

Mouth of St. John's [Umzimvubu] River "Gates of St John". [1880s]
From a photograph album compiled by Edmund Allenby. (Allenby 5/2)



Mouth of St. John's River.
"Gates of St. John".

ACTIVITY: Swimming

CASE [GSAF 1887.01.12](#) / SA-020

DATE: Wednesday January 12, 1887

LOCATION: The attack took place Eastern Cape Province of South Africa, in the Mzimvubu River, some 9,65 kilometres from the river mouth.

31°37,2'S, 29°33'E

NAME: Zangile

DESCRIPTION: He was a 13-year-old male, a member of the Gcaleka people, a major subgroup of the Xhosa found in the Transkei area of the Eastern Cape Province.

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: Full Moon, January 10, 1887

ENVIRONMENT: Nine years earlier the harbour area had been ceded to Britain by a local chief, and three years before the attack Britain had annexed the area to the Cape. The surrounding forest teemed with game and the river was home to hippopotami and crocodiles. The January 25, 1887 edition of the *Cape Mercantile Advertiser* noted that the Mzimvubu River was "swarming with sharks" the week that Zangile was killed.

TIME: About 12h00

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NARRATIVE: Zangile and two friends, Bokoka and Mbi, had been swimming in the river for some time. Mbi was near the river bank when Zangile cried out that he had been bitten. "I saw him sink", said Mbi, "and the water was red with blood". Mbi attempted to help his injured friend, but had some difficulty getting him to shore. As the two boys neared the riverbank Mbi saw the fin of a shark.

INJURY: Fatal. Nearly all the flesh had been removed from Zangile's hip to the knee of his right leg; there was a severe lacerated wound on his right leg extending from Poupart's ligament to the patella; only 7,6 centimetres of flesh remained inside the thigh. There was an incised wound to the lower part of his right calf and another to his right heel.

FIRST AID: While Bokoka remained with Zangile, Mbi ran to the kraal for help. Zangile was unconscious when people from his kraal, together with a Mr Addison, reached him. After his face was bathed with water, he regained consciousness. He was given a drink and then he asked what was the matter; "He did not know that he had been hurt or appear to feel the pain of his wound", said a witness.

TREATMENT: Zangile was carried to his hut. Later in the day the medical officer in charge of the troops at Port St Johns dressed his wounds. The patient died the next night. Inquest verdict: Death from the effects of severe injuries received from a shark, while bathing in the St Johns (Mzimvubu) River.

SPECIES INVOLVED: Not identified

SOURCES: Cape Mercantile Advertiser, January 25, 1887
Inquest Report in the Cape Archives, Cape Town, South Africa
[http://www.kingscollections.org/servingsoldier/collection/an-officers-life-part-1?searchterms=amatikulu#Gallery\[gallery1\]/14/](http://www.kingscollections.org/servingsoldier/collection/an-officers-life-part-1?searchterms=amatikulu#Gallery[gallery1]/14/)

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Marie Levine

Inquest for the District of *Port St. Johns.*

To

Chief Constable.
Jessie Kinnear | *in his lawful*
deputy

You are hereby required, in Her Majesty's name, to summon

I Emma -
II Fibi | *all Gualdas*
III and Bokolia

of *Port St. Johns*
that ~~he~~ appear before me on ~~this~~ the *17th* day of *January*
1847, in the *fore* noon, then and there to be examined at an Inquest
touching the death of *Jengilo a Gualda about*

13 years of age on the 13th inst

Herein fail not at your peril.

Dated at *Port St. Johns* this *15th* day of
January 18 *47*

F. J. Thomson

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JAN 28 1857

Proceedings of an Inquest
into the cause of death of a
Slave named "Gonzile".
residing at Port S^t Johns
- before me Captain F. J. Hinds
Resident Magistrate for the
district of Port S^t Johns - this
Seventeenth (17th) day of January
1857.

1st witness

Mrs. duty sworn states -

I live in this district
near Mr. Addison's house - I
am a Slave, and live with
my parents. On the 12th
instant, the deceased "Gonzile"
another boy named "Bokolia"
and myself went into the river
for a bathe, this was about
noon, we were swimming about
and while approaching the bank
to get out, when I heard the
deceased

deceased cry out, "I am sinking"
"I have been bitten" - I saw
him sink and the water red
with blood, I went to his assistance
and laid hold of him, but I had
some difficulty in getting him
ashore. I then saw that nearly
the whole of the ^{right} leg from the hip
to the knee was bitten off. I
don't know whether it was a
shark or not that attacked the
deceased, I suppose it was. The
other boy "Bokolin" was a witness
to the whole proceeding - he sat
on the bank while I helped the
deceased ashore - the deceased
never spoke in my hearing after
he was got out of the river. I
left the other boy "Bokolin" with
the deceased while I ran off
to tell the people at our beach -
they came down to the river bank
with Mr. Adchain, and carried
the deceased to his hut, I did
not

not see the deceased again, but I
know he died soon after.

Respectfully

E. J. Hernandez

Rh

2nd witness

"Bobolin" duly sworn states:

I live in this district
and went bathing in the river
on Wednesday last the 12th instant
with the deceased Gonzalez - and
the last witness "Bobli". We
had all 3 been swimming about
some time, I had just reached
the bank when I heard the
deceased cry out, and say, "I
am being bitten" - the last
witness then went to his assistance
and brought him to the bank. His
the deceased's leg was almost
torn off completely from the hip
to the knee. I saw the fin of
a shark in the water, just

as the deceased was brought out,¹⁴
the water was red with blood.
the deceased did not speak after
being brought ashore. soon after
some people came and carried
deceased to his hut. I was
present when the Magistrate
showed the body of "Gonzale" on
the 15th instant, I identified this
body as "Gonzale" - he was buried
on the 14th instant.

Before me

F. J. Abraham

Rth

3rd witness

Enosna, duly sworn states

I reside at Mr. Adkins's
place beyond the Isimaha in
this district. I remember
on Wednesday that the 12th
instant being called by the
witness "Tubi" - to see the
deceased who had been brought
out

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out of the river, very much injured
I went down and saw Gougeon
lying on his back, with a
terrible wound in his right
leg, nearly all the flesh had
been torn from the hip to the
knee - the deceased was unconscious
- but after I had bathed his face
with water & given him a drink
he spoke - and asked what was
the matter, he did not know he
had been hurt - or appear to feel
the pain of the wound - the
deceased was carried up to his
hut, and Cay & Patman was sent
for to attend him; deceased
survived until Thursday about
the middle of the night - that
was the 13th instant - and he
was buried on Friday morning -

Respectfully

E. J. Stoddard

Rt.

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From Forbes Hospital Palmer, duty
sworn states -

I am Hospital Surgeon
in Medical Charge of Troops at
Post 5th Johns - On Wednesday
the 12th instant, I was sent
for to attend a certain youth
who had been severely injured
by a shank while bathing. I
went to see him, the same day,
and found he was suffering
from a severe lacerated wound
in the right leg, extending from
poupart's ligament to the
patella - Giving about 3 inches
of flesh inside the thigh. Also
an incised wound on the lower
part of the right calf, and
another on the right heel -

The deceased was conscious
when I saw him; - I dressed
the wound, and gave him
of best pain - I reported his
life

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life in great danger, and from
the severity of the injuries, very
little could be done for him.

On the morning of the 14th
instant I heard of Gonzali's death.

On the morning of the
15th instant, I accompanied the
Magistrate to the deceased's
hut, and was present when
the body was examined. I
identify that as the body of
deceased. Identification had
been set in, and I have no
hesitation in saying the deceased
died from the effects of the
severe wound in his leg. -

Respectfully

E. J. Hornick

R. H.

Verdict

That deceased Gengeli
a Gualaka - died on the 13th
instant, from the effects of
severe injuries received from
a Shark while bathing in
the S^o Johns River on the
12th instant.

F. J. Hamilton
Rls

Port S^o Johns

17th January 1847.