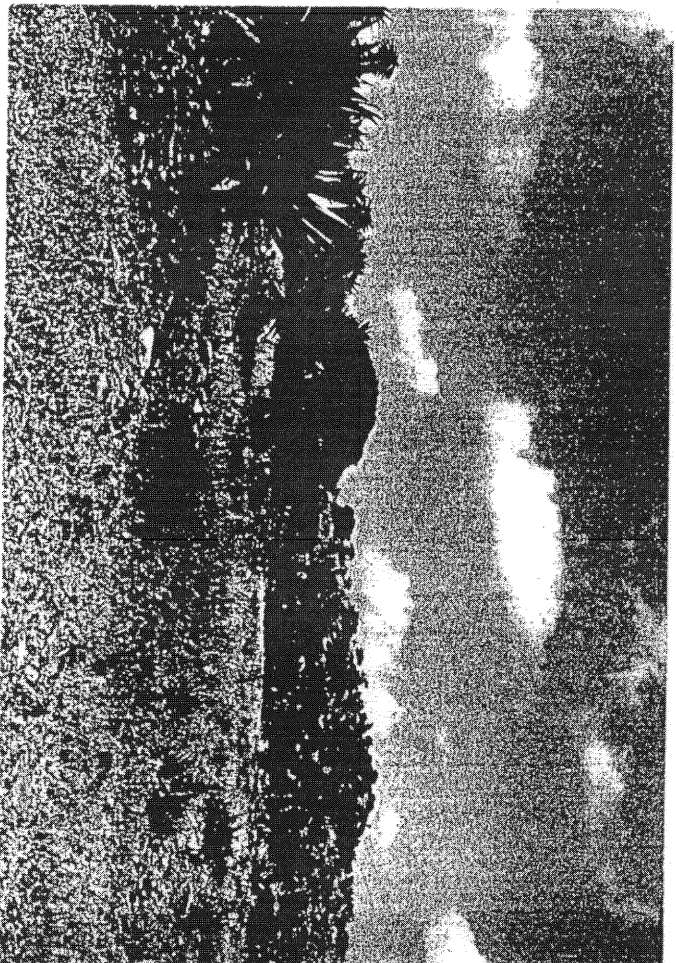


# **Preliminary Archaeological Impact Assessment on Majabes Kraal (23229 DC) Northern Province**



Compiled by Archaeo-Info  
For Tekplan Environmental Analysis Services  
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## ADDENDUM A: PHOTOGRAPHS

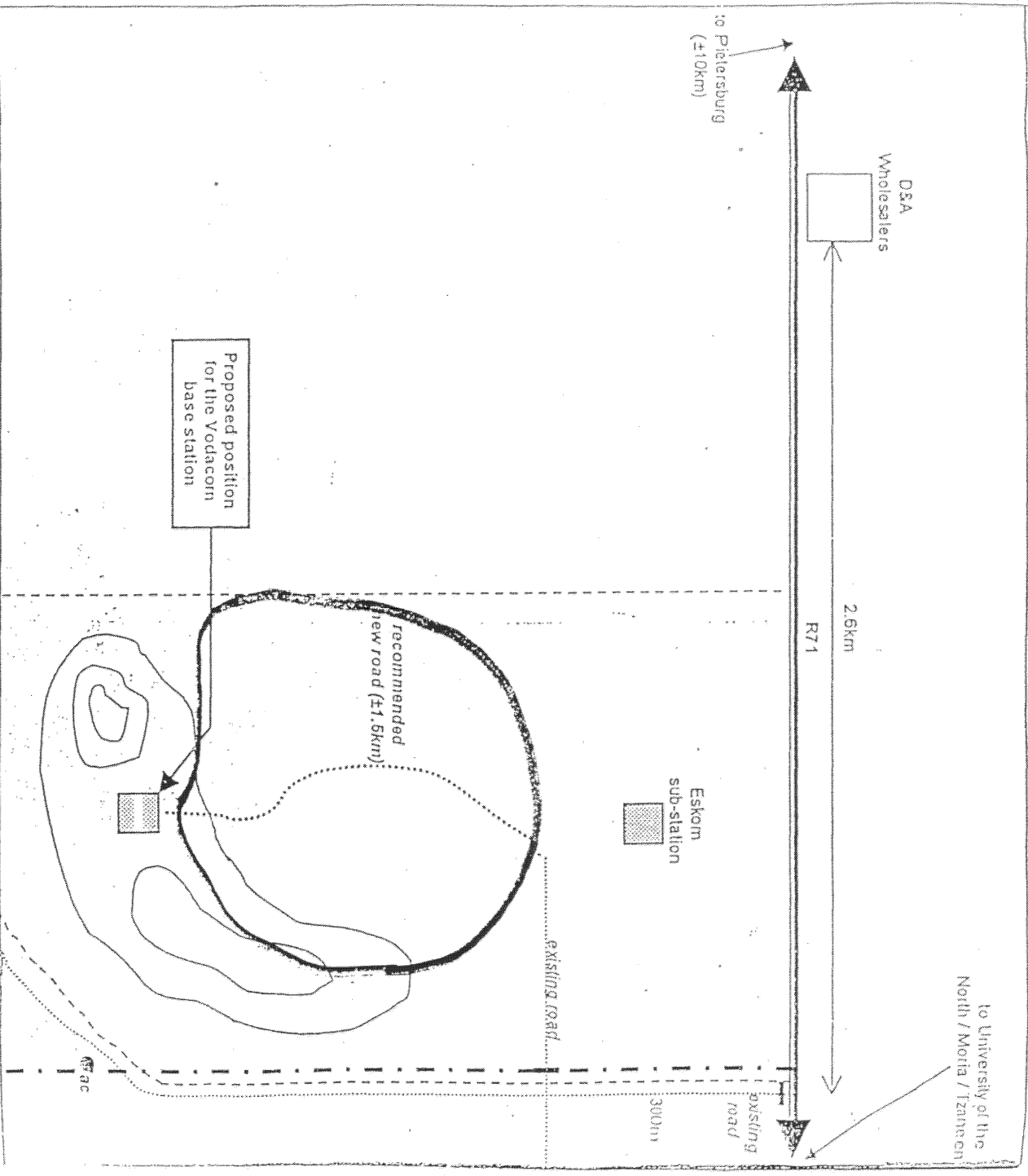
# **PRELIMINARY ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF A SITE FOR A VODACOM MAST AT MAJEBES KRAAL (2329 DC), NORTHERN PROVINCE**

## **1. Introduction**

Vodacom has identified a hill next to the R71 tar road, between Delmada and the University of the North, as a proposed location for a Vodacom base station (Fig 1). Tekplan Environmental Analysis Services contracted Archaeo-Info to perform a Preliminary Archaeological Impact Assessment (P.A.I.A.) at the proposed site, which comprised the first phase archaeological investigation and the evaluation of the archaeological potential and sensitivity of the area. The study areas consisted of approximately 1,5 km proposed access road and a 20 m x 20 m site for the development of the proposed base station.

## **2. Aim**

The proposed location of the base station and the proposed access road were surveyed and investigated in an effort to ascertain the viability of the placement of the base station and access road from an archaeological point of view. The aim of the study was to determine the archaeological potential of the study area and to assess the impact the development will have on possible archaeological sites and finds. Furthermore to evaluate these possible archaeological sites and finds in order to advise the client on alternative actions or placements of the development if it is found to have a negative impact on the cultural resources, which are protected in Act 25 of 1999.



Co-ordinates: 23° 54' 18" S  
29° 37' 04" E

Address: Site between Delmada and University of the North, on a hill next to the R71 to Tzaneen

Fig. 1. Location Map

### 3. Fieldwork

Members of Archaeo-Info met with Mr T. Kotze of Tekplan on Friday May 12, 2000 at the proposed site. After the initial reconnaissance of the proposed access road and base station site with Mr. Kotze, the survey of the proposed development was performed by two professional archaeologists.

### 4. Geographical/Environmental Setting

The study areas are situated on the farm Majebes Kraal 1002 LS (1:50000 map 2329 DC) approximately 12 km east of Pietersburg, just south of the Pietersburg/Tzaneen road (R71). The study areas are situated in a typical savannah environment, with a flowing landscape and isolated hills.

The proposed base station will be situated on one of these hills, with the proposed access road connecting the base station to an existing dirt road. The access road will be on the northern side of the hill, turning eastwards to join up with the existing dirt road on the eastern side of the hill. The proposed location for the base station is at 23° 54' 18" S 29° 37' 04" E (as provided by Vodacom).

### 5. Previous Archaeological Investigation

Archaeo-Info consulted Mr. F. Roodt at the Pietersburg museum in an effort to establish if any recent archaeological investigations were performed in the Turfloop area. To Mr. Roodt's knowledge no recent archaeological reports were available and the only relevant literature available for background studies was the work done by J.H.N. Loubser, *Ndebele Archaeology of the Pietersburg area*, 1994. The publication on the salvage excavations at Planknek near Potgietersrus by Prof. T.N. Huffman and R.H. Steel as well as relevant anthropological studies such as *Boundaries and Beliefs: The structure of a Sotho worldview*, 1981 by W.D. Hammond-Tooke were also consulted.

## 6. Methodology

The area was surveyed using standard archaeological surveying methods. The area was divided into blocks which were subsequently surveyed by foot because of the inaccessibility of the area due to heavy plant growth. The blocks were surveyed by walking in parallel lines covering as much of the area as possible. This technique has proven to result in the maximum coverage of an area. 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.

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 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 (*Cape datum*).

Indicators such as surface finds, plant growth anomalies, local information and topography were used in identifying sites of possible archaeological importance. Test probes were done at intervals to determine sub-surface occurrence of archaeological material. The importance of sites was assessed by comparisons 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, Swartkrans, 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 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 Description

The results of the survey and the description of the site will be discussed in the following section. The site was attributed a reference code, which consists of an abbreviation of the farm (i.e. Majebes Kraal - MAJ) 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 MAJ 001

G.P.S. 23° 54' 10" S  
29° 37' 04" E

#### Description:

The investigations started on the northern side of the hill. From this side it was evident that a large archaeological site was present, situated at the foot and on the northern slopes of the hill (Fig 1). An extensive stone walled complex covered an area of at least 500 m (east/west) by 300 m (north/south).

The large stone walled complex was characterised by numerous enclosures and interconnecting walls, which formed an intriguing maze of sealed off areas and paths/lanes (photo 1). The enclosures varied in size, which ranged from small ( $\pm 2$  m in diameter) to large ( $\pm 20$  m in diameter). The walls varied in height and size, with some of them measuring at least 1 metre high and 1 metre wide (photo2). Smaller (and lower) stone walls were also present. *Aloes* were growing on and between the walls (photo 3). There were so many *cloes* that it made the site visible even from the tar road. The walls were mostly still intact, with only a few enclosures in a dilapidated state. On the extreme northern side of the site, some parts of the stone walls were damaged by the construction and placement of an underground pipeline.

The entrances to the enclosures (photo 4) and pathways in between were well defined and easy to identify. Monoliths were strategically placed all over the

site (photo 5). Some of the enclosures had small fragments of burnt daub, which might indicate the presence of hut structures. Other enclosures had visible dung deposits, which made the grass flourish. Due to the overgrown nature of the site, it was difficult to find artefacts and only a few non-diagnostic potsherds were retrieved among ashy deposits in some of the enclosures. Except for the few potsherds, no other cultural material was found.

The proposed access road, which will follow the above mentioned pipeline for the first part, will pass through the damaged stone walling. As the access road turns south (leaving the east/west pipeline), it will pass through the centre of the site (photo 6). Near the summit of the hill, the proposed road will exit from the archaeological site and connect up with the proposed base station on the summit of the hill.

The proposed location for the base station did not have any archaeological structures, features or deposits. The only archaeological structure on the summit was a small enclosure on the extreme eastern side of the hill, which was approximately 80 m away from the proposed location of the base station.

## **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 MAJ 001**

#### **Category 3**

After completion of the first phase archaeological survey, it was evident that a large archaeological site was present on the northern side of the proposed hill for the Vodacom development. The site comprised of an extensive stone walled complex, which could be associated with the Northern Transvaal

Ndebele communities in the Pietersburg area. These communities occupied the Pietersburg region between 1600 – 1900 AD (Loubser 1994).

The archaeological site at Majeibes Kraal can be classified as a Group II site according to the classification model as described by Loubser. These sites are normally located at the foot and lower slopes of hills and are generally situated on the northern side of a hill. The site at Majeibes Kraal has orderly packed stone walls. The stone walls formed units, which could be sub-divided into a central enclosure with smaller enclosures surrounding the bigger, central enclosure (Loubser 1994).

The stone walls were constructed from granite rock, which formed two outer faces and was filled-up with smaller rocks, dirt and rubble. Numerous aloes (*A. marlothii*) were growing on the walls and inside the enclosures. According to Loubser, the occurrence of *aloes* on Ndebele sites are common, but although he could not explain the exact reasons for this phenomenon, he insisted that the intrusive aloes must have been brought in by the inhabitants of the site.

Group II Northern Transvaal Ndebele sites were also identified because of the dense vegetation and ashy deposits found across the site (Loubser 1994). The site at Majeibes Kraal is overgrown and ashy deposits were found frequently across the extent of the site.

Loubser identified his Style 2 and 3 ceramics together on Group II and Group III settlements. The investigators did not find any diagnostic ceramics supporting this theory. The Moloko (Style 2), and Letaba (Style 3) ceramics as found on Group II sites by Loubser indicated the connections to Koni/Tswana or Lowveld/Venda connections. No further deductions for the affiliation of the site at Majeibes Kraal could be made, due the lack of a ceramic sequence. Because of the location of the site, to the east of Pietersburg and far more north than most of the sites investigated by Loubser (which could be connected to Sotho-Tswana [Moloko]), the Majeibes Kraal site will most

probably produce ceramics which could be connected to the Venda and Sotho (Letaba) cultural sequences.

The occupation of the Group II site were abandoned after the *Boers* settled in the region during the 1850's the inhabitants presumably fled to the mountains where it was safer (Loubser 1994).

Archaeo-Info recommends that the proposed access road should be moved or altered not to affect the archaeological site. Although extensive research was done by Loubser on the Northern Transvaal Ndebele, he concentrated his attention to the south of Pietersburg. Sites to the east and north-east of Pietersburg were documented but not to the same extent as the sites Loubser excavated. The archaeological site at Majeibes Kraal was not mentioned in Loubser's publication, or any other relevant publication. This in its self make the Majeibes Kraal site worth preserving as it could prove the Lowveld origin rather than the Northern Natal connection, as advocated by Loubser.

An alternative route, as discussed with Mr. Kotze of Tekplan, on the southern side of the hill will have no effect on the site situated on the northern side of the hill. This route will be shorter and will not affect archaeological structures situated on top of the hill. The proposed location of the base station will not affect any cultural resources.

## **9. Conclusion**

During the archaeological survey of the proposed site for the Vodacom development, a Northern Transvaal Ndebele settlement was found. According Loubser (1994) the occupation of the Ndebele in the Pietersburg region lasted from 1600 – 1900 AD. The site at Majeibes Kraal was identified as a Group II settlement and was most probably abandoned during the 1850's with the *Boers* conquest of the Northern Province (Loubser 1994)

An alternative route for the access road is recommended, which will not affect or damage the archaeological site. A route on the southern side of the hill is

proposed, although no intensive archaeological study was done on this side of the hill. The proposed location of the base station does not endanger any archaeological structures, features or deposit and the construction of the base station may continue.

## 10. References

1. Hammond-Tooke, W.D. 1981. *Boundaries and Belief: The structure of a Sotho worldview*. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University press.
2. Huffman, T.N. and Steel, R.H. 1996. *Salvage excavations at Planknek, Potgietersrus, Northern Province*. Southern African Field Archaeology, 5: 45-58.
3. Loubser, J.H.N. 1994. *Ndebele archaeology of the Pietersburg area*. Navorsinge van die Nasionale Museum Bloemfontein. 10(2): 61-147.

# ADDENDUM A

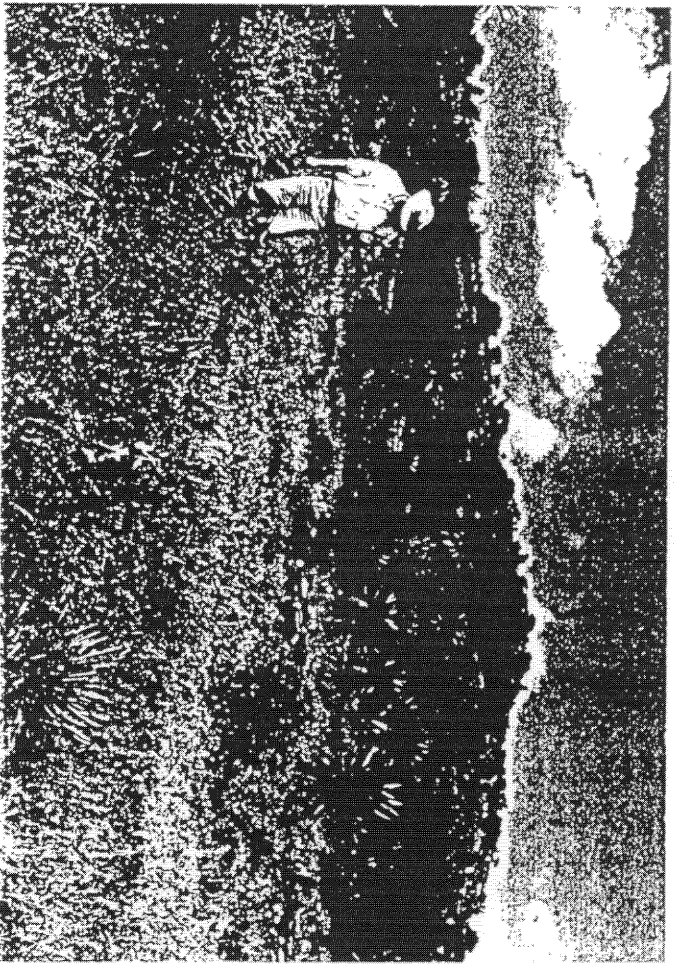


Photo 1. Location of site on Northern side of hill.

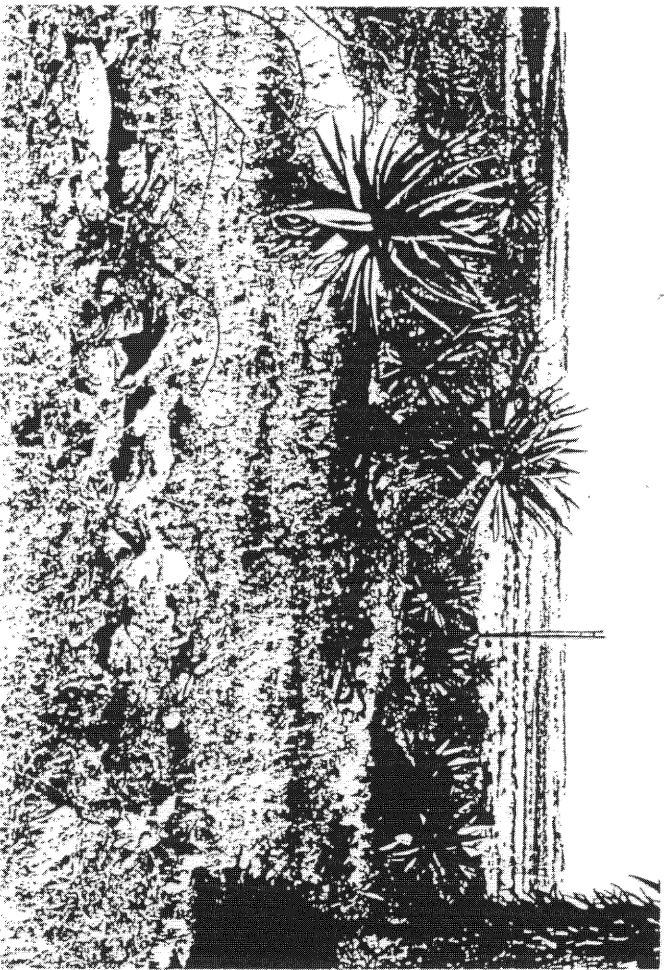


Photo 2. Stone walls



Photo 3. *Aloe marlothii* on and between stone walls

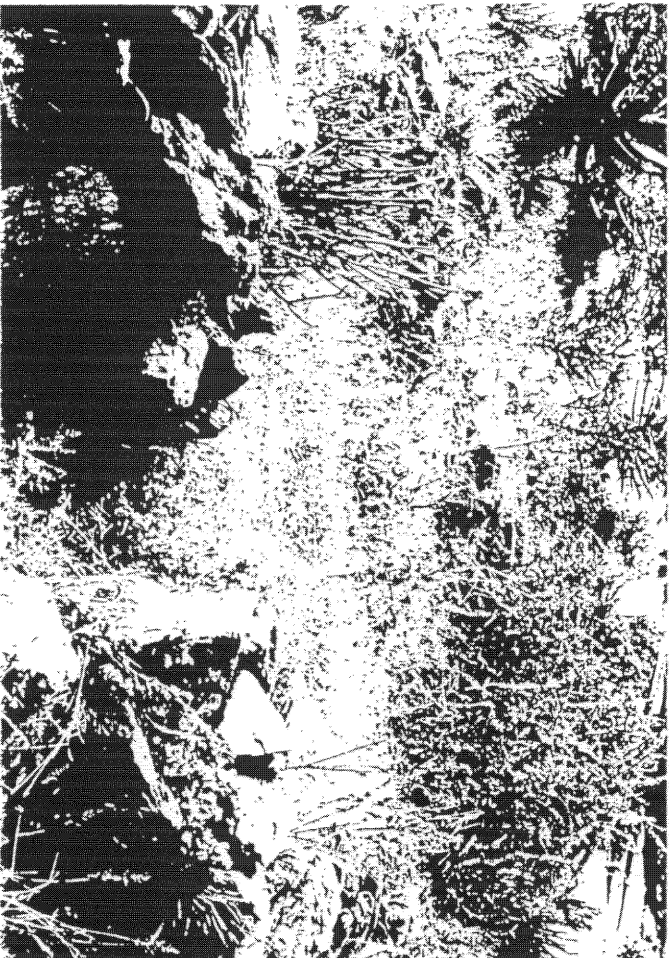


Photo 4. An entrance to an enclosure



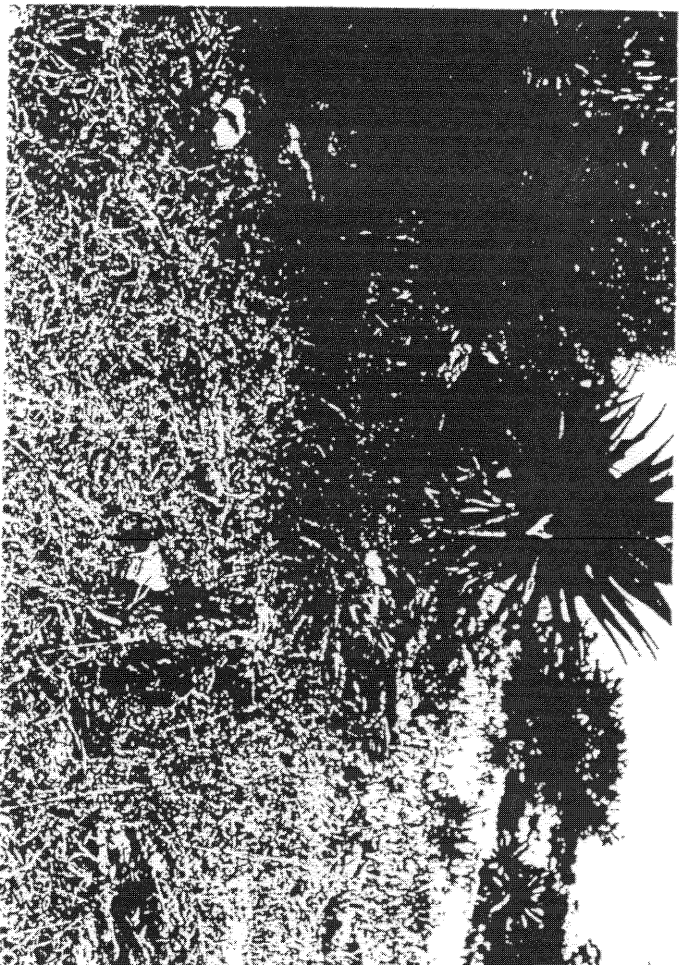


Photo 5. Monolith

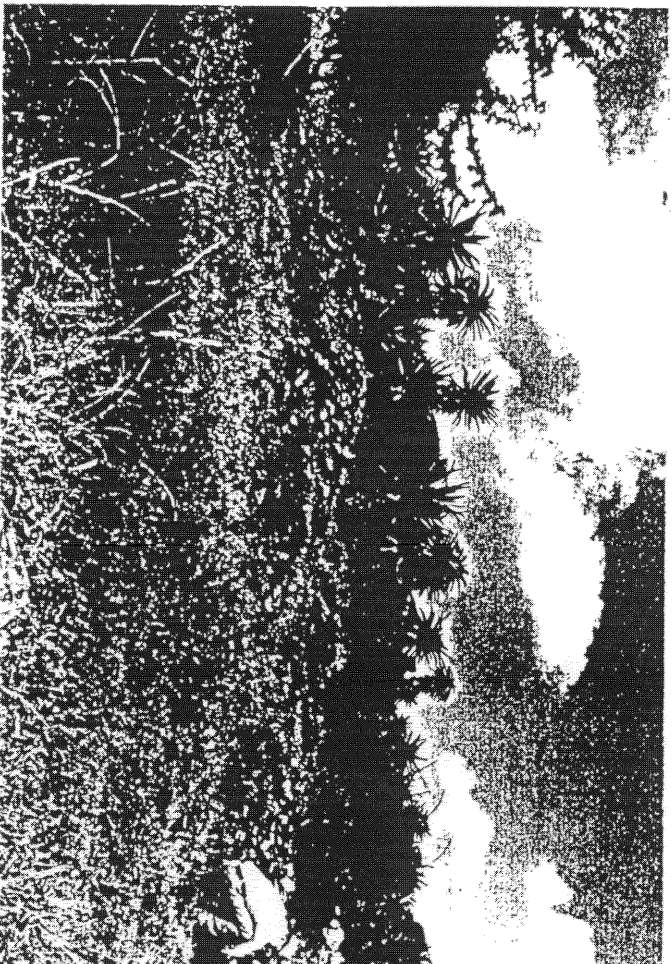


Photo 6. Stone wall complex in center of site