

REMEMBERING THE MOUNTAIN BUSHMEN: OBSERVATIONS OF NINETEENTH CENTURY HUNTER-GATHERERS IN LESOTHO AS RECORDED BY VICTOR ELLENBERGER

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ABSTRACT

Linguistic barriers to knowledge pose difficulties for archaeological researchers unable to access primary sources in languages other than their own. This paper makes available comments first published in French in 1953, but acquired in the 1920s and 1930s that provide firsthand observations of some of the last hunter-gatherers to live in the Maloti-Drakensberg Mountains of southern Africa. The observations are translated and assessed with reference to other historical and ethnographic sources. They offer additional information on the material culture, hunting practices and beliefs of the Mountain Bushmen of Lesotho. Most importantly, perhaps, of all, they provide valuable evidence for the authorship and production of Bushman rock paintings.

INTRODUCTION

If a lion could talk, we would not understand him.

Wittgenstein's (1958:223) comment reflects a truth as profound for archaeology as for philosophy, since it reminds us of the dangers that arise when knowledge is compartmentalised into linguistically separate boxes. The accelerating drive towards English as the principal language of international communication and academic publication encourages the neglect of other languages, their disappearance from school curricula, and the restriction of scholarship within linguistic ghettos: works written in other languages become, for most English-speakers, inaccessible and thus irrelevant. Southern African archaeology itself operates in a multilingual setting, with South Africa granting many languages state recognition, and Lesotho and Swaziland offering official status to their indigenous languages alongside English. But except for Mozambique, where Portuguese is the official language, there is no getting away from the pre-eminent position held by English in politics, business and education across the sub-continent. That all papers published in this journal, and all those published in the *South African Archaeological Bulletin* for at least the last 40 years, are in English underlines that language's dominance in archaeological writing in and about southern Africa. It is to tilt the balance away from this overpowering Anglophone predis-

position, however marginally, that I discuss here some observations of late nineteenth century hunter-gatherers in Lesotho first published in French over half a century ago¹.

Collating these observations was the work of Victor Ellenberger (1879-1972), scion of one of Lesotho's several French-derived missionary dynasties. Born in a cave house within a hundred metres of one of the country's few excavated archaeological sites (Mitchell *et al.* 1994), he was a son of Daniel Ellenberger, author of the first substantial history of the Basotho (D. Ellenberger & MacGregor 1912). Victor himself served in the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society's mission to Barotseland, western Zambia, from 1903-1917, before returning to Lesotho, where he worked at the Leribe mission until 1934. In 1935 he moved to France, becoming a parish priest near Paris, a position that he held until his retirement in 1947. As well as writing the book with which this paper deals, he also authored an important history of missionary activity in Lesotho (V. Ellenberger 1933) and was the pioneering translator into French of several Basotho writers, including Thomas Mofolo, whose widely acclaimed work, *Chaka*, was the first Sesotho novel.

Victor Ellenberger's historical interests extended to the history of the Bushman hunter-gatherer communities who still lived in Lesotho when he was born. Son-in-law to Frédéric Christol (1911) a fellow missionary and former Paris artist who copied and published examples of Bushman rock paintings, Victor took advantage of his posting to Leribe to do

the same. Collaborating with him in this was his son Paul, himself a writer of some note on Lesotho's archaeology and palaeontology (P. Ellenberger 1960; Ambrose 1991). Many of their copies were later exhibited in a yearlong showing at the Musée de l'Homme, Paris, in 1950-51, organised with the help of the Abbé Breuil. It was presumably also during his time at Leribe that Victor began to seek out elderly Basotho who had personal recollections of the last hunter-gatherers to live in Lesotho. Given the paucity of such evidence and the impossibility of obtaining such first-hand information today, his efforts enhance our knowledge of Lesotho's nineteenth century hunter-gatherer inhabitants in several ways. They are, however, buried within a much larger work that drew heavily upon earlier writers like Stow (1905), Schapera (1931) and Wilhelm Bleek to produce an account of the history and life ways of southern African Bushmen. Published in 1953, *La Fin Tragique des Bushmen* has received little attention from southern African archaeologists other than the late Patricia Vinnicombe (1976) and a couple of references by David Lewis-Williams (1981:14, 114). One reason for this lies in the book's rarity, but another, without doubt, in the fact that, for reasons of history and schooling, it is written in a language unfamiliar to many southern African researchers.

Ellenberger made use of a variety of Basotho informants when writing *La Fin Tragique*. Some of these remain unnamed, and in no instance are we provided with information about the circumstances in which interviews took place. For some individuals, however, including the most important of them, limited additional detail is provided on their qualifications and experience *vis-à-vis* nineteenth century Bushman history and life ways. Moreover, in the majority of cases Ellenberger provides his information in the form of direct quotations from his informants. Growing up and working in Lesotho as a native or near-native Sesotho speaker, there should be little doubt about the accuracy of his translations into French. I transmit his accounts verbatim, all translations being my own. Discussion of their wider significance in the context of our wider knowledge of Maloti-Drakensberg Bushman communities follows.

My emphasis is on the most significant, specific and, I suggest, reliable, of the accounts that Ellenberger preserved. Generalised statements not elaborated here include references to the importance attached by Basotho to establishing good relations with Bushmen by exchanges of meat and cannabis and of not looking Bushmen directly in the eye (V. Ellenberger 1953:65, 66). Others claim that Bushmen did not like to sing unless they had previously smoked cannabis (V. Ellenberger 1953:67)², or make passing reference to marriage patterns, shelters, how people indicated the direction of their movements to others, the uses of weighted digging sticks and bored stones, and the manufacture of arrow poison (V. Ellenberger 1953:74, 77, 80, 90, 125, 133). A detailed account of fire-making is also provided (V. Ellenberger 1953:84). Information on the defeat and death of the Bushman leader Soai at Sehonghong in the early 1870s, presented in the form of an appendix to the book (V. Ellenberger 1953:253-258), is not considered further here since it forms part of a more extended discussion of the historical sources for this event currently in preparation (Mitchell in prep.).

ELISABETHA 'MALÉKÉTANYANÉ MÔHANOÈ

This elderly lady, probably in her seventies when she spoke with Ellenberger, is the most important of the various informants whose words feature in *La Fin Tragique*. Indeed, Ellenberger himself describes her as "an old and precious Sotho informant" (V. Ellenberger 1953:86). At several points in the narrative she is referred to by name, and she may be the "old woman of Lesotho" mentioned on one further occasion. She is said to have been born in 1856 and could remember how, as a six year old child, Lesotho was affected by a great dust storm during the 'red dust' drought of 1862 (V. Ellenberger 1953:148; Eldredge 1993:78). She also recalled having seen hippopotami living in the Senqu River and at the confluence of the Caledon and Makhaleng Rivers, areas from which they finally disappeared in the 1870s (Germond 1967). Her significance derives from the fact that she had visited Sehonghong Shelter as part of a group led by the Phuthi chief Moorosi who went there to see the well-known Bushman leader Soai. At the time of this visit she was still a young woman, only recently married (V. Ellenberger 1953:148). This would suggest a date in the early 1870s, and thus probably not long before the death of Soai himself. An earlier reference to the visit having taken place when 'Me Môhanoè was sixteen (V. Ellenberger 1953:86) would, in fact, place the trip in 1872. However, it seems impossible to reconcile this date, derived from her date of birth, with the statement in the very same sentence that the visit occurred in 1866. Poor proof-reading or calculation seem the only explanations, the former supported by an earlier misdating of Jan van Riebeeck's settlement at Cape Town to 1632, instead of 1652 (V. Ellenberger 1953:27). However, for our purposes this difference is not critical. What is of greater interest are the observations that 'Me Môhanoè was able to recall. These cover a wide range of topics, as follows.

Pottery manufacture

Having observed women making pottery, presumably from the context of the sentence at Sehonghong itself, she said:

This is how they were going about it. First of all they went to look for one of those round stones, hollow on the inside, in the shape of a cup, like one finds in many places in Basutoland; they placed this natural stone vase in front of themselves, then tried to imitate the model with the clay in order to make a container that they were able to use (V. Ellenberger 1953:86).

Eating

'Me Môhanoè also recalled seeing some men who were making a kind of spoon using the horn of a black wildebeest. Using these spoons, they ate a kind of boiled meat porridge, which she described by the Sesotho word *lekhotoane*. She added:

To suck the juice of the meat the Bushmen made use of brushes made with the tails of long-tailed sheep or just the bristles or the hair; these hairs and bristles were attached to little sticks; they dipped the brush into the juice (*mouwo*) and sucked it; they flavoured the food with

the saltpetre (*lenyekethe*) that one finds on the walls of certain caves (V. Ellenberger 1953:87-88).

Hide preparation

Referred to here as "the old Bantu woman who in her youth had seen the Bushmen at home in a cave in Lesotho", her comments on tanning were:

They began by burying the skin that they were going to tan in wet ground; at the end of two days they took it out, removed the hair from it, then they fixed it on the ground in order to scrape it; they tanned it with soft stones of yellow sandstone. For the animals with a harder hide, they made use of hard flints (V. Ellenberger 1953:91-92).

Painting

This, the most extensive report given by 'Me Mōhanoè, begins:

With my own eyes I saw three men, with white goatee beards on their chins, who were making paintings on the rock walls in the great cave of Soai, each one on his own side. Not all the Bushmen knew how to paint...but only some of them, but those people were people who really knew how to do it. From time to time these men went to see those that were being made by the others; the women just watched...To paint they took a small vessel containing red paint; they wet their paintbrushes inside it; these brushes were made with the bristles taken from the tail of a black wildebeest (later they used horse bristles); these bristles were stiff and hard; the hair was fixed to a little stick with the twisted tendon of an animal. They plunged the paintbrush into the paint (inside the pot) and painted on the rock. As many pots as they had different colours...The paint was mixed with melted fat. To paint, they first of all took...a flat stone (a small piece of a thin and very flat stone) and traced on this a small version of the image that they wanted to represent; then, with the pot of paint in his hand and the same flat stone with him, the artist reproduced on a bigger scale on the rock wall what he had first represented on the flat stone (V. Ellenberger 1953:148-149).

Obviously in response to another question posed her by Ellenberger, she then "confirmed that these Bushmen did not use ochre for their paintings even though she could not tell me with what they had made them" (V. Ellenberger 1953:149).

Religious beliefs

As part of an extended discussion of Bushman religious ideas, 'Me Mōhanoè was again quoted:

The Basotho (*sic*; this is clearly an error for Bushmen) did not know how to pray; their god (*molimo-oa-Baroa*) was the praying Mantis, this green grasshopper that jumps (*qōtōma*) and that has the attitude of being at prayer (V. Ellenberger 1953:218).

Significantly, Ellenberger himself adds the comment immediately hereafter that this was the only occasion on which he heard anyone in Lesotho refer to the praying mantis as the 'god' of the Bushmen, even though Basotho commonly referred to the insect as the Bushmen's god.

Two further comments may have been made by 'Me Mōhanoè, but are not specifically attributed to her. Instead, both are assigned to "an old woman of Lesotho". The first of these statements concerns:

Decoration

No direct quotation is offered, but the informant is said to have provided exactly the same description of how Bushmen women decorated themselves with ostrich eggshell beads as was provided by the missionaries Arbousset & Daumas (1968:248) in the 1830s. Ellenberger (1953:183) notes that the informant "had seen these ornaments, worn by Bushman women, with her own eyes" and that strings of ostrich eggshell beads were passed through the nostrils and fixed onto the head from behind, thus making a kind of scallop shape on each cheek.

Medicinal practices

The second of these statements forms part of a series of comments drawn mostly from Schapera (1930) on beliefs about the rain:

They did not have 'charms' against thunder; nor did they still engage in scarification; they used cupping-glasses specifically made from springbok horns (V. Ellenberger 1953:224).

ELÉANORA MATLÉNANÉ

This lady is cited twice, the first time with specific reference to having communicated her account in 1934, the year before Victor Ellenberger left Lesotho. She described, as a second hand account, how Bushmen were able to access subsurface water when thirsty:

A Mosotho woman told me that when the Bushmen were travelling and became thirsty, they did this: they took a hollow reed (they always carried this with them when they were travelling) then, arrived at a place where they 'saw' that there was water, even if the surface was absolutely dry, or only where there might have been some, they stopped there and began to thrust the reed into the ground, more and more deeply. At the end one of them 'called' the water into the reed by breathing with his mouth; he tipped the water obtained like this into an empty ostrich eggshell and everyone was able to drink (V. Ellenberger 1953:102-103).

A subsequent comment (V. Ellenberger 1953:257) noted that different groups of Bushmen had different kinds of hair.

SÉ'QHOANG-'QHAÉ

This man was the son of someone who had himself fought against the Bushmen in the Maloti mountains. As a result of

this, he had received a Bushman name. Sé'qhoang-qhaé told Ellenberger that "when a storm threatened the Bushman would, as if summoning the clouds, begin to sound a trumpet-like instrument made from the horn of the impala (*phala*)" (V. Ellenberger 1953:103).

UNNAMED INFORMANTS SAID TO HAVE WITNESSED BUSHMAN HUNTING

Two references are relevant here. The first describes the way in which Bushman hunters used to approach large game and was certainly provided by a man, 'un Mossouto'. The second set of comments refer to the use of fibre technologies to trap and snare animals and were either given by men, or by a mixed group in which men outnumbered women.

They used to spy upon (lie in wait for [this is an alternative translation of the verb *épier*; P. Mitchell]) the wild animals and to approach them by crawling on all fours once they had located them; when the Bushmen got very close to the animals they stood up to frighten them so as to be able to choose from among them the biggest animal, the one whose colour was dark because it was fat: in fact, that was the one that they would shoot with the bow; it might have been a springbok, a black wildebeest or some other animal (V. Ellenberger 1953:121).

These cords were made from the tail hairs of a black wildebeest or zebra, or from the fibres of a plant, plaited and twisted tightly together. They took for themselves grey rhebuck by means of nets and cords hung in such a way that the animal got trapped in them. They made snares with the hair from the mane of the species called *khokong* (blue wildebeest) so that game would get its feet or neck trapped in them (V. Ellenberger 1953:124).

DISCUSSION

To ascertain the significance these comments merit we must do more than just consider such limited information as we have about the informants themselves and their opportunities to make, or obtain, accurate observations. We need to situate their statements within the broader context of our understanding of Bushman ethnography and history. For surviving Bushman peoples in the Kalahari, there is, of course, a wealth of anthropological material on which to draw (e.g. Marshall 1976; Lee & DeVore 1976; Lee 1979; Silberbauer 1981). Though strong similarities exist in belief, ritual practice and technology between Kalahari groups and Bushmen living farther south (Lewis-Williams and Biesele 1978), closer comparisons exist with other groups known in South Africa and Lesotho. For South Africa, the extensive archive provided by /Xam men and women to Bleek and Lloyd in the 1870s and 1880s is the pre-eminent source of information (e.g. Hewitt 1986; Lewis-Williams 2000; James 2001; Hollmann 2003), complemented by the accounts of late eighteenth and nineteenth century European travellers (e.g. Dunn 1872, 1873).

Information specific to the Maloti-Drakensberg area is considerably sparser. The most important sources include the

information imparted by the Bushman Qing to Joseph Orpen in 1873 (Orpen 1874), the account of the Thembu man Silayi of his three years' sojourn with a Bushman group in the 1850s (Stanford 1910), and the statements made in the 1980s by 'M', daughter of probably the last practising Bushman artist in the Maloti-Drakensberg region (Jolly 1986; Lewis-Williams 1986a). To these we must add as yet unpublished comments given by two elderly Basotho men at Sehonghong to Patricia Vinnicombe in 1971, and those provided by Moorosi's son Mapote to V. Ellenberger's niece, Marion How (1962), in the 1930s. Yet more information comes from the late Sister Mariya CR (Butler 2001), although its reliability has not yet been fully ascertained. Unfortunately, further opportunities for obtaining first-hand information of this kind no longer exist (Jolly 1994), although relevant data could still perhaps be retrieved from archival sources, such as those of Lesotho's Morija Museum.

For ease of discussion, I consider the significance of the comments made by Ellenberger's informants under four headings: material culture and technology; hunting; painting; ritual beliefs and practice. Under the first of these headings, I begin with pottery. 'Me Mōhanoé's rather idiosyncratic account of how people made pots adds, it must be said, little to what is already known on this subject, evidence for which is ably summarised by Bollong *et al.* (1997), though without reference to *La Fin Tragique*. Where her recollections are helpful is in her observation that pottery was being made by women, rather than men. This is consistent both with the account of /Xam pottery-making provided by //Kabbo (Bleek & Lloyd 1911: 343-347) and with Arbousset & Daumas' (1968:249) own brief allusion to the subject from a western Lesotho perspective. Pottery belonging to the LSA Maloti-Drakensberg tradition described by Mazel (1992) occurs throughout the upper 1700 years or so of the Sehonghong sequence (Mitchell 1996), and it is of interest to see that it was still being made in the 1870s, despite people having some access to European trade goods by this time (How 1962:51).

'Me Mōhanoé's description of eating utensils is more readily paralleled. Her reference to people using brushes made from sheep tail hair to pick up juice recalls Arbousset & Daumas' (1968:246) comment on the use of brushes made from wildebeest hair as spoons, as well as Dunn's (1931:24) reference to hyena mane hair being employed for the same purpose. Hardwood spoons are described by Lee (1979:155) among the Ju'hoansi, while the /Xam employed spoons made from springbok horn, rib bones and wood (Dunn 1931:23; Hewitt 1986:36). The "boiled meat puree" that she described with the Sesotho word *lekhotoane* recalls descriptions of Bushmen consuming boiled wildebeest skins (Arbousset & Daumas 1968:250) or pounded hide that had been boiled (Dunn 1931:37; Vinnicombe 1976:32) as famine foods, as well as the preserved meat and fat boiled together described by Doman (1909:443).

For all that scrapers loom large in archaeological typologies we have few nineteenth century accounts of how people prepared and tanned skins. 'Me Mōhanoé's description tallies reasonably well with that provided by Bleek and Duggan-Cronin (1942:vii), who also refer to skins being wetted and buried after they had first been scraped. Lee's (1979:124) record of the Ju'hoan process notes that soaking, softening and tanning were all subsequent to the initial pegging out, drying

and scraping of the hide. Since, however, 'Me Mōhanoè specifically refers to "tanning" it may be that she felt no need to mention these preliminary stages. Her observation of the use of "soft stones of yellow sandstone" recalls the informal //khom scrapers still employed in rural Namaqualand. As described by Webley (1990:28), these are "merely sandstone or chalky pebbles with an abrasive surface" employed to remove fatty tissue after the skin has been dried, moistened, rubbed and stretched. As she further remarks, it is extremely likely that such minimally modified artefacts might be discarded in excavation, especially if made of the same material as the rock-shelter roof and walls themselves. Sehonghong would be a case in point, since like other rock-shelters in the upper Senqu Valley it sits within the Clarens sandstone. Personal observation of all material excavated there in 1992 did not identify anything that would fit 'Me Mōhanoè's description.

What, however, of the formally retouched scrapers characteristic of recent Holocene assemblages at Sehonghong and elsewhere? It may be that the "hard flints" that 'Me Mōhanoè said were used to work "animals with a harder hide" could include these, and there is recent ethnographic evidence that the thinner skins of smaller bovids such as duiker and steenbok were used for different purposes than the thicker hides of larger antelope like hartebeest (Deacon & Deacon 1980:35). Alternatively, one is reminded of Inskeep's (1987:310) suggestion that small, mounted stone scrapers were used only in the later stages of skin working, perhaps to decorate hides, and not in the primary stages of preparation. More comprehensive and, if necessary, site-specific studies combining microwear and residue analyses with experimental replication and usewear might help explore this idea further.

I now turn away from 'Me Mōhanoè for a moment to consider evidence from other informants. Eléanora Matlénané's description of how people could access water by sucking it up from the ground through a reed finds a ready parallel in the use of reeds to suck water out of hollow trees or almost dry waterholes in the Kalahari and Karoo (Dunn 1931:27; Marshall 1976:75; Lee 1979:123). Ellenberger's comments on Bushman hunting practices have excited substantially greater interest. Even though they are not attributed to any one individual, they provide the main exception to the general neglect of *La Fin Tragique* as a useful source on nineteenth century Bushman practice. Vinnicombe (1976:292), for example, discusses them at some length, noting examples of paintings in the Drakensberg that, if interpreted literally, may support the use of snares to take eland and of nets to trap smaller antelope. Scenes that likely represent this latter practice are also known from the Western Cape. There, several sites preserve paintings of small or medium-sized antelope shown as if walking toward grid-like images that have been understood by some researchers (Manhire *et al.* 1985; Parkington 1989) as nets instead of entoptic phenomena (Lewis-Williams 1986b).

Also worth noting are the specific references made to the use of blue wildebeest bristles and black wildebeest or zebra tail hairs as raw materials for making snares. Wildebeest and zebra, though scarcely ever represented in Maloti-Drakensberg rock art, were certainly present in the Caledon Valley into the mid-nineteenth century (Ambrose *et al.* 2000:41). Archaeological evidence also demonstrates that black wildebeest (but not, apparently, the other two species) occurred in the Lesotho

highlands during the last 2000 years (I. Plug, pers. comm.), even though they went unreported by later nineteenth century travellers (Grant 1873; Orpen 1874; Clarke 1888; Kennan 1959; Ambrose & Sekoli 1990a, 1990b, 1990c, 1990d, 1991). Unless 'Me Mōhanoè's report is inaccurate, we may infer from this that either the meagre archaeological and historical sources available to us are not giving a complete picture of the region's fauna in the 1870s, or that Soai's Bushmen obtained access to these raw materials by other means. Hunting black wildebeest below the Drakensberg escarpment and exchange with groups living in KwaZulu-Natal, the Caledon Valley or the Free State are both possible. A final point also deserves comment, the emphasis placed on hunters selecting the biggest, fattest animal, an observation that tallies with the frequent stress placed on fat for both nutritional and symbolic reasons (Lewis-Williams 1981:48-52).

Returning to 'Me Mōhanoè, I now consider what she had to say on the subject of rock art. Several points warrant attention. First, she emphasised that painting was something undertaken by only some people and that, at least on the occasion that she observed this happening, "the women just watched". Moreover, it was not merely men who painted, but older men "with white goatee beards on their chins". The restricted authorship of rock art production implied by these comments is supported by the comments of the elderly Bushman descendant generally known in the literature as 'M', who was adamant that only men painted and that many of the paintings, moreover, were the work of shamans (Jolly 1986:5; Lewis-Williams 1986a:10; Jolly & Prins 1994:19). Furthermore, the exceptional quality of the art itself implies that only some individuals had the necessary skill and, perhaps, status to produce paintings (Lewis-Williams 1995:147). Qing's reference to some ritual knowledge being only known to "the initiated men of that dance" (Orpen 1874:3) and //Kabbo's many comments that only a *ǃo-ǃā's* man could properly harvest and employ this important medicinal plant (Hollmann 2003:277-278, 308-322) point toward other forms of specialisation, as may //Kabbo's use of the term *Brinkkop man*, which Deacon (1997) suggests specifically denoted initiated, male rainmakers. Lastly, recall that the rock art of the Maloti-Drakensberg region itself probably records a transition from a situation in which paintings were produced by many people to one in which groups of shamans and, eventually, single individuals became pre-eminent or were singled out by depicting them in white and with distorted features (Campbell 1987; Dowson 1994, 1998; Pearce 2002; Blundell 2004). In sum, 'Me Mōhanoè's comment about "men, with white goatee beards" fits with observations from several quarters that ritual knowledge and performance were more specialised among nineteenth century southern Bushmen than their recent Kalahari counterparts. Her emphasis on older men as the authors of the art is, however, uniquely valuable, and stands in contrast to the evident presence of female, as well as male, shamans among both the //Xam (Hewitt 1986) and modern Kalahari groups (*e.g.* Lee 1979)³.

Next, I examine what 'Me Mōhanoè knew of the technology of rock art production. The suggestion that sketches were made on painted slabs before images were painted on the rock face is not borne out by archaeological evidence and seems unlikely. Other details, however, are much more convincing and interesting. Her reference to the use of brushes made from the

tail hair of black wildebeest "fixed to a little stick with the twisted tendon of an animal" is, for example, paralleled almost verbatim by the description given by Silayi, who recalled that people painted with "hairs taken out of the tail or mane of a gnu. These hairs were tied together and fastened on a thin reed" (Stanford 1910:439)⁴. 'Me Mōhanoè's further comment that horse bristles were also used is of additional interest, since we know from the rock art itself that horses did not merely have a utilitarian value, but were also incorporated into Bushman belief systems: the well-known depiction of conflated horse/eland creatures at Melikane shelter is perhaps the best example of this (Campbell 1987:87-90). The use of horse bristles to make paintbrushes may thus also have had more than a purely functional significance. However, it is unclear what, if anything, we should make of 'Me Mōhanoè's use of the adverb 'later': does this mean that horse bristles came to substitute for those made from wildebeest hair, or were the two used sequentially at different stages of image production?

Surprisingly, given this level of detailed description and concordance with Silayi's account, 'Me Mōhanoè was able to say little about the pigments employed in the paintings she saw being made at Schonghong. Her explicit denial that ochre was used seems odd at first sight, but fits with the clear difference between ordinary ochre as used by the Basotho (*letsoku la Basotho*) and the glistening, sparkling *qhang qhang* pigment described by Mapote (How 1962:34). *Qhang qhang* also had to be heated at full moon before use, suggesting that some stages of pigment production were only undertaken at specific times (How 1962:35). If so, this may further explain 'Me Mōhanoè's inability to specify what was used to make paint. In similar vein, only *qhang qhang* was mixed with freshly killed eland's blood (How 1962:37-38). The red paint and other colours that 'Me Mōhanoè saw being used were thus perhaps all made from other kinds of pigment (*cf.* How 1962:35-36). Her reference to them being "mixed with melted fat" does, however, recall 'M's reference to a mixture of eland fat, eland blood and paint being used to make some paintings (Jolly (1986:6; Jolly & Prins 1994:20), as well as an oral tradition reported by Vinnicombe (1975:394) and comments, probably to be attributed to 'M's father, Lindiso, published by Rudner (1982:54). Further to this, Ellenberger recorded elsewhere that "we have heard some Basotho claim that the little yellow men also used the blood of animals to paint" and that "the Basotho have assured us that the Bushmen employed the juice of certain plants such as *Lotonis (khonathi* in their language) or the *Mosala-souping (Lithosperman sp)*" (V. Ellenberger 1953:164). The latter, like *Euphorbia candelabra*, which is also mentioned, were probably used as fixatives; similar uses were reported by Mapote (How 1962:36) and comments to the same effect were made by Sister Mariya to Butler (2001:17).

Given 'Me Mōhanoè's detailed knowledge of at least some aspects of rock art production, it comes as little surprise that she also knew something of the beliefs underlying it. Our evidence for this, though distressingly brief, is her assertion that the praying mantis was the god of the Bushmen (*molimo-oa-Baroa*). As we have seen, Ellenberger explicitly noted that this was contrary to the sentiments expressed by all other Basotho of his acquaintance, suggesting once again that 'Me Mōhanoè had access to information known to few others. As is now well understood (Hewitt 1986:140-142; Lewis-Williams 1997), the

association between /Kaggen and the insect that bore the same name was much more than an accidental homophony, and in southeastern southern Africa at least /Kaggen resembled a creator deity whose benevolence could be sought through prayer, not just a mere trickster or mythological figure (Hewitt 1986:60). Qing's extensive narratives as reported by Orpen (1874) and Arbousset & Daumas' (1968:255-256) more prejudiced account concur with 'Me Mōhanoè's statement.

The very last of 'Me Mōhanoè's comments to consider is her statement that the Maloti-Drakensberg Bushmen "used cupping-glasses specifically made from springbok horns". The parallel here with what we know of /Xam practice is uncanny, for /Han/kass'o commented that to increase the chances of hunting springbok successfully women "make cuts on our shoulder (with a sharp arrowhead). They suck our blood, they spit it out into a springbok horn. When the horn is full of our blood, they put buchu to burn, they put our blood to burn on top of the buchu, for they want the springbok to lie down (to die) for us" (Hollmann 2003:89). Though unobserved in the field, Marshall (1999:46) notes that Ju'hoan men also kept small duiker horns for cupping.

Further proof that Ellenberger's informants had access to accurate knowledge about Bushman beliefs and practices comes from Sé'qhoang-'qhaé's statement that people would blow on antelope horns "as if summoning the clouds" when a storm threatened. Sé'qhoang-'qhaé specifically refers here to the use of impala horns, but this seems unlikely since impala are only present in the far north of KwaZulu-Natal, some considerable distance from the Maloti-Drakensberg mountains (Vincent 1962; Smithers 1983:648). The summoning of a torrential downpour by blowing on an eland horn is, however, well attested during a stock raid into KwaZulu-Natal in 1850 (Vinnicombe 1976:52). That eland horns possessed power is further suggested by the belief that a special snake lived between an eland's horns, the frequent omission of horns from paintings of eland, the burning of horn by the /Xam to disperse rain and the Ju'hoan practice of keeping rain medicine in special (generally duiker) rain horns (Vinnicombe 1976:233, 340; Marshall 1999:166-167). Once again, our attention is drawn to the geographically far-reaching connections between the ideas of the Maloti-Drakensberg Bushmen and those living in other parts of southern Africa.

This is, of course, the striking conclusion that Bleek himself drew, having discussed with his /Xam teachers the copies of paintings that Orpen (1874) made at Schonghong, Upper Mangolong and Melikane. Moreover, this assessment, and the demonstration of recurrent and consistent links in belief, practice and knowledge between linguistically very different Bushman peoples in southern Africa, underwrite not just current understandings of Bushman rock art, but also the very use of such ethnographic data to help understand the deeper past recovered through archaeological excavation. To do this effectively, we need, as Humphreys (2004/05) has once again recently reminded us, to 'de-!Kung' the Later Stone Age (*sensu* Parkington 1984). One of several ways of doing this is to broaden the ethnographic dataset that we use for comparative purposes beyond the frequently used trinity of Ju'hoansi, G/wi and /Xam; Kalahari-based groups that have become more 'acculturated' through interaction with Bantu-speaking farmers should certainly not be excluded from this search. A second is

to turn to the material evidence, especially that of nineteenth century date, preserved in museums (Hobart & Mitchell 2004), while a third avenue would make greater use of those who observed hunter-gatherers firsthand in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. By collating and translating the evidence obtained over 60 years ago by Victor Ellenberger from elderly Basotho who had done precisely this, I hope that this paper has made some contribution toward this goal.

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Foot notes

1. We should also note the relevance of examining written Sesotho sources for information about nineteenth century Maloti-Drakensberg hunter-gatherers. Jolly (1994) does this to good effect when making use of observations reported by Azariah Sekese, while Ambrose & Sekoli (1990a, 1990b, 1990c, 1990d, 1991) have published and translated the 1887 travel account of Jobo Moteane.
2. Pieter Jolly has drawn my attention to the possibility that this reference to Lesotho Bushmen not liking to sing unless they had previously smoked cannabis may possibly refer to the use of narcotics in connection with the entry of shamans into altered states of consciousness if the singing concerned refers to singing or chanting during the trance dance. In the light of other knowledge (Mitchell & Hudson 2004) this would not be surprising.
3. Butler's (2001) report of Sister Mariya's account of the Bushmen of the Tsolo District of the Eastern Cape Province is at variance with these observations since she emphasised that everyone, both men and women, painted. While she noted, as one might expect from the art's associations with shamanistic experience, that paintings were "done during and after a feast" following the successful hunting of large game (Butler 2001:17), her evident lack of knowledge of other key matters, such as the religious significance of the art and the symbolic importance of eland, suggest that she may have had only limited knowledge of precolonial Maloti-Drakensberg hunter-gatherer life ways, something that fits well with her own date of birth (1915) and early twentieth century experience of a few Bushman survivors.
4. Other kinds of brush are also recorded from the region. Citing a letter from M. Apthorp to the then Director of the South African Museum, Louis Péringuey, Rudner (1982:54) reports that Lindiso, probably the same individual as the father of 'M', applied paint using "a piece of grass, which was sometimes split to make it resemble a brush". Sister Mariya's reference to "the root of a bush which turns to fibre when you knock it between stones" (Butler 2001:17) is not dissimilar.

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