



Figure 3.1 Location of the Cave of Hearths in southern Africa.

Makapansgat located close to the town of Potgietersrus in Limpopo Province, northern South Africa (Figure 3.1). As part of this process, we have been looking at ways of investigating hominid behaviour in a landscape setting. For the Middle and Upper Pleistocene the record of hominid activities at Makapansgat is like that of many other places in Africa. It includes some stratified sites and their assemblages, for example the Cave of Hearths, Magazine and Rufus Caves in the Makapan Valley, reported in Mason (1988). It also includes a landscape of lithic pieces, both individual finds and associated scatters, visible on the surface to field survey. Some of these scatters are indicators of stratified deposits below; others are solely surface finds. The project has set out to integrate these two different data sets through reinvestigation of the previously excavated assemblages from the Cave of Hearths, and landscape survey of the Makapan and Swartkrans Valleys and their immediate surroundings.

The Cave of Hearths

Through the course of excavation (in the late 1940s and

early 1950s) Mason identified 11 major beds, with the lowest 10 beds containing Early Stone Age (1–3), Middle Stone Age (MSA; 4–9) and Later Stone Age (LSA; 10) assemblages. Mason (1962) used the assemblages from the Cave of Hearths as a key component in a statistical analysis of the character and transition of the Early to the Middle Stone Age in the Transvaal. He saw the lithic assemblages from Beds 4 and 5 as a manifestation of the early phase of the Pietersburg industry, the regionally dominant MSA variant. Later Middle Stone Age assemblages have been typologically characterised as Howiesons Poort (Sampson 1974). Mason primarily concentrated on the typology of the assemblages and the retouched pieces in particular. Unusually for his time, he also examined those non-retouched pieces that he thought had been used. He gave less attention, however, to a detailed description and analysis of technological patterning. The Project has therefore focused its work on a reconstruction of the reduction patterns and their change through the stratigraphic sequence. In addition to augmenting our understanding of the nature of stone working on site, these technological analyses also indicate the likely provision