

***IDEOLOGY AND RELIGION: THE MISSING LINK IN
EXPLANATIONS FOR THE RISE AND PERSISTENCE OF THE
ZULU STATE***

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own work and that all sources used have been fully acknowledged. This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of The University of Western Australia. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or at any other university.



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ABSTRACT

Existing studies of the Zulu state emphasise its newness and the innovations of its first ruler, Shaka ka Senzangakhona. Explanations for the rise of the kingdom have stressed material factors such as trade, climate change, competition for resources and demographic change. This thesis will argue that the consolidation of the Zulu state required accumulation of ideological, ritual and religious power.

Chapter One, 'Historiography, Anthropology, and the Zulu State', is a literature survey of historical and anthropological research. It shows that there has been a lack of analysis of the role of religion in the consolidation of the Zulu state. Chapter Two, 'The State, Ideology, Power and Religion', examines these concepts in pre-colonial African society. It argues that religious thinking (about ancestors, divination and healing) permeated Zulu society, that an early state could not develop without a common ideology which was very often based on religion, and that power took different forms including abilities as a healer, diviner, war leader, certain knowledge, or possession of specific items. As a starting point for an analysis of religion and the Zulu state, Chapter Three, 'The Story of Shaka and the Diviners', focuses on the popular tale of Shaka. This story suggests a relationship between religion and power expressed through a struggle between King Shaka and diviners. Over 20 accounts of the story are listed and analysed including some that relate to other chiefs. Chapter Four examines 'Key Features of Zulu Religious Life and the Invisible Power of the 'Spiritual' World'. It aims to contextualise the story of Shaka and the diviners by examining key components of the religious realm including *uNkulunkulu*, ancestors, diviners and medicines. It considers the relationship between spiritual and earthly power and how it was expressed. Chapter Five examines 'The Role of Kings and Chiefs in Ritual and Religion' and shows that ritual was a common feature of chiefship. This chapter historicizes and conceptualises the role of supernatural practice in conflict and state building, 1800-1828. It argues that a leader's power was expressed in religious terms.

Chapter Six suggests 'How and Why Some Powers Over Religion, Ritual and Other Supernatural Agencies were Destroyed by Shaka and his Successors'. It is an analysis of how Shaka contended with others who possessed spiritual power by enhancing his own legitimacy through religion and ritual. The chapter considers major rituals such as the first fruits ceremony and rainmaking as well as marriage and circumcision. Chapter Seven, 'I Shall Need to Use Her to Rule':¹ The Power of 'Royal' Zulu Women in Pre-Colonial Zululand', shows how Shaka managed both the spiritual and political power of certain *amakhosikazi* and *amakhosazana*.

The thesis concludes by offering new explanations for the story of Shaka and the diviners. Political ascendancy was achieved alongside spiritual ascendancy. To achieve this, the Zulu king adapted old beliefs —the relationship between individuals, ancestors, diviners, and chieftainship —to changing circumstances.

¹Mangati ka Godide in C. Webb and J. Wright, (ed.) *James Stuart Archive*, 2, (Pietermaritzburg, 1979),

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GLOSSARY

<i>ibutho</i> (pl. <i>amabutho</i>)	age-group or 'regiment' of men or women enrolled by a Zulu king
<i>idlozi</i> (pl. <i>amadlozi</i>)	ancestor
<i>ikhanda</i> (pl. <i>amakhanda</i>)	military establishment
<i>inkatha</i>	grass coil symbolising the binding together of the 'nation'
<i>inkosazana</i> (pl. <i>amakhosazana</i>)	eldest daughter of the chief house, daughter of a chief
<i>inkosi</i>	king, paramount chief
<i>inkosikazi</i> (pl. <i>amakhosikazi</i>)	principal wife of chief or head man, female monarch
<i>inyanga</i>	diviner
<i>isangoma</i>	diviner
<i>isanusi</i>	diviner
<i>isigodlo</i> (pl. <i>izigodlo</i>)	the king's private enclosure consisting of the huts of his women and children
<i>ithongo</i> (pl. <i>amathongo</i>)	ancestor
<i>ithonya</i>	ascendancy
<i>umkhosi</i>	annual first fruits ceremony
<i>umthakathi</i>	1. witch, wizard; 2. skilful person
<i>umuthi</i>	medicine, medicinal charm
<i>uMvelinqangi</i>	great ancestor; often used to mean God
<i>uNkulunkulu</i> (pl. <i>oNkulunkulu</i>)	great ancestor; often used to mean God
<i>uThixo</i>	great ancestor; probably derived from 'Hottentot' word, often used to mean God

NOTE ON ORTHOGRAPHY

The various spellings of Zulu names and terms have presented difficulties. I have tried as much as possible to use modern spelling. The spelling of Zulu terms is based on those used in the *English-Zulu Zulu-English Dictionary*, by C. Doke *et. al.* published in 1990.² Names follow the spelling used in the *James Stuart Archive* edited by Colin Webb and John Wright (1976-1986).³ All quotations retain original spelling. The definitions above are adaptations from the *James Stuart Archive* and *English-Zulu Zulu-English Dictionary*.

²C. Doke, D. Malcolm, J. Sikakana and B. Vilakazi, *English-Zulu Zulu-English Dictionary* (Johannesburg, 1990).

³C. de B. Webb, and J. Wright, (eds.), *James Stuart Archive*, 4 vols. (Pietermaritzburg, 1976-1986).

INTRODUCTION

Religious beliefs and practices were not separated from other aspects of Zulu life in the early nineteenth century. They permeated daily existence. This thesis aims to introduce a religious dimension to the study of the Zulu state. It argues against widespread belief that the Zulu state was maintained solely by force or even by terror. It argues that religion and ideology played significant roles in both the creation and consolidation of the state.

The thesis begins with a literature review in Chapter One that systematically examines explanations for the rise of the Zulu state in order to determine the extent to which the state has been analysed in terms of religion. The review will show that the historiography has progressed over 160 years from concentrating on the perceived despotism of leaders such as Shaka, to materialist explanations. The most favoured explanations of the last thirty years focus on environmental change, population growth, economic factors and external aggression. More recently, gender has been introduced as an important factor.¹ Ideology in the realm of kinship and ethnicity has also been shown to be an important factor in shaping the Zulu state² and new perspectives have been offered which question many long held beliefs concerning the Zulu state.³

¹J. Guy, 'Ecological factors in the Rise of the Zulu Kingdom', in S. Marks and A. Atmore, (eds.), *Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa* (London, 1980), 102-19. J. Guy, 'Analysing Pre-Capitalist Societies in Southern Africa', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 14, 1 (1987), 18-37.

²C. Hamilton and J. Wright, 'The Making of the *Amalala*: Ethnicity, Ideology and Relations of Subordination in a Precolonial Context', *South African Historical Journal*, 22 (1990), 3- 23.

³J. Cobbing, 'Jettisoning the Mfecane (with perestroika)', seminar paper, (University of the Witwatersrand, 1988). J. Cobbing, 'Mfecane as Alibi: Thoughts on Dithakong and Mbolompo', *Journal of African History*, 29 (1988), 487-519. J. Cobbing, 'Rethinking the Roots of Violence in Southern Africa, ca 1790-1840', seminar paper, (University of the Witwatersrand, 1991). J. Cobbing, 'Ousting the Mfecane: Reply to Elizabeth Eldredge', seminar paper, (University of the Witwatersrand, 1991).

This literature survey reveals an enduring image of Shaka as an absolute ruler and the focus of power among the Zulu. But what of the relationships between politics, ideology, and religion in the Zulu state? Although the study of religion has often been seen to belong firmly within the domain of anthropology, a review of anthropological writings demonstrates a similar neglect of the role of religion in the process of pre-colonial state formation in South Africa. This is not to deny that anthropologists *have* studied Zulu religion, but they have emphasised social organisation and meaning.

Chapter Two examines the concepts of the state, ideology, power and religion and proposes that religion *is* an important factor for analysis of kingship and chieftainship. Elsewhere in African studies there has been a reaction against exclusively economic and political analyses. Religion and ideology have been argued to have been vital elements in the process of pre-colonial African state formation and consolidation. This chapter also incorporates Richard Adams' analysis of power in terms of independent and dependent power. Independent power may manifest itself in the ability of individuals to act as healers, diviners, war leaders, or in terms of specific knowledge, or possession of specific items.⁴

As the Zulu state evolved it is likely that the independent power holders of the previous system aided or interfered with the political interests of the ruling group. Some of the older beliefs may have been emphasised by the developing state, still others may have been altered. Many writers highlight the role of the shades or ancestors and diviners as two central features in 'traditional' Zulu life. The frequently told and often quoted story of King Shaka (c. 1816 - 1828) and the diviners makes a useful point of entry for an analysis of kingship and the spiritual realm.

⁴R. Adams, 'Power in Human Societies: A Synthesis', in R. Fogelson and R. Adams, (eds.), *The Anthropology of Power* (Academic Press, 1977), 388-9.

Chapter Three undertakes a systematic examination of nineteenth-century printed sources, the translated *James Stuart Archive*, traveller and missionary recordings, contemporary, and popular histories which give multiple versions of the story of Shaka and the diviners. The first written account of this story was set down in the early 1850s and many others followed, the most recent account in the 1980s. They differ not only in terms of how they are explained, but in detail — sometimes minor and sometimes material. E. A. Ritter's *Shaka Zulu: The Rise of the Zulu Empire* first published in 1955,⁵ presented one of the best known versions of the story. Its length and detail suggest that it was a significant event; a perspective which is further strengthened by the extent to which it has been quoted and referred to by other subsequent writers.

Most readings of the story assume that Shaka was testing the diviners with the intention of exposing them as frauds, or alternatively that he was checking challenges to his power with the intention of getting rid of these rivals. These readings often tell us more about the preconceptions of their authors than about Shaka and his state. The authors' sources are also scrutinised. Despite problems of methodology in these various accounts, key elements persist. The story raises questions about Zulu religion and kingship. How it is interpreted will influence our understanding of the role of Shaka's engagement in the religious realm. The accounts indicate a tenuous relationship between the king and diviners, and some sort of engagement by Shaka in the realm of religion. There are also accounts of other chiefs having had similar struggles with diviners. However, this story needs to be read and interpreted in the context of the invisible features of Zulu power.

Chapter Four attempts to identify the invisible power of the 'spiritual' world — ancestors and medicines — and to expand the investigation of the role of diviners and other specialist practitioners. This is necessary before attempting to illuminate the king's place in the realm of Zulu religious practice, and how it relates to the nascent

⁵E. Ritter, *Shaka Zulu: The Rise of the Zulu Empire* (First published, 1955; reprinted London, 1957), 241-54.

Zulu state in later chapters. Any chief attempting to extend his power over peoples outside his own immediate following would have found it difficult, if not impossible, to operate without reference to these enduring elements of religious practice.

The first problem that arises is that the concept of Zulu identity and of a Zulu 'nation' was in its infancy during the Shakan period and thus the notion of 'Zulu' as a complete social unit did not exist. Accepting that variations existed in political organisation and ethnic identity within the Zulu state as argued by Wright and Hamilton⁶, and accepting that changes in economic relations took place, then it is likely that variations existed within 'Zulu religion' before the state came into existence and that changes occurred with the consolidation of the Zulu state under Shaka.

As part of this investigation, it is necessary to deal with longstanding confusion on the question of *uNkulunkulu*, and to show how the development of the concept of *uNkulunkulu*, as the high God of all, obscures important aspects of the relationship which formerly obtained between chiefs and their departed ancestors. The ancestors were the key to the Zulu belief system, and therefore, intimately involved with social, economic and political life. To gain ascendancy over others in the political world required ascendancy in the 'spiritual' world controlled by ancestors. But what happened when a paramount chief assumed control over a group of other paramounds, instituted changes to established chiefships, and concentrated power in a single family as in the case of the Zulu kingdom? Whose ancestors become dominant and how would this domination have been achieved? In establishing dominance it would be necessary to make the Zulu ancestors relevant for consolidation, legitimacy and dissemination of state ideology. Diviners are among those who possessed the independent power necessary to communicate with ancestors and they were aided by certain materials. But

⁶J. Wright and C. Hamilton, 'Traditions and transformations: The Phongolo-Mzimkhulu Region in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries', in A. Duminy and B. Guest (eds.), *Natal and Zululand from Earliest Times to 1910*, (Pietermaritzburg, 1989), 49-82.

power in the spiritual realm did not rest with them exclusively. There is much evidence indicating a broader link between authority figures and religion.

Chapter Five examines the role of kings and chiefs in relation to ritual and symbols of state in the hope of enhancing our understanding of the role of religion and ideology in the formation of the Zulu kingdom. Shaka is purported to have exercised the religious or supernatural powers which other chiefs had also exercised. This chapter will examine the notion of divine kingship sometimes applied to Shaka and the popular theme of Shaka the necromancer. It also investigates the place of medicines or materials, including trade in such substances, rules governing access, and the acquisition of knowledge of the substances and their application. The chapter will then attempt to historicize and conceptualise the role of supernatural practice in conflict and state building. Shaka's role in religion has been noted by several scholars, however, the inference is usually that it was something new — a Shakan innovation linked to his drive for absolute power. The *James Stuart Archive* reveal a vastly different perception: that power was conceptualised in terms of 'invisible' religious factors prior to the formation of the Zulu state rather than political or legal power assigned to a leader by way of control over an army. I have used the term 'invisible' because ancestors are spirits are not visible in real form. Like the power medicines possessed the power is dependent on belief in the sense that they are not seen — unlike an army and physical weapons of war. The ancestors and medicines were seen by the indigenous population of northern-eastern South Africa to have had the ability to influence the conduct of people and events (natural such as rain, and unnatural such as war) are therefore seen to be able to influence life or death. It is this belief that makes them extremely powerful and these were key issues in consolidation. Some things were in fact visible — such as the *inkatha* — but not without the spiritual factors and material factors together. Invisible power can therefore be conceptualised as symbolic power rather than material power.

Chapter Six examines how the ideology, values and ideas of the Zulu rulers were passed on to the other members of the society. Shaka's most pressing task in the realm of religious practice was to superimpose the practice of giving honour to his own ancestors in a way which would not conflict with the honour owed to other ancestors at different subordinate levels of social organisation. In this way he could enhance his own legitimacy. One way in which this was achieved was through ritual. A picture emerges showing that Shaka was dominating ritual and religious functions by:

- taking control of and centralising the *umkhosi* (first fruits ceremony);
- centralising rainmaking ritual;
- taking control of and centralising rites-of-passage such as marriage;
- extending the medicines of chiefship to medicine of stateship; and
- exerting greater control over possession and practice.

Other ways he enhanced his legitimacy were by:

- drawing attention to his communication with ancestors through dreams by means of which he received instructions from previous Zulu chiefs; and
- emphasising, elaborating and to some extent 'reinventing', the symbols of kingship such as the *inkatha*.

His strategies for achieving spiritual dominance could very possibly have created tensions between the king, the lesser chiefs, and diviners. This thesis argues that Shaka challenged the diviners and rainmakers precisely because he shared the general belief in the efficacy of their power. His aim was to demonstrate his own superiority in their realm and to eliminate the power of the diviners of some of the groups he incorporated.

Chapter Seven examines how Shaka dealt with the ritual power of *amakhosikazi* and *amakhosazana*. Diviners were not the only group possessing independent power. Shaka had to carefully balance the independent political and ritual power of the women with his own and so used old forms to facilitate change. This is a significantly under-researched area and this chapter attempts to challenge many long held beliefs regarding

Zulu patriarchy. In the course of this research it became apparent that there was much detail on women that related directly to religious power which must have impacted upon Shaka. This is in contrast to Max Gluckman's claim that Zulu women "do not take part in national life or national ceremonies."⁷ The chapter also disputes claims made recently by Sean Hanretta that women's leadership was new to the Zulu.⁸ It was for this reason that a separate chapter is devoted to women. The chapter argues that the consensus on 'royal' female powerlessness in Zulu social and political life is very much a 20th century phenomenon. It extends Carolyn Hamilton's work by exploring 'royal' women's political, ritual and religious roles. The chapter reinterprets the placement of 'royal' women in military homesteads, the mourning of Shaka's mother Nandi, and royal 'celibacy'.⁹ The roles of key women will be shown to contradict the conventional view of the Zulu as an example of unmitigated hierarchical patriarchy.

Rather than examining individual features of Zulu religion in isolation, this thesis explores the relationship between religion and power. The thesis will not attempt to offer an alternative, monocausal explanation for the development of the Zulu state. Rather, it aims to suggest that alongside environmental, population and resource issues, ideology and religion were factors of significant importance. The thesis concludes by offering several alternative explanations for the story of Shaka and the diviners, emphasising the issue of legitimacy of Shaka's kingship. It is highly likely that without a religious foundation for their rule Zulu kings would not have been as politically effective.

The sources consulted for this study include unpublished manuscripts, published compilations of manuscripts, official papers, unpublished theses and conference papers,

⁷M. Gluckman, *Custom and Conflict in Africa* (First published 1956; reprinted Oxford, 1973) 115.

⁸S. Hanretta, 'Women, Marginality and the Zulu State: Women's Institutions and Power in the Early Nineteenth Century', *Journal of African History*, 39 (1998), 389-415.

⁹C. Hamilton, 'Ideology, Oral Traditions and the Struggle for Power in the Early Zulu Kingdom', M.A. Thesis, (University of the Witwatersrand, 1985), 424.

newspapers, published books and articles. The *James Stuart Archive* in particular (as well as the writings of missionaries, nineteenth century early travellers, and contemporary anthropologists) provides a wealth of information concerning the Zulu state and society in the pre-colonial period from which much can be gleaned about ritual, religion and leadership.¹⁰ A.T Bryant's *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal* published in 1929, contains much detailed information and was a dominant source for much of the twentieth century. However, as Wright points out "far from being based ['so entirely'] on oral traditions collected by Bryant himself, ... it was drawn mainly from previously published sources".¹¹ According to Wright the published sources were written by colonial writers whose interpretations were based on the testimonies of a very few informants and it is not possible to ascertain or check the conditions under which the testimonies were obtained. Similarly, the writings of nineteenth century travellers to Zululand, Nathaniel Isaacs and Henry Francis Fynn, have also been major reference sources. However, these are also used with caution. Contemporary scholars are highly critical of Isaacs pointing out that he was barely literate and hinting that his writing was aided by a more literate person.¹² Fynn's *Diary* was not really a diary, but rather the recollections written some time after the events. The *Diary* was also co-edited by James Stuart. More reliable accounts from Fynn are available through the *Annals of Natal* by John Bird first published in 1888.¹³

¹⁰Webb and Wright, *James Stuart Archive*, 4 vols.

¹¹J. Wright, 'A.T. Bryant and the 'Wars of Shaka'', *History in Africa*, 18 (1991), 421.

¹²D. Wylie, 'Autobiography as Alibi: History and Projection in Nathaniel Isaacs' *Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa* (1936)', *Current Writing*, 3 (1991)78-9, 81. D. Wylie, 'Textual Incest: Nathaniel Isaacs and the Development of the Shaka Myth', *History in Africa*, 19 (1992), 413, 415. S. Martin, 'British Images of the Zulu c. 1820-1879', Ph.D. Thesis, (University of Cambridge, 1982), 50.

¹³H. Fynn, *The Diary of Henry Francis Fynn* (eds.), J. Stuart and D. McK. Malcolm (Pietermaritzburg, 1969). J. Bird, (ed.), *The Annals of Natal: 1495-1845*, 1 (First published, 1888; reprinted Cape Town, 1965).

The *James Stuart Archive* (Vols 1-4) are an extensive compilation of oral histories with statements from 119 informants.¹⁴ Stuart, a colonial administrator, collected the testimonies during the period 1890-1920. John Wright argues that James Stuart became concerned about the breakdown of traditional African society particularly in relation to the role of chiefs and was motivated to collect the testimonies and to conduct research through his desire to understand and thus educate others on African custom and culture. Precise details of James Stuart's informants are not known. However, Wright tells us that

almost all were male, with the great majority being African, ranging in age from less than 50 to over 90. Most of them were members of, or closely associated with, the chiefly families which had dominated rural communities in both Natal colony and the Zulu kingdom in the nineteenth century.¹⁵

There has been some criticism of the editorial process and omission of some of Stuart's notes.¹⁶ Carolyn Hamilton warns that "detailed historical investigation reveals that Stuart was no mere inventor of Zulu history, that his collection warrants, and bears, the close scrutiny of historians seeking to recover the traces of indigenous views of Shaken times."¹⁷ Wright himself points out, the Stuart volumes should not be interpreted as the 'final' word.¹⁸

¹⁴J. Wright, 'Making the James Stuart Archive', paper, African Studies Association, (Florida, 1995), 21.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁷C. Hamilton, *Terrific Majesty*, (Cape Town, 1998), 5.

¹⁸Wright, 'Making the James Stuart Archive', 2, 17.

CHAPTER 1

HISTORIOGRAPHY, ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE ZULU STATE

(LITERATURE SURVEY)

The Zulu state has been a topic of great interest since the mid nineteenth-century and to varying degrees has captured the interest of travellers, missionaries, historians, anthropologists, political scientists and writers of fiction.¹ Research on the origins and development of the Zulu state has concentrated largely on political, military, economic and demographic developments. Initial studies were made by nineteenth-century travellers and missionaries who were neither anthropologists nor historians. In the early traveller/settler phase from about the 1830s—1930s the emergence of the Zulu kingdom was interpreted as representing the ultimate in ‘primitive savage’ might. Internal cohesion was viewed as the product of repressive measures instituted by Shaka and subsequent leaders. The Zulu were often perceived as a unified, bounded homogenous

¹Various terms have been used in relation to the form of political centralisation in the area that became known as Zululand. State is defined in this thesis as a political and regional association of people under the authority of a small ruling group. It does not suggest a geographic area with *firmly fixed* boundaries as in the modern nation state, nor does it imply any notion of a unified nation in the modern sense of the word. The terminology is arguable and there are various theoretical debates surrounding these terms including the inappropriate application of European concepts onto distinctly African situations. I find state a particularly problematic term in the context of this thesis as a state suggests maintenance of the order by use of force. Equally problematic are terms like king. However, it is difficult to use indigenous words for these concepts. Although there are African concepts developed independent of European influence, the translations of African terms are not free of European interpretations. I have chosen not to use *inkosi* as differentiation in the literature between ‘king’, or ‘chief’ is unclear and ambiguous.

Ultimately a decision must be made on the most appropriate terms for the research at hand. Thus in this thesis, I will use the terms ‘state’ and ‘king’. I will use the term king to refer to paramount chiefs such as Shaka. I do realise the inadequacies of these terms, but for the purposes of research and clarity in writing we are often left with few alternatives.

tribe — unchanged throughout time. Some of the descriptions and recordings were not specifically concerned with accuracy, and reflected vested interests such as commerce or evangelisation. Many interpretations were also paternalistic and stressed the advantages of European civilisation.² The writers of this period were generally uncritical, and offered little causal analysis. The only factor thought to account for internal social cohesion, or the legitimacy of the king, was force.³ Nineteenth-century travellers rarely perceived religion as being integral to African social or political organisation. This chapter is an historiographical survey of explanations for the rise and consolidation of the Zulu state. The chapter also considers the most influential anthropological accounts of the Zulu state as well as explaining a split within anthropological theory in South Africa. It is this division which may account for the apparent lack of integration between anthropology and history in relation to ideological and religious explanations for Shaka's actions in state building and consolidation.

The term Zulu has many meanings. At a basic genealogical level it refers to the lineage headed by Shaka's father, Senzangakhona. By the time that Dingane displaced Shaka, it was commonly used by Africans to refer to all the followers of the king. KwaZulu, or Zululand was also in common use as a way of referring to the country occupied by the kingdom. By the 1840s missionaries had already begun to speak of the Zulu language. This became a linguistic umbrella used to encompass all the dialects of the northern Nguni group – a category including large numbers of people who were never part of the

²Fynn argued that the Zulus under Shaka, and other marauding tribes who fled from them, depopulated the region. Thus, starving refugees were grateful for the protection offered by the Europeans who had entered this 'uninhabited' region.

³Fynn writes that, "the mode of government to which the Eastern tribes have been accustomed has been despotic, though it was not till after the chieftainship of Chaka that it can be said to have attained a very arbitrary character." J. Bird, (ed.), *The Annals of Natal: 1495-1845*, 1 (First published, 1888; reprinted Cape Town, 1965), 68. According to Fynn, the Zulu revolution was instituted when Shaka's ambitions led him to assassinate his protector Dingiswayo. This allowed Shaka to unite groups under his authority which he did with greater ferocity.

Zulu kingdom. In a similar manner, the word Zulu became an umbrella term for **ethnography/anthropology**. It was – and is- used to designate people who share a **heritage** of cultural practices. While this thesis aims to shed light on the role of ideology **and** religion in the Zulu kingdom, it draws on knowledge accumulated about the larger **cultural** grouping to which the kingdom belonged. Shaka did not reinvent the culture of **his** subjects. He drew on a rich, deeply entrenched body of custom and tradition.

Because Henry Francis Fynn (first published in John Bird, 1888) and Nathaniel Isaacs (first published, 1836) were among the first travellers to write about the Zulu they had an enormous impact on subsequent writing.⁴ They saw the creation of the state as the result of military conquests. Fynn believed that the Mthethwa chief Dingiswayo must have learned the arts of government and war from contact with a European, Dr Cowen, and “that on this were founded his plans for the future.”⁵ He learnt to encourage ingenuity and opened extensive trade with the Portuguese at Delagoa Bay. Unlike some other writers Fynn describes Dingiswayo as assuming “despotic power hitherto unknown.”⁶ Dingiswayo waged war on constantly quarrelling neighbouring tribes so as to unite them.⁷ The Zulu revolution began when Shaka’s ambitions led him to assassinate his protector, Dingiswayo. This allowed Shaka to unite groups under his authority which he did with even greater ferocity. Fynn did make some observations about connections between politics and religion, when he noted that “no chief who exercises power only by the principles of justice could control a Kafir nation...”⁸ But such observations were not expanded. Isaacs also saw the state resting on Shaka’s personality, fights of succession and ambition. He was a horrible, detestable savage unparalleled in history who was driven by his victories and a desire to expand his

⁴Bird, *The Annals of Natal*, 1: 60-71. N. Isaacs, *Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa*, 2 vols, (ed.), L. Herrman, (First published, 1836; reprinted Cape Town, 1937). Bird, *The Annals of Natal*, 1: 166-183.

⁵Bird, *The Annals of Natal*, 1: 63.

⁶*Ibid.*, 63.

⁷*Ibid.*, 64.

⁸*Ibid.*, 110.

nation.⁹ “This African Mars ultimately depopulated the whole line of coast from the Amaputa River to the Tugela.”¹⁰ Other early travellers such as Adulphe Delegorgue (Bird, 1888) mirrored this view of war and conquest describing Shaka as the “black Napoleon.”¹¹

Surprisingly, the Methodist missionary, William Holden (first published, 1855), paid little attention to indigenous religion. He, like many others, believed that Shaka seized the leadership “by treachery and violence.”¹² Holden explained state building and war as motivated by the blood lust and ambition of Shaka who he described as “ ‘the Modern Attila’ ... ‘the Hyaena Man’ ... [and] ‘The Great Elephant’.”¹³ Social processes and the bulk of the population were largely ignored by Holden. He drew attention to the more wondrous or alarming aspects of culture such as “cannibalism”. Despite his criticism of Isaacs’ work Holden followed his lead in emphasising the single leader and single group — Zulu — responsible for the death and destruction probably causing one group to “fall down upon” another.¹⁴

The next clergyman to write extensively on Zulu history was the Catholic, A. T. Bryant (1929). He also noted problems with Isaacs’ work, pointing to his poor understanding of the Zulu language. Yet, despite this criticism, Bryant wrote that Isaacs was “one of the earliest and the most literate of the English pioneers among the Zulus, and he has blessed us with the only published record, based on personal experience, of Shaka and his times (save a few pages by Fynn).”¹⁵ Through much of the twentieth century,

⁹Bird, *The Annals of Natal*, 1: 168, 172.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 168.

¹¹Delegorgue is one example. He described Shaka as “the contemporary of Napoleon”. Bird, *The Annals of Natal*, 1: 470.

¹²W. Holden *History of the Colony of Natal* (First published, 1855; reprinted Cape Town, 1963), 56.

¹³*Ibid.*, 55.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 42, 43, 49, 57, 342.

¹⁵A. Bryant, *The Zulu People as They Were Before the White Man Came* (Pietermaritzburg, 1949), 720.

Bryant's work was considered to be the most authoritative work on pre-colonial history. He believed that he had laid "the very foundation upon which all future 'Zulu' history must be based."¹⁶ Bryant has been described as an early Africanist in the sense that, unlike other settler historians, his focus was on African history and he attempted to incorporate an anthropological perspective.¹⁷ Nonetheless, his extensive writing on the Zulu has an ahistorical Eurocentric perspective that excludes analysis of social or structural change. Bryant demonstrated his view of African history and the Zulu when he wrote:

Among the Kaffirs it is only the few tribes that have any history to relate, and even they can seldom regale us with anything more inviting than the sordid of brutish fight and predatory raids. Of the smaller clans, too weak to wage war or embark on marauding expeditions, it was never their privilege to make history.¹⁸

Bryant's work has often been accepted uncritically and merely reproduced, but recent research has highlighted deficiencies and flaws.¹⁹ From my perspective, the most remarkable thing about Bryant is that he, a priest of the Catholic Church, had little to say about politico/religious relations in the nascent Zulu state in his book *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal* (1929). He does mention Shaka's 'priestly' role and hints at divine kingship, but otherwise said little. In his later publication, *The Zulu People* (1949) he did highlight the importance of the Zulu ancestors when he said:

the only ancestral clan-gods (*amaKosi*) that mattered now, since the foundation of the Zulu 'nation', were those of the *Zulu* clan, to which the national kings belonged. What happened to the myriad gods of the conquered clans, now dispossessed of their peoples' allegiance, we cannot think; nor can those people inform us. Presumably Shaka, along with the kings, had swept also their idols away into a common bin.²⁰

These religious aspects of kingship however, were not investigated further by later historians and it is these aspects that this thesis seeks to explore.

¹⁶A. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal* (London, 1929), ix.

¹⁷C. Saunders, *The Making of the South African Past* (Cape Town, 1988), 105.

¹⁸A. Bryant, *A History of the Zulu and Neighbouring Tribes* (Cape Town, 1964), 139.

¹⁹J. Wright, 'A.T. Bryant and the 'Wars of Shaka'', *History in Africa*, 18 (1991), 421.

²⁰A Bryant, *The Zulu People as They Were Before the White Man Came* (Pietermaritzburg, 1949), 503.

The early attempts at producing general history added very little to previous work on the Zulu kingdom. George McCall Theal's (1892) history of South Africa was predominantly the history of European settlement and administrations with occasional mention of the African leaders.²¹ Theal described Shaka as "one of the most ruthless conquerors the world has ever known", a man who was able to call up the Zulu's essential "passion for blood" so that he could rise "to tower in barbarian fame."²² This description 'explained much of Shaka's actions. Theal was also a proponent of white innovation theory. He argued that Dingiswayo learned about the European military system during his wanderings which took him as far as the border of the Cape Colony. He claimed that this was the account that the Zulu themselves believed. However, he admitted the possibility that Dingiswayo may have reintroduced a previous regimental system and crescent battle formation known two centuries earlier, but whose practice had declined under feeble chiefs.²³ After conquering neighbouring groups Dingiswayo was, according to Theal, satisfied. Shaka it would seem was not. He refined the regimental system and embarked on cruel aggressive campaigns and his cruelty was "hardly comprehensible by Europeans."²⁴ Shaka's actions caused some groups to flee into other areas and in so doing prey upon the previous inhabitants causing death and destruction which in turn gave rise to famine and large scale cannibalism.²⁵ According to Theal, Shaka was "utterly merciless [and] he set himself the task of not merely conquering but of exterminating the tribes as far as he could reach."²⁶

Theal's narrative is saturated with 'great man theory' and is completely devoid of analysis. His pronouncements on the origins of the Zulu state go no further than the discovery or re-discovery of a regimental system and crescent battle formation. As with Bryant, Theal's work has often been reproduced uncritically. This is unfortunate

²¹G. Theal, *History of South Africa*, 1-11 (1837-1919; reprinted Cape Town, 1964).

²²G. Theal, *History of South Africa*, 5 (Cape Town, 1964), 434.

²³Theal, *History of South Africa*, 5: 435.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 438.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 446-7.

²⁶G. Theal, *South Africa*, Eighth edition, (First published 1894; reprinted London, 1917), 163.

because Theal perpetuated many racial myths including the assumption of a state of constant turmoil prior to European settlement, and the empty land theory which was used to 'legitimate' the settlement of the regions by whites.²⁷ In all the many volumes produced by Theal there is virtually no discussion of Zulu religion or its importance in politics.

W. M. Macmillan (1929) laid foundations for an inclusive approach to history during the 1930s and 1940s but did not integrate the study of religion and state. Macmillan called for the study of social history instead of 'great man' political history, though this was not readily accepted at the time.²⁸ He linked what he terms the 'Chakan wars' in the interior to the process of colonisation and the slave trade. As an early professional, liberal historian he broke away from the traditions established by Theal and George Cory.²⁹ Unlike Theal, Macmillan was exposed to social theory from abroad and influenced by Fabian perspectives which raised social questions and sought to study social problems based on socialist ideas and notions of equality. As Saunders points out, Macmillan's social perspective on historical inquiry was also influenced by studies in Germany which "taught Macmillan how necessary it was to see contemporary social issues in historical perspective."³⁰ Macmillan criticised the cultural anthropological approach of the 'Bantu Studies' departments within universities which stressed differences between black and white as a subtle way to bolster the need for segregation.

²⁷Theal wrote that "at this period nearly the whole of South Africa beyond the borders of the Cape Colony was in a state of violent disturbance, owing to wars among different Bantu tribes." Theal, *South Africa*, 162. The first part of the argument is that the first Europeans encountered an 'empty' land which they then claimed as theirs. Saunders points out that Theal perpetuated this perception of the 'recent' arrival of 'the Bantu' in South Africa. Saunders, *The Making of the South African Past*, 39. The second part relates to the trekkers encountering an empty land produced by Shaka's devastations which depopulated. The trekkers then claimed the land as their own.

²⁸W. Macmillan, *Bantu, Boer and Briton* (London, 1929), 18-20.

²⁹G. Cory, *The Rise of South Africa*, 5 vols. (London, 1910-40).

³⁰Saunders, *Making of the South African Past*, 39.

Macmillan separated his history from anthropology. This further isolated liberal history from anthropological questions and thus from issues such as nineteenth century Zulu religion.

Macmillan's social perspective was not much pursued before the 1950s. Historical inquiry concentrated on the political arena. The potential for exchange and development between history and anthropology suggested by Macmillan's social perspective lay dormant. Even the early African historians writing in the first part of the twentieth century, neglected ideology, kinship, and religion. They wrote very much in the settler tradition of Theal. Like Fynn and Theal before him, S. Modiri Molema's *The Bantu Past and Present* (1920) argued that Dingiswayo had observed military skills in Cape Town which he imitated when he succeeded his father.³¹ This system was improved upon by Shaka who "carried fire and sword into the adjacent tribes, whom he scattered, exterminated, or incorporated into the Zulus. By 1820 he had depopulated large districts, and made the whole of South Africa ring with his name."³²

Although Eric Walker, another influential historian of the interwar period, acknowledged the importance of religion he did not include a discussion of religion in his account of the Zulu state. Noting that the Bantu "tribal system, [was] based on religious sanctions"³³, he believed that the Zulu under "military despotisms" of Shaka and Dingane were atypical of the "Bantu system of rule."³⁴

In the 1960s Africanist historians rejected 'great man' theory and began to offer more complex views of the Zulu state. They replied to the pretensions of the apartheid state with anti-racist liberal histories emphasising that Africans had already proved their ability to be self-determining founders of their own states. Shaka's astute leadership

³¹S. Molema, *The Bantu Past and Present* (First published, 1920; reprinted Cape Town, 1963), 80.

³²*Ibid.*, 81.

³³E. Walker, *A History of Southern Africa* (London, 1957), 111.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 111, n.1.

skills were emphasised in historical studies underpinned by hopes of empowerment. Africanists' attention focussed on particular regions, ethnic groups or states, challenging the previous negative assumptions of destruction and massive depopulation. As notions of primordial, static, unchanging African societies were challenged, liberal Africanists began to shift their attention to the study of dynamic internal forces. John Omer-Cooper's landmark book, *The Zulu Aftermath* (1966) argued that Africans had made history of interest to the world at large.³⁵ Omer-Cooper reinterpreted the period Walker called the *mfecane* as a positive event which resulted in the formation of new states. Yet Omer Cooper too neglected religion and ideology.

During the 1960s, historians and anthropologists of liberal sympathies worked together, writing history which emphasised the continuity and stability of African cultural groupings. Anthropology, a discipline that does pay close attention to religion, might have been expected to offer new insights into the Zulu state, but did not. Furthermore, even the most progressive anthropologists employed unrealistic concepts of homogeneity and firmly established 'ethnic' groups which could be traced back into the pre-colonial past. As Shula Marks remarked, Monica Wilson behaved like "an anthropologist looking at historical evidence 'for the sake of extracting static conclusions from moving elements', rather than ... an historian using the insights of anthropology and sociology to answer the historical questions of 'happening, change and the particular'." ³⁶

Nonetheless, the history written by Africanists in the 1960s was far removed from the history produced by contemporary Afrikaner nationalist historians such as the general history edited by C.F.J. Muller. He and his collaborators ignored the surge forward in African history during the 1960s and wrote as though there was no pre-colonial history

³⁵J. Omer-Cooper, *The Zulu Aftermath* (London, 1966).

³⁶S. Marks, 'African and Afrikaner History', *Journal of African History*, XI, 3 (1970), 441.

in southern Africa.³⁷ Indeed the notion of Shaka the brutal savage and mighty conqueror lived on in many places. Afrikaner historians were unlikely to undertake studies on the development of the Zulu state incorporating religion and ideology.

In the late 1960s historical research on South Africa took a radical turn.³⁸ Revisionist scholars challenged liberal Africanist history with interpretations which focussed on the relationship between political structures and economic factors. Suggestive insights developed earlier by Macmillan and C. W. De Kiewiet, which had been initially expressed in the 1930s and 1940s, were taken up and expanded.³⁹ Radical revisionists were not unified in their views, but opened new perspectives on pre-colonial African history. Materialist analysis of ecological and human forces substantially increased knowledge about south-eastern Africa in general, and the rise of the Zulu state in particular.

Important studies built on speculations about the relationship between demographic change and political development first advanced by the anthropologist, Max Gluckman. He suggested that population pressure established the preconditions for the emergence

³⁷C. Muller (ed.), *Five Hundred Years: A History of South Africa* (Pretoria, 1969). Muller incorporates an Afrikaner dimension to the writing of South African history but remains influenced by the settler tradition of Theal. Muller considered that the history of South Africa centred around the two poles of Afrikanerdom—the period of the Great Trek and the Anglo-Boer War. It is largely a political narrative of white South Africa. Sources have been used very selectively for a specific purpose. There is a decided lack of adequate source criticism, and in particular, a failure to critically evaluate the primary sources.

³⁸The black township of Sharpeville drew international attention when in March 1960, South African police opened fire on a crowd who were demonstrating against the Pass Laws. Sixty-nine unarmed people were shot. The South African government responded by declaring a state of emergency and banning the African National Congress and the Pan-African Congress and their respective armed wings.

³⁹Macmillan, *Bantu, Boer and Briton*. C. de Kiewiet *A History of South Africa Social and Economic* (London, 1941).

of larger political formations in southeast Africa.⁴⁰ Gluckman argued that rapid population growth had reached crisis point by the end of the eighteenth century. The new situation favoured the development of centralised institutions to control land use and resource distribution. While Gluckman incorporated a dubious psychoanalytic analysis of Shaka, he ignored ideological and religious change (see also pages 23-24).

Jeff Guy vastly extended the scope of environmental/ecological investigation in a series of important papers.⁴¹ Guy noted that successful cattle grazing in Zululand depended on two types of grass — sweetveld and sourveld — and access to both was of fundamental importance. Under favourable conditions, human population increased, making grasslands vulnerable to unbalanced stocking and erosion which in turn, led to a crisis. Guy argues that by the end of the eighteenth-century the previous long standing equilibrium with the environment gave way to disequilibrium between environmental grazing conditions and the human population. It was this imbalance that underlay the socio/political changes which occurred. Guy argues that there was “increasing violence in an area as they struggled for access to diminishing resources [and] that such a struggle was an important factor in the conflict which occurred in the region at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, out of which Shaka and the Zulu kingdom emerged”.⁴² Thus the centralised leadership exerted controls over the resources, the environment, and the population.

A less sophisticated ecological argument was advanced by Charles Ballard in 1986. According to Ballard, the Zulu state arose in response to over-population, climatic stress, and a declining resource base. Ballard argues that the so-called Madhlatule Famine at the end of the eighteenth century may have precipitated a potentially

⁴⁰M. Gluckman, ‘The Rise of a Zulu Empire’, *Scientific American*, 202, 4, (1960), 168.

⁴¹J. Guy, ‘Ecological factors in the Rise of the Zulu Kingdom’, in S. Marks and A. Atmore (eds.), *Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa* (London, 1980)

⁴²J. Guy, *The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom* (First published, 1979; reprinted Pietermaritzburg, 1994),

destabilising subsistence crisis which undermined existing strategies for feeding the region's population. Ballard argues that the northern Nguni did not have external trade networks in agricultural commodities capable of sustaining them during times of local scarcity. Therefore, during Dingiswayo's reign, survival strategies necessitated material reorganisations involving migrations, trading cattle for food, raiding and consolidation in order to gain access to and control over a greater range of suitable grazing and arable land. These in turn stimulated a political reorganisation under Shaka.⁴³ Ballard further argues that through the Zulu military regiment system Shaka implemented a social revolution, took control of the labour power of all Zulu men away from homestead heads, and also controlled population growth. "Population pressure on the land was eased considerably as a result of famine and the intense, genocidal warfare that accompanied Shaka's conquests."⁴⁴ Reviving some discredited elements of older interpretations, Ballard locates the 'revolution' firmly in the hands of Shaka the 'Black Napoleon' and claims that thousands took flight from his destruction where they "either eked out an existence as hunter-gatherers or resorted to cannibalism."⁴⁵ Ideology and religion do not figure in Ballard's analysis.

No sooner had Ballard's analysis appeared in print than an archaeologist, Martin Hall, called attention to the lack of empirical evidence for ecological disequilibrium. Drought, agricultural decline, and inadequate grazing resources were in his opinion unlikely to have precipitated Zulu state formation. Hall therefore, believes political and economic transformations were more likely based on the desire to control external trade connections centred on the Delagoa Bay region.⁴⁶

⁴³C. Ballard, 'Drought and Economic Distress: South Africa in the 1800s', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 17:2 (1986), 372.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 374.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 374.

⁴⁶M. Hall, *The Changing Past: Farmers, Kings and Traders in Southern Africa, 200-1860* (Cape Town, 1987).

Influential studies analysing the relationship between trade, economics, and politics had been launched by Alan Smith, David Hedges and Henry Slater in the 1960s and 70s.⁴⁷ Smith argued that the competition for control of European trade was instrumental in the consolidation of the Zulu state.⁴⁸ He believed that if “these were wars fought over matters of trade, then the increased militarism and consolidation which resulted could be viewed as a logical response to the necessities of the prosecution of trade.”⁴⁹ Hedges greatly expanded this line of analysis, attempting to show how control of trade and dispersal of imported goods was used by chiefs to form allegiances and to consolidate power. He challenged previous portrayals of ‘the Zulu’ as a homogenous group. His analysis moved beyond purely economic analysis toward recognition of cultural and ideological factors. Slater considered religion in part — but only in terms of Shaka’s absolute power (see page 119-120 below).⁵⁰ Slater argued that:

the monumental changes described amounted to the destruction of a feudal mode of production which had probably dominated the area for centuries before about 1750, and its replacement with a new ‘absolute’ mode of production and appropriate supernatural institutions. A change of this magnitude, seemingly spread over a relatively short period of time in the case of Zulu-Mthethwa, could not be accomplished without the exercise of a substantial amount of force. With a monopoly over the instruments of coercion, the state was in a position to institute a systematic reign of terror designed to quell all opposition as the transition to absolutism was forced through.⁵¹

David Chanaiwa turned away from speculations about trade in a study which attempted to link Zulu state formation, migrations and conquests to an intensification of the

⁴⁷A. Smith, ‘The Trade of Delagoa Bay in Nguni Politics’, in L. Thompson (ed.), *African Societies in Southern Africa* (London, 1969). H. Slater, ‘Transitions in the Political Economy of South-East Africa’, D. Phil, (University of Sussex, 1976). D. Hedges, ‘Trade and Politics in Southern Mozambique and Zululand in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries’, Ph.D. Thesis, (University of London, 1978).

⁴⁸By the end of the eighteenth century the intensity of commerce in the Delagoa Bay area had increased and the prime commodity exported from the region was ivory. Smith believes that the majority of export ivory was derived from Natal and therefore it may have been a significant factor in developments affecting the consolidation and expansion of the Zulu state.

⁴⁹Smith, ‘The Trade of Delagoa Bay’, 183.

⁵⁰Slater, ‘Transitions in the Political Economy of South-East Africa’, 317.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, 318.

'pastoralist mode of production'.⁵² He portrays the Zulu 'revolution' as an "innovative, indigenous process of state formation, crisis resolution and value orientation" in a pastoralist society.⁵³ As he describes the system, "Nguni pastoralist production was based on capital investment of cattle that were individually owned ... Chiefs and wealthy commoners could rid themselves of manual labor altogether by using milk as wages."⁵⁴ According to Chanaiwa, the economic and social divisions and deprivation produced by such disparities probably encouraged mass participation in Shaka's revolution.⁵⁵ Furthermore, these deprivations were also felt by Zulu princes. The revolutionary leaders capitalised on the centrality of cattle by offering prospects of social mobility through the accumulation of cattle to individuals. Charismatic leaders such as Dingiswayo and Shaka succeeded because of their leadership qualities and secondly because they were able to accommodate and mobilise the socio-economic forces in their societies. In Chanaiwa's analysis ideology functions only as an expression of class interests. Again, religion does not figure.

In the latter 1980s, Guy opened yet another way of looking at Zulu history with an argument emphasising the importance of gender.⁵⁶ He began by noting that women and cattle in Nguni-speaking society were more than a measure of wealth: "their accumulation and distribution were pursued out of the need for security and authority, and were a dominant social goal The drive to accumulate, and the association of accumulation with power and wealth, cannot just be assumed as an unproblematic, universal social feature."⁵⁷ The emergence of the Zulu kingdom must therefore be

⁵²D. Chanaiwa, 'The Zulu Revolution: State Formation in a Pastoralist Society', *African Studies Review*, 23: 3 (1980), 6-8.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 6.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 6, 7.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 8.

⁵⁶J. Guy, 'Analysing Pre-Capitalist Societies in Southern Africa', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 14: 1 (1987).

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 21.

examined in the context of social transformations involving the nexus between women and cattle. Guy did not, however, go on to speculate about the way these crucial mechanisms of control may have been conceptualised by ideology or religion.

Another revisionist historian, Philip Bonner, suggested a way of linking production, trade *and* ideology. The increasing incorporation of northern Nguni groups into European commodity exchange in the Delagoa Bay area caused increased competition and dislocation. Bonner believes that the two forces which shaped change were “competition for trade both within and between rival chiefdoms, and competition for scarce combinations of natural resources which could underpin a powerful and expansive tributary state.”⁵⁸ The Madhlatule famine intensified competition for resources and crystallised the transition from lineage-based society to the tributary state. Bonner points out that what arose was “a new tributary mode of production, replete with a new division of labour, the interruption of the homestead head’s control over reproduction and production, and a new aristocratic class cohering around the king, and new ideological forms to buttress the new order.”⁵⁹ These developments were far from uniform and impacted upon groups in varying forms and severity leading to variations in the state structures. Bonner also stresses that cultural factors influenced political developments, pointing for example, to ways in which Swazi politics were influenced by that of the Sotho.⁶⁰ But where Bonner’s work really stands as distinctive is that he argues that this period saw:

the emergence of new principles of structuring social organisation; new methods of surplus appropriation; a new division of labour; a new aristocratic class (composed of regional and military leaders and the close family of the dominant lineage); a new dynamic of production, centred on the production of surplus for the luxury consumption of this group, *and new content in old ideological shells* (emphasis added).⁶¹

⁵⁸P. Bonner, *Kings, Commoners and Concessionaires: The Evolution and Dissolution of the Nineteenth-Century Swazi State*, (Cambridge, 1983), 208.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 23.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 24.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 22.

Recent work by Carolyn Hamilton and John Wright has greatly advanced knowledge of **the** role of ideology in shaping the Zulu state.⁶² They argue that “the Zulu state, like **most** precolonial states in southern Africa, consisted of a number of heterogeneous **groups**, and that, as in all polities, ideological factors were crucial in maintaining its **social cohesion**.”⁶³ Hamilton and Wright focus on the formation of group identities **and** examine changes in kinship ideology in response to changing historical circumstances. With the emergence of the state the role of kinship ideology altered.⁶⁴ The establishment of the ethnically defined *amalala* illustrates that political differentiation of peripheral groups within the Zulu state was effected through state ideology rather than through force.

This thesis aims to extend the work of Hamilton, Wright and Bonner by focussing on the religious elements of ideology. Because anthropologists figure so prominently among students of religion it will also be necessary to look at the way that anthropology developed approaches to the study of Zulu society in the course of the twentieth century.

Anthropology and Zulu religion

It is curious that, although the analysis of culture and cosmology falls firmly within the domain of anthropology, anthropologists who have taken an interest in the formation, and maintenance of the Zulu state have neglected religion. It is worth asking why this should be so. It may be that early twentieth century anthropology was dogged by continuing links to physical anthropology which had obvious implications in a racially divided society. History in contrast was associated with politics, economics, and much focussed on European interests. For a very long time indigenous societies were

⁶²C. Hamilton and J. Wright ‘The Making of the Amalala: Ethnicity, Ideology and Relations of Subordination in a Precolonial Context’, *South African Historical Journal*, 22 (1990).

⁶³*Ibid.*, 3.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 13.

perceived as fixed and unchanging.⁶⁵ As the century progressed, South African anthropology itself split into warring camps based on conflicting theoretical foundations. On the one side were the social anthropologists who took their leads from British social anthropology. This faction included the majority of the black anthropologists. On the other side were the Afrikaner ethnologists who, despite divergences in opinion, can be broadly grouped under the theoretical banner of *volkekunde* (usually categorised as cultural anthropologists) who began to emerge in the 1920s.⁶⁶

Antagonism between the two theoretical approaches gradually intensified from the 1930s. Both sides took an interest in culture and indigenous law, but from very different political perspectives. The distinction between the two camps of Afrikaner/cultural and English/social anthropology was rooted in differences of opinion about the “unity and diversity of mankind.”⁶⁷ In a South African context, the conceptualisations of separate and identifiable cultures had political implications. This can be explained as resulting from a series of historical political processes.

⁶⁵ Bryant wrote that “The Zulu daily life of a hundred, perhaps a thousand, years ago was precisely that which it is to-day.” Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 74.

⁶⁶B. Pauw, ‘Recent South African Anthropology’, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 9 (1980), 317. There are possible exceptions to these distinctions. For example, an institution may teach in the English-medium but have a cultural anthropological theoretical base. Further, the classification into two broad categories is not to deny the possible existence of some theoretical common ground. For example, Pauw claims to have been influenced by both sides.

⁶⁷M. West, ‘Social Anthropology in a Divided Society’, inaugural lecture, (University of Cape Town, 1979), 2. Gluckman wrote in 1975 that he was “seriously disturbed by recent work in anthropology which, because of the developing interest in symbolism within cultures, confuses the problems of differences and similarities in cultures, with the problems of differences and similarities among human beings.” M. Gluckman, ‘Anthropology and Apartheid: The Work of South African Anthropologists’, in M. Fortes and S. Patterson, (eds.), *Studies in African Social Anthropology* (London, 1975), 27.

Afrikaner ethnologists trained in ethnological 'survey work' in the inter-war years were increasingly employed in the 1950s as professional advisers on 'Bantustan' and African administration.⁶⁸ W. Eiselen was a prominent *volkekundige* who criticised government policy and administration of the African population during the 1930s. He stressed that the preservation and development of 'traditional African culture' under an apartheid system would greatly improve the economic and social circumstances for the African population. Generally speaking, the *volkekundiges* naively believed that through segregation and education, the African pre-contact cultural situation (tribalised, 'traditional' cultural systems) could be revived. Eiselen redefined the 'Native Question' in terms of culture rather than race. The initial intentions of *volkekunde* anthropologists such as Eiselen was to stress that indigenous culture was not necessarily inferior, but must be preserved and allowed to develop independently. However, during the 1950s and 1960s culture and race were increasingly treated as synonymous. Indeed, discussions of *cultural* differences were often extended to include references to psychological differences. This anthropology was seen as racist by many historians.

A major subject of interest to *volkekundiges* was 'customary or indigenous administrative law' and a strong association existed between *volkekundiges* and government bureaucrats involved in recognising African law and its administration. Although identification of 'customary law' had began in the nineteenth century under the colonial government as a method of utilising indigenous structures, the legacy of that work had much to offer the apartheid state for subordinating and controlling the black population. Robert Gordon argues that " 'indigenous law' had been transubstantiated into a powerful means of control. " ⁶⁹

⁶⁸A. Kuper, 'Anthropology and Apartheid', in J. Lonsdale (ed.), *South Africa in Question* (London, 1988), 35.

⁶⁹R. Gordon, 'The White Man's Burden: *Ersatz* Customary Law and Internal Pacification in South Africa', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 2: 1 (1989), 60.

Like some liberal historians, social anthropologists in South Africa were heavily influenced by the political circumstances (apartheid) within the country and sought to oppose government socio/political policy and to separate their discipline from Afrikaner politics. English-speaking anthropology tended to distance itself from the pure cultural determinism⁷⁰ and rejected the political implications of stressing cultural difference within the context of segregationist politics. According to John Argyle and Eleanor Preston-Whyte “the appeal of social anthropology was doubtless enhanced by the fact that its emergence as an academic subject was part of a much wider development in the study and application of subjects with an African content during the decade, 1920-1930.”⁷¹

According to Robert Gordon, during the late 1920s and early 1930s, Isaac Schapera and W. H. Macmillan were critical of Bronislaw Malinowski’s approach because “the Malinowskian culture-change paradigm sits very well with proponents of apartheid.”⁷² Malinowski gave two lectures in Cape Town in 1934 where he argued “that it was dangerous to educate blacks using the same curriculum as that for whites, and then to discriminate against them. Rather, one should educate blacks for their ‘proper station in life’.”⁷³ There was thus a reaction by social anthropologists against Malinowski’s “culture contact approach.”⁷⁴ It is important to note however that even among English-speaking social anthropologists there was potential for isolating cultural groups. As Gluckman observed, “there have been also ‘liberal’ segregationists who, ... tended to emphasise the beauty and harmony, and even the appropriate uniqueness, of

⁷⁰By cultural determinism I mean the practice of invoking culture to account for the behaviour of social groupings. It fails to adequately analyse social, political and economic structures and processes.

⁷¹J. Argyle and E. Preston-Whyte (eds.), *Social System and Tradition in Southern Africa: Essays in Honour of Eileen Krige* (Cape Town, 1978), xiii.

⁷²R. Gordon, ‘Early Social Anthropology in South Africa’, *African Studies*, 49: 1 (1990), 31.

⁷³*Ibid.*, 31.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 31.

each African culture.”⁷⁵ Terence Ranger and Colin Murray also point to social anthropology’s:

alienation from the roots of black struggle against white supremacy, [which] represents at once a crippling displacement from access to policy-making and a failure to shed the image of ‘colonial hand-maiden’. Hence the paradox that the very strength of anthropology and the anthropological tradition inside South Africa is the source of its great weakness.⁷⁶

In the ideological tussles between the competing camps the study of ideology and religion in pre-colonial history were neglected. The next section will examine some of the most influential anthropologists in South Africa — and most importantly — those who studied the Zulu state and religion.

The most influential ethnographic work was produced from the 1930s by Hilda Kuper, Monica Wilson, and the husband-wife team of Eileen & J. D. Krige.⁷⁷ Wilson’s concern for history probably surpassed that of any of her contemporaries within the discipline of anthropology. The Kriges’ studies in the 1940s focused on economic life, law and political organisation reflecting their backgrounds in economics and law, and were heavily influenced by Winifred Hoernlé and Malinowski’s.⁷⁸ Other influential

⁷⁵Gluckman, ‘Anthropology and Apartheid: The Work of South African Anthropologists’, 22. Gluckman is severely critical of these anthropologists who he also sees as supporting the segregationist politics of the government.

⁷⁶T. Ranger and C. Murray, ‘Conference on the Interactions of History and Anthropology: Introduction’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 8, 1 (1981), 1-2.

⁷⁷ E. Krige, *The Social System of the Zulus* (First published, 1936; reprinted Pietermaritzburg, 1965).

E. and J. Krige, *The Realm of a Rain Queen* (London, 1943). H. Kuper, *An African Aristocracy* (London, 1947). M. Hunter, *Reaction to Conquest* (First published, 1936; reprinted London, 1961).

⁷⁸Winifred Hoernlé was herself influenced by Malinowski who was concerned with culture. She “emphasized the frame of social and political structure within which the flow of cultural borrowings and transmissions took place.” R. Gordon, ‘Early Social Anthropology in South Africa’, 31. In *The Realm of a Rain Queen* (1943), for example, the Kriges saw the monarch in their study as a central structure, and culture as an integrated structure, with each structure supporting the other to maintain equilibrium.

Religion and was thus interpreted in these terms.

anthropologists include Isaac Schapera, Myer Fortes and Max Gluckman. Their structural functional anthropology focused on social structure, or features of social organisation. In the 1920s and 1930s, Schapera's ethnographic work looked for similarities as well as differences among groups, and unlike many of his colleagues he did endeavour to incorporate an historical perspective. This anthropological approach stressed that similarities between the various groups would enable all to participate equally in the economic and political functioning of modern South African society. Studies focussed on groups interacting in a single social system. As a component of social structure, social cohesion became a major area of interest. Schapera undertook a comparative study of 'primitive' political organisation with the aim of providing a basis for generalisations. He stressed that political organisation was not based merely on kinship and that factors of locality were also a feature of political organisation in 'primitive' societies. Schapera was concerned with the centralisation of authority, the bureaucracy and the judiciary of the Zulu, and the relationship of such roles with kinship in contrast to western government. He argued that there appeared to be a correlation between subsistence strategies and political organisation. He therefore believed that institutionalised government with specialisation of power was less likely to be found in small-scale hunting and gathering communities.⁷⁹ He argued that political decisions were not necessarily bound by tradition and that chiefs could initiate their own political policies, such as Shaka's innovations in the military system.⁸⁰

Schapera challenged Malinowski's assertion that cultural homogeneity is found only in "higher stages of civilisation"⁸¹ and argued that cultural homogeneity was not always characteristic of Hottentot or Bantu tribes. However, he *did* argue that the groups which came to form the Shakan kingdom were culturally homogeneous. Interestingly, Schapera's explanation for the rise of the Shakan state did not differ much from settler historians' accounts. He argued that Shaka embarked on a mission of military

⁷⁹I. Schapera, *Government and Politics in Tribal Society* (London, 1956), 218-19.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 70.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, 19.

expansionism causing groups to either be subjugated by the Zulu or to flee.⁸² Shaka's political control was absolute and the source of his dominance was tyranny, and therefore, his assassination was the result of intolerable autocracy. Schapera did note however, that:

the establishment and maintenance of internal cooperation and external independence... [and therefore] the whole system of communal leadership and all the functions (as well as the powers) of the leaders; and in this context such activities as the organisation of religious ceremonies or collective hunts, or the concentration and redistribution of wealth, are as relevant as the administration of justice and similarly significant for comparative purposes.⁸³

In 1936 Eileen Krige wrote *The Social System of the Zulus*.⁸⁴ This book, like Bryant's *Olden Times*, has been considered for many years to be an authoritative work — despite its flaws. Like so many others, Krige saw Shaka's rule as tyrannical and argued that he modified customary law to suit himself.⁸⁵ Though *The Social System of the Zulus*, includes much discussion of religious practice, it ignores links between religion and state. Witchcraft and 'smelling out', for example, are treated as distinct from government and state. Although Krige has often been quoted by later writers, my own investigations of *The Social System of the Zulus* have found it to be poorly referenced and bordering on plagiarism in some parts. Thus, many of her claims should be investigated more closely. Some of these weaknesses will be highlighted in later sections.

⁸²Schapera argues that "The Cape Nguni tribes, for example, received large accessions of refugees from tribes uprooted by Shaka's raids into Natal." *Ibid.*, 22.

⁸³Schapera, *Government and Politics in Tribal Society*, 218-19.

⁸⁴R. Thurnwald described *The Social System of the Zulus* as "excellently written, without sentimentality or bias" and as a work analysing change. R. Thurnwald, 'Book Review', *American Sociological Review*, 1: 5 (1936), 859-60. But, the notion of historical change in *The Social System of the Zulu* was more likely to be the change of the time — as though relics representing a timeless past were slipping out of view. Ralph Linton was more enlightened in 1936 and said that although sociologists may find it useful, *The Social System of the Zulus* lacked "emphasis and interpretation" and failed to show "interrelations". R. Linton, Book Review, *The American Journal of Sociology*, XLII: 3, (1936), 452.

⁸⁵Krige, *The Social System of the Zulus*, 15.

Like many other social anthropologists, Max Gluckman was heavily influenced by Winifred Hoernlé. He, too, was critical of the Malinowskian approach to culture. Gluckman “broke from the Oxford structuralists who saw structure as a normative/jural order. Radcliffe-Brownian structuralism combined well with Gluckman materialism to underline this emergent universalist (socialist) ethic which stressed similarities in process rather than differences in substance.”⁸⁶

Gluckman wrote extensively on the Zulu. He saw pre-colonial Zululand as having attained a state of equilibrium through controlled expression of conflict and conflict resolution. In studying the role of conflict in the overall social process, Gluckman argued that the total political situation must be considered and used historical perspectives to compare various stages of equilibrium. He had an underlying interest in jurisprudence and political systems.⁸⁷ He described the Zulu ‘nation’ as consisting of a group of people “owing allegiance to a common head (the king) and occupying a defined territory ... the king exercised judicial, administrative, and legislative authority over his people, with the power to enforce his decisions.”⁸⁸ According to Gluckman political organisation was ‘pyramidal’ with the king at the apex.⁸⁹ Moving towards a perception of heterogeneity as against homogeneity Gluckman argued that it consisted of a “federation of tribes whose separate identities were symbolised by their chiefs.”⁹⁰

As noted above, Gluckman placed great emphasis on the role of population pressure in establishing the preconditions for the emergence of larger political formations in southeast Africa. He did not consider ritual except “as exaggerating real conflicts of

⁸⁶Gordon, ‘Early Social Anthropology in South Africa’, 32-3.

⁸⁷A. Kuper, *Anthropology and Anthropologists: The Modern British School* (London, 1983).

⁸⁸M. Gluckman, ‘The Kingdom of the Zulu of South Africa’ in M. Fortes and E. Evans-Prichard, (eds.), *African Political Systems* (First published, 1940; London, 1970), 30.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 39.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 40.

social rules and affirming that there was unity despite these conflicts.”⁹¹ Even more curious is that in his psycho/historical analysis of Shaka, Gluckman used individual psychology and applied it to the Zulu. He tended towards “committing a psychologism (the use of individual psychology to explain social and cultural phenomena)”⁹² — a danger that Winifred Hoernlé had warned of.

In 1969 E. V. Walter published a study of ‘terror and resistance’ in the Zulu state grounded in political anthropology. According to Walter, Shaka instituted a regime of terror and violence as a mechanism for social control and it functioned as a key feature of social organisation. According to Walter the despotic ruler such as Shaka directs his terror both inward and outwards. Inwardly, he sets one group against another for the purpose of social control — hence he accorded ‘witchdoctors’ a role. However, Walter’s treatment of Zulu religion is severely restricted, as will be demonstrated later, and his historical evidence on the role of ‘witchdoctors’ is highly questionable.⁹³

Basil Sansom’s anthropological study of the Zulu state also emphasises political factors and downplays religion. He examines the *span* or size of subject population and the *scope* of command, or the degree to which the monarch’s authority could influence the lives of his subjects. Shaka’s rule, once again, is described as absolute tyranny based on the regiments, unlike the Lobedu realm where the Queen’s power was grounded in religion. Sansom argues that the Zulu king “could be strengthened by ritual

⁹¹M. Gluckman, *Order and Rebellion in Tribal Africa* (London, 1963), 18.

⁹²Gordon, ‘Early Social Anthropology in South Africa’, 32. M. Gluckman, ‘The Rise of a Zulu Empire’, *Scientific American*, 202: 4, (1960), 167. Gluckman applies a modified functionalist approach to his analysis of change among the Zulu. He explains change as resulting from population pressure on resources and argues that rapid population growth had reached crisis point by the end of the eighteenth century. Alongside his hypothesis of demographic/ecological disequilibrium, Gluckman’s also incorporates a psychoanalytic analysis of Shaka which reflects the significant influence of Freud on Gluckman’s work.

⁹³E. Walter *Terror and Resistance* (New York, 1969).

performance ... [but that] the spiritual basis of power was secondary, used to buttress the edifice of military might.”⁹⁴ Sansom recognised the role of religion, but did not pursue it in relation to ideology and power. He argues that “when controller of all, a ruler can promote or demote institutions by laying emphasis on particular avenues of command. For Zulu kings, the military continued as the first source of power, their primary locus of absolute command.”⁹⁵ Thus the possibility of religion serving as a significant location of powers was not pursued.

More recently, Axel-Ivar Berglund has produced a substantial study of Zulu religion following extensive fieldwork into Zulu thought patterns and symbolism undertaken between 1959-1970. He claims that his interpretations are based as much as possible on the meanings assigned by the people to whom such rituals have expression and are significant, rather than being interpreted from a western scientific perspective. Because Berglund’s work is a contemporary study, it cannot be assumed to describe accurately the circumstances of pre-colonial times. Nonetheless, it still provides useful insights. Importantly for this thesis, Berglund contends that the “Zulu do not emphasise a distinction between that which is religious and that which may be described as secular.”⁹⁶

This thesis will question Sansom’s claim that the spiritual basis of the king’s power was secondary because religious and spiritual factors were of fundamental importance in Zulu life. They may well have been a primary factor. In order to challenge Sansom’s argument it is first necessary to make a closer examination of possible links between religion, ideology and politics.

⁹⁴B. Sansom, ‘Traditional Rulers and their Realms’, in W. Hammond-Tooke, (ed.), *The Bantu-Speaking Peoples of Southern Africa*, Second edition (London, 1974), 248.

⁹⁵*Ibid.*, 248.

⁹⁶A. Berglund, *Zulu Thought-Patterns and Symbolism* (London, 1989), 28.

CHAPTER 2

THE STATE, IDEOLOGY, POWER AND RELIGION

The review of historical and anthropological literature on the Zulu kingdom demonstrated that most studies have concentrated on political, economic or social change and some have combined those factors highlighting relationships. There has been no systematic, integrated study of religious, ideological and political change. Elsewhere in African studies there has been a reaction against exclusively economic and political analyses. Religion and ideology have (with considerable success) been argued to have been vital elements in the process of pre-colonial African state formation. Thus some contemporary anthropologists have complained of a lack of incorporation of ideological and religious perspectives in discussions of Asante history. T. C. McCaskie argues that the progressive exclusion of ideological and religious perspectives has left “the new Africanist political history ... substantially bereft of any serious contextualisation in culture.”¹ Clifton Crais has also called for a more “systematic exploration of the complex issues of ideology and consciousness.”² Crais is critical of Jeff Peires’s analysis of Xhosa history, arguing that Peires has not considered the centrality of culture and given too little attention to religion. “Such an exploration would place at the centre of analysis the ways in which the Xhosa ... constructed, represented and comprehended their world.”³ Crais also questions Peires for not examining the ways in which the Xhosa people themselves perceived a period of disturbance. McCaskie’s and Crais’ concerns can also be applied to the history of the Zulu state. As Crais argues:

much of the history of South Africa has involved struggles over culture and identity, the structure of agency, and the creation of consciousness. These struggles have only begun to be charted by historians, who in the past have focussed primarily on political economy and

¹T. McCaskie, ‘Empire State: Asante and the Historians’, *Journal of African History*, 33 (1992), 469.

²C. Crais, ‘Peires and the Past’, *South African Historical Journal*, 25 (1991), 238.

³ *Ibid.*, 239.

who by and large have seen ideology and agency as somehow reflective of, and reactive to, transformations unfolding within the economy.⁴

While every society has distinctive features, it is difficult to see how the Zulu state could be vastly different. States do not simply spring up suddenly but rather are the end results of long processes of development. Ideology is a vital factor in their formation and consolidation. As Henri Claessen and Peter Skalník observe, “a readily adaptable ideological background, be it religious, juridical or kinship, is a necessary condition for the emergence of the state.”⁵ Claessen and Jarich Oosten also point out that prior to the emergence of state, people were accustomed to military service.⁶ In other words Yet this is a feature often seen as a direct result of Shaka the despot suddenly seizing the Zulu throne. This chapter will examine four important inter-related concepts; power, the state, ideology and religion.

Power

Richard Adams’ analysis of power suggests for this study avenues of investigation other than Shaka the individual. Adams describes the concept of power as “the ability of a person or social unit to influence the conduct and decision-making of another through the control over energetic forms in the latter’s environment (in the broadest sense of that term)”. His distinction between independent and dependent power is also useful for this study. Independent power, according to Adams, is “a quality ascribed to people, and often also to things, that concerns their relative abilities to cope with the real world or their potential effect on it.”⁷ It may manifest itself in abilities as a healer, diviner,

⁴C. Crais, ‘Representation and the Politics of Identity in South Africa: An Eastern Cape Example’, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 25: 1 (1992), 126.

⁵H. Claessen and P. Skalník, ‘Ubi sumus? The Study of the State Conference in Retrospect’, in H.J.M Claessen and P. Skalník (eds.), *The Study of the State* (The Hague, 1981), 479.

⁶H. Claessen and Oosten, J. (eds.), ‘Introduction,’ in *Ideology and the Formation of Early States* (Leiden, 1996), 5.

⁷R. Adams, ‘Power in Human Societies: A Synthesis’, in R. Fogelson and R. Adams, (eds.), *The Anthropology of Power* (Academic Press, 1977), 388- 9.

war leader, or in terms of specific knowledge, or possession of specific items. This concept of power in its symbolic aspects contrasts with analyses which see power as simply a relationship between people with different levels of access to resources.

Power is dependent, according to Adams, when the controller[s] gives or lends a person the right to make decisions for them. It is granted when one person gives decision-making rights to another, allocated when a group each give the rights to a single person, and delegated when “a single party with some concentration of controls, or power from other sources, grants decision-making rights to a number of different people.”⁸ As societies become more complex, dependent power becomes more concentrated and the structures of dependent power also become more complex.⁹

The state

In its most basic form the state has been described as a political form of organisation built around a centralised institution which claims legitimacy in the exercise of power and recognises a territorially defined area. In the case of the pre-industrial Zulu state this definition needs to be further refined. Claessen and Skalník’s generalisation about what they denominate as the ‘early state’ is useful.

The early state is a centralized socio-political organisation for the regulation of social relations in a complex, stratified society divided into at least two basic strata, or emergent social classes —viz. the rulers and the ruled —whose relations are characterized by political dominance of the former and tributary relations of the latter, legitimized by a common ideology of which reciprocity is the basic principle.¹⁰

Claessen and Pieter van de Velde point out that this definition distinguishes the early state from both the chiefdom and the mature state.¹¹ The Zulu state would seem to fit this designation of the early state.

⁸*Ibid.*, 388.

⁹*Ibid.*, 388- 9.

¹⁰H. Claessen and P. Skalník, ‘The Early State: Models and Reality’, in H.J.M. Claessen and P. Skalník (eds.), *The Early State* (The Hague, 1978), 640.

¹¹H. Claessen and P. van de Velde (eds.), *Early State Dynamics*, (Leiden, 1987), 4.

Claessen and Skalník identify six factors in the development of the early state: population growth and pressure, war, conquest, progress in the production of a surplus, the influence of states already in existence, and ideology and legitimation.¹² Without the positive influence of ideology the further development of an early state was unlikely.¹³ In the light of further evidence, Claessen and van de Velde re-evaluated their previous conclusions, and in a later study “the ideological factor gained more emphasis while war and conquest were reduced to a more secondary role as a corollary of economic, or possibly, ideological competition.”¹⁴ This is particularly relevant to anyone trying to evaluate some of the conventional views of the Zulu state. Claessen and van de Velde also point out that it is not possible to identify a particular factor as “*the prime mover*” in the development of state.¹⁵ As we have seen, ideology and legitimation have received little attention in literature on the Zulu state, and ideological competition, almost none. Yet, as Claessen and van de Velde explain, “the evolution of sociopolitical organisation and leadership involves the complex interaction of various sets of factors — interacting with the sociopolitical forms, as well as mutually influencing each other.”¹⁶

Ideology

Put simply, the term ideology refers to systems of ideas (eg beliefs, traditions, myths) or the world view held by a group or society. Ideology reflects the group’s moral, social, political, economic and religious interests. Ideologies may be uniting, but are not fixed

¹²Claessen and Skalník, ‘Limits: Beginning and End of the Early State’, in Claessen and Skalník (eds.), *The Early State*, 625.

¹³*Ibid.*, 629.

¹⁴H. Claessen and P. van de Velde, ‘Introduction’, in H. Claessen and P. van de Velde (eds.), *Early State Dynamics* (Leiden, 1987), 6. Claessen and Skalník, ‘Ubi sumus? The Study of the State Conference in Retrospect’, 479, 484.

¹⁵Claessen and van de Velde (eds.), *Early State Dynamics*, 6.

¹⁶H. Claessen and P. van de Velde, ‘Sociopolitical Evolution as Complex Interaction’, in H.J.M. Claessen, P. van de Velde and M. Smith (eds.), *Development and Decline* (Massachusetts, 1985), 254.

or static and can be broken down into a number of components. They involve interpretation and are modified in response to change. Ideology can also refer to a system of beliefs which justify or reinforce the views of a particular political or economic group. The dominant ideology is usually the ideology of the rulers or the dominant group. Ideology can be both empowering as well as constraining and so certain features may be emphasised, de-emphasised or distorted by the rulers. Ideology is influenced by the society's needs and therefore adaptable to new situations, such as the development of state, and likely to be influenced from both 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' processes.

In a study of government ideology in early states in pre-colonial west Africa, Patricia Shifferd identifies three 'problem' areas. The first is leadership or legitimacy; the second problem is integration and thirdly, the 'boundary problems' or relationship with neighbouring groups.¹⁷ Shifferd's work implicitly supports the argument in this thesis that Shaka could not have relied on coercive measures alone for state consolidation and that something more legitimate such as ideology associated with spiritual authority was a significant factor in holding the state together.

For the purposes of this thesis the key elements in the formation of the early state are "political dominance ... legitimized by a common ideology"¹⁸ and "ideological competition"¹⁹. Zulu socio-political organisation was not static and unchanging and the same applies to ideology. Even when an organisation appears to be reasonably politically stable it is likely that changes in terms of ideology occur, and that such shifts are linked to political factors. Ideology is centrally informed by beliefs — including a world view and religion. Claessen and Oosten point out that "religious and political

¹⁷P. Shifferd, 'Ideological Problems and the Problem of Ideology: Reflections on Integration and Strain in Pre-Colonial West Africa', in H.J.M. Claessen and J. Oosten, (eds.), *Ideology and the Formation of Early States* (Leiden, 1996), 25-6.

¹⁸Claessen and Skalník, 'The Early State: Models and Reality', 640

¹⁹H. Claessen and P. van de Velde, 'Introduction', 6.

arguments are interwoven in the ideological discourse. One can not reduce one aspect to the other. They interact and determine each other far from being static, ideologies are ever changing and play a central part in the dynamics of early states.”²⁰

The position of the king, the ruling group, and the centralisation of rule need to be legitimised by the common ideology and vice versa. At the very least the king needs to bolster his legitimacy. That is, the ideology legitimates the dominance and power of the central rule. Claessen and van de Velde argue that:

The ideological factors that are most crucial for the government of an Early state are those concerning legitimacy. As legitimacy is the strongest buttress any government can possess, there will be continual attempts to foster the relevant feelings. If the conditions under which people are living change the legitimizing notions must also be changed and adapted to the new conditions. Yet, views, from the past will continue to influence more recent views; ideas in the periphery must become adapted to those prevailing in the centre...²¹

How were the ideology, values and ideas of the Zulu rulers passed onto the other members of the society? Adherence to an ideology by the larger group of commoners necessarily relied more on common ideas and values than open coercion by rulers.²²

One way this was done (in part) was through ceremony, ritual and myth, passed from one generation to the next. It is also important to note as Shifferd points out that:

elites are [not] simply manipulators of public opinion to maintain their own interests and position; the elite must also believe, to some (unknown) extent, the ideology upon which their power is based. However, this does not rule out the possibility of overt symbolic creation/manipulation upon occasion.²³

There are various symbols which express the ideology, including rituals and relics. These reinforce the ideology which legitimates the political and social system. As Claessen and Skalník explain, the ongoing development of a legitimating ideology

²⁰H. Claessen and J. Oosten, 'Discussion and Considerations', in H. Claessen and J. Oosten (eds.), *Ideology and the Formation of Early States*, 392.

²¹Claessen and van de Velde (eds.), *Early State Dynamics*, 15-6.

²²Claessen and Oosten, 'Discussion and Considerations', 379.

²³Shifferd, 'Ideological Problems and the Problem of Ideology: Reflections on Integration and Strain in Pre-Colonial West Africa', 26.

“may lead to the elaboration of existing institutions, or the making explicit of existing tendencies.”²⁴

Political or economic interests will always affect ideology. What needs further investigation is how the Zulu king managed conflicting interests and what strategies were used to gain support from the people who became part of the new state. As a tool for unification, of smaller groups into a new state, ideology is a more powerful and effective tool than terror. Terror may intimidate various groups in the short term, but it cannot give a sense of enduring unity nor legitimacy — ideology is necessary for that. Authority, however, and imposed sanctions must have rested on legitimacy because authority is the socially acknowledged right for a person to exercise power. As Patricia Shifferd explains, “physical sanctions must be backed up by moral imperatives, most likely founded on religious beliefs, to which people can assent.”²⁵ It thus becomes necessary to investigate Zulu religion and how it related to everyday life.

Religion

Early European traveller and missionary observations of Zulu religion were driven and interpreted predominantly by Protestant doctrine. Missionaries (and some travellers) wanted to establish the presence or absence of what they recognised as religion, especially what concept of God existed among the Zulu. Missionaries and preachers from various denominations wrote extensively on this, but gave little analysis of religious-state relations in the nascent Zulu kingdom. European understanding of Zulu religious concepts generally revolved around the issues relating to creation, the afterlife, their deities, worship, sin, rituals and ‘curious’ customs or ‘superstitions’. European perceptions of what constituted religion were by no means monolithic. Initially, most perceived an absence of anything that resembled religion, and implied that without a clear concept of God, the Zulu had no religion. Nathaniel Isaacs, who travelled among

²⁴Claessen and Skalník, ‘Limits: Beginning and End of the Early State’, 628.

²⁵Shifferd, ‘Ideological Problems and the Problem of Ideology: Reflections on Integration and Strain in Pre-Colonial West Africa’, 26

the Zulu in the 1820s, denied any existence of religion despite the many references to Zulu religion in his recordings. He said: "Religion —They have none. The Zoolas have no idea of a deity, no knowledge of a future state. They cannot comprehend the mystery of creation."²⁶ This perception of absence (based on Christian comparisons) continued for some time. C. H. Caldecott, believed that the 'savage' Zulu had "very little idea of morality, and none whatever of religion."²⁷ Many early writers held that the Zulu were deceived by their diviners who were charlatans.

David Chidester points out that this denial of the presence of religion among indigenous populations by early European travellers to 'new lands' was not unusual and occurred in relation to the peoples of North America, the Pacific Islands and Australia.²⁸

Further, he argues that:

the long history of denial in the European comparative religion of maritime and colonial contact produced a multilayered discourse about otherness that identified the absence of religion with images of indigenous people as animals or children, as irrational, capricious, and lazy, as both blankness and barrier to European interests.²⁹

An alternative formulation hypothesised a previous degeneration of religion. Allen Gardiner and Joseph Shooter believed that over time the Zulu had simply lost their understanding of God, and that only vestiges of such an understanding remained.³⁰ Accordingly, all that was required was for them to be instructed about the God that they had forgotten.

Now we are taught the story of God, our Father who is in Heaven, Unkulunkulu. But we black people went quite astray. But God wishes that we should do good things. He does not

²⁶N. Isaacs, *Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa*, 2, (ed.) L. Herrman, (First published, 1836; reprinted Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 1937), 248.

²⁷C. Caldecott, *Descriptive History of the Zulu Kaffirs* (London, 1853), 21.

²⁸D. Chidester, *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa*, (Charlottesville, 1996), 11-2.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 16.

³⁰J. Shooter, *The Kaffirs of Natal and the Zulu Country* (First published, 1857: reprinted New York, 1969), 160. A. Gardiner, *Narrative of a Journey to the Zoolu Country in South Africa* (First published, 1836; reprinted Cape Town, 1966), 152.

like the doing evil things. He forbids entirely war and hating one another. But He loves all men, for they are his people. But they (our fathers) know Him not. But the white people knew him.³¹

This notion of degeneration was vigorously contested by Bishop John. W. Colenso who believed that all people possessed an innate knowledge of God. Widely considered to be a pioneer of comparative religion, the Anglican missionary Henry Callaway wrote extensively on Zulu religion disputing fundamental features of Colenso's argument.³²

Even those who denied the existence of Zulu religion recognised the existence of superstition. These 'superstitions' were seen as being based on fear, wrong, ignorant, and childish. Those who held key positions in promoting the so-called superstitions such as diviners were labelled evil charlatans. Caldecott saw the Zulu as very superstitious, and dismissed their belief in sorcery and witchcraft as nonsense.³³ He wrote that "no religious ideas seem to influence them in their conduct, yet the idea of a Supreme being seems to be extant among them."³⁴ The essence of the disagreement among these early commentators about the concept of God among the Zulu is examined in greater detail in a later chapter, but the essential point to be made at this stage is that despite their interest, the early travellers and investigators of comparative religion took a very restricted view of many of the interrelationships between Zulu religion and other aspects of their daily life — in particular the connection with Zulu politics. They looked past indigenous religion in their eagerness to elicit comparisons with Christian concepts.

³¹Mankejane, 'An account of the Ekukanyeni Mission Station', Grey Collection, (G. 44a2, 25), (n.d. possibly mid 1850s)

³²Chidester, *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa*, 129-140, 153, 155, 157, 159.

³³Caldecott, *Descriptive History of the Zulu Kaffirs*, 24.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 28-9.

More recent writers on African pre-colonial societies have pointed out religious dimensions of life were not separated from other aspects of life — they were part of the social fabric of society and permeated daily existence. Terence Ranger and Isaria Kimambo agree that “there *is* no satisfactory definition of religion which allows us to separate it from political or economic or social life.”³⁵ Analysis of religious elements among ‘traditional’ societies are of fundamental importance because they encompass “philosophy, theatre, ‘science’, ethics, diversion, and other behaviour spheres which recent Western civilisation has tended to segregate.”³⁶ John Mbiti describes religion as an “ontological experience; it pertains to the question of existence or being.”³⁷ He thus denies that there can be a formal distinction between the secular and the sacred in the way that there is in western society. Unlike redemptive religions such as Christianity and Islam, ‘traditional’ religion concentrated on earthly matters. Mbiti points out that African religious beliefs are not “formulated into a systematic set of dogmas These traditions have been handed down from forebears, and each generation takes them up with modifications suitable to its own historical situation and needs.”³⁸ Thus, religion was not constituted as an unchanging isolated and separate activity. The concept of believer and unbeliever are alien; because of the inclusive nature of ‘traditional’ African religion, men, women, children and lineage ancestors all have a place — everyone participates. While acknowledging this insight, for the purposes of this study it is necessary to artificially isolate Zulu religion. Ranger and Kimambo argue that in their own work “this artificial exercise was a necessary one and that the distortions which it might produce were less dangerous than the distortions which might continue unless it was undertaken.”³⁹

³⁵T. Ranger and I. Kimambo (eds.), ‘Introduction’, *The Historical Study of African Religion* (London, 1972), 1.

³⁶W. Lessa and E. Vogt, *Reader in Comparative Religion: an Anthropological Approach*, Fourth edition (New York, 1979), v.

³⁷J. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, Second edition (Oxford, 1990), 15.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 3.

³⁹Ranger and Kimambo, *The Historical Study of African Religion*, 1.

The term religion itself (a European construct) in this context is problematic. Several terms are used in the literature to refer to 'traditional' belief systems and include 'superstition', 'spiritualism', 'cosmology' and 'theology'. The term 'religion' refers to a system of belief, but often associated with this term is the recognition of a God or superhuman individuals able to control outcomes — and who are worshiped. The term 'superstition' is likewise unsatisfactory because it immediately imposes western judgement and implies that the belief is unnatural, unrealistic and untrue. Similarly, the term 'spiritualism' is rejected for this study because it is strongly associated with western religions or otherworldliness. Zulu religion was deeply involved with worldly matters. 'Cosmology' refers to the science of the universe — a way of explaining the universe. The problem with using this term is the possible tension with western scientific views it posits. It also tends to hark back to earlier anthropological studies in which African thought patterns were interpreted as 'primitive' ways of explaining the world. 'Theology' refers to the study and analysis of systems of religion, yet this too is problematic as its interpretation depends on the interpretation of religion. But, theology also suggests explaining or rationalising the faith and in its linguistic root, theo, implies the notion of God. None of these terms are satisfactory and 'belief system' is cumbersome. Equally important is that all of them imply that religion is a separate activity — a concept that has already been rejected in terms of pre-colonial society. Paul Landau also points out the problems with categories such as cosmology and the implication that such a concept is stable.⁴⁰ Instead of reducing religion to universal phenomena a more insightful approach he suggests would "focus on what people themselves show through their behaviour and expressions...."⁴¹ For the sake of simplicity, I will continue to use 'religion' and 'spiritual', but recognise that the terms are not entirely appropriate in the Zulu context. I will specifically avoid the concept of worship for reasons that will be dealt with in a later section.

⁴⁰P. Landau, *The Realm of the Word* (Portsmouth, 1995), xx-xxi.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, xxi.

Stressing the inclusive nature of 'traditional' religion, does not mean that the notions of sacred did not exist in Zulu society. A great deal of the Zulu world view incorporated the notion of the sacred. The purpose here is to stress the interconnectedness of the secular and sacred in Zulu society — particularly as it relates to politics. As Claessen and Oosten state: "The development of socio-political and ideological, notably religious, organization are closely connected."⁴²

Like politics, economics, and ideology, religion is not static. As Mbiti and Mutumba Mainga point out, it is influenced by society's needs and is therefore adaptable to new situations such as the development of states and "their history constitutes the history of their religion."⁴³ Because religion is closely interwoven with the social and political aspects, religious change did not occur in isolation. Changes in one sector could result in changes in others. As Ranger and Kimambo argue, "if politics could have an impact on theology, so also could theology on politics."⁴⁴ The pre-colonial Zulu state was unlikely to be different in this respect. With this in mind, study of the relationship between the Zulu king and others of influence, particularly those with religious and ritual roles, may be revealing.

Zulu society has changed over time in response to both internal and external factors and movements of people. State consolidation, British colonialism, Christianity, modernisation, and politics have all interacted with 'traditional religious' beliefs and practices. It could therefore be argued that analysing the context of religion and ideology in respect to the king or the Zulu state is problematic. It would be anachronistic to use present-day ethnography as a template for Zulu ideology and

⁴²Claessen and Oosten, *Ideology and the Formation of Early States*, 390.

⁴³M. Mainga, 'A History of Lozi Religion to the End of the Nineteenth Century', in T. Ranger and I. Kimambo, (eds.), *The Historical Study of African Religion*, (London, 1972), 95. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 5.

⁴⁴Ranger and Kimambo, *The Historical Study of African Religion*, 7.

religion before there was a Zulu state. We cannot assume a homogenous substratum of Zulu culture. As Stuart's informant Ndukwana pointed out:

People go by the custom not obtaining to the tribe to which they belong, save (when) such (tribe) is the original one from which they derive their isibongo. And so, under a single chief there may be many sections of people with isibongos differing from his own, and who will not act in unison (or uniformly) as far as the various customs are concerned. They have their ancient customs; those remain with them.⁴⁵

While some anthropologists write as though religions were static, historians are unlikely to accept present-day religion as an accurate guide to the beliefs of 150-200 years ago. However, contemporary informants often employ concepts and beliefs which nineteenth century observers also reported. Elements persisting over such a long period may be of assistance in a study of ideology and religion in relation to the early Zulu kingdom. There are identifiable clusters of ideas that are meaningful to individuals and various social groupings. There are certain features which persistently dominate; the ancestors, diviners, rainmakers, the religious role of chiefs, and important symbols (these features will be identified and discussed in Chapters Four and Five).

Despite the identifiable gaps highlighted in the literature review, the writings of missionaries, nineteenth early travellers, and contemporary anthropologists contain much detailed information on Zulu religion. While their recordings and reports can be criticised and questioned, they provide a wealth of information on religion. As David Chidester points out in relation to missionaries, they were "situated in regions of intercultural contact, they practiced comparisons that mediated between the familiar and the strange, producing knowledge about the definition and nature, the taxonomy, genealogy, and morphology, of the human phenomenon of religion."⁴⁶ In addition to these sources, nineteenth century Zulu informants are now accessible through the *James Stuart Archive*, volumes 1-4. Contemporary work such as Axel-Ivar Berglund's study of Zulu religion used oral evidence and earlier ethnographic studies to develop a holistic account of contemporary 'traditional' Zulu religion. These writers all highlight role of the shades or ancestors, and diviners as two central features in 'traditional' Zulu

⁴⁵Ndukwana ka Mbengwana in *James Stuart Archive*, 4 (Pietermaritzburg, 1986), 297.

⁴⁶Chidester, *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa*, 11.

life. They also give information on the role of leaders in religion including Shaka's ambiguous relationship with diviners.

Religion is expressed through ritual, symbolism, and oral history by individuals, lineage seniors, rainmakers, diviners, and in some instances by kings. Patterns of religious and ideological thought are likely to exert an enormous influence over the people and serve as useful indicators of the values, uncertainty, changes or turmoil in societies. The incorporation of a religious dimension that considers the intertwining and overlapping of religion, and which links ideology, religion and power is necessary. As the Zulu state evolved, it is likely that certain components of the previous systems or processes either aided or interfered with the political interests of the ruling group. Some of these older beliefs may have been bolstered by the developing state, still others may have been devalued because they hindered the process of consolidation and cohesion. In order to get a more precise idea about the way this process was carried out, it will be useful to concentrate attention on certain key groups such as diviners, doctors of medicine, rainmakers, and 'royal' women.

The next chapter will examine a well known story of Shaka and the diviners. This analysis has several purposes which includes examining factors in the story relating to:

- common features;
- variations;
- sources used as evidence;
- ideological influences on interpretation; and
- Shaka's ambiguous relationship with diviners as related in the story.

The thesis will attempt to address Crais' and McCaskie's concerns by considering the concept of power as identified by Adams, moral imperative founded on religious beliefs identified by Shifferd, political dominance legitimised by a common ideology, and the influence of states already in existence identified by Claessen and Skalník. The story Shaka and the diviners serves as a useful entry point for understanding the relationship



between Shaka, diviners and state building processes. The aim is to analyse the relationship between Shaka's state building activities and his reported killing of diviners and his tolerance or collaboration with others.

CHAPTER 3

THE STORY OF SHAKA AND THE DIVINERS

This chapter focuses on one of the best known stories of Shaka in the early days of his kingdom; the frequently told and often quoted story of Shaka's relationship with diviners, recounted in contemporary histories, nineteenth-century books, oral traditions and in popular histories.¹ Because diviners were part of the religious system in Shakan times, and because of the interconnectedness of religion with other aspects of daily life, the story of Shaka and the diviners is significant. It tells of Shaka secretly sprinkling blood in the doorway of his *isigodlo*. The next day he proclaims it to be an evil omen and calls on the diviners to determine who was responsible. E. A. Ritter's *Shaka Zulu: The Rise of the Zulu Empire*, first published in 1955, contains one of the best known versions of the story (henceforth, The Story).² Both the length and detail centre the tale as a key point in the king's career — a point clearly perceived by subsequent writers who repeated it. Ritter devotes almost an entire chapter to The Story after setting the scene within the context of a power struggle between Shaka and the diviners (see Appendix 1 for Ritter's version of The Story). In Ritter's account, Shaka (aided in part by Mbopa³) sprinkled the sides of his hut and the ground around it with blood. The diviners were assembled for a 'smelling out' to determine who was responsible. Shaka's brother, close friends and allies were the first to be 'smelt out', and therefore, as candidates for execution. During the dramatic ritual, only two of the diviners —

¹For reasons of consistency I have chosen to use the word diviner throughout. However, I recognise that variations and specialisations within this category do exist.

²E. Ritter, *Shaka Zulu: The Rise of the Zulu Empire* (First published, 1955; reprinted London, 1957), 241-54.

³Mbopa is described by Bryant as the son of Sitayi of the eGazini and Shaka's 'head-domestic'. Mbopa was involved in the assassination of Shaka along with Dingane and Mhlangana. A. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal* (London, 1929), 659, 661-2.

Songqoza and Nqiwane — concluded that the act was done by Shaka himself and were thus designated ‘true diviners’.

Ritter does not cite a direct source for the story of Shaka and the diviners, and in the later edition not one reference is provided for the entire book.⁴ In the first edition, Ritter claimed that his major source was Zulu oral tradition that he gained during his boyhood contact with Zulu people. He also claimed to have gained information from his father, as well as the fifteen sources in his bibliography of which his main sources are A.T. Bryant, Henry Francis Fynn and Eileen Krige.⁵

1. Here is an abridged version of Ritter’s tale (see Appendix 1 for the full version of The Story).

Like other great dictator-reformers, Shaka was much concerned to check the power of the “spiritual arm” - in this case, the order of witch-doctors. It seemed to him, ... that the witch-doctors and diviners had forgotten the lesson he had taught them, and that even Nobela was becoming bold again.... Shaka therefore planned to expose the principal practitioners of sorcery as frauds, for it was necessary to have the support of the people against them, and to avoid shocking religious sensibilities. In his preparations Shaka made use of Mbopa.... Mbopa appeared in the Great Council hut, carrying what appeared to be a pot of beer. This he handed to his Royal Master, together with an ox-tail cut short and resembling a brush. leaving Mbopa in the hut, Shaka proceeded outside with the pot and the tail-brush.... the King now began to sprinkle the sides of his own hut liberally with the contents of the pot, until the whole circumference had been treated. Then he repeated the same thing on the yard floor right round the hut.... On the following morning it became light enough to see, ... that the Royal hut was spattered with blood, and the yard around it smeared with the same substance.... Shaka roared in majestic anger: ‘Who has committed this vile deed against the house of Zulu? Who had the criminal audacity to insult me thus? ‘I will have such a smelling out as the land of Zulu has never seen before. Summon this instant all the diviners and witch-doctors in the land, Summon, too, the whole adult male population to be assembled here on the seventh day, so that they may present a fitting field for the “smellers out....’ Shaka rose and commanded silence. Then he told them to smell out the perpetrators of the outrage, but as the diviners were many, and the business must be finished by sundown, they were to divine in groups of ten. As there were 152 of them, it would mean some fifteen teams.... Then, with Nobela’s cry of ‘Chant, ye people, chant,’ there began

⁴E. Ritter, *Shaka Zulu: The Rise of the Zulu Empire*, (London, 1971). As Dan Wylie points out, some references are provided by Ritter in the earlier edition, though there are a number of criticisms on the referencing issue nonetheless. See D. Wylie, ‘A Dangerous Admiration: E. A. Ritter’s *Shaka Zulu*’, *South African Historical Journal*, 28 (1993), 98-118.

⁵Ritter, *Shaka Zulu* (1957), 377-8. His references also include J. Bird, R. Russell, D. Moodie, A. Delegorgue, R.C.A Samuelson, W.C Harris, R. Moffat, J. Stuart, N. Isaacs, G. MacKeurtan and R.R.R. Dhlomo — several of which also have versions of The Story.

that process of terrorisation which has been described in an earlier chapter.... 'Blood calls for blood,' came the chorus. Then with a shriek, Nobela vaulted high in the air, and as she came down, struck Mbopa with the wildebeest tail across the head; ... As Nobela struck, Shaka muttered: 'Very near. She couldn't have struck nearer. The old python will upset all my plans.' When the last diviner had struck Mbopa, the slayers pounced on him, according to custom, and marched him off: but contrary to custom, not to immediate and painful death, but to the place which Shaka had ordained.... Nobela ... directly facing Shaka was going to strike against the high ones-the very highest in the land, and after her former humiliating experience.... 'I heard you, Nobela,' interposed Shaka, 'but the army is not to be touched. I alone deal with it.... 'Again I hear you, Nobela, but leave my father's son alone.' The sun had sunk to a 'little beyond half-way between the zenith and the horizon' before the last teams had finished their merciless work and rejoined the satisfied throng of witch-doctors who were gazing with unconcealed exultation at their harvest - well over 300 innocent people mutely suffering in agony of apprehension, There were now left but two witch-doctors, Songqoza and Nqiwane, who had not yet divined. All that day they had sat apart and aloof from the other diviners 'Does the King wish to hear the truth?' asked Songqoza 'O! King! I divine the heaven (Zulu).' 'It and It only, did it.' This meant Shaka himself, whose clan name was Zulu. There was a pregnant silence. Then noting Shaka's approving smile, Nqiwane, not to be outdone, instantly chimed in, '*Zulu nempela*' ('The heaven and none other'). '*Nitshilo!* ye have said it,' roared Shaka as he rose to his full majestic height. 'You, and you alone, have spoken the truth. Listen, my people. I, and I alone, did the deed. I spattered blood with my own hands on the walls of my hut, and smeared it on the yard outside. I did it, that I might find out who were the true diviners and who were the false. 'Look all and see. In the whole land there are but two true witch-doctors-these young men-and the rest are false.'⁶

Ritter goes on to describe the execution of the diviners and how the powerful diviner Nobela managed to cheat her executioners, and inevitable impalement, by committing suicide. Adding a little intrigue, Ritter also hints at Nobela predicting Shaka's assassination by his brother Mhlangana.⁷

Ritter suggests that it was Shaka himself who did not believe in diviners — a view that does not fit with the centrality of divination in Zulu society even taking into account Ritter's cautionary note that Shaka believed there may have been some 'true diviners'. Quite clearly Ritter is painting a picture of superstition, trickery and fraud from within Zulu society in that he extended this ambiguity to others who also believed that the chief diviner — Nobela — was an evil rival, a fraudulent diviner who had to be stopped, thus dismissing the concept of divination itself. Ritter is at once portraying Shaka as all powerful, but at the same time too weak to really deal with one troublesome diviner.

⁶E. Ritter, *Shaka Zulu* (1971), 214-25. Ritter, *Shaka Zulu* (1957), 241-54.

⁷Ritter, *Shaka Zulu* (1971), 221.

Ritter also says that men were attempting to “avoid military service by apprenticing themselves to witch-doctors” He noted this just prior (3 pages in fact) to relating the story of Shaka and the diviners in the 1971 edition of *Shaka Zulu*.⁸ In the 1957 edition, this avoidance explanation appears much later (nine chapters later) in relation to Shaka’s court of justice. Ritter also suggested that diviners such as Nobela smelled-out victims for their own ends — to be rid of those *they* did not like rather than those Shaka saw as a threat.

In Ritter’s account, political explanations for the event are also linked with law and order. In the 1971 edition of *Shaka Zulu*, the story of Shaka and the diviners is actually found under the heading “Shaka’s Court of Justice at Bulawayo”. According to Ritter, Shaka had initiated a clever scheme to break the power of the diviners who were a threat to his own power. He was thereby disposing of rivals through an officially sanctioned method while ensuring the protection of his own military through exclusion clauses. Nobela was plotting against him proven by the ‘fact’ that Shaka’s close friends and allies were the first to be smelt out as well as his own brothers. Ritter also mentioned an economic factor, but not in relation to the story of Shaka and the diviners. In the earlier edition, he says that economic prosperity could bring about an accusation of witchcraft.⁹

Ritter’s dramatisation is largely fiction. As Dan Wylie has argued in his analysis of Ritter’s *Shaka Zulu*, many of Ritter’s stories are fictionalised and should be treated with caution.¹⁰ Given Ritter’s fanciful account and lack of referencing, it is curious that he is cited in a footnote as a source by Alan Booth, the editor of *Journal of the Rev. George Champion: American Missionary in Zululand 1835-1839*. Booth says that executions for witchcraft were used by both Shaka and Dingane for political control.

⁸*Ibid.*, 211.

⁹Ritter, *Shaka Zulu* (1957), 96, 103.

¹⁰Wylie, ‘A Dangerous Admiration’, *South African Historical Journal*, 110.

Yet, at the point where the note is inserted by Booth, Champion himself makes no such claims. He merely says that in Dingane's time a person was accused of witchcraft, 'smelled' by 'smelling doctors' and then executed.¹¹

How the story of Shaka and the diviners is read will have a lot to do with how we understand the relationship of religion to Shaka's work as a consolidator of power. If this were the only tale of its kind, it could be readily dismissed as the fantasy of an amateur populariser of history. However, Ritter's is only one of many similar stories. They differ not only in terms of how they are explained, but in detail — sometimes minor and sometimes material. The various accounts often betray western concepts of divination and magic and the authors' religious, economic, political or ideological prejudices. While historians may be suspicious of the value of such stories and oral histories, it does not mean that they are of no use. This chapter will examine various accounts of the story of Shaka and the diviners in chronological order. It will identify variations in The Story, sources used, ideological influences on interpretation, aspects of continuity, and suggest the utility of the story of Shaka and the diviners for historians. The accounts fall into three categories:

- unsourced stories;
- stories convincingly attributed to African informants; and
- similar stories told about African rulers other than Shaka

The most favoured explanations offered for The Story are either that Shaka was testing the diviners with the intention of exposing them as frauds, or alternatively that he was checking challenges to his power by the diviners with the intention of getting rid of his rivals. This characterisation has filtered through and been applied to general descriptions of Shaka's behaviour in other works that do not necessarily mention The Story. Other, less popularly accepted explanations for the story of Shaka and the

¹¹G. Champion, *Journal of the Rev. George Champion: American Missionary in Zululand 1835-1839*, (ed.), A. Booth, (Cape Town, 1967), 85.

Diviners are also evident in the accounts cited below. The explanations fall into several **c**ategories (and some incorporate more than one). Shaka wished to:

- separate true diviners from false ones;
- disabuse his people of their false belief in diviners;
- control the numbers of diviners;
- get rid of troublesome political opponents;
- display his own superior power;
- stop people avoiding military service by practising divination;
- stop his warriors being killed off by being 'smelt out';
- limit people's wealth; and
- satisfy his blood thirsty nature and propensity for killing.

Un sourced Stories

2. The earliest reference to the story that I have located is by Captain R. J. Garden **w**ritten down some time between 1851 and 1854:

... Uzizmane a native doctor (now being near the Umzimkulu) once did a bold thing before Chaka. The latter told his chief men that many of the native doctors were impostors, accusers of the innocent - to try their knowledge, with great secrecy Chaka caused blood to be dropped on the ground from his hut to a distance - assembling the doctors he pointed it out & demanded to know who had done it - they were confounded- at length some of them accused several innocent persons. Uzizmane alone said it was ... Izulu, the only Izulu evidently meaning him who was above them all - his life was spared - the rest - some 30 or 40 were put to death.¹²

Garden depicts Shaka as believing that many diviners were imposters who accused **i**nnocent people. He decided to test them and so dropped blood on the ground **s**urrounding his hut and then assembled all the diviners demanding to know who was **r**esponsible for this act. They accused several innocent people. One diviner named **U**zizmane was bold enough to say that it was Izulu meaning it was Shaka himself.

¹²R. Garden Papers, 1851-1854, File A1157, 10, IV A (ii) 'Native Tribes; Customs and Beliefs', Natal Archives, 1040-1041.

3. Another account was written in 1882 by Captain W. R. Ludlow. His version accords with ideas about kingship at the time and identifies Shaka as claiming divine status to a greater extent than many before him (see Chapter Five on divine kingship).

In the time of King Tschaka, they [witchdoctors] acquired so great a power that the king began to be afraid of them, so he hit upon the following expedient for getting rid of them. One night, unknown to anyone, he went into his cattle kraal, and killing one of his beasts, cut off its tail, and using it as a brush, daubed the front of his hut with the blood, then carefully obliterated any marks by which he could be traced.

In the morning there was a tremendous outcry. Tschaka rushing out of his hut declared some evil spirit had bewitched him, and calling all his chiefs together, he asked what was to be done. They determined that all the doctors in the country should be called together, and whoever found out who had bewitched the king should have 100 head of cattle, but those who failed should die.

The witch doctors were greatly troubled, as those at the king's kraal well knew that it was only a ruse to get rid of them, because they were getting too numerous and too powerful. So each one came and said that he would go round and summon the others; but Tschaka refused, and sent his own messengers round to summon all the witch doctors they could find.

In a day or two they were all assembled. After invoking the aid of the spirits, they were ordered to seat themselves in a large circle, with the king and his counsellors in the centre. The king asked each one separately, who it was that had smeared the blood on his hut, and thus bewitched him. Various persons and animals were named as the culprit. At least one man answered that it was a Zulu king, meaning a 'celestial,' or king sent from heaven.

After all had been interrogated, the king stood up amid breathless silence, and said, – "You are false witch doctors. There is only one of you who has found out who bewitched me, namely, he who said a 'celestial' had smeared the blood on the hut. I am the 'celestial' king, and I alone did it. I give that man as his reward the 100 head of cattle. As for you who have prophesied falsely, you shall die;" and waving his hand to an impi that was in readiness they fell upon the witch doctors and slaughtered them to a man.¹³

Ludlow claimed that the diviners had become so powerful that Shaka was himself becoming afraid and so action was needed to get rid of them. Interestingly, Ludlow included Shaka's chiefs among those called to decide the course of action after the blood was discovered. In this version, Shaka has not only tricked his religious specialists, but also his counsellors.

4. Fred Fynney, inspector of native schools and Natal border agent in the 1860s wrote of the story of Shaka and the diviners in 1884.

Tyaka, who was never happy unless causing the death of numbers of his own people as well as those of his enemies, used to make use of the *Ingomboco* [assembly of diviners] as a political institution. One day he charged all the *abangomo* [diviners] with being humbugs, having first, during the night, sprinkled the kraal with blood. The people were sent for far and near, and a great smelling out ensued, by Tyaka's orders. One smelt out this person,

¹³W. Ludlow, *Zululand and Cetewayo* (First published, 1882; Pretoria, 1969), 112-13.

and another that; only one of the old hypocrites guessing rightly, and saying, 'I smell out the heavens' (meaning the king). His life was spared; the rest were all killed.¹⁴

In accordance with nineteenth century colonial perceptions of the degeneration of Zulu religion, Fynney (like so many others) saw divination as trickery and superstition. His version of The Story suggests that Shaka used the institution of divination for political purposes to get rid of his opponents. In keeping with the notion of Shaka as the 'black Napoleon' Fynney added another explanation; Shaka was satisfying his lust for blood. Shaka's blood thirsty nature and propensity for killing his opponents or rivals has been a popular theme in other texts. P. A. Stuart, in *An African Attila*, claimed that the king often used the process of 'smelling out' to get rid of people who did not support him. "It was a convenient method of ridding the country of evildoers, and men came in time to place implicit faith in the wisdom and justice of the Witchdoctor's findings But those who were in close touch with the King knew that in some cases, at least, witchcraft and the workings of some supernatural power were not alone responsible for the bloody deaths to which the victims were sent."¹⁵

5. Like Fynney, Tyler interprets The Story in political terms as a test of the diviners. Josiah Tyler, an American missionary, mentions The Story in his 1891 book, *Forty Years Among the Zulu*. Tyler's, and Fred Fynney's accounts, are unreferenced and remarkably similar.

It is said that Chaka, who ruled in Zululand at the beginning of this century, once had the courage to charge all the izanusu in his kingdom with being humbugs. During the night he sprinkled blood about the royal kraal and called the doctors to investigate the cause. One smelt out this person, another that. Only one guessed rightly, saying, 'I smell out the heavens' (meaning the king). His life was spared; all the rest were killed.¹⁶

¹⁴F. Fynney 'Our native Tribes: Their Customs, Superstitions and Beliefs', in F. Fynney, *Zululand and the Zulus* (First published, 1884; reprinted Pretoria, 1967), 11.

¹⁵P. A. Stuart, *An African Attila*, Second edition (First published, 1927; reprinted Pietermaritzburg, 1938), 98-9.

¹⁶J. Tyler, *Forty Years Among the Zulus* (First published 1891; reprinted Cape Town, 1971), 100, 101.

Tyler believed that the diviners terrified and deceived people and that it was a practice that should cease. Tyler said that diviners formally, “possessed unlimited power over their deluded countrymen”.

6. In 1892, H. Rider Haggard’s romance, *Nada the Lily*, was published. Haggard — a friend of Fred Fynney — claimed that his purpose in writing *Nada the Lily* went beyond the usual brief of the novelist. Haggard claimed that some Zulu oral traditions had been related to him, and to express admiration for Zulu militarism he aimed to preserve these traditions in a popular historical form. According to Haggard, “most, indeed nearly all, of the historical incidents here recorded are substantially true.”¹⁷ In relation to the sections on “Zulu mysticism, magic, and superstition, to which there is some allusion in this romance [he claims that], it has been little if at all exaggerated.”¹⁸ In the preface, Haggard acknowledges Fynney as a source, as well as David Leslie, John Bird and Henry Callaway, but no direct citations to sources for the actual story are given in the text.¹⁹ Haggard aimed to produce a popular history. His account of Shaka and the diviners and claims of authenticity must be treated with caution. Haggard’s account is long and detailed and below is an abridged form (see Appendix 2 for extended version).

‘The witch-doctors rule in Zululand, and not I, Mopo ... These Isanusi are too strong for me; they lie upon the land like the shadow of night. Tell me, how may I be free of them?’.... I speak that which is in the king’s mind, I answered ... It is indeed sacrilege to touch a true Isanusi, but what if the Isanusi be a liar? What if he smell out falsely, bringing those to death who are innocent of evil?One morning ... the king himself ran out, crying aloud to all the people to come and see the evil that had been worked upon him by a wizard On the door-posts of the gateway of the Intunkulu, the house of the king, were great smears of blood.... ‘Who has done this thing?’ cried Chaka in a terrible voice. ‘Who has dared to bewitch the king and to strike blood upon his house?’... On the tenth day from now the circle of the *Ingomboco* must be set, and there shall be such a smelling out of wizards and of witches as has not been known in Zululand!’.... On the last night before the forming of the *Ingomboco*, the witch-doctors, male and female, entered the kraal. There were a hundred and half a hundred of them Then ten of the women stood forward, and at their head was the most famous witch-doctress of that day - an aged woman named Nobela.... ‘Greeting, Mopo, son of Makedama! Thou art the man who smotest blood on the door-posts of the king to bewitch the king. Let thy house be stamped flat!’....[the king said] ‘Hold!’ he said. ‘Stand aside, son of Makedama, who art named an evildoer! Stand aside,

¹⁷H. R. Haggard, *Nada the Lily* (London, 1892), x.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, xi.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, xi.

thou, Nobela, and those with thee who have named him evildoer! What? Shall I be satisfied with the life of one dog? Smell on, ye vultures, company by company, smell on! For the day the labour, at night the feast!' So I rose, astonished, and stood on one side. The witch-doctrresses also stood on one side, wonderstruck, since no such smelling out as this had been seen in the land. For till this hour, when a man was swept with the gnu's tail of the Isanusi that was the instant of his death. Why, then, men asked in their hearts, was the death delayed? The witch-doctors asked it also a second party of the Isanusi women began their rites.... and this party swept the faces of certain of the king's councillors, naming them guilty of the witch-work. Stand ye on one side!' said the king to those who had been smelt out and a third party took up the tale, and they named certain of the great generals, and were in turn bidden to stand on one side together with those whom they had named. So it went on through all that day.... But there was one man of their company, a young man and a tall, who held back and took no share in the work.... And when his company had been ordered to stand aside also together with those whom they had smelt out, the king called aloud to the last of the witch-doctors....Does the king bid me to smell him of whom the spirits have spoken to me as the worker of this deed?'[he] struck the king in the face with the tail in his hand, saying, 'I smell out the *Heavens above me!*'²⁰ 'Thou hast said it', he cried, 'and thou alone! Listen, ye people! *I did the deed! I smote blood upon the gateway of my kraal; with my own hand I smote it, that I might learn who were the true doctors and who were the false! Now it seems that in the land of the Zulu there is only one true doctor... [Shaka said of the false ones] 'Let them die as liars should!' ... - all! all, save this young man!*' And thus ended the greatest *Ingomboco* of Chaka, the greatest *Ingomboco* that was ever held in Zululand.²¹

Haggard emphasised that people lived in fear of being smelt-out and that it was not Shaka alone who hatched the plot; he confided in, and sought advise from Mopo. The dreaded Nobela's role is ambiguous; on the one hand she embodies all the treachery and superstition of witch doctors, on the other hand she is also portrayed as possessing clairvoyant powers of prediction — she foretells Shaka's betrayal in a conversation with Mopo. Tyler, Fynney and Haggard all explain the story in political terms with Shaka testing the diviners. While the diviners were getting rid of his opponents, Shaka did not object. However, they became too powerful, and Shaka was angry at his military leaders being smelt-out, so he devised the test.

There can be little doubt that Ritter has relied heavily on Haggard. His character Nobela also features prominently in Ritter's account as does Mopo (Mbopa in Ritter) Shaka's assistant and future assassin.

²⁰Haggard notes at this point that this is "a Zulu title for the king". *Ibid.*, 62.

²¹*Ibid.*, 54-64.

7. Apart from the accounts by colonialists, the story also attracted the interest of the relatively new discipline of anthropology. H. W. Garbutt reported The Story in the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* in 1909. Without citing a reference he claimed it as a fact.

Tshaka, put the *izanusis* to a practical test. He secretly smeared the ground in front of the royal hut (*isigodhlo*) with blood — an act of treason if committed by any member of the tribe. Naturally the following morning there was a great outcry. All the witchdoctor were summoned in order to discover the perpetrators of this outrage. Numerous persons were pointed out by them as the guilty party. One doctor, however, exclaimed that the *Izulu* has done it, which pleased Tshaka, and which he interpreted to mean him. The doctor in question was the only one spared, all the others were slain by their would-be victims on Tshaka's orders. It is stated that ever after, he would not order a mans execution because of having been "smelled out."²²

Garbutt concluded his version by reference to a similar story and suggested that diviners were frauds (see version 27 below). In addition, he suggested, having a person 'smelt out' was a method for chiefs to dispose of powerful or wealthy rivals. However, he was not referring specifically to Shaka, but rather to chiefs in general.

These witches and wizards are the people whom the witchdoctors are ostensibly supposed to 'smell out,' but the victims were not always 'smelt out' for occult reasons. In some instances it might be someone whom the chief wished to punish for some crime, but who was too powerful or too clever for his guilt to be proved, or in another case, it might be someone rich in cattle and wives, and through jealousy and cupidity his neighbours have arranged for him to be 'smelt out' so that they can divide his possessions. It was a convenient weapon for a native chief, as he could thus remove a troublesome member of the tribe by a recognised and legal process.²³

8. Levine Henrietta Samuelson outlined the story of Shaka and the diviners in 1911 in a chapter on divination. She claimed also to be relating 'factual' oral tradition, but this must be viewed with a degree of caution. She was the sister of Robert Samuelson (see version 9 below) and both have missionary backgrounds. Levine was also the eldest daughter of Norwegian missionary Sivert Martin Samuelson. Levine's informant, Mini Kanyile, was a young boy during Dingane's reign. Levine Samuelson writes that:

Even Tshaka thought there were too many in his time, and hit upon a plan for doing away with numbers of them. They had got tired of fighting for him, and excused themselves for staying away by saying that they were diviners, the fact being that they were cowards.

²²H.. Garbutt, 'Native Witchcraft and Superstition in South Africa', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, XXXIX (1909), 536.

²³*Ibid.*, 534-5.

Warriors are always required, thought King Tshaka;- so one day, just to test their powers, he killed a goat and sprinkled its blood outside the door of the royal hut, and he would soon find out whether they could tell who had done this.

All the diviners were commanded to come before him, and he enquired of each one, but as none were able to tell him who it was, they were killed.

Only one guessed right. He said "The heavens did it," which meant Tshaka himself, Uzulu, the heavens, being his royal name or title.

This man saved his life by a lucky guess, and was in consequence thought much of afterwards.²⁴

On the basis of an oral source Levine Samuelson's version suggests that it was the diviners themselves who were conscious tricksters simply because they did not want to serve in the Zulu army and were tired of Shaka's wars. Lacking true commitment, they could avoid this duty by becoming diviners. Shaka believed that they were cowards, and so he tested them because he needed warriors. However, earlier, Levine Samuelson points out that the process of becoming a diviner might involve men or women.²⁵ Therefore, her explanation seems to disregard the female diviners.

9. Levine Samuelson's brother, Robert Charles Azariah Samuelson, also related the story of Shaka and the diviners in 1929. Like many others of his time, he supported the theory of the historical degeneration of Zulu religion and was preoccupied with 'proving' that the Zulu could be traced back to the Ethiopians, Moses and the Israelites. Robert Samuelson, who has many inconsistencies in his book, incorporates evidence from other sources including articles by his brother Samuel Olaf Samuelson.²⁶

Both male and female qualify for the profession of wizards and witches. In King Tshaka's time they became so numerous and caused so much trouble that Tshaka arranged to reduce them in his rough and ready way. He caused all these criminals to be called together and put them through a test as to whether they were genuine or not. For this purpose he caused certain blood to be placed about in a certain locality, and called upon each wizard to say who had placed it there; all failed to guess correctly, except one, who replied "Yizulu," "it is the heaven," which, of course, meant Tshaka himself, for the Zulus recognised him as the heaven, as he was so high above them. Tshaka thereupon ordered all the wizards to be killed and given to the wolves except the one who had made the correct guess.²⁷

²⁴L. Samuelson, *Zululand, Its Traditions, Legends, Customs and Folk-Lore* (First published, 1911: reprinted Durban, 1974), 62.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 57.

²⁶*Ibid.*, R. Samuelson, *Long, Long Ago* (Durban, 1929), 303-5.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 393.

In this relatively short account several explanations are mingled: Shaka wished to separate the true diviners from the false ones, control their numbers, and display his own superior powers. Thus, he brought them all together for testing to determine whether they were genuine or not.

10. Andrew Burgess (a colleague of American missionaries in Africa) wrote on Zulu religion in 1934 and noted The Story.

On one occasion, the king of the Zulus, decided to test out his diviners and see if they had the powers they were supposed to possess. It took considerable courage on his part to do this, but he was as fearless as he was wicked. During the night he sprinkled the blood of an ox about the royal kraal. The next day he called his *isanusi* together and asked them to smell out who had so disgraced his kraal and was bewitching it with blood. His diviners went about, each after his own fashion. One smelled out a certain person, another decided on someone else. Only one diviner said, "I smell out the heavens", which meant the king. Because of that Tshaka spared his life, but put to death the rest of his royal diviners²⁸

This version presents testing diviners as a brave act on Shaka's part. He is simultaneously separating the true from the false, disabusing his people from the false beliefs and displaying his own superior power. Burgess introduced a new dimension by suggesting that it was the royal diviners who were tested rather than *all* the diviners as claimed by most others.

11. The Reverend A.T. Bryant included The Story in *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal* (1929).²⁹ Bryant accepted the oral traditions as historical 'fact'.³⁰ He set out to

²⁸ A. Burgess, *Unkulunkulu in Zululand* (Minneapolis, 1934), 40.

²⁹ Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 650- 1.

³⁰ "As a general rule, we may say that every early Native historical tradition is based upon and born of fact; and secondly, that the basic fact is the only reliable element in the tradition.... The various minor circumstances in the progress of an event do not appeal strongly to the Native mind; to it the only matter of real importance is the main issue, the fundamental fact. Each separate Native witness will report the same occurrence in a slightly different manner; will fix upon such details only as made an impression upon his own mind, and repeat statements in his own wording; and all alike will embellish their narrative according to their own peculiar gifts of verbosity or imagination. For the African mind is both highly

“put the crooked straight and to fill in the gaps, linking together disconnected facts by probabilities based on other knowledge, moulding discrepant statements so that they harmonise with their surrounding, drawing conclusions following naturally from well-founded premises.”³¹ He chose to ignore conflicting accounts. His fanciful and exaggerated account of the story of Shaka and the diviners was also written to *entertain* a European audience, and for commercial purposes. Without reference to any particular source he wrote:

One night he stole quietly from his hut and sprinkled everywhere blood about the kraal. Then he stole in again. In the morning, ‘Wo! what hideous sacrilege is this?’ he cried. ‘Blood spilled everywhere! What can it mean? Call in at once the necromancers from the land, that they reveal the villain’. They came; and each in turn ‘revealed the villain’ - to his or her own perfect satisfaction. But not to Shaka’s; for all ‘smelt out’ an innocent individual, and each another one, and none the right. At length there stood up Songqoza, son of Ntsentse (of the Magwaza clan), cuter than the rest and blessed with just so much clairvoyance as to see right through the trick, who boldly ventured, ‘Sire, I divine the heavens (*iZulu*) above. They did it’ - insinuating, of course, that it was Shaka himself (whose clan name was *uZulu*). Then noting Shaka’s approving smile, up jumped Nqiwane (of the Dlamini clan), and proclaimed himself in entire agreement with the wonderful discernment of the honourable member for Magwazaland. Which speech Shaka heartily seconded. ‘There my men,’ he said (or words to that effect), ‘behold the genuine article! Only two just men in Israel; and all the rest dangerous quacks, who do not know an *umTakati* when they see one. Off with their heads!’³²

Bryant claimed that Songqoza and Nqiwane were the ones who saw “right through the trick” just as Ritter claimed thirty years later. Bryant’s version is noteworthy for its suggestion that despite the test, Shaka believed that through diviners, the ancestors could communicate with the living and “reveal to them all hidden truth”.³³ Yet, he also claims that despite this belief, Shaka was sceptical of the diviners and foresaw that most were frauds and decided to test them. Through much of the twentieth century, Bryant’s work was regarded as the most authoritative work on pre-colonial Zulu

imaginative and loose; and those defects will display themselves in an ever-increasing degree as the tradition is handed on.” Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 18.

³¹*Ibid.*, viii.

³²*Ibid.*, 650-1.

³³*Ibid.*, 650.

history. Recent research has scrutinised his work and highlighted many deficiencies and flaws.³⁴

12. The political anthropologist E. V. Walter included a version of *The Story in Terror and Resistance* in 1969. He does include references, but the sources cited to support his claims are quite startling. Once again, Haggard and Ritter feature strongly and their authenticity is unquestioned. Referring to Haggard, Walter says that the novel is “based in part on the chronicles” which refer to Shaka’s continuing struggle with the *isanusi*, and that Shaka’s ‘trick’ is recorded by the oral tradition.³⁵ Using this and Ritter’s 1957 edition of *Shaka Zulu*, Walter sets the scene for the story. The account itself though is drawn from Ritter and Garbutt rather than directly from Haggard.

Secretly he smeared the walls and the ground in front of the royal hut with blood, an act, if committed by any of the people, of sacrilege and lese majesty. After the outcry, all the *isanusi* were summoned to a great assembly to discover who had perpetrated the outrage. A large number, including several members of the king’s inner circle, were smelled out, but their expected execution was delayed by the despot’s order. Only one *isanusi* - Ritter’s account mentions two - had the wit to say that the act had been committed by *izulu*. Shaka, a great punster himself, was pleased by the double entendre - for the word signified either ‘heaven’ or a praise name of the Zulu king - and he spared him, ordering all the others to be slain by their would-be victims. It is said that from that time Shaka would not execute anyone smelled out by an *isanusi*.³⁶

Surprisingly, Walter quoted directly from Haggard’s novel that, “the witchdoctors rule in Zululand, and not I [Shaka]....”³⁷ Drawing on Ritter, Walter further argued that Shaka was under threat from the diviners because of the possibility of his political associates being smelt-out because through accusations of witchcraft, diviners posed a

³⁴J. Wright, ‘A.T. Bryant and the ‘Wars of Shaka’, *History in Africa*, 18 (1991), 421.

Recent research by Wright demonstrates that “far from being based [‘so entirely’] on oral traditions collected by Bryant himself, ... it was drawn mainly from previously published sources”. (Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, x.) According to Wright these sources were written by colonial writers whose interpretations were based on the testimonies of a very few informants and it is not possible to ascertain or check the conditions under which the testimonies were obtained.

³⁵E. Walter, *Terror and Resistance* (New York, 1969), 160.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 160-1.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 160. Haggard, *Nada the Lily*, 54.

threat to his bureaucracy and military officials.³⁸ The ensuing struggle between Shaka and the diviners resulted in him devising the scheme to break their hold. Walter clearly believes that Shaka was suspicious of diviners and was challenging their authority and power.

13. The story of Shaka and the diviners features prominently in the historical romance, *Phampatha the Beloved of King Shaka* in 1984, by academic, P. J. Schoeman. Like Ritter, Schoeman claimed credibility through childhood interaction with Zulu people, fluency in the language and “many years of personal research in and around Zululand.”³⁹ This supposedly gave him intimate knowledge of Zulu and their history through a simple transfer of information. He says that he “found no difficulty researching Shaka’s childhood among the old men of Zululand. They talked as if it happened in their own lifetime.”⁴⁰ Schoeman’s account is undoubtedly influenced by his tendency towards ‘great man’ history and his desire to portray Shaka as a hero rather than a vicious despot. Written in the form of a conversation between Shaka and his ‘true love’ Phampatha (“fully authenticated in Zulu tradition”⁴¹), this is another long and detailed account (see Appendix 3 for the full account).

‘My next campaign is against the small group of people who terrorize my subjects day and night - the diviners. There are too many of them who smell out innocent people and declare them wizards.... I do not want these soothsayers to prevent my Zulu nation from prospering.’.... Shaka told her [Phampatha] his plan. ‘Tonight Mgobozi and Mdlaka will place a pot of blood in my sleeping hut. During the night I will smear some of the blood with an oxtail on the outside of my hut, and also some in front of the entrance. Tomorrow morning when the guards notice the blood stains, they will shout that there are wizards who wish to bewitch the king. The news will spread quickly and all the soothsayers will realize that they will have to come to the royal kraal. Within two days they should all be here. I shall then summon you and my mother, as well as all the high ranking and important people. I want you who know about the blood to see how many innocent people will be smelled out by the diviners.’... The next morning there was pandemonium and terror in the kraal... Everybody was convinced that it was a wizard with very potent medicine Except for the few who knew what was actually happening, the multitude sat in petrified horror, waiting for the diviners to commence their smelling out. Shaka ordered them to come forward. When he saw that there were far too many to perform their rituals one by one, he had them divided into groups of ten. All in all there were nine groups and too odd male

³⁸Walter, *Terror and Resistance*, 160, referring to Ritter, *Shaka Zulu*, (1957), chapters 10 and 19.

³⁹P. Schoeman, *Phampatha the Beloved of King Shaka* (Cape Town, 1984), Preface, n.p.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, Preface, n.p.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, Preface, n.p.

diviners.... Shaka first put the men to the test.... As soon as one group of diviners was finished, Shaka called out another. The group of “guilty ones” grew as the witch doctors, using the crowd’s “Siyavuma” cleansed the nation of its enemies. Eventually the acknowledged leader of the female diviners, Nobela, could control herself no longer.... she had struck her wildebeest tail over the heads of Mgobozi and Mdlaka, and was crying out at the top of her voice, “Mgobozi and Mdlaka, your hands are stained with blood!” Now there remained only the two male diviners.... This diviner was acting differently from all his predecessors, and the crowd was frozen in terror. With the grace and speed of a leopard he leapt into the air, and headed straight for Shaka. He struck him across the right shoulder with the wildebeest tail, and cried out in a powerful voice, “The heavens! You, Ngonyama, Majestical Lion, have done it yourself!”.... Suddenly the air was split by a shriek from Nobela. “My bones also travelled the path of truth, but I was afraid to point at Heaven! So I chose those closest to you. If the king does not believe me, he can test me alone next time!” Shaka, infuriated by Nobela’s presumption, accepted her challenge. “You, Nobela will remain here at KwaBulawayo, until such time as I may need you!” he then turned to the innocent people who had been falsely condemned by the diviners: “You are free to go.” Turning to the group of false diviners, he condemned them to death.... Shaka then declared all his indunas and all his warriors and their families free from the power of any diviner.... “Today I have put an end to this evil practice in my kingdom. From now on the wizards will fear me, and not take advantage of my people and exploit them without definite proof. And from today my impi is immune against witchcraft!”⁴²

Schoeman claimed that Shaka was aided in his scheme by Mgobozi and Mdlaka and that Phampatha knew of his trick. His tale ends with Shaka sending Nobela away rather than executing her. Schoeman’s prominent character Nobela does not feature in any other account that I have found except those of Haggard and Ritter. Schoeman’s claims to authentic oral tradition can also be dismissed because of his lack of evidence for the existence of his main character, Phampatha. There are many conflicting claims made about Shaka. Thomas Mofolo, for example, claims in his historical romance that Shaka loved Noliwa as opposed to Schoeman’s Phampatha.⁴³

14. Among less direct references to the story James Langa’s *Shaka* (1982) mentions an alleged conversation between Shaka and Fynn:

⁴²*Ibid.*, 182-7.

⁴³T. Mofolo, *Chaka*. (ed. & Trans.) D. Kunene, (First published 1931; reprinted Oxford, 1981), 123.

While Mofolo’s work is fiction, Sir Henry Newbolt wrote in the introduction that “in the author’s own view it is a serious contribution to history.... The result is a interesting and convincing record, probably a valuable one.” Mofolo, *Chaka*, xi. Curiously, he locates it alongside Bryant’s *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal* and says that “it will be found to differ from them very seldom on points of fact, while it shows, as might be expected, more intimate knowledge of native life and thought, and a more serious attitude towards the character and motives of the African peoples and their chiefs.” Mofolo, *Chaka*, xi.

'I understood that kings such as yourself are only figure-heads, and that the witchdoctors are the real rulers of the African.'

Shaka grinned with amusement. 'That may be so in other societies,' he growled, 'but it is unwise to depend upon old women who are half-mad. I had such a one, named Nobela, who would have ruled my people through me ...'

Fynn waited for the sentence to be finished, but when his host said no more was forced to ask, "And what happened to her?"

Shaka, shrugged his heavy shoulders. 'She eventually died,' he said, 'and her sisters of evil with her.'⁴⁴

This account is entirely unreferenced, and there is no such conversation between Fynn and Shaka in *The Diary of Henry Francis Fynn*.⁴⁵ Once again as in Haggard and Ritter, Nobela the principal diviner, is featured.

Stories convincingly attributed to African informants

15. The missionary Henry Callaway included a version of the story of Shaka and the diviners in *The Religious System of the AmaZulu* (1868-1870), a work based on oral testimonies he recorded in the 1850s.⁴⁶ Unfortunately, he does not name his informant for The Story. He mentions only one diviner who points out the king, but, significantly, in Callaway's account there is no mention of witchcraft.

It used to be said if any omen happened in a village, that it was occasioned by the chief. For instance, Utshaka once sprinkled the blood of a bullock in the royal house during the night, saying by that means he should know if the diviners were true when they pointed out offenders. But they did not divine rightly, and he killed them all but one, who said, "it was done by the heaven," and asked, if he could point out the heaven as the offender? That was all he said; and the people understood that by the heaven he meant Utshaka; for the heaven too was said to be his. This is not true; it is a mere exaltation of the chief. For they say he is as big as the mountains. But it is not so; for if he is standing or sitting at the foot of the mountain it would hide him, and he could not be seen. It is the mere exaltation of a human being. Further, the word Ugukqabadele is not a name of Utshaka or Usenzangakona. It is a name which has arisen here among the English, as a name for the lord of heaven. For at first when the Dutch came, the white men used to make us swear to the truth of what we said; for they did not understand what a man said when he swore by our chiefs⁴⁷

⁴⁴J. Langa, *Shaka* (Harare, 1982), 97.

⁴⁵H. Fynn, *The Diary of Henry Francis Fynn* (eds.), J. Stuart and D. McK. Malcolm (Pietermaritzburg, 1969).

⁴⁶C. Hamilton, 'Ideology, Oral Traditions and the Struggle for Power in the early Zulu Kingdom', MA Thesis, University of the Witwatersrand (1985), 31.

⁴⁷H. Callaway, *The Religious System of the AmaZulu* (First published, 1870; reprinted Cape Town, 1970), 120.

As in Garden's account, there is one 'true diviner', but Callaway's account differs by locating The Story in religious context. Callaway did not believe that the Zulu had a concept of God equivalent to the Christian God, Lord of heaven, uThixo or Ugukqabadele (see Chapter Two above and Chapter Four below). He concluded that the word uThixo was an "isibongo or laudgiving name of some ancient brave" probably derived from 'Hottentot' words that meant 'broken knee' and he supported his argument by saying that there was a similar word — Ugukqabadele — among the Zulu (meaning "he kneels and they get enough of it", or unconquerable). The term Ugukqabadele expressed praise of a chief for his strength or whose army was successful in the face of adversity — the chief was praised rather than the warriors. It was the chief who was the greatest. However, Ugukqabadele was also introduced by Europeans to refer to the Christian God.⁴⁸

Callaway began by explaining that this concept of unconquerable was demonstrated through accounts such as the story of Shaka and the diviners. If something of prophetic significance (an omen) occurred in a village, it was said to have been caused by the chief. This version of the story concludes by explaining that describing the chief as the heaven was "a mere exaltation of the chief."⁴⁹ The most interesting aspect of this account is that it suggests a relationship between the king, ritual and the well-being of the community.

16. Captain J. R. Poole's version of the story of Shaka and the diviners was published in 1880 and demands attention as it is claimed to be "narrative [which] has been taken down from the lips of Cetywayo" (Zulu king 1872-1879). If indeed this is correct is likely to have been collected while he was imprisoned at Cape Town.

With regard to witches, a man had to be accused of witchcraft two or three different times before the king would sanction his death. At the same time, Cetewayo admits that he himself has no great faith in witch doctors; he knows that a good deal of bribery goes on; for instance, a rich man would say to the doctor he patronises, 'If you do not 'smell out'

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 113-120.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 120.

such and such a thing, you are of no service to me.' This undoubtedly does go on, and makes him disbelieve in them; but he appears to have been quite unable to cast them off. There is a story told that Chaka, wishing to discredit the witch-doctors, laid a trap for them. He and two men, who were in the secret, got some bullocks blood, and one night sprinkled it over the huts of several kraals. He then called together all the witch-doctors in the land, and had a grand 'smelling out'. They were each called upon to name the man or men who had done this, and a number of different people were accused, by all the doctors except two, who had the audacity or cleverness to accuse Chaka himself of doing it! Chaka then ordered *all* the witch-doctors to be killed then and there, except the two who had accused him, so only two remained in the country. They increased again in the reigns of Dingaan and Panda and also considerably in Cetywayo's. Cetywayo once had serious thoughts of getting rid of these pests, and told them that as his companies were suffering from there being so many of them (witch-doctors being exempt from soldiers' service), he should collect them, and order them to build a kraal in some out-of-the-way part of the country and live there together, away from everybody else; but this was never carried out. Yes, Cetywayo admits that they are mischievous, although he himself recognised and favoured a few according to custom. It would be a very good thing for the country if they were not tolerated.⁵⁰

In this account Shaka is aided in his task by two others. Only two diviners are clever enough to pass the test and remain the only two surviving diviners in the entire kingdom. However, after Shaka's death the diviners again become more numerous during the reign of Dingane, Mpande, and Cetshwayo. According to Poole's account, Cetshwayo also considered eliminating them because regiments were being affected due to diviners being exempt from military duties. However, unlike Shaka, Cetshwayo was not able to relieve his people of their false belief in diviners. This indicated a continuing tense relationship between the king and the diviners.

Poole's account suggests an extraordinary disbelief by the kings in a fundamental feature of Zulu life and an 'explosion' in the number of individuals called as diviners following Shaka's death. However, at the same time, a footnote mentions that Cetshwayo did not dismiss Zulu religious concepts entirely. The interpreter notes that:

Still, he is *very* superstitious. During his confinement at Cape Town, he was considerably depressed one morning, and for several days after, on account of his having dreamt at night, which made him believe that 'something was going wrong at his home.' The interpreter

⁵⁰Capt. J. Poole, 'Cetywayo's Story of the Zulu Nation and the War', *Macmillan's Magazine*, 244, XL1 (Feb, 1880), 273-95. This story is recorded in *A Zulu King Speaks: Statements Made by Cethwayo kaMpande on the History and Customs of his People*, edited by C. de B. Webb and J. Wright, (Pietermaritzburg, 1987), 19-20.

added, 'If he were king now, some poor wretch would be 'smelt out' over this, and killed, and then his mind would be at rest again!'⁵¹

Importantly, the story of Shaka and the diviners also occurs in oral traditions collected from Zulu informants. The published volumes of James Stuart's collection of Zulu oral traditions contain several references. Stuart, a colonial magistrate, collected these accounts from various informants in the 1890s and early 1900s. The accounts are not all the same. In fact, they vary dramatically.⁵² The diviners said to have correctly pointed out Shaka range between one and three, their names are different and they come from different groups. One informant claims that there were not many diviners in "old times" and that Shaka "refused to allow that there should be diviners."⁵³ Because they differ so much, each account will be set out in full.

17. In 1897 Ndukwana ka Mbengwana reported:

Tshaka once got bullock blood, and sprinkled it himself about the ground inside the kraal. In the morning he would call in witchdoctors and ask them to divine how the blood came to be there. The witchdoctors made a mistake, whereupon Tshaka had them killed as imposters.⁵⁴

18. Two more references to the story were recorded in 1900. However, both come from the same Ndukwana ka Mbengwana:

The doctor who guessed who sprinkled the blood, viz. Tshaka himself, was not put to death; all the others were. The one who guessed, 'It has been done by the heavens above' (ie. Tshaka himself), had been to the sea to drink its water. Tshaka gave orders that bulaing

⁵¹*Ibid.*, 273-95.

⁵²Baleka ka Mpitikazi in C. de B. Webb and J. Wright (ed.), *James Stuart Archive*, 1 (Pietermaritzburg, 1976), 9. Jantshi ka Nongila in *James Stuart Archive*, 1 (1976), 195. Lunguza ka Mpukane in *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 330-1. Mcotoyi ka Mnini in *James Stuart Archive*, 3 (Pietermaritzburg, 1982), 67. Ndabambi ka Sikakana in *James Stuart Archive*, 4 (Pietermaritzburg, 1986), 177. Ndukwana ka Mbengwana in *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 267, 317.

⁵³Ndukwana, *James Stuart Archive*, 4 : 317.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 267.

[the beating of stick on the ground to divine] was to be discontinued in Zululand as so many people owed their death to its influence.⁵⁵

In the first account there is no concept of sorting true from false diviners —they are all false. However, in the second account one true diviner is distinguished. This version strongly suggests that the story teller himself is struggling with conflicting ideologies. On the one hand he explains that Shaka was disabusing his people of an illusion, but at the same time, he records that the one who guessed correctly had been ritually strengthened with seawater.

19. A third account by Ndukwana:

There were not many diviners in old times; there would be one here, one there. Tshaka refused to allow that there should be diviners. Nowadays (there are) many. (There was) no smelling-out done in Tshaka's day. He said they smell out the people. He once took the blood of a slaughtered beast of the royal herds and he told them to sprinkle this inside the isigodhlo. The next day people were astounded, finding it blood-red inside the isigodhlo. They were then called to bula. Certain of them came forward and smell out people, saying that people had come to kill the king. There was one that bula'd and bula'd, and said he could not see, and fancied that it had been done by the heavens above, i.e. the king. T. then had all these who had done the smelling-out killed off. After this (there was) no initiating of diviners, and no running about crying. Women put on the top knot, and men put on the headring, and they became ordinary people. Ngqengelele said nothing.[fn 223
“Ngqengelele kaMvulana of the Buthelezi people was a commoner who rose to a position of prominence in the service of Shaka and Dingane”] This was done at Kwa Bulawayo.⁵⁶

The inference here is that Shaka was helped by his *induna* Ngqengelele of the Buthelezi who actually did the sprinkling. There is only one true diviner in this account. Shaka killed all the false diviners, but it seems a few survived here and there. This version adds another dimension to the explanation because Shaka severely curtailed the activities of those that remained, but he also put a stop to new diviners being called, apprenticed and initiated. He practically eliminated this 'class' and men and women “became ordinary people”.

20. Jantshi ka Nongila reported the following story to James Stuart in 1903:

I know Tshaka once wanted to see if *izangoma* were able to find out the truth or not. He would call them up in a body to *bula* and see who had sprinkled blood about his *isigodhlo*

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 342.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 317.

(an act done by himself), and such ‘doctors’ as smelt out other persons as being the cause of this, he had put to death. That doctor who rightly guessed by saying, ‘It was done by the heavens above,’ was allowed to go free. That man’s name was Nkuna. He lived among the people of Mbete of the Ngcobo.⁵⁷ Mbete is Gqayinyanga’s father (latter alive, is a chief in Lower Tugela Division). Nkuna is dead, but has sons living. Gobe is one of them.

Very frequently did Tshaka cause people to be put to death. I do not know why Tshaka spoke of the two doctors Mbekelo and Mqalana as of the Mtila.⁵⁸

Shaka again is trying to sort the true from the false diviners and one survives. When this account was recorded, it was noted that Ndukwana was also present.⁵⁹

21. Volume three of the *James Stuart Archive* records Mcotoyi ka Mnini (chief of the Thuli) in 1905. The editors note that this reference refers to “the well-known story of Shaka’s testing the powers of his diviners, and killing off those who failed.”⁶⁰

The names of those who escaped when the doctors were killed off were Mqayana ka Mlongwe(?), Ntando ka Mbaba of the Dube people [added by Mcotoyi], and Jele of the emaNgangeni [added by Dinya].⁶¹

It seems that by 1905 there are now three survivors — though the inference is more that they escaped rather than passed the test.

22. There are two more references to the story in 1909. Ndabambi ka Sikakana of the Dlamini reported:

Nqiwana ka Nyanya of the Dhlamini people is a doctor who escaped when Tshaka sprinkled blood about the isigodhlo, by saying it had been done by the heavens above (*izulu elipezulu*).⁶²

This account is interesting because there is no mention of a test, truth or falseness. The diviner escaped because he was accurate.

⁵⁷Jantshi, *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 195. At this point Webb and Wright (eds.) point out “Mbethe was a famous rain doctor in the reign of Mpande”. fn 54, 205.

⁵⁸Jantshi, *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 195.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 194.

⁶⁰Mcotoyi, *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 70.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 67.

⁶²Ndabambi, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 177.

23. The second account recorded in 1909 was by Lunguza ka Mpukane who gave the second longest account of The Story recorded by James Stuart.

Tshaka and the *izangoma*. Tshaka killed a beast. He said, 'How is it that my warriors suffer injury?' (i.e. are killed off). He then took clotted blood of the beast and sprinkled with it in the *isigodhlo*. He did this as it was getting dark. All then went to sleep. The next day many sprinklings of blood were seen about the *isigodhlo*, for the blood had been sprinkled. He then caused *izangoma* to be assembled from the whole country, and *bula'd*. They then smelt out people in various directions. A doctor (wizard), Mleku of the Dhladhla, then came forward, also Mbube of the Dhladhla, also Mehlo of the Dhladhla. These said, 'Nkosi, we cannot explain the matter. It does not look like the work of a man.' They then looked upwards at the sky and said, 'It seems to be like drops of rain that have fallen from the heavens.' Then he said, 'Are you smelling out me, I who am from the heavens?' They said, 'It does not seem to us like the work of a man. It is the work of the heavens.' Tshaka said, 'As you smell out me and say I did this, go, return to your homes. But when you get home, kill you goats and eat them, for you have smelt out me and say I have done this.' As for all the other *izangoma*, they were killed off to a man, i.e. those who had smelt out falsely. The three who had been sent home were then sent for. The king asked their family relationships. 'Of what people are you?' 'We are of the Dhladhla, Nkosi.' The king said to Mehlo, 'Son of Mfiswa, you have smelt me out, saying that this was the work of the heavens. Go now, return to wherever you may be called to do so, at Jobe's or elsewhere.' They then *bula'd*. Mehlo died eventually at Dumbeni in Nátal, in the Cunu country. Mleku also died there. Mbube died in Zululand. The doctors were all killed at Bulawayo.⁶³

Shaka himself does the sprinkling trick unassisted. He had to put a stop to his warriors being smelt out and killed. It becomes a 'national' campaign. Again in this account, three diviners are accurate in predicting that it was Shaka himself who sprinkled the blood.

24. In yet another account from the *James Stuart Archive* recorded in 1919, Baleka ka Mpitikazi (a Qwabe woman) said:

Tshaka took the blood of a beast and sprinkled it in the doorway in his *isigodhlo* during the night, without being seen by anyone. At dawn the next day he reported the matter to his *izinduna*. The *izinduna* came, including Ngqengelele. He said, 'Look at the evil omen that has befallen me. When I rose this morning I found it like this here in the *isigodhlo*. Here is blood! I don't know what has done this. This is an evil omen! let all the *izangoma* be gathered, all the people of the land.' Indeed all the *izangoma* were gathered. They came, and were told to *bula* at once. An evil omen had befallen the king and was in the king's *isigodhlo*. The Zulu people assembled, for an evil omen had descended on the king. The *izangoma* then *bula'd*. One would *bula* and smell out a person, then another would do the same. Then those who had already done so would be told to go and sit apart by themselves. Another would get up, *bula*, and smell out a person. Then he would be told to go and sit with those who had already done so. Others would then be called until they were all finished Only two remained. One of them got up and *bula'd*. He said, 'I do not see that this was done by an *umtakati*. I say that it was done only by the heavens above. It was not done by a man.' The last one also stood up and said, 'I do not see that this was done by a man. I divine the heavens above. I do not see that it was a man who sprinkled this blood in the *isigodhlo*. I find that it was done by the heavens above.' Tshaka ordered them all to be

⁶³Lunguza in *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 330-1.

killed, except for those two izangoma who knew how to bula. For they saw that it was no umtakati that had done the pouring; it had been done by the king. They said, 'I divine the heavens above.' he said, 'Let them alone for they know how to bula.' The many other izangoma all used to make up lies. The people of the king were always being killed, for the izangoma lied about them, saying they were practising witchcraft. Henceforth a person would be killed who was smelt out by these who had smelt out Tshaka - himself the two who had seen that the pouring of the blood had not been done by umtakati, but had been done on purpose by the king because he wanted to see if the izangoma really knew how to bula. Previously people were continually being killed; it was said that they had been smelt out by an isangoma. Tshaka thought in his heart, 'Let me see if they really know how to bula.' Then he saw that most of them did not".⁶⁴

The character, Ngqengelele, again features in this account as he does in version 19 by Ndukwana. However in 19 he is portrayed as an active participant in the scheme, but in this one he is unaware. Too many people were being killed and so Shaka had to both sort out the true from the false. Two true diviners emerge.

Little is known of the informants in the *James Stuart Archive* who are supposedly relating oral tradition. It is entirely possible that written versions of the story of Shaka and the diviners may have affected oral 'remembering' about Shaka and his deeds. It is difficult to determine to what extent each informant had been influenced by missionary education or had embraced Christianity; whether they were keen to demonstrate Christian faith; or whether they lived on mission stations. It is certain, however, that all African informants had been influenced to some degree by Europeans, and that European officials and missionaries generally disapproved of many African religious beliefs and practices. Some Europeans severely sanctioned such pagan practices. If these religious practices were illegal, it is unlikely that a full and accurate picture would be given. If informants were eager to affirm their Christian faith then it is also likely that they may have given an inaccurate account of 'savage customs'. Still further, there are the more obvious difficulties concerning the relating of oral history over long periods of time as stories are not static and are subject to change.⁶⁵

⁶⁴Baleka *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 9.

⁶⁵In 1855 Catherine Barter described some Zulu traditions and beliefs; she pointed to the coexistence for some of traditional religious beliefs even though an individual may have embraced Christianity. Barter described women passing on stories from one generation to the next. She also points out that

25. Presumably on the basis of the information from the oral traditions he collected, James Stuart himself included another account in a booklet titled *uTulasizwe* published in 1923.

Tshaka took the blood of a cow and poured it at the door of his enclosure at night when he was seen by no-one. In the morning he reported to the 'indunas'. The 'indunas' came. Ngqengqelele and Mdlaka came. He (Tshaka) said, 'Here is strange thing that has happened to me[sic]. When I woke up in the morning, I found it like this at the enclosure. Here is blood. I have no idea by what it was poured there. It is an absolute mystery! Let all the witch doctors be called together from the whole country.' Accordingly the witchdoctors were brought together. They came. It was said that they must divine by throwing the bones. The King has had this phenomenon happen to him at his enclosure.' Accordingly the Zulu nation came together when the phenomenon had befallen the King. The witchdoctors threw the bones. They divined and smelled out a certain man. Another one threw the bones and smelled out a man. Another one threw the bones and he smelled out a man. Then those who had thrown the bones were told, 'Go and sit over there.' Another one stood up, threw the bones and smelled out a man. Then he was told to leave and told to sit with those who had already divined. Others were called and threw the bones. They smelled out certain people. They were told to go and sit with the others also. More were called. They threw the bones, they smelled out people. They were sent 'over there' to the others. Finally they were all there throwing the bones and smelling out people. They were all told, 'Go over there and sit down'. Others were called. They threw the bones. They smelled out people. They were told to go and sit 'over there'. Then there were two left. One of them stood up and said, 'I do not think this was done by a wizard'. I think it was simply done by the sky above. It was not done by anyone.' The last one also stood up and said, 'I do not think that this was done by a person. I smell the sky above. I do not think any person poured the blood at the enclosure. I find that it was done by the sky above.

Tshaka said that all the witchdoctors should be killed, except the two who knew how to throw the bones. Because they realized that it was not a wizard who had poured the blood, but that it had been done by the King. They said, 'I smell the sky above'. He said let them be spared because they know how to throw the bones. These many other witchdoctors have been lying. For a very long time the king's people have been killed because they give false testimony against them, saying they are wizards. Those will be killed who are smelled out by these witchdoctors who have smelled out Tshaka himself, the ones who found it was not done by wizards, but it was done deliberately by the king, because he wanted to find out whether the witchdoctors threw the bones properly when people kept being killed when they were said to have been smelled out by the witchdoctors. Tshaka thought to himself, 'Let me see if they really know how to throw the bones', He found out that all these many did not know.⁶⁶

Stuart's account suggests that diviners "threw the bones" in separate groups and were then directed to sit "over there". Haggard's account also depicts a similar pattern (see

"Occasionally, however, some imaginative grandmamma will diverge from the usual routine and invent a new version, which becomes established among the hearers, and goes down to posterity side by side with the other." C. Barter, *Alone Among the Zulus: The Narrative of a Journey Through the Zulu Country, South Africa*, (ed.) P. Merrett, (First published, 1866; reprinted Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1995), 87-8.

⁶⁶KCAL Stuart Papers, File 85/53287, *uTulasizwe* by James Stuart, Translated by E. Dahle (1936).

appendix 2). It is likely that Stuart has also borrowed from Haggard. In his notes Stuart himself also suggests a connection between the story of Shaka and the diviners and a biblical story. It is possible that Stuart, like many others of his time, was attempting to make a connection with ancient Judaism.⁶⁷

Similar stories told about African rulers other than Shaka

26. Not only are there numerous discrepancies in the story of Shaka and the diviners, but there are also similar stories concerning other significant leaders testing their diviners. As well as reporting the story of Shaka and the diviners, James Stuart's informant, Baleka ka Mpitikazi also relates a story involving the Sutu chief Mabulane. Stuart himself notes that this story is "similar to that of Tshaka testing the witchdoctors."⁶⁸

The story of the Sutu chief Mabulane. Mabulane was like Tshaka in his testing of people. He once placed some fruit from the *umganu* tree in his mouth and said that he was sick. He gave orders that the *izinyanga* and *izangoma* should be called to bula, for he was sick - his cheeks were swollen. The *izangoma* came and bula'd, but could not find out what the trouble was. There were many of them but they did not find what sickness it was. Then one of them rose, and went and sat down in front of him. He held out his hands and said that the chief should take out what was in his mouth. Mabulane then spat out the fruit into the hands of the *inyanga*. He said, 'This is the only true *inyanga*; let these others leave off, and never bula again.' But he for his part did not kill them. He left them alone and they went back to their homes.⁶⁹

The theme is thus the same; separating the true diviners from the false ones. However, unlike Shaka, Mabulane allows the false diviners to live though he does not allow them to practice.

27. Another involves the prominent chief Mzilikazi of the Ndebele. This account of Mzilikazi and the diviners is also by Garbutt (1909) who concludes his version of the story of Shaka and the diviners (see version 7 above) with this story. To trick the diviners, Mzilikazi placed a stone in his mouth giving the impression of swollen cheeks and illness.

⁶⁷KCAL Stuart Papers, File 53/6 'Information on Shaka'. Page titled "notes"

⁶⁸Baleka, *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 9-10.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 10.

Umziligazi, to prove the nonsense of witchcraft, once put a stone in his mouth to represent a swollen cheek. He then called all his witchdoctors to 'smell out' the person who had done it. After several of them had smelt out their victims he spat out the stone.⁷⁰

According to Garbutt, Mzilikazi was also trying to prove there were no true diviners.

The item in the mouth to swell the cheeks was the method for testing just as in the account above of Mabulane.

28. Walter also cites a story claiming Mzilikazi as a tester of the diviners. He seems to have elaborated on the article by Garbutt above:

Mzilikazi, a despot of the Matebele (Ndebele), who emulated Shaka in many respects, once played a similar trick, putting a stone in his mouth to make it appear that he had a swollen cheek. He called all his doctors to smell out the person responsible for his affliction, and after their victims had been picked out, spat out the stone and exposed the diviners as frauds.⁷¹

In the case of Mabulane one diviner saw the trick and finally asked the chief to spit out what was in his mouth. This does not occur in Garbutt's and Walter's story in which there was no 'true' diviner. Mzilikazi spat out the stone after several people had been smelt out thus proving it was nonsense.

29. There is also a slightly different version of blood sprinkling involving Lewanika, paramount chief of the Barotse (May, 1887). The theme is the same: blood on the floor of his hut; a struggle with the diviners; divination being used as a weapon against him; Lewanika working to undermine diviners' influence; and diviners failing the test. However, it took Lewanika some 10 years to really crush the political influence of the diviners where as Shaka accomplished it in a much shorter period.⁷²

⁷⁰Garbutt, 'Native Witchcraft and Superstition in South Africa', 536.

⁷¹Walter, *Terror and Resistance*, 161.

⁷²M. Mainga 'A History of Lozi Religion to the End of the Nineteenth Century', 103. F. Coillard, *On the Threshold of Central Africa*, Third edition (First published, 1897; reprinted London, 1971), 287, 372, 494-5.

30. Ellenberger (1860s) cites an incident where the Sotho chief Mohlomi (who lived a generation before Moshweshwe) tested by hiding a shield and then calling on the ‘witch doctors’ to determine what had happened to the missing shield. “Having let them accuse whom they would, Mohlomi produced the shield and delivered a speech urging his people to avoid the witch-doctors, whose bad faith he had just exposed.”⁷³

31. Stuart Cloete’s 1964 novel *The Honey Bird*, includes a similar story linked to Christian enlightenment.⁷⁴ In this version the motive is the same — to test and expose deceptive diviners who were threatening the authority of the king. A young white woman from a missionary background outlined a plan for the ‘Sesuto’-speaking king, Maguda, to set a trap for his witchdoctors. The blood sprinkling act was carried out by his most trusted *induna* named Afusi. All the witch doctors, male and female, led by Negende were exposed as evil frauds and thus killed. In this account, the frauds were torn apart by the people themselves and the king thanked the white woman and “greeted her like a queen.”⁷⁵ They then embraced the woman’s all powerful God who gave her the wisdom to devise such a clever plan.

32. R. E. Gordon (1968) cites a different manifestation of the story, but this time it is the colonial official, Theophilus Shepstone, who tested the diviners. Gordon states her source as one of James Stuart’s informants named Lazarus.

[He] told with relish the story of the witchdoctors, which belongs to this period of Shepstone’s work. The role of the witchdoctor was so remunerative that it was becoming a ‘racket’ with deleterious effects. Theophilus endeavoured, by means of a Solomon judgement, to sort out the true from the false. About 50 men and women were summoned to Mountain Rise on the outskirts of Pietermaritzburg, to demonstrate their skill in the grounds of the magistrate Mr Samuelson. Acting Governor Bisset and other officials were present and the whole day was devoted to the business.

Money was hidden in boots, holes in the ground and so on, and the witchdoctors were set to discover its whereabouts. At last three were singled out for their accuracy. One, a woman located by occult means the ... [five pounds] hidden in Theophilus’ boot, another woman found the money under the Governor’s feet and a young man a buried snuff box some

⁷³D. Ellenberger, *History of the Basuto: Ancient & Modern* (First published, 1912; reprinted Morija, 1992), 92-3.

⁷⁴S. Cloete, *The Honey Bird* (London, 1964), 113-124.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 123.

distance away. Theophilus then declared that only these three would be permitted to exorcise and all the others would be punished.⁷⁶

Gordon's reference for the story is incorrect. It was actually a statement by MgodikaManxele not Lazarus.⁷⁷ The preliminary transcript from Stuart's notes reads:

Izangoma. S. called together about 50 of these, men and women, on Mountain Rise near where Samuelson lives - in acting Governor Bisset's time. One whole day was spent on a visit to these. Money was hidden in boots, in the grass (sikota) and on different people - the Governor was present too. The doctors were then told to bula imali. I was there as a waiter. A tent (marquee) had been pitched there. The doctors were seated ehlungwini. They all tshékula'd and tshékula'd. They then funa'd lento efihiwe, azi tshelwa ukuti imali kwa vel' izangoma za zitatu out of the 50, Nomadwala ka Masumpa, another woman from Mapapetweni district (where Kamanga now is, near Mgeni) and the third was insizwa yasemVoti. Nomandwala komba'd imali impTela i ku Somtsu esicatulweni se sandhla sokuponsa. S. told her to take off the boot. She undid it and lo and behold the five pounds were taken out and tela'd etafuleni. She then went to the Governor, the Governor was told to get up and she then dug up where his feet had been and took out L10 in gold which she placed on the table; the Governor told her to sit down because he was satisfied and that she would finish and find all. He wanted the others to have a chance. Another woman went and tata'd itongwane (lo pondo lu ka bejane - about five inches in diameter - li bem izinyanga ezimbili) esikteni, eceleni kwehlungu where it had been hidden. The woman sat down and cataz' ugawayi ku lon' itongwane lelo.

The insizwa also found something, but I did not see what. All I know is he was singled out.

S. then said, 'All you izangoma, should I hear you are bulaing you will all be bopa'd [locked up], but these three were told they might bula. ngoba ba ne qinso. baya kwazi ukubul' imali [for they had the truth; they had found the money]. Nomadwala is still living - she is very old. She rides on horseback. She is allowed to bula. Nomadwala still bulas.

Socwatsha says Nomadwala akela's [lives at] Mhlola ka Magqubu. She has plenty of property.

Lasi says: I lived away at Mpfana, that is why I did not know of the incident just related.⁷⁸

In 1843 Natal was annexed by Great Britain and in 1847 the Locations Commission "established the 'location system' that brought the nearly one hundred thousand Africans living in Natal under the jurisdiction of the colonial secretary for native

⁷⁶R. Gordon, *Shepstone* (Cape Town, 1968), 179-80.

⁷⁷The transcript lists the informant as Xaba because it had that appearance, but it was actually MgodikaManxele. I thank John Wright, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg for providing me with both Stuart's original notes on this incident and the preliminary transcript, and further for pointing out the discrepancy concerning the informants, and translating the Zulu words.

⁷⁸Preliminary transcript of KCAL, Stuart Papers, File 54, note book 3, (7 May, 1910), 72-5. Col. J. J.

Bisset was an administrator of the Natal Government and Acting Governor between 1865-67. W. Rees,

Colenso Letters From Natal (Pietermaritzburg, 1858), 95.

affairs, Theophilus Shepstone. From that point, as Shepstone declared, “The Native’s own laws are superseded [and] the Government of their chiefs is at an end.”⁷⁹ The *Report of the Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Past and Present State of the Kafirs in the District of Natal,...* of 1853 stated that the British government “failed frankly and openly to take its place as their chief, through the Magistrates, who ought to be the guides and rulers of all their feelings and actions. The native rulers did this to the fullest extent, in every conceivable respect.”⁸⁰ It was recommended that magistrates should take the place of Supreme chiefs over the African population. The commissioners believed that the hereditary powers of chiefs should be curtailed to end any conflict between the chiefs and the magistrates. The Local Ordinance “allowed by her Majesty in Council (1850) ... constitutes the Lieutenant-Governor for the time being supreme or paramount chief over all the Kafirs in the district, with full power to remove or appoint subordinate chiefs or other Kafir authorities.”⁸¹ Carolyn Hamilton argues that Shepstone favoured a system of rule for Natal and Zululand which was based on the Shaka’s strong central government.⁸² A declaration in May 1854 signed by Shepstone and Bhaca chiefs and councillors stated that:

we do further acknowledge our faithful allegiance to the said Theophilus Shepstone, Esquire, as such Supreme Chief or Ruler, as effectually and to all intents and purposes, as firmly as if the said Theophilus Shepstone, Esquire, had been or had become such paramount Chief or Ruler by succession according to our laws or usage.

And we do hereby further vest in and acknowledge that the said Theophilus Shepstone now possesses and shall continue to possess all and singular the powers and authorities which according to our laws or usage are vested on or possessed by any Paramount Native Chief in South Africa not subject to British jurisdiction or authority, to be exercised and enjoyed by the said Theophilus Shepstone, Esquire, as such Supreme chief or Ruler.⁸³

⁷⁹D. Chidester, *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa* (Charlottesville, 1996), 116.

⁸⁰*Proceedings and Report of the Commission Appointed to Inquire Into the Past and Present State of the Kafirs in the District of Natal,...* (1853), Natal Archives, File NCP 8/3/1, 19.

⁸¹*Proceedings and Report of the Commission Appointed to Inquire Into the Past and Present State of the Kafirs in the District of Natal,...* (1853), Natal Archives, File NCP 8/3/1, 23.

⁸²Hamilton, *Terrific Majesty* (Cape Town, 1998), 94.

⁸³Natal Archives, NCP Add 1/1.

But, Shepstone could never have demonstrated the links with their ancestors or the sanctioned medicinal and ritual authority required by a true chief. He could never ascend to the spiritual world and dominate the invisible powers. It would, therefore, have been useful to show that a European could be supreme chief like Shaka without the spiritual connection African chiefs possessed. Shepstone would have had an interest in reproducing the story showing that the influence and power of the ancestors *could* actually be separated from Shaka by attempting to demonstrate that Shaka himself — the most famous Zulu king — did not believe in the religious system. Modern authors — both black and white — follow Shepstone in citing Shaka as a model of rationalism, intelligence and innovation. Shepstone attempted to behave like a chief in many ways. He even instructed a chief to allow a man to put on the headdress.⁸⁴ “Sir T. Shepstone was to all intents and purposes exactly like a native chieftain. He behaved like one; witness the having a snuff box bearer.”⁸⁵

Shepstone, “representing Tshaka [sic]”, played a role in the installation of Cetshwayo.⁸⁶ Previously, diviners would have had a role to play in the ceremony. Hamilton argues that Shepstone perceived the opportunity as the “chance of intervening directly in matters of Zulu sovereignty”.⁸⁷ There is some debate concerning the extent to which Shepstone represented Shaka. But Shepstone would have realised that he was effectively intervening in both a political and a religious ceremony. Shepstone was by no means the first to employ this tactic. According to David Chidester, Shepstone’s youthful mentor, Harry Smith “intervened in Xhosa religious life not only by insisting on being called *Inkosi Inkulu*, ‘Chief of Chiefs’, but also by outlawing the practices of

⁸⁴Mmemi ka Nguluzane in *James Stuart Archive*, 3 (Pietermaritzburg, 1982), 240.

⁸⁵J. Kumalo in *James Stuart Archive*, 1 (Pietermaritzburg, 1976), 220-1.

⁸⁶KCAL Stuart Papers, File 54/13. Hamilton, *Terrific Majesty*, 75-80, 93.

⁸⁷Hamilton, *Terrific Majesty*, 94.

witch detection, rainmaking and female initiation Harry Smith learned just enough about Xhosa religion to identify the precise points at which it could be destroyed.”⁸⁸

Written versions of the story may have affected oral ‘remembering’ about Shaka and his deeds. To take an extreme example, it is possible that Shepstone may have influenced the remembering of Cetshwayo (Zulu king after 1873). It is also possible that Cetshwayo told a story about Shaka that was relayed to him from Shepstone rather than having originated in Cetshwayo’s own oral traditions. There is evidence which indicates that Shepstone reminded or ‘coached’ Cetshwayo in matters of history. In a reply to a letter from Cetshwayo in 1874, Shepstone wrote: “Cetywayo’s uncle Dingana killed or drove away all the raindoctors in Zululand but there was rain in the country after they were out of it as there had been before they appeared ...”⁸⁹ In this sense Shepstone could be seen as a culture broker.

The stories all differ — not only in terms of how they are explained — but also in detail. It is not possible to extract a single consistent narrative; there are far too many discrepancies. Some are as apparently unimportant as the type of animal blood used and the method of divining. Callaway and one of James Stuart’s informants, Ndukwana, describe the animal as a bullock; another of Stuart’s informants said a cow; Burgess an ox; and Levine Samuelson a goat.⁹⁰ In Schoeman’s and Ritter’s early edition, the method of divination was by throwing bones. Other differences are of greater importance. Some, for example, claim Shaka acted alone and unaided. Yet, in other accounts he was helped. Some claim he told another person of his intention, but acted

⁸⁸Chidester, *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa*, 98.

⁸⁹ SNA 1/6/2, ‘Papers relating to Panda’ Natal Archives.

⁹⁰Harriet Ngubane points out that the skin of goats sacrificed to the ancestors were considered to have “certain sacred properties”. H. Ngubane, *Body and Mind in Zulu Medicine* (London, 1977), 4. It would seem then that the ritual significance of goats is not the same as that of an ox.

alone. Schoeman, for example, claims that Shaka was aided in his scheme by Mgobozi and Mdlaka. He also claims that Phampatha knew of Shaka's trick.

There are enormous discrepancies concerning the roles played by the main characters. In three versions — Ritter, Haggard and Schoeman — Nobela is a main character and a problem for Shaka. In other accounts no such person is mentioned and the 'problem' is more widespread. In some versions only one 'true diviner' emerges, but in others there are two or even three. Some stories imply there were no 'true diviners'. Further, the actual names of the diviners who point out Shaka vary, as do the groups to which they were supposed to belong. These variations in numbers, names and groups of the so-called true diviners in the story of Shaka are shown in Figure 1 below. There are a total of twelve people named as 'true' diviners involving six different groups.

Figure 1: Diviners who point out Shaka

Informant: Name	Informant: Status	Number of 'true' diviners	Names	Group/s to which the 'true' diviners belonged
Ritter	Writer	two	Songqoza Nqiwane	Magwaza Dlamini
Callaway	Missionary	one		
Fynney	Govt Official	one		
Tyler	Missionary	one		
Haggard	Writer	one	Indabazimbi	Maquilisini
Ndukwana <i>JSA</i>		one	Nggengelele	Buthelezi
Jantshi <i>JSA</i>		one	Nkuna	Ngcobo
Mcotoyi <i>JSA</i>	Thuli Chief	three	Mqayana Ntando Jele	Dube emaNgangeni
Ndabambi <i>JSA</i>	Dlamini	one	Nqiwana	Dlamini
Lunguza <i>JSA</i>		three	Mleku Mbube Mehlo	Dhlahhla Dhlahhla Dhlahhla
Garbutt	Secretary, Rhodesia Scientific Society	one		
Mini Kanyile. (H. Samuelson)	Teacher			
Baleka <i>JSA</i>	Qwabe	two		
R Samuelson		one		
Bryant	Missionary	two	Songqoza Nqiwane	Magwaza Dlamini
Burgess	Missionary connections	one		
Walter	Anthropologist	one		
Schoeman	Academic	one possibly two		

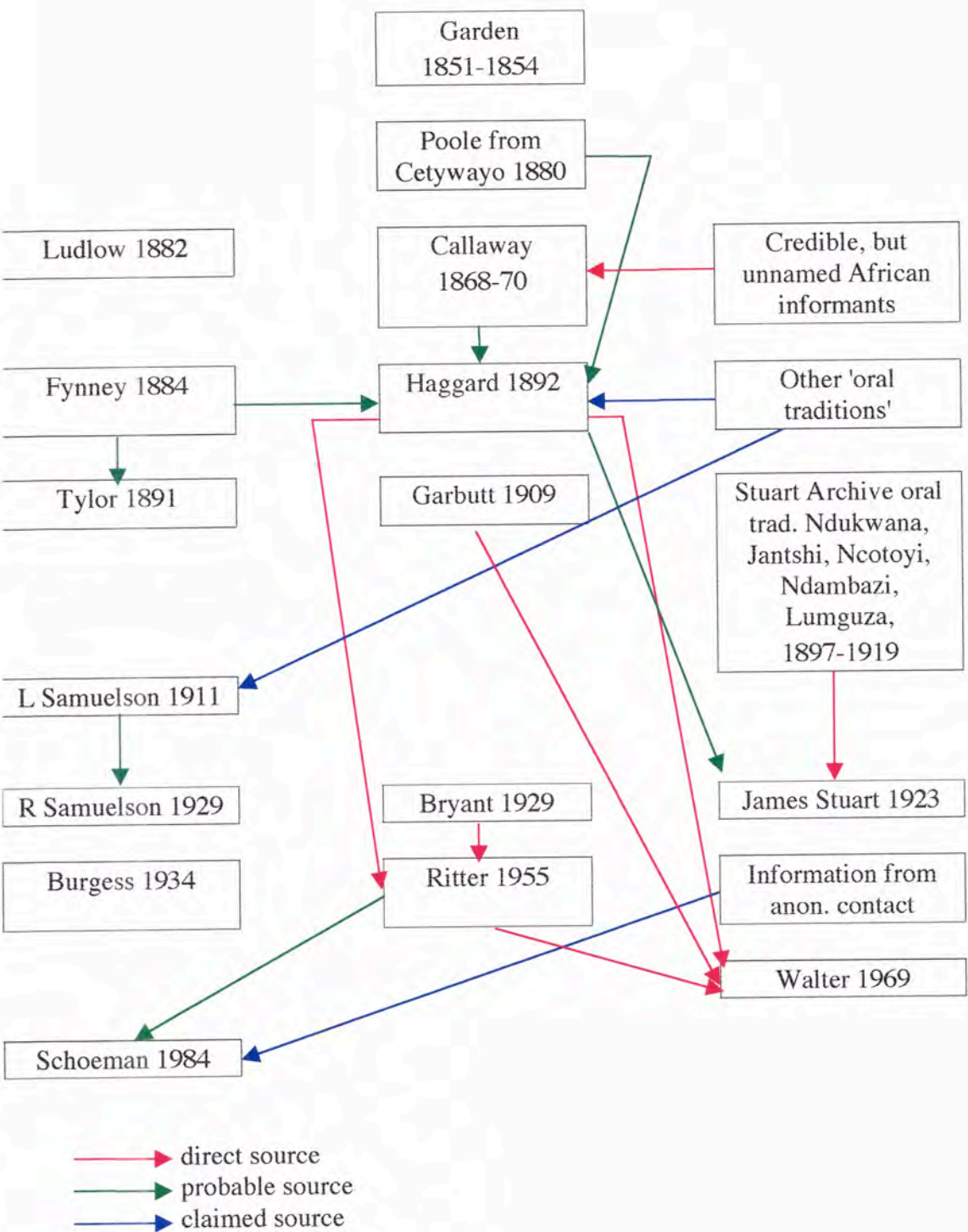
There is no consensus on gender; Nobela is clearly female, but in some accounts most of the diviners are male: others include both males and females. These gender questions appear to be important, perhaps indicating a larger power struggle over women's participation in religion. For example, M. Angulu Onwuejeowu has argued that "in the Zulu traditional religion women played an active part in the cult of the hoe and in 'spirit possession', and Chaka executed some of them to avoid a revolt."⁹¹ Finally, the various accounts differ in their identification of practitioners called diviners; some restrict the diviners to persons claiming to be able to identify evil-doers, others include other specialists in ritual and religion.

Sources

In addition to the problems of divergent and contradictory details are the vested interests of the narrators and the possible contamination of the story of Shaka and the diviners through 'feedback loops'. In many of the accounts very little direct reference is made to the source of the information provided. Determining the original sources involves a great deal of untangling. Figure 2 below demonstrates some of the complex 'feedback'.

⁹¹M. Angulu Onwuejeowu, *The Social Anthropology of Africa: An Introduction* (London, 1975), 271.

Figure 2. Accounts of the story of Shaka and the diviners



Conclusion

The focus of the story of Shaka and the diviners seems to have changed over time and some accounts have ‘developed’ substantially. There is little doubt that much of what has been written in the more elaborate literary accounts of The Story has been fabricated. Bits and pieces from various sources have also been put together to make The Story more ‘interesting’ or ‘authentic’. Some of the differences can be various prejudices of the authors. Travellers and missionaries, for example, imported their concepts of the ‘savage’ and ‘religious depravity’. Others include western concepts of divination and magic, as well as religious, economic, political or ideological prejudices. In addition to their distaste for such pagan practices, missionaries often considered diviners to be imposters. Ritter and Haggard added other extraneous elements in order to achieve sensational narrative effects.

With all the discrepancies, biases and feedback problems, it is tempting for the historian to dismiss this story as baseless fiction. Yet the oral accounts recorded in the *James Stuart Archive* are clearly more than recycled versions of white narratives. This is an impressive compilation of statements from 119 informants collected during the period 1890-1920.⁹² There has been some debate about the intentions or motivation of James Stuart, and the extent to which the views represent those of the recorder or the informant.⁹³ There has also been some criticism of the editorial process and omission of some of Stuart’s notes. But, as editor John Wright himself points out, the Stuart volumes should not be interpreted as the ‘final’ word; “as in the case of other published records of oral testimony, the form in which the testimony in the Stuart Archive appears is a product not only of the original informants and of the recorder, but also of the editors.”⁹⁴

⁹²J. Wright, ‘Making the James Stuart Archive’, paper, African Studies Association, (Florida, 1995) 21.

⁹³*Ibid.*, 8.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, 2, 17.

Nor is the Stuart Archive the only source of African oral traditions concerning the story of Shaka and the diviners. There is also Poole's account (supposedly recorded from Cetshwayo himself) to consider as well as Captain Garden's account — the earliest recording of the story. Where did Garden hear the story? It is highly likely that he heard it from Henry Francis Fynn or from Theophilus Shepstone. He was in contact with both, and they were considered to be authorities on matters of Zulu religion and custom. The oral traditions and Garden's account were all recorded some years after the event raising questions as to its accuracy.

Even allowing for contaminating influences on oral remembering, the very existence and *acceptance* of the story of Shaka and the diviners— inclusion in the oral tradition — argues for the existence of a solid core of meaning about Shaka's involvement in the realm of religion. As explanations for the story of Shaka's blood sprinkling 'trick', blood lust and savagery are unacceptable. There is also little evidence which might link the story of Shaka and the diviners to the prominent economic explanations historians have suggested for the rise of the Zulu kingdom. It is notable that little in the way of explanation is offered in accounts recorded by James Stuart. Grafting the explanations offered by colonial and modern writers onto the African oral accounts requires that we accept the dubious proposition that the Zulu religious system in which divination was entrenched could be ridiculed in such a manner or that the people could be duped by diviners and leaders who did not believe in such a system.

Moreover, engagement by leaders with diviners and tests did not end with Shaka. Claims of scepticism in relation to divination have been extended to also include Sutu chief Mabulane, Ndebele chief Mzilikazi, Barotse chief Lewanika as well as Zulu kings Dingane, Mpande and Cetshwayo. Francis Owen said he witnessed Dingane testing a diviner. According to Owen it seemed that "Dingane had called him on purpose to put his professed skill in the knowledge of secrets to the proof. Dingane who has a great

deal of sense in him began once to ridicule the fellow for not telling him his secret.”⁹⁵ Stuart’s informants, Ndukwana and Mpatshana, and Levine Samuelson describe Mpande’s struggles with diviners.⁹⁶ Mpatshana says that Mpande designated the kraal Kandempemvu for diviners. While there, they were exempt from military duties but were required to undertake domestic chores such as hoeing the gardens and fencing. Levine Samuelson described Mpande responding to common accusations of witchcraft by setting aside an area of refuge for the accused (*Izwe labatakati*), appointing a chief (the last once being Umtokwana), initiating a system of intelligence relating to witchcraft accusations and reducing the number of diviners. She claimed that Mpande compelled them to join the army. Her brother, Robert Samuelson, argued along similar lines in 1929, referring to Cetshwayo setting aside an area for the protection of those accused. This is said to have been done because they enjoyed a resurgence of power under Cetshwayo.⁹⁷ Alice Werner held that Cetshwayo “was certainly a sceptic as regards witchcraft.”⁹⁸ There is also the unusual story of Theophilus Shepstone testing the diviners and exposing frauds.

For all these reasons the story of Shaka and the diviners makes a useful point of entry for a study of chiefs’ engagement with the realm of religion. However, it needs to be read and interpreted in the context of invisible features of Zulu power including

⁹⁵F. Owen, *The Diary of the Rev. Francis Owen*, (ed.) G. Cory, (First published, 1838; Cape Town, 1926), 50.

⁹⁶Ndukwana, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 336. Samuelson, *Zululand, Its Traditions, Legends, Customs and Folklore*, 32-3. Mpatshana ka Sodondo in *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 315.

⁹⁷Samuelson, *Long, Long Ago*, 35, 229, 394. The theme of scepticism is again very strong and it is likely that Levine Samuelson is the source and that there has been a simple name change in relation to the king. It is possible that the area set aside was for the purpose of ritual cleansing just as it was when Cetshwayo appointed oVemvaneni (a small kraal) for the doctoring and purification processing of warriors who had killed men at Isandhlwana. Mpatshana, *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 303.

⁹⁸Samuelson, *Zululand, Its Traditions, Legends, Customs and Folklore*, 160.

ancestors, diviners, medicines and ritual. The next chapter will examine key features of 'traditional' Zulu religion and determine what was new and what was old. This is necessary before attempting to illuminate the king's place in the realm of Zulu religious practice, and the place of religious practice in the nascent Zulu state, in subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER 4

KEY FEATURES OF ZULU RELIGIOUS LIFE AND THE INVISIBLE POWER OF THE 'SPIRITUAL' WORLD

The literature survey revealed an enduring image of Shaka as an absolute ruler and the sole source of power among the Zulu. This chapter attempts to identify the invisible power of the 'spiritual' world — ancestors, medicines, ritual and dreams — and to expand the investigation of the role of diviners and other specialist practitioners. It will argue that the invisible power of the 'spiritual' world is clearly distinguishable in written sources dating from as early as the 1820s. It is not, therefore, necessary to speculate on the basis of twentieth-century ethnography alone that these elements of religious practice were extant in the time of Shaka. On the contrary, a powerful argument would have to be advanced by anyone wishing to contend that they were post-Shakan developments. Furthermore, these elements can be shown from the earliest available sources to have been present in all societies of south-eastern Africa. They may, for that reason, be supposed to have been in existence long before the nineteenth century. Any chief attempting to extend his power over peoples outside his own immediate following would have found it difficult, if not impossible, to operate without reference to these enduring elements of religious practice.

It is first necessary to deal with longstanding confusion on the question of *uNkulunkulu*, a term taken up by certain missionaries as synonymous with the God of Christian cosmology. Though the idea of *uNkulunkulu*, is now well entrenched in African as well as missionary Christian theology it cannot be expunged from religious discussions. The aim of the first section of the chapter is to show how the development of the concept of *uNkulunkulu*, as the high God of all, obscures important aspects of the relationship which formerly obtained between chiefs and their departed ancestors.

The Question of *uNkulunkulu* (*uMvelinqangi*)

Whether there was a pre-contact concept of a Supreme Being, *uNkulunkulu* or God among nineteenth century Zulu is probably one of the most intriguing questions concerning Zulu 'religion'. At the same time, however, the cultural context of the concept seems to have been given little attention. Some writers assume that *uNkulunkulu* is the same as the Christian God; others differ. Many accounts note that the Zulu appear to have a tradition of *uNkulunkulu* who sprang from a bed of reeds. Others simply talk of a notion, either conscious or latent, of a Supreme Being. Many nineteenth and early-twentieth century writers influenced by Christianity were interested in the possible existence among the Zulu, and other southern African groups, of an understanding of Creation, God (or a Supreme Being), Heaven and the hereafter. The question of *uNkulunkulu* is significant in relation to Zulu ideology, politics and the role of the king because, as this section will argue, the interpretation of *uNkulunkulu* as God has undermined the importance of ancestors and their role in the ideology of the Zulu state.

Early European writers, both missionaries and laymen, took belief in God to be critical to determine the existence or absence of 'religion' among southern Africans. The survivors of the *Stavenisse* ship wreck in the late seventeenth century reported that the 'natives' of Natal had no religion whatsoever.¹ One of the earliest accounts of the Zulu and their religion comes from Nathaniel Isaacs who lived in the region in the 1820s. Isaacs too claimed that the Zulu had no religion and said that they had "no idea of a deity, no knowledge of a future state [and] they cannot comprehend the mystery of creation".² Yet, Isaacs mentions the Zulu belief in the dead joining the "Issetator"

¹J. Bird, (ed.), *The Annals of Natal: 1495-1845*, 1 (First published, 1888; reprinted Cape Town, 1965), 45.

²N. Isaacs, *Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa*, 2, (ed.) L. Herrman, (First published, 1836; reprinted Cape Town, 1937), 248.

[*isithutha* or ancestral spirit] and living comfortably. ³ Isaacs reported that during a personal audience with Shaka he raised the notion of a Supreme Being and that Shaka responded that he knew nothing of such a deity, nor did his people. ⁴ Reverend Francis Owen, who began his missionary work among the Zulu in 1837, remarked that they had not the faintest notion of a God. ⁵ Adulphe Delegorgue who hunted in the Kwa Zulu/Natal region in the 1830s and 1840s also believed that the Zulu had no religion, no worship, only superstitions. ⁶

Slowly however, a contrary view began to take root through the process David Chidester terms 'discovery'. This shift was the result of the "practice of comparison itself." ⁷ Chidester argues that the "discovery of an indigenous religious system on southern African frontiers depended upon colonial conquest and domination." ⁸ In Natal, the 'discovery' began even before colonial conquest. Answering a missionary calling, Captain Allen Gardiner arrived in Natal in 1835. He travelled among the Zulus and concluded that there were vestiges of a belief in a Supreme Being. Gardiner described prisoners of Dingane (Shaka's successor) who were about to be executed as "ignorant of the immortality of the soul, and unconscious of a future state of existence." ⁹ At the same time, on the basis of his conversations with the prisoners, Gardiner believed that they did have some notion of a 'Supreme Being', but that it was rapidly being lost. From his conversation with Umkolwani of the Ngwane, he

³*Ibid.*, 248.

⁴Isaacs, *Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa*, 1: 285

⁵F. Owen, *The Diary of the Rev. Francis Owen*, (ed.) G. Cory, (First published, 1838; reprinted Cape Town, 1926), 94.

⁶Bird, *The Annals of Natal*, 1: 485. According to Delegorgue the Zulu first learnt of God from Farewell's party.

⁷D. Chidester, *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa* (Charlottesville, 1996), 17.

⁸*Ibid.*, 19.

⁹Gardiner, *Narrative of a Journey to the Zoolu Country in South Africa*, 152.

concluded that “every tradition had worn out; and they presented the awful spectacle of immortal beings without the knowledge or acknowledgment of a Creator Of a day of future retribution they had not the slightest idea, nor did they know anything of an evil spirit.”¹⁰ When Gardiner questioned the people in the mid 1830s about who made the sun, moon, mountains and rivers, they replied that it was the “Incosi pezulu”, but that they knew nothing more.¹¹ Delegorgue, in contrast, claimed that this notion of a heavenly chief, *inkosi pezulu* had actually been introduced in 1824 by Lieutenant Francis Farewell.¹² On the basis of recollection of one of his informants (Ndhlovu, a Zulu chief) James Stuart noted that “The word *pezulu* was taken ... to be the name of the ancient ancestor of the Zulu people, Pezulu being the father of Lubololwenja.”¹³ Gardiner acknowledged that the information he was able to collect on a Supreme Being and Creation was limited but mistakenly believed though that confirming evidence would eventually come to light.

It is agreed among the Zoolua, that their forefathers believed in the existence of an overruling spirit, whom they called Villenangi (literally the First Appearer), and who soon after created another heavenly being of great power, called Koolukoolwani, who once visited this earth, in order to publish the news (as they express it), as [sic] also to separate the sexes and colours among mankind. During the period he was below, two messages were sent to him from Villenangi, the first conveyed by a camelion, announcing that men were not to die; the second, by a lizard, with a contrary decision. The lizard, having outrun the slow-paced camelion, arrived first, and delivered his message before the latter made his appearance.¹⁴

Gardiner questioned ‘Foortu’ of the ‘Fingu’ people about their religion and determined that they were as ignorant of the subject as the Zulu. He says:

They acknowledged, indeed, a traditionary account of a Supreme Being, whom they called Oukoolukoolu (literally the Great-Great), but knew nothing further respecting him, than that he originally issued from a bed of reeds, created men and cattle, and taught them the use of the assegai. They knew not how long the issitoota, or spirit of a deceased person, existed after its departure from the body, but attributed every untoward occurrence to its influence, slaughtering a beast to propitiate its favour on every occasion of severe sickness,

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 170-1.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 178.

¹²Chidester, *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa*, 122.

¹³Ndhlovu ka Timuni, in C. de B. Webb and J. Wright, (eds.), *James Stuart Archive*, 4, (Pietermaritzburg, 1986), 200.

¹⁴A. Gardiner, *Narrative of a Journey to the Zoolu Country* (First published, 1836; reprinted Cape Town, 1966), 178.

&c. As is customary among all these nations, a similar offering is made by the ruling chief to the spirit of his immediate ancestor preparatory to any warlike or hunting expedition, and it is to the humour of this capricious spirit that every degree of failure or success is ascribed.¹⁵

Gardiner identified 'Villengi' (the First Appearer), and 'Oukoolukoolu' (the Great-Great) and a secondary heavenly being known as 'Koolukoolwani'. Gardiner said that most people knew little of 'Villengi', but that contact with Europeans had resurrected their general understanding of a Supreme Being.¹⁶ Francis Owen, on the other hand, said Dingane laughed at the name of God and was most amused by the Christian notion of saving the soul.¹⁷ Dingane is reported to have sought clarification from Owen about his Christian message. Dingane said:

'I have a few questions to ask you that I may not misunderstand'.
First.- 'Do you say there is a God, and but one God?' - The minister replied, 'Yes'.
Second.- 'Do you say there is a heaven for good people, and only one?' - Reply: 'Yes'
Third.- 'Do you say there is a devil?' - Reply: 'Yes'.
Fourth.- 'Do you say there is a hell for wicked people?' - The Minister replied, 'Yes',
Said the king if that is your belief you are of no use to me or to my people; we knew all that before you came to preach to us. I and my people believe there is only one God - I am that God. We believe there is one place to which all good people go; that is Zululand. We believe there is one place where all bad people go. There, said he, pointing to a rocky hill in the distance; there is hell where all my wicked people go. The chief who lives there is Umatiwane, the head of the Amangwane. I put him to death, and made him the devil chief of all wicked people who die. You see that there are but two chiefs in this country - Mawane and myself; I am the Great Chief - the God of the living; Umatiwane is the Great Chief of the wicked. I have now told you my belief; I do not want you to trouble me again with the fiction of you English people. You can remain in my country as long as you conduct your self properly.'¹⁸

Like Gardiner, the Reverend Joseph Shooter writing in 1857, referred to the Zulu having a "tradition of a Being who they call the Great-Great and the First Appearer or

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 314. The references to the lizard and the chameleon (Gardiner, 178), and to the bed of reeds, are likely to have been an adaptation by the Zulu people of the 'message' that was being delivered by various missionaries and travellers.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 178-9.

¹⁷Owen, *The Diary of the Rev. Francis Owen*, 84.

¹⁸R. Hully, *Zululand Under Dingaana: An Account of the Rev. Mr Owen's Visit to Zululand in the Year 1837, as Related to Mr Hully, taken Down by Rev. Mr Kirby, in South African Bound Pamphlets*, 140 (6), Reprinted from *Cape Monthly Magazine*, n.s., 2, (1880), 321-332, Cape Town. (South African Library),

Exister. He is represented as having made all things — men, cattle, water, fire, the mountains, and whatever else is seen. He is also said to have appointed their names.”¹⁹ Shooter who described the Great-Great as being worshipped believed that as a result of change, the Zulus had forgotten the true God; that “this tradition of the Great-Great is not universally known among the people”²⁰ and they had begun to worship others. Gardiner also suggested that the notion of a Supreme Being was not universally accepted or known. However, both Gardiner and Shooter seem to assume that this is due to lack of memory or knowledge and that the Ngwane like the Zulu had forgotten their unknown god. According to Joseph Shooter:

When Zikali, the present chief of the Amangwane, was asked whether he knew anything of the Great-Great, he replied in the negative; but thought that some of his old men might have heard of him. One of these said that when a child he had been told by a woman stooping with age, that there was a great being above, who was called by the two names previously mentioned. This was all he knew on the subject.²¹

Shooter took the two names to be one and the same God. Fred Fynney, the Natal colonial official, also believed that the Zulu had long held similar religious beliefs which predated the arrival of missionaries and described the belief in the existence of a “Supreme Being, who created all things and dwelleth in the Heavens, whose power is infinite.”²²

Several early observers of religion in southern Africa subscribed to the belief that there had been an historical decay of knowledge particularly relating to the notion of a powerful creator of all things, heaven and an afterlife or eternity. Thus all that was required to fill out the concept of the Christian God was to reverse this state of ignorance, pick up the threads and remind the people of their lost understanding.

¹⁹J. Shooter, *The Kafirs of Natal and the Zulu Country* (First published, 1857; reprinted New York, 1969), 159.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 160.

²¹*Ibid.*, 160.

²²F. Fynney, ‘Our Native Tribes: Their Customs, Superstitions and Beliefs’, *Zululand and the Zulus* (First published, 1884; reprinted Pretoria, 1967), 12.

Interpretations of the Zulu religious systems were made from a Christian and colonial perspective.

Discussions of Zulu religion in colonial Natal were generally carried on in Eurocentric terms. For many, Judaism provided a reference point of comparison. This was first suggested by Henry Francis Fynn who had lived among the Zulus from as early as the 1820s. Fynn said that there was some resemblance between certain Zulu practices and those of the Jews.²³ Natal Magistrate G. R. Peppercorne supported the claim (probably on the basis of Fynn's 'authority' on the Zulu) when he reported to the Native Affairs Commission in the 1850s that "a general type of the customs and laws of the Ama-zulu may be found in the early history of the Hebrews, until they became a nation under a settled monarchy."²⁴ In September 1853 Natal's Diplomatic Agent to the Native Tribes, Theophilus Shepstone prepared a memo for Capt. R. J. Garden which generally suggested the degenerationist hypothesis, arguing that elements of scriptural belief might have reached the region in times long past.

Traditions among the tribes of South Africa of the origin of man, are perhaps as numerous as the tribes themselves; most of them are vague and indefinite and seem to be but the mere fragments of some more complete legend lost in the lapse of time; it is only occasionally that one having any shape or point is met with, and some of these bear such a strong resemblance to the scripture account, that although good evidence may be traced of their having been in existence for several generations past, it is difficult to avoid suspecting that they may have been influenced by that history, if indeed they are not corrupted extracts from it.

The natives themselves repudiate any such connection, and declare their account was extant long before the Bible account reached them, or they had heard of its existence; this may be and probably is so far as those living are concerned, and the suspicion may still be well founded.²⁵

Even those who keenly pursued research into custom, beliefs systems and history — such as James Stuart — toyed with the idea that there was an identifiable ancient connection with Judaism. It seems this notion persisted and was to some extent internalised by some of his African informants who had themselves been influenced by

²³Chidester, *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa*, 126-7.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 125.

²⁵R. J. Garden Papers, 1851-1854, File A1157, 10, IV A (ii) 'Native Tribes; Customs and Beliefs', Natal Archives. 1048-1049.

missionary opinions. Stuart noted that “Mxaba now mentioned a number of Zulu customs and observances for the sake, as I thought, of identifying themselves with the Jews. He referred to ... sprinkling of blood these and other facts tend to establish the fact that the Zulus once were in contact with the Jews.”²⁶ Stuart concluded that Mxaba himself believed that the Zulu were descended from the Jews and were even possibly one of the lost tribes of Israel. No doubt this belief was the result of Christian influence as Stuart described Mxaba as “thoroughly well up on the whole subject, in native custom as well as biblical narrative.”²⁷ Mxaba was not the only informant who may have internalised colonial ideas about Jewish connections and such ideas had aroused interest among at least two other Zulu informants wanting more information.²⁸ Stuart made a list of customs “analogous to Jewish ones.”²⁹ He even compared Biblical accounts of the Israelites with stories relating to Shaka.³⁰

In 1853 John William Colenso became Anglican Bishop of Natal. He undertook his own investigation into Zulu religion accompanied by Theophilus Shepstone. Supporting the existence of ‘religion’ among the Zulus, while also incorporating aspects of degeneration theory, Colenso argued that the Zulu did not ‘know’ their Supreme Being. Nevertheless they had two names to refer to him: *uNkulunkulu* and *uMvelinqangi*. According to Colenso, *uNkulunkulu* was the Zulu name for the Christian God and he proposed that the Zulu term be adopted by all missionary bodies.³¹ Yet, decades earlier Owen and Champion had noted that the Zulu had no word for God, and that

²⁶Kumalo, Johannes, in *James Stuart Archive*, 1, (Pietermaritzburg, 1976), 243, 246, 262-3. Mxaba also present.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 262.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 246. Dinya ka Zokozwayo, in *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 98.

²⁹Dinya ka Zokozwayo, in *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 98, 100.

³⁰KCAL Stuart Papers, File 53/6 ‘Information on Shaka’. Page titled “notes”.

³¹J. Colenso, *Ten Weeks in Natal* (Cambridge, 1855), 59, 129. J. Colenso, *Bringing Forth Light; Five Tracts on Bishop Colenso’s Zulu Mission*, (ed.) R. Edgecombe, (Pietermaritzburg, 1982), 120, n.160, 194.

Utixo (a Hottentot word) was therefore introduced by Europeans. *UNkulunkulu* was a Zulu word, they pointed out, but it referred to an ancient chief and on that basis was rejected by the American missionaries as a suitable word for God.³² After a fierce debate, there was no consensus and several different terms continued to be used to translate the name of the Christian God, *uThixo*, *iThongo*, *uYehova*, *uDio*, *uLungileyo*, *umPezulu*, *umkulunkulu*, and *umVelinqange*.³³ Unrelenting, Colenso insisted that *uNkulunkulu*, and *uMvelinqangi* were the Zulu two names for the same God.

At Colenso's invitation, the German philologist Wilhelm Heinrich Immanuel Bleek arrived in Natal in 1855 and began to collect information on Zulu myths and legends. Rather than advancing the notion of degeneration proposed by so many others before him, Bleek approached the question from a different angle. He proposed that Zulu religion represented evidence of an *original* religion. He agreed with Colenso, however that the term *uNkulunkulu* approximated the Christian concept of God. On the basis of linguistic evidence, despite finding no evidence of worship of *uNkulunkulu*, Bleek affirmed that this God was held above all ancestors and was more powerful. While recognising the fundamental importance of the ancestors, he maintained that it was a primordial form of religion.³⁴ Bleek believed that "ancestor-worship [is] a form of religion which must be reckoned among the most ancient."³⁵ Curiously, he determined through a comparison of traditions throughout various parts of Africa that widely differing groups had basically the same name for God.³⁶ Chidester says that Bleek concluded that "the evolution of religion could be traced from Zulu ancestor worship, through Khoikhoi sidereal worship, to the heavenly God of European Christianity."³⁷ Contemporary or recent historical changes in Zulu stories were not considered. Bleek

³²Owen, *The Diary of the Rev. Francis Owen*, 89-90.

³³Colenso, *Ten Weeks in Natal*, 56-9, 160.

³⁴W. Bleek, *Zulu Legends* (ed.) J. Engelbrecht, (Pretoria, 1952), 29, 36

³⁵Chidester, *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa*, 145.

³⁶Bleek, *Zulu Legends*, 29.

³⁷Chidester, *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa*, 151.

collected material in Natal in 1855, but already the stories incorporated The Great One creating “white man’s girl”, and the white man coming from the sea. ³⁸

Sitting on the fence to some extent was the Methodist missionary, William Shaw (1872), who believed that the Xhosa and Zulu had no religion; only a system of superstitions “which interweaves itself with all the principal transactions of their social life, and produces most of their peculiar characteristics as a race of people.” ³⁹ This demonstrates the beginning of recognition or discovery of indigenous religion in the sense that ‘superstitions’ were seen to permeate daily existence. At the same time however, Shaw also supported the notion of degeneration saying that they had very vague knowledge of God and “remnants of a ancient ‘priesthood’.” ⁴⁰

However, the issues of disclosure and sacred knowledge of African religion seem not to have entered into the earlier studies. Nor did the issue of polite agreement. William Charles Willoughby in the 1920s referred to “the reluctance of the Bantu to talk to Europeans about the intimacies of their own religion.” ⁴¹ Critical of early investigators, he argued that:

What travellers have written on this subject is, therefore, seldom of much value; and many missionaries, officials, and traders who have won the confidence of the elders by prolonged residence among them, have been uninterested or untrained in the comparative method of studying religion ... ⁴²

His cautionary note appears to have gone largely unheeded by subsequent investigators. Many later writers reproduced earlier work unquestioningly. Myths that were recorded were accepted as having a primordial origin — or as having an origin as ancient as the

³⁸Bleek, *Zulu Legends*, 3-4.

³⁹W. Shaw, *The Story of my Mission Among the Native Tribes of South Eastern Africa* (London, 1872), 188.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 188, 195.

⁴¹W. Willoughby, *The Soul of the Bantu* (New York, 1928), 6.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 6.

Old Testament biblical tales linking the Zulu to the Jews, a comparison also recently noted by Paul Landau.⁴³

In the 1860s Anglican priest and missionary doctor Henry Callaway undertook his own independent investigations of Zulu religion. His conclusions differed markedly from those of Colenso and Bleek. His findings on *uNkulunkulu* were challenging and enlightening. On the basis of the Wesleyan missionary Mr Hully's knowledge and experience (interpreter to Reverend Owen in 1837), Callaway argued that *uNkulunkulu* was not a word of Zulu origin after all and that it had actually been coined by Gardiner. Hully said that the term *kulu* by itself meant great, and refused to use *uNkulunkulu* in the sense of a Supreme Being as Gardiner had interpreted it.⁴⁴ Stuart's informant Ndukwana reported that "there was no definiteness about our knowledge of *Mvelinqangi*. We never used to apply the word *Nkulunkulu* to the creator; that has been imported by missionaries and *kolwas*."⁴⁵

Callaway was aware of the role of the ancestors and incorporated an historical approach to his study of Zulu religion. However, he seemed to struggle explaining what he had found, and in accommodating his Christian preconceptions he 'fell back on' earlier theories of the degeneration of Zulu religion in order to explain the predominance of ancestor worship. Nonetheless, Callaway's findings concerning *uNkulunkulu* are crucial because without this clarification, the fundamental significance of the ancestors in both religion and politics is obscured.

⁴³P. Landau, 'The Meaning of *Modimo*: Translating 'God' and 'Self' in Southern Africa', paper, African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific, (University of Western Australia, 1999), 1.

⁴⁴H. Callaway, *The Religious System of the AmaZulu* (First published, 1870; reprinted Cape Town, 1970), 54.

⁴⁵Ndukwana ka Mbengwana in *James Stuart Archives*, 4: 302.

Criticising the use of the word *uThixo* as a ‘Hottentot’ word for God introduced by the missionary Peter Kolb ⁴⁶, Callaway pointed out that:

Nothing is more easy than to enquire of heathen savages the character of their creed, and during the conversation to impart to them great truths and ideas which they never heard before, and presently to have these come back again as articles of their own original faith, when in reality they are but the echoes of one’s own thoughts. ⁴⁷

Letters Owen received from the American missionary George Champion seemed to support Callaway’s view:

The Zulus have no word in their own language to express the sublime object of our worship. The word used in Caffre land and which has been introduced *here* by Europeans, and hence known to some of the Zoolus is Uteeko, or as the Missionaries write it Utixo, but it has a harsh and difficult click in it, and has no meaning being a word of Hottentot extraction. The word Ukulunkulu a real Zoolu word with an emphatic signification “the great, great ..” is objected to by our American friends as a suitable name for the great God, on the ground of its being applied by the natives to a certain ancient chief, whom they suppose to have sprung from a reed, and concerning whom they believe various other things inconsistent with a Deity. It is also the name of a certain worm which makes a covering for itself with grass. They recommend therefore the introduction of the Hebrew name Elohim, which is easy of pronunciation, besides possessing other obvious excellencies. ⁴⁸

Callaway attempted to unravel some of the misunderstandings that were current at the time. He points out that rather than meaning God (or Adam for that matter),

uNkulunkulu:

expresses antiquity, age, lit., the old-old one, as we use great in great-great-grandfather. *Umvelinqangi*, expresses priority; the first out-comer. *Uthlanga*, potential source of being.... For Unkulunkulu, the first man, sprang from - came out of- broke off from- a previously existing *uthlanga* or source of being, the nature of which is quite beyond the native philosophy; and having come out, he became the *uthlanga* or source of being of entire humanity. ⁴⁹

Callaway explained that *uNkulunkulu* was the first ancestor; not eternal, or immortal; a being who had existed in the past and as part of that existence, had made those who formed the first groups of people. ⁵⁰ *UNkulunkulu* himself had been created before he gave people ancestors, doctors, diviners, and medicines for diseases caused by the

⁴⁶P. Kolb, *The Present State of the Cape of Good-Hope* written originally in High German, by Peter Kolben, A. M.; done into English from the original by Mr. Medley (London, 1731-1738).

⁴⁷Callaway, *The Religious System of the AmaZulu*, 105-6.

⁴⁸Owen, *The Diary of the Rev. Francis Owen*, 89-90.

⁴⁹Callaway, *The Religious System of the AmaZulu*, 7.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 7.

ithongo.⁵¹ Thus *uNkulunkulu* was not God, nor Adam or Jesus and that there was no relationship with Christianity or Judaism. There is the *uNkulunkulu* who was the 'First Out-comer', but Callaway's information revealed that each house or family had its own *uNkulunkulu*. Moreover, Callaway found both male and female *uNkulunkulu*.⁵² A further distinction between the Christian concept of God was that *uNkulunkulu* was used not only in the name of good as is the case with the Christian God, but also associated with that which was not good.⁵³

Callaway's informant says the "ancients" said nothing about heavenly Lord, nor that *uNkulunkulu* "left any word for man".⁵⁴ The *uNkulunkulu* from which others originated was not worshipped because its *isibongo* was not known. It was not possible therefore, to praise this unknown *uNkulunkulu*. However, Callaway points out that "the Onkulunkulu of tribes and houses, whose *izibongo* are still known, are worshipped, each by his respective descendants."⁵⁵ This is referring to the praising of ancestors.

One of Callaway's informants explained the concept of *uNkulunkulu* thus:

To us black men Unkulunkulu is as a stalk of maize. It may produce the ear, it be plucked, and the stalk be left, and decay in the place where it grew; the grains of the cob are Onkulunkulu of houses, which now worship those only of their own family according to the order of their growth on the cob."⁵⁶

What is most interesting from my perspective is that not only did each family have its own *uNkulunkulu*, but so too did each lineage ('tribe'). Callaway noted that "very old Amazulu, when asked about Unkulunkulu, are apt to speak, not of the first Unkulunkulu, but the onkulunkulu of their tribes."⁵⁷ Referring to the Ngwane

⁵¹*Ibid.*, 5.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 35, 40-1. Berglund claims that *uMvelinqangi* is always referred to as masculine. A. Berglund, *Zulu Thought-Patterns and Symbolism* (London, 1989), 34.

⁵³Callaway, *The Religious System of the AmaZulu*, 25.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 44.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 17 fn 35, 18. fn. 38.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 18.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 54 fn 3.

Callaway's informant says that "all nations have their own Unkulunkulu. Each has its own. The Unkulunkulu of our tribe is Ugenamafu and Uluthlongwana and Usangolibanzi."⁵⁸ At this point Callaway's footnote explains that "at a certain period the tribe divided into three, each having its own Unkulunkulu. So Umahhaule, who has formed a small tribe, says, in a few years he shall be an Unkulunkulu."⁵⁹ "At last men said "King" to Umatiwana [Matiwane], in whose house the Onkulunkulu of our tribe were born."⁶⁰ At this point Callaway's footnote says "that is, the Onkulunkulu whose names he has given not only belonged to the Amangwane, but to the family of Umatiwana [Matiwane]."⁶¹ Callaway's conclusions are supported by the recollection of an informant, Mankejane, recorded around 1850 which supports the view that *uNkulunkulu* was introduced. He said "now we are taught the story of God, our Father who is in Heaven, Unkulunkulu.... But they (our fathers) know Him not. But the white people knew him."⁶²

Thus it may be argued that on one level a family has its own *uNkulunkulu*; at the level of the lineage another *uNkulunkulu*; and at yet another level, the paramountcy would also have *uNkulunkulu* (pl.) which would also be the family *uNkulunkulu* of the paramount chief. The network is represented in Figure 3 below.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 51.

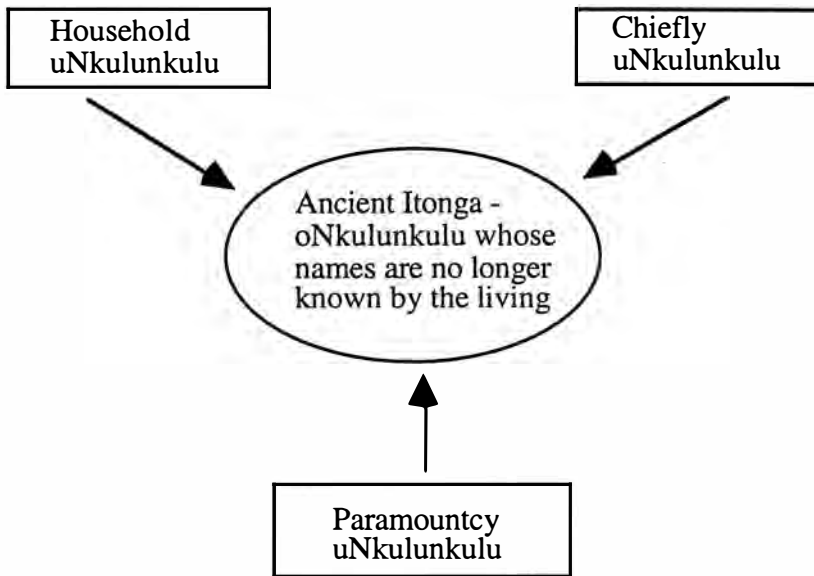
⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 51. fn 96.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 51.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 51. fn 97.

⁶²Mankejane, 'An account of the Ekukanyeni Mission Station' Grey Collection, (G. 44a2, 25), (n.d. possibly mid 1850s).

Figure 3. Network of *uNkulunkulu*



To sum up, *uNkulunkulu* then was nothing more than a generic name for particular significant ancestors — family, chiefly or ‘national’. Praises to ancestors went back several generations and once their names had fallen into disuse or been forgotten the generic name was also applied — or perhaps in some cases the term *uNkulunkulu* was used in accordance with name avoidance practices. Praising an ancestor or swearing by a chief was not the same as the Christian concept of worship but was part of a belief system linking chiefs, head people, and paramounts with their ancestors rather than God (this will be examined further in later sections). As Paul Landau points out “historians, as opposed to theologians, must avoid treating religious beings as transcultural universals: the “high God” is the questioner’s God, the “Spirit” the questioner’s Spirit: they are ready-made decisions of translation not evidence.”⁶³

The concept of *uNkulunkulu* was directly related to the ancestors — ancestors who were seen to have the power to influence Zulu lives. The significant question was who had the authority to influence this power, and if the ancestors were central to daily

⁶³P. Landau, *The Realm of the Word* (Portsmouth, 1995), xx.

existence, what role did they have in earthly authority and legitimacy? Moreover, what implications does the multiplicity of *oNkulunkulu* have for the newly emerging state? It seems that the key is the role of the ancestral shades, other features of Zulu religion and the role of chiefs. The next sections will examine each of the remaining key sources of power with the capacity to influence Zulu lives: ancestors; diviners, magic, witchcraft and sorcery; and medicines.

Ancestors (ithongo, idlozi) ⁶⁴

According to such early writers as Shooter, the Zulu had degenerated into ancestor worship by raising up the ancestors because they had lost their knowledge of a Supreme Being. ⁶⁵ As observed in the previous section, the often used concept of worship among the Zulu is misleading. Praising of the ancestors is more accurately described as an affiliation with lineage seniors who have departed from the living. It is also often assumed that only the male ancestors are significant. However, as Callaway points out protection was also sought from dead *grandmothers and* (emphasis added) grandfathers; both were honoured. According to Callaway's information, the Zulu believed that their *amadlozi* (pl.) exist. Though they had departed the living world they were considered to be ever present. ⁶⁶

The ancestors or shades had the ability to influence the living. They were the guardians of law, moral code, fertility, and prosperity, and thus harmonious relations were desirable because the ancestors expressed displeasure when angry. ⁶⁷ Care of the living and care of the ancestors was a relationship of reciprocity — each needed the other. In other words, if the *ihongo* did not take care of the living then there would be no one to

⁶⁴Ancestral spirit. Doke *et. al.* define *idlozi* as a “departed spirit (so called before it has gained entrance into the body of the amathongo, ancestral spirits, by the *ukubuyisa* ceremony).” C. Doke, D. Malcolm, J. Sikakana and B. Vilakazi, *Zulu-English Dictionary* (Johannesburg, 1990), 161.

⁶⁵Shooter, *The Kafirs of Natal and the Zulu Country*, 159-61, 165.

⁶⁶Callaway, *The Religious System of the AmaZulu*, 140-1.

⁶⁷Bleek, *Zulu Legends*, 36.

take care of the *ithongo*.⁶⁸ The relationship between the living and those that they praised may not always have been harmonious. Callaway says that an *ithongo* could be troublesome. If this was causing a person to be ill an *inyanga* was called to 'lay' such a troublesome *ithongo* with the aid of certain medicines. Sometimes the *amathongo* (pl.) revealed knowledge of certain medicines through dreams.⁶⁹ According to William Charles Willoughby (1928) "Bantu ancestor-spirits, ... are malignant when exasperated by the neglect or disobedience of their descendants, but helpful and protective while honoured and obeyed."⁷⁰ Ancestral shades retained the same *character* as they possessed when alive so they were not necessarily always kind, helpful and friendly. They also preserved the same *status* in death as in life.⁷¹ Thus, any conflict relationships which existed prior to death could continue as they had existed during the life of the deceased family member.⁷² Callaway's informant said there were wicked *ithongo* and cited Undhlebekazizwa as an example of a dreaded tyrant. Many were glad at his death. Therefore, his name was only mentioned when cattle were killed, but at no other time as he might destroy things as he did in life.⁷³

The ancestral shades would respond to offences which breached the law and moral code. Just as the chief has a protective duty, the shades of chiefs in particular were important guardians, being responsible for fertility and general well being of the group. The most important ancestors were those of the paramount and the most important of the ancestors for the group were approached by the him. What the early missionaries did not fully appreciate was that ancestors (*idlozi* or *ithongo*) were the key to the Zulu belief system, and therefore, intimately involved with social, economic and political

⁶⁸Callaway, *The Religious System of the AmaZulu*, 144-5.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 161-3.

⁷⁰Willoughby, *The Soul of the Bantu*, 87.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, 78, 429-30.

⁷²Callaway, *The Religious System of the AmaZulu*, 146-53.

⁷³*Ibid.*, 165-8.

life. As Bleek pointed out, the ancestors were “rulers of their descendants’ destinies.”⁷⁴ To gain ascendancy over others in the political world required ascendancy in the ‘spiritual’ world. Given the importance of ancestors, it would have been impossible to have one without the other.

Expressing the importance of correct observations and behaviour, some twentieth-century Zulu informants have been recorded as claiming that it was the failure to observe those procedures that precipitated the decline of the Zulu ‘nation’:

some old people claim that one of the reasons for the downfall of the Zulu military power was due to the decline and subsequent total ceasing of the slaughtering of *zinkomo zemzimu*. “These cattle from the enclosures of our kings was the greatest sign of communion between them and us. So when we on our side did not give them their food and they did not find their food at their places (the royal burial places), then they forgot us. that is why the whites killed (i.e. conquered) us totally.”⁷⁵

It was consequently inherently improbable that Shaka’s power was ever absolute — nor could it have been based solely on tyranny or terror. Moreover, to endure it required legitimacy — the authority or legitimisation of the ancestral shades within recognised ideological structures. There is little evidence to suggest that Shaka instituted ‘reforms’ that were not in keeping with accepted ideological forms. There is no evidence that Shaka’s name was avoided as in the case of Undhlebekazizwa (the dreaded tyrant cited above). Shaka was praised which implicitly negates the notion that he or his shade were considered seriously wicked by the surviving community. Stuart’s informant Mtshapi recounted that:

small lots of cattle are sent to various *amakanda*, which of course are known to belong to this or that king, e.g. the Dukuza ikanda would receive a lot of cattle with which Tshaka alone would be sacrificed to and praised by those associated with that *kanda*, and so to Mlambongwenya - this kraal was that of Mpande’s own people (*wa kwabo*), hence the lot of cattle sent there would be to praise Senzangakona and Mpande.⁷⁶

Ancestors had very strong socio-political importance. It is because of the key position that the ancestors held, that some explanation must be given of their role in religion,

⁷⁴Bleek, *Zulu Legends*, 36.

⁷⁵Berglund, *Zulu Thought-Patterns and Symbolism*, 209.

⁷⁶Mtshapi ka Noradu in *James Stuart Archives*, 4: 76.

ideology and politics of the Zulu state. From this base, further examinations can then be made. The first problem that arises is that the concept of Zulu identity and of a Zulu 'nation' was in its infancy during the Shakan period and thus the notion of 'Zulu' as a complete social unit did not exist. Accepting that variations existed in political organisation and ethnic identity within the Zulu state as argued by Wright and Hamilton⁷⁷, and accepting that changes in economic relations took place, then it is likely that variations existed within 'Zulu religion' before the state came into existence and that changes occurred with the consolidation of the Zulu state under Shaka.

Seventeenth century shipwreck accounts testify to the presence of lineage-based societies in pre-state Natal. ⁷⁸ In these pre-Zulu societies "the oldest man governs the rest, for all that live together are of kin, and therefore they submit to his government."⁷⁹ If we look to other groups for comparison we find that the missionary, Eugène Casalis, reported in 1861 that Sotho families acknowledged their own ancestors, but the 'tribe' as a whole acknowledged the ancestors of their leader in 'national' context. ⁸⁰ It is reasonable to expect similar practices among those who made up the Zulu. It is significant for the purposes of this thesis that, as Callaway tells us, the Zulu did not 'worship' *all* their ancestors. Primarily, they honoured the household head, but they also honoured the *amathongo* of their lineage chief. ⁸¹ The groups incorporated or subjugated into the Zulu state would have owed a previous allegiance to their own chiefly ancestral shades. While recognising that religious institutions are generally

⁷⁷J. Wright and C. Hamilton, 'Traditions and transformations: The Phongolo-Mzimkhulu Region in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries', in A. Duminy and B. Guest (eds.), *Natal and Zululand from Earliest Times to 1910*, (Pietermaritzburg, 1989), 49-82.

⁷⁸Bird, *The Annals of Natal*, 1: 59.

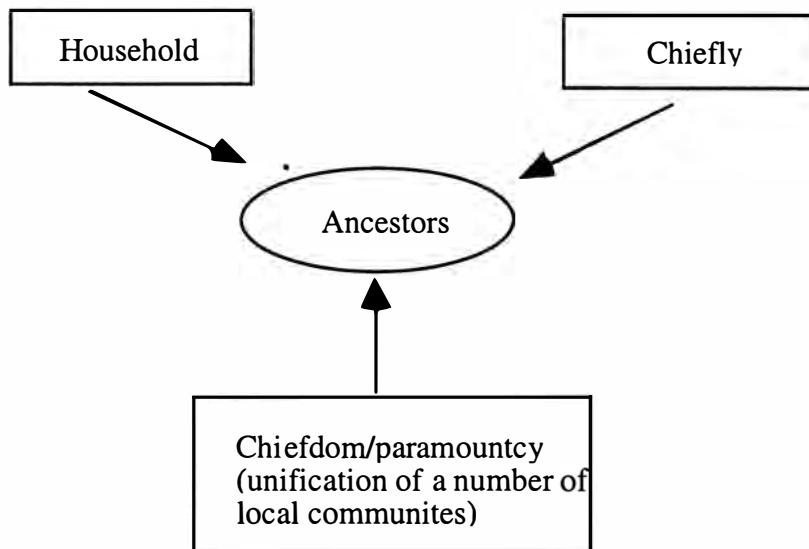
⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 59.

⁸⁰E. Casalis, *The Basutos; or Twenty-Three Years in South Africa* (First published 1861; reprinted Cape Town, 1965), 248.

⁸¹Callaway, *The Religious System of the AmaZulu*, 144-5.

resistant to change, this does not mean that there was no change. The multiplicity of relevant ancestors is represented in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Relevant ancestors



With the emergence of the Zulu state, the ancestor-honouring structures are highly likely to have changed to reflect the new authority. What happened when a paramount chief assumed control over a group of other paramounts, instituted changes to established chiefships, and concentrated power in a single family as in the case of the Zulu kingdom? Whose ancestors would become dominant and how would this be achieved? In the newly emerging Zulu state, incorporated people were required to give spiritual as well as political allegiance to a 'foreign' king. Yet ancestral connections to that chief and his *uNkulunkulu* were not direct and could not necessarily be traced. This must have had implications for the honouring of ancestors and ritual celebrations, and for legitimacy and authority. It was likely to have created tensions. This thesis attempts to examine such questions in later chapters.

Many observers noted the simultaneous existence of private and ‘tribal ancestor worship’.⁸² In the ‘tribal sphere’, “the spirits of chiefs of renown who have been dead for many generations are often thought more powerful than the spirits of those who succeed them in the chieftainship.”⁸³ In the private sphere a diviner was sometimes required to communicate with ancestors, but not always. It is difficult to specify all the changes which may have occurred in the private and public domains among the groups that made up the Zulu state, but it is highly likely that changes took place and that some ‘chiefly’ and some private ceremonies may have been ‘nationalised’ or centralised.

The issue of ancestors must also have been important in terms of ‘traditional’ territories and movements of people. We know that certain places such as the burial sites of Zulu kings were sacred (see Chapter Seven on royal women which details this). Willoughby produced evidence in the early twentieth-century to indicate that when a group held a territory for a significant time, their chiefly ancestors were believed to retain an interest and influence long after the people had been subjugated by another ruler. Because the new ruler had no standing with the conquered groups’ chiefly ancestors, the new ruler needed to go through the senior living descendant of that group if the influence or patronage of these ancestors was needed. “It is not uncommon, therefore, for a paramount chief to request one of his serfs to invoke the spiritual patronage of a dynasty that he or his forbears have shorn of its temporal powers and possessions.”⁸⁴ So, what of the spirits of chiefs who submitted to Shaka unwillingly; and what of those who were installed by Shaka; and what of those who moved territory? This would have created a number of problems for Shaka.

I have tried to argue that the key to understanding the Zulu religious social and political system is understanding the role of ancestors. Their power was independent because

⁸²Willoughby, *The Soul of the Bantu*, 6. Shaw, *The Story of my Mission Among the Native Tribes of South Eastern Africa*, 196, 197.

⁸³Willoughby, *The Soul of the Bantu*, 6.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 81-2.

they were seen to be able to have a significant affect on the real world of the people. That power could manifest itself through misfortune, illness, prosperity or natural phenomena. It was not a power ascribed to them by the dictates of a ruler or one that could be removed at will. Communication with them was important whoever held supreme power in the earthly political arena. Many Zulu religious activities involved communication with the ancestors including, dreaming, divination and rain making. It is therefore necessary to look at those people with the authority to engage in such communications.

***Inyanga* (pl. *izinyanga*): Diviners and doctors**

The diviners were vitally important religious practitioners. Much has been written on diviners in Zulu society. Many such accounts portray them as mysterious and treat them with scepticism. Missionaries often dismissed diviners as charlatans and believed that the practice had to be stamped out at all costs for the benefit of all. As the various accounts of the story of Shaka and the diviners in Chapter Three showed, diviners have been predominantly portrayed as frauds by outside observers.

A wide array of terms refer to diviners: some much more precise than others. Diviners are sometimes referred to as priests or wise men. Bryant and Callaway wrote of diviners as masculine, but Fynn and Shaw maintained that diviners could be male or female.⁸⁵ Writing of the Xhosa, Stephen Kay described diviners in the feminine form as sorceresses and “fabricators of falsehood, actuated by the hope of gain, and manifestly engaged in the work of the devil”.⁸⁶ Other European terms such as ‘witchdoctor’ devalue the work that diviners and ‘doctors’ perform. Some authors employ Zulu terminology, but even then the exact meaning is not always clear (see below). Zulu terms for diviners and medical practitioners include *isangoma*, *isanusi*, *inyanga* and *ibuda*. Callaway pointed out that *umungoma* is a term of respect, but *ibuda*

⁸⁵H. Fynn, *Diary of Henry Francis Fynn*, (eds.) J. Stuart and D. McK. Malcolm (Pietermaritzburg, 1969), 274-7. Shaw *The Story of my Mission Among the Native Tribes of South Eastern Africa*, 191-2.

⁸⁶S. Kay, *Travels and Researches in Caffraria* (London, 1833), 171.

(*ibhuda*) was often an expression of contempt. Callaway and Fynn maintained that *inyanga* referred to an individual who possessed a particular great skill or knowledge above that of the average person and might be applied to a range of skills, including iron smelting, craftsmanship, medicine or divination. An *inyanga yokubhula* was a person skilled in divining.⁸⁷ According to Fynn, the person Europeans identified most commonly as a ‘witch-doctor’ was an ‘*Isanusi*’: someone “gifted with an extraordinary power of discernment, but [who] also has an intercourse with the spiritual world” applying to his own ancestors for guidance.⁸⁸ Bryant pointed out the important distinction between *izinyanga* who treat and *izinyanga* who divine.⁸⁹

Expanding on the categories even further, Callaway delineated four classes of diviners: thumb-doctors, those who had eaten *impepo*, (a small plant used as medicine which diviners dry and wear in plaits around their neck⁹⁰) those ones who used bones or sticks to divine, and diviners who had familiar spirits. Callaway thought that the last category might have been a modern development.⁹¹ Callaway’s categorisations indicate stratification among diviners. Some were held in higher regard than others. The thumb doctors, called *Amabuda*, were not well respected and the people had little confidence in them. Those who used bones or sticks to divine were perceived as much more credible.⁹² Diviners who possessed *impepo* ranked highest. Stuart’s informant

⁸⁷Callaway, *The Religious System of the AmaZulu*, 280-1. Bird, *The Annals of Natal*, 1: 107-8.

⁸⁸Bird, *The Annals of Natal*, 1: 107-8.

⁸⁹A. Bryant, *Zulu Medicine and Medicine-men* (Cape Town, 1966), 13.

⁹⁰Ndukwana, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 321. Zulu women also used it as a scent.

⁹¹Callaway, *The Religious System of the AmaZulu*, 327.

⁹²H. Callaway ‘On Divination and Analogous Phenomena Among the Natives of Natal’, paper presented to Anthropological Institute, (May 15 1871), 177, 178. Grey Collection (G. 9d 5). Thumb-doctors proceeds with the assistance of participants who strike the ground, for example, and point to the doctor using their thumb when the doctor is correct. Callaway, *The Religious System of the AmaZulu*, 327.

Ndukwana reported that, if a diviner was recognised as being good he was said to “have eaten impepo.”⁹³ Though he was a practising missionary, Callaway wrote that:

we may suppose that these diviners are persons who possess some natural clairvoyant and prophetic power. We have now seen enough to render this supposition not only quite possible, but probable. They hold the same position among the natives as prophets and seers and oracles among other people. And as in those other cases we find a great deal of mistake mixed with a little truth, so among the Zulu diviners a thorough sifting may find a few grains of real wheat in the midst of much chaff. But it appears to me one of the most unwise things to pooh-pooh it as a system of mere imposture and deceit practised by intelligent men on the credulity of the ignorant.⁹⁴

A distinct subgroup of *inyanga* were the ‘war doctors’ who pounded and stirred up *izintelezi* medicines, called on the ancestors of the king, and treated the army by sprinkling them with the substance.⁹⁵ This would aid them in battle.⁹⁶

Callaway made a clear demarcation between those who divine and those who treat. In the case of illness, the diviner would direct the client to a particular doctor who they knew could successfully treat the particular disease.⁹⁷ Bryant believed there was still some overlap.⁹⁸ Often in the literature the distinctions are not made; all *inyanga*, *isangoma* and *isanusi* are lumped together and it is sometimes difficult to determine whether it is diviners or persons with other specialised skill that are being referred to. For the purposes of consistency in this thesis, the terms ‘diviner’ and ‘doctor of

⁹³Ndukwana, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 321

⁹⁴Callaway, ‘On Divination and Analogous Phenomena Among the Natives of Natal’, 179.

⁹⁵Krige defines *izintelezi* as “a generic name for all medicinal charms, the object of which is to counteract evil by rendering its causes innocuous, as when the poison of an *umthakathi* or flashes of lightning are rendered harmless by the doctor.” E. Krige, *The Social System of the Zulus*, (First published, 1936; reprinted Pietermaritzburg, 1965), 329.

⁹⁶Fynn, *Diary of Henry Francis Fynn*, 282. Ndukwana, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 332. KCAL Stuart Papers, File 2, ‘The Zulu War Doctor (2a). Mmemi ka Nguluzane in *James Stuart Archives*, 3 (Pietermaritzburg, 1982), 264. *Izintelezi* medicines were also used to ‘catch’ *umthakathi*. Mkando ka Dhlova in *James Stuart Archives*, 3: 181.

⁹⁷Callaway, *The Religious System of the AmaZulu*, 281-2.

⁹⁸Bryant, *Zulu Medicine and Medicine-men*, 11.

medicines', war doctor, or rainmaker will be used. Although it is acknowledged that the use of the Zulu terms would be more desirable, it is not always feasible given the vague terminology employed in many sources.

Zulu divination was a method of acquiring information through case-by-case inquiry, often addressed to the ancestors, about particular matters. It usually aimed at obtaining guidance and interpreting the meaning of events. It was used in reaching decisions, making predictions, and identifying someone or something which caused disharmony. Signs or symptoms showed that something was amiss. Diviners' initiation, position and role distinguished them from the general population, and they had the 'authority' to interact and communicate with the ancestors.⁹⁹

Fynn, Callaway and Shaw describe complex processes of initiation for diviners. These generally began when an otherwise healthy individual became ill.¹⁰⁰ The process was sanctioned by the community which both separated such persons from the community at large and raised them to a higher status. These persons then went through a series of physical and mental experiences. Their appetites diminished, particular foods were avoided, they had constant dreams, became delirious, and developed persistent pain throughout the body. Diviners determined that such persons were developing a 'soft head', a condition ascribed to diviners. Eventually it was concluded that they had been possessed by the *ithongo* or ancestors. Yawning, sneezing and a preference for snuff were other signs that indicated persons were going to be diviners. They became ill and thin, had convulsions, wept, sang and slept little.

The ancestors instructed them in dreams to go to certain diviners. "He is then quiet for a few days, having gone to the inyanga to have ubulawo churned for him; and he comes

⁹⁹Shaw, *The Story of my Mission Among the Native Tribes of South Eastern Africa*, 191-2. T. Jenkinson, *AmaZulu* (London, 1882), 26-7.

¹⁰⁰Fynn, *Diary of Henry Francis Fynn*, 274-7. Callaway, *The Religious System of the AmaZulu*, 259-65.

back quite another man, being now cleansed and an inyanga indeed.”¹⁰¹ Sometimes they must fetch *impepo*.¹⁰² Fynn observed that there did not seem to be any choice in the matter. A person was chosen by the ancestral shades as “the future agent between the spiritual and material world.”¹⁰³ The sickness was caused by those person’s ancestors who intended that they should become diviners.¹⁰⁴

Diviners performed many religious functions, had specialised knowledge and were credited with access to the power to restore harmony and to heal. Although individuals may have dreamed of ancestors, in the case of illness, it was essential to have a diviner confirm the cause and the remedy — for example the slaughtering of a bullock.¹⁰⁵

Canon Thomas Jenkinson (who succeeded Callaway as head of the Anglican mission, Springvale) described diviners as ‘appointed teachers’ and likened them to an ‘ancient priesthood’. They also acted as detectives by exposing offenders, discovering causes of sickness and directing people to the appropriate doctor of medicine. They pointed out any neglect of rituals that might have disturbed the social balance, detected witches, wizards and those who administered poisons (see section below on witchcraft).¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹Callaway, *The Religious System of the AmaZulu*, 265.

¹⁰²Callaway, *The Religious System of the AmaZulu*, 272. “The *impepo* is used when sickness has frequently visited a kraal and after the *inyanga*, having been consulted, directs a sacrifice (viz. that the *amadhlozi* want food).” Mkando in *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 171.

¹⁰³Bird, *The Annals of Natal*, 1: 108.

¹⁰⁴Fynn, *Diary of Henry Francis Fynn*, 274-7.

¹⁰⁵H. Callaway, *The Religious System of the AmaZulu*, 171-3

¹⁰⁶Jenkinson, *AmaZulu*, 26-7. Willoughby explains that “it is often necessary to consult a diviner for the discovery of the spirit’s wishes, or sometimes before one can be sure of its identity; but diviners are more frequently consulted when divine guidance is desired but not forthcoming. The diviner discovers what spirit is displeased, or what sacrifice is demanded, or, rarely, where the sacrifice is to be offered, or, much more frequently, what the result of a contemplated transaction or journey will be, what thief has been stealing one’s property, what neighbour has been ill-wishing one’s dependants, what direction one must take to find stray animals, and a variety of similar matters.” Willoughby, *The Soul of the Bantu*, 136.

Diviners played an important and complex role in society that encompassed religious, and judicial elements. As Stuart's informant, Ndukwana, explained, diviners were often involved in the settlement of disputes between men of high standing in the community.¹⁰⁷ Another informant, Mtshapi, told of Mpande calling on the diviners to settle a dispute between two sons of a chief.¹⁰⁸ Bryant contended that they held status and power over life and death that equalled the king's, though such power was "hidden and mysterious".¹⁰⁹

It would seem that doctors of medicine were not 'called' in the same way as diviners and were of a lower status. When describing the stratification among the doctors, Shaw noted the existence of "a class of native medicos who are not supposed to be endowed with the higher faculties of predicting coming events, witch-finding, and rain-making."

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The proper practitioners, or, as they may be denominated, the native Priests of the higher grade, are initiated into their office by a peculiar process, called *ukutwasa*; and very disagreeable consequences, probably even forfeiture of life itself, would follow an usurpation of this office without a previous induction into the priesthood by the authorized method....[*ukutwasa* is] probably intended to intimate that the individual undergoes a new birth, or new creation, by which he is elevated to a higher state than others, and in virtue of which he is qualified to hold intercourse with the *imishologu*, or spirits of the departed.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷Ndukwana says: "In the event of two persons of high standing having a quarrel, or where it might be necessary to call in diviners to *bula* in respect to some great man, a large gathering of persons was called together to deal with the matter. To such inquiries Ndukwana sometimes went. The quarrel would at first be inquired into and, it might be decided, if no satisfactory decision could be come to, to hold a *bulaing* session (*umhlahlo*) to settle the matter. The gathering met together would then disperse to reassemble say some three or four days later, when the necessary *izangoma* or *izanusu* had been summoned. The *izinnyanga* [sic] would have to *bula* at the head kraal where the inquiry was being held. An *umhlahlo* of this kind would be known by the name of *ingoboco*." Ndukwana, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 319.

¹⁰⁸Mtshapi in *James Stuart Archives*, 4: 64.

¹⁰⁹Bryant, *Zulu Medicine and Medicine-men*, 10.

¹¹⁰Shaw, *The Story of my Mission Among the Native Tribes of South Eastern Africa*, 191-2.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, 191-2.

Bryant added the observation that being a ‘medicine-man’ (doctor of medicine) was a simple matter of choice. It was generally a hereditary profession which a son was taught over a long period, acting as assistant until his father died.¹¹² Fynn believed that a son or daughter could not become a doctor of medicine, and only a grandchild could assume the practice.¹¹³ In 1852 (by which time he had progressed from trader to magistrate in Pietermaritzburg) Fynn claimed that the knowledge of the various doctors of medicines could be obtained by others — even bought. He also pointed out that knowledge of the medicinal aspects of certain plants was not confined to the doctors of medicine.

A knowledge of the virtues of particular plants, when possessed by private families, is considered their heirloom. Hence, on a native being attacked by disease, he obtains the opinion of a native doctor as to the nature of his complaint, and is recommended to apply to a family which possesses the knowledge of the appropriate remedy — for fever, dropsy, rheumatism, or whatever the complaint may be. But the doctors frequently purchase a knowledge of such remedies for their own practice.¹¹⁴

In Richard Adams’ terms of power, diviners (and possibly to a lesser extent doctors of medicine) possessed independent power — “a quality ascribed to people, and often also to things, that concerns their relative abilities to cope with the real world or their potential effect on it.”¹¹⁵ However, their independent power was bound to the spiritual realm; they could seldom simply do as they wished without the ancestors, and certain materials.

Fynn’s evidence to the ‘Native Commission’ in 1852 indicates that diviners were a distinct class separate from the community, part of the hierarchy of spiritual authority,

¹¹²Bryant, *Zulu Medicine and Medicine-men*, 10.

¹¹³Fynn, *Diary of Henry Francis Fynn*, 280.

¹¹⁴Bird, *The Annals of Natal*, 1: 106.

¹¹⁵R. Adams, ‘Power in Human Societies: A Synthesis’, in R. Fogelson and R. Adams, (eds.), *The Anthropology of Power* (New York, 1977), 388-9. Adams describes the concept of power as “the ability of a person or social unit to influence the conduct and decision-making of another through the control over energetic forms in the latter’s environment (in the broadest sense of that term)”, 388. Adams differentiates between independent and dependent power relations. Dependent power is granted, allocated or delegated.

held in high regard in their religious and judicial capacity, and respected for their capacity to restore harmony and balance. ¹¹⁶ Fynn observed that Europeans would have great difficulty in breaking down the power of the diviners over the community. Attempts to do so would produce more problems than they would solve. ¹¹⁷ In particular he pointed out that:

The Isanusi ... is also the great lever by which the chief exercises power.... no chief who exercises power only by the principles of justice could control a Kafir nation.... The Isanusi are regarded with feelings of fear and awe. These feelings arise from the belief that the Isanusi have frequent intercourse with departed spirits - that they can employ powerful agencies to accomplish their purposes, and possess and extraordinary degree of penetration in the detection of evil-doers, while it is well known that those whom they declare to be criminals are certain to be summarily and severely punished.¹¹⁸

Thus far, attempts by the colonial government and missionaries to remove the influence of the diviners had been unsuccessful. Practices unacceptable to colonial law had been driven 'underground'. This, Fynn said, had caused additional problems because European influence had impaired the chief's 'control' and caused discipline problems without devising a suitably influential system to replace it — both in terms of internal control and control of the 'natives' by the minority Europeans. ¹¹⁹

A theme of the story of Shaka and the diviners is that in Shaka's time there were few diviners; but that in contemporary times there were many. ¹²⁰ A missionary among the Zulu wrote in 1879 that:

The natives say that in former times these doctors belonged to a distinct class, the power of divination descending from one generation to the next; and that in those times they were exclusively and essentially umtagati - 'smellers;' but that the mystery they professed has now become common property, and anyone, without distinction of class, may now become a Sanunse. With the decay of the dignity and exclusiveness of the profession, we are told that the Zanunse lost much of their supernatural knowledge and power — and hence the frequent mistakes and failures of the doctors at the present day. Certain it is that the natives

¹¹⁶Bird, *The Annals of Natal*, 1: 109-10.

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*, 110, 111.

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*, 109-10.

¹¹⁹Bird, *The Annals of Natal*, 1: 110-11.

¹²⁰Ndukwana, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 317.

calling themselves ‘Witch Doctors’ are numerous enough at present — though few are celebrated for skill or proficiency.¹²¹

But why would it be that there were few in ‘olden times’? It would stand to reason that each group that became part of the Zulu state would bring with them diviners and doctors and that the number of ‘Zulu’ diviners would *increase*. And what of the diviners from other groups? Was it because, as the story of Shaka and the diviners says, Shaka got rid of them? Before attempting to address these issues it is necessary to deal with longstanding misunderstandings.

Diviners are sometimes termed in the literature as wizards or *abathakathi*.¹²² Such terms are most frequently interpreted and translated to mean evil purpose. This is in stark contrast to the diviner as the restorer of harmony highlighted above who ‘smells out’ the *umthakathi* or evil doer. Fynn highlighted the European misunderstanding of the word “Tagata”, pointing out that there was no correlation with the European concept of witchcraft. According to Fynn, “There is probably no subject of greater difficulty connected with the customs of these tribes, or one which requires to be settled with greater delicacy and discrimination than this.”¹²³

“Tagata” refers to crime and “Umtagati” to the person committing the crime. Petty criminals are referred to as “Ishingan”, which according to Fynn means “a rascal”.¹²⁴ *Umthakathi*, therefore, is vastly different to *inyanga*, *isanusi* or diviner. Poisoning — a criminal act — is therefore attributed to *abathakathi*, or criminals. According to a nineteenth-century missionary, when a person claimed that someone had been killed by “*tagatiwe*,” or witchcraft, they usually simply meant that the person had been

¹²¹Anon, ‘Zulu Customs’, Zulu *Izanga* by a Zulu missionary, (Reprinted from the Natal Colonist Newspaper, 11 Nov, 1879), 12.

¹²²*Ibid.*, 12.

¹²³Bird, *The Annals of Natal*, 1: 107.

¹²⁴*Ibid.*, 107.

poisoned.¹²⁵ Explaining the concept of *umthakathi* Joseph Shooter said that:

The term “witchcraft” has been applied by Europeans to a class of native crimes, partly real and partly imaginary. *Um-takati*, the word usually translated witch or wizard, signifies an evildoer, though perhaps limited in use to malefactors of the greatest criminality. It expresses, for instance, a murderer, and adulterer, and (as we have seen) one who violates the rules of consanguinity. It is also used to designate an individual who is doing, or supposed to be doing, secret injury to another. In effecting this hidden mischief, the “evildoer” is supposed to employ medicine[to], injure the health, destroy life, cause cows to become dry, prevent rain, occasion lightning....¹²⁶

Despite this distinction, Walter argues that “the *umthakathi* is one of the most important links between magic and power.”¹²⁷ Walter further believes that through terror Shaka could guard himself against sorcery, and by controlling the major magical activities of the practitioners Shaka’s power would remain unchallenged.¹²⁸ This then is the basis for Walter’s account of the story of Shaka and the diviners. Walter based many of his arguments on Eileen Krige’s *The Social System of the Zulus*, first published in 1936. But scholars should be aware that there are problems with Krige’s work. What could be described at best as poor referencing and sloppy work, or at worst as plagiarism, emerged during the present research into the concept of witchcraft.¹²⁹ What may seem

¹²⁵Anon, ‘Zulu Customs’, 13.

¹²⁶Shooter, *The Kafirs of Natal and the Zulu Country*, 141.

¹²⁷E. Walter, *Terror and Resistance* (New York, 1969), 156.

¹²⁸*Ibid.*, 157-162.

¹²⁹*Ibid.*, 157. Walter referred to Krige, *The Social System of the Zulus*, 321. Krige in turn acknowledged Shooter regarding *umthakathi*. In the footnote she says, “the term *umthakathi*, according to Shooter, is also used to express a murderer, an adulterer, or one who violates the rules of consanguinity (*The Kafirs of Natal*, 141).” Krige has misspelled the title of Shooter’s book, though a much more serious point is that apart from excluding Shooter’s parenthesis, Krige has almost used Shooter’s exact words. Shooter, *The Kafirs of Natal and the Zulu Country*, 141. Other researchers studying the Zulu may wish to take up the challenge and carefully review *The Social System of the Zulus*. On page 227 Krige has also referenced the wrong source in a direct quotation. She writes: “Indeed, it is said that “a great deal of smelling out and killing in consequence thereof was done long before the king knew about it, by powerful chiefs.” Krige’s source for this quotation is L. Samuelson *Zululand, Its Traditions, Legends, Customs and Folklore* (First published, 1911: reprinted Durban, 1974), 155. However, I can find no such statement on

pedantic is important in a scholarly work used as often as Krige's. Tracing back the source is revealing. Krige claims that:

If, in a case of "smelling out," the majority of people were dissatisfied with the decision of the doctor, the case was taken to the king, for all cases of witchcraft did not go to the king in the first instance.¹³⁰

Krige's source for this is Levine Samuelson's, *Zululand, its Traditions, Legends, Customs and Folklore*. In fact, this is not what Levine Samuelson claimed on page 155.

Rather, she wrote that:

The office of Detector of Wizards was held by the Chief Izanusi. He was the one chosen by the king to decide abatakati (wizard) cases.... He heard only the most complicated cases in which the majority of people were dissatisfied with the inferior Zanusi's (detector of wizards) decision.¹³¹

What Levine Samuelson suggests is that like many other aspects of Zulu society, *the diviners and their roles were stratified*. They constituted an important element in the hierarchical structure of the early state and the principal judge in the case of criminal activity was appointed by the king.

Given the centrality of diviners in spiritual life, why would Shaka get rid of them? Could his test have been connected to stratification in Shaka times as Levine Samuelson notes above? It is likely that there were a number of factors at work. Was there any link to the use and possession of medicines by diviners and doctors? Medicines were used among the Zulu for many purposes besides restoring poor health. They could be used for either healing or harm (as in war medicine). Sometimes a medicine could do either.¹³² Certain materials or medicines (*umuthi*) contained great power. Some were used in ritual—to protect or restore balance.¹³³ Not only were the substances themselves important, so were the symbols (materials) which were attached to the

that page by L. H. Samuelson. The quote actually comes from R. Samuelson, *Long, Long Ago* (Durban, 1929), 393. She has used a large part of a sentence directly from R.C.A. Samuelson.

¹³⁰Krige, *The Social System of the Zulus*, 227.

¹³¹Samuelson, *Zululand, Its Traditions, Legends, Customs and Folklore*, 155.

¹³²H. Ngubane, *Body and Mind in Zulu Medicine* (London, 1977), 22.

¹³³Ngubane, *Body and Mind in Zulu Medicine*, 132.

medicine and were part of the treatment; the symbols could be as important as the medicine itself. ¹³⁴ The application of medicines to cattle to protect them from disease was also marked by a range of rituals. ¹³⁵ The discussion of the role of medicines is expanded in Chapter Five.

Medicines form another component of Adams concept of independent power because of their perceived ability to have an effect on the real world order. ¹³⁶ Ancestors had the independent power and wisdom to affect the lives of the living. Medicines, associated with ritual, assisted in attaining favourable outcomes. The power of divination and treatment cannot be fully understood without reference to medicines and ritual.

Conclusion

Praising ancestors was much more complex than simply the honouring of deceased family. The ancestors were central to daily existence, especially in crucial times of uncertainty. Once linked with the multiplicity of *uNkulunkulu* the issue of the question of dominant ancestors becomes much more important. It is likely that there were different categories of significant ancestors for an individual; the household or family; the chiefly ancestors at the 'tribal' level; and paramount chiefly ancestors. Which ones were invoked and by who would have depended on the misfortune involved. In the case of local issues the 'commoner' shades would have been approached "usually after obtaining the advice of izangoma or diviners, because it was believed they were the cause of the trouble, and that, on being propitiated, they would relent, thereby allowing

¹³⁴Berglund points to the difficulty in obtaining some substances which were symbols of lightning. It is likely that some difficulty in obtaining substances may have also occurred in the early nineteenth century. Berglund, *Zulu Thought-Patterns and Symbolism*, 351.

¹³⁵Bryant mentions various cattle diseases and notes that the people had "fair working knowledge how to deal with them." Bryant, *The Zulu People as They Were Before the White Man Came* (Pietermaritzburg, 1949), 336. Delegorgue mentions the problems of ticks during his travels. A. Delegorgue, *Travels in Southern Africa*, 1, (trans). F. Webb, (First published, 1847: reprinted Pietermaritzburg, 1990), 52-3.

¹³⁶Adams, 'Power in Human Societies: A Synthesis', 388-9.

the laws of nature to bring about their customary beneficent results.”¹³⁷ However, in the case of misfortune that affected the entire group such as drought, famine or war the ancestors of the chief would have taken precedence. Just as chiefs had a protective duty, their ancestors would have been important guardians, responsible for fertility and general well being of the group. A leader could not have retained his position without being seen to be sanctioned by the ancestors and thus have legitimacy.

The attainment of Zulu political ascendancy which has so often been viewed in purely secular terms thus had a critical religious dimension because the various groups which were incorporated or subjugated into the Zulu state (some of which had been undergoing their own state development) would have owed previous allegiance to their own chiefly and lineage ancestral shades and thus had their own *uNkulunkulu*. The next question is what implication did this hold for the position of the Zulu king’s ancestors. The interpretation of *uNkulunkulu* as God, or of the Zulu kings as gods has undermined the importance of ancestors and their role in the ideology of the Zulu state which is why Callaway’s clarifications are crucial.

Establishing dominance would have entailed making the Zulu ancestors relevant for consolidation, legitimacy and dissemination of state ideology. This was a relationship or perception that was required to cement the legitimacy of the new regime and so new ideological forms had to emerge. This brings us back to the ancestors and the issue of who had the authority to communicate with them, because new ideological forms had to develop from the old ideological forms. Diviners were among those with the independent power necessary to communicate with ancestors and had an important and complex role in society that included religious, and judicial elements. Diviners may have had power, but they were not a power unto themselves. They were central to the religious ideology of the Zulu, but they worked in conjunction with the ancestors, and certain materials — two other sources of independent power. Returning to the theme of the story of Shaka and the diviners, it would not have helped the consolidation of

¹³⁷KCAL Stuart Papers, File 2, ‘Rain-making and Lightning’, 10-12.

monarchical power to denounce most diviners as frauds. It would have cut off access to ancestors —and probably would have failed. But there was the potential for conflict with the ideological aspirations of the king as he sought to alter old ideological structures, because each incorporated group had its own diviners and doctors of medicine with powerful medicines — especially relating to war and rainmaking — and they could have engaged in open communication with possibly rival ancestors. These three components of access, knowledge and control of powerful medicines would thus have been very important. Stories concerning struggles with diviners cannot be explained in isolation from these key issues.

Diviners were not the only group who communicated with ancestors. All versions of the story of Shaka and the diviners suggest some sort of engagement by rulers in religion. Suppose we turn the story of Shaka and the diviners on its head and refuse to follow the line of missionaries, colonial officials and novelists who see a sceptical king anxious to discredit divination and the spiritual world. Consider instead the possibility that Shaka's aim was to establish *his* credibility as an operator in the realm of ritual and religion.

CHAPTER 5

THE ROLE OF KINGS AND CHIEFS IN RITUAL AND RELIGION

This chapter will attempt to show that all early nineteenth-century chiefs and rulers were required to participate in the realm of unseen power. It will demonstrate that Shaka was not unique in this respect. The chapter will begin by examining chiefly practices elsewhere in Africa in relation to dreams, medicines or materials, and knowledge. The chapter will then attempt to historicize and conceptualise the role of supernatural practice in conflict and state building. It will argue that all the great political contests were accompanied by struggles for control of ritual power and medicines.

There is much evidence indicating that the ability to interact with significant ancestors, to officiate in rituals, to access and to use powerful medicines were not confined to diviners and doctors of medicine and that there was a broader link between other authority figures and religion. Combining the secular and the sacred roles in leadership in pre-colonial polities was not unusual. Examples from east, central, west, and southern Africa attest to close linkages between religion and politics.¹ The Bemba

¹P. Maylam, *A History of the African People of South Africa* (London, 1986), 28. H. Slater, 'Transitions in the Political Economy of South-East Africa', D.Phil. Thesis, (University of Sussex, 1976), 317. M. Gluckman, 'The Kingdom of the Zulu of South Africa' in M. Fortes and E. E. Evans-Prichard (eds.), *African Political Systems* (First published, 1940; reprinted London, 1970), 30-31. J. Peires, *The House of Phalo* (Berkeley, 1982), 31, 32, 38. M. Hunter, *Reaction to Conquest* (First published, 1936; reprinted London, 1961), 79-83, 270, 317, 352, 389-427. A. Richards, 'The Political System of the Bemba Tribe—North-Eastern Rhodesia', in M. Fortes and E. Evans-Prichard, *African Political Systems* (First published, 1940; reprinted London, 1970), 83-120. S. Redding, 'Government Witchcraft: Taxation, the Supernatural, and the Mpondo Revolt in the Transkei, South Africa 1955-1963', *African Affairs*, 95 (1996), 555-579. T. McCaskie, 'Empire State: Asante and the Historians', Review Article, *Journal of*

chiefs of Zambia, for example, all used their 'spiritual powers' for the good of the community and their ritual duties included caring for the sacred relics, economic rites and first fruits ceremonies as well as protecting the people from witchcraft.²

The interpenetration of ritual and politics is also evident in north-eastern South Africa during the 1810s and 1820s. Communication with ancestors to procure rain, protect the people from sorcery, prepare medicines, treat the army before battle and choose the day for harvest rituals were important aspects of the relationship which formerly obtained between chiefs and their departed ancestors. A chief's power was enhanced by the ability to call on the power of the ancestors, and to access powerful medicines. Shaka is purported to have exercised the religious and supernatural powers which other chiefs had exercised before him. This leads to questions concerning the enduring perception of Shaka as an absolute ruler whose power was based on military and economic factors. Shaka would have found it difficult to extend his power over people outside his immediate following without reference to religious beliefs and practices. His role in religion has been noted by some scholars, however, their inference is usually that it was something new — a militarised Shakan innovation connected to his pursuit of absolute power.³ The *James Stuart Archive* reveal a vastly different perception among Zulu people: that power was conceptualised in terms of 'invisible' religious factors prior to the formation of the Zulu state. These were key issues in consolidation. Shaka's engagement in the realm of religion extended far beyond the testing of diviners that is recounted in *The Story*.

African History, 33 (1992), 467-476. P. Skalník, 'Early States in the Voltaic Basin', in H.J.M. Claessen and P. Skalník (eds.), *The Early State*, (The Hague, 1978), 471.

²Richards, 'The Political System of the Bemba Tribe—North-Eastern Rhodesia', 104-6.

³"The rituals of these national ceremonies was similar to that of tribal ceremonies of pre-Shakan times, but Shaka militarised them and the men paraded for them in regiments." M. Gluckman, 'The Kingdom of the Zulu', in M. Fortes and E. Evans-Prichard (eds.), *African Political Systems* (First published, 1940; reprinted London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 31.

This chapter will question whether the notion of divine kingship can be applied to Shaka. I will also examine another popular theme: Shaka the necromancer. Medicines or materials were an important component of rituals and another source of independent power. For this reason medicines need further investigation in relation to state development. Important factors to consider include trade in such substances, rules governing access, and acquiring knowledge of the substances and their application. The chapter will then attempt to historicize and conceptualise the role of supernatural practice in conflict and state building.

Zulu Kings and religion

Many early writers concluded that Shaka's engagement in the religious realm resembled divine kingship.⁴ In the 1970s (citing the work of the anthropologist Max Gluckman), Henry Slater described changes in the Zulu political structure and power relationships as a result of transformation from a feudal mode to the emergence of a

⁴According to the missionary Lewis Grout who worked in Natal in the 1840s, Shaka was "praised and worshipped, ostensibly at least, by his soldiers and his subjects, as the tiger, the lion, the elephant, the huge mountain, the black prince, the Supreme mighty ruler, King of Kings, the Immortal only one." L. Grout, 'Report of the Commission ... to enquire into the past and present state of the Kafirs in the district of Natal, and to report upon their future government', *The Natal Government Gazette* (Pietermaritzburg, Jan 18: 1853) n.p.. In the 1890s, J. Voigt described Shaka's murderers as believing that they had "killed a god". J. Voigt, *Fifty Years of the History of the Republic in South Africa (1795-1845)* (First published, 1899; reprinted Cape Town, 1969), 200. In a lighter vein, A. T. Bryant called Shaka a "greedy and jealous god". A. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal* (London, 1929), 637. This perception was continued by anthropologists like William Willoughby (1928) who held that over time the king was assigned a god-like status. "Every Bantu chief whose status is not based on force or fraud is credited with divine power. His tribesmen look to him and his ancestors for fertility of fields and flocks; and in their eye he is more than a priest, or even a hierarch; he is a peer of the gods". W. Willoughby, *The Soul of the Bantu* (New York, 1928), 434.

system with a power holder at the top where “no longer was it an office of ‘paramount’ chief amongst many chiefs, but of something approaching divine kingship”.⁵ But divine kingship, as Cohen explains, “is a particular form of such generally enhanced supernatural status in which, as in ancient Egypt, the ruler qua ruler is a god in his own right.”⁶ Shaka did not have authority totally independent from the people or the ancestors. He was not considered a god or the reincarnation of a previous god-king, nor was he deified or worshipped. The prosperity and continuation of the Zulu ‘nation’ did not depend upon him; the state continued after his death.

Shaka did, however, have an important role in ritual and a vital relationship between religion and power did exist. Fynn mentions chiefs taking a central role in rituals before going to war by calling the assistance of the ancestors.⁷ In 1857, Joseph Shooter also drew attention to Shaka’s practice of divination. He pointed out that the distribution of booty and prosperity were not sufficient in themselves to maintain Shaka’s influence over the people. So, the king used two other methods “which operated with greater

⁵Slater, ‘Transitions in the Political Economy of South-East Africa’, 317. Max Gluckman noted the relationship between religion, ritual and power in ceremonies such as the first fruits festival, rain making, war magic and the *inkatha*. Gluckman argued that the Zulu king “performed religious ceremonies and magical acts on behalf of the nation....The king was approached with ceremonious salutations and titles of respect which, say the Zulu, increased his prestige. He was addressed as the nation. What tradition and history was common to all Zulu had to be told in the names of the Zulu kings and it was largely their common sentiment about the king and his predecessors which united all Zulu as members of the nation.” M. Gluckman. ‘The Kingdom of the Zulu of South Africa’, 30-1.

⁶R. Cohen, ‘State Origins: A Reappraisal’, in H.J.M. Claessen and P. Skalník (eds.), *The Early State* (The Hague, 1978), 64.

⁷H. Fynn, *The Diary of Henry Francis Fynn*, (eds.), J. Stuart, and D. McK Malcolm, (Pietermaritzburg, 1969), 217.

force, namely Superstition and Severity.”⁸ On the one hand Shooter held that having forgotten the one true God, the Zulu had degenerated to the point where they worshipped others (*uNkulunkulu* and ancestors). On the other hand, he believed that the chief’s authority depended to a large extent on the influence of the diviners. Shooter concluded that “Tshaka did not attempt to govern without that [diviners] support; but he contrived to unite the two offices in his own person, and persuade the people that he was himself inspired.”⁹ Shooter is saying that Shaka claimed to have the same access to the ancestors and secret knowledge that diviners had. This he believed to be a Shakan innovation, ignoring plentiful evidence that Shaka was simply exercising his normal religious role as a chief. Moreover, Shaka’s spiritual powers were not clearly distinguishable from those of other regional leaders such as the Ndwandwe chief, Zwide.

Mkando ka Dhlova (*b.* late 1820s) informed James Stuart in 1902 that messages, instructions or warnings could be sent from the ancestors through dreams.¹⁰ He recalled his own experience where his dead father warned him of an attack where axes and barbed assegais would be used against him. This was confirmed in a battle the next day. Ancestors also communicated with diviners, and were seen to communicate directly with chiefs through dreams. Ancestors were thought to use this medium to reveal certain knowledge, advise on breaches of the moral code as well as to express their pleasure or annoyance with actions of the people.

There were two components to this communication: the message itself, and the interpretation. Both aspects have been observed in relation to Shaka. Henry Fynn

⁸J. Shooter, *The Kafirs of Natal and the Zulu Country* (First published, 1857; reprinted New York, 1969), 268.

⁹*Ibid.*, 268-9.

¹⁰Mkando ka Dhlova in *James Stuart Archive*, 3, (Pietermaritzburg, 1982), 172.

described Shaka as “given to dreams and necromancy”.¹¹ Fynn appears to have believed that this was a novelty. Shaka “had professed himself, six or eight months previously, capable of undertaking that function, the duty of which would consist in interpreting dreams or doubts as to thefts, cases of poisoning, sickness, &c. Now he took it on himself as an employment.”¹² Dr Andrew Smith, who visited Dingane in 1832, also recorded the practice of chiefs and important people informing the king of their dreams.¹³

Shaka is reported to have been an interpreter of the dreams of others and had significant dreams — messages from ancestors — himself. Nathaniel Isaacs described Shaka as ‘pretending that he inherited this power [of knowing all their thoughts] from the spirit of his forefather, who had deputed to him’.¹⁴ Sanctioning of a chief’s action by significant ancestors via dreaming was an important aspect of leadership. This is what was meant by Henry Callaway’s informant who said that “the Itongo dwells with the great man; he who dreams is the chief of the village.”¹⁵ Stuart’s informant Mtshapi explained that there were two ways of obtaining permission to begin hostile proceedings one of which was “by the king dreaming that his ancestors agree to their being entered on.”¹⁶

¹¹Fynn, *The Diary of Henry Francis Fynn*, 31.

¹²J. Bird, (ed.), *The Annals of Natal: 1495-1845*, 1 (First published, 1888; reprinted Cape Town, 1965), 96. Shaka’s leadership was from c. 1816-1828. Fynn arrived in Natal in 1824. Therefore the announcement Fynn refers to supposedly did not occur before 1823 suggesting a gradual process.

¹³P. Kirby, (ed.), *Andrew Smith and Natal: Documents Relating to the Early History of that Province* (Cape Town, 1955), 1, 93.

¹⁴N. Isaacs *Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa*, 1, (ed.), L. Herrman, (First published, 1836; reprinted Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, 1937), 276.

¹⁵H. Callaway, *The Religious System of the AmaZulu* (First published, 1870; reprinted Cape Town, 1970), 6.

¹⁶Mtshapi ka Noradu in *James Stuart Archive*, 4, (1986, Pietermaritzburg), 77.

Isaacs and Fynn both report Shaka's dream communications with the spirit of a Zulu chief, Mmbiya (*d.*1826) who warned Shaka about breaches of the moral code.¹⁷ Shaka had met Mmbiya during his time with Dingiswayo and maintained a close relationship with him after he assumed the leadership of the Zulu. Isaacs recalls that Shaka ordered warriors to execute offenders after Mmbiya communicated with Shaka through a dream that boys had engaged in sexual activity with girls from Shaka's *isigodlo*.¹⁸ Isaacs believed the action to be probable on the basis of the behaviour that he himself had witnessed. Shaka claimed that Mmbiya's communication on this matter confirmed what he had himself dreamt.¹⁹ After punishing the offenders Shaka announced that he would consult further with Mmbiya.

Shaka also claimed that through a dream Mmbiya had advised that his father, Senzangakhona, was unhappy with the Zulu for not keeping up their reputation as the shrewd, cunning superiors of the neighbouring groups. Mmbiya told him that there was still much to be done and enemies to conquer before they could celebrate. The significance of the dream was publicly recognised by slaughter of cattle. In ideological terms the dream meant that Shaka's success in consolidation and Zulu dominance had been confirmed by the ancestors.²⁰ In later years Dingane dreamed a conversation with Shaka in which he was warned of impending danger.²¹ Cetshwayo dreamed of a

¹⁷Fynn, *The Diary of Henry Francis Fynn*, 31-32.

¹⁸Isaacs, *Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa*, 1: 129-32.

¹⁹Shooter, *The Kafirs of Natal and the Zulu Country*, 273, 275.

²⁰Bird, *The Annals of Natal*, 1: 176. Shooter (referring to Isaacs) also describes this incident. Shooter, *The Kafirs of Natal and the Zulu Country*, 269. Isaacs, *Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa*, 1: 276-7.

²¹D. Leslie, *Among the Zulus and Amatongas*, (ed.) W. H. Drummond, (First published, 1875; reprinted New York, 1969), 37.

conversation with Dingane “together with some former king of Zululand” regarding succession by his sons.²²

Fynn recounts Mmbiya's communication with other chiefs as well. Shortly after Mmbiya's death, his spirit was reported to have manifested itself as a snake sent to visit Shaka. The king sent chiefs who determined that the spirit was indeed Mmbiya. Political discussions then took place between the spirit and the chiefs. During the discussions the spirit repeatedly praised Shaka, informing the chiefs that Shaka had their favour and that Mmbiya had been sent to make this known. This story indicates that Shaka's rule was accepted by the chiefs and ancestors including the 'voice' of a Mthethwa chiefly ancestor.²³

The accuracy of the dreams is less important than the point that interpretation of dreams, and dreams of significance was a recognised aspect of chiefship. There is no evidence that such use of dreams was something 'invented' by Shaka. Shaka did nonetheless draw power from ancestors through dreaming. In this case Shaka demonstrated the approval of previous influential chiefs sanctioning his leadership. Later Zulu kings reinforced their legitimacy by having Shaka visit them in dreams. The incident related above demonstrates other chiefs working 'with' Shaka in hearing the voice of ancestors who supported Shaka and in turn supporting his leadership. But what of chiefs whose ancestral allegiance lay elsewhere? How might their dreams be interpreted and by whom? There appeared to be some potential for overlap or conflict in this area between the religious roles of various chiefs, diviners and the Zulu king. Callaway reported that a Zulu village head could actually bypass the diviner and interact directly with the ancestral shades.²⁴ The potential for conflict became more apparent in other activities of kings, especially in rainmaking.

²²Mkebeni ka Dabulamazi in *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 200-2

²³Isaacs, *Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa*, 1: 129.

²⁴Callaway, *The Religious System of the AmaZulu*, 173-4.

Rainmaking was a very important arena of 'supernatural' practice associated with chiefdoms. Callaway's informant mentioned Shaka's prominence in rainmaking practices:

I saw a rain-man; his name was Umkqaekana. He was a great doctor even among the Amazulu, skilful in producing rain. But among the Amazulu he did not show himself much to the chief; for the chiefs of the house of Uzulu used not to allow a mere inferior to be even said to have power over the heaven; for it was said that the heaven belonged only to the chief of that place. Umkqaekana therefore remained hidden. But he did not cease to produce rain in secret. At length he crossed to this side [sic] the Utukela, for he heard that Utshaka had said, "Let all the heaven-doctors be killed." He escaped, and came among the English; ... He became a dependant of the chief of the Amadhhlala; it is the same to whom we were subject.²⁵

These tales mirror the story of Shaka and the diviners who were likewise portrayed as a threat to Shaka's power. These tales are even more specific and focus on the rainmakers, who were few in the Zulu state because, it is said, both Shaka and Dingane killed them off. The reason was that:

Utshaka claimed to be king of heaven as well as of earth; and ordered the rain-doctors to be killed because, in assuming power to control the weather, they were interfering in his royal prerogative. These doctors have medicines and other means by which they imagine or pretend that they are able to influence the heaven, bring rain, repel a storm, send the lightning-stroke to kill an enemy, or circle a kraal with an influence which shall protect it from its fatal power.²⁶

Allen Gardiner in 1835 believed that within the kingdom there had been destruction of rainmakers and "almost extinction of witchcraft."²⁷ Andrew Smith recorded that Dingane, like Shaka, wanted to disabuse his people of their false belief in rainmakers. Dingane:

was discussing the proceedings of the rainmakers and their merits. He thought they had been deceiving him. He first sent cattle, rain did not follow, then sent to know why. Rainmaker said the spirit wanted more cattle. Sent more. Soon after rain came. He decided to have the first back as rain did not follow them. He also told them he would take the whole of their cattle this year, but if he was so much deceived next year he would kill them all. Some time ago a rain-maker said in order to produce rain he required black cattle. He got them. Rain did not arrive. Then said he wanted white ones. Rain did not arrive. They said some person had taken away his power. They were by the king desired to point them

²⁵*Ibid.*, 389-90.

²⁶H. Callaway, *Nursery Tales, Traditions, and Histories of the Zulus* (First published, 1868; reprinted Westport, 1970), 152.

²⁷B. Leverton, (ed.), *Records of Natal, Volume Three August 1835-June 1838* (Pretoria, 1990), 22.

out. They pointed out 4. He killed them all and said: 'Now your power must exist again'. Chaka had but little belief in rain-doctors.²⁸

Callaway also adds that each tribe had a "chief's song" which was believed to either encourage or reduce rainfall. It was a song of significance and only sung if necessary at the first fruits festival or by an army hampered by rain.²⁹ Despite pointing out that each tribe had its own chief's song, Callaway called this "the national song of the Amazulu."³⁰

Rainmaking was recognised as a specialist activity whose rituals involved the use of certain rainmaking medicines and symbols. As in the story of Shaka and the diviners, it would not have helped the consolidation of monarchical power to denounce rainmakers as frauds. This would have cut off access to ancestors —and probably would have failed because rain was critical to the fertility of the region. To suggest that Shaka took on exclusive responsibility for rainmaking is equally problematic. Questions arise: did every chief have access to such medicines? Who was ultimately responsible for them and how would a chief learn such a specialist craft? There was obviously potential for conflict where ritual power was shared by more than one person and by more than one group (chiefs and rainmakers).

Medicines of chiefship

Along with diviners and doctors, chiefs were also legitimately involved in the use of medicines which accompanied ritual and medicine used for healing. It is first necessary to dispel a misconception concerning the king's use of medicines. Eileen Krige suggested that one of the king's roles was that of "tribal medicine man", but at the same

²⁸Kirby, *Andrew Smith and Natal: Documents Relating to the Early History of that Province*, 47. Smith collected notes himself, but obtained much of his information relating to Natal from Henry Fynn and to a lesser extent from Francis Farewell.

²⁹Callaway, *The Religious System of the AmaZulu*, 409.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 413.

time she said that “the king has a right to be a sorcerer.”³¹ Sorcery, however, was the secret and unlawful use of medicines. No leader could risk the wrath of the ancestors by practising sorcery. Krige also claimed that the title of *umtakati* was ascribed to the kings: “the title *inkhosi enkhulu* (great king) and *umthakathi omkhulu* (great sorcerer) are synonymous among the Zulu.”³² She based her argument on the recordings of the nineteenth century traveller Adulphe Delegorgue who observed that:

every great king bore the title of *om-tagaty*, to justify which he must ensure that during his reign the sun never set without witnessing the death of a man. Djacka and Dingaan had been *om-tagaty-om-koulou*.... He [Panda] is an *om-tagaty*, an *om-tagaty--omkoulou*, The titles *kos-omkoulou*, great master, great king and *om-tagaty-omkoulou*, great wizard, great marksman, great assassin, are synonymous among the Amazoulous, and are used indiscriminately in addressing the chief whose ears are flattened (*sic*) by the description, for he reigns by terror and prides himself on this fact.³³

Krige’s conclusions are incorrect not only on the basis of legitimate activities of leadership, but also because her reference to Delegorgue above is out of context. As noted earlier, the meaning of *umtagati* is vastly different to *inyanga*, *isanusi* or diviner. There is no direct correspondence to the European concept of witch or sorcerer. In common parlance, *tagati* referred to someone who committed a crime. But the term can be defined in a number of ways and one such definition is as a skilful person.³⁴ The statement reported by Delegorgue was made in the context of a discussion during the first fruits ceremony about murder which in turn was in response to Mpande’s thrust of a spear during a dance towards the unarmed Delegorgue. The Frenchman mistakenly took the action as threatening behaviour. During a discussion of this incident Delegorgue pointed out that anyone who killed an unarmed man in “every country of

³¹E. Krige, *The Social System of the Zulus* (First published, 1936; reprinted Pietermaritzburg, 1965), 242, 243. See also 233, 242.

³²*Ibid.*, 242-3.

³³A. Delegorgue, *Travels in Southern Africa*, I, (trans). F. Webb, (First published, 1847; reprinted Pietermaritzburg, 1990), 207, 208.

³⁴C. Doke, D. Malcolm, J. Sikakana and B. Vilakazi, *English-Zulu Zulu-English Dictionary* (Johannesburg, 1990), 781. Harriet Ngubane points out that the term can also mean power. H. Ngubane, *Body and Mind in Zulu Medicine* (London, 1977), 33-4.

the world” would be hanged as a murderer. Delegorgue’s informant was bemused and wondered how Mpande could be hanged as a murderer (if he were in such a country) when he is an *om-tagaty-omkoulou*. The informant was not suggesting that the king was a sorcerer, but rather that he was the supremely skilled leader who had the power to pronounce someone else a *tagati*.

Medicines were important in many rituals including rainmaking and war magic —important to the entire community. Their use by chiefs, including Shaka, features strongly in oral traditions. Chiefs used medicines for both offence (to overcome an enemy), and defence (to protect oneself, army or community). There were rules governing the materials themselves in terms of who was allowed access to them and have knowledge of their properties and methods of application. Possession was subject to strict regulations. *Izihlazi*³⁵ for example were only carried by diviners and not herbalists.³⁶ Some were for the general population while others were considered to be so powerful that they could only to be used or possessed by diviners/doctors and chiefs — the chief first and foremost. Chiefs were said to have had the ability to “feel” the presence of “great” medicines being unlawfully possessed. They had the right to demand the surrender of such substances for the good of all. Possession of powerful medicine could cause a person to “fall down”.³⁷ And so, “if common men are unable to restore such a person, it at length becomes known to the great men; and people suffering in this way are helped by the chief; he will cure him.”³⁸

³⁵“decoctions of miscellaneous drugs, or merely the drugs themselves.” *James Stuart Archive*, 4, 305.

According to Bryant, *izihlazi* is a herb used for febrile complaints and malarial fever. A. Bryant, *Zulu Medicine and Medicine-men* (Cape Town, 1966), 54, 105.

³⁶Ndukwana ka Mbengwana in *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 306.

³⁷Callaway, *The Religious System of the AmaZulu*, 417-19.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 419.

Henry Callaway explained that it was dangerous for inexperienced persons to possess powerful medicines. This could attract attacks by possessors of other medicine.³⁹ That is why it was so important that:

the chief collects to himself all medicines of known power; each doctor has his own special medicine or medicines, and treats some special form of disease, and the knowledge of such medicines is transmitted as a portion of the inheritance to the eldest son. When a chief hears that any doctor has proved successful in treating some case where others have failed, he calls him and demands the medicine, which is given up to him. If he fail [sic], the case is given up as incurable. It is said that when a chief has obtained some medicine of real or supposed great power from a doctor, he manages to poison the doctor, lest he should carry the secret to another and it be used against himself.⁴⁰

Callaway's informants also warned that even those who were versed in medicines should not consider themselves to be equal to or more powerful than the chief in that respect. If they should be so bold as to try, they might soon find themselves defeated.⁴¹

There are many reports of Shaka's use of special medicines. He treated the father of one of Stuart's informants when he was injured in a campaign against the Mpondo.⁴²

Jantshi recalled that Shaka used to 'doctor' his spies. Jantshi's father "never went on a spying expedition without consulting the king beforehand and being doctored by him

The spy would carry medicine with him too ... He did not know the name of this medicine. He would never have been told the name of the king's medicine."⁴³ Mangati described an incident following a battle with Zwide's Ndwandwe in which two of Shaka's men were wounded and subsequently successfully treated with the king's medicines. "On the king's orders they went to him at his home; they did not go to their own homes. He treated them with medicines ..."⁴⁴ Describing the sickness of an

"influential Indoona" Allan Gardiner noted that:

³⁹*Ibid.*, 420-1.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 419-20.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 427.

⁴²Mtshapi, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 82.

⁴³Jantshi ka Nongila in *James Stuart Archive*, 1 (Pietermaritzburg, 1976), 193.

⁴⁴Mangati ka Godide in *James Stuart Archive*, 2 (Pietermaritzburg, 1979), 209.

on being made acquainted with the nature of his disorder [the king], would send down such medicine as he thought proper. This I am told is usual practice. Dingane expects to be made acquainted with the ailments of all his principal people; when any danger is apprehended, the case is then referred to the doctors residing in the capital, and, according to their advice, medicine is forwarded to the patient, who, whether it agree or not, is obliged to take it.⁴⁵

The Zulu kings not only used but also manufactured the medicines of chiefship. Shaka, Dingane, Mpande and Cetshwayo all stirred up medicines. The king's medicines were prepared or stirred up by him in the *isigodlo*, a place, which as will be argued in Chapter Seven, conferred a sacred character. Apparently no one went there when this was being done.⁴⁶ Stirring could be undertaken by persons other than chiefs, but strict rules applied. To break them would be criminal. According to Ndukwana:

no man was allowed to stir up medicines as the king did. No one could cause the foam in *izitunda* medicines to bubble up; it was criminal to do this. Many persons were at various times killed for doing this. For the king alone stirred up water, i.e. water of kingship for washing, with medicines of the king. When the king stirred medicines in this way, he acquired the power of foresight, divination or of prophesying future events....⁴⁷

This may account for the great interest in European medicines by the Zulu kings. Henry Fynn for example 'flaunted' the medicines he alone possessed and processed. However, the possession of such medicines was the right of the Zulu kings and the visitor was obliged to surrender them. At the very least, Europeans would have needed to comply with the conditions for use cited above. This contrasts with the conventional view that because Shaka sought medical assistance and drugs from Fynn, he therefore acknowledged the superiority of European medicine.

⁴⁵A. Gardiner, *Narrative of a Journey to the Zoolu Country in South Africa* (First published, 1836; reprinted Cape Town, 1966), 74.

⁴⁶Ndukwana, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 305-6.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 280-1. The editors give a definition taken from Bryant's *Dictionary*, 662. *Izintunda* medicines are "any medicine mixed up ... and drunk as an emetic, in order to render oneself favoured by the amadhlozi or by the girls." *Ibid.*, 386, fn 78.

While stirring up the medicines the king may have sat on *izidwedwe*⁴⁸ taken from an opponent, or on the *inkatha* (the symbol of the binding together of the 'nation'). Personal items (*izidwedwe*) were collected and used in medicine directed against an opponent. The one with the materials in his possession would "sit on them, stir up medicines (*phela amanzi*), and wash over them."⁴⁹ Such actions were powerfully demonstrated in a story of Dingiswayo and Zwide, as well as in the story of Shaka's employment of *intelezi* medicines against Zwide.⁵⁰ Another story tells how Shaka doctored his father Senzangakhona following a meeting at Dingiswayo's kraal. Shaka (in some versions aided by Dingiswayo) used the medicine to assist him in seizing the chiefship from his father. Senzangakhona became ill and diviners were subsequently consulted by Dingiswayo and determined that the resulting illness suffered by Senzangakhona was caused by the ancestors. Senzangakhona died and Shaka was installed as chief.⁵¹

For diviners, knowledge of the medicines was acquired through a complex process of initiation. How chiefs acquired knowledge is less clear. They had no initiations that we know of. In the case of the Zulu there is no evidence of such knowledge being passed from father to son, or being shared between brothers. Shaka appointed chiefs himself in some cases; chieftainship in the Zulu state was not necessarily hereditary. Yet, chieftainship automatically opened channels of communication with ancestral shades. How, then, did the chief or king acquire the necessary knowledge of medicines of

⁴⁸"These are things stolen by one kinglet from another, by his own agents or members of his rival's tribe. The things referred to appertain to small or large articles used by the king or kinglet in ordinary life at home, such as mats, skins etc." *Ibid.*, 280.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 280.

⁵⁰Mmemi ka Nguluzane in *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 271.

⁵¹Mruyi ka Timuni in *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 36-7. Mtshayankomo ka Magolwana *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 122-3. Ndhlovu ka Timuni in *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 198, 204-5, 217, 227-8.

chiefship, interpretation of dreams and various ritual practices? Did they learn from their own diviners and doctors? Was there potential for knowledge to be withheld?

Callaway's evidence indicates that the vessel of the chief (most likely a symbol or relic of chiefship) was bestowed upon him by the 'doctors', and that he was instructed in its use. The medicine used and the vessel in which it was mixed was thought to protect the chief and give him foresight and influence; "his vessel is a diviner to him". It showed that the chief was the first among those with the knowledge of medicines.⁵² This may have come in part through an installation ceremony. Callaway also notes instances of diviners passing on knowledge of divination to a chief.⁵³ Callaway says that a chief:

calls to him celebrated diviners to place him in the chieftainship, that he may be really a chief; and not be one by descent merely, but by adding a chieftainly character by calling doctors who possess medicines and charms; and these doctors place him in the chieftainship. One comes and performs many ceremonies, telling the chief the power of his medicines. Another does the same⁵⁴

Information about chiefly education in medicines emerges again in the recollections of Stuart's informant, Mqaikana, concerning the wanderings of the Zondi (Dlamini) chief Magenge. He sought to learn the medicines of chiefship from other chiefs. After some time 'wandering' he returned to another group and there doctored and strengthened the young Mpumuza chief Xesibe. He also 'doctored' the Mpumuza army against his 'old tribe' and accompanied them on their campaign. With this protection the army was successful, and Magenge was once again made chief of his own tribe.⁵⁵ There is an obvious parallel with the stories of Dingiswayo's and Shaka's wanderings. Dingiswayo was also 'doctored' by the Hlubi chief Bungane after seeking him out for instruction

⁵²Callaway, *The Religious System of the AmaZulu*, 340-7.

⁵³M. Benham, *Henry Callaway M.D., D.D. First Bishop for Kaffraria* (London, 1896), 245. The Thwana chief Malitshe used medicine to direct buffalo and the man who instructed him in the use of the drug is said to have strengthened Malitshe in his chiefship with medicines. Mahaya ka Nongqabana in *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 133.

⁵⁴Callaway, *The Religious System of the AmaZulu*, 340.

⁵⁵Mqaikana ka Yenge *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 11-12.

about chiefship —which most probably included instruction about the medicines of chiefship.⁵⁶ ‘Doctoring’ could be used for defensive or offensive purposes and so knowledge of this art was an essential component of leadership. However, acquisition of knowledge rendered a chief vulnerable to attack from rivals. This must surely have been an area of tension — especially in the early stages of chiefship. Perhaps this is what was meant by Shaka’s reported comment in regard to the dispute about chiefship between Mande and Magaye (Cele) that “a chief is not made; a chief makes himself.”⁵⁷

Medicines and ritual were particularly important in relation to war. One of Stuart’s informants describes the danger of medicines ‘falling into the wrong hands’. When Mkwebi split from Mande, he departed with the drugs of Mande and eventually became Mzilikazi’s war doctor.⁵⁸ Mzilikazi, of course, would have endeavoured to seize any opportunity for ritual enhancement.⁵⁹ At a later time, the Swazi leader Mbandzeni experienced a similar problem when the ‘queen mother’ fled with the rain medicines following a quarrel between the two.⁶⁰ She was subsequently captured and killed.

Shaka did not (as far as we can tell) inherit the knowledge of the chief’s medicines from his father. He would have needed instruction. Since he was separated from his father for many years and grew up among his mother’s people, he would have needed to acquire vital knowledge from doctors of medicine and other chiefs. It is possible that this was a factor in Shaka’s residence with his mother’s people —a common practice throughout the region. Their role as educators of the future king would have rendered such people very powerful indeed. Eventually they became part of the structure of authority.

⁵⁶Mabonsa ka Sidhlayi in *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 12.

⁵⁷Dinya ka Zokozwayo *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 116.

⁵⁸Mageza ka Kwefunga *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 73-4.

⁵⁹Mzilikazi also features in a version of the story testing diviners.

⁶⁰H. Kuper, *The Swazi: A South African Kingdom* (New York, 1963), 10.

Shaka's control of certain substances and protection from others would have been seen as vital. What might this have meant to the developing Zulu state?

Shaka was certainly not the first chief to interpret dreams, communicate with ancestors, take a key role in ritual, or to possess and use powerful medicines. The Sotho chief Mohlomi is said to have tested diviners, and used medicines for healing.⁶¹ It was necessary for state development that the Zulu king control the realms of medicine and ritual.⁶² This would have created inescapable tensions between diviners and the Zulu king because a diviner was 'called', went through a series of ordeals, served a long 'apprenticeship' in order to access the knowledge, and performed certain religious tasks to communicate with the ancestors. Second, there would have been tensions between the ruling group and established religious practitioners among those groups who came under Zulu influence. This tension is evident in a story recounted by Stuart's informant Jantshi. Shaka 'tested' his diviners: Mqalana, his "inyanga from the Swazi country" and Ngazi. Mqalana was apparently able to name all of Ngazi's medicines, but Ngazi could not name all of Mqalana's medicines. The inference is that Mqalana was withholding powerful medicine from the Zulu king. Shaka responded by having Ngazi doctor and kill Mqalana.⁶³

Shaka had to contend not only with the power of diviners, but also with the religious and ritual power of rivals. During the early nineteenth century Shaka was one of several chiefs whose power was enhanced by their ability to call on the power of the ancestors through dreams, to acquire powerful medicines and to make rain. These were well established features of chieftainship among large and small groups in southeast Africa.

⁶¹E. Ellenberger, *History of the Basuto* (First published, 1912; Morija, 1992), 92.

⁶²This also explains the reported great interest of Shaka in the medicines of his early European visitors and in acquiring them. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 654. Bird, *The Annals of Natal*, 1: 78.

⁶³Jantshi, *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 192.

Zwide of the Ndwandwe, Dingiswayo of the Mthethwa, along with various Qwabe and the Hlubi chiefs all played significant roles in religious activity. In rivalry between them, religious practice was a strategic weapon. Equally important was gaining access to significant medicines, knowing their properties and being instructed in their use. Shaka needed to conquer his rivals spiritually as well as militarily. The *James Stuart Archive* reveals that power was very much conceptualised in religious terms.

Historicizing and conceptualising the role of supernatural practice in conflict and state building 1800-1828

The Zulu in Senzangakhona's days (*b.* 1757, *d.* 1816) appear to have been *abahwebi* (traders of medicines) — dealing in *ikhathazo* (a medicinal plant used for colds that grew in the Zulu area) which was in high demand among the Mthethwa and the Qwabe. Senzangakhona traded cattle for *ikhathazo*.⁶⁴ “Mudhli was the induna of those who brought it to the Mtetwa. Dingiswayo gave him a number of cattle. When Mudhli got back to his chief Senzangakhona the latter instructed him to go back and tender his allegiance to Dingiswayo.”⁶⁵ The Hlubi also traded *ikhathazo*.⁶⁶ Zulu, Cunu and Qwabe traded medicine made from the *indungulu* plant. It warded off fever in the winter, deterred lightning strikes in the summer, and could cause crop failure.⁶⁷ It was also used to cure *umkhuhlane* (disease that ‘just happens’⁶⁸) and in certain rituals. Mmemi seems to suggest that there was also an identity attached to the possession of

⁶⁴Dates are based on Bryant's estimates. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 42. Stuart Papers, File 53/4, 23. Maziyan ka Mahlabeni in *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 281. Baleni ka Silwana in *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 29. Mbovu says “*Ikatazo* is a medicine for colds. People of the olden days carried *ikatazo* and said, ‘*Ofe mkosi!*’ They went about selling it (said by ancient Zulus. I do not know the meaning of the phrase.” nb: no closing brackets. Mbovu ka Mtshumayeli *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 25.

⁶⁵Stuart Papers, File 53/4

⁶⁶Maziyan, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 281. Magidigidi ka Nobebe in *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 84.

⁶⁷Magidigidi *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 84.

⁶⁸Ngubane, *Body and Mind in Zulu Medicine*, 23.

the *indungulu* plant saying that “amaNtungwa carry the indungulu plant”⁶⁹ — so called by the Qwabe because they were from the north. “The Zulus used to arrive in the Qwabe tribe with *indungulu* and *ikatazo* medicines, and say on arrival, ‘*Ofe mkosi*’, speaking of themselves as amaNtungwa.”⁷⁰ The identity may have been regionally based or have had something to do with status.⁷¹ Carolyn Hamilton argues that a three tier society emerged under Shaka and that the first (king and members of the royal house and groups incorporated in the first stage of expansion) and second tiers (incorporated groups who became ‘full subjects’ and retained privileges) became collectively known as the *amantungwa*. They constituted the aristocracy of the Zulu state.⁷² “To foster the growth of a sense of corporate identity among them, they were encouraged by their Zulu rulers to regard themselves as all being of *amantungwa* descent”.⁷³

Baleni seems to imply that the object of trade was cattle when he recalled that “the Zulu may have been ‘hawkers’ [of medicine] and so acquired the cattle”⁷⁴ Perhaps regional trading in medicines and associated symbolic materials used in performing rituals facilitated the acquisition of cattle. There may well have been an element of

⁶⁹Mmemi, *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 263.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 263.

⁷¹John Wright and Carolyn Hamilton point out that the term *amantungwa* “may have been derived from an ecological characteristic of the region which the Zulu were incorporating at an early stage of their expansion”. J. Wright and C. Hamilton, ‘Traditions and Transformations: The Phongolo-Mzimkhulu Region in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries’, in A. Duminy and B. Guest (eds.), *Natal and Zululand from Earliest Times to 1910*, (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1989), 81 fn 80.

⁷²C. Hamilton, ‘Ideology, Oral Traditions and the Struggle for Power in the Early Zulu Kingdom’, M.A. Thesis (University of the Witwatersrand, 1985), 507.

⁷³Wright and Hamilton, ‘Traditions and Transformations: The Phongolo-Mzimkhulu Region in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries’, 72.

⁷⁴Baleni, *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 29

competition in such trade. The Zulu were not the only group undergoing change and expansion in the early nineteenth century; Qwabe and the Hlubi were also expanding. They formed part of what Wright and Hamilton termed the secondary category of defensive states.⁷⁵ In this period of change, struggles for control of powerful medicines certainly contributed to tensions between groups. While some substances were readily available in all districts, others seem to have been specific to particular areas.

By the early nineteenth century several states were competing: “Mabhudu, Dlamini-Ngwane, Hlubi, Ndwandwe, Mthethwa and Qwabe.”⁷⁶ By the 1810s the main struggle pitted Mthethwa against the Ndwandwe, though the Mthethwa were less centrally controlled than the Ndwandwe and the subordinate chiefs within the Mthethwa state retained more autonomy than those within the Ndwandwe.⁷⁷ By 1816 the Ndwandwe had attacked the Mthethwa, defeated the army and killed their king (Dingiswayo) which paved the way for the further growth of the Zulu under Shaka.

Religion, conflict and state building

Prophecies, dreams and ritual medicines feature prominently as weapons in the traditions which recall the strife between the Ndwandwe and the Mthethwa. The conflict reached crisis point when Dingiswayo was killed by Zwide, who is said to have ‘doctored’ him.⁷⁸ Whether medicines affected the outcome is less important than the fact that the substances are recorded in the oral traditions as significant and powerful agents. It was said that by secretly obtaining some personal effect (semen according to

⁷⁵J. Wright and C. Hamilton, ‘Traditions and Transformations: The Phongolo-Mzimkhulu Region in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries’, 64-5.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 66.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 66.

⁷⁸Makuza ka Mkomoyi in *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 170-1. Mandhlakazi ka Ngini in *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 186. Ndukwana, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 331. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 163, 164.

Mandhlakazi⁷⁹) from Dingiswayo, and subsequently compounding the substance into a medicine, Zwide was able to overcome him.⁸⁰ Zwide was also able to 'see' Dingiswayo through the power of the medicines.⁸¹ After Dingiswayo had been captured, Zwide's *induna* are reported to have said, "we shall not kill him, for he was killed by you when you jumped over him" and Zwide replied, "I have killed him with the medicines which I ate."⁸² Yet, prior to the event Dingiswayo claimed to have dreamt of this happening. Despite this victory, Bryant claims that Zwide did not have as much strength of *umlingo* as some others. But Bryant also says that this was compensated to some extent by the rainmaking skill of Zwide's daughter Madungudu.⁸³ The result of the conflict was that the Ndwandwe emerged as the dominant power in the north between the Black Mfolozi and the Phongolo Rivers and the Mthethwa were severely weakened.⁸⁴ The Ndwandwe also emerged dominant in medicines and war ritual.

State building activities and ritual manoeuvring went on within the Mthethwa leadership. Dingiswayo is reported to have prepared medicines for ritual purposes to overcome other chiefs. In a meeting with Senzangakhona and Shaka, he is said to have 'doctored' Shaka using a variety of methods, as well as 'doctoring' Senzangakhona's mat so that the Zulu chief would be overcome by his son Shaka. Apparently, Shaka stood so that his shadow would fall on Senzangakhona. In due course the latter died along with four of his leading men. Mkebeni gives a slightly different version where

⁷⁹Mandhlakazi, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 186.

⁸⁰Ndukwana, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 279. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 163, 164.

⁸¹Makuza, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 170.

⁸²*Ibid.*, 171.

⁸³Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 162. Stuart's informant Mkando infers that Madungudu was male. *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 185.

⁸⁴J. Wright, 'Political transformations in the Thukela-Mzimkhulu Region in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries', in C. Hamilton (ed.), *The Mfecane Aftermath* (Johannesburg, 1995), 168-9.

Dingiswayo arranged for his *inyanga* to doctor Shaka in order for him to overcome Senzangakhona. Fuze also has a version of Dingiswayo enlisting doctors to overcome Senzangakhona and install Shaka as chief.⁸⁵ The important point is the emphasis on the possession of special material with which the younger man could overcome the chief. Dingiswayo is also said to have prepared medicines during a meeting with a Qwabe delegation (sons of Kondhlo) in relation to a Qwabe succession dispute. Dingiswayo supported Nomo because the medicines showed him who should be the chief.⁸⁶

Between the white Mfolozi and the Thukela Rivers, the dominant powers of the 1810s were the Zulu and the Qwabe.⁸⁷ Following Dingiswayo's death, the Mthethwa were incorporated into the Zulu by Shaka. Besides acquiring people — and therefore men to boost an army — Shaka gained control of Mthethwa rainmakers such as Maqabisi and access to the most powerful medicines of the Mthethwa. The next task was acquiring medicines with which to overcome Zwide's Ndwandwe.

Dealing with the Ndwandwe, their allies and their offshoots

Wright recounts how the Ndwandwe broke up from a combination of internal and external forces including Shaka's successful campaign against them in the early 1820s.⁸⁸ Traditions recall that Shaka's forces were initially unable to overcome Zwide; only when Shaka's *intelezi* medicine began to take effect were the Zulu successful.⁸⁹

⁸⁵Mmemi, *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 244. Ndhlovu, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 198, 228. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 66-67. Mkebeni, *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 198. M. Fuze, *The Black People and Whence They Came*, (ed.) A.T. Cope, (trans.) H.C. Lugg, (Pietermaritzburg, 1979), 46.

⁸⁶Mmemi, *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 244.

⁸⁷Wright, 'Political transformations in the Thukela-Mzimkhulu Region in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries', 169.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, 170.

⁸⁹Mmemi, *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 271. Jantshi, *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 184-5.

Not only did Shaka defeat Zwide militarily — aided by ritual and medicine — but he also absorbed the Ndwandwe ideologically by incorporating many Ndwandwe customs and practices (possibly including the ‘Bayete’ salutation for the Zulu king and the royal ceremonial song).⁹⁰ It remains unclear whether in breaking up the Ndwandwe Shaka also acquired the ‘famous’ rainmaker, Zwide’s daughter, Madungudu, as well as the ritual power of the Ndwandwe. It might reasonably be assumed that Shaka gained control of some of their most powerful medicines through his right as leader — as he had done with the Mthethwa before. This would have been a significant ideological, religious and political achievement.

Shaka’s successful campaign caused the Ndwandwe to splinter. A number of separate groups moved northward. Mzilikazi’s Khumalo moved to the south-eastern Transvaal area and Nxaba’s Msane shifted to eastern Swaziland, while the Ndwandwe ruling section moved into southern Swaziland. Zwangendaba’s Jele and Soshangane’s Gasa both moved into the Delagoa Bay area.⁹¹

⁹⁰Madikane ka Mlomowetole in *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 53. Madikane says that Zwide in turn had taken it from Sobhuza. Madikane recounted that Shaka tended to substitute Bayete for “Wen’ o ngang’ ezwe” meaning “you who are as great as the nation”. Dinya, *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 104, 122 fn. 25. Melapi says that Bayete was also an *isithakazelo* [polite address, praise flatteringly] used among the Cele before Shaka’s leadership. Melapi ka Magaye in *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 76. C. Doke, D. Malcolm, J. Sikakana, and B. Vilakazi, *Zulu-English Dictionary* (Johannesburg, 1990), 781. Melapi assumed that the word may have derived from the Mthethwas to which the Cele were related. Melapi, *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 79.

‘Bayete’ was a term generally recognised as reserved for the Zulu king, but several informants claimed it had non Zulu origins.

⁹¹Wright, ‘Political transformations in the Thukela-Mzimkhulu Region in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries’, 169.

The break-up of the Ndwandwe left a political vacuum in the area which the Zulu sought to fill.⁹² It is possible that the fragmentation of Ndwandwe coalition and related groups (including the Hlubi, Soshangane, Nxaba, Sobhuza and Zwangendaba) also left a religious vacuum. After the defeat of the Ndwandwe the Zulu moved to incorporate groups formerly tributary to Zwide including the Mabhudu to the north-east.⁹³ In the late eighteenth century Mabhudu possessed *amabutho* and was pursuing its own expansionist ambitions.⁹⁴ The chief, Makhasane (r. 1800s to 1850⁹⁵), was reputed to be very powerful in ritual, iron working and medicines and was remembered for having sent the locust plagues to Zululand at various intervals between 1826-1854.⁹⁶ Shaka defeated Makhasane and the Mabhudu subsequently paid tribute to the Zulu in the form of elephant tusks.⁹⁷ Shaka was thus publicly acknowledged as the superior one who could bring down a locust plague.

Whether these incidents occurred before Soshangane shifted from Zululand is unclear. Besides their rainmaking power, the Gasa (and the Basuto) were known to possess numerous medicines, one of which was responsible for *amandiki* — a disease which ‘caused’ mental illness in people and seizures in cattle. It was considered very powerful medicine indeed and was common in northern Zululand. Ngubane argues that *indiki* is a new type of spirit possession that emerged at the turn of the century, but Junod’s work (which she based her conclusion on) suggested that the concept may have been linked

⁹²*Ibid.*, 170-1.

⁹³Wright and Hamilton, ‘Traditions and Transformations: The Phongolo-Mzimkhulu Region in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries’, 71.

⁹⁴Makisane is reported to have engaged in slaving selling his people for food possibly with the Portuguese during a famine. Mahungane ka Nkomuza in *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 143.

⁹⁵H. Junod, *The Life of a South African Tribe*, 1 (London, 1927), 25. Bryant claims that Makhasane died in 1854 when he was over 90 years old (ca 1764-1854). Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 305.

⁹⁶Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 305. Mahungane, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 147-8.

⁹⁷Mahungane, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 143, 152. Ndukwana, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 285.

to affliction caused by strangers and from travelling in foreign lands. From that perspective it is much more likely to have increased as people began to move around more and not necessarily emerging for the first time during the late nineteenth/early twentieth century and rather being more prevalent at such times.⁹⁸ Mapita (chief of the Mandlakazi) suspected his son Zibhebu was getting powerful drugs from Soshangane to use against him and so wanted him killed.⁹⁹

There is reason to suspect that control of medicines may have been one motive for Shaka's attack on the Gasa in 1828. It was while the *impi* were away on this campaign that Shaka was assassinated.¹⁰⁰ Both Joseph Shooter and Nathaniel Isaacs mention a locust plague said to have been sent by Soshangane against the Zulu. "It is a singular fact that these insects were not known in this quarter before 1829 or early in 1830; and the Zulus superstitiously attribute their visitations to the power of Sotshangana, who the Zulus were sent to attack by Tshaka in the district of Delagoa, and who they followed on their retreat after having been defeated by that chieftain."¹⁰¹ The struggle with the Gasa persisted during Dingane's rule: a group of Gasa rainmakers were put to death by Dingane. He asked them to bring rain but thunder and lightning struck. Dingane devised a trick and the rainmakers were killed.¹⁰² On another occasion he had failed to halt the locust scourge sent by Soshangane because Zulu doctors had no medicines against them.¹⁰³

⁹⁸Mnkonkoni in *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 287. Doke *et al* define this as a hysterical disease or person possessed. *Zulu-English Dictionary*, 538. Ngubane, *Body and Mind in Zulu Medicine*, 142. Junod, *The Life of a South African Tribe*, 2: 480. Mkando, *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 186.

⁹⁹Mpatshana ka Sodondo in *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 312.

¹⁰⁰Makewu, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 163.

¹⁰¹Shooter, *The Kafirs of Natal and the Zulu Country*, 23-4.

¹⁰²Mayinga, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 250-1.

¹⁰³Shooter, *The Kafirs of Natal and the Zulu Country*, 25.

It would seem that the Mthethwa under Dingiswayo incorporated the Zolo (Tolweni, Tolo, Zolweni) who had a reputation as great rainmakers.¹⁰⁴ This asset would have been subsequently incorporated into the Zulu state. Stuart notes that “missions were sent to them from surrounding tribes when rain was wanted.”¹⁰⁵ Gasa of the Zolo lived in “the Qudeni” and is remembered as Shaka’s last rainmaker. He would call upon his distant ancestors, which included Zulu, to request rain. He was killed when he caused thunder.¹⁰⁶ According to Mini it was the Zolo who gave the *induku yo ku Busa* (the staff of office) to the Zulu¹⁰⁷ which indicates that the Zolo symbol of chiefship was given or appropriated by the Zulu and it is highly likely that the symbol of office was associated with ritual.

Each of the important fragments of the old Ndwandwe power figures in oral recollections of struggle over ritual power and medicines. One such Ndwandwe offshoot was the ‘state builder’ Mzilikazi who departed Zululand around 1822-1823. A story tells of him testing his diviners.¹⁰⁸ Madikane recalls that Mzilikazi was Shaka’s *inceku* (attendant) at esiKlebeni.¹⁰⁹ Presumably, Mzilikazi progressed to the status of *induna*.¹¹⁰ Whatever the case, Mzilikazi would have acquired important knowledge which stood him in good stead in his later career. Another Ndwandwe off-shoot, Nxaba’s Msane, figures in Shaka’s accumulation of powerful medicines. Maputwana

¹⁰⁴Magidigidi, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 84. S. Mini in *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 134, 135.

¹⁰⁵Mini in *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 135.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, 135, 136. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 358. Mini, *James Stuart Archive*, 3, 136.

¹⁰⁷Mini, *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 134.

¹⁰⁸Baleka ka Mpitikazi *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 10. H. Garbutt ‘Native Witchcraft and Superstition in South Africa’, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, XXXIX (1909), 536. E. Walter *Terror and Resistance* (New York, 1969), 161.

¹⁰⁹Madikane, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 60.

¹¹⁰Ndukwana in *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 264.

recalled that Shaka attacked Nxaba because he kept white cattle.¹¹¹ White was associated with the ancestors and Tyler observed that cattle in the world of the ancestors were thought to be white.¹¹² For this reason the Qwabe defector, Nqetho, cut off the tails of Shaka's white stock (cattle or oxen) when he departed from the Zulu. The tails were for *imiklezo* used in the first fruits ceremony and for doctoring soldiers.¹¹³ On leaving Zululand, Nxaba went to the place of Mabelemade (see Chapter Seven for more on Mabelemade).¹¹⁴ Makhasane of the Mabhudu ordered his army to pursue Nxaba hoping to seize the cattle, but they were slow to respond and it was the Zulus who gained the cattle.¹¹⁵ Zwangendaba of the Ngoni, another Ndwandwe ally, also departed Zululand in the early 1820s.¹¹⁶ He too had *umlingo*. Bryant describes Zwangendaba's 'magical activities' saying that "he knew the way of other kings."¹¹⁷ So did Sobhuza, founder of the Swazi kingdom. Like Shaka, Sobhuza aimed to acquire "among other things, new and powerful magic for rain, war, and cultivation, which bolstered his military conquest by extending his range of ritual."¹¹⁸ The ritual and religious role of Swazi leaders is well documented and Sobhuza was recognised as a great rainmaker. The Swazi king and his mother called on their ancestors and performed rainmaking rituals.¹¹⁹ When, following attacks by the Boers, Dingane fled to Swaziland, Sobhuza showed no mercy seizing both people and cattle.¹²⁰ Clearly, Dingane posed the same problem for Sobhuza as the notable rainmaking chiefs had posed for Shaka. He is

¹¹¹Maputwana ka Didiza in *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 230.

¹¹²J. Tyler, *Forty Years Among the Zulus* (First published 1891; reprinted Cape Town, 1971), 97.

¹¹³Melapi, *James Stuart Archive*, 3, 82, 88. Cattle are mentioned on page 82, but oxen on page 88.

¹¹⁴Maputwana, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 230.

¹¹⁵Mbovu, *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 45.

¹¹⁶Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 459.

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*, 245, 463.

¹¹⁸Kuper, *The Swazi: A South African Kingdom*, 8.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*, 20.

¹²⁰B. Leverton, (ed.), *Records of Natal, Volume 4 July 1838- September 1839* (Pretoria, 1992), 15.

reported to have asked the stricken chief, “ ‘Dingaan! are you still the rainmaker? Are you still the greatest of living men?’.”¹²¹ Then Dingane was killed. A later Swazi king, Mbandeni, also proved himself to be a very reputable rainmaker: the man responsible for the *uSihlambi-sinye* (the One-long-downpour).¹²²

Dealing with the groups to the south: The Qwabe, Hlubi, Sithole, Mkhize and Cele

The southern extension of the Zulu state was marked by the same program of ritual conquest that had characterised the struggle with Zwibe and the Ndwandwe allies. Shaka established dominance over much of the south “in a belt of territory on its south-western and southern borders which extended from the lower Mzinyathi south-eastward between the Thukela and Mvoti Rivers to the coast, and thence south to the lower Mngeni-Mlazi area.”¹²³ Those groups that had been jostling for dominance in the lower Thukela area (Qwabe, the Mbo, Ngcobo) were subjugated and the Hlubi of the upper Mzinyathi fragmented. The Qwabe chiefs were powerful in ritual, medicines and rainmaking.¹²⁴ Shaka overcame the Qwabe through a combination of military and ritual means. This “spiritual conquest” was remembered as a significant part of victory.

It could be the Qwabe believed that they were so accomplished in the spiritual realm that their chief could repel all others. Stuart’s informant Mmemi tells a story of a doctor named Mqayana of the Nzuzu who went to *khonza* the Qwabe people offering his *ikhathazo* and *indungulu* medicines, but they drove him away. This suggests that Mqayana may have been sent away by Qwabe chief Pakatwayo because he saw the stranger as a challenge to his own ritual power. Or, perhaps they felt they did not need it. Mqayana then went to the Qwabe’s enemy, Shaka, who recognised the potential of

¹²¹Bird, *The Annals of Natal*, 1: 375-6. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 326.

¹²²Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 334.

¹²³Wright, ‘Political transformations in the Thukela-Mzimkhulu Region in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries’, 172.

¹²⁴Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 184-5.

such knowledge and said “‘have you got medicines, Mqayana?’ He said, ‘Yes, Sir. I have them to doctor with.’ T. [Shaka] then gave him protection.”¹²⁵ Shaka asked Mqayana to use the medicines to kill Pakatwayo. They devised a plan and Shaka subsequently overcame the Qwabe capturing Pakatwayo because of the ‘doctoring’ with the medicines of Mqayana. Pakatwayo was so overcome with all this that he died and the Qwabe were broken up. Some surrendered to Shaka while others *khonza’d* Zwide.¹²⁶ It is religious essence of the recollection that is important rather than the ‘truth’ of the anecdote.

According to this story, Shaka overcame Pakatwayo through his more powerful medicines.¹²⁷ As a result, Shaka also obtained items of Pakatwayo’s clothing and bound them to the *inkatha*. In effect, he used the medicines acquired from Nzuza to overcome Pakatwayo militarily and spiritually. He then further demonstrated the victory ideologically by using the substances to strengthen the Zulu *inkatha* — the sacred relic of kingship. The symbolism attached to this action is powerful. It was Shaka and the Zulu who defeated the Qwabe by using medicine acquired from another group.¹²⁸ It is worth noting that a doctor named Mqayana later emerged from Shaka’s test as one of the ‘true’ diviners.¹²⁹ Following his victory, Shaka annexed Qwabe medicine and skills — including rainmaking. Jantshi recalls Mqayana (and others) using their medicines to assist Shaka in overcoming Zwide just as Zwide had overcome Dingiswayo.¹³⁰

¹²⁵Mmemi, *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 240.

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, 241-2.

¹²⁷*Ibid.*, 242.

¹²⁸Mpatshana, *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 327.

¹²⁹Mcotoyi ka Mnini in *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 67.

¹³⁰Jantshi, *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 184-5.

Hlubi chiefs, too, had reputations as doctors and rainmakers. In the same way that all things were said to belong to Shaka, so too were they said to belong to the Hlubi chief Bungane (*d.* 1800¹³¹); “*uBungane wenza nga ku ningi*, i.e. all things belong to Bungane. Even today, when the sky rains, people say this.”¹³² Bungane had a reputation for his skill in overcoming other chiefs.¹³³ Stuart’s informant Mabonsa goes so far as to say that Bungane was greater than Zwide and Sobhuza.¹³⁴ This may be interpreted to mean that he was more ritually powerful and possessed powerful medicines. In the presence of young Shaka, Dingiswayo is reported to have asked Bungane: “When you overcame the nations, how did you do it?”¹³⁵ Bryant estimates that the visit occurred at the height of rivalry between the Mthethwa and the Hlubi.¹³⁶ After Bungane communicated knowledge of medicine to Dingiswayo, the Hlubi blamed themselves “for having educated Dingiswayo.”¹³⁷ Thus, the Mthethwa under Dingiswayo gained ascendancy over the Hlubi because of ritual knowledge that had been passed on. The tale of Dingiswayo’s schooling also suggests that previously the Hlubi had been *more* ritually powerful. Fuze says that Mthimkhulu’s Hlubi were very powerful and they assisted Shaka against Zwide.¹³⁸ They were feared. Yet, Mabonsa’s evidence given to James Stuart indicates that the Hlubi were no warriors, using neither assegais or sticks.¹³⁹ These contradictory statements may be reconciled on the hypothesis that it was their ritual power that was feared and desired by Shaka. The

¹³¹Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 157.

¹³²Mabonsa, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 14.

¹³³*Ibid.*, 12, 13.

¹³⁴*Ibid.*, 13.

¹³⁵*Ibid.*, 12.

¹³⁶Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 148. Bryant suggests that Bungane died around 1810.

¹³⁷Mabonsa, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 12.

¹³⁸Fuze, *The Black People and Whence They Came*, 23.

¹³⁹Mabonsa, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 14, 18.

Hlubi chief Langalibalele was also a well respected rainmaker.¹⁴⁰ If the Hlubi were considered more knowledgeable in ritual and medicines a likely scenario is that Shaka would have needed to control them.

However, it was not Shaka but the Ngwane chief Matiwane who attacked the Hlubi and killed their chief, Mthimkhulu. Stuart's informant Mabonsa recalls that it was actually Mthimkhulu's own doctors "who caused Matiwane to murder Mtimkulu."¹⁴¹ The implication is that this doctor was able to assist Matiwane in conquest much the same way as Zwide, Dingiswayo, Shaka and Pakatwayo had been helped. This particular case shows how vulnerable chiefs were to the power of their own doctors.

Following the subjugation of the Qwabe and the incorporation of sections of the Hlubi, Shaka sought to bring the other chiefdoms of the lower Thukela valley under his sway, constituting three "semi-autonomous client polities"¹⁴² These consisted of Jobe of the Sithole, Zihlandlo of the Mkhize and Magaye of the Cele. Two other groups moved south beyond the range of Shaka's power.¹⁴³ Ngoza's Thembu shifted across the lower Mzinyathi, with the exception of some men who remained with Jobe.¹⁴⁴ Jobe was then installed by Shaka as chief of the Sithole.¹⁴⁵ Jobe appears to have been allowed to exercise some chiefly privileges in relation to religion, however they were controlled. He had the authority to put people to death but it seems that ritual authority and practice remained the domain of Zulu diviners and doctors.¹⁴⁶ Ritual activities in the Zulu state

¹⁴⁰Mtshayankomo, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 111-112. Mpande sent to him for rain.

¹⁴¹Mabonsa, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 16.

¹⁴²Wright, 'Political transformations in the Thukela-Mzimkhulu Region in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries', 171.

¹⁴³*Ibid.*, 171, 172.

¹⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 169-70. Lugubu ka Mangaliso in *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 290.

¹⁴⁵Bird, *The Annals of Natal*, 1: 144. Lunguza ka Mpukane in *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 301.

¹⁴⁶Lunguza, *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 330, 336.

were regulated. This is also evident in a story of several relatives of one of Jobe's *induna* who were ordered by Dingane to be killed because they had *pupa'd* (to dream, talk nonsense, or become weak); "they *pupa'd* because they used to hold the *umkosi* ceremonies at Ngoza's." ¹⁴⁷ This incident suggests that the deluded people (the kin group of one of Jobe's principal people) held a first fruits ceremony at Ngoza's which was a transgression of ritual and religious boundaries and punishable by the central administration. ¹⁴⁸

The reputation of Thembu chiefs in medicines and ritual had been long established. Gazi (a predecessor of Ngoza) had great and 'strange powers'. ¹⁴⁹ The people would say that "the powers of Gazi are great. There is no-one who still knows the medicine that has the power to do this. Even among the Mabaso it is not to be found." ¹⁵⁰ Chief Mabaso (predecessor of Gazi) was likewise recalled as possessing strong medicines and good knowledge of how to use them. ¹⁵¹ People "were afraid of the powers that Mabaso could work" ¹⁵².

Now Mabaso was feared because he had strong medicines. He would point at people walking along one behind the other, and they would stop and be unable to move.... Mabaso had always had a knowledge of medicines. No-one knew where he had got his powers of being able to stop people in their tracks. ¹⁵³

¹⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 313.

¹⁴⁸Note that the editors give the meaning of *pupa'd* as "the verb *ukuphupha* is literally to dream, or to talk nonsense, or to become weak. Its meaning in the present context is obscure." *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 350. Doke *et. al.* "Any medicinal charm-plant used by young men to make girls dream of them." *Zulu-English Dictionary*, 679. In this context the word can be interpreted to be associated with ritual and religion be it through dreaming, or medicine associated with the first fruits ceremony.

¹⁴⁹Gazi was a descendant of chief of the Mvelase branch of the Thembu and related to Mabaso. Lugubu, *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 288-9. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 244-5, 418-19.

¹⁵⁰Lugubu, *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 289.

¹⁵¹*Ibid.*, 289, 290. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 245.

¹⁵²Lugubu, *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 289.

¹⁵³*Ibid.*, 288-9.

Not only were the Thembu chiefs perceived to be powerful in ritual and religion, but Thembu diviners were important to Shaka. Mehlo of the Dhladhla is named as one of the 'true' diviners in a version of the story of Shaka and the diviners. He was reportedly told by Shaka to "go now, return to wherever you may be called to do so, at Jobe's or elsewhere."¹⁵⁴ The Dhladhla had been attacked by Shaka around 1820. One section was overtaken by Shaka and probably incorporated into Zihlandlo's group. Another attached themselves to Ngoza, but appear to have ended up in Jobe's Sithole. They seem to have been variously under the Sithole, Zihlandlo and Cunu.¹⁵⁵

Hamilton argues that the establishment of Zulu control over the old Thembu area was significant because of resources, supplying much of the royal insignia and *amabutho* attire including shields, monkey skins, lourie plumes and crane feathers.¹⁵⁶ Because Thembu chiefs and the diviners were just as important to Shaka his drive to control these human resources paralleled his drive to control the natural resources Hamilton identifies. Jobe himself had no pre-existing reputation for ritual power (unlike his predecessors) most likely because he had been installed by Shaka.

The second semi-autonomous client polity¹⁵⁷ established by Shaka — Zihlandlo's Mkhize people — *khonza Shaka* without resistance. Neighbouring groups who did resist were eventually incorporated and placed under the control of chief Zihlandlo who maintained close links with the Zulu king. Like Jobe, he retained some chiefly status

¹⁵⁴Lunguza, *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 330-1.

¹⁵⁵Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 226-7, 246. Magidigidi, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 90.

Ndabazwe ka Mfuleni in *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 183

¹⁵⁶Hamilton, 'Ideology, Oral Traditions and the Struggle for Power in the Early Zulu Kingdom', 257.

Madikane. *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 60.

¹⁵⁷Wright, 'Political transformations in the Thukela-Mzimkhulu Region in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries', 171.

and privileges.¹⁵⁸ Unlike Jobe though, Zihlandlo had already gained a reputation in ritual and seems to have retained some medicines.¹⁵⁹ It therefore became necessary for Shaka to demonstrate ‘publicly’ his ritual dominance over Zihlandlo. Stuart’s informant Mcotoyi described how Shaka stole Zihlandlo’s shield and then used it to wash himself on. When the shield was returned to Zihlandlo he suddenly became ill and died.¹⁶⁰

Although this account of Zihlandlo’s death differs from other accounts, it is important for its emphasis on Shaka’s ability to subordinate and control chiefs through his ritual powers. This was necessary because of Zihlandlo’s reputation for being able to kill an *ingezelo* beast by pointing a pair of pincers and then to bring it back to life.¹⁶¹

Mbokodo seemed to be referring to Zihlandlo when he recalled that:

The chiefs of former times used to have certain powers, in the days when they were still fighting one another. In the old days the chiefs of high standing used not to resort to stabbing cattle to kill them. A beast to be killed, having been caught by the regiments and brought to the chief, would be ‘struck’ by the chief’s shadow and then ‘fade’ - waste away - and, after being driven away, take ill and die without being stabbed. Death of this kind happened when a man against whom a chief had been fighting had been caught and brought captive to his conqueror, surrounded on all sides with his warriors. On merely beholding the conqueror, the captive would be overcome with fear and then succumb.¹⁶²

Located near Zihlandlo’s Mkhize were the Cube. Like the Mkhize, they submitted to Shaka without resistance.¹⁶³ Their chief, Zokufa, is remembered as a favourite of Shaka.¹⁶⁴ The Cube were known for their use of ‘supernatural’ power to gain ascendancy over others (*ithonya*) so they were “quickly able to kill people with whom they were fighting.”¹⁶⁵ Their doctors were powerful and they had no need for foreign ones in Zokufa’s time (Bambata later did). The Cube were the most prominent iron

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 169, 171. Hamilton, ‘Ideology, Oral Traditions and the Struggle for Power in the Early Zulu Kingdom’, 476-7.

¹⁵⁹ Ndabazewe, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 191.

¹⁶⁰ Mcotoyi, *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 55.

¹⁶¹ Mbokodo ka Sikulekile in *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 14.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁶³ Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 415.

¹⁶⁴ Mpatshana, *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 322.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 322.

workers for “the whole country” and they made assegais for the king.¹⁶⁶ As with the Thembu both the human resources — ritual power of the Cube — and the skills with the natural resources — iron making skills — were important to Shaka.

The Chunu chief Macingwane, who had himself been attempting to expand his influence, shifted across the Thukela to distance himself from the early Zulu expansion.¹⁶⁷ Prior to conflict with Shaka there were divisions within the Chunu, some of which related to ritual. Macingwane had been asserting his ritual authority over his rivals. In an apparent attempt to control rainmaking he killed chief “Mnisi of the rain”. Macingwane had requested Mnisi’s people to make rain for him which they did. Afterwards, when they were returning home, Macingwane double crossed them by attacking and capturing the rainmakers (and presumably the rainmaking medicine). This was said to have caused the group to fragment.¹⁶⁸

We have already seen that the Chunu were *abahwebi*, trading medicine from the *indungulu* plant which was said to ward off lightning strikes in the summer.

Macingwane apparently passed on his ‘great power over drugs’ to the Bhaca chief Madikane who was subsequently renowned for skill with medicines.¹⁶⁹ The Bhaca also called on Macingwane in a dispute with Nombewu’s people over access to *upoko* for beer making.¹⁷⁰ Madikane in particular was renowned for his ability to overcome other

¹⁶⁶Baleni, *James Stuart Archive* 1: 41. Magidigidi, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 84, 85. Mqaikana, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 14.

¹⁶⁷Wright, ‘Political transformations in the Thukela-Mzimkhulu Region in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries’, 169.

¹⁶⁸Mayinga, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 251.

¹⁶⁹Mahaya, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 117-18

¹⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 113.

chiefs. He was however, eventually overcome by a combined force of Xhosa, Thembu and Mpondo.¹⁷¹

Friction between Macingwane and the Ndlovu chief Mpongo is remembered as a contest of ritual power. Mpongo was said to have great powers, yet Macingwane succeeded in 'doctoring' him. Another account relates that Mpongo's medicine was more powerful forcing Macingwane to call on the assistance of others.¹⁷² Macingwane later attacked and defeated the Cube. According to the recollections of Magidigidi, Shaka was angry because they were his iron, brass and copper smiths making beads, hoes and assegais.¹⁷³ Political and ritual control over the Chunu was thus of extreme importance for Shaka and he did eventually incorporate them.

Before their move over the Drakensberg, Matiwane's Ngwane were well known for ritual power, medicine and rainmaking.¹⁷⁴ Recollections of conflict between the Ngwane and the Hlubi were cast in religious terms. Matiwane attacked the Hlubi chiefdom killing their chief, even though the Hlubi had superior 'manpower'.¹⁷⁵ The decisive advantage had been obtained by other means. In this case a Hlubi diviner joined the Ngwane and conspired with Matiwane to doctor the Hlubi chief Mthimkhulu (d. 1818¹⁷⁶). The result was that the Ngwane were able to attack and kill Mthimkhulu

¹⁷¹*Ibid.*, 118

¹⁷²Fuze, *The Black People and Whence They Came*, 15. Mqaikana, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 26. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 265-6.

¹⁷³Magidigidi, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 84, 85.

¹⁷⁴Bikwayo ka Noziwawa, *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 67, 69. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 358

¹⁷⁵Mabonsa, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 16.

¹⁷⁶Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 157.

and the Hlubi broke into various fragments.¹⁷⁷ Not all Ngwane stayed with Matiwane. As Hamilton explains, “one section of the Ngwane, known as the Mpembeni split off from the main group. Amongst the Mpembeni were a section known as the Dladla, who gave their allegiance to Shaka, and became renowned as the foremost amongst Shaka’s rainmakers.”¹⁷⁸ The Dladla are also mentioned earlier on page 145 as possibly part of the Sithole, Zihlandlo and Cunu. Whatever the case, Lunguza’s account of the story of Shaka and the diviners mentions these same Dladla as ‘true diviners’.

The Mpondo to the south were another group to feel the effect of Shaka’s campaigns.¹⁷⁹ Bryant claims that Faku, paramount chief of the Mpondo, did not have *umlingo*, but he did nonetheless have a good understanding of “ordinary Nguni magic”.¹⁸⁰ Callaway, on the other hand, relates a story of Faku working ‘magic’ on the Bhaca chief, Ngcaphayi, who gave his allegiance to the Mpondo chief.¹⁸¹

Conclusion

Zulu kings and chiefs were not considered divine in the sense of worshipped Gods. However, they sought ascendancy in the spiritual world as keenly as they pursued ascendancy in the political world. Chiefs were important for communication with the chiefly ancestors for the common good — under their patronage chiefs acquired legitimacy. Dreaming was part of that communication.

Kings, chiefs, diviners and doctors used medicines for curing ills, protection, and influencing nature. The symbolism attached to the king’s medicine was enhanced by the

¹⁷⁷Mabonsa, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 13-4. Hamilton, ‘Ideology, Oral Traditions and the Struggle for Power in the Early Zulu Kingdom’, 281.

¹⁷⁸Hamilton, ‘Ideology, Oral Traditions and the Struggle for Power in the Early Zulu Kingdom’, 283-4.

¹⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 363.

¹⁸⁰Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 401.

¹⁸¹Callaway, *The Religious System of the AmaZulu*, 431-4.

strict rules governing preparation. Acquiring and keeping certain medicines were important. So was a chief's recognition as one possessing *umlingo*. A great many recorded wars were marked by struggles for control of ritual power, special medicines, and important practitioners of the rites of rainmaking and divination. Part of the process of political consolidation involved the acquisition of these powers. When renowned and powerful groups were incorporated into the Zulu state their special powers were transferred to Shaka. He had to claim dominance in this area, control the access to material, restrict practitioners and play more of the chiefly religious roles himself.

It may be hypothesised that in the period of state consolidation the independent power of the diviners —especially those of incorporated groups — interfered with the political interests of the newly developing Zulu state, consequently hindering the process of consolidation and cohesion. The king became the most senior representative of the ruling group, and therefore, so did his ancestors. Shaka's most pressing task in the realm of religious practice was to superimpose the practice of giving honour to his own ancestors in a way which would not conflict with the honour owed to other ancestors at different subordinate levels of social organisation. In this way he could enhance his own legitimacy. One way in which this was achieved was through ritual. As the state developed, 'national' rituals emerged which could very possibly have created tensions between the king, the lesser chiefs, and diviners.

CHAPTER 6

HOW AND WHY SOME POWERS OVER RELIGION, RITUAL AND OTHER SUPERNATURAL AGENCIES WERE DESTROYED BY SHAKA AND HIS SUCCESSORS

Chiefs and diviners and doctors of medicines were all part of a hierarchy of spiritual power. Shaka had to overcome rivals spiritually as well as militarily. This process could continue long after an initial military conquest had been accomplished. A significant factor in destroying leadership structures was acquiring control of ritual. Shaka continually sought to shore up his position as king by drawing on traditions which ascribed special 'supernatural' powers to chiefs. This can be illustrated by the way in which he asserted his powers and functions.

For Shaka to consolidate successfully a number of disparate lineages and chieftaincies under his own leadership, he would have had to deal with potentially conflicting ancestral allegiances among his subjects. It was not open to him simply to appeal to the *uNkulunkulu* of them all because, as Henry Callaway notes, *uNkulunkulu* applies "to the founders of dynasties, tribes and families."¹ For the Zulu, *uNkulunkulu* was Shaka's ancestor.

Ukoto, a very old Izulu, one of the Isilangeni tribe, whose father's sister, Unandi, was the mother of Utshaka, gave me the following accounts:- I say for my part that the Unkulunkulu whom we know is he who was the father of Utshaka; Usenzangakona was Utshaka's father. After Usenzangakona comes Utshaka. Utshaka had no children. After him Udingane was made king. After that they killed Udingane, and made Umpande king to this day, those two kings, Utshaka and Udingane, having no children.

Ujama was the father of Usenzangakona, the father of the Utshakas; it is he who is Unkulunkulu."²

¹H. Callaway, *The Religious System of the AmaZulu* (First published, 1870; reprinted Cape Town, 1970), 48.

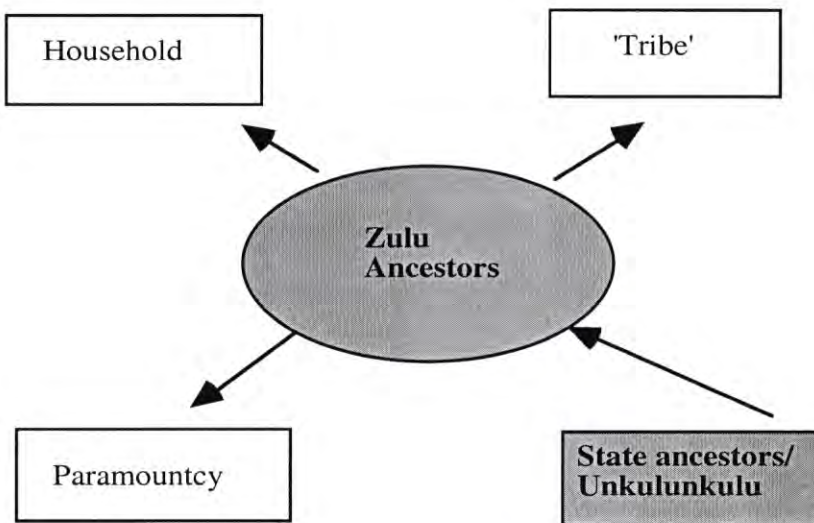
²*Ibid.*, 47-8.

Eileen Krige asserted that the Zulu king:

holds his position in the first place as representative in the direct line of the tribal ancestors, and he is the only man who can approach them for their blessings on the tribe as a whole. That is why the subjects of the king are all vitally concerned when his ancestors show any signs of being angered....In addition to this the king is the chief medicine man of the tribe, the centre of all agricultural and war ritual and representative of the unity of the tribe.³

But, as noted earlier, Krige cited Zulu practices seen in her own time as evidence of the situation which obtained during the early nineteenth century. Shaka could not in the beginning at least have been 'representative in the direct line of the tribal ancestors' for *all* the people in his expanding kingdom. This was a relationship or perception that had to be created. New ideological forms had to emerge.

Figure 5: State ancestors or *uNkulunkulu*



To facilitate the emergence of new ideological forms it was necessary for Zulu ancestors to take precedence. The way to achieve this was through centralising major rituals concerned with the collective good such as rain, harvest, fertility and war. In the case of private matters such as birth, death, marriage, and some sickness which did not impact directly upon the state, the family or household ancestors would have still been appealed to or praised. It may be that Shaka interfered with, or centralised one or more

³E. Krige, *The Social System of the Zulus* (First published, 1936; reprinted Pietermaritzburg, 1965), 233.

of these private ceremonies by delaying marriage. It may be that over time the distinctions between what constituted private, chiefly, and central became blurred. As Claessen and Skalník point out (see page 29 above), ideology and legitimation are key factors in the further development of an early state.⁴ Symbols which express and reinforce the ideology, including rituals may be emphasised or de-emphasised.

Rainmakers

In the early stages of Zulu consolidation, as Chapter Five showed, Shaka incorporated groups with a reputation for rainmaking. Powerful rain medicines were needed to stop enemies using them to prevent rain; a problem that would have been heightened in times of drought. The region did suffer a major drought (the 'Madhlatule') in the early nineteenth century. This drought has been often mentioned as a possible factor contributing to the formation of the state (see Chapter One above). It is highly likely that during such a crisis the ritual aspects of leadership, the role of rainmakers, and access to successful rainmakers and their medicines would have been more marked. David Leslie's evidence indicates some struggles for dominance over rainmaking during drought. This suggests that the issue of competition for such dominance is worth considering in wider context.⁵ How withholding rainmaking services could result in war was explained by Stuart's informant Mahaya:

In the year when Satshwa became chief there was a great sun, the year in which the Mbotos chief Njilo was killed by the Imitwana tribe. Njilo refused to bring about rain. The Imitwana went off to ask for it.... The Mbotos said, 'You come to ask us for rain. We won't give any. We have increased in numbers now. Msatanyoko,⁶ do what you like. The Imitwana then went back by night. They reported to Satshwa on their return. Satshwa took his tuft of black finch feathers - a huge one used by him in the umkosi ceremony - and gave it to his induna, Tshengu ka Mambamba of the Tshezi people, i.e. of the Bomvana tribe, to put on. He told him to sound the alarm. 'The dog has pissed on me.' His army then hurried forward and went to the great place (Satshwa's kraal). S. gave them cattle which they were to take and kill very early. 'You must have finished by the time the sun is getting warm. When the sun comes up, make ready for battle.' This took place accordingly. The two

⁴H. Claessen and P. Skalník, 'Limits: Beginning and End of the Early State', in H.J.M. Claessen and P. Skalník (eds.), *The Early State* (The Hague, 1978), 625.

⁵D. Leslie *Among the Zulus and Amatongas* (First published, 1875; reprinted New York, 1969), 169.

⁶"ie you who slept with you mother." C. de B. Webb and J. Wright (ed.), *James Stuart Archive*, 2 (Pietermaritzburg, 1979), fn.76, 138.

forces went to meet one another. They fought till sunset. They fought again. Towards sunset the Mboti forces were finished. The Mboti chief now fought and was killed. The sun on that occasion shone scorchingly for three years.⁷

Once groups with rainmaking reputations were incorporated Shaka needed not only to reinforce the prerogative of the Zulu king in religious matters, but also to discredit or bypass less reputable rainmakers of other groups and disempower them. He needed to put an end to the “owners of the rain ... [being] at variance amongst themselves”⁸ He centralised rainmaking, allowing some groups to practice, while others were not, in much the same way as some groups were excluded from the central decision making processes. Taking control of and ‘nationalising’ rainmaking rituals would have provided a vehicle for the reinforcement of Shakan ideology by focusing on Shaka’s ancestors as important in sending rain. This is because, as the Hlubi example showed, a chief was susceptible to double cross by his ‘doctors’. Callaway’s informant said that Shaka:

made his prayers greater than those who preceded him. He summoned the people, a great assembly, consisting of the chiefs of the villages. He collected black oxen, and sheep and black rams; and went to pray; he sang a song and prayed to the lord of heaven; and asked his forefathers to pray for rain to the lord of heaven. And it rained.⁹

Taking control of rainmaking not only served immediate purposes. It could secure the future, provided the royal house could maintain its control of the knowledge and prevent knowledge passing to others. The bid for central control would naturally create tension between the Zulu king and other practitioners. Insubordinate rainmakers who withheld their services could pay the ultimate price for their recalcitrance. Andrew Smith claimed that whenever a chief was killed, his ‘queen’ (see Chapter Seven on the ritual powers of certain royal women) and most of his doctors were also killed. This means that those seen as ritually significant and possessing medicines or relics of kingship which might threaten or enhance the kingship were killed. Importantly the Zulu state retained control of both the medicines and the relics. It is likely that it was for

⁷Mahaya ka Nongqabana in *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 130.

⁸Leslie, *Among the Zulus and Amatongas*, 169.

⁹H. Callaway, *The Religious System of the AmaZulu*, 92.

these reasons that certain rainmakers and doctors were killed by Shaka. A similar explanation can be applied to the other chiefs who are remembered as having struggled with diviners.

Later kings also worked to ensure the supreme power of their ancestors in rainmaking. In the reign of Dingane (1828-40), the struggle for control over rainmakers was as much an external issue as internal. Mzilikazi, Sobhuza and Soshangane had departed taking important rainmakers with them. An Ndwandwe revival continued to threaten the Zulu. It is also possible that after Dingane's assassination of Shaka, the new king would have required new rainmakers to appeal to other ancestors for rain because his own ancestors — including his brother Shaka — might be displeased with his actions.

Dingane was the first king who had to contend with missionaries who discounted Zulu religious practices, who set themselves up as representing a higher authority and who declared that the ancestors had no influence. Missionaries directly challenged the responsibility of the king and his ancestors for rainmaking by praying to their own God for rain. As Stuart's informant Mandhlakazi said later, "it is clear that missionaries are endeavouring to break down the native *uhlanga* and to destroy the power of the chiefs."¹⁰ The religious activities of missionaries were much more difficult for the Zulu king to influence hence the king's ritual and religious authority was gravely threatened by this unexpected external force. In addition, adventurers and traders had set themselves up as 'chiefs' and there was a settlement at Port Natal to which people could migrate. D. C. Toohey said in 1835 that he found John Cane, Henry Ogle, James Collis, and Charles Pickman had all established several 'kraals' installing themselves as supreme leader.¹¹ Collis (1835) said that around 3,000 people acknowledged him and

¹⁰Mandhlakazi ka Ngini in *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 185.

¹¹J. Bird, (ed.), *The Annals of Natal: 1495-1845*, 1 (First published, 1888; reprinted Cape Town, 1965), 550-1.

several others as their chiefs to whom the people looked for protection.¹² There were several white men acting like chiefs, but they did not behave as chiefs in the Zulu sense. Not did they submit to Dingane's authority in religion. He was the supreme leader in ritual and medicines — anyone in his territory with access to powerful medicines not already in the king's possession was obliged to forward it. Anyone using medicines unlawfully (witchcraft) was killed. In 1831 Dingane requested that Fynn (who had assumed the status of chief) kill six Cele chiefs, saying that they were guilty of witchcraft in one of Dingane's kraals while under Fynn's protection. Dingane and Fynn argued and this would have caused enormous tension in political and religious terms.¹³ Thus, tensions between the traders and the king had a religious as well as a secular dimension.

Shooter records an occasion in which Mpande appealed to the shades of Jama and Shaka for rain.¹⁴ In this instance, Mpande sought the assistance of two other rainmakers — one male and one female. Mpande had earlier sought rainmakers from the Natal and Swazi regions. When rain fell after the intervention of the first independent rainmaker mentioned, Mpande did not recognise the rainmaker's success. Rather, he attributed the rainfall to his own ancestors — Shaka and Dingane. Shooter claimed that the female rainmaker that he consulted was "famous in Shaka's time" (which undermines claims that Shaka killed *all* the rainmakers).¹⁵

¹²B. Leverton, (ed.), *Records of Natal, Volume Three August 1835-June 1838* (Pretoria, 1990), 16.

¹³H. Fynn, *The Diary of Henry Francis Fynn*, (eds.), J. Stuart and D. McK Malcolm, (Pietermaritzburg, 1969), 210.

¹⁴J. Shooter, *The Kafirs of Natal and the Zulu Country* (First published, 1857: reprinted New York, 1969), 212.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 213-4.

Symbols of office

The *inkatha* is another good example of the interrelationship of religion and politics. Bryant tells us that the *inkatha* was important in the ritual associated with the ‘coronation’ of a new king. The doctor gathered medicines and other items (materials connected to his enemies so as to gain ascendancy over them) he had collected and prepared. Some of these medicines were burned and some were smeared on the king thereby “homoeopathically, fortifying him against all possible noxious influences bearing upon him from without.”¹⁶ The doctor also manufactured the *inkatha* for the new king.

The *inkatha* was considered sacred, passed from one generation to the next and was an important part of the king’s regalia. Bryant says that each king had his own private *inkatha* and that when he died this was incorporated into the ‘national’ *inkatha*. As the *inkatha* of preceding kings were combined with the ‘national’ *inkatha* it would not only have grown physically, but the spiritual power of the *inkatha* would have increased. Stuart’s informant Ndukwana describes two *inkatha* — the ‘small’ one used by the king when he stirred up medicines. The second *inkatha* described by Ndukwana was the ‘great’ one (*inkatha yezwe*) — the ‘national’ *inkatha* representing the ‘binding together of the nation’ and used for ceremonial occasions.¹⁷

When ill, the king was treated on the *inkatha* by his doctor.¹⁸ The king “stands on the *inkatha* as he bathes himself with prescribed decoctions whilst he sits on it — when

¹⁶A. Bryant, *The Zulu People* (1949, Pietermaritzburg), 469.

¹⁷Ndukwana ka Mbengwana in *James Stuart Archive*, 4, (Pietermaritzburg, 1986), 280. Baleni ka Silwana in *James Stuart Archive*, 1, (Pietermaritzburg, 1976), 40. Ndukwana, in *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 373.

¹⁸L. Samuelson, *Zululand, Its Traditions, Legends, Customs and Folklore* (First published, 1911; reprinted Durban, 1974), 138-9.

rubbed with other drugs whose special object is to invigorate and give him ascendancy over the foe.”¹⁹ The ‘war doctor’ would call on the ancestors of the king and proceed to treat the army.²⁰

The *inkatha* symbolised Zulu power in the developing state, the dominance of Zulu ancestors and the continuation of that authority. It played a significant part in establishing Zulu ideological dominance over a large geographical area of previously politically independent groups and in undermining their relics of chiefship. “Inkata [sic] grass was gathered from all the paths of the nations ... it would be plaited and have medicines mixed with it ... to gain ascendancy over kings so that impi will catch him and defeat.”²¹ Not only did it represent the binding together of the nation, but was also considered an important instrument for drawing back deserters. A person could not leave if anything belonging to them was placed on it because they would be overcome and caught. According to the reminiscence of Paulina Dlamini (a royal attendant during Cetshwayo’s time):

Shaka greatly strengthened the power of the *inkatha*. He subjected a large number of tribes but formed them into a united people by collecting bits from the *izinkatha* of vanquished tribes and particles from the bodies of slain chiefs and embodying them in his own coil. When the king has made physical contact with the *inkatha*, when he sits on it, a power emanates from him which transcends all distance. He can influence his army so that it does not waver and stands united in battle to defeat the enemy. He also prevents the spirits of dead chiefs and their followers, from aiding the enemy in battle, because when he sits on his *inkatha*, holding the ceremonial assegai, those spirits become a footrest for his feet. This assegai, the *inhlendla* takes the place of a sceptre. It is crescent-shaped and has a long shaft.²²

We do not really know very much about the precursor of the royal *inkatha*, but it seems that similar ritual materials had existed at the chiefdom level. Bryant suggests that Senzangakhona conceived the idea of the *inkatha* and entrusted it to Langazana.²³ In

¹⁹Killie Campbell Africana Library (KCAL), Stuart Papers, File 66/15.

²⁰KCAL, Stuart Papers, File 66/15.

²¹Ndhlovu ka Timuni, in C. de B. Webb and J. Wright, (eds.), *James Stuart Archive*, 4, (Pietermaritzburg, 1986), 211.

²²H. Filter, *Paulina Dlamini: Servant of Two Kings*, (ed. & trans), S. Bourquin, (Durban, 1986), 35.

²³A. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal* (London, 1929), 56. Bryant, *The Zulu People*, 476-7.

effect then, the Zulu 'national' *inkatha* overrode the power of all competing devices and nullified the power of rival chiefly ancestors. The Zulu king enhanced his legitimacy by emphasising and elaborating this symbol.

First fruits ceremony (*umkhosi* ritual) and the king

The Zulu *umkhosi* (held each year in the *Masingana* month; around early January) lasted three days. On the final day the king consumed the product of the first crops. Until that time it was forbidden for anyone to eat the produce.²⁴ Such harvest rituals were not peculiar to the Zulu. Gardiner observed that it "obtains among all the neighbouring nations." Stuart's informant Mabonsa recalled that the Hlubi also had an *umkhosi* ceremony (see below).²⁵ However, Shaka 'nationalised' what in many cases had been a local harvest ritual, enhanced the status and importance of the ceremony, and focussed it very much on the Zulu king and his ancestors.²⁶ As Robert Samuelson explains:

The true subject dealt with here is Umkhosi, commonly known as the Feast of First Fruits. The true meaning of Umkhosi is, however, the King's Mass, for no one could perform it except the King of the Zulus. The word comes from the noun Inkosi ("King"), which had its inflex "in" altered to "um", to found the word Umkhosi. The Umkhosi was divided into three parts, each carried out at different times, and each having ceremonies which differed in many respects. The three parts were named: Umkhosi Wegade, Umkhosi Wokunyathela,

²⁴T. Arbousset and F. Dumas *Narrative of an Exploratory Tour to the North-East of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope* (First published, 1846; reprinted Cape Town, 1968), 154-155. A. Gardiner *Narrative of a Journey to the Zoolu Country in South Africa* (First published, 1836; reprinted Cape Town, 1966), 96. Mkando ka Dhlova in *James Stuart Archive*, 3, (Pietermaritzburg, 1982), 168.

²⁵Gardiner, *Narrative of a Journey to the Zoolu Country in South Africa*, 96. Mpondos see M. Hunter, *Reaction to Conquest* (First published, 1936; reprinted London, 1961), 404. Bechuanas see E. Casalis *The Basutos; or Twenty-Three Years in South Africa* (First published 1861; reprinted Cape Town, 1965), 215. Hlubi see Mabonsa ka Sidhlayi in *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 24-25.

²⁶G. Champion, *Journal of the Rev. George Champion: American Missionary in Zululand 1835-1839*, (ed.) A. Booth, (Cape Town, 1967), fn. 49, 139.

Umkhosi Wemithetho; The central and essential figure in all these ceremonies was the king; he was the King, Master of Ceremonies and the High Priest.²⁷

However, Shaka was not the first to attempt to centralise the ritual; he was repeating a practice he may have learned from the Mthethwa chief, Dingiswayo. During the Mthethwa's period of expansion Dingiswayo had attacked and subsequently killed Tokozwayo ka Mandayiya because he had held a first fruits ceremony without permission. Thus, he was effectively defying the authority of the Mthethwa chief.²⁸ The 'right' to hold the *umkhosi* was reserved for the most powerful group and was thus an extremely important element in the ideology of dominance.²⁹ Shaka applied the same policy regarding the first fruits ceremony but with greater force.

All men had to travel to the capital for the Zulu *umkhosi* and the ritual effectively confirmed allegiance to the king.³⁰ All tributary chiefs were required to attend the ceremony and failure to do so would have been interpreted as challenge or opposition to Zulu rule and the chief killed.³¹ A 'national' dance took place specifically reserved for this event. It was an opportunity for the ritual strengthening of the king, parading the army in full war dress to the multitudes that assembled for the ceremony, and for the declaration or rescinding of laws, repeated to the *amabutho* by messengers. It concluded with the singing of the king's song ('national anthem').³² Shooter observed in 1857

²⁷R. Samuelson, *Long, Long Ago* (Durban, 1929), 380.

²⁸KCAL, Stuart Papers, File 53/4.

²⁹KCAL, Stuart Papers, File 52/6. Papers, File 52/5. The right' to have an *isigodlo* was also reserved for the most powerful group.

³⁰Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 72.

³¹Fynn, *The Diary of Henry Francis Fynn*, 304-5.

³²Samuelson, *Long, Long Ago*, 386. Mkando in *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 152. Leslie, *Among the Zulus and Amatongas*, 91. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 72.

that “Tshaka added to it certain military rites, and gave it much more the aspect of a war-feast.”³³

The *umkhosi* would also involve a ceremony at the ‘royal’ graves praising the Zulu ancestors and requesting rain.³⁴ Centralising the first fruits ceremony was thus closely associated with the centralisation of rainmaking. “This annual meeting, by which they are enabled to count the years of any King’s reign, lasts three or four days and defines Kings from chiefs, who dare not presume to such a privilege.”³⁵ Some groups, however, were allowed to hold localised harvest ceremonies —under Shaka’s strict control as in the case of the Qwabe:

Tshaka attacked the Qwabe on this side of the river after killing Pakatwayo. The Qwabe ate our gourds. My father sent and reported the fact to Tshaka. T. said, ‘O, they are doing things they shouldn’t do behind my back. Why do they do this? Let these wrong-doers perish!’ The gourds were then hidden. Tshaka proclaimed a warning to the wrong-doers and the annoyance ceased, whereupon the gourds which had been hidden away were once more used openly. The country then became quiet.³⁶

Thus permission had to be granted by the king before certain privileged chiefs could hold this festival. The *igagane* was allowed—a local ceremony among the Hlubi which coincided with the *umkhosi*. “But it was a very different affair. People used to go and beg permission of the king to eat pumpkins, on the ground that there was famine at (their) kraal. People would, as it was called, ‘ask for the gourd’, i.e. pumpkins.”³⁷ It was this ceremony that conveyed to the Hlubi that the Zulu king had eaten the first fruits and thus they could now eat their harvest.³⁸ Stuart’s informant explained that “it used to be *umkhosi* among our tribe previously to Tshaka. We were prohibited from practising the custom as it was intended our tribe should be extinguished in order that

³³Shooter, *The Kafirs of Natal and the Zulu Country*, 25.

³⁴Mtshayankomo ka Magolwana, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 115-8, 146.

³⁵Fynn, *The Diary of Henry Francis Fynn*, 304-5.

³⁶Melapi ka Magaye, *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 80.

³⁷Mabonsa, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 21.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 21.

Tshaka's nation should be augmented.”³⁹ The Mbo chief, Zihlandlo, retained privileges related to the *umkhosi*.

Sambela was a younger own-brother of Zihlandhlo. He followed him in age.... When Sambela had grown up, Tshaka said to Zihlandhlo, 'I must take him and make him *induna* of all my *amabuto* and of yours.' Sambela became a great and famous fighter, no one greater. In consequence of his eminence, Zihlandhlo made a chief of him, that he should be saluted as one, and hold his own *umkosi* ceremony.⁴⁰

The 'national' Zulu *umkhosi* ritual was thus important for the dissemination of Zulu ideology and a visible sign of Zulu power over the state. It legitimised the king's rule and reinforced his authority. The practice continued under Dingane.⁴¹ So entrenched were the taboos surrounding the *umkhosi* that they endured even among groups who went to live in Natal. Stuart's informant, Ndhlovu, tells us that after Thimuni left during Dingane's reign, he was afraid to hold an *umkhosi* lest he been seen as claiming status equal to that of Dingane.⁴² Some elements of the ceremony stayed the same under Dingane, others changed. In his time "girls were not specially called up as in Tshaka's day; they used to come to the head kraal, Mgungundhlovu, for the *mkosi*, and would bring food for their brothers. They were not *buta'd*."⁴³

More changes in the *umkhosi* emerged during Mpande's reign (1840-1872). Due to the presence of the Boers and the British the king no longer controlled the chiefs as Shaka had. It is likely that the spread of colonialism and internal divisions such as the succession disputes between Cetshwayo and Mbuyazi saw the *umkhosi* cease to be the all-important 'national' ritual it had been during Shaka's leadership. Stuart's informant Mbovu explained referring to the early 1900s that:

nowadays the country belongs to the new generation - *abatsha*. We have mixed up; old habits and customs of the Zulus are dying out. We do not hold the *umkosi* ceremony. Formerly those who were Christians lived on mission reserves; now they live in among

³⁹Mabonsa, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 25.

⁴⁰Mbokodo ka Sikulekile in *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 8, 11.

⁴¹G. Stow, 'Intrusion of the Stronger Races' [ca. 1880] Ts. Part V MSB 472 (6), 47

⁴²Ndhlovu ka Timuni in *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 207.

⁴³Ndukwana, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 273.

ordinary natives. The old ways are therefore dying out. New laws etc. have come in. The missionaries belong to us and cause our old ways to die out, especially as we do not hold the *umkosi* ceremony.⁴⁴

At the height of the kingdom's glory, however, the *umkhosi* had been a mechanism for the assertion of Shaka's ritual dominance and the power of his ancestors.

Umkhosi and marriage

The *umkhosi* was connected with human reproduction as well as fertility of the land because the *umkhosi* was the time when regiments of men and women were given permission by the king to marry.⁴⁵ Much has been written about the delay and control of marriage in the Zulu state. It is usually attributed to Shaka and explained in military terms, but it should be noted that marriage (and thus reproduction) was strongly associated with this centralised harvest ritual.

As people were integrated into the Zulu state, the institution of marriage moved from the private sphere (localised) into the public (centralised) sphere. This was another way of chipping away at localised power and breaking down family alliances for the purposes of state building. Walter Gisborne observed in 1836 that "when a Caffre chief is a clever man he has great power, when he is a weak man the heads of tribes and the heads of villages possess the power he would have if he had more ability."⁴⁶

Controlling marriage restricted people's movements around the region. It gave Shaka greater, but indirect, control over the movement of people from place to place. It particularly restricted the movement of women since wives went to live with their husbands' families. It also restricted the movements of men who may have considered setting up their own homestead and thus controlled to some extent the emergence of headmen within the state.

⁴⁴Mbovu ka Mtshumayeli in *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 34.

⁴⁵Lunguza ka Mpukane *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 317. KCAL Stuart Papers, File 2, *Studies in Zulu Law and Custom*, by James Stuart (printed as a pamphlet), 4.

⁴⁶Leverton, *Records of Natal, Volume Three August 1835-June 1838*, 63.

Control of marriage took on additional meaning when it was used as ritualistic reward for allegiance and loyal service. This aspect of Zulu dominance was attested by one of Stuart's informants:

It so happened that the Jobe people were in the habit of putting on their headrings at an early age, so, when recruited by Tshaka into the Hlomendhlini regiment, many of them already had put on headrings. Tshaka asked who had given them permission to sew on headrings, and then directed that all were to be cut off and removed, which was done. They again put them on when at Mgungundhlovu under Dingana.⁴⁷

Incorporated chiefs were also subjected to Zulu control in matters of marriage. Fynn relates a story of a dispute between the Qwabe chief Nqetho and Dingane which arose because the Qwabe chief had married two women, one of whom was the wife of his dead brother Pakatwayo. He had acquired her in accordance with *ngena* (levirate marriage: taking as wife the widow of a dead brother). However, he only reported to Dingane that he had taken one wife. "But Dingane, having heard of the other (i.e. the spinster), handed Nqetho's messenger over to the chiefs, by whom he was to be tried for attempting to impose on the King."⁴⁸ The case was decided in favour of Nqetho on the basis of *ngena*. But Dingane was displeased as he had ordered that "no marriage of any kind was to be entered into" and Nqetho feared for his life.⁴⁹

Exceptions were occasionally allowed. "No one was ever allowed to marry without having *tunga'd* [sewing on the headring - rite-of-passage]. If, however, some man of high standing died and his kraal had to be kept up, special permission would be given to a young man (son or near relative of deceased) to *tunga*, even though he might have been *buta'd* [gathered together] with a regiment not up to that time permitted to *tunga*, and to marry a girl."⁵⁰

⁴⁷Lunguza, *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 302-3.

⁴⁸Fynn, *The Diary of Henry Francis Fynn*, 165.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 165.

⁵⁰Ndukwana, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 274.

Though there is much disagreement among Stuart's informants on this issue, it is possible that once again Shaka may not have been the first to assert these controls on marriage. He may have appropriated and enlarged upon existing practice. Delaying marriage could have been a practice adopted from the Thuli according to Stuart's informant Maziyana.⁵¹ Another informant says that Dingiswayo had married women off by command.⁵² On the other hand, Ndukwana says that "the *jubaing* [issuing of order especially in relation to marriage] of girls began with Tshaka in Zululand. In Senzangakona's time there were no such rules about marriage. Girls could take their own lovers. (Ndukwana) hears nothing of *jubaing* (among) Dingiswayo's people."⁵³ Centralised control of marriage continued under Dingane but Ndukwana noted a change in his time:

Dingana no longer went according to custom or method, for when the fighting with the Boers began, Dingana's object was to occupy two counties, i.e. Zululand and Swaziland, so that although the Boers attacked and succeeded in one country, Dingana could still defend and hold the other. In order to occupy this country, it was necessary to cause an extra number of men to marry in order to populate and hold the proposed state. This being so, Dingana caused many youths, who otherwise would not have been permitted, to *tunga*, and *juba'd* girls to them accordingly.⁵⁴

James Stuart made a note that his informant Socwatsha attributed the introduction of state sanctioned marriage to Dingane and not Shaka — though this seems unlikely.⁵⁵

By directing the marriage of age-groups or 'regiments' of men or women which he enrolled (*amabutho*) and tying it to the *umkhosi* ritual Shaka was centralising and elaborating a rite-of-passage previously in the hands of chiefs and lineage heads. As Maurice Bloch observes, increased ritualization of behaviour accompanies increased

⁵¹Maziyana ka Mahlabeni in *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 292. KCAL Stuart Papers, File 2, *Studies in Zulu Law and Custom*, by James Stuart (printed as a pamphlet), 5.

⁵²Magidi ka Ngomane in *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 79.

⁵³Ndukwana, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 333.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, 273-274, 276.

⁵⁵Jantshi ka Nongila in *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 177.

elaboration of authority. By its repetition ritual emphasises rules of behaviour. The entire group acts out, and accepts, the authority of those who direct the ritual. “In this sense, says Bloch, ritual is culturized and symbolic authority Thus, to increase the ritual associated with office, is to increase or to substantiate an increase in his authority.”⁵⁶

Circumcision

Circumcision —a rite-of-passage into manhood —was practiced in many parts of north eastern South Africa during the early nineteenth century. A ban on circumcision among the Zulu has been widely attributed to Shaka and, like marriage bans, is most often explained in military terms. Jantshi recalled that previously all men were circumcised, it was not a prerequisite for marriage nor did it need to be sanctioned by the king as other rituals were.⁵⁷ This poses an apparent contrast to the increased centralisation of ritual noted above. It is possible, however, that the abolition of circumcision was in fact another manifestation of the state control of ritual. It was not so much the abolition of the practice itself that was important, but rather, its removal from the ritual control of lesser chiefs and their circumcisers. Thus, denying them their rights to conduct the ceremony paralleled the state’s takeover of the *umkhosi*, marriage, rainmaking and powerful medicines. Second, it is possible that it was an identity marker; to be Zulu meant not to be circumcised. This would effectively cut across other ethnic markers (eg. *amaNtungwa* and *amaLala*) and provide a clear ‘national’ identifying symbol. This would be similar to the way in which Shaka had certain Zulu *amabutho* marked by ornamental incisions.⁵⁸ Third, it would have been impractical to centralise circumcision and perform the ceremony on a mass scale. The abolition of circumcision,

⁵⁶R. Cohen, ‘State Origins: A Reappraisal’, in H.J.M. Claessen and P. Skalník (eds.), *The Early State*, (The Hague, 1978), 63.

⁵⁷Jantshi, *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 195.

⁵⁸Dinya ka Zokozwayo in *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 104. This also indicates that the state regiments were not homogenous.

therefore, was another way of exerting state control over the rituals outside the royal court among *amabutho* even when they had returned to their chiefdom.

As with other so-called Shakan innovations, there is some doubt that Shaka was the first to tamper with this rite-of-passage. Stuart's informant, Jantshi, suggested that perhaps it began with Dingiswayo.⁵⁹ Fynn says that:

before the date of Dingiswayo's conquests, the custom of circumcision had been general among all kafir natives: but he ordered the right to be deferred until he should have brought under his dominion all within his reach. Owing to this circumstance, circumcision fell into disuse among all the Eastern tribes, and the omission of the ceremony extended to all who acknowledged his authority. Among these was Senzangakona: the rite was postponed in his case.⁶⁰

It seems the omission of the ritual imposed by the Mthethwa as a aspect of domination was continued under Shaka.

The right to practice rituals such as circumcision at the more local level was reasserted by those who broke away or maintained a level of independence. Among the Swazi, circumcision occurred at around 33-34 years of age, and followed the man putting on the headring. He was then ready for marriage.⁶¹ The Swazi king Mswati (Mswazi, Mavuso) ended the practice apparently in response to missionary influence around 1845-1865.⁶² Among the Mabaso Thembu it was Ngoza who ended it.⁶³ And among the Mpondo it ceased during the leadership of Mqikela.⁶⁴

⁵⁹Jantshi, *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 195. G. Stow, 'Intrusion of the Stronger Races' [ca. 1880] Ts. Part VMSB 472 (6), 156.

⁶⁰Bird, *The Annals of Natal*, 1: 64.

⁶¹Mnkonkoni in *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 284.

⁶²J. Gama in *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 140. Mnkonkoni in *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 284.

⁶³Lunguza, *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 301.

⁶⁴Hunter, *Reaction to Conquest*, 396.

Conclusion

Just as Shaka set out to control powerful medicines, he also took control of key rituals in which such medicines would have been used. It appears that as Shaka incorporated new groups into the Zulu state, he restructured social and political organisation by removing much of the ritual authority of chiefs and centralising key rituals — especially those related to fertility and prosperity: rainmaking and the *umkhosi* — and by controlling rites-of-passage such as marriage and circumcision. Taking control of ritual was not a Shakan innovation, but he did elaborate ‘traditional’ patterns of thought and behaviour to disseminate Zulu ideology. Shaka initiated some changes and borrowed others.

There is little evidence that Shaka used ‘foreign’ rainmakers during his reign (i.e. rainmakers residing outside the Zulu state). Rather, there is evidence that he purposefully incorporated groups with reputations as great rainmakers, overcame chiefs with rainmaking reputations, stratified the profession of rainmaking and took on a rainmaking role himself. It is likely that the ‘national’ song of the Zulu noted by Callaway was important for ideological purposes in centralising ritual and asserting Zulu religious dominance.⁶⁵ Shaka declared that rainmaking was a prerogative of kings. Others who assumed such powers were interfering with his authority. In this quest the Zulu ancestors were crucial and central. Using the burial place of past Zulu chiefs as the location for the rituals emphasised the importance and prominence of the king’s ancestors. Again, this served to strengthen his legitimacy as both the spiritual and the political leader of his people.

The elevation of symbols of office such as the *inkatha* to the level of ‘national symbols’, was also part of the same process. The *umkhosi* became a state ritual with strict rules for attendance. During the *umkhosi* the army paraded and new laws were

⁶⁵At the same time, there may have also been rain songs at the chiefly or domestic level.

proclaimed. The king himself underwent elaborated rituals which strengthened him and fostered a sense of sacredness. By increasing his religious role, the king was differentiating himself from others and setting himself apart from others. As Kurtz explains: "Expanding the social distance between the rulers and ruled advances the mystique of the rulers and enhances the respect which the state authority structure demands." ⁶⁶

The *umkhosi* was an important social, political and cultural event and crucial in the dissemination of the dominant ideology. By asserting control over it Shaka's ritual responsibility was elaborated. He became not only responsible for the fertility, welfare and endurance of the entire state through the *umkhosi*, but extended his responsibility over human fertility as well. In this context his marriage controls and the abolition of circumcision need reconsideration. To entrench the royal position both ideologically and politically, Shaka would have needed to override the family or chiefly ancestors in certain matters. Previously, a chief or headman was vested with the authority to act as mediator between the ancestral shades and his living community in private rituals such as marriage and circumcision. The Zulu king needed to shift loyalties from one centre to another — from the local to the central state. Actively breaking the links between the other ancestors and fertility at the chiefly level broke down their ritual power in much the same way as Shaka had broken the control of rainmaking and the *umkhosi*. These assertions of ideological dominance lessened the need for direct physical coercion.

There remained, however, another area of independent ritual power. This involved 'royal' women. Diviners were not the only group with independent power. Certain Zulu royal women were in leadership positions in *ikhanda* and held important religious roles. The analysis would not be complete without examining their key role in state formation which will be the subject of the next chapter.

⁶⁶D. Kurtz, 'The Legitimation of the Aztec State', in H.J.M. Claessen and P. Skalnik (eds.), *The Early State* (The Hague, 1978), 175.

CHAPTER 7

'I SHALL NEED TO USE HER TO RULE': THE POWER OF 'ROYAL' ZULU WOMEN IN PRE-COLONIAL ZULULAND

Zulu historiography does not generally accord an important political place to Zulu women. There are a few studies that focus on the role of *amakhosikazi* and *amakhosazana*. They have generally been treated as peripheral or insignificant in the politics of the state. The predominance of research on Zulu militarism and, therefore, men, may not seem very remarkable because Zulu society is generally taken as a model of hierarchical patriarchy in which men dominated both domestic and political affairs. The 'royal' women have generally been seen first and foremost as mothers, aunts or sisters of Shaka, Dingane or Mpande. The nineteenth century traveller, Adulphe Delegorgue, claimed that, "the government of the Zulus derives its form from the patriarchal. This of all systems is the most natural. But susceptible as it is of extension, it soon assumes exaggerated proportions, and wraps itself in all that is most hideous in despotism."¹ In a classic article, anthropologist Max Gluckman argued that even when women engaged in "rituals of rebellion" they were actually demonstrating their abject subordination in daily life. He believed that women could not become politically powerful, were suppressed in religion and did not become ancestral shades (spirits).² Yet, Helen Bradford has recently pointed to dangers of taking at face value androcentric versions of the South African past.³ In the context of the Xhosa wars, Bradford's work

¹J. Bird, (ed.), *The Annals of Natal: 1495-1845*, 1 (First published, 1888; reprinted Cape Town, 1965), 479.

²M. Gluckman, 'Rituals of Rebellion in South-East Africa', in *Order and Rebellion in Tribal Africa* (London, 1963), 115.

³H. Bradford, 'Women, Gender and Colonialism: Rethinking the History of the British Cape Colony and its Frontier Zones, c. 1806-70', *Journal of African History*, 37 (1996), 351-70.

demonstrated that even such an apparently well known body of knowledge in relation to frontier society, systematically excludes women.

In the case of the Zulu, examination of women's ritual and religious roles is inextricably linked to their other functions in political affairs. This chapter will therefore situate its evidence on the ritual and religious spheres within the larger context of ongoing debates about the changing role of women in leadership.

The consensus on female powerlessness in Zulu political life is very much a twentieth century phenomenon. As far back as the early 1850s, colonial officials noted that Zulu government, as distinct from Zulu society, was "not patriarchal", though they failed to explore this further.⁴ In 1853 the commissioners appointed to investigate the "past and present state" of Africans in Natal noted the potential for female chieftainship in the context of ownership of cattle.⁵ Not only was there a *potential* for leadership as the commissioners of 1853 noted, but it existed, and rather than being peripheral in politics, key women were central characters.

Notable exceptions to androcentric interpretations of Zulu leadership have been put forward by Carolyn Hamilton and Sean Hanretta.⁶ Hamilton challenges the view of women in the Zulu state as a homogenous group marked by universal subordination. She examines their participation in state institutions and looks at the emergence of the

⁴*Proceedings and Report of the Commission Appointed to Inquire Into the Past and Present State of the Kafirs in the District of Natal,...* (1853), Natal Archives, File NCP 8/3/1, 6.

⁵*Ibid.*, 39.

⁶C. Hamilton, 'Ideology, Oral Traditions and the Struggle for Power in the Early Zulu Kingdom', M.A. Thesis, (University of the Witwatersrand, 1985), 422 - 52. S. Hanretta, 'Women, Marginality and the Zulu State: Women's Institutions and Power in the Early Nineteenth Century', *Journal of African History*, 39 (1998), 389-415. This chapter was not written in response to Hanretta's article, nor is the research in response to Hanretta's.

izigodlo in association with the *amabutho* (male regiments).⁷ Hamilton argues that these institutions fulfilled important socialisation functions and drew on the labour power of the homestead. During the Shakan period elderly Zulu royal women were placed in positions of authority in the *amakhanda* (pl. military kraals; sing. *ikhanda*) and invested with a degree of authority and autonomy because of their age and freedom from ritual constraints. They functioned as the king's representatives, without posing a threat to the king's power because their gender prevented them from usurping the kingship for themselves. Hamilton argues that:

Under Shaka, *izigodlo* were established at every *ikhanda*, housing large numbers of women, well above the levels necessary to fulfil the functions of diplomatic marriages and royal patronage, or those necessary to perform the domestic labor of the king's household. Close examination of provisioning at the *amakhanda* and of the local agricultural cycle suggests that the existence of the hugely expanded women's institutions played a crucial role in crop production for the people based in the *amakhanda*. The concentration of agricultural power in the *izigodlo* under the aegis of the king, represented at every *isigodlo* by an eminent elderly female relative, facilitated the increased centralization of the *amabutho* and provided an added source of royal control. The *izigodlo* became thus a crucial power base for the *amakhosikazi* directly governing the *amakhanda*.⁸

Hanretta suggests that women's leadership was new to the Zulu and that "the potential for both exploitation and the acquisition of power and prestige increased as women's lives became integrated into the Zulu state."⁹ Social and political changes affecting 'royal' women during early nineteenth century were certainly a response to changing circumstances, but involved a complex interaction of three key factors; ideology, legitimacy, and religion. On the one hand, there *was* an attempt by Shaka to focus the greater group (the newly emerging state) on the high status of the *isigodlo*, certain key Zulu women such as Nandi (King Shaka's mother), and those in charge of *amakhanda*. But, on the other hand, their high status and their political power was not altogether new. These women were not "exceptional rather than representative figures [nor were

⁷*Izigodlo* - the king's private enclosure consisting of the huts of his women and children. C. Doke, D.

Malcolm, J. Sikakana, and B. Vilakazi, *Zulu-English Dictionary*, (Johannesburg, 1990), 252.

⁸C. Hamilton, 'Ideology, Oral Traditions and the Struggle for Power in the Early Zulu Kingdom', 505.

⁹Hanretta, 'Women, Marginality and the Zulu State', 415.

they] ... honorary males ...” as argued by Cheryl Walker.¹⁰ It is this concept of *amakhosikazi* and *amakhosazana* power that is lacking in Hanretta’s article. Arguably, there was a decrease in the power of *amakhosikazi* and *amakhosazana* as the state became more centralised.

Key indicators of these women’s positions and their power were their religious roles, position in *ikhanda*, mourning rituals, symbolic ‘celibacy’, and the link with legitimacy, integration and boundary issues.¹¹ If we look at evidence concerning the Zulu *amakhosikazi* and *amakhosazana* we find some similar links between ritual, religion and chiefly power. The point is that the focus for those people incorporated into the state had to be on **Zulu** *amakhosikazi* and *amakhosazana* rather than those of subjugated groups — to surpass the importance of other *amakhosikazi* and *amakhosazana* in the same way as Shaka was consolidating a state dominated by the Zulu. Both Shaka and Dingiswayo appear to have attempted to incorporate and to combine in their own persons aspects of both male and female power. “Dingiswayo and, after him, Shaka pretended to be afflicted with certain evacuations in the way that women are, though not at regular periods. On these occasions numerous cattle were slaughtered and many people killed.”¹²

Richard Adams’ analysis of power in terms of independent and dependent power is also useful for this study. Independent power, according to Adams (see also Chapter Two,

¹⁰C. Walker, (ed.), *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945* (Cape Town, 1990), 29.

¹¹P. Shifferd, ‘Ideological Problems and the Problem of Ideology: Reflections on Integration and Strain in Pre-Colonial West Africa’, in H.J.M. Claessen and J. Oosten (eds.), *Ideology and the Formation of Early States* (Leiden, 1996), 25-6.

¹²H. Fynn, *The Diary of Henry Francis Fynn*, (eds.), J. Stuart and D Mck Malcolm, (Pietermaritzburg, 1969), 30.

page 27), is “a quality ascribed to people, and often also to things, that concerns their relative abilities to cope with the real world or their potential effect on it.”¹³

In the developing Zulu state it is likely that certain components of the previous system — such as the role of some ‘royal’ women — either aided or interfered with the process of consolidation and cohesion. *The James Stuart Archive* and the writings of missionaries, early nineteenth century travellers, and contemporary anthropologists provide a wealth of information concerning these aspects of the Zulu state and society in the pre-colonial period.¹⁴

Zulu amakhosikazi and amakhosazana

Hanretta suggests that as a result of the militarisation of Zulu society a “new role for royal women developed” because the king needed “direct” representatives in the military establishments. Hanretta further argues that this allowed Shaka to represent the state organisation as an extension of household organisation.¹⁵ Leadership however, had little to do with Shaka in the sense that he did not bestow leadership roles on women for the first time. Nor was leadership not confined to Zulu women. They were not participating in what had usually been “male spheres of action” or exercising their power indirectly through a male family member.¹⁶ Further, chiefly women’s power was not necessarily related to age as Hanretta argues. Women leaders existed throughout northern and central Africa since ‘ancient’ times. While evidence is

¹³R. Adams, ‘Power in Human Societies: A Synthesis’, in R. Fogelson and R. Adams, (eds.), *The Anthropology of Power* (New York, 1977), 388-9. Adams describes the concept of power as “the ability of a person or social unit to influence the conduct and decision-making of another through the control over energetic forms in the latter’s environment (in the broadest sense of that term).” 388.

¹⁴Webb and Wright, *James Stuart Archive*, 1-4, (Pietermaritzburg, 1976-1986).

¹⁵Hanretta, ‘Women, Marginality and the Zulu State’, 398.

¹⁶Hamilton, ‘Ideology, Oral Traditions and the Struggle for Power in the Early Zulu Kingdom’, 424.

Hanretta, ‘Women, Marginality and the Zulu State’, 398.

fragmentary, many records attest to the existence of female leaders in southern African regions. Christine Qunta argues that in the pre-colonial era, “contrary to the more popularly held view, African women on a continent-wide scale enjoyed great freedom and had both a legal and social equality which, among other things, enabled them to become effective heads of state and military strategists.”¹⁷ In order demonstrate ‘royal women’s significance in politics and religion, and to refute Hanretta’s claims, this chapter will:

- cite examples of non-Zulu influential women
- note the significance of various women who held state political and/or ritual roles in the Zulu kingdom.
- extend the discussion beyond the Shakan period in an attempt to demonstrate that there was a decrease in the power of *amakhosikazi* and *amakhosazana* as the state became more centralised and as it broke down in contrast to Hanretta’s claim that women’s leadership was new to the Zulu and that their power increased.

Many women such as Machibise, Mjantshi, Ntombazi, MaNthatisi, Zambili, Mhlase, Lekgolane and MaMthunzini held chiefly positions in southern Africa and demonstrated leadership in both military and ritual affairs. A.T. Bryant, Lieutenant-Governor Sir John Scott, and James Stuart’s informants all mention the female chief named Machibise.¹⁸ She had her own *impi* who gained a reputation as fierce warriors. When Macingwane (a Chumu chief) attacked Machibise and her people, “Macibise offered so stout a resistance that Macingwane was obliged to give up the idea of

¹⁷C. Qunta, ‘Outstanding African Women, 1500 BC - 1900 AD’, in C. Qunta (ed.), *Women in Southern Africa* (London, 1987), 23-4.

¹⁸A. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal* (London, 1929), 256-7. Bird, *The Annals of Natal*, 1: 129, 137. Mahaya ka Nongqabana in *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 119, 137. Mcotoyi ka Mnini in *James Stuart Archive*, 3 (Pietermaritzburg, 1982), 54. Mqaikana ka Yenge in *James Stuart Archive*, 4 (Pietermaritzburg, 1986), 3. According to Bryant, Machibise led two Nqondo offshoots (aba kwa Ngwane and emaHlavuleni).

capturing her cattle.”¹⁹ Mabonsa notes in relation to the Hlubi that “sometimes women’s names give rise to tribal names” a factor which supports chieftainship in relation to women.²⁰

Mjantshi (alias Mjanji, Mochache, Mabelemade) was chief of the Venda.²¹ She was well known for her skill as a rainmaker, and in medicines.²² Francois Coillard, the French Protestant Huguenot wrote of her in 1897.

No stranger is allowed to penetrate into the village of this chieftainess.... She herself is invisible, so that certain individuals take it upon themselves to doubt her existence. Those best informed assert that Mochache really exists, and they even add that she is immortal! All I know is that, like all the fraternity of magicians, she is gifted with a penetration which sets her far above the common herd. For two days, she made us wait, in order to heighten her dignity: then when pressed by my messages, she refused to see us, asking haughtily the object of our visit. He answer was already prepared. "I have my god, and I am his priestess: I do not want you or your God If I allowed you to come to me, either you would be in prison, or you would ruin my authority."²³

These women chiefs held the same ritual importance as their male counterparts.

Coillard also described a woman chief named Nashintu who “exercised power by means of her medicines and her charms. She has a Pandora’s box: she dispenses drought and hail, calamities and epidemics, at will ...”²⁴

¹⁹Mqaikana, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 3, 23. Mahaya, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 119.

²⁰Mabonsa ka Sidhlayi in *James Stuart Archive*, 2; 19.

²¹The evidence is a little unclear as Mjanji seems to have been a generic term for successive female rulers among this group. Nonetheless, there appears to have been a woman who became chief c. 1800, and by 1819 was considerably powerful. Mahaya, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 118. Maputwana ka Didiza in *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 230, 231. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, n. 211. E. and J. Krige, *The Realm of a Rain Queen* (London, 1943), 2.

²²E. Krige, ‘Divine Kingship, Change and Development’, in M. Fortes and S. Patterson, (eds.), *Studies in African Social Anthropology* (London, 1975), 61. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 210-12. Mahaya, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 132.

²³F. Coillard, *On the Threshold of Central Africa* (First published, 1897; London, 1971), 77-8.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 313.

Ntombazi of the Ndwandwe was another politically influential and powerful woman. She played a part in the death of Dingiswayo and overruled Zwide who was inclined to release him following his capture.²⁵ Ntombazi's exact relationship to Zwide is unclear. She was Zwide's mother according to A.T. Bryant or a sister according to Stuart's informant Mpatshana.²⁶ Stuart suggests that she was a spinster, but that status could have applied to either mother or sister (see section on celibacy below).²⁷ Whatever the case, she also held some ritual importance as her hut was deemed sacred. Medicines were kept in her hut including those for *cwiyaing*. The hut was also used by Zwide to purify himself.²⁸ Zwide's daughter also held ritual status. She was, according to Bryant, a renowned rainmaker:

the paternal defect [of Zwide] was in some degree neutralized by the remarkable powers as rain-doctress of his daughter, Madungudu. Indeed, so busy a life did she lead bringing down rain or holding it up, as her clients desired, that she forgot to get married, and so died, at emaGudu, a virgin.²⁹

Sekonyela's mother, MaNthatsi (Mosayane) of the Tlokwa (*ca.* 1781- *ca.* 1836), "the famous conqueror" was said to have had the first voice in his council as well as displaying a celebrated "martial genius" engaging in conflict and allocating land.³⁰

²⁵Jantshi ka Nongila in *James Stuart Archive*, 1 (Pietermaritzburg, 1976), 177, 183-4.

²⁶Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 162. 165. Mbovu ka Mtshumayeli *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 32. Mpatshana in *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 327.

²⁷J. Stuart, *uTulasizwe*, Stuart Paper, file 85/53285.

²⁸Mpatshana, *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 327. Baleka ka Mpitikazi in *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 13.

²⁹Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 162.

³⁰Bird, *The Annals of Natal*, 1: 369. A. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 150-2. E.

Ellenberger, *History of the Basuto* (First published, 1912; Morija, 1992), 124. D. Kotze, (ed.), *Letters of the American Missionaries 1835-1838* (Cape Town, 1950), 193 n. C. Coquery-Vidrovitch, *African Women*, (trans.) B. Raps, (Boulder, 1997), 39. Bryant has her as Mokotjo's widow and Sekonyela's mother, but Ellenberger says that Monyalue, MaNthatsi's mother, bore a son in 1804 called Sekonyela which would make MaNthatsi Sekonyela's sister. Ellenberger, *History of the Basuto*, 42. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 150.

MaNthatisi assumed the leadership around 1817 when Sekonyela was thirteen years old, and thus was active during the early Shakan wars. Following these clashes she led her people westward and fought Moshweshwe and his people. Robert Moffat wrote of her in 1843:

For more than a year numerous and strange reports had at intervals reached us, some indeed of such a character as induced us to treat them as the reveries of a madman. It was said that a mighty woman, of the name of Mantatee, was at the head of an invincible army, numerous as the locusts, marching onward among the interior nations, carrying devastation and ruin wherever she went; that she nourished the army with her own milk, sent out hornets before it, and, in one word, was laying the world desolate.³¹

Sekonyela assumed the chiefship around 1824, but according to David Sweetman, it was six years before full authority was assigned to him by his mother (around 1830; two years after Shaka's death).³²

There are numerous references to women chiefs. MaMthunzini of the abaLumbi, who "anciently occupied from the Umhloti, above Verulum, to the upper part of the Imona River."³³ She came into conflict with Shaka and her people were dispersed by the Zulus. Matyatye (or Ssete) possibly clashed with Mzilikazi.³⁴ Zambili, was influential enough to propose changes to *lobola* practices during her term.³⁵ Mhlase, "paramount chieftainess" of the Hlongwa was ordered by Shepstone to keep her people in line.³⁶ Another notable female ruler was Lekgolane of the Transvaal area.³⁷

³¹R. Moffat, *Missionary Labours and Scenes in Southern Africa*, Second edition, (New York, 1843), 230.

³²D. Sweetman, *Women Leaders in African History* (London, 1984), 61.

³³Bird, *The Annals of Natal*, 1: 129. Mcofotyi, *James Stuart Archive* 3: 54.

³⁴R. Rasmussen, *Migrant Kingdom* (London, 1978), n 53, 186.

³⁵Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 307. P. Bonner, *Kings Commoners and Concessionaires* (Cambridge, 1982), 102. Mahungane and Nkomuza in *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 153, 146. Bryant has her as a daughter of Sobhuza (Swazi king) and mother of Ngwanaza, but Bonner says she was Mswati's daughter and was married to Nozingile the Mabhudu king.

³⁶J. Lambert, *Betrayed Trust* (Pietermaritzburg, 1995), 26.

³⁷P. Delius, *The Land Belongs to Us* (London, 1984), 233-4.

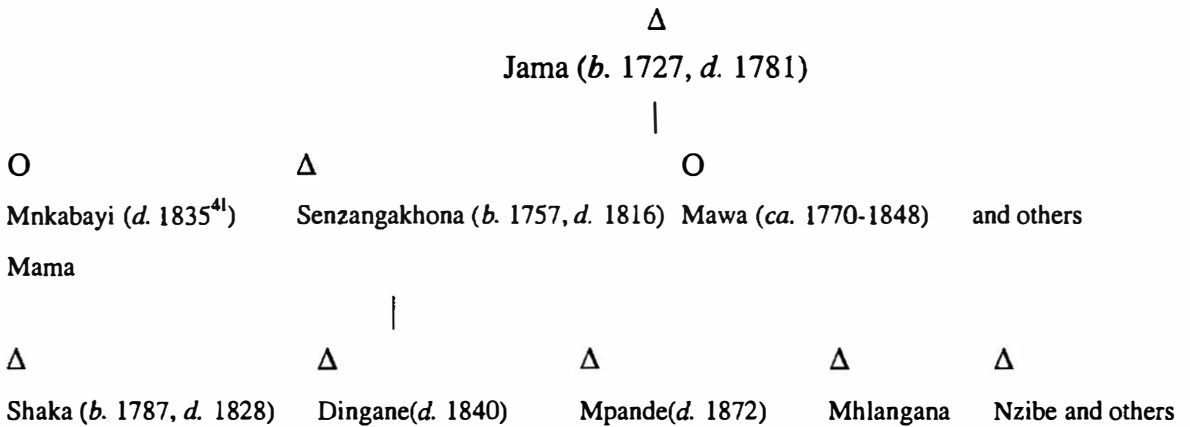
The evidence of James Stuart's informant Ndukwana suggests 'royal' female independence existed at least as far back as Dingiswayo's time — preceding Shaka's leadership. In relation to Dingiswayo's attacks on various groups he is reported to have said "the matter will be decided by the women, for they will get tired of living in the hills and return to the sites of their kraals." Ndukwana goes on to say "they are the ones who scattered the peoples."³⁸ Zulu women exercised similar political, judicial and religious power and authority.

Hanretta does not fully investigate the range of abilities and attributes of individual *amakhosikazi* and *amakhosazana* and barely mentions Mnkabayi yet that woman looms large in the pre-Shakan period. While Mnkabayi's importance has sometimes been recognised, she is most often portrayed as either a passive puppet or a ruthless schemer. She was chief Jama's principal daughter, senior to all her siblings including Senzangakhona.³⁹ In accordance with European classifications she would be described as the aunt of Zulu kings Shaka, Dingane and Mpande (see Figure 6).

³⁸Ndukwana ka Mbengwana in *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 361.

³⁹M. Fuze, *The Black People and Whence They Came*, (ed.) A.T. Cope, (trans), H.C. Lugg, (Pietermaritzburg, 1979), 62. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 40.

Figure 6: ⁴⁰ Relationships



It is not known what Mnkabayi’s exact political position was prior to Jama’s death, but there is much evidence to indicate that she was a very significant woman possessing *independent* power long before Shaka came to rule. ⁴² Mnkabayi’s influence — and that of other powerful ‘royal’ women — extended far beyond the household and was not dependent on men.

According to Bryant, Senzangakhona could not take charge because he was a minor and so Mnkabayi became joint chief of the Zulu with her male cousin Mudli. ⁴³ Using Bryant’s estimates of dates it appears that she would have been a reasonably young

⁴⁰Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 42. Dates of births and deaths are from Bryant’s estimates.

This list is by no means complete. It simply indicates the placement of characters mentioned in this chapter.

⁴¹ We don’t really know when Mnkabayi died. Gardiner wrote of her in 1835. On the basis of this Bryant determined that by that time she was “well over seventy years of age , [and] it is not likely Mnkabayi survived much longer.” Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 42. C. Coquery-Vidrovitch, *African Women*, 39.

⁴²Madikane ka Mlomowetole in *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 49.

⁴³Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 41, 45, 46. Fuze, *The Black People and Whence They Came*, 62.

woman of marriageable age at the time of Jama's death. This casts further doubt on the claims put forward by Hanretta and others: that women's political influence was associated with post-menopausal status; that they were thus unlikely to challenge the king militarily; and that post-menopausal status meant they were ritually clean, and in a position to operate as males.⁴⁴

Even after Senzangakhona became chief, Mnkabayi continued to advise on political matters, most likely taking a key role in council.⁴⁵ She again assumed authority for a short time following his death probably "to allow Tshaka to come up."⁴⁶ Yet, Shaka was around age 29 when his father Senzangakhona died. In contrast with the view of Shaka as the usurper of power, Mnkabayi's transitional leadership suggests a relatively smooth transfer to Shaka. Jantshi claims that "no one was ousted by Shaka [and] it is probable then that Tshaka was offered the position of king."⁴⁷ The question is, offered by whom; Mnkabayi perhaps? This indicates that neither Shaka nor Senzangakhona had possessed untrammelled power as is often assumed.

The struggles for leadership among Zulu males such as Shaka and Dingane are well known, but there may well have been important struggles between Shaka and key women. Mnkabayi is said to have advised Shaka's brothers to kill him. She also played a role in determining the outcome of the subsequent succession dispute between Dingane and Mhlangana by installing Dingane.⁴⁸ She apparently ordered Mhlangana's

⁴⁴Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 42. If she was born when Jama was 20, for example, she would have been around 34 years of age when he died, and Senzangakhona would have been around 24.

⁴⁵Fuze, *The Black People and Whence They Came*, 62.

⁴⁶Jantshi, *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 199.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 199.

⁴⁸Fuze, *The Black People and Whence They Came*, 72, 97. Jantshi, *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 196.

Mkhehlengana ka Zulu in *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 217.

execution for the stabbing of Shaka.⁴⁹ Allen Gardiner reported that he had heard that Mnkabayi and Dingane together overruled a chief's decision to execute him.⁵⁰

Mnkabayi assumed a leadership role at three significant points in Zulu history — following the deaths of Jama, Senzangakhona, *and* Shaka.⁵¹ She engaged in political manipulations, and played a central role in installing the new king. This implicitly challenges claims that Dingiswayo alone (chief of the Mthethwa) was instrumental in installing Shaka. Just how involved Mnkabayi may have been in bringing about the leadership of Senzangakhona, Shaka and Dingane is not really known, but she certainly played a part. She retained a position of influence (as did other women) in the *amakhanda* (military 'kraals') of the successive Zulu kings Shaka (1816-1828), Dingane (1828-1840) and Mpande (1840-1872) and survived the so-called ruthless despotism of both Shaka and Dingane.⁵² *Amakhosikazi* and *amakhosazana* were actually part of the system of leadership before, during and after Shaka's reign.

Location of *amakhanda*; Ideological and religious significance

During the period in which the Zulu established initial dominance over much of their region, challenges to expanding their dominance remained.⁵³ It was during this period that new military *amakhanda* were created, many of which were under the control of

⁴⁹Jantshi, *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 196. Ndukwana, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 346.

⁵⁰A. Gardiner, *Narrative of a Journey to the Zoolu Country in South Africa* (First published, 1836; reprinted Cape Town, 1966), 222-3.

⁵¹Fuze, *The Black People and Whence They Came*, 62, 72. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 45,46, 669. Jantshi, *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 196-9. Mkehlengana, *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 217.

⁵²P. Kirby, (ed.), *Andrew Smith and Natal: Documents Relating to the Early History of that Province* (Cape Town, 1955), 89. Andrew Smith noted her importance and authority when he visited Dingane in 1832.

⁵³J. Wright, 'Political Transformations in the Thukela-Mzimkhulu Region in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries', in C. Hamilton (ed.), *The Mfecane Aftermath* (Johannesburg, 1995), 177.

Shaka's women relatives.⁵⁴ Many of these women belonged to the Zulu clan. Others such as the wives of Senzangakhona were members of other clans in accordance with Zulu exogamy. However, it is possible that as they became 'mothers' of the kings that this overrode previous clan identity. The whole notion of 'clan exogamy' is not at all clear cut. Adam Kuper explains that "in the first place, rules of exogamy did not exclude only marriages with lineal kin. In the second place, it was not true that even among Zulu- and Xhosa-speakers all marriages were banned between people who shared a common patronymic."⁵⁵ Carolyn Hamilton and John Wright have shown how kin relations could be manipulated. They argue that "with the emergence of centralized state ... ruling groups increasingly came to use it [kinship] in attempts to define categories of people whose access to socially necessary resources, and to state power, they were, for historically specifiable reasons, concerned to diminish."⁵⁶ What was really important for the 'royal' women in the Zulu state was an established kin relationship to the king either through consanguinity (biological ties) or affinity (relationships through marriage).

Adam Kuper notes a system of 'appointments' or 'placing' among some southern African groups where the ruler placed male relatives in positions of authority over subordinate groups. In the Zulu state, the relatives placed in positions of authority were women. Why would this be the case? Several explanations can be put forward which connect the ritual and political role of certain women.⁵⁷ *Amakhosikazi* and *amakhosazana* were placed in charge in the *amakhanda* because they were *already* 'traditionally' part of the power structure — particularly Mnkabayi — and because of

⁵⁴This is not to suggest that the woman ruled absolutely or to deny that other males may at the same time have been in a position of authority.

⁵⁵A. Kuper, *Wives for Cattle* (London, 1982), 48.

⁵⁶C. Hamilton, and J. Wright, 'The Making of the *Amalala*: Ethnicity, Ideology and Relations of Subordination in a Precolonial Context', *South African Historical Journal*, 22 (1990), 4.

⁵⁷Kuper, *Wives for Cattle*, 52.

their relationship to the king. They had ritual, administrative and judicial power. Shaka had to carefully balance the pre-existing political power of the women with his own.

It was not unusual to have *amakhosikazi* distributed in various geographic locations, and during Senzangakhona's time, his women resided in at least three different royal *umuzi*.⁵⁸ It is likely that Shaka expanded Zulu dominance by strategically locating certain *amakhosikazi* and *amakhosazana* in *amakhanda* and ruling *with* them. This addressed the factors Shifferd notes as important in the successful development of state — legitimacy, integration and boundary issues.⁵⁹ As the state developed, territorial lines became more important and as Maclean (who spent time at Shaka's capital) recorded in 1855, certain women acted as Shaka's *aides-de-camp* and were the link between himself and his chiefs.⁶⁰

The 'place of Mnkabayi' is well known, her Qulusi *ikhanda* being described by Guy as "the most important of the royal sections."⁶¹ Stuart's informant Ndhlovu spoke of "the people of Mnkabayi" and Ndukwana explained that Qulusi were a 'people' who took their name from Mnkabayi's *ikhanda*.⁶² She also ruled at Nobamba attached to which

⁵⁸Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 46.

⁵⁹P. Shifferd, 'Ideological Problems and the Problem of Ideology: Reflections on Integration and Strain in Pre-Colonial West Africa', 25-6.

⁶⁰C. Maclean, *Nautical Magazine*, Feb, 1855, 67. I am grateful to Julian Cobbing, Rhodes University, for this reference

⁶¹J. Guy, *The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom* (First published, 1979; reprinted Pietermaritzburg, 1994), 252.

⁶²Ndhlovu ka Timuni in *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 224. Ndukwana, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 277. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 181. Guy, *Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom*, 36. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 181, 642. Baleni ka Silwana in *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 20. Magidigidi ka Nobebe in *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 91. Maputwana, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 230. Ndhlovu, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 232.

was the *amaWombe iButho* — Shaka, Dingane, and Mpande were all of the *amaWombe*.⁶³ It is unclear at what time she led each, or whether it was concurrent, but she was not unique or exceptional. Other women relatives of Shaka were at various times also in control of *amakhanda* including Mnkabayi's twin sister Mama, Shaka's father's sister Mawa, his father's widows Mkabi and Langazana, and several of Shaka's sisters.⁶⁴ The Sebeni *ikhanda* was also under Mama, and Mawa (ca. 1770-1848⁶⁵) was in control at Ntonteleni during Dingane's time; Gardiner mentions her being in control of 'Muckachani'.⁶⁶

Mkabi wielded authority over of the esiKlebheni kraal and was assisted by Langazana.⁶⁷ EsiKlebheni was originally one of Jama's and Senzangakhona's establishments, and was continued under Shaka.⁶⁸ When Shaka moved his headquarters the isiklebebe which were broken up and scattered and the uDubintlangu, previously attached to Mkabi's sKlebe kraal, were moved and placed under Mawa's

⁶³Magidigidi, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 91. Baleni, *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 28. C. Faye, *Zulu References* (Pietermaritzburg, 1923), 51. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 46.

⁶⁴Coquery-Vidrovitch, *African Women*, 39. Ndukwana, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 278, 327. Madikane, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 57. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 42-3. Mangati ka Godide in *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 216. Gardiner, *Narrative of a Journey to the Zoolu Country in South Africa*, 116. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 46, 642-3. Baleni, *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 20. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 46. Mgidhlana ka Mpande in *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 105, 108. Jantshi, *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 199. Mmemi ka Nguluzane in *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 248.

⁶⁵Coquery-Vidrovitch, *African Women*, 39.

⁶⁶Ndukwana, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 278, 327. Madikane, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 57. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 42-3. Mangati, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 216. Gardiner, *Narrative of a Journey to the Zoolu Country in South Africa*, 116.

⁶⁷Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 46, 642-3.

⁶⁸Madikane, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 48.

authority.⁶⁹ Baleni lists the four 'kraals' of Langazana's as eZembeni, eNkonjeni, eNdlwayini, eNtoleleni.⁷⁰ In Cetshwayo's time Langazana moved down to her eNdiwayini kraal where Bryant says she died in 1884 at over 90 years of age.⁷¹ Langazana ruled a large area and had judicial functions as did Nomcoba who together with Mnkabayi ordered the death of Mhlangana (Shaka's brother).⁷² Gardiner says that "although only an inferior wife of his father, she bears, with many others, the appellation of "the King's Mother" which suggests that she was deemed 'mother'.⁷³ Mayinga however, claims that she was chief wife at esiKlebheni.⁷⁴

The leadership arrangements in the *amakhanda* were not static and at times some changes in the composition, and the women in authority, seem to have been made. It is also possible that from time to time leadership was collectively exercised with more than one woman in control. The practice of appointing women to oversee *amakhanda* continued under Dingane. Langazana had authority in the Kangelela *ikhanda*, and at esiKlebheni, during Mpande's leadership. EsiKlebheni was headquarters of the Nonkenke regiment and contained over three hundred huts.⁷⁵

The women's *amakhanda* were important in terms of ideology, legitimacy and integration.⁷⁶ Mnkabayi's *ikhanda*, Qulusi, incorporated several groups. According to

⁶⁹Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 642-3.

⁷⁰Baleni, *The James Stuart Archive*, 1: 20.

⁷¹Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 51.

⁷²D. Leslie, *Among the Zulus and Amatongas*, (First published, 1875; reprinted New York, 1969), 70. Ndukwana, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 292.

⁷³Gardiner, *Narrative of a Journey to the Zoolu Country in South Africa*, 123.

⁷⁴Mayinga ka Mbekuzana in *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 256.

⁷⁵Leslie, *Among the Zulus and Amatongas*, 70-1. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 50.

Mtshapi ka Noradu in *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 76. Mayinga, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 256.

⁷⁶Hamilton, 'Ideology, Oral Traditions and the Struggle for Power in the Early Zulu Kingdom', 340.

Guy, Qulusi was established under Shaka, though Stuart's informant, Ndhlovu, refers to Mnkabayi's Qulusi during Senzangakhona's leadership. Mnkabayi had a recognised leadership which possibly overrode previous clan identities.⁷⁷ As Ndukwana pointed out to James Stuart, the Qulusi "is not the name of a regiment but of a people; these people take their name from the name of the kraal of Mnkabayi."⁷⁸ Qulusi was located in the northwestern section of the kingdom and troublesome elements were resettled there by Shaka according to Hamilton.⁷⁹ Hamilton points out that the new Zulu army recruits spent their initial training period at esiKlebheni and Nobamba. Not only was this significant in terms of boundary issues and integration, but also enhanced the dissemination of Zulu ideology, and legitimacy. That is, the "ideas in the periphery... [became] adapted to those prevailing in the centre."⁸⁰ The point is that the focus for those people incorporated into the state had to be on **Zulu amakhosikazi** and **amakhosazana** rather than those of subjugated groups. They had to surpass the importance of others so as to help consolidate a state dominated by the Zulu.

The Zulu king had a very important religious role as the intermediary between the people and the ancestors. In various ways and in varying degrees certain Zulu **amakhosikazi** and **amakhosazana** also had ritual status. One way in which this was

⁷⁷Ndhlovu, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 224. Ndukwana, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 277. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 181. Guy, *Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom*, 36. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 181, 642. Baleni, *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 20. Magidigidi, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 91. Maputwana, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 230. Ndhlovu, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 232. Guy, *Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom*, 36.

⁷⁸Ndukwana, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 277. Maputwana, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 230. Guy, *The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom*, 36.

⁷⁹Hamilton, 'Ideology, Oral Traditions and the Struggle for Power in the Early Zulu Kingdom', 365.

⁸⁰H. Claessen and P. van de Velde, (eds.), *Early State Dynamics* (Leiden, 1987), 15-6.

signified was by their separation from ‘ordinary’ people, and through the processing of medicine in the Zulu *isigodlo* — a sacredness beyond sexual seclusion.⁸¹

The ancestors of previous Zulu rulers — including women — were central to social life and to the legitimacy of the leadership. The women’s Nobamba and esiKlebheni *ikhanda* were located near the graves of kings and provided a vital link to Zulu ancestors. This area (Makhosini district) was of great ritual and religious significance. Praising of the ancestors and various ceremonies were undertaken there.⁸² “When used in connection with the royal graves, ... (the praises of kings) brought about a sense of the power of the nation.”⁸³ The graves and ancestors of women such as Mnkabayi and Nqumbazi were also important in ritual including purification rituals and a refuge for those sentenced to execution.⁸⁴ Ndukwana informed James Stuart that at the place where Mnkabayi was buried “people might find refuge [because] in the case of a king giving the order that any man was to be killed, and this man escaping into the king’s graveyard, he would not be molested any further.”⁸⁵ Another informant, Mpatshana, recalled that at the site of Nqumbazi’s ancestral spirit, the *izinxweleha* (one who has killed another in battle) “were given medicine to suck from the fingers, and sprinkled with medicines to drive off evil.”⁸⁶ Notwithstanding Gluckman’s claims relating to female spirits, the ancestral shade of Mnkabayi was accorded as prominent a place as that of Shaka, Dingane and Senzangakhona. She was praised along with kings in a way that recognised both her political and religious authority. Mtshayankomo told Stuart

⁸¹Ndukwana, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 305-6.

⁸²Mgidhlana, *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 108. Bikwayo ka Noziwana in *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 69.

Mayinga, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 253. Ndukwana, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 290-1. Mtshayankomo ka Magolwana in *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 115-116

⁸³Mtshapi, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 77.

⁸⁴Mpatshana, *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 303-5. Ndukwana, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 360.

⁸⁵Ndukwana, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 360.

⁸⁶Mpatshana, *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 304.

that in Mpande's time he participated in certain rainmaking ceremonies, including the *ukuketa* dance, performed at the graves of kings. He said that "praises were addressed to the kings, to all of those whose graves had been visited — Jama (5), Tshaka (3), Dingana (1), Senzangakona (4), Mnkabayi (2), Punga (7), Ndaba (6), Mageba (8). There was no king whose praises were omitted when the cattle of the spirits were sacrificed."⁸⁷ Mtshayankomo recalled that when Magolwana declaimed praises he began with Senzangakhona followed by Shaka, Mnkabayi, Dingane, Mpande, and so on.⁸⁸ In both cases Mnkabayi, has a prominent position.

In the emerging state, women's independent political (in Adam's terms) and religious position enhanced the king's. Publicly, the aim was for Zulu ancestors to be praised and acknowledged by all. Thus groups residing apart from the king's principal *ikhanda* could be linked to the central group through religion promoting overall unity beyond the regiment. These factors would all be important in contributing to Zulu power and legitimacy because when "the conditions under which people are living change the legitimizing notions must also be changed and adapted to the new conditions [and] views, from the past will continue to influence more recent views".⁸⁹

Unlike the Bemba chiefs of Zambia who cared for their sacred relics, Zulu women had this key role which demonstrated their importance in ritual and religion. The *inkatha*, the sacred symbol of the office of kingship, was 'entrusted' to Langazana and kept in her hut at esiKlebheni.⁹⁰ The king either went to that location, or had it sent to him when required and though Ndukwana does not know when this particular practice

⁸⁷Mtshayankomo ka Magolwana in *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 117,

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, 144.

⁸⁹Claessen and van de Velde, *Early State Dynamics*, 15-6.

⁹⁰Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 56. A. Bryant, *The Zulu People as They Were Before the White Man Came* (Pietermaritzburg, 1949), 476-7. Ndukwana, in *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 373. Baleni, *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 40.

began, he believes that it must have been in Shaka's time.⁹¹ Baleni believes that the *inkatha* was kept at Nobamba in both Senzangakhona's and Dingane's time.⁹² Though the location may have changed in Shaka's time, the custodianship seems to have been 'traditionally' in the hands of significant women.⁹³

Senzangakhona is said to have entrusted the *inkatha* to Langazana.⁹⁴ If this were the case she was unlikely to have been at an age of ritual cleanliness (to use Schapera's terms who says that post menopausal women were permanently ritually clean and could, therefore, participate more freely than men in ritual).⁹⁵ There is no adequate explanation why Langazana was made custodian of the *inkatha* and why other women were keepers of medicines, or played some part in rain-making rituals. It is unclear whether the sacred royal relic was in Langazana's care because she was responsible for it, or whether she actually *owned* it. Because the *inkatha* symbolised the legitimacy of Zulu rule and was linked to the ancestors, the custodian could, theoretically at least, jeopardise legitimacy by withholding it. In this context, she may have been ritually more powerful than the king.⁹⁶ Shaka would have needed to work with such a custodian.

⁹¹Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 56. A. Bryant, *The Zulu People as They Were Before the White Man Came* (Pietermaritzburg, 1949), 476-7. Ndukwana, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 373. Baleni, *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 40.

⁹²Baleni, *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 40.

⁹³Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 56.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, 56.

⁹⁵W. M. Eiselen and I. Schapera, 'Religious Beliefs and Practices', in I. Schapera (ed.), *The Bantu-Speaking Tribes of South Africa*, (London, 1937), 259.

⁹⁶Ronald Cohen argues that by being in possession of the sacred objects of kingship, power passes through the "Queen Mother". She in effect gives power, but can't take it herself. She is the only one who can access the sacred objects and therefore safeguards succession. R. Cohen, 'Oedipus Rex and Regina:

Because the *inkatha* was kept in the back of the hut (presumably the *umsamo*) it could be argued that Langazana's custodianship resembles the chief wife's duties in tending the *umsamo* for the family ancestors. However, a simple transfer from household to state fails to consider the ownership issue and the religious power of *amakhosikazi* and *amakhosazana* related to the significance of the *inkatha*. Thus, rather than a symbol of the office of kingship the *inkatha* could be more accurately described as a symbol of leadership especially when linked with the earlier discussion regarding Mnkabayi.

Shaka's mother Nandi, like other chiefly mothers, had a leadership role and an important personal following. Mabonsa notes that after Mthimkhulu's (Hlubi chief) death "people went off in a body and *khonza'd* Nandi and became her regiment."⁹⁷ Shaka is said to have sworn by her and Maclean reports that Nandi contradicted Shaka.⁹⁸ The conventional view is that older women went to live with their sons because they were no longer 'useful'. In the case of the Zulu kings this practice seems to have had more to do with the political significance of mothers. Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch points out that "the important role played by queen mothers or their equivalents, whether in a matrilineal or patrilineal society, is the clear sign of real female power."⁹⁹

Another way in which Shaka could bolster legitimacy was through the mourning rituals accorded to significant Zulu women. This is most evident through the mourning of

The Queen Mother in Africa', *Africa*, 47, 1, (1977), 23. Zulu women such as Mnkabayi, however, did take power.

⁹⁷Mabonsa, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 20. J. Stuart and D. McK Malcolm describe Nandi as the "patroness" of the Izinyendane regiment. Fynn, *The Diary of Henry Francis Fynn*, n. 1, 124.

⁹⁸Maclean, *Nautical Magazine*, June 1853, 299. Maclean, *Nautical Magazine*, Jan 1854, 27. Krige, *The Social System of the Zulus*, (First published, 1936; reprinted Pietermaritzburg, 1965), 172.

⁹⁹Coquery-Vidrovitch, *African Women*, 37.

Shaka's paternal grandmother Mntaniya (ca. 1730-1825¹⁰⁰) and mother Nandi (d.1827¹⁰¹).¹⁰² They were mourned in a manner similar to chiefs. Nandi's mourning in particular seems to have staked out new dimensions in political terms. Mntaniya's mourning appeared to take on a 'national' significance, but we know few other details.¹⁰³ The death and mourning of Nandi on the other hand is well known and has been described in great detail.¹⁰⁴ An eye witness recalls that Nandi died a natural death and was not killed by Shaka as is often claimed.¹⁰⁵ Fred Fynney, for example, believed that Shaka killed his mother for concealing a child of his.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁰The time of her death is disputed. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 41. Madikane, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 49. Madikane's evidence suggests that Mntaniya was poisoned by Mnkabayi to ensure that Senzangakhona would become king and not the child that was produced through Mntaniya's marriage following Jama's death - thus many years earlier than that claimed by Bryant. He claims she died in early November 1825, yet he also claims later in the book that she dies on 4 October 1825. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 41, 606.

¹⁰¹ The time of Nandi's death is also unclear. Isaacs claims to have heard of Nandi's death on 11 August 1827, but Bryant claims she died on 10 October 1827. *Ibid.*, 608.

¹⁰²Charles Maclean, an eye witness in Shaka's time, says that the only bodies that were interred were those of great chiefs. Maclean, C. *Nautical Magazine*, Aug. 1853, 434.

¹⁰³Fynn, *The Diary of Henry Francis Fynn*, 121. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 41. N. Isaacs, *Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa*, 1, (ed.), L. Herrman, (First published, 1836; reprinted Cape Town, 1937), 51.

¹⁰⁴Fuze, *The Black People and Whence They Came*, 63-64. Jantshi, *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 194-5. Lunguza ka Mpukane in *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 307, 337. Ndukwana, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 292-3, 327. Isaacs, *Travels and Adventures*, 1: 196. Fynn, *The Diary of Henry Francis Fynn*, 131-3. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 608.

¹⁰⁵Madhlebe ka Njinjana, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 45.

¹⁰⁶F. Fynney 'The Rise and Fall of the Zulu Nation', in F. Fynney, *Zululand and the Zulus* (First published, 1884; reprinted Pretoria, 1967), 10-11.

The meanings of the killings associated with her mourning were more complex than the indiscriminate massacre that Henry Francis Fynn described, or the politically motivated killings described by Fynney who thought “that there was a good deal of strategy manifested by this dodge of Tyaka’s, for it is known that those killed on this occasion were chiefs and men of position whom he could not otherwise readily have got hold of.”¹⁰⁷ An alternative view is that many oxen were sacrificed and several people served as ritual burial victims so as to attend to her in the world of the ancestors because people have the same status in the spiritual world as in the earthly world.¹⁰⁸ It was not uncommon however, for kings or people of rank to be accompanied in death.¹⁰⁹ Further, the reported atrocities that followed Nandi’s death do not seem unusual when compared with the death of the queen mother in Ganda which also “created a time of terror for the country...[because the king] had his executioners catch and kill many people in his grief.”¹¹⁰ This is not to suggest that the Zulu resemble the Ganda, or that there was some transfer of ideas between the two. It merely demonstrates that Nandi’s case was not necessarily exceptional.

In many respects Nandi’s mourning seems to have surpassed those of kings. She was mourned ‘nationally’, purification ceremonies were exaggerated, the grave was watched for a year and on three occasions during the following year people were called together to express their grief. There is some debate surrounding duration of her mourning. According to Henry Francis Fynn certain taboos were in place for twelve months. Her grave was watched for a year and on three occasions during the following year people

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁰⁸Ndukwana, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 327. Many were killed in the purification rituals following the death of Nandi. Mbovu, *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 31.

¹⁰⁹Mqaikana, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 21-2. Ndukwana, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 292-3.

¹¹⁰Fynn, *The Diary of Henry Francis Fynn*, 132-9. L. Schiller, ‘The Royal Women of Buganda’, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 23, 3 (1990), 459.

were called together to express their grief and mourn Nandi.¹¹¹ Andrew Smith's evidence also indicates a year long mourning period. He noted that pregnancies were not permitted for twelve months.¹¹² In contrast, Isaacs says that on 7, September 1827 the mourning for Nandi was allowed to end suggesting a relatively short mourning period. He is, however, referring to the wailing and it was more likely that just one section of the mourning was over.¹¹³

According to Bryant, the *ihlambo* ceremony marked the end of the mourning period and was performed three to four weeks after death for the general population, and after six months for "the higher ranks of society".¹¹⁴ It usually took the form of a hunt, but for 'royals' involved an attack on an enemy.¹¹⁵ The killing of just one buck would apparently still constitute the purification ceremony.¹¹⁶ Nandi's *ihlambo* ceremony was exaggerated and involved an attack on the Mpondo rather than the more usual hunt.¹¹⁷ Mcotoyi says that: "when Nandi died, later on, a further *impi*, known as the

¹¹¹Bird, *The Annals of Natal*, 1: 91-3. J. Shooter, *The Kafirs of Natal and the Zulu Country* (First published, 1857: reprinted New York, 1969), 242-9. Isaacs, *Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa*, 1: 204.

¹¹²Kirby, *Andrew Smith and Natal: Documents Relating to the Early History of that Province*, 77.

¹¹³Isaacs, *Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa*, 1: 204.

¹¹⁴Bryant, *The Zulu People as They Were Before the White Man Came*, 708-9.

¹¹⁵C. Cane in *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 77. J. Gama in *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 136. Krige, *The Social System of the Zulus*, 173. Mqaikana says that after the burial there would be two hunts and that it was common practice. The first hunting party would be the 'black' one. After 'doctoring' (purification most likely) there would be a second 'white' hunting party which usually involved a cattle raid. *James Stuart Archive* 4: 21.

¹¹⁶Cane, *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 77.

¹¹⁷Cane, *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 77. Gama, *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 136. Dinya ka Zokozwayo in *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 119. Mayinga, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 249. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 621-2. Krige, *The Social System of the Zulus*, 173.

ihlambo one, was sent to attack Faku — previously unknown.”¹¹⁸ It is not clear what this means exactly, but the passage suggests that the *ihlambo impi* was previously unknown and would certainly have served as a way of heightening allegiance to the Zulu state. Monica Hunter points out that the “mourning period is interesting as being a occasion of the dropping of old customs and the introduction of new ones.”¹¹⁹ Thus, the *ihlambo* in the form of the “washing of the spears” may have begun following Nandi’s death. Much less is known regarding other *amakhosikazi* and *amakhosazana*; Luzipo mentions participating in a washing of the spears mourning hunt held for Nqumbazi, Cetshwayo’s mother, but none seem to have held the status of Nandi.¹²⁰ Nandi’s mourning involved rituals and procedures similar to those applied to a king including particular ceremonies and moving of the kraal at the completion of the period of mourning.¹²¹ Krige claims that there was never an *ukubuyisa* (bring back, restore) ceremony for women.¹²² Yet, Nandi’s spirit appears to have been brought back so her spirit would continue to watch over Shaka’s welfare.¹²³

¹¹⁸Mcotoyi, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 66.

¹¹⁹M. Hunter, *Reaction to Conquest* (First published, 1936; reprinted London, 1961), 400.

¹²⁰Luzipo ka Nomageje in *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 355.

¹²¹Krige notes that “the royal kraal is always moved to a new site at the end of the mourning period, for each king has his own kraal, and this was done even at the death of Nandi, when Shaka had a new residence built for himself.” Krige, *The Social System of the Zulus*, 174. Christain Cane mentions an *ihlambo* ceremony held following Nandi’s death. “Tshaka had ordered that all were to cut sticks for his mother’s *ihlambo*. They were all green. They were not stuck in the ground but simply laid there. This was done to cast away the death. The sticks represented the throwing away done when any king died.” Cane, *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 77. Gama mentions that mourning for kings involved an *impi* carrying off cattle. Gama, *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 136.

¹²²Krige, *The Social System of the Zulus*, 169.

¹²³M. Msimanga in *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 41.

In the newly developing Zulu state, Shaka exalted the status of his mother to raise his own. The status of the mother of the king was emphasised in the burial and mourning process which elevated Nandi above all chiefs, and mothers of chiefs, before her. Nandi's mourning was not simply a manifestation of some psychopathic aspect of Shaka's personality, or guilt, but reflected the importance of Nandi herself. The mourning was an opportunity to express, or to enforce, allegiance to the Zulu. As Cohen points out:

Succession and royal burial are special events developed out of the death of local leaders, but elaborated upon enormously so that the process of installation elevates the incumbent above his fellow royals, into leadership of the state. Death involves placing the leader among his royal dynastic ancestors where he can be appealed to, and interceded with by succeeding monarchs.¹²⁴

Other interesting questions are who filled Nandi's role as queen mother following her death, and how was succession to the position determined in relation to Senzangakhona's other wives? Questions also arise concerning the mothers and female relatives of succeeding Zulu kings. Bibi, for example, was important during Dingane's reign, but was killed by Mpande's forces.¹²⁵ It is in this sense that Mpande's statement is so interesting: " 'Let her not be killed. *I shall need to use her to rule* [emphasis added]." But Mqundane said, "Stab her, for she was favoured over our mothers' ".¹²⁶ As Mangati's evidence confirms, the king could not rule alone.

So far the emphasis in this chapter has been on the independent power of *amakhosikazi* and *amakhosazana*. I have tried to suggest ways in which this was employed to address legitimacy, integration and boundary problems. However, as Shaka's power expanded and the state grew we can assume that the independent power of the women also changed. As societies become more complex, dependent power becomes more concentrated and the structures of dependent power also become more complex.¹²⁷ On

¹²⁴Cohen, 'State Origins: A Reappraisal', 64.

¹²⁵Mkebeni, *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 200.

¹²⁶Mangati, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 206.

¹²⁷R. Adams, 'Power in Human Societies: A Synthesis', 388-9.

the one hand, Shaka had to rule with the women, but on the other hand he and Dingane tried to circumvent the independent power of *amakhosikazi*. One way in which they did this was by claiming to combine in their own person aspects of both male and female power. This brings us to the question of 'royal celibacy'.

'Celibacy' (c. 1781 - c. 1840)

'Celibacy' was a symbol of particular status among 'royal' women.¹²⁸ This 'celibacy' involved either not marrying at all, marrying for a short period, not remarrying, not having a child, or not being recognised as having a child for a particular period. Several of Shaka's female relatives fell into one or more of these categories. Senzangakhona's sisters, Mnkabayi and Mama, remained unmarried. There is disagreement about whether Mawa was ever married, but substantial evidence that most of Senzangakhona's sisters *and* daughters were unmarried during the Senzangakhonan and Shakan periods. This is plainly at odds with the emphasis many historians and anthropologists have placed on the importance of marriage and children in African societies. Bryant describes the royal women as "bold and independent hussies" who had an "aversion" to marriage, and Mnkabayi as a "tigress".¹²⁹ He argued that: "their particular penchant was to go off and, sometimes, though rarely, get a child, then leave it behind and return home. They were received like conquerors, and were rewarded with separate kraals of their own, where they reigned henceforth as free-lances."¹³⁰

Several of Senzangakhona's widows appear not to have remarried. Mayinga disputes claims that Nandi married Gendeyana following Senzangakhona's death saying that "no

¹²⁸Celibacy is defined in this paper as the absence of formal recognised marriage or child while holding particular office or status.

¹²⁹Mangati, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 204-5, 216. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 41-2.

H. Lugg, *A Guide to the Zulu Social System* (Durban, 1978), 24.

¹³⁰Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 41.

wife of Senzangakona ever married again.”¹³¹ According to Bryant it was only in Dingane’s time that some of the women, though past child bearing age, were married.¹³² Dingane gave Shaka’s sister Nomzinhlanga (aged 45) in marriage to Mlandela of the Mthethwa; she had no children.¹³³ It is unclear whether Shaka’s sister, Nomcoba married, but she did not have children either.¹³⁴ Mtembazi (see below) was also unmarried.¹³⁵

These women cannot all be explained simply as a few ‘spinster royals’ who were undesirable, ambitious or infertile.¹³⁶ Several explanations can be offered. The ‘celibacy’ separated them from ‘ordinary’ people, and it is also likely that ‘celibacy’ was held as sacred representing a special status — particularly when their religious role is considered. The conventional political explanation holds that the lack of a husband neutralised potential threats and restricted the birth of potential heirs especially as a ‘royal’ woman’s husband was likely to be a chief or other person of rank. An ambitious husband would likely have had influence over the ‘royal’ woman and access to political power. A child resulting from such a union would also be a potential rival. A religious explanation would emphasise the independent status of the women. The absence of a husband, would have meant no competition for loyalty in relation to ancestors, who may have influenced or inflicted something dire onto the ‘queen’. More importantly, if a woman remained unmarried, she honoured only her own lineage ancestors who also became those honoured for the group (*ikhanda*) over and above any others. This could have been vital to the emerging Zulu state because the woman’s ancestors were the king’s, so they reinforced that line and legitimacy.

¹³¹Mayinga, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 247.

¹³²Bryant, *The Zulu People as They Were Before the White Man Came*, 482.

¹³³Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 46-7. Mmemi, *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 259.

¹³⁴Jantshi, *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 199.

¹³⁵Mtshayankomo, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 144.

¹³⁶Bryant describes Mnkabayi and Mama as ‘old maids’. *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 41.

There is a logical link between the officially unmarried and childless states of Shaka and Dingane, and the celibacy of particular prominent ‘royal’ women. Shaka’s domestic arrangements have usually been explained in terms of his personality or sexual preference. The conventional view is that unlike his predecessors, Shaka did not marry, nor did he have children. But, he had many concubines whom he killed when they became pregnant. Gardiner observed that “neither Charka nor Dingarn ever allowed that they had children, and it would be instant death to any subject who would make such an assertion!”¹³⁷ It is often claimed that Shaka’s motives were political — to avoid producing heirs who might have risen against him and because he wanted warriors “trained in the practice of brutal passion only.”¹³⁸ Max Gluckman supported this view, but in the 1960s added that “Shaka was at least a latent homosexual and possibly psychotic.”¹³⁹ Donald Morris (1966) and Brian Roberts (1974) continued this perception that Shaka was impotent and probably homosexual.¹⁴⁰ Even as late as 1994, Stephen Taylor claimed that Shaka “had an aversion to sex.”¹⁴¹

That ‘celibacy’ extended to Dingane as well was remarkable. However, his successor, Mpande, *did* marry. He also fathered children for three of his dead brothers — two of

¹³⁷Gardiner, *Narrative of a Journey to the Zoolu Country in South Africa*, 99. Shooter, *The Kafirs of Natal and the Zulu Country*, 272. Bryant Olden *Times in Zululand and Natal*, 636, 637. S. Taylor, *Shaka’s Children* (London, 1994), 72.

¹³⁸Bryant Olden *Times in Zululand and Natal*, 607, 636, 637. Bird, *The Annals of Natal*, 1: 302.

¹³⁹M. Gluckman, ‘The Rise of a Zulu Empire’, *Scientific American*, 202, 4, (1960), 168.

¹⁴⁰D. Morris, *The Washing of the Spears* (first published, 1966; reprinted London, 1973), 91. B. Roberts, *The Zulu Kings* (London, 1974), 86.

¹⁴¹Taylor, *Shaka’s Children*, 72-73.

them being kings.¹⁴² Mpande “raised seed” for Shaka with Monase described as “an *ingodosi* girl of Tshaka.”¹⁴³ Fuze explains:

One of the harem girls was suspected by the king of being pregnant, and she was given to his brother, Mpande, with the request that he propagate for him as he was in a position to do so. And so it came about that Monase, Mpande's chief wife and the mother of Mbulazi, Mantantashiya, Mkhungo, and Bathonyile [a girl], was from Shaka's harem. For some special reason which is unknown, the king allotted her [Monase] to his brother to bear children on his behalf.¹⁴⁴

Monase was mother to Cetshwayo's rivals, Mbuyazi and Mkhungu, which was to have an important bearing on Mbuyazi's later succession dispute with Cetshwayo and Monase's departure to Natal.¹⁴⁵ Carolyn Hamilton points out that Mbuyazi emphasised descent from Shaka to heighten his claim to the leadership. Cetshwayo challenged this, arguing that they were both “the second sons in the houses of their mothers, the first son in each case having been killed by Shaka.”¹⁴⁶

There are other anomalies. Despite Dingane's apparent ‘celibacy’, according to Mtshayankomo, he fathered Mtembazi.¹⁴⁷ He also fathered another child with Masala, but the child was raised by Mpande. Mmemi says that “Dingana put Masala ka Dhlozi ... into the family way. When he found out ... he was inclined to put her to death as in the case of others [but] directed she was to go and marry Mpande.... she bore the son Tshonkweni, who is thus the son not of Mpande but of Dingana.”¹⁴⁸

¹⁴²Mangati, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 216.

¹⁴³Ndhlovu, *The James Stuart Archive*, 4: 198. Mangati, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 216. Mkebeni (*James Stuart Archive*, 3: 205) and Magidi ka Ngomane (*James Stuart Archive*, 2: 80) name Zibizendhlela as a son of Shaka. However, Jantshi (*James Stuart Archive*, 1: 176) describes him as a brother. Fuze, *The Black People and Whence They Came*, 60-1.

¹⁴⁴Fuze, *The Black People and Whence They Came*, 60-1.

¹⁴⁵Ndhlovu, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 198, 218. Fuze, *The Black People and Whence They Came*, 61.

¹⁴⁶C. Hamilton, *Terrific Majesty*, (Cape Town, 1998), 57.

¹⁴⁷Mtshayankomo, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 144.

¹⁴⁸Mmemi, *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 245.

The existence of these children is confirmed by Maclean's report that women who became pregnant were sent away and lived "in great retirement and obscurity."¹⁴⁹ There is much ambiguity about the symbolic 'celibacy' of Shaka and Dingane. It is unclear why Mpande was categorised differently in terms of marriage and children, but a few speculations are possible. Mmemi's evidence suggests that Mpande differed from his brothers because he was born of the *umsizi* and thus of inferior status.¹⁵⁰ It can be assumed that this would apply to social, political and ritual rank and that such a person would be considered unlikely to ever assume leadership. This may account for Mpande being designated as able to marry and have children — unlike his brothers and certain female relatives — and to "raise seed" for his higher status brothers. Mmemi says:

Ndhlela ka Sompisi said to Dingana, "Why do you concern yourself about this scrofulous little thing (umcobokwana)? What is there in this thing of Songiya, this thing of the *umsizi*?" This caused Dingana to desist from killing Mpande. Dingana then took 100 cattle (the *umqeku* steers) and ordered Mpande to go and establish an *umuzi*. He was presented with the cattle. He was told to build his own *ikanda*. He accordingly went off with Ngqumbazi.¹⁵¹

Mpande married *during* Shaka's lifetime and Shaka seems to have played a part in bringing that event about.¹⁵² It is highly likely that there is a politico-religious connection if Mpande was indeed a child of the *umsizi*.

¹⁴⁹Maclean, *Nautical Magazine*, Jan 1854, 26.

¹⁵⁰Mmemi, *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 266. The editors point out that *umsizi* is medicine. At a particular point in the First Fruits Ceremony the *umsizi* is applied to the king. He must then go to a specially treated hut in the *isigodlo*. He would be attended by a selected *isigodlo* woman and any child conceived during this time is considered to be of inferior rank. *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 281, n. 99. Jantshi, *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 198, 205 n. 62. Ndhlovu, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 217. Bryant, *The Zulu People as They Were Before the White Man Came*, 519.

¹⁵¹Mmemi, *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 266.

¹⁵²Jantshi, *James Stuart Archive*, 1: 198. Fuze, *The Black People and Whence They Came*, 61.

In contrast, both Shaka and Dingane seem to have appropriated the symbolic 'celibacy' of significant women for the specific purpose of transferring to their own person the independent power of the women. It is possible that Shaka and Dingane had Mpande raise children for them because, as leaders *they* wished to be perceived as symbolically celibate. According to Mkungu:

Tshaka said to Mpande that the Zulu nation would not allow him to marry and have children. This being so, he gave Mpande a girl in marriage and said that the child she should bear him would be called Mbuyazi....Tshaka said such a son would restore the land (*buyis' izwe*) and represent him.¹⁵³

Maclean claims that it was part of an agreement between Shaka and Dingane that Shaka not produce any heirs — in effect to engage in 'celibacy'.¹⁵⁴ Neither their father, nor grandfather before them practiced this, and the only others recorded among the Zulu as unmarried and childless are women. The women's symbolic celibacy had the capacity to be altered according to circumstances and was a key characteristic of their independent power. The power struggles which went on in the Zulu state are very likely to have included *amakhosikazi* and *amakhosazana* as well as males. Anticipating the potential for challenges to overall authority, Shaka and Dingane responded. Under such circumstances, and the growth of the state, it was necessary for the king to focus power on himself. So, Shaka and Dingane mimicked the symbolic celibacy and became like sisters and 'mothers'.

Shaka (and Dingiswayo before him) reinforced this by mimicking menstruation and thus acquiring a portion of women's independent power.¹⁵⁵ "Dingiswayo and, after him, Shaka pretended to be afflicted with certain evacuations [menstruation] in the way that women are, though not at regular periods. On these occasions numerous cattle were slaughtered and many people killed."¹⁵⁶ Conception and birth have often been

¹⁵³Mkungu ka Mpande in *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 232.

¹⁵⁴Maclean, *Nautical Magazine*, Jan 1854, 26.

¹⁵⁵Fynn, *The Diary of Henry Francis Fynn*, 30.

¹⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 30.

interpreted as sources of female power which needed to be controlled. The implications of transfer of gender have been pinpointed by Harriett Ngubane's study of the Zulu which argues that divination is a "woman thing" and that if a man is 'called'

he becomes a transvestite, as he is playing the role of a daughter rather than that of a son. For the special and very close contact with the spirits is reserved in this society for women only - women who are thought of as marginal, and can thus fulfil the important social role of forming the bridge between the two worlds.¹⁵⁷

This is not to suggest that women monopolised divination during the nineteenth century. Stuart's informant, Mkando, for example, mentions the existence of male diviners several times and says his brother "emerged as a diviner (twasa'd) in Dingane's time."¹⁵⁸ However, the political, judicial and religious power of key women may have posed problems for the newly emerging centralised state system and its ambitious leader, Shaka. Certain *amakhosikazi* and *amakhosazana* had independent power and were thus able to exert influence on the society and possessed important skills and religious status. Some male chiefs asked women leaders for their help in combating plagues and making rain.¹⁵⁹ Thus it would not be whimsical or irrational for the Zulu king to attempt to also address potential threats by mimicking in his own person certain aspects of femininity: ritual 'celibacy' and menstruation.

Some evidence concerning female leadership among relatives of Mpande and Cetshwayo also survives, though by their time the British and the Boers were both present and influencing Zulu social and political structures in varying degrees. Certain women continued to exercise political influence during Mpande's kingship, but rivalries simmered among the women and the male leaders.

¹⁵⁷H. Ngubane, *Body and Mind in Zulu Medicine* (London, 1977), 142.

¹⁵⁸Mkando ka Dhlova in *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 176, 177, 178, 179.

¹⁵⁹Krige, 'Divine Kingship, Change and Development', 61. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 210, 211, 212.

In 1842, during the early period of Mpande's reign, Mawa left Zululand for Natal taking 'some thousands' of people with her.¹⁶⁰ According to Mangati: "Mpande took exception to Mawa crossing over into Natal with as many people as she wished ... [and] directed [they] be attacked by the Izingulube regiment, so that the people of the nation should get drawn together and no longer cross over."¹⁶¹ Such departures would have threatened the continuation of the state and, therefore, been punishable.¹⁶² Mawa's actions and her following indicate an act of rebellion by a person with significant standing. Mpande's wife Monase followed Mawa's example and left Zululand for Natal, taking her son Mkhungu with her, most likely during the late 1850s. Monase is described by Guy as a favourite of Mpande, and was the mother of Mbulazi.¹⁶³ Rivalry had developed during 1850 between Mbulazi and another of Mpande's sons, Cetshwayo, and factions associated with these two sons emerged.¹⁶⁴ In a letter dated 1866, F. S. Colenso mentions that Monase, and her younger son Mkhungu, were well supported by a large following of people.¹⁶⁵ Bishop J. W. Colenso noted an example of a 'royal' woman (probably Monase) attempting to exercise her authority with Colonial officials after having left Zululand.¹⁶⁶ Monase, a 'fugitive Queen', may have departed

¹⁶⁰*Proceedings and Report of the Commission Appointed to Inquire Into the Past and Present State of the Kafirs in the District of Natal...* (1853), Natal Archives, File NCP 8/3/1. 13. Madikane, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 56-7. Magidi, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 79. Mangati, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 204-5, 216. Bird, *The Annals of Natal*, 2: 198. Bryant, *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal*, 43. Ndukwana, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 332. Fuze, *The Black People and Whence They Came*, 62.

¹⁶¹Mangati, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 204-5.

¹⁶²L. Grout's evidence to the Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Past and Present State of the Kafirs in the District of Natal, *Natal Government Gazette*, no. 221, 1 March 1853.

¹⁶³Guy, *The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom*, 13.

¹⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁶⁵F.S. Colenso describes her as a fugitive queen. W. Rees, *Colenso Letters From Natal* (Pietermaritzburg, 1958), 108.

fearing for her life, but her departure was probably related to her own power as much as her older son Mbuyazi's political rivalries.¹⁶⁷

Nomantshali, another favourite wife of Mpande, became embroiled in a dispute with Cetshwayo, but appears to have been neither as fortunate, nor as astute as Monase. She was killed by Cetshwayo following the battle of Ndongakusuka because her sons Mthonga and Maqayingana were rivals and followed Mbuyazi rather than Cetshwayo.¹⁶⁸ The killing of Nomantshali along with her sons, and the departure of Monase associated with the same incident, indicates the political importance of mothers.

Fuze offers yet more evidence of Nomantshali's power, innovation and leadership, but presents it as an example of her strange behaviour. This 'strange' behaviour is very revealing. According to Fuze, she once represented the king at the annual first fruits ceremony (*umkhosi*) – something that had not been done before. "She came forward to represent him, dressed like a king [*inkosi, pl. amakhosi*] and carrying a small shield, to represent the Zulu nation."¹⁶⁹ There is also evidence that Songiya (Mpande's mother) played a part in the first fruits ceremony despite it being usual practice for each king to hold it at his own capital. Cetshwayo (Mpande's son and successor) usually held the ceremony at Mpande's capital "doing so to demonstrate to the people that he was still Mpande himself, and that they had no cause for disunity."¹⁷⁰ However, Cetshwayo

¹⁶⁶Most likely his mother Monase, but could have been Mawa his aunt. It is unclear whether the woman involved left at the same time as Mkhungu or not. SPG, D8, Colenso to ?, 8/8/57 Ekukanyeni. I am grateful to Norman Etherington, University of Western Australia for this reference.

¹⁶⁷Rees, *Colenso Letters From Natal*, 108.

¹⁶⁸Mtshapi, *James Stuart Archive*, 4: 63. Mgidhlana, *James Stuart Archive*, 3: 106. Mangati, *James Stuart Archive*, 2: 207-8.

¹⁶⁹Fuze, *The Black People and Whence They Came*, 105.

¹⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 105.

once held a first fruits ceremony at the place of his grandmother, Songiya. Whereas males had led before in the *umkhosi*, was this a reassertion of women's ritual power, or an attempt to reconnect with it?

By the time of Dinuzulu's succession, 'royal' women's role in leadership transitions differed markedly from the practice in Senzangakhona's time. Much of their influence seems to have been lost. At the time of Cetshwayo's death Dinuzulu was not yet old enough to assume the leadership. According to Guy he was under the guardianship of two important *men* — his uncle Ndabuko and the Buthelezi chief Mnyamana.¹⁷¹

Alongside emerging rivalries and changes to the internal political and social structure of the Zulu state, nineteenth century European patriarchy, ethnocentrism and androcentrism acted as veils obscuring leadership by women. If colonial officials were trying to take over some of the aspects of Zulu leadership for the purposes of administration, as Carolyn Hamilton argues, then the political significance and influence of women was likely to have declined in politics, ritual and religion.¹⁷²

Perhaps it was a combination of African and colonial factors where the Zulu kings recruited outside assistance through a process Jeff Guy terms the "accommodation of patriarchs." As Guy has pointed out, Natal officials and chiefs colluded to curb women's rights, power and influence.¹⁷³ It is highly unlikely that colonial officials would have emphasised the political roles of women, though missionaries noted their ritual role. The old connection between the two however, appears to have been lost.

¹⁷¹Guy, *The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom*, 218.

¹⁷²C. Hamilton, 'Authoring Shaka: Models, Metaphors and Historiography', Ph.D. Thesis, (The John Hopkins University, 1993). C. Hamilton, *Terrific Majesty*, 75-80.

¹⁷³J. Guy, 'An Accommodation of Patriarchs: Theophilus Shepstone and the Foundations of the System of Native Administration in Natal', paper, International Colloquium on Masculinities, (University of Natal, Durban, 1997).

Conclusion

Despite the emergence of the Shakan state, Zulu *amakhosikazi* and *amakhosazana* were not the subordinates of male dictators that many would have us believe. Nor was leadership by women the exception, or the result of a “more forceful character.”¹⁷⁴ It is quite clear that certain women possessed real political, and ritual power by virtue of their gender. Zulu women held leadership positions at least as far back as the days of Jama and they exerted more influence than has been previously recognised. In the early days of Zulu political development it is possible that Mnkabayi was an independent power holder at the higher level and that power was ‘lent’, granted or allocated to the male chiefs. It is also possible that certain ‘royal’ women held power in conjunction with that of males. Shaka did not rule alone and needed to rule *with* women such as Mnkabayi to be able to rule at all. ‘Royal’ women’s significance in the Zulu state went beyond functions of production and reproduction. The leadership activities of Zulu women were not confined to the private domain, but exercised publicly and through ritual. Their role was not simply a ceremonial one; leadership by women was an intrinsic part of the pre-colonial Zulu political system.

Features that had been part of the old system, such as the power of *amakhosikazi* and *amakhosazana* needed to be incorporated into the emerging state system. Building on the pre-existing power of *amakhosikazi* and *amakhosazana* women administered *amakhanda*, and held territorial jurisdiction. Extending their field of influence beyond their own Zulu lineage meant that it would then include political and ritual authority over other lineages that were brought under the new grouping categories of regiment and state. The women’s authority in *amakhanda* was a mechanism to link groups, thereby neutralising possible conflict, competition and division. It further aided Zulu legitimacy ideologically through linkages to Zulu ancestors. Thus, while exercising authority over their own areas, at the same time, the political power of women leaders was centrally aligned. This system broke down during Mpande’s leadership when two

¹⁷⁴Bryant, *The Zulu People as They Were Before the White Man Came*, 459-60.

key women left taking a significant following of people. Further, by the time of Mpande and Cetshwayo the state was becoming increasingly secular and under the influence of Europeans.

In the process of consolidation, the public profile, political and ritual status and influence of the king's mother — Nandi — was raised to the state level. This was demonstrated dramatically through Nandi's mourning and to a lesser extent by the mourning for Shaka's grandmother. It also symbolised Shaka's authority, as well as the legitimacy and continuity of the state. The public prominence accorded to the Zulu king's mother and aunts has been previously to a large extent obscured by assumptions about the prevalence of patriarchy.

Shaka was able to expand his administrative unit through his female relatives because they were already historically part of the system of leadership. Shaka had to carefully balance the political power of the women with his own. At the same time, usurping women's influence would have been vital to the consolidation of central power. It is not surprising that key figures toyed with the idea of attempting to incorporate and combine in their own person aspects of both male and female power. It is likely that Shaka's political power was ideologically constrained and such constraint would pose challenges to political consolidation in the developing state. For the kings, access to the ritual power that certain women possessed would have been desirable. It is no coincidence that every effort was made to centralise power and to manage potential limits to the power of the king and to take on a feature of women's leadership.

Whereas Mnkabayi played a prominent role in leadership alongside Senzangakhona, Shaka and Dingane, women were less visible by the time of Mpande's and Cetshwayo's installation as King. The attempt to subvert the role of women appears to have succeeded to a degree. During the reigns of Mpande and Cetshwayo rivalries related to politics and religion emerged among *amakhosikazi* and *amakhosazana* Important

women also rebelled by departure to Natal and we see a 'confusion' of male and female ritual leadership in the first fruits ceremony.

Turning the more conventional view on its head it is possible that rather than Mnkabayi's political and religious power being subject to ideological constraint it is likely that it was actually Shaka's political power that was ideologically constrained and such constraint would pose challenges to political consolidation in the developing state. It is reasonable to expect that careful management of powerful women and capitalising on their political and religious power would be an important part of state consolidation.

CONCLUSION

Shaka has often been portrayed as a leader whose secular strategies were highly innovative. Zulu religion is treated as a separate aspect of culture not connected with state development. Yet, religion and ancestors were an intrinsic part of everyday existence. The ancestors were considered “rulers of their descendants’ destinies.”¹ The interpretation of *uNkulunkulu* as God contributed to the undermining of the importance of ancestors in scholarly works on the Zulu. A leader such as Shaka could not possibly have successfully overcome and incorporated surrounding groups without addressing the invisible spiritual aspects of power as well as the visible. Shaka’s authority was not totally independent from the people or the ancestors.

The popular story of Shaka and the diviners, a story which has been repeatedly reproduced in various forms since at least 1854, suggested some sort of engagement by the king in the realm of religion. Mirroring that story are references to Shaka getting rid of rainmakers. Both are usually cited as evidence of Shaka’s attempt to expose frauds. This thesis argues that Shaka challenged the diviners and rainmakers precisely because he shared the general belief in the efficacy of their power. His aim was to demonstrate his own superiority in their realm. Ancestors were central to everyday existence. Diviners were among those who possessed the independent power and the authority to communicate with them. Divination was firmly entrenched in the Zulu religious system and the colonial proposition that it could be ridiculed in such a manner is highly dubious. Even so, the many oral accounts do indicate a tense relationship between the king and diviners, which could not be ignored. There are also accounts of other chiefs having had similar struggles with diviners.

Along with ancestors, diviners (and to a lesser extent doctors of medicine) and certain material possessed independent power. This was not something bestowed upon diviners

¹W. Bleek, *Zulu Legends* (ed.) J. Engelbrecht, (Pretoria, 1952), 6.

as some sort of reward and it could not be removed at will. Diviners had specialised knowledge and an important and complex role in society. They were set apart from the general community through their elaborate initiation. Yet, the diviners and doctors of medicine were not the only ones with the authority to interact with significant ancestors and to engage in ritual and religion. The *James Stuart Archive* revealed that a common feature of chiefship aimed at protecting and enforcing the common good involved a number of ritual roles and religious practices. The conceptualisation of the Zulu king's power in religious terms has been widely ignored yet it had clear implications for politics.

Shaka was not the first leader to aspire to a dominant role in ritual and religion. This was not a Shakan innovation but a common aspect of chiefship that pre-dated his leadership. During the competition for political dominance that was occurring in south-east Africa in the early nineteenth century, opportunities to seize and enhance power were more than military. Nor did political control exclude ritual control. Zulu state development may have precipitated similar tendencies among other chiefs in the groups that were competing for dominance or undertaking their own resistance to Zulu domination. Shaka used ritual means to overcome rivals. He aimed as well to incorporate groups who were recognised as ritually powerful. Strong medicines were seen to assist Shaka in gaining ascendancy over his rival Zwide and other groups jostling for power. If the Ndwandwe were previously recognised as the most ritually powerful in the region, the political vacuum that was left on their demise could thus be filled by the victor — the Zulu under Shaka. He needed to reverse the ritual dominance of the Ndwandwe and to obtain more powerful medicine. He also needed to learn about the medicines of chiefship. It is also possible that the Zulu sought to control the trade in medicines. Through conquest Shaka was increasing his ritual power by controlling chiefs, diviners rainmakers and medicines, demonstrating his *umlingo* was greater than that of his opponents.

Thus Zulu conquest involved not only conquest of land, political institutions and economic power. It also involved capturing the invisible spiritual power, acquiring medicines and overcoming rival ancestors. The king's medicine — an extension of the medicines of chiefship— would have become more important. So would the knowledge about such medicines — instruction of the medicines of chiefship. Fynn pointed out that knowledge of medicines could be bought and some was in the hands of private families. No leader could risk opponents using powerful medicines against him. Shaka had to guard against his chiefs assuming too much of either aspect of power — political or religious. Enhancing his own ritual status, controlling ritual power, knowledge, activities and alliances was an integral part of establishing supremacy and emphasising his *umlingo*. Clear divisions would have existed in terms of the amount of ritual dominance and control chiefs were allowed to retain. This process would have the potential for conflict and resistance.

In conquering territories and expanding occupation Shaka is likely to have been confronted with the power of the ancestors of each subjugated group. This would have been very problematic especially in the case of groups who were unwillingly placed under Zulu influence. He would have needed to invoke the patronage of the spirits of each subjugated group and in the unlikely event of that being forthcoming other methods would have been needed to destroy their power. Having shorn the chiefs of much of their ritual power he also had to deal with other groups with access to the power of the ancestors and medicines — most importantly the diviners and rainmakers. A leader would need to sort out spiritual allies from enemies just as he differentiated between political allies and enemies. There was the likelihood of tensions between diviners and the king not least of all because a diviner was 'called', had to go through a series of ordeals, and serve an 'apprenticeship' in order to access the knowledge, perform certain religious tasks and to communicate with the ancestors.

Ritual and religion was an important component of the king's leadership but he was also closely connected to diviners and doctor of medicine. The independent power of

the diviners, doctors of medicine, and rainmakers, which was part of the pre-existing system, was at variance with centralising aspirations of Shaka. Once chiefs were subjugated, their power depended on the Zulu king, but this was not the case with the diviners who could potentially inhibit the development of a strong central government. As Fynn pointed out, diviners applied to their ancestors for guidance.² As the state grew and became more complex Shaka set out to concentrate the spiritual power of the Zulu state, to take control of the independent power of the diviners and to focus spiritual dominance more on his ancestors. The Zulu king's position, policies and practices were justified through old chiefly prerogatives and reinforced through a series of ritual and ceremony. In this way the ideology, values and ideas of the Zulu rulers were passed onto the other members of the society. A picture emerges where Shaka was dominating ritual and religious functions by:

- taking control of and centralising the *umkhosi* (first fruits ceremony);
- centralising rainmaking ritual;
- taking control of and centralising rites-of-passage such as marriage;
- extending the medicines of chiefship to medicine of stateship; and
- exerting greater control over possession and practice.

As the hierarchy of the state increased the figure of Shaka became more central in ritual and the ceremonies surrounding him were enhanced. Localised versions of these centralised rituals may have existed to a certain extent, but were subject to Zulu control. Assuming this dominance would require control of knowledge and its transfer. Sean Redding points out that “the state, whether precolonial and African or colonial and white controlled, depended partly upon beliefs in the supernatural powers of political leaders for gaining the acquiescence of the ruled.”³ It is likely that the potential for

²J. Bird, (ed.), *The Annals of Natal: 1495-1845*, 1 (First published, 1888; reprinted Cape Town, 1965), 107-108.

³S. Redding, 'Government Witchcraft: Taxation, the Supernatural, and the Mpondo Revolt in the Transkei, South Africa 1955-1963', *African Affairs*, 95 (1996), 562.

conflict existed between 'localised' and centralised or 'national' issues as the king's religious role was enhanced.

The new state needed a common ideology. The king found that the existing collection of ideologies was not fulfilling his purpose and that the old ideologies hindered the development of common values and norms. A common ideology could be forged and propagated by combining the pieces of the pre-existing ideologies which served the interests of the developing state. It would seem that this is what James Stuart meant when he wrote: "Thus by a process of absorption Tshaka made the people one."⁴

A leader could not retain his position without being seen to be supported by the ancestors. The ancestors had to override other chiefly ancestors. Zulu ancestors needed to have relevance for the wider political group. This was critical in facilitating the development of a dominant ideology. Binding the Zulu ancestors to a wider group of people was a relationship or perception that had to be created and so new ideological forms had to emerge through old structures. The centralised major rituals connected with fertility and well being facilitated this process. The fact that they were associated with the place of the graves of Zulu ancestors meant that Zulu ancestors took precedence, thus strengthening the king's legitimacy. Just as the diviner applied to his own ancestors for guidance, the Zulu king would have appealed to his own ancestors. Shaka made changes within and borrowed from outside. Other ways he enhanced his legitimacy include:

- drawing attention to his communication with ancestors through dreams where he received instructions from previous Zulu chiefs; and
- emphasising, elaborating and to some extent 'reinventing', the symbols of kingship such as the *inkatha*

This is not to suggest that such changes were necessarily sudden or occurred as a single process — adaptations to greater or lesser degrees may have been ongoing depending

⁴Stuart Papers, File 52/7.

on circumstances. Callaway's informant explained that "all nations have their own Unkulunkulu."⁵ Shaka's strategies might have also facilitated the emergence of a concept of a 'national' Zulu *uNkulunkulu* — the *uNkulunkulu* of the Zulu royal house in the way that Callaway's informant relates to Matiwane: "At last men said "King" to Umatiwana, in whose house the Onkulunkulu of our tribe was born."⁶

It is suggested that by the time of Dingane's kingship control over ritual and practitioners was more tenuous and the struggle for control was as much an external issue as internal. Some of those states that were developing during the initial phase of Zulu expansion were again coming into their own. Under Mpande the king's dominance and control over rainmaking broke down and a division between secular and the sacred developed and widened. As the control from the centre decreased, the focus on the central ancestors would similarly decrease, and those at the chiefly and family level would re-establish their importance.

In order to achieve spiritual dominance Shaka also needed to contend with the ritual power of *amakhosikazi* and *amakhosazana*. Shaka had to carefully balance the independent political and ritual power of the women with his own. To this end he used old forms to facilitate change. The administrative unit was extended via the women because they were already part of the system of leadership. A spiritual aspect accompanied that leadership just as it did in the case of male chiefs. Shaka needed to rule *with* women such as Mnkabayi to be able to rule at all. Thus the dominance of Zulu ancestors could be asserted on a larger scale.

Extending the women's field of influence in the context of state building meant that their political and ritual authority would extend to other groups and state regiments. Certain key women were responsible for the relic of leadership the *inkatha*, a relic

⁵H. Callaway, *The Religious System of the AmaZulu* (First published, 1870; reprinted Cape Town, 1970), 51.

⁶*Ibid.*, 51.

which was emphasised and elaborated under Shaka. Nandi's mourning also signaled the ritual importance of key Zulu women in maintaining Shaka's authority, along with the legitimacy and continuity of the Shakan state. On the other hand, the independent power of the key women was a potential threat to the aspirations of Shaka. It is not surprising that key figures in the consolidation of the Zulu power toyed with the idea of attempting to incorporate and combine in their own person aspects of both male and female power. For the kings, access to the ritual power that certain women possessed would have been vital.

Establishing the spiritual domination of incorporated groups helped to negate the need for overtly coercive measures. Nonetheless, it is likely that some conflict persisted. Stuart was told that "only the Zulus retained their old laws and customs. Other tribes were made to relinquish many old customs by the Zulus."⁷ It is precisely this tension which is represented in the story of Shaka and the diviners. In all forms, it represents the dominance of chiefs in the spiritual realm within an accepted ideological framework. The test did not demonstrate Shaka's scepticism about the concept of divination. It demonstrated his own special powers and also advanced Zulu spiritual dominance. Having established the interconnectedness of chiefly activity and religious activity, four new explanations can be put forward regarding Shaka's 'blood sprinkling trick'.

1. That the story has a wholly Zulu origin and is 'true'. It represents the struggle occurring in politic-religious relations between the king and the diviners incorporated into the state and is directly related to the assertion of Zulu dominance. Shaka's struggle with diviners was about him as king dominating as "the future agent between the spiritual and material world."⁸ The struggle extended to ancestors as well. During the period of change it is possible that the diviners were very influential with people on

⁷Ndukwana ka Mbengwana in *James Stuart Archive*, 4 (Pietermaritzburg, 1986), 363.

⁸Bird, *The Annals of Natal*, 1: 108.

the periphery. The vital point about the story is that the true diviners smelled out the heaven above or iZulu, thus recognising Shaka ancestors or *uNkulunkulu* as dominant.

Ndukwana's recollection of the story (version 19) claims that the smelling out took place at Bulawayo — Shaka's first capital which would mean that it occurred at a time when there was still the external threat from the Ndwandwe. The need for religious reinforcement of the state was critical.

2. That it is a contemporary reworking of an old story to acknowledge the religious dominance of the paramount chief. This was not unusual. Several of the myths and legends collected by Bleek, for example, were not legends that had some primordial origin, but rather were contemporary nineteenth-century cultural explanations of the world. The stories tell not just of struggles between Shaka and his diviners, but similar struggles by the Sutu chief Mabulane, Mzilikazi of the Ndebele and Lewanika, paramount chief of the Barotse, Mpande, Cetshwayo and Theophilus Shepstone. While it could be argued that these similar stories are merely a contamination of the Shaka story, it could also be argued that these are similar cases where a struggle with diviners was going on during a period of political expansion accompanied by the necessary spiritual expansion.

3. That it was modern colonial construct probably originating with Theophilus Shepstone in an attempt to discredit Zulu religion in order to facilitate colonial domination.⁹ This would explain the apparent absence of reference to the story before 1854. Shepstone had a thorough understanding of the Zulu and would have recognised the importance of the spiritual aspect of leadership. He accompanied Colenso during his interviews with Zulu about their religion. The link between the political and religious aspects of authority was not something that colonial officials could duplicate or provide a substitute for.

⁹C. Hamilton, *Terrific Majesty* (Cape Town, 1998), 93.

4. That it was modern construct originating with Henry Francis Fynn. It was also in Fynn's interest to show that one could be 'made' a paramount chief without being a 'native' —that the secular and the sacred aspects of leadership could be separated. Hamilton's argument concerning Shepstone could be equally applied to Fynn.

To sum up, the king's power was dependent in both ritual and political affairs. The independent power of the diviners was at variance with the spiritual domination sought by all chiefs: Shaka, Mzilikazi or even Shepstone. Independent power was held by the ancestors, diviners and certain 'royal' women. The king needed to either access that power or reduce its importance. Shaka did this by reducing the significance of other ancestors, elevating his own ancestors, strictly controlling the activities of religious practitioners, elaborating and centralising certain rituals, controlling access to powerful materials and knowledge, and incorporating in his own person aspects of the nature of power held by others such as 'royal women'. As the state grew and became more complex Shaka attempted to concentrate further the spiritual power of the Zulu state. The legitimacy of Shaka's kingship and his authority rested on the dominance of the Zulu ancestors.

It is highly likely that without this religious foundation, the Zulu kings would not have been able to hold their office, just as Shaka could not have ruled without incorporating and accommodating the 'traditional' power of key women. It becomes possible to reject the widely accepted view of Shaka as the 'black Napoleon', the revolutionary and the innovator who rejected many past practices and beliefs. Rather, he can be seen in many respects as a firm traditionalist, albeit one whose times and circumstances required new interpretations of old beliefs concerning the relationship between individuals, ancestors, diviners, and chieftainship. Ideology and religion—invisible factors — were key components in the rise and persistence of the Zulu state.

Appendix 1.

E. Ritter, *Shaka Zulu: The Rise of the Zulu Empire* (First published, 1955; reprinted London, 1971).

Like other great dictator-reformers, Shaka was much concerned to check the power of the "spiritual arm" - in this case, the order of witch-doctors. It seemed to him, ... that the witch-doctors and diviners had forgotten the lesson he had taught them, and that even Nobela was becoming bold again. The old witch was gathering information of Court secrets in the course of her traffic in drugs and medicines. And Ndabazimbi had defied the government by hypnotising a military patrol sent to arrest his novice. Shaka therefore planned to expose the principal practitioners of sorcery as frauds, for it was necessary to have the support of the people against them, and to avoid shocking religious sensibilities. In his preparations Shaka made use of Mbopa....

About bed-time Mbopa appeared in the Great Council hut, carrying what appeared to be a pot of beer. This he handed to his Royal Master, together with an ox-tail cut short and resembling a brush. Leaving Mbopa in the hut, Shaka proceeded outside with the pot and the tail-brush. Dipping the latter into the pot, the King now began to sprinkle the sides of his own hut liberally with the contents of the pot, until the whole circumference had been treated. Then he repeated the same thing on the yard floor right round the hut. Having completed this task, Shaka re-entered the hut, and gave both pot and tail to Mbopa, with instructions to burn the latter on the hearth fire within the hut, and to clean out the residues left in the former. Mbopa then carefully examined Shaka to make sure that no tell-tale marks remained on him....

On the following morning it became light enough to see, the guards then on duty were struck with consternation, when on their rounds they beheld that the Royal hut was spattered with blood, and the yard around it smeared with the same substance. Who could have perpetrated this horrible sacrilege in the heart of the sacrosanct Royal enclosure? ...

As he gazed at the blood-spattered hut and yard, Shaka roared in majestic anger: 'Who has committed this vile deed against the house of Zulu? Who had the criminal audacity to insult me thus? Blood calls for blood. What were the guards doing? What say they?' 'I will have such a smelling out as the land of Zulu has never seen before. Summon this instant all the diviners and witch-doctors in the land, Summon, too, the whole adult male population to be assembled here on the seventh day, so that they may present a fitting field for the "smellers out". Blood calls for blood, and blood I will have.'

The smelling-out parade was arranged to take place in the great cattle-kraal, whose 130-odd acres would provide ample room for the 30,000 or so people who would be present....

There now arose an eerie wailing and caterwauling from outside the cattle-kraal palisades, and through a side gate near the head of the kraal there poured a gibbering, crouching, vaulting and seemingly endless line of witch-doctors-male and female-led by Nobela, more grotesquely dressed than ever...

Shaka rose and commanded silence. Then he told them to smell out the perpetrators of the outrage, but as the diviners were many, and the business must be finished by sundown, they were to divine in groups of ten. As there were 152 of them, it would mean some fifteen teams....

Then, with Nobela's cry of 'Chant, ye people, chant,' there began that process of terrorisation which has been described in an earlier chapter....

'Blood calls for blood,' came the chorus. Then, with a shriek, Nobela vaulted high in the air, and as she came down, struck Mbopa with the wildebeest tail across the head; ... As Nobela struck, Shaka muttered: 'Very near. She couldn't have struck nearer. The old python will upset all my plans.'

When the last diviner had struck Mbopa, the slayers pounced on him, according to custom, and marched him off: but contrary to custom, not to immediate and painful death, but to the place which Shaka had ordained. Mbopa, though buoyed up by his secret knowledge, felt and looked shattered by the tenfold public denunciation, and uncomfortable realisation of the uncanny powers which Nobela wielded.

Nobela and her evil brood now advanced boldly to within a dozen paces of the Royal throne, and formed into a line before it, with Nobela in the centre and directly facing Shaka. She was going to strike against the high ones-the very highest in the land, and after her former humiliating experience, she was taking no chances, which the exercise of prudence might avoid. She would therefore divine by the wonted and more cautious manner of self-evident ambiguity, which closely paralleled the famous Oracle of Delphi.

'What is sometimes said of a person travelling? What is he called?' shouted Nobela for all the councillors and important persons to hear. At which Shaka whispered, 'She means Nqoboka' (his friend, the Sokulu chief, from the Zulu word '*Coboka*', to be exhausted by a journey). Shaka glowered, and Nqoboka, who was seated close to him, on his left, stirred uneasily, as he felt the gaze of all directed towards him. Thus Nobela had, through an innuendo understood by all,

cleverly passed the onus of taking action on to Shaka. If he failed to take action, he risked public criticism unless the person indicated was very popular. Nqoboka was, however, not well known at the Zulu capital, but he was one of Shaka's best friends, who with Mgobozi and Shaka, as ordinary warriors, had vowed to protect each other's backs. The slayers moved towards Nqoboka in anticipation of the Royal order to remove him. Here was a dilemma for Shaka. The councillors looked expectantly at him, for every person 'smelt out' increased the chances of the rest. Only Shaka and Mbopa sitting lonely under the shadow of death-knew on what a volcano the diviners were standing, or sitting! If Shaka shielded Nqoboka prematurely, Nobela's uncanny reasoning powers might detect the truth, if indeed she had not already done so. Mbopa needed some heartening companionship at this stage too. Shaka therefore decided to send Nqoboka to him, but he would give his old comrade-in-arms a cabalistic message which would reassure him. As Nobela looked like forcing matters, the more prominent the people she condemned, the more devastating would be the popular reaction against the diviners in the final act.

'Nqoboka!' said Shaka addressing him, 'You must go, but as a chief, and without an escort of slayers. For this you must thank he day you threw away your sandals, which later cost you five of your best cows, and now this road.' Nqoboka at once understood the implication of the nebulous message, but it went above the head of Mgobozi and the crowd, who knew nothing of that little private cattle transaction. Nqoboka arose, and giving the Royal salute, '*Bayete!*' he strode away to join Mbopa.

This was more than Mgobozi could stand, for had he and Shaka not long ago promised Nqoboka, and each the other, that they would be each other's shield, and if need be, eat earth together? Rising and turning, Mgobozi faced the King, with a resonant, '*Bayete!* my Father, have me killed too; for I go to join Nqoboka, and eat earth with him. In any case it will save time and trouble, as that old strumpet of the baboons will not rest till she has killed all your best friends. She stinks of witchcraft herself, and her odour exceeds that of a mangy hyaena seven days dead; and as the maggots come out of this, so the lies pour out of her evil mouth. I will be silent now, my Father and King, lest I say something unseemly about her before I die. *Bayete!*'

Shaka had difficulty in restraining a smile at this honest outburst, and touching loyalty to a friend, and the veiled rebuke to himself, for the blunt old warrior lacked that discerning finesse to understand that Shaka was playing a deep game-moreover, one which the continued presence of Mgobozi might now jeopardise. In any case Mgobozi merited at least a sharp rebuke for speaking out of his turn. In fact, it was a case of *lèse-majesté*, and in itself sufficient to earn the death sentence. The King, therefore, rejoined sharply: 'Go then you fool. Join Nqoboka, and find a premature death with him.'

'*Bayete!*' saluted Mgobozi, with upraised hand, and with proud step he marched to where Mbopa and Nqoboka were squatting.

A low moan of anguish arose from the whole assembled multitude. Starting from the councillors and the Royal family, it ran like a *feu de joie* to the farthest ends of the crowd, and then came rolling back again. Nandi was dreadfully upset and on the point of intervening, when she was pacified and restrained by Pampata, who sat beside her. For Pampata's amazing intuition had begun to grasp the whole situation. The manifest distress of all the people showed the immense popularity of Mgobozi, and provided a striking contrast to the venomously gloating diving fraternity, who, as a whole, felt that the heroic fool had indeed spoken the truth when he said that his act would save them time and trouble.

'Greetings, Nqoboka and Mbopa,' Mgobozi said grimly, as he joined the other two. 'Now there are three of us in the pot of that old witch, and plenty more are coming.'

'She may well overfill it,' was the quiet and cryptic reply of Mbopa.

While these conversations were taking place Nobela had resumed her oracular divinations.

'A sticky thing that grows on trees; do you recognise it?' she called to the councillors. None dared reply till Shaka guessed: 'She means *ntlaka*' (the Zulu word for gum). This obviously indicated Mdlaka, the generalissimo of the army, who was sitting a [sic] Shaka's feet.

'I heard you, Nobela,' interposed Shaka, 'but the army is not to be touched. I alone deal with it. That was my word long ago, when you thrust your face into a hornets' nest.' A sigh of relief swept over the officers and guards near by, and like a telepathic wave rolled onwards through all the tense regiments drawn up in the great kraal.

Again Nobela asked, 'When a person is in want, what is it that is said of him?' Perfect silence reigned till Shaka broke it- 'She means "Udingani"'-an obvious reference to his half-brother Dingane, who scowled and cast a murderous look at Nobela.

Shaka frowned as he replied. 'Again I hear you, Nobela, but leave my father's son alone.'

Once more Nobela propounded a riddle. 'What is it which grows on the banks of rivers and in swamps with a flower like a plume: when it is but a small plant what do you call it?' She obviously meant a reed, the Zulu word for which is *umhlanga*, and its diminutive *umhlangana*. It could indicate none other but Shaka's half-brother Mhlangana.

'Cease your animosity against my father's house, O bird of evil omen, and get done with your business.'

'I hear you, O King,' replied Nobela, 'but on the day you see the blood dripping from the blade of the little red-handled assegai you now hold in your hand it is then, O King, you will hear my words again, and bitterly regret that you heeded them not in time. For then it will be too late. I have said my say and I go to make room for these other diviners.' Nobela then walked upright at the head of her line of assistants to the place which Shaka had indicated--each team of diviners to sit opposite those whom they had condemned.

The sun had sunk to a 'little beyond half-way between the zenith and the horizon' before the last teams had finished their merciless work and rejoined the satisfied throng of witch-doctors who were gazing with unconcealed exultation at their harvest -- well over 300 innocent people mutely suffering in agony of apprehension, There were now left but two witch-doctors, Songqoza and Nqiwane, who had not yet divined. All that day they had sat apart and aloof from the other diviners 'Does the King wish to hear the truth?' asked Songqoza

'O! King! I divine the heaven (Zulu).'

"It and It only, did it.' This meant Shaka himself, whose clan name was Zulu. There was a pregnant silence. Then noting Shaka's approving smile, Nqiwane, not to be outdone, instantly chimed in, '*Zulu nempela*' ('The heaven and none other').

'*Nitshilo!* ye have said it,' roared Shaka as he rose to his full majestic height.

'You, and you alone, have spoken the truth. Listen, my people. I, and I alone, did the deed. I spattered blood with my own hands on the walls of my hut, and smeared it on the yard outside. I did it, that I might find out who were the true diviners and who were the false.

'Look all and see. In the whole land there are but two true witch-doctors--these young men--and the rest are false'.¹

¹E. Ritter, *Shaka Zulu: The Rise of the Zulu Empire* (First published, 1955; reprinted London, 1971), 214-

23. E. Ritter, *Shaka Zulu: The Rise of the Zulu Empire*, (First published, 1955; reprinted London, 1957),

241-54.

Appendix 2

H. R. Haggard *Nada the Lily* (London, 1892).

'The witch-doctors rule in Zululand, and not I, Mopo, son of Makedama,' he said to me. 'Where, then, is it to end? Shall I myself be smelt out and slain? These Isanusis are too strong for me; they lie upon the land like the shadow of night. Tell me, how may I be free of them?'....

I speak that which is in the king's mind, I answered.

Hearken, O king! It is indeed sacrilege to touch a true Isanusi, but what if the Isanusi be a liar? What if he smell out falsely, bringing those to death who are innocent of evil? Is it then sacrilege to bring him to that end which he has given to many another? Say, O king!

One morning thereafter a new thing came to pass in the royal kraal, for the king himself ran out, crying aloud to all the people to come and see the evil that had been worked upon him by a wizard. They came together and saw this. On the door-posts of the gateway of the Intunkulu, the house of the king, were great smears of blood. The knees of men strong in the battle trembled when they saw it; women wailed aloud as they wail over the dead; they wailed because of the horror of the omen.

'Who has done this thing?' cried Chaka in a terrible voice. 'Who has dared to bewitch the king and to strike blood upon his house?'... On the tenth day from now the circle of the *Ingomboco* must be set, and there shall be such a smelling out of wizards and of witches as has not been known in Zululand!'....

On the last night before the forming of the *Ingomboco*, the witch-doctors, male and female, entered the kraal. There were a hundred and half a hundred of them

Wizards have bewitched me! Wizards have dared to smite blood upon the gateways of the king.... Show them to me truly, and your gifts shall be great; and for them, if they be a nation, they shall be slain. Now begin. Begin by companies of ten, for you are many, and all must be finished ere the sun sink.'

'It shall be finished, Father,' they answered.

Then ten of the women stood forward, and at their head was the most famous witch-doctress of that day - and aged woman named Nobela, a woman to whose eyes the darkness was no veil, whose scent was keen as a dog's, who heard the voices of the dead as they cried in the night, and spoke truly of what she heard....

Then they crept nearer, crept on their hands and knees, till they were within ten paces of where I sat among the indunas near to the king.... It was I, my Father, I who was about to be smelt out; and if I was smelt out I should be killed with all my house, for the king's oath would scarcely avail me against the witch-doctors....

'Ha! ha!' they laughed, 'we hear you! His is the name. Let him be named by it in the face of heaven, him and all his house; then let him hear no other name forever!'

And suddenly they sprang up and rushed towards me, Nobela, the aged Isanusi, at their head....

'Greeting, Mopo, son of Makedama! Thou art the man who smotest blood on the door-posts of the king to bewitch the king. Let thy house be stamped flat!'....

I glanced at the king, and, as I did so, I thought that I heard him mutter; 'near the mark, not in it.'

Then he held up his spear, and all was silence. The slayers stopped in their stride, and all the witch-doctors stood with outstretched arms, the world of men was as though it had been frozen into sleep.

'Hold!' he said. 'Stand aside, son of Makedama, who art named an evildoer! Stand aside, thou, Nobela, and those with thee who have named him evildoer! What? Shall I be satisfied with the life of one dog? Smell on, ye vultures, company by company, smell on! For the day the labour, at night the feast!'

So I rose, astonished, and stood on one side. The witch-doctresses also stood on one side, wonderstruck, since no such smelling out as this had been seen in the land. For till this hour, when a man was swept with the gnu's tail of the Isanusi that was the instant of his death. Why, then, men asked in their hearts, was the death delayed? The witch-doctors asked it also, and looked to the king for light, as men look to a thunder-cloud for the flash. But from the Black One there came no word.

So we stood on one side, and a second party of the Isanusi women began their rites. As the others had done, so they did, and yet they worked otherwise, for this is the fashion of the Isanusis, that no two of them smell out in the same way. and this party swept the faces of certain of the king's councillors, naming them guilty of the witch-work.

'Stand ye on one side!' said the king to those who had been smelt out; 'and ye who have hunted out their wickedness, stand ye with those who named Mopo, son of Makedama. It well may be that all are guilty.'

So these stood side on side also, and a third party took up the tale. and they named certain of the great generals, and were in turn bidden to stand on one side together with those whom they had named.

So it went on through all that day.... But there was one man of their company, a young man and a tall, who held back and took no share in the work, but stood by himself in the centre of the great circle, fixing his eyes on the heavens.

And when his company had been ordered to stand aside also together with those whom they had smelt out, the king called aloud to the last of the witch-doctors, asking him of his name and tribe, and why he alone did not do his office.

'My name is Indabazimbi, the son of Arpi, O king,' he answered, 'and I am of the tribe of the Maquilisini. Does the king bid me to smelt him of whom the spirits have spoken to me as the worker of this deed?'

'I bid thee,' said the king.

Then the young man Indabazimbi stepped forward across the ring, making no cries or gestures, but as one who walks from his gate to the cattle kraal, and suddenly struck the king in the face with the tail in his hand, saying, 'I smelt out the *Heavens above me!*'²

Now a great gasp of wonder went up from the multitude, and all looked to see this fool killed by torture. But Chaka rose and laughed aloud.

'Thou hast said it', he cried, 'and thou alone! Listen, ye people! *I did the deed! I smote blood upon the gateway of my kraal; with my own hand I smote it, that I might learn who were the true doctors and who were the false! Now it seems that in the land of the Zulu there is only one true doctor- this young man- and of the false, look at them and count them, they re like the leaves. See! there they stand, and by them stand those who they have doomed- the innocent whom, with their wives and children, they have doomed to the death of the dog. now I ask you, my people, what reward shall be given to them?'*

Then a great roar went up from all the multitude, 'Let them die, O king!'

'Ay!' he answered. 'Let them die as liars should!' ... - all! all, save this young man!'

'There the lie, Mopo,' he said. 'There lie those who dared to prophesy falsely to the king!'

That was a good word of thine, Mopo, which taught me to set the snare for them; yet me thought I saw thee start when Nobela, queen of the witch-doctresses, switched on thee. well, they are dead, and the land breathes more freely; and for the evil which they have doe, it is as yonder dust, that soon shall sink again to earth and there be lost.'

[But, as Nobela was dying she confronted the king]

'Hail king!' she screamed.

'Peace, liar!' he answered; 'thou art dead!'

'Not yet, king. I heard thy voice and the voice of yonder dog, whom I would have given to the jackals, and I will not die till we have spoken. I smelt him out this morning when I was alive; now that I am as one already dead, I smelt him out again. He shall bewitch thee with blood indeed, Chaka-he and Unandi, thy mother, and Baleka, they wife. Think of my words when the assegai reddens before thee for the last time, king! Farewell!' And she uttered a great cry and rolled upon the ground dead.

'The witch lies hard and dies hard,' said the king carelessly, and turned upon his heel. But those words of dead Nobela remained fixed in his memory, or so much of them as had been spoken of Unandi and Baleka. They remained like seeds in the earth, there they grew to bring forth fruit in their season.

And thus ended the greatest *Ingomboco* of Chaka, the greatest *Ingomboco* that was ever held in Zululand.³

²Haggard notes at this point that this is "a Zulu title for the king", H. R. Haggard *Nada the Lily* (London, 1892), 62.

³*Ibid.*, 54-64.

Appendix 3

P. Schoeman, *Phampatha the Beloved of King Shaka* (Cape Town, 1984).

'My next campaign is against the small group of people who terrorize my subjects day and night - the diviners. There are too many of them who smell out innocent people and declare them wizards. Such 'wizards' are then reported to the king to suffer a cruel death. A man whose herd of cattle increases is soon accused of having secret magic potions and is thus a threat to the king. This also happens to someone who has unusual success with his crops, or to someone who has exceptionally healthy children. I do not want these soothsayers to prevent my Zulu nation from prospering.' ...

Shaka told her [Phampatha] his plan. 'Tonight Mgobozi and Mdlaka will place a pot of blood in my sleeping hut. During the night I will smear some of the blood with an oxtail on the outside of my hut, and also some in front of the entrance. Tomorrow morning when the guards notice the blood stains, they will shout that there are wizards who wish to bewitch the king. The news will spread quickly and all the soothsayers will realize that they will have to come to the royal kraal. Within two days they should all be here. I shall then summon you and my mother, as well as all the high ranking and important people. I want you who know about the blood to see how many innocent people will be smelled out by the diviners.' ...

The next morning there was pandemonium and terror in the kraal... Everybody was convinced that it was a wizard with very potent medicine, for how could he have come into the kraal without being seen by the guards on duty? For the next few days nothing else was discussed. On the third day Mgobozi came to fetch Phampatha and Nandi. The cunning Mgobozi kept speaking at length of the wizard's magic potion.

On the parade ground an ominous silence prevailed. Except for the few who knew what was actually happening, the multitude sat in petrified horror, waiting for the diviners to commence their smelling out. Shaka ordered them to come forward. When he saw that there were far too many to perform their rituals one by one, he had them divided into groups of ten. All in all there were nine groups and too odd male diviners....

Shaka first put the men to the test. In every groups there was a natural leader who immediately took charge. He began by holding his divining bones in his cupped hands, blowing on them, and chanting a spell. Holding his hands forward he suddenly opened them and cast the bones on the ground, where they formed a rough circle. For the next few moments he carefully studied the position of the most important pieces, mumbling incoherently to himself. He suddenly sprang to his feet, waving a wildebeest tail switch in his right hand, and called out, "The amadlozi speak through my knucklebones!" As soon as one group of diviners was finished, Shaka called out another. The group of "guilty ones" grew as the witch doctors, using the crowd's "Siyavuma" cleansed the nation of its enemies.

Eventually the acknowledged leader of the female diviners, Nobela, could control herself no longer.... In a shrill and piercing voice she cried out, "The king's most dangerous enemies must be sought close to him." "I see two of the king's most dangerous enemies sitting very close to him." ... Like a flash Nobela suddenly sprang forward towards the royal party, and before anybody realised what was going on, she had struck her wildebeest tail over the heads of Mgobozi and Mdlaka, and was crying out at the top of her voice, "Mgobozi and Mdlaka, your hands are stained with blood!" ...

As the executioners came forward to take them away, everyone was astounded to see that Shaka did not move a finger to stop them. Mgobozi looked at him with reproach in his eyes, but Shaka took no notice and remained silent.

Now there remained only the two male diviners. One of them immediately cast his divining bones onto the ground and scrutinized them while mumbling inaudibly to himself. He scooped them into his cupped hands, blew on them and muttered a few words. Then he threw them a second time. An almost palpable silence followed. This diviner was acting differently from all his predecessors, and the crowd was frozen in terror. With the grace and speed of a leopard he leapt into the air, and headed straight for Shaka. He struck him across the right shoulder with the wildebeest tail, and cried out in a powerful voice, "The heavens! You, Nkonyama, Majestical Lion, have done it yourself!"

The crowd was unable to mutter a sound. It was only when Shaka rose to his feet, smiled and said, "Bravo! Your divining bones are the only ones that walked the path of truth. I appoint you as the only diviner of my war impis," that the crowd sighed with relief.

Suddenly the air was split by a shriek from Nobela. "My bones also travelled the path of truth, but I was afraid to point at Heaven! So I chose those closest to you. If the king does not believe me, he can test me alone next time!"

Shaka, infuriated by Nobela's presumption, accepted her challenge. "You, Nobela will remain here at KwaBulawayo, until such time as I may need you!"

he then turned to the innocent people who had been falsely condemned by the diviners: "You are free to go." Turning to the group of false diviners, he condemned them to death. "You have exploited my people for a long time. Now I will make an example of you. Executioners, take them away!"...

Shaka then declared all his indunas and all his warriors and their families free from the power of any diviner.... "Today I have put an end to this evil practice in my kingdom. From now on the wizards will fear me, and not take advantage of my people and exploit them without definite proof. And from today my impi is immune against witchcraft!"⁴

⁴P. Schoeman, *Phampatha the Beloved of King Shaka* (Cape Town, 1984), 182-187.

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