

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF THE PROPOSED DAM NEAR THE TOWN OF MAPUMULO

INTRODUCTION

The Institute for Cultural Resource Management was approached by the KwaZulu Monuments Council to undertake an archaeological survey of the proposed dam on the Umvoti River, near the town of Mapumulo. The aim of the archaeological survey was to identify and assess archaeological sites that may be affected by the proposed dam, and to suggest mitigation and management plans for these sites.

The archaeological survey had several limitations. The main limitations is in the difficulty in detecting subsurface sites in areas with dense vegetation, as was the case in the study area. A further limitation was in the current conflict occurring in the area. We were advised not to go into certain areas on Saturday without police protection/escort, and thus the latter areas were not surveyed. Unfortunately two areas with potential archaeological sites are situated in this area and will need to be surveyed at a later stage.

ASSESSMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

An archaeological site is defined as having several artefacts or features in a primary or secondary context, and they should be, for the time being, at least older than 100 years. No archaeological sites *per se* were recorded in the study area, however several graves were either observed or recorded. Those sites that were recorded may be just younger than 100 years old.

According to one of the local residents, this part of the Umvoti Valley was occupied from 1906 due to socio-political factors in KwaZulu-Natal - referred to as the Bambatha 'rebellion'. This information was substantiated by residents near MOP1, and MOP2, who remembered that their parents had moved into this valley when they were younger - these informants are between 65-80 years old.

Site 1: MOP1

MOP1 is situated on the top of a spur leading towards the river. This site has been occupied since the first ±1906 occupants arrived in the valley. The site consists of huts, cattle byres and ash patches associated with the cattle byre. These homesteads have been occupied continuously since the first occupants arrived. The artefacts included pot sherds, animal bones and upper and lower grindstones. The lower homesteads are the older houses.

In addition to the homesteads, two graves besides the house were recorded. The relatives of the deceased live in the currently occupied house.

The site is of low archaeological significance and the impact of the dam on the site will be high negative.

Site 2: MOP2

MOP2 is located halfway up the hill near the proposed dam wall. The site consists of one, possibly two, stone terraced house(s), a possible cattle byre, and two graves. The artefacts associated with the site include pot sherds (one sherd had a black burnish with a flat lip, while others had a brown burnish), a lower and upper grindstone, and fragments of glass. The graves were situated slightly upslope from the main house. To the west of the graves is an open field where many sherds were observed.

According to a local informer, the house is believed to be the oldest on this hill, and may have been occupied 70-80 years ago. No-one claims ownership to the house, however, the previous occupant is known to the community.

The site is of low archaeological significance, and the affect of the dam will be high negative.

Grave 1

This site is located near MOP1 and consists of a stone terraced house and one grave. There are the remains of a more recent house nearby the graves. The artefacts at the site include pottery sherds and iron pots, while daub/plaster remains were recorded as well.

The grave is located northwards to the river, in front of the house. The grave, as with other graves in the area, consists of a stone cairn $\pm 1.5\text{m}$ wide, $\pm 2\text{m}$ long, and 0.5m high. There are often cacti or succulents growing on the graves. More graves may exist near the end of the spur towards the river.

The site is of low archaeological significance, and the affect of the dam will be high negative.

DISCUSSION AND MITIGATION

As stated earlier archaeologists tend to consider sites older than 100 years to be archaeological sites. This does not, however, imply that the homesteads recorded in this part of the Umvoti River Valley are of no significance - they may have historical significance. The movement of people into this area relates to the consequences of the Bambatha 'rebellion' of 1906. Moreover, one of the battles occurred within 40km from the study area.

While no archaeological sites *per se* were recorded in the limited survey, several graves were either noted or recorded. Several legislative Acts protect these graves and mitigation would be required prior to the flooding of the proposed dam. I am in no position to suggest this mitigation and it should be included in the social impact study. No archaeological mitigation is required for those homesteads to be affected by the proposed dam.

In the introduction I noted that some areas were not surveyed for various reasons. There are at least two areas within the high water mark that still need to be surveyed. These areas appear to be more archaeologically significant than other areas, and may have Early Iron Age material.

CONCLUSION

An archaeological survey of the proposed dam near Mapumulo was undertaken to identify and assess potential archaeological sites. These potential sites would be negatively affected by the proposed dam. The whole area was not surveyed for reasons stated above.

The survey did not record any archaeological sites, however, several graves were observed and/or recorded. These would require mitigation and should be included in the social impact study.

GPS CO-ORDIANATES OF RECORDED SITES AND/GRAVES

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| Grave 1: | S29 ⁰ 14' 59" | E30 ⁰ 59' 48" |
| Site 1 - MOP1: | S29 ⁰ 15' 00.5" | E30 ⁰ 59' 43" |
| Site 2 - MOP2: | S29 ⁰ 15' 20" | E30 ⁰ 59' 58" |