Eland hunting rituals among northern and southern San groups: striking similarities


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Eland hunting rituals among northern and southern San groups: striking similarities

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<td>20 pages</td>
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ELAND HUNTING RITUALS AMONG NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN SAN GROUPS: STRIKING SIMILARITIES

J. D. LEWIS-WILLIAMS and M. BIESELE

The prominence of the eland in San thought is suggested by the frequency with which this antelope was depicted in rock paintings and also by the myths and rituals in which it features. In this paper we describe and compare certain eland beliefs and hunting rituals drawn from two San groups, the !Kung of Botswana and the now extinct /Xam of the Cape Province. The relevance of material obtained from the northern !Kung to the explication of the limited southern /Xam ethnographic record and rock paintings has been regarded as questionable in view of the ecological and linguistic differences between the two societies. Using the results of recent field work among the !Kung, we attempt to show that, in spite of the linguistic and ecological differences, there is evidence for a conceptual framework common to both groups.

THE ELAND

The eland, Taurotragus oryx, is the largest and most impressive of the southern African antelope. The average height at the withers of full grown bulls is seventy inches (Dorst and Dandelot 1970: 187); their gait, size and general appearance have much in common with the ox (Barrow 1801: 1262). The colour of the eland is a bright, rich fawn; as the bulls grow older they assume a greyish-blue tint, a result of their losing much of their hair (Bryden 1893: 422). The bulls' appearance is reflected in a word sometimes used by the !Kung to describe them: //aiha, an important person or master. Eland do not commonly consort with other animals; of this trait the !Kung say, 'Why should it go around with ordinary people? Other animals are like servants to the eland.'

In spite of the eland's imposing appearance it is the most docile of antelope (Barrow 1801:1262; Bryden 1899: 421; Shortridge 1934: 615; Roberts 1951: 305). Its meek disposition is particularly observable in its behaviour when run down by a hunter. In a comparatively short time it becomes winded and eventually stands stock still, refusing to move in any direction; no antelope is as easily taken. If the wind is fairly strong, it stubbornly refuses to run in any direction other than upwind (Sparrman 1789: 11 153; Selous 1893: 75; Bryden 1899: 431; Smith 1939: 1 136); in the absence of any wind, however, it is possible to drive the animal back to the camp and so slaughter it close at hand. The early European travellers and hunters who accomplished this on horseback considered it a masterly achievement and aspired to impress their associates with this ability. As the animal is pursued it foams at the mouth and sweats excessively (Harris 1838: 76; Arbousset and Daumas 1846: 46; Cumming 1850: I 252; Selous 1893: 440; Bryden 1899: 430; Thomas 1969: 36). Although hunting scenes are
much less common than is generally supposed, some rock paintings depict San
hunters pursuing eland which have white foam falling

ELAND HUNTING RITUALS AMONG THE SAN
ZAMBIA
Maun
ZIMBABWE
Franc!
*Ghanzi
G/W/
KO
NAMIBIA
MALUTI
/xAM
LESO'
SOUTH AFRICA
INDIAN OCEAN

FIG. 1: Map of southern Africa showing locations of San groups and places
mentioned in the text. The circled letters indicate areas from which quantitative
statements on rock painting are available.
ANGOLA
Salisbury
BRANDSERG
&Windhoek
ATLANTIC OCEAN

ELAND HUNTING RITUALS AMONG THE SAN
from their mouths (see Haughton 1927). Hunters are, indeed, more frequently
shown running after eland than shooting at them with bow and arrow. After the
arrival of the white settlers, the San used horses to run down eland (Moodie 1838:
V 3), a practice also depicted in the paintings.
One of the factors which contribute to the ease with which the eland is run down
is its fatness, which is especially pronounced in the male. I The !Kung wax
elloquent on the subject of the fat of an eland bull. There is so much fat around the
heart, they say, that two or three people are required to carry it. When it is melted
down, it is necessary to make a large receptacle of the eland skin to contain it all.
The heart together with the surrounding fat may be of such a size that it is
impossible for a man to put his arms around it.
SAN GROUPS
A certain amount of confusion surrounds the relationship among San groups.
Much of this confusion has arisen from the application of ethnological,
physicalanthropological and economic criteria to what is best seen as a linguistic
matter (Westphal 1963: 243-4). As a result of his recent research, Westphal
(1971) distinguishes three 'click' language families, each including several
languages and/or dialects. He considers these three language families to be unrelated to each other and calls them the Ju, the Taa and the !Wi, according to the way in which each renders the word 'person'. The Ju family includes the three !Kung dialects and is spoken by the largest number of living San in any one language group. The Ju speakers currently live in the north west of Botswana and in the adjacent areas of Namibia. Much of the recently obtained oral material discussed in this paper came from members of this group (see also Jenkins and Tobias 1977).

We compare this !Kung material with material recorded in the last century from two groups about seven hundred miles to the south. One of these, the /Xam, belonged to Westphal's !Wi family. They used to inhabit the Cape Colony south of the Orange River, but are now extinct. The other southern group, also extinct, lived in the Maluti Mountains in what is now Lesotho. These San cannot now be compared to the /Xam on purely linguistic grounds owing to the paucity of the material available, but D. F. Bleek (1927: 56) regarded their language as similar to but not identical with /Xam. The ethnographic record certainly shows that the mythologies of these two groups had much in common (W. H. I. Bleek 1874).

ETHNOGRAPHIC SOURCES
The /Xam material, which we discuss, was collected a century ago by Dr Wilhelm Bleek, a linguist who was at that time librarian to the Governor of the Cape Colony. His /Xam informants' remarks were noted down verbatim in an orthography developed by Bleek, and then translated with the assistance of those informants who could speak a little Dutch and English. With the help of his sister-in-law, Miss Lucy Lloyd, Bleek compiled a vast collection. His daughter, Dorothea, later saw to the publication of much of the material. This paper also draws upon the large amount of unpublished material now in the Jagger Library, University of Cape Town. 6 Bleek started working with his first /Xam informant in 1870 (W. H. I. Bleek and Lloyd 1911: x); three years later J. M. Orpen recorded a valuable collection of San myths from the Maluti Mountains, about four hundred miles to the east of the area from which Bleek's informants came. Orpen obtained his material from a man named Qing who, until he acted as Orpen's guide, 'had never seen a white man but in fighting' (Orpen 1874: 2).

The nineteenth century material collected by Bleek and Orpen is, in this paper, compared with data collected by the authors from !Kung informants in Botswana mainly in December 1975. One of our informants, Kan/a, about 65 years old, had himself killed an eland and had been through the rituals he described. The others knew the details of the ritual, but had not themselves killed an eland; owing to the present scarcity of the antelope, and to game restrictions, they did not expect ever to kill an eland now. Most of the informants came from Dobe, but Kan/a, who as a young man had lived and hunted at /Ai/ai (twenty five miles from Dobe), now lives near Magoegoe.
Interviewing techniques used by W. H. I. Bleek and Orpen in the 19th century produced material which we feel can be profitably compared to interviews conducted by ourselves on similar rituals today. Further, the attitudes towards the eland as a symbol which emerge-like those towards several other animals-resonate through the various media used by the San and across all religious and artistic contexts. It was possible in our interviews to use /Xam texts to uncover new material among the !Kung and, conversely, to use the !Kung material to explicate the sometimes cryptic /Xam record. This two-way process has proved more productive than might have been expected.

Before describing the hunting rituals which form the subject of this paper we examine the status of the eland relative to other animals in !Kung thought and in /Xam thought and art.

THE ELAND IN SAN THOUGHT AND ART

The eland is a prominent theme in both the mythology and the rock paintings of the southern San. Eland creation myths and remarks from the /Xam (D. F. Bleek 1924) and the Maluti San (Orpen 1874) reveal that this antelope was /Kaggen's favourite animal. /Kaggen appears as the chief figure in both collections of southern San mythology; he was partly a beneficent creator and Lord of the Antelope, and partly a trickster figure. The word /Kaggen was translated by the Bleeks as The Mantis, but we retain the /Xam word.

In the three /Xam creation myths recorded by Bleek (D. F. Bleek 1924: 1-9; L.V.1.3608-83) the eland is lovingly created by /Kaggen in a water hole. In one version he fed the eland on honey and water and in another he 'moistened its hair and smoothed it with the honey-water'. An aspect of the myth that is not brought out in the published versions is that /Kaggen was creating a 'male creature which is not small' (L.II.4.492); again and again //Kabbo, one of the informants, insisted on this point. This is clearly important in view of the great quantity of desirable fat possessed by the eland bull. The eland grows up eating honey and living in the water; it is greatly loved by /Kaggen. But the people become dissatisfied because /Kaggen is not bringing home any honey. Eventually /Kwammang-a, the husband of /Kaggen's adopted daughter, kills the eland. /Kaggen returns home weeping, for, as /Han 56kasso, another of Bleek's informants, put it in his version of the myth, the eland 'had no equal in beauty' (L.VIII.6.6540). When /Kaggen finds the eland being cut up by the Mierkats (/Kwammang-s'a sons: L.V.1.3631) he attacks them 'for he meant to fight the Eland's battle'. The myth ends with the creation of the moon.

ELAND HUNTING RITUALS AMONG THE SAN

from /Kaggen's shoe in one version and in another from a feather which he has used to wipe the eland's gall from his eyes.

In further observations on the eland (D. F. Bleek 1924: 12), /Han56kasso explained that /Kaggen loved the eland more than any other antelope: /Kaggen 'does not love us, if we kill an Eland'. His second favourite was the hartebeest and after that the gemsbok. Dia!kwain, another of Wilhelm Bleek's informants, said the eland and the hartebeest were 'things of /Kaggen' and therefore they possessed 'magic power' (D. F. Bleek 1924: 10). The heart of the eland was thought by the
/Xam to possess especially strong power; on account of that organ's potency, the man who had shot the eland did not approach the dead animal until the heart had been removed (D. F. Bleek 1932a: 237). The word translated by the Bleeks as 'magic power' is /k.a:de. This word might have indicated an intense and dangerous form of the power harnessed by /Xam medicine men in trance performance. The potency used by the medicine men was called /gi: or //ke:n. The striking similarity between /Xam and !Kung notions concerning such potency will become apparent below.

Further to the east, the Maluti San also associated /Kaggen (Cagn in Orpen’s orthography) closely with eland. When Qing was asked about /Kaggen's whereabouts, he replied, 'Where he is, elands are in droves like cattle.' (Orpen 1874: 3). In the Maluti version of the creation of the eland, /Kaggen is angry because his wife has 'spoilt' his knife; he says evil will come upon her and she gives birth to the eland. /Kaggen himself rears the eland in a 'secluded kloof (a mountain ravine) enclosed by hills and precipices', perhaps the montane equivalent of the /Xam waterhole. /Kaggen attempts to kill it with a spear, but fails. He goes on a three day journey to his nephew to obtain arrow poison. While he is away his sons, Cogaz and Gcwi, kill the eland while it is sleeping and dismember it. On his return /Kaggen is incensed because they 'spoilt the elands when I was making them fit for use'. The eland's blood is then churned, but it produces only frightening snakes. A second attempt produces hartebeests. For the third attempt fresh eland blood is mixed with the fat of the eland's heart and elands are produced. In another story /Kaggen transforms himself into a large bull eland.

In order to obtain comparable material from the !Kung, the following question was put to the informants: 'Does God love one antelope more than others?' They responded in the affirmative, explaining that God made the eland first and then the giraffe. God dug down in the well of creation and found red, white and black sand. He used red mud to make the eland, white for the giraffe and gemsbok and the black for the elephant, warthog, buffalo and wildebeest. Although the narrative aspects of this myth differ from the southern myths, there are structural parallels in that the eland is regarded as the supreme creature and is created in a waterhole. Red is the colour most highly esteemed by both !Kung and /Xam. !Kung informants explained, 'Red things are beautiful things'. The word /'hum, translated here as 'beautiful', also has connotations of goodness. The association of the colour red with beauty was also expressed during the course of the narrative by //Kabbo, the /Xam informant: 'Rub (with haematite) the children that the children should be handsome. You all should be red' (L.II. 13.1290).

In both the north and south, then, the eland is regarded as God's favourite creature; the /Xam, moreover, considered it to possess /kx.Ide. It appears that /k.):.de and /!gi: or //ke:n were together very similar to the !Kung concept of n/urn (see also Vinnicombe 1972: 199). N/urn is believed to be an invisible potency employed by medicine men in the curing rituals, and which exists in medicine songs, medicine plants, certain animals, rain and a variety of other things (L. Marshall 1969: 350-3). !Kung informants told us that the eland has more n/urn than any
ELAND HUNTING RITUALS AMONG THE SAN

FIG. 2: A southern San hunter finds the carcase of an eland he had previously wounded with a poisoned arrow. A shaded polychrome painting from the Barkly East district; parts of the painting have been destroyed by flaking of the rock face.

ELAND HUNTING RITUALS AMONG THE SAN

other animal; this n/urn is especially present in certain parts of the animal, described below. According to our informants the n/urn hierarchy of animals is as follows: eland, giraffe, gemsbok, kudu; lowest among the big antelope is the wildebeest and after the wildebeest, we are told, the small antelope, steenbok and duiker.

Maingard (1937: 233), working in the southern Kalahari, encountered a different situation regarding the status of the gemsbok: 'The gemsbok pervades every aspect of their communal activity, and forms as it were, the focal point of their lives, the centre round which hinges all their philosophy, all their habits and customs. The Bushman's horizon, one might say, is bounded by the gemsbok.' It is possible that this is a reflection of a different regional emphasis, the result of different ecological conditions.

When questioned specifically about the gemsbok, the !Kung replied, 'The gemsbok does not have much n/urn.' In response to enquiries about the small 'magic' arrows, the points of which are made from gemsbok horn, the !Kung denied that the power (n/urn) derived from the gemsbok. It resides, they claimed, in the special type of grass (/dan) from which the small arrow shafts are fashioned.

We now turn our attention to the position of the eland in rock paintings. The !Kung do not paint, having indeed few surfaces on which to paint; they are, however, aware of the existence of rock paintings in the Tsodilo Hills: they believe that the great god, Gaoxa, put them there. One !Kung woman said that if Gaoxa had not painted the pictures, it must have been the Tsaukwe, a San group living to the south east of the !Kung area. Although a number of these paintings have been published (I. Rudner 1965; J. and I. Rudner 1970), a quantitative inventory is not available. However, from what has been published it appears that a wide range of animal species is represented and the eland does not appear to predominate as it does in the south.

More precise data are available for the southern San rock paintings. Several quantitative studies of rock paintings in the Drakensberg have shown that the eland was, in the south eastern highlands, depicted more frequently than any other animal. In the Barkly East area, for instance, 69% of the identifiable representations of antelope are eland. (The Barkly East data are taken from a largely unpublished study by Lewis-Williams.) In the Western Cape the eland is exceeded only by 'small antelope', an omnibus category. (See also Maggs 1967; Pager 1971; Smits 1971; Lewis-Williams 1972, 1975; Vinnicombe 1976. The locations of these studies and other places mentioned in the text are shown in...
In addition to the frequency of depiction the artists lavished more care on representations of this antelope than on any other subject. In the Barkly East area the elaborate techniques of using more than one colour and shading were employed in painting 91 * 30% of the representations of eland; while only 68. 407 of the hartebeest and 65 "5 %V of the rhebuck were so depicted (see also Lewis-Williams 1972; Pager 1971; Vinnicombe 1976). Still further emphasis was placed by the painters on the eland by involving it in superpositioning more frequently than any other representation. At Barkly East 20.6% of the paintings of eland are involved in superpositioning; only 10.0% of the representations of hartebeest and 5 0% of the rhebuck were used in this manner by the painters. Eland are painted on eland 25 times, but only once does a rhebuck appear on an eland (see Lewis-Williams 1972 and 1974; Pager 1975). This feature of the rock paintings has been preliminarily interpreted by Lewis-Williams (1974: 102) as a form of syntax employed by the painters to focus the attention of the viewers on one segment of the significance of the eland.

An understanding of the significance of the eland is clearly germane to an interpretation of the rock paintings and also to an appreciation of San cosmology. However, very few writers have tackled the problem. As long ago as 1908 Werner, in a discussion of the rock art, suggested that the eland was to the San 'what the ox is to the pastoral Bantu-not only their principal food provider, but in some sense also, a sacred animal' (p. 393). Battiss later accepted this view, but despaired of arriving at an understanding of the significance of the eland: 'One might say that the painters worshipped the eland and that its representation had a very special religious significance... that is now lost to us' (1958: 61-2). Pager (1975), noting the emphasis on eland in the rock art, has suggested that this antelope was part of an 'antelope cult', but he does not attempt a detailed analysis of the eland symbol. Such an analysis has been essayed by Vinnicombe (1975: 397) who concludes that 'among the Southern Bushmen, the eland became the symbol through which natural phenomena, human experience, cosmic events and divine activity were inextricably inter-related: the eland was the pivot of a value structure around which the stability of the social organism was dependent.'

ELAND HUNTING RITUALS

Having noted the supreme status enjoyed by the eland among both the !Kung and the /Xam, we now turn our attention to the hunting observances consequent upon the shooting of an eland. Most of the !Kung. observances to be described (taken from our own informants) apply only to eland, some to other animals as well, and some only to a boy's first-kill eland; we shall distinguish among these in the discussion that follows. The /Xam observances were obtained by Wilhelm Bleek (D. F. Bleek 1932a: 233-40) from Dia!kwain who came from the Katkop Mountains to the north of Calvina. In addition to the eland observances, the same informant also recounted some similar, but less elaborate, observances concerning hartebeest. These beliefs (L.V. 16: 5257-L.V. 17: 5300), which have not been published, are considered along with the eland rituals to distinguish between observances which applied to eland only and those which extended to /Kaggen's
second favourite antelope. The three sources of information described here form the basis of this section. No mention was made by Dia!kwain of special rituals attendant upon the shooting of a hunter's first eland; he simply started by saying, 'When we have shot an eland...'. But from time to time he distinguished between the hunter and 'the old men, the heads of the family'. This distinction implies at least that the rituals did not apply to older men; it may be that the informant was not distinguishing carefully between the common shooting of an eland and a first-kill eland. This omission also characterised the statements made by our own !Kung informants, who had to be asked repeatedly to make this distinction. The first stage of both the regular and the first-kill ritual is initiated when an arrow is shot at the eland. The !Kung arrows, like those formerly used by the southern San (Sparrman 1789: 1141; Le Vaillant 1796: 1135-6; Thunberg 1796: 11161; Steedman 1835: 1148; Methuen 1846: 85; Chapman 1868: 153; Lichtenstein 1928: II 248; Stow 1905: 68-71; Vinnicombe 1971: 619), are constructed on a linkshaft principle: the poisoned point remains embedded in the animal while the reed shaft falls to the ground. The hunter advances to find the shaft and examines it to see how it has broken and whether there is blood on it. He is thus able to estimate the extent of the wound. A !Kung boy who concludes from the evidence of the shaft that he has shot his first eland does not touch the shaft as he examines it: he turns it over with the point of his bow. If an older man is present, he picks up the shaft and places it in the boy's quiver. If the boy is alone, he leaves the shaft where it has fallen. He returns to the spot the next day with the older men, who then pick up the shaft and place it in the boy's quiver. If the boy were to touch the shaft, the informants explained, the eland would not die. The !Xam hunter also avoided touching the arrow: 'We leave the arrowhead, we first fetch a leaf (?), for we want to pick up the arrow together with the leaf (?), lying on the leaf (?)... we do not want the wind to see it, so we try to get it to the quiver and put it in without the wind seeing it' (D. F. Bleek 1932a: 233). Although this ritual is not identical with the !Kung practice, we can discern in both the expression of the same basic concept: the artefact which 'links' the hunter with the antelope assumes a potency. This presumably derives from the eland's n/urn and the wide-ranging social effects of an eland kill. This will become clearer as we proceed to describe the subsequent stages of the ritual.

The shooting of the arrow, the act which initiates the ritual, establishes a special relationship between the hunter and the animal; this is evident, as we shall now see, in both the !Kung and the !Xam material. The !Kung explained that the hunter must now be very circumspect; he must walk slowly and not run: 'If he runs fast, the eland will also run fast.' This, the informants said, also applies to other animals, not exclusively to the eland. The !Xam hunter, likewise, was enjoined not to run. 'On his way back he does not hurry, but goes quietly along; he does not look around, but gazes quietly at what he sees, for he thinks that otherwise the eland would not look as he does, but look as if it felt that its heart were not afraid' (D. F. Bleek 1932a: 233-4). This restriction also applies more
generally among both the /Xam (L.V. 21. 5684-5) and the !Kung. The same /Xam informant, speaking elsewhere of any game shot, also reported another expression of the empathetic bond. The hunter avoided eating the meat of a swift-footed animal: 'If we eat the flesh of a thing which is fleet, the thing (i.e. the game) arises; it does like that thing of whose flesh we did eat' (W. H. I. Bleek and Lloyd 1911: 271). As an example, he said that people who have shot a gemsbok should avoid eating springbok flesh. It was also deemed unwise to sneeze near a man who had shot an animal: 'For if we sneezed when game was wounded, we startled it by our sneezing, if we sneezed into the ears of the man who shot the game' (D. F. Bleek 1932b: 325).

In an unpublished note (L.II.36. cover rev.) //Kabbo, another /Xam informant who spoke a slightly different dialect from Dia!kwain (W. H. I. Bleek and Lloyd 1911: xi), described how /Kaggen behaves when an eland has been shot: 'How /Kaggen when his (or an?) eland has been shot, goes backwards and forwards to the Bushmen, buzzes (?) (hisses?) in their ear, stands on their eyebrows etc., looks in their quivers for an arrow for shooting an eland, and goes and tries all the strings of their bows to see whose has been used to shoot with. The man who has shot the eland really goes off on his ein-en [own], and some other old man carries the quiver which contains the offending arrow.'

The hunter's return to the camp is another crucial point in the ritual. A !Kung boy who believes he has shot his first eland remains in the veld until late afternoon. During this period he lights a fire and, taking the ash, makes a circle on his forehead and a line down his nose; this represents the tuft of coarse red hair on the eland's forehead and is a visual representation of the bond which now exists between him and the wounded animal. When he enters the camp, he does not speak: the people see the mark on his forehead and know that he has shot an eland. The children are told to be quiet, because if they make a noise the eland will hear them and run far from the camp: 'the eland is a thing which has n/urn, therefore if there is loud speech it will die far from the camp, especially if the children toss up dust'. The hunter, furthermore, may not go near the pot or things associated with the women, although he may smell the aroma of cooking. Among the /Xam the hunter also avoided the women and stood silently on the edge of the camp until an old man, realising that something important had happened, asked him if he had shot an eland. He replied evasively that a thorn had pricked his foot. The old men then looked in his quiver to see if there was an arrow with eland hair on it. If the evidence was positive, the old men then made a hut for the hunter away from the women and children. A /Xam man who had shot a hartebeest also had to avoid women's things, even the smell of cooking, 'for the pot's things are what cools the poison'. If, on the following day when they are tracking the wounded hartebeest, they see by the spoor that it is walking as if it were not wounded, they say, 'Our brother seems to have smelt the pot's scent, for the pot's scent is a thing the scent of which has this effect.' As soon as it became known that the hunter had shot a hartebeest the children in the /Xam camp were quieted. The reason for this was
given as follows: 'The man who shot the hartebeest is the one who hears the child's crying. Therefore the hartebeest also seems to hear when the man has heard the child's crying.' Therefore a woman tries to prevent her child from crying by giving it her breast. 'The game knows the things we do when we are in our home... The game is on the hunting ground, it seems to know what we are doing there.' It seems that some of the /Xam avoidances were extended to the hartebeest because it was /Kaggen's second favourite antelope; the more elaborate rituals were reserved for the eland. The !Kung were emphatic that the avoidances did not apply to wildebeest and certain other animals.

Rules regarding the way in which the hunter spends the night after his return to the camp apply among the !Kung as they did among the /Xam. The !Kung boy goes to the young men's hut where the youths spread out a scratchy type of grass on which he is to sleep. If he feels pain from the grass and does not sleep well, the eland will also not sleep well. During the night the boy may urinate, but he is given only a little water with certain roots so that the eland will not urinate and lose the poison.

The empathetic bond evident at this stage was similarly ritualised in the south. The /Xam hunter did not sleep in his own hut; instead the old men constructed a special hut for him away from the women and children. In this hut the hunter behaved as if he were ill; an old man took care of him, kindling a fire to keep him warm. The construction of this hut by the old men and its associations of illness closely parallel the building of a hut for the seclusion of a girl at puberty, and strongly suggest that we are dealing with rituals attendant upon a first-kill eland. Among the !Kung, the boys' eland first-kill rituals are in some ways a mirror image of the girls' puberty rituals.

The /Xam hunter, secluded in his specially constructed hut, spent a restless night, as does the !Kung hunter. As we have seen, /Kaggen resented the killing of an eland; he was believed to take the form of a louse and to bite the man. If the man killed the louse, 'Its blood will be on his hands with which he grasped the arrow when he shot the eland, the blood will enter the arrow and cool the poison.' As in the north, the special relationship between the wounded eland and the hunter was also expressed in avoidance customs relating to urination. The /Xam hunter was instructed by 'the old men' not to 'pass water freely, for if he did so, the eland would also pass water freely... If he acted so, then the poison would hold and kill the eland, for the poison would hold its bladder shut, and it would not open to pass water' (D. F. Bleek 1932a: 235). An old man 'takes the man's apron and rolls it up sticking it into the belt'. In a passage omitted (perhaps in the interests of propriety) from the

ELAND HUNTING RITUALS AMONG THE SAN

published version the informant explained that this was done in case the hunter did not hold the loin cloth to one side when he passed water; the practice does not appear to be related to an apparently similar !Kung practice to be described below. In the /Xam hartebeest observances /Kaggen tries to secure the escape of the wounded antelope as he did with the eland. He is not said to appear as a louse but he sits on the hunter's quiver in the hope that the women will fail to respect
him, and throw stones at him. When they see him on the quiver, they do not
speak: 'They speak with their eyes.' If the women were to throw stones at
/Kaggen, he would go to the hartebeest and say, 'You are writhing there for
nothing for the man who shot you, his wife has thrown me away. You must get
up, you seek the things which you can eat. You are needlessly writhing there,
although you see the people have not respected (!nanna-sse) you, you can get up,
you can walk' (L.V. 5269-70).
In the morning the tracking of the wounded eland commences. The !Kung hunters
loosen their bow strings and set out to pick up the eland's spoor. As eland sweat
and the foam which comes from the mouth of a pursued eland are considered by
the !Kung to possess powerful n/urn, certain precautions have to be taken. The
spoor must be followed obliquely: a hunter unscarified for eland must not cross
the trail. If he does, it is believed that he will become tired and confused, but if he
has scarifications on his legs, he will not become weary. Among the /Xam the
hunter who had shot the eland did not take part in the tracking; he directed the
others to the spot where the animal was shot so that they could pick up the spoor.
Those following the track did not cross the spoor: 'we walk on one side of its
spoor'. This was done, the informant explained in a subsequent note (L.V. 5316
rev.), so that they would not tread upon the spoor.
Another critical stage is reached when the eland is finally found dead. The !Kung
boy who shot the eland does not approach the animal directly; he crouches down
behind and places his arms around an old man who then pretends to stalk the
animal. This is 'bringing the boy to the animal' and the position is like the one
adopted by a medicine man and a novice when the younger man is learning how
to go into a trance and to cure. No hunter, whether young or old, may approach
the dead animal with a torn loin cloth or with flaps hanging down from his loin
cloth; these loose parts are tucked between the buttocks. If this were not done, the
informants explained, the eland would be thin and lean and the fat would 'fall to
pieces' like the leather loin cloth. Precautions regarding the eland's fat were also
observed in the south. The man who had shot the eland did not approach the
animal until the heart had been cut out. In the published account the text is
incomplete, as the word /ka:.ide has not been translated; as we have seen, this
word is translated elsewhere as 'magic power'. The translation should, therefore,
read, 'When they have cut it to pieces and cut out the heart, then he joins the men
who are cutting it up, after the heart is out because they are afraid that it is a thing
which has magic power' (D. F. Bleek 1932a: 237). Dia!kwain explained that it
was the man's scent which would make the eland lean. The /Xam hunters then
performed a ritual using the eland's tail. This was cut off and used to beat the dead
animal. 'When they beat the eland with its tail, it seems to sigh just as they are
used to sigh; when they eat eland's fat then they sigh like that, so they beat the
eland with its tail to fatten it' (ibid. 238). (In the manuscript what is here translated
'sigh' has been rendered 'break wind'.) The hunters must furthermore take care not
to allow their shadow to fall on the animal as that would also make it lean.
The /Xam account ends at this juncture, but the !Kung first-kill ritual continues. It
is not impossible, in view of the numerous parallels we have already noticed, that
the /Xam also observed further rituals for a first-kill eland; but the informants did not tell the Bleeks about them. The difficulty of getting the complete story was illustrated by the way in which the !Kung material had to be obtained by constant, close questioning. Without a knowledge of the /Xam rituals we should not have been able to obtain numerous aspects of the !Kung observances because the informants simply did not think to tell us. Even if such rituals did not exist among the southern groups, it seems probable that the concepts expressed by them did.

THE FIRST-KILL RITUALS
In view of the close parallels already noted and also because of the intrinsic interest of the material we continue with an account of the !Kung first-kill rituals.

After the boy 'has been brought to the eland', a fire is lit a few inches in front of the eland's forelock. The boy's bow is placed on and at right angles to the female fire stick while the fire is being kindled. It is held in place by the fire-maker's left foot at a position near the point at which the fire is being made. Ashes from this fire are rubbed on the bow so that 'the bow will drink the anger of the fire'. This fire is lit so that when hunting eland the boy will find that 'the eland's face will split and it will die'. It is also said that the boy's face will be the opposite of the dark ash of the fire: in other words his face will be 'bright'-he will see clearly to hunt well. This fire is not used for cooking, but coals from it are taken away to light the cooking fire.

The liver and some other parts are then roasted at this second fire by the hunters, but a portion of the liver is taken home for the women. If, when first skinning the eland, somebody takes a portion out and roasts it badly, the rest of the animal will also not cook properly. The regular eland medicine dance is then danced. But first the men look to see how much fat is on the eland; then 'you dance in praise of the fat'. A medicine man who has eland n/urn goes into a trance and cures all present of known and unknown ills. The dance is performed only by the hunters; no women are present. It takes place at any eland kill even if there is no boy who has just shot his first eland. Certain parts of the eland are buried in the second fire and roasted overnight; they are the parts which are considered to have n/ur: the skin of the chest (dewlap), the tail cut off about one third of its length from the body, the forelegs, the lower part of the hindlegs and the middle of the back of the neck. Over these medicine parts is placed a piece of skin and on top of this the contents of the eland's stomach. The whole is left to roast overnight. In the morning the smell of the roasted fat is said to be beautiful. The stomach contents are thrown away and the older men eat some of the medicine parts. The boy eats only the regular parts. The women are still in the camp and do not take part in this meal.

Then the men return to the camp with the cut-up meat of the eland. Every time the men bring in an eland the women sing to praise them, crying out 'Euu! Euu! Euu!' This sound is used for no other animal 'because they don't have fat'. The owner of the animal (i.e. the owner of the arrow with which the hunter shot the eland) carries a stick on which are hung the heart, the forelock, the ears and other medicine parts; he sets all down around a very big tree. The arrangement at this
stage does not appear to be as elaborate as that adopted by the MutshiKu San in their ritual hunt (Kohler 1973).

If they are bringing in a young boy who has shot his first eland, 'the women see what he has done and praise him'. His mother runs up to him holding her breast and flapping it in a standard gesture signifying motherhood as she cries out, 'My son!

ELAND HUNTING RITUALS AMONG THE SAN

My son! How is it that you are such a little thing and yet you have killed such a big thing that is so fat?' The women set about pounding sd (aromatic herbs) with their digging sticks. If this were not done, the eland would in future hear the sound of women and run away, but 'if you do it now, the next eland will hear the sound and not run away'. The eland likes sd because the plants which it eats are aromatic; the eland does not itself smell of sd, but it smells very sweet and of fat. This peculiar fragrance of the eland has been noted by others (Bryden 1893: 427; Shortridge 1934: 613). As the pounding of the sd continues, the whole camp begins to smell of it, and everybody's brains go 'Pah! Pah!' Everyone is happy and friction is dissipated, a state that is desirable on an individual and on a social level.

A special eland ritual is then performed. The eland's throat and collar bone, both of which have n/urn, are boiled to make a broth which only men who have been through the ceremony may eat. The fat which rises to the surface of this broth is taken off and placed on another dish. The boy then sits cross-legged on the centre of the eland's skin which is spread out on the ground. He is then scarified on the right arm for a male eland or on the left for a female. The cuts are made with a broad, flat metal knife which is also used for cutting hair and for scarifying people who are sick. The blade is sharpened on a stone and then, with a quick flicking motion, on the palm of the hand. The boy's skin is pinched and small transverse nicks are made. When all the cuts have been made the medicine is rubbed in; this comprises fat from the eland broth, burnt eland hair and portions of certain medicine trees. The scarifications are said to 'create a new hunter'. The informants explained that the hunter is scarified not only for his first-kill but for each large game animal he shoots. 'Look at all my scars,' exclaimed Kaishe.

Then, while the seated boy holds his bow pointing out in front of him, the string uppermost, an old man takes the right foreleg of the eland, or the left if it is a female, and makes a circle of eland hoof prints around the skin on which the boy is sitting. As this is done, the eland hoof makes the characteristic clicking sound which the animal makes as it walks. The circle of hoof prints is made so that when the boy hunts eland in the future the eland will not go off in just any direction; but the boy will have to find the track. When the circle of hoof prints has been completed, the eland foot is placed in front of the boy. In the next stage of the ritual the eland's forelock, ears, hairy skin of the dewlap and the tail tuft are hung together and dipped in the fat collected from the surface of the eland broth. The fat is then flicked over the boy's shoulders and smeared on his body. While this is being done the boy must not look around, but keep his eyes downcast: 'that
is how elands will behave when he hunts them in future'. Hairs from the eland's ears are then placed on the boy's temples. When these rituals have been completed, the boy drops the bow, plucking the string with his thumb as he does so; this is how the eland will in future fall when he goes to hunt. He then picks up the bow and leaves the circle of eland tracks. Of this ritual the informants said, 'His heart is burning hot towards meat; he desires meat. He has become a real hunter and will spend the whole day out and not come back to camp.' Although the ritual takes place in the camp, only the men and the old women may come to the place; the younger women must stay away. After the ritual has been completed, the family remains to eat and sits around singing the eland song which is said to resemble the wailing of hyenas cheated of the eland meat. People, hearing that a neighbouring band has been fortunate enough to secure the meat of a large antelope, visit and join in the meat sharing and the curing dance. The expression of social relationships in food sharing has been described for

numerous northern San groups (see D. F. Bleek 1928: 16; Fourie 1928: 100-101; Dunn 1931: 8; Metzger 1950: 25; Silberbauer 1965: 49-50; L. Marshall 1961: 236-41; Lee 1968: 345; Thomas 1959: 208 and Tanaka 1969: 11). Lévi-Strauss (1972: 104), interpreting Fourie's report, suggests that the San postulate an equivalence 'between the parts making up an individual organism and the functional classes making up the society'. Small game could be consumed by the band, but large game, especially an eland, provided for the expression of the widest social relationships. The practice of sharing meat also existed among the southern San. Numerous tales recorded by Bleek are connected with food sharing or the failure to share (W. H. I. Bleek and Lloyd 1911: 85, 155, 277, 281; D. F. Bleek 1924: 22, 34, 37, 51; B. 26. 2487; L. VIII. 16. 7399); a person who behaved ungenerously with food was called by the /Xam 'Decayed Arm' (W. H. I. Bleek and Lloyd 1911: 125). The !Kung sometimes call such people 'bags without openings' (J. Marshall film n.d.). Various travellers who encountered the southern San were impressed by the practice of food sharing (Le Vaillant 1796: III 186-7; Philip 1828: I 6-7; Moffat 1842: 59; Arbousset and Daumas 1846: 250, 254; Borchers 1861: 114; Shaw 1820: 25; Stow 1905: 41; Dornan 1909: 442; Ellenberger and MacGregor 1912: 7); they considered it to be one of their few redeeming features. CONCLUSION During the ritual there are oblique references to other aspects of eland symbolism. The eland plays a prominent role in the !Kung girls' puberty observances, and, when possible, in marriage rituals. These other aspects of the eland symbol, however, lie beyond the scope of the present paper. The eland, to use Turner's (1967: 51) phrase, is a multi-vocal symbol, certain aspects of which are emphasised in particular contexts. We have dealt with only one limited context. For reasons which we shall not discuss here, it seems probable that some of these other contexts were also represented among the southern San and reflected in their rock art.
A comparison of the !Kung and /Xam data suggests that there existed an underlying conceptual structure common to both groups. This structure expressed itself in various ways in the different areas and different language groups, but the significance appears to have been the same; as one of our !Kung informants expressed it: 'Different people do things in different ways'. In view of the numerous parallels noted in this paper, we suggest that they were in fact doing the same thing in different ways. A similar conclusion was reached by McCall (1970: 18) in his examination of the equivalence of hunting and mating in San thought: 'While it is realised that there are differences among different bands and dialect groups, as well as differential acculturation to Bantu, Hottentot and European, it has seemed that the concepts discussed here are pan-Bushman or nearly so.' In addition to the eland parallels noted in the present paper and the hunting/mating concepts discussed by McCall we have drawn attention to similarities between the !Kung concept of n/um and the /Xam beliefs concerning /k:5de and /ke:n and the employment of this power by medicine men in both the north and the south. Vinnicombe (1972: 200) has drawn attention to yet another !Kung concept that appears to have been shared by the /Xam. She cites certain /Xam beliefs that suggest that the southern San had a concept similar to the !Kung idea of n/ow; the !Kung believe that the n/ow of a hunter interacts with the n/ow of a shot antelope to affect weather conditions (L. Marshall 1957).

ELAND HUNTING RITUALS AMONG THE SAN

The structural equivalences that have been discussed in this paper suggest strongly that there is a conceptual framework common to !Kung and /Xam thought and that as a result the eland meant much the same to the /Xam as it still does to the !Kung. It is, therefore, probably legitimate to use !Kung material in a cautious amplification of the limited /Xam and Maluti records in an attempt to arrive at an elucidation of the eland symbol as it appears in southern San myth, ritual and art (Lewis-Williams 1977).

NOTES

The authors wish to thank six !Kung informants who very kindly answered questions about the eland rituals between the 10th and the 18th of December 1975: they are Kan//a and !Kun/obe of Magoegoe, and Kaishe, Ti!nay, /Xwa, and 'oma !oma of Dobe, Botswana. J. D. Lewis-Williams further thanks the Librarian, Jagger Library, University of Cape Town, for permission to use the unpublished material collected by Wilhelm Bleek which is housed there.

I 'San' is a term increasingly being used to refer to the hunting and gathering 'Bushmen' of southern Africa, as the terms 'Bushmen,' or 'Masarwa' as they have also been called locally, have collected perjorative connotations.

I This striking characteristic has been widely noted by such writers as Sparrman (1789: 192); Barrow (1801: 1262); Burchell (1822: 219); Harris (1838: 263); Methuen (1846: 109); Arbousset and Daumas (1846: 46); Baines (1864: 116); Bryden (1893: 388); Selous (1893: 439); Lichtenstein (1928: 1130); Silberbauer (1965: 36) and Steyn (1971: 297). (Sparrman 1789: 1115; Collins 1838: 2; Cumming 1850: 1253, 314; Mackenzie 1883; 42; Bryden 1893: 389; Selous 1893: 120; Smith 1940: 1145; Roberts 1951: 305.)
I Sparrman 1789: II 153; Barrow 1801: I 263; Burchell 1822: II 218; Harris 1838:
77; Arbousset and Daumas 1846: 45; Methuen 1846: 110; Livingstone 1851: 139;
Baines 1864: 116; Bryden 1893: 388; Shortridge 1934: 615; Roberts 1951: 305;

6 All the archival sources cited in this paper are in the Jagger Library and are
prefaced with L (collected by Lloyd) or B (collected by W. H. I. Bleek). In the
Lloyd series of notebooks the roman numeral indicates the informant; the
following arabic numerals indicate first the number of the book and then of the
page (continuous through the notebooks). Right hand pages only are numbered;
left hand pages are therefore denoted 'rev' (reverso) after the page number. ' The
word !gi: derives from !gi:xa (one who possesses !gi:), as the !Kung word n/urn is
similarly related to n/urn k"xau (medicine owner). //Ke:n might have been a
respect word for !gi:. The !Kung concept of n/urn is differentiated contextually
into known connotations of good and bad power; the /Xam, it seems,
differentiated them linguistically, using /k..:Jde to refer to intense and dangerous
potency.

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LES RITUELS DE LA CHASSE À L'ÉLAN CHEZ LES GROUPES SAN DU NORD ET DU SUD: QUELQUES RESSEMBLANCES FRAPPANTES

Deux ensembles de matériel ethnographique recueilli à cent années d'intervalle sont étudiés ici pour faire ressortir un cadre conceptuel commun aux différentes peuplades San d'Afrique méridionale qui vivent de la chasse et de la cueillette. Des enquêtes menées chez les !Kung (San du nord) et effectuées au cours des années 1970 sont utilisées afin d'explorer à la fois la culture à présent disparue des /Xam (San du sud) telle qu'elle a été consignée vers 1870 et les peintures rupestres découvertes dans la zone /Xam. En dépit des différences linguistiques et écologiques entre les deux groupes, des ressemblances frappantes ont été mises à jour dans l'usage rituel et symbolique de l'élan du Cap.

La prééminence de l'élan dans la pensée San est suggérée par la fréquence avec laquelle celui-ci apparaît sur les peintures rupestres, dans les mythes et les rituels. Représentant la plus grande et la plus impressionnante des antilopes de l'Afrique méridionale, qui se distingue par sa graisse, sa chair délicieuse et son allure noble à laquelle s'ajoute une docilité surprenante, elle possède une très grande importance économique et artistique. Le symbole de l'élan était utilisé par les !Kung et les /Xam dans les cérémonies de puberté des jeunes filles et les rites de mariage. On en constate la prédominance numérique sur tous les autres animaux dans les peintures rupestres de la zone /Xam. C'est un animal qui prédomine également dans les initiations à la chasse destinées aux jeunes gens. Les auteurs exploitent en profondeur les renseignements que les chasseurs !Kung actuels, qui ont eux-mêmes accompli la poursuite de l'élan à pied puis reçu les scarifications rituelles, peuvent fournir sur certaines remarques faites il y a un siècle à W. H. I. Bleek et Lloyd sur leurs anciens rituels de la chasse à l'élan.

Pour reprendre l'expression de Turner (1967: 51) l'élan émerge comme 'symbole multivoque' dans une grammaire de significations sociales. Certaines équivalences structurelles examinées dans le présent article suggèrent que l'élan avait pour les /Xam une signification très peu différente de celle qu'il a encore pour les !Kung. Il est donc probablement légitime de mettre à profit les renseignements disponibles sur les !Kung pour procéder avec les précautions d'usage à un élargissement des renseignements limités sur les /Xam: ceci permettrait d'aboutir à une élucidation de l'élan en tant que symbole tel qu'il se manifeste dans l'art, les mythes et le rituel des San du sud.