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36. Note on Some Stone-Walled Kraals in South Africa

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ORIGINAL ARTICLES.

Africa, South : Transvaal. With Plate E.

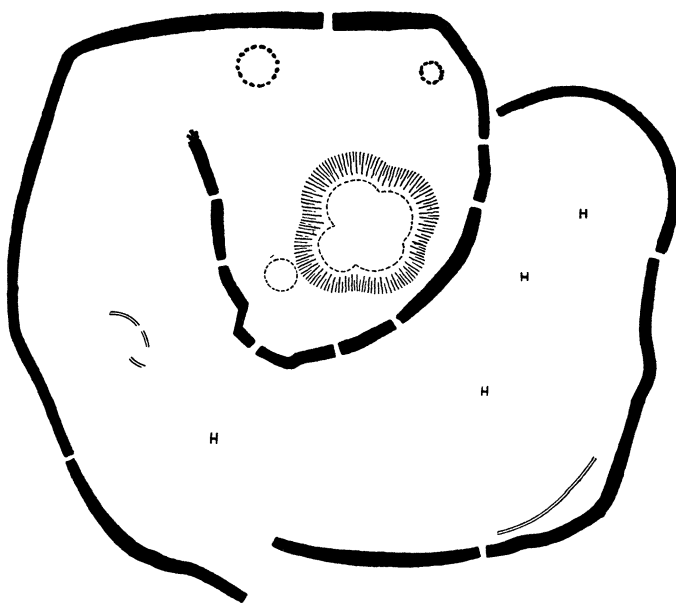
Johnson.

Note on some Stone-walled Kraals in South Africa. By J. P. **36**
Johnson.

The Masibi reservation is an extensive tract of country occupied by a section of the Bantu people and situated on the right bank of the Magalakwin river, north-west of Potgietersrust. The whole area was formerly under one chief of that name, but on his death it was divided into a northern and southern portion under his sons Hendrick and Hans respectively.

In passing through this area in 1910 I came across the remains of a group of old kraals that had a special interest in that they possessed many of the characteristic features of the better ruins north of the Limpopo. I learnt that these were inhabited up to about 1897, when they were set on fire during a fight between Hendrick and Hans. I also saw a number of inhabited kraals of the same kind. Since the old kraals, now represented by little more than the stone walls, afforded, in their ruined condition, a better comparison, I devoted most of the little time at my disposal to making plans of as many as I could. I also secured a number of photographs of both the ruined and the inhabited kraals.

These old kraals are ranged along the western foot of Ramoo Kop, which is situated on the boundary between the northern and southern divisions of the reservation, and number eleven in all. Of these I surveyed the first four, counting from north to south.



RUIN No. I.

All four ruins, though differing much in form, are built on the same general plan, that is, they each consist of an inner enclosure, containing a shallow pit surrounded by a mound, and an outer enclosure containing the remains of huts.

The wall of the inner enclosure is, in each case, higher and more neatly built than that of the outer, and was once completely plastered over with mud.* The former is mainly built of split, though not trimmed, slabs of gabbrodiorite, and the latter is largely made up of rounded and irregular pieces, but both exhibit considerable variation in quality of construction from point to point. They similarly vary

* Mr. Franklin White (*Proc. Rhodesia Scientific Assoc.*, Vol. IV, p. 15) in describing the Khami ruins, mentions the presence on some walls of a coating of cement or plaster, and remarks that "this probably covered the whole of the interior walls . . . and also formed the floor." The outer enclosure of the inhabited kraal, referred to later, has a cement floor.



FIG. 1.

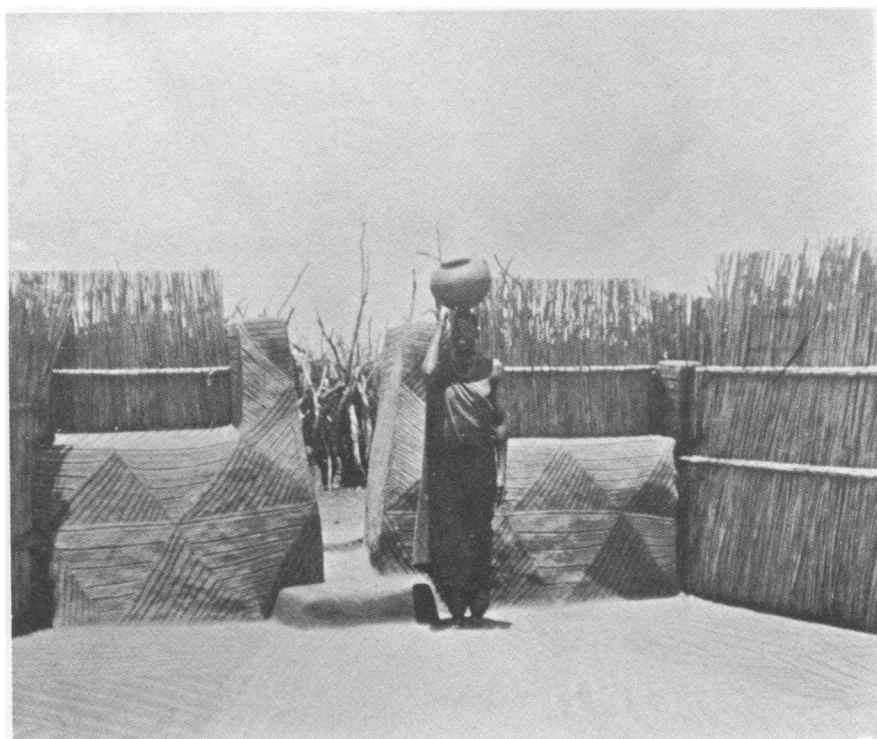
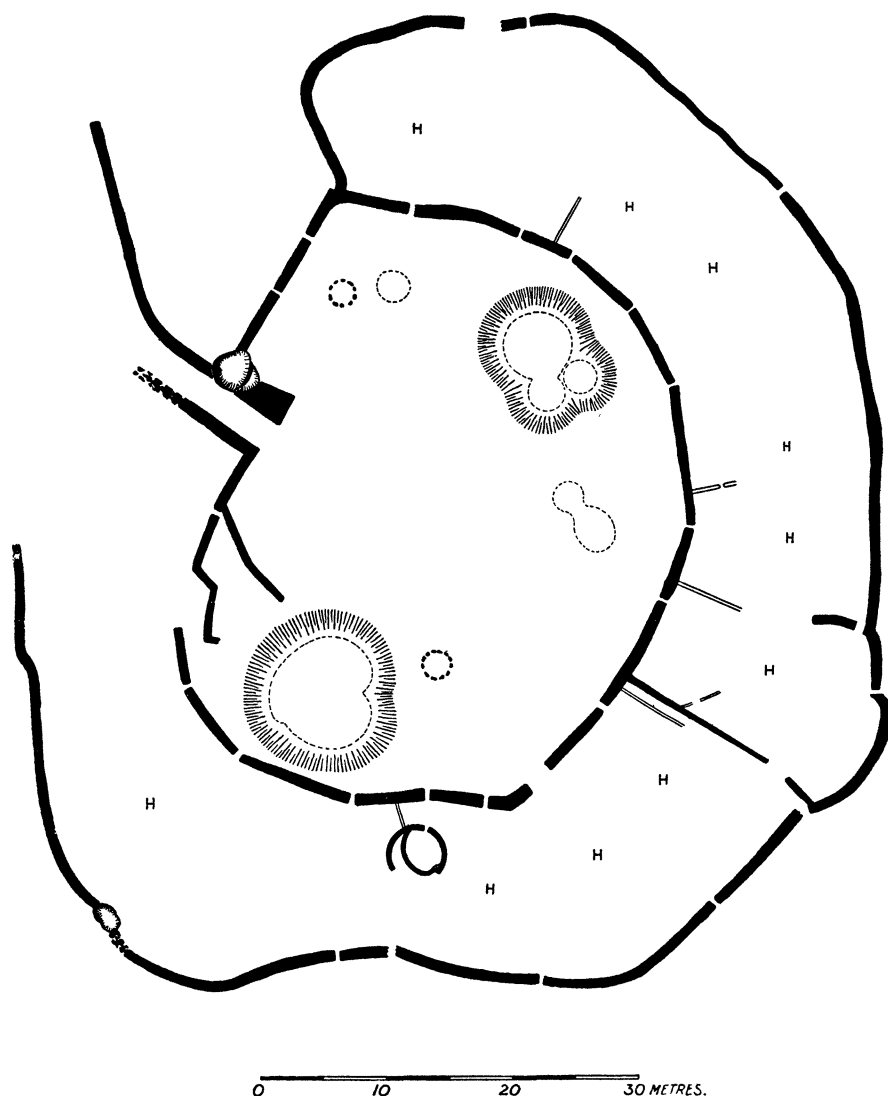


FIG. 2.

SOME STONE-WALLED KRAALS IN SOUTH AFRICA.

in height, which ranges from one-half to one-and-a-half metres, and, as will be seen from the plans, in width.

The plaster is largely preserved at No. II ruin, and also at No. IV ruin, but only traces remain at the other two. One small patch still retains the red and white geometric decoration. At the No. II ruin, the high door-posts of the same material are preserved at two entrances.



RUIN NO. II.

The entrances are mostly rectangular, but in ruin No. IV there are two rounded examples. In the one, the main entrance, the rounding is due to its being built of boulders; in the other, squared slabs are used, and the rounding intentionally produced, but curiously enough, one of the four corners is rectangular.

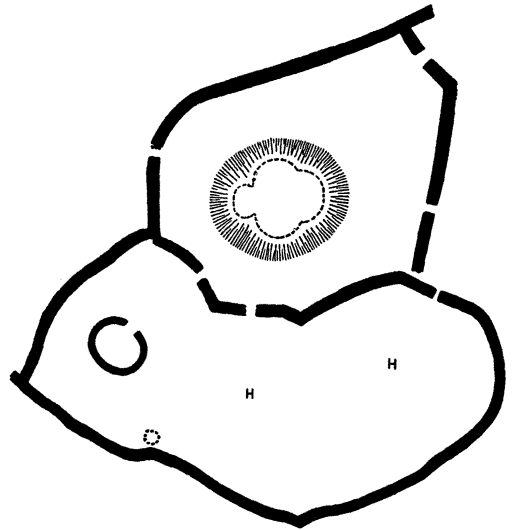
The two stone-built hut walls are interesting. They are both very neatly constructed, and differ from the other walls in that the slabs of stone, some of which are distinctly trimmed, are laid in a mortar of mud. That in No. III ruin is the better

preserved, and still retains two patches of decorated plaster on the inside. The inner arc of the other seems to be a later addition, and is a low wall, very roughly built without mortar, but the whole is much fallen in.

The outer enclosure was originally split up into compartments by means of radial mud walls, and each compartment possessed an entrance to the inner enclosure, and contained a hut. Portions of these dividing walls are still standing in No. II ruin, which is both the largest and the best preserved of the group. The circular cement hut foundations, from which the bottoms of the posts that supported the roofs still project, though now largely concealed by soil, can still be traced, while, in some cases, portions of the mud walls shown on the plans, are still standing. In No. II ruin no less than eleven of these hut foundations are shown, and the reader will readily perceive the probable position of four more. With a little excavation one could restore all the interior features of these ruins.

The hut sites are strewn with broken hand-made pottery, some of which is plain, some incised with cord, herring-bone, and similar patterns, and

some polished with both incised and painted



RUIN No. III.

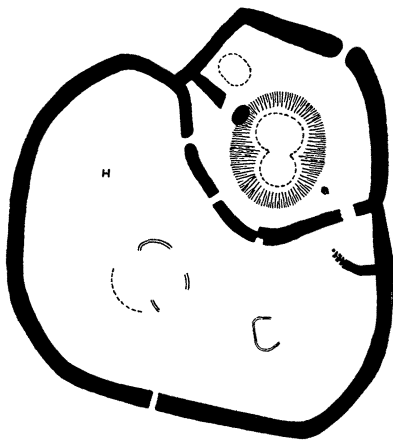
In the plan of ruin No. IV I have

shown a small heap of stones. In the outer enclosure of ruin No. II there are a number of these small heaps. I do not know their purpose. They remind me of the heaps of stones that the Kafirs sort out of the soil during their agricultural operations.

There are many similar kraals still inhabited in the neighbourhood, and they show that the outer wall was capped by a fence of cut bushes and that the inner wall was capped by grass-matting.

In Plate E are reproduced two photographs of the inner walls of inhabited kraals; Fig. 1 in which the plaster covering is not yet completely added, and Fig. 2 in which the plaster covering is finished and decorated.

These kraals also show the purpose of the inner enclosure. Its primary object was to stable the animals at night, these being herded in one or more lesser enclosures of cut bushes. It was also used as a place of assembly. Under its floor was buried the store of grain, the rifling of which has given rise to the mound-encircled pits.



RUIN No. IV.

cut bushes. It was also used as a place of assembly. Under its floor was buried the store of grain, the rifling of which has given rise to the mound-encircled pits.

The smaller circular depressions were fire-places where pots and other things were cooked.

The wall decoration is in red and white, which colours were obtained by powdering ochre and limestone; lately, blue, obtained from traders, has been added in some cases.

In other kraals in the neighbourhood stone walls have been discarded.

Pottery with patterns similar to, but not always quite identical with, those from the ruins, is made and is in general use in the kraals visited by me, but as I only went into a few out of the many, no importance must be attached to the difference. It is noteworthy that the polychrome ware is reserved neither for special persons nor for special occasions but is as much an article of daily use as the plain, the degree and style of decoration going with the class of utensil. The colouring materials are wood ash for white, ochre for red, and graphite for black. The pottery, it may be remarked, is made by the women.

Another common household article is a conical dish of marula wood, round the rim of which is carved the chevron pattern, sometimes single and sometimes double, as on the main building at Zimbabwe.

In and around these ruins, large pebbles, worn down on both sides to a flat disc by rubbing, abound, as also do the polished slabs of gabbrodiorite with which they were used, and the pounding stones and hollowed out blocks of the same rock that served the purpose of pestles and mortars.

On the other side of the Magalakwin, on the road from Potgietersrust to the tin mines and not far from the latter, are the remains of a kraal that was inhabited until recently, when the inhabitants burnt it down and removed to another spot nearer the river. In what was the inner enclosure of this kraal, recognisable, though it had no stone wall but merely a fence of cut bushes, because it contains a dumb-bell-shaped grain-pit, without, however, any surrounding mound, and the smaller circular fire-place, stands a stout tapering pole about five metres in height. This is decorated with alternate plain black and red bands and has the head of what appears to be a hornless ox carved on the top. In the inner enclosure of the new kraal, which likewise has a fence of cut bushes only, but shows no pit, a similar pole painted with alternate bands of black and white, and surmounted by a rag model of what appears to be the head of a hare, has been erected. Owing to my ignorance of the language I was unfortunately unable to obtain any satisfactory information regarding these poles, but gathered that they were connected with initiation ceremonies. Can these be homologous with the birds-on-posts or the conical tower at Zimbabwe?

J. P. JOHNSON,

India : Manipur.

Shakespear.

Kabui Notes. By Lieutenant-Colonel J. Shakespear, C.I.E., D.S.O.

37

Village, Ireng, close to Kangjupkhul. In their own language they call themselves Hā-me. In the village are found the following "Sageis" :—

KABUI NAME.

MEITHEI NAME.

Matang-me.

Ningthauja.

Heng-me.

Luang.

Bon-me.

Kabon-ngamba.*

Marem-me.

Kumul.

Pui-me is the name they apply to the people of Ngatokpa, who are called by the Manipuris Kabui anoba.†

Marong-me is applied to the people of Konga-khul and most of the plains Kabuis, and appears equivalent to Songpu.

* or Khābangānba.

† i.e., New Kabuis.