

waters of Rhodesia flow into the Makarikari in the rainy season. This was a big camp, but as deserted as the other. We waited there for three hours, to let the overheated engine cool off a little.

By nightfall we had reached the outskirts of Francistown—we'd by then covered something like three hundred and fifty miles since Maun, and since Ghanzi almost a thousand.

Francistown is, in effect, a single street alongside the rail-track which goes from Rhodesia to the Cape. At the Tati Hotel I was immediately worried to find three quite pretty young white women: the manageress, the telephonist from the post office and another "lady." I'd have to keep an eye on Georg! Already he had lost all signs of fatigue and was casting looks in their direction.

"How about fixing up for us to have a drink with one of those ladies, while I set on with parking the truck somewhere and having a shower? I'm covered in Mobiloil."

We'll see about that, I thought to myself. When he had gone I spared myself nothing in behaving so outrageously with these colonial goddesses that they lost no time in beating a retreat . . . rather like the gnus in the Kalahari! When Georg returned there was no sign of them, and I explained what had happened, giving it a rather different slant.

"What prudes!" he muttered. "Isn't that just our luck."

I was getting to like Buchholtz more and more, and just at the moment, in his immaculate shirt and shorts, he made a pleasing sight.

"Buchholtz," I said, "you remind me of an adventurous fellow I met in Lehututu in 1948. You might have heard of him—he had some story of having found the Lost City. His name was J. J."

(In view of the serious remarks from Buchholtz which now follow, I prefer not to give the name of the man in question.)

"Of course I knew him! I'm afraid I didn't care for him very much. I was on good terms with his wife though, shortly before she went and married him. By 1950 she'd had enough of it and walked out on him. So I took up with her where we'd

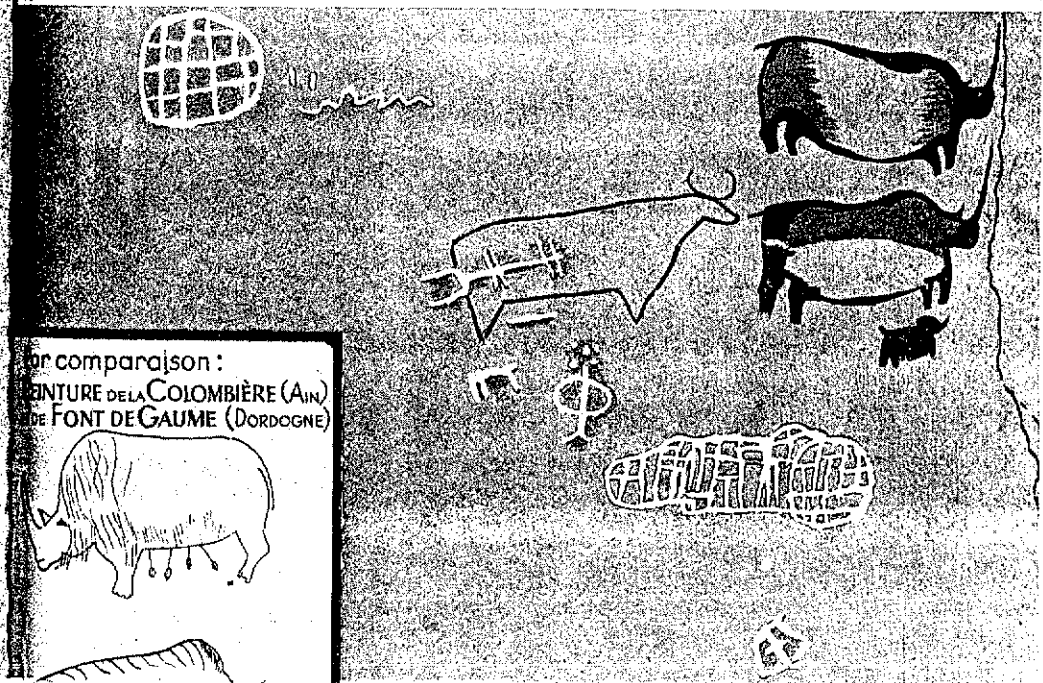


Tsodillo rock paintings: dimensions 16 feet by 10 feet

The most ancient example of bushman art discovered in the Mt. Femelle, estimated to be from 5,000 to 10,000 years old. The life-like polychrome rhinoceros are typical of prehistoric rock decoration.

The paintings in white are recent Bechuana additions.

(inset)—For comparison: paintings at Colombière (Ain) and Font de Gaume (Dordogne)



For comparison:  
PEINTURE DE LA COLOMBIÈRE (AIN)  
DE FONT DE GAUME (DORDOGNE)

than in all the others we saw on the mountain, and they might well date from the very first inhabitants of the Kalahari.\*

The unique thing about these paintings is that they bear no resemblance to any others hitherto found in South Africa, as the eminent Abbé Breuil will confirm.

Although it had been agreed that the Yellow Hunters were among the first men to populate this continent, and that the American scholar Baumann had accorded to them the First Cycle, and although it was even allowed that these people could safely be linked with the prehistoric age on the grounds of the Boskop skeleton—yet there had until now been no work of theirs found with the typical character of caveman art. *Would this Major Painting of Tsodillo prove a definite link with primitive man?* Would it reveal the secret of the antiquity of the Bushmen? The secret could certainly not have been more jealously guarded than here in its stone stronghold in the heart of unexplored African desert.

I knew that there would be plenty of work for the specialists in such matters before anything definite could be said. For the moment all I could do was to take photographs and make sketches, and leave the interpretation of them to others.

The other details of the painting are of less importance. The cow designed in ochre is like one found in caves in the Sahara. It is probably not more than four hundred years old, since there were no grazing cattle in the Kalahari before the advent of the Bantu Bechuanas in the sixteenth century, the land being populated only with the rare Kungs, a hunting people. But as soon as cattle were introduced, they were hunted by the Bushmen much as if they had been common game, which is why they are associated in these paintings with the other wild animals.

I would be glad of Picasso to help me understand the significance of the drawing in white paste. I could distinguish a zigzagging snake and perhaps even a dog in the object shaped like a stool, but any guess I made after that would need a wild stretch of imagination. The Abbé Breuil later made three suggestions. He thought that what looks at first sight like an arrow piercing the cow is in fact the superimposition over the cow at a much later date of a symbolic pair of horns, to

\* M. l'Abbé Breuil estimates it to be about seven thousand years old.

turn it into a horned animal; that you can read into the  $\varphi$  the shape of a man standing with his hands on his hips, as in neolithic Spain, the dots above the outline perhaps standing for eyes, nose, mouth and ear-rings; and finally that the cross in a frame represents a buried person—and *this* was the sign that Kehore Hilli assured me stood for a typical Bushman shield!

As for the criss-crossed lines, I give up! Mauduit thought they were meant for snares of creeper, and had been painted by the natives to bring them luck as they set out on a hunting expedition. Abbé Breuil, on the other hand, thought they represent a hut, or collection of huts, further confused by an attempt to portray the occupants.

At all events, these paintings in a white, kaolin-base paste are in typical Bantu tradition, and therefore fairly recent. One might estimate them to be between fifty and a hundred years old, and they can probably be attributed to the black hunters who pass through Tsodillo to reach the Bushmen and trade with them—spear-heads and pottery for skins and secret medicines.\*

By the time I had taken my photographs and made what notes I could about this lone masterpiece on the interior of the mont Femelle, it was late afternoon. I could delay no longer, for I realised that Mauduit and Bourdelon must long have finished their work and struck camp. I was in luck, for the path came out where I had hoped, in the gap between the two mountains, and thanks to Kehore Hilli's infallible undergrowth-sense, we soon reached the truck.

Mauduit and Bourdelon forgot their own work in their excitement at the rough sketches I had brought back with me. We talked non-stop about the discovery while we ate a hasty meal.

John, meanwhile, was craftily loading up the truck and ostentatiously starting up the engine, doubtless hoping to force my hand and get us to start the return trip without delay. Our men were getting to understand us by now, and they knew that

\* A later enlargement of my colour photograph revealed the faded outline of a hand, also in white paste, between the baby rhino and his mother above him. This hand is characteristic of Bushman art, and, although a kaolin addition to a work in iron oxide, it is probably very old, and not Bantu work.