



San rainmakers living amongst the Mpondomise who were met and photographed by Sir Walter Stanford.

Source: Special Collections, UCT.

The last San painters

It is difficult to say exactly who the last south-eastern San artists were and where the last paintings were executed. In the eastern and north-eastern Cape and adjacent areas, however, the fineline tradition continued into the second half of the nineteenth century, and most probably into the following century as well. According to Stow, a San painter was shot as late as about 1866 in the Witteberg Native Reserve in the Herschel District while raiding for horses in the area. He was said to have had ten small horn pots hanging from his belt, each of which contained paint of a different colour from the rest. Stow also reports that an old San painter, 'Gcu-wa, the brother of the San chief Mada'kane who roamed an area along the Black Kei, was still alive in 1869.

Although these were among the last surviving painters, it appears that the painting tradition continued until an even later date in the north-eastern Cape. From written and oral historical sources it seems more than likely that Mamxabela's son, Lindiso, and possibly Mamxabela herself, lived under the patronage of the Mpondomise in Ncengane Cave, a richly painted shelter next to the Inxu River in the Tsolo District, Eastern Cape, until at least the late nineteenth century. It is in this cave that some of the last paintings in the millennia old tradition of rock painting by San people were created.

Much of what we know about the people living in Ncengane Cave derives from information provided by an elderly Mpondomise woman, Manqindi Dyantyi, the daughter of Lindiso, and granddaughter of Mamxabela and her artist husband. This woman was located and interviewed in 1984 at her Mpondomise homestead close to the Inxu River, and in Ncengane Cave on this river. Her sister had acted as a rainmaker for the Mpondomise of the area for many years, but died before she could be interviewed. Although not as knowledgeable about San customs and their painting tradition as her sister was said to be, Manqindi provided a considerable amount of information about her father, Lindiso, who, she stated, was both a rainmaker and painter.



Manqindi.
Source: the author.



Manqindi commenting on published reproductions of rock paintings. Her interpreter, Nozuko Mfono, sits next to her.

Source: the author.



Manqindi descending to Ncengane Cave in the Inxu River valley.

Source: the author.

It seems that Manqindi's father lived in Ncengane Cave until the last decade of the nineteenth century. Thereafter he went to Umtata and married an Nguni woman. He returned to the area a few years later and settled in an Mpondomise homestead not far from the Inxu River, becoming a fully-fledged member of Mpondomise society. He nevertheless appears to have maintained links with people who were still living in Ncengane Cave, and he occasionally returned to the cave to paint there - probably until about 1920. Manqindi and her sister sometimes accompanied their father to the cave as young children, but they were not allowed to watch him paint. When they were much older, Lindiso took them to the cave and used the paintings in the cave to introduce them to the Tsolo San's culture and way of life.

The paintings at Ncengane Cave range from finely painted polychromes, scenes that clearly belong to the corpus of "traditional" San art (such as people reaching out to a recumbent eland, a line of figures with bows and arrows, and clapping, seated women), to crude finger paintings, as well as paintings incorporating contact motifs (such as cattle and horses, a goat, an ox wagon, and an SDF). It is not certain which of these paintings were done by Lindiso, but, according to Manqindi, blood from an eland that had been magically captured and led back to Ncengane Cave to be ritually slaughtered was mixed with various other substances and added to the paint used by San artists at this cave. Another dimension was thereby added to the paintings for, in this way, the paintings were imbued with a particular potency associated with the sacrificed eland. This power, Manqindi said, could be drawn upon by placing one's hand on the paintings or by facing the paintings when dancing in the cave.



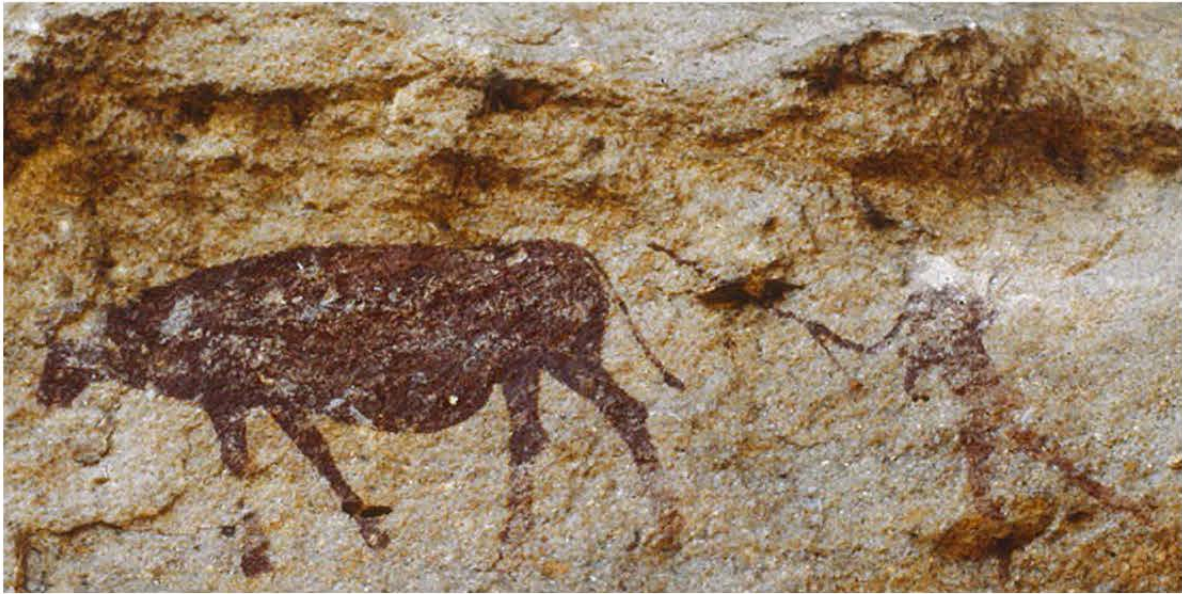
Manqindi close to the cave on the Inxu River.

Source: the author.



Ncengane Cave, screened by trees and bushes, on the Inxu River.

Source: the author.



Some examples of the paintings: A horse , goat and a dog(?); A man hunting an antelope with a knobkierie and assegai; A herder and an ox.
Source: the author.



Eldritch figures painted in Ncengane Cave.
Source: the author.



Manqindi places her hands on the paintings to draw power from them. Note that the end of the middle finger of her left hand is missing. Amputation of the end of one of the fingers was a San custom, which was adopted by some Nguni and Sotho people.

Source: the author.



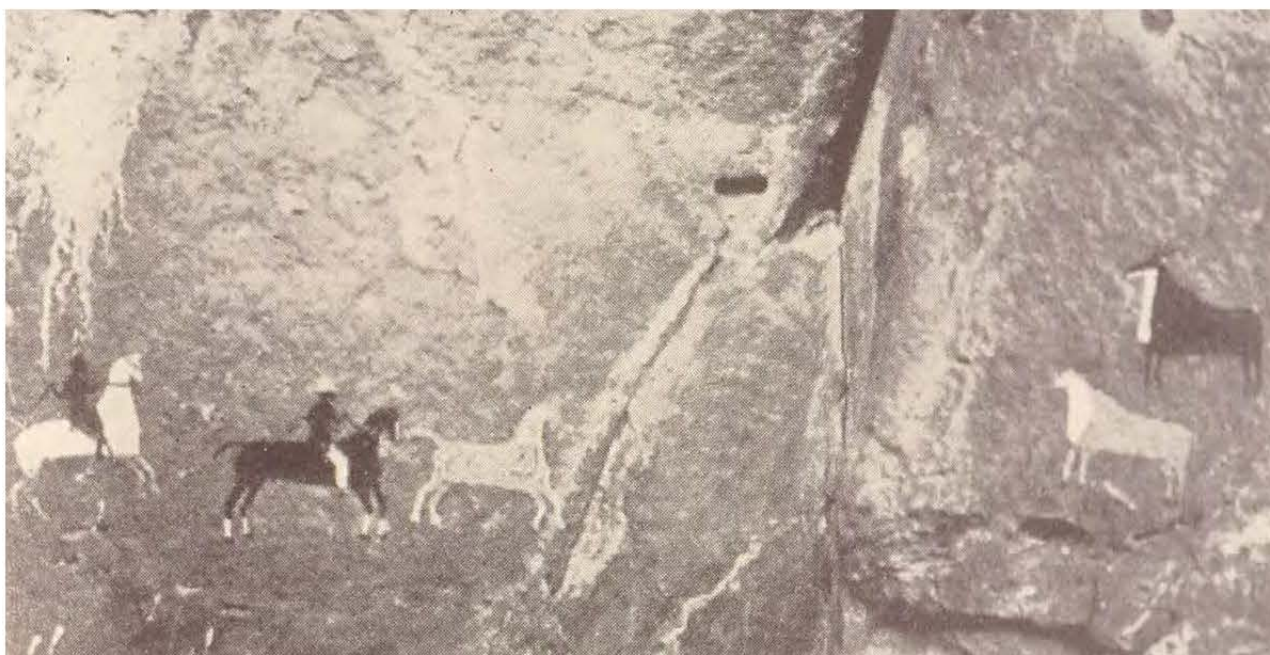
Manqindi dancing in front of, and interacting with, the paintings.

Source: the author.

There are questions regarding the authenticity of some of the information Manqindi provided, but if Lindiso did paint in Ncengane Cave, as Manqindi claimed, it is likely that the motivation underlying the paintings he made, as well as the symbolism that may have been associated with these paintings, would have been influenced to a significant extent by the culture of the Mpondomise amongst whom he was living. The paintings probably acted both as symbolic bridge with his past as well as a means of integrating the tradition of his San forefathers with the worldview of the farmers into whose society he had been accepted.

Two Phuthi artists

A final glimpse into the art of the south-eastern San was provided in the early 1930s to Marion Walsham How, wife of the British District Commissioner in Basutoland, now Lesotho. How was living at Moyeni in the Quthing District in 1932 when she was visited by a Phuthi artist named Masitise, who offered to do some paintings for her on the sandstone wall of the verandah of the British Residency building. Some of the Phuthi people were said to have been taught how to paint by the San and Masitise appears to have been considerably skilled as an artist as he was probably responsible for some well-painted antelope and Colonial horsemen in a small rock shelter close to the Residency.



Paintings, probably by Masitise, of antelope and Colonial horsemen.

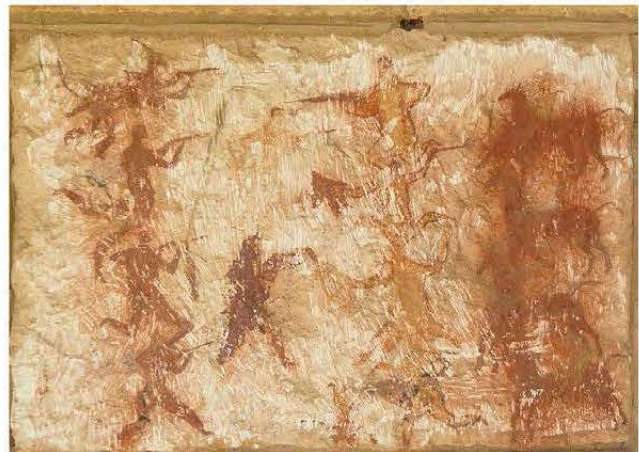
Source: Cawston, F.G. (1931). A consideration of the Bushmen's paintings at Quthing. *South African Journal of Science* 28: 470-471.

How was interested to see what Masitise would produce and left him to his work while she attended to other matters. When she returned, she found that he had transformed a section of the front wall of the verandah. It was now decorated with many paintings, including a scene with a strange mythical or hallucinatory animal, two figures with very extended arms, and a serpent - something which strongly suggests that he had direct knowledge of the trance-inspired art of the San. He also painted a scene representing a battle between the San chiefs, Soai and Mphaki. Soai was depicted on horseback, wearing a uniform and holding a white flag. Masitise explained to How that the uniform and flag had been obtained by Soai from a party of British soldiers. According to the Phuthi artist, Soai had encountered the party in East Griqualand and one of the soldiers had begun waving a stick to which a white flag was attached, but Soai's band, unaware of the symbolism underlying this gesture, killed the soldiers. Soai took the uniform and the flag, which he considered to be the insignia of their leader, and on his return to Basutoland rode into battle against Mphaki wearing the unfortunate soldier's uniform and carrying his flag of surrender. The painting of Soai and Mphaki, and the other paintings done by Masitise, can still be seen on the walls of the Residency building.



The Residency at Upper Moyeni where Masitise painted for How. The paintings are on the sandstone walls of the building, on the right hand side, under the verandah.

Source: Janette Deacon.



Some examples of the paintings done by Masitise.

Source: the author.



A strange hallucination-induced or mythical beast, two figures with very extended arms, and a serpent.

Source: the author.



Soai on horseback with a white flag.

Source: the author.

This was not the first occasion on which How had witnessed a Phuthi artist painting. Two years prior to Masitise's arrival at the Residency in 1932, How was based with her husband at Qacha's Nek in the mountains on the border of Lesotho and South Africa. While she was living there she heard of a Phuthi man, named Mapote, who had painted with the San. She sent a message to him asking him to come and visit her, and, although he was an old man by this time, he made the long trip over the mountains to visit her at the Residency. Mapote, was the son of the Phuthi chief, Moorosi, and had escaped being captured or killed when Mount Moorosi was stormed by the British in 1879. Moorosi's close connections with the San and the fact that he had two San wives meant that Mapote had been permitted to paint with his San half-brothers and other San in a cave during his youth.

The old man agreed to do a painting for How and said he would paint an eland, as the Bushmen of that part of the country were "of the eland". He made a brush of bird feathers stuck into the ends of tiny reeds and the pigments he used consisted of a variety of substances including *qhang qhang*, a red ochre used by the Sotho to ward off lightning. Mapote said that the *qhang qhang* had to be heated by a woman out of doors at full moon until it was red hot before it could be used as an ingredient of the paint.

When he was ready to paint the eland, Mapote asked for fresh eland blood to mix into the paint. Since this was not available, the blood of a freshly-killed ox was brought from the local butcher and used in its place. Over the next two days Mapote did a number of paintings on two smallish stones and a large rock in the garden of the Residency. He painted two eland, a hartebeest, a lion, two San men with bows and arrows, and a Phuthi man dancing and singing his *lithoko* (praise songs).



Paintings done by Mapote for How.

Photograph: Andrew Salomon.

After choosing a present of new boots from the trading store, Mapote prepared to leave for home. "And so", writes How, "we said goodbye with all the graceful words with which the Sotho language is endowed for such occasions. ... Mapote's slight old figure disappeared over the horizon, carrying his assegaai in one hand and his beautiful new boots at the end of a stick slung over his shoulder ...". He, and his fellow Phuthi artist, Masitise, are the last people with direct links to the San artistic tradition known to have painted.

TIMELINE

1866

San painter, with ten horn paint pots hanging from his belt, shot in the Wittebergen Native Reserve

1870

Convict San from the Breakwater Prison in Cape Town go to live at the house of Wilhelm Bleek and his sister-in-law, Lucy Lloyd

1875

Wilhelm Bleek dies

1878

Last sighting of a San band in the Drakensberg

c. 1888

Sir Walter Stanford meets San rainmakers, including Mamxabela, the widow of a San painter, at the Umnga River, Transkei

1905

Last San in the Umnga River area, including Mamxabela, gather at Jengca Store and are met by Stanford

1926

San hunting kit and fresh bedding found in Eland Cave, Drakensberg

1930

Mapote interviewed by, and paints for, Marion Walsham How at Qacha's Nek, Lesotho

1932

Masitise paints on the walls of the British Residency at Quthing, Lesotho

1984

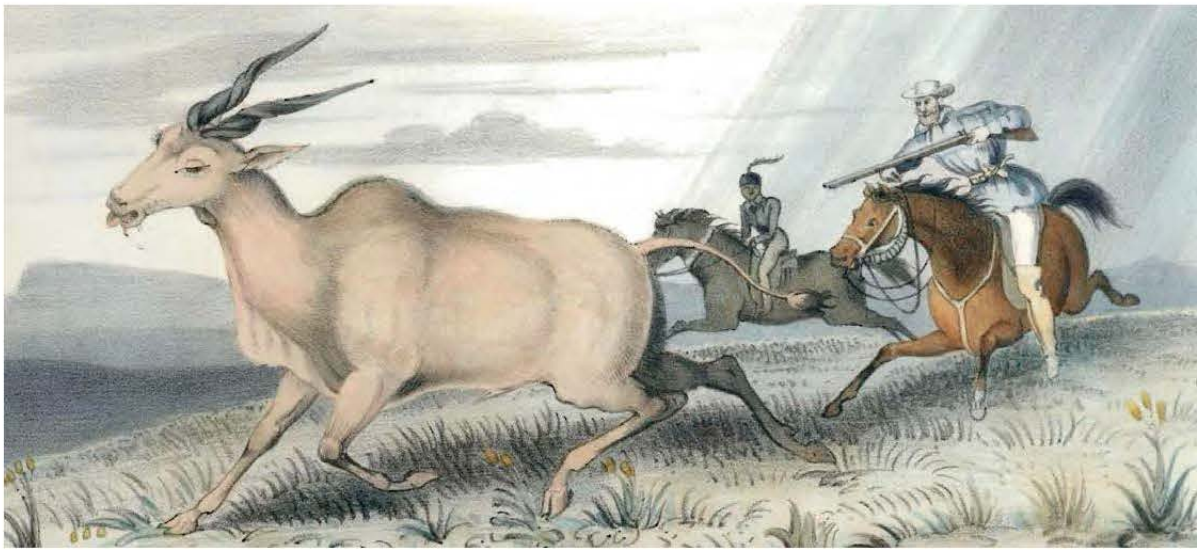
Manqindi, daughter of the San painter, Lindiso, and granddaughter of Mamxabela and her painter husband, interviewed at her homestead and at the shelter on the Inxu River where her father was born and painted

EPILOGUE

PEOPLE OF THE ELAND

I said, "Where is Cagn?" He answered, "We don't know, but the elands do. Have you not hunted and heard his cry, when the elands start and run to his call? Where he is, elands are in droves like cattle".

Joseph Orpen. Interview with the nineteenth century Maloti San informant, Qing



Hunting eland.

Source: Butler, H. (1841). *South African Sketches*. London; Ackermann.

Mapote's remark that the San of the Maloti were "of the eland" is both a poetic and a factual expression of the strength of the south-eastern San's relationship with this animal. For the San, the symbolism of the eland was woven into all aspects of their life and expressed in their rituals, their myths and their beautiful and complex paintings. The first eland was born of a San woman, and men became eland in trance. The creator being, Cagn, was intimately associated with the eland, as Joseph Orpen's San guide, Qing, made clear in his eloquent expression of the greater religious significance of the eland for the San, cited above. And the San, like the eland, depended on the land that had been their inheritance for thousands of years. The bitter struggle waged between the San and immigrant groups had been about land, and all that the land signified for the San, including the game that roamed it.

It was often claimed that the San had no ties to the land, never settling in one place but continually following the game, and this reasoning was invoked to justify the occupation of San territories by the frontier farmers and herders. Yet this difference in attitude to the land by the two groups should not deceive us into thinking that the San placed little or no concept of property or rights to land. As one historian of the struggle between the Native Americans and European settlers has put it: "It is not that one had property and the other had none; rather it was that they loved property differently".

It is difficult, therefore, to exaggerate the significance for the San of the capture of their lands and the eland that roamed them, for there were spiritual as well as material dimensions to the loss. The land,

the water rising at its springs and all the creatures, including man, that drew on these resources were imbued with spiritual powers and bound together in a seamless whole in San thought. All depended on each other and to destroy one was to sow the seeds for the disintegration of the whole system. As the historian Susan Newton-King has remarked:

“Every krans, every spring, every pool of water carried reminders of a cosmic order whose foundations had been laid long before the coming of the Europeans. The *veeboeren* had blundered into this world, ignorant of its principles, unaware of its secrets, recklessly careless of its prohibitions. They had desecrated its landscape and destroyed its most precious treasures, killing eland like cattle, piling the carcasses high on their wagons, without regard to the meaning of their actions.”



The slaughter of the game.

Source: National Library of South Africa.

By occupying the springs where the eland drank and by hunting out the great herds of animals that teemed upon the plains and roamed the mountains the immigrant groups, but particularly the *Tuntsi*, mounted on horses and “armed with thunder and lightning”, destroyed not only a significant part of the San’s means of subsistence but also the very foundations of their cosmological order.



An eland about to be killed by hunters. By William Cornwallis-Harris.

Source: Museum Africa.

Yet there was another side to this story, despite its predominantly tragic theme. The eighteenth century Swedish traveller, Anders Sparrman, commented that, even among the frontier farmers who were responsible for so much of the material and psychic damage inflicted on the southern San, there were some who strongly disapproved of these acts of violence. This reminds us that not all the frontiersmen conspired in this process. Positive and creative forces were also released through this meeting of different peoples and cultures. These included the development in the Nguni and Sotho contact situation, in some cases, of new relationships based on intermarriage, friendship and trade that were beneficial to all the groups concerned, as well as the appearance of new themes and symbols in their art. I believe it appropriate, therefore, that this account of the relationships which developed between the southern San and the immigrant herders and farmer societies they encountered should end with an account of friendship between San and Sotho, people of the eland and of cattle respectively.

According to this tradition, the young herders of Chief Makhoakhoa's clan amused themselves while looking after their animals in the mountains by fashioning figurines of cattle from clay. When they brought in their flocks that evening, they left these clay sculptures where they had been grazing their animals, intending to collect them the following day. Unbeknown to them, however, they had been observed making these figures by the San, and when they returned to retrieve their toys they found them where they had left them, but also, placed amongst them, a number of beautifully fashioned figurines - not of cattle, but of eland.

In the words of the anthropologist Monica Wilson: "Conflict in societies persists, but the lines of cleavage are not constant: sooner or later, he who once was a stranger becomes a brother".

THE SOURCES

Syntheses of archaeological and historical material are, by definition, based on the work of many people who have contributed to the subject. This summary of the current state of our knowledge of the later history and art of some of the southern San groups contains information drawn from a wide range of sources. These include the accounts of early travellers in southern Africa, published articles and books, and unpublished theses and documents.

A list of the primary sources consulted in writing this book has been provided in the select bibliography, but, in view of the fact that no references are included in the text itself, the main sources and the contribution of particular scholars to specific issues and fields of research related to the history and art of the San after contact are briefly discussed here. The reader should consult these sources for fuller details and analysis of particular aspects of San history and art dealt with in the text.

Introduction

The introduction to the later history and art of the southern San leads us immediately to an important debate in Khoe-San studies. This debate, which came to be known as “the revisionist debate”, centres on issues of ethnicity and the degree to which the distinction between aboriginal hunter-gatherer societies on the one hand, and herder and agriculturist societies on the other, became blurred due to symbiotic contact between these groups. It is also concerned with the degree to which people in southern Africa have oscillated between the hunter-gatherer and pastoralist/agro-pastoralist modes of production.

The suggestion that the San were originally Khoe who subsequently lost their cattle and became hunter-gatherers was first put forward as early as 1828 by Reverend John Philip (1828) but was rejected by other writers of the period. Marks (1972) re-opened the debate, pointing out that, although most of the people referred to in the historical record as “Soaqua” or “Bushmen” and “Hottentots” may have been the descendants of aboriginal hunter-gatherers and the first immigrant herders respectively, movement between the hunter-gatherer and pastoralist modes of production by individuals and groups means that one cannot be sure that this was always the case. These ideas were developed by Elphick (1977) and Schrire (1980), and prompted other archaeologists and historians, such as Parkington (1984), Wilson (1986), Wright (1996) and myself (Jolly 1996a), to re-examine the terms used by early European settlers and travellers to describe the indigenous peoples they encountered. Wilmsen (1989) takes the controversial view that the (Kalahari) San of historical and present times did/do not constitute a cultural group distinct from the pastoralist societies of the region, practising a way of life passed down from their aboriginal ancestors. Rather, he argues, they represent a poverty-stricken class of “lapsed” pasto-foragers, people who had, through misfortune of one kind or another, lost their livestock and been placed on the fringes of pastoralist society. All these sources are drawn upon in the general discussion of terminology in the introductory chapter.

Chapter One

This chapter begins with an outline of the theories concerning the origin of the Khoe and the possible routes they followed when migrating southwards into the territories of the southern San. Elphick’s (1977) hypothesis that the Cape Khoe moved down from the north through the interior of the country, rather than down the west coast as was previously considered to be the case, is outlined and

discussed. Barnard (1992) has put forward an argument for particular Khoe southward expansion routes that is based on linguistic evidence. The question of whether sheep and pottery first reached the Cape with the arrival of Khoe themselves or by means of diffusion, whereby hunter-gatherers acquired domestic animals and pottery skills from pastoralists, passing them southwards to other aboriginal communities, is also considered. Smith (1986 and other publications), Boonzaaier et al (1996) Kinahan (1995) and Sadr (1998, 2003) all discuss this issue.

The relationships which may have been established between San hunter-gatherers and early Khoe communities are also discussed in this chapter. Parkington et al (1986) and Smith (1986,1990) suggest that San and Khoe groups maintained their own cultures and a considerable degree of independence from each other after contact. They argue that San and Khoe were generally in conflict with each other, but in some cases mutual tolerance and the establishment of ties based on the provision of services by client San to their Khoe patrons characterised the relationships they established with each other. Marks (1972), Elphick (1977), Schrire (1980) and Wilmsen (1989), in contrast, see greater integration and overlap between the hunter-gatherer and pastoralist groups, as well as considerable movement of individuals and groups between the hunter-gatherer and pastoralist ways of life.

The chapter concludes with a discussion of relations between pioneer first millennium agriculturist communities and the hunter-gatherers whose territories they entered. Whitelaw and Moon (1996) and Whitelaw (2008) provide information on the movements and ways of life of these early agriculturist groups. Archaeological excavations and analyses by Maggs (1980) and Mazel (1989), as well as a study of the patterning of early radiocarbon dates by Parkington and Hall (1987), have all helped to throw light on interaction between early agriculturists and south-eastern San hunter-gatherers in KwaZulu-Natal. Hall (1990) has excavated the sites of Edgehill and Welgeluk in the Fish River basin and has used information from these and other sites to model patterns of interaction between hunter-gatherer-fishers and herders and agriculturists in this area. Ribot et al (2010) discuss the biological and dietary changes that occurred amongst coastal San in KwaZulu-Natal after the arrival of agriculturists in about 450 AD.

Chapter Two

The arrival of the first Europeans at the Cape and the process of expansion by these people during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries into territories occupied by the San is dealt with in this chapter. Here I have drawn on a wide range of sources, including the accounts of early travellers.

Raven-Hart's (1967,1971) synthesis of accounts by European callers at the Cape provided information on early relationships between Europeans and the Khoe-San before and after the arrival of Van Riebeeck. I also drew on Moodie's (1960) compilation of documents from the official records related to the condition and treatment of the "native tribes" of South Africa from about the time of Van Riebeeck's arrival until the early years of the nineteenth century. Elphick's (1977) study of Khoe-European relations was a particularly useful source of information on early interaction between these groups.

Detailed studies of European expansion and settlement in Khoe-San territories, primarily during the eighteenth century have been made by Newton-King (1984 (with Bredenkamp, H), 1986, 1992, 1999) and Penn (1986, 1987, 1989, 1995, 1996, 2005). These authors have drawn mainly on archival material, but also on published books and articles, and between them they throw much light on the relations that existed between the Khoe-San and the Dutch during the eighteenth century. Their studies have been important sources of information to me when writing this chapter.

For information on the skirmishes and wars between the San and European farmers I also drew on Theal (1888) and Stow (1905) as well as Van der Merwe (1937, 1938), Macrone (1937), Marais (1962), Spilhaus (1966), Smith (1976), Katzen (1982) and Neville (1996), who all describe this conflict in greater or lesser detail. Van der Merwe's work, the first study of trekboer expansion into Khoe-San territories to be based on detailed research of archival documents, contains much information on the expansion of the trekboers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. A feature of his writing on Khoe-San-trekboer relations, however, is his tendency to act as apologist for the farmers' expansion into Khoe-San territories and their subsequent treatment of the indigenous inhabitants. Marks (1972) provides a synthesis of material, including published archival documents, relating to the struggle between the Khoe-San and the Dutch in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Szalay (1983, 1995) provides information on contact between the Khoe-San and the European Colonists. Sampson (1994 and other publications) focuses on the archaeological traces of the contact situation in the Seekoei River valley. Gall's (2001) overview provides a useful synthesis of material relating to contact between many of the southern San groups and the European settlers, and Smith et al (2000) give a good overview of contact between the San and other groups, including Europeans. More recently, Adhikari (2010) has brought out an overview of contact between the Cape San and the European Colonists. He argues, persuasively, that the actions of the latter constituted a form of genocide.

Chapter Three

This chapter focuses on attempts to settle and pacify the San, particularly the efforts of Christian missionaries to evangelise the San and the establishment of missions to the San by the LMS. Here I have drawn to a large extent on Schoeman's (1993 a,b, 1994, 2003) work on the LMS's missions to the San, but also on a number of early travellers' narratives, as well as Kicherer's (1804) account of the mission he established at the Sak River. Szalay (1995), too, provides much information on the San missions. I also drew on Neville's (1996) work on the San of the Seekoei River Valley, and Penn (1995, 2005) and Schoeman (1996) for information concerning the Sak River mission. Wilson (1975) has written on the mission at Ramah. Details of the last mission to the San at Kat River are taken from Saunders' (1977) article on the San leader, Madolo, amongst whose people this mission was established. More recently, McDonald (2007) has made a study of the LMS missions to the San.

Chapter Four

The capture of San adults and children for use on the farms of the European Colonists forms the focus of this chapter. Newton-King (1992, 1999), Penn (1995, 2005), and especially Szalay (1995) were consulted for details of San captured by commandos during the eighteenth century. Eldredge (1994) was a source of information on raiding for San labour in Transgariep during the nineteenth century. Supplementary information on the use of San captives as labourers on the farms of Boers was taken from Burchell (1953/1822-4), Philip (1828), Kirby (1939, 1940), Lye (1975), Orpen (1964) and other writers.

Chapter Five

The occupation of San territories within the Transgariep by a number of groups, including Boers, Korana, Griquas, Bergenaars and Basters, in the nineteenth century is detailed and discussed in Stockenstrom (1887), Van der Merwe (1937), Van Aswegen (1968), Legassick (1970, 1989), Ross (1976), Schoeman (1993a, 1993b, 1994, 1997, 2002, 2003, 2005a, 2005b), Johnson (2012) and Halford (n.d.). Details of the Maloti-Drakensberg San and their conflict with immigrant European farmers were obtained primarily from Wright (1971) and Vinnicombe (1976). These are the chief