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**A REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL TEST EXCAVATIONS
AT CHIEF DINGISWAYO'S HOMESTEAD SITE (OYENGWEND),
MTETHWA TRIBAL AREA, NEAR KWAMBONAMBI, UTHUNGULU
DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY, KZN**

For:

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REPORT: APAC013/40

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Field Work conducted: *April 2013* Report: *June 2013*

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**I HEREBY DECLARE THAT I AM AN INDEPENDENT
SPECIALIST APPOINTED BY THE CLIENT ON A CONSULTANCY
BASIS**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Peber". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a horizontal line at the end.

SUMMARY

Amafa is embarking on a multi-year, systematic heritage survey and preliminary excavations of a series of early Shakan sites, of which the Dingiswayo site is the first as it is now in the process of being proclaimed as a Provincial Heritage Site. As part of this project Amafa required test-pit excavations at the Dingiswayo Site to verify oral histories and confirm the site as of heritage significance as part of the proclamation process and possible future interpretation.

Amafa appointed A.Pelser Archaeological Consulting to undertake the test pit excavations and preliminary research on the Dingiswayo site. A permit (Reference Number 0013/04) was issued and the excavations conducted during a 8-day period in May 2013. This report is a discussion of the results of the investigations and also provides recommendations regarding the way forward.

The excavation team also included a number of Amafa staff members as part of a training exercise. The archaeological investigations included background research, detailed mapping of the site and features identified on it, as well as three formal excavations on the site. It should be mentioned that the site has been impacted on by the erection of a fenced-off Memorial site close to the grave of Dingiswayo.

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INTRODUCTION

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The excavation team included a number of Amafa staff members as part of a training exercise. The archaeological investigations included background research, detailed mapping of the site and features identified on it, as well as three formal excavations on the site.

In 2004 Kwa-Zulu Natal Heritage (Amafa) contracted Umlando Archaeological Tourism and Resource Management to undertake an archaeological assessment of Dingiswayo's grave. According to the resultant report the specific area was marked by oral history as the final resting-place of Chief Dingiswayo (c. 1828 AD). At the time of the fieldwork the Mthethwa people had proposed some development in this vicinity.

Anderson describes the site as occurring 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 center of the site. This *Euphorbia ingens* is believed to mark the grave of Dingiswayo. The report indicates that the site had two stages of occupation: Middle Stone Age (MSA), and Late Iron Age (or Historical Period). The MSA artifacts recorded by Anderson consisted 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 consisted of pottery, grinding stones, faunal remains, and potential human remains. The pottery recorded during the 2004 survey was thin-walled and undecorated, dark brown or orange-red in colour. One flat lip with straight rim was observed. One upper grinding stone and a lower smoothed stone were observed near the grave (Anderson et.al 2004: 2-3).

Several areas around the site appeared to be the remains of possible huts (indicated by depressions in the soil and/or "circles" of bushes). The site also had the general appearance of an abandoned settlement. Anderson specified that only excavations could determine the type of settlement and the extent and quality of spatial features. Furthermore, according to

Anderson the site is of high historical significance as it the alleged grave of Dingiswayo as well as a settlement for a Zulu regiment (according to onsite discussions). Finally he recommended that oral history will need to detail the full significance of the site (Anderson 2004: 3).

Based on the results of this survey, and subsequent discussions with the Mthethwa people who requested that the site be Memorialized and declared a Provincial Heritage Site, Amafa has decided to conduct the detailed archaeological research on the site to verify its significance. The April 2013 work conducted by Anton Pelsler and his team was the first of series of fieldwork sessions recommended in relation to the Dingiswayo site. The results of research are discussed in this report.

AIMS

The aims of the Archaeological Investigation (including mapping of the site and test excavations) of Chief's Dingiswayo's homestead site near KwaMbonambi in KZN were as follows:

- (a) to conduct test excavations on the site in order to determine the type of settlement, time-frame of occupation and material culture
- (b) to map the site and features on it in detail to help with determining settlement layout and extent
- (c) to conduct background research on both oral and historical records of the site in order to complement the archaeological record
- (d) the analysis of the cultural material recovered during the excavations
- (e) the drafting of a detailed report on all the findings and recommendations on the way forward and finally,
- (f) the proper curation of the material in a recognized institution. In this case (as per permit regulations) the material will be lodged at the repository of Amafa AkwaZulu-Natali

METHODOLOGY

The methodology comprised the following:

Background Research – This included background research on the area and history regarding Chief Dingiswayo.

Photographic - Photographs of the site and area were taken, while all identifiable features, excavations and individual objects were also photographed for recording purposes.

Mapping

All identifiable features, excavations and the site's extent were recorded and a detailed map on the site produced.

Archaeological Excavations

Three formal excavations were conducted: Excavation 1 on the possible kraal, Excavation 2 inside the Dingiswayo Memorial area at a possible sunken granary and Excavation 3 at a midden on the periphery of the site.

Analysis & Documentation/Curation of cultural material

All the cultural material recovered was documented photographically and analyzed accordingly. The material was also cleaned superficially and packed in bags and boxes for delivery to Amafa for proper curation.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Mthethwa confederacy arose in the 18th century as a consolidation of clans that formed part of the greater northern Nguni-speaking cultural group in southern Africa. Their ruling lineage (the Nyambose) originally settled between the Mfolozi and Mhlatuse rivers (Wylie 2006: 49).

Any research involving the history of Dingiswayo and the Mthethwa has to take place within the wider regional context because there were various dynamics present that would directly impact on the ascendancy of both. The late 18th century in Southern Africa saw a period of great instability and upheaval among indigenous groups and this is commonly referred to as the Mfecane or Difaqane. The long-held belief that the increased militarization of the Zulu under Shaka was solely responsible for this state of conflict has now been revised, with research pointing to multiple factors contributing to the instability. These include pressure on natural resources, population expansion, drought, increased social stratification, attempts to control trade routes and, to some extent, European-sponsored slave-raiding among local groups (Eldredge 1992; Gump 1989 and Wylie 2006).

Indian Ocean trade contributed to changes in the socio-political structures of many groups, including that of the Mthethwa: imported beads became part of bride-wealth/lobola currency, increased demand for meat and grain from east coast ships necessitated more control of agricultural labour, cattle-raids etc, and even influenced the evolution of the amabutho (age-set regiments) system. Ivory, hides, slaves, grain and metal hoes were exchanged for incoming commodities such as beads and cloth (Mitchell & Whitelaw 2005: 228; Huffman 2007: 77-80). It was amid the ensuing power struggles between politically complex chiefdoms that the Mthethwa, Ndwandwe in the north and the Qwabe in the south emerged as prominent role-players.

DINGISWAYO AND THE RISE OF THE MTHETHWA

Dingiswayo Godongwana kaJobe was born around 1770, a son of the Mthethwa chief Jobe. After a dispute with one of his brothers he spent some time in exile among the Qwabe and Langeni people. Upon his father's death he successfully challenged his brother Mawewe for the Mthethwa leadership and renamed himself Dingiswayo – 'The Wanderer' (<http://www.sahistory.org.za>; Wylie 2006: 51).

In his ambition to access the lucrative Delagoa Bay trade route he competed with the powerful Ndwandwe and Ngwane-Dlamini groups (Wylie 2006: 112). Although he may have occasionally resorted to violent means in pursuing this aim, Dingiswayo is above all recognized for using diplomacy and the assimilation of other chiefdoms (including the Zulu) to strengthen the Mthethwa powerbase.

Eldredge (1992: 31) asserts that state formation under Dingiswayo was a process of incorporation of people, not extermination. Dingiswayo is often credited with abolishing territorial based circumcision schools and instituting age-set regiments or amabutho (later perfected by Shaka), although it seems his father Jobe had already organized two such regiments during his rule over the Mthethwa (Gump 1989: 62). The 19th century notion, propagated by Europeans, that Dingiswayo copied regimental organization from white men is no longer universally accepted (Wright 1978: 23). Nonetheless an efficient militarized regiment system must have contributed in securing the loyalty of surrounding groups, widening the Mthethwa sphere of influence.

Dingiswayo is also well known for being instrumental in the rise of the Zulu nation by becoming Shaka's mentor and protector. Shaka, son of Senzangakhona (chief of the small Zulu clan) grew up with the Mthethwa and participated in their various military expeditions; he was apparently inducted into Dingiswayo's isiFazana regiment or ibutho. It was Dingiswayo who supported Shaka in assuming the Zulu chieftainship when the latter's father eventually died (Wylie 2006: 138; <http://www.sahistory.org.za>).

Many oral traditions exist regarding Dingiswayo's death, considered to have taken place around 1817. Most allude to medicine or witchcraft used by his old foe Zwide of the Ndwandwe to gain power over him. What is known for certain is that Dingiswayo was taken to Zwide's main establishment, Nsingweni, where he was killed. Some reports say that he was decapitated (Wylie 2006: 202; <http://www.sahistory.org.za>). According to one oral history retold by James Stuart's informant Makuza, Zwide and his troops discuss the burial of Dingiswayo's body: " 'Tell us where we are to bury him'. 'Bury him at the Mahlabaeni hill. While some are digging, let others cut posts. When you have prepared them, fix them in the ground, build a fence right round the grave, so that no evil person will be able to come and cut open this chief for the purpose of killing the chief who lives.' " (Wylie 2006: 203). It is believed that Dingiswayo's grave is located at the Oyengweni site but according to Mokhanya (2009: 2) the oral accounts vary to the extent that some believe the grave in fact belongs to his father Jobe.

CULTURAL ASPECTS RELEVANT TO ARCHAEOLOGY

Very little information could be found on cultural features that were characteristic of the Mthethwa people at the time. Since they formed part of the larger northern Nguni grouping (which absorbed a number of other chiefdoms and ultimately gave rise to the Zulu kingdom) the following is drawn mainly from Zulu culture – unless otherwise specified.

Settlement patterns

The umuzi or basic homestead

The social organization of the Nguni groups (including the Mthethwa and Zulu) was founded on extended family lineages as well as kinship ties to other clans and non-relatives who were accommodated in a client relationship. At the very core of domestic organization was the umuzi or homestead which served as a residential site, a base for kinship and an economic unit (Kuper 1993: 472). According to the ethnographic model, a typical Zulu homestead consists of three concentric circles:

- the outside fence is made of timber, bushes or stone walling
- the inside perimeter contains dome-shaped/bee-hive grass huts for people of the homestead
- the innermost ring consists of a kraal / fenced enclosure for livestock

The central position of the cattle enclosure illustrates the crucial role these animals played in pre-colonial farming societies of the Late Iron Age (AD 1300-1840) and is consequently referred to as the Central Cattle Pattern. This type of settlement may be recognized archaeologically from centrally located cattle pens associated with high-status burials, grain storage pits, men's assembly area and evidence of iron-forging (Mitchell & Whitelaw 2005: 223).

Archaeological evidence shows that settlement patterns in the upland and lowland areas of KwaZulu-Natal differed considerably from each other before the 19th century, after which they became more homogenous. From that period on the Zulu stereotype seem to dominate: homesteads and stock pens are orientated to face downhill or east (Maggs 1980: 14, 15).

Although ethnographers emphasize that all Zulu homesteads followed the same basic distribution pattern, it is important to note that some archaeological research has shown structures that do not conform to that model (Hall 1984).

The regiment system (amabutho) and barracks (ikhanda)

The development of the amabutho or age-group regiments among the Mthethwa and other groups during the late 18th century took place in response to widespread socio-political changes in the region. As centralized states (including the Mthethwa) rose in power, the old circumcision age-groups were gradually replaced by a new regiment system. In essence the paramount chiefs needed to tighten control over their labour force, which was made up of women and younger men. The men were conscripted into organized age-groups which were responsible for managing the chief's crops, herds and homesteads, during which time they were prohibited from taking a wife (the headrings men wore to indicate their eligibility to

marry were thus removed). Ultimately they were also used as a defensive force. In essence the amabutho was a disciplined military and labour force that enabled powerful chieftains like Dingiswayo to expand and defend their territory (Gump 1989; Wright 1978).

Regiments were accommodated in an ikhanda which served as a combined barracks and royal residence. It is not certain what Dingiswayo's ikhanda looked like but to some extent it must have followed the general layout pattern of other similar Zulu amakhanda. Watson & Watson (1990: 34) state that "All amakhanda shared a common organization and purpose that was reflected in their physical organization." What follows is a summary of archaeological features observed at the later capital of Ondini (built by Cetshwayo). The major divisions were:

- the eziGabeni: Warriors' quarters. Divided into two sections on either side of the parade ground. The most senior officers on each side resided closest to the royal area (isiGodlo).

- the isiGodlo: Royal area housing the king, his wives and children. Strictly segregated from the warriors' quarters.

- the isiBaya samaTole: Area set aside for king's rituals and ablution.

- the parade ground: Central space where people gathered for ceremonies and the regiments were doctored before going to war.

- royal granaries and dairy: Two small separate enclosures located behind the main complex (Watson & Watson 1990: 34).

An induna assigned to head an ikhanda or barracks held great power and would wear brass bangles, beads and certain birds' feathers to show their status. Furthermore each regiment had specific coloured hides on their shields. The ikhanda was not only a military stronghold but also a domestic establishment, bound by rituals and ultimately controlled by the king (Wylie 2006: 191, 232). With regard to Dingiswayo's main kraal Oyengweni an important point to consider is that Gump (1989: 65) mentions the location of two separate sites (I and II); Dingiswayo apparently established Oyengweni II near the headwaters of the Mvamanzi River, on higher terrain than the homestead of his father Jobe.

Material culture and economy

The Late Iron Age economy was based on agriculture and livestock. Both components were inextricably linked to cultural practices and even contributed to the evolution of other institutions (see the amabutho above). Among the Nguni groups these economic activities were divided along gender lines; thus men were closely associated with cattle and women with farming. It is believed that maize was introduced to northern KwaZulu-Natal via the Delagoa Bay trade network and the crop soon became widely cultivated. According to oral tradition the Mthethwa first produced maize in the late 18th century (Huffman 2007: 453, 457).

Along with cattle and trade beads (both used as currency for bride wealth), metal objects also became markers of wealth, status and power. Iron and copper ornaments (eg. bangles, neck-

and earrings) were not only worn to indicate social position but were also used in trade (Wylie 2006: 58, 59). Other metal artefacts which may appear in the archaeological record are iron spear points and hoes used for agriculture, although very few have been found in context. It is interesting that the deliberate burial of hoards of metal objects (mostly spearheads and hoes) seems to have been a common practice in Late Iron Age KwaZulu-Natal (Maggs 1991). This phenomenon is probably connected to the period of instability leading up to the Mfecane.

The Nguni ceramic sequence consists of the Blackburn, Moor Park and Nqabeni phases, although excavated pottery is seldom decorated and therefore complicates archaeological interpretation (Huffman 2007: 441, 443). With regard to the Oyengweni site in particular, an initial archaeological survey s found undecorated thin-walled ceramics both dark brown and orange-red in colour. A grinding stone was also present which can be connected to the production of grain (Anderson 2004: 3).

The above section was taken from a report commissioned by A.Pelser as part of the first phase of archaeological investigations at the site (Unpublished Report 2013: F. Gravett).

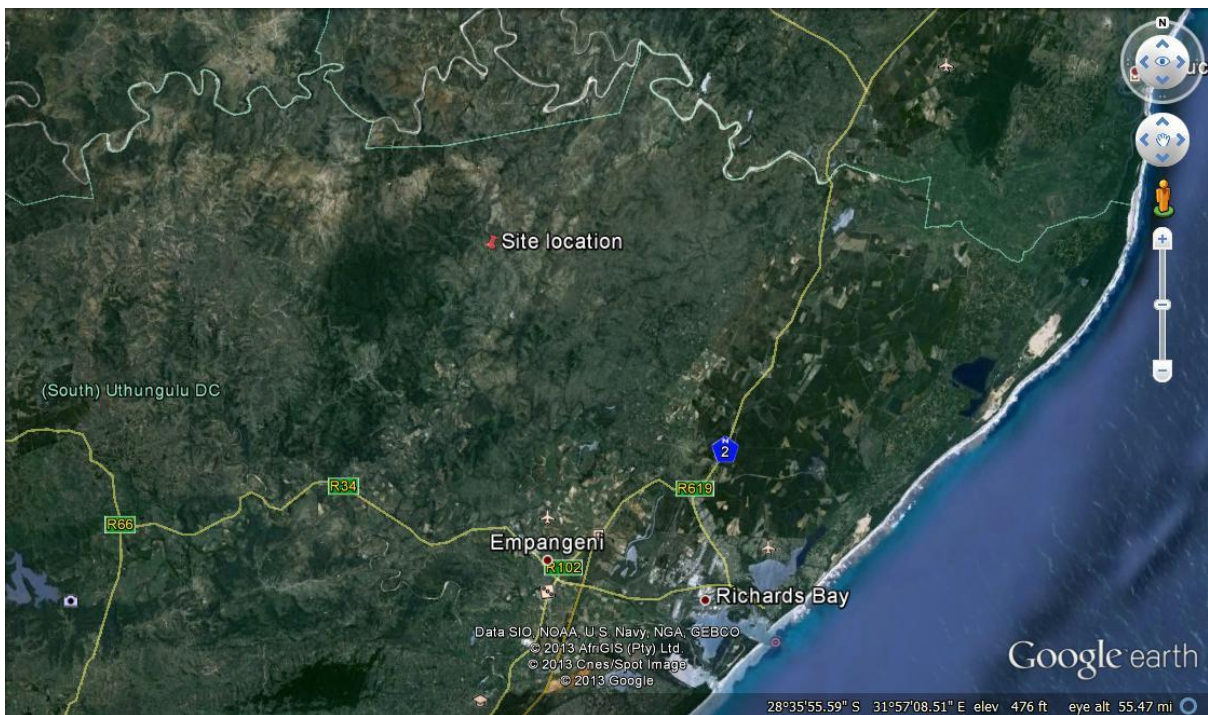


Figure 1: General location of the site (Google Earth 2013).

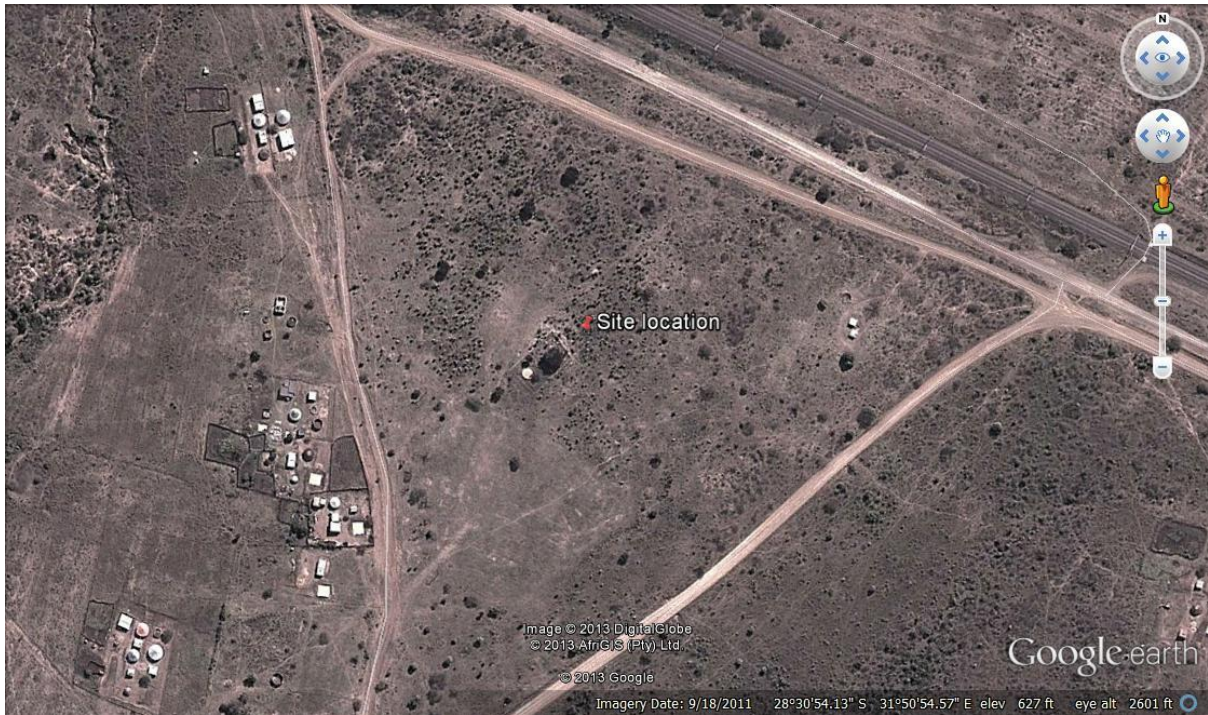


Figure 2: Closer view of the site location. The Memorial is visible in the center next to the place marker (Google Earth 2013 – image date 9/18/2011).



Figure 3: View of the site, with the fenced-in memorial area visible.



Figure 4: View of the Memorial Plaque.



Figure 6: Closer view of plaque with historical information.



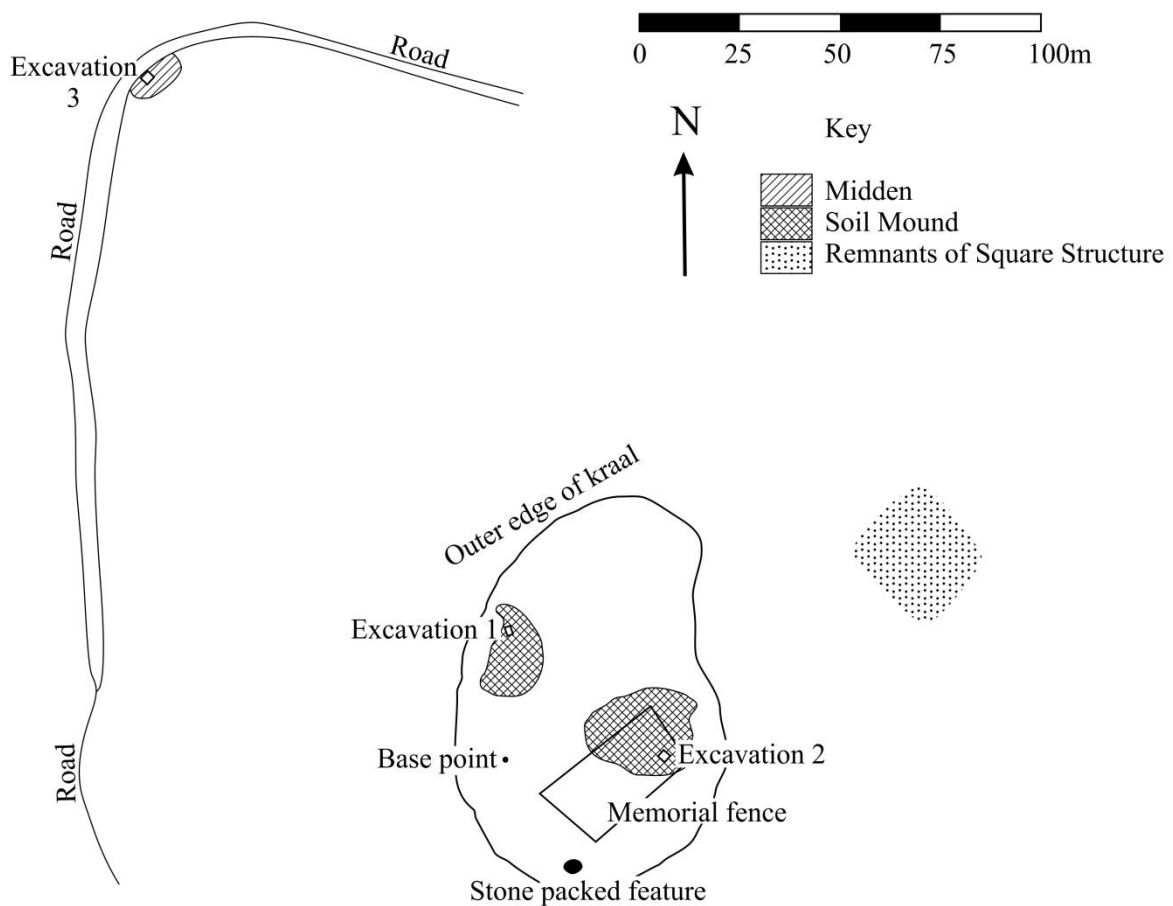
Figure 7: Another view of the site. The individual is standing in the area identified as the possible location of the kraal area.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

The archaeological investigations at the Dingiswayo Homestead & Memorial site aimed at obtaining as much information as possible on the settlement layout and material culture deposit present here. The first session of work was mainly test excavations to determine the extent and depth of the archaeological deposit, the significance of the site and then to determine the way forward in terms of further detailed archaeological work. All visible features related to the site was mapped (including the various excavations), while three (3) formal excavations were conducted on different areas of the site. The details on the fieldwork will be discussed in the sections below.

Mapping

All visible features on the site, including the homestead/kraal area, Memorial, possible hut features, outer perimeter of the site, ash midden, Excavations conducted and other individual features were recorded and mapped accordingly. The data was utilized in producing a detailed site map in order to try and determine settlement layout and extent. A profile drawing of the stratigraphy in the midden excavation was also produced.



Map 1: Map of Site Layout showing location of features and excavations.

Excavations

Three formal test excavations were conducted on the site. Excavation 1 was a 2m x 3m trench measured out in the area identified as the possible centrally located kraal. Only a 2m x 1.5m section was excavated. Excavation 2 was a 2m x 2m square inside the Memorial area where some disturbance in the form of depressions were noticed. It was thought that this might possibly be sunken grain pits. The third and final excavation (Excavation 3) was on an ash midden with bone and pottery exposed by a dirt road, and located on the outer periphery of the site. This test trench measured 3m x 2m in size. Each excavation will be discussed in more detail in the next section.



Figure 8: Excavation 1. Surface grass removed.



Figure 9: Location of Excavation 2. Surface cleared of grass.



Figure 10: Midden exposed by road. Note burnt bone and pottery.



Figure 11: Excavation 3 after cleaning of surface grass.

Results

Excavation 1

The aims with this excavation were to determine if this area was in fact the kraal location as initially thought, to test the depth and extent of the archaeological deposit and to recover as much cultural material as possible to help interpret and date the settlement site.

A 2m x 1.5m section was excavated completely, with the soil extremely hard and compacted making excavating difficult. Layer 1 was around 25cm deep, with the stratigraphy

homogenous throughout, consisting of a dark-grey clay soil. At first it had a hard, chunky consistency, becoming softer lower down. The soil also became more dampish at the bottom of this layer. Some calcrete nodules were also noted. The cultural material from this layer included a number of MSA/LSA flakes, as well as pottery fragments, some bone and shell fragments, as well as a shoe and cloth fragments. Last mentioned might be a later intrusion into the historical-archaeological deposit.

Layer 2 was taken down to a depth of around 50cm below the PSL. The stratigraphy consisted of a reddish-brown clay, although the clay was more damp and the chunky, nodular pieces were much smaller than in the upper layer. Still no indication of an ashly or kraal deposit was found. Again some MSA/LSA flakes were recovered, as well as some animal skeletal remains. The nearly complete skeleton of a canine (dog) was recovered from this layer, attached to a piece of insulated copper electrical cord with a noose at the one end. The shoe found in layer one was in the same area. Again this could be an indication that these remains were deposited here during recent time, with the “burial” pit for the dog dug into the kraal. A single piece of undecorated pottery was also recovered from Layer 2. A small section (around 0.50m) was taken down to see if there was any cultural deposit further down in the excavation. No evidence of any kraal deposit was found, although a finer sandy level was reached. Stone tools and flakes were again found, as well as animal bones and plastic bag fragments. The excavation (in this section) was stopped at a depth of about 0.70m below the PSL.



Figure 12: Excavation 1 – Layer 1 completed.



Figure 13: Excavation 1 – close up of shoe and cloth.



Figure 14: Excavation 1 – Layer 2.



Figure 15: Excavation 1 – Close up of dog remains and electrical cord with noose.



Figure 16: Excavation 1 finalized.



Figure 17: Close-up of bones and plastic bag remains at the bottom of Excavation 1.

Excavation 2

This excavation was a 2m x 2m square inside the fenced-off Memorial area, and was measured out in a location where there were visible disturbances that were identified as possible sunken grain pits. Permission was given to undertake the excavation here by Nkosi Mtethwa, who was present on the site at the time. The aims were therefore to determine if these “features” were in fact grain pits or other disturbances and to gather as much cultural material as possible from this area of the site.

Layer 1 was taken down to a depth of around 25cm below the PSL (for the whole square). The stratigraphy remained homogenous throughout and consisted of a hard, clay soil. Very little cultural material was recovered from here. A 1m x 1m section of the excavation was then taken down to around 60cm deep and sterile levels. No evidence of any kraal or archaeological deposit was found. Cultural material found included glass bottle fragments (modern), pieces of shell (achatina/landsnail), pieces of concrete and plastic bag fragments.

Based on the evidence from the excavation it seems as if these disturbances could have been the result of activities during the erection of the Memorial and fencing around the area. No evidence of any historical-archaeological activity or features was noticed.



Figure 18: Excavation 2 completed.



Figure 19: Excavation 2 close up. Note the hard clay soil throughout.

Excavation 3

This excavation was located on an ash midden on the periphery of the site. A dirt road had exposed a section of this, and burnt bone and pottery was visible as a result. The excavation was measured from the edge of the midden/road cutting inwards and was 3m x 2m in size.

The first 5cm below the PSL very hard, compacted clay and grass cover. The cultural material (faunal remains & bone) was situated just underneath this layer. Termite activity was also evident. Below this hard layer the soil became softer and less chunky. More historical-archaeological cultural material (in the form of pottery and bone) was found in this layer, although a modern nappy and sweets wrappers were also recovered. Last mentioned objects

were possibly brought into the midden (intrusion) through rodent activity as a section of a burrowing tunnel was noticed close to where these objects came from. The animal burrowing activity was found at about 42cm below the PSL. The bottom level of bone and pottery is around 20cm below the PSL, with the layer of cultural material around 5-7cm thick. It is possible that the midden was eroded/washed away over time, leaving just a relatively thin layer of bones and pottery.



Figure 20: Faunal remains visible in Excavation 3.



Figure 21: Pieces of pottery in the hard clay of the midden.



Figure 22: More material visible in the side wall of Excavation 3.



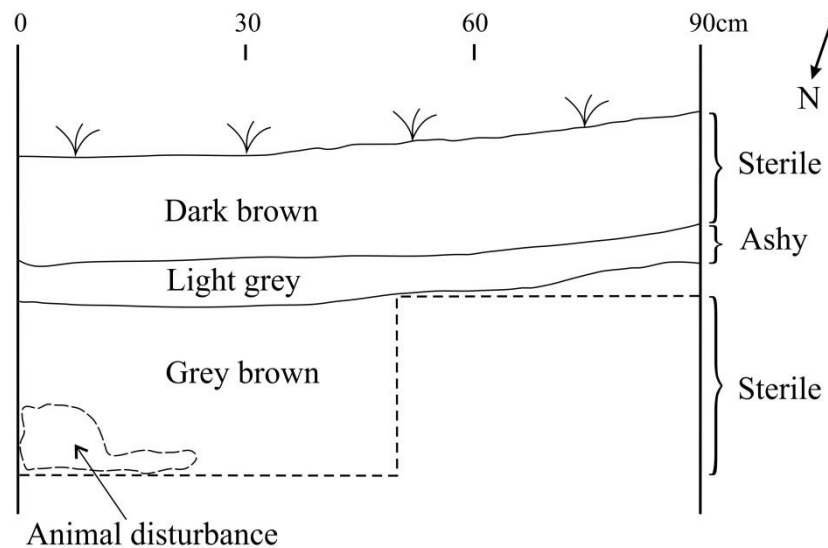
Figure 24: Visible rodent activity in the midden.



**Figure 25: A nappy found in Excavation 3.
This was found close to the rodent tunnel in the midden.**



**Figure 26: A section of the excavation in the midden.
The layer of cultural material lies between the two black lines.**



**Figure 27: Cross-section of stratigraphy in Excavation 3.
The cultural material is found in the ashy, light grey layer.**

Discussion of Cultural Material

Excavation 1

Although two layers were excavated, and the material sampled as such, it seems as if there was no real difference in the types and ages of material recovered from the two layers. However, the material will still be handled separately in the discussions.

Layer 1

The cultural material recovered from this layer (and indeed from Layer 2 as well) included a number of modern items dating to the 20th/21st century. It is possible that these are intrusions into the historical-archaeological deposit, buried there by local inhabitants of the area.

The “modern” items included parts of a leather sandal. It is fairly small and looks like a woman’s shoe. Another object is a green cloth fragment that could be remnants of a shirt, while a small fragment of a woolen garment was recovered as well. A 1c coin, dating to 1998, could provide a relative date for the burying of these recent-day items.

Cultural material with an archaeological origin and with a possible relation to Dingiswayo’s presence on the site includes a number of Stone Age tools and flakes and some pottery. The 5 stone tools/flakes are preliminary identified as belonging to the MSA/LSA, evidence of human presence in and utilization of the area for nearly 300 000 years. The Middle Stone Age (MSA) dates to less than 300 000 – 20 000 years ago with the Later Stone Age (LSA) 40 000 years ago – 2000 years ago. It should be noted that these dates are not a neat fit because of variability and overlapping ages between sites (Lombard et.al 2012: 125). During a 2004 assessment of the site Umlando also identified stone tools. They indicated it as dating to the MSA, with the artifacts consisting of the standard flakes associated with open-air MSA sites.

The stone tools identified by them were on cryptocrystalline silicates (CCS) or dolerite (Anderson et.al 2004: 2).

The pottery recovered from the first layer of Excavation 1 consisted of only 3 small, undecorated pieces of pottery. None of the pieces were diagnostic and dating them and fitting them into a pottery tradition is therefore difficult. The pottery is again similar to pieces recorded by Anderson in 2004 (2004: 3). A larger sample of pottery was recovered from the midden excavation (Excavation 3) and will be utilized for a more detailed analysis.

Other material from layer 1 included 1 small piece of unidentifiable bone, 8 pieces of shell (achatina/landsnail) and 2 pieces of wood.



Figure 28: Piece of green cloth from Layer 1.



Figure 29: Remains of a shoe/sandal.



Figure 30: Pieces of wood, shell and bone.



Figure 31: A 1998 1c coin.



Figure 32: MSA/LSA flakes & tools and pieces of pottery from layer 1 of Excavation 1.

Layer 2

The cultural material from this layer of the excavation is very similar to that from Layer 1. It included (again) modern objects such as fragments of plastic bags, part of the leather trimming of the sandal from layer 1 and an insulated electrical cord with a noose at one end. This object was found in close conjunction with the skeletal remains of a dog, with the cord probably used as a tether.

Besides the nearly complete skeleton of the dog, which seems to have been a juvenile animal based on the fact that not all the bones had completely fused, ten (10) MSA/LSA flakes and tools; 11 pieces of achatina/land snail shell and one piece of undecorated pottery was also found. This piece is fairly thick walled and could have been part of a storage or cooking vessel. One large stone was also collected from this layer of the excavation as it has some evidence of having been used (smoothed surface) possibly as a grinding stone.



Figure 33: Cord used as tether (not the noose at one end).



Figure 34: Pieces of plastic bags from Layer 2.



Figure 35: Stone tools and undecorated pottery.



Figure 36: Some of the dog skeletal parts from the layer.



Figure 37: Possible used stone from Layer 1.

Excavation 2

This excavation mainly produced modern material, with very little evidence of the presence of historical-archaeological deposit related to Dingiswayo. The material recovered included part of a plastic bag, some pieces of concrete/cement (possibly left during the construction of the memorial) and 38 pieces of bottle glass. Last mentioned is probably part of a recent liquor bottle.

Once again some MSA/LSA stone tools and flakes were recovered (3 in total), while 7 pieces of achatina/land snail shell and a possible rubbing or hammer stone was also found here.



Figure 38: Piece of plastic bag from Excavation 2.



Figure 39: Glass bottle fragments from the excavation.



Figure 40: Cement/concrete pieces from Excavation 2.



Figure 41: Stone tools from Excavation 2.



Figure 42: Possible rubbing/hammer stone.

Excavation 3

This excavation produced a fairly big amount of cultural material, although only pottery and faunal remains (animal bones) were uncovered. The excavation was located on a midden situated on the periphery of the main site.

The faunal remains included **849** unidentifiable fragments of bones and enamel (tooth fragments), representing ribs, vertebrae, long bone, pelvic and cranial bones. Unidentifiable means that the bones cannot be identified to either species, age, class or sometimes skeletal part. Some of the bones have been burnt. A number of bone fragments (**8** in total) have been worked and polished, with at least 3 possibly remnants of bone needles or awls. Identifiable bones and teeth were also recovered. This included 39 identifiable bones that can be used to determine species, class, age range and size. A preliminary identification (by the main author of this report) seems to indicate that the remains represent cattle (*Bos Taurus*) and smaller livestock such as sheep/goat (*ovis capra/capra hircus*), while there is a possibility of avifauna and other non-domestic animals. Eighteen (18) sets of teeth (molars, incisors) were present as well, while two lower mandibles (cattle and sheep/goat) were also found. The faunal sample is not large enough at this stage to warrant a detailed archaeozoological analysis, but once further archaeological work is undertaken and the sample is increased this should be conducted as a matter of course.

The pottery sample contained 56 undecorated body sherds and 6 rim pieces. The undecorated body pieces included both thin and thicker-walled sherds, both dark-brown and orange-red in colour, while there are a quite a number of pieces with black burnish or that has been burnt black because of their use as cooking vessels. The initial archaeological survey found undecorated thin-walled ceramics dark brown and orange-red in colour (Anderson 2004: 3). The rim pieces represent 4 individual vessels. Two pieces are too small to determine vessel profile or shape, while 4 of the other pieces (representing 2 of the vessels) are most likely pots with upright necks and flattened rims. The one is coarse and unburnished (possibly and unfinished vessel), while the second has an orange-red burnish.

The nature of Nguni material culture affects archaeological evidence, with the archaeology difficult to study as beehive huts do not preserve well and with the pottery seldomly decorated (Huffman 2007: 441; 443). Huffman indicated in earlier analysis (2004) that the Nguni ceramic sequence contained three phases namely Blackburn (AD1050-1500), Moor Park (AD1350-1700) and Nqabeni (AD1700-1850). It is now known that it also includes the Ntsuanatsatsi sequence (Huffman 2007: 443). With the pottery from Dingsiwayo's site being undecorated determining the pottery sequence to which it belongs is difficult. Based on the known (historical/oral) age of the site it is possibly linked to the Nqabeni sequence. However, a larger sample, including decorated pieces, is needed for a more in depth and meaningful analysis.



Figure 43: Identifiable faunal remains from Excavation 3.



Figure 44: Worked and polished bone fragments.



Figure 45: Undecorated body sherds from Excavation 3.



Figure 46: Rim sherds representing 4 individual vessels from Excavation 3.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

During the excavations the site was also visited on a number of occasions by Dr. B.V.Mthethwa, who provided valuable information on the site and Chief Dingiswayo. He also took the team to a local school and introduced them to the principal and teachers of the school. A short discussion was held and cultural material recovered during the work was shown to and discussed with the staff. The purpose of this visit was to sensitize the staff to the history and archaeology of the area, as well as the value of preserving this heritage for future generations.

Members of the general public (locals from the village situated close to the site) also visited the site during the course of the fieldwork session, with some also providing information on the site and area.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion it is possible to say that the Test Excavations at Dingiswayo's Homestead site in the KwamBonambi area of KZN, was conducted successfully. The aims of the Archaeological Investigation were as follows:

- (a) to conduct test excavations on the site in order to determine the type of settlement, time-frame of occupation and material culture
- (b) to map the site and features on it in detail to help with determining settlement layout and extent
- (c) to conduct background research on both oral and historical records of the site in order to complement the archaeological record
- (d) the analysis of the cultural material recovered during the excavations
- (e) the drafting of a detailed report on all the findings and recommendations on the way forward and finally,
- (f) the proper curation of the material in a recognized institution. In this case (as per permit regulations) the material will be lodged at the repository of Amafa AkwaZulu-Natali

From the excavations at this stage it is not possible to determine the type of settlement, time-frame and material culture. No real features were uncovered, and the area thought to be the main kraal could not be confirmed positively with very little evidence of this being the exact position. It is clear that the area has been disturbed during the recent past, with modern-day material found in conjunction with small numbers of historical-archaeological artifacts, as well as through the construction of the Memorial. The only feature that can be positively linked to an archaeological past is the ash midden situated on the periphery of the site. Dating the site is also difficult at this stage, with all the pottery undecorated and very little c14 material available, although some burnt bone was recovered. Material culture is also difficult to reconstruct with a relatively small number and range of artifacts found.

Through the mapping of the site the settlement layout has been determined to some extent, although very tenuously at this point. It seems as if the site contained a central kraal/homestead area, with the huts located around this area (although only one possible hut has been located). The midden area is situated on the periphery. Therefore, although it is assumed that the settlement would have conformed to the standard Nguni pattern, this has not been conclusively determined. Although oral testimony has indicated that this is the location of Chief Dingiswayo's homestead, more oral recording is required. The position of the Memorial close to the large *Euphorbia ingens* tree where Dingiswayo's "grave" is purportedly located is also based on this evidence, and although the Memorial is of

significance it has impacted to some extent on the site. The impact of this on the historical-archaeological landscape and deposit is however difficult to determine. According to Nkosi B.V.Mthethwa the “grave” does not actually contain any skeletal remains, but only the clothing and royal regalia of Dingiswayo. His remains were never recovered and buried here. Of some interest is the testimony of an old local inhabitant of the area (his details were not recorded at the time) who visited the site while the excavations were ongoing and indicated that the burial site was actually located somewhere else prior to the railway line being constructed here in the 1970’s and because the original site were to be impacted the “burial” was relocated to its current location. The validity of this needs to be investigated.

With this only being test excavations, and the project being part of an envisaged multi-year program it should however be stated that although the aims have not been fulfilled 100%, and because only a limited number of excavations could be carried out due to the loss of fieldwork days as a result of rain, the first phase of work on Dingiswayo’s homestead site was successful. A number of possible features, such as the one hut, ash midden and kraal area has been located. Cultural material has been recovered and provides more information on the site that has ever been available. This, together with the oral and historical evidence already available does indicate that the site is significant from an archaeological and historical point of view and should therefore be preserved and investigated further. In light of the preliminary findings during the test excavations and mapping of the site the following is recommended:

1. that all available oral records are provided to researchers to scrutinize for relevant information, while further testimonies should be recorded as part of ongoing research on Dingiswayo
2. that a second field season of archaeological excavations are conducted, focusing on extending the midden investigation, excavation of the possible hut feature and further excavation on the central kraal/homestead area. More mapping should also be undertaken.
3. that the archaeological sample (specifically the faunal remains and pottery) be increased through this in order to help with reconstructing material culture, time-frame of settlement and settlement layout. Once this has been completed expert analysis (more specifically the archaeozoological analysis of the faunal sample and radiocarbon dating of the burnt bone) needs to be undertaken as well.
4. that the location of the reported second Dingiswayo site (Oyengweni 2?) be determined and the possibility of researching this site also be investigated

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