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Dear Peter,

When I arrived at the University of Oxford on October 11, I knew almost nothing about the people, language, culture or politics of South Africa's Zulu "nation." Even now, almost three months later, I feel as if I have pieced together one small corner of a giant jigsaw puzzle. I have an idea of what the picture looks like, but I won't know for sure until I've connected all the interlocking pieces.

As you know, here at Oxford I am a fellow in the Reuter Foundation Program for journalists. Each fellow is expected to produce a substantial piece of writing during his or her time in the program. I've spent my time learning as much as I can about the Zulu nation, past and present. And, so, that's the focus of my research paper, as well as my first Institute newsletter.

What follows is a version of my research paper. As you'll see, my conclusion is extremely vague. However, I didn't feel comfortable drawing any serious conclusions, either in my newsletter or in my research paper. Two years from now maybe I'll feel confident enough to make some judgement calls. For now, I prefer to just wait and see what happens.

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INTRODUCTION

In April of this year, South Africa brought to power its first democratically-elected black president. And, day-by-day, the ANC-led, National Unity government of President Nelson Mandela strives to change the glaring disparities in living standards between whites and the five-to-one black majority.

Needless to say, the challenge of reconciliation and reconstruction is enormous: There's a critical shortage of housing in townships, a backlog in black education (an estimated 800,000 to 2 million children should be in school but aren't), and the unemployment rate is as high as 50 percent..

And the list of challenges doesn't end there. South Africa also faces a unique complexity: It has eight kings, representing some 3,000-plus royal families and traditional leaders, and each wants influence and recognition in post-apartheid South Africa. How to reconcile the role of traditional leaders and indigenous law in a democratic system is a matter of serious concern for the new government.

The Zulu people comprise South Africa's largest ethnic group and their king is Goodwill Zwelithini, a 45-year-old Christian with five wives and the 8th monarch of the Zulu nation. kwaZulu-Natal is heartland to South Africa's 8.5 million Zulu people and one of nine new regions that came into existence with the April 26-28 elections.

Two days before the democratic elections that ended white rule in South Africa, King Zwelithini demanded a sovereign kingdom. He feared that the monarch's role would be diminished in a unitary state.

Zwelithini's uncle, Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi -leader of South Africa's third largest parliamentary party, the Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP)- threatened to boycott the first all-race elections if the constitutional role and status of the Zulu monarchy were not secured. Moreover, he warned South Africa of possible civil war.

At the 11th hour, the King and Buthelezi abandoned their stance but only after the African National Conference and the National Party approved changes in the country's interim constitution to reinforce the king's position. And, perhaps more importantly, the ANC and National Party promised international mediation after the election to resolve the king's constitutional concerns.

Just 24 hours before the all-race elections, nearly three million hectares of kwaZulu-Natal land was transferred to the King by way of a trust created by former state President F. W. de Klerk. The King reportedly now controls 10 times more land than the 9th Duke of Buccleuch, listed in the Guinness Book of Records as the biggest landowner in the world. And its worth is conservatively estimated at $194 million.[1]

Clearly, the Zulu monarch enjoys a unique position to influence future developments. When the King lifted his decree against the elections, it meant the difference between voting and not voting for millions of Zulus in the kwaZulu-Natal region. Such pre-election wins and concessions would seem to enshrine the Zulu nation's future. But that's not necessarily the case. International mediators have, yet, to meet on the king's position. There's speculation that the government is either stalling or planning to renege on its promise.

In the meantime, violence, political rivalries and feuding among Zulu royals seems to be tearing at the seams that bind Zulu unity. King Zwelithini is engaged in a complex power struggle with Buthelezi, who is Minister of Home Affairs in the National Unity government. Political analysts speculate that a split between the two will shift the balance of political power in the region, which is among the poorest in South Africa.

Rival clans in kwaZulu-Natal are feuding over "land, resources, women and cattle. Warriors armed with assault rifles, spears and hatchets and 'protected' by a witch doctor's battle medicine tear into each other." [2] And, as the population grows, the problem may get worse.

Vicious political warring poses, yet, another deadly threat to unity. Faction fighting between Nelson Mandela's African National Conference and the Inkatha Freedom Party reportedly has claimed between 10,000 and 15,000 lives in the province in the past decade. Peace workers also estimate that violence has displaced up to a half million people.

In this paper, I will explore the various forces that threaten Zulu unity, as well as consider the kingdom's future in South Africa's new democratic system. More specifically, I will examine the division between King Zwelithini and his uncle, Chief Buthelezi; violence in kwaZulu-Natal, and the possible effects of political shifts within kwaZulu-Natal.

THINGS FALL APART

The Zulu nation is relatively young, only about 175-years-old. It was brought together by the warrior King Shaka, who wielded together groups of disparate clans into a unified Zulu kingdom.

Ironically, feuding over this year's annual celebration marking the death of Shaka lead King Zwelithini "to sever all ties" with Chief Buthelezi, self-proclaimed "traditional prime minister" to the king. That decision then led to another. Since announcing the split with his uncle on September 20, the King has worked to "wrest custodianship of Zulu traditionalism" from the Inkatha Freedom Party.[3] Up till now, the Inkatha Freedom Party and Zulu identity had been viewed as indivisible.

It all started when the King sent a letter inviting President Mandela to be guest of honor at Shaka celebrations. Buthelezi was furious that he had not been consulted about the letter to his arch political rival, whose ANC party has been trying to lure the King to their side. Nevertheless, he agreed to meet with the King and Mandela to consider the matter.

During the meeting at the royal palace in Nongoma, however, one hundred or so Inkatha supporters arrived, bent on disrupting the proceedings. "They jeered at Mr. Mandela, threw stones at his helicopter and damaged the royal grounds." Worse yet, they praised Buthelezi with a Zulu greeting traditionally reserved for the king: "Bayete" meaning "Hail" or "Great One."[4]

Later it emerged that an anonymous leaflet had been circulated in Ulundi, urging people to stand up for Buthelezi. The pamphlet reportedly said he was being "degraded" and that the leader of the communists (Mandela) was trying to "disturb the unity of the Zulus." Insulted, the King announced on September 20 his decision to break with his uncle. He also canceled Shaka Day celebrations, saying the nation should hold a day of prayer instead. But Buthelezi ignored his nephew, insisting that cancellation was out of the question. He even indicated that dangerous times may lie ahead if the event were canceled. "The celebrations should go on because any cancellation is bound to inflame anger against the King. It is best for the celebration to go on...that will also protect the King," Buthelezi said in a report by John Carlin for *The Independent* of London.

Sure enough, Buthelezi held celebrations in the kwaZulu-Natal town of Stanger, where the 19th century king is buried. An estimated 10,000 people attended. Zwelithini, meanwhile, reportedly accepted army protection from some angry subjects. The dispute over the Shaka celebrations led to another, even more public, fracas. On September 25, two million South African TV viewers watched Buthelezi storm into a Durban studio during a live broadcast and scuffle with Prince Sifiso Zulu, an adviser to Zwelithini.

News reports say that Chief Buthelezi was at the Durban studios of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) for an interview about the dispute over the invitation to Mandela to attend the Shaka ceremony. Once his interview was over, Buthelezi watched on closed circuit a debate between Prince Zulu and the Inkatha MP Themba Khoza. Prince Zulu and Khoza were supposed to talk about the weekend Shaka Day festivities, which the King had canceled and Buthelezi held in defiance. However, they never got around to it. An enraged Buthelezi, accompanied by a group of his personal bodyguards, burst into the studio, advanced toward the prince and demanded: "What are you saying about me?"

Viewers saw a scuffle, blows and bodies surround Prince Zulu, who claimed that a ranting Buthelezi poked and prodded him with a ceremonial stick, according to Reuter News reports. They also saw a gun emerge. By the time the dust had settled, Prince Zulu was nowhere to be seen and Buthelezi had taken his place in the studio chair. He proceeded to school TV viewers on Zulu political protocol. He claimed that the prince had no right to speak on behalf of the royal family. What's more, he said it was unacceptable for a mere

junior prince such as Prince Zulu ("He's younger than my own children.") to question his credentials. Meanwhile, scores of Buthelezi supporters reportedly arrived at the entrance of the SABC studios, brandishing weapons.

Prince Zulu was subsequently charged with illegal possession of an Olympic .22 revolver and eight live rounds of ammunition, according to news reports. The cabinet censured Buthelezi, and Mandela ordered him to make a public apology. Buthelezi obliged, but the apology has not meant an end to his problems.

The incident at the Royal Palace and the on-screen ruckus both highlight the complex struggle between Buthelezi and his nephew. From all appearances, it seems that they are engaged in a battle for the loyalty and control of the Zulu nation. The division between the two royals doesn't begin and end with just them. Its effect has pitted chief against chief, leaving traditional leaders in the unenviable position of deciding where to pledge their allegiance.

Choosing sides is not simply a matter of pledging loyalty to either Buthelezi or the King. There's a third factor -the ANC. ANC provincial leaders in kwaZulu-Natal have campaigned for no less than four years to woo the King, along with the hundreds of junior princes (*abantwana*), chiefs (*amakhosi),* and headmen (*izinduna)* who comprise the monarch's leadership, according to an October report of *Africa Confidential.*

While the ANC won comfortably at the national level (62.6 percent), Inkatha officially won kwaZulu-Natal, with 50.3 percent of the vote (41 of the 81 provincial seats). The ANC won 32.2 percent (26 seats). In local elections next year, the backing of the King will be pivotal for kwaZulu-Natal. Control of the province could swing to the ANC, if Zwelithini opposes Buthelezi. kwaZulu-Natal is the only province Inkatha controls and the only provincial government, apart from the National Conservative Party in the Western Cape, not held by the ANC.

And so, when television cameras zoomed in on the scuffle between Buthelezi and Zwelithini's adviser, it was, as one newspaper reporter put it, a picture of a man "fighting for political survival."

"AN APPETITE FOR POWER"

A lot has been written about 66-year-old Mangosuthu G. Buthelezi and the writers generally fall into one of two categories: They either love him or hate him. And most appear to hate him. Or, perhaps it's better to say they hate his politics.

"An Appetite for Power: Buthelezi's Inkatha and South Africa" is the title of a book co-authored by Gerhard Mare and Georgina Hamilton. The authors take a critical view of Buthelezi and his Inkatha Freedom Party.

Essentially, they maintain that Buthelezi created Inkatha in 1975 to further his political ambitions. In their view, he appropriated Zulu traditions to serve his own purposes and he dragged the King along, realizing the monarch's power and influence.Worse yet, they suggest that Inkatha is at "the heart of violence" in kwaZulu-Natal. And, indeed, it has been reported that prior to the elections a close relationship existed between Inkatha vigilantes, the South African police and the kwaZulu police.s *The Weekly Mail*, a South African newspaper, reported last June that several Inkatha officials had been linked to hit-squad activities. The weekly based its report on findings from the Goldstone Commission of Inquiry into the Prevention of Public Violence, which was set up by former President F. W. de Klerk to investigate public violence and recommend steps to curb violence in South Africa.

Buthelezi has been described as a man prone to erratic behavior, quick to fly off the handle. *Criticism,* he reportedly doesn't take well. He is pro-capitalist and was against international sanctions against South Africa. Critics vilified him for not supporting sanctions; as well, he has been criticized for supporting Zulu people who apply for jobs left vacant by striking workers.

But in his and their defense, Buthelezi has said Zulu people need the jobs.
"When we go for the jobs that are open because the ANC calls for strikes, we are called scabs," he said during an address to a gathering of Inkatha Freedom Leaders in August 1992. "But we have come to the cities to work to feed our families and we get work because we work hard and well, we are disciplined and committed. We deserve the jobs if people want to strike, or we will help people if they are intimidated into striking."

Buthelezi reportedly neither drinks nor smokes. He was the first Zulu chief to earn a university degree (BA Fort Hare, 1950), and he was the first to marry only once. (His father, Chief Mathole, had 20 wives). Buthelezi's wife is Princess Irene; they met while she was a nursing student in Johannesburg. They married in 1952, when Buthelezi was 24. They have three sons and four daughters.[5]

He also professes Christianity as his faith. Two years ago, during a speech in which he vehemently denied allegations that Inkatha has instigated violence in his home region, he told kwaZulu civil servants: "I try to lead a Christian life, and I will never sanction violence for party political gain. To others amongst us who are Christian let me remind you that the golden thread which goes right through our Christian ethic is: 'Do unto others as you would like done unto you.'" Some political analysts believe that Buthelezi's Christian ethic is based more on the principle of "an eye for an eye." And they point to revenge attacks among clans as proof. Indeed, many worry that revenge attacks will continue in kwaZulu-Natal for years go come.

Buthelezi took over the leadership of the Buthelezi clan in 1954 and became recognized by the state as legitimate chief in 1957. He was elected head of the Zululand Territorial Authority in 1970 and the kwaZulu Legislative Assembly in 1972. In 1977, the self-governing territory of kwaZulu was established and Buthelezi was appointed chief

minister. In 1975, he created Inkatha, also called the National Cultural Liberation Movement.

As an aside, the word Inkatha originally was used to describe an artifact, not a movement. Author Nicholas Cope explained its significance in his book "To Bind A Nation," which examines Solomon kaDinuzulu and Zulu nationalism. He wrote: "It was a sacred coil containing substances of metaphysical significance, bound circularly in woven grass. The *inkatha* had customarily hung from the roof in the Zulu King's residence, representing the unity of the Zulu nation and embodying the spiritual essence (*insila*) of the Zulu people. It had also served as a symbol of the state and of the "super power" of the Zulu kingship. The *inkatha* had been passed down from king to king until 1879, when it was destroyed as British redcoats fired King Cetshwayo's principal residence at Ondini, which is today known as Ulundi."

There was also an Inkatha movement that predated the one created by Buthelezi. That Inkatha was founded in 1928 by Solomon ka Dinuzulu, late uncle of Buthelezi. In 1879, after the British defeat of King Cetshwayo's forces, zululand was divided into 13 small areas, with the zulu king based at Nongoma. Solomon founded Inkatha to try and unify the Zulu nation in the face of its forced fragmentation. However, the movement to preserve the Zulu heritage collapsed within a few years.

When Buthelezi revived/created the present-day Inkatha, he said he did so to oppose fragmentation imposed by the apartheid government and to emphasize the unity of the black people of South Africa. To further that end, he refused to accept independence for kwaZulu. He led a black homeland, yet vociferously opposed the homeland policy. Some praised him for leading a black homeland while opposing the homeland policy. But others labeled him a "sell-out" for participating in the "homeland charade" of the former nationalist government.

His determination to resist independence for kwaZulu led the South African government to try to replace him with Zwelithini in the 1970s. Zwelithini 's coronation was in December 1971; he was 23. He had been encouraged by the apartheid government and some royalists to believe that he could challenge Buthelezi for executive powers in the kwaZulu Assembly, author Stephen Taylor wrote in the recently published book, "Shaka's Children: The History of the Zulu People."

Taylor quotes an unidentified white official closely connected with the maneuverings who said: "Our department (Bantu Affairs) was trying to invest the king with as much power as possible, partly because they thought the king would ultimately be the most powerful voice in Zulu politics, but also because they wanted to undermine Buthelezi." In the end, Zwelithini proved no match for his uncle. News reports recount that he literally fled the kwaZulu Assembly, reportedly in tears, after being subjected to a grueling inquisition by Buthelezi. Prince Sifiso Zulu, who witnessed the scene, apparently has never forgiven Buthelezi for shaming the King.

To make sure that Zwelithini did not attempt such a thing again, the kwaZulu Legislative Assembly prohibited him from participating in party politics. On January 19, 1976, he took this oath:

"I, Zwelithini Goodwill Zulu kaBekuzulu, presently the Ngonyama of the Zulus, pledge to the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly here present and to the Zulu nation my solemn word that I will withhold myself from any participation in any form of politics and from any action or words which could possibly be interpreted as participation in politics. I pledge further that I will honor in thought, word and deed the letter and spirit of the KwaZulu government." (*Africa World News*: "KwaZulu-Natal: Political Violence, Electoral Fraud and The Land Deal." Nov. '94-April '95)

And to make doubly sure Zwelithini was brought under control, Buthelezi reportedly threatened to cut off his stipend. Zwelithini became, for all intents and purposes, a symbolic head of the Zulu nation, while Buthelezi retained real control for himself.

ROYAL PAINS

While the animosity between Zwelithini and his uncle dates back to the 1970s, more serious problems erupted during the build-up to the all-race elections in April.

Buthelezi and Zwelithini often appeared together at political rallies. And it appeared that they wanted the same things, namely the guarantee of land and self-determination for the monarchy in a post-Apartheid South Africa.

Their demand for sovereignty led the Negotiating Council of the Multi-Party Negotiating Process to change South Africa's interim constitution to provide for "the institution, role, authority and status of a traditional monarch" in kwaZulu-Natal.

In real terms that means the King may open and close the kwaZulu-Natal provincial assembly and lead a house of traditional leaders. (Though, the traditional leaders enjoy advisory powers only.) Zwelithini also gets a budget to look after the royal house. (Though, there again, the power to actually pass the budget rests with the provincial government.) In effect, the King has no executive powers, just power and influence on customary and traditional matters.

Since the elections, Buthelezi has changed his view about sovereignty for the Zulu kingdom. Now he says there is no place for an independent Zulu kingdom. What's more, his Inkatha-led provincial legislature recently passed a controversial House of Traditional Leaders Act. The King believes the act reduces him to the status of a chief and opens the doors for him to be "voted out" of his throne. "It gives politically aligned chiefs power to vary or withdraw my powers, functions and role," he told a Reuter news service correspondent. The royal family is threatening to battle the legislation in the Constitutional court.

The land transfer is another sticky matter. The Ingonyama Trust Act was enacted to ensure that land occupied or owned by tribes in kwaZulu-Natal would vest in them when the new constitution came into effect. Mr. de Klerk approved the bill on April 25, four days after it was passed by the kwaZulu government. The new law requires the King to administer the trust "for the benefit, material welfare and social well-being" of the communities that now fall under his way. He has power to deal with the land in accordance with Zulu law or any applicable law. However, he may not sell or lease the land without first obtaining the written consent of the traditional authority of the community whose land is involved, according to the November-April edition of the London-based magazine *Africa World Review*.

The kwaZulu-Natal land transfer was made public after the election and, from a public relations standpoint, the timing couldn't have been worse. By cutting the deal hours before the all-race elections, it appeared that Mr. de Klerk and Zwelithini had acted in secrecy, while the rest of South Africa had its eyes and attention focused on the historic elections. The disclosure caused such a public outcry that Mandela's cabinet on May 23 appointed a committee to investigate the act.

Buthelezi has said there was nothing secretive about the deal. The land in question had actually been transferred to the kwaZulu government three years ago and, hence, the transfer was simply a technical matter.

But despite his claims, the deal did not go over well with South Africa's seven other kings. At a June conference of the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (Contralesa), members reportedly protested the controversial deal, saying the king of the Zulus did not deserve preferential treatment above other royalty.

The cabinet committee appointed to investigate the land transfer reported its findings in June. Basically, the committee recommended that King Zwelithini remain guardian of the transferred land.

Land Affairs Minister Derek Hanekom, chairman of the committee, reported that the act does not make the King owner of the land "in the sense that it is his personal property. He holds the land as statutory trustee, subject to the existing rights of people."

"Furthermore, most of the land is already occupied," Hanekom told reporters at a June 15 news conference. "The majority of the land transferred to the trust has been occupied by tribes and communities since prior to 1913. The act will have limited impact on land redistribution and restitution."

That said, Hanekom added that the committee decided that the act should be amended or substituted because it "results in an unusual mixture of public and private law powers and functions. This complicates its interpretation and application, resulting in uncertainty and administrative problems."

The committee suggested the following amendments or substitutions:

- the act shall describe the functions and powers of the trustee (the King) and shall address issues dealing with alienation of land and resolution of tribal border disputes.
- the act should govern all tribally-owned land falling within the former territory of KwaZulu, subject to existing rights of occupants of the land.
- the act should provide that the land should be dealt with in accordance with a set of agreed principles
- the legislature should create a structure for managing the land which is sufficiently broadly based to ensure any unwarranted interference by any person or body. This should be done to allay any fears of possible illicit interference or manipulation.

The committee, working with a panel of legal experts, also recommended that the amendments to the act should be agreed to by the central government in discussions with the parliament.

THE BIG BREAK

Zwelithini wasted no time in trying to break away from his uncle once the elections concluded. The day after the presidential inauguration, he had lunch with Mandela and confided that he, too, had been a prisoner for 24 years -a prisoner of his uncle.[6]

The King said he had lived in fear of his uncle all these years. Buthelezi controlled his salary, his travel arrangements and even his security, by way of the kwaZulu Police. The King claimed that he had lived under virtual house arrest.

(Human rights monitors and others have alleged that Buthelezi deployed the kwaZulu police against his political enemies, royal family members included. It's a charge he denies. "While the ANC points fingers at kwaZulu police hit squads, everybody knows that it is they that have unleashed a campaign of terror against defenseless black communities in South Africa," Buthelezi said during a Dec. 19, 19993 address to a South Coast IFP Youth Rally.)

Mandela saw to it that new arrangements were made for the King. He is now guarded by the South African National Defense Force and his salary is paid by the central government in Pretoria. The new arrangement has allowed King Zwelithini to assume new freedoms, as well as better establish himself as a neutral monarch. He has come up with a peace and development plan in kwaZulu-Natal to unite Zulus and de-politicize the institution of traditional leaders. (Though, a survey in the Ulundi and Nongoma areas of kwaZulu-Natal revealed that the King had alienated rural people "in light of an apparently popular perception that he had abandoned his uncle's Inkatha Freedom Party," *The Star* of South Africa reported.)

Zwelithini is also urging his chiefs to be above politics. Partisanship by traditional leaders has resulted in the loss of thousands of lives, and he has expressed his hope that the bloodletting will end.

In the meantime, Buthelezi seems determined to keep close ties with his nephew. "I am still the king's man," Buthelezi has said told reporters. "...The IFP ran a veritable gauntlet by refusing to go into elections until there was some guarantee that his majesty's position and that of the kingdom of kwaZulu would be secured as a constitutional monarchy. I am confident that in the end his majesty and his successors will be grateful for the strong stands that I have taken." So far, however, the King appears not to have taken that view.

THE BITTER END

An Ethiopian friend once told me a saying that goes something like this: When two elephants fight, it is the grass underneath their feet that suffers. My friend's words spring to my mind when considering past and present struggles in the Zulu heartland of kwaZulu-Natal.

Black rural areas in kwaZulu-Natal are among the poorest in South Africa and many blacks barely survive on subsistence farming. Yet, as of late November, the kwaZulu-Natal provincial government reportedly had met only twice in the past six months. And when meetings were held, Inkatha and ANC members fought over whether the provincial capital should be at Ulundi or Pietermaritzburg.

And what about violence in kwaZulu-Natal? On Dec. 11, Reuter News Service reported that at least three people were badly hurt when a man armed with an AK-47 rifle opened fire on a commuter train as it passed a railway station on the outskirts of Durban. The attack was very near to where King Zwelithini was supposed to address a peace rally, but didn't show.

It seems that there are still scores to settle, political and otherwise, in kwaZulu-Natal. And, unfortunately, it may take years for people to feel that the wrongs committed against them have been avenged.

And then there's the political tug-of-war going on between the Inkatha Freedom Party and the ANC, with the King as the prize. South Africa Broadcast Corporation reported on Dec. 15 that some 300 chiefs in kwaZulu-Natal, among them Home Affairs Minister Buthelezi, gathered at Ulundi for an audience with the King. But the King reportedly was in bed sick. The next day, the chiefs blamed President Mandela for causing turmoil in the royal house.

King Zwelithini has compared his fight to preserve Zulu interests in kwaZulu-Natal to the battles his warrior ancestors fought against the British. But maybe it's time to let go of the

warrior image, stop looking at every situation as a pitched battle. Maybe it's time to construct a new Zulu image in the new South Africa.

One of my friends here at Oxford happens to be Zulu. But it's hard to get him to talk about what it means to be Zulu. He throws his hand in the air and says, "Aah, people think all Zulus are violent, walking around with spears and AK-47s." He hates all the talk about warriors and battles and fighting. And, he has nothing nice to say about Buthelezi.

My friend, a journalist with a wife and young daughter, told me that earlier this year he wrote a column in which he said he believes his King should stay out of politics, stay neutral. When the column appeared, he said his editor received an early morning telephone call. "We know where the two of you live," the caller warned. My friend said he and his editor just looked at each other. That's about all they could do.

One gray rainy day while sitting in Rhodes House Library reading "The Washing of the Spears," I ran across a surname identical to my friend's. The section dealt with a 1906 uprising staged by a "petty Natal Kaffir chieftain" who refused to pay a poll tax imposed on all unmarried male natives. The chief, joined by 150 followers, ambushed a police patrol, killing four Europeans. As might be expected, he and virtually all of his "warriors" were killed. "It was the last Zulu rising...," wrote author Donald G. Morris.

As it turns out, my friend is a great grandson of that chief. Yet, he doesn't know much of anything about him, other than his name and that "he fought the British over something to do with taxes." The irony for me is that my friend has a rich history, of which he knows little. By contrast, my history is largely a mystery.

I've encouraged my friend to write his memoirs. Though, he's a young man of 26. Three weeks ago, he handed me his first few pages, which recount a day from his childhood, and I want to share with you a few passages:

"On this particular day when there was nothing in the house to eat, I went out as usual to the bus, to meet the unknown. Somehow I always believed that one day someone would come and rescue us from our troubles. The bus represented contact with the outside world and fueled my hopes for salvation from the outside.

I boarded the bus just before the last stop. We always struggled with people who were getting out trying to get in first. Usually, this was met with backhands on the face and was not very nice. But we still struggled with them anyway. I got in eventually. The first thing was to start looking in the bus for leftover food that people had in town but could not finish for whatever reason.

I looked on the seats and there was nothing left over. Like a huge stone being placed on you, heavy with disappointment was the result if there was nothing. When I started looking underneath I saw what I could, at that time, only describe as a miracle -one big potato.

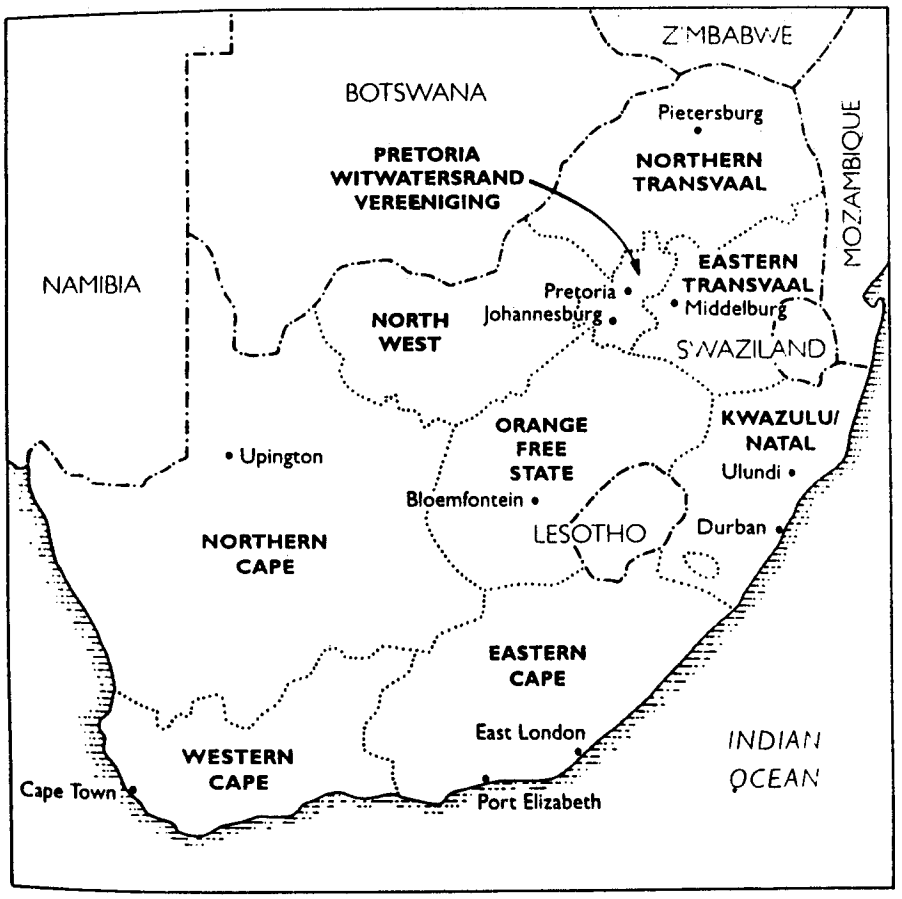
One big potato when there is nothing in the house was a miracle. Quickly I hid my potato...and started walking quite proudly towards home. After all, I had a potato and this meant a difference between starving and eating."

Peter, you may wonder why I've chosen to conclude my first newsletter with another person's words. Well, I've done so for two reasons: To me, my friend's story says more about the urgent needs in kwaZulu-Natal than most of the newspaper articles, books, magazines and broadcast texts I've examined.

My second reason is this: While my childhood experiences were vastly different from my friend's, I found it ironic that our respective histories do converge. He has his potato story and, as you may recall from the autobiographical sketch that I submitted for this fellowship, I have mine.

Best regards,

Sharon F. Griffin



SOUTH AFRICA TODAY

Map Credit: Shaka's Children: A History of the Zulu People by Stephen Taylor.

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[2]Bosch,Marius. "Old Feuds Continue in South Africa's Zulu Heartland." Reuter News Service. 28 Jun. 1994

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