

**KGATLA IRON AGE SITE:
EXHIBITION PROPOSAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN**

For:

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SUMMARY

The Museum was asked to investigate the possibility of developing a Late Iron Age/Historical Period Tswana site, situated in the Mankwe district, into a archaeological site museum. After investigation of the relevant facts, it is the conclusion that it would not be a viable proposition. An alternative suggestion, i.e. to use the site as archaeological field school, is proposed.

KGATLA IRON AGE SITE: SITE DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

1. INTRODUCTION

It is proposed by VKE Engineering (Mr B de Swardt) that an Iron Age site, located on the farm Droogesloot 285KP, Mankwe district, North-west Province, be developed as an archaeological site museum.

Discussions were held with the developer. From these, it was resolved that:

- The cultural/historical significance of the site should be determined.
- The potential for development of the site should be determined.
- If the site have the necessary potential, a proposal for the future development of the site must be drawn up.

2. THE SITE

The site is located on the eastern side of a small hill, known as Ramosibitswana, on the farm Droogesloot 285KP. The site is identifiable by some stone walling, some of it still approximately 1,0 metre in height. Due to dense vegetation it is not possible to determine the complete layout, but it is taken to be typical of Tswana settlement layout found in the area. Other cultural features are middens showing ash, bone and potsherds. Grinding stones are found in various locations on the site.

3. HISTORY OF THE KGATLA OF KGAFELA

This site can be associated with the Kgatla of Kgafela, a Tswana-speaking group of people who are known to have lived in this area during pre-colonial and historical times. The particular site is dated by oral history to the 1830s.

At least four major Sotho-Tswana groups can be distinguished, namely, the Rolong, the

Hurutshe, the Kwenana and the Kgatla.

One of the Kgatla's earliest settlements is known as Marapjana which is located on the farm Schilpadfontein, north of the hamlet of Northam. It is here that the Marota broke away some 300 years ago, to eventually form the nineteenth century Pedi chiefdom. The Kgatla of Motsha still occupy this locality. The Kgatla of Mmakau, who also broke away from here, now reside at De Wildt. Two other groups also broke off from this original nucleus, namely, the Kgatla of Mosethla and the Kgatla of Kgafela. The former group today occupy the Hammanskraal-Warmbaths area. The latter group again separated into two clans, of which the senior group moved into Botswana; the junior group live in Saulspoort in the Mankwe district, and form part of the people under consideration here.

Local oral tradition also claim that just to the north of this particular site, the Kgatla fought a battle with the Ndebele of Mzilikazi. In this battle, the Kgatla apparently succeeded win the Ndebele, thereby forcing them to leave the area. This site was not visited and it is doubtful if any material remains would be found here.

4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SITE

Archaeological sites may range from highly significant to less significant. Sites which are defined as significant would require appropriate mitigation, such as excavation or sampling, if they are threatened by development. In the case of site museum development, mitigation should also take place.

Determining the significance of a archaeological site or feature, can be open to subjective bias, though it is possible, on a comparative basis, to arrive at an evaluation of a specific site. Significance is judged according to several factors:

- Is this site the only one of its kind so far recorded?
- Does the site have any rare or unusual features?
- Is there good preservation of artifacts and is the site relatively undisturbed?
- Does the site have the potential to answer any questions currently asked in the related research?
- What is the social and historical significance of the site to current communities?
- What is the religious/sacred value of the site to current communities?

These questions are rated on a five point scale: one = poor, to five = excellent, against what is known about the site.

For this purpose, a survey of all relevant literature was conducted with the aim of reviewing the state of knowledge regarding this site in particular, as well as its position in

a wider geographical and cultural perspective. Some basic information was also gained from local people during a visit to the site. From this investigation, the following conclusions were made:

- No previous archaeological research has been done on the site or in the immediate vicinity.
- Local oral history relate this site to the Kgatla of Kgafela, and is therefore currently viewed by members of this community as having historical significance to the Kgatla people.
- No known former chiefs are known to be buried here, or are revered here.
- However, some uncertainty still exist about its origin and background and relationship to the larger Kgatla history. No information could be found in the existing published sources that refer to this particular site. From its size and location, it seems to be that this site was located on the periphery of Kgatla society and settlement.

In table form, the significance of the site can be rated as follows:

	Rating				
	Poor				Excellent
	1	2	3	4	5
Is this the only site of its kind?	x				
Does it have unusual features?	x				
State of preservation?			x		
Research potential?			x		
Social/historical value to current communities?				x ¹	
Religious value to communities?	x				

From the above it can be seen that, overall, this site rate a relatively low score.

5. DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

Archaeological sites are especially vulnerable to damage caused unwittingly by visitors. Anyone making a site available to the public, either as a formal site

¹ One should, however, be careful not to judge this factor to high, as the expectations of the community might already have being raised because of the interest shown in the site.

museum or simply as a place of interest, should therefore take basic precautions to ensure the safety of the site and its contents. Expert advice should be sought from the National Monuments Council and/or from a museum or university department. No site should be opened to the public without a professional investigation that includes complete documentation in case of damage.

If the site is to be developed as museum or place of interest, the following key issues have to be addressed.

5.1 Legislation

The development will have to be carried out within the framework of the current legislation. All archaeological sites are protected by the National Monuments Act (No 28 of 1969, as amended). If development is to take place, permission for this will have to be obtained from the National Monuments Council.

5.2 Mitigatory actions

The background research for the project will form part of the mitigation process that will have to take place if the site is developed. This information can be used in the development of the site.

Apart from the archaeological investigation of the site, research must be done to record all local oral tradition with regards to the site and the immediate vicinity.

5.3 Museological aspects

The National Monuments Council has developed a set of minimum standards (see Appendix A), that have to be considered if development of any archaeological site takes place. This is largely aimed at preserving the site, but also to give to the visitor a positive experience.

5.4 Infrastructure

Tourism increase demands on the local infrastructure, such as transportation, water supply, wastewater collection and treatment, solid waste disposal, and health care facilities as well as a variety of public services that are usually the responsibility of local government.

As with the museological aspects (no. 5.3 above), a number of essential services should be available: access routes; signage; electricity; ablution facilities; health care facilities; refreshment and petrol facilities; etc.

6. VIABILITY OF THE PROJECT

The conclusion drawn from the available evidence, for the development of the site is:

6.1 From an archaeological perspective:

- The conclusion drawn from the investigation, with the present state of archaeological knowledge in mind, is that this particular site does not have much significance, which does not make it a proposition for development. Development does not necessarily imply conservation; in any case, all sites are automatically protected by law.

However, the site might produce some information of value for the understanding of the prehistory/history of the Tswana in particular and the region in general.

6.2 Investigation of the site as tourist attraction:

- The total lack of the necessary facilities does not contribute to this site being selected for development. The cost factor will totally outweigh the benefits.

Based on the above, it is our opinion that development of the site as museum, is not be a viable proposition.

7. ALTERNATIVE SUGGESTIONS

The National Cultural History Museum has a system whereby schools are taken on guided tours to a number of archaeological sites in and around Pretoria. This has indicated a big interest in archaeology by local schools, with positive implications for visitor numbers at an archaeological site.

It is therefore suggested as alternative, that the site under consideration be used to give local school children exposure to the subject of archaeology, by hosting archaeological field schools on the site.

A short excavation season, eg. two weeks in July, led by members of the Museum, will be sufficient to give groups of children the opportunity to have hands-on experience with archaeology. Depending on the size of the site and the amount of excavation that is done (the Monuments Act allows only 50% to be excavated), this can be done over a period of three to four seasons.

When no more excavation can take place on the site, evaluation of the project takes place. If positive, a new site can be found and the project can be carried on a

different site.

The material retrieved and information generated from the excavation can be turned into small " history boxes" that are circulated to the various schools to be used as teaching aids in history classes.

8. CONCLUSION

Within the larger framework of education in South Africa, this project will do much to give the public and especially school children the opportunity to experience archaeology and to get insight into previously neglected parts of South African history.

9. SOURCES CONSULTED

9.1 Unpublished sources

Archaeological Data Recording Centre, Tvl section, National Cultural History Museum, Pretoria.

9.2 Published sources

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10. PROJECT TEAM

Dr J. van Schalkwyk
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Mr M. Naude

APPENDIX A: MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE MUSEUMS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

The following minimum standards are recommended by the National Monuments Council.

1. Approach to the site

Arrangements for visiting -

- * if the site is open at all times, there should be adequate signposting;
- * if the site is kept locked, there should be clear arrangements for the collection and return of a key;
- * if it is open only by appointment, there should be someone to guide people to the site and that this person has had clear instructions on what to do and say.

Provision for vehicles -

- * there should be an adequate and well-maintained road with off-road parking;
- * the parking should not encroach on the site - vehicles should not park closer than about 100 m from the edge of the site;
- * the parking area should be marked by a barrier between it and the start of the path.

Facilities -

- * there should be a litter bin at the parking lot and it should be emptied regularly;
- * consider the need for toilets and the supply of refreshments and other facilities such as a shop, public telephone, rest room, etc., depending on the number of visitors expected;
- * consider the need to establish an interpretive centre *separate* from the site, where people can see the excavated artifacts in a museum-type situation and where you may be able to store material, provide accommodation, etc.

Design of the path -

- * make sure that the path to the site is distinct;
- * the path should follow the contours to avoid unnecessary erosion of the hill slope;
- * make sure there are discreet signs to indicate direction where the path crosses a rocky area;
- * the path should not enter the site at a position where the deposits or the rock art can be damaged;
- * the introductory notice board should be displayed at the end of the path and the beginning of the site, where it will not interfere with good photographic views.

2. Protection of the site

The principles for protecting archaeological deposits and sites are that the methods used should be effective, reversible and recognizable yet harmonious. It is important that visitors get the impression that the site is being well looked after, so it should be clean and as 'natural' as possible.

If you take, or expect to take, more than 50 people a year to the site, there should be:

Provision of information -

- * at least an introductory notice board explaining that the site is protected by law;
- * where appropriate, a display with more detailed information on what can be seen at the site and what it means;
- * a visitors' book in a container to protect it from the weather, or at the farmhouse or other convenient place;
- * an explanatory leaflet or pamphlet that is specific to the site.

Protection of the art -

- * a psychological or a physical barrier could be set up between the visitor and the rock art or display area in the form of anything from a low wooden railing to a fence that encloses the entire site, depending on the vulnerability of the site or precautions necessary for the safety of the visitor;
- * every effort should be made to remove graffiti from the site as it attracts more graffiti. A permit from the National Monuments Council is required to remove graffiti at a rock art site.

Protection on the surface and deposits -

- * an effective cover should be put on the floor of the site to prevent dust being kicked up and damaging rock art and to stop people picking up material on the surface. Cover can be provided by a boardwalk, geotextile, commercially crushed stone (the layer should be at least 30 mm thick) or medium to large slabs of natural rock from the surrounds of the site. Plastic sheeting can be used to seal off the natural surface from the covering stone or rock but must be completely covered or it will degrade. Do not cover the original surface with soil from the surrounding area as it will not be possible to distinguish this from the natural deposit at a later date;
- * There should be effective shoring up of excavated sections to prevent the sections from collapsing and to prevent people from entering the excavated area. This should be done in consultation with the National Monuments Council.

Regular maintenance

- * provision should be made for regular visits to the site by the manager or property owner to check on litter, damage, graffiti, etc.
- * there should be regular monitoring of vegetation around the site so that, if

necessary,

- measures can be taken to protect it against trampling,
- potentially dangerous plants such as those with thorns can be controlled,
- dead wood can be removed so that damage by veld fires can be avoided.

Avoid having:

- * a litter bin on site unless very large groups are catered for;
- * braai or picnic places on the site or right next to it;
- * plastic sheeting or plastic bags exposed to view unless there is not other option;
- * concrete barriers or surfaces;
- * metal poles or wire in contact with rock shelter or cave walls as they rust and stain the rock;
- * a sandy surface on the outer side of a fence as this will be eroded by people walking there and the fence will be under-cut.