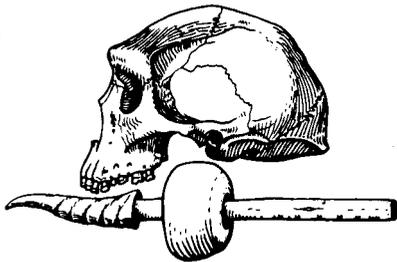


Published by
The South African
Archaeological
Society
P.O. Box 15700
Vlaeberg
8018
South Africa



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The Digging Stick

EDITORIAL

With this issue of *The Digging Stick* I have taken over as Editor from Mrs Shirley-Ann Pager, who has many other responsibilities on her hands and is also about to visit Australia, as she mentioned in the last issue. I should like to thank her on behalf of all our members for a job well done. We are deeply in her debt for all the time and effort that she has put into *The Digging Stick* over the last five years; to her the newsletter owes both its name and its success.

This issue of *The Digging Stick* will complete the present volume in essentially the format that we have come to know but with some small changes. With the new volume next year the format will change further and our newsletter will expand to become a magazine. I wrote to all our members a few months ago outlining my suggestions for a magazine and asking for your response. This was very positive and extremely encouraging (see the article below) and Council has agreed that we should go ahead, first with a fairly small magazine but building on this as we see how it goes.

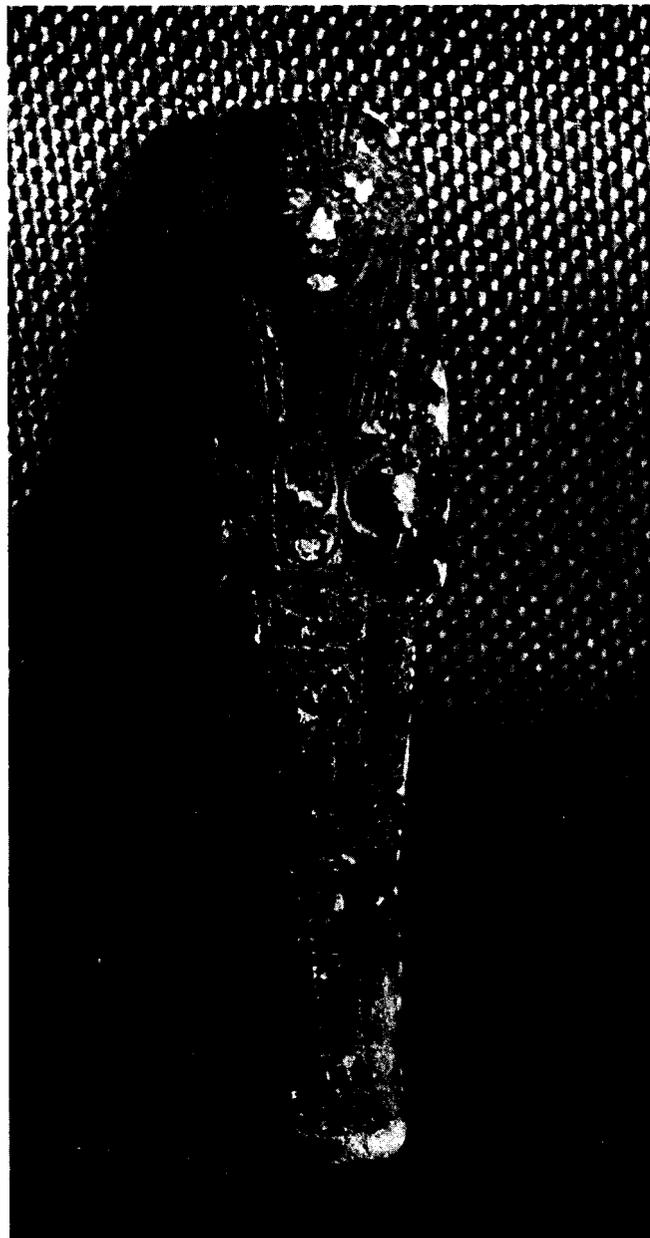
ARTICLES

AN EGYPTIAN ENIGMA

A.J.B. Humphreys

Shabtis (or Ushabtis) are small mummy-shaped statuettes that were entombed with Egyptian pharaohs. They were images of servants who would perform the tasks demanded by the pharaoh in the other world. These shabtis were of the most varied types and materials, some masterpieces in their own right, others rudimentary.

About 20 years ago I acquired two clay shabtis, one of which is shown here and is 163 mm tall. Given their availability and the general state of the 'antiquities' market in Egypt, it seemed unlikely that they were genuine but they were nevertheless interesting specimens that made attractive ornaments. Consultation with various experts over the years, as



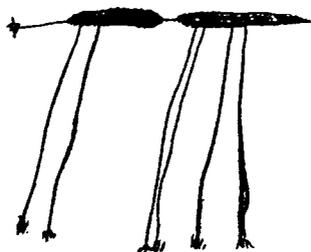
The exercise was good for both girls and teachers as it showed very quickly that there is more to archaeological excavation than just digging holes in sites. The entire project was relatively simple, requiring a few artefacts, bones, shells, broken potsherds (these were leftovers from University of Cape Town student practicals but could be any broken dishes) and slag. Thus, cost was minimal and many schools have a long-jump sand pit which is ideal for creating the 'site'.

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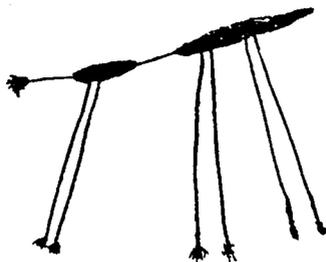
ON TRANCE, DREAMS, AND THE MANTIS

J.F. Thackerav

In a recent article on southern African rock art, Lewis-Williams has drawn attention to Bushman words for dreaming, and has recognised a close connection with trance (*World Archaeology* 19: 165-177). He cites ethnographic accounts in which the trickster, //Kaggen ('the mantis') features in trance-related beliefs and he goes on to interpret a number of paintings in terms of 'trance-dreaming'. The existence of conceptual associations between trance, dreams and the mantis is suggested from additional data.



2.



1.

1. *ibaggen gwa*, male mantis.
2. *ibaggen tsilyi*, female mantis.

Diabekzin, March, 1878.

Ed. note: The mantises were copied from *Specimens of Bushman Folklore*, collected by W.H.I. Bleek & L.C. Lloyd. 1911. London: George Allen & Co. Ltd. For those, like me who have not seen it before, this is a fascinating book with the most delightful illustrations which were drawn by Bushman informants.

In Bleek's *Bushman Dictionary* we find that the word //gan'a has more than one meaning. It can refer to a dream but it also refers to the insect *Empusa purpuripennis*, identified by Bleek as a mantis. Moreover, the term, //gan'a is similar to the word for a hallucinogenic plant (*Salsola* sp.) which is commonly known as *ganna* (incorporated into Afrikaans).

The common root in words for a mantis, a dream and a hallucinogenic plant provides a basis for suggesting that these concepts were associated in prehistory. Of course, the association could be entirely coincidental but this is unlikely if it is taken together with ethnographic and other data cited by Lewis-Williams. In this case the conceptual association suggested by the linguistic data is supported by ethnographic data. In another example a common root (*kwa kwa*) in Bushman words for a mantis, a disguise and something elusive may lead to the discovery of associations that are not explicit in ethnographic accounts but are supported by other independent lines of evidence such as the behaviour and shapes of animals.

In the light of these and other examples, where ethnographic support may or may not be forthcoming, it seems reasonable to take full advantage of any information to be gained from the linguistics, to explore the implications of common roots in terms of various animals and concepts. If this leads to the recognition of conceptual associations we may then look for other independent evidence to confirm these associations. Corroboration from independent sources, perhaps including prehistoric rock art, should stimulate further enquiry along avenues opened up by exploratory linguistic analyses.

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RAISING THE DUST AT STORMSVLEI

Between 13 and 29 January, South African Museum Archaeology Department members Mike Wilson, Bill van Rijssen, Vivien van Zyl and Cyd Wolfaardt, assisted by three volunteers, Olive van der Stuyt, Thea Toussaint van Hove and Tony Pedroza, carried out excavations in a rock-shelter on the farm Grootkloof, at Stormsvlei, between Rivier-sonderend and Swellendam. The farm is owned by well-known Bonnievale farmer, Mr Laubscher van der Merwe, who started clearing out the shelter with a view to using it as a weekend campsite. However, when human remains were exposed, he contacted his niece, the museum planetarium's Elmara Willis, who alerted the archaeologists. The site was inspected in late November and plans made for an urgent salvage operation.

The main interest of the excavation was the discovery of another two human burials under a cairn of rocks. There are the remains of two young, probably San, adults who were buried lying on their sides, facing each other and with limbs drawn in towards the body. Their heads were placed on a flat 'pillow' and red ochre was scattered over the bodies before the grave was closed. The bones were in very poor condition, and it took meticulous work by Bill to expose as much bone as possible before Vivien set about impregnating it with adhesive in order to facilitate removal - a long and tedious job for both, but ultimately rewarding. While this was being done, other members of the team were excavating the deposit in other parts of the shelter - hard, rocky soil that strained the wrists and, when sieved, raised clouds of dust that coated everybody and everything.

Our work aroused considerable interest among the local communities and we had a constant stream of visitors to the site, with whom we were only too happy to talk; on-the-spot PR does much to make people aware of the importance of