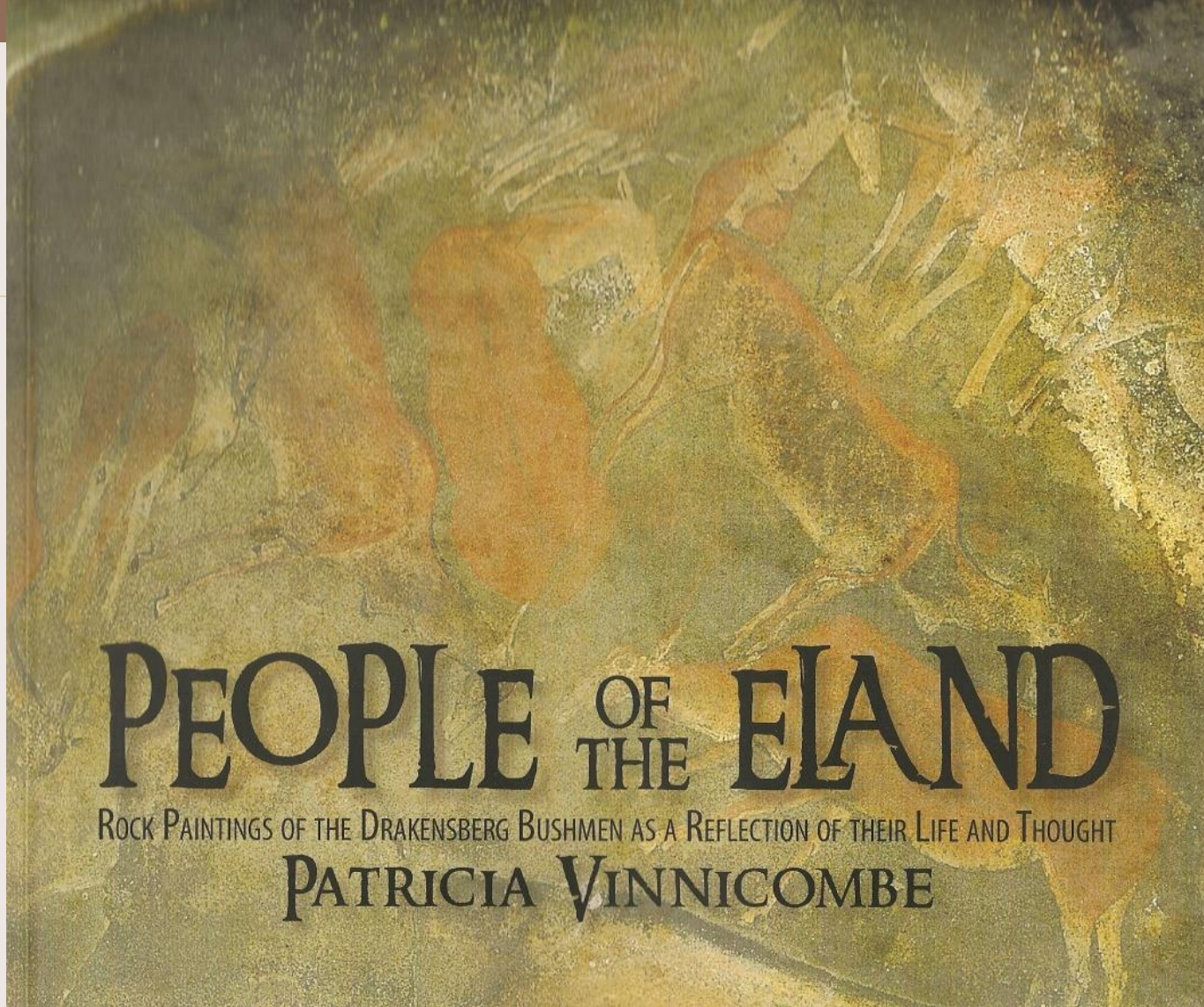


# The Disappearance of the Drakensberg San

Gary Warrick – Contemporary Studies, WLU

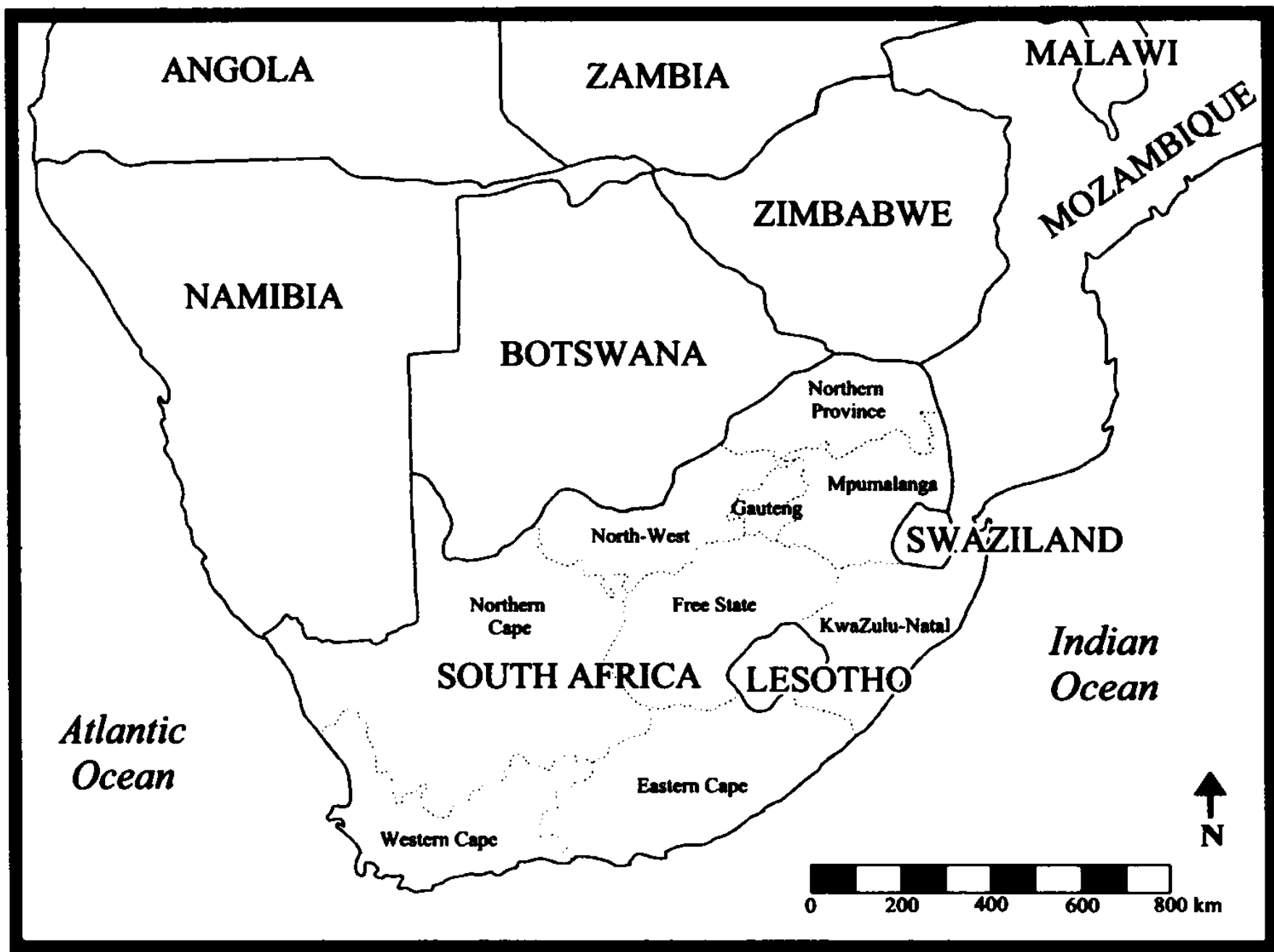




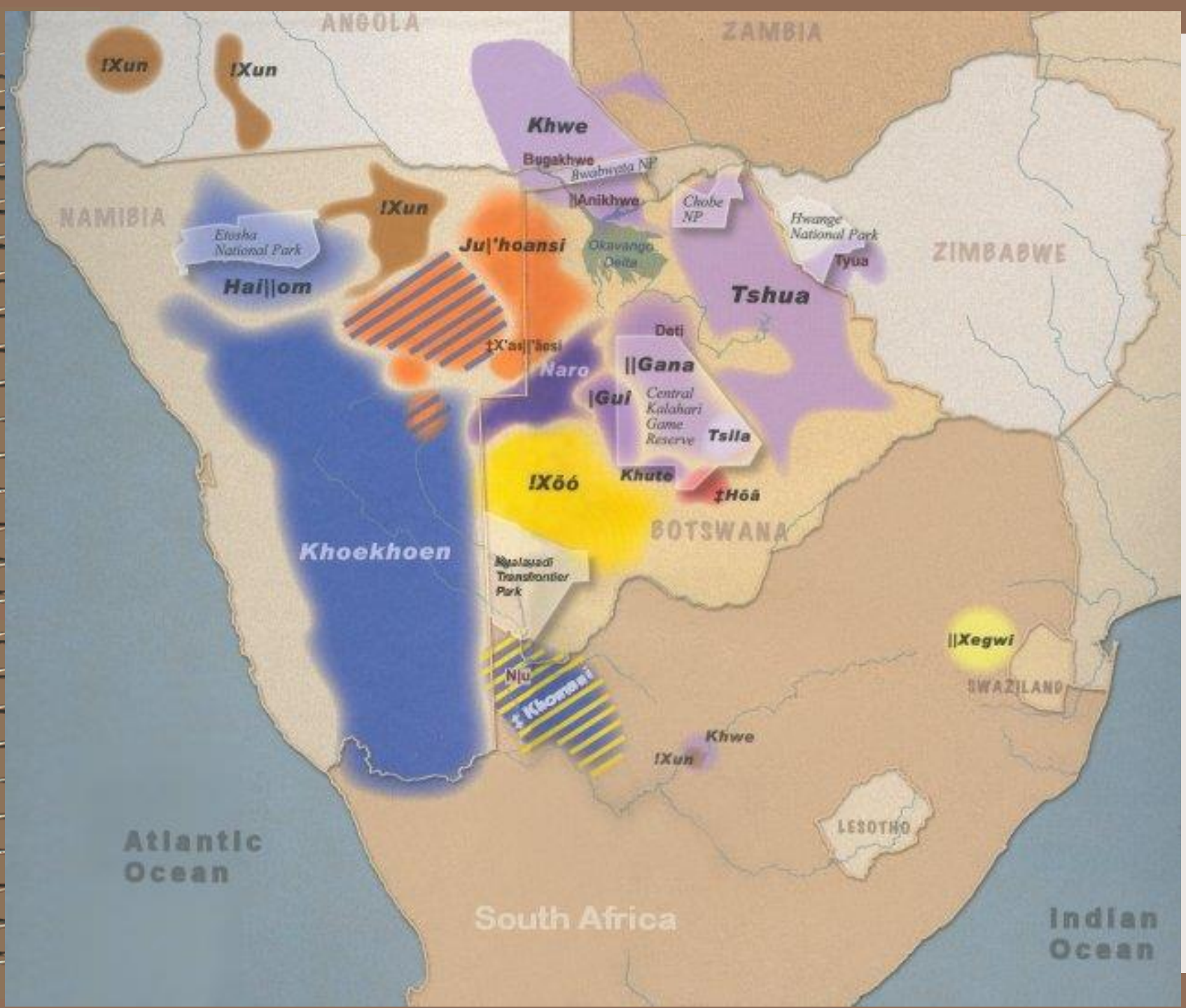
Drakensberg San – *N//ǀ* (*People of the Eland*)





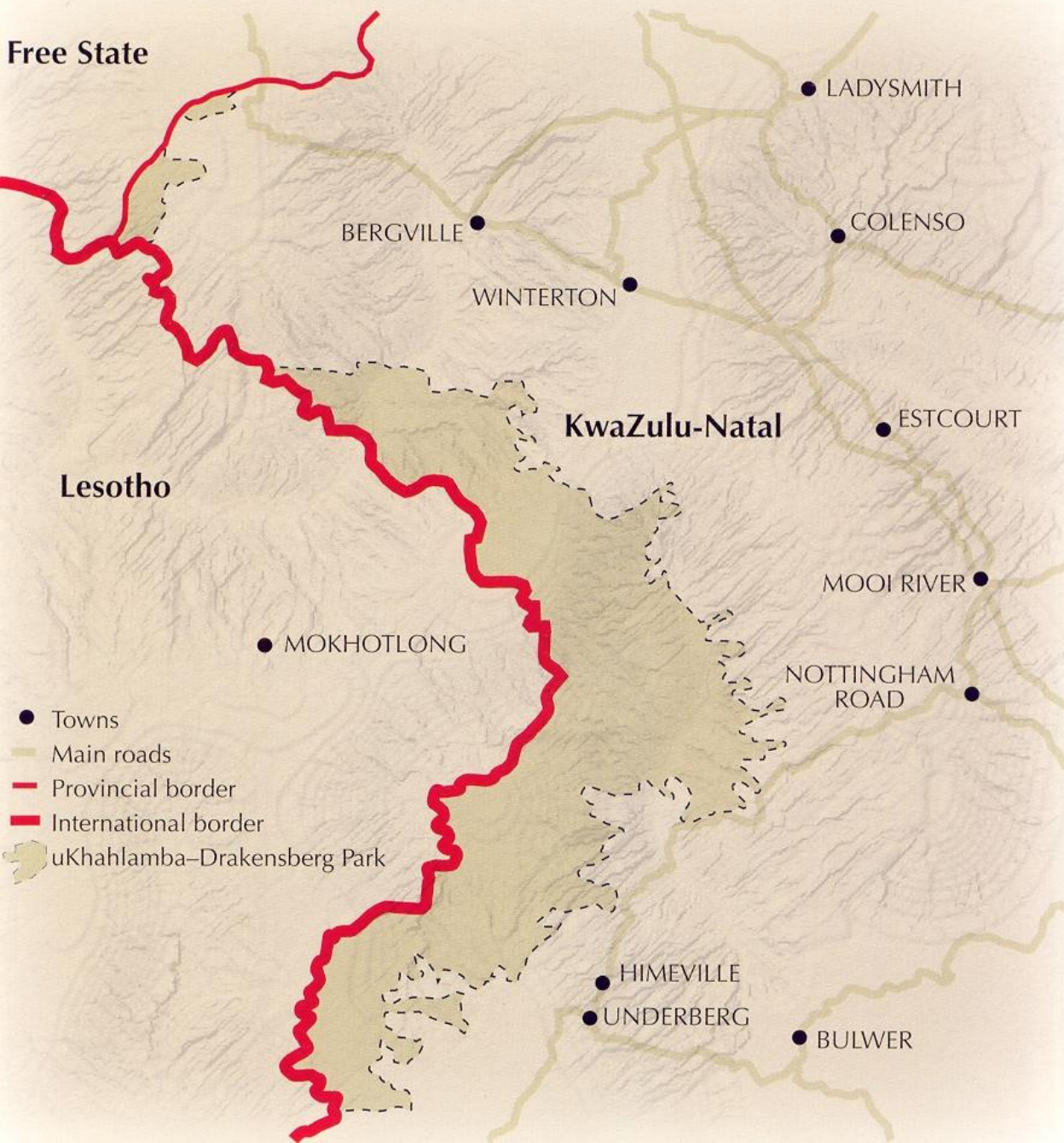




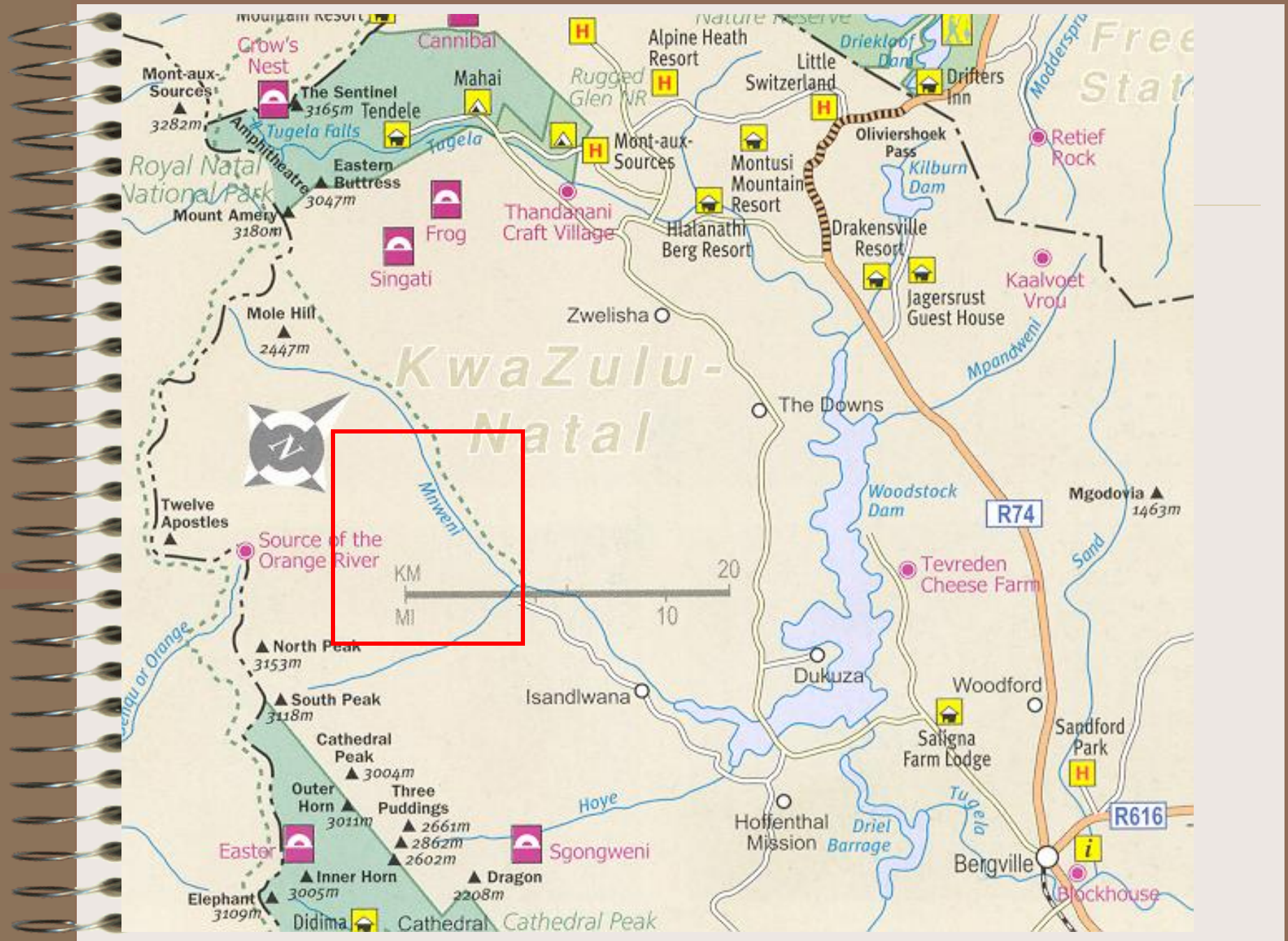




# THE DRAKENSBERG REGION AT THE END OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY













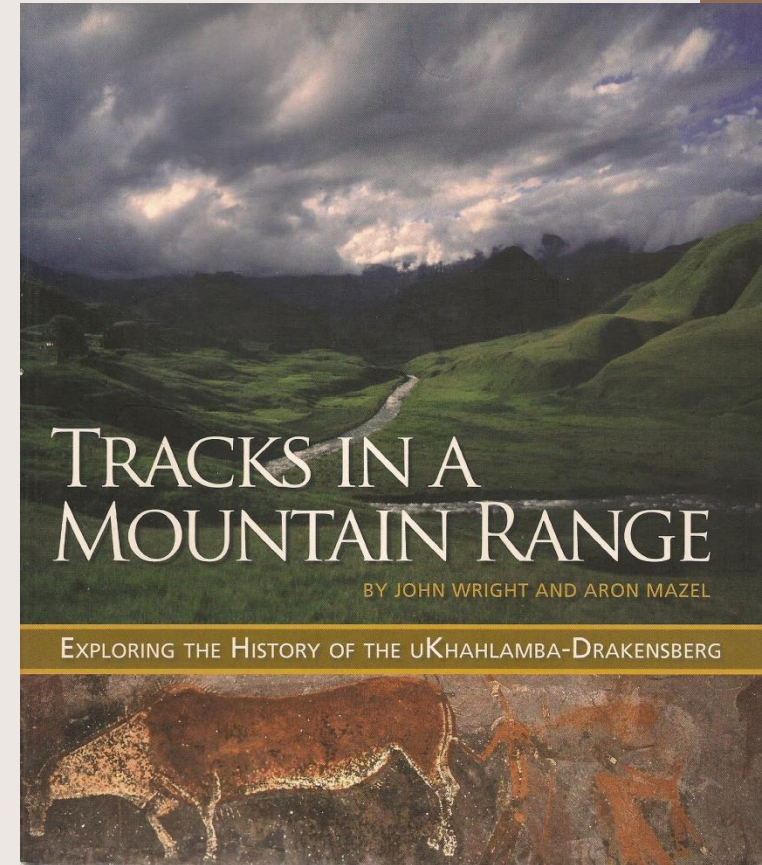
# San in Mnweni Valley



- 5,000 years
- Oldest dated paintings – 3,000 years
- Trade, hunting, and intermarriage for 400 years with amaZizi

# Archaeology

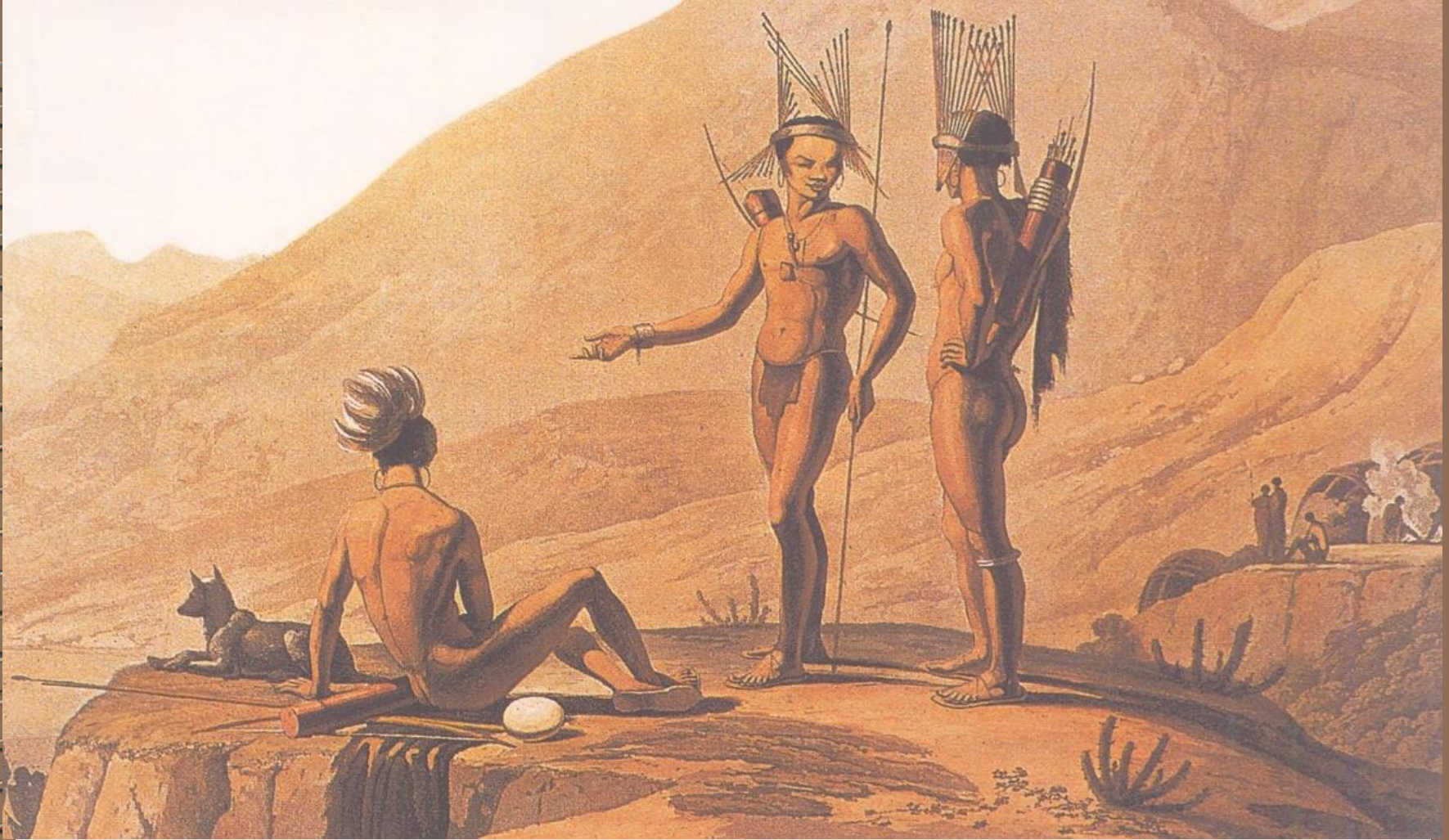
- Archaeology –  
Aron Mazel 1978-1996
- Rock art – Meridy  
Pfotenhauer and Justine  
Windjes – 1996-2010











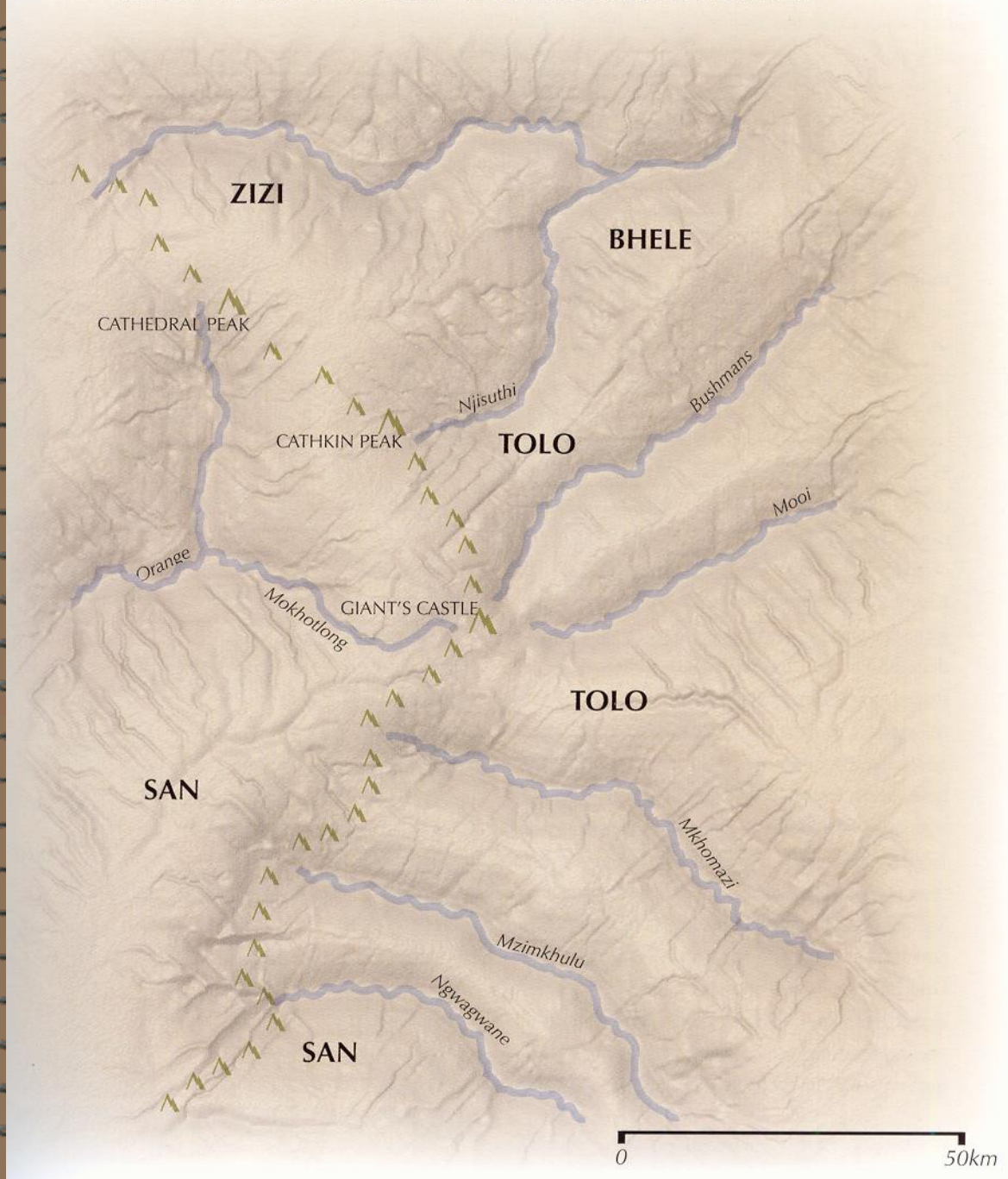
Cape San – late 18<sup>th</sup> century







THE DRAKENSBERG REGION IN THE LATER EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

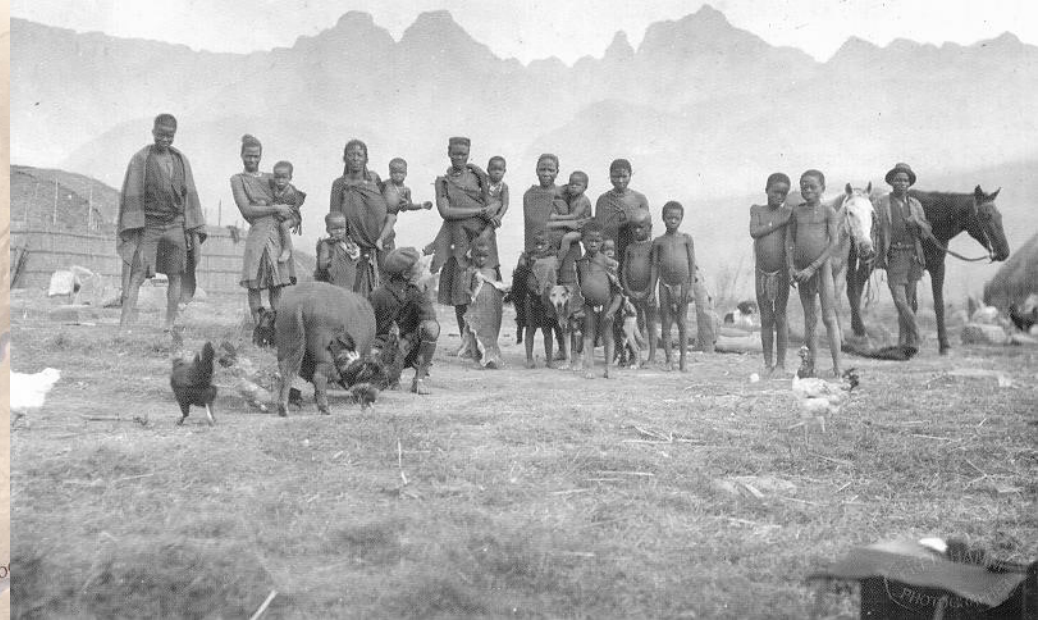
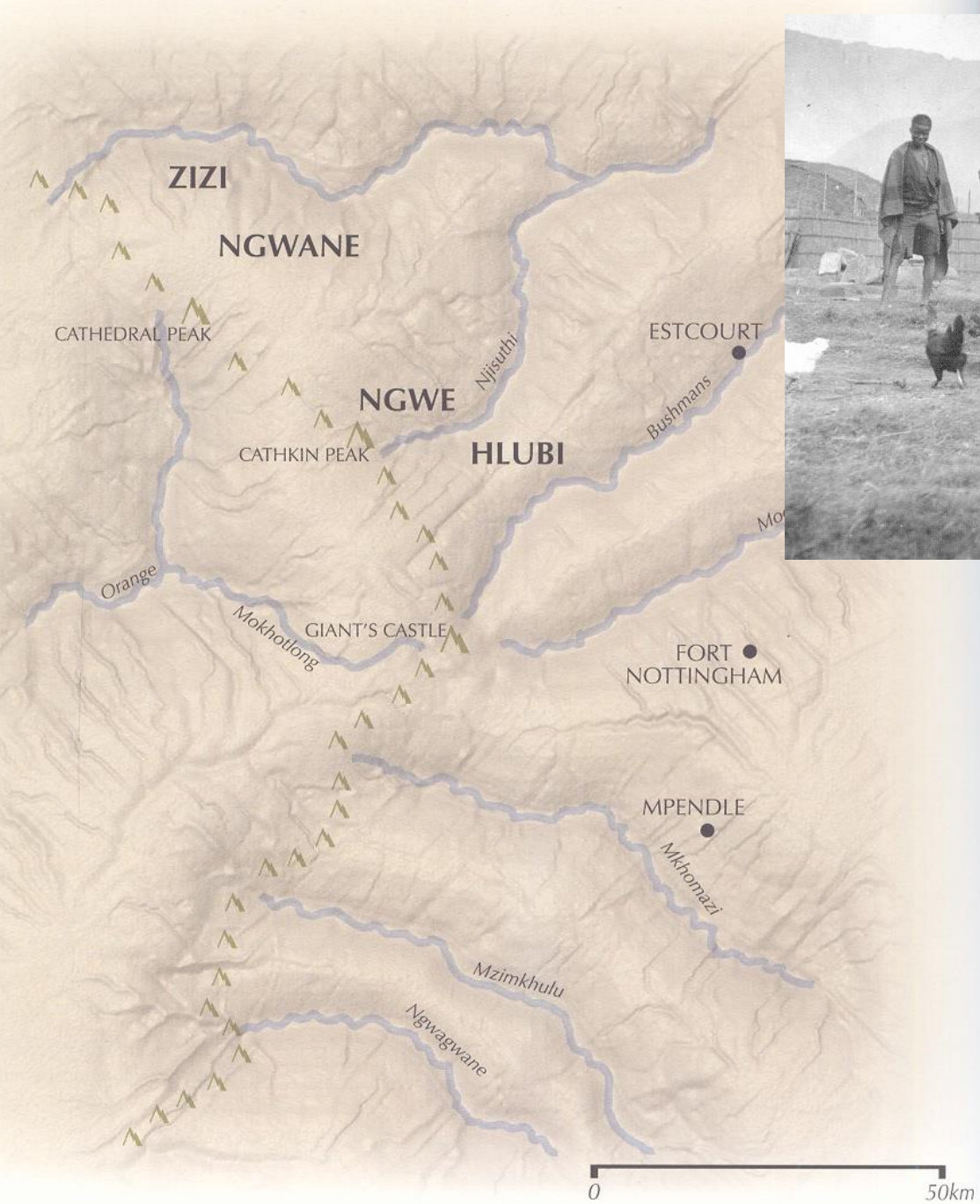


amaZizi –

Miya clan 1500s

(from Wright and  
Mazel 2007)





amaNgwane –1830s

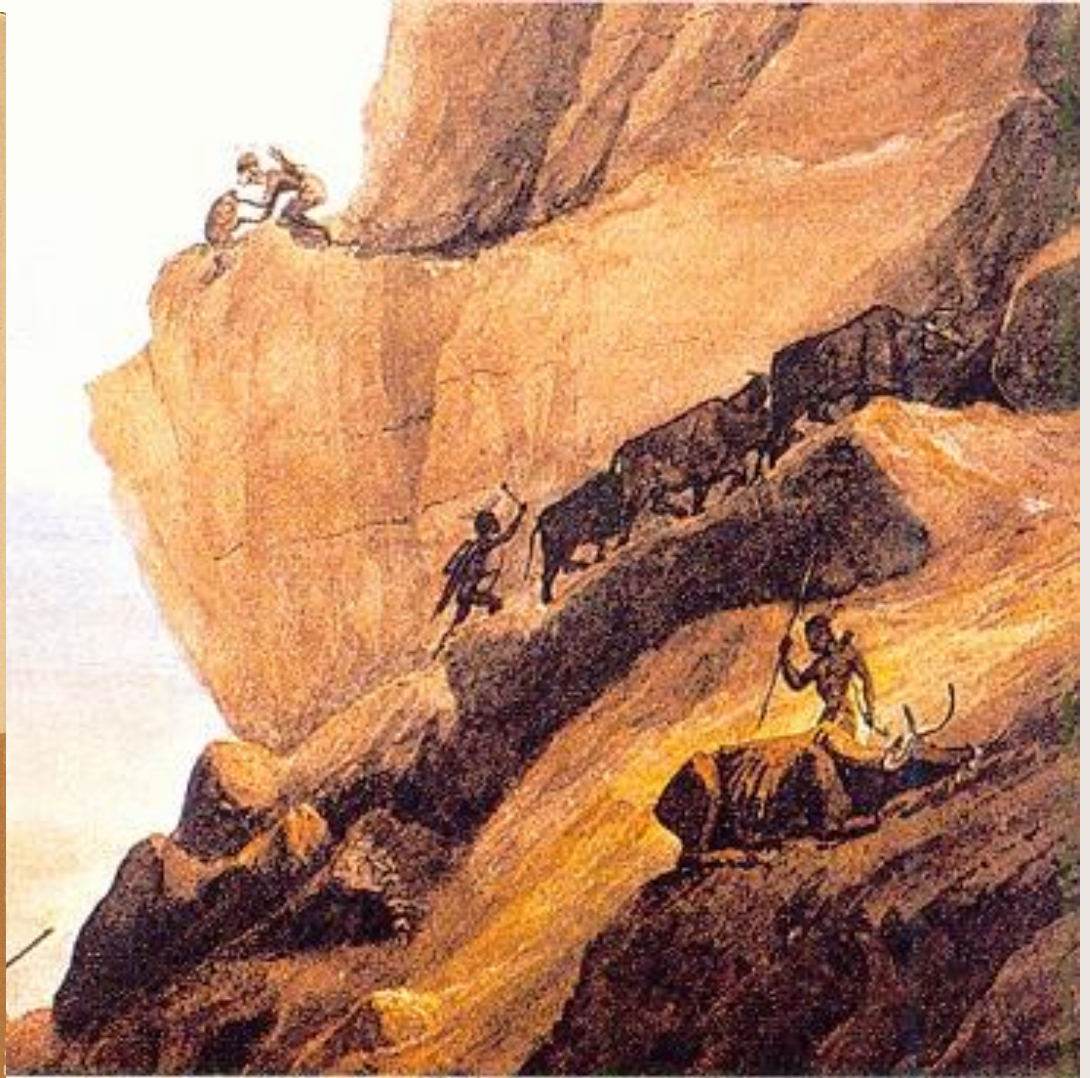
(from Wright and Mazel  
2007)



## San raiders – 1840s – 1870s

BUSHMAN RAIDERS  
OF THE  
DRAKENSBERG  
1840-1870

by John B. Wright

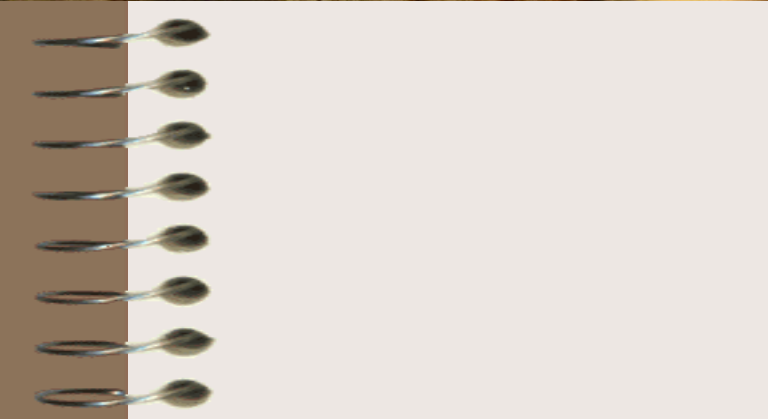
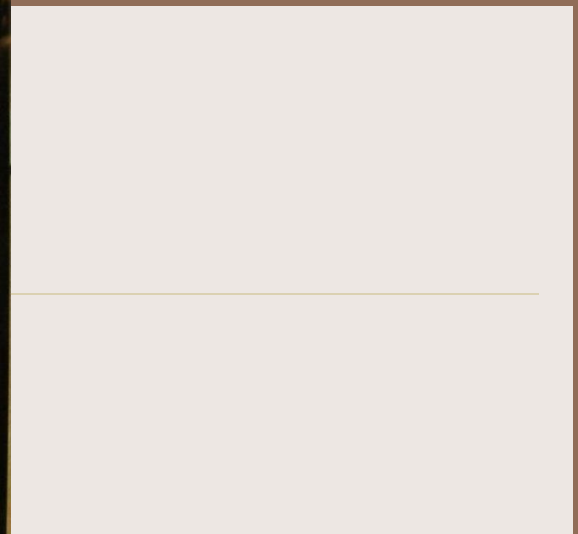






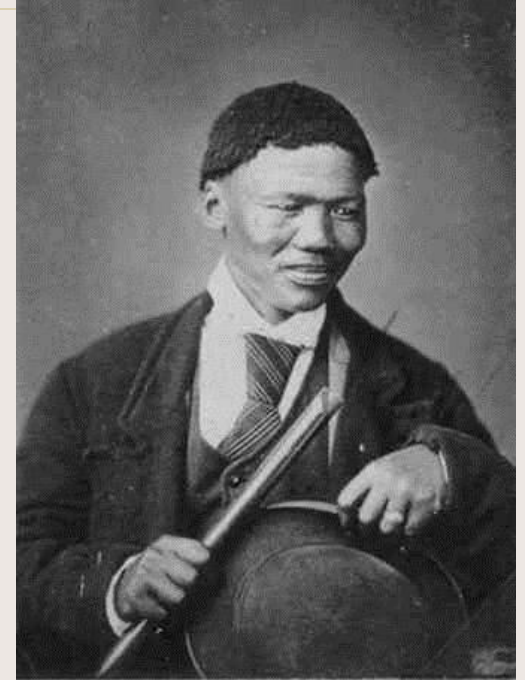
(from  
Patricia Vinnicombe 1976  
– *People of the Eland*)







# Cultural extinction



*To lose a culture is to lose something of ourselves.*

*(Wade Davis 2009 – The Wayfinders)*



# Extinction of San in South Africa - Politicians

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Thabo Mbeki (May 8, 1996 – “I am an African” speech)

*I owe my being to the Khoi and the San whose desolate souls haunt the great expanses of the beautiful Cape – they who fell victim to the most merciless genocide . . . they who, as a people, **perished** in the result.*



# Historians

*In Natal a few stories have survived of individual Bushmen being found in the Drakensberg foothills in the early 1900s . . . but it was in these early years of the twentieth century that the Bushmen of the eastern highlands finally **died out**.*

(John Wright 1971:180)



# Archaeologists

*By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were **no** San hunter-gatherers left in the Natal Drakensberg. . .Some unconfirmed accounts suggest that isolated San may have survived into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but ostensibly by the 1880s their occupation of the Natal Drakensberg was over.*

*(Aron Mazel 1992:758, 760)*



# But . . .

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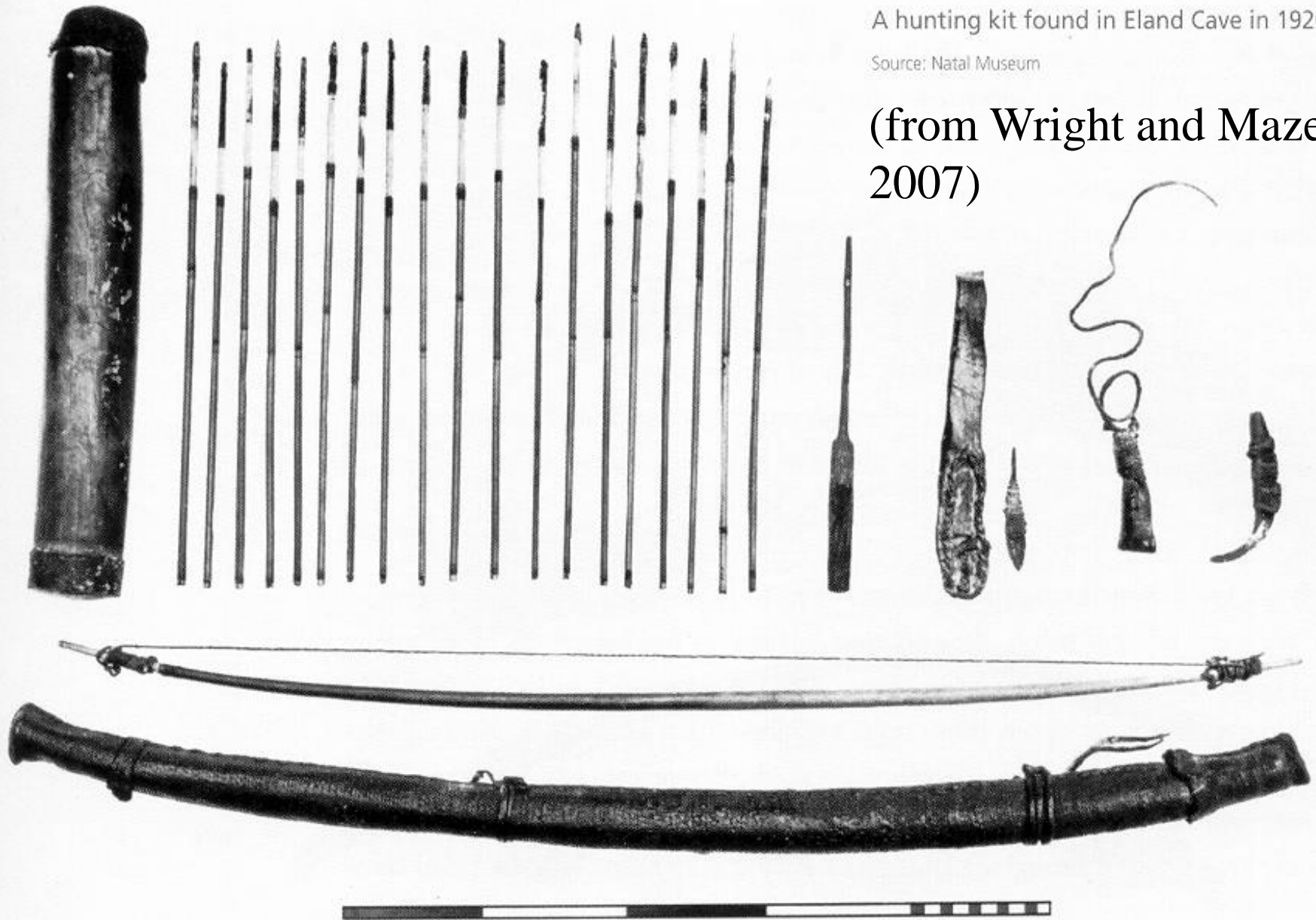
- 1878 – honeymoon couple saw San north of Mnweni
- 1926 – hunting kit found in valley south of Mnweni
- 1930 – rancher killed by poisoned arrow near Kamberg

(Prins 2009)

A hunting kit found in Eland Cave in 1926.

Source: Natal Museum

(from Wright and Mazel  
2007)





# Oral history in South Africa

## Oral History in a Wounded Country

Interactive Interviewing in South Africa



Edited by Philippe Denis and Radikobo Ntsimane

Sensitive issues in Mnweni:

- apartheid
- HIV/AIDS
- ethnic violence
- politics (traditional/ party politics)
- secret/sacred knowledge
- marijuana trade

# Oral history

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Pieter Jolly (1996; 2007) – interviews with San descendants in southern Drakensberg and Lesotho

Michael Francis (2007, 2009, 2010) and Frans Prins (2009) – interviews with descendants of Drakensberg San – “secret San” in Kamberg area

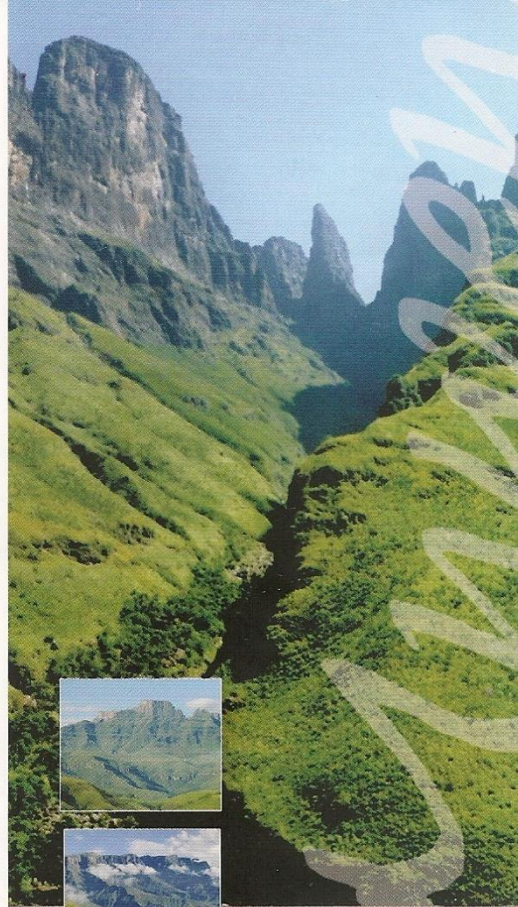








CARING | SHARING | CONSERVING



# MNWENI

CULTURAL & HIKING CENTRE

NPO No: 035-645

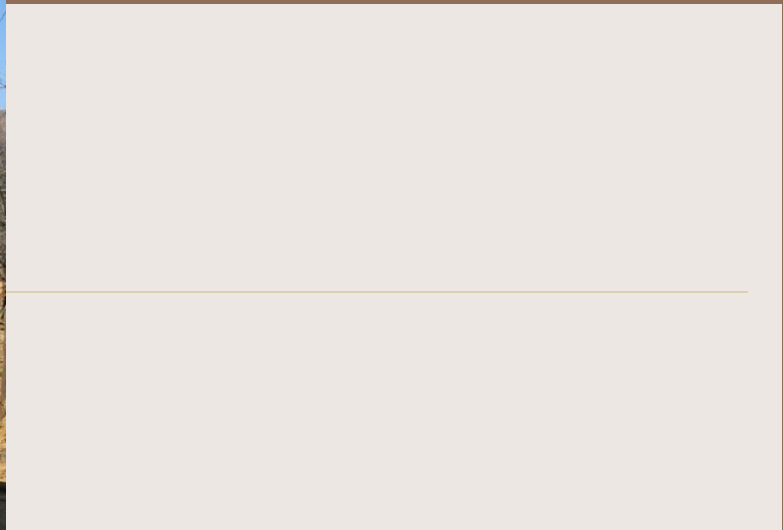






Mnweni Cultural Centre staff and guides









Muzi Msimanga



Magagetshane  
Mohlakwane Miya and  
granddaughters





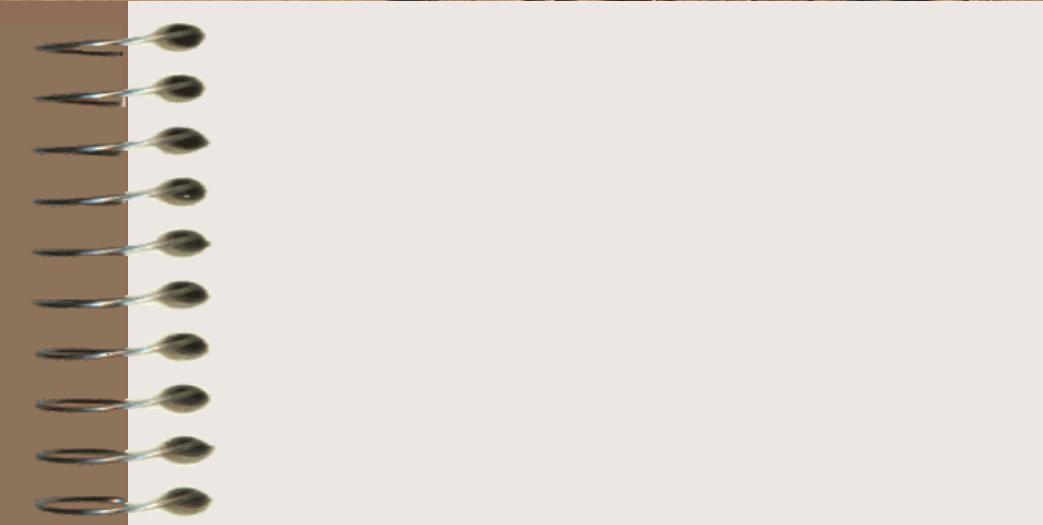
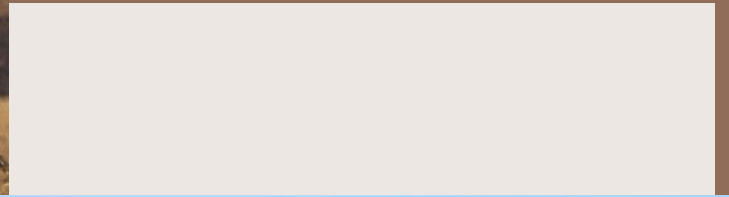














Thomas Miya

- Great grandfather  
hunted with San –  
1850s – 1860s





## Mtatata (Jim) Miya

- amaZizi settlement of eBusingatha area displaced San – ca. 1850s
- Great grandfather saw San – ca. 1880s





Maswazi Miya – taught to make San bow and arrows by father

- Great grandfather hunted with San and witnessed rock art painting – ca. 1880s



Mgwazeni Hlongwane  
- Grandfather saw San ca. 1890-1910 on  
south side of Mnweni valley





## Elliott Nxumalo

- Grandparents saw entire families of San in upper valley – ca. 1900



## Chief Mthetwa Miya (amaZizi *inkosi*)

- Grandfather observed San family doing a dance to celebrate a hunt- ca. 1900-1910
- amaZizi hunted with San 1700 -1800s for eland
- leads an annual “royal hunt”





Themba Ndaba

- Observed campfires  
of San in  
rockshelters in  
upper valley –  
1910-1920



Maswazi  
Chebekhulu  
-Grandfather and  
parents saw San  
families on south  
side of Mnewni  
valley – ca. 1900-  
1920s





Ephraim Dlamini

- Observed old San individuals in upper valley – ca. 1940s

# San in Mnweni Valley – oral history findings

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- San in rockshelters in southern and upper Mnweni valley in late 19<sup>th</sup> / early 20<sup>th</sup> century
- San hunted with amaZizi (i.e. Miya) – 1700s-1900
- San travelled through and encamped in valley – ca. 1910-1920
- Last reported San ca. 1930-1940s



# Kamberg Rock Art Centre



# San renaissance in South Africa

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- “Coloured” communities = Khoe-San identity
- Zulu community (Duma clan – Kamberg) = San identity

Why?

Post-apartheid – safe, Indigeneity honoured + for psychological, political, material benefits (e.g. land claims, cultural tourism)

(Besten 2009; Francis 2009, 2010; Lee 2003)



# Today - San in Mnweni valley

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- San have been embedded culturally (and probably genetically) in amaZizi and amaNgwane
- Denial of San ancestry (proudly Zulu + no perceived benefits)
- San rock art and shelters – rightful owners are amaZizi and amaNgwane
- San did not become “extinct”



Bawinile Mtolo – amaZizi rock art guide





- Graffiti removal —  
Jeremy Hollmann  
(Natal Museum)  
and Caiphas  
Mthabela  
(Mnweni  
Monitoring  
Group)

# Acknowledgements

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- Wilfrid Laurier University
- Tshepo Research Institute
- Mnweni Cultural Centre
- Natal Museum
- Muzi Msimanga and Meridy Pfotenhauer
- amaNgwane and amaZizi elders and communities



