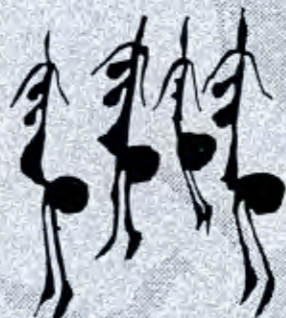


# THE ROCK ART OF THE LIMPOPO-SHASHE CONFLUENCE AREA



A Contribution Towards National and World Heritage Site Status  
for the Mapungubwe Area

Edward B. Eastwood  
Palaeo-Art Field Services  
2001



**NORAD**

DIREKTORATET FOR  
UTVIKLINGSSAMARBEID  
NORWEGIAN AGENCY FOR  
DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

Prepared for the Dept of  
Environmental Affairs & Tourism

Report funded by NORAD





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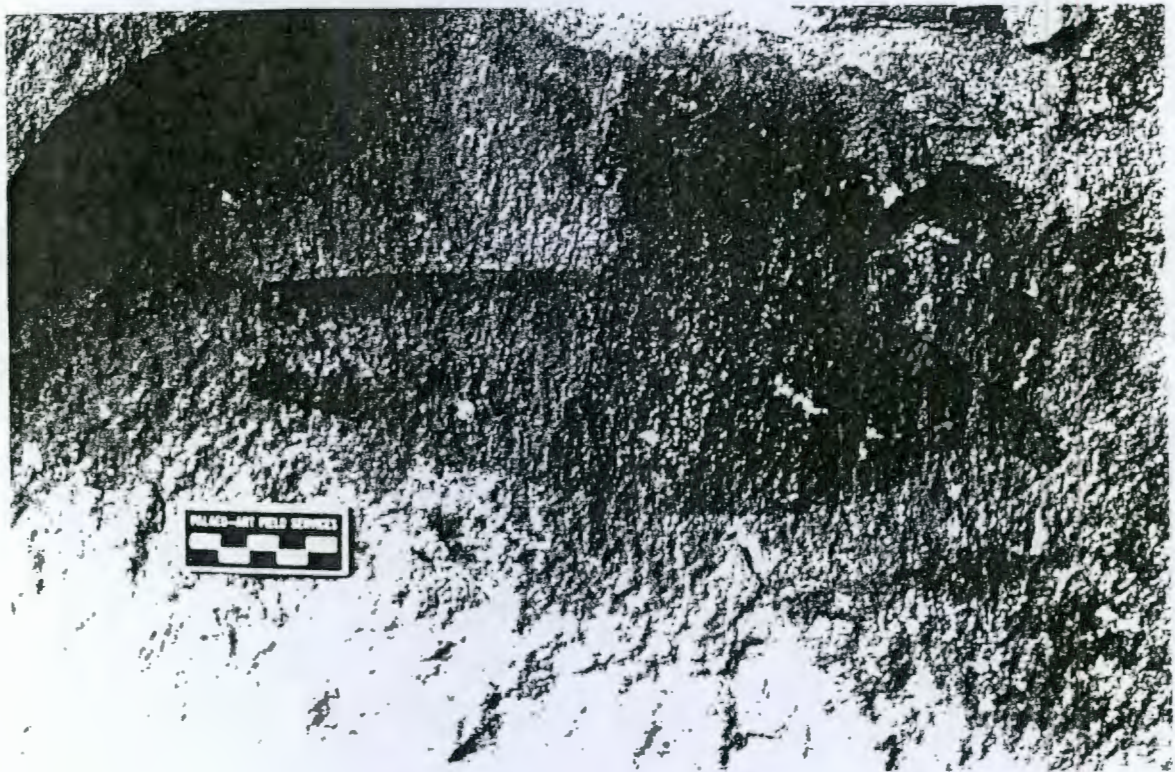
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Frontpiece: San painting of a fish outlined in green-blue pigment. Mapato Shelter, LSCA

## CONTENTS

Summary and Acknowledgements	1
Introduction	2
The geographical context of the LSCA	3
The historical context	8
Traditions and authors of LSCA rock art	10
The LSCA rock art survey	14
Numerical data	22
Description of ten sites in the LSCA	27
Rock art and the landscape	57
LSCA rock art in a southern African context	61
Conclusion	69
References	71
The LSCA: recent research and unpublished survey reports	76

## Summary

Although rock art studies of the Limpopo-Shashe Confluence Area (LSCA) began in the 1960s, it was not until the 1990s that the area was methodically surveyed by members of Palaeo-Art Field Services. Contrary to initial expectations, LSCA rock art turned out to be diverse and complex, and holds as much potential for understanding Khoisan cosmology as do the better-known areas of rock art in the Matopos, Brandberg, Drakensberg and Cederberg. In this report the geographical and historical context of the rock art is discussed, quantitative results of the LSCA survey are provided, the relationship between rock art and landscape is examined, and intra- and inter-regional comparisons are made. Finally, the significance of LSCA rock art is discussed. A reference list of recent research articles and survey reports is provided.

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Little mention of the rock art of the region was made after that time until the 1950s when Clarence van Riet Lowe (1952) published a catalogue of rock art sites in South Africa; he listed nine for the LSCA. This was followed in the 1960s by a brief study of nine sites by Murray Schoonraad (1960), and by descriptions of certain sites by Alex Willcox (1963), Cran Cooke and Harry Simons (1969). Most of these early investigators noted the co-occurrence of paintings and engravings, and were particularly intrigued by paintings of enigmatic Y-shapes and 'animal-skin' motifs.

Later, in the 1970s, Harald Pager conducted fieldwork on the South African side of the Limpopo River, recording selected images from 36 sites (Pager 1975). Pager focused his attention on the Y-shapes and animal-skin motifs which he identified as fish traps. After he moved his recording programme to the Brandberg in the late 1970s, there was another hiatus in research for about a decade.

From the 1970s onwards, there was declining interest in the rock art of the region; instead, research concentrated on the south-eastern mountains of southern Africa, the South Western Cape, the central interior of South Africa, the Matopos of Zimbabwe, and areas in Namibia.

This interlude ceased in the 1990s when the Soutpansberg Rock Art Conservation Group produced three unpublished reports on five properties in South Africa. Palaeo-Art Field Services, a survey and recording group, developed out of this earlier, largely avocational, organisation. Palaeo-Art Field Services persevered with work in the LSCA, and between 1992 and 1999 they produced a further nine unpublished reports on 18 properties in South Africa and Zimbabwe. To date 150 rock art sites have been documented in the LSCA.

Surveys of the LSCA and nearby rock art areas, where a total of over 450 previously unknown sites have been documented, have shown that the rock art of the Central Limpopo Basin is far more varied and complex than was at first thought, and indeed has become a central focus for southern African rock art studies. Of all the areas surveyed in the Central Limpopo Basin, the LSCA stands out as the most important area in terms of the diversity of its rock art traditions, and its potential to contribute towards understanding the past.

In this document I begin by discussing the geographical and historical context of the rock art, and then describe the rock art of the area in terms of quantitative studies, an examination of rock art and landscape and intra- and inter-regional comparisons. Finally, the significance of LSCA rock art is discussed.

### **THE GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT OF THE LSCA**

The Limpopo Basin, or watershed, extends from the Witwatersrand (South Africa) in the south to Bulawayo (Zimbabwe) in the north, and from the edges of the Kalahari Sandveld (Botswana) in the west to a narrower 'corridor' where the Limpopo flows into the Indian Ocean in the east in Mozambique. The Central Limpopo Basin comprises the rock art areas of the LSCA and north-eastern Venda (which together form the Limpopo Valley), the Soutpansberg, and the Makgabeng Plateau. The Central Limpopo Basin lies between the rock art areas of the Northern and Southern Limpopo Basin. The Northern Limpopo Basin incorporates the rock art areas of Matebeleland South Province of Zimbabwe, and the Southern Limpopo Basin comprises the Waterberg and Pieterburg rock art areas extending southwards from the Tropic of Capricorn.

While rock art 'regions' and 'areas' are necessarily geographically distinct entities, and are usually identified on a 'stylistic' basis or motif-region (Hampson et al. in press), the Central Limpopo Basin rock art region may be separated from other rock art regions by a single, painted and diagnostic image class. It is divided into four distinct geographical areas, albeit with some cross-cutting of technique, 'style' and motif type.

The geography and landscape of the LSCA has played an important role in the human settlement of South Africa. In order to appreciate the diversity of the rock art in this relatively small area, its historical context needs to be understood.

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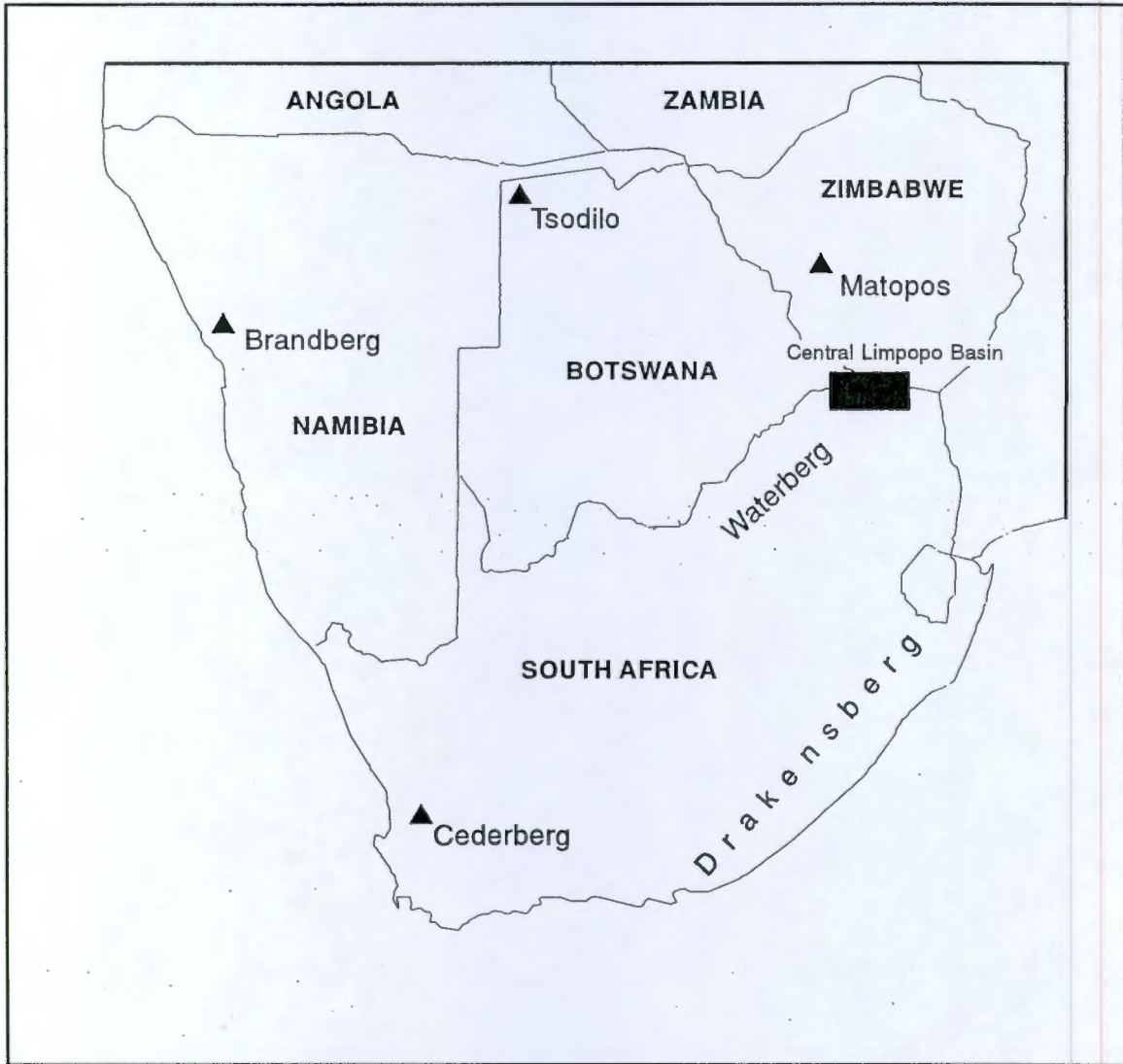
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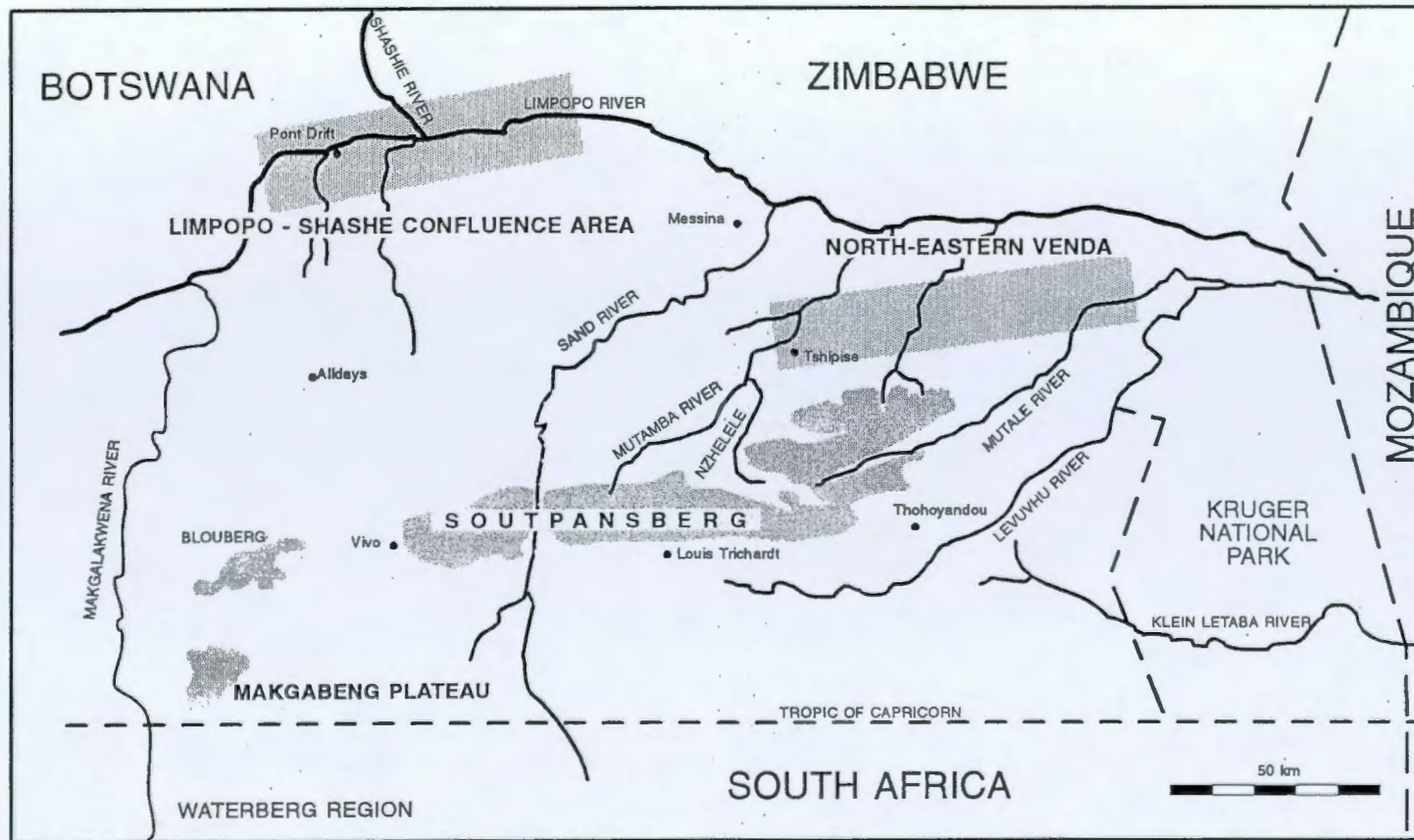
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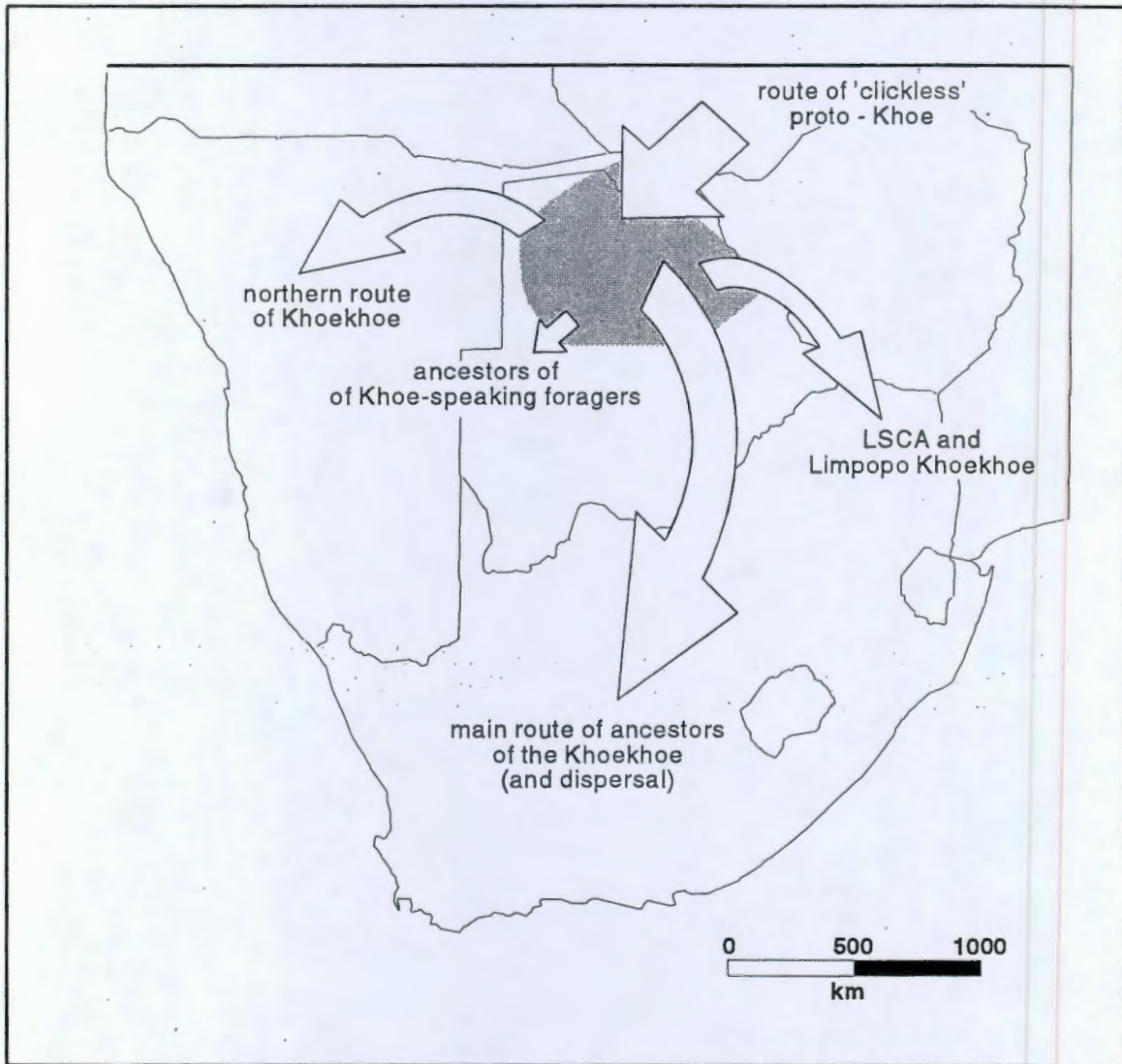
The geography and landscape of the LSCA has played an important role in the human settlement of South Africa. In order to appreciate the diversity of the rock art in this relatively small area, its historical context needs to be understood.



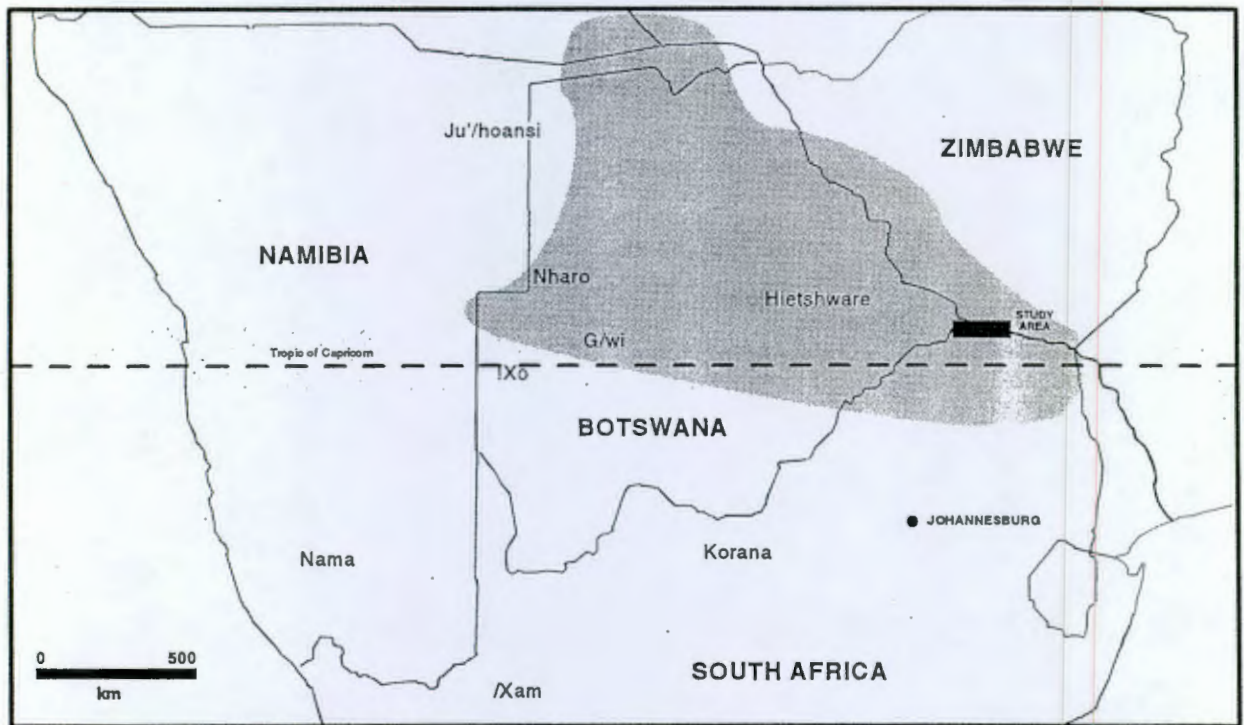
MAP OF SOUTHERN AFRICA SHOWING LOCATION OF  
CENTRAL LIMPOPO BASIN AND OTHER  
MAJOR ROCK ART REGIONS



THE LSCA STUDY AREA AND SURROUNDING ROCK ART AREAS



Migration routes of early Khoekhoe herders.



The distribution of Khoe-speaking San groups in the Greater Kalahari.

## THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Although small groups of Late Stone Age hunter-gatherers were present in the landscape for the last 5 000 years, there was a significant presence by the time the first Iron Age farmers began settling in the LSCA in the first half of the first millennium AD (Simon Hall pers comm.). However, even before the arrival of farmers in the area, the original San peoples of the eastern Kalahari-fringe had already had contact with herders moving down from the north.

According to archaeo-linguistic reconstructions of the past the autochthonous peoples of the Kalahari and its fringes were originally 'click-speaking' hunter-gatherers. Towards the end of the first millennium BC proto-Khoe herders moved into the region of the Zambezi-Okavango River watershed. From areas of initial contact, these herders dispersed southwards and eastwards, moving into present-day Zimbabwe, Botswana and South Africa. As they migrated, they influenced certain hunter-gatherer groups, either having a profound effect on their economic activities or, at the very least, impacting on their language but not affecting the hunting and gathering lifestyle significantly. It is likely that although the hunter-gatherers of the eastern Kalahari-fringe spoke a Khoe language after contact with herders, they nevertheless remained a distinct cultural entity (Smith & Ouzman in press). It is likely that the San hunter-gatherers were clients of the Khoekhoe herders (Barnard 1992).

Despite differences in the details of various linguistic models, some archaeo-linguists, namely, Otto Westphal and Christopher Ehret, believe that early Khoekhoe herders (or proto-Khoe peoples) were present in the Limpopo Valley at various times during the first millennium AD. According to Ehret (1982) the Khoe-speaking Nharo and Hietshware San languages were already established before the beginning of the first millennium AD. During the first millennium the Hietshware of the LSCA, and Tati and Tuli River areas, at least, coexisted with herders for many hundreds of years (Eastwood et al. in press). At this time the lives of the hunter-gatherers and herders were to change dramatically with the southward movement of Bantu-speaking farmers in the first millennium AD. The first millennium was a period of movement of peoples, an unsettling era for the foragers whose lifeways were deeply affected by change.

Indeed, the Iron Age archaeological sequence of the LSCA is relatively well known. At present, the archaeological evidence suggests that there was a succession of occupations in the region beginning with Early Iron Age farmers in the nearby Soutpansberg at the beginning of the first millennium AD (Steyn et al. 1994). Later, from 800 AD onwards, people of the Zhizo tradition were followed

by proto-Shona traditions, such as the K2, Mapungubwe, Zimbabwe and Khami cultures (Huffman 2000), and more recently by Sotho-speakers in about the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and later, Venda groups.

Although the succession of Late Iron Age groups that occupied this area is well known, the role of the Late Stone Age people in these successive occupations is not. In fact, very little work has been conducted on the Late Stone Age sequence. What has been done, however, suggests that the hunter-gatherers of this region did not live their lives untouched by the Later Iron Age peoples.

When populations of Bantu-speaking farmers increased at the end of the first millennium AD, the San hunter gatherers were marginalised and began moving away from populated areas in the LSCA (Hall & Smith 2000). Although there was a limited San presence in the area during the second millennium, these small groups were nevertheless affected by later political upheavals. During the nineteenth century, for example, many of them fell victim to the war between the Matabele and Tswana (e.g. Wood 1893). After this period of conflict, very few San groups were reported by European travellers in this disputed frontier territory (see, for example, Elton 1873; Selous 1908).

To what extent the *mfecane* or Refuge Period affected the hunter-gatherers is, however, difficult to determine. This is because very few early travellers ventured into the LSCA until the 1890s. At the beginning of this century, however, Samuel Dorman, an Irish Presbyterian missionary, reported that groups of Hietshware San were still near the LSCA, and that some lived in Tswana villages along the Motloutse and Shashe Rivers. Considered to be Eastern Khoe-speakers, belonging to the Hietchware group, the San who live along the Shashe River are related to the Central San language family of Khoe-speakers which includes the G/wi, Nharo and Bateti of the Kalahari (Barnard 1992).

Indeed, San hunter-gatherers were still living in the LSCA well into this century; according to Venda and North Sotho people now living in south-western Zimbabwe, and finally moved away from the LSCA into Botswana in the 1930s after white farmers settled in the region (Eastwood & Cnoops 2001). They still live along the Shashe River in Botswana but have largely lost their identity and customs (Walker 1991). Direct contact with herders and farmers for at least 1300 years by the LSCA Hietshware means that they had a mixed-resource economy for some considerable time. The fact that herder/hunter-gatherer peoples were present in the LSCA until a few decades ago is indeed a testimony to their resilience in the face of enormous odds. One of the legacies of the past is the rock art of San hunter-gatherers, Khoekhoe herders and Bantu-speaking farmers.



## TRADITIONS AND AUTHORS OF LSCA ROCK ART

In the popular imagination 'rock art' in southern Africa is generally thought to be the sole work of San hunter-gatherers, yet there were other peoples who painted and engraved on rocks. These were Bantu-speaking farmers and Khoekhoe herders.

### The Engravings

The engravings are divided into five image classes, each with a number of subcategories. The main image classes are: grooves, cupules, representations of animals tracks, depictions of animals and geometric engravings.

#### *Grooves*

Elongated, usually parallel, grooves are of two main types: those found on horizontal pavements or on loose rocks within shelters, and those found on vertical or sloping rock faces in certain shelters. The first category may have been used for sharpening bone or wooden points, for example, because they are situated in places which would have been comfortable to sit at ease while executing such tasks.

A second category of grooves are situated on rock faces up to 3,5 metres above ground level, thus suggesting that they served some non-utilitarian function. It would appear that the engravers built some sort of scaffold, so as to laboriously cut these marks into the relatively hard sandstone rock faces. These non-functional marks certainly suggest that they were made for a specific ritual purpose, rather than an economic activity. In one shelter, for example, there are over 400 cut marks, most of which are situated between chest height to above the head of a person of average height. In addition some of the grooves are covered in a silica skin, suggesting that they are very old. The exact meaning of these grooves is uncertain, but it would appear that they may have had a ritual function.

#### *Cupules*

The second main category of engraved marks are called cupules. These are small, randomly situated hollows, usually about the size of a bottle cap. Cupules, like grooves, may similarly be divided into two subcategories, utilitarian and non-utilitarian. The first category are found on horizontal pavements or low, loose rocks within shelters. These cupules may have been used as nutting anvils for cracking open the seeds of the marula, *Sclerocarya birrea*, which contains an

edible nut, or as receptacles for holding ostrich-eggshell 'blanks' or 'roughouts' whilst the central hole is being drilled. In the Kalahari today, ostrich-eggshell roughouts are placed in hollows made in wood for this specific purpose.

Another type of utilitarian cupule are sets of hollows, usually arranged in four lines of eight cups each on horizontal surfaces near Iron Age sites and often within painted shelters. Some of these were likely to have been made much later than the irregular cupules, judging by their respective patination. The function of these were for playing the game called *mafuvha* in tshiVenda or *ncuba* in xiTsonga. The *mafuvha* boards which are found all over the Limpopo Valley may be older than the appearance of Bantu-speaking farmers. This "cloud game" or "African chess" is believed by some Khoekhoe peoples to have been placed on the rock by their god, Heiseb, and was mystically linked to rain (Schmidt 1995).

The second subcategory, which we term 'classic' cupules, are groups of randomly distributed hollows situated on sloping or vertical surfaces or large boulders within rock shelters. Like the second category of grooves some of these hollows are situated up to 3,5 metres above ground level. Their position and planar orientation suggests a ritual and symbolic function. Most cupules of this type are covered in silica skin and appear to be of great antiquity, possibly as old as 6 000 years or more (Ouzman pers. comm.). Non-utilitarian cupules and grooves were probably the work of hunter-gatherers

#### *Animal spoor*

The third, and probably the most interesting category of engravings consist of animal spoor. These usually depict zebra or indeterminate antelope spoor, although there are also infrequent examples of bird, elephant, kudu and eland tracks. Spoor engravings are found throughout southern Africa and are characteristic of Kalahari-fringe areas in South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Angola. Animal spoor engravings are found along the Limpopo River, in the LSCA and north-eastern Venda, but appear to be absent from areas further south in the Northern Province.

#### *Animal Representations*

The fourth category of engravings are those depicting animals. These include depictions of elephant, rhinoceros, giraffe, hippopotamus, kudu, gemsbok, sable antelope, buffalo, zebra, and indeterminate animals cut or pecked into stone. Most engraved animals are recognisable as the art of hunter-gatherers. Although Bantu-speaking farmer engravings are a feature of the rock art sites of north-eastern Venda, there are none in the LSCA, bar one possible exception.

### *Geometric engravings*

This is a diverse image class, ranging from 'hairline' images to heavily pecked, incised or abraded geometric forms, such as squares, diamond-shapes, grids, circles and so forth. Their authorship is uncertain.

### **Late White Finger Paintings**

Another tradition of painting known as 'Late Whites' is found in the Soutpansberg and in north-eastern Venda. These finger-paintings consist of anthropomorphic, zoomorphic and geometric designs. These paintings were often painted in several colours, but generally speaking the imagery is predominantly white.

Recent research in south-central Africa suggests that the Late White tradition is at least partially explicable. Because the art is fairly recent; and the people who live near the sites are only a few generations removed from the painters, it has been possible to relate the symbolism depicted in the art to modern forms of ritual and the use of symbolism. In the Northern Province of South Africa, at least some of the Late White tradition paintings can be linked to Sotho-speakers (Benjamin Smith pers. comm.). It is likely that the imagery was linked to rites of passage.

Although the late white paintings of Bantu-speakers is a strong feature of Central Limpopo Basin rock art, it is rare in the LSCA. About 30 images are found at two sites in the LSCA.

### **Geometric Finger Paintings**

One of the most intriguing of the rock art traditions of the LSCA is a distinct geometric form of art. Unlike the human and animal subjects of hunter-gatherer art the geometrics are composed entirely of geometric forms such as circles, rayed circles, concentric circles, circle-and-dot motifs, circle-and-cross motifs, rows of finger lines and rows and clusters of finger dots or microdots. These are most commonly painted in red pigment, sometimes in red and white, and occasionally only in white. In contrast to the fine-line brushwork of hunter-gatherer art, the geometrics were applied by finger. At present there is uncertainty about the meaning of these paintings. They are different in style from the paintings recognised as belonging to the Bantu-speaking people of the region.

Some of the finest examples of the geometric paintings are found in the LSCA. Despite the apparent 'crudity' of the imagery when compared to the delicate fine-lines of the San paintings, the

geometrics are nevertheless strikingly beautiful. They are usually big and bold, and stand out in startling contrast to the grey-red rock faces of shelters.

The geometric paintings are found from south-central Africa to the Cape, and it is now known that they were made by Khoekhoe herders. Benjamin Smith and Sven Ouzman (in press) inferred the authorship of the geometric and handprint paintings based on dating, excavation sequences, archaeo-linguistic data and distribution of this art form.

Khoekhoe paintings are usually non-representational, but one image class is thought to represent aprons (Eastwood et al. in press; Smith & Ouzman in press). These are semi-ovoid motifs, sometimes with tassels and tying thongs. Most are decorated with finger dots or lines.

Some researchers have proposed that incoming groups of Khoekhoe herders appropriated the hunter-gatherer's sacred places, over-painting the finer San art and thus placing their 'stamp of authority' on ritual places in the landscape (Hall & Smith 2000). However, in the LSCA and north-eastern Venda it would appear that the appropriation of sacred places was a rare occurrence and may only have occurred when demographic pressures were extreme, or there was acute competition for resources. Generally, in the Central Limpopo Basin, including the LSCA, Khoekhoe paintings were placed alongside San paintings and are found both over and under San paintings, suggesting that the herders and hunter-gatherers either shared ritual venues, or, perhaps, joined together for certain rituals.

The Khoekhoe geometric paintings are frequently associated with handprints, especially in the southern parts of South Africa. Handprinted sites are widely but thinly spread over the Central Limpopo Basin, and have not been found in the LSCA.

### **Fine-line Paintings**

In contrast to the Khoekhoe finger paintings, San art was made using fine brushes, quills or sticks, although there are a few partially finger painted images. From observations in the LSCA it appears that the technique used by artists to produce an image was first to draw an outline in charcoal, ochre crayon or paint, and then fill in the image with paint. In fact this observation was corroborated in the ethnography where Samuel Dornan (1925) noted this technique when he watched an artist make rock art images.

San rock art, at least in the LSCA, is completely representational, depicting a wide variety of subject matter including over 30 species of animals, male and female human beings – depicted singly, in single- or dual-gender groups, and Y-shapes and ‘animal skin’ motifs.

At this point, it is pertinent to note that the identification of these enigmatic images was for some time contentious. Pager (1975) interpreted these Y-shaped and ‘animal skin’ images as portraying fish traps. Later, Geoffrey Blundell and Ed Eastwood (2001) re-identified the Y-shapes and animal skin motifs as representations of male loincloths and female aprons respectively, basing their evidence on museum specimens, descriptions from the ethnography, and paintings of aprons that are worn. Over 99% of the loincloths and aprons (the clothing motif) in the LSCA are depicted as not being worn - they stand alone.

In this document the LSCA San rock art is emphasised, and more detailed quantitative data and explanations follow.

## **THE LSCA ROCK ART SURVEY**

### **Site Locations and Estimated Number of Images**

The LSCA rock art survey covered 23 properties. Most properties were fairly extensively searched with a few exceptions; this is shown in the accompanying map. Most searches were done by vehicle and on foot. Vehicles were used to assess the lay of the land and to identify promising areas. Foot searches were done by walking in rough transects in an east-west orientation, along the line of the rocky outcrops. The location and spread of rock art sites in the LSCA are illustrated below.

# Limpopo-Shashe Rock Art Survey



BOTSWANA

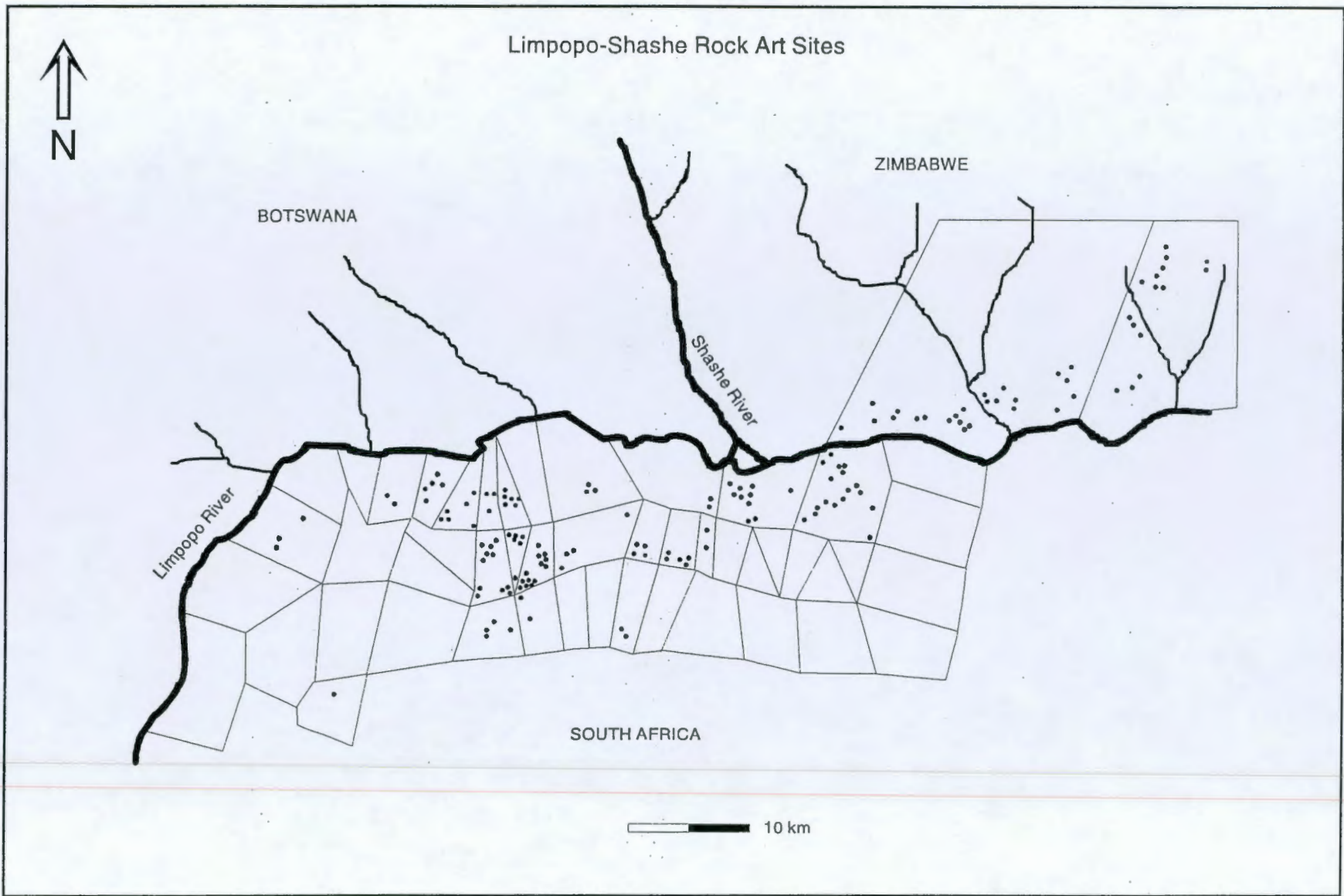
ZIMBABWE



- 1 Maramani
- 2 Sentinel
- 3 Nottingham
- 4 Kruidfontein
- 5 Eendvogelpan
- 6 Breslau
- 7 Ratho
- 8 Hillstone
- 9 Parma
- 10 Pont Drift
- 11 Modena
- 12 Rhodes Drift
- 13 Welton
- 14 Tuscanen
- 15 Den Staat
- 16 Samaria
- 17 Greefswald
- 18 Schroda
- 19 Weipe
- 20 Riedel
- 21 Breslaw
- 22 Nekel
- 23 Kilsyth
- 24 Hamilton
- 25 La Reve
- 26 Cerberus
- 27 Stindal
- 28 Athens
- 29 Hackthorn
- 30 Machete
- 31 Little Muck
- 32 Armenia
- 33 Mona
- 34 Balerno
- 35 Parma
- 36 Princess Royal
- 37 Montrow
- 38 Onrust
- 39 Bultpan
- 40 Vergenoegd
- 41 Somerville
- 42 Halcyon
- 43 Hilda
- 44 Anglican
- 45 Blyklip
- 46 Edmondsburg
- 47 Faure

- Intensively surveyed
- Reasonable coverage
- Reported sites - not surveyed
- Not surveyed

10 km



The table below requires some explanation: site references refer to properties marked on the 1:50 000 survey maps and the number of each site in order of its discovery. AR = Armenia, AT = Athens, BL = Balerno, BR = Breslau, BP = Bultpan, DS = Den Staat, ED = Edmondsburg, GW = Greefswald, HK = Hackthorne, HC = Halcyon, HD = Hilda, LM = Little Muck, MC = Machete, MD = Modena, MN = Mona, NT = Nottingham, PA = Parma, PD = Pontdrif, RD = Rhodes Drift, SA = Samaria, SC = Schroda, ST = Sentinel, WL = Welton. Site reference numbers in bold refer to properties in Zimbabwe. The asterisks after certain site references refer to the presence of Bantu-speakers' rock paintings in those sites. KK = Khoekhoe.

**Table 1. Site locations and estimated number of images in three major traditions**

Site Ref. No.	Position by	Co-ordinates	No. Engraving	No. KK Paintings	No. San Paintings
AR/1	GPS	22.16.10 S; 029.13.44 E	16		66
AR/2	GPS	22.16.19 S; 029.13.38 E			47
AR/3	GPS	22.16.13 S; 029.13.15 E			2
AR/4	GPS	22.16.18 S; 029.13.46 E			3
AR/5	GPS	22.16.19 S; 029.13.46 E	14		
AR/6	GPS	22.16.12 S; 029.13.47 E			3
AR/7	GPS	22.16.45 S; 029.12.54 E	10		46
AR/8	GPS	22.16.45 S; 029.12.54 E	13		5
AR/9	GPS	22.16.45 S; 029.12.54 E			10
AR/10	GPS	22.16.48 S; 029.12.55 E	1		2
AR/11	GPS	22.16.44 S; 029.12.55 E			37
AR/12	GPS	22.16.47 S; 029.13.14 E	2		31
AR/13	GPS	22.16.47 S; 029.13.05 E	45		2
AT/1	GPS	22.15.33 S; 029.20.10 E			7
AT/2	GPS	22.14.11 S; 029.20.00 E	41	5	5
BL/1	GPS	22.17.13 S; 029.12.12 E	180		63
BL/2	GPS	22.17.13 S; 029.12.14 E			2
BL/3	GPS	22.17.13 S; 029.12.13 E	3	1	44
BL/4	GPS	22.15.55 S; 029.11.18 E	37		
BL/5	GPS	22.15.54 S; 029.11.18 E	18		2
BL/6	GPS	22.15.56 S; 029.11.17 E	67		
BL/7	GPS	22.17.16 S; 029.11.18 E			68



BL/8	GPS	22.15.58 S; 029.11.28 E	30		1
BL/9	GPS	22.15.29 S; 029.11.23 E			2
BL/10	GPS	22.16.25 S; 029.11.12 E	4		
BL/11	GPS	22.17.39 S; 029.11.32 E		1	8
BR/1	Map	22.15.45 S; 029.03.11 E			18
BR/2	Map	22.16.44 S; 029.02.15 E			24
BR/3	Map	22.16.45 S; 029.02.15 E			1
BP/1	GPS	22.21.53 S; 029.05.24 E			11
DS/1	GPS	22.13.55 S; 029.14.38 E	9		2
DS/2	GPS	22.13.55 S; 029.14.41 E	139		
DS/3	GPS	22.13.45 S; 029.14.41 E	6		
ED/1	Map	22.18.36 S; 029.17.07 E			1
ED/2	Map	22.18.30 S; 029.17.06 E			27
GW/1	GPS	22.13.53 S; 029.22.28 E	1		7
GW/2	GPS	22.13.00 S; 029.21.14 E	12		4
GW/3	GPS	22.13.03 S; 029.20.59 E			36
GW/4	GPS	22.13.03 S; 029.20.58 E			1
GW/5	GPS	22.14.01 S; 029.22.25 E			13
GW/6	GPS	22.12.35 S; 029.24.01 E	50		44
GW/7	GPS	22.13.50 S; 029.22.13 E		10	13
GW/8	GPS	22.13.31 S; 029.22.06 E	18		17
GW/9	GPS	22.13.46 S; 029.22.29 E	19		
GW/10	GPS	22.12.49 S; 029.21.17 E	116		5
HK/1	GPS	22.15.07 S; 029.19.40 E	12		9
HK/2	GPS	22.15.07 S; 029.19.41 E			32
HK/3	GPS	22.15.07 S; 029.19.39 E			2
HK/4	GPS	22.15.12 S; 029.19.13 E			9
HK/5	GPS	22.15.11 S; 029.19.12 E		1	
HC/1	GPS	22.18.13 S; 029.11.46 E			16
HC/2	GPS	22.18.14 S; 029.11.50 E			8
HC/3	GPS	22.18.02 S; 029.12.05 E			22
HC/4	Map	22.18.06 S; 029.12.31 E			1

HD/1	Map	22.18.06 S; 029.13.38 E			17
HD/2	Map	22.17.30 S; 029.12.45 E	3		14
LM/1	GPS	22.16.30 S; 029.14.37 E			19
LM/2	GPS	22.14.44 S; 029.15.35 E	44		147
LM/3	GPS	22.14.33 S; 029.17.05 E			81
LM/4	GPS	22.14.44 S; 029.15.34 E		36	
MC/1	Map	22.14.50 S; 029.17.30 E	32	9	173
MC/2	Map	22.14.50 S; 029.17.31 E			3
MC/3	Map	22.15.14 S; 029.17.28 E			7
MC/4	Map	22.15.41 S; 029.17.00 E			6
MD/1	GPS	22.15.30 S; 029.10.40 E	78	84	99
MD/2	GPS	22.15.14 S; 029.09.28 E			138
MD/3	GPS	22.15.13 S; 029.09.27 E		3	13
MD/4	GPS	22.14.28 S; 029.10.23 E			1
MD/5	GPS	22.13.96 S; 029.10.44 E			3
MD/6	GPS	22.14.40 S; 029.09.45 E	3		
MN/1	GPS	22.15.52 S; 029.12.34 E	1	1	5
MN/2	GPS	22.15.53 S; 029.15.58 E			1
MN/3	GPS	22.15.56 S; 029.12.25 E	3		4
MN/4	GPS	22.15.57 S; 029.12.26 E			7
MN/5	GPS	22.15.22 S; 029.12.00 E	66		1
MN/6	GPS	22.17.13 S; 029.12.28 E			8
NT/1*	Map	22.06.53 S; 029.36.20 E			20
NT/2	Map	22.06.54 S; 029.36.19 E			2
NT/3	Map	22.06.26 S; 029.36.50 E	67		12
NT/4	Map	22.03.31 S; 029.41.47 E			218
NT/5	Map	22.03.17 S; 029.39.39 E			4
NT/6	Map	22.03.47 S; 029.39.05 E			6
NT/7	Map	22.03.47 S; 029.39.06 E	41		15
NT/8	Map	22.03.47 S; 029.39.08 E			1
NT/9	Map	22.03.45 S; 029.39.10 E			4
NT/10	Map	22.03.05 S; 029.40.45			29

NT/11	Map	22.03.01 S; 029.40.46 E			2
NT/12	Map	22.05.04 S; 029.39.51 E	17	1	2
NT/13	Map	22.05.05 S; 029.39.51 E			1
NT/14*	Map	22.03.21 S; 029.41.45 E	24	26	9
NT/15	Map	22.04.40 S; 029.39.36 E			17
PA/1	GPS	22.14.30 S, 029.06.45 E		220	10
PA/2	GPS	22.13.25 S, 029.06.44 E	20		19
PD/1	GPS	22.14.03 S, 029.08.57 E	5		
PD/2	GPS	22.14.08 S, 029.08.21 E	16		1
PD/3	GPS	22.14.46 S, 029.07.51 E	23		
PD/4	GPS	22.14.08 S, 029.08.45 E	15		
PD/5	GPS	22.14.23 S, 029.07.50 E			1
RD/1	GPS	22.13.40 S; 029.11.01 E	13		86
RD/2	GPS	22.13.40 S; 029.11.00 E			2
RD/3	GPS	22.14.03 S; 029.10.47 E			23
SA/1	Map	22.13.18 S; 029.20.22 E	16		15
SA/2	Map	22.13.30 S; 029.20.23 E	16		
SC/1	Map	22.10.40 S; 029.25.01 E	25		22
SC/2	Map	22.10.52 S; 029.25.42 E		48	
SC/3	Map	22.10.52 S; 029.25.43 E		12	
SC/4	Map	22.10.57 S; 029.25.45 E	83	107	
SC/5	Map	22.12.40 S; 029.24.50 E			19
SC/6	Map	22.12.32 S; 029.24.48 E	3		7
SC/7	Map	22.11.05 S; 029.25.15 E			21
SC/8	Map	22.10.51 S; 029.24.44 E	7		
SC/9	Map	22.11.16 S; 029.26.13 E		2	
SC/10	Map	22.11.10 S; 029.26.35 E			6
SC/11	Map	22.11.10 S; 029.26.35 E			4
SC/12	Map	22.11.57 S; 029.26.07 E			3
SC/13	Map	22.12.00 S; 029.25.16 E			8
SC/14	Map	22.12.02 S; 029.25.14 E			5
SC/15	Map	22.13.15 S; 029.24.07 E			9

SC/16	Map	22.11.32 S; 029.27.38 E			23
SC/17	Map	22.12.07 S; 029.26.40 E			4
ST/1	Map	22.09.25 S; 029.26.44 E			78
ST/2	Map	22.09.25 S; 029.28.05 E	47		28
ST/3	Map	22.09.25 S; 029.28.15 E		1	
ST/4	Map	22.09.16 S; 029.29.05 E			12
ST/5	Map	22.09.15 S; 029.29.08 E			1
ST/6	Map	22.09.25 S; 029.29.00 E		1	
ST/7	Map	22.07.57 S; 029.31.20 E			6
ST/8	Map	22.07.48 S; 029.31.54 E	128		47
ST/9	Map	22.09.22 S; 029.29.45 E			5
ST/10	Map	22.09.22 S; 029.29.44 E			3
ST/11	Map	22.09.21 S; 029.29.46 E			2
ST/12	Map	22.07.46 S; 029.34.28 E		35	47
ST/13	Map	22.07.03 S; 029.35.00 E	153		44
ST/14	Map	22.07.04 S; 029.35.03 E			1
ST/15	Map	22.07.05 S; 029.35.04 E	6		4
ST/16	Map	22.07.58 S; 029.31.56 E			1
ST/17	Map	22.07.28 S; 029.35.05 E			7
ST/18	Map	22.08.00 S; 029.31.01 E	25		6
ST/19	Map	22.08.02 S; 029.31.02 E	77		45
ST/20	Map	22.09.27 S; 029.26.45 E			20
ST/21	Map	22.09.45 S; 029.25.21 E			5
ST/22	Map	22.08.00 S; 029.31.10 E			2
ST/23	Map	22.09.36 S; 029.26.22 E	18		17
ST/24	Map	22.09.00 S; 029.26.16 E			1
WL/1	GPS	22.14.24 S; 029.11.30 E			4
WL/2	GPS	22.14.00 S; 029.11.26 E	450	21	9
WL/3	GPS	22.14.09 S; 029.12.11 E			1
WL/4	GPS	22.13.57 S; 029.12.05 E			7
WL/5	GPS	22.13.58 S; 029.12.04 E			5
WL/6	GPS	22.14.14 S; 029.11.37 E			8

## NUMERICAL DATA

### Site Orientation

Table 2. Orientation of sites. Total number of sites = 150

Aspect	No. sites	Percentage	Aspect	No. sites	Percentage
North	49	32.6	South	25	16.7
North-west	6	4.0	South-east	4	2.7
West	18	12.0	East	24	16.0
South-west	6	4.0	North-east	18	12.0

### Site Categories

Table 3. Site categories. Total number of sites = 150

Site category	Number of sites	Percentage
Shelter	130	86.7
Boulder	11	7.3
Tunnel	3	2.0
Pavement	1	0.7
Rock face	5	3.3

### Artefacts & Structures in Shelters

Table 4. Surface artefacts and various features in sites. Total number of sites = 150.

Artefacts & structures	Number sites	Percentage
LSA lithics	111	74.0
MSA lithics	15	10.0
Inderminate pot sherds	86	57.3
Trade beads	9	6.0
Ostrich eggshell beads, roughouts or fragments	21	14.0
Fresh-water mussel shells	5	3.3
Portable grindstones & in situ grinding hollows	41	27.3
Grain bins or remains	7	4.7
Stone walling, terraces or cairns	4	2.6
Mafuvha boards	16	19.7
Timber structures, stockades	6	4.0
Other artefacts	9	6.0

### Co-occurrence of Engravings and Painting Traditions

Table 5. Co-occurring engravings and painting traditions. Number of sites = 150.

Co-occurrence	Number sites	Percentage
Engravings only	11	7.3
San paintings only	82	54.6
Farmer paintings only	0	0
Khoekhoe paintings only	7	4.7
Engravings + San + Khoekhoe + Farmer paintings	1	0.7
Engravings + San paintings + Khoekhoe paintings	8	5.3
Engravings + San paintings	35	23.3
Engravings + Khoekhoe paintings	1	0.7
San paintings + Khoekhoe paintings	4	2.7
San paintings + Farmer paintings	1	0.7

### Co-occurrence of Main Painting Traditions

Table 6. San and Khoekhoe paintings. Total number of painted sites = 139

Co-occurrence	Number sites	Percentage
San paintings only	118	84.9
Khoekhoe paintings only	8	5.7
San + Khoekhoe paintings	13	9.4

### Breakdown of Engravings

Table 7. Engraving categories. Figures expressed as percentage of total number of marks or images in 56 sites (n = 2331).

Engraving category	Number of marks/images	Percentage
The clothing motif	1	0.04
Animal spoor	67	2.9
Animals	31	1.3
Geometric engravings	43	1.8
Cupules (utilitarian & non-utilitarian)	957	41.0
Grooves (utilitarian & non-utilitarian)	1232	52.9

## Engraved Animals

Table 8. Animal categories depicted in the engravings. Figures expressed as percentage of number of images of animals images (n = 31).

Animal class/image	No. of images	Percentage	Animal class/image	Number of images	Percentage
Giraffe	6	19.4	Hippopotamus	1	3.2
Rhinoceros	4	12.9	Buffalo	1	3.2
Kudu	1	3.2	Zebra	1	3.2
Elephant	4	12.9	Indet. animals	7	22.6
Gemsbok	1	3.2	Indet. antelope	4	12.9
Sable Antelope	1	3.2			

## Breakdown of San Paintings

Table 9. Categories/ main image classes. Figures expressed as percentage of total number of images (n = 2447).

Image category	No. images	Percentage
Lines, dots, 'nets' etc	39	1.6
Animal spoor	37	1.5
The clothing motif (loincloths & aprons)	216	8.8
Animals	1034	42.3
Human beings	1119	45.7
Therianthropes	2	0.1



### Human beings

Table 10. Breakdown of human categories. Figures expressed as percentage of total number of human figures (n = 1119).

Human category	Number images	Percentage
Indeterminate human	540	48.3
Male	263	23.5
Female	316	28.2

### Animals

Table 12. Animal categories in San paintings. Figures expressed as percentage of total number of animals (n = 1034).

Animal category	Number images	Percentage
Species-specific animals	296	28.6
Indeterminate animals	183	17.7
Species-specific antelope	174	16.8
Indeterminate antelope	381	36.9

### Species-specific Antelope

Table 13. Species of antelope. Figures expressed as percentage of total number of antelope depicted, including indeterminate species (n = 555).

Species	No. images	%	Species	Number images	%
Sable/roan	5	0.9	Hartebeest	1	0.2
Waterbuck/Reedbuck	3	0.5	Tsessebe	19	3.4
Bushbuck	5	0.9	Gemsbok	5	0.9
Impala	36	6.5	Eland	13	2.3
Wildebeest	8	1.4	Kudu	97	17.5

## Other Animals

Table 14. Main animal species or category. Figures expressed as percentage of total number of animals including antelope (n = 1034).

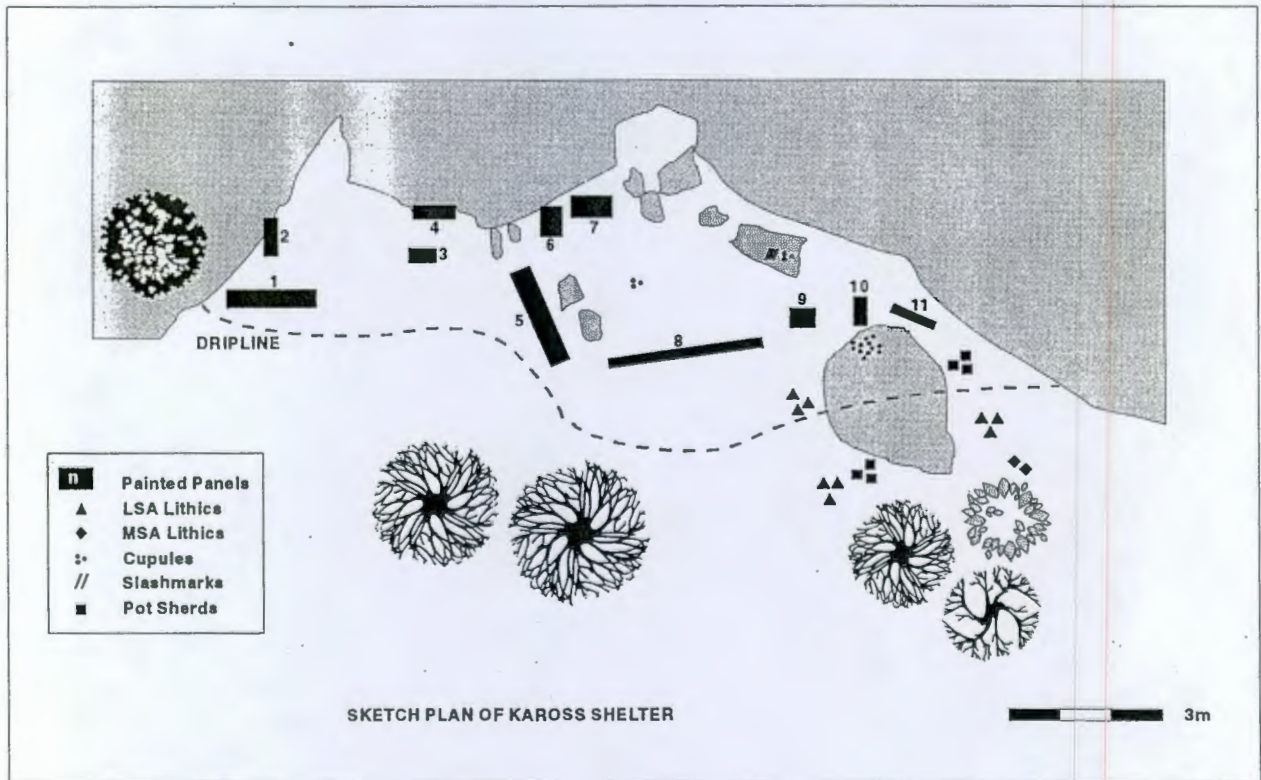
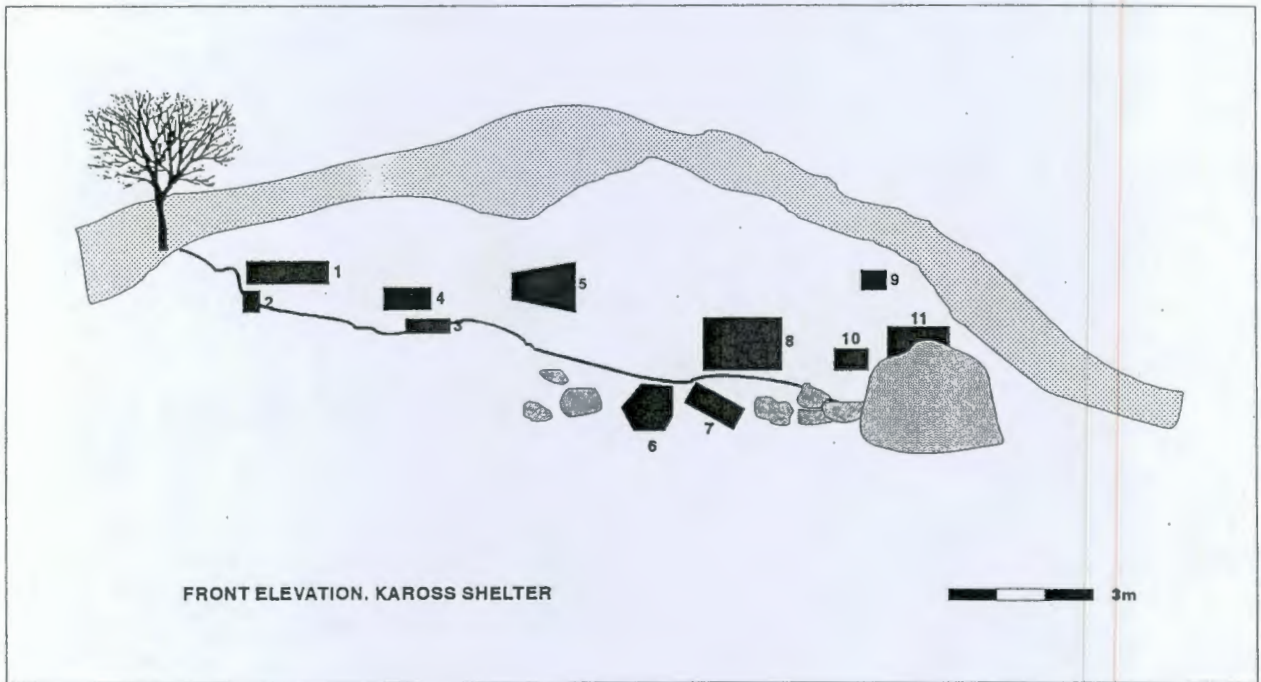
Class/species	No. images	%	Class/species	No. images	%
Elephant	58	5.6	Antbear	4	0.4
Rhinoceros	10	1.0	Springhare	1	0.1
Hippopotamus	4	0.4	Porcupine	1	0.1
Giraffe	76	7.4	Baboon	5	0.5
Buffalo	3	0.3	Fat-tailed sheep	10	1.0
Zebra	6	0.6	Snake	1	0.1
Warthog	5	0.5	Fish	17	1.6
Feline	9	0.9	Ostrich	12	1.2
Hyena	3	0.3	Other birds	11	1.1
Wild dog	1	0.1	Locust/grasshopper	13	1.3
Jackal	7	0.7			

## DESCRIPTION OF TEN SITES IN THE LSCA

In this section one rock art site has been selected to illustrate the level of detail in the archive; an abridged data sheet illustrates which data were collected. More detailed information was taken down in a field notebook. In this particular site 6 out of 12 panels were traced and redrawn, and all images were photographed. Three drawings and three photographs illustrate a sample of the rock art in this shelter. The rock art of a further nine sites is briefly described and discussed, accompanied by selected photographs and redrawings.

## SITE 1. KAROSS SHELTER, MODENA

Site name:	Kaross Shelter		
Reference number:	LVSA/MD/1		
GPS reading (Magellan 2000):	22.15.30 S; 029.10.40 E		
Property:	Modena		
Map sheet:	2229AC Evangelina		
Site Type:	Shelter		
Aspect:	South		
Dimensions:	Length:	22m	
	Depth:	8m	
	Height:	3,5m	
Environmental damage:	Seepage, water runoff, exfoliation, algae		
Human impact:	Attempt to chip out panel; one panel removed; graffiti		
Deposit:	Very shallow, gravelly.		
Surface artefacts:	LSA microliths; MSA lithics; indeterminate pot sherds; ostrich eggshell fragments; trade beads; a palette		
Engravings:	Cupules:	53	
	Cross:	1	
	Slashmarks:	24	
San Paintings:			
	Humans:	Indeterminate:	9
		Males:	10
		Females:	2
	Animals:	Indeterminate:	4
	Antelope:	Indeterminate:	24
		Eland:	2
		Impala:	1
		Kudu:	11
		Gemsbok:	1
		Water/Reedbuck:	1
		Hartebeest/Tsessebe:	1
	Other animals:	Elephant:	1
		Ostrich:	8
		Felids:	2
		Bird:	1
		Warthog:	4
		Sheep:	2
		Giraffe:	2
	Animal spoor:	Zebra:	10
	Y-shapes:	2	
Khoekhoe paintings:	Aprons, oval grids, fingerlines, fingerdots, comb-shapes: 10 sets (Total 84 images).		
Techniques:	Monochromes; bichromes; polychromes; superposition		
Pigment colours:	Yellow, white, black, red		



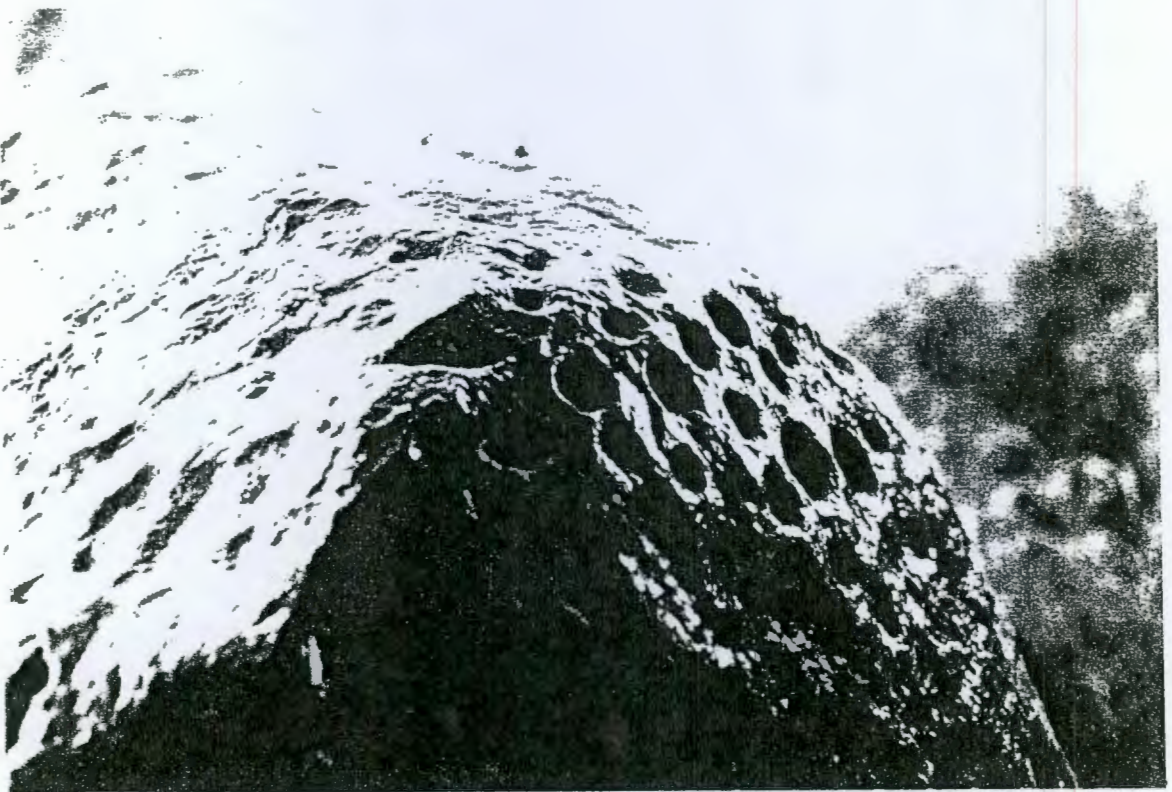
Elevation and plan of Kaross Shelter

The rock art in Kaross Shelter is diverse and visually impressive, and is important for research.

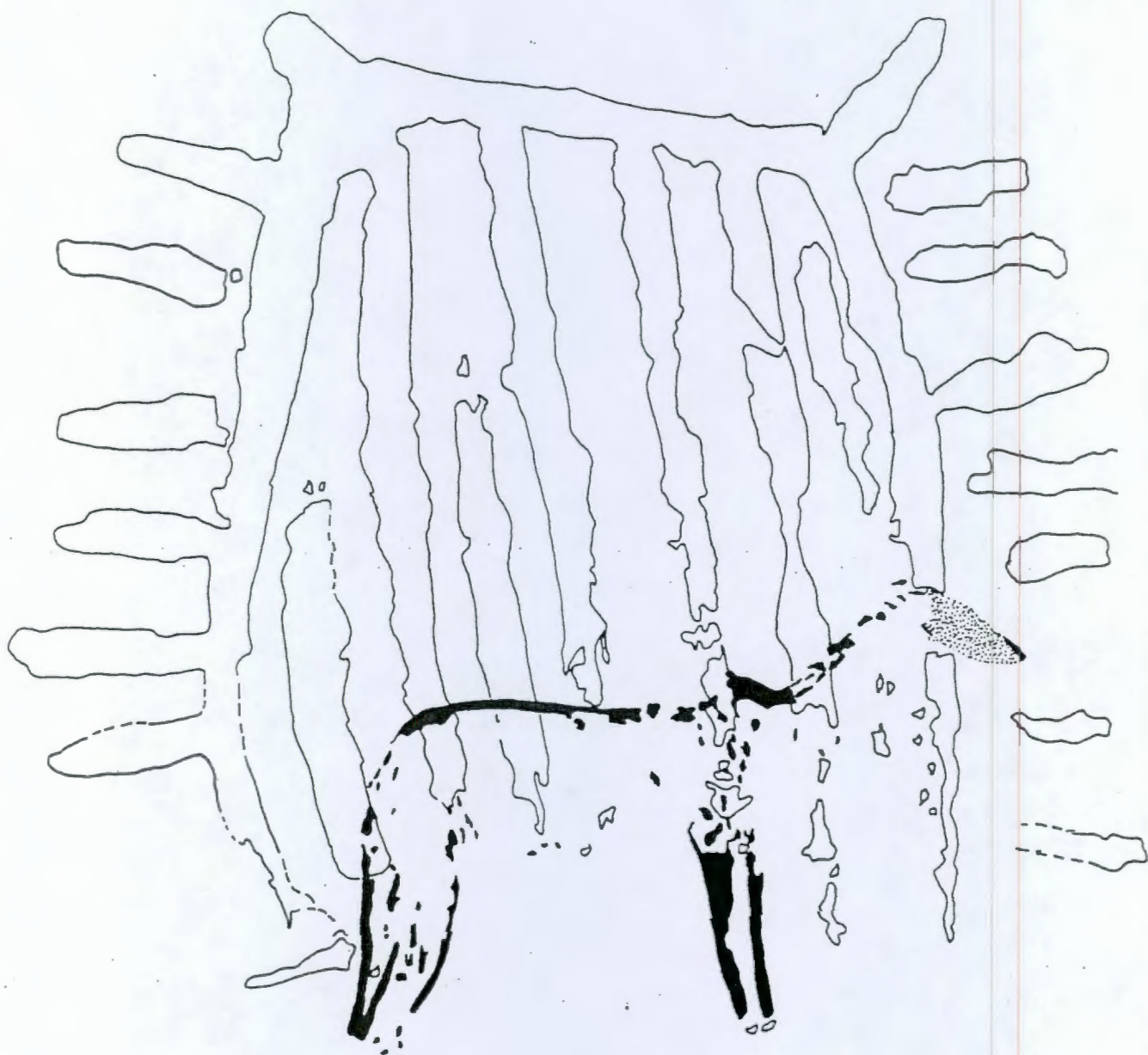
- This medium-sized shelter contains three traditions of rock art: cupule engravings, Khoekhoe finger paintings and San paintings.
- There are over 70 cupules pecked onto the sloping sides of a boulder inside the shelter.
- The Khoekhoe paintings consist of at least three representations of semi-ovoid motifs which are considered to represent Khoekhoe aprons (see Eastwood et al. in press; Smith & Ouzman in press). Other, typical Khoekhoe paintings consist of two parallel lines of finger dots.
- This site, however, is notable for its San paintings. There are about 100 images in the site including 13 species of animals and clusters of zebra spoor. Animal species include kudu, eland, gemsbok, impala, tsessebe, waterbuck, wildebeest, elephant, giraffe, felines, warthog, ostrich and fat-tailed sheep.
- A painting of a human figure wearing a kaross is the only such image in the LSCA.
- A rare painting of a polychrome gemsbok is found here.
- One of the most important panels in the LSCA is found here: a depiction of a Y-shape with a white smear above and over it. The white smear was identified by Harald Pager (1975) as a fish 'swimming' into the Y-shape which he interpreted as a fish trap. Since then however, the panel was retraced and the white smear re-identified as a U-shaped zebra spoor.



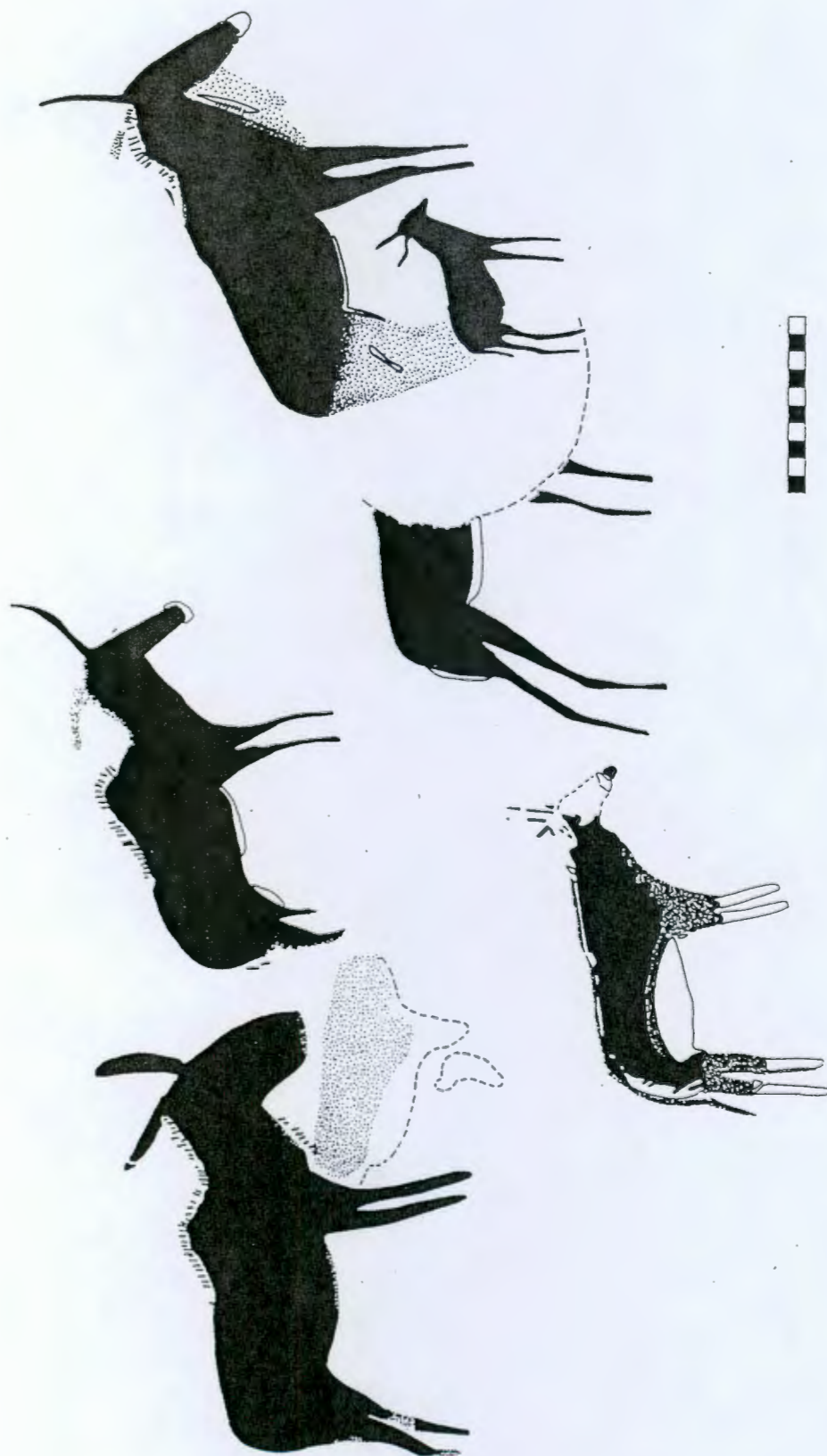
Sketch of Kaross shelter by Ciske Cnoops-Staring



'Classic' cupules at Kaross Shelter



Khoekhoe apron motif with San painting of an animal over it.



Although the animals at the top resemble donkeys, they probably represent kudu.  
A gemsbok is painted below them.

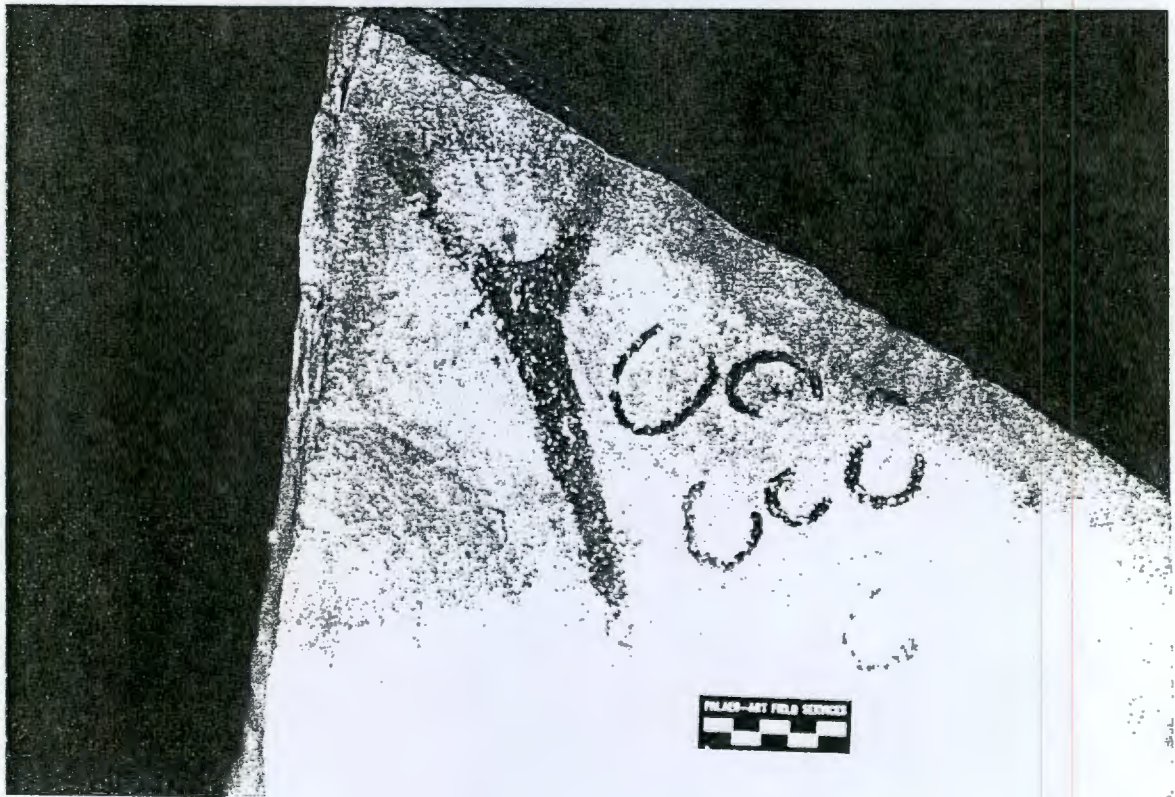




Photograph of human figure wearing a kaross.



At top is Pager's copy of a fish supposedly swimming into a fish trap.  
Below is a retracing of the panel. It can clearly be seen that the 'fish' is in fact a zebra spoor.

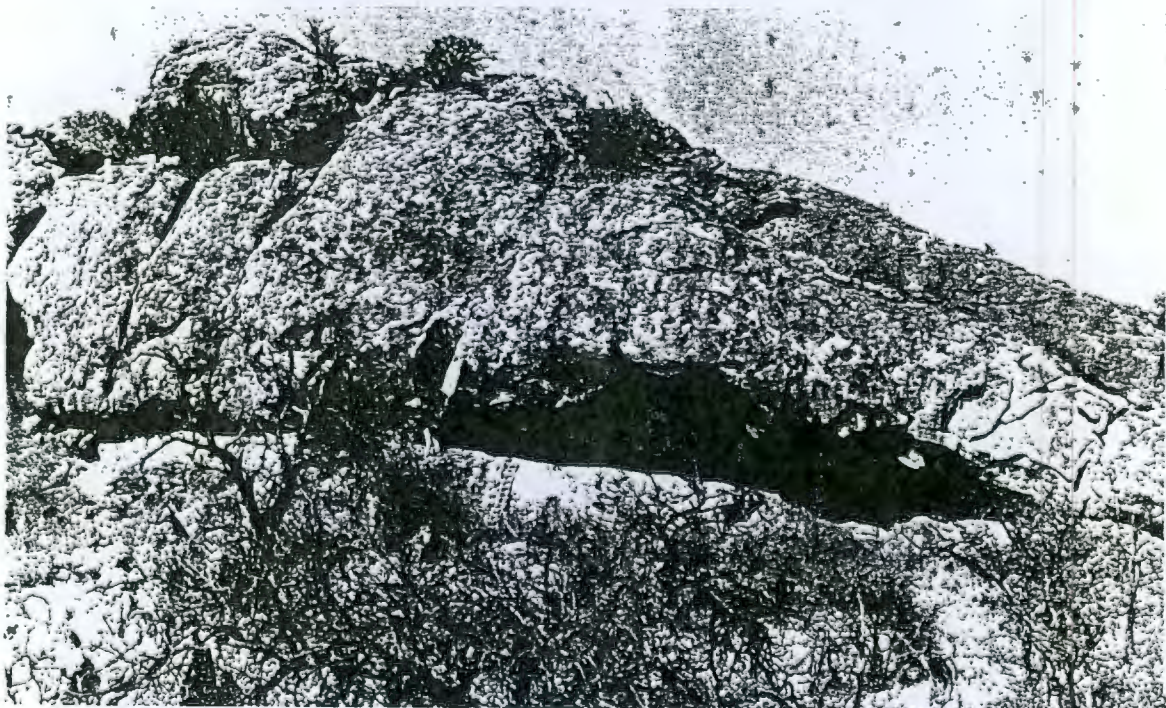


Photograph of a man's loincloth and zebra tracks.

## SITE 2. KAOXA'S SHELTER, MACHETE

Kaoxa's Shelter has been opened to the public and contains a number of information boards. Over 500 tourists visited this site in 2000. The site is very large and contains a number of notable features:

- There are both Khoekhoe and San paintings at this site. On a boulder within the shelter there is a fine example of a *mafuvha* board.
- The site is notable for its striking and varied San art. There are over 170 images painted here.
- Paintings of at least 16 species of animal are found in this shelter. There are images of kudu, eland, gemsbok, impala, hartebeest, waterbuck, roan/sable antelope, bushbuck, wildebeest, giraffe, hippopotamus, hyena, felines, locusts, springhare, and mongoose. This diversity suggests that many animals were important in the belief system of the Hietshware people who painted them.
- There are 13 images of locusts painted here – an unusual and unique subject for San artists. These are the only known rock paintings of locusts in southern Africa.
- Other unusual animal paintings include a hippopotamus, mongooses and a springhare.

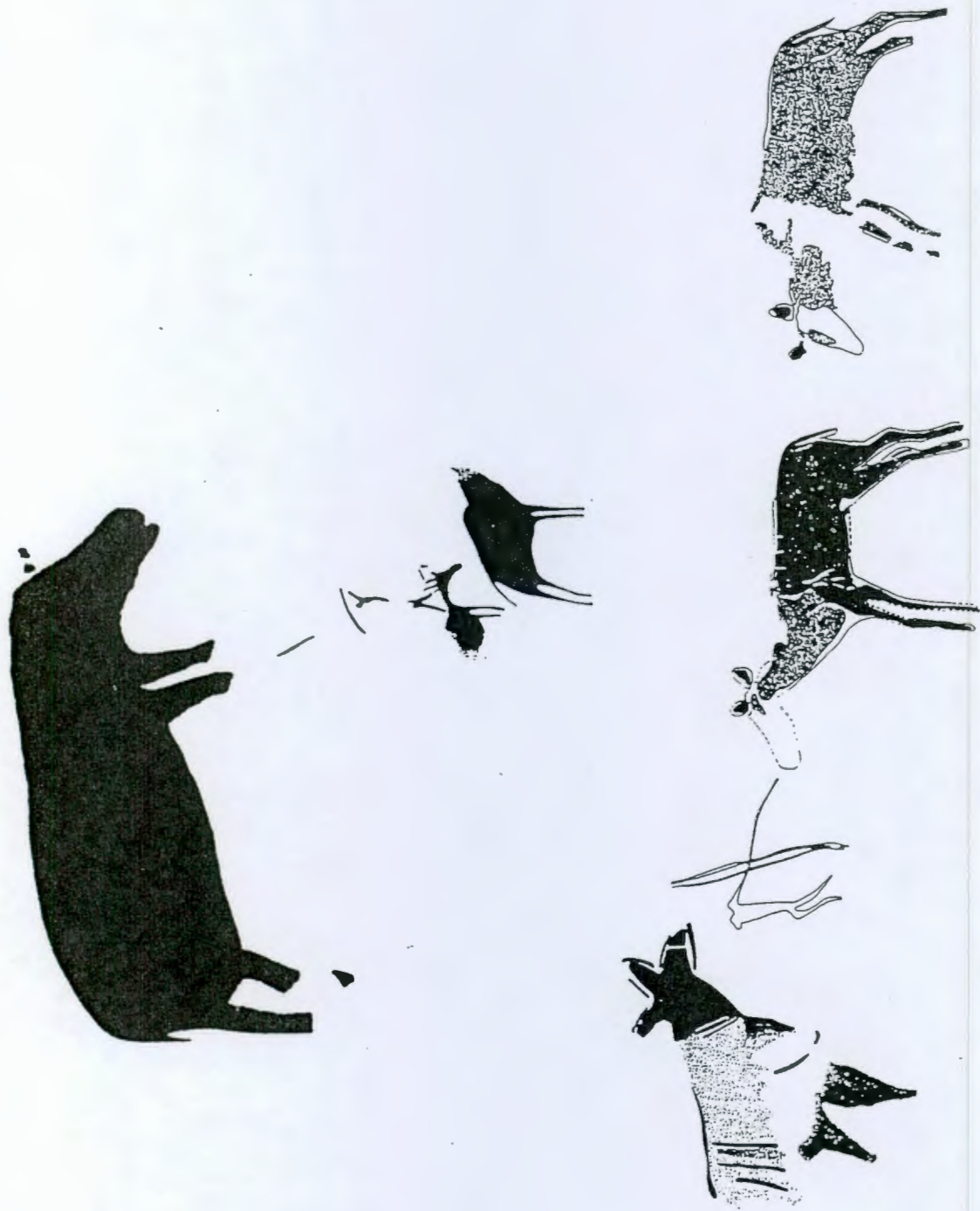




Three locusts at Kaoxa's Shelter



Giraffe, wildebeest and antelope. Kaoxa's Shelter.



A hippopotamus hunt and two kudu cows in pre-mating posture at Kaoxa's Shelter.



Photograph of a giraffe depicted in Kaoxa's Shelter.



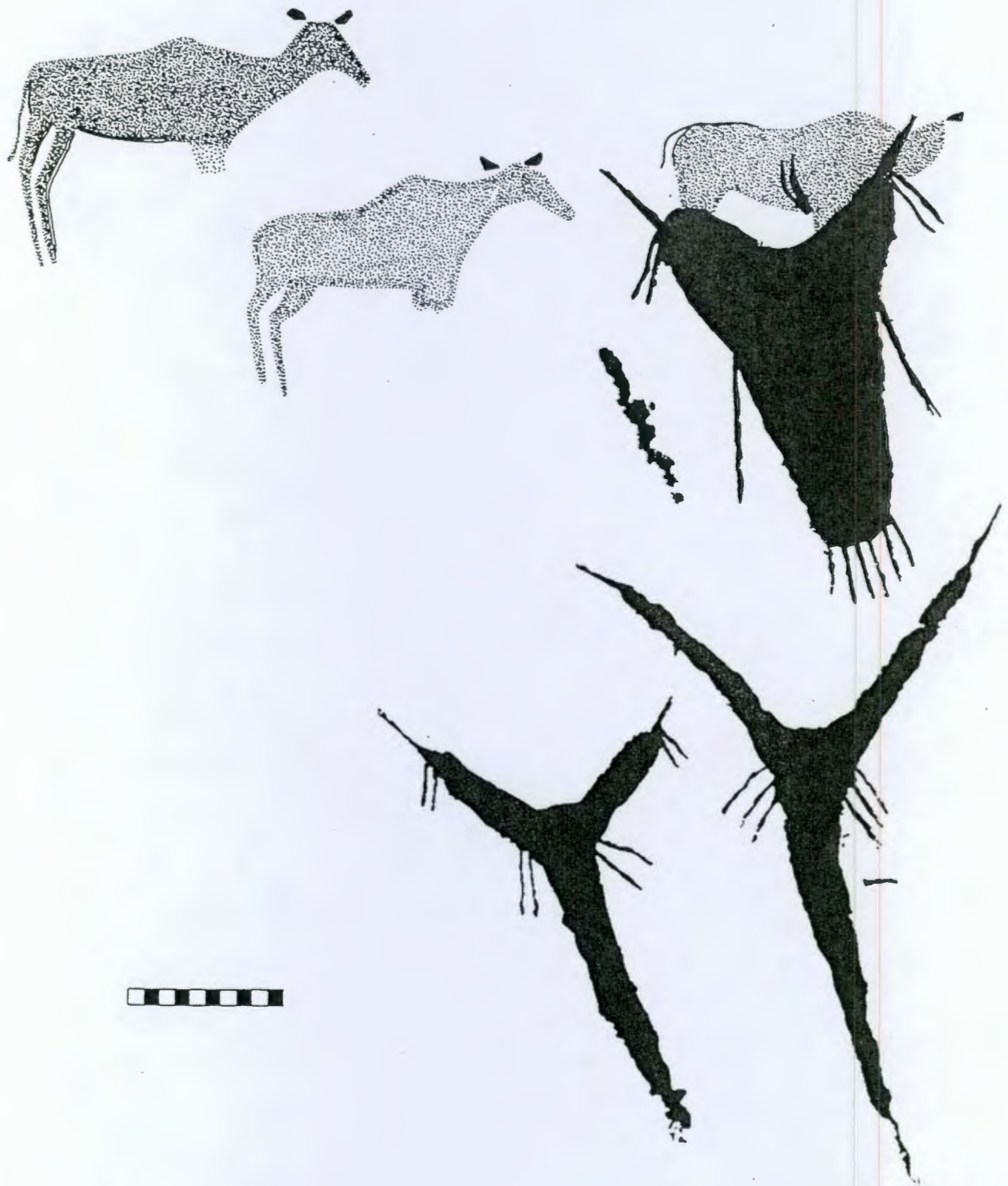
### SITE 3. VENUS SHELTER, GREEFSWALD

This is a very small site which contains only San paintings. It is notable for the following features:

- This shelter contains a rare painting of a group of women, one of which is depicted in frontal position.
- There are three images comprising two male loincloths and a female apron. The apron has tassels at its lower edge.
- Juxtaposed with the clothing motifs are three kudu cows, one of which is superimposed on the apron. Unusual features of the kudus are that they are depicted with necks extended and heads lowered – a posture associated with female kudu in oestrus. In addition, they all have their genital areas emphasised with red pigment. This feature points to the symbolism of the clothing motif which may have resonances in San thought concerning sexuality, marriage, childbearing, and possibly be linked to male and female rites of passage (cf. Eastwood & Cnoops 1999a; Eastwood et al. 1999).



Painting of woman in frontal view.



Two loincloths and an apron with three female kudu in pre-mating postures.  
The kudus have their genital areas emphasised in red pigment.



Photograph of the clothing motifs at Venus Shelter.

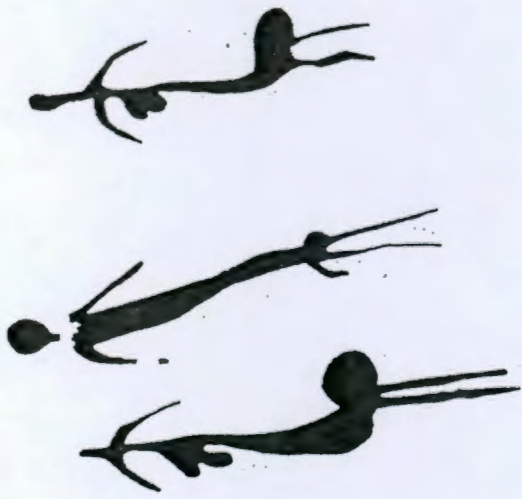
#### SITE. 4. WITTE VLOED SHELTER, ATHENS

This small painted boulder is situated far from other rock art sites. Although it might appear insignificant, it nonetheless contains some interesting features.

- There are two clusters of human figures painted here. In the first group there are four images of females. Three figures have large breasts and probably depict mature women, while a fourth figure has very small, pointed breasts, suggesting that she is a girl.
- In the second group, there are two women and a male figure. The male figure is notable for his drooping penis – an unusual feature in San paintings of males where penises are usually depicted as erect.
- The isolation of the site suggests that this might have been an initiation site. The paintings may portray an initiation dance in which old men are allowed to participate. The girl may represent the initiand.



Photograph of Witte Vloed Shelter.



The two processions at Witte Vloed Shelter.

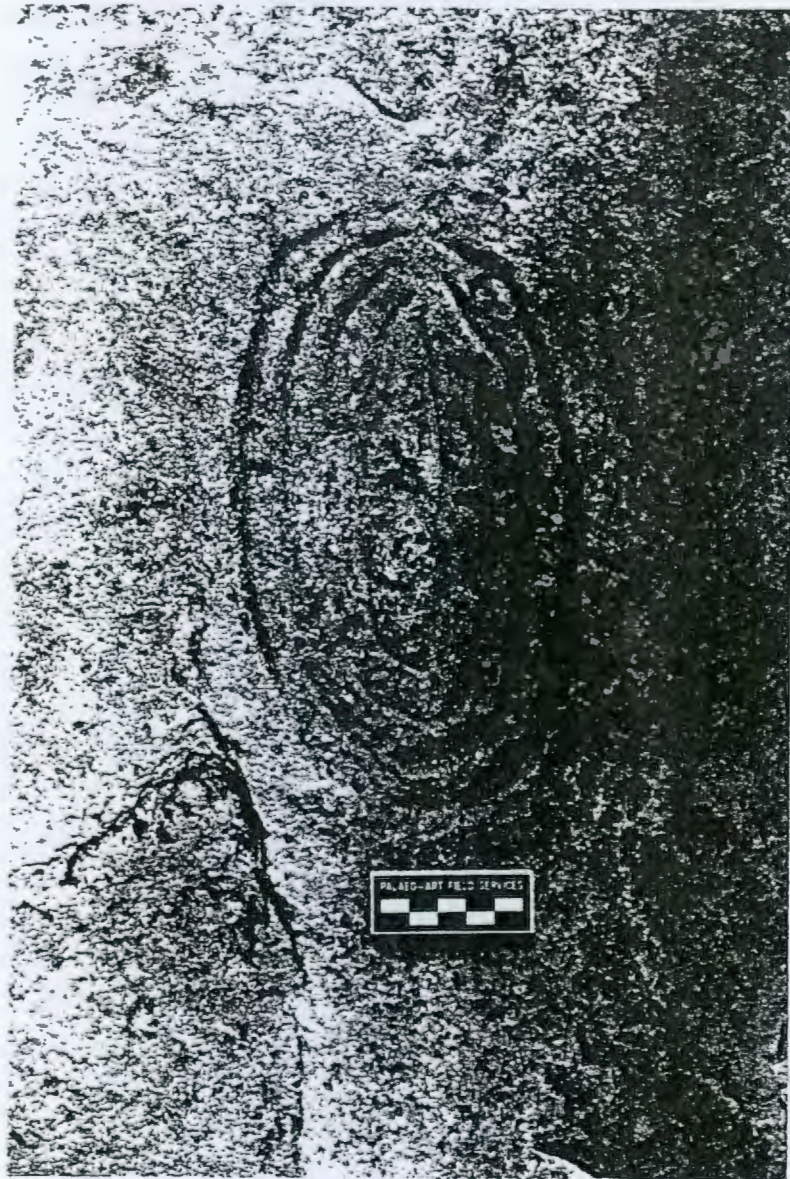
### SITE. 5. PETROGLYPH SHELTER, BALERNO

This site is being excavated by archaeologists from the Universities of the Witwatersrand and Cape Town. This large, spacious shelter contains only engravings.

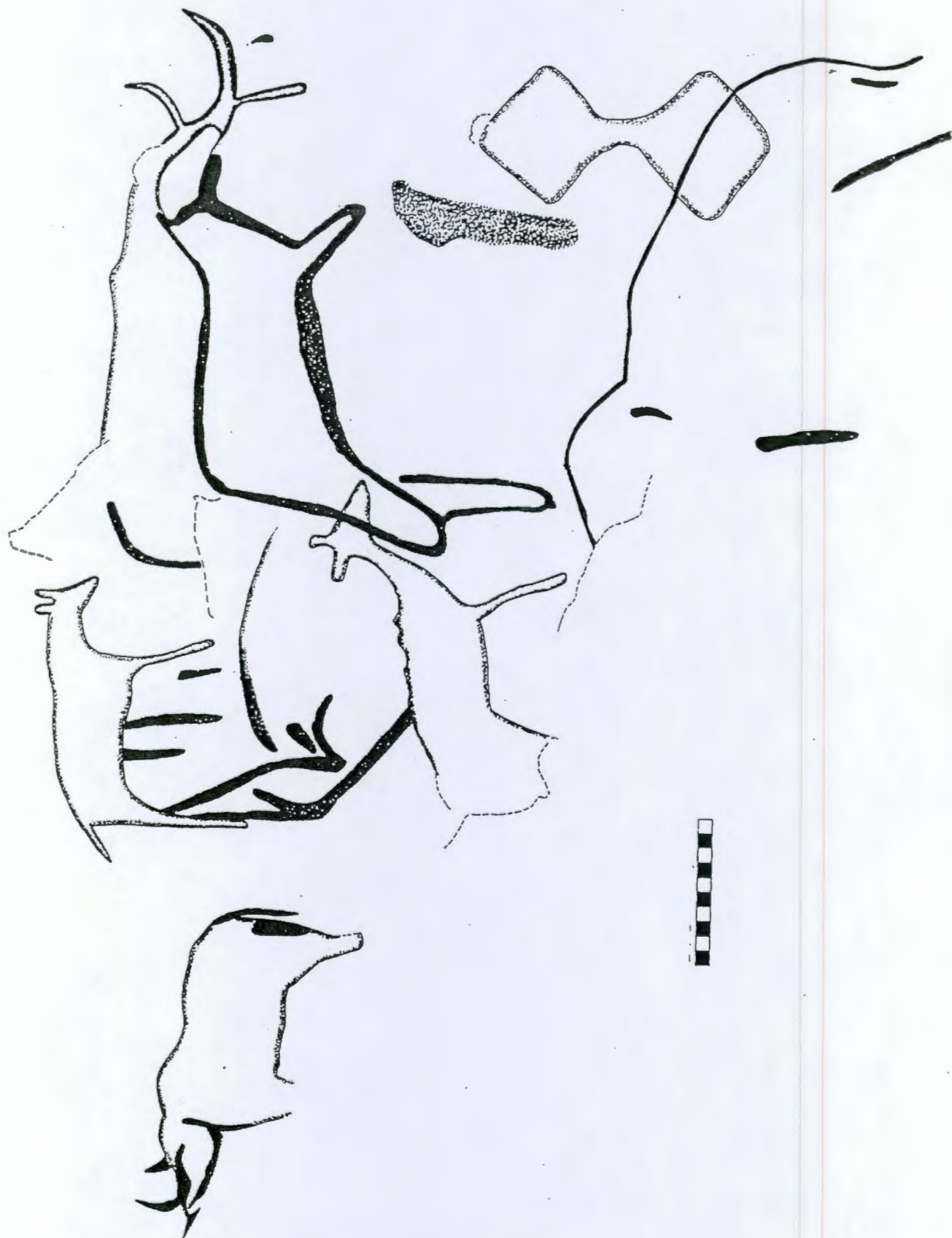
- There are several geometric engravings here including a 'double diamond' shape, a square and concentric circles.
- Animal engravings include three rhinoceroses, a kudu, an elephant and several giraffe.
- One of the engravings of a giraffe has remnants of paint on it, suggesting that later painters may have been particularly interested in the images of giraffes.



Incised and abraded engraving of a young rhinoceros.



Photograph of engraved concentric circles, Petroglyph Shelter.



Panel of engravings depicting indeterminate animals, two rhinoceroses, a kudu, an elephant and a geometric form. Petroglyph Shelter.



## SITE 6. THUDWA SHELTER, LITTLE MUCK

This medium-sized site has been excavated by archaeologists and they suggest that main occupation by hunter-gathers took place over a long period of the first millennium AD (Hall & Smith 2000). This suggests that the paintings found here may be as old as 2 000 years. Older engravings found here are certainly older than the paintings.

- A rare and important feature of this site is that recognisable paintings were made over engraved animals. For example, an antelope is painted over a large, engraved indeterminate animal, and a loincloth has been painted over an engraving of a bovid animal.
- There are engravings of bird tracks in this site - an unusual feature in LSCA rock art.
- This site has about 150 San images including magnificent portrayals of giraffe painted in several colours. Animal depictions include eland, kudu, impala, bushbuck, wildebeest, giraffe, rhinoceros, felines and elephant.
- There are 11 depictions of loincloths and two aprons.
- At least two paintings of felines were painted over red wavy lines. These lines appear to be the red dorsal lines painted on elephants – a feature of elephant paintings in the area (Eastwood 1999). The white paint representing the elephants' bodies has since faded away.



Felines superimposed on the red dorsal lines of elephants.



Two polychrome giraffe and a woman. Thudwa Shelter.

## SITE 7. SHEEP SHELTER, EDMONDSBURG

When the first Khoekhoe arrived in the Limpopo Valley, they probably brought with them sheep and pottery. Sheep paintings made by hunter-gatherers reflect this cultural innovation. The Sheep Shelter has the most impressive depictions of sheep in the region (see Eastwood & Fish 1996). The shelter also contains paintings of an elephant kudu and a number of human figures.

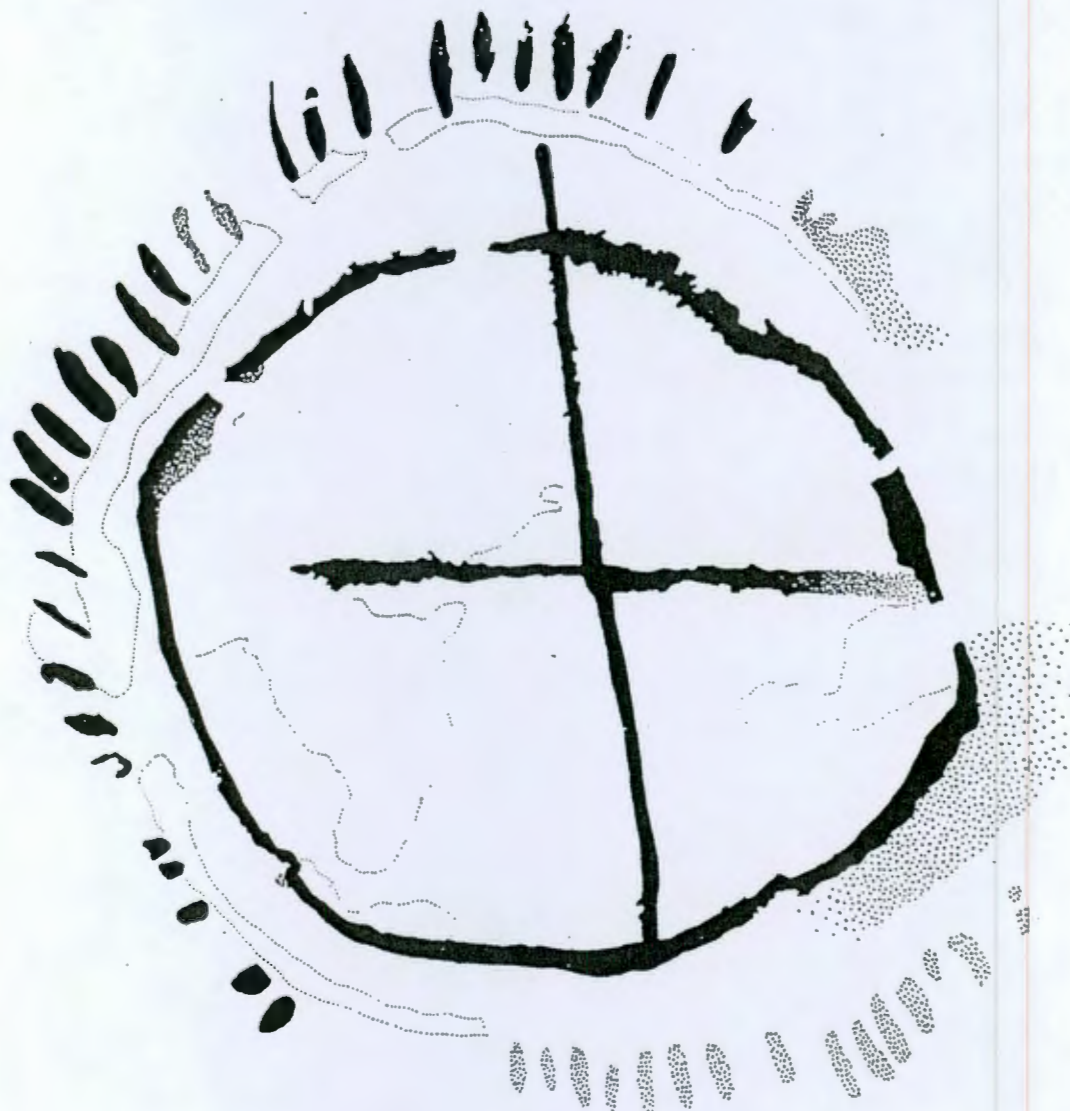


Photograph of four fat-tailed sheep are accompanied by a herder. The back apron worn by the human figure suggests that he is a Khoekhoe man. Khoekhoe men wore triangular back aprons, unlike San men who wore only loincloths.

**SITE 8. BEACON III SHELTER, SCHRODA**

This site is significant for two reasons:

- It contains over 70 abraded grooves.
- It contains some of the best examples of Khoekhoe art in the LSCA. This includes a rayed circle-and-cross motif painted in red and white pigments.

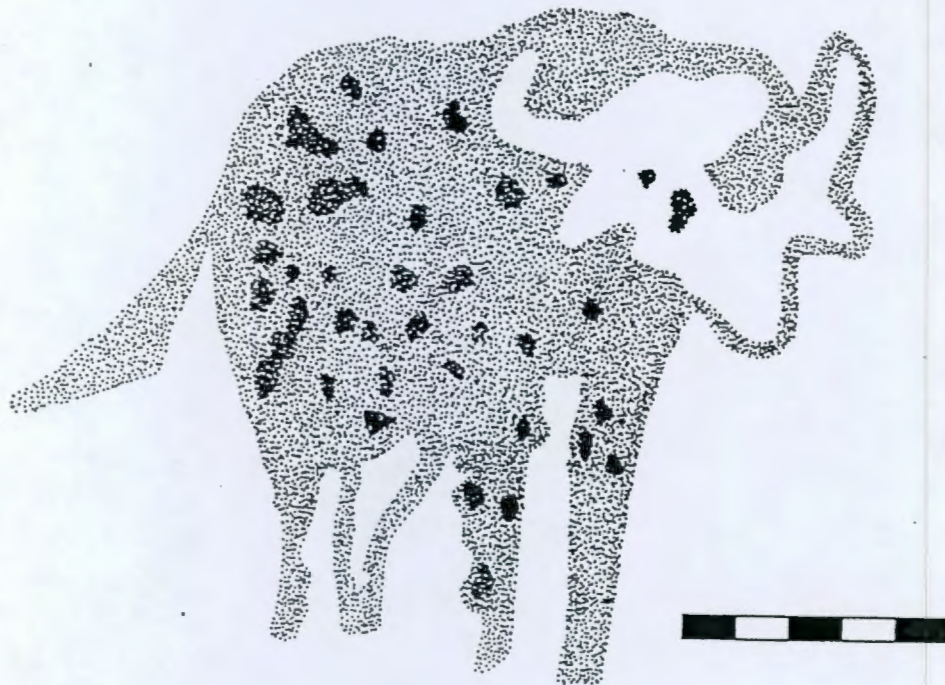


Fine example of rayed circle-and-cross motif painted by a Khoekhoe artist. Copy by Harald Pager.

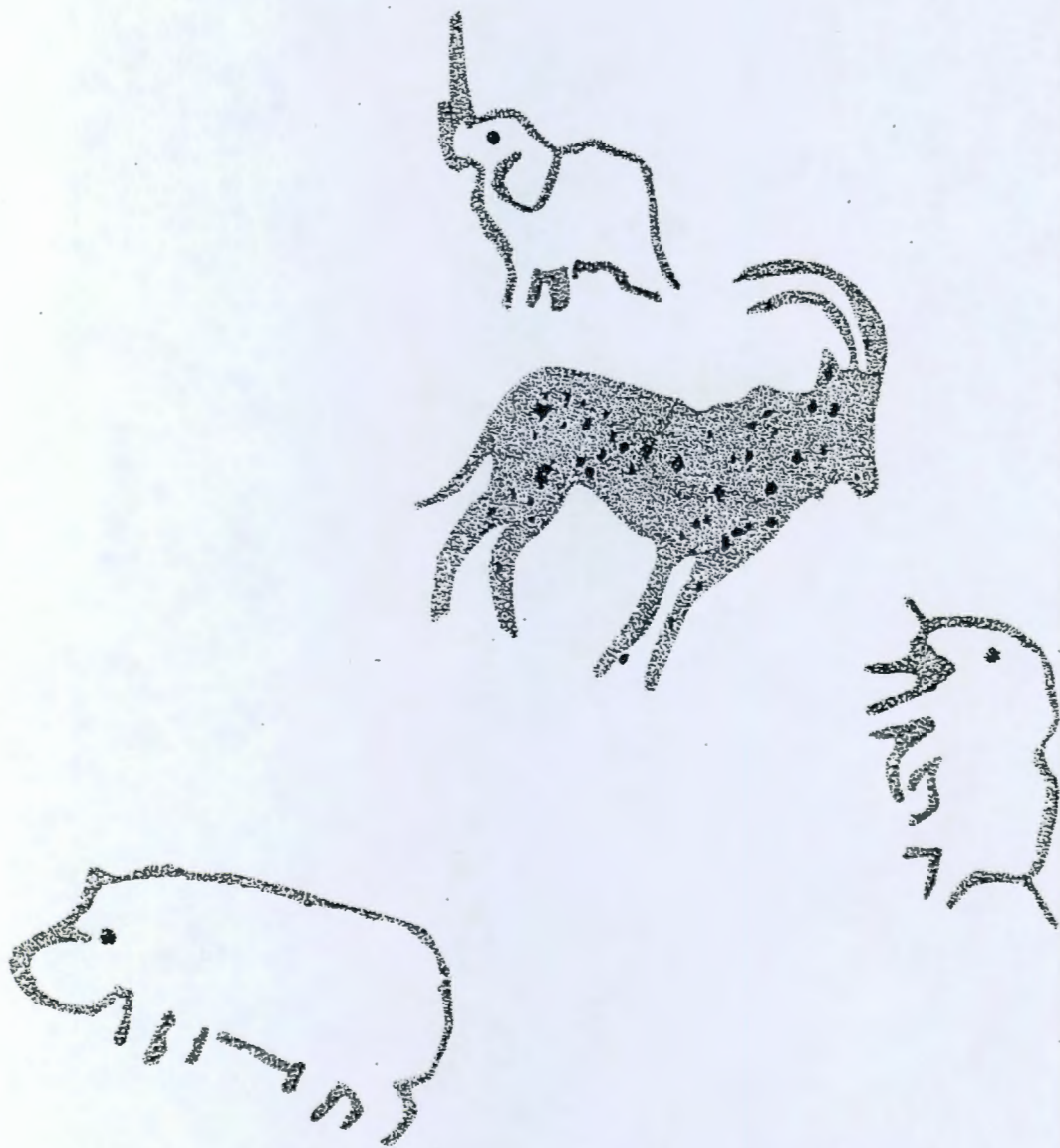
## SITE 9. THE DEN STAAT ENGRAVINGS

This unusual site is situated on an unprotected horizontal sandstone pavement.

- There are pecked and incised images of three elephants, a buffalo, a sable antelope, a hippopotamus and a *mafuvha* board.
- These engravings are intriguing; they do not appear to have been made by hunter-gatherers whose engravings are generally 'stylistically' different. These engravings may have been made by Bantu-speaking farmers and, indeed, are situated in the middle of an Iron Age site.



Engraving of a buffalo.



Two elephants, a sable antelope and a hippopotamus. Den Staat.

## SITE 10. RHODES DRIFT MAIN SHELTER

One of the most intriguing San sites in the region, this shelter contains two rather beautiful panels of paintings, plus several smaller clusters of images. Paintings include impala, hippopotamus, tsessebe and a porcupine.



A number of men and two women are associated with a family of impala and an elephant. Interestingly one of the women appears to be pregnant. At least three impala are depicted, a male, a female and a young one. Near this panel a number of male loincloths are depicted, perhaps pointing to the connection between the clothing motif, childbearing, family relationships and so forth.

## ROCK ART AND THE LANDSCAPE

The rich and diverse plant communities of the LSCA, ranging from riverine forest, grassland, and woodland to the specialised plant groups growing in the rocky outcrops form ideal habitats for very diverse and abundant animal communities, ranging from megaherbivores and plains animals to smaller mammal, bird and reptile populations. Pools at the junction of the seasonally flowing Limpopo and Shashe Rivers provide a perennial water-source for the wild animals of the region, local human communities and their livestock, in addition to providing fish and fresh-water mussels. The rich resources of the LSCA was certainly an attraction to human communities, as we know from the archaeological record.

While Western people might perceive the landscape as a series of topographical features, beautiful vistas, impressive rock formations and so forth, a hunter-gatherer perception would be quite different. As Elizabeth Marshall-Thomas (1959) wrote of the !Kung of the Kalahari

Each group knows its own territory very well; although it may be several hundred square miles in area, the people who live there know every bush and stone, every convolution of the ground, and have usually named every place in it where a certain kind of veld food may grow, even if that place is only a few yards in diameter, or where there is only a patch of tall arrow grass or a bee tree, and in this way each group of people knows many hundred places by name.

Unfortunately we have no idea from the Hietshware of the LSCA how they perceived the landscape, but they, no doubt, saw it in terms of its plant and animal resources, just like the !Kung. Unlike the !Kung, however, the Hietshware lived in a rocky landscape.

A landscape study by Janette Deacon (1977) based on the Bleek and Lloyd ethnography suggests that engravings were used to mark places in the landscape that had special significance for the Northern Cape /Xam San, in particular for rainmaking. Although there is evidence in the LSCA rock art to suggest that environmental concerns were of interest to the Hietshware, there is minimal evidence to suggest that rainmaking rites were practised by them. Venda, North Sotho, Tswana and Shona informants who had some contact with the Hietshware of the LSCA, all denied that the San were involved in rainmaking rites. This appears to be the case throughout the Kalahari where Guenther (1999) suggests that rainmaking was a purely opportunistic activity.

Although the Hietshware ethnography is mute on the perception of landscape, what can the rock art



tell us about the land and how early peoples lived in the landscape? The rock art itself suggests that the San lived by hunting; it also hints at a supernatural landscape filled with potent animals and beings, rather than the physical landscape. However, the spread of sites across the area, the types of art in various sites and the selection of sites for various purposes indicate a more prosaic and practical appreciation of landscape in terms of shelter and selection of sites for specific purposes.

During the course of the survey we could not correlate site locations with areas of rich food resources, such as stands of marula or other fruit-bearing trees, nor were sites concentrated near seasonal pools in the Limpopo - they were spread out far and wide in apparently waterless areas. However, we did discover one site in a very arid area of mopani scrub; this site was located in a huge workshop area, a source of quartz, jasper, indurated shales, and agates. The absence of these raw materials in other parts of the LSCA suggested that the San came here to process these materials into portable cores and blanks for their microlithic tools. Other San sites are found in isolated areas, far from the cave sandstone ridges. The paintings in these small sites frequently depict images of women and aprons, perhaps suggesting that these sites were specifically used for initiation purposes (Eastwood & Ouzman in prep.).

The distribution of sites across the LSCA generally appear to be a function of the geology - they are spread out along the rocky outcrops, and most suitable shelters were painted. Sites were also not chosen for their orientation; even though most sites face in a northerly direction, there are many sites oriented in the other directions as well. It would seem that sites were generally chosen on the basis of having suitable surfaces to paint or engrave on.

About 30% of sites appear to have been comfortable living areas, chosen for adequate floor space and shelter from the elements. These sites always contain a large number of surface artefacts, and most are richly painted. In smaller shelters there are generally only a few paintings and/or engravings even though there may be adequate space on the walls to make art. Generally, these sites may have been temporary shelters, although some of them have particularly interesting paintings.

Some of the largest sites may have been chosen because they were suitable venues for aggregation. Typically, San lived in bands which would move seasonally in response to the movements of game animals, availability of veld foods, and water. In difficult times bands might break up into smaller groups so as not to put too much pressure on scarce food resources, while in better times, they would come together again. Every few years larger congregations of bands might be arranged in order to exchange gifts, rekindle relationships, young people would marry members of other bands

and there would be an exchange of ideas, story-telling and large, group rituals such as initiation and medicine dances.



TDK aggregation site situated in mopane woodland.

An example of such an aggregation site in the LSCA is TDK in Zimbabwe – a 100 metre long site with painted panels extending for some 80 metres. Here, there is a deep, built up deposit, and many surface artefacts including ostrich eggshell fragments and microliths are to be found here. Over 200 paintings include depictions of shamanic experiences, the medicine dance, and a host of potent animals; there are over 40 images of the clothing motif and over 80 representations of men and women in equal numbers. Certainly this site was important in a number of ways; it is now generally accepted that San art relates to San religious rituals, either medicine dances or initiation rites. Rock art sites were likely to have been considered as entrances to the spirit world, a liminal space between the physical world and the realm of the gods and spirits.

It is known that the Hietsware followed this pattern of aggregation as the following story illustrates. At the end of 1998, in search of old people who could tell us more stories of the San, we met Faru Maruaduna, an octogenarian Shona man whose father was a Karanga from the Lozwi Clan. He now lives beside the Shashe River, some distance south of Fort Tuli. He told us that during the 1930s and 1940s a *Vhasarwa* (San) herbalist lived near him. This man, named Sitsharu,

he said, was exceedingly skilled in the use of veld medicines which were efficacious in healing a number of serious ailments. Often he would divine illness with a set of warthog-bone divining dice. Sitsharu and a San friend called Tomu would often go into the bush for long periods on hunting expeditions. They wore loincloths of goatskin and always carried bows with poisoned arrows. Sometimes, in return for medicines Sitsharu was given a goat, clay pots or sometimes sorghum seed which he would plant and cultivate.

Faru showed us a granite hill some thirty kilometres north of the LSCA where many San would congregate at certain times of the year to dance. This hill is locally known as *Thavha ya Vhasarwa*, the Hill of the Bushmen. The hill itself is unremarkable, rather smaller than surrounding and more impressive granite kopjes. At its base are several large rounded boulders set upon horizontal pavements of granite and flat grassy areas. Its use as a ritual and aggregation place was abandoned in 1947, the time at which both Tomu and Sitsharu also left the area forever.

Other observations of the sites and their art, however, point to differential use by various peoples. For example, most sites with San paintings were found to be at ground level, and with level floors. Larger sites where stone structures, circular lower grindstones, grainbins, iron artefacts and pot sherds are found were also used by Bantu-speaking farmers as places of shelter, storehouses, and, perhaps, for certain religious rites, such as initiation and rainmaking ceremonies, for example. Khoekhoe paintings in larger sites which also contained San art suggest that they too found these sites attractive. In contrast to the selection of sites by the San (and some Khoekhoe artists), some sites exclusively painted by the Khoekhoen frequently had little floor space, or had sloping floors and low ceilings. This observation was also made in north-eastern Venda where there are very many sites containing only Khoekhoe paintings. Often during the survey one could predict which tradition of painting would be found in certain shelters, even before reaching the site. This tells us that for some purposes, at least, the herders selected particular sites, perhaps wishing to exclude San artists.

Although the distribution and orientation of painted and engraved sites tells us a little of how past peoples used and regarded the landscape, the rock art of the LSCA suggests that this was not only a diverse and rich natural landscape containing a myriad of animal species, but a cultural and sacred landscape as well.

## LSCA ROCK ART IN A SOUTHERN AFRICAN CONTEXT

In order to contextualise the rock art of the LSCA in the subcontinent, it is necessary, first, to situate the art in the Central Limpopo Basin, and, secondly, to examine the art of the LSCA by comparing it to other major rock art areas of southern Africa.

### Intra-regional Comparisons

Engravings are found in the Limpopo Valley, that is, in the LSCA and North-eastern Venda, but are virtually absent from the Soutpansberg and Makgabeng Plateau. Khoekhoe and San paintings are found in all four regions in a fairly even spread.

**Table 15.** Co-occurrence of San and Khoekhoe paintings in the Central Limpopo Basin. Sample of 77 sites in the Makgabeng Plateau, 122 sites in north-eastern Venda, 37 sites in the Soutpansberg and 139 sites in the LSCA (a total of 375 sites in the Central Limpopo Basin – the CLB) .

Painting traditions	M'beng	Venda	SPBG	LSCA	CLB
San paintings	54	46	24	118	242
San + Khoekhoe paintings	19	39	12	13	83
Khoekhoe paintings	4	37	1	8	50

Turning to the San paintings of the LSCA and other areas in the Central Limpopo Basin general, there are certain differences and similarities. Beginning with numerical differences, the LSCA has, for example, the highest number of animal species (and other taxa, such as fish, insects, birds) depicted: 31 – whereas the Soutpansberg has 12, north-eastern Venda has 10, and the Makgabeng has 16 species and other taxa. Paintings of humans also show a number of differences, for example, humans outnumber depictions of animals in the LSCA, Makgabeng Plateau and Soutpansberg,

whereas in north-eastern Venda animals outnumber human figures. There are also differences in the way human figures are painted. In the LSCA and north-eastern Venda images of men rarely hold weapons, whereas in the rest of the Central Limpopo Basin men are frequently shown holding bows and arrows, or only arrows.

A striking similarity in the four areas of the Central Limpopo Basin San art is the attention to detail lavished on depictions of giraffe. Not only is the giraffe painted in polychrome, with details of mane and body markings, but depictions were painted much larger than other animals including elephant. In all four areas of the Central Limpopo Basin the giraffe is numerically significant, being dominant in north-eastern Venda. Elephant depictions, while being numerically significant in the LSCA and Soutpansberg, are less frequently depicted in the Makgabeng Plateau and north-eastern Venda. The kudu motif, an animal which is numerically significant in the LSCA, Soutpansberg and Makgabeng Plateau is infrequently depicted in north eastern Venda.

Such cross-cutting of numerical data only confuses the issue; however, one animal stands out above the rest in the region – the giraffe. Another motif which is numerically significant and found in all four areas in the Central Limpopo Basin is the clothing motif; it constitutes 8.8% of all paintings in the LSCA, in the other three areas the percentage is less. Nonetheless the figure remains significant; in 350 sites containing Khoisan paintings in the Central Limpopo Basin, 24.6% (n=86) contain images of the clothing motif. The motif constitutes 5.8 % of the total number of paintings (n=6106).

### **Inter-regional Considerations**

The Limpopo Valley is one of the major rock engraving areas in southern Africa; most of the main engraving categories are present in the LSCA; the exceptions are engraved Khoekhoe geometric imagery and the depiction of aprons - features of certain rock engraving areas in the central interior of South Africa.

San rock paintings are generally considered to be broadly similar across southern Africa, but with regional differences. This too is the case with the LSCA. The San paintings of the LSCA show broad similarities in manner of depiction and subject matter to images found south of the Zambezi River in places like the Matopos, Drakensberg, Cederberg and Brandberg

San paintings consist predominantly of human beings and animals. Human beings were depicted in

a continuum from very detailed to very sketchy 'crude' representations. There are a great many variations in the treatment of body proportion, size and detail like limb shape, clothing decoration, head shape and so forth. Crudely painted human beings are found in the Waterberg and Tsodilo Hills in Botswana (Walker 1998), for example. Animal depictions show a similar range of variation from crude to detailed, and from indeterminate to species-specific. Although the manner of animal representation differs from region to region, there are commonalities in the ways in which animals were depicted. For example, a pan-southern African feature of San paintings is that certain animals were represented using combinations of diagnostic features (e.g. Eastwood et al. 1999; Smith 1998), making identification of particular species possible. Such a widespread convention suggested that the painter intended the viewer to know exactly which animal was being portrayed.

The San paintings of the LSCA therefore have similarities in technique to other areas of the subcontinent. However there are also quantitative similarities. These include, first, the depiction of detailed and recognisable images of human beings in greater numbers than animals. As in other parts of southern Africa, such as the Western Cape (Maggs 1967; Halkett 1987; Hollmann 1993), the Drakensberg (Pager 1971; Lewis-Williams 1972, 1974), the Matopos (Walker 1996) and the Trelawny-Darwendale district of Zimbabwe (Tucker & Baird 1983), paintings of human beings predominate in the LSCA (cf. Eastwood & Blundell 1999). Secondly, as in other regions, antelope are numerically predominant in the LSCA, particularly indeterminate species (at any rate as far as researchers are concerned). Indeed, throughout southern Africa, quantitative studies almost always show that indeterminate and species-specific antelope are the largest category of animal images (e.g., Maggs 1967; Pager 1971; Lewis-Williams 1972, 1974; Tucker & Baird 1983; Hollman 1993; Lenssen-Erz 1994; Walker 1996; Laue 1999; Eastwood & Cnoops 1999a, 1999b).

Another widespread feature of southern African forager rock art is the choice of particular animals which *may* be numerically predominant, but are depicted in more detail, are painted in several colours, are proportionally larger, and are found in more complex associative contexts than is the case with other animal depictions. In the south-eastern mountains of South Africa, for example, this dominant icon is the eland (e.g. Vinnicombe 1976; Lewis Williams 1981), in the Brandberg of Namibia and in the Matopos of Zimbabwe it is the giraffe (Guenther 1984; Walker 1996), in Mashonaland of Zimbabwe it is the elephant (Garlake 1989), in the Makgabeng Plateau and the Waterberg it is the red hartebeest (B. Smith pers. comm.), in north-eastern Venda it is the giraffe and zebra, while in the Soutpanberg and LSCA it is the kudu and giraffe (Eastwood & Cnoops 1999a). Although the choice of these animals differ, it was

usually one of the larger and most impressive animals that were chosen.

It is the presence of certain elements in the art that really mark the LSCA as a rock art area distinct from the forager rock paintings in other parts of southern Africa. There are three important features of LSCA rock art that underscore its distinctiveness from other well-known forager rock art areas. These are: the frequency of depictions of women, the diversity of animal species depicted, and the presence, in significant numbers, of loincloths and aprons. I discuss each in turn.

One of the major differences between the rock art of the LSCA and almost every other documented rock art region in southern Africa is the number of depictions of women and the conventions used in their portrayal. In the LSCA, images of women, identifiable by breasts, make up 28.2% of the total number of depicted human beings, while men, identifiable by penis, make up only 23.5%. The percentage for women is exceptionally high compared to figures elsewhere. In the Drakensberg, percentages range from as little as, 0.3% in the Barkly East area (Lewis-Williams 1981) to 2% for a larger sample area in the southern Drakensberg (Vinnicombe 1976) and a high of 14.8% for the small area of the Ndedema Gorge (Pager 1971). Elsewhere percentages of depictions of women are also small - 9.6% and 6.4% for the Putslaagte and Koebee areas of the Western Cape respectively (Halkett 1987; Hollmann 1993), and 8.5 % for the Trelawney-Darwendale districts of Zimbabwe (Tucker & Baird 1983). The way in which the images of women in the LSCA are depicted is also distinctive. Typically, they are characterised by exceptionally large buttocks, forward-curved spine (lordosis), and reverse articulation of the knee joints. Both the exaggerated backward bending of the knees and the slenderness of the legs suggest the hind legs of an animal, rather than those of a human.

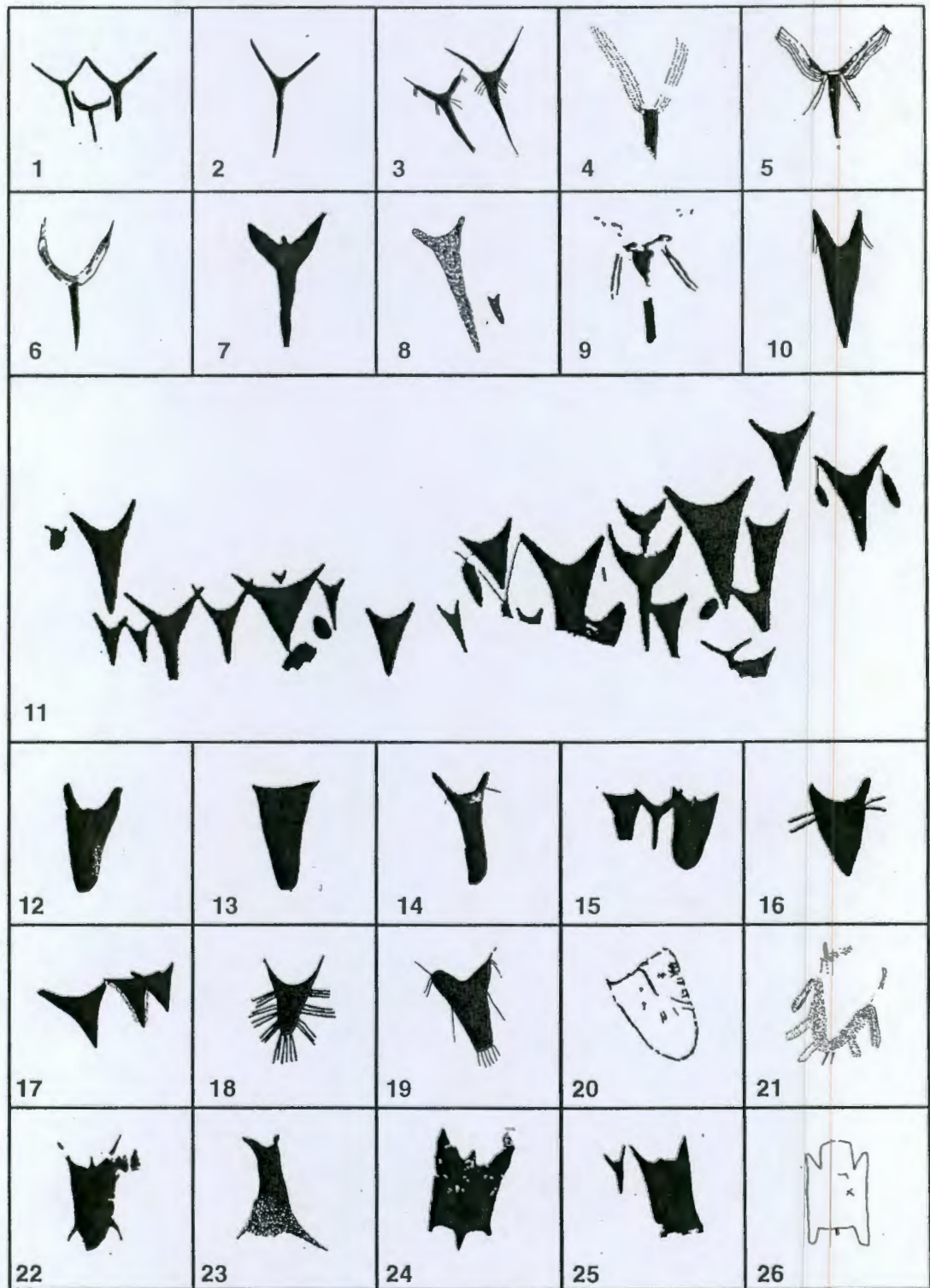
The second distinctive feature of the LSCA San rock paintings is the diversity of painted animal species. Like rock art regions elsewhere in southern Africa the LSCA rock paintings depict a variety of animal species. The average number of animal species per site in the LSCA is 2.7 suggesting at first glance that only a small range of species were painted. This figure is, however, misleading: 31 species of mammals, fish, birds and insects are depicted in the LSCA (Eastwood & Cnoops 1999b). Compared with a sample area in the Drakensberg, for example, only 11 species were recorded (Lewis-Williams 1972) while in a survey of the Cederberg Wilderness Area in the Western Cape only 8 species were recorded (Deacon 1993). It is interesting to consider that in the Trelawney-Darwendale district of Zimbabwe 26 species of animals were noted (Tucker & Baird 1983), and in the Matopos over 40 species are depicted (Walker 1996); these figures suggest that depicted species diversity may increase farther north in southern Africa. This diversity in the rock art, however, may

be a reflection of differential species diversity in different ecological biomes.

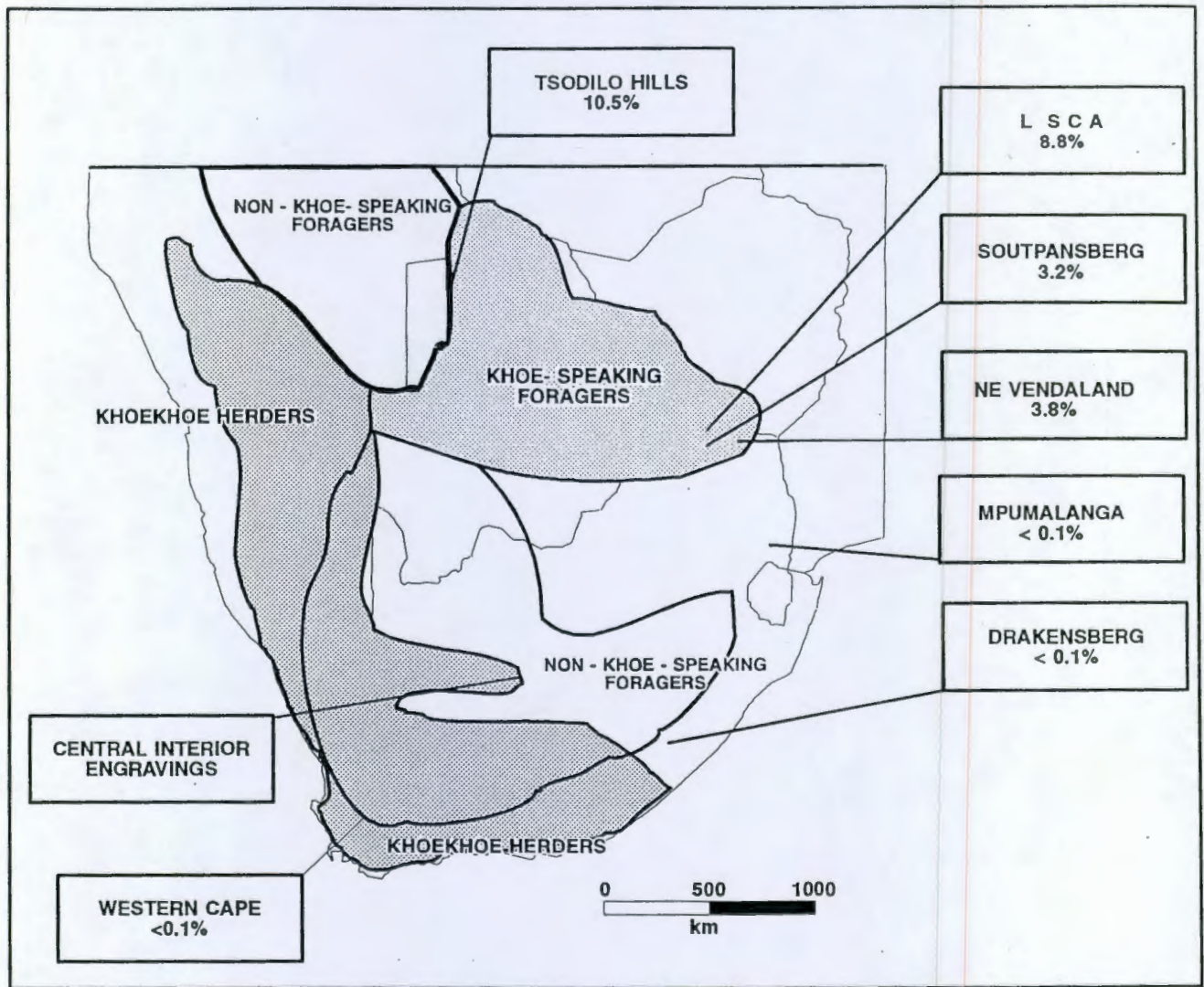
The third, and most distinctive attribute of the LSCA San paintings, are depictions of loincloths and aprons (the 'clothing motif'; Blundell & Eastwood 2001). The variation in form of the clothing motif is shown below. In 127 sites containing forager fine-line paintings in the LSCA, 44,9% (n=57) contain images of loincloths and aprons; they constitute 8,8% of the total number of paintings (n=2441). The clothing motif is not only confined to the LSCA, however; it is a significant feature of the fine-line paintings of the Soutpansberg and north-eastern Venda (3.2% and 3.8% of the total number of paintings respectively). It is also a feature of the Makgabeng Plateau where surveys are not yet complete (the figure is estimated at c. 3 - 4%). In no other area of southern Africa, bar one, are images of loincloths and aprons found painted in such profusion and diversity as the Central Limpopo Basin. It is clear that they are a significant symbolic component of LSCA iconography.

These three features of LSCA San rock paintings (the diversity of painted animal species, the conventions used in the portrayal of women, and the depiction of the loincloth and apron motifs) make the art instantly recognisable and distinguish it from other regions. Even though the paintings of the LSCA are fine-line in technique, the unusual nature of the subject matter and manner of depiction of some of this subject matter suggest that the authors of the LSCA paintings were cognitively and culturally different, to some degree in any event, from those who made the fine-line paintings in other parts of southern Africa. The emphasis on items of clothing and the high frequency of women in the art are features not found together elsewhere in southern Africa and are seemingly more fully explicable as a manifestation of a localised belief system, which is attributable to a specific historical context.





Selected images of aprons and loincloths showing their variation.  
 All are from the LSCA except for numbers 13, 17, and 18 which are from the Soutpansberg.



Map of southern Africa showing distribution and estimated percentages of the clothing motif.

The distribution of the motif correlates with Khoe-speaking San distribution.

## The Distinctiveness of LSCA San Rock Art

Paintings of the clothing motif is only significantly present in two rock art areas of southern Africa: the Central Limpopo Basin and the Tsodilo Hills of Botswana. This fact led to an investigation of the authorship of the LSCA San rock paintings. Basing their evidence on archaeological data, archaeo-linguistic studies, the correlation between the distribution of the clothing motif and the distribution of Khoe-speaking hunter-gatherers, authorship of the Tsodilo Hills paintings, and Eastern Khoe San ethnography, Eastwood et al. (in press) identified the authors of the LSCA art as Hietshware hunter-gatherers. They found that the apron motif was also depicted in the Khoekhoe art tradition, and suggested that the clothing motif was a diagnostic feature of Khoe-speaking hunter-gatherer art, and that its symbolism had possibly been borrowed from the Khoekhoen.

Although arguments have been put forward that demonstrate Khoekhoe and Bantu-speaker authorship of some rock art in southern Africa, this is to the best of our knowledge, the first time a body of rock art outside of the Tsodilo Hills has been shown to have been made by Khoe-speaking hunter-gatherers. This is a significant step forward in appreciating the diversity of southern African forager art.

The association of images of loincloths and aprons with Khoe-speakers' and not with non-Khoe-speakers' rock art suggests strongly that the images may be a product of the influence of Khoekhoe peoples on the autochthonous foragers in the areas through which they passed. This suggestion finds significant support because images of loincloths and aprons have also been found in the finger-painted technique, now associated with Khoekhoe herders, in the LSCA. Importantly, finger painted Khoekhoe images are found both over and under the fine-line brush technique images of the LSCA, suggesting a long period of interaction between Khoekhoe herders and the autochthones where both communities used the same shelters to paint. Because the LSCA images of loincloths and aprons are the only extensive body of images done in this fine-line technique, it seems that they were made by the autochthones interacting with the Khoekhoen. Mathias Guenther (1999), for example, points out that Khoekhoe influences on forager religion are many and pervasive. The blending of, and striking resemblances between their religious beliefs (Schapera 1930), and their practically indistinguishable folklore traditions (Biesele 1993) are a result of a long and varied history (Barnard 1992). As yet undemonstrated, however, preliminary interpretations of the clothing motif in the Central Limpopo Basin suggest that it is linked to male and female rites of passage, based on correspondences between Kalahari Khoisan ethnography and the painted contexts of the motif (Eastwood in prep.).

The recognition of a Khoe-speaking forager art poses questions about the broader diversity of hunter-gatherer rock arts in southern Africa. For example, can the ritual symbolism associated with shamanic activity (rather than *shamanistic* concerns; Taçon 1983) which is such a blatant feature of non-Khoe-speakers' rock art in the south-eastern mountains of southern Africa be extended to the forager rock paintings of the Central Limpopo Basin? Because the apron motif is absent from the Matopos and the Brandberg, as far as we know, where painting activity mainly predated Khoekhoe herder incursions (Pager 1989; Walker 1996), does this suggest distinctive Khoe-speaking and non-Khoe-speaking painting traditions? These and other questions may be partially resolved when the meaning of the clothing motif is explained, and when the archaeological record is better understood.

The next few years should see more evidence come to light that will advance our appreciation of the complexity and diversity of southern African rock art. The recognition that a diversity of peoples produced rock art opens up exciting prospects for the study of interaction and the flow and reshaping of particular cosmologies.

## CONCLUSION

At the beginning of the Central Limpopo Basin Rock Art Survey back in 1992, the rock art of the LSCA appeared to be rudimentary and composed of a few simple images. This impression was created by the publication of several books illustrating the rich polychrome imagery of the Drakensburg. However, as the survey progressed, and the different traditions of rock art became apparent, the more complex and interesting the art became.

Particular San images in the LSCA, for example, are almost incomparable: portrayals of loincloths and aprons, paintings of mormyrid fish outlined in green pigment, detailed and colourful depictions of kudu and giraffe, images of locusts, mongooses, porcupine and springhares. The engravings are no exception, and exhibit a wide range of techniques, styles and subject matter; likewise, the Khoekhoe paintings are striking and intriguing. These all contribute to making the LSCA rock art complex, distinctive and interesting.

The landscape, geographical and historical contexts underpin the complexity and diversity of LSCA

rock art. The co-occurrence of paintings and engravings in the same sites noted by earlier investigators is not the only significant feature of LSCA rock art. Features of the San art which set it apart from other major rock art regions are the depiction of aprons and loincloths, the diversity of animals depicted, and a very high proportion of human female figures.

Another feature, and one that has only recently been recognised, is the co-occurrence of Khoekhoe herder and San hunter-gather rock paintings. This recognition of a herder rock art in the region has, despite the paucity of archaeological evidence for an historical herder presence in the area, become the primary archaeological source of evidence for a long period of interaction between these two culturally distinct Khoisan peoples.

Even more significant perhaps is the recognition that the San rock art of the LSCA is a distinctive Khoe-speaking San rock art, its diagnostic feature being the ubiquitous imagery of loincloths and aprons. While the symbolism of the clothing motif has not yet been formally demonstrated it appears to be a central or key symbol, with a wide range of associations in San and Khoekhoe thought.

Whether or not the social significance and the meaning of the art is ever solved, it is certain that this region holds as much potential for understanding hunter-gatherer and herder cosmology as do the better-known areas of rock art in the Matopos, Brandberg, Cederberg and Drakensberg.

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