The Cutting Edge

Khoe-San rock-markings at the Gestoptefontein-Driekuil engraving complex, North West Province, South Africa

Jeremy Charles Hollmann

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I dedicate this study to the memory of Ed Eastwood (1946–2008)

Contents

Abbreviations

BP	Years before present
BRN	Boschpoort Road North
BRS	Boschpoort Road South
ca	circa
CAPD	Circular arrangement of pecked dots
CB	Charlie Badenhorst
DH	Driekuil Hill
DRN	Driekuil Ridge North
GDC	Gestoptefontein-Driekuil Complex
ha	hectares
L-B-H	Limbs, body and head (spread-eagle motifs)
L-B-H-T	Limbs, body, head and tail (spread-eagle motifs)
L-B-O	Limbs and body only (spread-eagle motifs)
L-B-T	Limbs, body and tail (spread-eagle motifs)
LSCA	Limpopo-Shashe Confluence Area
MQ	Married Quarters
P and O cluster	Cluster of parallel and overlapping incisions
RARI	Rock Art Research Institute, University of the Witwatersrand
RPES	Roughly parallel and evenly spaced (incisions)
SAHRA	South African Heritage Resources Agency
SAPD	Stacked arrangement of pecked dots
SH	Skeleton Hill
VF	Vorster's Farm

Preface

My first contact with this extraordinary religious complex on the farms Gestoptefontein and Driekuil was late in 2004 when I was asked to carry out an archaeological impact assessment on Driekuil Hill, a rock art site near Ottosdal, a village in North West province. The mining company Wonderstone Limited, whose operation is based on the adjoining farm, Gestoptefontein, sought permission to destroy this hill in order to assess the quality of the wonderstone[1] outcrop on which the rock art is pecked and incised (see chapter 1).

On this preliminary excursion I accompanied an official from the holding company Assore, a couple of mine employees and colleagues from the Rock Art Research Institute (RARI), University of the Witwatersrand. We had made the two and a half hour journey from Johannesburg early that day and spent the rest of the morning walking about on the hill, looking for the engravings. It did not appear to be a large or extensively engraved site, although we did note two striking instances of ancient interaction with the rock. Most obvious was a surface into which people had ground at least 50 grooves up to 25 mm deep and just under half a metre long. The other, a more conventional image on a densely engraved pavement of rock, was the largest and most detailed depiction of a woman's pubic apron I have encountered. In my excitement, I called everybody over to admire the work. I heard subsequently from one of the mine employees that afterwards the company official had walked off muttering disparagingly about the quality of the art and scoffing at my enthusiasm over such a poor piece of work.

This attitude of disdain and incomprehension was quite general amongst the 'white' people I met, but with important exceptions. I was often questioned about the reasons for my interest in what one person called *'kaffergoed'* (a demeaning expression in Afrikaans for things made by people who are not 'European' or 'white'). An artisan asked me why I chose to work on primitive and prehistoric artefacts when I could be studying the heritage of white South Africans, such as the ox wagons of the pioneering *Voortrekkers* of the mid-1800s. On another occasion, after thieves stole the battery from my car while it was parked near Driekuil Hill, the landowner, who kindly towed my vehicle back to the mine, asked me in puzzlement how I could justify spending so much time on

[1] Wonderstone is the name given to the form of pyrophyllite, a mineral with similar properties to talc, that occurs in this part of North West province (see chapter 1).

the heritage of the very people who had stolen my battery. He also suggested that I was doing my job of documenting the rock art rather too thoroughly. Others found it hard to understand what kept me so busy on the hill – they had walked over it and 'seen nothing'. They were especially negative about the numerous cuts and pecks on the rocks. These were evidence of the sheer meaningless of the markings made by these inferior people as they idled away their time in the sun. Tswana-speaking workers assumed that I was making a lot of money; why else would I spend so much time up there on the hill in the sun amongst the snakes? I earned a Tswana nickname – Monakgeng – it means, in English, 'the one who lives in the veld'. I was flattered to hear that I was credited with the ability to spot rock art through the grass and in the dark, this no doubt because of my habit of wandering around on the hills at twilight, when the angled light makes it easier to spot rock art that might have been missed at other times of the day.

People's responses were not overwhelmingly negative, however. Pieter de Jager, whose family had owned the hill and whose ancestor's initials were carved into the rock on the hill, is an historian who is passionately interested in the history of the area (De Jager 2008). I found too, that when I had the opportunity to work with people on aspects of the rock art, they were receptive to my enthusiasm and the tentative explanations I offered. These were the people who related stories to me about the wonderstone hills and told me where I could find more rock art.

I soon realised that the middle management of Assore, while concerned to observe the letter of the law and anxious to be seen as honouring their legal obligations, saw the rock art as overburden, a niggling and time-consuming problem that had to be dealt with before they could strip it off and examine the extent and quality of the deposits below. There was an additional reason for their haste. The mine's prospecting licence was soon to expire. The archaeological work would have to be carried out as soon as possible if they were to prospect within the limited time remaining before the expiry of the permit. One of their chief concerns was that the South African government's Department of Minerals and Energy would then grant a prospecting licence to somebody else. The presence of competitors would complicate and perhaps threaten the mining company's operations.

As it turned out, the prospecting licence did indeed expire.Nonetheless, Wonderstone was able to renew their licence.

In their haste and apparent ignorance of the presence of rock art on the hill, a local farmer and historian told me later, the mining company had first attempted to go ahead with the destruction of the hill without any kind of archaeological impact whatsoever. Mine management had organised a *braaivleis* (barbecue) for the owners of the portions of Driekuil 280 IP and had informed these local farmers that the company intended to destroy the hill. One of the farmers, Pieter de Jager, who knew about the rock art on the hill, asked the mine manager what they were going to do about the rock art. 'What rock art?' the manager wanted to know. De Jager told him that the hill was covered with engravings and that an archaeological survey would have to be carried

out to establish whether or not the prospecting would be permitted. Shortly afterwards Assore contacted RARI and asked them to assess the site.

In the Archaeological Impact Assessment (AIA) (Hollmann & Huffman 2005) we recommended that full mitigation of the site be carried out so that Wonderstone could thereafter apply for a permit from the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) – the national body that coordinates the identification and management of the national estate – to destroy the site. SAHRA issued the necessary permit to carry out survey work and stipulated in addition that Wonderstone would be obliged to remove and house these in a small museum on the mine's property.

Based upon our initial visit to Driekuil Hill, I allowed four days in which to locate and record the rock art. Working with a colleague, Riaan Rifkin, I soon realised that this was a gross underestimate. The more we looked around on the hill, the more evidence of rock marking we saw. I use the term 'marking' because much of the evidence of human activity on the hill was in the form of cuts and hammer marks, and not 'images' (see chapter 3). In addition we noticed triangular and diamond shaped 'meshes' incised on surfaces on the hill. I considered these valuable data, soon to be destroyed, and so spent an additional 14 days recording them, as well as additional representational imagery that we had overlooked in our initial survey.

At the outset of the project Benjamin Smith (then director of RARI) and I had judged the site as 'minor' when compared with the much larger and relatively well-known rock art site on the farm Gestoptefontein and, therefore, expendable. Wonderstone employs around 150 people (Jos Joubert, pers. comm. 2011) and in a region with high unemployment we did not want to stand in the way of economic betterment. I was also aware that for Wonderstone and, for that matter, Ben Smith too, the destruction of the hill was a foregone conclusion. For SAHRA, the archaeological assessment and mitigation were merely legally required processes before they could get to work on the hill. I was uncomfortable with my collusion in the destruction of an archaeological site but consoled myself with the thought that I was facilitating much-needed development and that at least the largest rock art site was to be left untouched.

The knowledge that I was working on a 'condemned' site strengthened my resolve to make the survey and recording work as complete as possible. I felt a strong sense of responsibility for the place. Once my work was done, the site would be destroyed. Beside the few context-less stones in the small museum on the mine, my notes and records would be the only reference to the place. With this anxiety in the back of my mind I took especial pains to photograph the motifs and markings in great detail, returning to the site to re-photograph many of the markings and motifs.

As I located and recorded the hundreds of motifs and markings on Driekuil Hill I learnt of other rock art sites, also on wonderstone, from curious local farmers and mine employees who came to see what I was doing. I visited these sites and began to realise that Driekuil Hill was one of several wonderstone outcrops, all of which bore similar motifs and markings. Indeed, it seemed that every significant wonderstone outcrop bore rock art. The import of Driekuil Hill

started to assume different proportions. Far from being an isolated, minor and thus unimportant place, it was part of a much bigger picture, a constituent of a 'complex' of at least 12 sites. Moreover, this complex was unique in terms of its wonderstone substrate and the content of the rock art. My close acquaintance with the rock art on Driekuil Hill also enabled me to compare this body of motifs and markings with engraved rock art sites elsewhere. It became apparent that although there are intriguing and important similarities between certain motifs and markings at other sites in North West province, Free State, Gauteng and even further afield in the Northern, Eastern and Western Cape provinces (see chapter 2 for discussion of the so-called 'Khoekhoen art tradition'), the Gestoptefontein-Driekuil Complex (GDC) as I started to call it, was a meaningful and self-sufficient unit of analysis in its own right.

The removals heightened the tension between myself and mine management. Even though I was well aware that I had been hired for just this reason, I felt horrified at the prospect of overseeing the destruction of the place that I had spent so much time surveying and that I had grown to love. Mine management put pressure on me to remove only the minimum number of rocks from the hill. I, on the other hand felt justified in expanding upon the original list of stones to be removed that I had submitted to SAHRA. After all, the permit stated that I was entitled to remove not only the stones I had specified, but also 'any others that can be accommodated' and since I was in charge of the operation I used my discretion and happily exceeded the initially proposed number of stones earmarked for removal. We took most of the stones out using machines – a large machine-mounted pneumatic drill and a back actor. The machine operators worked carefully to remove the stones, using the same equipment that later would level the hill into a series of terraces. Soon there were rows of stones packed along the side of the mine's processing plant. Using the mine's diamond-tipped saws we worked long hours to cut the 100 or so stones to size. Again, a head office representative attempted to prevail upon me to ensure that 'the best' stones were sent away to the provincial museum 70 kilometres away in Klerksdorp and to the University of the Witwatersrand. There was merit in this suggestion – more people would be able to view the rock art – but there was also, I suspected, an ulterior and less civic-minded motive. Were the 'best' pieces to remain at the mine 'museum' it would mean that people would come to see them and that would be a nuisance and an inconvenience for the company.

Relations at this stage were at an all time low between myself and this head office official. When, after working five or six 12-hour days, we had not quite finished the work, he informed me that 'funds were exhausted' and that Wonderstone would not pay me to complete the work; I had exceeded my brief and removed too many stones, compared to the total I had specified on the original list. It was a strategic move on the company's part. By this time the stones had all been safely removed and, because mine management was champing at the bit to strip the hill, I had told SAHRA that the way was clear to grant Wonderstone their permit for the destruction of Driekuil Hill. It did not take them very long to strip the hilltop and discover that, for the next few years at any rate, the deposit was not worth the expense involved to exploit it.

In other words, the company had what it wanted and did not attach much value to it. I had lost my hold over them and now they had me over a barrel. My professional integrity was at stake and I could not leave the project incomplete. In addition they had realised that I had an intense personal interest in the work. I had told them of my academic interest in the site and my intention to research the sites for a doctorate. The same head office functionary had already informed me that as I was interested in the sites for personal reasons, I should be prepared to bear some of the costs myself.

The situation was thus very delicate and I was extremely anxious about the prospects of my getting permission to carry out survey work on the other wonderstone outcrops owned by Wonderstone. I completed the work of cataloguing the stones and moving them into the mine's museum and I supervised the transport of selected stones to Klerksdorp Museum for no charge. The stones destined for the University of the Witwatersrand were finally delivered several years later. Thanks to the interest of an individual within the company, a designer has produced some display posters I compiled, but these have not yet been completed. The place is not yet a functioning museum. Although Wonderstone did initially spend some money on preparing wood and glass display cases for the museum, I have had to prevail upon mine management to paint the building and fit glass into some of the windows.

I had fought hard to do the best I could for the site and the stones that were removed and in the process I had antagonised management. I had no qualms about it in the light of their behaviour and attitude. Indeed I had pushed back hard against them by putting in an application to have the largest remaining rock art site on Gestoptefontein declared a National Heritage Site; receipt of this application was never acknowledged and as far as I am aware the authorities have not evaluated the application. On the other hand I was still beholden to mine management. I wanted permission to continue working on their property. More than that, I also wanted the mine to give me free accommodation in their guest house, only 500 metres from the big site on Gestoptefontein, while I did the work. Head office, to whom I had addressed my request, wrote back and informed me that they had no objection to my surveying the big engraving site but 'unfortunately' the guest house would be in continual use for the foreseeable future and I would not be able to use these facilities. This was a blow to me because I was working on a limited budget. Having to pay for accommodation off-site at a bed and breakfast (even at reduced rates) would stretch my finances and reduce the amount of time I could afford to spend doing the survey. I did not have a job and I intended to use the money I got from Wonderstone to do my survey work.

It was at this stage that Jos Joubert, the Mine Manager, came into his own. He overrode head office's decision and made the guest house available to me when it was not in use. Although an avowed 'philistine' on heritage matters, I think he respected my tenacity and seemed to hold no grudge against my emphatic behaviour concerning the rock art removals from Driekuil Hill and was at least prepared to tolerate my presence on mine property.

There were therefore a number of factors that impelled me to undertake a

detailed study of the GDC. The threatened status of the sites, lack of any in-depth research into the rock art, and people's ignorance and prejudice, not to mention the fact that I was casting around for a suitable thesis topic, all drove me to tackle this project. Having presided over the destruction of Driekuil Hill, I was determined to spend time amongst the largest remaining body of motifs and markings – Gestoptefontein Hill. Located in the midst of the mine, bounded to the north by a service road and the quarried remains of what may have been one of the largest engraving sites in North West province, the mine offices, workshops to the east, the powder plant to the west, and farmland to the south, I sometimes saw my work on the hill, an area of about one hectare, as an analogy. I was working in the belly of the beast, finding and recording treasures while all around the unthinking, uncaring world proceeded about its business.

I could not sustain this elitist attitude for any length of time, however, in the face of the many contradictions it concealed. After all, without the mine's existence, I would not have been involved with the rock art in the first place, and I depended on mine management's largesse for access to the sites and for accommodation in their guesthouse. I was indebted and so at other times I had to settle for something less grand – I was simply recording what was left of the hill, after many years of destructive and uncoordinated mining and collecting.

It is now more than six years since I wrote this preface. The mine museum, containing the remains of some of what was salvaged from Driekuil Hill, was officially opened in December 2012 but is rarely visited. Then, in 2015 my worst fear was realised when a Head Office official told me that Wonderstone was considering to mine Gestoptefontein Hill (the largest, most densely engraved remaining site). The Mine Manager, Jos Joubert, had always said to me "The company *will* mine the koppie [i.e. Gestoptefontein Hill], but *not* in our lifetime". He was wrong about that – the company wanted to mine the koppie *now*. Remarkably (and to their credit), however, considering that I told Wonderstone management that I would recommended against any further mining (as I duly did) they approached me to carry out an AIA to this end in 2015. In the report (Hollmann 2015) I wrote:

> Gestoptefontein Hill is a threatened remnant of one of the country's the most outstanding examples of a Khoe-San rock art tradition that involved making images and other markings in the performance of women's initiation rites. It is therefore recommended that Gestoptefontein Hill be declared a Grade 1 heritage site of national significance. The site should be protected from any mining activities. In the event of the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) approving the mining of Gestoptefontein Hill, extensive mitigation and the construction and maintenance of a public display of the rock art would be required.

The mitigation and public display costs would have outstripped the potential value of the wonderstone deposits below Gestoptefontein Hill and as far as I

know, plans to mine the best preserved remnant of an ancient religious 'happening' have been shelved – forever, one hopes.

None the less there are still communication problems between the production-oriented people that plan and execute mining operations, and the heritage people whose concern is the the protection of important archaeological and historical remains. Concerns about the fencing around Gestoptefontein Hill are a good example of how we can misunderstand each other. In a letter to management written in 2014 I pointed out that the fence around Gestoptefontein Hill did not enclose the entire field of engravings. Important and vulnerable engravings were excluded from the rest of the site by the enclosure, constructed from large steel drums, weighted with stones, painted white and linked to each other with thick gauge fencing wire. This fence provided a visual barrier and demarcated the area that was not to be entered. Some of the barrels, however, were standing on top of engraved surfaces. I suggested doing away with any fencing, in view of the potential for damage caused by digging fence post holes jn an engraving site. I had expected to hear from Wonderstone management in due course to discuss how the work should be done and if necessary to arrange for a permit from SAHRA the heritage authorities. I never received a response to this letter but early in 2016, after Wonderstone paid me to come out and physically point out the localities of all the engraving sites of which I was aware, I noticed that the barrels were gone and that there was a (new) wire fence around Gestoptefontein Hill. Closer inspection showed that the fence still did not enclose all the rock art and other markings. Furthermore the wire fence was painted with silver paint on site, thus spattering some of the rocks with silver paint. This work was done without a permit from SAHRA and was thus illegal.

To make matters worse, some (again unpermitted and unsupervised) preliminary quarrying of a small hole was carried out at the foot of Gestoptefontein Hill to inspect the colour of the underlying wonderstone. In the process of excavating the hole, the machine operator backed the excavator over some densely engraved rocks, destroying most of the motifs.

These incidents underline the need for mine management and archaeologists to talk to each other and to work together closely on developments where mining and heritage resources are so closely intertwined. The damage could have been avoided had an informed heritage practitioner been invited to participate in the process of re-siting the fence from planning to execution. Similarly the destruction of engravings could also have been avoided by engaging a heritage professional. I know from my own experience that management resent paying archaeological consultants (they think we charge too much), but it is also the case that because management is so 'production' oriented it does not occur to people in these positions that their activities – even those carried out with good intentions – might have adverse consequences for the heritage for which they are responsible. Yet again the rock art has been carelessly (and needlessly) damaged.

Heritage and development do not necessarily have to be at loggerheads, but the reality is that in South Africa despite good legislation they often are, especially when it comes to mining interests. This is to be expected when we have

a state bureaucracy in which the Department of Mineral Affairs and Energy (DME) apparently enjoys so-called 'senior status' over the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) and acts with apparent impunity. In late 2014 one of the Boschpoort Road rock art sites narrowly avoided damage when the company Sino Rock arrived at a farm on Driekuil, without the required SAHRA permit and proceeded to extend an old test pit, creating an excavation approximately 100 m2 and c. 2 m at its deepest point. This was carried out within the legally prescribed 10 m exclusion zone of the rock art site. Although reported to SAHRA in March 2015, the case is still "pending and under assessment" over two years later.

Elsewhere in South Africa, the ignorance of and disregard for our heritage was highlighted again in 2016, when the DME permitted open cast mining at Canteen Koppie, an important and legally protected archaeological site in South Africa's Northern Cape Province. It was only through the determined efforts of an archaeologist and concerned citizens that the mining was stopped, but not before the site was damaged. SAHRA's voice was notably absent. A judicial review has been ordered into the granting of the permit but nobody should hold their breath to wait for the outcome.

This preface has most largely been about the threats the GDC rock art faces because it was a little appreciated and even denigrated part of the South African past. Ironically, it was this very neglect in the first place that led me to explore the significance and meaning of the what I call the 'phenomenon' of the Gestoptefontein and Driekuil rock art. With this book I have fulfilled my promise to explore the significance that these wonderstone outcrops had for people in the past and to make these results known to fellow researchers and to the public. By proposing a past for these places in which the outcrops played an important role in the social life of the people who visited them, I have tried to show that these places deserve our respect and appreciation. No matter how the ideas in this book may be modified or discounted in future, nobody can now claim that the rock art of these places is insignificant or redundant. The wonderstone outcrops with their rock markings and motifs were an integral part of the social landscape of the past. They should enjoy our care and protection in the present.

Part I

Introduction

Chapter 1

What this all means: an ancient religious centre in North West Province

There is a place on the plains on the farm Driekuil, a few kilometres northeast of Ottosdal, from which one can pick out seven of the thirteen outcrops that together form an ancient religious complex (Figure 1.1). Once one learns to recognise the shape of the outcrops – some with large red and grey slabs – they stand out from the rounded hills and quartzite outcrops that surround them. People in the past marked all these outcrops by rubbing, scratching and hammering the slate-like wonderstone. The larger outcrops have many motifs as well, of humans and other animals, but many more forms that do not seem, at first, to depict any 'thing'. The wonderstone outcrops occur only on two adjacent farms – Gestoptefontein and Driekuil. I call it the Gestoptefontein-Driekuil Complex (GDC), although in the past it would certainly have had another name or names.

In this study I try to recover something of the past significance of the GDC, when it was a prominent religious centre that attracted people from all around the area. I want to find out 'what this all means', a play on words that Janet Spector used in her study of a Wahpeton Dakota village, *What This Awl Means* (1993). Working in the North American archaeological milieu of the 1970s and 1980s Spector was frustrated by the predominant approach to archaeological remains that emphasised classification and dating. Spector wanted to 'discover ... feelings of the past' (Spector 1993: 1). A small, decorated awl handle, made from an antler and recovered from an archaeological 'garbage dump' catalysed these feelings:

FIGURE 1.1. From a point to the southeast one can discern eight of the thirteen Gestoptefontein-Driekuil Complex (GDC) outcrops. In this photograph the outcrops may look insubstantial but a person standing in this location can pick them out quite easily because their rocky surfaces are dark and sparsely vegetated in comparison with the surrounding landscape.

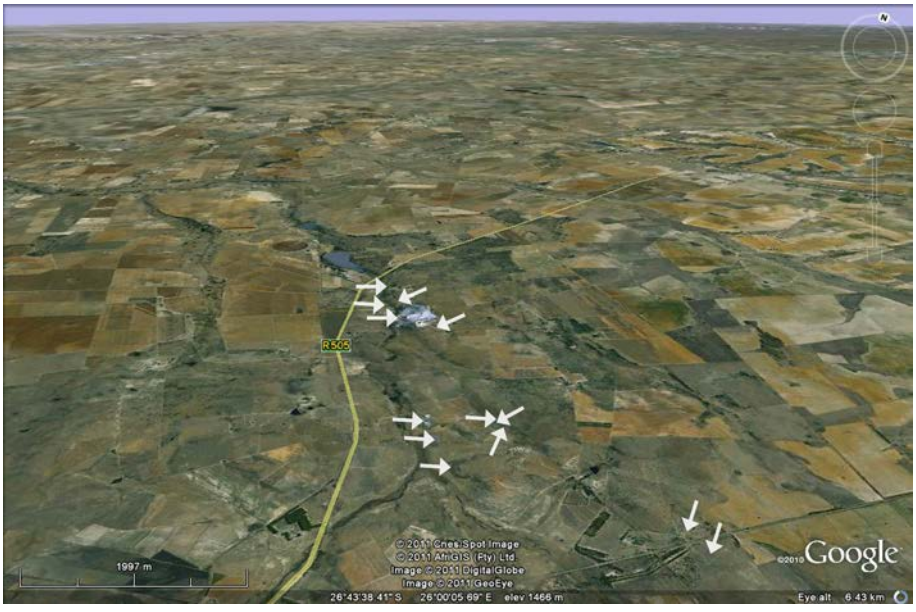


FIGURE 1.2. An overview of the GDC looking northwest. Most of the wonderstone outcrops occur along the Driekuil Stream which forms pools in places. The Boschpoort Road outcrops occur to the southeast. The village of Ottosdal is just out of the picture in the southwest (i.e. bottom left) corner of the picture. (Google Earth image)

FIGURE 1.3. Location of the GDC in the context of the southern African subcontinent.

> *I felt certain that a Wahpeton woman had once used the tool at Little Rapids and that its inscriptions conveyed a great deal about her accomplishments to those who understood their meaning. The awl handle became an important symbol to me. In response to this evocative find, I wrote the story of how the awl might have been used and lost.... Through this account I hope to give readers a sense of Dakota culture in those times and to stimulate curiosity about the site and the people who left no written records of themselves.... Throughout I have tried to convey the turmoil of the times and to avoid the rhetoric of archaeology that frequently obscures the people being studied.*
>
> (Spector 1993: 18)

Spector's book influenced a generation of archaeologists. I suspect that a similar bond with the people behind the archaeological artefacts motivates the following words, written by David Morris, archaeologist at the McGregor Museum in Kimberley, Northern Cape:

> *The Northern Cape rock art sites I study are material residues in the landscape of ancient ideas, perhaps even rituals. The interpretive role of archaeology is to breathe back into these silent traces, as best*

> *we can, something of the significance and motivation that might have lain behind their original creation.*
>
> (Morris 2007: 2)

Morris uses the metaphor of breathing life back into artefacts. His interest in the 'material residues' at a rock art site is to recreate their original significance and meaning, as far as this is possible. It was Morris's (2002, 2010) work on Driekopseiland – that well-known rock art site on the Riet River south of Kimberley, Northern Cape – that inspired me to undertake this investigation into the rock art of the GDC.

These are not just 'rock art sites' and to view them through this narrow perspective would be to lose sight of their significance to the people that were associated with them. Like Spector and Morris, I am concerned with revitalising a place that once lived. The thousands of markings and motifs on thirteen outcrops of 'wonderstone' – the local form of the slate-like mineral pyrophyllite (Astrup & Horn 1998: 601) – have seized my imagination and stimulated me to try and understand their significance. The GDC is a 'phenomenon', a notable, extraordinary, exceptional occurrence (Oxford Talking Dictionary 1998). The word 'phenomenon' implies a unique and dynamic process – a place that once was 'alive' and on which motifs and markings 'grew' as people used the place. The GDC 'happened', and the motifs and markings are the most prominent remains of this 'happening'.

1.1 Understanding the GDC 'phenomenon'

A large part of this study is spent getting more closely acquainted with the motifs and markings in the GDC before I present a scenario that tries to integrate the outcrops, motifs and markings, historical landscape, and the coming together of people and performance of ceremonies. I pose three main questions:

- What do the rock markings mean?
- Who made them?
- Why did they make them on the wonderstone outcrops?

This is a typical 'Western agenda' – find out meanings, pin them down in time and space, and in writing. But this approach is in conflict with the ways that the people who make the art understand their activities. The questions that anthropologists/rock art researchers formulate do not emerge from the lifeworlds of the artists but from our anthropological perspective and the study of the peoples' 'art'. As Gow observes, our

> *key questions have been set by the agenda of the aesthetic tradition with which most anthropologists have grown up, the Western tradition... The power of this tradition is such that it has constrained ethnographers endlessly to ask the same questions of other visual aesthetic systems, and to receive the same bemused answers. Even when they are fully aware that such aesthetic systems are very different ... ethnographers continue to ask ... "Who made it?", "What is it called?", "What does it look like?", "What does it mean?" These questions tell us most of what we need to know about Western art, but there is no reason to think of them as universal.*
>
> (Gow 1999: 229–230)

All researchers in this 'Western tradition' have to deal with this legacy, which Ingold outlines:

> *For those of us who call ourselves academics and intellectuals, however, there is a good reason why we cannot escape 'the West', or avoid the anxieties of modernity. It is that our very activity, in thinking and writing, is underpinned by a belief in the absolute worth of disciplined, rational inquiry. In this book, it is to this belief that the terms 'Western' and 'modern' refer. And however much we may object to the dichotomies to which it gives rise, between humanity and nature, intelligence and instinct, the mental and the material, and so on, the art of critical disputation on these matters is precisely what 'the West' is all about. For when all is said and done, there can be nothing more 'Western', or more 'modern', than to write an academic book such as this.*
>
> (Ingold 2000: 6–7)

For an anthropologist/rock art researcher the contradiction is between the belief in the 'worth' of 'rational inquiry' and its concomitant 'dichotomies' on the one hand – and the phenomenon that is being investigated, which is structured in a 'pre-objective' way (Ingold 2000: 25). Towards the end of her life, the rock art researcher Pat Vinnicombe – who produced *People of the Eland* (1976), one of the seminal books on southern African hunter-gatherer rock art – mused about her experiences working with Aboriginal groups in Western Australia. These experiences changed her perceptions of San rock art and scholars' attempts to explain it (Vinnicombe 2010). Like Gow and Ingold, she recognised the contradictions inherent in anthropological studies of indigenous art:

> *We westerners are always looking for the 'full story', the 'whole answer', the 'complete myth', and the 'correct sequence' in which events happened. What is more, we want the story all at once, not in dribs and drabs over a period of time. And when we finally collect sufficient information to satisfy our alphabetically oriented minds, we insist on recording what we have been told according to our categories,* our *logic.*
>
> (Vinnicombe 2010: 242, original emphasis)

The researcher wants to record fully another 'reality' but in the process some of the meaning escapes or is altered. Vinnicombe gives the following example:

> *Our dependency on the written word and the fixed order into which we place these letters can be a source of bemusement, and indeed amusement, to many preliterate people. One of my Aboriginal collaborators . . . has a family name . . . that is difficult for a westerner to pronounce and has accordingly been written in numerous different ways . . . his works . . . are listed under widely varying spellings of his name. I brought this to his attention and asked him under which name he would prefer to be known. "That's white fella business," was his mildly rebuking reply: "I know who I am!" . . . . When in Hector's company, I often dive for my notebook, scribble down words, and look up back pages for a previous explanation, he pities my lack of memory, my dependency on these marks on pieces of paper. "You got story in book," he smiles wryly, "I got story in body."*
>
> (Vinnicombe 2010: 242)

This anecdote about a 'story-in-body' reminds me that an analogous situation pertains amongst Khoe-San people in southern Africa. The 19th-century narrator ||kabbo implied a similar comparison between 'book' and 'body' when he explained to Lucy Lloyd that the Bushman's 'letters' are in their bodies (L. II. 28: 2531rev.). It is a key distinction and a major stumbling block for the Western researcher and his or her grasp of native reality, as Vinnicombe points out:

> *This dichotomy between 'book' and 'body' is a crucial and important factor influencing differences in world view. In my opinion, it is a dichotomy over which we 'literates', who try to understand the thought processes of preliterate people, are forever floundering. We try to bridge the gap but we are continually being 'led by the nose' in the direction of our own cultural perceptions, rather than those of the people about whom we are writing. We are often more preoccupied with academic acceptance than with an empathetic understanding of concepts that are not necessarily compatible with our own.*
>
> (Vinnicombe 2010: 242)

Now Vinnicombe is not saying that one should not do research – after all, that is 'white fella business'. She is reflecting on the intrinsic difficulties of doing research. Ingold suggests that the basis of our 'floundering' lies in the simultaneous but contradictory impulses that underlie the Western desire to 'know' and 'understand' other lifeworlds. He writes of our 'double disengagement' from the world:

> *The first sets up a division between humanity and nature; the second establishes a division, within humanity between 'native' or 'indigenous' people, who live in cultures, and enlightened Westerners, who*

> *do not. Both claims . . . are underwritten by a commitment . . . to the ascendancy of abstract or universal reason . . . abstract reason can treat, as objects of contemplation, diverse worldviews, each of which is a specific construction of an external reality. . . . The anthropologist . . . is . . . a 'viewer of views'.*
>
> (Ingold 2000: 15)

Ingold's problem with this authoritative position – a theoretical stance much in evidence in the anthropological literature – is that such distancing assumptions permeate the anthropologist's interpretations of what the native says or does. These issues are directly relevant to my study. I want to understand the ways in which the GDC phenomenon was part of the people's knowledge of the world. This is not 'story-in-book knowledge', transmitted across generations in the form of 'interconnected beliefs and propositions' held in the mind (Ingold 2000: 21). Nor is it inscribed in the form of signs encoded in objects; Ingold cites the example of a young male Walbiri initiate who is taken around the country on a 'grand tour' and told about the significance of certain landscape features and their relation to the ancestral beings of the Dreaming (Ingold 2000: 20–21). In this way the 'truths immanent in the landscape . . . [are] . . . gradually revealed to him, as he proceeds from the most superficial, 'outside' level of knowledge to deeper, 'inside' understanding' (Ingold 2000: 21). Similar dynamics pertain to the GDC, I argue. Movement through the landscape, physically encountering the terrain, hearing the sounds and inhaling the smells were ways of connecting with the place; they generated an emotional response or feeling in the body. People established a relationship with the place through the performance of certain acts (see Part IV). In this way the landscape became meaningful. It was the act of relating that established this sense of meaning and a sense of self.

Ingold makes a point concerning the relation between 'form and feeling' (Ingold 2000: 22–24) that is important for my consideration of the motifs and markings in the GDC. Citing Langer's (1957) book on art and aesthetics, *Philosophy in a New Key*, Ingold distinguishes two 'registers of understanding' of 'art objects'. One discerns meaning in the art object itself, the other in what the object signifies, or represents (2000: 22). According to Ingold, Westerners tend to look beyond the object itself, seeking to understand what the object means. But music is an example of an art form in which this kind of representational meaning is much less prominent: '[m]usic, surely, can stand for nothing but itself' (Ingold 2000: 23). The appreciation of music lies largely in the realm of feeling, and 'feeling', Ingold argues, 'is a mode of active, perceptual engagement, a way of being literally 'in touch' with the world' (Ingold 2000: 23). Music, dance, painting and sculpture give form to human feeling. What we call 'art', says Ingold, 'is the shape that is taken by our perception of the world, guided

as it is by the specific orientations, dispositions and sensibilities that we have acquired through having had things pointed out or shown to us in the course of our sensory education' (Ingold 2000: 23).

In fact, the motifs and markings are not 'art' as this term is understood in everyday Western parlance:

> *Hunters and gatherers of the past were painting and carving, but they were not 'producing art'. To understand the original significance of what they were doing, I contend, we must cease thinking of painting and carving as modalities of the production of art, and view art instead as one rather peculiar, and historically very specific objectification of the activities of painting and carving.*
>
> (Ingold 2000: 131)

In other words what one sees today when walking around the GDC as 'art' are residues of these acts of creation and feelings – not just any feelings, however – the 'original significance' of the place is the feelings, sentiments and associations with the objects depicted and the place of which they are part. They are intuitive knowledge, what Ingold calls 'a poetics of dwelling' (2000: 26). These are the 'poetics' that I want to evoke.

1.2 The sites

The thirteen wonderstone outcrops of the GDC are strung out along a 9,26-km-long[1] northwest–southeast axis (Figure 1.2).[2] On the farm Gestoptefontein there is a single chain of wonderstone but to the south on Driekuil the wonderstone outcrops split into two 'lines', an eastern and a western arms. There may be yet more similarly marked portions of wonderstone outcrops, although these are probably not as extensive as those already known.

People have altered the countryside considerably since the heydays of the GDC and so it is worth reading in detail the first recorded impressions of the GDC made by European visitors. These are in German and have to my knowledge not been published in translated form.

1.2.1 First published records

The first published record of the GDC is by mining engineer Adolf Hübner. He described his first impressions of the place:

> *A strenuous ride of 15 hours brings the wanderer from Potchefstrom* [sic] *to the farm of Mr van Zyl, where a vast plain stretches from*

[1] All measurements and compass directions in this section are derived using Google Earth.

[2] Field work was done from 2005 to 2009. Details are in Appendix A.

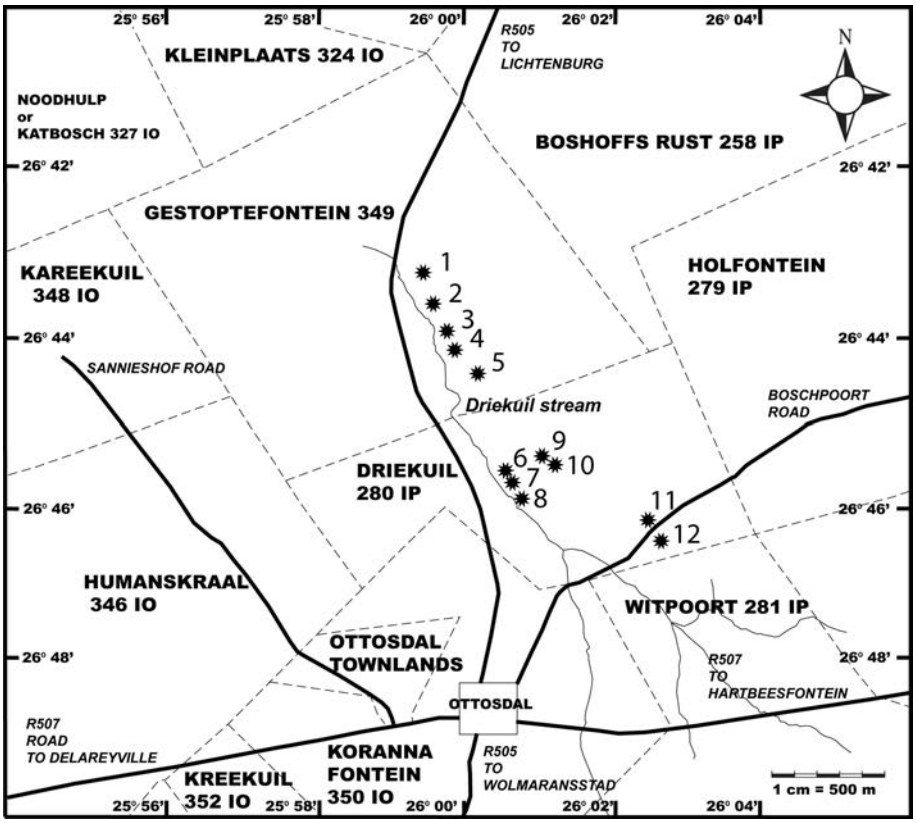


FIGURE 1.4. The localities of the GDC outcrops on the farms Gestoptefontein and Driekuil, near Ottosdal, North West province.

the west to the north and then to the south-east, with low hills to the south bordering the horizon. From a distance one can see a bigger hill, it is called Klochopitzana by the Damara negroes of the region. The house of the aforementioned gentleman is situated near it. Coming closer one discovers a few smaller hills which together with the bigger hill form a small chain, extending from north to south. They all consist of a strongly tilted slate, which falls to the west, with outcrops of good smooth surfaces on the western slope...

On nearly all the slate outcrops one can see carvings. Although very rough and only outlines of objects, they show a certain skill in drawing; one can see that the craftsman understood how to reproduce the shape of animals, even though in rough strokes, one can recognise them by their characteristic features. Although the slate, which resembles lithographic stone, is easy to cut into, it has been worked in a rough manner. The outlines are not continuing lines, but small adjoining holes obviously chipped out with an instrument resembling a chisel. But the surrounding surfaces have also been filled with a

FIGURE 1.5. An overview of the northernmost GDC sites. From left to right: Vorster's Farm, Married Quarters, Gestoptefontein Mountain (destroyed), Gestoptefontein Hill, Charlie Badenhorst. (Google Earth image)

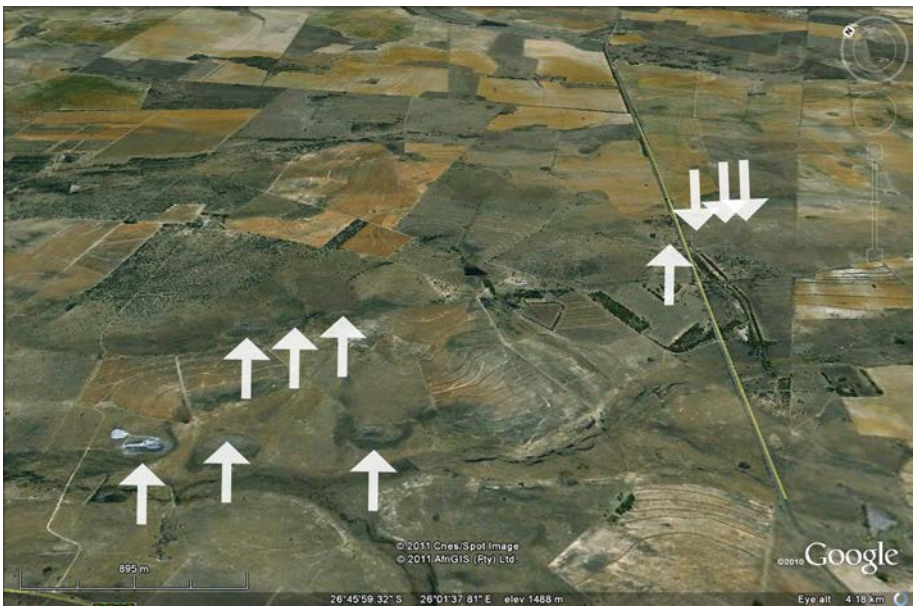


FIGURE 1.6. Overview of the western and eastern 'arms' of the wonderstone outcrops. The outcrops in the foreground along the Driekuil Stream are, from left to right: Driekuil Hill (destroyed), The Mound, Skeleton Hill. The eastern arm comprises the Driekuil Ridge sites in the middle ground and the four outcrops on Boschpoort Road, at middle right. (Google Earth image)

mass of similar perforations and this is certainly to be seen as a crude effort to approximate plasticity.

On many carvings I noticed straight, deep incisions that do not have any connection to the pictures, but seem to be made by the same craftsmen and therefore show that they also made use of knife-like instruments. I could not discern what they were supposed to signify. Because dozens of them are to be found on the same slab one can assume that they were not made by stonemasons trying to evaluate the quality of the stone.

Incidentally, the only man who up to now has cut the slabs is Mr Harley in Potchefstrom and he removed only a few.

Concerning the carvings themselves, which are made up of 2–300 [200 to 300] *figures, they chiefly depict animals, human figures are found very rarely. The only plant I discovered was a palm-like tree. Cultural objects like weapons, buildings and the like I could not discover and only rough ground plans of kraals seem to tell of the somewhat higher culture of the craftsmen while pointing to their latent surveyor ability. I noticed the following depictions of animals, and it is noticeable that there are no domestic animals among them: lions, elephants, camels as they are known here, in other words giraffes, alligators, leopards, rhinoceroses, hartebeests, wildebeests, ostriches, elands, scorpions, but no oxen, horses, pigs, dogs, chickens and such like. I found human figures only twice. I copied the best preserved figure, as shown below; it is a man with a bow.*

Apart from these easily recognisable drawings there are also many that are difficult to interpret and are totally incomprehensible to me; I need only refer to those where 6 vertical lines, that is lines of adjoining holes, are cut at right-angles by 4 or 6 similar lines, or where 12 rows of 3 holes each occur under one another. One cannot possibly explain these as alphabets. One also often finds circles of 100 millimetres in diameter out of which 18 radial lines of 100 millimetres spread out, so that the whole might depict a sun. What is the purpose of these pictures? One cannot learn anything from the negroes who reside there now. One has to look for the answer in the carvings themselves. They certainly do not represent a pictographic writing system, because the separate figures obviously have no relation to each other. They seem far more to be the random products of momentary artistic urges that found an excellent field of satisfaction in the lovely slate.

Did the mountain possess a certain distinction as its name Head of Quagga suggests? (Quagga is here to be understood as a delicacy.) The carvings might have originated during great gatherings of people which brought together all the tribes who lived in the vicinity. They cannot be decorations of graves either, because the stone has not been damaged anywhere. The most likely explanation remains that they came into being as a way of passing the time.

I made some copies of the most characteristic figures and only regret that because of the briefness of my visit I could not make a larger selection. They are nearly true to nature, because I in effect made impressions of them. I rubbed printing ink on the surfaces

> *concerned with rubber sheets and then transferred the pictures on to newsprint of which one side had been moistened.*
>
> (Hübner 1871: 51–53, transl. N. Mössmer, my square brackets)

Hübner mentions the name *Klochopitzana* ('Head of Quagga') and some of the most characteristic features of the GDC. It is not clear how many of the outcrops he visited, but I assume that his observations are based largely on what Holub (see below) calls the *Doppelhügel* ('double hill'), i.e. what I have called Gestoptefontein Mountain (now destroyed) and the adjoining Gestoptefontein Hill. He describes images of animals in rough strokes and clusters of 'straight, deep incisions' (what I call 'grooves'; see subsection 3.4.3). He mentions a depiction of a 'palm-like tree', an image that I have not been able to locate; Holub did remove a piece (57.584; Želizko 1925: plate 12.3) that he (or Želizko[3]) have called a *Baum* (tree). In my opinion, however, this image does not resemble a palm tree. His 'rough ground plans of kraals' are, I think, perhaps clothing motifs or items of personal adornment – these are always presented in metric perspective (i.e in 'plan view'; see section 7.1). They are not, in my opinion, at all similar to the kraal layouts described by Maggs (1995) and others (e.g. Evers 1981). These motifs occur in different regions and not in association with the range and number of other images such as one finds in the GDC; in addition they are believed to be authored by Bantu-speakers. Hübner greatly underestimates the number of anthropomorphic figures. He also alludes to many other motifs that he could not construe and which he found 'totally incomprehensible'; I interpret some of these puzzling motifs in chapter 5–chapter 8.

Most interestingly, and in the light of what I have discussed above (see section 1.1) about the significance and meaning of the GDC, Hübner suggests that the motifs are 'random products of momentary artistic urges that found an excellent field of satisfaction in the lovely slate'. In its original context perhaps this comment may be construed as a negative evaluation of the worth of the art. In view of the native context of the 'art' that I have evoked above, however, it seems rather apt; these were spontaneous rather than 'random' responses to being in the GDC. Hübner's speculations about the nature of *Klochopitzana* are intriguing too: he wonders whether the mountain possessed 'a certain distinction' to which 'great gatherings of people' were attracted. Just a few years later, Emil Holub – medical doctor, explorer, amateur anthropologist and remover of rock art – described seeing the outcrops for the first time:

[3]In Želizko's book it is often not clear who the author of the identifcations and comments is. For example, there are a few instances where Holub is specifically credited; this suggests that in other cases, perhaps many, the content was authored by Želizko. Holub had lost all of his notes in a hostile encounter in Zambia and there may have been very little original documentation accompanying the removed pieces.

> *The next morning we travelled across a plain surrounded by hills, watered by a tributary of the Harts River and on which numerous dwarf* [small] *ledges are to be found. While we were travelling I noticed a double hill to the east on which one could discern reddish and grey slabs of stone. – 'A rare kind of stone for this country,' I commented. 'It might be ancient mudstone, but I have never seen such big slabs of it in this country. I want to go there as soon as we have outspanned* [unharnessed] *and examine it more closely…' I examined the heights* [hills] *on the very same day and who can describe my astonishment, my joyous excitement, when I discovered numerous chiselled Bushman drawings on the isolated twin group which was not even 80 metres high.*
>
> *We soon reached a farmhouse! The property had the odd name of Gestopftefontein* [sic]*, which means blocked spring, and with its large one-storey building had earlier belonged to probably the biggest* [farmer] *in the district – a Mr van Zyl. At the moment this large farm belongs to a very courteous Englishman, Mr Attwell. He immediately invited us to stay over for a few days to give our exhausted draught animals some rest. I examined the heights* [hills] *on the very same day and who can describe my astonishment, my joyous excitement, when I discovered numerous chiselled Bushman drawings on the isolated twin group which was not even eighty metres high. This confirmed my opinion that the Bushmen had lived in these parts and even further to the north, and that especially here and in the neighbouring northern parts they were assimilated into the Bechuana, who were the first to arrive from north of the Zambezi. They became the Masarwas and in the next generation the Makalaharis. Mr Atwell was so kind to leave us a totally free hand in the removal of the engravings. We started work immediately, and added 140 pieces of Bushmen chiselling to my collection. They were all beautiful in every way. I measured and copied the examples which were too big, as well as those which were too badly damaged or fragmented, and not worth transporting and sending home. I included them in the ethnological diary of the results of my study there and then…. I also visited Gestopftefontein on my way back and tried to complete my studies as far as the daily rain and the north wind allowed. Mr Attwell treated me with the same kindness as before and did not yield to the pressure which was generally exerted in 1884 to permanently prevent the removal and export of Bushman carvings.*
>
> (Želizko 1925: 13–14, transl. N. Mössmer, square brackets by N. Mössmer)

Holub was probably not the first to remove pieces from the GDC and he was definitely not the last. Kandert (1998) has listed the accession numbers and short descriptions of the removed stones. The location for the stones removed from the GDC is given as 'Doppelhügel near Gestopftefontein, distr. Lichtenburg, Western Transvaal' (Kandert 1998: 20–26). Holub apparently obtained

informed comment by local people on some of the motifs, although tantalisingly little is known about the circumstances and identities of the people and there is very little of this information. According to Želizko (1925: 5) all of Holub's ethnographic notes were 'stolen and destroyed' in 1866 when his camp at Galulonga – in what is now southern Zambia, on the Kafue River, a tributary of the Zambezi River – was attacked by a group of Maschukulumbe, or Ila people. In addition to the ethnographic value of Holub's identifications of motifs, it is clear that in most instances he correctly identifies the object that the motif depicts: anthropo- and zoomorphs, aprons, animal-skin hides and designs. There are instances in which I differ from him, for example, his identification of 'spiders', 'crabs' and a flying insect (see subsection 4.3.5 and section 8.7). I have, however, found it necessary to create many more subdivisions in Holub's categories.

1.2.2 Destruction

More than 60 years ago Battiss commented: 'This is a ruined site, ruined by robbers and vandals' (1948: 57). Quarrying activities have damaged all of the sites. Nel and his co-workers described how small scale quarrying proceeded:

> *So far the methods of extracting the stone have mostly been rather crude and little care given to the proper removal of the waste. Stone sufficient to meet the immediate demand is taken out at some spot conveniently situated and giving promise of easy and inexpensive quarrying. . . . On further demands for stone arising quarrying is resumed in the same excavation, or should the extraction of the stone become too costly either as a result of waste accumulation or because of restrictions imposed by increasing depth, another small quarry is opened up in the vicinity. This way of taking out stone is probably the chief reason for several disused quarries, where for lack of proper quarrying methods quarrymen have literally dug themselves into a hole from which stone could no longer be extracted except by the expenditure of labour and money beyond their resources.*
>
> (Nel *et al.* 1937: 17)

Quarries occur on all the wonderstone outcrops, with the possible exception of The Mound (subsection 1.2.10) and Skeleton Hill (subsection 1.2.11).

There is also evidence of the removal of slabs of wonderstone, most likely pieces of rock bearing markings and motifs. I therefore assume that all the sites are disturbed and that people would have removed what they considered to be the most striking images, perhaps of zoomorphs and anthropomorphs. The implication is that the thematic content of the remaining rock art is skewed. This factor in turn limits the possibilities of making generalisations and comparisons

FIGURE 1.7. The northernmost wonderstone outcrop on Vorster's Farm. The west-facing outcrop lies just below the horizon in the photograph, level with the head of the wind pump at right in the picture.

about the content and distribution of motifs and markings on the different outcrops because these may not be a representative sample. Nonetheless, enough of the rock art remains to enable me to identify patterns and tendencies regarding the content of the rock art and its arrangement on the outcrops.

I introduce the sites in order from the northernmost to the southernmost. In most cases it was necessary to coin names for the sites; the name was chosen to reflect an easily identifiable characteristic, such as a farm name or the name of a road.

1.2.3 Vorster's Farm

The northernmost wonderstone outcrop (Figure 1.7–Figure 1.9) is on the portion of Gestoptefontein 349 IO owned by Ms Linda Taljaard (née Vorster). There are three small quarries in the area (Figure 1.9). These must have been started before 1937, because Nel *et al.* reported on them in their 1937 publication. These authors also reported that 'two local stone masons' were still mining the outcrop for material from which to manufacture gravestones (Nel *et al.* 1937: 17). These activities have probably destroyed much of the rock art on Vorster's Farm (VF). What remains is a scatter of motifs and markings, includ-

FIGURE 1.8. View from Vorster's Farm of *Tlogo Pitsane*, 'the Zebra's/Horse's head' aka Gestoptefontein Mountain, now almost levelled by mining over the past 20 years or so. To the right of the destroyed mountain is Gestoptefontein Hill.

ing a pecked rhinoceros, tasselled apron, scatters of peck marks and incisions (Figure 1.7).

1.2.4 Married Quarters

The Married Quarters (MQ) site is on the portion of Gestoptefontein 349 IO that is owned by the mining company Wonderstone (Pty) Ltd. It is a comparatively small exposure, about 0,12 (1 200 m^2), approximately 0,92 km southeast of the Vorster's Farm site and 20 m southwest of a cluster of houses in which married employees stay while in the employ of the mine, hence the name (Figure 1.10). In the mid- to late 19th century several structures were built in the vicinity of this little outcrop. By 1864 Hendrik Mattijs van Zijl, an ivory hunter, had completed his massive fortress-like house between 200 and 300 m north of the outcrop (De Jager 2008: 34). Later, the house was a coach stop on the route between Klerksdorp and Mafikeng (formerly spelt 'Mafeking'); on the outcrop is a detailed depiction of the kind of coach regularly used by the Zeederberg carriage company on this road between 1880 and 1900 (Figure 1.12; De Jager 2008: 77–87).

FIGURE 1.9. Quarries on Vorster's Farm. These may be the quarries mentioned by Nel *et al.* (1937: 17) that were used as a source for gravestones. Quarrying has probably destroyed many of the motifs and markings on this outcrop.

FIGURE 1.10. A view of the Married Quarters outcrop looking towards the east.

There are also several signatures and dates, the earliest dated example of which is 1877, although the signatures of the Van Zijls are almost certainly older, because they owned the farm 'Gestoptefontein' prior to the Pohls (Figure 1.13).

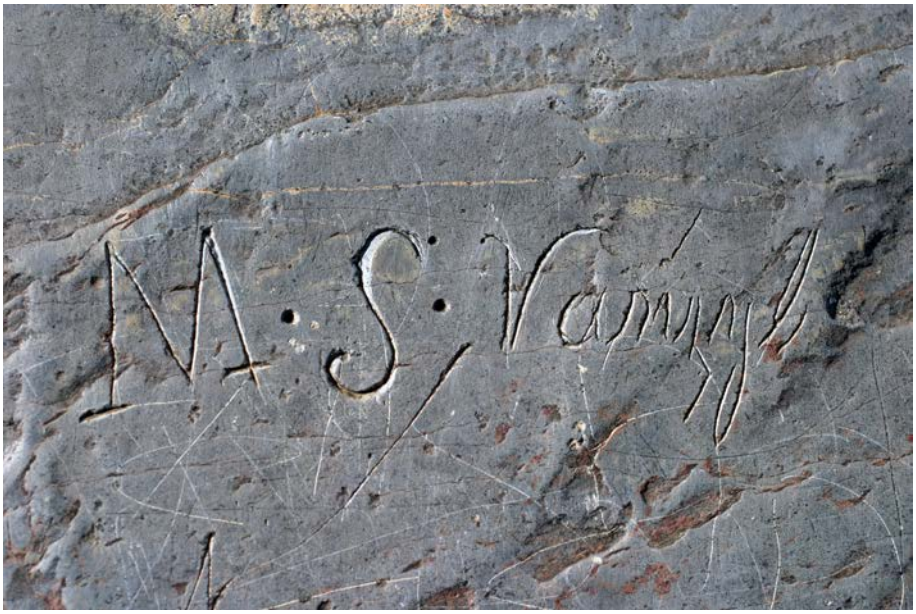
There is evidence of small-scale quarrying here, as well as mechanical damage to the outcrop, especially the northern end of the outcrop probably inflicted by heavy machinery. It is also evident that people removed much rock art here – there are the tell-tale traces of chisel marks and associated piles of rubble all along the terraces of this outcrop (Figure 1.14). Very few images remain on the outcrop; most of the surviving rock art comprises incisions and configurations of peck and hammer marks.

1.2.5 Site 13

This was the thirteenth site that I recorded. It is located on the left-hand side (northwest) of the road into Wonderstone about 20 m before the security checkpoint (Figure 1.15). A small quarry has destroyed most of whatever marked

FIGURE 1.11. All the wonderstone outcrops that have smooth, tile-like surfaces have been marked. They reflect light when the sun strikes them at a certain angle.

FIGURE 1.12. An engraving of a passenger coach on an outcrop close to the old coach stop between Klerksdorp and Mafikeng, in use between 1880 and 1900 (De Jager 2008: 77–87).



(a)

(b)

(c)

FIGURE 1.13. Several signatures occur on the Married Quarters outcrop: (a) M.S. van Zijl could be Mattijs van Zijl, one of the sons of Hendrik van Zijl, a renowned ivory hunter who lived nearby; (b) and (c) signatures of J.T. and L.T. Pohl, dated 26 June 1877.

FIGURE 1.14. Chisel marks and missing rocks like these probably indicate places from which engravings have been removed. I recorded at least 40 such instances on the Married Quarters outcrop.

FIGURE 1.15. Site 13 is a small, low outcrop that has been quarried. A few scattered markings remain.

surfaces there were. It is possible that this was always a relatively small site in comparison with sites like Gestoptefontein and Driekuil Hill, or even smaller sites like Married Quarters.

1.2.6 Gestoptefontein Mountain

The largest wonderstone outcrop of all was Gestoptefontein Mountain. I use the word 'mountain' because before extensive mining reduced it to ground level in places, this feature used to dominate the skyline and could be seen from many kilometres away (Figure 1.16). The height of Gestoptefontein Mountain is given by Nel *et al.* (1937: 6) as 180 feet (almost 55 m). Perhaps this does not sound very impressive but the visual impact that the outcrop made in relatively flat and featureless surroundings was, by all reports, quite considerable. To get an impression of its size and presence one needs to refer to historical accounts and personal anecdotes. I estimate that it was about 540 m long and 260 m wide, covering an area of approximately 14,04 ha.

In the first published report on the rock art of Gestoptefontein, Hübner (1871: 51) observed that Gestoptefontein 'mountain' could be seen from 'a distance'. His mention of the name *Klochopitzana* is the first recorded use of which I am aware. It is a seTswana name, spelt *Tlogo Pitsane* using modern

(a)

(b)

FIGURE 1.16. (a) Photograph taken before 1937 (Nel *et al.* 1937: plate 1) of the approximately 80-m-high prominence known as *Tlogo Pitsane*, 'the Zebra's head'. The explorer Holub called the two adjoining hills the *Doppelhügel*. (b) All of *Tlogo Pitsane* has been destroyed, most of it in the last 30 years. Now the smaller hill at the right, Gestoptefontein Hill, seems comparatively high.

orthography and it means 'Quagga' or 'Zebra's head' (Hübner 1871: 53). This is the name that seTswana-speaking locals still use and it has a bearing on the significance of the place in the past, as I discuss in Part IV. Hübner's reference to Damara negroes is puzzling and probably incorrect: the Damara live far away to the northwest in Namibia.

A contemporary eyewitness who grew up on a neighbouring farm recalled that from Ottosdal, about 6 km away, workers at Wonderstone in their red helmets could be seen moving around on the top. The mountain was visible from Sannieshof, about 30 km to the northwest (Johannes Ramathalesa, Head of Security at Wonderstone (Pty) Ltd, pers. comm. 19 May 2009).

As the biggest and most visually outstanding of all the outcrops, it seems likely that Gestoptefontein Mountain may have been in some ways the most important of the outcrops to the people that visited them; I shall endeavour to bear this possibility in mind throughout this study. It is certain that there was rock art on this outcrop. Past and present Wonderstone employees have told

me how they cast aside large pieces of wonderstone bearing engravings to get to the valuable stone below. The Focks confirm that 'Today the main part of the northern hill where most of the engravings were found has been mined' (Fock & Fock 1984: 117, transl. by N. Mössmer).

Gestoptefontein Mountain has been the focus of mining activities since the founding of Wonderstone (Pty) Ltd in 1937. The destruction of this site – without any documentation, and possibly with no provenanced examples of the rock art – is one of South Africa's unpublicised archaeological tragedies.

1.2.7 Gestoptefontein Hill

Gestoptefontein Hill (GH) is immediately south of Gestoptefontein Mountain and is separated by a shallow neck/valley through which runs a mine road that leads from the entrance of the mine to the offices and workshops that lie to the east (Figure 1.17) To the west is the powder plant (which crushes the rock to powder) and a stockpile of stone to feed it. Part of the hill has been cordoned off with a fence of wire and barrels to demarcate the extent of the engravings and to indicate that access is forbidden, but it does not enclose all the rock art by any means. With the annihilation of Gestoptefontein Mountain, Gestoptefontein Hill is now the largest of the 13 sites. Motifs and markings are spread out over about one hectare of the outcrop. It is the most densely marked of all the existing sites and the place at which I spent most of my fieldwork time between June 2006 and March 2009. There was almost certainly more rock art on the northwestern aspect of Gestoptefontein Hill; the rock art extends to the edge of rock surfaces that have been excavated. Much rock art has been removed from this site because it is easy to access. Most of the rock art occurs on the western slopes with two concentrations of motifs and markings that are associated with large areas of smooth surfaces.

1.2.8 Charlie Badenhorst's farm

The Charlie Badenhorst's farm (CB) site is on a low outcrop that straddles two portions of Gestoptefontein 349 IO (Figure 1.18). The smaller northern portion is on land owned by Wonderstone (Pty) Ltd, while Mr Charlie Badenhorst owns the larger portion of the outcrop. There are two small quarries on the southwestern edges of the outcrop, as well as signs of the removal of slabs of rock from wonderstone terraces (Figure 1.19, Figure 1.20). I assume that these surfaces bore rock art.

FIGURE 1.17. Gestoptefontein Hill. The fence of wire and barrels marks the 'core' of the site.

FIGURE 1.18. The shiny rocks in the foreground indicate the Charlie Badenhorst outcrop. In the background is Gestoptefontein Hill.

FIGURE 1.19. One of the two small quarries on Charlie Badenhorst outcrop. Note the abandoned cutting wire, used to cut the rock into pieces.

FIGURE 1.20. Stone was removed from this area of Charlie Badenhorst outcrop. It is not clear whether rock art was removed or if the area was a small quarry.

1.2.9 Driekuil Hill

Driekuil Hill (DH), about 2,92 km southeast of Gestoptefontein, was probably the second most densely marked of the extant GDC. (This assessment excludes Vorster's Farm and Gestoptefontein Mountain because the rock art on these outcrops was destroyed before my research in the area began and because there are no known records.) Driekuil Hill is on the portion of Driekuil 280 IP owned by Mr Rossouw Du Toit and was destroyed by Wonderstone (Pty) Ltd in February 2006 under a permit from the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) (Figure 1.21). The objective was to examine the underlying deposit of wonderstone and to evaluate its potential for commercial exploitation. I carried out the archaeological impact assessment and subsequent mitigation and also supervised the removal of about 100 rocks bearing markings and motifs (Figure 1.22). Three organisations are responsible for looking after and displaying the salvaged pieces of rock art: Klerksdorp Museum in North West province has most of the stones, Wonderstone has a small 'museum' on the Gestoptefontein property, and the University of the Witwatersrand has accepted responsibility for four.

1.2.10 The Mound

This is a relatively low and small hummock perhaps 10 m above stream bed level with an exposed outcrop of about 1.32 ha (200×66 m) (Figure 1.23). It is approximately 0,25 km southeast of Driekuil Hill. It is the only outcrop that dips to the east and on which the exposed wonderstone occurs on the eastern side of the prominence (Figure 1.24). The rocks protrude only 0,30–0,40 m above ground level and there are no extensive continuous areas of pavement surfaces available for marking. Nonetheless, there are several stones that bear markings. I gained the impression that the colour of the exposed wonderstone is lighter than that of the outcrops to the north; this difference in rock colour can be seen on all the outcrops south of Driekuil Hill. I did not notice any signs of quarrying or any removals. The flat surfaces of the outcrop suitable for marking face east, unlike those of all the other outcrops.

1.2.11 Skeleton Hill

The Skeleton Hill (SH) site is about 1,07 km southeast of Driekuil Hill. The name derives from the story associated with this hillock on Driekuil 280 IP: skeletons, apparently of 'Bushmen' and dating perhaps from the early or mid-1800s were found here (De Jager 2008: 424; see Part IV). The outcrop is divided into

(a)

(b)

FIGURE 1.21. (a) The southeast side of Driekuil Hill before it was destroyed. (b) Driekuil Hill after it was destroyed in May 2006. The rocks in the foreground are engraved and marked pieces that were removed for safekeeping.

FIGURE 1.22. Engraved stones, removed from Driekuil Hill, in temporary storage before being transported to the heritage institutions tasked with their safekeeping.

FIGURE 1.23. View of The Mound and the remains of Driekuil Hill looking north from Skeleton Hill. The Mound is the gently sloping, brown, grass-covered prominence in the middle ground.

FIGURE 1.24. An overview of part of the roughly east-facing slope on The Mound. There are markings on some of the rocks on the slope.

a northern and southern section by a fence (Figure 1.25, Figure 1.26). There are several motifs and markings, some on white and red striped rock.

1.2.12 Driekuil Ridge (North, Central and South)

The three Driekuil Ridge (DR) sites are located on the western line of the wonderstone outcrop on Driekuil 280 IP (Figure 1.27–Figure 1.31). They are about 0,93 km east of Driekuil Hill and Skeleton Hill. The wonderstone outcrops on this western line have been quarried and I assume that much rock art was destroyed in the process (Figure 1.30). There are motifs and markings sparsely scattered on the ridges, including incised decorative patterns on banded grey and white rock.

1.2.13 Boschpoort Road (North and South)

The Boschpoort Road sites (BRN and BRS) are on jagged outcrops that mark the end of the eastern belt of wonderstone (Nel *et al.* 1937: 7, 9). It lies about 2,68 km east southeast of Skeleton Hill. The Boschpoort road, as it is called, runs between the wonderstone outcrops – here very low – dividing them into a northern and southern section (Figure 1.32–Figure 1.35). The northern area is

FIGURE 1.25. Skeleton Hill as seen from the west.

FIGURE 1.26. One of the pools in the Driekuil Stream, opposite Skeleton Hill.

FIGURE 1.27. View of the Driekuil Ridge sites from Skeleton Hill, looking eastwards across the valley. The Driekuil Ridge is immediately below the line of trees on the horizon.

FIGURE 1.28. Driekuil Ridge North looking northwards towards Gestoptefontein Hill on the horizon.

FIGURE 1.29. The southern end of Driekuil Ridge Central looking northwards and up to the top of the hill.

FIGURE 1.30. An abandoned quarry on the west side of Driekuil Ridge Central. Quarrying activities probably destroyed some of the markings and motifs on this hill.

FIGURE 1.31. An overview of the west-facing side of Driekuil Ridge South.

much smaller, lower and more broken in character than the two larger and higher outcrops south of the road. These are aligned along a northwest-southeast axis some 210 m long and are separated from each other by about 50 m. Portions of the outcrops have been quarried, but there are nonetheless many occurrences of motifs and markings on the rocks.

1.3 Wonderstone

Wonderstone, so-called because of 'certain qualities regarded as unique' (Nel *et al.* 1937: 5) occurs only on the farms Gestoptefontein and Driekuil.[4] It is a light- to dark-grey rock, massive but at the same time as soft as talc (1,0 on the Mohs scale) and easily cut. Wonderstone comprises 89% pyrophyllite, an aluminasilicate $Al_2Si_4O_{10}(OH)$ and the 'impurities' chloritoid, epidote, diaspore, and rutile (Astrup & Horn 1998: 599). This composition gives wonderstone a most sought-after quality:

[4]Very white pyrophyllite is mined by Ceramic and Industrial Minerals on the farm Witpoort 281 IP, southeast of Ottosdal. The pyrophyllite has variable amounts of bentonite associated with it, while elsewhere in the succession bentonite forms thin but distinct layers. The pyrophyllite is primarily used as a filler in paints, plastics and paper, with small amounts also used in ceramics, especially in whiteware production (Astrup & Horn 1998: 602).

FIGURE 1.32. The Boschpoort Road North outcrop. The tarred road that divides this site from the three Boschpoort Road South outcrops is just on the other side of the fence.

FIGURE 1.33. Panoramic view of Boschpoort Road South Outcrop 1.

FIGURE 1.34. Panoramic view of Boschpoort Road South Outcrop 2.

FIGURE 1.35. Panoramic view of Boschpoort Road South Outcrop 3.

> *A further property of wonderstone is a considerable increase in melting temperature with increasing pressure. This property is exploited in one of its major uses, as a pressure transmitting receptacle in the synthesis of industrial diamonds.*
>
> (Astrup & Horn 1998: 599)

Wonderstone is thus a key element in the manufacture of industrial diamonds. These diamonds are mounted into cutting heads used to drill for oil. In this way the demand for wonderstone is linked to the demand for oil: when demand for oil, and therefore the oil price, increases, then orders for wonderstone increase. I was told that Wonderstone (Pty) Ltd was exempted by the USA from the economic sanctions it imposed on South Africa in the 1980s. Wonderstone is a curious, valuable and strategic commodity.

The wonderstone deposits occur in three horizons that are contained within quartzites. These lenses have their genesis in one of two possible processes. They may have originated through a hydrothermal process (the most common origin of pyrophyllite) in which hydrothermal fluids that are present in shear zones and faults change alumina-rich parent rock into pyrophyllite (Astrup & Horn 1998: 599). Metamorphic origins are less common; here 'pyrophyllite forms during low- to medium-grade metamorphism of alumina-rich rocks, with volcanic ash horizons being most susceptible' (Astrup & Horn 1998: 600). At Gestoptefontein one can see cross-bedding and ripple marks in the rock; these sedimentary structures suggest that

> *the primary rock from which the pyrophyllite formed comprised volcanic ash deposited during a hiatus in volcanic activity over rather extensive areas. Sedimentary processes might have reworked the ash into thicker deposits.*
>
> (Astrup & Horn 1998: 602)

1.4 Archaeology of the GDC

What little is known about the local archaeology and history of the area helps to establish a rough *terminus ante quem* for the GDC 'phenomenon', i.e. the latest historical time period during which the GDC outcrops were visited for ceremonial purposes. And an idea about potential candidates for GDC artists.

Oddly, I (and others who have spent time at the GDC) found no artefacts on the outcrops or within a couple of hundred metres of them; one might have expected to find stone artefacts, ceramic shards, kraal and hut remains, but with a single exception that I discuss shortly, none have yet come to light. Beyond a few small flat stones with holes bored through them and some pieces of worn wonderstone found on the outcrops – used perhaps as hammer stones for the

manufacture of engravings – the outcrops have not yielded any artefacts. These findings suggest that there were no settlements in the immediate vicinity of the GDC.

However, Mr Pieter de Jager, whose family have farmed on Driekuil for almost a century, showed me stone artefacts that had been ploughed up and collected over the years, from areas within sight of the GDC outcrops. These include bored stones and flakes of wonderstone and other materials, as well as small stone 'balls', approximately 50 mm in diameter, made of another rock type. Some of the stone artefacts I identified as Middle Stone Age, while bored stones are typically associated with Later Stone Age hunter-gatherers and, therefore, with Khoe-San peoples and their ancestors. Seemingly then, there was a Stone Age presence in the vicinity of the GDC.

1.5 Local history

Mr de Jager also pointed out to me the remains of some circular stone walling on a quartzite ridge that lies between the Driekuil Ridge and Boschpoort Road wonderstone outcrops. These ruined walls, which I have seen but not investigated, are referred to locally as 'Koranna kraals' (Pieter de Jager, pers. comm., see below). This attribution is based on local historical knowledge: the land on which the nearby town of Ottosdal stands was a farm called Korannafontein (originally Koransfontein or Koranderfontein), so-called because it was formerly occupied by a group of Koranna known as the Taaibosse. It is not certain when these Koranna groups themselves had moved into the area; it may be as recent as the early 1700s. Taaibos Koranna cattle posts may still be found on the farms adjoining Korannafontein (De Jager 2008: 14). The main kraal was on Korannafontein itself. Apparently the Koranna sold and bartered their land for horses, cattle and wagons with Afrikaner farmers, sometimes on the understanding that the Koranna families could still reside on the land (De Jager 2008: 13, 14). The presence of the Taaibos Koranna in the area in recent times was demonstrated in the study 'Taaibosch Koranas of Ottosdal' by the anthropologist Philip Tobias (1955), in which he examined ten people of Koranna descent. More recently, Pieter de Jager (pers. comm.) told me about a Koranna man he knew, Jantje Seribe, who, when drunk, would sometimes remonstrate with him, declaring: '*Dis ons land hierdie, julle het dit gesteel*!' [It's our land, you (Afrikaners) stole it!].

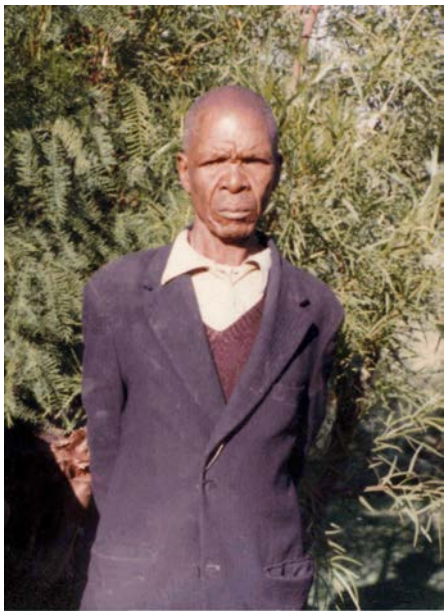


FIGURE 1.36. Mr Jantje Seribe, a Koranna man from Ottosdal. (Photo: Pieter de Jager)

The first European settlement was in the 1840s, after the Difaqane,[5] but hunters and *trekboere* (people of Dutch origin with herds of cattle and sheep) had been crossing the Vaal River since early 1700s and by early 1800 *trekboere* were established around Koransfontein. According to De Jager these *trekboere* negotiated with local groups of Koranna and Tswana (perhaps baRolong) for rights to camp, graze their herds and to hunt; sometimes the *trekboere* shot wild animals for these groups as payment (De Jager 2008: 13).

The events of the Difaqane caused great upheaval in the area, as attested in the journal of the Methodist missionary Reverend Thomas L. Hodgson (Cope 1977: 14), who attached himself to the Seleka-Rolong (a group of Tswana under Chief Sehunelo) for a total of four years, in 1823 and then from mid-1825 to mid-1828. Together with his colleague, Samuel Broadbent, Hodgson established a mission at Matlwase (now Makwassie) in April 1823, some 60 km south of the GDC, as Sehunelo intended to settle here permanently (Cope 1977: 6). However, hostile forces kept Sehunelo on the move and the mission at Matlwase was attacked and destroyed by a group of Taung under Moletsane a year later

[5]The term Difaqane is a seSotho word meaning 'the crushing' or 'the scattering', used here to describe the period of massive upheaval and warfare in the South African interior between 1815 and 1840 as groups of people were displaced.

in April 1824 (Cope 1977: 7). Hodgson's mentions of Matlwase, however, are the closest that he gets to the GDC area.

De Jager has mentioned '*wilde Boesmans*' (a commonly used Afrikaans term meaning 'wild Bushmen', i.e. not in the service of a farmer) in the area during the early years of Afrikaner settlement in the area. These may not have been groups of Bushman families, however, but rather an assortment of desperate men (and women), perhaps not all of them Bushmen, who exploited the vulnerable situation of the few farmers spread out across the land. According to one of De Jager's informants '*roofbendes Boesmans*' (gangs of Bushmen) burnt down farmhouses, murdered the occupants, and broke open kraals at night, stealing cattle and driving them southwards down the Makwassie stream. In response, farmers corralled their stock together for the night and a watch was kept until morning. According to De Jager's sources Bushmen infiltrated farmers' herds in daylight under the noses of mounted and armed shepherds and drove off a few animals, disappearing as De Jager has put it, '*soos mis voor die son*' (like mist in the sun). The shepherds were wary about tracking them down for fear of ambush and death as a result of Bushman arrow poison. Bushman rustlers, if apprehended, were killed. As the area became increasingly populated by Afrikaner farmers and a system of commandos developed, cattle theft declined (De Jager 2008: 28, 29).

By this time the use of the GDC as a ceremonial destination must surely have ended. So the identity of the patrons of the GDC must be sought sometime before the 1800s. One cannot assign them to a pre- or post-pastoralist time period based on radiocarbon or other dating techniques. The style and technique of the motifs may suggest they are more recent rather than older in age because they look similar to so-called 'geometric' motifs elsewhere that are known to have been made within the last 2 000 years (Morris 2002: 215).

To whom then, may one attribute the GDC rock art?

1.6 Authorship and age of the art

1.6.1 Time, dating and chronology

'How old is the art?' is another frequently asked Western-type question. Currently there is no way to date the engraved rock art absolutely, no independent, freestanding support from which to hang the interpretations that I will develop in this study. There are only more relative, indirect and tentative means of placing the GDC in a time frame. These weaker expressions of the life span of the GDC are all that are available unless or until we can develop ways of directly dating engraved rock art. I have related what little I have found in

the way of historical records. Studying the order of superpositioning in layered engravings enables one to construct relative form of 'dating', though this term can be misleading, as I discuss just now. The sequence of layers of engravings developed by Butzer (1989) for a large portion of the central interior (121 sites, by my calculation, and mostly in the Northern Cape and North West provinces) recognises five broad phases (see Table 1.1):

> *(a) Oldest phase. Hairlines, in the case of superimpositioning, are always found under engravings rendered in other techniques, and consequently are oldest.*
>
> *(b) Older phase. Next oldest are certain pecked, outline engravings in which the edges of the relatively fine dots are quite smooth, as a result of weathering rather than abrasion by water or wind. The subjects are animals exclusively, and include no humans or designs.*
>
> *(c) Intermediate phase. Of intermediate age are pecked engravings of animals and humans shown in a combination of silhouette and profile, as well as naturalistic silhouettes that leave various character marks unpecked and, more rarely, a partial or complete outline that produces a vividly naturalistic profile. In the area covered by volume II* [parts of North West province], *this group of pecked engravings is sometimes rendered with a three-dimensional effect ('classical style'), achieved by leaving colour markings, skin folds, or bony protuberances unpecked in the case of silhouettes, or through deeper incision of partial outlines that commonly terminate in sharp, deep external profiles. . . .*
>
> *(d) Younger phase. Relatively younger are pecked representations of animals, humans or designs done primarily in outline, with unevenly applied coarse dots . . . dashes . . . animals so shown appear schematic, boxy, and wooden.*
>
> *(e) Youngest phase. The youngest engravings are hacked designs or poor animal representations that are unidentifiable as to genus; many appear to have been made with metal tools.*
>
> *These five phases do not demarcate temporally exclusive time spans but patterns of superimpositions at specific sites. They probably overlap, and a site with engravings of one phase need not be of the same age as another characterized by similar technique and style.*
>
> (Butzer in Fock & Fock 1989: 138, my square brackets)

This sequence does not explain anything – it needs *to be* explained. It certainly does *not* mean that there are five separate art traditions piled up one on top of the other. It says nothing about the absolute age of the layer nor does it record any information about the time period between the phases. Perhaps some phases and subsets of phases, such as 'classical style' *are* distinct 'traditions' but this is saying the same thing twice – 'the classical style is a tradition' – and begs the question: what is a tradition? Other layers may not comprise traditions

at all. In addition, the sequence is a composite of the layers from at least 120 sites. Not every site has all five phases, nor can the age of a motif at one site be assigned to a motif from the same phase at another site. And what of motifs that are not involved in superpositions? How do they fit into the sequence at a particular site? In a recent study Rifkin despairs at the complexity of it all:

> *when viewed from a regional perspective, the engraved art of the southern African central interior presents a confusing array of images engraved over a period of several thousand years. Understanding this vast body of art is rather complicated, and often the variation at a single site, or group of related sites, is nearly as great as that of the region as a whole.*
>
> (Rifkin 2007: 138)

On the other hand, there is no reason to suppose that the imagery scattered over tens or hundreds or even thousands of square kilometres would conform to any classificatory schema at such a general level. Instead of seeing 'complexity,' one could see rather 'richness' and individuality; we tend to underestimate the personal hand of the people concerned with the site. Every site has its own sequence, or history, which needs to be discovered.

Table 1.1
The five phases recognised by Butzer. (After Butzer in Fock & Fock 1989: 138)

Phase	Type of marking	Subjects
Oldest	Hairlines	Unspecified
Older	Pecked outline engravings; edges smooth as a result of weathering rather than abrasion by water or wind.	Animals exclusively, no humans or designs.
Intermediate	Pecked engravings showing a combination of silhouette and profile, as well as naturalistic silhouettes that leave various character marks unpecked. More rarely, a partial or complete outline that produces a vividly naturalistic profile.	Animals and humans.
Younger	Pecked outline engravings with unevenly applied coarse dots and/or dashes. Appearance schematic, boxy, and wooden.	Animals, humans or designs.
Youngest	Hacked designs or poor animal representations, genus unidentifiable. Many appear to have been made with metal tools.	Animals or designs.

1.6.2 The case for the Koranna

They were there, but were they there early enough and for long enough? My understanding of Maingard (1932) is that the Taaibosch Koranna were late arrivals in the area, sometime in the late 1700s. Some people have suggested that the rock art predates the arrival of the Koranna:

> *The name Koranna was given to the stone under the mistaken impression that the Korannas, a tribe which formerly inhabited this region, were responsible for the petroglyphs frequently found on its outcrops. These carvings on the rocks, however, date back to a much earlier culture which, according to some authorities, probably existed more than ten thousand years ago.*
>
> (Nel *et al.* 1937: 5)

Enough is known about the history of the area and the similarities in the rock art to suggest that the GDC rock art has strong affinities with Khoe-San artistic traditions. The subject matter and the styles and conventions of the GDC rock art resemble those of rock art elsewhere on the central plateau of southern Africa. Past researchers of the GDC (Hübner 1871; Želizko 1925; Wilman 1933; Battiss 1948; Fock & Fock 1984) have all assumed, correctly I believe, that the GDC rock art was authored by Khoe-San people. This is not to say that Khoe-San groupings were the only authors of rock art in central South Africa: research has shown that groups of Bantu-speaking farmers also made rock art (Evers 1981; Prins & Hall 1994; Fock & Fock 1989; Maggs 1995). Usually, however, these images can be quite easily distinguished on the basis of subject matter and 'style'.

If the outcrops were, as I argue, locales for initiation ceremonies and if, as seems to be the case, the Koranna kraals were located south of the wonderstone outcrops, one can see that the hills are close enough to be used by groups of initiates from nearby settlements, but far away enough to be isolated and private so that rituals and other procedures would not be disturbed or intruded upon by ordinary life.

I wish to avoid the traps of ethnic essentialism, oversimplification, and labelling. The GDC falls within an ancient zone of 'moving' and 'static' frontiers (Alexander 1984; Humphreys 1988). San hunter-gatherers, Khoekhoen pastoralists and, more recently, Tswana groups, have shared the landscape (Breutz 1957). The challenge one faces when trying to understand the motifs and markings of the GDC is that the outcrops are fixed and prominent points in a dynamic social and historical landscape. Can ethnography help to identify possible processes of fusion and change that may have taken place in specific, local contexts without falling prey to 'ethnic essentialism' and overarching generalisations?

This is not an easy question to answer. Very little is known about the local prehistory, nor are there any absolute dates associated with the rock art. There is a paradox here. While one wants to be sensitive to local historical developments and processes of identity formation, the probability that fluid social, political and economic conditions may have pertained over the past two millennia requires one to interpret the rock art by analogy with the broadest possible range of Khoe-San beliefs and practices. I use Leonhard Schultze's (1928) term 'Khoe-San' (originally 'Khoi-San') – which includes Khoekhoen, Damara, Khoe-speaking Bushmen and non-Khoe speaking Bushmen – to encompass the probability that over many centuries, even millennia, the GDC sites were significant to a variety of groups. But I do not use Khoe-San in a linguistic sense. In the study I use it as a collective term to embrace the historical depth and variety of people who spoke different languages[6] and lived in different ways. The traditional archaeological labels 'hunter-gatherer' and 'herder' are not hard and fast (Barnard 1992: 17), nor is it reflected in deeply entrenched pan–Khoe-San worldviews. Beliefs and ceremonies regarding girls' puberty, for example, are similar and widespread and cut across differences in modes of production. Tony Humphreys has recently criticised what he see as the abuse of 'Kalahari analogues' (Humphreys 2003/2004: 36), that is, the over-reliance on !Kung Bushman ethnography, or what Mitchell (2005: 67) calls 'the holy trinity of Ju|'hoansi, G|wi and |Xam', to understand the Later Stone Age in South Africa. Another reason for using a term as general as Khoe-San is to avoid what Morris (2002: e.g. 209) has criticised as the 'reification' of ethnicity. He points out that certain studies of the Northern Cape rock art site Driekopseiland were obsessed by the question of race and identity, as though by stereotyping the artists in this way one could understand their work and the significance of the place. Later, however, in the concluding chapter of this study I shall compare the GDC rock art to rock art sites elsewhere with which it shares certain characteristics, specifically, the class of objects depicted, the style in which these are depicted, and the technique used to produce them, as well as the proximity to water. These correspondences may give us a better understanding of the age of the art and the people who made it.

[6] of the Khoe-Kwadi, Ju|'hoasi and Tuu language families

Chapter 2

Research context

In this chapter I discuss the research issues that have stimulated me in the course of the GDC study: authorship, clothing, geometric motifs, and landscape.

2.1 Authorship

The unique and uncommon qualities of the GDC rock art are the reason why I use the expression 'cutting edge' in the title of the study: literally, the phrase describes the predominance of incised motifs and rock markings in the GDC, while figuratively, the rock markings at Driekuil Hill are relevant to 'cutting edge' debates about the identification and interpretation of a distinct Khoekhoen rock art tradition (Anderson 1997; Eastwood 2003; Eastwood & Eastwood 2006; Eastwood & Smith 2005; Hollmann & Hykkerud 2004; Smith & Ouzman 2004). The 'authorship debate' is too wide-ranging and complex to rehearse here in detail, but for my purposes it concerns whether one may associate certain defined styles of painted and engraved 'geometric' rock art with particular historical groups of Khoe-San people in particular geographic areas in southern Africa. Proponents of a 'Khoekhoen identity' (Eastwood 2003; Eastwood & Smith 2005; Eastwood & Eastwood 2006; Eastwood, Blundell & Smith 2010; Smith & Ouzman 2004) see 'evidence' in the form of rock art of an incoming herder 'identity' with a 'widespread distribution and formal uniformity' (Smith & Ouzman 2004: 521) and propose that the 'geometric' nature of the motifs originates with

> *clickless proto-Khoe–speaking foragers in the region of western Zambia/Angola acquiring sheep and perhaps pottery from Bantu-speakers, realigning their society to herding as well as hunting and gathering, and moving southward into a southern Africa inhabited by click-language speaking San foragers.*
>
> (Smith & Ouzman 2004: 511)

That there were southward migrations by a 'third population type which preceded the Bantu spread' is not in dispute (Güldemann 2008: 118), nor that these people were food producers. The rest of the picture, however, is fluid and debatable; in a recent article Güldemann warns that 'a hypothetical scenario on such a general and abstract level must remain simplistic' (2008: 118) and that '[t]he scenario which involves the least contradictions to any of the major empirical facts available from such disciplines as palaeoclimatology, archaeology, rock art research, cultural anthropology, genetics, and linguistics should be viewed as the most plausible one' (Güldemann 2008: 119). Smith and Ouzman's scenario quoted above follows Westphal's (1963, 1980, cited in Güldemann 2008: 120) and Ehret's (Ehret 2008) version of events. Güldemann, however, disagrees with most aspects of Westphal's and Ehret's hypotheses:

> *[W]hile Westphal presented hardly any linguistic evidence, the scenario proposed here is based on more concrete arguments from several strains of historical linguistic analysis and can thus be tested more easily in further research. . . .*
>
> (Güldemann 2008: 94)

Güldemann outlines his proposal:

> *I propose that at the time of entering southern Africa the people of this Later Stone Age culture spoke an early chronolect of the Khoe-Kwadi family, had a Non-Khoisan genetic profile, and in subsisting primarily on livestock introduced the first type of food-production into southern Africa.*
>
> (Güldemann 2008: 118)

There is no reason to suppose, says Güldemann (2008: 120), that the language spoken was clickless. And whereas Smith and Ouzman have identified central Africa as the ancestral origins of the proto-Khoe foragers, Güldemann argues for origins of a Khoe-Kwadi group in East Africa (Güldemann 2008: 94). Once in southern Africa this movement of people came into contact with local hunter-gatherers. These hunter-gatherer people are

> *[t]he oldest indigenous population layer in southern Africa* [who] *can be identified in the general profile of Non-Khoe groups, which is characterized by a Khoisan genetic profile, Palaeolithic hunter-gatherer subsistence, and a considerable linguistic homogeneity due to spatial and/or genealogical relationship.*
>
> (Güldemann 2008: 118, my brackets)

After arriving in northeastern Botswana the pre-Kwadi–speaking group expanded westward, eventually splitting from the Khoe-Kwadi family altogether (Güldemann 2008: 122). The Pre-Khoe moved into the Kalahari where they interacted closely with local hunter-gatherers. Their descendants became people of

'genetic Khoisan admixture' speaking Proto-Khoe languages that had acquired a Ju|'hoan substrate (Güldemann 2008: 113). The Proto-Khoekhoe group that is ancestral to South African pastoralists expanded further into the southern Kalahari and beyond, eventually reaching the southern coast:

> *These Pre-Khoekhoe, while maintaining basic subsistence and language, blended even more into the local population profile by relying more on a foraging subsistence component, by adding to their language a strong Tuu substrate* [i.e. one of the south Khoisan lineages], *... and ... by undergoing a greatly increased genetic admixture from local Khoisan. The last process can account for the fact that these southern pastoralists are in biological terms so close to local foragers that both groups were since early on classified together, giving rise to Schultze's (1928) original concept of Khoisan.*
>
> (Güldemann 2008: 123, my brackets)

Here is a picture of a great diversity of independent linguistic lineages (Güldemann 2008: 100), a phenomenon that Güldemann associates with many migrations and consequently, an 'enormous heterogeneity across southern African groups in terms of linguistics, anthropology, and genetics' (Güldemann 2008: 126). His migration scenarios concerning the area from which the migrations took place, as well as the forms of the language groups involved, differ in some important details from those endorsed by Smith and Ouzman (2004). These differences will no doubt have implications and consequences for their argument, especially their characterisation of the art and the 'Khoekhoen identity' it is supposed to express. I do not deal with these here, however; I am interested in how their hypothesis affects the interpretation of the GDC motifs and markings.

Theirs is a 'big picture' hypothesis. They want to show that the rock paintings are evidence of a people's progress along the proposed migration routes – the river systems in the central and western parts of the subcontinent. The rock art is a proxy for the people. The original style or type of rock art is 'Central African Geometric Art': it comprises 'finger-painted' and engraved 'geometrics', the same basic repertoire of forms found in southern African Khoekhoen art (Smith & Ouzman 2004: 511). There is a 'suite of traits' that identifies the art:

> *technique (rough pecking and finger painting), iconography (dominantly geometrics and rudimentary 'representational' forms), location (proximity to water sources and courses), site preference (rock shelters with inner cavelike spaces), and pigment type (large-grained ochres and clays). Together, these evidential traits suggest a dominant Khoekhoen ancestral heritage.*
>
> (Smith & Ouzman 2004: 521)

They do not explain the context or possible significance of the Central African geometric rock art, but elsewhere Smith (www.sarada.co.za/traditions/african hunter-gatherers/pygmy, accessed on 4 April 2011) suggests that this tradition has two components: a 'man's' art that comprises highly stylised and distorted animal forms plus rows of finger dots, and a 'women's art' characterised by superimposed layers of massed, finger-painted, geometric designs. Men and women paint at separate but proximal places. According to Smith the stylised animal depictions mark the symbols and concerns of the ceremony similar to the *molimo* of the historically known pygmy as observed by Turnbull (1961: 71–88; 89–101; 132–149) . The women's geometric designs represent the symbols and concerns of an *elima*-like ceremony (specifically fertility and rain divination), like that performed by pygmy women in the recent past (e.g. Turnbull 1961: 167–181).

Besides the 'designs' there are also motifs of aprons and loincloths. These were not initially recognised by Smith in his Dedza-Chongoni Hills 'data set' of paintings in Malawi, but were identified subsequently as 'aprons' (Eastwood & Smith 2005: 69–75). Motifs of aprons and loincloths are regarded by proponents of the Khoekhoe identity argument as a crucial identifying feature in the 'Khoe' art that developed from the proto-Khoe beginnings just outlined:

> *Whereas the rock art of the Khoe-speaking painters of the LSCA* [Limpopo-Shashe Confluence Area] *and the Tsodilo Hills has high numbers of loincloths and aprons, this motif is all but absent in areas where forager art was made by non-Khoe speakers* [e.g. Brandberg in Namibia, Matopos in Zimbabwe and the Drakensberg 'complex' in South Africa]. . . . *They seem more common in the rock engraving of the interior plateau . . . particularly in places where there is known to have been a strong Khoekhoe influence. We believe the seemingly incongruent occurrence of aprons and loincloths in this area is explained by this influence. When plotted on a map, the distribution pattern could hardly be more convincing: in the areas where Khoe-speakers are/were found, aprons and loincloths are prevalent in the rock art, but in the areas where non-Khoe speakers live loincloths and aprons are all but absent.*
>
> (Eastwood *et al.* 2010: 90, my brackets)

In essence they equate the loincloth and apron motifs, as well as the geometric designs, with Khoe speakers and their art; these are their proto-Khoe heritage. I have not found a direct explanation by proponents of the 'Khoekhoen identity' thesis regarding the significance of the apron motifs in the original proto-Khoe art, so I infer that they link the motifs to women's fertility and the *elima*. In line with this proto-Khoe emphasis, Eastwood *et al.* (2010: 91) argue that Khoe-speakers in general place a greater emphasis on girls' puberty rites, and that these rituals are more elaborate than those of non-Khoe speakers (in the

Kalahari at least). Thus loincloth and apron motifs in 'Khoe-speakers art' are linked, among other things, to these puberty rites. (To give an idea of the kinds of interpretive links offered I briefly review Eastwood's interpretations of the significances of the motifs in both Khoe forager art and the art of the 'Limpopo Khoekhoen' in section 2.2.)

The engravings of the central interior – of which the GDC is one instance – have special significance for the 'Khoekhoen identity' argument:

> *The existence of significant numbers of images of aprons and loincloths in the engravings of parts of southern Africa raises questions about the authorship of these engravings. Indeed, these engravings are found in areas where Khoekhoe herders, but not always Khoe-speaking foragers, were found historically. While this again suggests that images of loincloths and aprons were a particular interest of Khoekhoe peoples, it also suggests that the authors of many of the engravings in the interior of south Africa were Khoekhoe herders. This goes some way to understanding some of the important differences among southern African paintings and engravings.*
>
> (Eastwood *et al.* 2010: 91–92)

The argument seems straightforward enough: the people who created the GDC phenomenon, and 'many' other sites were 'Khoekhoen' because there are motifs of aprons and loincloths, which are a Khoekhoen phenomenon. But is there not a circularity in this statement? Does it not beg the question about the Khoekhoen essence: 'aprons are us'? What makes a particular depiction of an apron 'Khoekhoen'? Before I began work in the GDC I was persuaded by the Khoekhoen hypothesis. In the Northern Cape province around Williston, Martin Hykkerud and I visited many sites that fitted the suite of traits that Smith and Ouzman have outlined, although these were painted, not engraved (Hollmann & Hykkerud 2004; Hykkerud 2006); we therefore concluded that these were 'Khoekhoen herder sites'. Since working in the GDC and studying other engraving sites in the North West and Northern Cape provinces, however, I am less inclined to make attributions in terms of such high-level and abstract categories. Contrary to Eastwood and other's enthusiasm for declaring the rock art of the interior as 'Khoekhoen', it was while recording on Gestoptefontein Hill that I realised I could not cram the rock art into a category of herder or hunter gatherer, Khoe-speaker or non-Khoe speaker. These classifications were not helpful to my enquiry – to understand what the motifs signified to the people who made them. I was concerned not so much with what tradition the art belongs as what the GDC phenomenon meant to the people that made it.

Nonetheless I agree with Güldemann (2008: 118–119) when he says that 'this kind of kind of historical modelling is useful and the plausibility of different proposals can be evaluated and partly tested.' The hypothesis that the rock

art of Khoe-speaking 'foragers' and 'herders' derives initially from proto-Khoe practitioners of the Central African Geometric Tradition is a bold one. It is a grand perspective that argues for links between widely dispersed bodies of art, from the forests of central Africa to the southern tip of the continent. The breadth (and temporal depth) of this perspective, as Güldemann has observed of linguistic theories of past movements of people, means that it is pitched at a high level of generalisation and abstraction. There are many imponderables. As a result, proponents of a 'Khoekhoen herder rock art' are forced to employ blanket terms ('geometric', 'identity', 'proto-Khoe', 'Khoekhoe') whose very generality obscures detail and variation and are hard to conceptualise and concretise. The basic idea has its merits but I think it still needs to be honed considerably in the details to accommodate the enormous diversity mentioned by Güldemann and to avoid over-reliance on high-level concepts like those just mentioned. Morris has expressed his concern that the hypothesis is too clumsy to apply to individual sites because it tends to disregard complex local changes in favour of abstracted ideas about ethnicity:

> [Smith and Ouzman's] *paper ends up . . . reifying the ethnic distinctiveness of the Khoekhoen relative to San and others, bundling together particular ranges of rock paintings and engravings in a package (with language and other cultural and economic traits) that can be traced . . . in a continuum across two millennia. . . . I have theoretical and empirical misgivings about this conclusion. At a theoretical level I have been concerned to challenge essentialist conceptions of 'culture,' ethnic group, class, etc., as bounded systems in which 'ulterior structure' is reproduced. . . . By approaching the analysis of rock art in these terms, one may be blinded to levels of social and cultural dynamism and fluidity – of contestation and individual agency – which have resulted in what is a quite varied corpus of rock art in southern Africa. Smith and Ouzman appear to recognize this in one breath but construct a nearly primordialist Khoekhoen identity and rock art tradition in the next. The existence of groups cannot be assumed a priori. . . . Projection of such identities and cultural configurations into the past can be done only* [by] *way of analogy and hypothesis – mindful that the way things are today results from events and circumstances in the past and not the other way around.*
>
> (Morris 2004: 518, my brackets)

In addition to pointing out the disjunction between 'big picture' high-level concepts and fine-grained assessments of local sites, Morris finds that there are inaccuracies in the Khoekhoe herder model:

> *At an empirical level, sites in the central interior turn out to be pivotal, given the assertion that 'distribution rather than dating is key' in determining authorship. This 'works' once it is assumed that all non-entoptic geometric rock art post-dates the appearance of*

> *farming, with the remaining question being its association with agriculturists . . . or pastoralists . . . Dating, particularly of engravings, remains notoriously difficult, but . . . at Driekopseiland, most of the geometric engravings at the older western end . . . are as weathered as (and hence as old as) the earlier, probably pre-2000 BP, animal engravings. . . . These may therefore pre-date the hypothesised advent of Khoekhoen pastoralists. Nor, after this, is there evidence for any marked population replacement. Moreover, artifact inventories characteristic of herder sites along the lower Orange River are quite different from those at Driekopseiland. Yet it seems true that geometric rock art sites do increase in frequency in the last 2 000 years. An alternative to the ethnic explanation at Driekopseiland . . . which draws on remarkably consonant ethnography from across the Khoe-San spectrum is that it was a site of ritual intensification (specifically the female rites of passage) in which climate history, changing metaphorical understandings of place, and responses to an increasingly complex social landscape all played a role.*
>
> (Morris 2004: 518–519)

Morris points out that at the Driekopseiland engraving site some of the geometric-type patterns predate the migrations of the Proto-Khoe and Pre-Khoekhoe (see Fock & Fock 1989: 155–156 for a chronology of the rock art based on environmental change). Geometric designs may therefore not be the exclusive preserve of 'Khoekhoen herders'. And he points out that there are other ways of explaining variation in the rock art. I build upon Morris's interpretation of Driekopseiland. to argue that the landscape of GDC was associated with the presence of a rain entity – a 'megametaphor' – that people from far and wide visited in order to mark important changes in their lives (see Part IV).

2.2 Clothing motifs

Eastwood's (2003) seminal work in the central Limpopo basin identified the presence of clothing motifs in the rock art of certain parts of southern Africa. He compared rock art images from the Makgabeng plateau and the countryside around the confluence of the Limpopo and Shashe rivers with museum specimens of aprons and loincloths, as well as other ethnographic records, and confirmed that these motifs do indeed depict various items of leather clothing (Blundell & Eastwood 2001; Eastwood 2003; Eastwood & Smith 2005; Eastwood & Eastwood 2006; Eastwood *et al.* 2010). Subsequent to Eastwood's identification of apron motifs in these parts of Limpopo province, apron depictions have been identified in the Tsodilo Hills of Botswana (Eastwood & Green 2007: 10–11) and in parts of South Africa's southeastern mountains (Green & Eastwood 2008).

Eastwood has argued that Khoe-speaking San in the central Limpopo basin made brush-painted apron motifs in a variety of forms: elongated and broadly

cordiforms images, triangular shapes, semi-ovoid shapes, and cordiforms and rectangles. Some depictions feature elaborate fringes and other decoration (Eastwood 2003: 15). The aprons are depicted in two ways: most seem to be what Green and Eastwood (2008: 144) call 'stand-alone' motifs – the apron is depicted lying or hanging flat in two dimensions (see section 7.1 for a detailed discussion of the metric projection). Other apron motifs are depicted as being worn.

Eastwood attributes to these motifs a 'central role... in the belief system of the Limpopo San' (Eastwood & Eastwood 2006: 149). He distinguishes between two basic forms of clothing motifs in the San hunter-gatherer art style that he has identified: depictions of animal skins are female aprons, while Y-shaped motifs are male loincloths (Eastwood & Eastwood 2006: 152; see also Blundell & Eastwood 2001 for more on Y-shaped motifs). Eastwood has investigated the significance that these motifs may have had for the Limpopo San. He argues that they figure in several related spheres of San life. Men's loincloths are linked to prowess and success in hunting (Eastwood & Eastwood 2006: 153–154). Decorated aprons are potent items worn during the Medicine Dance: they chase sickness away and attract 'arrows of potency' (Eastwood & Eastwood 2006: 154–155). In the context of hunting, however, women's aprons are 'subject to strong male avoidance behaviours' (Eastwood & Eastwood 2006: 156); these 'behaviours' are linked to a more general symbolic opposition, according to Biesele (1993: 41) between 'men's hunting' and 'women's reproductive capacity'. Finally, Eastwood points out the importance of aprons in girl's puberty rites; they are indicators of their status (Eastwood & Eastwood 2006: 157). After the 'new person' emerges from isolation she is dressed in a new, woman's apron (Eastwood & Eastwood 2006: 157).

Eastwood found that images of aprons and loincloths occur in three contexts in the rock art of the central Limpopo basin: 'transition rites; hunting; and the Medicine Dance (Eastwood & Eastwood 2006: 160). He identifies paintings of a procession of five women as the depiction of a dance similar to the Eland Dance, which is performed amongst the Ju|'hoansi during the isolation period of a female initiate (Eastwood & Eastwood 2006: 160–161; see chapter 9). Apron motifs are also found juxtaposed with images of female kudu (one of which is in a mating posture) and the image of a male figure with a strung bow aiming an arrow at a kudu. Eastwood suggests that this juxtaposition is symbolically significant:

> *We suggest that the kudu and associated apron relate directly to female potency as manifested in girls' puberty rites. In this ritual context, it follows that the apparent portrayal of antelope hunting may allude to the influences of the initiate's liminal potency on hunting in*

> *general. More specifically, however, the image of the hunted female kudu may relate to marriage, which in the ethnography is equated with hunting.*
>
> (Eastwood & Eastwood 2006: 162)

Eastwood points out other arrangements in which loincloths are associated with zebra spoor, a juxtaposition that he suggests may be linked to male first-kill ceremonies and to the belief that the hunter's loincloth must not be torn or have flaps hanging down lest the animal killed become thin and lean with fat that would 'fall to pieces' like the torn loincloth (Eastwood & Eastwood 2006: 162; Lewis-Williams 1981: 60). In other painted contexts, Eastwood argues, aprons and loincloths are associated with imagery that is evocative of the Medicine Dance and supernatural potency.

Eastwood and colleagues have identified depictions of 'Khoekhoen' motifs in various parts of Limpopo province and has argued that that these, and associated images, were made in two 'phases' – an earlier, 'Red phase' including 'handprints, simple geometric forms, fingerdots on vertical surfaces, and [a] very small proportion of depictions of aprons' – and a later 'White phase' comprising fingerdots on vertical and horizontal surfaces, 'elaborate' geometric forms 'and a large proportion of aprons' (Eastwood & Eastwood 2006: 61). Eastwood and colleagues believe that the two arts interact:

> *This suggestion finds significant support in the linguistic evidence whereby the intruding Khoe languages came to dominate over the older autochthonous languages and in the fact that a number of the unusual features in the rock art appear to derive from (or at least are shared by) Khoekhoe rock art. For example, the crudeness of both animal and human depictions in the LSCA is more reminiscent of the finger-painted manner introduced by the Khoekhoe than the fine brushwork typical of forager paintings in other parts of southern African* [sic]. *Also, recent discoveries in northern Venda and the Makgabeng Plateau have brought to light a significant number of cases where loincloths and aprons are found applied using the Khoekhoe finger-painted technique and associated with Khoekhoe geometric paintings. Aprons and loincloths thus provide at least one subject that bridges forager and Khoekhoe art in this area. Just as the evidence of interaction between Khoekhoe herders and the autochthones is inherent in the content of the art, so it also apparent in the overlay sequences at larger shelters. Finger-painted Khoekhoe images are found both over and under the fine-line brush technique images of the LSCA and Makgabeng Plateau, showing that the two communities and painted in the same shelters.*
>
> (Eastwood *et al.* 2010: 91)

The rock art of Limpopo thus provides clues for Eastwood and the others to describe a historical situation in which various groups of people shared an en-

vironment contemporaneously at times, successively at others. Such richness in the form of clearly identifiable traditions and episodes seem to be absent from the GDC, which has its own particular treasures.

2.3 Geometric motifs

Researchers use three terms to describe motifs that are thought not to depict animals, objects or any other 'things': they are 'non-representational', or 'abstract', or 'geometric'. But these are misleading expressions that obscure rather than encourage investigation of the art.

Fock (1969: 114) used the term 'non-representational', although in the same paper he proposed that the motifs are in fact designs 'inspired by nature' and also 'reminiscent of patterns on Bushman knapsacks' (Fock 1969: 105). He justifies his use of the term 'non-representational' solely on conventional grounds: 'it [the term 'non-representational'] is an accepted one by workers in this field' (Fock 1969: 126, my brackets). Later, however, Fock evidently realised that the term was inaccurate and changed his terminology. In the first of a three-volume study of South African rock engravings, he uses the German word *Muster*, which may be translated as 'patterns' or 'designs':

> *A group among the engravings is known by many different names: geometric drawings, symbols, non-representative engravings and so on. These terms are not quite appropriate. The term Schematic Design was suggested by the Nomenclature Committee in Dakar. I accept this term in principle, although I have shortened it to Design, even though it is not always applicable.*
>
> (Fock 1979: 75, transl. N. Mössmer)

Others, however, continue to use 'non-representational', seemingly without reflecting on what the concept implies. For example, Parkington, Morris and Rusch (2008: 71, my emphasis) say of the rock engravings at Driekopseiland that the 'engravings are almost all, more than 95% by most counts, *non-representational*'. No explanation is given as to why they are 'non-representational' instead of, say, 'unidentified' or 'unidentifiable'.

The term 'non-representational' and the semantically linked 'abstract' harbour mistaken assumptions about the motifs – that they bear no resemblance to any object and therefore depict concepts that have no referent. Henshilwood and colleagues (2002) make the same mistake by referring to the engraved pieces of ochre from Blombos Cave as 'abstract representations'. In the absence of any ethnographic knowledge about a body of art it is misleading to define a motif as 'abstract' or 'non-representational'. How does one know? The classification is

premature and unwarranted. In the context I have outlined, the terms 'abstract' and 'non-representational' are misnomers.

If these two terms are downright misleading, one can perhaps better understand the use of the term 'geometric', although I do not favour it. Some motifs may indeed be perceived as geometrically shaped, although these forms are not formally linked to or derived from the branch of mathematics called geometry. I understand that people most often use the term as an analogy (but see below); they do not intend any assumption about the nature of the motifs.

Morris (1988), for example, uses the terms 'geometric' and 'inanimate'. He is explicit that these labels are heuristic and that 'distinctions between them are not always clear-cut' (1988: 113). Writing about rock art traditions in the central Limpopo basin, Eastwood and Smith (2005: 63) adopt the term 'Geometric Tradition art' to describe what they argue is a Khoekhoen painting and engraving tradition. They acknowledge that a component of this art,

> *once thought to be entirely abstract and non-representational . . . has turned out to have a relatively significant representational component that accounts for 24.9% of the total number of geometric motifs, handprints, and groups of dots and strokes.*
>
> (Eastwood & Smith 2005: 63)

For these writers, therefore, 'geometric' is only a convenient label not a constitutive term. But its descriptive nature is itself a limitation because the term is a metaphor taken from an unrelated sphere of knowledge; describing a motif as 'geometric' does not point one in the direction of discovering what the motifs mean. In addition, the term is not entirely innocuous and is potentially misleading. In his discussion of *yonchi*, the designs of the Piro people of eastern Peru, South America, Gow cautions that:

> *The designs,* yonchi, *produced by this action are usually termed 'geometric' by Western observers, due to their perceived similarity to geometrical drawings. To avoid the unwarranted implications of this visual metaphor, I here translate the Piro term simply as 'design'.*
>
> (Gow 1999: 229)

Gow's concerns are valid: in southern African rock art research the 'unwarranted implications' of geometric-looking rock engravings has led some researchers – most notably Lewis-Williams and Dowson (1988, 1989) but others too (e.g. Rifkin 2007: 156) – to identify them as inspired by hallucinatory forms they call 'entoptic phenomena' (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1988). Lewis-Williams and Dowson argue that at least some engraved designs depict entoptics seen in trance:

> *Bushman shamans evidently 'saw' these forms in trance and then depicted them. This means that they probably attached meanings to them.... We do not yet know what meanings Bushman shamans gave to their entoptics.*
>
> (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1989: 61–62)

Lewis-Williams (1988a: 19) has suggested that the engravers were a distinct group of San who 'paid more but not exclusive attention to the first stage of altered consciousness and so emphasised geometric entoptic phenomena'. He speculates that:

> *There are also some indications that the vision quest, so important in many other shamanistic societies, may have played a bigger role than the San ethnography at present seems to suggest. Some engraving sites may have been principally but not entirely vision-quest sites where the shamans' initial acquisition of power was signalled by their experiencing the entoptic phenomena of the first stage of altered consciousness. The engraved entoptics and animals may thus have been symbols or representations of the potency shamans seek.*
>
> (Lewis-Williams 1988a: 19)

On the face of it the argument is plausible, but it depends on the identification of these so-called 'geometric forms' as entoptic forms. There may be no such correspondence, however; nor does the hypothesis account for other characteristics associated with the art, as I point out shortly.

Lewis-Williams (1988a: 5) advances the argument by means of a leading rhetorical question: 'Do the engraved geometric forms look at all like entoptic phenomena?' and then suggests that they do: 'We are showing that a set of seven distinct forms, the very ones we should expect to find in a shamanistic art, are indeed present' (Figure 2.1). Dowson later published examples of putative entoptic forms from several engraving sites in the Northern Cape and North West provinces (Dowson 1992: 30). He commented that:

> *We should, however, bear in mind that any interpretation must be based on authentic Bushman beliefs. The geometric forms – spirals, zigzags, dots and so forth – look very much like those seen by subjects taking part in laboratory experiments.... Identifying engraved geometric patterns as entoptic phenomena is not enough. Entoptics are bound to have had some meaning or significance for them to have been engraved, but this is still obscure.*
>
> (Dowson 1992: 30)

In this case, however, neither Dowson nor Lewis-Williams have brought any 'authentic Bushman beliefs' to bear on these forms, nor have they discussed their 'significance' beyond the suggestion offered by Lewis-Williams (1988a: 19, quoted above) that 'entoptics' may 'have been symbols or representations of the

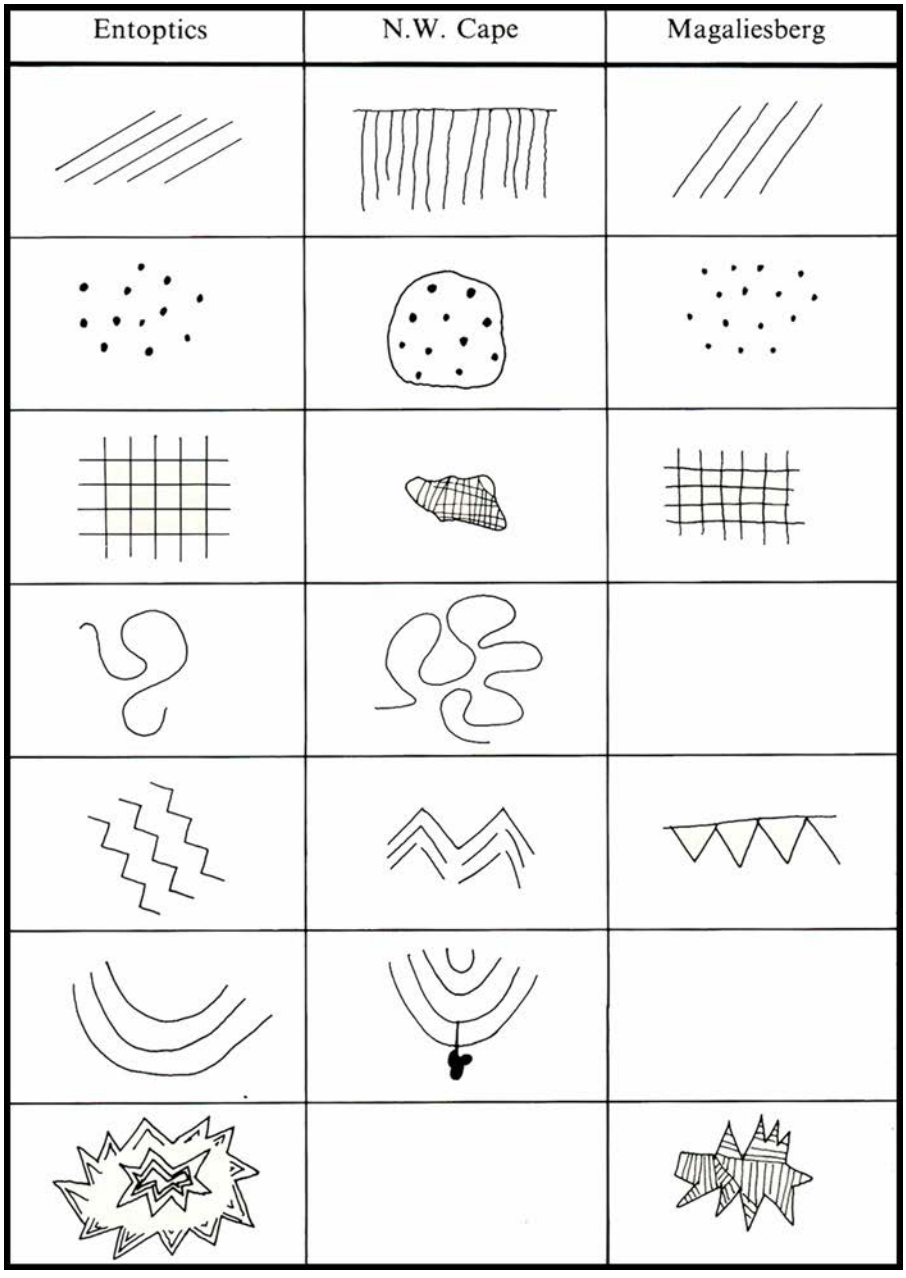


FIGURE 2.1. Entoptic forms identified by Lewis-Williams (1988a, table 1).

potency shamans seek'. In the process they have bypassed a rich ethnographic literature on Khoe-San customs and beliefs, despite Dowson's injunction to consider 'authentic Bushman beliefs'.

Some examples from Gestoptefontein Hill illustrate my contention. Dowson identifies a complex form (Figure 7.6; see subsection 7.2.1 for discussion) as strikingly similar to a 'lattice entoptic' (Dowson 1992: fig. 32). He also draws attention to 'duplicated zigzags' (Dowson 1992: fig. 36; Figure 7.7; for discussion and comparison with similar-looking motifs see subsection 7.2.1). His assumption that certain rock engravings depict entoptics also leads him to see the ubiquitous arrangements of 'rows' and 'columns' of pecked circular shapes as 'pecked dots... typical hallucinations from the first stage of trance experience' (Dowson 1992: fig. 37). In this way Dowson equates the 'geometrical appearance' with entoptics. He neglects to consider the associations of these geometrical forms with other motifs and markings, nor does he account for the important differences between the rock art of the GDC (and many engraved and painted sites in the North West and Northern Cape provinces) and the art tradition of the southeastern mountains, the original context in which Lewis-Williams developed his ideas about the occurrence of entoptics in rock art.

Subsequent work on the relation between schematic designs and entoptics by Dronfield (1996) casts doubt on the claim that the motifs identified above are 'diagnostically' entoptic forms. Dronfield carried out an experiment in which he extracted schematic forms from known shamanistic and non-shamanistic bodies of art. He found that these forms fell into one of three categories – diagnostically endogenous (i.e. shamanistic), diagnostically non-endogenous (i.e. not shamanistic), and undiagnostic (Figure 2.2). Five of the forms that Lewis-Williams and Dowson (1988) claimed as entoptic (Figure 2.3), belong in the 'undiagnostic' category (Dronfield 1996: 386, fig. 13). This means that most of the schematic forms that we encounter at rock art sites are not necessarily derived from entoptics; they belong in Dronfield's undiagnostic category. The entoptic hypothesis is weakened when one considers that amongst these putative entoptics, on the same rock surfaces, there are other schematic motifs that bear no resemblance to any of the seven forms that Lewis-Williams describes (1988a: table 1). If these cannot be assigned to the category of entoptics and if one assumes that they are part of the same tradition of image-making as the proposed entoptics by virtue of their shared style and proximity to each other on the rock surface, then the entoptic argument becomes even harder to sustain. The question arises: If some motifs are entoptic and others are not then what does it say about the explanatory potential of the entoptics argument? The motifs-as-entoptics argument is vitiated.

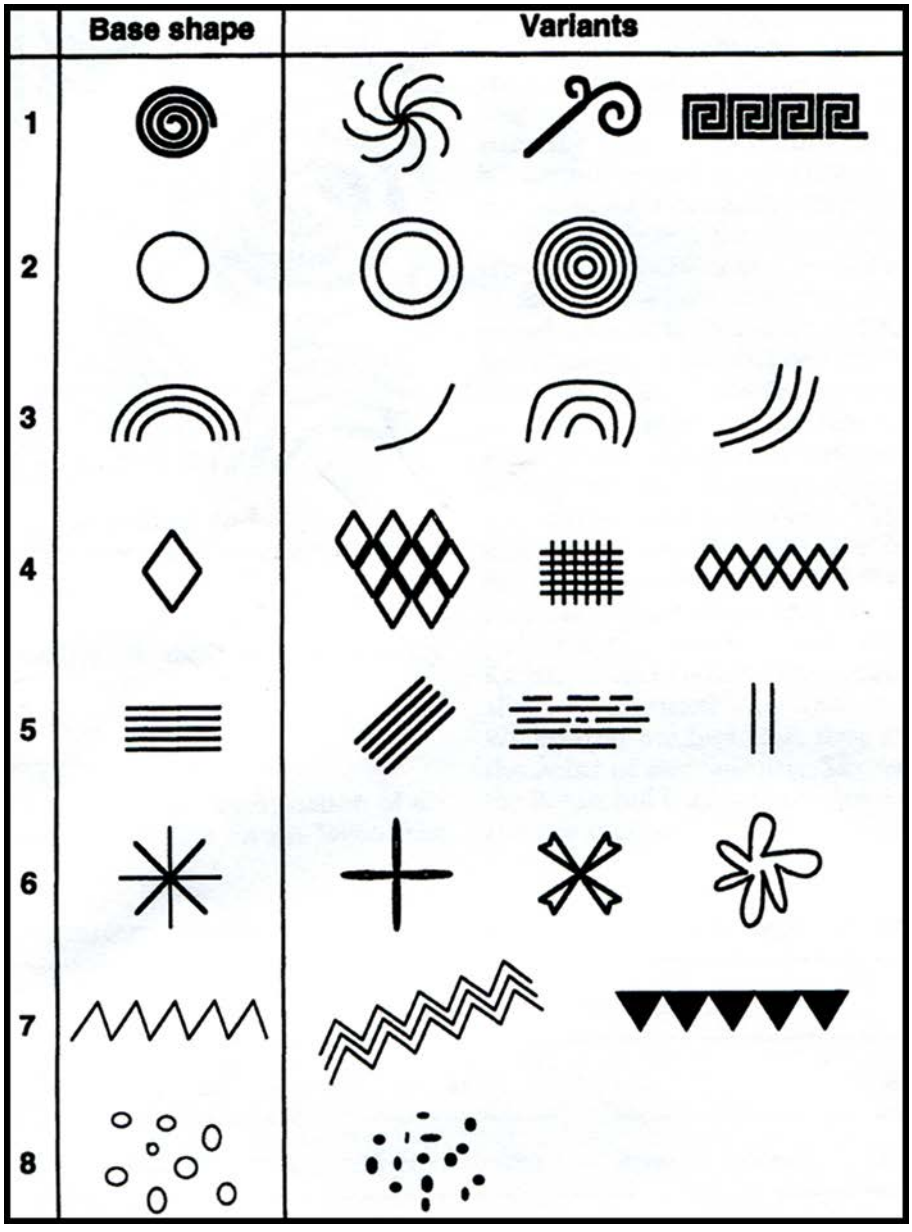


FIGURE 2.2. The categories of schematic forms identified by Dronfield (1996: fig. 13). The original caption reads: 'Undiagnostic shapes and patterns, all of which can and do occur as endogenous phenomena, but are not diagnostically exclusive to endogenously derived art.'

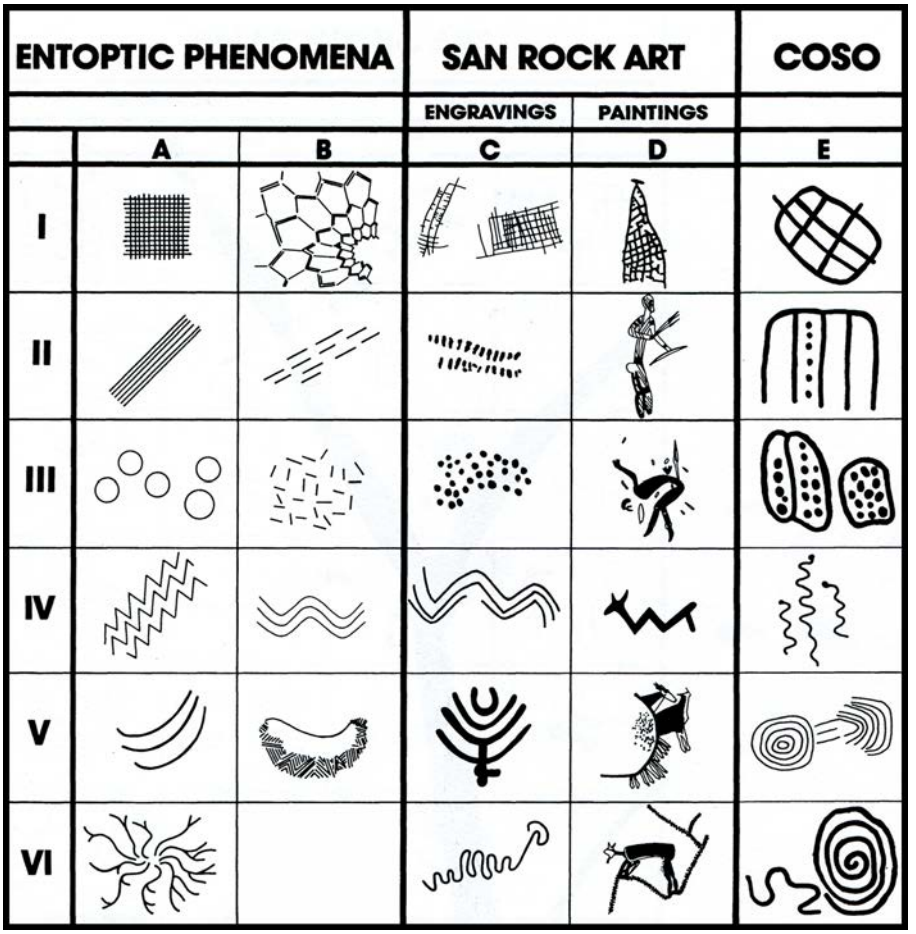


FIGURE 2.3. Entoptic forms identified by Lewis-Williams and Dowson (1988, fig. 1).

Nor does the social division that Lewis-Williams (1988a) and others (Eastwood *et al.* 2010: 92) make between painters and engravers hold: we find similar motifs painted and engraved in certain parts of the Northern Cape province, for example, at sites on the Vaal River (Willcox 1965; Fock 1969), the Harts River valley (Dowson *et al.* 1992) and tributaries of the Sak River near Williston (Hollmann & Hykkerud 2004; Hykkerud 2006).

Thus, while certain researchers were aware of what seemed to be a different kind of art – in painted and engraved form – and distinct from 'Bushman' hunter-gatherer fine-line paintings and naturalistic engravings of anthropomorphs and zoomorphs, they seemed not to pay much attention to these telling differences. They tried, not unreasonably, to explain the engravings in terms of their understanding of the paintings, to recognise and focus on the familiar. For example, writing over 25 years ago, Lewis-Williams emphasises similarities between paintings and engravings:

> *The two art forms* [painting and engraving] *have much in common, but there are also differences. Most writers have tended to emphasise the differences at the expense of the similarities and have so consigned the engravings to a quite separate category. It is true, for instance, that the paintings, at any rate the more recent phases, show a higher percentage of human than animal representations, as well as much more complex groupings; human figures and groupings are rare in the engravings. But there are also a number of points of similarity. There is at many of the engraving sites the same marked numerical emphasis on eland to which I have already referred. Other depictions found in both art forms include buck-headed figures, men apparently dancing around eland, creatures with erect hair, eared serpents and human figures with the characteristic 'bar' across the penis. Whatever the differences may be, these shared details seem to indicate that both art forms were the product of a single cognitive system.*
>
> (Lewis-Williams 1983: 31, my brackets)

Here Lewis-Williams's focus is implicitly and exclusively on fine-line rock paintings and those engravings that feature similar elements. He emphasises the presence of certain categories of art in the engravings – the predominance of eland and images with shamanistic features (the buck-headed figures, etc.) – but does not consider how this art relates to that at rock art sites (sometimes the same rock art sites) where paintings and engravings of schematised objects and designs occur. Indeed he concludes that 'At present we have no idea what most of these prolific designs [i.e. the schematised motifs] mean' (1983: 34, 35, my brackets). His conclusion that 'both art forms were the product of a single cognitive system' begs the question as to what is meant by 'a single cognitive

system'. We must look elsewhere to understand the context and meaning of these forms (see section 5.1).

I take the view that the 'geometrics' are representational. They depict a variety of 'things': anthropo- and zoomorphs, objects, and also, 'swatches' of designs. One of the reasons why observers have mistaken some of them for 'non-representational', 'abstract' images is because the artists used a metric projection that presents these things in ways that an outsider may not recognise easily (Hagen 1986: 5; see section 7.1).

My use of the term 'design' is not unprecedented; in addition to Fock's (1979) use already mentioned, J. Desmond Clark (1958) uses 'schematic' (as well as 'geometric') to describe motifs from parts of southern Africa, and Chaplin (1959a, b) the term 'design'. These terms imply that the motif is a representation of some thing albeit not always immediately recognisable by a stranger to the art.

This is indeed the case in arts that include or wholly comprise apparently abstract or non-representational motifs, and that are well understood, as in Australia (e.g. West 1988: plates 1, 12, 63, 86) and in Pacific Northwest Native American art. In southern Africa, Catherine Vogel (1983: 44) recorded amongst the Pedi of Sekhukhuneland that 'concentric circles and multiple diminishing crescents are the *kgopha* (snail), and the multiple triangles look like the "tiger" *(nkwe*: leopard)'. This recalls too remarks by Edmund Leach about the nature of depictions in 'primitive' art:

> *I hold that the designs of primitive people are seldom abstract in any genuine sense. Designs, both as wholes and as parts usually have a definite functional significance for the artist who makes them. Frequently of course the design element has moved very far indeed from anything that might be described as photographic realism, but nevertheless the 'realistic' element remains. Primitive designs are mostly representational.*
>
> (Leach 1954: 105)

Here he disputes the idea that 'primitive' people make 'abstract designs' (read 'geometric' in the southern African context) and suggests that these primitive designs are chiefly, even entirely, representational. I shall argue in this study that the variety of engraved motifs that researchers call 'non-representational' do indeed represent something – those very designs painted on the bodies of the newly initiated women, their ornaments and their clothing (see chapter 5, chapter 7 and chapter 8).

2.4 Landscape

The significance of place is a prominent theme in recent southern African research into rock engravings. This interest in landscape parallels international research into a fundamental aspect of the significance of rock art: the fact that by definition the notion of place is part of the 'meaning' of the rock art:

> *[W]hat we know as rock-art qualifies as such not so much because of its association with rocks (sculptures and mobile art too are made from stone), nor simply due to its placement on parietal surfaces (murals, on built walls, would also qualify). Instead, the defining characteristic of 'rock-art' is its placement on geological substrates, which is to say the natural landscape.... [R]ock-art ... was landscape art ... we have largely ignored this defining contextual attribute....*
>
> (Whitley 1998: 11, my brackets)

I emphasised this point earlier when I pointed out that the GDC is not just a collection of rock art sites but a 'phenomenon' by virtue of the attributes of the place itself, including the wonderstone substrate and its location in the valley of the Driekuil Stream (see chapter 1). The markings and motifs are a consequence of the qualities of the place, not the prime reason for its importance (Deacon 1988: 138). There are indeed anecdotes about the GDC that suggest additional 'reasons' why the GDC became a landmark; I discuss these later in the study (see Part IV). Here I show how southern African researchers have incorporated the significance of the actual places where rock engravings occur into their research.

Deacon's work, based on ethnographic records of 19th century |xam people collected by Bleek and Lloyd, has revealed that although

> *[i]t is clear that ... the |Xam San may not have given significance to every landscape feature, they certainly attached importance to some landmarks and incorporated them into their beliefs, rituals, and folklore.*
>
> (Deacon 1988: 129)

Deacon points out two places in the Northern Cape province that were 'associated with rainmaking metaphors alluded to in the folklore of the people who lived there' (Deacon 1988: 136). These were places 'that may be near waterholes, on north-facing hill slopes or on landmarks that have legendary connotations for rain' and 'were used repeatedly by rainmakers' (Deacon 1988: 136). One is an engraving site close to a permanent spring at which |xam rainmakers gathered to capture the rain-bull, a ritual carried out to bring rain to where it was needed (Deacon 1988: 132–134); the other locality has been identified

as the Strandberg, between Vanwyksvlei and Kenhardt (Deacon 1986). The Strandberg comprises two larger hills and one smaller prominence. These hills are said to be the body of a lizard from a previous era of creation which was broken into three pieces (Deacon 1988: 134; Bleek & Lloyd 1911: 215–217). The head of the lizard is the northernmost hill; such lizards are believed to lie in trees with their heads pointing northwards, the direction from which rain usually comes. All three koppies have engravings, but most are on the 'lizard's head', the northernmost one. Deacon believes that this concentration of engravings is linked to the story about the lizard and the lizard's behaviour regarding rain:

> *Engravings at these places reinforced the power already present there because the animals and other themes depicted carried metaphorical significance that inspired the rainmakers and their assistants.*
>
> (Deacon 1988: 136–137)

Deacon does not suggest that the rock art was integral to the performance of ceremonies as there is no ethnographic support for this in the |xam ethnography (Deacon 1988: 137–138). It is rather that these powerful places 'attract rock art and localise it to a greater extent than if the art alone provided the inspiration and this might explain why rock art often appears as localised concentrations whereas nearby places remain without art' (Deacon 1988: 138).

Subsequently Deacon has found that the |xam of this area distinguished two kinds of prominences – dolerite hills and mountains capped with shale or sandstone (Deacon 1997: 25). The 'capped' mountains, she says,

> *were known for the products they offered, such as* tto [red ochre] *and holes or rock shelters, or because the shape of rock formations was reminiscent of people or animals. They do not seem to have the same ritual significance as dolerite hills.*
>
> (Deacon 1997: 25, my square brackets)

Dolerite hills, or *brinkkoppe* or *bruinkoppe* (lit. 'brown hills'), on the other hand, were places to which people went in order to look out for springbok moving across the plains below and to try and catch sight of people who had gone missing (Deacon 1997: 25). But they were also places where men went to make rain. Deacon suggests that there may be a link with male initiation too, because several of the men mentioned in the manuscripts of Bleek and Lloyd are identified as 'Brinkkop men'; perhaps, Deacon wonders, they performed certain rituals on the hills. She connects the *bruinkoppe* to the words of a dying man: 'My heart stands on the hill,' he says as he lies dying from the effects of an accidental wound from a poisoned arrow. In terms of this metaphor, Deacon

(1997: 26) argues, the dying man's 'heart' was already on its way to its final resting place, on the hill, whence people would be able to ask for his help with rainmaking and other matters.

Deacon's work has important consequences for the GDC study. She has established that amongst the|xam at least, people identified themselves with landscape features by coining names for places, by means of stories, and by the performance of important activities that involved communication with powerful forces such as the rain. Rock art is associated with these places, although in the cases which Deacon examines, the rock art may not actually be directly involved in the rainmaking rituals. More recently, Lewis-Williams (2010) has argued that 'the San' of the Maloti–Drakensberg saw 'pregnant nuggets of significance' about the cosmos in the mountainous landscape: people associated the mist-filled mountains with the presence of the trickster deity Cagn and the eland that belonged to him:

> *Climbing up to their summer aggregation rock shelters, San people were getting closer to Cagn and the healing potency that they so desired. There in the mountains, the San could . . . kill an eland and 'purify' themselves in a place redolent with the smell of meat. There, too, they made rock paintings.*
>
> (Lewis-Williams 2010: 14–15)

I believe that, like the dolerite hills of the|xam and the mountains of the Maloti San, the GDC outcrops were recognised as powerful places and that these hills too were associated with stories and rites. There are hints of the place's former significance: the name *Klochopitzana* (Zebra/horse's head, see subsection 1.2.1), the stories of a great snake that basks on the rocks and a story about the protective powers of one of the GDC outcrops (see Part IV).

Fieldwork in the Northern Cape province and elsewhere has identified another link between certain kinds of rock art and landscape features. It is the association of so-called 'non-representational' rock engravings – what I argue are depictions of objects and designs of various kinds – with water holes, pans, river beds or 'fountains that become partially or completely submerged after rains or when the river comes down in flood' (Fock 1969: 103–104). Fock (1969: 126; see also Geldmacher 1967) suggests that these designs might depict water or rain and that they 'have some connection with puberty ceremonies'. Driekopseiland, where hundreds of motifs cover the river floor, is a prime example of such a place (Morris 2002, 2010). As I mentioned above (see section 2.1), Smith and Ouzman (2004: 521) have extended this association to include a suite of additional (non-landscape) features shared by most engraving and painting locales.

Another remarkable instance of the coincidence of landscape and rock art is the location of certain engraving sites (in North West province and Free State)

at places where other animals have already modified the landscape. I mean the *blinkklippe* ('shiny stones', Afrikaans) or 'touchstones': boulders that animals have used as scratching posts perhaps for hundreds of years and which have become 'polished' through use. Geldmacher (1967: 488) notes that engraving sites are 'often' found in association with *blinkklippe*, but these stones themselves are seldom engraved (but see Geldmacher 1967, Ouzman 1996a for exceptions). Ouzman (1996a) has conceptualised a scenario for the site Thaba Sione, 71 km northwest of the GDC, in which he links the 27 *blinkklippe* that occur in a complex of engravings to the presence of waterholes and the Thlakajeng River nearby. The presence of rhinoceroses is what connects these components; there are many rhinoceros motifs on the hills, some of which Ouzman has concluded are rain-animals, while the blinkklippe and waterholes are evidence of rhinoceroses in the area. He imagines a situation in which rain-shamans 'lead' the dangerous rhinoceros-like rain-animals from the waterhole to the hill and caused rain to fall (Ouzman 1996a: 59).

The artists were not just paying attention to large-scale landscape features. They often made systematic use of 'natural features' of the rock surfaces on which they painted (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1990; Woodhouse 1990) and engraved to express profound insights; the rock surface itself was a 'landscape' (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1990). The notion of the rock surface as a world in itself is not unique to Khoe-San. In Scandinavia, for example, Helskog (2010) has drawn attention to the ways in which the artists positioned figures relative to features of the rock surface. In southern Africa, rock paintings and engravings are aligned with cracks, steps and other irregularities on the rock surface as if to depict the images 'entering' and 'leaving' the 'spirit world' that Lewis-Williams and Dowson (1990: 14) have argued was believed by the artists to be on the other side of the rock face. These authors have argued that this integration of images with the topography of the rock face implies that all rock art imagery is framed in what they call a 'shamanistic context': 'eland and all the other images came from the spirit world hidden behind the walls of the rock shelters, invisible to ordinary people' (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1990: 15). Rock engravers apparently used a similar convention; zoomorphic motifs are sometimes juxtaposed with cracks and steps in the rock, as though entering/leaving the world behind the rock surface; in addition Morris has pointed out that certain incomplete-looking zoomorphic motifs – not associated with any cracks or steps in the rock – may in fact also be intended to depict their 'emergence' from the other world (e.g. Morris 2002: 139, 2010: 43–44, figs 3.6, 3.7, 3.8).

In addition to the presentation of motifs entering and leaving cracks in the rock, the engravers also paid attention to the shape of the rock surface and to ridges and hollows. In one instance from Klipfontein engraving site, near

Kimberley, Northern Cape province, a design envelops the entire top surface of the rock (see Morris 2002: 135, plate 10). Dowson suggests that

> *the pattern thus becomes part of the rock itself and this suggests that whatever the pattern signified was also intimately bound up with the rock. In these engravings, depiction and rock are one.*
>
> (Dowson 1992: 103)

Dowson points out examples of instances in which artists have placed images in natural hollows and alcoves (1992: figs 154, 155, 157). There is also the well-known example of the flamingo motif from Klipfontein (Fock 1979: plate 88.3), which Dowson (1992: 103) incorrectly calls an 'ostrich'. It is engraved just above a small hollow in the same rock surface. When the hollow fills with water it is as if the flamingo is engaging in its habitual behaviour of feeding in shallow water (Morris 2002: 135). Morris (2002: 135, plates 11–13, 2010: 43–44, fig. 3.7) has also pointed out that in some cases natural holes in the rock become incorporated into motifs such as at Brandfontein, west of Hopetown in the Orange River valley (Fock & Fock 1989: plates 127.4, 127.5, 128.1, 129.3). Many of these compositional devices are also a feature of the GDC (see section 4.4.2 and section 5.7).

Morris's (2002, 2010) work on the Driekopseiland engraving site is perhaps the most sophisticated exposition of a 'landscape perspective' in southern African rock art studies to date and inspires my analysis of the GDC. In his discussion of Driekopseiland as a 'powerful place' he summarises his hypothesis:

> *If places in this landscape came to be imbued with meaning and power, then, it is argued, Driekopseiland, in its remarkable setting, and marked with more than 3 500 rock engravings, was certainly such a place . . . as the striated blue-grey glaciated andesite was exposed by geomorphological processes in the last two and a half millennia, so these striking expanses of smoothed rock, lying length-wise in the bed of the river, came to be identified, not quite as the 'great whales lying in the mud,' as Battiss memorably described Driekopseiland, their backs 'decorated with innumerable designs', but indeed as !Khwa, the 'Rain/Water' in the form of an immanent giant Great Watersnake. As such it appears to emerge from the depths in the channel of the ǂGama-!ab, and to dip down beneath the riverbed again a few hundred metres further downstream.*
>
> (Morris 2002: 154)

Morris argues that what I call a 'mega-metaphor' underpins the significance of the place – the landscape of the river bed was seen as a manifestation of !Khwa, the embodiment of rain/water, in the form of a Great Watersnake that appeared and disappeared as the river level rose and fell. In making the engravings the people were therefore decorating the snake. Morris rejects the hypothesis that

Driekopseiland was a rain-making site because it is on a river bottom while the rain-making sites that we know from the |xam ethnography are on hills (e.g. Deacon 1988, 1997). Nor, at Driekopseiland, are there any obvious depictions of zoomorphs that could be construed as rain-animals. Rather, Morris sees Driekopseiland as an example of regional variation in which schematic designs are linked to puberty ceremonies. He argues convincingly for this hypothesis, using a 'cross-section' of Khoisan ethnography:

> *Significant at the conclusion of female puberty rites, in a cross-section of Khoisan groups, were the uses, variously, of tonsure, tattoos and scarification, and of ochre, buchu . . . and mud, to mark, paint or daub – or to sprinkle over – the body, objects, and water. . . . These practices ensured protection, and the 'cooling' of dangerous potency, in various rituals to associate the 'new maiden' with !Khwa or its equivalent manifestations, following her period of seclusion. As regards the engravings at Driekopseiland, on a glaciated rock support that is pregnant with symbolic possibilities, a case can be made for a link with the beliefs surrounding menarcheal rites. These are themselves bundled together with beliefs about rain and the weather, if not rain-making per se; and the 'new maiden' is said to possess 'the rain's magic power'. . . . Given the role of marking or image-making in these rites, the engravings could have been part of the rituals, constituting, perhaps, a 'residue of a ritual sequence'. . . . It could even be, in these terms, that clustering of certain image forms on different parts of the site at Driekopseiland indeed represent discrete events of ritual performance, the practices of perhaps several generations, that invoked ritual meanings in this extraordinary setting.*
>
> (Morris 2002: 173)

Morris has constructed a persuasive case for the significance of Driekopseiland as a locale for the celebration of 'menarcheal rites'. But he seems reluctant to draw what I see as an ineluctable conclusion. In his scenario he brings the initiates to the rock surfaces in the river where they are groomed and marked and anointed to associate them with the snake and thus protect them and the community. But he stops short of discussion about the motifs themselves beyond suggesting that the making of the engravings was part of a ritual act. Like Fock (1969), he is tantalisingly close to making what seems to me the obvious correspondence between the designs painted on the initiates' bodies and the engravings. He is on the brink of understanding but pulls back, perhaps for fear of unfounded 'indulgence' (Morris 2002: 142); possibly his use of the term 'non-representational' to describe the engravings prevents him from seeing that the engravings might be designs and other items, such as aprons. As that literary master detective Sherlock Holmes puts it when remonstrating with his friend and chronicler, Watson, in the case of *The Blue Carbuncle:*

> *'I can see nothing,' said I, handing it* [an old battered felt hat] *back to my friend. 'On the contrary, Watson, you can see everything. You fail, however, to reason from what you see. You are too timid in drawing your inferences.'*
>
> (Doyle 1928: 153, my brackets)

I shall argue in this study that the variety of engraved motifs that researchers call 'non-representational' do indeed represent something – those very designs painted on the bodies of the newly initiated women, their ornaments and their clothing. I build on Morris's insights into the Driekopseiland rock art and its location to argue that the GDC was an important locale at which female initiates and their communities celebrated rites of reincorporation.

Part II

The rock art of the GDC

In this investigation into the motifs and markings of the GDC, I attempt to answer the first of the three questions that I posed earlier: *What do the rock motifs and markings mean?* I start by identifying what they are depictions of and I draw on Khoe-San ethnography to understand their context in the 'poetics' of Khoe-San people. Darwin wrote that 'all observation must be for or against some view if it is to be of any service!'[1] – my view is that many of the GDC motifs depict objects and designs. I recognised three types of apron depicted in the GDC and as I worked I found depictions of other items of clothing as well as ornaments and designs. This work built on Eastwood's research (see section 2.2) in the Central Limpopo Basin, which identified Khoe-San rock art that depicts aprons. Morris's work on Driekopseiland (see Part IV) inspired my ideas about the significance of the GDC outcrops for Khoe-San people.

A striking and characteristic phenomenon of the GDC is the proliferation of markings that people cut, pecked, and abraded on every outcrop of wonderstone. Indeed occurrences of cuts, pecks, and abraded grooves far outnumber schematics and designs in the GDC. Some of the outcrops were marked only in this manner; there are apparently no schematics or designs. However, as virtually every outcrop has been disturbed and rock art removed, one cannot be entirely sure that this was always the case. The actions of cutting, pecking and abrading the soft wonderstone surfaces were carried out in certain characteristic ways, but the resultant traces left by these repetitive activities on the rock certainly do not seem to depict any 'thing'. Was I precipitate, in the previous chapter, in discarding non-representationality as a useful classificatory option for the rock art? No – merely because an occurrence of marking on the rock does not depict an object or a pattern does not mean that it is therefore non-representational, except in a trivial sense. Calling the remnant cut and peck marks 'non-representational' does not bring one any closer to understanding their predominance and their significance. A different set of categories is called for.

I found Josephine Flood's (1997: 148–149, 154, 2004: 191) use of the concepts 'referential' and 'gestural' invaluable in making a distinction between the two types of markings found in the GDC. Referential art is the term used to describe depictions that have a referent in the form of an object or organism and are more or less recognisable depending on the conventions and techniques used to depict them. In the context of the GDC, referential art includes depictions of anthropomorphs, zoomorphs, decorative designs, depictions of clothing and ornaments and decorations, patterns (Figure 2.4).

[1] In a letter to Henry Fawcett, 18 September 1861, Darwin Correspondence Project Database, `http://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/entry-3257`, accessed on 26 March 2011.

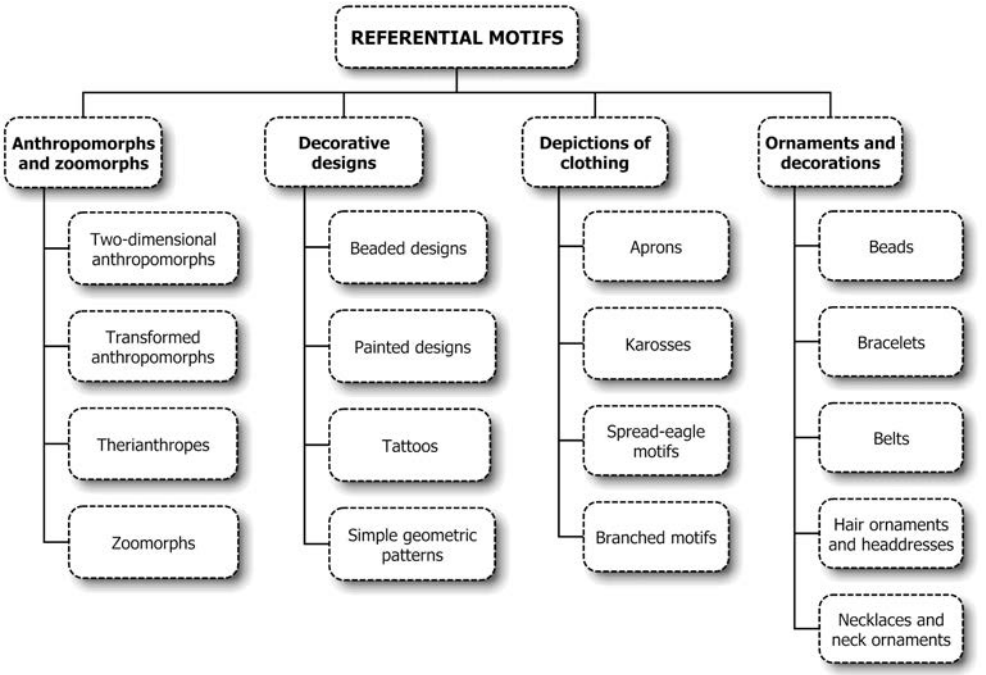


FIGURE 2.4. Categories of referential art.

Gestural 'art' on the other hand as defined by Rosenfeld (1993, cited in Flood, 1997: 353; see also Rosenfeld 1999) does not depict any 'thing'; it is, rather, the residue of activities that 'manifest a person's relationship to a place in the gesture of their execution' (Rosenfeld 1993: 77, cited in Flood 1997: 353). In the GDC I classify patterned and repeated sets of incisions, pecking, and hammering that do not appear to depict any objects as the result of gesture or performance (Figure 2.5). They are 'gestural' or 'performative'. I do not imply that the mark makers themselves recognised or set any store by this dichotomy – the distinction is useful for analytical purposes and then only to a limited extent. We cannot pigeonhole all kinds of markings into one or the other category; some markings may straddle these boundaries, as I shall point out later. In the absence of ethnography or for other reasons, one may mistakenly assign a particular marking to the wrong category (e.g. 'gestural' when it is 'referential') and thus end up drawing erroneous conclusions. Nonetheless the characterisation of the GDC rock art as referential and gestural is important because it introduces the element of performance and it bypasses the unproductive categories of representational/non-representational and utilitarian/non-utilitarian.

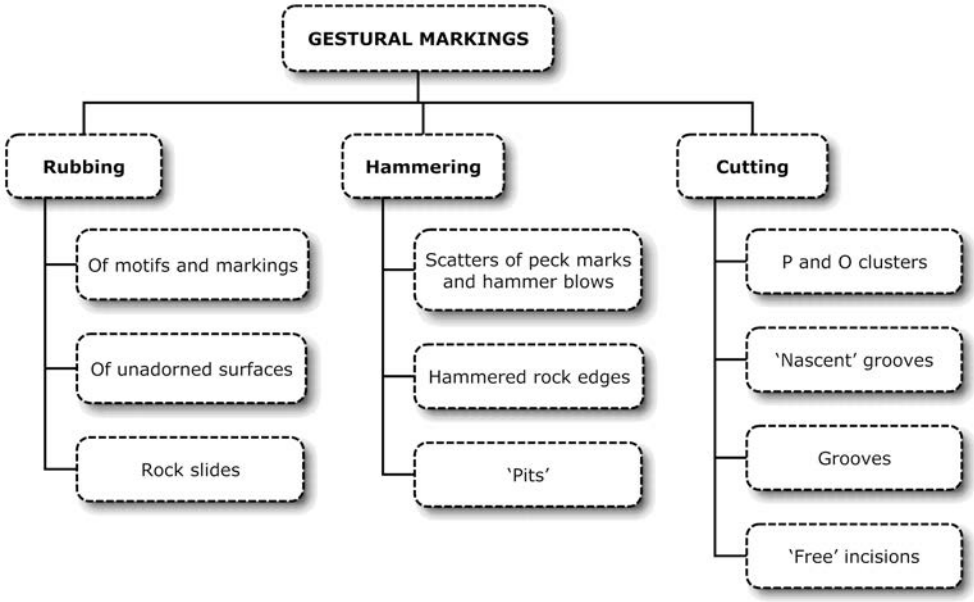


FIGURE 2.5. Categories of gestural markings.

Such 'gestural' markings are probably neither 'utilitarian' nor representations of objects but rather evidence of the performance of repeated actions that, in the context of the wonderstone hills as a ceremonial complex of sites, may indicate the performance of rituals. I discuss these in much greater detail in chapter 3 and chapter 10). Not that people necessarily regarded these gestural marks as 'mere' by-products – the very fact that they structured their behaviour to include this kind of mark making suggests that they regarded the resultant traces on the rock as important and significant.

In addition to making this distinction between 'gestural' and 'referential' art, I need to clarify other terms that I use throughout this study.

The term 'rock art' is a handy label that archaeologists and others (myself included) use to describe non-utilitarian, human-made markings on the rock, especially those that were made by people in the past and for which there are sparse, or no, written records. Rock art can be painted on the rock surface or forms are created by breaking through the surface patina either by cutting, scraping, or hammering it, thereby exposing the differently coloured and textured surface of the rock beneath.

In the course of my research I found that much of what is subsumed under the rubric of rock art may not have been considered 'art' by its makers, at least not in the sense that 'fine art' is in so-called 'Western' societies. Similarly, the value of the concept 'utility' to distinguish whether or not something is 'art' is questionable; in what sense is a given instance of 'rock art' utilitarian or otherwise? These problems occurred to me as I was recording the rock art in the GDC when I encountered 'art' that distorted the sense of the terms 'rock art', 'utilitarian' and 'non-utilitarian' so to render them meaningless. For example, the grooves, incisions, pits and scatters of peck marks that make up most of the occurrences at the sites hardly qualify as 'art' in the Western sense; yet, as I shall argue, the presence of these 'phenomena' must be understood in terms of their relation to the 'motifs' (defined below) with which they co-occur. As to whether these are 'utilitarian' or 'non-utilitarian', I doubt that it is a meaningful question to pose; rather than attempting an *a priori* categorisation on the basis of assumed utility, it may be better to ask how these features contribute to an understanding of the rock art.

I therefore refer to grooves, incisions, pits and scatters of peck marks collectively as types of 'rock markings' (see Hollmann 2007a). The term 'rock marking' is loose enough to cover a variety of forms without granting them a misleading status as art but at the same time it does not discount their significance as components of the social phenomenon that is the GDC.

I use the term 'motif' for incised and hammered referential depictions of anthropomorphs, zoomorphs, patterns and other shapes. They are motifs because these categories are distinctive and recurrent themes. They are motifs also because many of them are ornamental designs and decorations.

Thus the rock art of the GDC comprises both rock markings and motifs. These manifest on the rock in varying quantities and configurations that comprise 'occurrences' of rock art. Throughout the study I shall use these terms – 'rock art', 'markings', 'motifs', 'occurrences' (as well as other related concepts that I introduce) to refer to these traces of ancient activity on wonderstone.

My criteria for using the terms 'juxtaposed', 'associated' and 'composition' are based on close physical proximity of motifs to each other and the relative isolation of these 'associated' motifs from other clusters of motifs.

❁

In the following chapters I discuss in detail both the gestural and referential components of the GDC *corpus*. I have developed a schema that divides the two main groups into further categories (Figure 2.4 and Figure 2.5). These are categories that I have imposed on the art; I am not suggesting that the

manufacturers themselves categorised their products in this way. Although I may dismantle the rock art into categories and focus on types of motifs and markings, they must always be seen as part of a sequence of mark-making on a particular surface. By focusing individually on each type I hope better to understand how they belong together. In Part IV I shall discuss the role and significance of these markings and motifs in terms of Khoe-San ethnography.

Chapter 3

Gestural markings

In this chapter I analyse the GDC rock markings that I have classified as the gestural component of the rock art of this complex. I reiterate that the categories I employ – i.e. 'gestural' and 'referential', and the distinctions I make between different kinds of incised and pecked work – are mine, not the artists'/participants'. These conceptual distinctions are necessary, however, for my reconstruction of how people used the outcrops.

3.1 Aspects of performance

Much of what we call 'rock art' is, anthropologically speaking, a residue of ritual activity (Lewis-Williams & Blundell 1997). The motifs and markings that are variously painted, cut, scraped or pecked on the stones are remnants of activities carried out at these places; what is absent is the transient and intangible component – chatting, singing, dancing and grooming (e.g. Ingold 1994: 330–331; Seeger 1994: 686–687).

Southern African researchers are aware of this dimension to 'rock art sites' and have tried to incorporate these aspects into the ways that we interpret the rock art. For example, Lewis-Williams (e.g. 1995) has argued that rock paintings were potent objects that may have been incorporated in rituals that afforded access to the spirit realm. Ouzman has endeavoured to identify non-visual, performative aspects of ritual activities allied with the manufacture of rock art:

> *[C]ertain San rock engravings were hammered, rubbed, cut and flaked in order to produce sound; to touch certain numinous images and rocks; and to possess pieces of potent places.*
>
> (Ouzman 2001: 237)

Ouzman (2001: 248) suggests that at least some of these markings may be understood as ways of 'piercing the rock so that potency would flow from the Spirit World into the Ordinary World'. Although couched in terms of the medicine dance, these insights also apply to this study. Wonderstone is easily scratched and people could mark the rocks with very little effort. The ease of marking wonderstone attracted people to mark these outcrops – this is demonstrably the case, as there are no markings on any of the surrounding quartzite ridges. This characteristic of wonderstone together with its smooth texture also has the consequence of preserving a multitude of markings: even very fine and light scratches can be observed. What is most noteworthy, as I suggested earlier, is that the markings I classify as 'gestural' are not random or arbitrary. There is a characteristic 'set' of markings in the rock art of the GDC that is repeated on all the marked outcrops. In this chapter, however, I can only hint at the importance of the sense of place and its significance that probably underpins the use of wonderstone outcrops as marking locales. I shall discuss them in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

Although gestural markings occur all over the outcrops and far outnumber examples of referential art, they are often difficult to concentrate on: the arbitrary appearance and seemingly random arrangement of these markings creates a mental stumbling block for the recorder. One wants to overlook them as 'noise', especially when compared with referential art. Indeed, this selective and largely unconscious bias may be the reason why previous research at the GDC sites makes little if any mention of any of the categories of gestural art that I describe here. I certainly detected this attitude in myself when tracing motifs, which, very often, are superimposed on certain classes of gestural markings, largely incised markings. As I worked I found that I wanted to dismiss the gestural markings as visually uninteresting and meaningless and focus exclusively on deciphering the form of the referential motif. It required more effort to look at and record the gestural component of the GDC rock art. The reactions of others who sometimes walked over the hills was even stronger and negative in its assessment of the gestural marks; they saw these kinds of markings as evidence of the trivial and meaningless nature of the GDC rock art – it was the mere doodling of people who were bored and had nothing else to do. Indeed, the 'boredom hypothesis' has been advanced by Jeffreys (1953) as an 'explanation' of the rock art at Redan, an engraving site in Gauteng, and in the GDC, by Hübner, who concluded that 'the most likely explanation remains that they [i.e. probably the 'lines' and 'holes'] came into being as a way of passing the time' (1871: 53, my brackets). The art is therefore not worthy of study or protection from mining.

It was these reactions – the contemptuous dismissal of the art by others and my own tendency to 'slur over' the gestural component of the rock art – that spurred me on to try and look beyond immediate perceptions and to get to the possible significance of these markings. This process continues to be salutary and I am convinced that the gestural markings are every bit as significant and informative as the referential motifs. As I worked I developed the idea that the gestural markings are kinetic in nature, they are 'frozen movements', records of what people were doing on the outcrops. They are part of the 'whole' that is the GDC and are crucial to understanding the significance of the place. In this chapter I develop the first phase of my argument by describing and illustrating what I conceptualise as the gestural markings of the GDC. This process requires the 'dissection' of the rock art into categories that I analyse in depth. The reader should bear in mind, however, that this analysis requires me to consider each category in isolation, whereas the 'reality' is that each group occurs in the context of other categories of motifs and markings. It is a matter of juggling two perspectives, one 'macro' (the arrangement of motifs and markings on an outcrop), and the other 'micro' (in-depth examination of the constituent types that combine to form the whole).

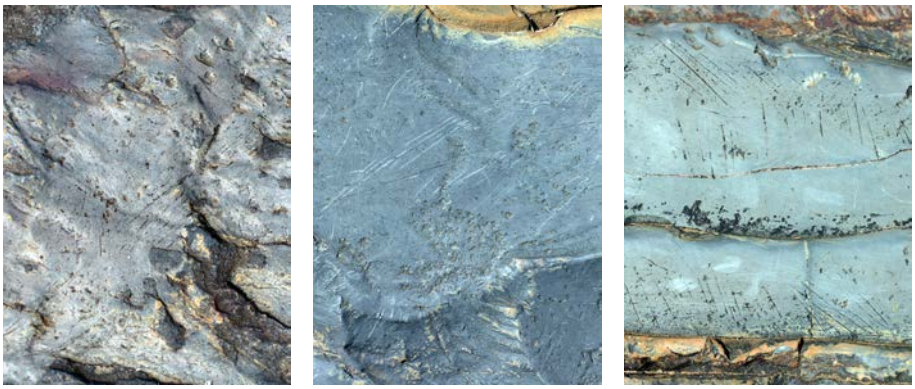
One can discern traces of people's past performances and encounters on the outcrops of the GDC. They left rubbed surfaces on many outcrops, some of which are probably testimony to the presence of small groups sitting (and moving) around on the rock (see section 3.2). They also systematically marked the rocks using percussive techniques – pecking, hammering and battering (see section 3.3) – and by scratching and incising the rock in various ways (see section 3.4).

3.2 Rubbing the rocks

Rubbing can be discerned on all the GDC outcrops. It is 'gestural' because it is a focused and repeated activity but does not produce a motif or depiction of any object. I distinguish three basic types of rubbing. Many, even most, of the marked surfaces of the GDC show signs of being rubbed or smoothed. There are also more extensive, unadorned surfaces that appear to have been rubbed. Then there is an intriguing category of a rather different kind of rubbing – the rock slides.

3.2.1 Rubbed motifs and markings

Frequently, GDC surfaces bearing motifs and markings have been rubbed. In many cases the rubbing has taken place subsequent to the manufacture of the



(a) Driekuil Hill (DH018) (b) NW57 SE41 (c) NW74 SW07

FIGURE 3.1. Engraved and marked GDC surfaces were commonly rubbed smooth some time after their manufacture. It is not clear, however, whether this rubbing was deliberate or, perhaps, a consequence of other activities, such as people sitting on the surfaces.

motif or marking (Figure 3.1). Was this an intentional act that targeted the motifs and markings themselves or a consequence of other activities, such as sitting on the rocks?

In other instances it seems that motifs and markings were made on surfaces that were already smoothed, although this is difficult to determine with the naked eye. Nor is it clear whether the GDC artists/visitors to the GDC deliberately prepared the surfaces in this way or if it was merely coincidental (Figure 3.2).

3.2.2 Large rubbed surfaces

There are several places on Gestoptefontein Hill, Driekuil Hill and on one of the southern hills of the Boschpoort Road sites where expanses of wonderstone have been rubbed smooth (Figure 3.3). These spots are larger in area than portions of wonderstone that have been smoothed and then marked (see subsection 3.2.1). Because of their relatively large area I suggest that this kind of rubbing results from abrasion caused by contact of people's bodies with the rock. Surfaces subject to regular or intensive episodes of rubbing would become noticeably smoother than the surrounding untouched rock. Wonderstone can be smoothed very easily in a few minutes with ordinary sandpaper so it is not far-fetched to suggest that people could do this by just sitting around. A possible scenario could be that these smoothed areas mark the places where participants/initiates habitually congregated on the outcrops. More specifically, people may have sat on these rock surfaces, which are all located in the midst of the marked outcrops.

(a) Driekuil Hill DH036

(b) Driekuil Hill DH064b

(c) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW17 NE04)

(d) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW56 SW39)

FIGURE 3.2. Certain marked and engraved surfaces may have been rubbed prior to marking/engraving, but closer inspection with higher magnification devices is necessary to confirm this observation. In many cases it is not possible to determine, with the naked eye, at what stage the rubbing was carried out.

The contact that their bodies made with the rock would have been dynamic as people shifted and changed their position.

3.2.3 Rock slides

On the western flank of Gestoptefontein Hill, on a massive, inclined red slab of wonderstone of about 90 m² is a narrow 'path' that runs from the top of the slab to the bottom, a distance of about 10 m. The 'path' has been worn into the rock so that the top layer of haematite-containing rock has been abraded to reveal a layer of grey-coloured wonderstone below. This 'path' is a rock slide or 'chute' (Figure 3.4); from the top of the slide it is possible to whizz down the rock to the bottom. In addition to this most noticeable slide, there are at least three other, apparently much less used examples on Gestoptefontein Hill. On the same big slab, a couple of metres north of the most prominent slide is another far less distinct track of long, parallel scratches that suggests the presence of another chute (Figure 3.4a). Then, on a smaller slab, adjacent to and west of the big slab is another, much shorter and less distinct slide. Over

(a) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW19)

(b) Boschpoort Road South (BRS3 06)

(c) Charlie Badenhorst (CB02)

(d) Driekuil Hill (DH320)

FIGURE 3.3. Rock smoothed but no markings

to the north of Gestoptefontein Hill on the spectacularly grooved slab in NW 57 SE quadrant, a track is visible when the sun is low (Figure 3.5). All of the slides are on surfaces that are marked with motifs and markings; indeed, the tracks of the slides pass over and in between the markings.

It is not known how long these slides have existed. None of the 19th-century visitors to Gestoptefontein (e.g. Anderson, Hübner, Holub) mention them; however, the well-known archaeological maxim – 'absence of evidence is not evidence of absence' – applies. Perhaps as Alex Willcox (1961: 68) wrote after visiting Gestoptefontein Hill: 'This [rock slide] must of course have been noticed before but not then considered of archaeological interest'. Certainly, by 1948 the main slide seems well established: there is a photograph, taken by Dr E.P. Friede, of South African artist Walter Battiss on all fours next to the slide (Figure 3.6). Is the slide a relatively recent plaything or is it linked to an earlier, ritual or ceremonial aspect of the initiation rites that I argue took place here? Willcox noted:

> *Wherever children and sloping rock faces have come together there have no doubt been slides . . . but the Gestoptefontein slide is worn too deep to be the recent creation of picanins* [young black children].
>
> (Willcox 1961: 68, my brackets)

Willcox suggested that the slide was 'archaeological' in age because in his opinion the track of the slide was too well developed to be of 20th-century origin. There are indeed intriguing suggestions in the ethnographic literature that the slide might been created by precolonial artists/participants (see Part IV).

The association of rock slides and rock art at Gestoptefontein Hill therefore warrants deeper analysis. All the rock slides occur on surfaces that bear rock art; people thus slid between and over motifs and markings. One must consider that the co-incidence of slides and rock art could simply result from the fact that such large sloping rock surfaces are equally suitable for both phenomena. However, it would be perverse not to consider the potential social and cultural significance to the artists and participants of a possible association (assuming that the rock slides and at least some of the rock art were coterminous creations). The ceremonial use of rock slides need not necessarily preclude their use as children's playthings; people may have used the slide at Gestoptefontein Hill for both ritual and recreational purposes.

3.3 Hammering the rocks

One of the easiest ways of marking wonderstone is to hit the rock surface with a hard object such as another piece of wonderstone. The blow removes a flake

(a)

(b)

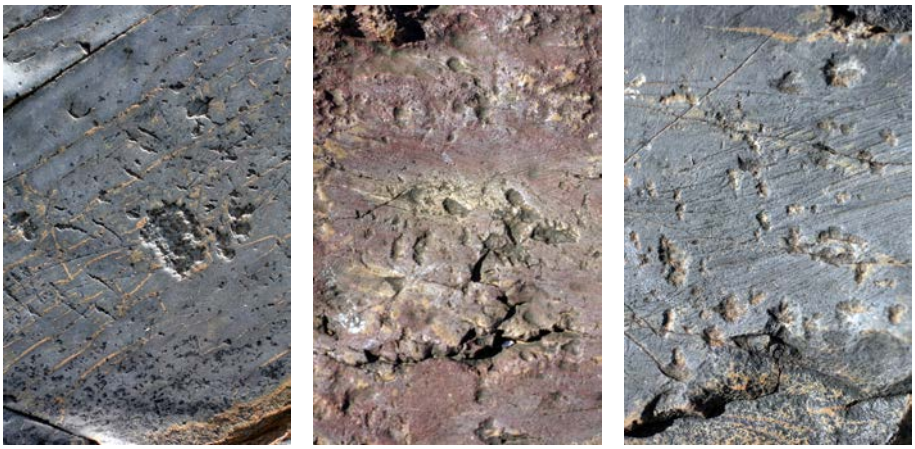
FIGURE 3.4. (a) There are two rock slides on Slide Rock: at right is a well-marked slide that has been used so much that the red patina of the rock has worn through. At left is a less distinct slide as indicated by the two track marks. (b) A view of Slide Rock looking southwest.

FIGURE 3.5. Another, shorter and less used slide can be seen on this large slab (Gestoptefontein Hill NW57 SE). To the right of the scale bar, parallel tracks are visible and the rock appears to be smoother.

of rock and creates a cavity. As a result, one perceives a difference in colour between the marked and unmarked rock surface as well as a difference in dimension. The artists/participants used this hammering technique to produce much of the referential imagery of the GDC rock art and the bulk of the gestural component. Marks of varying sizes and configurations are the most numerous kind of gestural marking in the GDC.

The marks are not randomly arranged, however; as with the incised markings, one can discern certain characteristic and repeated arrangements of pecked and hammered markings (I shall define the terms 'pecked' and 'hammered' in a moment). The classification of these marks presented certain challenges: although people tended to make a limited variety of pecked arrangements, it is not always easy to demarcate these; some of the categories I discern may not be entirely discrete and so one kind of arrangement blends with another and the distinction may sometimes be arbitrary. In addition, the gestural nature of the peckings made it a challenge to develop appropriate concepts and terminology to describe the range of configurations that I observed. I have attempted to choose categories, terms, and concepts that adequately reflect the variety and patterning of the pecked markings.

FIGURE 3.6. Artist Walter Battiss near the bottom of the main slide. The photograph was published in Battiss's book *Artists of the Rocks* (Battiss 1948: opposite page 130). Photograph by Dr E.P. Friede.



(a) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW63 SW14) (b) Skeleton Hill (SH07) (c) Married Quarters (MQ14 SW04)

FIGURE 3.7. These examples of peck marks show some of the great variety in size and shape of peck marks in the GDC.

3.3.1 Pecking, hammering and battering

I discern three types of blows: pecked, hammered, and battered. 'Pecked' marks are the smallest in area and volume and range in size from approximately 1 mm² (or less) to about 10 mm². 'Hammer' marks are larger (from around 10–30 mm²) and, I assume, made with more force than 'pecked' marks. Evidently, 'hammer' marks were made with a larger 'hammer' (a rock or other object) than the tools used to produce peck marks. 'Battering' is an extreme form of hammering in which blows inflicted on the rock have resulted in battered areas of rock up to about 0,04 m² in which individual blows cannot be distinguished. Pecked and hammered marks, on the other hand, can be distinguished individually and are arranged in a variety of configurations, as I describe below. The size of the individual marks (either 'pecked' or 'hammered') does not correlate with any particular configuration; in other words, there is no correlation between a certain size of mark and a particular type of arrangement.

3.3.2 Scatters of peck marks and/or hammer blows

I developed this category to classify surfaces on which I observed 'scatters' of peck and/or hammer marks that have no clear representational form or structure. Scatters of peck and/or hammer marks are the most common form of rock marking at the GDC. They occur on all the outcrops surveyed and are the most numerous: I recorded some 1 424 instances. There are probably instances of

FIGURE 3.8. 'Hammer marks' are larger than peck marks and range in size from 10 mm² to 30 mm². The marks can be distinguished individually and may be arranged in a variety of configurations. Married Quarters (MQ05 SW06)

FIGURE 3.9. 'Battering' is a form of hammering in which the individual hammer marks cannot be easily distinguished. Gestoptefontein Hill (NW26 NW11)

'scatters' that may represent incomplete depictions of objects or things, while other examples of 'scattered' pecks may be 'gestural'. Such overlap is unavoidable, however, and most of the scatters that I recorded seem to be amorphous and random; probably the configuration and size of the scatters was constrained by the degree of movement afforded the wrist of the person making the marks and the reach of the person's arm. These variables would be determined by the bodily posture adopted, i.e. standing, sitting, squatting or lying.

Scatters of peck and/or hammer marks vary in size from a few pecks to hundreds of blows made on large surfaces or several adjoining surfaces. Large surfaces with several separate scatters of pecks, as well as other markings and motifs, comprise what I call 'activity rocks'. The presence of such aggregations on a single large surface or cluster of surfaces suggests communal activities (see section 10.2).

3.3.3 Associations with other elements of GDC rock art

Scatters occur as single and multiple instances without any other types of motifs or markings on the rock surface, or in combination with other pecked and incised elements (Figure 3.10). I recorded many instances in which scattered peckings were made on top of other elements of GDC rock art. The frequency of this practice at all the GDC sites suggests that the superimposition of pecks over other kinds of rock art, especially over the parallel and overlapping scratched clusters, was a meaningful convention (Figure 3.11 and Figure 3.12). I discuss the possible significances of this practice elsewhere.

3.3.4 Types of scattered pecks and/or hammer marks

Most scatters vary continuously in area and density, from 'loose' to 'dense' configurations (Figure 3.13). Others show a densely pecked 'centre' with a halo of less densely pecked scatters, as if the mark-makers may have been deliberately focusing on a small area of rock (Figure 3.15).

One also encounters surfaces that are covered with discrete scatters of peck and hammer marks of different sizes and shapes, as well as hammered edges, incisions and a few motifs. I shall argue later that these surfaces, which I call 'activity rocks', may be tangible residues of communal performances of ritual acts (see section 10.2).

Pecking and hammering on warty rocks

Some of the rocks on Skeleton Hill and the Boschpoort Road sites have a warty brown appearance. Sometimes this rock is also pitted. People evidently noticed

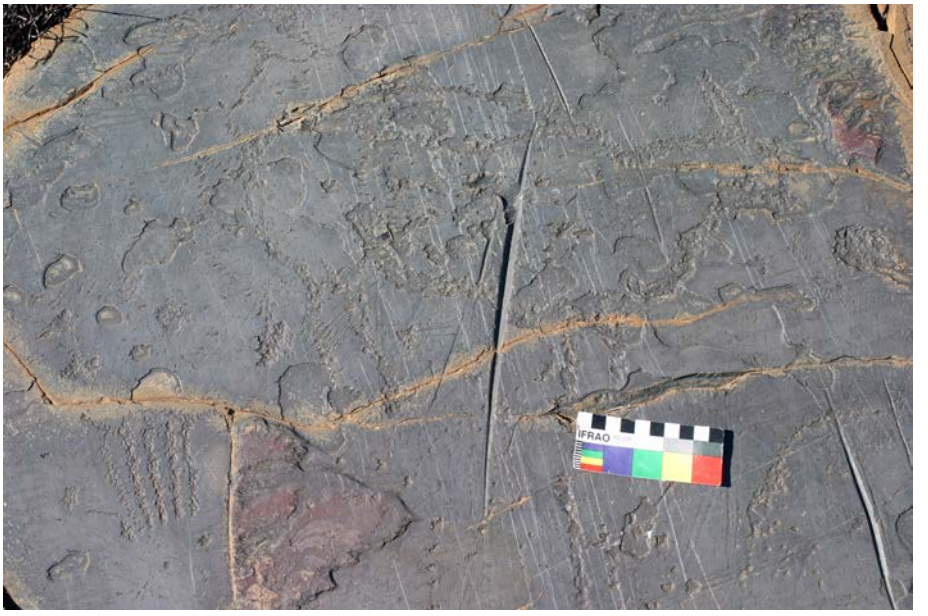


FIGURE 3.10. Scattered pecks occur amongst referential motifs of a tasselled apron (bottom left) and the pecked silhouette of a small, horned, antelope motif (centre, facing right). Grooves, another gestural element, are also juxtaposed with these referential motifs. Gestoptefontein Hill (NW08 NE04).

FIGURE 3.11. On this surface gestural elements – scatters of pecks, clusters of parallel and overlapping incisions, and grooves have been grouped. Driekuil Hill (DH111)

FIGURE 3.12. A scatter of pecks has been made on top of a cluster of lightly scratched parallel and overlapping incisions. This combination is common in the GDC. Married Quarters (MQ03 SW05)

FIGURE 3.13. A 'loose' arrangement of pecks. Driekuil Hill (DH R1)

FIGURE 3.14. A dense scatter of pecks made on top of an incised 'grid'. Boschpoort Road South (BRS2 09)

FIGURE 3.15. In this example of a scatter of peck marks there is a densely pecked 'core' with a surrounding 'halo' of pecks. Boschpoort Road South (BRS2 04)

(a) (b)

FIGURE 3.16. A cluster of rough, naturally pitted rock on Skeleton Hill. The surface has been extensively pecked and scratched. Note the two sizes of peck mark in (b) and the proliferation of scratches. Skeleton Hill (SH07)

this phenomenon because in several instances on these sites they added marks of their own thus creating quite large expanses of extensively pecked and hammered areas.

Hammered edges of rocks

On all of the wonderstone outcrops there are instances of rocks whose edges have been repeatedly struck – presumably with another rock – so that the natural edge has been altered. These hammered edges usually occur in conjunction with other motifs and markings. Although for analytical purposes I have identified the hammering of the edges of rocks as a separate category of mark making I think that this kind of gestural marking had a similar purpose as the gestural scatters of pecks and hammer marks and that they also produced in the same performative context. I therefore regard the hammering of rock edges as a type of gestural marking.

Deeply pecked 'pits'

'Pits' are anthropogenic holes in the rock, larger and deeper than peck marks and hammer blows, 10–50 mm in diameter and 5–35 mm deep (Figure 3.18). People produced these pits by focusing blows on a small area of rock. Pits occur in isolation or in rows, but in other cases, people made them on top of other motifs and markings, especially grooves, but never, apparently, over pecked 'geometric' motifs. Most of the GDC pits are roughly hammered and occur singly and in small groups, often less than ten. Some of them, however, are large and smooth enough to resemble the 'cup-like depressions' (Rudner 1965: 65), now known

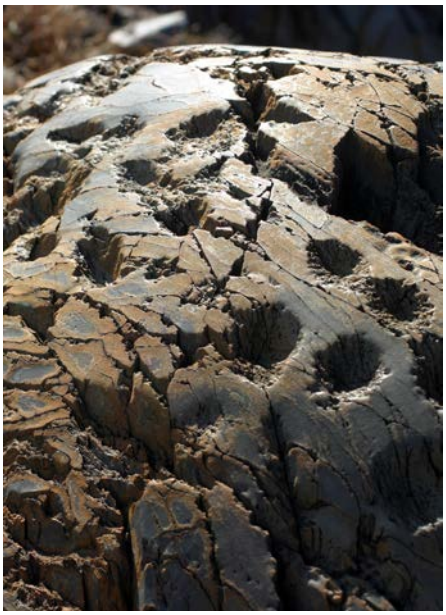
FIGURE 3.17. People appear to have systematically hammered the edges of certain rocks. This activity may have taken place during the performance of songs, stories or other kinds of performance. Driekuil Hill (DH189)

as 'cupules', found at Tsodilo Hills and in Limpopo province (Eastwood and Eastwood 2006: 79).

Rock battering

Certain rocks in the GDC have been subjected to repeated, forceful blows with a large object (probably a chunk of wonderstone), rather than 'hammered' or 'pecked'. I discerned at least 197 instances of rock battering in 157 places on six of the thirteen sites (Married Quarters, Gestoptefontein Hill, Charlie Badenhorst, Driekuil Hill, The Mound and on Driekuil Ridge). A large area on Gestoptefontein Hill towards the foot of the western slope (NW26) comprises almost exclusively extensively battered rocks with no other motifs and markings and may be unique in the GDC. The battering does not seem to be the result of recent mining activities, such as prospecting; typically, small-scale miners looking for rock that can be easily removed will hammer wedges into fault lines in the rock or sink iron pegs into the rock. Such mining work is relatively recent, not more than one hundred years old, and the resultant scars are much lighter than the surrounding rock. The battered rocks on the other hand, have a patina on them: there is no difference in colour between the battered area and

(a) Skeleton Hill (SH01)



(b) Skeleton Hill (SH11)

(c) Driekuil Hill (DH132)

(d) Driekuil Hill (DH12)

FIGURE 3.18. Pits – deep holes in the rock made by people – occur on some of the GDC outcrops.

the adjoining, unbroken surfaces of the same rock. This uniform colour suggests that the battering predates the mining damage by a long time.

There seems also to be a pattern that underlies the placement of these battered areas: 'sets' of battered areas occur on large surfaces (bigger than 0,25 m^2). This pattern in the distribution of battered areas may indicate that several people sat around the rocks together at the same time and battered the rock (Figure 3.19). Other instances of battering include 'furrows', i.e. a narrow 'channel' of rock about 15–20 mm deep that traverses the rock, usually from one side to the other (Figure 3.20). These furrows, of which there are 16 examples, seem to be exclusive to Gestoptefontein Hill.

3.4 Cutting the rocks

I have discerned four categories of gestural marking at the GDC that have resulted from 'cutting' the wonderstone, ranging from light scratchings to smoothly abraded grooves several millimetres deep. Incised markings are ubiquitous at the GDC and occur on the same surfaces as other kinds of markings and motifs. Many surfaces are, however, covered only by various types and arrangements of incisions. The categories of incised gestural markings merge: in some instances I classified sequences of short, vertical incisions as tattoo marks and, therefore as referential depictions of 'objects', but in other instances (the majority) I decided rather that the sequences of vertical incisions did not represent any thing and classified them as gestural.

3.4.1 Clusters of parallel and overlapping incisions (P and O clusters)

I coined the term 'cluster of parallel and overlapping incisions' – abbreviated to 'P and O cluster' – to describe a distinctive and repeated kind of marking that people made on all 13 of the marked outcrops. A single P and O cluster comprises a set of at least five incisions but in a few instances, the number of cuts could be as many as 100 (Figure 3.21). The incisions that make up each cluster are usually not very deep: typically 1 mm or less in breadth and depth and approximately 50 mm wide and 150 mm in length. Close study of a P and O cluster and experimental replication (Figure 3.22) suggest that each cluster is the result of a single marking episode; a person squatted down next to the rock surface and marked the surface, probably with a flake of wonderstone, in a single, co-ordinated set of movements. So soft is the rock that this is the work of only a few seconds. The scratching action produces two things: it leaves behind on the rock a cluster of cut marks that parallel and overlap each other in a distinctive

(a) Overview of battered rock. Gestoptefontein Hill (NW26 NW12)

(b) Detail of battering. Gestoptefontein Hill (NW26 NW12)

FIGURE 3.19. Battering of rocks occurs in discontinuous patches, very often on the edges of rocks. Rock battering occurs on 6 of the 13 GDC sites. Rock battering may have been a technique to collect large amounts of stone to crush into powder that was used for body decoration.

(a) Overview of a rock in which a 'furrow' has been made. Gestoptefontein Hill (NW26 NW13)

(b) Close up of a 'furrow'. Gestoptefontein Hill (NW26 NW13)

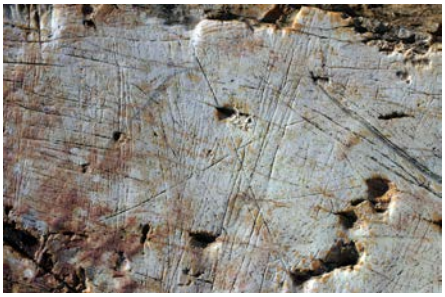
FIGURE 3.20. Instances of battering include 'furrows', a term I use to describe a narrow 'channel' of rock that traverses the rock surface from one edge to the other.

way; it also creates a small amount of fine rock dust. Both of these products may have been significant to the people who made them, as I shall discuss later. P and O clusters are numerous and ubiquitous: they occur on every outcrop except Site 13 – I recorded some 1 020 instances in 621 localities. These figures show that P and O clusters are amongst the most abundant types of marking on the GDC. Examination of published rubbings of engraved surfaces in the Magaliesberg suggests that similar clusters of parallel and overlapping incisions occur there (e.g. Steel 1988: 26) and that they are associated with finely incised depictions of antelope and rhinoceros, as well as grid and mesh motifs. If these markings have the same anthropological context as the GDC, then the practice of this kind of rock marking is not unique to the GDC.

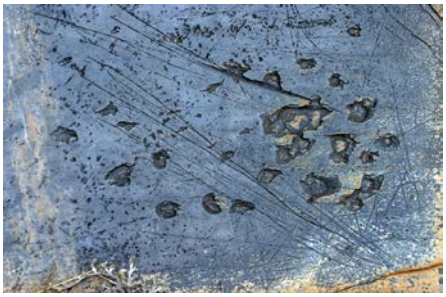
Arrangements of P and O clusters

P and O clusters were also amongst the first of markings that people made on the outcrops because in cases of superimposition the clusters are invariably underneath the other markings and/or motifs. The implications of this proposed primacy, however, is open to interpretation. P and O clusters could be regarded as part of Van Riet Lowe's 'Series I (A)' (1937: 259), i.e. as the 'first' phase in the evolution of an engraving tradition that, from simple incised beginnings, culminates in the topmost layers of rock art that comprise pecked representational motifs, i.e. Van Riet Lowe's (1937: 259) 'Series III', consisting of 'finely pecked and rubbed figures'. This scenario does not necessarily assume any continuity between the phases. In the absence of any chronometric data, however, this is not the only explanation possible, nor does it explain the significance of P and O clusters and how these markings might relate to juxtaposed and superimposed rock art. I choose instead to construe the P and O clusters as prime markings in what might have been an integral *series of activities* carried out on the wonderstone outcrops, some of which involved marking the rock and creating motifs, as well as other intangible activities such as singing, dancing and chatting. The precedence of P and O clusters and their numerical predominance support an interpretation that a larger group of people may have been responsible for making the P and O clusters than, for example, the schematic motifs. It takes no skill to make a P and O cluster; anybody could easily make their mark on the stone. I shall have more to say about this in Part IV.

Arrangements of P and O clusters are repeated within and between sites. The sparsest configuration is a single P and O cluster on a facet of rock, likely the work of one person. As already mentioned they frequently underlie other motifs. In many cases a scatter of peck marks overlies a P and O cluster. Examination of close-up photographs suggests that these pecks are always made on top of the



(a) P and O clusters on a band of white wonderstone. Skeleton Hill (SH08)



(b) These P and O clusters have been pecked over; this practice is a common pattern in the GDC.Gestoptefontein Hill (NW56 NE09)

(c) A P and O cluster placed on a facet of rock. Gestoptefontein Hill (NW79 NW04)

(d) The apron motif has been pecked over several P and O clusters. Gestoptefontein Hill (NW59 SW06)

(e) A sparse pecked outline of a right-facing zoomorph over P and O clusters. Married Quarters (MQ02 NE05)

FIGURE 3.21. Examples of P and O clusters of various sizes and in different contexts.

FIGURE 3.22. Replication of a P and O cluster performed by J.C. Hollmann. It took less than 10 seconds to produce this cluster of scratches and generated a couple of millilitres of finely powdered rock.

P and O cluster, never the reverse. In some case individual pecks were focused so as to fall within the bounds of the P and O cluster. However, the overall form that the peck marks take seems to be unconstrained. Evidently it was important to peck over (at least some) P and O clusters. Perhaps it was the act of pecking over the P and O cluster that was important, not the production of a specific, superimposed form. I shall return to this issue in Part IV.

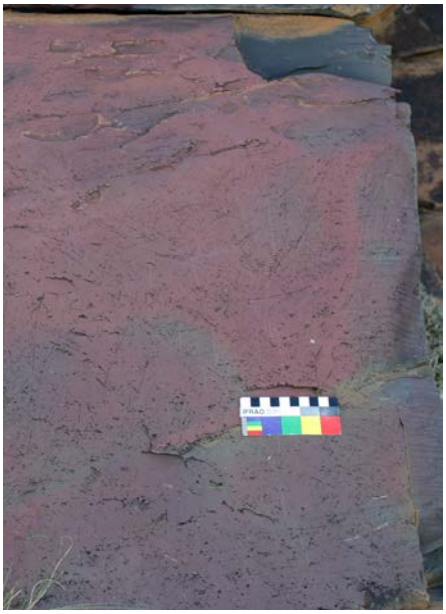
What I call 'scratch rocks' (Figure 3.23) is another easily recognisable arrangement. There are five such rock surfaces in the GDC; they are covered predominantly with many sets of P and O clusters, but also with scattered peckings and incised designs, particularly grids and meshes. Scratch rocks occur on four of the thirteen sites.[1] Scratch rocks are large and flat – characteristics that enable a group of three (in some cases more) people to sit around them simultaneously.

[1]Gestoptefontein Hill, Driekuil Hill, Skeleton Hill, and on Boschpoort Road South (S3).

(a) Boschpoort Road 3 (BRS3 16)

(b) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW10 SW02)

(c) Skeleton Hill (SH01)



(d) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW13 NW)

FIGURE 3.23. 'Scratch rocks' are flat, smoothed surfaces covered with 10 or more sets of P and O clusters in addition to incised grids and meshes, as well as other gestural and referential elements.

3.4.2 'Nascent' grooves

A nascent groove is an instance in which people transformed a P and O cluster into a larger and deeper 'groove' (see subsection 3.4.3) by broadening and deepening one of the component cut marks of a P and O cluster (Figure 3.24). I recorded 129 instances of nascent grooves in 112 localities on eight GDC sites[2] (Figure 3.24–Figure 3.26). Because nascent grooves are a physical link between P and O clusters and grooves it seems likely too that these two phenomena may share meanings and significance (see Part IV for discussion).

3.4.3 Grooves

Grooves are amongst the most striking of the GDC markings and are mentioned in the first published account of the GDC (Hübner 1871: 52). I recorded 192 grooved areas on 11 of the 13 recorded GDC rock art sites. The grooves range from 5 mm in depth and width and 100 mm in length, to 50 mm in depth and width and over 1 000 m m in length. They occur singly and – most prominently on the Gestoptefontein and Driekuil Hills – in large aggregations. The presence of these grooves on the GDC is, I shall argue in Part IV, directly linked to the attributes of wonderstone as a raw material and the religious significance which Khoe-San visitors to the GDC attached to wonderstone.

Ancient grooves ground into rocks (not on wonderstone) are widespread in southern Africa – in Lesotho (personal observation), Zambia (Chaplin 1961), Botswana (Van der Ryst *et al.* 2004), Limpopo (Eastwood & Eastwood 2006), Free State (Singer 1961; Hollmann & Swart 1991), Eastern Cape (e.g. the Krompoort rock art site in Albert District) and Western Cape (Singer 1961; Sadr & Fauvelle-Aymar 2006). However, I do not assume that all instances of grooves on the subcontinent are conceptually similar and confine myself to a discussion of the grooves in the GDC.

GDC grooves are often in clusters, arranged in roughly parallel 'rows' in some places, and in apparently random configurations in others. Some grooves cross over each other in an 'X' shape. Grooves often share surfaces with other incised marking such as meshes, grids, and aprons (see discussion of referential motifs in chapter 5–chapter 8), P and O clusters and nascent grooves (terms discussed above). The co-occurrence of P and O clusters, nascent grooves, and grooves suggests that even the biggest GDC grooves originated in the simple scratching of the substrate with a piece of wonderstone. If this technique does indeed account for the genesis of the grooves it suggests that grooves and P and O clusters could be conceptually related and that the largest grooves may

[2]Married Quarters, Site 13, Gestoptefontein Hill, Driekuil Hill, The Mound, Skeleton Hill and Driekuil Ridge (northern and middle hills)

(a) Driekuil Ridge North (DRN)

(b) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW57 NE43)

(c) The Mound (MND12)

(d) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW56 NW39)

FIGURE 3.24. 'Nascent' grooves develop from a few light scratches (a 'P and O cluster'). If the scratching is continued the 'nascent' groove becomes a fully-fledged 'groove'.

(a) 'Groove Rock' on Gestoptefontein Hill is perhaps the most spectacular accumulation of grooves in the GDC (NW57 SE01 & 02)

(b) Grooves at the bottom end of Slide Rock on Gestoptefontein Hill have been carefully pecked over. They resemble tattoo marks made on people's bodies.

FIGURE 3.25. Concentrations of grooves on Gestoptefontein Hill.

(a) One of three adjacent rocks covered with P and O clusters, 'nascent grooves' and grooves. The surface has subsequently been heavily pecked and hammered (DH12).

(b) The 'plinth-like' form of this rock enabled people to make grooves from either side. The surface has also been heavily pecked and hammered (DH51).

FIGURE 3.26. Two densely grooved areas on Driekuil Hill.

have been the product of many people participating in the process, perhaps, but not necessarily, over an extended period. In many cases, subsequent to groove manufacture, people made scatters of pecks and hammer marks on these surfaces, as well as pits. Their labours have produced smoothed and densely marked areas on which grooves are juxtaposed with a wealth of motifs and markings.

Gestoptefontein Hill boasts the largest extant grooved areas, the most spectacular of which is on the northwestern aspect of Gestoptefontein Hill on an inclined grey surface of about 10 m² (Figure 3.25). There are about 240 grooves here, the longest of which is 0,78 m, although there are two longitudinally fused grooves that total 1,18 m in length. The grooves are mostly on the eastern and northern edges of the large slab. This positioning suggests that perhaps people sat or stood around the sides of the slab and worked the grooves from the edge of the slab towards the centre. The grooved surface is replete with other motifs and markings (see chapter 4–chapter 8). The areas between the grooves bear scatters of pecks and pits whose interiors have been rubbed smooth. There is a meandering 'line', pecked over the grooves, that runs in an east–west direction for about 1,8 m. On the same surface is a spread skin motif. On the same surface, to the south and west, are tens, perhaps hundreds, of motifs and hundreds of scattered pecks, making this slab one of the most densely marked areas in the GDC.

A smaller assemblage of grooves of just over 1 m² was created on the southwest side of Gestoptefontein Hill on Slide Rock (Figure 3.25). Here several of the grooves have been overlaid with a series of ca 15 mm densely and finely pecked areas regularly spaced along their length. I have suggested that these may resemble the tattoo marks made on people's bodies (see section 5.5).

Two sets of rocks on Driekuil Hill feature concentrations of grooves. Surface DH12 comprises three areas on adjacent rocks of which the middle (at least 30 grooves) and southernmost areas (45 grooves counted) are the most densely marked (Figure 3.26). One notices similar features as at Gestoptefontein Hill: smoothed rock, P and O clusters, and nascent grooves. There are some differences too, however: the absence of any representational motifs, and two instances in which comparatively small and isolated areas between certain grooves have been covered with peck marks. Here too are pits, but the interiors have not been rubbed. The grooves are shorter, narrower and shallower than the examples on the big grey slab on Gestoptefontein Hill, possibly because the dimensions of the DH12 surfaces are much smaller and also because they can only be easily accessed from one direction.

Surface DH51a, a rock about 1 m high, 1,6 m long and 0,45 m wide, has at least 50 grooves and can be approached from two sides (Figure 3.26). These

grooves have been heavily hammered and battered, but otherwise the immediate surrounding areas are smooth. There are a couple of pits that have been rubbed smooth. There is an apron motif on the same surface.

Hübner (1871: 52) speculated that what he called 'straight, deep incisions do not have any connection to the pictures' (i.e. the referential component), but that the incisions 'seem to be made by the same craftsmen and therefore show that they also made use of knife-like instruments'. He does not explain why he thinks that these deep incisions were made by the same people who made the other referential motifs, but I do agree with this conclusion; later I will argue that the grooves could have been made without the aid of a knife, which would soon become blunt (see chapter 10).

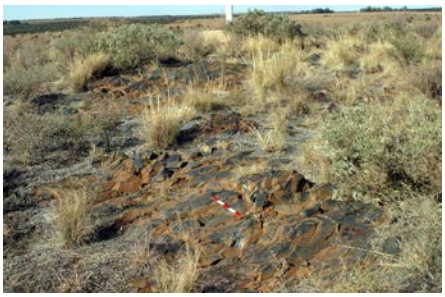
There is a popular local belief that the grooved rocks on Driekuil and Gestoptefontein Hill are 'sharpening stones'. The explanation offered is that Mzilikazi's warriors, who were in the vicinity in the 1820s, left these marks after using the rocks to sharpen their spears. There are, however, problems with this account. As mentioned, grooved stones are not unique to the GDC: they occur far beyond the historical distribution of the Matabele, often at rock art sites (e.g. Eastwood & Eastwood 2006; Van der Ryst *et al.* 2004). Nor does the spear-sharpening hypothesis account for the pits and peck marks associated with grooves, or the nascent grooves. It also seems unlikely that the grooves are residues of metal spear *sharpening*. The process of abrading the rock to form grooves will soon blunt an iron spear point or blade – to sharpen an iron blade one abrades the sides on a flat stone surface. The proposal that the grooves at Driekuil Hill are residues of Matabele spear sharpening therefore seems unlikely.

3.4.4 Free incisions

I created this category to cater for cases of incisions in which I could not discern any regular pattern. Free incisions do not seem to obey any set of rules; they are apparently arbitrary arrangements of incisions (Figure 3.28). This is a widespread category of which there are examples on at least 9 of the 13 outcrops known to bear rock art (Vorster's Farm, Married Quarters, Gestoptefontein Hill, Charlie Badenhorst, The Mound, Skeleton Hill, Driekuil Ridge (Middle and South), Wits University collection). As is also the case for the other categories of gestural-type incisions, free incisions often occur underneath other types of markings and images, but they also occur on their own.

3.4.5 'Activity rocks'

These are discrete surfaces on which people made gestural type markings and on which there are very few or no schematic and design motifs (Figure 3.27). The

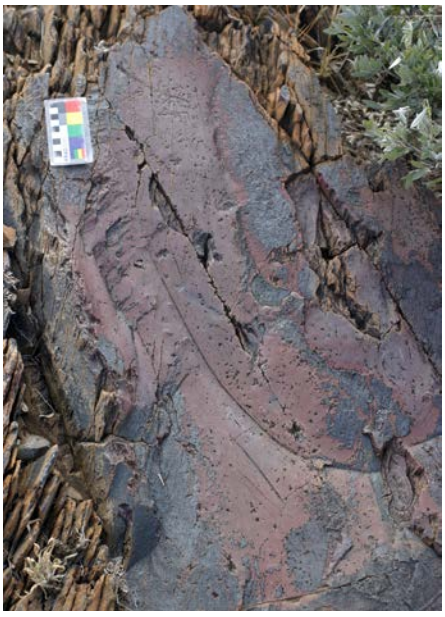


(a) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW02 NE05)

(b) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW22 NE04)

(c) Charlie Badenhorst (CB07)

(d) Charlie Badenhorst (CB12)



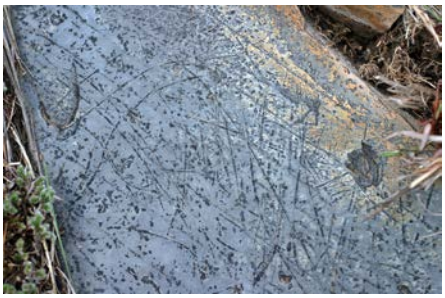
(e) Boschpoort Road South (BRS3 09)

(f) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW17 SW02 to 04)

FIGURE 3.27. 'Activity rocks' in the GDC. I coined this term to describe large flat surfaces around which people sat and made gestural markings and referential motifs. These surfaces are also extensively smoothed probably because people sat on the rocks.

(a) Boschpoort Road North (BRN1 05)

(b) Married Quarters (MMQ10 NW01)



(c) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW45 NE08)

(d) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW31 SE01)

FIGURE 3.28. Free incisions are apparently arbitrary arrangements of incisions.

peckings, scratchings and grooves on these surfaces are residues of activities that people performed on the outcrops. I imagine that people gathered around these areas of 'pavement' outcrops and sat and danced and hammered and scratched the rocks. In a later chapter I explore scenarios in which I consider how people performed rituals on the hillsides (see section 10.2).

Chapter 4

Anthropomorphs and zoomorphs

People tend to think of Khoe-San rock art as comprising mostly depictions of humans and other animals. I have heard casual visitors to the GDC evaluate the 'beauty' and 'interest' of a particular GDC outcrop in terms of the number of realistic-looking depictions of animal species. If there are many naturalistic animal motifs then it is a 'good' site; sites with predominantly gestural markings and few, if any, animal motifs, are seen as the work of bored and lazy people (see section 3.1). It is therefore perhaps ironic that depictions of 'human' and 'animal' motifs in rock art have the greatest potential for misunderstanding – because people can identify the subject of the depiction as a specific animal species, they assume that they know what the images mean. This 'recognition' is superficial and misleading, however, and not to be trusted.

Accepting Gibson's understanding of a 'picture' as a record of awareness (Gibson 1979: 274), it follows that to understand the picture one needs to know more about the nature of the awareness – what the people who created them had in mind (Lewis-Williams 1983: 51). Consider the example of images of sheep, oxen, and birds that feature in Christian art; to understand their significance one must know the stories of the Old and New Testaments. As Guenther (1988: 194) says: 'Bushman art is no more "wildlife art" than are the scenes in nativity paintings'. I therefore use the 'anthropomorph' and 'zoomorph' because although they may be rather clumsy and tedious terms they make fewer assumptions about the ontological status of images.

Much of the research on southern African rock art over the past 40 years has been devoted to the exploration of the meanings and associations of animal imagery in rock art (e.g. Lewis-Williams 1974, 1981, 1985, 1998; Pager

1975; Vinnicombe 1975, 1976; Ouzman 1995, 1996a, b; Solomon 1997; Eastwood 2006; Eastwood & Cnoops 1999; Eastwood *et al.* 1999; Hollmann 2002, 2003, 2005a, b; Mguni 2004; Mallen 2005). These and other researchers have drawn on ethnographic studies of Khoe-San groups that reveal the significances of anthropomorphs and zoomorphs in their cosmologies.

4.1 Khoe-San beliefs and feelings about animals

For Westerners perhaps the most striking feature about Khoe-San beliefs and attitudes about humans and non-human animals is that 'no clear conceptual boundaries separate the two life forms' (Guenther 1988: 196). This may be contrasted with much of Western thought which typically 'drives an absolute division between the contrary conditions of humanity and animality' (Ingold 2000: 48). Guenther (1988: 197) writes that 'Bushman ritual, like mythology, is informed with the themes of animal simulation and transformation, notably in the trance dance and the passage ritual, the two ritual patterns of Bushman society.' Biesele has described the metaphoric power of animals for the Ju|'hoansi:

> *There are several realms of life in which the Ju|'hoansi believe humans cannot act all by themselves. Things like curing the sick by calling on supernatural sources of power, travelling to another world to plead for those dying, bringing game into range, changing the weather, fending off attacks by lions – all seem to the Ju|'hoansi to demand a source of power which is beyond ordinary human grasp. Accordingly, they seek ways of transcending human limitations, mediators between men and the forces of the atmosphere, metaphors with the strength to bridge worlds. Animals, because they are visible, visibly powerful, and near to hand, are a good choice for these purposes.*
>
> (Biesele 1993: 89)

Biesele (1993: 89) contends that in these contexts animals are 'metaphors with the strength to bridge worlds'. These are not insipid metaphors in which, as Ingold (2000: 50) puts it, 'a figurative parallel' is drawn 'across two fundamentally separate domains', but rather metaphors that point 'to the real unity that underwrites their differentiation.' Writing specifically about Bushman rock art, Lewis-Williams (1983: 52–53, original emphasis) has argued that 'metaphor is more than subtle meaning and the creation of meaning; it actually *does* things. Men resort to animal metaphors to change themselves.'

The transformative power of animals is linked to the presence of a vital force that is inherent in people and certain other animals and other substances (e.g. Marshall 1999: xxxiii). The Ju|'hoan term is *n|om* (Biesele 1993: 74). In

the |xam language the terms *!gi*, *|ko:ode,* and *||ken* denote a similar vital force (Lewis-Williams 1981: 77). It is no coincidence that most of the zoomorphic depictions in rock art are of species believed to possess this vital force; most of these species are large herbivores, and foremost amongst them is the eland (e.g. Lewis-Williams 1981; Eastwood & Eastwood 2006). The non-human animals in the GDC rock art may not depict what the Western viewer thinks they do; for example, the English term 'eland' is an inadequate translation of the !Kung conception of 'eland' (e.g. Lewis-Williams's (1981) treatment of the subject of eland). Thus, whilst a Westerner may admire a depiction of a zoomorph for its resemblance to the species on which it is modelled, this verisimilitude does not preclude the possibility that the image may also depict a person. There is a distinction between external appearance and internal nature. This seems to be the case in a number of hunter-gatherer societies; Ingold argues that in northern circumpolar societies living beings have

> *an interior, vital part that is the source of all awareness, memory, intention and feeling, and an exterior, bodily covering that provides the equipment and confers the powers that are necessary to conduct a particular form of life.*
>
> (Ingold 2000: 123)

Ingold (2000: 123) suggests that the external appearance of living beings is an 'inherently unstable ... bodily covering'. Circumpolar shamans are able to see the 'true face ... concealed behind the bodily covering' (Ingold 2000: 123). I suggest that a similar situation pertains amongst Khoe-San people. San shamans are believed to turn into lions (e.g. Lewis-Williams 1981; Keeney 1999: 61, 71, 73, 81, 93, 99–101, 107, 108, 115; Hollmann 2004: 202, 204, 206, 210) and people find it very difficult to know whether a particular lion is a transformed shaman or a 'real' lion (e.g. Keeney 1999: 93). Lions can turn into people and other kinds of animals, such as antelope (Hollmann 2004: 59, 60, 62). There are many other examples of so-called 'magic' animals, such as the story about the ostrich that turned out to be a 'Magic Bird' that punished Mantis, a trickster deity, for stealing all of her eggs (Bleek 1924: 28–30). As Ingold (2000: 113) remarks: 'no form is ever permanent.'

Khoe-San beliefs about how animals got their external forms and their behaviour have their origins in a 'primal time' that antedated current species distinctions. Entities, including the stars, sun, and moon, looked like and behaved like 'people' (see Hollmann 2004: 332–333, 2007c for details and additional references). Eventually, however, the divisions and differences manifest today became established and entrenched. Biesele (1993: 116, 119–121) has recorded a Ju|'hoan version of how certain animal species received their distinctive

body shapes and external markings. It describes how the 'old people' decided to create *n|om* and use it to 'brand' the 'meat animals':

> *[T]hey said, 'Today we'll n‡om ka n|om* [create n|om]*, and we'll use it to give a different design to each animal. From today people will no longer be people but will have markings and be animals.' So they created n|om. They gave names to all the animals; they told each animal his name. 'Today we're going to brand you all so that you will be animals from this day.'*
>
> (Biesele 1993: 116, my square brackets)

The Old Old People (Marshall 1999: xxxvi) drew distinctive markings on a variety of animals: stripes on the zebra, and the characteristic markings of giraffe, kudu, wildebeest, gemsbok, tsessebe, duiker and steenbok, amongst others. When they had finished, the people said:

> *'These pretty ones are the ones who will turn into meat animals. They will be good meat animals.' And since then the meat animals have spread out into the land. People go about naming them. When people get together and talk, they say, 'Yes, these are the meat animals, and we kill them and eat them.'*
>
> (Biesele 1993: 121)

People like to recite the names of these *n|om* animals and they do so in a unique fashion:

> *[W]hen Ju|'hoansi enumerate the animals, especially the large meat animals, whether in folktales or in ordinary conversation or in answer to questions, they do so in a highly stylised, almost rhapsodic fashion. They count graphically and visually, putting successive fingers up to their lips as each animal's name is called. There is a certain way of stressing the syllables that appears in no other context. . . . The list becomes a singsong. Almost, the eyes glaze over. . . . People love to do it, and they count off the animals at every opportunity. The effect it conveys is of a dream landscape dotted with an impossible plenty of 'kudus, . . . buffaloes, . . . eland, . . . giraffes. . . .'*
>
> (Biesele 1993: 60–61)

This practice of naming and counting the animals (not just *n|om* animals) was recorded by Bleek amongst the 19th-century |xam (James 2001: 57–59, 175–178). Commenting on the recital of such animal litanies James (2001: 177) cites Rothenberg's comments on

> *the power of repetition and naming (monotony too) to establish the presence of a situation in its entirety. This involves the acceptance (by poet and hearers) of an indefinite extension of narrative time,*

> *and the belief that language . . . can make-things-present by naming them.*
>
> (Rothenberg 1985: 441)

The profusion of powerful animals created by such 'word pictures' recalls the scatters of zoomorphic motifs at Khoe-San rock engraving sites; I explore this aspect of the significance of GDC zoomorphic motifs later in the study (see Part IV).

Earlier in this section I mentioned Biesele's observations about Ju|'hoan attitudes towards animals, especially their metaphoric 'bridging' power. Biesele has observed that certain animals act as 'operators' to bring about 'desirable outcomes' (1993: 195). One such instance that I think has great import for understanding certain GDC zoomorphic motifs concerns animals, women, eating and sex. Biesele points out that Ju|'hoan people equate women and meat (1993: 196): men hunt animals for their meat, just as they hunt and 'eat' – have sex with – women. This is not just a Ju|'hoan conception: the 19th-century |xam narratives allude to a similar correspondence and the problems it created for 'people' in the primal time when they took the metaphor too far and carnivores married herbivores with disastrous results (see the story, 'The young dog', in Hollmann 2004: 359–365). The equation of women and herbivores means that men avoid contact with women and women's things when in pursuit of an animal. Subsequent to successful hunting, however, when the men have secured the meat, it is entirely appropriate for a man to resume close relations with his wife. This happens within the terms of the 'women and meat' metaphor as Biesele has shown:

> *Coming home after a successful hunt . . . a hunter would greet his wife with special fervour. He would 'praise the meat' . . . lying next to his wife with his face between her breasts. He would see her buttocks and her legs and would be happy 'because the meat had fat and was fat'. . . . When he comes home . . . he can immerse himself joyfully in the things which tie animals and women together. It is hard to tell, even in this piece of everyday discourse, which meat – animal or woman – is being discussed. The metaphors tying women to the enchanted, hunted prey are so intricate as utterly to defy untangling.*
>
> (Biesele 1993: 196–197)

Thus in certain contexts women *are* herbivorous animals. Biesele also points out another situation in which the closeness of women and and herbivores (in this case specifically eland cows) is highlighted: this is the 'Eland dance' that women perform during puberty rites. I discuss aspects of this important ceremony later (see subsection 9.1.5). The most important implication for the study of the GDC motifs is that zoomorphic and anthropomorphic motifs must be understood in

terms of Khoe-San 'poetics of dwelling' (*cf.* Ingold 2000: 25–26, 102, 110), in which transformations in outward forms of organisms are considered part of everyday life.

4.2 Anthropomorphic motifs in southern African rock art

Research into anthropomorphic motifs in southern African rock art has focused largely on depictions in the rock paintings of the Drakensberg and Maloti of Lesotho, KwaZulu-Natal, and the Eastern Cape province and, to a lesser extent, those in Limpopo province, the mountains of the Western Cape, Zimbabwe and Namibia. Depictions of anthropomorphs in postures reminiscent of contemporary San healers have been convincingly identified as 'shamans' (e.g. Lewis-Williams 1980). Anthropomorphic images that combine human and other animal characteristics – the so-called 'therianthropes' – are interpreted as 'transformed shamans' (Lewis-Williams, e.g. 1998: 87), 'mythological' beings (Solomon 1997) or as depictions that refer to 'a shifting spectrum of spirit-beings, comprised of temporarily transformed living shamans, dead shamans and Primal Time beings' (Hollmann 2003: 145).

Considerably less research has been conducted into engraved anthropomorphic motifs. The little that has been carried out, however, suggests similar interpretations to those advanced for the rock paintings. The problem is that research into anthropomorphic engravings has tended to focus on sites and motifs that can readily be identified as shamanistic (e.g. Dowson 1992); anthropomorphic motifs that are not in characteristic 'trance' postures tend to be ignored because researchers do not know what to say about them. The problem is not unique to rock engravings: paintings of anthropomorphs without contextual information also resist detailed interpretation. In the absence of any overt details on the anthropomorphic motif and without any adjacent diagnostic associations (i.e. other motifs nearby that are clearly 'shamanistic') one cannot make an argument based on iconographic details. The researcher must then either eschew interpretation altogether or else argue for an interpretation based on an hypothesis about the overall significance of a site based upon a global appreciation of the motifs.

4.3 Anthropomorphs in the GDC

In the GDC, motifs of anthropo- and zoomorphic motifs occupy the same level in the 'stratigraphy' of the GDC sites as clothing and other referential motifs.

FIGURE 4.1. Engravings of male (top) and two female (bottom) anthropomorphs, possibly in dance postures. Note the steatopygia, fat stomach, and large breasts of the middle figure. The pecked 'lines' associated with the head could depict plaited hair or hair ornaments attached to the head. The original caption (translated) is: 'Three human figures. One male and two female; the remarkable realism is noteworthy.' Piece 57461, Museum of Ethnography, Vienna (Želizko 1925: plate 17.1)

Indeed, these categories are combined on the rock surfaces as if they belonged together. I re-emphasise that I separate these out only in order to draw attention to features of motifs and to detect patterns (conventions) in the ways that motifs are arranged.

Anthropomorphic motifs in the GDC are not numerous and are far outnumbered by zoomorphic motifs. Holub collected many of the most naturalistic-looking pieces (Želizko 1925: plate 17). He commented on the relatively low number of engraved anthropomorphic motifs at the sites which he visited (not just the GDC sites):

> *People seldom feature in these carvings. Males appear rarely and are usually depicted less accurately than the Bushman women. The figures are always naked; the men just about always with bow and arrow, weapons which we seldom find depicted as individual objects.*
>
> (Holub in Želizko 1925: 15, transl. N. Mössmer)

Apart from his observation about the relative scarcity of anthropomorphic motifs, the other comments do not necessarily apply to the GDC anthropomorphs. There are more male than female anthropomorphic motifs in the GDC (based on the depiction of a penis) and only a few of these are associated with 'weapons'. Others hold sticks, which may not be 'weapons' but dancing sticks. There is some merit in Holub's observation about the 'accuracy' with which female anthropomorphs are depicted (Figure 4.1). Želizko (1925: 9) commented that 'the typical steatopygia of the hips, hanging stomach and breasts of the Bushman women are excellently illustrated.'

Several anthropomorphs are depicted in dance postures, a widespread and characteristic form of presentation of anthropomorphic motifs in Khoe-San rock art (Figure 4.2). It is apposite to quote Vinnicombe's comments about the context and significance of rock art motifs that depict dancing:

> *Dancing to the Bushman, therefore, was not only a source of pleasure and a channel for the release of tensions and pressures; dancing could influence the forces of good and evil, thus humans, animals and natural phenomena were inextricably involved. Through the medium of dances, the Bushman passed his deepest secrets and beliefs concerning the universe from one member of the band to another, and from one generation to the next.*
>
> (Vinnicombe 1976: 319)

4.3.1 The Náprstek Museum stone

A possible clue to the significance of at least two anthropomorphic motifs is provided in the accession notes of a piece removed from the GDC – probably from Gestoptefontein Hill – and kept in the Náprstek Museum in Prague.

The accession details for this stone (Želizko 1925: plate 16.5) are given in Kandert as follows:

> *Made by Hottentot people. It represents the Bushmen* [sic] *man and wife. The rock engraving in the piece of a slate. Man is looking/spitting at the woman's womb.*
>
> (Kandert 1998: 17, my brackets)

Was Holub the source of these remarkable comments? It is very tempting to assume that he was recording a native interpretation; indeed, it is hard to

(a) Museum of Ethnology, Vienna (57 464; Želizko 1925: plate 17.5)

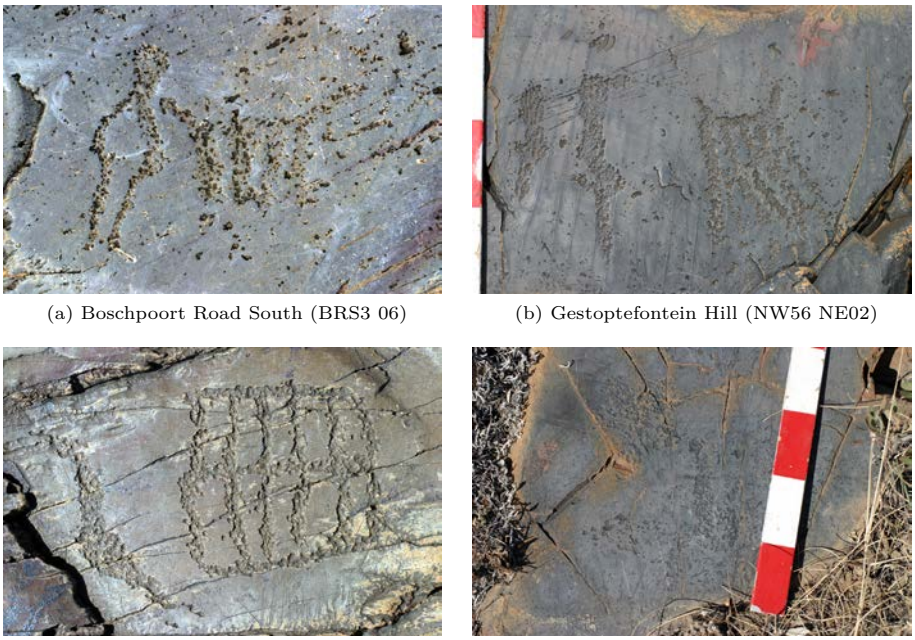
(b) Driekuil Hill (DH154)

(c) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW45 NW02)

FIGURE 4.2. Dancing anthropomorphs from the GDC. (a) Piece 57464 in the Museum of Ethnography is catalogued as a 'mythical figure' or alternatively, a 'San shaman in trance' (; `http://bilddatenbank.khm.at/viewArtefact?id=566551`); (b) anthropomorph with arms outspread, probably a dance posture; (c) anthropomorph that may be clapping.

FIGURE 4.3. A piece in the Náprstek Museum, Prague, is described in the accession details as depicting a 'Bushmen [sic] man and wife.' The man is reportedly 'looking/spitting at the women's womb' (Kandert 1998: 17). Note that there are six pecked dots in a rough straight line from the male figure at left to the female figure at right. Náprstek Museum stone NpM47114, Prague, Czech Republic.

imagine how else Holub could have arrived at this explanation – unless he was just speculating. But Holub was interested in the people he encountered on his collecting expeditions; elsewhere he wrote about gaining the confidence of some Koranna men about initiation practices (Holub 1881: 7). If this comment about the stone was made by an informed person, as I think it was, it is a crucial piece of information. The reference to a man looking/spitting at a woman's womb may indicate that the significance of at least some of the motifs concerns issues about fertility and the male and female roles associated with religious practices. The interpretation also supports my hypothesis that other motifs (such as the aprons) and markings relate to similar themes of fertility that are well-known amongst Khoe-San groupings (see Part IV). The subtlety of the details depicted in the Náprstek stone is a reminder of how carefully a researcher needs to consider the data; first in establishing the genders of the two figures and then to notice the six pecked dots in a roughly straight line between the male figure's head, at left, and the pelvic region of the female figure, at right. Without the necessary ethnographic background, however, it would be virtually impossible to reconstrue the meaning of the composition.



(a) Boschpoort Road South (BRS3 06)

(b) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW56 NE02)

(c) Skeleton Hill (SH10)

(d) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW39 NW01)

FIGURE 4.4. Anthropomorphs juxtaposed with apron motifs.

4.3.2 Associations with apron motifs

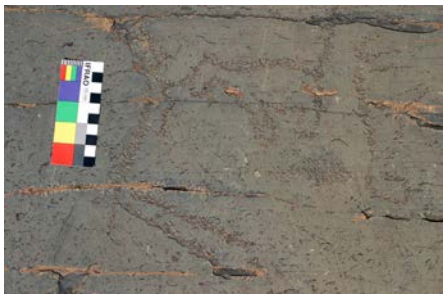
There are several instances in which anthropomorphs are juxtaposed with apron motifs (Figure 4.4). There can be little doubt that the association is intentional: the motifs are grouped together and this arrangement is repeated within and between the GDC sites. I explore the significance of these associations in Part IV.

4.3.3 Interactions with zoomorphs

I recorded two instances in which anthropomorphs and zoomorphs are juxtaposed in an arrangement of motifs that suggests interaction. These two 'sets' of motifs are within a few metres of each other. One composition (Figure 4.5) shows a zoomorph that does not look like a particular species and immediately adjacent to it, an anthropomorphic figure seemingly without a head or arms. The figures point in opposite directions and one of the anthropomorph's legs touches one of the zoomorph's legs.

Close by is a composition comprising an anthropomorph bent forward in what may be the bending-forward posture that has been linked to the moment when the vital force in the body is activated during trance dances (Figure 4.5;

(a) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW10 NE)



(b) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW10 NE)

FIGURE 4.5. There are two instances on Gestoptefontein Hill in which a zoomorph and anthropomorph appear to be interacting. (a) A zoomorph with extended tail is juxtaposed with a headless and armless anthropomorph. (b) An anthropomorph, possibly with tail, bends toward a zoomorph with a long, raised tail; to the right is another zoomorphic depiction.

Lewis-Williams 1981: 88). The figure seems to have no arms but it does have a tail, a detail that suggests that it is transformed. It faces a zoomorph with short ears, slightly arched back and a long, raised tail – possibly a felid. To its right is another zoomorph, arranged at right angles and with a short, drooping tail; the form is reminiscent of a herbivore.

Both instances may possibly be understood with the notions of transformation of external body form and what Biesele (1993: 89, 195; see discussion under section 4.1) has called the 'bridging power' of non-human animals.

4.3.4 A distinctive type of anthropomorph

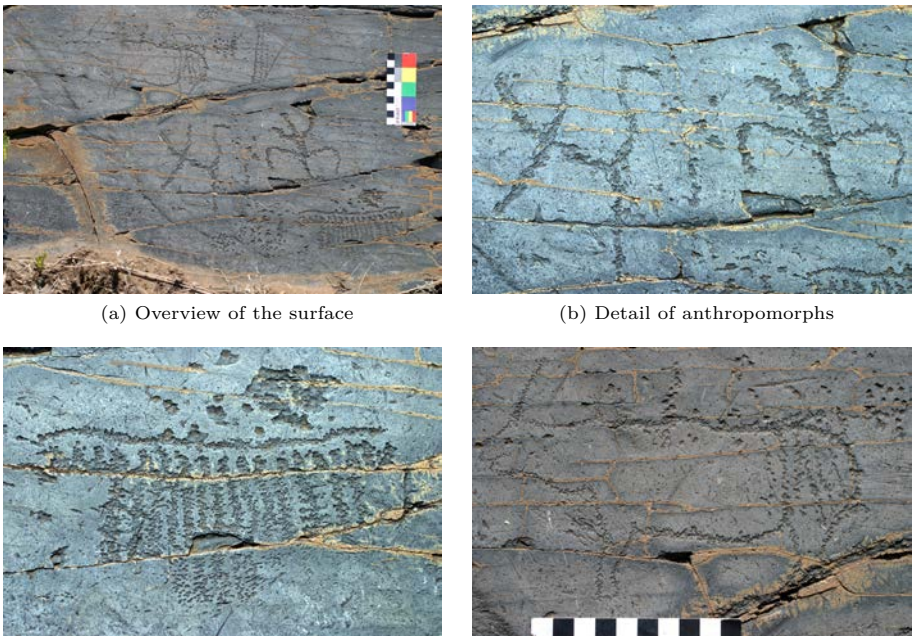
There is a distinctive 'subdivision' of anthropomorphic depictions found only on Gestoptefontein Hill and possibly on Skeleton Hill. These motifs are products of a different style; unlike the realistic-looking figures commonly made in the GDC, these images are two-dimensional creations. They are frequently depicted on surfaces with aprons, headbands, and design motifs.

The examples from Run Rock (SW20 NW03) are what appears to be a pair of anthropomorphs depicted in dynamic postures (Figure 4.6). The left-hand figure is portrayed in an exaggerated running posture. Notice the long neck and the absence of a distinctive head. The right-hand figure has its arms raised and the knees are flexed in a deep squat. Immediately below the junction of the legs but apparently separate from the body is a pecked form that resembles an inverted 'T'.

These two figures are on the same surface as a depiction of a large antelope-like creature, probably an eland. Below the anthropomorphic pair is pecked a motif that depicts either a broad tasselled apron or a headband. The two-dimensional anthropomorphs are juxtaposed with zoomorphic imagery and clothing motifs.

Another example of a two-dimensional anthropomorphic motif occurs on a surface nearby (Figure 4.7, SH10 0502). It is a little more difficult to construe. The overall impression is reminiscent of a figure presented in a full frontal view, rather like some Khoe-San painted motifs of male and female anthropomorphs (see examples in Solomon 1994).

Some anatomical details have been omitted, others are distorted. The legs are widespread and seem bent at an impossible angle. There are no arms or shoulders and the motif actually comprises two separate parts, lower and upper. The top half consists of a vertical pecked 'line' that may represent the upper torso, but with no arms or shoulders. Then contiguous with this vertical 'line' is a roughly symmetrical pair of more or less equal 'comma-shaped' forms. These I interpret as a headdress or even hair. Associated with this figure, on the same



(a) Overview of the surface

(b) Detail of anthropomorphs

(c) Headband/ Tasselled apron motif

(d) Large antelope

FIGURE 4.6. On the surface of Run Rock on Gestoptefontein Hill (SW20 NE03) are juxtaposed two anthropomorphs of a type that may be unique to the GDC , a headband or apron motif and a large antelope..

surface, are two apron motifs: at top left is a decorated skin, probably a back apron. Below the spread-legged anthropomorph is a four-tasselled apron motif. This surface is thus another instance in which these reduced, two-dimensional anthropomorphic motifs are juxtaposed with clothing motifs.

There are a number of motifs in a similar style. On Skeleton Hill there is a squatting anthropomorph, apparently male, with arms raised. It is immediately adjacent to a tasselled apron motif (Figure 4.8).

Another example is part of an arrangement that includes a coil-shaped design motif, two possible apron depictions, and a spread-skin motif. Part of the surface was intensively scratched before motifs were pecked over them. The figure is remarkable: apparently depicted in profile, it has a single leg, large buttock and thin torso that seems to arch backwards (Figure 4.35). Its short arms are held out at either side. It looks ambivalent – both human and ostrich. I discuss the possible significance of this figure and the surface in Part IV.

Two more examples share the surface with circular motifs that resemble beadwork apron designs. They too have their arms widespread and may be

(a) Overview of surface

(b) Detail view of anthropomorph

(c) Tasselled apron motif

FIGURE 4.7. A full-frontal, two-dimensional anthropomorphic depiction on Gestoptefontein Hill (SW12 NW01) with legs raised and a headdress or hair arrangement. It is associated with at least two apron motifs.

dancing. Again, this kind of anthropomorph is closely associated with female clothing.

The examples I have pointed out thus far are clearly anthropomorphic. There are other figures, however, that are not as unequivocally anthropomorphic, but which nevertheless appear to have anthropomorphic properties such as legs and a torso. For example, a possible anthropomorphic figure is associated with a motif of a back apron skin, four 'columns' and a swatch of scratched, nested diamond/triangle design (Figure 4.10).

Another image is similarly schematised, with no indication of a distinct head, or even arms. Yet one may discern a pair of legs and a torso and the motif is closely juxtaposed with a back apron motif (Figure 4.11).

Other examples suggest that some artists pushed the limits of this kind of schematisation or abstraction even further. A stone in the collection of Witwatersrand University (RE2005181) may show an anthropomorphic motif with legs, torso, and, possibly, hands raised above the head and holding both ends of an object (Figure 4.12). The composition conveys the impression of a circular motif. Note that, as with the figure on SW02 SE02, this motif is associated with a scratched design motif of nested diamond-shapes. It is also juxtaposed with what may be an avimorphic figure.

The possibility that the Wits motif is anthropomorphic suggests that another similar-looking motif, still on Gestoptefontein Hill, may depict an even more abstracted anthropomorph (Figure 4.13). Unlike the previous examples, in this case the 'figure' is not bilaterally symmetrical. Yet, I do discern an anthropomorphic element in this motif. The almost circular shape at left approximates most closely to a head shape. In the approximate centre is a possible rayed motif. In the gap between the circular enclosing lines is an arrangement of dots that forms a circular shape. Two pecked 'lines' are associated with the roundish lines. One, at left, is short; the other leads to the right and it branches into four lines, two of which are staggered. The two lines furthest right branch into a pair. The overall impression is of an anthropomorphic trunk, but it is difficult to identify which of the lines might depict the 'arms' and legs.

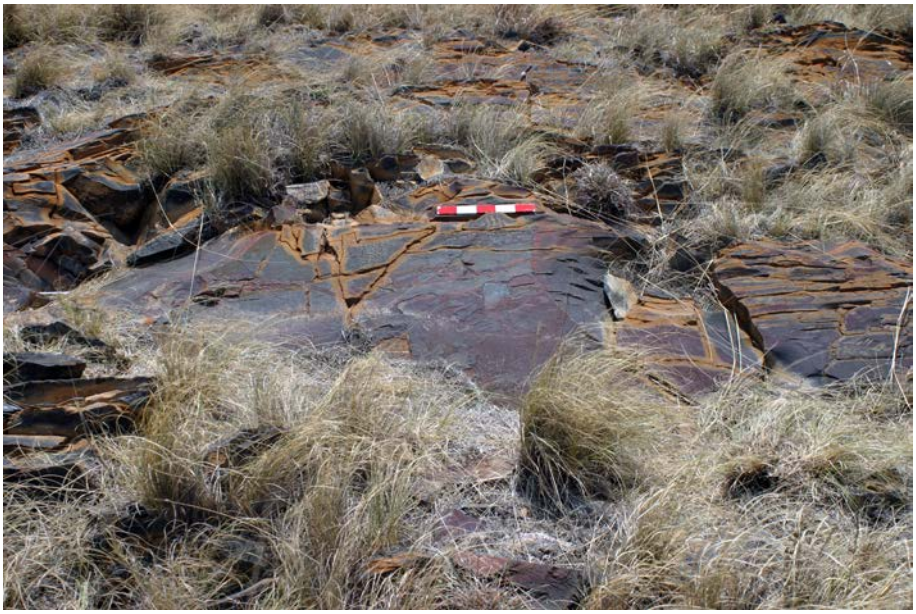
The motif was made on a surface that was already at least partly scratched. It is now part of an extensively scratched area and has itself been scratched over at the right, where two large grooves have been made in the rock (Figure 4.13). Several other large, and smaller, grooves were made to the right of the motif. All around are sets of parallel and overlapping clusters. The entire surface is covered by scatters of single peck marks, some of which seem to have been made over the scratch marks. There is also evidence in one area of several much heavier hammer blows on the rock; some of these are directly associated with

FIGURE 4.8. Squatting male anthropomorph next to a tasselled apron motif. Skeleton Hill (SH10)

(a) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW56 NE13)

(b) Apron SAM 10653

FIGURE 4.9. (a) Two schematised anthropomorphs stand with arms stretched out in what may be a dance posture. They share the surface with depictions of coiled beadwork designs similar to (b) beadwork decorations on aprons (courtesy of South African Museum).



(a) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW02 SE02)

(b) Detail of figure and four pecked 'columns'

(c) Detail of back apron motif

FIGURE 4.10. A possible anthropomorphic motif is associated with a back apron motif, four columns and a swatch of triangular design to the right of the 'anthropomorph'.

FIGURE 4.11. Schematised anthropomorphic motif with legs and head but no arms, juxtaposed with a decorated, back apron motif (just above the anthropomorph). Gestoptefontein Hill (NW57 SE10)

FIGURE 4.12. Possible schematised/abstracted motif depicting an anthropomorphic form. This and similar motifs form the most abstracted end of the 'depictive spectrum' in the GDC. Wits University Collection (RE2005181)

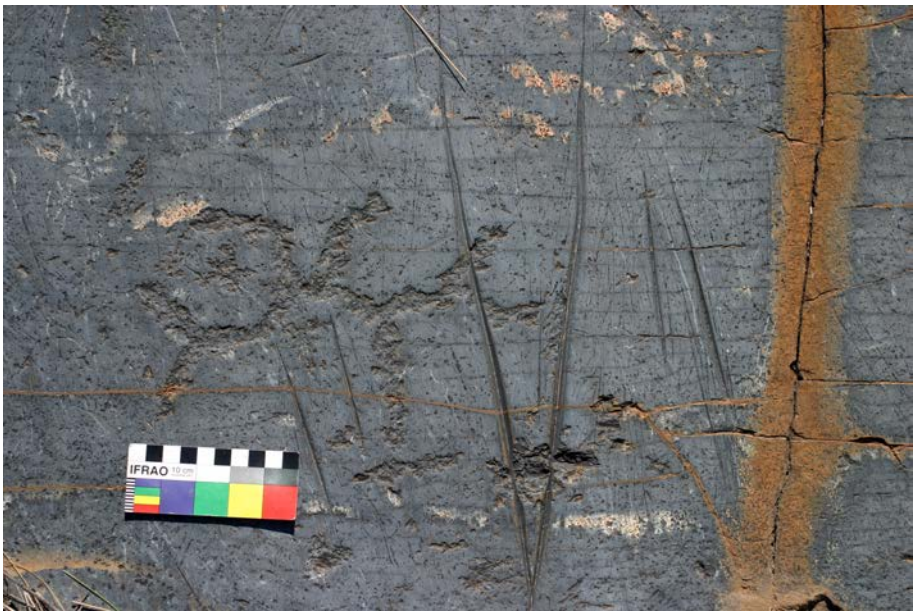


FIGURE 4.13. A pecked motif that may depict an anthropomorphic form. The roughly circular form at left approximates a head shape while the 'lines' may depict the trunk and limbs. The 'anthropomorphic' motif has been made on an extensively scratched surface. The grooves at right seem to have been produced subsequently and thus overlie the anthropomorphic motif. Gestoptefontein Hill (SW17 NW01)

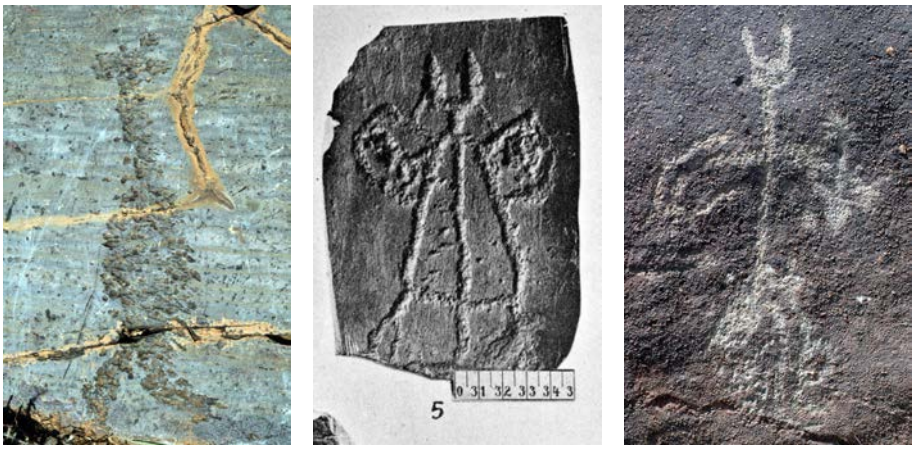
grooves, but I have not been able to determine the order in which the respective gestural markings were made.

4.3.5 Anthropomorphs with animal features (therianthropes)

There are very few clearly therianthropic motifs in the GDC. On Driekuil Hill is a solitary, armless figure with a long neck and what looks like an antelope head with large ears (Figure 4.14). Holub (or perhaps Želizko) identified another motif, which was removed, as a 'flying insect' (Figure 4.14):

> *Flying insect. The body is triangular, decorated with a central line and a line from one side to the other lower down. Semicircular wings on both sides of the front part of the body; two antennae on head.*
>
> (Želizko 1925: plate 14.5, transl. N. Mössmer)

I think, however, that this identification fails to recognise that there is a strong anthropomorphic component to the motif; although the 'head' and 'arms' do not look anthropomorphic in themselves, the overall body plan, which is reminiscent of a frontal view, does look anthropomorphic. Indeed, the motif resembles an



(a) Driekuil Hill (DH231)

(b) 57582 Museum of Ethnology, Vienna (Želizko 1925: plate 14.05)

(c) Verdwaalvlakte/Excelsior engraving site

FIGURE 4.14. There are very few therianthropic motifs in the GDC. (a) Here is a solitary figure with no arms and, possibly, the head of an antelope. Unfortunately the motif was destroyed during attempts to remove it. (b) Motif removed by Holub is identified in Želizko (1925) as a 'flying insect' but the body plan also looks anthropomorphic. It bears a striking resemblance to (c) a therianthropic figure from an engraving site (Verdwaalvlakte/Excelsior) about 130 km west of the GDC.

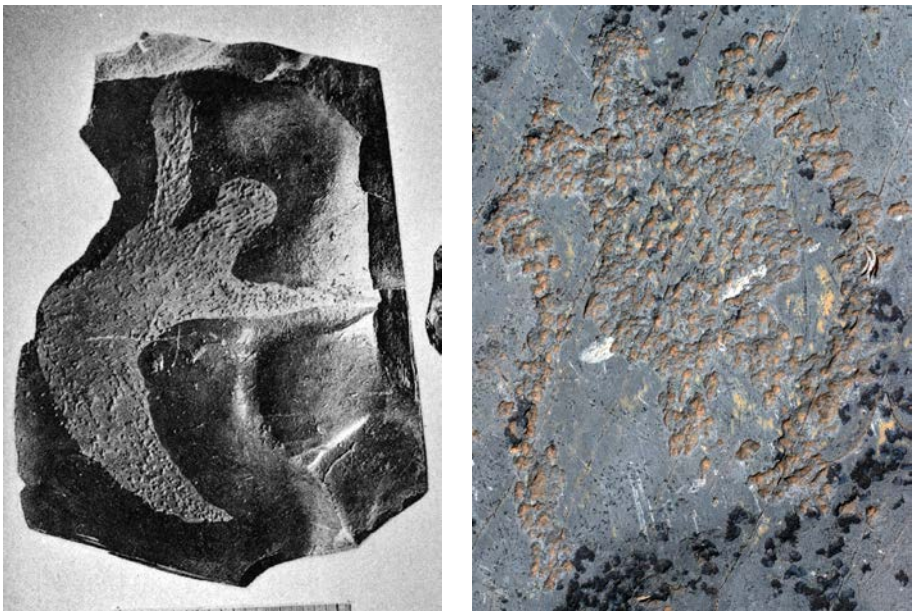
anthropomorphic figure from Verdwaalvlakte/Excelsior, an engraving site about 130 km west of the GDC in North West province.

There are also a few instances of motifs that may combine features of humans and ostriches; I discuss these 'struthianthropes' later in this chapter (see section 4.4.4).

4.3.6 Transformed anthropomorphs

There are also some anthropomorphic motifs that do not exhibit markedly animal-like features but, rather, a distorted kind of transformation of the body. These take various forms in which the limbs are 'atrophied' or the torso is truncated (Figure 4.15). Želizko published a striking motif (Figure 4.15), the original caption of which reads: 'Animal (?) with round head, two feet and a sharply tapered, bent body' (Piece 57585 in the Museum of Etnology, Vienna (Želizko 1925: plate 12.1, transl. N. Mössmer)).

On Gestoptefontein Hill is another 'transformed' motif with 'pointed shoulders', extremely long arms and stubby legs (Figure 4.15).



(a) Piece 57 585, Museum of Ethnography, Vienna. (Želizko 1925: plate 12.01)

(b) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW75 NW05)

FIGURE 4.15. Anthropomorphic motifs that display signs of distortion or transformation: (a) Figure with arms raised. (b) 'Distorted' motif with long arms and stubby legs.

There are a few figures with additaments on the head, some of which could be interpreted as hair ornaments (Figure 4.1); others might depict metaphors of trance experience in which the spirit of the person leaves its body (Figure 4.16).

4.4 Zoomorphs in the GDC

In this section I give a general account of the zoomorphic motifs in the GDC. For comparative purposes I refer at times to the data collected by the Focks (1979, 1984, 1989). These alone will not help us to understand the significance of the motifs; nonetheless, they are pertinent to recognising metaphors (i.e. preferences for certain species) that may characterise a particular site, for example Ouzman's (1996c) characterisation of the Thaba Sione engraving site north of the GDC as the 'place of rhinoceroses' because of the prominence of this motif. Meanings lie rather in understanding that zoomorphic imagery is part of a world view in which personhood is not restricted to the human species and animals are metaphors for people. I look for the forms and significances of metaphors in 'patterns', i.e. consistently repeated details and ways of depicting zoomorphic motifs, as well as their associations with other motifs. I do not

(a) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW56 SE19) (b) Klerksdorp Museum (KM042465) (c) Boschpoort Road South (BRS2 13)

FIGURE 4.16. Anthropomorphs with additaments on the head that may depict a metaphor of trance experience in which the spirit leaves the body.

attempt, however, to explore all the kinds of zoomorphic motifs in the GDC or to give equal attention to the patterns that I have identified. I investigate a few surfaces that are rich in visual information later in the study (see chapter 11).

I recorded zoomorphic motifs on 9 of the 13 GDC outcrops (VF, MQ, CB, DH, SH, DRN, BRS, BRN). A total of 24 animal groups and/or species can be recognised (Figure 4.17). In addition, there is a small component of zoomorphs that does not represent any recognisable species. In these cases it appears that it was the artists' intention to depict an 'unreal' zoomorph.

Most zoomorphs are pecked in outline only or silhouetted; there are also instances of scratched outline motifs. As seems to be the case at most Khoe-San engraving sites in southern Africa, the images are arranged on widely dispersed surfaces, usually singly, but also, less commonly, in groups. Numerically, the emphasis is on eland, as it is in so many painted and engraved locales in South Africa (e.g. Butzer in Fock & Fock 1989: 151). Ostrich are common; depictions of elephant and rhinoceros are also present in some numbers, while the Boschpoort Road South outcrops are noteworthy for cheetah depictions.

4.4.1 Geometric projections

The GDC zoomorphs are based on two types of geometric projection. A handful of GDC zoomorphic images embody the so-called 'classical style' to which Fock and Butzer refer (Fock 1979: 108; Butzer in Fock & Fock 1989: 139, 152–156):

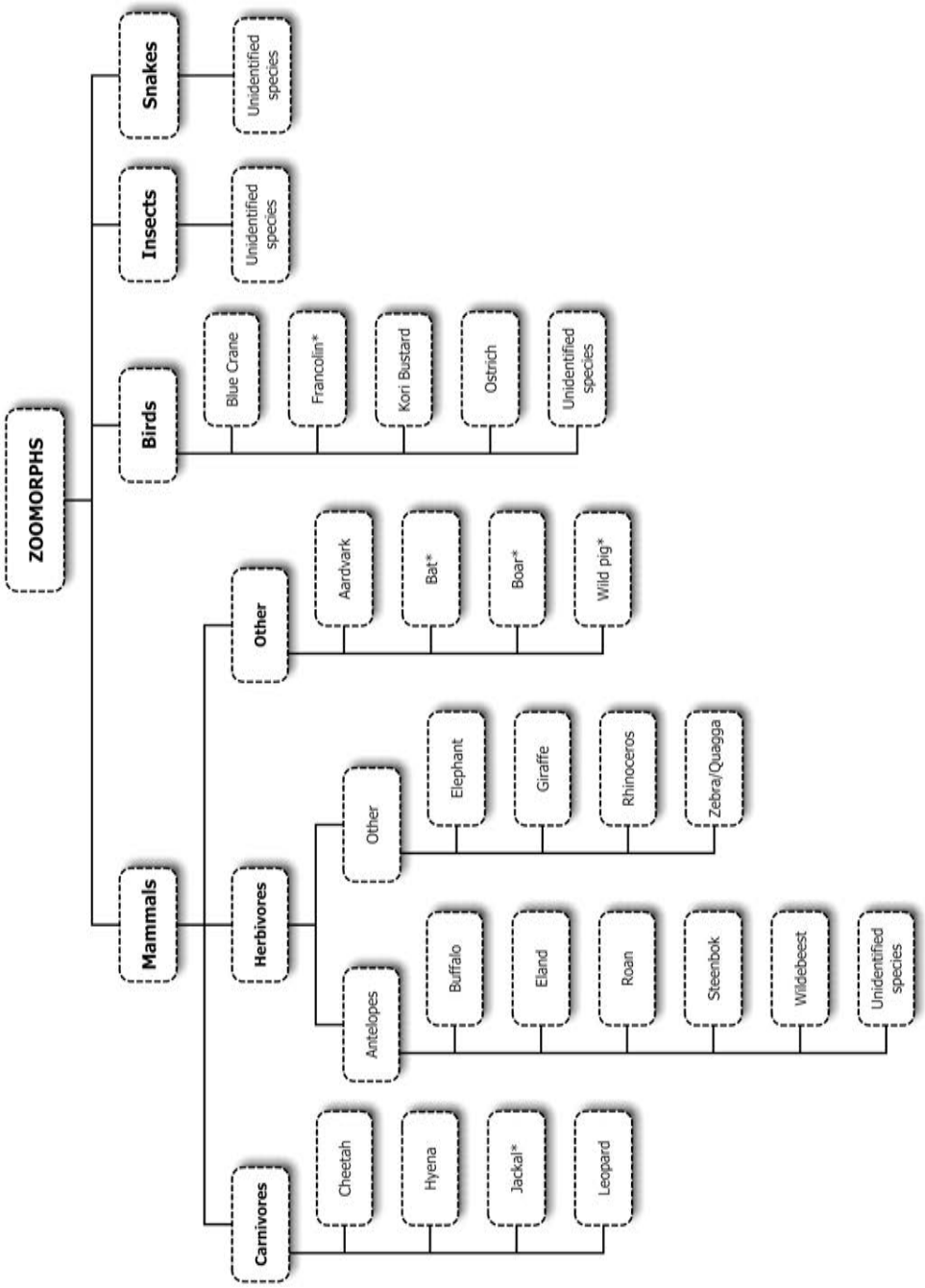


FIGURE 4.17. Recognisable animal species/groups depicted on the GDC outcrops.

> *[T]his group of pecked engravings is sometimes rendered with a three-dimensional effect ('classical style'), achieved by leaving colour markings, skin folds, or bony protuberances unpecked in the case of silhouettes, or through deeper incision of partial outlines that commonly terminate in sharp, deep external profiles. Altogether these 'classical and related' engravings are characterised by a measure of accurate anatomical detail and regular peck marks of homogenous size.*
>
> (Butzer in Fock & Fock 1989: 152)

Here Butzer describes the techniques that artists used to create a 'naturalistic' effect. But these devices alone do not create the 'three-dimensional effect'; 'classical style' art has an underpinning geometric component (Hagen 1986: 203, see section 7.1). The 'classical style' of engraved rock art is grounded in a projective perspective in which the animal is pictured from a single station point. This is the projection that underlies much of Western art and is therefore the kind of 'realism' with which Westerners are most familiar. The presence of 'classical style' motifs in the GDC is also useful in establishing the position of the complex in the overall sequence of southern African engravings and their approximate absolute ages.

However, most zoomorphic (and anthropomorphic) depictions in the GDC use a 'metric' rather than a 'projective' perspective; the metric perspective combines multiple viewpoints in one image and in this way has the potential to convey accurate information about the size and number of image features. There is no attempt to create a three-dimensional effect. Westerners are perhaps most familiar with plan and elevation drawings which also use the metric perspective. I do not, however, argue that the GDC artists were aware of the theory and concepts of graphic representation; I imagine that the metric perspective was adopted for non-geometric reasons (see chapter 11).

The differences between these two modes of perspective (projective and metric) are easily recognised. A piece from the GDC, now in the University of the Witwatersrand collection, features two rhinoceros images (Figure 4.18). The topmost rhino is an example of a projective perspective; it is a three-dimensional image. Notice the systematic use of unpecked space to create the impression of folds in the animal's skin. The artist has partially obscured one each of the front and back legs to create the illusion that the motif has two sides, one of which is closest to the viewer. Careful attention has been paid to the shape of the head and mouth of the animal and it is possible to recognise that it is a representation of a black rhinoceros *(Diceros bicornis)*.

The lower rhino motif was produced using a metric perspective. Certain information about the animal is conveyed: the distance between the two back legs, for instance, as well as the relative distances between horns and ears. In this particular case, however, the artist has not used the full potential afforded

FIGURE 4.18. Two distinct modes of perspective underpin these two rhinoceros depictions: the topmost motif of a black rhinoceros is of the 'classical' style and uses the projective type, which is often used in Western art. The lower motif uses a metric depiction. Most of the GDC zoomorphs employ the metric perspective. Wits University (RE2005011)

by the metric perspective to create a realistic image; not enough information is provided about the head and mouth to identify the species. It is not the perspective as such that is 'deficient' but rather the limited use made of it by the artist. I hasten to add that these details may not have been important as far as the artists were concerned. The important thing is to recognise that people in the GDC made use of two different perspectives and to consider how, if at all, this knowledge can help in understanding the significance of the motifs and their contexts of production.

The so-called classic-style engravings are probably most vulnerable to 'collectors', who tend to focus on the more 'realistic' looking examples of rock art. For example, an erstwhile Director of the Klerksdorp Museum obtained a permit in the 1970s to remove an engraving of a rhinoceros motif (Figure 4.19) from one of the Driekuil Ridge sites, although the site itself was not threatened. He subsequently justified this move, arguing that more people would have an opportunity to see the beautiful rhino motif than if it had remained in its original location (Roelf Marx, pers. comm.).

It is therefore most likely that of the pieces of rock art removed by private collectors and of which there is no record, 'classical style' engravings would have

FIGURE 4.19. Motif of rhinoceros removed from Driekuil Ridge (north) in the 1970s. A permit for its removal was issued although the site was not threatened. The piece is now in the Klerksdorp Museum, North West Province. (Photograph from Fock & Fock 1984: plate 133.2)

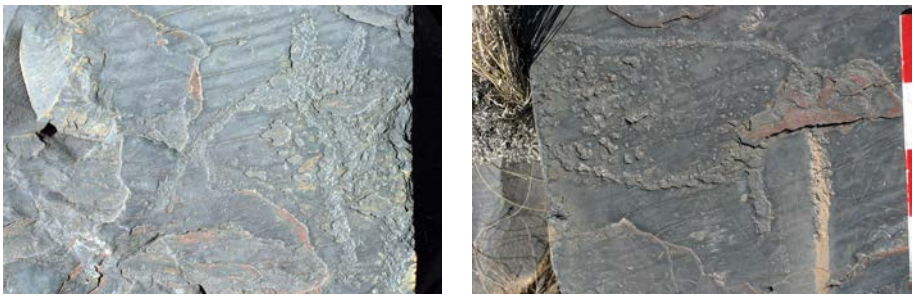
been removed preferentially. Their fascination for collectors probably also means that the number of examples remaining on the GDC outcrops is disproportionately low. However, my impression is that even taking this probability into account, the majority of zoomorphic representations are metric, two-dimensional outlines and silhouettes that evidence varying degrees of skill in reproduction. Most of the animals are depicted in profile, except the 'insect' motifs (discussed in subsection 4.4.5 below) which are in plan view. In Part IV I shall argue that the basic and simple appearance of many motifs (zoomorphic and other) may help to locate the artists' position and status in their society and indeed provides a clue to the 'reasons' why they made these motifs.

For purposes of analysis and to the extent that the motifs can be identified, I have grouped the GDC zoomorphic motifs into categories based upon Western concepts: mammals (herbivorous and carnivorous) and birds. There are also depictions of zoomorphs that do not resemble any known species.

4.4.2 Herbivores

Elephant

There are eight depictions of elephant in the GDC, three of which are in museum collections. Except for a possible elephant depiction on the Married Quarters hill, the others are all on Gestoptefontein Hill. One of the Gestoptefontein Hill



(a) NW45 NW09 (b) NW45 NW03

FIGURE 4.20. This elephant motif on Gestoptefontein Hill has been broken into two pieces, perhaps as a result of attempts to remove it.

elephants has been split in two, perhaps the consequence of a botched removal attempt (Figure 4.20).

A piece in the Museum of Ethnology, Vienna, is captioned *Elephant mit Jungem* ('elephant with young'). It shows a large elephant with trunk and tusks. Immediately below is a much smaller zoomorph with ears and trunk (Figure 4.21). These two depictions are a convincing mother–child pair.

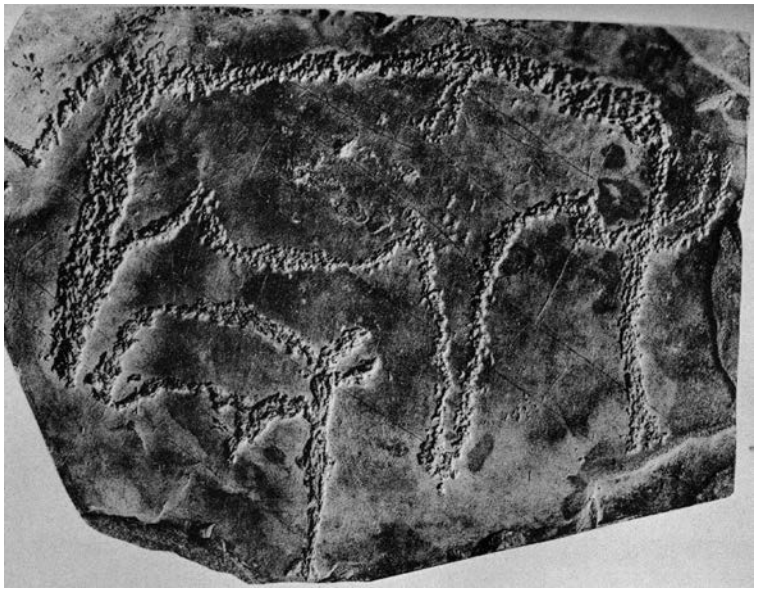


FIGURE 4.21. Possible depiction of a mother-and-child pair of elephant. Piece 57 529, Museum of Ethnology, Vienna (Želizko 1925: plate 14.02)

FIGURE 4.22. This surface features referential motifs of 2 elephant, a dorsal outline of a rhinoceros, aprons, spread skin motifs and many gestural markings. Gestoptefontein Hill (NW63 SW07).

In the northwest sector of Gestoptefontein Hill two elephant depictions are closely juxtaposed with a rhinoceros motif and two apron motifs (Figure 4.22). These referential motifs have all been superimposed onto a surface already replete with gestural markings that include freely scratched areas, 'swatches' of mesh patterns, grooves and scattered pecks. The association of large herbivores with clothing motifs and gestural-type markings is typical of Gestoptefontein Hill (see chapter 11).

Rhinoceros

Rhinoceros motifs are quite common in the rock art of the Northern Cape and North West provinces: according to my calculations the Focks (Fock 1979; Fock & Fock 1984, 1989) published records of 121 engraving sites in these two provinces of which 35 sites featured at least one depiction of a rhinoceros. Thaba Sione, an engraving site some 71 km northwest of Gestoptefontein Hill, has 62 rhinoceros motifs (Ouzman 1996a: 43), possibly the highest number of any known locale (Ouzman 1996c). Klipfontein, near Kimberley in the Northern Cape province, has about 20 motifs, and Kinderdam, near Vryburg in North

(a) NW45 SW11 (b) NW50 NE03

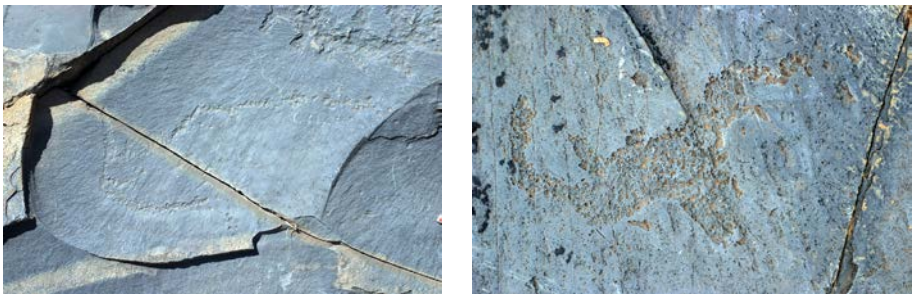
FIGURE 4.23. Depictions of rhinoceroses that comprise only the characteristic double horns, ears and a portion of the dorsal outline. Both examples are from Gestoptefontein Hill.

West province, has a spectacular 'magic rhino' (Fock & Fock 1984: fig. 98) and at least another 15 rhino motifs.

Of the 22 rhino depictions I have recorded in the GDC, five are in institutional collections (two in the Museum of Ethnology in Vienna, Austria, two in the Klerksdorp Museum, and one at Wits University). This tally includes depictions in which only certain, key parts of the rhinoceros are presented. For instance, there are some surfaces on Gestoptefontein Hill that show only the characteristic double horns and a pecked line that I interpret as the depiction of the adjacent dorsal outline. The clearest example is on surface NW45 SW11; a dorsal line links the outline of a pair of ears and two horns (Figure 4.23).

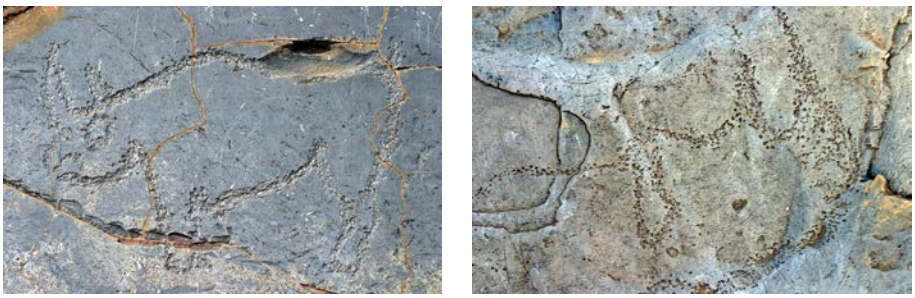
With this example in mind it is possible to recognise a second instance, this one without the silhouetted ears (Figure 4.23). There are two additional cases of such partial but nonetheless diagnostic depictions; these are scratched. There are other examples of partial rhinoceros depictions on Gestoptefontein Hill. In these cases (Figure 4.24), more of the rhino outline is revealed, but still not the entire animal. Possibly these motifs are depictions that were merely interrupted and never completed; however, this phenomenon has been noted at other engraved and painted sites in South Africa (Fock & Fock 1984: plate 30.5; Morris 2002, 2010); in Namibia there are painted outlines of giraffe in the Brandberg and Erongo mountains (e.g. Kinahan 1999: 343). It has been suggested of supposedly incomplete zoomorphs in the Northern Cape province these that the artists were showing how the motifs, considered as things-in-themselves, or 'images of power', manifested and disappeared into a realm that exists beneath the outer surface of the rock (Morris 2002: 139).

Two species of rhino occur in southern Africa, the Black *(Diceros bicornis)* and the White *(Ceratotherium simum)*. Khoe-San artists did make rock en-



(a) NW40 NW10 (b) NW75 NW03

FIGURE 4.24. More examples of partial outlines of rhinoceroses from Gestoptefontein Hill. In these cases the head and some of the dorsal outline are included.



(a) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW19 NW01) (b) Vorster's Farm (VF11)

FIGURE 4.25. Naturalistic depictions of rhinoceros include carefully chosen details such as (a) the beak-like snout of the black rhino, and (b) a close up of a right facing rhino head (with the two horns visible) showing folds of skin around the eye.

gravings of both species (Ouzman 1996c; Ouzman & Feely 2002), but I have only been able to identify some depictions of Black Rhinoceros in the GDC. I found it impossible to identify the species of most of the rhino motifs because often there was not enough visual information. But the GDC artists did create realistic-looking rhino motifs. The image on SW19 is clearly a black rhino: the characteristic 'beak-like snout' (Estes 1991: 228) has been faithfully captured (Figure 4.25). One of the few intact engravings from the Vorster's Farm site is of a rhino with its ear hanging down and the folds around the eye delineated with a few apt scratches (Figure 4.25).

A stone in the collection of Klerksdorp Museum presents an uncommon view of a rhino – it could depict a rhino from the rear (Figure 4.26). Notice the two 'wide set, pillar like' back legs (Estes 1991: 228) and at top right, the silhouette of a sensitively rendered ear. Head-on views of zoomorphs are known from a few engraving sites in Northern Cape and North West provinces;

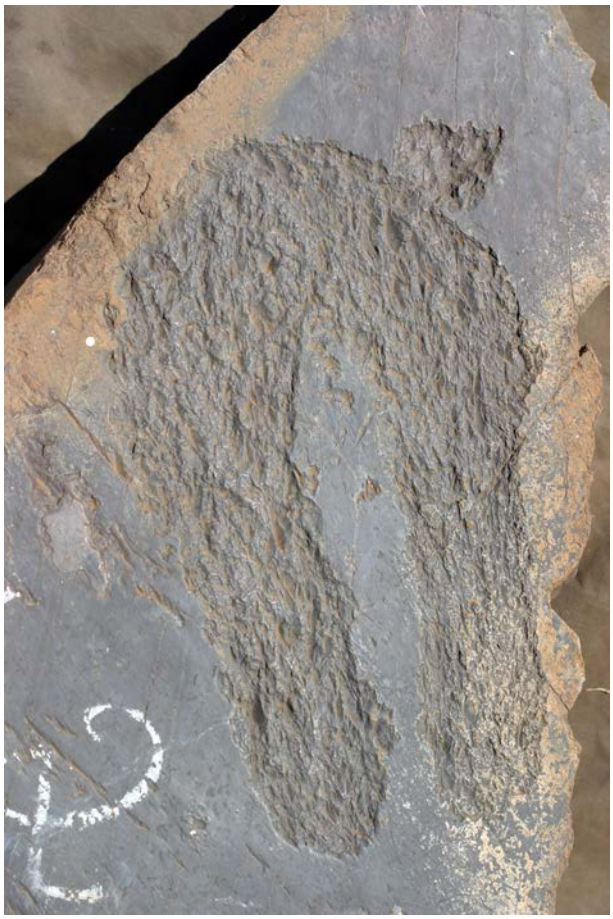


FIGURE 4.26. An unusual engraving that may depict a rhino seen from the rear. Note the sturdy back legs, pecks that might be a tail, and the silhouette of an ear at top right. Klerksdorp Museum (KM042522).

at Kinderdam, some 150 km northwest of the GDC is a head-on motif of a rhinoceros (Figure 4.27; Fock & Fock 1984: plate 20.1)

There is little Khoe-San ethnography regarding 'religious' beliefs about rhinos. The presence in Khoe-San rock art of rhino motifs and their association in the art with clothing motifs (see discussion in section 11.1) suggests that these animals did have cosmological significance (Ouzman 1995, 1996a , c). In the GDC certain rhinoceros motifs are juxtaposed with apron motifs; the Focks recorded a similar pattern at Klipfontein (e.g. Fock 1979: plates 44, 47, 51), although they (mistakenly I think) identify the apron motifs as 'traps' (discussed in more detail in *section 7.2.4*).

FIGURE 4.27. Head-on view of a rhino from the Kinderdam site, about 150 km northwest of the GDC. (Fock & Fock 1984: plate 20.1)

Giraffe

Depictions of giraffe are also quite ubiquitous: the Focks recorded them at 22 of the estimated 121 sites they documented. There are five depictions of these large herbivores known from the GDC (Figure 4.28). Two of these occur on Gestoptefontein Hill, two on Skeleton Hill, and the fifth is now in the collection of RARI at Wits University. This specimen was probably removed from Gestoptefontein Hill in the last 50 years; it can be traced to an area in the southwest sector of the hill where the words 'Giraffe removed here' have been written. The colour, texture and faults in the removed rock look very similar to the rock that surrounds the area from which the rock was probably removed.

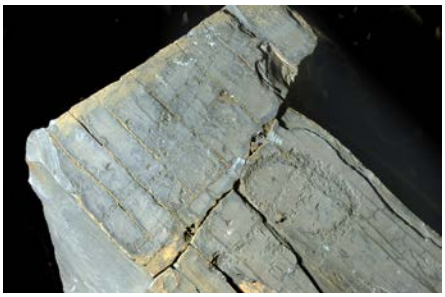
Two of the motifs (Figure 4.28 c, d) occur in close conjunction with other motifs, including a possible depiction of a necklace and a design motif. The possible significance of such juxtapositions is discussed in Part IV.

Eland

There are approximately 37 eland motifs in the GDC, more than any other category of zoomorphs depicted. This emphasis on eland is the norm in Khoe-San rock art and suggests that the GDC eland may be understood in terms of a similar set of beliefs about the significance of these animals in Khoe-San beliefs (Lewis-Williams 1981, Vinnicombe 1976). Holub removed just under a third of known eland depictions (11 pieces) from the GDC and their original context has probably been lost. Most of the eland motifs still *in situ* occur on Gestoptefontein Hill. The other outcrops either have no eland motifs (Vorster's Farm, The

(a) Skeleton Hill (SH02)

(b) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW74 SE02)



(c) Wits University Collection (RE2005133)

(d) Skeleton Hill (SH09)

(e) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW41 NE03)

FIGURE 4.28. There are five depictions of giraffe known from the GDC.

(a) (b)

FIGURE 4.29. Buffalo motif positioned to create the impression that it is emerging from a crack in the rock. Skeleton Hill (SH09)

Mound, the three Driekuil Ridge sites, Boschpoort Road North, Boschpoort Road South 2, Site 13) or single occurrences (Married Quarters, Driekuil Hill, Boschpoort Road South 3, Skeleton Hill). Of course it is possible, even likely, that eland motifs may have been removed from these sites. Nonetheless, I think it remains a valid observation that the GDC artists probably made more eland motifs on Gestoptefontein Hill than on the other outcrops, with the possible exception of Gestoptefontein Mountain, a site for which we have no data at all.

The eland motifs have the same 'stratigraphic' relationship to the gestural component of the GDC rock art as the other referential motifs: they are pecked on top of scratch marks and grids.

Buffalo

Buffalo motifs are not very common in the engraving sites of the North West and Northern Cape provinces; the Focks recorded only about 16 motifs at 9 sites (excluding the GDC) from a total survey of 121 sites (Fock 1979; Fock & Fock 1984; Fock & Fock 1989). Six of these depictions occur at Kinderdam (Fock & Fock 1984: figs 43–46, plates 63.2, 67.4), about 130 km west of the GDC.

The Focks recorded a single buffalo motif on Skeleton Hill (Fock & Fock 1984: plate 133.1). This motif is depicted as though it is emerging from a crack in the rock; it is a very good instance of this as there can be very little doubt about the deliberate placement of the motif at the juncture of a smooth and flat horizontal surface and rough, vertically oriented rocks (Figure 4.29). This kind of motif differs from the 'emergence' or 'fading in and out' of motifs discussed above (section 4.4.2) but the significance is similar, I imagine: the rock surface is an interface between this world and another world that exists behind the rock face (Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1990; Morris 2002: 139, 2010: 43–44).

FIGURE 4.30. A depiction in the classical style of a buffalo head and horns (facing right, at right), juxtaposed with a 'branched motif' on Gestoptefontein Hill (NW56 SW10).

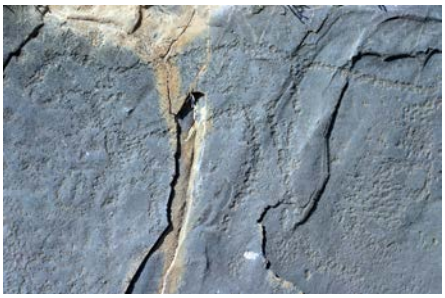
Another buffalo motif, on Gestoptefontein Hill, is a sensitive depiction of the horns and head in the 'classical style' (Figure 4.30). The motif is superimposed on scratches and juxtaposed with a branched motif (see subsection 7.4.5) and what may be gestural-type scatters of peck marks.

4.4.3 Carnivores

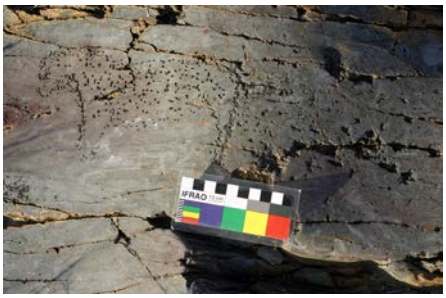
There are about 15 motifs of zoomorphs with pecked outlines in two-dimensional projection that resemble leopard and cheetah; some additional motifs are non-specific but look like carnivores. Holub removed three of the more naturalistic-looking pieces; two motifs are identified as cheetah (57558, 57559) and one as a leopard (57560). Gestoptefontein Hill has seven motifs including a possible leopard and a cheetah (Figure 4.31). The Boschpoort Hills and Skeleton Hill have some identifiable cheetah depictions, including a naturalistic running animal that is possibly a cheetah, rather than a leopard (Figure 4.31).

4.4.4 Birds

At least four recognisable bird species are depicted on the GDC outcrops, most of them on Gestoptefontein Hill. All of these species are comparatively large –



(a) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW48 NE05)



(b) Skeleton Hill (SH14)

(c) Boschpoort Road South (BRS1 01)

FIGURE 4.31. Zoomorphic depictions of what I identify as (a) leopard and (b & c) cheetah.

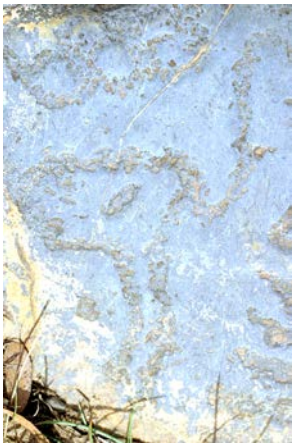
the ostrich is the largest of all birds and the Kori Bustard is Africa's largest flying species – and are adapted to a largely terrestrial mode of feeding. Significantly, as I discuss in Part IV, two of these species exhibit behaviours that Khoe-San people have interpreted anthropomorphically.

Ostrich

Ostrich are by far the most numerously depicted bird species (about 30 depictions) and – after images of eland – comprise the second most numerous category of zoomorphic depiction in the GDC. As with many of the zoomorphic GDC depictions, ostrich motifs occur singly on surfaces and also in association with other motifs. Motifs of ostrich occur mostly as single individuals, portrayed as standing or walking with the head raised as though alert to its environment (Figure 4.32). There are some exceptions, however, in which single ostrich are depicted with the neck twisted and legs bent (Figure 4.32e).

There is a single instance of an 'ostrich herd' (Figure 4.33) – Holub removed a stone on which, according to the caption, seven ostrich, some superimposed on each other, are depicted. Because the stone was removed from its context, however, the possible associations of this grouping may have been lost.

(a) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW64 SW06)



(b) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW75 SE04)

(c) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW09 NW03)

(d) Piece 57 568, Museum of Ethnology, Vienna (Želizko 1925: plate 10.4)

(e) Klerksdorp Museum (KM042566)

FIGURE 4.32. Most depictions of what I have identified as ostriches in the GDC are of single individuals, walking or standing in an alert posture with neck straight and head raised. However, one ostrich motif (e) has a bent neck and legs. Notice the characteristic (here slightly exaggerated) detail of the foot, which is cloven, a unique adaptation amongst birds.

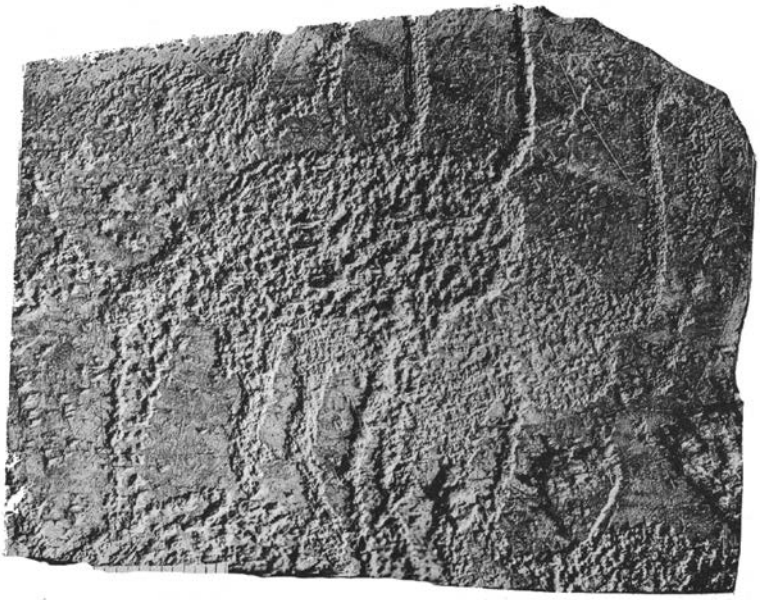


FIGURE 4.33. A grouping of about seven ostrich images arranged, according to as a herd. This is the only aggregation of ostriches depicted in the GDC. Piece 57574, Museum of Etnology, Vienna (Želizko (1925: plate 10.5)

Some ostrich motifs occur in association with other motifs in contexts that may be helpful in attempts to understand the significance of ostrich depictions.

Struthianthropes Another type of motif seems to combine ostrich-like affinities with anthropoid characteristics – they seem to be 'struthianthropes' (Hollmann 2001: 73). For example, a motif in the southwest sector of Gestoptefontein Hill is cunningly ambiguous. Depicted in profile, it has a leg and a large buttock (Figure 4.35). The torso of the motif, however, is represented by a single pecked line that bends forward sharply with two arm-like appendages that extend straight out on either side. The rest of the body above these extended appendages curves sharply upwards in a way that is reminiscent more of an ostrich than a human. The arrangement and dimensions appear to be deliberately equivocal: the motif could be an anthropomorph, perhaps bending forward in a dance posture, while at the same time it can be construed as an ostrich bending forward and waving its wings.

There are a few other possible conflations of anthropomorphs and ostriches on Gestoptefontein Hill. These struthianthropes are associated with other zoomorphic motifs as well as depictions of clothing and design motifs.

FIGURE 4.34. Ostrich motifs in the GDC are sometimes associated with motifs of clothing and items of adornment. Gestoptefontein Hill (NW75 SE04)

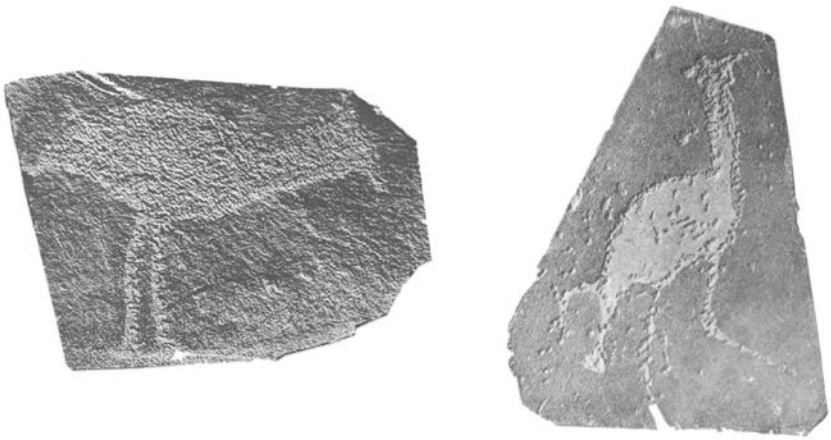
Kori Bustard

There are a couple of motifs that depict a large bird that looks different to an ostrich (Figure 4.36); both are on stones removed by Holub (Želizko 1925: plates 10.3, 18.4). The motifs are identified (correctly, I think) as depictions of a *Trappe* ('bustard'). The overall stature of the bird depicted, the long legs, thick neck, and tufted crest on the head are most characteristic of the Kori Bustard *(Ardeotis kori)*.

Blue crane

On Gestoptefontein Hill are two possible depictions of a Blue Crane *(Anthropoides paradiseus)* (Figure 4.37). The two long wing feathers, which look like a tail, are a distinctive identifying feature. In the one instance, the motif is juxtaposed with an apron motif and many other images. The second shows a bird with long tail/wing feathers, long neck and slender body. Behind it (to the left) is a smaller depiction of a similar-looking bird, perhaps a juvenile. A little further left of the two bird motifs is an anthropomorph, arms widespread and looking in the direction of the birds.

FIGURE 4.35. Some motifs on Gestoptefontein Hill seem to combine characteristics of humans and ostriches: they are 'struthianthropes'. Gestoptefontein Hill (SW13 SE01)



(a) Piece 57575, Museum of Ethnology, Vienna (Želizko 1925: plate 10.3)

(b) Piece NpM4-7.115, Náprstek Museum, Prague. (Želizko 1925: plate 18.4)

FIGURE 4.36. Depictions of a Kori Bustard (*Ardeotis kori*), Africa's largest flying bird.

(a) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW56 SW63)

(b) (Želizko 1925: plate 11.1)

(c) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW01)

FIGURE 4.37. Possible depictions of the Blue Crane *(Anthropoides paradiseus)* from Gestoptefontein Hill: (a) Blue Crane motif discussed in (section 11.1); (b) possible Blue Crane depiction (the long feathers that make identification more certain have been broken off); (c) possible adult at right; the head, neck and chest of a smaller bird is visible at left.

4.4.5 Insects

Although not common, Fock recorded insect motifs at Klipfontein (1979: plate 118) and three other sites (Fock & Fock 1984: plate 78.2, 1989: plates 26.2, 125.2), although I think that some of the identifications (1989: plates 26.2, 125.2) may be incorrect. There are two similar-looking, juxtaposed motifs on Gestoptefontein Hill (SW14 NE02) that resemble winged insects (Figure 4.38).

4.4.6 Snakes

In the Museum of Ethnology, Vienna, is a piece of engraved rock that Holub (or Želizko) identified as *Hornviper und Skorpion* ('horned viper and scorpion'). The identification of the snake is convincing; although the black and white photograph is small, the curves are evocative of a snake, but I was not able to discern details about the tail and head or to discern any other details. The scorpion is not clear to me, however.

FIGURE 4.38. One of two motifs that may depict winged insects; from Bird Rock on Gestoptefontein Hill. (SW14 NE02) [2111101]

FIGURE 4.39. *Hornviper und Skorpion* ('horned viper and scorpion'): a realistic depiction of a 'horned viper'; the photograph is too small to discern the 'scorpion'. Piece 57 579 in the Museum of Ethnology, Vienna (Želizko 1925: plate 11.6)

Chapter 5

Decorative designs and patterns

The rocks of the GDC are covered with pecked and incised motifs that apparently do not resemble any object or organism. Many engraving sites in the Northern Cape and North West provinces feature similar motifs (Wilman 1933; Slack 1962; Fock 1979; Fock & Fock 1984, 1989). These motifs are distinct from the schematised designs that the Focks identified as bags, aprons and traps (Fock 1979: 75; see subsection 7.2.4).

5.1 Contexts for Khoe-San designs and patterns

How do designs and patterns form part of Khoe-San lifeways? In what contexts do they feature and what are their associations? Are they 'representational' or 'abstract/non-representational'? I look for answers in the following aspects of Khoe-San designs and patterns: archaeological, historical, and ethnographic accounts of Khoe-San and their use of design motifs, and, most importantly, accounts from Khoe-San people about the nature and significance of designs.

5.1.1 Archaeological, historical and ethnographic accounts

Designs and patterns similar to those in the GDC are found on items of Khoe-San clothing and accessories, as well as bags, quivers, and many other items. Following the work of Evers (1988: 21) on the recognition of groups in the Iron Age of southern Africa, I argue that the pecked and incised motifs encountered in the GDC have the same visual and symbolic connotations as similar motifs made of beads, or incised into wood, bone, and ostrich eggshell, or painted

onto peoples' bodies and animal hides. Evers has shown that amongst Bantu-speaking groups:

> *[T]he names and connotations of the designs were the same on different artefact categories. This unity in names and connotations underlines that decorative art expresses some of the total meaning system of a group.*
>
> (Evers 1988: 33)

I suggest that a similar 'unity' is expressed in Khoe-San decorative art styles within a given group of people. For instance, Valiente-Noailles comments of the Kua that:

> *Marks on objects are often compared to the markings on ... faces and bodies, as though the former* [i.e. markings on objects] *were derived from the latter* [marking on faces and bodies] *and the original reasoning were* 'if these markings beautify the body they also embellish these objects'.
>
> (Valiente-Noailles 1993: 163, my brackets)

Similar-looking decorative designs are applied to the body, as well as to a wide variety of objects, and perhaps for the same reasons – beautification. Later I shall examine more closely what concepts of 'beauty' and 'beautification' entail. I do not mean to imply a 'Pan-Khoe-San' system of styles and meanings, however. The widespread distribution and long usage of incised meshes, grids and triangles suggests that such motifs will not have a single and fixed meaning *(contra* Uher's (1994: 312) argument that zigzags are 'strongly associated with antagonism and thus [have] become a form of punctuation in the art of the Bushmen and in many other cultures to mark situations of tension'.)

Decorated artefacts

Certain design motifs – cross hatching, meshes, grids and triangles – are extremely old, going back to the predecessors of the Khoe-San in southern Africa. The ochre pieces from Blombos Cave, Western Cape, incised with triangular forms, are 70 000 years old (Henshilwood *et al.* 2002). Texier *et al.* (2010) describe what they call 'abstract linear depictions' on ostrich eggshell containers from 60 000 years ago, in the Howiesons Poort levels of excavation at Diepkloof Rock Shelter, Western Cape. (The authors' description of the depictions as 'abstract' is asserted, not motivated.) Humphreys excavated fragments of incised ostrich egg at various sites in the Ghaap plateau (Humphreys & Thackeray 1983).

Bone tubes incised with mesh designs, and dated to 3 660 BP, were recovered from Nelson Bay Cave, Robberg Collection by Inskeep (Figure 5.1; Inskeep 1987:

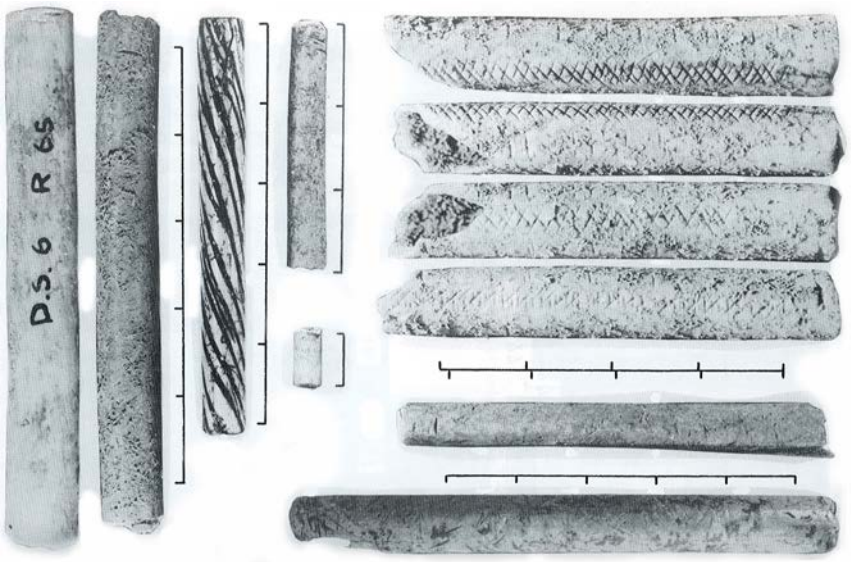


FIGURE 5.1. Mesh designs on bone, dated to 3 660 BP, from Nelson Bay Cave. (After Inskeep 1987: plate 14)

166, plate 14). Pieces of Cape Gannet bone too were engraved with diamond shapes and meshes (Figure 5.2; Inskeep 1987: plate 15).

Incised grids are among the very small sample of dated South African rock art. From Wonderwerk Cave in Northern Cape province the Thackerays dated two apparently deliberately broken stones that bear incised grids (Thackeray & Thackeray 1981); one, a piece of dolomite, was dated at $5\,180 \pm 70$ BP and the other, a portion of haematite, was dated at $4\,240 \pm 60$ BP. Leather associated with a 2 000-year-old Khoe-San burial in the Western Cape were decorated with incised 'rectangular' and 'cross-hatched' designs (Sealy *et al.* 2000: 35).

Similar patterns adorn worked bone objects from more recent ethnographic collections, such as pipes, melon knives (Figure 5.3), decorated hoofs, sticks, decorated ostrich eggs, and leather. Triangle and diamond motifs have been created in beadwork designs on belts, headbands and aprons (Figure 5.4, Figure 5.5).

Body designs

Khoe-San people, past and present, decorate themselves with designs in various media. Rudner (1982) has the ethnographic data concerning 'cosmetic pigments and paints' by 'Hottentots' and 'Bushmen' (1982: 112, tables 20, 45 and passim). The practice of body painting is longstanding: Rudner concluded that

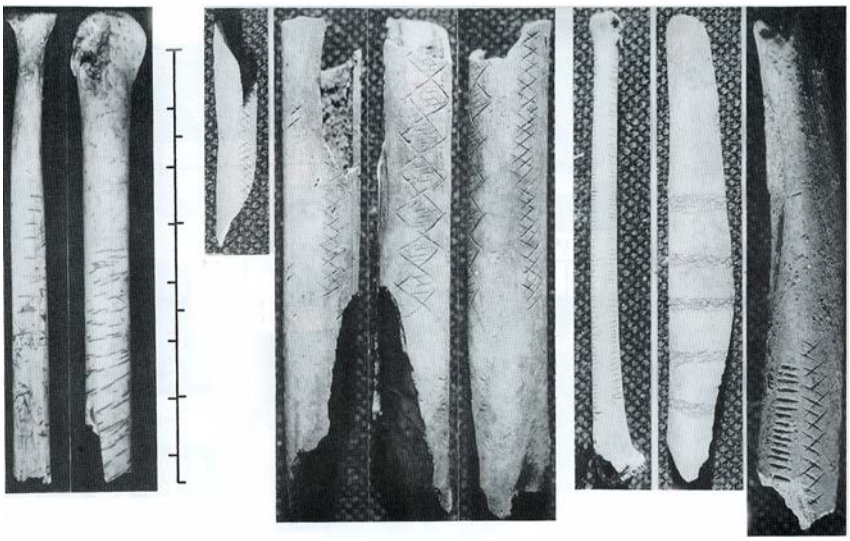


FIGURE 5.2. Diamond motif and mesh pattern on Cape Gannet bone. (After Inskeep 1987: plate 15)

FIGURE 5.3. Melon knives decorated with chains of diamond motifs. Courtesy Iziko SAM (UCT 38/36)

FIGURE 5.4. Triangle and diamond motifs used to decorate the edge of an apron. Courtesy Iziko SAM (SAM 10002)

FIGURE 5.5. Beaded ornament with nested diamond design. Courtesy Iziko SAM

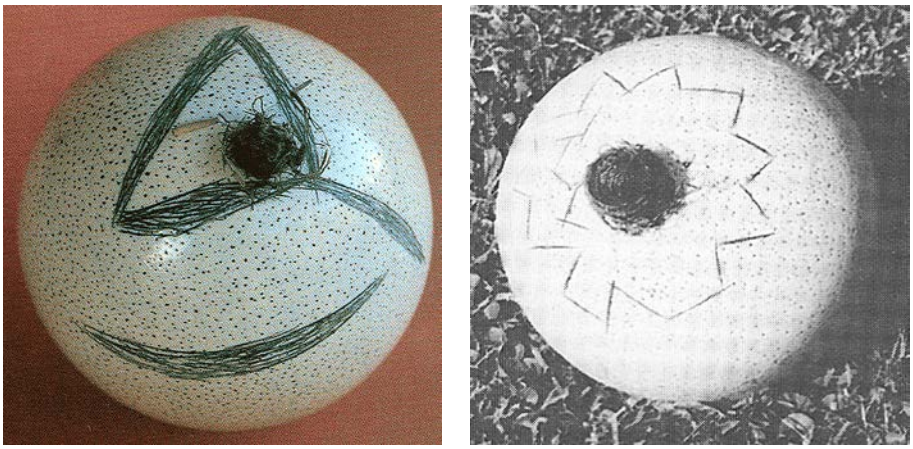
> *A comparison with the practices of the historical Hottentots . . . shows that facial patterns were made throughout historical times to the present day.*
>
> (Rudner 1982: 171)

The same is true of 'Bushman groups' (Rudner 1982: 210). Men and women beautified themselves with painted and tattooed designs, for cosmetic and ritual purposes, especially the initiation rites of young women, which I discuss in detail in Part III. Designs took the form of dots, stripes (Rudner 1982: figs 18 & 19), fingernail-scratched designs in body paint, as well as circular and zigzag forms. Pigments used included haematite, which yielded a red colour, specularite, powdered white quartz, white clay, charcoal (or soot, or pot-black, or ash), as well as plant pigments (Rudner 1982: 115–116, 210–211). These pigments were commonly mixed with fat before application. Designs took the form of facial masks, some of which – such as the 'gemsbok face' (Rudner 1982: fig. 1b) – were somewhat standardised. Other designs however were often individualistic and unique: Rudner cites Le Vaillant's comments about Gonaqua Khoekhoe women who painted their faces 'a hundred different ways' and their bodies 'in a thousand different ways' (Le Vaillant 1790, cited in Rudner 1982: 278, 292).

Khoe-San people also tattooed themselves with designs (Figure 5.17; see section 5.5, section 10.3). This practice had cosmetic, medical/magical, and ritual dimensions (Rudner 1982: 209). Bleek reported of Nharo women that 'Very frequently one sees women with a black stripe tattooed down the centre of the forehead, one or two horizontal ones at the corners of the eyes and a whole forest of slanting cuts on the buttocks and outside of the thighs.' The reason was 'that the men may see us pretty' (Bleek 1928: 10–11, cited in Rudner 1982: 219). Several centuries earlier, Francois Valentyn wrote of the 'Gregriqua' (a Khoekhoe tribe) that:

> *The young girls 'disfigure themselves with smearings and paintings'. 'When they are asked, why they smear their bodies with such stinking grease, they reply: for the same reasons why the Dutch women deck themselves out . . . in order to please . . . men . . . and because the manners and customs of our land entail and demand it.'*
>
> (Valentyn 1726: 2:63, cited in Rudner 1982: 124)

Here, again, concepts of beauty and goodness (in the sense of adhering to custom) are 'reasons' given for the use of designs. Notice too, that the women make an explicit comparison between their motivations for body decoration and those of 'Dutch women'.



(a) Plate 43 in Valiente-Noailles (1993) (b) Plate 48 in Valiente-Noailles (1993)

FIGURE 5.6. a) Scratched design of a snake in a tree stalking a bird, as seen from below: the triangle depicts the bird, the thick line is the snake; b) the meandering line depicts the track of a worm.

5.1.2 Inspirations for designs

I have already pointed out that many decorative designs are derived from representations of actual things. As Valiente-Noailles comments:

> *Geometric designs predominate* [on the ostrich eggshells] .... *The distinction between figurative and non-figurative designs, is just a supposition of the* [Western] *observer, and a decoration that seems to us purely geometric or abstract, can hide a figurative or descroption* [sic] *purpose.*
>
> (Valiente-Noailles 1993: 165, my brackets)

This is a fundamental point that southern African researchers of engraved rock art have either missed or failed to consider; in the absence of informed comment and because these researchers do not discern any realistic object in the motif they conclude that such designs are 'abstract' or 'non-representational' (see section 2.3). In making this conclusion one may mistakenly assume that the meaning and significance of such motifs is irrecoverable and, therefore, unfathomable; hence the enquiry reaches a dead end. But this verdict is not inevitable; designs that seem 'non-representational' to an uninformed outsider may, upon inquiry, transpire to be schematised representations of objects.

In some cases the relation between signifier and signified is unique and personal. For example, the geometrical design on the ostrich eggshell in Figure 5.6a is a depiction of an incident recollected from a person's youth: a venomous snake (Black Mamba) in a tree stalking a bird (Valiente-Noailles 1993: 165, plate 43).

FIGURE 5.7. This scratched rhomboid form depicts a beetle resting on a tree. Photo by Carolina Elkin (Valiente-Noailles 1993: plate 49)

The triangular form is the bird and the line attached to the triangle represents the bird's tail. The artist explained that the snake is depicted as being small because from his perspective looking up into the branches, the snake was partly concealed. He criticised his design, explaining that it had not turned out as well as he had hoped, because of his failing eyesight and the lack of a good knife.

Another seemingly inscrutable, even 'meaningless' motif is the meandering line around the mouth of a water flask of ostrich eggshell. It represents the track of a particular worm (Figure 5.6b; Valiente-Noailles 1993: 166, plate 48).

A bone pipe decorated with dots clustered to form a rhomboid and triangles depicts 'a beetle of the Carabidae family, accustomed to rest on tree trunks of the same colour, and mimicking its bark' (Figure 5.7; Valiente-Noailles 1993: 167, plate 49). In these cases the subject and its representation was unique and understanding was only possible because an informed person was able to provide an interpretation. These examples convinced me that at the GDC we are dealing with a similar principle. The motifs are meaningful albeit schematised depictions of objects and concepts.

5.1.3 The power of decorative designs

Certain designs in particular contexts can confer protection too. Lorna Marshall recorded that amongst the !Kung she knew, a girl at the end of her menarcheal

rite is rubbed with a paste of pulverised plants, then rubbed with fat before the women that take care of her at this time apply designs to her body:

> *The girl is then marked with ritual markings. If tsi* [possibly *Bauhinia esculenta,* an important food plant] *is available, it would be used. If the tsi season is past and none is available, crushed haematite is used. The tsi, roasted in the n/um fire, or the haematite is made into a paste with fat. The mother or the other woman who has bathed the girl takes this substance onto her finger and draws a line with it down the girl's throat, chest and abdomen, thickly covering the umbilicus with the paste. She draws a similar line down the girl's back. We were told that the line over the abdomen makes the girl's heart strong to bear hunger so that she will not greedily ask for food. The paste on the umbilicus makes the girl grow fat. . . . A design is then painted on the girl's face. The design is red. It is the same design that is painted on the face of a bride at the time of her wedding. A line about a quarter of an inch wide is drawn across her forehead curving down each cheek to the nose. No one could tell us about the origin of the design or its possible symbolic associations, but we were told that it keeps sickness away.*
>
> (Marshall 1999: 200, my brackets)

In this way, the newly initiated woman is protected from harm through the use of powerful designs made of powerful media. If she married before her first menstruation her husband too is protected with a design:

> *Without this protection his wife's menstruation would cause him to be weak and tired and to have pains in his bones. Furthermore, he would have bad luck in hunting and be liable to serious injury. To prevent all this, he is given a ritual bath by his wife's mentor. . . . A design is then painted on his body with a paste made of marrow, if available, or fat, mixed with n/um plants. The plants used in this ritual; are those the healers keep in their tortoise shells. . . . The mentor draws lines with it up the backs of the young man's legs, over his buttocks, up his back and across his shoulders, on his upper arms, down his chest, abdomen, the fronts of his legs, and over his feet. Circles are drawn around his eyes. Thus striped in black, he looks beautiful, we were told, and his legs would be strong for running and his arms strong for shooting, and the poison on his arrows would be strong to kill the game. His strength and skills ritually protected, he brings strength to his group.*
>
> (Marshall 1999: 200–201)

Again, designs – in this case made with explicitly powerful substances – protect, enhance performance and beautify.

Decorative patterns play a similar role amongst other Khoe-San people. Ansie Hoff interviewed many Khoekhoen women in the 1980s. She reports the importance of body and facial designs on a 'new' woman, a person who has emerged

from isolation during her first menstruation (Hoff 1990: 177–179, 1995). The old women who look after her paint her face with a design called the gemsbok pattern, as well as '*toesteek*' eyebrows (makeup applied over the eyebrows, thus linking them). Although Hoff does not say explicitly that the designs are inherently powerful they do seem to have protective properties. For example, the joined eyebrows are considered to make the woman attractive to the mythological Water Snake. This emulative action is believed to associate the woman with the Water Snake and thus gain its protection and favour. During this time the woman's legs and arms are also painted with zigzag patterns. The same patterns are used at other important times including the time after birth (Hoff 1995: 34).

Incised grid and mesh designs are also incorporated into items directly linked to puberty rituals amongst the !Ko. Heinz mentions that:

> *On her final day the initiated wears two 12-inch straight decorated sticks . . . which hang from her necklace decorated with beads and flower-pods. These are made by her male grandparents and, say the !kõ, decorated with simple designs for aesthetic effect (?). They are worn to strengthen her back and must be flawlessly straight. When the girl has completed her second period they are burnt to produce charcoal for her tattoos.*
>
> (Heinz 1966: 122–123, his brackets)

In both of the ethnographic examples I have cited, designs afford the 'new woman' protection from dangerous forces. Her protection, in turn, benefits her community by bringing luck and prosperity. This protective and fortune bringing aspect of particular designs plays a key role in my interpretation of the incised GDC motifs.

5.1.4 'Walking softly' – the properties of decorative designs

What do Khoe-San people themselves say and think about the the meaning and significance of the decorative designs and patterns? Comments made by late 20th-century Kalahari San people about the creation of design motifs and their meaning provide an analogy for understanding the decorative designs and patterns in the GDC.

People frequently talk about the beauty of designs: for example, a young girl explained to Valiente-Noailles why she chose to decorate an ostrich egg water flask with a motif depicting 'the track of a small mouse running inside a house . . . from one seed to another' (Valiente-Noailles 1993: 166). She was copying a design that her late father used to make: she recalled to Valiente-Noailles that

> *[h]er father told her: 'I'll show you how to do it, because that way you will make the egg beautiful and at the same time show how the mouse runs.'*
>
> (Valiente-Noailles 1993: 166)

The girl used a design that she had learnt from her father. The design, she felt, was beautiful and interesting because it showed 'how the mouse runs'. The 'reasons' for making the design, therefore, are complex and include the regard for a loved one (nostalgia, perhaps?) as well notions of beauty and interest.

Valiente-Noailles has observed that the Kua equate beauty and goodness:

> *a synonymity exists between 'beautiful' and 'good' and the ideas underlying these two qualities coincide and are to some extent intertwined*
>
> (Valiente-Noailles 1993: 161)

The concepts of 'beauty' and 'goodness' seem to be embodied in certain body designs that are applied in particular ceremonial contexts, such as puberty celebrations and wedding rituals, more of which later (see Part IV).

Wiessner (1984) has recorded the thoughts of some Kalahari Ju|'hoansi about the designs that they make on headbands; these have a bearing on understanding the GDC designs. The women said of the 'major' design of the headband that

> *it should not cover the entire headband, but should wander amid the background like 'a person who walks softly through the bush back to camp'*
>
> (Wiessner 1984: 201)

Wiessner explains that:

> *The concept of 'walking softly' was frequently mentioned to me in connection with headband designs and has wide application in San life. It evokes the modesty of a hunter who brings home a large kill, quietly leaves it in the bush behind his camp, and sits down at his fire without a word. It evokes the discretion generally used in traditional San social life which helps to preserve harmony. The paradox of a message associated with quiet and modesty being sent through a beautiful, visible and colorful item which is worn in times of joy, fertility, and plenty gives headbands powerful impact.*
>
> (Wiessner 1984: 201)

'Walking softly' is the metaphor that they thread bead by bead into the headband; the design embodies the metaphor. The power of such metaphors-as-decorative designs is that they are worn and displayed and admired and enjoyed. They beautify and fortify whatever they adorn (see section 6.3).

The women told Wiessner that certain designs are more 'suitable' for headbands than others. They felt that headband designs from Tsumkwe (a government settlement) would not do for them – the Tsumkwe designs were like 'many people talking at once', 'gaudy and overdone ... and reminiscent of the loud and indiscreet relations at Tsumkwe' (Wiessner 1984: 217). They explained to Wiessner why they were 'reluctant' to use certain exotic design elements that she showed them: 'we do not want to copy these designs as we do not know the people who made them' (Wiessner 1984: 210).

Wiessner noted that people had names for all the designs, for example, 'puff adder', and 'tracks of a urinating bull' (Figure 5.8; Wiessner 1984: 201), 'python' and 'clouds' (Biesele pers. comm. in Eastwood & Eastwood 2006: 157–158). The names given to a particular design might vary from individual to individual. Eastwood and Eastwood record that:

> *Khwe informants further suggested that, long ago, their apron decorations depicted the sun, the moon, and the fruits of the veld: ostrich eggs, spiny cucumbers, tuberous vegetables, and so forth.*
>
> (Eastwood & Eastwood 2006: 158–160)

The Eastwoods (2006) also relate that Khwe men and women described rayed concentric circles – in copies of rock art imagery from the central Limpopo basin shown to them by the Eastwoods – as the sun. Concentric circles they identified as the giant land snail, *Achatina* sp. They suggested that certain circular motifs represented the moon in various phases. Others thought that the motifs had animal associations, such as 'eye of owl' or 'eye of chameleon'. Circles with rays were said to represent the sun, and, as with other circular motifs, had animal associations such as 'hedgehog'. Shostak (1976: 177) recorded several designs and their names – 'zebra face', 'zebra body', 'gemsbok face', 'vulture wings' and 'lettuce caterpillar' – but she also explained that:

> *Not all women sew with these designs in mind. Some women simply sew 'their thoughts', while others sew traditional designs without knowing their names. But even when a woman purposely uses a traditional design, she uses it more as a reference than as a pattern to follow closely ... there is tremendous variation in how any design is executed: one woman may sew it mechanically ... another may conceive of it so freely that no visual unity is achieved.*
>
> (Shostak 1976: 178)

The question of the 'meaning' of headband motifs raises issues that are important for understanding the GDC decorative elements. Some 24 years after the publication of her paper, I asked Wiessner whether the people she spoke to mentioned the 'symbolism' of the designs. A very Western question to ask, but

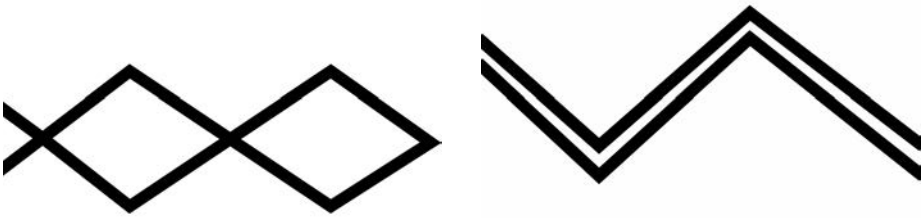


FIGURE 5.8. Two named design motifs. Puff adder (at left) and 'tracks of a urinating bull' (right). After Wiessner 1984: figure 2a & b)

one which she, also a Westerner, understood. I was initially disappointed by Wiessner's response:

> *I spent lots of time trying to figure out if there was significance to patterns but could find none.... I do not think there is any symbolism in patterns today, but there may very well have been in the past. So much changed after the Bantu came. For instance the Bushmen used to have exogamous 'name groups' or clans associated with certain territories (n!ores) with names like giraffe, duiker, water roots, etc. But all of this has been forgotten and even in the 1970s it was not possible to get more information.*
>
> (Wiessner, pers. comm.)

'Too late', I thought, 'the symbolism has been forgotten. How will we ever recover the meaning of the GDC decorative designs?' On reflection though, I realised that the people had already explained what the headband designs 'meant'. To press for a 'deeper symbolism' was to misunderstand the significance of decorative designs and to encourage people to say 'the thing which was not' (Swift 1999: 248).

5.2 Decorative designs and patterns in the GDC

My search of the GDC revealed many motifs depicting distinctive and characteristically Khoe-San designs. Like the apron and ornament motifs, the decorative designs and patterns are emblazoned on the rock surfaces as discrete items, projected metrically. Decorative designs and patterns are juxtaposed with motifs of anthropo- and zoomorphs (chapter 4), clothing motifs (chapter 7) and items of adornment (chapter 8). The designs are similar to those that Khoe-San people and their ancestors have used to decorate themselves and their possessions with

for thousands of years, but here it is the rock that has been decorated. The motifs depict the following:

- Designs similar to beaded designs;
- Designs similar to those painted on people and on their possessions;
- Designs similar to markings tattooed on people;
- Patterns similar to those made on implements.

Some design motifs may have been used in beaded designs, e.g. as apron decorations, as well as painted designs made on the body; there is, therefore, some 'overlap' between these two categories.

5.3 Beaded designs

5.3.1 Apron decorations

Želizko (possibly after Holub) recognized that some of the GDC motifs depicted *Fellverzierungen*, or 'hide decorations' (also called apron decorations) and removed some of the most ornate examples.

These resemble the decorative beaded designs that women sew onto aprons and other items (Figure 5.9). Each design is unique, just as are the beadwork designs made by Khoe-San women. These are ornate designs that would make an apron (and the rock surface) look beautiful.

Despite these removals many motifs resembling decorative beaded designs remain in the GDC. These pecked and incised motifs include rayed designs, coils, semi-circles, and circular clusters of beads (Figure 5.10).

5.3.2 Triangle and diamond motifs

Beautiful triangular and diamond-shaped motifs, scratched into the rock, are a feature of Gestoptefontein Hill. They were first noted by Van Riet Lowe:

> *During the recent survey* [i.e. an archaeological and geological survey of the Harts, Vaal and Riet River valleys] *scores of sites containing rock engravings and pitted figures chipped or pecked out of the rock were examined, and in many widely separated cases we found finely incised lines forming simple geometric patterns (criss-crosses, triangles, squares, ladders, and variations of these) always finely engraved with a graving tool under the chipped-out figures. . . .*
>
> (Van Riet Lowe 1937: 255, my brackets)

He refers to 'simple geometric patterns' that include 'criss-crosses, triangles, squares and ladders' but here I shall only discuss the 'triangles' (Figure 5.11; I discuss the other patterns in section 5.6).

(a) Courtesy Iziko SAM (10653)

(b) Courtesy Iziko SAM (10654)

(c) Courtesy MuseumAfrica (1995-2-418)

(d) Courtesy Iziko SAM (10652)

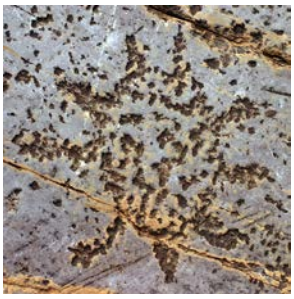
FIGURE 5.9. Examples of modern beadwork designs.

Subsequently, Van Riet Lowe argues that markings of this type, which he calls 'line-engraved ... geometrical figures' are the oldest rock engravings in South Africa (1945: 332, 333) although he concedes that:

> *[W]e cannot say whether the difference in age is to be gauged in minutes or millennia. All we can say with certainty is that in South Africa we have evidence that geometrical figures were engraved by man before he engraved animal figures, and that these line-engraved figures are older than the more common 'engravings' where the technique employed by the artist was a pecking or stippling process.*
>
> (Van Riet Lowe 1945: 333)

This matter of the relative age of the incised motifs in comparison with overlying pecked images is not one that can be resolved easily in the absence of absolute dating (Butzer *et al.* 1979: 1210).

The Focks make no mention of the incised triangular and diamond-shaped motifs in the GDC, although they were aware of at least some incised motifs: 'Of special interest [are engravings] with fine, scratched lines (hairlines), which cannot be interpreted' (Fock & Fock 1984: 117, transl. N. Mössmer; square brackets by Mössmer, round brackets by the Focks).



(a) Boschpoort Road South (BRS3 19)

(b) Gestoptefontein Hill (S5 W47)

(c) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW05 SE)

(d) Klerksdorp Museum (KM042513)

(e) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW20 NW01)

(f) Driekuil Hill (DH26)

(g) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW56 NE13)

(h) Boschpoort Road South (BRS3 16)

(i) Skeleton Hill (SH06)

FIGURE 5.10. These and similar-looking motifs in the GDC are interpreted as depictions of beadwork designs: Rayed motifs, (a) (b) (c); Coil motifs, (d) & (e); Motifs resembling circular clusters of beads, (f), (g) & (h); Cross-shaped motif (i).

Triangular and diamond designs feature in beaded apron designs, borders to aprons, ostrich eggshells, melon knives and many other items (Figure 5.4). Some of them look like the design motifs that some Ju|'hoansi women identified as 'puff adder' and 'tracks of a urinating bull' (Wiessner 184: 201).

In the GDC the designs are often built up of sets of multiple and parallel scratches. There are many instances in the GDC, mostly on Gestoptefontein Hill, but also on the nearby Driekuil Hill, Married Quarters and Vorster's Farm sites (Figure 5.12). They vary too in recognisability – some are fairly symmetrical linear patterns – others are difficult to distinguish because the design motif has not been skillfully developed or the design seems incomplete, perhaps abandoned.

5.4 Painted designs

There are motifs in the GDC that resemble designs painted on the body, clothing, ostrich eggs and other items. For example, a pecked design on a surface filled with zoomorphic and clothing motifs looks similar to the facial designs of a newly-initiated Khoe-San woman (Figure 5.13).

A 17th-century visitor to the Cape observed that Khoe-San people 'with a red stone write stripes and crosses on each others' foreheads' (Schouten, in Raven-Hart 1971: 84): there are a few similar designs in the GDC (Figure 5.13) as well as other rock art sites in the North West and Northern Cape provinces. Another motif, of two joined 'arches' may refer to the so-called *'toesteek'* eyebrows, a form of face-painting in which two arches are painted above the eyes (Figure 5.13). Many other motifs in the GDC may depict body designs (Figure 5.14).

Other pecked GDC designs resemble motifs painted on leather bags and aprons by some Khoe-San groups (Figure 5.15).

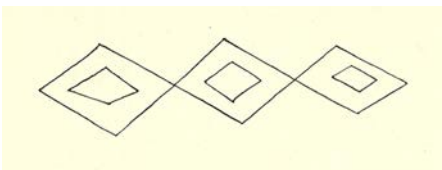
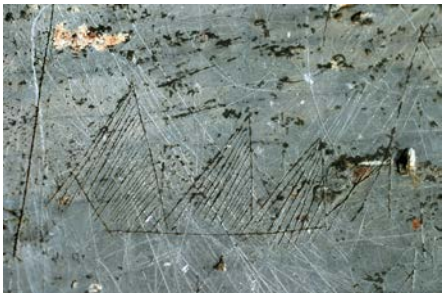


FIGURE 5.11. Scratched pattern of a chain of nested diamonds, possibly from a GDC site. (Van Riet Lowe 1937: fig. 1.iv)



(a) Married Quarters (MQ05 SW02)

(b) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW55 NE01)

(c) Driekuil Hill (DH291)

(d) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW58 NW10)

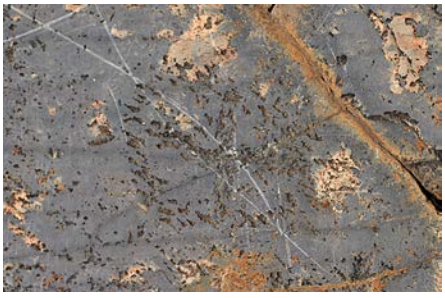
(e) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW73 SE01)

(f) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW72 NW08)

FIGURE 5.12. Diamond and triangle patterns: (a) triangular motifs with cross-hatched interiors; (b) nested diamonds (top) with linked diamond forms (below); (c) nested diamond motifs; (d) possible hair ornament with nested diamond motif]; (e) and (f) incomplete-looking nested diamond motifs.

(a) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW19 SE05)

(b)



(c) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW22 NE01)

(d) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW55 NE08)

FIGURE 5.13. (a) A pecked design motif from Gestoptefontein Hill looks like; (b) the designs painted on the faces of these two women from near Upington, Northern Cape Province (photograph by Nigel Crawhall); (c) circle and cross motif, perhaps a body design; (d) design motif that may depict a style of face painting in which the eyebrows are emphasised and joined with paint.

(a) Charlie Badenhorst (CB04)

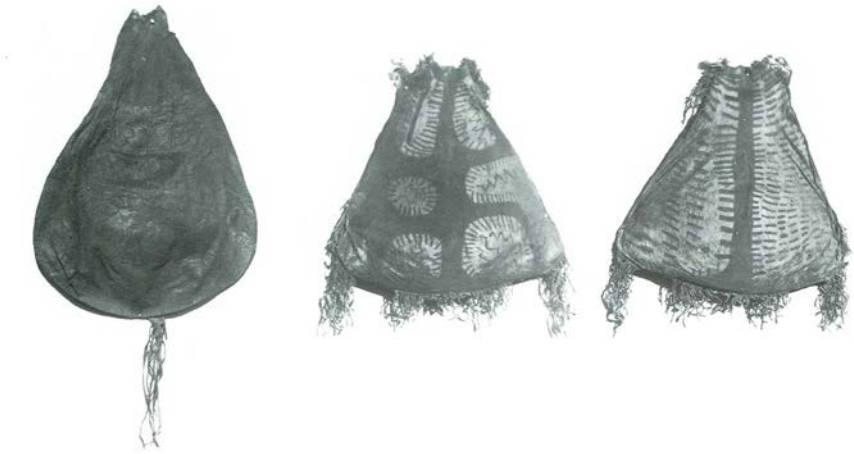
(b) Klerksdorp Museum (KM042508)

(c) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW20 NW02). Image has been rotated 90 degrees to fit better on the page.

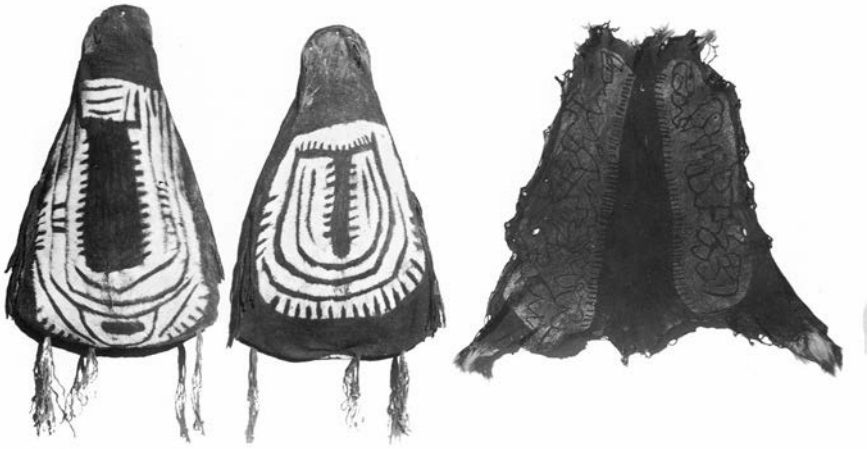
FIGURE 5.14. Possible body design motifs from the GDC.

(a) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW55 SW01)

(b) Iziko, SAM (SAM10643)

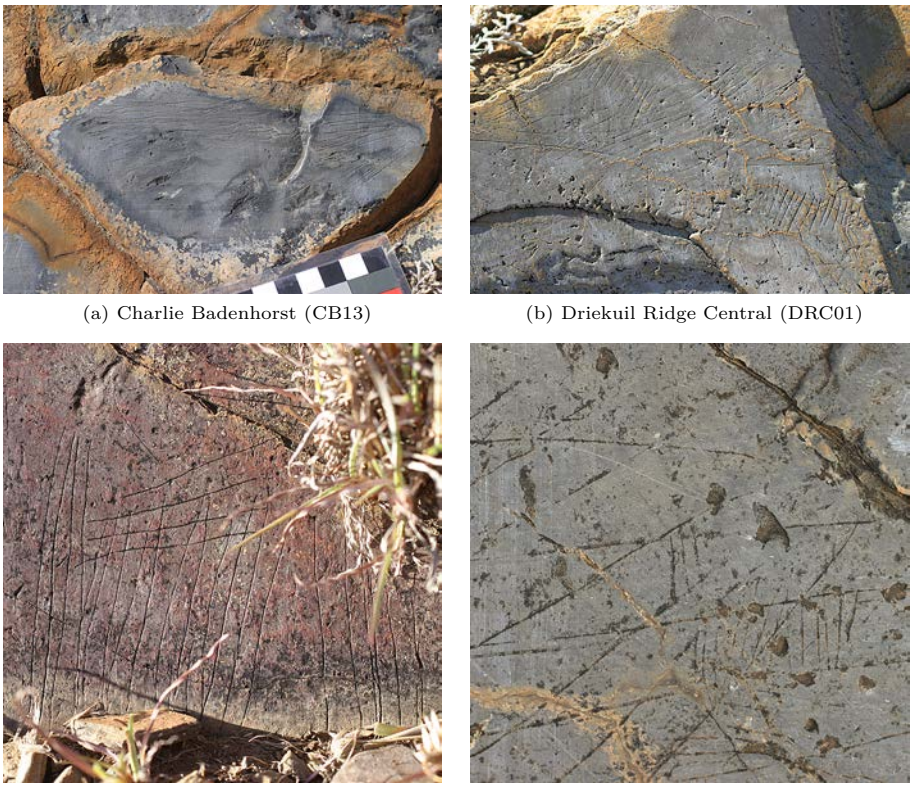


(c) Fock (1979: fig. 144)



(d) Fock (1979: fig. 144)

FIGURE 5.15. (a) A pecked design from Gestoptefontein Hill (NW55 SW01, 3282828) is comprised of an arrangement of lines. This design looks similar to designs painted on (b) a back apron and (c) bags, knapsacks, karosses and aprons made by Khoe-San groups that lived along the lower Nossob River, Botswana.



(a) Charlie Badenhorst (CB13)

(b) Driekuil Ridge Central (DRC01)

(c) Skeleton Hill (SH12)

(d) Boschpoort Road North (BRN1 04)

FIGURE 5.16. Sets of relatively parallel and evenly spaced (RPES) incisions.

5.5 Tattoos

Arrangements of what I call roughly parallel and evenly spaced (RPES) incisions occur on most of the GDC outcrops (Figure 5.16). This category of motif is often pecked over and, frequently, juxtaposed with other motifs and markings, although they do also occur in isolation. RPES incisions vary in size (the length of the individual incisions), the distance between incisions, and in the degree of parallelity. It is a category that is convenient for classifying motifs that all have a broadly similar configuration.

The variety of RPES incisions makes it unlikely that they all 'mean' the same thing. There are at least four possible explanatory contexts for RPES incisions:

1. A proportion of RPES incisions may be gestural, i.e. they are not patterns but markings, perhaps with a similar performance-related function as the sets of parallel and overlapping incisions that are discussed in subsection 3.4.1.

(a) Kua woman (Valiente-Noailles 1993: plate 37)

(b) G|wi female initiate (Silberbauer 1965: 85)

(c) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW57 SE44)

(d) Driekuil Hill (DH183)

(e) Driekuil Hill (DH129e)

FIGURE 5.17. Some of the RPES incisions resemble Khoe-San tattoo marks.

2. Some RPES incisions may depict cross-hatching (see section 5.6).
3. Other sets of RPES incisions may be incomplete or indecipherable incised aprons, triangles and diamonds, grids and meshes.
4. Certain RPES incisions resemble tattoo marks (Figure 5.17).

Arrangements of RPES incisions that are short (less than or equal to 50 mm) and quite closely spaced seem reminiscent of tattoo marks (Figure 5.17), as Gerhard Fock (1969: 126) has suggested of motifs elsewhere. Tattooing is widely practised by Khoe-San in association with initiation, marriage, and hunting rituals (see 'Body designs' under subsection 5.1.1; Schapera 1930; Silberbauer 1963; Hoff 1990; Barnard 1992; Valiente-Noailles 1993; Marshall 1999; Hollmann 2004; see Mitchell & Plug 1997 for an overview of Khoisan tattooing practices). I discuss the possible significance of motifs that resemble Khoe-San tattoo designs later (section 10.3).

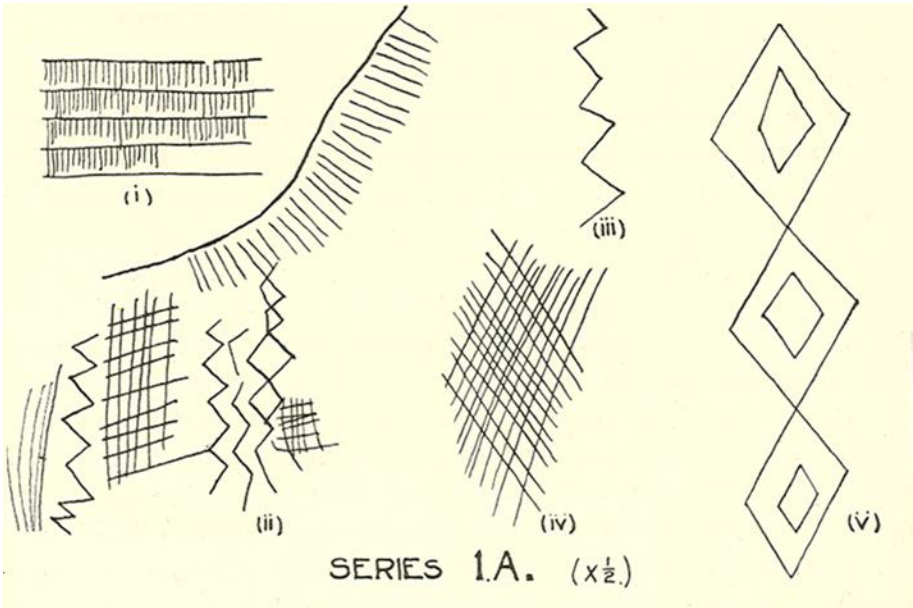


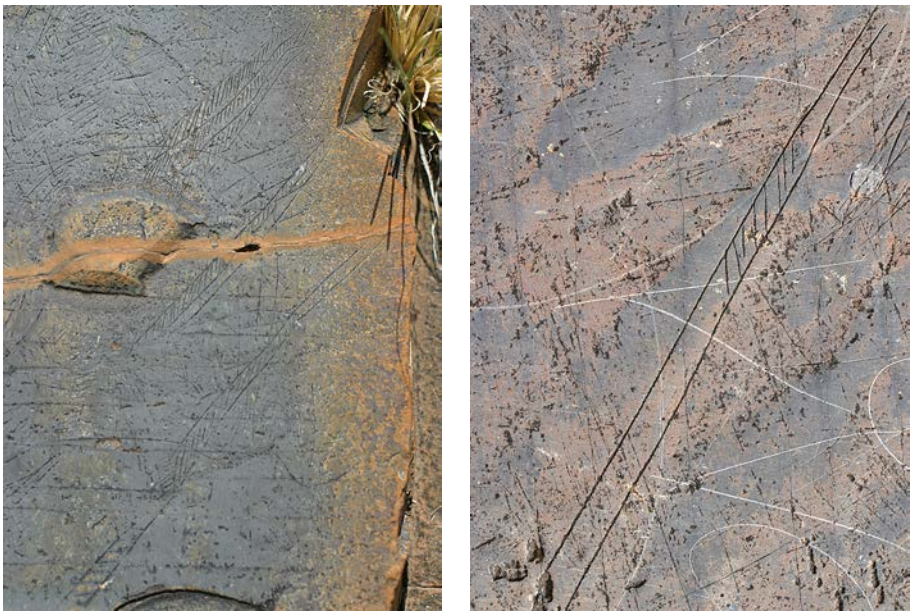
FIGURE 5.18. Van Riet Lowe categorised incised motifs in the GDC as Series Ia, 'Simple and finely engraved geometric figures' (1937: 259). He describes them as 'criss-crosses, triangles, squares, ladders, and variations of these' (1937: 255). (Van Riet Lowe 1937: fig. 1)

5.6 Patterns on implements, ornaments and other items

Van Riet Lowe recorded the presence of 'simple geometric patterns' in the GDC (as well as other sites, see subsection 5.3.2) (Figure 5.18). These are similar to the kinds of patterns that Khoe-San people make on various implements, ornaments and other items, such as ostrich eggshells (see 'Decorated artefacts' under subsection 5.1.1). I have adapted and refined Van Riet Lowe's observations and coined new descriptive terms for some of the patterns. There are five configurations:

1. 'Grids' made of cuts intersecting at approximately 90°
2. 'Meshes' comprising arrangements of small 'diamond' shapes
3. Arrangements of 'nested' triangles and diamonds (see Figure 5.11)
4. Relatively parallel and evenly spaced (RPES) sets of incisions (see section 5.5)
5. Zigzag incisions

I have already dealt with the triangular and diamond-shaped patterns, and some of the possible referents of RPES incisions. Here I discuss the zigzag incisions, certain configurations of RPES incisions that may depict cross-hatching,



(a) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW08 NE02) (b) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW09 NW03

FIGURE 5.19. Examples of cross hatching from Gestoptefontein Hill.

as well as the 'grids' and 'meshes' and their similarity to patterns made on Khoe-San artefacts.

5.6.1 Zigzag incisions

Although Van Riet Lowe illustrated some zigzag incisions as an example of some of the 'simple geometric patterns' in the GDC (Figure 5.18) he does not single them out either by naming them or discussing them. There are not very many zigzag incisions in the GDC; I recorded about 24 instances. They are, as Van Riet Lowe observed, part of the general corpus of incised patterns in the GDC. It is not clear whether all, or some, of the zigzag incisions are referential or gestural.

5.6.2 Cross-hatching (RPES incisions)

There are several instances in the GDC of RPES incisions that are contained at top and bottom by borders of horizontal incised lines (Figure 5.19).

This arrangement resembles the 'cross-hatching' that is such a characteristic Khoe-San decorative pattern. It is a particularly common feature of the incised markings on ostrich eggshells (Figure 5.20). Similar patterns (also called

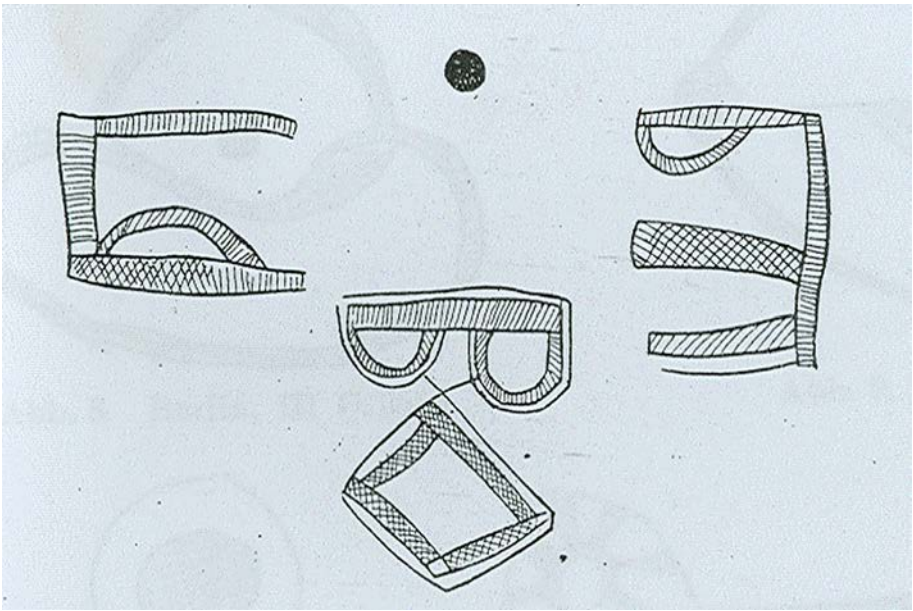


FIGURE 5.20. Detail of cross-hatched motifs on an ostrich eggshell (from Luschan 1923: fig. 6). The black circle represents the drinking hole. Two kinds of motif are present: roughly parallel and evenly spaced (RPES) incisions and 'mesh'-shaped incisions. Compare these with Figure 5.19.

'hatched bands') appear on fragments of ostrich eggshell recovered from archaeological deposits dating back to 60 000 BP (Texier *et al.* 2010: fig. 1b, d–g, i).

5.6.3 Grids and meshes

Grids and meshes are among the most numerous of the GDC motifs and no interpretation of the rock art of the GDC would be complete without a consideration of their significance. The patterns are not unique to the GDC but they are much more numerous here than at other South African rock art sites, both painted and engraved. Why are there so many of them in the GDC? What do they mean? This strange subset of signs cries out for investigation.

They occur on at least seven of the thirteen GDC outcrops. I did not find any on six sites: Vorster's Farm, Site 13, Gestoptefontein Mountain, The Mound or Driekuil Central Ridge. The reasons for the absence of incised patterns from these sites could be twofold. Most obviously, in the case of Gestoptefontein Mountain, but also in the case of Vorster's Farm, Site 13 and Charlie Badenhorst, the surfaces have been destroyed by mining and probably too, by collectors – there is nothing, or very little, left to see. In the case of The Mound

FIGURE 5.21. A scatter of peck marks over an incised grid (CB13 2616).

and Driekuil Central Ridge the absence of patterns may indicate lower intensity usage of these particular outcrops, as the overall density of markings at these sites is very low.

These patterns are numerous and easily made. By cutting two sets of parallel and evenly spaced cuts into the rock at 90° to each other, one makes a grid. A mesh results when two sets of parallel and evenly spaced cuts are superimposed at 45°. At one stage I wondered whether these two forms were in fact distinct. There are many situations in which the two orientations are juxtaposed, however, and I have concluded that there is indeed a clear distinction between the two patterns. The motifs are never very extensive in area – grid and mesh motifs range in size from about 10×10 mm to approximately 500×200 mm. Incised grids are more common than meshes and also exhibit the most variation in style; incised grids range from neat and clearly scratched examples to lightly scratched and less symmetrical motifs. Recognisable mesh forms are generally compact and clear. Most commonly they comprise small 'swatches', as if people were concerned only to make the bare minimum necessary for recognition as a pattern.

(a) Skeleton Hill (SH 15)

(b) Charlie Badenhorst (CB15)

(c) Driekuil Hill (DH158)

(d) Driekuil Hill (DH339)

(e) Charlie Badenhorst (CB08)

FIGURE 5.22. Aggregations of five or more swatches of grid, mesh and RPES incised patterns on a single surface occur on several of the GDC sites.

FIGURE 5.23. An incised mesh pattern that fills the entire surface of the rock facet (BRS2 09 1394). It is one of an aggregation of incised grids and meshes on a single surface.

Contexts and associations of grids and meshes

Grid and mesh forms occur in the following three main iconographic contexts:

1. Single instances and aggregations
2. Forms underneath pecked motifs
3. Forms incorporated into representations of artefacts

Single instances and aggregations On a few of the GDC outcrops (GH, DH, SH, BRN1) are surfaces almost entirely covered with aggregations of incised grids, meshes and RPES incisions (Figure 5.21, Figure 5.22). These are often mixed, i.e. two or three types of pattern are juxtaposed. Individual arrangements of incisions are often sensitive to the format of the rock surface; the pattern swatch is fitted onto a portion of the rock defined by the natural fault lines of the surface (Figure 5.23).

Forms underneath pecked motifs Van Riet Lowe emphasised that at Gestoptefontein in particular, these scratched design motifs 'consistently *underlie*' pecked motifs (1937: 255, original emphasis). Grids, meshes and RPES incisions are the main categories of scratched designs that are involved in this

relationship; by contrast, for example, diamond- and triangle motifs seem never to be involved in superpositioning; they are only ever juxtaposed with other motifs. The grids and meshes on the other hand are very often underneath other, pecked motifs. There are variations in the way that these motifs underlie pecked motifs. In many instances the scratched grid is covered by a portion of a pecked motif and in these cases it is not easy to argue that the artists were making a point of superimposing images on top of grids. Sometimes, however, the overlying motif seems to have been placed such that it covers most of the underlying scratched grid (Figure 5.24). This kind of superimposition seems quite deliberate and therefore meaningful: I discuss possible interpretive scenarios in a moment. Some of the superimpositions involve the juxtaposition of grids and meshes with clothing, zoomorphic and anthropomorphic motifs (Figure 5.24).

Forms incorporated into representations of artefacts There a few instances in which grid and mesh motifs are incorporated into depictions of artefacts (Figure 5.25). In these cases the grid/mesh form may function as ornamental embellishment, as an infill. This mode is perhaps quite distinct from the grid/mesh contexts already mentioned, in which it is the presence of the grid/mesh pattern itself that is being emphasised.

Superimpositioning of incised and pecked motifs

I pointed out that grid and mesh patterns are sometimes involved in relations of superpositioning. What is the nature of this relationship? While Van Riet Lowe and others have pointed out that grids, meshes and RPES incisions consistently underlie pecked motifs, this may not invariably be the case – I found a few cases in which it seemed that the grids could have been made at the same time as the pecked imagery (e.g. the spectacular apron at Driekuil Hill (DH63)). If this observation is correct then, to paraphrase Van Riet Lowe, the difference in age between incised grids, meshes and RPES incisions and the overlying pecked motifs may in certain cases be calculated in 'minutes' rather than 'millennia'. Indeed, in these instances the manufacture of both 'types' of image (incised and pecked) could have been simultaneous.

Notwithstanding the few possible instances that suggest that incised grids, etc. and pecked motifs may have been produced simultaneously, in the majority of cases pecked motifs overlie incised grids, meshes and RPES incisions. There are two ways of interpreting the terms of this relationship: as the appropriation of a previous and unrelated tradition, or as a 'conversation' between two visually distinct but conceptually linked systems of representation that form part of a single artistic tradition.

(a) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW55 NW02)

(b) Close up of (a)

(c) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW64 SE11)

(d) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW65 SW11)

FIGURE 5.24. There are a few instances in which the artists made pecked motifs directly over incised grids and meshes. (a) and (b) Anthropomorph pecked over incised grids; (c) apron motif pecked over a grid?; (d) apron motif pecked over a grid?.

FIGURE 5.25. Incised mesh technique is here incorporated into an apron motif. Gestoptefontein Hill (SW07 NE01)

An important implication of the first scenario – in which the manufacturers of the later, pecked images chose to make some of their images on top of the incised grids and meshes – concerns the way in which the two components are conceptualised. Perhaps the incised designs represent a distinct and prior tradition, created in conceptual and temporal isolation from the later pecked imagery. But how; then, does one explain the deliberate superimposition of pecked motifs on top of the incised motifs? It seems unlikely that the pecked images were superimposed on the incised grids as a means of concealing or obliterating them, because only a limited number of incised motifs were singled out for superimposition. If annihilation was the intention then one might expect far more instances of superimpositioning. Perhaps, instead, the incised motifs had power and superpositioning was the way to incorporate it into the subsequently pecked design.

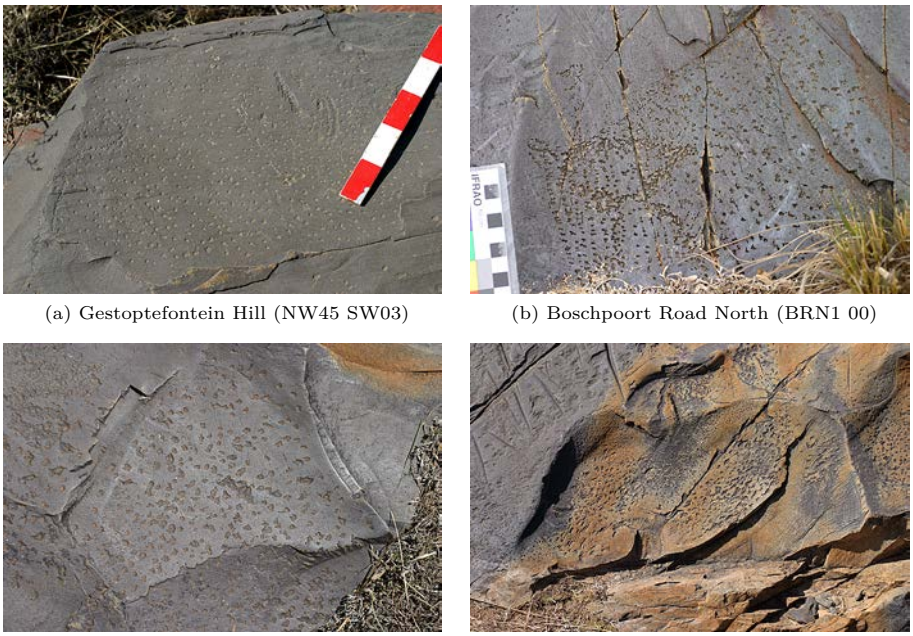
The other possibility is that the incised patterns were a linked component or a prior stage in the ritual of rock marking at the GDC; one cannot automatically equate incised rock markings with an earlier and distinct tradition. There may be two linked systems of representation at the GDC as practised for example by the Australian Yolngu in which figurative and geometric systems of representation are part of the same tradition (Morphy 1991). In this scenario,

the 'same' people who went to the GDC to make the incised motifs incised grids also made the pecked engravings. The GDC artists may have used the techniques of incising and pecking to make conceptual distinctions between distinct categories of rock marking. It appears that the incised technique was mostly reserved for decorative designs and patterns (i.e. grids, meshes, triangles and diamonds, with a few incised zoomorphic and clothing forms) while pecking was used to create clothing and anthropomorphic and zoomorphic imagery.

The 'meaning' of grid and mesh patterns

Displays of grid and mesh patterns emerged in the GDC as people visited the outcrops and carried out certain activities appropriate to the place (see Part IV). The meanings and significance of the grid and mesh patterns – and indeed all the GDC 'rock art', gestural and referential – need to be appreciated in terms of the overarching metaphor that animated the place, which I discuss in Part IV. Like the 'puff adder' design and the 'tracks of a urinating bull' the grid and mesh patterns (and probably all the other GDC decorative designs) would have had names, though these may never be known. If, as is the case with many decorative designs, the grid and mesh patterns are not 'abstract' or 'non-representational' then what do these patterns connote? The 'reasons' why people made grids and meshes on the rocks may be found in the poetics of ornamentation that inspires the decoration of a wide variety of objects – clothing, bags, sticks and ostrich eggshells, to mention a few. I pointed out earlier (section 5.1) that decorative designs incorporate strong feelings of love, affection, as well as notions of 'beauty' and 'goodness'. Recall that one researcher observed that people tended to use the same design on various surfaces: an arrangement of designs made on the body will often be replicated on objects, in the apparent belief that 'if these markings beautify the body they also embellish these objects' (Valiente-Noailles 1993: 163). Motifs are thus very personal things: they are part of the body itself and they also adorn one's possessions. Motifs are also family and group affairs: they are sometimes passed down to subsequent generations (e.g. the Kua girl who decorated an ostrich eggshell with a design she copied from her late father). Groups of people, for example, the Ju|'hoansi women interviewed by Polly Wiessner (1984), had decided preferences for particular design layouts and linked these to the psychological characteristics of the people that produced them (see subsection 5.1.4).

Patterns, ornaments and items of adornment are all efficacious too; their beauty makes them so. As a Kua person explained to Valiente-Noailles about a tortoise-shell medicine container adorned with bead pendants:



(a) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW45 SW03)

(b) Boschpoort Road North (BRN1 00)

(c) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW56 NW41)

(d) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW57 SE03)

FIGURE 5.26. Surfaces covered with a uniform and widespread scatter of pecks. I suggest that these decorated surfaces may depict the spotted hide of an animal, perhaps a snake.

> *It is an ornament. In this way we show that we are really asking for a person's recovery. This is why we have to make the box beautiful.*
>
> (Valiente-Noailles 1993: EC 84: 32)

Similar sentiments are expressed about ostrich eggshell beadwork: Dowson cites a personal communication from Wiessner:

> *When preparing for a trance dance, people adorn themselves with ostrich eggshell beads to impress bystanders but, more importantly, to make themselves look strong and attractive to the spirits with whom they communicate when they enter the spirit world.*
>
> (Dowson 1989: 85)

In this way Khoe-San people associate strength beauty and efficacy with items of adornment in general and motifs in particular. The grid and mesh designs share similar associations as the designs and patterns described in the ethnography – they are beautiful and that means they are strong.

(a) Married Quarters (MQ01 SW02)

(b) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW65 SW09)

(c) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW50 SE07)

(d) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW55 NE11)

FIGURE 5.27. There are a number of instances in which people filled smaller facets of rock with roughly even pecks (a) and (b). In other cases they placed peck marks in small recesses (c) and (d).

5.7 Filled recesses and facets

I noticed many instances (about 60), mostly on Gestoptefontein Hill, in which the GDC artists 'filled' small recesses as well as much larger areas with a dense and uniform scatter of pecks (Figure 5.27). I was not sure how to classify these two phenomena. Are they 'gestural' or 'referential', both or neither? These two practices – the 'filling' of recesses and the creation of large 'patches' of peck marks – do not sit comfortably in either of my two categories. I see them as 'markings' and have therefore decided to assign them to the 'referential' category. They are explicable in terms of possible beliefs by the people about the nature of the outcrops, particularly Gestoptefontein Hill. I argue later in the study that the GDC 'phenomenon' is concerned closely with a 'megametaphor' of the outcrops as parts of an animal's body. It is this light that I interpret the filling of recesses and the covering of rock facets. People, I believe, were marking the animal body that was the wonderstone outcrop. The recesses and facets are thus identified as anatomical features of the creature-being's body. Similarly, the more extensive pecked areas were created with this metaphor in mind. A comment by Hübner (1871: 52) suggests that this phenomenon

impressed him too: he commented on surfaces that had been covered with a 'mass of perforations' in what he called 'a crude effort to approximate plasticity'. I think he is correct in recognising that the people who made the marks were accentuating the form of the surfaces by decorating them in this way. To me the effect created in some places is a resemblance to the spotted hide of an animal – mammal or reptile.

Chapter 6

Ethnography

Until the arrival of European explorers, traders and colonists in the subcontinent, Khoe-San people probably dressed exclusively in skin garments. In ethnographic times it was usually men who were responsible for preparing the skins, cutting the tanned hides to the required shapes and sizes for clothing and bags, and sewing them up (Bleek 1928: 9; Lee 1979: 276; Valiente-Noailles 1993: 59) although Schapera (1930: 311), citing Schultze (1907), recorded that Nama women were responsible for the tanning of hides.

6.1 Leather clothing

Khoe-San men and women dress differently and distinctively. Amongst the Kua Bushmen (speakers of |gwikwe and ‖ganakwe dialects (Valiente-Noailles 1993: 10)), infants older than a few months begin to wear clothes: boys wear a small loincloth and girls wear a front apron made of strips of leather which conform to the body's shape and conceal the genitals (Valiente-Noailles 1993: 83). Later, at 6–8 years old, or when the boy starts to feel embarrassment when his genitals are exposed, he receives a loincloth (Valiente-Noailles 1993: 91). A girl gets a back apron at around the same age, or when people notice that her private parts are exposed when she bends forward (Valiente-Noailles 1993: 92).

6.1.1 Men's loincloths

Traditional men's dress is a leather breech-clout (triangular loincloth); one point of the triangle passes between the legs and then fastened to the other two corners, which are bound around the waist (Silberbauer 1981: 224–225). The broad part of the triangle covers the loins and the two sides of the triangle hang down slightly between the wearer's legs, leaving the buttocks uncovered (Sil-

berbauer 1981: 224–225). The skin most commonly used in recent times is that of the steenbok *(Raphicerus campestris)*, a small antelope (Silberbauer 1981: 224; Valiente-Noailles 1993: 59). Schapera (1930: 67–68) reports a variation on male dress amongst 'Hottentots'; in front, men wore a small pouch-like piece of jackal or wild cat skin, fur outwards. Over their buttocks they wore a large, triangular piece of skin, with the broad part downwards so that it could be sat upon.

6.1.2 Front aprons

Older girls and all women wear back and front aprons. Sometimes women wear an additional front apron (Schapera 1930: 65; Silberbauer 1981: 225). Amongst those Khoe-San who do not keep livestock the skin of choice for a front apron is a steenbok (in the G|wi dialect the word for 'front apron', *g!eisa*, is synonymous with 'steenbok'). Softened and depilated sheep- and goatskins were favoured by the Nama, a Khoekhoen group that possessed livestock (Schapera 1930: 311). The front apron commonly took the form of a belt to which was attached a skin piece that covered the groin (Schapera 1930: 65). Želizko (1925: plate 15.1) calls this a *Leibgurtschürze (Leibgurt* is an old-fashioned word for *Gürtel*, a belt or waistband; *Schürze* is an apron (N. Mössmer, pers. comm.)). Schapera (1930: 68) has described another arrangement of front aprons amongst 'Hottentot' women: the front apron hung the fastening knot of the back apron. The bottom portion of the front apron was cut to make a fringe. Underneath this front apron was an undecorated smaller apron, that, in Schapera's (1930: 68) words, 'served more strictly the ends of modesty' because it could be drawn between the legs when the women sat down. In addition to these front aprons, Schapera mentions that women may also wear leather straps or strings of ostrich eggshell beads round their waists on which were tied tortoise-shells containing powdered herbs (1930: 68).

Commonly, the shape of a front apron is shield-like (Silberbauer 1981: 225) or semicircular (Bleek 1928: 8). Alternatively, a front apron might comprise a 'fringe' of tassels (Bleek 1928: 8) or even other objects, such as the metatarsals of the springhare amongst certain groups of G|wi (Silberbauer 1981: 225). Bleek observed that amongst the Nharon people she visited, tasselled aprons tended to be worn by girls rather than married women though this was not a 'rule' (Bleek 1928: 8). Dornan (1975: 87) also noted that girls tended to wear smaller, fringed front aprons than older women. Front aprons are often ornamented with tassels of beads or thongs (Schapera 1930: 65) and the surfaces decorated with beadwork (Dornan 1975: 87; Silberbauer 1981: 225), shells, and 'trinkets'

FIGURE 6.1. This Khoe woman is wearing an elaborate tasselled headdress. Her face is painted with designs, including large arches above her eyes. She wears a beaded choker. Her large kaross (skin cloak) is tied at the neck. She wears a large back apron and, in front two decorative front aprons with diamond shape patterns that may represent embroidered beadwork. She has several bracelts around her wrist and ankles. (ART144/1/3, The Brenthurst Library. Reproduced in Smith & Pheiffer 1994)

(Schapera 1930: 68). These details are depicted in the GDC apron motifs (see section 7.2 below).

6.1.3 Back aprons

The back apron covers the buttocks and is therefore larger and of a different shape to the front apron (Silberbauer 1981: 225). Schapera (perhaps after Bleek 1928: 8) records that the back apron is sometimes worn hanging from the shoulders, but more often it is tied at the waist, 'almost meeting over or under the apron in front' (Schapera 1930: 66). The back apron may also be threaded through a belt (Schapera 1930: 66). 'Hottentot' women wore a large, triangular skin: two ends were tied in front at the waist while the third point hung down

(a) 'San family group' from Raper & Boucher 1988: plate 69. Original artwork in Rijksprentenkabinet, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

(b) Detail of 'Khoi dancers and musicians' from Raper & Boucher 1988: plate 56. Original artwork in Rijksprentenkabinet, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

FIGURE 6.2. 'San' and 'Khoe' clothing. (a) The woman wears a headband with a design of diamond shapes. She wears a back apron and her front apron has a semicircular border and is decorated with beadwork. Her belt or girdle is made from different types of beads. (b) These women have painted faces, headbands, feathers in their hair, back aprons knotted at the front and tasselled front aprons.

behind, reaching as far as the knees (Schapera 1930: 68). Back aprons of the G|wi are also decorated with shaved patterns, tassels and fringes (Silberbauer 1981: 225); undoubtedly many other Khoe-San groups did the same. The skins of various animals used to make back aprons are mentioned in the ethnography: springbok (Valiente-Noailles 1993: 60), duiker (Dornan 1975: 87; Silberbauer 1981: 225), sheepskins (Schapera 1930: 311) and jackal skin (Dornan 1975: 87). The skins of many other species were probably used. Silberbauer observed that G|wi back aprons were shield-shaped or square:

> *The hind-skirt* (!u:sa) *is made from duiker hide. It may be shield-shaped or square, measuring some 45 cm across the top (a fore-skirt is some 22 cm across the top), and is also fitted with waist ties. Some are decorated by patterns of hair left on the hide, and tassels and fringes may be sewn on.*
>
> (Silberbauer 1981: 225, original brackets)

There are many GDC motifs that have these characteristics – large size, square and triangular forms, and possible depictions of beadwork. In addition there are what I call 'spread-eagle' forms, depictions of spread animal skins, that are probably back apron motifs (section 7.2).

6.1.4 Karosses (skin cloaks)

A kaross (skin cloak) was another important and widely used item of clothing, usually made from several smaller skins sewn together, or from the single skin of one of the larger antelopes. Both men and women wore karosses as protection against the cold and the wind, as a blanket, and as a carrying bag (e.g. Silberbauer 1981: 225; Valiente-Noailles 1993: 59). The kaross is fastened over the right and under the left shoulder – either with leather strings (Bleek 1928: 8) or the stubs of the front and back legs that were retained when the skin was cut (Silberbauer 1981) – as well as around the waist. In this way a fold is formed under the left arm. Dorothea Bleek marvelled at the facility that this fold afforded:

> *In this they carry ostrich eggshells filled with water, roots and fruit, grass or firewood, and the baby on top. It is wonderful what a load they can bear.*
>
> (Bleek 1928: 8)

Karosses wore out under these conditions and just as it was expected of a man to provide his wife-to-be with a kaross (Bleek 1928: 9), so he replaced her clothing, and their children's' too when required.[1] Silberbauer (1981: 224) estimated that in the G|wi communities in which he lived, a kaross lasted about six months before it tore. He reckoned that the curing process, not all of it requiring any labour or attention, took 14–16 days and another hour to cut out the kaross (Silberbauer 1981: 224, 225). Lee (1979: 276) calculated that it took 15 'in-camp' hours to make a kaross that lasted five years. Such discrepancies in lifespan illustrate perhaps that the lifetime of leather clothing varies according to the stresses to which it is subjected.

The Koranna had two kinds of kaross: a larger 'sleep-kaross' that would use as many as six small skins, and a smaller kaross with a collar for daily wear that used two or four skins (Figure 6.3; Engelbrecht 1933: 111). Until they have been weaned, children up to three or four years old share their mother's kaross (Schapera 1930: 66). Girls then receive a small kaross of their own, but not boys, who do not wear karosses until their teens (Schapera 1930: 66).

When cutting a single, large hide to make a kaross, the neck, forearms and stifles are often cut off and the skin is trimmed to a roughly rectangular shape (Silberbauer 1981: 225). The result is a large oblong form with short projections at each of the four corners. This characteristic form can readily be recognised in the rock art of the GDC. Karosses made of smaller skins such as steenbok (Bleek 1928: 9) sheepskins, jackal and wild cats (Schapera 1930: 67) were, amongst

[1] Amongst the Nama, as I mention earlier, both women and men tan the skins (Schapera 1930: 311).

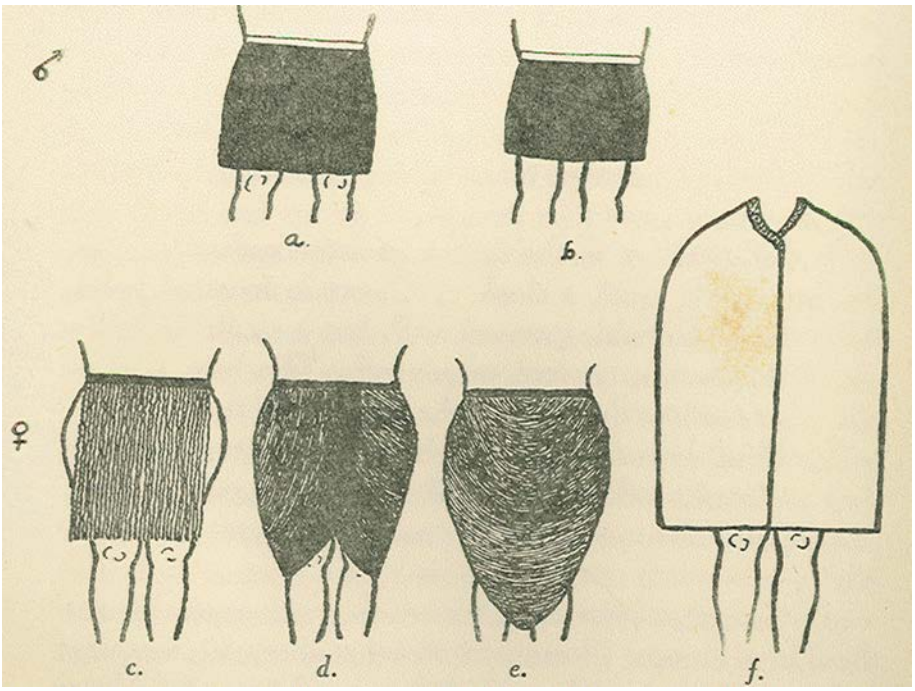


FIGURE 6.3. The forms of traditional Koranna men and women's clothing. The kaross design illustrated here is a sleep kaross, as the short edges are straight (Engelbrecht 1933: diagram 6, 111).

the Koranna people interviewed by Engelbrecht (1933: 111) cut and sewn by a trained craftsman, the cutter (!*ao-kxaob)*.

Karosses were also decorated. Amongst the Koranna, for example, the cutter used leather offcuts to make a patterned border approved by the owner (Engelbrecht 1933: 111). Others shaved the hairy side of the kaross into patterns (Silberbauer 1981: 225).

6.2 Hide preparation

Hide preparation involves the removal of the hide from the carcass, scraping the hide clean of blood, fat, and other tissue, removal of hair (when necessary), softening the skin and, finally, tanning the skin to make it strong and water-resistant. One of Valiente-Noailles's interviewees told him that: 'The work we enjoy most is the scraping of skins' (Valiente-Noailles 1993: 59, EC84: 15). I briefly describe the hide preparation process as it useful to understand how skin clothing is prepared and why the clothing items have their particular shape.

FIGURE 6.4. Karosses made of smaller skins that have been sewn together. The dancing women to the right may be wearing a combination of front aprons of leather and tassels; they wear necklaces and bracelets of coloured beads, as well as bangles and rings, perhaps of leather or wood. One of the women has many beaded strings tied into her hair and their faces are painted with various designs in black. . (ART144/1/8, The Brenthurst Library. Reproduced in Smith & Pheiffer 1994: plate 8)

Silberbauer (1981: 223–224) describes the procedure in some detail. Schapera (1930: 310–311) and Engelbrecht (1933: 109–111) also provide descriptions of phases of the hide preparation process. First the carcass is flayed. A cut is made from chin to crotch; the cut is then extended along each of the animal's hind legs. Then a cut is made from the animal's breast along each of the forelegs up to the fetlocks. The hide can now be carefully separated from the subcutaneous tissues, starting at the chest and working 'outward and backward' (Silberbauer 1981: 223); once the skin has been pulled off the animal's legs, the carcass turned over and the hide on the back is peeled off, 'working from tail to head' (Silberbauer 1981: 223). After cutting it loose from around the ears, eyes, nose and mouth, the hide is finally removed in one piece.

Next, the hide is pegged out, hair side down, on a clean surface such as dried grass (Silberbauer 1981: 224) or a larger tanned skin (Engelbrecht 1933: 110) and left to dry. Once dry, the skin is lifted up and scraped clean (carefully, to avoid piercing and spoiling the skin) with a very sharp adze (Silberbauer 1981: 224). If necessary, the hairy side of the skin can be scraped smooth, also with an adze (Silberbauer 1981: 224). Kolb (1922: 110–113, cited in Schapera 1930:

310), reported that in order to remove the hair from a fresh skin the 'Cape Hottentots' sprinkled the skin with ashes and water, rolled up and the exposed to the sun's heat for a couple of days.

Following the removal of hair from the skin, it is moistened and kneaded to make it soft and pliable. Any remaining flesh is removed with the fingernails. For a steenbok skin, which is relatively small, the G|wi use the juice of *Crinum* (a kind of amaryllid with a large, juicy bulb) or a mixture of *Crinum* juice (or tsama melon juice, when in season) and human urine (Silberbauer 1981: 224). Nama women used the juice of succulent plants to moisten the skin (Schapera 1930: 311). Then the skins are kneaded and wrung out to soften them; the skins are then left to dry. Bleek (1928: 9) records that the Nharo danced on the skins to soften them. Schapera (1930: 311) reports that Nama women sprinkled the fleshy side of the skin with 'sandstone powder' then rubbed it with a stone to soften the skin and remove residual tissue. If necessary the process of wetting, kneading and drying the skin was repeated until the skin was fine and soft. The skin then needed to be preserved and waterproofed. This was commonly done by saturating the skin in a fatty solution or, in some cases, by tanning the skin with parts of *Acacia* and *Elephantorrhiza* trees.

The hides of larger antelope like eland, gemsbok, kudu or hartebeest are moistened with a mixture of fat and brains (themselves high in fat) (Silberbauer 1981: 224). Valiente-Noailles (1993: 59) records that Kua people in different areas use various fatty preparations for this purpose: animal brains, muchivi *(Quibourcia coleosperma)* or mangongo oil *(Ricinodendrum rautanenii)*, a mixture of brains and milk, bone marrow, or the baked kernels of *Ximenia caffra* fruits. This process saturates the skin with fat. The skin is kept moist for about three days (Silberbauer 1981: 224). The treatment is known as 'oil tanning' (Badenhorst 2009: 37, citing Spier 1970: 114–115). Thereafter the skin is wet and kneaded another three times before it is finally ready for use. Technically speaking, skins prepared in this way are not tanned, because no tannins are involved in the process.

Some Khoe-San groups did, however, practise vegetable tanning: Schapera (1930: 311, citing Kolb 1922: 110–113) describes how Nama women used the pounded inner bark of a species of *Acacia* tree. The skin to be tanned is rolled up with the pounded bark and then soaked in a solution made with bark. Afterwards the skin is dried and stretched, leaving it 'permanently soft and watertight, and beautifully red on the inside' (Schapera 1930: 311).

6.3 'Listen to the ornaments'

Up until now I have written about clothing and items of adornment as detached and isolated objects and described the mechanical processes involved in the manufacture of some of these items. This was necessary in order to establish what these objects look like and to understand how they were made and by whom. However, these bald descriptions do not reflect the full significance of these items – what they mean to the people that make and wear them. If one listens to what Khoe-San people say about these items of clothing and adornment (as well as the designs painted on these artefacts and on peoples' bodies) then it becomes apparent that to understand the prominence of clothing, adornment and decorative motifs in the GDC it is necessary to go below the surface and explore how Khoe-San people themselves experience them.

An extract from the story of the Dawn's Heart star (Bleek & Lloyd 1911; Hewitt 1986; Koorts 2006) told by ǁkabbo evokes the poetics of clothing and adornment. He describes how the Dawn's Heart star (identified as the planet Jupiter) hides his child in a hole in the ground for the child's mother, who has human and caracal (or 'lynx' as she is called in the story)[2] characteristics. The Dawn's Heart star explains to the child how to distinguish his mother from anybody else who tries to impersonate her. Several characters come to try and take the child away, but they do not manage to fool her. Finally, the mother arrives:

> *The she-lynx comes. The Day-Heart Child sees her. The Day-Heart Child says that her mother has come. She wears thick rings on her wrists and ankles and she shakes her long earrings as she walks because she has tied metal decorations to her hair. Her ornaments jingle as she comes. Her smell is like* ǂkhuŋ*, her ornaments smell of honey. She comes. The hyena smells like a hyena, it is different. The jackal smell is different, that smells bad! The child smells that her mother is here. She knows her mother's sweet smell because her father told her when he was burying her.*
>
> *He said to her: 'You must look at the people; you must not mistake your mother for a stranger. You will know your mother is coming, because she wears ornaments. And so you will know your mother, when she comes. Once you know that it is your mother, then you must jump onto her back. She has tied metal ornaments to her hair. Because your mother is bringing a little kaross, a small kaross which your mother will carry you in. You will know that it is your mother coming because your mother wears the little kaross above the big kaross. The little kaross has arms to tie it up with. You must realise that your mother is here; her face is white. She has tied a round ornament to her hair which shines brightly on her*

[2]In fact, the caracal, *Caracal caracal*, is not related to the Eurasian lynx.

> *face.*[3] *Her face is white, her legs are white, her hands are white. They are* |ko-wa.[4] *She is beautiful. Then you must jump onto her back so that she can carry you away . . . .*
>
> *Then they do two* [together] *go. They do not leave each other. . . . Therefore they do two* [together] *walk. The two of them go along digging out* !kuisi. *Therefore, they do come two, coming. Those (?)see them; as they two come. They* [are] *all handsome. They are* |koΘ-wa [alternative spelling in the original manuscript]. *Their faces are white. Their skin is red. Their karosses are red.*
>
> *And so too, your mother is to carry you, in a little kaross*[5] *which is red. She carries you away. She is to carry you with her in the little kaross whose feet are red. The springbok's little kaross. You must listen to the ornaments as she walks away. You must look at the ornaments, at her ears when she shakes them.*
>
> (Bleek & Lloyd Collection: L. II. 15: 1439–1451, edited by JCH)

It is by the sight and sound of her ornaments that the child will recognise its mother: 'Her ornaments jingle as she comes.' The 'clinking' sound of anklets and bangles also presages the appearance of a 'sleek-skinned, fertile . . . heroine' in some Ju|'hoansi folk tales recorded by Biesele (1993: 198). The child of the Day-Heart Star will know her mother by her sweet honey smell and by her mother's ornaments which 'smell of honey'. Her mother's beauty is enhanced by a round ornament hanging down from her hair onto her to her hair which 'shines brightly on her face'. There is also the use of body paint – white face, hands and legs. Her face is white, her legs are white, her hands are white. They are |*ko-wa*, a word whose full meaning Lloyd was not able to grasp but which hints at the importance of colour and specifically, it seems, the beautiful effect created by the juxtaposition of red and white. Taken as a whole, then, ‖kabbo creates a vivid and impressive word sketch of a strong, vital and beautiful woman. And in the picture that he creates of the 'she-lynx', the ornaments and body paint that she adopts are an inseparable component of her imposing presence. This is a glimpse of the affective power of the sight, sound and smell of clothing, ornaments and body paint as seen 'from the inside'.

In the extract just cited, mention is made of the karosses that the she-lynx wears. ‖kabbo emphasises that in addition to her own kaross, the she-lynx carries a little kaross, with 'arms to tie it up with' and whose 'feet are red'. He also mentions that their karosses are red, and he draws a contrast between the redness of the karosses and the whiteness of the faces of the she-lynx and her daughter. Again there is the juxtaposition of red and white. Reference to

---

[3] *1445 rev.: a round ornament fastened to her hair and hanging down in the middle of her forehead.*

[4] *1445 rev. This word appears to stand for red or white*

[5] *!kiʃi*

these details no doubt resonated with |xam audiences: a 'picture' of a well-dyed kaross probably conjured up positive feelings about the pleasure and comfort of wearing a well-cared for and beautiful piece of clothing. And, for children, the mother's kaross is their shelter and refuge until they are weaned and old enough to get their own, as is the case in this story.

Because clothing is commonly made by and for friends and family they are imbued with powerful emotions. The same applies to clothing that one makes for oneself because the manufacture and decoration of clothing is learnt in the context of the family and the group. For example, a Kua person that Valiente-Noailles interviewed about the significance of certain markings explained that decorations on an apron made by her husband were arranged in the same pattern that her mother had made on her face when she was a child and which had made her look beautiful (Valiente-Noailles 1993: 163). Part of the reason for her choice of design was based on her regard and, quite possibly, affection for her mother. Choice of design in this case (and more generally too I argue) seems to be influenced by love and respect, as well as the desire to look good.

Winberg (2001: 16) provides another example of the positive emotional regard that Khoe-San people (and especially women, it seems) have for traditional clothing. Winberg describes an interview with a Khoe-San woman, originally from Angola but now living in Platfontein, near Kimberley:

> *She* [Andry Kashivi] *disappears into the house again and this time produces a magnificent skirt. She lays it out on the ground in front of us.*
>
> *'This is my dancing skirt, made by me as my mother taught me.' The skirt is cut from a springbok's skin, scraped clean except for a thin strip of brown and white hair from the animal's back. The bottom of the skirt is decorated with strings of beads and seeds.*
>
> *She ties the dancing skirt around her waist and moves in rhythm. The beads and porcupine quills rattle softly around her swaying hips.*
>
> (Winberg 2001: 16, my square brackets)

In this case a woman made an apron for herself, but, significantly, she follows techniques taught to her by her mother. As it lies on the ground (in much the same position as the GDC apron motifs are spread out on the rock) the apron creates a striking picture. It is clear both from Kashivi's 'performance' while modelling the apron and from Winberg's description that the apron is designed to be seen and admired, and, also, to be heard.

This highly personal and affectionate approach to women's artefacts is echoed in Megan Biesele's reflections on women's aprons, especially the apron given to a young woman on the occasion of her initiation:

(a) Photograph by E. Cosser, in Winberg (2001)

(b) Photograph by E. Cosser, in Winberg (2001)

FIGURE 6.5. (a) The springbok skin dancing skirt of Andry Kashivi, from Platfontein (near Kimberly, Northern Cape province). The skin has been scraped clean leaving only a thin strip of brown and white hair. The apron has ties trings and is decorated with varoius types of seeds and sections of porcupine quill. These rattle when she dances. (b) Andry Kashivi dancing in the skirt she made in the way that her mother taught her.

> *What I know about aprons, and specifically the ones connected to the menarcheal dance, is this: among Ju|'hoan* [!Kung] *people of my acquaintance, there is a special apron made by an older female relative, likely the 'big name' in the grandparental generation for whom the girl is named. These days this apron is made ornately with glass beads and named designs ('clouds', 'pythons' come to mind) and is always worn thereafter, usually nowadays under skirts but occasionally disclosed (such as when dancing, or when women are bathing together and talking in ways that emphasise female solidarity). There is great warmth in discussing the person who has made the apron for the woman, who still speaks of the connection well into middle age, at least. So it seems that the apron has resonances in female kinship and nurturing. It also seems to have sexual resonances, in that the Eland Dance of menarche so clearly emphasises both readiness to bear young as well as the girl's relationship to the health of the land.*
>
> (Biesele in Eastwood & Eastwood 2006: 157–158)

Biesele raises a number of important points that are relevant to understanding the power and significance of the GDC motifs and markings; I shall return to these later in the study to discuss their implications. For the moment I merely point out that the strong affirmative emotions and clothing and decoration described by Biesele seem particularly evident during aspects of Khoe-San women's puberty rituals, as Valiente-Noailles confirms:

> *During the puberty ritual the women and specially the one in charge of the ritual, make beautiful ornaments for the young initiate. One of these ornaments is . . .* [a] *. . . headband . . . in which the cocoons of a moth hang in a decorative way. . . . Thus they associate the creation of beauty and the embellishment of the initiate, with one of the happiest moments in the Kua's life: the coming of age of a new woman. More than that . . . the beauty of some ornaments as well as music and dancing is meant to please God and attain his attention.*
>
> (Valiente-Noailles 1993: 164)

The affective power of clothing and designs is not limited to stories and ceremonies however. It is part of the 'manufacturing process' itself, as Wiessner observed of women sitting together and making headbands :

> *During the manufacturing process . . .* [headbands] *. . . are frequently stretched out and shown to others while such topics as patterns, to whom they will eventually be given, and how beautiful they will look are discussed again and again.*
>
> (Wiessner 1984: 200, my brackets)

Make no mistake however, these are gifts in the Maussian sense: 'apparently free and disinterested, but nevertheless constrained and self-interested' (Mauss 1990: 3). Wiessner explains that:

> *the vast majority of !Kung said that they made artifacts beautifully in order to project a positive image of themselves to others. In doing so, they specified others whom they wanted to impress and elaborated on their expectations of return for this effort either in terms of reciprocity or in attracting members of the opposite sex. . . . There were few discussions of style in headbands that did not lapse into pantomime of how, when they saw the beautifully made artifacts, others would be aware how diligent, creative, caring, and hardworking the maker was, and of what generous gift exchange would ensue.*
>
> (Wiessner 1984: 204)

Mauss was also the one who pointed out that 'to make a gift of something to someone is to make a present of some part of oneself' (1990: 13). In return for the gift, some Khoe-San believe that the giver gets luck back: amongst Khoekhoen descendants interviewed by Hoff (1990: 181) the young woman strews people with *sâ-i* (powdered medicinal and fragrant herbs, etc.) which makes them lucky too. This is an aspect to the GDC motifs that begs the question I posed at the beginning of the study – why did people adorn the the GDC outcrops with these gifts of clothing and ornaments? In the following two chapters I explore the remarkable wealth of motifs of these gifted items in the GDC. Then in Parts III and IV I use Khoe-San ethnography to develop a scenario in which the making of the gestural and referential motifs is part of a wider set of religous activities that people performed at a singular place.

Chapter 7

Depictions of clothing in the GDC

One of the most intriguing features of the GDC rock art is the prominence of motifs of clothing and items of adornment. Depictions of aprons of various kinds, decorated and trimmed hides, spread skins, as well as items such as headbands, belts, bracelets, necklaces, and beads form a major numeric component of the referential rock art and are a key element in my understanding of the GDC sites.

7.1 The geometry of clothing motifs

Depictions of motifs of clothing and ornaments in the GDC obey two invariable 'rules' of presentation: they are always disembodied and in plan view (a type of 'metric projection'), as though the object were spread out flat on a level surface and the viewer were looking down on the object from above. Painted and engraved motifs of aprons and ornaments in plan view occur elsewhere in South Africa (e.g. Fock 1979; Fock & Fock 1984, 1989; Eastwood 2005; Green & Eastwood 2008). To my knowledge, however, nobody has thought about why artists chose this kind of geometric projection. Consequently, I recount briefly how the the use of a metric projection results in a view of the object that provides certain kinds of information at the expense of other data (the different projections of the earth are a good example).

Hagen (1986), a perceptual psychologist writing about representational art, refers to the 'varieties of realism' engendered by the underlying geometric projection. Inspired by the principles of visual perception developed by Gibson (1979), she analyses the geometrical perspectives that underlie styles of art (i.e.

paintings, drawings, etchings, engravings, photographs and digital creations, but not sculpture or artefacts). Hagen points out that:

> *All representational pictures from any culture or period in history, exploit the fact of natural perspective, the geometry of the light that strikes the eye. They succeed as representations because they provide structured visual information equivalent to that provided by the real scene represented.*
>
> (Hagen 1986: 8)

Hagen explains that there are four main possible geometrical perspectives that are used to provide the required 'structured visual information' for a given depiction: metric, similarities, affinities and projective. Hagen is not a 'geometrical determinist', however: she cautions that 'art is *never* the mechanical application of geometry' (1986: 180, her emphasis) and that artistic 'styles' are 'subject ... to non-geometric, or extrageometric conventions and constraints in addition to its geometrical ones' (1986: 188). Hagen cannot, therefore, be accused of 'reductionism' because she acknowledges the complex nature of image creation. The point here is to understand that how the creators of the GDC clothing and adornment motifs solved the problem of representing three dimensional objects in two dimensions. The GDC artists had – as do all artists:

> *more freedom of vision than the observer of the ordinary environment... . The artist is not constrained by the temporary positioning of objects in space or by the place where he is momentarily standing. In a single depiction an artist can 'move' many times, showing as many aspects of the object or scene as are required by the composition. Objects can be arranged 'in space' at will, ordered and rendered symmetrical, stacked and distributed according to artistic demand. This freedom ... makes it simple for the artist to select from the enormous variety in the optic array just those invariants that serve the purposes of artistic expression.*
>
> (Hagen 1986: 179)

With this freedom to choose how to depict objects comes the necessity to make a choice and to accept the limitations that a particular choice entails. Each depiction system has its limitations in terms of what and how much the image-maker can communicate about form and spatial layout (Hagen 1986: 179–180):

> *It cannot be said too often that any artist(s) engaged in transforming three-dimensional solids into two-dimension forms is forced to order priorities for depiction. One can't do everything.*
>
> (Hagen 1986: 174)

GDC artists opted for a two-dimensional mode of composition. The choice has had consequences for rock art research, especially for motif identification. The

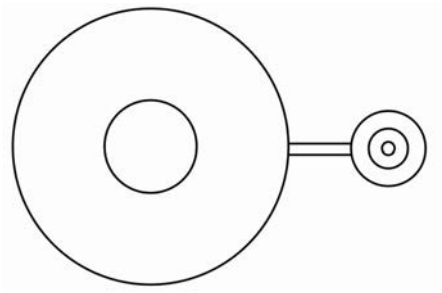


FIGURE 7.1. A viewer with no information about the context of an image in plan view might not be able to identify correctly what the image depicts. An example is the popular perceptual puzzle of a Mexican with a sombrero frying an egg.

use of metric projections can make it difficult to identify the thing depicted if the informational context is not known. The 'Mexican frying an egg' is an example of how difficult it can be to recognise objects without an explanatory context (Figure 7.1). One needs to know where the art was made, who made it, what its use was, what its functions were, and what it meant to the people who made use of it (Hatcher 1999: 1). Once the researcher is told or otherwise recognises what perspective is being used, he/she can make sense of the image.

The use of metric projections is prevalent in ancient Egyptian tomb art, Pacific Northwest Coast Indian art, 12th-century Romanesque manuscript writing, and the Cubist style of painting (Hagen 1986: 210).

What are the implications for the GDC art of this choice of perspective? A brief examination of ancient Egyptian tomb paintings of objects (as opposed to animals, human and non-human) provides some insights into the use of metric perspectives in depicting GDC motifs of clothing and items of adornment.

The objects depicted in ancient Egyptian tomb art include depictions of tables, chairs, vases and braziers. Hagen points out that what the ancient Egyptian tomb painters chose to preserve was information about shape. This information is contained in persistent properties (invariants) of the objects: 'size, shape, distance, angle size, straightness, parallelism, length, ratio of length, cross-ratio, collinearity, area, betweenness, position of the centre of gravity, and perpendicularity, ratio of division, and harmonic vision' (Hagen 1986: 180). In preserving these invariants (but allowing a reduction in scale) Hagen argues, the ancient Egyptian artists were ensuring the recognisability of the objects:

> *When we remember that Egyptian art was the art of tomb paintings, and that tombs were filled with objects presumably intended for the comfort of the deceased in the afterlife, we have a clue to the importance of recognisability as a primary artistic goal. It might well have*

> *been the case that objects painted in tombs possessed the same degree of 'solidity' as objects truly present, at least as far as the interests of the dead were concerned.*
>
> (Hagen 1986: 174)

As Hagen has noted, the use of metric perspective preserves accurate details about the relative shape and size of these important objects, without which life in the afterworld would be compromised. In other words, these depicted objects are, 'as far as the interests of the dead were concerned' real things.

Returning to the GDC depictions of clothing and items of adornment, I suggest that this concern for verisimilitude underlies the use of metric perspectives.[1] This mode of depiction preserved the most important details of the objects – their relative size and shape[2] and the details of ornamentation. The reasons why these invariants were considered so important I discuss later in the study.

7.2 Apron motifs

The most numerous and perhaps most striking of GDC referential motifs are women's aprons.

Holub recognised these motifs 130 years ago and identified different sizes and styles of aprons *(Schürzen)* (Želizko 1925). Comparison of the GDC motifs with Khoe-San aprons in the ethnographic collection of the Iziko South African Museum (Figure 7.2) confirms this identification. The GDC motifs also look similar to rock art motifs elsewhere in southern Africa that have been identified as depictions of aprons (Eastwood 2003). In addition, aprons are often superimposed on various configurations of cut marks (see subsection 3.4.1).

I distinguish two main categories of apron motifs:

- Tasselled aprons
- Front and back aprons

There is some overlap between these groups, however, and although certain motifs may share certain characteristics, each apron motif is unique.

In many cases, however, I found it possible to distinguish depictions of front aprons (Figure 7.3) from back aprons (Figure 7.4) based on the shape of the apron as well as, to a lesser extent, the apparent size of the apron depicted. Front apron motifs are semi-circular, square or V- and Y-shaped. They are smaller in size in comparison with the motifs I identify as back aprons; a front

[1] Ironically, this very concern has led to confusion for rock art researchers; aprons depicted in this way have been misidentified as bags, traps, and hallucinatory phenomena (see section 7.2.4 below as well as section 2.3).

[2] But not the actual metric distances.

(a) SAM 10653

(b) SAM 10654

(c) SAM 10652

(d) SAM 10002

(e) SAM 1547

(f) SAM 8262

(g) SAM 9313

(h) SAM 5747

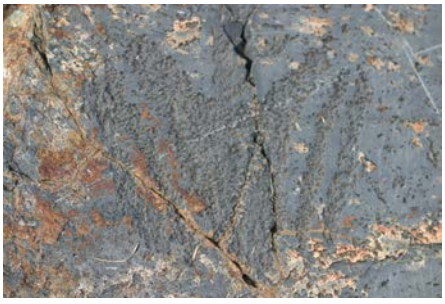
(i) SAM 1333

(j) SAM 13897

FIGURE 7.2. Examples of Khoe-San aprons in the collection of the Iziko South African Museum, Cape Town.

(a) Driekuil Hill (DH58)

(b) Wits University Collection (RE2005054)



(c) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW22 NE01)

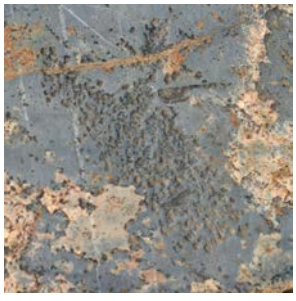
(d) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW39 NE07)

(e) Klerksdorp Museum (KM042458)

(f) Skeleton Hill (SH12)

(g) Piece 57503 Museum of Ethnology, Vienna (Želizko 1925: plate 13.5)

(h) Boschpoort Road South (BRS2 01)



(i) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW22 NE01)

(j) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW63 SW12)

FIGURE 7.3. Some of the GDC motifs identified as depictions of front aprons on the basis of their shape and size.

apron has only to cover the genital region, whereas the back apron must cover the entire buttocks and is thus square or rectangular and comparatively larger than depictions of front aprons.

7.2.1 Holub's and Želizko's aprons

Holub pointed out and described several types of decoration associated with particular apron motifs. It is also evident that he took care to remove a selection of apron motifs that represented the variety of apron forms especially on Gestoptefontein Hill, the richest in number and variety of GDC apron motifs. Some of these accessions have accompanying details about particular apron motifs. We do not know whether Holub himself perceived the features he described or if others pointed them out to him; as noted earlier, Holub lost most of his notes in an attack in southern Zambia so we cannot clarify this point. Nor do we know whether some of the descriptions are based on Želizko's personal observations. Whatever the case, these comments support the hypothesis that the GDC artists depicted detailed apron motifs.

A critical analysis of Holub and Želizko's comments and close attention to the details of the images themselves provide a foundation for the identification and description of clothing motifs in the GDC. The wide variety of apron types depicted is striking; within the broad confines of the two functional categories (tasselled and front/back aprons) no two aprons are the same. Many motifs feature what Holub correctly identified as depictions of decorated beadwork patterns. Among the apron motifs that Holub/Želizko identify are images that I would have been hesitant to classify as aprons. For example, the stone numbered 57496 is described as: 'Front apron, a single hide, with glass beads' (Figure 7.5).

This identification is most interesting, and its correctness is confirmed by the presence of certain other motifs on Gestoptefontein Hill as I shall explain in a moment. The reference to glass beads is intriguing. Did a native make the identification for Holub? If so it is valuable ethnography that can be applied to what remains of the bodies of art in the GDC. Nothing more is said about the glass beads but perhaps the pecked nested shapes depict patterns sewn in glass beads onto the apron skin. There are another two similar motifs still on Gestoptefontein Hill. One is in Block NW56, one of the most densely engraved 100 m² of the GDC (Figure 7.6).

It looks very similar to the Vienna piece in the use of nested lines to produce a visually arresting pattern, but is not identical. Possibly the Vienna piece came from close by – part of this rock surface has been prised off.

The third motif using the same technique is on Slide Rock (Figure 7.7). It is the most clearly identifiable apron motif of the three I think. Indeed, were it

(a) Driekuil Hill (DH35)

(b) Driekuil Hill (DH38)

(c) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW12 NW01)

(d) Boschpoort Road South (BRS2 01)

(e) Klerksdorp Museum (KM042450)

(f) Piece 94446 Ethnological Museum, Berlin (Želizko 1925: plate 19.1)

(g) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW55 SW02)

(h) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW45 NW11)

FIGURE 7.4. GDC motifs that I have identified as depictions of back aprons.

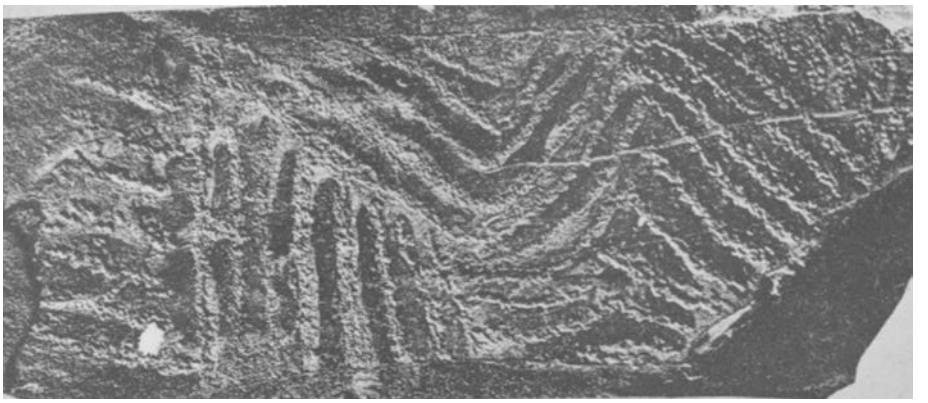


FIGURE 7.5. Motif identified in Želizko (1925: plate 14.1) as a front apron with glass beads. Piece 57496 Museum of Ethnology, Vienna.

FIGURE 7.6. Motif from Gestoptefontein Hill (NW56 NW37) that closely resembles a motif identified in Želizko (1925: plate 14.1) as a front apron decorated with glass beads.

FIGURE 7.7. Motif of a tasselled apron with possible three-stranded bead waistband. Gestoptefontein Hill (SW04 SE)

not for the identification in Želizko I would have had difficulty in accepting the Vienna motif was an apron and in arguing that the NW56 motif was a clothing motif. The Slide Rock motif clinches it, however; the waistband, comprising three nested, undulating 'lines', is clearly delineated and symmetrically laid out in the same manner used for the tasselled apron motifs and for other front aprons. Then the covering flap of the Slide Rock apron is easy to recognise, because it is clearly outlined and where one would expect it to be, attached symmetrically to the waistband.

Having seen the Slide Rock apron one can look afresh at the other two similar motifs and recognise the 'apron-ness' in these rather more idiosyncratic depictions. The nested and undulating lines in NW56 apron image can now be resolved as the tie strings and the parallel vertical lines below as the front flap of the apron. The Vienna apron is the most cryptic: the nested lines that in the other two motifs may be construed as tie strings are here only partly imaged; one is not shown their full extent nor their symmetrical attachment. One can, however identify the cover flap of the apron; it seems to show two different beadwork designs. One half is decorated with columns of beads, the other sports a pattern of undulating nested rows of beads. One can see at top left and top right of the stone a set of parallel pecked 'lines' that suggest the

FIGURE 7.8. Piece 57499, identified in Želizko (1925) as a *Leibgurtschürze* (a combination belt and apron) incorporates depictions of complex beadwork decorations. Museum of Ethnology, Vienna

fringe of an apron although it is difficult to discern because the photograph is very small and of poor resolution.

Holub/Želizko identify other complex motifs as aprons; piece 57499 is described as a *Leibgurtschürze.* The combination of these two words, 'belt' and 'apron' suggest that this relatively large motif depicts an apron that is incorporated with an elaborate belt or girdle (Figure 7.8).

The long, tapering strap-like part of the image wraps around the waist. The broader portion, gently curved at top and bottom to suit the form of the human waist, represents the apron component that covers either the buttocks or the front area – I am not sure which. The photograph in Želizko is, I think, presented 'upside down'; the motif makes more sense if one rotates it by 180° so that the fringed area (Figure 7.8) is at the bottom of the picture instead. This, I think, is the way it would have been worn, with the tasselled fringe hanging down. The motif is heavily decorated and is clearly a beautiful item; there are the more-or-less evenly space vertical 'divisions' on the girdle itself, perhaps beadwork, and on the apron component a grid-like arrangement, perhaps also made from beads and/or seeds. I have mentioned the depiction of about nine tassels along the base of the apron, but not the tuft or tassel at the top of the apron. The motif has been superimposed on dense areas of free incisions and scratched parallel lines.

The identification of piece 57508 (Figure 7.9) as an apron motif is also helpful because it confirms the wide variety of these motifs in the GDC and inspires confidence in recognising certain motifs as depictions of clothing. The motif depicts a very decorative front apron. I think the broad waist band and the four rounded flaps of skin that hang down from the waistband (at the bottom

FIGURE 7.9. Piece 57508, identified in Želizko (1925) as a *Schürze*, depicts a front apron. Museum of Ethnology, Vienna

(a) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW57 SE19) (b) Boschpoort Road South 3 (BRS3 17)

FIGURE 7.10. Unique apron motifs in the GDC: (a) possible depiction of an apron made from the skins of a small mammal with a long tail (e.g. springhare, ground squirrel, meerkat) ; (b) possible apron motif comprised of a thin belt or cord to which are attached three trimmed pieces of leather. The scattered dot-like forms may depict beads sewn onto the apron.

of the photograph) are meant to cover the buttocks, while the single, similarly shaped flap of skin depicted at the top of the photograph and suspended from a much thinner waistband, was worn in front.

7.2.2 Identifying apron motifs in the GDC

Having seen these examples one may proceed to identify other motifs in the GDC as unique and detailed depictions of aprons.

Arguably the most spectacular and detailed apron motif is from Driekuil Hill (Figure 7.11). It is larger than any other GDC apron depiction and includes detail such as rows of triangular shapes (probably beadwork) and tassels around

FIGURE 7.11. A spectacular and detailed apron motif from Driekuil Hill (DH63).

the edge of the apron. This engraving was removed from Driekuil Hill in May 2006 and is in Klerksdorp Museum, North West province.

Depictions of aprons occur in various contexts. They may be depicted collectively and singly, in isolation and in association with depictions of anthropomorphs and zoomorphs, as well as with depictions of designs.

7.2.3 Incised apron motifs

Most of the GDC apron motifs are pecked but there are a few that have been scratched into the rock (Figure 7.12). These easily overlooked motifs incorporate finely incised arrangements of lines that suggest decorative patterns.

7.2.4 Tasselled aprons

On 9 of the 13 GDC sites are pecked motifs comprised of a pecked 'column' and several (1–12) intersecting, perpendicular columns. In Želizko (1925) these forms are identified as aprons *(Schürzen)*, women's aprons *(Frauenschürzen)*, and thong aprons *(Riemenschürzen)* (Figure 7.13).[3] I call them tasselled aprons and they are quite distinctive and different from the other GDC apron motifs.

[3]Tasselled apron motifs published by Želizko are associated with glass beads *(Glasperlen*, 1925: plates 13, fig. 2 & 24, fig. 12 a, b & c) but in three of these four instances I have not

(a) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW45 NW07)

(b) Removed from Driekuil Hill (DH183)

(c) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW07 NE01)

(d) Gestoptefontein Hill (SE06 NW01)

(e) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW55 NE04)

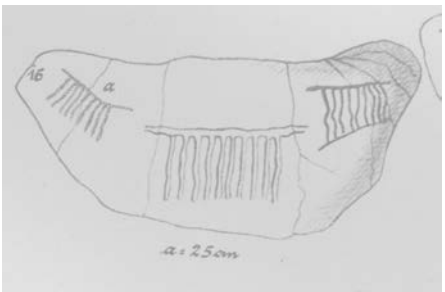
(f) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW58 NE01)

(g) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW84 SE02)

(h) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW84 SE04)

FIGURE 7.12. There are a few incised apron motifs on some of the GDC outcrops, most of which are on Gestoptefontein Hill. These incised motifs are detailed and include decorative patterns.

(a) Piece 57469, Museum of Ethnology, Vienna (Želizko 1925: plate 15.5)



(b) Želizko 1925 (plate 24.16)

(c) Želizko 1925 (plate 24.12)

FIGURE 7.13. Motifs collected by Holub and classified variously as (a) an apron *(Schürze);* (b) *Frauenschürze* (b) and (c) *Riemenschürze.*

There are many examples of tasselled aprons in museum collections, as well as illustrations in the ethnographic literature. Ethnographic and contemporary tasselled aprons comprise a waistband and tassels that hang in front of the front area and may be made of leather, grass, or bark fibre (Figure 7.14).

Tasselled aprons represent a large proportion of GDC apron motifs. I recorded approximately the same number of surfaces bearing tasselled apron motifs as all the other apron motifs put together. I recorded 166 individual motifs and it is certain that motifs of tasselled aprons were amongst the bodies of rock art destroyed by mining or removed by collectors – especially on Gestoptefontein Mountain, Married Quarters, and Site 13. Stones bearing motifs of tasselled aprons are found in each of the four 'official' collections of removed GDC rock art that I have seen.[4]

Each individual tasselled apron motif is unique but most share a number of common characteristics (Figure 7.15).

been able to identify the bead motifs. The fourth case I thought was better interpreted as a belt or girdle.

[4]Klerksdorp Museum, Witwatersrand University, Museum of Ethnology in Vienna, Náprstek Museum in Prague.

(a) SAM 5747 (b) SAM 9313 (c) SAM 7583

FIGURE 7.14. Tasselled aprons in the ethnographic collection of the Iziko South African Museum.

(a) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW12) (b) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW14 NE02)

(c) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW40 NW08) (d) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW68 SE09)

FIGURE 7.15. Examples of the variety in tasselled apron motifs: (a) 3- or 4-tasselled apron motif); (b) 11-tasselled motif ; (c) motif with decorated waistband ; (d) motif with doubled waistband.

I allow a range in the number of tassels (from 1 to 12), although I suggest certain extended, multi-tasselled motifs with additional pecked detail could be headbands (discussed under subsection 8.4.4). Varieties of waistband are depicted, some decorated. Tasselled motifs without tie strings I accept as aprons.

Mostly the tassels are rendered as if lying flat (or hanging straight down), but sometimes they are depicted in undulating, serpentine fashion. There are a few instances in which one or two of the tassels are shortened or extended. I also noted many examples of less thoroughly and deeply pecked examples of tasselled apron motifs.

Contexts and associations of tasselled apron motifs

With one possible exception, the tasselled apron motifs obey the same 'stratigraphic rules' as do all the other types of apron motifs and indeed the entire referential component of the GDC; viz in virtually all known examples of superimpositioning the GDC artists pecked these motifs over incised motifs and markings.

Two general, overlapping patterns of association involving tasselled apron motifs repeat themselves in the GDC:

- Tasselled apron motifs as a component in 'displays' of clothing motifs (types of apron and spread skin motifs), and associated with motifs of items of adornment, and design motifs;
- Tasselled apron motifs with anthropomorphs and zoomorphs.

It is only for analytical purposes that I discuss these associations as separate categories; their possible meanings and significance lie in the overall relationships between the motifs and markings in the GDC, not as disembodied signs assigned to artificial categories.

Tasselled apron motifs as a component in displays of clothing, items of adornment and design motifs Perhaps the closest kind of association of tasselled apron motifs is with other types of front aprons, rear aprons, and some types of spread skin motifs (motifs that I define and discuss shortly). The various apron and spread skin motifs are placed close to each other; it is clear the GDC artists grouped the motifs together and created a single and coherent composition. I shall have more to say about the significance of these clothing motifs in Part IV. Tasselled apron motifs are also associated with my category of 'pecked clusters', many of which I think are loosely pecked apron motifs. They are also superimposed on and juxtaposed with grid and mesh forms that I identify as apron motifs. Tasselled apron motifs are juxtaposed with what I

(a) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW12 NE01) (b) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW65 NW10)

FIGURE 7.16. Tasselled apron motifs are sometimes engraved next to zoomorphs; (a) tasselled apron and ostrich (b) tasselled apron and black rhinoceros.

have identified as imagery of belts/girdles, bracelets, hair ornaments necklaces, arrangements of beads, and design motifs.

Tasselled apron motifs, anthropomorphs and zoomorphs There are several instances in which tasselled apron motifs are present in close proximity to anthropo- and/or zoomorphic motifs on an isolated surface. Almost all these examples occur on Gestoptefontein Hill. I interpret each case as deliberate and meaningful juxtaposition by the artists; they were associating the motifs with each other. I say more about this process later (Part IV). There are examples in which only two images are involved: an ostrich and a tasselled apron motif, some 100 mm apart, are the only two components of a discrete surface (Figure 7.16a). Elsewhere a tasselled motif without tie strings is superimposed on the image of a black rhinoceros (Figure 7.16b).

In another case a tasselled apron motif, an eland, a pecked cluster and set of rings are juxtaposed (SW03 SE01, not illustrated). A second example of association with a tasselled apron motif and eland imagery is on a densely marked surface that includes gestural components, another apron motif, and the images of two eland and a rhinoceros (NW56 SE12, not illustrated). On Gestoptefontein Hill a tasselled apron motif is pecked in close proximity (about 100 mm) to the image of a small antelope, both of which are superimposed on a densely incised surface (NW08 NE04, not illustrated). In Part IV I shall also discuss apron motifs that are associated with other zoomorphic images. On Boschpoort Road South Hill 3 there is an arrangement of a tasselled apron motif and immediately next to it an anthropomorphic-looking motif (Figure **??**). On the southwestern slopes of Gestoptefontein Hill is a composition on a discrete rock surface in which an anthropomorphic figure (apparently with legs raised) and a headdress, apron motif, and tasselled apron motif are grouped (Figure 4.7).

Previous research on the association of 'designs' and zoomorphs

My identification of the tasselled apron motifs and their association with zoomorphic depictions may contribute to resolving wider issues of identification of motifs and associations at other engraving sites in Northern Cape and North West provinces. For example, in a study of the rock engravings of parts of the central interior Fock (1979: 75) noted a repeated association between zoomorphic images and *Muster* (German for 'designs' or 'patterns'), as well as between zoomorphic images and depictions of two kinds of objects – 'bags' and 'traps'. However, I think that Fock has misidentified the motifs that he calls 'bags' and 'traps'; a few images may depict bags, but in my opinion most of them depict aprons. As for the interpretation of certain engraved forms as 'traps', I think that Fock is completely mistaken and that, rather, these motifs are better interpreted as aprons and/or designs. I examine Fock's argument and his conclusions in more detail.

Motifs that depict 'bags'

The bag-like depictions are

> *mainly rectangular, of different lengths, slightly rounded and sometimes oval as well. At the one end (top) two 'strings' can be recognized and there is often a tassel decoration at the bottom . . . Because this kind of design occurs at different sites in the same or similar way, it seems to have a special meaning. We compared it with the Bushman (San) Inventory in the Duggan Cronin Bantu Gallery in the McGregor Museum, and found the same shapes in the Bushman bags . . . The strings referred to are handles made of thong, the tassels are also present and on the bags we found decorations, mostly in white, corresponding to many of the designs on the engravings. We can only describe them as 'designs' . . .*
>
> (Fock 1979: 75, transl. N. Mössmer)

In fact, not all of the museum items that Fock illustrates are 'bags', nor are the bags all of one size, shape or function (Figure 5.15). According to Wilman, who also commented on the similarity between designs on leather items and designs engraved on rock (1933: plate 5), and who published the same photographs by Duggan-Cronin in 1933 (1933: plate 2) these items include a 'Girl's voorkaross (girdle)',[5] while the bags include a woman's vanity bag[6] (used to carry tortoiseshell containers filled with aromatic herbs and a powder puff), women's

[5] Wilman 1933: plate 2.6; Fock 1979: plate 144, bottom right

[6] Wilman 1933: plate 2.6; Fock 1979: plate 143 (top left)

carrying bags,[7] and a 'knapsack' that was used by either sex.[8] All of these items have been decorated with designs made by shaving the hair from the skin to create patterns in contrasting textures and colours.

The resemblances between these museum items, made by '|auni and χatia Bushmen from the lower Nossob River' in Botswana (Wilman 1933: plate 2), and certain rock engravings of objects and designs, are striking, and, mostly, convincing. However, I think that the Focks misidentified many engravings as depictions of 'bags' when they are probably depictions of aprons; I shall discuss this shortly. As to the significance of the depicted bags, Fock reasoned that:

> *If one assumes that the artists were hunter-gatherers and one knows that present-day hunter-gatherers are dependent for 60%–80% of their food from collecting, then the bag* [filled with food] *is the equivalent of game.*
>
> (Fock 1979: 78, transl. and brackets N. Mössmer)

There is ethnographic support for thinking that depictions of filled bags may refer to feelings of well-being and plenteousness. I pointed this out with reference to certain rock paintings in Western Cape province (Hollmann 2001: 66–67) and the description by ‖kabbo[9] of the joyous reception that men get when they return carrying meat (sometimes in bags and nets). This association between bags and meat is not what Fock had in mind, however:

> *The killing of game is however much more exciting than the collection of berries, fruit, nuts and small mammals. No wonder that the bag was not engraved as often as animals.*
>
> (Fock 1979:78, transl. N. Mössmer)

From these comments one gets the impression that Fock interpreted these bags solely as women's things, used to collect veldkos. According to Fock, then, although the bags were significant enough to be depicted, the fact that they are less frequently engraved in comparison to depictions of 'animals' indicates that bags were less 'exciting' (and thus less important?) than depictions of animals. This is the 'reason' that Fock gives for their relatively infrequent depiction at rock engraving sites. I shall return to this point in a moment; first I need to argue that the engraved depictions identified by Fock as 'bags' may depict aprons.

Although I grant that certain engravings may depict bags of various sizes, shapes and functions, in the case of the GDC and many of the sites illustrated by

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[7] Wilman 1933: plates 2.1 & 2.3; Fock 1979: plate 144 (top row: middle and right hand bags, bottom row: left and middle bags)

[8] Wilman 1933: plate 2.4; Fock 1979: plate 144 (middle row)

[9] A.k.a. Jantje Tooren, one of the |xam 'teachers' who contributed to the manuscripts of Bleek and Lloyd (see Deacon 1996).

the Focks, there are motifs that are better interpreted as depictions of aprons. Now the Focks did recognise a few motifs as reminiscent of aprons, rather than bags (e.g. Fock & Fock 1984: illustrations 197, 210; Fock & Fock 1989: illustrations 16, 17, plates 22.2, 100.5). Significantly for this study, they identified two motifs from Gestoptefontein Hill as aprons and two from Driekuil Hill (Fock & Fock 1984: illustrations 197, 210, plate 133.4). However, they give no explicit criteria for distinguishing between depictions of bags from those of aprons. The identification of depictions of bags and aprons is a more general problem that affects southern African rock art research. Researchers in the central Limpopo Basin and southern Drakensberg (Green & Eastwood 2008) have pointed out that 'stand-alone' (i.e. not worn) painted depictions of bags and aprons may be confused; in their discussion and tabulation of the similarities and differences between bags and front aprons they have advanced criteria to distinguish the two categories.

The criteria relate to the shape of the bag/apron form, and the kinds of decoration and 'attachments' associated with bag/apron-like depictions (Green & Eastwood 2008: table 1). Perhaps the most definitive criterion – when this feature is present – is the 'attachment' of thongs to the top edge of the bag or apron. Some depictions (painted and engraved) show what may be interpreted as 'looped carrying straps' (Green & Eastwood 2008: table 1); such instances thus probably depict bags. In other examples, the 'strings' are not looped and can therefore not readily be explained as carrying straps; these 'strings' are connected to the main bag/apron form at each of the two top corners but are not attached to each other. Instead, they extend in a roughly straight line at an angle to the main bag/apron form. These 'strings' look more like apron tying thongs than carrying straps and I think that the artists intended to depict apron motifs with tying thongs, not bags with looped carrying straps.

Returning to the Fock's work, I think that in many cases they have misinterpreted pecked and incised apron motifs as bags;[10] they tend to classify engraved motifs with strings as bags whereas, on close inspection and comparison with the GDC motifs I recorded, the number of motifs that have looped carrying straps is very small. Many of the motifs that the Focks identified as 'bags' are better interpreted as aprons; I shall develop the implications of this misidentification in the concluding part of this study. In the meantime I note that depictions of apron motifs are in fact widespread.

[10]See Fock 1979: illustration 67, plates 41 (bottom left and right), 42, 43, 49, 74 (top left), 139 (top right), 140 (top left and bottom left), 142 (top right), 143 (bottom right), 145, 169 (bottom); Fock & Fock 1984: plates 132.3, 133.5; Fock & Fock 1989: illustrations 39, 40, 57, 58, 59, 144, 145, plates 16.3, 35.4, 50.6, 53.5, 53.6, 70.2, 95.1, 107.6, 113.1.

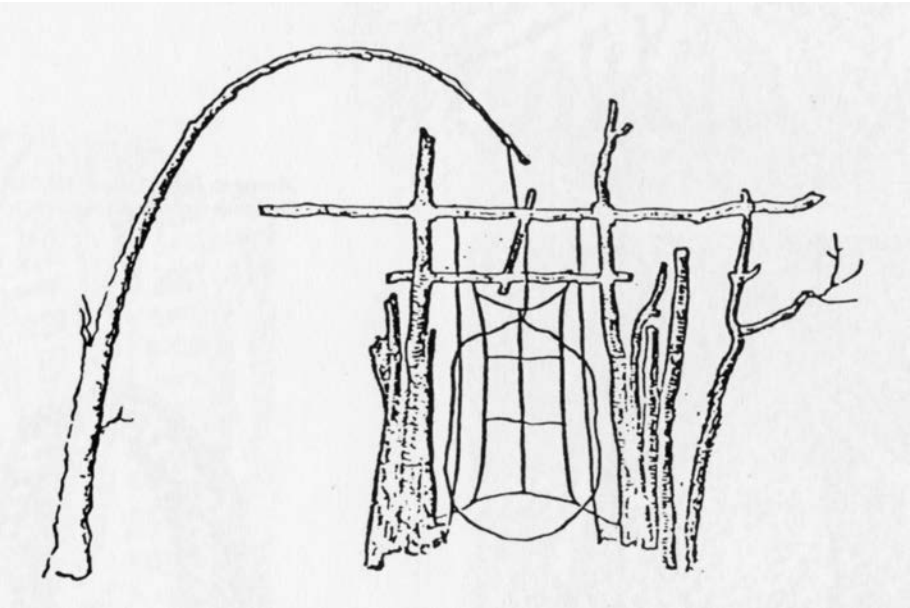


FIGURE 7.17. Fock (1979: 78) has argued that certain juxtaposed motifs at Klipfontein, Northern Cape (and other engraving sites), depict animals caught in traps. He uses this diagram of a trap to argue for this likeness. I argue that Fock is mistaken, and I interpret similar juxtapositions in the GDC as zoomorphs and aprons. Diagram of a trap after Balfour (1894, in Fock 1979: fig 68)

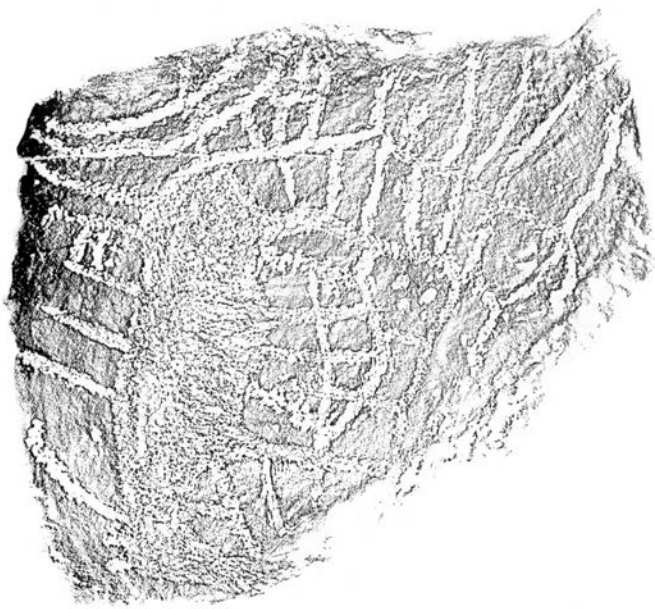


FIGURE 7.18. This rubbing shows what Fock (1979: 78) referred to as 'the best example' of the association of zoomorphic motifs with a trap. I argue instead that the engraved lines underneath the 'antelope' depict more than one motif, probably an apron motif and design motifs. Original caption: 'Antelope in trap'. (Fock 1979: plate 47.1)

Motifs that depict 'traps'

Fock discerned another pattern in the arrangement of engraved imagery at Klipfontein – the juxtaposition of zoomorphic motifs with 'designs' (Figure 7.18):

> *The design is mostly a grid in an oval and more lines are often seen on the sides... In many cases the animal has both hind legs in such a 'design'.... After the descriptions of this 'design' and its connection with animals we are not far wrong, in my opinion, when we regard it as a trap.*
>
> (Fock 1979: 78)

Again, as with the identification of motifs as depictions of 'bags', I think that Fock has misidentified the motifs that he calls 'traps'; these images are better interpreted as design motifs and/or apron motifs. The examples I have identified in the GDC show this clearly, I believe. What we are looking at therefore, is a pattern in which anthropo- and zoomorphs are juxtaposed with depictions of aprons (mostly tasselled, but other types too). In Part IV and the conclusion to this study I shall explore the possible significances of this widespread association.

7.2.5 Front and back aprons

GDC artists created a number of other types of apron motifs. Because of the schematic presentation of these apron motifs and because in many cases tie strings are not depicted, it is not always easy to recognize some motifs as aprons. Again, some of the captions in Želizko's book are indispensable for the identification of certain forms as depicting aprons.[11] In addition it is difficult to distinguish front and back aprons motifs from each other partly because I am not well acquainted enough with Khoe-San dress to distinguish them with confidence. I have therefore not created separate categories for these two kinds of clothing although where I am certain I do identify specific motifs as either front or back aprons.

Having said this, it is possible to discern a few broad types of apron motif. Besides the tasselled apron motif, one may distinguish:

- Roughly V-shaped motifs
- Motifs with semi-circular lower edges and that are wider than they are long
- Comparatively large apron motifs that are square- and oblong-shaped
- Comparatively small apron motifs that are square- and oblong-shaped

[11] This is not to say that I accept each and every identification of the motifs in Želizko's (1925) book

However, not every apron motif falls within these broad parameters and I emphasize that no single motif is identical with another. Each apron motif is unique in specific details.

The captions in Želizko (1925) are also valuable as a source of information about the kinds of decorative details depicted in some of the apron motifs. The captions identify certain kinds of internal subdivisions within specific apron motifs as depictions of decorative beadwork. Some of the motifs are described as being decorated with glass beads *(Glasperlen)* (e.g. 57496, 57540).

More commonly, depictions of front aprons comprise a dense cluster of peck marks in roughly triangular, semi-circular and square forms, often with a horizontal line at the top edge that presumably depicts the tying string of the apron. This type of apron is less numerous than the tasselled type.

Also fairly common are depictions of square-shaped forms made up of peck marks.

Back aprons (Figure 7.4) cover the buttocks and, typically, are relatively wider and longer than front aprons. Often the apron appears to comprise a single skin, commonly with skin around the limbs still attached. Others have been trimmed so that they have a triangular form: the base of the triangle, the widest part, incorporates tying strings so that the apron can be wrapped around the waist.

7.2.6 Displays of aprons

There are instances[12] in which people created 'displays' of several aprons on a single surface. Displays feature a variety of apron types (tasselled, front and back aprons) often in conjunction with design motifs. It is possible that individual aprons now in the European museum collections include motifs that were prised out of such aggregations.

NW59 NE07

This surface is one of 15 marked surfaces in an area of 25 m^2, not the densest concentration on Gestoptefontein Hill, but within the densest area of motifs and markings, on its northwestern slopes (Figure 7.19). Motifs have been broken off the end of the northwestern subsurface (Figure 7.20) and there have been another two removals in the vicinity. NW59 NE07 is a celebration of aprons. In an area about 0,7×0,5 m there are 14 clothing motifs and a possible item of adornment (Figure 7.21).

[12] 'Displays' of aprons: NW 45 SW 11, NW 59 NE07, SW 15, BRN1 04, BRS2 01, BRS2 02

FIGURE 7.19. The surface is located within one of the densest concentrations of motifs and markings on Gestoptefontein Hill, on the northwestern slopes. (NW59 NE07)

FIGURE 7.20. Evidence of the removal of motifs; note the damaged apron motif. At top left, above the scatter of large pecks is a set of crudely pecked dots. (NW59 NE07)

FIGURE 7.21. Overview of the three subsurfaces showing the concentration of clothing motifs. (NW59 NE07)

There are three adjoining subsurfaces. The southernmost subsurface has a six-tasselled apron, a large spread skin with back legs and part of the tail (Figure 7.22). Is this size and shape of skin an apron form or rather, perhaps, a big cloak or mat? I have wondered too, if these big spread skins may not be linked to another important object that is incorporated in some Khoe-San female initiation practices – the mat on which the initiate sits during her seclusion. (I discuss this in chapter 9). On the right is a small apron, divided into three panels and with a hem of short tassels, and a waistband.

The northeastern subsurface has at least six clothing motifs and a pecked cluster (Figure 7.23). The three images at top depict decorated skins of dimensions that suggest they represent back aprons. The left hand motif is decorated with four vertical and parallel lines that may be rows of beadwork and it seems to still have the animal's tail attached (Figure 7.24).

The middle apron (Figure 7.25) depicts a smaller skin with a waistband (perhaps the front legs of the animal, a pair of straps midway down the body of the apron and the back legs dangling down. There are pecked lines within the body of the skin; these may depict beadwork. The motif probably depicts a back apron.

FIGURE 7.22. The southern subsurface, from left to right, features a tasselled apron, spread skin with tail, and decorated front apron. (NW59 NE07)

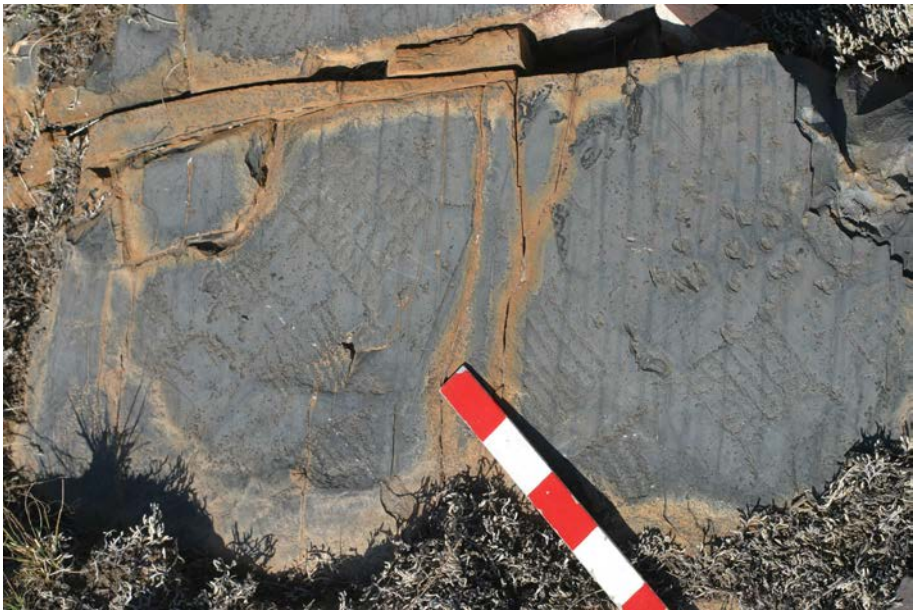


FIGURE 7.23. View of the northeastern (left) and northwestern (right) subsurfaces. (NW59 NE07)

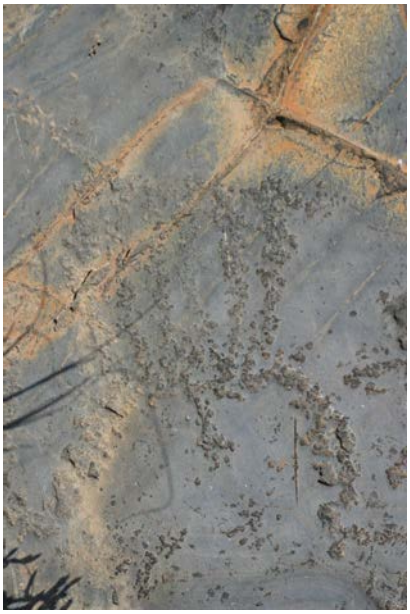


FIGURE 7.24. View of leftmost clothing motif on the northeastern subsurface; the limbs of the animal skin have been retained and the skinned limbs are used as tie strings. The tail is still attached. It has vertical subdivisions that may depict beadwork patterns. (NW59 NE07)

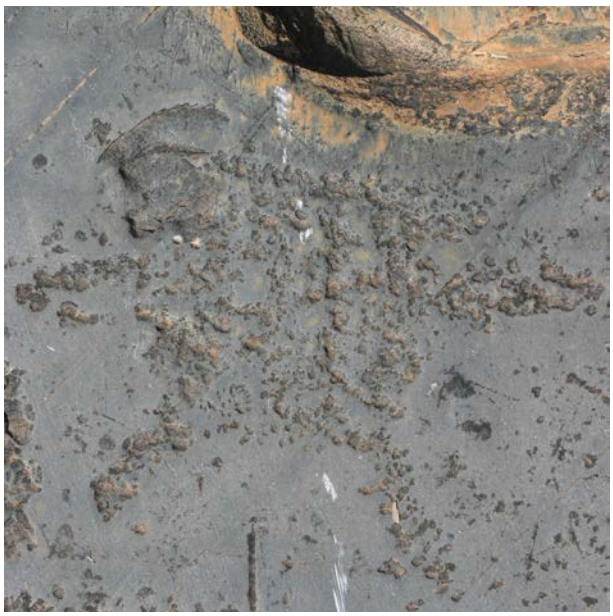


FIGURE 7.25. An apron motif. Note the internal subdivisions; these may represent beadwork decoration. (NW59 NE 07)

FIGURE 7.26. A large skin with waistband and two straps on either corner of the bottom edge of the skin – these may be the animal's limbs. The internal subdivisions probably represent beadwork patterns. There is a pecked cluster immediately to the right of the spread skin motif. (NW59 NE07)

The rightmost skin (Figure 7.26) is internally subdivided in what is probably a beadwork pattern. It has a waistband and two straps on either corner of the bottom of the skin; these may be the animal's limbs. Immediately next to this skin motif is a pecked cluster. The juxtaposition of pecked clusters and apron motifs is repeated on a few GDC surfaces; the association of these two motifs may be an indication that the pecked cluster too is referential, that it depicts either an object or perhaps a design.

Below the top row of hides are more clothing motifs. The central image depicts a large skin with straps (the animal's limbs?) on at least three of the corners (Figure 7.27). It is decorated with an arrangement of about seven vertical lines and a single horizontal perpendicular intersecting line roughly in the middle; these, like those described in Želizko (1925), may be beadwork patterns.

Below the large skin is a smaller apron motif (Figure 7.28) with four vertical, parallel lines (possibly beadwork). Its smaller size and the rounded shape of the skin suggest that it may be a front apron.

FIGURE 7.27. Large spread skin with internal subdivisions that may depict beadwork patterns. (NW59 NE07)

FIGURE 7.28. Decorated apron motif. The width and length of the apron suggest that it may depict a front apron. (NW59 NE07)

FIGURE 7.29. A large rectangular form with tie strings and seven internal subdivisions that may depict beadwork; the size and shape of the motif suggest that it depicts a large back apron. (NW59 NE07)

The northwestern subsurface has five clothing motifs (Figure 7.23). There is a large rectangular form, perhaps a back apron, with waistband and seven vertical subdivisions (possibly beadwork?) (Figure 7.29).

Below is a smaller form, also internally subdivided; it is probably a front apron (Figure 7.30). To the right is a large spread skin motif, with limbs for waist ties and the other two on either corner of the apron's hem (Figure 7.31). It is finely divided, possibly to indicate patterns of beadwork.

Below and to the right is another depiction of what may be a decorated front apron motif (Figure 7.30). A fifth motif at far right has been mostly destroyed by the removal of the rock surface at the northwestern edge of the surface (Figure 7.20).

Just above the clothing motifs is an area that has been struck repeatedly with different size hammer stones (Figure 7.32b). Some of these markings may be gestural; the approximately 12 large, scattered blows may have been part of activities associated with female initiation (see Part IV).

On the other hand, a rough but nonetheless more structured arrangement of six circle shapes above the heavy, scattered blows may be referential; they are reminiscent of the *Tupfen* or 'dots' mentioned in Želizko, possibly large beads or seeds.

FIGURE 7.30. Possible depiction of a decorated front apron. (NW59 NE07)

FIGURE 7.31. A large, possibly decorated spread skin motif, probably a back apron. (NW59 NE07)

(a) 1705 (b) NW59 NE07

FIGURE 7.32. (a) A pattern of five rows of three cross-shaped forms may depict a bracelet made from ostrich eggshell beads. (b) These 12 large peck marks may be gestural in nature and were possibly produced as part of activities carried out during female initiations.

In the corner of the northwestern subsurface is a pattern that comprises five rows of three similar cross-shaped forms (Figure 7.32a). I interpret them as representing an item of adornment, perhaps a bracelet.

NW45 SW11

This surface, about 1,10 m long and 0,8 m high (Figure 7.33), is in a quadrant that is full of motifs and markings. It is one of the quadrants that have suffered many removals, no doubt because the wealth of images here attracted the attentions of the removers. There may possibly have been a removal at bottom left of the outcrop on which NW45 SW11 occurs.

There is an underlying layer of markings in some areas; it comprises apparently unstructured scratches. There is also a small set of scratched chevrons (Figure 7.34).

There are two tasselled aprons here, the topmost rather larger (300 mm across at the waistband) than the other (240 mm) and with undulating tassels (Figure 7.35). Just to the right of this apron is a curious outline; it is the dorsal outline of the neck and head of a right-facing rhinoceros (Figure 7.36). This is not the only 'incomplete' but nevertheless diagnostic depiction of this species in the GDC (section 4.4.2). Nor is it the only instance in which tasselled aprons and rhinoceros are juxtaposed.

A pecked cluster (or possibly two as one can discern an unpecked area within the cluster) is closely juxtaposed with the rhinoceros image (Figure 7.37). The pecked cluster may be construed both as gestural and utilitarian, or the cluster may represent something, perhaps a cluster of decorative finger dots painted onto the skin.

FIGURE 7.33. Overall view of the display of aprons. Gestoptefontein Hill (NW45 SW11)

FIGURE 7.34. Scratched chevron designs. (NW45 SW11)

FIGURE 7.35. A large (300 mm wide) tasselled apron with undulating tassels. (NW45 SW11)

FIGURE 7.36. Dorsal outline of the neck and head of a right-facing rhinoceros arranged next to a tasselled apron. (NW45 SW11)

FIGURE 7.37. Pecked cluster next to the outline of the neck and head of a rhinoceros. (NW45 SW11)

The lower tasselled apron is flanked by a skin to its right, and another skin below; these skins are probably back aprons (Figure 7.38). A third skin to the left of the tasselled apron is on another facet of the surface (Figure 7.39).

To the right of the lower row of aprons is a battered area: the rock surface has been heavily hammered, probably with large hammer stones (Figure 7.40). I interpret this phenomenon, which occurs on many surfaces, as part of the gestural repertoire in the GDC.

7.2.7 Why use metric projections for aprons?

Using the example of ancient Egyptian tomb art that depicts funerary objects, I explained earlier that the metric projection of an object preserves the dimensions of an object and details of the object's surface. I think that GDC artists chose to present apron motifs as metric projections so that they could convey the maximum amount of information about the apron shape and design details as possible. It is not necessary, however, to argue that the artists themselves had a coherent understanding of concepts of geometry and that they applied these consciously to the art. This focus by the artists on shape, size and surface detail may explain why the apron motifs in the GDC are disembodied. One cannot easily discern details of apron shape and decoration when the apron is depicted

FIGURE 7.38. The tasselled apron is flanked by a skin (at right) and another skin (below); the skins are probably back aprons. (NW45 SW11)

FIGURE 7.39. A skin motif has been placed to the left of the tasselled apron, on another facet of the surface. (NW45 SW11)

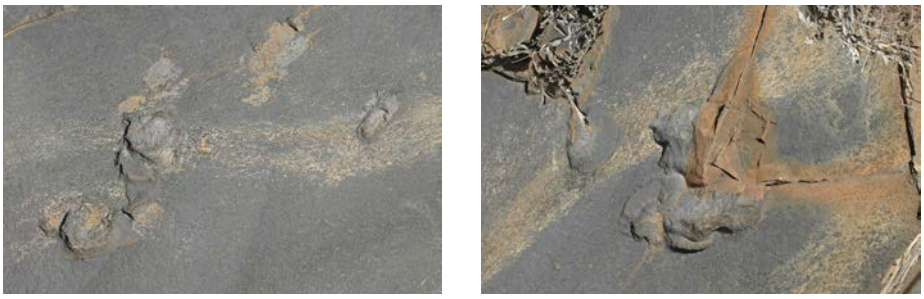


FIGURE 7.40. Part of the surface has been battered with large hammer stones. (NW45 SW11)

as being worn; problems of perspective and scale arise. In order to see the details of the apron the figure that is depicted wearing needs to be presented from the front (in the case of a front apron) or from the back to show a back apron. Then, too, the apron has to be presented at a scale large enough to enable details of decoration to be discerned. As to why it was important to depict apron shape and decorative detail, I believe that it was so that their beauty and complexity could be admired and appreciated. All the salient details of the apron are there to see. Recall that a lot of love, care and labour goes into preparing an apron – preparing the hide, deciding on its shape and ornamenting its surfaces with a variety of objects, including complex beadwork – and that usually the apron is made for a particular person by a family member. Each apron motif is unique and the majority of them are richly decorated and the best way to appreciate them is by depicting them using metric perspective. Disembodied presentations of apron motifs (and other items of adornment) therefore emphasise the objects themselves and enable important formal details to be clearly presented.

7.3 Karosses

Some GDC motifs may depict trimmed hides: they lack limbs, head and tail and are more regular in outline than the spread-eagle animal-skin hides already discussed. They are not uniform in appearance, but can be grouped roughly according to overall appearance. For example, some motifs are oblong, roughly uniformly pecked shapes, with or without a distinct border (Figure 7.41). These forms resemble that of the kaross outline in Engelbrecht's sketch (1936: diagram 6f, reproduced in Figure 6.3) except that the GDC motifs do not show that the hide has been trimmed to accommodate the neck of the wearer.

Engelbrecht describes this type of cloak, ǂ*namma* in the Koranna language, in some detail. It is knee length, or longer and is worn inside out (i.e. hairy side

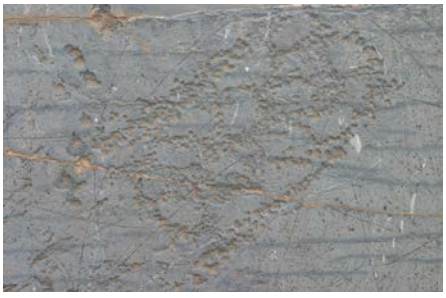
(a) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW58 NW11)

(b) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW57 SE11)

(c) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW57 NE42)

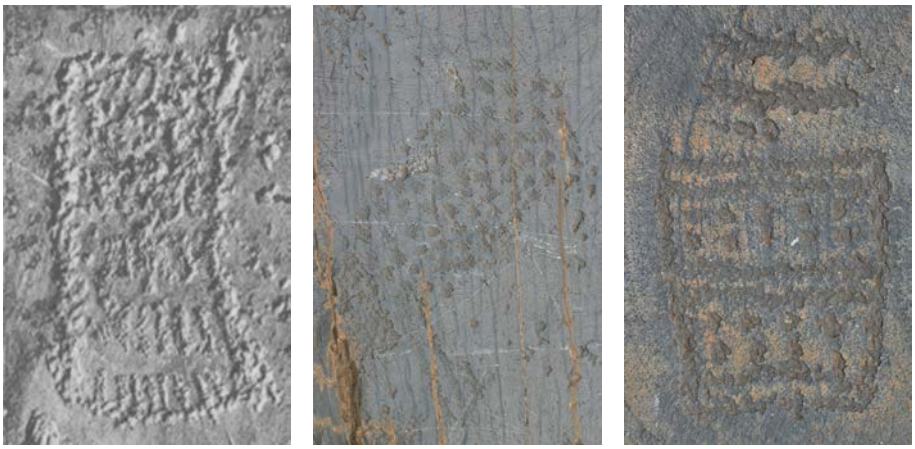
(d) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW56 NW37)

(e) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW55 SW22)



(f) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW14 NE02)

FIGURE 7.41. These forms depict animal-skin hide motifs that have been trimmed to produce cloaks and blankets.



(a) Piece 57513, Museum of Ethnology, Vienna (Želizko 1925: plate 14.8)

(b) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW14 NE02)

(c) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW08 SW02)

(d) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW48 NE05)

(e) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW46 SW01)

(f) Driekuil Hill (DH74e)

FIGURE 7.42. Examples of trimmed hides that are also decorated.

in), with the collar turned out to form a fur collar. Sheepskin was a favourite material but other animal hides were used (not goat or silver jackal, however). Engelbrecht (1936: 105) notes that: 'Fancy karosses were often made by sewing the skins of different animals together.'

Some trimmed hide motifs are more regular and feature more decorative patterns (Figure 7.42) than other trimmed hide motifs (Figure 7.43).

(a) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW15 SW01) (b) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW57 NE40)

FIGURE 7.43. These trimmed animal-skin motifs show no sign of tie-strings, or limbs and may thus be depictions of cloaks They have regular, internal divisions. I interpret these divisions as depicting beadwork decoration: SW15 SW01 (2303008); NW57 NE40 (NW 57 NE 033).

7.4 Spread-eagle motifs

On several of the GDC outcrops are spread-eagle motifs of animal-skin hides and other forms. These motifs appear singly, over scratched surfaces, in groups, and in conjunction with other clothing motifs, as well as anthropomorphic and zoomorphic imagery. Each motif is unique in size, dimensions and other aspects but they do occur only in one of five conformations:

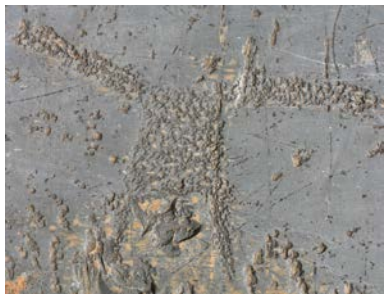
- Limbs and body only
- Limbs, body and head
- Limbs, body and tail
- Limbs, body, head and tail
- Branched motifs

These types are fairly easily distinguished with the exception of some spread-eagle motifs in which it is difficult to determine whether it is the head or tail that is depicted, but there are fewer than ten of these problematic motifs. The limbs-body-head-tail (L-B-H-T) combination is the most numerous and widespread (Table 7.1). Limbs-body-only (L-B-O) and limbs-body-tail (L-B-T) are the next most numerous types. The L-B-T combination occurs at 7 of the 13 GDC outcrops. Least numerous and least widespread are arrangements that show limbs-body-head (L-B-H).

7.4.1 Limbs and body only (L-B-O)

Most, perhaps all, of the spread-eagle motifs in the L-B-O conformation can be construed as representations of aprons. Probably the majority of these depic-

(a) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW20 NW02)



(b) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW14 NE01)

FIGURE 7.44. Spread-eagle motifs comprising limbs and and body only and with one pair of limbs longer than the others are probably apron motifs.

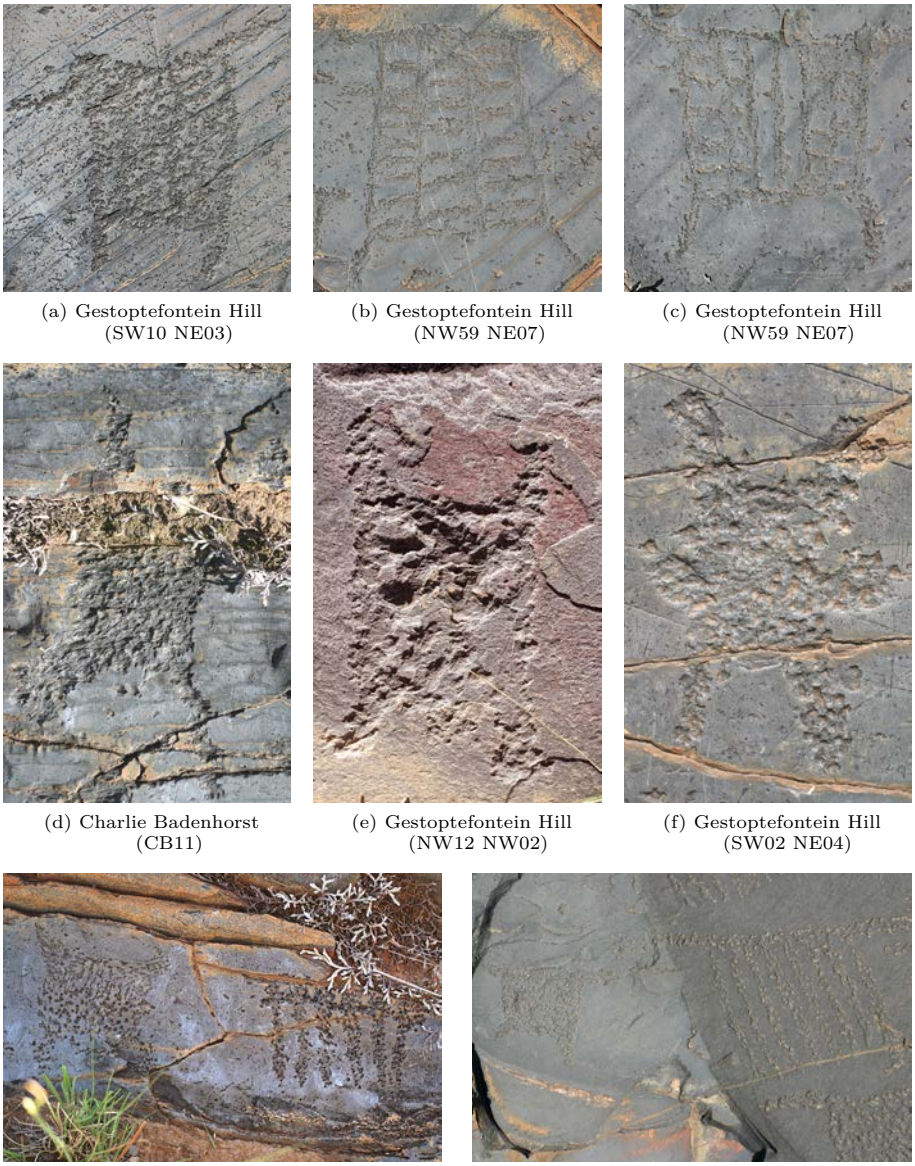
tions represent back aprons because the motifs comprise large, square or oblong shapes big enough to cover the buttocks of the wearer but too large and clumsy to serve as a front apron. Another clue to the identification of certain L-B-O conformations as apron motifs is that in some cases one set of limbs is depicted as quite long. Presumably these served to tie the apron around the waist (e.g. (Figure 7.44)).

Certain L-B-O motifs are almost definitely aprons – the interior portion of the motif has been subdivided into regular, even-sized blocks (Figure 7.45). I argue elsewhere that these interior subdivisions connote arrangements of decorative beadwork.

Another 'style' of L-B-O conformation type aprons is H-shaped motifs, which seem to depict aprons that have been trimmed to a more regular square–oblong size (Figure 7.45). The length of all four of the limbs either remains roughly

Table 7.1
Different conformations of spread-eagle motifs and their distribution.

Conformation	No. of sites	No. of motifs
Limbs and body only (L-B-O)	3	20
Limbs, body and head (L-B-H)	2	10
Limbs, body and tail (L-B-T)	7	20
Limbs, body, head and tail (L-B-H-T)	10	58
Branched motifs	5	28



(a) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW10 NE03)

(b) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW59 NE07)

(c) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW59 NE07)

(d) Charlie Badenhorst (CB11)

(e) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW12 NW02)

(f) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW02 NE04)

(g) Driekuil Hill (DH27)

(h) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW45 SW11)

FIGURE 7.45. Spread-eagle motifs with limbs and body only (L-B-O) probably depict back aprons. (a) to (c) feature internally-subdivided 'blocks' that may depict arrangements of decorative beadwork; (d) to (f) are H-shaped motifs, in which the limbs are roughly equal or the lower two limbs have been shortened; (g) & (h) L-B-O motifs are sometimes arranged on surfaces alongside apron motifs.

(a) Boschpoort Road South (BRS2 03) (b) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW56 NW38) (c) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW56 SE11)

FIGURE 7.46. Spread-eagle motifs comprising limbs-body-head (L-B-H).

equal or the lower two limbs (i.e. those not used to fasten the apron around the waist) only are shortened.

The context of many L-B-O motifs may support my interpretation of them as apron motifs. In several instances L-B-O motifs are arranged on surfaces alongside apron motifs (Figure 7.45). In such cases I interpret the proximity of F-B-O motifs to other apron motifs as an indication that the artists regarded as one of several kinds of clothing motif.

7.4.2 Limbs, body and head (L-B-H)

There are not very many L-B-H motifs (10 in total) and these are restricted to two outcrops: Gestoptefontein Hill and Boschpoort Road South 2. Some of these motifs look anthropomorphic (e.g. Figure 7.46a, b) or saurian (lizard- or crocodile-like) (Figure 7.46c). These proportions of these examples are fairly slender and seem not to be suitable for use as aprons. At least some of the L-B-H motifs, therefore, may not be apron motifs.

However, L-B-H motifs do share surfaces with other motifs, especially aprons. In one instance an L-B-H motif (Figure 7.47) is on one of a pair of rock facets (Figure 7.47b). On the other facet is what may be an apron motif (Figure 7.47c). There are no other motifs nearby and so I interpret this as a deliberate and meaningful arrangement in which the motifs are paired and support each other; each lends meaning to the other. What these meanings may be I discuss in Part IV. In another case, a rather rudimentary L-B-H motif is positioned next to an apron motif (Figure 7.48a). Another Gestoptefontein Hill surface also shows an L-B-H motif with a L-B-O motif that I interpret as a back apron (Figure 7.48b). In a fourth instance of association (Figure 7.48c) a L-B-H is closely juxtaposed with the motif of a female anthropomorph and a

pecked cluster. The association between some L-B-H motifs and apron motifs is also present on a large surface at the southern end of Gestoptefontein Hill. The L-B-H motif has long front limbs and short rear limbs and is not an easily recognisable depiction of a known animal.

Two L-B-H motifs on Gestoptefontein Hill may depict a particular species of animal, real or imaginary (Figure 7.49). They are not identical, but each has a small head and a pointed snout, a squat, roughly square body and large limbs in proportion to the body (Figure 7.49a, b). One of these motifs is juxtaposed with an area of pecked rock (Figure 7.49b). The other is alone on a surface. Another L-B-H motif (Figure 7.49c) shares the surface with gestural markings, but no other motifs occur nearby.

7.4.3 Limbs, body and tail (L-B-T)

This is the third-largest of the four categories. Many of these motifs seem to depict aprons. Holub removed a stone on which is the motif of a hide trimmed to a rough square and decorated with beadwork patterns; the tail has been retained (Figure 7.50a). A motif of a similarly trimmed hide with a zigzag border and a tail is still on the hill (Figure 7.50b).

Many L-B-T motifs depict animal-skin hides that have not been trimmed to a regular form. These hides vary in size and dimensions. This variation may reflect the variety of animal-skin hides used as clothing (see discussion of L-B-H-T motifs in subsection 7.4.4) and the intended use of the skin depicted (i.e. as smaller-size back aprons, or larger skins that may have been used as cloaks).

In a few instances, L-B-T motifs are closely juxtaposed with clearly identifiable apron motifs (Figure 7.51a–d).

I interpret this association as an indication that L-B-T motifs are part of the same nexus of meaning as the other apron motifs on that rock surface. Some of the larger L-B-T motifs with long tails could depict large skin cloaks (karosses) (Figure 7.52), while others are probably rear aprons (Figure 7.53).

7.4.4 Limbs, body, head and tail (L-B-H-T)

This is numerically the largest category of the spread-eagle motifs. Each is a unique combination of limbs, body, tail, and head. Variation in competence of execution is also evident and could suggest that many different individuals participated in creating motifs – some of whom were not necessarily accomplished artists. Certain motifs are naturalistic enough to identify: three animal-skin hide motifs illustrated in Želizko (1925) are specifically identified as depictions of a 'monkey' (perhaps the Vervet Monkey, *Cercopithecus pygerythrus)*, a 'squirrel' (perhaps the South African Ground Squirrel, *Geosciurus inauris)*, and a

(a) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW62 SW02)

(b) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW62 SW02)

(c) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW62 SW02)

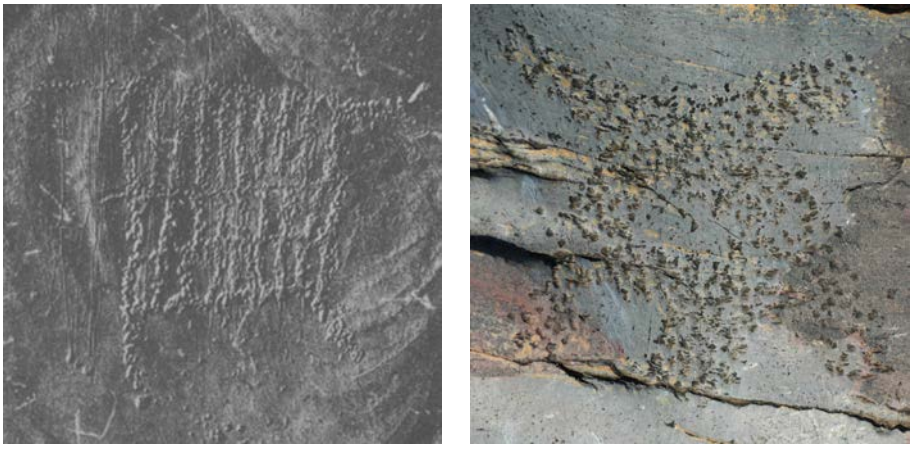
FIGURE 7.47. Motifs on two adjacent facets of rock: at left is a possible apron motif. At right is an L-B-H motif.

(a) Boschpoort Road South (BRS2 01) (b) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW56 NW38) (c) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW39 NW01)

FIGURE 7.48. Examples of L-B-H motifs that are juxtaposed with apron motifs. Figure (c) has a female anthropomorph. The apron motif is the cluster of pecks directly in front (left of) the anthropomorph.

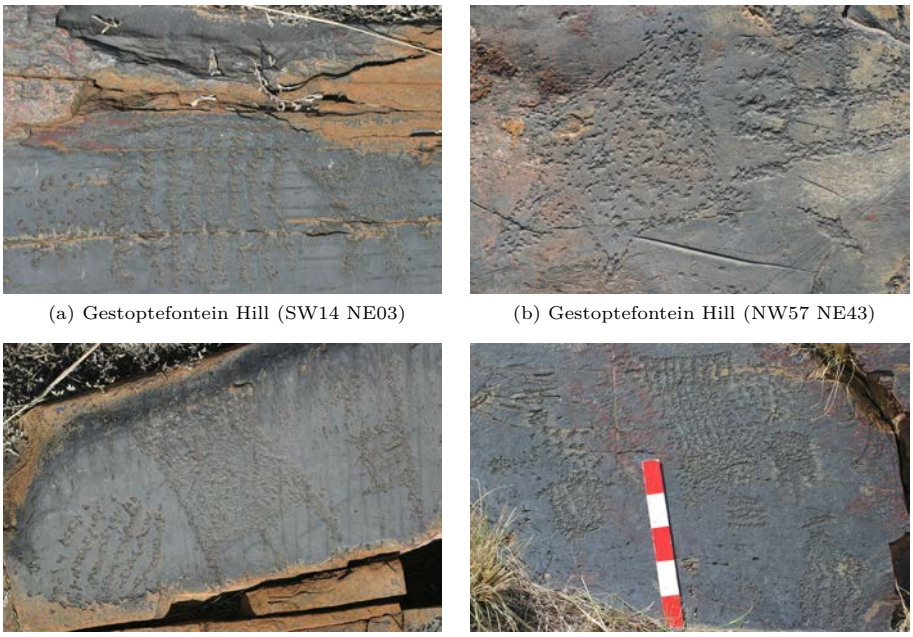
(a) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW53 NW08) (b) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW66 NW04) (c) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW56 SW46)

FIGURE 7.49. Distinctive animal-shaped L-B-H motifs.



(a) Želizko: 1925: plate 15.4 (b) Driekuil Hill, DH044

FIGURE 7.50. L-B-T motifs that probably depict trimmed and decorated back aprons.



(a) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW14 NE03)

(b) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW57 NE43)

(c) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW59 NE07)

(d) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW15)

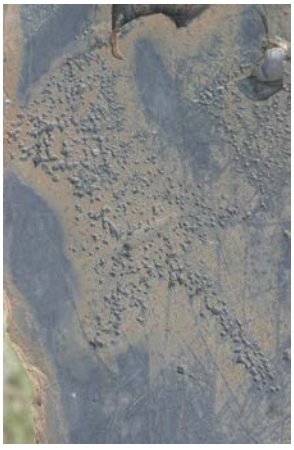
FIGURE 7.51. L-B-T motifs that are juxtaposed with apron motifs.

'honey badger' *(Mellivora capensis)* – although it is not clear whether these determinations were made by an informed native observer or Holub himself (Figure 7.54).

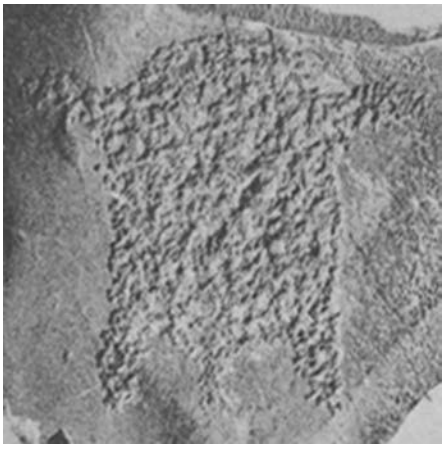
These specific identifications are interesting because they confirm the observation that at least some spread-eagle motifs on the GDC outcrops represent depictions of various animal species. The identifications suggest that these animal-skin hides are not generalised or abstract depictions of shapes; the motifs have a naturalistic basis.

Encouraged by the specific identifications in Želizko (1925) one may identify on the GDC outcrops further examples of spread-eagle motifs that could depict certain species or kinds of animals. There are motifs that depict what are possibly small mammals with long tails (Figure 7.55).

On the GDC outcrop BRS3 are four L-B-H-T motifs that have long tails and legs and broad heads with no necks (Figure 7.56). These motifs may depict felids, such as a lioness, cheetah, leopard or one of the smaller feline species.



(a) Klerksdorp Museum (KM042538)



(b) Piece 57519, Museum of Ethnology, Vienna (Želizko: 1925: plate 12.9)

(c) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW11 NE03)

(d) Boschpoort Road South (BRS2 10)

FIGURE 7.52. Examples of large L-B-T motifs, some with long tails. These may be depictions of skin cloaks (karosses).

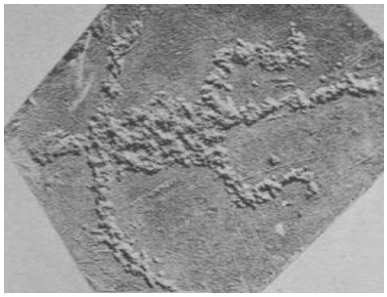
(a) Driekuil Hill (DH44)

(b) Boschpoort Road North (BRN1 03)

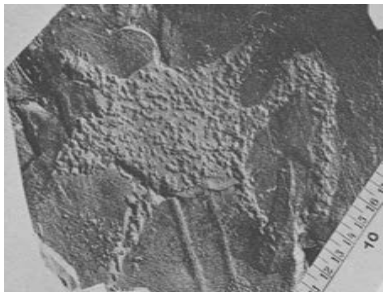
(c) Boschpoort Road North (BRN1 01)

FIGURE 7.53. Example of L-B-T motifs that depict back aprons.

(a) *Honigdachsfell* (honey badger skin), accession number 57524



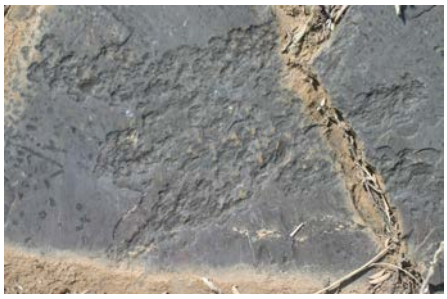
(b) *Affenfell* (monkey skin), accession number 57523



(c) *Eichhörnchenfell* (squirrel skin) accession number 57525

FIGURE 7.54. Spread-eagle motifs identified in Želizko (1925: plate 12) as animal-skin hides. Museum of Ethnology, Vienna.

(a) Boschpoort Road South (BRS2 12)

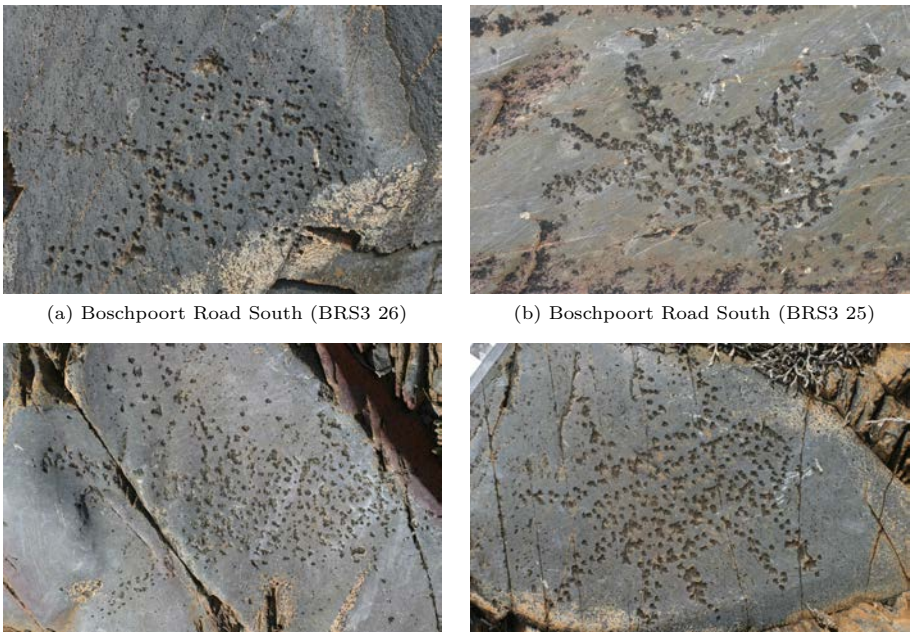


(b) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW48 NE15)

(c) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW17)

(d) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW64 SE01)

FIGURE 7.55. These motifs may depict the skins of small mammals.



(a) Boschpoort Road South (BRS3 26)

(b) Boschpoort Road South (BRS3 25)

(c) Boschpoort Road South (BRS3 01)

(d) Boschpoort Road South (BRS3 07)

FIGURE 7.56. Possible feline spread-eagle animal-skin hide motifs, all from outcrop BRS3.

Anthropomorphic motifs

Two of the 'spread skin' motifs on one of the Skeleton Hill surfaces may be based on anthropomorphic, rather than zoomorphic, body plans. The bodies are long and narrow and there is some differentiation between the two sets of limbs – one set is longer than the other. Possibly then, one set of limbs depicts legs while the other, shorter, set of limbs represents arms. Both motifs are part of the same set of complex and dramatic motifs and markings on the same large, smoothed surface (Figure 7.57).

The first of the two anthropomorphic motifs I discuss is part of an arrangement of motifs that comprises a four-tasselled apron motif with tie strings and a pecked, meandering 'line' (Figure 7.57). The thick, sinuous pecked line is looped at one end and has two sac-like attachments (Figure 7.58). I interpret this motif as a waistband, or a belt. The 'free' end of the belt threads through the loop at the other hand and in this way the belt can be tightened. This association between spread-eagle motifs and clothing motifs is found across the GDC outcrops (see Figure 7.50–Figure 7.54).

Close examination of the spread-eagle motif suggests that it has anthropomorphic features (Figure 7.59a). There is a 'head' that is not attached to

(a) Overview of surface with anthropomorphic spread-eagle motifs.

(b) View of surface with apron motif, meandering 'line' and spread-eagle

(c) View of surface with anthropomorph, elaborate spread-eagle and apron motif

FIGURE 7.57. Two of the spread-eagle motifs on one of the Skeleton Hill surfaces (SH10) may be based on anthropomorphic, rather than zoomorphic, body plans.

FIGURE 7.58. Motif identified as a belt, or waistband (SH10). From L to R: the looped end of the waistband; sac-like attachment; the other end of the waistband with what could be a tassel attached to the waistband.

the rest of the motif, but close enough to be associated with the rest of the body. One can discern a pair of 'arms', shorter than the lower limbs and angled slightly upwards, as if raised. The 'arms' may be holding objects: at left is a short pecked line, and at right, a pecked square. The lower limbs are longer, as would be expected in a realistic depiction of an anthropomorph. The 'legs' appear to be bowed. The short pecked section between the legs may be interpreted as a penis, rather than a tail. The overall impression is that of a male anthropomorph in a 'dynamic' posture – legs braced and arms raised – possibly a dance posture. Thus in close association is a tasselled apron motif, possibly a male anthropomorph and what I interpret as a depiction of a waistband. This choice of motifs is part of what is by now a familiar pattern in which spread-eagle motifs are juxtaposed with clothing motifs and, on occasion, zoomorphic and anthropomorphic imagery.

The second possible anthropomorphic motif is on the western side of surface SH10 (Figure 7.57c). I describe the motifs from left to right, beginning with the anthropomorphic pecked outline image (Figure 7.59b).

This anthropomorph stands and faces to the left. I interpret this figure as male: there is a projection where one would expect a penis to be. The image is arranged in a stationary posture but the positioning of the arms, which are

(a) Spread-eagled anthropomorph next to a tasselled apron motif (SH10, 0474).

(b) Pecked outline image of a left-facing male anthropomorph with both arms raised (SH10, 0465).

FIGURE 7.59. Possible anthropomorphs from Skeleton Hill.

raised and bent at the elbow, indicates that the figure is intended to be construed as dynamic: perhaps it is a 'frozen moment', an isolated dance posture.

To the right of this anthropomorph is the intriguing spread-eagle L-B-H-T motif (Figure 7.60). The orientation of this spread-eagle motif may be consistent with (i.e. the same as) that of the anthropomorphic motifs on either side. If so, then the 'lower' limbs are longer than the 'upper' limbs, a configuration that is consistent with the interpretation of the motif as anthropo- rather than zoomorphic. The 'lower' limbs are legs, the 'upper limbs' are arms. The pecked 'projection' between the legs may either represent a penis, or, if one considers the possibility that the motif incorporates features of other, non-human animals, then it could be a tail. The slender waist and torso is also consistent with an interpretation of the motif as having anthropomorphic qualities. Certainly, the thin appearance of this motif is unlike any of the animal-skin hide motifs.

The large pecked dots are also unique to this spread-eagle motif. They seem to be arranged in a 'cloud' around the waist and torso of the motif. Are these 'dots' the conceptual equivalent of the *Tupfen* mentioned in Želizko (1925) and discussed in section 8.1, 'Beads'? The 'dots' may provide important information about the nature and significance of the spread-eagle motif.

FIGURE 7.60. Anthropomorphic spread-eagle motif of the L-B-H-T type. It has been pecked over a smoothed surface that was then densely scratched before the engraving was made. Several dots have been pecked on either side of mid-section of the spread-eagle motif.

The upper portion of the spread-eagle motif does not appear to be a completely naturalistic representation of an anthropomorph. I interpret the outermost pair of pecked 'projections' as the upper limbs, or 'arms', of the motif. What then of the innermost 'pair' of 'projections'? These are arranged on either side of the area in which one would expect the neck and head of an anthropomorph to be situated.

To the right of this spread-eagled putative anthropomorph and separated by a crack in the rock are another two motifs (Figure 7.61). I interpret the leftmost motif as an anthropomorphic figure depicted in profile. It faces to the right. The motif is 'schematic' – it has no arms and gives no conclusive clue to gender, except, perhaps, that the 'thigh' area is noticeably thicker than the rest of the body, a feature that could suggest it is female. The upper part of the torso narrows to form the 'neck' and the 'head' may have a 'projection' from the top.

In the absence of any indication of tie strings or a waistband, I interpret the roughly square, internally divided shape right next to the anthropomorph as a trimmed and decorated animal hide.

FIGURE 7.61. Anthropomorph at left, inclined slightly from the waist, next to a possible trimmed and decorated animal hide.

Sauroid motifs

These are motifs that look lizard- or crocodile-like. They are quite distinctive in appearance, with a long tail, relatively short limbs, and a long snout (Figure 7.62).

Context and associations of L-B-H-T motifs

As with the other conformations of animal-skin hide motifs there is a close association between L-B-H-T motifs and clothing motifs. For example, an L-B-H-T motif is part of a detailed arrangement of motifs and markings on a large surface on Gestoptefontein Hill (Figure 7.63). The L-B-H-T motif is pecked out within the confines of an eland motif and is juxtaposed with a detailed clothing motif that may be an apron.

Nearby on a separate facet is a composition that comprises a densely pecked cluster that may be an apron motif, an arrangement of *Tupfen* (dots) and an L-B-H-T motif (Figure 7.64).

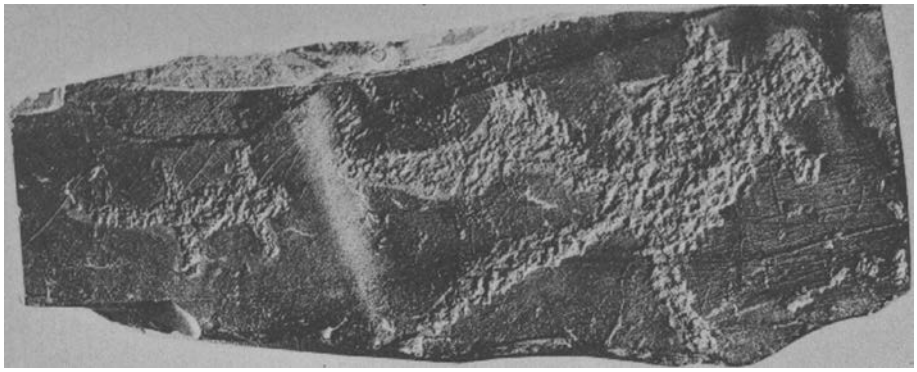
Further downhill on the same large slab is a long-tailed L-B-H-T motif with a square body (Figure 7.65). It is close to a pecked cluster that may be an apron and within a few centimetres of two large apron motifs.

Another surface on Gestoptefontein Hill comprises two L-B-H-T motifs and two pecked aprons with solid waistbands and pecked infill for the 'body' of the aprons (Figure 7.66). Here the association between spread-eagle motifs and apron motifs is unequivocal because there are no other motifs on the surface. Intriguingly however, these examples of spread-eagle motifs have very slender bodies and appear more anthropomorphic than zoomorphic.

The association of L-B-H-T motifs and apron motifs is clear in another example from Gestoptefontein Hill. In this case, an L-B-H-T motif is the leftmost

(a) Klerksdorp Museum (042454)

(b) Sauroid motif removed from Driekuil Hill (DH300)



(c) Possible sauroid motifs collected by Holub (Želizko 1925: plate 12.5). The two motifs collected by Holub do not have long muzzles but their long tails and short legs are nonetheless sauroid in appearance.

FIGURE 7.62. Motifs that resemble lizards or crocodiles.

FIGURE 7.63. An L-B-H-T motif (just below the eland's hump) is juxtaposed with an eland depiction and an apron/beaded waistbelt motif (at right). Gestoptefontein Hill (NW55 SW13).

FIGURE 7.64. An L-B-H-T motif arranged on the same surface as a densely pecked cluster (at left) and a stacked arrangement of pecked dots. Gestoptefontein Hill (NW55 SW17)

of three motifs: in the middle is an unidentified motif and at right, an apron motif with tie strings (Figure 7.67).

Despite superficial formal resemblances the GDC spread-eagle motifs do not seem to be a monolithic category. There are four basic conformations. The L-B-O motifs are probably all apron depictions, but the L-B-H motifs – although they share the same surfaces as apron motifs – are in some cases too thin to be construed as apron motifs. Some seem anthropomorphic, and a few look saurian. Many L-B-T motifs may depict back aprons and have been trimmed and decorated. In many cases too these motifs were placed next to clearly identifiable apron motifs. The L-B-H-T motifs are diverse in their appearance and have the largest number of examples of all spread-eagle motifs. Certain motifs may be identified as skins of small mammals, which may depict aprons. Other L-B-H-T motifs seem anthropomorphic, and a couple have a lizard-like appearance. L-B-H-T motifs are often associated with apron motifs.

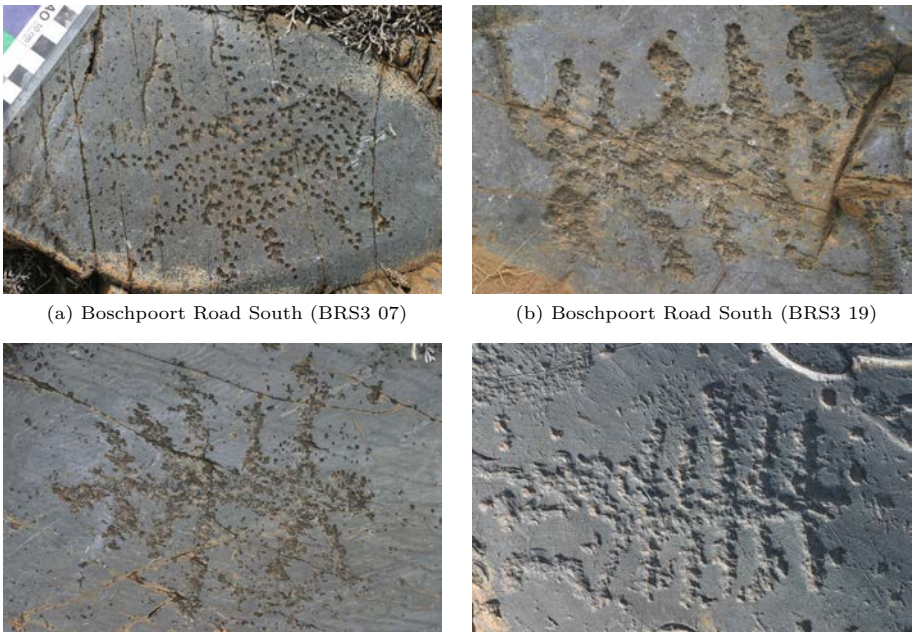
7.4.5 'Branched' motifs

I created the category of 'branched' motifs to accommodate motifs that have in common a central line which is crossed at right angles by two or more shorter lines. These branched motifs are a widespread puzzle – similar-looking mo-

FIGURE 7.65. A long-tailed L-B-H-T motif with a square body is associated with a pecked cluster and close to two large apron motifs (apron motifs not illustrated). Gestoptefontein Hill (NW55 SW18)

FIGURE 7.66. Two L-B-H-T motifs (at left), juxtaposed with two apron motifs (bottom right). Gestoptefontein Hill (NW56 NW22)

FIGURE 7.67. L-B-H-T motif at left, unidentified motif (middle) and front apron motif with tie strings (at right). Gestoptefontein Hill (NW53 NW04)



(a) Boschpoort Road South (BRS3 07)

(b) Boschpoort Road South (BRS3 19)

(c) Boschpoort Road South (BRS3 13)

(d) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW57 SE24)

FIGURE 7.68. Is there a link between spread-eagle animal-hide skins and branched motifs? (a) is a spread-eagle motif with four limbs on either side rather than the usual four. It looks similar to (b) - (d), examples of 'branched motifs' that look rather zoomorphic.

tifs (painted and engraved) are common in North West and Northern Cape provinces (e.g. Slack 1962: fig 1, pl. 7; Rudner & Rudner 1968 (including cover picture), 1970 (esp. plate 46), Fock & Fock 1989: plates 3.1, 3.2, 39.3, 71.1, 94.3, 114.1; Hollmann & Hykkerud 2004 (figs 3, 8). Are branched motifs schematised depictions of objects or design motifs, or something else? In keeping with the hypothesis that most, if not all, GDC motifs are referential, I suggest that the branched motifs too are referential (although not immediately identifiable as to what the referent/s may be). Wilman (1933: plate 60.1) describes an example of a branched motif as a 'grapple thorn' but are all branched motifs derived from the same 'subject'? Slack has asserted that a particular example of a branched motif from the Stowlands engraving site in Free State province depicts a 'tree of life'. I do not profess to be able to answer such questions definitively. Rather, I point out the contexts in which this kind of motif occurs in the GDC.

Study of spread-eagle animal-skin motifs made me aware of a possible link between these motifs and some of the 'branched' motifs. On outcrop BRS3 is an unusual animal-skin hide motif (Figure 7.68). Instead of the usual two pairs of limbs, this has four 'projections' on either side. Whether this means that

the motif is not naturalistic or that the projections are attachments to the skin is not clear. What is of interest is the similarity between this motif and many examples of branched motifs in the GDC (Figure 7.68).

The basic design principles or 'layout' of both types of motifs are similar: there is a central axis (a 'torso' or 'trunk'), both motif-types are bilaterally symmetrical and both have 'projections' ('head' and 'tail). Does this mean that these motifs mean the same thing? On the one hand, one should not confuse the use of a technique – the spread-eagle perspective – with the subject matter. But, on the other hand, the similarities may suggest an origin for, or a link between spread-eagle animal-hide skins and branched motifs. The nature and significance of a putative origin, or link, remains obscure for the moment.

Context and associations of branched motifs

In the GDC branched motifs occur alone and with zoomorphic motifs and clothing motifs. For example, a very interesting combination occurs on two adjacent surfaces in quadrant NW56 on Gestoptefontein Hill, one of the most densely engraved areas (Figure 7.69). At left is a buffalo-head motif that faces toward the adjoining facet, on which a motif of black rhino has been pecked. The two zoomorphic images face each other across the natural crack in the rock.

Each animal representation is closely juxtaposed with a branched motif – so closely that the two motifs almost merge. In the case of the buffalo, at first glance the branched motif looks like the animal's spine; I do not think, however, that the branched motif is intended to depict the spine. I am only pointing out the close juxtaposition of the two motifs. The pecked outline black rhino image has been infilled with parallel and evenly spaced pecked lines. A branched motif nests below the belly line. In both cases it seems difficult to argue that the various motifs were set down in a particular order or to attempt to attribute particular motifs to a particular 'artistic tradition' or ethnic group – for instance that the exquisitely pecked buffalo head and the black rhino are products of a Bushman hunter-gatherer culture, probably predating the branched motifs, which could be classified as more recent Khoekhoe herder art (see discussion in section 2.1).

Other instances of branched motifs are associated with clothing motifs. An engraving that Holub removed seems to show an apron motif with a branched motif design. Branched motifs are incorporated into a few larger and densely marked surfaces that include apron motifs (as well as many other motifs and markings), such as the large surface in quadrant NW57 (see Figure 7.71).

Other motifs have a branching pattern that does not seem to derive entirely from the spread-eagle animal-skin 'template' that I noted earlier. These motifs

(a) Buffalo motif and branched motif at left; black rhino motif and branched motif at right.

(b) Detail of NW56 SW10

(c) Detail of NW56 SW11

FIGURE 7.69. Zoomorphs juxtaposed with branched motifs. Gestoptefontein Hill (NW56 SW10 & 11)

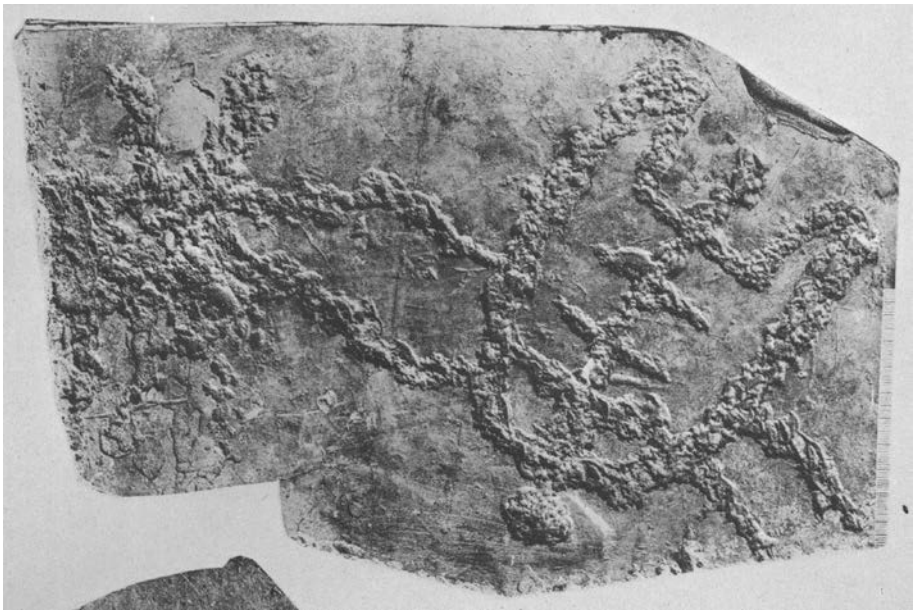


FIGURE 7.70. Depiction of front apron (at right) with a possible branched motif design, perhaps intended to depict a design made in beads. Piece 57500, Museum of Ethnography, Vienna (Želizko 1925: plate 13.1)

FIGURE 7.71. Branched motif on a facet of Groove Rock a large and densely marked surface. Gestoptefontein Hill (NW57 SE24).

FIGURE 7.72. Some branched motifs are asymmetrical. Gestoptefontein Hill (SW17 NW02).

are not bilaterally symmetrical. They resemble some of the branched motifs from Driekopseiland that are illustrated in Slack (1962: figure 1, plate 7).

I am inclined to think that these branched motifs are referential, as so many other supposedly 'non-representational' motifs have turned out to be metric depictions of unfamiliar objects (e.g. hair ornaments, headbands, rattles). They are juxtaposed with all the other motif groups. However, their identity, and the significance of branched motifs – both the bilaterally symmetrical types and the other branched designs – remain obscure, for the moment at least.

Chapter 8

Ornaments and decorations

Many of the GDC motifs can be interpreted as metric projections, or plan views of ornaments and decorations that Khoe-San people used in the ethnographic past. Once this explanatory context is assumed it is possible to recognise depictions of a range of artefacts. Historical descriptions of Khoe-San adornments describe the extensive use of beads (especially and most characteristically, ostrich eggshell beads) to adorn items as well as items of beadwork. Bleek (1928) describes women winding chains of large beads three or four times around their waists, wearing necklaces and bracelets and coronets of beads, and sewing beadwork motifs onto their aprons. Hair ornaments made from a great variety of materials are commonly worn. Ethnographic accounts describe people wearing feathers, Dutch coins, shells, brass, copper and glass beads (not to mention strings of ostrich eggshell beads), gall bladders (Raven-Hart 1971: 16, 35, 125). Women wore earrings and strings of beads in pierced ears (Raven-Hart 1971: 16, 125). People also wore bangles of ivory and copper (Raven-Hart 1971: 16). Above all, people are resourceful and make ornaments from miscellany of items (e.g. Valiente-Noailles 1993: 157). Bearing in mind the three questions I posed in the beginning about the GDC motifs– who made them? what are they? why make them here? – in this chapter I show that one can recognise a rich variety of motifs that depict ornaments and decorations on the GDC outcrops. Then in subsequent chapters I explain why these engravings were important.

8.1 Beads

Beads are a characteristic Khoe-San accessory used to make aprons and apron decorations, necklaces, waist belts and waist cords, ornaments worn in the hair and bracelets (e.g. Schapera 1930: 66–67). The Khoe-San are perhaps best known for the ostrich eggshell beads that they have been producing for thou-

sands of years (e.g. Schapera 1930: 66; Deacon & Deacon 1999: 118, 147, fig. 8.15). Glass beads were obtained through trade and barter with Bantu-speakers and European traders and were much sought after (Schapera 1930: 67).

Several GDC motifs illustrated in Želizko's (1925) book have captions that identify motifs that incorporate *Perlen*, 'beads', *Glasperlen*, 'glass beads' and *Tupfen*, 'dots'. I have already pointed out that many of the GDC apron motifs feature depictions of beadwork (chapter 7). Želizko (and/or Holub) identified other instances of beads and items of clothing: beads as *Verzierungen*, 'decorations' (NpM4-7117 & 94445) on hides, a bead belt (Figure 8.18a) and a *Fell*, 'skin', that I have categorised with motifs that I call karosses (see section 7.3).

8.1.1 'Dots' and 'spots' *(Tupfen)*

Arrangements of pecked, regular and uniform-sized dots, never more than a couple of millimetres deep and at most 35 mm in diameter, are a striking component of the motifs on Gestoptefontein Hill (Figure 8.1). They are described in Želizko's book as *Tupfen*, 'dots' or 'spots'. They are not the same as the 'cupules' of Limpopo province and elsewhere (e.g. Eastwood & Eastwood 2006; Walker 2010); the GDC *Tupfen* are much smaller than cupules and are often incorporated into designs or juxtaposed with other referential elements, as I discuss in a moment.

Most often the dots are ordered in rows and columns but occasionally the dots are organised into circles (Figure 8.2). When involved with any superimpositioning these dots are always on top of the incised component of the GDC art. With the possible exception of Gestoptefontein Mountain, about which we have no data, these arrangements of holes/dots were made only on Gestoptefontein Hill, mostly but not entirely, on the large flat surfaces on the northern end of the hill.

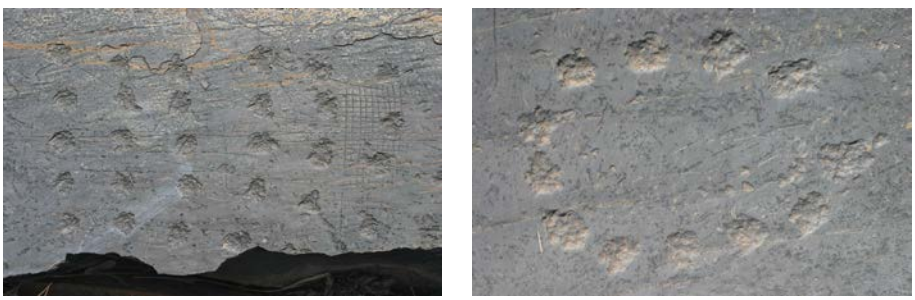
Alfred Hübner, a mining engineer who visited the GDC some time before 1871, wrote:

> *Apart from these easy recognisable drawings* [of anthropo- and zoomorphs as well as 'cultural objects'] *there are also many that are difficult to interpret and are totally incomprehensible to me; I need only refer to those where 6 vertical lines, that is lines of adjoining holes, are cut at right-angles by 4 or 6 similar lines, or where 12 rows of 3 holes each occur under one another. One cannot possibly explain these as alphabets*
>
> (Hübner 1871: 53, transl. N. Mössmer, my brackets)

Holub (or Želizko – it is not always clear whose opinion is reflected in the captions) only described three arrangements of *Tupfen*, those that are incorporated into depictions of objects (see discussion in Part IV of a depiction of an object

(a) Overview of boulder (b) Detail of the largest arrangement of dots

FIGURE 8.1. The largest arrangement of rows of pecked dots is on this displaced boulder on Gestoptefontein Hill (NW56 NE17). It comprises 15 rows and 12 columns of dots.

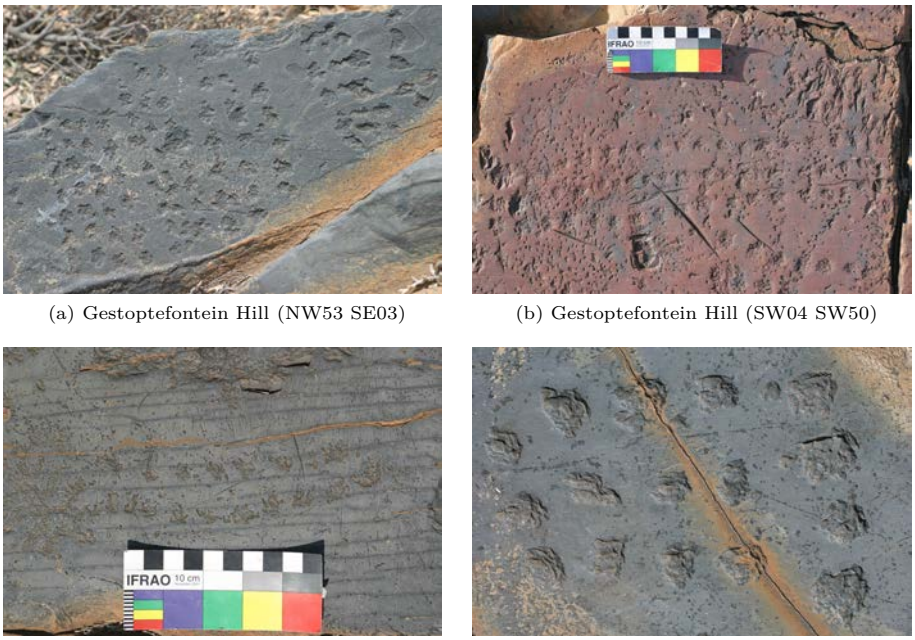


(a) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW65 SE04) (b) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW48 NE13)

FIGURE 8.2. (a) When there is any superimpositioning, dots are always on top of incised patterns and markings. (b) Dots are also arranged in circular patterns.

FIGURE 8.3. The *Tupfen* in Piece 57518 that are described as 'chiselled spots' decorating a hide (Želizko (1925) may depict large beads.

on surface SW14 NE01 that incorporates similar 'dots'). In each case the dots are slightly different in shape, yet Želizko uses the same term. The three rows of evenly sized cross-shapes in piece 57504 (Figure 8.18a; see subsection 8.2.2 for more cross-shaped forms) are interpreted as a single object: a *Männergurt*, 'man's belt'. In the second example (57518; Figure 8.3) the items identified as *Tupfen* are described as 'chiselled spots' that decorate a hide. It is not explicitly stated that these 'spots' depict beads, but I think that it is reasonable to infer in this case that the *Tupfen* may depict large beads. The third motif in which the term *Tupfen* is used (57513; Figure 7.42a) concerns a *Fell*, or 'hide', half of which is decorated with 'dots' *(Tupfen)*. The other 'half' of the hide is decorated with *Strichen*, 'lines', perhaps of sewn-on beads. These 'dots' seem much smaller than the previous two examples of *Tupfen* although I could not discern their shape and size clearly because I had access to a scanned version of Želizko's book and because the photograph is also small and it is not easy to see such detail. It seems therefore that Holub (or Želizko) used the term *Tupfen* generically, to refer to a variety of circular bead like forms larger than those that are identified as 'beads' and 'glass beads'. The term *Tupfen* does not refer to a single particular artefact, therefore, but is a broader term that denotes large spherical items used for decoration and ornamentation and which seem to be distinct from what have been identified as beads and glass beads.



(a) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW53 SE03)

(b) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW04 SW50)

(c) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW14 NE03.2)

(d) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW40 NE03)

FIGURE 8.4. Stacked arrangements of pecked dots on Gestoptefontein Hill resemble Khoe-San belts and bracelets made from a variety of beads, including ostrich eggshell beads.

Stacked arrangements of pecked dots (SAPDs)

The identification of these dots *(Tupfen)* as bead-like forms may also apply to the arrangements that so puzzled Hübner. I call them 'stacked arrangements of pecked dots' (abbreviated to SAPDs; Figure 8.4). Some of these may arguably resemble beadwork belts, while others could be bracelets or headbands. Other, larger arrangements probably represent other items, as I discuss shortly.

Perhaps these SAPDs depict items such as belts, strap-type bracelets, and headbands made either of circular or cross-shaped beads (see Figure 8.5 and Figure 8.12).

So far I have suggested that many SAPDs depict beadwork items. But what about the larger matrices of holes mentioned by Hübner? They seem too large and the wrong shape to be belts or straps (Figure 8.6). I agree with Hübner that these are not 'alphabets' because there is no indication that the dots (which are more or less uniform in appearance) are letter-like symbols that codify meanings. Nor are the dots likely to be a form of counting or tally system; there is nothing in Khoe-San ethnography to suggest that people counted things in this way. Moreover, the suggestion of a counting system begs the question of what was

(a) UCT 38/1: Iziko SAM

(b) SAM 7571: Iziko SAM

FIGURE 8.5. (a) Khoe-San belt made of ostrich eggshell beads; (b) Khoe-San headband made of ostrich eggshell beads.

(a) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW55 SW06)

(b) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW55 SW17)

(c) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW55 SW22)

(d) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW56 NE08)

FIGURE 8.6. Arrangements of dots larger than three or four rows across are too big and not the right shape to represent beadwork straps or belts. Instead, they could depict either items of adornment such as beadwork aprons or complex patterns of dots that were painted on people's bodies.

being counted, and – in the context of what seems to be an important Khoe San engraved landscape – why.

My hunch is that these arrangements too are depictions of objects, or things. The dots may depict small, beadwork decorate aprons that some Khoe-San women wore over other aprons or skin coverings (e.g. Schapera 1930: 65, 68). The differing configurations of dots reflect different sizes and items of beadwork.

Circular arrangements of pecked dots (CAPDs)

Yet another configuration that occurs on several surfaces is a circular arrangement of pecked dots (CAPDs) (Figure 8.7) a motif that may depict items of adornment such as necklaces, bangles, or leg and arm rings made of large beads. Alternatively, the dots may represent dabs of pigment that were applied to people's skins (perhaps their faces) as a form of body decoration.

A variant of the CAPDs has the circular arrangement of dots with the addition of another dot (sometimes more, up to four) more or less in the centre of the circle (Figure 8.8). These cannot therefore be necklaces or arm or leg rings. A more likely explanation is that these arrangements depict particular arrangements of body decoration.

8.2 Bracelets

I distinguish between two types of motifs that may depict bracelets in the GDC: pecked circular outlines and oblong motifs.

8.2.1 Circular bracelets

Pecked circular outlines may depict objects such as bangles or hair ornaments that were made from skin, wood, strands of beads, or metal rings (Figure 8.9; Figure 8.17).

8.2.2 Strap-type bracelets

There are several oblong motifs on GDC outcrops, some of which may have been intended to depict strap-type bracelets, or in some cases, perhaps belts (see section 8.3). I have divided the GDC examples into three groups:

- Oblong forms with at least two (but sometimes up to four) bounding lines, and an infill (Figure 8.11).
- Oblong forms composed of two or more rows of roughly cross-shaped forms (Figure 8.12).

(a) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW48 NE13) (b) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW56 SE22) (c) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW65 SE11)

FIGURE 8.7. Circular arrangements of pecked dots (CAPDs) may depict necklaces or arm and leg rings made from large beads. Another possibility is that they depict painted body designs.

(a) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW56 SW17) (b) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW56 NW19) (c) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW57 SE02)

FIGURE 8.8. Examples of arrangements of dots that may depict blobs of paint applied to people's skins.

(a) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW10 SE02) (b) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW40 NW02) (c) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW48 NE15)

FIGURE 8.9. Pecked circular outlines that may represent bangles or hair ornaments.

FIGURE 8.10. Metal bangles identified as Khoe-San. Iziko SAM (SAM5280)

- Oblong forms made up of pecks (Figure 8.13).

There are about nine incised motifs that may depict either bracelets or belts, although the relative short length of the motif suggests to me that they are most likely bracelets. These motifs comprise two, sometimes four, roughly parallel bounding lines with incised infill between the bounding lines (Figure 8.11). The type of 'infill' includes an incised zigzag line, incised mesh pattern, parallel slanted scratches, parallel scratches perpendicular to the bounding lines, and randomly arranged pecks. A possible bracelet motif on Gestoptefontein Hill has additional detail in the form of an edging of scratched triangles.

The second group of motifs that may depict bracelets comprise rows of distinctively cross-shaped forms arranged in oblong conformations. The component, cross-shaped form may depict a characteristic bead or arrangement of beads used to make the bracelet.

The largest category of bracelet depiction comprises pecked, oblong forms with no bounding lines. I think these also depict bracelets. The motifs vary in terms of the precision with which the individual pecks were made, the care taken to spread the pecks evenly, and in their situation on the rock with reference to natural features of the surface.

Associations of bracelet motifs

While some motifs that look like bracelets occur on their own with no other motifs in close proximity, some of these bracelet-like motifs are juxtaposed with clothing motifs, either on the same surface, or a little way further off. Indeed

(a) Driekuil Ridge South (DRS10)

(b) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW66 SE04)

(c) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW68 SW02)

(d) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW68 SE12)

(e) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW68 SE06)

(f) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW59 NW07)

FIGURE 8.11. Motifs comprising two roughly parallel lines with incised infill may depict bracelets and/or belts.

(a) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW59 NE04)

(b) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW59 NE07)

(c) Skeleton Hill (SH04)

(d) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW10 SE01)

FIGURE 8.12. Cross-shaped bead motifs.

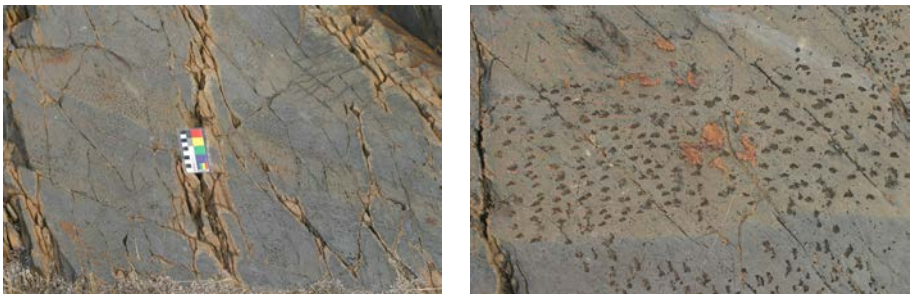
(a) Boschpoort Road North (BRN1 04)

(b) Boschpoort Road South (BRS2 12)

(c) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW11 NE01)

(d) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW20 NW02)

FIGURE 8.13. Motifs comprising a pecked, roughly rectangular form may depict bracelets. Some of these motifs have been pecked so as to conform to natural faults in the rock.



(a) Boschpoort Road North (BRN1 04) (b) Boschpoort Road North (BRN1 04)

FIGURE 8.14. Possible bracelet motif right next to two spread skin motifs and on same surface as other spread skins, scratched patterns (fine parallel and vertical scratches), and large pecked and scratch outlined zigzag shape that may be a clothing motif, such as an apron.

(a) Boschpoort Road South (BRS2 11) (b) Boschpoort Road South (BRS2 11)

FIGURE 8.15. Possible schematic depiction of a bracelet on a noticeably smoothed pavement surface. On the same surface are pecked lines, a front apron, pecked dots and a cheetah. It seems that people sat on this rock a lot, hence the smoothness; it is close to the ground with suitable surfaces for at least three small people.

it was this association of pecked oblong shapes with aprons and other motifs that first suggested the possibility to me that certain pecked oblong forms were bracelets. I reasoned that because of the presence of recognisable clothing motifs, such as aprons, other as yet unrecognised, but associated motifs may also depict clothing and/or accessories.

8.3 Belts

The category 'belts' includes strap-like belts as well as strings of beads wound around the waist. The concept of a 'belt' overlaps with that of 'aprons' and 'strap type bracelets'; one cannot always be sure to which category a particular depiction is best allocated. Recall that some women did wear a kind of front apron that incorporated a belt, e.g. the *Leibgurtschürze*, which is both a 'girdle' and an apron. Another factor that makes the category of 'belt' less

FIGURE 8.16. Possible tasselled apron motif with one long tassel. It is juxtaposed with forms that may be interpreted as bracelets Gestoptefontein Hill (NW47 NW08)

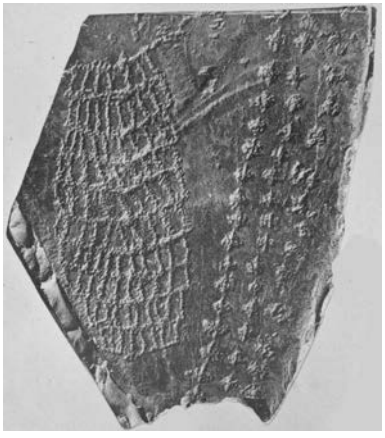
than exclusive is the matter of scale – should a particular motif be interpreted as a belt or long string of beads (large in size), or as a smaller sized object – a head ornament or a string of beads used as a necklace? Nonetheless, there are depictions that seem best described as belts.

For instance, Holub (or Želizko) identify a motif comprising three parallel rows of *Tupfen*, 'dots', as a *Männergurt*, 'man's belt' (Figure 8.18). Many of these 'dots' are, on closer inspection, cross-shaped. They resemble cross-shaped shapes in bracelet motifs on Gestoptefontein (see Figure 8.12); perhaps they are cross-shaped arrangements of ostrich eggshell beads, or other (unknown) objects. The belt itself may comprise three strings of beads sewn together to make a broad band (Figure 8.17); alternatively the belt may comprise three separate strings of beads or a single long string wound three times around the waist.

A similar arrangement of more or less parallel rows of pecked dots can be seen on a fragment of rock in the Klerksdorp Museum (Figure 8.18); it is perhaps also a depiction of a belt.

Elsewhere (subsection 7.4.4), I referred to a belt or waistband on Skeleton Hill (Figure 7.58). This depiction shows what may be a loop at one end, through which the other end of the belt could be threaded and then knotted. There are

FIGURE 8.17. Both the woman and the child wear belts made of strings of beads. The woman is also wearing rings and rings around her arms, wrists and ankles. Taken from Raper & Boucher 1988: plate 9. Original artwork in Rijksprentenkabinet, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.



(a) Piece 57504, Museum of Ethnography, Vienna (Želizko 1925: plate 14.1)

(b) Klerksdorp Museum (KM042556)

FIGURE 8.18. (a) The three rows of *Tupfen*, 'dots', at right are identified as a *Männergurt*, 'man's belt', in Želizko (1925: plate 14.1). Many of these 'dots' are, in fact, cross-shaped. (b) A similar arrangement of parallel lines of 'dots' on a piece in the Klerksdorp Museum.

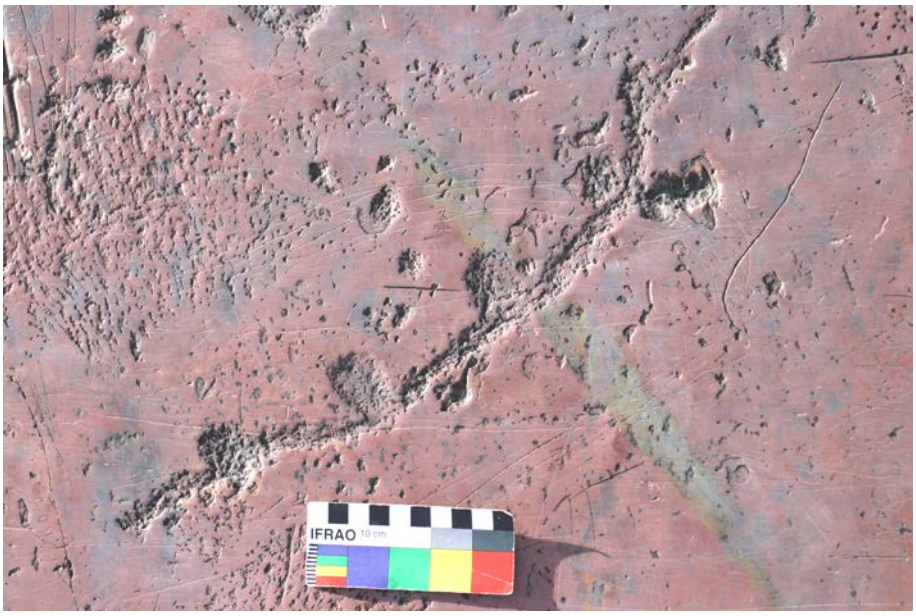
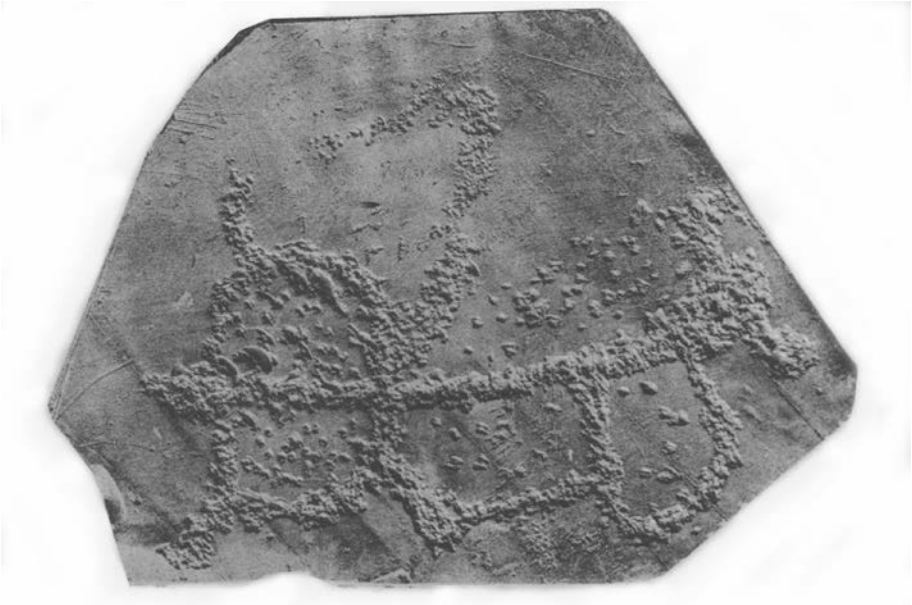


FIGURE 8.19. Depiction of a thong, with five small, sac-like forms attached. Depending upon the scale the artists intended, the motif may depict a waist cord, necklace or hair ornament. Gestoptefontein Hill (S7 W49)

two sac-like attachments, the central one being much larger than another form to its right. The large sac-like form could be a small bag or – bearing in mind what I said earlier about the difficulty of distinguishing belts and certain kinds of front aprons – a small front apron.

Then there are depictions in the GDC of what may be thongs and/or strings of ostrich eggshell beads to which items, possibly beads, or other objects have been attached. For example, a motif from Slide Rock may depict a thong with about five small, sac-like forms placed to suggest that they are attached to the thong (Figure 8.19). Khoe-San attach a variety of beautiful-looking objects – seeds, insects (such as beetles), shells, as well as, more recently, 'found objects' such as tinned meat keys – directly onto their persons or to items of clothing. These sac-like forms may depict such an item. Depending on the scale according to which one compares the object, the thong with sac-like attachments may depict something long enough to tie around the waist, or else a shorter, necklace or hair ornament.

A depiction of a thong or string of beads with items attached may be illustrated in Želizko (1925: plate 13.4; Figure 8.20a). The caption relates that, 'according to Dr Holub', the depiction is of an 'animal skin' or 'two animals'. I suggest, rather, that one can discern a thong- or string-like form running ho-



(a) Piece 57511 (Želizko 1925: plate 13.4)

(b) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW19 SE14)

(c) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW68 SW02)

FIGURE 8.20. (a) The shape at extreme left may be a tortoiseshell container (seen in plan view) with four prominent tassels; to its right are (possibly) two pieces of leather attached to the belt. (b & c) Motifs of beadwork that, depending on the intended scale of depiction, may represent beadwork belts that were attached to a belt and worn around the waist, or, alternatively, worn around the neck or the arm.

rizontally; at right it bifurcates, the bifurcations perhaps depicting tie strings. At left is an oval-shaped object attached at its middle to the horizontal cord; the object resembles a tortoiseshell medicine box in plan/metric view with short strings (of beads?) attached. The surface of the 'tortoiseshell' has a dense scatter of pecks perhaps intended to suggest beadwork decoration. To the right are two outlined forms. The central outline is rectangular and has a scatter of pecks within the pecked outline. The right hand form is longer than it is broad and has rounded corners at the bottom edge as well a scatter of pecks within the pecked outline. These two outlined forms may depict pieces of leather that have beads sewn on.

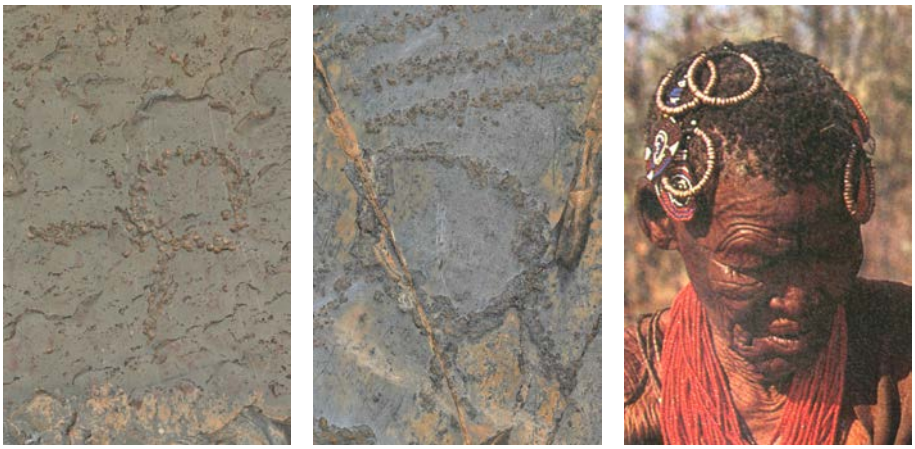
Finally, there are three motifs of what could be elaborate beadwork belts (Figure 8.20b, c). Again the issue of scale of depiction arises. Did the makers of the motifs intend them as beadwork objects that were suspended from a thong worn about the waist, or are they meant to depict much smaller beadwork items that were worn around the neck or arms?

8.4 Hair ornaments and headdresses

Khoe-San people, especially women (e.g. Schreyer, cited in Raven-Hart 1971: 126) adorn their hair in various ways (Schapera 1930: 66; Raven-Hart 1971: e.g. 16, 35, 125, 126). Bands of ostrich eggshell beads that encircle the head are worn (Bleek 1928: 9), as are strings of ostrich eggshell beads, singly and 'worked into more complicated ornaments'. Ostrich eggshell bead strings are tied to the hair and people also like to wear a long narrow strip of beads that hangs down the forehead or the neck (Bleek 1928: 9–10). Glass beads are also used to make hair ornaments, on their own and in combination with ostrich eggshell beads (Bleek 1928: 10).

European visitors to the Cape in the 17th century commented on Khoe-San who wore in their hair 'copper plates, doits,[1] white shells and large beads' (Johan Nieuhof, 1654, cited in Raven-Hart 1971: 16). Another caller reports seeing people whose hair was 'hung with coloured feathers, penny-pieces ... dried gall-bladders &c' (Schreyer, cited in Raven-Hart 1971: 125). He adds that 'Over their face they hang imitation corals or large glass beads, all of which they obtain by barter from the Dutch' (Johan Schreyer cited in Raven-Hart 1971: 125). He mentions 'a string of glass beads, and below this a little seashell which swings [*'läutet'*] to and fro in front of the face'.

[1]**doit** /dt/ *n.* Now *arch.* or *Hist.* L16. [MLG *doyt* = MDu. *duit, deuyt.* Cf. DODKIN.] **1** A small Dutch coin formerly in use, the eighth part of a stiver; any very small coin or sum. L16.] (Oxford Talking Dictionary 1998)



(a) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW10 NE) (b) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW75 SE04) (c) Wannenburgh *et al.* (1979: fig 49)

FIGURE 8.21. Hair ornaments are depicted as a loop of beads to which are attached short strands of threaded beads. The ornament is tied to the hair. (a) A loop with two short strings of beads; (b) loop with three short strings; (c) woman wearing metal loops without short strings of beads attached.

In the story of 'The Day's Heart Star', as told by ||kabbo (one of the prominent 19th-century |xam narrators who worked with Bleek and Lloyd) two kinds of hair ornaments are mentioned. He describes how the beautiful wife of the Day's Heart Star 'fastens metal [to her hair] which shines brightly on her face' (L. II. 1445–1446, my square brackets) and explains that the object is 'a round ornament fastened to her hair and hanging down in the middle of her forehead' (L. II. 1445 rev.). In a note to the story, Lloyd noted another kind of hair ornament that ||kabbo mentioned:

> [Women] *make fast round, metal, bright things to the ends of their hairs round their heads, putting a thread* ... [through] ... *the ornaments. He says that they cut the brass tinder boxes into small pieces and make pretty things out of them.*
>
> (||kabbo in Bleek and Lloyd Collection: L. II. 1440 rev. note, my brackets)

8.4.1 Loops of beads

Certain kinds of hair ornaments are depicted in the GDC. The simpler and smaller type depicted is a circular form that probably represents a loop of threaded beads to which are attached short strands of threaded beads (Figure 8.21). There are four examples of this type – a loop with a single strand, one with about eight strands, and two loops each with three strands attached. Compare

(a) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW14 NE01) (b) Fourie 1928 (opposite page 89)

FIGURE 8.22. (a) Hair ornament of the larger kind that comprises one large loop that fits around the circumference of the head to which are attached four, smaller loops that hung down when the ornament was worn. (b) This Nharon woman wears a similar kind of hair ornament.

these examples with the hair ornaments worn by Ju|'hoansi girls and women in more recent times (Figure 8.21).

8.4.2 Headdresses

The second type of hair ornament that is depicted in the GDC is larger. It is perhaps better to call it a headdress, rather than an ornament, because it covers the entire head (Figure 8.22). It looks similar to the kind of headdress mentioned by Bleek (1928: 9), in which strings of ostrich eggshell beads are used to construct a single complex object. In this case there is one large circular loop that fits around the head. This large loop is reinforced internally by about seven loops to form a kind of skullcap. Attached to this large circular form are four much smaller loops. These probably hung down when the decoration was worn; the wearer may have positioned them so that they hung over the forehead.

A more complex headdress can be seen on the side of a stone at the foot of the grooved rock in block NW 57. It is an arrangement about 250 mm in diameter that seems to consist of a large circular outline internally divided into three 'slices'; smaller roughly circular forms are arranged around this large circular outline (Figure 8.23). Some sections have three rows of the smaller roughly circular outlines; in other parts of the circumference of the large circular outline the smaller roughly circular outlines form only a single row or are absent entirely. This motif could represent the kind of elaborate headdress to which Bleek (1928: 9) referred. It comprises a skullcap (large circular outline internally divided into three 'slices') to which are attached up to three rows of loops, all manufactured from ostrich eggshell beads.

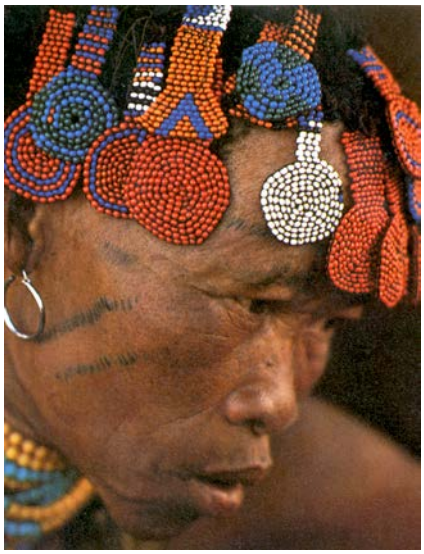
FIGURE 8.23. Another engraving of an elaborate headdress from Gestoptefontein Hill: the large circular outline that is subdivided into three parts may be the skullcap. Attached to the skullcap are rows of looped shapes that would have hung down the side of the head. Gestoptefontein Hill (NW57 SE55)

8.4.3 Beaded hair decorations

Three clustered forms on shiny brown rock south of the big rock slide may also depict hair ornaments (Figure 8.24). Slack mistakenly reports that these engravings (which she identifies as 'patterns') have been destroyed (1962: 100) but they are still in their place just south of Slide Rock. The motifs are finely pecked and attracted Battiss's attention, who copied them (1948: 131, bottom left). Sullivan (1995: 8) seems to suggest that they depict cosmic flower buds: each 'flower bud' is supported by a stem. The two flanking forms are finely finished but the middle motif less so; all three, however, basically similar and probably depict three of the same kind of item. Each motif has two different ends: a longer, thinner attenuated end and a shorter, thicker end. In the two flanking forms is a concentric arrangement of forms consisting of the following:

- An outer, bounding set of shapes contiguous with the two end parts,
- In the leftmost form, a diamond-shaped outline and within its bounds, a smaller, innermost elliptically shaped area,
- In the rightmost form, a oval/elliptical outline, and within its bounds, a smaller, innermost elliptically shaped area.

(a) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW10 NE)



(b) Wannenburgh *et al.* 1979: fig. 50

FIGURE 8.24. (a) These three finely pecked forms could be depictions of beaded hair ornaments; compare them with the hair ornaments (b) photographed in the Kalahari.

These arrangements are not as well developed in the middle form; however, one can see that the middle form features the same design as the outer two shapes.

Comparison of these shapes with those in the hair of San women photographed in Botswana suggests that these engraved motifs depict similar hair ornaments perhaps made of glass beads (Figure 8.24).

8.4.4 Headbands

Beaded headbands are a characteristically Khoe-San item of headgear. Wiessner's (1984) study of headbands of Ju|'hoansi people living at Dobe, |Xai|xai and Tsumkwe reveals important information about the context of manufacture of items of adornment in general, especially her emphasis on the feelings of affection with which the object is endowed. For example, the Ju|'hoansi told Wiessner that headbands were beautiful things:

> *Headbands are among the San's most prized possessions, and prior to the availability of glass beads, they were made of ostrich eggshell beads. Headbands are associated with happiness, festivity, plenty, and beauty, or, as the San say, 'headbands are worn when one's heart soars.'*
>
> (Wiessner 1984: 200)

The decoration of other artefacts, such as aprons, is similarly imbued with warmth and positive regard (see e.g. Biesele's comments about aprons, cited in Eastwood & Eastwood 2006: 157–158). I think this is an aspect of aprons, headbands and other items of adornment that is crucial to appreciating the GDC, because the outcrops are covered with depictions of these emotionally charged, beautiful objects. I discuss this observation and Wiessner's comments about the significance of design motifs and the 'psychology' of artefact manufacture in an earlier chapter (chapter 5).

Headbands are made and worn mostly by women although Ju|'hoansi men also wear them. Wiessner compares headbands to Western jewellery: items regarded as valuable, personal property, although the headbands will be exchanged

> *after they have been kept for 2 months to 2 years. After the headbands have changed hands two to three times, some of the threads break, and they are unraveled and resewn into new patterns.*
>
> (Wiessner 1984: 200)

Certain GDC motifs may depict headbands. There are three clear examples and several other possible depictions. The most complex and easily recognisable headband motif (Slack (1962: fig. 101) misidentifies it as a 'counting device is on Gestoptefontein Hill (Figure 8.25). It is a depiction of a beaded headband. A real life headband of this sort, according to Wiessner's (1984) study, is about 40 mm wide and 500 mm long. A circular pendant that hangs from the centre of the headband may be depicted by means of a dense cluster of small peck marks: it probably represents a dangling ornament similar to ethnographically known examples described above.

A motif from Driekuil Hill may depict either a strap-type headband or, a headband made up of several beaded strands (Figure 8.26a). There are three, long horizontal rows of pecked dots, two grouped together along the top edge, the third horizontal line of pecks along the lower edge. Arranged between these horizontal rows are about eight vertical pairs of more or less evenly spaced, pecked lines. Below the bottom edge of the headband are three forms, two of which seem to be T-shaped. I interpret the motif as a headband with beaded forms or other, decorative objects tied to the bottom of the headband so that they dangle down over the forehead of the wearer.

There are several examples in the GDC of tasselled motifs that have seven or more strands (up to twelve) – longer than the 3–5-stranded tasselled forms that I have identified as front aprons. Some of these longer motifs with 7–12 tassels recall a type of headband known from Khoe-San ethnography. It comprises a band around the head, from which tassels of beads are suspended (Figure 8.26b).

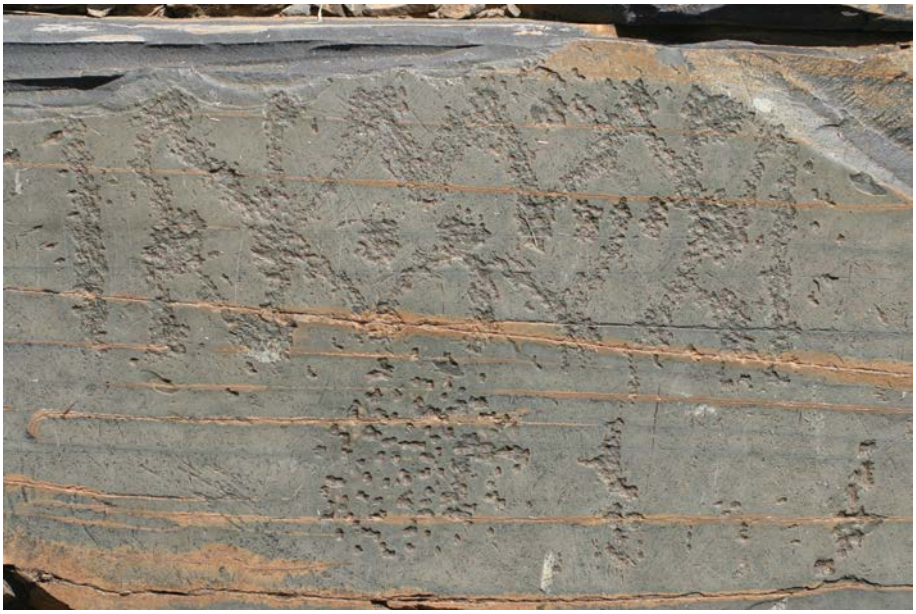


FIGURE 8.25. Strap-type headband with triangular motifs. The design incorporates configurations of triangular forms interspersed with circle shapes. The pecked circle below the headband motif probably shows an ornament that dangles from the headband. Gestoptefontein Hill (SW10 SE01)

(a) Driekuil Hill (DH35)

(b) Valiente-Noailles 1993: plate 29b

FIGURE 8.26. (a) Headband, either strap-type, or comprised of several beaded strands. Attached to the bottom of the headband are decorative objects that dangle over the forehead of the wearer; (b) a Kua woman wearing a tasselled headband given to her at the conclusion of her puberty ceremony.

(a) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW20 NW03) (b) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW50 SE02)

FIGURE 8.27. Headbands or aprons? Forms with 7–12 tassels may depict headbands and/or tasselled aprons: (a) tasselled motif with three lengths of tassels; (b) tasselled motif with two lengths of tassels.

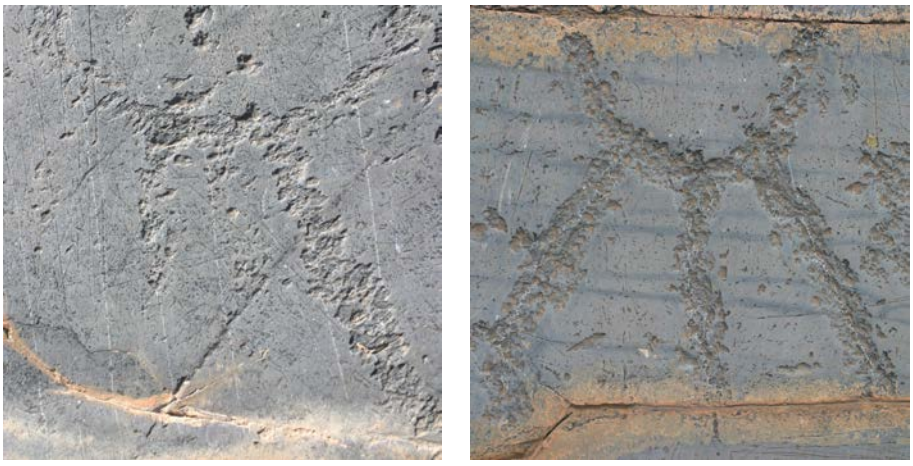
Some of the many-tasselled motifs forms in the GDC have, in addition, 'tassels' of different lengths; perhaps they are variants of the more common and less elaborate tasselled forms (Figure 8.27).

One cannot be certain, however, that all (or any) 7–12-tasselled forms depict headbands. Some (or all) of these motifs may simply be a different way of depicting tasselled front aprons; or they could depict larger, back aprons (although I have not found any explicit references in the literature to tasselled back aprons). There are no contextual associations that one could use to discern between the two explanations; as I pointed out at the beginning of this section, the motifs are disembodied, metric projections. There are consequently no examples of anthropomorphic motifs wearing clearly discernible tasselled aprons or headbands. Nor do the variants of tasselled forms provide definitive detail that would enable one to conclusively identify the longer tasselled motifs in the GDC as either headbands or aprons.

8.5 Necklaces and neck ornaments

There are depictions on Gestoptefontein hill of possible neck ornaments. Two of these motifs are very similar (Figure 8.28). As seems to be customary in the GDC they are metric projections, i.e. in plan view. In both of these similar instances, the top end is a pecked semicircular arc that depicts the part that is tied around the neck. To this arc, a string of ostrich eggshell beads, perhaps, are attached three shorter strings of beads that hang down the chest.

A third instance of a possible necklace depiction shows a long, V- or U-shaped pecked 'line' and attached to this at roughly right angles, several much shorter, pecked lines (Figure 8.29). I interpret the V- or U-shaped form as a



(a) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW14 SW01) (b) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW14 NE02)

FIGURE 8.28. Two possible depictions of a kind of neck ornament. The curved line represents a string of beads worn around the neck; the three lines are probably strings of beads.

thong that is tied around the neck, while the shorter pecked lines depict short tassels.

Two roughly arc-shaped forms, each with a set of more or less evenly spaced short pecked lines arranged perpendicularly along the length of the arc, occur in close proximity to each other on Gestoptefontein Hill (Figure 8.30). They could be necklaces to which objects such as wood, bone, bone or seeds have been attached.

8.6 A colonial hat

On a small rock near the top of the hill above Slide Rock is a carefully incised depiction of a high-crowned, broad-brimmed hat (Figure 8.31a). It is unequivocally a Western (colonial) item and yet it looks as though it has been executed according to the same stylistic canons as the nearby incised apron. The artist incised arrangements of pairs of lines on the crown and brim of the hat and filled the spaces between the lines with short evenly spaced roughly parallel cuts. This decorative finish may not have been the straightforward representation of a 'real' pattern' on an actual hat; rather, it could be a creative embellishment to create a truly beautiful and fashionable hat that featured characteristic Khoe-San cross hatching. This possible stylistic affinity is emphasised by contrast with the depiction of another, probably more recent drawing of a man with a hat

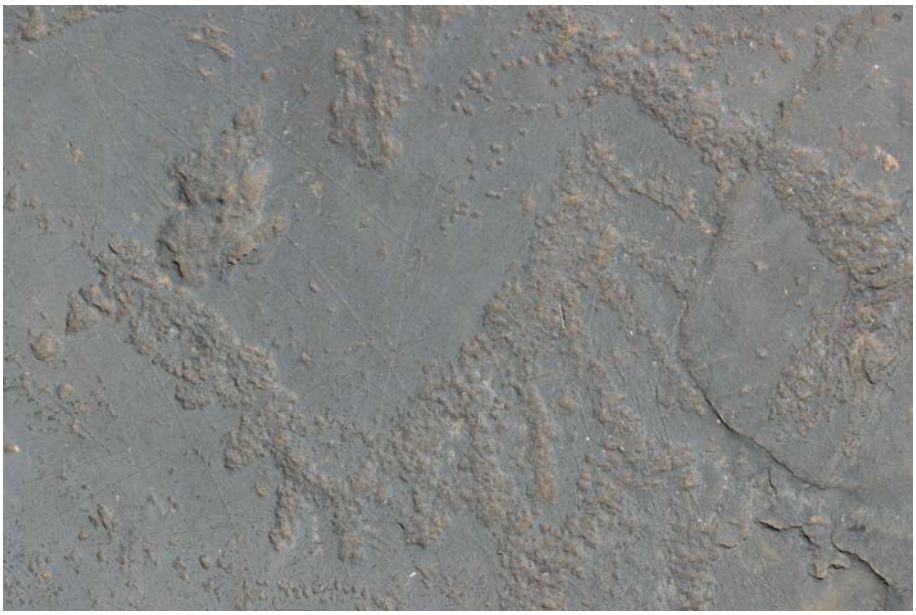
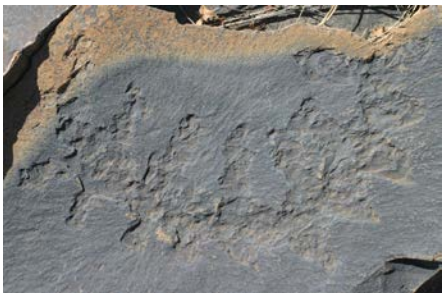
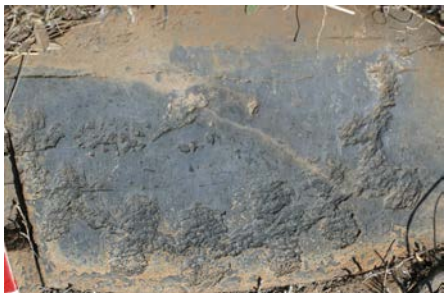


FIGURE 8.29. Another possible neck ornament from Gestoptefontein Hill: the long, roughly V- or U-shaped pecked line has several shorter pecked lines (perhaps depicting tassels) attached to it. (NW41 NE03)



(a) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW40 NW10)



(b) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW40 NW12)

FIGURE 8.30. Two possible necklace motifs with objects attached.

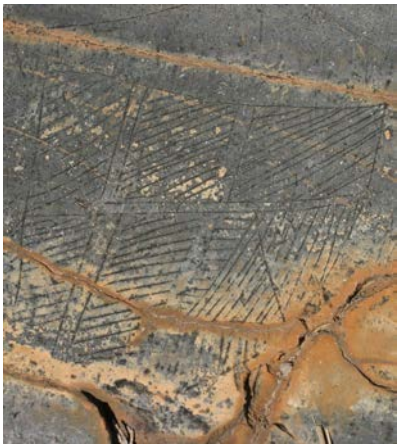
smoking a pipe (Figure 8.31c): this 'engraving' seems to me to belong in the genre of Western-style representations.

The fact that a hat is depicted on Gestoptefontein Hill amongst the other motifs and markings is intriguing; if a Khoe-San person made the hat image and in the same style as other, traditional items such as aprons, then it suggests they were visiting Gestoptefontein Hill (and perhaps other GDC sites as well) in the late 18th century or, quite possibly in the 19th century, perhaps under different socio-political circumstances and on a much-reduced scale. Another example of the integration into Khoe-San rock art of colonial era items is a rock art site near Williston, Northern Cape, where a tasselled apron is painted in a deep rich blue pigment that is probably washing blue, a mid-19th-century Western innovation. Washing blue was also used in at least one case amongst the Nama to decorate women's faces (Von François 1896, cited in Rudner 1982: table 20). Thus, at Gestoptefontein Hill there is a 'modern' item of clothing that has been incorporated into the traditional style of depicting things, while near Williston there is an instance of an artist using a 'modern' pigment to depict a traditional item. In both cases what is of interest is the persistence of rock art into the 19th century.

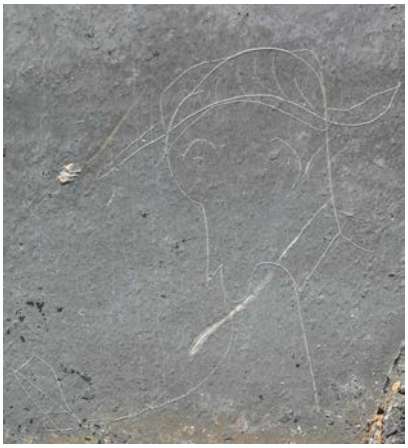
8.7 Spiders, or a vanity bag and a tortoiseshell container?

In Želizko (1925) two of the removed tiles in the Ethnographic Museum in Vienna are identified as *Spinnen*, 'spiders' (Figure 8.32). One may indeed perceive a spider-like form in both cases: a cephalothorax (the 'head'), an abdomen, and several sets of legs. But this identification is incorrect, I think; the motifs are certainly not accurate depictions of arachnids – the number of legs and the places at which they are attached to the body are wrong. I suggest an alternative explanation more in keeping twith the rest of the subject matter presented in the GDC. By orienting the photographs of these objects differently to the way they are presented in Želizko's (1925) book one can see them differently – as depictions, respectively, of a tortoisehell and a small, highly decorated bag. The first tile (Figure 8.32a) may depict a tortoiseshell (the 'spider's abdomen') in plan or metric view. People and women especially, use tortoiseshells in which to carry medicinal and cosmetic powders; these containers are frequently decorated. The spider's 'legs' are in fact 12 tassels – perhaps of ostrich eggshell beads – that have been attached to the rim of the tortoiseshell. The 'spider's head' may be a 'tuft' of short, beaded thongs attached to a stopper that seals the mouth of the tortoiseshell preventing the contents from spilling out. The stop-

(a) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW02 NE03)



(b) Gestoptefontein Hill (SE06 NW01)



(c) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW64 SE12)

FIGURE 8.31. (a) A carefully incised depiction of a colonial-era hat, executed in the same style as nearby motifs (b) of traditional Khoe-San aprons. Compare these with (c) a Westerner's graffiti of a man and his hat and pipe.

(a) Piece 57580 (Želizko 1925: plate 15.3)

(b) Piece 57581 (Želizko 1925: plate 14.7)

FIGURE 8.32. Two motifs identified by Želizko (1925) as *Spinnen*, 'spiders'. I suggest instead that (a) depicts an ornamented tortoiseshell to which 12 tassels have been attached (the 'spider's legs'). At the bottom is a tasselled 'plug' that stops the mouth of the tortoiseshell. The motif in (b) can be seen as a depiction of a small bag decorated with diamond motifs, like those in which Khoe-San women carry their tortoiseshell containers. The bag has a carrying strap and a flap, which is depicted as 'open' thus revealing the 'mouth' of the bag.

(a) Beaded tortoiseshell container from the Kalahari (55107 Peter Nelson Collection)

(b) 'Vanity bag' used to carry tortoiseshell containers (Wilman 1933: plate 2.6)

(c) 'Vanity bag' from the Kalahari (53656 Peter Nelson Collection)

FIGURE 8.33. A tortoiseshell container and bags in which these are carried; these items resemble some of the motifs engraved in the GDC. (a) and (c) photographed by Adam Line, courtesy of Africa Direct.)

per frequently serves also as a 'powder puff' that is used to apply the contents of the container onto the body.

The other tile (Figure 8.32b) can be seen as a small leather bag, decorated with beadwork diamond motifs. It has thin carrying thongs. The 'fan-shaped' form with short, nested, semicircular lines may be the flap of the bag. Perhaps it is a depiction of what Wilman called a 'vanity bag' (Wilman 1933: plate 2.6); Wilman explains that the vanity bag 'holds, *inter alia*, tortoise-shell pots, each containing "buchu" powder, and puff' (see Figure 8.33b, c).

❁

Motifs of ornaments and decorations – beads, bracelets, hair ornaments, even a colonial hat – are to be found on rock surfaces scattered over the GDC outcrops, especially on Gestoptefontein Hill. The motifs are on the same surfaces as depictions of aprons, anthropo- and zoomorphs and all the other pecked motifs and are part of the same body of GDC 'art'. With the exception of the broad-brimmed Western style hat, the other items are things associated predominantly with women. What is the link between the motifs that I have identified in this part of the study, and their presence on the wonderstone outcrops? I think the significance of the decorated GDC outcrops lies in the celebration by Khoe-San people of womanhood. That is what I discuss in the following part of the study.

Part III

Khoe-San womanhood

Detailed study of the GDC outcrops (Part II) shows that most of the referential motifs depict items of women's clothing and ornaments; anthropomorphic and zoomorphic imagery is integral to the art, but less numerous. Holub identified several of the pieces he removed as aprons and other items used mostly by women (Želizko 1925; Part II). Battiss was convinced that the creators of the art were women:

> *These designs are so unusual for a hunting people like the Bushmen, that I at first suspected they were by a different people – and I suspected the last Koranas. Since seeing the engravings at Driekopseiland I have modified my view and wonder if Gestoptefontein isn't a domestic site decorated by Bushmen women! The men would surely do their favourite animals again.*
>
> (Battiss 1948: 57)

Battiss does not explain why the 'designs' persuaded him that they were made by Bushman women: perhaps, like Holub, he recognised that the motifs depicted articles used by women. Battiss does not seem to consider that the engravings could also have been made by Koranna women; I mentioned earlier that the Taaibosch Koranna lived in the area (section 1.5).

Why *did* people make depictions of their clothes and ornaments on the outcrops of the GDC? Research in the central Limpopo basin by Eastwood and by Morris at Driekopseiland, Northern Cape province suggests that some rock art may have been made by women in connection with puberty rites (section 2.2; section 2.4). I believe that the significance of the GDC phenomenon lies in understanding how women's power relates to the motifs and markings on the outcrops as well as to the landscape of which the GDC is a part. In this part of the study I undertake a detailed review of Khoe-San practices that concern womanhood; in the process it will become apparent that there are potential linkages between these practices and the motifs and markings of the GDC.

In Khoe-San cultures, women have an innate power, called by the !Kung *tsau n|um* – 'women's power' (Marshall 1999: 188). *Tsau n|um* is linked with 'female procreative power' (Biesele 1993: 93) and, especially, to menstrual blood. The blood is not seen as 'polluting' or 'defiling' as is the case in other southern African cultures. Rather, the menstruating person 'is in a state of extra-ordinary power . . . at the height of her female procreative power' (Biesele 1993: 93), not least because the !Kung believe that 'in conception menstrual blood unites with male semen and together those substances become the child'; a woman is 'strong' (Marshall 1999: 188) because she has *tsau n|um*, 'woman potency' (Marshall 1999: 188). It is the same *n|um*, Katz (1982: 92) points out, that also means sorcery, power and medicine.

Marjorie Shostak, who worked amongst !Kung people in the same area as Marshall, wrote that:

> *First menstruation is believed to engage powerful spiritual forces identical to those involved in trance medicine. It must be approached properly and handled respectfully.*
>
> (Shostak 1981: 149)

As with 'trance medicine', metaphors of the transformative powers of *n|um* are prominent. With the onset of menstruation the girl is now 'ripe' – 'ready for intercourse and impregnation' (Biesele 1993: 79–81). She has 'supra-normal ability' (Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2004: 163) that must be carefully managed so that it is only used for the common good.

Chapter 9

Girls' puberty rites

First menstruation marks the transition from childishness to adulthood, literally as a rebirth – the girl becomes what the |xam teacher Dia!kwain called a *!kui |a ||ka:n*, a girl who is new, or 'fresh' (MS L. V. 6:4397 rev.). It was Arnold van Gennep who articulated the 'pattern of the rites of passage':

> *[A]n individual is placed in various sections of society, synchronically and in succession; in order to pass from one category to another and to join individuals in other sections,* [s]*he must submit, from the day of his* [her] *birth to that of his* [her] *death, to ceremonies whose forms often vary but whose function is similar.*
>
> (Van Gennep 1960: 191, my square brackets)

These ceremonies, Van Gennep (1960: 21) pointed out, may be broadly conceived as preliminal rites ('rites of separation from a previous world'), liminal rites ('those executed during the transitional stage', and postliminal rites ('ceremonies of incorporation into the new world').

Van Gennep's pattern of rites is a useful heuristic with which to conceptualise Khoe-San management of menstruation. It is a transition has to be carefully managed and supervised as it is fraught with danger for the girl concerned, the community and what Hoff (1990) has called *lewensbronne* ('sources of life', Afrikaans) – water and rain, veldkos and animals to hunt. The |xam girls modelled *!nanna sse*, 'respect' (Bleek 1956: 473) and *!koa sse*, 'to take care of' or 'be careful about' (Bleek 1956: 438) behaviours: they avoided doing and saying certain things and performed special acts and ceremonies (more below). Old women were considered to be the most knowledgeable about appropriate behaviour for girls in puberty and were expected to advise them how to protect their communities from danger.

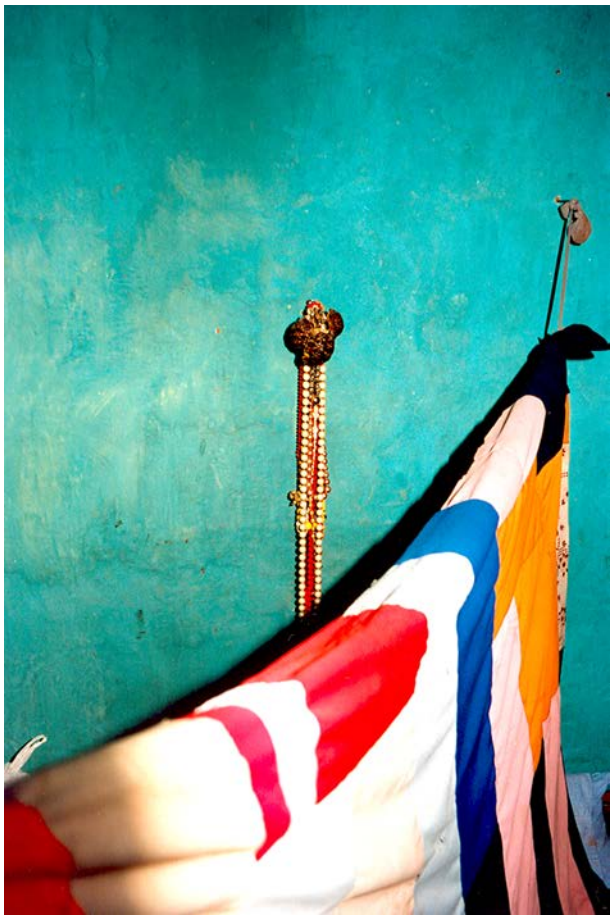


FIGURE 9.1. A curtain marks off a corner of a room as the place in which the initiate will spend her period of isolation. The tortoiseshells hanging from the wall will later be worn around the waist by the 'new person' that emerges from isolation. (Photograph taken in Griquatown, Northern Cape province, by Linda Waldman)

9.1 Life in transition

The girl is kept in isolation in a specially constructed hut, or a room in the house or behind a partition in a room, depending upon group and circumstances (Figure 9.1). What follows is based on Hoff's extensive interviews conducted in the 1980s among Khoekhoen descendants in Namibia and the Northern Cape province (Richtersveld and Steinkopf). These accounts have the greatest amount of detail and elaboration and are essentially in agreement with other Khoe-San puberty ceremonies. I shall point out similarities and differences with other Khoe-San groups as I proceed.

9.1.1 Mentors or *kai taradi*

In all the accounts listed, when a girl begins to menstruate for the first time she remains wherever she is, with eyes downcast and covers herself with her kaross (if she has one) until another woman notices what has happened. Then she is taken back to the camp. In the case of Nama people interviewed by anthropologist Winifred Hoernlé the girl must be carried to avoid her feet making contact with the ground as it is believed that the she might 'scorch up' the edible roots and berries' in the veld with her newly acquired 'woman power' (Hoernlé 1985: 63). Marshall reports that the !Kung women she spoke with also carry the girl back to camp, where she will go into seclusion. In some cases the person who carries the girl is a woman who will act as her mentor during the transition period. In the Nama language this woman is known as the *aba taras* (from *aba*, 'to carry a child on one's back' and *taras*, the dignified word for 'woman') (Hoernlé 1985: 63). Marshall's !Kung informants said the ideal choice for mentor is the woman for whom the girl is named; often this is the girl's grandmother. Alternatively the mentor should be a woman with whom the girl has the joking relationship, or the girl's older sister (Marshall 1999: 189). Marshall notes that the mentor 'must be strong enough to carry the girl on her back to the place where the seclusion shelter will be built' (Marshall 1999: 189). Moreover, every day for the duration of the girl's seclusion, the mentor will have to carry the girl in and out of the hut to perform bodily functions outside. Mentors are not formally paid for their services but one of Hoff's informants said that the she would get the black hide mat on which the girl sat during her seclusion (Hoff 1990: 159) and Heinz mentioned that a mentor would be eligible to receive a gift like an apron at some time in the future (1966: 124).

In interviews with late 20th-century Khoekhoen descendants by Ansie Hoff (1990: 159), the characteristics of a good mentor are described. The girl's mother chooses a mentor, a *groot vrou* ('strong woman', Afrikaans), or *kai taras* (Nama equivalent). Silberbauer (1963: 19) calls them 'matrons'. The *kai taras* is post-menopausal and must be well-known, trustworthy, healthy, fertile and lucky, with *gesonde hande* ('healthy hands', Afrikaans). She must herself have had easy pregnancies and had uncomplicated births. She must also know the rules and restrictions and be able to tell the girl what she needs to know.

Above all, maintained Hoff's informants, it is the duty of the *kai taras* to prevent the girl harming herself or others (Hoff 1990: 160). The *kai taras* has to prevent undesirable people from coming into contact with the girl's sweat and dirt on her skin as these are redolent with her power and may cause her and others considerable harm. She has to make sure that the girl does not make contact with the *lewensbronne* ('sources of life', Afrikaans). The *kai taras*

also helps to test whether the girl is 'lucky' or 'unlucky' (more about these important concepts later). The *kai taras* does not work in isolation however; she is often assisted by a *strooimeisie* (Afrikaans, meaning, in a Western context, 'bridesmaid'; here it has the sense of an assistant and close confidante about the same age; Waldman (1989: 33) used 'handmaid'). The *strooimeisie* must have already undergone the puberty ritual and not be menstruating. She must be a 'lucky' person. She helps the initiate to grind *sâ-i* (blends of the aromatic parts of plants, fungi and lichens (see e.g. Maingard 1932: 142), often, but not exclusively or always, *buchu*[1]) brings her food and takes part in the testing and 'coming out' activities.

The mentors may have played an active role in creating the motifs on the GDC and in leading the girls there and supervising the scratching and hammering of the rocks in order to get powder.

9.1.2 Attitude of *kua*

According to Bleek and Lloyd's |xam informants the girl must lie quietly and 'rest' – initially with her back to the doorway (Figure 9.2), according to Heinz's (1966: 118) observations and, crucially, never looking at people (more of this later). Marshall (1999: 189) wrote that the girl is seated on a grass mat, facing inward, with her kaross covering her head. Amongst the !Kung groups most interviewed by 20th-century researchers the girl is expected to adopt an attitude of *kua*. This is

> [a] *demeanour of restraint, respect, and even silence. Variously translated as 'awe', 'fear,' and 'respect,' the !Kung term* kua *describes both the feelings and the actions associated with ritual events* [marriage, initiation and a boy's first kill], *as well as with nonritual events involving intense emotions.*
>
> (Shostak 1981: 147, my brackets)

Writing of !Kung women who, ideally, are expected to give birth alone, Biesele (1997: 488) gave the characteristic !Kung phrase used to describe this attitude of *kua* – 'not even brushing away flies.'

Something of this attitude is alluded to by Hoff's informants (Hoff 1990: 160), who explained that the girl should speak (and laugh) little and softly so that she would not be judged by others as *losbandig* ('wanton', Afrikaans).

[1] Any of various South African shrubs of the rue family (esp. *Agathosma betulina* and *A. crenulata)* whose leaves yield a diuretic drug; the powdered dried leaves of such a shrub.

FIGURE 9.2. The female initiate must lie quietly inside the house. Kua girl photographed by Teresa Usandivaras. (From Valiente-Noailles 1993: plate 28)

9.1.3 Inside the hut

Isolation/separation is crucial so that she does not harm people, and they don't harm her. She has potential to cause economic damage until the time when she ceremonially disposes of her *ou liggaamsvullis* ('old body dirt', Afrikaans) and is re-associated with her environment. She needs to be separated so that she can be cleaned/purified *(reinig)* of her old *liggaamsvullis* and of her old life. The old *liggaamsvullis* would also affect her health adversely because it could cause her not to gain mass while in seclusion (Hoff 1990: 162). Hoff's informants explained that during her confinement the girl receives treatment to ensure that periods will be regular and painless, that she will be healthy (during menstruation the dirty blood may have disease in it.) The way she manages her first menstruation is the key to how it will be in the future so she has to take care not to neglect to do things right; she must not catch cold, make contact with undesirable categories of person in any way. If she fails to do this, she will be '*skraal en uitgeteer ("winddroog")*' (Hoff 1990: 162).

Every day the black skin on which the initiate sits is rubbed *(gebrei)* and combed to remove the dried menstrual blood. All *liggaamsafval*, including the dirt from her clothes, is either buried or thrown into a bush where undesirable people and evildoers will not encounter it (Hoff 1990: 173).

The initiate usually goes to the toilet at night, wrapped up in a blanket, so that nobody will see her. A 'lucky' woman walks in front of the initiate, in case the initiate is 'unlucky' and therefore 'burns' the veld (Hoff 1990: 173).

She has to be tested to establish if she is 'good luck' or 'bad luck' (see detailed discussion in section 9.3). This can only be ascertained with certainty by separating her from undesirable categories of person. If she's unlucky then the *kai taras* can at least warn her about it and caution her to avoid *lewensbronne* when menstruating or when pregnant. Attempts are made to promote the girl's luck by the use of *sâ-i* and because the girl is associating with the *kai taras* who is a lucky person (Hoff 1990: 161–162).

The *kai taras* controls access to the *kharu-oms*. Usually only lucky post-menopausal women and young girls could be admitted (Hoff 1990: 163–165). The initiate is dangerous for certain categories of people. No men are allowed into *kharu-oms*. Men involved in testing the girl could come to the entrance of the *kharu-oms*. A girl's *vuil bloed* is very dangerous for men, especially their genitals, which might enlarge/swell up *(vergroot)*. Sex with a menstruating girl could be deadly. The girl also has a negative effect on other menstruating women, pregnant women and the sick (Hoff 1990: 165).

While she's in the *kharu-oms*, friends and relatives come and visit and dance every night. They eat meat of a specially slaughtered animal. To prevent the initiate from feeling stiff from the long confinement she is taken out of the *kharu-oms* every night to dance with the visitors. She wears a veil *(sluier)* over her face because this may only be seen when she is *uitgedans* ('danced for', Afrikaans) at the end of the ceremony (Hoff 1990: 173).

During her isolation the girl has to clean herself regularly and powder herself with *sâ-i* because her menstrual smell would affect her health and the health of others. She does not wash with cold water because this could cause her periods to be painful or to disappear with the result that she would not be able to rid herself of *vuil bloed*. For these reasons lukewarm water is used in conjunction with massage to warm her blood so that it flows better. She takes medicines and is massaged to warm the arteries and ensure a strong and thorough menstrual flow *('dat sy goed ... en heeltemal "uitvloei")*. In fact *||khâ|aesenni* (menstruation) may be translated as 'health' *(gesondheid)*. She has to ensure that her period is not interrupted otherwise the *vuil bloed* that remained inside her body would cause her to bloat *(opblaas)*. She had to sit out of the wind or draughts, inside her *kharu-oms* clothed and covered with a blanket so that she does not catch cold. One informant explained that the girl has to sweat out all the cold and windiness *(winderigheid)* that she absorbed when, as a boy *(axab)*, she had run around outside without shoes (Hoff 1990: 170).

(a) (b)

FIGURE 9.3. Decorated faces of two initiates from Griquatown, taken in the 1980s. (Photograph by Linda Waldman)

The *kharu-oms* is hot inside and the girl is covered with a blanket so that she can sweat out her *liggaamsvullis* and her skin can become clean and light in colour (*eiergeel*, 'colour of egg yolk'). She cleaned herself daily with the help of the *kai taras*. The cleaning agents of preference were cream and dung but other things were also used – ‖*kau* seeds in milk, lukewarm water only, coffee grounds with milk. Make up is removed with Vaseline, clarified butter and removed with a soft cloth. A woman must never go to sleep with make up on; it will burn into her *(brand vas)* if she dies in her sleep. Dairy products are used only after it has been established that the girl is 'lucky' (Hoff 1990: 170–172).

The term used to describe the daily application of make-up by the girl and/or the *kai taras* is *boro* or, in Afrikaans, *blom*. These are not always complex facial patterns though; these are usually reserved for the times when she emerges from seclusion to take exercise, at her final emergence or when it has to be decided what patterns had to be used for the *uitdansseremonie* (Hoff 1990: 171).

The girl's entire body, underneath her clothes too, is smeared with a mixture of ochre, *hardevet* and *sâ-i*, or with ochre and water, or milk. On her face she smears pounded raw *hardevet (âu-i)* mixed with *haasboegoe* (*!ôasâ-i)*, powdered *melkhoutboombas* and *rosyntjieboom* or *kameeldoringboomkern* (*!gû-i)* or ochre (Hoff 1990: 169).

Decorative patterns are drawn on her face by removing sections of the make up in striped patterns or by removing makeup around the mouth, eyes and face (Figure 9.3). She might make an ochre powder circle on her lips and around her mouth, or put dots of ochre powder on her cheeks. Dots can also be made using

a mixture of *hardevet* and *!gû-i*. They call these *moesies* and they are considered desirable. In recent times people use lipstick. The eyebrows are coloured with pot black (Hoff 1990: 169).

There are two patterns, the springbok and the gemsbok. People say these patterns celebrate the beauty of these two animals. Informants' interpretations of these patterns differ widely. It appears that the gemsbok pattern was the most popular design. The girl's legs and arms are smeared with ochre and milk/water mixture in which zigzag patterns were drawn with a finger. The same patterns (springbok and gemsbok) are used on other special occasions, such as by a woman after birth (Hoff 1990: 169).

The mixture used for make up also has a skin lightening and moisturising effect. This cleanliness routine was also an indication of the initiate's adult status as a 'new person' (Hoff 1990: 169).

A Koranna informant told Engelbrecht (1933: 163) that after entering the hut the mentor rubbed the girl's almost naked body red ochre and cream. This was repeated every day until a few days before she came out of seclusion. Fourie (in Schapera 1930: 120) reported that amongst the Hei‖om Bushmen, 'her hair is smeared by the attendant woman with a mixture of red bark powder and powdered seed'. Amongst the !Kung who spoke to Lorna Marshall it is only on the first day that the upper half of the girl's body is rubbed with a paste of plant food and fat, preferably eland fat (Marshall 1999: 190). Shostak observed (1981: 149, my square brackets) that the girl 'is "made beautiful," bedecked with ornaments ... rubbed with oil, and brought into a hut built for the ceremony.'

9.1.4 Eating and drinking

The kind of food a girl may eat while in seclusion is restricted. It may be significant that in Khoe-San groups that rely heavily on hunting animals and gathering veldkos, the girl's intake of food is restricted to plant foods. Consumption of meat may be forbidden perhaps because of the 'opposition' (Marshall's word, 1999: 146) between hunting and 'femaleness', a matter that I discuss later. Heinz (1966: 125) reported that *!kõ* girls were not allowed any meat, eating only 'melons and wild potatoes'. Fourie (in Schapera 1930: 119) reported a similar stricture amongst the Hei‖om as does Steyn (1971: 296) of the Nharo. Marshall observed that:

> *A very symbolic act required of the girl is that, whatever amount of food she has been served, she must leave some of it.... This exercise in restraint strengthens the girl's self-control and her ability to withstand hunger. Such ability is held a virtue among the !Kung.*
>
> (Marshall 1999: 193)

Control over the intake of food and water by the mentors and restraint on the part of the girl were also stressed by the 19th-century |xam individuals who spoke to Bleek and Lloyd. Although the girl was allowed to eat meat she could only eat it under supervision of one of the old women and then only certain parts of particular kinds of animals that had been killed by her father (e.g. Hewitt 1986: 280). It was taboo to eat meat hunted by young men as this would negatively affect the men's hunting abilities (e.g. Hewitt 1986: 280). The girl's moderate consumption meant that others too would be moderate in their intake of food and water (L. V. 2: 3875–3881). Her mentor gave her meat cut up into little pieces to encourage moderation. Water too was restricted; she could only sip water from an ostrich eggshell container using a reed as a straw. These privations and the attitude of 'not brushing away flies' (see subsection 9.1.2) are not prolonged more than five days, and seem to depend on the length of the girl's period (e.g. Shostak 1981: 149; Marshall 1999: 200).

A rather different scenario regarding food pertained amongst Khoe-San groupings that kept stock, according to self-identified Nama, Koranna and other Khoe informants. The slaughter of animals was part of the proceedings and the avowed aim was to fatten the girl. Thus Winifred Hoernlé said of the Naman initiation that:

> *one of the chief things required of a girl in the hut is that she should get fat, with smoothly shining skin. . . . Indeed, immediately she is in the hut, her relatives kill for her, the feast being called* kharu ≠ap. *All her nearer relatives take part in this killing, even the girl's elder married brothers if she has any. Everything killed must be female, and chief of all must be a heifer.*
>
> (Hoernlé 1985: 63)

Hoff (1990: 166) confirms this emphasis amongst 20th-century Khoekhoen descendants on fattening the girl up; the girl gets a lot of food so that she can grow, gain strength and because *gesetheid* ('plumpness', Afrikaans) is considered beautiful. The girl's appearance should be a surprise for the men when she emerges (Hoff 1990: 161). There is a *kalbas* ('calabash' or 'gourd', Afrikaans) with *dikmelk* ('thick milk', i.e. sour milk, Afrikaans) in the hut at all times. Milk was considered the healthiest food and was considered to be *medisyne* ('medicine', Afrikaans) (Hoff 1990: 166). The girl was also given *sousryke* ('rich in sauce', Afrikaans) meat dishes, as well as medicine to enhance her appetite. Amongst late 20th-century Griqua descendants in the Northern Cape province Linda Waldman reported that while the initiate was in seclusion:

> *She was intended to become fat and white (or light-skinned). . . . It seems that getting fat is related to being healthy, as the ceremony is supposed to prevent girls from getting sick. Thus Gertrude* [the alias

FIGURE 9.4. The girl's mentors are eating the flesh off the sheep's pelvis. It is important that the pelvis remains whole. (Photograph taken in Griquatown, Northern Cape province by Linda Waldman)

> of one of Waldman's informants] *told me that when the ceremony is over, you are healthy.*
>
> (Waldman 1989: 27)

Hoff's informants spoke of two slaughterings, one at the beginning and another at the end, but other researchers were told that only one slaughtering ceremony was held, at the conclusion of the girl's seclusion (Engelbrecht 1933: 163). Hoff recorded the following details (1990: 167–169; see also Waldman 1989). Traditionally, the first, or *kharu-ab* ('first menstrual slaughter', Nama), was eaten by the girl and the mentors only; pregnant and menstruating women especially may not eat the same food (Figure 9.4). Nowadays however men and children also partake, but never of the ‖*haus* ('pelvis and hip bones', Nama), ritually the most significant part of the slaughter. The pelvis is cut out whole, sometimes with a bit of the spine attached. The ‖*haus* must not be broken or cut up to avoid the same thing happening to the girl in future. It is cooked separately by the *kai taras* and boiled carefully (it must not be grilled) to prevent it becoming too soft and causing bones to become soft. All the other bones are collected and buried or burnt.

After consumption, the ‖*haus* is scraped clean and smeared with ochre, *hardevet*, and *sâ-i* ('fragrant herbs', Nama). Ochre and *hardevet* are to ensure that

the bones don't become white and brittle. Then it is hung up in the house or in front of the house. Once it begins to disintegrate it must be burnt or buried so that people do not walk over it and bring the girl bad luck.

The *harslag* (Afrikaans, 'pluck', i.e. the heart, liver, and lungs and other viscera) is seen as the 'life' of the animal. Some informants said the initiate has to eat them to test her 'luckiness' with stock. Others maintain that she eats the *harslag* with the *kai taradi* to avoid *benadeling* ('harm', Afrikaans) and ensure her luckiness.

Other animals beside the ‖*haus* animal are also slaughtered at the same time. But only females, as the meat of males would taste bitter. Those eating these animals had to be protected from the girl's power – the young men and boys especially – are dusted with *sâ-i*, the males on their genitals, girls and women on the neck or chest. They may powder themselves, or the girl does it, or the *kai taras*.

Engelbrecht reported of his Koranna informants that an animal is slaughtered only at the end of the girl's seclusion (1933: 163) as does Waldman (1989: 27) of Griqua people in the 1970s.

9.1.5 The Eland songs and the Eland Dance

The Eland songs and the so-called Eland Dance are an important feature in the girls' puberty rituals of some Khoe-San groupings. These include !Kung groups as well as Nharo, Tasu and !Ko groupings but not any of the groups to the north of the !Kung (Marshall 1999: 195). It seems as if the Eland Song and Dance are performed only by certain groups of Khoe-San who have lived until recently as hunter-gatherers; it is not part of the repertoire of the Khoekhoen groups.

The Great Eland Song has no actual words; it comprises vocal sounds, including yodelling, delivered in contrapuntal lines that rise steadily in pitch, as well as an 'intricate' clapped rhythm said to represent the trot of the eland (Marshall 1999: 196). There are also 'Small Eland Songs' (Marshall 1999: 196). These differ between groups and are not composed in the same scale as the 'Great Eland Song'. The fact that Marshall's interviewees reported that the song was handed down by the 'Old Old People' and that it is sung by speakers of distinct Khoe-San languages suggests that the song is of great antiquity. Marshall cites ethnomusicologist Nicholas England's (1995) observation that the Great Eland Song uses a particular scale that he calls the Rain-Eland Scale. Only two songs are based on this very old scale – the Great Eland Song and the Rain Song, which has now become part of the repertoire of songs performed at healing dances. Marshall said that:

> *The scale associating life-giving rain and the eland with the girl in the Menarcheal Rite reinforces the symbolism of plenty and well-being. . . . It is with the fertility of vegetation, especially the fertility of the plant foods, that a strong ritual association is made through the association with rain.*
>
> (Marshall 1999: 196)

I note here the association of the girl with rain, the eland and the 'fertility of vegetation'. Later I argue that this association provides insight into the significance of the motifs and markings of the GDC.

Among some groups the women come every day to perform the Eland songs outside the hut of the secluded girl. Dancing is integral to the performance of the songs and although the dance is not given a specific name, Marshall (and others) have referred to it as the 'Eland Dance'[2] (Marshall 1999: 197). In the dance the female participants act as female eland: these women discard their karosses and back aprons, thus exposing their buttocks, a part of the anatomy that is 'strongly associated with sex' (Marshall 1999: 147). Shostak described the occasion as:

> *[F]estive for all participants except the girl herself. While women dance and sing outside her hut in bawdy, high-spirited displays of femininity, including baring their buttocks,*[3] *she lies inside, with her head covered, eating and talking as little as possible.*
>
> (Shostak 1981: 149)

The women may wear a string of ostrich eggshell beads that hangs down between the buttock cheeks and represents cow eland tails (Marshall 1999: 195).[4] Marshall says that the emphasis in the dance is on the behaviour of the female eland, although a limited number of men do participate, acting as eland bulls:

> *One man had sticks shaped like eland horns tied to his head; the others held branched sticks against their heads representing horns.*

---

[2]Marshall (1999: 197) has noted that:

> *In the literature on Bushmen, the dance has been called the Eland Bull Dance by several writers. . . The !Kung we worked with did not use 'bull' or 'male' in the titles of their songs or in reference to the dance. Although the male eland is specifically represented in the Eland Dance, the male role is given much less prominence than the female role. Male participation in the dance is not absolutely essential to the ritual; it may be omitted. To call the dance the Eland Bull Dance seemed inappropriate.*

[3]Elsewhere, Shostak mentions that the dancing women also lift up their front aprons and flash their genitals to 'celebrate their womanhood' (1981: 355).

[4]The significance of the tail may be that amongst cows in oestrus, the cow will hold her tail to one side.

> *With delightful pantomime they imitated bull elands approaching the females, sidling up to them, following close behind, and turning and brandishing their horns at other men to ward off rivals.*
>
> (Marshall 1999: 199, on her observations of a group of Nharo men at !Go Tsao)

All other men are excluded from the dance and from watching it. According to Marshall (1999: 199) the women divide into groups: one group sings and claps while the other dances in a line around the hut in which the girl is secluded. One person clinks together two metal ankle ornaments said to represent 'the sound of eland footfalls' (Marshall 1999: 199). The sound of the eland's footsteps was believed to:

> *make the menstruating girl 'hear nicely,' so that when the girl would be asked to do something, such as to fetch water from the water hole, she would obey and respond cheerfully.*
>
> (Marshall 1999: 199)

The women exchange roles from time to time. The dance step is intended to suggest the slow trot of a heavy eland and is performed by the women with

> *precision, vigor, and with apparent intense concentration, singing loudly all the while, their naked bodies gleaming in the morning sunshine.*
>
> (Marshall 1999: 199)

The Eland Song and Dance are a characteristic part of the initiation rites of girls in particular Khoe-San groupings, notably the 'Kalahari groups' that in historical times subsisted through hunting and gathering. Marshall's impression of the ceremony is that:

> *The nakedness, the clarion singing, and the intensity of the dance lifted it entirely out of ordinary daily experience. It made a powerful statement. Its meaning is to bring to the girl the goodness that the Rain-Eland Scale stands for: strength, health, fatness, plenty, well-being. One woman said to me, 'We dance eland because the eland is a happy thing.' I thought, looking at those vigorous women, that the Eland Dance was indeed a 'happy thing' and that it also made a vivid affirmation of femaleness.*
>
> (Marshall 1999: 199)

Lewis-Williams (1981: 43–44) notes that the !Kung women with whom he spoke regarded the Eland Dance as the 'most important element of the observances. A woman will refer to the rites as a whole in these terms, saying that she did or did not "receive the Eland Bull dance"'. The link between women, eland, and happiness is clearly made by the participants and is an important insight that I shall return to when discussing the significance of motifs of eland, facial designs, and aprons (section 11.4).

FIGURE 9.5. Woman dancing and showing her buttocks. Xade, Botswana. (Photograph by Paul Weinberg: African Media Online)

9.2 Rites of incorporation

All Khoe-San peoples perform postliminal rites in which the new person is integrated into the community. Two phases of 'incorporation' may be discerned: the first, chronologically speaking, involves the cleansing of the girl of her childhood dirt, her beautification with new clothes and items of adornment and, in most cases, dancing. The second phase involves the 'association' of the girl with the community and the natural resources it depends upon – the livestock, natural vegetation, local water source and more. The essentials are similar amongst the Kalahari hunter-gatherers and the Khoekhoen.[5]

9.2.1 Emergence of the new person

A !Kung girl is 'bathed' – although 'anointed' describes it better (Marshall 1999: 200) – with a plant food paste which is then rubbed off, followed by anointment with fat, preferably eland fat. The women paint the girl with designs, using a paste of the *tsi* plant roasted in a special fire or crushed haematite:

> *The mother or the other woman who has bathed the girl takes this substance onto her finger and draws a line with it down the girl's throat, chest and abdomen, thickly covering the umbilicus with the paste. She draws a similar line down the girl's back. We were told that the line over the abdomen makes the girl's heart strong to bear hunger so that she will not greedily ask for food. The paste on the umbilicus makes the girl grow fat. . . . A design is then painted on the girl's face. The design is red. It is the same design that is painted on the face of a bride at the time of her wedding. A line about a quarter of an inch wide is drawn across her forehead curving down each cheek to the nose. No one could tell us about the origin of the design or its possible symbolic associations, but we were told that it keeps sickness away.*
>
> (Marshall 1999: 200)

Amongst the G|wi interviewed by Silberbauer the girl and her husband have their heads shaved with matching patterns, then their bodies are washed with *bitsha (Raphionacme burkei)* root shavings:

> *Man and wife are rubbed down simultaneously; first their heads, then arms, bodies and their legs are washed. No purpose could be discovered in this washing; 'it is always done' and 'it cleans them', which indicates a state of ritual impurity, but the nature of the*

[5] Each Khoe-San group has its own format of ceremonies and activities. The differences are few and minor. For example, although contemporary San people may keep livestock, no mention is made of any reintroduction rites with livestock. Nor would it be necessary for the new person to be reintroduced to any gardens.

> *impurity and the way in which* bitsha *removes it could not be adduced. . . .*
>
> (Silberbauer 1963: 20)

9.2.2 Feasting and gift-giving

The emergence of the new person from seclusion is accompanied in all the Khoe-San groups by the presentation of gifts of clothing and items of personal adornment. Amongst the Kua, the women of the group and especially the women in charge of the ritual make beautiful ornaments for the girl to wear (Valiente-Noailles 1993: 163). According to Valiente-Noailles, the people

> *associate the creation of beauty and the embellishment of the initiate, with one of the happiest moments in the Kua's life: the coming of age of a new woman*
>
> (Valiente-Noailles 1993: 164)

Some of the items are outright gifts while others are loaned. The girl is feted by all and adorned with hair ornaments, earrings, necklaces, bracelets and anklets (Marshall 1999: 200). These are gifts or loaned for the occasion so that 'she will be beautiful in celebration of her new womanhood' (Marshall 1999: 200):

> *The people of the band fetch their jewellery and drape it on the girl and her husband; the ostrich-eggshell beads made into strings, pendants, or garments; red, white, and black trade-beads; small bone, copper, or iron ornaments, and perhaps one of the rare leather caps to crown the girl. The couple may wear these as long as they wish, but most are returned by the end of the day and only a favoured few are kept for any length of time.*
>
> (Silberbauer 1963: 21)

Hoff's Khoekhoen informants said that when the initiate emerges from *kharu-oms* she strews s*â-i* on visitors and over the places she visits. Ethnography of the !Ko (Heinz 1966: 119) and the G|wi (Silberbauer 1963) records that the emerging woman cannot at first walk and is guided in her first faltering steps by her mentors. Hoff reports that the initiate is given loose beads that she threads into necklaces that she wears at the end of the ceremony. The old women, her mother, and her friends give these to her. She also gets decorations as presents, as well as livestock, clothing. The giving of gifts is regarded as a means of giving luck to a person (Hoff 1990: 172).

There is no slaughtering amongst Khoe-San hunter gatherer groups; this could be because traditionally, stock would not be readily available and because hunter-gatherer beliefs about animals do not include their prescribed slaughter. Amongst Khoekhoen groups, however, a female animal is slaughtered on the

day the initiate emerges from *kharu-oms*. Waldman (1989: 27) has suggested that for the Griqua people she observed, 'the death of this animal symbolises the death of ... the child.' Great care is taken to prevent any of the blood from spilling, perhaps because the blood is considered to be potent and dangerous. Indeed, Engelbrecht (1933: 163) was told that were a man to see any of the blood, he would have to rub his eyes with powdered charcoal to protect himself.

Everybody eats this meat which is supplied by the girl's father (amongst the Koranna with whom Engelbrecht (1933: 163) spoke it was the girl's maternal uncle). Nowadays, according to Hoff's informants, *koek en tee* ('tea and cake', Afrikaans) is also served (Hoff 1990: 179). Hoernlé (1918: 74) mentions that the fat of the slaughtered animal is draped over the girl's head, but Hoff's informants did not know about this (Hoff 1990: 179).

At this stage it is safe for anybody to visit. Hoff's informants said this was when people brought her presents of *kopdoeke*, ('headscarves', Afrikaans) accessories such as beads, and livestock. A lucky girl gets lots of presents. The guests say '*Ons gee geluk*' ('We give good fortune/luck,' Afrikaans) and the gifts multiply the girl's luck (Hoff 1990: 179).

9.2.3 Coming out of the hut

The girl is *uitgedans* ('accompanied by dancers', Afrikaans) at dusk and starts to prepare for this event in the morning (Figure 9.6). She is first ceremonially cleansed for hygienic reasons but also to remove her childhood during which she was actually a boy (see Hoernlé 1918: 72), and also, according to one of Hoff's people, to free her or loose her from her isolation. The cleaning is done by the *kai taras* often with the help of other women. They smear her with cream, pounded *hardevet*, milk or cream and dung and roll off the dirt. This smearing is called *‖am* and if it's not done she would not be *voorspoedig* ('successful', Afrikaans) she would not grow fat, and she would burn the veld because she still has her child life on her. Then she is made up *(geblom)* by the *kai taras*. The gemsbok pattern and '*toesteek*' eyebrows (i.e. eyebrows joined together, idiomatic, Afrikaans) were very popular. The eyebrows and the *moesies* are regarded as very desirable by the *Rivierslang*, which also has these eyebrows (see following section on associations). Arms and legs are decorated with zigzag patterns. This makeup emphasised her new status as *nuwe mens* ('new person', Afrikaans) and adult woman (Hoff 1990: 180).

She is dressed in new clothes that match/indicate her new status. Her short dress is replaced by a long one together with a variety of *kopdoeke* (black, white and yellow were popular), *velskoene* and decorative ornaments such as earrings *(oorkrabbetjies)*, a beaded band that fits tightly around the neck, strings of

FIGURE 9.6. The 'new person' (the young girl dressed in white, centre of picture) is heralded by the community on her emergence from isolation. (Photograph by Linda Waldman)

beads, beaded collar, beaded ankle bands, copper armbands and rings. These were usually gifts, or lent to her or made by her while in the *kharu-oms*. Several tortoise shells filled with s*â-i* are threaded on a skin belt worn around the waist (Hoff 1990: 180).

Amongst the Khoekhoen the *uitdansery* from the *kharu-oms* was the highlight of the ceremony. In the distant past reed flutes *(-adi)* (Hoernlé 1918: 73) were played, more recently guitars, concertinas and harmonicas are played. The style of dance is called *Namastap* ('Nama step', Afrikaans). The guests dance around the *kharu-oms* behind the musicians while the *kai taradi* block the entrance. When night falls the *kai taradi* take the new person into the *matjieshuis*. They surround her and she wears a shawl over her head. Some informants said she walks crouched, others that she was piggy-backed (Hoff 1990: 180).

Young men competed to be the first to dance with the new woman. The prize went to the one who could get past the *kai taradi* and 'steal the honour' *(steel die eer)*. He reappears with her, both dancing. Her veil is removed and she strews *sa-i* over the dancers and the fire; in this way she strews luck, *'strooi ... geluk uit'* ('sprinkles/spreads happiness/luck', Afrikaans) (Hoff 1990: 181).

The new woman does not dance as much or as long as the others; the *kai taradi* take her inside. The *pensmis* ('chyme', Afrikaans) of the first animal

slaughtered is thrown out and the dancers have to dance it dry. Often people danced till the morning star appeared. Some informants said that she sleeps that night in the *kharu-oms*, others that the place was burnt down and she slept in the *matjieshuis* (Hoff 1990: 181).

The new woman's appearance marks the end of her vulnerable and dangerous condition. Her adult and marriageable status is emphasised and her appearance at the *uitdansseremonie* was of special importance to the young men of the community (Hoff 1990: 181).

9.2.4 Community and environment

As with the beliefs and procedures associated with the emergence of the new person from seclusion, the process of reintroducing the new person to the community, livestock and natural resources is essentially similar amongst all the Khoe-San groupings that have been studied. I therefore use Hoff's account (1990: 181–187) as the framework for discussion because it is the most detailed and comprehensive.

According to Hoff's informants, the day after her emergence the new person was repeatedly brought into contact with facets of particular importance in Nama life. She is now a new person, no longer a child, when she was regarded as a boy. She is therefore an alien as far as the environment and *lewensbronne* are concerned, so for the sake of their stability/balance and because of the threat they pose to the new woman she needs gradually to be united *(verenig)* with her environment. At the same time people are observing how her luck affects the *lewensbronne*. The association process can also be regarded as a series of tests on the new woman. Most informants said that the *kharu-oms* was broken down during this period. According to some, she was liberated *('vrygemaak')* when the *kai taras* ritually cleaned her for the last time, but others said that she was only freed from her restrictions after the period of re-association.

The *kai taras* brings the new person into contact with the *lewensbronne* and the tasks she had to perform. The *kai taras* was the first to touch these things in order to enhance the luck of the new person. They used *sâ-i* to enhance her luck.

First association was the homestead fire. Some informants explained that the rear entrance of the *matjieshuis* was opened and burning coals brought inside and held under the new person's face while she strews *sâ-i* on the fire and allows the smoke to rise up into her face. The *kai taras* leads her outside to the fireplace and she strews *sâ-i* on the fire and makes *drinkgoed*. Some informants said that the new person only strews *sâ-i* on the outside fire and is not exposed to the coals inside the hut.

The kai taras *streep*-ed the top of the new person's foot with ash as well the '*oorgang van haar voet na haar been',* between the eyebrows, on her hand or strewed ash on her foot. Then the new person throws *sâ-i* on the fire. The *kai taras* holds a burning piece of wood in front of the new person's face so she can smell the scented smoke. The fire was a symbol of plentiful supplies of food. If she was lucky then there would be food every day to cook, '*die vuur sal elke dag brand*' ('the fire will burn every day', idiomatic Afrikaans expression meaning that there will always be something to cook on the fire). For the same reasons she had to make *drinkgoed* ('beverages', Afrikaans) and use groceries such as sugar out of previously unopened packets.

Then the *kai taradi*, the new person, *strooimeisie* and the musicians danced their way to the accompaniment of reed flutes to various places. At every house they stopped at, the *kai taras* made a vertical stripe of ash between the new person's eyebrows, the *oorgang van haar voet na haar been*, her hand and below her knee. Then the new person threw *sâ-i* on the fire, around the fireplaces in and around the house. She also handled the household groceries.

The second association took place at the kraal of new person's parents. Before the new person could enter the kraal the *kai taras* had to *streep* her with dung on top of the foot, on her heel, below the knee, between the eyebrows or on her hand. One informant explained the heel was marked so that she could walk wherever she wanted. Alternatively the *kai taras* sprinkled goat dung on the new person's foot or the new person held a bit of goat dung in her hand. Then she sprinkled it in the kraal and over the livestock. One informant said that the new person buried some *sâ-i* in the dung to make the livestock lucky.

Some informants said the new person has to milk the livestock and touch them (see Hoernlé 1918: 74). In this way she was re-associated with this work and people observed the behaviour of the cow or ewe as well the condition of the milk produced. Often, she was given a wild animal to hold to see whether she had a calming effect on the animal. She could first rub the udder with *sâ-i* before starting to milk. If the animal became unmanageable, or got sick, or died, or if the milk was bloody this meant that the new person had a negative effect, she was unlucky.

She was also permitted to catch a young goat for herself to give herself luck.

Thirdly, the new person was taken to the garden. There is a lot of contradictory information here perhaps because horticulture/agriculture is a recent addition to the Nama economy. Apparently, the kai taras would *streep* the new person, then the new person would take water and *sâ-i* in her mouth and spit it over the vegetables or else sprinkle them with *sâ-i.* Then she said '*geluk'* and the *kai taras* wished her luck. A lucky person with *gesonde hande* enabled the plants to grow well.

FIGURE 9.7. The *kai taras* hits the the water with a stick to establish if the new person is lucky. (Photograph by Linda Waldman)

Fourthly, she was associated with the local water source, e.g. a spring, river, water hole, irrigation canal or tap. Then the new person strewed *sâ-i* in and around the water sources. Some informants said that when this procedure was carried out at rivers, it also served to soothe the *Rivierslang* ('River snake', Afrikaans) and to keep it away, so she was also protecting people against the dangers that lurked in the river. I shall discuss the *Rivierslang* and the new person's relationship with water in greater detail later because I think it is extremely important in understanding the GDC 'phenomenon.

The *kai taras* would sometimes hit the water with a stick so that some of the water splashed the new person's face (Figure 9.7; Waldman 1989: 38). This is done to establish whether the new person was unlucky and would cause the water source to dry up. The practice more recently is that the *kai taras* hits water in a bucket or sprinkles the new person with water. Some informants stated that hitting the water was a way of introducing the new person to the *Rivierslang* so that he would not molest her when she came to the water. The *Rivierslang* would appear nearby and observe the new person. The stick used to hit the water was treated with medicines (see Hoff 2007: 24–25 for details; it could be a stick made of olive wood into which medicines and mud from the river had been cut).

The new person also took water into her mouth and then spat it out while the *kai taras* said '*geluk, geluk*' ('good fortune, good fortune', Afrikaans). Hoff mentions a !Kharakaikhoe woman who explained that the *kai taras* scratched the earth with a stick and then said: '*Die vet loop soos water; die rivier is vol; baie water; dis 'n mooi jaar*' ('The fat runs like water, the river is full, lots of water, it is a good year', Afrikaans).

Then the new person was taken to the *veld*. She walked through the *veld*, touching shrubs, pulling off leaves, picking flowers, rubbing twigs between her hands, chewing fruits and spitting them out or rubbing the fruits in her armpits. The !Kharakaikhoe informant said that the new person would jump over a nest of ostrich eggs, then collect and cook some of them. One informant said the *kai taras* chewed leaves and then smeared the mixture onto her legs. The new person also sprinkled the shrubs and trees with *sâ-i* so that the veld would not burn up, it would rain and the veld would flourish and that the trees and shrubs would bear fruit and have lots of gum. The *kai taras* again wished the new person luck. A lucky person would bring rain and mistiness *(vogtigheid)*. Drought was ascribed to unlucky women who have not benefited from the association process and who adversely affect the environment when they have their periods. More recently, drought is ascribed to the fact that girls are not undergoing puberty rituals and are not being associated with water and the veld.

Lastly, the new person had to prepare food under the supervision of the *kai taras*. She watched to see if the new person spilt sugar, honey or milk into the fire. If this attracted scorpions, snakes, carnivores or the *Grootslang* then obviously she was unlucky.

During this period of re association, and according to some informants, the *kai taras* preceded the new person in performing the new person's daily tasks of milking, fetching wood and water, collecting veldkos and food preparation. The *kai taras* would, for example, touch the cow's teats first, then put the new person's hands in position. It was also a way of increasing the new person's luck because her touch came after the touch of the *kai taras* who was already known to be lucky.

The *kai taradi* also associated the new person during the first rains and thunderstorms. This walking in the first rain is called *tuteba* (Nama?). All women who had undergone puberty rituals had to do this. The *kai taradi* and/or young girls, chased the initiates around in the rain, hitting them on the pelvic region with sticks, head scarves and shawls. They were taken to places where rainwater had dammed up *(leegtes* or *riviertjies)* where they put water into their mouths and spit it out again or they wiped their faces with the water and walked through it.

This process was called *om te dokter* ('doctoring', Afrikaans). It prevented her pelvis from getting cold, prevented her from developing problems during pregnancy, and prevented sudden cessation of menstrual flow, which could lead to contracting tuberculosis. It also prevented her from being struck by lightning when pregnant or menstruating; the lightning can easily smell the women during these periods.

9.3 Good and bad luck

The Khoe-San people that Hoff interviewed attached great importance to concepts of luck (*!gâi!o*, Naman) and bad luck (*tsu!o*, Naman) (1990: 92). These concepts seem analogous to the *n!ao* of which Marshall (1957, 1999), Biesele (1993) and others wrote amongst the !Kung. Beliefs about 'luckiness' and ways of testing and enhancing it are, I believe, important for understanding the GDC motifs and markings. I therefore discuss Khoe-San ethnography about 'luck' in some detail.

Hoff's informants distinguished between luck (good and bad) that is innate and luck (good/bad) resulting from events and experiences. People are born with good or bad luck. Inheritance and breastfeeding play a role but not necessarily decisive and determining factors. Bad luck can be transmitted through sex. A midwife with unhealthy hands *(ongesonde hande)* can make an infant unlucky. A man can become permanently unlucky if he uses the weapons of an unlucky man, or lends his own weapons to an unlucky man or even if an unlucky man steps over his weapons. People can become unlucky through sorcery *(towery)* and as a result have a negative influence on economic aspects of community (Hoff 1990: 92).

9.3.1 Tests of good and bad luck

Good/bad luck has influence not only on the individual but the entire community too. Therefore people pay great attention to signs of good/bad luck and people's characters are interpreted in terms of good/bad luck. Tests are carried out to determine whether a person has good or bad luck (Hoff 1990: 93).

A girl or woman is tested during first menstruation, i.e. during her puberty ritual, and sometimes during pregnancy, and at the birth of her first child to determine her influence on certain facets of the economy. The husband usually carried out the tests on the pregnant woman and her effects on hunting and livestock. It was of paramount importance to test the female initiate because as an adult she could have an extremely disadvantageous effect *(besonder nadelig)* on the community during future menstrual periods and pregnancies. The im-

portance of testing was for the community to be aware of her inherent good/bad luck status. Boys and men are not routinely tested although some parents did test their sons and individual men also tested themselves (Hoff 1990: 93).

Certain qualities that are linked to a person's blood form the basis for the concepts of *!gâi!o* and *tsu!o*. A lucky person has 'good' unspoilt *(onbedorwe)*, healthy *(gesonde)* blood and healthy *(-uru)* hands. Such a person does not have a negative/unfortunate effect on mode of existence *(bestaanswyse)*, and was successful and was not dangerous to others. On the other hand, an unlucky person has a negative effect on others. Their mere presence and touch, including their shadow and eating could unleash *(ontketen)* this negative effect on others (Hoff 1990: 94).

An unlucky person has blood that is not good, it is spoilt *(‖gao hâ)*, impure, unhealthy and poisonous. An unlucky person has poisonous and unhealthy hands and was therefore considered dangerous in certain economic activities and towards other people. Unlucky people had foul-smelling blood because their blood was not pure. This odour could attract snakes and lightning (Hoff 1990: 94).

Hoff (1990: 94) qualifies herself and says that these blood-related terms are not used to the same degree in all areas.

Lucky and unlucky people respectively have a beneficial or detrimental effect on the economy. This is especially marked with regard to the weather during critical times such as birth, puberty, marriage and death. Rain, mist and cool weather at the time of a birth indicate that a baby will be lucky. East winds, heat and drought were signs of bad luck. It is said that a baby brings *(|hôa)* rain. The midwife also has an influence on the weather. People can also influence the weather when they wash themselves – body, hair and clothes (Hoff 1990: 94).

Lucky people are beneficial to the economy and bring economic prosperity to others. They always find food and get many gifts. That was not the lot of an unlucky person, who would, by contrast rather bring about economic reversals, *(agteruitgaan)*, e.g. spoiling the milk, burning of *veldkos*, drying up of water sources, weight loss in livestock, low fertility of stock, impeded plant growth. An unlucky person has a negative effect on domestic and natural resources. An unlucky person imperils another's livestock if he/she handles raw innards and brains (Hoff 1990: 95).

People with unhealthy hands could prejudice resources through physical contact, especially handling. Garden and wild plants don't grow well after contact. Handling of a ram or bull, e.g. carrying out castration, could have a negative effect on the animal. An unlucky person who decapitates an animal may give the meat a bad taste and have unhealthy effects on those who ate the meat, for example, causing diarrhoea or bloating. Contact with the udder of an animal

could infect the udder or bring about a decrease in milk production (Hoff 1990: 95).

An unlucky person was also unsuccessful with regards to production. For example, a stick might poke his hunting dog's eye, a bullet would malfunction and hit the hunter, or a carnivore might attack an unlucky hunter. This dynamic is reflected in the aggression of nature towards the unlucky. Lightning behaves aggressively towards an unlucky person. Scorpions, snakes, carnivores and the *Grootslange* attack the unlucky and the Orange River and the sea itself become rough and drag the unlucky in. Domestic animals become wild when an unlucky person handles them (Hoff 1990: 95).

The negative characteristics of unlucky women are aggravated during menstrual periods and pregnancy. Especially the first day of menstruation when she is still 'fresh' *(vars)* (Hoff 1990: 96).

In contrast to a lucky person, who is calm, good natured *(saggeaard)* and sharing, an unlucky person is bad tempered and irascible *(kwaadwillig)*. Lucky people, in contrast to unlucky persons are seen as an asset to the community because of their economic success and because of their character. They helped to bring harmony into the community (Hoff 1990: 96).

Hoff's informants maintained that there is an inherent and invisible potency *(kragkomponent)* in every person and their shadow that is stronger than the potency of certain plants. Personal power is present as an aura *(kragveld)* around the person's body. When a person goes through a transition they have to get rid of their old smell and bodily excretions *(liggaamsvullis)*. The new aura, with its new smell can then emerge. This renewal seems to be necessary as the old one ebbs away during the day and over a longer term as well. The corollary to this is that the new person is extraordinarily powerful (Hoff 1990: 102).

According to Hoff's informants when a person's blood is present on the outside of their body, or their blood can be smelt, e.g. during menstruation, after sex, and after the !*gao-gom* treatment, they have a sickening effect *(siekmakende uitwerking)* on sources of life *(lewensbronne)* and could also unwittingly summon up powerful and dangerous natural forces against themselves. This is especially the case with a pregnant person, because she has more blood than usual. One's potency is integrally linked to one's blood and smell so the smell of blood or its presence outside the body creates a stronger aura, too strong for life essences and therefore disadvantageous. It seems that the balance of potency between person and environment is disturbed (Hoff 1990: 102–103).

Individuals have positive and negative potency that are manifest in particular personality characteristics and that are linked to their blood. Also in the hair, sweat, smell, other secretions and their aura. The amount of good/bad

potency a person has can be determined at birth, puberty marriage and death. Also a person may unknowingly influence the weather during these times. A person transfers their good or bad potency onto everything he/she touches (Hoff 1990: 103).

During times of transition people change, regardless of whether these changes are bodily or changes in social status. Their old smell lingers and this has the result that the person in transition becomes alien and unknown to their surroundings, their connection with the environment is broken. They are dangerous at this stage because they can have a negative effect on their surroundings. After transition, as a 'new' person, the individual is also unknown to the world and thus has the same negative effect on their surroundings (Hoff 1990: 104).

9.3.2 Testing a girl's luck

A girl's 'luck' is consistent across all areas of life – if she's unlucky regarding hunting, then she'll also be unlucky in other spheres. A lucky girl's birth and first menstruation are characterised by rain, drizzle, mist and coolness. One of Hoff's informants spoke of how the Orange River came down during her puberty rites, but most emphasised evoking drizzles. An unlucky girl evokes the east wind, heat and drought. These negative effects are amplified during menstruation. So a girl gets tested to see whether she is unlucky and needs to observe *verbodsbepalinge* ('taboos', Afrikaans) (Hoff 1990: 173–174).

Tests involve being associated with different entities and observing the effects. The first test concerns her effects on cattle. She drinks milk produced by a young cow with its first calf, because the mother cow is relatively 'wild' and so the girl's effect on the cow will be easy to spot (the tamer an animal is the less easily visible are the effects). A lucky girl will increase the quality and quantity of milk, the cow will be easy to handle and the calves will be fat (Hoff 1990: 174).

An unlucky girl will make the milk bloody or cause clots in the udder or dry up the milk supply. The udder could swell up and get small tears *(barsies kry)* and cause the young cow to become wild. To counteract this the Nama in the Richtersveld treat the cow by cutting in pieces of !*galisa* bush. Amongst the !*Gâmi-nûn* the *kai taras* rubs *hardevet* and the girl's *liggaamsvullis* into the udder so that it can be safely milked (Hoff 1990: 175).

Another test used by some of Hoff's Nama informants is the effect on the raw meat of the ‖*haus.* She gets the head and brains and if she's unlucky then the raw meat will go rotten and if it is lambing season the newborn lambs will die (Hoff 1990: 175).

They also check on her effect on hunting; this is mostly carried out on hunters in her family. She wishes them *loop gelukkig* ('go well', Afrikaans). They come and stand in front of the kharu-oms and she '*streeps*' them with *sâ-i* mostly '*oor die waai van die werksarm*' ('on the crook of the arm that holds the weapon', Afrikaans) and on their weapons. She can also *streep* the weapons with saliva or merely blow on them or touch them. Hunters may also give their dogs milk containing *sâ-i*, or wash themselves with *sâ-i* and water to increase their luck. The water is discarded in a bush to prevent any negative influences. If the hunters are lucky on the first day of the hunt then clearly the girl is lucky and the hunters give her presents of rings, beads and *kopdoeke*. An unlucky girl would cause a hunter to find no animals, or for the rifle to misfire and shoot the hunter, cause wood to stab a dog's eye, or to cause its *hakskene en stertpunt* ('hind legs and tail-tip') to bleed, or result in a carnivore attacking the hunters (Hoff 1990: 175–176).

Another important test involves her eating the brains or sometimes the entire head of the hunted animal, with neck attached. These parts of the body show the effects of the girl the quickest because they are regarded as the most important part of the animal; they are '*die* "*lewe*" *van die dier*' (the 'life' of the animal). If the animal was pregnant the girl would eat the foetus to test her influence on the fertility of wild animals (Hoff 1990: 176).

She was also tested for her effects on the availability of veldkos. Lucky women went out to collect veldkos having had their digging sticks and hands powdered with *sâ-i*. If they find much veldkos or good quality veldkos then it is clear that she's lucky and she then eats some of the veldkos before the women go out again (Hoff 1990: 176).

A similar procedure is followed with honey collecting and fishing. The girl *streeps* the men and their implements with *sâ-i* and sometimes her saliva too, or she blows over them or just touches them. Thereafter a bee is held over the area between her eyebrows or over her *werksarm* until it stings her. If she's unlucky, then the bees in the veld will become angry and prevent the collectors from approaching the hive or the hive will be empty. If honey is found she eats some honey and honey comb. They make mead and she drinks a bit and spits it out. She *streeps* the men with some of the honey *op die waai van die werksarm* and wishes them luck in their second expedition. With fishermen, she eats a fish head and *streeps* the fishermen. In both cases, success on a second expedition means she's lucky (Hoff 1990: 176).

Once it's known she's lucky the girl gets more presents, ranging from chewing tobacco to cattle, from friends and relatives than an unlucky girl. People make use of her, for example, father and brothers ask her to handle their implements

and she's asked to cook meat of hunted animals. This will ensure success (Hoff 1990: 177).

In the case of an unlucky girl, the *kai taras* warns her not to milk during her periods or to drink the milk of young cows. She must not walk in the veld or the garden. Hoff refers to Hoernlé (1923: 525) and Vedder (1928: 136) who also mention tests for the initiate. Thus by 1880 at least these concepts were well entrenched (Hoff 1990: 177).

9.4 Women and water

In the previous section, I mentioned that the girl's relationship with water is so important to my understanding of the GDC phenomenon that I would devote a separate section to explaining the form of the connection and identifying aspects that seem to throw light on the significance of the GDC motifs and markings.

All Khoe-San groupings seem to emphasise a link between the pubescent girl and the water; there seem to be differences in the forms that these take, however, although the lack of detailed ethnographies make it difficult to compare beliefs and practices.

What is common to all Khoe-San groups is the belief that water, and especially water in the form of precipitation (rain) has to be 'respected', i.e. girls have to follow certain 'avoidance behaviours'. Marshall's !Kung informants explained that:

> *Rain has n|um, and the first rain has exceedingly strong n|um. In !Kung belief, if the first rain were to fall freely on the girl, this would cause the rain to leave her people's place, to go around it and not to fall on it again for a very long time. Also, first rain touching the girl would cause her skin, which is especially tender at this time, to erupt in sores. The girl would become thin and might even become seriously ill and die.*
>
> (Marshall 1999: 192)

Rain has this power called *n|um* and we know that the girl too has *n|um*. It seems that when these two make contact undesirable things happen: the rain goes away and the girl becomes ill. The same underlying principle applies to all the other Khoe-San groups about which there exists relevant ethnography – there is a concentration of power.

The ethnographies of the |xam and Khoekhoen (Nama, Koranna, etc.) have much more to say about the power of rain, and its personification. The most detailed accounts we have are from the well-known |xam 'teachers', especially Diä!kwain and |han‡kasso, who dictated hundreds of pages of anecdotes in which !khwa ('rain', |xam) features (e.g. Hollmann 2004: 129–196). Many of these

concern the special relationship that !khwa had with women. I have described three related and overlapping aspects to !khwa:

> *One emphasises* !khwa: *as H_2O, the chemical compound. This aspect is sometimes, but not always, qualified by the phrases* !khwa: ‖ki *('rain liquid'), or as 'rain's rain'* (!khwa: ka !khwa:). *The second manifestation of* !khwa: *is as 'rain-cattle'* (!khwa:-ka xoro) *which were captured by rain-makers and led to the places where rain was needed (Hewitt 1986).* [In a] *... third aspect ...* !khwa: *... appears as a conscious being, personifying rain/water and the natural forces associated with it, such as clouds, wind, thunder, lightning and wind. This is what I call* !khwa: *with a capital 'K'.*[6] *The two other aspects already mentioned –* !khwa: *as precipitation and* !khwa: *as rain cattle – are under the control of this last manifestation of* !khwa:
>
> (Hollmann 2004: 129, my square brackets)

9.4.1 The power of a 'new' girl

Diä!kwain explained that 'when she is a *!kui* |*a* ‖*kan* [new maiden], she has the |*ko:ode* [the equivalent of the !Kung's *n*|*um*, or power/potency] of !Khwa' (L. V. 13: 4989). Girls in this state were to be 'feared' *(!h△mmi)*:

> *he* [any young man] *should be afraid, for the girl's rain* [‖kitten ka !khwa] *would come out upon him, if he was not afraid of the girls. . . .*
>
> (L. V. 6: 4389 rev.–4390 rev.)

!Khwa was jealous of girls in puberty and became angry when he smelt a girl's scent (|*k"wai)* on other people, striking them down with lightning or causing one of his 'things' – creatures associated with !Khwa because of certain properties – to take possession of them. Girls were therefore expected always to fear *(!h△mmi)* their |*ko:ode* and that of !Khwa.

In order to forestall !Khwa's anger, girls followed two codes of behaviour; one, called *!nanna sse*, or 'respect' (Bleek 1956: 473) involved avoiding the use of certain words; the other, *!koa sse*, means 'to take care of' or to 'be careful about' (Bleek 1956: 438). Old women were considered to be the most knowledgeable about appropriate behaviour for girls in puberty and were expected to advise them on how to protect their communities from !Khwa's anger.

In this extract Diä!kwain details various *!nanna sse*, or respect, behaviours, some of which also apply to adolescent boys. Girls are expected to use alternative, 'respect' words for !Khwa's 'things'. For instance, a girl must call the porcupine *!kho*, and not the usual word ‖*gauxu*, for fear that the porcupine

[6] Folklorist Megan Biesele (1975: 131) compares !Khwa with ‖Gauwa, the lesser god of the Ju|'hoansi who live in the Kalahari Desert. Like !Khwa, ‖Gauwa is 'generally thought of as the destroyer' (1975: 131), but he does both good and evil deeds.

would hear her and not come out of its hole (L. V. 6: 4378 rev.). She must not pick up tortoises in her bare hands (L. V. 6: 4380 rev.), because they (and the puff adder) are also !Khwa's things.

Diä!kwain details far more *!koa sse*, or care-taking behaviours, than *!nanna sse*: most involve ensuring that the girl's scent is not transferred onto anybody else; only old people ate food collected by girls in puberty. Intriguingly, a girl should not ‖"*kwerre* men – a word translated as 'to play with, tease, annoy, attack' in the *Dictionary* (Bleek 1956: 610). Adolescent boys are also warned to fear such girls for fear that !Khwa would literally 'get wind of' her scent on his body (L. V. 6: 4389 rev.–4390 rev.). This has obvious sexual connotations, which were probably not developed because of the unique situation in which the narratives were made (Guenther 1996).

A girl at puberty burnt herbs (generically known as *sã*:, or buchu): the scent of the herbs mingled with her own, granting protection from !Khwa's anger. Girls would *ko:ʃitja*, (translated as 'fumigate') their fathers with buchu smoke, and burn buchu under the cooking pot (L. V. 6: 4392 rev.–4407 rev.).

The new maiden's anger provoked !Khwa to react angrily towards the people (and the girl too), particularly if she had violated any of the taboos during her stay in the 'house of illness' (i.e. the isolation hut). Many of the narratives are sensational cases of girls in puberty who do not respect !Khwa and become angry with others – with disastrous results.

In addition, girls had to use alternative, 'respect' words for certain reptiles – these were considered to be !Khwa's 'things'. The girls also learnt how to behave respectfully towards these to avoid !Khwa's anger.

Young women also showed respect for !Khwa by performing ceremonies at waterholes and springs – strewing *sã* (aromatic herbs believed to possess magical properties) onto the water, and 'darkening' *(|ho)* the water with powdered red haematite *(to:)* to calm 'new' rain. Girls were uniquely suited for this kind of magical intervention because of their particularly close relationship with !Khwa.

9.4.2 Taking care of the community

!Khwa was jealous of girls in puberty and became violently angry when he smelt a girl's scent *(|k"wai)* on other people, especially males. This behaviour – and a reference to !Khwa's genitals (see Hollmann 2004: 148) – suggests that !Khwa was a masculine being. Girls were expected to *!koa sse* (protect) their relatives by 'fumigating' *(ko:ʃitja)* them and anybody else (particularly young men) with whom they came into contact, by burning *sã* (aromatic herbs). This fragrant mixture masked the girl's smell and had a soothing effect on !Khwa. A girl would

also paint zebra-like stripes of red haematite on the young men to protect them from lightning.

A new maiden's water and her magic power also affected the success of men in hunting. A glance from a menstruating girl made the game behave unfavourably. Any contact with a hunter and his weapons made it impossible to hunt and attracted !Khwa's anger. To avoid contamination, the girl's father reserved certain arrows to kill animals for his daughter; only the old women shared this food with her.

In addition, and in common with young (male) hunters these girls were not allowed to drink water from an ostrich eggshell container, nor from any water sources such as 'pits' and springs (e.g. L. V. 2: 3867–3868). The consequences of disobeying these rules were dire – for the girl and her family. In one instance a girl became a frog because she went to the water hole (L. V. 2: 3864–3881); in another, a girl was taken up into the sky by a whirlwind and transformed into a snake (L. V. 13: 5019).

❁

The importance of managing women's innate power underpins the performance of the ceremonies concerning the transition from childhood to womanhood. When the initiate emerges from isolation, she is a 'new person'. She has to re-establish relationships with the people in her world, as well as with the sources of life in her environment, especially water (and rain). As already mentioned, this time of reincorporation was generally a joyous time: a !Kung woman interviewed by Marjorie Shostak told her that:

> *All the women came to me, took off their beads and necklaces and put them all over me. My heart was excited to be wearing all those beautiful things.*
>
> (Shostak 1976: 177)

In the next part of the study I argue that the GDC outcrops, festooned with motifs of aprons, beads, and other ornaments and decorations, played an important role in making this transition.

Part IV

Back to the hills

Now it is time to return to the GDC and to breathe the life back into the motifs and markings. To do this I need to move from the close focus on the GDC rock art to a wider view of the two 'arms' of wonderstone outcrops set in a well-watered valley and to consider why, in the first instance, rock art was made here. Just as I have emphasised that the GDC is not simply a complex of 'rock art sites' so I must make it clear that people did not come to the GDC merely to make motifs or collect powder with which to adorn themselves. The rock art, both the referential and gestural components, was part of the GDC phenomenon – a 'megametaphor' that was the primary reason for people to go the place. It was to the outcrops themselves – the bodies of 'wonder' stone, and their links to the water entity in the Driekuilspruit – that people were attracted. The main thing was for the young woman to be associated with the place so as to secure good luck for herself and the community. The motifs and markings were bound up in this process of incorporation.

The 'production and consumption' (Lewis-Williams 1995) of the rock art of the GDC was, I think, part of the ceremonial activities held to incorporate a young woman into society after her rites of transition. Schechner's (1994: 613) observation that rituals are 'performative' is apposite, as is his understanding of ritual as 'theatre' that entertains, celebrates, unites, educates and heals (Schechner 1994: 613, see Biesele's 1993 work on !Kung folklore). In this regard Vinnicombe (1976: 311) mentioned an anecdote recorded by Moszeik:

> *An old Bushman from the Cape once remarked, with a kind of pious awe, that dances were to the Bushmen what prayer is to white people, and that his people would look upon it as irreverent if one only dance for entertainment.*
>
> (Moszeik 1910: 85)

In the context of the GDC, one is very likely dealing with rites of introduction, reportedly a time of joy and happiness, one of life's high points (see chapter 9). Many of the activities may have celebrated the appearance of a new young woman in the world and the luck that she brings; they would certainly have involved the entire community at different times and in various ways. In a moment I shall propose some scenarios to re-place the GDC motifs and markings in their ritual context.

One can understand the GDC 'phenomenon' – i.e. the valley with its wonderstone hills and pools of water – in terms of Khoe-San beliefs about the protection of the young woman who has emerged from seclusion. One of the foremost concerns is to introduce the young woman to water. In her paper 'The expression of the social value of water' Hoernlé observed that:

> *water is ... invested with great power, essentially protective and wholesome so long as social life runs its normal course, but exceed-*

> *ingly dangerous to all the forces which threaten society, or to the members of the society themselves when the social bonds are loosened.*
>
> (Hoernlé 1985: 89)

I have shown elsewhere how Khoe-San groups handle this problem through 'respect' and 'care-taking' behaviours and attitudes (see section 9.4). Here I look more specifically at how the GDC was implicated in this process. The notion of 'association' with water and the practices carried out to achieve this is the key to my reconstruction of the ritual significance of the GDC.

Association is a means by which people create harmony with their surroundings (Hoff 1990: xii, passim). According to Hoff the principle behind 'association' is that:

> *that with which there is a bond cannot be dangerous to humans.... Association is therefore also used to prevent or stop aggressiveness from the Water Snake. By means of actions of association one entity is made similar to another.... The important element is the contact action performed. Such actions of association are performed to create a bond with phenomena with which people have no natural bond.*
>
> (Hoff 1997: 30)

Association is necessary because in the case of the young woman emerging from seclusion she is a new person whose smell is unfamiliar to the water entity. Treatment of the young woman is regarded as 'doctoring' and was carried out according to some of Hoff's informants, by a traditional 'doctor' (Hoff 1997: 31). The Nama word used for the young woman's associative treatment is *tuteba* and it means *gedokter* ('doctored', Afrikaans) or *behandel* ('treated', Afrikaans), according to Hoff (1990: 119). Association is achieved through different 'actions':

> *The associations may include the drawing with mud or clay from the water source of across in the middle of the forehead, between the eyes, or on the knee, drawing a vertical line on the front of the lower leg, drawing a horizontal line under the nose, the drinking and sometimes spitting out of water.... Through these ritual associations the Snake becomes acquainted with the person and will in future not be aggressive towards them.*
>
> (Hoff 1997: 30)

These associative actions are carried out at the water source. Some 20th century Khoe-San descendants mention other treatments, one of which is a technique carried out in the camp, according to a 'Griqua' informant (Hoff 1997: 30). The young woman was associated with the water snake through her make-up: 'A spot on the forehead, linked eyebrows and beauty spots were painted on her face so that she resembled the Water Snake and therefore associated with him' (Hoff

1997: 30). Another practice concerns the incorporation into the person's body of substances that grant protection against dangers from specific sources. Hoff (1997: 30–31) reports that 'doctors' (i.e. traditional healers) rubbed powerful substances associated with the Water Snake (e.g. its fat, or droppings, etc.) into the initiate's body. Herbs, animal body parts and powdered ochre are also strewn on the water where the Water Snake is believed to live. All of these substances are believed to pacify the snake.

These practices are suggestive for my reconstruction of the significance of the GDC's role in the incorporation of young women; indeed I think that the gestural markings that comprise most of the 'rock art' in the GDC are linked to the association of the young women with the water entity, as I now explain.

We know little enough about the individuals who created the GDC but there is information about the place that indicates that people in the past did ascribe significance to not just the GDC outcrops, but the whole valley, including the *kuile* (pools) of which three are referred to in the name of the farm *Driekuil*.

There are two intriguing anecdotes about these hills that hint at their significance to past inhabitants of the area. One of the first white farmers in the area, Salmon Vermaak, who arrived in the 1840s, apparently found human skeletons on Skeleton Hill (De Jager 2008: 424; pers. comm). The story goes that these were the skeletons of 'Bushmen' who had fled there in the belief that they would become invisible and escape their pursuers. The hills therefore apparently had extra-ordinary qualities that these 'Bushmen' believed would afford them protection – there are no natural features on the hills such as caves or dense vegetation that would have provided cover or camouflage.

Gestoptefontein Mountain and Gestoptefontein Hill have another oral tradition associated with them. Since the 1870s at least, when Alfred Hübner and then Emil Holub visited Gestoptefontein, the place has been known by the Tswana name '*Klochopitzana*' (Hübner 1871: 51) – this name is still used today in preference to 'Gestoptefontein'. According to Mr Josia Modise Rapoto, who now lives in the village of Mareetsane, North West Province, and worked at the mine for twenty years, *tlogo pitsane* (modern orthographic rendering) means 'horse's head' (pers. comm. June 2007). He explained that the name comes from an enormous snake that lived (and probably still does, says Rapoto) on these two outcrops. The snake basks in the sun on a large slab of wonderstone. The shadow cast by its head resembles that of a horse, hence the name *Tlogo Pitsane*. At night the snake roams around with a light on its head. Rapoto related that a colleague of his saw the snake and told him that it could also swim and fly and walk, 'like a *likkewaan*' (monitor lizard). The snake is apparently undisturbed by the mining activities but, Rapoto added, should dynamite ever

be used the snake would become very angry – he mimed the snake writhing furiously – and displace the hills from the mine property.

Rapoto's explanation of the origins of the name '*Tlogo Pitsane*' is deeply embedded in traditional southern African beliefs. The characteristics of the snake he describes – its size, the un-snakelike shadow cast by its head, shape-shifting abilities, the light on its head, nocturnal activities, and immense power – indicate that this is no ordinary snake. The qualities Rapoto describes are all features ascribed by Khoe-San to a large snake-like creature believed to control the flow of water and the appearance of rain (Hoff 1997; Van Vreeden 1955, 1959); this is *Rivierslang* that I discussed in a previous chapter. The belief that the snake has a horse's head, I discovered later, has wide currency. Mr Poem Mooney, *Stamvader* ('elder', Afrikaans) of the Attaqua, a Khoekhoen group in the Western and Eastern Cape Provinces, related an anecdote in which a so-called 'Koranna' person notes in passing that these 'snakes' have horse's heads (pers. comm. 10 August 2007). Both Rapoto's and Mooney's comments suggest that the name *Tlogo Pitsane* links Gestoptefontein Mountain and Gestoptefontein Hill to the presence of a Water Snake.

These stories show that for at least 100 years people have attributed special qualities to the wonderstone outcrops. Such beliefs could help explain why most wonderstone outcrops have been marked. The artists may have construed the texture of wonderstone, the restricted distribution of the outcrops, and their proximity to the Driekuil stream[7] as evidence of its 'super-natural' qualities (see Tilley & Bennett's (2001) interpretation of 'natural' features in the United Kingdom). David Morris (2002: 203, 217; 2010) suggests that the engraved glaciated pavement at Driekopseiland on the Riet River, Northern Cape Province, was seen by Khoe-San people as the embodiment of a Water Snake that was submerged in summer and exposed in winter. Perhaps at certain times in the history of the G-D sites, engravers held similar beliefs about the wonderstone outcrops – parts of these distinctive formations 'emerge' from the surrounding countryside, others are 'submerged' below ground.

The GDC was a place that seems to have occasioned a feeling of *ubiety* – 'The fact or condition of being in a definite place; local relationship; whereness.'[8] Morris uses this term (2002: 201) to describe Khoe-San attitudes to the Driekopseiland engraving site. Janette Deacon's (1988: 138) pioneering discussion of topophilia, the 'human attachment to familiar places', and Sven

[7]The existence of the Driekuil stream and the presence of several springs in the area over at least the past hundred years is borne out by the names of several farms in the area called Korannafontein ('Koranna spring') after the Koranna, a group of Khoekhoen; the town Ottosdal itself used to be called Korannafontein (De Jager 2008).

[8]Excerpted from Oxford Talking Dictionary.

Ouzman's (1998) work on 'mindscapes' is also important in this regard. The presence of the wonderstone outcrops and their associations with a great snake, safety, and the stream and pools of the Driekuilspruit are central in my interpretation of the motifs and other markings on Driekuil Hill.

Hübner mentions that it was probably a 'locale':

> *Did the mountain possess a certain distinction as its name Head of Quagga suggests? (Quagga is here to be understood as a delicacy.) The carvings might have originated during great gatherings of people which brought together all the tribes who lived in the vicinity.*
>
> (Hübner 1871: 530, original brackets)

I suggest that the 'point of intersection' between Khoe-San puberty rites and the motifs of aprons and items of personal adornment in the GDC is the rites of incorporation – the time when the new person is painted with designs, dressed in fineries, receives presents and goes down to the water source to introduce herself to the guardian of the water, which, perhaps, took the form of a 'magical' serpent.

Chapter 10

The significance of gestural markings

In chapter 3, I showed that people scratched, hammered and rubbed the rocks in certain ways to produce clusters of scratches, grooves, and so on. This stereotyped 'marking behaviour' suggests that people were doing something – probably the same thing – repeatedly on different parts of the hill. The presence of these patterns is graphic evidence of conventional, patterned behaviour, 'residues of ritual activity' (Lewis-Williams & Blundell 1997). Not that people would have regarded the marks as insignificant by-products – the ritualised nature of the mark-making suggests that they are important and significant marks in their own right as I shall discuss just now.

10.1 Clusters of scratches and grooves

A clue to the motivation behind the scratches, the grooves and the pecking lies partly in the nature of wonderstone itself. When thoroughly crushed, the stone becomes

> *a very fine impalpable* [very fine, not containing grains that can be felt] . . . *and unctuous* [of the nature of an ointment, i.e. oily, greasy] *mineral powder free from any gritty matter. . . .*
>
> (Nel *et al.* 1937: 20, my brackets)

These are qualities that make ideal body paint when mixed with water or saliva. When first applied, the powder is light grey in colour but it dries to a much lighter shade of white (I tried it out). The properties of wonderstone did not escape the notice of the GDC people; it was these very qualities that encouraged

FIGURE 10.1. Replication of a P and O cluster produces about a fingertip of dust. IMG9660

people to make the clusters of scratches, grooves and to peck and hammer the rocks. These techniques easily produce powdered rock.

I confirmed for myself the ease of the scratching technique with a simple replication experiment. By scratching a piece of wonderstone for 10 seconds or so I produced a few grams of rock powder, about a fingertip of dust (Figure 10.1).

The technique is almost effortless and produces a heap of powdered rock that is easy to collect. Grooves, as I pointed out in chapter 3, have their beginnings in a type of scratched cluster that I call a P and O cluster (see chapter 3); persistent scratching in the same place on the rock produces a groove. Grooves are therefore also (but not only) a relict of powder production. I see the grooves – especially the aggregations of grooves that occur on some of the outcrops – as evidence of communal powder production (Figure 10.2). Perhaps small groups of successive visitors to the outcrops gravitated to these large surfaces, deepening and extending the existing grooves. Another possibility is that large surfaces with many grooves may have developed as a result of larger groups of people making grooves simultaneously.

The gathering or production of powder was probably a ritualised performance. The young woman (this is the phrase that Lucy Lloyd used in some of her translations of *!kui |a*, e.g., Bleek & Lloyd 1911: 193) may have been the one to do the scratching of the rock, guided perhaps by the hand of her mentor. The

(a) Gestoptefontein Hill (NW57 SE01)

(b) Driekuil Hill (DH51)

(c) Driekuil Hill (DH12)

FIGURE 10.2. Aggregations of grooves: On some of the GD outcrops grooves are concentrated on particular surfaces. Some of these surfaces are large enough for several people to stand or sit around and to scratch the rock simultaneously in different places. The size of these surfaces and the orientation and number of grooves allow that groove manufacture and powder production may sometimes at least have been communal affairs.

young woman may still have maintained her solemn demeanour of 'respect', not 'even brushing away the flies' (see chapter 9). Having scratched the surface the mentor may have picked up the rock powder on the tip of a moistened finger and marked the young woman. The procedure may have been repeated and the powder may have been used to create more or less elaborate patterns on the young woman's face and body, as is the case amongst known Khoe-San communities (e.g., the !Kung and the Nama). Words and songs may thus have accompanied the manufacture of rock powder that was used as body decoration in the incorporation rites held for young women. The occurrence in the GDC of 'activity' and 'scratch rocks' may be the surfaces on and around which people gathered.

10.2 Activity and scratch rocks

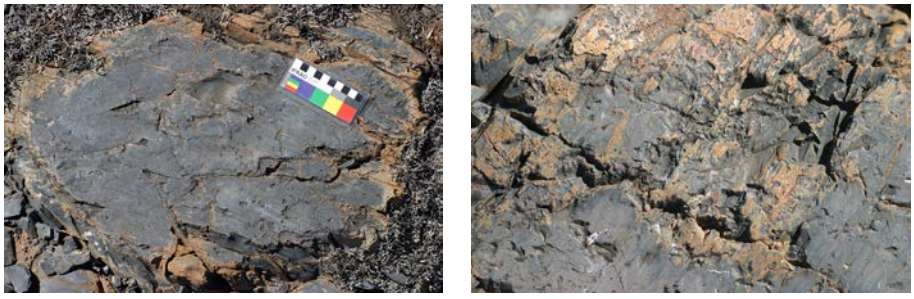
On some of the outcrops I recorded surfaces on which certain kinds of gestural marks predominate. There are discrete surfaces that contain many small, separate areas of pecking, with some referential motifs: I call these 'activity rocks' because it seems that people, perhaps in groups, sat on and around the surfaces and struck the rocks probably with small 'hammer stones' of wonderstone picked up casually for the purpose. I recorded 'activity rocks' on Gestoptefontein Hill, Charlie Badenhorst and on Skeleton Hill. Activity rocks are significant because they are a clue to the dimension of performance in the GDC. Drawing on her many years of experience with Ju|'hoansi people, Polly Wiessner has commented that

> *People usually make things in a social atmosphere and tell stories while decorating or making objects, so design can incorporate elements of the stories and their telling. For instance pecking might be an action done to punctuate a story*
>
> (Wiessner, pers. comm. 8 Feb 2011)

Surface CB07 on Charlie Badenhorst is a good example of this phenomenon (Figure 10.3). The surface is quite large, about 1,5 m in length and breadth, an area of about 2,25 m^2. The rock, which is more or less level with the surrounding surface, has been extensively smoothed, perhaps as a result of people sitting on the rock and moving about on the rock surface. There are areas of pecked and hammered rock all over the surface (Figure 10.4).

There is a variety in the size and density and shapes of the blows made on the rock. This miscellany of marking suggests either that more than one person was involved in making the marks, or that a single person made a variety of marks on the surface at different times. I think it more likely that the activity rocks came about as a result of communal, rather than solitary activities.

FIGURE 10.3. One of the 'activity rocks' that occur on certain GDC outcrops. Here groups of people may have gathered to perform ceremonies to extract rock powder. Charlie Badenhorst (CB07).



(a) Overview of one of the surfaces (b) Detail of peck marks

FIGURE 10.4. Detail of the surface of an 'activity rock'. This flat surface has been pecked and hammered, perhaps as a means of extracting rock powder for ceremonial purposes. Charlie Badenhorst (CB07)

FIGURE 10.5. An example of a 'scratch rock': people gathered around certain GDC surfaces to make many clusters of scratch marks. The scratches may have been made to extract rock powder for ceremonial purposes. The making of the scratched clusters might have been a ceremonial activity. Gestoptefontein Hill (SW13 NW)

10.2.1 Scratch rocks

Then there are surfaces on which are clustered many scratches (Figure 10.6): I found three 'scratch' rocks on Gestoptefontein Hill (NW10 SW02; SW13 NW; Slide rock) and two on Skeleton Hill (SH01 and SH07). Many, perhaps most, of the scratches are in clusters, but other scratched arrangements do occur, such as freely incised surfaces as well as grids and meshes. There are occasional scatters of peck marks on these surfaces too and, in some cases, motifs too; scratchings, however, are the most obvious and numerous markings on these surfaces.

Interestingly, on Gestoptefontein Hill all three scratch rocks are on red rock, as are the two on Skeleton Hill. Was there a preference for scratching red rocks?

(a) (b)

FIGURE 10.6. Detailed views of a 'scratch rock': (a) the picture gives an idea of the density of the scratched markings. The second photograph (b) shows that the scratches are not merely random: they are organised into arrangements that are repeated throughout the Gestoptefontein Hill (SW13 NW).

The colour of the rock powder would be the same greyish-white colour regardless of the rock's colour (red or grey).

10.3 Sliding into womanhood

I mentioned in chapter 3 that there are at least four 'rock slides' on Gestoptefontein Hill, one of which is very conspicuous. I suggested that the slides may be contemporaneous with the use of the GDC and that they may have been of ritual significance. Here I concentrate on the most noticeable and probably the most used slide on the large, tilted slab of wonderstone that I call Slide Rock because the slide, a long smoothed 'pathway' of grey, is one of the most noticeable features of the surface (Figure 10.7). The slide is part of a large surface (approximately 90 m^2) that has been extensively marked with an accumulation of motifs and markings. There are also large areas of rock that have been smoothed, probably as a result of groups of people sitting and moving around on the rock.

The slide, the motifs and markings, as well as the extensively smoothed surfaces are, I suggest, the tangible remains of past 'performances' to use Schechner's (1994) terminology. Women (and perhaps men and children too) made Slide Rock their 'performance space' in and on which they performed 'symbolic, representational techniques' intended to create a 'positive relationship to natural sources' (Schechner 1994: 615). In the case of Slide Rock and the GDC in general, these 'techniques' were the rites of incorporation.

The rock slide exemplifies this understanding of the 'entertainment value' of ritual, as I shall explain. I want first to point out what may be the ritual

FIGURE 10.7. The most noticeable rock slide in the GDC is on Gestoptefontein Hill on Slide Rock (SW04). I suggest that this slide, and two or three less used slides are tangible remains of past performances of rituals or ceremonies.

efficacy of the slide. Certain rock slides elsewhere in Africa and also in Europe are directly implicated in women's rituals. Fagg (1957a: 31) mentions five rock slides in Brittany, France; as recently as the 1880s young women used these slides to 'commune ... with the spirit of the rock' by sliding down naked and making offerings to ensure an early marriage. Bennet-Clark (1957: 32) describes two rock slides in Athens (Greece), one of which was known to be used by infertile women who wanted to remedy their problem. Rock gongs and rock slides co-occur at sites in Nigeria. Fagg reported that:

> *Inside Zaria City there is a rocky hill traditionally associated with marriage customs known as 'Ci Amare' (Hausa for 'Win the brides'). There are some very fine rock gongs and adjacent to them are rock slides used by the young children. The brides customarily slide on the rock slide the day before marriage but never again. An identical custom persists at Tukur-tukur, a village near Zaria.*
>
> (Fagg 1957b: 112, original brackets)

These rock slides are all used by women for ritual purposes, i.e. to secure fertility. Some are associated with rock art, and with rock gongs. Note that the Zaria City slides are used for customary performances by brides and also – perhaps most of the time – for fun by children.

In the light of these associations I agree with Malan (1959: 31) who, writing about a rock slide near Parys, Free State, suggested that southern African researchers 'should not overlook the possibility that the local occurrence [of a slide] might have had some analogous significance' with the Zaria City slides. Goodwin (1957: 40) has speculated that rock slides symbolised the act of birth; Erika Insam, an erstwhile colleague who visited Gestoptefontein Hill with me, suggested another metaphor: that of initiates sliding into fecund womanhood.

I imagine that there may well have been an element of 'fun' and 'entertainment' in this sliding. Perhaps the initiates screamed or laughed, or chanted as they slid while the others may have sung songs appropriate to the occasion; bystanders may have laughed, shouted, screamed, made comments and clapped. Perhaps there was also a more formal element and the whole procedure presided over by the chief initiator. It may be that the soon-to-be-woman slid down naked, seated only on a piece of skin and was dressed and adorned once she had slid to the bottom. The place was used; the extensively smoothed areas may be where people sat during the spectacle; the rubbing of the rock, perhaps over generations or by many people, caused the surfaces to become smooth.

There are other possible indications that 'performances' were held at Slide Rock. The south-eastern 'corner' of Slide Rock is covered with apparently formless scatters of peck marks; these, I imagine, could be the result of blows that were the percussive accompaniment to singing, chanting and dancing. One

(a) (b)

FIGURE 10.8. (a) Grooves that have been 'transformed' by the addition of pecked transverse forms; there are several of these, mostly on red rock, on the south eastern portion of Slide Rock. (b) Tattoo marks made on the face of a G|wi woman on the occasion of her initiation (photo from Silberbauer 1965: 85). These tattoos resemble the 'sutured' grooves found on parts of Slide Rock.

should allow the possibility, however, that the scatters may have been referential; people may have perceived the surface as the skin of an animal, perhaps even the snake's body, and added spots to the body (section 5.7).

The many grooves at the bottom, southern end of the big slab are vestiges of repeated scratching of the rock in one place. They could have been made, as I discuss elsewhere in more detail, as an efficient way of extracting fine, powdered stone to use as body decoration and, possibly, for other purposes. However, some grooves have been elaborated upon: several grooves, most of which are on red rock, are associated with pecked, transverse forms (Figure 10.8).

The effect may be compared to a gash (the groove) and sutures (the pecked forms). It is not clear which was made first – the groove or the pecked forms – but they seem to form a whole. These are no longer simply dust-producing grooves; they represent some thing, perhaps the tattoos that Khoe-San people make on the body (Figure 10.8): Silberbauer (1963: 20) describes how, during the G|wi rites of incorporation, the tattooer 'pinches the skin between thumb and forefinger and nicks it with a rolling stroke, making an incision just deep enough to bring the blood welling out' before rubbing into the cuts '[a]shes of magic and medicinal roots' that leave black cicatrices. Fock (1969: 126) has pointed out the resemblance between these tattoo marks and 'vertical lines and motifs known from rock-engravings, or paintings in or near shelters'.

❁

My study of the 'rock markings' of the GDC has revealed that the same marks are repeated over and over on all the outcrops. Nor was it boredom or listlessness that caused people to make them; their cutting, hammering and smoothing behaviour amounts to the treatment of the wonderstone surfaces as a body or parts of a body, perhaps a snake's body. Its dust was its essence and it was used to great effect as a means of association and protection with a great source or power in the landscape.

Chapter 11

Themes in the referential art of the GDC

In the previous chapter I tried to 're-animate' the gestural component of the 'rock art'; I suggested that people treated the GDC surfaces as a source of pow(d)er which associated them with the place. Now I want to show how the 'referential' component – the motifs – fits in with the gestural component and with the proposition that the the GDC was animated by the megametaphor of the great water snake. The emphasis here is therefore on how the rock art 'felt' rather than what it 'means'. In the beginning of the study (section 1.1) I spoke of two 'registers of understanding' – what the object signifies, or represents (dealt with in Part II of the study), and the meaning in the art object itself (Ingold 2002: 22, citing Langer (1957)). These 'meanings in the art object itself' are allusive and metaphoric and are not accessible by intellect alone. Rock art surfaces are not 'texts' that can be finally 'explained'; there is no level of 'symbolic bedrock' to be reached, a level at which lies the 'central meaning' (Lewis-Williams 1981: 127-131). Instead, Lewis-Williams suggests, there are 'shifts' in levels of thought; such 'shifts' involve movement from the conceptual to the visual (Lewis-Williams 1981:130). Verbal metaphors manifest themselves as engraved motifs, as I illustrate below with specific examples from the GDC. Beliefs, attitudes, practices and the motifs concerning the power of women are inextricably linked .

To make an analogy with music, the motifs on the GDC surfaces are like leitmotivs, recurrent themes that play out on the outcrops. Was the music always there? In other words, were the motifs experienced as an integral part of the outcrops, as pre-existing 'givens' that had always been there? Or was the making of motifs on the surfaces by people considered a ritual adornment

of the snake's body, carried out perhaps by the older women, the caretakers of the girls? These are just two scenarios regarding the context, or setting, of the motifs.

11.1 Zoomorphs, clothes, ornaments and decorations

One of the most common associations of imagery at rock engraving sites in parts of the NW and Northern Cape provinces is of zoomorphs and motifs that depict clothing, ornaments and decorations (see figures and plates in Fock 1979; Fock & Fock 1984, 1989). Similar juxtapositions are also prominent patterns in the GDC (section 7.2). The presence of clothing and/or ornament motifs suggest that they can be understood in the context of the transition rites of women. Van der Walt (1987) has suggested that the GDC apron motifs may be 'substitutes' or 'symbols' for women:

> *In English a wench can be both an apron and a young woman. (As this meaning of wench is not given in all dictionaries, please consult Cassell's German-English English-German dictionary. 1980. London: MacMillan.) This gives the impression that an apron is a substitute for a woman. Could the Bushwoman's apron, that appears, according to Holub, so often in engravings, be a symbol for a woman?*
>
> (Van der Walt 1987: 49)

The idea is appealing: Westerners say 'clothes make the person' and the reincorporation rites of Khoe-San all involve rebirth and new clothes (see the story of the blue crane, below). In these circumstances it is understandable that clothes could be women.

I think the zoomorphic motifs too may represent women; ethnography suggests the motifs are of animals that embody desirable qualities in women. I give an example from 20th century Kalahari ethnography that may provide a way of understanding the association of animals and artefacts. In response to the question, why it is an *eland* dance that is performed during the rites of isolation, a person told Lewis-Williams that:

> *The Eland Bull dance is danced because the eland is a good thing and has much fat. And the girl is also a good thing and she is all fat; therefore they are called the same thing.*
>
> (!kun|obe quoted in Lewis-Williams 1981: 48)

The eland is a 'good thing' and so is the girl; the eland 'has much fat' and the girl is 'all fat'. When she says that 'they are called the same thing' it is more than

just a descriptive manner of speaking. As Jackson puts it, a metaphor 'is a mode of speaking, thinking and acting in which personal, social and natural aspects of Being are made to correspond or coalesce' (1983: 127). And the nature of this correspondence is not intellectual, but is rather a matter of 'thinking through the body' (Jackson 1983: 128). As Jackson explains:

> *the world of things is merged with the world of Being, and as a consequence 'things' like stones, hillsides, and whales assume the status of 'signs' whose decipherment mediates understanding and action in the human world. This corporeal and sensible way of 'reading' what the world means presupposes a continuity between language, knowledge and bodily praxis, a view which is characteristic of preliterate societies where knowledge and speech cannot be readily abstracted from contexts of practical activity. It is because, in such societies, knowledge is articulated in skills, formulae and routines upon which physical livelihood directly depends that it is 'logical' for preliterate peoples to emphasise the embodied character of knowledge and speech, such as when the Dogon equate word and seed or speak of the ripe millet being 'pregnant'. Metaphor here is situated. It discloses the functional interrelations between proper knowledge, productive activity, correct speech, and socio-physical wellbeing. Metaphor is not merely a figure of speech, drawing an analogy or playing on a resemblance for the sake of verbal effect.*
>
> (Jackson 1983: 130–131)

What Jackson says here harks back to my introductory remarks regarding the 'story-in-body' versus 'story-in-book' way of being (section 1.1). An example of thinking through the body amongst Khoe-San – and the bodies of other animals – is evident in a spontaneous comment recorded by Lewis-Williams (1981: 48) in which female eland and women are compared. People were discussing eland behaviour as depicted in rock paintings; somebody explained that a female eland gives birth on her own, away from all the others. Another person interjected that 'a really good woman who is not afraid will also go off by herself to give birth' (Lewis-Williams 1981: 48; see Biesele 1997 for detailed discussion). Thus human and other animals' bodies are the subject of metaphor. The repeated instances in the GDC of the juxtaposition of zoomorphic motifs with clothing and other motifs suggest that they are powerful, 'corporeal and sensible' metaphors that concern the transition that girls make to 'womanhood'. Now !ku|nobe's statement in its original context was in response to Lewis-Williams's question about why the eland specifically is chosen and not some other large animal, like a gemsbok or a giraffe. Here the motifs are giraffe, rhinoceroses and birds. Like eland, they have stories in their bodies.

FIGURE 11.1. Rhinoceros motif with tasselled apron motif superimposed. Gestoptefontein Hill (NW65 NW10)

11.2 Women and rhinoceroses

There is a metaphorical link between women and rhinoceroses: rhinoceroses are good mothers, fierce and protective. Their horns are especially important in this regard. A study on dehorned mother rhinos showed that they lost all their offspring to attacks by spotted hyenas (Berger & Cunningham 1994). In one |xam story set in the time when animals were people, the she-rhinoceros kept her horns in her hut while she was out collecting. When she needed to chase off suitors she sent her youngest daughter, called Driving Away – who had been ordered to spy on her elder sister and to report strangers to her mother – to the hut to fetch either her short horn if the suitors were jackals or hyenas or, in the case of the leopard, her long, 'real' horn (L. VIII. 5: 6474). |han‡kasso, the narrator, pictures the ferocity of a mother rhinoceros defending her child from unscrupulous and unworthy suitors: jackals and hyena. Dust is raised by her trampling feet, she tears up bushes, charges down on the suitors and wants to toss them on her horn.

> *The silver fox* [an onlooker] ... *screamed at the dust of the rhinoceros; it said that Driving Away* [the youngest daughter] *should have let the rhinoceros mother be, when the rhinoceros mother was at peace; for this thing* [i.e. the rhinoceros mother] *did not seem as if*

> *it would be nice; for the rhinoceros mother seemed to be making a dust; she was carrying away the bushes.*
>
> (6458 rev., my brackets)

The rhinoceros's performance is described in the following quote as a |*a*, a 'fight': the word may also be translated as 'harm' or 'curse' (Bleek 1956: 267). The Ju|'hoansi use the same word in certain contexts to describe a concentrated jolt of *n*|*um* (Lewis-Williams: 2002: 86-88). A 'fight' of *n*|*um* aimed at a person can kill them (Marshall 1969: 351–352). Thus, the use of the word here may be understood as a description of a 'person' – the She-rhinoceros – that has a lot of *!gi:* (the |xam equivalent of *n*|*um*). She is therefore powerful and dangerous:

> *The silver fox was used to say.... Oh! I wish that Driving Away would indeed deal gently with us with her mother: that the child ought to be dealing gently; she goes about telling her mother of it; a fight's thing comes down ... because she must have gone to her mother; she has been to tell her mother; and dust it is that which comes; and the thing does not seem as if it would be nice on account of it.*
>
> (6459 rev.)

The mother is 'a fight's thing' coming down on the cowardly suitors, she does not behave 'nicely' or 'gently' towards them: she is fiercely maternal. I think that these qualities are relevant to understanding the association of rhino and clothing motifs (Figure 11.1). These juxtapositions would have impressed themselves on initiates visiting the GDC.

Similar associations evoked by the juxtaposition of rhinoceros and apron imagery may pertain to another surface on Gestoptefontein Hill in which apron motifs are placed in close proximity to elephant and rhinoceros imagery (Figure 4.22). Again, there may be a metaphor implied that equates the maternal behaviour of elephants (they are matriarchal) with desirable qualities of women.

11.3 The story of the blue crane

The blue crane too has associations with power and womanhood and so it is interesting to note that on Gestoptefontein is a juxtaposition of a blue crane motif and an apron image (Figure 4.37). In a |xam story (L. VIII. 32: 8794-8811) told by |han‡kasso and set in the same 'mythical' time as the She-rhinoceros, the blue crane has grown lean through grief about a missing person. Two lions find her, kill her and eat her. However, one of the blue crane's bones 'springs out' out of one of the lion's mouths and goes to 'lie down'. The |xam trickster deity |kaggen comes looking for the blue crane, finds the bone, puts it in the

FIGURE 11.2. Motif of a blue crane and apron on a densely marked surface. Gestoptefotein Hill (NW56 SW63)

water and leaves. On his return the blue crane 'springs up [and] splashes into the water' (L. VIII. 32: 8803), then sits in the sun (L. VIII. 32: 8804). Taking care not to startle her, |kaggen goes to 'prepare things which he should when the blue crane grows up' (L. VIII. 32: 8805). He leaves her to grow 'to be a young woman' (L. VIII. 32: 8806–8807). Quietly he creeps up on her and grabs her as she tries to go into the water; he rubs her face with the sweat from his underarms (L. VIII. 32: 8808–8809). |kaggen explains to the blue crane that he is actually her elder brother, that she must stop struggling. Then |kaggen dresses her in the clothes of a |xam woman: he has made a cap for her head, a kaross and a 'skin petticoat' (apron) (L. VIII. 32: 8810–8811).

In this story |kaggen resurrects the blue crane from a single bone placed in the water, then waits for the blue crane to grow until she is a young woman, then gives her clothes. |kaggen's actions thus parallel, in part, the reincorporation rites of the newly initiated woman. Having revived her life by immersing one of her bones in the water, |kaggen waits until she is a young woman. Then he takes hold of her and covers her with his smell, perspiration from the underarms which, in the context of the medicine dance, is a powerful, healing substance. This element of the story is intriguing as it concerns |Kaggen's 'shamanic' healing powers: he rubs her with his perspiration, then 'he made the blue crane smell his odour, he told the blue crane that he is the blue crane's elder brother' (L. VIII. 32: 8809) and 'that the blue crane must leave off struggling' (L. VIII. 32: 8810 & 8809 (rev.)). It seems that his goal in rubbing her was to make her realise who he was and that he wanted to help her, but perhaps it also implied that he healed her from her traumatic experience of being eaten by lions. There is may also be a link here to the initiate's introduction to the water snake at the waterhole, part of which serves to introduce the smell of the initiate to the water snake, so that it will know her in future. The waiting for the blue crane to grow to the brink of womanhood and the provision of age-appropriate clothing obviously have direct parallels with Khoe-San initiation procedures. I am not arguing, however, that the GDC motifs illustrate the |xam story; rock art does not illustrate 'the mythology' of the Khoe-San (e.g. Deacon 1994). I am pointing out important, longstanding and far-ranging commonalities that help to contextualise the GDC rock art.

11.4 Eland, facial designs and aprons

I pointed out earlier that the eland is central to the puberty rituals of particular Khoe-San groups in the form of the Eland songs and the accompanying dancing (see chapter 9):

> *The Menarcheal Rite has aspects other than restrictions and avoidances – affirmative ones rather than restrictive ones. It ushers the girl into womanhood and it evokes concepts of health, strength, plenty and well-being. Through the association of ideas established in Bushman cultures over the ages, the eland is a symbol of these good things.*
>
> (Marshall 1999: 195)

The eland 'symbol' plays a transformative role in the dancing that accompanies the Eland Song: recall that amongst the !Kung and others the women strip down and mimic eland in oestrus (chapter 9). And while Biesele spoke of animals as 'metaphors', the boundaries between 'metaphor' and 'reality', human and animal, do get blurred (to paraphrase Guenther):

> *It is at this point in the rite that transition comes close to being, or in certain instances or for certain moments actually being, transformation. At such a point, the Bushman rite moves beyond the themes enacted universally in initiation rites: suspension of social status and the consequent liminality and inversion of social and moral categories and rules. What we find transpiring – and what we will see happening also during the trance dance – is the actual ontological transformation, mimetically and symbolically, of the neophyte, and those around her, into animals.*
>
> (Guenther 1999: 176)

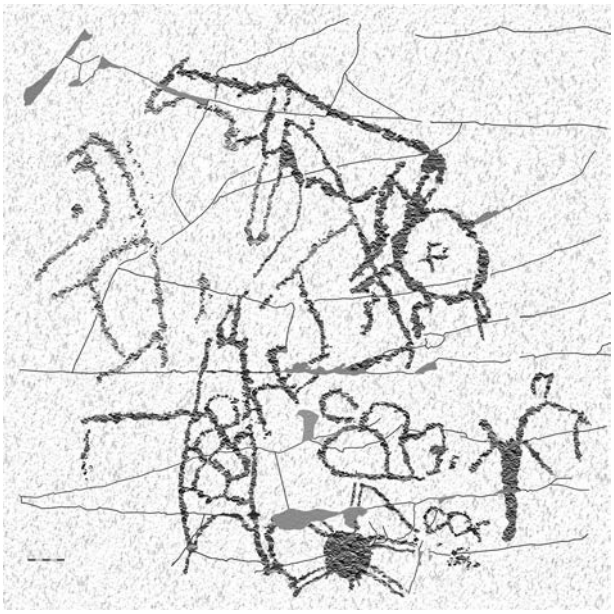
Does this notion of an 'ontological transformation', in which a human becomes an eland, have application to understanding eland motifs in the GDC rock art? Are motifs of eland also transformed women? Possibly. Consider Eastwood's (2006) analysis 'Animals behaving like people', in which he argues that certain painted motifs in the central Limpopo basin – for example, female kudu in oestrus, women with animal back legs – depict transformed women.

A surface on Gestoptefontein hill shows how the notion of eland as women enriches one's appreciation of what the motifs in the arrangement are 'doing' (Figure 11.3).

The topmost zoomorph is an eland; the slender stature and small dewlap suggest an eland cow. It stands quietly, like an initiate. Another antelope motif, less detailed, is superimposed. There is another antelope to the left.

Immediately below are at least three clothing motifs: a pubic apron with either a shaved or beaded pattern, a depiction of a piece of hide with 4 sets of paired tassels attached and, at the extreme right another clothing motif, perhaps another pubic apron because the form is narrow and tapers towards the bottom. Just below what could be the tie strings of the apron are two symmetrically arranged 'lines' one on either side. These may be tassels. I am, however, not certain what to make of the complex of lines to the right. Are these parts of the motif, or something else altogether?

(a) Photograph of surface



(b) Tracing of surface

FIGURE 11.3. Motifs of eland are juxtaposed on this surface with apron and design motifs. This arrangement can be understood in terms of Khoe-San ethnography about female initiation practices. Gestoptefontein Hill (SW19 SE05).

FIGURE 11.4. The southern edge of the surface (SW19 SE05) has been hammered. Perhaps people did this to collect pieces of rock that they could crush and make fine powder. The powder may have been used for decorative purposes.

In addition to zoomorphic and clothing imagery there are two motifs that may depict designs similar to those painted on the faces of women. They are reminiscent of designs made with a finger on the face, limbs and torso of Khoe-San female initiates (Figure 5.13; see also Rudner 1982: figs 17–19).

There are depictions of the key elements of beliefs and rituals concerning young women: the beautiful clothes that are given her, the designs (which would have had names no doubt) painted on her face (with wonderstone paste?) when she emerges from seclusion, the hair ornament. The women may be there too, in their 'metaphorical' form, as beautiful eland cows. The whole can be interpreted in terms of women's power and the rites of transition and incorporation associated with its management during puberty.

The gestural component is also present. The southern edge of the stone has been hammered extensively (Figure 11.4). The presence of hammered areas in the immediate vicinity of surfaces with rock art occurs at a few places on Gestoptefontein Hill. The hammering could have been contemporary with the 'use' of the surface rather than a random, unrelated removal of material. The stone fragments may have been used for body decoration – an activity that may have been carried out in front of the rock art – as part of the rites performed on the hill.

Other zoomorphic motifs in the GDC may be understood as *animaux de passage* (Lewis-Williams 1981) or as other powerful entities (see below). Eland are not the only *n|um* animals; Gemsbok, and an unspecified kind of bird have also been invoked in the puberty rites of the ǂAu‖eisi (Bleek 1928: 3). There is a wide variety of zoomorphic motifs in the GDC in arrangements with clothing motifs, items of adornment and designs. Do these zoomorphs too have the ambiguous status of transformed humans? One does not know the original artists' intentions but that the GDC zoomorphic motifs are 'strong things' (to paraphrase a !Kung expression for things that possess *n|um*) there can surely be little doubt. the zoomorphic motifs – that I identified as depictions of 'aardvark', 'bird', 'equid', 'bees' and 'tortoise' – each has its own associations that may be linked to women directly or indirectly. And some of these associations extend to a 'place' beyond time and space, the spirit world or Primal Time, the time when animals were people. This terrain is the meeting ground of myth and ritual where animals are people and people are animals.

(a) (b)

FIGURE 11.5. Overviews of Slab 3. Gestoptefontein Hill (SW14 NE01)

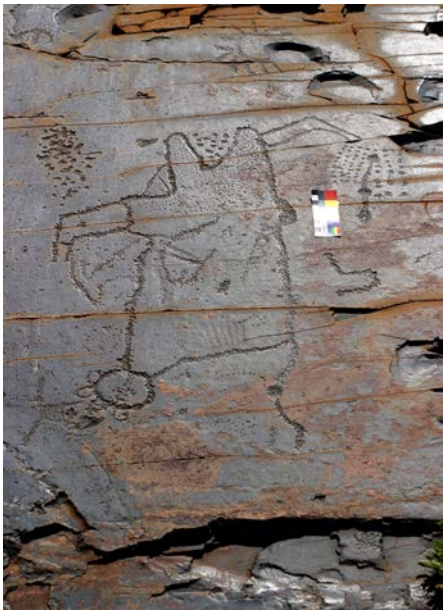


FIGURE 11.6. The large zoomorph on Slab 3.

FIGURE 11.7. Detail of the zoomorph's head.

11.5 Woman and the Rain

This slab is dominated by the motif of a large and striking zoomorph with enormous head, open, gaping mouth, no neck, a massive, block-like body and an extended tail. It is not a naturalistic depiction of a known animal species. Rather it may incorporate characteristics of two species – a rhinoceros and a lioness. These features, together with additional details, have been 'reassembled' to create a unique creature. The 'horns' on the creature's nose, though spindly and out of scale when compared with the dimensions of the bearer, look similar to those of a rhinoceros: they are quite accurately spaced and the way that they curve looks authentic. The muzzle, possibly spotted or whiskered, and ear resemble those of a lioness. In the creature's maw is a cluster of about 13 pecks; notice too the line of about 11 tiny pecks across the creature's mouth. The whole is almost all head, body and tail. The legs seem insignificant; the front pair skinny and crippled, the rear legs missing altogether.

Most intriguingly – but not surprisingly – this arresting and unique motif is juxtaposed with items of women's clothing, items of adornment, and design motifs (Figure 11.8). Superimposed on the creature's back legs is an arrangement of circular outlines, a motif that depicts (I think) a hair ornament made from ostrich eggshell beads (see Part II for the identification and discussion of Khoe-San hair ornaments). Immediately next to the 'hair ornament' is a spread skin with one pair of long limbs (at left) and one apparently shorter (at right); this I interpret as an apron motif. Placed within the creature's hindquarters is a six-tasselled apron motif. The juxtaposition of these 'women's' things' with this creature is enormously significant; I shall return to this important association just now.

In front of the zoomorph's muzzle is a circular, rayed motif, similar examples of which have been identified as sun motifs (Eastwood & Eastwood 2006: 158).

Above the creature's head is an intriguing composition that may depict a rattle or fly whisk. The thick pecked shape that incorporates three circular areas would be the handle and the arrangements of smaller series of circular shapes depict beads on (invisible) strings. Within 400 mm of the enormous zoomorph are more motifs. There is a semicircular form with a small 'aura' of peck marks, possibly a design; a tasselled apron, and a large pecked cluster.

What is one to make of this surface on which are deliberately combined the image of a large and perhaps aggressive-looking creature with motifs that depict items of women's clothing, items of adornment, and design motifs? The relationship between a woman (especially an initiate) and water recalls one of the |xam 'adventures' of the 'first' Bushman girl, in which !Khwa, the rain,

(a) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW14 NE01)

(b) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW14 NE01)

(c) Gestoptefontein Hill (SW14 NE01)

FIGURE 11.8. The large zoomorphic motif is juxtaposed with items of clothing and decorations used by Khoe-San women. (a) Motif of possible hair ornament; (b) spread skin motif, probably a back apron; (c) lightly pecked tasselled apron motif.

(a) Rayed motif

(b) Semicircular motif with 'aura' of peck marks

FIGURE 11.9. Possible design motifs associated with the large zoomorph.

comes to 'court' (‖*haita*, |xam) a young woman who is still in seclusion[1] (Bleek & Lloyd 1911: 192–199; Notebook A2. 1. 91 in the Bleek & Lloyd Collection). !Khwa, in the form of a *xoro gwai*[2] (translated by Lloyd as a 'bull') has smelt her and comes to the hut. The place becomes misty as a result of the rain's breath, a pleasant sweet smell. She realises that !Khwa wants to take her to the water pit (7439 rev. note) so she puts *sa* ('buchu', a mixture of plant and animal substances, |xam) on his forehead, fearing all the time that she would die in the water pit, or turn into a frog. The *sa* makes him docile and she tells the bull to take her first to some trees. There she rubs him with more *sa* and he falls asleep. She makes her getaway and burns more *sa* to rid herself of the smell of ‖*khou*, which is one of !Khwa's things.[3] The old women burnt horns so that !Khwa 'should not be angry with them (the smell of burning horns is believed to banish the rain). !Khwa returns to his water pit, thinking still that the girl is on his back.

The story helps to understand the choice and combination of imagery on Slab 3 in terms of a woman's relationship with water. She is sexually attractive to !Khwa and she has to protect herself and the community from the dire consequences of this interest. A note to the story explains this:

> *Her (the young woman's) understanding was that with which she worked the rain nicely; and this was why all the people lived, who would have been dead, all (would have) become frogs (?toads).*
>
> (7447 rev. note, brackets are Lloyd's)

[1]She is not like the young woman of |xam society because it seems that she already has a child and a husband! (see 7435, 7438 rev. note, 7439, 7440]

[2]Literally, a male ox [7436 rev. note]]

[3]In 7446 rev. note Lloyd wonders if the ‖*khou* is not some kind of fungus.]

The young woman in the story was a member of the so-called Early Race that lived long ago, but it is a fact that Khoe-San women *do* have to use their 'understanding' to 'work the rain nicely' for theirs and the community's sakes. Returning to the rock surface I think that it would not be unreasonable to suggest that the fearsome zoomorph depicts a form of the water entity that the |xam called !Khwa. Though not a bull, the creature is large and bulky and, importantly, it looks like nothing on earth. The open mouth filled with pecks may depict the rain's breath, the sweet-smelling mistiness that accompanies !Khwa. On and around !Khwa's body are powerfully charged cultural items belonging to women: a hair ornament, two kinds of aprons, possible apron designs (i.e. the sun motif and the 'T' motif), possible facial dots (the scatter of pecks), and the singular object that may be a dance rattle. One does not want to over analyse this assemblage or to impute to it concepts and conventions more appropriate to the Western art tradition, but it would not, I think, be inappropriate to suggest that a dynamic has been created on the rock surface, between the rain-animal and women's power, as exemplified by the aprons, etc. This is not an outright opposition, however and the relationship between woman and water in the Khoe-San views of the world is not necessarily antagonistic. Indeed the whole point is that women have to manage their relationship so that it is not disruptive or destructive of social life.

The 'rain-animal surface' with its poignant and graphic content is perhaps analogous to dramatic enactments in oral cultures: they have a mnemonic aspect, as Biesele has explained:

> *Dramatic interactions involve the listener at an emotional level while providing him with a mnemonic device – the sequence of dramatic events – for recalling content. For memory's sake, narratives are agonistically toned, promoting empathy rather than distance in listeners. Emotional involvement reinforces retention.*
>
> (Biesele 1993: 55)

What Biesele says fits well with what we see on the rock: depictions of highly charged images. Looking at them, especially in a ceremonial/ritual context, would probably have been a dramatic and impressive experience that was part of an atmosphere of joy and excitement.

Part V

Conclusion

Chapter 12

The value of the GDC study

What is the value of the GDC study and how does it contribute to our understanding of southern African rock art?

The GDC study is a detailed, 'localist' approach to understanding the motifs and markings that proliferate on the wonderstone outcrops. Whilst the notion of 'full' or 'complete' documentation is an unattainable ideal, I have systematically noted and recorded the details of motifs and markings on almost all surfaces on Gestoptefontein and Driekuil Hills as well as Married Quarters. This attention to detail has enabled me to become intimately acquainted with the 'rock art'. I became aware of patterned associations between certain motifs and markings and was able to discern two main components of the GDC 'rock art' – what Flood (1997) has called 'gestural' and 'referential' components. Gestural 'art' is defined as the 'by-product' of activities performed on the outcrops and refers specifically to arrangements of incisions, grooves, smoothing of rocks and scatters of peck marks. The category of 'referential' art refers to depictions of objects. This division is a heuristic convenience; I do not suggest that it was a distinction intended by the people who made the GDC motifs and markings. Indeed I recognise that certain markings such as the grooves may not fit comfortably in either category; instead they may incorporate elements of both of these groups.

Using ethnographic records and collections I was able to identify many motifs as depictions of typically Khoe-San ornaments, decorative designs and items of clothing, and an especially rich array of back and front apron motifs. These elements occur at other rock art sites in North West and Northern Cape provinces. The design motifs especially have puzzled researchers for many years and a

confusing and imprecise terminology had sprung up, with terms such as 'non-representational', 'geometric', 'abstract' and 'schematic' bandied about indiscriminately. In the study I have argued that they are depictions of objects and other 'things', some of which are very idiosyncratic. Every single design is unique. The schematic appearance is due to the metric projection perspective (akin to a plan view in an architect's drawing) that the GDC artists used to depict these things. Once it is realised that the objects are being presented in this fashion it becomes much easier to recognise the depictions. Admittedly there is a danger that one might end up classifying all puzzling and apparently unidentifiable motifs as idiosyncratic designs, much as people in the past did by interpreting motifs as 'entoptics'. Any approach has its limits – and is usually pushed beyond them in order to establish what these are. There are enough convincing examples, however, for me to be confident that many of the 'geometric' motifs depict designs similar to those applied to bags, aprons, karosses, as well as to designs painted onto the bodies of Khoe-San girl initiates. The explanation provides a far more detailed ethnographic context for the motifs and because these putative designs occur in amongst detailed depictions of all sorts of other items that are associated with women. These conclusions also provide a springboard to other engraving and painting sites in which similar motifs occur. It seems likely that similar-looking schematics may also depict a similar array of things that relate to women and women's rituals. Where these places where transition rites were performed? Would this mean that the use of engraving sites as places of reincorporation was quite widely practised? And how would this modify Smith and Ouzman's (2004) 'Khoekhoen herder' hypothesis?

The fact that wonderstone has a hardness equivalent to talc and may thus be easily marked and smoothed has had the fortunate consequence that some of the gestural or performance-related aspects of activities in the GDC have been 'preserved'. I have identified smoothed areas of rock on several outcrops as places where people sat and talked, danced, and sang. There are also places in the GDC that I have interpreted as 'activity rocks': these are surfaces covered with concentrations of incisions and scattered pecking. In my 'reconstruction' of the GDC I have suggested that people sat around these surfaces in groups and marked the rocks, probably as an accompaniment to other activities. The so-called 'scratch rocks' are another gestural phenomenon; I have argued that the repeated occurrence on most GDC surfaces of clusters of incisions (I call them parallel and overlapping clusters of incisions, or P and O clusters) are a result of people collecting small amounts of fine rock powder, perhaps for use as body paint. The 'scratch rocks' may be areas where groups of people collected rock powder. Perhaps the most striking of the 'gestural' component is the many abraded grooves sometimes grouped in clusters. I have argued against the

popular local belief that these are 'sharpening stones' used by Ndebele warriors during the Difaqane; instead I suggest that these grooves developed as a result of prolonged rubbing, probably with a stone, an activity that produces a fine powder that may have been used for personal adornment. I have been careful to emphasise that my classification of so-called 'gestural markings' is externally imposed and that phenomena like the aggregations of abraded grooves also have a referential aspect to them; people may have thought of them as 'cuts' made on the 'body' of the rock. The rock 'slides' on Gestoptefontein Hill are another uncommon gestural element, I have argued. There is one very obvious slide and two or three shorter and less frequently used surfaces. I have suggested that these rock slides may have been implicated in ceremonies celebrating the advent of womanhood for Khoe-San females and that they may have been part of ceremonies that involved initiates 'sliding into womanhood'.

I have also uncovered clues about the GDC that suggest it was infused with a sense of ubiety, a term I use after Morris (2002: 201) to describe the existence of a strong local relationship between people in the past and the outcrops of the GDC. It is not clear if the seTswana name *Tlogo Pitsane*, 'horse's/zebra's head', applies only to the two most prominent outcrops, Gestoptefontein Mountain and Gestoptefontein Hill. An old man told me that these two outcrops were the home of an extraordinarily large snake with a horse's head and a light in its forehead and with the ability to change form. His description is similar to descriptions given by people of Khoe-San descent of a Water or River snake that controls the water source in which it lives and to whom newly-initiated women had to be introduced as part of their reincorporation rites. Even now people say that the outcrops attract lightning because of their supposed 'blue' colour. I was also told that a destructive wind that blew down large trees and power cables and tore the roofs off buildings in October 2007 was evidence that the snake had moved through the area. In addition there is the intriguing anecdote about the wonderstone outcrop on Driekuil farm that I have called Skeleton Hill. Here the skulls and bones of numerous 'Bushmen' were observed by one of the area's first white farmers in the 1840s. The story, collected by a local historian, goes that these were Bushman people who were being pursued and who believed that they would be magically protected by taking refuge on the small hill. The existence of a well-established name for the at least some of the outcrops and the Skeleton Hill story show that clues to the past significance of places can linger for a hundred years.

The predominance of depictions of women's artefacts in the GDC led me to regard the GDC 'phenomenon' as a place to which people, especially female initiates and their care-takers, came to perform ceremonies to celebrate the reincorporation of initiates into society as 'new' people. (I do not, however,

insist that the GDC outcrops were exclusively used by women, or that they were only used for reincorporation rites). This perspective on the GDC builds on Morris's and Eastwood's work and then takes it further by linking the motifs and markings themselves to known Khoe-San rituals. A 'high point' amongst ethnographically known Khoe-San societies is the moment when the initiates are dressed in new aprons and women adorn them with necklaces, hats, headbands, bracelets and other items. This ceremony may have been performed in or near the GDC. The significance of the outcrops is that they are a 'mega-metaphor' – the outcrops are linked to the presence of the water snake, either as the embodiment of the snake itself, or as the abode of the snake on which it lay and basked in the sun. The making of motifs and markings may have taken place under the supervision of the initiates' care-takers who may also have made some of the motifs.

Together with Eastwood's and Morris's work on rock art outside the well-known mountainous regions of Lesotho, Free State, Eastern Cape province and Kwa-Zulu Natal, the findings of the study suggests that Khoe-San rock art is not exclusively concerned with depicting the exploits and experiences of 'shamans'. Rather, Khoe-San people made rock art to depict metaphors of power ($n|um$) in two realms: those of the 'shamans' and those of women. Lewis-Williams and Pearce (2004: 160-164) have argued that the same power (or supernatural potency to use their expression) animates healing and the transition to womanhood: 'each [kind of transformation] is a subtle interweaving of belief, cosmology, and transcendental experience' (Lewis-Williams & Pearce 2004: 160, my brackets). The findings of the current study support the growing body of research that is showing that South African rock art, especially in areas outside those researched by Pager (e.g. 1971, 1975b), Vinnicombe (1976), and Lewis-Williams (1981), does indeed focus directly on the concerns of women.

Regarding the question of authorship – more specifically, the hypothesis proposed most recently by Smith and Ouzman (2004: 521) of a proto-Khoekhoen geometric art tradition with 'widespread distribution and formal uniformity' – I am not persuaded that the motifs and markings of the GDC represent a separate rock art tradition of 'purely geometric art' (Smith & Ouzman 2004: 508) made by migrating proto-Khoekhoen. I have not been able to discern any kind of layering of pecked motifs that might suggest that what Smith and Ouzman call 'geometric' motifs occur separately from say zoomorphic motifs; rather, the motifs seem to be integrated. On the other hand, I am not inclined to characterise the GDC as a 'forager rock art site' either: the dichotomy is typical of the knots with which story-in-the-book researchers tie themselves up. There are many and varied issues to consider and there is a danger that in the

process of trying to use the rock art to vindicate theories about the presence and movements of groups that one loses track of the rock art itself.

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Appendix

Appendix A

A kind of torture: the GDC survey

It was midday on Gestoptefontein Hill one particularly hot afternoon in February 2007 and I was ensconced beneath the only tree of any size on the koppie. The shade was my refuge from the sun and heat and I regularly retreated here to rest and to drink water. This is where Justice, one of the mine's employees, found me. Looking around him at the bare, shiny rocks shimmering in the sun and radiating heat, and my scattered recording equipment, he turned to me in astonishment and exclaimed: 'But this is a kind of a torture!'

Typically, the collection of archaeological data does involve a degree of physical discomfort, even mild privation, although the researcher, intent on answering particular questions, is mostly unaware of this; often it requires somebody outside the enterprise to point this out! In my case I was motivated by a desire to get to know the GDC sites intimately. I wanted to understand the sites in their entirety, not just sample a few of the images that I could easily recognise and find something to say about based on what researchers elsewhere had said.

A.1 Data collection

This study relies on data collected from 13 sites that bear motifs and markings, all of which are on wonderstone outcrops (Figure 1.4). I have tried to counter as far as possible any skewness of the data as a result of removals from the GDC sites. For collections in European museums I refer to Želizko (1925). In South Africa I have examined the collection held by the Rock Art Research Institute, University of the Witwatersrand, and 45 of about 130 removed stones at the Klerksdorp Museum. Never the less there must be stones in museums

and private collections, as well as stones that have been cast aside, which I have not seen. However, I am confident that this unseen component is part of the same body of art. And so, while it is true that every instance of a motif and marking contributes to the researcher's understanding of a place, sheer numbers alone will not change the import of my argument.

The survey work at the GDC took place over about four and a half years, between February 2005 and May 2009 in 10–14-day stints. The process of data collection is determined by theoretical considerations. *What is important to record, and why?* I posed these questions to myself continually and the answers changed as the GDC survey proceeded. The temptation, initially, is to decide that 'everything' must be recorded; one is quickly forced to define more closely what this means, however. It is impossible to record every aspect of an archaeological phenomenon like a rock art 'site'. There are an infinite number of variables and it would cost so much in time and money and result in such a plethora of material that one would be overwhelmed. Sooner or later the researcher has to pare down his or her scope of data collection to focus on specific, well-defined research questions and then devise the means to investigate the 'problem' to derive answers.

The effort I expended to record the rock art of the GDC is an indication of its centrality to this study. As that often cited literary model of forensic research, Sherlock Holmes, exclaims impatiently in *The Copper Beeches* (Doyle 1928: 284): 'Data! Data! Data!... I can't make bricks without clay.' Similarly I could not attempt to create a 'picture' of the GDC without first having a very good idea of what was there in the first place (see chapter 2). The collection of data, or to state it less clinically, a thorough acquaintance with the motifs and markings and other salient features, is fundamental to the kind of 'localist' study I am espousing (see chapter 2 and chapter 12).

Although the approach adopted in this study is anthropological, the information is archaeological. I used basic archaeological techniques to collect the data. In order to capture as many occurrences of motifs and markings on the outcrops as possible I laid out a survey grid over the portion of the outcrop bearing rock art, each block approximately 10×10 metres. I then subdivided these 100 m^2 blocks into four quadrants – labelled NE, SE, SW, and NW – before searching through each of them.[1]

I adopted the grid system of surveying after my initial experience on Driekuil Hill, the first of the GDC sites that I documented. There I had assumed initially

[1] I thank Wayne Glenny for suggesting this technique to me, and Laura Glenny for helping to design the methods I adopted. Tristan x, a Wits University archaeology student advised me how best to divide the hill up into blocks and sketched me a design for an apparatus I could use to measure accurately on steep slopes.

that the 'rock art' was composed predominantly of pecked images, with a few examples of abraded grooves and some instances of incised patterns. Based on the impression that there was very little rock art on the hill and that I already knew where most of it was, I decided that there was no need to structure the way in which I moved from one occurrence of rock art to another. It took a couple of days to realise that there was far more cultural material to be recorded and that the technique I was using was clumsy and inadequate for a site of this size and density. The result was a convoluted and unwieldy trail of numbers that wandered all over the hill. Nor did this method enable me to incorporate any idea of the proximity and density of the rock art into the way I structured my field notes. I therefore used the grid survey technique at all of the other GDC sites.

A.1.1 Markers, notes and sketches

I used white plastic plant tags to mark each occurrence of rock art, motifs and markings, on each of the outcrops. Of course, the definition of an occurrence of rock art by a researcher in the field would not be the same as that of the people who made them. This is unavoidable and should not cause too much alarm; while it does mean that one is not able to study the incremental growth of the site, with the partial nature of archaeological data this would in any case be aiming rather high. Nor should the subjectivity of the process put one off the necessary business of recording; it is an integral part of interpretation. The important thing is to leave a trail behind one so to speak; to make explicit the terms and conditions of the recording process (Francis 2001).

I noted the following on both sides of the plastic tag in pencil (graphite being stable and enduring, far more than ink): the block number, quadrant and a unique number allocated to that particular occurrence. I wedged the label in a crack of rock or weighted the label down with a small stone so that it could not easily be dislodged by the wind. The minuscule amount of time and effort required to write the particulars on each side of the label was a worthwhile insurance; some of the labels remained in position for three years during which time the writing on the side of the label exposed to direct sun faded or even disappeared. The plastic also became brittle and some labels cracked or broke into pieces. In these cases I could still recover the information because it was written on the reverse side.

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of this thorough and painstaking approach to documentation for this study. It ensures that the ground is covered and that as many occurrences as possible can be detected. I cannot be sure that I would have found the hat motif in SW 02 (Figure 8.31a) had I not made the

commitment to combing the ground in this way. Theoretically speaking too, the method emphasises the importance not only of having a thorough acquaintance with the material but also of examining and explaining the combinations and permutations of the rock art as it was made at a particular place. The emphasis I place on this kind of detailed survey and recording is thus not a disguised empiricist approach to the GDC. I see it as a counterpoint to more regional studies in which researchers 'sample' individual motifs from different sites in service of some idea or theory.

Vindication of this method also derives from the nature of the data. These are mostly small and insignificant cuts and pecks on naturally occurring surfaces; there are no artificial edifices to attract the attention, no bright colours to highlight their presence. Ostensibly there is just a rocky hill covered in scrub; there is little hint of the widely distributed cultural riches that are there. It is only once one has marked 'everything' and then sits and surveys the field of tags that an idea emerges of the use that was made of this place.

The anecdote I recounted earlier illustrates, I think, that nobody but a researcher would undertake such a painstaking and counter intuitive labour as recording and analysing the images and markings of a ritual and ceremonial centre. I will try to explain my *modus operandi*, though it was not consistent; I think that I improved and refined my recording techniques.

The notes and sketches comprised the initial stages of interpretation in which I identified what features I thought it necessary to record. In my initial work on Driekuil Hill, I began with the impression that the 'rock art' mostly comprised images. Once I began to examine the rock surfaces in more detail however I found that 'arrangements' of incisions and pecks proliferated and greatly outnumbered the images.

I noted occurrences of motifs, markings, signs of the removal of rocks and historical graffiti. Each such occurrence was photographed (subsection A.1.2) and marked. In this way I was able to record the position, details and the total number of occurrences noted. The only exception to this procedure was Driekuil Hill; as mentioned in the Preface, this site was the first feature that I tackled and in my ignorance of the riches that lay around me, I simply recorded occurrences of rock markings as I came across them. This discrepancy in method has no effect on the data collected.

Initially I relied solely on photography and brief written descriptions and measurements of each phenomenon. Later, however, in the absence of ready access to the photographs while actually working on the outcrops, I experienced difficulties when trying to relocate occurrences of motifs and markings based only upon a word picture. I therefore added a rough pencil sketch of each occurrence to my repertoire of recording techniques. The sketch was an easy

reference in the field and enabled me easily to relocate the occurrence. The drawing was not made to scale but did incorporate measurements.

A.1.2 Photography

Apart from the word pictures and rough sketches the mainstay of recording was digital photography. The necessity for intensive photography was underlined by the fact that some of the wonderstone outcrops may be destroyed in future mining activities. I wanted to make as full a record of the occurrences as possible for conservation purposes. Fortunately the advent of digital photography has made it possible to take virtually unlimited numbers of photographs at very little cost. I took photographs of every occurrence and followed the same procedure in each case:

1. Photograph the occurrence from a few metres away in portrait and landscape format to include the surrounding rocks and thus to enable one to see the context of the occurrence and to facilitate its relocation. I included a scale in some of these photographs.
2. Move closer and photograph the rock/s that bear the occurrence from various angles.
3. Photograph the occurrence at a distance of about 10 cm or more.
4. Take detailed close-up photographs between approximately 2 cm and 5 cm distant from aspects of the occurrence.

The aim in zooming in to each occurrence from a few metres to a few centimetres was to create a detailed enough record of the occurrences so that it could be studied and conserved. Again, I learnt from my initial work at Driekuil Hill, where I found that my photographs of the occurrences lacked detail about the surrounding context of the occurrence as well as, often, insufficient close up details. I used a 50 mm macro lens to achieve the necessary close-up resolution as well as a polarising filter to eliminate glare and reflection from the rock surface. A tripod was useful in most cases to avoid camera shake and blurred pictures, especially when photographing close-up details. Human error, however, has meant that some occurrences of rock art are better recorded than others; sometimes pictures are blurred, or there is not quite enough detail.

A.1.3 Tracing

The technique of tracing is often used in rock art studies in order to 'fix' or clarify details that are not easy to see . Tracing is an interpretive process and the notion of a tracing as an exact copy has long been discredited . That said, I took

great care to observe and record the incisions and peck marks that constitute an occurrence. The tracings are stored at the Natal Museum in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal. I was handicapped to some extent by the tracing materials I selected. For the most part I made the tracings on clear plastic using the thinnest possible felt-tipped pen commonly used on overhead projectors. This transparent material enabled me to see the occurrences very clearly. The fine pen made it possible to record the fine incisions on the rock, although in some cases the incisions were thinner than the pen tip. The ease and clarity of vision were therefore offset by the slightly too thick pen. However, I am confident that this compromise in choice of tracing materials has not significantly affected the accuracy and verisimilitude of the tracings.

Digital tracing

In other cases, especially where the occurrence consists of many fine incisions and I felt that it was too fine to trace using the felt-tipped pen and plastic technique, I made digital tracings using Adobe Illustrator. A suitable photograph of the occurrence served as the template for the tracing. I distinguished the different kinds of rock marking that made up the occurrence, i.e. incisions, pecked details and scatters and/or clusters of peck marks, and created a layer for each type. These layers are superimposed on the template. The digital tracing technique enables considerable control over the size and other stylistic aspects of the copying tool; one may specify width and texture. This degree of control also makes the appearance of the copy consistent. Other advantages to digital tracing and digital redrawing include the ability to switch certain layers on and off so that one may concentrate on a single layer at a time when necessary or check how the various layers combine to make the whole. One may zoom in and out at will, a facility that makes it possible to observe details and place marks with great precision and accuracy.

A disadvantage of digital tracing, albeit one that may to an extent owe to my ignorance, is that one is restricted to tracing relatively small images and markings. In the first place, there are restrictions associated with the camera, a crude device when compared to the visual perceptive apparatus of the human organism. A camera is only capable of delivering an image of a certain size and resolution with a given lens. Secondly, there is the matter of distortion. Due to the configuration of the camera lens the image is clearest at the centre of the picture while at the edges some distortion occurs. However, digital tracing was most useful in making copies of very small and detailed occurrences where these technical limitations did not impinge.

Redrawing the field tracings

All the field tracings were scanned. The originals are stored at the Natal Museum. The redrawings were made using Adobe Illustrator and Adobe Photoshop. In making these redrawings I strove to recreate the motifs and markings in as 'realistic' a manner as possible; in the past the conventions for presenting copies of engravings, at least in South African research and publications have, not unreasonably, focused on the form of the image, except in instances that show images of animal fore or hind quarters associated with steps and cracks in the rock surface that suggest the creature is 'emerging' or entering the rock. Details of the rock surface from which the image emerges are often ignored and so the image is disembodied and 'floats' on the page.

In making the field tracings and in the subsequent redrawings I tried to incorporate the omnipresence of the rock of which the occurrence is part. My reasons are twofold: theoretical, because I want to emphasise the prime importance of the wonderstone substrate, which I shall argue later, gives the occurrence its power and force. The image cannot be divorced from the rock and I wanted to emphasise this crucial and fundamental aspect. The artists and participants who made the motifs and markings had to decide where to cut and peck the rock and selected surfaces with this in mind. The rock is therefore not a neutral background and one must acknowledge and incorporate this realisation accordingly.

Practically speaking too there are important reasons for incorporating features and details of the rock of which the occurrence (motif or marking) is part. I suggest that it is altogether a more satisfying experience to look at redrawings that attempt to convey the visual complexity of engraved marks.

A.1.4 Video

I became aware of the value of filming, as opposed to simply photographing the GDC occurrences. This realisation occurred to me as a result of collaboration – unfortunately aborted due to wrangling over copyright of the footage – between myself and a Johannesburg filmmaker, Erika Insam, in a project that was intended to result in an educational documentary with an emphasis on the threats posed to the GDC by mining. I learnt from this exercise that moving pictures have the advantage over still photographs in certain respects. A still photograph is a 'frozen' moment in space and time and is useful for analysis and recording of information, but it isolates what is in the image from everything that surrounds it. This 'stillness' is difficult for us as organisms to understand, as we live in a world that moves all the time. So while still photographs are very useful and important in the kind of documentation I was doing at the GDC they could

not capture the whole of the place and show how one set of occurrences related to another. Film is an antidote to the stiltedness of photography because it animates things. By zooming and panning it is possible to show how one occurrence relates to another and how one rock art site relates to its surroundings and to the other rock art sites. Moving pictures complement still photography. But there are yet more exciting potentials available with film that I will discuss shortly.

After some unpleasant wrangling with Erika Insam I was very lucky to be able to work with Lawrence Msimanga, a filmmaker I had met in the course of my work in the northern Drakensberg in KwaZulu-Natal. Msimanga is an 'anthropological' filmmaker. He is fascinated by people and culture and his style of handling the camera enables him to speak to people without making them self-conscious. He has the gift of being able to insinuate himself into situations, regardless of context, to ask telling questions and to allow people to tell their stories. His involvement with the GDC and its stories came about as a result of conversations he and I had and he asked to come along on a field trip. His interest and excitement grew as he realised the depth and extent of the issues involved: its past significance as a major ceremonial site for women, the beliefs about the power of the wonderstone that are still current today, the personalities involved in aspects of the GDC, the piecemeal removal of cultural heritage to overseas and local museums and the threats to the GDC posed by mining. He has filmed extensively on Gestoptefontein Hill, the largest of the remaining GDC sites. We thus have an animated record of this site, which is now surrounded by the mine as well as occurrences of rock art on the hill. This footage is a valuable record in its own right, but it also helps to convey to people what the site looks like and how it fits in with its surroundings, in a way that still photography cannot do.

But it is Msimanga's interest in the people and the issues around the GDC that are a fresh perspective and important addition to my fascination with 'the stones', as he calls them. This brings me to the point about the potential of film that I left dangling earlier. Moving pictures can animate archaeological artefacts, as I have already mentioned but it can do much more by including people. There is no substitute for seeing and hearing people speak about their experiences, beliefs and ideas. Using film we were able to record interviews with people who had something to say about the GDC phenomenon. We interviewed Mr Josiah Modise Raphoto who worked at Wonderstone mine for at least twenty years. Oom Pieter de Jager was a fund of local knowledge. Mr Roelf Marx, former director of the Klerksdorp Museum also agreed to be filmed. We also hope to talk to the management of Wonderstone or perhaps of the holding

company, Assore. Msimanga has also filmed me at work on Gestoptefontein Hill and explaining points of interest.

Once we have interviewed mine management and completed filming the other GDC sites, the next step will be to get funds to visit some of the overseas museums that have stones that were removed from Gestoptefontein Mountain and Gestoptefontein Hill (see chapter 1 for the story of these removals, as well as a map, pictures and descriptions of the GDC sites). We plan to make a film about the GDC. The film will tell people about the GDC, what it meant to people in the past, what we think is significant about the motifs and markings, and what is happening to the GDC sites now.

A.2 Mapping the GDC

Although it might not seem to be directly relevant to this study, which takes an anthropological perspective on the GDC, mapping the rock art is an important component of the work carried out at the GDC sites, especially when one considers the threat that mining poses to what remains of the GDC. It is obviously important to locate each of the recorded occurrences of rock art on the outcrops. Wayne and Laura Glenny mapped Driekuil Hill and later I was able to use Assore's GPS system to map the occurrences on Gestoptefontein Hill to within a few centimetres. At the other GDC sites I used a handheld GPS to mark occurrences but this device is only able to pinpoint locations within quite a wide margin of error (2–6 m). In October 2008 I submitted a proposal with French researcher Nicholas Mélard of the National Heritage Institute of France (Institut National du Patrimoine) to the French CNRS to conduct studies in the microtopography of the abraded grooves and incisions. If the funding is forthcoming then Mélard's expertise and access to a three dimensional scanner will make it possible to overlay the GPS data from Gestoptefontein Hill onto the three dimensional data to create a map of this site, which is most at risk from potential mining.

A.3 The potential of GIS

It will also be possible to study and to monitor the occurrences using GIS technology, which integrates GPS co-ordinates with images and other data. This technology makes it possible to study the distribution of motifs and markings on the outcrops by interrogating the database. The software then generates 'answers' in the form of maps and reports so that the questioner can literally see the answers to the questions. I will not be using this technology in this

study, however. The current study is primarily concerned with recreating the ways in which the sites were part of the life of the people that came there to adorn the rocks and focuses on anthropological questions about the GDC art. It is not intended to be an exhaustive archaeological analysis of the GDC rock art although plans are afoot for a monograph on the GDC that will incorporate more archaeological aspects.