

ACTIVITY: Swimming
CASE [GSAF 1895.04.29 / SA-023](#)

DATE: Monday April 29, 1895

LOCATION: The incident took place in the Mzimvubu River, near Port St Johns, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa.

31°37,2'S, 29°33'E

NAME: Sombutize

DESCRIPTION: He was a 28-year-old male, the son of Mxebedola.

BACKGROUND

MOON PHASE: New Moon, April 25, 1895

ENVIRONMENT: The town of Port St. John's grew up around the British garrison. As late as 1944, the river was navigable 10 kilometres from the sea and coasters were still using the port. Nkasmeni reported that she saw two sharks in the river on the day of the accident.

TIME: About 12h00

NARRATIVE: Sombutize was trying to cross the Mzimvubu River when he screamed that he had been bitten by a shark. He managed to reach shore without assistance, and was found sitting on the bank of the river, bleeding profusely, by two women, Nkasmeni and Mavula.

INJURY: At the inquest Frank Sidney Butler, District Surgeon for Port St Johns, testified, "I found two lacerated wounds situated on the inner side of the right arm: the upper wounds situated about the middle and upper part of the upper arm, the main artery in this wound was debrided. The lower wound was situated on the forearm just below the elbow joint. ... In my opinion death was due to loss of blood and shock."

FIRST AID/TREATMENT: Sombutize was taken home by Nkasmeni and his wounds were bound. He died early the next morning in Nkasmeni's kraal. Inquest verdict: "Death from the bite of a shark while crossing the Mzimvubu River."

SPECIES INVOLVED: Not identified, but the location suggest a bull shark.

SOURCE: Inquest Report in the Cape Archives, Cape Town, South Africa

CASE INVESTIGATOR: Marie Levine

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Paul Horsie



*A coaster on the Mzimvubu River
in the late 1800s*

V-VI



Inquiry into the death of
Native Sombulie on Monday the
29th April 1895 -

Mavula's sworn statement

I was at Frank
Gregory's place on Monday 29th April about
noon, I heard screams from the direction
of the river: I ran down to the river
bank, and found Sombulie sitting down:
he was bleeding from a large open wound
in his right arm, I asked him what
had made it, & he said he had been
bitten by a shark while he was cross-
ing the river. I heard of his death, he
was buried by his father Mzeeleola. I
saw the body yesterday (1st May) & I iden-
-tified it as the body of Sombulie - he
was about the same age as myself.

--- -- Mavula his mark

Before me

Witnesses } F. S. Butler
 }

Res Magt.

Chasmeri, "Suom Stales"

I know Sombulige during his lifetime well he was son of Moxebetolo - About noon I heard screams. I went to see what was the matter. I found Sombulige sitting down he had a wound on his right arm when we got home I asked him what had caused it - he said a shark had bitten him - it was bleeding very much - I bound the arm up - I saw two sharks the same day in the river - Sombulige died very early on Tuesday morning. and his father and myself buried him - He died in my hut and did not speak before he died, he was about the same age as Moxebetolo (about 30 years) I identified the body exhumed yesterday as being Sombulige

Chasmeri ^{his} mark

As witnesses } F. S. Butler
 } T. M. Miller
 } Before me


Butler

ORIGINAL
27 MAY 1966

Frank Sime Butler sworn states I am district surgeon for Port St Johns. I was instructed by the Resident Magistrate to proceed up the river to examine & examine the body of a boy named Conbutze.

The body was examined and upon examination I found two lacerated wounds, situated on the inner side of the right arm; the upper wound was situated about the middle & upper part of the upper arm, the main artery in this wound, was divided.

The lower wound was situated on the forearm just below the elbow joint. These wounds may have been caused by a bite from a shark or some animal.

In my opinion death was due to loss of blood and shock.

The age of the boy in my opinion was between 18 and 20 years of age - this is the result of my examination.

F. S. Butler.
Dist. Surgeon

As Witness }
Matthew Martin

Before me

[Signature]
Res. Magistrate

Verdict - Death from the bite of
a shark while crossing the In-
- Zimwele River -

M. R. ...
Resident Magistrate

Part of ...
2nd May 1895

The Resident Magistrate *Part of ...*
Proceedings returned herewith for
record.

By order,

P. ...
Chief Clerk
to the Solicitor-General.

