

**DIOCLECIANO FERNANDES
DAS NEVES (1829-1883):
HIS RESIDENCE IN MOZAMBIQUE
AND HIS VISIT TO THE TRANSVAAL**

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FOREWORD

Four Portuguese travellers visited the Transvaal in the second half of the 19th century, and wrote about their impressions of the country and its inhabitants.¹ Although their backgrounds, personalities and motivations for their visits differed, to a great extent the images they evoked corresponded with each other.

My almost lifelong interest in the contact between Portugal and South Africa introduced me to these adventure-seeking and colourful travellers and the products of their pens. Their characters enthralled me and, in a way, a sort of friendship came to exist between them and myself. Ultimately, I felt obligated to publish their writings *in toto* or in part, in order to bring them to the attention of fellow historians and cultural historians in a freshly published and annotated form.

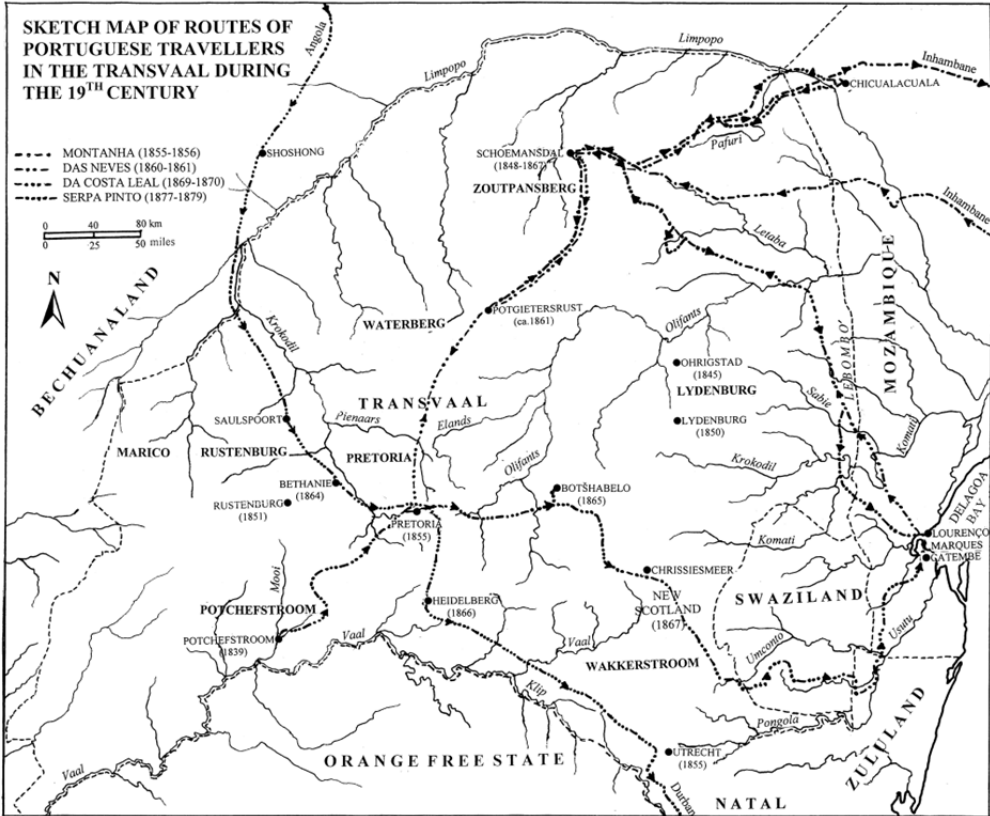
During my research on Commandant-General Stephanus Schoeman (1810-1890), I became acquainted with Joaquim de Santa Rita Montanha (1806-1870). He was a Roman-Catholic priest from Inhambane who visited Zoutpansberg in 1855-1856. This 'meeting' with Montanha resulted in the publication of *Montanha in Zoutpansberg: 'n Portugese handelsending van Inhambane se besoek aan Schoemansdal, 1855-1856* (Pretoria: Protea Boekhuis, 2002). Louis Changuion's walking tour, whilst clad in a priest's garb, from Inhambane to Zoutpansberg commemorated the Pater's visit. Changuion's arrival at Schoemansdal coincided with the launch of the book.

My interest in the pioneer history of the Transvaal soon brought me into contact with the sensitive poet, writer and perspicacious observer, Fernando Augusto da Costa Leal (1846-1910). Great was my joy when Dr. Nicol Stassen of Protea Book House asked me to edit Da Costa Leal's manuscript for publication. The result was *Da Costa Leal in die Zuid-Afrikaanse Republiek: die sekretaris van 'n Portugese Diplomatieke Kommissie se besoek aan Potchefstroom en terugreis na Lourenço Marques, 1869-1870* (Pretoria: Protea Boekhuis, 2008). Later, when Prof. Schalk W. le Roux and I visited Goa, India, we searched in vain for Da Costa Leal's grave. We were, however, able to experience something of the atmosphere of his last abode.

The most flamboyant of the four travellers was doubtless Alexandre Alberto da Rocha de Serpa Pinto (1846-1900). After I 'met' him through his book, *How I crossed Africa from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean*, my imagination was seized by the story of his journey from Benguela in Angola to the Transvaal – especially his stay in Pretoria during the British Annexation – and his journey back to Portugal via Durban. This led to the publication of *Serpa Pinto amongst Boer and Brit: his travels through the Transvaal and Natal, 1879* (Gordon's Bay & Jeffreys Bay: Tormentoso, 2012). With Drs. A.C.W. (Kees) van Zoelen as guide, I followed in Serpa Pinto's footsteps in Northern Portugal.

¹ See O.J.O. Ferreira, "Portugese reisigers in die Transvaal in die negentiende eeu", *Historia*, 51 (2), November 2006, pp. 45-74.

Diocleciano Fernandes das Neves (1829-1883), the last of the quartet of travellers to the Transvaal, gets his turn with this publication. My connection with him is almost as long as that with Montanha. That Das Neves's travel journal, published under the title *Diocleciano Fernandes das Neves (1829-1883): his residence in Mozambique and his visit to the Transvaal* (Gordon's Bay & Jeffreys Bay: Tormentoso, 2013), was the last to be published does not in the least mean that it is any way inferior. On the contrary, he provides a new perspective on events in Mozambique and the Transvaal. His tragic end at Bembe near the mouth of the Limpopo River in Mozambique still clutches the heart.



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