

## **Ba Ga Mohlala In Steelpoort and Ba Ga Mohlala In Schoonoord/The Missing Link**

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Ba Ga Mohlala researchers in Schoonoord are busy doing research on the history of Ba Ga Mohlala in Steelpoort as we believe that the two (Ba Ga Mohlala in Schoonoord and Ba Ga Mohlala in Steelpoort) are related and that there is high possibility that e ka be re le bana ba motho o tee yo e lego Segodi morwa Mohlala Morudi. Therefore, we are happy to announce that indeed, the research has started in earnest with serious determination and passion.

For the purpose of our study/research on the Steelpoort area, we collected data and also used data collected on other researches carried by other people and institutions on the area.

Data collection included literature review of primary and secondary sources such as academic journals, textbooks and archival records, national and provincial websites, archaeological field guides, national guidelines, maps, photographs and plans. Desktop surveys of historical aerial photographs, historical maps, topographical maps and satellite imagery were undertaken to determine possible relative ages of existing infrastructure in the area.

So far, we have managed to establish that there is a rich history of **Stone Age** and **Iron Age** settlements in the area.

**The Stone Age** in South Africa is divided into three periods: ■ **Early Stone Age** (ESA) (2 million years ago - 200 000 years ago) ■ **Middle Stone Age** (MSA) (300 000 years – 20 000 years ago) ■ **Later Stone Age** (LSA) (20 000 years ago – 2 000 years ago). Based on the criteria for classification, it is evident that the initial model of ESA, MSA, and LSA (with variants) developed by Goodwin and Van Riet Lowe (1929) is appropriate. Having stated this, the last formal summary of the southern African Stone Age Sequence prior to (Lombard, et al., 2012) was conducted in 1984. Within the surveyed area, stone tools associated with the MSA were identified. Lombard et al. (2012) summarises the MSA as consisting of the various technocomplexes. South African and Lesotho MSA sequence as described in Lombard et al. (2012), including alternative names and regional variants Period Technocomplex Also known as (including regional variants)

Middle Stone Age final MSA 2040 ka (informal designation) MSA IV at Klasies River, MSA 4 generally

>20 ka <300 ka late MSA /

- postSibudu 4558 ka Howieson's Poort or MSA III at Klasies and MSA 3 generally (all informal designations)

- Howieson's Poort 5866 ka Still Bay 7077 ka

- Pre Still Bay 7296 ka

Mossel Bay 77105 ka (informal designation) MSA II at Klasies River, (Pietersburg, Orangian)

Klasies River 105130 ka MSA 2b generally MSA I at Klasies River, MSA 2a generally (Pietersburg)

- Aarly MSA 130300 ka (informal designation)

Although the Stone Age is fairly well researched and understood in southern Africa there is little Stone Age research published on the Mpumalanga region (Esterhuysen & Smith, 2007). Most Stone Age sites recorded during previous assessments near the project area were found to be MSA and LSA.

***The Iron Age*** is divided into three main temporal periods: ■ **Early Iron Age** (EIA) (AD 200 – 900) ■ **Middle Iron Age** (MIA) (AD 900 – 1300) ■ **Late Iron Age** (LIA) (AD 1300 – 1840). According to the heritage impact assessment report prepared by Digby Wells Environmental Report for Rhodium Reef Limited Platinum Operation, a cluster of pits were uncovered approximately 21km north of the area during excavations for a pipeline trench. These pits were interpreted as dating to the Early Iron Age and being associated with Lebalelo, an archaeological site near Bugersfort. Heritage resources recovered from these pits include bone and ceramics within ash dung deposits. Ceramics facies that were identified are that of the Mzonjani facies, dating to AD 685-795 (Huffman & Schoeman, 2011). Later Iron Age remains within and surrounding the project area includes sites such as KwaMaza and Esikhunjini approximately 65 km south west from the area. A complex mix of Pedi, Nguni and Ndebele cultural markers are evident at these sites of which include Eiland facies ceramics (Schoeman 1998a; Schoeman 1998b). Eiland facies range between AD 1000 and AD 1300 (Huffman, 2007). A variation of Moor Park walling is associated with these settlements. Beehive huts were positioned on the back of terraced platforms with cattle kraals and the central court built to be the same with two lobes and a small court in a side chamber (Huffman, 2007).

On the issue of historical period and social history, it is recorded that the region surrounding Steelpoort was settled by the Bapedi from the north-west around 1650 CE. These groups were primarily scattered throughout the landscape until they were united under chief Thulare at Manganeng some 15 km north of the area. Two years after his death in 1824, Mzilikazi attacked the Bapedi, causing them to flee into caves and the mountains (Kinsey, 1973). His son Sekwati and his followers fled north and settled at Phiring, approximately 60 km north east from the area. In 1857, Sekwati came to an agreement with the Boers and declared the Steelpoort River as the boundary to the Bapedi Kingdom (Kinsey, 1973). Sekwati's son, Sekhukhune led the war against the Boers in the so-called First Sekhukhune War. The Volksraad declared war upon Sekhukhune on 16 May 1876 (Anonymous, The Kingdom of Bapedi Nation, 2012). President Thomas Francois Burgers marched on Thaba Mosega on the 1 August 1876 and suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of King Sekhukhune (Anonymous, South African History Online, 2012). When the Transvaal was annexed, the Bapedi Kingdom fell within British rule, King Sekhukhune did not agree with this, and so began the Second Sekhukhune War. The British troops attacked the Bapedi in 1878 near Magnet Heights. By 1879 the war had ended (Phala, 2007). Sekhukhune was killed by his brother Mampuru. The Boers, who viewed Sekhukhune as an ally after the Transvaal was annexed, retaliated against Mampuru and began the so-called Mapoch's War against the Ndebele (Coertze, 1983). At present, the communities residing on the area include the Ga-Mampuru and GaMatate. The people in the Ga-Mampuru, Ga-Matate, Dithamaga and Ga-Phasha communities predominantly belong to the Pedi (babina Noko clan) (Metago Environmental Engineers, 2009). During the 19th century, the Voortrekkers (Boers) surveyed and fenced off land in an area to the south of the Steelpoort River in the current Mpumalanga Province (formerly known as the Eastern Transvaal). This fenced-off land was then allocated to white settlers and farmers (Delius & Cope, 2007: 142). After the Second Anglo-Boer War (1899 – 1902), patterns of land use and occupation were established along racial lines as the Government Commissions began to designate the Steelpoort River as the boundary between white South Africa and the 'native

reserve' (Schirmer, 2007: 295; Mulaudzi & Schirmer, 2007: 356). Reserves were established and governed under three different acts. These included the Land Act of 1913, The Development Trust and Land Act (Act 18 of 1936) and The Native Trust and Land Act of 1936. Under these three Acts there was a formalisation of separation between white and black rural areas over time, and with the Natives Service Contracts Act of 1932 coming into effect, many black farmers were displaced from land that was originally their own. These black farmers either opted to move to the cities, farm on other white-owned land, or settle within the African reserves (James, 2009). According to the National Archives, The Native Trust and Land Act of 1936 established a South African Native Trust (SANT) which purchased all reserve land not yet owned by the state, and had responsibility for administering African reserve areas. During the 1970's, portions of the farms De Goedeverwaching and Boschkloof were sold and transferred to the South African Bantu Trust (aka Native Trust) (Archive Ref: D45/1396/31/1). It is during this period that Kgoši Arthur Mampuru Makopole and his followers were moved to live on the reserve at Boschkloof. It is with the establishment of this reserve on the farm Boschkloof that the settlement of Ga-Mampuru came into being. With regards to more recent social history, there are currently a total of 20 separate land claims for De Goedverwachting 332KT that have been lodged with the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform. The Mampuru Community is one of the claimants.

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THE RESEARCH ON BA GA MOHLALA IN STEELPOORT IS AN ONGOING PROCESS.

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