

Miss Bleek.
"La Rochelle"
Camp Ground Rd
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BC 151 D3.22

CAPE TOWN 'A' PROGRAMME,
SATURDAY, 28th Sept. 1946
9.00 p.m. - 9.20 p.m.

CALL BACK THE PAST.

SIG. TUNE - VIVALDI CONCERTO REC. 1 BEGINNING TAKE TO B/C

ANN: Once again it is time for our weekly programme of Africana - arranged and presented by Richard Buncher under the title "Call Back the Past".

UP RECORD AND OUT.....

R.B. Good evening - well to-night I am very tempted to call this programme Haul Back the Past as I intend going back some several hundreds of thousand million years ago..... and if this is'nt hauling back the past - what is? In this programme you are going to hear about the formation of the Cape aeons ago, something about the earliest peoples to inhabit the Cape and then something about the art of those survivors of the ancient past - the Bushman, who are some of the oldest people living in the world to-day..... Those of you who say the film cartoon - Phantasia - and remember that very vivid pictorial account of the early evolution of the world set to some of Stravinski's elemental music - might be interest to hear something of the early evolution of this part of the world....and so I have asked Walker, Professor of Geology at the Cape Town University to come and answer a few questions for usI suppose one of the earliest landmarks would be Table Mountain - Professor Walker - how old would our mountain be?

A. It is difficult to estimate the exact age of a mountain, but the range of which it is the remnant would date back roughly 200 million years.

R.B. Heavens - now I know how the expression "as old as the hills" originated. Now this range you speak of - can you tell us something of that?

A. Well, Table Mountain formed part of a huge range which included the Hottentot Hollands. This range probably took the form of a vast arch of rock, the flatter portions of which are all that remain. A similar range was that of which only the Cederberg now remains - and the peninsular was undoubtedly part of the range at one time.

R.B. Why is Table Mt. the shape it is - and why is this shape repeated so often, for instance in the Karoo?

A. Well, as you know perhaps, the rock is sandstone, which means that it was formed from ancient sand deposits rather like those formed at a river mouth only ^{on} a mammoth scale. This sandstone, by its very nature, is in layers which will explain why it is flat-topped. Similar formations of rock are found in other parts of the world - for instance Arizona.

R.B. I have heard that shells have been found on the top of Table Mt...is this a fact?

A. No. Reports, as you say, have come up from time to time in the press, but investigations have proved them to be groundless.

R.B. Has any sign of ^{human} pre-historic life been discovered on the mountain?

A. Not exactly identifiable fossile remains have yet been found. - only fossilised worm-burrows. During the period of the formation of our mountain there was very little life on land - merely plant life, a few crustaceous fish and perhaps some fresh-water fish.....

R.B. I believe that the peninsulat was at one time an island -
is this right?

A. It is - the peninsular was an island comparatively recently -
within Man's time on earth...let's say 25 thousand years ago.

R.B. To break right off the subject for a moment, Professor Walker,
could you give us a simple picture as to how long in
comparison with the age of the world Man has been upon it.....

A. Yes, I think I can, ,,,,imagine the period of the earth
to be represented as the face of a clock....man's period
of existance on earth would be when the hands pointed to
one minute to twlove.....

R.B. That's rather chastening to our pride,,,Now, to revert,
you have said that no signs of prehistoric life ^{or pre-human} has been
discovered on Table Mt...but what about the Cape Province?

A. Oh yes various branches of the Dinosaurs have been discovered
all over the Karoo - these animals came to an end about
100 million years ago.

R.B. Are there any visible signs of any of the primaeval
upheavels on Table Mt.?

A. Many - to mention one - remnants of a very early Ice Age are
to be found. An Ice Age, earlier incidentally than the
3 Main Ice Ages that swept Europe and N. America...it takes
the form of stones which bear the markings of having been
part of the rubble ground by the ice-layers. This stone
is especially visible around Maclears Beacon - but probably
the lay-man would not see anything remarkable in it.

R.B. Shells have certainly been found all over the Green Point
Common area - this means, I Suppose, that the sea
covered this part at one time?

A. Yes - the sea was some 30 - 40 feet higher not so long ago geologically speaking since the shells found belong to existing species of shell-fish..... probably well within man's time.

R.B. Now one last question - which I hope you'll be able to tackle in a brief replay...was Africa ever part of South America as the two shapes suggest?

A. This opinion is held by many eminent geologist - and certainly cannot be dismissed. Professor du Toit is a powerful exponent of the theory in his book "Our Wandering Continents" - he makes a very plausible case for the theory that S. America, Africa, Australia and the Antarctic formed one land mass - since similar fossils - rock formations etc. are to be found in each....It is estimated that this land mass - known to us as "Gondwana Land" began to split up 180,000 millions years ago - That would mean, of course that Table Mountain was already formed at this period.

R.B. That is very interesting...ch.. one last question..What of Atlantis.....

A. Well, some submergence of land must certainly have taken place to the West of Britain and France many aeons before man's existence on earth - note that I say before man - so that the wonderful stories about a lost civilisation are the result of imagination not of scientific findings.

R.B. Well, thank you very much Professor Walker. Now for something about early Man at the Cape....and to tell us about this, here is A.J.H. Goodwin.....

GOODWIN:

Man, - primitive man such as I want to talk to you about to-night, - was a part of his own environment. I think it was Charles Darwin who pointed out that carnivorous animals
can/.....

can never dominate the world. They carry the seeds of their own destruction within themselves. Directly there are too many carnivores, there is too little flesh left for them to eat. They must starve or eat one another. When man arrived he was wise in two ways. He didn't only live on flesh, and he thought things out. For instance, it is obvious that man invented the idea of marriage to get a balanced diet. A lion has to get his vitamins by eating the pre-digested food from the stomach of his kill; man gets his vitamins B and C by keeping a wife; the wife gets her vitamins A and D through the kindness of her husband.

ANNCR:

I don't quite follow the argument, - could you make that point clearer?

GOODWIN:

Women are necessarily tied down closely to the home by young children, and a stone-age mother would have starved if she had no husband to go a-hunting to get meat for herself and the youngsters. On the other hand, it takes a full day's work to collect enough berries, roots, leaves and fruits to maintain a family. That was the wife's job in life. We find the same natural division of labour all through the world of hunting peoples, and there is thus every reason to believe that marriage, and a simple arrangement of this kind of running the home, went back to the very earliest times.

ANNCR:

And when would those earliest times be?

GOODWIN:

Personally, I cannot think in dates. If I said a million years ago it would mean as much to me as the number of Hungarian pengoes in the pound sterling. It is enough to say that man arrived here at the Cape at a period when the sea-level was about 300 feet above its present shores, and in that time the old Vaal River has had time to cut into solid rock and earth to a depth of two hundred feet.

That/... ..

That must have taken a vast age to happen. We can find man's tools caught up in ancient beaches and in old river gravels that show he was wandering about the country as long as all that.

ANNCR: And in South Africa, was man as primitive and as early as he was in Western Europe?

GOODWIN: Just about the same; hardly any difference. All through the habitable parts of Asia, Europe and Africa, the earliest man just hacked a usable chunk of stone into a better and more wieldy shape, and that made the first weapon, digging - tool, chopper or whatever was needed. Then came a change. People got together. And when people get together they become self-conscious. The result of being self-conscious is that people start a fashion, stick to it, and are afraid to leave it. Early man did the same thing when he began to make conventionalised stone implements. Instead of hacking a chunk of rock into any old shape, he trimmed it more carefully, until it looked very like any implement made by people of his own period and fashion. In these early days it is like the writing lesson in a kindergarten. The same things are fashioned again and again, but as the years go by they are better and better formed.

ANNCR: Then do you find a single continuous development in tools on all through the ages?

GOODWIN: Not by any means. You see there were at least three great explosions of mankind throughout the old world. Either new types of man spread, or more likely, their ideas or fashions took the old world by storm. In this country we call these explosions or incoming waves of new ideas the Earlier, Middle and Later Stone Ages. Withing each of these there was an intricate pattern of style and fashion, migration/*****

migration, and movement, that can never be fully disentangled. A new idea might start in one corner of Africa, and spread wherever it was acceptable and useful, while another idea spreading by a different route would be limited by the factors that would render it useless in a new area.

ANNCR:

Can you give us an example of this sort of thing. It seems a somewhat difficult idea to take in all at once.

GOODWIN:

Well, it is simply really, though not easy to find a clear example. The simplest case probably lies in Africa, where the ideas and fashions that were useful in the forests of the Congo, failed to spread to the South. On the other hand, ideas and tools used on the grasslands of East Africa missed the West African forests, and spread all over the grasslands of South Africa. Here it is certainly the environment that forced some ideas to spread in one area, but held them back from others. Then of course there is another way in which environment affected man. This lay in the changes in the material that was available for making stone implements. Of course everyone knows that stones are not the same all over Africa. Here we get one group of rocks; in the Karoo another; in the Orlqualand West area we get a third; and in Kenya we get something quite different. As man passed from one area to another, so he found he could do different things with his stones. In Kenya he could make lovely knife-like blades out of volcanic glass. When he left that sort of rock behind him, he had to change ~~mak~~ his ideas and attune his implement-making to the stone he could easily find around him. All that forces a change in fashion and technique, just as evident as the changes forced on man to-day by switching over from glass to iron, or from paper to cellophane. These are the things that made man break away from his early conservative ideas.

ANNCR:

And when did our stone age finish in this country?

GOODWIN: Perhaps it still continues in the dune country of the Namib Desert. Primitive folk were still reputed to be existing there, using stone tools to break their shellfish open as late as 1916. We do know that people who habitually made stone implements were alive up to the end of last century. They sometimes made use of glass for making arrow-heads, so that in one instance we hear of a German firm that made cheap scent, and sold it in thick bottles. The Bushmen bought the bottles of scent, drank the useless contents, and made very nice implements out of the bottle. For a Bushmen to use scent would perhaps be gilding the lily, but really thick bottle-glass was not easy to get.

R.B. Thank you very much Mr. Goodwin....and now we have reached Man who is sufficiently advanced to produce some form of art - I refer, of course to the Bushmen painting in caves..... and to tell us something of this aspect of early Cape art here is Miss Bleek.....

BLEEK: All over South Africa we find occasional rock-shelters bearing rock-paintings, and new-comers wonder who were the artists who made them. Before any white man or black men came to South Africa, a small yellow race dwelt in the land, the descendants of the stone age men. The Bushmen, as they were called, were not toilers, but a happy-go-lucky race of hunters and foodgatherers, who lived on what nature provided, and spent their many leisure hours in artistic pursuits. They danced, sang, made music, told wonderful folktales, and painted what they saw. The walls of the rock-shelters were their canvas, clays and ochres their painting material. These earths mixed with animal fat produced very lasting colours, and still bear witness to the painters' talents.

Different/.....

Different parts of the country show different styles of work. The Western Province and the coastal belt in the Midlands and East has chiefly monochromes, often badly drawn. In the Eastern Province north of the Katberg and in the foothills of the Malutis in the Free State and Natal, there are countless galleries showing ^a ~~layer~~ upon layer of paintings, monochromes, polychromes, single figures, groups, good painting and bad. This district bears evidence that not only one generation painted here, but many generations followed each other, for nobody would paint over a forbear's work, ^{whose} ~~till his~~ memory had faded. ^{not} ~~it~~

We find innumerable beautiful bucks, many with shading in two colours, the dark parts being given in red, brown or orange, the lighter parts in white. Beasts of prey are not wanting, nor rhino, hippo and giraffe. Birds are beautifully portrayed. But plants are rarely found in the pictures, and scenery is lacking.

Rhodesia on the other hand shows paintings of very well drawn plants, and attempts at scenery. There are fewer animal groups, but very finely drawn single animals. Some of the groups of humans show interesting ceremonies, of which we have no explanation, for in this part of the country the Bushmen were killed or driven away before the paintings were found.

The Eastern Province paintings were copied much earlier, by Mr. Stow, who sent a number to my father to be shown to the Bushmen in his household. They instantly recognized the work of their race, and could explain the scenes depicted. These are women marching out with digging sticks upon their shoulders, to collect roots and bulbs for the family dinner. See, there is a hunter in disguise, with an ostrich head and neck fixed on a stick on his head, the body feathers covering his body. He is stealing up to that group of ostriches to get near enough to shoot.

Those/.....

Those women with buck's heads as headdresses are treading a dance which they hold occasionally in order to test the children's manners. If the youngsters laugh, then they have "no education", if they are silent, then they are well brought up.

The dance of men with arrows stuck in a band round their heads is a hunters' dance, for though arrows are carried in a quiver or long bag when not in use, for action in a hunt or fight they are placed in a headband to be handy. This weird animal is a rainbull, whom the sorcerers ^{led} over the land to make rain. He has with him his special creatures, frog, fish, snake and tortoise. This group shows the family of the girl who displeased the rain, and as punishment was turned into a frog, with all her people. Some in the group are humans, some frogs, some half and half. The human figures in the older painting are nude, later ones show the Bushman, leather aprons and karosses and bags, such as are still worn by the few tribes that survive in the Kalahari. Among the latest work in the Eastern Province we see people included who are not Bushmen, and animals not indigenous to this country. There are fights between Bushmen and Bantu tribes, both with the distinctive physiognomy, dress and weapons of their race. There are oxen, sheep, and horses, even white men and women in old-fashioned dress, and soldiers with busby and sword.

The Bushmen continued to paint well on into the 19th century, when they ceased to exist as a race, the painting stopped.

R.B.

Miss Bleek - just a few questions if you don't mind... would you say that these paintings had any religious or even social significance? Failing this were they of any practical use, such as acting as messages to other tribes regarding the hunting possibilities and so on? Or would you say that they were merely spontaneous expression of inborn artistry?

BLEEK:

I do not believe that the bulk of the paintings were made for either religious or practical purposes. The Bushman is a most improvident person, he never prepares for the future. Art is learnt in youth or not at all. Magic and sorcery are old men's jobs. If the old hunter turns sorcerer, because age has dimmed his sight, he will, no doubt, use every talent he has to aid him in 'making magic'. If he is a dancer, he will bring dancing into his performance, if he is a good painter he may use that art to help him impress his audience. A very few pictures look as if they might have been made under such circumstances.

But no Bushman youth would ever devote himself to painting to provide for his old age, any more than he would practice dancing for such a purpose. I am sure both painting and dancing are done for pleasure, done because people like to do them, as the moderns say to express themselves.

We are utilitarians, and those who do not know primitive man are apt to presume that he has the same kind of mind as we have, so think he can only have painted for some definite purpose, such as decoration, magic, a message or tally. I who had lived among Busmen feel sure that most of their painting had no such subject, was the outcome of their artistic nature.

R.B.

And, Miss. Bleek, briefly how do the paintings of the Bushmen compare with those to be found in N.E. Spain?

BLEEK:

Soon after the Spanish Rock paintings were found, Professor Balfour, the Oxford archaeologist, was shown a number of copies of them. The friend who brought the copies asked, Do you know what these are? Yes, copies of Bushman paintings, said Professor Balfour unhesitatingly. Look what animals are^{re} produced? said the friend. Then Professor Balfour studied the figures more closely, and saw in place of the African antelope, the antlered deer of Europe, in place of rhino and hippo, the mammoth and bison.

IF/.....

If so great an archaeologist could make such a mistake, there must be a great similarity in style and general appearance between the paintings of the two countries.

I have not seen the Spanish paintings except in copies, but the likeness to some of our paintings is very great, The sketchy human figures with no pretence at correct proportion, but with wonderful action are very similar. The themes of the paintings, hunts, fights, dances are the same. The superposition of one painting on another is found in both places, only there are far more superpositions to be found in South Africa than in Spain, as in fact there are far more rock paintings in this country than in the old world.

The Spanish paintings must be a great age, since no one has painted on the rocks there in historic times, whereas the latest Bushman paintings date from the nineteenth century.

We do not know who painted on the Spanish rocks. I think we may presume some very primitive race of hunters, with an artistic nature similar to that of our Bushmen.

It is interesting to note that the Bushman when we discovered him was in the same stage of culture as the late Stone Age man of Europe, as the man who painted on the rocks in Spain.

R.B. And our last question is this. Are these Bushmen dying out - or are they thriving in the various parts of the country where they are settled?

BLEEK:

The Bushmen as such will certainly disappear as they are only able to lead a Bushman life where there is plenty of ground for hunting and collecting wild vegetable food. As stronger pastoral and agricultural tribes take possession of the country the Bushmen become their dependants, mingle with their masters and cease to be a distinctive race.

R.B.

Well, thank you very much Miss Bleek....and now it is time
to say good night and goodbye till next week.

MUSICRECORD $\frac{1}{2}$ INCH TOWARDS END...TO E/G

ANNCH:

You have been listening to "Call Back the Past" - a programme
feature arranged and presented weekly by Richard Buncher
This evening you