ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF KLIPRIVIERSBERG
PART ONE

A phase-1 Report Prepared for DISA ENVIRONMENTAL

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF KLIPRIVIERSBERG

PART ONE

INTRODUCTION

The Alberton Town Council appointed the Disa Environmental/Planpractice Consortium to draft land development guidelines for a portion of Klipriviersberg near Meyersdal. The designated area lies to the south of the proposed rural residential zone (reported in Part Two). The present project area includes proposed residential and business zones as well as open spaces. Late Iron Age stone-walled settlements are known to occur throughout this area (Mason 1986), and so Disa Environmental commissioned Archaeological Resources Management (ARM) to conduct an archaeological survey.

It was ARM's task to verify the location of archaeological sites shown on Fig 239 of Mason's map (Mason 1986:559), to assess their relative importance, and to recommend appropriate mitigation measures in the light of the proposed development plan.

METHOD

ARM staff worked in the proposed nature area in July and in the proposed development area on November 1. We verified site locations by using the orthophoto map series 1:10 000 2628 AC 2 Linmeyer, and a 1:5000 orthophoto map supplied by the Alberton Town Council.

BACKGROUND

Three different types of stone-walled sites are on record in the former southern Transvaal (Derricourt & Evers 1973; Mason 1968, 1986; Taylor 1979). The first, commonly called Group I, is characterized by a large circular outer wall (usually less than 50cm high) surrounding one or two inner circles for cattle. The space inbetween was the residential zone. Occasionally, small stock enclosures were incorporated in the outer wall behind the residences. Group III is a more complex version of Group I, with more livestock enclosures and higher walls. The same pottery, originally called Uitkomst (Mason 1962), occurs on both Group I and

III, and this pottery is associated with Type N settlements in the Free State (Maggs 1976). All three types of settlements, Type N and Groups I and III, can be identified with southern Sotho-Tswana people historically known as the Ba Fokeng. Group I probably dates to between AD 1500 and 1650 and Group III from AD 1650 to the 1820s.

Group II, in contrast, can be associated with Western Sotho-Tswana, and the Ba Kwena in particular (Taylor 1979). Group II is characterized by a high outer wall arranged in regular scallops, forming the individual households of married women, surrounding an inner circle of several cattle kraals (Huffman 1986). Group II was contemporaneous with Group III and dates to between AD 1650 and the 1820s. Group II sites are common around Suikerbosrand, while Groups I and III are more frequent in the Klipriviersberg. Both II and III settlements were probably abandoned in the 1820s when Mzilikazi conquered the area.

RESULTS

Mason based his Figure 239 on a 1:10 000 orthophoto map, so his locations are accurate.

A few Group I sites exist in the southern residential zone (26.17.53.S 28.04.53E & 26.17.53 S 28.05.00 E) . Most others belong to Group III. Some Group III sites have been severely damaged in recent years by roads and pipelines. Others appear to have been dismantled many years ago to build farm dams. Most of these damaged sites have been earmarked for removal. One dismantled site (26.17.24.S 28.04.35 E), however, has been incorporated in an open space at the far west end of the property.

There is one Group II site located at the southern end in residential zone 5 (26.18.05 S 28.05.06 E). It contains at least one burnt daga (i.e. wattle and daub) structure in a residential bay, and there appears to be two recent graves in another embayment.

In addition to the Late Iron Age settlements, a few historic sites were also noted. The rectangular foundations of stone-walled buildings (26.17.07S 28.04.53E) stand near the lower dam wall, and an old mining trench is still visible about 300 metres north. These historic sites are of little value.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Because a number of stone-walled settlements will be protected inside the proposed nature reserve, it is not necessary to save every settlement in the development area. Sites that have been extensively robbed or severely damaged, for example, can be sacrificed.

The single Group II is unusual for the area, while the Group I sites are rare; and so if possible, these few sites should be preserved.

Whatever decision is finally taken, all archaeological and historical sites that will be destroyed must be mitigated. Minimally, each site needs to be mapped. Secondly, any significant midden deposit (50cm or more thick) needs to be test excavated, while thirdly, every daga structure must be carefully excavated.

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF KLIPRIVIERSBERG
PART TWO

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF KLIPRIVIERSBERG
PART TWO

INTRODUCTION

R & D Projects appointed the Disa Environmental/Environomics Consortium to prepare a scoping study for a proposed rural residential area in the Klipriviersberg on Meyersdal. Late Iron Age sites are known to occur throughout the designated area (Mason 1986:559). Consequently, Disa Environmental commissioned Archaeological Resources Management (ARM) to verify the locations of each stone-walled settlement, assess their importance and consider their integration into the proposed development layout.

METHOD

Two ARM staff surveyed the designated area on November 1. They examined each stone-walled settlement marked on Mason's Figure 239 and checked its location on the 1:10 000 orthophoto map 2628 AC 2 Linmeyer, Third Edition 1993.

RESULTS

Mason's Figure 239 was originally based on a 1:10 000 orthophoto map, and so the locations are accurate.

Some of the stone-walled clusters have been recently damaged, such as the northern most cluster (26.16.47 S 28.04.35 E) in the proposed western open space. Most other walling is well preserved. Well-preserved daga (i.e. wattle and daub) houses, on the other hand, are rare and therefore important. The settlement cluster with the best evidence for these structures stands on plot 58 (26.16.40 S 28.04.49 E). About 50m south on plot 45 stands the only other stone walling in the designated housing area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The proposed nature area encompasses many examples of stone-walled settlements; and so, it is unnecessary to preserve every example inside the rural residential zone. Those already damaged, for instance, are less visually attractive and could be removed. The northern most cluster of the western open space is a case in point.

To comply with heritage legislation and the ethics of the archaeological profession, archaeologists need to perform a minimum level of mitigation on each settlement designated for destruction. First, the walls of each cluster must be mapped. Secondly, sizeable middens (i.e. refuse dumps about 50cm or more thick) need to be test excavated, and thirdly, all visible daga structures need to be fully excavated. The site on plot 45 therefore needs to be mapped and test excavated, while the site on plot 58 requires full mitigation.

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