

A DESKTOP ASSESSMENT OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL
POTENTIAL OF THE MAPUMULO, LOWER THUKELA,
NDWEDWE AND UMBUMBULU DISTRICTS

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Systematic archaeological surveys have been carried out Lower Tugela and Ndwedwe only, and in each case the surveys were part of pre-development impact assessments and thus restricted in areal focus. Consequently, this report cannot in any way be regarded as providing a comprehensive statement on the archaeological sites and resources in the four districts. A significant number of sites have been recorded beyond the limits of the impact assessment surveys, particularly in Lower Tugela, and usually in the vicinity of newly-constructed roads or residential development. These indicate that many archaeological sites remain unrecorded. Some may be of great scientific significance and thus worthy of conservation.

Given these circumstances, it would be pointless to provide detailed site location data in this report. First, many recorded archaeological sites no longer exist. Secondly, such data are incomplete. 'Dots on a map' therefore, would provide a false impression of the archaeological potential of the four districts. Herein lies a danger, from an archaeological point of view, because developers and planners separated from this report may fail to appreciate the incomplete nature of the data. Consequently, they may inadvertently make decisions that adversely affect archaeological sites and data. What follows then is an overview of the known archaeological potential of the four districts. The intention is to alert developers and planners to this potential.

Overview of the known archaeological resources of the four districts

We consulted the 1: 50 000 topographic maps held by the regional recording centre in the Department of Archaeology. The following types of sites are recorded in each district.

Lower Tugela

Archaeological sites recorded in Lower Tugela number 117. Some were recorded during three archaeological impact assessments conducted in the district, two associated with the new National Road 2 and Thukela river bridge and one linked to the Port Zimbali development (south of Ballito). The sites cover the full spectrum of human history, ranging from Early Stone Age through to the Anglo-Zulu war of 1879.

Many sites were recorded, and subsequently destroyed, during the course of residential and township development along the coast. The expansion of Ballito, for example, resulted in the destruction of a great many Iron Age sites. Many were coastal shell middens, accumulated as a result of centuries of mussel and oyster exploitation, principally by early black agriculturists (cf. Horwitz *et al.* 1991).

Recorded Early and Middle Stone Age sites occur most frequently in ancient river terraces and gravels, though some occur on the earth surface. These are often, though not always, of limited archaeological significance. Of considerably greater significance is Sibhudu rock shelter on the northern side of the Tongati river near Tongaat, with a well-preserved Middle Stone Age deposit. This site is of national monument status, though it has not yet been declared one. It will shortly be the subject of a research project undertaken by the Department of Archaeology, University of the Witwatersrand.

Around Stanger are a number of sites reputedly associated with Shaka. These include Shaka's bathing place and spring, execution cliff, the Shakan *amakhanda* (military

homesteads) of Hlomendlini 1 and 2 and Mdumezulu, Shaka's Rock and well. Not all of these sites can be unambiguously linked to Shaka (Brooks 1992). Certainly Shaka, in the last years of his reign, established a new capital called Dukuza in the Stanger area. It was also in this vicinity that he was assassinated in 1828. Stanger appears to have been constructed on the site of Dukuza, but the site of Shaka's assassination is not unequivocally established. Controversy over the precise location and importance of sites is possibly best left to professional historians, however: Stanger today has gained significance among several communities because of the area's association with Shaka.

Fort Pearson and the Ultimatum Tree, on the south bank of the Thukela, are sites of the Anglo-Zulu war of 1879. Once linked by a path, they are now separated by the N2 and Thukela bridge, an extraordinarily insensitive development from a cultural heritage point of view. Both sites have been developed for tourism. The Ultimatum Tree is the more important of the two, though it probably receives less publicity. It was here that the colonial government instructed the Zulu king Cetshwayo to disband his army (and so his kingdom) or face destruction by colonial forces. The tree therefore represent the sharp end of colonialism, the subjugation of indigenous communities.

Mapumulo

Little archaeological work has been done in this area. Four Early Stone Age sites have been recorded in ancient river terraces. Only one Late Iron Age is known. These were recorded in the course of geological research of river terraces.

Ndwedwe

Most of the recorded archaeological sites in the Ndwedwe district were identified in an archaeological impact assessment of the area now flooded by Inanda Dam (Maggs, Mazel & Ward 1984). These sites, 13 in all, were located on the northern bank of the Mngeni river. Mitigatory excavation was conducted on several of the more significant sites prior to the completion of the dam. The results of the excavations are of great scientific interest and contributed substantially towards developing a deeper understanding of Iron Age communities of southern Africa during the first millennium AD (cf. Whitelaw 1993 1994 1994-1995, Whitelaw & Moon 1996). All sites now lie beneath the waters of Inanda Dam.

Early Stone Age have been recorded in river gravels elsewhere in the district, and an possibly significant Early Iron Age site is located near the Mushane/Mvoti confluence.

From the maps provided, Durban Outer West and Ndwedwe appear not to have a common boundary in the vicinity of Inanda Dam. A substantial number of archaeological sites, not mentioned in the Durban Outer West report (May 1998), were recorded on the southern side of the Mngeni at Inanda Dam. All are flooded, but I mention them here simply to illustrate the potential archaeological richness of the Ndwedwe district.

Umbumbulu

Little archaeological work has been done in this district. Middle and Late Stone Age sites occur associated with river terraces on the Lovu river, near the Mkomazi and elsewhere on the earth surface. Already mentioned in the Durban Outer West report (May 1998), are several archaeological sites at Shongweni Dam (the maps provided make it difficult to establish district boundaries precisely). These include an important Stone and Iron Age site and several other potentially important sites, including a rock art site. The full range of human history is represented in the Shongweni area, and probably elsewhere in Umbumbulu, with Early, Middle and Late Stone Age remains, as well as Early and Late Iron Age material.

Tourism and educational potential

Several of the known sites would be suitable for development as tourist and educational resources. These include a rock shelter site close to the Shongweni Dam (also mentioned in my Durban Outer West report) that is of special archaeological significance. Sibhudu rock shelter near Tongaat with a Middle Stone Age deposit is of even more significance and worthy of declaration as a national monument. Current research plans by the University of the Witwatersrand provide an opportunity for the development of this site for tourist and educational purposes. Shell middens along the coast, in the vicinity of Ballito for example, may be usefully exploited for the same purpose. All such development, however, requires sufficient financial investment so that it can be achieved in accordance with the requirements of the National Monuments Act (No. 28 of 1969, as amended) and the KwaZulu-Natal Heritage Act (No. 10 of 1997). People should *not* be encouraged to visit the sites prior to development and implementation of an appropriate management plan for the sites, in consultation with the National Monuments Council or provincial heritage agency. Details of the location of these sites can be obtained from the Pietermaritzburg offices of the provincial heritage agency.

The Shakan sites around Stanger and the Anglo-Zulu war sites on the Thukela south bank are obvious drawcards. Fuller use could be made of these sites to convey something of the nineteenth-century history of the region. I would recommend that further development of any of the Shakan sites convey something of the speculative nature of the evidence for their association with Shaka (cf. Brooks 1992). Reinterpretation of the Anglo-Zulu war sites should present the war as one of colonial oppression rather than a heroic sequence of events for which the British government awarded a large number of Victoria Crosses.

Cultural resource management

The archaeological potential of the four districts is considerable. Any development should be preceded by an Environmental Impact Assessment which should include an assessment of cultural resources (archaeological, historical etc.). In this connection, it is worth noting that heritage management in this province will shortly become the responsibility of the provincial heritage agency, Amafa aKwaZulu-Natali. Amafa will be established in terms of the KwaZulu-Natal Heritage Act (No. 10 of 1997).

Section 27 of the Act, dealing with heritage resources management, requires that the Council of Amafa, at the earliest stages of initiating certain categories of development projects, be furnished with details regarding the location, nature and extent of the proposed development.

These categories of development are:

- construction of a road, wall, power line, pipeline canal or similar form of linear development or barriers exceeding 300 m in length.
- construction of a bridge or similar structure exceeding 50m in length; and
- any development, or other activity which will change the character of an area of land or water exceeding 10 000 m in extent;
 - involving three or more existing erven or subdivisions thereof; or
 - involving three or more existing erven, or subdivisions thereof, which have been consolidated within the past five years; or
 - the costs of which will exceed a sum set in terms of regulations; or
 - any other category of development provided for in regulations.

The Amafa Council may require that heritage impact assessments are carried out prior to any development being undertaken.

Glossary

The **Stone Age** refers to the period when human and human ancestors survived principally through scavenging, gathering, fishing and hunting food. Technology was simple, people typically lived in smallish groups.

Early Stone Age: from older than 1 million years to about 200 000 years ago

Middle Stone Age: from about 200 000 years to about 25 000 years ago

Late Stone Age: from about 25 000 years ago to colonial times

The **Iron Age** refers to the period when black, Bantu-speaking people settled in southern Africa. They farmed domestic animals and crops and produced various metals from ore.

Early Iron Age: from about AD 400 to AD 1000

Late Iron Age: from AD 1000 to colonial times

Contact numbers

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