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# uKhahlamba Drakensberg and Mapungubwe

## Contrasts in South Africa's World Heritage Rock Art Sites

***ABSTRACT***

*South Africa has a wealth of rock art sites with considerable variety in style and content. Similarities and differences between two of the regional traditions are exemplified in the uKhahlamba Drakensberg mixed natural and cultural World Heritage Site in the south-eastern part of the country, and in the Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape World Heritage Site in the far north. They demonstrate how a similar belief system can be expressed in different ways in rock paintings made by geographically separate communities at the southern end of the African continent.*

### Introduction

South Africa is one of the few countries in the world where reliable ethnographic evidence is available to assist with the interpretation of hunter-gatherer rock paintings and engravings. Accounts of the beliefs and customs of the /Xam San (Bushmen), written down in the vernacular and translated into English by Wilhelm Bleek and his sister-in-law Lucy Lloyd in the 1870s (Bleek & Lloyd 1911), as well as shorter accounts by Orpen (1874), Stow (1905), How (1962), Jolly (1986) and others, have provided valuable insights that assist in our understanding of the meaning and motivation of the art.

Although Wilhelm Bleek recognized a link between the San beliefs and rock art, this was not clearly articulated until the second half of the 20th century when researchers such as Patricia Vinnicombe (1976) and David Lewis-Williams (1981) began to understand the symbolism and identify metaphors in the rock art with the help of both the 19th and 20th century records. Some of the more obscure references in the 19th century documents were brought alive through anthropological research in neighbouring Botswana and Namibia in the 20th century (Thomas 1959; Lee & DeVore 1976; Biesele 1993; Guenther 1999; Marshall 1999). They confirm the existence of a belief system with elements common to many San language groups in southern Africa.

Research over the past 40 years has broadened the scope of rock art interpretation considerably. Once it was realized that the art is essentially religious in nature, rather than simply a record of daily life, it opened the door to exploration of the implications. Lewis-Williams (1981, 2003) , in particular, developed a new paradigm for rock art research in which he made two important points that have since

*Fig. 1. Eland Cave in the northern UDP*

been applied to other rock art traditions in southern Africa and beyond. The first is that rock art can be interpreted with integrity and authenticity if it draws on the metaphors and symbolism in the cognitive system and beliefs of the artists. The second is that the wiring of the human brain is similar in all anatomically modern people and therefore reacts in a similar way to certain stimuli (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1988). As a result, there will be similarities in the form of rock paintings and engravings in different parts of the world if the stimuli are part of the cognitive system. This does not mean that they had the same meaning in all cultures, nor does it imply that there was a single point of origin that spread by direct contact between communities.

At a high level of analysis, the animals important to the artists and the postures of the human figures can be identified in rock art and compared with the significance they had in the belief system. In the case of geometric or non-representational art traditions, the meaning of symbols is not always clear if there is no direct ethnographic information, but they can be compared to the patterns commonly 'seen' by people in altered states of consciousness and, if there is a match, they might be linked to ritual and religious practice.

At the next level of analysis, variability within major traditions can be explained by environmental and cultural factors. Rock paintings in the two World Heritage sites described in this paper reflect basic similarities in the beliefs of the artists, but choices in the subject matter selected for painting are evident as a result of a different range of animals in the two environmental settings, and differences in the choices people made about which rock art themes would contribute to their well-being.

## uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Park (UDP)

The UDP World Heritage Site is located on the eastern slopes of the uKhahlamba-Drakensberg mountain range in the KwaZulu Province of South Africa adjoining the mountain kingdom of Lesotho. Inscribed as a mixed natural and cultural World Heritage Site, the layers of rock which form the dramatic high altitude grasslands with steep-sided valleys encode over 200 million years of geological history. The resulting diversity of habitats within the 242,813 ha park supports an unusually high number of endemic and globally threatened species which justify inscription as a site of natural significance. The geology has favoured the formation of sandstone rock shelters and overhangs at the base of high cliffs and on the underside of some of the large boulders which have become detached from these cliffs (Fig. 1). Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife has management responsibility for the UDP World Heritage site.

### *Significance*

The World Heritage Committee approved two cultural criteria when the site was inscribed in December 2000. These inscriptions are largely based on the abundance, diversity, preservation, and quality of the Later Stone Age San (Bushmen) hunter-gatherer rock art along with the fact that it provides insights into their ways of life and beliefs systems. Archaeological excavations reveal that while the San have inhabited the UDP since about 8000 years ago, their occupation remained insubstantial until around 3000 years ago (Mazel 1990; Wright & Mazel 2007). In the northern UDP there was a more intensive occupation from 3000 until 1600 years ago as evidenced in the greater number of rock shelters occupied, and the increased quantities and variety of food and cultural remains recovered from excavations (Mazel 1990; Wright & Mazel 2007).

The paintings were most likely done from at least 2500-3000 years ago until the late 19th century AD. This is known from the AMS C14 dating of a few rock paintings (Mazel & Watchman 1997, 2003), the sequencing of paintings at several sites (Russell 2000; Swart 2004), information from an excavated site (Mazel 1992), and the presence of subject matter with known chronological contexts (Manhire et al. 1986; Vinnicombe 1976). It has recently been proposed that the shaded polychrome technique emerged in the UDP around 2000 years ago and, with few exceptions, lasted until 1600 years ago in the northern UDP when the San left the area for a thousand years (Mazel 2009). The terminal date for these in the southern UDP is not known and requires additional research.

### *Recording and analysis*

Although the copying of UDP paintings commenced in the 1860s, the first sustained recording of the rock paintings occurred in 1910 when Trooper Whyte was instructed in response to growing concern about the damage which was being done to the paintings through human actions and natural phenomena, to locate all the rock paintings within part of the southern UDP. Whyte produced the first quantitative record of the paintings in the UDP, counting 1041 images in 37 sites. This recording was, however, not sustained and hardly any work was undertaken until the 1950s when Alex Willcox, who published the first book devoted solely to UDP rock art in 1956 and Patricia Vinnicombe, who was raised in the Drakensberg foothills, took up the challenge of recording and writing about the paintings. They were joined in the 1960s by Woodhouse (1965), Lewis-Williams (1966) and Pager (1971).

Between 1978 and 1981, Val Ward and Aron Mazel undertook a project commissioned by the Department of Forestry, which managed most of the UDP at the time, with the primary objective to 'obtain accurate and detailed information on the rock art … that occurs in many rock shelters in the' UDP. This project involved the compilation of all known data about the location and content of UDP rock art sites (Ward) followed by an extensive fieldwork programme (Mazel). At the completion of the project about 520 rock art sites were known. New discoveries since then have increased the number of known sites to over 600 with between 35 000 and 40 000 recorded individual images. Although all the large, major painted sites have probably been discovered, new sites continue to be found as areas are searched more intensively.

The number of paintings in individual rock shelters varies considerably, from only one painting in 25 or more rock shelters, to over 1000 paintings in four rock shelters, including

Eland Cave, in which Pager (1971) recorded 1639 paintings. There are, however, on average about 60 paintings per site. One area that does not correspond with this trend is Didima Gorge, in the northern UDP, which was comprehensively recorded by Pager (1971) in the 1960s. Pager recorded 3909 paintings in 17 sites in Didima, with an average of 230 paintings per site. Didima contains two of the four UDP rock shelters housing over 1000 paintings. Significantly, Didima Gorge which comprises less than 0,5% of the UDP in area, contains about 10% of its known paintings, which lends support to Pager's (1971: 2) comment that 'There is, to our knowledge, no other stretch of only 5.5 km containing as many paintings anywhere in South Africa.'

## *Quality and diversity*

Not only are the UDP paintings well preserved, but they are also of exceptional quality with images of humans, animals and items of material culture often depicted in extraordinary detail. Human figures occasionally display fingers, toes, hairs and facial features, sometimes in lines less than 1.5 mm wide, and they are occasionally elaborately decorated (Figs 2 and 3). Depictions of the animals are generally well observed and are equally detailed; for example, many of the eland have eyes, mouths and dewlap clearly shown (Fig. 4), while there are depictions of bees with clearly shaped torsos and wings (Fig. 5). Antelope, in particular eland and rhebuck, are painted in the shaded polychrome technique with one colour shading into another to give tonal depth (Fig. 4). Items of material culture are similarly detailed; for example, bows are often shown with the stave in red and the strings represented by a thin white line, while arrows are frequently painted in red, orange and white sections which represent the different parts of composite arrows (i.e. main and link shafts and arrowhead) (Fig. 3).

A diverse subject matter is reflected in the paintings. The recording of 19,000 paintings along the length of the UDP by Mazel (1981, 1984; Wright & Mazel 2007) has revealed that

*Fig. 2. Cascades 2: row of elaborately decorated figures. Scale in centimetres*



*Fig. 3. Battle Cave: a decorated running male figure carrying much equipment. Scale in centimetres*

the majority of the paintings are humans (56%), followed by animals (28%), objects such as sticks and bows (13%), and ritual figures (2%) shown individually and in scenes of dancing, conflict and other activities. It is generally impossible to distinguish which sex the paintings of humans belong to although where this can be determined men outnumber women by 10% to 2% with 88% indistinguishable (Wright & Mazel 2007). Humans are shown singly and in groups, with most of the groups consisting of six or lesser individuals. Although not common, there are groups of people numbering over 20 people, such as the marching men at Ikanti which comprises over 70 individuals. Human figures are portrayed in everyday postures, such as standing, walking, sitting, running, and dancing, as well as in positions which reflect the sensations felt by shamans, such as the arms back position they adopt when asking God to put potency into their bodies.

An extensive range of animals was depicted by the San although antelope represent over 70% of the painted animals (Wright & Mazel 2007). Eland comprise just over half of the antelope painted, and rhebuck roughly a third. Hartebeest is the only other type of antelope represented in any quantities while other antelope, such as bushbuck, oribi, and wildebeest, were seldom painted. Fish, baboons and fe-

*Fig. 4. Eland Cave: a panel of shaded polychrome eland. Scale in centimetres*

*Fig. 5. Poachers Cave: a swarm of bees*

lines are the most commonly painted of the other animals; however, paintings of birds, elephants, snakes, pigs, jackals, rhinoceroses, dassies, moths, and a lizard are also known.

While the UDP can be viewed overall as a single rock art area, there are noteworthy differences between the paintings of the north and the south (Mazel 1982; Wright & Mazel 2007). This includes the depiction of bees and ladders only in the north, and paintings of horses and colonial imagery such as wagons only in the south. Paintings of cattle are known from the north and the south, but they are far more common in the south and are often associated with paintings of horses (Fig. 6). Depictions of what are believed to be rainmaking are found only in the south.

The paintings of colonial imagery, horses and many, if not most or all, of the cattle in the south were probably made between the 1830s and the 1870s, when the San inhabitation of the southern UDP essentially came to end. It is unlikely that they were made before the 1830s because it was around this time that European colonial presence in the region was established and that horses were introduced in significant numbers into the eastern part of South Africa. The paintings of cattle in the northern UDP could have been done at any time after the Iron Age farmers first entered KwaZulu-Natal around 1600 years ago, but the absence of horses and colonial scenes in the paintings (other than a scene showing men with guns) in this region suggests that the cattle depictions predate the 1830s (Manhire *et al*. 1986, Wright and Mazel 2007).

It has been recently proposed that many of the 19th century paintings were done by people known as the amaThola, which were mixed groups of San, black farmers, and Khoekhoen who had entered the southern UDP to escape from the chaotic situation which had enveloped the nearby frontier regions at the



*Fig. 6. Mpongweni North: horses and cattle. Scale in centimetres.*

*Fig. 7. Gxalingenwa Shelter 1: rainmaking scene. (Below)*

time (Challis 2008). The amaThola survived primarily by raiding cattle and horses from black and white farmers and by trading them to other black farmers. It has been suggested that the amaThola believed that horses and baboons had special powers, and that the making of paintings of these animals afforded them protection during raiding expeditions (Challis 2008).

Paintings of rain-making scenes are usually recognized by the occurrence of large hippopotamus-like animals that are occasionally, partially, or completely surrounded by lines associated with rain (Fig. 7). San shamans were known to have made rain for the black farmers during the 19th and early 20th centuries in exchange for horses and guns and assistance in cattle-raiding. The paintings of these scenes in the south in all likelihood reflect this relationship and were made after the San had abandoned the northern UDP, where these paintings are absent (Wright & Mazel 2007).

### *Context and interpretation*

According to Lewis-Williams (2003), the UDP paintings mostly, if not entirely, represent the visions and experiences of shamans in trance, with the eland having been singled out for special attention as a source of power. The recovery of a painted slab from Collingham Shelter with a central dancing figure indicates that trance dances were performed at least 1800 years ago (Fig. 8, Mazel 1992). It is believed that people who enter into altered states of consciousness pass through three stages (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 2000), all of which are represented in the UDP paintings. The first stage is manifest in patterns of light, or 'entoptics', such as dots, wavy lines, and grids, which appear to be characterized by paintings of red lines fringed with white dots and zigzag shapes. The second stage is characterised by people attempting to make sense of entoptic phenomena by arranging them into recognized items, such as honeycombs because bees were believed to be symbols of potency. The third stage shows the conflation of animal and human forms (i.e. therianthropes), which depicts the fusion in trance of shamans with

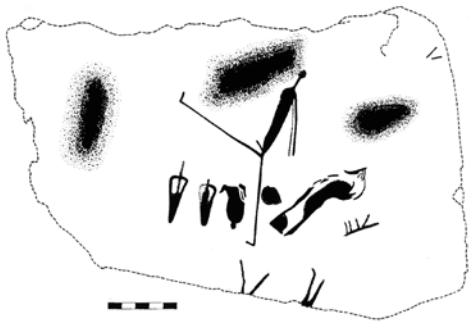

*Fig. 8. Collingham Shelter: painted slab recovered from 1800-year old deposits. Scale in centimetres*

their source of their potency, derived from their `possession' of animals (Fig. 9). Eland and rhebuck are most commonly portrayed therianthropes, but other animals, such as elephants and baboons, have also been used.

Superimpositioning represents a significant feature of the UDP paintings (Fig. 4). Studies have shown that eland paintings generally overlie other eland and humans, but that humans rarely cover eland. According to Lewis-Williams and Dowson (2000), this aspect of the art may relate to the fact that the trance visions experienced by shamans are often 'multi-layered', although it is appreciated that the significance of superimpositioning still remains uncertain.

*Fig. 9. Lower Mushroom Shelter: therianthropic figure Scale in centimetres.*

In several UDP rock shelters the paintings appear to go into or come out of cracks in the surfaces of rock shelters. It has been suggested that the rock face on which paintings were placed were believed to be a 'veil' between the spirit world and the painter and that the UDP painters regarded the spirit world as lying behind the surface and accessible through gaps in the rock (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1990).

We are unsure about how the UDP paintings were viewed by the San after they were made. Given the symbolism and potency associated with the production of the paint and the making of the paintings, it is possible that they became storehouses of supernatural potency and that most, and maybe even all of them, continued to be used for ritual reasons (Wright & Mazel 2007). The practice of superimpositioning supports the understanding that the paintings continued to be of significance after they had been created. Insights obtained in the 1980s from an old woman of partial San ancestry who lived to the south of the UDP and whose father had been a shaman, sheds further light on this issue. According to her, people could harness the special powers and potency of the paintings in two ways: (i) lifting their arms and facing the images when dancing in rock shelters and (ii) by placing their hands on paintings of eland. It is possible that intensively painted sites housing ritually important images became very powerful places for the San hunter-gatherers who had lived in the UDP for thousands of years.

*Fig. 10. Landscape of the MCL at the confluence of the Limpopo and Shashe rivers.*

## Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape (MCL)

Situated on the southern bank of the Limpopo River, which forms the border between South Africa and Botswana to the north-west and Zimbabwe to the north-east, with the Shashe River between them (Fig. 10), the Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2003. At the time, the boundaries coincided with the Vhembe-Dongola National Park that changed its name to the Mapungubwe National Park and World Heritage Site soon afterwards. The land currently owned by the national park, or that South African National Parks manages in terms of a contract with the land owner, is about 20,000 ha but is likely to increase as additional

properties are acquired. Although the land encompasses the major Iron Age sites known in the MCL, the rock art traditions are much more widespread.

The geological formations that have led to the development of rock shelters suitable for habitation and paintings in the MCL are related in time to the Karoo cave sandstones in the UDP dating to about 200 million years ago, but have not been uplifted to the same extent and are relatively low-lying on the edge of the Limpopo River valley. The valley lies north of the tropic of Capricorn and the indigenous vegetation is consequently very different from that in the high alpine environment of the UDP. Hot summers and mild winters have encouraged riparian forest along the river and semi-arid mopane scrub, giant baobabs and woodland on the higher lying soils derived from the Karoo sandstones. Summer thunderstorms and relatively dry winters make the Limpopo valley suitable for commercial agriculture today only where water can be drawn from the river for irrigation.

Mapungubwe National Park has a wide variety of game animals, particularly elephant, giraffe, kudu, gemsbok and eland, although this by no means replicates the diversity present there in pre-colonial times. Similarities in the cultural and natural history north and south of the Limpopo River have encouraged the development of the MCL into a Greater Mapungubwe Trans-Frontier Conservation Area (GMTFCA) with a vision to extend the boundary of the World Heritage Site into Botswana and Zimbabwe. At present, fences across the border have been partially removed and elephant in particular move freely between Botswana and the MCL.

## *Significance*

The summary statement of significance in the nomination dossier for the MCL (DEAT 2002) describes it as the centre of the first powerful indigenous kingdom in southern Africa between 900 and 1300 AD. A dynamic interaction between society and landscape laid the foundation for a new type of social organisation in the region based on an agricultural Iron Age economy that developed as the result of wealth accrued to its leaders from trade with the Indian Ocean network. This took place some 500 years before the Portuguese began trading along the east African coast. The trade goods going out were mainly gold, ivory, copper and hides, while in-coming goods included glass beads, cotton cloth and Chinese ceramics.

Although rock art was not one of the main reasons for listing the MCL as a World Heritage Site, its significance lies in the contribution it makes towards an understanding of the history of settlement in the landscape, and there are details of technique and content in the MCL rock art that are rare or absent elsewhere in southern Africa. The number of paintings per site ranges from fewer than 10 to more than 450. In a sample of 26 sites in the core of the MCL, there is an average of 24 paintings per site (Eastwood & Eastwood 1999).

## *Recording and analysis*

The presence of rock art in the MCL was known from at least the early 20th century (Roberts 1916), and it was several decades before detailed recording was done by Murray Schoonraad (1960), Alex Willcox (1963), Harald Pager (1975) and others. Current knowledge is based almost entirely on the work by Ed and Cathelijne Eastwood who began a recording project with a team of volunteers in 1991 and by the end of the millennium had recorded over 100 sites on properties that now form part of the MCL, as well as a similar number in neighbouring regions. There are still several farms within the MCL that have not yet been searched, and at least 50 more sites are known in neighbouring Botswana and Zimbabwe on properties expected to be included in a trans-frontier extension of the MCL. In addition, there are many more rock art sites with a wider range of subject matter in the Makgabeng and Soutpansberg ranges to the south of the MCL (Eastwood & Eastwood 2006).

Archaeological, ethnographic and historical information together shows that hunter-gatherer peoples have lived intermittently in the MCL for more than 500,000 years. Earlier

*Fig. 11. A herder finger-painting probably representing a woman's apron.*

and Middle Stone Age artefacts have been found at open sites (Kuman et al. 2005), and Later Stone Age deposits dating back some 13,000 years have been excavated in rock shelters (Van Doornum 2005, 2007, 2008; Hall & Smith 2000).

No direct dates have been obtained yet for rock paintings or engravings, but it is generally accepted that the fine-line paintings mainly of people and animals were done by Later Stone Age San hunter-gatherers. Archaeological excavations confirm their presence in the MCL intermittently between about 13,000 and 1000 years ago. Their artists probably practised over several thousand years before AD 1000, by which time they seem to have stopped painting in the MCL.

About 2000 years ago, Khoekhoe herders came into the landscape with domesticated sheep. The herder painting tradition is characterized by paint applied with a finger to make abstract designs such as circles, dots and grids, with representations of aprons as well (Fig. 11). The images of this geometric tradition both overlie and underlie fine-line paintings, suggesting that hunter-gatherers and herders lived in a symbiotic relationship alongside each other for several hundred years (Eastwood & Smith 2005). Fine-line paintings of fat-tailed sheep, but not cattle, have been recorded in the region, although not within the World Heritage Site.

The archaeological record has many examples of Iron Age settlements, including the Mapungubwe kingdom, from AD 900 onwards. These Iron Age people later added to the corpus of rock art in the region until the early 20th century, but there are no examples of this genre on properties that today form part of the World Heritage Site (Eastwood & Eastwood 2006:38 ff.).

Unlike the UDP, where San artists continued painting until the mid-19th century and contributed images of Iron Age people and their cattle and, later, British soldiers, guns and horses, the hunter-gatherer art of the

MCL does not include these subjects. This suggests that the San were no longer living permanently in this part of the Limpopo Valley after AD 1000 or, if they did, they had become absorbed into the economy of the herders and/or Iron Age agriculturists.

Finally, members of the South African Defence Force, stationed on the border during the late 20th century, contributed images of war on rock surfaces both with paint and engravings, and in one case damaged a San painting in the process (Eastwood & Eastwood 2006:34).

## *Quality and diversity*

The hunter-gatherer painting tradition contrasts with that in the UDP in several respects. The figures quoted below are drawn from two reports, one summarizing the information from a sample of 26 sites with 636 paintings on the properties Balerno, Mona, Armenia and Little Muck that are part of the core area of the MCL (Eastwood & Cnoops 1999), and another summarizing a larger sample of about 140 sites with almost 2000 paintings situated in the wider Limpopo-Shashi confluence area that includes sites within the MCL as well as on neighbouring properties in South Africa and across the Limpopo River in Botswana and Zimbabwe (Eastwood & Blundell 1999).

The first important contrast is that rock engravings occur alongside rock paintings at some of the rock shelters. This is a very rare occurrence in South Africa, but is better developed in Namibia at the Twyfelfontein World Heritage Site. At Balerno in the MCL, an engraving of a giraffe has also been painted and antelope spoor have been engraved on a rock surface outside the shelter (Figs 12 and 13). Most of the engravings, however, are in the form of cupules and cut marks (Figs 14 and 15). Because these latter are placed on both vertical and horizontal surfaces, and sometimes as much as 4 m above ground level, Eastwood and Blundell (1999) suggest that they may have served a symbolic rather than a practical function. Some were nevertheless made for a 'board' game known as *morabaraba* or *mafuvha* in which small stones are placed in the hollows and competitors attempt to capture their opponent's stones. Eastwood

*Fig. 12. Balerno: painted engraving of a giraffe.*

*Fig. 13. Balerno: engraved antelope spoor outside the shelter.*

*Fig. 14. Machete: cupules arrayed for a* morabaraba *game.*

*Fig. 15. Armenia: cut marks on the floor of a shelter.*

*Fig. 16. Thudwa: men in dancing postures.*

and Eastwood (2006:51) note that the Venda people link the game to rain and fertility.

Second, the colours and application techniques used in the paintings in the UDP and MCL are different. There is more use of yellow ochre in the MCL and in addition to red ochre, black and white pigments, green paint has been used at several sites, particularly in Zimbabwe, probably made from copper oxide. Bi- and polychrome paintings generally lack the shaded polychrome treatment so typical of the UDP.

## *Context and interpretation*

A third contrast is that although the gender of people in the paintings cannot always be established with certainty, the MCL has a much higher incidence of women than the UDP. In the sample of 26 sites 36% of all human figures are clearly female and in the larger sample of over 140 sites, women comprise 31%. The ratio of animals to humans is slightly different to the UDP with 49.5% humans in the small sample of 26 sites where aprons (also called Y-shapes) make up a further 9% and animals of various species comprise 41.5%. In the larger sample of 140 sites, humans comprise 53%. In general, the human figures tend to occur in rows or processions, often with a range of age groups represented, and in dancing postures (Fig. 16) or family groups (Fig. 17). There is a lower incidence of therianthropes in the MCL compared to the UDP, although more occur in the larger regional sample and particularly in the Makgabeng plateau to the south (Eastwood & Eastwood 2006:123-125). However, the ways in which animal and human characteristics are combined is more subtle. Dancing women, for example, are shown with 'reverse articulation' of their legs suggestive of antelope hind legs and illustrate the metaphor commonly used by San in neighbouring Botswana of women as 'meat' and 'prey' (Biesele 1993; Eastwood & Eastwood 2006:137) .

Fourth, the most commonly painted animals in the MCL are not eland and rhebuck, but kudu, giraffe, impala and elephant, and



*Fig. 17. Rhodes Drift: A family group with a pregnant woman, men and impala.*

*Fig. 18. Armenia: a man, two elephant, an antbear and two rhinoceros.*
*The back of the elephant on the right in the bottom row has been emphasized with a thick red line.*

*Fig. 19. Little Muck: Y-shapes probably representing male loin cloths.*

there appears to be higher species diversity (Eastwood & Blundell 1999:21) than in the UDP. Details such as the eyes and mouth of animals like the eland in the UDP are mostly absent in the MCL where potency is expressed instead in the form of red dorsal lines painted on the backs of animals (Fig. 18).

Lastly, the MCL corpus of paintings includes a range of images variously referred to as Y-shapes, spread-eagled motifs, aprons and loin cloths (Fig. 19), that have not been reported in the UDP, or indeed in any other region, in the same quantity and diversity.

Drawing all these characteristics together, Eastwood and Eastwood (2006) have made a convincing case for a regional rock painting tradition that not only depicts hunter-gatherer beliefs and rituals associated with the rites of transition primarily for girls, but also illustrates how the paraphernalia and animals that were part of these rites were symbolically significant in rain-making and medicine dances as well. The metaphor that MCL rock art uses for this association is an apron for women and a loin cloth for men. Loin cloths are typically painted in a Y-shape and front and back aprons worn by women are more often painted in a U-shape or rectangle. The same metaphor was carried forward by the Khoekhoe herders who also appear to have used the area for girls' rites of passage.

## Variations on a theme

World Heritage status has acknowledged the significance of the San rock art tradition and its variations. Outstanding universal value of the rock art at the UDP is based on criteria (i), a masterpiece of human creative genius, and (iii) bearing a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition which is living or which has disappeared. The nomination dossier emphasizes the concentration, quality and diversity of the rock art made by the San over more than four millennia.

The MCL nomination was based on criteria (ii), (iii), (iv) and (v) as an organically evolved associative cultural landscape that retains both tangible and intangible traces of the first powerful indigenous kingdom in southern Africa. As one of several tangible traces contributing to the outstanding universal value of the cultural landscape, the significance of concentration, quality and quantity of rock art are outweighed by ideological issues and metaphors of power that were played out by the San before and after herders and Iron Age farmers settled in the MCL in the first millennium AD.

Despite the differences in technique, emphasis and content of rock paintings identified in these two World Heritage sites, there is a strong underlying similarity that reflects the pervading hunter-gatherer belief system in southern Africa. The belief that certain animals can help shamans access power from the spirit world is evident in the high incidence of eland in the UDP and kudu and giraffe in the MCL. Human figures with animal characteristics illustrate transformation experienced by shamans, or are metaphors for the bond between people and animals during rites of passage. The prominence given to women, aprons and loin cloths in the MCL, and to elaborate therianthropes in the UDP, are evidence of the richness and infinite variety of the artistic expression of an ancient and exceptionally long-lasting belief system.

Management plans for rock art at both sites address the need to educate the public through site visits supervised by trained guides at a small number of suitable rock shelters, and interpretation centres where more detailed information is available. Giant's Castle, Didima and Kamberg are the most frequently visited sites in the UDP with a combined total of about 20,000 visitors in 2009. There are excellent interpretation centres at Kamberg and Didima. In the Mapungubwe National Park rock art visits in the MCL are not yet offered on a regular basis, but are available on request if arrangements are made in advance. An interpretation centre is nearing completion.


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