

FINAL EXHUMATION REPORT:

South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) Permit ID: 218/Case ID: 1490

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE SALVAGING, EXHUMATION AND RE-INTERMENT OF
EXPOSED HUMAN SKELETAL REMAINS AT MPHANAMA VILLAGE, WITHIN
FETAKGOMO LOCAL MUNICIPALITY OF THE SEKHUKHUNE DISTRICT,
LIMPOPO PROVINCE**

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Disclaimer: Although all possible care is taken to identify all sites of cultural importance during the phase two investigation, it is always possible that hidden or sub-surface sites could be overlooked during the assessment programme. Vhufashu Heritage Consultants and its personnel will not be held liable for such oversights or for costs incurred as a result of such oversights.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Note: This report follows minimum standard guidelines and standard archaeological practices required by the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA and SAHRIS) for compiling exhumation and analysis investigation Report.

Site name and location: Mphanama village is situated about 120 km south west of Polokwane Central Business District. The site is situated further south of the Lebowakgomo area, within the Fetakgomo local municipality of the Sekhukhune District. The affected archaeological site is located at the following global positioning system co-ordinates South 24° .35'. 371" and East 29° .51'.503"

Legal documents that govern archaeological sites excavation and exhumation were obtained from South African Heritage Resource Agency. The process was conducted from the 8th to the 12th of April 2013. The affected archaeological site was excavated within standard best practice framework. Two human skeletal remains were uncovered and several diagnostic and undiagnostic potsherds retrieved. This report form part of the process written to communicate on the nature of the excavation and basic findings. Graves are more than any other aspects of Cultural Resources Management, human remains are prone to be the focus of emotional, ethical and cultural controversy, where exhumation approach seldom compromise emotional, ethical, and cultural consideration, and they are regarded as sensitive .The sentimental value attached to the graves and its contents, by the relatives of the individuals is very high, therefore dealing with human remains demand the highest ethical standards, respect for the remains often involves a token gesture, real and heartfelt.

The work was commissioned by the Department of Road and Transport conducted

in line with the National Heritage Resources Act of 1999 (Act No. 25 of 1999). The act protects heritage resources through formal and general protections. The South African Heritage Resources Agency developed minimum standards for impact assessments. In addition to these local standards, the International Council of Monuments and sites (ICOMOS) published guidelines for assessing impacts within or near the proposed development.

Summary of finds:

Two human skeletal remains were uncovered inside test trench 1 (TT1), they were uncovered at a distance of 18 meters apart. One of the remains belongs to a child 0-4 months old while the other remains belong to an adult individual. Child's remains cranium (skull) was characterized by isolated plates, with no sutures, collected bones from this skeleton include: cranium plates, ribs, Clavicle, vertebra, femur, humerus, tarsal and metatarsal bones, ulna, radius and phalanges. The second skeleton is of an adult male individual of between 35- 45 years of age. He was buried lying on the left hand side of the body, with hands placed on the sternum (chest), the legs were tied and folded to be accommodated inside a small round grave pit measured (73cmX70cm) in diameter. The orientation of the individual was facing the western section where the existing village is situated. Unfortunately the cranium section of the skeleton was disturbed. Possibilities are that the cranium or skull was damaged by earth moving machinery during grading activities of the gravel road bypass (for more information see enclosed photographs in the document). The proximal and distal ends of the long bones were disintegrated and very brittle.

Acknowledgements:

Vhufashu Heritage Consultants wishes to express its sincere gratitude's to all who contributed to the excavation and exhumation process more especially the Department of Road and Transport by commissioning this study. We also wish to acknowledge the role played by different stakeholders such as the South African Heritage Resource Agency Burial Grounds Unit for issuing the excavation Permit, Mphanama Community, Mphanama Tribal Council, Kgosi Mphanama for his generosity and allowing us to conduct the investigations, Ward Chancellor Klass Diphofa for overall social facilitation. And last but not least this acknowledgement would not be complete if we do not mention the excavation team members.

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PROFESSIONAL DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, Mr. Mathoho Ndivhuho Eric hereby declare that I am a Professional Archaeologist accredited with the association for South African Professional Archaeologist (ASAPA) Membership No #312 and that Vhufashu Heritage Consultants is an independent consultants with no association or with no any other interest what so ever with any institution, organization, or whatever and that the remuneration earned from consulting work constitute the basis of Company livelihood and income.



.....
Mr. Mathoho Ndivhuho Eric

Archaeologist and Heritage Consultant for Vhufashu Heritage Consultants
ASAPA Member # 312

1. INTRODUCTION

In February 2012 the Department of Road and Transport informed the author that human skeletal remains were exposed by earth moving machinery during the establishment of access gravel road bypass at Mphanama village. These activities also disturbed archaeological site where the top section (10cm) of archaeological deposits was scraped off. The disturbed area was inspected in the presence of the Mphanama tribal council elders and Local municipality wards Councilors, in February 2013. South African Heritage Resource Agency Office was informed immediately, but could not manage to arrange a site visit. SAHRA therefore relied on the recommendation of the principal investigator that all activities within the affected areas must be put on hold and that an archaeologist must be appointed to conduct a rescue operation. The Department of Road and transport procured funding for site excavations the exhumation. A permit to excavate, salvage and exhume human skeletal remains was issued dated March 11, 2013.

It must be noted that the Limpopo Department of Environmental Affairs had exempted this road upgrade from the Environmental Impacts Assessments process. We are not certain whether an Archaeological Impact Assessment (AIA) for the proposed road upgrade was conducted. The aim of the exercise was thus to respectfully excavate, salvage, exhume and re-bury the exposed human skeletal remains.



Figure 1: View of the study area indicated by an arrow after recent rain fall.



Figure 2: Section of the cranium exposed by gravel road grading activities.

2. REGIONAL SETTING: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The history Ba- Pedi before the 20th century has been well described and documented in several literatures. The exact origin of Ba-Pedi is shrouded by mystery; they are undoubtedly, of Sotho origin. The Sotho division is so classified principally on the linguistic grounds of similar characteristic of Sotho people (Mönnig 1967). The Tswana Chiefdom form part of the larger group of Sotho people, while Sotho group itself is one of the three great sub-divisions of the bantu-speaking peoples situated north of the Nguni communities. In addition to Batswana or Western Sotho, the Sotho group includes the Basotho of Lesotho and the Orange Free State, to whom the term Sotho has come to be more specifically the almost exclusively applied. This group some time also referred to as the southern Sotho. The third group comprises the Bapedi who have been generally referred to as the northern Sotho, with the exception of some Tswana; this group is the one that dominated in the study area. To wrap up the above all these tribes call themselves Sotho (Mönnig 1967).

Legassick (1969) summary of the vast and complicated literature on the Sotho- Tswana oral tradition provide a frame work for the understanding of the relevant archaeological records. It is possible to establish a meaningful relationship between archaeological and historical groups and to use this relationship to clarify the early history of the Sotho-Tswana-Ba-Pedi. The Transvaal Sotho has been subdivided into a number of groups. These are the eastern Sotho, particularly the Kutswe, Pai and Pulana; the north eastern Sotho, particularly the Phalaborwa, Mmamabolo and Lobedu the northern Sotho, particularly the Kgaga, Birwa, Tlokwa and some Koni and Tau. Historical documents and Sotho oral tradition suggest that they originated from the Great Lakes in central Africa. Their migration occurred in succession of waves over many years under the leadership of king Kgalakgadi who settled in Botswana in the early 13th centuries. The next group to have arrived in the early period seems to have been the Digoya who were the first group to cross the Vaal River, little is known of their history and they were finally absorbed by the Ba-Taung tribe. The majority of the proper Sotho followed two three migration of the Ba-Rolong, Ba- Fokeng and Ba- Hurutshe.

Documents suggest that Marota (commonly called Ba-Pedi) originated from Ba- Kgatla form central Highveld near present day Rustenburg and Pretoria, an important offshoot, the Ba- Pedi is thought to have moved northeast in the mid 17th century. Another member of the cluster may be the Ba- Tlokwa. Maggs (1976) connect Ba- Tlokwa with the Pembe ruins which are situated some few kilometers south of Ntuanatsatsi hill, he further alluded that Ba- Tlokwa once built a

capital called Itlholanoga in the Pilansberg near the present day Sun City; it was at a later stage that the Ba-Kgatla took over this area. The site is characterized by well constructed stone walled complex located on top of hill; the architectural style of the stone wall has been dominated by Molokwane patterns. According to Maggs (1976) the Ba-Kgatla tribes were responsible with the construction of the stone walling while Ba-Tlokwa was responsible with the earliest occupation. According to Boeyens (2005) Tlokwa are known to have lived in the late 18th century at Marathodi site.

Oral traditions suggest that migration and settlement in the sub- continent are of course conjectural with trace of genealogies of the Ba-Rolong tribe back to 1270 and the Ba- Fokeng even to 980 AD, the Ba-Rolong began their migration at the beginning of the 15th century and towards the 16 century they were followed by two last group, the last of which was the Ba-Hurutshe who transverse the land and settle in what is now the western Transvaal. History suggest that when Mmathobele was expecting her first child the other wives of Diale (The ruler), were jealousy and they said that they could hear the child crying in her womb. Naturally this unusual event was attributed to witchcraft, and the Kgatla wanted to kill the mother and child, Diale interceded for her and the child was born normally, the child was nick-named Lellelateng (it cries inside), as the child grow older, his father, seeing that the tribe would never accept his son to attained the kingship, he instructed him to leave with his mother and followers towards the east, the group under the leadership of Thobele founded their own tribe, the Pedi. Lellelateng is generally taken as founder of the Pedi, although tradition makes no further mention of his sons or successors, where as Thobele is accepted as the man who led the Pedi to their new home (Mönnig 1967).

According to the 19th century settlement of this region, the Sotho speaking Ba-Pedi arrived relatively late, they did however build powerful kingdom in time of Thulare 1790-1820. One of the reasons was availability of excellent pasture and good landscape. Historians suggest that Ba- Kgatla clan consolidated other smaller clan forming the Ba-Pedi stronghold state. The Pedi oral traditions suggest that Ba- Pedi chief Thulare maneuvered to the top of the ladder through his superb military tactics and became undisputed paramount chief of the region. By 1828 the new Pedi chief Sekwati had returned to the area, and over the next ten years rebuilt the Pedi stronghold. When the Voortrekker arrived in the Marota (Ba-Pedi) Empire King Sekwati (King Sekhukhune's father) resisted, and a famous battle was fought at Phiring in 1838, Sekwati defeated the Boer. The Ndzundza Ndebele, who also appear to have a long history in the area

appear to have been subordinate to the Pedi up until the death of Sekwati in 1861 at this point the Ndzundza declared their independence (Esterhysen & Smith, 2007).

After the death of king Sekwati an illegitimate ruler who came to power using military force, emerged (king Sekhukhune), he maintained stronghold with neighbouring tribes through intermarriages, it was at this time that his brother Mampuru (legitimate ruler) was forced to flee from the kingdom. During the reign of Sekhukhune he sent young men under the auspices of his headmen's to work in white farms and at the diamond mines, money earned from these employment were taxed and the taxes was used to buy guns form the Portuguese in Delagoa bay where he usually sent his subordinates for trade purposes, some of the money was used for purchasing cattle in an attempt to increases Marota's wealth.

By the 19th century the Marota Empire had grown to unite all disparate people in the area (Sekhukhune land). It was the same guns that were used in the war of resistance against the Boers and British. During the wars of resistance Sekhukhune was of the attitude that the land between the Vaal and Limpopo Rivers belongs to him and his area fall outside Pretoria's jurisdictions. Communities around the region were living harmoniously, trading and farming it was up to the year 1826 when Mzilikazi Khumalo fled from King Shaka's rule and reaches the region devastating the tribes that were within the region including Ba-Pedi communities, fortunately the Ba- Pedi recovered the devastation. A notable event was the decimation of the Pedi at some point between 1823 and 1825, there were some dispute over who was responsible and Mzilikazi Khumalo (Ndebele) moved up into the region to revenge the Pedi and their land, Ndwandwe under Zwibe were responsible. The Pedi survivor took refuge in the Waterberg area (Esterhysen & Smith 2007).

Many wars of resistance were fought and later Sekhukhune was forced hide himself in the cave. And the European troops cut supply of food and water and Sekhukhune was forced to come out of the cave surrender, and was captured and locked in prison. It was after his release in 1882 that his brother Mampuru murdered him. During those years Mampuru and Nyabela fled and hid from Commandant General Piet Joubert. (Mapoch was the chief of the Ndzundza-Ndebele tribe) The cave where Nyabela and Mampuru were hiding was besiege by Joubert in 1882 and Nyabela was arrested and lost his chieftaincy and the land under his jurisdiction was divided amongst the white (Burgers) who participated in the siege.

3. LOCATION

General co-ordinates: South 24°.35'. 371" and East 29°.51'.503" (See locality map for more details).

Mphanama village is situated about 120 km south west of Polokwane Central Business District. The area is located 1,2 kilometers from Lepallane River Bridge, further west of Lepallane dam, within the Fetakgomo Local Municipality of the Sekhukhune District. Topography of the study area is much varied influenced by the presence of mountain range and river valleys; these were the preferred settlement places for Iron Age communities in the past. This area was previously used as cultivation fields, demarcated by *Agave sisalana* plant (sisal), and is currently on secondary succession with scattered single strands of countable indigenous trees. The area is over grazed by cattle, donkeys' sheep and goats. The vegetation of the study area comprises of sparse numerous endemic plant species, heterogeneous rocky habitat, with numerous floristic links and grass cover, important plant taxa include: *acacia* sp, *Boschia albitrunca*, *Euphorbia tirucalli* and *engens* and grass etc (Ackocks 1975; Mucina and Rutherford 2006).

The area had been severely disturbed by village agricultural activities and the recent construction of gravel road bypass. The geology and soils of the study area is mostly characterized by grainy coarse sandy soil with sections characterised by calcrete formations exposed at nearby borrow pit site.

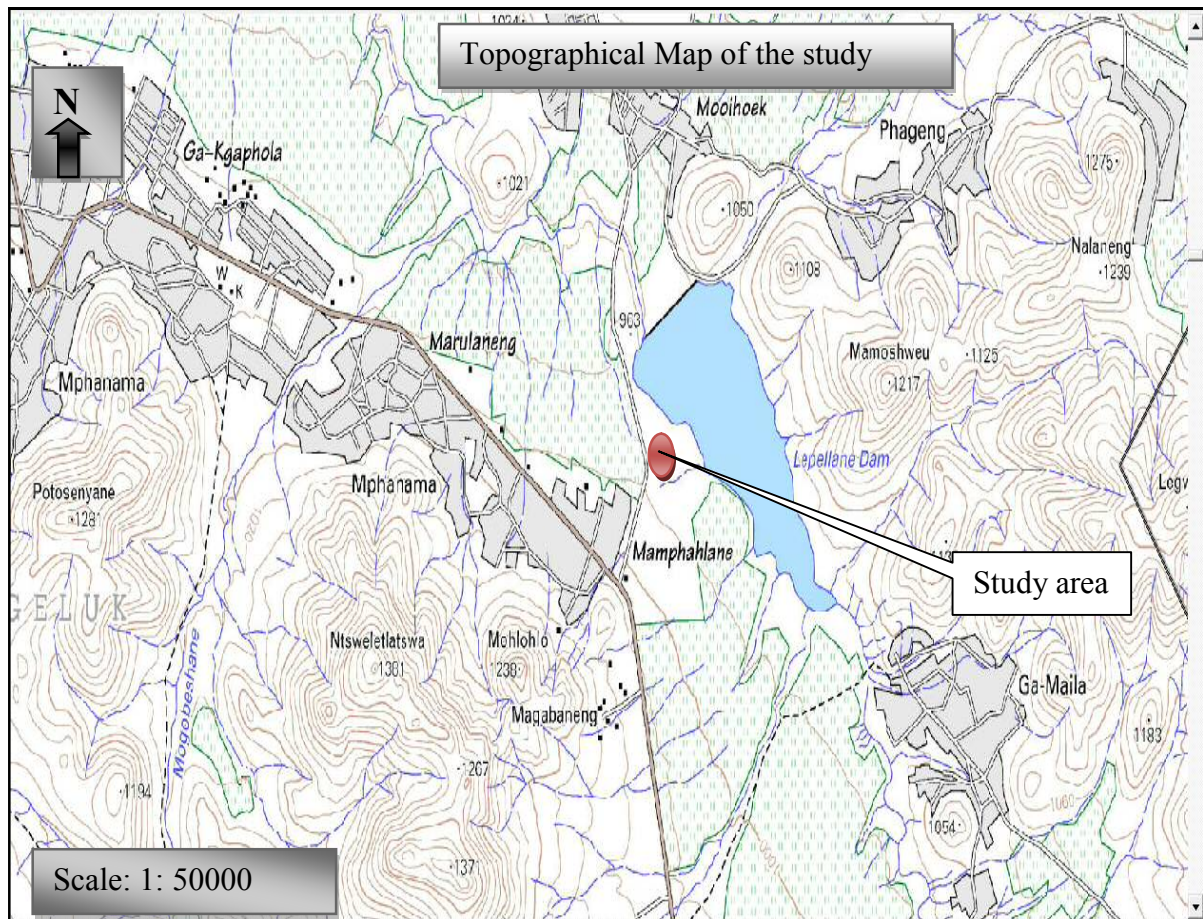


Figure 3: The study area indicated by a red dot west of Lephallane dam, situated adjacent to the newly constructed tarred road.

4. LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Two sets of legislation are relevant for the study with regards to the protection of heritage resources and graves.

4.1. The National Heritage Resource Act (25 of 1999)

This Act established the South African Heritage Resource Agency (SAHRA) as the prime custodians of the heritage resources and makes provision for the undertaking of heritage resources impact assessment for various categories of development as determined by section 38. It also provides for the grading of heritage resources (section 7) and the implementation of a three-tier level of responsibility and functions from heritage resources to be undertaken by the State, Provincial and Local authorities, depending on the grade of heritage resources (section 8)

In terms of the National Heritage Resource Act 25, (1999) the following is of relevance:

Historical remains

Section 34 (1) No person may alter or demolish any structure or part of a structure, which is older than 60 years without a permit issued by the relevant Provincial Heritage Resources Authority.

Archaeological remains

Section 35(3) Any person who discover archaeological or Paleontological object or material or a meteorite in the course of development or agricultural activity must immediately report the find to the responsible heritage resource authority or the nearest local authority or museum, which must immediately notify such heritage resources authority.

Section 35(4) No person may, without a permit issued by the responsible heritage resources authority-

- destroy, damage, excavate, alter, deface or otherwise disturb any archaeological or palaeontological site or any meteorite;
- destroy, damage, excavate, remove from its original position, collect or own any archaeological or paleontological material or object or any meteorite;
- trade in ,sell for private gain, export or attempt to export from republic any category of archaeological or paleontological material or object or any meteorite; or
- bring onto or use at an archaeological or paleontological site any excavation equipment or any equipment which assist with the detection or recovery of metal or archaeological material or object or such equipment for the recovery of meteorites.

Section 35(5) When the responsible heritage resource authority has reasonable cause to believe that any activity or development which will destroy, damage or alter any archaeological or paleontological site is underway, and where no application for a permit has been submitted and no heritage resource management procedures in terms of section 38 has been followed, it may

- serve on the owner or occupier of the site or on the person undertaking such development an order for the development to cease immediately for such period as is specified in the order

- carry out an investigation for the purpose of obtaining information on whether or not an archaeological or paleontological site exists and whether mitigation is necessary;
- if mitigation is deemed by the heritage resources authority to be necessary, assist the person on whom the order has been served under paragraph (a) to apply for a permit as required in subsection (4); and
- recover the cost of such investigation from the owner or occupier of the land on which it is believed an archaeological or paleontological site is located or from the person proposing to undertake the development if no application for a permit is received within two week of the order being served.

Subsection 35(6) the responsible heritage resource authority may, after consultation with the owner of the land on which an archaeological or paleontological site or meteorite is situated; serve a notice on the owner or any other controlling authority, to prevent activities within a specified distance from such site or meteorite.

Burial grounds and graves

Section 36 (3) No person may, without a permit issued by SAHRA or a provincial heritage resources authority:

- (i) destroy, damage, alter, exhume, remove from its original position or otherwise disturb any grave or burial ground older than 60 years which is situated outside a formal cemetery administered by a local authority; or
- (ii) bring onto or use at a burial ground or grave any excavation equipment, or any equipment which assists in detection or recovery of metals.

Subsection 36 (6) Subject to the provision of any person who in the course of development or any other activity discover the location of a grave, the existence of which was previously unknown, must immediately cease such activity and report the discovery to the responsible heritage resource authority which must, in co-operation with the South African Police service and in accordance with regulation of the responsible heritage resource authority-

- (I) carry out an investigation for the purpose of obtaining information on whether or not such grave is protected in terms of this act or is of significance to any community; and if such grave is protected or is of significance, assist any person who or community which is a direct descendant to make arrangements for the exhumation and re-interment

of the contents of such grave or, in the absence of such person or community, make any such arrangement as it deems fit.

Cultural Resource Management

Section 38(1) Subject to the provisions of subsection (7), (8) and (9), any person who intends to undertake a development*...

- must at the very earliest stages of initiating such development notify the responsible heritage resources authority and furnish it with details regarding the location, nature and extent of the proposed development.

development means any physical intervention, excavation, or action, other than those caused by natural forces, which may in the opinion of the heritage authority in any way result in a change to the nature, appearance or physical nature of a place, or influence its stability and future well-being, including:

- (i) Construction, alteration, demolition, removal or change of use of a place or a structure at a place;
- (ii) Any change to the natural or existing condition or topography of land, and
- (iii) Any removal or destruction of trees, or removal of vegetation or topsoil;

place means a site, area or region, a building or other structure

structure means any building, works, device or other facility made by people and which is fixed to the ground.

4.2. The Human Tissue Act (65 of 1983)

This act protects graves younger than 60 years, these falls under the jurisdiction of the National Department of Health and the Provincial Health Department. Approval for the exhumation and reburial must be obtained from the relevant provincial MEC as well as relevant Local Authorities.

5. TERMS OF REFERENCE

- (a) carry out an investigation for the purpose of obtaining information on whether or not such grave is protected in terms of this Act or is of significance to any community; and

(b) if such grave is protected or is of significance, assist the Department of Roads and Transport and any person who or community which is a direct descendant to make arrangements for the exhumation and re-interment of the content of such grave or, in the absence of such person or community, make any such arrangement as it deems fit and submit a specialist report to the South African Heritage Resource Agency and the Department of Roads and Transport, which addresses the following:

- Executive summary
- Scope of work undertaken
- Methodology used to obtain supporting information
- Overview of relevant legislation
- Results of all investigations
- Interpretation of information
- Assessment of impact
- Recommendation on effective management measures
- References

6. TERMINOLOGY

The Heritage impact Assessment (HIA) referred to in the title of this report includes a survey of heritage resources as outlined in the National Heritage resources Act, 1999 (Act No 25 of 1999). Heritage resources, (Cultural resources) include all human-made phenomena and intangible products that are result of the human mind. Natural, technological or industrial features may also be part of heritage resources, as places that have made an outstanding contribution to the cultures, traditions and lifestyle of the people or groups of people of South Africa.

The term ‘pre –historical’ refers to the time before any historical documents were written or any written language developed in a particular area or region of the world. The historical period and historical remains refer, for the project area, to the first appearance or use of ‘modern’ Western writing brought South Africa by the first colonist who settled in the Cape in the early 1652 and brought to the other different part of South Africa in the early 1800.

The term 'relatively recent past' refers to the 20th century. Remains from this period are not necessarily older than sixty years and therefore may not qualify as archaeological or historical remains. Some of these remains, however, may be close to sixty years of age and may in the near future, qualify as heritage resources.

It is not always possible, based on the observation alone, to distinguish clearly between archaeological remains and historical remains or between historical remains and remains from the relatively recent past. Although certain criteria may help to make this distinction possible, these criteria are not always present, or when they are present, they are not always clear enough to interpret with great accuracy. Criteria such as square floors plans (a historical feature) may serve as a guideline. However circular and square floors may occur together on the same site.

The 'term sensitive remains' is sometimes used to distinguish graves and cemeteries as well as ideologically significant features such as holy mountains, initiation sites or other sacred places. Graves in particular are not necessarily heritage resources if they date from the recent past and do not have head stones that are older than sixty years. The distinction between 'formal' and 'informal' graves in most instances also refers to graveyards that were used by colonists and by indigenous people. This distinction may be important as different cultural groups may uphold different traditions and values with regard to their ancestors. These values have to be recognized and honoured whenever graveyards are exhumed and relocated.

The term 'Stone Age' refers to the prehistoric past, although Late Stone Age people lived in South Africa well into the historical period. The Stone Age is divided into an Early Stone Age (3Million years to 150 000 thousand years ago) the Middle Stone Age (150 000 years ago to 40 years ago) and the Late Stone Age (40 000 years to 200 years ago).

The term 'Early Iron Age' and Late Iron Age respectively refers to the periods between the first and second millenniums AD.

The 'Late Iron Age' refers to the period between the 17th and the 19th centuries and therefore includes the historical period.

Mining heritage sites refers to old, abandoned mining activities, underground or on the surface, which may date from the pre historical, historical or relatively recent past.

The term 'study area' or 'project area' refers to the area where the developers wants to focus its development activities (refer to plan)

Phase I studies refers to survey using various sources of data in order to establish the presence of all possible types of heritage resources in a given area.

Phase II studies includes in-depth cultural heritage studies such as archaeological excavating and sometimes laboratory work. Phase II work may include documenting of rock art, engravings or historical sites and dwellings; the sampling of archaeological sites or shipwrecks; extended excavation of archaeological sites; the exhumation of bodies and the relocation of grave yards, etc. Phase II work may require the input of specialist and require the co-operation and the approval of SAHRA.

7. COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

During the initial inspection of the affected site, the archaeologists had identified the remains as belonging to the pre-colonial Iron Age period based on the content of the disturbed archaeological deposit. Nevertheless, in accordance with legislative requirements, a community consultative process was undertaken in an attempt to test local indigenous knowledge about the remains. Mr. Mathoho Ndivhuho Eric of Vhufashu Heritage Consultants undertook the community consultation process. Interviews were held with local residents with the aid of Chancellor Klass Diphofa. Kgosi Mphanama also called a public meeting to deal with identifying the site. According to Pat Kgaphola the site was occupied by Late iron age people before ,they were born and none of Mphanama elders know about the presence of site like that, it was only when the skeletal human remains was uncovered that they came to realise that people were buried in that area. The community leaders, Department of Road and Transport facilitation team were extremely helpful and positively participated directly in the process. Mr. Klaas Diphofa, ward chancellor became a liaison or middle man between the Municipality, the traditional leadership and the archaeologists to successfully conclude the consultative process. An agreement was reached between Vhufashu Heritage Consultants and the Chief Curator of the Polokwane Museums to catalogue and curate all archaeological material remains uncovered during the excavation process (see repository letter from the Polokwane Museums -Annexure 1).

The community consultation produced no direct descendants or any person who claimed the graves. Satisfactory arrangements were made with the traditional authority for the salvaging,

exhumation and reburial of the remains. The Traditional Authority identified site, as the reburial place, a site close to where the remains were originally exposed. A date for the reburial was finalised to be the 29th of August.

8. THE EXHUMATION SITE

The affected site is situated southeast of the newly constructed tarred road from Mphanama to Pitseng village on the gravel road bypass. The area is characterised by disturbed topsoil. The deposit, into which the remains were noticed, consisted of removed 15cm top soil layer containing archaeological materials. From the top soil livestock dung deposit (white ash like layer) with scattered faunal and undiagnostic potsherds, top and bottom grading stones could be seen exposed by earth moving activities of the gravel road by-pass (temporary road). Recent rain-runoff deposited loose sand deposit covering the identified skeletal remains on the other section of the site archaeological materials such as animal bones and potsherds were exposed to the surface..



Figure 4: faunal remains indicated by arrow. **Figure 5:** View of bottom grinding stone.

9. THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROCEDURE

Excavation has been defined by Shrare and Ashmore (1979) as the principal means by which data is gathered about the past the method is used to gather and retrieved data from beneath the ground. This data is seldom in primary context. The archaeological excavations included both

formally laid out excavation trenches and/or squares in predetermined areas; in this regard it was decided to concentrate on disturbed areas, where human skeletal remains were noted (Gravel road bypass).

The procedures to deal with the site were in Threefold:

- The visible skeletal materials were exhumed.
- A control test trench was excavated parallel to the gravel road bypass. This was to recover archaeological material in context and to enable determination of stratigraphy and cultural sequence of the site.
- Laboratory work for conducting specialist analysis to determine the number of individual's recovered and basic pathological data such as age and gender of the individuals.

10.1. RECOVERY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS

Surface collection was conducted where potsherds, top grinding stones were randomly collected. Excavation process was informed by ground thruthing an essential prelude. The process was guided by surface distribution of artefacts, ecofacts and features which provide an insight on what lies beneath the ground. The excavation procedures involved establishing baselines and excavation grids. The process of excavation was done in spits of 10cm. A sieve of 2mm was used throughout the entire excavation process to collect possible hammer scale and other small objects such as glass beads, and charcoal which are important for relative dating and radio carbon dating.

All archaeological features encountered during excavation were drawn on A3 sketch graph book and photographed using digital cameras. Once removed the finds was placed in labelled bags and stored. Each arbitrary layer described using a standardized archaeological documentation form for stratigraphy. Most of the retrieved artefacts disturbed or insitu were relevant to investigation objectives'. The main objectives of the excavation program are to retrieve contextually well resolved data for analysis investigation.

The emphasis was to recover the human skeletal remains and secondly, to collect a sample of pottery that would enable the identification and relative dating of the archaeological site.

A test trench, TT 1 that was 6 meter long and 1 meter wide was excavated. The block was the first block to the north; this block was dug up to layer 3 (10 cm spits). The entire deposit consisted of white ash deposit. Few undiagnostic potsherds were found in association with animals bones.



Figure 6: Controlled test trench



Figure 7: Excavation of the first trench

10.2. EXHUMATION OF SKELETAL REMAINS.

The graves were excavated according to archaeological techniques used to investigate historical and archaeological graves as described by Nienaber (1997) Nienaber & Steyn (1999) for the recovery and analysis of human skeletal remains. The procedures employed minimise damages to the bones and helps in determining and confirming the burial position of the deceased as well as determining the identity in terms of race, sex and age. Standard anthropological procedures were employed to analyse the remains in situ after the remains were exposed by means of archaeological methods. At the depth of 20cm grainy sterile soil was encountered, circular grave pit, 30cm in diameter was noticed with child remains the remains were fragmented with disintegrated skull plates all other bones were well preserved. Some of the identifiable bones includes ribs and vertebrae, femur, clavicle were collected from the base of the grave pit. No associated grave goods material remains was present in or adjacent to the remains.

Test trench was extended to more than 80meter towards the northern sections covering the entire area. Additional three meters separate trenches were standardized over an area presumed to be livestock kraal characterised by ashy dung deposit. At the depth of 15centimeters an adult human remains were uncovered, buried inside 73cmX70cm diameters round grave pit. The cranium (skull bone) was damaged with broken mandible, and several loose incisors teeth, possibly this were damaged by the grade activities of gravel road. While the whole skeleton with its long bones was recorded insitu, however the proximal and distal ends of all the long bones were disintegrated. The individual was buried lying on the left hand side, on his/her stomach(see Photographs for more detail), with all the hands folded on the sternum (chest bone).All the legs were tied together and folded to fit inside the small grave pit. All the remains were collected for further laboratory analysis. After the archaeological excavation processes were completed all the excavated test trenches and associated blocks were rehabilitated into its original setup.



Figure 8: Human Skeletal remains o



Figure 9: child remains indicated by arrow.



Figure 10: View of the excavated test trench with human remains covered by plastic in the middle of the trench.



Figure 11: After the excavation of the area, the site was rehabilitated.

11. SPECIALIST ANALYSIS OF THE SALVAGED HUMAN REMAINS

A minimum number of **2 individual skeletons** were salvaged during the archaeological process.

Skeleton 1

Skeleton: 45, 4% complete.

Dentition: 0% no dentition present.

Gender: cannot be distinguished.

Age: Between 0-4 month of age at time of death: absence of ossification of the acetabulum, absence of milk teeth, thin cranial bone, with no sign of sutures. Ossification process on humans starts at 12 years, complete at 16 years.



Figure 12: Skeleton 1 belongs to a child of age 0-4 month.

- **Skeleton 2**

Skeleton: 45% complete.

Dentition: 59% complete. Postmortem loss of dentition.

Age: 35- 45 years of age

Gender: Male, according to the shape of the rami in the mandible and the pelvic girdle.

This was the only feature that could be used for gender determination.

Ossification of acetabulum complete: Ossification starts at the age of 12 years and the process complete at the age of 16 years. Permanent dentition fully erupted: complete by 21 years. At 15 years only 3rd molar needs to be erupted. 2nd and 3rd mandibular molars are erupted, thus approximately 11 years. Mandibular 3rd molar, the last tooth to erupt, at approximately 15-21 years.



Figure 13: Skeleton 2, some of the bones were very brittle.

Preservation of the remains was generally poor, the skull and mandible were clearly visible, but none of the long bones was complete, the proximal and distal ends have disintegrated (all their ends were eroded away) all the four limb could be observed, very little could be seen on the ribs and vertebrae. A complete set of permanent teeth with advanced wear was evident. The observed cervical vertebrae shows some age changes, these characteristic probably indicate an individual older than 40years. The pelvis was very fragmentary and was completely exposed but the ends of the girdle has disintegrated, and could thus not used in sex determination. However the skull was quite robust with large mastoids, prominent brow ridge and rounded orbital margins, broad nasal aperture, thus indicate an individual of African descent; it was not possible to take cranial measurement that could be used for further analysis. Assesments for the presence of trauma and pathology was hampered by poor preservation.

12. DISCUSSION

The affected site was identified as a Late Iron Age Icon facies of the Moloko Branch, the first Sotho-Tswana speakers that entered the area during the 13th century. This was achieved through a comparative study with the pottery remains found in the deposit. Most of the ceramics were highly fragmented making it difficult to reconstruct the shape profiles. When cleaned, it became clear that some of the pottery fragments were decorated with designs formed by red ochre and graphite burnishing, cross hatched, fine lines incisions, herringbone and punctate. Considering the multiplicity of shapes, size, paste design organizations, these designs are typical Moloko wares, and have been dated elsewhere to the Late Iron Age (Huffman 2007).

About 1800 years ago the first farming communities entered South Africa and started to replace the Stone Age hunter-gatherers. For the first time, people lived in settled communities, cultivating such crops as sorghum, millets, ground beans and cowpeas, and they herded cattle as well as sheep and goats. Because these early farming peoples also made their own iron tools, many archaeologists call this block of time the **Iron Age**. For convenience and to mark widespread events, it is divided into three periods: the Early Iron Age (AD 200-900), the Middle Iron Age (AD 900-1300) and the Late Iron Age (AD 1300-1820- see page 33 for details).

Archaeologically, the Sotho-Tswana language is associated with the ceramic cluster known as Moloko. The earliest recorded facies of Moloko is *Icon*. *Icon* pottery first appears in the Phalaborwa area in the 12th to 13th centuries and then slightly later in the rest of the Limpopo Province. *Icon*, in both areas forms major disjunctions with the local sequences: it cannot be derived from *K2* and *Mapungubwe* in the Limpopo Province, or from *Kgolpolwe* to the southeast. Furthermore, *Icon* cannot be derived from the *Happy Rest – Eiland* sequence elsewhere in Limpopo. Because of the constraints within an historical tradition, *Icon* cannot be derived from other **KALUNDU** facies in Botswana, Zimbabwe or Zambia. By a process of elimination, Sotho-Tswana then most likely had Early Iron Age **UREWE** sources somewhere in East Africa. Sites with this pottery are limited to the Limpopo Province, Mpumalanga and

perhaps Botswana, dating to between about AD 1300 and 1500. According to the ceramic evidence, in some places *Icon* incorporated earlier *Eiland* elements (Huffman 1980, in Press). This phase predates the oral record. Because *Eiland* cultural remains were also found, this site may add to the evidence of the merging of *Eiland* and *Icon* in about the 13th – 14th centuries.



Figure 14: The surface collection only yielded a small representative sample of 30 ceramic shards which cannot help us to determine the pottery analysis in terms of ceramic styles and motif.



Figure 15: Some of the three top grinding stones collected from the top layer of TT1.

13. REBURIAL

After the completion of the excavation process, including preliminary basic analysis of the skeletal remains, the remains were handed over to the Mphanama community via the office of the Traditional Authority and the ward councillor Mr Klass Diphofa. The traditional authority allocated a gravesite approximately 400meters north east of the archaeological site. The site had existing unknown graves, indicated by granite tombstones as dressing. All the remains were place inside wooden coffins for the reburial process. The remains were re-buried on the 29th August 2013. A large number of community members congregated for the reburial process. Important to note is that traditional leadership and tribal council representatives attended the re-burial ceremony. This concluded the process and the local community and Kgosi expressed their satisfaction with the proceedings.



Figure 16: view of the erected tombstones with white wooden coffins, during the reburial program



Figure 17: After the reburial process here are some of the Mphanama Tribal authority members behind the newly erected tombstones.



Figure 18: After the reburial process, food being distributed at the Mphanama tribal council office.

14. CONCLUSION

The objective of this project was concluded by re-interment of the exposed human skeletal remains at Mphanama village. Although certain evidence leads us to conclude that these remains were not related to the present Mphanama community, since archaeological and burial site pre-date oral history the traditional leadership of Mphanama community closely monitored and participated fully on the entire process. The salvaging of remains was successfully concluded.

15. REFERENCES

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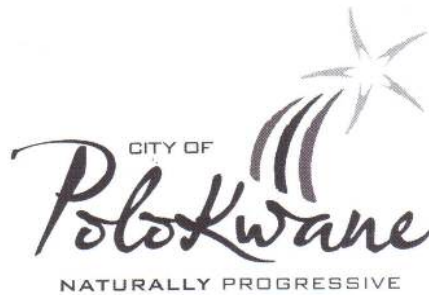
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Date: 27 February 2013

PO Box 456
LADANNA
POLOKWANE
0700

Dear Sir

REPOSITORY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS FROM MPHANAMA

This letter serves to justify that Polokwane Museums have accepted the offer to be the repository for the archaeological artefacts which will be excavated on the Mphanama Village road reserve.

Polokwane Museums have the necessary facilities to host such related material and has been on the mainstream of various research related matters.

We hope you will be so kind so assist the researcher in this regard.

Regards


Chief Curator Polokwane Museums



Annexure 1: Repository letter from Polokwane Museums for storage of archaeological material uncovered during excavation.

MPHANAMA REMAINS RESCUE

Our Ref: MPHANAMA REMAINS RESCUE

Enquiries: Itumeleng Masiteng
Tel: 012 362 2535
Email: imasiteng@sat.sahra.org.za
CaseID: 1490

Date: Monday March 11, 2013
Page No: 1

PermitID: 218



PERMIT:

In terms of Section 36(3) of the National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999)

Permit Holder:
Mr Eric Ndivhuho Mathoho
Vhufahashu Heritage Consultancy CC
45 Voortrekker St
Polokwane
0700

Site: Mphanama Village Road Reserve 1 (Mphanama 1) approximately at 24° 35' 37.0212" S, 29° 51' 56.2212" E

Conditions:

If the permit holder is not to be present on the site at all times then the heritage authority must be provided with the names and qualifications of the authorised representatives. Adequate recording methods as specified in the Regulations and Guidelines pertaining to the National Heritage Resources Act must be employed. Note that the position of all excavations and objects collected must be marked on a plan of site. A standard site record form must be lodged with the Museum in Limpopo (Irish Museum).

Human remains must at all times be handled with respect and graves should not be disturbed except where unavoidable. The consultation procedures as indicated in the Regulations and the National Heritage Resources Act must be observed as appropriate. The recommendations for removal of graves and exhumations and for re-burial stipulated in SAHRA's Policy 'What to do when graves are uncovered', section 3, must be observed as far as possible. A report on the specimens recovered and their origin must be submitted to the heritage authority annually on or before 30th of April 2014 for the duration of the permit.

All remains recovered, including relics and artefacts, as well as field notes and records, must be kept with the skeletal material and be curated at the <Repository>. Reprints of all published papers or copies of theses and/or reports resulting from this work must be lodged with the relevant provincial heritage authority and SAHRA. If a published report has not appeared within three years of the lapsing of this permit, the report required in terms of the permit will be made available to researchers on request. It is the responsibility of the permit holder to obtain permission from the landowner for each visit, and conditions of access imposed by the landowner must be observed.

It is the responsibility of the permit holder to fill in excavations and protect sites during and after excavation to the satisfaction of the heritage authority and the landowner. The heritage authority shall not be liable for any losses, damages or injuries to persons or properties as a result of any activities in connection with this permit. The heritage authority reserves the right to cancel this permit by notice to the permit holder.



MPHANAMA REMAINS RESCUE

Our Ref: MPHANAMA REMAINS RESCUE

Enquiries: Itumeleng Masiteng
Tel: 012 362 2535
Email: imasiteng@sat.sahra.org.za
CaseID: 1490

Date: Monday March 11, 2013
Page No: 2

PermitID: 218



This permit is valid from **11/03/2013 to 11/03/2014**.

Itumeleng Masiteng
Heritage Officer
South African Heritage Resources Agency

Troy Phil
Manager: Burial Grounds and Graves Unit
South African Heritage Resources Agency

Additional Info:

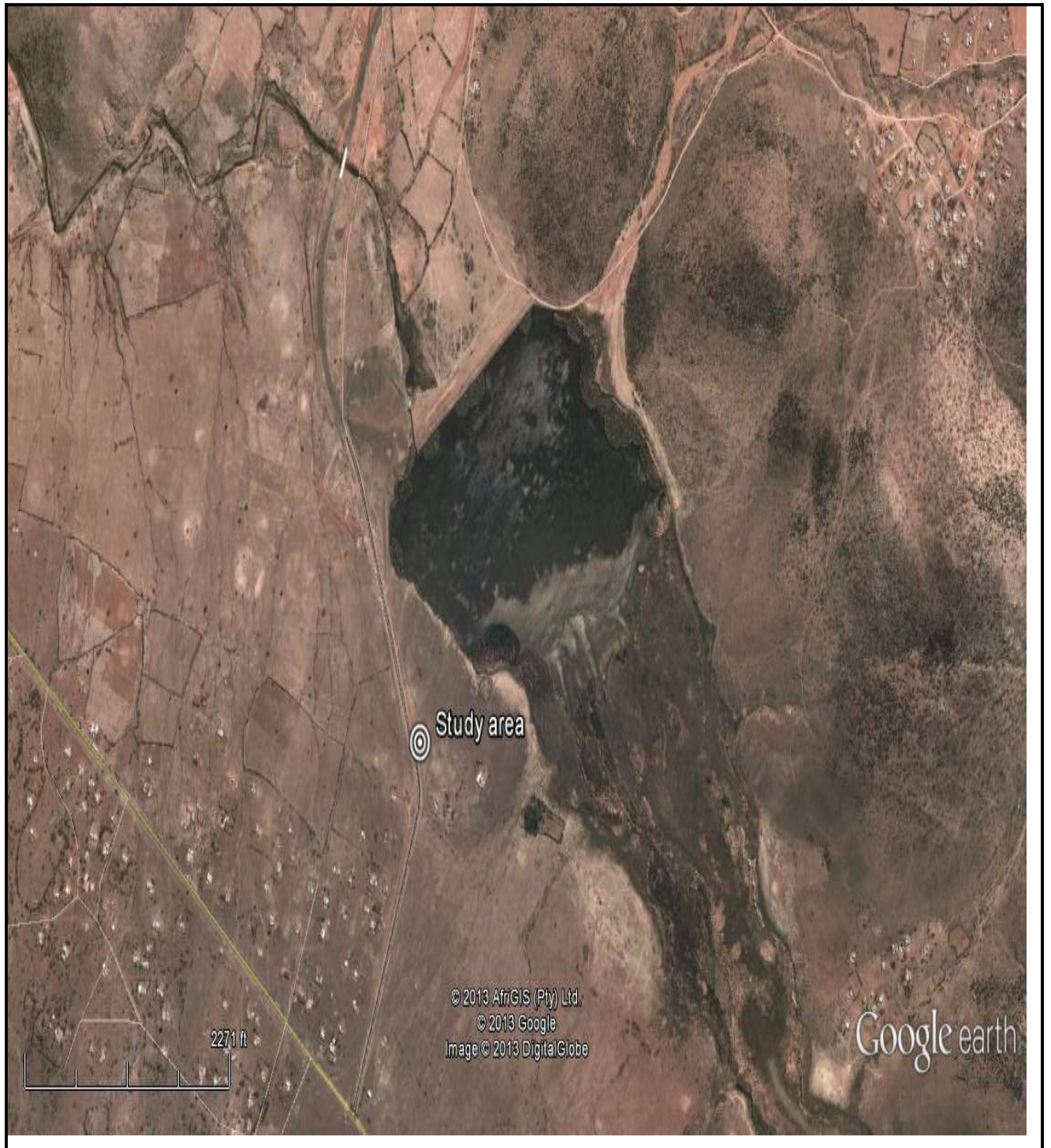
Please note that this permit may be suspended should an appeal against the decisions be received by SAHRA within 14 days from the date of the permit. SAHRA may not be held responsible for any costs or losses incurred in the event of the suspension or retraction of this permit.



The South African Heritage Resources Agency

Street Address: 111 Harrington Street, Cape Town 8000 * Postal Address: PO Box 4637, Cape Town 8000
* Tel: +27 21 462 4502 * Fax: +27 21 462 4509 * Web: <http://www.sahra.org.za>

Annexure 2: Excavation Permit from the South African Heritage Resource Agency (SAHRA)



Annexure 3: Google map of the study area.

Annexure 4: Site plan.

