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PRELIMINARY ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

For a Vodacom Mast Site at Oliefantshoek Village

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Addendum A (Photographs)

PRELIMINARY ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF A SITE FOR A VODACOM MAST AT SHIPFOPHI, OLIFANTSHOEK VILLAGE

1. Introduction

GALA Earth Science requested Archaeo-Info to perform a Preliminary Archaeological Impact Assessment (P.A.I.A.) at Shipfophi, Olifantshoek village near Soekmekaar in the Northern Province. The P.A.I.A. comprised the first phase investigation and evaluation of the archaeological potential and sensitivity of the site. The P.A.I.A. was conducted in accordance with the newly approved and operational National Heritage Resources Act no. 25 of 1999.

2. Aim

A first phase archaeological investigation was performed to determine the archaeological potential of the site. The proposed locations of the mast and access route were surveyed to determine the viability of the placement of the mast and the access route and to evaluate the impact they would have on archaeological structures and features found on the site. The aim was also to advise the client on alternative placements of the mast and route and how to preserve the cultural resources of the study area as prescribed in Act 25 of 1999.

3. Fieldwork

Two professional archaeologists performed the survey of the proposed mast site and access route on April 24, 2000.

4. Geographical/Environmental Setting

The proposed mast and access route will be situated on the farm Olifantshoek 106 LT on an elongated hill named Shipfophi, just south on the outskirts of the Olifantshoek village, near Soekmekaar in the Northern Province. The hill was isolated and stood out in the flat surrounding area. The hill was covered with short grass and small brush growth with only a few big trees occurring on the slopes and summit. Loose rocks were scattered everywhere and small rocky outcrops were protruding from the slopes and the summit of the hill. The proposed location for the mast is at 23° 21'10" S, 30° 16' 25" E (as provided by GALIA Earth Science).

5. Previous Archaeological Investigations

No previous archaeological investigations were performed in this area and no archaeological reports were available for the study. Relevant anthropological studies such as *The Bantenda*, 1968 by H.A. Stayt, *Gazankulu en sy Mense*, 1991 by J.D. Kriel and J.B. Hartman, and *The Ethno-archaeology of Venda-speakers in Southern Africa*, 1991 by J.H.N. Loubser were used as background studies.

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 subsurface 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 artefacts, 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.

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 stonewalling 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 site will be discussed in the following section. The site was attributed a reference code which consisted of an abbreviation of the village's name (i.e. Olifantshoek - OFH) and a numerical indicator. A GPS (Global Positioning system) co-ordinate was given for the site, as well as a short description.

7.1 OFH 001

GPS: 23° 21' 09" S H.A.S.L.: 720 m
30° 16' 26" E

Description:

A circular stone walled structure was found on the highest point of the hill. The structure was situated approximately 8 m north-east of a trig. beacon. The stone walls were in a dilapidated state and the walls measured approximately 1

m in width and height. The stone walls formed an enclosure, which measured approximately 15 metres in diameter (photo 1). The enclosure was filled up with a layer of soil and decomposed dung and a layer of soil mixed with ash. The dung and ash components in the soil made for a very lush grass covering within the enclosure. Several small stretches of stone walling or terracing were also observed to the west of the enclosure with monoliths indicating possible entrances or activity areas (photo 2). No other structures or other ash deposits were found on the hill. Only three potsherds were collected on the whole of the hill (non-diagnostic) and no other artefacts were found.

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 OFH 001

Category 4

The investigations on the hill proved that an archaeological site was present in the study area. The stone walled enclosure found on the summit of the hill and described in this report proved to be a cattle byre (kraal) with a small occupational area situated on the western side of the kraal.

Similar sites were documented in the previously known homeland of Venda. Sites like Schirbeek (H.P. Prinsloo, pers. Comm) and at Makonde, Mianzwi the old kraal of chief Lambani (Stayt, 1968: 7) had cattle byres on hills with small occupational areas attached to it. These cattle byres belonged to influential men (such as the resident chief or headman) and were attended to and guarded by herdsmen/boys. At Schirbeek, for example, the owner of the cattle resided on another hill with his wives and family. At Olifantshoek it also seemed to be the case although the occupational area of the owner of the cattle was not found. These hills were utilised and occupied during the 1800's up to approximately the turn of the previous century (1900).

Although more similar sites are known and well documented, the Olifantshoek site was the first site of its kind documented in this region. The survey was performed over Easter Weekend and it was not possible to investigate the location of the occupational area through interviews with locals, as they were engaged in religious and sporting activities.

Information provided by GALA Earth Science stated that the proposed development would occupy approximately 10 m x 12 m of the hill. Markings on rocks on the summit of the hill do not correlate with the position of the mast on the provided map. These markings indicated the position of the mast on top of the archaeological remains. A minor adjustment of the exact location of the proposed mast will eradicate any problems. The north-eastern side of the summit (the proposed position of the mast as indicated on the map) provides sufficient space to continue with the development without affecting or damaging the archaeological remains. Archaeo-Info is prepared to indicate the no-go areas with *danger tape* if any uncertainties exist on where the safe areas are located.

The proposed access route as indicated on the map will not affect or damage the archaeological remains and it is safe to continue with the development of the route.

9. Conclusion

A cattle byre, probably originating from the 1800's was found on the summit of the hill. With minor adjustments to the exact location of the proposed development with the aid of an archaeologist, the construction of the proposed mast and access route can continue. These minor adjustments will ensure that the archaeological remains will not be affected or damaged by the proposed development.

10. References

- Kriel, J.D. & Hartman, J.B. 1991. *Gazankulu en sy Mense*. Pretoria: University of Pretoria.
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- Steyl, H.A. 1968. *The Bavena*. London; Frank Cass and Company Limited.