Archaeological research at Modipe Hill, Kgalagadi District, Botswana. Survey and Excavation, 1992 to 1995

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Location and Setting

Modipe Hill is located on the southern border of Kgalagadi District, southeastern Botswana, approximately 2 km to the southeast of Modipane village at 24°39'S and 26°10'E. (Figure 1). It comprises a massive granite outcrop measuring three km in length, one km in width, rising up to 100 metres above the height of the surrounding plains (Figure 2).

The 1993 Survey

At the base of the hill a number of isolated collapsed huts were recorded on its western and northern sides. In addition, a large undisturbed village of collapsed huts associated with a major pottery scatter was found on its eastern side at the base. The number of individual huts currently visible at the surface numbers 50. The area of pottery scatter measures approximately 4 hectares. (Figure 3a).

The major part of the programme of survey work involved mapping the stone walled remains that are found on the mid slopes of the hill on its eastern and southern sides. In all, a major area of approximately 12 hectares of stone enclosures was located and surveyed on the eastern side of the hill as well as the smaller, less densely formed area at its southern end, covering an area of approximately 4.5 hectares (Figure 2).

A number of distinct elements were determined to be present within the stone walled settlement on the mid slopes of the hill as a result of the survey work: (a) oval or circular enclosures, (b) terraces, (c) open areas within the main settlement, (d) the upper plateau, (e) trackways, (f) in situ grinding stones, (g) furnace remains, and (h) "daga" deposits. ("Daga" is defined here as that material which is used in the construction of hut walls, floors and external yards comprising specifically chosen types of soil and perhaps containing dung, which is included to provide adherence. As dung may also attract termites it is not necessarily always present).

Enclosures

The stone enclosures consist primarily of stone circles or ovals from between 2.5 metres in diameter to up to 16 metres in diameter, often joined in groups of two or three with one small enclosure associated with one or two of a larger size (Figure 4). There are, in many cases, related curving walls radiating away from the central circles forming partially enclosed outer areas. In all, approximately eighty of these features were located and surveyed. They have been termed "kraal complexes" after Pistorius (1992:15). These complexes tend to be located primarily on those parts of the hill where the gradient is gentle to medium. The walls of these "kraal complexes" were very roughly constructed out of angular medium sized stone fragments, with little attempt at forming either inner or outer smooth faces. The best preserved stand to a maximum height just in excess of one metre. The quantity of similar sized stones lying haphazardly both inside and outside the areas enclosed by the walls attests to the fact that when originally built they were in many cases considerably higher. In a few cases larger more regularly shaped boulders had been positioned to form the two sides of an entrance to the enclosure. At the time of the survey work it was not possible to definitively determine the function of these enclosures. They may have been family compounds, animal enclosures or perhaps have been used for cultivation. Additionally or alternatively they may have had a ritual purpose. Some tentative interpretations were made after the 1994 excavation season had taken place (see below, Discussion).
Figure 1: Location of Modipe Hill

[Map showing the location of Modipe Hill within Botswana, highlighting the Kalahari Desert and surrounding regions.]
Figure 2: Modipe Hill showing archaeological features and the stone crushing area.
Figure 3a: Location of Excavation area 1994.1
3b: 1994.1 Detail of excavated features

A

MODIPE HILL

B

HUT D
HUT B
HUT C
HUT A

1994.1 LIMIT OF EXCAVATION

- 1994.1 EXCAVATION AREA
- RONDAVELS AND POTTERY SCATTER

0 50 METRES

- FLOOR DEPOSIT (DAGA)
- HEARTH
- GRANITE BOULDER
- CHARCOAL
- HEARTH STONE
- MIDDEN DEPOSIT

5
Terraces

It became clear as the survey progressed that in addition to the “kraal complexes” there were a number of walls that were linear or curvilinear in shape rather than forming an enclosed space. Although a proportion of these can be attributed to the ravages of time and may have formerly formed enclosures it was clear that some had been deliberately created to revet the slope into rudimentary terraces. These tended to be located on those parts of the hill where the slope was steepest and also followed the contours of the hill. They were most frequently recorded to either side of the more southerly of the two trackways that leads up the site on the eastern side of the hill from its base to where the “kraal complexes” are situated. The largest of these terraces was located in the smaller southern settlement area. It measured in excess of 180 m in length and closely followed the contours of the hill. Significantly it was situated between the hill-base and the settlement itself, commanding access to and from the site. At the time of the survey it was difficult to interpret the function of these features. Those located adjacent to the access ways up to the settlements may have been defensive in nature. It is equally plausible that the level area that was created behind these and the others terraces elsewhere on the hill may have been used for occupation or cultivation. There were however no areas of “daga” collapse in association with the terraces which would have clearly indicated domestic occupation.

Open Areas

There are two areas of the site which may be interpreted differently on the basis of their shape and size (Figure 4). They form large irregular open areas enclosed by low curving stone walls and greater in size than the “kraal complexes”. The area that they enclose is generally flat and clear and in both cases there is a high density of in-situ grinding stones. As with the other features on the mid-slopes of the hill there is no evidence for the presence of “daga” deposits which would be a clear indication of domestic occupation. They have therefore been tentatively interpreted as spaces within the village where functions of a public nature may have taken place (see below, Discussion).

The Upper Plateau

This 7 ha area lies on the southeastern side of the hill about 50 m higher than either of the two areas of stone walled enclosures (Figure 2). It is surrounded by massive rock outcrops on all sides and it is significant that the only two relatively easy access routes to this plateau from the base of the hill are straddled by the stone enclosure settlements. It became clear during the fieldwalking of this area that no major stone features had been erected here although at its southern end a thin spatially restricted pottery scatter was observed in association with a small isolated patch of “daga”, which may indicate some occasional semi-permanent occupation. The large size of this area of very protected flat ground is a factor which is not present elsewhere on the hill and gives it some significance. Again its not possible to assign a precise function for this element of the site but clearly it could have been used for cultivation. Alternatively large numbers of animals could have been let out to pasture here in considerable safety.

Trackways

Two linear zones were found within the settlement area on the eastern side of the hill (Figure 4). They were narrow and were bounded by low stone walling and led from the area of settlement to the base of the hill by the easiest route between the rock outcropping. They were clearly used to provide access to and from the site for both people and animals.

In-situ Grinding Stones

Seventy grinding stones were found throughout the area of settlement, either within the interior of an enclosure or often built into the perimeter wall itself. Occasionally they were found in association with a rubbing stone which would have been held in the hand and with which they would have functioned. As noted above they were most common within the two open areas which have been interpreted as public areas.

Furnace Remains

A single area was identified on the mid slopes in the same general location as the eastern “kraal
Figure 4: Location of 1994 excavation areas
complex" settlement where there was evidence for metalworking. An area of approximately 100 square metres was strewn with fragmentary furnace blast-pipes (tuyeres) and a cursory examination of the area indicated that the furnace itself was partially preserved below ground level. Apart from locating the spot on the overall general survey no further action was taken at that stage. It was however excavated later in the project (see below, The 1994 Excavation Season).

"Daga" Deposits

It should be noted that as the survey of the mid slopes was being carried out it became apparent that there was very little evidence for the presence of buildings in the form of in situ "daga" deposits or even isolated "daga" lumps. Only isolated examples of this material were found within the "kraal complexes" on the eastern side of the hill. Additionally some was observed in the upper plateau. This is in marked contrast to the situation at the base of the hill on its eastern side where at least 50 individual "daga" constructed huts are readily visible at the surface. Some preliminary examination of this contrasting situation is made below (see Discussion).

1992/3 Excavations

The impetus for this work was the heavy rain of late 1992 which exposed some hitherto concealed "daga" deposits at the base of the hill on its northwestern side. In all, five excavation areas were opened, varying in size, up to a maximum of 7 m x 3 m (Figure 2). Four areas were opened where it was evident that a mass of "daga" lumps represented the collapse of a building. In each of these cases excavation revealed the presence of a small circular hut, approximately 3 m in diameter. In the case of 1992.1, 1992.2 and 1992.3, there was no evidence for a well constructed floor but the presence of complete pottery vessels smashed in situ as well as a small iron awl. Sufficient charcoal was only obtained from the interior of one these features, (1992.3), to ensure that a radiocarbon date could be obtained. This indicates occupation of the hut in the later Iron Age (Table 1). The final excavation involved the removal in its entirety of a small oval furnace, which was in the path of a flood channel. (1993.2). This was encased in reinforced plaster of paris and removed to Phuthadiikobo Museum where its fill was excavated. The presence of what were copper fragments would suggest that it may have been used for the smelting or resmelting of copper. Again sufficient charcoal was obtained to ensure that a radiocarbon date could be obtained. This date, in the early part of the second millennium A.D. is the earliest so far obtained from the hill (Table 1).

The 1994 Excavation Season

The 1994 programme of excavation comprised the most labour intense period of fieldwork that was undertaken during the project. Between June and September in excess of fifty students and volunteers were employed at the hill. The work included three separate areas of activity. The first was at the base of the hill on its eastern side within the zone of "daga" huts. The second comprised the excavation of one of the "kraal complexes" on the mid slopes. The third was located in the same general area as the second and consisted of the excavation of a metal-working furnace. These were termed Excavation Areas 1994.1, 1994.2 and 1994.3 (Figure 4).

Excavation Area 1994.1

This site, at the base of the hill, was chosen because it comprised a group of four huts which may have been related, perhaps within a single compound, (huts A-D). Adjacent to them was a subcircular area of homogeneous grey soil which may indicate the presence of a midden or a kraal used in association with the huts (Figure 3b). Prior to excavation the collapse of the superstructure of each hut was visible at the surface as roughly circular areas of broken "daga" lumps. The removal of this deposit showed that in each case the struc-
### Table 1: Radiocarbon Dates

<table>
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<th>Site Name</th>
<th>Lab number</th>
<th>Radiocarbon years B.P.</th>
<th>Calibrated date A.D. Intercept(s)</th>
<th>Calibrated date A.D. Range(s)</th>
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<tr>
<td>1992.3[1005]</td>
<td>Beta-79884</td>
<td>260 ± 50</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>1890-1915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993.2[1004]</td>
<td>Beta-79883</td>
<td>880 ± 130</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1994.1[1021]</td>
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<td>80 ± 50</td>
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<td>1650-1685</td>
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<tr>
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<td>260 ± 60</td>
<td>1665</td>
<td>1745-1805</td>
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<td>430 ± 50</td>
<td>1475</td>
<td>1570-1630</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Modern</td>
<td>Modern</td>
<td>Modern</td>
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<tr>
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<td>240 ± 50</td>
<td>1670, 1780, 1795</td>
<td>1740-1810</td>
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<td>1630-1665</td>
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<td>420 ± 50</td>
<td>1485</td>
<td>1560-1630</td>
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**Notes:**

a) Two previous radiocarbon dates for Modipe Hill have already been reported (Campbell et al. 1991).

b) The above site names include two elements. The first part, e.g. 1993.2 refers to the site code. The second part, e.g. [1004] refers to the individual deposit within that excavation.

c) All dates are cited at 1 sigma variation.

ture had consisted of a roughly circular hut approximately three metres in diameter. In each example there was a smoothed clay floor, although only in two cases was this well preserved (huts C and D). The most distinct feature in each case was a central hollow rich in charcoal which was clearly the hearth. In three instances medium sized stones which would have supported the cooking vessels were still in situ. No other constructional features such as the threshold, or internal partitions etc. were found preserved in these huts. However a considerable amount of material was found inside them. In each case it was clear that pottery vessels had still been in situ on the floor when the superstructure collapsed and these were therefore recovered smashed but complete. In addition to the pottery, iron and copper artifacts were recovered. The iron objects consisted of several blades which may have been either knives or arrowheads. The copper artifacts consisted of some short lengths of neatly coiled wire found in association with two half spheres. These spheres
each had two small opposed holes close to their edges which may have originally been attached to the wire. It is suggested tentatively that this material was jewellery, either forming part of a necklace or perhaps representing a pair of earrings. Three radiocarbon dates were obtained from charcoal deposits within the huts. These indicate late Iron Age occupation of the site (Table 1).

Excavation Area 1994.2

This area located on the mid slopes of the hill comprised one of the more diagnostic and well preserved “kraal complexes” within one of the more densely settled parts of the site, adjacent to what might be considered one of the main thoroughfares through the village (Figure 4). It consisted of two large linked stone circles with a smaller one attached. These enclosures were numbered A, B and C respectively (Figure 5). Two large upright stones in the northwestern quadrant of enclosure A delineated an entrance. An entrance to enclosure C was also present, adjacent to enclosure B. There was a marked gradient downwards along the long axis of enclosures A and B from the southwest to the northeast. As a result of this gradient there was a difference in the amount of archaeological material present from the high side to the low side of each enclosure. In each case bedrock was present immediately below the topsoil on the upper side, whereas on the lower side of each enclosure in the space created behind the terrace formed by the construction of the perimeter wall, there was in the region of 1 m of archaeological buildup before bedrock was encountered. No evidence for human habitations in the form of clay floors, deposits of “daga”, hearths or other features were discovered on or within the build-up that was contained by the enclosure walls. There was, however, a considerable quantity of pottery sherds, fragments of animal bone, charcoal flecks, quartzite crystals and some copper and ostrich eggshell beads within the build-up. The presence of this diverse material despite the lack of evidence for well constructed habitations may indicate that the enclosures functioned in a more complex way than simply as enclosures for domestic livestock. A further significant aspect of these excavations was that a single adult burial was found within each of the larger enclosures, buried beneath a cairn of stones. In one case the individual was a middle-aged man and the other was a woman. The man had suffered from osteoarthritis and also a double fracture of the right leg. The woman was buried with some grave goods consisting of an impressive necklace of ostrich eggshell beads, a copper earring, and two bracelets. One of these was in a well preserved condition and was made of iron. The other was wooden and in this case was fragmentary. Additionally an infant and a four to six year old child were buried in the same enclosure as the male. During the course of excavation in Enclosure B it became apparent that a number of the deposits apparently ran under the perimeter wall. Because of this it was decided to remove a section of the wall itself in the eastern quadrant of the enclosure. This exercise indeed proved that a number of deposits including a compacted “daga” deposit ran under and were not respected by the enclosure wall. It was clear therefore that there had been occupation at the site prior to the laying out of all the enclosure complexes, at least in this part of the settlement. Five radiocarbon dates were obtained from charcoal deposits within these enclosures, indicating occupation in the later Iron Age.

Excavation Area 1994.3

While the excavation of these stone enclosures was taking place the small furnace located nearby which had been discovered in 1993 was investigated (Excavation area 1994.3, Figure 4). This proved to be a narrow and deep slit like feature not thought likely to have been used for smelting iron. It may have been used for copper production or alternatively for the consolidation of iron blooms.

Discussion

The first general question that needs to be addressed is the relationship between the various elements of settlement that can be found at the hill. These include the individual isolated structures scattered around its base, the major village of “daga” huts found at the base on its eastern side, the two areas of “kraal complexes” on the mid slopes and the upper plateau on the higher part of the hill. In addition to this evidence the two furnaces that have been excavated, one at the
Figure 5: Detail of excavation area 1994.2

ENCLOSURE A

ENCLOSURE B

ENCLOSURE C

BURIAL CAIRN (MALE)

BURIAL CAIRN (FEMALE)

ENTRANCE

ENTRANCE

0 10 METRES
base of the hill and one on the mid slopes, also need to be considered. There is little difficulty in making an assessment of the function of the separate “daga” structures that are found individually around the base of the hill. These were clearly isolated features and may have functioned as cattle posts and lands complexes in the same way as those which are currently in use at the site. They may therefore have been built at any time during the Iron Age. Of the two radiocarbon dates that have been obtained for these parts of the site during the current project, that for the hut excavated in 1992.3 would indicate settlement in the later Iron Age. However the date obtained for the furnace at the northwestern end of the hill, [1993.2] indicates the date that it was fired to be in the 11th or 12th century A.D. This is by far the earliest date for the occupation of Modipe Hill that has so far been obtained.

This date is particularly important when considered in conjunction with the evidence of the archaeological reconnaissance that was carried out at Modipe Hill in the mid 1980s (Segobye 1987). Surface collection of pottery took place at two different places on the hill. At one of these the material was exclusively of later Iron Age date. However at the other, amongst the later material there was an element that was considered to be of the latter quarter of the first millennium A.D., i.e. of early Iron Age date. The author informs me that the site containing this earlier element was located on the western side of the hill. It would seem reasonable to infer therefore that there was some occupation at Modipe Hill in the Early Iron Age, at least on its western side. Unfortunately the presence of a stone crushing plant here has caused considerable destruction and it is now unclear how extensive such settlement was. What is therefore important to consider is the nature of the settlement evidence on the eastern side of the hill where disturbance has been minimal. Here the relationship between the “daga” village at the base of the hill and those features on its slopes, particularly the “kraal complexes” on the mid slopes is crucial, particularly the date of their initial occupation and the question of their having coexisted. As far as their broad date is concerned the radiocarbon dates from the sites on the eastern side of the hill indicate settlement in the later Iron Age. Of the two radiocarbon dates that have been obtained for these parts of the site during the current project, that for the hut excavated in 1992.3 would indicate settlement in the later Iron Age. However the date obtained for the furnace at the northwestern end of the hill, [1993.2] indicates the date that it was fired to be in the 11th or 12th century A.D. This is by far the earliest date for the occupation of Modipe Hill that has so far been obtained.

As can be seen from an examination of the dates, three of which are from the site at the base of the hill (1994.1) and five of which are from that on the mid slopes (1994.2), there appears to be little discrepancy between the time span that is represented at each site. In each case there is a date which would indicate initial occupation in the late 15th century A.D. and in each case there is a date indicating occupation up to the 17th or mid 18th century. There is also a date from each site which would indicate human activity in the relatively recent past, although this element may be perhaps explained by the known importance of Modipe Hill in the modern period as a ritual site associated with rain making ceremonies. The previously obtained dates are in accordance with this evidence (Campbell et al 1991:277). In other words the evidence from the radiocarbon dates would indicate that settlement at the eastern side of Modipe Hill, both at its base and on the slopes is of the Late Iron Age, commencing in the 15th century and continuing up to the 18th century, with additional activity in the modern era.

If the radiocarbon dates are looked at in isolation from the other strands of evidence from the eastern side of the hill it would be reasonable to suggest that all of the structural elements coexisted and had therefore been built by a stable community who had made full use of the environmental possibilities that were offered at the hill both at the base and on its slopes. An analysis of the pottery has however indicated that there are additional factors that are worthy of consideration. There is little overlap of motif style between the pottery from the site at the base of the hill and that on the mid slopes. However, although motif styles are not shared, the pottery appears to all belong to the Moloko tradition. This raises difficult problems of interpretation which will remain unanswered until the pottery has been further researched and more extensive fieldwork has been carried out at the site. A number of solutions are however plausible. Firstly, that different activities took place at the two sites and that the function of the vessels dictated the style of the motifs. Secondly, that the people who occupied the hill, did so episodically and the differences in the motif styles represent different periods of occupancy by them during the late Iron Age. Thirdly, that the hill was occupied during the late Iron Age by more than one community who although related and sharing the same pottery tradition, each had their own range of motif styles. The pottery evidence provides a further complexity in that at the site on the mid slopes.
there is evidence for an earlier element being present within enclosure A which is not represented in either Enclosure B or C. The mid fifteenth century radiocarbon date from 1994.2 also came from the earliest deposits in this enclosure. The clear inference to be drawn from this is that Enclosure A was constructed first and that the others were later additions. Taking into account the above dating and pottery evidence the following initial attempt can be made to interpret the nature of Late Iron Age settlement at the eastern side of Modipe Hill. At the base of the hill a group of at least 50 huts clearly supported a medium sized community throughout the period. The abundance of pottery sherds and other artifacts found with them are a clear indication of a wide range of human activities having been carried out. In the one area that was examined in detail the subcircular deposit of homogenous grey soil may represent an animal kraal or midden. On the basis of this evidence it would indeed be reasonable to interpret this as a viable village that could have existed in isolation from other sites in the vicinity. Consideration of the stone “kraal complexes” on the mid slopes of the hill indicates that the situation there is more complicated. Their general shape and the archaeological evidence, in particular the presence again of the homogenous grey soil, would indicate that at least one of their functions was for the enclosure of livestock. There is also some evidence for human habitation at least during the earlier part of the period (the 15th/16th centuries A.D.). Under the wall of Enclosure B there was evidence for the presence of a “daga” deposit which although fragmentary in nature is reasonable proof for the presence of a hut. Given that the pottery and the radiocarbon dates indicate that Enclosure A predated the other two that were excavated it is not unreasonable to assume that the hut represented by the “daga” deposit may have been used for domestic occupation by the people who were using enclosure A as an animal kraal, particularly as they are so close to one another. It is therefore proposed that during the earlier part of the Late Iron Age Period there is clear evidence for a substantial village existing at the base of the hill and that there is possible contemporary evidence for human habitation on the mid slopes when the first of the stone enclosures had been laid out.

Leaving aside the difficult question of simultaneous use of the two sites their clear structural differences, location, layout and the variations in pottery motif styles indicate considerable complexity of occupancy. Whether or not this reflects differences in function, cyclical presence by one community, or occupancy by more than one separate but related groups, perhaps at the same time, all remain debatable issues. The situation becomes even more difficult to explain later when all of the stone enclosure complexes had been built. During the whole of the 1993 survey all of the enclosures were looked at in some detail and during the course of the 1994 excavation season an enclosure complex was excavated in its entirety. During all of that work no further in situ “daga” deposits, (other than that which was found under and predating the wall of Enclosure B) were located on the mid slopes of the hill. It is therefore extremely difficult to argue that, in their final phase of use in the Late Iron Age, the “kraal complexes” at Modipe Hill contained the kinds of dwellings that Late Iron Age peoples were known to be able to construct with some ease. Accordingly it seems unlikely that this part of the site was by then used for habitation by the community that had created it. So what were the mid slopes of the hill being used for in the latter part of the Late Iron Age? Clearly they would still have been used for the containment of livestock. In addition to this, however, in their final phase of use, the larger stone enclosures were being used for burial. The fact that only one adult was placed within each enclosure and the fact that both the excavated examples were placed in the same central position in the lower half of the enclosure would imply that burial had become an important element in their overall function. More tentatively but associated with these more formal or ritual community matters it is perhaps possible to argue that the two open areas that are found within the “kraal complex” settlement may have had a public function in much the same way as the “kgotla” does in current Tswana society. It may be therefore that by the end of the Late Iron Age the mid slopes of Modipe Hill had already begun to acquire a symbolic function, in the same way that it has acquired importance as a rain making site in the modern era. If one accepts this argument then the disappearance of any evidence for domestic occupation combined with the presence of the burials is less difficult to explain. What is obscure is where the people buried in the enclosures actually lived, as there are no huts to suggest that they lived on the mid slopes. It is the opinion of this author that they in fact lived in the
site at the base of the hill, despite the differences in pottery motif styles. It is considered that the lack of human habitations combined with the presence of the burials are such clear evidence for a restricted use of the mid slopes that the variations in pottery motif style can be explained by the differences in the function of the two sites. The terraces and the upper plateau are also elements which must be assessed when considering the overall nature of settlement at Modipe Hill. Clearly the terraces, particularly those adjacent to the access routes to the mid slopes, would have had a defensive function. This is certainly the case with the very long example which runs parallel to the base of the hill and protects the "kraal complex" settlement at its southern end. The large numbers of these terraces elsewhere on the hill must require additional explanation. In no case was there evidence for a hut having been constructed on the flat area created by the terrace wall. Other suggestions for their construction must therefore be sought. One possibility is that small thorn kraals were positioned on them and these areas too were used for the penning of livestock. An alternative suggestion is however possible, that these were used for cultivation. At this stage this must remain as nothing more than supposition although chemical analysis of the soils in the future might give a more definitive answer to this question. This issue of animal husbandry and possible cultivation also brings into the debate the question of the 7 hectare plateau that is located on the upper slopes between the two separate areas of "kraal complexes" on the eastern and southern sides of the hill respectively. These two areas have clearly been deliberately placed to command access to this upper plateau. Again much more analysis needs to be done on the deposits that are found on this upper plateau but it would seem very possible that this area was used for the containment of a large number of animals and/or cultivation when conditions would allow. In either case the resultant resource present in this area would have been well protected from both human and animal predators. The final elements which have not been discussed hitherto are the two furnaces that were discovered during the course of the project. One is positioned in an isolated position at the base of the hill at its northern end and one is located on the mid slopes in proximity to a part of the "kraal complex" settlement on the eastern side of the hill. As yet their residues have not been analysed. The single radiocarbon date obtained from the furnace at the base of the hill is extremely interesting. If one accepts the reliability and validity of a single date then this is the earliest evidence so far obtained for copper working in southeastern Botswana.

In conclusion, it should be stated that as a result of the limited scale of the fieldwork that has taken place at Modipe Hill to date and the fact that it has not yet been possible to place this site in a coherent regional setting, any interpretation must be of a tentative nature. The broad range of evidence would tend to indicate that the majority of the surviving man made features were constructed between the 15th and the 18th centuries A.D., perhaps by separate but related groups. In addition to this there is tantalizing evidence for some occupation, as yet unquantifiable, in the Early Iron Age. On a general level the limited range of artifacts present at the site would indicate that the communities who lived here were not particularly wealthy nor did they trade extensively. The evidence would however indicate that they contained within their ranks skilled potters, builders, smiths and farmers. Using this diversity of human talent they were able to exploit fully the range of natural environments that were available to them both at the base of the hill and on its mid and upper slopes, whilst also no doubt making use of all the natural resources that were available to them in the surrounding bush.

Acknowledgements

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