

QUERY WITH REGARD TO THE NAMING OF THE ISIGODLO AT uMGUNGUNDLOVU

E-mail received from Chloe Rushovich on 2nd February 2021.

Another query has cropped up regarding uMgungundlovu that we think you might be able to help us with.

There seems to be some confusion about the isigodlos.

According to John Wright, the diagrams produced by James Stuart and his interlocutors give the white isigodlo as the 'senior' one, i.e. the one where Dingane lived. Lunguza, who was of course an occasional visitor, not a resident, states specifically that he was called several times into the white isigodlo, where he encountered Dingane (JSA 1, pp. 304, 310, 320, 321, 339). Dingane's mother also lived in the white isigodlo (p. 344). He never entered the black isigodlo (p. 344). Umndlunkulu women were to be found in both izigodlo (pp. 310, 320, 321, 339, 344). He knew nothing in particular about the black isigodlo, nor why it was distinct from the white one (p. 344). His impression was that certain huts in the black isigodlo were partitioned off from others (p. 339). He had sometimes heard that Dingane was at eBheje, but did not know what eBheje was (p. 313).

Dingane of course had no wives, so who precisely lived in which isigodlo? And what was the case in the times of Mpande and Cetshwayo, who both had wives?

*On the other hand, without being specific about which king he is talking about, Bryant gives the king's wives and the adult girls of the umndlunkulu as living in the black isigodlo. Below this, on one side was the section of the white isigodlo where the king's children lived. On the other side was the section of the white isigodlo where the younger girls of the umndlunkulu lived. He specifically calls the white isigodlo the 'less important' of the two (Dictionary, 10905, pp. 187-8). He repeats this in *The Zulu People* (1949), pp. 473-4, where the white isigodlo is the 'less dreaded' one.*

In her generalized synthesis, Krige follows Bryant in this (Social System, 1936, pp. 234-5). In the middle of it all she reproduces Samuelson's diagram of uluNdi, Cetshwayo's chief umuzi in the 1870s. This does not show a black isigodlo, but shows the white isigodlo in two small sections. This was where some of the king's wives lived and where his food was prepared. Others of the kings' wives lived above the king's cattle enclosure. (Samuelson, Long, Long Ago, 1929, between p. 128 and 129, legend on pp. 245-6.)

John seems to think that the way that the FHYA has represented the white isigodlo and the black isigodlo is the wrong way around, but we have reproduced the way the Frans represented these isigodlo's, so now none of us are sure!

Basically, we were just wondering if you had any insights or thoughts.

MY RESPONSE

I elaborate on this because I believe that there was a fundamental difference in the social structure of uMgungundlovu pre-1835 compared to post-1835 up to its demise in 1838.

1. **Fact Check.** The sketches or diagrams made by James Stuart as deduced from his informants, especially Lunguza, do **NOT** resemble the preserved archaeological remains on the site of uMgungundlovu as it appears today. uMgungundlovu was rebuilt in 1835 (Roodt 1992). To illustrate it, I refer to Gardiner (1966).

Below are some short extracts from Gardiner (1966), who witnessed the process, as recorded in the article mentioned above.

During his first visit in February 1835 Gardiner wrote: "I dismounted under a wooden knoll, whence the circular fence of the town appeared like a distant race-course..." (Gardiner 1966:28). It was during this visit that he made his famous sketch showing this race-course effect.

During a later visit on 8 July 1835, he observed "the town, which had been rebuilt, appeared in the distance like an immense assemblage of hay-stacks, ... The whole was not yet complete – numbers of women, bearing bundles of grass on their heads, were approaching from all sides, while, as we advanced towards the gate, we observed several hundreds of the *amabooto* (young soldiers) hastening forward in compact lines, bearing mimosa boughs for the fences."

On 10 July he wrote: "The scene here is a busy one – houses in all stages of progress ... The huts are more numerous and better built than in the former town ..." (Gardiner 1966: 199). In a footnote for the day's inscription, he remarked that the huts were moved to the open areas between the two external fences as indicated on his sketch and that the inner fence was totally removed (Gardiner 1966:204).

2. **Discussion: Lunguza ka Mpukane's visits and description of uMgungundlovu.** Lunguza first accompanied his father as mat bearer to uMgungundlovu and admitted to having little knowledge of the inner workings of the *isigodlo* (Webb & Wright 1976:304, 307, 320, 324). With reference to the above-mentioned observations of Gardiner about the rebuilding of uMgungundlovu, it is of vital importance to establish at what stage Lunguza made his observations. It must be determined whether they were made before, during or after 1835 – the year in which the complex was enlarged. This can be calculated with a high level of certainty as it is known to which regiment Lunguza belonged.

Lunguza mentioned that he belonged to the *Kokoti*-regiment (Webb & Wright 1976:302). According to Bryant (1929:654), members of this regiment, which was formed in 1838, were born in 1818. Lunguza also confirmed that he was present when Piet Retief and his men were killed in 1838 and at the battle of Blood River on 16 December 1838 (Webb & Wright 1976:312, 319). This confirms that Lunguza was already an adult and that he was born in approximately 1818. Bryant (1949:496) mentions that a Zulu boy became a carpet bearer when reaching puberty at the age of more or less 14. Two

years later his status progressed when he and his peer group were assigned to one of the *amakhanda* to herd the king's cattle. During this stage in their lives, it was customary for the boys to drink milk by squirting it directly from the cow's udder into their mouths (*ukuklesa*). Lunguza mentions that he 'kleza'd' at uMgungundlovu, but that his age group only resided there for a month before they were dispatched to remote regions (Webb & Wright 1976:308, 329). At about 18, the boys were divided into formal regiments. According to this calculation, it is possible that Lunguza was already allocated to the *Kokoti*-regiment by 1836. Lunguza also mentioned that, as member of the *Isiziba*-section of the *Kokoti*-regiment, he knew uMgungundlovu, but did not permanently reside there as a warrior (Webb & Wright 1976:310, 321).

It is crucial to remember that Lunguza accompanied his father as mat bearer to uMgungundlovu when he entered the *isigodlo* and Dingane's hut. Taking Bryant's analysis above into consideration, it establishes a date somewhere between 1832 and 1834/1835, during which time he was admitted into the *isigodlo* as a youth. Thereafter, Lunguza left his father's *umuzi* and reported at uMgungundlovu as one of the king's cattle-herders. It seems likely that Lunguza made his observations of the king's hut before or during early 1835 and did not visit the *isigodlo* again thereafter. As warrior, he probably spent most of his time in the field and was therefore unaware of Gardiner or even the missionary Owen's four-month long stay at uMgungundlovu (Webb & Wright 1976:311).

It can then be deducted that Lunguza described much of the original uMgungundlovu before its enlargement while still a youth. He most likely entered the same hut as the one that was described by Gardiner and that it was situated in the position as indicated on Stuart's diagram (before uMgungundlovu was rebuilt).

Plan of Mgungundlovu according to Lunguza

See Tswana's plan in part 1 of No 28, p. 1 for names of sections of kraal.

> rru-azana //
 > eBele s'inte
 > kwa m'beceni
 (see Tswana's)



A = isigodlo esimhlope (white)
 B.B = isigodlo esimnyama (black)

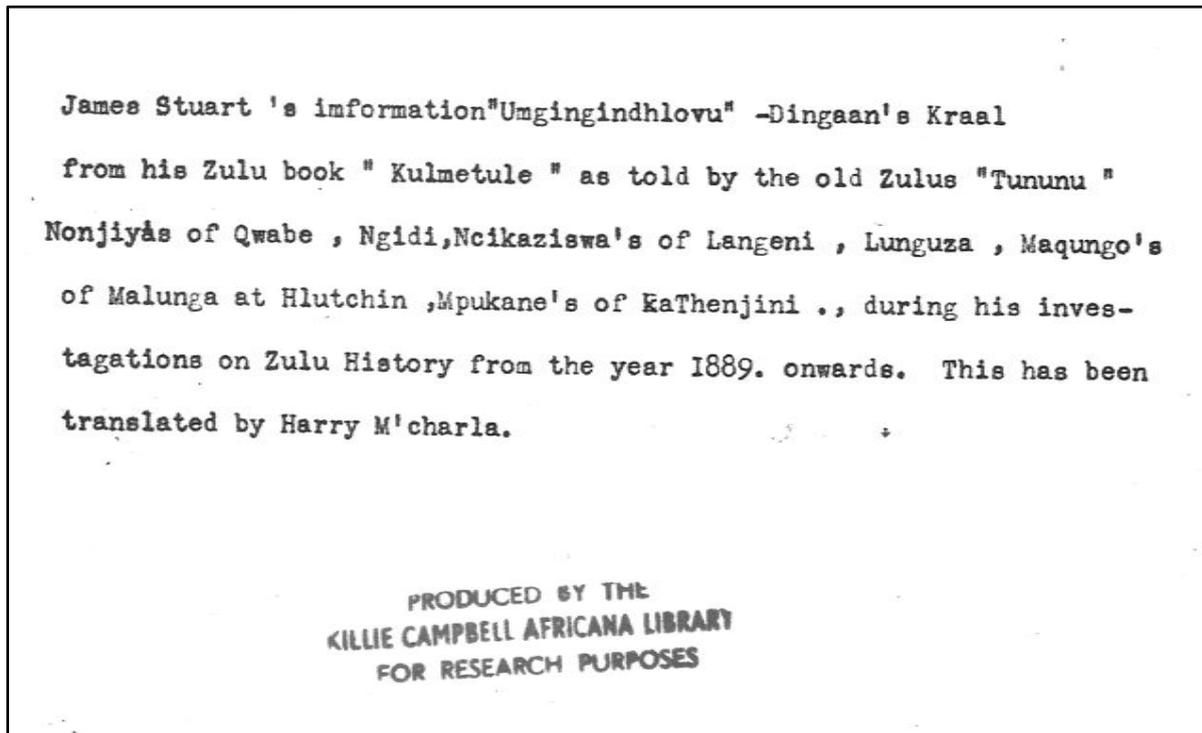
From: Webb, C. de B. & Wright, J. 1976. *The Stuart Archive*, Volume 1. Pietermaritzburg: Natal University Press. p 340.

Plan of uMgungundlovu according to Lunguza, sketched by James Stuart. Note the positions of the two isigodlo; A & BB. The king's hut is positioned as Z on the left or eastern side.

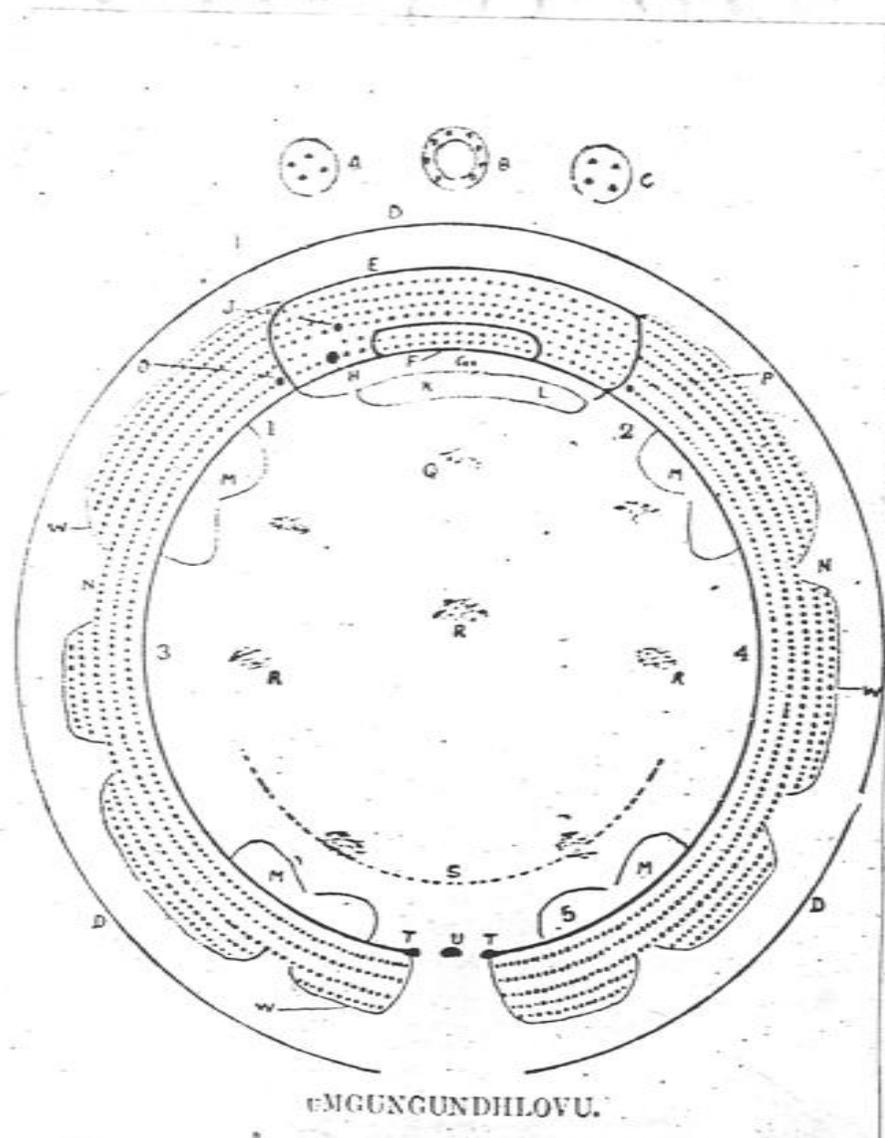
3. **James Stuart's final sketch of uMgungundlovu.** The under-mentioned information and sketch is extracted from a document acquired from the Killie Campbell Africana Library – the Killie Campbell Manuscript Papers: KCM 3191 (Old no. 19484).

What is noticeable here is that Stuart **adjusted** the positions of the two *isigodlo* in the published accounts of the sketch of uMgungundlovu, i.e, in his book, Kulmetule, as well as in the later publication (Stuart & Malcolm 1969). The black *isigodlo* is placed in the inner part of the larger *isigodlo* and the white *isigodlo* encircles the black *isigodlo* (marked only the fences; F = black *isigodlo* and E = white *isigodlo*). This reflects the higher status of the black *isigodlo* as is generally portrayed. The king's hut remains on the left inside the white *isigodlo*.

I believe this reflects the true position of the social structure of the *isigodlo* before uMgungundlovu's rebuilding in 1835, bearing in mind that Dingane never married. However, after 1835, there seems to have been a radical change in the social structure of the *isigodlo* with the king's hut being relocated to the right side and placed within the black *isigodlo* (see point 4 below).



Extract from the Killie Campbell Manuscript Papers: KCM 3191 indicating that Stuart integrated the information from informants other than only Lunguza to produce the sketch of uMgungundlovu illustrated below.



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Detailed plan of Umgungundhlovu -Dingaan's kraal.

This diagram is circular for reasons of space and more easily handled for details. It is in fact elliptical

From J Stuart's book "Kulumbule"

- A. Mvazana, the little outside Kraal.
- B. Beje. the little centre outside the kraal.
- C. Kwa Mbeceni the little outside right kraal.
- D. Fence of the big Royal Kraal.
- E. Fence of the "white" Isigodhlo.
- F. Fence of the "black" Isigodhlo
- G. Barracks of the Isigodhlo. sentries.
- H. House of the King.
- J. House of Mpikase. Mother of Dingaan.
- K and L Slaughter Kraals and Dingaan's washing kraal.

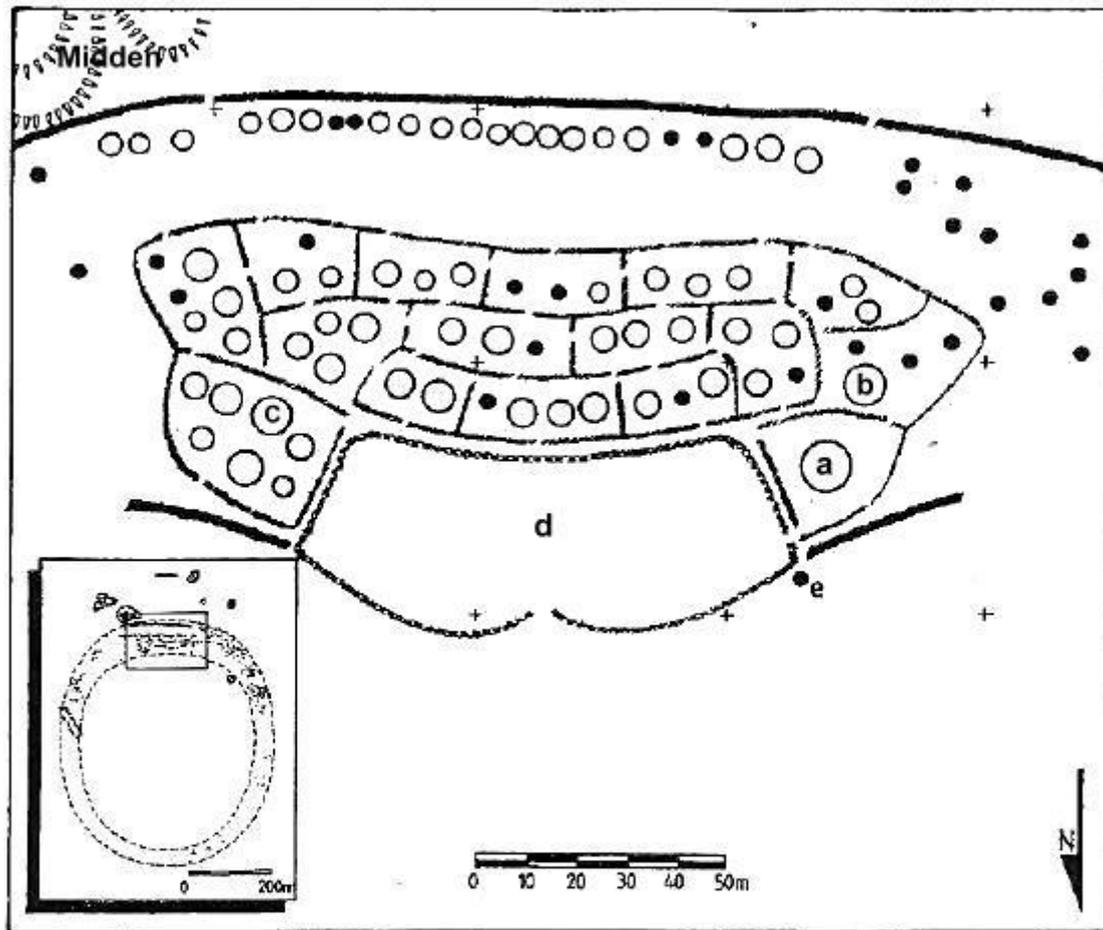
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- M. Cattle Kraal for General Community
- N. Regimental Barracks.
- O. House of the Commander Ndhlela.
- P. House of the Induna Nzobo.
- Q. Abattoir enclosure.
- R. Milking enclosure.
- S. Enclosure for soldiers in which dances took place at milking time.
- T. Kraal Gate posts (Main Gate)
- U Central deviding gate post.
- W. Fences of soldiers barracks.

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(1) Head of Kraal (top) (2) Top of kraal .(3) Ribs of kraal .(4) Great Cattle kraal. (5) Great cattle kraal of Mawombe regiment.

4. **Reconstruction of the layout of the black *isigodlo* based on archaeological excavations.** The reconstruction below was published by Roodt (1992).



- LEGEND:** ○ = Excavated floors ● = Located hut floors
- a. King Dingane's hut
 - b. Hut 23 (Parkington & Cronin 1979)
 - c. Position of king's hut by Lawton as inferred from James Stuart
 - d. Cattle enclosure
 - e. Probable guard hut

This is a true reflection of the archaeological floors in that particular section of the *isigodlo*. The partitioning is my own reconstruction based on evidence by the Reverend Francis Owen. On 11 February 1838, Owen describes the *isigodlo* as being divided into numberless compartments, each containing about three huts and that the king's hut, being the largest of all in a compartment by itself (Cory 1926: 56). Champion (Booth 1967) mentions that the compartment was somewhat in the shape of a triangle.

Circle (a) is the position of the king's hut floor. It was excavated in 1990 (Roodt 1992). It has a diameter of 10 metres, with 22 support post holes; it matches descriptions in size, the number of support posts and the design of the fireplace (hearth) made by the reverends Owen and Champion and Piet Retief. During his visit in November 1837, Retief, for example, describes the hut as follows: "The king occupies a beautiful habitation. The form is spherical, and its diameter is twenty feet. It is supported in the

interior by 22 pillars, which are entirely covered with beads. The floor is perfectly smooth, and shines like a mirror” (The Grahams Town Journal 1937). Champion confirms the 22 posts covered in beads (Booth 1967). Owen remarked that the fireplace was “... very tastily devised...” and echoes Retief’s description (Cory 1926).

Circle **(b)** was excavated by UCT and numbered 23. It was the largest hut found by them and had a diameter of over 6 metres. “It had at least three sets of small parallel post holes around the rear, which may have supported wooden racks” (Parkington and Cronin 1979:141). Floor 23 is thus ideally located to have functioned as a store room for the king.

Circle **(c)** was excavated by UCT and numbered 6. It is a large floor measuring just less than 6 metres in diameter. Lawton (1959) identified this as the king’s hut floor (probably based on the Stuart sketches). In his attempt to demonstrate that this hut is the one described by Gardiner; he even went as far as to present a small indentation in an otherwise perfectly round fireplace as the “scalloped”-shape shown in Gardiner’s sketch.

(d) Shows the reconstructed position of a cattle enclosure. When the layout of the *isigodlo* is studied, it is noticeable that the huts on the left-hand side form a symmetrical outlier to the position of the king’s hut on the right-hand side. Taking existing evidence into consideration, it is most probable that a cattle kraal took up the space between these two outliers. During Champion’s first visit he mentioned that Dingane sat just outside his cattle kraal and that this was also the place where he sat every morning to settle the day’s affairs (Booth 1967:32). This location and the direct contact with the cattle kraal are important in terms of the magical-religious functions and bathing of the king.

Comment: The work of Gardiner and Stuart may not reflect the present state of affairs at uMgungundlovu, however, they represented information of a particular phase in the history of uMgungundlovu and in that respect provide the most complete information and illustrations of king Dingane and his main settlement, uMgungundlovu up to 1835.

- 5. Thoughts on the post 1835 change in social structure of the *isigodlo* area.** I am hesitant in drawing a direct analogy between a military settlement (*ikhanda*) and a common Zulu settlement (*umuzi*). It is obvious that the *ikhanda*’s form is based on the round Zulu *umuzi*, but because it served a military purpose, it was much larger and adapted to special circumstances. I, however, want to suggest that certain elements of the symbolic organisation of dividing the spatial environment of the *umuzi* into expressive space were ultimately transferred to uMgungundlovu when it was rebuilt in 1835. When an *umuzi* is laid out, the axis line is formed by the *indlunkulu* (main hut - replicated by the black *isigodlo*) on the upper side and the cattle kraal and main entrance on the lower side. By looking from the main entrance upwards towards the *indlunkulu*, the axis line would divide the *umuzi* into two halves. The right-hand side is the *ingqadi*-section from which an heir to the king could be appointed if the *indlunkulu* was unable to produce one. This is equivalent to the ‘male’ side, whilst the left-hand side – which is known as the *ikhohlwa*-section, and which is lower in status – equals the ‘female’ side (Krige 1974:42-43). The *ikhanda* is also divided by a central axis-line into two halves (*izinhlangothi*). It could be assumed that the symbolism of the right-hand side

with its higher status in Zulu cultural activities probably had an effect on the relocation of the king's hut to the right-hand side as his attitude about status and authority increased.

6. References

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Frans Roodt