

# **ASTRONAISSANCE: COMMUNICATING ASTRONOMY & SPACE TO THE AFRICAN IMAGINATION**

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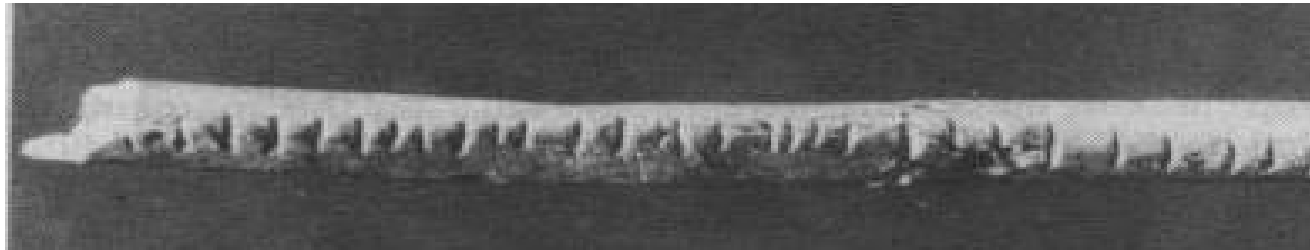
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# The big screen above



Lebombo bone 35 000 BCE  
Ishango bone 20 000 BCE



2 views of the Ishango Bone

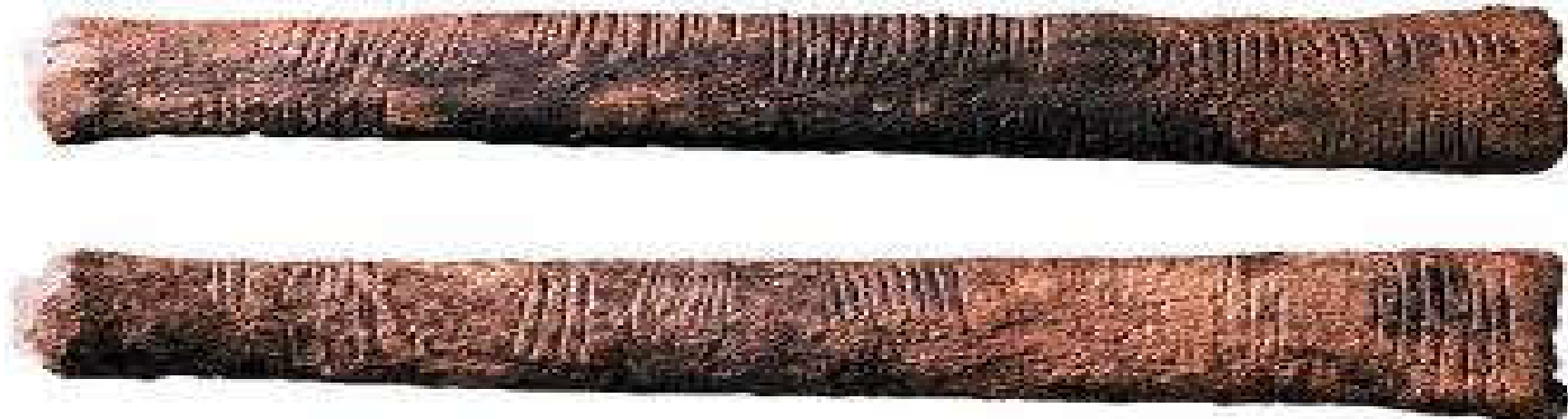


Photo courtesy of Science Museum of Bristol.

# San rock painting: comet



# San rock painting: split head comet or fireball



# Nabta Playa solar observatory Upper Egypt, c. 4 500 BCE



# Nabta Playa

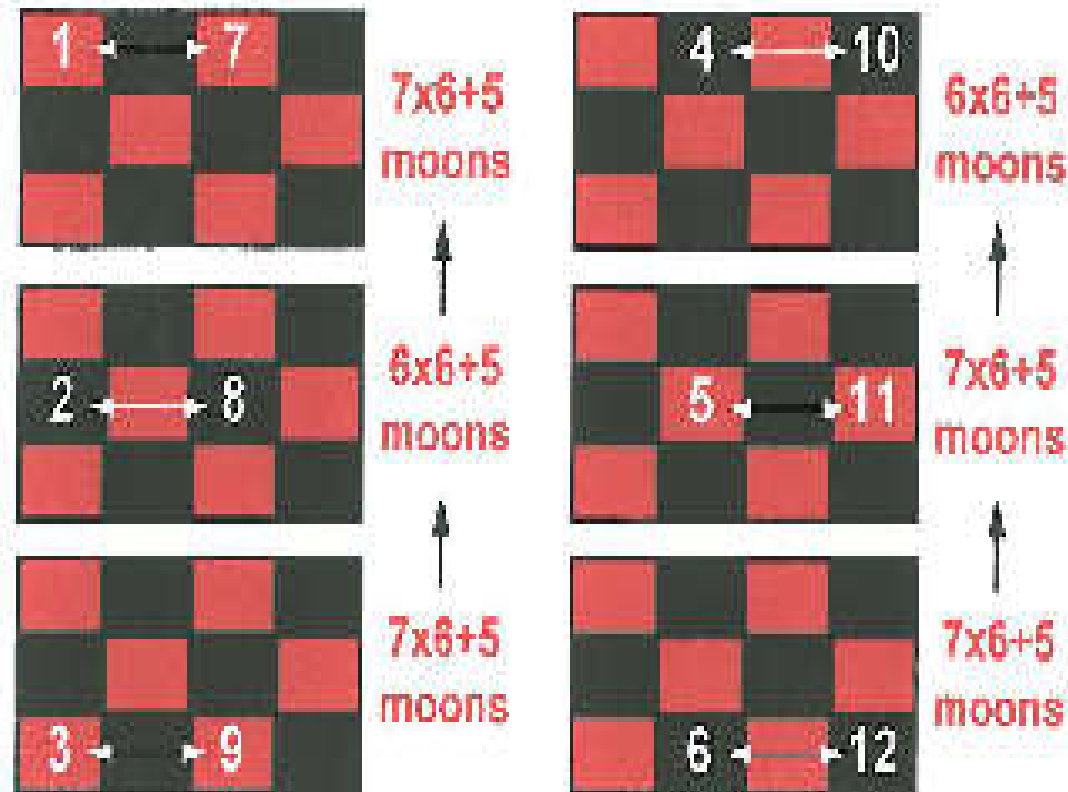


# Axum Kingdom coin, pre-333 CE





# Acano : Amazigh (Berber) lunar calendar, Canary Isles



A count of **270 moons** (46 could give eclipses)



## - White Paper on Science & Technology, 1996

“It is also important to maintain a basic competence in flagship sciences such as physics and astronomy for *cultural reasons*. Not to offer them would be to take a negative view of our future – the view that we are a second class nation chained forever to the treadmill of feeding and clothing ourselves.”

- pg.16 (emphasis added)



# Communicating Astronomy & space to the African imagination

- Pre-1990: Sutherland open to public one night per year
- Booked out 4 months ahead
- SA Museum: mini-planetarium seats c. 16
- Keeps lights out *between* shows
- So white racists won't see Coloureds sitting in the back row & demand apartheid



# Communicating Astronomy & space to the African imagination

- Democracy: Sutherland open 360 days / yr
- SAAO creates 1<sup>st</sup> full-time public education post
- Charismatic edu-tainers: Case Rijdsijk,  
Kevin Govender



# 1<sup>st</sup> public star party @ Sutherland

- *Nuwejaar*
- 1 Jan 2009



# Pseudo-science also competes for hearts & minds

- magazine proprietors & editors finger women as soft targets for Eurocentric astrology
- Post-1990: launch new magazines aimed at middle class black women, all indoctrinating with astrology columns
- Need to debunk with Copernican revolution



# Astronomy tourism

- Headlines go to 7 billionaire space tourists to space station; next to Virgin Galactic flips
- But 99% space tourism is on the ground
- Over 10 000 tourists per year to SAAO
- Sutherland hotel gets more guests; several B&Bs open
- Sutherland property prices rise higher than other rural towns of the same size
- OTR & ISSA should open for space tours
- eg., Cape Canaveral: 20 buses; 12 ticket kiosks



eg., **OVER THE MOON TOURS**

[www.capecentre.org.za](http://www.capecentre.org.za)  
[www.lookingupsa.com](http://www.lookingupsa.com)  
[kechil@overthemoontours.co.za](mailto:kechil@overthemoontours.co.za)  
[www.overthemoontours.co.za](http://www.overthemoontours.co.za)

OVER THE  
**MOON**





# Way forward:

## Policy Recommendations

- Supplement Astronomy Geographic Advantage Act with a national dark sky law, as Czech & Slovenia Republics already have
- Key lobbying point: full cut-off light fixtures mean we can use smaller wattage, save electricity & money
- Astronomy, other space sciences, astronautics must be clustered together for outreach



# Way forward: Policy Recommendations

- SAAO tours limited to middle class who can afford overnight accommodation
- Shuttleworth pioneered mobile S&T show touring 100 schools in 9 provinces
- Need 9 Astronomy-Astronautics mobile S&T shows tours, each touring its province with multi-lingual edu-tainers
- Work with AU AMCOST to seek donors to start-up same in other African countries



# TRUE CONFESSIONS:

WHO REALLY GAVE NIC COPERNICUS THE IDEA  
THAT PTOLEMY & THE CHURCH HAD GOT IT WRONG

one moonful night

mrs. Copernicus whispered:

“darling, the *earth* moved”



# Challenger crew



# Columbia crew







Astronomy is looking up

***Amandla!***

