

ILANGA LASE NATAL.

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DINGANA'S KRAAL.

At their meeting in Johannesburg recently, the members of the Historical Monuments Commission made a proposal to reconstruct Dingana's great fortress kraal-city of uMgungundlovu.

It is a ticklish subject. Among the Zulus, divided as they are in point of view, in cultural attainment, in approach to questions of race relations and co-operation, it will be received with mixed feelings.

There are two ways of approach to the matter. Some people will see in the proposal as they see in the white man's interest in the Zulu language (a subject that is receiving much Press publicity at the moment), the sign of Zulu greatness. They will contend that all this frenzy about Zulu cultural and historical affairs, proves the historical greatness of the Race. The reconstruction of Dingana's kraal, they will maintain, will reveal the ingenuity, the skill and the genius of the Zulu.

For Dingana's great Capital of Umgungundlovu, we know, was no mean city. It was a Fortress built with great ingenuity. Standing amid beautiful and picturesque hills, it was bounded by a stream on one side, by bushy growths on the other, by hills on the third. Its defences were excellent. It had underground chambers where food was hidden and kept. In it were many glories of the Zulu tribal state - a cattle-kraal which contained the great uniformed herds of cattle, foundries, a dancing arena, a swimming bath, court and council and warrior places, and so forth.

For this reason, some Zulu thinkers will look with favour on the proposal. Such thinkers are people who also think that a scheme such as the proposed Mashu Museum is a good one as it will help preserve valuable tribal cultural elements. This School of Thought represents those who as they go forward, veer back with yearning and pride to things Zulu. They believe that by only such a process can the Zulu maintain his identity and genius. His roots, his sources of inspiration, his rich raw material for artistic and philosophic originality, must be the tribal background. They want to see Zulu medicine, mythology, customs and laws preserved, studied and something beautiful and new made from them.

But there is another side to the story - those who will oppose the scheme strongly and without hesitation. They will contend the proposal, like all this talk about teaching Zulu in European schools, is not only so much froth and bubble, but is done for the good of the European only. The white man, it will be said, has ulterior motives of self interest. If he did not, why does the Commission not include Africans or consult their accredited leaders (not chiefs only)? Why do those who want to learn Zulu, not allow Zulu teachers to teach that language in their schools? The whole thing is not a compliment to the Race. The European wants to do these things so that he can have a good job and be in a position to undermine and control the people and claim to be an expert in Zulu psychology and life.

Similarly the proposal to rebuild Dingana's kraal is a move to perpetuate ill-feelings of the past. Why, of all Zulu kings choose Dingana? Why make museums to keep the dead past alive? The first thing those who speak about preserving their tribal culture because it is precious - the first thing they should know is that it is a desecration and an insult to reconstruct this kraal. They will contend that if the European is sincere, he will help the people, the Zulus, in the way they like, not in the way the European likes.

The political representatives of this school will seal the argument by saying there are numerous ways in which the white man can show his genuine interest in us. They will say, give us citizenship, we the progeny of the Dingana about whom you worry so much; we the remnants and living examples of the culture you seem so eager to preserve.

Says a reviewer of Lord Elton's "Imperial Empire" (an empire which is said to be a non-Imperial Empire) "The Empire was not acquired in a fit of greed. Nor, when acquired, was it left to be administered for gain ..... After war and conquest, we have admitted the vanquished to terms of equality ..... After the Boer War Campbell - Bannerman gave responsible government to South Africa ..... Of those who were once her enemies, Britain, in a fuller sense than Rome of old, may be allowed to claim - she it is who alone has taken on to her bosom the conquered, and has cherished the race of men with a common name after the fashion of a mother, not a ruling mistress."

The second school of thought demands similar treatment from white South Africa.

Scholars will say that a purely cultural matter such as the reconstruction of Dingana's kraal has nothing to do with all this. Quite true. But equally true it is that Dingana is connected with vital political and racial issues, and inflammatory issues at that.

On this whole subject the "Ilanga lase Natal" withholds its opinion. We have only put forward the two schools of opinion among our people. We hope they and the authorities will consider the matter in the light of these remarks and so arrive at some point of understanding and co-operation.