

di questa cosiddetta fase delle « teste rotonde » sono gravide di un senso drammatico della esistenza.

A mio parere, poi, questa fase dovette coprire diversi millenni; è probabile che tutta la sua impostazione debba essere riveduta; non è escluso che i suoi autori appartenessero a gruppi antropologicamente ed etnicamente diversi, nel tempo; non se ne conoscono i confini cronologici, l'inizio e la fine; in una parola se ne conoscono soltanto le opere d'arte, fortunatamente numerose, che ci sono state lasciate nei vicini massicci dell'Acacus e del Tassili. Ritengo tuttavia che esse, insieme con quelle dei popoli pastori, siano abbastanza stimolanti ed indicative, pur nel mistero che le circonda, da meritare l'attenzione di tutti coloro che sono in grado di studiarle e di coglierne anche parzialmente il significato. Si tratta, del resto, di strappare all'oscurità del nostro passato qualche tessera di quell'immenso, lacunoso mosaico di cui abbiamo il dovere di tentare, anche se non completare, la ricostruzione.

#### RÉSUMÉ

Après un bref examen des méthodes et des principes d'information qui ont guidé les tenants de diverses disciplines dans l'étude des origines de la pensée magico-religieuse, l'Auteur montre la nécessité d'une collaboration effective entre des savants de tendances différentes, afin de serrer la question d'aussi près que possible. En effet, outre son aspect scientifique, ce problème a d'importantes implications sociales et une grande influence sur la culture de l'homme d'aujourd'hui. L'Auteur expose donc certains des résultats obtenus lors de sa mission au Sahara. Parmi des milliers de graffiti et de peintures, certaines oeuvres témoignent d'un véritable esprit magico-religieux: elles appartiennent à diverses phases de l'art rupestre préhistorique saharien, et, si on ne peut en éclaircir le mystère, fournissent des indices suffisants pour entrevoir la profondeur de la vie spirituelle de ces populations de chasseurs et de pasteurs qui habitèrent la vaste région aujourd'hui désertique, depuis les dernières phases du Pléistocène jusqu'au 1<sup>er</sup> millénaire avant notre ère.

#### SUMMARY

After a brief examination of the methods and principles used by the adherents of various disciplines in the study of the origins of magico-religious thought, the author shows the need for effective collaboration between scholars of different schools in order to deal with the question as rigorously as possible. Apart from its scientific aspect, this problem has important social implications and a strong influence on the culture of contemporary man. The author then sets out some of the results obtained during his expeditions to the Sahara. Some of the thousands of graffiti and paintings show a genuinely magico-religious spirit. They belong to various phases of prehistoric Saharan rock art and, even if their meaning cannot be explained fully, they provide sufficient indicators to reveal the depth of the spiritual life of the hunting and pastoral peoples who inhabited this vast, now desert region from the last phases of the Pleistocene until the first millennium B.C.

CONTRIBUTION A L'ETUDE DES RELATIONS  
PROTOHISTORIQUES ENTRE LE MANDE ET L'ACTUEL GHANA

Dieterlen, Germaine, Paris, France.

Les problèmes des migrations et l'étude des voies de communication qui ont traversé, à une époque déjà très ancienne, l'ouest de l'Afrique depuis la Méditerranée jusqu'au golfe de Guinée, c'est-à-dire sur les côtes de l'actuel Ghana et de la Côte d'Ivoire, ont fait l'objet de travaux extrêmement intéressants publiés par divers auteurs, aussi bien anglophones que francophones, et dans lesquels ont été dépouillés tous les ouvrages des auteurs anciens, en particulier ceux des auteurs arabes, et les observations faites par les Portugais à l'époque où ils arrivèrent sur la côte d'Afrique par la mer.

Mon exposé ne reprendra pas ces travaux qui font état et qui sont absolument nécessaires à notre érudition: il convient cependant de mentionner la remarquable étude du professeur R. Mauny (1961) qui a traité de ce sujet, spécialement en ce qui concerne les relations entre la Méditerranée et le Niger.

En vue d'établir des relations commerciales entre ces deux zones économiquement complémentaires, des caravanes cherchèrent à se frayer passage de l'une à l'autre: le bassin du Niger offrait de nombreuses possibilités de communication entre elles; quant au Sahara, de nombreuses cartes publiées par les auteurs anciens montrent qu'il était sillonné de plusieurs pistes utilisées pour ces échanges.

Les auteurs anglais qui ont travaillé au Ghana en particulier ont montré qu'il existait des voies de communication relativement ouvertes et fréquentées entre le Ghana proprement dit et le Niger, permettant de transporter certaines denrées rares, comme le sel, du Sahara jusqu'à la côte, et que d'autres denrées pouvaient être ramenées en échange par les mêmes voies, puis traverser le Sahara par les pistes connues des caravanes.

Ces études ont toutes été élaborées d'après des documents historiques; il semble que la tradition orale n'ait pu, jusqu'ici, apporter sa contribution dans ce domaine, du fait de la difficulté de l'appréhender, sur le terrain d'enquête, et d'en dégager des points de repère précis.

J'ai pourtant été amenée, au cours de recherches échelonnées sur une trentaine d'années, à rassembler des informations relatives au pro-

blème des communications interrégionales, ceci indirectement et à la faveur d'études sur des phénomènes religieux.

Dans les premiers articles traitant des mythes et de l'organisation sociale en Afrique occidentale, j'avais apporté les premiers éléments recueillis dans diverses ethnies, concernant des faits et des représentations associés à des liens particuliers unissant le bassin du Niger et la côte atlantique sud et très précisément Dya, au Macina, et Accra, au Ghana (Dieterlen, 1955, 1959). Et je soulignais que les « routes commerciales » connues reliant ces deux régions étaient également celles des « pèlerins »; les uns — c'est le cas le plus courant — allaient effectuer un travail à l'étranger en vue de rapporter « les cauris et les pagnes » destinés à leur mariage ayant une valeur symbolique en même temps qu'économique; pour les autres, il s'agissait, au terme du voyage, de formuler des vœux de prêtrise, ou de prospérité familiale.

Les enquêtes menées depuis cette parution me permettent aujourd'hui d'apporter d'autres éléments et notamment de situer avec plus de précision les étapes qui jalonnaient ces « routes », de souligner leur caractère particulier, et de dégager certaines des valeurs attachées aux lieux d'aboutissement. Pour les appréhender il convient de les examiner d'abord dans la perspective des usagers, à la lumière de leur mythologie.

Les représentations attachées au cours du Niger d'une part, d'autre part à la mare de Dya et à la lagune d'Accra sont associées à l'histoire du « géniteur » mythique de l'humanité, Faro pour les Malinké et Bambara, Nommo pour les Dogon, et plus précisément: *o nommo* ou « Nommo de la mare ». Ce nom souligne sa domination sur l'eau, son siège, et son rôle vis-à-vis des humains: il est le gardien des principes spirituels des hommes dont certains éléments siègent dans les « mares » ou points d'eau affectés à chaque lignage.

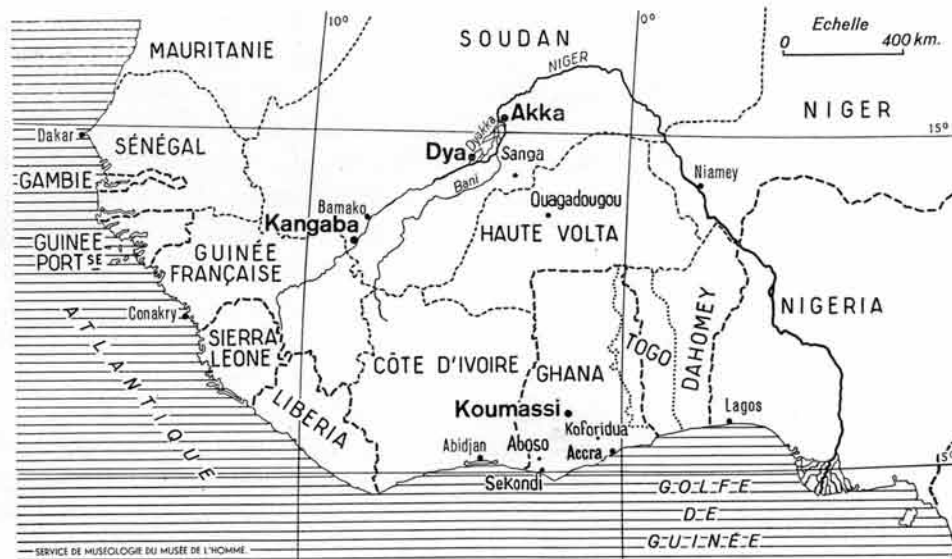
Ainsi, complémentairement, le siège terrestre du Moniteur de l'humanité est l'eau — et de façon privilégiée, le Niger —, sa manifestation céleste étant celle de « l'arc-en-ciel » et notamment le premier en date, celui qui est censé avoir uni Dya et Accra.

D'autre part, chez les Dogon, les voyages des migrants et des pèlerins sont associés à ceux des avatars des ancêtres apicaux. Les représentations attachées à ces déplacements sont, de plus, inscrites sur le terrain où vit actuellement cette population, sur le plan géographique, social et religieux à la fois. C'est pourquoi j'aborde cette démonstration en l'étudiant à travers leur mythologie et leur histoire à la fois, étant bien entendu que les voyages actuels des Falaises de Bandiagara au Ghana répètent ceux que faisaient les usagers lorsqu'ils étaient au Mandé.

Pour apporter plus de clarté au sujet traité, je crois utile d'exposer la succession des informations recueillies telles qu'elles m'ont été rapportées au cours de mes enquêtes et la façon dont j'ai été amenée à les relier les unes aux autres:

I - La première mention que j'ai eue de ces déplacements et de ces relations entre habitants du Niger et habitants du Ghana, a eu lieu chez les Dogon, en 1938, lors de mes premières enquêtes, alors que je relevais un texte rituel fixe qui était psalmodié à l'occasion des rites funéraires.

Fig. 186  
Carte de l'Afrique Occidentale.



Ce texte a été publié dans: « Les Ames des Dogon » (Dieterlen, 1941), ouvrage dans lequel j'expose la notion de personne dans cette population et particulièrement l'effet de la mort sur la personne; il a été recueilli parallèlement par Mme S. de Ganay dans une autre perspective, et publié également par elle (1941). Nous avons donc là deux versions très proches l'une de l'autre, qui montrent la solidité et la permanence de ce texte.

Or, dans cette prière sont énumérés, à propos du mort, tous les endroits où il s'est rendu; il y est question de déplacements qui, géographiquement représentent de véritables voyages; sont énumérés une série de lieux dits proches de Sanga que je connais bien, puisque c'est à Sanga même, ches les Dogon, que j'ai recueilli ce texte; je me suis aperçu assez rapidement que cette toponymie évoquait des lieux dans lesquels se trouvaient des autels ou des marques d'interdits, ou des croisements de chemins qui avaient une importance rituelle.

Dans cette prière, il était précisé: « Il est allé à Koumassie; il est revenu en santé ». Ayant fidèlement noté cette phrase sans en comprendre alors la portée exacte, il m'a été expliqué que les jeunes gens allaient effectuer un voyage en Côte d'Ivoire ou en Côte de l'Or pour en ramener les pagens et les cauris nécessaires à leur mariage, pour y acquérir d'autres biens et pour y apprendre des langues étrangères; quand ils revenaient, contrairement à ce que l'on pourrait croire, ils distribuaient tout ce qu'ils avaient pu recueillir et ne conservaient strictement (du moins c'était la tradition) que les pagens pour leurs fiancées et les cauris, monnaie traditionnelle, à faire remettre par leur père à leur futur beau-père. Il y avait donc là tout un rituel: dans la remise des pagens et des cauris, dans la distribution des biens acquis à l'étranger, la valeur symbolique du don l'emportait de beaucoup sur sa valeur économique. Ceci a été la première mention que j'ai eue de ce voyage. Il s'agissait d'un périple très long; quatre de mes informateurs actuels, ayant plus de 70 ans, ont fait ce voyage à pied et m'ont dit combien de temps ils avaient mis pour aller et revenir.



II - La seconde mention de relations avec le Ghana a été faite dans la même population à l'occasion d'une interprétation des trances des prêtres totémiques. Les postulants rentrent en trances, et dans cet état, ils rééditent un périple qu'ils auraient du obligatoirement avoir accompli avant d'accéder à la prêtrise. En effet, les postulants devaient se rendre non seulement à Koumassie, mais à Accra (je connais plusieurs d'entre eux qui ont fait ce voyage alors qu'ils étaient postulants à la prêtrise): ils devaient apporter des graines de céréales cultivées à Sanga et recueillies dans certaines conditions, et les déposer au bord de la lagune d'Accra pour demander à Dieu de bien vouloir leur accorder la prêtrise.

En fait, mes informateurs dogon ont précisé que la mention « Koumassie » pouvait se référer à 4 lieux géographiques distincts du Ghana: l'actuel Koumassie, Accra, un lieu qu'ils nomment Segouna situé près de Sekondi (ou qui est Sekondi lui-même) et enfin Obosso.

Le sens de ces voyages a été éclairé d'une façon tout à fait particulière lors de l'approfondissement de la mythologie dogon et malinké: en fait, tous ces déplacements sont liés aux représentations que se font ces populations de l'apparition de l'homme sur la terre et de la vie de l'humanité.

Les Dogon, les Malinké, les Bambara, les Bozo considèrent tous que la création de l'univers est l'oeuvre d'un Dieu unique, tout-puissant, transcendant, etc... qui l'a réalisé à partir de sa pensée. La création s'est déroulée en deux genèses; lors de la seconde Dieu a créé l'homme. Les premiers hommes, premiers êtres animés, furent créés sous forme de poisson, parce que l'homme est un poisson dans le sein maternel; le symbole du poisson comme fœtus est absolument général dans ces populations.

Pour les Dogon, Dieu a créé au ciel une ennéade, 4 couples de jumeaux mixtes dont les mâles sont les moniteurs Nommo (Nommo die, Nommo titiyayne, o Nommo et Ogo). Les deux premiers siègent avec Dieu, Amma, dans le ciel empyrée. Le troisième est le « père des hommes »; il fut sacrifié au ciel pour réparer les fautes du quatrième, formateur de la Terre, déchu et transformé en Renard; puis il ressuscita; il est le géniteur des « ancêtres » des quatre lignages: Amma Sérou, Lébé Sérou, Binou Sérou et Dyoungou Sérou qui, avec leurs jumelles, sont considérés symboliquement comme les « huit ancêtres » apicaux de l'humanité avec lesquels, sur une arche gigantesque il descendit du ciel sur la Terre. Telle est pour les Dogon, la première génération des hommes, issue d'un personnage, O Nommo, dont le siège sur la Terre est l'eau, mais qui reste cependant le parèdre de ses frères demeurés au ciel; c'est lui qui détient et protège les principes spirituels des hommes et des graines cultivées.

O Nommo est donc descendu sur la Terre avec ses fils formés au ciel: la généalogie des 8 ancêtres se poursuit sur cinq générations dont les Dogon ont en mémoire la liste complète. Deux autres personnages, créés après le sacrifice de O Nommo sont descendus également: ce sont le forgeron et le griot qui sont, comme lui, de la génération des « pères ».

Ces éléments de la mythologie étaient nécessaires pour comprendre que le siège du Nommo ressuscité, du « Nommo de la mare », c'est

l'eau (o veut dire « mare » en langue dogon). Il est le maître de l'eau; son siège principal est le Niger. On dit couramment: « Le Nommo ressuscité est couché dans le Niger. Sa tête est dans le Debo; son bras c'est le Bani, etc... »; il y a là une image saisissante de ce corps étendu dans le cours du fleuve. Mais « il est aussi, disent les Dogon, dans l'eau que l'on boit »: c'est dire que son essence est partout présente dans cet élément. Sa résurrection est théoriquement associée à une étendue géographique que l'on peut considérer comme une trajectoire d'est en ouest. Une autre de ses manifestations est la pluie et l'arc-en-ciel; le premier arc-en-ciel s'est levé du nord au sud, et très précisément de Dya à Accra.

Tel est le second élément avec lequel je me suis trouvée confrontée dans la poursuite de mes recherches. J'ai donc vu tout de suite, pour revenir aux tranches et aux déplacements du prêtre totémique, qu'il était question pour lui, non seulement de parcourir symboliquement le cours du Niger, siège terrestre du Nommo, mais aussi d'embrasser son domaine céleste, du nord au sud, selon la trajectoire de l'arc-en-ciel dont les points symboliques d'impact sont l'importante ville de Dya (les Dogon connaissent bien les autels qui s'y trouvent) et la lagune sacrée d'Accra.

Un autre personnage joue un rôle fondamental: le forgeron, qui possède un statut très particulier. Il est considéré comme le « jumeau » du Nommo qui siège dans l'eau. Il est craint pour ses pouvoirs car il est très puissant, mais il est respecté. L'importance du forgeron est certaine, étant donné le travail qu'il réalise comme artisan, mais elle est capitale en ce qui concerne son rôle dans les manifestations religieuses. Le forgeron est le grand maître de l'initiation dans les populations d'Afrique occidentale que j'ai étudiées; les informations que je vous communique m'ont été données par les Dogon, mais également par le forgeron du Hogon d'Arou, c'est-à-dire du chef religieux, autrefois politique, des Dogon. Cet artisan était considéré comme l'un des initiés majeurs du peuple Dogon.

Au cours des événements mythiques, exposés succinctement plus haut, et à cause des fautes du Renard, certaines interventions divines furent nécessaires. La plus importante fut « la chute de l'enclume céleste »; tous mes informateurs situent son impact au Ghana et attribuent la formation du lac Bosomtwi (situé non loin de Koumassie) à la chute d'un aérolithe gigantesque. J'ai publié voici quelques années un article à ce sujet (1965) et j'avais conclu à l'époque en disant que des recherches étaient en cours pour savoir quelle était l'origine de la formation du cratère du lac Bosomtwi, formation qui intéressait nombre de spécialistes. Le professeur Th. Monod m'a annoncé en 1970 qu'il avait été prouvé que le cratère avait été creusé par un aérolithe gigantesque. Ceci coïncidait exactement avec les dires des informateurs: pour eux « c'est la masse ardente du « sang du cœur » du Nommo sacrifié constituant l'enclume qui a creusé le cratère du lac Bosomtwi qu'ils nomment « mare du trou de l'enclume descendue » (*dene sugu bunna e*). C'est au sud de ce cratère qu'elle est allée se « repiquer » après en avoir rejailli. Le forgeron mythique est descendu du ciel au Mandé; il a ramassé un morceau de météorite, « sang de la rate » du Nommo, puis

il a émigré depuis cette région jusqu'aux abords du cratère, qui s'était rempli d'eau, pour édifier la première forge non loin de là où se trouvait l'enclume. Ce périple est interprété comme la réplique, sur la Terre, de la « route du sang » écoulé du Nommo sacrifié au ciel, « comme pour retourner à son point d'origine ». C'est au bord du lac qu'est tombée la « hache de pluie » qui devait chasser le Renard venu pour boire, pierre que le forgeron a utilisée comme siège de travail après avoir effectué une purification des lieux et des eaux. « Le Renard est arrivé pour boire l'eau de la mare. Amma a lancé une « hache de pluie » sur sa tête; le Renard a sauté, est sorti. Le forgeron est descendu, la « hache de pluie » est devenue son siège; on a fait une purification avec (en sacrifiant) une chèvre. Chaque année on fait une purification car on ne sait pas si le Renard n'est pas venu pour boire là la nuit ». (Texte dogon, Dieterlen, 1965, p. 19).

Pour préciser le sens de ces voyages, il est nécessaire d'avoir présents à l'esprit d'autres détails mythiques:

Le second ancêtre, celui que les Dogon nomment Lébé Sérou, fut le premier cultivateur. Il sema le premier champ; mais, par suite de l'intervention du Renard, qui crée constamment le désordre autour de lui, il fut amené à consommer une graine impure. Ce qu'il n'aurait pas du faire car toute impureté entache les activités du prêtre, responsable de la terre cultivée et des principes spirituels des céréales et se transmet aux céréales, et en particulier aux graines de semence.

Il fut donc nécessaire de sacrifier Lébé Sérou, qui avait fait l'erreur de consommer cette graine: il fut sacrifié sur le lieu où la graine impure avait germé, pour le purifier. Il meurt donc, mais sa culpabilité étant atténuée à cause de l'intervention du Renard, Dieu (Amma) dans sa miséricorde permet sa résurrection: il ressuscite sous la forme de deux serpents (toute résurrection s'inscrit dans la ligne initiale des desseins du Créateur qui voulait que l'homme soit immortel comme lui-même; la mort étant considérée comme une rupture et un désengagement de l'homme avec les desseins du Créateur se produit donc à son endroit). Son frère aîné devient le Hogon, prêtre de son culte et premier chef religieux des Dogon: c'est le culte de la terre cultivée fournissant les céréales nourricières, base de la vie économique des Dogon, comme des Malinké, des Bambara, etc.

Lébé Sérou, sacrifié, ressuscite sous la forme de deux serpents qui sous cette forme se rendent du Mandé (les Dogon ayant migré à l'époque de Soundiata, ces événements mythiques sont censés se passer au Mandé) au Ghana en empruntant des voies d'eau souterraines.

Ces déplacements sont liés au regroupement des principes spirituels de Lébé Sérou, principes qu'il avait perdu par suite de la rupture d'interdit qui avait nécessité son sacrifice.

Le premier serpent circule dans l'eau souterraine et émerge dans une mare située près d'Obosso; il en sort couvert d'or, et il restera toujours couvert d'or (première mention dans un récit mythique de migrations relatives au commerce de l'or avec les pays de la Côte de l'Or, l'actuel Ghana). Il existe une illustration concrète des survivances de ce mythe dans les rites dogon: quand on intronise le Hogon, on lui

met un bonnet rouge, insigne de la chefferie; la couleur rouge symbolise ici l'or; on enroule par dessus un turban blanc: le Hogon est censé porter un serpent d'or autour de la tête.

Le second serpent qui est, lui aussi, l'avatar du même personnage sacrifié, Lébé Sérrou, effectue également voyage souterrain par voie d'eau; il se rend à Koforidua, lieu où les initiés situent la première forge; dans une petite clairière située près de l'agglomération un rituel serait encore célébré en liaison avec cet événement.

Ayant réalisé ce voyage ils sont revenus à leur point de départ. Le premier serpent couvert d'or, dit « de l'intérieur », *de lebe*, particulièrement sacré, est censé vivre dans la demeure du Hogon; il est le gardien de l'autel le plus important du culte, que nul ne peut jamais approcher sauf le dignitaire et son sacrificateur. Le second serpent, dit « de l'extérieur », *para lebe* devient le gardien des champs de céréales. Ces deux serpents, revenus de ce périple, sont censés être toujours vivants et présents dans les falaises de Bandiagara.

Le périple suivant au Ghana a été effectué par le 3ème des ancêtres apicaux, Binou Sérrou, ou tout au moins par le serpent qui fut son avatar après sa mort. Binou Sérrou devint chef de lignage après son frère aîné, et fut également le premier prêtre totémique. Sa vie s'est déroulée sans incidents graves; il est resté indemne de toute souillure et a gardé son intégrité physique; après sa mort, il s'est transformé en serpent d'eau, *di yurugu*: le premier acte qu'il aurait accompli fut d'aller au Ghana, à Sekondi. Ce voyage fut réalisé à la suite de « la mort » du mil survenue par la faute du Renard. Les peintures réalisées dans certaines cavernes dogon sont consacrées à l'image des « funérailles » du mil qui sont censées s'être passées au Mandé: nouvelle démonstration de la représentation en pays dogon d'un épisode mythique situé par eux au Mandé.

Il s'agissait de demander aux Nommo, qui en sont les dépositaires, les principes spirituels du mil et de les restituer aux hommes. C'est la raison du voyage de Binou Sérrou sous forme de serpent; il a rapporté au Mandé les principes spirituels, en même temps que le cuivre jaune, symboliquement associé à la terre cultivée. Il n'est pas possible d'exposer ici dans leur développement les rapports très précis établis avec la mythologie dogon. Si un individu trouve par hasard un objet de cuivre, il ne peut le garder, mais doit le porter au sanctuaire de son clan et le remettre au prêtre.

Un autre voyage est plus suggestif encore parce que toutes les étapes géographiques y sont mentionnées, et facilement repérables sur une carte. Il s'agit du voyage du premier prêtre totémique qui a succédé à Binou Sérrou; il est de la génération suivante et porte le nom de Dewa.

C'est le premier ancêtre qui, sous forme humaine, a réalisé un voyage du Mandé à Accra pour y retrouver l'un des principes spirituels du Nommo siégeant dans l'eau de mer de la lagune d'Accra, « point d'impact de l'arc-en-ciel »; à l'autre extrémité dans la mare de Dya, faite d'eau douce, siège l'autre principe spirituel de sexe opposé du Nommo. (Dieterlen, 1959, p. 134). Le but de ce voyage était égale-



ment de demander la prêtrise: Dewa l'a accompli, et en état de crise, ou transe de possession.

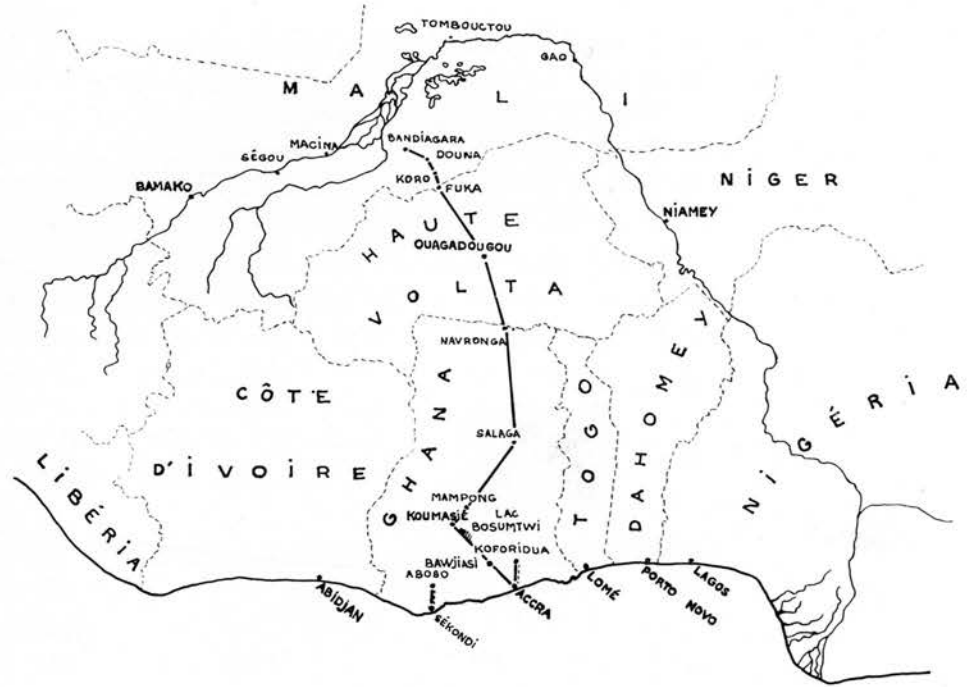
Or les renseignements sur le périple de Dewa nous ont été fournis à propos des 22 tranches que doit présenter tout postulant avant d'accéder à la prêtrise. Ces 22 tranches ne sont que la réédition des 22 étapes du périple de Dewa du Mandé à Accra (11 étapes pour aller et autant pour revenir). C'est ainsi qu'en étudiant un phénomène religieux: celui des tranches de tout postulant à la prêtrise, j'ai été amenée à établir une relation avec les autres informations que j'avais recueillies sur les voyages mythiques des ancêtres des Dogon au Ghana dans leur texture géographique réelle. Il y a là un itinéraire bien connu des Dogon qui fait partie d'une route fréquentée et relativement moderne des migrants qui se rendent en Côte d'Ivoire ou au Ghana. Ainsi, nous nous trouvons, de par la tradition orale, confrontés avec des points de repère géographiques correspondant au périple mythique d'un ancêtre, Dewa, au périple réédité symboliquement en territoire Dogon par les postulants à la prêtrise, et enfin au pèlerinage réel qu'accomplissent certains initiés (tous mes informateurs l'ont accompli, y compris le forgeron qui a mentionné avec précision les noms des lieux sacrés et leurs caractéristiques.

Il s'agit vraiment d'un pèlerinage; en voici les étapes:

- à Douna, se trouve une pierre levée située à côté d'un puits; le patriarche du village y effectue un sacrifice annuel.
- à Koro, un autel d'Amma dont le responsable est un prêtre.
- à Fuka, une plante particulière, que l'on plante à côté des sanctuaires totémiques dogon, marque l'emplacement de l'étape sacrée.
- à Ouagadougou, un étang se trouve au croisement de la route de Bobo et de celle de Ouahigouya.
- à Navronga, un autel est gardé par l'homme le plus âgé du village.
- à Salaga, il y a une mare sacrée.
- à Mampong, il y a une pierre levée.
- à Koumassie, c'est le lac Bosomtwi; il y aurait un arbre, objet d'un culte spécial à l'occasion de ces voyages.
- à Issangai l'endroit exact de l'étape n'a pu être déterminé.
- à Bawjassi, il y a un petit sanctuaire.
- enfin à Accra, la dernière étape est la lagune.

Je me suis rendue à Accra et j'ai vu l'un des sanctuaires des Ga qui sont également les prêtres de la lagune. J'avais emmené des informateurs Dogon et nous avons trouvé là la preuve de ce qui m'avait été dit; l'indice le plus important est un champ de mil situé dans la ville d'Accra (en principe on ne cultive pas le mil dans cette région). J'ai vu ce champ qui mesure à peine un are: la récolte est consacrée uniquement à des offrandes qui ne peuvent avoir lieu que sur les autels des sanctuaires des Ga, ce qui d'ailleurs ouvre des perspectives très importantes quant à l'origine et à l'histoire des Ga. Etant retournée après cela au Mandé, mes informateurs malinké m'ont assuré connaître l'exi-

Fig. 187  
Le périple de Dewa.



stence des Ga, partis du Mandé à une époque ancienne et actuellement responsables du culte de la lagune d'Accra. Une fois de plus nous sommes confrontés avec des points d'eau précis.

*Témoins des lieux dits  
et des périples en  
territoire Dogon.*

Les lieux situés au Ghana et les voyages font l'objet de représentations symboliques en territoire Dogon :

Au flanc sud du massif de Yougo, une grande excavation a été creusée, qui représente le cratère devenu « mare », soit le lac Bosomtwi. C'est à Yougo Dogorou, village perché au sommet du massif et situé au dessus de cette excavation, que débutent les cérémonies soixantaines du Signi. Dans cette agglomération, non loin des cavernes où sont abrités les masques et divers objets rituels, un rocher naturel vertical de grande dimension figure l'enclume mythique.

A Arou-près-Ibi, où vit le chef religieux — autrefois politique — le plus important des Dogon, des aménagements ont été réalisés dans les dépendances de l'habitation du dignitaire. Dans la cour, une vaste excavation circulaire a été creusée, qui représente le lac. En face de la demeure, sur un escarpement qui domine la cour, à côté d'un autel consacré au dieu créateur Amma, on a dressé un bloc vertical, l'enclume... Dans la région de Sanga, trois cavernes ont été aménagées; dans l'une est symbolisée la descente du forgeron; dans la seconde figurent les événements « célestes » associés à la chute de l'enclume; la troisième, très vaste, ouvre sur une vallée dans laquelle se trouve la « mare » : à l'intérieur, des dispositions de blocs de pierre représentent l'enclume, le siège du forgeron, sa tombe, etc... ». (Dieterlen, 1965, p. 21).

Le périple de Lébé Sérrou est rappelé à Sanga du Haut par 4 autels situés dans le champ du Hogon, servant de support à des libations qui sont offertes avant les semailles et après les récoltes, comme dans tout

culte agraire. Deux de ces autels représentent la forge de Koproduo et la clairière-proche de l'agglomération dont j'ai parlé; les deux autres, les lieux dits d'Obosso. Nous avons donc ici un autre exemple (après celui de l'enclume) de la représentation sur le terrain, dans un champ cultivé, de lieux qui se trouvent au Ghana et correspondent à des points précis de la mythologie Dogon.

Quant au voyage de Dewa, premier prêtre totémique, voyage dont je viens de donner l'itinéraire, il est évoqué par les 22 tranches de possession que doit présenter tout postulant avant son intronisation, correspondant aux 11 étapes du voyage Sanga-Accra et aux 11 étapes du retour Accra-Sanga. À Sanga, ces crises de possession doivent être réalisées dans des endroits précis qu'il serait ici fastidieux d'énumérer: ils connotent, l'un après l'autre, les lieux qui jalonnaient le voyage de Dewa au Ghana.

Le forgeron mythique, après avoir initié les générations suivantes et après la célébration du deuxième Sigui, 60 ans plus tard, se serait également transformé en serpent et serait retourné au Mandé pour s'abriter dans une caverne; il existe une réplique de cette caverne du Mandé en territoire Dogon.

D'autres exemples pourraient être évoqués. Il est très important de souligner que les Dogon ont inscrit tous ces événements mythiques sur leur territoire; ils les commémorent et les réactualisent, avec diverses périodicités, au cours de cérémonies rituelles.

#### *Contexte historique.*

Les ancêtres des Dogon sont partis du Mandé à la fin du 12<sup>ème</sup> ou au début du 13<sup>ème</sup> siècle de notre ère. On sait qu'ils ont quitté le village de Dogoro, situé dans les monts Mandingues, non loin de Sibi et qu'ils sont des Keita, ayant émigré pour n'avoir pas voulu se convertir à l'islamisme.

Leur installation sur le territoire dogon ainsi que la transposition de tout leur système religieux sont donc anciennes. Étant donné qu'ils se sont donnés la peine, dans leurs champs rituels et dans leurs cavernes, de représenter, dès cette époque, certains sites du Ghana qui jouent un rôle fondamental dans leur système religieux, on est en droit de se demander si les routes commerciales entre le Mandé et le Ghana n'existaient pas déjà de façon certaine à une époque ancienne et bien antérieure au départ des Dogon du Mandé, en particulier pour le transport de l'or du Ghana au Mandé.

Des représentations relatives au Ghana étaient solidement ancrées dans l'esprit des Dogon: elles ont gardé toute leur vigueur malgré un assez long séjour à Djenné, puis dans le Yatenga.

De plus, à propos de Dya que je considère comme une ville de première importance pour l'histoire du Mandé et de toute l'Afrique de l'Ouest, je me suis demandé s'il n'existerait pas des documents anciens qui nous renseigneraient sur les relations existant entre Dya et Accra. Il y a certainement une raison pour que ces deux régions soient constamment évoquées dans les représentations des Dogon et d'autres populations de l'ouest africain.

Ceci a été confirmé par Mr. Youssouf Cissé: d'après ses propres recherches historiques, avant la découverte des mines d'or du Bouré dont l'épuisement provoqua la chute de l'empire de Ouagadou, les Sarakollé allaient chercher de l'or sur la côte; dans des travaux non encore publiés, Mr. de Gironcourt donne une liste fort longue des rois Sarakollé de Djenné qui vivaient au temps de l'empire de Ouagadou et souligne que Dya, en particulier, a été fondée par des Bozo et par des Sarakollé.

Nous avons établi des cartes de ces voyages à but économique. Les périples effectués par les Sarakollé aboutissent tous dans la région d'Accra, que Sarakollé et Dogon nomment unanimement « Ankara », sans que le point d'aboutissement en soit exactement précisé.

L'itinéraire comporte les noms de lieux où se trouvent encore des Sarakollé; sans doute y ont-ils reflué au moment de la chute de Ouagadou, mais ils ont dû s'établir dans des lieux anciennement fondés par leurs compatriotes pour servir d'étape aux caravanes intéressées par la recherche de l'or.

Il faudrait examiner également quel rôle exact ont joué les villes de Dya et de Djenné. Djenné semble être le point de départ de ces migrations anciennes. Il conviendrait d'entreprendre une étude des lieux mentionnés et des sites archéologiques, car ces lieux aux noms anciens comportent des tumuli qui n'ont pas encore été fouillés<sup>1</sup>.

La ville de Dya, en particulier, mériterait d'être étudiée dans une telle optique. Cette ville est d'une importance considérable pour l'histoire de l'ouest africain. Les « portes » de Dya rappellent l'implantation des Malinké (Dieterlen, 1955, pp. 39-76). D'autre part, le fait que ce sont les Cissé, des Sarakollé, qui sont responsables de la mare de Dya, lieu sacré entre tous, souligne que l'implantation Sarakollé doit être antérieure à celle des Malinké. Il existe par ailleurs nombre de tariks familiaux Sarakollé non exploités. Leur étude associée à d'autres enquêtes ethnologiques et à des fouilles archéologiques nous permettrait de poursuivre nos recherches.

<sup>1</sup> Une société comme la Fondation Ludwig Keiner, spécialisée dans les recherches ethnographiques et archéologiques conjointes pourrait peut-être s'intéresser financièrement à un tel programme de recherche.

## RIASSUNTO

L'esistenza di vie di comunicazione tra il Niger e l'area di Mandingo, nel periodo protostorico, è documentata da antichi scrittori e da moderni geografi. Dal punto di vista della tradizione orale, lo studio di alcuni fenomeni religiosi tra popoli del bacino del Niger contribuisce a darci precise informazioni su questo soggetto. L'attenzione su questa possibilità fu dapprima attirata da due fatti:

1. - Gli attuali pellegrinaggi dei Dogon alla Costa d'Avorio o alla Costa d'Oro per riportare i perizoma o i cauri che abbisognano per i loro sposalizi.

2. - La riproduzione in occasione delle cerimonie di possessione del viaggio che i preti totemici compiono ad Accra prima della loro consacrazione. Una ulteriore ricerca ha mostrato che questi viaggi sono strettamente collegati alle rappresentazioni mitiche dell'apparizione dell'uomo sulla terra e della vita dell'umanità,



in relazione con la palude Dya in Macina e quella dei preti Gâ ad Accra. Un'altra serie di miti menziona il viaggio degli antenati mitici Dogon dall'area di Mandingo al Ghana. La mitologia Dogon dà un posto importante agli avvenimenti accaduti nell'area di Mandingo, e troviamo presso i Dogon ed altri gruppi etnici rappresentazioni simboliche di luoghi del Ghana. Si sa che, per non aver voluto convertirsi all'Islamismo, i Dogon dovettero lasciare l'area di Mandingo nel XIII secolo. Ciò spinge a chiedersi se le vie di commercio tra l'area di Mandingo e il Ghana non possano essere già esistite prima della partenza dei Dogon.

## SUMMARY

The existence of communication routes between Niger and the Mandingo area in the proto-historic period is documented by early authors and modern geographers. From the point of view of oral tradition, study of certain religious phenomena among the peoples of the Niger basin also contributes precise information on this subject. Attention was first drawn to this possibility by two facts:

1. - Contemporary pilgrimages made by the Dogon to the Ivory Coast or the Gold Coast to bring back the loincloths and cowrie shells needed for their wedding.

2. The totemic priests' re-enactment, on the occasion of possession ceremonies, of the journey they made to Accra before their admission to the priesthood.

Further research has shown that these journeys are closely linked to mythical representations of the appearance of man on earth and the life of humanity, related to the Dya lagoon in Macina and the lagoon of the Gâ priests at Accra. Another series of myths mentions the journey of mythical Dogon ancestors from the Mandingo area to Ghana. Dogon mythology accords an important place to events which occurred in the Mandingo area, and both the Dogon and other ethnic groups have symbolic representations of places in Ghana. It is known that because they did not wish to convert to Islam, the Dogon had to leave the Mandingo area in about the thirteenth century. This leads one to wonder whether the commercial routes between the Mandingo area and Ghana may not already have existed before the departure of the Dogon.

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## THE RITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF ELAND (*TAUROTRAGUS ORYX*) IN THE ROCK ART OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

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Recent quantitative analyses of rock art samples from study areas in southern Africa have revealed a high degree of selectivity in the subject matter portrayed. Among the animals, this selectivity is not necessarily related either to the former faunal population of the area, nor to the daily diet of the hunters. I have suggested elsewhere that this selectivity resulted from a complex philosophy among the hunter-gatherer peoples responsible for the art, and that the numerical emphasis on the various animals may reflect in symbolic form a hierarchy of values which regulated social structure (Vinnicombe, 1972a).

The purpose of this paper is to draw attention to some of the values symbolised by the eland antelope (*Taurotragus oryx*) which is the dominant species among the animal paintings of the Drakensberg and associated Maluti mountain massive in Lesotho, as well as among rock engravings and paintings in the northern and western regions of the Cape Province in the Republic of South Africa (see Tables in Vinnicombe, 1972, a, b).

Eland are the largest and most docile of the African antelope, and are characterized by their ox-like massiveness. Their meat yield is excellent both in quality and quantity, an adult bull weighing up to 1,200 lbs (546 kilo). Including wastage, this amount of meat could theoretically provide a camp of twenty Bushmen with sufficient meat for over a month, allowing an average of one pound of meat per person per day. The economic value of eland to a hunter-gatherer community cannot therefore be overlooked, and throughout the following discussion, this factor should be borne in mind.

Many of the physical characteristics of eland are faithfully portrayed by the Bushman artists, such as the large dependent dewlap, the ridge of dark hair along the crest of the neck and back, the tufted tail, wrinkled neck, and growth of coarse hair on the forehead, as well as the postures and gaits common to this heavy ungulate. In the art there is, however, a general tendency towards elongation of proportions, with a relatively small head in relation to the bulk of the body. Eland horns, which are present in both sexes and project backwards in line

with the profile of the face, are often absent in the paintings, a peculiarity probably explained by the transience of the black paint commonly used to depict such details as horns, hooves, backstripe and eye. The rest of the eland body is usually painted red, although the natural colour of an eland is a tawny dun colour becoming slightly lighter underneath. The Bushman artists exaggerated this feature, and adopted a wide-spread convention whereby the head, neck, belly and legs were painted white. In many instances, the white has now entirely disappeared, leaving only a red block-like body, with extensions to form the tail and neck-stripe. In the Drakensberg and Maluti mountain areas, the size of eland paintings are often exaggerated by comparison with other humans and animals in the same composition, and the technique of shading colours to give a modelled effect was lavished on eland more than on any other subject (Vinnicombe, 1970, in ms; Pager, 1971, pp. 323, 327, 328). From these observations, it is apparent that eland, in addition to being numerically preponderant and dominant in size, were singled out for especially elaborate treatment by the artists. Apart from the relative complexity of their execution, eland are often shown in singularly close, even personal, relationships with human beings in scenes that are clearly not associated with the hunt. Humans may extend an arm towards an eland's head, may hold its tail or bend forward over its rump, may cling under its neck or vault over its back. In addition, there are scenes where eland are shown trussed up, their legs bound with thongs and in association with therianthropic figures. Sometimes the eland are connected by rope-like lines to curiously decorated human figures, or dead eland may be shown in conjunction with snakes or creatures with wings or arms held back in a winglike posture (Vinnicombe, 1970 in ms; Woodhouse, 1971; Lee & Woodhouse, 1970). Where human beings are associated with eland, and especially in hunting scenes, their faces are often painted white, a factor which could hardly be interpreted as advantageous to a hunter in any practical sense, and the penis is sometimes shown with a bar across the tip.

Fig. 188  
*Mababla's shelter, Belleview, Mount Currie district, East Griqualand. A herd of eland linked by a meandering line to anthropomorphic figures. Above and left, hunters with whitened faces run, stand or crouch in groups of two and three. They do not appear to be actively hunting the eland. Length of eland at lower left, nose to rump: 91 cms.*



In my own study area, a high percent of the total number of superimpositions involve depictions of eland, and the eland themselves are often overpainted. This may take the form of a subsequent colour, for example bright brick red or yellow ochre, being painted on top of an originally

Fig. 189

Eagle Krantz, Hlatimba valley, Impendle, Natal. A group of elongated hunters with whitened faces superimposed on an eland. Note the bar across the penis of the figure on the left. The scale is in centimetres.



dark red body, or the entire outline of an eland may be slightly altered to give the effect of extra limbs, additional head, or double lines to the neck and belly. Although this « renewal » procedure has been noted very occasionally on paintings of other animals, it is reserved almost exclusively for eland (Vinnicombe, 1970, in ms). A general feature of the art is that although very few of the paintings are exactly alike, they are apparently governed by strict adherence to certain basic rules, and the colour conventions, distorted body proportions, and relationships between men and animals, whether in scenes or superpositions, recur repeatedly over distances separated by hundreds of miles. This in itself lends strength to a ritual interpretation for much of the art, ritual being essentially « any practice done or regularly repeated in a set precise manner so as to satisfy one's own sense of fitness and often felt to have a symbolic or quasi-symbolic significance ». (Webster's dictionary).

The reason for the selection of the eland as a significant symbol among the Southern Bushmen may have been because their own band behaviour is in many ways reflected in the basic behaviour of eland herds. During the winter months when grazing and browsing is at its lowest nutritional level, the eland herd divides into small groups, but with the coming of the first rains in spring, there is a progressive amalgamation until a single large cohesive herd is formed when mating takes place. With the onset of regular frosts and the deterioration of the grassland early in winter, subdivision into smaller units again takes place, the cows and their progeny separating from the adult males (Roberts, 1951). Although there is little direct evidence as to the seasonal movements of the now extinct Southern Bushmen, the social organisation of extant hunter-gatherer groups in the desert regions of the Kalahari is largely governed by seasonal factors.

Several bands may temporarily congregate in a circumscribed area, and at this time exchange visits and arrangements for marriage tend to take place (Marshall, 1959, 1960). In the daily activities of the Bushmen, there is a rigid division of labour based on sex and age; the women and dependent children collect vegetable foods, while the men and older boys go hunting and snaring. It may well be then, that the Bushmen saw in the behaviour of the eland herds a basic similarity to themselves and in this way the identification between man and animal



Fig. 190

Site W 12. Cross-legged shelter, Tsoelike river, Quacha's Nek district, Lesotho. Elongated human figures, some of whom stand cross-legged and have animal hooves in lieu of feet, in association with a dead eland which has blood running from the nose and double thongs around the hind legs. The length of the eland from nose to rump is 24 cms.



commenced. Be this as it may, Bushman mythology clearly indicates that a third dimension was involved, man, eland and deity. Among the Southern Bushmen, the name of this deity was /Kaggen, a name somewhat misleadingly translated as 'Mantis' in the literature (Gusinde, 1966). Since much of the following discussion revolves upon three versions of the eland creation myth collected from Bushmen during the latter half of last century, an outline of their content will now be given. In each case, and in all quotations, the name /Kaggen is retained.

*Myth 1:* told by a /Xam Bushman, Dia!kwain, from the Katkop Hills in the northern Cape.

« /Kaggen put the shoe of his son-in-law, /Kwammanga, into a water-pool, and he made an eland out of it, feeding it on honey. /Kaggen's family wondered why he no longer brought any honey home, so his grandson /Ni (Ichneumon) went out with him one day to discover the reason.

While /Kaggen went to call the eland from the reeds where it lived, /Ni pretended to be asleep, but was really watching through a peep-hole in his kaross. /Kaggen called: « /Kwammanga's shoe! », and the eland came up and stood, while /Kaggen moistened its hair and smoothed it with honey.

Having discovered where the honey was disappearing to, /Ni told his father /Kwammanga, and together they plotted to kill the eland. While /Kaggen was away, they cut honey, took it to the pool of water, called « /Kwammanga's shoe! » and when the eland came leaping out of the reeds, /Kwammanga shot it. The eland bounded off and lay down to die.

Meanwhile /Kaggen was looking for honey but each comb he went to was dry. He interpreted this as an omen that danger had come upon his home and that blood was flowing, so he returned. He went to the water and called the eland, but the eland did not come. Then he wept; tears fell from his eyes because he did not see the eland. When he looked for the eland's spoor, he found blood, then wept again. He covered his head with his kaross, and still weeping in anger, he went home to lie down even though the sun was still high in the sky. While /Kaggen was lying mourning, /Kwammanga, together with a number of meercats, went to cut up the dead eland, but /Kwammanga only looked at it, then returned home. Then /Kaggen roused himself, picked up his quiver, and ran along the eland's spoor. When he caught sight of the meercats as they cut up the eland, he took out an arrow, for he meant to fight the eland's

battle. But each time he shot, the arrow returned, passing close to his head so that he narrowly missed shooting himself. He tried to attack the meercats with a knob-kerry, but a meercat snatched it from him, beat him, and threw him on the eland's horns. /Kaggen was next made to carry wood and tend the meercat's fire, but he escaped further punishment by pricking the eland's gall which he saw on a bush. This covered everything with darkness, but then /Kaggen could not see the ground, and kept getting tangled in the bushes. So he took off his shoe, and threw it into the sky where it became the moon, and lighted the earth for him.

In the words of the myth, /Kaggen said: « The sun was shining brightly when I grew angry, because the meercat had wrestled with me and beaten me with a stick. I gathered wood, but I was angry. I made a hole for the fire, but I was angry. I placed stones on the wood, I gathered more wood and put it on, I lighted the fire, but I was angry. The place was light because it was midday, but I was angry, so I pricked open the eland's gall, because I wanted the sun to go into the dark. The sun set behind the mountain; darkness covered the earth. Darkness covered us all, even the meercats, we were all in the dark. Then I quickly thought about it, I quickly snatched off a shoe and spoke to it as I threw it up. I said: « I am /Kaggen, and this my shoe shall verily become the moon which shines in the dark » (Condensed from Bleek 1924, 1-5).

*Myth 2:* told by a /Xam Bushman, Hankasso, from the Strontbergen in the northern Cape, about 200 miles east of the Katkop Hills. The two /Xam informants never met, therefore the legends are independent testimonies.

« /Kwammanga threw away part of this shoe, which /Kaggen picked up and soaked in water at a place where reeds stood. /Kaggen returned at intervals to watch the shoe grow into an eland. When it had grown, he trilled to it, making his tongue quiver as Bushmen do in springbok hunting, and he called to it, « /Kwammanga's shoe piece! » The eland then walked up to his father, and /Kaggen rubbed its ribs with honey. He repeatedly treated the eland in this way while it grew, and he wept, fondling it, and beautifying it with honeycomb. After one such occasion, the eland walked back to bask in the water, and /Kaggen did not come back for a time. For three nights the eland grew, becoming like an ox. Then /Kaggen returned early, as the sun rose, and called the eland. The eland came forth, and the ground resounded as he came. Then /Kaggen sang for joy about the male eland, meanwhile rubbing it down with honey.

Next morning, while the eland was grazing, /Kaggen took his young grandson /Ni with him to the water. They sat down in the shade of a bush, and /Kaggen told /Ni to go to sleep, covering his head. But /Ni lay awake and saw the eland. Then young /Ni went and told his father what he had seen, and while /Kaggen was away, he guided his father, /Kwammanga, to the place where the eland lived. /Kwammanga knocked the eland down, and when /Kaggen arrived on the scene he saw /Kwammanga and the others cutting up the carcass. /Kaggen was very angry because they had not waited for permission to kill the eland, and he wept for the eland. His heart did not feel satisfied about his eland, whom he alone had made.

/Kwammanga and /Ni made /Kaggen gather wood for them, for they wanted to cook and eat the meat. As he went gathering wood, /Kaggen caught sight of the eland's gall, which he eventually pierced and burst. The gall broke, covering his head so that he could not see, and he groped about feeling his way. While groping along, he found an ostrich feather and he brushed the gall from his eyes. Then he threw the feather up, telling it that henceforth it should be the moon and shine at night, to lighten the darkness for men till the sun rise. « Thou art the Moon, thou dost give light for men, then thou dost fall away, thou dost return to life, when thou hast fallen away... That is what the Moon does: the Moon falls away and returns to life... » (Condensed from Bleek 1924, 5-9).

*Myth 3:* told by Qing, a Bushman from the Maluti mountains in eastern Lesotho. This region is about 340 miles from the Strontbergen, and 540 miles from the Katkop Hills.

« /Kaggen, who was the first Being and a great chief, had a wife named Coti. As a result of a scolding from her husband, she conceived, and brought forth a strange child in the veld. She told her husband, who ran to see it, and with the aid of *canna* (ground herbs?) he put questions to it: « Are you this animal? Are you that animal? » but it remained silent. Finally he asked: « Are you an eland? » and the reply was « Aaaa ». Then he took the young eland and folded it in his arms, and put it in a gourd which he hid in a secluded kloof enclosed by hills and precipices, and left it to grow there.

/Kaggen then attempted to kill the eland by throwing sharpened sticks at it, but each time he missed, so finally he went away to fetch arrow poison. During his three-day absence, his two sons Cogaz and Gcwi went out with young men to hunt, and they came upon the eland their father had hidden. After some difficulty, the newly grown eland was encircled and stabbed, the blood collected, and the meat cut up. Before carrying the supplies home, they noticed /Kaggen's snares and traps in the vicinity, and were afraid because they then realized that he was the rightful owner of the eland.

When /Kaggen returned and saw blood on the ground where the eland had been killed, he was very angry with his youngest son Gcwi who had stabbed the eland, and punished him for his presumption and disobedience by pulling off his nose and flinging it into the fire. But then he repented, put the nose on again, and said to his son, « Now try to undo the mischief you have done, for you have spoilt the elands I was making fit for use ». Gcwi was told to take some of the eland's blood which had been brought home in a paunch, and to churn it by rubbing a churn-stick between the palms of his hands, thus scattering the blood. The drops of blood first turned into frightful snakes which went abroad, then hartebeests which ran away, but /Kaggen was dissatisfied with his son's creations. The blood was thrown out, the pot cleansed and more blood emptied into it from the paunch. Fat from the eland's heart was added to the mixture and /Kaggen's wife Coti now churned, while /Kaggen sprinkled, and the drops became bull elands which surrounded them and pushed them with their horns. /Kaggen again said, « You see how you have spoilt the elands? » and he drove them away. Then they churned and produced eland cows, and they churned again to produce multitudes of elands, and the earth was covered with

Fig. 191  
*Tsuayi's shelter, Mzimude river, Underberg, Natal. A hunter in pursuit of game, and a dead eland, bleeding from the nose, superimposed on an earlier rendering. A Kaross-clad figure with zoomorphic head underlies the later painting. Length of dead eland, nose to rump: 35 cms.*



them. Then /Kaggen said to Gcwi, « Go and hunt them, and try to kill one; that is now your work, for it was you who spoilt them ».

Gcwi ran and did his best, but came back panting, footsore and worn-out. He hunted again next day but was still unable to kill any. The eland were able to run away because /Kaggen was in their bones. /Kaggen then sent his eldest son Cogaz to turn the elands, and when they came running close past him, he threw assegais and killed three bulls. Then /Kaggen sent Cogaz to hunt, first giving him a blessing, and he killed two. Then Gcwi was sent again, and he killed one. That day game were given to men to eat and this is the way they were spoilt and became wild. /Kaggen said he must punish them for trying to kill the thing he made, and must make them feel sore ». (Condensed from Orpen 1874).

Qing gave neither the circumstances nor the manner in which the moon was created, but did say that /Kaggen gave orders and caused the moon to appear.

Apart from the more obvious similarities between these three myths, /Kaggen's creation and careful nurturing of the Eland, the premature killing of the Eland by younger members of /Kaggen's family, and the sorrow and reproof that follow, there are suggestions of a more complex mystical significance.

In all three myths, it is evident that /Kaggen the Creator was greatly angered by the death of his Eland, and in the version from the Katkop Hills, it is significant that when /Kaggen attacked the meercats, he « meant to fight the Eland's battle ». Meercats (esp. *Cynictis penicillata*) are a variety of small carnivorous mongoose not harmful to man, and in terms of Levi-Strauss's symbolism, they may be equated with hunters since both kill animals in order to live. The myth is therefore relating a confrontation between the creator of life, and the destroyers of life. Temporarily, the hunters triumph by rendering /Kaggen impotent and reducing him to the status of a servant. But /Kaggen's anger finally results in a bitter blackness covering the earth, in inability to see clearly, in the world becoming a stumbling block. Man and god are estranged. In the myths recorded from the /Xam Bushmen, the situation is redeemed by the creation of the moon which not only lightens the darkness, but in its phases of waxing and waning, also symbolises regeneration and life after death.

The myth from Lesotho does not incorporate the creation of the moon, but here an actual re-creation or regeneration of the slaughtered eland is described. In this account, it is of note that the eland is immune to attack from the creator /Kaggen, but not from his sons. When /Kaggen punished the son responsible for stabbing the eland, he « pulled his nose off » which may be a misplaced castration symbol indicative of thus being rendered impotent. But then /Kaggen felt that this punishment had possibly been somewhat drastic, so he restored his son to normality *on condition that he atoned for his misdeed*: « Now begin to try to undo the mischief you have done... ». The procedure involved churning and scattering the dead eland's blood, but the hunter alone was unable to achieve success. /Kaggen then co-opted help, and once fat from the dead eland's heart had been added to the blood, multitudes of eland were created in place of the one which had been killed. The unfortunate son who had stabbed the first eland was condemned



to kill again, but was unable to do so without the co-operation of /Kaggen, and his brother also had to be « blessed » before he was able to hunt successfully. And so the eternal cycle of taking life and replacing that which had been taken in the hunt was established.

But even more significant, perhaps, is an analysis of the relationships between the principal participants in the myths, suggested to me by Dr. E. R. Leach.

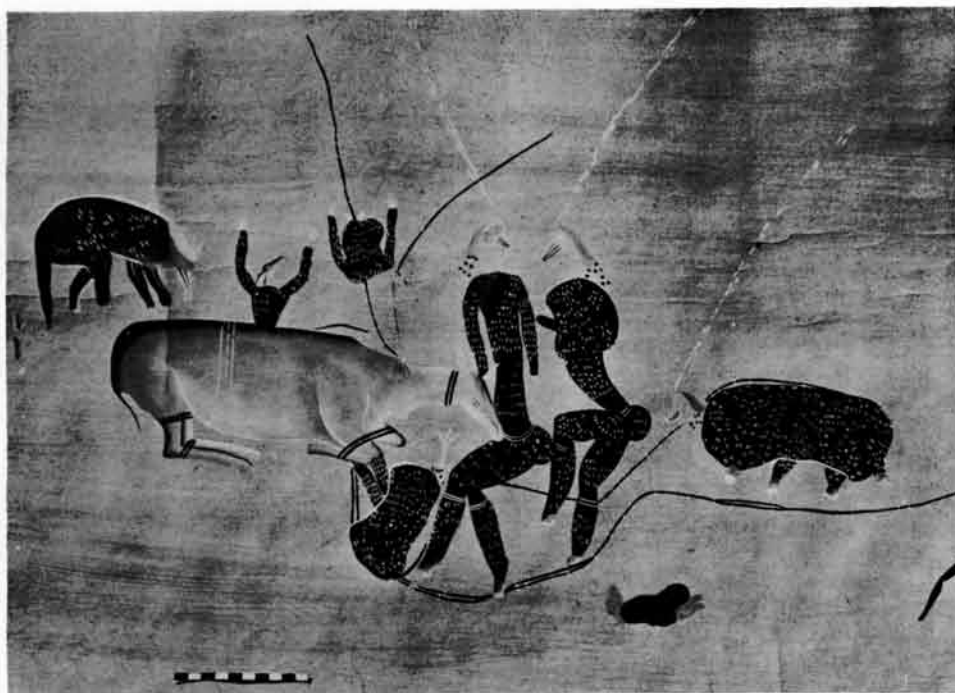
In each instance, the victim (eland), is the child of the Creator /Kaggen. The betrayers are a son-in-law and grandchild in the first two stories, and sons in the third. The slayers of the eland are the same as the betrayers, and the victim (eland), is in the same status vis-a-vis the creator as is the slayer. This is a characteristic of true sacrifice, for in sacrificial rites a great deal of the preliminaries are concerned with establishing a symbolic identification between the giver of the sacrifice (the slayer) and the victim (the sacrificial beast) (Hubert & Mauss, 1964).

In his monumental work on the South American Indians, Levi-Strauss presents an elaborate argument in which honey represents menstrual blood or male semen, while Freudian symbolism links shoes with the female vagina (Levi-Strauss, 1966 (3), p. 340). If these symbols had a similar significance in southern Africa, the shoe of /Kaggen's son-in-law would symbolise /Kaggen's daughter, and by feeding the shoe with honey /Kaggen was having incestuous relations with his daughter. The product of this union, a young bull eland, was therefore /Kaggen's daughter's son who shared the same relationship with /Kaggen as his grandson /Ni. /Ni and the eland thereby became substitutes for one another, just as the ram became a substitute for Isaac in the Old Testament story. This may appear to be stretching the available evidence too far in the case of the Bushmen, but the sacrifice hypothesis is independently supported by a complex set of rules prescribed for hunting eland among the now extinct /Xam Bushmen.

At the outset, I shall define the meaning of 'sacrifice' as used in this essay in the words of Webster's dictionary: « The destruction or surrender of something for the sake of something else: giving up of some desirable thing on behalf of a higher object ». Although sacrifices take various forms according to their special functions, there is inherent in all true sacrifice a consistent scheme which can be divided into five basic components listed as follows: the victim, the place and instruments of sacrifice, the 'sacrifier' or one who initiates the sacrifice, the sacrificer who acts as an intermediary between 'sacrifier' and victim, and the exit from the state engendered by sacrifice (Hubert & Mauss, 1964). Linked with the latter are the rites of purification and the sacrificial meal (Robertson-Smith, 1927).

I shall now discuss each of these ingredients of sacrifice with reference to the hunting rites of the Bushmen, first outlining the theoretical 'model' for each component for which I draw heavily from the work of Robertson-Smith and Hubert & Mauss, and then describing the relevant factual material without any attempt at interpretation. My own observations on the possible significance of the rites will be limited

Fig. 192  
 Moshebi's shelter, Belle-  
 view, Mount Currie dis-  
 trict, East Griqualand. An  
 eland, bound with double  
 thongs around front and  
 hind legs as well as round  
 the neck, is surrounded by  
 therianthropomorphic beings.  
 Broken white lines extend  
 upwards from the heads of  
 some figures, and a spotted  
 line connects the eland with  
 the figures on the right.  
 The scale is in centimetres.



to the sections on *Purification* and *The sanctuary or place of sacrifice*, which, because of the paucity of recorded data, are of necessity more deductive than factual.

By this means, the model, the objective facts, and my personal interpretation of these facts will remain clearly separate.

### *The victim*

The victim of a sacrifice is of necessity a consecrated animal, and it sometimes achieves this state not through preparatory ritual, but by a fact of its birth. The species to which it belongs is joined to the divinity by special links, and it thus has a divine character by nature (Hubert & Mauss 1964, 11, 29).

The bond of kinship between the Bushman's creator god and eland has already been expressed in the myths cited, and their close identification is further exemplified in a remark made by Qing, the young Bushman informant from the Maluti Mountains. When asked the whereabouts of his deity, he replied: « We don't know, but the elands do. Have you not hunted and heard his cry, when the elands suddenly start and run to his call? Where he is, elands are in droves like cattle » (Orpen, 1874). In the myths related, it is clearly implied that eland belonged to the sphere of the gods, for a legendary figure, Qwan-ciqutshaa, who lived in a place surrounded by hills and precipices, « saw his elands running about, and wondered what had startled them ». It is of note that an early traveller to Lesotho remarked on a prevalent belief that eland had an imaginary shepherd named Unconagnana who lived in the Maluti Mountains, and that the Bushmen believed that /Kaggen, the creator of all, gave to animals a special mark by which they could be individually identified: to this eland he gave a stump of a tail, to that a folded ear, and to another a pierced ear (Arbousset, 1852, p. 79, p. 363).

Fig. 193

Site W 22, Tsoelike river, Qacha's Nek district, Lesotho. An elongated group of figures, most of whom are unarmed, perform antics round a central eland. The eland has been painted on top of an earlier, more faded representation. The scale is in centimetres.



The /Xam Bushmen of the northern Cape were even more specific in the identification of their deity with certain antelope. They believed that /Kaggen created the eland first among animals, followed by the hartebeest, and for this reason, « he did not love the Eland and the Hartebeest a little, he loved them dearly, for he made his heart of the Eland and the Hartebeest... The Hartebeest and the Eland are things of /Kaggen, therefore they have magic power ». (Bleek, 1924, 10-12).

#### *The sacrificial weapon.*

The instrument used for sacrifice is often treated with especial reverence and care is taken to set it apart and distinguish it from ordinary secular usage. Preparatory rites are often necessary before the weapon can be handled (Hubert & Mauss, 1964, p. 27).

Among Bushmen in general there seems to be little ritual attached to the preparation of bows, arrows and arrow poisons (Schapera, 1930, pp. 128-130; Shaw & Woolley, 1963), but once the weapons are completed they are subject to various taboos to ensure good aim and potency of the poison. All women, and those who are menstruating in particular, are forbidden to touch men's hunting gear except on significant occasions such as marriage and initiation when they play a symbolic role (Metzger, 1950, p. 53; Silberbauer, 1965, p. 85; Marshall, 1961, p. 243). In the words of the /Xam Bushmen, women had to « show respect for men's arrows, so that the men may quietly kill » (Bleek & Lloyd, 1911, p. 77). Should the hunters have ill luck in hunting, which they ascribed to such factors as the death of a friend, a special rite was enacted by the women to restore virility both to the arrows and the hunters. They would burn a highly prized aromatic shrub called *buchu*, and treat the arrows with the smoke. Then they would make incisions on the men's shoulders with a sharp arrowhead, suck blood from the cuts and spit the blood into an antelope horn. The hunter's blood was then poured onto the burning *buchu*, with the result, it was believed, that game would once again succumb to the hunter's shot. (Bleek, 1932, p. 248).

Before going hunting, the hunters would rub special ash into cuts on their arms and on their hand between the thumb and first finger; this was the place where the arrow lay when drawing the bow, and the charm ensured that the arrow would « fly well » and the aim be straight. When the game was actually sighted, a stick of charm medicine especially carried for the purpose, was set alight and pointed towards the game; then with the charcoal from the burnt charm they would mark their foreheads, noses and cheeks. (Bleek, 1935; Schapera, 1930, p. 138-9). Only after these preparations was the practical task of stalking the game able to commence. Once the animal had actually been shot, the hunter would search for the arrowhead that hit the quarry, and would pick it up not with his bare hand, but wrapped in a leaf, taking especial care to shield it from any wind, and he would then carefully lay it on another arrow in his quiver.

### *The 'sacrifier'*

The 'sacrifier' or person who initiates the sacrifice is prepared for the rite by being made different and separate from the community of which he is a part. He becomes the object of special attentions, and he must be associated as closely as possible with the victim which serves as an intermediary between the 'sacrifier' and his god. In fact, the victim not only represents the 'sacrifier', — it is merged in him. The two personalities are fused together and identification becomes complete. Because the victim is about to die, an ambiguous situation results for the 'sacrifier', — he runs the risk of sharing its fate because he is so identified with it. So the 'sacrifier' touches the victim only through an intermediary. The divine principle is contained within the body of the victim, and death will release this. But the killing is nevertheless a crime, a kind of sacrilege (Hubert & Mauss, 1964, pp. 20, 29, 32, 52).

Among Bushmen, the shooting of an animal does not result in instant death because of the delayed action of the poison, and a period of anything from one to five days elapses before the animal weakens and finally collapses and dies. During this period, a complex set of rules governed the behaviour of the /Xam hunter who had shot an eland.

After collecting the spent arrow and slinging on the skin bag containing his hunting gear, the hunter would return to his camp, quietly and solemnly, not looking around, for from this time onwards, the hunter and his prey were very closely identified, and any action or emotion on the part of the hunter would similarly affect the eland. When he arrived near the encampment, he did not enter openly, but stood to one side. Only the adult men were allowed to approach and question him, but even then the hunter replied evasively, speaking quietly and as if in pain, never actually saying, «I have shot an eland». Then an old man would inspect the hunter's quiver to identify any hair that may have been adhering to the arrow, and if he recognised eland hair, he immediately exposed the hunter's genitals by rolling up his skin apron and tucking it under his belt. He then instructed the hunter to no longer pass water freely for fear the eland would do likewise, for it was necessary that the poison should « hold its bladder shut ». From this time on, the hunter was kept quite separate from the women and children. A special hut was made for him windward of the main camp, lest he smelt the scent of food. If he did, the eland would likewise smell food and become strengthened. An old man would sleep with him in order to care for him and tend his fire, for the hunter acted



as if he were ill and in pain. He was unable to sleep because he believed that his deity, /Kaggen, was tormenting him: « /Kaggen does not love us, if we kill an eland ». So /Kaggen did all manner of things to make the hunter feel uncomfortable and to elicit a response to the discomfort: he could bite all parts of the hunter's body, make his eyes smart, or pinch the inside of his ear. « Sometimes he appears as a louse that is biting the man. Even if the man feels that a louse seems to be biting him, he does not scratch, but gently wriggles his body a little where he feels that something is biting him. He knows that it is not a louse, but it is /Kaggen trying to cheat him, for /Kaggen wants him to think it is a louse and to catch and kill it. ...When /Kaggen behaves like this, he wants the eland to get up as the man kills the louse... » (Bleek, 1932, p. 236).

« At another time he sounds like a puff-adder, because he wants the man to be frightened and jump up, so that the eland may also get up. If he sees that the man is walking about, he goes to tell the eland about it, that the man who shot him is not lying ill, but is jumping about... He goes and strikes the eland's horn, and the eland arises, the eland eats, because it feels it has quite come to life by means of /Kaggen's doings... » (Bleek, 1924, pp. 11 - 12).

When day finally broke, the hunter would lead the men who were going to follow the eland towards the place where he had left the spoor, but the hunter himself did not join in with the tracking: he held back with the old man. Only after the heart had been removed from the carcass and the meat cut up into portions by intermediaries was the hunter allowed to participate in any way.

### *The sacrificer*

The sacrificer acts as an intermediary between the deity, the person who initiates the sacrifice, and the victim. The supernatural power possessed by the victim must be diminished before it is approachable by ordinary mortals, and the expulsion of a sacred spirit, whether pure or impure, is a primordial component of sacrifice. In particular sacrifices there is found, in a variety of expressions, a struggle between the feeling that the victim is too holy to be eaten or even touched, and the principle that its atoning efficacy depends on participation in its life, flesh and blood (Hubert & Mauss, 1964, pp. 6, 44; Robertson-Smith, 1927, p. 354).

The /Xam Bushmen believed that /Kaggen was with the eland as it lay dying, so they showed « respect » in order that it would be « fat ». No shadow was allowed to fall on the body of the eland for fear of « hurting » it or making it « lean », and for the same reason, the hunter's « scent » was not to come anywhere near it. Only one man approached the eland while the others laid their weapons down and waited. Taking care to work so that he cast no shadow on it, the selected man first cut off the eland's tail and beat it with its tail. The eland seemed to sigh just like men sigh when they have eaten fat. Then the man who beat the eland put down the tail, took a knife and cut the eland open. Meanwhile the other men looked in a different direction « for they are afraid that their eye might by looking make it lean ». When the man who cut the eland open saw that it was indeed fat, he was diffident and abstruse in his comments, pretending it was lean, and leaving the others to approach to see for themselves. Then the

other men would say, « Look at the eland which our brother said was lean, look, this eland's fat is such that people will not eat meat of the eland. For pure fat is what they will eat » (Bleek, 1932, p. 240).

Unfortunately, no record was made of what the hunter had to do in order to be acceptable again to god and society after he had killed the animal especially loved and created by /Kaggen, but there are references in the mythology collected from the Lesotho Bushman that the killing of eland was followed by an act of purification which resulted in regeneration of dead eland. This aspect will be dealt with more fully after discussion of the distribution of the meat.

### *The sacrificial meal*

The significant part of a sacrifice does not lie in the death of the victim, but in the participation of its life or life-blood, whereby a circle of kinsmen are united with one another and with their god. The responsibility for the death of the victim is distributed as widely as possible, and in the end, everyone eats of the flesh. Details of the ritual are shaped by the rule that no part of the life might be lost, and that the whole body must be distributed and used up. The victim is so holy that no part of it may be treated as mere waste: a means must be found of dealing with the body consistent with the respect due to a dead kinsman - a respect not based on sentimental grounds, but on the belief that the corpse and everything with which it comes into contact is a source of very dangerous supernatural influences of an infectious kind (Robertson-Smith, 1927, pp. 304, 312, 338, 349, 369, 385).

All descriptions of the butchering of large game animals by Bushmen emphasise the almost complete utilization of every part of the animal, and Lorna Marshall comments: « Nothing is wasted; all is distributed » (Marshall, 1961, p. 237; Silberbauer, 1965, p. 49; Marshall-Thomas, 1959, p. 49).

Among most Bushmen, rigorous rules for meat-sharing apply to all the larger game animals shot with the bow and arrow, and certain categories of people are limited to eating prescribed portions (Silberbauer, 1965, p. 47; Fourie, 1928; Bleek, 1911, pp. 271 - 283).

Among the !Kung, the person responsible for the distribution of the meat is the owner of the arrow which was shot into the animal, and this person may or may not be one of the hunters. The giving and lending of arrows among kin, affines or friends is a form of gift-exchange, and the status of the arrow plays its part in the distribution of the animal killed with it. Everyone who receives meat gives again in another wave of sharing, and it ends in everyone getting some meat. The person one shares with will share in turn when he gets meat and people are sustained by a web of mutual obligation. Lorna Marshall comments: « The society seems to want to extinguish in every way possible the concept of the meat belonging to the hunter » (Marshall, 1961, pp. 236 - 238).

On certain occasions the G/wi Bushmen have a special meal in which only the men participate, but the hunter himself plays no significant part in it, and may even absent himself after a short time. The chief purpose of this gathering is to alleviate friction and counter estrangement, for the men are compelled to get together and join in a common purpose (Silberbauer, 1965, p. 50).

The now extinct /Xam Bushmen were governed by a complex set of rules termed *!nanna-sse* which applied to the treatment of specified game. In the following account, springbok are used as an example. When a springbok had been killed, the hunter was not allowed to touch the meat with his hands, « because our hands are those with which we held the bow and arrows when we shot the thing ». Any blood accidentally spilt was carefully lifted up together with the earth or bushes on which it lay, and put down opposite the entrance of the hut belonging to the man who killed the springbok. The bones too, were not to be thrown about, but had to be carefully piled in the same place as the blood, and the contents of the springbok's stomach were also emptied on the heap of bones. The shoulder blades were treated with especial deference; these had to be put away in the hut to prevent the dogs from crunching them (See also Willcox, 1963, p. 48). All this was done to ensure that the hunter would not miss his aim in future. In the division of meat, the man who shot the springbok was always given the upper bones of the foreleg so that his child should eat the marrow out of them. The tip of a springbok tongue on the other hand was never to be eaten by children, and likewise women were forbidden to eat meat from the shoulder because they had to show « respect » for the men's arrows. If any of these taboos were broken, the springbok could enter that person's flesh and cause illness. Children were not allowed to play on the springbok's skin for fear of invisible magic arrows possessed by the springbok which could do great harm, and the skins themselves had eventually to be cured and softened by the women to barter for such desirable items as more poisoned arrows, red haematite and black specularite (Bleek & Lloyd, 1911, pp. 271-283).

### *Purification*

In 'primitive' forms of sacrifice, the act of slaughter appears to release an ambiguous force which has to be limited, directed or « tamed » by prescribed rites, and the participants are generally left with a sense of impurity which makes them feel unfit to participate in the life of the community. Where the uncleanness is of a mild form, it is dealt with mainly by ablutions, but where the uncleanness is more intense, by more elaborate procedures. The most powerful cleansing media are derived from the body and blood of the sacrosanct victim, and the forms of purification embrace such rites as the sprinkling of sacrificial blood or ashes, anointing with holy unguents, or fumigation with the smoke of incense (Robertson-Smith, 1927, pp. 426, 428).

The rules which govern the hunting of eland and the subsequent treatment of the carcase have largely been drawn from the customs of the /Xam Bushmen, but among this group there is no record of any obligatory act of « purification » following on the death of an eland. The only rite described concerned baboons and hyenas, when it was said that fine lines had to be engraved round the points of the bow in order to remove a curse. « Father used to tell me that the baboon's death would live in our bows of we did not cause it to leave them » (Bleek, 1931, 5 (2), p. 167). Baboons and eland were among the animals which the /Xam Bushmen associated with « respect » words, and the extant !Kung Bushmen use « respect » words only when the real word is considered too « strong » for secular usage. This strength or potency is known as *n/um* and can have either a good effect or a bad effect

on man (Marshall, 1961, p. 252; 1962, pp. 226-7). In addition the /Xam Bushmen described « clouds » made by a baboon when it died, clouds that resembled a man's clouds (Bleek, 1931). This appears to refer to a quality similar to that called *no!ow* described from among the !Kung, a quality which can affect the weather. *No!ow* is common both to men and to certain selected game animals of which the eland is one, and a complicated inter-action between the *no!ow* of the hunter and the *no!ow* of the animal takes place on the death of the animal. (Marshall, 1957).

Fig. 194  
Kilrush, Mount Currie district, East Griqualand. On the right, human figures appear to be dismembering a dead eland. Heading downwards towards the carcass is a male anthropomorph with arms held back in a wing-like posture. The meandering, tapered line is probably a mythical snake. Curved horns can be seen protruding from the fragmentary head. The scale is in centimetres.



There are, however, specific references to an act of 'purification' attendant on killing eland in Lesotho. According to an early traveller in the western region, the inhabitants 'purified' themselves before eating the flesh of an eland because they believed the meat to be charged with venomous juices associated with a dangerous viper thought to live between the horns and hidden in the tuft of hair on the forehead. For this reason, when an eland was brought to the ground, they struck the top of its head with heavy blows before stabbing it to the heart (Arbousset, 1852, p. 79). This may be related to the Bushman belief that « /Kaggen sat between the eland's horns » (Bleek, 1924, p. 11), and to the Khoi belief that a snake lived on the forehead of all eland (Hahn, 1881, p. 81). The association of snakes with dead eland has also been recorded among the paintings, and may be symbolic of the dangerous forces being expelled after death.

In view of the significance of ablution in some forms of purification, it is of interest that one of the mythical figures in the Maluti myths, Qwanciqutshaa, is described as having killed and skinned a small antelope (red reebok), after which he called a girl to « fetch water to wash the blood off his hand » (Orpen, 1874). Whether or not this could be termed a rite of purification is debatable, but there are other more specific allusions to purification in the myths. One of the rituals described involves dissention with a baboon, after which « Qwanciqutshaa killed an eland (and) purified himself as the baboon had defiled him ». On another occasion « Qwanciqutshaa killed an eland and purified himself and his wife, and told her to grind *canna*, and she did so, and he sprinkled it on the ground, and all the elands that had died became alive again... ». (Orpen, 1874). Here it seems, an act of purification was followed by the re-creation of dead eland, which in turn ties up with



the myth which prescribes that the hunter who killed the first eland created by /Kaggen should *try to undo the mischief he had done*, an enjoiner followed by the sprinkling of blood and fat from the dead eland in order to create new eland (Orpen, 1874).

The possible role of painting in this rite can only be conjectural, but I offer the suggestion that the painting of eland played an important part in the ritual of purification and recreation after the slaying of an eland. It is of particular relevance that when an old Mosotho who had formerly painted with the Maluti Bushmen was asked to execute a painting using the same techniques, he requested the *blood of a freshly killed eland*. When this was not available, he mixed a substitute of ox blood with red ochre, and then said he would first paint an eland, *as the Bushmen of that part of the country were of the eland*. (How, 1962, p. 38). Recent analytical tests have established that blood was among the media used in the paint (Denninger & Willcox, 1971), but it is not yet known whether antelope blood was specifically used in antelope paintings. Although the old Mosotho did not request fat for his painting, several early writers who were contemporaries of the Southern Bushmen recorded that fat was a component of the paint, and ochre mixed with a « greasy substance » has been found in painted rock shelters (Moszeik, 1910; see also Adam, 1940, p. 93; Whyte, 1910; Baines, 1961; Dunn, 1931; Kannemeyer, 1890). In the Cathkin Park area of the Drakensberg, where until recently there were Africans still living who knew the Bushmen, a tradition survived that actual eland fat was used for mixing with the pigment (Wells, 1933). With the aid of ultra-violet photography, fat has been detected in paintings in Zambia (Clark, 1954; Holliday, 1961), but similar methods have not yet been applied in South Africa.

Blood and fat are widely recognised as symbols of the vehicle of life or special seat of life (Robertson-Smith, 1927, pp. 341, 383) and among the Bushmen, the usage and significance of blood, fat and other media such as honey, gall and red ochre, all of which are known to have been endowed with supernatural qualities, would make a study in its own right. Suffice it to say here that because significant symbols often depend on verbal puns, a detailed knowledge of Bushman culture and linguistics would be essential before a really meaningful analysis of the mythology in relation to the paintings could be made.

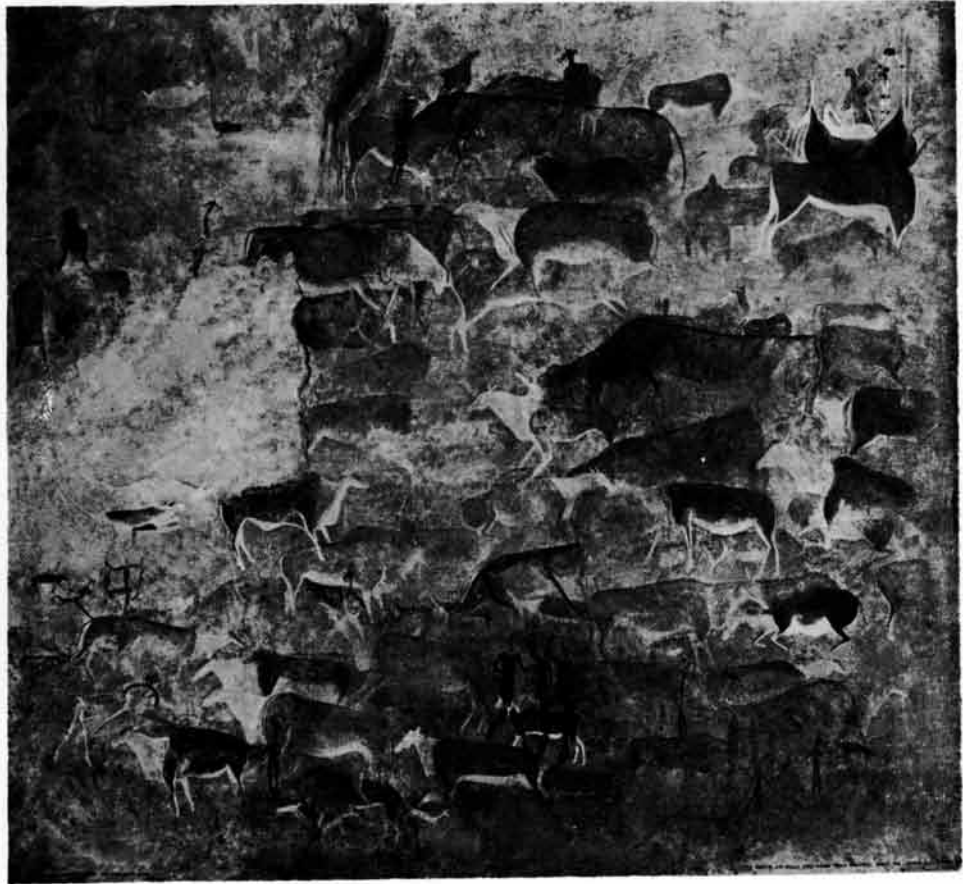
#### *The sanctuary or place of sacrifice*

The place of sacrifice is made sacrosanct by the presence of the divinity, and the place where sacred blood has once been shed is the fittest place to shed it again.

In early times, sacred stones took the place of an altar, and these sacred stones had to be periodically consecrated with blood and anointed with fat from a sacrificial victim. Linked with the consecration was the concept that the mystic unity of life in the community was liable to wear out, and had to be revived and strengthened from time to time (Robertson-Smith, 1927, pp. 378, 406, 436).

The place where game shot with a poisoned arrow actually falls and dies is both variable and completely beyond the control of the hunter. Therefore, although Bushmen believed that selected large game animals

Fig. 195  
*Sheltered Vale, Mount Currie district, East Griqualand. A panel of heavily superimposed paintings, in which eland predominate. Top right: An upside-down or dead eland which has been superimposed on an earlier animal, is attended by a white-painted figure. Top centre: Therianthropomorphic figures appear both under and over representations of eland. Bottom centre: Two female figures with whitened faces raise their arms towards a similarly decorated male. The height of the figure on the right is 26 cms.*



were sacrosanct by nature (Vinnicombe, 1972 b), the actual place where they died does not appear to have been regarded as sacred. If, however, the hypothesis be accepted that painting was associated with a ritual involving the visual re-creation of eland then the shelter where the blood and fat of the dead eland, mixed with red ochre, was painted on the rock, could be regarded as the 'sanctuary'. The sanctity, or strength, of these sacred paintings would then have to be renewed from time to time.

The Bushman's vision of regeneration and renewal of life is contained not only in the myths already cited which describe the regeneration of the moon and the re-creation of dead eland, but in many other myths. There are details, for example, of the butchered hartebeest which magically re-assembled itself (Bleek & Lloyd, 1911, pp. 3-17), and in the Maluti mythology, /Kaggen, after being killed, was magically re-constituted, his bones being collected together and his head tied on (Orpen, 1874). A similar theme is echoed in the myths of the !Kung Bushmen in the Kalahari, in which a fat paouw (bustard) being cooked in a pot swelled and burst into pieces, but then the pieces came back together again and flew away. The !Kung believe that their great god *Goa!na* has a medicine with which he can renew himself at any time. He also renews all the beings who live with him in the sky. They get old and he renews them (Marshall, 1962, pp. 229, 235).

In my view, this fundamental philosophy of the desirability of renewal and re-creation of that which becomes old or has been destroyed is closely associated with many of the eland paintings, particularly those examples associated with over-painting and re-painting. I suggest that these paintings were incorporated in an act of atonement and reparation in which dead eland were symbolically re-created in order to ensure the continued well-being both of the people and the animals on which they were so largely dependent.

Fig. 196  
*Mahabla's shelter, Belleview, Mount Currie district, East Griqualand. Hunters with whitened faces interspersed among eland. Note the bars, some of which are decorated, across the genitalia of the figures on the right. Height of human on extreme right: 25 cms.*



### *Conclusions*

If, as I have tried to demonstrate, the hunting of eland and other specified game animals had, in a broad sense, a sacrificial significance for the Bushmen, then the motivation underlying their hunting rites moves from the realm of individual magic to the realm of public sanctity (Durkheim, 1972, pp. 219-238). The act of hunting expressed the idea that man does not live for himself but with and for his fellows, and that this partnership of social interests is the sphere in which the supernatural powers participate (Robertson-Smith, 1927, p. 265). In other words, the 'sacrifier' did not sanctify himself wholly for his own sake; he did so on behalf of the society for whom he was acting (Hubert & Mauss, 1964, p. 24). This concept is, I suggest, reflected in the whitened or masked faces of the hunters seen in so many of the paintings. By covering their own features, either literally or symbolically, self is obliterated, and the outer covering represents society as against the individual (Levi-Strauss, 1963, pp. 261-266). Similarly, the bar across the penis which is a recurrent feature in paintings of male figures, may symbolise not only the sexual abstinence, physiological continence and social separation which the hunter had to endure while he was empathetically linked with his victim, but it may also symbolise castigation for the crime of killing. This castigation would cause a barrier between man and the virile power associated with his creator god, a barrier which would have to be removed by ritual procedures in which representational art in all probability played a significant role. By this means, the solidarity of Bushman social structure and the maintenance of right relations between man, god and nature would be periodically re-inforced.

In addition to being a symbolic medium of re-creation, atonement and reparation, the eland, and in some areas the gemsbok, were also significant symbols in puberty rites, of which the Eland Bull Dance is a well-known example. This dance is performed at the girl's initiation ceremony, and has a clearly sexual connotation implying virility and creativity, whereby the women court the attention of men who impersonate eland bulls (Schapera, 1930, p. 119). It is of particular significance that the music for this dance is composed of a very unusual and archaic scale, and the same tune is sung by Bushmen of different language groups in different parts of the Kalahari (England, 1967).

The social significance of selected large game animals among Bushmen is re-inforced not only by mythology, but by such concepts as *soxa* (Fourie, 1928), and *no!ow* (Marshall, 1957), whereby men and specified animals were closely linked, and the killing of these animals was illegal to an individual; the destruction of life could only be justified if the whole clan shared in the responsibility of the dead animal.

Among the Southern Bushmen, the eland became the symbol through which natural phenomena, human experience, cosmic events and divine activity were inextricably inter-related: the eland was the pivot of a value structure around which the stability of the social organism was dependent.

#### RIASSUNTO

Recenti analisi statistiche dell'arte rupestre in specifiche aree dell'Africa meridionale hanno dimostrato l'esistenza di alcune tendenze nella scelta dei soggetti con una accentuata preferenza per l'antilope (*Taurotragus oryx*), al di fuori di ogni rapporto con l'importanza reale di questo animale nella antica fauna della regione o nella dieta quotidiana dei cacciatori. Uno studio critico dei miti e dei rituali dei Boscimani mostra che questa tendenza può essere messa in relazione con fattori religiosi. I miti sulla creazione dell'antilope in connessione con le prescrizioni relative alla caccia, chiaramente significano che vi è una relazione rituale fra l'uomo, l'antilope e la divinità creatrice, relazione la quale è trasposta su un piano simbolico per mezzo di un complesso ordine sacrificale. L'Autore suggerisce che in questo rito la raffigurazione pittorica dell'antilope abbia non soltanto il significato simbolico della rigenerazione della vita, ma anche quello della solidarietà della struttura sociale dei Boscimani e del mantenimento di giuste relazioni con il mondo soprannaturale.

#### RÉSUMÉ

De récentes analyses quantitatives de l'art rupestre dans certaines zones d'Afrique méridionale ont montré une tendance, dans le choix des sujets, à privilégier l'antilope hors de toute proportion avec l'importance réelle de cet animal dans la faune de la région ou dans la diète quotidienne des chasseurs. Une étude critique des mythes et rituels boschimans montre que cette sélectivité peut être mise en relation avec des facteurs religieux. Les mythes qui racontent la création de l'antilope en connexion avec des prescriptions concernant la chasse indiquent clairement une relation rituelle entre l'homme, l'antilope et le dieu créateur, qui est symbolisée par une ordonnance complexe du sacrifice. L'Auteur suggère que dans ce rite, la représentation picturale de l'antilope ne symbolise pas seulement la régénération de la vie, mais fonde aussi la structure sociale boschimane et le maintien de relations correctes avec le monde surnaturel.



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## THE ANTELOPE CULT OF THE PREHISTORIC HUNTERS OF SOUTH AFRICA

Pager, Harald, Johannesburg, South Africa.

### *Introduction*

The richest sources of information on the lives and thoughts of the prehistoric people of Southern Africa are the rock paintings and petroglyphs these Stone Age hunters left behind them. In the Republic of South Africa alone over 2,500 rock art sites have been recorded so far and these may house more than 150,000 individual works of art. Stone implements found at these sites are similar to the European Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic cultures and have, according to recent discoveries, an age range of up to 44,000 years. As intensive haematite mining was already carried out from 41,250  $\pm$  1,600 B.P. on, the possibility exists that, due to the use of this pigment, prehistoric art in Southern Africa had begun just as early as in Europe. Whatever its date of origin, here in South Africa the Stone Age hunter's art was carried on into modern times, until negroid and European immigrants annihilated the last of the artists at the end of the 19th century. Those last artists were Bushmen, and their paintings, together with the surviving fragments of their lore and the ethnological reports of early explorers who still encountered them, form the link to the traditions and beliefs of still earlier times.

One of the favourite subjects of the rock painters and, so it seems, also the centre of religious thought, was the antelope, and researches undertaken in recent years have revealed the forgotten belief that human beings would, after death, be transformed into spirit antelope. The data which led to this conclusion are briefly stated in this paper and the wider validity of the findings is investigated.

### *The Ndedema findings*

I have during the past five years documented the rock paintings of the Ndedema Gorge in the Natal Drakensberg Mountains (Republic of South Africa), an area of c.6 km<sup>2</sup>, where 3,909 rock paintings are housed in 17 rock shelters. The surrounding area of 190 km<sup>2</sup> containing 130 rock shelters, which house another 12,762 rock paintings was investigated at the same time (Pager, 1971). The inquiry into the religious beliefs of the painters brought an initially disappointing result, since among the thousands of figures painted only 210 could be identi-



fied as being mythological creatures. This small sample did, however, have a numerical structure, the significance of which could hardly be overlooked because 172 (82%) of these 210 figures belonged to only two types of extraordinary beings. For the 88 figures which comprised the one group, the name *antelope men* was chosen. For the 84 others, which depict peculiar flying creatures, the chosen term was *alites* (singular: *ales*). The predominance of these two groups of figures seemed to indicate that particular mythological significance must have been attached to them. The final analysis revealed even more and showed that the two groups are closely related, thus depicting one major religious thought (fig. 197).

The *antelope men* are basically human figures who have hooves instead of feet. Some also have hooves instead of hands and most, although not all, have an antelope head in place of a human one. These features suggested the theory that a transformation from the human form to that of an antelope was depicted. The second main group of mythological figures, the *alites*, includes humanoid beings holding their



Fig. 197  
*Ndedema*. Although they look like devils with horns and hooves, these antelope men from *Ndedema* area might actually depict an aspect of an envisaged paradise. They are human souls that have been partially changed into antelope. A further stage of this metamorphosis is depicted in the *ales* that hovers above, having the same head-shape and head-dress as the creatures below.

Fig. 198  
 Nkosasana Shelter (Natal Drakensberg). The «angels» are but one of the many forms in which the alites, the flying spirits of the rock painters, were depicted. Although most of the alites of anthropomorphic type are shown with hooves, like the antelope men from which they are derived, a normal human foot is shown in this painting.

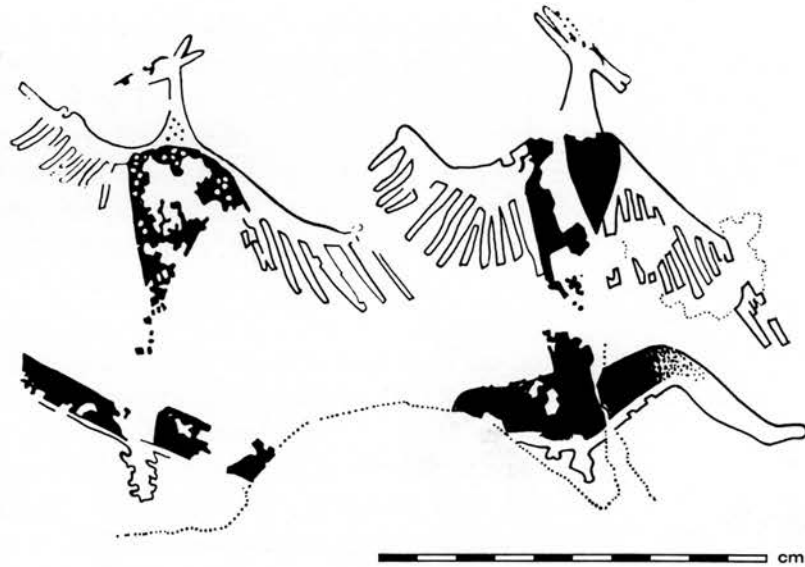


Fig. 199  
 Natal Drakensberg. This collection of alites from several rock painting sites was assembled in the logical sequence of their transformation. At the left a stooping antelope man throws his arms back in a wing-like posture, then he kneels down, the legs take an animal form while the arms stretch and become feathered wings until finally a bizarre flying creature has formed.



### Open questions

As the above-quoted conclusions were drawn from a relatively small rock painting area the question remained as to whether the theory suggested by the findings was justified or alternatively whether it might have an even wider validity.

While there is little doubt that the bizarre flying antelope from the alites group depict mythological creatures, the antelope men together with other animal-headed human figures had, in the past, received different interpretations. It was asserted that animal heads had been used as hunting disguises, costumes for ceremonies and dances or even that they were once an everyday item of dress. On the other hand the possibility exists that many antelope-headed human figures, which according to my definition could not be classified as antelope men are,

in fact, also depictions of mythological creatures. Here it must be stressed that my sole criterion for the classification of the *antelope men* was the possession of hooves, which had to be considered as a therianthrope feature and not an item of apparel. In other words, antelope-headed human figures who possessed normal human feet and hands were not classified as *antelope men*. The former, however, which are open to the above-stated four alternative explanations, are being investigated in this paper.

In this investigation historians and early African explorers who reported on Bushman customs are quoted and the evidence of the rock paintings, together with the explanations which Bushmen gave for some of these paintings, is considered. Numerical data are taken from two samples of rock paintings. One is the above-mentioned Ndedema sample of 3,909 rock paintings, the only large and fully documented sample of South African rock art to date. The other sample is the collection of rock painting copies by G. W. Stow (Stow & Bleek, 1930; Rosenthal & Goodwin, 1953). These copies, made in the Eastern Cape Province and the Orange Free State, are not a complete record of all the paintings in the sites which Stow visited, but they do at least contain a high proportion of group depictions, which are of major importance for the present investigation, as the true nature or occupation of the people depicted can, in nearly all cases, only be assessed from a descriptive scene. A man with a bow, for example, is only recognisable as a hunter when he is depicted in a hunting scene, otherwise he might as well be a warrior, dancer or musician. This is as obvious as the fact that not every man dressed in a black suit can be called an undertaker unless he is observed performing this job. The point is emphasized only because this simple principle of interpretation is frequently violated in rock art research.

To reiterate: it will be investigated whether animal-headed human figures (excluding the mythological *antelope men*) depict:

- a) hunters in disguise;
- b) dancers or ceremonial performers with masks;
- c) ordinary people wearing an everyday garment;
- d) mythological creatures.

### *The disguised hunters*

A popularly held view is that Bushmen frequently used the heads, skins and feathers of animals to disguise themselves when stalking game and that this hunting method is also depicted in the rock paintings. Supporting evidence is, however, not at all plentiful. There are seven reports that Bushmen had used the feathers of an ostrich, together with its neck and head, as a hunting disguise (Alexander, 1838; Hahn, 1870; Körner, 1873; Stow, 1905; Theal, 1910; Dornan, 1925; Dunn, 1931). Four of these reports seem to be first-hand accounts, and there is also one rock painting depicting this hunting method (Stow, 1905, 1930). We are not, however, concerned with this type of disguise, but with the use of antelope heads or the heads of other mammals and on this subject only one author (Stow, 1905) states that the heads and hides

of hartebeest, blesbok and zebra were constantly employed by the old Bushmen hunters to facilitate approach to the various species of game. The nearest to Stow's report is a remark by Burchell (1822), who saw a Bushman wearing a large fur cap, which was supposed to simulate the back of a springbok, as well as a statement that Bushmen stealing sheep in the 1850's put a skin over their shoulders, obviously to disguise themselves (Macquarrie, 1962) but no animal head was used in either case. Other authors describe completely different methods of approach. According to Holub (1881) and Dunn (1931) a small bush was carried by the hunters for camouflage, they would sprinkle their bodies and clothing with dust (Lichtenstein, 1811; Wallmann, 1830) or wear some tufts of grass in their headbands (Dunn, 1931). The latter method is also mentioned by Stow (1905). Seven other authors who give details of Bushman hunting techniques, mention no body camouflage at all (Barrow, 1806; Galton, 1853; Kratzenstein, 1861; Chapman, 1868; Bleek & Lloyd, 1911; Ellenberger Macgregor, 1912; Vedder, 1934).

Seen against this negative evidence, Stow's single report on the constant use of a variety of animal heads and hides as hunting disguises should be considered with caution. The report is in all probability a second-hand one and Stow himself mentions in his foreword that he had much trouble in separating reliable and fictitious accounts and warns of the many shortcomings and imperfections in his book. Even if the report is based on fact, the lack of amplifying evidence suggests that it was not a common practice for Bushmen to wear animal heads as hunting disguises and a quantitative analysis of our two rock painting samples gives precisely the same impression.

In the rock painting sample from the Ndedema Gorge, 116 men are depicted in 28 hunting scenes, but only a single hunter has an animal head. The Stow sample documents 112 men in 21 hunting scenes, (excluding the above-mentioned scene of a hunter disguised as an ostrich) but only seven of these hunters, depicted in two of the scenes, have animal heads. Not even these few examples are proof that animal heads were actually used as hunting disguises, as the paintings might equally well depict mythological figures in their « eternal hunting grounds » (The above-mentioned hunting scenes in the Stow sample appear on the following plates: Stow Bleek (1930) 3, 15, 30, 30, 30, 31, 33, 54, 56, 59, 63, 64, 65, 68; Rosenthal Goodwin (1953) 2, 3, 13, 14, 32, 35, 42).

### *The Masked dancers*

The most detailed description of masquerade among Bushmen is again given by Stow (1905) who states that skins, heads and horns of animals were used by the dancers who mimicked the character of some particular animal, bird or monster during their performance. General masquerades were held on special occasions, these being considered the high festivals.

Two other authors, Hahn (1870) and Theal (1910), also mention these animal-mime dances, but apart from a short remark by Theal, who says that they were not frequently performed, no details are given. All



three authors, Stow, Hahn and Theal, also remark on dances which were performed without animal disguises. Two further authors, Galton (1853) and Vedder (1934) also emphasize the animal mimicry of Bushman dances without, however, referring to any masquerade and the following ten authors mention neither the Bushman's mimicry of animals nor any animal masquerade in the dances which they describe: Burchell (1822), Alexander (1838), Kratzenstein (1861), Chapman (1868), Orpen (1874), Ellenberger (1912), Bleek Lloyd (1911), Dornan (1925), Dunn (1931) and Silberbauer (1965). It is of additional interest that in two particular dances, the eland bull dance (Dornan, 1925) and the gemsbok dance (Silberbauer, 1965) no appropriate masquerade was used.

There is an equal scarcity of evidence in our two rock art samples. In the Ndedema sample 90 dancers appear in 13 scenes, but only one is depicted with an animal head. The Stow sample documents 171 dancers in 13 scenes. In four of these scenes 32 dancers are depicted with animal heads, but on only 13 of these figures, all grouped in a single scene, did the artist make it clear that these animal heads are, in fact, *masks*. The other 19 animal-headed dancers are still open to the alternative interpretation of perhaps being mythological creatures. It should also be kept in mind that any masked dancer might, in fact, have mimed a mythological creature of an imagined likeness. It is hardly surprising that the particular dance scene referred to, in which the 13 *masked* figures are depicted, but which also contains 10 other animal-headed humans, was actually described as a sorcerer's dance by a Bushman to whom a copy of this rock painting was shown. (The above-mentioned dance scenes in the Stow sample appear on the following plates: Stow Bleek (1930) 2A, 13-14, 16, 16, 18, 33, 44, 46, 55, 71-72; Rosenthal Goodwin (1953) 15, 54, 30.

#### *The fashionable garment*

The theory that animal heads might once have been worn as an everyday garment was put forward by Johannesburg rock art author H. C. Woodhouse (1967), but was not backed up by statistical data and I myself have not, so far, found any supporting evidence. None of the above-cited ethnological authors makes any mention of such an everyday fashion and, as has been demonstrated above, animal-headed human figures are seldom illustrated in hunting and dancing scenes. They are similarly rare in an overall count of human figures depicted in the rock paintings. For example, of the 1,848 human *and humanoid* figures counted in the Ndedema sample only 63 are depicted with an animal head.

#### *The mythological creatures*

In recorded Bushman folklore a few transformations from the human form to that of antelope and *vice versa* are mentioned (see below) but none describes any animal-headed personages in particular. The question of whether such figures illustrated in the rock paintings portray mythological creatures received little elucidation from the Nde-

dema sample where nearly all these characters are depicted in isolation, offering no opportunity for interpretation. Only two appear in a seemingly mythological setting (Pager, 1971, *fig.* 383) but even here the true meaning of the scene is obscure.

The Stow sample, however, contains 12 scenes depicting animal-headed human figures (apart from the already listed hunts and dances) and ten of these have either been explained by Bushmen as actually being mythological scenes or are open to such interpretation. They are listed below, the plate numbers referring to the first volume of the Stow copies (Stow Bleek, 1930) with the exception of plate 9, which was published in the second volume (Rosenthal Goodwin, 1953).

Plate 5: Seven human figures with pointed animal heads, wearing skins over their shoulders, were explained by a Bushman to be people killed by lightning.

Plate 17: Three huge figures with horned antelope heads fight three small men. The impression is one of gigantic demons fighting normal human beings.

Plate 27: A bulky, sharp-toothed fantasy animal is approached by an animal-headed human. According to a Bushman's explanation, the latter depicts a dead person.

Plate 9 (Rosenthal, 1953): Here an antelope-headed human lies below a monster similar to the one described above and the same interpretation is applicable.

Plate 45: An animal-headed human stands next to a group of large frogs. The painting was interpreted by a Bushman as the depiction of a magical transformation.

Plate 50: One antelope-headed human surrounded by nine other human figures was named as a mythological being by a Bushman.

Plate 52: Two antelope-headed humans within a group of 21 other human and humanoid figures were singled out by a Bushman as being mythological creatures.

Plate 58: Thirteen antelope-headed humans are depicted in the supernatural company of a fantasy animal and nine *alites*. A Bushman ascribed magic to the scene.

Plate 67A: Two antelope-headed humans, standing next to fantasy animals are sorcerers, according to a Bushman's statement.

Plate 71: A scene containing six antelope-headed humans gives, according to Stow's and Orpen's (1874) explanations, the impression that demons are dragging off two mortals.

Plates 6 and 12 show a total of ten animal-headed humans depicted without particular actions and accessories and cannot, therefore, be explained with any degree of certainty.

The above-quoted explanations by Bushmen, to whom Stow's rock art copies were shown, finds a parallel in the statement of the Maluti Bushman Qing, who was asked by Orpen (1874): « What to the pictures of men with rhebok's heads mean? » and the answer was, « They were men who had died and now lived in rivers ». Qing made a similar statement when being questioned about one particular rock painting from the Cave of Medikane, which depicts three antelope-headed humans in karosses. A Bushman from a different area, when asked about the meaning of the same painting, explained that the figures represent sorcerers.

These interpretations by the last people who were linked to the rock painters, show clearly that at least many of the animal-headed figures illustrated in the rock paintings depict mythological creatures, be these the spirits of the dead, demons, culture heroes or sorcerers. It is, therefore, possible that other animal-headed personages depicted in hunting and dancing scenes also portray such mythological characters and that these scenes, as already suggested, might illustrate the happenings in an imagined afterworld and not necessarily the customs and habits of the living.

#### *An antelope cult*

It is of particular significance that most of the animal-headed figures encountered in the present survey are actually *antelope-headed* creatures. This fact strengthens the conclusion arrived at in the survey of the Ndedema area (Pager, 1971). The main finding of this research has already been mentioned (82% of all mythological creatures depict the various stages of a transformation from the human form to that of the antelope) and it should be added that a third of the other fantasy figures, which constitute the remaining 18%, also have antelope characteristics. This strengthens the theory that the antelope dominated the religious thoughts of the rock painters, a trend which can be termed an 'Antelope cult'.

Many allusions to this major concern are also contained in recorded Bushman folklore:

The omnipotent hero *Cagn* was imagined as being surrounded by herds of eland and the first creature his wife gave birth to was also an eland (Orpen, 1874). Eland blood was thought to have purifying power (Orpen, 1874); respect had to be shown to the hunted antelope; the handling of their meat and treatment of their skin as well as the disposal of their bones was given consideration; and springbok were thought to possess magical arrows (Bleek Lloyd, 1911). There are two stories telling how *Cagn* (alternative spelling *Kaggen*) transformed himself into an eland (Orpen, 1874) and on another occasion into a hartebeest (Bleek Lloyd, 1911). In a further account *Kaggen* is described as the protector of the hunted eland (Bleek, Lloyd & Bleek, 1924), but most revealing for the present survey are the following two beliefs: It was believed that human beings had been antelope before they were given their present form by divine power (Lloyd 1889) and, as if to close a cycle of transformations, antelope seen near Bushman graves were not regarded as ordinary animals but as the spirits of the dead (Bleek &

Lloyd, 1911). These beliefs confirm and supplement the pictorial evidence of the rock paintings. Conclusions arrived at, like the interpretation of the man-antelope metamorphosis, are, however, only the beginning of the explanations. Depictions of *alites* and *antelope men* have been discovered in an area which extends over 900 km where hundreds of rock shelters house thousands of prehistoric paintings (Luschan, 1906; Lee and Woodhouse, 1964, 1968, 1970; Rudner & Rudner, 1970; Woodhouse, 1971a, b). The thorough exploration of these sites in years to come might well reveal the full story of the forgotten antelope cult.

#### Acknowledgements

Acknowledgement is made to the research work of Messrs. D. N. Lee and H. C. Woodhouse, who were the first to realize the significance of the *alites*, to the Johannesburg Africana Library for the helpfulness of the librarians, in particular Mrs. E. B. Nagelgast, and to my wife Shirley-Ann and Miss Muriel Keyes for the editing of this paper.

#### RIASSUNTO

Le figure umane con testa d'animale costituiscono un elemento ricorrente nell'arte parietale sud-africana. Lo studio di due gruppi di pitture rupestri e quello delle fonti storiche ed etnografiche rivelano che solo una piccola parte di queste figure rappresenta cacciatori travestiti o, in qualche caso, danzatori mascherati, mentre la maggior parte raffigura esseri mitologici. Il ritrovare dappertutto, fra questi esseri mitologici, i tratti dell'antelope, giustifica la conclusione che un qualche genere di culto dell'antelope costituisca l'aspetto religioso più importante delle popolazioni di cacciatori preistorici del Sud-Africa.

#### RÉSUMÉ

Les figures humaines à tête d'animal constituent un élément récurrent de l'art pariétal sud-africain. L'étude de deux ensembles de peintures rupestres ainsi que les sources historiques et ethnologiques montrent que seule une faible proportion de ces figures représente des chasseurs déguisés, ou dans quelques cas, des danseurs masqués, tandis que la majorité d'entre elles dépeignent des êtres mythologiques. Parmi ces derniers, l'omniprésence d'éléments appartenant à l'antelope amène à conclure qu'une espèce quelconque de culte de l'antelope devait être au centre des préoccupations religieuses des chasseurs préhistoriques d'Afrique du Sud.

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## THE DRAKENSBERG ROCK PAINTINGS AS AN EXPRESSION OF RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

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### *Introduction*

The student of Palaeolithic religion may approach his subject along a number of different routes. He may examine the results of excavations, he may then compare what few clues he can thus find with existing primitive communities, he may study the art of the people with whom he is dealing, or he may analyse their mythology. The present paper is an attempt to show that the last two are both expressions of Bushman religious thought.

Excavation can yield only objects and show relationships between objects: deductions concerning concepts made from such evidence can be only tentative. Excavations of certain palaeolithic burials in various parts of the world suggest belief in life after death, but it is not always clear whether certain elements of the grave furniture were placed in position so that they could be used by the deceased in a life after death or because of their symbolic value. Similarly it is not clear whether the dead body was rubbed with ochre to give it an appearance of life or whether the colour was symbolic of beliefs and emotional states. Workers in Europe have been fortunate enough to discover elaborate burials that have yielded various suggestions, but, apart from actual grave furniture, excavations in Europe have also brought to light figurines and other carvings that suggest a fertility cult. Such evidence is largely absent in South Africa, but mention must be made of the painted grave stones from the southern Cape coastal caves. A number of these are known, but unfortunately only two come from a modern excavation. One of these depicts a number of whales or porpoises executed in black and white. It has been dated to  $2\ 285 \pm 105$  B. P. (Singer and Wymer, 1969). Two important deductions may be made: the practice of painting is of considerable antiquity for these stones doubtless do not represent the first attempts at art and, secondly, the art has not been executed for purely aesthetic reasons as it has been deliberately placed in a context in which it can no longer be viewed. Although this paper will deal with parietal art, it should be noted that at least some of the prehistoric art of South Africa was unquestionably associated with ritual.



A comparison of both the results of excavation and the parietal art of western Europe with reports concerning the beliefs of modern primitive people which came largely from Australia, led Reinach, near the beginning of the century, to propose the now famous sympathetic magic theory as an element of prehistoric religion. Some modern workers, like Leroi-Gourhan (1968), feel that all ethnographic parallels should be eschewed in the study of the religion of prehistoric man. There is much to be said for this view. It is tempting for the student of the religion of the prehistoric Bushmen to consult their descendants now living as hunters and gatherers in the Kalahari, but the temptation should be resisted. Changes in environment, economy and social structure must have had far reaching effects on religious thought. Bleek (1930) found that virtually all knowledge of myths collected between 1870 and 1880 had died out by 1910. This is not surprising when it is realised that these years were characterised by social and economic change. The modern Bushman will then be able to offer even less help. The study of the religion of the prehistoric Bushmen must be based exclusively on records that are genuinely prehistoric.

Two such sources fortunately exist. The rock art of South Africa has long been justly famous and made known to a wide public through the medium of a series of illustrated books and papers, although these have never done justice to the originals. The vitality and beauty of the art is so striking that most workers have been blinded to the significance of the art and have concentrated on extolling its many excellences, giving only a cursory glance at its motivation and function. Some have tried to treat the art as a source of ethnographic data, but this is a hazardous procedure. At the best the art illustrates what has been learned from the writings of the early travellers who observed the Bushmen's way of life. Hunting techniques, details of dress and aspects of the Bushman's material culture can all be detected in the paintings, but only after the worker has been made aware of their existence by means of other sources. To work in reverse is dangerous indeed. Unless confirmation is obtained from the early writers, the worker can never be sure whether a given feature is historically accurate or a product of the painter's imagination. The present writer is trying to approach the paintings from a different and more meaningful point of view, that is to regard them as an expression of prehistoric thought.

The other indisputably prehistoric source is the mythology. In Europe workers are limited to the parietal and mobile art, but in South Africa, by almost incredible good fortune, a series of myths has been preserved. Not only can the paintings be studied, but the myths told by the artists, together with some of their taboos and rites, can be analysed with a view to gaining a clearer picture of the religion of the prehistoric Bushmen.

### *The Paintings*

In dealing with prehistoric art certain principles of approach must be observed. All deductions must be drawn from a complete inventory of all the paintings in a restricted area. In the past workers have too often presented only the most interesting or photogenic examples drawn from widely scattered sites. The unusual has been given prominence

at the expense of the common. Selectivity has indeed vitiated most books on the South African rock paintings. The first pioneering paper to treat the whole corpus of paintings in a limited area was published by Maggs (1967) who analysed the paintings of an area in the western Cape Province. He was interested mainly in the extraction of ethnographic data, but in addition he discounted the existence of sympathetic magic in the area. Preliminary reports on similar work have come from three workers in other regions: Vinnicombe (1967) in the southern Drakensberg, Smits (1971) in Lesotho, and Pager (1971a) in the Ndedema Gorge of the Natal Drakensberg. Pager (1971b) has since published a fuller account.

The present writer's (1972) analysis of 1.335 paintings in the Giant's Castle region of the Natal Drakensberg brought to light certain features of the art that are germane to the subject under discussion: they suggest that the art was not simply an exercise in aesthetics, but was a field in which symbols were articulated according to certain rules. These features will now be briefly reviewed.

First it should be noted that the subject matter of the art is restricted and repetitive: it is limited entirely to animals, people and their equipment. Apart from a very few lines and rows of dots, all the inanimates are of skin bags, digging-sticks fitted with bored stones, etc. There are no attempts at landscape or natural features. Of the 500 recorded animal representations 95,8% are antelope. The most commonly depicted species is eland, accounting for 49,1% of all antelope, while rhebuck account for only 21,5% (the rhebuck group includes all small antelope). The antelope thus fall into two main groups; it should be added here that the percentage of eland is probably higher as nearly all those antelope recorded as indeterminate (28,2%) are most likely eland. It is suggested that these two groups represent symbolic entities.

The groups differ in a number of ways. The size distribution of the groups is quite different: the eland range from 10 cms to 70 cms, whereas the rhebuck are clustered in the 4 to 15 cms range. The two groups are further differentiated by the frequency with which various techniques were used in painting them. The elaborate techniques of using more than one colour and shading were used more frequently on eland (82,2%) than on rhebuck (33,1%). Of the total 1.335 paintings 59,8% are of human beings. Sex is indicated in 33,5% of the paintings, but it seems likely that most of the 66,5% indeterminate figures are male. The paucity of female figures is a significant feature of the art.

As with the animals, two groups may be distinguished on the criteria of size and other characteristics: figures wearing antelope skin karosses and naked figures. The naked figures range from 3 to 16 cms with very few beyond that, but the kaross figures range from 6 to 58 cms. Not only are these two human groups different in size, but there is also a marked similarity between the eland and the kaross-clad figures on the one hand and the rhebuck and the naked figures on the other. more care was taken in painting kaross-clad figures than naked figures:

more than one colour was used in painting only 16,8% of all naked figures, whereas 58% of the kaross-clad figures are executed in two or more colours. Shading, too, is a technique used primarily in depicting kaross-clad figures. This situation is therefore comparable with the eland/rhebuck grouping. An examination of head types also shows that more care was taken in painting the kaross-clad figures than the naked. Although 51% of both groups have concave heads, the most common type in the area, there was a tendency to use the more elaborate hooked and animal heads on the kaross-clad figures. Furthermore, the kaross-clad figures are frequently depicted with large shoulders giving them a dorsal line reminiscent of the eland. Although the number of fantasy creatures is small, they are of great interest. The two so-called flying buck are from a small site that contains only two other figures, but many others are known in the vicinity. Men in the arms-back position, which some workers believe to be connected with flying buck, are also found; it may be that they are imitating flying buck (Lee and Woodhouse, 1968; Woodhouse, 1971).

A major theme among the fantasy creatures is the representation of creatures that are partly human and partly animal. A figure at Willem's Shelter shows a creature that is animal from the waist up, but which has clearly human hips and legs, although no feet are shown. A second, almost identical figure, has recently been discovered. The same idea is reflected in other partially animal figures. Some human figures have animal hoofs and others, as at Cleopatra, full animal legs. Animal hoofs and heads appear most frequently on the large kaross-clad figures. In the case of the animal headed figures it is not always easy to discern whether the painter intended to depict a man with an animal mask or a mythical figure: it is not unlikely that no such distinction existed in the Bushman mind. Certainly it is most unusual to find such figures in hunt scenes.

Following this brief review of some of the significant features of the paintings regarded as individual representations, attention will be given to the ways in which the paintings are related to one another. Three forms of syntax may be discerned: scenic relationships, juxtapositioning and superpositioning. As these three forms of syntax have been discussed more fully by the writer elsewhere (1972), only a brief summary of the relevant features will be given here.

Scenic groupings have always captured the attention of western viewers and, as a result of their intrinsic interest as glimpses of a way of life now vanished, writers have given the impression that they are more common than they actually are. In fact very few paintings are in distinct scenes and these are frequently difficult to interpret.

Juxtapositioning is far more common than scenic grouping, although in practice it is sometimes difficult to distinguish them. When two or more representations are juxtaposed, their symbolic value is likely to be of prime importance.

Although it has not been possible to subject juxtapositioning to quantitative analysis, it has been possible to examine superpositioning in this way. An analysis of seventy instances of superpositioning revealed a pattern which suggests that it was not simply a haphazard painting

of one representation upon another but a deliberate means of linking representations. In his study of the palaeolithic art of western Europe, Leroi-Gourhan (1968) came to a similar conclusion. In Bushman art there was a marked tendency for antelope to be painted upon other antelope or human figures, but very seldom do human figures appear on top of animals. Of the seventy initial elements 53% are animal, but 92% of the terminal elements are animal. An examination of the types involved in superpositioning also proves significant. 35,0% of the total number of eland are involved in superpositioning, while only 4,8% of the rhebuck are so treated. A comparable state of affairs exists in the human group: 21,5% of the kaross-clad figures are involved in superpositioning, but only 8,5% of all other figures. The two groups, eland and kaross-clad figures, which have the same size distribution and other features in common, are thus shown to be linked in this particular syntactic structure.

The basic elements of Bushman rock art should be regarded as signs and symbols. What is signified by any given representation is determined by the context in which it is used. As with myth, the true constituent units are relationships. Thus a representation of a man in one context may signify a given individual, in another context it may signify the whole tribe or the quality of humanity as opposed to animality. The system that is now apparent makes it impossible for the paintings to be regarded any longer as simply the product of aesthetic endeavours: they are a system of signs and structures. That they express concepts that may be described as religious will become apparent as the discussion proceeds.

### *The Myths*

Myths are the essence of religion, not a manifestation as are shrines and taboos. We are, therefore, exceptionally fortunate in having access to certain myths of the prehistoric Bushmen. The main source is Dr W. H. I. Bleek. Assisted by his sister-in-law, Miss Lucy Lloyd, he collected myths from Bushmen who, as convicts, were sent to work on the breakwater at Cape Town. Bleek took some of these unfortunate people to live at his suburban home where he developed his own orthography and grammar of the extremely difficult Bushman language. After his death the work was continued by Miss Lloyd and Bleek's daughter, Dorothea. Another recorder of the mythology of the Colonial Bushmen was G. W. Stow who worked on the banks of the Orange River and in the eastern part of the Cape Province. He was also responsible for a valuable collection of copies of Bushman paintings which are now preserved in the South African Museum, Cape Town. Many of these were published under the guidance of Dorothea Bleek. Both Stow and Bleek dealt with the Bushmen who lived in the less well watered areas to the west of the Drakensberg and so somewhat remote from the area under discussion. J. M. Orpen, however, collected certain myths from the Maluti Mountains of Lesotho; they were published in 1874. A comparison of the myths of these two areas shows that they had a great deal in common. At this stage of the work it is not possible to present a complete analysis of the mythology, but certain themes may be mentioned. As Levi-Strauss has shown, myths make statements



about the relations between man and man, and between man and nature. We shall now turn our attention to the relationship between man and the animals or Culture: Nature.

Stow (1905) records a creation myth. In the beginning the first Bushmen came out of a hole in the ground at the roots of an enormous tree. They were followed by the animals in an ever increasing flood at the height of which they came flocking out of the branches as well as the roots. When at length the creation ceased, the sun set and all remained, endowed with the gift of speech, seated amicably under and around the tree. As the night wore on the cold became unbearable, so cold in fact that the Bushmen disobeyed a command they had been given and lit a fire. The startled animals fled in terror, losing the power of speech. So « the great family of animals was broken up, and could never again be re-united ».

The same opposition is dealt with in a more complex Kun myth (Bleek, 1935). This myth starts with the statement that two buck desired an inversion of the animal/human dichotomy. « The bucks said to us, they are Bushmen, let us be buck, let them trap us, to cook in a pot to eat ». The Hare, however, caught them with a « rope which is (like) sinew » and restored the situation. In the middle section of the myth the Hare puts the Bushmen in a skin bag and throws them far away and then gives them the rope, saying, « This rope I throw far away for Bushmen, in order that they may eat the bucks ». The final section takes place after a sunset and sunrise. Another character, Xue, a Bushman, tells the Hare to collect grass and foliage and to lie on the ground, not in a hut. The Hare protests, « I am not a mere Hare, but am a Bushman Hare, and am Xue; for thou alone art not Xue, for we two are Xue, and are Bushmen ». Xue challenges the Hare to speak in the Bushman tongue, but the Hare can only reply in a sharpish voice, « Say! What! I do speak the Bushman language ». In response to a subsequent challenge the Hare refuses to give food to the Bushmen. The myth ends with Xue giving the Bushmen the bow and saying to the Hare, « Be silent, I have given the Bushmen the bow, that they may shoot thee ».

To interpret this myth simply as an account of how the Bushmen came to possess the bow would be naive: the structure of the myth suggests that it is likely that it is dealing with the distinction between animals and men, and yet their basic unity. The feeling of a paradoxical bond with the animals is also expressed in certain hunting observances and beliefs to which we shall now turn our attention.

The hunter avoided eating the meat of swift creatures because, quite contrary to what we would expect, *his quarry* would thereby gain speed. « If we eat the flesh of a thing which is fleet, the thing (i. e. the game) arises; it does not like that thing of whose flesh we did eat » (Bleek and Lloyd, 1911). When a gemsbok has been shot and the poison is taking effect, the hunter avoids eating springbok meat: « It (the game) would also do that which the springbok does; and the springbok is wont to do thus, when the sun has set for it in one place, the sun arises for it in a different place, while it feels that it has not slept ». Prior to the hunt the hunter almost becomes the animal: « We have a sensation

in our feet, as we feel the rustling of the feet of the springbok with which the springbok come, making the bushes rustle. We feel in this manner, we have a sensation in our heads, when we are about to chop the springbok's horns. We have a sensation in our face, on account of the blackness of the stripe on the face of the springbok; we feel a sensation in our eyes, on account of the black marks on the eyes of the springbok ».

We turn now to the beliefs concerning a specific antelope: the eland. There are three extant versions of the creation of the eland, two from the Colonial Bushmen and one from the mountain Bushmen of the Malutis.

In the first version recorded by Bleek (1923), Kaggen a supernatural being who appears in the Maluti as well as the Colonial myths, makes the eland out of a shoe belonging to his nephew, Kwammang-a. The eland grows up eating honey and living in the water; it is greatly loved by Kaggen. The people become dissatisfied because Kaggen is not bringing home any honey and Kwammang-a kills the eland. Kaggen finds that the source of the honey has dried up and concludes that blood is flowing and danger has come upon his home. When Kaggen finds the dead eland, he is distressed and attempts to shoot the mierkats who are dismembering the animal, but his arrows return to him so that he has to dodge them. The mierkats beat him and order him to fetch wood. Kaggen pierces the eland's gall and darkness reigns. He then throws his shoe into the sky and it becomes the moon. « That is why the moon shines at night. That is why the moon is cold, because it is a shoe, it is leather. It is red because it has earth on it, the dust in which the Mantis (i. e. Kaggen) walked ».

The myth starts with a shoe being made into the eland which lives and dies, and it ends with a shoe being made into the moon which waxes and wanes. It might be that the eland in this myth mediates the life: death opposition as the moon mediates between day and night. In the second version, the eland is also made out of a shoe, is killed and dismembered. While it is growing Kaggen rubs honey on its flanks. The myth ends with the gall being pierced, but the moon is made, not from a shoe, but from an ostrich feather which Kaggen had used to brush the gall from his eyes. Elsewhere (Bleek & Lloyd, 1911) it is recorded: « Our gall, when we die, sits in the sky; it sits green in the sky when we are dead ». For reasons that are not yet clear the gall appears to be associated with death and the sky. Following the sentence just quoted, we read: « The moon is carrying people who are dead; ..... it lies hollow, because it is killing itself (by) carrying people who are dead ».

Orpen's (1874) informant claimed that prayers were said to Kaggen in times of famine. When asked concerning the whereabouts of Kaggen, he replied, « We don't know, but the elands do. Have you not hunted and heard his cry, when the elands suddenly start and run to his call? Where he is, elands are in droves like cattle ».

In the Maluti version of the creation of the eland, Kaggen is angry because his wife has spoilt his knife by using it to sharpen her digging-stick. He says evil will come upon her and she gives birth to the eland. Kaggen himself, after he has reared the eland in a kloof, attempts

unsuccessfully to kill it. While he has gone to fetch poison, Cogaz and Gcwi try but fail to trap the eland. Eventually Gcwi spears it while it is sleeping and they dismember the animal. On his return Kaggen is angry because Gcwi has « spoilt the elands when I was making them fit for use ». The eland's blood is then churned, but it produces frightening snakes. A second attempt produces hartebeests. On the third attempt Kaggen sprinkles new eland's blood mixed with the fat of the heart and bull elands make their appearance, surrounding Kaggen and pushing him with their horns. He declares that they are spoilt and, having driven them away, he churns again to produce a multitude of eland cows. The sequence of unsuccessful attempts to kill the eland starts again. Gcwi fails because Kaggen is in the bones of the eland. Finally Kaggen himself kills three bulls and then Cogaz and Gcwi are able, with Kaggen's blessing, to enjoy success. « That day game were given to men to eat, and this is the way they were spoilt and became wild ». The myth seems to attempt a resolution of the equivocal attitude to wild animals. That snakes should be made from eland's blood is interesting as there are paintings of serpents with antelope heads and ears. Elsewhere we are told that the men with rhebuck heads, who live mostly under water, tame elands and snakes. This Maluti myth ends with the resurrection of the eland whereas the two Colonial versions end with the creation of the moon which itself dies and is restored to life.

In another myth in the Orpen collection Kaggen transforms himself into a huge bull eland so that he can obtain honey in spite of an eagle's attempts to prevent him from doing so. When the eagle tries to spear the eland, the assegais miss it and the eagle, finally stunned by hail, is killed by Kaggen.

Qwanciqutshaa, a chief, is spoken of as having his own elands: « Qwanciqutshaa had killed a red rhebuck and was skinning it when he saw his elands running about and wondered what had startled them ». Later we read: « Qwanciqutshaa had killed an eland, purified himself as the baboon had defiled him ». The eland's powers of resurrection are again developed in a myth concerning Qwanciqutshaa: « And all the elands that had died became alive again, and some came in with assegais sticking in them, which had been struck by those people who had wanted to kill him ».

We shall not now dwell upon the sociological aspects of the mythology. It is clear that the myths frequently deal with relationships between individuals and between groups. Above all the clearest message is that men must co-operate if society is to prosper. This is necessary in the face of the dangerous and predatory aspects of nature, dissent within the hunting band and when faced by hostile groups.

Also on the sociological level myths mediate oppositions between generations. One of the most ubiquitous features of the myths is the long wrangles between Kaggen and the younger Kwammang-a who often uses the Ichneumon as an intermediary, the younger generation always claiming to know better. Sometimes it seems that Kaggen and Kwammang-a represent the wisdom and the foolishness of man. They are seen as complementary parts of the rainbow: « The rainbow is yellow in

the part that lies above; the piece which seems red lies below. For the Mantis (Kaggen), who is also yellow, lies above, and Kwammang-a lies below ».

These remarks concerning Bushman mythology merely scratch the surface: a full structural analysis would yield highly significant results. At this stage of the study we can only point out certain themes which are relevant to the subject of this paper. Many myths appear to be mediating the opposition Culture : Man :: Nature : Animals, while others are making statements about relations between man and man, and the necessity for co-operation if society is to continue.

*Religion and  
Rock Art*

A full discussion of a definition of « religion », prehistoric or otherwise, lies beyond the scope of the present paper. Here we are dealing only with those aspects of religious thought that find expression in the rock paintings.

We may start with the statement that religion is a cultural institution that answers needs. In saying that we have not drawn any clear distinction between religion and other cultural institutions, for all human behaviour, including the execution of rock paintings, is performed with the intention of satisfying needs. If the behaviour satisfies a need, the pattern will be re-inforced. If, on account of social or economic changes within the society, the need is removed, diminished or transformed, concomitant changes in the pattern of religious behaviour will follow. The needs which religion satisfies are of two kinds: social and psychological. The function of religion in satisfying these needs may be manifest or latent. By manifest we mean the functions recognised and intended by the participants, and by latent those functions that are unrecognised and unintended but which, nevertheless, answer social and psychological needs. The manifest function of a ceremony may be to ensure rain, but from our more informed vantage point we can see that this is not its real function. The real function is latent: we could hardly expect a participant in the ceremony to tell us that, in addition to causing rain to fall, the ritual provides a dramatisation of social solidarity and an emotional catharsis.

These concepts, basic in social anthropology, are also applicable in the field of prehistoric art. The art, too, performed manifest and latent functions and answered social and psychological needs. It is not sufficient to ask what the artist's intention was in executing a representation of, say, an eland. Even if the answer to the question could be found, only part of the function of the painting would have been elucidated; the latent function — which might well have been the most important — would remain unexplained. In dealing with the motivation of the South African rock art all workers have made this mistake and have speculated solely on the manifest function of the art. Hence the motives so far advanced have been aesthetic expression, fertility magic, hunting magic and the recording of historical events — all, except the last, borrowed from works on the palaeolithic art of Europe and imported into South Africa without due consideration being given to the great differences in content and context between the two arts. Even



in Europe, however, these theories are far from proven and have recently been challenged by Leroi-Gourhan who, significantly, bases his ideas on a quantitative study of the art, and the distribution of the paintings within the caverns.

If we must be careful to distinguish between the manifest and latent functions of the art, it is also true that the same distinction must be applied to the mythology. The recounting of a myth may well be ostensibly to entertain but myths cannot be dismissed as simply recreational and nothing more. Levi-Strauss (1968, pp. 206-231) has pointed out that myth is concerned with resolving unwelcome paradoxes: « Mythical thought always progresses from the awareness of oppositions toward their resolution ». This, it is here suggested, is what the rock paintings also do. They may be considered as a graphic form of mythic thought, not simply as illustrations of myths in the way that a child's story book may be illustrated.

Certainly the art does contain numerous examples of creatures that can be explained only as fantastic; to call them « mythical » implies that they featured in certain specific myths and would be recognised by the prehistoric viewers as such; but that is not necessarily the case. A quantitative study of the art shows that these creatures represent only a very small proportion of the art: if men with animal heads and hoofs be excluded, they total only four out of the 1.335 paintings recorded in the study area. Workers have, on finding such fantasy creatures, searched the mythology for descriptions that could possibly apply to the paintings. Such identifications have not always been beyond dispute. A dance scene in the Orange Free State was identified as a Mantis dance (Willcox, 1963, fig. 4); subsequently it became clear that the name of the mythical being Kaggen should not be translated as Mantis, and the whole idea of the Bushmen worshipping the mantis was shown to be suspect (Pager, 1969). The connection between the art and the mythology is more subtle than this simplistic view.

Lee and Woodhouse (1964, 1968) have interpreted flying buck as the spirits of dead Bushmen, a view endorsed by Pager (1971 b) who also subscribes to Vinnicombe's unpublished suggestion concerning an eland cult, although Pager tends towards a more general antelope cult. It may be that this view of flying buck is over simplified. The interpretation is based on certain references in the recorded mythology and on the associations of a few paintings.

Only one reference from the last century is used by Pager (1971 b): he claims that antelope seen near Bushman graves were thought to be the spirits of the dead. This is based on a passage in Bleek & Lloyd (1911). It should, however, be observed that Bleek's informant mentioned « small antelope » third after snakes and lizards. Snakes, some with ears, appear in the paintings but not lizards. Of the small antelope the informant said, « It is the person who died »; and exactly the same of the snake: « It is our other person, our dead person ». This is not explicitly claimed for the lizard but it is implied. The Bushman informant may simply have been saying that any creature seen near a grave is to be respected. Stow (1905) describes the belief of the Orange River Bushmen that, if the prescribed rites of mutilation are performed,

the deceased will arrive at a certain spot on the banks of the river where « they will be feasted with locusts and honey ». There is no mention of hunting or eating meat in this heaven or, on the other hand, of the dead becoming antelope.

The associations of flying buck with other representations are equivocal. Pager (1971 b) illustrates a « scene » from Nänni's Rock which appears to depict two fighting men with a flying buck partly superimposed. He comments: « This could be an accidental superimposition, but it could also be an intentional indication that one of the combatants is about to lose his life ». An examination of the full panel, however, reveals that this group is actually part of a complex arrangement of rhebuck, hartebeest, eland and men, one of whom is shooting an arrow at a buck. The flying buck could be associated with a number of these or, more likely, with all in symbolic juxtaposition.

One final comment on the mythological representations must be made: they represent a very small percentage of the total number of paintings. Pager (1971 b) gives the figure of 1,7% of all the paintings in his research area. A more comprehensive explanation must be sought in the structure of Bushman thought and it is to this that we now turn.

Religion, as a cultural institution, offers its participants a social experience. The same is true of art and ritual. As in dancing, there is a sharing of experience in viewing the representations on the wall of a rock shelter whether this is done alone or in groups. The symbolic value of the representations is appreciated by all the viewers and this provides an ambient sense of security and social solidarity: it is a common denominator for all who view, a symbol of shared emotion and action. Unlike the ephemeral dance, it is always there to perform its function whenever viewed either by individuals or by groups.

The viewing of the paintings thus provides an experience of social cohesion, but, in addition to this, the art offers symbols of social co-operation. It is these paintings that validate co-operation as necessary for the preservation of the society and so of the individual. Paintings of solitary men are extremely rare; man is nearly always depicted as a social creature or related to animals. He is shown hunting, dancing, making spears, running or walking in groups: the message is patent and is re-inforced each time certain myths are recounted or paintings viewed. The viewing of such paintings in all probability gave pleasure to the viewer, but it would be quite mistaken to stop short at that, just as it would be equally wrong to dismiss the myths as entertainment and nothing more. The nature of the « pleasure » that was derived from viewing the rock paintings brings us to the psychological or emotional needs which rock art, as a manifestation of religion, answered.

As was seen in the account of the myths given above, the Bushmen were concerned with the distinction between Culture and Nature and its attendant paradoxes. Myth seeks to exhibit, in an acceptable form, these paradoxes and moves by a process of mediation toward their resolution. The same function is performed by the paintings by means of a process peculiar to graphic representation. As was shown above, human figures can, on a number of criteria, be divided into two groups: the naked men and the larger kaross-clad figures. It is now suggested

that clothing, the skin of animals, represents a mediation between Culture and Nature, man and the animal. This is further shown by frequency with which the kaross-clad figures are depicted with animal features such as heads and hoofs. The similarities between these figures and the eland are striking: the same care in painting is bestowed upon them as upon the eland and they approximate in size and shape. The situation is even more remarkable in that these are the two types most commonly involved in superpositioning. As the kaross-clad figures represent a mediation between man and animal, it is possible that the naked men drew the distinction between man and animal and restored the balance that the two buck in the Kun myth tried to invert.

The exact symbolic value of the eland remains somewhat obscure: when its relationships with other elements are examined in a structural analysis of the myths, the meaning will be clarified. For the present all that can be said is that it clearly occupied an important position in Bushman religious thought. It is tentatively suggested that, perhaps among other things, it represented a symbol of mediation between life and death. The flying buck and therianthropie figures are another manifestation of a thought process which mediates oppositions in a graphic context as mythology manipulates symbols to the same end but according to rules peculiar to itself. Such a view of these mythological representations affords them a place in a framework which gives meaning to the whole range of the art and avoids the limitations of a particularist approach: the art is an expression of the structure of Bushman thought. In performing this function the medium of painting spawns a proliferating series of structures, a fact which accounts for the restricted and repetitive nature of the art as revealed by quantitative analysis. The art produces a theoretically infinite number of versions of the same set of themes, each slightly different from the others. As Levi-Strauss (1968) has said of myth, the art too « grows spiral-wise until the intellectual impulse which has produced it is exhausted ».

### *Conclusion*

In this discussion of religious thought as expressed in myth and art, it has been suggested that each is an independent field in which symbols are manipulated in various relationships according to rules peculiar to each field. One is not an illustration or extension of the other: each exists in its own right to answer the same social and psychological needs according to its own rules and structures. The rock paintings are religious in content in that they employ symbols of religious thought, and religious in function in that they answer the same needs as other manifestations of religious thought such as myth and ritual. Geertz (1966) has offered a definition of religion that could apply as well to the rock paintings and which provides a fair summary of what has been said in this paper:

Religion is a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.

South Africa offers an exceptionally promising field for the study of prehistoric religion: both myths and paintings are available to the student. These fields represent two converging avenues. We cannot pretend to have reached the junction or indeed to have travelled very far along either, but in journeying along each of these separate but converging avenues we have reached positions from which it is possible to look across the intervening territory to the other road and to recognise that in due course we shall arrive at a common destination.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The writer records his thanks to the South African Human Sciences Research Council for a grant to enable him to participate in the symposium.

#### RIASSUNTO

Un esame dettagliato delle pitture « preistoriche » di un'area ristretta del Drakensberg non reca nessun supporto alla teoria classica per quanto concerne la motivazione dell'arte rupestre. Il modo in cui le figure sono collegate le une con le altre così come altri particolari emersi dall'inventario di oltre 1.300 pitture indicano chiaramente che questa arte è simbolica. Alcuni temi della mitologia boscimana, registrati verso la metà del secolo scorso, si ritrovano ugualmente nell'arte rupestre. L'Autore propone l'ipotesi che le pitture non siano soltanto l'illustrazione dei miti, ma che mito e arte svolgano indipendentemente funzioni simili: entrambi utilizzano simboli per creare e rafforzare stati sociali ed emozionali e per rappresentare una concezione della realtà che funge da mediazione delle opposizioni.

#### RÉSUMÉ

L'examen détaillé de peintures « préhistoriques » dans une aire restreinte du Drakensberg n'appuie pas les théories classiques concernant la motivation de l'art rupestre. La manière dont les figures sont liées les unes aux autres ainsi que d'autres détails révélés par l'inventaire de plus de mille trois cents peintures indiquent clairement que cet art est symbolique. Certains thèmes de la mythologie boschimane enregistrée au milieu du siècle dernier apparaissent également dans l'art rupestre. L'auteur suppose que les peintures ne sont pas seulement l'illustration des mythes, mais que le mythe et l'art jouent indépendamment un rôle similaire: ils utilisent le symbole pour créer et renforcer des états sociaux et émotionnels et pour présenter une vision de la réalité médiatrice des oppositions.

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## STONE AGE AFFINITIES IN BUSHMAN RELIGION

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Various lithic cultures are abundantly represented in the archaeological finds of the Southern parts of Africa. Both fossils and prehistoric remains have been unearthed in various sites, some of the most important being discovered at Florisbad (*Homo africanthropus helmei*), Taungs (*Australopithecus africanus*), Sterkfontein (*Australopithecus transvaalensis*) and Makapansgat (*Australopithecus prometheus*) (Louw, 1960, p. 11).

One of the most valuable sources of information is the Matjes River Rock Shelter (MRRS). Although there are some problems regarding the dating of the different layers, this site provides several indications on the religion of prehistoric man. The MRRS is about 65 metres from the sea, half-a-mile from Keurboom Strand, and about 13 kilometres from Pletenberg Bay. The faunistic, archaeological and human material found here, now in the National Museum at Bloemfontein, show evidence of an ever-changing environment which had a deep influence on the acts and the beliefs of the inhabitants of this area. According to Dreyer, the « Matjes River Races », as they are called, appear to have occupied the site for a long period.

1. Layer A: Mixed Layer of ashes, shells, animals, etc.
2. Layer B: Mytilus layer, made up of shells of Blue Mussel.
3. Layer C: Very rich in human remains and material culture.
4. Layer D: Called the « burnt » layer.

The skeletal remains from the various layers are of *Homo Sapiens* and are from the late Stone Age. Samples from deposits of the MRRS, presented in April 1957 to the Lamont Observatory of Columbia University for radio-carbon dating, led to the following results (not calibrated):

Sample No. 2 from Site 1 in Layer C . . .	7,750± 300 years.
Sample No. 4 from Site 2 in Layer C . . .	5,400± 250 years.
Sample No. 7 from Site 3 in Layer D . . .	10,500± 400 years.
Sample No. 8 from Site 4 in Layer E . . .	11,250± 400 years.

There is much speculation regarding the origin of the Bushmen, as the inhabitants are called today. Stow infers from known informations that they « gradually worked their way through a really unoccupied country, and that they were the primitive inhabitants of Southern Africa and the forerunners of every other race » (Stow, 1964, p. 10). Schapera regards the Earlier and Middle Stone Age Cultures in Southern Africa as previous to the Bushmen and suggests that the latter came into South Africa from the north-east (Schapera, 1963, p. 27). Other scholars find evidences of a combination of early Mediterranean characteristics with Mongoloid characteristics while still others consider the presence of physical affinities with the Hottentots. Another theory tries to prove that South Africa itself is the area in which the Bushman-type has evolved. Whatever the facts about his origin may be, the Bushmen of the MRRS did undergo certain physical changes. Some scholars ascribe the paedomorphic structure of the Bushmen partly to diet while Schapera rejects any development or degeneration theory and maintains that they entered South Africa « well over a thousand years ago » (Schapera, 1963, p. 29).

The deposits in the MRRS give, however, some indications about the Bushmen religion, which has adapted itself to phenomena not peculiar to Southern Africa. For example, many ochre deposits have been found in the graves in each layer; it is known that ochre has played a role in the graves of the Aurignacians and other Stone Age people in Europe and elsewhere. Human skeletal remains from Layer E, clearly indicate that ochre was usually poured over the head of the deceased and some skulls have been found which were completely encrusted in a shell of ochre about 25 mm thick, probably indicating some religious purpose (Hoffman, 1958). It is possible that the ochre was used to keep evil from the corpse or to protect the offspring of the corpse from its potential evil effects. The cultural belongings of the deceased were also thickly smeared with ochre and in some graves in this layer, an ostrich egg-shell with a hole on top or a Kwê-Stone (a round stone with a hole through it). The graves in this layer were then covered by flat stones painted with ochre. The people of Layer D, referred to as Proto-Bushmen, buried their dead in the same manner but without grave-goods. Since the burials of Layer C are much more carefully done and contain objects, according to the traditional approach, they provide evidence of a more highly-developed culture.

### *Modern Bushmen*

So far, there is little knowledge of the religion of the ancient Bushmen. Since the 17th century, sporadic references have been made to these people in literature, but it is only since the second half of the last century that attention has been given to their religious practices and, even in this short time, a rapid development from a naturalistic to a monotheistic religion can be discerned (Bleek, 1923, p. 9).

The Cape Bushmen are regarded as revealing the oldest forms of pure Bushmen religion, their highest « beings » were celestial bodies, especially the Moon. Since the Moon was directly related to the life of the Bushman (New Moon - Masculine; Full Moon - feminine), he

approached it in prayers, centered on his specific needs. This relationship to a life giving factor paved the way to a monotheistic deity. The Moon was treated with respect, was personified, and emotional reactions were ascribed to it. The Moon is seen as the shoe of the Mantis, a prominent figure in the mythology of the Cape Bushmen, created by him for the Bushman; the Mantis threw a feather into the sky and said, « Thou must now lie up in the sky, thou must henceforth be the Moon... Thou art the Moon, thou dost give light for men, then thou dost fall away, thou dost return to life, when thou hast fallen away, thou dost give light to all people ». It can be seen that primitive man, when he conceptualizes, uses living figures and experiences, not himself in these figures, but life itself. In fact, the Moon is also connected by the Bushmen with death: according to a myth, the Moon appeared to the hare and told him to inform mankind that « As I die and return again; so shall man die and return again ». However, the hare was disobedient and distorted the message, telling mankind that they would die and never return, thus bringing death to the earth. This myth with regard to man's disobedience which is repeated, with some variations in several religions, has an « eternalizing » tendency; what happened once has no history but happened once and repeated itself. This « *once* » is mythical and not historical.

Every myth is symbolical and, for the Bushman, in a world in which man and nature form such a close unit, man must put himself in the position of the animals around him and speak about them in anthropomorphic terms, humanizing them, seeing himself in the guise of animals or, rather, as animals. The Mantis (or « praying insect »), has a mediatory function between the Bushman and nature. He has a wife and children and some scholars see the Bushman concentration on him as the forerunner of their concept of the deity, one who often has a wife and children. Called Kaggen, Kang, or Quing, he is the symbol, not only of power or the vital force in nature, but also of its weaknesses; he has no divine attributes but remains a favorite hero of the Bushman folklore, an entity who could be foolish... sometimes mischievous, sometimes kind, at times very human... » (Bleek, 1923, introduction). Although he had creative powers, only his creation and that of the Moon and the other celestial bodies were worshipped.

Animals, thus, receive special attention in the mythologies of primitive man — he « spiritualized » nature while modern man confronts it, making and breaking it for his own purposes. Certain animals are feared by the African peoples in South Africa, such as the chameleon or the frog « from whom the snake gets its poison ».

The Zulu people believe that their ancestors come to them in the form of certain snakes, such as the poisonous mamba, to whom they bring sacrifices. The Bushmen, however, revere certain animals, especially the Eland, which being created by the Mantis, « came leaping out of the reeds » (Bleek, 1923, p. 1). This myth is similar to the Zulu one of uMvelingangi, their Supreme Being, who came out of a bed of reeds. This myth is also found in ancient Egypt. The Bushmen speak in anthropomorphic terms about this revered animal, a relatively tame, good-natured antelope, who speaks in a kind of Bushmen dialect.



A protective cult developed around the Eland; the Bushmen believed that « the Mantis does not love us if we kill an Eland » and add, « The man who shot the Eland is the one whom he hurts, because he wants the man to cry with pain, so that he may go and make the Eland come to life... » (Bleek, 1923, p. 12). Although the Eland is not a totem, there existed a strong social relationship between the Bushman and this animal, expressed in paintings and in myths. This intense relationship is foreign to the Bantu or to any other people in Southern Africa, but, for the Bushman, the Eland is the symbol of highly-esteemed characteristics in the community and thus life is inter-related with that of the Bushman. Of all the animals, the Eland cooperates the most, is most part of his world. The lion or the elephant do not give food to the Bushman, but the Eland does. By painting the Eland, the Bushman expresses his desire that the Eland be resurrected after being shot with the poisoned arrow - the Eland represents the original source of all well-being. Thus, if the painting of magical figures « manufacturing » rain, actually brings rain for the Bushman, one can readily accept the idea that painting the Eland is related to its resurrection: if its killing leads to drought, painting will bring rain.

« Power », « mystical power », the power of what is around him, is important for the Bushman. There is power in the medicine man, in the magicians. Their ancestors, the stars, were powers, which could give certain specific foods (Orpen, 1874). While modern man analyzes the qualities of certain elements scientifically, primitive man concentrates on its emotional and magical qualities - its qualities for wrath, for courage, for bravery. Magical formulas are used in connection with these qualities. Every magical act has a psychic substructure and every psychic disposition has a concrete magical substructure. This disposition is seen in the relationship with the Eland.

The Eland is a source of power, but to obtain this power a certain relationship to the Eland must be established. This relationship can only be established by resurrecting the poisoned Eland and by ritually purifying the impure killer and his unclean arrows. Harmony with Nature, which is symbolized by harmony with the Eland, the highest among animals, the animal with whom they could converse without difficulties, was of supreme importance for the Bushman. The difference between the Bushmen and the environment was not a matter of essence but of grade, typified by the gap between them and the Eland. This is why the Eland played a greater role than even the Mantis in the lives of the Bushmen.

In Bushman mythology, *Dema* figures, i. e., half-human, half-animal, are also important. *Dema* is a word borrowed from the Marindanim in New Guinea. With the Bushmen, one finds such figures engaged in certain magical acts, such as rainmaking, for example; in painting with a rain-making theme, two mythical creatures, half animal, half man, stand beside a whirlwind causing rain to fall to the ground at the edge of the whirlwind. Such combined beings are extremely effective magically. The Bantu also consider the mixing of man and animal to be very important and, in their strong medicines, mix certain animal

and human parts. In Bushman paintings, one sees the gradual change from human to animal form, even though, at first, many of the stars were considered to be either animals or people of the early Race. Girls killed by lightning become beautiful water flowers. The « snake », in another painting, has an animal head, a hairy body, and wings, showing that animals are also interchangeable. Rain is painted as a bull, either as a solitary animal with a trunk or standing under a rainbow.

The double-ended and double headed snake also plays a role in Bushman mythology (Lee-Woodhouse, 1970, pp. 121 - 135). The Bushman, like many prehistoric peoples, has no use for contradictions; he always tries to mediate between them. The dema figure is evidence of this intense feeling of bringing together what seems separated. This is different from the animals found in Hinduism, or even in revelations, through which certain deities act. Although these dema figures are found in different cultural levels, such as among the ancient Greeks and Egyptians, they predominate in the lives of prehistoric man. They bring various experiences into harmony with one another. For the Bushman, « I am not only I, but I am also the other. I can be an animal or the animal can be me or one can be in combination with an animal ». The Bushman world knows no beings which exclude one another. The distinction between objects for the Bushman is imaginary as everything is connected with everything else.

This variety of figures indicates the intensity of mythical thinking for the Bushman; for him, history is what modern man calls nature and nature is what modern man calls history. All events are mythical, whether it be rainmaking or the Mantis changing springboks into Bushmen (all Bushmen were springboks according to a myth). The Mantis can bring people to life again; some people become clouds when they die. The predominance of mythical events does not imply that these events were supernatural, because the distinction between 'natural' and 'supernatural' does not exist for Bushmen. These mythical events are not supernatural; they just happen as part of normal life. One finds a close relationship between the Bantu and some of his cattle; with the Bushmen there is a close affinity with many animals and even a deep understanding with them. In their myths and stories, animals speak, obviously in the Bushman language. Everything is connected with everything else and their disposition is rather that of synthesis than of analysis: everything forms an actual whole.

The Bushman sees life as action in and through mythical figures which reflect his feelings and thoughts, suggested by the realities of a world dominated by animals. Through the myth, he experiences life as it goes through his own life. Rain is due to a magical rain bull; drought is due to the unwise killing of the Eland; the paintings may express not only the desire for its « resurrection » but also a magical act through which rain is effected. The rain bull, living in water holes from which rain magicians draw it out to wander over dry areas, is often found on rock paintings accompanied by such animals as frogs, fish, tortoises, and others which are closely connected with rain. Rain

itself is described as being emotional, capable of bringing destruction if the necessary ritual prohibitions are not observed; it can even transform people into animals, a punishment which implies that a certain distinction was made between Bushmen and animals.

It can be seen then, that magicians have played an important role among the Bushmen, this magical disposition being deeply ingrained in the Bushmen, whether he « treats » his weapons, his shelter, or himself. Magic, however, is not an obscure activity for the Bushman, in spite of the evil elements in some of its practices. He projects the external world inward in order to rule within it; he refuses to accept the givenness as he finds it. While the religious person struggles with spirits and deities, the magical person is, in a sense, a « secularist » because he tries to control his world through his own acts. One has the impression that the ancient Bushmen were more magically oriented, although they were not merely magical persons but rather magic-religious beings. Later, the Bushmen incorporated more religious practices into their beliefs, such as prayers not to celestial bodies but to deities and even to ancestor spirits; a feeling of dependence on the latter beings developed, replacing the earlier mythical dema figures and the overruling magical emphasis.

Concrete things are treated by the Bushmen as if these respond like human beings, a typical mythical approach which is found already in their early religion. They make no distinction between what is psychic and what is concrete. For example, when an ostrich is killed, one of its feathers is thrown into the air and it becomes an ostrich; the shoe of the Mantis is thrown into the air and becomes the Moon to which, as we have seen already, emotional reactions are ascribed. But modern man is not so far removed from this approach as we may think. Where the Bushman speaks of « disease spirit », modern man keeps death off his body as if it were also an object, something « alive », that tries to destroy him.

The magical person refuses to be subjected by his environment. This Bushman approach through the centuries is obvious from the evidence in the MRRS. Magic always played a prominent role with these people and one must disagree with those scholars who emphasize the religious aspects to the detriment of the magical. Even some Bantu words for magicians are derived from Bushman words. If Bushmen magicians impressed the Bantu in such a manner, obviously the Bushmen made the world of Southern Africa their own, to the extent of influencing the languages in this part of the world. With the use of magic, the Bushman objectified the world, controlling it. In this kind of world, animals act like human beings and human beings, like animals. They are all part of one totality, all participating in the world around the Bushman. This emphasis is also expressed in his singing and dancing, through which he hopes to obtain fertility and success in hunting. In the usual African world view, masked dances identify the dancers with the spirits of their ancestor; such masks, however, are only used by the Bushmen for hunting purposes, for camouflage. Identification is rather found in the dema figures.

With regard to life after death, a definite destiny has been ascribed to the shades; earlier, death was looked upon as a sleep of which the Bushmen were very unwilling to speak. A vague idea of life beyond the grave developed, whether or not the possessions of the deceased were buried with the body. For the Bushmen, the shade came to be considered as concrete as the body: man is made up of a body, a free « spirit » or shade, and a bodily « spirit ». The bodily « spirit » ascends under later influences, into the sky. The word « gauna » is often used by the Northern Bushmen for a person who has died. This word also means « wind », just as the word ' shade ' can be translated, in Bantu language, into « wind ». Some missionaries use the word « gauwa » to describe Satan. The Khung of Tsumeb only expect evil from « gauwa ». Here one finds definite Hottentot influence, as the original Bushmen had no concept of a devil or a satan, but only of beings which could be both good and evil (Vedder, 1912, p. 123).

The word « gauwa » was always used by the Bushmen to mean « shades ». Only later, did the idea develop that they could be the cause of illness and of death, an idea also seen with the Hottentot and Bantu, whose ancestors can cause diseases if ritual prohibitions were not observed or if the necessary sacrifices were not offered. However, ancestors never played an important role with the ancient Bushmen, because the patrilineal emphasis in the Bushman social structure is not very strong. In their original religions, the ancestors were stars and, as such, had nothing to do with man's life except to come down and take people away to be with them; this act may have contributed to the later development of considering the ancestors, when they do act, as mainly negative.

Among one tribe, the *Eastern Khung*, five kinds of spirits have been discerned: 1) the chief or headman; 2) those lying around in the sky, the stars, which come down and steal the « souls » of people; 3) the *gauab*, spirits of the dead, who remain at the grave and are very dangerous; 4) malicious water spirits; 5) spirits of diseases which enter people and make them sick (Lebzelter, 1928, 407-410). Among Orange Free State Bushmen, certain spirits attended to the Mantis. Small stones were thrown on the graves of the deceased by some Bushmen tribes in order to appease the departed's spirit. Only among the Southern Bushmen tribes did one find, in the last century, invocation of the spirits of the dead, probably due to Hottentot influence. During this century, the practice was extended to some of the tribes or clans. It seems that, gradually, the « spirits » (shades) of the dead came to have some influence on the living, but not to the extent found among the Bantu peoples.

The Bushman religion had very definite Stone Age affinities, but through acculturation it was gradually influenced by the Hottentots and the Bantu. The complexity of their religious approach, even where Stone Age elements are concerned, should make anyone careful in his analysis of the religion of prehistoric man. It is much more complex than any artifacts, engravings, or paintings can indicate on first sight. Furthermore, religion is continuously subjected to a process of change.



## RIASSUNTO

L'Autore esamina la stazione di Matjes River, nei cui livelli sono stati riconosciuti elementi che gettano nuova luce sulla religione preistorica nell'Africa Meridionale. Dopo una trattazione del contesto, sono riportate alcune teorie sull'origine dei Boscimani, attuali abitanti del luogo. Un esame delle loro credenze e della mitologia, mostra che contengono elementi di origine preistorica.

Attraverso una descrizione critica delle figure mitologiche e della simbologia boscimana, comparandola ad esempi di concetto diversi, delle mitologie Bantu, Zulu e Ottentotte, l'Autore perviene ad una sintesi del processo di trasformazione della religione boscimana, che provenendo da una tradizione preistorica, ha subito di recente notevoli cambiamenti di contenuto.

## RÉSUMÉ

L'Auteur examine le site de Matjes River dans les couches duquel plusieurs éléments ont été découverts, qui apportent des nouvelles données sur la religion préhistorique en Afrique méridionale. Après une considération de ce contexte, sont examinées certaines théories sur l'origine des Boschimans qui habitent le site actuellement; leur croyances et leur mythologie apparaissent étroitement liés à leur vie quotidienne et comprennent des éléments d'origine préhistorique.

En suivant une description critique des figures mythologiques et du symbolisme des Boschimans, en comparant celui-ci à des exemples de conception différente, des mythologies Bantu, Zulu et Hottentot, l'Auteur parvient à une synthèse du processus de transformation de la religion des Boschimans en montrant les changements subis en époque récente.

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## DEBAT SUR L'AFRIQUE

- ANATI: The papers we have heard on Africa, taken together, give such a rich picture of the African field that the listener is almost unable to digest such wealth. It is difficult for specialists from other fields to form an overall picture of intellectual life in prehistoric Africa. Would it be possible for one speaker from each area to give us a brief outline of the general picture (a) for North Africa and (b) for South Africa?
- CAMPS: C'est une tâche difficile, mais certainement utile et nécessaire. La division entre Afrique du Nord et du Sud est parfaitement fondée, vu les profondes différences entre les groupes ethniques et la chronologie de ces deux zones. Présenter de façon synthétique ce qui a trait à la vie religieuse de l'Afrique est plutôt difficile. Le premier facteur à souligner, c'est la profonde religiosité des peuples africains. L'amas de pierres du gisement moustérien d'El-Guettar (Tunisie) constitue le plus ancien témoignage de celle-ci.
- Une des questions les plus importantes est celle de savoir si dès les temps néolithiques, exista une conception anthropomorphe de la divinité. Les fresques montrées aujourd'hui par F. Mori sont intéressantes à ce point de vue: de nombreuses figures ont un corps d'aspect humain; c'est frappant surtout dans le cas des figures animées.
- LEWIS-WILLIAMS: My own field is South Africa. There, we are faced with a tremendous wealth of material and it would seem, from what we have seen during the last few days, that this is true of most parts of Africa. In South Africa we have many engraved and painted sites, and when I go to work in the field, it is rare for a day to pass without discovering a new site. Such a wealth of material is almost embarrassing! We do have some ethnological sources available to us, even if they are only slight, regarding the mythology of those who executed the rock paintings. These sources are rich and promising, and so far largely untapped.
- The question is, how are we to handle this material? My own approach has been to see the representations, not so much as works of art, in terms of line, form and colour; for African art seems to be functional. I have observed Africans making masks; when they are completed, I have heard the Africans express satisfaction at the completion, but their aesthetic quality is never commented on. My method has therefore been to treat the paintings as archaeological objects, to describe them quantitatively and in detail, and then to search for patterns. Before we start on the task of interpretation, we must have data of this kind, giving a detailed description of the art of a limited area. I have tried to avoid assigning meanings to paintings too soon; first I make an algebraic study of their associations and contexts and, only then, do I attempt to deal with meaning. These paintings cannot be said to 'illustrate' the myths. They are not merely depictions of episodes from the myths. Their relationship is more subtle.



- ANATI: En comparant l'Afrique du Nord et du Sud, malgré les nombreuses différences, on reste frappé par un facteur commun: la recherche d'une symbiose entre hommes et animaux. Malgré les variations dans la manière d'affronter le problème, il est clair que celui-ci est à la base d'un très grand nombre de manifestations similaires. Chercher à le cerner sur une vaste échelle, permettrait certainement de s'orienter dans la documentation ample, mais fragmentaire, dont nous disposons.
- CHRISTINGER: Dans les documents d'Afrique du Sud qui nous ont été montrés, j'ai remarqué une scène importante: une antilope tenue par la queue, par dessus laquelle saute un personnage. Il serait utile de faire un index des motifs de ce type: le saut par-dessus un animal, comme le taureau en Crète, etc... Un index de cette nature, les archéologues sont en mesure de l'élaborer et de l'apporter aux historiens des religions.
- SIMONEAU: J'ai été vivement intéressé par les conférences concernant l'Afrique du Sud et particulièrement le culte de l'antilope. Dans la zone du Drâ, les seules représentations de masques connues sont en effet en relation avec les figurations d'antilopes. Cependant, au Maroc, les représentations de caractère religieux n'ont pas le même poids à la fin du Néolithique que plus tard à l'Age du Bronze. Dans le Haut-Atlas, avec l'apparition de la métallurgie, le symbolisme religieux se fait plus poussé, sur la base d'associations, d'enchaînements systématiques.
- GRIFFITHS: As an Egyptologist, I am very interested in the idea that some North African arts were influenced by Egypt. For example, the figure Simoneau showed us, in which the wavy line is used to denote water. This is the Egyptian hieroglyph for water. The main difficulty in establishing the link between Egypt and North Africa is that of chronology. Simoneau said that ancient rock art in Morocco goes back to at least 4000 B.C. The civilization of Ancient Egypt persisted however, until the fourth or fifth centuries A.D. and one should be able to establish the dating of the rock figures that can be compared. Is there a chronological gap?
- DAVIDE: Un collega di Varsavia ha studiato i predinastici a Badari e a Naqada e ha dimostrato che la popolazione egizia era già allora composta: vi sono due aspetti, uno di carattere armeno (teste corte), uno che proviene dal sud dell'Asia, attraverso lo stretto di Bab el Mandeb. La popolazione è formata da due componenti, a testa corta e a testa lunga. L'esame statistico rivela la curva bimodale sia nei maschi sia nelle femmine, sia nei soggetti giovani sia in quelli anziani. Qual'è lo scopo di questa osservazione? Se vi sono due correnti, vuol dire che queste correnti avranno portato con sé mentalità, usi, costumi, religioni, ecc. Ciò aiuta a indirizzare le ricerche anche dal punto di vista delle religioni.
- MORI: Vorrei ricordare che la vastissima regione del Nord Africa ha rivelato in questi ultimi decenni una tale ricchezza di manifestazioni artistiche che ci fa pensare veramente sull'importanza dell'evoluzione spirituale di queste popolazioni, che è andata di pari passo con la eccezionale maestria di queste incisioni rupestri in un periodo anteriore al III millennio a.C. C'è stata allora tutta una gamma meravigliosa di manifestazioni alla quale noi dobbiamo rivolgerci per comprendere la vita di quell'epoca. Quali connessioni vi sono con l'arte egizia che sembra scoppiare improvvisamente? Quest'arte sahariana è senza dubbio anteriore alla nascita dell'arte egizia, ritenuta finora una filiazione dell'Asia. Ora invece bisogna guardare all'Africa e alla civiltà sahariana. Ci sono le raffigurazioni della fase delle « teste rotonde » che è un mondo ancora ignorato, ma che ci rivela un pantheon così straordinario che ci induce a riflettere sul livello spirituale delle popolazioni di quell'epoca. Queste raffigurazioni hanno uno stretto legame con la vita religiosa. Ci sono esseri metà animali, metà uomini, nati certamente dall'immaginazione di queste popolazioni. Ma cosa erano? riti? preghiere?
- I limiti cronologici di quest'arte vanno ben al di là del Neolitico e quindi quest'arte è più antica di tutte le manifestazioni artistiche della civiltà egizia. L'inaridimento ha inizio con l'istaurarsi dell'optimum climatico verso il 4000 a.C. Allora i pastori con le loro ricchissime mandrie si dirigono verso la valle del Nilo. Queste popolazioni non hanno avuto altra possibilità di scelta che la fuga verso i fiumi Nilo, Niger, ecc.

- SEGLIE: A propos des Dogon, je voudrais demander à Mme Dieterlen de nous parler de l'organisation des peintures sur les façades des temples dogon, et notamment des figures d'animaux.
- DIETERLEN: Les dessins faits sur les façades des temples sont presque toujours réalistes, car visibles pour tous. Ces dessins sont en outre destinés à être lavés par la pluie et leur « contenu » entraîné dans les champs cultivés. Dans l'exécution de la peinture, quelle qu'elle soit, l'important c'est l'acte. Tout dessin est essentiellement dynamique. Sur les sanctuaires, le prêtre refait chaque année les peintures. Tous les éléments se rapportant au clan doivent y être représentés, afin que soit assurée leur pérennité. Certains éléments sont chaque année différents, d'autres doivent obligatoirement être répétés chaque fois.
- KÖNIG: I would like to give some examples of lines used to make a figure or symbol: the bull is organizing lunar time by means of his horns which have a crescent-like shape; the three lunar phases can also be represented by a triangle, or a shape made of three lines and three angles.
- ANATI: It is impossible to generalize. Various populations have mythologies concerning the moon but not all of them connect the crescent with the horns of the bull.
- BELTRAN: L'Afrique et l'Europe peuvent avoir des relations dans leur idéologie préhistorique, mais il faut s'abstenir de faire des généralisations a priori. Je me demande aussi sur quelles bases scientifiques seraient conçues les hypothèses de Mme König, même en ce qui concerne l'Europe.
- BIANCHI: Cette séance sur l'Afrique a été remarquable, et la documentation apportée extrêmement importante. En tant qu'historien des religions, je voudrais soulever une question d'ordre méthodologique. Il me semble qu'un danger réside dans l'excès d'humilité des préhistoriens quand ils parlent de phénoménologie religieuse, quand ils utilisent sans qualification phénoménologique des mots tels que: dieu, homme, animal, figure intermédiaire, etc. Car, en histoire des religions, il ne faut justement pas partir de catégories préétablies, mais au contraire établir des catégories sur la base de la phénoménologie religieuse (j'entends une phénoménologie établie par l'application correcte de la méthode historico-comparative). Il faudrait donc éviter l'usage de catégories historico-religieuses trop générales, indéterminées ou superficielles. L'attitude méthodologiquement valable consisterait à établir une typologie stricte, précise et reconsidérée sans cesse en cours d'étude, sur la base de la documentation qui pourrait avoir des rapports avec la religion, et à bannir les termes généraux de dieu, esprit, ... L'utilisation de ces derniers va à l'encontre de l'intérêt de la recherche préhistorique.
- En ce qui concerne le problème des rapports entre l'Égypte et l'Afrique du Nord, je serais d'avis de concentrer l'attention sur certaines figures égyptiennes, comme par exemple Seth, ou le trickster, génie sympathique de nature à la fois complexe et unitaire, qui rappelle à bien des égards le personnage du renard pâle ou coyote africain du Soudan (étude de Mme Dieterlen). Il me semble qu'il serait intéressant d'orienter les recherches dans ce sens, plutôt que d'insister sur un caractère thériomorphe en général. Étudier un personnage, un sujet, et les caractères de celui-ci qui nous ont amené à nous poser la question: « est-il dieu ou homme? » nous permettrait de comprendre ce qui, par contre, continuera de nous échapper tant que nous nous limiterons à nous poser simplement cette dernière question.
- CAMPS: Grâce à l'intervention de Mr. Bianchi, nous nous trouvons, je crois, au cœur du Symposium. L'historien des religions nous demande à nous, préhistoriens, de faire une typologie exacte. Or, tout ce que nous pouvons dire, c'est: « cela est une scène qui semble présenter des caractères religieux », puis utiliser le vocabulaire dont nous disposons, essentiellement imprécis. Nous pourrions créer des espèces de codes, avoir recours à la statistique. Mais à quoi cela nous mènerait-il? Le type d'analyse proposé par Mr. Bianchi, par exemple pour le cas de Seth, me semble indiquer une voie très positive. Je pense aussi, à ce propos, que l'Égypte doit beaucoup aux civilisations néolithiques de l'Afrique saharienne qui lui sont bien antérieures. Seth pourrait constituer l'ultime avatar d'une de ces représentations néolithiques que nous avons vues aujourd'hui.

MORI:

Vorrei fare qualche osservazione su quanto ha detto Bianchi. Esattamente qui è il problema. Noi domandiamo agli storici delle religioni di aiutarci. Quando noi troviamo qualcosa non possiamo descriverlo senza fare ricorso a termini sia pure arbitrari, ma già conosciuti. Non possiamo prescindere da ciò. Noi dobbiamo parlare di esseri divini, semiumani, ecc. Noi domandiamo agli storici delle religioni di compiere degli sforzi per tentare di interpretare tutto ciò e trovare le costanti che sono al fondo dei fenomeni religiosi che crediamo di avere scoperto. Ogni sistema religioso ha un suo sistema di riferimenti. Se in questo sistema di coordinate noi troviamo le costanti, allora potremo parlare della vita religiosa di un gruppo o di un altro. Dobbiamo cercare di trovare un legame tra il mondo preistorico e il mondo attuale, tra le concezioni preistoriche e quella che noi abbiamo di questi fenomeni religiosi.