

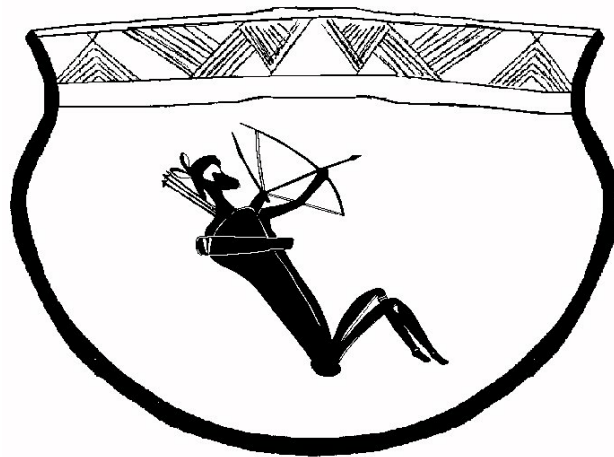
# **The Archaeological Survey Of Dingiswayo's Grave**

**For Kwa-Zulu Natal Heritage**

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**By Gavin and Louise Anderson  
Umlando: Archaeological Tourism and Resource  
Management**

**PO Box 491, Mkuze, 3965**



## INTRODUCTION

Kwa-Zulu Natal Heritage contracted Umlando to undertake an archaeological assessment of Dingiswayo's grave, Kwa-Zulu Natal. The specific area has been marked by oral history to be the final resting-place of Dingiswayo (c. 1828 AD). The Mthethwa people have proposed some development in this vicinity.

The archaeological survey was conducted with a historian from Kwa-Zulu Natal Heritage, as well as the Mayor of Uthungulu District Municipality, and two other representatives from the Mthethwa people. This trip was undertaken after Inkosi Mthethwa granted permission to visit this site.

The terms of reference for this project are:

- Undertake an archaeological assessment of the area
- Note if any special archaeological features occur
- Suggest a management plan for future development

## RESULTS

The site occurs on the top of a small hill and has a radius of approximately 30 - 50 m. The area has been flattened by presumed human activity. This probably occurred at the first occupation of the site. The most notable feature is a very large *Euphorbia ingens* (Candelabra tree, *Naboom*) near the centre of the site. This *Euphorbia ingens* is believed to mark the grave of Dingiswayo (fig. 1) and this tree is often used to demarcate human graves.

The site has two stages of occupation: Middle Stone Age (MSA), and Late Iron Age (or Historical Period)

The MSA artefacts consist of the standard flakes associated with open MSA sites. The stone tools are made on cryptocrystalline silicates (CCS) or dolerite. No special stone tools were observed.

The Late Iron Age, or Historical Period, part of the site consists of pottery, grinding stones, faunal remains, and potential human remains.

The pottery is thin-walled and undecorated. The pottery is dark brown or orange-red in colour. One flat lip with straight rim was observed.

One upper grindingstone and a lower smoothed stone were observed near the grave.

Several areas around the site appear to be the remains of possible huts (indicated by depressions in the soil and/or "circles" of bushes). The site also has the general appearance of an abandoned settlement. Only excavations can determine the type of settlement and the extent and quality of spatial features.

**Significance:** The site is of high historical significance. The site is the alleged grave of Dingiswayo as well as a settlement for a Zulu regiment (according to onsite discussions). The oral history will need to detail the full significance of the site.

**Mitigation:** The site should not be disturbed. Disturbance refers to a physical, visual and spiritual impact.

## **MANAGEMENT PLAN**

There are three proposals by the Mthethwa people regarding this site:

1. A memorial or grave stone, near the grave indicating whom Dingiswayo was.
2. A fence to protect the site surrounds the area.
3. The building of several huts to symbolise the various diaspora of the Mthethwa people in sub-Saharan Africa.

**Fig. 1: *Euphorbia ingens*. Indicating the Grave of Dingiswayo**



A small memorial to Dingiswayo should not pose a threat to the grave area itself. The roots of the *Euphorbia ingens* tree have turned the soil near the grave and have thus disturbed any potential archaeological features. The memorial can be placed in this area. The memorial should not affect the visual impact of the tree or the site itself.

I do not believe that a fence should be erected **on** the site itself. Any fencing (including the poles) will be an excavation and thus will have the potential to damage part(s) of the site. These areas would need to be cleared by an archaeologist before the fencing was erected, and this will be time consuming and expensive. The alternative is to erect a type of fence  $\pm 20$  m outside the boundaries of the site. In this way the site itself will not be damaged, yet it will serve the presumed function of demarcating the site.

Demarcating sites with fences is a difficult decision to make. There are several examples where sites have been damaged after boundaries have been made. Fencing also has the potential to have a negative visual impact. That is, the fences will spoil the spiritual and historical mood of the site, as such boundaries did not exist at the site in the past. An alternative to fencing is to use natural, or traditional, flora to demarcate the site. For example, certain low-lying bushes or trees may be used. These will need to be placed outside the boundaries of the site.

The building of the huts will have an immediate negative visual and archaeological impact on the site. Any buildings should be built outside the boundaries of the site and not effect the panoramic view from the centre of the site. The view from the site gives the site itself a sense of place on the landscape.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Dingiswayo's graves was assessed for its archaeological significance and a management plan is proposed. The site has potential spatial features, artefacts and the remains of a key player in the rise of the Zulu nation. It is thus of high historical significance. This significance should restrict any physical and visual impacts on the site, with the exception of the memorial. If any other development occurs, it should be undertaken outside the radius of the site. It should also not affect the view of the site, or the view from the site.