

Archaeological Mitigation Report:

The Archaeological documentation of a Late Iron Age stone-walled complex located on the farm Bruintjieslaagte 465 JT, Mpumalanga.

Prepared for: The South African Heritage Resources Authority (SAHRA).

Compiled by:



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I, Jean-Pierre Celliers as duly authorised representative of Kudzala Antiquity CC, hereby confirm my independence as a specialist and declare that neither I nor the Kudzala Antiquity CC have any interest, be it business, financial, personal or other, in any proposed activity, application or appeal in respect of which the client was appointed as Environmental Assessment practitioner, other than fair remuneration for work performed on this project.

SIGNATURE:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Celliers', written over a horizontal line.

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Executive summary

The Mpumalanga Escarpment and Lowveld served as homeland for the Bokoni people from AD1650 onwards. When the Maroteng (Rota, Pedi) moved across the Crocodile River from the south-west (Marapjane) into Mpumalanga during AD1650 they encountered Koni splinter groups who, by as late as AD1800, occupied the land between the Steelpoort River in the north and further east included the later towns and areas around Lydenburg and Ohrigstad to Sabie. Further to the south the Bokoni sphere of influence incorporated the Kwena Basin and even as far as Belfast and Carolina.

The limited archaeological research which has been done in this region (confined to Lydenburg and Kwena Basin) provided radio carbon dates for the late 17th century or early 18th century whilst the Marateng ceramics predates a stone walled settlement at one of the sites which was investigated by Collet (1979).

The Bokoni sphere of influence is evident from oral history which outlines the settlement history of this group. Historical evidence also outlines the expansion of the Pedi chiefdom from the Steelpoort region which was accompanied by clashes between successive Pedi chiefs such as Moukangwe, Morwamotse and Sekwati with Koni groups such as the Kgomane (Lydenburg/Dullstroom) and the Koni living at the stronghold Kutwaneng near Badfontein. At least one of the sons of a Pedi chief, namely Makopole, the eldest son of Thulare, is also described as 'a chief of the Bakoni who lived near Lydenburg (Delius, Maggs & Schoeman, 2014).

Archaeological evidence available for the distribution of stone walled sites Mpumalanga corresponds with historical descriptions of the Bokoni sphere of influence. Stone walled sites are located in a north to south running belt stretching between Lydenburg/Ohrigstad in the north to Carolina in the south. These settlements tend to cluster around rivers such as the Komati, Elands, Crocodile, Sabi, Spekboom and Dwars Rivers. The archaeological identity used to describe this region including pottery and the architectural styles of the stone walled settlements was called the Marateng tradition (Delius, Maggs & Schoeman, 2014).

The northern part of Bokoni is characterized by rugged terrain as can be found at the Leolo Mountain range and Dwars River Valley in the Steenkampsberg as well as mountainous terrain around Lydenburg, Ohrigstad and the Kwena Basin. The southern part however, comprises a undulating grassland and shallow river valleys. This geography was important during times of turmoil and instability as groups preferred to move into the northerly rugged terrain which offered defensible opportunities whilst the open terrain further to the south was vulnerable.

The environment being part of the Grassland Biome, was favourable for the BoKoni people's lifestyle, good grazing in conjunction with a temperate climate and relatively high rainfall ensured that crop production and domestic stock farming was possible.

Gentle hill slopes was the preferred location for their homesteads in between which were made extensive terraces upon which they cultivated crops like maize, and possibly sorghum and millet.

The large numbers of centrally located stone walled enclosures are assumed to have been used for the penning of stock such as cattle and smaller animals including goats and sheep. Networks of stone

packed cattle tracks or lanes which passed through the terracing linked the stone walled enclosures and served to guide the animals through the grain fields in an effort to minimize their impact on the crops.

As a result of this intensive farming practise there was probably a good surplus of grains and this may have contributed to the existing Mpumalanga coastal trade network.

The spatial organization at both sites BL 2 and BL 4A and B reflect the layout of the Badfontein walling (Huffman, 2007). These sites were investigated in detail by Collett (1979, 1982) and he divided them into groups of complex layout which consists of a central cattle pen with two opposing entrances and semi-circular walling attached around where houses were situated. This was then often encircled by a larger outer wall. These were interspersed with agricultural terracing.

The second group of stone walling was simple in layout and would often consist of single circular or oval stone walling only and spatially removed from the more complex core structures. These probably served as outlying stock enclosures. Site BL 2 conforms to the more complex type and probably served as a stock enclosure with attached living space or enclosures for smaller stock such as goats or sheep. In contrast site BL 4A conforms to the simple layout and was probably a stock enclosure with attached BL 4B a housing enclosure with adjacent terracing.

Economic subsistence at both sites is uncertain as no bone or other waste material such as charcoal was found which would indicate domestic food consumption and preparation.

The absence of animal bone or waste material (or any middens) on the sites means that no assumptions could be made about the collection of food or possible hunting practises and diet derived from such.

The presence of an upper grinding stone at site BL 2 and the terraces at BL 4B does confirm that at least part of the diet comprised grains.

No iron artefacts such as agricultural hoes or metal objects were found. There was also no evidence of permanent platforms, for example built of stone, for the storage of grain in baskets or clay caskets inside the living space areas. Such structures usually occur near living space areas near hearths where food was prepared.

It is probable that the events of the Difaqane (*Mfecane*) during the early 1820's when large scale conflict threatened the security of BoKoni resulted in the abandonment of this and many other similar sites in the area. Consequently it is possible that this site may have been occupied for only a short period which may explain the paucity of cultural material found there.

The mitigation of sites BL 2 and BL 4A and B is completed with the archaeological documentation thereof and it is recommended that Joubert en Seuns Citrus (Pty) Ltd applies for a demolition permit for sites BL 2 and BL 4A and B from the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA).

1. Background

The Joubert en Seuns Citrus (Pty) Ltd is in the process of obtaining environmental authorization to construct an irrigation dam on their farm Brintjieslaagte 465 JT in Schoemanskloof, in the Mbombela Local Municipal area, Mpumalanga. The project footprint area is located on the higher altitude areas of this farm which is ideal for the location of an irrigation dam which will be utilized for water supply to citrus orchards at lower levels of the farm. The dam will consist of an earthen wall which will be constructed in a narrow valley with an approximate length of 370 metres including the spillway, and height of some 20 metres. The expected surface area of the dam will be approximately 13,4 ha.

A Phase 1 Heritage Impact Assessment was conducted in April 2017 by Mr JP Celliers and a Late Iron Age stone walled complex was identified. The proposed dam position would negatively impact on some parts of this site and archaeological mitigation was recommended. This was approved by SAHRA comment (Case ID: 12231) and a permit application for mitigation was approved by SAHRA and issued on 17 July 2018 (Permit ID: 2750).

In terms of this, sites BL 2 and BL 4A and B were subjected to a Phase 2 archaeological excavation with the following objectives:

- Bush clearing at the sites (BL 2 and BL 4A & B)
- Systematic shovel test pit excavation in order to determine if there is any archaeological deposit.
- Based on information gathered thus, certain features or areas will be further excavated with the aim of obtaining cultural material in order to positively identify the cultural group.
- If possible, obtain any datable material

With reference to the above, when formal excavation is necessary it will be conducted as follows:

- Selecting and excavating parts of the enclosures that are likely to yield maximum information about the cultural identity of the site, based on the initial shovel test pits.
- Standard archaeological methodology used on Farming Community sites.
- Sediments will be excavated in 5cm spits until stratigraphic layers are reached.
- All sediments will be screened through 2mm and 5mm screens to recover cultural material, potential botanical remains as well as bone (for possible dating).

This report outlines the findings of the Phase 2 archaeological documentation of sites BL 2 and BL 4A and B.

2. The Project Area

Since 1945, Nelspruit and the farms to the west thereof, including Bruintjieslaagte, formed part of the Lydenburg district. This remained the case up until 1902, when the Barberton district was proclaimed. The farm area fell under the jurisdiction of the White River ward in the Barberton district. In 1930 the Nelspruit district was proclaimed and in 1977 the area was re-classified as the Nelspruit Magisterial District. By 1994 the farm area was still located within this district. (Bergh,1999: 17, 20-27). By 1902 the current Bruintjieslaagte was located on the farms Koedoeshoek 344 and Geluk 486. By the 1930s, it was on Koedoeshoek 33 and Geluk 24. Farm references changed again in 1969 and at that time the property was located on Koedoeshoek 301 JT and Geluk 299 JT. By 1984 the farm Bruintjieslaagte 465 JT had been proclaimed, leaving the farms Koedoeshoek and Geluk reduced in size.

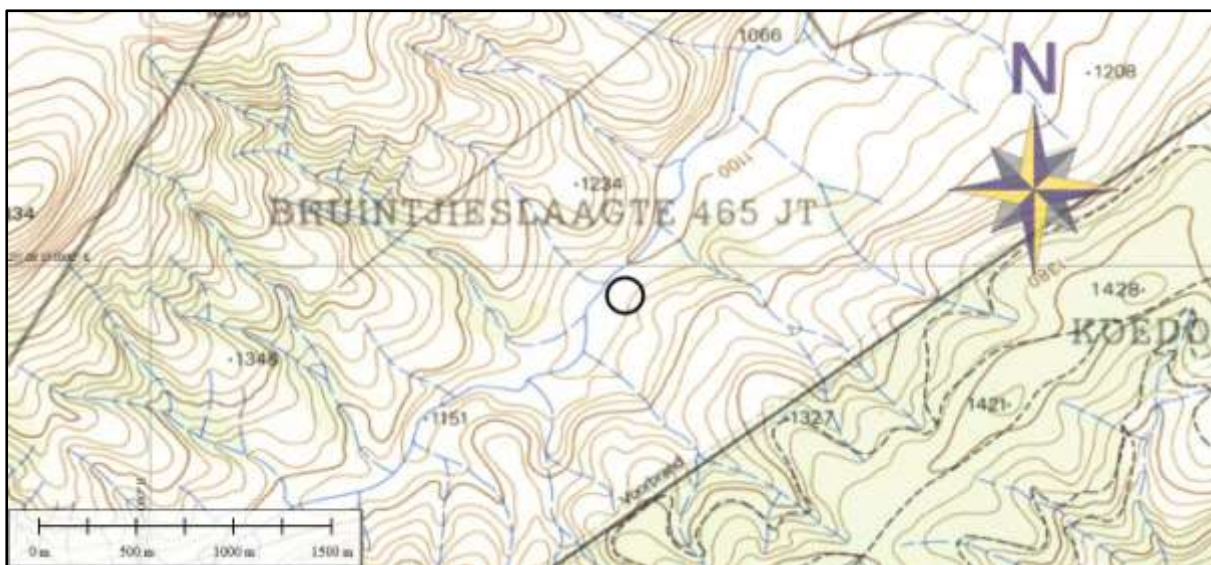


Figure 1. The Bruintjieslaagte project site is indicated with a black circle on this 1:50 000 topographical map 2530 BC.

The farm is located in the Schoemanskloof, a fertile agricultural valley along which the Crocidile River flows eastwards towards the Mpumalanga Lowveld. This River originates from the higher altitude Kwena Basin located roughly west of the Schoemanskloof between Bambi and Lydenburg. The Schoemanskloof is located within the Mbombela Local Municipal area.

3. Contextualising the Project Area

The project area is located in the midst of an archaeologically and historically significant cultural landscape which has large diversity. Heritage remains dating from the pre-historic era up to and

including the historic (colonial) period is abundant. Well known Stone and Iron Age sites as well as historic heritage remains occur in the larger area and particularly along the Eastern Lowveld escarpment. The Schoemanskloof Valley, where the farm Bruintjieslaagte is located, was home to Stone Age a later Iron Age people before it was colonized by European settlers. In the following paragraphs the project area will be contextualized in terms of its pre-history and more recent historic events.

3.1. Stone Age Period

In Mpumalanga Province the Drakensberg separates the interior plateau also known as the Highveld from the low-lying subtropical Lowveld, which stretches to the Indian Ocean. A number of rivers amalgamate into two main river systems, the Olifants River and the Komati River. This fertile landscape has provided resources for humans and their predecessors for more than 1.7 million years (Esterhuizen & Smith in Delius, 2007).

The initial attraction of abundant foods in the form of animals and plants eventually also led to the discovery of and utilisation of various minerals including ochre, iron and copper. People also obtained foreign resources by means of trade from the coast. From 900 AD this included objects brought across the ocean from foreign shores.

The Early Stone Age (ESA)

In South Africa the ESA dates from about 2 million to 250 000 years ago, in other words from the early to middle Pleistocene. The archaeological record shows that as the early ancestors progressed physically, mentally and socially, bone and stone tools were developed. One of the most influential advances was their control of fire and diversifying their diet by exploitation of the natural environment (Esterhuizen & Smith in Delius, 2007).

The earliest tools used by hominids date to around 2.5 million years ago from the site of Gona in Ethiopia. Stone tools from this site shows that early hominids had to cognitive ability to select raw material and shape it for a specific application. Many bones found in association with stone tools like these have cut marks which lead scientists to believe that early hominids purposefully chipped cobblestones to produce flakes with a sharp edge capable of cutting and butchering animal carcasses. This supplementary diet of higher protein quantities ensured that brain development of hominids took place more rapidly.

Mary Leaky discovered stone tools like these in the Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania during the 1960s. The stone tools are named after this gorge and are known as relics from the Oldowan industry. These tools, only found in Africa, are mainly simple flakes, which were struck from cobbles. This method of manufacture remained for about 1.5 million years. Although there is continuing debate about who made these tools, two hominids may have been responsible. The first of these was an early form of

Homo and the second was *Paranthropus robustus*, which became extinct about 1 million years ago (Esterhuizen & Smith in Delius, 2007).

Sometime later, around 1.7 million years ago, more specialised tools known as Acheulean tools appeared. These are named after tools from a site in France by the name of Saint Acheul, where they were first discovered in the 1800s. It is argued that these tools had their origin in Africa and then spread towards Europe and Asia with the movement of hominids out of Africa. These tools had longer and sharper edges and shapes, which suggest that they could be used for a larger range of activities, including the butchering of animals, chopping of wood, digging roots and cracking bone. *Homo ergaster* was probably responsible for the manufacture of Acheulean tools in South Africa. This physical type was arguably physically similar to modern humans, had a larger brain and modern face, body height and proportion very similar to modern humans. *Homo ergaster* was able to flourish in a variety of habitats in part because they were dependent on tools. They adapted to drier, more open grassland settings. Because these early people were often associated with water sources such as rivers and lakes, sites where they left evidence of their occupation are very rare. Most tools of these people have been washed into caves, eroded out of riverbanks and washed downriver. An example in Mpumalanga is Maleoskop on the farm Rietkloof where Early Stone Age (ESA) tools have been found. This is one of only a handful such sites in Mpumalanga.

Middle Stone Age (MSA)

A greater variety of tools with diverse sizes and shapes appeared by 250 000 before present (BP). These replaced the large hand axes and cleavers of the ESA. This technological advancement introduces the Middle Stone Age (MSA). This period is characterised by tools that are smaller in size but different in manufacturing technique (Esterhuizen & Smith in Delius, 2007).

In contrast to the ESA technology of removing flakes from a core, MSA tools were flakes to start with. They were of a predetermined size and shape and were made by preparing a core of suitable material and striking off the flake so that it was flaked according to a shape which the toolmaker desired. Elongated, parallel-sided blades, as well as triangular flakes are common finds in these assemblages. Mounting of stone tools onto wood or bone to produce spears, knives and axes became popular during the MSA. These early humans not only settled close to water sources but also occupied caves and shelters. The MSA represents the transition of more archaic physical type (*Homo*) to anatomically modern humans, *Homo sapiens*.

The MSA has not been extensively studied in Mpumalanga but evidence of this period has been excavated at Bushman Rock Shelter, a well-known site on the farm Klipfonteinhoek in the Ohrigstad district. This cave was excavated twice in the 1960s by Louw and later by Eloff. The MSA layers show that the cave was repeatedly visited over a long period. Lower layers have been dated to over 40 000 BP while the top layers date to approximately 27 000 BP (Esterhuizen & Smith in Delius, 2007; Bergh, 1998).

Later Stone Age (LSA)

Early hunter gatherer societies were responsible for a number of technological innovations and social transformations during this period starting at around 20 000 years BP. Hunting of animals proved more successful with the innovation of the bow and link-shaft arrow. These arrows were made up of a bone tip which was poisoned and loosely linked to the main shaft of the arrow. Upon impact, the tip and shaft separated leaving the poisoned arrow-tip imbedded in the prey animal. Additional innovations include bored stones used as digging stick weights to uproot tubers and roots; small stone tools, mostly less than 25mm long, used for cutting of meat and scraping of hides; polished bone tools such as needles; twine made from plant fibres and leather; tortoiseshell bowls; ostrich eggshell beads; as well as other ornaments and artwork (Esterhuizen & Smith in Delius, 2007).

At Bushman Rock Shelter the MSA is also represented and starts at around 12 000 BP but only lasted for some 3 000 years. The LSA is of importance in geological terms as it marks the transition from the Pleistocene to the Holocene, which was accompanied by a gradual shift from cooler to warmer temperatures. This change had its greatest influence on the higher-lying areas of South Africa. Both Bushman Rock Shelter and a nearby site, Heuningneskrans, have revealed a greater use in plant foods and fruit during this period (Esterhuizen & Smith in Delius, 2007; Bergh, 1998).

Faunal evidence suggests that LSA hunter-gatherers trapped and hunted zebra, warthog and bovids of various sizes. They also diversified their protein diet by gathering tortoises and land snails (*Achatina*) in large quantities.

Ostrich eggshell beads were found in most of the levels at these two sites. It appears that there is a gap of approximately 4 000 years in the Mpumalanga LSA record between 9 000 BP and 5 000 BP. This may be a result of generally little Stone Age research being conducted in the province. It is, however, also a period known for rapid warming and major climate fluctuation, which may have led people to seek out protected environments in this area. The Mpumalanga Stone Age sequence is visible again during the mid-Holocene at the farm Honingklip near Badplaas in the Carolina district (Esterhuizen & Smith in Delius, 2007; Bergh, 1998).

At this location, two LSA sites were located on opposite sides of the Nhlazatshe River, about one kilometre west of its confluence with the Teespruit. These two sites are located on the foothills of the Drakensberg, where the climate is warmer than the Highveld but also cooler than the Lowveld (Esterhuizen & Smith in Delius, 2007; Bergh, 1998).

Nearby the sites, dated to between 4 870 BP and 200 BP are four panels, which contain rock art. Colouring material is present in all the excavated layers of the site, which makes it difficult to determine whether the rock art was painted during the mid- or later Holocene. Stone walls at both sites date from the last 250 years of hunter gatherer occupation and they may have served as protection from predators and intruders (Esterhuizen & Smith in Delius, 2007; Bergh, 1998).

3.2. Iron Age Period

The period referred to as the Early Iron Age (AD 200-1500 approx.) started when presumably Karanga (north-east African) herder groups moved into the north eastern parts of South Africa. It is believed that these people may have been responsible for making of the famous Lydenburg Heads, ceramic masks dating to approximately 600AD.

Ludwig von Bezing was a boy of more or less 10 years of age when he first saw pieces of the now famous Lydenburg heads in 1957 while playing in the veld on his father's farm near Lydenburg. Five years later von Bezing developed an interest in archaeology and went back to where he first saw the shards. Between 1962 and 1966 he frequently visited the Sterkspruit valley to collect pieces of the seven clay heads. Von Bezing joined the archaeological club of the University of Cape Town when he studied medicine at this institution.

He took his finds to the university at the insistence of the club. He had not only found the heads, but potsherds, iron beads, copper beads, ostrich eggshell beads, pieces of bones and millstones. Archaeologists of the University of Cape Town and WITS Prof. Ray Innskeep and Dr Mike Evers excavated the site where von Bezing found the remains. This site and in particular its unique finds (heads, clay masks) instantly became internationally famous and was henceforth known as the Lydenburg Heads site.

Two of the clay masks are large enough to probably fit over the head of a child, the other five are approximately half that size. The masks have both human and animal features, a characteristic that may explain that they had symbolic use during initiation- and other religious ceremonies. Carbon dating proved that the heads date to approximately 600 AD and was made by Early Iron Age people. These people were Bantu herders and agriculturists and probably populated Southern Africa from areas north-east of the Limpopo river. Similar ceramics were later found in the Gustav Klingbiel Nature Reserve and researchers believe that they are related to the ceramic wares (pottery) of the Lydenburg Heads site in form, function and decorative motive. This sequence of pottery is formally known as the Klingbiel type pottery. No clay masks were found in a context similar to this pottery sequence.

Two larger heads and five smaller ones make up the Lydenburg find. The Lydenburg heads are made of the same clay used in making household pottery. It is also made with the same technique used in the manufacture of household pottery. The smaller heads display the modeling of a curved forehead and the back neck as it curves into the skull. Around the neck of each of the heads, two or three rings are engraved horizontally and are filled in with hatching marks to form a pattern. A ridge of clay over the forehead and above the ears indicates the hairline. On the two larger heads a few rows of small clay balls indicate hair decorations. The mouth consists of lips – the smaller heads also have teeth. The seventh head has the snout of an animal and is the only head that represents an animal.

Some archaeological research was done during the 1970's at sites belonging to the Early Iron Age (EIA), location Plaston, a settlement close to White River (Evers, 1977). This site is located on a spur between the White River and a small tributary. It is situated on holding 119 at Plaston.

The site was discovered during house building operations when a collection of pottery sherds was excavated. The finds consisted of pottery shards both on the surface and excavated.

Some of the pottery vessels were decorated with a red ochre wash. Two major decoration motifs occurred on the pots:

- Punctuation, using a single stylus; and
- Broad line incision, the more common motif.

A number of EIA pottery collections from Mpumalanga and Limpopo may be compared to the Plaston sample. They include Silver Leaves, Eiland, Matola, Klingbiel and the Lydenburg Heads site. The Plaston sample is distinguished from samples of these sites in terms of rim morphology, the majority of rims from Plaston are rounded and very few bevelled. Rims from the other sites show more bevelled rims (Evers, 1977:176).

Early Iron Age pottery was also excavated by archaeologist, Prof. Tom Huffman during 1997 on location where the Riverside Government complex is currently situated (Huffman, 1998). This site is situated a few km north of Nelspruit next to the confluence of the Nelspruit and Crocodile River. It was discovered during the course of an environmental impact assessment for the new Mpumalanga Government complex offices. A bulldozer cutting exposed storage pits, cattle byres, a burial and midden on the crest of a gentle slope. Salvage excavations conducted during December 1997 and March 1998 recovered the burial and contents of several pits.

One of the pits contained, among other items, pottery dating to the eleventh century (AD 1070 ± 40 BP). This relates the pottery to the Mzonjani and Broederstroom phases. The early assemblage belongs to the Kwale branch of the Urewe tradition.

During the early 1970s Dr Mike Evers of the University of the Witwatersrand conducted fieldwork and excavations in the Eastern Transvaal. Two areas were studied: the first area was the Letaba area south of the Groot Letaba River, west of the Lebombo Mountains, east of the great escarpment and north of the Olifants River. The second area was the Eastern Transvaal escarpment area between Lydenburg and Machadodorp.

These two areas are referred to as the Lowveld and escarpment respectively. The earliest work on Iron Age archaeology was conducted by Trevor and Hall in 1912. This revealed prehistoric copper-, gold- and iron mines. Schwelinus (1937) reported smelting furnaces, a salt factory and terraces near Phalaborwa. In the same year D.S. van der Merwe located ruins, graves, furnaces, terraces and soapstone objects in the Letaba area.

Mason (1964, 1965, 1967, 1968) started the first scientific excavation in the Lowveld, followed by N.J. van der Merwe and Scully. M. Klapwijk (1973, 1974) also excavated an EIA site at Silverleaves and Evers and van den Berg (1974) excavated at Harmony and Eiland, both EIA sites.

Research by the National Cultural History Museum resulted in the excavation of an EIA site in Sekhukuneland, known as Mototolong (Van Schalkwyk, 2007). The site is characterized by four large cattle kraals containing ceramics, which may be attributed to the Mzonjani and Doornkop occupational phases.

Various historians and ethnographers describe that the Mpumalanga Lowveld was frequented by Swazi and Sotho-Tswana groups during the Late Iron Age (AD 1500-1820's) (Barnard, 1975; Bergh, 1998; Bornman, 2002; Herbst, 1985; Myburgh, 1949).

In the Mpumalanga Lowveld a sub-group of the Northern Sotho, known as the eastern Sotho, were present nearby the eastern escarpment. They are known as the Pulana, Pai (emaMbayi) and Kutswe, these people moved from northern Swaziland further northwards when Swazi expanded into this area during the *mfecane* (Bergh, 1998:107-108). One of the recorded events relates to the attack of the Ndwande under Zwibe on the Pedi in 1825 (Bergh, 1998:114-115). This seems to have started from the Lowveld in the region of the Pretoriuskop area towards Steelpoort.

During the nineteenth century the Lowveld of Mpumalanga was extensively settled by both Bantu and European groups that migrated into this area. Bantu migration was mainly as a result of political upheaval during the *mfecane* ("the crushing" in Nguni). This was a period of bloody tribal and faction struggles in present-day KwaZulu Natal and on the Highveld area, which occurred around the early 1820's until the late 1830's (Bergh, 1998). 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 (Giliomee, 2003). During this period, a movement of Swazi people took place to the areas north and northwest of Swaziland. As a result reports indicate that the Swazi were living in the Lowveld area by the 1840's (Bergh, 1998).

Before the *mfecane* period (1820's) small farmer groups including the Pai and Pulana resided in the mountainous area surrounding Barberton and Nelspruit. The conflict during the *mfecane*, when the Swazi under Mswati II raided these smaller groups, resulted in scattered settlement of those who managed to escape the Swazi onslaught. Evidence of these scattered settlements is sometimes found in the form of small stone walled enclosures in and around Barberton, Nelspruit and onwards to the Schoemanskloof.

According to Bornman:

"Mswati continued his attacks on the emaMbayi (Sotho) tribes living south of the Ngwenya (Crocodile) and the Mlambongwane (Kaaop) Rivers, who fled into the present day Kruger National Park and into the mountainous area of Mphakeni (Crocodile Gorge) and the Three Sisters Mountains.

But as soon as the Swazi army had retreated, the emaMbayi returned to their old haunts and reoccupied them.

Again the Swazi regiments drove the emaMbayi from this area. The battle, which took place near the creek, today known as Low's Creek, west of the Three Sisters Mountain, was so fierce that the creek ran red with the blood of the slain. After the battle the Swazi named the creek: the red (or blood) river (Mantibovu) and the Three Sisters they named Mbayiyane, meaning the 'mountain of the emaMbayi'.

Mswati proceeded systematically to settle this area with members of his own family and trusted commoners after they killed Tsibeni and evicted the remnants of his people who fled to an area near Legogote, where they are still living today" (Bornman, 1995).

3.3. Historic Period

By the late 1820s, a mass-movement of Dutch speaking people in the Cape Colony started advancing into the northern areas. This was due to feelings of mounting dissatisfaction caused by economical and other circumstances in the Cape. This movement later became known as the "Great Trek". This migration resulted in a massive increase in the numbers of people of European descent. As can be expected, the movement of whites into the Northern provinces would have a significant impact on the local farmer - herders who populated the land.

The "Great Trek" of the Voortrekkers started with the Tregardt- van Rensburg trek in 1835. The two men met where Tregardt and his followers crossed the Orange River at Buffelsvlei (Aliwal North). Here van Rensburg joined the trek northwards. On August 23, 1837 the Tregardt trek left for Delagoabay from the Soutpansberg. They travelled eastwards alongside the Olifants River to the eastern foothills of the Drakensberg. From here they travelled through the Lowveld and the current Kruger National Park where they eventually crossed the Lebombo mountains in March 1838. They reached the Fortification at Lourenço Marques on 13 April 1838 (Bergh, 1998:124-125).

Permanent European (Voortrekker) settlement of the eastern areas of Mpumalanga can be traced back to a commission under the leadership of A.H. (Hendrik) Potgieter who negotiated with the Portuguese Governor at Delagoabaai in 1844 for land. It was agreed that these settlers could settle in an area that was four days journey from the east coast of Africa between the 10° and 26° south latitudes. Voortrekkers started migrating into the area in 1845. Andries-Ohrigstad was the first town established in this area in July 1845 after the Voortrekkers successfully negotiated for land with the Pedi Chief Sekwati. Farms were given out as far west as the Olifants River. The western boundary was not officially defined but at a Volksraad meeting in 1849 it was decided that the Elands River would be the boundary between the districts of Potchefstroom and Lydenburg as this eastern portion of the Transvaal was then known (Bergh, 1998).

Due to internal strife and differences between the various Voortrekker groups that settled in the broader Transvaal region, the settlers in the Ohrigstad area now governed from the town of Lydenburg decided to secede from the Transvaal Republic in 1856. The Republic of Lydenburg laid claim to a large area that included not only the land originally obtained from the Pedi Chief Sekwati in 1849 but also other areas of land negotiated for from the Swazis. The Republic of Lydenburg was a vast area and stretched from the northern Strydpoort mountains to Wakkerstroom in the south and Bronkhortsspruit in the west to the Swazi border and the Lebombo mountains east.

As can be expected, the migration of Europeans into the north would have a significant impact on the indigenous people who populated the land. This was also the case in Mpumalanga. In 1839 Mswati succeeded Sobhuza (also known as Somhlomo) as king of the Swazi. Threatened by the ambitions of his half brothers, including Malambule, who had support from the Zulu king Mpande, he turned to the Ohrigstad Boers for protection. He claimed that the land that the Boers had settled on was Swazi property. The Commandant General of the Ohrigstad settlement, Andries Hendrik Potgieter, responded that the land was ceded to him by the Pedi leader Sekwati, in return for protection of the Pedi from Swazi attacks (Giliomee, 2003).

However, in reaction to the increasingly authoritarian way in which Potgieter conducted affairs at Ohrigstad, the Volksraad of Ohrigstad saw Mswati's offer as a means to obtain more respectable title deeds for the property (Bonner, 1978). According to a sales contract set up between the Afrikaners and the Swazi people on 25 July 1846, the whites were the rightful owners of the land that had its southern border at the Crocodile River, which stretched out in a westerly direction up to Elandspruit; of which the eastern border was where the Crocodile and Komati rivers joined and then extended up to Delagoa bay in the north (Van Rooyen, 1951). The Europeans bought the land for a 100 heads of cattle (Huyser).

The discovery of gold in South Africa had a major impact in the region. In 1873 gold was discovered in Pilgrims Rest, 80 kilometres north of Nelspruit. This drew scores of prospectors into the region. The establishment of Barberton in 1884, after the discovery of the Sheba gold reef, also brought about greater activity in the area. The Nelspruit settlement first received official recognition in August 1884 (South African History Online 2013).

The discovery of diamonds and gold in the Northern provinces had very important consequences for South Africa. After the discovery of these resources, the British, who at the time had colonized the Cape and Natal, had intentions of expanding their territory into the northern Boer republics. This eventually led to the Anglo-Boer War, which took place between 1899 and 1902 in South Africa, and which was one of the most turbulent times in South Africa's history.

Even before the outbreak of war in October 1899 British politicians, including Sir Alfred Milner and Mr. Chamberlain, had declared that should Britain's differences with the Z.A.R. result in violence, it would mean the end of republican independence. This decision was not immediately publicised, and as a consequence republican leaders based their assessment of British intentions on the more moderate

public utterances of British leaders. Consequently, in March 1900, they asked Lord Salisbury to agree to peace on the basis of the status quo ante bellum. Salisbury's reply was, however, a clear statement of British war aims (Du Preez, 1977).

During the British advance between February to September 1900, Lord Roberts replaced Genl. Buller as the supreme commander and applied a different tactic in confronting the Boer forces instead of a frontal attack approach he opted to encircle the enemy. This proved successful and resulted for instance in the surrender of Genl. Piet Cronje and 4000 burghers at Paardeberg on 27 February 1900.

This was the start of a number of victories for the British and shortly after they occupied Pretoria on 5 June 1900, a skirmish at Diamond Hill resulted in the Boer forces under command of Louis Botha, retreated alongside the Delagoa Bay railway to the east. Between the 21-27 August, Botha and 5000 burghers defended their line at Bergendal but were overwhelmed by superior numbers and artillery. This resulted in the Boer forces retreating even further east and three weeks later the British reached Komatipoort and thus the whole of the Eastern Transvaal south of the Delagoa Bay railway line was now occupied by British Forces.

General Louis Botha, with his Boer forces, marched through Nelspruit on 11 September 1900. A week later, on 18 September 1900, the British battalion of Lieutenant General F. Roberts arrived in Nelspruit. Botha and Robert's routes would have taken them through the area where Bruintjieslaagte is located today. No major skirmishes in the war took place near Nelspruit, but a concentration camp for black people was established a small distance to the north of the town. Another event of import in the area was the arrival of the President of the Transvaal, Paul Kruger, in Nelspruit on 29 May 1900, where he received a message saying Lord Roberts had annexed the Transvaal. Kruger declared the annexation illegitimate on 3 September 1900, the same day that Nelspruit was proclaimed as the administrative capital of the Transvaal Republic. Kruger left Nelspruit in June of that year in order to board a ship to Swaziland (Geschiedenisatlas van Suid-Afrika 1999: 51; 54).

During the Battle of Helvetia, ZAR forces succeeded in capturing "The Lady Roberts" British naval gun after a surprize attack on enemy fortifications located at Helvetia between Lydenburg and Machadodorp on 28 December 1900. It was the only gun captured during the War and later destroyed by the ZAR forces to prevent the British claiming it back. The largest portions of the gun are at the National Museum in Pretoria but an inscribed piece which comes from the breech of the gun is part of the Lydenburg Museum collection.

4. Methodology

4.1. Survey, mapping and photography

The main aim of the investigation and mitigation of sites BL 2 and BL 4A and B was to document the settlement as the sites will be destroyed when the proposed irrigation dam will be constructed by Joubert en Seuns Citrus (Pty) Ltd.

The documentation of the sites was achieved by detailed mapping of the stone walled enclosures with the use of a professional land surveyor and specialised equipment (total station).

Sites BL 2 and BL 4A and B were also extensively photographed. The spatial organization derived from this documentation provided some evidence regarding the historical and cultural affiliation of this stone walled site.

The site comprises three spatially removed areas (Site BL 2 and BL 4A and B) but represent components of a single site

4.2. Archaeological excavations

Stone walled sites BL 2, BL 4A and BL 4B were earmarked for archaeological testing by systematic excavation. This was done by combining shovel test pits and test trenches inside the stone walled enclosures and its additions where applicable. To explore larger surface area a 2m x 2m excavation square was included.

Systematic archaeological excavation proposes to extract cultural material or identify features within the sites which will assist in reconstructing the lifestyle and identity of the people who built and occupied the living space. It tells us more about the time-space utilization of the settlement.

4.3. Detail analysis

No detail analysis of any material collected during the mitigation was done as limited archaeological material occurred on the site. No evidence of ash or remains of charcoal was found on the sites.

5. Documentation of Sites BL 2 and BL 4 A & B

Both sites BL 2 and BL 4A & B were mapped in detail by professional land surveyors using a Trimble S5 Total Station. This was done in order to document the respective sites and assist in planning the excavation trenches and shovel test pits. It is important to map stone walled sites like this in detail as the layout of the complexes are indicators of cultural identity and function. The stone walled sites of the Mpumalanga escarpment area are notorious for paucity of cultural material within the archaeological deposit and therefore much value is generated by detailed mapping of the sites.

5.1. Stone-walled complexes in the larger region

The later phases of the Iron Age (AD 1600-1800's) are represented by various indigenous groups including Ndebele, Swazi, BaKoni, and Pedi, marked by extensive stonewalled settlements found throughout the escarpment and particularly around Machadodorp, Lydenburg, Badfontein, Sekhukuneland, Roosenekal and Steelpoort.

Up until the 1930s, malaria would have occurred sporadically in the area during the rainy season. During the first half of the nineteenth century, Tsetse flies also thrived in this area. 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 and the "sleeping sickness" transferred by Tsetse flies was a constant threat to humans and their stock (Bergh 1999: 3; Shillington 1995: 32). Therefore the elevated location of the stone-walled sites on Bruintjieslaagte was probably purposeful to avoid these pests. It also points to the ancient origin of the sites.

The BaKoni were the architects of a unique archaeological stone building complex who by the 19th century spoke seKoni which was similar to Sepedi. The core elements of this tradition are stone-walled enclosures, roads and terraces. These settlement complexes may be divided into three basic features: homesteads, terraces and cattle tracks. Researchers such as Mike Evers (1975) and David Collett (1982) identified three basic settlement layouts in this area. Basically these sites can be divided into simple and complex ruins. Simple ruins are normally small in relation to more complex sites and have smaller central cattle byres and fewer huts. Complex ruins consist of a central cattle byre, which has two opposing entrances and a number of semi-circular enclosures surrounding it. The perimeter wall of these sites is sometimes poorly visible. Houses are built between the central enclosure and the perimeter wall. These are all connected by track-ways referred to as cattle tracks. These tracks are made by building stone walls, which forms a walkway for cattle to the centrally located cattle byres.

A combination of these features occurs on a few dispersed sites on the farm Bruintjieslaagte. Though spatially clustered and some distance separating individual sites, it forms part of one large settlement. The individual sites range from simple enclosures, which consist of single or two concentric

stonewalled circles found in isolated small settlements, to semi-complex sites with large central enclosures which have smaller enclosures attached to their outer walls. The walls are built with undressed locally occurring stone.

5.2. Sites BL 2 and BL 4 A & B

Site BL 2 is a typical LIA stone-walled homestead associated with the Badfontein type stone-walling (Huffman, 2007). The style and time-period is contemporary with the 17th century BoKoni region (Delius, 2007). The circular enclosure comprises dry-packed stone walling varying in height of 0,3 - 0,5m high and often as much as 0,8m thick. The site is located on a slope which is elevated on the east and progresses down slope to the west. The stone used for the construction of the walling was locally available as is evident from the general area.

The site is located approximately 300 meters to the east of a small tributary of the Crocodile River and it is highly probable that the inhabitants of the site collected their drinking water from this source. Domestic animals such as cattle, sheep and goats would have grazed nearby as the higher altitude setting would have had good grazing pastures. There are a number of very large indigenous trees and shrubs as well as thick undergrowth resulting in the site being much overgrown with vegetation and the soil impregnated with roots and insects. The site is currently totally covered by the tree canopy and in permanent shade. It is debatable if this was the case upon its inception.

This particular site consists of two oval outer enclosures which, on the western side measures approximately 6m (north-west/ south east) and 4m (east/ west). The second, larger central or inner enclosure attached to this, measures approximately 10m (north east/ south west) and 12m (north-west/ south east). This feature was possibly used as central stock enclosure with attached cells for houses (see figure 2).

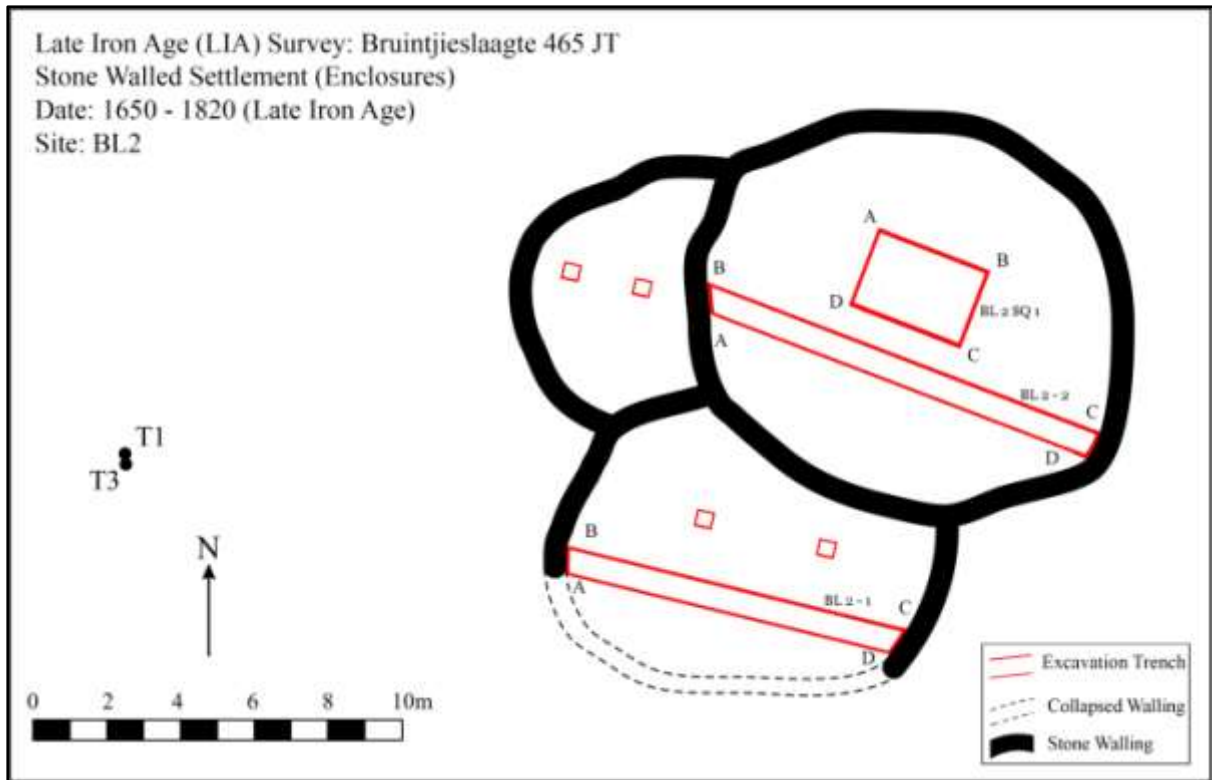


Figure 2. Site BL.2. Site plan with the test trench excavations, excavation square and shovel test pits indicated in red.



Figure 3. Site BL.2. The photo was taken before clearing and excavation. This is a view of the site from the south-east onto the central inner enclosure.



Figure 4. Site BL 2. This is a view from inside the central inner enclosure towards the south-east.

Site BL 4A is a large outer oval-shaped stone-walled kraal measuring approximately 18m (north east/south west) and a semi-circular inner enclosure with mostly collapsed walling. The walling has mostly collapsed in the south eastern side and the terrain slopes steeply upwards in an eastern and south eastern direction. This structure was possibly exclusively used for domestic stock (see figure 5).

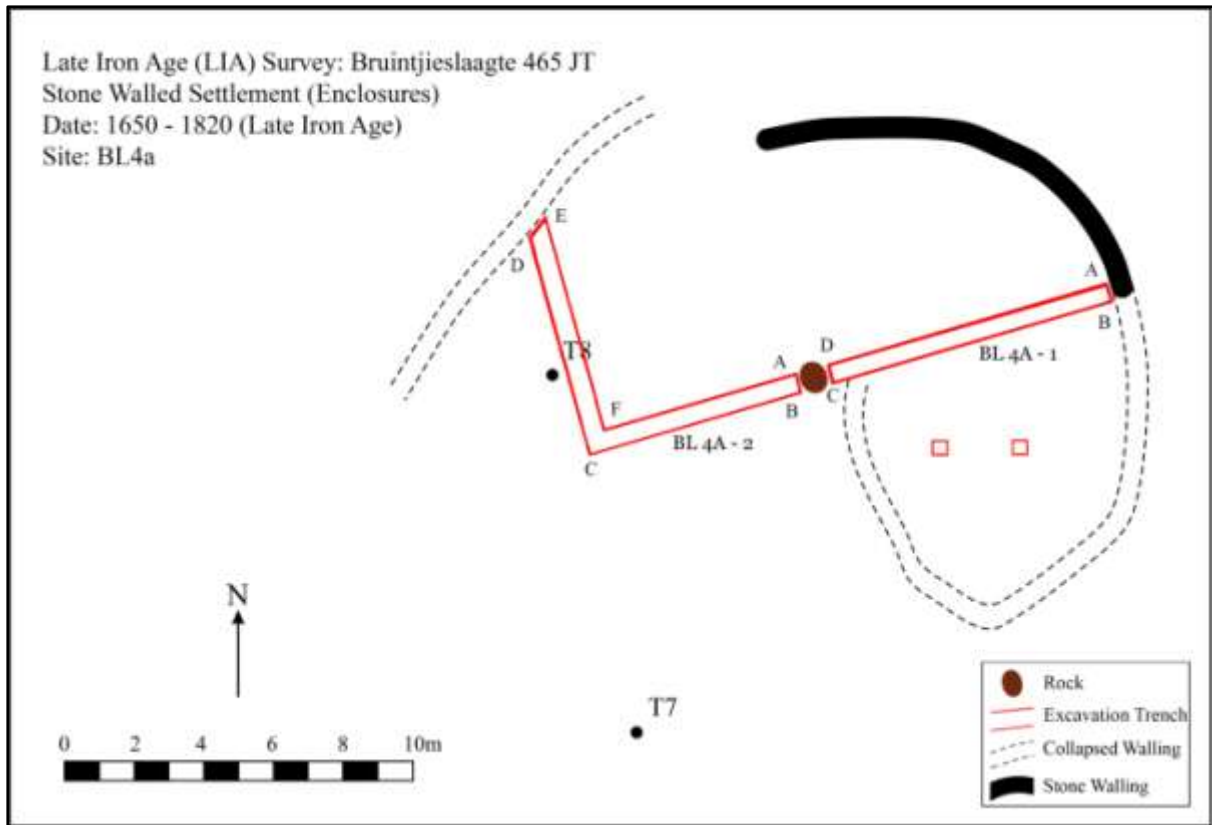


Figure 5. Site BL 4A. Site plan with the test trench excavations and shovel test pits indicated in red.



Figure 6. Site BL 4A. The collapsed oval-shaped wall viewed in a north-western direction.



Figure 7. Some of the better preserved walling visible at site BL4 B. The scale is 50 cm.

Associated **site BL 4B** consists of an enclosure which measures approximately 9m across (east/west). The walls are well-defined and reach a height of 1,5m and even higher in places. The walls are very sturdy and quite thick measuring up to 900cm broad in places. There is a prominent entrance on the south-eastern side with prominent “gate posts” in the form of two large monoliths opposite one another. There is only one entrance. Further to the southeast there are also some poorly defined terraces (see figure 8). This enclosure was possibly used as a housing unit.

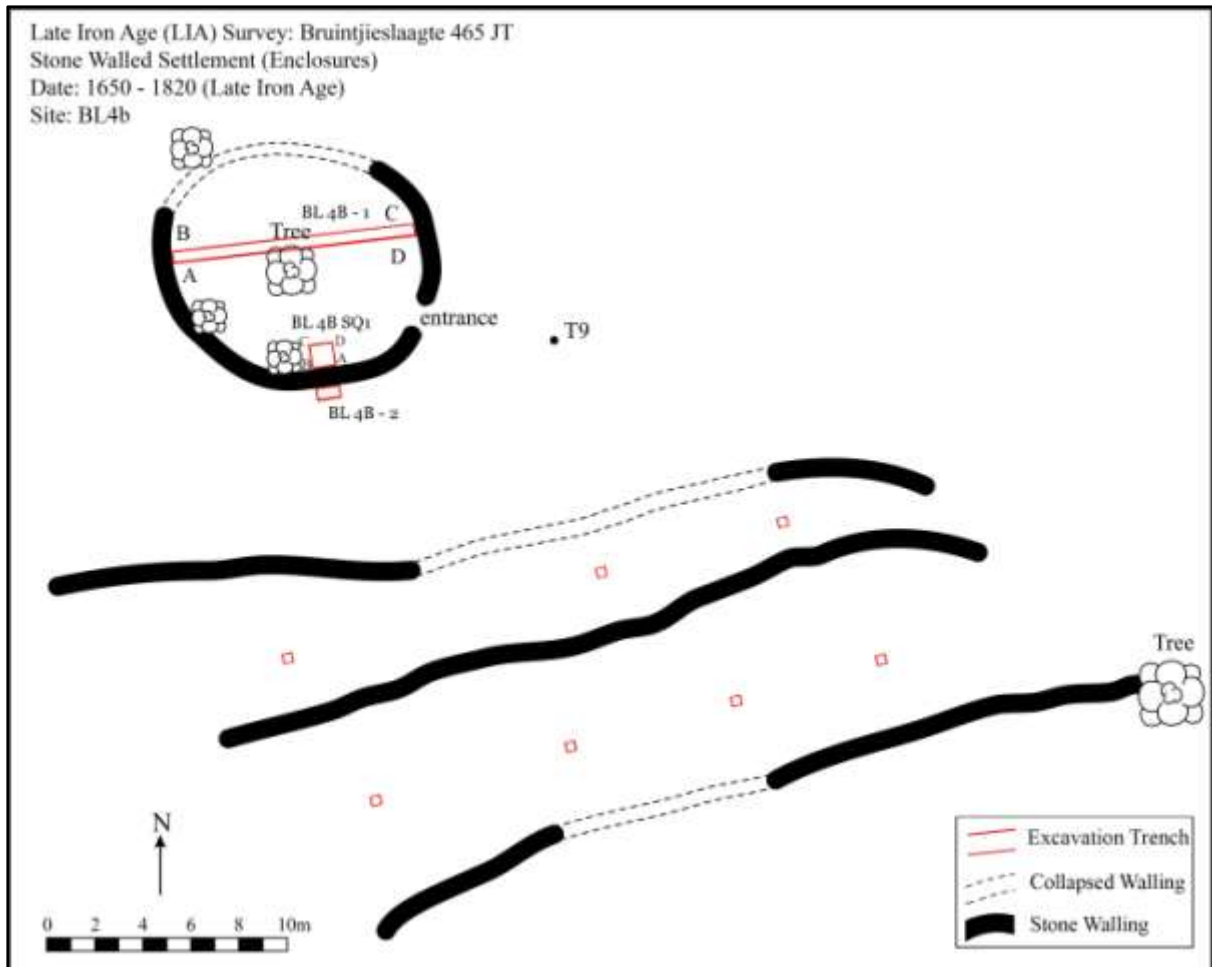


Figure 8. Site BL 4B. Site plan with the test trench excavations, excavation square and shovel test pits indicated in red.



Figure 9. A photo of the entrance on the eastern side of the enclosure at site BL 4B.



Figure 10. A photo of the inner side of the enclosure wall at site BL 4B.

5.2.1. The outer enclosure walling

The walls are generally in very good condition but have collapsed in some places. At site BL4 A however, most of the walling has collapsed or it is possible that the stones were re-used in the construction of new or additional features when the site fell into disuse.

The construction of the walls is done by the so-called dry packed technique. This building technique comprises the building of two parallel walls with large to medium sized stones which is then filled-in with debris or smaller stones. This results in mostly low but thick walls.

5.2.2. The central circular enclosures

Constructed in a similar fashion as the outer walls, the walls of the central enclosures are often higher as it was used for domestic stock and therefore the walls often collapse with age.

5.2.3 Terracing

Terraced and stonewalled sites in the Mpumalanga Province of South Africa mark the extent of the pre-colonial polity in the area historically known as Bokoni (Delius & Schoeman 2008, 2010; Maggs 2008; Delius, Maggs & Schoeman 2012; also see Evers 1974, 1975; Marker & Evers 1976; Collett 1979, 1982 for more information on these sites).

The Bokoni sites comprise four settlement phases. The system that is materialised in the terraces, roads and stonewalls developed during the first phase of Bokoni settlement (1650 AD). During this phase the sites clustered in the southern part of Bokoni, with the Komati River forming a key centre.

Terracing is a unique feature of the Bokoni sites and was an ingenious way to farm crops. The building of terraces resulted in areas with steep gradients could be used for cultivation of crops. The terraces also ensured that the soil retained moisture which resulted in good crop production and possibly above average yields.

Terracing is found at site BL4 B and located a few meters upslope and to the south and south-east of the circular enclosure there. The terraces are very poorly defined and run parallel to one another roughly in an east-west direction (see figure 8).

5.3. The archaeological excavations

At both the sites on Bruintjieslaagte (**BL2 and BL4 A&B**) the depth of the archaeological deposit was initially not known as the field survey and mapping of the sites consisted of non-intrusive methods. Furthermore, these sites are renowned for having a paucity of cultural material remains within the archaeological deposit and most value is generated by mapping of the stone-walled enclosures which results in the reconstruction of settlement layout and a better understanding of the identity of the people who built them.

The excavation of the sites had the following objectives:

- Bush clearing at the sites (BL 2 and BL 4A & B) in order to facilitate surface sampling of artefacts should there be any; and in order to identify areas suitable for test trenches and pits.
- Systematic shovel test pit excavation in order to determine if there is any archaeological deposit.
- The excavation of test trenches in identified features or areas with the aim of obtaining cultural material or settlement features in order to identify the cultural group.
- If possible, obtain any datable material

Excavations were conducted as follows:

- Selecting and excavating parts of the enclosures that are likely to yield maximum information about the cultural identity of the site or the use of space within the different components of the sites.
- Standard archaeological methodology used on Farming Community sites.
- Sediments were excavated in 5cm spits until stratigraphic layers or sterile soil was reached.
- All sediments were screened through 5mm and 2mm screens to recover cultural material, potential botanical remains as well as bone (for possible dating).

5.3.1. Site BL 2

This site is located under a number of trees and overgrown with shrubs and weeds. This results in a tick soil covering consisting of leaves and twigs. The soil underneath is riddled with both fine and large roots. Consequently excavation was made difficult and the result was often untidy profiles and poorly visible stratigraphy. Four shovel test pits measuring approximately 400mm x 400mm x 400mm were dug in the respective attached outer cells of the main enclosure the results of which indicated the soil profile. The upper soil consisted of a dark brown humus layer underlain by a reddish dark brown loamy texture. This is followed by red clay sterile soil which proved to be the composition of the soil throughout site BL 2.

Two test trenches were planned to explore two of the enclosure units diagonally including the foundations of the inner walls (see figure 2). These trenches were named BL2-1 and BL2-2 respectively.



Figure 11. Pre-excavation shrub and bush clearing at site BL 2.

An excavation square was conducted to the north-east of Trench BL 2-2 and inside the main enclosure.



Figure 12. Clearing the large central enclosure of bush and shrubs in order to start with surface collection of artefacts and measuring out the excavation trenches. Notice the dense vegetation growth on the site.

5.3.1.1. Trench BL 2-1

Trench BL2-1 was made inside the southern cell attached to the central enclosure. It extended from the inside of the wall to the opposite inside of the wall and the trench dimensions were 0,5metres wide by 5,5 metres long. The purpose of this trench was to determine the depth of the archaeological deposit and also to expose any sub-surface features such as floors of houses and any cultural artefacts. The excavation was preceded by carefully searching the surface for artefacts and cleaning it by removal of leaves, twigs and other surface materials. Thereafter the excavation continued in 50mm arbitrary spits. These were extended to 100mm intervals by the archaeologist's discretion.

At a depth of 200mm the layer of red clay soil started. It continued to a depth of 350mm where the excavation was halted as it was evident that sterile soil was reached. An effort was made to excavate below the foundations of the walls in order to determine the extent of soil accumulation within the enclosed space (see figures 14-17).

Finds: On the surface no cultural material was collected. Finds in the excavation include seven undecorated pottery fragments recovered from a depth of 50mm and another 5 undecorated pieces from a depth of 250mm.



Figure 13. Trench BL 2-1. This photo was taken after surface collection and clearing and before excavation commenced.



Figure 14. Trench BL 2-1. Excavated to a depth of 50mm. Notice the dense root distribution in the topsoil layers. This negatively affected accurate identification of soil profiles.



Figure 15. Trench BL 2-1. Excavated to a depth of 150mm. Notice the dense root distribution in the topsoil layers. This negatively affected accurate identification of soil profiles.



Figure 16. Trench BL 2-1. The trench reached sterile soil at 350mm which was well below the foundation of the wall.



Figure 17. Trench BL 2-1. The trench reached sterile soil well below the foundation of the northern wall.

5.3.1.2. Trench BL 2-2

Trench BL2-2 was made inside the central enclosure. It extended from the inside of the wall to the opposite inside of the wall and the trench dimensions were 0,5 m wide by 6 m long (see figure 2). The purpose of this trench was to determine the depth of the archaeological deposit and also to expose any sub-surface features such as floors of houses and associated cultural artefacts. The excavation was preceded by carefully searching the surface for artefacts and cleaning it by removal of leaves, twigs and other surface materials. Thereafter the excavation continued in 50mm arbitrary spits. These were extended to 100mm intervals by the archaeologist's discretion. The profile was compiled of 100mm of humus-loamy topsoil which had a dark brown colour followed by red clay which started at 100mm and extended downwards in the excavation trench to 300mm.

At a depth of 300mm the excavation was halted as it was evident that sterile soil was reached. An effort was made to excavate below the foundations of the walls in order to determine the extent of soil accumulation within the enclosed space (see figures 18-21).

Finds: No surface finds were documented. Sub-surface finds include 12 undecorated pottery pieces at a depth of 100mm and another 8 at a depth of 350 mm.



Figure 18. Trench BL 2-2. This photo was taken after surface collection and clearing and before excavation commenced.



Figure 19. Trench BL 2-2. Excavated to a depth of 50mm. Notice the dense root distribution in the topsoil layers. This negatively affected accurate identification of soil profiles.



Figure 20. Trench BL 2-2. At a depth of 300mm the excavation was halted as sterile soil was reached.



Figure 21. Trench BL2-2. The excavation extended well below the wall foundations until sterile soil was reached.

5.3.1.2. Square BL 2

North-east of Trench BL 2-2 and inside the main enclosure, a 2m x 2m square was excavated. The square was extended to the west by 1m later on in an effort to include more surface area, deepen the excavation and possibly expose cultural features. The purpose of this excavation was to determine the depth of the archaeological deposit and also to expose any sub-surface features such as floors of houses and associated cultural artefacts. The excavation was preceded by carefully searching the surface for artefacts and cleaning it by removal of leaves, twigs and other surface materials. Thereafter the excavation continued in 50mm arbitrary spits. These were extended to 100mm intervals by the archaeologist's discretion. Similar to the two test trenches, BL 2-1 and BL 2-2, the profile was compiled of a 100mm of humus-loamy topsoil which had a dark brown colour followed by red clay which started at 100mm and extended downwards in the excavation trench to a maximum of 450mm.

Finds: A single upper grinding stone was found on the surface. Two decorated and burnished pottery fragments were found at a depth of 250mm together with three undecorated pieces. A small upper grinding stone, possibly used for the grinding of herbs and plants for medicine was also found at a similar level.



Figure 22. Square BL 2. A photo before excavation commenced.



Figure 23. Square BL 2. The excavation at 50mm.



Figure 24. Square BL 2. At a depth of 250mm and extended with 1 meter to the west.

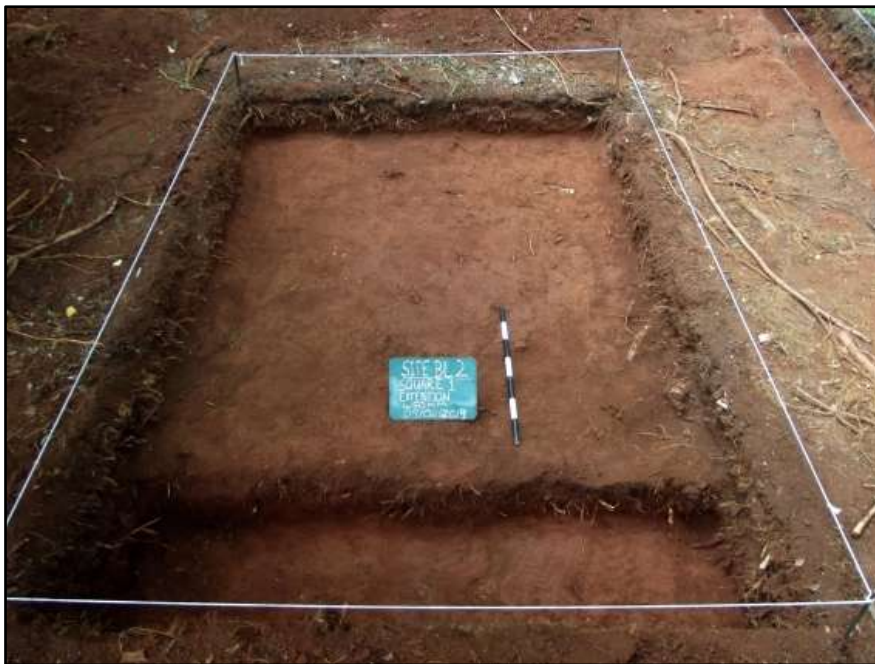


Figure 25. Square BL 2. The excavation stepped to a depth of 450mm where sterile soil was reached.



Figure 26. Square BL 2. The soil profile in the north-western corner of the excavation. A termite nest was exposed in the right corner.

5.3.2. Site BL 4 A

This site consists of a poorly defined oval shaped stone wall. It is in poor preservation condition as most of the walling collapsed. It is therefore also poorly visible and was covered with dense vegetation. The large size of the enclosure suggests that it may have served as a kraal for domestic animals (see figure 5) with an entrance located on the northern side.

Two shovel test pits measuring approximately 400mm x 400mm x 400mm were dug in the semi-circular enclosure made up of collapsed walling and intact dry-packed walling located to the north-east. The results of the pits indicated the soil profile. The upper soil consisted of a dark brown humus layer underlain by a reddish dark brown loamy texture. This is followed by red clay sterile soil which proved to be the composition of the soil profile throughout site BL 4A.

Two test trenches were planned in an effort to find archaeological deposit and investigate its profile. They were made to join the stone walling and expose the foundations of the inner walls (see figures 29-41). These trenches were named BL 4A-1 and BL 4A-2 respectively.



Figure 27. Site BL 4A. Bush clearing before excavation. Note the dense undergrowth.



Figure 28. Site BL 4A. Clearing the undergrowth to expose the stone walling and soil surface in order to measure out the excavation trenches and test pits.

5.3.2.1. Trench BL 4A-1

This trench measured 0,5 meters by 7 meters (see figures 29-34) east to west. The purpose of this trench was to determine the depth of the archaeological deposit and also to expose any sub-surface features such as floors of houses and associated cultural artefacts as well as explore the foundation levels of the stone walling. After extensive bush clearing the excavation was preceded by carefully searching the surface for artefacts and cleaning it by removal of leaves, twigs and other surface materials. Thereafter the excavation continued in 50mm arbitrary spits. These were extended to 100mm intervals by the archaeologist's discretion. The profile was compiled of 150 mm of humus-loamy topsoil which had a dark brown colour followed by red clay which started at 150 mm and extended downwards in the excavation trench to 250mm where it was evident that the soil was sterile.

The trench joined the stone walling on the northern side of the site where it exposed the foundation of the wall. Here it was excavated further down to 450mm in an effort to see if the red clay soil continued or if there was possible deposit further down. A number of rocks which tumbled down from the wall were exposed. Investigation by means of further excavation between these and the wall confirmed that they were indeed positioned there as a result of the collapsing wall. This excavation was halted at a depth of 450mm where the red clay soil was sterile (see figures 33, 34).

Finds: No surface or sub-surface archaeological finds were recovered from this trench.



Figure 29. Trench BL 4A-1. The trench at 50mm excavated.



Figure 30. BL 4A-1. The trench excavated to a depth of 250mm where sterile soil was encountered.



Figure 31. BL 4A-1. The trench excavated to a depth of 250mm where sterile soil was encountered.



Figure 32. The profile up to 250mm of trench BL 4A-1.



Figure 33. BL 4A-1. The trench at a depth of 450mm where it joins the wall. Rocks which tumbled from the wall are exposed. At this level the red clay soil continued and reached a sterile bottom.



Figure 34. Trench BL 4A-1 at a depth of 450mm where the trench meets the northern wall of the enclosure.

5.3.2.2. Trench BL 4A-2

This trench continued in the same direction as trench BL 4A-1 from a point where it is interrupted by a large boulder. It continued east to west on the other side of the boulder for 2,5 meters (0,5 meters wide) where it made a right angle to join with the stone walling. From this joint to the wall measured 3 meters by 0,5 meters (see figures 35, 36).

The purpose of the trench was to determine the depth of the archaeological deposit and also to expose any sub-surface features such as floors of houses and associated cultural artefacts as well as explore the foundation levels of the stone walling. After extensive bush clearing the excavation was preceded by carefully searching the surface for artefacts and cleaning it by removal of leaves, twigs and other surface materials. Thereafter the excavation continued in 50mm arbitrary spits. These were extended to 100mm intervals by the archaeologist's discretion. The profile was compiled of 150 mm of humus-loamy topsoil which had a dark brown colour followed by red clay which started at 150 mm and extended downwards in the excavation trench to 250mm where it was evident that the soil was sterile.

The trench joined the stone walling on the western side of the site where it exposed the foundation of the wall. Here it was excavated further down to 450mm in an effort to see if the red clay soil continued or if there was possible deposit further down. A number of rocks which tumbled down from the wall were exposed. Investigation by means of further excavation between these and the wall confirmed that they were indeed positioned there as a result of the collapsing wall. This excavation was halted at a depth of 450mm where the red clay soil was sterile (see figures 35-41).

Finds: The only finds in this trench were four undecorated pottery pieces at a depth of 150mm.



Figure 35.Trench BL 4A-2 at surface level. Photo taken in a western direction where the trench joins the wall.



Figure 36.Trench BL 4A-2 at 50mm excavated. Photo taken in a northern direction. Trench BL 4A-1 is visible in the background.



Figure 37. Trench BL 4A-2. The trench excavated to sterile level at 250mm. The photo was taken in a northern direction. Note the clear division of the upper dark brown and lower red clay soils.



Figure 38. Trench BL 4A-2. Excavated to a level 250mm deep, the excavation exposes the wall foundation located to the west and well below the foundation level.



Figure 39. Trench BL 4A-2. Excavated to a level 250mm deep. Photo taken in a northern direction.



Figure 40. Trench BL 4A-2. Excavated to a level 250mm deep, the excavation exposes the wall foundation located to the west and well below the foundation level.



Figure 41. The profile up to 250mm of trench BL 4A-2.

5.3.3. Site BL 4 B

This site consists of a circular stone wall with an entrance located to the south east. The walls are approximately 900cm thick in some places and up to 1,5m high at their highest point. A large portion of the walling collapsed on the northern and north western part. The stones from the top of the wall collapsed and tumbled down slope towards the north. It is covered with dense vegetation and a few trees within and just outside the walling. The relatively small size of the enclosure suggests that it was possibly used for living space.

Towards the south and south east of the enclosure there are some terracing consisting of parallel placed linear stones against an upward slope towards the south east.

A trench extending from inner wall to inner wall, measuring 8,5 meters x 0,5 meters roughly in a east-west direction, was excavated. The trench was named BL 4B-1 and continued to a depth of 300mm. This exposed the soil profile. The upper soil consisted of a dark brown humus layer underlain by a red clay layer which is sterile soil. This proved to be the composition of the soil profile throughout site BL 4B.

Towards the south and adjoining the southern was an exploration square of 1m x 1m was excavated. It was excavated to a depth of 300mm where sterile soil was reached. The square was numbered BL 4B SQ1. The soil profile is similar to trench BL 4B-1.

On the opposite side of the wall a small exploration trench, BL 4B-1, was excavated. It measured 1m x 0,5m and was excavated to a depth of 500mm.

In an effort to establish if there is any deposit within the terracing a sequence of shovel test pits measuring approximately 400mm x 400mm x 400mm and numbering seven in total, were dug.

5.3.3.1. Trench BL 4B-1

This trench measured 0,5 meters by 8,5 meters (see figures 42-45) east to west. The purpose of this trench was to determine the depth of the archaeological deposit and also to expose any sub-surface features such as floors of houses and associated cultural artefacts as well as explore the foundation levels of the stone walling. After extensive bush clearing the excavation was preceded by carefully searching the surface for artefacts and cleaning it by removal of leaves, twigs and other surface materials. Thereafter the excavation continued in 50mm arbitrary spits. These were extended to 100mm intervals by the archaeologist's discretion. The profile was compiled of 200 mm of humus-loamy topsoil which had a dark brown colour followed by red clay which started at 200 mm and extended downwards in the excavation trench to 300mm where it was evident that the soil was sterile.

The trench joined the stone walling on the eastern and western side of the site where it exposed the foundation of the wall. Here it was excavated further down to 300mm in an effort to see if the red clay soil continued or if there was possible deposit further down. A number of rocks which tumbled down from the wall were exposed together with large tree roots. The trench joined the inner wall at both the east and western side. The foundation of the wall was exposed in this way and it was reached some 80mm below the soil surface. The excavation continued below this foundation to explore if there was any archaeological deposit below the wall foundation. This excavation was halted at a depth of 300mm where the red clay soil was sterile (see figures 44-45).

Finds: A single piece of undecorated pottery was found on the surface of the trench.



Figure 42. Trench BL 4B-1 at the surface level.



Figure 43. Trench BL 4B-1 at 50mm deep. Photo taken towards the inner eastern wall.



Figure 44. Trench BL 4B at 300mm deep where sterile soil was reached. Photo taken in the direction of the inner western wall.



Figure 45. Trench BL 4B-1 below the stone walling on the inner eastern side.

5.3.3.2. Trench BL 4B-2

A small exploratory trench measuring 1m x 0,5m was excavated to a depth of 500mm on the outside of the enclosure to the south (see figures 46-47). The purpose of this trench was to determine the outer depth of the wall i.e. reach its foundation. It was not possible however as a very hard yellowish-coloured bedrock was encountered at 0,5m consequently and also due to time constraints the excavation was halted.

Finds: No finds were recorded from this trench.



Figure 46. Trench BL 4B-2 at surface level.



Figure 47. Trench BL 4B-2 at 500mm where bedrock was reached.

5.3.3.3. Square BL 4B

A small exploratory square measuring 1m x 1m was excavated against the inner southern wall of the enclosure. It was excavated to a total depth of 300mm. The soil profile consisted of a top layer of dark brown soil which changed to red clay at a depth of 100mm. From here down to 300mm the soil consisted of red clay where it reached bedrock against a large boulder. The square exposed the wall foundation at a depth of 150mm below the soil surface. See figure 8.

Finds: Four undecorated pottery pieces were found.



Figure 48. Square BL 4B at surface level.



Figure 49. Square BL 4B at bedrock level.

5.3.3.2. The associated terracing

Located on the south eastern side of the enclosure are three terraces consisting of packed stones oriented roughly in a east west direction parallel to one another. A total of seven shovel test pits were dug in an effort to determine if there is archaeological deposit or any evidence in the soil profile which may confirm agricultural activity. The pits measuring approximately 400mm x 400mm x 400mm, were made in a linear fashion in-between the stones outlining the terraces. The soil profile in all the pits consisted of a top layer of dark brown soil up to a depth of 200mm followed by red clay up to 400mm deep. No archaeological deposit was found. The soil in all cases was sterile. See figure 8 and 50 for details.



Figure 50. Test pits at site BL 4B terracing were dug systematically approximately 2 meters apart.

6. The finds

No significant material culture objects were found during the excavations. Finds consisted of two upper grinding stones, two sparsely decorated pottery pieces and a few undecorated pottery pieces. The finds do not contribute to a detailed understanding or interpretation of the sites except that the people who utilised it probably practised livestock and grain farming and built their homesteads in the BaKoni fashion. Below is a table which summarizes the finds at the various excavations trenches and squares within the site complex.

Table 1: Bruintjeslaagte Archaeological finds summary per excavation trench or square

Location/ Depth	BL 2-1	BL 2-2	BL 2 SQ1	BL 4A-1	BL 4A-2	BL 4B-1	BL4B SQ1	BL 4B SQ2
Surface			1X Upper grinder			1X Undecorated pottery piece		
50mm	9X Undecorated pottery pieces							
100mm		12X Undecorated pottery pieces						
150mm					4X Undecorated pottery pieces			
200mm	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
250mm	5X Undecorated pottery pieces		1X Small Upper grinder. 2X Decorated pottery pieces 7X Undecorated pottery pieces				4X Undecorated pottery pieces	
300mm	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
350mm		8X Undecorated pottery pieces						

6.1. Potsherds

As explained above only two small pieces of decorated pottery was found at site BL 2. The rest of the pottery pieces were all undecorated. The total assemblage is too fragmented to be of value and cannot be used for a formal pottery analysis.



Figure 51. Two pieces of pottery which has some rudimentary decoration were found in Square BL2-SQ1

6.2. Grinding stones

Two upper grinding stones were found at site BL 2. The larger of the two was found on the surface and the second, smaller one below the soil surface. Both are evidence that the inhabitants of the site probably had grains in their diet, which may have consisted of maize and millet or sorghum and most probably a mixture thereof. It is possible that the small grinder may have been used for delicate grinding of herbs and plants of medicinal value.



Figure 52. The large upper grinder at site BL 2 was found on the surface.



Figure 53. This small upper grinding stone was found in Square BL2-SQ1 at a depth of 250mm. It may have been used as a grinder of herbs or medicinal plant material.

7. Conclusion

As a consequence of no bone or charcoal remains found at the sites no radiocarbon dating can be done for the settlement. Economic subsistence is also difficult to identify as no animal bones or waste materials (ash middens) were encountered. The terracing and upper grinding stones do however point to the cultivation and consumption of various grains, therefore at least crop farming can be inferred.

Pottery fragments although very fragmented, few in number and undiagnostic, in conjunction with the upper grinding stones and the settlement layout suggest that the occupants of the site probably led an agro-pastoral lifestyle which conforms to the BoKoni identity of the larger area. As discussed earlier the settlement layout is typical of the Badfontein walling associated with BoKoni and large enclosures were used to pen domestic animals such as cattle. Smaller, often attached, units were used for either living space or served as enclosures for small animals such as sheep and goats.

It is possible that the expansion of Swazi influence and establishment of Swazi capitals such as Hhohho, Mbhuleni, Mjindini and Mekemeke on the borders of BoKoni during 1850 and 1860 may have intensified instances of raids and attack on sites like the one on Bruintjieslaagte. This may have lead to the eventual abandonment of the site.

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