas was highlighted. In this section close attention will be paid to these particular paintings, the regional distribution of which shows clear patterning. No paintings of horses are known from the area between northern Giant's Castle and Royal Natal, an area which has in excess of 15 000 paintings. Between Giant's Castle and Bushman's Nek, on the other hand, Mazel (1981) recorded 135 horses and Vinnicombe (1976), in her analysis of 150 sites, recorded 558 horses. The area studied by Vinnicombe actually includes some sites studied by Mazel as well as sites in East Griqualand and on farmland adjacent to the southern Drakensberg. In Vinnicombe's (1976) sample, horses accounted for 66% of the domestic animals, a figure which closely agrees with the 60% for horses obtained by Mazel (1981). Horses, therefore, are not only present in the southern Drakensberg and absent from the north, they are also the most commonly painted domestic animal.

The distribution of cattle is similar to that of horses. Although present in both the northern and southern Drakensberg, they exist in far greater numbers in the latter. Pager (1971) recorded 14 cattle in the Ndedema Gorge and a further 20 in the rest of his Cathedral Peak/Cathkin Park research area. Mazel (1981) recorded no cattle outside of Pager's (1971) research area between Giants Castle and Royal Natal. Three sites in the vicinity of Royal Natal have cattle paintings. At two sites only two cattle were painted, and at the third about ten. In the southern Natal Drakensberg, on the other hand, Mazel (1981) recorded close on 100 cattle, and Vinnicombe (1976) in her geographically more extensive survey of 150 sites, recorded 242 cattle.

Beyond the differences in the number of cattle paintings in the northern and southern Drakensberg, there is a clear stylistic distinc-

tion. The northern cattle are mainly black, though some are white, and are characterized by horns painted in a neatly twisted perspective, often at 90 degrees to the body. A localized stylistic manifestation has been recognized at two sites close together in the vicinity of Royal Natal, where there are grey cattle. At one of these sites (eBusingata Shelter), the cattle have been outlined in white and have grey infill. In the south, by contrast, a greater proportion of cattle have been painted in black than have other animals, but there are equal, if not more, cattle painted in the traditional dark reds, bright vermilion or orange. Another distinguishing feature is that the southern cattle often display patterned hides, typical of the Sanga group of cattle (Fig. 7). The horns of the southern cattle are sometimes depicted in twisted perspective as in the north, but also tend to be shown side on. The association of cattle with horses, geographically and stylistically in the south, further differentiates the southern cattle from those in the north.

Horses were introduced in large numbers into Natal in the late 1830s whereas hunter-gatherer occupation of the Natal Drakensberg, save for a handful of survivors, was terminated by the late 1870s. It is, therefore, not unreasonable to assume that the paintings of horses and some, if not most, of the associated cattle were executed over a 40-year period. Vinnicombe, on the basis of her archival and painting research, argues for an even narrower time range for the majority of these paintings. She suggests (1976:158) that it is unlikely "that paintings on the Natal side of the escarpment are of post 1870 date, and the majority must have been executed prior to 1850."

It is impossible to provide an equally precise dating for the cattle paintings in the north but some comments are possible. The absence of horses suggest that they predate the late 1830s. According to Wright (1971:16), in 1822 the highveld areas began to experience the effects of the Difaqane, and for the following five or six years the Upper Tugela area experienced severe devastation. Although, as Wright (1971) argues, the hunter-gatherers, by virtue of their sophisticated knowledge of exploitable veldkos, would have been better able to survive in this area than other people, it is likely that they too evacuated decimated areas. However, whether they remained in these areas or evacuated them, it does not appear that large numbers of hunter-gatherers were resident in the northern Drakensberg after the Difaqane. Support for this suggestion comes from study of the sources of raiding parties in Natal between 1845 and 1872. Of the eight raids that occurred in the vicinity of the northern Drakensberg, only one inconclusive report mentions the driving of sheep into the nearby hills (Wright 1971). Other reports indicate that the raiders came from "the interior", the south or "Basutoland" (Wright 1971). It is thus tempting to conclude that the paintings of cattle in the northern Drakensberg were executed prior to the 1830s.

The earliest evidence for cattle in the Tugela Basin is about AD 550 in the middle reaches (Maggs 1980). By about AD 1300, cattle-keeping farmers moved into the grassland areas of Natal on a permanent basis whereas previously they may have moved their cattle between the grassland and thornveld areas on a seasonal basis. It is thus possible that paintings of cattle were done any time after AD 600, but more likely after AD 1300.

If the suggested chronology of domestic animal paintings in the northern and southern Drakensberg is correct, then the question arises as to why there are so few paintings in the north and so many in the south. To answer this question, we need to refer back to the reasons why people painted. The view taken here is that the paintings carry symbolic meaning and can best be understood within what has been loosely phrased the 'trance hypothesis' (Yates *et al.* 1985). Lewis-Williams (1981, 1982, 1985) has convincingly argued that the paintings are shamanistic, and has clearly illustrated their connection with trance. Among the tasks shamans perform are the maintenance of social relations, the promotion of economic activity by, for example, guiding antelope into ambushes and controlling rain (Lewis-Williams 1985) and the maintenance of sound links between bands through 'out of body travel' (Lewis-Williams 1982, 1985). Sickness is seen as socially derived, and it is interesting to note that in trance dances quarrelling men are normally placed next to each other. "The importance of the shaman's art can therefore hardly be overestimated. It was not a luxury indulged in leisure time to provide pleasure and relaxation. Rather this remarkable aesthetic achievement was at the very heart of the functioning of San society" (Lewis-Williams 1985:59).



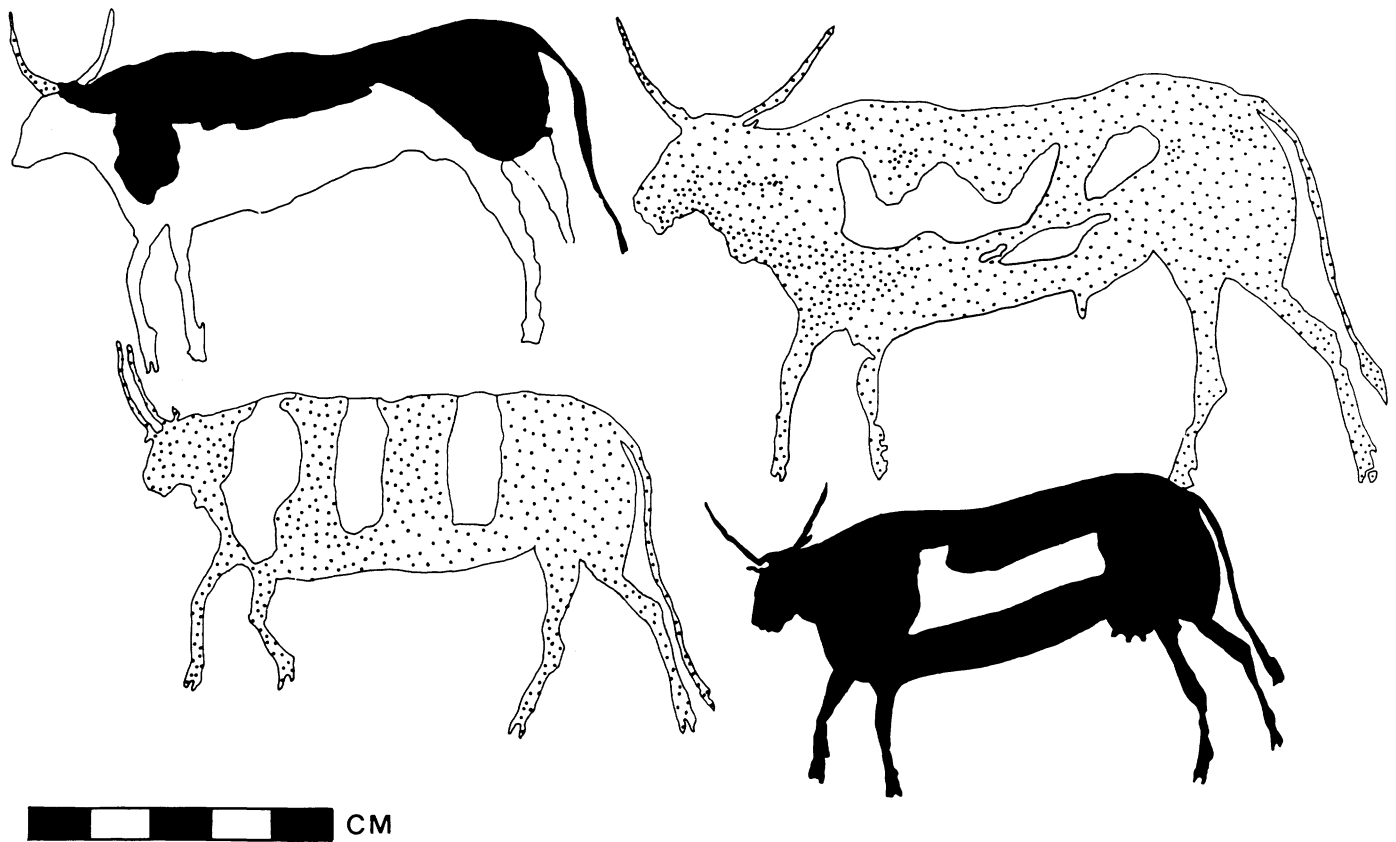


Fig. 7. Mpongweni, southern Natal Drakensberg. Part of a panel with many cattle. Colours, red, white and mottled blue-white.

Further insights into the relationship between the 'functioning of San society' and trance performance is provided by Guenther's research in the Ghanzi District of Botswana. "As the tensions and pressures in the farm Bushmen's everyday existence have grown so has the importance of the ritual through which it is partially alleviated. Ghanzi people observe that there has been a rise in trance dance performances over the last decade . . . Not only have dance performances increased in incidence but the ritual has also become more elaborate and more esoteric and the role of the shaman-dancer more specialized" (Guenther 1976:50). Johnson (1982:406) has further commented that "intensification of ritual, however, may signal a system in trouble rather than one doing particularly well. Conversely, absence of elaborate ritual need not be taken as evidence of a benighted population so occupied with a struggle for subsistence that they have no time for more 'intellectual' affairs."

The implication of this understanding of the role of the shaman, trance performance and the paintings for the question posed earlier, is clear. That the San in the southern Drakensberg experienced great stress and disharmony between 1840 and 1880 is beyond doubt. Lewis-Williams (1984:325) has already commented that "it seems that when the new disruptive element entered their lives, the San used their traditional rituals in an attempt to control the incursions and depredations of the white settlers." If, therefore, as amongst the 'farm Bushmen' of Ghanzi, stress is alleviated through increased ritual activity, and a close connection between the paintings and ritual activity existed, then the numbers of paintings of domestic animals and historic scenes becomes explicable. The trance element is clearly visible in many of these paintings. We note, however, that the absence of overt trance elements in these paintings cannot be taken as an indication of their not being trance related. Lewis-Williams (1984) has already drawn attention to the trance elements in the Beersheba paintings which contain mainly cattle, horses and men (presumably British and/or Boers) firing at fleeing figures. Of note here is the apparent trance dancer on the right of the scene. Similarly, the Bamboo Mountain stock raid scene (Vinnicombe 1976:45, 47) shows a rain animal in association with cattle and horses. Immediately adjacent to this, in the so-called 'Bushman encampment', there is at

least one clapping figure and two animal figures holding sticks and appearing to be dancing.

Applying the same understanding to paintings of the northern Drakensberg, it would appear that hunter-gatherers may have experienced a lower order of stress in their relationships with the cattle keeping farmers who occupied the grasslands after AD 1300 than their counterparts in the southern Drakensberg from the 1830s onwards. It seems remarkable that a period of 40 years in the south generated close on 1 000 paintings of horses and cattle, whereas in the north over 500 years of contact with farmers produced fewer than 50 cattle paintings. In this respect, the paintings suggest that a far less disruptive interaction took place between hunter-gatherers and farming communities prior to the Difaqane in the 1820s.

### Conclusion

In this paper we have reviewed the distribution of domestic animals in southern Africa and considered the implications of the various patterns described in the text. We have shown that domestic animals cannot be divorced from the general corpus of paintings and are, in fact, often associated with elements such as trancing figures which link them with the shamanistic interpretations of Lewis-Williams.

Following Guenther (1976), we recognize that increased stress may well have led to a heightening of ritual behaviour which, in turn, may have affected not only the amount of painting carried out but also the content of the art. Under these circumstances, with the greater need to protect the integrity of the group, shamans may have assumed a more powerful role in the society as a whole. This is certainly the case among the Ghanzi 'farm Bushmen' today who, although they do not paint, have elaborated their ritual trance performances in an attempt to cope with adverse conditions. In both the south-western Cape and the Drakensberg, one of the responses of hunter-gatherers to stressful situations, such as those engendered by competition with immigrant groups, appears to have been an increase in the tempo of painting coupled with the development of a more complex form of imagery. Apart from this parallel development in the art, the actual nature of the interactions between



indigenous hunter-gatherers and groups with different economic and social systems was very different in each area.

In the south-western Cape, paintings of domestic animals are a very small component in the history of these interactions. There are no verifiable paintings of cattle and comparatively few sheep. Furthermore, there are very few obvious conflict scenes and none, to our knowledge, which involve domestic animals. Similarly, overt trance associations are much less demonstrable in the western Cape than in the Drakensberg although the tradition of the art is undoubtedly shamanistic (Yates *et al.* 1985). The impact of pastoralism is, however, clearly visible in the changes in settlement pattern which occurred subsequent to the introduction of pottery and the appearance of domestic animal bones in sealed deposits. After about 1700 BP there was a systematic evacuation of open site locations which coincided with the appearance of numerous bedding and ash deposits in small cave and shelter sites in the mountains (Manhire 1984; Manhire *et al.* 1984). We suggest that the intrusive nature of the pastoralist occupation of lowland areas increased the levels of stress among residual hunter-gatherer bands and elicited both ecological and social responses, the most obvious of these being residential relocation and intensification of painting (Parkington *et al.* in prep.).

Another way of viewing the interactions between pastoralists and hunter-gatherers is in terms of a series of 'frontiers' between different economic systems. Alexander (1984) makes a distinction between 'moving frontiers' where farming societies (or their technology which includes domestic animals and plants) are still expanding into new areas, and 'static frontiers', where the process of expansion has ceased. The moving frontier is further divided into two phases of activity. The first of these is a pioneering phase in which small groups settle new areas and exert a wide, but not necessarily disruptive, influence over indigenous hunter-gatherers. This is followed by a denser phase of occupation in which farmers are likely to enter into long-term relationships with hunter-gatherers.

In the south-western Cape the appearance of pottery and domestic animal bones in Later Stone Age contexts may well mark the end of the expansionist phase. Elphick (1985) suggests that the basic similarity between hunter-gatherer and herder lifestyles would have led to conflict over resources. This may have led to the changes in settlement patterns described earlier and have initiated a series of long-term relationships between pastoralists and hunter-gatherers that persisted into the historical era.

In the Drakensberg the situation is considerably more complex with a long period of contact existing between hunter-gatherers and farmers before the system was transformed by the arrival of Europeans. Whereas domestic animal paintings are scarce in the south-western Cape they are relatively common in the Natal Drakensberg and, significantly, many are attributable to the period of European colonization. The pattern of distribution is also informative as amongst the 15 000 or so rock paintings recorded in the northern Drakensberg, between Giant's Castle and Royal Natal, the number of domestic animals is insubstantial. By contrast, cattle and horses are fairly common in the southern Drakensberg and the combination of domestic animals, conflict scenes and trance elements is unique in the rock art of southern Africa. The evidence suggests that the long period of contact between hunter-gatherers and agropastoralists in the northern Drakensberg was less stressful than the shorter, but far more dramatic, interaction with European colonists in the southern Drakensberg.

These two case studies show that although rock art images can be used as indices of social relationships, the precise nature of these relationships is as yet poorly understood. Certainly the only valid avenue to understanding the paintings of domestic animals is within the context of Lewis-Williams's trance hypothesis and it is obviously inadequate merely to read them as markers of pastoral migration routes.

Notwithstanding these conclusions we acknowledge that a number of questions remain unanswered. We need to know more about the process whereby new elements are incorporated into the painted record. If rock art functions, at least in part, as a dynamic response to changing social conditions, then what is the mechanism by which motifs such as fat-tailed sheep and domestic cattle become part of the conceptual system of the artists? Also, can these animals be equated, at any level, with the more commonly represented wild species?

Perhaps the most intriguing problem, to which no satisfactory

explanation is forthcoming, is the disparity in the distribution of domestic animal paintings. Whilst the appearance of horses in the art of the southern Drakensberg has some historical validity, the absence of cattle in areas such as the south-western Cape remains a mystery. These, and other questions, can perhaps only be answered with any satisfaction when the relationship between trance, stress and the medium of painting is better understood.

#### Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Simon Hall and Leon Jacobson for providing information on the location of sites; Royden Yates and the editors of the volume, Martin Hall and Andrew B. Smith, for comments on the text. The tracings of Putslaagte, Watervalsrivier and Mpongweni were done by Royden Yates.

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