

What Da Gama missed on his way to Sofala

Vasco da Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope on 22 November 1497. His three vessels entered the Bay of São Bras (Mossel Bay) on 25 November where they anchored for the next 13 days. After a fracas with the local Khoi community, they sailed on east, then northeast. By Christmas Day 1497 they had passed by 70 leagues the most easterly point that Bartolomeu Dias had reached, and Vasco da Gama named the land he saw Natal. Three days later, Da Gama's ship 'stopped off the coast'¹, apparently off Natal Bay. The record makes no mention of anyone on shore, and they sailed onwards after some successful fishing. Da Gama first made contact with Bantu-speaking agriculturists north of what is today Delagoa Bay, probably at the mouth of the Inharrime river in present-day Mozambique².

What might Da Gama have found, and whom might he have met, had he landed in his Natal? Archaeological evidence available for the period around 1500 is limited, and restricted entirely to hunter-gatherers, though we know a great deal more about the periods before 1400 and after 1700. There is some written historical evidence. In the century that followed Da Gama's voyage, contact with much of the KwaZulu-Natal coast was forced upon the Portuguese by foul weather and leaky vessels: the *São João* was wrecked near the present Port Edward³ in 1552 and the *São Bento* at Msikaba⁴ in 1554. Accounts of the experiences of these castaways provide only limited information about the local communities, though reports from crew members of the *São Thomé* (wrecked on the Zululand coast in 1589) and the *Santo Alberto* (wrecked on the Transkei coast in 1593) are more informative. In this paper, I draw on these sixteenth century records. I couple them with archaeological information from before and after Da Gama's voyage to provide a broader context for Portuguese comments, and in this way try to develop a picture of the people whom Da Gama would have met had he landed. However, I first establish that the land the Portuguese called Natal corresponds to at least part of present-day KwaZulu-Natal.

Interpretations of early Portuguese geography

Most commentators believe that Da Gama's Natal was what is today called Pondoland. This is, in part, based upon an interpretation of João de Lisboa's not-very-useful 1514 description of the southern African coast⁵. Stuckenberg's well-argued article elsewhere in this issue of *Natalia*, however, indicates that Da Gama

was probably off the KwaZulu-Natal South Coast on Christmas Day 1497, in the vicinity of present-day Hibberdene. Furthermore, Manuel de Mesquita Perestrello, in his 1575–76 survey of the southern African coastline, described the Land of Natal as extending from latitude 32° to 30° , thus encompassing the Pondoland and southern KwaZulu-Natal coast from Coffee Bay to Isipingo Beach, a little south of Durban⁶. Bell-Cross⁷ ignored the latitudes given, because elsewhere Perestrello had commented as follows:

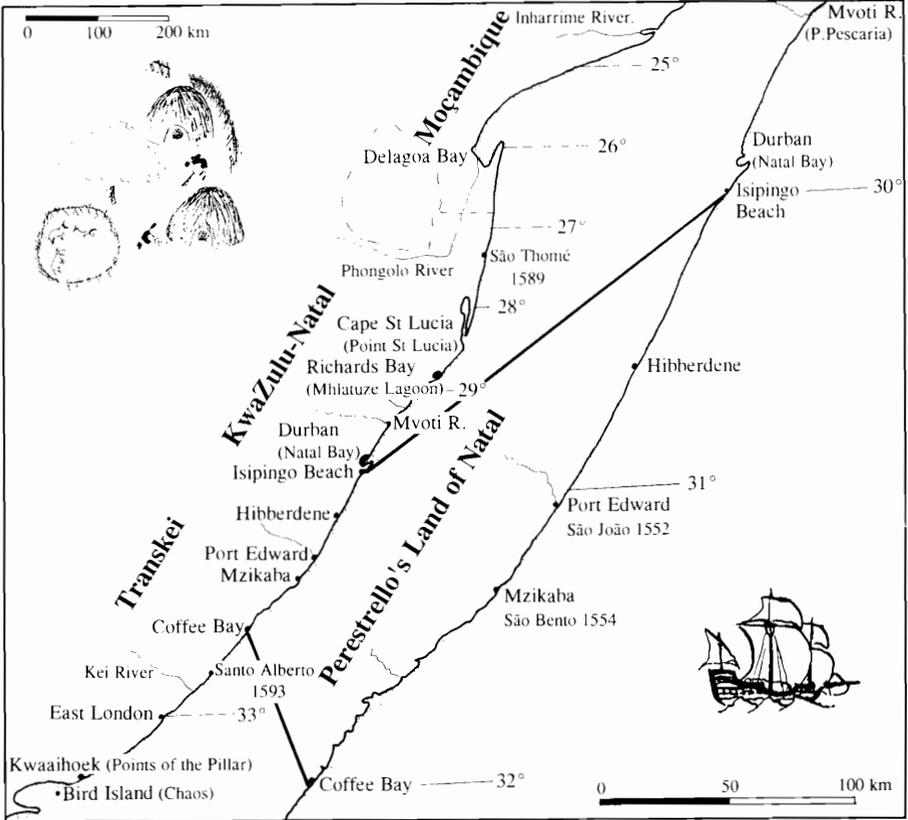
The Points of the Pillar are four leagues east of the islets Chaos, in latitude thirty-three degrees. The first part of the Land of Natal lies northeast at a distance of twenty-five leagues.⁸

The islets Chaos (Bird Islands in Algoa Bay) and the Points of the Pillar (Kwaaihoek, west of the Bushmans river mouth) are in fact separated by a straight-line distance of 5.9 leagues⁹, not far off Perestrello's measurement. Where Perestrello erred, however, was in placing Kwaaihoek at latitude 33° , rather than $33^{\circ} 43'$. It was presumably this error that led Bell-Cross to reject the latitude in favour of the established location of Kwaaihoek, when he placed the Land of Natal between the Buffalo river and a point north of the Mzimvubu¹⁰.

It is conceivable, though, that Perestrello measured the 25 leagues to the Land of Natal from latitude 33° , rather than Kwaaihoek. Natal itself extended a further 45 leagues from its southernmost point. These measurements, taken from latitude 33° , place the Land of Natal precisely between latitudes 32° and 30° , which is consistent with Perestrello's description. Support for this position is provided by the latitudes Perestrello gave for landmarks north of the Land of Natal. Point Pescaria lay 12 leagues north of Natal at latitude $29^{\circ} 20'$. Point St Lucia (Cape St Lucia), for which Perestrello gave an accurate latitude of $28^{\circ} 30'$, lay 15 leagues north of Point Pescaria. The identity of Point Pescaria is unknown, though it is often linked to the Durban Bluff¹¹. Measurements from Cape St Lucia southwards and from the 'last point' of Natal (latitude 30°) northwards place Point Pescaria tightly between $29^{\circ} 20'$ and $29^{\circ} 10'$, north of the Bluff. This matches Perestrello's reading. It would seem that the most likely identity of Point Pescaria is the Mvoti river mouth at $29^{\circ} 24'$. With its small rocky point and a hill that rises inland of it to a height of 108 m, it appears to match Perestrello's description much better than does the Bluff:

[It] is a point not very high, with small rocky ledges, and in the interior there is another larger one behind that on the coast, with many white patches.¹²

The internal coherence of coastal landmarks with Perestrello's latitude and distance measurements demonstrate beyond reasonable doubt that the land the Portuguese called Natal encompassed the entire KwaZulu-Natal coast south of Durban.



Places on the south-east coast of Africa mentioned in the text.

(Illustration by Val Ward)

The archaeological evidence

Sixteenth century reports indicate that Portuguese castaways on what is today the KwaZulu-Natal coast came into contact with people who were 'herdsmen and cultivators of the ground, by which means they subsist'¹³. Archaeological evidence shows that Bantu-speaking agriculturists first settled in southern Africa around AD 300. Bantu-speakers originated in the vicinity of modern Cameroon from where they began to move eastwards and southwards, some time after 400 BC, skirting around the equatorial forest. An extremely rapid spread throughout much of sub-equatorial Africa followed: dating shows that the earliest communities in Tanzania and South Africa are separated in time by only 200 years, despite the 3 000 km distance between the two regions. It seems likely that the speed of the spread was a consequence of agriculturists deliberately seeking iron ore sources and particular combinations of soil and climate suitable for the cultivation of their crops¹⁴.

The earliest agricultural sites in KwaZulu-Natal date to between AD 400 and 550. All are situated close to sources of iron ore, and within 15 km of the coast. Current evidence suggests it may have been too dry further inland at this time for successful cultivation. From 650 onwards, however, climatic conditions improved and agriculturists expanded into the valleys of KwaZulu-Natal, where they settled close to rivers in savanna or bushveld environments. There is a considerable body of information available about these early agriculturists¹⁵.

Seed remains show that they cultivated finger millet, bulrush millet, sorghum and probably the African melon. It seems likely that they also planted African groundnuts and cowpeas, though direct evidence for these plants is lacking from the earlier periods. Faunal remains indicate that they kept sheep, cattle, goats, chickens and dogs, with cattle and sheep providing most of the meat. Men hunted, perhaps with dogs, but hunted animals made only a limited contribution to the diet in our region. Metal production was a key activity, since it provided the tools of cultivation and hunting. The evidence indicates that people who worked metal lived in almost every village, even those that were considerable distances from ore sources. KwaZulu-Natal lacks rich copper ore sources. Consequently, the focus was on the production of iron items. However, small copper artefacts recovered from two KwaZulu-Natal sites suggest the possibility of trade networks with copper-rich areas north of the Phongolo river¹⁶.

Large-scale excavations in recent years have provided data indicating that first-millennium agriculturist society was patrilineal and that men used cattle as bridewealth in exchange for wives. On a political level, society was organised into chiefdoms that, in our region, may have had up to three hierarchical levels. The villages of chiefs tended to be larger than others, with several livestock enclosures, and some were occupied continuously for lengthy periods. Social forces of the time resulted in the concentration of unusual items on these sites. These include artefacts that originated from great distances, ivory items (which as early as AD 700 appear to have been a symbol of chieftainship), and initiation paraphernalia¹⁷.

This particular way of life came to an end around AD 1000, for reasons that we do not yet fully understand. There was a radical change in the decorative style of agriculturist ceramics at this time, while the preferred village locations of the last

four centuries were abandoned in favour of sites along the coastal littoral. In general, sites dating to between 1050 and 1250 are smaller than most earlier agriculturist settlements. It is tempting to see in this change the origin of the Nguni settlement pattern. Indeed, some archaeologists have suggested that the changes were a result of the movement into the region of people who were directly ancestral to the Nguni-speakers of today. Others prefer to see the change as the product of social and cultural restructuring within resident agriculturist communities¹⁸.

Whatever the case, it seems likely that this new pattern of settlement was in some way influenced by a changing climate, for there is evidence of increasing aridity from about AD 900. Furthermore, tree-ring data from a nearly 600-year-old yellowwood from KwaZulu-Natal suggest that the region may have been arid in the fourteenth century. Average annual rainfall increased in the 1400s, though the 1480s appear to have been dry. In contrast, the tree-ring data suggest that Da Gama sailed along the east coast of southern Africa in conditions wetter than those of the previous 200 years¹⁹.

Two sites dating to the period 1050–1250 have been excavated. The excavator of one suggested that the settlement originally contained 15 to 20 huts of about 5.5 m in diameter. These appear to have been of beehive construction, with one or more central posts. The agricultural technology appears to have remained essentially unchanged: people continued to plant crops, practise metallurgy and keep domestic animals. Men still hunted, while on the coast people fished and gathered shellfish as had been done for the previous 400 years²⁰.

From at least AD 1250, agriculturists moved for the first time into the grasslands of KwaZulu-Natal. Here they constructed settlements on hilltops, with low stone walls forming hut terraces and livestock enclosures. These structures are frequently enclosed within walling positioned, apparently, to augment the natural defenses of the hills, though the limited height of the walls would seem to negate this possibility. Several sites of this period are known, though only one has been excavated²¹.

The nature of the dwellings on these sites is uncertain, though they had well-prepared rammed-rubble floors, smeared probably with a mix of mud and dung. One floor preserved the impressions of a woven grass mat. Other evidence shows that communities in the grasslands cultivated sorghum and kept cattle, and it seems probable that they had other traditional African crops and animals. They used iron tools, though there is no evidence of the production of iron²². This is not surprising because there is very little wood in the grasslands that could be used to fire a furnace. Clearly, grassland communities must have received their tools from iron-producing people elsewhere. This new pattern of economic inter-dependence is substantially different from that of earlier centuries, and is one that continued into the colonial period nearly 500 years later²³.

No archaeological information on agriculturists in KwaZulu-Natal is available for the period between the early 1400s and the 1700s. Archaeological research of the later period has focused upon settlements built with stone, situated in the grasslands of KwaZulu-Natal. The visibility of these stone-built settlements makes them a convenient subject for research. Typically, each settlement has a livestock enclosure,

or several enclosures, at its centre. These are surrounded by dwellings and other structures such as grain-store foundations. Discrete settlements are frequently clustered, each situated within metres of its nearest neighbour. This pattern is interpreted as reflecting 'agnatic clustering', in which several men related through a common ancestor built settlements in close proximity to one another. There is only limited evidence of hierarchies, which suggests that chiefdoms of the time in these areas were relatively small in scale. Interestingly, various styles of settlement layout occur. These appear to have been culturally specific and governed by male cultural, but not political, affinities²⁴.

People of this time would have planted a range of crops. Evidence exists of both sorghum and cowpeas, but the cool, moist climate of the grasslands is less suited to African cereals than are conditions in lower-lying areas, and maize was widely cultivated²⁵. The introduction of this crop from the Americas by the Portuguese may have had far-reaching social implications. Maize has a higher carbohydrate yield per unit of labour and land than African cereals, and it is less susceptible to damage by birds. Furthermore, the adoption of maize as a staple crop allowed a significant expansion of people into areas that previously had little occupation by agriculturists²⁶.

The archaeological and associated oral-historical evidence for this time indicates that livestock, particularly cattle, was both a social and a more strictly economic resource. The animals provided food and leather, and were used by men as bridewealth for wives. Consequently, people within each chiefdom appear to have used the varying resources available to them to maximise herd growth²⁷.

The Portuguese records

Perestrello described the Land of Natal as high, with patches of sand along the sea and a rocky shore. Inland, it was fertile, well-peopled and with 'a great variety of animals tame and wild'²⁸. North of its northern boundary was Point Pescaria, for which Perestrello gives a latitude of 29° 20', a little north of Natal Bay, although the term Pescaria was elsewhere used for the Mhlathuze lagoon (present-day Richards Bay). Point Saint Lucia (Cape St Lucia) lay to the northeast at a latitude of 28° 30'. Perestrello described Lake St Lucia as being of 'good size, and with some swamps which continue for several leagues'. North of the lake lay the Land of Fumos, which extended to Delagoa Bay²⁹.

With the exception of hunter-gatherers, most people living in this territory spoke an Nguni language³⁰. This seems clear from a number of words that the Portuguese recorded during the 1500s. In particular, the terms *inkosi* for king or chief, *isinkwa* (sincoa) for bread, *halala* (alala) and a derivation of *nana* (nanhata) used for a greeting, suggest an Nguni language. So too does the name uBaba, given for a man who met the survivors of the *Santo Alberto* in 1593. Indeed, the *Santo Alberto* report confidently asserts that the language of nearly all people of Kaffraria is the same, differences only existing at a dialect level between one area and another. This may well have been the case for the area through which the *Santo Alberto* survivors travelled, but Hair has rightly questioned such a sweeping statement, drawing attention to inconsistencies in the meaning of the term Kaffraria and in the words

recorded³¹. The *Santo Alberto* report was compiled in 1597 by João Baptista Lavanha from the journal kept by the pilot who survived the wreck and subsequent journey to Delagoa Bay. Lavanha appears to have merged accounts of Khoi and Bantu-speakers in his brief ethnography of the people of Natal. It is possibly this conflation of data sources that is responsible for his recording the word *pombe* for beer, currently a Swahili word, in a primarily Nguni area.

Survivors of the four sixteenth-century wrecks along the KwaZulu-Natal coast followed one of two strategies in their efforts to return to Portugal. The crews and passengers of the *São João*, *São Bento* and *São Thomé* all travelled northwards along the coast, while the *Santo Alberto* survivors, aware of the hardships that earlier castaways had experienced on the coast, chose to journey inland. All were dependent upon food and drink they could gather or obtain through trade from local communities. The accounts describe a variety of crops. These include at least two cereals, one with a grain the size of a peppercorn, the other with grain like canary seed. These are probably sorghum and one of the millets. People ground the grain in wooden mortars or between two stones and used the flour to make a paste (possibly porridge), beer and a form of bread. African melons, groundnuts, beans³² and 'ameixoeira', described in different accounts as a grain and a pulse³³, were also cultivated. This range of plants is consistent with the archaeological evidence and with traditional practices documented in the recent past.

Livestock was abundant, particularly inland where survivors of the *Santo Alberto* travelled. This account contains descriptions of herds of 100 or more head of cattle, along with a note that these typically include more cows than bulls, and flocks of 200 sheep³⁴. These may be exaggerations, but it is worth noting that a young man from Bengal, wrecked with the *São João*, informed the *São Bento* party that 'the country was thickly populated and provided with cattle'³⁵, although this was apparently not evident from the near-coastal zone in which the *São Bento* survivors travelled. The animals provided meat, milk and 'butter', by which the Portuguese presumably meant *amasi* (sour milk). Interestingly, whereas castaways travelling along the coast mention goats, sheep were apparently the dominant small stock encountered by the *Santo Alberto* party. It seems unlikely that this was a case of mistaken identity, and limited archaeological support for the *Santo Alberto* account is provided by an eighteenth-century stone-walled site near present-day Bergville which yielded the remains of one sheep, 22 sheep or goats, but no certain goats³⁶. It is tempting to wonder whether this difference between inland and coastal livestock herds was culturally significant, or simply related to the differing environments. Agriculturists of sixteenth-century Natal probably considered chickens to be of limited importance, though they often offered them to the Portuguese in trade.

The Portuguese noted that local diets were not limited to the products of domesticated plants and animals, but that agriculturists also exploited a wide range of wild ones. Fishing appears to have been an important activity along the northern KwaZulu-Natal coast, and the *São Bento* survivors bought fish at the Mhlathuze lagoon. Perestrello, who was with the *São Bento* party, described a man fishing with traps in Delagoa Bay, while the *São Thomé* account mentions people fishing from

small craft in the general vicinity of the bay³⁷. Neither Perestrello's report, nor that of the *São João* ordeal, mentions fishing further south. Yet oral-historical and written information shows that people used fish traps in Natal Bay between about 1750 and 1824³⁸. This may have been a later development, for Álvaro Velho, chronicler of Da Gama's voyage, made no mention of any fishing in the bay, if this was indeed where Da Gama's fleet stopped on 28 December 1497³⁹.

The principal item of value that the Portuguese could offer in exchange for food, drink and guides was metal. The Nguni communities of the Land of Natal and further north clearly valued metal items, both for their novelty value and for their usefulness when reworked as tools or weapons. The *Santo Alberto* document urged the survivors of shipwrecks to burn the remains of their vessels, to extract the nails for trade, or toss them into the sea, thus increasing the value of the goods held by castaways⁴⁰. Archaeological and geological evidence from KwaZulu-Natal indicates that there is an uneven distribution of metal ores in the province⁴¹. This is reflected in the Portuguese accounts. At Msikaba and in the Land of Fumos to the north, for example, people carried fire-hardened wooden spears. Elsewhere, near the Thukela river, the *Santo Alberto* party noted that:

for the same amount of copper — of which they wear bracelets — for which the [people met earlier in the journey] gave three cows they would only give one, it not being so valuable among them, and they also accept calico, which the others would not accept. It is therefore proper to trade with copper and iron for the purchase of provisions until reaching this place, and to keep calico for this place and the country beyond, for this is what they demanded in exchange for cows⁴².

This contrast illustrates the differing access that people had to iron; the Thukela basin, unlike southern KwaZulu-Natal, Transkei and the plains north of Mhlathuze lagoon, has rich bodies of iron ore.

Two points of interest arise from the documentation of this exchange. First, the production of metal among Bantu-speaking people was not a simple technological event, but richly imbued with symbolism, prohibitions and ritual⁴³. Metal production was not a widely-practised skill, in the sense that it was done by specialists, and the industry was governed by chiefly authority. It is difficult to know what effect the availability of Portuguese metal might have had, for it seems unlikely that all people who received the metal items were smiths. Secondly, copper was probably being worked into ornaments such as bracelets in the Thukela basin at the end of the 1500s. The *Santo Alberto* account indicates that the value of the metal was lower in the Thukela basin than further south. Yet, only low-grade copper ore bodies occur in the province, and the available evidence indicates that the metal was imported into the region. The reduced value of the Portuguese copper suggests that the volume of imports was significant, even at this early date. Alternatively, local environmental conditions may have restricted the growth of cattle herds, increasing the value of each beast.

Detailed descriptions of the homesteads of the people of Natal are limited in the Portuguese documents, and sometimes ambiguous. Perestrello described a homestead as consisting of about 20 huts 'like a baker's oven'⁴⁴ built of poles and

thatched. These, he wrote, were moved from place to place with the changing seasons. This is clearly incorrect, though the actual description of the huts corresponds with a beehive hut. Lavanha described what seems to be a Khoi settlement in his ethnography at the beginning of the *Santo Alberto* account, but later wrote:

they came to a village consisting of a few houses around a kraal, in which there were about a hundred cows and a hundred and twenty very large sheep of the Ormuz breed. Here lived an old man with his sons and grandsons ...⁴⁵.

I have already mentioned that I regard Lavanha's ethnography with some scepticism. The second description probably comes more directly from the pilot's journal and is consistent with settlement layouts of the 1700s, except that it suggests that cattle and sheep were kraaled together. Inhaca's capital at Delagoa Bay impressed Perestrello with its order and size, courtyards and paths. It was surrounded by 'a kind of prickly pine trees which grow in that country, thickly set, with three or four entrances ...'. The party rested in a courtyard 'before the king's rustic mountain palace'⁴⁶. Perestrello's description could be interpreted in many ways, but it is at least not inconsistent with ethnographically- and archaeologically-known settlements. In particular, the image suggested by the courtyard before the king's rustic mountain palace finds a parallel in the practice of placing a court or meeting place near the ruler's dwelling.

The information on settlements provides data on the structure of society: the Portuguese frequently describe clusters of homesteads, in the near-coastal zone and further inland. It is tempting to interpret these as reflecting the agnatic clustering noted among eighteenth-century settlements in the grasslands of KwaZulu-Natal. Indeed, this seems the most likely explanation, especially considering the description above of the relationship between the men of the homestead visited by the *Santo Alberto* party. Furthermore, the settlement pattern at which the Portuguese documents hint (a cattle pen surrounded by dwellings) exists among Bantu-speaking people who are patrilineal and exchange cattle for wives⁴⁷. Since Nguni society at this time was polygamous⁴⁸, we can reasonably assume that this was the case in the lands of Natal and Fumos. This conclusion is supported by missionary André Fernandes' 1562 report from Inhambane that marrying men there paid bridewealth in the form of cattle⁴⁹.

Today, Nguni-speakers practise exogamy, marrying outside their kin group. Though I found no comment on this in the sixteenth-century accounts of the lands of Natal and Fumos, Fernandes recorded exogamy near Inhambane⁵⁰. Marriage, as in all societies, was a rite of passage. It is therefore not surprising that dress styles changed upon marriage. The *Santo Alberto* report records that young nobles wore reed mats prior to having 'female associates, which was generally at the age of twenty-two and upwards'⁵¹. Circumcision, another rite of passage, was evidently practised among the Tsonga and south of latitude 29°⁵².

The distribution of settlement in what is today KwaZulu-Natal was not uniform in the 1500s. All the shipwrecked parties travelled through terrain with limited or no habitation. The experiences of the *Santo Alberto* party are particularly interesting. Travelling inland, they crossed at least two areas they referred to as

desert because of the absence of habitation and edible foodstuffs. These were almost certainly zones of sourveld with unpalatable grasses unsuitable for cattle farming⁵³.

The Portuguese developed a basic understanding of political systems in south-east Africa early in their exploration. On Da Gama's 1497 voyage, a chief at the Inharrime river indicated to Da Gama's 'interpreter' the existence of a 'great lord'⁵⁴, implying a hierarchical political structure. Further south in territory occupied by Nguni-speakers, the *São João* survivors met an old man who, as head of two homesteads, may have been a petty chief. The *São Thomé* survivors provided some detail on the political situation along the coast. The report names several 'kings' from Delagoa Bay southwards to some distance inside the Land of Natal. South of this last kingdom, 'there are no other kings, but all is in the possession of chiefs called Inkosis, who are heads and governors of three, four, or five villages'⁵⁵. The hierarchical structure of governance seems to have been reasonably well understood. Perestrello observed that the king Inhaca delegated authority to individuals within each village.

During the course of the sixteenth century some of the northern chiefdoms experienced substantial growth. This was clearly at the expense of other political entities and Portuguese shipwreck survivors were at times drawn into the political intrigue. It is difficult to establish to what extent the trade through Delagoa Bay was responsible for this conflict. The rapidly-established ivory trade (Lourenço Marques began annual or biennial visits to the bay for trading purposes in 1542) and the wealth this generated must have increased tension between communities. However, archaeological evidence suggests that political strife between chieftains occurred on varying levels throughout the long history of agriculturists in southern Africa. Moreover, Swahili traders had been operating along the east coast of Africa for several centuries.

Conclusion

The Portuguese observers were writing, as Auret and Maggs put it, before the time of detached, scientific observation that was a feature of the eighteenth century's Age of Reason⁵⁶. The accounts of the experiences of the survivors are nevertheless extraordinarily interesting documents that provide hints of agriculturist life in sixteenth-century KwaZulu-Natal. In this paper, I hope that by providing a broader archaeological context to the accounts, I have been able to sketch a picture of agriculturist life around AD 1500.

NOTES

1. Axelson, E. (ed.) 1988. *Dias and his successors*. Cape Town: Saayman & Weber (Pty) Ltd, p. 9.
2. Axelson, E. 1940. *South-East Africa 1488-1530*. London: Longmans, Green and Co.; Axelson, E. 1973. *Portuguese in south-east Africa 1488-1600*. Johannesburg: C. Struik (Pty) Ltd; Axelson, *Dias*.
3. Maggs, T. 1984. The Great Galleon *São João*: remains from a mid-sixteenth century wreck on the Natal South Coast. *Annals of the Natal Museum* 26(1): pp. 173-186.
4. Auret, C. & Maggs, T. 1982. The Great Ship *São Bento*: remains from a mid-sixteenth century Portuguese wreck on the Pondoland coast. *Annals of the Natal Museum* 25(1): pp. 1-39.
5. Bell-Cross, G. & Axelson, E. (eds) 1988. João de Lisboa's description of the coast of South Africa, c. 1514. In: Axelson, *Dias*, pp. 14-27.
6. Theal, G. M. 1898 (1964). *Records of South-eastern Africa (Volume I)*. Facsimile reprint. Cape Town: C. Struik (Pty) Ltd, p.328.

7. Bell-Cross, G. (ed.) 1988. Mesquita Perestrello's survey of the south and south-east coast of Africa, 1575–1576. In: Axelson, Dias, pp. 28–38.
8. Theal, *Records (Vol I)*, p. 321.
9. A league is 5.92 km.
10. Bell-Cross, Mesquita Perestrello's survey, p. 37.
11. Axelson, Dias, p. 9. The survivors of the *São Bento* wreck gave the name Pescaria to the Mhlathuze lagoon: Maggs, T. 1989. The Iron Age farming communities. In: Duminy, A. & Guest, B. (eds) *Natal and Zululand from earliest times to 1910*. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press.
12. Theal, *Records (Vol I)*, p. 324.
13. Theal, G. M. 1898 (1964). *Records of south-eastern Africa (Vol. II)*. Facsimile reprint. Cape Town: C. Struik (Pty) Ltd. p. 293.
14. See *Azania* 29–30 (Special volume: The growth of farming communities in Africa from the Equator southwards) for papers that provide an overview of this period.
15. Maggs, T. 1994–95. The Early Iron Age in the extreme south: some patterns and problems. *Azania* 29–30: pp. 171–178; Whitelaw, G. & Moon, M. 1996. The ceramics and distribution of pioneer agriculturists in KwaZulu-Natal. *Natal Museum Journal of Humanities* 8: pp. 53–79.
16. Maggs, The Early Iron Age in the extreme south.
17. Whitelaw, G. 1994–95. Towards an Early Iron Age worldview: some ideas from KwaZulu-Natal. *Azania* 29–30: pp. 37–50.
18. Maggs, The Iron Age farming communities. An alternate hypothesis for the origin of agriculturist communities of the early second millennium AD is provided by Huffman, T. 1989 ...
19. Hall, M. 1976. Dendroclimatology, rainfall and human adaptation in the Late Iron Age of Natal and Zululand. *Annals of the Natal Museum* 22(3): pp. 693–703; Prins, F. E. 1994–95. Climate, vegetation and early agriculturist communities in Transkei and KwaZulu-Natal. *Azania* 29–30: pp. 179–186.
20. Davies, O. 1971. Excavations at Blackburn. *South African Archeological Bulletin* 26: pp. 165–178; Robey, T. Mpambanyoni: a Late Iron Age site on the Natal south coast. *Annals of the Natal Museum* 24(1): pp. 147–164.
21. Davies, O. 1974. Excavations at the walled Early Iron Age site in Moor Park near Estcourt, Natal. *Annals of the Natal Museum* 22(1): pp. 289–323.
22. Davies, Excavations at Moor Park.
23. Maggs, Iron Age farming communities.
24. Maggs, T., Oswald, D., Hall, M. & Rüther, H. 1986. Spatial parameters of Late Iron Age settlements in the upper Thukela Valley. *Annals of the Natal Museum* 27(2): pp. 455–479.
25. Hall, M. & Maggs, T. 1979. Nqabeni, a Late Iron Age site in Zululand. *The South African Archaeological Society Goodwin Series* 3: pp. 159–176; Maggs, T. 1982. Mgoduyanuka: terminal Iron Age settlement in the Natal grasslands. *Annals of The Natal Museum* 25(1): pp. 83–113.
26. Maggs, Iron Age farming communities.
27. Hall, M. & Mack, K. 1983. The outline of an eighteenth-century economic system in south-east Africa. *Annals of the South African Museum* 91(2): pp. 163–194.
28. Theal, *Records (Vol. I)* p. 323.
29. Bell-Cross, Mesquita Perestrello's survey.
30. Hair, P. E. H. 1980. Portuguese contacts with the Bantu languages of the Transkei, Natal and southern Mozambique 1497–1650. *African Studies* 39(1): pp. 3–46.
31. Hair, Portuguese contacts; Theal, *Records (Vol. II)*.
32. 'Beans' were described by the missionary André Fernandes: 'Each pod contains about sixteen beans more or less ...' (Theal, *Records (Vol. II)* p. 73). He may have been referring to cowpeas which have pods resembling that described.
33. Theal, *Records (Vol. II)*.
34. Theal, *Records (Vol. II)*.
35. Theal, *Records (Vol. I)*, p. 235. This happened north of latitude 30°.
36. Plug, I. & Brown, A. 1982. Mgoduyanuka: faunal remains. *Annals of the Natal Museum* 25(1): pp. 115–121.
37. Theal, *Records (Vols I & II)*.
38. Webb, C. de B. & Wright, J. B. 1979. *The James Stuart archive of recorded oral evidence relating to the history of the Zulu and neighbouring peoples, vol. 2*. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press.
39. It is possible that Da Gama was a considerable distance north of Natal Bay on 28 December, given the speed at which Stuckenbergh suggests his flotilla was sailing, even allowing for the running repairs to the mast (see Axelson, Dias, p. 9).
40. Theal, *Records (Vol. II)*.

41. Whitelaw, G. 1991. Precolonial iron production around Durban and in southern Natal. *Natal Museum Journal of Humanities* 3: pp. 29–39.
42. Theal, *Records (Vol. II)*, p. 326
43. Maggs, T. 1992. 'My father's hammer never ceased its song day and night': the Zulu ferrous metalworking industry. *Natal Museum Journal of Humanities* 4: pp. 65–87
44. Theal, *Records (Vol. I)*, p. 230.
45. Theal, *Records (Vol. II)*, p. 300.
46. Theal, *Records (Vol. I)*, p. 270.
47. Kuper, A. 1980. Symbolic dimensions of the southern Bantu homestead. *Africa* 50: pp. 8–23.
48. Theal, *Records (Vol. II)*.
49. Theal, *Records (Vol. II)*.
50. Theal, *Records (Vol. II)*, p. 143.
51. Theal, *Records (Vol. II)*, p. 317.
52. Theal, *Records (Vol. II)*, pp. 66 & 294.
53. Probably Acocks' Highland sourveld and Dohne sourveld.
54. Hair, Portuguese contacts, p. 8.
55. Theal, *Records (Vol. II)*, p. 199
56. Auret & Maggs, *São Bento*.

GAVIN WHITELOW