

The Linton Stone

The Linton Stone is a solid slab of rock measuring about 2m in length. It was removed from the rock face of a cave near Maclear in the Western Cape in 1918 and carefully transported to Cape Town where it is now housed in the South African Museum. The figures on the stone have been used in our national coat of arms. They depict people in an attitude of greeting, thereby showing the transformation of an individual into a social being who is part of a stronger collective unit.



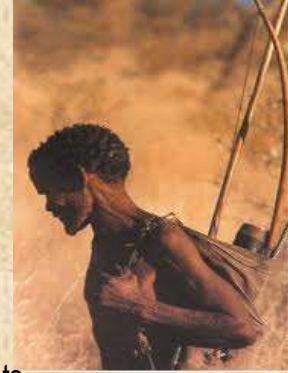
The motto on the South African coat of arms:

!ke e:/xarra //ke

*Originates from the /Xam (Khoisan) language
and means:*

People who are different join together

The San, their art and rituals

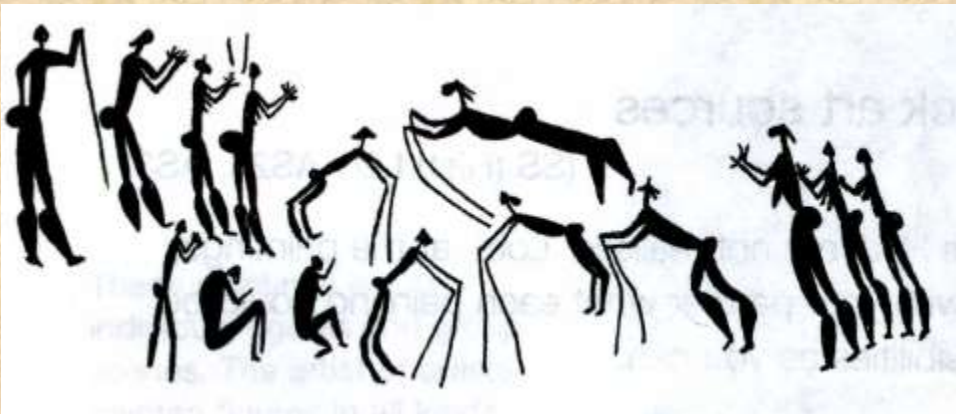


Our Stone Age ancestors have long since disappeared but today we are lucky enough to be able to study the paintings and culture of their descendents, the San. Their artwork depicts everyday life and often has a deeper spiritual meaning.

They are works of art – We could look at *what* they painted *how* they painted it and how well it was done.

They tell us a story about everyday life – We can see paintings as descriptions of the Sans' way of life

They have a spiritual meaning – We can make conclusions from the evidence that the San were a deeply spiritual people who believed in the unnatural.



The women sat around a fire. They clapped and chanted, while other people from the group danced around them. Anyone could dance and try to get into the trance state.

As they danced, some of the dancers gained spiritual energy. The energy became so powerful that the dancers went into a trance. They became "shamans". As shamans they believed that they entered the spirit world, and often felt as if they had changed into another form. They felt that they had become an animal with spiritual healing power – often an eland or a mythical rain animal.

Sometimes during the trance, the shamans felt as if they were flying or swimming. Often blood came out of their noses. Once the trance ended, the shamans believed that their sweat could heal sick people.

The trance dance was very important in hunter-gatherer society in southern Africa. Hunter-gatherers also believed that the dance could bring rain, or bring them success in hunting.

Shamans recorded their visions in rock paintings or engravings.

The Trance Dance

1. What are the people on the left and right sides of the painting doing?
2. What do you think the people in the middle are doing?
3. Why was this dance so important to the San?