



Archaetnos Culture & Cultural
Resource Consultants
BK 98 09854/23

FINAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPORT

A REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF GRAVES AT THE PROPOSED NANDONI RESIDENTIAL ESTATE ON PORTION 6 OF THE FARM MOLENJE 201 LT, THULAMELA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, VHEMBE DISTRICT, LIMPOPO PROVINCE

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For:
Mulendze Development Trust

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REPORT NO: **AE02223V**

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SUMMARY

Archaeos cc was requested by the Mulendze Development Trust Sekoko Resources to exhume some graves identified within the boundary of the Nandoni Golf Estate. The graves were identified during an Archaeological Impact Assessment (AIA) done by Vhufa Hashu Heritage Consultants in. The necessary permission was obtained from the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) to have the graves exhumed and reburied.

An extensive process of social consultation was done by the client and the necessary documents included in the permit application to SAHRA. Tshitshie & Bros Funeral Undertakers were appointed to assist with the project. The number of the permit obtained from the Burial Grounds and Graves Unit (BGG) of SAHRA is as follows – CaseID: 16550; PermitID: 3306.

The proposed development is located on portion 6 of the farm Molenje 201 LT. This falls within the Thulamela Local Municipality, Vhembe District in the Limpopo Province.

The archaeological investigations at the site commenced during May 2022. In total 36 graves were identified. Due to certain issues only 14 graves were exhumed, and the team returned in August 2022 to exhume the remaining 19 graves. The total number of graves exhumed are thus 33, but one of these had two individuals inside. There is also one alleged grave, of which the families could not remember the location. Although a number was allocated thereto, it could not be exhumed. Three other graves were not exhumed but also numbered. Two of these falls outside of the area of development and for one consent could not be obtained from the family. As a result the numbering of the graves goes up to no 37.

All indications of graves were exhumed, with the exception of no 32 for which approval was not obtained from the family. This grave will not be impacted directly by the development as it lies within the servitude next to one of the roads.

- 1. It is therefore recommended that a management plan be drafted for approval by SAHRA, ensuring the preservation of this grave.**

The mortal remains and grave goods of all graves as well as soil samples where applicable, were taken for reburial. It should be noted that even though care was taken to exhume all mortal remains there are always a possibility that some graves may still be found during work on the site. In fact, number 19 was allocated to a grave of which the families could not remember the location. It could thus also not be exhumed proving that the possibility of encountering human remains during development is reasonably high.

- 2. Should human remains be found, work on site should cease, the area should be demarcated, and an archaeologist should be contacted**

immediately to investigate the find and to see to it that it be exhumed and relocated in an appropriate way.

- 3. In lieu of the above, it is recommended that development in the area may continue.**

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The South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) or one of its subsidiary bodies needs to comment on this report and clients are advised not to proceed with any action before receiving these. It is the responsibility of the client to submit the report to the relevant heritage authority.

1. INTRODUCTION

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The archaeological investigations at the site commenced during May 2022. Due to certain issues only 14 graves were exhumed, and the team returned in August 2022 to exhume the remaining 19 graves. The total number of graves exhumed are thus 33.

2. AIMS

The aims of the archaeological investigation and exhumation of the graves were the following:

- Exhume the graves at the Nandoni development
- Document the SAHRA and unknown graves in accordance with the stipulations of the SAHRA permit.
- To record all human skeletal and cultural remains from any possible burials that might exist on the site to facilitate their successful relocation.

The reinternment of the human remains was done by Tshitshie & Bros Funeral Undertakers. They also marked the graves, after completion of the social consultation process.

3. LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Aspects concerning the conservation of cultural resources are dealt with mainly in two acts. These are the National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999) and the National Environmental Management Act (Act 107 of 1998).

Aspects concerning the conservation of cultural resources are dealt with mainly in two acts. The first of these are the National Heritage Resources Act (Act 25 of 1999) which deals with the cultural heritage of the Republic of South Africa. The second is the National Environmental Management Act (Act 107 of 1998) which inter alia deals with cultural heritage as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment process.

3.1 The National Heritage Resources Act

According to the above-mentioned act the following is protected as cultural heritage resources:

- a. Archaeological artifacts, structures and sites older than 100 years
- b. Ethnographic art objects (e.g. prehistoric rock art) and ethnography
- c. Objects of decorative and visual arts
- d. Military objects, structures and sites older than 75 years
- e. Historical objects, structures and sites older than 60 years
- f. Proclaimed heritage sites
- g. Grave yards and graves older than 60 years
- h. Meteorites and fossils
- i. Objects, structures and sites of scientific or technological value.

The national estate includes the following:

- a. Places, buildings, structures and equipment of cultural significance
- b. Places to which oral traditions are attached or which are associated with living heritage
- c. Historical settlements and townscapes
- d. Landscapes and features of cultural significance
- e. Geological sites of scientific or cultural importance
- f. Archaeological and paleontological importance
- g. Graves and burial grounds
- h. Sites of significance relating to the history of slavery
- i. Movable objects (e.g. archaeological, paleontological, meteorites, geological specimens, military, ethnographic, books etc.)

A Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) is the process to be followed in order to determine whether any heritage resources are located within the area to be developed as well as the possible impact of the proposed development thereon. An Archaeological Impact Assessment (AIA) only looks at archaeological resources. It must be done under the following circumstances:

- a. The construction of a linear development (road, wall, power line canal etc.) exceeding 300m in length
- b. The construction of a bridge or similar structure exceeding 50m in length
- c. Any development or other activity that will change the character of a site and exceed 5 000m² or involve three or more existing erven or subdivisions thereof

- d. Re-zoning of a site exceeding 10 000 m²
- e. Any other category provided for in the regulations of SAHRA or a provincial heritage authority

Structures

Section 34 (1) of the mentioned act states that no person may demolish any structure or part thereof which is older than 60 years without a permit issued by the relevant provincial heritage resources authority.

A structure means any building, works, device or other facility made by people and which is fixed to land, and includes any fixtures, fittings and equipment associated therewith.

Alter means any action affecting the structure, appearance or physical properties of a place or object, whether by way of structural or other works, by painting, plastering or the decoration or any other means.

Archaeology, palaeontology and meteorites

Section 35(4) of this act deals with archaeology, palaeontology and meteorites. The act states that no person may, without a permit issued by the responsible heritage resources authority (national or provincial):

- a. destroy, damage, excavate, alter, deface or otherwise disturb any archaeological or paleontological site or any meteorite;
- b. destroy, damage, excavate, remove from its original position, collect or own any archaeological or paleontological material or object or any meteorite;
- c. trade in, sell for private gain, export or attempt to export from the Republic any category of archaeological or paleontological material or object, or any meteorite; or
- d. bring onto or use at an archaeological or paleontological site any excavation equipment or any equipment that assists in the detection or recovery of metals or archaeological and paleontological material or objects or use such equipment for the recovery of meteorites.
- e. alter or demolish any structure or part of a structure which is older than 60 years as protected.

The above mentioned may only be disturbed or moved by an archaeologist, after receiving a permit from the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA). In order to demolish such a site or structure, a destruction permit from SAHRA will also be needed.

Human remains

Graves and burial grounds are divided into the following:

- a. ancestral graves
- b. royal graves and graves of traditional leaders
- c. graves of victims of conflict
- d. graves designated by the Minister
- e. historical graves and cemeteries
- f. human remains

In terms of Section 36(3) of the National Heritage Resources Act, no person may, without a permit issued by the relevant heritage resources authority:

- a. destroy, damage, alter, exhume or remove from its original position or otherwise disturb the grave of a victim of conflict, or any burial ground or part thereof which contains such graves;
- b. destroy, damage, alter, exhume or remove from its original position or otherwise disturb any grave or burial ground older than 60 years which is situated outside a formal cemetery administered by a local authority; or
- c. bring onto or use at a burial ground or grave referred to in paragraph (a) or (b) any excavation, or any equipment which assists in the detection or recovery of metals.

Unidentified/unknown graves are also handled as older than 60 until proven otherwise.

Human remains that are less than 60 years old are subject to provisions of the **National Health Act (Act 61 of 2003)** and to local regulations. Exhumation of graves must conform to the standards set out in the **Ordinance on Excavations (Ordinance no. 12 of 1980)** (replacing the old Transvaal Ordinance no. 7 of 1925).

Permission must also be gained from the descendants (where known), the National Department of Health, Provincial Department of Health, Premier of the Province and local police. Furthermore, permission must also be gained from the various landowners (i.e., where the graves are located and where they are to be relocated) before exhumation can take place. Human remains can only be handled by a registered undertaker or an institution declared under the **National Health Act (Act 61 of 2003)**.

3.2 The National Environmental Management Act

This act (Act 107 of 1998) states that a survey and evaluation of cultural resources must be done in areas where development projects, that will change the face of the environment, will be undertaken. The impact of the development on these resources should be determined and proposals for the mitigation thereof made.

Environmental management should also take the cultural and social needs of people into account. Any disturbance of landscapes and sites that constitute the nation's cultural heritage should be avoided as far as possible and where this is not possible the disturbance should be minimized and remedied.

4. CONDITIONS & ASSUMPTIONS

The following conditions and assumptions have a direct bearing on the study:

1. SAHRA graves consist of two categories namely all those with a date of death older than 100 years (archaeological graves) and those with a date of death older than 60 years (heritage graves).
2. Graves with an unknown date are handled as if they are SAHRA graves.
3. All recommendations are made with full cognizance of the relevant legislation.
4. Although care was taken to unearth all human remains at the site, there always is a possibility that some remains may have been missed. This is due to various factors, such as incaving soil, graves that are not marked properly etc. Should any remains be unearthed during work on the site, an archaeologist should be called out to assess the find.
5. Not all graves exhumed include human remains as many different factors may influence the preservation of skeletal material, such as the acidity of soil, humidity of environmental conditions and the age of the individual concerned. In such cases it is standard to use a soil sample from the grave pit for reburial.
6. Even though some graves do not contain human remains, grave associations such as coffin wood, coffin lining, nails and grave goods are sometimes found indicating that it indeed is a grave.
7. Some of the graves were identified by families although it may not contain any human remains or other grave goods.
8. Headstones and grave dressing also indicate a grave, although no other evidence may be found.
9. The disturbance of soil is another indication that a grave indeed is one, although no other evidence may be present.
10. In this particular case, one (no 19) were not exhumed since the family could not remember the location thereof.

5. METHODOLOGY

The graves were exhumed and documented within generally accepted guidelines of the archaeological profession. This is in line with the grave relocation process as prescribed by SAHRA and discussed by Van Vollenhoven (2016 & 2017). The documentation includes photography and the filling in of a burial relocation form which serves as reference to the grave as well as its new location.

The documentation comprised the following:

Archaeological Investigations

The archaeological investigations comprised of the undertakers excavating the trenches up to the level of skeletal or coffin remains, or up to the level of sterile soil. The archaeologists would then conduct further excavation to expose the remains in situ. Burial recording forms were then filled in to record all details of the burials (see Appendix I-XXXVII).

Photographic

Photos of all excavations and remains were taken, while individual objects were also photographed for record purposes (see Appendix I-XXXVII).

GPS Data

A GPS reading for each grave or group of graves were taken in order to locate it on a map of the area (see Appendix I-XXXVII).

6. DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

In general the Nandoni area consist of natural vegetation where there are not houses or other buildings. Vegetation seem reasonably natural, but some disturbances are noted. This is visible in overgrowth, pioneer species and barren patches in-between thickets of trees and shrubs.

The Nandoni development will consist mainly of residential properties. It will include a golf course. It is located towards the south and west of the Nandoni Dam. The latter lies south-west of Thohoyandou. As indicated above it is located on portion 6 of the farm Molenje 204 LT. This falls within the Thulamela Local Municipality, Vhembe District in the Limpopo Province (Figure 1-3).

The topography of the area reasonably very flat with very few features such as hills and outcrops. A number of rivers and streams does drain the landscape.

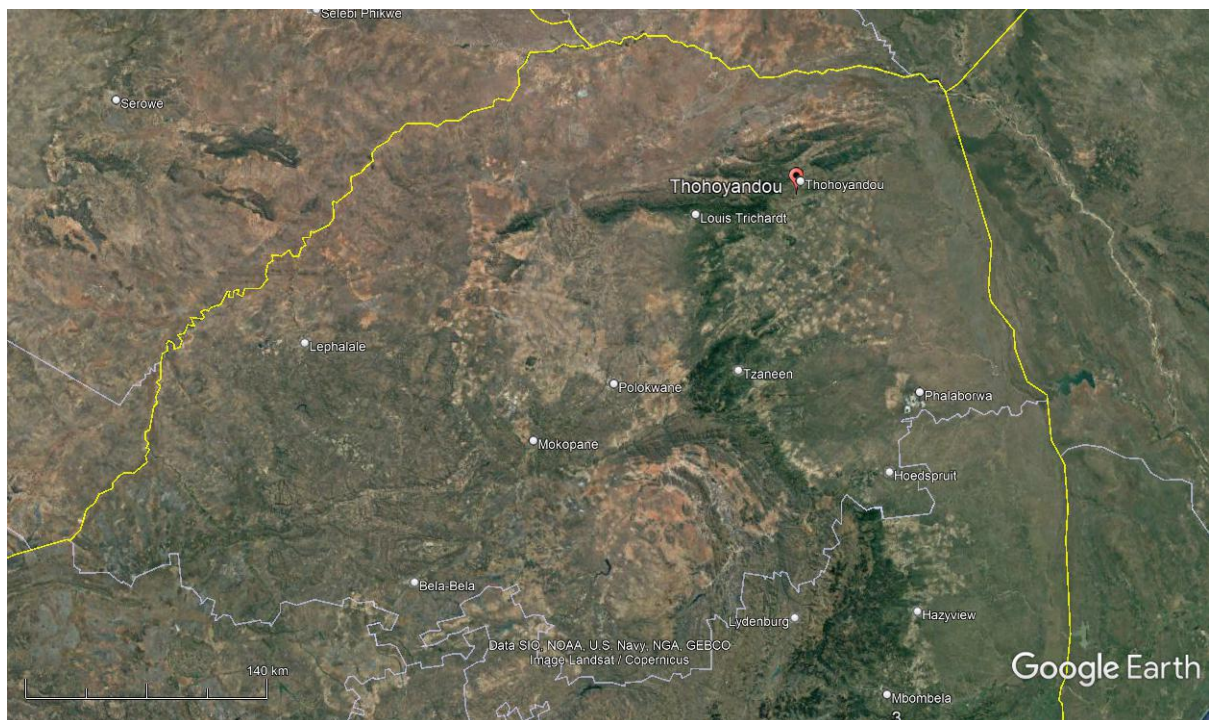


Figure 1: Location of Thohoyandou in the Limpopo Province.

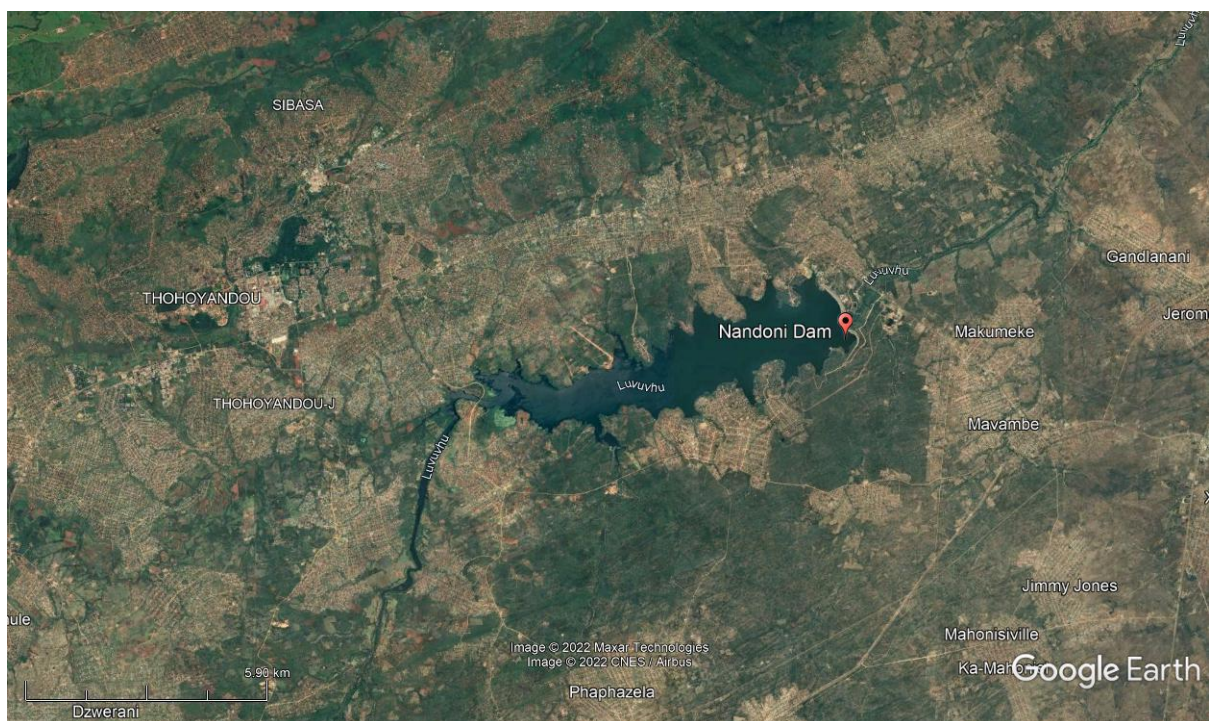


Figure 2: Location of the Nandoni Dam in relation to Thohoyandou.

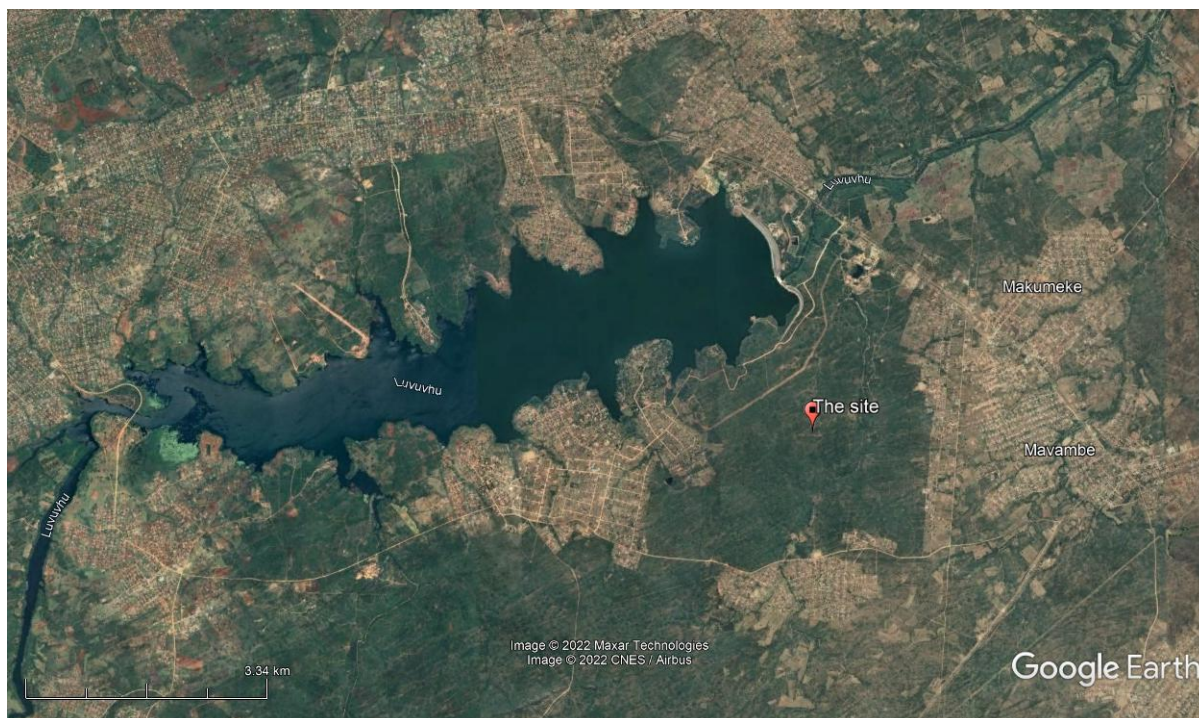


Figure 3: Location of the site in relation to the Nandoni Dam.

7. DISCUSSION

Although 33 graves were exhumed, there are 36 graves in total. The numbering however go up to 37. This is for the following reasons - It was realized that two of these (no 29 and 30) were outside of the impacted area and thus they were excluded. For another one (no 19), the family could not remember the location of the grave and thus it could not be exhumed. Another one was not exhumed since the descendants did not give permission for it to be relocated. This grave is a stand-alone one, remains in situ and will be addressed further in the recommendations to this report (Figure 4).

None of the graves are archaeological, 15 are categorized as heritage graves, one is younger than 60 years of age and 17 are unknown. The grave numbers are:

- Heritage – no's 2, 5-8, 10-14, 18, 24-25, 31 and 33
- Younger than 60 – no 017
- Unknown – no's 1, 3-4, 9, 15-16, 20-23, 26-28 and 34-37)

Nineteen of the graves had proper headstones (no's 2- 5, 7, 10, 013-14, 17-18, 20-26, 31 and 33. Only five of these were legible namely no's 13, 14, 24, 25 and 31.

The type of material from which the headstones were made are as follows:

- 8 Metal markers (no's 2, 3, 4, 5, 18, 20, 22 and 33)
- 1 Metal marker with three stones (no 23)
- 5 Single stone markers (no's 7, 10, 17, 21 and 26)
- 5 Granite (no's 13, 14, 24, 25 and 31)

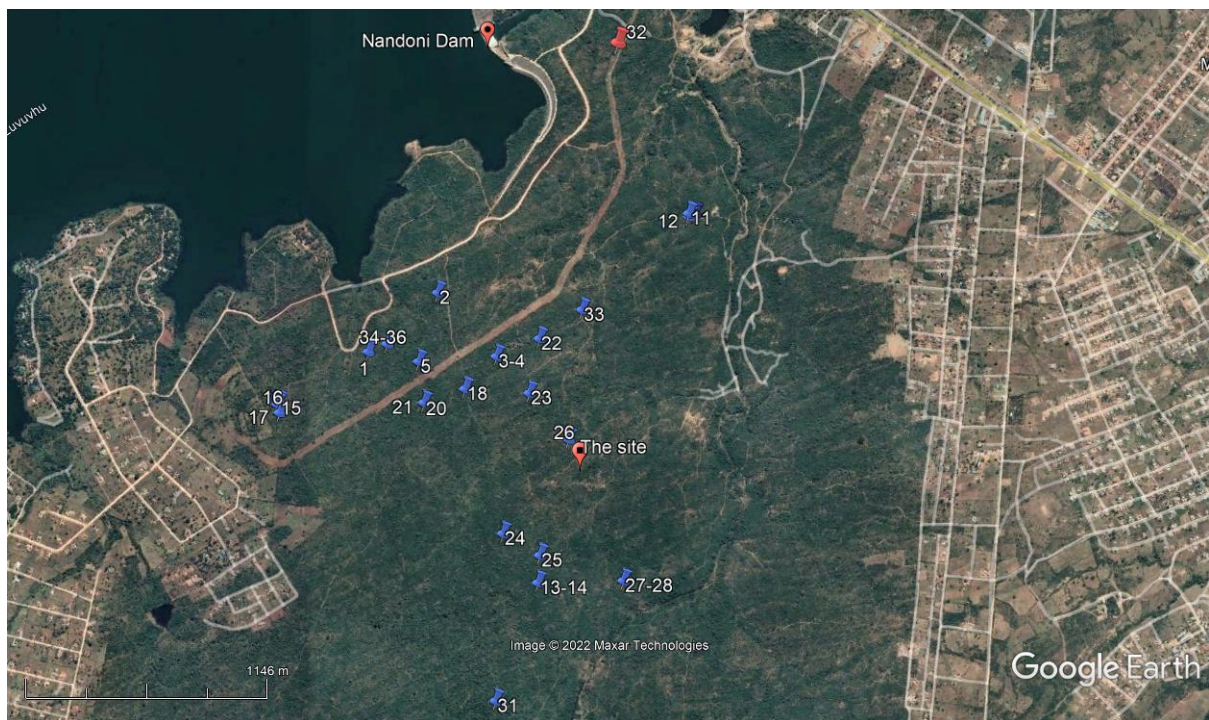
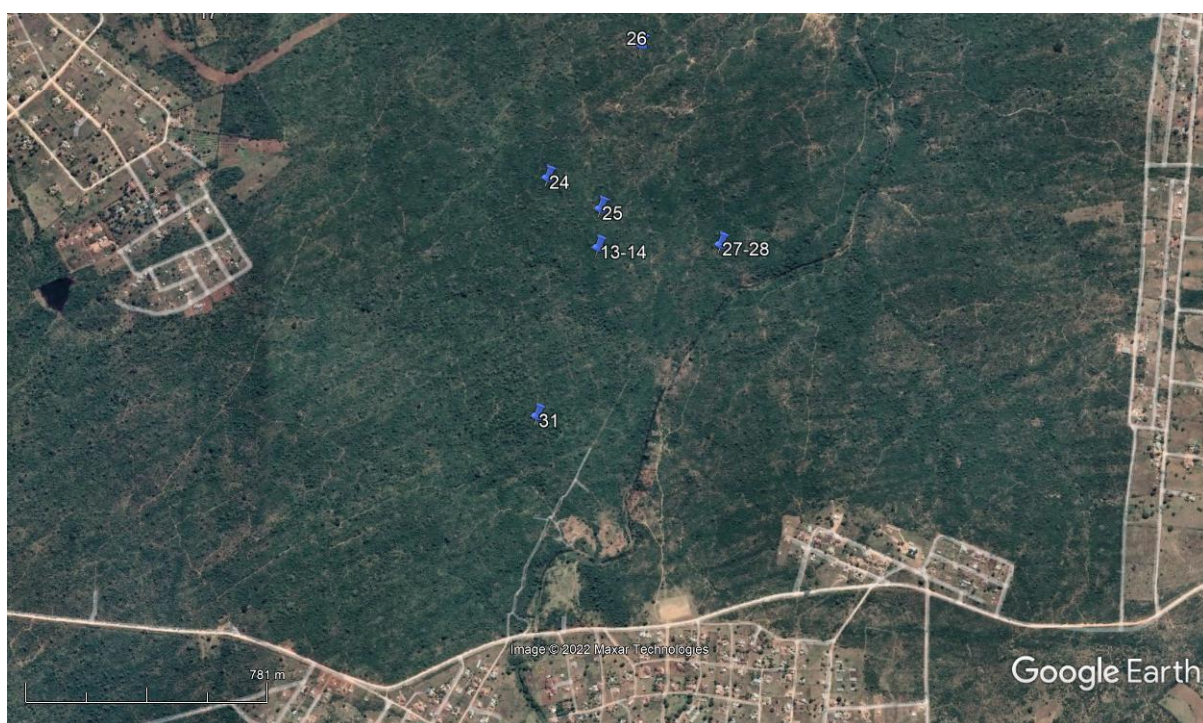


Figure 4a: Location of the 33 graves exhumed. It also indicates no 32 which were not exhumed (red marker).



Figure 4b: Position of exhumed graves on the northern side of the development.



Thirty of the graves had grave dressing or borders (no's 1-10, 13-18, 20-28, 31 and 34-37). The type of material used for this is:

- 15 Oval stone borders (no's 1-2, 5-6, 8-10, 15-18, 20, 26, 28 and 34). It needs to be mentioned that one of the stones at grave no 5 is a Lower Grinder.
- 1 Circular stone border (no 3)
- 1 Uneven shaped stones (no 4)
- 2 Oval/rectangular stone border (no's 7 and 27)
- 2 Brick, concrete and granite border filled with gravel (no's 13 and 14)
- 1 Rectangular stone border (no 21)
- 1 Soil mound with a half circle stone border (no 22)
- 1 with stone at head and foot of grave (no23)
- 2 with cement and black ceramic tiles (no's 24 and 25)
- 1 with tiles and cement (no 31)
- 1 mound with four stones on top (no 35)
- 1 Half-moon shaped stone border (no 36)
- 1 earth mound (no 37)

Twenty-one of the graves included human remains, being number 1-2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 13-15, 17-18, 20-28 and 31. The remains in graves number 2, 14, 21-23 and 26 were in a fair condition ($\geq 60\%$) whereas those in graves number 20, 25, 27 and 31 were in a good condition. In the remaining graves (no's 1, 4, 6, 8, 10, 13, 15, 17-18, 24 and 28) were in a bad condition. Male burials counted 17 (no's 3, 5, 8-10, 11 [which had two individuals inside], 12, 14, 20, 22-23, 25-27, 31 and 33). Female burials counted 16 (no's 1-2, 4, 6-7, 13, 15, 17-18, 21, 24, 28 and 34-37). For the remaining 16 graves the gender is unknown. This means that although 33 graves were exhumed, 34 individuals are represented. Accordingly soil samples were taken at the 12 graves with no skeletal remains. These are no's 3, 5, 7, 9, 11-12, 16 and 33-37.

Grave goods and associated artifacts found includes beads, buttons, ceramics, glass, metal (including a plough share in no 4 and a silver ring in no 14), household artefacts (spoon, knives, hammer etc.), cow skin (no's 6 and 14), coffin wood, coffin lining, remains of blankets and other material and a baby bottle (grave number 3). These were found in grave number 1-2, 4, 6, 10, 13-15, 17-18, 20-28 and 31 (see Appendices for details).

All the mortal remains, grave goods, associations and soils samples reburied at the Mulenzhe cemetery, in the Nandoni area. Detailed documentation and photographs are to be found in Appendix I-XXXVII.

8. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is concluded that the exhumation of the graves was done successfully. In summary it can be stated that 36 graves were identified. The total number of graves exhumed are 33, but one of these had two individuals inside. There is also one alleged grave, of which the families could not remember the location. Although a number was

allocated thereto, it could not be exhumed. Three other graves were not exhumed but also numbered. Two of these falls outside of the area of development and for one consent could not be obtained from the family. As a result the numbering of the graves goes up to no 37.

All indications of graves were exhumed, with the exception of no 32 for which approval was not obtained from the family. This grave will not be impacted directly by the development as it lies within the servitude next to one of the roads.

- 1. It is therefore recommended that a management plan be drafted for approval by SAHRA, ensuring the preservation of this grave.**

The mortal remains and grave goods of all graves as well as soil samples where applicable, were taken for reburial. It should be noted that even though care was taken to exhume all mortal remains there are always a possibility that some graves may still be found during work on the site. In fact, number 19 was allocated to a grave of which the families could not remember the location. It could thus also not be exhumed proving that the possibility of encountering human remains during development is reasonably high.

- 2. Should human remains be found, work on site should cease, the area should be demarcated, and an archaeologist should be contacted immediately to investigate the find and to see to it that it be exhumed and relocated in an appropriate way.**
- 3. In lieu of the above, it is recommended that development in the area may continue.**

9. REFERENCES

- Republic of South Africa. 1980. Ordinance on Excavations (**Ordinance no. 12 of 1980**). The Government Printer: Pretoria.
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- Vhufa Hashu Heritage Consultants, n.d. **Archaeological impacts assessment process for the proposed Nandoni Residential Estate Sites Project on**

portion 6 of the farm Molenje 204 LT, Thulamela Local Municipality of the Vhembe District, Limpopo Province, South Africa. Polokwane.

LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDING BURIAL RELOCATION FORMS AND PHOTOGRAPHIC DOCUMENTATION

- I. grave number 1**
- II. grave number 2**
- III. grave number 3**
- IV. grave number 4**
- V. grave number 5**
- VI. grave number 6**
- VII. grave number 7**
- VIII. grave number 8**
- IX. grave number 9**
- X. grave number 10**
- XI. grave number 11**
- XII. grave number 12**
- XIII. grave number 13**
- XIV. grave number 14**
- XV. grave number 15**
- XVI. grave number 16**
- XVII. grave number 17**
- XVIII. grave number 18**
- XIX. grave number 19 (not exhumed, location unknown)**
- XX. grave number 20**
- XXI. grave number 21**
- XXII. grave number 22**
- XXIII. grave number 23**
- XXIV. grave number 24**
- XXV. grave number 25**
- XXVI. grave number 26**
- XXVII. grave number 27**
- XXVIII. grave number 28**
- XXIX. grave number 29 (not exhumed, outside of area)**
- XXX. grave number 30 (not exhumed , outside of area)**
- XXXI. grave number 31**
- XXXII. grave number 32 (not exhumed, no permission)**
- XXXIII. grave number 33**
- XXXIV. grave number 34**
- XXXV. grave number 35**
- XXXVI. grave number 36**
- XXXVII. grave number 37**