

CONSERVATION PRACTICES: MGUNGUNDLOVU HOMESTEAD, KWAZULU-NATAL

Mgungundlovu constitutes a unique and valuable cultural and historical heritage, which has its roots in a number of our population groups.

ORIGIN OF HOMESTEAD UMGUNGUNDLOVU (31° 16' E, 28° 26' S) - F.R. 37, ^{ka Senzagakhona}
1828

Wintermouth of
1829 D.
(Becker 1964)

General tradition asserts the umuzi was built by Dingane after the assassination of King Shaka in 1828 at Dukuza. On assuming kingship, Dingane built his principal umuzi close to the ¹⁴⁰⁰⁻¹⁷⁰⁰ traditional land of his father, Senzagakhona, in the Makhosini ^{hutte} Valley area, allegedly completing the immense settlement in 1829 and living there until 1838.

1838

Singonyama (Lion koppie) hill behind Ngungu. ^{Fraus has a colour repro of Dingane}
The site was abandoned by King Dingane after the Battle of Blood River and destroyed by A Pretorius ⁱⁿ December 1838. ^{on 20} Bird 1965: 448, 450

1909

In 1909 the area 'Dingaan's Kraal' of B of Moordplaats No 193 of Vryheid ... was registered in the name of the Natal Government under Deed of Transfer No 640/1909 (28 May 1909).

1927

'A Native in charge of the land' (?)

1927:

In 1927 the South African Government 'purchased the farm on which the site of Dingaan's old kraal is situated. Mr Grobler asks me to enquire whether the Historical Monuments Council will be prepared to take over this site from the government. It is at present being cut out from the rest of the farm' (Letter to Mr Graham Botha, Chief Archivist, Parliament House CT from Gordon E Verster, Private sec Minister of Lands 31 March 1927 - HMC 15/2/2/1). Parliament agreed that '124 acres, of farm Sub-division B of Moordplaats No 193 Vryheid' be transferred to the Historic Monuments Commission in May 1927 (notice attached) (8/N/Bab/1) (Part 1, 1927-1938) 'Re Transfer of Dingaan's Kraal Site. 18 July 1927 'I think this offer should be graciously accepted. (File note: For original of this letter see File HMC 21/4 'Photographs of monuments throughout the Union'). The areas were surveyed and registered (diagrams on linen in file).

Immediate attention was paid to the enclosure of the site to prevent grazing thereon, and a request was made to 'place the dead trunk of one of the Euphorbias in a place of safety' (R.J. van Reenen's telegram*). Van Reenen submitted a description of the site (Annexure A) together with suggestions as to fencing the site, indicating 'roughly the limits of the actual kraal' and protecting (by fencing) the evident hut floors.

1929

The Public Works Department submitted drawings and estimates for the erection of fencing and walling etc, Dingaan's Kraal. (27 April 1929), drystone walling from an outcrop of a Bastard Granite running through Farm Outspan.

1931:

Die Sending van die Ned Herv of Geref Kerk van Suid-Afrika opened negotiations to built a church near the site of Piet Retief's Grave.

1935

HC Lugg (Chief Native Commissioner, PMB) visited the site at the request of the District Engineer, PWD, Durban and inspected the site, his report and an accompanying statement from 'an old Native named Tomu Sibiya whose father lived near the entrance from 1882' supported findings at the site (Annexure B) (8/N/Bab/1; Part 1, 1927-1938)

Wry 1926: 107

Becker 1964

Stuart & Madwlm 1969

Roberts 1974

Bergh & Bergh 1984

Welsch & Wright 1976

Ponyant 1949

Maggis 1992

Booth 1967

Gardiner 1966

Gibson 1903

Wood 1884

Belegogue 1847

Sketches by Hester p. 44.

in Mwanza (00s)

Bheje (centrale)

KwaMbeeni (wes)

} 2 small hilled complexes behind the main complex

coloured parts of the fireplace in Dingane's hut floor (p. 46)

Parkinson & Cronin 1979:

Zulu smithies

Tufas 1847: pl. 23 -

neck & arm rings

Ubhedu

Knigge 1974

Webb & Wright 1986

Umdaka

Umnaka

Illius:
Loodt
60

Isinda - Ngungunus (3)
MM

isongo - VM - (nice one!)

Isintibiniqa - $\frac{1}{2}$ decorated

Ingxolba KCM

Indondo DSS

Vingernips DSS - (haven't seen these)

Isimulwane

NM. - '64 of these five sided heads - cast in
dimp and then hammered - were found in a
rubbish heap at Dungaankraal at
Ntonjaneni -
Beads of this type were last worn by
the Mbhoro Regt. "

Ubuhlalu - (Faup 1923) MB1
small copper beads

Uqhosha: open stud. MM

Dungaankraal Leendriestane



CURATORSHIP AND HUT RECONSTRUCTION

- c1935 One Bester owned the adjacent farmland and became the volunteer caretaker (unpaid) of the site.
- 1936 The sites Dingaanskraal and Piet Retief's grave were declared Monument under 'The Natural and Historical Monuments, Relics and Antiques Act, 1934: Protection of Monuments', No 526, Gov Gazette, 6 Apr 1936
- 1937-8 Construction of a new rondavel to replace the old 'Visitors' Shelter' at Dingaanskraal (PWD Dwg No. 570/37)
- 1938 Reports of vandalism and theft at the site soon became alarming, typically *'Re vandalism at Dingaanstaat, don't believe that trash in the newspaper contradicting. I saw a fireplace smashed for the purpose of souvenirs (sic), and this fireplace was behind the dias or earthen mound throne. I protested but was shouted out'*, reported one HCB Wylde Browne of Estcourt in February 1938 to Van Riet Lowe. B Bennett, Acting News Editor of The Star in Johannesburg had reported what he had seen during his coverage of the festivities on the site in March 17 1938 and wrote to Van Riet Lowe that he had similarly commented on the mild but none the less serious vandalism *'people picking up rounded stones used in Dingane's day for grinding corn and placing them in their pockets together with tiny beads scratched from just beneath the surface or exposed'*.
- 1938 Reconstruction of traditional huts on the site had been proposed early on: C van Reit Lowe, HC Lugg (then Secretary of native Affairs, Pietermaritzburg) and others proposed the building of four huts, those of Dingane, Mpikase (Dingane's mother) and his two indunas, Ndlela and Nzoba. The procedure had gone as far considering suitable inscriptions for the huts. It is clear that Van Riet Lowe's sensitivities and farsightedness concerning conservation far exceeded others, Lugg's advice was that the building of the huts 'should be put in hand by a local Native chief', not only would it cost less but, in his opinion, it would be 'done efficiently'. Lugg's proposal was accepted. His attitude however, seemed to make Van Riet Lowe flinch: in a letter to Secretary for Public Works JS Cleland - 'The maintenance of the huts is obviously an important point and instead of using chemical preservatives, Mr Lugg may wish to suggest that the whole lot be left to some Native. It may save a lot of trouble in future if such contingencies are borne in mind while the erection of the huts and seat is being considered. Your recommendations will be most welcome.'
(8/N/Bab/1, Part 1 (a) 25 March 1938)

Quotes were received from Mr Bester, owner of a neighbouring farm, who agreed to 'reconstruct' Dingane's hut. He estimated the need for 'about 10 loads of Nlongos or wattle sticks and about 10 Natives to build this hut' and went on to stress the need for the go-ahead to be given to the builders by their chief, Chief Mheyeni ... 'You know what Natives are when they are afraid to tackle anything against their principles'. Lugg thought Bester was too expensive and (Van Riet Lowe's prophesy) suggested the chief should handle the whole thing - 'the material to be used should be steeped in one of our cattledipping tanks in the fairly near Native Reserve in Mahlabatini District ... in addition ... there would be the cost of fencing the huts to guard against vandalism.' Writing in July, he recommends prompt action 'as thatching grass will soon become scarce.' (8/N/Bab/1, Part 1 (a) 24.6.1938)

Part 6 (1/9/61 - 31/7/72)
Part 7 (1/8/72 - 14/1/77)
Part 8 (Jan 1977 - 1980)
Part 9 (1981 - July 1983)
Part 10 (1983 - June 1986)
Part 11 (Jul 1986 - 30 Apr 1990)

Frans Rod: A reconstruction of brass smithing at
Ngungundlovu
- 'n rekonstruksie van geel koperbewerking
by Ngungundlovu
T.A. Arch. U.P. 1993

nature & source of the brass

E.

(p. 438 - 458)

Journal of the expedition
to the

Emigrant Farmers under their chief commandant A.W.J. Pretorius (formerly
of Graaff-Reinet), against Dingaan, the king of the Xhosa...

'in the month of Nov & Dec 1838; undertaken for the purpose of revenge for
the most cruel and barbarous ~~act~~ murder of the late chief of the
emigrants, P. Retief, and his fifty companions ... and also for the
purpose of recovering the goods & property stolen by them from the emigrants
on these occasions'

Journal kept by J.G. Bantjes - Clerk of the Volksraad, .. during the
exped. See to Chief Commandant Pretorius

1838... being encamped at the Umhlaluzi, the patients while spying
saw Dingaan's town covered with clouds of smoke ... we encamped near
his town on 20th ... we went with about 900 men, & found the town deserted
& the palace of the King totally burnt down. The commandant ordered that
all that was found should be brought together, and whatever was in the
fire, such as iron & copper, should be rescued and taken care of.'

(... then came the ambush)

... returned to Zaves

the chief commandant then caused the town to be further destroyed by fire ... we returned to the Timpela River, where the chief commandant divided the booty & we separated.

Return ' dispatch from 'King Dupaian's city, called
Ungung.

Dupaian set his capital at here, & his own palace was destroyed by the conflagration.

... The goods which we found near Dupaian Res. h. b. publicly sold for upwards of Rds 6,000.

Annals of Natal 1495-1845 - J. Rivd vol 1 (1965 reprint)

- 1939 A letter from HC Lugg to the HMC (4 Jan 1939) implies four huts are in the course of construction 'the Secretary for native Affairs has informed me that there is no objection to the fencing of the four huts in question being undertaken by workmen of the Department of Native Affairs, provided this service can be conveniently fitted in ...'. However a visiting Senator in February 1938 makes no mention of existing new huts, supporting in fact that four huts as suggested be built to protect the sites.
- 1939 From the beginning, the immediate conservation considerations were for the protection of the site. Attention centered around keeping cattle and humans away from the unprotected baked earth hut floors and keeping the bush and certain invasive plants under control. Part of the site 'the forbidden area' (at the top of the present site) was fenced and a gate with a padlock erected.
- Vandalism increased with the site's popularity as a place of pilgrimage to Piet Retief and his contingents' death and burial site. Van Riet Lowe referred to reports of theft from the site by visitors 'the site must have a caretaker and removals of relics, damage, etc. stopped.' (10 Feb 1939) (8/N/Bab/1, Part 1 (a)).
- 1939 In June or July 1939 the Government resumed Bester's farm (cancelled his lease of Moordplaats) and he would have to leave the place (8/N/Bab/1, Part 1 9a): letter John M Hershensohn, The Shielings, Greytown to the sec, HMC 10 March 1940) One of the problems being that in December 1939 Bester 'used Dingaans kraal as a cattle paddock, on which we relieved him of the duty of caretaker' (ibid). The Babanango Magistrate tried to get in touch with Aaron Sibiya, who was living on a farm adjacent to Moordplaats to act as caretaker but Mr Sibiya refused. The Greytown committee were completely against employing a Native caretaker and unanimously voted for the reinstatement of Bester.
- 1940 Bester was reinstated at £3.0.0 per month and Van Riet Lowe drew up a duty sheet (26 Aug 1940), whereby Bester should maintain all fences, gates and erections at the site, keep the site clean and tidy and free from noxious weeds, any damage of the ground or any archaeological relic to be reported immediately, report need for any repairs and to report all this to the secretary HMC (Van Riet Lowe). In 1941 he was to be paid £5.0.0. per month and was permitted a 'Native assistant' (paid £1.10.0 per month). It was after the latter appointment that maintenance of the site improved.
- 1940 The Regelings Kommissie wanted to renew an application for a large building within the grounds for meeting purposes and suggested fencing some of the fireplaces. (10 March 1940). Eufeels Saal? By 1940 the huts still had not been built. Van Riet Lowe was disgusted that his countrymen's lack of public spirit (27 March 1940).
- 1941 The huts were not constructed, largely because of the serious reservations put forward by the local chief (Letter 6 Dec 1941 Secretary of native Affairs, Pretoria reported on communication from Chief Native Commissioner, Natal - NMC file 8/N/Bab/2), accounted for in a telegram 'Secretary Native Affairs writes - Paramount Chief Zululand lodged protest concerning construction huts Dingaanskraal - fears perpetuation friction Zulu and Afrikaans community - recommends demarcation of sites whitewashed stones for present.' Van Riet Lowe was informed (9 Dec 1941), that the Acting Paramount Chief of Zululand considered reconstruction of the four huts would perpetuate bad

blood between Afrikaner & Zulu.

1942 CvRL to Killie Campbell (3 Sep 1942) (8/N/Bab/1) (Part 2, 1942-1947): 'Excavation - Dingaanskraal': recalls the 'Die Historiese Kommissie van die Saamwerk Unie' requesting permission to hunt for the Pretorius Stone on the site, permission was refused them by the Native Affairs Department ... the Native Affairs Department must agree to the excavations proposed and a properly qualified archaeologist must supervise all excavations on a habitation site, but not necessarily beyond the limits of such a site.' The same group commissioned Margaret Cary's painting of Mgungundlovu, c1938.

1944: NGK PP Stander 1944

1945 Ilanga Lase Natal (20.10.1945; 27.10.1945; 10.11.1945) published extensive correspondence on the issue of the restoration/reconstruction of 'Dingaan's Kraal'; official correspondence on the matter, between the Secretary for Native Affairs and C vr Lowe indicates that leading Zulus vetoed the 'reconstruction' of Dingane's 'great fortress kraal-city', to vRL's regret: 'In view of your repeated recommendation not to pursue this matter, no further action will be taken at this stage. Unfortunately the only losers are the Zulus ... if they persist in their present attitude the visible signs of their past, their more tangible traditions, are destined to be as bleak and lifeless as is Dingaan's kraal itself - or as the graves of the Zulu Kings would be if the Commission did not mark them ... As sentiment and reason so seldom walk hand in hand it is possibly best in this case to let each go its own way ... yours faithfully C.v.R.L. (8/N/Bab/ part 2: ...*) - Letter 5 Dec 1945)

1952 The NGK in Natal opened an evangelist training centre and orphanage for Zulu orphans, in 1956 acquiring Mr Bester's farm next to them on his leaving. Dominee Stander of the Mission was appointed curator of the site by the HMC in that year.

REPORTS, SURVEYS AND EXCAVATIONS

1951 Report by FW Ahrens & BD Malan, 7 Nov 1951 (8/N/Bab/1) Part 3: May 1947 - 1952

1959 'Plan of Dingaan's Hut Group and Reconstruction of Dingaan's Hut, Dingaan's Kraal, Zululand.' James Walton 7 March 1959. (8/N/Bab/1) Part 11 July 1986 - Apr 1990)

1960 Oberholster/Walton survey of Mgungundlovu: meanwhile the floors were still unprotected, gates were often left open and cattle strayed in etc.

1970s Durban Onderwysers College undertook work and maintenance of the site in 1970s and Cas Kruger's report (8/N/Bab/1) (1972-1977), giving a history of the site and attaches numerous historic sketches, sums up those years.

Ongoing concern about the floor protection: the best way of doing this considered to be to reconstruct a hut or two over the principal cleared floors. This chase continued until 1980s, the 'Natives' opinion having hitherto always being taken into consideration but with nothing happening.

1972 Chadwick reported 20 Dec 1972 to the NMC on work at Mgung: mainly general restoration (road signs, lettering in NMC

notices) and Restoration of hut floors - No 1 hut chosen as experimental area: used 'Glyptal' 'sealed the floor and gave it a somewhat shiny appearance'; Industrial finish (Partenon) + 1/3 thinners - made floor impervious to water and while soaking in gave it a dark shiny appearance, when dried hardly discernable' Novabrick - when first applied gave the floor a red shiny appearance but on drying sealed the floor and was hardly discernable, and so on. diagrams, recommendations.

- 1973 Chadwick and Maggs worked on the site 1973 (Chadwick report 1 Nov 1973) (8/N/Bab/1) (Part VII, 1972-1977). Maggs suggested Mr Parkington work on the site.
- 1974 Mr J Parkington 'worked on the site for almost the whole of January 1974,' with a team from UCT (8/N/B-O/1).
- 1977 Professor Parkington (excavated there in 1977) (cf 8/N/B-O/1), exposing about 20 hut floors and made a survey of the site (letter Rudner to Chadwick) 'I asked him how this site could be improved as a tourist attraction. He suggested that the best preserved floors be protected by a roof and fence, while others should be left open for people to walk on, these would have to be treated or restored every year. Huts of the old type could finally be built on the remaining floors. Some of these huts should be equipped as they originally were, but it is also important that an exhibition hall be built where plans, pictures and reconstructions can be shown, in addition to excavated material ... it is ... important that the site be well fenced to protect it from grazing animals ...'
- 1977 Mgungundlovu Advisory Committee on the decision of the NMC, at the advice of Nick vd Merwe, John Parkington, Tim Maggs and AJB Humphreys: to plan and coordinate, inter alia, the long-term conservation and preservation of the site.
- 1979
- 1981 Meeting between Dr Martin Hall and members of the Mgungundlovu Advisory Committee (8/N/B-O/1) - Record of meeting.
- 1982-1984 Discussions took place between the NMC and the SABC for the use of the site by SABC (Elmo de Wit studios) to film 'Shaka Zulu' for TV. The SABC proposed to reconstruct about 400 of the huts on a more archaeologically-based method under quite strict control by the NMC (such as covering the old floors to protect them.) It seems that these are the basis for the reconstructed huts we see today. A huge fuss erupted over the damage done to the site by the film crew. It blew over - and left a considerable number of reconstructed huts, increased visitor numbers and a number of other expensive issues.

APPOINTMENT OF FULL-TIME ARCHAEOLOGIST/CURATOR

REPORT OF THE ARCHAEOLOGIST - MGUNGUNDLOVU - Frans Roodt

REFERENCES

NMC (closed files) 8/N/Bab/1

Part 1 (1927-1938)

Part 1 (a) Feb 1938 - March 1932

Part 2 (April 1942 - May 1947)

Part 3 (May 1947 - 1952)

Part 4 (Feb 1953 - May 1956)

Part 5 (June 1956 - August 1961) - great big coloured plan by Wallon YES YES YES

Part 6 (1/9/61 - 31/7/72)
Part 7 (1/8/72 - 14/1/77)
Part 8 (Jan 1977 - 1980)
Part 9 (1981 - July 1983)
Part 10 (1983 - June 1986)
Part 11 (Jul 1986 - 30 Apr 1990)

(Lugg to Sec of native Affairs - 23 June 1938 - Part 1 (a); Nodwengu : site enclosed by the late Chief Maqiyana Mpungose some years ago at his own expense)
sagiterios of 1988, vol 3 no 4 - snuffbox
Frans Roodt thesis;
Mgung files NMC Natal Branch
STURART ARCHIVES (various accounts of the site, response to questions put by Stuart to interviewees)