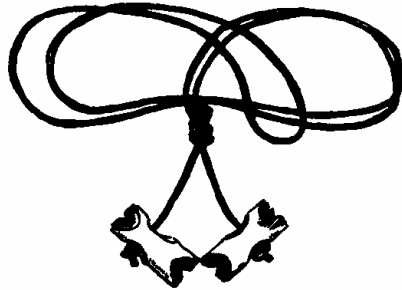


Imperial Appropriations– a history of *iziqu*



Dinuzulu kaCetshwayo wearing iziqu in gaol in Eshowe, November 1889



The Wood Badge downloaded from the Wood Badge website April 1999



Baden-Powell after the Zululand campaign January 1890

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May 1999

The discovery by South African scholars, as radical change in the body politic enabled them to shift from authoritarian positivism to cultural relativism, that artefacts have a multiplicity of significances and meanings which undergo fascinating changes and mutations as they move in time and space, has had a number of interesting, contradictory consequences. On the one hand it has opened a rich field for exploitation by academic entrepreneurs attracted by the social and cultural contradictions created in situations of enormously rapid political change, which they situate in the ironies and anomalies of poststructural discourse. This shift, in so far as it detaches its exponents from the demands of history, is largely retrogressive. But it is not entirely so, for it has also enabled scholars who still insist on the analytical primacy of the material to recognize the significance of the cultural, without being charged with irrelevant romantic idealism.

I seek to demonstrate this here by examining a cultural artefact as it has progressed through the history of KwaZulu Natal and the British Empire and which can still be found lodged in the corners of neo-imperial thinking and practice. The story is far from complete but there is sufficient evidence to suggest its main lines and nodal points - as long as one gives weight to their different aspects, sacrificing neither the political for the symbolic, nor the symbolic for the political.

Background: Zululand, 1888

After the failure to conquer the Zulu kingdom in 1879 by direct military means the British divided the territory amongst a number of local leaders thereby excluding the Zulu royal house from authority. Rallying around the exiled king's brothers and his son, Dinuzulu, the royalists, the Usuthu as they were called, attempted to regain something of their political autonomy. But they were actively opposed by some of the new appointed chiefs who were backed by the colonial authorities in the neighbouring Colony of Natal. Civil war broke out and by 1883 the old political order had been effectively destroyed. Taking advantage of this Zululand's colonial neighbours moved in to seize land and resources. The north-western districts were incorporated into the Transvaal and in 1887 the territory between the Transvaal and the coast was annexed as British Zululand. Attempts by the colonial representatives of the new imperial authority to eradicate the vestiges of royal power that remained only provoked further resistance and British troops were authorised to support the civil authority in putting down what was characterised as a rebellion. At the end of June 1888 the Commander of British forces in South Africa, Lieutenant-General Henry Smyth, took direct control of military operations in Zululand.

On his arrival Smyth came into conflict with the Governor of Zululand, Sir Arthur Havelock, who was determined that overall direction of military operations should remain with the civil powers. As far as Havelock was concerned the violence in Zululand was the work of a handful of unrepresentative royalists whose pretensions had to be checked by the civil authorities protected by the military. Military action outside of civil control might well provoke general Zulu resistance and Havelock was determined to do what he could to mount a policing rather than a military operation in

Zululand. He was only too aware that the prospect of stirring up a local conflict into one of Queen Victoria's little wars was far too attractive to younger military officers for whom bloodletting was a necessary prerequisite for military reputation and advancement. And one such officer was Smyth's aide-de-camp and nephew, "Stephe", the thirty-year old Captain Robert Stephen Baden-Powell.¹

Smyth and his staff arrived at Eshowe on 20 June 1888. Earlier in the month the Zululand Police had had to be rescued by the military from the consequences of their bungled attempt to arrest Dinuzulu in the defensive position he had constructed near the summit of Ceza mountain. On 23 June Dinuzulu's Usuthu force left Ceza to attack its greatest enemy Zibhebhu's Mandlakazi which it defeated under the guns of the Zululand police in the fort at the magistracy at Nongoma.

In the aftermath the military and civil authorities fell back on defended positions while they attempted to raise "loyal" forces from amongst the Zulu to be used to bring the Usuthu under control. In the tense and occasionally violent situation that followed communication was broken between the Chief Magistrate at Eshowe and the Resident Magistrate in the Lower Mfolosi district. A flying column of some 200 British regulars, supported by 2000 men supplied by John Dunn and 200 mounted levies supplied by the Sotho chief Hlubi, was put together to relieve the Lower Mfolosi magistracy. It was under command of Major A.C. McKean and Captain Baden-Powell accompanied him as staff officer. It left Eshowe on 7 July, reached the magistracy two days later, and returned on the 13th leaving a trail of burnt and looted homesteads.² It also left an angry Governor who earned the contempt of the military for his opinion that "burning kraals" was not "a judicious means of inflicting punishment for offences committed by British subjects living within British territory."³ The Colonial Office was to agree with the Governor's attempts to keep the military under some control, but for different reasons: "We have to look on these Usutus as potential tax payers, and it was of importance from that point of view, if from no other, to shoot as few of them as possible."⁴

But Havelock's hold on the military was tenuous and there was still shooting to be done. General Smyth arrived at Nkonjeni on 1 August, sent a flying column to Ivuna on 4 August, and on 9 August a military post under Lieutenant-Colonel Thompson was established in the upper reaches of the Black Mfolosi. Baden-Powell was placed in command of the Mounted Infantry, Dragoons,

¹ Born 22 February 1857 Robert Stephenson Smyth Powell, Baden-Powell from 1869. Charterhouse, commissioned to the 13th Hussars in India, where he wrote *Reconnaissance and Scouting* (1885), and then to Natal where, with nothing else to do in Pinetown, he wrote *Cavalry Instruction* (1885). ADC to his uncle Lieutenant-General Henry Smyth in 1887 and accompanied him to Zululand in 1888 as Military Secretary.

² For the official account see British Parliamentary Paper [BPP]. C5892. No 4, Havelock to Knutsford, 7 August 1888, enc. 1 Smyth to Havelock 17 July 1888 which forwards Major A.C. McKean report dated 14 July 1888.

³ BPP. C5892. No 4, Havelock to Knutsford, 7 August 1888, enc. Havelock to Resident Commissioner, 7 August 1888,

⁴ An (ironic obviously) minute by Fairfield in PRO.CO 427/2, 21012, on the whole question of civil and military authority raised by Havelock to Knutsford, 23 September 1888.

and a troop of African levies and ordered to prepare the ground for an attack on Dinuzulu's defended position at Ceza. But it was already too late: the British force was never able to have its military confrontation with the Zulu "rebels" that its officers so desired. On the evening of 7 August the members of the last active Zulu military mobilisation under the command of members of the royal house burnt their shelters at Ceza and moved northwards out of British Zululand before dispersing to their homes.

Deprived of a conclusive military action Baden Powell's detachment began mopping up "the enemy" in the upper valley of the Black Mfolozi in preparation for a reconnaissance of the now deserted Usuthu stronghold. On 10th August, it was reported that during the night some of his African sentries had been threatened by Usuthu. They were said to be operating from a number of caves near Fig Tree Store on the border with the Transvaal. On the morning of the 11th the levies supported by the British regulars, all under Baden-Powell's command, left at daybreak to clear the caves. Inhabitants in nearby homesteads fled driving their cattle before them as the force approached. The African levies began to move towards the caves in horn formation and they were supported by volleys fired by the Mounted Infantry. After some skirmishing and an exchange of shots the people in the caves were forced out, leaving behind at least three bodies including one of a mentally-deficient woman. Over 100 head of cattle were looted, and thirty women and children captured, before the military discovered that they had terrorized and attacked their own allies, "loyal" Buthelezi, and that the caves in which they had taken refuge lay outside British Zululand well within the Transvaal.⁵ Baden-Powell pushed on that night to the now deserted Ceza which he was able to show his uncle, General Smyth, when he arrived on 16 August.

Creating a heroic war in Zululand

The South African Library contains drafts of Baden-Powell's reports on the Fig Tree raid in which he blamed the fiasco on the inaccurate "Government map", and misleading information given by his guide and the African levies under his command.⁶ With their many emendations they are only the first of a series of attempts to obscure the multiple failures associated with the Fig Tree raid and in the process to recreate Baden-Powell's experiences in Zululand. For in time of course Baden-Powell was to become one of the most famous figures in the history of the British Empire. After experience in two "little wars" against the Ashante and the Ndebele in the 1890s he gained a world reputation as the defender of Mafeking in the South African War. Attracted towards the youth movements of the time, deeply concerned about the threats to the hegemony of the British Empire and the capacity of the nation's youth to confront them, fascinated by the subterfuge, guile and the physical prowess required by military scouting and intelligence, he wrote between 1905 and 1907 *Scouting for Boys*. Suitably advanced by entrepreneurial interests in the publishing industry it became, in the words of his most recent biographer,

⁵ See documents in NA. ZGH713. Z558, 565

⁶ SAPL Baden Powell, R.S.B. Sir, MSB 66 Scrap Album: Zululand Campaign 1888 Items 24 and 34.1.

not only one of the world's greatest best sellers but the Boy Scouts' Bible: on one level a 'how to do it' manual, but on another an almost theological statement of purposes and principles.⁷

The Boy Scouts became a vast national, and later an international movement in which millions of young people were to participate, in which outdoor activities were organised so as to promote physical well-being, an individual moral code and sense of social responsibility. And, although he was only in Zululand for three months in 1888 his experiences there were to form a resource which inspired him for many years to come and which he was to incorporate into the mythologies and rituals of the Boy Scouts movement.

For the first time in his military career he had been responsible for deploying men and columns and had had occasion to work with native levies and native spies. He had become thoroughly familiar with the skills involved in primitive warfare by actual practice in the bush and on the veld. He had learned the Zulu ways of living and of fighting.

Throughout it all he had kept an exhaustive diary,⁸ jotting down experiences and tips for future reference. He had added materially to his store of information for the booklet on 'scouting' he might some day write.⁹

It was this experience that he was to pass on to the youth of first Britain, and then the world, warning them of the physical and moral challenges which they faced in softer, degenerate, urbanised and therefore equally dangerous, environment and giving advice on how to counter them. In an affidavit on the writing of *Scouting for Boys* he wrote that he had "studied '... the principles adopted by the Zulus and other African tribes, which reflected the ideas of Epictetus, and the methods of the Spartans, ancient British and Irish for training their boys.'"¹⁰

Baden-Powell presented the Zululand campaign as a glorious adventure. He was at the Cape, having to perform the social duties of a Military Secretary which "was great fun a regular beano, when ... bang came a bombshell!"

An alarming telegram came though from Zululand to say that the Usutus were up.... They had defied the police; some troops from Natal had been sent to back up the civil force and had been driven back with loss. Generally the fat was in the fire.¹¹

Of course, for most of those caught up in the conflict in Zululand in 1888 it was a tragic affair, the crushing of the last desperate bid for autonomy by the surviving rulers of an African kingdom which the authorities had attempted to destroy by setting one faction against the other. The major clashes took place not between the military and the Usuthu but amongst the Zulu themselves. There was no enemy uprising in the Lower Mfolozi district. Although officials tried to assert that the magistracy had been attacked this was not so: the violence in the area was a symptom of the official manipulation of divisions amongst the Zulu there. The African columns with the British troops were largely out of control and most of them were men provided by John Dunn whose role in the calamities which had overtaken the Zulu had been decidedly ignoble. Even now Dunn resisted giving military support until he was assured

⁷ Tim Jeal, *Baden-Powell*, (London: Hutchinson, 1989), 376.

⁸ I have not had the opportunity to consult this diary.

⁹ William Hillcourt (with Olave, Lady Baden-Powell). *Baden-Powell. The Two Lives of a Hero*. (London: Heinemann, 1964), 84.

¹⁰ Jeal, *Baden-Powell*, 582-3.

¹¹ Lord Baden-Powell of Gilwell *Lessons from the 'Varsity of Life* (London C. Arthur Pearson, 1933), 147.

of a sufficient reward and the line of march was marked by burning kraals, looted cattle, and abducted women and children.

Baden-Powell saw none of this. As far as he was concerned he had been privileged to observe the noble Zulu warrior in all his glory. Forty years later, he could still remember the arrival of Dunn's force and depicted it as one of the most stirring of his memories.

When we topped the rise, we saw moving up towards us from the valley below three long lines of men marching in single file and singing a wonderful anthem as they marched. Both the sight and sound were intensely impressive. Every now and then one man would sing a few notes of a solo which were then responded to by an immense roar of sound from the whole impi of deep bass voices and higher tones singing in harmony. Then in the midst of their song there would be a sudden break and a shrill whistle would go up or a crash as they struck simultaneously their great hide shields with their assegais. The timekeeping and rhythm of these warriors in their singing was marvellous, accompanied as it was with stamping of the feet and booming and rattling at given periods a glorious sound. The men themselves looked so splendid ... very smartly decked out with feathers and furs and cows' tails. They wore little in the way of clothing and their brown bodies polished with oil and looked like bronze statues.¹²



Baden-Powell. "John Dunn and his Impis" SAPL

He sketched the scene, and made notes on the singing and took down Dunn's translation.¹³ In 1907, at the camp which Baden-Powell set up on Brownsea island off the Dorset coast at which some of the activities which were to become intrinsic to Boy Scout ritual were first practised, a journalist was to write how Baden-Powell

told true-life 'yarns' about being hunted by Zulus in the Matopo Hills With experiences culled from all over the world and three small wars, not to mention a big

¹² Baden-Powell. *Varsity of Life*, 153.

¹³ Hillcourt, *Two Lives of a Hero*, 82.

one, [Baden-Powell] was in an unrivalled position to entertain his youthful audience. [a journalist] watched Baden-Powell at the camp fire leading the boys singing a Zulu war chant. This was the Eeengonyama chorus soon to be famous among all Boy Scouts. 'Eeengonyama – gonyama,' sang Baden-Powell loudly, to be answered by the boys singing heartily: 'Invooboo. Yah bo! Invooboo.' this was supposed to mean; 'He is a lion!' Yes! he is better than that; he is a hippopotamus!' Everett was mesmerized. 'I can see him still,' he wrote twenty years later, 'as he stands in the flickering light of the fire – an alert figure, full of the joy of life, now grave, now gay, answering all manner of questions, imitating the call of birds, showing how to stalk an animal, fleshing out a little story, dancing and singing round the fire.'¹⁴

Baden-Powell also remembered the magistrate's "fine shooting" which killed two men under a euphorbia tree at a paced distance of nine hundred yards. There was also the young Zulu woman with a bullet through the stomach.

She was very plucky and knelt up when we told her to so that we could plug the holes and bind her up. Her only clothing was a bead girdle and a necklace of black and white beads.

But she died in the night.

Before burying her I took the liberty of annexing her necklace as a memento, and it stood me in good stead later on.¹⁵

The Fig Tree Store raid and the reconnaissance of the deserted Usuthu camp on Ceza underwent transformation as well. Originally Baden-Powell held bad maps and faulty intelligence responsible for his attack on allies sheltering in foreign territory. But this was the report of a obscure officer seeking reputation and promotion and somewhat concerned about the effects of a scouting blunder on his career prospects. Forty years later Lord Baden-Powell of Gilwell, wrote that Usuthu were trying to reach the safety of the Transvaal and "we disregarded the border and followed them up, attacked, and got them."¹⁶

The reconnaissance to the deserted Usuthu camp at Ceza was similarly recast. On the way Baden-Powell just escaped an attack by "a splendid figure of a Zulu warrior, in all the glory of glistening brown skin and the white plumed head-dress from which the Usutu had their nickname of 'Tyokobais'", before being able to reach a crevice in the rocks "packed with the brown faces, with rolling eyes and white teeth, of hundreds of women and children, refugees hiding from us..." which he was then able to reassure and lead to safety. And whereas the Usuthu had left Ceza a week previously leaving Baden-Powell plenty of time to sketch the stronghold from different perspectives, pull down defensive walls and clear the paths, this was to be represented as the "final dash" on Ceza, from which Dinuzulu "decamped" before coming "a few days later" to surrender: or "I had been sent forward on a scouting expedition into his stronghold. He nipped out as we got in."

Baden-Powell never saw Dinuzulu. The Zulu prince in fact only surrendered three months later – and not to the military but to the Governor of Natal in Pietermaritzburg. And he did so after taking refuge in the house of his supporters the daughters of Bishop Colenso which he reached moving surreptitiously across country with a skill which might have caught the

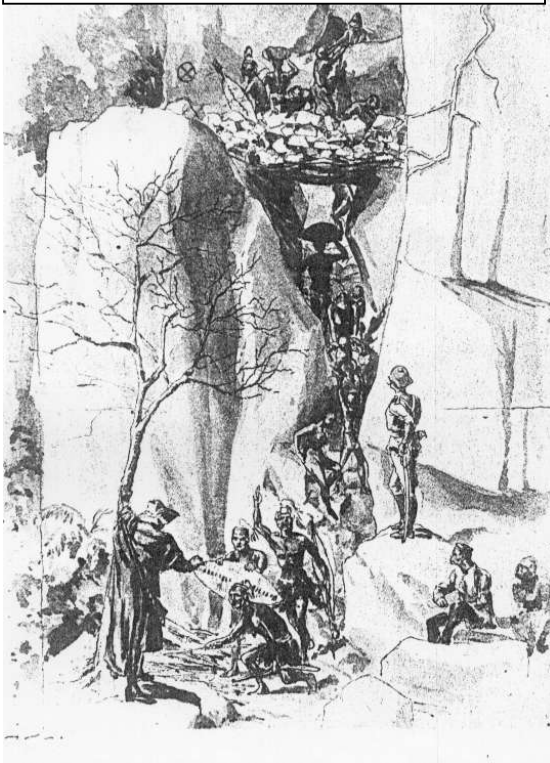
¹⁴ Jeal, *Baden-Powell*. 386.

¹⁵ Baden-Powell. *Varsity of Life*, 152. Jeal, *Baden Powell*, 134, quoting Wade Piper of Pax

¹⁶ Jeal, *Baden-Powell*, 136

attention of a man for whom subterfuge and scouting skills were so important. But it is not just the conflicting and inaccurate accounts that Baden-Powell wrote of his Zululand experiences over the years – after all in the 1920s the Chief Scout of the Empire could hardly admit to being misled by his spies and basic errors in map-reading. More interesting is the deep ambivalence in the way he depicts his early African experiences. They can be as vile as anything that the history of British imperialism has to offer as he flaunts his racism and cruelty. And it was his desire for violent confrontation which throughout the Zululand campaign blocked any capacity he had to understand the obvious – that the people around him were not “the enemy” - and which led him to attack his own non-combatant allies as they sought safety and then shrug off the political, military and moral consequences of his actions. But at the same time there was in Baden-Powell the deep desire to romanticise this imperial violence, to sentimentalise both attacker and attacked, and idealise its objectives, and indeed invest it with a moral quality.

Baden-Powell. "Surrendering one of Dinuzulu's Strongholds". (SAPL)



These latter aspects can be seen in his sketches of the 1888 Zululand campaign. Consider this one: I cannot comment on its accuracy as an event – at least without examining Baden-Powell’s diaries. The caption is certainly misleading – Dinuzulu did not have “strongholds” other than the defensive position at Ceza which had been abandoned by the time Baden-Powell got there. It is conceivably an illustration of the vacating of the cave at Fig Tree Store and therefore the surrender of “loyal” Zulu after an official attack. However the elements are accurate – the natural environment is convincing, as is the induna/guide wearing both heading and jacket seated on the right, the African levy, probably one of Hlubi’s Basotho on the right, and the women and children clambering

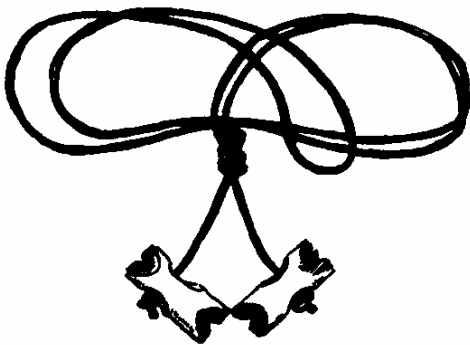
with their foodstocks from their shelters. It is in the emotional message of the sketch which is so misleading. It lies in the supplicating raised right hand of the third man surrendering his weapons, bowing at last to the superior power; in the top figure of the soldier giving a firm, helping hand, the child being lowered over a boulder and above all it is in the picture’s focal point; in the statuesque Dagoon, controlling all, determined that the surrender should reflect what the misguided rebels will now experience, the order and the humanity of British rule.

The transition from seeing the other as barbarian to depicting him as noble savage can only be made of course when he is no longer a threat, and when Baden-Powell was in Zululand the idea of the Zulu as the noblest of savages was only just beginning to emerge. But by the time he wrote *Scouting for Boys* this was changing, under the influence of the works of Rider Haggard especially. And by now there were independent influences promoting a romantic recreation of the primitive acting upon Baden-Powell as well. Ernest Thompson Seton was a naturalist living in North America who had just founded the Woodcraft movement and for whom an idealised recreation of Native American life was to give shape to his revolt against the experience of modernising industrial society. In 1905 as he was writing *Scouting for Boys* Baden-Powell received from Seton a copy of his *The Birch-bark Roll of the Woodcraft Indians* with its call for a return to a more simple life, the enjoyment of outdoor adventure, close observation of nature and the materials it provided, and drawing on the wisdom and the lore of the tribe. The book gave substance to many of Baden-Powell's ideas and he adopted and adapted many of Seton's: the games for example; the tribe and the totem which provided the the organisational principles, and the system of awards for achievement based on the natural world and its wild creatures amongst whom the young adventurers lived and played.¹⁷ In the end Seton was to accuse Baden-Powell of appropriating his ideas. But as Jeal has written:

Baden-Powell learned from Seton and the Woodcraft Indians that romantic schemes conceived in a spirit of open opposition to industrial society had no future. Neither the industrialists of Progressive Era America nor Britain's beleaguered ruling class could be expected to see any merit in anything openly subversive. His Boy Scouts scheme would therefore have to promise to make boys not 'noble savages' but the patriotic and morally upright youngsters whom their 'betters' believed the country needed.¹⁸

Nonetheless the call of the wild and the primitive remained a feature of the appeal of the Boy Scout movement's rituals and mythologies, and it drew for its inspiration on both Ernest Thompson Seton's recreation of Native American, and Baden-Powell's imagined African experience.

Wood Badge – “the hope of the world”



Over the years the Chief Scout, B-P, was to write and re-write his autobiography, drawing on his campaigns and adventures, changing them, re-representing them, as attitudes and demands of the times and movement changed. The effect of Baden-Powell's continual recreation of his past in his writings makes it extraordinarily difficult to construct the most simple narrative of events. But we

do know that during his service in Zululand Baden-Powell acquired not just

¹⁷ This brief account of Seton draws on the interesting chapter “Fortifying the Wall of Empire” in Michael Rosenthal. *The Character Factory. Baden-Powell and the origins of the Boy Scout Movement*. (London: Collins, 1986). Much of the depth in Jeal's *Baden-Powell* is the consequence of his ongoing argument with Rosenthal's important, but rather tendentious, interpretation of Baden-Powell's life.

¹⁸ Jeal, *Baden-Powell*, 381

experiences which were to lead to the Boy Scout Movement but the inspirations for the songs, chants and awards which were to become part of its ritual and iconography. And of these none are more significant than what became the Wood Badge, a small, wedge-shaped wooden bead, burnt on both ends, threaded on a leather lace.

The Wood Badge, given to Scoutmasters on completion of the Wood Badge Course, was the most prestigious symbol of scouting achievement and awarded only after a rigorous series of theoretical and practical training had been completed. Although it appears to have been phased out by the Scout Movement in the United Kingdom over the last thirty years it remains a feature of other scouting organisations. A visit to Wood Badge sites on the Internet shows that Wood Badge training is still a feature of scouting life in the USA and provides a number of versions of its history. As originally conceived the Wood Badge was associated with Gilwell Park, the 54 acre estate which was acquired for the Boy Scouts in 1919. It was here that Baden-Powell first presented the Wood Badge to Scoutmasters and told them of its history.

On the morning of September 8, 1919, a 61 year-old retired general of the British Army stepped out into the center of a clearing at Gilwell Park, in Epping Forest, outside London, England. He raised to his lips the horn of a Greater Kudu, one of the largest of African antelopes. He blew a long sharp blast. Nineteen men dressed in short pants and knee socks, their shirt-sleeves rolled up, assembled by patrols for the first Scoutmasters' training camp held at Gilwell. The camp was designed and guided by Sir Robert Baden-Powell, the founder of the World Scouting Movement.

When they had finished their training together, Baden-Powell gave each man a simple wooden bead from a necklace he had found in a Zulu chieftain's deserted hut when on campaign in South Africa in 1888. The Scoutmasters' training course was a great success and continued to be held year-after-year. At the end of each course the wooden beads were used to recognize the completion of training. When the original beads ran out, new ones were whittled to maintain the tradition established by Baden-Powell. Because of these beads, the course came to be known as the Wood Badge Course. It continues to this day in England and around the world as the advanced training course for leaders in Scouting.¹⁹

Here is another version from what might be called the official biography:

"...B-P did not care for certificates. He rummaged among his trophies and souvenirs for a suggestion and pulled out a long string of wooden beads he had found in Dinizulu's deserted hut in the Ceza bush during the Zulu War in 1888. He presented each man who had taken part in the camp with one of the beads.

These simple wooden beads signifying the completion of the training course became one of the most highly prized possession a Scoutmaster could want. The beads gave the training its name of the Wood Badge Course. When Dinizulu's original beads ran out, the Gilwell training staff whittled others to keep up the tradition established by B-P.²⁰

This latter account, published in 1964, has Baden-Powell finding the beads in the abandoned stronghold.²¹ Jeal however has examined the original diaries at the time and can find no account of this. The only references to beads are those worn by the injured girl whose necklace Baden-Powell "annexed" before

¹⁹ <http://www.pinetreeweb.com/woodbadg.htm>

²⁰ William Hillcourt (with Olave, Lady Baden-Powell). *Baden-Powell. The Two Lives of Hero*. (London: Heinemann, 1964) 358. There are many other versions of course most of them are derivative. See for example <http://www.pinetreeweb.com/woodbadg.htm>

²¹ This is the version presented by D J Landsberg, Leader Trainer in his four page typescript entitled "Wood Badge Training". I would like here to acknowledge Mr Landsberg's kind assistance in providing me with this material.

burying her, and indeed some historians of the scouting movement have taken these beads to be the original of the Wood Badge, no doubt under the influence of Baden-Powell's own statement that the necklace "stood me in good stead later on." But there are many other versions of the origin of the beads. There is a tradition that the beads were "captured" from Dinuzulu²² despite the fact that he had left Ceza over a week before Baden-Powell arrived there. In some cases the account becomes more confused. For example that they were "hand-carved beads he had taken from Zulu Chief Dinizulu during the Ashanti campaign in 1888."²³

The beads themselves gained their own character: they were part of a vast necklace some 12 feet in length and consisting of more than 1000 South African yellowwood beads which the giant 6' 7" famous Dinizulu had worn.²⁴

Or they were given added significance as a sacred talisman, the guardian of the strength of nation:

On state occasions, Dinizulu wore a necklace some 10 to 12 feet in length consisting of over a thousand beads, ranging in size from tiny emblems to others four inches in length. It was considered sacred by the warriors, and there was a belief that if it was ever captured all resistance by the natives would cease. The necklace was kept in a cave, high on a mountain and guarded night and day.

B.-P. heard of this, and hoped that he would capture Dinizulu and acquire the necklace. It did come to pass, and his wish was fulfilled and B.-P. took the necklace home to England where it was kept with his other military souvenirs. It was over 30 years before he made further use of it.²⁵

However none of these stories sat particularly well with the Scout movement as it was envisaged after Baden-Powell's death in 1941 and in the post-war era of decolonisation.

To have stolen a Zulu ruler's property was thought underhand and unpleasant, as was the idea of the founder of worldwide multiracial brotherhood fighting against Africans. So it became policy within the Movement to claim that Baden-Powell had been given the necklace by Dinuzulu.²⁶

But annexed, purloined, captured, found or presented the importance of the Wood Badge to the movement was undoubted and the symbolic weight attached to these beads was huge and continues in parts of the world to this day. We only have to consider the following:

Two Tiny Wooden Beads

Two tiny wooden beads on a leather thong. Doesn't sound like an outstanding badge or mark of distinction, but it is known and respected as such around the globe. It is symbolic of the efforts and interest of one man in behalf of others that created and launched the greatest movement for boys the world has ever known.

²² See for example the other major biography before *Two Lives*, E.E.Reynolds, *Baden-Powell...*(London: OUP, 1957) where the beads were "captured" on 183. The same word is used by Carel Birkby (ed.) *The History of Scouting in South Africa* [1957]

²³ <http://www.woodbadge.org/founding.htm>: The Founding of Wood Badge by Nelson R. Block. copyright 1994 *The Journal of Scouting History* .

²⁴ Photocopy "The Woodbadge Story" Mss, provided by Mr Landsberg. See also "Dinizulu's Necklace. Origin of the Wood Badge – Worldwide Symbol of a trained scoutmaster." Printed with the badge of he World Jamboree 1967, Idaho, U.S.A.

²⁵ Photocopy, The First Gilwell Park Group" provided by Mr Landsberg

²⁶ Jeal, *Baden-Powell*, 134

It is the mark of men who have demonstrated that they are men of character and who are devoted to a cause.... Striving for perfection in themselves that they might train others better. To this end exists Wood Badge.....

Who knows but that this effort, this crusade, may flourish to the end that two tiny wooden beads on a leather thong may yet become the symbol of a succeeding effort to bring about a World Brotherhood of Man under a Fatherhood of God. To that end may Wood Badge serve and her men never falter or fail. Two tiny wooden beads on leather thong. They could symbolize the hope of the world. It's up to you.²⁷

The religious overtones in this quotation are obvious and when reading of the beads' significance to the Boy Scout movement and their history one is frequently reminded of other religious founding narratives which suggest the mystical role that the Wood Craft Badge filled in the Boy Scout movement. But we can take the significance of the beads to another level as well. Consider the elements of the story. The founder of the movement, now realising that his active days are numbered, emerges from his place of retreat, holding a object made of commonplace material but which he has transformed and filled with spiritual significance. He breaks it up, takes the pieces, and gives them to his followers, as recognition of their achievements and with the charge that they take what they have learnt and pass it on to others.

The parallels with the Christian narrative and its associated rituals - the breaking of the bread, and the injunction that the disciples do likewise and spread the message through the world - seem to me to be significant. But what is unique and interesting about the Wood Badge myth – for it is this, it is not history– is the beads' primitive provenance and the spiritual power that they derive through association with a conquered savage people. In 1919, forty years after the formal conquest of the Zulu kingdom, thirty years after he had been in Zululand and participated in its final subjugation, Baden-Powell stood before his successors, broke up his war trophy, and distributed its constituent parts with the charge that his successor do likewise. In so doing he created an Imperial Myth as part of an Imperial Religion. Decolonisation, contemporary anti-racial convention and liberal internationalism has buried it very deep in the western unconscious. Nonetheless the story of the Wood Badge is a ritual enactment of the appropriation and incorporation by the imperial conqueror of African power. By the same token it is a demonstration of the Africanization of the imperial conqueror.

iziqu

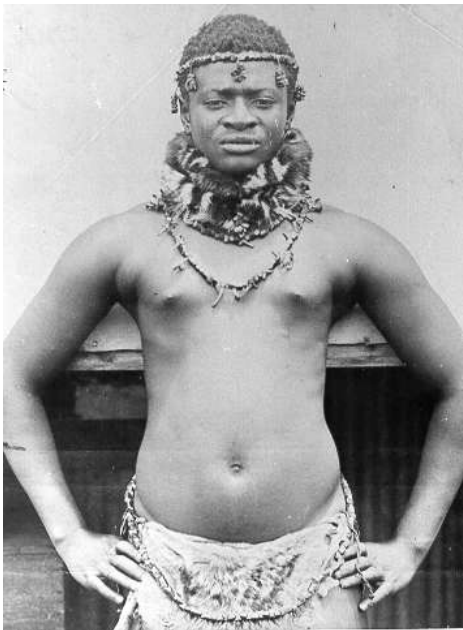
The immediate question which springs to mind is the obvious one: in amongst all these inaccuracies were the beads authentic at all, and if they were what was their origin and meaning before they were transported and transformed by the conquerors and incorporated into their rituals and celebrations? But of course the question cannot be framed in such terms. The wooden beads did and do exist – they are called *iziqu* and their passage can be tracked through the history of KwaZulu Natal. But their meaning and their significance and symbolic weight cannot be reduced to a single definition or description. No matter that cultural traditionalism will always try and fix their meaning outside history, their story and significance of the beads which were retained in

²⁷ <http://www.woodbadge.org/BoyScout/wbtinybeads.htm>

KwaZulu-Natal remains as dynamic and contradictory as that of those which Baden-Powell removed from their cultural context and used to celebrate his imperial project.

In the 1850s Charles MacLean (who was himself resurrected and recreated as the boy hero John Ross by settler society needing founding mythologies) wrote that in the 1820s in the Zulu kingdom he had seen soldiers at Bulawayo “ornamenting and decorating their persons with beads and brass ornaments....”

The most curious part of these decorations consisted of several rows of small pieces of wood, about the size and shape of those used in playing draughts, strung together and made into necklaces and bracelets. Some of these warriors had their necks and arms ornamented with several rows of this description, and those particularly about the neck seemed to be very inconvenient to the wearer, and certainly were not very ornamental. But on inquiry we found that the Zulu warriors set great value on these apparently useless trifles, and that they were orders of merit conferred by Shaka on those who had distinguished themselves by daring deeds of bravery on the field of battle. Each row, whether round the neck or arm, was the distinguishing mark of some heroic deed, and which the wearer had received from Shaka’s own hand. These were principally gained in the last amaMpondo war, from which Shaka had returned with a large booty. These of course were all the first class of warriors, high in favour with the Zulu monarch, and were now displaying their finery and decorations preparatory to presenting themselves before him.²⁸



They appear in Colenso’s *Zulu-English Dictionary* where the first edition refers to *iziqu* which are “worn as charms upon the neck of a man”²⁹ but does not associate them with warfare. I have not yet found any further contemporary references to *iziqu* from the time of the history of the kingdom. After its conquest however, at the time of the tragic attempt by the Usuthu to promote Dinuzulu as heir to the kingdom he was photographed wearing a necklace of *iziqu*. This seems more of the necklace of wooden beads, interspersed with twigs, than the “rope of beads” that Baden-Powell describes and the whole question of the “beads” as distinct from the way they are strung needs more investigation.

²⁸ Stephen Gray (ed.). *Charles Rawden Maclean. The Natal Papers of ‘John Ross’*. (Durban and Pietermaritzburg: Killie Campbell Africana Library and University of Natal Press, 1992). 113-4

²⁹ J.W.Colenso, *Zulu-English Dictionary* Pietermaritzburg: P. Davis & Sons, 23 Church Street, 1864: New Edition Revised and Enlarged. Printed by Magema, Mubi, & Co., Ekukanyeni. Davis & Sons, Maritzburg [nd]: New Edition Revised and Enlarged. Natal: P. Davis & Sons, Maritzburg and Durban, 1884.



The necklace is a common feature whether it consists of a few or many seeds, pieces of wood, bone, beads, animal horns teeth or claws. In this photograph of the sage and diviner Laduma Madela, which I took at Ceza in 1970, he is wearing three necklaces none of which are made of *iziqu* but of berries, bone with a horn pendant, and snakes' vertebrae. In the close interlocking of the various portions they remind one of the necklace of *iziqu*, that is the *mnyezane*, after the willow from the root of which the *isiqu* is made.³⁰ Axel-Ivar Berglund informs me that the willow itself is associated with the shades and treated with reverence and respect.

4. Laduma Madela, 1970, Ceza.



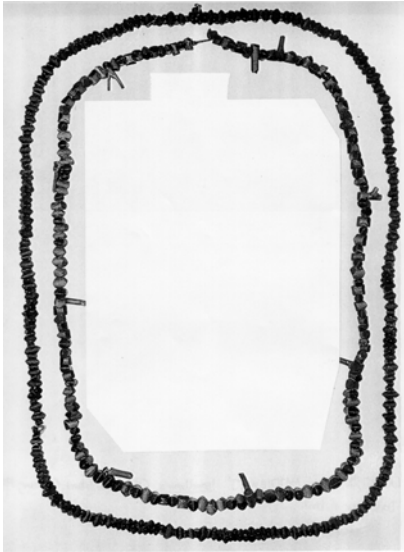
The man on the left is depicted as wearing *mnyezane* made up of *iziqu* together with twigs threaded amongst the beads. The painting is by Barbara Tyrrell and the original is in the Campbell collection together with photographs she took of the subject,³¹ Maphelu kaMkhosana of the Zungu, who led a life of great risk and adventure as a devoted soldier and servant of Dinuzulu. The original painting shows the interlocking beads particularly clearly.

5. Barbara Tyrrell, *Tribal Peoples of Southern Africa*. Books of Africa, 1968. "An old man in head-ring and wearing wood necklace denoting valour in war." Original in Campbell Collection. [114]

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³⁰ I would like to thank Stephen Kotze of the Campbell Collections for his assistance on these, and on many other points discussed in this paper.

³¹ Personal communication, 1970.



The back cover of Laband and Matthews, *Isandlwana* (Pietermaritzburg: Centaur, 1992) has examples of both these types of strings of *iziqu* which housed in the Natal Museum.

Dinuzulu seems to have been in possession of similar examples of both when he arrived in Pietermaritzburg to surrender to the authorities in November 1889. He was photographed

wearing them when he was detained in the Police Barracks in Pietermaritzburg and can be seen with the "necklace" and the "rope of beads" draped around his body.



Dinuzulu was sent to Eshowe the administrative capital of British Zululand where he was gaoled before standing trial for Public Violence, High Treason, and Murder. Here he was visited by a Zulu chief who reported to his superiors that

Dinuzulu had round his neck several necklaces (Igiq'u) [sic] such as are worn by natives, after they have killed an enemy or enemies in battle.³²



He was photographed while in gaol and chose to wear the necklace of *iziqu* on this occasion.

Harriette Colenso visited him for lengthy periods while he was in gaol and it is therefore significant that in the fourth edition of Colenso's *Zulu-English Dictionary* published after this the accepted "root" and root of the matter" and "worn as charms upon the neck of a man" the further meaning "after he has killed or *hlomula-ed* a man in battle" is added.³³

One has to draw the conclusion that Harriette Colenso obtained this information directly from the Zulu royalists at Eshowe.

Bryant on his dictionary expanded on this by describing the pieces of wood as "prophylactic medicines" keeping harm at bay until the effective medicine arrives, and by extension sees them as charms to protect a man who has

³² BPP. C.5892. No. 126, Havelock to Knutsford, 8 February 1889.

³³ J.W. Colenso, *Zulu-English Dictionary*. Fourth authorised edition. Revised and enlarged. Printed by Munro Bros, Bank St., Pietermaritzburg. Published by Messrs. Vause, Slatter & Co., Natal. 1905.

killed in battle and before the purification ceremonies have been carried out. Literally *isiqu* is a root, the tap root, and by extension it refers to the origin of a matter, an issue or an event. Thus the fourth edition Colenso's *Dictionary* refers to *iziqu* being used to refer to "the main arguments, or the foundation facts." This meaning is in use to this day. Thus Axel-Ivar Berglund writes of "traditional court cases" when "a judge may call for *isiqu sendaba*, i.e. the origin of accusation or rumour. He thereby shifts the emphasis of the case from the dialogue between the accused and accuser, calling on witnesses to speak ...[on] the origin/source of the issue at stake. *isiqu* carried considerable weight in the ... judge passing judgement, *isiqu* regarded as the source, origin and hence beginnings of the case discussed" Berglund extends his argument to refer to the necklace as whole, *umnyezane*, after the willow tree from which the *iziqu* were made, and its symbolic association with the shades. In these multiplicity of meanings Berglund believes we have "an important Zulu idiom to which not sufficient attention has been given by cultural anthropologists".³⁴

A study of the *isiqu*,³⁵ "*qu*" would be most rewarding for at some time in the twentieth century it gained not a new meaning so much as an extension of the old one in a new context – for today the word is most widely translated and most frequently used to refer to a university degree or a diploma.³⁶ Exactly when and how this extension happened I still have to discover but the standard Zulu-English dictionary³⁷ does not have this meaning while the English-Zulu dictionary published in the 1950s does.³⁸ Whether further research will reveal a conscious decision to find a suitable Zulu word (as I suspect, by the self-appointed modernizers of the language in the interwar years) or whether it was an unconscious cultural adaptation, either discovery will be fascinating. It will indicate something of the way in which the meaning of the word *isiqu* has been transferred from an award given by the Zulu kings recognising victory in the field of war, to one given by the Chancellor of a University recognising victory in the field of learning.

***iziqu* – reality defeated and traditions revived.**

I want to end with another historical narrative in which *iziqu* played a part. In this case however, because it was an attempt to utilize *iziqu* to sustain the power of the Zulu royal house in the era of high imperialism, it had to be crushed – there was no question here of inventing or adapting a tradition in order to re-invent it – no tradition associated with an independent and formidable African power, and which sought to maintain and assert itself at the height of British imperial power, could be allowed to survive.

³⁴ I acknowledge and thank Axel-Ivar Berglund for his detailed communications with me on this subject.

³⁵ Doke and Vilikazi *Zulu-English Dictionary*. **qu** 5. [mod] Stem (gram term) *isiqu* segama (stem of a word)

³⁶ In the experience of colleagues and the result of scores of informal questions.

³⁷ C.M. Doke and B.W. Vilakazi, *Zulu-English Dictionary*. Johannesburg, Witwatersrand University Press, 1972. Second Edition.

³⁸ C.M. Doke, D McK Malcolm J M A Sikakana *English and Zulu Dictionary* Johannesburg, Witwatersrand University Press, 1958.

Dinuzulu did in fact present *iziqu* to a European in Zululand in 1888. It was not to Baden-Powell however but Harriette Colenso. She had been in contact with the Usuthu during the disturbances and was convinced that far from being a rebellion the Usuthu leaders had been forced to defend their people against the violence initiated by the authorities and carried out by their Zulu appointees. Only when absolutely necessary, she believed, had Dinuzulu and his supporters acted violently against those being used against them.

It was Harriette Colenso who organised, and largely paid for, the defence of Dinuzulu and his uncles before the Court of Special Commissioners in Eshowe in 1888-9. She visited them in gaol, looked after their needs and interests as best she could, and made sure that Dinuzulu received an education in the long months he waited for confirmation of sentence. In so doing she was carrying the charge laid upon her by her father John William Colenso, the bishop of Natal, and his friend, Dinuzulu's father Cetshwayo kaMpande. Her young nephew Eric visited her in Eshowe and as Nondela met the detained Dinuzulu and exchanged gifts with him. In January 1890 Dinuzulu and his uncles were sent into exile on the island of St Helena. By then Harriette Colenso was already on her way to England determined to bring his case before the British politicians and public and persuade the government to return the Zulu princes to Zululand where Dinuzulu, as heir to the Zulu throne, should be allowed the opportunity to lead his people in rebuilding the nation which Britain had treated so cruelly for the past decade.

She travelled on the *Grantelly Castle* with her mother Sarah Frances, and her sister Agnes Mary. On the same vessel was Baden-Powell and General Smyth, newly decorated for his role in "suppressing the Zulu rebellion" - and here he will find it on board the same steamer, as irrepressible as ever! poor man." wrote Harriette Colenso.³⁹ The Colenso and Baden-Powell families knew one another. In the mid-century controversies on the nature of science and religion Professor Baden-Powell and Bishop Colenso had been allies. But on this voyage their children, now opponents on the Zulu question, did not speak with one another. And yet they had something in common. Baden Powell had amongst his trophies the *iziqu* he was to claim belonged to Dinuzulu. Harriette Colenso carried *iziqu* with her as well – not as the trophy of the conqueror but as the emissary of the Usuthu, charged with bringing their case to the people of England so that justice might be done. While in Britain she had to report back to her allies in Zululand and their leaders on St Helena. The effectiveness of her letters to them was necessarily limited not only by the effects of official surveillance but more significantly by the fact that the men and women she wanted to reach could not read. But the Colensos had always set great store in the photograph as a means of communication and Harriette Colenso paid particular attention to having photographs taken while she was in England campaigning for the Usuthu in the 1890s.

³⁹ Natal Archives. Colenso collection. HEC to Kate Giles, Friday. For letters to Kate Giles see Box 73.

Some were portraits of herself. Others photographs were of the Colenso family who were so closely associated through their fathers with Dinuzulu kaCetshwayo. When these photographs arrived in Natal, Zululand and St Helena the fact that she held the *tshokobezi*, the white cow's tail worn by the Usuthu, confirmed her continued commitment to their cause. And clasped in her hands, or held out to view by Agnes, or draped around Nozela's neck, were *iziqu*, confirming to all he saw the photographs, and knew the meaning of the wooden beads, that here were people without fear and prepared to sacrifice all for the Zulu cause, and that their case, the "main arguments", "foundation facts", *isiqu sendaba*, were before the parliament and the people of Great Britain.



The Colenso family in London in the early 1890s. Their mother Sarah Frances sitting in the centre. Frank and Robert Colenso on the left and right and their wives in the sitting and standing near them. Harriette in the centre standing holds *tshokobezi* and *iziqu* a strand of which Agnes makes sure is not hidden from the camera. Their nephew, Eric, known to Dinuzulu as Nondela, sits on his father's lap with *iziqu* around his neck and it would seem a doll of some kind with must have sort of association with the exiled Usuthu.

The Usuthu cause however failed. There was never enough support in this era of "new imperialism" for women fighting for African autonomy. British Zululand was incorporated into Natal in 1890 and Dinuzulu was returned but stripped of authority and he and Harriette Colenso were soon to be caught up in that horror of colonial violence which history knows as the Bhambatha Rebellion. Baden Powell of course went on to more African victories emerging as one of the Empire's great figures, enabling him to revive and incorporate his memories of conquest and trophies of war into the rituals and iconography of the Boy Scout movement. But, on the other side, with the defeat of the Usuthu so its symbols declined to be preserved in museum cabinets as records of extinct practices and dead beliefs, or transformed into symbols of new struggles and victories in different fields.

References to the beads awarded for "exceptional courage in the field of battle"⁴⁰ can be found occurring sporadically in the literature. In 1963 Mangosuthu Buthelezi was reported as having sent *iziqu* to a scout leader in Canada. Four "replicas of Dinuzulu's Necklace" were made by "European Rover Crews in Natal and Zulu Scouts" and taken to the 12th World Jamboree in Idaho in 1967. And in

1987 Chief Minister Mangosuthu Buthelezi of KwaZulu was the guest of honour at a huge Scout rally [where] the Chief Scout of South Africa, Garnet de la Hunt, took from around his neck a thong on which four Wood Badge beads were hung, and handed it to Chief Buthelezi, in a symbolic act of returning the beads to their rightful heir.⁴¹

In 1996 an exhibition of "the material culture of the Zulu People" included two *iziqu* under the title "Valour-Award Necklace" with the incorrect information that they were "last awarded in the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879" and this is now being repeated in tourist-orientated coffee-table books on Zulu culture.⁴²

At the time of writing (early May 1999) however there are signs that *iziqu* are in the process of undergoing a major revival and substantial transformation. It would seem as if an important factor in this is the newly unveiled Isandlwana monument. It has been created by the sculptor Gert Swart and is in the form of a huge necklace cast in bronze which includes *iziqu*. Already this monument is reworking traditions, moving them away from the recognition of valour against the enemy in times of military conquest towards a yearning for tolerance and reconciliation in a rainbow nation. Staff at KwaZulu-Natal museums are being asked increasingly about *iziqu* and the monument. And in a letter in the press on the Isandlwana monument the process by which traditions are re-created is almost tangible:

My initial reaction to the *iziqu* was bewilderment. While I recognised the famous chest and horns formation in which it is laid, I drew a blank on the necklace itself. What a refreshing experience then to learn of the story behind the *iziqu*. Unlike most other military traditions whose medals of valour are bestowed upon the recipient, the *iziqu* is created by the warrior himself after being identified by the king as having distinguished himself in battle.

⁴⁰ For example J. L. Smail. *With Shield and Assegai*. Cape Town: Timmins, 1969, 32.

⁴¹ I first came across this reference on a webpage called "African Seeds of Scouting" at <http://www.scouting.org.za/scouts/seeds/> but the original source in article by Elwyn Jenkins. "Tradition borrowed and returned. The wood badge beads", *Lantern*, Spring 1995.

⁴² *Zulu treasures. Amagugu kaZulu*. KwaZulu Cultural Museum and the Local History Museums: 1996. The catalogue notes that *iziqu* were normally buried with the owner - an interesting observation, if it could be validated.

I found the image of a warrior carefully crafting his own *iziqu* after confronting the violence and brutality of war moving and sympathetic. It seems to me that apart from its military aspects this ritual embodies remedial and healing qualities as well - serving as a kind of occupational therapy. This, together with its inherent themes of creativity and reconstruction for me make it a wonderful dedication, not only to the Zulu fallen, but to the English who died as well (not to mention the obvious symbolic reference to our present situation).⁴³

Within the last two weeks *iziqu* have appeared at the curio shop at the Rorke's drift museum. For R25 one can buy six pieces of doweling, "*Hand made*" and "*Crafted by Paddy*", on a thong to which is attached a tag: "*Iziqu. A Zulu symbol of Courage ... Painstakingly crafted from willow wood, the Zulu symbol of courage in battle*"

Observers of the politics and the history of KwaZulu Natal would do well to monitor the contemporary and future progress of these small pieces of wood – in their new manifestations they should continue to gather new meanings in new contexts, even as their fixed timeless, traditional powers are asserted. (Unless of course a modernist, reflexive, analytical, historical self-consciousness deprives them of their considerable symbolic power.)

⁴³ "The story behind the monument". Letter by Patrick Makkink, *The Natal Witness*, 6 February 1999.