

LATER STONE AGE FUNERARY PRACTICE IN THE MATOPOS, ZIMBABWE: A CONTRIBUTION TO UNDERSTANDING PREHISTORIC DEATH RITES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA*

NICK WALKER

National Museum, Private Bag 114, Gaborone, Botswana

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the few human remains found in Later Stone Age contexts in the Matopos and considers their relationship to the ancestry of the remnant hunter-gatherer populations in Zimbabwe before comparing funerary modes in the archaeological record for the rest of southern Africa. Burial practices among San people are also briefly reviewed in an attempt to learn about accompanying beliefs and decipher any regional patternings. It concludes that there were different concepts about the afterlife in different parts of the subcontinent and that the challenge is to try and explain this.

INTRODUCTION

Few Stone Age human skeletal remains have been recovered in the southern African interior. In Zimbabwe, for example, in spite of excavations in more than 60 Stone Age sites, only three burials may date from the Stone Age - at Ziwa shelter in Inyanga (Robinson 1958), Outspan Shelter (White 1905) and Nswatugi Cave (Walker 1980) in the Matopos. There is in fact, some doubt as to whether the first two are even Later Stone Age - they may date to the Iron Age (see below). Human remains from near the Umgusa River, just north of Bulawayo, are less certainly of a burial and might date to the Middle Stone Age (Robinson unpubl.). A highly mineralised human mandible from a pan in Whange Game Park is probably also Stone Age, but there is no evidence that it came from a burial (National Museum & Monuments of Zimbabwe records).

In contrast, Later Stone Age (LSA) human remains are numerous in the southern and eastern Cape as a result of the widespread practice there of people having buried their dead in graves within their living sites (Deacon 1984; Inskeep 1986; Hall & Binneman 1987). This contrast in the richness of human remains between the interior and the Cape south coast suggests that different mortuary practices were in operation in different parts of southern Africa during the LSA. It is therefore of interest to note evidence for other ways of disposing of the dead in the Matopos and elsewhere in south-central Africa. This paper discusses the evidence from the Matopos with these other finds.

MATOPOS LATER STONE AGE RESEARCH

The Matopos is an area of about 2 200 square km of hilly granite country with thousands of rock shelters (Fig. 1).

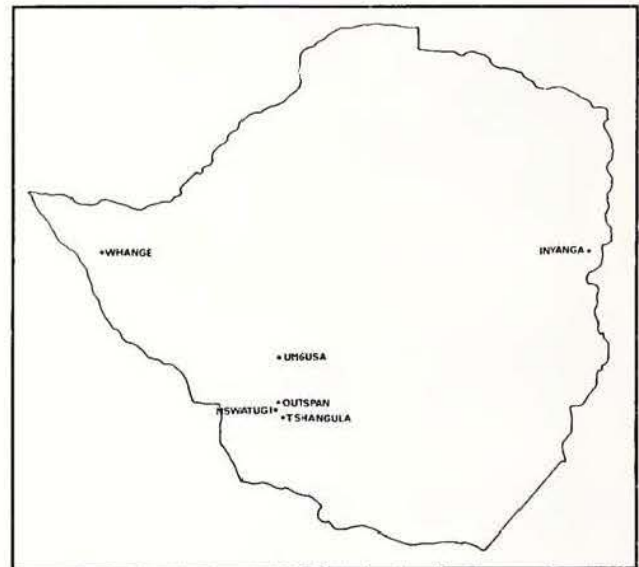


Fig. 1. Map of Zimbabwe showing sites mentioned in text.

These shelters were frequently used by LSA people and some 800 sites have so far been located in them. Most were only used for painting and any related ritual (Walker in press) or limited processing and maintenance work (Walker in prep.), but about 30% were lived in and have up to 2 m of LSA deposit in some cases. The Later Stone Age dates from about 13 000 to about 1500 BP in the Matopos and overlies Middle Stone Age (MSA) in the larger shelters. The MSA is in need of re-analysis, but current interpretation suggests that all of it might be more than 20 000 years old (Walker 1990).

To date 14 rock shelters have been excavated, some extensively (White 1905; Hall unpubl.; Arnold & Jones 1919; Armstrong 1931; Jones 1933; 1940; Paterson

unpubl.; Cooke & Robinson 1954; Cooke 1963; Walker 1980; 1992, in prep.) and so observations on shelter usage can be considered as reliable. The rarity of human remains is unlikely therefore to be a factor of limited research. Nor can the sparsity of human skeletal remains be attributed to poor preservation. Bone weathering is variable between sites, but faunal remains have survived well in all LSA levels. It is of course possible that some human bones may not have been identified in the past. If this is the case however, such remains are unlikely to have been complete burials, as these should have been more easily recognisable.

STONE AGE HUMAN REMAINS IN THE MATOPOS

Human remains have been recovered in four probable Stone Age contexts in the Matopos.

The Outspan Shelter burials

In 1905, Franklin White published a brief report on his excavation in the Outspan Shelter (White 1905). He identified two Stone Age layers at the site. He uncovered an apparent Iron Age burial interred into the upper layer plus another burial in the lower level. He regarded the latter grave as being contemporaneous with the layer. Considering the shallow deposit at the site it would have been a very shallow grave. There are no details about this burial or the skeleton and the material is no longer available, but White regarded the two assemblages as being distinct. Judging by the range of artefacts present in the dripline and on the talus in front of the shelter (scrapers comparable with the Pomongwe Industry, bone tools and backed tools comparable with the Amadzimba Industry), the lower level may well have been early Holocene (c. 9 800 to 9 000 years ago) and the upper level late Holocene on typological grounds (Walker 1991a). Of course, White could be wrong in considering that the burial was not also inhumed in more recent millennia.

Tshangula Cave human bone

This cave was excavated by Cooke (1963:134,142-5) to check on his findings at Pomongwe Cave, but never fully written up. Considering the sections illustrated and the typology of the associated cultural material, it seems that layer 1 has both late (2150 ± 100 (SR-75) BP) and early (8560 ± 80 (Pta-2472) BP) Holocene material; layer 2 is fairly pure early Holocene, dating to between c. 9000 and 9400 BP on typological grounds; while layer 3 is a mixture of early Holocene (9800 ± 90 (Pta-2473) BP) and late Pleistocene material (Walker 1991a, 1992). A human tarsal was found in a recent analysis of the faunal remains from level 2. This has a deep incision near the proximal articular end which had been cut at or shortly after death, as if for suspension.

The Nswatugi Cave burial

A contracted burial (Fig. 2) was located against the

south wall at a depth of 1,2 m (Walker 1980). The body was lying on its right side, with its head to the east, facing north. The thighs were at right angles to the body and the legs were tightly flexed. The right hand rested on the left hip and the left hand on the neck. The bones were in a poor state, in part because the grave was situated near the edge of the drip line where the deposit is periodically dampened and in part because of damage by termites. Soft, uncarbonised organic matter is usually soon destroyed by termites in the tropics, even in rock shelters, especially along shelter walls where they are most active. Bone is usually ignored, but in this instance they had made their chambers and passages in the long bones and skull, destroying and moving various parts of the skeleton in the process. The loss of soft bone, in particular facial bone, vertebrae, limb extremities and phalanges complicated recovery. This made analysis difficult, but H. de Villiers (pers. comm.) has tentatively identified the skeleton as that of an adult Khoisanoid woman, approximately 40 years old. Stature was about $1,51 \pm 0,04$ m.

No grave profile was recognisable because of leaching, termite activity and subsequent disturbance during later occupation, but it was possible to estimate the antiquity and type of burial by considering the orientation of the larger flakes in the grave fill. Normally, large artefacts lie approximately horizontal or parallel with the natural shelter slope, but in backfill the angle of repose is variable. The relevant stratigraphy is: (1) MSA, capped by (2) a thin sterile layer with a date of 10270 ± 90 BP (Pta-2218), below (3) LSA dating from about 9790 ± 90 BP (Pta-1771). The site was then used intensively for nearly another 4 000 years or so before being abandoned (Walker in prep.).

A shallow oval depression some 0,20 m deep had first been scraped out of (or already existed in) the sterile layer and top of the MSA, approximately 0,60 by 1,0 m in area along the southern cave wall. The body was then laid to rest, a stone slab placed on the knees and the hole backfilled. Only a slight mound was made over the grave (although this may have been flattened by subsequent use) and this was soon covered by occupational debris. The burial thus dates to late in the formation of the sterile unit, perhaps before the cave was regularly lived in, or in the first centuries thereafter, and is most probably between 10 300 and 9 500 years old.

The only artefact clearly associated with the burial is a large, core-like basalt flake tool, showing no sign of use, that had been placed carefully on the head. No ornaments, colouring matter or stains that might have been derived from organic grave goods, clothing, sprinkled ochre or body paint were noted with the body.

Nswatugi Cave child remains

Some smashed, burnt and scattered limb bones of a child (6 to 10 years) were found in an ash layer (Fig. 3) in unit IV dating to $7 880 \pm 70$ (Pta-2046) years ago in the centre of the cave (Walker in prep.). None of the damage occurred at or shortly after death (Kobus pers. comm.) and it is presumed that fragmentation followed

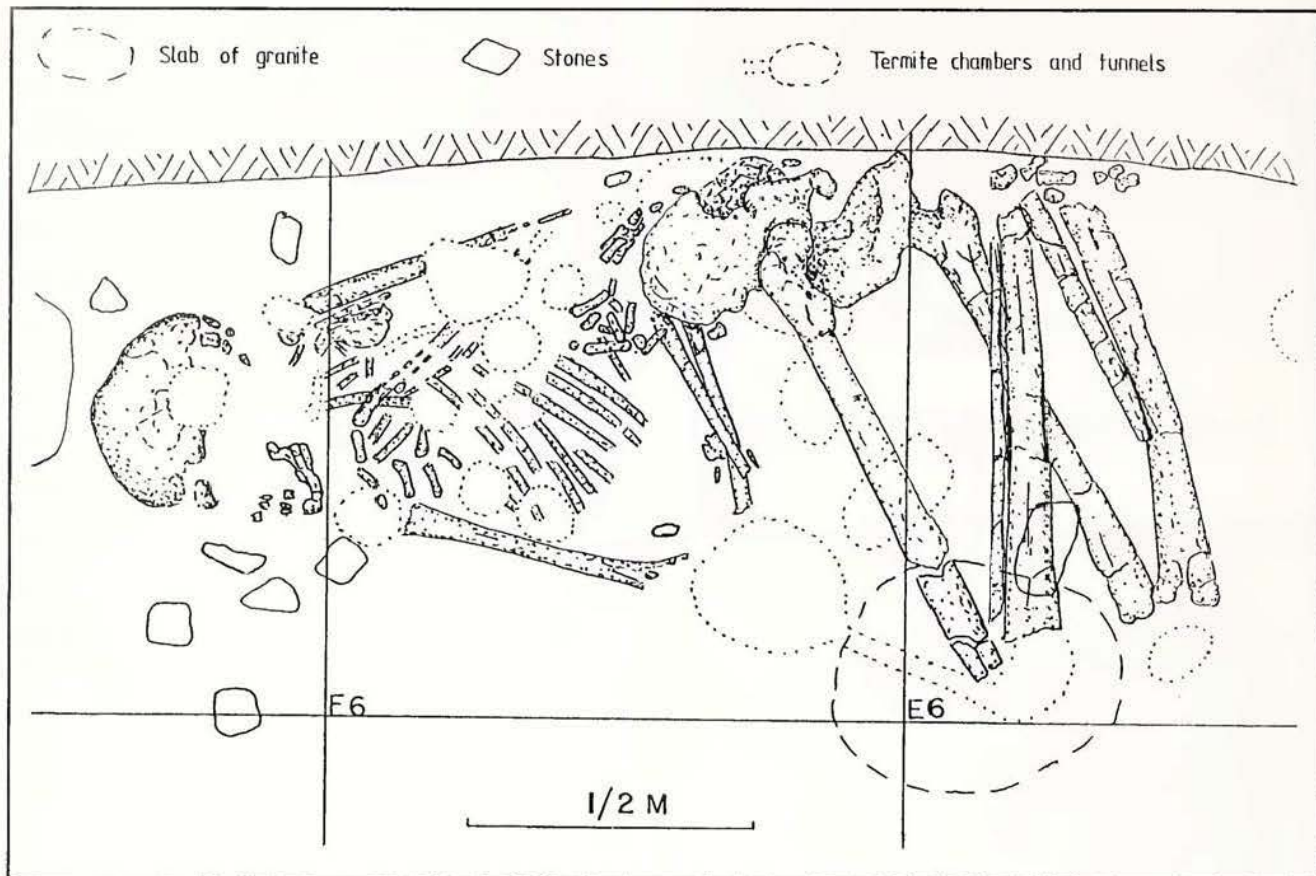


Fig. 2. The Nswatugi Cave burial.

by cremation occurred much later, but before the bones had completely dried.

STONE AGE DESCENDANTS IN ZIMBABWE

Little research has been carried out on recent hunter-gatherers in Zimbabwe. Distinct ethnic groups of foragers have largely disappeared or been absorbed by more powerful neighbours, following the increased demand for land in previously under utilised areas and land reforms in the last few centuries. Some are remembered in myths, for example, the 'Dzangara Mudzimu' or 'will o' the wisp' little people of long ago (Beach 1980) and they point to a widespread distribution of hunter-gatherers in low-lying areas until relatively recently. Thus, in the Masvingo and Sabi region there was a group remembered as master hunters and honey collectors, who could not speak siKaranga, and who bartered honey and skins for iron (Dornan 1917; Von Sicard 1954; K. Robinson pers. comm.). Some may have been early Bantu-speaking farmers who lost their stock or who mixed with hunters and relied on foraging in remote parts into which they had been displaced; the 'Knobnoses' who grew a few crops along the Limpopo river (Mauch 1871; Elton 1873; Von Sicard 1954) and the Vadoma in the Zambesi Valley (Nicolle 1959; Tamayi 1959) might be such people, but without more serious study the question cannot be fully answered.

Many foragers in north and west Matabeleland succumbed during the turmoils of the 19th century, when they were often ruthlessly hunted down (*cf.* Chapman 1966; Mohr 1876; Finnaughty 1957). No study has been made of the click speakers in the Karoi-Gokwe area, many of whom may have become victims of the recent wars (P. Locke & S. Nduku pers. comms), nor those reported in the central parts of Mocambique (P. Sinclair pers. comm.). Many of their words may linger on in place names in the Zimbabwe midlands (Summers unpubl.). The recent hunter-gatherers in the northwestern parts of the country (Nicolle 1959; P. Fox pers. comm.; Hitchcock & Nangati 1993) are or were Khoisan people speaking Tshukwe (*i.e.* Central) Bushman languages (Westphal 1971), as are the Basarwa (San) groups in southwest Zimbabwe and adjacent Botswana (Baines 1946; Mohr 1876; Dornan 1917; Hitchcock 1982; pers. records). Coupled with the continuity in the rock art and its links with recent Khoisan beliefs (*e.g.* Lewis-Williams 1981), the evidence indicates that the last Stone Age or foraging people of Zimbabwe are or were Khoisan people. This is in keeping with the tentative evidence from the Nswatugi burial, the cranium from Umgusa (Robinson unpubl.) and possibly the Inyanga burial (Tobias 1958; but see Rightmire 1984).

The shortage of Later Stone Age burials has complicated our understanding of the physical type of these people. This is in contrast with the Iron Age

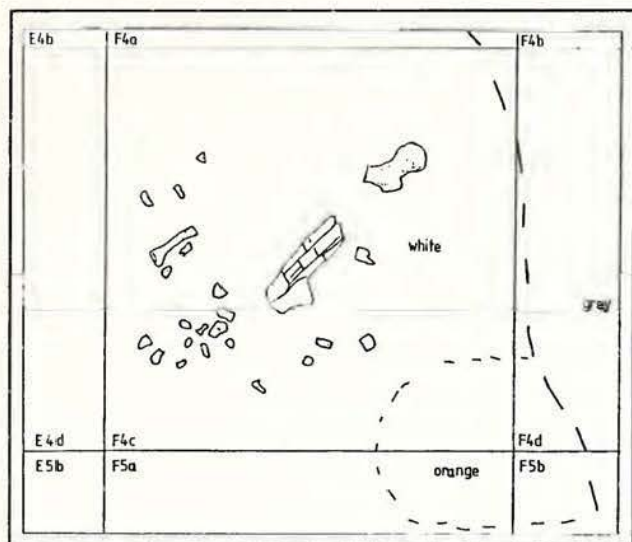


Fig. 3. The Nswatugi Cave child remains. The central piece is the collapsed shaft of a limb bone.

situation, thanks to traditional Bantu mortuary practice, in which burial is widespread and often accompanied by elaborate ritual (*e.g.* Bullock 1927; Gelfand 1962) and which certainly has been important for at least a thousand years (see *e.g.* Walker 1991b).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS IN OTHER AREAS

Numerous LSA burials have been found in the southern Cape (over 300 are listed in Inskip (1986)) and formal interment dates back some 10 000 years (Deacon 1984). These graves are found both at or near open and rock shelter camps.

In spite of the large sample of excavated burials, few meaningful data were collected in the early days. Nevertheless, the majority are flexed burials. There is a tendency for the burials at certain sites or in specific levels to be placed on a particular side, but there are no consistent trends and it seems unlikely that side had any special meaning. Similarly, orientation was also apparently random (see data in Goodwin 1938; Inskip 1986; Hall & Binneman 1987).

Grave goods, including ostrich shell canteens (originally with water?), shellfish (some are unopened bivalves) and meat bones are sometimes present, especially with adults. Ochre was often sprinkled over the bodies (Louw 1960; Deacon 1976). Hall and Binneman (1987) have suggested that regional variations in ornamentation and grave goods may reflect different levels of gift exchange to bolster social relations, but their sample is small and other data (*e.g.* Goodwin 1938; Deacon 1984; Inskip 1986, 1987) indicate greater local diversity and until a larger sample with better dates or more conclusive data are available, we cannot discount change in ritual or fashion over time as a factor (Inskip 1986).

Several burials contained painted stones some of

which were originally grindstones, coloured in red wash or with actual pictures, although most graves lack them and painted stones have been found unassociated with graves (Rudner 1971; Deacon *et al.* 1978). Mural art is rare along the Cape coast, perhaps because of dampness from sea mists (Willcox 1984) and portable art may just have been devised to facilitate safeguarding the paintings, but more likely this is a distinctive religious tradition in which the art played a more active role than in areas with mural art; three quarters of the painted stones have been found along the coast in a relatively small area. Rudner (1971) also notes how many have faded since excavation and, considering the likely loss because of the dampness of some deposits, possibly there were once a great many more.

In spite of a relatively small sample size one cannot but note the absence of eland, which is otherwise so common a symbol in South African art, the high incidence of the colour black and the frequent depiction of buffalo and cetaceans, elsewhere rare elements in the paintings. In the Matopos art buffalo were avoided as subject matter (Walker *in press*) and black frequently occurs with wildebeest. Vinnicombe (1976) suggests that wildebeest had negative values to explain their rarity in South African art. Charcoal is in fact often an ingredient in medicine and so perhaps certain animals and the colour black may have been linked with death or curing. We thus cannot dismiss the possibility of some of the southern Cape painted stones being funerary art, perhaps either representing failed attempts at curing or possibly painted especially for the last journey or afterlife. This is not at variance with the current model of much of the rock art dealing with curing and contacting the spirit world (*e.g.* Lewis-Williams 1981), although it suggests that ancestors here may have played a more active role in supernatural activities.

Children often had more elaborate ornamentation than older people and Hall & Binneman (1987) suggest that this may be because individual exchange (*hxaro*) relationships are planned and inherited at an early age but become less important in later life. As noted, their sample of adult burials is small and elsewhere there are exceptions to this model. The G/wi in fact redistribute beadwork to daughters at death (Silberbauer 1972) and of course children would have no one to pass on property to if they died prematurely. *Hxaro* is not universal among Khoisan people (*e.g.* Kent 1990) and seems to be a strategy developed by some peoples in fairly marginal areas for maintaining links between relatively small, dispersed and mobile groups; it is unlikely that the two regions are ecologically comparable. Inskip (1986) however notes that ornamentation in the southern Cape has a chronological basis, being commonest in the early Holocene. This might reflect fashion or other trends as with the change in arrow design implied by the increase in backed tools in the mid Holocene, although this in itself does not preclude changes in intensity of reciprocity relationships with time. The mid-Holocene is a period when more property was buried with the body including food and water, which probably relates to perceived

needs in the afterlife and perhaps the mediation of suitably propitiated ancestors in spiritual matters, as suggested above. This implies additional social or ritual forces in operation.

Some 200 graves have been opened up in the northern Cape and eastern Free State (van Riet Lowe 1931; Dreyer & Meiring 1937; Mason 1954; Humphreys 1970, 1982, Humphreys & Maggs 1970; Morris 1992). They are often deep with side niches and covered by stone cairns. None has been found in shelters and they are rare at living sites. Most appear to be late or relate to recent pastoralists (Humphreys & Maggs 1970; Inskeep 1986; Morris 1992; but see Humphreys 1974).

Only a few LSA burials have been found in Namibia (Vogel & Visser 1981), Botswana (Rubin unpubl.; Campbell 1992), the Transvaal (Mason 1974) or adjacent regions, despite considerable research in these areas. These few graves are apparently also relatively recent and the Nhabe River burial more correctly was associated with a pastoralist site (Campbell 1992). The burial from near Makgadigadi Pan is of interest because it was a flexed burial, but one foot had been disarticulated and placed on the chest (Rubin unpubl.). Populations were lower in this broad region during the mid-Holocene (Deacon 1984) and parts were probably uninhabited, but a low density cannot explain the rarity of graves in Zimbabwe throughout the LSA, where sites are numerous sites.

Human remains are more common in LSA contexts further north in Zambia, where about 60 individuals have been recorded. Clark (1950:113) found a very mineralised contracted burial "lying on the left side facing west" associated with "two LSA macrolithic flakes" at the Maramba river near Livingstone. Further east, several shallow burials were discovered at the Gwisho living site (Gabel 1963; Fagan & van Noten 1966). They were in a variety of positions and orientations, but tended to be extended, making them unusual for the Later Stone Age. Some skeletal parts are missing, but the excavators considered this to be a result of random scavenging by animals as the graves were shallow. No grave goods were noted, only occasional stains from ochre body paint. The burials date to between about 3500 and 4900 BP Fagan & van Noten 1966).

Several Zambian shelters have also yielded human remains in the LSA levels, but data are few. At Mumbwa, Dart and Del Grande (1931) recovered 16 very fragmented human remains. Some of the lower ones came from three 'beehive enclosures', stone lined 'tombs' (*i.e.* graves), together with stone implements along the cave wall. The excavators surmised from the positions of the surviving bones that the bodies had been placed in sitting or foetal (flexed) positions, but it remains uncertain whether they were complete skeletons. Dart and Del Grande (*ibid.*) do not mention how many bodies were found in each grave. They also describe an oval stone-lined feature with ash from the base of the LSA as a 'furnace' but there is no support for this and Clark (1942) probably correctly considers that it was another grave. Certainly, we can dismiss the idea of smelting at

this remote time and the ash content is therefore significant. Clark (*ibid.*) recovered several scattered human teeth, including five canines (*i.e.* at least two individuals) from his own excavations at this site. Unfortunately the data are far from satisfactory, but there seems to have been a development from burying the dead in relatively elaborate formal graves, perhaps in ceremonies that included cremation and/or other posthumous ritual treatment to a phase that allowed the scattering or 'dumping' of the remains (Clark *ibid.*). Here we cannot exclude exhumation from shallow graves by scavengers.

At Chipongwe Cave near Lusaka 'scattered' human bones from at least four individuals were found on the surface associated with a "few Wilton artefacts" (Clark 1950:113) showing "no evidence of burial" (Clark 1955:108). At Leopard's Hill the LSA skeletal parts are described as extremely fragmented and "worn" (Clark 1950:113), but nothing is stated about their antiquity.

A few isolated human remains (an ulna, a phalange and teeth) were also found in the LSA levels at Nachikufu Cave (Clark 1950:117) but no details were given about the depth they came from. At Kalembe, the bones of four humans had been deliberately smashed and sometimes burnt before burial in neat but incomplete arrangements under stones (Phillipson 1976). Clearly, they had been ritually dismembered before burial and Phillipson (1976:169) suspects that cannibalism might have even been practised. These burials are early to mid-Holocene in age (Phillipson *ibid.*).

CONTEMPORARY SAN BURIAL PRACTICES

Customs have apparently changed among the Kalahari San, as they have long been influenced by Bantu-speaking neighbours (*e.g.* Wilmsen & Denbow 1990) and more recently by political pressures to conform. Funerary rites have regrettably been ignored by most recent researchers among the San. Traditionally burial may not have been very common and the old may have been abandoned or had their bodies left for scavengers (Dornan 1917; Bleek 1928; Hahn *et al.* 1928). Burial is now fairly widespread although influenced by a person's status, by terrain type and by circumstances, such as time of year, who else is present and intra-group stress (Wiessner 1983). Deep graves at times with side recesses for the body are sometimes dug in soft sand by some Tshukwe groups (Dornan 1925; Bleek 1928; Silberbauer 1965), but often handy antbear holes in termitaria are used (Schapera 1930).

There are apparently no differences in burial according to sex (Wiessner 1983). Bodies are placed on their side in a contracted foetal position and often buried facing east (Arbousset & Daumas 1846; Dornan 1925; Bleek 1928; Wiessner 1983), perhaps reflecting beliefs of where they originated (see Schoeman n.d.:37) or that the spirits of the deceased leave via the head before taking up residence in the east (see Marshall 1962). Roos (1931) however, states that bodies are faced north. Bleek (1928) states that the body is placed on the left side, but

Wiessner (*ibid.*) and Roos (*ibid.*) say that it is laid on the right side. These contradictions might reflect regional variations, but this suggests that less significance is attached to placement by these people than by Bantu people (for example, Shona-speaking males were often placed on the right side and females on the left side (J. Thokozane pers. comm.) as part of strict gender symbolism (*cf.* Huffman 1982)). Buchu or ochre may be sprinkled over the body or annointed on the head before the grave is filled (Schapera 1930). Arbousset and Dumas (1846) also mention burning the deceased's hut over the body prior to filling the grave. In general adult graves tend to be away from living sites, except temporary camps, when in any case the group immediately moves. This is because of a fear of spirits.

There seem to be different opinions as to whether possessions or goods are specially placed with the body, but Morris (1992) concludes that the interment of objects was characteristic of the San. Clothing and ornaments are left on the body usually which might be wrapped in a skin blanket, but some groups redistribute property (Steyn 1971; Silberbauer 1972; Wiessner 1983) while others place weapons, personal effects and at times water and food in or on the grave, sometimes breaking artefacts first (Bleek 1928; Silberbauer 1972). Stones may or may not be placed in or on graves (Dornan 1925; Schapera 1930; Morris 1992). !Kung women have a stone placed above the head (Wiessner 1983). Unfortunately there are no details on the symbolic meaning behind these various customs. Clearly, more research is needed into Khoisan funerary rites for it is uncertain whether differences reflect the break up of traditional practice, recent adoption of new ideas, regional variation or simply inadequate data collection. It is relevant to however note the lack of standardisation, the general but not exclusive inclusion of grave furniture or goods, the lack of elaborate treatment of the body and the subsequent avoidance of the burial location.

CONCLUSION

To summarise a picture complicated by inadequate data, different LSA funerary modes were observed at different times in various parts of southern Africa. The practice of burying the dead may date from the MSA (Beaumont 1980), but the evidence is far from conclusive and they only become common in the Holocene. Along with art they indicate a growing concern for spiritual matters. Burials were in shallow graves, unlike more recent Khoisan practices, probably relating to the difficulty of digging with organic implements. Apparently, burial, occasionally in living sites, was fairly widespread albeit rare in the early Holocene, but there were shifts in funerary beliefs and practices thereafter.

By the mid-Holocene, three major modes had developed, with burials in living sites being very much a feature of the Cape coastal belt, but less so in the interior (between latitudes 18 and 32 S). This is too strong a pattern to be simply a factor of inadequate sampling or low population density in the interior. For much of

Zimbabwe, eastern Zambia and perhaps the southern African interior itself, bodies may have been ritually dismembered and disposed of, perhaps even used for example, in ceremonies that included cremation, although scavenging and death and mutilation by predators cannot be completely dismissed as a factor. Burial seldom took place at home sites in the southern interior. Only in eastern Zambia was there any consistent attempt to bury these ritualised remains in formal graves at living sites. Perhaps western Zambia represents a further tradition of non-ritualised burial at living sites. Apart from western Zambia there is little evidence of any formal burial of complete bodies in the interior before simple burial customs were apparently adopted within the last two millennia, possibly from immigrant farmer populations. One conclusion then is that recent Khoisan burial modes - burial with minimal ritual treatment of the bodies in graves - have no clear continuity with the past prior to the arrival of new social forces, although burial in graves away from living sites may have taken place.

The manner of disposal incorporated beliefs and concerns about the afterlife, but it seems that it was only in the southern Cape that some preparation for the last passage was deemed necessary. The people of the Cape Folded Mountains thus seem to have had a distinctive set of beliefs from the rest of the subcontinent as indicated in their art and burial modes, despite continuities in economy and technology with other parts. The strong correlation of graves with living sites and again with art suggests that ancestors may have become important in ritual activity, which is atypical of traditional San practice.

The development of mortuary practices can be viewed from a perspective of evolving cognitive systems, with initially perhaps more an emotional concern about abandoning the body of a loved one to scavengers, hence no growth of a formal mode of disposal. The introduction of fairly standardised practices as the Later Stone Age evolves suggests an appreciation of religious aspects to death that needed to be addressed, although different parts responded in different ways. Brandt (1988), quoting Chapman (1981) and others, suggests that at times of high population or increased sedentarism people needed visible graves by which they could display territorial rights to land. However, this seems unlikely for even semi-mobile foragers, where affinities with other groups needed to be maintained and in the southern African LSA we do not get the necessary monumental graves. Still, the idea that increased stress during the interior was a factor in investing less effort in the disposal of the dead is in agreement with Wiessner's (1983) observation, while it may not be coincidence that graves were commonest in more productive areas such as along the Cape coast and in Zambia, where groups may have been less mobile, but other factors might have been involved. With the advent of pastoralism we do get the appearance of cairns on graves and this might be part of a display legitimising land tenure. The often very elaborate graves of senior agropastoral people represent a still further level where they in fact served as shrines.

This variability and the changing practices outlined above introduce a cautionary note to the indiscriminant use of recent ethnographic models to systems operating many millennia ago. Considerable variation was allowable at most times but, as noted by Inskeep (1986) more careful recording and research of human remains is needed in future for us to better understand the rich symbolism being expressed. The Cape in fact, because of the abundance of graves, offers tremendous potential, not only for insights into demography, diet, disease, genetics and religious practices, but also deeper social organisation along the lines of the work of Hall and Binneman (1987). Such research needs to be couched in a theoretical framework which can address questions as to why these differences emerged and thus needs to consider the broader socio-economic background than is possible in a paper of this nature.

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