

Interim Archaeological Mitigation Report

**For Site 10 (Mogalakwena Municipality Water Master Plan) near Mokopane, Limpopo
Province**

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1. INTRODUCTION

Heritage Contracts and Archaeological Consulting CC (**HCAC**) has been contracted by Tekplan Environmental to conduct a heritage impact assessment of the proposed infrastructure for the proposed water supply pipelines for Cluster 1 and 5 of the Mogalakwena Water Master Plan (Van der Walt 2017). During this assessment several heritage significant sites were identified of which two sites will be impacted on by the proposed project. These two sites were classified as a Late Iron Age stone walled settlement (Site 10) and a Stone Age (MSA/ LSA) site (Site 1). SAHRA commented on the report and supported the recommendations (SAHRA case ID 11916) and these sites were subsequently mitigated by HCAC under SAHRA permit ID 2690. This report focuses on the mitigation of the Iron Age site (Site 10) that is located to the north of Mokopane in the Limpopo Province (Figure 1). The analyses of the artefacts from Site 1 is still pending and due to the construction schedule and standing penalties, it is was imperative to finalise work on Site 10 to avoid delays to the project.

Mitigation of the Iron Age Site (Site 10) was undertaken as the first phase of the archaeological mitigation for the project during the week of the 16th of April 2018. The mitigation entailed the bush clearing, detailed mapping of the site layout and archaeological features with an EDM and test excavations.

The spatial lay-out of the stone walled settlement was recorded and due to the lack of anthropogenic deposit or cultural material this site is sufficiently recorded. Therefore it is recommended that the proposed development can continue based on obtaining a destruction permit from SAHRA.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

HCAC was contracted by the client to undertake the mitigation measures of Site 10. This stone walled settlement site is situated on the highest part of a hill to the south of Ga-Malapile, occupying an area of approximately 60m x 60m (Figure 2). The site is characterized by low ephemeral stone walled scallops and is highly overgrown. No cultural material or middens were noted during the survey (van der Walt 2017). Mitigation was necessitated as the site will be directly impacted on by the construction of the proposed reservoir that forms the centre of the project that will provide 33 villages with much needed water.

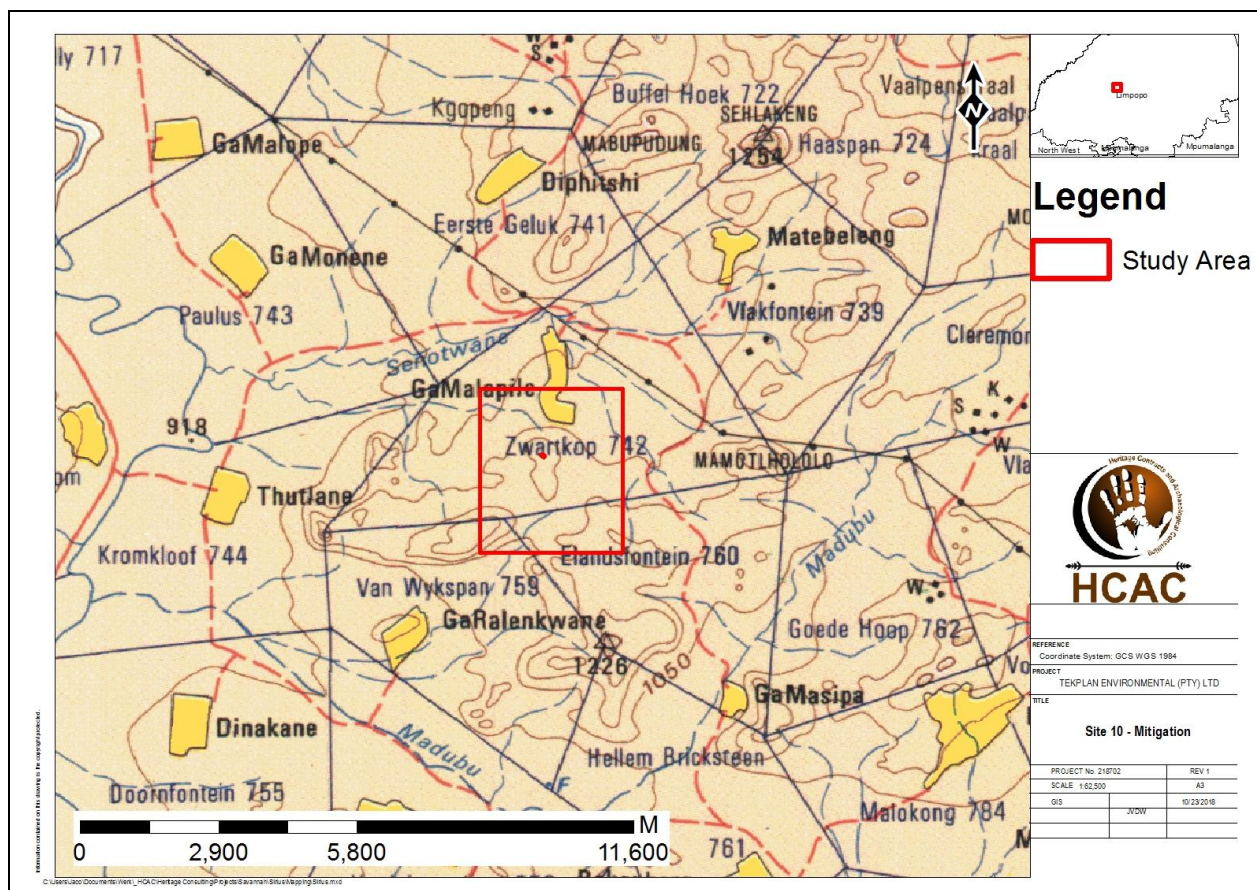


Figure 1. Locality map.

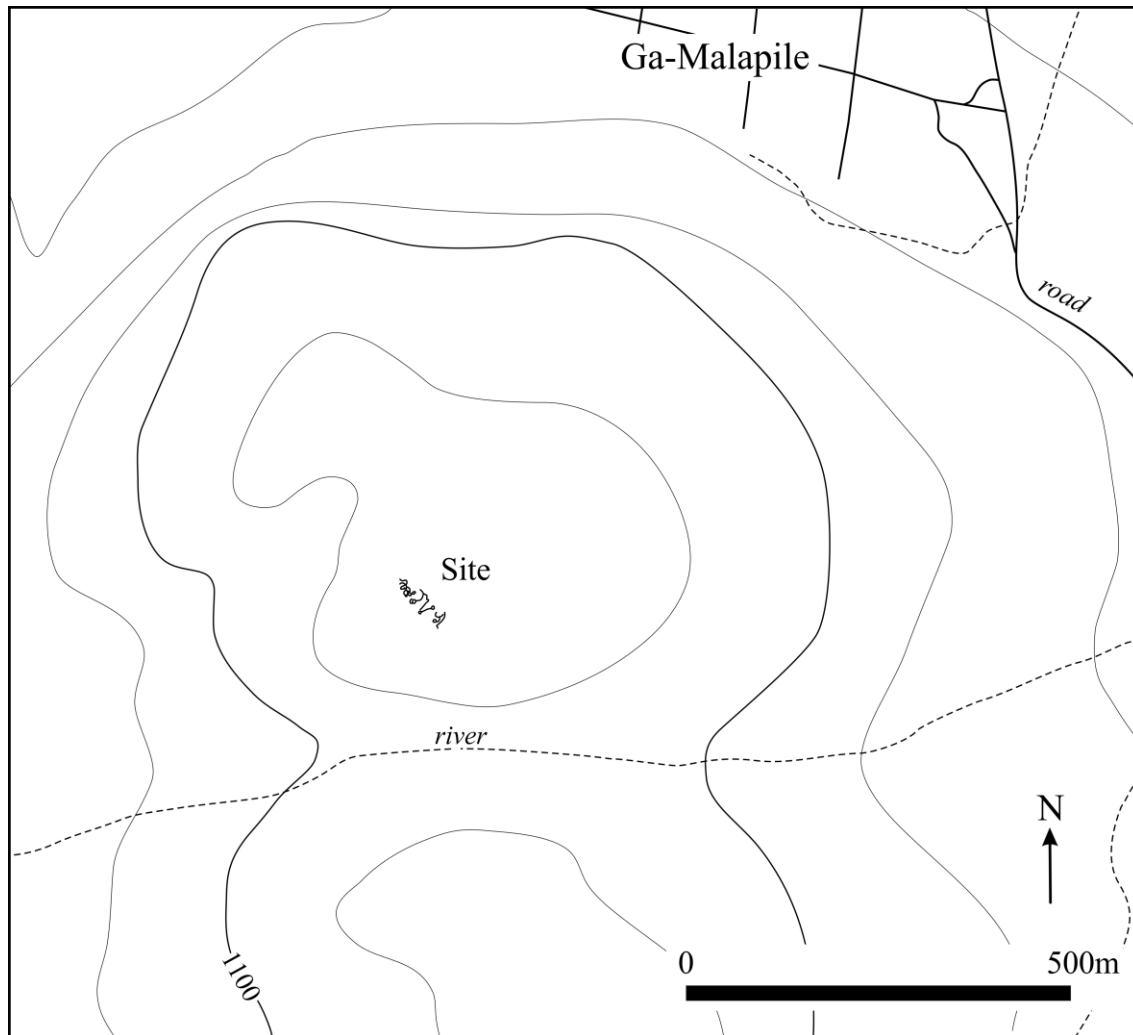


Figure 2. Location of Site 10 on a small hill.

3. METHODOLOGY

The site was cleared of large bushes and shrubs in order to map the site using an EDM. The terrain is extremely rocky with very little deposit and excavations focused on areas that could be excavated. Below is a brief outline of the methodology employed during mitigation of the site while the results are discussed in Section 4 of this report.

3.1 Contextualising the study area

A brief survey of available literature was conducted to extract data and information on the area in question to provide general heritage context of the study area. This literature search included published material, unpublished commercial reports and online material, including reports sourced from the South African National Archives.

3.2 Mapping

The main aim with the mapping of Site 10 was to document the settlement layout of the site that will be impacted on by the proposed project. The documentation of the site was achieved by means of preparing scaled ground plans of the site. These maps were compiled after the sites were surveyed with an EDM. Main features were also photographed. Excavated layers and features were recorded in plan and section drawings of selected features. True north is indicated on all plans and site photographs. Photographs of the excavations were taken using a 1m scale and close-up photographs with a 10cm scale.

3.3 Excavations

Stone walled structures were exposed in order to record their dimensions and method of construction. Excavations were conducted by hand with trowels and shovels. Excavations focused on surface features and were conducted stratigraphically whereby the uppermost deposit was exposed and recorded before excavation. Excavations was terminated either when continuous deposits, such as sterile soil or bedrock were encountered. Stone walled structures were exposed to record their dimensions and method of construction. At Site 10 shovel pit testing was conducted within open spaces where no surface features were visible. Excavated material

was screened through a fine and course screen and all excavations were backfilled. Digital photographs of the excavations were taken together with plan drawings.

The excavations did not reveal any stratigraphic layering and only exposed an ordinary layering of natural soils in the structures that were excavated. It quickly became clear that the site most likely represents a short occupation of a single cultural unit and no anthropogenic deposits were encountered. Due to the lack of cultural deposit no profile drawings of the excavations were done.

3.4 Analysis

No archaeological material such as pottery, faunal remains or any evidence for ash or middens were encountered in any of the test excavations. Due to the lack of any archaeological material no analysis or dating of the site was possible.

4. Contextualising the study area

4.1. Location of Site 10.

The site under investigation is located about 54 kilometres north west of Mokopane (previously known as Potgietersrus), 76 kilometres west of Polokwane (previously known as Pietersburg) and 18 kilometres west of the N11 in Limpopo Province.

4.1.1. Historiography and Methodology

It was necessary to use a range of sources in order to give an account of the history of the area under investigation. Sources included secondary source material, maps and online sources. Owing to the constraints in time and resources, this study should be viewed as an introduction to the ethnohistory of the area under investigation.

The following sources can be consulted at the National Archives of South Africa if a more comprehensive study is done in the future:

DEPOT SAB

SOURCE NTS

TYPE LEER

VOLUME_NO 7114

SYSTEM 01

REFERENCE 365/323

PART 1

DESCRIPTION POTGIETERSRUST. NATIVES ON "ZWARTKOP" 944.

STARTING 1925

ENDING 1935

DEPOT SAB

SOURCE URU

TYPE LEER

VOLUME_NO 1138

SYSTEM 01

REFERENCE 1723

PART 1

DESCRIPTION TRANSACTIONS IN TERMS OF SECTION 1 OF NATIVES LAND ACT OF 1913 (LEASE BY CENTRAL SOUTH AFRICAN LANDS AND MINES LIMITED TO NATIVE LMM CHARLIE OF RESIDENTIAL AND GRAZING RIGHTS OF FARM "ZWARTKOP" NO. 944, POTGIETERSRUST.

STARTING 19300000

ENDING 19300000

DEPOT SAB

SOURCE NTS

TYPE LEER

VOLUME_NO 3723

SYSTEM 01

REFERENCE 1973/308

PART 1**DESCRIPTION** POTGIETERSRUST. FARM ZWARTKOP 944.**STARTING** 1937**ENDING** 1939

DEPOT SAB**SOURCE** LDE**TYPE** LEER**VOLUME_NO** 2147**SYSTEM** 01**REFERENCE** 104/1**PART 1**

DESCRIPTION 1) BUFFELSHOEK 585, POTGIETERSRUST. 2) EERSTEGELUK 588, POTGIETERSRUST. 3) ELANDSFONTEIN 946, POTGIETERSRUST. 4) VLAKFONTEIN 945, POTGIETERSRUST. 5) **ZWARTKOP 944**, POTGIETERSRUST. CENTRAL SOUTH AFRICAN LANDS AND MINES LIMITED.

STARTING 1937**ENDING** 1937

REMARKS R/29, 30, 31, 32, 33, NP104 = GENERAL TRANSVAAL LAND OWNERS ASSOCIATION OFFER OF ABOVE AND 83 AND ONE THIRD OTHER FARMS.

DEPOT SAB**SOURCE** NTS**TYPE** LEER**VOLUME_NO** 1201**SYSTEM** 01**REFERENCE** 725/162**PART 1****DESCRIPTION** POTGIETERSRUST. **ZWARTKOP NO 944**. TRADING RIGHTS ON.**STARTING** 1939**ENDING** 1951

4.1.2. Maps of the Area Under Investigation

Since the mid-1800s up until the present, South Africa has been divided and re-divided into various districts. In 1848, the Iron Age site on the present-day Zwartkop 742 LR would have been located in the Soutpansberg district. Since 1866 the site formed part of the Waterberg district. By 1923, the site would have formed part of the Potgietersrus district. By 1977 the site under investigation formed part of the magisterial district of Makerong 2. This remained the case up until 1994. (Bergh 1999: 17-27)

Note that Zwartkop 742 LR was known as Zwartkop 944 prior to 1950. (NARSSA *RAK 3070*)

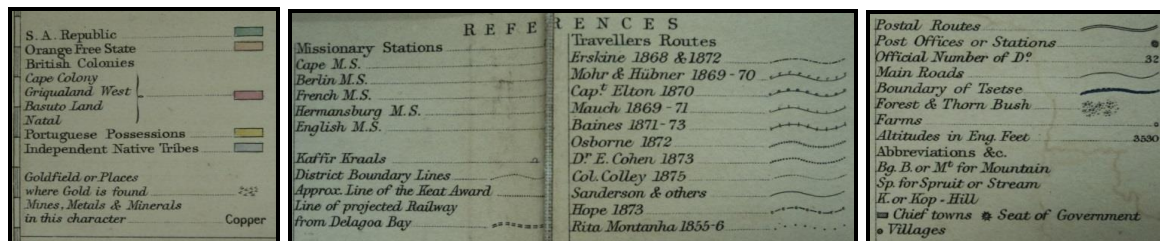


Figure 3. 1878 Map of the Transvaal and surrounding territories, by Fred Jeppé. By this time Mankopane was the chief of the Langa, who were the predominant tribe in the area under investigation, to the east of the Mogalakwena River. (Jeppé 1877)

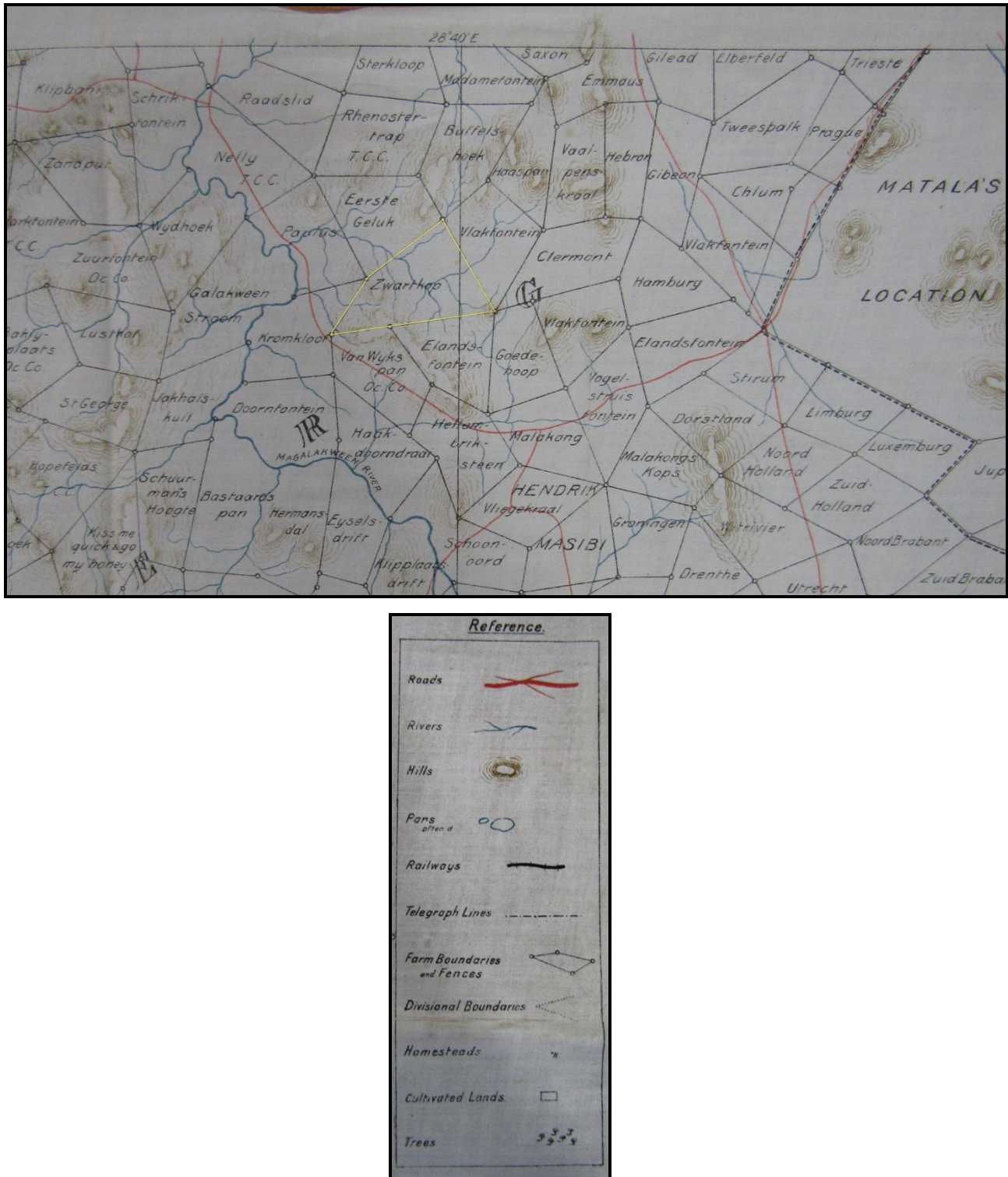
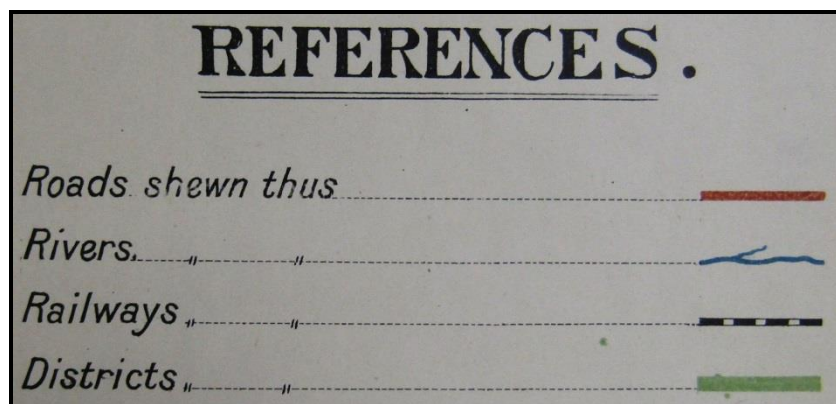


Figure 4. 1900 Map of the Waterberg district. Zwartkop was located to the east of a road, and Matala's Location is visible to the east. (National Archives of South Africa Maps: 3/519)

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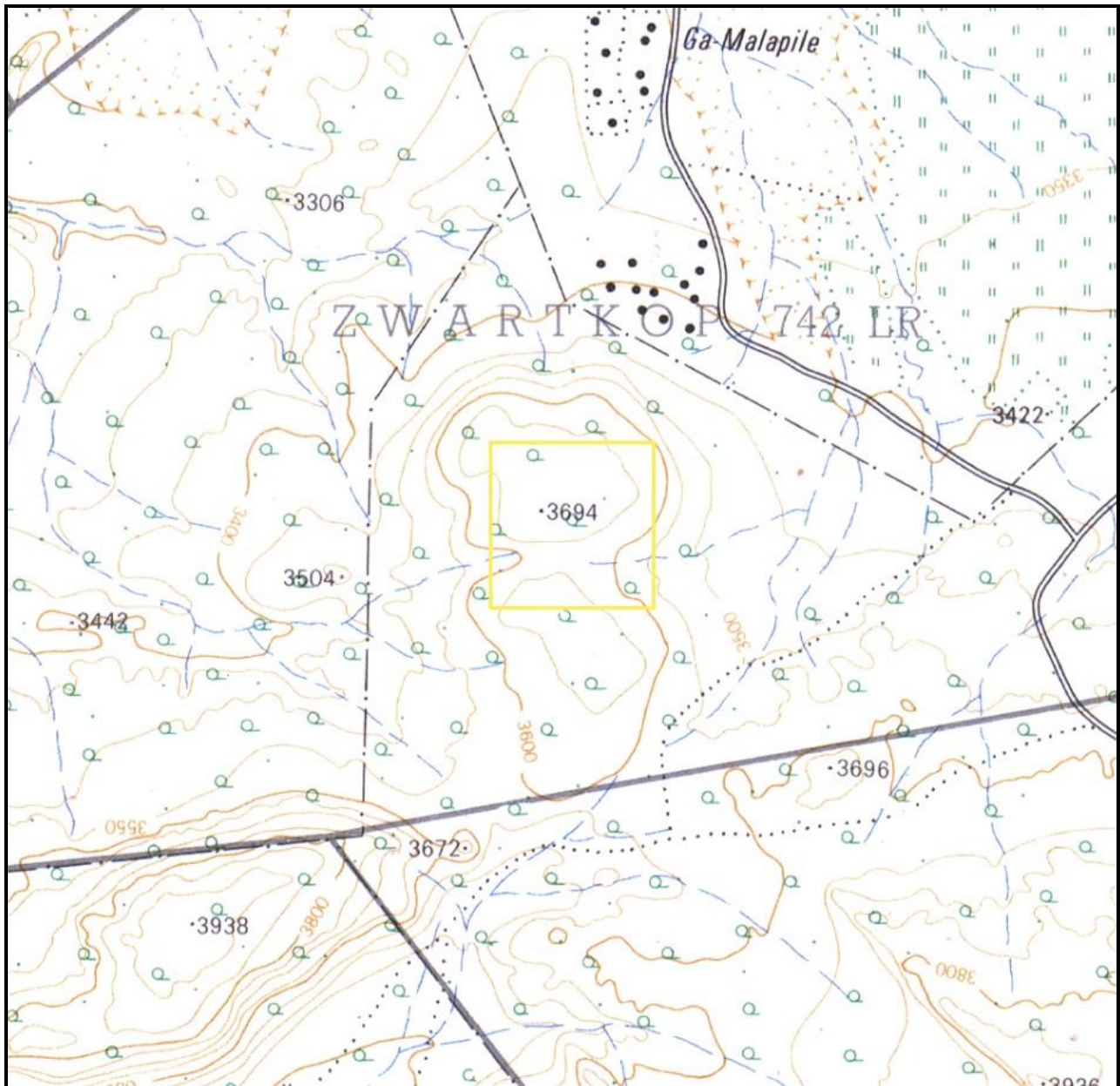


Figure 6. 1970 Topographical map of the site under investigation on Zwartkop. Ga-Malapile can be seen to the north. (Topographical map 1970)

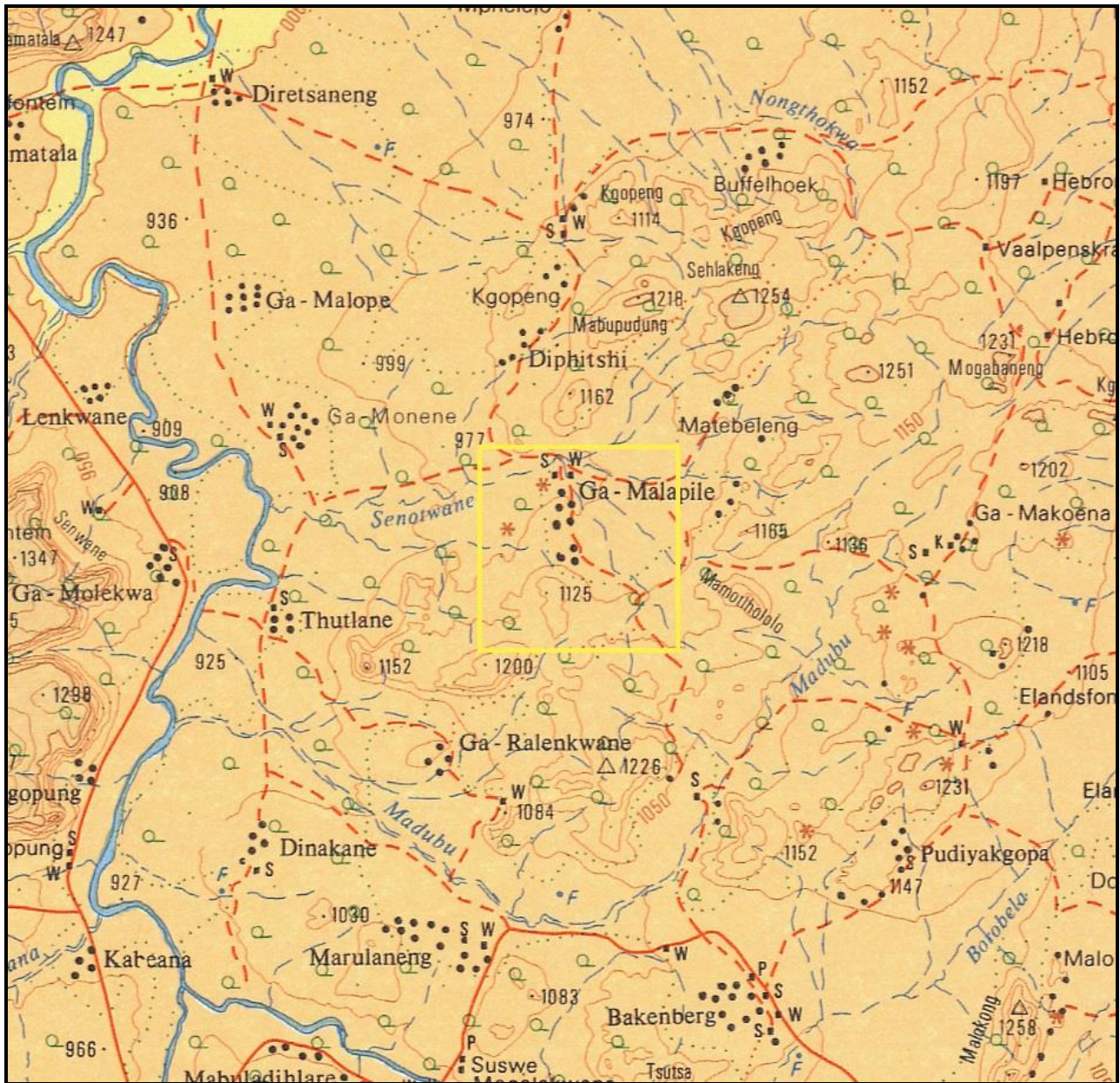


Figure 7. 1972 1:250 000 Topographical map of the area under investigation. (Topographical map 1972)

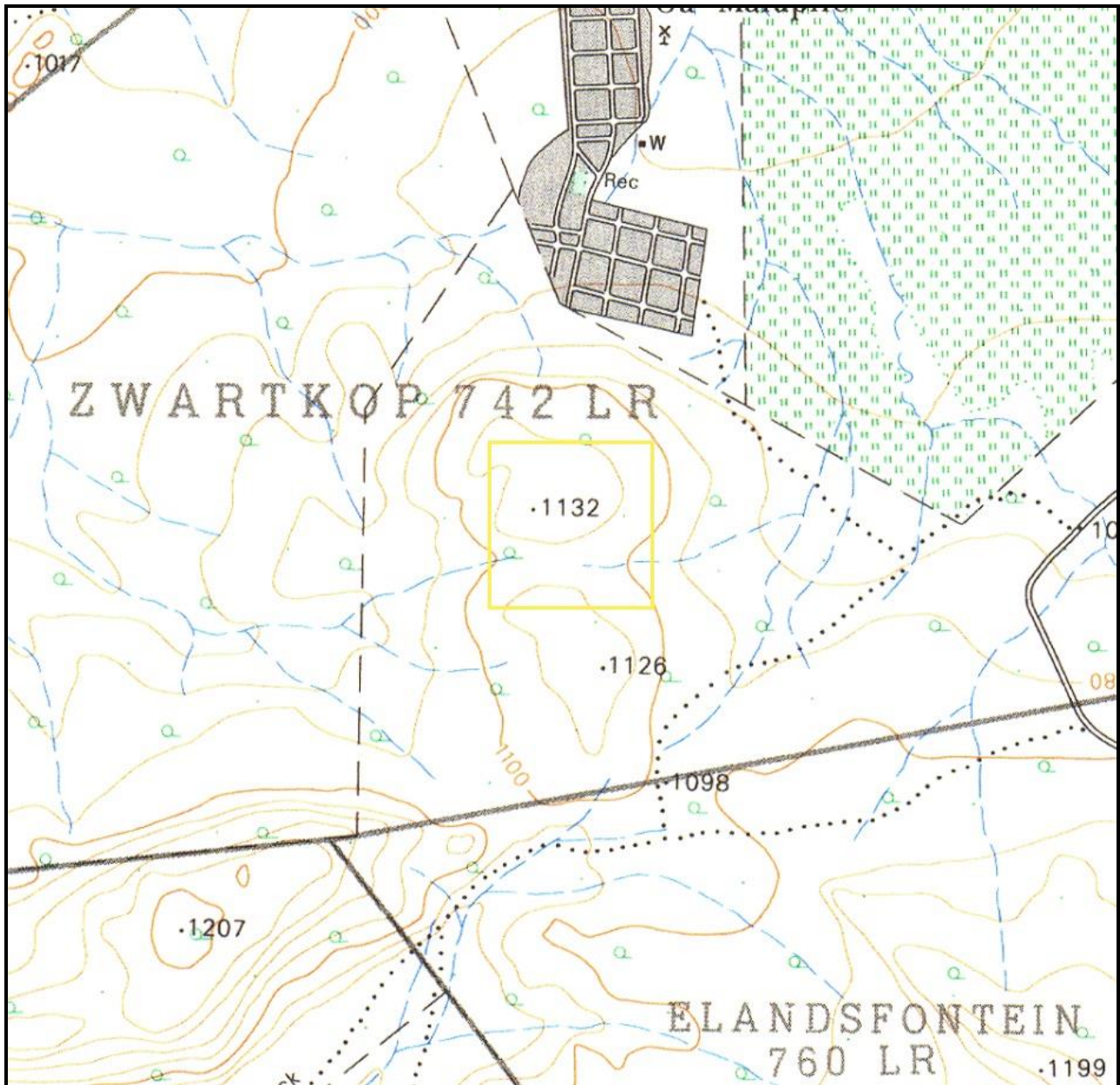


Figure 8. 1983 Topographical map of the site under investigation on Zwartkop. (Topographical map 1983)

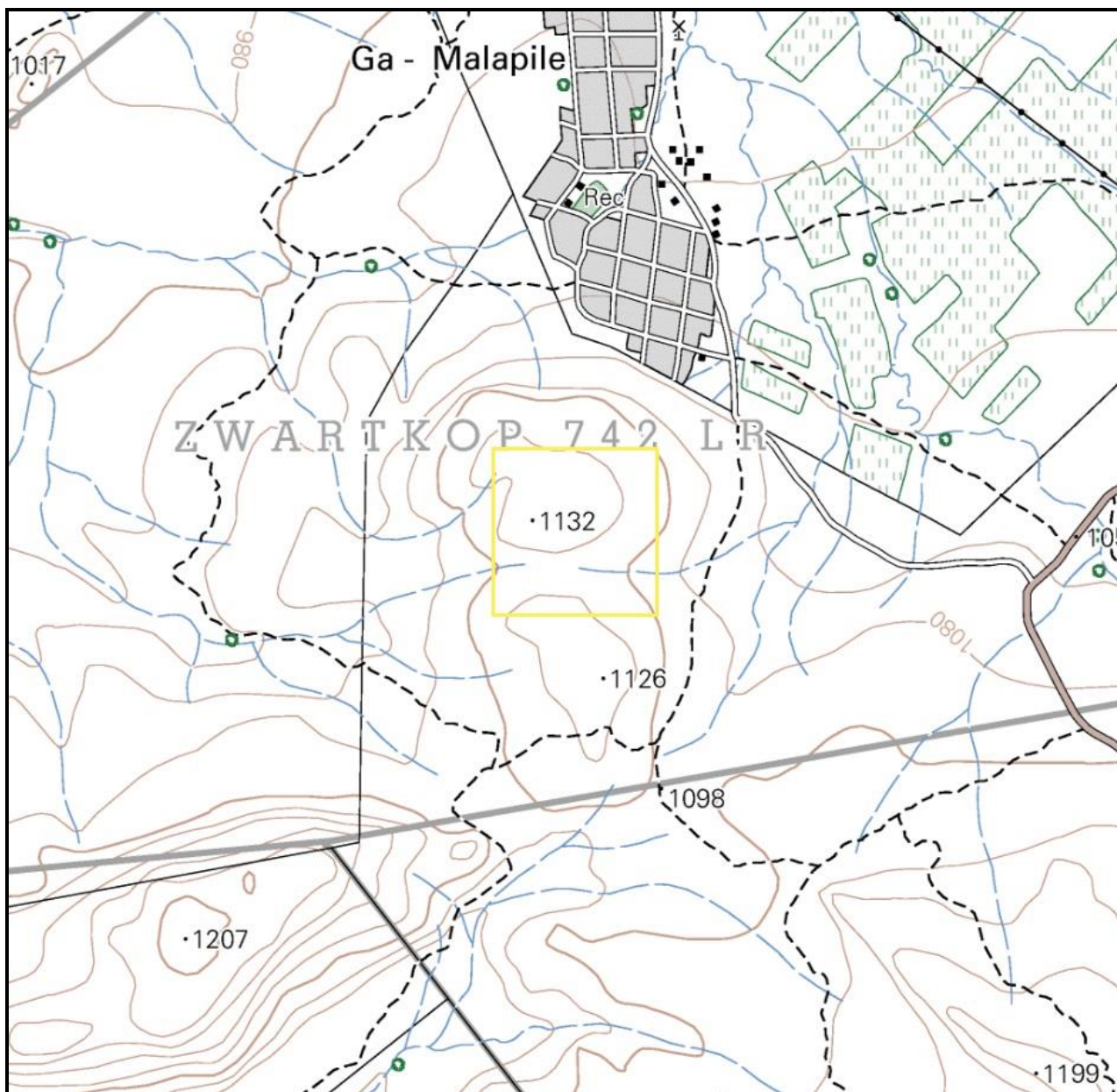


Figure 9. 2004 Topographical map of the site under investigation on Zwartkop. (Topographical map 2004)

4.1.3. A Brief History of Human Settlement in the Study Area

In this section, the settlement and interactions of various people groups in the study area and the wider region will be discussed.

Rock art and rock engravings can be found in most parts of South Africa and serves as the oldest physical reminders of earlier civilizations that roamed the land. According to the Rock Art Research Institute of the University of the Witwatersrand, Bushmen hunter-gatherers, the Khoikhoi herder people, as well as the Bantu-speaking Iron Age farmers all created rock art. Rock art was an integral part of the Bushmen's religious beliefs and practices, and *shamans* (medicine men) believed that through the rite of dance and creating rock art, it was possible to harness supernatural powers to enter the spirit world, where they could for instance heal the sick, control the weather and visit far-off places. The imagery often depicts the shamans' actions in the spirit world. Herder rock art can be distinguished from the Bushmen rock art in that it is made up of geometric designs, finger dots and handprints – very unlike the animal and human images that characterize Bushman rock art. The rock art of the Iron Age farmers is by far the rarest of South Africa's prehistoric art traditions. Apart from a few engravings, Iron Age farmer art is always painted. The art is predominantly in white and was applied by finger daubing, which produced a very rough appearance. Though the subject matter is varied, it is dominated by images of humans and animals. The earliest sites in the Limpopo valley are dated to the fourth century AD. Ninety percent of the five hundred known Iron Age farmer sites are concentrated in the hills of Limpopo Province. (University of the Witwatersrand 2017)

A historical atlas of the northern provinces of South Africa by one J. S. Bergh provides various maps that help to show how the socio-cultural landscape changed over time. The map below shows that several rock art sites can be found in the vicinity of the area under investigation. It is possible that some of these artworks were created by Iron Age herders. (Bergh 1999: 5)

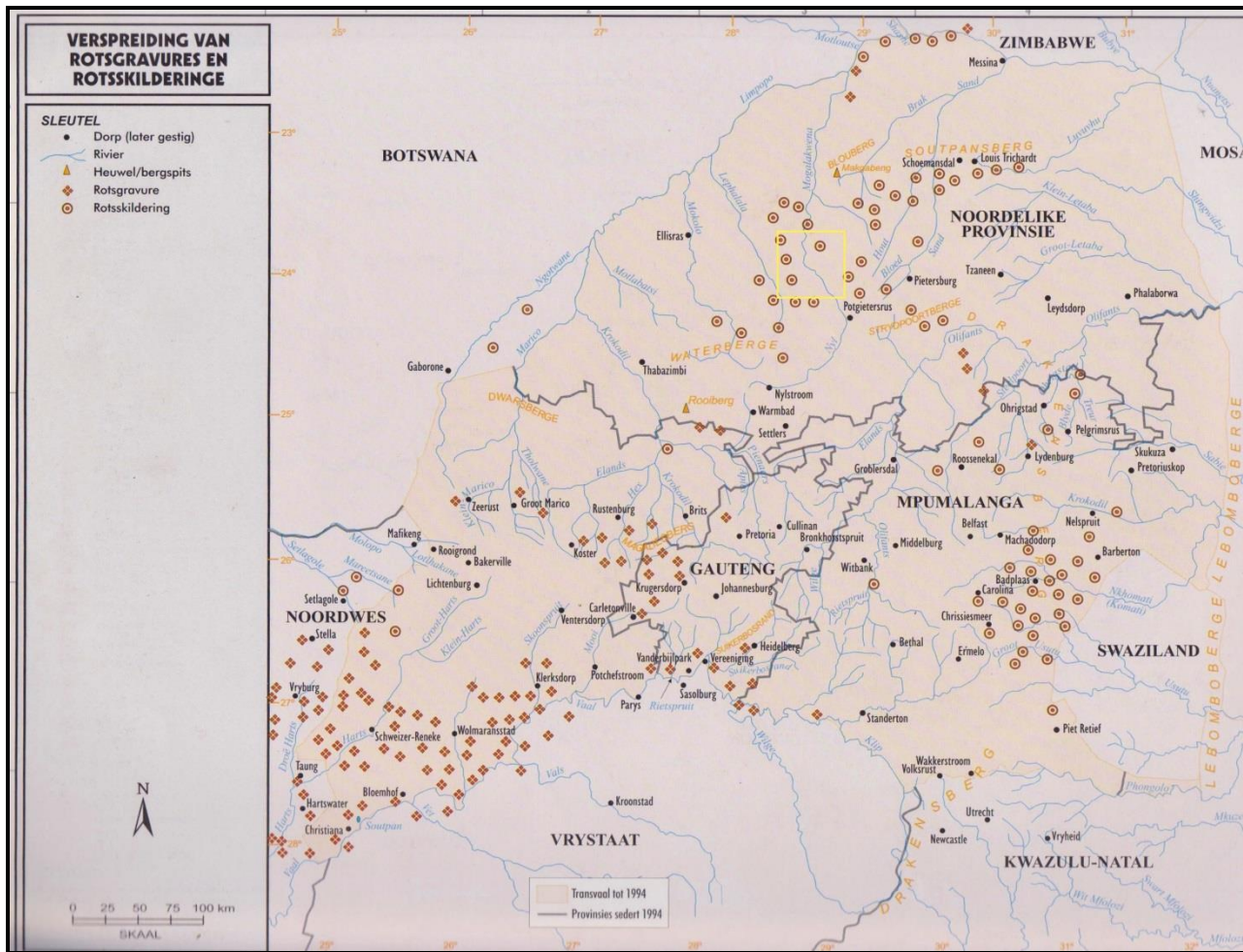


Figure 10. Map showing the distribution of rock engravings and rock paintings in the northern provinces of South Africa. The area within the yellow border, especially on the eastern bank of the western tributary of the Mogalakwena River, is of interest for this report. (Bergh 1999: 5)

In Southern Africa the domestication of the environment began only a couple of thousands of years ago, when agriculture and herding were introduced. At some time during the last half of the first millennium BC, people living in the region where Botswana, Zambia and Angola are today, started moving southward, until they reached the Highveld and the Cape in the area of modern South Africa. Over the centuries, as the sub-continent became fully settled, these agro-pastoralists, who spoke Bantu languages, started dominating all those areas which were ecologically suitable for their way of life. This included roughly the eastern half of modern South Africa, the eastern fringe of Botswana and the north of Namibia. (Ross 1995: 6-7; Packard 2001: 594)

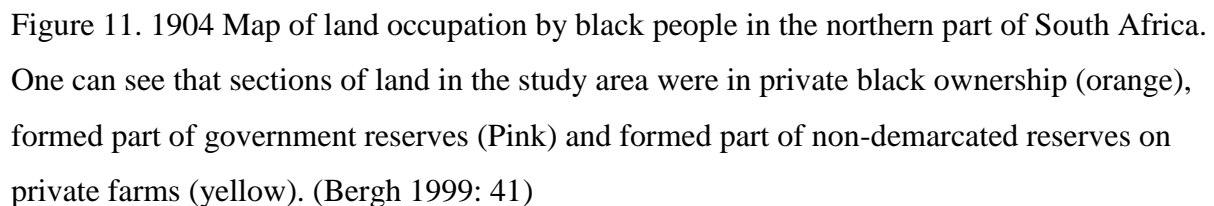
During the nineteenth century, the farm that is now known as Zwartkop 742 LR and the surrounding area would have formed part of a region where malaria would regularly occur during the rainy season. This area was however not plagued by Tsetse flies, as the warmer areas neared South Africa's northern and eastern borders. Pastoralists would have avoided the moist low-lying valleys and thickly wooded regions where these insects preferred to congregate. It is unlikely that populations would be dense in areas where malaria was a constant threat. (Shillington 1995: 32; Gear *et al* 1981; Fuller 1923; Bergh 1999: 3)

The Difaqane (Sotho), or Mfekane ("the crushing" in Nguni) was a time of bloody upheavals in Natal and on the Highveld, which occurred around the early 1820s until the late 1830s. It came about in response to heightened competition for land and trade and caused population groups like gun carrying Griquas and Shaka's Zulus to attack other tribes. In the early 1800s before the Difaqane, Ndebele-speaking tribes were the predominant settlers in the study area. These people are not to be confused with the Khumalo-Ndebeles of Mzilikazi, who like the Zulu tribe expanded their settlement area during the Difaqane years. (Bergh 1999: 9-11; 109-119)

It is believed that the Transvaal groups of Ndebele speakers had lived in the area to the north of the Vaal River since the first half of the eighteenth century. These people are subdivided into the North and South Ndebeles. The Northern Ndebele Langa Tribe under Chief Mapela was the predominant tribe living in the area under investigation. (More information on this tribe is provided in the following section). Towards the end of Chief Mapela's rule, the Matabele of Mzilikazi moved into his area, and the Langa suffered greatly at their hands. Mapela died in 1825 at his headquarters close to the Fothane Mountain. (Bergh 1999: 10, 108; Eckert 2000: 57-58)

The first Europeans arrived in the Cape in 1652, and expansion to the northern parts of South Africa only started in the late 1820s. The Great Trek, as this northern movement from the Cape Colony was called, resulted in a massive increase in the extent of that proportion of modern South Africa dominated by people of European descent. As can be expected, the migration of whites into the northern provinces would have a significant impact on the black people who populated the land. This was also the case in Mpumalanga, the then Eastern Transvaal area.

By the second half of the nineteenth century, the population of whites in the central Transvaal was already very dense and the administrative machinery of their leaders was firmly in place. Many of the policies that would lead the apartheid laws later on had already been developed. In November 1864, for example, the broad design of the guidelines concerning the pass-system for blacks, the provision of labour, the obligatory tax and the carrying of firearms, had been published in the Government Gazette. In 1860, the Transvaal was again divided into a number of districts, facilitating the administration of blacks through the instalment of a greater number of officers. While there were only seven districts in 1860, the Transvaal was divided into 15 districts by 1886. Blacks in isolated regions would especially feel the threat to their autonomy as white control became increasingly rigid. About half of the black population in the Transvaal was living on private land, owned by whites or companies, in 1904. According to the Squatters' Law of 1895, no more than five families of "natives" could live on any farm or divided portion of a farm, without special permission from the Government. This law was however not rigidly enforced in practice and large numbers of blacks still occupied certain places. (Ross 1995: 39; Bergh 1999: 170, 171; Massie 1905: 97)

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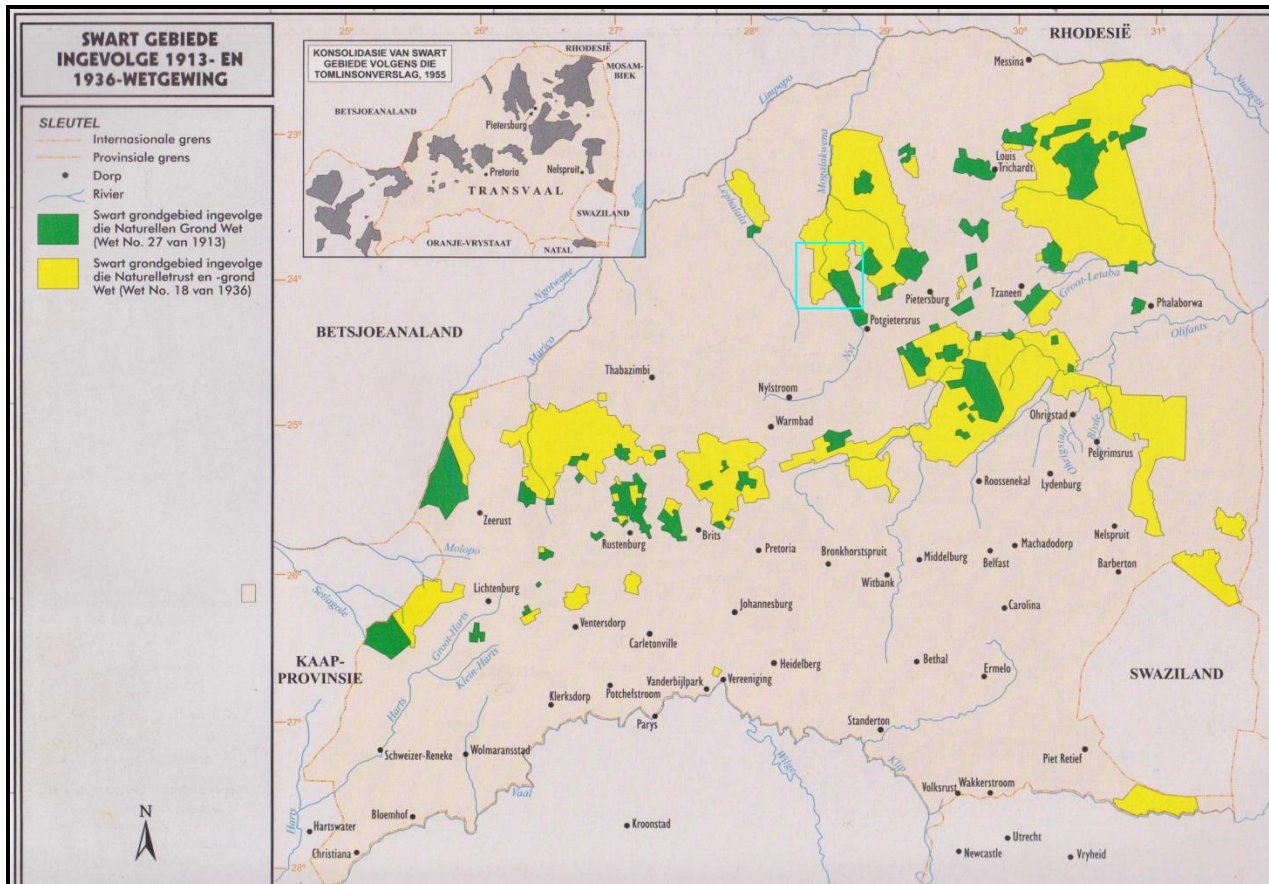


Figure 12. Map showing the demarcation of areas for black occupation. One can see that sections of the area under investigation formed a part of the area demarcated for black settlement. (Bergh 1999: 42)

In time the area demarcated for black settlement in the study area became part of the homeland of Lebowa, which was set aside by the apartheid government for the North Sotho people. This area became a semi-independent national state in 1972. The area was fragmented into six separate areas scattered throughout the then northern Transvaal. By 1978, Lebowa was the actual residence of more than half of South Africa's northern Sotho people, all of whom were legally Lebowa citizens. Under the South African constitution that abolished the apartheid system, Lebowa was reincorporated into South Africa in 1994 as part of the newly created Northern (now Limpopo) province.

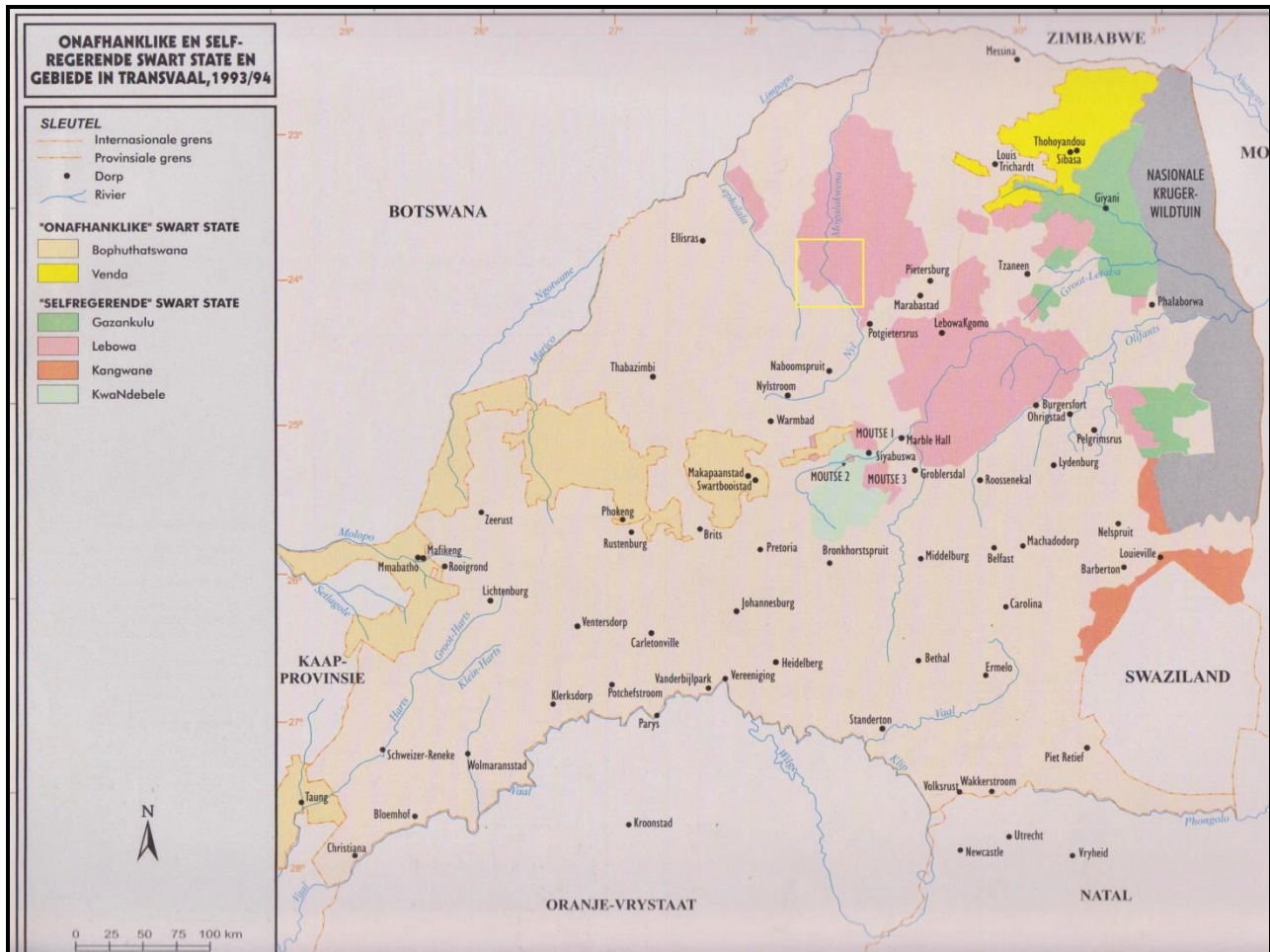


Figure 13. Early 1990s map showing independent and autonomous black states and regions in the Transvaal. A section of the area under investigation formed part of the Lebowa Homeland. (Bergh 1999: 43)

4.1.4. The Langa and Laka Of Mapela

It has been ascertained that the Langa of Mapela had been living in the area to the north of the town that is now known as Mokopane since the first half of the eighteenth century. These people still occupy this area, though the Lebowa Homeland (which was established in this area between 1913 and 1994) was set aside by the apartheid government for the Northern Sotho people. The Langa of Mapela is of Nguni origin and, together with other chiefdoms in the region, forms the Northern Ndebele section of the Transvaal Ndebele. Almost all the Northern Ndebele people live in Limpopo Province. The Nguni name “Langa” is used to refer to the nucleus of the royal family, whereas the Northern Sotho word “Laka” refers to stranger groups of Northern Sotho and other origins. (Eckert 2000: 55)

When the ruling nucleus of Mapela settled in the area, they came into contact with surrounding Northern Sotho-speaking people, and over time intermarried and assimilated with these people to such an extent that today most of the Langa descendants speak predominantly Northern Sotho. They have also adopted many Northern Sotho cultural practices, like circumcision and performing joint initiation rituals. They even venerate the totem animal (the elephant) of the Northern Sotho people. (Eckert 2000: 55-56)

Like other Northern Sotho-speakers, the Northern Ndebele also have a traditional authority system of chiefdoms that form the local administration of rural areas in Limpopo Province. Figure 14 presents the respective chiefs (*magosi*) and regents of the Langa of Mapela.

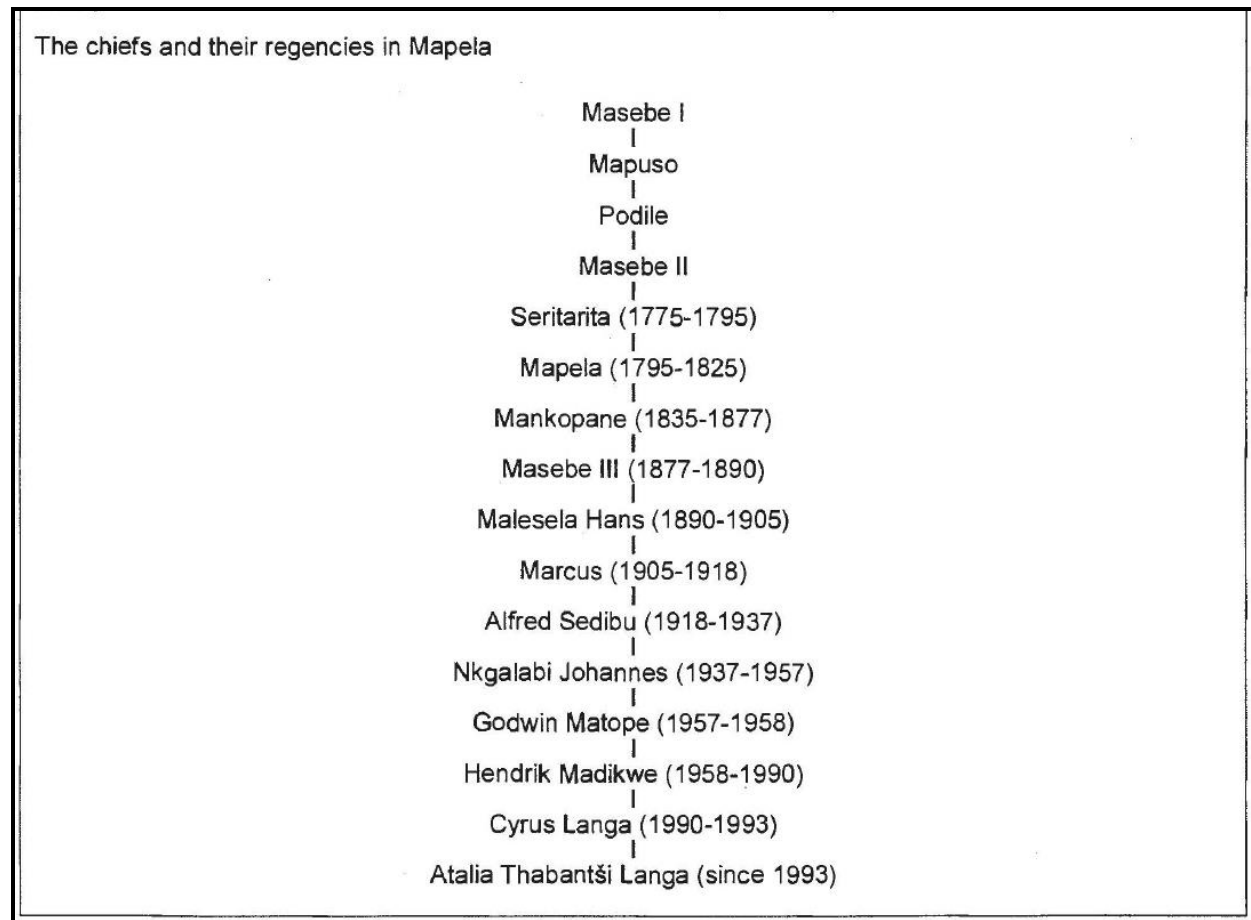


Figure 14: This diagram presents the respective chiefs (magosi) and regents of the Langa of Mapela. (After Eckert 2000: 56).

The clan name “Langa” is derived from the word *ilanga*, which means “sun” in the Nguni languages. Langelibalele was the name of the first chief and common ancestor of the Langa ruling lineage. These people left their original home under the leadership of Chief Masebe I in KwaZulu around the middle of the seventeenth century. For a short while they resided east of Pietersburg at Bosega. Masebe I and his successors Mapuso, Podile and Masebe II ruled and died at Thaba Tshweu, a few kilometres southeast of Pietersburg. Masebe II was succeeded by Podile’s grandson Seritarita in about 1775. The new chief departed with his people to settle at Maleoko, almost directly north of Potgietersrus. Mapela, the son of Seritarita’s third-ranking wife, became the new chief. He moved his people near the Mogalakwena River at Moumong-wa-Matswake, where the tribe settled from there on. Mapela was a good ruler and established a large farming community, whilst incorporating a number of small Sotho chiefdoms and lineages. (Eckert 2000: 57-58).

5. DOCUMENTATION AND EXCAVATION OF THE SITE

5.1. Site 10

This small and ephemeral stone walled complex is situated on the highest part of a hill, occupying an area of approximately 60m x 60m. The stone walled complex consists of several enclosures and curved stretches of low packed stone walls, often linking enclosures. Most of the walls are packed single lines of stones which also incorporate numerous natural occurring features and rocks. The walls are overgrown, low and mostly poorly defined (Figure 15 & 16). The entire site was cleared from bushes and shrubs to facilitate the mapping of the site and to expose features/areas for excavation (Figure 18 – 22).



Figure 15. Overgrown stone walls



Figure 16. Ephemeral stone walling

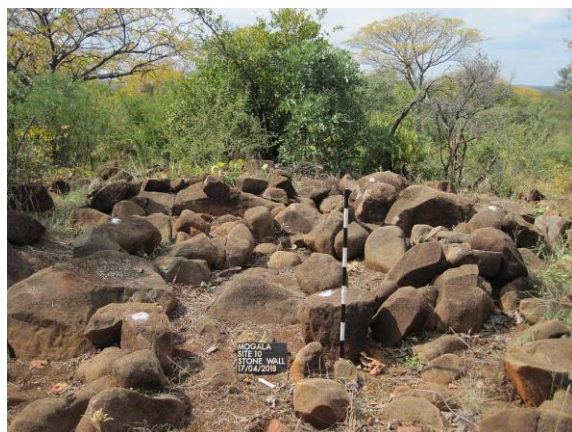


Figure 17. Cleared enclosure



Figure 18. Cleared stone walls



Figure 19. Cleared stone walls



Figure 20. Cleared stone walls



Figure 21. Cleared stone walls

Seven trenches (A – G) were excavated (Figure 22). Due to the lack of anthropogenic deposits encountered in trench A the other trenches were excavated by shovel pit testing, also exposing sterile natural deposit.

Trench A was laid out within the largest enclosure, situated at the highest point of the site. The trench extended across the enclosure from the one stone wall to the other stone wall on the opposite side. It measured approximately 5,5m in length and was 0.5m wide. The trench was divided into 6 blocks which measured 1m x 0.5m each, except for the last block which measured approximately 0.5m x 0.5m. The blocks were numbered from 1 to 6 and each block was excavated in 5cm spits until bedrock was encountered (Figure 23 – 34). The excavated depth varied between 17cm to 23cm deep across the six excavated blocks.

The remaining six trenches were shovel pit tested (50 X 50cm) and excavated to an average depth of 19cm. No anthropogenic deposit was recorded and excavations were stopped. All excavations were backfilled (Figure 35).

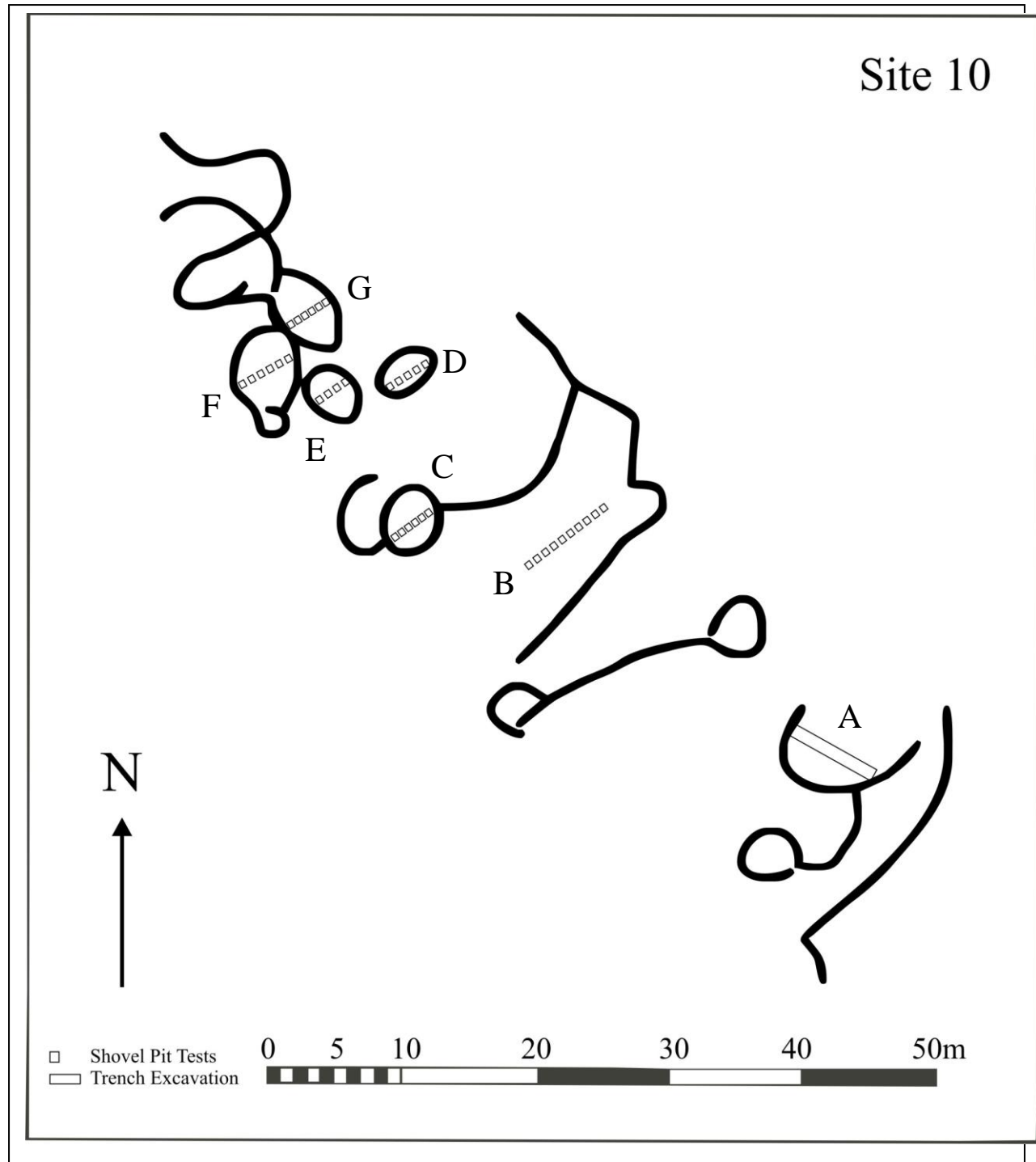


Figure 22. Excavation plan



Figure 23. Surface layer trench A



Figure 24. Block 1 Surface Layer



Figure 25. Block 1 Layer 1



Figure 26. Block 2 Surface



Figure 27. Block 2 Layer 1



Figure 28. Block 3 Surface



Figure 29. Block 3 Layer 1



Figure 30. Block 4 Surface



Figure 31. Block 4 Layer 1



Figure 32. Surface Layer Block 5



Figure 33. Block 5 Layer 1



Figure 34. Block 6 Surface Layer



Figure 35. Back filled trench

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

No archaeological material such as pottery, faunal remains or any evidence for ash or middens were encountered in any of the test excavations. Neither was any archaeological features like hut remains etc. visible on the surface of the site. The lack of anthropogenic deposit at the site resulted that the mitigation strategies changed as the excavations proceeded, however the overall programme satisfied the initial goals.

In terms of the economic subsistence of the occupants of the stone walled complex, the site contains small enclosures possibly for sleeping huts and does not have the larger enclosures for keeping livestock. The lack of maize grinding stones, faunal material or any middens associated with agricultural communities indicates that the site was only occupied for a very short period. Although the site does not have any archaeological deposit and therefore no material culture were retrieved, it became clear after mapping of the site that the spatial layout does conform to Later Iron Age Stone walled settlements in the region. Due to the total lack of material cultural the ethnography of the region might hint at the occupants of the site and is briefly discussed here.

Several groups entered and occupied the general area since 1600 A.D. including Ndebele, Shangaan and Koni people (Loubser, 1994). By the 19th century, several local Ndebele communities occupied the region, one of the most prominent being the Kekana. Late Iron Age sites to the south of the study area at Mokopane belonging to the Moloko and Letaba ceramic traditions, shows that Northern Transvaal Ndebele lived there from about AD 1780 to 1840 (Huffman 1996). Other studies in the area (Moore 1981; Loubser 1994) suggest that the Northern Transvaal Ndebele lived in the stone-walled sites in the region. During this time Europeans started to move into the area (around the 1830's) and marked the first contact between the Europeans and the local Ndebele (Naidoo 1987). The interaction between the Ndebele and Europeans was often marked by conflict and the local geography was important during times of turmoil and instability when groups preferred to move into rugged terrain which offered defensible opportunities whilst the open terrain remained indefensible and vulnerable.

Site 10 together with other stone walled sites in the general area is located within the Ndebele sphere of influence and therefore may have been occupied by Ndebele groups from AD1600 onwards. It is however unlikely that the site was occupied as early as this date suggests. The site shows strong affinities in term of layout with sites at Mokopane (Huffman & Steel 1996) and the spatial layout of the site appears to be a variation of Loubser's (1994) Group III pattern. This type of walling relatively dates the site from about AD 1855 to 1875 (Huffman & Steel 1996).

It is believed that the archaeological mitigation work conducted for this site was completed successfully and the proposed development can continue at Site 10 based on obtaining of a destruction permit from SAHRA.

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