Salvage ethnography and the imagination of deep time in southern Africa, 1930-present

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Abstract For at least three centuries, foraging peoples in southern Africa have been foregrounded as key to understanding *Homo sapiens'* movement from tradition to modernity, egalitarianism to inequality, even while genocidal campaigns and subtler (no less destructive) programmes of violence precipitated the attrition that was disclaimed as inevitable. Scholarship critical of the reification of 'the hunter-gatherer' has scrutinized the far-reaching epistemic and physical consequences of this anthropological category. Here, I am interested in examining how individual ethnographers in the early twentieth century crafted visions of deep time and human creativity through the micropolitics of fieldwork with interlocutors of foraging cultures. I want to consider where localized practices of salvage ethnography – including how this articulated with contemporary scientific currents – informed particular understandings of how the residues of the deep past could be accessed, the relative importance of intervening historical events, and how art practices connected past and present. I go on to trace how these visions of the past have been incorporated into archaeological canon – where they have been challenged and where they demand further query. I argue that a fine-grained focus on intimate field encounters, the knowledge they produced and obscured, and the intellectual routes this knowledge traversed is essential to the work of re-definition and restitution in deep time study.

1. Introduction

In November 1930, Marion Walsham How invited a man called Mapote to her home in Qacha's Nek, Basutoland (today, Lesotho; Figure 1), to teach her about painting rock art. How was a keen amateur scholar of natural science, with interests ranging from archaeology to history to veterinary science, supported by a dynasty of missionary-intellectuals that her grandfather, David-Frédéric Ellenberger, founded on his arrival in the region in 1860 (King 2018). How's account of her work with Mapote credits Ellenberger as ultimately facilitating this meeting: Ellenberger was missionary to Mapote's father Moorosi from 1866 until Moorosi's failed 1879 rebellion against Basutoland's government led to death, expulsion from the territory, and violent punishment for Moorosi's followers, including Mapote.[1] These consequences make Mapote's decision to visit How particularly remarkable, although the risks that he undertook by travelling from South Africa to Basutoland at her behest are omitted from How's records of the meeting.
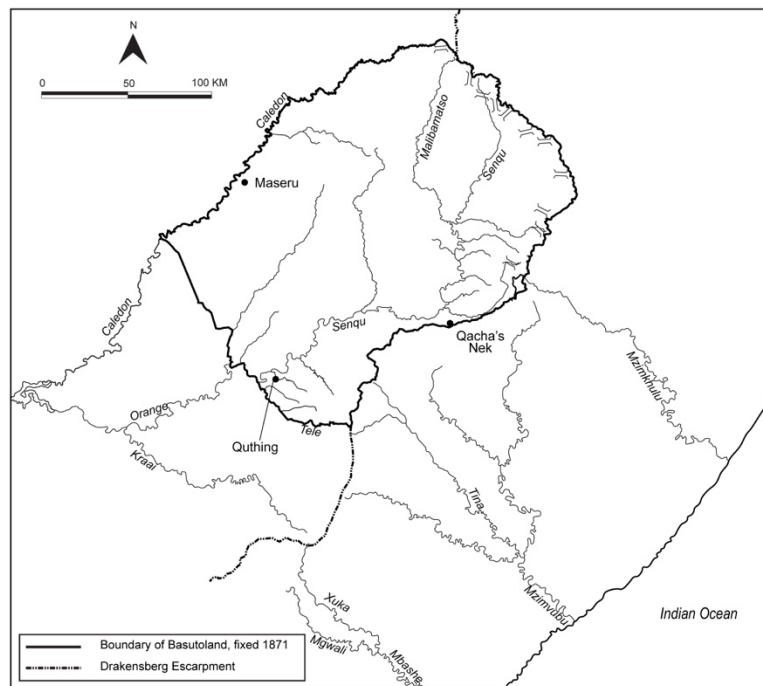

Figure 1. Map of Basutoland showing locations mentioned in the text.

Instead, How's field notes and later unpublished writings detail Mapote's process in producing what How called 'the next best thing to a Bushman painting':[2] the implements and raw materials used for painting; how to prepare paints, binders, and the rock surface; the

difference between ideal materials and ersatz ones; and comments on Mapote's artistic knowledge and family history that How presented as *verbatim* transcripts. She considered these details as 'the next best thing' because Mapote's biography included statements that he learned painting from 'half-Bushman' relatives among Moorosi's people;[3] he was not a Bushman himself, therefore the painting was less-than-authentic. (I retain 'Bushman' with its myriad connotations where this is taken directly from primary historical sources; for all other references I use San as the preferred term for Indigenous peoples speaking Khoisan languages, following the 2003 Working Group on Indigenous Minorities in South Africa and the South African San Institute statement of preference. See King 2019: 22.) After painting for How, Mapote left her home with a pair of new boots as an expression of thanks, while How spent the next 30 years researching the deep history of the Maloti-Drakensberg Mountains in which Basutoland was situated. In 1962, she produced *Mountain Bushmen of Basutoland*, which included Mapote's project. Since its publication, *Mountain Bushmen* has become one of a number of ethnographic sources used to interpret the significance of southern African painting traditions, and Mapote's Stone itself is prominently displayed in Johannesburg's Origins Centre museum.

In a recent paper (King et al. 2021), my colleagues and I drew on How's research archive and non-destructive analyses of Mapote's Stone to delve into the micropolitics of Mapote's and How's fieldwork, describing the ways in which How established expertise through a mixture of emergent standards in rock art studies and credibility bestowed on amateur-experts within legacy colonialist networks, all while qualifying Mapote's artistic skill as inauthentic. Both in that paper and in the longer history of intellectual engagement with How's work, Mapote's painting (along with a second, less well-discussed painting she commissioned by a man called Masitisi) is characterized as a form of salvage ethnography – recovering remains of 'disappearing' cultures.

Here, I offer some preliminary thoughts about How and Mapote's encounter as a waypoint in archaeology's history of thinking about the deep past in terms of salvage. The notion of a disappearing past does a great deal of intellectual, rhetorical, and violent

practical work in settler colonial contexts, and Indigenous critiques of salvage ethnography's North American legacies have long demonstrated the imperative to challenge disappearance as a heuristic underlying such projects (Simpson 2016). Habits of thinking about the past – including people racialized as being in and of the past – as vanishing permeated academic and non-academic field projects from the nineteenth century onward in southern Africa (see below). In How's case, her publicly lauded claim to access lost knowledge about rock art production became elided with views holding the art itself as a scarce, public resource. This elision of rock art with artists and the consignment of both to deep time produced a distance from the present that has (and continues to) cast rock art as a particular kind of commons – a resource defined (following Ostrom 1994) by its potential for depletion and the difficulty of protecting it from such depletion (cf. Alonso González 2014: 362-3).

This paper, then, attempts to draw some connections between legacies of thinking about salvage ethnography, rock art, and prevailing tensions in heritage management, and highlight some ways in which critical historical and ethnographic attention to field projects – especially those conducted by informal experts like How – can address these. Asserting the potential for restitution is not done lightly, and I am not in a position to stake such a claim here. Instead, I aim to illuminate some reconnections: among artists and their work, networks of scholar-practitioners, and archaeological and heritage values. As such it speaks particularly to on-going projects focused on traditional custodianship in rock art: efforts to recognize that people with a stake in this material culture have significant strategies of use and preservation that have been undermined, dismissed, and criminalized by various modes of authority over heritage. This paper is an outline contribution to understanding how this valuation of rock art and its inscription as commons came to be; how this implicates archaeological practice; and how historical considerations of these processes offer potential for revisiting or revising tensions between preservationism and custodianship arising from constructions of 'salvage' as a paradigm and practice.

2. **Salvage practices and politics: South Africa c. 1905-1962**

While there is utility in considering salvage ethnography as a paradigm or sensibility (Clifford 1989) – manifesting as more of a disposition rather than a theoretically-grounded practice – there is also a need to trace its intellectual framings and practices through particular geopolitical contexts and the historical complexities of these (Redman 2021). This becomes particularly important in the case of How's work, as her un-disciplined approach to salvage borrows somewhat haphazardly from ideas prevalent in archaeology and anthropology but seldom made explicit. Tracing her work is therefore an exercise in tacking between the professional development of the disciplines and the practice that How developed through her understanding of the context in which she worked. As I will argue shortly, this is crucial to tracing how productions of rock art as a common, deep past were instantiated and effectively rendered commonsense.

Salvage ethnography is perhaps most closely associated with the foundations of American social anthropology, formalising and professionalizing a 'preservation-oriented vision' as core to the relationship between the federal state and Indigenous peoples (Redman 2021: 7, 40). Jacob Gruber's (1970) seminal writing on the topic suggests a different (although related) trajectory in British ethnological thought. Gruber (1970: 1292) traces this to Victorian humanism active in the early to mid-nineteenth century, which produced reports like that of the 1837 British Select Committee of Aborigines, voicing concerns over the moral and scientific crises of Indigenous communities facing 'imminent destruction' from the advance of empire. The British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS) codified this position as an urgent need to preserve 'vanishing' cultures, instantiating a novel remit for the young field of anthropology that included ethnography specifically as a tool for salvage.

In the 1905 joint session of the BAAS and the South African Association for the Advancement of Science, A.C. Haddon (President of BAAS' Anthropological Section and one of the field's founding figures) declared the future of anthropology as a 'science of salvage', urging South African anthropology to focus in 'very careful and detailed studies' of 'those that will disappear first' (Haddon 1905: 524-5; Bank 2016: 23-24).[4] Peoples deemed

most in danger of disappearing included 'Bushmen' and 'Hottentots' (as opposed to descendants of populations speaking Bantu languages that arrived in the region c. 3000 years BP), and professional ethnographic fieldwork during the first decades of the twentieth century prioritized collecting data on physiognomy, psychology, and cultural artefacts from these groups (Bank 2016: 24).[5]

Such an approach crystallised longstanding impulses within communities of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century intellectuals within southern Africa, for whom collecting material related to archaeology and ethnology was part of a developing regional scientific tradition (Dubow 2006). Rock art and its creators were a focal point of this tradition. Knowledge networks centred on Cape Town but reaching farther afield placed a premium both on the linkage of art with linguistic and interpretive details derived from associated living communities (e.g. Bleek 1874; Orpen 1874), and the ability of the art to serve as historical narratives within a growing genre of 'native history'. George Stow's (1905) work is among the best-known of this latter category, which cast rock art as a Bushman 'title deed' to the country, threatened by the arrival of Bantu-speaking people. This notion further yielded the contention that Bushman art and culture was jeopardized through contact with black culture, positing that earlier fine-line painted styles were degraded as a result of intra-continental migration, resulting in other, supposedly less accomplished styles (e.g. geometric, finger-painted, or otherwise thick-lined). Contemporary scholarship that took a critical, even antagonistic stance to Stow did little to shift this thinking (King 2015), which instantiated visions of hunter-gathering people as existing in a mythologized, 'timeless' moribund state for whom rock art represented the sole extant means of self-expression (Gordon and Sholto-Douglas 2000; Skotnes 2002).

Of course, Haddon's 1905 pronouncement came at a time when both anthropology and archaeology had become more fully professionalized. By the time How met Mapote in 1930, Winifred Hoernlé had been implementing and innovating on the sorts of salvage ethnographies advocated by Haddon and A.R. Radcliffe-Brown for two decades. The installation of Radcliffe-Brown as head of social anthropology at the University of Cape Town

in 1921 was heralded by many as the formal, regional establishment of the field, carried forward by a number of his 'disciple' ethnographers (Bank 2016: 15-6). One outcome of this move towards formalization was to render much earlier or non-academic ethnological work as essentially pre-professional, creating scholarly networks whose theoretically-informed research and 'methodological values' offered one way of delineating amateurs from experts (Stocking 1989: 210).

However, salvage ethnography (either professional or otherwise) was never solely the purview of the academy or even of anthropology in southern Africa. As with natural sciences and archaeology from the nineteenth century onward, fieldworkers involved in gathering ethnological data frequently included people (especially women) with varying degrees of proximity to these intellectual circles. Moreover, many rock art copyists worked with one eye to ethnographic data collection, and in the absence of standardized methods copyists gained significant local reputations for their ethnological knowledge and visual literacy but were frequently (though not always; see, e.g., Weintroub 2016; Morris 2021: 146) marginal to or omitted from the academic canon (Weintroub 2009; Witelson 2018). Indeed, rock art studies in southern Africa did not see the same processes of professionalization that anthropology or other branches of archaeology did, with the result that fieldworkers unaffiliated to universities and who might be dubbed amateurs in other disciplines could build expert reputations based on their experience and access to validating audiences (see Whitley 2001 for a global history of these practices).

In How's case, these factors as well as geopolitical ones kept her peripheral to developments within professional anthropological and archaeological practices: Basutoland remained a British colony (governed separately from South Africa) until 1966, and while How and her family were imbricated in a trans-national community of amateur and professional scientists and historians (see below), her marriage to an imperial administrator obliged her to spend much of her life in the colony where she was born and raised. Therefore, while a view of salvage ethnography from South Africa would indicate that by the time How met Mapote systematic agendas for salvage had been professionalised, the effect of these in Basutoland

was qualified by their being centred on South African universities and the impacts of people continuing to do pre-professional work that was accepted by a community of peers.

This point is, I suggest, important to understanding the trajectory of salvage and rock art. The latter was a fixture of archaeology rather than anthropology, although this certainly never precluded interpretations of the art derived from historical or contemporary ethnography. Indeed, views of the art and its creators as disappearing or already vanished were implicit in early twentieth-century treatments (promoted internationally by scholars like Abbé Henri Breuil) of South African rock art as analogous to the deep-time arts of the European Palaeolithic. This facilitated the imbrication of the South African past in national political agendas and narratives – particularly white supremacist, settler ones (Dubow 2019). At the level of the field, figures like How helped these ideas take root by working in a literally un-disciplined manner that developed a locally recognizable set of methods yoking a salvage sensibility to archaeology. These idiosyncratic ways of working were enabled and affirmed by the continued existence of networks whose roots in the late nineteenth century intelligentsia described above conferred access to respectability and authority.

3. The deep time of Marion Walsham How

In many ways, How's research exemplified the eclectic interests in natural and cultural history that characterized earlier generations of colonial intellectuals. She published on veterinary medicine (including the history of the Basotho pony) and early nineteenth century history (How 1954), in addition to rock art. As mentioned above, How joined a dynasty of missionary-scholars founded by her grandfather among the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS) and perpetuated by his descendants who produced works on palaeontology, archaeology, and ethnology, among others (e.g. Ellenberger 1956). The continuation of Ellenberger's scholarly legacy and commitment to Basutoland is embodied by his voluminous archive, created during the course of his own historical research and subsequently emended, catalogued, expanded, and stewarded by each successive generation from the early 1910s. This archive provided the historical basis for what would become *Mountain Bushmen*, although there is no indication that How was pursuing historical

questions at the time she embarked on her fieldwork with Mapote. Instead, her field activities were heavily influenced by an interest in the relationship between art and time, and her ethnographic approach aimed to address this specifically.

In draft texts for what would become *Mountain Bushmen* (produced nearly 30 years after her November 1930 meeting with Mapote), How writes that the idea for her work with Mapote came from reading Frédéric Christol's 1911 *L'art dans L'Afrique Australe*, specifically a passage in which he notes that 'art is always hereditary'.[6] Interestingly, Christol's text does not say this precisely, and perhaps the closest comment to this effect is his description of Bushmen as 'artistes inconscients' ('unconscious artists'). *L'art* represents an example of the hybrid travelogue-ethnological history genre common across southern Africa in the nineteenth century, and Christol was a part of the PEMS network described above. The book subscribes to a view resonant with George Stow's: art attributable to Bushmen was a form of history-writing, displaying a level of acumen comparable to Assyrian bas reliefs and Egyptian frescoes but destroyed through contact with other African peoples, whose dislike of Bushmen coexisted with a desire to (poorly, in his view) emulate their style.

That How engaged with Christol's suggestion of art as unconscious speaks to the idea that art cannot be learned but is biologically embedded; that she interpreted this as hereditary (almost certainly not a mis-translation, as she spoke French) suggests a concern with the transmissibility of the art. Consequently, when 'servants in the kitchen' at How's home in Qacha's Nek put her in contact with Mapote as a someone knowledgeable about painting her interest in his background and biography formed a key part of her enquiry.[7] As Mapote executed paintings on a pair of stones in How's garden (Figure 2), he narrated not only details about his family life and memories of growing up in the southern Maloti-Drakensberg Mountains, as well as his painting technique.[8]
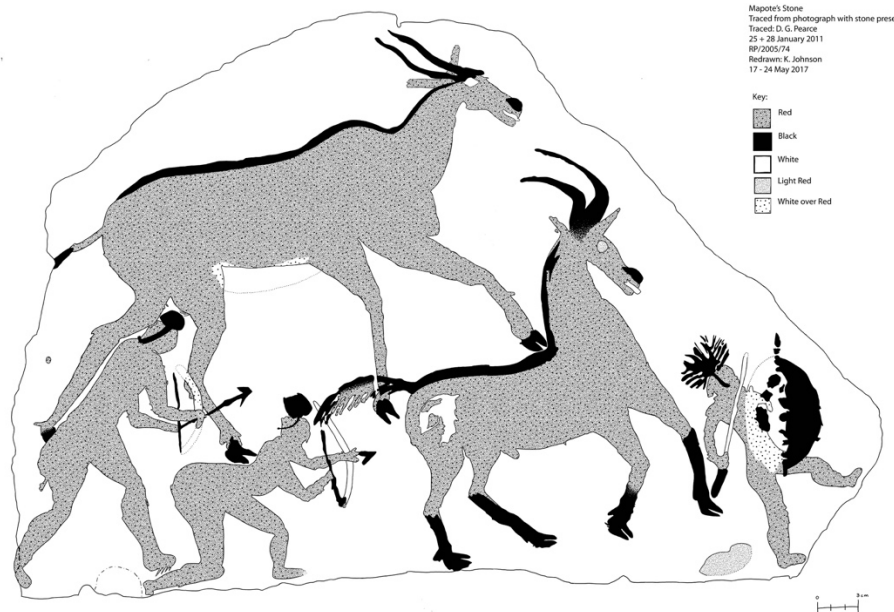
Figure 2. Re-drawing of Mapote's Stone. Drawing by Kiah Johnson, image courtesy RARI.

How's family relocated to other bureaucratic postings across Basutoland and furlough in England during the roughly two decades between meeting Mapote and assembling what would become *Mountain Bushmen*. Within that intervening period, How commissioned a second painting experiment from a man called Masitisi (the same name as the town in which he produced his art) (Figure 3).[9] As I note elsewhere (King et al. 2021), this piece of art production was much less meticulously documented than Mapote's and How's scathing critique of Masitisi's work ('I was not as impressed with Masitisi as I was with old Mapote.'[10]) supported conclusions not only that the former possessed more authentic knowledge but that How possessed the requisite acumen to tell the difference.

Figure 3. Masitisi's painting on the wall of Quthing Residency. Image courtesy RARI.

When How began compiling research for *Mountain Bushmen* in the 1950s, she had developed an awareness of two key themes that would inform the book: the need for a more thorough historical understanding of Moorosi's polity (Mapote's family and cultural background) and the wider, long-term campaigns of violence and assimilation waged against San people in the region. The former led her to the Ellenberger family archive in Morija, and specifically to an unpublished volume that D.F. Ellenberger failed to complete before his death but which featured a large body of archival and oral historical material on the subject (King 2019: 80). Notes and marginalia in the archive, along with personal correspondence, indicate that How was soliciting sources to build on Ellenberger's work, including from respected local historians like Ronald Stretton Webb.[11] This was a process of collaboration among family, friends, and university colleagues as well as an individual research exercise: How's notes indicate that her work in the archive included consultation with her mother on French translations and her uncle René to catalogue material;[12] she sent specimens of Mapote's pigments to the University of the Witwatersrand for analysis;[13] and the artwork for *Mountain Bushmen* was provided by James Walton, another highly-regarded imperial administrator and polymath perhaps best known for his foundational work on traditional architecture in southern Africa (see Lupuwana 2021 for an analysis of this legacy). How's

personal understanding of San persecution developed through these lines of communication, as well as her acquaintance with military and government officers personally involved in carrying out these aggressions.[14]

The manuscript and publication resulting from this work exemplifies the variety of intellectual exercises possible within a salvage paradigm. That she saw her fieldwork in these terms was made abundantly clear in the final outputs, as she illustrated with a particularly poignant statement by Mapote:

> He thought of asking some old friends to come and [paint] with him. 'I will ask ….. I will ask …..'. He put his hand over his eyes and said again 'I will ask …..'. Then he took his hand from his eyes, looked at me and said, 'They are all dead that I could ask'.[15]

While she acknowledged the role of government-led violence and territorial encroachment, she also invoked the view that Bushmen were subject to comparable disdain and dehumanisation from African people (e.g. 'The Basuto may have scorned and looked down on the Bushmen, but there is no doubt that Bushman art, and their knowledge of poisons far surpassed that of the Basuto.'[16]). However, How stands out from her contemporaries in that her historical treatments of the Maloti-Drakensberg and Mapote's life there take seriously the potentials for syncretic identities. In How's framing, these were political identities separate from cultural and racial ones: she acknowledged Moorosi's ability to build a coalition from a range of diverse peoples but Mapote's statements about painting separately from half-Bushmen relatives illustrate what she perceived as the limits of this cooperation.

Within this historical framework, comparison and context are at the heart of How's analysis, and allow her to posit an argument not only of deep time but also of the potential for salvaging its art. This draws on her ability to connect ethnographic data from Mapote and Masitisi and her own visual literacy established through experience viewing regional rock art (King et al. 2021). Such an exercise led How to make a favourable comparison of Mapote's art with Masitisi's, but she qualifies this with an appeal that leads, ultimately, to salvage:

> It seemed to me when looking at the paintings of Mapote and Masitisi that I could see two differences between real Bushmen paintings and theirs. Even when Mapote was

painting on a piece of rock that was too small, his figures and animals were large—so were those of Masitisi. But even if the little yellow men had a whole cave wall to paint on, the figures and cattle they painted were unusually small. Their pictures were much more full of life and movement, as if they enjoyed depicting energetic lively happenings.[17]

Mapote's art may have been the more accomplished of the two but comparison with the wider corpus of art in the Maloti-Drakensberg illustrated what for her was a decline from these examples of earlier, more accomplished art. Taken with Mapote's comment about having no one left to ask, How suggests that the disappearance of the skill necessary to make this high art is relatively recent. For How, then, deep time could be relatively shallow – within living memory, albeit memory qualified by the supposed imperfection of the skills necessary to transmit that memory fully (i.e. the act of painting). This is certainly consonant with evolutionist and diffusionist perspectives alike that treated San (and forager populations globally) as living relics (Bank 2000; Barnard 2006).

However, the significance of How's work for thinking about rock art and salvage comes from the test of her hypothesis about the heritability of art. While she never claims this in specific terms, the clear conclusion of *Mountain Bushmen* is that it is not: despite a well-established history of varied relationships among different groups of people, How effectively identified a specific horizon to authentic, Bushman art production during the nineteenth century. She further argued (through Mapote's and Masitisi's art) that painting was not a skill to be learned but something innate. As described earlier, racialised conceptions of rock art were an established feature of thinking about the deep past in southern Africa that pre-dated How's birth, let alone her fieldwork. That fieldwork, though, provided essential empirical scaffolding for these ideas: she obtained first-person testimony which she crafted into an ethnographic narrative in support of disappearing artists; she provided a timeline on which to pinpoint this disappearance; and she undermined arguments for hereditary claims to authorship or other connection to extant, fine-line art.

Mountain Bushmen was published largely as a piece of popular writing (newspapers like *The Pretoria News* praised it as 'informative and enchanting'[18]) rather than an academic work, although she certainly had experience of the latter genre. However, I suggest that it

was the book's somewhat delayed incorporation into the archaeological canon as an analogical resource that carried its visions of rock art salvage forward.

4. Canon and commons

Globally, rigorous use of ethnographic data (a large amount of which could be characterised as salvage, Monney 2015) within rock art studies was encouraged by the structuralist turn of the 1950s-1980s (Conkey 2001). Perhaps more than any other geographical research area, southern African scholarship drew critically and extensively on its wealth of ethnographic records to interpret rock art through analogical and direct historical approaches. *Mountain Bushmen* was drawn into this work where Mapote's descriptions of painting techniques resonated with this broader ethnographic corpus – particularly where they supported a view of producing and consuming rock art as a holistic, embodied experience (Lewis-Williams and Dowson 1990; Lewis-Williams and Pearce 2004: 101-2). This trajectory, however, has meant that many of How's underlying assumptions have gone unchallenged and the elements of Mapote's and Masitisi's biographies unique to them and to their homes in the Maloti-Drakensberg have faded from view as immaterial to the construction of ethnographic analogies. Her vision of salvage has been accepted into canon along with the fieldwork details that she reported.

Indeed, How's account has been further validated by anthropological work concerned with the appropriateness of modern Maloti-Drakensberg communities as analogues for archaeological ones. Responding to critiques of archaeology's use of ethnographic analogy, anthropologists like Pieter Jolly (1996), David Hammond-Tooke (1998), and Frans Prins (1994, 2009) turned to contemporary ethnographic studies from the region to demonstrate the long-term dynamism and fluidity of these cultures, including 'secret' claims to ancestral descent from San people. Mapote's statements became implicated in this debate, used to bolster evidence for the assimilation of San within communities like Moorosi's. Inasmuch as these arguments used acculturation as a way to qualify the use of analogical rock art interpretation (urging caution when proclaiming the quality of 'fit' across ethnographic and archaeological sources), they tacitly accepted How's central conclusion that such

acculturation – along with its stigmatisation – could represent an obstacle to the transmission of knowledge about painting.

Of course, time and the reconfigurations of longstanding livelihoods and families complicate or inhibit sharing creative practices, not just art production. And of course, rock art dated to 5,000 years BP cannot be attributed to a distinct set of living constituents (Bonneau et al. 2017). But the notion that, when it comes to rock art, authorship rather than use is the primary mode of identifying people with art has been a key point of tension within both the scholarship and management of painted sites for decades. The same body of assimilationist ethnography just described indicated the significance of fine-line art to present-day communities for whom paintings represent a source of healing and potency (Jolly 1999). Concerns over balancing access to these sites (which often serve as shelters for herders and age-set initiation settings) for people living locally to them with preservation of the art itself has generated a vast body of participatory programmes and research projects critiquing heritage practices that privilege management-through-exclusion over valid forms of custodianship (e.g. Ndlovu 2009; Mokoena 2018).

These marginalising policies are the result not only of loss-averse instincts within archaeology (much-criticised and rejected by many involved in heritage management), but national heritage legislation. Writing of South Africa's post-democratisation heritage agendas, Lindsay Weiss (2008: 55-56) has argued that invoking the 'timeless time' of a mythologised San past as a foundation from which to build a vision of a unified society risks reifying the distance between that past and a more diverse, dynamic present. The decision of the post-1994 ANC government to adopt a national coat of arms proclaiming 'unity in diversity' in an extinct Khoisan language and borrowing stylistically from rock art imagery further underscores that distance (Smith et al. 2000). In Lesotho, national heritage legislation draws a similar line between the deep past of rock art and the immediate, personal relevance of a past grounded in the founding of the Basotho nation (King 2019: 227). Of course, rock art was produced in both Lesotho and South Africa into the twentieth century; at its founding and today Lesotho is home to a number of political-cultural identities other than

Basotho; and major tourist sites like Wildebeest Kuil attempt to rectify the distance between the San past and the present through a focus on landscapes of layered rock arts and identities (Morris 2014). But the widespread persistence of this distance and its affirmation in how heritage is managed – especially the premise that stakeholder communities must make their claim to rights and ownership based on authorship *as well as or instead of* use – has cast traditional rock art as a particular form of public commons: finite, non-renewable, belonging to everyone and no one at the same time but subject to experts and the state when collective publics are deemed to fail in their caretaking (Alonso González 2014: 363).

To be clear, I am not claiming a direct line from How's research to these policies, not least because both salvage and commons went through numerous paradigm shifts within South Africa during the lifespan of her work; a detailed history of those paradigms and their translation into policy would be a welcome addition to our knowledge. I am, instead, arguing that How's work represents an illuminating waypoint in the history of ideas within archaeology, and how these have carried forward notions of salvage and commons premised on particular conceptions of disappearance, descent, and the deep past. This is a history demanding more examination than is possible here, and of which I have not even scratched the surface. But the story of How, Mapote, and the life of this work outside of the field indicates the need to take seriously how these projects resonate throughout disciplines and practices, especially as these find their way into the public sphere as heritage.

5. Concluding thoughts

Archaeology and rock art studies in particular have dedicated sustained focus to historiographic critique of the ethnographic sources and sensibilities that are brought to bear on interpreting the past. I have aimed to demonstrate here that the informal, often improvisational research habits that characterise How's fieldwork is a crucial place to begin undertaking this sort of epistemic revision. The field and long-term practices of revisiting this are particularly significant sites of knowledge production, and should be understood alongside other intellectual currents that intersect with more formal, public-facing spheres. This is particularly relevant for settler contexts, in which networks of informal research

persist and retain authority, becoming enmeshed in later institutions and collegial relationships. Picking apart this mesh is, I suggest, well within archaeologists' remit both for the potential to identify how presumptions about disappearance, salvage, and so on become commonsense, and also because they afford the opportunity to recover perspectives like Mapote's and Masitisi's that are easily subsumed within How's own narrative.

Further, I suggest that we can push this farther and with greater awareness of the (re-)connections between habits of thinking about the past and policies for managing heritage in the present. What would an archaeological approach to rock art rendering authorship and its scarcity as one among many potential determinants of value look like? Could this offer a way out of the notion of a 'disappearing' San past that has been so tenacious, and that How's work sedimented into the official record? More urgently, could this validate understandings of heritage value derived from use and custodianship? I am not suggesting that this offers licence to dispense with rock art preservation, but rather to shift the conceptions of scarcity, value, and commons that underpin this – to escape, in other words, a salvage paradigm that we are still operating under.

6. Acknowledgments

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[1] Morija Museum and Archives (henceforth MMA), David-Frédéric Ellenberger Papers (henceforth DFEP), Manuscript for *Mountain Bushmen of Basutoland*, p. 11.

[2] *Ibid*., 14.

[3] *Ibid.*, 12-3.

[4] It is interesting to note that in this same keynote Haddon's urging for detailed description of how cultural units came to be juxtaposes South Africa's anthropological priorities with archaeological ones. See King forthcoming for this.

[5] This contrasts with the early American mode of professional salvage ethnography that strongly emphasized folklore (Redman 2021).

[6] MMA, DFEP, Manuscript, p. 10.

[7] *Ibid*., 10. One newspaper article covering *Mountain Bushmen*'s release reports that Mapote was the father of one of these servants; this is not indicated anywhere in How's research archive; cf. 'She knows the secret,' 20 March 1962, *The Pretoria News*'.

[8] *Ibid.*, 12-13.

[9] The drafts and published version of *Mountain Bushmen* suggest that How met Masitisi after her work with Mapote, although her 1930 field notes describe Masitisi's painting in their final paragraphs immediately after her description of Mapote's art. It is possible that this represents her remembering Masitisi's painting and relating this to Mapote's during her fieldwork, in which case Masitisi's painting came first. It is also possible that she re-used her notebook when she met Masitisi shortly after working with Mapote. There is no indication in the notes themselves to confirm either scenario, and Masitisi's rather ambiguous role within How's research activities would be illuminated slightly differently in each. Here and elsewhere (King et al. 2021) I proceed cautiously taking How at her word. See MMA, MWHP, 'Notes taken end of November 1930 from Mapote the son of Moorosi at Qachas Nek'.

[10] MMA, DFEP, Manuscript, 24.

[11] MMA, Marion Walsham How Papers, R.S. Webb to M.W. How, 24 May 1958.

[12] MMA, DFEP, Manuscript for *History of the Basuto*, Third Period, undated.

[13] MMA, DFEP, Manuscript, 24.

[14] *Ibid*., 33.

[15] *Ibid.*,12.
[16] *Ibid.*, 23.
[17] *Ibid.*, 28.
[18] 'She knows the secret,' 20 March 1962, *The Pretoria News*.