

CULTURAL HERITAGE RESOURCES IMPACT ASSESSMENT ON MALOKONG HILL



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1. DEFINITION

The broad generic term *Cultural Heritage Resources* refers to any physical and spiritual property associated with past and present human use or occupation of the environment, cultural activities and history. The term includes sites, structures, places, natural features and material of palaeontological, archaeological, historical, aesthetic, scientific, architectural, religious, symbolic or traditional importance to specific individuals or groups, traditional systems of cultural practice, belief or social interaction.

2. PROTECTED SITES IN TERMS OF THE NATIONAL HERITAGE ACT, Act no. 25 of 1999

The following are the most important sites and objects protected by the National Heritage Act:

- a. Structures or parts of structures older than 60 years
- b. Archaeological sites and objects
- c. Palaeontological sites
- d. Meteorites
- e. Ship wrecks
- f. Burial grounds
- g. Graves of victims of conflict
- h. Public monuments and memorials
- i. Structures, places and objects protected through the publication of notices in the Government Gazette and Provincial Gazette
- j. Any other places or object which are considered to be of interest or of historical or cultural significance
- k. Geological sites of scientific or cultural importance
- l. Sites of significance relating to the history of slavery in South Africa
- m. Objects to which oral traditions are attached
- n. Sites of cultural significance or other value to a community or pattern of South African history

3. METHODOLOGY

Malokong Hill lies on the farms Vriesland 781L, Vliegekraal 783 LR, Malokong 784 LR, Vogelstruisfontein 785 LR, Malokongskop 780 LR and Groningen 779 LR (see map 2328 DD Limburg 1/50 000). All appropriate maps and databases on the area were studied. The site was visited, extensively walked, visually inspected and recorded.

4. RESULTS

Malokong Hill is a granite hill rising above flat low lying deep sedimentary clay soils, stretching in all directions. On the eastern foot of the mountain lies the informal settlement of Malokong under headman (induna) Mabusela.

Oral tradition mentions that the Mabusela clan has lived on the hill as long as they can remember. They are Northern Ndebele people who settled amongst the Northern or Central Sotho. Originally they lived on the highest point of the mountain for security reasons. Gradually they slowly moved down the mountain. According to local traditions there were five different stages of settlement on top of the mountain before they settled on the southwestern side at the foot of the mountain in the valley. As the population increased they settled around the foot of the mountain. The present settlement on the eastern side of the mountain is built on top of earlier settlements. For details of settlement chronology and distribution, compare map 1.

The oldest location is on the highest peak of the mountain, and consisted of stonewalls between large boulders. The area is densely forested and the site is difficult to reach. The time when the people settled here must have been a period of turmoil and war. They built here for security and defence reasons (see photograph 1). With the present dense vegetation it is difficult to interpret the site. A monolith is in one of the stonewall enclosures at the top of the mountain (see photograph 2). These monoliths are associated with chieftainship and fertility (S23°52'38.4" E28°49'01.1").

The second settlement consists of two parts in the saddle just north of the first settlement, one on the eastern side and the other on the western side, thus protecting the whole saddle. These two, like most of the settlements on and at the foot of the mountain, consist of a number of large stone circles with a smaller stone circle in the middle. The smaller circle in the middle probably was a cattle enclosure. The houses stood between the outer and inner stonewall circles. This is typical of Nguni settlement pattern. The saddle area is rich in iron ore (magnetite). Iron ore is so abundant that it was even used in the construction of stonewalls (see photograph 3).

The third settlement was on a high plateau just north of settlement 2. It is still in a good condition and contains the best preserved and highest stonewalls. Entrances to stone enclosures have also been well built (see photograph 4). The fourth settlement was further down the mountain, just north east of the previous one, also with well-preserved stonewalling (see photograph 5). This settlement is almost 200 metres in diameter. Settlements 5 and 6 are again north of the previous settlements and lower down on the mountain (see map 1). The largest settlement on the mountain is no 6, which is about 300 metres in diameter. The grave of headman Gagahudja Mabusela, who was buried in 1901, is here and it is marked by a single stone in one of the inner stonewall circles (see photograph 6) (S23°52'01.2" E28°49'26.4").

Although the settlements were widely spread on the mountain, it seems that the largest concentration of settlements was on the southwestern side. This area also contains a large amount of iron slag and probably was an iron-smelting site. Stone anvils and stone hammers also occur (see photograph 7). The sites on the

northwestern side of the mountain seem to be the youngest as some square structures appear in these sites.

Though pottery is found on all the sites the only identifiable pottery was discovered on the eastern side of the mountain. This pottery is Moloko type pottery, associated with Sotho speaking people. The pottery was probably obtained from Sotho neighbours (see photograph 8). Middle Stone Age material occurs in small numbers throughout the whole area (see photograph 9).

5. CONCLUSION

Iron Age people have inhabited Malokong Hill for a long period. The sites are relatively well preserved and are associated with the Mabusela clan. They represent a long chronology of occupation, which should be investigated through archaeological research. According to oral tradition the sites are associated with the Northern Ndebele, though the pottery suggests a strong link with Sotho speaking people.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that before any mining operations can take place the following has to be done:-

- detailed mapping of all archaeological sites
- the creation of a conservation area for the sites which will not be affected by mining
- salvage archaeological excavations on all sites which will be affected by mining
- development of a heritage management plan for the sites within the conservation area
- consultation with the Mabusela clan and other affected parties on the above issues.

7. REFERENCES

Hall, S.L. 1985. Excavations at Rooikrans and Rhenosterkloof, Late Iron Age sites in the Rooiberg area of the Transvaal. *Ann. Cape Prov. Mus. (Human Sci.)* Volume I (Part 5) 27th September 1985

Loubser, J.H.N. 1994. Ndebele archaeology of the Pietersburg area. *Navorsing van die Nasionale Museum Bloemfontein.* Volume 10 (part 2) February 1994.

PHOTOGRAPHS



No. 1 Stonewalls of the first settlement on Malokong.



No. 2 Monolith at first settlement.



No. 3 In the second settlement iron ore is abundant and is even used in wall constructions. The dark stones are iron ore.



No. 4 The best stonewalls where found in the third settlement. Entrances to stone circles are well constructed..



No. 5 Typical stonewalling of the settlements on the mountain.



No. 6 Graveside of headman Gagahudja Mabusela who was buried here in 1901.



No. 7 Stone anvil near the iron smelting sites at the south-western side of the mountain.



No. 8 Maloko type pottery found on the sites.



No. 9 Middle Stone Age material found on the mountain.

