

PRELIMINARY REPORT ON ACCIDENTAL EXPOSURE OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL HUMAN REMAINS/ BURIAL DURING TRENCHING FOR WATER RETICULATION AT SETUMONG, UNDER AGANANG LOCAL MUNICIPALITY IN THE CAPRICORN DISTRICT, LIMPOPO PROVINCE.

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Tuesday, 05 July 20162016-07-05

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REPORT DETAILS

Project name: PRELIMINARY REPORT ON ACCIDENTAL EXPOSURE OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL HUMAN REMAINS/ BURIAL DURING TRENCHING FOR WATER RETICULATION AT SETUMONG, UNDER AGANANG LOCAL MUNICIPALITY IN THE CAPRICORN DISTRICT, LIMPOPO PROVINCE.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CRM	Cultural Resources Management
CMP	Conservation Management Plan
DEA	Department of Environmental Affairs
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
HIA	Heritage Impact Assessment
LSA	Late Stone Age
LIA	Later Iron Age
LIHRA	Limpopo Heritage Resources Authority
PHRA	Provincial Heritage Resources Authority
MSA	Middle Stone Age
NHRA	National Heritage Resources Act
SAHRA	South African Heritage Resources Agency

DEFINITIONS

Archaeological material: remains resulting from human activity left as evidence of their presence which, as proscribed by South African heritage legislation, are older than 100 years, which are in the form of artefacts, food remains and other traces such as rock paintings or engravings, burials, fireplaces and structures.

Artefact/ Ecofact: Any movable object that has been used, modified or manufactured by humans.

Catalogue: An inventory or register of artefacts and/or sites.

Conservation: All the processes of looking after a site/heritage place or landscape including maintenance, preservation, restoration, reconstruction and adaptation.

Cultural Heritage Resources: refers to physical cultural properties such as archaeological sites, paleontological sites, historic and prehistorical places, buildings, structures and material remains, cultural sites such as places of rituals, burial sites or graves and their associated materials, geological or natural features of cultural importance or scientific significance. This include intangible resources such religion practices, ritual ceremonies, oral histories, memories indigenous knowledge.

Cultural landscape: “the combined works of nature and man” and demonstrate “the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of the physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by their natural environment and of successive social, economic and cultural forces, both internal and external”.

Cultural Significance: is the aesthetic, historical, scientific and social value for past, present and future generations.

Early Stone Age: Predominantly the Acheulean hand axe industry complex dating to + 1Myr yrs – 250 000 yrs. before present.

Early Iron Age: Refers cultural period of the first millennium AD associated with the introduction of metallurgy and agriculture in Eastern and Southern Africa

Later Iron Age: Refers to the period after 1000AD marked by increasing social and political complexity. Evidence of economic wealth through trade and livestock keeping especially cattle

Excavation: A method in which archaeological materials are extracted, involving systematic recovery of archaeological remains and their context by removing soil and any other material covering them.

Grave: a place of burial which include materials such as tombstone or other marker such as cross etc.

Historic material: means remains resulting from human activities, which are younger than 100 years and no longer in use, which include artefacts, human remains and artificial features and structures.

Intangible heritage: Something of cultural value that is not primarily expressed in a material form e.g. rituals, knowledge systems, oral traditions, transmitted between people and within communities.

Historical archaeology: the study of material remains from both the remote and recent past in relationship to documentary history and the stratigraphy of the ground in which they are found; or archaeological investigation on sites of the historic period. In South Africa it refers to the immediate pre-colonial period, contact with European colonists and the modern industrial period.

In situ material: means material culture and surrounding deposits in their original location and context, for instance archaeological remains that have not been disturbed.

Later Iron Age: The period from the beginning of the 2nd millennium AD marked by the emergence if complex state society and long-distance trade contacts.

Late Stone Age: The period from ± 30 000-yr. to the introduction of metals and farming technology

Middle Stone Age: Various stone using industries dating from ± 250 000 yr. - 30 000 yrs. ago

Monuments: architectural works, buildings, sites, sculpture, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings which are outstanding from the point of view of history, art and science.

Place: means site, area, building or other work, group of buildings or other works, together with pertinent contents, surroundings and historical and archaeological deposits.

Preservation: means protecting and maintaining the fabric of a place in its existing state and retarding deterioration or change, and may include stabilization where necessary.

Potsherd: ceramic fragment.

Significance grading: Grading of sites or artefacts according to their historical, cultural or scientific value.

Site: a spatial cluster of artefacts, structures, organic and environmental remains, as residues of past human activity.

Site Recoding Template: Site recording form.

1. INTRODUCTION

On 20 May 2016 human bones were exposed during trenching for the laying of a bulk water pipe at Setumong Village. Riverside Chuene Construction was doing excavations as contracted by the Capricorn District Municipality. The material was turned up at GPS coordinates S 23° 45' 22.80 " E 29° 02' 38.47" outside the Bakone Ba Matlala a Thaba Traditional Council offices (Figs 1-2). The development of water supply infrastructure is part of government's on-going programme to provide basic needs in rural areas.

Operations were suspended and the South African Police Service (SAPS) at Matlala Station was called to attend. A case was opened and referenced OB1675/05/2016. Police observation was that the bones were old. The file was therefore closed as the Police ruled out foul play, leaving the matter to the discretion of the Bakone Ba Matlala a Thaba Traditional Council to find means of disposal of the remains.

2. APPOINTMENT OF MBOFHO CONSULTING & PROJECT MANAGERS

Aganang Local Municipality on behalf of the Capricorn District appointed us as Heritage Specialists to carry out investigations. Our first site visit was on 28 June 2016 with a consultative meeting convened at the same time, attended by representatives of the Bakone Ba Matlala a Thaba Traditional Council. The meeting authorised archaeological salvage of the remains proposing relocation at a formal cemetery. The following is a report of preliminary findings.

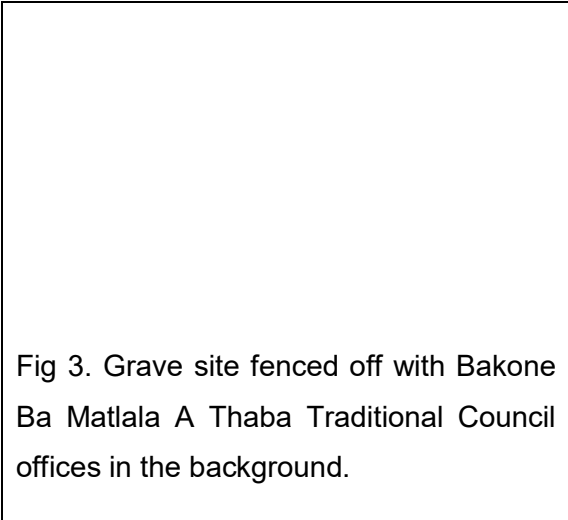
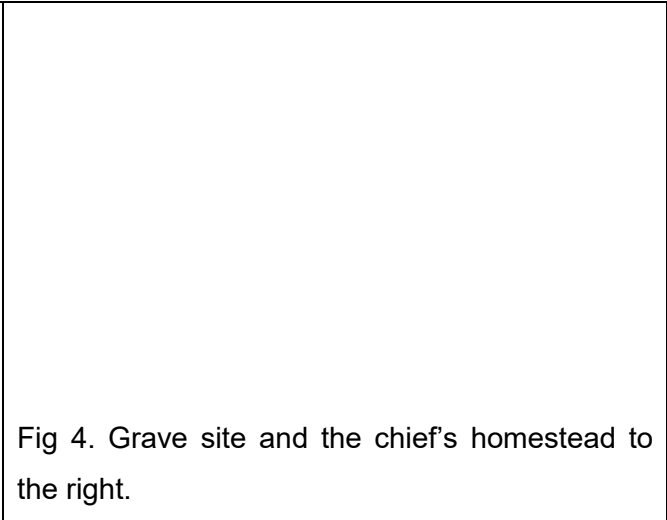
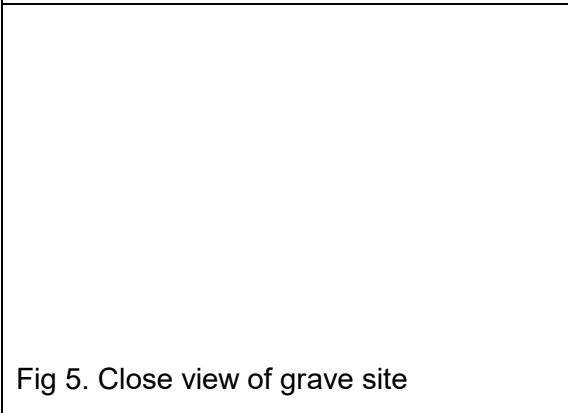
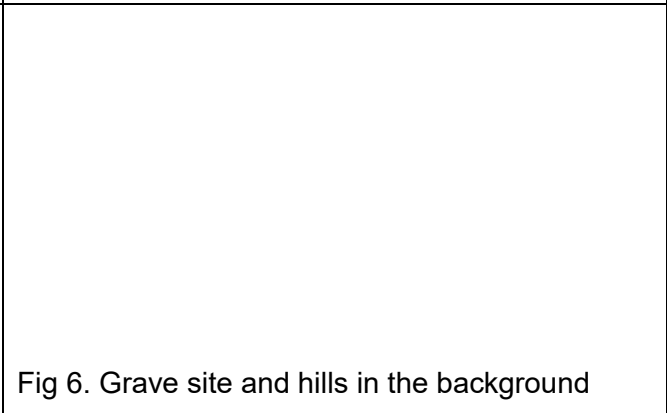
3. PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

The burial site is located in Setumong Village between the Bakone Ba Matlala a Thaba Traditional Council Offices to the east and the chiefs homestead to the west (Figs 3-6). Setumong Village is situated 45km west of Polokwane City on the foot of an isolated granite complex with a series of peaks. A river, one of main tributaries of the Sand River, passes close by east of the hills on a northward course to the Limpopo River

Fig 1. Google-Earth map shows the location of the grave site west of Polokwane.

Fig 2. Google-Earth map shows the location of the grave site on the foot of a granite complex in Setumong Village.

Soils are sandy-loamy. We noticed exposures of many small fragmented bones, although there were attempts by the contractor to cover them. We also noticed possible traces of vitrified dung indicating that there was a cattle kraal in the area. Our preliminary conclusion is there was a large village in the area in precolonial times to which we can associate the burial. The burial is therefore old and should be treated as archaeological. The poor state of preservation of bones, and the fact that village residents were not aware of the remains before they were exposed support this conclusion.

 <p>Fig 3. Grave site fenced off with Bakone Ba Matlala A Thaba Traditional Council offices in the background.</p>	 <p>Fig 4. Grave site and the chief's homestead to the right.</p>
 <p>Fig 5. Close view of grave site</p>	 <p>Fig 6. Grave site and hills in the background</p>

4. PROPOSED MITIGATION PLAN

Given that the site has been disturbed by the trenching, salvage work must be undertaken to remove the remains and re-inter them in a formal graveyard. Procedures for archaeological salvage of graves are set out in SAHRA guidelines on the treatment of human remains. The community has been consulted through the Bakone ba Matlala a Thaba Traditional Council. Since the remains are unknown and

they are in the midst of a residential area, the appropriate action is to retrieve and reinter them in a formal cemetery. Alternatively they could be deposited in a museum or research institution. However museums hold a large number of human remains recovered in similar circumstances. Archaeological and heritage experts now favour reburial in accordance with local cultural practices rather than turning them to museums or universities as research or exhibition material. We therefore recommend reburial at a site to be identified in consultation with the local traditional council.

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For Mbofho Consulting and Project Managers

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