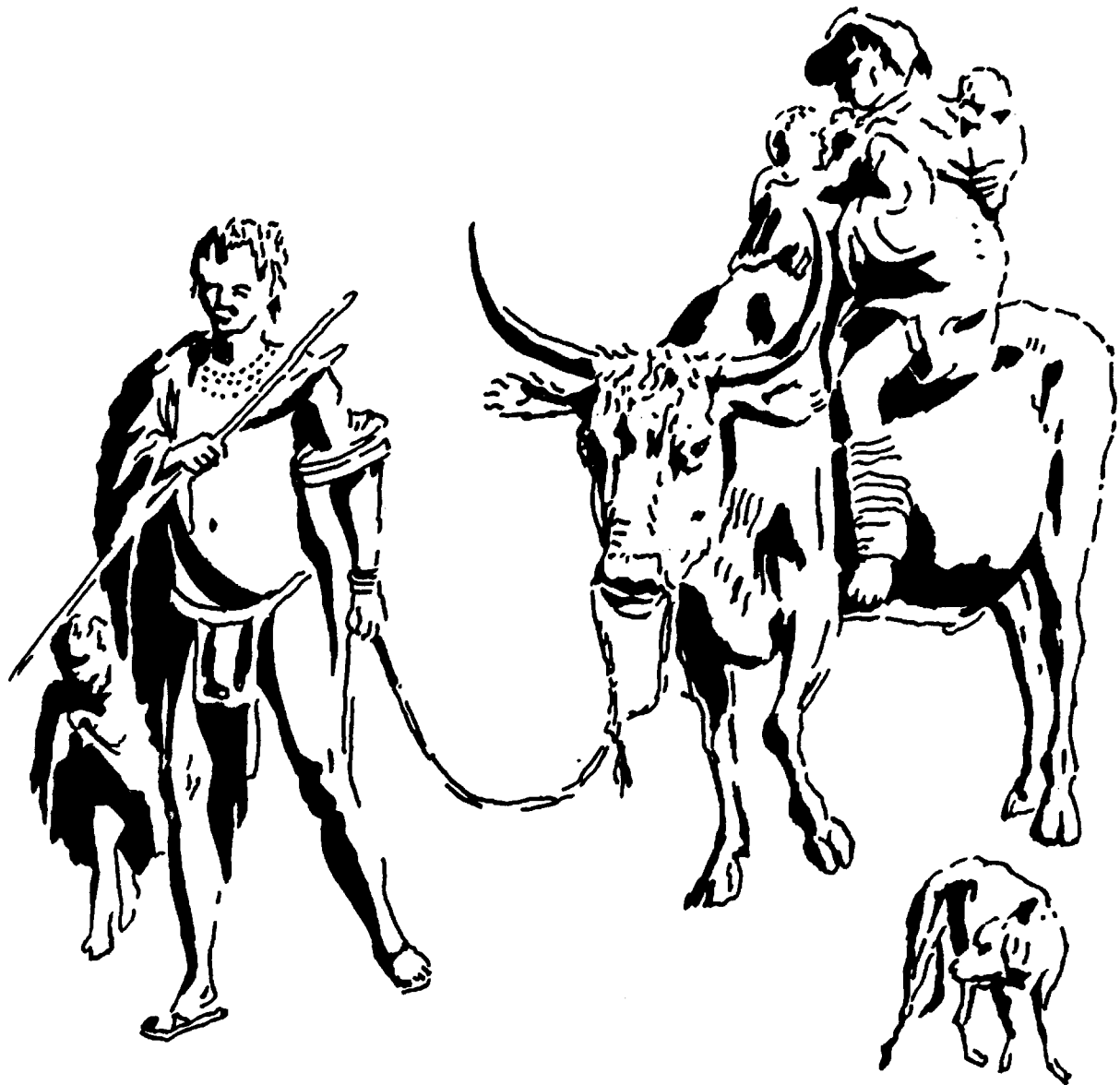


THE DIGGING STICK

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THE PROBLEM OF THE ORIGIN OF THE KHOIKHOI

M.L. WILSON

For more than a decade most archaeologists have accepted that the Khoikhoi originated in the general area of north-eastern Botswana and south-western Zimbabwe rather than further north, as suggested by George Stow and C. K. Cooke. The reasons for this are the great biological similarity between the remaining Khoikhoi - effectively only the Nama - and the San of Botswana and Namibia, as well as similarities between Nama and some of the San languages, which constitute a language family that Ernest Westphal called 'Tshu-kwe'.

Richard Elphick elaborated on this and proposed that the Khoikhoi were originally hunter-gatherers who obtained domestic stock from other peoples in the area and by that act became Khoikhoi. These new stock-owners then moved southwards to the confluence of the Vaal and Orange Rivers where they split into two groups. One group moved west along the Orange River until they reached the sea, where some turned north and the others south. The second group continued south from the Vaal-Orange confluence to a point in the vicinity of present-day Graaff Reinet, where they split again, part moving to the west, the rest to the east. In the early period of recorded history the Khoikhoi pastoralists were found to occupy most of the coastal region from beyond the Orange River to the Great Fish River as well as some parts of the interior.

At present, however, the archaeological evidence does not support this hypothesis of such an area of origin. Archaeologically, the presence of the Khoikhoi in an area is indicated by the remains of domestic stock - sheep and/or cattle and, in the northern regions, goats - and by sherds of a distinctive type of pottery (whole pots are only rarely found). For more than a decade an apparent anomaly has existed in the archaeological record, in that radiocarbon dates for sites with remains associated with the Khoikhoi or other pastoralists are older in the south-western Cape than in areas to the north.

Two sites in the Hermanus district, at Die Kelders, to the east of Hermanus, and Hawston, to the west, have deposits that have yielded what are the earliest radiocarbon dates that can be associated with the Khoikhoi. Die Kelders has yielded potsherds and remains of sheep from deposits dated to about 2000 years ago and cattle remains from deposits some 400 years younger. Hawston yielded a date for deposits containing potsherds and sheep remains that is similar to the earlier Die Kelders date. Radiating outwards from the Hermanus district, dates for sites in the south-western and southern Cape such as Byneskranskop, Kasteelberg, Boomplaas and Nelson Bay Cave are a century or two younger.

Radiocarbon dates for the area north of that just mentioned that can be related to the introduction of pottery and/or domestic stock are generally later than those for the previous area. Early dates, such as those for Equus Cave (2390 B.P.) and Dikbosch Shelter (3000 B.P.) are questionable on the grounds of context. (B.P. = date before the present, calculated as from 1950.) The earliest date (2050 B.P.) for a level in the Klein Witkrans Shelter containing potsherds and sheep/goat remains was obtained by extrapolation of two later dates for levels higher in the deposits. The older of these (1830 B.P.) is broadly contemporary with the later dates for the south-western Cape.

The present archaeological evidence from the supposed area of origin of the Khoikhoi, specifically Botswana, indicates that the earliest date for pottery and sheep/goats is around 1650 years ago: about the same time as cattle made their appearance in the south-western Cape. An exception to this is suggested by a single radiocarbon date of about 2140 B.P. for deposits in Bambata Cave in the Matopos Hills of south-western Zimbabwe that contained potsherds and the remains of sheep/goats. The difference of less than 200 years in the dates for Bambata and Die Kelders suggests a remarkably rapid migration southwards, for which there is at present no ready explanation. If the Equus Cave and Dikbosch Shelter dates are accepted as correct, this would allow for a slower southward movement than is otherwise indicated, as well as broadening the context of the south-western Cape dates. Such acceptance would, however, cause even greater problems with regard to the origin of the domestic stock, since such early dates have not been obtained from sites in Zambia, Malawi or Mozambique.

Stow suggested that the Khoikhoi had been displaced from their original territory in the lakes region of East Africa by stronger peoples moving in from elsewhere but, like Cooke and Elphick, he did not put forward a reason as to why it was necessary for the Khoikhoi to move so far south. The archaeological evidence for the intervening area is that the Early Iron Age black farmers did not begin to settle south of the Limpopo River until about 200 years after the first Khoikhoi herders arrived in the south-western Cape and that they only occupied the eastern part of the country. The area through which, according to Elphick's hypothesis, the Khoikhoi migrated southwards was evidently only sparsely occupied by San hunter-gatherers; and it is one that has proved well suited to stock farming. The Korana, who lived in the vicinity of the Orange River, had an oral tradition that they were driven from their place of origin by people they identified as Tswana, which agrees more with their

having been in Botswana rather than as far north as Stow suggested. Another of their traditions was that some of them had lived closer to the Cape Peninsula, from which they had moved away in the early years of European settlement. In the late eighteenth century, Robert Jacob Gordon found 'Camdeboo Hottentots', who were Korana, in the vicinity of present-day Graaff Reinet.

Although there are paintings in Zimbabwe of fat-tailed sheep of the kind known to have been kept by the Khoikhoi, these are all located in the north-eastern part of the country, outside the area proposed by Elphick as that of the origin of the Khoikhoi. Sheep are not depicted in the rock art of Botswana, although cattle are. Moreover, Early Iron Age sites yield the remains of cattle and, where these have been firmly identified, goats, but not sheep. In the early period of recorded history in southern Africa the only Khoikhoi who had goats were the Nama. These they traded for metal with the Thlaping tribe of the Tswana whom the Nama called

in Namibia are as late as those for the northern areas of South Africa and for Botswana. An early date of about 2600 B.P. for potsherds from Big Elephant Shelter is considered doubtful. However, a date for part of the deposit in a site containing potsherds at Warmquelle in northern Namibia is the same as that given above for Bambata. The Falls Rock shelter further south has also yielded a similar date for deposits containing potsherds and the bones of what may be domesticated bovinds. The Eros Shelter and a site near Outjo have yielded dates in the range of 1750-1800 B.P. for deposits with potsherds. Although the evidence is at present too sparse to be highly persuasive, it may well provide support for the suggestion by Stow and Cooke that this was the route the Khoikhoi took, rather than that proposed by Elphick. The question of the origins of the Khoikhoi and of their domestic stock still, however, remains unanswered.

The physical similarity of the remaining Khoikhoi to the San indicates that both are part of a Negroid biological community that is generally distinct from the Negro peoples of southern Africa. Their similarity is reinforced by the fact that their languages are more like each other than they are like any of the Bantu languages, despite the evidence for exchange. It would be misleading to assume, however, that because the remaining Khoisan (Khoikhoi and San) are at present located almost entirely in Botswana and Namibia (perhaps also still in southern Angola) that this was their place of origin. Despite the overall similarity, there is considerable linguistic diversity among these peoples that may result from the isolation of the various communities from one another over a long period. Alternatively, it may be an indication that at least some of these people are, like the blacks and the whites, immigrants from elsewhere.

A recent study of 'marker genes' in southern African populations by George Nurse showed that the Nama are now genetically closer to Negro populations such as the Herero, Sarwa, Dama and Kwengo than to any remaining San groups. Nurse's study indicated, moreover, that the Nama are genetically closer to the Zulu and Tonga, who live on the eastern side of the country, than to the Dama who had a long, servile relationship with the Nama. It seems unlikely, however, that the Zulu/Tonga were the incoming Iron Age peoples from whom the San-turned-Khoikhoi obtained their domestic stock. As already mentioned, sheep were already in the southwestern Cape before the Early Iron Age peoples crossed the Limpopo, and they had goats, not sheep. It seems more likely that after some 2000 years any genetic exchange that might have taken place between the Khoikhoi and the Zulu/Tonga would by now be so diluted by exchange with other peoples living in closer proximity as to make the apparent evidence of an original genetic exchange highly questionable.

A matter that does not seem to have received the attention it deserves is that, despite the physiological and linguistic similarities between the Khoikhoi and some of the San, there are (or were) fundamental cultural differences between the herders and hunter-gatherers.

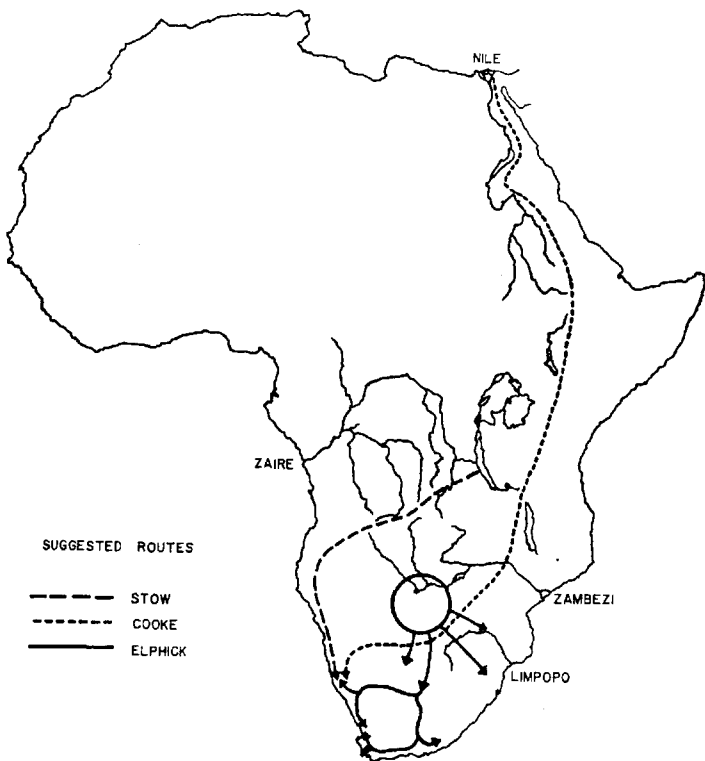


Fig. 1. Alternative origins routes proposed for the Khoikhoi immigration into southern Africa.

'Briqua' or 'goat people'. To compound the problem Christopher Ehret claimed that the Bantu words for cattle are derived from Khoikhoi. This is surprising, since it might reasonably be assumed that people who acquired animals that were new to them would also take over the words used by the people from whom they obtained these animals, rather than the other way around.

Both Stow and Cooke suggested that the Khoikhoi migrated into South Africa by way of Namibia, but while Stow suggested a route via Zaire and Angola, Cooke proposed one through Zimbabwe and northern Botswana. Many of the radiocarbon dates obtained for sites

These differences transcend those that could be expected to have arisen as the result of the adoption of pastoralism by one or more groups of former hunter-gatherers. Among the most important of these are folklore and spiritual beliefs: there is, for example, no evidence that the Khoikhoi engaged in the trance performance associated with physical, mental and social healing that is (or was) an integral part of San culture.

Khoikhoi pot shapes and decoration generally differ markedly from those of Iron Age pots made by the black farming communities. Pottery from Zimbabwe and Botswana is generally very different from Khoikhoi pottery, which is also found in Namibia, and the only apparent point of similarity between Bambata pots and Khoikhoi pots is that some of them had spouts. The earliest pottery from Die Kelders is well made. This indicates that the technique was well known, and not a local invention developed from ideas derived from the people from whom the Khoikhoi acquired their domestic stock, and that the shape was adapted to the needs of the different users. The reconstructed forms of the earliest pots from Die Kelders are very different from that of the pot from the later layer with the cattle remains. It may be suggested that the earlier shapes were suited to the milking of ewes, but that a different shape had to be designed when cows were acquired and pots, along with the other baggage, had to be transported on the backs of oxen.

The shapes of some of the modern pots made by the Herero and the tribes of Ovamboland, as well as features such as lugs, bosses and decorative patterns, bear more than a passing resemblance to Khoikhoi pots. The problem here is that these could have developed through contact with the Nama, or have evolved independently as a response to the particular needs of their users. Without a detailed knowledge of the evolution of pottery styles among these peoples, as well as among the Khoikhoi, these similarities cannot be used to suggest a western origin for the Khoikhoi.

Another matter that needs considering is whether the 'immigration theory' is not outdated, and whether acculturation did not perhaps play a more important part in the dispersal of pastoralism in southern Africa than did the actual movement of people. It has been reported that the Kalahari San, in particular, have been resistant

to substituting a pastoral-agricultural way of life for hunting and gathering; but there is abundant evidence in the records of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries of 'Bushmen' who acquired and kept stock, thus becoming pastoralists. Objections to this have been that the 'psychological barrier' to such a transition is enormous, and that the present evidence suggests a movement of pastoralism too rapid for it to have been accomplished by the consecutive acculturation of groups bordering on the pastoralists. However, the present evidence does suggest a fairly rapid acceptance of the benefits of pastoralism by at least some of the hunter-gatherer groups, wherever they were located. This seems a more reasonable explanation for its apparently swift spread than the alternative, which requires the movement of the early pastoralists over fairly great distances and through sparsely-inhabited country.

Much work remains to be done before solutions can be found to these problems. If the immigration of the Khoikhoi from their point of origin into the areas in which they were observed from the fifteenth century onwards was rapid, it may be that, as Hilary Deacon has suggested, traces of their movement might be so ephemeral that they would be archaeologically invisible. However, as T. S. Eliot said "For us there is only the trying. The rest is not our business".

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South African Museum, P.O.Box 61, 8000 Cape Town.

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Roman city emerges in Israel

A massive amphitheatre, where Romans watched men battling lions 2000 years ago, dominates the extensive excavations at Beit Shean in the Jordan Rift valley. In front of the amphitheatre is the main street, called the Cardo, and the uncovered remains of shops, bath houses and private homes.

Israeli archaeologists believe that when excavations are completed, the ancient city, called Scythopolis by the Romans, will prove to be one of the most important cities in the Roman Empire.

KEITH RADCLIFFE ROBINSON (1904-1988): AN APPRECIATION

J. DESMOND CLARK

It was with great sadness that we learned of Keith Robinson's death in early September last year. The news did not reach us in California until early December and it was all the more unexpected as we had visited him in August, and spent a superb half day with him and Gwylim Hughes at Khami. There could have been no finer or more knowledgeable guide to this complex of ruins on which he was the unchallenged authority. Gwylim was seeking his advice on how best to stabilise walling and prevent further collapse of the various parts of the main ruin he had excavated. Much of this intimate knowledge is probably now lost for ever but I shall never forget his stopping at one wall revetment and saying, 'There is a drain opening here that was disguised by a stone placed at the end.' All the blocks looked the same to us but after three minutes or so Keith found it. His memory was exceptional, both for happenings or events and for artefacts.



My earliest contact with him was in 1938 when he was working at Wedza as an assistant on a farm in circumstances where he was first able to indulge his interest in archaeology. During the war he was with the Rhodesian Armoured Cars through the North African campaign. He had little time then to devote to archaeology but in Tripolitania he discovered the Aterian site in the Wadi Gan - the only one to my knowledge in northern Libya - which was later excavated by Eric Higgs and a team from Cambridge which included Glynn Isaac.

I got to know Keith quite well when he was filling in for the Conservator at the Victoria Falls while the latter was on long leave. With his dog, Jock, we covered most of the country on both sides of the Falls looking for sites, and it was on these occasions that we discovered the best 'Magosian' localities on the sand scarp on Jafuta Farm in the valley of the Masue a few miles south of the Falls. Keith was mostly interested in the Stone Age at that time - encouraged, no doubt, by Neville Jones - and I will always remember his telling me that when he told Neville Jones that he was going to give the collections he

had made to the Rhodes-Livingstone Museum, 'Uncle Neville's' comment was 'You surely are not going to give those to Clark?'

Keith also did a lot of survey work at Lockard, probably the most extensive and interesting Acheulean site on the watershed between Bulawayo and Harare. Here he came across one or two small caches of bifaces and tracked their origin down to a local Ndebele who said that he used them for throwing at game; a suggestion that was taken up more seriously by a later investigator! Keith was also responsible for the investigation of Stone Age rock shelters and other sites in the Inyanga District, and his Chapter 13 in Roger Summers' book *Inyanga: prehistoric settlements in Southern Rhodesia* still remains the standard work on that region.

Keith will be remembered in particular, however, for his outstanding contributions to the Iron Age archaeology of southern Africa. I do not know to what extent this was stimulated by Libby's 1952 dating of the wooden beam from the drain in the Great Enclosure at Great Zimbabwe to the 7th century, but Keith's interests and activities, from the early 1950s onwards, were focussed firmly on the Iron Age. His 1959 volume on his excavations (1947-1953) at Khami; his 1958 work on the Hill Ruin ('Acropolis') at Great Zimbabwe in conjunction with Roger Summers' work on the Great Enclosure and Tony Whitty's on the architectural walling; that on the Leopard's Kopje Culture (1966); not to mention the excavations at Gokomere (1963) and Mabveni (1961) are all basic and outstanding contributions to the proto-history of Zimbabwe on which all future work must draw.

I got to know Keith even better when he joined us to work in Malawi in 1964 and later. It was exceedingly difficult to persuade him to leave Southern Rhodesia even to go so short a distance as to Malawi, but we did at length do so and he never regretted it. The survey in northern Malawi gave me an opportunity to see Keith at work searching for Iron Age sites. I know of no-one better able to do this than he, and it was uncanny how he would, by moving back and forth over the ground (wearing his canvas, calf-length gaiters and carrying a stick, as protection against thorns and snakes), find sites if they were there. Incidentally, he had a variety of sticks and always took one when he went out. One he gave to me when we last met and I use it regularly.

The greater part of what we know of the Iron Age sequence in Malawi results from Keith's work in the northern, central and southern parts of the country, and is contained in five major monographs and several papers in scientific journals. Again, these all contain sound,

hard data that are the basis for reconstruction. In Malawi he never undertook any large-scale excavations, preferring to rely on test-trenching to establish the stratigraphic sequences or small-scale 'horizontal' excavations to uncover a hut floor or a refuse pit. The information he got from these usually radiocarbon-dated excavations he supplemented by working with local Africans in recovering oral traditions that he used with the archaeology to reconstruct events and to relate these, where possible, to the present ethnic population. Keith, as always, however, kept his factual data distinct from his interpretations, and his work is all the more valuable and lasting thereby.

Keith certainly endeared himself to the local villagers with whom he worked. He identified much more closely with them than he did with the white settlers. One picture will always remain with me of Keith, with bare feet and bent back, walking along the edge of Lake Malawi, looking for potsherds and followed, just like the Pied Piper of Hamelin, by seven or eight small likeable and keen-eyed urchins who would, from time to time, come forward with a sherd to offer him or, when he himself stopped, would crowd around looking eagerly up into his face, half frightened and half expectant of some exciting revelation.

I suppose you would call Keith an introvert; he was certainly a retiring man who shunned social life and pre-

ferred to be in the bush with his local African friends and helpers, and his dog. He was a man of simple tastes, living frugally and devoting his whole attention to archaeology. To few is given the ability to retain the enthusiasm and excitement of continuing to do research to the end of life but Keith succeeded. It is surprising and impressive how he continued to publish his findings from the farm some thirty miles north of Bulawayo to which he had retreated after retiring from the Rhodesian Historical Monuments Commission. Keith has an indelible place in the record of archaeological research in Zimbabwe and Malawi. I do not think he received any professional training in archaeology but he became a professional from self-training which, for the attention he gave to detail and the clarity with which he set forth the evidence, is unsurpassed.

I think the photograph accompanying these comments says something of Keith's personality: austere, weather-beaten, a man with an unwavering mission, self-contained and owing nothing to anyone. The face is that of a man you could rely on and those who were lucky enough to know him as a friend had an opportunity to appreciate that dry sense of humour that endeared him so much to us. Perhaps I may be forgiven for summing up by using what I feel would have been Keith Robinson's motto, if he had had one, namely that well-known, fractured Latin doggerel *Non illigitimi carborundum*.

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THRILLERS AND ARCHAEOLOGY: A THIRD SEASON

A.J.B. HUMPHREYS

The interest generated by two earlier lists of popular novels that can be categorized as 'thrillers and archaeology' published in *The Digging Stick* (September 1984 and September 1987) has been such that I have ventured to produce a third list. As always, the literary merit is variable and the books might not necessarily appeal to all tastes but each, in its own way, is a good combination of an archaeological background and an intriguing puzzle. Unfortunately, none of the following books has a sub-Saharan setting but they at least provide a pleasant means of expanding one's archaeological horizons.

Underwater archaeology plays a major role in Peter MacAlan's *Kitchener's Gold* (W.H. Allen 1986). In this story a group of 'archaeologists' is ostensibly diving on the wrecks of three Viking ships off the Orkney Isles in 1933; in fact, they are after the wreck of the HMS 'Hampshire' which sank in 1916 with Lord Kitchener on board. (A South African connection, after all!) One of the hired professional divers makes a remark which will strike a chord with many an archaeologist: "The fee is adequate but not generous. But then, what can you ask

for if you are working for archaeologists?" All in all, an excellent book.

Egyptologist Dr Barbara Mertz is again on the list with a book under each of her pseudonyms. As Barbara Michaels she has written *Be Buried in the Rain* (Piatkus 1986) which involves historical archaeology on an old family plantation in Virginia, USA. Some skeletons are excavated and there is a description of how a physical anthropologist tries to reconstruct the flesh on a skull. There is even a 'psychic archaeologist' lurking on the sidelines! The second book, written under the name of Elizabeth Peters, is *Trojan Gold* (Piatkus 1987) which revolves around the appearance of a photograph of someone other than Sophia Schliemann wearing the famous Trojan jewellery. Has the missing treasure reappeared? As usual, Dr Mertz's books are well worth reading.

Also set in Turkey is Anne Stevenson's *Turkish Rondo* (Piatkus 1982). This is a spy thriller in which excavations in eastern Turkey form a background. A golden bull

from a Urartian tomb near Lake Van provides a crucial link running through the story.

Egypt, of course, is a seemingly endless source of inspiration. Cecelia Holland's *Valley of the Kings* (Gollanz 1978) has Howard Carter telling, in the the first person, his story of the discovery of Tutankhamen's tomb. Each alternate chapter is a reconstruction of the intrigues surrounding the life and death of Tutankhamen. Who or what killed him? And what was the role of his wife Ankesenamum? The book is very well researched and is marred only by a few terrible Americanisms which Carter would certainly never have used!

Dennis Wheatley's *The Quest of Julian Day* (Hutchinson 1939) is another book with Ancient Egypt as its background. Some people are rather critical of Wheatley's work but this one is well worth the effort for its authentic background and cracking pace. It is also interesting as a rather early example of an 'archaeological thriller'.

Finally, there are two books with biblical archaeological settings. Steve Shagan's *The Discovery* (Morrow 1984) is about a search for the 'last words of God' given to the son of Aaron some 3000 years ago. Once again, the research is excellent and reference to real sites like Ebla help create a convincing atmosphere. In *The Body* (W.H. Allen 1984) Richard Ben Sapir describes the discovery of a skeleton in a sealed tomb 2000 years old. Who is it? And what can be proved one way or the other? It is a fascinating book with a totally unexpected ending.

Sir Mortimer Wheeler based the title of his autobiography on a chance meeting with the artist Augustus John; he is reputed to have said "Hullo, Rikki, still digging?" to which Wheeler replied "Hullo, Augustus, still sketching?" Perhaps an appropriate ending at this point would be to say "Still reading".

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STONE PILLAR IN THE MACLEAR DISTRICT INSCRIBED 1800

J.M FEELY* and C.G. SEPHTON†

Some 18 km west-northwest of Maclear, Cape Province, on the farm Redcliff (quarter-degree square 3128AA) in the southeastern foothills of the Drakensberg lies an isolated graveyard. It comprises a rectangular area about 80 sq m, demarcated by nine rough-hewn pillars protruding about 1,7 m from the ground and strung with barbed wire. The wire (Johnson's) was imported from England and installed early in the present century, according to A. Sephton, the grandson of the original owner. All of the pillars appear to be equally weathered and to have been hewn and erected at the same time.

In the northeast corner of this area is one obvious grave marked by small stones and a monumental mason's headstone. This grave is of the infant daughter (born and died 16th December 1899) of Jan and Ida Botha. The foundations of their home are still visible some 400 m to the southeast. Botha was a 'bywoner' of A.W. Sephton, who owned the property from 1883, when title was first granted, and in whose family ownership remains.

Of special interest, however, is the central sandstone pillar on the east side of the rectangle. It may commemorate two significantly older burials since it has an epitaph (Fig. 1a) inscribed low on its east-facing surface. On the same surface, near the top, a start had been made on a similar inscription, but only the letters JU were completed. The obverse side of the pillar was also

inscribed (Fig. 1b). It is likely that the pillar is the memorial stone for two white people whose initials were J.U.H. and M.A.L., or, alternatively, only one person whose name was J.U.H. Smal. (Excavation may provide the answer.) He (they) could have belonged to a scouting or hunting party from white-owned farms in the Cape Colony of which the northeast boundary lay some 200 km to the west in 1800. Archival research might throw more light on the identity of the person(s) concerned and whence he (they) came.

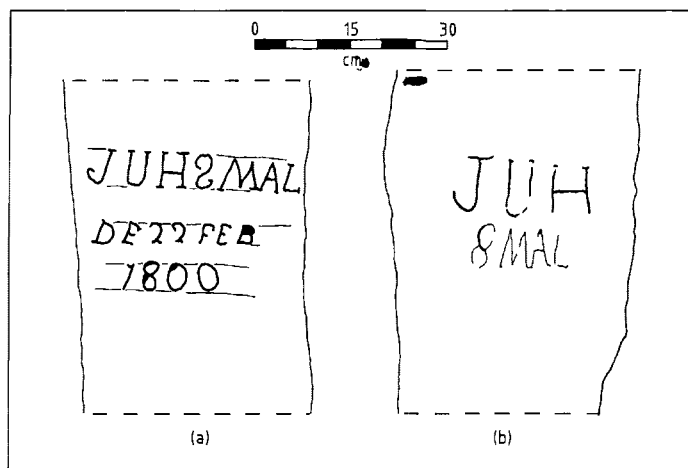


Figure 1. Tracings taken from photographs of inscriptions on pillar surfaces. (a) east-facing, and (b) west-facing surface.

If these suggestions proved correct, the locality could be the most northeasterly reached by whites from the Cape Colony during the 18th century. Only along the Transkei coastal belt are expeditions from the Cape known to have travelled overland east of 28°E before 1800. In 1736 Hubner's expedition probably reached as far as Pondoland, while in 1752 Beutler's party turned back to the Cape a short distance to the east of present-day Butterworth (3228AD). Lastly, parties were sent in 1783 and 1790/91 to search for survivors from the wreck of the 'Grosvenor', the latter expedition reaching the wreck site in northeastern Pondoland (3129BD).

We thank S.M. Bell-Cross and A. Sephton for comments on drafts, and B. Sephton for showing us the foundations of Botha's house.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

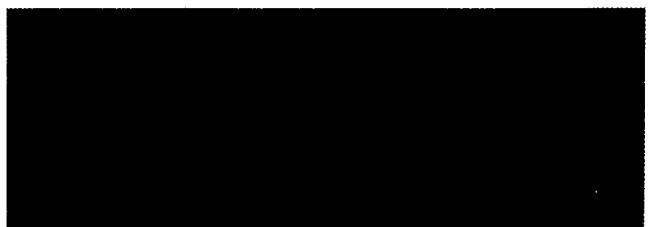
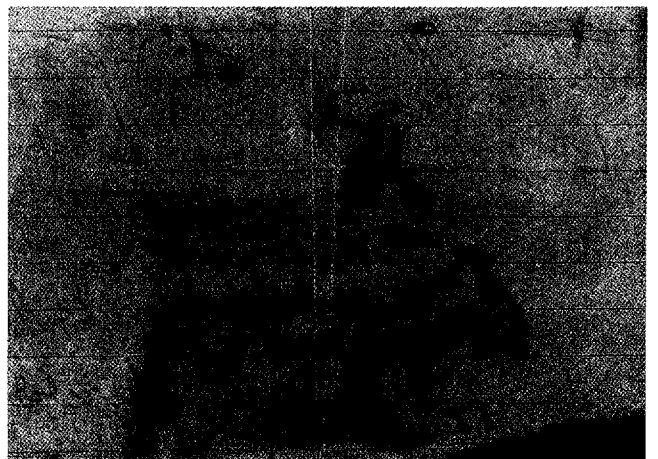
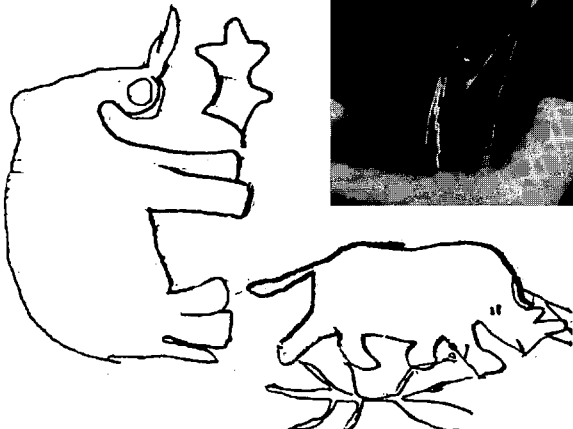
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NAMA DRAWINGS

Mr Leonard Scheben, who now lives in Paraguay, used to live in Namibia and was one of the earliest members of the Society. He recently received the belongings that he left behind when he left Namibia in 1951. Among these things were sketches made in his presence in 1947 by a young Nama woman, who is shown in the photograph. Mr Scheben says that the young woman made the drawings (reproduced here) with a pencil on scraps of paper purely for her own amusement. He adds, 'I can assure you that there was no opportunity for her to see such paintings as there are none in that particular locality (around Keetmanshoop in Namibia)'.



WESTERN CAPE BRANCH

The Western Cape Branch of the Society generally meets to hear a lecture from an invited speaker on the third Tuesday of the month, except during January, July and December, at the Atheneum, Camp Ground Road, Newlands in Cape Town. Day and weekend outings to places of archaeological interest are arranged periodically and a one-day lecture series is held on a Saturday in September. Visitors are very welcome. Details are available from the Hon. Secretary, Dr Anne Thackeray, Dept of Archaeology, University of Stellenbosch, 7600 Stellenbosch, telephone 02231-773470/2 office or 02231-79420 home after 8 pm.

Over the past few years the Western Cape Branch has held a one-day lecture series in September to bring archaeology to the general public and to advertise the activities of the Society. These have been enormously successful with over 200 people attending. Previous themes have included 'Prehistoric people at the Cape', 'Human origins' and, in 1988, 'Khoikhoi: the forgotten people of the Cape'.

The sketch shown on page 1 was used on the poster to advertise the Khoikhoi series. It is an adaptation by Dr Robin Catchpole of an anonymous sketch of Khoikhoi at the Cape, possibly done in the early eighteenth century. Our information about the Khoikhoi who were in contact with the Dutch colony at Table Bay is based on accounts by travellers, officials and residents, who were

not trained ethnographers and who consequently produced European ethnocentrically biased accounts of these indigenous people. Available drawings of the Khoikhoi also tend to be inaccurate because the engravers, who were generally given only rough sketches on which to base the finished work, had never visited the Cape.

An exception to this is a series of 28 anonymous sketches housed in the South African Library and recently catalogued (*Quarterly Bulletin of the South African Library* 43: 59-66). In these drawings the Khoikhoi are shown not as caricatures but as real people interacting with the colonists. The drawings are a mine of information on Khoikhoi dress, and social and economic activities. The sketch used for our poster comes from this collection and shows that the septum of the ox's nose was pierced and a rope threaded through as a rein, babies rode with their mothers on the backs of oxen, the man is wearing a leather kaross over his shoulder, a skin loin cloth and sandals with thongs. The woman has a large kaross and a sling for covering the babies. She is wearing many leg rings.

We plan to hold another one-day lecture series on a Saturday in September 1989. Details will be available from Dr Anne Thackeray at the address and telephone numbers listed above.

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NATAL BRANCH

At a function held on 17th November 1988 the Council of the Natal Museum honoured two members of the Natal Branch of the South African Archaeological Society by appointing them Honorary Museum Associates. Both David M. Green of Estcourt and Michael A. Moon of Kloof have been energetic and willing helpers in the Archaeology Department. In his address, the Director of the Museum, Dr Brian Stuckenberg, had the following to say:

DAVID GREEN: David Green is a prominent though modest figure in conservation and environmental matters in the Natal Midlands. He farms near Estcourt and therefore has first-hand experience of, and is considered an expert on, such aspects of the environment as soil erosion reclamation, veld regeneration, and the local flora and fauna. He is a pioneer of, and active spokesman for, the farm conservancy movement. He does much to encourage environmental awareness among the community by interacting with schools, the Fort Durnford Museum, Natal Parks Board, Estcourt Town Council, etc.

His farm, Rensburgspruit, includes Voortrekker sites as well as fossil and many archaeological sites ranging from

the Early Stone Age to the Late Iron Age, which he encourages people to visit. He has been an active member of the South African Archaeological Society, Natal Branch, for years and has hosted several visits, including the South African Association of Archaeologists excursion during their Natal conference in 1972. Over the years he has pointed out numerous important archaeological sites to us at the Natal Museum and has participated in our fieldwork. Most recently he has contributed to the discovery and recording of the previously unknown Iron Age rock engravings in the Frere area.

MICHAEL MOON: The first contact between the Natal Museum and Mike Moon was made in July 1981. He immediately joined the South African Archaeological Society and has become an active member of the Natal Branch.

Mike Moon retired voluntarily at a young age to pursue his hobbies - archaeology and wild life. He is an inveterate explorer and combs the kloofs in his area for anything interesting. He assists the Natal Parks Board personnel at Krantzklouf Nature Reserve in some of their

field work. As his archaeological knowledge has developed he has become more and more involved in the work of the Natal Museum.

Since he assisted with the archaeological survey of the Umgeni Valley for the proposed Inanda Dam in 1983 he has constantly monitored earthmoving developments at the site and examines any earthmoving occurrence wherever he see it. As a result many archaeological sites have been discovered, fully recorded and photographed, and the information and rescued material lodged in the Natal Museum.

In 1985 Mike Moon made a significant discovery of a 6/7th century Early Iron Age pit during earthworks at the Inanda Dam site. He reported the find to the Natal Museum and was asked to recover the material. He systematically excavated, photographed and recorded the procedure over several days. Thereafter, he cleaned and reconstructed pottery at his home before bringing it to the Natal Museum. This material was subsequently the basis for an exhibition mounted at the Jack Heath Gal-

lery at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, which then travelled to the Durban Art Museum before going on display at the Natal Museum.

After the 1987 floods Mike Moon walked the Umgeni and Mhlatuzane river banks and came across several new sites which he fully recorded and reported to the Natal Museum.

Mike Moon has frequently assisted us and contract archaeologists in surveys and excavations. He has undertaken these tasks without hesitation - and without remuneration. For the past two years he has helped Gavin Whitelaw, a Wits graduate working under the supervision of the Natal Museum, in his excavation programme at Inanda Dam.

In 1984 Mike Moon was elected to the committee of the Natal Branch of the South African Archaeological Society. His work for the Society and the Natal Museum has been extensive, consistent and efficient. He thoroughly deserves recognition for his services.

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BOOK REVIEWS

BINFORD, L.R. 1983. *In pursuit of the past. Decoding the archaeological record*. London:Thames & Hudson. Paper back edition (1988). 256 pp. 147 illus. Price R57,00.

The buzz-words associated with Lewis Binford in any student's mind are 'the New Archaeology', 'processual archaeology' and 'middle-range theory'. He has been at the cutting edge of archaeological method and theory over the past three decades and his books and papers are always guaranteed to stimulate further discussion of one sort or another. This book is no exception. It contains nine papers, most of which were presented as lectures to large general audiences or small professional groups during visits to Southampton, London, Sheffield and Amsterdam in 1980/81. The lectures were taped and John Cherry and Robin Torrence undertook to transcribe and edit them. They say it was more time-consuming than they had imagined, particularly where they had 'to simplify as far as possible those passages made somewhat inaccessible by the famous Binford prose style'. This paperback edition does not add anything new to the 1983 hardback, reviewed by John Parkington in the June 1985 edition of the *Bulletin*, but the price makes it a little more accessible.

In pursuit of the past is of value for the way in which Binford updates ideas and methods published over the past three decades, and for his southern African experience. He sees it as a progress report on various ideas and investigations. Cherry and Torrence see it as a statement that the archaeological record is much more complicated than previously imagined. Since Binford has had

'hands-on' experience of observing hyaenas in the wild in South Africa, Eskimo hunters in North America and Australian Aborigines in the desert, he has been able to appreciate the vagaries of human nature and to realise that the general laws so beloved of the New Archaeology are observed about as often as the laws of a country today. He is a kind of missionary, a born-again ethno-archaeologist with a strong desire to improve archaeological methods for inference. On the other hand, it may surprise some to read that he thinks the association of the New Archaeology with deductive reasoning may well have been counter-productive: "But while I probably have to shoulder some of the blame for the poor arguments about deduction and hypothesis testing that were so prevalent in the 1970s, I should like to think that I'm not entirely responsible" (p 107). Indeed, he actively tried to disassociate himself from many of the new fields that the New Archaeology spawned in the 1970s (p 108).

The main text is divided into three parts entitled: What was it like?, What does it mean? and Why did it happen? The methodological mission is evident in all the papers in the volume, ranging from the hunting patterns of early hominids, and stone artefacts of the Mousterians, to present-day hunter-gatherers and agriculturalists, and the earliest civilizations. There is a constant interest in the relationship between statics and dynamics, or how archaeological evidence comes to be there and what we can say about it. Binford is essentially concerned with pattern recognition and interpretation, and he loves to knock down long-cherished beliefs. This is good and exciting stuff, but are his observations and assumptions any more believable than those he tries to supplant?

Experience gathered from visiting Eskimo hunters in Alaska has given Binford a fund of information on which to draw when interpreting the spatial distribution of bones and artefacts in Mousterian and Upper Palaeolithic sites in Europe and the success of the research, summarized in Part II, is partly the result of the similarity in lifestyle between the people involved. The long-standing argument he had with Francois Bordes as to whether the variability of Mousterian sequences in France was the result of sites being occupied by different cultural groups or of different activities being carried out by the same people at different times, is modestly addressed: "But make no mistake: these ethnoarchaeological experiences do not provide direct solutions to the 'Mousterian problem'. The conclusion we can draw from my work among the Nunamiut is not that my functional arguments about Mousterian variability were correct, but rather that archaeological methods for inference are *in general* very inadequate" (p. 143, emphasis in original). If, after nearly twenty years of ethnoarchaeological fieldwork, it is still not possible to resolve the question, one is bound to ask if the research should not be refocused.

Also in Part II are papers designed to link present-day observations of the lifestyles of the Eskimo, Kalahari San, Australian Aborigines and others to the archaeological record, ultimately to be able to answer questions about archaeological variability. Some of the conclusions drawn seem very general and have been made before, such as "the less mobile or more sedentary a group is, the greater the likelihood of conflicts in the scale and duration of activities carried out at any one place" (p 191). The message is more in the admonition that "Criteria based on similarity are insufficient to demarcate the boundaries of past cultural systems" (p 191) than in any coherent answers to specific questions.

Another Big Question is the reason for the beginnings of agriculture. In his seminal paper in 1968 on the beginnings of domestication, Binford proposed a model of demographic expansions rather than climatic change or gradual development of knowledge. In Part III of this book, he returns to his original concept and argues that in temperate regions, conflict situations led to the establishment of more groups of people who were increasingly obliged to limit the size of their territory and

gradually to focus on smaller animals, fish and plant foods. As pressure increased, they became more and more sedentary and agriculture became their only viable option. However, "all such theories or models for why something happens cannot be tested in any direct sense against the archaeological record" (p 212), and "Archaeology, in general, has failed to realize that in order to refute or support theories it requires a strong body of inferential techniques, warranted independently of its theories about past dynamics" (p 213). Again, dire warnings but no answers.

The final chapter looks at the development of complex societies and takes up the idea Binford used in his doctoral thesis on complex social systems in eastern North America. It is based on the belief that power was derived from the monopoly of resources in societies that depended on storage because their resources were only available in small patches of space or time. These monopolies could be manipulated for political advantage (p 215). Reviewing the ideas about intensification and specialization, he takes the Darwinist stance of believing that cultural systems change under conditions of natural selection where there is a situation of stress, and is somewhat disparaging about paradigms built around 'risk reduction' and 'optimal foraging theory' because they are arguments from economic philosophy that assume that any 'rational' man will seek a profit. Contrary to a number of researchers who maintain that change is generated from within society, Binford believes "A system will remain stable until acted upon by forces external to its organization as a system" (p 21).

The writer one meets in the pages of this book is indeed a more cautious man than he was in the 1960s. He has many ways of saying we are a long way off understanding the archaeological record, but gives few specific answers. He has matured in the sense that he is more in tune with ethnographic reality, but he is less overtly optimistic about the ability of archaeologists to decode the record of the past. He retains his missionary zeal, neatly harnessed by the editors of his tapes, although in pursuing the past he has not caught it yet. Like many missions, its message lies in the principles for living rather than in the reason for life.

Janette Deacon, University of Stellenbosch.

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NEW PUBLICATIONS

A NEW HUMANITIES JOURNAL FOR NATAL: *NATAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES*

Since 1906 the Natal Museum has published its *Annals of the Natal Museum* which has always contained a mixture of natural science and human science research

papers, but mostly the former. From 1980, due to an increased volume of archaeological research, it was decided to make these results more easily available to the broad archaeological community by publishing papers bi-annually. Offprints of the archaeological papers were bound together for sale also as

Archaeological Papers from the Annals of the Natal Museum. In response to the popularity of these bound offprints the Natal Museum has now established a separate journal for the publication of the results and conclusions of humanities research undertaken in Natal by its staff and other researchers. This journal, to be published annually, will include papers on, for example, archaeology, ethno-archaeology, anthropology, rock art, shipwreck studies, cultural and historical research and ethno-botany. It will be known as the *Natal Museum Journal of Humanities* and will be an accredited refereed journal. The first issue will be in May/June 1989. Subscription to this journal, each issue of which is intended to be between 150 and 200 pages long, will cost in the region of R60 per annum. People interested in subscribing should write to the Librarian, Natal Museum, Private Bag 9070, 3200 Pietermaritzburg.

The first issue of the new journal will comprise a single major paper by Dr Aron Mazel, entitled 'People making history: the last ten thousand years of hunter-gatherer communities in the Thukela Basin'. This is a socially orientated historical account of the hunter-gatherers who occupied the Thukela Basin during the last ten thousand years. It draws together the results of Dr Mazel's many rock-shelter excavations in this area between 1981 and 1984.

MARGARET SHAW LECTURE 2. THE WORLD OF MAN AND THE WORLD OF SPIRIT: AN INTERPRETATION OF THE LINTON ROCK PAINTINGS

by PROFESSOR J.D. LEWIS-WILLIAMS.

A 500 x 1020 mm poster of a tracing of the complete Linton rock painting has been printed by the South African Museum to accompany this 16-page booklet in which Prof. Lewis-Williams interprets the Linton panel.

The Linton paintings comprise one of the large rock panels on display in the Museum's Archaeology Gallery. The panel is regarded as one of the Museum's great treasures and is possibly one of the most important rock-art panels in any museum in the world. It is of great significance to the interpretation of San rock art.

Obtain your copy at the Museum bookshop or send a cheque/postal order to the South African Museum, Publications (Orders), P.O. Box 61, 8000 Cape Town.

Prices:

poster and booklet - R12.50; poster - only R7.50.

Local (for packing, postage and GST) add R3.60 for poster and booklet; R2.05 for poster only.

Overseas (for packing and postage) add R3.85 for poster and booklet; R2.10 for poster only.

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FROM THE BULLETIN

Volume I Number 2, March 1946.

In the editorial the following was written:

'It takes a discerning mind to write a good popular article that is not merely a rehash of someone else's work. It needs expert knowledge, even if only in a limited field. It requires simplicity of approach and simplicity of language. It calls for balance and direction, and sufficient shrewdness not to lull the reader to sleep. It wants accurate and clear expression and a correct simplification of ideas. One day we shall reach this pleasant level of publication without prostituting archaeology by inaccuracy, the cheaper forms of journalism or by sensationalism.'

We are still striving towards this happy state of affairs, although now in *The Digging Stick*, but, then as now, 'we need more simple and accurate articles'!

Articles covered quite a wide range:

'Major G. Tylden, expert in the field of arms, turns his attention to the simple heraldry of our Southern Bantu tribes, and defines the shields that appear so frequently in later paintings.

'The Director of the Archaeological Survey (Prof. C. van Riet Lowe) develops the heraldic theme, and follows

Major Tylden's paper with a note on tribal recognition in prehistoric art.

'Sub-Lt Philip Bateman, having been released from the silence imposed by the wartime activities of Saldanha Bay, now gives us our first account of prehistoric man in that extremely important area.

'Mr J. d'A. Waechter continues his descriptions of the methods used in the Middle East; methods that are suitable for application in South Africa.'

This volume also carries a list of the Foundation members of the Society.

As always, back numbers are available from head office.

Laser printing courtesy of the South African Museum

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