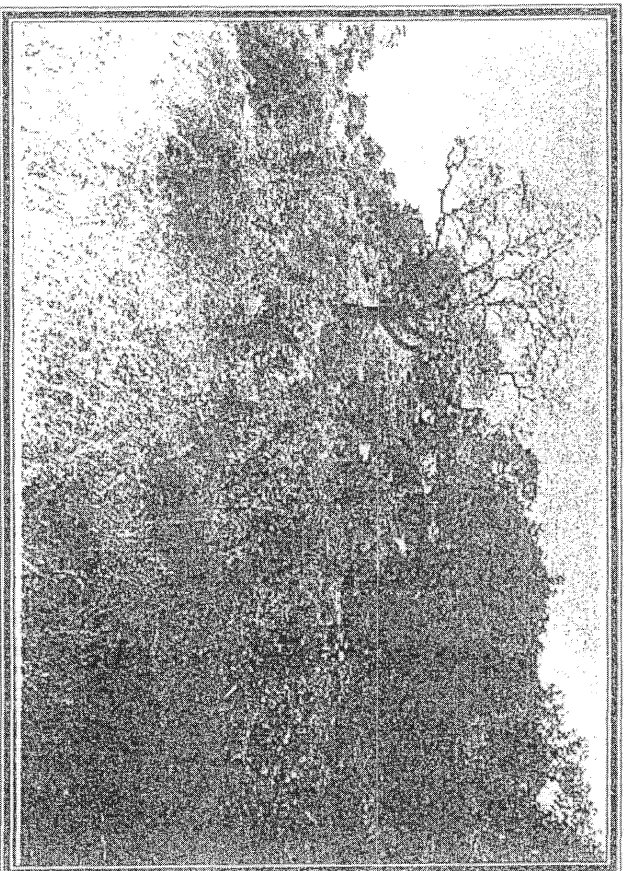


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Preliminary Archaeological Impact Assessment

McKechnie Vodacom Mast – Giyani



**Compiled by *Archaeo-Info*
For GAIA Earth Sciences
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	3
2. AIM.....	3
3. FIELDWORK	3
4. GEOGRAPHICAL/ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING	3
5. PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS.....	4
6. METHODOLOGY	4
7. SITE DESCRIPTIONS	6
7.1. MCK 001	6
8. INTERPRETATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	7
8.1. MCK 001	7
9. CONCLUSION.....	9
10. REFERENCES.....	9

ADDENDUM A (Photographs)

ADDENDUM B (Guidelines for the handling of graves)

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

Photo 1: Slag and potsherds
Photo 2 & 3: Terrace walling
Photo 4: Entrance stones
Photo 5: Ash deposit
Photo 6: Dense grass

PRELIMINARY ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF A SITE FOR A VODACOM MAST AT MCKECHNIE

1. Introduction

Archaeo-Info was appointed by GALA Earth Science to perform Preliminary Archaeological Impact Assessment (PAIA) in the Giyani area at McKechnie in the Northern Province. The PAIA was conducted in accordance with Act 28 of 1969 (Amended in 1986) and comprised the evaluation of the archaeological sensitivity of the study area.

2. Aim

The proposed location of the mast and the proposed access route was surveyed and investigated in an effort to ascertain the viability of the placement of the mast and access route from an archaeological point of view. The aim of the study was to determine the archaeological potential of the study area and how it will be affected by the proposed development. Previous involvement with other projects country wide stressed the need for the early identification of graves and investigators also concentrated on the identification of graves in the study area.

3. Fieldwork

Members of Archaeo-Info performed the fieldwork for the PAIA on March 31, 2000 and it was conducted by two professional archaeologists.

4. Geographical/Environmental Setting

The study area is situated on the farm McKechnie in the former homeland of Gazankulu. The proposed mast and access route will be situated on a hilltop approximately 16km north of Giyani just west of the Giyani/Malamulele road (R81). The hill formed part of a series of granite outcrops situated in the

predominantly flat sandveld of the region. The proposed construction site is located at 23° 08' 54" S, 30° 39' 34" E (GPS, Magellan 2000 XL).

5. Previous Archaeological investigations

Archaeo-Info received a copy from GAIA Earth Science of a previous archaeological investigation performed by Hester Roodt on the same farm. Other investigations performed by Archaeo-Info further north in the Malamulele and Mavambe areas were also consulted. No other archaeological reports are known from this area. Relevant anthropological studies such as *The Bavenda*, 1968 by H.A. Stayt, and *Gazankulu en sy Mense*, 1991 by J.D. Kriel and J.B. Hartman were used as background studies during the investigations.

6. Methodology

The study area was surveyed using standard archaeological surveying methods. The area was covered on foot and the investigators were on the lookout for surface finds, plant growth anomalies and other indicators for archaeological evidence. Test probes were done at intervals to determine sub-surface occurrence of archaeological material. Standard archaeological documentation formats were employed in the description of sites. Using standard site documentation forms as comparable medium, it enabled the surveyors to evaluate the relative importance of the sites found. Furthermore, GPS (Global Positioning System) readings of all finds and sites were taken. This information was then plotted using a *Magellan 2000 XL* GPS. All archaeological artifacts, if any were found, were photographically documented (100 ASA colour prints, Canon A1 SLR & Ricoh KR10 SLR).

Parts of the slopes on different sides of the hill were also surveyed in an effort to cover a larger area to determine the extent of the archaeological evidence found. a

The importance of sites was assessed by comparison with published information as well as comparative collections. All sites or possible sites found were classified

using a hierarchical system wherein sites are assessed using a scale of one to five on the basis of their importance. These categories are as follows;

Category 1. Sites in this category are of such great international and/or national importance in terms of cultural heritage that they can not be disturbed or altered at any cost. No development will be allowed in such an area. It should be noted that sites in this category are very rare - e.g. - *Great Zimbabwe, Swarthrans, Mapungubwe*

Category 2. Although these sites are not unique in terms of their culture they are of such archaeological value that any decision concerning their destruction can only be taken after full scale excavations have been undertaken - e.g. - *Thulamela*

Category 3. These sites are of lesser importance than the first two categories, but should be fully documented before they are destroyed. This documentation would entail the excavation of certain parts of the site - e.g. - *Masorini*

Category 4. Sites in this category consist of scattered evidence of archaeological occupation. Sometimes dilapidated stone walling can occur. Surface scatters of cultural material are evident. A limited number of test trenches should be excavated in order that the cultural affinity and importance of the site can be established.

Category 5. Areas that consist only of a very loose scattering of cultural material on the surface. No structures are visible and little archaeological deposits are evident. The occurrence of cultural material could, for example, be due to erosion. Apart from the surface collection of cultural material, no further work needs be done on such sites.

NB: It is important that any archaeological sites should be monitored during construction.

Category 6: Graves. The only archaeological aspect that could still be encountered during construction is the exposure of unmarked graves.

It should be noted that graves are subjects of great sensitivity and should be treated as such. Prompt and correct procedures will eliminate possible embarrassing situations for the developer.

7. Site Descriptions

The results of the survey and the description of the sites will be discussed in the following section. This site was attributed a reference code which consisted of an abbreviation of the farm (i.e. McKechnie - MCK) and a numerical indicator. A G.P.S. (Global Positioning System) coordinate was given for the site as well as a short description.

7.1. MCK 001

G.P.S. 23° 08' 54" S

H.A.S.L. 612m

30° 39' 34" E

Description:

The investigated hill was flat on top with steep descending slopes on all sides. The elongated flat top measured approximately 100m (east to west) in length and 30m (north to south) in width of which most of the area showed archaeological deposits, features and structures.

Scattered concentrations of potsherds and slag (photo 1) were found all along the top. Terrace walling on the southern and eastern perimeters of the hill prevented large scale erosion of the archaeological deposits and within these terracing most of the artifacts were collected. The artifacts consisted predominantly of potsherds and slag, but a few dağa fragments, fragmentary animal bone and fresh water mollusca shells were also recognised.

The terraced walling consisted of a single line of packed stones (photo 2 & 3) of various sizes on the southern and eastern perimeters of the hilltop extending over a distance of approximately 60m. Further terracing is most probable but could not be recognized due to the lush vegetation. Two vertically erected stones (photo 4) on the eastern extent of the site indicate an entrance to the site. These stones form part of the line of terrace walling and were erected approximately 1m from each other.

No other structures such as huts, grain-bins and cattle byres were found although a few ash concentrations (photo 5) were encountered.

More artifacts (potsherds and some slag) were found along the proposed access route (as indicated with yellow markers from the summit of the hill). These artifacts however were found only on the top part of the route and none were found at the bottom.

8. Interpretation and Recommendations

The site was attributed a category as described in the section on methodology and the interpretation and recommendations for the site are as follows.

8.1 MCK 001

Category 4

The result of the investigation showed that an archaeological site was present on the proposed construction site. These results compared favorably with the previous investigation conducted by Hester Roodt on another hilltop (site name unknown) in the area. The diagnostic potsherds found on the site were compared to published ceramic types (Mason, 1968b; Van der Merwe and Scully, 1971; Evers, 1974, 1975, 1979) and although the sample taken was not sufficient it could be stated that it belongs to the *Letaba* tradition (± 1600 AD - ± 1900 AD).

The occupation of a hilltop during these times were common albeit by Venda or Shangaan communities. A senior member of a tribe most probably occupied the hilltop with his family and followers. From the archaeological remains it was evident that occupants from this hilltop site did not have the same status or wealth as the occupants of the site investigated by Hester Roodt. As deduced from her report the occupants of MCK 001 did not have the same measure of metal working and only small sections of terrace walling were found and no stone walls on the site itself were evident. Smaller site size and fewer structures on MCK 001 indicated a subordinate position to that of the neighbouring site. Further evidence retrieved, however indicated that the sites were both of the same cultural affinity and era. The documentation of this site will give insight into the regional distribution and development of the *Letaba* tradition as well as provide information on the regional hierarchy of this tradition.

It is recommended that no construction should take place before phase two investigations on MCK 001 are performed. These phase two investigations will entail bush clearing (photo 6) to determine the full extent of the site and mapping of the site. After completion of these investigations it will be possible to recommend a safe area for development through discussion with the client. Only after evaluating the extent and settlement pattern of the site can recommendations be given on possible areas for development. MCK 001 is however not as significant as the site on the hill to the west (reported on by H. Roodt) and through correct mitigation can be constructed on. Construction on this site can only continue after a permit is issued by the *National Monuments Council* for destruction of the site. This permit will only be issued after evaluation of an archaeological investigation. Alternatively another site for construction should be chosen.

9. Conclusion

The development and construction of the proposed Vodacom mast can not continue before phase two investigations are made into the extent of the site. These investigations will indicate the road ahead.

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APPENDUM A



PHOTO 1

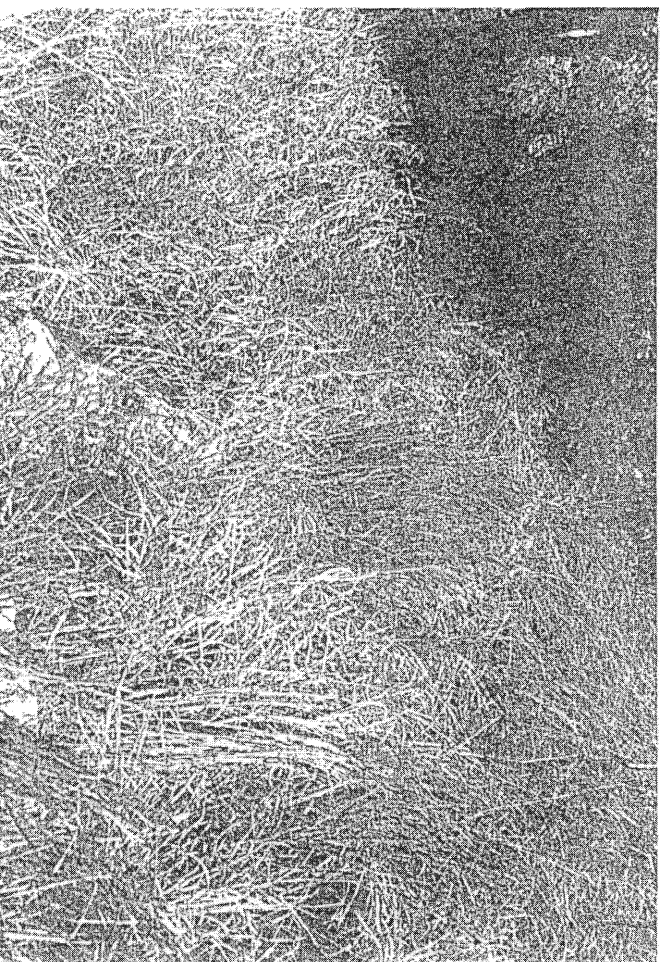


PHOTO 2

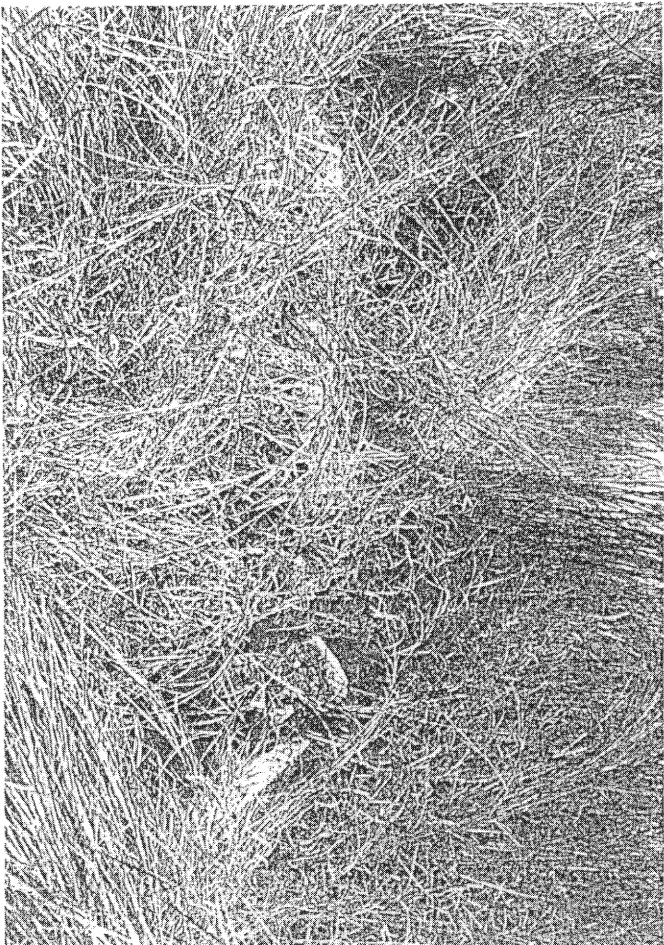


PHOTO 3

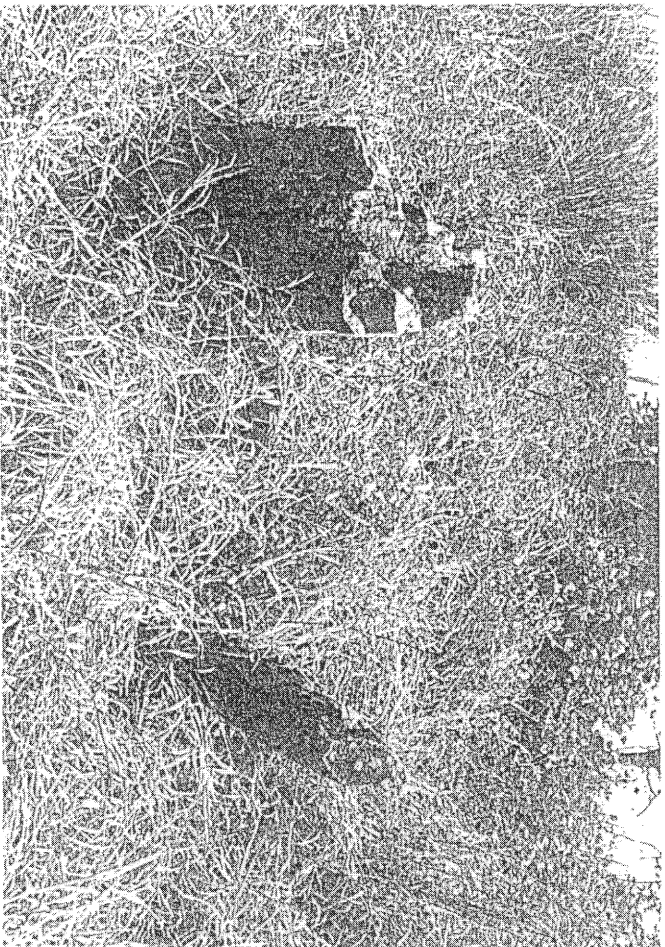


PHOTO 4



PHOTO 5



PHOTO 6

APPENDUM B