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DOCUMENTATION OF HISTORICAL SITES IN THE
TWICKENHAM PLATINUM MINE DEVELOPMENT,
SEKHUKHUNE DISTRICT, LIMPOPO PROVINCE

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SUMMARY

Documentation of historical sites in the Twickenham Platinum Mine development, Sekhukhune District, Limpopo Province

During a survey undertaken to locate, identify and evaluate sites, objects and structures of cultural importance within the boundaries of the area in which it is proposed to develop a new platinum mine, a number of archaeological sites were discovered. It was determined that mitigation will have to be undertaken for at least some of these, as the sites eventually will be destroyed.

Documenting the sites showed that it all belonged to a single extended family that have been living in the area for a number of generations. Suddenly, the history of a seemingly insignificant group of people became the object of study, giving us the opportunity to understand the problems they faced and continue to face in their daily lives.

Maps were drawn, interviews were conducted and photographic documentation was done. This material will hopefully one day be used in exhibits and publications to educate fellow South Africans and others, in order to create a climate of understanding between people of different backgrounds.

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**DOCUMENTATION OF HISTORICAL SITES IN THE
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1. AIM OF THE PROJECT

During a survey undertaken to locate, identify and evaluate sites, objects and structures of cultural importance within the boundaries of the area in which it is proposed to develop a new platinum mine (Fig. 1), a number of archaeological sites were discovered (Van Schalkwyk 2002a, 2002b, 2002c). It was determined that mitigation will have to be undertaken for at least some of these, as the sites eventually will be destroyed. In fact, some of them have already being damaged as the result of roads that were made for exploration activities. The aim of the exercise was therefore to recover as much information in order to:

- record the sites to preserve the cultural features identified;
- reconstruct, if possible, the time-scale of the sites;
- reconstruct the history and cultural background of the people who lived there.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Preliminary investigation

2.1.1 Survey of the literature

A survey of the relevant literature was conducted with the aim of reviewing the previous research done. In this regard, various anthropological, archaeological and historical sources were consulted - see the list of references below. Settlement pattern is dealt with by authors such as Bothma (1962) and Monning (1967).

2.2 Site documentation

The remaining structures, mainly stone and clay walling, was surveyed by means of a theodolite and from this scale drawings were produced. Concurrently, an examination was made of surface material in order to gain a better understanding of the sites. No excavations were done and no artefacts were removed. In support of this documentation, approximately 100 photographs were taken.

2.3 Oral histories

Oral histories were taken down as given by local people in the vernacular. However, for the purpose of this documented, a translated summary is presented as part of the interpretation.

2.4 Ethnographic analogies

A number of homesteads showing more traditional elements in layout and architecture and construction techniques were visited and interesting features were documented to support what were noted during the site documentation.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

The sites that were documented are located on the farm Twickham 114KT, in the Sekhukhune land district of Limpopo Province, South Africa (see Fig. 2).

The topography of the area varies from mountains, to plains bisected by a number of smaller rivers. The geology made up of norrie, with gabbro occurring to the west of the area. The original vegetation of the area consisted of two veld types – Mixed Bushveld and a section of Sourish Mixed Bushveld wedging in from the west. However, agricultural activities – ploughing and grazing – and harvesting of wood, has turned it largely into scrub veld.

4. ORAL HISTORY ¹

According to local spokespersons, the recorded homesteads were all inhabited by the people of Sekiti, forming part of an extended family. They claim to have originated from the Koni of Matlala, living north west of Pietersburg at Matlala a Thaba. However, this may possibly be disputed as they have a totally different totem, revering *phiri* or the hyena, whereas the Koni of Matlala revere *thantlilagane* or the scaly feathered finch. It is not unknown for people to change totem after splitting off from a 'parent' group. But in this instance other groups found in the Sekhukhune land area also claiming to be Koni and also revering the hyena, claim origins different than the Koni of Matlala.

The date and reason for the Sekiti breaking away from their 'parent' group is not remembered anymore. However, after this breakaway, they eventually settled with the people of Mashabela at Mosego (on the farm Hackney 116KT). The people of Mashabela called themselves the Pedi of Mongatane. They have *kwena* (crocodile) as totem.

“The great-grand father (of Mmamphse, the spokesperson recounting the history) was a wealthy man, with many head of livestock. He married a woman from the Mashabela, but eventually he left the area due to a lack of grazing for his livestock. He moved up the Leolo mountain and over the mountain to the place called Mohlaletsi (Geluks Location), close to the present capital of the Pedi people. Originally he settled peacefully amongst the people there. However, this did not last long and conflict developed when he was appointed headman (*tona* or *ramotzana*) over the people of the area. The local people did not like this and fighting broke out between his followers and the local people. This conflict carried on, even after the death of the old man.

As a result of this fighting his three sons, Puleng, Moshonaneng and Phomphage (also known as Njubala), fled back to Mashabela, settling with their aunt (sister to their

¹ In this section the material is presented as close to the original narration as possible. This is done to preserve the authenticity of the spoken material, thereby distinguishing it from more conventional historical sources. Only minor changes were made in order to facilitate logic and ease of presentation. Grammatical mistakes were edited out.

deceased father). Here each of the three sons took one of their nieces as wife. After a time, they went to settle at Makgato (Twickenham 114KT), where the family of Makgwale later joined them. This took place c. 1928.

We stayed here at Makgato until 1954, when we were forced to move away by the then government² to the place called Senthana, together with the family of Makgwale. Later we were joined here by the family of Makola.

When the development of malene started, we were again forced to move and were resettled, in 1975, at our current place of residence at Makobakobe. Here a split took place as some people chose to follow chief Kgopuso Thobejane and other chose chief Mashabela.

The place where we are today (i.e. busy documenting the sites) is called Senthana. It was so named because the point of this mountain itself was called Senthana - therefore the village also was called the same.

Two chiefs reigned at this place called Makobakobe, Thobejane and Mashabela, but here at Senthana the chief was Mashabela. The headman or *ramotsana* was Mshoaneng. Three different kraals were found here at Senthana

- Mashabela with the crocodile as their totem,
- Sekiti with hyena as their totem,
- Makola with the baboon as their totem."

The different homesteads, as documented in this area (see Fig. 3 for the order of numbering), was inhabited as follows:

2 "Betterment"

As result of over population, drought and bad farming practices, the agricultural potential of the black homelands (bantustans) declined drastically and government was trying to find solutions. A number of commissions were appointed to study this and present solutions. One was the *Social and Economic Planning Council*, whose report appeared in 1946 under the title *The Native Reserves and their Place in the Economy of the Union of South Africa*. In 1948 the National Party came to power and in order to solve these problems they also appointed a number of commissions, the most important of which was the *Tomlinson Commission*, whose report appeared in 1955.

The mayor problems identified in these reports had to do with the quality of the land on which black people were settled. It was therefore decided to address this in drastic manner. One was to lessen the number of livestock, as it exceeded the carrying capacity in most cases. The other was to urbanize the areas. These and other measure not mentioned here, over time, gave rise to the concept of "betterment".

According to the system of "betterment" a survey was made of all land in the homelands, which was then subdivided into three categories: land suitable for grazing, agriculture or settlement. 'Surplus' animals were culled, in most cases without the knowledge and consent of the owners. Further, new settlements were laid out according to planned townships and people were forced to move to these. This was later colloquially referred to as *malatene*, derived from the word line, with reference to the settlements being laid out in lines. (This, in all probability was the first move (1954) mentioned in the oral history.) Needless to say, it created a lot of resistance and strife amongst the different people and communities, especially in the Sekhukhuland area (see Bundy 1987, Delius 1989, 1990). This was also confirmed by local spokespersons, who told in detail about their resistance to these forced moves.

The second move (1975) referred to in the oral history, is basically a continuation of the forgoing events. In this case, however, it more specifically had to do with the concept of homeland consolidation and development with the eventual aim of achieving 'independence'. This necessitated the implementation of the same principles as originally formulated for "betterment". Needless to say, it had similar results as the people also resisted it.

1. The old settlement that is in your left side when coming up with the Makobakobe valley belonged to Sephehle Sekiti. He and his wife Mmanake had four children:

1. Puleng Hlegere (son)
2. Mampshe (daughter)
3. Tsakadume (son)
4. Modiego (daughter)

2. Across the road from the previous homestead, Makgotodiwe Sekiti and his wife Raisibe lived. They were blessed with five children:

1. Puleng Khalene (son)
2. Tshipane (daughter)
3. Lethube (daughter)
4. Maseke (son)
5. Thatiwe Mmamashaba (daughter)

3. This is the homestead of the old lady Mohlakodise. It is on the left hand side when one goes down over the ridge. This old lady was of the family of Thobejane. She was unmarried.

4. On the right side, across the road from the previous homestead, is the old homestead of Makola. We cannot remember their children

5. This homestead belonged to Mmampshe Sekiti, the son of the Moshuaneng Sekiti.

6. This homestead belonged to Puleng Sekiti. Puleng, with his third wife, were blessed with five children:

1. Mmammpshe (son)
2. Tshaka (daughter)
3. Mphage (daughter)
4. Sedume (daughter)
5. Mmabulane (daughter)

7. This homestead belonged to Moshuaneng Sekiti. He had two wives, Mamasianoke and Mpou. The children of the first marriage were:

1. Mampshe (son)
2. Puleng (son)
3. Sepedi (son)

The children of the second wife were:

1. Mampshe (daughter)
2. Maanake (daughter)
3. Mante (daughter)
4. Setshakadiwe (son)
5. Makgolane (son)

8. This homestead belonged to Ramatlape. The family of Ramatlape and his wife Mamatshela were as follows:

1. Nkawu-Motsekatsi (daughter)
2. Kgolane (daughter)
3. Mpogo (son)
4. Mamsho-Tsotsobane (daughter)

9. The homestead belonged to Phomphage Sekiti Njubalala. He and his wife Mangakane nine children:

1. Mampshe (son)
2. Pitsi ye Kgolo (son)
3. Madilwane (daughter)
4. Mohube (son)
5. Nollwane (daughter)
6. Mogwabane (daughter)
7. Mpaki (daughter)
8. Putane (son)
9. Tswele (daughter)

Homesteads number ten and eleven were also inhabited by Sekiti's people. However, this predate the above nine homesteads, as this was when they were settled at Makgatio, before moving to Sentlhana (in other words, the period 1928 to 1954). The different spokespersons were a bit uncertain as to who occupied which particular homestead, attributing number ten to a certain Makau. Number eleven is very atypical and little can be said about it.

5. SETTLEMENT PATTERN

Traditionally, villages grew up around the homestead of the most senior person to settle at a place. Here his house and the houses of his different wives would be found in an arch, with the *lešaka* (cattle kraal) in front and gathering place for men (*kgoro*) next to it. Female space is usually indicated by objects such as grindstones and fireplaces (cooking hearths). Other dependents and strangers would settle in increasing distances from this original core. The whole village would be surrounded by an area used for agricultural fields and grazing. This would represent the ideal pattern of settlement.

The rules which determine the location and arrangement of households (*malapa*) in residential units, such as amongst the Ntshabeleng and the Pedi are described by Bothma (1962:43-44) and Monnig (1967:212-213).

The locations of the *malapa* of the various homesteads are determined by social status and rank: the family group of the senior lineage head lives immediately to the left of the entrance to the senior lineage head's dwelling and the second most senior group to the right of the entrance and the third most senior group to the left again, etc.

While the *lapa* of a polygamist's senior wife is normally situated in a central position in the *kgoro*, the second wife's dwelling is located to the right of the senior wife's. The third wife's *lapa* is to the right of the senior wife and the *lapa* of the fourth is located to the left again, etc.

In the case of the sites documented in this project, these distinctions do not occur clearly. It is believed it has largely to do with the physical nature and location of the homesteads that made the attainment of the ideal layout impossible. However, in most cases elements of the traditional settlement pattern can still be identified. One enters the area passing the *kgoro* or gathering place for men, with the cattle kraal closely associated with it (eg. units 1, 6, 7 and 9).

Individual households consisted of, at a minimum of a house shared by the parents and small children. These were either rondavel or square shaped structures. In the latter case, the structure was subdivided into smaller rooms.

A second structure, usually in the shape of a rondavel, served as kitchen cum storeroom, and probably as sleeping quarters for a grandmother as well. (see unit 6, Fig. 9).

Apart from the *kgoro* and *lešaka*, it is possible to identify structures such as goat pens and pigsties. The latter is usually located some distance from the rest of the homestead (see for example unit 9 (Fig. 12).

An interesting feature here is that in a number of cases the ash was thrown onto an outer wall (Fig. 22), or in a place that was specially created to keep the ash together. In early times, ash was usually buried, or discarded on a midden. In this particular case it was deliberately 'hoarded' in a single spot. Local informants vary in their opinion as to the meaning of this practice, stating that it was to keep snakes out, which is not an acceptable explanation as in most cases it was confined to a single spot in walls many metres long. In all probability, the ash was used during rituals such as initiation (apparently a school is held regularly in the area).

6. CONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUES

The stone outer walls and the walls of the cattle kraal, *kgoro*, etc. were mostly built from stone. The technique used was by placing two rows of stone a short distance from each other and then filling the intervening space up with smaller stones and rubble (Fig. 21). The walls mostly range in height from 0,50 m to 1,20 m. Thorn branches were placed on top of the walls, especially with goat pens, to increase the height and keep the goats inside.

The house structures and *lapa* walls (courtyard walls) were by clayed up, using the box technique. Some of the larger structures had foundations of stone (Fig. 16). Afterwards, when dry, the walls were plastered with a layer of clay and then whitewashed or painted with a thin slip of different colours of clay. It seems as if sun-dried bricks were not used at this stage, although it is currently one of the main building techniques used.

Little remains from fittings such as doors and windows and the roofs. However, according to local spokespersons, these were largely the same as is still used in the construction of the more traditional homes.

The roofs, for square houses, were made of tin and were mostly nearly flat. In contrast, the rondavels had conical thatched roofs.

7. DISCUSSION

What was found in this study was a dynamic situation, in which people first willingly and later were forced to move around. Each time some necessary changes, because of local circumstances, different needs, etc. were undoubtedly made to their lives. This left a legacy in the landscape, which is ill documented, not only here, but for most areas of the country.

It has been demonstrated by this particular case study that settlement pattern and architecture has been and still is, heavily impacted upon by development activities in the area. Fewer and fewer homesteads containing elements of traditional architecture, building techniques and spatial layout are found in areas such as this.

In the past, programmes of social engineering, such as 'betterment' and urbanization, impacted heavily on such traditional features. Lately, external factors such as mining activities and engineering projects such as dam building, impact just as heavily. The difference, however, is that contrary to past practices, today the resettlement and changes occurs as result of negotiated agreements.

However, this does not detract from the fact that our cultural heritage is disappearing at an alarming rate. It is postulated that over time this element of traditional culture would disappear, as with most other elements of traditional culture as well, which proves the value of projects such as this one.

From our own perspective, what became very clear from this study was the value of an integrated, multi-disciplinary approach such as the one that was followed.

8. REFERENCES

8.1.1 Interviews

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Chief: Mashabela
Date: 15\05\2003-17\05\2003

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8.2.2 Maps

1: 50 000 Topocadastral maps – 2429DB, 2430AC

9. PROJECT TEAM

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