

**PHASE 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT &
MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR A ROCK ART SITE:**

ASI 819-001

SPITSKOP PLANTATION

MPUMALANGA PROVINCE

PREPARED FOR

KOMATILAND FORESTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study was done in the area known as Spitskop plantation, situated near the Spitskop Plantation offices, Sabie, Mpumalanga, on the farm *Spitskop 195JT*. Komatiland Forests requested that the rock art site *SPITSKOP 1*, or locally named “*Baboon Rock*”, be assessed and management guidelines drawn up. The site is included in Komatiland Forests’ inventory of *Areas of Special Interest (ASI)* on Spitskop plantation. The site is numbered as *ASI 819-001 (Baboon Rock Bushman paintings)*. The site was originally recorded by Komatiland Forests in 1997.¹

A phase 1 Heritage Impact Assessment was conducted and surveyed for archaeological and historical cultural remains. Visibility of the area was excellent. The site is situated close to the R537, main road from Sabie to White River. The paintings were done on loose standing sandstone / quartzite rocks. The panels are very small and naturally faded. The outstanding features at this rock art site are images of a horizontal “floating” figure (see fig. 8), and a Rhebuck with knobs on its horns (Fig. 12). There are traces of illegal visitation (broken glass), and a GEOCACHE was found at the site, but no signs of vandalism was noted on the paintings itself.

The National Heritage Resources Act, no 25 (1999)(NHRA), protects all heritage resources, which are classified as national estate, and it is stated in section 27(18) that “no person may destroy, damage, deface, excavate, alter, remove from its original position, subdivide or change the planning status of any heritage site without a permit issued by the heritage resources authority responsible for the protection of such site,” and in section 35(4) “No person may without a permit issued by the responsible heritage resources authority – (a) destroy, damage, excavate, alter, deface or otherwise disturb any archaeological site.

It is recommended that the Management Guidelines, as set out in Part II, be implemented by the Komatiland Forests Plantation Manager for the Spitskop section, and that quarterly and annual monitoring takes place (see PART II for Management Guidelines), to ensure the effective management and conservation of the rock art site.

¹ C. Foster, e-mail correspondence, 2013-05-26.

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PHASE 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR THE ROCK ART SITE: SPITSKOP PLANTATION, SABIE

A. INTRODUCTION

Adansonia Heritage Consultants were appointed by Komatiland Forests, to conduct a phase 1 archaeological impact assessment, as well as to recommend management guidelines for the conservation of the rock art site on Spitskop Plantation, *SPITSKOP 1*, approximately 10km south of Sabie in Mpumalanga.

B. AIMS OF REPORT

The aims of this report are to source all relevant information, archaeological resources, background information and origins of the rock art on the site near the Spitskop Plantation offices, on the farm *Spitskop 195JT*. Komatiland Forests will be advised as to the current status of the rock art site, and management guidelines will be proposed to ensure the future protection of the site. Specifications as set out in the National Heritage Resources Act no., 25 of 1999 (NHRA) were consulted, although each site is unique with specialized requirements. The study area is indicated in **Appendix 1: (Location of the Spitskop Rock art site on topographical map)**.

C. METHODOLOGY

The rock art site on the farm *Spitskop 195JT*, near the Spitskop Plantation office, was visited and a full investigation was conducted on the current status of the site. The site is small and situated on two sandstone / quartzite rocks. The area was scrutinized for more rock paintings, but none was found in the vicinity of the site.

• **Fieldwork & Survey:**

The research was conducted by means of:

- Fieldwork and survey was conducted on foot of the study area as indicated by GPS co-ordinates;
- The site was photographed and site information was recorded on forms (see **Appendix 3: First Visit & Rock Art site records for SPITSKOP 1**). Digital photographs were used and the images were color enhanced with a specialized computer program in order to get a complete record of the images (see **Appendix 4: Photographic documentation**). The standard "*First Visit*" *Site Information* form, as well as *Rock Art Site Record* forms were used. These forms are currently used by the Rock Art Research Institute at Wits University.
- Research was conducted by means of collecting primary or secondary literary sources with relevant information on the prehistory and history of the area;
- Evaluation of the status of the site was done within the framework provided by the National Heritage Resources Act, no. 25 (1999) and South African Heritage Resources Authority's (SAHRA) guidelines;
- Personal and written information were acquired from employees of Komatiland Forests.

- **Survey of the study area:**

The surface of the study area is a rocky sandstone outcrop, with natural vegetation and drainage lines in the immediate area. The area surrounding the site is grassland, with signs of alien vegetation (black wood, black wattle and pine), bordered by Pine forest plantations under the jurisdiction of Komatiland Forests. The rock art is painted on two separate rocks, one small and one fairly big. Visibility was excellent and the area was first visited just after the pre-burns were made in 2012. The current survey took place during May 2013. GPS co-ordinates were used to locate the rock art site on the property.

- **National Heritage Resources Act**

All archaeological and other cultural heritage resources are evaluated according to the National Heritage Resources Act, no., 25, 1999 (NHRA), section 3(3). A place or object is considered to be part of the national estate if it has cultural significance or other special value in terms of:

- (a) its importance in the community, or pattern of South Africa's history;
- (b) its possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of South Africa's natural or cultural heritage;
- (c) its potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of South Africa's natural or cultural heritage;
- (d) its importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class of South Africa's natural or cultural places or objects;
- (e) its importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by a community or cultural group;
- (f) its importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period;
- (g) its strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.

D. LOCALITY

The study area includes the rock art site at Spitskop Plantation on the farm *Spitskop 195JT*, topographical map 1:50 000, 2530BB, SABIE (see **Appendix 1**). The rock painting site is situated approximately 9.2 km south of Sabie on the R537 road to White River. Turn left at a small dirt road and continue for 400m before crossing the (unmarked) *Spitskopspruit*. Continue for another 45m. The site is visible on the right. Walk approximately 55m towards the large rocks.

E. CURRENT STATUS: FABRIC, ASSOCIATIONS, SETTING & SURVEY

Rock art site names in general are standardised to conform to the national sites names, which are also specified by the Rock Art Research Institute at Wits. The site is officially allocated the name of the farm on which it is situated, *SPITSKOP 1*. All other names which locally refer to the site, will also be recorded.

- **Background**

Komatiland Forests has identified 15 *Areas of Special Interest* (ASI) on the Spitskop plantation. Most of these sites are graves, natural- or cultural heritage features related to recent white history, and three rock art sites. In the summary of *Areas of Special Interest* on Spitskop, the site is numbered as 819-001 (*Baboon Rock*).²

Cultural resources are those natural and modified features of the landscape associated with human activity, both past and present which includes *inter alia*, rock art. All these resources are critical to the understanding and interpreting of southern African colonial and pre-colonial history. They are fragile and may be destroyed unless proper management principles are implemented. These finite and non-renewable resources cannot be recovered, once they are lost.³

Rock art is a legacy left by the Bushman (San people) who lived in the area. The art was created primarily for religious and ritual purposes, and every rock art site is therefore regarded as a sacred site.

Rock art forms part of South Africa's rich history with a combination of unique features:

- Rock art occurs in all sections of the Mpumalanga Province, but has not been extensively researched; A total of 29 sites were recorded by the author on the Mpumalanga Escarpment.
- A wide range of images are depicted in the art;
- the rock paintings are preserved not only in their natural setting, but also in their cultural context. The floors of painted shelters, loose boulders or rocks, are often strewn with artifacts which were made and used by the San hunter-gatherers;
- the rock art of the region uniquely represents a coherent artistic tradition and embodies the beliefs and cosmology of the San of this area, their contacts with other people and their changed circumstances through time.⁴

- **Legislative context**

The management of cultural resources in the Mpumalanga Province is mandated by the National Heritage Resources Act no. 25, 1999 (NHRA), which aims to promote good management of the national estate, and to enable and encourage communities to conserve their legacy so that it may be bequeathed to future generations. Heritage is unique and it cannot be renewed, and contributes to redressing past inequities.⁵ It promotes previously neglected research areas of which the study area is in crucial need of.

²C. Foster, e-mail correspondence 2013-04-26.

³E.J. Wahl, A.D. Mazel & S.E. Roberts, *Cultural Resource Management Plan for the Natal Drakensberg Park*, p. 2.

⁴E.J. Wahl, A.D. Mazel & S.E. Roberts, *Cultural Resource Management Plan for the Natal Drakensberg Park*, p. 2.

⁵National Heritage Resources Act, no. 25 of 1999. p. 2.

The NHRA protects all ancient sites and states in Section 27(18) that “no person may destroy, damage, deface, excavate, alter, remove from its original position, subdivide or change the planning status of any heritage site without a permit issued by the heritage resources authority responsible for the protection of such site;”⁶

Rock art is a priority for all custodians (such as Komatiland Forests), in terms of cultural resources management. Rock art sites can play a major role in understanding the history of San people who once lived in this area. It is stated under the general principles for heritage resources management specified in the NHRA, section (5) that “all authorities performing functions and exercising powers in terms of this Act for the management of heritage resources must recognise certain principles” such as: “the lasting value of heritage resources and the valuable, finite, non-renewable and irreplaceable aspects thereof; the moral responsibility; to ensure that heritage resources are effectively managed; laws and procedures should be clear and available; heritage resources form an important part of the history and beliefs of communities; heritage resources contribute to research and education and should be developed in a respectful way”.⁷

The general protection of the NHRA, states in section 5(7) that “the identification, assessment and management of the heritage resources of South Africa must - (a) take account of all relevant cultural values...” and forms part of the national estate.⁸

“**alter**” means - any action affecting the appearance or physical properties of a place or object, whether by way of structural or other works, by painting, plastering or other decoration or any other means;

“**archaeological**” means:

(a) **material remains** resulting from human activity which is in a state of disuse and are in or on land and which are older than 100 years, including artifacts, human remains and artificial features and structures; and

(b) **rock art**, being any form of painting, engraving or other graphic representation on a fixed rock surface or loose rock or stone, which was executed by human agency and which is older than 100 years, including any area within 10m of such representation.

“**conservation**” in relation to heritage resources, includes protection, maintenance preservation and sustainable use of places or objects so as to safeguard their cultural significance;⁹

⁶National Heritage Resources Act, no. 25 of 1999. p. 42.

⁷National Heritage Resources Act, no. 25 of 1999. p.16.

⁸National Heritage Resources Act, no. 25 of 1999. p.16.

⁹ National Heritage Resources Act, no. 25 of 1999. pp. 6-8.

- **SPITSKOP 1** (See **Appendix 2: First Visit & Rock Art Site Record** & **Appendix 4: Photo documentation**)

The two rocks with paintings on, are situated next to each other, and are dealt with as one site.

OFFICIAL SITE NAME	GENERAL NAME	ORIGINS / TRADITION	GPS CO-ORDINATES	ASSOCIATED ARCHAEOLOGICAL MATERIAL
<i>Spitskop 1</i>	Spitskop paintings: Sabie Rock art Baboon rock ASI 819-001	SAN / BUSHMAN	S 25°08'46.42" E 30°49'47.35" Elev: 1274m	DEPOSIT: There is no clear deposit under the paintings, as the rocks are situated on bedrock. Scatters of white quartzite were observed in the direct vicinity;

PHOTOGRAPHS & DISCUSSION:



Fig. 1: The *Spitskop 1* rock art site. The paintings were done on loose standing rocks or boulders. The arrows indicate the rocks with Bushmen paintings on. The rock on the right where the arrow points, was thought to have paintings on but nothing could be found after the markings were color enhanced. This particular rock was called “Baboon Rock” which is the local name for this site.¹⁰ Vegetation is growing in between the rocks with paintings. This poses a problem, and needs to be managed (see Part II).

¹⁰ Bekky Mashego, Personal communication, 2013-05-10.



Fig. 2: The original “Baboon Rock”. No images were found on this rock which is situated to the far right of the site.

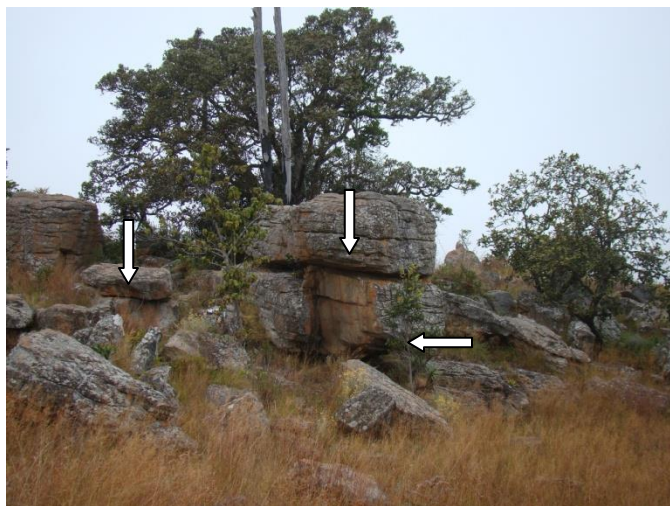


Fig. 3: The arrows indicate where the rock art is situated on the small (left) and middle boulders (right).



Fig. 4: The small rock where the “floating figure” is situated close to the surface.



Fig. 5: The boulder in the middle of the site. Only one image of a buck with prominent “knobs” on its horns was identified on this rock face.

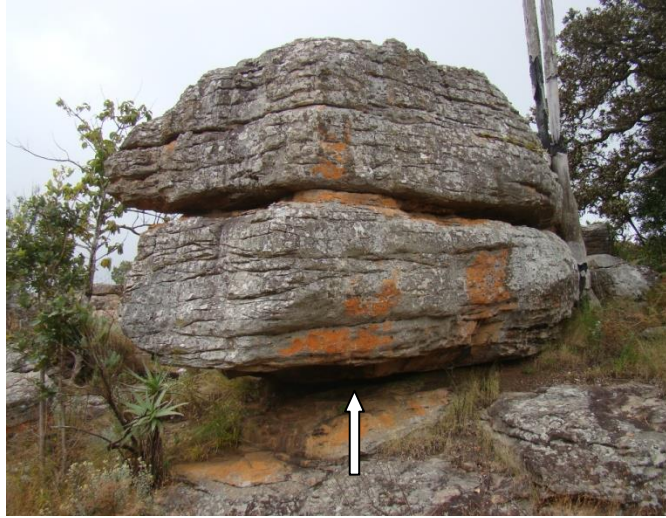


Fig. 6: The same boulder as in Fig. 5, seen from the opposite side. Some ochre markings are done underneath this boulder (See fig. 13 & 14).



Fig. 7: The site on the left (see Fig. 4). The paintings are naturally deteriorated and are not clearly visible. Water seep lines on the left and right are also visible and lichen on the right.



Fig. 8: The image is color enhanced to give a clearer picture. The two images to the right are faded and not distinct.



Fig. 9: The central figure at the top is “floating” or “flying” which might indicate a sensation of weightlessness, experienced by the Shaman during a trance state.¹¹ The two images below are not clear but the one below the floating figure might be a *therianthrope* – with animal and human traits.¹² The front legs are clearly human and facing right. The hind legs look like that of an animal but the feet looks like that of a human. The image also has a tail. This figure has feline characteristics.

¹¹ Lewis-Williams, J.D., & Pearce, D.G., *San Spirituality*, p. 35.

¹² Lewis-Williams, J.D., & Pearce, D.G., *San Spirituality*, p. 43.

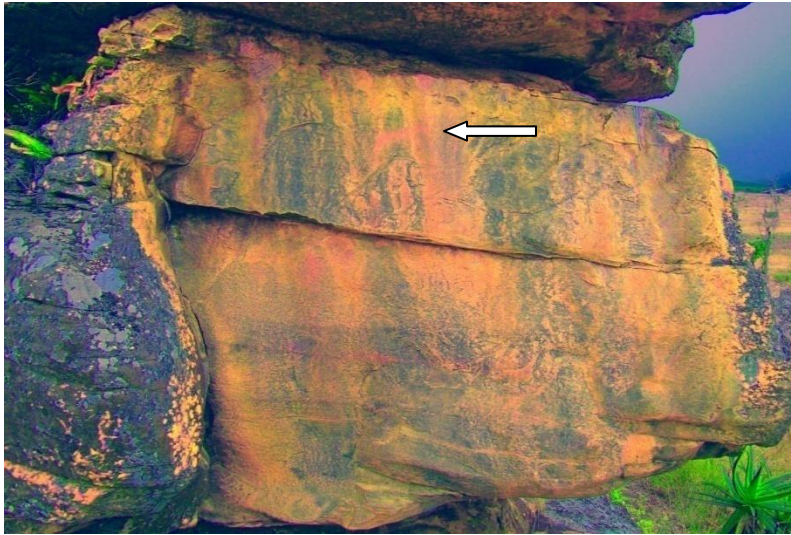


Fig. 10: The entire rock face of the middle boulder (see fig. 5), was color enhanced. Only one image of a buck could be identified (see fig. 11 & 12).



Fig. 11: The image of a buck is also not distinct and naturally deteriorated. Water seepage is visible over the image.



Fig. 12: This image which is color enhanced shows an unnatural feature of “knobs” on the Rhebuck’s horns. This is of particular interest as the rhebucks’ ears were usually emphasized and in this instance there are no ears. The head is also lowered (dying posture), which may indicate that this animal is a metaphor of trance. (See explanation in *Appendix 5*).¹³



Fig. 13: The ochre markings under the middle boulder are difficult to interpret as they are very indistinct.

¹³ Lewis-Williams J.D., & Dowson T., *Images of Power*, p. 50.

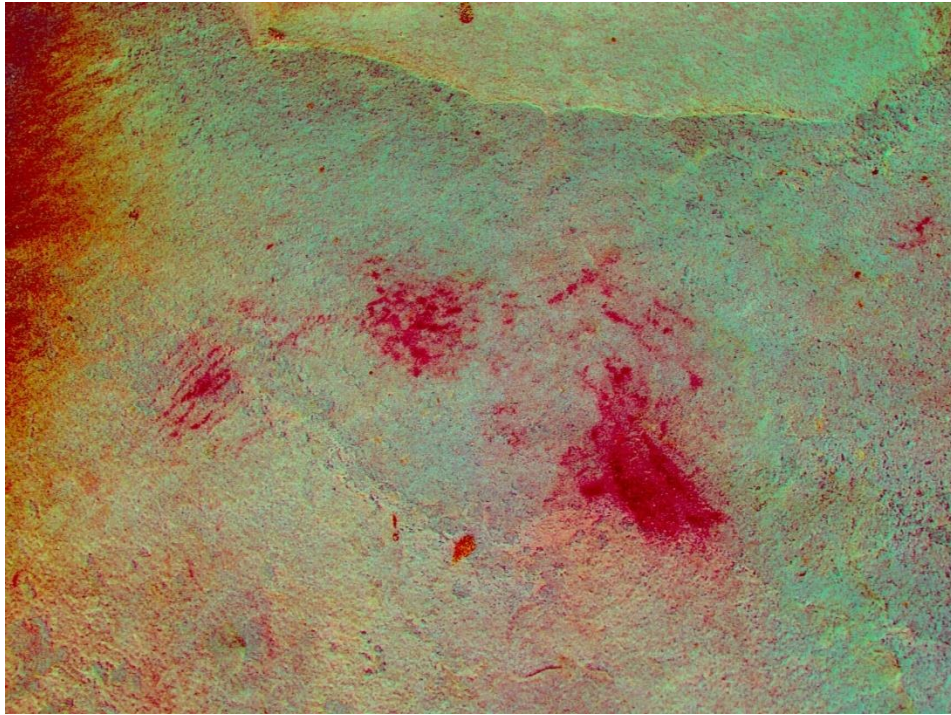


Fig. 14: The same marks or scratches (see Fig. 13) which are color enhanced. The meaning of these marks may well lie in the actual position underneath the middle boulder. Other sites on the Mpumalanga Escarpment have clear patches of paint which is believed to contain special powers when touched.

F. PREHISTORY AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE SAN (BUSHMAN) IN THE HIGHVELD AREAS OF MPUMALANGA

The Mpumalanga Province and Escarpment area have an abundance of rock art sites of which little is known and only a few research reports were executed. According to an article by Murray and Elzabé Schoonraad, a 1952 survey revealed a total number of 46 rock art sites in the entire Eastern Transvaal,¹⁴ of which 10 was listed in the Barberton and Nelspruit districts of Mpumalanga, and 4 in the Kruger National Park (KNP). Research by rock art enthusiasts have since revealed 109 sites in the KNP,¹⁵ and over 100 sites at Bongani Reserve and its immediate surrounds.¹⁶ Komatiland Forests' Areas of Special Interest register counted 11 sites,¹⁷ and 26 rock painting sites (excluding the three at Spitskop) were recorded by the author on the Mpumalanga Escarpment. A conservative figure of 249 sites are now recorded in Mpumalanga (excluding the Piet Retief and Chrissiesmeer / Ermelo areas).

¹⁴ Schoonraad M., & Schoonraad E., (no date), Rotskuns van die Oos-Transvaal, *Outlook*, p 10.

¹⁵ English, M. 1990. Die rotskuns van die Boesmans (San) in die Nasionale Krugerwildtuin. In: Pienaar, U. de V. *Neem uit die verlede*: 18 – 24. Pretoria: South Africa National Parks.

¹⁶ HAMPSON, J., CHALLIS, W., BLUNDELL, G., & DE ROSNER, C., The Rock Art of Bongani Mountain Lodge and its environs, in *The South African Archaeological Bulletin*, p. 15.

¹⁷ C. Foster, e-mail correspondence, 2013-05-22 & 26.

In academic terms, the word “Bushmen” was replaced with “San”, although both terms are now currently accepted. The San people or “Bathwa” as the black people also refer to them, inhabited the Mpumalanga Escarpment long before black societies began to enter the region.¹⁸ Remains of stone tools and rock art sites have been found throughout the Mpumalanga Province.¹⁹

Rock art of southern Africa was part of a remarkable religious tradition. The art was not simply decorative or a record of daily life. Its purpose was deeper, and the trance dance was the central religious ritual of the San. Shamans or medicine people used supernatural power obtained during trance states to make rain, heal the sick and maintain social harmony. Many rock paintings are depictions of visions experienced while in a trance. Others depict ritual occasions or the animals whose power the shamans hoped to use. The art is also a monument to the San who struggled to retain their rights and their land.²⁰

The disappearance of the San people in this region may be attributed to the greatly increased and rapidly expanding population of black settlers who immigrated to this area, especially since the 17th century, and the arrival of Europeans during the 19th century. Some of the rock painting sites on the Mpumalanga Escarpment show signs of contact between the San and the black people, as art made by black farmers are painted over the earlier San paintings. Rock paintings and stone artifacts are the main records that remain of the San people's presence.

Murray and Elsabe Schoonraad have described only two rock art sites on the Mpumalanga Escarpment during the 1970's, at Ledouphine and Erasmushoop, which is situated between Graskop and Bourke's Luck to the northwest of Sabie. They compare the sites, based on the stylistic similarities, to the rock art of Zimbabwe.²¹

The Welgelegen rock art shelter, (approximately 15 km from Chrissiesmeer) was excavated in 1967 and radiocarbon dated to the year 1200.²² Another site which has been excavated in the 1970's, is the Bushman Rock Shelter (BRS), which is dated to the Middle Stone Age, approximately 25 000 BP.

The following section is included in the Mpumalanga Escarpment context, although it has relevance to the Highveld areas around Chrissiesmeer and Amsterdam. It is however the only reference to the presence of living bushmen at the time, and will give some insight to a people that were quickly absorbed by a changing landscape in which they had no place left:

¹⁸Tlou Makhura, Early Inhabitants, in P. Delius (ed.), *Mpumalanga, History and heritage*, p. 91.

¹⁹PRMA: Information file 9/2.

²⁰SAHRA, Rock Art, <http://www.sahra.org.za/rockart.htm> Access 2008-10-16.

²¹ Schoonraad M., & Schoonraad E., (no date), Rotskuns van die Oos-Transvaal, *Outlook*, p. 11.

²² Schoonraad, M., & Beaumont P., The Welgelegen Shelter, Eastern Transvaal, in *Supplement to the SA Journal of Science no. 2*, May 1971, p. 62.

Some interesting information was obtained from the National Archives of South Africa, about the fascination with indigenous groups, at the beginning of the 20th century, as the following section shows. Please note that terms are kept in the original context of when it was first written during this time in history:

The British Association was to visit South Africa (Johannesburg) at the end of August 1905 and for this gathering a selection of the various native tribes, and papers on subjects regarding initiation ceremonies and diseases amongst natives,²³ were prepared as part of the program of events.

In early 1905, the Department of Native Affairs were enquiring at all their regional offices as well as District Magistrates offices, about the possible existence of “thoroughbred bushmen in the old Transvaal area”²⁴ (currently North-West, Gauteng, Limpopo, Mpumalanga provinces). This information was needed for the planned visit of the Anthropological section of the British Association, in August 1905.

The Resident Magistrate in Ermelo reported that “there are several Bushmen who appear to be thoroughbred” on the farm Bothwell 140, **Chrissiesmeer area**. He also reported that “a small tribe of wild Bushmen were discovered in the krantzies along the” Ingwempizi river, bordering Swaziland (**Amsterdam area**).²⁵ Most of them were already intermarried with Swazis but mention was also made of “Bushmen families which are as near as possible thoroughbred” on the farm Florence of Mr. JW Grimes.²⁶ The Native Commission communicated to the resident magistrate to get some of these “Bushmen” for the British Association’s visit, railway fares and subsistence allowance was to be paid by the Native Commission. The resident magistrate of Ermelo sent a telegram on 24 August 1905, to the Native Commission that Mr. Grimes stated the “bushmen absolutely refused to go to Johannesburg” as “they have superstitions if they leave [the] farm their children will die...”

There is very little known on the history of the San people in the Chrissiesmeer area but pioneer work has been done by anthropologist Frans Prins, of the Natal Museum who did some research on the current population of about 50 San individuals still living in the area. Information was also discovered in the memoirs of a German, Jacob Filter who described that some “Bushmen left the foothills of the Central KwaZulu-Natal Drakensberg in 1879.” Jacob Filter was a transport rider between Natal and the then Eastern Transvaal. He described two groups of Bushmen – the ‘black’ Bushmen of Natal and the ‘yellow’ Bushmen of Lesotho. Both groups travelled together, and after four years, reached the Lake Chrissie area in Mpumalanga. Jacob Filter became well-known to these Bushmen groups and he also transported

²³SNA: 260 Letter from Central Division Native Commissioner, NCP 264/1905, 19 July 1905.

²⁴SNA: 260 Letter from Resident Magistrate Ermelo to Secretary for Native Affairs, 13/494, 21 July 1905.

²⁵SNA: 260 Letter from Resident Magistrate Ermelo to Secretary for Native Affairs, 13/494, 21 July 1905.

²⁶SNA: 260 Letter from Von Dessauer to Marwick, Undated.

them on his ox-wagon.²⁷

It is thought that their choice of destination was based on long-standing trade relations with Bushmen already resident in the area. The many overhanging shelters overlooking the famous pans found in the Lake Chrissie area, provided natural habitations and safe havens for the San. The pans themselves were used by the San to conceal themselves from the Swazi impis and Boer commandos. Tradition has it that they could remain submerged for hours at a time, breathing through reed pipes.²⁸

The current small Bushman community at Lake Chrissie was known to few ethnologists, but it is clear that they were the last remnants of the great painters of the Drakensberg. They have lived in this area for almost five generations and worked as farm labourers on sheep farms and have almost completely lost any link with their rich cultural heritage.

According to Prins, their original Xegwi language has been completely forgotten except for two very old men who could still remember fragments of this speech. They remember stories about their forefathers painting on the rocks and hunting with bows and arrows but had no idea of how to do this themselves. But, in spite of this, they regard themselves as Bushmen, “amaBushmana”. They still have the generic traits typical of the San, short body stature and a slant to the eyes, but there is an acute sense of loss of their original cultural identity and way of life.²⁹

Specific information on the *Spitskop 1 site*, is not obtainable. The site is listed in Komatilands’ Areas of Special Interest (ASI) records, and were originally recorded in 1997.³⁰

G. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The rock painting site at the Spitskop Plantation, on the farm *Spitskop 195JT*, is extremely exposed to the elements and the site is already indistinct. It also needs special management requirements to preserve it for longer. There are signs of uncontrolled visitation at the site, as broken glass is visible close to the site, and a GEOCACHE is located next to the painted rocks. The images are naturally deteriorated but no damage was caused by vandals. It must be remembered that the art is non-renewable and should be carefully managed and preserved.

The rock art site, *SPITSKOP 1*, as is the case of all rock art sites, are extremely important in terms of its pre-historic connection with a heritage that is no longer with us. There are no known descendants of the

²⁷E. von Fintel (Red.), *Die Nachkommen van Johann Heinrich Jakob Filter 1858-2008: Die Geschiede einer Pionierfamilie in Nordnataal*, p. 405.

²⁸ Schoonraad M., & Schoonraad E., (no date), Rotskuns van die Oos-Transvaal, *Outlook*, p. 10.

²⁹ Personal information: F. Prins, Anthropologist, Natal Museum. Interview by Sian Hall, Sept 1999.

³⁰ C. Foster, e-mail correspondence, 2013-05-26.

painters left in the vicinity, as is the case at Roburnia and Jessievale, and every attempt should be made to gather information about this lost heritage.

H. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

All heritage features identified in the area as a whole, are protected under the National Heritage Resources Act no. 25 of 1999, and changes are subject to professional research and impact assessment.

In the light of the above information as well as the specifications as stipulated in the NHRA, it is recommended that Management Guidelines, as set out in Part II, be implemented by the Komatiland Forests Plantation Manager for the Spitskop section, and that quarterly and annual monitoring takes place (see PART II for Management Guidelines).

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