

Lenao la ga Matsieng

Matsieng is one of the several places all over the country that could be referred to as "creation sites" because of their association with myths that explain the origin of life. According to the Matsieng legend, Matsieng is the ancestor of the Tswana. It is believed that life began when he emerged from a hole in the ground followed by his people and animals. This happened when the rocks were still soft. Therefore, their feet sank and left footprints when the rocks hardened.

{mosimage1}Access

This monument is in the southeastern hardveld of Botswana, in the kgatleng district, near Rasesa village. The place is accessible by road along the Gaborone – Francistown road and then following a turn off 10 kilometers from Rasesa village. There is a signboard indicating the direction of the site, which is about a kilometer from the tarred road.

Special cultural features and archeological evidence

Matsieng engravings or petroglyphics characterized mostly by animal tracks (felines) and U-shaped human footprints with dots or dashes representing toes. Most of them are between 120 and 290 millimeters long with the exception of one that is giant sized (340 millimeters long). In spite of the legend, archeological evidence shows that these are merely man-made.

It has been suggested that there is some evidence to link the engraved symbols originally with Bushmen religious practices like possessing animals for magic purposes. It seems that sites in Botswana which had such characteristics were incorporated into Tswana mythology. In the case of Matsieng, it continued to be an important rainmaking place. The majority of these engravings were badly eroded due to exposure to animal and human movement as well as direct sunlight and rain, before the present conservation measures were taken.

There are two large holes at the site which retain water for several months of the year depending on rainfall intensity.

They are clearly natural and could be volcanic vents. The bigger hole which is three meters deep, is usually referred to as the main hole because it is deeper, retains water longer, and has most of the engravings around it. It is from this hole that Botswana believe their ancestor Matsieng emerged. Local people still draw water from here for domestic use and to water their small stock. In the area around the main, there are several grinding patches and a few canoe shaped sharpening grooves.

{mosimage2}Natural heritage

Two families of beetles (Coleopteran) and one family of bugs (Hemiptera) are found in the two pools. The holes are home to a variety of aquatic insects and vertebrates, including one species of a frog. There are also a wide diversity of insect larvae in the main pool.

Some rules

Matsieng is a National Monument administered by the Botswana National museum and protected by the revised Monuments and Relics Act (2001). Adherence to some basic guideline will make your visit worthwhile and ensure the continued protection of a part of Botswana's unique heritage.

- Use the designated parking lot and report to the custodian's office
- Register in the visitor's book
- PLEASE do not interfere with the engravings or any other feature
- Do not remove any artifacts
- Cooperate with custodians
- Take all your litter away with you