

## A.T. Bryant's Map of the 'Native Clans in Pre-Shakan Times'

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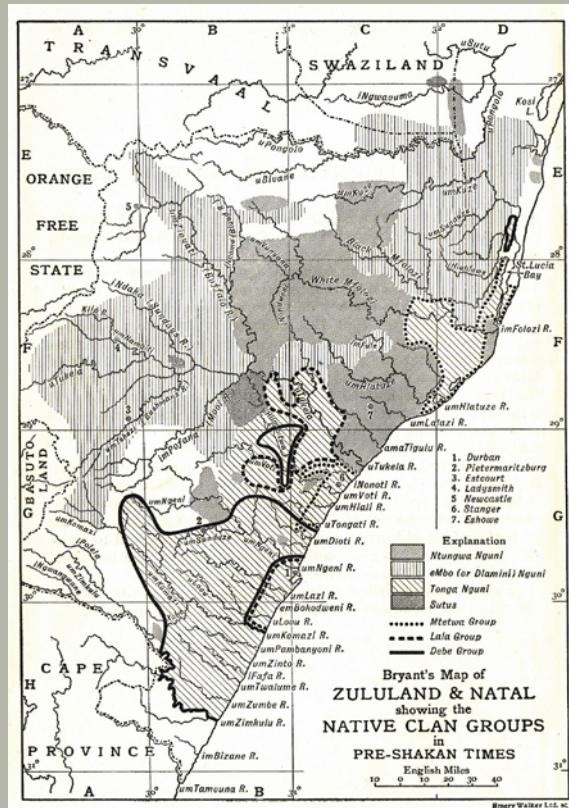


Figure 1 (opposite).  
A.T. Bryant's delineation of broad groups: Ntongwa, Mbo, Tonga Nguni and Sutus. A.T. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, London: Longmans, Green, 1929, p. 82

A.T. Bryant's map of Natal and Zululand purporting to show the location of 'Native clans in pre-Shakan times', is a rich compendium of information about group identities at various times, *provided* that it is used in conjunction with the text of *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, the genealogical tables and clan lists (Figure 2). Drawn in accordance with established Western conventions for the cartographic depiction of tribes, the map conveys a misleadingly static picture of chieftaincies in relation to territory. Used as a visual accessory to the book, however, the map does assist readers to appreciate the dynamic processes making and unmaking group identities in the period 1750–1850. Bryant's peculiar historical method, built on chiefly genealogies, has significant limitations. Its great merit was to enable him to break free from entrenched ideas about tribes as persistent and relatively unchanging entities. Because Bryant made the emergence of Zulu hegemony under Shaka his central concern, his treatment of territories west and south of the Thukela River raises more questions than it answers.

A missionary priest turned scholar, Bryant created this intriguing map that purports to show more than 130 African clans and sub-clans 'as located in pre-Shakan times'. He rightly regarded this as a great improvement on older representations, such as those he derived from Manuel de Faria e Sousa's *The Portuguese Asia*.<sup>1</sup> Sousa's section on south-eastern Africa used archival sources to describe the socio-political situation of the region as of about 1589. There he found mention of the 'Fumos', the 'Macomatos', 'Vambe' and 'Ankozoes'. Who could these people be? 'All of this is as meaningless to us as though written in the language of Crete or Yucatan; it but leaves us wondering.'<sup>2</sup>

Eighty years on, the same can be said of Bryant's own map. We find names written there – 'Kuze', 'Lumbi', 'Seleku' and many others – that do not appear in the index. Other groups described in the text as numerous and important, such as Ngcobo, are not on the map. An appendix lists 'more than 800 East-Nguni clans and sub-clans', less than 20 per cent of which feature on the map. Names are scrawled higgledy-piggledy across the map in different sizes of lettering on crazy angles. Some conform to convex arcs, others to the concave, still others cling precariously to the horizontal. A chart so chaotically presented and inadequately explained cannot be touted as influential. Most readers ignore it, which

<sup>1</sup> Manuel de Faria e Sousa's *The Portuguese Asia* was first published in 1681. Bryant does not cite the book in his bibliography, but it is likely he used the English translation by J. Stevens, London: C. Brome, 1695.  
<sup>2</sup> A.T. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, London: Longmans, Green, 1929, pp. 288–9.