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Johan Binneman
Lita Webley

The aim of *Southern African Field Archaeology* is to communicate basic data to professional archaeologists and the public.

Manuscripts of original research undertaken in southern Africa will be considered for publication. These may include reports of current research projects, site reports, rock art panels, rescue excavations, contract projects, reviews, notes and comments. Students are encouraged to submit short reports on projects. *Southern African Field Archaeology* also welcomes general information on archaeological matters such as reports on workshops and conferences.

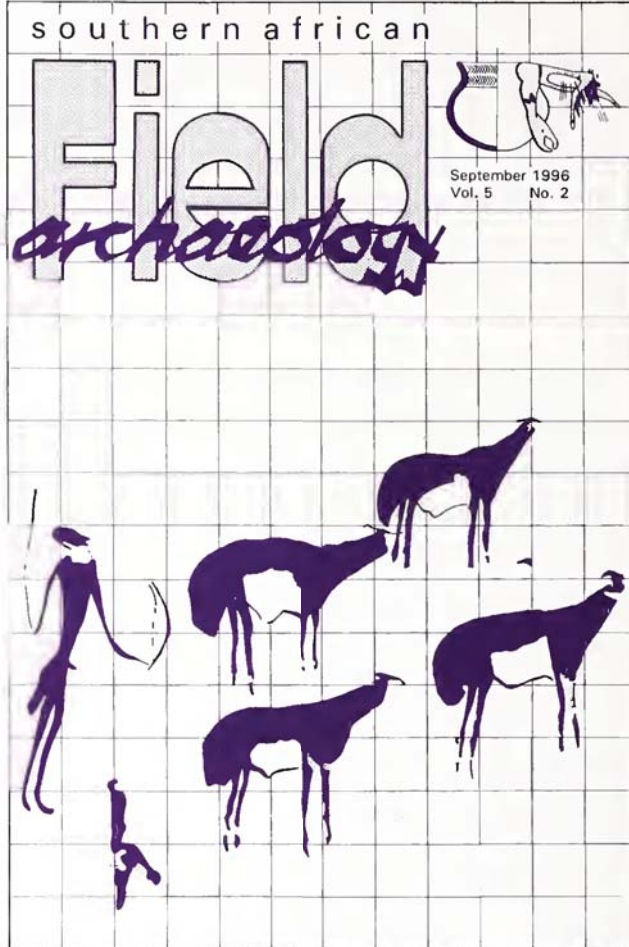
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Cover illustration:

Fat-tailed sheep from Edmondburg Sheep Shelter, Limpopo River valley, p. 59.

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OPINIONS

ARCHAEO-TOURISM AND
IMAGES OF AFRICA

Having just officially emerged from the grips of colonialism, South Africa is now faced with the dilemma of both inviting and rejecting a re-colonisation of the country by archaeo-tourists.

At the heart of the impasse lies the danger of pandering to, and even accepting, an image of Africa that consists of unspoilt natural places with abundant herds of game and which is largely devoid of people. When people are foregrounded it is most often as an 'authentic' and culturally ingenuous ethnic groups. Yet it is the archaeo-tourist who offers the best hope of maintaining and sustaining our archaeological resources. Southern Africa's abundant archaeological resources have remained largely unnoticed by local residents who either take them for granted or who are, as a result of a divisive education system and society, largely unaware of the value of these resources. It is therefore ironic that the current value of southern Africa's archaeological resources is largely ascribed by a numerically small group of often non-resident archaeo-tourists. These archaeo-tourists will also argue that the revenue they enable will help South Africa come to terms with its turbulent democracy.

This turbulent democracy is, however, the last thing the archaeo-tourist wants to be aware of as it is an undeniable reality that exposes the fiction of the pristine

Africa image. The contradiction between reality and stereotype may lead the notionally politically correct archaeo-tourist to experience feelings of guilt. These guilt feelings may arise because the archaeo-tourist realises that her or his presence represents a re-colonisation of Africa and that, once again, the cultural achievements of Africa are being compared to a Western-European standard. Once again, local residents become victim of a dependency syndrome whereby we have to pander to dis-located images of southern Africa in order to access archaeo-tourist revenue. Furthermore, the cash-based authority of the archaeo-tourist's distorted image of southern Africa may become entrenched and concept-forming; thereby denying many local residents the opportunity to ground their lives in the context of own owned history and self-knowledge. It may, however, be possible to both manage archaeological resources and overturn stereotypes of southern African archaeology by pre-senting select archaeological sites in an arresting and challenging way.

I suggest the San rock art site represents an image of southern Africa that is well-positioned to both entertain and educate archaeo-tourists and local residents. Public rock art sites have been a persistent though low-level feature of the southern African landscape. In post-Apartheid South Africa the re-discovery of neglected archaeologies as well as the need for landowners to maximise their holdings' profitability have led to a dramatic increase in the development of public rock art sites. The higher visibility accorded this archaeological resource has both problems and potential.

As a fragile and non-renewable resource rock art, like all archaeological resources, requires a sustainable management plan. If landowners are taking the initiative (and the profit) to foreground rock art and other archaeological sites they, in partnership with vocational archaeologists, CRM consultants and facilitator organisations such as the National Monuments Council and ROCUSTOS, must also assume the moral and legal responsibility for sustainable site management. Developing rock art sites is neither difficult nor is it costly. The minimum requirements of a well-maintained sign-posted path, wooden boardwalk, interpretive noticeboards and access control can be implemented for as little as R2000-00, a fraction of the cost of re-furbishing

a room in a Bed & Breakfast establishment. Though such an arrangement raises very real problems of under or no staffing, money and time at most archaeological hubs, it is also a public arena in which archaeology can demonstrate its social relevance.

Unlike many other archaeologies, the visual primacy and immediate authenticity of San rock art sites make them ideal vehicles by which to engage and educate archaeo-tourists and local residents. The visual impact of rock art sites may be enhanced by using professionally produced redrawings and short, informative text at the site so that it becomes a space of authority within which it is possible to sensitise viewers to a southern African visual practise and history very different from that with which they are familiar. Granted, this process privileges archaeological images of southern African history but as concept and identity-forming practise, archaeology is a powerful tool which may be used to counter a market-driven archaeo-tourist re-colonisation of southern Africa and promote an image of southern African history in local idiom that owes no allegiance to Europe. Such active and deliberate archaeological intervention is also necessary because the people who produced the rock art are absent, the victims of genocide, social strangulation and misarticulation with non-forager communities and are unable to prohibit or inform us about visiting their sites. The absence of these artist communities and the proxy which archaeologists assume should be forcefully presented.

This problematising mode of rock art site presentation and management allows the site to be visited and re-visited by people as entertainment, education and a pricking of conscience. This uneasy alliance between satisfying archaeo-tourist's expectations and allowing them to overturn their stereotypical expectations of southern Africa is, I suggest, an appropriate metaphor for the search for a South African identity and is where a large part of the social relevancy of our archaeology resides.

Sven Ouzman
Rock Art Department
National Museum
Bloemfontein

BOOK REVIEW

THE ROCK ART OF THE GOLDEN GATE AND CLARENS DISTRICT

by Bert Woodhouse. 1996. William Waterman Publications: Rivonia. (R89,95)

GEOFFREY BLUNDELL

*Rock Art Research Unit, Archaeology Department,
University of the Witwatersrand, Private Bag 3,
P.O. Wits 2050, Johannesburg*

Bert Woodhouse, together with his colleague Neil Lee, has probably seen more rock art sites in South Africa than anyone else. Over the years, the material that these two enthusiastic workers have gathered has been published in a number of books and articles. Their work has served an important end in bringing so much of the imagery to the attention of the general public. Woodhouse continues with this important task in his most recent publication.

The book begins with "A visual reference gallery" of 61 colour plates. Most rock art books either have the colour plates dispersed through the text or, in cases where cost is a consideration, the colour plates are placed together at the end of the book. I found the position of the colour plates at the front of the book appealing. The images raise expectations and capture the reader's imagination.

The rationale for including certain pictures is, however, not evident. Plate 25, for example, is of a guest farm at Sunnyside taken in 1974! (No photograph of the guest farm at present is provided). There are other plates too that could have been excluded in favour of pictures of the rock art itself. Moreover, some of the plates are partly out of focus (for example, Plates 36, 47, 48). With the cost of so thin a book being so high, one expects that the author and the publishers would have maintained a rigorously high standard.

Apart from the "visual reference gallery" of colour plates, the rest of the book is illustrated by means of black-and-white photographs and, in one or two places, tracings. The tracings are poor and lack detail. Moreover, the black-and-white photographs (reductions from colour slides?) are seldom clear, and the reader struggles to see many of the images that are referred to in the text.

Apart from these minor points, Woodhouse's book raises two important issues for rock art research. The first is that of interpretation. Throughout the book Woodhouse employs at least five interpretations. These are:

a) Hunting Magic

Considering a now-famous painting of two crabs surrounded by a line (Dowson, T.A. 1988. *World*

Archaeology 20:116-128), for example, Woodhouse (p. 48) comments, "...both caught in a trap which may indicate the outcome desired by the artist and his audience".

b) Shamanic Interpretations

In what appears to be a turnaround from his earlier position, Woodhouse makes extensive use of shamanic interpretations. Many of his interpretations - perhaps too many - stress the relation of the imagery to rain-making.

c) Daily Narrative

Commenting on a group of women surrounded by dots and flecks, Woodhouse (p. 76) rejects Dowson's neuropsychological explanation of these as entoptic phenomena (he does not say that Dowson argued that the San probably saw these entoptic phenomena as depictions of potency). Instead, he states, "[t]he more realistic explanation of a recently arrived group joining a feast seems a possibility...". Woodhouse does not, however, address the issue of how one recognises "realism" in the art.

d) Exotic Interpretations

In one place, Woodhouse (p. 55) suggests that paintings of figures in long white "gowns", may indicate the presence of Arabs. Although he admits that this is a flight of the imagination, he provides evidence in the form of Pedi ethnography to support his view. He does, in other words, entertain this as a serious possibility.

e) Eurocentric Interpretations

In some places, Woodhouse interprets images in terms of widely-held stereotypes. For example, he comments on a painting (p. 76) that partly comprises two red human figures, one short and the other tall: "[i]t provides further evidence of the mixing of different groups of people, notably blacks and Bushmen". Without any diagnostic features such as shields and so forth, and in light of the fact that the San painters did not use size realistically, surely this interpretation is nothing but guesswork based on stereotypes of the San and their size? This sort of interpretation - guesswork without any supportive evidence - permeates many of his interpretations

throughout the book. In another place (p. 51, caption to figure 26), he interprets seated figures (that appear to my eye similar to other seated San figures found in the art) as appearing, for unspecified reasons, more like Isent-speaking people than San. In yet another place, Woodhouse, in an attempt to defend an earlier, discredited, interpretation of his of the same painting, suggests, again without supporting evidence, that the San domesticated rhebok (p. 87).

There is nothing wrong, in principle, in using more than one interpretation, but one should state clearly how one knows which interpretation is appropriate in what circumstances. Woodhouse, however, employs his five types of interpretation without discrimination. The issue raised by this *laissez faire* approach is this: what constitutes a valid interpretation of rock art? Do, as some extreme post-processualists believe, all interpretations have equal validity? If so, then interpretations that are clearly denigratory and have racist undertones to them - as do exotic interpretations - have to be allowed. Surely not. On the other hand if all interpretations are not equally valid, then what criteria do we use to decide which interpretations are appropriate and which ones not?

Of course, there is no easy answer to this question and, no doubt, it will be one that nags at the minds of rock art researchers for years to come. Nevertheless, I believe that the discipline has advanced far enough over the last two decades to secure at least some certainties. We know, for example, that the art was deeply symbolic, that it played an important role in San religion, that it negotiated political status and that it was implicated in gender and other social relations. We also know that the art was not simple narrative, art for art sake, or sympathetic magic and that it cannot be interpreted from a Eurocentric perspective. We have, in other words,

already begun to place limits on interpretation. Those limits are presently defined by certain bodies of literature. These are ethnographical, historical, archaeological, neuropsychological and social theory writing. When interpretations are not supported by one or more of these literatures - as many of Woodhouse's are not - then, surely, they cannot be sustained.

The second important issue raised by Woodhouse's book centres on site management. Over the last decade or so, writers on rock art have not published the exact locations of rock art sites in books meant for the general public, or indeed even in academic journals. Usually, only the district is given. The reason for this is a simple and powerful one: when locations of rock art sites have been given in the literature, those sites have been visited by people and ultimately many of them have been damaged and some even destroyed. A recent (1996) alarming report submitted to the Natal Parks Board by Wahl, Anderson and Pfitenhauer on the paintings of the Ndedema Gorge, the area made so famous by Harald Pager's book, shows how many of the paintings have faded since Pager published his book in 1971. In the past Woodhouse has himself withheld the locations of sites. He has broken his silence in this book - he has given detailed locations for people to find rock art sites. One can only ask whether any measures have been taken to ensure that there will be adequate supervision at all the sites mentioned. If not, and in the face of the overwhelming opinion of rock art researchers, why have the locations of these sites been published?

The exposure of the exact locations of rock art sites throws a dark cloud over the book and any other issues it may raise. I can only urge Mr Woodhouse, the publishers and anyone else so inclined, to stop revealing the exact locations of rock art sites.