

# ARTEFACTS

Reports covering the period August to December 2013

## EVENING LECTURES

### Ancestral attachments: ethnographic insights into the archaeology of Komaland, northern Ghana (1 August 2013)

*Dr Natalie Swanepoel, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Anthropology and Archaeology, University of South Africa*

**D**r Swanepoel spoke about her recent work in Komaland, northern Ghana, together with Prof. Benjamin Kankpeyeng from the University of Ghana and others. Hundreds of mysterious mounds are densely packed in an area only 30 km square. They were first excavated in 1985 under the guidance of Prof. James Anquandah. Publicity from this discovery led to looted terracotta figures appearing illegally on the antiquities market, emphasising the urgent need for protection of the area and further research.

The people now living in this area seem to have no connection with the makers of the figurines, which are thought to date to between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, the era before Islamic empires developed in West Africa. The sites represent episodes of ritual activity and there are various hypotheses as to what these could have been. They could be burial mounds, ritual discard sites or ancestral shrines, the latter being the current idea. The earlier research suggested a link to trans-Saharan trade, but this is no longer considered the best explanation since the figurines have now been found to predate that trade. In addition, they are different from terracotta's found in Mali.

The mounds are only 40 cm to 60 cm high. The figurines and fragments of figurines are found under an overlying

*Ritual figurine*



layer of broken pottery and upper grinders. Some mounds contain human remains, but only certain bones, as if these were secondary burials. The figurines represent humans and animals, a typical figure being a single eye on a concave head. There are libation structures consisting of figurines with dished tops and holes for the libation liquid to come out through the nose and ears. The fragmentation of pottery is not thought to be accidental. Possibly, when a clay object is broken, people can take pieces away.

The question arises, who or what are ancestors? By ancestors we mean those who have died but still have a role to play; there is a continued relationship. This is not thought of as ancestor worship but rather as ancestor veneration or belief. The living descendants are responsible for performing rites of incorporation. Such rites are often centred round the curation of specific types of objects by different groups – stones, bracelets, wooden figures – that 'attach' the ancestor to the physical plane. When a person dies their spirit goes wandering and it is necessary to anchor it to the material realm. Other characteristics of ancestral shrines are as follows:

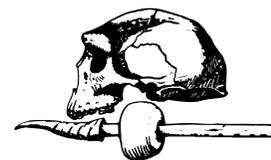
- The curated objects or structures are used over a long period of time.
- The grave and shrine are usually separate and there need to be special stones for a person's spiritual place.
- Ancestorhood is dependent on continued actions of propitiation and sacrifice by lineal descendants.
- Rituals of incorporation turn the deceased from a spirit into an ancestor.
- Ancestor shrines are important loci of communication.

There is little in the archaeological record that assists in determining how far back in time practices such as these occurred. Future research will explore social, political and economic context; chronological and regional variation; ritual production and the status of the artists; links between ritual activity and environmental/social change; and descendant societies.

**Report by Pamela Küstner**



*Komaland horse or camel-rider*



A publication of the Trans-Vaal Branch  
South African Archaeological Society  
PO Box 41050 Craighall 2024

Editor: Reinoud Boers

Production: Marion Boers

## Political and economic interactions in the hinterland of the Mapungubwe polity (Pretoria, 15 August 2013)

**Dr Alexander Antonites, Lecturer in the Department of Anthropology and Archaeology, University of South Africa**

For years, archaeologists have been concerned with what gave rise to social complexity, social stratification and inequality. It has long been thought that Mapungubwe at the confluence of the Limpopo and Shashi rivers was a state that had top-down political governance. Through long-distance trade, prestige goods were imported to the centre, with glass beads possibly being redistributed to settlements on the periphery. These settlements, it is argued, created the kingdom's non-elite goods and were locked out of what occurred at the centre. If this theory is true, the archaeology should show a distinct elite economy and a commoner economy.

However, Dr Antonites' ongoing excavations at Mutamba appear to be indicating a different picture to that of the accepted scenarios of how state societies were formed. His research began from an outside perspective looking in. He sought to find the relationship between the smaller settlements on the periphery and Mapungubwe, the centre. How did these seemingly insignificant villages interact with the centre? How were the goods distributed within the greater area that was Mapungubwe? What were the demands of the under-classes as suppliers of goods for export?

Xander began with an overview of the history of the Mapungubwe region. Around AD 900 various groups moved into the Limpopo valley. The Zhizo ceramics date from this period and the nearby Shroda site, excavated by Edwin Harnisch, came into being. As trade expanded with the east coast trade route around AD 1000 a new group that is identified with the Leopards Kopje ceramics wrestled the stronghold from Shroda. K2 became this group's main site, which was surrounded by smaller sites. By AD 1220, K2 was abandoned and the development of the Mapungubwe culture began. Class structures developed and trade goods such as gold and fine Chinese porcelain became status symbols of social importance and prestige. Mapungubwe provides the opportunity for a case study to investigate the inequalities inherent in social relationships, modern class structures and cities in contrast to the smaller villages.

We were next introduced to Xander's Mutamba excavation site in the foothills to the north of the Soutpansberg. The site clearly fell into the late Mapungubwe cultural period. The Soutpansberg formed a clear cultural division with the people to the south, who were part of the Eiland culture. Mutamba thus represents a village site on the edge of the Mapungubwe state and is an apt place to investigate social boundaries on the edge of the empire. During the initial phase, random 1 m by 1 m squares were excavated, which brought to light some baked-clay floors. Good preservation resulted in the recovery of household items such as iron artefacts, ostrich eggshell beads and cowrie shells from the Indian Ocean. Flotation techniques used during excavation made the isolation and recovery of seeds possible, with wild raisin and sorghum seeds being the most common. Thousands of bone fragments represented a large range of wild and domesticated animals.

The recovery of spindle whorls – 189 to date – indicates serious cotton production in the area and a sizeable cloth-weaving industry at the site. Although ostrich shell beads were also produced, what was especially interesting was the discovery of glass beads at Mutamba. A gold bead was also found in the excavations. Such a commoner site should not have had such beads. The gold bead meant that smaller settlements were not merely cogs in the Mapungubwe machine but that they, too, had power. Hinterland sites such as Mutamba may not have had to rely on the centre for gold. For whatever reason, local leaders were keeping some gold for themselves.

The excavations at Mutamba have radically altered the understanding of simple top-down political governance from the centre to the periphery. The picture is far more nuanced and complex than thought. The Mutamba excavations show that the hinterland communities in the broader Mapungubwe area played a part in the formation of social hierarchy. The lecture ended with the question whether the finding of glass beads indicate that hinterland villages also began to be involved in two-way trade with the east coast, thus allowing what were elite goods to be traded in the greater region of Mapungubwe? This, then, begged the question whether such a state of affairs lead to the eventual disintegration of the Mapungubwe state? Xander plans to excavate at several other hinterland sites in the coming years to help answer these questions.

**Report by Graham Reeks & Law Pinto**

## Early archaeology in China – East versus West (5 September 2013)

**Professor Kathy Kuman, Lecturer in the Early and Middle Stone Ages of Southern Africa, University of the Witwatersrand**

Prof. Kuman's lecture began with a picture of that wonderful site in Xian, the terracotta army that dates from the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC. Photos showing interesting displays of stone-age cultures from Chinese museums followed. Kathy explained that the Chinese believe they have a direct link to *Homo erectus* in China. Her presentation would show how many sites there are and to what extent excavations have revealed the depth of stone-age cultures in China. Her involvement with China dates from 2007 when the president of China, Hu Jintao, paid a visit to South Africa. As part of the visit a bilateral programme in palaeosciences was entered into by China and South Africa to investigate Stone-age cultures and sites in China, with Prof. Kuman collaborating with Prof. Li Chaorong of Beijing University.

Kathy presented a brief analysis of the earliest stone tools and hominids in Africa, beginning with the simple Oldowan core and flake tools, of which the oldest so far from Gona in Ethiopia dates to 2,6 million years ago (Ma). However, the oldest site with both Oldowan-type tools and *H. habilis* remains from 2,34 Ma is from Hadar in Ethiopia. *H. habilis* also existed in Kenya and at Swartkrans around 2,0 Ma.

A map of China showing the earliest sites of hominids illustrated just how widespread the sites are. The hominid species found are far more complex than just *H. erectus*, even though a number of the sites are controversial. At Renzidong (> 2 Ma), although clearly a death trap for fauna, the artefacts found are unproven. Similarly, Longgupo in central China (2,0 Ma to 1,8 Ma) may also be a faunal site, and Yuanmou, in the south, has the earliest core and flake tools dating to 1,66 Ma to 1,0 Ma. Lantian, also in central China, has really good hominid fossils (Lantian Man) dating to 1,1 ma, which have been shown by Prof. Ron Clarke to be very close to *H. habilis*.

By 1,76 Ma, *H. ergaster* at Swartkrans was making early Acheulian tools, i.e. hand-axes and cleavers. By 1,0 Ma African hominids were a mixture of *H. ergaster* and early *H. sapiens*. But in China it appears as if the Oldowan-type tools continue through to around 0,7 Ma without the development of true Acheulian tools. The Zhoukoudian site in northern China is the most famous *H. erectus* site with over 40 fossils. Its 40 m of sediment has revealed a new tool industry: smaller tools with a lot of bipolar flaking. However, still no hand-axes or cleavers even though the site was occupied until around 0,4 Ma. The Longyadong site in central China, which has yielded around 77 000 artefacts, dates to around 0,35 Ma.

There are three major hand-axe regions in China where the poorer rock types available may



The Yunxian Man site on the Han River where two 800 000-year-old hominid crania were discovered in association with handaxes

have led to ‘tongue shaped’ distal-end hand-axes rather than the more traditional Acheulian hand-axes. Additionally, the absence of good quality rock possibly explains the lack of cleavers. The Chinese hand-axe debate also concerns itself with

the question of possible population-movement routes from the West, which may have resulted in genetic mixing or a transfer of a western technology into China.

At Bose Basin in southern China, a site that dates to 0,8 Ma, a large excavation in laterite clay has brought to light the production of tongue-shaped axes, heavy picks, but again no cleavers. At Danjiang Reservoir in central China, four terraces dating from 0,8 Ma to around 0,4 Ma have been excavated that dated. A hominid fossil was found in terrace four, dating to 0,8 Ma. The fossil exhibits both archaic and sapient traits, and has been named Yunxian man. The fossil was found with tools that can be described as crude proto-Acheulian hand-axes. A second site in central China, Luonan basin (0,8 Ma to < 0,5 Ma), produced a range of tools made from quartzite and they are most like of the Acheulian variety. The site also produced quartzite cleavers that appear to be close to Acheulian technology.

According to Prof. Kuman, the lack of good raw materials for making stone tools clearly played a role in the late development of hand-axes and cleavers in China, but it may also have been the relative isolation of China from the ‘Middle East path’ out of Africa, not only as far as developing hominids but also their tools is concerned. Modern humans only entered China around 30 000 years ago and Kathy showed slides of tools and beads from Shuidonggou in north China, which resemble more closely our South African Middle and Later Stone Age artefacts.

**Report by Graham Reeks**

## Reflections: four decades of doing archaeology (10 October 2013)

**Dr Leon ‘Jake’ Jacobson, Honorary Research Fellow at the University of the Witwatersrand**

**D**r Jacobson, more affectionately known as ‘Jake’, gave members an insiders perspective of the significant changes that have taken place in professional archaeology over the past 40 years – most for the better but some not so. Jake started his archaeological career in 1973 at the then State Museum in Windhoek, Namibia. In 1989 he was appointed assistant director of the McGregor Museum in Kimberley, from which he retired in 2011. His research has included excavations and ethnoarchaeology in north-west Namibia, from which time he drew many interesting and amusing anecdotes. His published work covers provenancing and conservation studies of ceramics, clays, gold, glass and rock art paint using computer-driven

techniques such as ‘pixie’ and ‘XRF’. His more recent work uses neutron and X-ray tomography. He is currently involved heritage museum and tourist issues, and a paper he co-authored on these aspects won the Fitzsimmons Award at the 2010 SA Museums Conference. He is currently an honorary Research Fellow at Wits University and serves on the council of the National Museum in Bloemfontein.

From the moment Jake ‘took the stand’ it became apparent that he has always been unconventional and provocative. With the inclusion of many anecdotes, he described how archaeology in southern Africa is an immensely creative discipline, rather than simply re-interpreting or adding footnotes to previous research. However, the need for long absences in the bush definitely required a sympathetic family. The accommodation also was certainly less than 5-star. This had been particularly relevant in his own case when during his early years he undertook ethnoarchaeological research in Namibia desert country, in particular in the Brandfort range, which is particularly unforgiving. He described how one’s camp near a dry river bed can be flooded without notice because of storm far away in the mountains – within minutes the camp would be gone! Another desert tale concerned the collection of grass seeds either for eating or for brewing beer. Desert grass is of course thinly distributed and collection by hand would be very time-consuming. But an ingenious method of ‘collection’ was found, namely to raid the nest of harvester ants, which collect and store grass seeds. Ethnography in a desert environment, for example with the Himba, had peculiar challenges because when a village moves they take all their possessions on their backs and there is very little left for the archaeologist.

Jake paid tribute to his many mentors at university, especially to the brilliant Max Paesak. Max was a crossword fanatic and was very good at it. He was forever doing one, but on one rare occasion he was unable to find an answer to the last clue. He asked his learned colleagues but none of them could solve the problem. The brilliant Max was nonplussed when a mechanic standing nearby and overhearing the talk, and called out the answer! Max’s philosophy, which Jake has adopted throughout is life, was ‘Keep your mind active, work hard and play hard’. Another big influence on him was the book *The Sheltering Desert* by Herno Martin, which he recommended highly. It tells the experiences of two Germans living in Namibia at the time of Second World War, who rather than being imprisoned chose to escape into the Namibian desert for two years.

Jake laid much stress on the benefits of modern technology, in particular tomography, which, according to him, was the future. It produces masses of data, but also requires powerful computers to interpret them. He is concerned about politics and archaeology. As archaeology is concerned with people, politics is inevitably involved, but past work must be seen in context. For example, should the work of archaeologists who serve in the apartheid SADF be ostracised? Unfortunately archaeology was becoming a political tool. He quoted an example from when he was at the McGregor Museum. He was asked to prove that a particular tribe had a land claim by proving that pottery found on the site was associated with the tribe! As to the future, just as he gravitated from Stone-age fieldwork to work that involved more and more scientific interpretation, he sees archaeological analysis using scientific methods as a the trend of the future. In addition, increasing emphasis will need to be placed on outreach to communities. **Report by John McManus**

**Remember: [www.archaeology.org.za](http://www.archaeology.org.za) for branch activity and books for sale**

## Between Africa and Egypt: art and archaeology of ancient Sudan (14 November 2013)

**Dr Cornelia Kleinitz, Lecturer in the Department of Egyptology and Northeast African Archaeology, Humboldt University in Berlin, Germany**

**D**r Kleinitz, who has been working on Sudanese archaeology for the past decade, told members that the Muslim state of Sudan contains the Middle Nile or Nubian culture, which transcends the third, fourth and fifth cataracts of the Nile River's six cataracts. Nubian studies were 'owned' by both Egyptologists and Africanist archaeologists since the cultures had features of both.

In 1820/21 the Ottomans conquered Sudan and European exploration started immediately thereafter. The German, Richard Lepsius (1810-1884) arranged an expedition from 1842 to 1845 to what was then known as 'Aethiopia' to investigate the remains of the Middle Nile culture. He published his findings and sketches in a book entitled *Ägypten und Aethiopia* ('Egypt and Aethiopia'). Lepsius was rather disparaging about what he found: 'The ruins were nothing but the remnants of a late art'. Even today, the Nubian culture suffers from being compared to the art of ancient Egypt, Cornelia said. Sudan's historic periods or cultures are as follows:

- Kadero Neolithic
- Kerma 2500 to 1450 BC
- Kush 1450 (?) to 1100 BC
- Black Pharaohs First millennium BC
- Meroe 270 BC to AD 300
- Medieval Christian 550 to 1450 AD
- Islamic Post 1450 AD

The **Kerma Culture** developed at the third cataract. Here are found the Deffluffla ruins, a mud-brick building surrounded by a city. Lepsius called this an 'Egyptian outpost', although at that time the walls of the ruins stood 20 m high. Of course, he could only see one exposed building – today it is known that this building was surrounded by a great city. Rather than seeing this city in Egyptian terms archaeologists are now viewing it from an African aspect as well. The reason for this is the shape of the structures. Compared to the square form of Egyptian structures, Kerma buildings incorporate the principle of roundness and circularity, which is very much a sub-Saharan African archaeological form. Today the old walls have been shaped above the ground to give an idea of the complex.

A few kilometres from Duki Gel in the vicinity of Deffluffla lies a cemetery that hosts 35 000 graves and tumuli dating from 1750 to 1550 BC. The dead were buried in spacious pits, lying on beds that were surrounded by beautiful pots and animal sacrifices. Large royal tombs and funeral temples in the cemetery indicate that human and animal sacrifice was practised on a massive scale. Some 4 000 cattle skulls have been found in the burial site, which, for a desert region, is an immense display of power and wealth. In the surrounding area, boulders and rocks are covered by petroglyphs. Cattle images dominate and the aesthetics of the forms must have been of great importance, as reflected by the shapes of horns and the patterns on the coats of the cattle. Some images even have multiple horns. The surprising aspect is that over thousands of years the form of the cattle engravings at Kerma, Kush and Meroe have basically remained the same. The Kermans were called the 'Wretched Kush' by the Egyptians, who destroyed the civilisation in 1450 BC, Egyptianised the population and introducing the cult of Amun.

The **Kush culture** developed at the fourth cataract. As at the third cataract, an early cattle aesthetic is found at the fourth cataract as indicated by numerous cattle petroglyphs and the remains of cattle skulls in the area. In addition, rock gongs and percussion stones represent a visual and acoustic world. A rock art salvage project in an area being flooded by a new storage dam in which Cornelia was involved not only recorded over 1 000 rock art sites but 1 100 percussion zones represented by 150 rock gongs and 200 rock gong complexes situated near almost every rock art site. This was the largest study of rock gongs or percussion idiophones ever made.

The ruins of the Gebel Barkal temple are found at Barkal Mountain, which is believed to be the southern birthplace of the ram-headed god of Amun. A large natural rock image stands out from one side of the mountain, although little of the temple is visible today. The rule of the Kush was ended by an Egyptian invasion in 1100 BC and this was followed by the 'dark ages' and the eventual formation of a local Kush elite that adopted Egyptian funerary customs and began building pyramids as tombs at the beginning of the first millennium BC. These pyramids were not as large as those at Giza, but they were greater in number. The biggest one, Taharqo, which dominates the Nuri royal cemetery, is 52 m high and consists of two pyramids, one within the other. Interestingly, Kushite grave chambers were situated underneath the pyramids rather than inside them. They also differed from Egyptian grave chambers in that the human images depicted in the wall decorations are not Egyptian but Kushite as far as dress and caps is concerned.

From the Kush elite arose the 'Aethiopian' dynasty of Black Pharaohs who ruled the Kush for about a thousand years in the first millennium BC. Five of them ruled Egypt as well for about a century. One of these, King Piye, united the Cushitic and Egyptian regions under his rule, which resulted in strong Egyptianisation.

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC the centre of power moved to Meroe at the fifth cataract. The culture was still Kushite in nature. Meroe grew into a massive city and is referred to today as the 'Birmingham of Africa' since it had a large iron smelting and manufacturing industry. Hellenistic and Roman architectural influences from trade and conflict are found at Meroe, but the culture had its own aesthetics and art like the Venus of Meroe celebrates the originality of that culture. A line of 76 royals, including queens, ruled Meroe. An as yet undeciphered Meroitic language with both hieroglyphic and a cursive script was developed. The Meroe culture has provided much pottery, fine-ware, painting, metalwork, weapons and indications of milk libation.

The enclosed royal or northern cemetery boasts many small pyramids, but these were not as well constructed as those at the fourth cataract. Here the pyramids have a rubble core with an outer lining instead of being constructed of cut stone throughout. Some of the pyramids that were taken apart by Lepsius in the 1840s have now been rebuilt. Queen Amanishakheto's tomb incorporates a mix of Egyptian, Meroe and African designs, but what is fascinating is the incorporation of African aesthetics, such as decorations of 'happy' (read 'thin') or fat queens, which contrasts distinctly with the Egyptian aesthetic. The royal grave goods are now from the deceased's life rather than being manufactured specially for the burial.





A day's journey into the desert from Meroe lies Naga, a mysterious site with square temples and an oval enclosure. Water for the town was stored in a 200 m diameter *hafia* or water tank, which is still partly operational today. Here lies the temple of Amun from the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD; the Hathor chapel; the temple for the Apedemah lion god whose huge murals depict both a king and a queen, and a three-headed, four-armed lion god; the Moon temple modelled on

Egyptian temples; and the so-called 'Roman Kiosk, which meshes Roman and Egyptian styles. The Meorites built temples for their own gods, which were worshipped beside the Egyptian gods. Another lion temple is found at the great enclosure of Musawarat es Sufra, the main sanctuary of Apedemah. This 200 m wide enclosure and structural labyrinth has little primary decoration, but tens of thousands of mainly human motives in what must constitute 'officially' sanctioned graffiti. Here one also finds the southernmost Latin inscription. In the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD cattle images were still engraved. But this is where the cattle petroglyphs end, for now the camel is introduced to the Sahara. The construction of pyramids also came to an end and internments of humans and animals again take place in tumuli.

Cornelia Kleinitz closed her lecture with a look at the future of archaeology in Sudan. The Nile Valley from the third to the fifth cataracts will change drastically since a series of very large reservoirs are planned to be constructed along the river. The area's archaeological heritage will to a large extent disappear under water. Archaeological teams from all over the world are now working there to record the archaeology. Qatar alone is financing 29 archaeological salvage projects.

**Report by Reinoud Boers**

## EXCURSIONS AND OUTINGS

**Behind the scenes at the Rock Art Research Institute, Origins Centre, University of the Witwatersrand (24 August 2013)**

**With Professor David Pearce and Drs Sam Challis and Mark McGranaghan of the Rock Art Research Institute, and an introduction by Steven Sacks, Director of the Origins Centre**

On a surprisingly cold Saturday morning, 25 members and friends of the Society met at the Origins Centre for a tour inner sanctum of the Rock Art Research Institute (RARI). First we were addressed, however, by Steven Sacks, director of the Origins Centre. He outlined many of the plans that are afoot for the centre, including an expansion of the buildings, educational programmes for both adults and children, and a music programme scheduled for October. This will feature a collection of 92 rock gongs. The indentations in the rocks are being studied by ethnomusicologists, who are making a set of hand-held gongs and working on a piece of music. Another Origins project will connect medicine, art, the sciences and archaeology.

We then proceeded to RARI's library where we were addressed by Prof. David Pearce, the Director of RARI. He gave credit to Dr David Lewis-Williams who appreciated the 'complex symbolic and metaphoric representation of San religious beliefs and practices' and, in 1978, developed the institute's research programme. He is still involved at RARI as emeritus professor. The institute has a staff of six academic researchers and several technicians.

We divided into three groups and joined our leaders, David Pearce, Sam Challis and Mark McGranaghan for a tour of the facilities. My group was led by David Pearce and we began in the securely monitored and temperature controlled room that housed the magnificent work of Harold Pager. This collection was made possible by Dr Roberts of the construction company Murray and Roberts, who had a deep concern for our cultural heritage. He purchased the Pager collection to prevent it from being split up and sold piecemeal. The collection toured the country and passed on to Wits University on Dr Robert's death. The company financed the restoration of the collection by specialists of the National Cultural Museum. This was necessary as the sketches had repeatedly been rolled up and unrolled during their travels, and the work took a painstaking two years.

Harald Pager, an Austrian artist, became interested in Bushman rock art and spent two years with his wife at Ndedema Gorge in the Drakensberg from 1967. With the keen eye of an artist and designer he recorded a total of 3 909 images in 17 shelters. Many images were very fine and unsuitable for photography, or very small, measuring only 1 cm to 2 cm wide. Pager developed a technique using a black and white film to photograph the rock face in sections of about one square metre. From these he made life-size prints. Taking these prints back to Ndedema Gorge, he coloured in the images with oil paints. Some of the faintest paintings he outlined in pencil first. He took care to record all the flakes and any damage, which assist today's specialists to determine the rate of deterioration. Processing the paintings involved cutting the photographs at the natural cracks and steps in the rock face, where after he glued the pieces together to form a life-sized mosaic. The paintings from Ndedema are invaluable as a research resource, not only for South Africa but internationally as well.

The Pager room contained a series of life-size pull-out screens to which the drawings were attached. We were able to see the intricate details of his art, which are immensely interesting and a source of wonder and speculation. While at one time people believed that Bushman paintings were a record of daily life, language researcher Wilhelm Bleek recorded in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that 'they were ideas that most deeply moved the Bushman mind and filled it with religious feelings'.

The second room we visited houses RARI's total collection of slides, maps and photographs. This highly organised collection is moving towards digitalisation. Photographs, of which there are many, are being converted to slides. Research material is catalogued by site and acquired collections are catalogued under the names of the photographers. The 100 000 slides are invaluable for research. The Bleek collection, which was put on microfilm in 1960, is now available on DVD. Map collections are catalogued by site. Two sets are made of slides, one for use in the field and one for the archives.

The third room contained tracings and drawings. They are rolled up in labelled boxes on the shelves in an orderly arrangement. The drawers contain records of historical material and collections of paper copies. Watercolour drawings, archaeological surveys and other material related to South Africa, as well as some from the USA are also filed here. We noticed drawers containing the work of Walter Battiss and Pat Vinnecombe amongst many others. Of particular interest to us was the drawer containing the collection of Elywn Jenkins, our long-time lecturer and member. There is also a well-arranged rock art stamp collection.

One of the hazards for paintings is the weather, which cause damage not so much because of moisture, but as a result of the mineralisation of water crystals. Dirt also contains harmful minerals and another risk is dirt. As we progressed, things became ever more technical. There is an interesting collection of machines designed to digitise the slide collections. However, many of the copies are degrading faster than the slides. In the process of scanning all site markings are checked and rechecked. This is indeed high-end photography. At our last stop, tracings and drawings are processed using special papers. The coding of colours is a very careful process. The final aspect is the digitalisation of the drawings. Computers enable minute details to be highlighted by isolating and enlarging.

The morning was totally fascinating! The art of the ancient Bushman, created using only the materials of the earth, are subject to intense research by teams of well-trained scientists and technicians using all the available high-tech equipment.

**Report by Gerry Gallow**

## **Public art walking tour of Johannesburg's inner city, with lunch at the Rand Club (14 September 2013)**

### ***With Jo Buitendach of Past Experiences***

**J**o Buitendach is passionate about Johannesburg's inner city and spends time walking and researching it, and meeting the people that live and work there. Jo aims to support small business in the city with her walking tours, hoping her visitors will interact with the city and those who live there. We joined Jo for a walk through parts of the inner city including Newtown.

In the 1890s Newtown was a slum, but later was the site for the Johannesburg power station, of which the Turbine Hall is all that remains today. Apart from cooling towers and a compound for electrical and other municipal workers, Newtown also housed Johannesburg's fruit and vegetable market. Present-day Newtown is considered the cultural precinct of the Johannesburg inner city and has been and is still being rejuvenated. The regeneration of the inner city has included the commissioning of public art, the biggest evidence of which are over 1 000 carved wooden heads made out of railway sleepers placed on plinths throughout the Newtown precinct and Johannesburg as a whole. The artists, Simon and Dan Guambe, Petrus Matsolo and Joe Matola intend these heads to reflect African diversity. They symbolise how for the better part of the last century, Johannesburg was home to thousands of migrants from South Africa and the rest of Africa.

We passed the Department of Home Affairs building that is on the site of the old Native Pass Office of the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek. A blue heritage plaque commemorates the site. After the Anglo-Boer War, the pass office, as well as the ZAR-era pass laws enforced by it, was retained by the British who needed black mineworkers to restart mining operations. Next door in Ferreirasdorp we viewed the Origami-like pigeon statue, which greets those who enter the inner city from the west. This artwork is part of Johannesburg's 'Gateway Project' that has placed a big

artwork on the main entry points into the inner city. The 3 m high pigeon sculpture in Market Street's Pigeon Square was a collaboration between artists Gerhard Marx and Maja Marx. Constructed from steel, the pigeons reference the oriental paper folding technique known as origami and pays homage to the Chinese community that has played a significant role in this part of the city. It also refers the traditional presence of pigeons in the city and serves as a perching pedestal for the vast resident pigeon community of Ferreirasdorp. The work acknowledges the relationship between the pigeons and the local community, who give them food and water daily.

Chinese people were brought to Johannesburg during the 1890s as indentured labour and many of them immigrated back to Johannesburg in the early 1900s. It is estimated that by 1904, almost 180 Chinese businesses were operating in and area known as the 'Cantonese Quarter' or 'Chinatown'. This historic area now has two huge Dragon pillars in Commissioner Street that welcome one back to 'Chinatown'. The precinct is one of the oldest in Johannesburg and contains one of its oldest buildings, the Chinese Club Building (substantially altered in the 1940s). Although many businesses have relocated in recent years to the 'new' Chinatown in Cyrildene, some restaurants and shops remain and there are proposals to redevelop the area. The Swallows Inn, the oldest Chinese restaurant in Johannesburg, is still open for business in the original Chinatown.

Ferreirasdorp, a mining area situated on the outskirts of the original Johannesburg, is home to a close-knit Hindu and Muslim community and is one of Johannesburg's most vibrant areas. It still has a small-town feel and is often called a 'village within a city'. Beautiful early 20<sup>th</sup> century architecture surrounds you as you walk through this bustling area, which for many decades has provided cultural items to migrant labour from all over southern Africa. From Basotho blankets to muthi shops, all can be found here. Many 'Wholesale Cash and Carry' firms also operate from the

basements of the high-rise flats, supplying goods that are bought for export to the rest of Africa. Our path took us to 25 Fox Street, the address for Chancellor House opposite the Magistrate's Court. Between 1952 and 1956 Chancellor House was Indian-owned, which allowed Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo to set up a law practice here, helping those accused of crimes against the state, especially contraventions of the pass laws. By 2010 it had fallen into disrepair but has now been rehabilitated as a national heritage site. While not open to the public, it has historical displays against the windows and is lit up at night. Opposite Chancellor House stands a 6 m high steel statue, 'The Shadow Boxer'. Inscribed with Mandela's words, 'In the ring, rank, age, colour and wealth are irrelevant', it stands as tribute to his fight for the freedom of the nation. An interesting feature of the sculpture is that special lighting allows the sculpture to cast a shadow onto the Johannesburg Magistrate's Court building at night.



*The statue of Mandela in front of the Magistrate's Court building (photo: H Geber)*

Back to Newtown and the Market Theatre area. The old Indian Fruit Market was converted

into the Market Theatre which opened in June 1976 and was one of the only venues where blacks and whites performed on stage together for non-racial audiences. In the early 1980s supporters of the Market Theatre Foundation proposed building a music club where local musicians could play and hold workshops as part of the plan to develop Newtown into a cultural precinct. This came to reality in 1986 when Kippiess International Jazz Club, named after legendary saxophonist Kippie Moeketsi, opened to become one of Johannesburg's most famous jazz venues. The design was based on the Edwardian public toilet block nearby, which dates from 1913. The club was closed in 2005 when severe structural problems were discovered. However, it was declared an interim heritage site to protect it from demolition. In 2009, work commenced on the restoration of the building and a life-size bronze sculpture of Kippie Moeketsi was unveiled. The sculpture, by artists Guy du Toit and Egon Tania, is a detailed portrait of the man and his instrument, seated on an ordinary kitchen chair with an empty one alongside, ready for a passerby interested in a photo opportunity or perhaps for a musician who likes to imagine what it felt like playing alongside him.

In front of the Bassline music venue across the square stands a bronze sculpture of legendary songstress Brenda Fassie by artist Angus Taylor. This was created in 2006 as part of the *Sunday Times* Heritage Project to mark the 100th year anniversary of the newspaper. The sculpture features Brenda sitting on a stool behind a stage microphone. The text superimposed on Fassie's arms and legs consists of quotes by the artist on her relationship with the media.

As we walked through the areas described we were amazed by the graffiti. Jo advised us that graffiti came to Johannesburg much later than elsewhere, only in the late 1990s to early 2000s. In New York the trend began in the 1960s. However, Johannesburg is now becoming a graffiti destination and boasts street art by numerous local and international artists. Jo related that there is a distinct culture and respect amongst graffiti artists – they are generally not paid and street art is seldom repeated.

We finished our tour at the historic Rand Club where we were able to wander through the club to view the paintings and displays, as well as the wonderful library and impressive function rooms, before partaking in a lovely lunch of open sandwiches and coffee. The Rand Club as it stands today was occupied in December of 1904 and the exterior of the club has changed little over the years. The building is one of the first in Johannesburg to have a steel frame clad in concrete. The frame was fabricated in the United Kingdom and was pre-erected there before being shipped to South Africa. A magnificent glass dome with stained glass designs covers the central staircase. The whole club was given a complete refurbishment and the dome was restored following a fire in June 2005.

A fascinating detail is that a central vacuum-cleaning system was installed in the club when it was first constructed; one can still see the vacuum connection points throughout the building. The original manually operated lift is still in operation, albeit with a different motor.

Report by Anne Raeburn

## Outing to the Olifantsnek battle site and year-end lunch (17 November 2013)

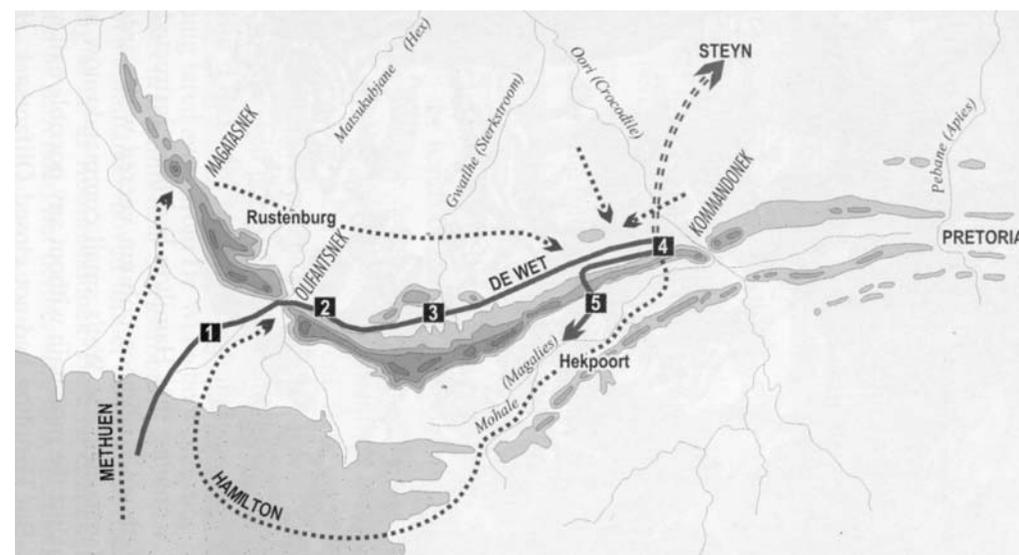
**With Vincent Carruthers, historian and conservationist, and author of the book 'The Magaliesberg'**

Forty ArchSoc members and guests arrived on the Retief farm below the Olifantsnek pass in the Magaliesberg to hear Vincent Carruthers talk on the lead-up to and the battle of Olifantsnek towards the end of the Anglo-Boer War. Vincent is an authority on the

Magaliesberg biosphere, and in particular on confrontations that took place there between the Boers and the British. Alan Retief, who is a descendent of farm's owners at the time the battle occurred on the farm was present for the talk. The farm has been owned by the Retief family since 1884. Our party stood on the site of the British position facing the kloof where the Boers were entrenched. Vincent produced a camera obscura photo taken at the time from where the party was now standing, which helped to our understanding of the event.

After their early failures elsewhere, the British had driven the Boers back to the northern and western areas of South Africa by the first half of 1900. Mafeking was relieved on 18 May and the British commander Lord Roberts entered Pretoria on 5 June. The last formal battle of the war took place at Diamond Hill on 11 and 12 June 1900. The British, including Lord Roberts, thought the war was virtually over. Lord Roberts had a huge army with which to finish the war, with troop numbers that exceeded the white population of the country at that time! In fact, some demoralised Boer leaders were contemplating terminating the war. However, President Steyn of the Orange Free State rallied the Boer generals and it was agreed to continue the fight to the 'bitter end' by conducting a guerrilla war led by De la Rey, probably the best general on either side in the war.

De La Rey took command of the western Transvaal. Olifantspoort was a vital pass for the Boers and they fought several battles in the region prior to the Olifantsnek engagement. Control of Rustenburg, which was a key point for both armies, changed hands no less than six times during this period, including twice when the British were led by the renowned Baden-Powell of Mafeking fame. He marched through Western Transvaal virtually unopposed and entered Rustenburg on 14 June, garrisoned Olifantsnek and proceeded to Pretoria. While in Pretoria, the alternation of the occupation of Rustenburg began during which two British relief columns were



De Wet's escape (Image: The Magaliesberg by Vincent Carruthers, p. 309)

- 1: 13 August 1900: De Wet reaches Roodewal
- 2: 14 August: He crosses Olifantsnek and hides on the north
- 3: 15-17 August: The commando rests near Kromrivier
- 4: 18 August: De Wet challenges Baden-Powell at Kommandonek. President Steyn proceeds to join Kruger.
- 5: 19 August: De Wet recrosses the Magaliesberg at Remhoogte

defeated and Baden-Powell was finally besieged in Rustenburg. Lord Methuen force-marched his troops from Krugersdorp to relieve Baden-Powell and to force the Boers up against the Magaliesberg massif in the hoping of trapping them there and possibly achieving a quick conclusion to the war. After successfully driving the Boers off the pass on 21 July, the British moved the bulk of their forces to join Lord Roberts' main offensive against Louis Botha who was moving towards Delagoa Bay. However, Colonel Kekewich was left behind with the task of building forts around the pass as part of the British strategy of containing the Boers. Later in the morning, the ArchSoc party, led by Vincent, climbed the promontories behind the Hunters Lodge Hotel, which overlook the pass, to see the remains of two of the Rice forts. The collapsed dry-wall stonework could be seen but the corrugated iron walls, naturally, are no longer extant. A panoramic view of the surrounding countryside was had from the positions of the forts.

After the battle, the British evacuated the Olifantsnek positions, which opened the way for one of the great escape stories of the war. Elsewhere a large British force had failed to catch General De Wet's commando, but after crossing the Vaal River De Wet, who was hotly pursued, decided to escape to the north via Olifantsnek. Lord Methuen instructed Col. Hamilton, who was in position to cut off the retreat, to retake the pass and prevent the escape. Hamilton chose to try and engage de Wet, failed to find him and when Methuen finally arrived at Olifantsnek the Boers had passed through – surprised to find no opposition! One redeeming feature of Hamilton's performance is revealed in his book *Ant-Commando*, as follows: 'In 1900, at Olifantsnek in the Transvaal, I won the heart of a little Boer girl aged about twelve by saving her pet calf from the clutches of my own men at the cost of half a bottle of whisky, which by some miracle I was able to produce from my Cape cart. The scene rises up before me as a picture: the fair-haired child clinging on desperately to the neck of the terrified calf; the ragged, hungry troopers, half sorry for the child but full set on roast veal for supper. Above us towered the rocky "Pass of the elephants" through which De Wet had just given us the slip, and the smoke of his camp fires were still curling up into the sky. So now that the pet calf was saved, the pretty little enemy girl condescended to tell the old khaki commander all about everything ... Below Olifantsnek perhaps that little girl still lives.' Alan Retief agreed that the girl was possibly a past relative.

Had the British stopped the escape of de Wet group the war may well have ended. In fact, it continued for a further two years until 31 May 1902.

Report by John McManus

## ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM 2013

### *Archaeology of the global south*

19 October 2013

### The Middle Stone Age at 100 ka: the story of ochre

**Dr Sarah Wurz, Senior Researcher at the Evolutionary Sciences Institute, University of the Witwatersrand**

Dr Wurz opened the series of lectures with her talk on ochre in the Middle Stone Age (MSA). She discussed the ochre toolkits from Blombos cave, dating to ~100 000 years ago, in the context of engraved ochres from Klasies River and Pinnacle Point, dating to the same time range. This was to show that there was a definite, if not well-known convention of ochre production and engraving 100 000 years ago. Sarah's main research focus is stone tool technology and related cognitive development during this period.

From 100 000 years onwards, significant quantities of ochre have been found at almost every excavation site in the southern Cape, but notably at Klasies River Mouth, Pinnacle Point and Blombos. It occurs in a variety of forms and is associated with intriguing and complex behavioural patterns. Ochre is commonly interpreted as evidence for symbolism because of strong ethnographic evidence for the symbolic meaning of the colour red and the use of ochre as a colouring agent. The people of this time were *Homo sapiens*, proficient hunter-gatherers. They were people like us.

Ochre has featured in debates about symbolic culture for a long time. It is a hydrated iron oxide with sufficient haematite content to be used as pigment. It comes in colours ranging from deep red to yellow, and is turned red by heating. It is frequently used as a colouring agent, particularly in rock art and body decoration. Diverse uses of ochre may be summarised as follows:

| Functional applications           | Symbolic applications                    |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Hide preservative                 | Pigment for parietal art                 |
| Adhesive ingredient               | Pigment for colouring tools, trade goods |
| Topical medicine/insect repellent | Cosmetic/self-adornment                  |
| Birthing lubricant                | Sham menstruation hypothesis             |
| Vegetable preservative            | Substrate for engraving                  |
| Internal medicine                 | Grave goods                              |

Sarah Wurz then went on to discuss ochre found at the three major sites.

**Pinnacle Point** consists of a complex of caves occurring right on the coast near Mossel Bay. The site includes an extensive MSA deposit with multiple occupations, dated to between 39 000 and 162 000 years ago, and consisting of uncemented deposits with intermittent hearth ash. Many fragments of ochre have been found, including an engraved piece with 14 facets. The largest pieces of ochre show evidence of use, having been either ground or scraped. The colour of all the pieces is a deep, saturated red and the source has been located some 5 km north of the site. The faunal assemblage is limited to shellfish, collected primarily from nearby tidal pools.

**Klasies River Mouth:** the deposit of one of its main sites is 21 m deep, indicating that it was a favoured site. Occupation dates from 150 000 to 60 000 years ago and fossils show the presence of anatomically modern humans. At level 14, intensively used pieces of ochre were found, including an ochre pebble bearing a sequence of linear incisions. Other artefacts include worked pieces referred to as 'crayons' and notched bone with ochre in the depths of the notches. The bone may have been used in ochre-related activities, but this is speculative.

**Blombos Cave** is situated on a cliff high above the sea near Still Bay and discoveries at this site have changed the perception of the MSA. A lot of ochre has been found, mainly from the earliest phase, and the source is thought to be the Bokkeveld Group deposits that are about 50 km away.

There were 1 534 pieces greater than 10 mm in length. Two deliberately engraved pieces, the larger of these with a cross-hatched design, have been dated to 77 000 years ago. It is clear that the designs on both pieces result from deliberate intent and they have been described as the earliest representation of art. In 2008, the ground-breaking recovery of two *in situ* ochre processing toolkits pushed the origins of possible symbolic thought back to 100 000 years ago. The toolkits consist of abalone shells *Haliotis midae* with grindstones. Kit 1 has ochre stains from a pigment-rich mixture left inside it. The pebble found inside the shell has use-wear marks showing that ochre was ground with it. The upper face is stained with red ochre and encrusted with fragments of porous bone that would have once been rich in fat and marrow. Kit 2 shows striations caused by sand, indicating mixing with a finger. Analysis has shown that the mixture contained three different kinds of ochre. These finds provide a benchmark for early evolution of cognitive abilities. Not only is it the earliest evidence of the use of a container, it is also the earliest known evidence of people processing ochre, mixing it with fat, bone and organic compounds to make a pigment rich mixture. The habitual exploitation of ochre is interpreted as evidence for symbolism, a proxy for the origin of language and as a key element of ‘symbolic’ and ‘modern’ human behaviour. In a wider context it is likely that there was continuity in the production and symbolic use of ochre throughout the MSA sites in the southern Cape.

Report by Pamela Küstner

## The archaeology of the Neolithisation process in southern Africa

**Professor Karim Sadr, Head of the School of Geography, Archaeology and Environmental Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand**

Neolithisation (even the speaker stumbled over this word) is a term derived from ‘neolithic’ as used in European archaeology. It refers to the processes in which food production emerged in societies with tools made of stone as distinct from metal. In his highly suggestive and stimulating talk, Karim Sadr applied it specifically to the processes, beginning a little over 2 000 years ago, by which certain groups of hunter-gatherers in southern Africa took to owning sheep.

An old idea, dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when European colonists saw ‘Hottentots’ and Bushmen as separate races, was that sheep and cattle had originally been brought to the arid western regions of southern Africa by groups of Hottentots migrating from East Africa. After World War II, anthropologists came to see Khoekhoe herders and Bushman hunter-gatherers as belonging to the same physical type. Archaeologists now argued that herding in the arid regions originated when groups of Bushman hunter-gatherers in northern Botswana acquired first sheep then cattle from Bantu-speaking farmers who were advancing into the better-watered eastern regions of South Africa. These hunter-gatherers-turned-herders then spread south and east, in the process becoming the historically known Khoekhoe.

The ‘Kalahari debates’ of the 1980s and 1990s led scholars to focus much more than before on the nature of historical ‘interactions’ between herders and hunter-gatherers. Members of one school of thought argued that there was no sharp division between Khoekhoe herders and Bushman hunter-gatherers, and posited instead that there had been a spectrum of societies ranging from hunter-gatherers to hunter-gatherers-with-sheep to fully fledged herding groups. Prof. Sadr has been a leading exponent of this idea. His lecture to the symposium drew on new lines of argument to explain why some hunter-gatherer groups might have taken to owning sheep in the first place.

He approached this topic via an intriguing excursus into ideas about how and why food-producing emerged among hunter-gatherer societies in south-western Asia 10 000 or 12 000 years ago. In the 1930s, Gordon Childe argued that climatic change at the end of the Pleistocene had led to increasing aridity in the region, forcing hunter-gatherer societies to make more intensive use of plant and animal food resources. This led to the beginnings of domestication, the production of greater surpluses and ultimately to the emergence of the politically and stratified ‘complex societies’ that are often labelled in the literature as ‘civilisations’. Variations of this argument, all of which put the emphasis on the effects of environmental stress, remained influential among archaeologists until the 1990s.

In recent years, however, archaeologists in south-western Asia and elsewhere have begun to challenge this model. Evidence from sites like Göbekli Tepe in Turkey indicates that in some societies greater degrees of complexity were emerging *before* the beginnings of farming. Researchers like Canadian Brian Hayden suggest that at the end of the Pleistocene, hunter-gatherer societies in the region were becoming more specialised. A range of new technological developments enabled them to shift from exploiting limited and fluctuating resources to utilising more abundant and stable ones – so-called *r*-selected resources. This in turn made it possible for individuals to compete for social prestige, using these resources without adversely affecting their subsistence base through over-exploitation.

In this new, competitive social environment, the more pushy males were able to start turning themselves into Big Men by establishing a slightly greater degree of control over food resources and so accumulating surpluses used by them to gain more prestige, status and political power. The holding of public feasts, an activity that is well-attested in the modern ethnographic literature on hunting and gathering societies, may have been an important means of doing this. Material expressions of the emergence of a social stratum made up of influential Big Men and their families may be seen in the development of an architecture of prestige at places like Göbekli Tepe. In due course, the closer management of food resources by this stratum led to the beginnings of domestication and hence to the production of greater surpluses, and the growth of ‘civilisations’. The older model argues that environmental stress experienced by hunter-gatherer societies led to domestication and hence the production of greater surpluses, which in turn provided the basis for social and political stratification. The newer model turns this around by arguing that it was the prior development of social and political stratification in hunter-gatherer societies that provided the incentive for domestication.

Prof. Sadr went on to examine the implications of the newer model for understanding the origins and spread of domestic animals, in the form of sheep, in western southern Africa. The archaeological evidence makes clear that sheep were brought to the subcontinent by at least 200 to 100 BC, several centuries before the advent of farming peoples. They were rapidly taken up by numbers of hunter-gatherer groups in suitable grazing areas all the way to the southern coasts of the Cape. But, Prof. Sadr argued, the evidence suggests that they were important less as sources of



Göbekli Tepe – a site revealing greater complexity prior to farming [Image: Inside the Neolithic Mind, by David Lewis-Williams]

subsistence than as sources of prestige and status for their owners. The groups that incorporated them continued to depend primarily on hunting and gathering for their subsistence: they were hunter-gatherers-with sheep, not herders. It was only much later that some of them – no doubt with Big Men in the lead – began to turn to full-scale herding.

As for the question of who brought the sheep to southern Africa in the first place, Karim Sadr suggested that it was probably small groups of people who ‘infiltrated’ southwards from East Africa over a long period and became absorbed within hunting and gathering societies. Some linguists now argue that the languages spoken today by Khoekhoe people in southern Africa may have their roots in languages once spoken in East Africa. If this is so, we are back with an element of the old 19<sup>th</sup> century idea. Here is another important story to be told. **Report by John Wright**

## China unearthed in Africa: Chinese ceramics from archaeological excavations in southern Africa

**Professor Alexander Duffey, art historian and acting manager of the University of Pretoria Heritage Collections**

Prof. Duffey’s lecture presented both the historical and archaeological truth behind the importation of Chinese ceramics. Contrary to popular belief, there was not a significant trade in Chinese ceramics with the African trading peoples of eastern and southern Africa. This is demonstrated by the fact that generally only a very small collection of shards of Chinese ceramics have been found at archaeological sites in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. The inference is that ceramic items were more likely to have been gifts to African chiefs as tokens of goodwill for bilateral trade. Although trade items did migrate from Africa to China and vice versa, it was through the intermediate trade routes of Sri Lanka (Ceylon), India and Arab countries, as well as Ethiopia and Egypt. Later the Portuguese and Dutch added to the mix of trading nations in the Indian Ocean. What was clear is that China’s indirect trade networks with east Africa developed over five major Chinese dynasties, namely the Tang (618–908), the Song (960–1279), the Yuan (1279–1368), the Ming (1368–1644) and to the middle of the Qing (1644–1912).

Prof. Duffey’s lecture was illustrated throughout with slides of the ceramic shards recovered from the excavations. The earliest shards found in Africa dating to the Tang dynasty were found at the Egyptian site of al-Fustat. They are of white Xing-yao ware and the quantity found clearly indicates that the items at this site were a trade commodity. Recently the base of a Xing-yao bowl was found in northern Mozambique near Inhambane. By the late 10<sup>th</sup> century Arab traders were trading along the east African coast as far south as Sofala (Bilad as-Sufālah or ‘The Land of Gold’). By the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the coastal communities were the gateways to the interior and the Arab traders were exploiting raw materials such as gold, ivory, copper and exotic woods. Chinese Song-dynasty celadon and glazed Persian wares migrated inland to places such as Great Zimbabwe. Chinese ceramics appear to have inspired Mapungubwean potters to copy the Yuan dynasty’s shaped spouted kettle.

The Ming dynasty lasted nearly 300 years and clearly the earliest Ming pieces were part of the Arab–Sri Lankan trade routes. Fine quality Ming wares dominated the more commercial wares in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, but archaeological evidence indicates that this trend had been reversed by the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Ming celadon shards have been found in excavations in Botswana, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Mozambique. By the early 1500s the Portuguese had reached Chinese ports and were

bringing huge quantities of silks, spices and Ming porcelain to the east coast of Africa and Europe. They operated a trading station some 300 km inland on the then navigable Save River in Mozambique and established more forts, churches or trading stations throughout Zimbabwe and Mozambique in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Excavations at Great Zimbabwe and Khami, and at Sena, Manyikeni and Angoche in Mozambique have revealed quantities of Ming and Qing blue and white porcelain dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards, as well as blue and white Shunzhi (1644–1661) or Kangxi (1662–1735) porcelain.



Chinese Song dynasty (960–1279) Celadon ceramic sherds from Great Zimbabwe (left) and Ming dynasty (ca 1400) Celadon sherds from Mapungubwe (four ruffled sherds on the far right). (Image: National Museum, Cape Town, and the University of Pretoria)



Ming blue-and-white Wanli (1572–1620) sherds found at Mutoko, the Portuguese fair at Luanze in Zimbabwe. (Courtesy, Mutoko Museum, Zimbabwe)

By the 17<sup>th</sup> century the Dutch East India Company (VOC) began taking over the east African trade from the Portuguese. Early Qing porcelain was traded to Europe, but large quantities were also imported into Cape Town. This included both the utilitarian domestic ware (‘kraakwaren’), as well as finer blue and white porcelain. Both types have been found in many excavations in Cape Town and some of the early inland towns such as Stellenbosch, Franschhoek and Graaff Reinet. Prof. Duffey completed his lecture with slides of complete Jiajing ware cups and bowls discovered in the *Espardarte* wreck found on the Ilha de Moçambique. Over a seven-year period of excavations some 960 pieces of porcelain were recovered, of which 501 pieces were intact or nearly so. There are some 2 700 recorded shipwrecks on the east African coast, although to date only 12 have been explored on the Mozambique coast. **Report by Graham Reeks**

## Recent advances in the characterisation and direct dating of southern African rock art paints

**Professor David Pearce, Director of the Rock Art Research Institute, University of the Witwatersrand**

Prof. Pearce’s lecture outlined recent research into the composition and dating of Later Stone Age (LSA) rock art paints from areas in South Africa. He showed that paintings at various rock art sites like Robberg, Klasies River Mouth and Matjies River Shelter could be dated

by the association of shells, charcoal and carbon attached to the stones. He discussed the composition of various coloured paints and how they relate to our wider understanding of LSA rock art in southern Africa. Dates obtained by researchers in 2003 from northern Drakensberg rock paintings range from 2965 BP.

David's new work on rock paintings in Maclear shows that the direct radiocarbon dating is now possible when carbon from soot in the paint itself can be sampled and dated. He and his colleagues have developed an improved pre-treatment protocol for the radiocarbon dating of black pigments in San rock art. Their findings were published in 2011. Some of the dates obtained so far go back as far as 3200 BP, about 250 years earlier than the dates recorded in the northern Drakensberg.

**Report by Hilary Geber**

## Recovering the Batau: an integrated approach to reconstructing the history of a Sotho-speaking group of people

**Dr J A van Schalkwyk is Senior Curator at the Ditsong Cultural History Museum, Pretoria**

According to the *Transvaal Native Affairs Department short history of the native tribes of the Transvaal* of 1905, the Batau, or 'the people of the Lion tribe' are said to be descended from the Swazis of the east of South Africa. They were said to have subsequently become 'subject to the Bapedi chief and from that time adopted the Sepedi language and customs'. This report also states that, 'After the Ba-Matau had become vassals of the Bapedi they took an active part in nearly all the wars the latter had with both white and black. They have lost their original nationality, and are now looked upon as Bapedi-Basuto.'

In his attempt to reconstruct the history of the Batau, Dr van Schalkwyk used publications, oral evidence, surveys, museum collections, including material collected by Dr Beukes in 1934/35, and material collected in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The Transvaal Native Affairs report referred to above, documents 11 independent but historically-related chiefdoms of the Batau, which is a small group within of the approximately 120 independent chiefdoms classified as Pedi and referred to archaeologically as Marateng.

Johnny van Schalkwyk spent a lot of time talking to older Batau people but was only able to establish a skeleton genealogy of the Tau chiefs. The oral sources say that Ngwatu brought the people out of Swaziland, but according to Johnny there was no certainty on this as there could be a chronological disjunction in this regard. He mentioned that the older generation of Batau gave us the 'Praise poetry', but its meaning was not really known. The complexity of the past had been flattened because everyone now speaks Sepedi and not Setau.

Examining the settlement patterns of the Nguni (Swazi) and the Sotho showed that the Nguni had a very open settlement plan against the Sotho's compact and very well defined and managed space using high walls and murals. The high walls symbolised boundaries that indicated where individuals could and could not go. Dr van Schalkwyk outlined the main differences between the Batau and the Pedi, as follows:

- The Batau's ceramics are Swazi in style but only dated from approximately 1850.
- They are the only group among the Sotho people who have elaborately decorated headrests.
- Among the Batau it is customary to marry your mother's brother's daughter or your father's sister's daughter.

- Snuff was considered very potent stuff. Amongst the Sotho people it was used when they accessed the ancestors, and they would send a go-between with snuff to negotiate a marriage. The snuff was kept in snuff boxes, which were very phallic in nature. In museums there is snuff that is 100 to 120 years old.
- With regard to clothing, in the 1930s there was a Lutheran congregation at one of the original 11 to 12 Batau chiefdoms and they wore *ele*, meaning 'yard', because of the many that were used yards in the making of a long top or smock. It became a symbol of fertility.
- The leather aprons worn by the Batau women have additional appendages or flaps. When a Batau man was to marry he would slaughter an animal and make an apron for his wife. Each of the flaps had a name and referred to cuts of meat. The newly married couple would receive gifts of cattle and the flaps were used to record the cut of meat for a specific family. For example, *pzalo*, a cut of meat at the back of the head, signified one's mother's brother (your cattle father). This custom kept the cattle in the family.

Johnny concluded that the Batau were similar to the Pedi, but also different. There was, no definite evidence that the Batau came from Swaziland. It was his belief that there was still a huge body of information waiting to be discovered as regards chieftainship, the central courtyard, rainmaking and at initiation.

**Report by Anne Raeburn**

## The remarkable true story of the English East Indiaman *Grosvenor* (1872)

**Jonathan Sharfman, maritime archaeologist, African Centre for Heritage Studies**

Jonathan Sharfman described the background history of the East Indiaman *Grosvenor* and gave a firsthand account of how the sunken ship was located and artefacts were recovered from the ship.

The *Grosvenor* was built at Rotherhithe, England, in 1770 and was recorded as a 499 t vessel whereas she was in fact 799 t. The reason for the difference was the English maritime requirement for any ship of over 500 t to carry a priest! In 1782 she was berthed in Madras, India, her departure delayed by bureaucratic difficulties. In March 1782 she finally sailed in haste for Ceylon, her departure point for England. Here she joined a Royal Navy Squadron. This was one of the many occasions when England and France were at war and en route there was an inconclusive engagement with a French fleet. It is assumed that the *Grosvenor* was not involved in the conflict, but Jonathan did find lumps of lead amongst the debris, which could have been French cannon balls. The ship was wrecked on the Wild Coast.

The Captain, John Coxon, was not greatly experienced. The more significant passengers were an Admiral Hughes; William Hosea who had made a large fortune from sugar and was of dubious character; a lawyer named Newman who had paid Coxon £2 000, a considerable sum at the time, to get a passage; a French officer; and two wealthy merchants – Taylor and Wills. The fact that there were wealthy and suspect passengers on board has in the past led treasure hunters to believe the ship contained treasure.

Jonathan observed that the Wild Coast is devoid of significant landmarks from seaward that could have aided navigation. He showed a Portuguese map of the period that was probably similar to the map being used by Coxon. This was very misleading in that the coastline was shown hundreds of kilometres to the west of its actual position. This could have led to over-confidence

by the ship's officers. When approaching land in the early hours of the morning, a sailor reported what appeared to be fires in the distance, but the third mate on watch ignored this, possibly under the impression that they were still far out at sea. When he did eventually realise the danger and reported to Coxon it was too late. The ship was driven on to rocks and was held fast.

In order to rig a suspension cable to shore, three sailors were offered a reward to swim a rope to shore. Only one made it, but some passengers were able to land with the aid of the suspension cable. When the captain tried to beach the ship, a gaping hole allowed in seawater and the *Grosvenor* broke in two. The stern fortunately stayed on the rocks. Of the 140 people on board 123 managed to get to shore, but their problems had only just begun. The local Xhosa were not hostile, but nor were they helpful. They were more interested in recovering metal objects such as buttons and burnt the woodwork to remove the metal fittings. A possible reason for their offhandedness was the fighting that had occurred at previous Portuguese shipwrecks. Furthermore, there had been a severe drought in the region and food was scarce. Two men remained behind and the rest of the survivors trekked south across inhospitable terrain crossed by numerous rivers and ravines. Of the 123 survivors only 18 reached the Dutch settlement at Algoa Bay.

Over the years there have been numerous shipwrecks off South Africa's east coast, but the position of the *Grosvenor* was well known. Jonathan made a clear distinction between treasure hunting and maritime archaeology, the latter incorporating the systematic collection and recording of evidence; the analysis and interpretation of data; and the publication of findings. He related that since 1890 there had been many expeditions to try and recover the *Grosvenor's* treasures. Failed attempts involved digging a tunnel to the wreck, which was lying fairly close inshore, and the construction of a breakwater. The motivation always was the legend that there was a fortune on board. The site has even proved difficult for archaeological diving because the wreck lies in the surf zone. However, many artefacts of interest have been recovered, including furniture, personal belongings, coins and a set of cutlery. The most valuable find was a pocket watch. Many of the recoveries are encased in concretions and needed separating. Of particular interest is a brass nameplate with the word *Grosvenor* on it that at least proves its provenance.



*The sinking of The Grosvenor (painting by George Carter, image: Wikipedia)*

Report by John McManus

## In small things consumed: entomology and entomophagy in |Xam narratives of the Bleek-Lloyd archives

*Dr Mark Granaghan, post-doctoral Fellow at the Rock Art Research Institute, University of the Witwatersrand*

**D**r Mark McGranaghan started his talk by explaining that entomophagy means the eating of insects. A recent UN report had suggested that insects should be considered as food in the light of a growing human population. Insects are high in protein and low in fat, are good protein converters and do not emit methane like traditional animal sources of protein. Insects also do not require vast tracts of land for cultivation. Both prehistoric societies that have eaten and contemporary societies that do eat insects tend to be located in the tropic and sub-tropic regions where insects do not die off in winter. When Western settlers from temperate climates arrived in southern Africa they frowned on the eating of insects – to them it was sign of savagery. Even so, both Moffat and Livingstone admitted to eating various insects.

Information about entomophagy by the |Xam tribesmen (known colloquially as Bushmen) can be obtained by re-examining the Bleek-Lloyd narratives. Although a colonial artefact, reanalysis shows the importance of insects in the |Xam's lifestyle. The narratives not only show the importance of the mantis as a spiritual entity, but mention is made of many insects that were considered food. The importance of these insects to |Xam society is reflected by the names given to the various stages in the lifecycle of insects, which suggests an intimate knowledge of insect life. The narratives highlight those insects considered to be tasty and others like the stink bug that were not for eating. Bleek established the |Xam names of various insects by showing specimens to his |Xam informants. When shown a Red Roman (*Solifugae*), Bleek noted that the insect was not viewed in a favourable light and certainly was not on the list of insects that could be eaten. The name captured by Bleek for this insect translates into 'let go, get away'!

The narratives suggest that the |Xam took delight in harvesting and eating swarming locusts, known colloquially as 'treksprinkhane', in the same way they harvested the large herds of springbok, known colloquially as 'trekbokke'. Just as close observation of the springbok introduced numerous names for the lifecycle of the springbok, similar observations and vocabulary are associated with the lifecycle of the locust. These observations must have aided in better harvesting of these creatures. The Bleek-Lloyd narratives show that locusts also had a spiritual association and despite the usefulness of locust as a food source, locust shaman or 'owners' of locusts were antisocial sorcerers. Locusts and other insects were deployed by them to cause illness, to eat people and were sometimes even fired into people to carry infection and badness. Some insects had positive influences, e.g. live dung beetles were tied with string and worn around the neck to take illness away.

Entomophagy by the |Xam was not limited to the locust; other insects including termites were eaten. The small white eggs of the termite are known as 'Bushmen rice'. The narratives also tell how harvested insects were dried and stored for future use. Of all the insects, only bees were owned. Selected woman owned hives and the honey was evenly distributed throughout the tribe. Re-analysis of the Bleek-Lloyd narratives enables the important role that insects played in the precarious lives of the |Xam people to be established. It also shows their delight in the arrival of swarming locusts and their prudent management of their meagre resources. This suggests that the |Xam had a more sophisticated society than was first imagined by early Western settlers.

Report by Louise Mackechnie

