

The Cultural Heritage of the Nharira Hills National Monument, Zimbabwe: Results of an Ethno-Archaeological Survey.

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Introduction

The Nharira Hills are located 38km west of Harare on Saffron Walden Farm (now known as Tateguru farm) in Norton; Zimbabwe. Nharira Hills was declared a national monument number 169 on the 25th of February 2000, becoming one of the sites looked after by the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe (NMMZ).

The boundaries of the monument are the lowlands on all sides that were once fields but have now been left derelict. On the eastern side of the hills is Munwahuku River (Fig. 1), a tributary of the Hunyani River. To the west of the monument is the strip road that runs through the commercial farms.

Academic publications on the monument have focussed on the conflicts between the traditional custodians of the sites led by Sekuru Mushore on one hand, and the farm owner (Mr Hinde) on another (Manyanga 2003, Pwiti and Mvenge 1996). The claims by the traditional custodians centred on gaining access to settle on their ancestral land and appease their ancestors through traditional rituals and ceremonies. However, the cultural material in the national monument has not been fully documented and studied. Ethno-archaeological investigation has demonstrated abundance of cultural material in the area that includes sacred trees and tunnels, burials, pottery, granaries and ceremonial axes as well as stonewalls enclosures, rock paintings and remains of iron smelting. It also demonstrated the inseparable relations between the features such as burials, furnaces, stonewalls and the sacred traditional ritual and ceremonial belief system and practices by the traditional custodians of the monument. This paper presents the results of an ethno-archaeological study carried out to document the diverse forms of cultural material that constitutes the Nharira hills monument. It also attempts to show how the traditional custodians of the monument perceive and associate with the material remains and the monument as a whole.