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### CAN WELLS SERVE AS ARCHAEOLOGICAL INDICATORS FOR LIVESTOCK HERDING?

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This paper discusses a series of wells mapped in an archaeological survey in western Kalahari, Namibia. The study examines the wells as archaeological evidence for livestock herding and considers their implications for related studies in southern Africa.

Cet article présente une discussion sur une série de puits cartographiés lors d'une reconnaissance archéologique dans le Kalahari de l'ouest, en Namibie. L'étude considère les puits comme preuve archéologique sur l'élevage de troupeaux de bétail et examine leurs implications pour des études apparentées en Afrique australe.

#### INTRODUCTION

Archaeologists in southern Africa disagree on how livestock herding should be identified in the archaeological record, and the timing and forms for the introduction of pastoralism. It is debated whether the descriptions in early historical accounts can be considered authentic reflections of the distant past. The question has been whether distinctions between hunter-gatherers and pastoralists reflect discrete ethnic categories, or whether they reflect more complex relationships that crosscut ethnic and linguistic boundaries. The "Kalahari debate" (see below) involves all these issues and centres on the Nyae Nyae-Dobe in north-western Kalahari (Fig. 1).

The Kalahari is a vast sandy area in the interior of southern Africa (Thomas and Shaw 1991). The north-western parts of the Kalahari, in the borderland of Namibia and Botswana, is characterised by sand layers considered to be thick, even for Kalahari standards (Simmonds 2001). Since thick sand layers result in high evaporation rates and paucity of surface water, the area is considered unsuitable for livestock herding (Kuper 1970:45; Foster et al. 1982). According to this view, livestock herders were able to establish themselves only in the later half of the twentieth century when deep reaching boreholes were introduced. This idea also became helpful for making sense of the long survival of the Ju/'hoansi, a Khoesan-speaking, hunter-gatherer group that lives in the region (Marshall 1976:14; Lee 1979:39).

The archaeological record of pastoralists in the Kalahari was perceived either as non-existent, or received little attention from scientific enquiry. This changed, however, in the 1980s, with finds of first millennium AD pottery and cattle bone in the Dobe area (Wilmsen 1978, 1988). Seen in relation to the results from