

IDENTIFYING ZULU MILITARY (AMAKHANDA) SETTLEMENTS IN THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORD

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## Research Article

IDENTIFYING ZULU MILITARY (*AMAKHANDA*) SETTLEMENTS  
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## ABSTRACT

A common cultural practice within southern Africa is the organisation of youths as part of an initiation ceremony. Literature refers to this practice as regimental groups, age regimental groups, age sets or simply as age groupings (Kuper 1954, 1986; Hughes 1956; Hoernlé 1962; Omer-Cooper 1966; Laband 1995; Knight 1995). After the period of aggression among the northern Nguni of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, a new version of the regimental system had developed. A key component of the new system was the military settlement, which acted as an administrative centre in addition to providing regimental housing. Called *amakhanda* (sing. *ikhanda*), each community had its own architectural and socio-demographic organisation. *Amakhanda* were built in close association with traditional family homesteads (*imizi*). The close proximity and physical similarities between these two settlement types makes it difficult to distinguish them apart in the archaeological record. This study therefore examines the archaeological signature of each settlement form in order to determine whether or not it can be distinguished from any other within the archaeological record. This was done by examining and comparing the size, function and cultural material deposition of each settlement type. It was found that differences existed in the size of the central enclosure, the number and placement of huts, along with different faunal and cultural material assemblages. It emerges that these two settlements were sufficiently distinct in their function so that they represent unique features and material signatures that can be used to distinguish them in the archaeological record.

Key words: *Ikhanda*, regimental system, Zulu, military settlement, archaeology.

## INTRODUCTION

During the 18th century AD, a number of changes started to occur in southern Africa among the northern Nguni that would culminate in the development of the various northern Nguni kingdoms throughout the region, including the Zulu, Swazi and Ndebele. This period of social and political changes has been studied extensively and is collectively referred to as the *mfecane* in isiZulu, and *difaqane* in seSotho (Omer-Cooper 1966; Shillington 1995). Originating in KwaZulu-Natal (South Africa), it would affect the whole of southern Africa as far north as present day Malawi. It is best known for the magnitude of its social, political and demographic disruptions which would permanently transform the socio-political landscape of the region. This period witnessed the collapse of well-established political groupings in conjunction with the development of new political and cultural identities. An important development during this period was the creation of military settlements of the northern Nguni, called *amakhanda* (sing. *ikhanda*). Fulfilling a specific function, these settlements had a unique architectural and demographic organisation not found within

the traditional family homestead (*umuzi*), despite sharing many physical similarities. This article will show that by examining the archaeological signature of each settlement type, it is possible to distinguish them from one another within the archaeological landscape.

## BACKGROUND

The grouping of youths according to age is a practice that is found among all communities in southern Africa, except the historical Shona (Kuper 1954). Believed to have originated with the Sotho/Tswana, it formed part of their initiation ceremonies, with the Nguni later adopting this practice after their encounters with the Sotho/Tswana (Omer-Cooper 1966). Despite having many differences in the 19th century, the original Nguni system (called *ibutho*) is thought to have been similar to that of the Sotho/Tswana (Van der Merwe 2014; Van der Merwe & Pikirayi 2018). Although initiation practices can differ greatly between communities, the Sotho/Tswana system had four basic elements. Firstly, youths (boys and girls separately) were grouped according to age and region. Secondly, they were secluded from the rest of the population for a short period, usually not longer than six months. Thirdly, local chiefs could use them as a source of free labour for any menial task. In emergencies, boys could also be used as soldiers. Lastly, at the end of the initiation process, the boys underwent circumcision (Hoernlé 1962; Omer-Cooper 1966; Mönning 1988). During this period, male initiates either stayed in the open veld or lived in huts/lodges that were specifically built for this purpose. These circumcision lodges would later develop into the military settlements (*amakhanda*) associated with the northern Nguni. In both systems, the end result of the process was that the initiates (of both sexes) were regarded as being adults, and could now marry and have children.

Towards the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, the northern Nguni communities living in KwaZulu-Natal entered a period of heightened aggression. The causes of this increase in aggression are still a topic of debate; however, it is generally agreed that it was caused by a combination of three primary factors, namely: economic and social strain caused by a severe and prolonged drought; overpopulation; and a desire to control the lucrative trade (primarily ivory) route between Cape Town and Delagoa Bay (Guy 1980; Laband 1995). This period of conflict gave rise to a new regimental system among the northern Nguni that would be central to the strength and political organisation/stability of the northern Nguni kingdoms. By the time the first Europeans arrived in the region of KwaZulu-Natal during the 1820s, three critical changes had already been made to the *ibutho* (pl. *amabutho*) system used by the northern Nguni. Firstly, regiments (*amabutho*) were no longer part of the circumcision

schools as their primary function had been changed to that of being military regiments. Secondly, youths were now grouped according to age only and no longer by region, ensuring the loyalty of the soldiers and commanders to the king instead of regional chiefs. Lastly, the period of service within these regiments was extended to years instead of six months, and could last up to the age of 30 among the Zulu (Krige 1965; Hughes 1956; Hoernlé 1962; Omer-Cooper 1966; Knight 1994, 1995; Laband 1995). These changes formed part of larger socio-political changes occurring among the northern Nguni Kingdoms during this period. These changes allowed for the development of the highly centralised northern Nguni Kingdoms (such as the Swazi, Ndebele and Zulu) with their large standing armies. In order to accommodate these large standing armies, a new type of settlement was needed. As a result, circumcision lodges were modified to act as *amakhanda*. These *amakhanda* would ultimately become central to the political and administrative organisation of the northern Nguni Kingdoms, which allowed the kings to exert greater and more centralised control over their territory.

**IKHANDA AND UMUZI SETTLEMENT LAYOUT**

Before examining how these two types of settlements can be distinguished from each other, a brief description of each settlement model is required. For a detailed description of the *ikhanda* settlement model and its different variations, see Van der Merwe (2014), and Van der Merwe and Pikirayi (2018).

**IKHANDA**

Each northern Nguni Kingdom had its own variation of the *ikhanda* settlement. Consequently, the model provided below is the variation used by the Zulu Kingdom during the 19th century.

An *ikhanda* can be divided into four distinct sections, namely, the great *isigodlo*, the *isigodlo*, the regimental section, and the central enclosure (Fig. 1). Within the *isigodlo* lived the king/induna (regimental commander) and the women of the *isigodlo* (female *ibutho* forming part of the *amabutho*). The term *isigodlo* can be misleading as it is used to describe both a female *ibutho* (Webb & Wright 1979) as well as the section of the *ikhanda* which houses these regiments (Stuart & Malcolm 1986). In both

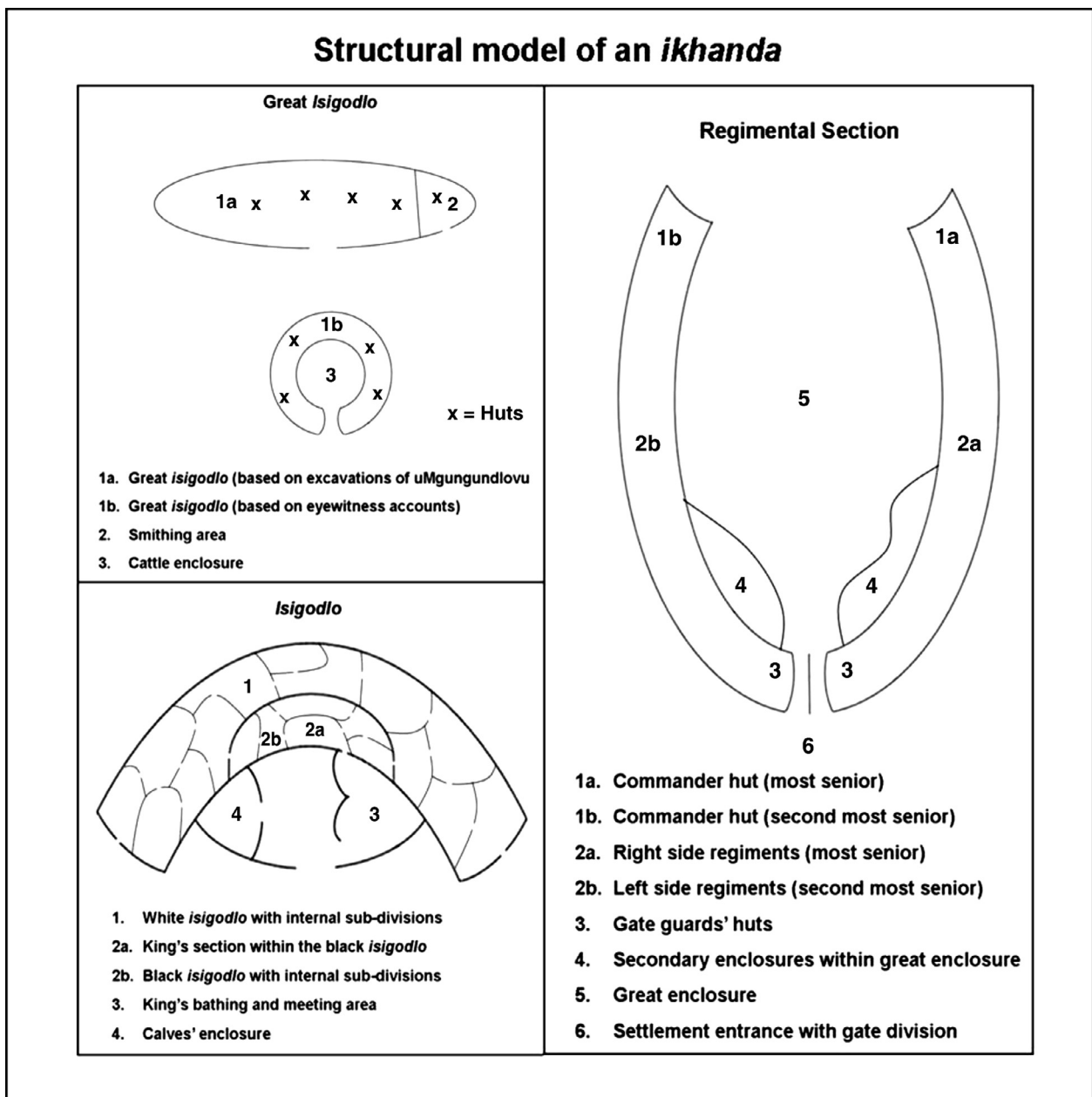


FIG. 1. Structural model of an *ikhanda* (Van der Merwe 2014: 105).

cases, the term *isigodlo* is always associated with the king since the female *amabutho* are seen as being under the king's protection. Therefore, the women of the *isigodlo* are members of a female *ibutho* who live within the *isigodlo* section of an *ikhanda* with the king or induna. Access to this area was strictly controlled and any person (male or female) entering it without an invitation was punished by death (Krige 1965; Gardiner 1966; Booth 1967; Stuart & Malcolm 1986; Grey 1992; Knight 1994; Van der Merwe 2014). The *isigodlo* was further divided into two sections, the black and the white. Within the black section lived the king or *induna*, depending on the settlement variation, and the *amakhosikazi*. Among the women of the *isigodlo* there existed a three-tiered hierarchy, namely, the *amakhosikazi* (female blood relatives of the king and his wives if he was married); the *ondlunkulu* (girls selected to be part of the *isigodlo*); and the *izigqila* (orphans or girls whose father had angered the king). This social hierarchy was not always visible outside the *isigodlo*, as the rest of the population treated all members of the *isigodlo* in the same way, and generally avoided any contact with them (Van der Merwe & Pikirayi 2018). Outside and above the *isigodlo* was located a settlement complex collectively called the great *isigodlo* (Van der Merwe & Pikirayi 2018). The great *isigodlo* was directly associated with royal authority and was found only at royal *amakhanda*. Gardiner (1966) documents their presence at the summer and winter capitals of the Zulu King Dingane kaSenzangakhona between 1826 and 1840. They were an extension of the *isigodlo* and used for specific functions such as childbirth, female initiation, smithing, and storing the grain and cattle used by the king and the *isigodlo*. The great *isigodlo* complex consisted of either two or three smaller enclosures, the number depending on the importance of the settlement. The great *isigodlo* complex of the primary capital of King Dingane kaSenzangakhona (uMgungundlovu) had three enclosures, whereas his secondary capital (Congella/kwa-Khangela) had only two enclosures (Gardiner 1966). It is believed that in such a case as the secondary capital, the cattle and grain would be kept in the same enclosure.

Below the *isigodlo*, in the main settlement, was located the regimental section, constructed on the sides of the settlement, and enclosing the central enclosure, in which the soldiers of the *amabutho* were housed. Social standing was determined from right to left, with the most senior commander and regiment located closest to the king/induna. The central enclosure consisted of two main sections: the king's area located next to, and in front of, the *isigodlo*; and the parade ground that constituted the rest of the enclosure (Krige 1965; Gardiner 1966; Booth 1967; Stuart & Malcolm 1986; Grey 1992; Knight 1994; Van der Merwe 2014). Although the king's area of the enclosure was physically part of the central enclosure, it was seen as forming part of the *isigodlo*, with the same rules applying in this section as those in the *isigodlo*. The king's area can further be divided into a left and right section. The right section had two sub-sections again, one of which was used by the king as a bathing area. This sub-section also had an entrance to the king/induna's area of the black *isigodlo*. The lower section was where the king held meetings, when these were not conducted in the king's section of the black *isigodlo*. Calves were kept in the left section of the upper part of the enclosure. The rest of the cattle herd was kept in the main enclosure, with the cattle being divided into predetermined groups (usually based on the different patterns and colours of the hides since not all cattle had the same patterns and colouration) within the enclosure. Depending on the size of the settlement, smaller secondary enclosures were also located on the wings of the settlement, close to the entrance. This enclosure was also used by the

soldiers as a parade ground as well as a dancing and feasting area (Krige 1965).

#### UMUZI

A large number of variations in the organisation of the family homestead exist among the different groups of southern Africa. Although there are physical differences in how these settlements are organised, among the northern Nguni, the majority of the differences are about social standing and the representation of such differences. As a result, this section will only describe these settlements in their most basic form. Similar to the *ikhanda*, these settlements are circular with an outer and inner fence which surrounds a central cattle enclosure (Fig. 2). Opposite the entrance was the family head's hut. He would either have his own hut or share the hut with his great wife. Surrounding this hut, and descending towards the entrance, would be the huts of the remaining wives. The location of a wife's hut in relation to the family head and other wives illustrated her social standing within the family. The rules used to determine this placement were not constant, with variations occurring among all of the northern Nguni. At the entrance of the settlement, huts were built for children old enough to live on their own, as well as the huts of the family retainers. Any livestock that the family owned would have been kept in the central enclosure. The organisation and size of these settlements were determined by the social standing and wealth of the family head (Krige 1965, 1980, 1982; Huffman 1982, 2001, 2007; Hall 1984; Badenhorst 2009; Van der Merwe 2014).

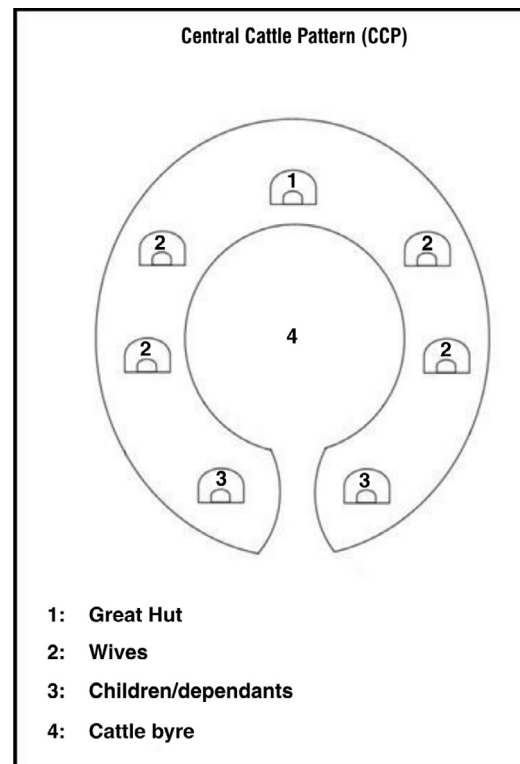


FIG. 2. Family homestead following the Central Cattle Pattern (Van der Merwe 2014: 18).

#### IDENTIFYING AMAKHANDA WITHIN THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORD

##### ENCLOSURE SIZE AND ORIENTATION

Despite the superficial similarities between the *ikhanda* and *umuzi*, closer examination has revealed clear and significant differences between the two. These differences can be seen in

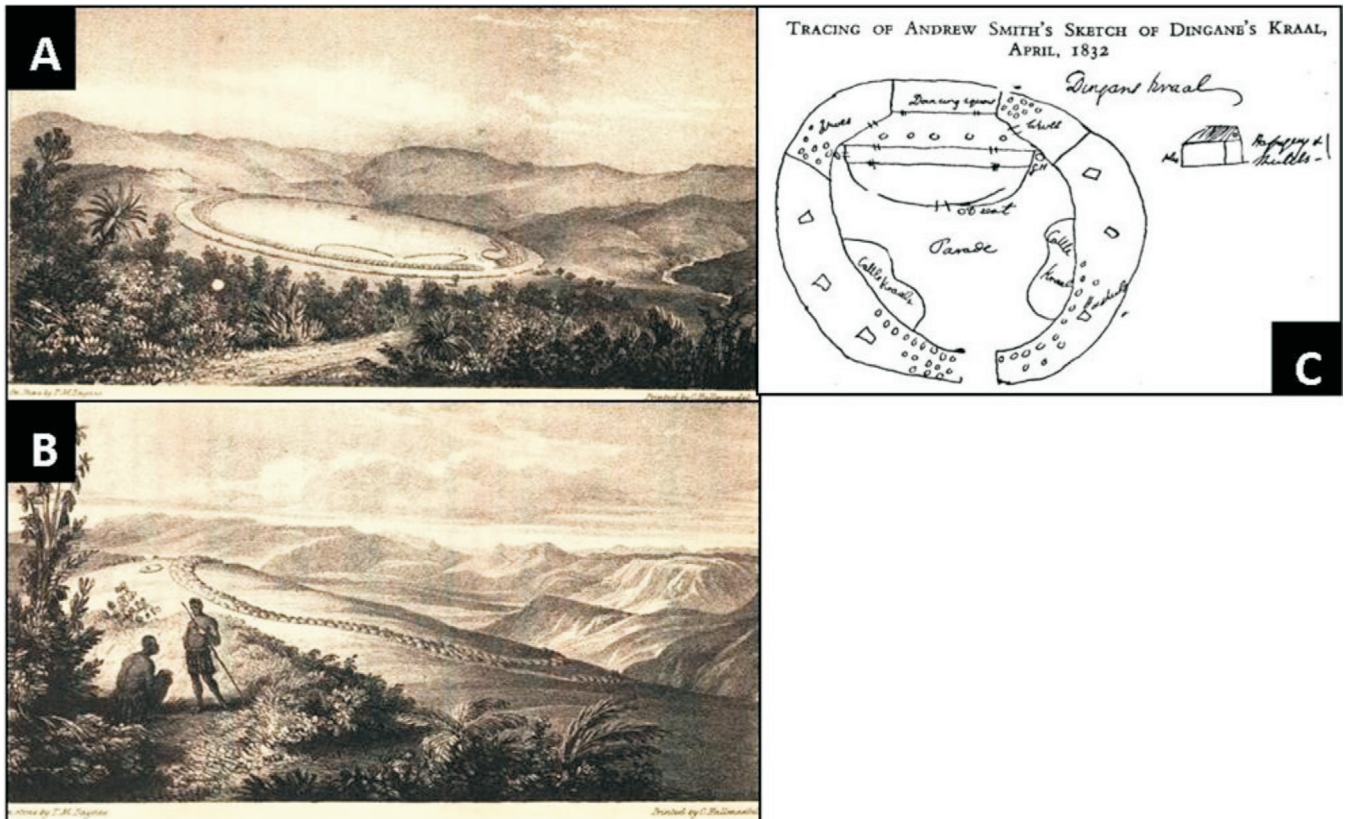


FIG. 3. (A) Gardiner's sketch of uMgungundloou (Gardiner 1966: 28). (B) Gardiner's sketch of Congella (Gardiner 1966: 120). (C) Smith's sketch of uMgungundloou (Smith 1955: 53).

the central enclosure, hut layout, as well as in the fences and walling constructed around the settlement. The most clearly noticeable difference between these two settlement types is their physical size, and corresponding difference in population density. Historical sketches created by Gardiner and Smith (Fig. 3), as well as Holden (Fig. 4), provide a first-hand view of the *ikhanda* settlement. James Stuart also created a number of

diagrams of *amakhanda* based on his interviews with various informants (Fig. 5). In this study, these 19th century sketches and diagrams were used to compare the findings of the excavations and this allowed for a more detailed reconstruction of the settlement organisation.

Physical size can clearly be estimated in the size of the settlement's central cattle enclosure. Excavations done by

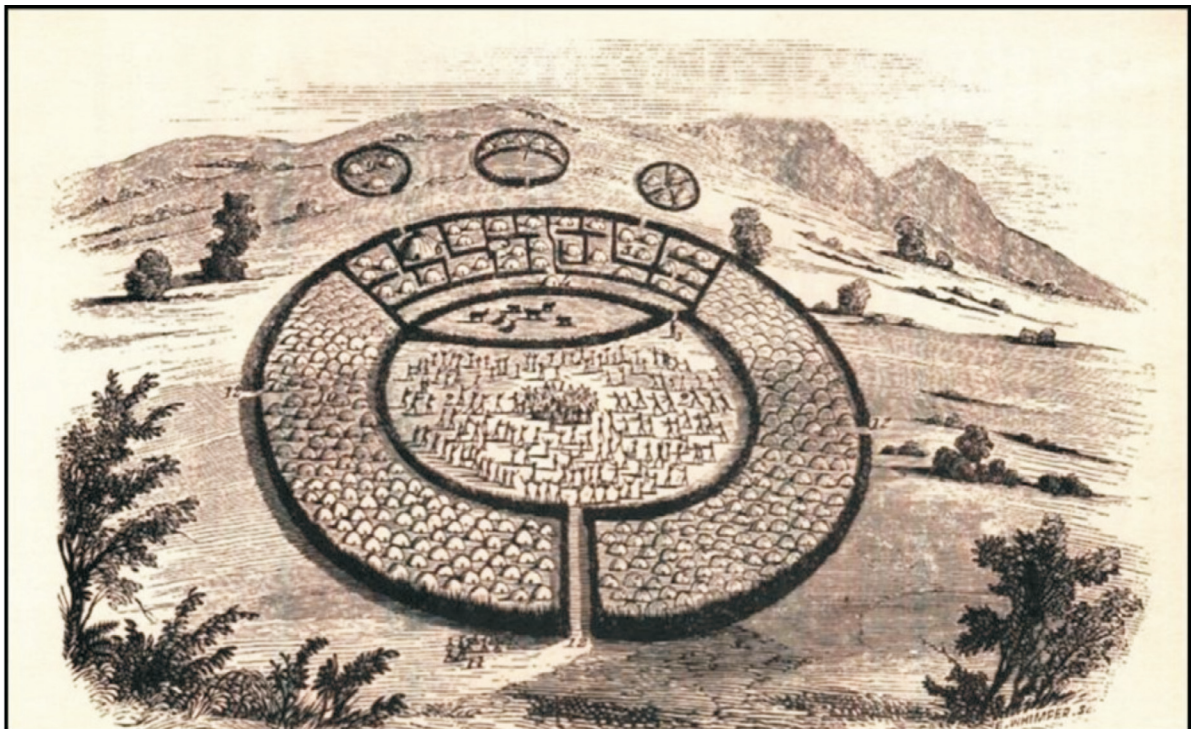


FIG. 4. Holden's sketch of uMgungundloou (Holden 1963a).

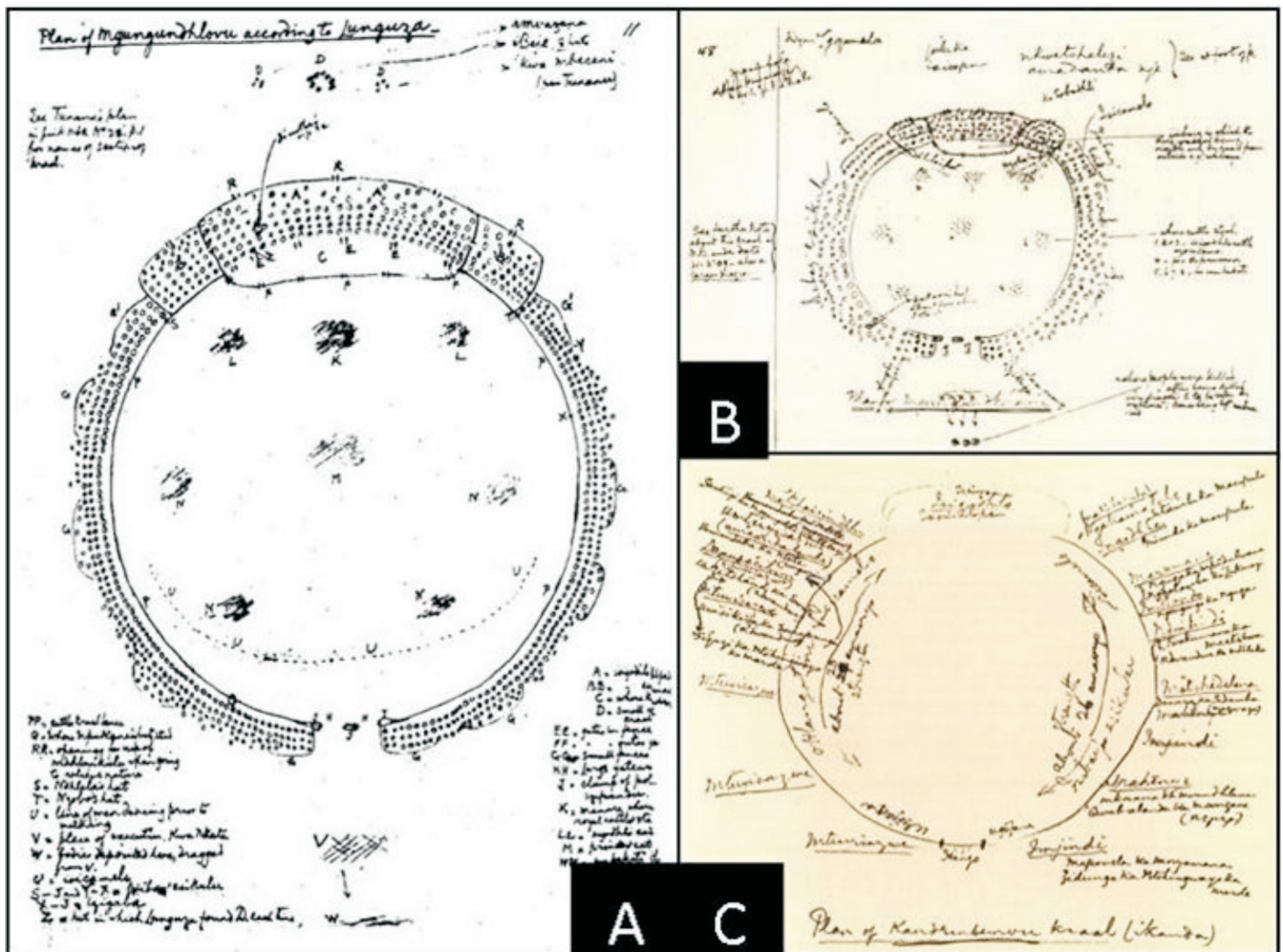


FIG. 5. (A) Sketch of uMgungundlovu (Webb & Wright 1976: 340). (B) Secondary sketch of uMgungundlovu (Webb & Wright 1976: na). (C) Sketch of Kandempemvu ikhanda (Webb & Wright 1982: 85).

Parkington and Cronin (1979) and Rawlinson (1985) of the two Zulu capitals (uMgungundlovu and Ondini), and the survey of kwaBulawayo undertaken by Whitelaw (1994), found that the ikhanda had a large central cattle enclosure (Parkington & Cronin 1979; Rawlinson 1985; Roodt 1993; Whitelaw 1994; Van Schalkwyk 1999). These enclosures had a diameter of between 200 m and 600 m. When compared to umuzi such as Mgoduyana, Nqabeni and Oyengweni excavated by Maggs (1982), Hall and Maggs (1979), and Pelsler (2013) respectively, there was a clear difference in the sizes of the central enclosure. The enclosure sizes of these settlements varied from 10 m to 100 m, with the average being 30 m to 60 m. From this it can be seen that the average umuzi was still significantly smaller in diameter than the smallest of the excavated ikhanda. Owing to the extent and clear visibility of the cattle enclosures, they are often far easier to locate than other features such as huts. It would therefore be possible to distinguish an ikhanda from an umuzi during surveying by determining the extent of the central enclosure.

The size of the central enclosure is, however, not the only discerning factor that can be used to distinguish between an umuzi and an ikhanda. The central enclosures of the umuzi and the ikhanda also present with structural differences. For the umuzi, the central area was divided into multiple enclosures, the centre of which was not necessarily used to house cattle. Sites such as Mgoduyana (Maggs 1982), Siklibeni (Becker 2008), and the site described as kwaBulawayo by Pelsler (2014), all presented with multiple enclosures. These enclosures seem

to be dispersed over the expanse of the site and do not follow any pattern that indicates any association with one another (Maggs 1982). These imizi also presented with a dispersed hut placement around the enclosures (Maggs 1982; Becker 2008; Pelsler 2014).

This stands in direct contrast to the large central enclosures associated with amakhanda (Parkington & Cronin 1979; Rawlinson 1987; Roodt 1993). These central enclosures were further sub-divided into smaller secondary enclosures. However, these secondary enclosures were still situated within the confines of the larger central enclosure (Parkington & Cronin 1979; Rawlinson 1987; Roodt 1993). Hut placement suggested a closer proximity to one another and to the central enclosure. These differences can be related to the periods of increased conflict associated with 19th century KwaZulu-Natal (Laband 1995; Knight 1995). This period is marked by an increase in cattle raiding and conquering of neighbouring groups. During this era, cattle also became increasingly important, being an integral part of chiefs' authority in the newly expanding and centralising chiefdoms (Omer-Cooper 1966). As a result, settlement construction had to be adapted to provide more protection for both the inhabitants and the cattle. These adaptations can clearly be seen in the ikhanda settlement form. This new, more centrally focused settlement organisation also allowed the chief to exert greater control over access to and use of the cattle, reinforcing in turn the link between cattle and chiefly authority.

It should be noted at this point that all the imizi examined in

this study predate the rise of the Zulu Kingdom. These *imizi* are believed to have been abandoned by the late 18th or early 19th century, which indicates that none of them were inhabited during the period of the Zulu Kingdom. This has a direct impact on how the Central Cattle Pattern (CCP) model should be used and interpreted within KwaZulu-Natal. The CCP model is based on ethnographic and historical studies done on communities that lived after King Shaka kaSenzangakhona's wars of expansion (1816–1828) and the establishment of the Zulu Kingdom. Furthermore, it is generally accepted that the early part of the 19th century saw a change in social structures among the northern Nguni, which led to the creation of the Zulu kingdom (Omer-Cooper 1966). Thus it is possible that *imizi* dating to the 18th century and older may not have used the traditional CCP model as it is understood today. A statement made by Ndukwana ka Mbengwana, interviewed by James Stuart in the 19th century, seems to support this view.

In the old days, kraals had several cattle enclosures and the cattle belonging to such 'villages' were not brought for the night into a single enclosure, but their respective ones. The cattle of each enclosure too grazed apart (Webb & Wright 1986: 348).

The multiple cattle enclosures found at Mgoduyanuka, Nqabeni and Siklibeni illustrate that the construction of one central enclosure was not always practised. When considering the close relationship between political authority and settlement construction in 19th-century KwaZulu-Natal, the alteration in settlement construction becomes a logical course of action. It is a historically and ethnographically accepted view that the Zulu *ikhanda* was a means by which the Zulu kings could expand and consolidate their power and authority (Krige 1965; Omer-Cooper 1966; Guy 1983; Knight 1994; Laband 1995). Consequently, as these changes in political organisation started to occur with the emergence of centralised authority, this leads to the logical assumption that settlement construction would have mirrored such changes and would have filtered through to the *umuzi*. Similarly, this period saw a dramatic increase in the level of aggression among the different groups within the region (Bryant 1965; Omer-Cooper 1966). This increase in conflict could have forced a number of changes on the *imizi* constructed in the region. Additionally, it may be that the traditional CCP model, as based on 19th and 20th century ethnographic studies, was a response to these changes in the region. Hence, *imizi* constructed before this period, such as Mgoduyanuka and Nqabeni, will not share the same settlement layout as settlements postdating this period. Historical accounts of Champion (Booth 1967) and Barter (Merrett 1995) state that the placement of the cattle enclosure within the centre provided the best protection from predators, such as lions, hyaenas, wild dogs and leopards, which were plentiful in the region. As a result, a combination of these events might have led to the creation of the CCP model as it is understood today.

Although the presence of the outer fence is described as a key component of the traditional CCP model, there is evidence to suggest that the outer fence may not always have been present. Maggs (1982) found no evidence of an outer fence at Mgoduyanuka and suggested that it was unlikely that one ever existed. Similarly the historical accounts of Champion and Gardiner mentioned settlements (not named in the accounts), as well as the homesteads of the AmaPondo, that did not have any outer fences (Gardiner 1966; Booth 1967). Champion mentioned that the construction of an outer fence depended on the availability of wood and was often limited to settlements

constructed next to woodlands (Booth 1966). Gardiner (1966), Champion (Booth 1967) and Barter (Merrett 1995) further mentioned that the outer fence was constructed in order to defend the inhabitants as well as protecting the cattle from predators. It is interesting to note that both Gardiner (1966) and Champion (Booth 1967) mentioned settlements constructed of stone in the region of Nqabeni and Mgoduyanuka. Those settlements that did not have an outer fence built had smaller reed fences next to their huts. These fences were mainly to keep the cattle in (Gardiner 1966; Booth 1967). It may be that the presence of the outer fence, as associated with the CCP, was determined by the environmental conditions of the area and not so much by people's social practices. In regions where the danger posed to the inhabitants and cattle was high, an outer fence would have been constructed, forming the traditional CCP-model *umuzi*. It would have been unnecessary for the inhabitants of more peaceful areas to devote their time and resources to constructing an outer fence. The study on the Anglo-Zulu War undertaken by Laband (1995) provides a photograph of a 19th century homestead without an outer fence, but with reed fences set up next to the huts, illustrating the existence of such settlements. The layout of Siklibeni (Becker 2008) seems to further support the existence of settlements with such a layout pattern. It may also be possible that since the average family would not have had a large number of cattle, the construction of an outer fence would also have been determined by the number of cattle possessed by the homestead.

Since the main function of the *ikhanda* was to house the regiments of the *amabutho* system, this necessitated a minimum size for the settlement which would have been proportional to the number of soldiers stationed there. The minimum size of a regiment was three platoons each between 20 and 60 soldiers (Bryant 1965; Guy 1983; Rawlinson 1987). It follows then that the minimum number of soldiers who stayed at the regimental *ikhanda* would have been about 60 soldiers. This means that the smallest *ikhanda* would have been similar in size to a large *umuzi*. Holden (1963b) states that the average size of a homestead during the 1860s was between 1 and 20 huts (with pre-Shakan homesteads numbering between 20 and 30). Since it is known that the majority of *amakhanda* were of the divisional *ikhanda* type, which would have been similar in size to kwaBulawayo, the majority of *amakhanda* had to have been larger than *imizi*. This distinction can be further supported when considering the number of huts found at *amakhanda*. Nodwengu, King Mpanda kaSenzangakhona's capital, was estimated to have had around 2000 huts (Baldwin 1967). Excavations of uMgungundlovu and Ondini (Parkington & Cronin 1979; Rawlinson 1985; Roodt 1993; Van Schalkwyk 1999) estimated that these two settlements had between 1100 and 1500 huts located between the inner and outer fence. Kwa-Bulawayo was estimated to have had between 700 and 800 huts (Whitelaw 1994), with historical accounts estimating the average hut number of a divisional *ikhanda* at 150–300 huts (Drummond 1875; Cory 1926; Holden 1963b; Gardiner 1966; Booth 1967; Stuart & Malcolm 1986; Norris-Newman 1988). No direct description is provided for a regimental *ikhanda*. However, Gardiner (1966) and Leslie (in Drummond 1875) mentioned homesteads with around 30–60 huts. Holden mentioned that the average homestead size in the 1860s was between 1 and 20 huts. This might therefore indicate that the homesteads described by Gardiner and Leslie, numbering between 30 and 60 huts, were regimental *amakhanda* rather than *imizi*. It is quite clear that the majority of *amakhanda* had more huts located within their area of occupation than *imizi*.

## HUT PLACEMENT AND FUNCTION

## Regimental section

Hut placement and organisation within the settlement can similarly be used to distinguish between *amakhanda* and *imizi*. Historical and ethnographic accounts both mention that uMgungundlovu had a linear hut placement pattern with the huts placed in rows; each hut built roughly the same distance from the neighbouring huts (Cory 1926; Gardiner 1966; Booth 1967; Stuart & Malcolm 1986). Excavations of uMgungundlovu and Ondini also delivered evidence of a linear pattern in the placement of huts (Parkington & Cronin 1979; Rawlinson 1985). In addition, the regimental section followed a linear pattern. Huts were arranged from the top to the bottom (the settlement entrance) of the settlement; however, these were not necessarily aligned in straight lines.

It is noteworthy that, when examining the ethnographic accounts of the two capitals of uMgungundlovu and Ondini (Webb & Wright 1976, 1979, 1982), no mention is made of any special structural features. It may then be safe to assume that there existed a certain degree of continuation in practices from the start to the end of the Zulu Kingdom. The excavations at the two capitals showed that the huts located within the regimental section all had similar hut designs (Parkington & Cronin 1979; Rawlinson 1985). Each hut had an estimated diameter of 3 m, with the hearth located in the same position of each hut (Parkington & Cronin 1979). This pattern is not unexpected when one considers that the warrior class of the Zulu Kingdom was seen as occupying the same hierarchical position. The egalitarian nature of the *amabutho* system would result in a more uniform hut design, as all warriors were regarded as equals.

*Isigodlo*

As has been mentioned previously, the *isigodlo* was divided into black and white sections. These two sections can be distinguished as they presented with different hut layout patterns and hut designs. Within the white *isigodlo*, a linear pattern similar to that of the regimental section can be observed (Parkington & Cronin 1979; Rawlinson 1985). Owing to the lower social standing of women in the white *isigodlo*, it is not surprising that huts constructed in this area had a similar pattern and construction. On the other hand, huts within the black *isigodlo* were more dispersed and presented with individualised hut designs. The women occupying the black *isigodlo* were the king's wives or mother, so these women would have used their hut design and placement as a way of representing their different social standings. The king's section of the black *isigodlo* again differed from the rest of the black *isigodlo*. As the king, he had the largest hut located within the settlement, as well as additional huts for his own personal use, each one having a different design.

Huts associated with domestic activities such as milling and cooking (which can potentially be identified archaeologically by the presence of grinding stones and pottery) would have been restricted to the *isigodlo* section of the *ikhanda* (Cory 1926; Krige 1965; Gardiner 1966; Omer-Cooper 1966; Booth 1967; Parkington & Cronin 1979; Rawlinson 1985; Bourquin 1986; Roodt 1992; Webb & Wright 1976). This is because these activities were primarily associated with women. Women were only allowed to live in the *isigodlo* section of the *ikhanda* and as such, domestic activities would have been restricted to this area. The soldiers were supplied with food from their family *umuzi* and would therefore not have had the need to perform these activities themselves (Cory 1926; Gardiner 1966; Booth

1967). This is in contrast to the *umuzi* where these activities would have been spread throughout the settlement since women were not restricted only to one part of the settlement.

Great *Isigodlo*

The existence of the great *isigodlo* complex is a criterion that can be used for distinguishing *amakhanda* from *imizi*, as the latter would not have had a great *isigodlo*. Similarly, it is also possible to distinguish between the royal *ikhanda* which always had a great *isigodlo*, and the divisional and regimental types which never had a great *isigodlo* attached to it. Although the functions associated with the great *isigodlo* may have varied between the different kings, it was always located in the same area (outside and at the top of the settlement) and surrounded by a fence. During their excavations, Parkington and Cronin (1979) and Roodt (1993) found evidence of brass smithing at the great *isigodlo* of uMgungundlovu. Their findings are also supported by the historical and ethnographic accounts (Cory 1926; Gardiner 1966; Booth 1967; Webb & Wright 1976). It is evident therefore that the presence of brass smelting next to a large settlement would indicate the presence of an *ikhanda*. The function of the huts found at great *isigodlo* is still unclear. Although excavations at both uMgungundlovu and Ondini presented evidence of hut floors, they were all damaged to some extent (Parkington & Cronin 1979; Rawlinson 1985). Roodt (1992) did, however, find evidence of both initiation and smithing in the vicinity of these huts, yet it is unclear what the direct association between the huts and these activities was.

The presence of the great *isigodlo* can also be used as an indication of social status. Although little reference is made to the great *isigodlo* in the historical accounts, the ethnographic accounts indicate that each royal *ikhanda* would have had at least two great *isigodlo* homesteads (confirmed by Gardiner's sketch of Congella [1966]). Excavations at uMgungundlovu and Ondini (Parkington & Cronin 1979; Rawlinson 1985), however, identified three great *isigodlo* homesteads in each of these settlements. This discrepancy may be explained when one takes into consideration that not all royal *amakhanda* were necessarily used as the permanent residence of the king. Those that were used as the king's permanent residence (capitals) would have been of greater importance than others. In order to emphasise this importance, these settlements may have had distinguishing features such as the presence of three great *isigodlo* homesteads. The presence of three great *isigodlo* homesteads then could have been a physical indication that the ruler of the settlement occupied the highest level of the social hierarchy.

Excavations at uMgungundlovu (Parkington & Cronin 1979; Roodt 1992) and Ondini (Rawlinson 1985) have presented evidence for non-uniformity in hut construction and placement within different areas of the settlement. This in turn can be used to differentiate between the separated areas within the settlement. Also, it is not presently clear whether these differences were found at all the *ikhanda*, or only at uMgungundlovu and Ondini, as the historical sources only mention that the huts had 'similar' designs. Although this may indicate a correlation between the archaeology and the historiography, the accounts are too limited for specific comparisons to be made. Furthermore, a more detailed study needs to be undertaken in order to examine the differences between the designs of the huts at the capitals and those at the *imizi*. This will determine whether the huts at the *amakhanda* differed from those of the *imizi*.

*Umuzi*

It is not possible to reconstruct the position of the huts of the other excavated Late Iron Age *imizi* to the same degree as



uMgungundlovu and Ondini. Nevertheless, considering the informal nature of *imizi* it is unlikely that such a degree of uniformity would have existed. This assumption is supported by the irregular distances between the huts found at Mgoduyanuka and Siklibeni (Maggs 1982; Becker 2008). In addition, it is known from ethnographic studies such as Kuper (1982) that a wide range of variation existed among the Nguni with regard to hut design and construction. Specific hut design and construction would have indicated the social standing of each wife (along with her children), unlike the uniform designs and layout associated with the white *isigodlo*, and the regimental section of the *ikhanda*.

## DIET

Faunal assemblages are routinely used as an additional source of information to understand archaeological sites. The study of faunal remains can be used to reconstruct aspects of diet, dietary preferences (looking at species distribution), and meat usage (looking at age distribution of slaughtered animals and the preferred cuts of meat). Knowing the cultural practices of soldiers' preferred diet, faunal assemblages can be utilised to distinguish between an *umuzi* and an *ikhanda*.

From ethnographic and historical accounts we know that the soldiers of the *amakhanda* consumed higher quantities of meat than other people living in *imizi* (Drummond 1987; Cory 1926; Holden 1963b; Krige 1965; Gardiner 1966; Booth 1967; Webb & Wright 1976, 1982; Bourquin 1986). This stems from the belief that strength is granted to the soldier when consuming meat, and as such, it constituted an important part of their diet (Holden 1963b; Krige 1965). Although any meat would provide this source of strength, cattle meat was preferred to that of sheep or goat, and wild game, as these were thought to impart less strength to the soldier (Holden 1963b). In addition, cattle had a high level of economic and spiritual value and as a consequence, were believed to provide greater strength to the soldiers.

The soldiers of the *amabutho* were supplied with cattle meat from the king's own royal herds. This cemented the king's position of authority signifying that his wealth was so great that he could afford to provide cattle to be slaughtered more regularly. This further ensured the loyalty of the soldier to the king since cattle were granted as reward for service and courage in battle, and as a result, was a means for soldiers to acquire status and wealth (Gardiner 1966; Omer-Cooper 1966). The consumption of large quantities of cattle meat can be seen within the archaeological record of both uMgungundlovu (Plug & Roodt 1990) and Ondini (Watson & Watson 1990). At both capitals, large amounts of charred cattle bones were found, with both capitals' faunal assemblages consisting of 90% or more cattle remains (Plug & Roodt 1990; Watson & Watson 1990). Ondini, however, had a slightly higher amount of wild game in its faunal assemblage. This can be explained by the widespread shortage of cattle in the Zulu Kingdom during the 1870s, brought on by severe drought and cattle disease (Watson & Watson 1990). The fact that Ondini still had such a large representation of cattle remains within its faunal assemblage, despite these shortages, emphasises the importance placed on providing cattle to the soldiers. Both the ethnographic and historical accounts make mention of this practice. Mgidhlana ka Mpande (Webb & Wright 1982), interviewed by James Stuart, stated that the cattle were killed in such numbers at uMgungundlovu that they were piled up in mounds, two or three times a month. Owen (in Cory 1926) and Gardiner (1966) confirmed that large quantities of cattle were killed at uMgungundlovu at least once a week, although they suggest

that the frequency was completely dependent on the whim of the king (Cory 1926; Gardiner 1966; Booth 1967). Gardiner further mentioned that a single ox could support five soldiers for a day and a half (Gardiner 1966: 175). Although the ethnographic accounts (Krige 1965; Omer-Cooper 1966; Webb & Wright 1976) state that the soldiers' daily diet consisted primarily of beer and beef, it is unlikely that this consumption rate would have been sustainable in the long term. If soldiers were provided with such large quantities of meat on a daily basis, the demand would soon have exceeded the supply. This is especially evident when one considers that the estimated size of the Zulu army at this time was approximately 30 000 soldiers (Laband 1995). Both Gardiner (1966) and Owen (in Cory 1926), however, mention that the number of cattle killed at the capitals was much higher than that reported for other *amakhanda*.

The importance allocated to cattle meant that they would under normal circumstances only have been consumed on rare and special occasions. This is especially true for homesteads such as *imizi* (Holden 1963b). The consumption of cattle meat was restricted to very special events such as weddings and funerals, and it was seldom consumed on a daily basis (Holden 1963b; Krige 1965). When analysing the faunal remains of *umuzi* such as Mgoduyanuka (Plug & Brown 1982), the apparent difference in faunal assemblages of *amakhanda* and *imizi* becomes clear. Mgoduyanuka had a far smaller faunal sample with the age distribution of the animals being more balanced (Plug & Brown 1982). It seems likely that these animals were slaughtered as part of a festival or ritual, rather than as a need for sustenance. This view is supported by Holden (1963b) who mentions that cattle were only slaughtered at special occasions. Additionally, the ratio of cattle to sheep and goats remains is more balanced at Mgoduyanuka, which confirms the more conservative use of cattle at *umuzi* (Plug & Brown 1982). Considering that even a wealthy individual would not have had the means to provide cattle meat on a regular (daily) basis to the family (living in an *umuzi*), a high frequency of cattle bones within an archaeological faunal assemblage would rather be indicative of the presence of an *ikhanda*.

## BEADS

Historical accounts indicate that beads were used to denote wealth and social status (Gardiner 1966; Stuart & Malcolm 1986). This was also true for the Zulu royal families and members of the *isigodlo*. As is often the case with this form of status, certain types of beads was reserved for use by the king himself, and others for members of the royal family. This practice was held in especially serious regard, since it was reported by Gardiner (1966), Owen (Cory 1926) and Barter (Merrett 1995) that failure to adhere to these restrictions would be punishable by death. Nonetheless, as is always the case with decorative items, the type and colour of beads that were regarded as 'royal' did not remain constant. Historical accounts extending from the reign of King Shaka (1816–1826) to the reign of King Cetshwayo (1872–1879) do, however, indicate that certain colours were always considered to be royal (Drummond 1875; Cory 1926; Smith 1955; Gardiner 1966; Baldwin 1967; Booth 1967; Stuart & Malcolm 1986; Grey 1992; Merrett 1995). These include red, green and occasionally yellow beads, with each colour's importance varying depending on the shade (Booth 1967; Grey 1992; Smith 1995). From descriptions of the dresses worn by the women of the *isigodlo* as well as the bead covered posts of King Dingane's hut, provided by the accounts of Ross (Grey 1992), Gardiner (1966), Owen (Cory 1926), Champion (Booth 1967), Leslie (Drummond 1875) and Paulina Dlamini

(Bourquin 1986), it is clear that beads were extensively used by the members of the *isigodlo*. Extensive bead usage within the area of the *isigodlo* was confirmed during excavations undertaken at uMgungundlovu and Ondini (Parkington & Cronin 1979; Rawlinson 1985). In both cases, high concentrations of beads were found in the area of the *isigodlo*, whereas the areas constituting the regimental section were almost devoid of beads (Parkington & Cronin 1979; Rawlinson 1985). Bead concentration can therefore potentially be used as a determining factor to distinguish between the *isigodlo* and the regimental section, where the former would present with much larger quantities of beads within the matrix. Bead colouring can, in addition, be used to pinpoint royal areas, bearing in mind that the inconsistencies in colour preferences may to some extent influence the usefulness of this approach.

Large bead concentrations within the archaeological matrix can also be used to distinguish between an *ikhanda* and an *umuzi*. No beads were recovered during excavations undertaken at several *imizi* (Hall & Maggs 1979; Maggs 1982; Becker 2008; Pelsner 2013, 2014). However, it should not be assumed that bead usage was not present at the *imizi*. Historical accounts make mention of bead usage within homesteads; however, Barter (Merrett 1995) supports the view that the ordinary population of the kingdom did not possess large amounts of beads. One would therefore not expect to find large concentrations of beads within *imizi* settlements, whereas they would be more prevalent in the *isigodlo* section of an *ikhanda*.

## DISCUSSION

Although there is a high degree of similarity between the *ikhanda* and the *umuzi*, it is still possible to distinguish these two settlements from each other archaeologically. This article has outlined several elements that can potentially be used to differentiate between an *umuzi* and an *ikhanda*. The first and most apparent element covered is that of settlement size. *Amakhanda* seem to have had much larger central enclosures measuring 200–600 m in diameter. This is significantly larger than the average 30–60 m provided for *imizi* settlements. Similarly, the number of soldiers housed in *amakhanda* was generally much larger than the number of people living within an *imizi*. Consequently, the number of huts located in the settlement would be greater in an *ikhanda* than in an *umuzi*. The central enclosure of the *ikhanda* presented with some structural variation to that of the *umuzi*, which may be observed archaeologically. *Amakhanda* presented with secondary enclosures within the primary or central enclosure, both areas of which were used to house cattle. The *imizi*, in contrast, seem to have had multiple enclosures either attached to the primary enclosure, such as at Nqabeni; or randomly dispersed over the extent of the site, as seen at Mgoduyanuka, Siklibeni and the site described by Pelsner (2014) as kwaBulawayo.

Hut placement and design were also discussed as possible discerning factors in distinguishing between *amakhanda* and *imizi*. Hut placement and designs in the white section of the *isigodlo* as well as the regimental section of the *ikhanda* were shown to follow a linear pattern with a uniform hut design. Hut placement in the *umuzi* was more dispersed with huts often constructed and stylised according to individual preference. This study also identified huts associated with the great *isigodlo* section of *amakhanda*. These huts are only present at *amakhanda* and can in addition be used to distinguish royal *amakhanda* from divisional and regimental *amakhanda*, since these last two settlements would not have had a great *isigodlo*. Dietary differences were also discussed as a possible means of identifying *amakhanda* within the archaeological record. Histor-

ical, ethnographic and archaeological sources indicated higher frequencies of beef consumption within *amakhanda* settlements. This relates back to the belief that a diet of primarily meat, specifically cattle meat, would impart strength to those who consume it. Kings would have provided large amounts of cattle to be slaughtered to ensure not only their regiment's strength in battle, but also their continued loyalty towards the king and the *ibutho* system. The faunal assemblages of *umuzi* were equally distributed between cattle, sheep and goat, and wild faunal remains, suggesting that a specialised diet of primarily cattle meat was restricted to the *ibutho* system and therefore the *amakhanda* settlements. Dietary reconstructions should, however, not be used as a single source of information from which to extrapolate information since diet can easily be influenced by external factors such as drought and disease amongst herds. These differences would not be representative of the social practices but rather, the need to adapt to environmental conditions. Thirdly, beads are a useful means not only of identifying *amakhanda* but also for determining the sections within the *ikhanda* itself. As has been shown, bead usage was primarily reserved for the king and the royal family. Areas within the *ikhanda* associated with the royal family (*isigodlo*) presented with much larger quantities of beads than any other area within the *ikhanda* settlement. Such large quantities of beads is also not reported for any of the *imizi* settlements. Nevertheless, future research into bead usage and the preferential use of some types and colours of beads at *amakhanda* may provide greater insight into the social structuring of Zulu society.

## CONCLUSION

The 18th century was a period during which a number of social changes started to take shape among the northern Nguni, which would ultimately result in the formation of the northern Nguni Kingdoms, and the reorganisation of the political and demographic composition of much of southern Africa. The militarisation of the northern Nguni created a system and settlement patterns that were unique to the kingdoms and allowed them to conquer large areas. Understanding how such social changes affect settlement distribution and organisation has the potential to help us in identifying similar occurrences further back in the archaeological record.

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