



**MANOGENG SWITCHING STATION DEVELOPMENT**

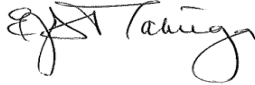
**ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESCUE OF HUMAN REMAINS AND ARTEFACTS FROM THE SITE OF THE**

**CONSTRUCTION OF THE MANOGENG SWITCHING STATION NEAR ROOSSENEKAL, ELIAS**

**MOTSOLEDI LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, LIMPOPO PROVINCE**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Eskom commissioned an archaeological rescue programme at Manogeng after the chance discovery of human remains in 2018. To date seventy-nine (79) individual skeletons have been isolated, making it probably the largest assemblage of human remains of a pre-colonial date ever to be found in South Africa. The archaeological graves at Manogeng only began to be noticed when site preparation for the construction of the switching station commenced in 2018. Although stone walls, piles and cairns had been reported in pre-development heritage impact assessment reports, it is impossible that the experts would have guessed what lay below the surface. For this reason in many Phase I Heritage Impact Assessments experts recommend that a project may go ahead with a proviso that as archaeological deposits are usually buried underground, should in future artefacts or skeletal material be exposed in the area, physical works should be halted, and the provincial heritage resources authority or SAHRA notified in order for an investigation and evaluation of the finds to be undertaken. As it has turned out, this is what happened as the following synopsis of the sequence of events will show. The measures which were taken by the developer in mitigation was in line with the law and standard procedures as set out by the regulating authorities.

## **2. DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE**

Manogeng was a large settlement of a Later Iron Age (LIA) date, possibly falling within the period from the 17th to the 19th centuries (Lat: 25° 6'32.79"S, Long: 29°49'34.51"E). It was laid out on the eastern foot of an igneous massif rising gradually from the west bank of the Steelpoort River and then rising sharply over 600 m. This created a natural terrace on which the settlement was built with a dramatic mountainside backdrop to the west. This location appears to have been chosen as ideal for habitation as it is sheltered by mountains in the west and east of the river, and is at the bottom of a basin in which the Steelpoort River flows. Yet on close examination this location on the foot of a mountain a distance from the river demonstrates finer planning decisions to avoid as much as possible the mosquito-infested banks of the Steelpoort River.

Many interesting aspects of the site have observed during the archaeological rescue programme and the finds retrieved. The site consisted of clusters of stone walls, piles or cairns which would have partitioned a living area. We postulate that in this matrix of walls there were dwellings, cattle enclosures and pens for small stock although this evidence is difficult to reconstruct from the debris which has been moved to a stockpile (Figures 1 - 4).

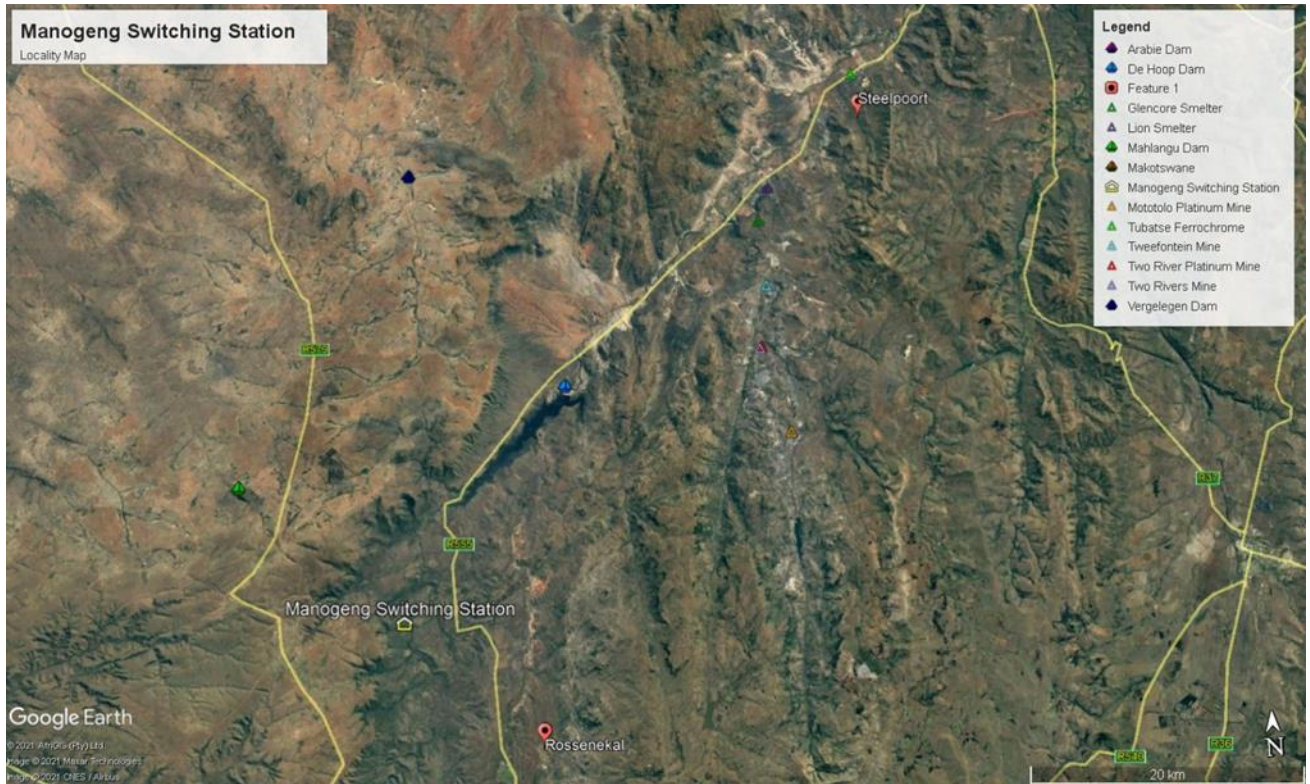


Figure 1: Google Earth map showing the location of Manogeng Switching Station and mining activities in the area.

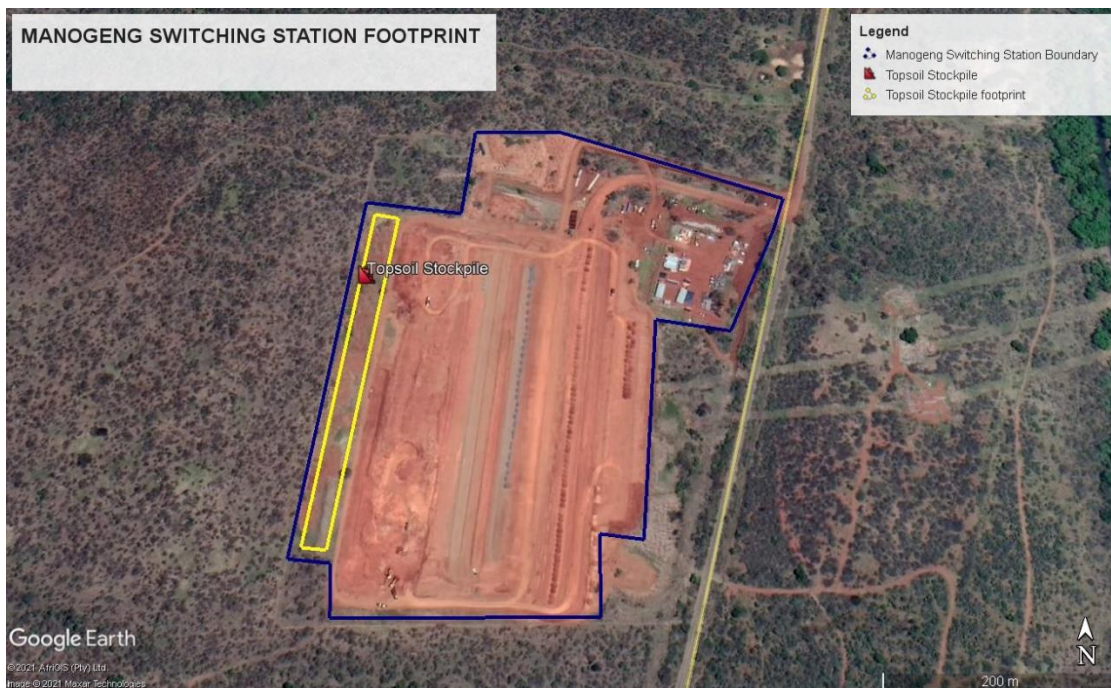


Figure 2: Google-Earth Map shows the footprint of the ongoing switching station development. The yellow outline marks the topsoil stockpile from which a considerable number of human bones and cultural material has been retrieved



Figure 3: Topsoil stockpile forms a low ridge or embankment which can be seen in the middle ground in the picture. This mass of earth removed from the platform area contains human bones and cultural material associated with domestic functions (pottery, grinding stones, animal bones, and metal jewellery)



Figure 4: Low stone walls and cairns located at the northwest end of the construction site gives a picture of what the rest of the site possibly looked like

### **3. STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESSES**

Stakeholder engagement, also known as Public Participation Process (PPP), is indispensable in the development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of a project. Stakeholder engagement is the process used by an organisation to engage relevant parties to achieve expected outcomes. It should be mentioned from the outset that stakeholder engagement is not a once-off process, but a systematic and continuous process of communication.

Stakeholder engagements are conducted to solicit ideas from all key stakeholders on how to handle the human remains which had been accidentally exposed during construction earthworks. More importantly, stakeholder engagement confirms the importance of communities affiliated with the graves especially those who claim to be the descendants of people who were buried at the site. The treatment of human remains in such circumstances are bound by cultural norms and values which must be respected. The stakeholder engagements were intended to create awareness within the surrounding communities on the importance of the finds in this regard. They were aimed to get buy-in from various stakeholders regarding the treatment of the human remains.

Eskom relentlessly engage with all stakeholders, especially the Rampedi and Matjomane families, on the issues of the graves in line with commitments that had been made and agreed upon within the ambit of an MoU. It has been acknowledged that the Rampedi and Matjomane families descend from those who were buried at Manogeng, and have a strong historical association with the area. Lately in memoranda addressed to the developer the families have been seeking clarification on the processes that had been followed from the time construction work started at Manogeng in 2017. They also requested that Eskom provides an outline of the work of each of the archaeologists who had been involved in the project. Information requested has been duly provided. The window period for receiving responses in respect of the public notices on the intent to reburial the human remains from Manogeng came to an end on 20 December 2021. Comments were received from the Matjomane and Rampedi families and they are being considered. After the public notice had expired, two more groups of families submitted claims that the graves at Manogeng were their ancestral graves. This notwithstanding, Eskom decided to consider these petitions and auditions with all the groups were scheduled for the first week of February.

On 21 and 22 February 2022 members of the Mokabane gained entry into the construction site without permission or making prior arrangements with Eskom. The developing tension

was such that work had to be suspended, the workers vacating the site and retreating to Roossenekal. The situation returned to normal after the intervention of SAPS.

### *Public Notices*

In records provided, an advertisement was placed in a newspaper during the EIA process conducted by Savannah Environmental in 2008. No objections to the project had been received, and consequently an Environmental Authorisation had been issued for the project to go ahead.

In 2018 public notices had been placed in public areas in Roossenekal and the same notice published in a newspaper following the first discovery of human remains.

Responding to the Public Notices, the Manquammogo Community Committee had come forward with some cultural protocols proposed – appeasement, but gave a green light for the archaeological rescue programme for the human remains to continue.

Subsequently in 2021 the Matjomane-Rampedi families approached Eskom with a complaint that they had been side-lined. Yet they had a strong and irrefutable historical association with the area and the graves.

As required in terms the regulation a Public Notice was issued in October 2021 of intent to rebury the human remains with the public expected to make their submissions over a period of 60 days. In order to achieve a wide reach and social penetration the notices were placed at 22 public places Sekhukhune District, Limpopo.

- Service stations
- Clinics
- Police stations
- Shopping centres
- Municipal offices

Furthermore the same notice was published in the Sekhukhune Times, a locally circulating weekly newspaper.

Public Notices were also delivered in sealed envelopes local Traditional Authorities, namely Kgoshi Moloko of Jane Furse, Kgoshi Mahlangu of Dindela and Kgoshikgolo Mohlaletsi of



Fetakgomo. The municipalities are Fetakgomo, Tubatse, Elias Motsoaledi, Ephraem Mogale, Makhuduthamaga.

#### **4. A BRIEF HISTORY OF RESEARCH AT MANOGENG**

##### **Johnny Schalkwyk**

After the first field assessment in 2012 Dr Johnny Schalkwyk noted that at the first site of choice for the substation, there was a significant archaeological footprint of stone walls and terraces indicating a large Iron Age settlement. Exercising due diligence, he therefore recommended that the site of the substation be moved to another location 100 m to the north. The Heritage Impact Assessment Report was accordingly updated after Schalkwyk had examined the site of second choice in 2013 (where the substation is currently being built). At the new site Schalkwyk flagged 2 sites named Site TS13 and Site TS14 as they were found to be potentially rich and significant; and he ranked them as High - Grade III (reference to SAHRA grading). As this was now the site of choice for the construction of the substation, Schalkwyk cautiously recommended further investigations, which prompted Phase II HIA. He “recommended that the area is cleared by hand in order to determine the full extent of the stone walling and that it is documented (mapped and photographed) before construction takes place.” The Phase II investigations were undertaken by Anton Pelsler.

##### **Anton Pelsler**

In 2013 Anton Pelsler, a renowned specialist on archaeological graves, was commissioned to carry out a walk-through screening for heritage resources along the corridor of the construction of overhead pylon towers from the proposed switching station (Manogeng) over the escarpment to Globersdal. Notably he examined four Tower Positions located within the footprint of the Manogeng switching station (T49, T50, T100, T101). Pelsler also duly flagged the short walls and piles of stones documented in the previous survey by Schalkwyk (referenced above). Pelsler mapped significant features on the site and recommended these (or some of these features and areas) must be excavated as part of the Phase 2 Mitigation for which an Excavation Permit from SAHRA was required.

Subsequently Pelsler obtained an excavation Permit for Sites 12 & T13. On Site T13 he targeted an area with cattle dung that was part of visible terracing and possibly a cattle pen. Pottery and metal fragments and animal bones were found (PGS Report, Page 8). On Site T12 a number of shovel test excavations were undertaken on the terraces. Pelsler came to

the overall conclusion that the remains were of an Early Iron Age date; only a small portion of the terraces fell within the footprint of the development and would be affected. A green light was given for the construction project to go ahead.

### **Professional Graves Solutions (PGS)**

PGS was appointed by Eskom in 2017 to implement an Archaeological Monitoring Programme (AMP) integrated with the site's overall Environmental Monitoring Plan (EMP). The AMP recommended a Public Participation Process as necessary for the benefit of stakeholders before destruction of the archaeological features which had been documented. In a risk assessment the AMP identified several activities that could potentially result in the disturbance or destruction of heritage resources:

- Earthmoving
- Placement of construction camps
- Topsoil clearing and dumping
- Opening of temporary roads
- Movement of machinery and opening of pedestrian pathways

The AMP also recommended that an archaeologist must be appointed to monitor construction work for the possible accidental exposure of cultural material or human remains.

Thus far, the processes followed leave no doubt that the developer had taken all necessary precautions and that a mitigation plan was in place in the event of chance discoveries. A cautious approach was followed and minimum standards of archaeological practice were observed.

### **Trust Mlilo**

In March 2018 human remains including a complete skull and potsherds were unearthed as earthworks continued at the site. Work was halted and an archaeologist, Trust Mlilo, was called to attend. The human bones were obviously an important chance or surprise discovery. But as Phase 1 assessment reports are based on evidence on the surface an archaeologist is not expected to have guessed the location of material buried below the surface. Mlilo recommended that the earthworks be halted and an area of 100 m radius around the spot of the finds be cordoned pending assessment by SAHRA, which would entail the appointment of

an archaeologist to conduct further investigations. The 100 m buffer around graves is a minimum standard regulated by SAHRA.

### **Nkosinathi Tomose**

In the wake of these findings Eskom appointed Nkosinathi Tomose of NGT Heritage Management Solutions who conducted a situational assessment. Tomose reached out to stakeholders, in particular communities who claimed association with the site. Tomose's findings confirmed the integrity of the measures taken by the developer and implemented under the Construction Environmental Management Programme (CEMP) as required in terms of the National Environmental Management Act (1998) and supporting Regulations. He observed that the archaeological potential of the site had somewhat been underestimated since (with the benefit of hindsight) an intensive walking survey of the footprint of the substation should have been undertaken prior to construction, ideally at the time Anton Pelsler walked the length of the corridor of the power-line and the pylon tower positions in 2013 (Tomose, page 29). Tomose recommended that another systematic site survey must be undertaken with particular focus on the identification of and screening for graves or human remains.

### **Munyadziwa Magoma (archaeological rescue of the graves)**

In mid-2018 Eskom appointed archaeologist Munyadziwa Magoma to carry out archaeological salvage of the graves. At this point it is also apparent from the paper trail that SAHRA and LIHRA were closely and actively monitoring the developing situation to ensure legal compliance and respectful treatment of human remains. Magoma carried out a more detailed scan of the site in spite of the fact that a significant portion of site had already been affected by the earthworks. As the archaeological finds continued to unfold, Magoma's conclusion that the entire site could have been a large settlement with substantial surface and subsurface material was based on reasonable extrapolation. The archaeological report mentioned graves, stone walls, grindstone and potsherds. The findings prioritised graves underlining the need for a public participation process to connect with people that might be affiliated with the settlement and the graves. The report recommended a raft of additional mitigation measures including:

- Further investigation of the entire area in order to rescue any material disturbed or undisturbed that might have been overlooked.
- Training of workers to spot chance finds.

- Preparation of a Heritage Management Plan as a tool for sustainable management of finds.

### **Thero Services**

Thero Services was appointed in 2020. Recognising the importance of communities affiliated with the site and in light of the sensitivities surrounding the subject of human remains, Thero Services reached out to representatives of the local communities and those who claim to descend from the people buried at the site. Rules of engagement have been sealed into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in March 2020.

## **5. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

### **5.1. The Iron Age**

The scientific evidence unfolding is convincing that this site if forgotten in the passage of time, is nevertheless important. Collective memory might have been lost as people migrated or probably as a result of forced removals. Sites dating to the Early Iron Age have been found in the Steelpoort River valley. The region first received archaeological spotlight after the discovery of the much-acclaimed EIA Lydenburg terracotta heads. These artistic objects are featured in international literature and have given character to the South African Iron Age. Preliminary identification of the pottery indicates that it belongs to the Doornkop phase of the Early Iron Age dated between AD 600 and 900. The Lydenburg clay masks found during the 1960s belong to the same EIA tradition and have gained international acclaim.

### **5.2. The Later Iron Age**

The transition from the Early Iron Age to the Later Iron Age, to which Manogeng settlement is dated, took place around the 11th century. Dramatic political developments were unfolding as growing personal affluence by means of control of long-distance trade and ownership of cattle wealth provided the stimulus for social differentiation. The LIA in eastern Limpopo Province and Mpumalanga Province is characterised by stone-walled settlements (Esterhuysen 2007). At Manogeng the relationship between the stonewalls, burials and household activities has been established and confirms the much-debated Bantu Central Cattle Pattern which has been described in Section 4.2 above.

LIA communities engaged in trade including Long-distance exchanges across the Indian Ocean with Asia and later with the Portuguese.

### **5.3. Precolonial communities**

The pre-colonial people enter into history partly through written observations of early European travellers. They descended from preceding Stone Age and Iron Age Cultures. The pre-colonial communities may be divided into two major groups.

#### **5.3.1. The Pedi**

The precolonial history of the area cannot be complete without mention of the Pedi. The Northern Sotho occupy a large belt spanning the Limpopo and Mpumalanga Provinces. Of these, the baPedi of Sekhukhuneland were a significantly large group. The site is in the heartland of the Pedi Kingdom and its power and influence in the region is well documented. Its encounter with the Nguni and later with Boers and the British is in literature. From c. AD1700 to AD1826 the Pedi of Sekhukhune gained a political foothold in the area reaching the apogee of power under King Thulare who died in 1824.

The history of the origins of Thulare connects the Pedi with the Batkgatla living around the Pilanesberg hills in the North West Province and western margins of Limpopo Province (South African History on Line).

#### **5.3.2. The Ndebele**

From the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century to the 17<sup>th</sup>-century historical traditions attest to migration streams of Nguni speaking people from the eastern seaboard (present-day Kwa-Zulu Natal) to the South African highveld. The eastern region which receives relatively good rainfall and is endowed with fertile soils experienced rapid population growth, which coincided with the introduction of maize by the Portuguese (Pikirayi per com, Nov 2015). The region had to shed excess population which led successive waves of people to settle on the vast plains of the highveld to the northwest. From among the AmaHlubi splintered a group which eventually settled near present-day Pretoria under the leadership of Musi the son of Mhlanga. Musi had five sons, namely Manala, Ndzundza, Mhwaduba, Dlomu and Mthombeni. Upon the death of Musi, there was a power struggle between his sons Manala and Nzunza. Nzunza and Mthombeni left for Kwa-Simkhulu across the Olifants River in the present-day Mpumalanga Province. Subsequently, Mthombeni, the founder of the Northern Ndebele, broke away from Ndzundza and moved across the Olifants River to present-day Zebediela. Mthombeni changed his name to Gegana (or Kekana) and his followers were henceforth referred to as the people of Kekana. The Ndzundza remained east of the Olifants River and

from their fortified town near present-day Roosenekal, they featured prominently in the wars of resistance to colonial occupation in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The area of study falls within the trail of Mzilikazi's Ndebele during the Difaqane (c. 1822 to 1828) during his epic flight from the reach of Shaka of the Zulu Kingdom. Mzilikazi's *impis* attacked the Pedi in 1826 and 1827/1828. The incursions caused people to scatter.

The Pedi moved to defensible areas in the Soutpansberg in 1822 and returned in 1828. After the scourge of Mzilikazi, the Swazi also attacked the Pedi. In the same period, Mzilikazi also besieged the Ndzundza at *KoNomtjarhelo*, but were repulsed.

#### **5.4. Resistance to Colonial Occupation**

##### **5.4.1. The Pedi**

The Voortrekkers arrived in the Steelpoort area in the late 1840s. In 1842 Andries Potgieter, one of the renowned Trek Boer leaders, moved with his followers from Potchefstroom, the first colonial settlement to be established north of the Vaal River (Lekwa) to the Eastern Transvaal and founded Ohrigstad. The town served as the seat of parliament (the Volksraad). From 1848 to 1849 Ohrigstad was abandoned when many people died of malaria in favour of Lydenburg established further to the south, 60km east of Manogeng. Several skirmishes between the Voortrekkers under Andries Potgieter and the Pedi ensued over territory.

The Pedi King Thulare's main village was Monganeng on the banks of the Tubatse (Steelpoort) River. His son, Sekwati, had fled to the Soutpansberg in the north during the incursions of Mzilikazi in 1822. Returning in 1828 he occupied the mountain fortress Phiring from where he reunited the Pedi. After a clash with the Boers in 1852 Sekwati moved his capital to Thaba ya Mosego. In 1857 the border between the Pedi and the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR) was settled with an accord making the Tubatse (Steelpoort) River the border between the two political entities.

Sekwati gave the Berlin Missionary Society of the Reverend Hans Merensky permission to establish the Maandagshoek Station on the outskirts of Tjate, his stronghold a few kilometres from Manogeng. After he died in 1861, his son Sekhukhune ordered the Berlin Missionary Society to discontinue their work and the mission station was burnt down (Figure 5).

The mission moved to Botšabelo at Middelburg. During the 1st Sekhukhune War in August 1876, the Voortrekkers attacked Thaba Mosego and partly destroyed the settlement. Johannes Dinkoanyane, Sekhukhune's half-brother detained a wagonload of wood belonging to Jankowitz, a Boer farmer who had trespassed on Dinkoanyane's land. When the news reached Pretoria, President Thomas Francois Burgers decided to set out a deal with the Pedi. He assembled a large commando armed with 7 pounder Krupp guns they marched to Thaba Mosega arriving on August 1, 1876. He was joined by African collaborators. Sekhukhune came to Dinkoanyane's rescue and, although Dinkoanyane himself was killed in action, Sekhukhune defeated the Boer force under President Burgers, who lost the presidency to Paul Kruger as a result. As they were smarting from the humiliating defeat the Boers unleashed a troop of mercenaries who unleashed terror and committed atrocities among the Pedi



Figure 5: Bust photograph of Kgoshi Sekhukhune (courtesy of SAHO).



Figure 6: Statue of Kgoši Sekhukhune at Tjate (Photo: Lethabo Motswiane).

As this was happening in 1877 the British annexed the South African Republic (ZAR). After this act of aggression, the British set their eyes on Sekhukhune on the pretext that Sekhukhune's territories were in the South African Republic. Sekhukhune rejected this claim. Captain Clarke mobilised to attack Sekhukhune, but his forces were routed with heavy losses at Magnet Heights. Immediately after this blow, a force of 1,800 men under Colonel Rowlands mounted an incursion from August until October 1878, but the mission failed again with much loss of life on both sides.

A third attempt in June and July 1879 also failed. After the defeat of King Cetshwayo and the fall of the Zulu, the timing was appropriate to muster a force under Sir Garnet Wolseley including those who had fought at the fateful battle of Ulundi and 10,000 Swazi troops (collaborators) to attack the Pedi. Battles were fought from November 28 to December 2 1879. The Pedi fought with muskets obtained from several informal sources – Lesotho, workers from Kimberley mines and Delagoa Bay in Mozambique. Sekhukhune was captured and taken to prison to prison in Pretoria. He was released in August 1881 after the signing of the Convention of Pretoria.

#### *5.4.2. Pretoria Convention which ended the British annexation of the Transvaal.*

Sekhukhune was murdered on the night of 13 August 1882 by collaborators of his half-brother, Mampuru, who was staking a claim for the kingship.



#### 5.4.3. *The Ndebele of Ndzundza*

When the Boers regained independence from the British in 1881, they went on to make good their gains by attacking and subjugating independent African polities. In the course of the next two decades, these African kingdoms would fall. One of the targets was Nyabela, leader of the Ndebele of the Ndzundza clan who occupied territory south of Burgersfort in the region of present-day Roossenekal. Nyabela was based at KoNomtjarhelo, a natural fortress established by his father Mabhogo (referred to as Mapoch) near Roossenekal in the 1830s. Nyabela ascended to power in 1875 as a regent after the death of Maphogo. He is said to have commissioned various renowned land surveyors, hunters and military experts, who were subjects of the Swazi King, Mangwane, to layout his capital in an area with ravines and hills, strewn with boulders and honey-combed with intricate caves. Mabhogo then introduced into this landscape large cattle pens, terraced agricultural fields and irrigation ducts fed by springs. An interlocking system of fortresses, subterranean tunnels, rock barriers and underground bunkers was constructed for defensive purposes.

From the time of the arrival of the Boers in the late 1830s, there had been an uneasy relationship and power shift in which the Ndzundza ended up paying taxes to the local Boer commandant. In the 1860s Chief Mabhogo overturned this arrangement, winning a prolonged struggle for power and compelling the ZAR to recognise his jurisdiction over the lands that his people occupied. In the 1870s it seemed that the peaceful coexistence was going to hold as the two parties collaborated against Sekhukhune. The relations soured again when Nyabela decided to shelter Mampuru who was a fugitive from a succession struggle with his half-brother Sekhukhune.

In mid-1882 Sekhukhune was assassinated by Mampuru's followers. Mampuru and his supporters fled and sought refuge with Makwani, one of Nyabela's subordinate chiefs. It was rumoured that Nyabela and Mampuru were jointly plotting to coordinate a general rebellion against the South African Republic. Nyabela spurned Boer demands to extradite Mampuru.

In November 1882 General Piet Joubert mobilised a commando of 2000 men to capture Mampuru, his collaborators and those who were harbouring him. The Boers served Nyabela with an ultimatum hoping that he would capitulate. The Ndzundza had been getting guns illicitly and had built a substantial armoury. To compound the problem, the Boers were launching an offensive in difficult terrain. The Ndzundza had tested victory before against Mzilikazi's Ndebele taking advantage of the caves and

crag. They had stocked grain anticipating a long lockdown. The Boers intended to do precisely that to wear down their opponent by confining them to the hills and avoiding a head-on confrontation.

On 5 November 1882, the Ndzundza mounted a surprise attack, capturing nearly a thousand cattle, which they intended to drive into their mountain stronghold. The plan was eventually thwarted and the cattle recovered.

On 14 November five members of the attackers were ambushed and killed. On 17 November there was another skirmish in which forty of the defenders were killed. Nyabela sent out emissaries to discuss peace terms, but Joubert demanded to meet with the chief himself. Nyabela declined to present himself, no doubt suspecting that it was a ploy to capture him. On 25 November Commandant Senekal and another man were lost to sniper fire in the course of those operations. Several assaults on the mountain stronghold followed.

In early January 1883, the Boer force suffered more casualties when lightning struck 'Fort Nuwejaar' (Fort New Year), killing one and injuring seventeen others. On 20 January 1883, about 300 of their followers raided the kraals of two loyal tribes.

On 28 February, Commandant Stephanus Roos was shot dead while dynamiting a cave. Roos had led the decisive Boer charge at Majuba in Zululand in 1838. The nearby town of Roossenekal, established soon after the war, was named after him and Commandant Senekal.

There were many military tactics employed in the war which lasted 9 months: trenching to get closer to the hills to avoid exposure to enemy snipers and the use of dynamite. There were many attacks and counterattacks. The Ndzundza rolled down rocks and stones down crags and ravines; they mounted cattle raids. On 8 July 1883, Nyabela handed over Mampuru hoping for a peaceful settlement, but after the protracted struggle and the human losses incurred, the Boer Parliament ruled out talking to force an unconditional surrender.

On 10 July, eight months after the start of hostilities, Nyabela surrendered along with c. 8 000 of his people who had stayed by him to the end. Sadly Nyabela and Mampuru were treated as common criminals. They were tried in Pretoria and sentenced to death. As it turned out Mampuru was hanged, while Nyabela received a reprieve after the

British pleaded on his behalf, and he was sentenced to life imprisonment, of which he spent fifteen years in captivity before being released. He died on 19 December 1902 at Wamlalaganye, Hartebeestfontein, near Pretoria.

After the war, Ndebele social, economic and political structures were dismantled and by a proclamation, on 31 August 1883 36 000 HA of land was taken as spoils of war and distributed among the white burghers who had participated in the campaign.

The Ndzundza were removed from their lands and resettled in different places while others were indentured to white farmers as virtual slave labourers on five-year renewable contracts. In 1895 what remained of the Ndzundza territory, now called Mapoch's Gronden, was incorporated as a ward of the Middelburg District, and became part of the homeland of KwaNdebele from 1979 to 1995.

The settlement area of KoNomtjharelo, located about 10km east of Roosenekal on the road to Lydenburg, is held in deep reverence and has a strong emotional significance for the Ndzundza Ndebele. In 1970, a statue of Nyabela was erected at the foot of the hill in the presence of his descendant, Chief David Mabhogo, as well as many descendants of those who had fought there (Figures 7-9). Nyabela's death is commemorated on 19 December every year. The Ndebele gather at KoNomtjharelo ('Mapoch's Caves') east of Roosenekal to pay tribute to Nyabela and those who fought with him.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This account is a summary adapted from Saks, D. 2008. An African Masada: Nyabela, Mampuru and the Defence of Mapochstad. *Military History Journal* Vol 14 No 4, December 2008

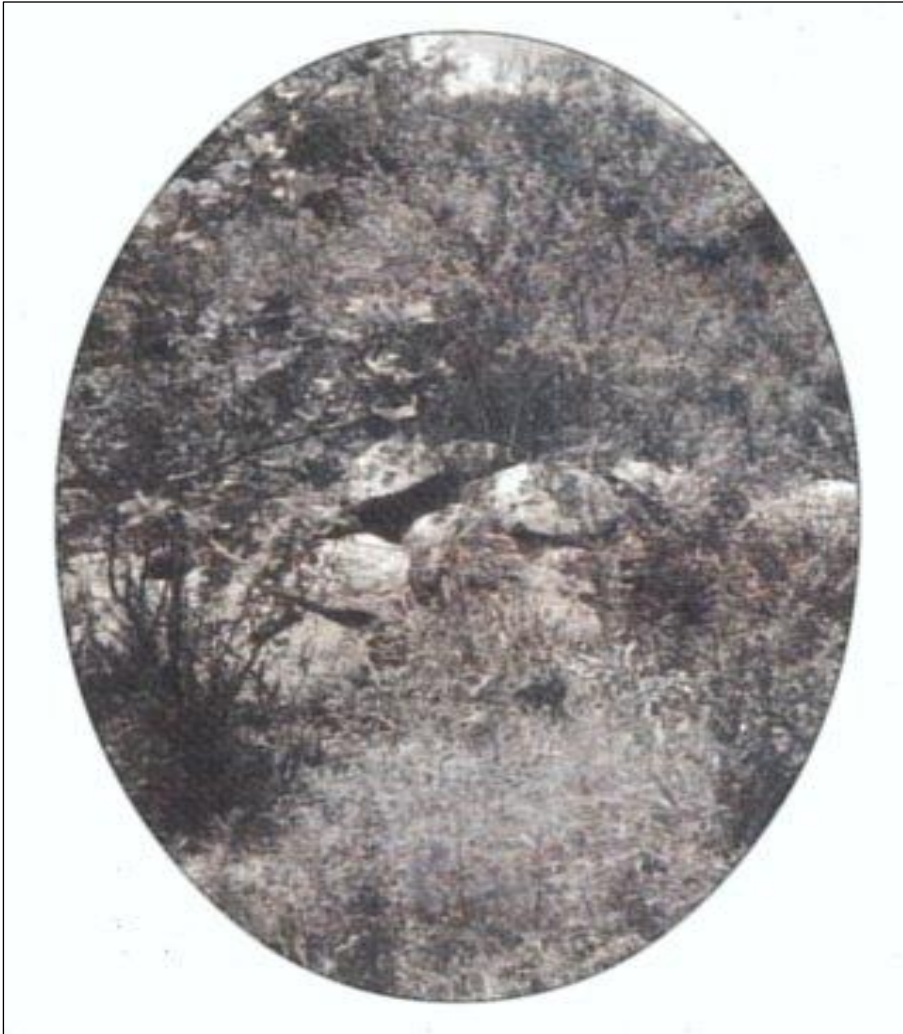


Figure 7: Remains of fortifications on KoNomljarhelo (Photo: By courtesy, David Saks)

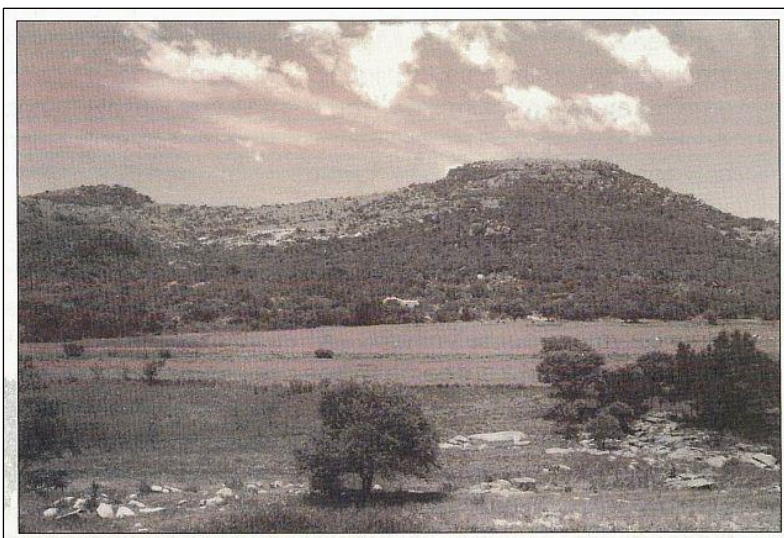


Figure 8: KoNomljarhelo, Nyabela's mountain fortress (Photo: By courtesy, David Saks)

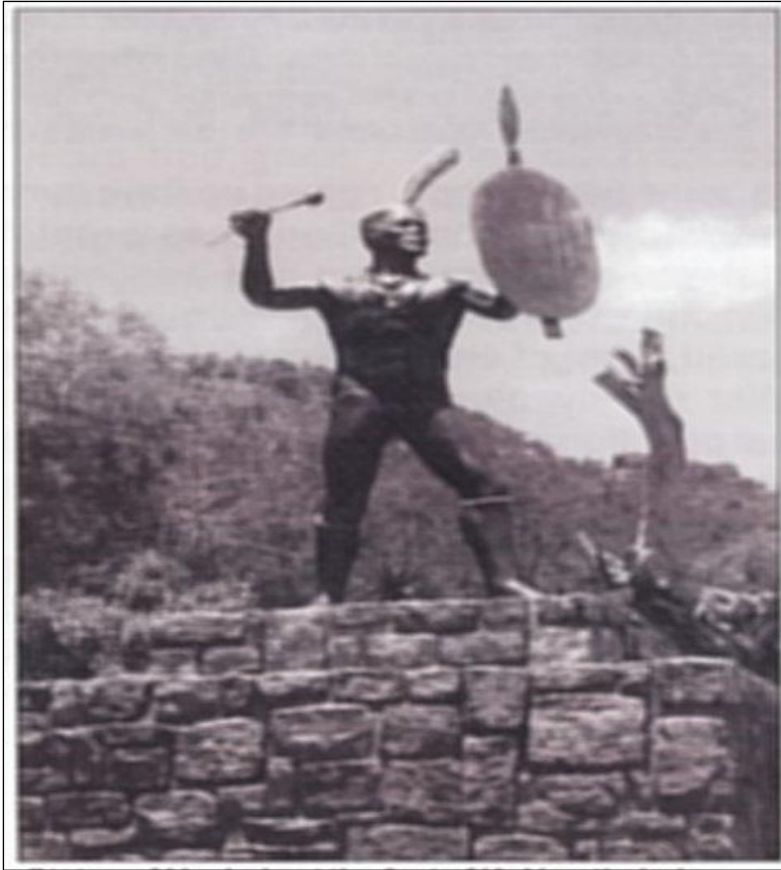


Figure 9: Statue of Nyabela at the foot of KoNomtjarhelo (Photo: By courtesy, David Saks)

#### 5.4.4. *The Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902*

The region was an active theatre of the Anglo-Boer War and sadly in past officially managed narratives the role of Africans in that conflict was excluded. The import of giving this background is to encourage scientific research to find possible links between Manogeng and the archaeology and history of the broader area.

Research to establish the broader context and significance of this settlement resonates with the general feeling that the findings unfolding can contribute to education and science.

Occupation opened the way for the exploitation of minerals. The Steelpoort area was found to abound with minerals and of particular importance then was chrome and later platinum and other strategic minerals found in the Bushveld Igneous Complex. The railway line between Steelpoort and Lydenburg was constructed in 1924 due to an increase in the mining of chrome and magnetite.

#### **5.4.5. A brief history of the Manquammogo Community**

The Manquammogo Community, a family branch of the Bakoni, claims historical connection with the settlement and burial ground at Manogeng. Their oral accounts attest to a historical settlement where the substation is being developed called Buhupetswane, which the broader neighbourhood was Tjetje.<sup>2</sup>

The Bakoni belong to the Sotho linguistic group, and in pre-colonial times they occupied a large area astride present-day Limpopo and Mpumalanga Provinces, but with their cradle around present-day Machadodorp. There are a number of questions unanswered about the historical origins and identity of the Bakoni. Some historians argue that they were a loose association of clanships and did not manage to achieve solid political unity. Yet it is clear from oral history that there was a collective cultural identity.

The Bakoni are archaeologically and historically associated with iconic stonewalled structures that abound in this part of Limpopo and Mpumalanga provinces. This provides interesting historical context for the stone walls, cairns and burials found at Manogeng. The oral traditions which have been collected as part of the mitigation plan for the archaeological rescue at Manogeng seem to confirm the archaeological evidence.

The Bakoni coexisted with the Pedi from the 18<sup>th</sup> century with intermittent conflicts. Gradually the Pedi subdued the Bakoni incorporating some of the vanquished communities into their ranks. In the 1820s after the death of Thulare and the succession struggles which ensued, the Bakoni regrouped under Marangrang and tried to reassert their power and independence. This attempt was thwarted by Thulare's successor, Sekwati. In short the Bakoni, never managed to forge political unity despite the strong cultural footprint manifested in the stone building tradition.<sup>3</sup>

## **6. ORAL HISTORY PROGRAMME**

The need to consult local communities when graves are discovered by chance is a statutory requirement in terms of Section 36(5) and 36(6)(b) as referenced above. It is mandatory, and Eskom has duly followed the process since 2018. At the time after the

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<sup>2</sup> Draft Minutes of the Proceedings of the Public Participation Meeting held at Groblersdal on 29 March 2021.

<sup>3</sup> Bokoni. Found at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bokoni> Consulted December 2020

issue of Public Notices and a Newspaper advertisement in 2018, the Manquammogo Community Committee came forward and presided on behalf the Community. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed in March 2020 setting out the rules of engagement.

Subsequently in March 2021 the Matjomane and Rampedi Families made a strong representation that the graves were their ancestral graves. The Manquammogo Community Committee had no objection to the late submission and accepted the representatives of the families into the panel of community representatives on the matter.

Eskom issued a Public Notice in October 2021 as required in terms of a SAHRA/LIHRA regulation inviting the public to give comments/remarks/objects to the proposal to bury the human remains with the stipulated 60 days in which the public were to make their submissions. The Notice expired in December 2021, after which two groups came forward with a petition that they must also be considered as historical descendants of those buried at Manogeng.

When the 60-day notice period expires it does not preclude ongoing public participation processes. The expiry of the notice period does not mean the end of the public participation, and at law it cannot be used as a sanction to prevent other citizens from participation in the reburial process, if they wished to do so. It also does not seek to contravene the right of individuals to practice their cultural, traditional and freedom of belief as embedded in the Constitution of South Africa, 1996 Bill of Rights, Sections 15, 29 and 30.

In essence the Public Notice is used to rule out those who might want to object to the reburial and scuttle plans at the last minute, but not in any way to inhibit the stakeholder processes. The process continues, for those who commented during the Notice Period and those who elected not to comment, remain stakeholders if they have a valid stake. The notice issued out related to the plans to rebury the human remains and that any person who had concerns with reburial must come forward. The other claimants did not make objections and they were not obliged to submit any documentation to that effect.

Those who came in after the Notice Period cannot object to the process, but they may be allowed to join in if there but they may be allowed to join in if there is material proof that

they are bona fide claimants. These are matters for the various stakeholders to decide on the basis of the merits of the submission and come to a resolution.

It is not the mandate of the Heritage Service Provider, Developer or LIHRA to discredit or disqualify any claimants as we must desist from actions that can cause divisions in a community. The communities are therefore required to engage amongst themselves to advise the developer and service provider in an open collective process.

- The Mokabane Tribe settled in the area between 1670-1772 aligning with archaeological finds stating the cultural context of the bones is that the site is of a mid-19th century date at the latest, otherwise a date before 1850.
- Both the Mmanquamogo and the Mokabane mention the Anglo-Boer War which impacted them in many ways including displacement.
- The Matjomane Rampedi said that they arrived in the 1660s, a few years before the Mokabane Tribe.
- The Makua claimed that they settled in the area around 1817,

In addition 3 claimants (Mmanquamogo, Makua and Matjomane Rampedi) share a number of surnames indicating a common historical origin.

Concerning the significance of the findings in the stakeholder engagement process, the archaeologist made the following observations:

- i. There were more commonalities shared by the four groups than differences between and among them. It was common cause that the groups should leverage shared values in order to forge unity and unity of purpose among the claimant groups so that we finalise the reburial plan.
- ii. All four claimant groups claim historical association with the area and the graves
- iii. There were forced removals in the area between 1930s and 1960s supported by apartheid legislation. Such violent episodes have a tendency to disrupt collective memory, one of the reasons why possibly the communities had forgotten about the burials.
- iv. The area was prone to erosion which might have created new post occupation stratigraphy. Graves at the top of the slope would be shallow while those at the bottom



would be buried under a thick overburden of earth eroded from higher sections of the slope.

- v. There may have been successive occupations over several centuries, so that the site cannot necessarily be attributed to one group or a single time period.
- vi. There were confrontations and wars of resistance to European occupation in the area. The Boers fought a number of battles in the area with indigenous people. A bullet casing was found on site. Information at hand shows that it was manufactured Germany. The bullet casing came from the same grave with the spear, which was burial site 28. There could be many possible reasons why the bullet casing ended at site.
- vii. There is more than one possible scenario with regard to the context of the graves. There may have been mass graves in the area and individual graves.

The general conclusions were that based on the scientific evidence and the testimonies from the four claimant groups:

- (i) The burials at Manogeng might come from a succession of occupations over many centuries possibly 16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> Century, or early 20<sup>th</sup> century;
- (ii) The site represents a mixed heritage; it does not belong to a single generation but represent several successive generations;
- (iii) It is a **common heritage** of all the people of Sekhukhune District;
- (iv) It is therefore our considered view that all the claimant families must work together and find a common way forward to engage peacefully and form a Reburial Task Team to plan the reburial of their ancestral remains.

	Questionnaire	<b>BATLOKWA BA MOKABANE</b>	<b>MMAQUAMMOGO BABINA KWENA BA BAKONI</b>	<b>MATJOMANE AND RAMPEDI BABINA KWENA BA MADIHLABA</b>	Notes
<b>1</b>	Chieftain affiliation	The Batlokwa Ba Mokabane resided in the area under their great King Tshela who descended from Steelpoort	Babina Kwena Ba Bakoni have been under their Chief Moloko	The Great Chief Madihlaba	Babina Kwena Ba Makua settle in the area with the great Chief Makua
<b>2</b>	Formal recognition by COGHSTA or other relevant authority?	No letter of chieftaincy appointment has been provided thus far. On the list of the registered and recognize Chiefs	A letter of chieftaincy appointment has been provided thus far. On the list of the registered and recognize Chiefs from Coghsta (2016) they do not appear but there is a	No letter of chieftaincy appointment has been provided thus far but Babina Kwena Ba Madihlaba are recognize and registered chiefs from Coghsta list of 2016. This include the main chief as well as the sub-chieftaincies (see attached list)	Letter of chieftaincy appointment has been provided thus far. Babina Kwena Ba Makua are recognize and registered chiefs from Coghsta list of

	Questionnaire	<b>BATLOKWA BA MOKABANE</b>	<b>MMAQUAMMOGO BABINA KWENA BA BAKONI</b>	<b>MATJOMANE AND RAMPEDI BABINA KWENA BA MADIHLABA</b>	Notes
		from Coghsta (2016) they do not appear.	letter issued to the project team.		2016. This include the main chief as well as the sub-chieftaincies (See attached list).
<b>3</b>	Family Names	Mokabane (Mokabai)	Rampedi, Matuludi, Tshehla, Matjomane, Moloko	Rampedi, Matjomane, Madihlaba	Makua
<b>4</b>	Totem	Their totem is based on the Praising of the Leopard (Ba Bina Nkwe)	Their totem is based on the Praising of the crocodile (Babina Kwena) Totemic poetry	Their totem is based on the Praising of the crocodile Babina Kwena Ba Madihlaba	Their totem is based on the Praising of the crocodile Babina Kwena Ba Madihlaba
<b>5</b>	Brief history	They came from Steelpoort with their king. At Manogeng under	No information with regard to the place of origin before settling at Manogeng.	No information with regard to the place of origin before settling at Manogeng. At Manogeng under Their king was Madihlaba and	No information with regard to the place of origin before settling at Manogeng. The

	Questionnaire	<b>BATLOKWA BA MOKABANE</b>	<b>MMAQUAMMOGO BABINA KWENA BA BAKONI</b>	<b>MATJOMANE AND RAMPEDI BABINA KWENA BA MADIHLABA</b>	Notes
		Yes, Great King Tshela	Manquammogo buried their king at the Motapala burial site	Rampedi. Madihlaba & Rampedi king was buried in Luipershoek	King was buried at Mmusho and Kgodu is different burial site.
<b>6</b>	Historical links with Manogeng	They first settled in the area with their king in 1680.	They indicated that they were there pre-1800	They settled in the area before 1900.	History on their arrival was not given. Claims are that before 1800.
<b>7</b>	When & how they left Manogeng	There was no documented forced removal however migration towards Roosenekal and Stofberg in 1772.	The forced removal started just after the 1930 and until they were declared national separation. There are no current land claims for this group, but as part of the MmaquaMmogo surnames for Matjomanes and Rampedis, There claims are for the entire Tubatse Valley.	The forced removal started just after the 1930 and until they were declared national separation	1''

	Questionnaire	<b>BATLOKWA BA MOKABANE</b>	<b>MMAQUAMMOGO BABINA KWENA BA BAKONI</b>	<b>MATJOMANE AND RAMPEDI BABINA KWENA BA MADIHLABA</b>	Notes
<b>8</b>	Current permanent home	They are mainly residing at Jane Furse and no traces of Makobanes at Manogeng was confirmed.	There are claimants residing in Ward 29 and Ward 30. Currently there are relatives residing in close proximity to the Manogeng Site.	There are claimants residing in Ward 29 and Ward 30. Currently there are relatives residing in close proximity to the Manogeng Site.	There are claimants residing in Ward 29 and Ward 30. There are current relatives residing in close proximity to the Manogeng Site.

## 7. FINDINGS

A number of domestic goods have been found – at least 30 thousand with a wide range of decoration motifs, shapes and sizes, which reflect different uses. Many grindstones found (at least 200 upper and 25 lower grindstones) are associated with food production in a household context. It paints a picture of a large settlement divided up into families or households, and these artefacts provide graphic insight into the significant role of women as the nuclei of these households. A number of metal finds have been found and many of these are ornamental iron bangles, and in one instance it was worn around the angle as broken tibia and fibula were in the ring. Ostrich egg shell beads were threaded and worn either in the neck, arms or legs. These were associated with Grave No 44 (Figures 10-15).



Figure 10: More than 30 000 fragments of pottery (potsherds) have been found at the site



Figure 11: Some decorated potsherds isolated from the pottery assemblage



Figure 12: More than 30 upper grinding stones have been retrieved from the site



Figure 13: Two hundred upper grindings stones have been found at the site



Figure 14: Grave No 73 human bones retrieved from an original position; broken tibia and fibula were found with a rusted anklet measuring 10 cm in diameter around them, suggesting that the deceased was buried wearing the trinket





Figure 15: Ostrich egg shell beads

## 5.2. Spatial organisation of the settlement

Many human skeletons have been discovered at the settlement that at any other Archaeological site in South Africa suggesting that it was a large burial ground (Figures 12-13). Although it is difficult to figure out the spatial relationship between the burial ground and other features of the site such as the stone walls, the artifacts and domestic activities, we are guided by archaeological theory. This settlement seems to fit well into the established Bantu Central Cattle Pattern (CCP) hypothesis (Huffman 2007).

The Central Cattle Pattern is a spatial organisation hypothesis based on ethnographic observation used to interpret settlement organisation during the Southern African Iron Age (Figures 17 - 18). First postulated by Hilda Kuper in the 1980s, it represents the relationships between the physical components of a settlement in terms of parameters such as status, life forces and kinship. The centre of the settlement, the domain of men, encompasses cattle byres (enclosures or pens) where men and other important people are buried, as well as sunken grain pits or raised grain bins for long term storage, a public smithing area, and an assembly area where men resolve disputes and make political decisions. The outer residential zone, the domain of married women, incorporates the households of individual wives with their private sleeping houses, kitchen, grain bins and graves (Huffman 2001: 19-21, Kuper 1982). The Central Cattle Pattern is closely associated with a specific social organisation and worldview (Figure 16). The theory can best account for the mixed location

of burials and household artefacts such as pottery and grinding stones. Archaeologist Anton Pelsler reported that he excavated an area with cattle dung that was part of visible terracing and possibly a cattle pen. Pottery and metal fragments and animal bones were found (PGS Report, Page 8).

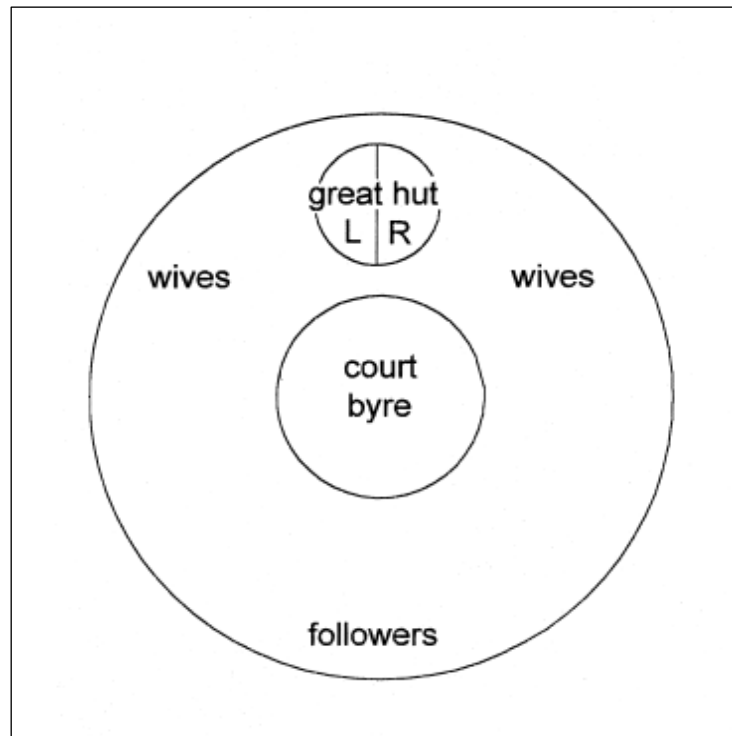


Figure 16: The structural arrangement of the Central Cattle Pattern. The cattle byre doubles up as the burial ground for important members of the family (Huffman, 2001: 20)



Figure 17: Location of human bones indicates possible burial sites spread across the site



Figure 18: Skeletal material representing a single individual (No 37)

### **5.3. Dating of the settlement**

#### *5.3.1. The Iron Age*

The scientific evidence unfolding is convincing that this site if forgotten in the passage of time, is nevertheless important. Collective memory might have been lost as people migrated or probably as a result of forced removals. Sites dating to the Early Iron Age have been found in the Steelpoort River valley. The region first received archaeological spotlight after the discovery of the much-acclaimed EIA Lydenburg terracotta heads. These artistic objects are featured in international literature and have given character to the South African Iron Age. Preliminary identification of the pottery indicates that it belongs to the Doornkop phase of the Early Iron Age dated between AD 600 and 900. The Lydenburg clay masks found during the 1960s belong to the same EIA tradition and have gained international acclaim.

#### *5.3.2. The Later Iron Age*

The transition from the Early Iron Age to the Later Iron Age (LIA), to which the Manogeng settlement is dated, took place around the 11th century. Dramatic political developments were unfolding as growing personal affluence by means of control of long-distance trade and ownership of cattle wealth provided the stimulus for social differentiation. The LIA in eastern Limpopo Province and Mpumalanga Province is characterised by stone-walled settlements (Esterhuysen 2007). At Manogeng the relationship between the stonewalls, burials and household activities has been established and confirms the much-debated Bantu Central Cattle Pattern which has been described above. LIA communities engaged in trade including Long-distance exchanges across the Indian Ocean with Asia and later with the Portuguese.

On the basis of unfolding archaeological evidence the settlement and burials may be about 150 years old. In suggesting a date around the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (at the latest) we are informed by the cultural context of the skeletons. The cultural objects associated with the bones are largely associated with pre-colonial African societies.

(i) Ostrich eggshell beads

(ii) Iron anklets (found in May/June 2021)

(iii) A large assemblage of clay potsherds common before the introduction of porcelain ceramics and metal household utensils.

(iv) pre-industrial iron implements

These types of artefacts have been encountered at many sites elsewhere in South Africa. Our conclusion, therefore, informed by the cultural context of the bones is that the site is of a mid-19th century date at the latest, otherwise a date before 1850. It also noted that the cultural material came different horizons to a depth of 1.5m or slightly more. The site may have been occupied for a period of not less than a century which can be expressed as three or four generations.

## **6. PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS**

Archaeological evidence at hand indicates that the settlement and burials may be at least 150 years old. In suggesting a date around the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century we are informed by the cultural context of the skeletons – the potter and grinding stones. These objects are of pre-colonial antiquity. The burial ground is not remembered in local oral traditions because of the time depth of 150 to 200 years. This observation does not invalidate any oral traditions that some families have in connection with the site.

The types of artefacts found at the settlement have been encountered at many sites elsewhere in South Africa dating to this period or earlier:

(i) Ostrich eggshell beads

(ii) Iron anklets (found in May/June 2021)

(iii) A large assemblage of clay potsherds common before the introduction of porcelain ceramics and metal household utensils.

(iv) pre-industrial iron implements

Our conclusion, therefore, informed by the cultural context of the bones is that the site is of a pre-colonial date.