

Archaeological and historical sources nevertheless support the claims of the Mbedzi and Lembethu boat-builders that they have inhabited the Soutpansberg for at least five centuries (Loubser in prep.). Historical documents (e.g. Beuster 1879) and archaeological excavations also show that the Venda produced iron locally, and were therefore able to make the necessary tools for carving the boats.

Evidence for boat-building among the black people of Southern Africa is not limited to the Venda alone. According to Bryant (1949) the Zulu people must once have had dug-outs because their language has the word "umkumbi" or "dug-out-trough", a term that Zulus still use for modern boats.

Hoffman wrote that the so-called "boats" depicted in Bushman (San) rock paintings are smaller than the Venda boats, and suggested that the paintings could depict Zulu crafts. He supports this suggestion by stating that there is no independent ethnographic or historical evidence that the San ever used boats. Unfortunately, there is also no ethnohistorical

information about Zulu boats.

Whatever the case may be, recent research on San rock art suggests that while the paintings may look like boats to the European viewer, they could actually depict something else. This is likely because San sometimes painted animals, especially eland, in association with similar boat-like shapes. In other words, our first impressions of other people's cultures are often misleading. Only detailed research into their particular histories and beliefs may yield clues as to what they actually did. Hoffman has shown that it is indeed important that we consider the specific cultures under scrutiny — in order to retrieve information as to the past practices of the people.



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SNUIFDOSIE VERDWYN UIT FRESHFORD-HUISMUSEUM



Gedurende die Desember/Januarie-vakansieseisoen is hierdie koper-snuifdosie, met die voorletters J.G. daarop gegraveer, uit Freshford-Huismuseum gesteel. Alhoewel die kommersiële waarde van die artikel gering is, is dit vir Freshford-Huismuseum van groot kultuurhistoriese waarde, aangesien dit aan die Harrison-familie behoort het. Indien u meer lig op die saak kan werp kom asseblief met die Nasionale Museum in Bloemfontein in aanraking.