



South African
NATIONAL PARKS

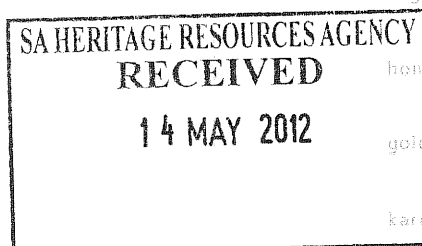
Tel: 012 426 5000

Fax: 012 426 5547

E-mail: elizabeth.mhlongo@sanparks.org

30 March 2012

The Chief Executive Officer,
South African Heritage Resources Agency
111 Harrington Street
Cape Town
8001



To whom it may concern,

NATIONAL HERITAGE SITE NOMINATION (THULAMELA DRY STONE WALL RUINS, KRUGER NATIONAL PARK.)

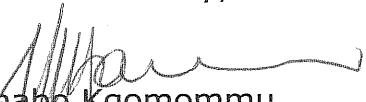
This letter serves as official nomination of the Thulamela Ruins (in the Kruger National Park) as a grade 1 site.

SANParks has previously interacted with SAHRA on this matter and this has culminated in a site inspection by SAHRA in 2011. We now hereby request SAHRA to take this process to finality as it is our wish to celebrate the declaration as part of the heritage day celebrations in the park.

Find attached a nomination dossier.

Your cooperation in this regard will be highly appreciated.

Yours Faithfully,


Thabo Kgomommu
Manager: Cultural Heritage
SANParks

addo elephant

agulhas

augrabies falls

bonobok

golden gate highlands

karoo

kgalagadi transfrontier

knysna lake area

kruger

mapungubwe

marakele

mountain zebra

namakwa

table mountain

tankwa-karoo

tsitsikamma

[-]ais/richtersveld

vaalbos

west coast

wilderness

Official Use
File Ref:.....
Site Ref:.....
Grade 1:.....
Committee Date:.....



**SOUTH AFRICAN HERITAGE
RESOURCES AGENCY**

111 Harrington Street
Cape Town, 8001
Tel: 021 4624502 Fax: 021 4624509 E-mail: info@sahra.org.za
Web Page: www.SAHRA.org.za

National Heritage Site Nomination Form

This form precedes the submission of the 'Nomination Document' and is designed to assist with the grading of heritage resources in terms Section 3(3) of the National Heritage Resources Act, as part of the process of declaration as a National Heritage Site (Section 27). Nominated heritage resources that are of special national significance will be graded as Grade 1 and considered for National Heritage Site status.

Proposed National Heritage Site: Thulamela Ruins

Brief Statement of Significance: *(A full statement of significance is required as an attachment)*

Thulamela is significant with regard to history and prehistory in a regional context including South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. It bears testimony to the early development of a complex state system similar to those in Mgungubwe, Khami and later Great Zimbabwe.

Proposed By: SAMParks **Date Proposed:** 30 March 2012
Contact Details: Elizabeth Mhlongo
Name of Property: Kruger National U Park
Street Number and Street: Funza Maria Road
Suburb: Rafuri Area
Town: Mohoyandou **District:** Uhembe District

Cadastral Information

Erf/ Farm Number:

Registration Division:

Longitude:

Latitude:

Map Reference:..... **Recording Method:**

Type of Resource

- Place
- Structure
- Archaeological Site
- Palaeontological Site
- Geological Feature
- Grave

- Do moveable objects relating to the site form part of the Nomination?
- Serial nomination (Is more than one site being nominated as part of a 'Joint Nomination')

(For serial nominations, complete one form for each site, supply additional details about the information relating to the relation of the sites, and the management and phasing of proposed nomination be attached).

Sphere of Significance	High	Med	Low
International	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
National	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provincial	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Regional	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Specialist group or community	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What other similar sites may be compared to the site? How does the site compare to these sites?

(Please expand on separate sheet)

Kaditswene, Dzata Ruins

Owner: SANParks, General Manager (SI)

(If state-owned; responsible department and official position of contact)

Postal Address: P.O. Box 787, Pretoria 0001

Telephone: 012 426 5000 Fax: 012 426 5547 Cell:

E-Mail: Elizabeth.Mhlongo@sanparks.org Web Page: www.sanparks.org

Contact Person: *(If different from above. Please supply contact details)*

Thabo Kgomo Mny 012 426 5130

- * Expanded statement of significance; *(Refer specifically to significance criteria listed below)*
- * Motivation for declaration as a National Heritage Site, including potential heritage value, threats and vulnerabilities;
- * Short history of the place;
- * Physical description of the heritage resource;
- * Locality plan (map) and Site Plan;
- * Photographs and plans;
- ** List of moveable objects relating to site that are proposed as part of nomination, or for archaeological or palaeontological site ;list of repositories where these are housed;
- ** Bibliography of documentation relating to the heritage resource;
- ** Statement of current protections and restrictions (e.g. previous national monument; register of immoveable property; conservation area; current zoning; servitudes);
- ** List any heritage organizations consulted and their comments on the proposed nomination.
- *** Site plan (with proposed site boundaries);
- *** Conservation or management plans (send immediately if any exist);
- *** Heritage Agreement (if required).

(Please supply those marked () with this nomination form, as well as any others that are already available. Those marked (**) will be requested when the proposal first goes to SAHRA Council for endorsement (Tentative List of National Heritage Sites). Those marked (***) will be required when the Nomination goes to the following Council Meeting for approval as a National Heritage Site). All information submitted to SAHRA will remain with SAHRA.*

Type of Significance

Indicate with a tick	Comment where appropriate. Indicate sphere of significance: i.e. National, Provincial, Local and degree of significance: i.e. High, Medium or Low.
----------------------	--

1. Historical Value

a. It is important in the community, or pattern of history

- i. Importance in the evolution of cultural landscapes and settlement patterns
- ii. Importance in exhibiting density, richness or diversity of cultural features illustrating the human occupation and evolution of the nation, Province, region or locality.
- iii. Importance for association with events, developments or cultural phases that have had a significant role in the human occupation and evolution of the nation, Province, region or community.
- iv. Importance as an example for technical, creative, design or artistic excellence, innovation or achievement in a particular period

b. It has strong or special association with the life or work of a person, group or organisation of importance in history

- i. Importance for close associations with individuals, groups or organisations whose life, works or activities have been significant within the history of the nation, Province, region or community.

c. It has significance relating to the history of slavery

- i. Importance for a direct link to the history of slavery in South Africa.

2. Aesthetic Value

a. It is important in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by a community or cultural group

- i. Importance to a community for aesthetic characteristics held in high esteem or otherwise valued by the community.
- ii. Importance for its creative, design or artistic excellence, innovation or achievement.
- iii. Importance for its contribution to the aesthetic values of the setting demonstrated by a landmark quality or having impact on important vistas or otherwise contributing to the identified aesthetic qualities of the cultural environs or the natural landscape within which it is located.
- iv. In the case of an historic precinct, importance for the aesthetic character created by the individual components which collectively form a significant streetscape, townscape or cultural environment.

3. Scientific Value

a. It has potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of natural or cultural heritage

- i. Importance for information contributing to a wider understanding of natural or cultural history by virtue of its use as a research site, teaching site, type locality, reference or

benchmark site.

- ii. Importance for information contributing to a wider understanding of the origin of the universe or of the development of the earth.
- iii. Importance for information contributing to a wider understanding of the origin of life; the development of plant or animal species, or the biological or cultural development of hominid or human species.
- iv. Importance for its potential to yield information contributing to a wider understanding of the history of human occupation of the nation, Province, region or locality.

b. It is important in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period

- i. Importance for its technical innovation or achievement.

4. Social Value

a. It has strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons

- i. Importance as a place highly valued by a community or cultural group for reasons of social, cultural, religious, spiritual, symbolic, aesthetic or educational associations.
- ii. Importance in contributing to a community's sense of place.

Degrees of Significance

5. Rarity:

a. It possesses uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of natural or cultural heritage

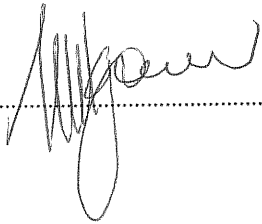
- i. Importance for rare, endangered or uncommon structures, landscapes or phenomena.
- ii. Importance in demonstrating a distinctive way of life, custom, process, land-use, function or design no longer practiced in, or in danger of being lost from, or of exceptional interest to the nation, Province, region or locality.

6. Representivity:

a. It is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class of natural or cultural places or objects

- i. Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a range of landscapes or environments, the attributes of which identify it as being characteristic of its class.
- ii. Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of human activities (including way of life, philosophy, custom, process, land-use, function, design or technique) in the environment of the nation, Province, region or locality.

Signature:



Date: 30 March 2011

NATIONAL HERITAGE SITE NOMINATION: THULAMELA RUINS.

INTRODUCTION

Thulamela Heritage Site

Thulamela is a stone-walled old royal settlement that was found in the Kruger National Park. After it was rediscovered, a decision was taken that these dry-stone walls should be reconstructed and be preserved for future generations. After a series of excavations since 1993 to 1997, the site was opened to the general public for enjoyment and appreciation.

The excavations and the subsequent opening of the site for public access, exposed the site to danger of deterioration and destruction. In order to prevent all these, the South African National Parks sought the services of consultants, to assist in the development of a management plan that will be used to manage the site on a daily basis and to ensure that the site get maximum protection.

SITE IDENTIFICATION AND DESCRIPTION

3.1 IDENTIFICATION OF PROPERTY

Site name:	Thulamela Heritage Site (KNP)
Country:	South Africa
Province:	Limpopo Province
District Municipality:	Vhembe District Municipality
Local Municipality:	Thulamela Local Municipality
Nearest Town:	Thohoyandou
Property Name:	Thulamela Heritage Site situated northern part of the Kruger National Park (Pafuri area)

Boundaries

Site Type: Dry-Stone wall site

Topographical Map Reference: 1:50 000

Site Description and Background

This section comprises of a summary description of Thulamela Heritage Site, including its history and an outline of the type of cultural assets that now make up the site and gives it its character. A thorough understanding of the nature of the resource that comprises Thulamela Heritage Site is essential to achieve comprehensive management.

Thulamela is a dry stone-walled site situated in the Limpopo valley in the north-eastern part of South Africa commonly known as Pafuri within the Kruger National Park. Pafuri occupies the far northern part of the Kruger National Park. Thulamela is located on the summit of a plateau overlooking the Luvuvhu river floodplains.

The foundations of the KNP in this area were laid with the establishment of the Sabie Nature Reserve in 1903. Subsequently the Shingwedzi and Pafuri areas were also incorporated in the national park. At the time the area is said to have been occupied by the Lembethu and Nyai under the paramount leadership of Makahane although they belonged to different clans.

The remains of stone-walls at the Thulamela hill were rediscovered by a park ranger back in early 1980s. An insitu investigation a few days later confirmed that it was probably Late Iron Age associated with habitation during the previous century. The site was then recorded added to the 255 archaeological sites in the Kruger National Park's register. In 1993, the Gold Fields Foundation sponsored a reconnaissance team that visited the site again to conduct walking survey, surface collections and test excavations on site and its surrounding areas. The team also surveyed and mapped the main features of the site.

The research team and SANParks recognised the scientific, archaeological and especially educational value of the site. The one major priority was to ensure that Thulamela developed to its full potential as an educational and tourist resource for the benefit especially of local communities. Thus the rediscovery of Thulamela marked the beginning of the partnership project between KNP and neighbouring Venda and Tsonga communities. The partnership eventually led to the establishment of the Thulamela Board of Trustees constituted by members drawn from four chieftainships in areas of Venda (Mutele, Makuya and Mphaphuli) and Tsonga (Mhinga). The Board of Trustees was tasked to oversee excavations conducted by archaeologists in 1993.

The archaeological research revealed that the site was occupied by the ancestral Venda and Shangaan communities between 1200 and 1600 AD. During that time, trade links were established with the East African Coast. As the test excavations progressed, the significance of Thulamela changed that of a regional site to a site with international connections. Few gold beads, potsherds, tiny gold droplets, cowries shells from the Indian Ocean, a piece of Chinese porcelain and some more gold wires were testimony of the long distance trade networking with the far east.

Prof Tom Huffman of the University of the Witwatersrand argued that Thulamela was historically linked to the Zimbabwe Culture north of the Limpopo River. He argued that Thulamela characterizes the Venda specifically; its affinities were with the Zimbabwe culture, which encompassed the people who later became Vendas. In that context, the practices of the Zimbabwe culture implied that the royal court at Thulamela would have had one section reserved for the chief containing his Pfamo (palace) and the Tshivhambo (audience chamber) and another section for the senior sisters (Makhadzi)

The principal social dynamics of the Zimbabwean culture were class distinction and sacred leadership. The sacred King was supposed to be socially aloof rather than a public figure. Each capital contained a stone-

walled palace that provided ritual seclusion for the King. The stone monolith guarding the rear entrance to the palace was an indication of the social status of its inhabitants and a symbol of defence. The Venda people have a proverb that translate "A Crocodile does not leave its pool". Among both the Venda and the Shona, there is a symbolic link between rulers and crocodiles dating back several centuries and the proverb refer to a King or Chief's ritual seclusion.

The design and location of the royal palace on Thulamela Hill, high above and away from where about some 1500 commoners would have lived in thatched dwellings down below the hill, is a reflection of the social and spiritual distance between the King and his subjects.

The people of Thulamela were traders and farmers with a stable socio-political system which lasted at least 200 years. For the first time clear evidence was found that gold was melted and worked in a royal dwelling and metals like copper and iron were used extensively.

The rise of Thulamela coincided with numerous socio-economic and commercial activities involving transactions with neighbouring communities of the Monomotapa Empire north of the Limpopo River and with foreign traders of Arabs and Portuguese. (Nemaheni 2004). At least, it is evident that a century before Jan Van Riebeeck set foot on the southern tip of Africa, the people of Thulamela had a trading network extending as far a field as India and China. On the basis of the artifacts found at the site, it has been concluded that they were skilled goldsmiths who used gold as their main currency.

The indigenous communities descending from the builders of Thulamela were relocated to create a National Park, breaking their spiritual link with the site. It has since been established that the site was associated with Late Iron Age era and was occupied during the 18th century. Prof Ralushai, argues that the Thulamela was built by the Nyai clan of Makahane. The Nyai were among the first Venda clans to occupy mountainous areas along the Limpopo river.

After the rediscovery and subsequent archaeological explorations, the site was reconstructed between 1993 and 1997. After the site was cleared, the layers of stone from the collapsed walls were carefully and systematically excavated, analyzed and removed until the original wall bases were revealed. Masons, from the local communities, rebuilt the walls strictly following the old building style of the ancestors.

At the same time, Thulamela received the international spotlight concerning the funerary goods including items of gold. Visitations to the Kruger National Park and to the site increased immensely. A site interpretative centre was established, which was commissioned by the former Environmental Affairs and Tourism Minister, Dr Pallo Jordan.

In 1997 human remains adorned with gold were discovered. One of the graves was believed to have the remains of a Queen and another, the King. The Queen was buried with her head towards the north and facing the King's chamber. Both hands were under her cheek in a position of great respect, known in Venda as "Ulosha". She wore two gold bracelets, one of solid gold and the other one made of a double string of gold beads. Within the King's grave, only the cranium and some bones and glints of gold were found.

The Board of Trustees, Makuya and Hlanganani park forums, academics from the Universities of Venda, Pretoria and Witwatersrand were advised made aware of the discoveries. A decision was taken by the Board of Trustees and forums to allow the excavations and then rehabilitate the burials after research is concluded. The forums also proposed that a ritual ceremony should be performed before the reburials to appease the royal spirits and pave the way for opening the site to the public.

VALUES AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THULAMELA

This section sets out the Cultural significance of the Thulamela Heritage Site. Understanding the full significance of Thulamela is the basis for making

informed and effective management decisions. The statement of significance ensures that all the values of the site are protected for future generations and that the site is managed properly in the context of its tangible and intangible attributes.

Values of the site

Thulamela is of prehistoric and historical significance. Information derived from research will contribute to the reconstruction of South African history, which during the apartheid years falsely started with the arrival of Jan Van Riebeeck in the Cape Colony in 1652. Thulamela bears the evidence that indigenous people were the first people to occupy the area and South Africa in general.

Dr Pallo Jordan said that *“History books always taught that black people had never created anything of worth, which was a lie. Now we can produce evidence that it was untrue. On the foundation of this African civilization we will build a better future for all South Africans. Our true origins have been captured by Thulamela and not by colonialism, which was just a passing phase in our history”*

The religious significance of the Thulamela is demonstrated by the sacred monoliths in and around the confinement enclosure. Pregnant wives of the king and other respected people in the village lived here. The monoliths are symbolic spears raised skywards, invoking the protection of the ancestral spirits for the future leaders and children.

The site is of educational value since schools and institutions of higher learning nationally and internationally visit the site on a regular basis. The Social Ecology Department of the Kruger National Park commissioned the Archeological Resource Development Programme of the University of Witwatersrand to develop educational materials for the teachers in schools bordering the Pafuri area of the Kruger National Park. The rationale behind

these educational materials was to enable teachers to include the site of Thulamela and the prehistory of the area in their curriculum.

During the developmental phase an Environmental Education committee was formed. Its aim was to ensure that the educational aspects of the project was addressed and that the oral history component was respected.

The Thulamela project represents an entirely new approach to heritage resources management on state land. Extensive consultations with local communities before and during reconstruction of the stone walls represents partnership between various interest groups.

Political significance: Thulamela is now a focal point that has helped to unite otherwise politically diverse communities. The Venda and the Shangaan who were involved in a bitter dispute about site ownership have now come together work for the common good. The Greater Thohoyandou Local Authority, which encompasses Venda and Shangaan areas, was renamed Thulamela Local Municipality.

Economic significance: Thulamela is potentially a remarkable tourist attraction within the Kruger National Park. There are tremendous opportunities to generate income directly from entrance fees and indirectly through the provision of accommodation and the sale of curios and souvenirs. This is a sector in which local communities can directly participate.

Natural significance: Thulamela is a unique cultural landscape endowed with wild fruit trees such as the Baobab. There are also medicinal plants such as the Buffalo thorn, used for treatment of both people and their domestic animals.

Statement of significance

Thulamela is significant with regard to history and pre-history in a regional context including Zimbabwe, South Africa and Mozambique. This site is

testimony of the development of a complex state system in pre-colonial South Africa.

The wealth of information revealed through excavations will contribute immensely to the reconstruction of South African history and redress distortions that the history of South Africa begins with the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck in 1652.

The religious significance of the site is evidenced by the monoliths in and around the confinement enclosure.

The history and pre-history of the site and its artifacts stimulate academic debate and present a new perspective on the social and political complexity of pre-colonial African societies.

The inhabitants of Thulamela made good use of their natural environment harvesting Baobab fruits, and medicinal plants such as buffalo thorn to treat common ailments in both humans and domestic animals. The harmony between the site and natural environment is one of the key elements of the Thulamela landscape.

Of most importance is the fact that Thulamela ruins, extraordinarily, epitomize an entirely new approach to heritage resources management in general.

OWNERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THULAMELA

The current ownership and management of Thulamela Heritage Site rests with the South African National Parks (Kruger National Park). With its declaration as a National Heritage Site, Thulamela will adhere to the National Heritage Resources Act, No 25 of 1999

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

According to Professor Victor Ralushai (1998), Thulamela cannot be studied in isolation. There are two Thulamela sites that are identified in Van

Warmelo's works (Van Warmelo 1949). One site is found in Makahane area south of the Luvuvhu River in the Kruger National Park and the other one is found at Ha-Mutele area, north of the Luvuvhu River outside the borders of the Kruger National Park. The valley in which both sites are found is called Vhulembethu area. Both sites have dry-stone walls. It is believed that, it is from this area (Mutele, Makahane, Thulamela and the neighboring areas) that Malombo (Malopo in N. Sotho), spread to other parts of Venda and N. Sotho areas. There are other similar sites ascribed to the Mbedzi clan of Tshitaka-tsha-Makoleni and Tshilavulu (Tshaluvhimbi).

A study of the Thulamela, Makahane, Tshitaka-tsha-Makoleni and Tshilavulu (Tshaluvhimbi) and Dzata at Nzhelele and Tshiendeulu dry stone-walls reveals structural similarities. The builders of Thulamela had close affinities with the builders of Great Zimbabwe dry stone-walls. In fact the Limpopo Valley should be seen as a melting pot of the Zimbabwean and South African dry stone cultures.

The impressive Great Zimbabwe site is the largest of several hundred similar sites located between the Limpopo and Zambezi rivers. Other sites of the same architectural style are Dananombe (Zimbabwe), Domboshava (Botswana), Naletale, Khami and Shangagwe in Zimbabwe and Manikweni (Mozambique) (Ndoro, 2005).