

DINGANE'S ATTACK ON LOURENÇO MARQUES IN 1833

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IN 1855 J. William Colenso wrote that he believed that one of the first British settlers in Natal, Henry Francis Fynn, regarded 'the memory of Shaka, notwithstanding his great cruelties, with some respect, and considers him to have been a man of spirit and genius, and not merely a brutal and abominable despot, like his brother Dingaan. He thinks that his severities were, in a manner, almost necessary—like those of Napoleon or Robespierre, to maintain his power.'¹

In a recent paper Felix Okoye² pointed out that Dingane's 'brutalities' make sense if we accept the same frame of explanation proposed by Colenso for Shaka's actions. Dingane had to deal with problems different from Shaka's, among them those caused by the presence of Europeans living at Port Natal. It would also be somewhat off the mark to regard Dingane's reign as only a period of decay. At least until 1835 the Zulu were still expanding northwards into the area inhabited by the Tsonga. It is even possible that Manukuza Soshangana, king of the Gaza Nguni or Shangana, who is reputed to have sojourned in an area north of the Save river probably between 1836 and 1838,³ left the Limpopo area where he had been living before in order to be less exposed to a Zulu attack.

Dingane's attack on Lourenço Marques should be seen against this background of Zulu expansion, though the events themselves may be interpreted as a reaction on the part of some Tsonga chiefs and the Zulu king himself to the actions of one particular governor against whom and whose personal dependents their attack was directed. In so far as the hostilities were directed against one person or one group of Europeans only, there is a parallel to Dingane's contemplated attack on Cane in 1831 and to the assault on Piet Retief's and other Boer groups in 1838.

The main outline of the events described below is known, as they have been treated by A. Lobato, J. D. Omer-Cooper and J. J. Teixeira Botelho, whose accounts differ from that advanced by Theal, who underrated the importance of the Zulu in the area of Lourenço Marques and ascribed to

¹ John William Colenso, *Ten Weeks in Natal: A journal of a first tour of visitation among the colonists and Zulu Kafirs of Natal* (Cambridge, 1855), 224.

² Felix N. C. Okoye, 'Dingane: a reappraisal', *J. Afr. Hist.* x, 2 (1969), 237-52. I am indebted to Professor J. D. Fage for sending me an advance copy of this article and for some constructive criticism on an earlier draft which also benefited from helpful comments from Dr Shula Marks and Mr David Hedges. I also have to thank Janet Hinshaw and Peggy Luswazi for correcting my English.

³ cf. A. Grandjean, 'L'invasion des Zoulou dans le sud-est Africain,' *Bull. de la Soc. Neuchâteloise de Géogr.* xi (1899), 75-7; G. Liesegang, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Reiches der Gaza Nguni im südlichen Moçambique, 1820-1895* (Köln 1968), 51-2.

the Gaza Nguni more importance than they had before 1840.⁴ The emphasis therefore is on the social and political conditions between 1829 and 1833.

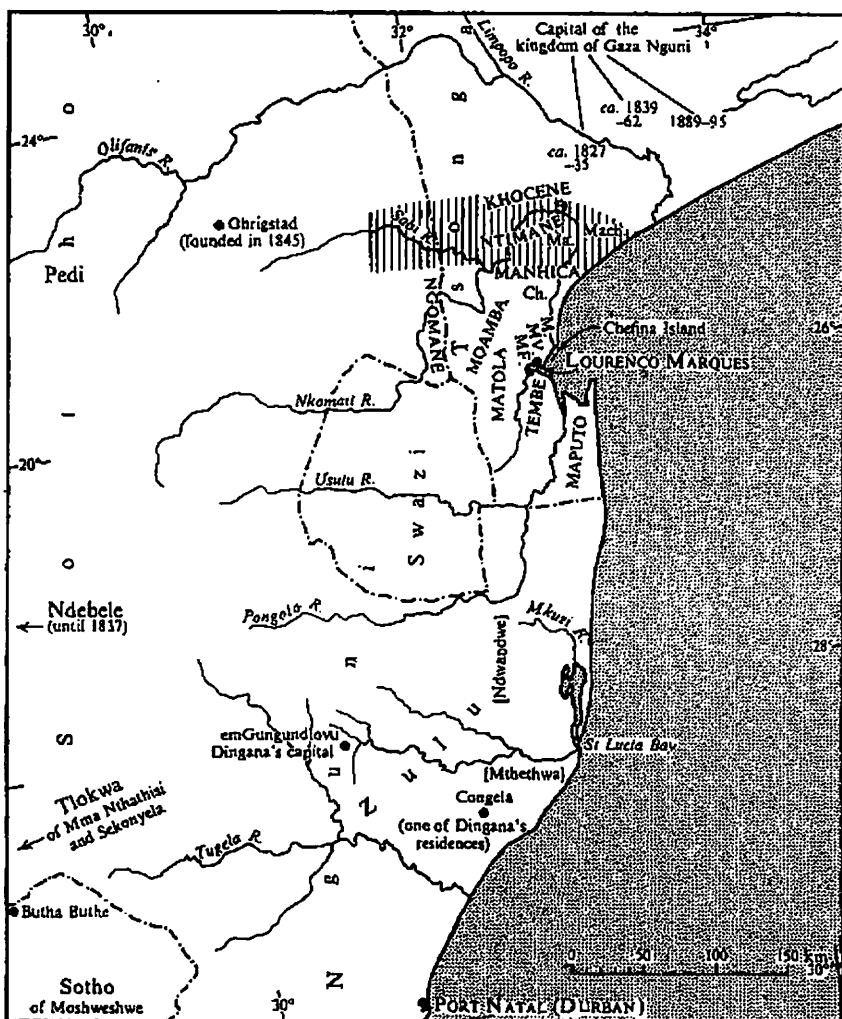


Fig. 1. The shaded area shows the approximate northern limit of the area inhabited by peoples paying tribute to Dingane in 1835. — Modern international boundaries. Ch., Chirinda; Ma., Mamalungo; Mach., Machichongue; MF., Mafumo; M., Magaia; MV., Mavota. Less-known political units only shown for the neighbourhood of Lourenço Marques.

⁴ Alexandre Lobato, *Quatro estudos e uma evocação para a história de Lourenço Marques* (Lisbon, 1961); John D. Omer-Cooper, *The Zulu Aftermath* (London, 1966), 43; J. J. Teixeira Botelho, *História militar e política dos Portugueses em Moçambique de 1833 aos nossos dias* (Lisbon, 1936); G. McC. Theal, *History of South Africa from 1795 to 1872*, v, 3rd ed. (1920), 128-40.

I

In 1829 Lourenço Marques was little more than a fortified trading post. A garrison was maintained by the Portuguese government to prevent other European powers from taking possession of Delagoa Bay, but this hardly restricted the activity of British, French and American ships coming to trade.

The trade was of two kinds: (a) to obtain foodstuffs and (b) to obtain export goods. Export goods consisted of ivory, hippopotamus teeth, rhinoceros horns, slaves, ambergris, etc. (Slaves were important for Lourenço Marques from about 1825 to 1831. They were exported mainly to Brazil and French territories.) Foodstuffs were needed chiefly for the garrison, and consisted of cereals (maize and millet), cattle and (for the crews of European ships) also vegetables. The Africans exchanged these commodities for brass bangles (*manilhas de pescoço* or *m. de mão*), beads (several varieties) and cloth (mainly dark blue cotton).⁵

It seems that before 1826 most of the supercargoes of the ships visiting Delagoa Bay purchased either directly from chiefs and African traders, who were not controlled by the Portuguese, or from the garrison. Governors and officers were trading on a large scale. There was probably only one European who lived on trade alone. To obtain the necessary trade and European consumer goods, many of the Europeans at Lourenço Marques had fixed trade partners in Moçambique or on Brazilian ships. The system of trade changed a little when a trading company, which had received a monopoly for the ivory trade of Delagoa Bay, established a 'factory' at Lourenço Marques in 1826. As it purchased directly from the Africans, it competed with the garrison. This competition had its repercussions in government records.⁶

The population which was living inside Portuguese territory in 1829 may be divided into three sections:

(1) Government personnel, including soldiers, civil servants and their respective retinues of slaves and servants. Two or three Europeans, principally engaged in trade but probably independent from the company, could also be included here.

(2) The company agent and other employees (probably three to seven Europeans and a number of slaves of the company).

⁵ cf. Lobato, *Quatro Estudos*; [Henry Francis] Fynn, Delagoa Bay, in Theal, *Records of S.E. Africa*, II, 479-488; Francisco Santana, *Documentação Avulsa Moçambicana do Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino*, 1 (Lisbon, 1964), 902, 1104; Nathaniel Isaacs, *Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa*, ed. L. Herrman (Cape Town, 1936-7), II, 280-3. When Isaacs visited Delagoa Bay in June/July 1831, he found 11 ships there, most of them American whalers.

⁶ Lobato, *Quatro Estudos*, 123-8; Santana, *Documentação*, I, 202-4, 215, 268, 535, 572 and passim; Lisbon, Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino (A.H.U.), Moç. Cxa 77, X. Schmid v. Belliken to GCG, 21 July 1826. Portuguese government staff in East Africa was still at that time generally paid with cloth supplied by the government, and mainly used it to trade with. Guns or muskets, a staple of the trade with the Makua in northern Moçambique, do not seem to have been in demand at Lourenço Marques at this time.