

Report to the National Monuments Council of South Africa

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A report on the archaeological and historical investigation  
of Mgungundlovu, King Dingane kaSenzangakhona's  
capital from 1829 to 1838  
for the period 1 July 1986 to 30 June 1987

RJC Rawlinson  
**University of Zululand**

June 1987

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Verlag van Argeologiese werk te uMgungundlovu deur  
R.C.J. Rawlinson

*I think that this should be in special file sub by the museum*  
*archaeological research.*

1.	Titelblad	1
2.	Inhoudsopgawe	2
3.	Illustrasies	3
4.	Woordelys	4
5.	Inleiding - kort historiese agtergrond	6
6.	Historiese skets van uMgungundlovu as argeologiese terrein	10
7.	Doelstellings	12
<del>8.</del>	<del>Literatuurstudie</del>	
8.	Metodologie	14
9.	Literatuurstudie	16
	9.1 algemene vorm en groete	16
	9.2 kultuure	17
	9.3 isigodlo (ook sosiale organisasie)	18
	9.4 krygerarea "	20
	9.5 paradegrand en hoofingang	23
	9.6 satehietstasies agter hoofkompleks	24
	9.7 voeding en bestaans ekonomie	25
10.	Argeologiese werk	27
	10.1 voorbereiding	27
	10.2 doel: steekproewe uit ashope, binne aktiwiteits area, posisie van hoofingang	27
	10.3 ashope	28
	10.3.1 metodologie	28

5. Ceramic analysis - a more solid  
method sh. be used - of. Hall here  
sat Babango

Johan de Villiers

1. Sundas Tintane will want to  
know if R35,000 for 1st yr was  
well spent
2. Area is low yielding in area
3. Sh. have a final spulles report
4. Long term plan - sh. fit in  
with this
5. Angus has provided R17,000 up to Dec 1987
6. If to go on we must have  
confidence in him

R11,000  
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10.3.2.	aard van afsetting	28
10.3.3	fauna	29
10.3.4	botaniese inligting	29
10.3.5	keramiek	30
10.3.6	ander vondste	32
10.3.7	gevolgtrekking	34
10.4	Binnre aktiwiteitsarea	36
10.4.1	beskrywing van asloop	36
10.4.2	voorbereiding	36
10.4.3	beskrywing van opgraving en netbodems	36
10.4.4	fauna	37
10.4.5	keramiek	38
10.4.6	ander vondste	38
10.4.7	botaniese inligting	38
10.4.8	gevolgtrekking	39

Dist. intro

- omissions
- mistakes
- no indication of events leading to occupation of site

T. Maggs

- ① arch planning inadequate
- ② objectives not clearly stated
  - ↳ preservation
  - ↳ reconstruction
  - ↳ research
- ③ need to assess long term plausibility

no further major work without consolidation digitation & assessment

could give a specific task on E side of main gate

crit

1. no attention to prev. work done
  - Berles
  - G.A.C.
  - ignores Martin Hall
  - only ref. to Parkington
2. no comparison between diff parts of terrain - however student report avail + Martin Hall
3. no effort to link into RAF area with arch, finds
4. Plan of entrance p 307 p 50 - large no of old, without, + 100m, 200m

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## CONTENTS

	Page
1. Introduction	1
2. Environment and History	5
3. Objectives	7
4. Methodology	8
5. Literary Evidence	11
6. Archaeological Evidence	28
7. Conclusion	53
8. Acknowledgements	55
Bibliography	

FIGURES	PAGE
1. South East Africa	2
2. Mgungundlovu	8
3. Schematic diagram of layout	13
Legend for Fig 3	14
4. Champion's plan	23
5. Smith's plan	24
6. Lunguza kaMpukane's plan	25
7. Gardiner's sketch	26
8. Illustration of shield storebuilding	27
9. U.C.T.: Survey and excavations	29
10. Current Excavations	30
Legend for fig 10	31
11. Ceramic decoration - 'nipples'	35
12. Ceramic decoration - variations	36
13. Small finds	39
14. Small finds	40
15. Small finds	41
16. Small finds	42
17. Kitchen midden base	48
18. Kitchen midden bases	49



## ZULU TERMS

mGungundlovu:	'the Laird' of the elephant' (Booth 1967).
iBandla(amaBandla):	assembly; assembly of king's Councillors
isiBaya (iziBaya):	cattle enclosure; parade ground
umBengo (imiBengo):	meat cut into strips for grilling
ubuSenge:	coiled copper amulet or anklet
iButho(amaButho)::	warrior; age-group of men or women; regiment
isiCamelo(iziCamelo):	head rest; area occupied by senior councillors at the capital.
inCeko (izinCeko):	Royal servant
uDibi (izinDibi):	youth (boy) cadet who carries the warriors and officers belongings on campaigns; see <u>ukukleza</u>
umNdlunkulu	women (girls) of the Royal Household given as tribute or taken by the King to become part of the <u>isigodlo</u> .
isiGaba (iziGaba):	section of <u>uhlangoti</u> ; group of warriors.
isiGodlo (iziGodlo):	King or headmans private enclosure found at the upper end of his residence (homestead): includes the buildings and all those who reside therein.
uhlangoti (izinhlangothi):	side; flank; portion.
ikhanda (amaKhanda):	major military centre: Royal umuzi; barracks

ukuKleza: to drink milk directly from a cows udder;  
name given to cadets; to be conscripted  
into an age-group.

umKhosi: most important event in the Zulu  
calender; first fruits ceremony held to  
celebrate new seasons harvest.

emaKhosini: a valley where the early Zulu Kings lived  
and are now buried; literally 'place of  
Kings'

isiKulu (iziKulu): person of high social/political rank.

iPhakati (amaPhakati): councillor; within the King's council

Ipini (amaPini): junior military officer

inThuba (izinThuba): gateway, small opening

uTshwala: sorghum beer

iViyo (amaViyo): platoon; group of 20 to 60 warriors.

umuZi (imiZi) homestead: includes inhabitants and  
buildings.

## 1. Introduction

Students of Zulu history can never cease to be amazed by the spectacular events that crowded the nineteenth century in south east Africa. It began with the Mfecane and the Shakan campaigns which unified hundreds of smaller political groups into a single unitary Zulu State. This was followed by contact with mobile Voortrekkers which culminated in the Battle of Blood River; the succession war between the Prince's Cetshwayo and Mbuyazi at Ndondakusuka culminating with the Anglo/Zulu War, the heroic scenes at Isandlwana and the devastating Zulu Civil War in the early 1880's (Omer-Cooper 1966, Guy 1982, Colenbrander nd.). The most prominent feature of this century was the Zulu military machine, their tactics, organization and role in maintaining Zulu hegemony - politically, socially and economically. The King held power by keeping a vast number of single men, the amabutho, continually mobilized and quartered in a number of military barracks known as the amakhanda. As these centres were part of each succeeding monarch's inheritance, they multiplied in number until by Cetshwayo's reign in the 1870's, there were some 29 to be found throughout Zululand (Laband and Thompson 1983). Besides a steady growth in the number of amakhanda, each monarch, on succeeding to the throne, built a new capital, the senior ikhanda, larger and more complex than the others since it was the nerve centre of the kingdom as well as being the Royal Residence (Webb and Wright 1976, 1979, 1982). Shaka kaSenzangakhona's capital, Bulawayo, situated near the umHlatuzi river, was the first of the amakhanda visited and described by the handfull of adventurers, traders and

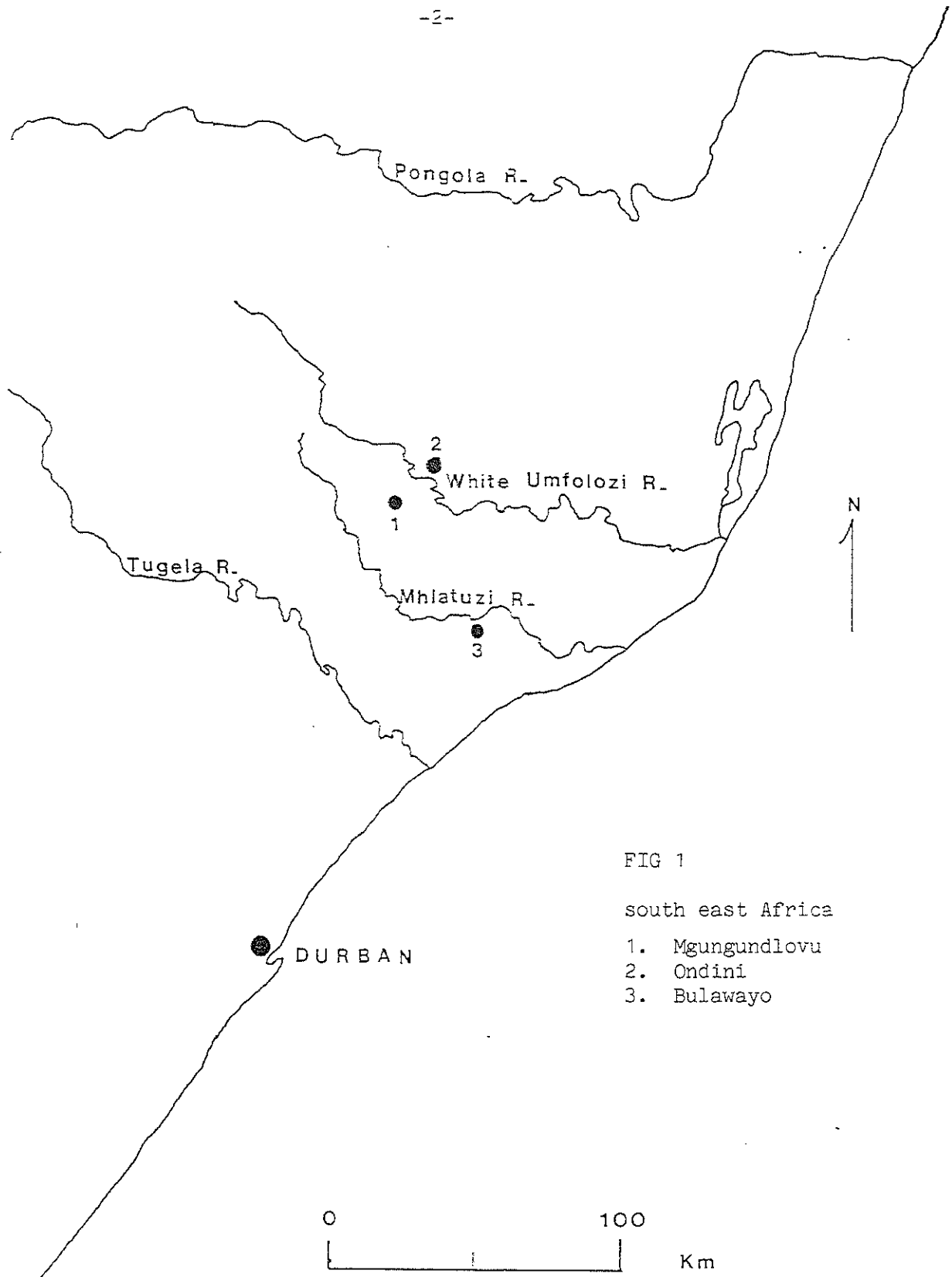


FIG 1

south east Africa

- 1. Mgungundlovu
- 2. Ondini
- 3. Bulawayo

travellers to venture into the interior (see, for example, Isaacs 1970, Stuart and Mck. Malcolm 1950). Their presence posed no threat to the king and in fact were welcomed because of the high value placed on trade by the king (Corey 1926, Stuart & Mck. Malcolm 1950). After the assassination of Shaka in September 1828, Dingane kaSenzangakhona, a half brother, seized power and commanded his new capital to be built on the slopes of the emakhosini valley. Traditional ground of the Zulu clan, Mgungundlovu, as it was named, was however to witness a change in the fortunes of the Zulu people when European penetration and expansion into Natal grew dramatically in the 1830's. The British presence at Port Natal remained insignificant. They were not seeking land for agriculture or ranching but remained content trading and hunting for ivory. Some were missionaries intent on 'civilizing' the Zulu in the grand Empire mould, more often than not, though, with little success (Gardiner 1966; Corey 1926, Booth 1967). The Voortrekkers, arriving from over the Drakensberg mountains in the latter part of the 1830's, however, posed a rather different and more serious threat. They arrived in far greater numbers and were searching for land for their stock and to settle permanently. Dingane appreciated the potential threat to his kingdom, and must have at some stage decided that the only solution and course of action was to forcibly remove them (Okoye 1965). Considering the apparant might of the Zulu army, past military successes and the excessive demands of the Voortrekkers, it is understandable that the Zulu monarch considered a military solution the most practicable. A series of events ensued, beginning with the killing of Piet Retief and his party earlier

in the year and culminating with the Battle of Blood River on the 16th December 1838. The Zulu army was defeated and Dingane and his followers retreated to the north. Mpande kaSenzangakhona, a half brother, seized the opportunity to rally his followers, opposed the king, and finally defeated him at the Battle of Maqonqo near present day Mkuze. Dingane escaped but was eventually assassinated. Mpande became the new king inheriting a diminished empire while the Voortrekkers settled vast stretches of western and northern Natal (Webb and Wright 1976, 1979, 1982).

The 1830's then was a watershed in the history of south east Africa; Mgungundlovu is seen as a monument to the demise of the old Zulu order as well as the place where Piet Retief and his party lie buried. Mgungundlovu is also where the first missionaries attempted to convert the Zulus to christianity and where trade flourished as never before.

## 2. Environment and History.

The site is situated near the middle reaches of the White Umfolozi river (28° 26'S; 31° 17' E). Like all imizis (Raum 1973) it was built on a gentle convex slope set against the iSangoyane hill and is flanked by the Mkumbane and Nzololo streams, tributaries of the White Umfolozi river. The emakhosini valley has a warmer, drier climate than the surrounding ridges, supporting a valley bushveld type vegetation with a sweet to mixed grass cover. Remnants of riverine forest exist in the kloofs and more secluded parts. The surrounding ridges are occupied by a 'Ngongoni veld type and have a sour to mixed grass cover (Acocks 1975). Although the countryside is today well wooded there is strong evidence to suggest that during the 1830's the valley may have had more grassland with a little less bush with occasional large trees (Webb and Wright 1976, 1982; Booth 1967).

Despite the importance and ease of access to the site no scientific archaeological investigation was undertaken until 1974. There is no doubt that over the decades the site has been plundered by visitors hunting for curios but it appears that the bulk of this vandalism is restricted to the land surface.

Some unrecorded excavations have taken place but again it appears that the damage may be minimal.

During 1974 and 1975 the archaeology department from the University of Cape Town spent two seasons at the site concentrating on the upper high status residential section and associated middens. The results of this work have appeared in an article describing the size and layout of Mgungundlovu (Parkington and Cronin 1979); an archaeo-magnetic study (Reid et al 1979) and an unpublished honours thesis (Cronin 1975). Although the analysis on the fauna, ceramics, charcoals and small finds have been completed the results have not yet been published or drafted in any form.

The University of Cape Town's excavations and survey also revealed that the site is, unlike many others which have been completely destroyed, relatively undisturbed. A small section of the eastern flank has been ploughed but should not effect any efforts in resolving the issue of constructing the dynamics of the capital.



### 3. Objectives

When, in 1986, the University of Zululand initiated a fresh investigation of the site, it was immediately obvious from the records kept by the University of Cape Town that a sufficiently large enough sample had been recovered from the high status area. Further work in the isigodlo and its associated features would merely be repetitive and add very little more to our present knowledge of the dynamics of that part of the capital. What is evident, though, is the lack of information from the lower status quarters of the amabutho. Nor is much known of the inner activity areas and outer refuse middens—areas that may shed light on the diet, access to trade goods and other economic factors in the lives of the lower status inhabitants of the capital.

Broadly the objectives fall into two main categories:

- (a) to archaeologically investigate the lower status features that would help in unravelling the dynamics of amabutho society and
- (b) to combine these results with those from the University of Cape Town to procure a balanced view of the dynamics of the society at Mgungundlovu as a whole.

This report is concerned with progress in the first category of objectives. Once achieved the second objective should be taken up as the data is ready without the expense of re-excavating and re-analysis which is time consuming.

#### 4. Methodology

Research into amabutho society and their quarters has complimentary themes; the literary and archaeological evidence.

The literary evidence is reviewed in the following section, the archaeological in the one after.

Aided by the University of Cape Town's survey, field notes and reports the general location of the main gate was sought. Being at the 'opposite end' from the Royal Enclosure it can be safely assumed to have been the area where at least some of the amabutho were quartered together with gatekeepers and officers of low rank.

Once the location had been identified, a surface survey of cultural material, vegetational changes, soil discolouration and land contour irregularities were noted. Several apparant refuse middens, an inner activity area, building floors and the main entrance were tentatively identified. A fifty meter square grid system was implemented and marked on the ground with metal pegs (fig 2). Each fifty meter square block was subdivided into five meter squares. Any further subdivision would be implemented when and where necessary.

Since the cultural material represents the remains of a single occupation the deposits were not expected to have any significant depth nor, more importantly, identifiable lenses representing

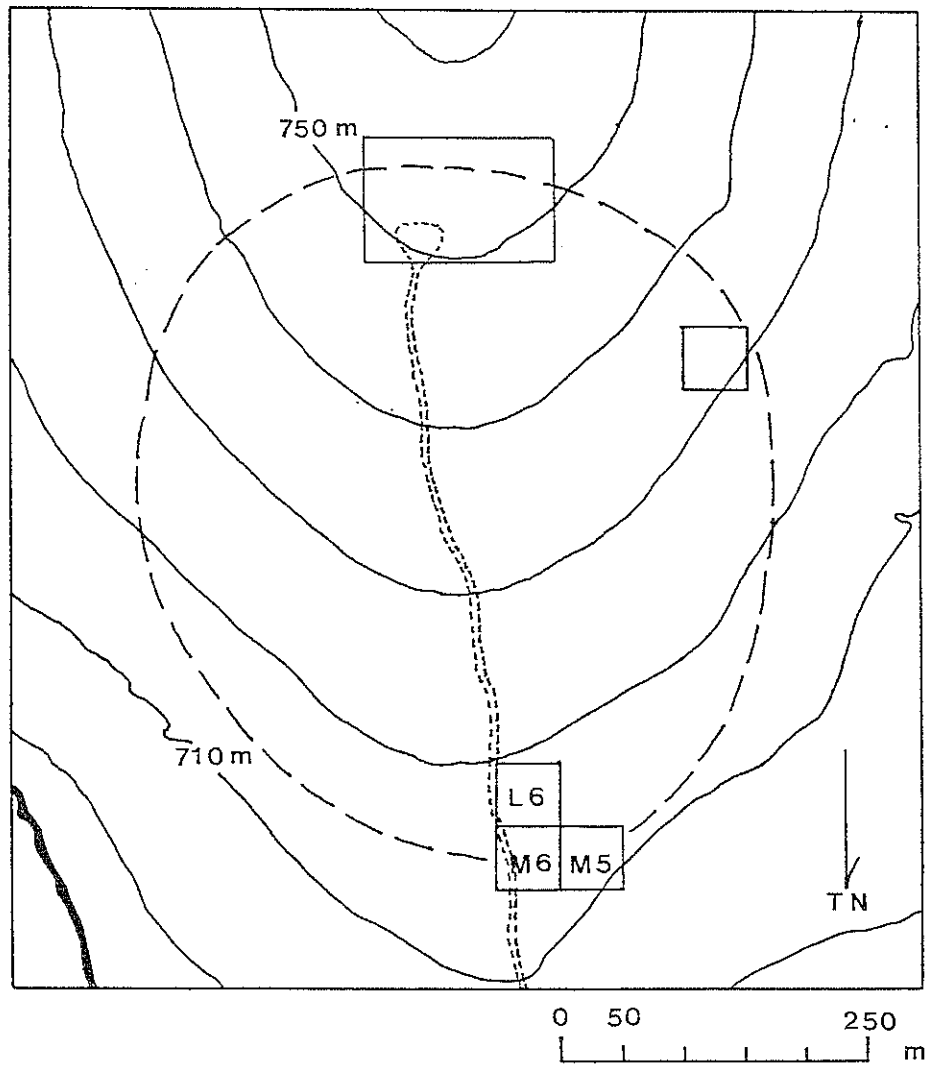

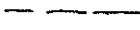




FIG 2 Mgungundlovu

	Vehicle track
	Approx. outer boundary
	Mkumbane stream
	U.C.T's area of investigation

Blocks M5, M6 and L6 - current area of investigation

different time periods (Rawlinson thesis in prep.). Ash lenses in the refuse middens or inner-activity area would be monitored and recorded as distinct features when and if located.

All excavated material was passed through a 5 mm grid aperture sieve followed by one with a mosquito netting base (approx. .1 mm grid aperture), the latter to trap small finds like glass beads, minute fragments of coiled copper bangles and botanical remains.

## 5. Literary Evidence

When Dingane ordered the building of Mgungundlovu, the layout and size followed that of the capitals of his predecessor. Rank and social status decreed the area each person occupied and was allowed to enter. Functions were performed in specific parts of the capital and strict adherence to protocol was demanded. At any given time some 3 000 to 5 000 people probably resided there (Hall 1987, Rawlinson 1985). Others - court messengers, herders, regiments summoned from outlying district amakhanda, relatives bringing provisions, visiting dignitaries, traders and the daily business of drilling, dancing and singing made it a centre of activity quite unlike anywhere else in Zululand (Rawlinson thesis in prep.).

Physically Mgungundlovu was elliptical in shape, somewhat longer from the isigodlo to the main gate and covering an area of approximately 35 hectares. Although visitors to the capital don't all agree on the diameter it was most probably in the region of six hundred meters (Booth 1967, Parkington and Cronin 1979, Webb and Wright 1982, Krige 1965, Mitford 1975). A stout timber outer palisade comprising a double row of branches, some 2 m high and crossing near the top formed a most effective barricade (Bryant 1967, Stuart and Mck. Malcolm 1950, Webb and Wright 1976, 1979, 1982, Booth 1967). Within the palisade, round beehive shaped buildings, densely packed and 6 to 8 deep at the high status upper end, extended down the gentle slope of the hill to form the oval shape of the capital (Gardiner 1966, Bird 1965, Leslie

1969). The exact number of buildings remains conjecture, ranging from 1 000 to over 2 000 (Krige 1965, Webb and Wright 1982, Bryant 1967). Reviewing the evidence it would most likely to have been between 1 400 and 1 800 buildings. They all took on the same form and were constructed of the same materials - thatch, saplings and bark with the floor constructed of an antheap/cowdung compound polished with beef lard. Those of the amabutho were of a standard size - approximately 3,5 m in diameter - (Parkington and Cronin 1979, Cronin 1975) but in the high status area they varied in size with an average diameter of over 5 m (Parkington and Cronin 1979) no doubt size decreasing rank.

Placed at regular intervals amongst the buildings were similar structures but raised on stilts the bases being some 2 m above ground level. These were the shield storage buildings (Booth 1967), although Parkington and Cronin (1979) suggest that at least one ground level building excavated in the high status upper end may have been a shield storage building as well.

There were several minor entrances (ithuba) to the capital but only one main gate through which most people, and all visitors, entered or left (Bryant 1929, McKeurtan 1930, Webb and Wright 1976, 1979, 1982).

For convenience and clarity details of the capital will be described in sections. Figure 5 describes the most important features, some of which are discussed below.

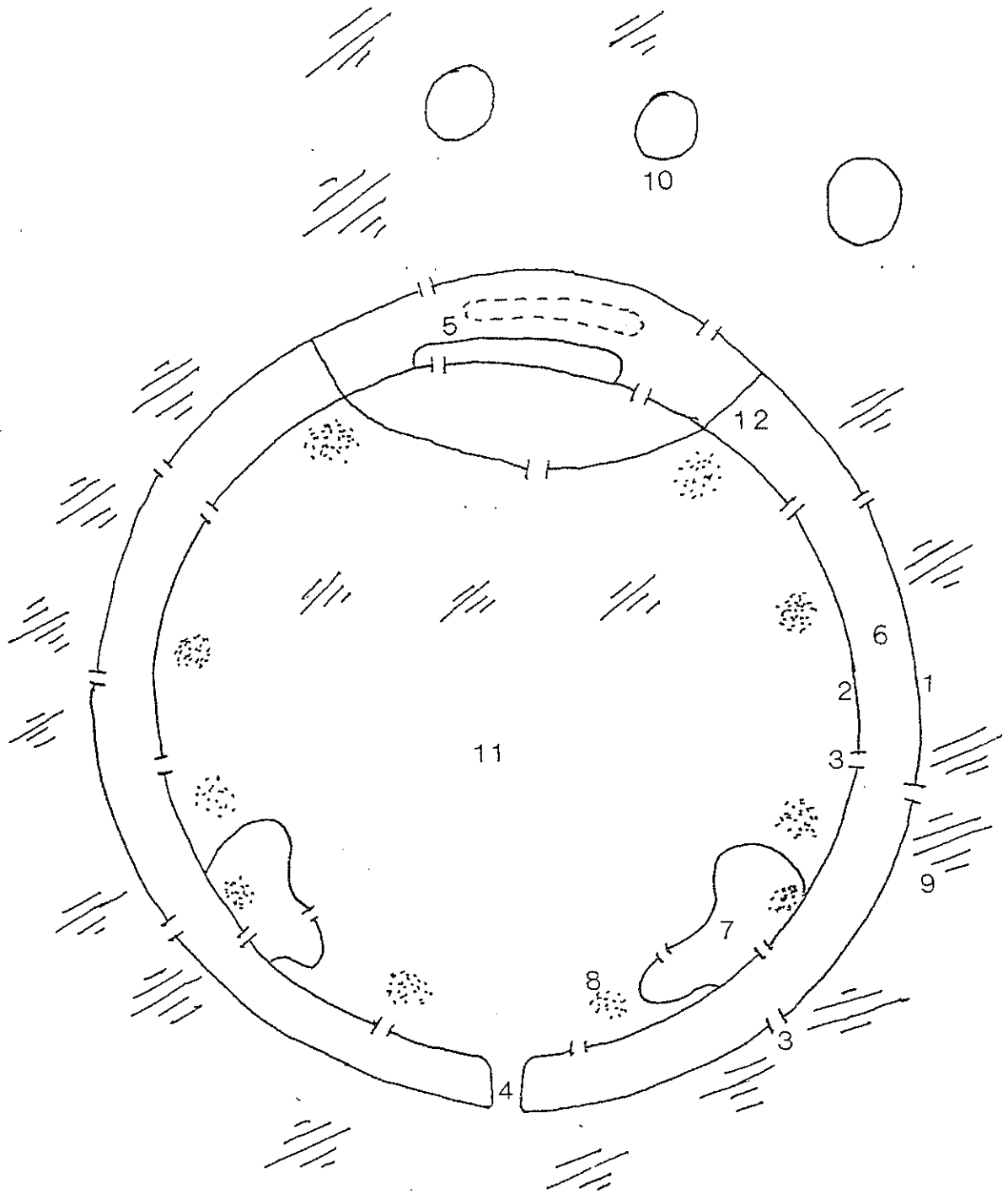


FIG 3

Schematic diagram of Mgungundlovu

LEGEND FOR FIG 3

1. Outer palisade
2. Inner palisade
3. entrances
4. main gate
5. isigodlo
6. uhlangoti
7. cattle enclosures
8. inner activity area
9. refuse middens
10. auxilliary homesteads
11. Parade ground
12. isicamelo



The Royal Enclosure - isiGodlo

Situated at the upper (southern) part of Mgungundlovu, it comprized of approximately 100 to 200 buildings (Gardiner 1966, Isaacs 1970, Parkington and Cronin 1979). These were arranged in groups seperated by a maze of screens, in the middle of which was an open space for dancing and singing (Parkington & Cronin 1979, Webb and Wright 1982). The isigodlo housed the Royal family and entourage and was fenced off from the rest of the capital by a stout palisade. Furthermore it was strictly out of bounds except at the express invitation of the king (Webb and Wright, 1976, 1982). All entrances were guarded and closed with palings at night. The Royal family comprized the king, his 'queens' or 'mothers' who generally were the king's relatives and who regulated and organized the functioning of the isigodlo, and the umndlunkulu girls. The latter were girls presented or taken by the King to work in the Royal household, preparing and cooking food and beer, tending the Royal fields and generally attending to the king's and the 'mothers' needs. They also spent a considerable time rehearsing and performing songs and dances. The king was also entitled to offer them in marriage to whom he wished. (Gardiner 1966, Stuart and Mck. Malcolm 1950, Webb and Wright 1976, 1979, 1982).

The isigodlo was divided into two main sections - the white and the black. The black section was where the king, his 'mothers' and some favoured umndlunkulu girls resided and was especially private while the white housed the balance of the Royal household (Bryant 1967, 1929, Isaacs 1970, Gardiner 1966, Corey 1926). Some

of the buildings were purely sleeping quarters but others were kitchens, breweries, storage rooms and probably craft centres (Rawlinson thesis in prep., Parkington and Cronin 1979, Cronin 1975). Collectively the buildings and the inhabitants were known as the isigodlo.

The only other persons to regularly frequent the isigodlo were the gate guards and izinceko - the personal man servants of the king who attended to those functions, like shaving the king, which the women could not, according to protocol, fulfill (Webb and Wright 1976, 1979, 1982).

#### The Warrior Quarters - izinhlangothi

Immediately adjoining the isigodlo and sweeping down in two large arcs towards the main gate were the warrior quarters. At the upper (southern) end, closest to the isigodlo, the buildings may have been 6 to 8 deep but the rows thinning down to perhaps only 3 or 4 towards the main gate (Webb and Wright 1976, Gluckman 1960, Mitford 1975). The izinhlangoti were divided into sections known as izigaba (Webb and Wright 1982). The uppermost izigaba, on either flank and closest to the isigodlo, were known as the izicamelo and were occupied by the two most senior councillors (amaphakathi), and their retinue, in the Kingdom (Webb and Wright 1979, 1982, Gardiner 1966, Corey 1926).

Each regiment, - an ibutho - or part of a regiment, barracked at the capital occupied an isigaba. The number of regiments garrisoned at any one time at Mgungundlovu varied considerably. Although the army was commanded by a senior commander and a number of subordinates each regiment had at its head an induna. His second in command was known as an ipini whose most important task was to distribute to his regiments the arms and rations supplied by the king. Both officials were appointed by the king (Wright 1977, Cobbing 1977, Guy.1983, Webb and Wright 1982).

A regiment consisted of a number of 'platoons' - amaviyo. An iviyo consisted of an age-set of young men usually conscripted from a common district. The strength of an iviyo varied considerably and could consist of 20 or even 60 amabutho, while a regiment could consist of 3 or 4 or even 70 or 80 amaviyo. Thus regimental strength varied considerably as there was no fixed rule on this matter (Webb and Wright 1976, 1979, 1982, Bryant 1929, 1967, Bird 1965, Laband and Thompson 1983, Gibson 1903.)

When young men were conscripted they were either directed to an already existing regiment to bolster its strength or were commanded to form a new regiment with its own name and identifying insignia. New regiments were either allocated to an existing ikhanda or were instructed to build a new one. On occasion regiments were temporarily split so that a number of amaviyo may be stationed at different amakhanda at any one time. On special occasions like the umkhosi festival or when preparing for a campaign, all regiments reported at the capital, many

having to camp in the surrounding countryside. (Webb and Wright 1976, 1979, 1982, Wright 1977, Peires 1983, Guy 1977, 1982, Bryant 1929, 1967, Krige 1936, Gluckman 1960, 1974, Samuelson 1929, Colenso 1905).

Besides the amabutho and army officers quartered in the izinhlangoti, each regiment had young lads who had been conscripted (ukukleziwa), too young yet to actually fight, but who acted as aids to the amabutho. These were the udibi boys who on campaigns carried the shields, rations and bedding for the amabutho and officers. At the amakhanda they would herd the kings cattle, collect fuel and generally clean the izinhlangoti (Webb and Wright 1976, 1979, 1982, Laband and Thompson 1983, Wright 1977).

The izinceko and the various guards were also quartered in this part of the capital.

Women were not permitted (except of course the kings isigodlo) with the exception of the two senior councillors, Ndlela and Dambuza. They were allowed a limited number of relatives at any one time to see to their domestic needs (Webb and Wright 1976, Isaacs 1970, McKeurtan 1930).

The Parade Ground - isiBaya

Within the circle of buildings, but separated from them by a single row timber palisade, was a large expanse of ground bare except for several cattle enclosures. Openings - ithuba - at regular intervals allowed for ease of access by the various izigaba to the parade ground.

Most of the capital's activities occurred at different parts in this space. Towards the upper end in a private small isibaya, the king undertook his daily public ablutions. Just outside the private enclosure he met his ibandla, the izikhulu, to discuss matters of state or decree new laws. It was also where the amabutho gathered to partake of their meals and meet socially. Shield makers, herbalists and other craftsmen (with the exception of the Royal copper-smith) worked in various parts of the parade ground. Important festivals, ceremonies and religious rituals were also performed here, as was the military drilling, dancing and singing (an important part of training and discipline for the army) and where the King received his troops and cattle. In the evenings the ikhanda's (Royal) cattle were penned in the various minor internal izibaya. At the northern end, furthest from the isigodlo, was the main gate. Magidigidi kaNobebe in Webb and Wright (1979) described it as a 'double' gate because a group of central posts divided the entrance into two sections - one side used by the regiments while cattle passed through the other. At night the entrance, together with all the others were closed by means of stout posts. Information about the Parade ground can be found in numerous

books, publications and documents but the most important are probably Webb and Wright (1976, 1979, 1982), Samuelson (1929), Stuart and Mck. Malcolm (1950), Isaacs (1970), Rawlinson (thesis in prep.).

#### The Auxilliary Homesteads

Behind the isigodlo, perhaps 50 to 100 m to the south, were two or possibly three groups of buildings and a cattle enclosure arranged in a crescent shape. It was here that the kings grain was stored, where the Royal coppersmith operated, where the milch cattle were penned and to where members of the Royal household retired on occasion (Rawlinson 1985, thesis in prep., Booth 1967, Webb and Wright 1976, 1979, 1982). Lunguza kaMpukane in Webb and Wright (1976) considered them as part of the isigodlo. Magidigidi kaNobebe (Webb and Wright 1979) mentions two groups of buildings and distinguishes them from the isigodlo and remarks that they were called the eNgome and eBeje. He does agree, as do many other observers, that the respect given to these areas was the same as that of the isigodlo (Bryant 1926, 1966, Stuart and Mck. Malcolm 1950, Booth 1967, Isaacs 1970, Corey 1926).

Rations and Subsistence.

The amabutho, while garrisoned at the king's amakhanda, were ostensibly rationed at his expense but in reality were forced to subsidize their diet by obtaining provisions from other quarters (Laband and Thompson 1983). In part they received food parcels from their kin at home; hunting and snaring was another source and fairly often cattle bestowed on them by the king for bravery were kept near the ikhanda for dairy products (Rawlinson thesis in prep, Webb and Wright 1976, 1982).

Whilst on campaigns they carried provisions with them as well as being allocated some cattle to tide them over on the journey. Once there, they were expected to obtain their provisions looted from the enemy's stores. On more than one occasion the amabutho resorted to eating their own shields for sustenance (Webb and Wright 1976, 1982, Stuart and Mck. Malcolm 1950).

When cattle were slaughtered, or beer, milk products and grain distributed from the king's stores the amabutho would shout the praises of the king and prepare, cook and consume it within the parade ground. Only provisions other than that given by the king could be consumed outside the parade ground (Rawlinson thesis in prep., Bryant 1966, Webb and Wright 1982).

Meat was cooked either by cutting it into strips (umbengo) and roasting it on the coals or, more generally, stewing it in large earthenware vessels. Some of these pots had a volume of

approximately 70 litres and when in use an earthenware 'lid' was placed over the opening (Stuart and Mck. Malcolm 1950). The amabutho would gather in regimental groups on the periphery of the parade ground and each prepare and cook their own supplies under the supervision of the iPini. It is most probable that the large, heavy yet fragile cooking pots remained permanently at each cooking/eating place. And because of the many cattle and general activity they would have been placed as close to the inner palisade as possible to avoid been broken. (Stuart and Mck. Malcolm 1950, Rawlinson thesis in prep.).





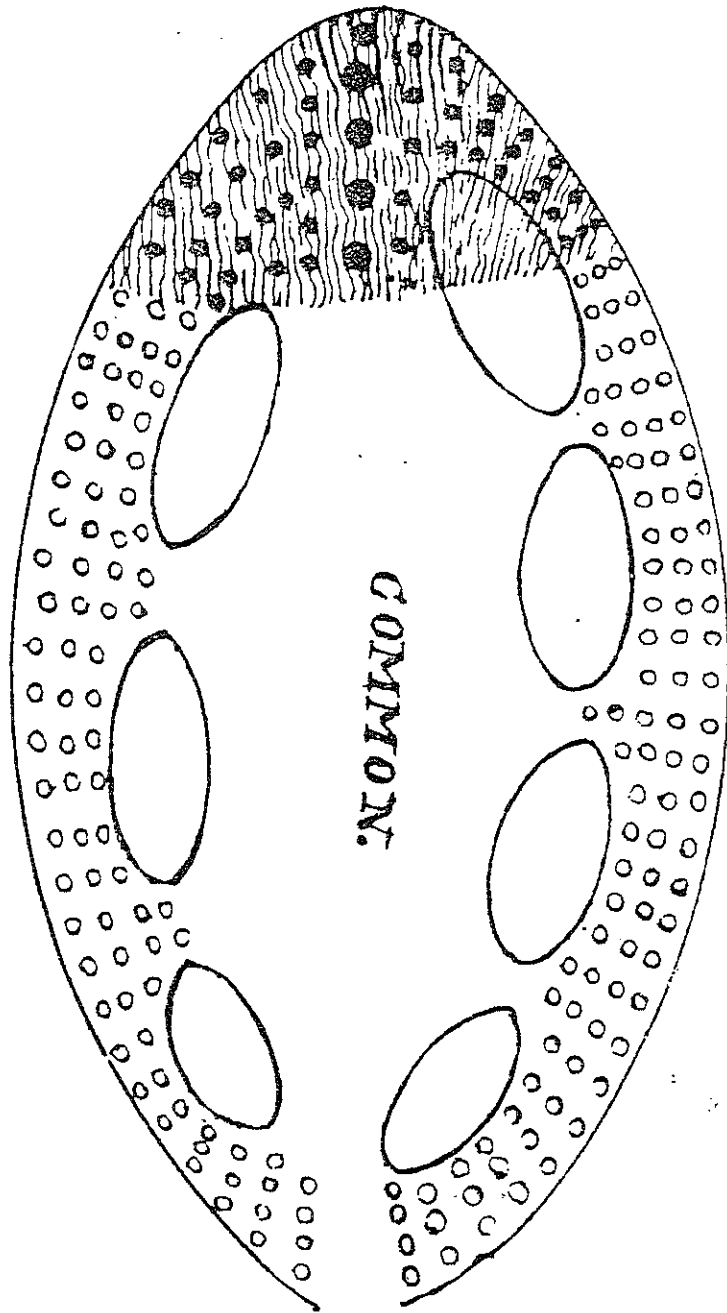


FIG 4

Champion's plan of Mgungundlovu

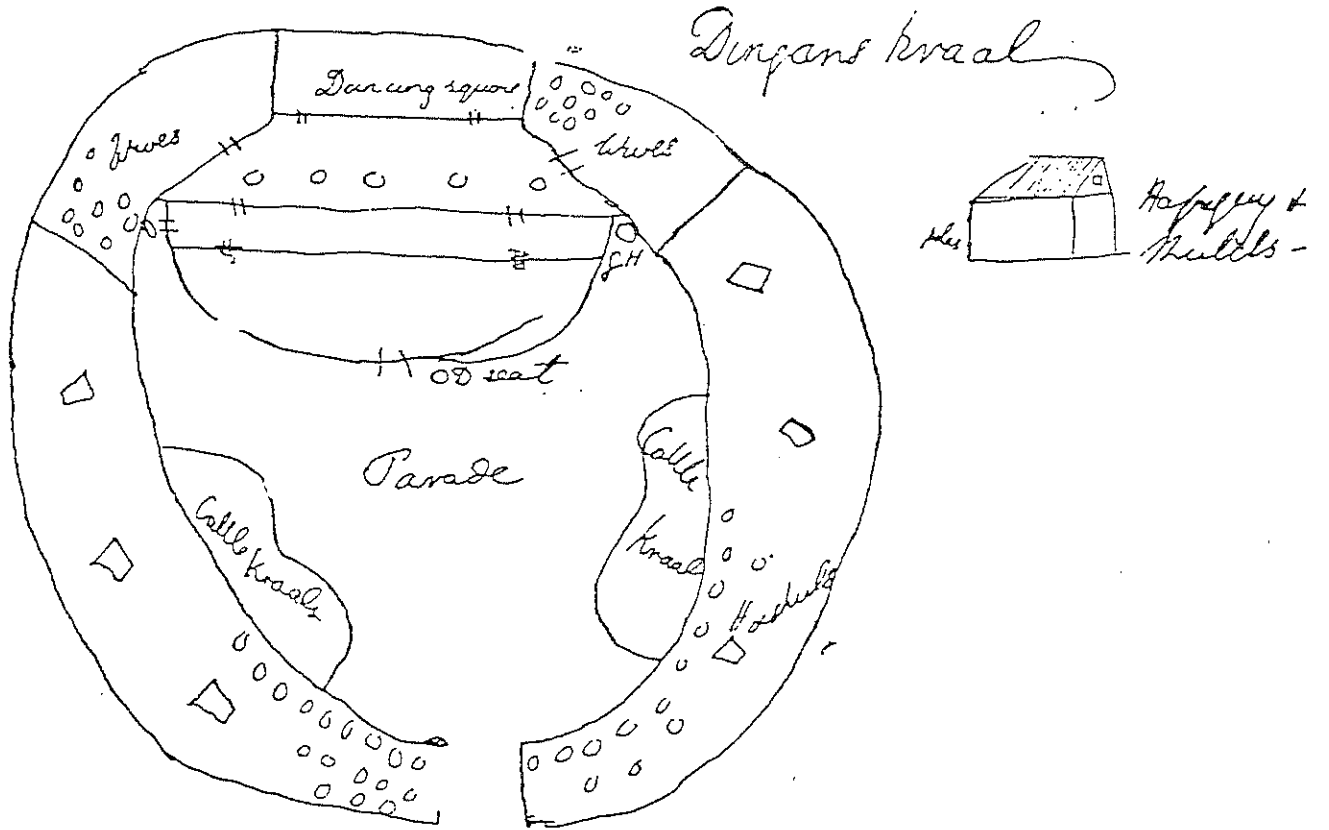


FIG 5

Smith's plan of Mgungundlovu

48

Handwritten notes in the top left corner, including the name 'Mungundlovu' and other illegible text.

Handwritten text: 'isigomeda' with a small sketch above it.

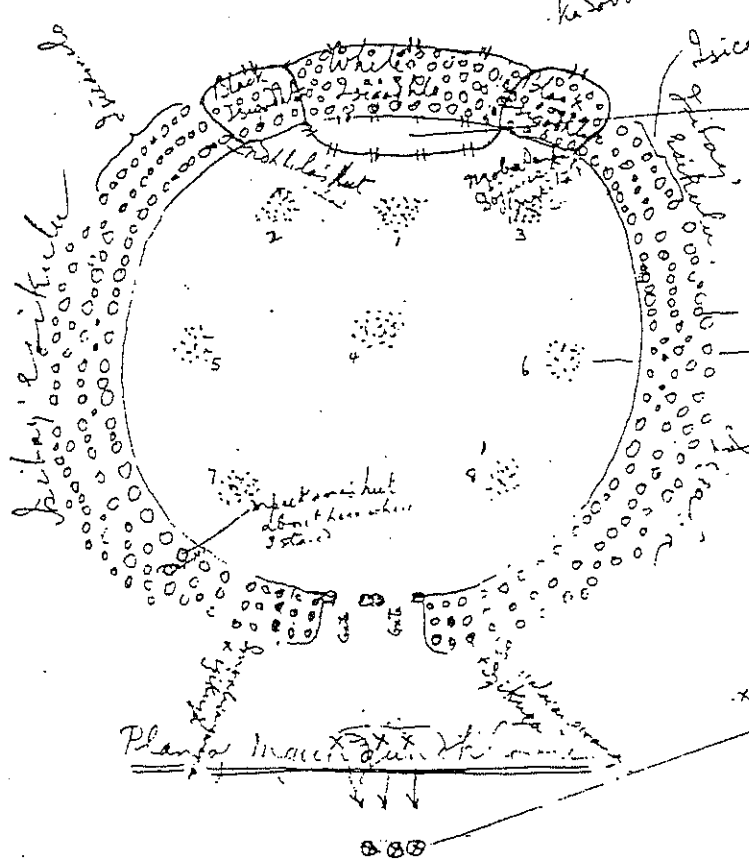
Handwritten text: 'Iluke isicepu'.

Handwritten text: 'ukwetshelezi amadanta nye'.

Handwritten text: 'ka Sobathli'.

Handwritten text: 'See at foot of p'.

See further notes about this kraal in N.B. under date 21-2-09 - also a larger diagram.



isibaya in which the king washed being visible only by head from outside e.g. isibaya

where cattle stood. 1, 2 + 3 = isicashle cattle enclosures. 4 = for the process. 5, 6, 7, 8 = for umbakete

where people were killed after being killed were dragged to to be eaten by wallies. Bones being left outside

FIG 6 Lunguza kaMpukane's plan of Mungundlovu

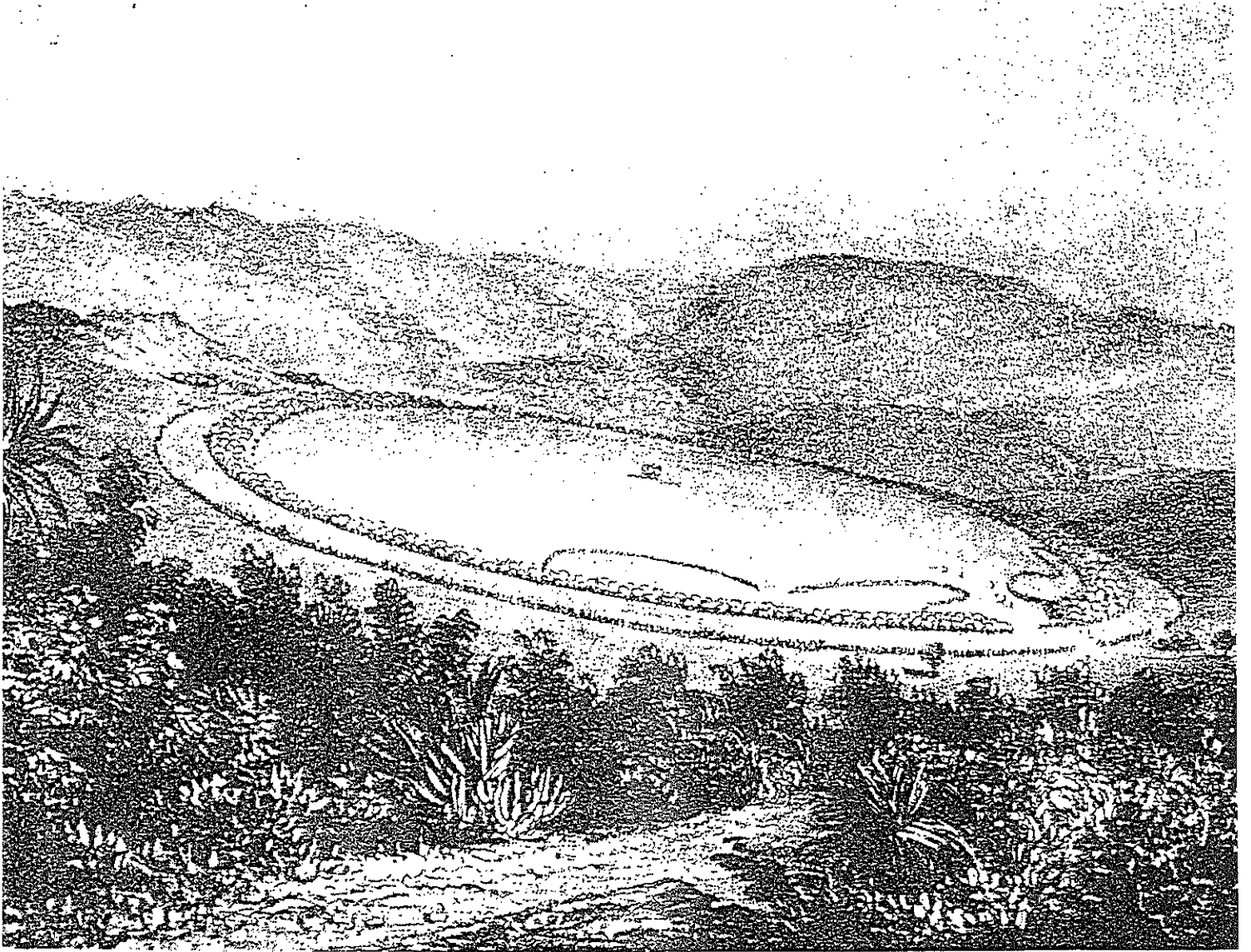


FIG 7 Gardiner's sketch of Mgungundlovu

## 6. Archaeological Evidence

Excavations began in August and were completed in November 1986. A short season of a week was undertaken in April 1987.

The area chosen for investigation was mostly covered with dense thornbush and several weeks were needed to clear it. One section had already been fenced off to represent the position of the main gate. Within this fence were the remnants of an exposed building floor with a plastic tag, set in concrete alongside, with the symbol DI. Whether it relates to the floor or some broader survey of the site is unknown. The vehicle track that visitors used to visit the upper part of the site runs through the eastern half of the demarcated area. It has now been closed but has left a substantial scar. Once the grass had been cleared two earlier 'archaeological' trenches were noticed by disturbances in the soil (see fig 10). The excavators and their records are unknown.

There were three objectives: to sample the refuse middens, an inner activity area and to try and locate the main gate by exposing the peripheral building floors of the eastern and western izinhlangoti. It was also hoped that the remains or disturbances in the soil may indicate the location of any former palisading.

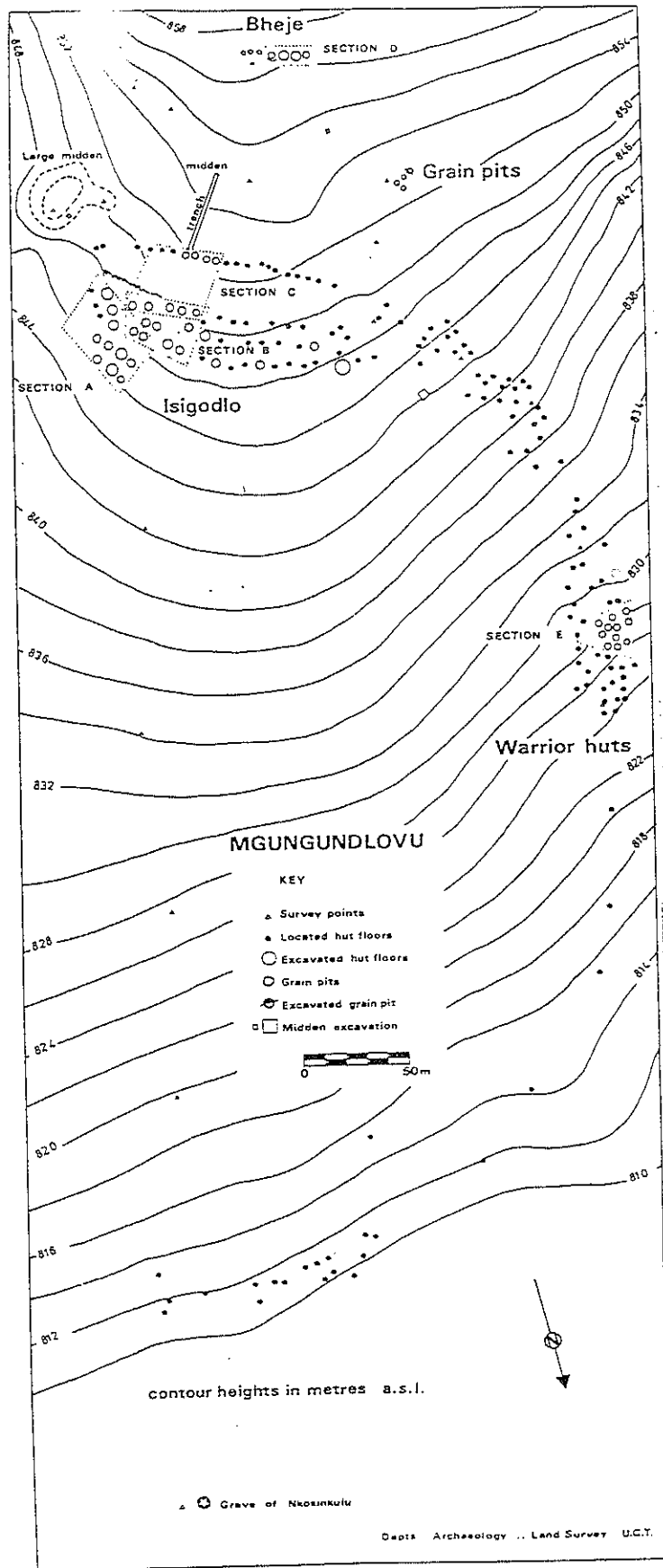


FIG 9 UCT's excavation  
(after Parkington & Cronin 1979)

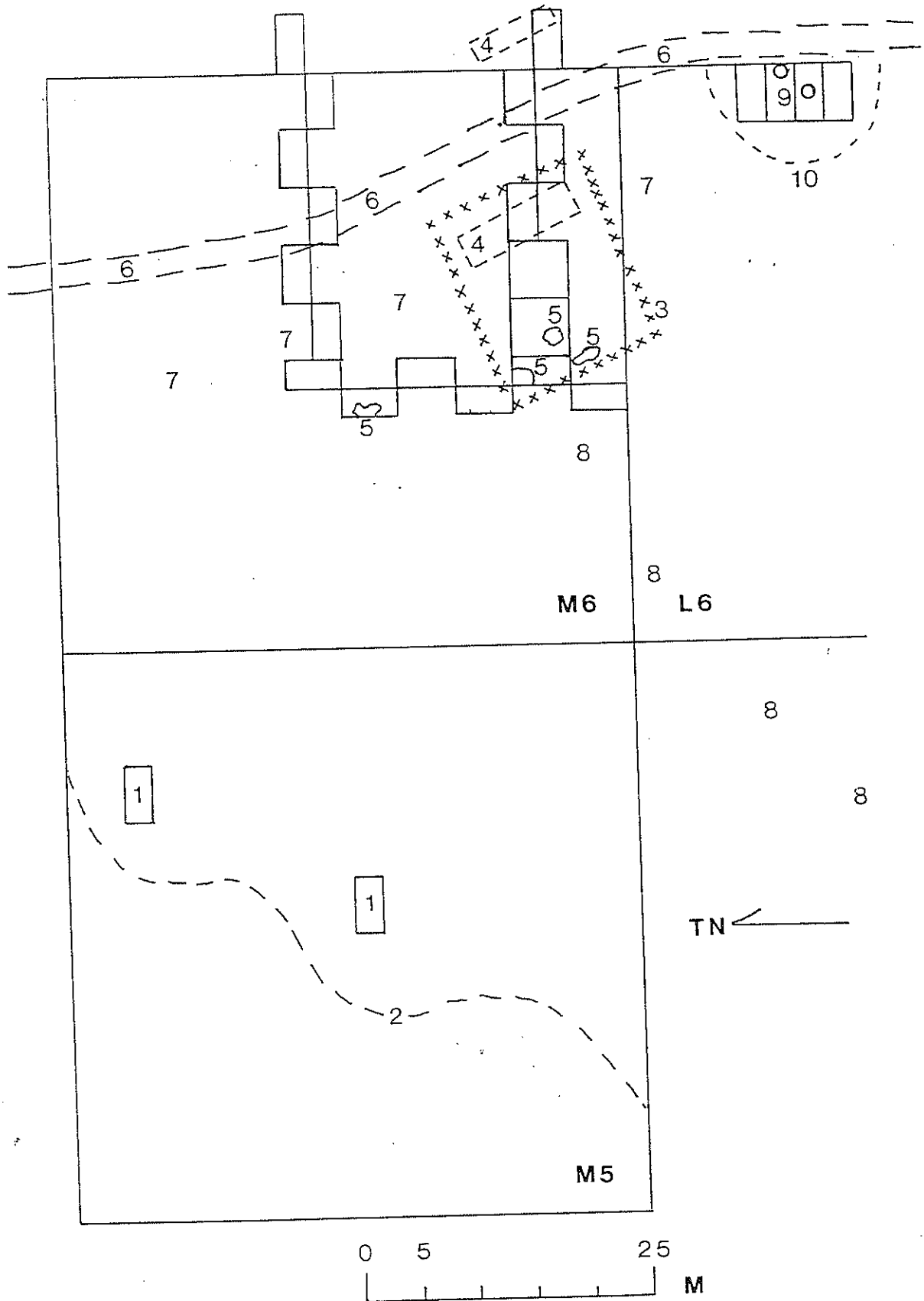


FIG 10

Current excavation plan



LEGEND FOR FIG 10

1. Refuse midden trenches
2. Approx. outer limit of Rubbish Dumps
3. wire fence
4. old trenches
5. building floors
6. old vehicle track
7. depression
8. approx. line of Western uhangoti
9. kitchen midden and vessel bases
10. approx. outer limit of kitchen midden

## 6.1 The Refuse middens.

Below the apparant periphery of the western uhlangoti two low mounds were visible, one of which had been disturbed by some burrowing animal. In the burrow, pottery shards and fauna was visible. With this evidence a trench 2,5 m by 5 m was laid out and excavated. A second trench on the other mound some 20 m further east, also 2,5 m by 5 m, was laid out and excavated. Both mounds had been disturbed by burrowing but not to any large extent.

The upper 100 mm (layer 1) of both trenches was removed and considered disturbed material. The lower layer (layer 2) was removed as a single unit as no features or lenses were encountered. Both trenches were sunk to a depth of approximately 600 mm where the deposit became suddenly virtually sterile. The deposit was extremely hard, of a reddish brown colour and contained within it some rotten bedrock. No ash or ash lenses were encountered although small fragments of charcoal were common.

### 6.1.1. Fauna

The faunal material is still undergoing specialist analysis and the results are expected in the near future. Information about species identification, age at death, body part distribution patterning, butchering techniques and degree of fragmentation will then become available.

Tentatively the following observations are offered.

7,364 faunal pieces were recovered, many very fragmentary and therefore adiagnostic. However a substantial number of complete mandibles, long bones, teeth and other diagnostic pieces were recovered.

From the preliminary analysis it is also evident that a variety of species are present which may include bird, antelope and possibly reptiles. However, a detailed and accurate analysis of the fauna is necessary before any construction of the diet of the amabutho can be made.

#### 6.1.2. Botanical/Charcoals

The many charcoal fragments have been kept but have not been submitted for identification. It was felt that very little, if any, information could be extracted from such fragmentary pieces. However small amounts of carbonized Zea mays (both the maize kernals and parts of the cob), Sorghum sp and Citrulbus lanatus (African or common wild melon) were recovered. The size of the maize kernals, the indentations on the cob and the curvature of the cob itself indicates a small head variety of maize. Although the above specimens have been positively identified by myself, they have been submitted for specialist identification to verify my conclusions. A report is awaited.

### 6.1.3 Ceramics

As expected, the ceramics were very fragmentary and any attempt at reconstructing even part of a vessel proved futile.

There were a total of 12 988 shards recovered of which, on a numerical calculation, 36,4% were burnished while on a mass calculation they only constituted 17,1% of the total, indicating possibly that the smaller vessels were more commonly burnished. Burnish colours ranged from black to red and orange with no particular colour dominating.

Rim fragments and decorated pieces constituted less than 2% of the total number of shards recovered. Rim form was standard throughout and can be described as without any outer lip and flattened on the upper surface.

Decoration was almost exclusively the round 'nipple' type with two exceptions. The first variation, of which only one sample was recovered, is part of an embossed 'rib' similar to what can be commonly found on wooden utensils in Zululand today. The second variation, of which only one sample was also recovered, is several triangular indentations in the body of the vessel. The extent and position of both the above decorative forms on their respective vessels cannot be concluded because of the small sample and size of shard.

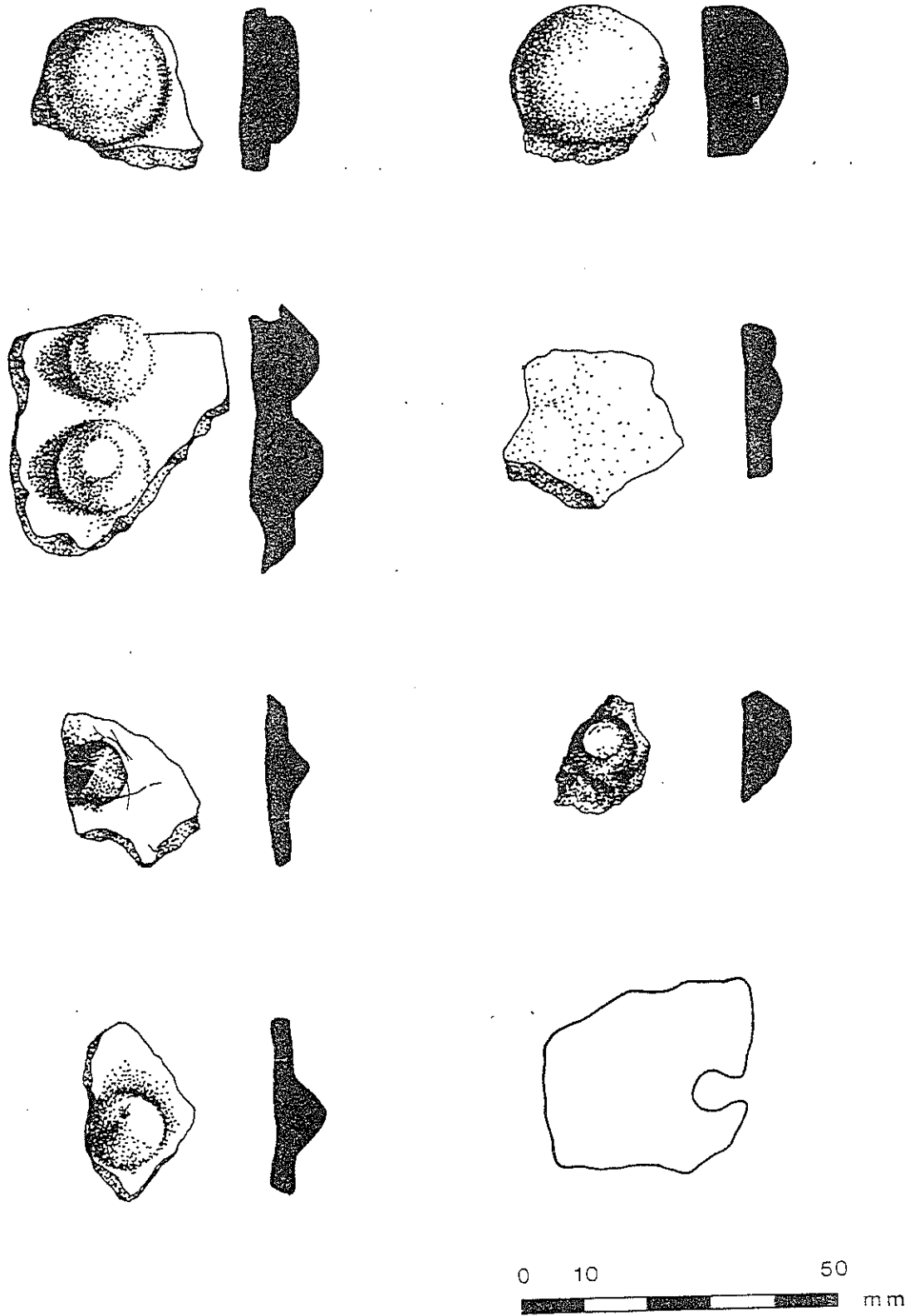
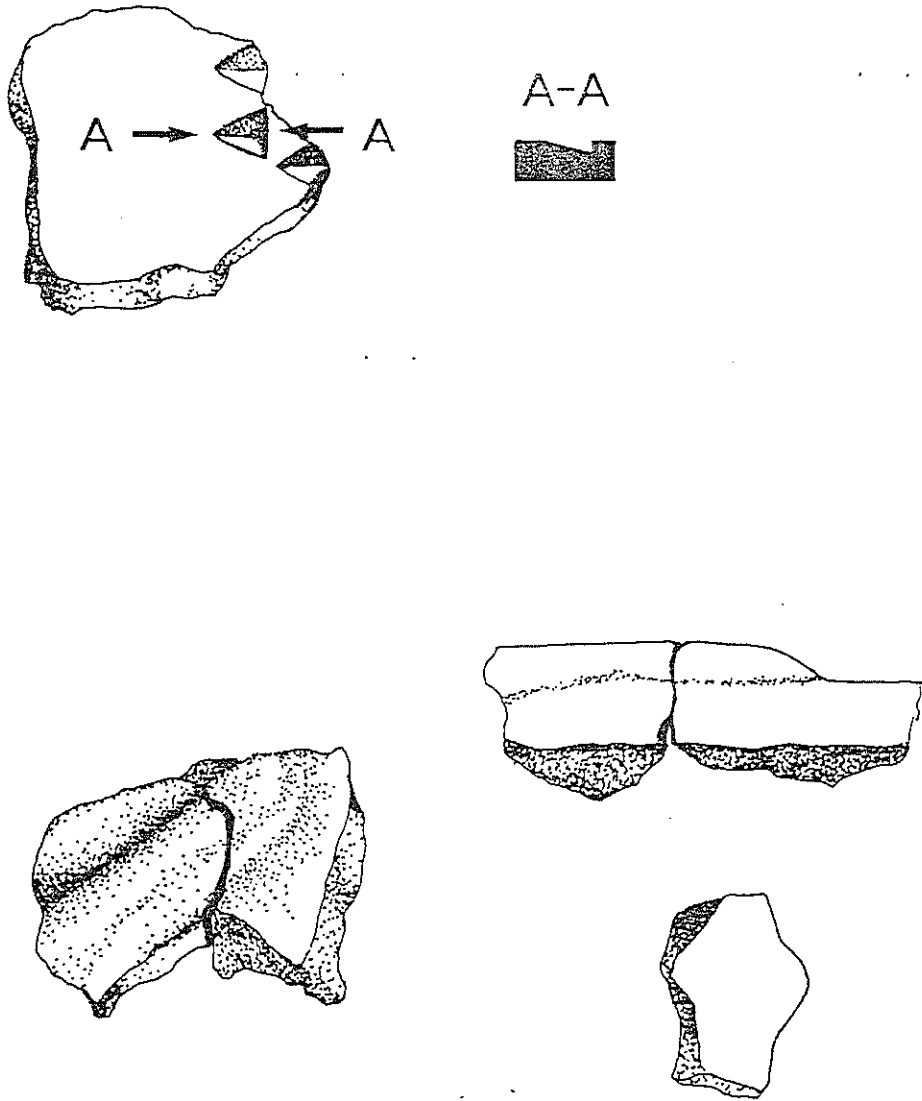


FIG 11 Range of 'nipple' form of decoration



0 10 50  
mm

FIG 12 upper - indentation variation  
lower - imbossed rib variation

In fact, because of the fragmentary nature of all the shards, the position on the vessel of any of the decoration cannot be resolved. Nor can shape and size of any of the vessels be reconstructed.

The range in burnish tints, without a dominance of any of the colours, may indicate that the smaller vessels were brought to Mgungundlovu by the amabutho from their respective homes. If they had been locally manufactured I suggest that perhaps a certain colour burnish may have predominated. Furthermore, the presence of the two different decorative forms may also suggest that the vessels had been transported from another district where such decoration may have been common.

#### 6.1.4. Small Finds

The glass and few metal beads recovered have been submitted for specialist analysis and the results are expected in the near future. Information as to colour frequency, size range and frequency, mode of manufacture and probable origin can be expected. Besides saying that an excellent sample was recovered, any further statements will have to await the report.

Below is a list of the small finds from both trenches. Although they have been catalogued as two distinct collections I do not see any advantage of separating them in this report.

- 1 metal part of a mouth organ (non-ferrous)
- 3 buckles, each a different type (copper/brass/bronze)
- 2 knife remnants (iron)
- 1 hoe (modern design)
- 1 rifle cartridge (possibly .303 guage)
- 1 airgun pellet
- 1 horse shoe remnant (iron)
- 1 bone snuff spoon shaft
- 2 safety pins
- a number of cast iron pot fragments
- a number of nails (round modern variety)
- a number of pieces of wire (iron)
- assortment of lengths of small chains (copper)
- 1 remnant of coiled copper wire (ubusenge)
- several small pieces of sieve (non-ferrous)
- assortment of metal (iron) pieces that may once have been a small box
- 1 'Tunic' stud (non ferrous)
- 1 'Tunic' pyramid shaped button (non ferrous)
- 3 white buttons
- 1 neatly coiled small bundle of copper wire
- collection of glass fragments
- 4 small fragments of porcelain/china
- miscellaneous adiagnostic metal pieces

Several of the items are almost certainly later incursions. These could possibly be the metal part of the mouth organ, the hoe, the rifle cartridge, airgun pellet, horse shoe remnant, safety pins,





FIG. 13 Small finds

1. barbed wire
2. conical metal button
3. airgun pellet
4. remnant of metal box
5. stud
6. ,303 cartridge
7. coil of copper wire
8. remnant of horse-shoe
9. metal pin

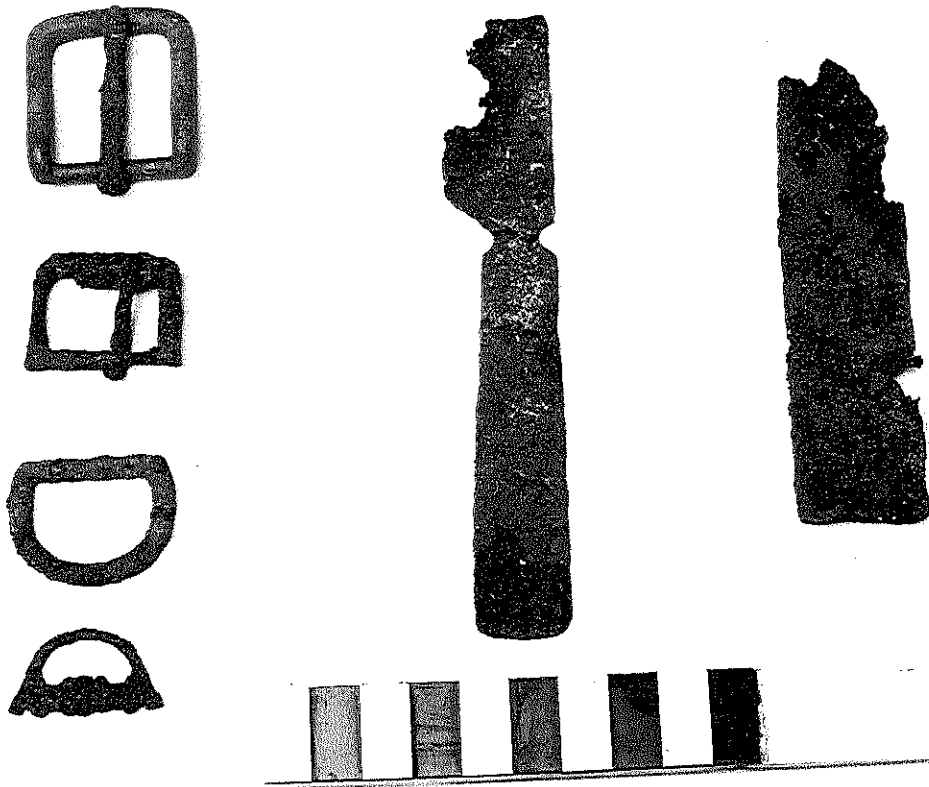


FIG. 14 Small finds

1. buckles
2. remnants of knife

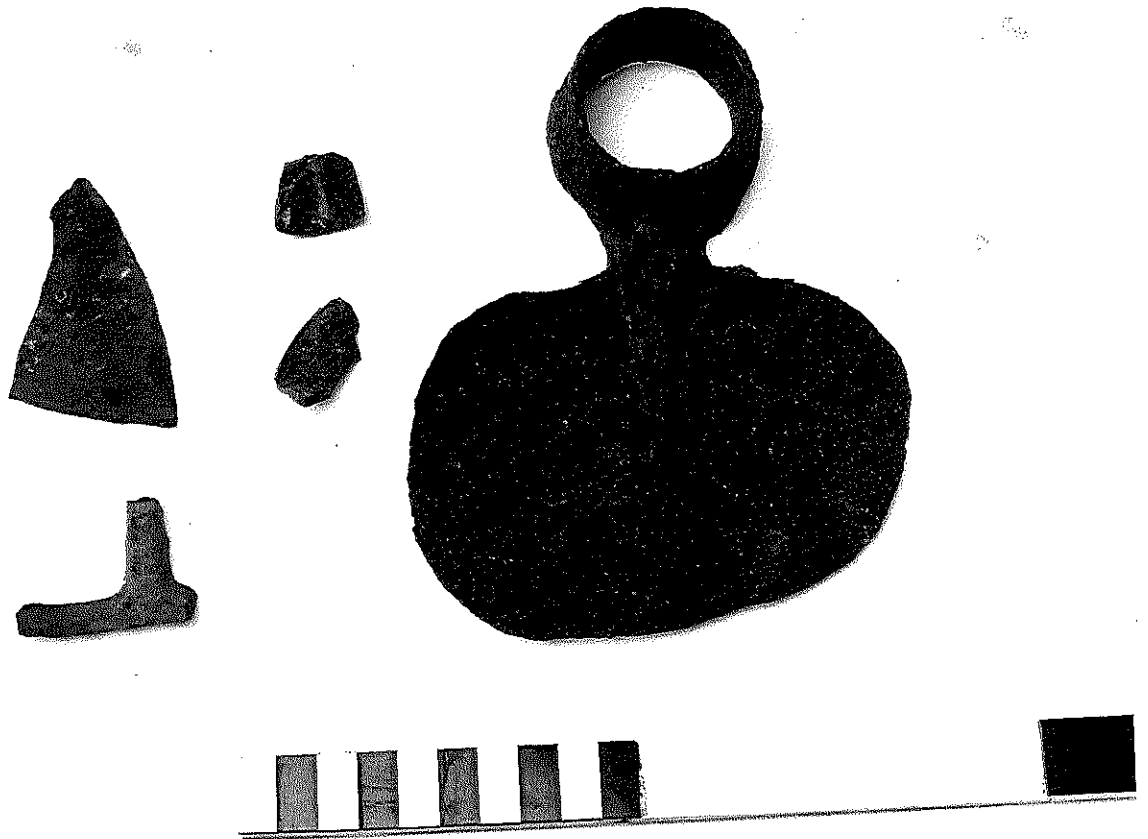


FIG. 15 Small finds

1. fragments of cast iron vessels
2. bottle glass
3. hoe

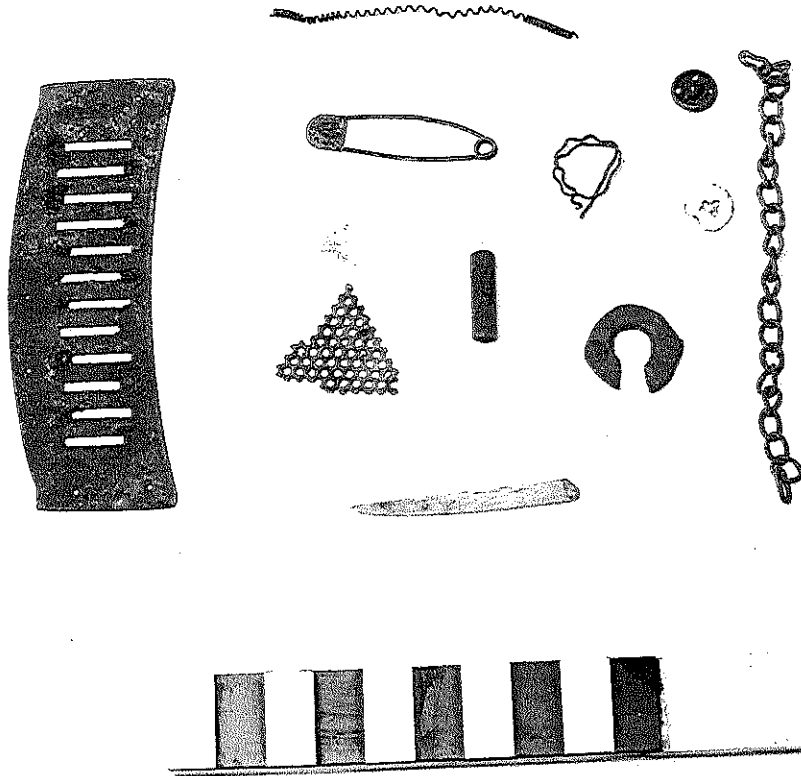


FIG. 16

Small finds

1. mouth organ remnant
2. coiled copper wire (ubusenge)
3. safety pin
4. metal seive remnant
5. bone snuffspoon shaft
6. miscellaneous metal artefacts
7. stud
8. button
9. copper chain

the nails, iron wire, the 3 white buttons, some of the glass fragments and porcelain.

Certainly the rifle cartridge and airgun pellet had not yet been developed by the 1830's and the robustness of the cartridge suggests it's of recent origin. The hoe is without a tang and is of modern design introduced this century. The iron wire, horseshoe, mouth organ part, safety pins, nails, white buttons, some of the glass fragments and porcelain could be either recent incursions or have been deposited during the 1830's. However, without any means of positively resolving this matter, I suggest that they be considered recent incursions.

#### 6.1.5. Conclusions

It is obviously a little premature to draw any final conclusions at this stage as the various specialist reports will contain the details. However I venture a few remarks based on preliminary observations. There is no doubt that a sufficient faunal sample has been recovered and that it seems likely that, in composition, it will differ markedly from that recovered by U.C.T. from the 'Royal' midden (Brown pers comm.). The 'Royal' midden is almost exclusively of cattle remains whilst the assemblage from the 'amabutho' middens appear to have a larger variety of animals.

Furthermore differences may be found in age of death of the cattle slaughtered; the degree of fragmentation as maximum benefit is extracted from the food by the amabutho and body part patterns as the different classes in the society receive different parts of the carcass.

With regard to the ceramics the proportion of burnished and unburnished vessels may differ as the finer crafted and finished vessels are more likely to have predominated in the upper class sector. It is unlikely that there will be a difference in the form of decoration (Rawlinson thesis in prep.), although there might be a difference in quality and quantity. Although a fine collection of glass beads were recovered the quantity and range of small finds was disappointing. Only one fragment of a bone artefact was recovered and several items appear to have been later incursions. Those items that can be considered exotic, like the buckles, tunic buttons and studs are of a paramilitary nature. The contents and use of the glass vessels cannot be resolved due to the fragmentation of the evidence. The presence of pieces of cast iron pots I believe indicates an early adoption of these items in preference to the fragile indigenous ceramic vessels. The presence of copper wire and one fragment of ubusenge is as expected as this was a highly prized commodity. The copper chains are almost certainly trade items as the regularity of form of the links suggest factory manufacture. All in all, although there is some confusion as to what items were later incursions, it does appear that trade goods did filter through all classes of society at Mgungundlovu.

## 2.2 The Inner Activity Area

While conducting the surface survey it was noticed that the old vehicle track had exposed a lense of faunal and ceramic artefacts which were set in an unmistakably grey mound. This deposit, although ill defined on its periphery, had a diameter of approximately 15 m. The grey colour of the deposit was deeply contrasted with the red brown colour of the surrounding soil.

This 'midden' was situated some 5 to 10 m south and slightly west of what was presumed to be the main gate. On the south western edge of the grey deposit was a large Euphorbia ingens tree alongside which was an old termite nest that had been hollowed out by some animal. As described above, the eastern flank had been destroyed by the vehicle track.

The whole area was cleared of grass and brush and 4 trenches of 2,5 m by 5 m laid out. Excavation began in the northern trench and almost immediately the base, still in situ, of a large ceramic vessel was exposed. A similar base, south west of the first one and 3,74 m away, was exposed soon afterwards. Although all 4 trenches were eventually excavated no further bases were discovered. A remarkable feature of the bases was their proximity to the surface. No more than 50 mm of soil covered them.

Furthermore, although they were the remains of large vessels, very few shards were recovered from the deposit. No doubt their proximity to the surface guaranteed that either through natural agencies the shards have been widely distributed or collected over time by souvenir hunters.

That more bases were not discovered can be attributed to various reasons:

- (a) that this particular 'kitchen' had only two cooking pots
- (b) that further excavation is necessary to expose the entire midden and thus more bases.
- (c) that the vehicle track, tree and termite nest has destroyed any other bases that may have existed.
- (d) that any other vessels that may have been there have been destroyed beyond recognition.

#### 6.2.1. Fauna

A total of 2 347 faunal pieces were recovered and have been submitted for specialist analysis. A report is expected in the near future. The fauna was evenly distributed throughout the 4 trenches and did not appear to have collected in any particular area. Very little was burn't and it appears to be exclusively the remains of cattle. Another feature of the deposit was that the fauna all came from within 200 mm of the surface. A test pit of 1 square meter sunk to a depth of 500 mm produced a sterile lower layer that contained a sparse scattering of small charcoal fragments although the soil was slightly grey in colour even at



the lowest level.

#### 6.2.2 Ceramics

A total of 439 ceramic shards were recovered all very fragmentary and the bulk were miscellaneous body parts. 7 Rim pieces were recovered and no decoration was evident on any of the pieces. The bulk of the shards were the remains of thick bodied large vessels without any signs of burnish although a few displayed blackened burn marks.

#### 6.2.3 Small Finds

Very few glass beads or other small finds were recovered and, besides the beads, may have all been later incursions since they constituted fragments of iron wire and nails.

#### 6.2.4 Botanical/charcoal

No botanical remains of edible foodstuffs were recovered. The charcoal fragments have not been submitted for identification as the benefit of such analysis would be minimal.

A sample of the deposit has been taken but to date has not been submitted for analysis. I believe such an analysis would be of value in determining the content of the deposit with regard to the presence of ash and/or cowdung.

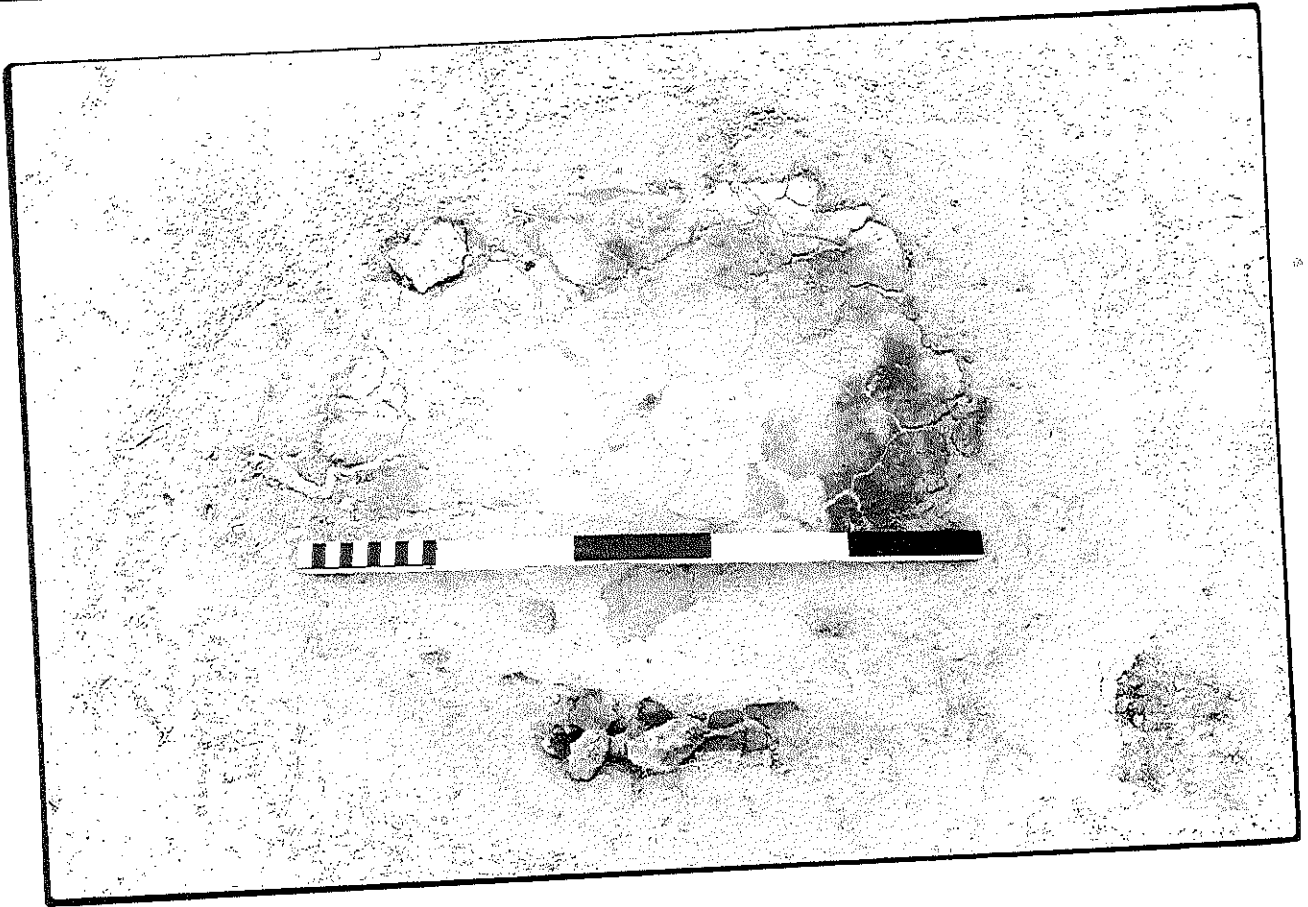


FIG. 17      Kitchen midden vessel base

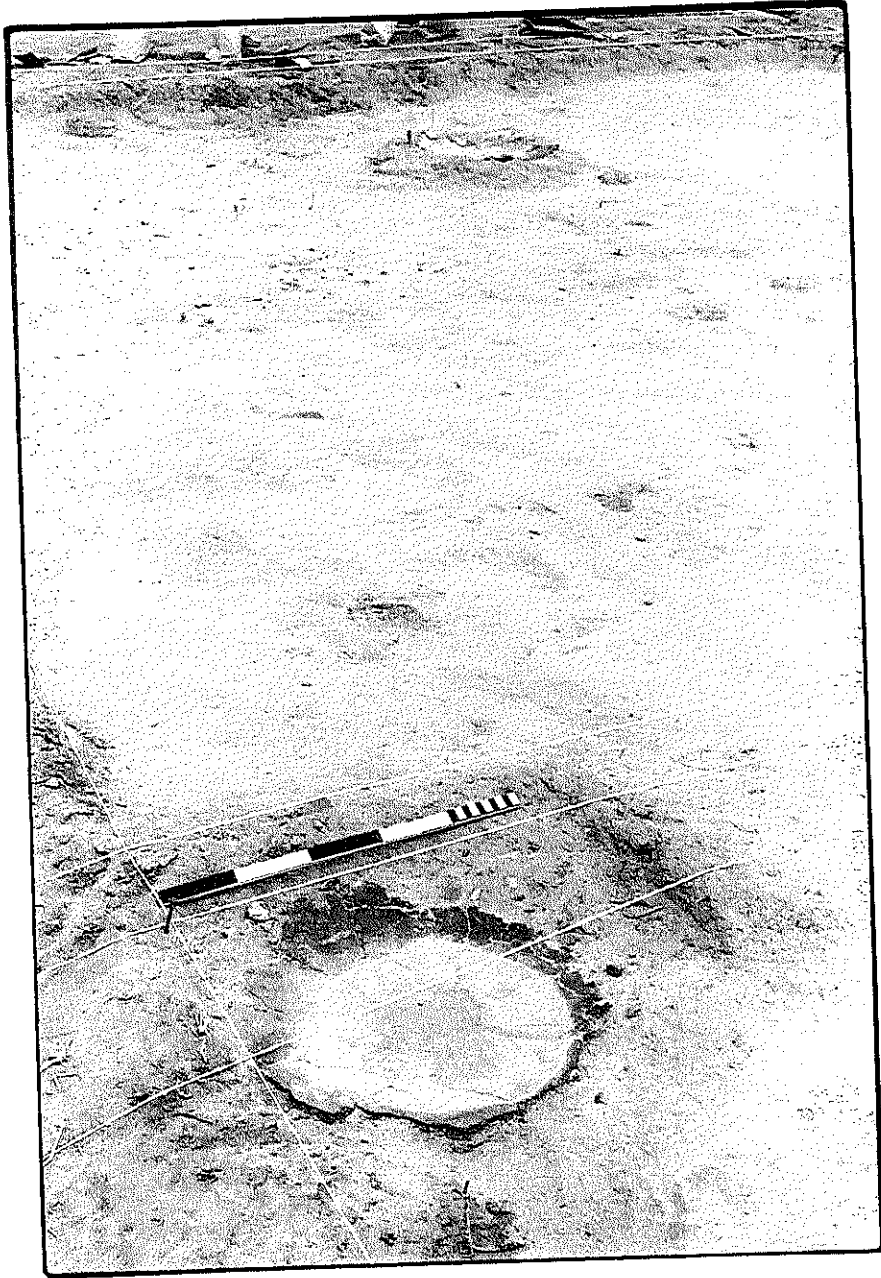


FIG. 18 Kitchen midden vessel bases

#### 6.2.5 Conclusion

This feature is undoubtedly an inner 'kitchen' midden where the amabutho prepared, cooked and consumed the rations supplied by the king. One of the remarkable aspects of this kitchen midden is its proximity to the possible position of the main entrance. If the entrance is where it is thought to be then some 5 to 10 m separates these two features and if we are to believe the assumption that the entrance was a busy thoroughfare then the vessels described would have been in danger of being destroyed especially by cattle. I suspect that the midden however, was not directly in front of the main entrance but slightly to the west so as to avoid being in the main path of traffic.

#### 6.3 The Main Entrance

There were two main reasons for locating the exact position of the main gate. Firstly from a restoration point of view. In the overall plan for Mgungundlovu, the main gate is seen as an important feature which the Natal Library and Museum Services wishes to restore (together with various other features of the capital). Secondly, to establish its' relationship with the 'kitchen midden' and outer refuse middens. Fig. describes the layout of the excavation trenches. Several factors contributed to the decision to excavate/expose the area chosen. Firstly, previous work by the University of Cape Town and others had demarcated (by fencing it off) an area as the most probable position of the main gate. Secondly, and more importantly, a depression running on a north/south axis for about 30 or 40 m, gradually disappears on its northern periphery but terminates

fairly abruptly at the kitchen midden on its southern boundary. The vehicle track just east, and running parallel to this depression, had penetrated and truncated the midden. However the depression did not and it was thus argued that if it had been caused by an old road it would have penetrated through the midden. Therefore the depression must have been formed by some other agency. Again it was argued that it could be the result of heavy traffic, both animal and/or human, passing regularly along this route. Furthermore the drainage of the capital may quite possibly have been the heaviest at this point if it had been the entrance, as no obstacles like palisading or buildings would have impeded the flow of rain water. The argument that the kitchen midden should have been destroyed by the flow of rainwater may be countered by the fact that through use the deposit was constantly being replenished; that it was also not in the direct line of traffic and that cattle and human agencies played a larger share in causing the depression than natural agencies.

The initial strategy was to locate the floors on the periphery of the eastern and western izinhlangoti. It was felt that the floors, being more substantial and durable, would be more visible than the remains of palisading or gateposts. Four remnants of floors were exposed on the periphery of the western uh angoti, all in a very poor state of preservation. On one floor the base of a hearth was visible but there were no postholes or any other artefacts on any of the floors. Although the test trenches extended for 35 m in an easterly direction, no floors from the periphery of the opposite uhlangoti were found. Nor were signs of

soil disturbance or the remains of palisading and gateposts detected.

### 6.3.1 Conclusion

The failure to resolve the issue of the location of the main gate may be summarised as follows:

- (a) The floors on the eastern uhlangoti were either not fired, and thus reduced their ability to survive and overall visibility, or have subsequently been destroyed without trace. The former possibility is fairly likely if the wind was from a north easterly aspect on the day Mgungundlovu was set alight and those buildings escaped the fire. The latter possibility seems unlikely as no trace of even floor rubble was found.
  
- (c) The main entrance may be wider than anticipated and current excavations have not yet reached the periphery of the eastern uhlangoti. This seems unlikely as entrances were kept to a minimum width to maintain security (Raum 1973, Krige 1936), and an entrance width of over 35 m seems excessive.
  
- (d) There exists the possibility that the search has been directed in the incorrect direction. Only extensive fieldwork would be able to answer this problem.

### 7. Conclusion.

7. Conclusion

Three features of the low status area of Mgungundlovu were investigated during the past year - namely the outer refuse middens, an inner-activity area and the location of the main gate. The results, although not yet complete, have both negative and positive aspects.

Although generally features in the low status area seem less visible than those from the high status area - for example the preservation of floors (Parkington and Cronin 1979) and the size of the refuse middens - a considerable amount of data have been gleaned.

The refuse middens appear to be adequately sampled although the faunal report is necessary to substantiate this claim. The inner-activity 'kitchen' midden, although not clearly defined due mostly to the destructive agencies of the road and large tree, is the first of these to be exposed in situ.

The failure to locate the position of the main gate has been the only disappointment. In retrospect it seems unlikely that it can ever be accurately mapped. Even if floors from the eastern uhlangoti are ever exposed there is no positive way of proving that they represent the peripheral buildings unless of course the remains of the palisades and gateposts are found.

Finally, I wish to propose that the balance of this year be spent on;

- (a) completing the faunal, small finds (glass beads) and botanical remains analyses so that a comprehensive assessment of the economics and general dynamics of the low status area be made and published.
- (b) combining the results from the University of Cape Town's analysis with the current findings for the publication of an overall view of the capital.
- (c) a comparative study of the dynamics of Mgungundlovu and Ondini to monitor the temporal evolution of the amakhanda over a 40 year period.

I would like to emphasize that none of the three suggestions above have ever been fully carried through to a logical conclusion. Furthermore, although a significant amount of fieldwork has been done, and the analysis complete or nearly complete, there is a dearth of published material. In the interests of the larger plan for Mgungundlovu, I suggest that a period of assessing and writing up the material, before further fieldwork, be done.



## Acknowledgements

There are many people and institutions to thank and who have been an integral part of the project and their interest and help is here gratefully acknowledged. But in particular I wish to thank Frans Roodt, Curator at the site, for his generosity, insight, knowledge and numerous suggestions. I would also like to express my appreciation to:

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Prof J. de Villiers, Head of the Department of History, University of Zululand.

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The Africana Museum, Johannesburg

The University of Cape Town and

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