

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION
OF IRON SMELTING SITE MUT 41, IN THE NANDONI
DAM, THOHOYANDOU DISTRICT, NORTHERN PROVINCE**

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SUMMARY

Archaeological investigation of Iron smelting site Mut 41, in the Nandoni dam, Thohyandou district, Northern Province

During a survey undertaken to locate, identify, evaluate and document sites, objects and structures of cultural importance within the boundaries of the area in which the proposed Nandoni dam is being developed, sites of Iron Age origin were found. Assessments of these sites determined that mitigation will have to be undertaken for at least some of these sites.

The aim of this report was the investigation of an iron smelting sites. A furnace that can be described as typical of what can be expected in the area, was investigated. The larger site was also investigated to determine if other activities can be associated with the smelting activities.

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1. AIMS OF THE EXCAVATIONS

The archaeological investigation of the site known as Mut 41 was part of a larger mitigation exercise of archaeological sites in the Nandoni dam. Previous excavators, in their assessment of the site, made certain assumptions regarding the type and significance of the site and, based on that, proposed mitigation measures. These were considered during the current investigations. Even before the archaeological excavations were completed, it could be predicted that these assumptions were incorrect.

The aim of the excavations was therefore to recover as much information and cultural material in order to:

- reconstruct, if possible, the time-scale of the site
- determine the cultural identity of the people who worked at the site, and
- to determine as much about the technology regarding iron smelting employed on the site.

2. THE SITE

The site discussed in this report, coded 2230DC2 (originally Mutt 41) (22° 58' 55" S; 30° 35' 21" E), is located on the southern bank of the Levuvhu river on the farm Molenje's Location 204LT in the Thohoyandou district of Northern Province (Fig. 1). It is located on a triangle of land form by an unnamed tributary that flows into the Levuvhu river.

The terrain morphology of the larger area can be described as slightly irregular plains. The dominant lithology is gneiss, overlain with clay accumulation especially close to the river banks.

The vegetation in the area is quite undisturbed, being largely used as grazing. The original veld type is classified as Lowveld Sour Bushveld and the landcover can be described as bushveld dotted with a variety of tree species. Belts of forest occurs along the river, with lianas and scramblers densifying the growth (see also Acocks 1975:27-28).

The site is indicated by the original investigators to be approximately 150 x 100 m in size. This

is somewhat larger than what was determined by the recent investigations. Surface finds are slag,