ON ROCK-ENGRAVINGS OF ANIMALS AND THE HUMAN FIGURE, THE WORK OF SOUTH AFRICAN ABORIGINES, AND THEIR RELATION TO SIMILAR ONES FOUND IN NORTHERN AFRICA

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ON ROCK-ENGRAVINGS OF ANIMALS AND THE HUMAN
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By L. PÉRINGUEY.

Plates XII., XIII., XIV.

(Read May 30, 1906.)

Figures engraved on hard rocks have been known in South Africa for some time. They are far from uncommon, along the banks of the Vaal River from Vereeniging in the Transvaal, where they have been quite lately discovered, to its junction with the Orange River, and also along that river; they have been found in the Klerksdorp District, in the Transvaal, have been reported from Kuruman, and are known to occur in the vicinity of Vryburg. They are found in the Victoria West and Britstown Districts of the Cape Colony, in Prieska, Clanwilliam, and Beaufort West; are said to occur in the Middleburg District, Cape Colony, in the Kalahari, and lately they have been discovered in Humansdorp. A systematic search for these interesting relics will probably lead to their discovery in many other parts of the Cape Colony and elsewhere in South Africa. I am not aware of any of them having been met with north of the localities mentioned, and the rock carvings found in Southern Rhodesia are pronounced to be altogether different from those which form the subject of this paper.

But it is not in South Africa only that these "rock-engravings," or "graffiti," or "rupestres" are found.

Barth, during his journey in Africa, discovered rock-engravings which, from his description, as well as from the vignette he gives, are of a workmanship very similar to, if not identical with, those met with in South Africa. On two occasions he mentions this discovery in his "Travels in Africa," London, 1857 (vol. i., chap. xii., p. 293):

"Notwithstanding our perilous situation, I could not help straying about, and found on the blocks over the tebki, or pond, some coarse rock-sculptures representing oxen, asses, and a very tall animal which, according to the Kéb-owi, was intended to represent the giraffe." Barth was then to the north-west of Lake Chad.

(*Ibid.*, chap. ix., p. 196, cum fig.): "Scarcely had we pitched our tents, when we became aware that the valley contained some remarkable sculptures deserving our particular attention. The spot where we had pitched our tents afforded a very favourable locality for commemorating any interesting events; and the sandstone blocks which studded it were covered with drawings representing various subjects, more or less in a state of preservation. With no pretensions to be regarded as finished sculptures, they are made with a firm and steady hand, well accustomed to such work, and, being cut to a great depth, bore a totally different character from what is generally met with in these tracts. The most interesting sculpture represented the following subject, the description of which I am, unfortunately, able at present to accompany with only an imperfect woodcut, &c." (Fig. 12).

FIG. 12.

"The sculpture represents a group of three individuals of the following character and arrangements. To the left is seen a tall human figure, with the head of a peculiar kind of bull, with long horns turned forward and broken at the point; instead of the right arm he has a peculiar organ terminating like an oar, while in the left hand he carries an arrow and a bow—at least such is the

appearance—though it might be mistaken for a shield; between his legs a long tail is seen hanging down from his slender body. The posture of this figure is bent forward, and all its movements are well represented. Opposite to this curious individual is another one of no less remarkable character, but of smaller proportions, entirely human as far up as the shoulders, while the head is that of an animal which reminds us of the Egyptian ibis without being identical with it. The small pointed head is furnished with three ears, or with a pair of ears and some other excrescence, and beyond with a sort of hood, &c.; over the fore part of the head is a round line representing some ornament, or perhaps the basilisc. This figure likewise has a bow in its right hand, but, as it would seem, no arrow, while the left hand is turned away from the body. Between these two half-human figures, which are in a hostile attitude, is a bullock, small in proportion to the adjacent lineaments of the human figure, but chiselled with the same care and the same skilful hand, with the only exception that the feet are omitted, the legs terminating in points—a defect which I shall have occasion to notice also in another sculpture. There is another peculiarity about this figure—the upper part of the bull, by some accident, having been hollowed out, while in general all the inner part between the deeply-chiselled outlines of these sculptures is left in high relief. The animal is turned with its back towards the figure on the right, whose bow it seems about to break. The block on which it was sculptured was about four feet in breadth and three in height. It was lying loose on the top of the cliff.”

Barth, of course, proceeds to attribute to these sculptures an Egyptian origin, but those acquainted with Bushman paintings and the mythical subjects often represented by them, will see there the delineation of a myth, one of the actors being the Ibex; the other personage may be perhaps “Heitsi-Eibit,” the one-legged man, a famous person in the mythology of the Khoi Khoi. This suggestion is not so hazardous as it might at first appear. I give (Fig. 13) a reproduction by a Bushman artist of two mythological personages having a confabulation. The head and neck, which are painted white, are those of the South African Rheebock, or perhaps of the Duiker antelope; the rest of the body is human and painted red. In Barth’s vignette the head is what is known to the Egyptologists under the name of “Ibex,” and is similar to that occurring on pottery and other remains of the pre-dynastic Egyptian race.*

Of course it is not an *Ibex*, because the horns of that wild goat

* Cf. earthenware box of the Predynastic Period figured in “Budge’s Egypt in the Neolithic and Archaic Period,” vol. i., 1902, p. 98, Lond.

sweep backwards, but it might be the representation of the *Dorcas* or the Seemering gazelle, the horns of which are somewhat long and slender and their tips turned inwards and forwards.

Owing to the gradual penetration of the French into the Sudan, there has been brought lately to light the presence of "rock-engravings" in the southern part of Algeria, and especially in the "In Salah" region, some 1,100 miles as the crow flies from the northern part of the Lake Chad, and somewhat in the direction of

FIG. 13.

the locality mentioned by Barth, but also further south. The Arabic name is there, "the written stones."

A careful examination of these engravings has shown that they are of two kinds.

Not only the technique differs, but also the reproduced figures, and the patination is different according to M. G. B. Flamand, of the Geological Survey of Algeria, who discovered and investigated those relics.* In several places he was able to find representations of *Bubalus antiquus*, an extinct species of Buffalo, whose surviving ally is the "Arni" or Indian Buffalo. Distinguishing between these engravings and others attributed to a Lybico-Berber race, M. Flamand says, "Prehistoric man possessed a sense of drawing, and although he never took perspective into account, he

* "L'Anthropologie," vol. ii., p. 555. 1900. Paris.

has produced faithful representations which are not without a good deal of spirit. The representations are *line drawings*, the depth of the lines varying from 5 to 12 mm., and they have a thick patination. The Lybico-Berber is not such a good artist, and its work consists of *pointing* (pointillage); figures of that period are much less darkly patinated, and it is quite easy to distinguish the former from the latter. Moreover, this pointing covers, in several places, the prehistoric engravings which represent a fauna no longer existing in the country; the elephant, the rhinoceros, the buffalo have disappeared. In the Lybico-Berber engravings the reproduc-

FIG. 14.

tions are that of alphabetical signs, or of animals still living in the region," &c.

In the figure given by Pomel in his paper on *Bubalus antiquus*, Duv.,* and here reproduced, it is easy to recognise in the background the *Rhinoceros simus*, from the manner it carries its head. Pomel, who did not know the animal, mistakes it for the wart-hog, *Phacochoerus aethiopicus*. Flamand is therefore justified in concluding that it is impossible to admit that an artist might have depicted by pure chance, and in several places, an animal which no longer existed at the time he made a figure of it—figures the authenticity of which are corroborated by a study of the reconstructed skeleton.† Thus at

* "Carte Géologique de l'Algérie *Bubalus Antiquus*," by A. Pomel. Alger, 1893.

† Pomel, *loc. cit.*, p. 81 *et sequit.* The figure is almost of the size of the animal, viz., 1m. 71c. at the shoulder, 1m. 53c. at the hindquarters. The restoration of the animal gives 1m. 85c. and 1m. 70c. respectively as the height of these parts.

very remote time (recent quarternary) there were in Algeria artists sufficiently observant and skilled to represent faithfully the animals they then saw, by using stone implements as tools, just as in the grottoes of Aquitaine, prehistoric man engraved on bones, or other material, figures of the reindeer, the aurochs, the bear or the mammoth, so proving his contemporaneity with these animals.

I may add that the remains of a buffalo of gigantic size, allied to, but differing by the shape of the horns, from the Northern African Buffalo, *i.e.*, *Bubalus bairdi*, have been discovered in South Africa;* and that I found with its remains stone implements which I believe, however, to be of a posterior date.

Foureaux, in his exploration of the Sahara, has met in what he calls Zone X, in the mountains and plateaux of the Northern Touaregs, rock-engravings comparable to those first mentioned by Barth,† and these he describes as follows (p. 1087):—

" . . . smooth walls of granite of great height; these vertical rocks are covered with designs (dessins) of all kinds: men, giraffes, antelopes, (?) ‡ horses, ostriches, bustards, guinea-fowls. These representations have been obtained by means of numerous punchings, not simple lines, but lines formed by a sort of closely-set pointing produced by numerous blows, and giving to the line a certain width. These engravings are covered by numerous inscriptions in Tifnagh and Arabic characters, crossing in all directions; the line of the latter is finer, and the workmanship is different. . . . On the banks of the Ouad Tidek, rise numerous rounded hillocks (mamelons), natural, not artificial, and consisting of large blocks of gneiss or granite with more or less flat surfaces. Most of these blocks are covered with rock-engravings (sculptures rupestres) representing men with large phalli, antelopes with or without horns, giraffes, ostriches, guinea-fowls, &c. In those, as in the ones above mentioned, the outline is produced by a sort of pointing, and they have likewise numerous inscriptions in Tifnagh or Arabic characters engraved across them."

In one spot, however, the traveller found the representation of an antelope, 73 cm. long by 51 cm. high, engraved in simple line, and he adds: "Further south (than the mountains where live the northern Touaregs) I did not meet with any inscriptions, but I know that in the mountainous parts of the Air one comes across a fair number of these rock-engravings."

* Orange River Colony, Basutoland; Darling, Cape Colony.

† "Documents scientifiques de la Mission Saharienne," par F. Foureaux. Paris, 1905.

‡ The query is mine.

If we turn to the South African engraved stones we notice that the workmanship differs from that of the prehistoric "rupestres" of Northern Africa. All those that I have examined or of which I have seen photographs, are made by pointing or punching, not by line drawing, except one which pertains to both these processes. The technique is thus similar to that of the Touareg country.*

The depth of this pointing is variable.

In the figs. of Plate XII., the punching is deep and uneven, the surface is a shaley quartzite, naturally well polished.

Fig. 1 is a very good delineation, on the same kind of rock, of the Koodoo (*Strepsiceros kudu*).

Fig. 2 is that of an undetermined, somewhat unreal antelope, possibly meant to represent the Blue Wildebeest (*Connochastes taurinus*).

These two figures come from the Klerksdorp District in the Transvaal, and are probably the work of the same artist.

Fig. 3 is a giraffe, no longer drawn in outline only; the body is also pointed or etched; towards the edge of the slab is seen the head of another giraffe.

Fig. 4 is an ostrich; the reproduction is excellent; there also the body is etched, and the attitude is perfect.

Mr. C. J. Swierstra, of the Pretoria Museum, has sent me excellent photographs of work of the same technique and also found in Klerksdorp. They represent either the Guinea-fowl, or, more probably, the large bustard or Gom Paw (*Otis kori*), the Cape Ant-eater (*Orycteropus capensis*), the Gemsbok, the Eland, &c.

These engravings with deep, broad, intaglio pointings may be very ancient or not. The surface of the rock and the lines of the animals do not show much trace of weathering. But the same cannot be said of the engravings found along the banks of the Orange River or of the Vaal River. There the rock chosen is the smooth surface of boulder-like masses of weathered dolerite, or diabase.

Fig. 5 of Plate XIII. is incomprehensible. It is impossible to say if hieroglyphs are meant, or if it is merely the expression of a whimsical fancy on the part of the engraver. The lines, for they are lines rather than pointings, are the deepest I have yet seen.

Fig. 6 represents a Gemsbok (*Oryx gazella*) checking itself while at full speed before the extraordinary object set before it; at an angle of the face of the rock is a similar figure which, not having

* Line drawings have, however, been discovered quite lately of a far superior type, and will be the subject of another note.

been chalked, does not appear in the figure. Is it intended to alarm the game and drive it into another direction? I am informed by Mr. C. E. Stewart that he has seen many similar figures that look like pegged-out skins near Kuruman on rocks forming the bottom of a "pan."

Fig. 7 is that of an Ostrich seemingly rising.

Fig. 8 is that of the Wildebeest. Judging from the shape of the horns it is not the Black Wildebeest (*Connochaetes gnu*), which is there represented, but its ally, the Brindled Gnu (*Connochaetes taurinus*), which is found now further north only. The attitude of the animal, which is so remarkable owing to the great sloping of the hindquarters, is admirably reproduced.

On other stones are depicted, among others, a two-horned rhinoceros and an equine animal, probably a zebra, &c. The original rock-engravings are in the South African Museum. The hollowed parts have been very carefully touched with chalk to bring them out clearly enough to be photographed, because the figures engraved on the dolerite rock are not deep; many seem to have weathered away at the same ratio as the surface of the rock itself; in many the patina is almost that of the untouched rock surface, or the outline and etched parts are worn out nearly flush with the original plane of the rock. Most of them would be passed unnoticed even by people in search of them, except when dew or rain has been retained in the very shallow cavities. Personally I think that some specimens of this type of rock engravings are extremely ancient.

Figs. 9 and 10 of Plate XIV. are a good representation of such engraved stones photographed *in situ*. They were kindly sent me by Mr. F. B. Parkinson, who writes: "One of the stones is within a few yards of the other, and the engraving is not apparently so old, as photographs show it without whitening. The bird in left-hand bottom corner is evidently a recent production." This is probably the true explanation. The surface of one stone has undergone more weathering than the other because it is of an older date. The texture of the stone is the same, and the exposition identical. It may be argued that this Karroo dolerite, in spite of its hard texture, weathers away very rapidly, or that the depth of the engravings will greatly depend on the depth of the crust of the surface. But the depth of the pointing does not vary much in the engravings from the neighbourhood of the Orange River Colony observed by or sent to me by Mr. Parkinson. The tools used for the work have been found *in situ*. They are flakes with well-rounded, uneven, worn-out points, made from a shale hardened by the intrusion of dolerite, and

they have a very distinct patination. On one very large boulder, the smooth surface of which bears the reproduction of a rhinoceros, and also of probably a zebra, *which are no longer clearly defined*, the crust of the under surface on which the boulder rested is of the same thickness as that of the smooth upper surface, although it was certainly more protected in that situation from weathering agencies, and the wearing away of the engraving must have taken a very considerable time. There is also another reason why some of these inscriptions should prove to be very ancient. They are not always found on the Karroo dolerite mentioned above, but also on the *glaciated* surface of diabase rocks forming at Riverton the bed, and at other places the banks of the Vaal River. They have not been obliterated either by the flow of water or by ordinary weathering. There is no reason to believe that the etchings were originally much deeper than the striated glacial lines, but some of them have become very faint. In the Victoria West District the engravings are hardly distinct from the background.

Another kind of technique is recorded by Mr. M. J. Jackson, who states * that while on patrol some thirty-five years ago among the kloofs of the Zwartberg, in the Kenhardt District, Cape Colony, he found a fine engraving *in relief* of an antelope. That is to say, the surroundings of the outline had been chipped away. I have not been able to trace any specimens of this kind.

Rock-engravings made by line drawings are also found in the Cape Colony. My friend, Mr. H. C. Schunke-Hollway, made copies in 1873 at Jagdpanfontein in the district of Kenhardt, Cape Colony, of a number of these. He is quite sure that the engravings were not pointed or punched. In this locality the variety of figures depicted is great. Next to faithful reproductions of an ass-like animal, possibly a zebra, an eland, a kudu, a multi-striped zebra, inferior, however, in delineation to the examples I have mentioned or figured, are depicted fanciful representations of a chameleon, 14 inches long, with its huge tongue protruding, and having a long, erect mane, and the tail of a baboon; a monitor (*Varanes*) has a crest over its nose; a wart-hog (*Phacochærus*) has a third tusk in the shape of a mark of interrogation curving above its head; an eland has a bifid horn shorter than the ears, and is adorned with two twisted appendages in the centre of the face, while an antelope, which, like the eland, is otherwise fairly delineated, bears instead of horns a straight process divaricating at right angles at the top, &c.

* Return showing the Districts and the places within them in which Bushman paintings are known to exist.—*Parliamentary Paper*, 1906.

An examination of these line engravings could, alone, enable one to judge if the technique of the work is really very dissimilar from the engravings done by pointing. I am informed that in the Prince Albert District line engravings, very shallow, are of common occurrence, but as the sketches shown me are those of a woman with European dress, &c., and the lines are merely scratched, they need not be taken here into consideration. Mr. Parkinson informs me that after he had shown some of the men on the farm, hybrid Korannas, the engraved rocks, one of them set immediately to carve one *in line*, but it was a man on horseback.

FIG. 15,

It is worthy of note that the figures of man are very poor in design, and very inferior to those of the animals. Mr. A. du Toit, of the Cape Geological Survey, has very kindly sketched for me the engraving at Warrenton, on the Vaal River, of what appears to be the figure of a baboon in an erect, semi-human attitude; associated with it is a zebra conspicuously striped all over the body. At

Jagdpanfontein there is depicted a man with a malformation of one hand, and provided with an enormous phallus not represented in the figure (Fig. 15).

This is another point of similitude with the "rupestres" mentioned by Foureau, *loc. cit.*, p. 1096.

Stowe, in his book, "The Native Races of South Africa," London, 1905, p. 12, says: "The Bushman tribes with regard to their artistic talents were divided into painters and sculptors, and judging from the relics they have left of their former ownership they entered the widespread territories of South Africa by two different lines of migration. The sculptors moved to the southward as far into the Cape Colony as Beaufort West and the Sneeuwberg. The painters, on the other hand, appear to have advanced through Damaraland along the western coast; on arriving at the great mountain ranges in the south, they turned to the eastward, in which direction they can be traced as far as the mountains opposite Delagoa Bay."

I am of opinion that there is no foundation for a theory based on such artistic considerations, because rock-paintings occur also in places where rock-engravings are found. We know also from the subjects depicted that some of these Bushman paintings have been made within recent times. Such an one is a picture in the Cradock District, Cape Colony, of European soldiers on the march, with the commanding officer on horseback, men with the "bear skin," sappers, &c. This probably represents the landing or parading of English troops at Port Elizabeth at the time of the settlement there. But there is no evidence that "rock-engravings" were made lately.* It is possible, however, that both the arts may have been known or practised at the same time by the same people. The paintings would have decayed, the engravings remained well-nigh imperishable. This possibility would, at first sight, be borne out by the discovery, quite lately made by Mr. J. M. Bain, of a "rock-carving" painted over with red ochre, in the Humansdorp District of the Cape Colony. The place on which this engraving was found is in a narrow gorge, where game pits with the stakes at the bottom were still preserved, and disposed in such a way that a driven animal, if it avoided one could not but fall in the other. It is also equally possible that the bedizening of the engraved part is comparatively a recent act.

The comparison of some of the rock-engravings of Southern Algeria and of those of the Sudan with those of Southern Africa,

* Rev. Westphal, of Iniel, on the Vaal River, assures me that he has seen there a rock-engraving representing a mounted man in the act of seizing a man in flight.

the technique, the subjects reproduced, are strong evidences that the aborigines of the North and those inhabiting at one time South Africa were of one race. The great antiquity of the race that once inhabited Southern Algeria is proven by its representation of pre-historic extinct animals, and representations of such a gigantic size and of extinct animals have not yet been discovered in South Africa it is true, although here also we had a buffalo probably more gigantic still than the one depicted in Northern Africa. But there is evidence all over South Africa of a *palæolithic* Stone Age which cannot be attributed to a Bushman race, and which finds its exact counterpart in Northern Africa and also in the Congo Region. On the other hand, we have also evidence here of a *neolithic*, a recent age, which is ascribable to the Bushman or Strand-Looper, in the shape of the very minute stone implements with numerous secondary chippings, used for boring small disks of ostrich shells. Identical implements and similarly bored ostrich-shell beads are found in Algeria, Tunis, Egypt, the Sudan, and Abyssinia.*

Nor must it be forgotten that the date of the history of Egypt is receding more and more as new discoveries are made; that there existed a pre-dynastic race which retained many of the physical attributes of our modern Bushmen and Hottentots, and that many scientific men of repute are of opinion that these Bushmen, or Hottentots, as we call them here, are the remnants of that race which have moved southward.

* I mention here only one case in point. The others are dealt with in another paper.

TOOLS USED, FOUND *in situ* (see page 408).