RESTORATIONS OF DRY-STONE WALLS AT MAPUNGUBWE NATIONAL PARK AND KRUGER NATIONAL PARS.

1. Name of the Company:

South African National Parks (SANParks)

2. Name of the project:

Site documentation and restoration of six cultural heritage sites within the Mapungubwe National Park (K2 and Leokwe Hill dry-stone walls) and Kruger National Park (Thulamela, Bowker'skop dry-stone wall, Mount Tshikumbu dry-stone wall and Masorini dry-stone wall).

3. Location and description of the proposed project:

Two SANParks protected areas, namely, Mapungubwe National Park and Kruger National Park.

4. Archaeological background:

Mapungubwe National Park and World Heritage Site was inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 2003 as a Cultural Landscape. Named after the Kingdom of Mapungubwe (1075 – 1220), the Park is located on the confluence of the Limpopo and Shashe Rivers, being the border of South Africa with Botswana and Zimbabwe. The roots of Kingdom of Mapungubwe were largely anchored by trade that was integral to its continued existence. With its economic dominance, the Kingdom of Mapungubwe originated within an area that includes a number of other sites (i.e. K2, Schroda, and Bambandhlanalo) that have gained archaeological significance over the years. Prior to the 2003 inscription as a World

Heritage Site, major archaeological sites in the landscape, namely, K2 , Mapungubwe Hill, and Schroda, had already been proclaimed as National Heritage Sites (NHS) in terms of the National Heritage Resources Act (no. 25 of 1999). The three NHS, together with Bambandhlanalo and Leokwe Hill, are the main sites within the Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape. Due to its significance as a cultural landscape, the management of the Park has to comply with the requirements of NHRA and the 1972 World Heritage Convention. The proposed project is thus a partial fulfillment of best management practices for cultural resources, conforming to requirements of NHRA and the World Heritage Convention.

Within the Mapungubwe National Park and World Heritage Site, the proposed project will principally be focused at restoring dry-stone walls at two specific locations. These are the K2 and Leokwe Hill dry-stone walls. The latter is about 1000m x 2 000m while the former is about 500m x 2000m. The two archaeological sites have a number of dry-stone walls, with these visible perimeter walls circumventing the hills. Most sections of the walls have, however, collapsed over time. There are a number of factors that could be behind the collapse, ranging from various anthropogenic and natural factors. As a result, they require restoration to bring the two sites of K2 and Leokwe to the same level as other heritage sites with stone walls. There are other attractive examples of such dry-stone walling, which have been extensively restored over the years, include Great Zimbabwe and Domboshaba (Figs 1 & 2) in Botswana. From the archives of University of Pretoria (UP) Museums, we sourced a number of historic images of the dry-stone walls identified for restorations (Figs 3, 4, 5, & 6). The use of these historic images shall help in ensuring that our interventions are authentic, giving integrity to the exercise.

Such interventions will significantly enhance archaeological knowledge about the two national parks, especially Kruger National Park which is largely known for the large game. Yet, it is archaeological endowed, with heritage resources dating to different archaeological periods. One of such heritage sites have rock art images that are largely found in the southern areas of Kruger National Park (Fig. 7).

Figure 1: Domboshaba photograph dating back to 1928, with the cheque decoration visible.

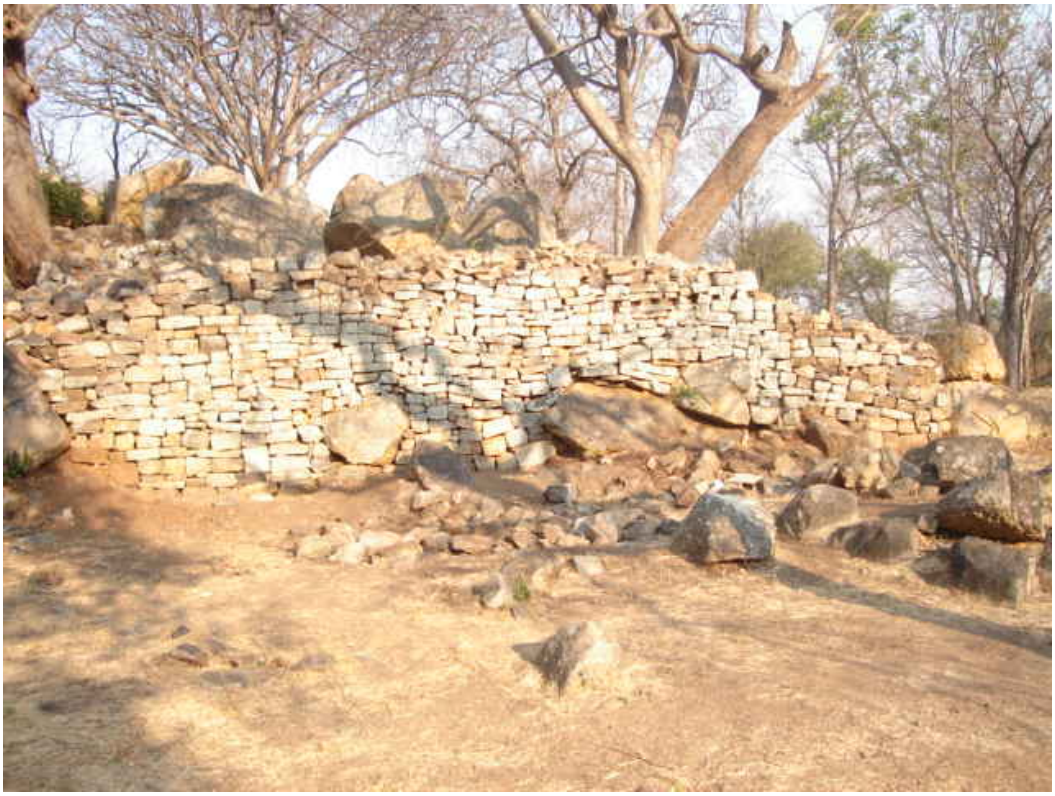

Figure 2: A photograph taken in 2006 illustrating a restored Domboshaba dry-stone wall.

Fig. 3: A historic image of a dry-stone walling at K2 taken in the early 1930s.

Fig. 4: One of the dry-stone wallings at K2. Image taken in the early 1930s.

Fig. 5: A historic image of a dry-stone walling at K2, taken in the early 1930s.

Fig. 6: A historic image of a dry-stone walling at K2, taken in the early 1930s.

Fig. 7: Afsaal or Vapour trail rock art at Afsaal at Kruger National Park.

Kruger National Park, just like Mapungubwe National Park, is also rich with archaeological heritage. This is not, however, a well-known description of this world-famous national park. The most extensive archaeological investigations were conducted between 1973 and 1983, led by archaeologists from the University of Pretoria. Yet, its archaeological heritage is not widely known. Instead, the national park is famous for the big game that attract many visitors to the locality. The archaeological heritage remains unexplored, by researchers and tourists. Among some of the significant archaeological sites at the Kruger National Park are Thulamela, Bowker'skop dry-stone wall, Mount Tshikumbu dry-stone wall and Masorini dry-stone wall. All of these archaeological sites date back to the Iron Age period.

Thulamela (Fig. 8) is a stone-walled site in the far north region of Kruger National Park (Pafuri area) that was discovered in 1983. Over the years, Thulamela has been extensively excavated, from which significant insights have been gained. There have been constant restorations undertaken at the site, to safeguard the integrity and authenticity of the dry-stone walls that regularly get trampled by animals, especially elephants (Fig. 9).

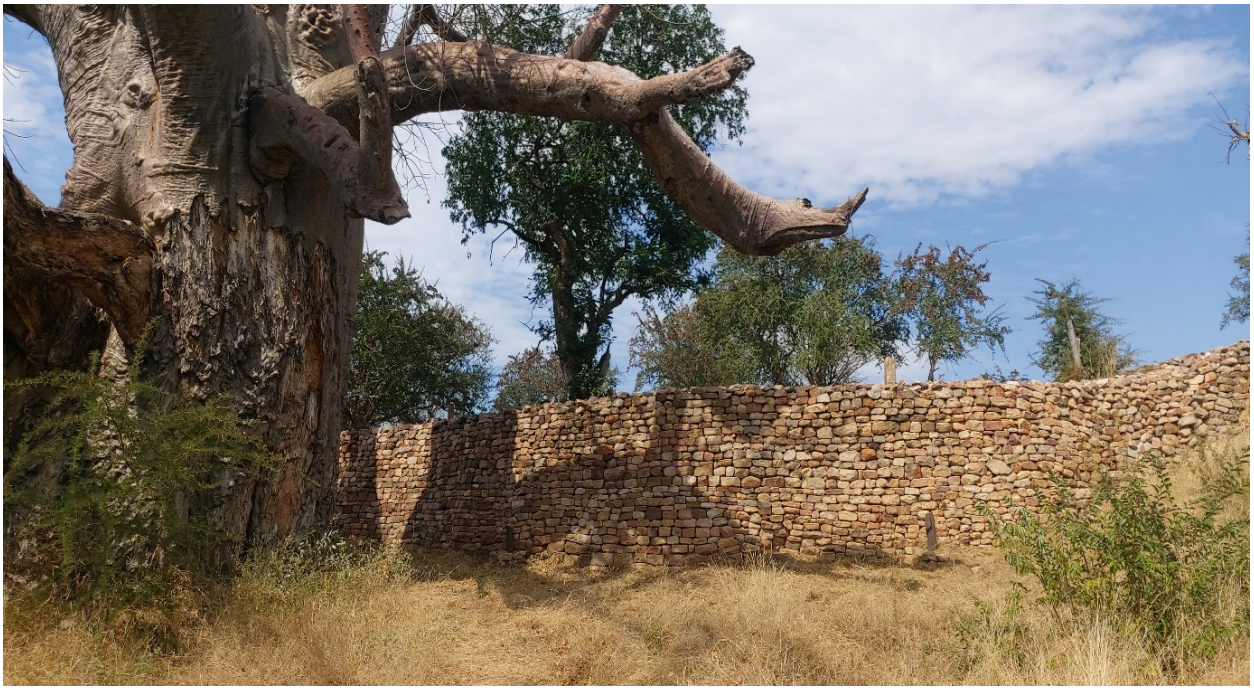

Fig. 8: An improperly restored dry-stone walling at Thulamela, where cement was used.

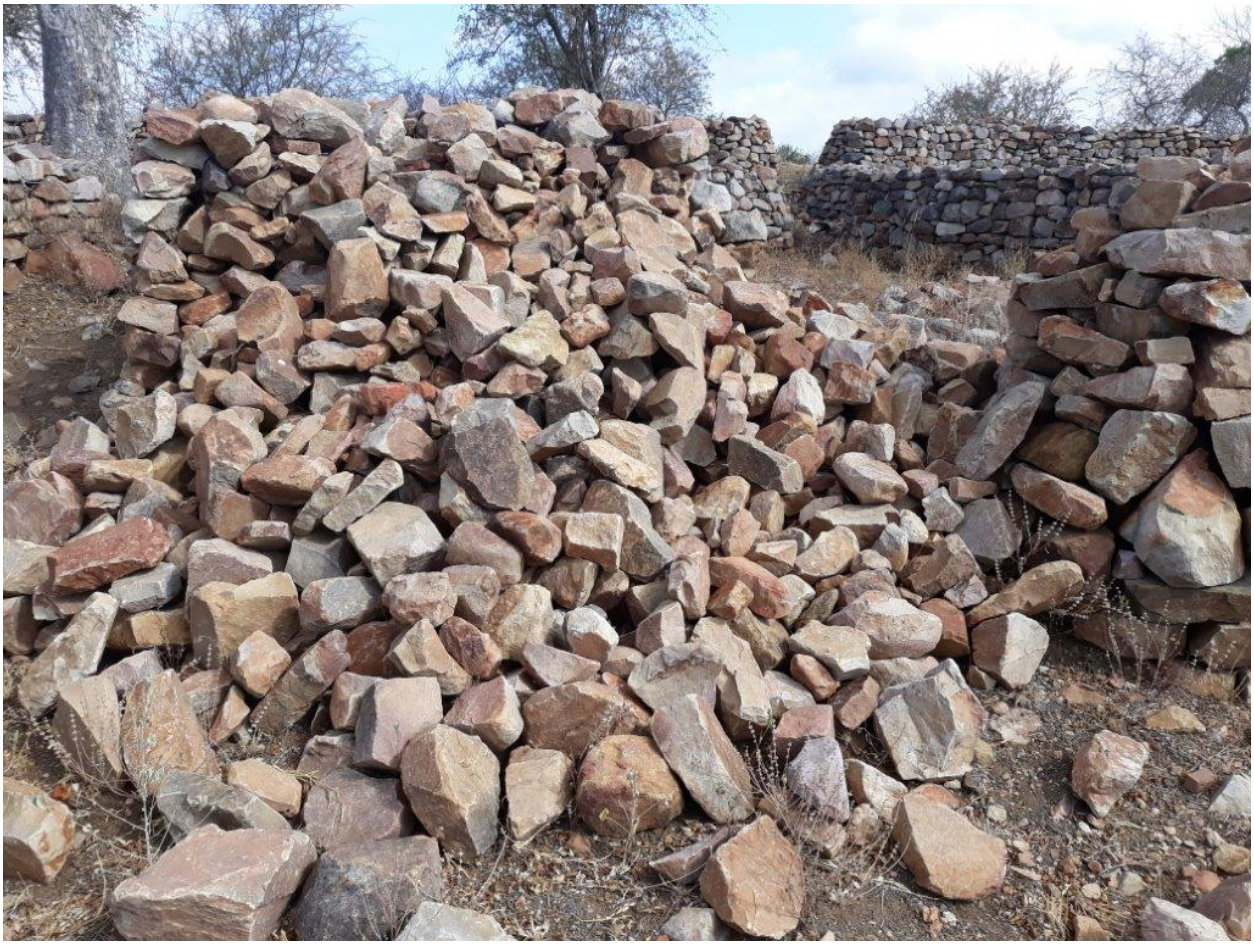

Fig. 9: Dry-stone walling destroyed by elephants at Thulamela. This wall is going to be restored.

Bowker's Kop (Fig. 10) is located about five kilometres north of the Mopani Rest camp. Historically, the site was a hunting camp for Miles Bowker, after whom it is named (Fig. 11). To pay homage to such historical links, a granite rock with inscriptions "near this Baobab tree a party of hunters from the rand had their camp in 1888, their names were Miles Robert Bowker whose name is carved on this tree." Archaeological materials that have been discovered at this site include burnt daga fragments, a C-shaped stone wall on the western side of the hill, as well as diagnostic and undiagnostic ceramic sherds. These discoveries confirm the occupation of the site by Iron Age farmers. A large section of the stone wall has, however, collapsed over the years.

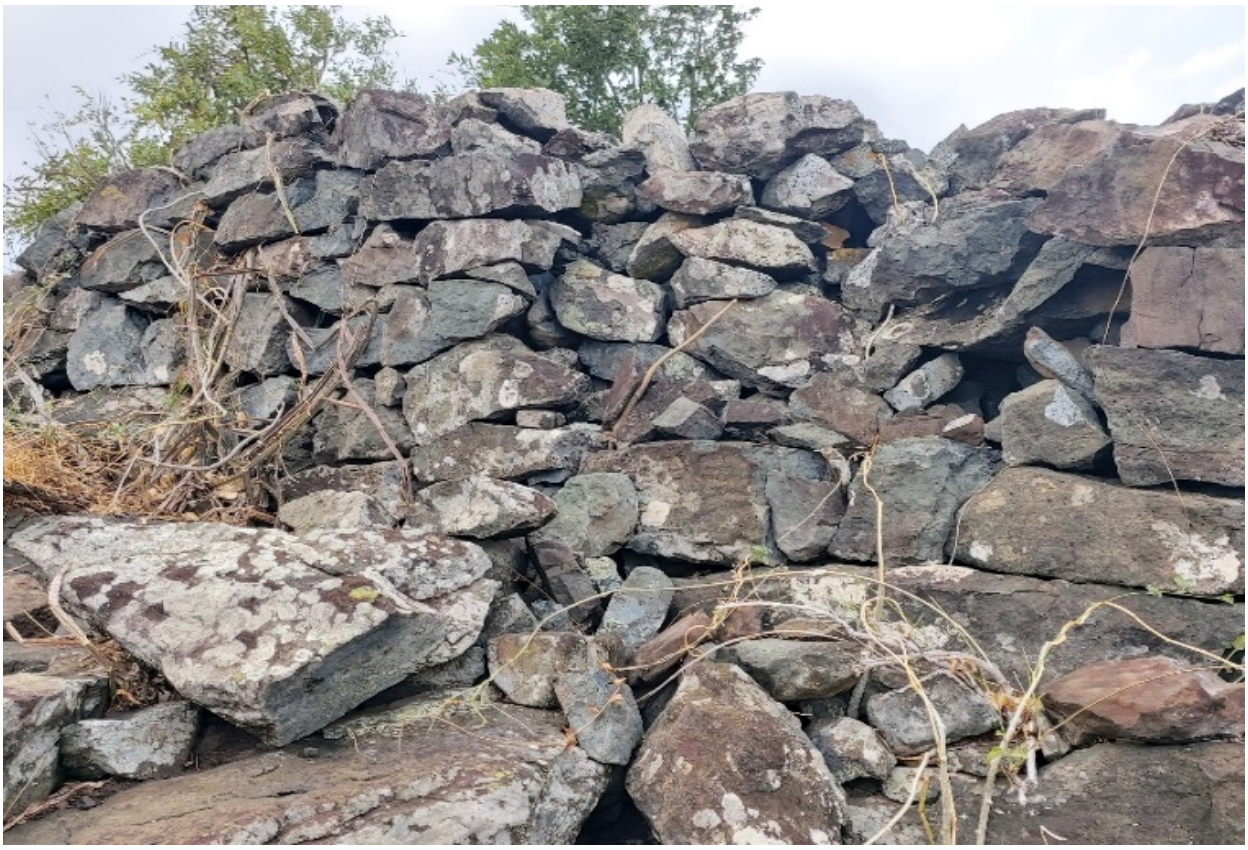

Fig. 10: Dry-stone walling at Bowker's Kop.

The third site which will be part of the restoration of dry-stone walls project at the Kruger National Park is the sacred Mount Tshikumbu (494m) area. This locality and the surrounding landscapes were sacred landmarks occupied during the Iron Age period, after which the area was populated by both Bakgalaka and the Ba-Phalaborwa people under the leadership of their traditional authority (Fig. 12). These 19th century occupants at Mount Tshikumbu were the same iron-smelting communities who also occupied Pjeni/Masorini Hill, a well-known partially-restored archaeological site within Kruger National Park. As informed by oral history and archival records from by the Portuguese delegation, the area between Letaba and Olifants rivers was named Shirimatendere (or Ciremandelle), which means the bird, and its nest was called Matendere. The use of these words was in direct reference to the tradition from Great Zimbabwe known as Matendere. Therefore, Mount Tshikumbu was considered the main 'nest', the Dendere, where Chief Mushashane Leshiva Tongogara and his family. The sub-chiefs lived at the Pjeni/Masorini Hill, Vudogwa, Sekhutupu, Mulambane. Chief Tongogara's descendants have continued to perform ritual ceremonies at the site (Fig. 13).

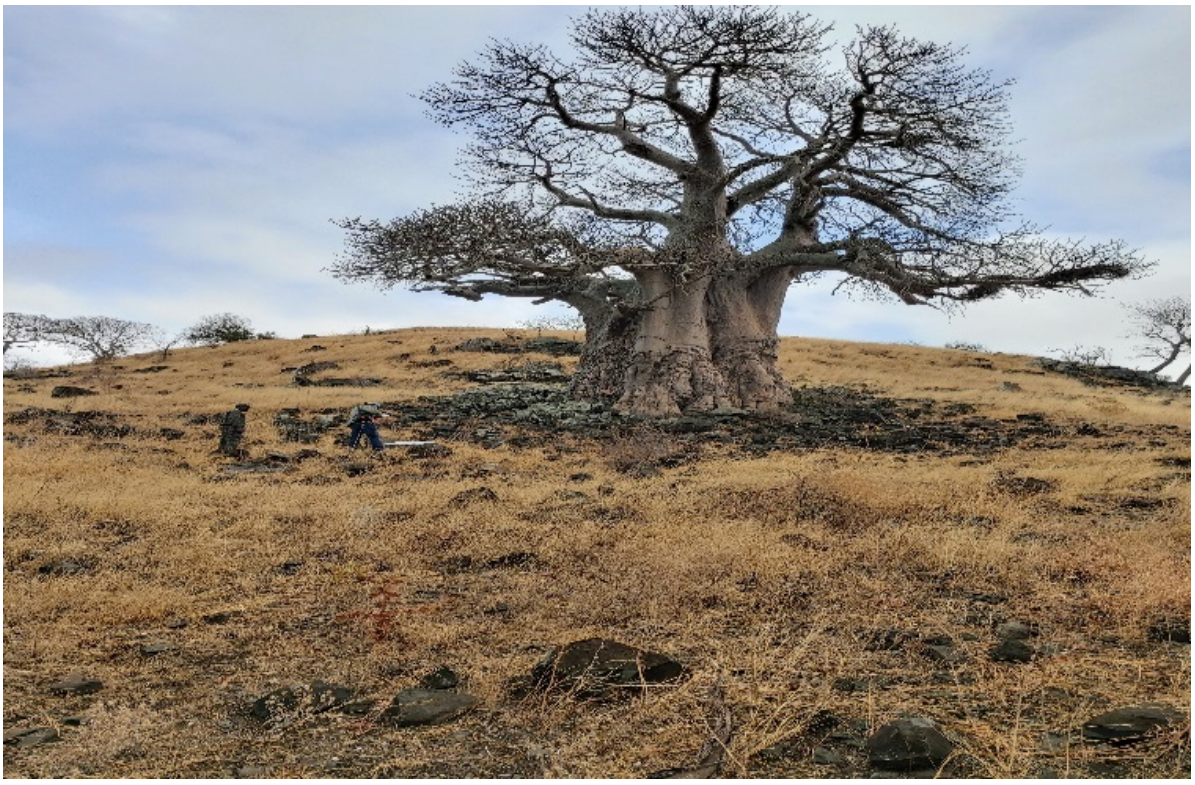

Fig. 11: A Baobab tree near the Bowker's Kop where the hunting camp was located in 1888.

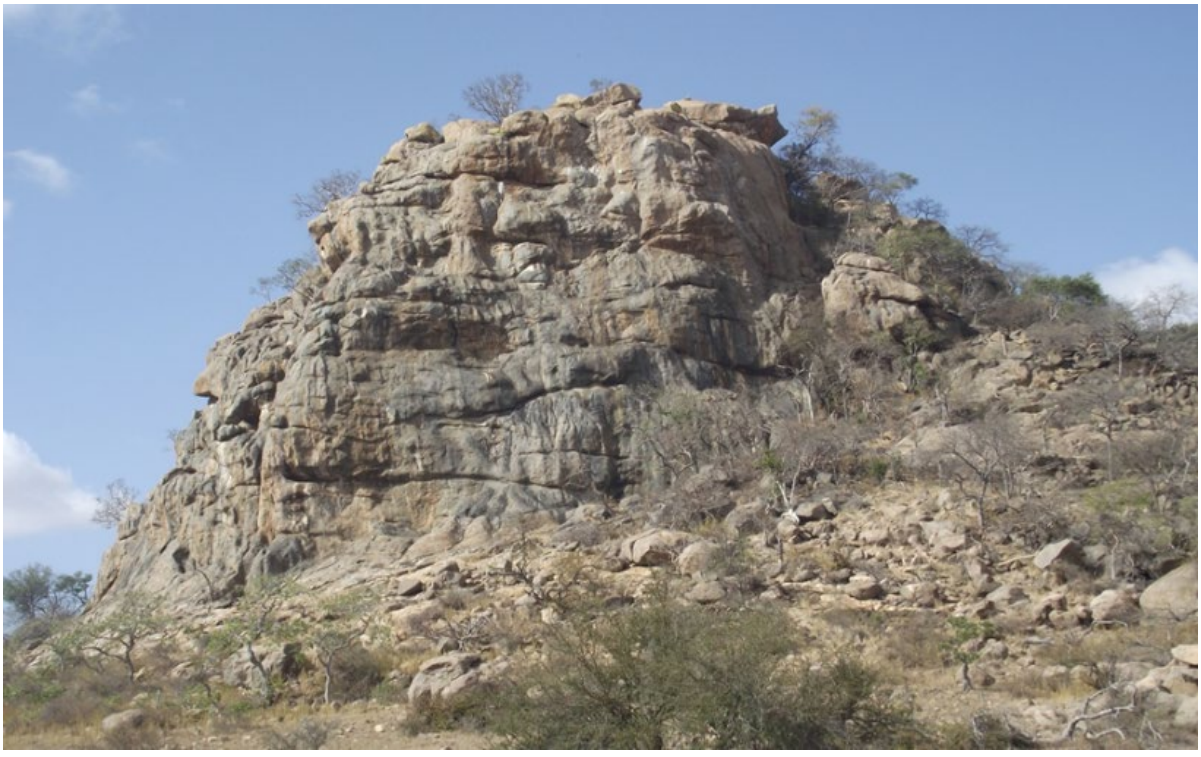

Fig. 12: Mount Tshikumbu, the sacred landscape for the descendants of Chief Tongogara.

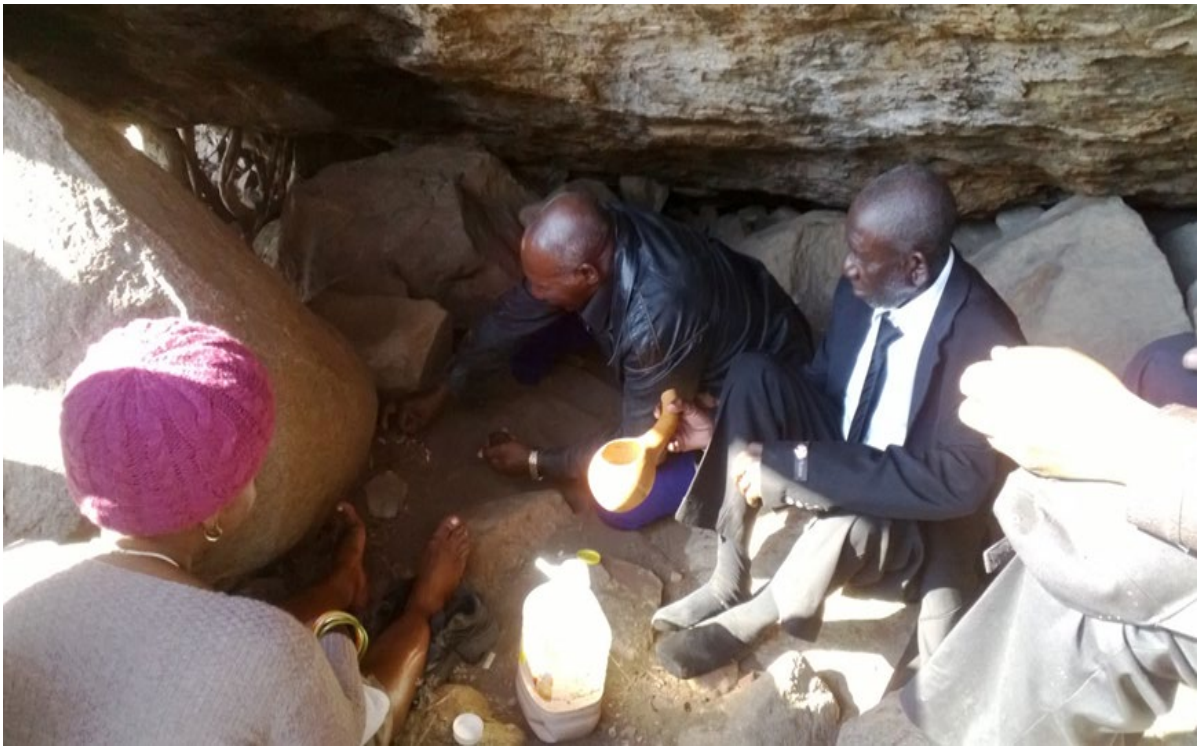

Fig. 13: Ritual activities being conducted by elders at Mount Tshikumbu.

Mount Masorini (590m) is a Sotho village that flourished during the late Iron Age (Fig. 14). As was a case with the Kingdom of Mapungubwe, there was social stratification evident among the inhabitants of Masorini, with the smelters occupying the lower-lying areas while the forgers lived by the hilltop. Dry-stone walls at Masorini have previously been restored, with a museum developed on site. There are a number of huts that were reconstructed as part of an initiatives to present the significance of this archaeological site to the public (Figs 15 & 16). A need has been identified for further restorations to the Masorini dry-stone walling.

The restorations that have been made over the years to continuously restore dry-stone walls at both Thulamela and Masorini provide critical comparative data to understand the value and significance of restoring the walls. Such is a virtual illustration of the importance of restoring these dry-stone walls. These restoration efforts have improved visitor experiences at Thulamela (Fig. 17) and Masorini. It is equally important, therefore, that such mitigation measures are implemented at the other locations within both Mapungubwe National Park and Kruger National Park. Doing so will help improve the visual appearance of these dry-stone walls, helping to improve the overall visitor experience.

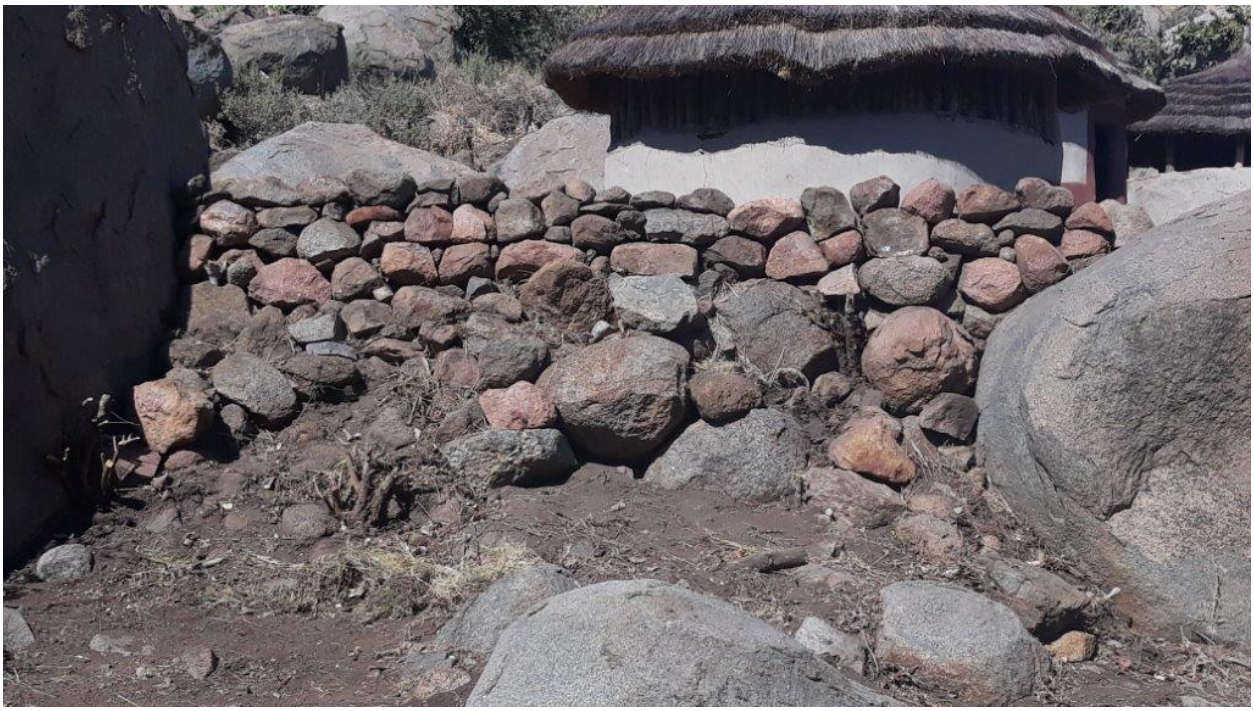

Fig. 15: A portion of the dry-stone wall and huts at Masorini.

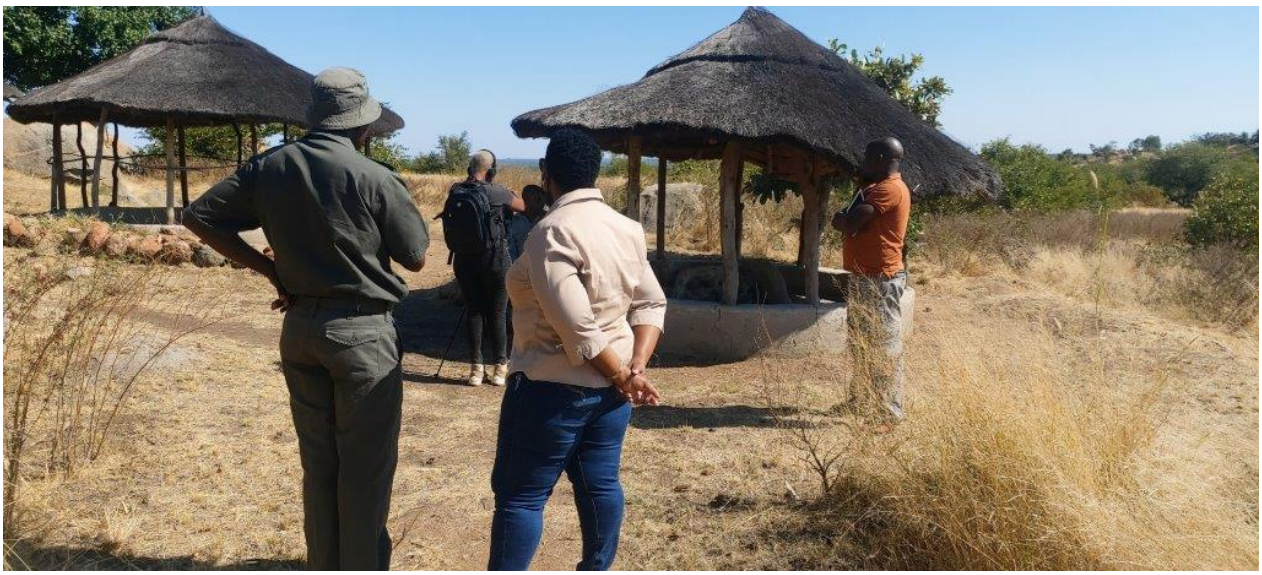

Fig. 16: Two of the huts at the Masorini Iron Age site, with the tourist guide based at the site giving us insights behind the smelting of iron at the site.

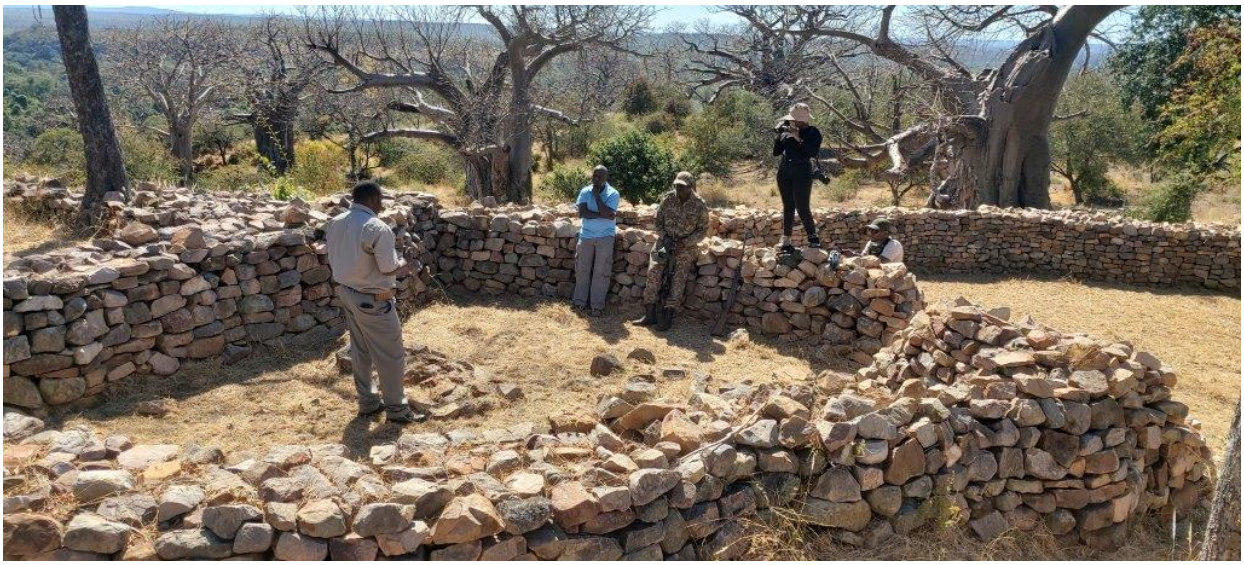

Fig. 17: The tourist guide giving a narration about the Thulamela site, by the Queen's enclosure.

5. Technical background:

Dry-stone walls are built without any mortar to bind the different stones. The advantage of not having mortar is that each stone acts individually. As a result, it is thus possible to remove one stone without this having an impact on the durability of the wall. Stylistically, there are three types of dry-stone walls that have been recorded in southern Africa. These are (i) Zimbabwean Culture, (ii) those built by the Sotho-Tswana, and the (iii) Woolandale. Generally, most of these dry-stone walls are located on hilltops, highlighting social stratification among those who lives within them.

Dry-stone walls are among the most visible and accessible archaeological materials. However, and largely based on a number of factors, such as the building technique, workmanship, material, natural and anthropogenic interventions, these dry-stone walls have been collapsing over the years. A number of restorative measures have been done at many such archaeological sites within southern Africa. During such mitigation processes, authenticity and integrity have always been critical, in terms of the setting, workmanship, and material. Adhering to such principles of conservation safeguards the long-term existence of these dry-stone walls.

The K2 and Leokwe dry-stone walls at Mapungubwe National Park and four sites at Kruger National Park (Thulamela, Bowker'skop dry-stone wall, Mount Tshikumbu dry-stone wall and Masorini dry-stone wall) have collapsed in a number of sections. It is envisaged, however, that their restoration/reconstruction will greatly enhance the authenticity and integrity of both the Mapungubwe

Cultural Landscape and Kruger National Park. This expectation is based on the visual benefit that shall be gained from the restoration/reconstruction measures, thus enhancing visitor experience.

Prior to restoration being undertaken, all the identified dry-stone walls shall be documented (i.e. site plans, photographic database, etc.). Regular updates shall be provided during the restoration. After all restoration measures are finalised, the restored dry-stone walls shall be adequately documented once again.

The proposed restorations of the dry-stone walls are in support of Section 5 (Guiding Principles) of *Policy for the Conservation, Management, and Promotion of Cultural Heritage Resources in SANParks*. A Project Steering Committee has been established to oversee the whole project. The Steering Committee shall be composed of the three SANParks officials, namely, Managing Executive: Conservation (Dr Dziba), General Manager: Cultural Heritage (Mr Kgomommu), and Manager: Cultural Heritage (Mr Chauke). The Project Managers shall be Mr Thanyani Madzhuta and Dr Ndukuyakhe Ndlovu.

6. Scope of Work:

Archaeologists within SANParks will undertake the necessary documentation of the sites whose dry-stone walls must be restored. This extensive documentation will be carried out prior to and after the necessary restorations. Stone masons will be engaged to restore, under supervision, the dry-stone walls at the six identified locations within Mapungubwe National Park (K2 and Leokwe hills) and Kruger National Park (Thulamela, Bowker's dry-stone wall, and dry-stone walling at both Mount Tshikumbu and Masorini). Restoration shall be done by highly experienced stone masons. They have been previously tasked with restoring dry stone walls, particularly at Thulamela. All their work shall be monitored by the Project Managers, Mr Thanyani Madzhuta and Dr Ndukuyakhe Ndlovu.

During the whole period, SANParks will provide a Field Ranger to assist with the necessary protection of all those who shall be involved in documenting and restoring the dry-stone walls.

The work will commence after all approvals have been obtained from the South African Heritage Resources Authority (SAHRA). There have been contrasting opinions about the authenticity of reconstructing dry-stone walls, because such intervention is likely to present the site as if natural or human degradation has not occurred over time since its last occupation. As a result, only a portion of the dry-stone walls shall be restored, instead of the full length. This will maintain the existing integrity of the site, with degraded walls, to illustrate the changes that have occurred over the years.