

Shaka zulu



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Shaka Zulu was the first son of the chieftain Senzangakhona and Nandi, a daughter of Bhebhe, the past chief of the Elangeni tribe, born near present-day Melmoth, KwaZulu-Natal Province. He was conceived out of wedlock somewhere between 1781 and 1787. Shaka almost certainly spent his childhood in his mother's settlements. Shaka served as an Mthethwa warrior for perhaps as long as ten years, and distinguished himself with his courage, though he did not, as legend has it, rise to great position.

Dingiswayo, having himself been exiled after a failed attempt to oust his father, had, along with a number of other groups in the region (including Mabhudu, Dlamini, Mkhize, Qwabe, and Ndwandwe, many probably responding to slaving pressures from southern Mozambique) helped develop new ideas of military and social organization. On the death of Senzangakhona, Dingiswayo aided Shaka to defeat his brother and assume leadership in 1816. He became the leader of the Zulu Kingdom from 1816 through 1828.

As Shaka became more respected by his people, he was able to spread his ideas with greater ease. Because of his background as a soldier, Shaka taught the Zulus that the most effective way of becoming powerful quickly was by conquering and controlling other tribes. His teachings greatly influenced the social outlook of the Zulu people. The Zulu tribe soon developed a "warrior" mind frame, which made it easier for Shaka to build up his armies.

Dingane and Mhlangana, Shaka's half-brothers, appear to have made at least two attempts to assassinate Shaka before they succeeded, with perhaps

support from Mpondo elements, and some disaffected iziYendane people. While the British colonialists considered his regime to be a future threat, allegations that white traders wished his death are problematic given that Shaka had granted concessions to whites prior to his death, including the right to settle at Port Natal (now Durban). Shaka had made enough enemies among his own people to hasten his demise.

It came relatively quickly after the devastation caused by Shaka's erratic behavior after the death of his mother Nandi. According to Donald Morris in this mourning period Shaka ordered that no crops should be planted during the following year, no milk was to be used, and any woman who became pregnant was to be killed along with her husband. At least 7, 000 people who were deemed to be insufficiently grief-stricken were executed, though it wasn't restricted to humans, cows were slaughtered so that their calves would know what losing a mother felt like.

The Zulu monarch was killed by three assassins sometime in 1828; September is the most often cited date, when almost all available Zulu manpower had been sent on yet another mass sweep to the north. Some older histories have doubted the military and social innovations customarily attributed to Shaka, denying them outright, or attributing them variously to European influences. More modern researchers argue that such explanations fall short, and that the general Zuluculture which included other tribes and clans, contained a number of practices that Shaka could have drawn on to fulfill his objectives—whether in raiding, conquest or hegemony.

Shaka is often said to have been dissatisfied with the long throwing "assegai," and credited with introducing a new variant of the weapon — the "iklwa," a short stabbing spear with a long, sword-like spearhead. Shaka is also supposed to have introduced a larger, heavier shield made of cowhide and to have taught each warrior how to use the shield's left side to hook the enemy's shield to the right, exposing his ribs for a fatal spear stab. The throwing spear was not discarded but used as an initial missile weapon before close contact with the enemy; when the shorter stabbing spear was used in hand to hand combat.