

SHAKA AS A LITERARY THEME

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents.

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DECLARATION

I have incorporated some sections of my M.A. Dissertation, entitled "Zulu Views of a Zulu Monarch", in this thesis. The sections in question are the analyses of the praise-poems composed in honour of Shaka provided by Lewis Grout, Robert Samuelson, Revd. E. W. Grant, and Professor A. T. Cope; together with the analysis of the "Ode to Dingan" published by the Revds. Arbousset and Daumas. Part I of Shaka as a Literary Theme contains analyses of four other Shakan praise-poems.

I have also submitted an article to the scholarly journal, English in Africa, on "The Literary Legacy of Thomas Mofolo's Chaka", which summarises some of the conclusions reached in Chapters 2 and 4 of this thesis.

ABSTRACT

This thesis is an analysis of the mythopoeicis of Shaka or, in other words, it is a study of the different myths (fictitious traditions that are accepted as historical) of the life and reign of the first Zulu king, Shaka.

The study is primarily concerned with the literary texts, but it includes a discussion of the historiography of Shaka - that is, the changing interpretations of the Shakan era and the different uses to which those interpretations have been put.

In effect, one has to deal with three overlapping chronologies: firstly, the historical record of the rise and fall of Shaka; secondly, the chronology of research, as Africanists in different periods have paid attention to different features of the Shakan era, thus providing a distorted perspective of the changes that took place; and thirdly, the "ideological" chronology, as the achievements of Shaka are constantly reinterpreted, in the oral and written literary traditions, in accordance with the different perspectives taken by those engaged in the evaluation of the life and times of Shaka.

NOTE ON ORTHOGRAPHY

There is a standard Zulu orthography, but many of the texts discussed in this thesis pre-date the standardisation; and the older the Zulu text, the more problematic it is to convert from one to the other. Throughout this thesis, when transcribing the Zulu, I have maintained the orthography of the original text.

I have also used the author in question's spelling of the name "Shaka", when evaluating individual texts.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is an analysis of the mythopoeicis of Shaka, or, in other words, it is a study of the different myths (fictitious traditions that are accepted as historical) of the life and reign of the first Zulu king, Shaka.

The study is primarily concerned with the literary texts, but it includes a discussion of the historiography of Shaka, that is, the changing interpretations of the Shakan era and the different uses to which those interpretations have been put.

The first part of this thesis is concerned with the praise-poems (izibongo) composed in honour of Shaka. The opening section discusses the genre of praising, placing it in its cultural context; and this is followed by detailed analyses of the versions of Shaka's praise-poem that have been published from collections made by Lewis Grout, Robert Samuelson, James Stuart, A. T. Bryant, E. W. Grant, Cyril Nyembezi, C. T. Msimang, Jack Cope and Trevor Cope.¹

What emerges from the evaluation is that certain "praises" form what might be called a common "stock", which individual poets embroider to the best of their ability. Although a large percentage of these "praises" are handed down through the ages - the earliest set was published in 1859 by Revd. Lewis Grout, and the latest, to my knowledge, is Msimang's lengthier version published in 1975 - a close analysis of these texts shows the interplay between tradition and the individual talent.

Most of the scholarship on izibongo stresses the thesis that these poems are the offerings of memorisers, rather than "original" creations. The high frequency of the appearance of "stock" praises

would seem to confirm this hypothesis, but the case is still open for perceiving these poems as individual creations or re-creations.

Amongst the published versions of Shaka's poem, few of the sources are named, nor are biographical details given. Revd. Grant recorded his version from Gwebisa, a soldier in Cetshwayo's army at the Battle of Isandlwana, and a supporter, later on, of Cetshwayo's rival, Zibebu. Grout, Samuelson, Bryant and Jack Cope do not name their informants; James Stuart named some of his sources in his manuscripts. (I have, through the courtesy of the Killie Campbell Africana Library in Natal, managed to get copies of some of Stuart's manuscripts which are discussed for convenience in Part II Chapter 3.) But the grand Shakan poem, edited by Trevor Cope, which was published in 1968, is based on the thirty-three individual versions of Shaka's poem collected by James Stuart. Stuart died whilst working on the manuscript, with the assistance of a South African linguist, D. McK. Malcolm, on a collated version of Shaka's poem. Trevor Cope assumed editorial responsibility for the text on Malcolm's death.

In his introduction to Izibongo: Zulu Praise Poetry, Trevor Cope summarises Raymond Mazisi Kunene's thesis² that Zulu izibongo falls into three categories, which he styles: pre-Shakan, Shakan and post-Shakan. Kunene maintains that the first category is made up of eighteenth century poems which are lyrical, and consist of images of "harmless" animals - birds, duikers and the likes; and that these "primitive" (to use Cope's word) poems were superseded by those of the Shakan era, which were heroic - characterised by the use of more fearsome animal imagery (lions and leopards) and a stanza consisting of a statement, extension, development and conclusion (usually of a 'contrary twist' kind, introduced by the word "kanti", which can be translated as "whereas" or "but then"). The post-Shakan phase is said to reflect the virility of the Shakan era.

Whilst it is true to say that Shaka's praise-poem is, perhaps, the finest of the royal praise-poems; the tripartite division of eras is facile, as it is almost impossible to date the composition of many of the poems. As Msimang has shown, Shaka is praised as a "butterfly" - which is hardly the symbol of aggression!³ The "mechanics" of the Shakan stanza have been explored by Cope, who focuses on the poetic techniques used: metre, rhyme, alliteration, assonance, parallelism and repetition. Cope's analysis reveals his linguistic bias - my emphasis is on the poetic use of language in the portrayal of Shaka as a conquering hero. Cope views the izimbongi more as memorizers than as creators; he notes the high pitch and fast speed of the delivery; and concludes:

The function of praise poems arises from the function of praises in general, which is to bring about conformity to the approved modes of behaviour. (4)

The early collections are made by missionaries who, for the most part, were cautious in describing izibongo as poems, because of ethnocentric views of what constituted "poetry".⁵ This generic issue persisted for almost a century, and underlies Bryant's disparaging remark on Ndaba's praises: "The above is not verse; much less is it poetry."⁶

The pioneering study by a black academic revolved around the question of genre. B. W. Vilakazi wrote:

The problem to be solved is whether izibongo can be considered as poetry. Personally I contend that they are poetry, because in studying the language of their composition, one does not fail to discover a deep and genuine imaginative tone, for the composer of izibongo apprehends experience, both in its intensity and its subtlety, and shows undeniable power of revealing unknown modes of being through his creation and association of images. (7)

Vilakazi, in his two poems "UShaka kaSenzangakhona" ("Shaka, Son of Senzangakhona") and "Phezu Kwethuna LikaShaka" ("The Grave of Shaka") tried, with limited success, to utilize the "traditional" images of izibongo in Western-style verse,⁸ prompted, no doubt, by his preoccupation with metre. As Trevor Cope points out:

. . . the Zulu is forced into a mould of rhyming couplets, the language minced and mincing, quite unsuitable to the subject of 'arms and the man', quite unsuitable to Zulu phonology, and quite contrary to Zulu 'natural' poetry. (9)

Vilakazi's poems will be considered in the last chapter of this thesis - suffice it to say, here, that izibongo need to be evaluated on their own terms, rather than being forced into generic moulds that have shaped, and been shaped by, European poetic forms. This observation brings us to the question of "formulas" in izibongo.

Personally, I do not find the term "formulas" very useful in dealing with praise-poetry, for it brings to mind the strictures of Albert Lord and Milman Parry on Jugoslavian epics and those of Homer.¹⁰ Lord, Parry and Jeff Opland see the oral poets as people who use "formulas" and set phrases as aids to extempore composition.¹¹ One would qualify this by pointing out that the question of metre has not been satisfactorily resolved, with regard to izibongo,¹² nor is it that important. More energy has been spent in trying to work out the mechanics of the art of praising than on the meaning of the poems - an imbalance which this thesis attempts to redress. In fact, most of the editions of Southern African Praise Poetry have been compiled by linguists and anthropologists, rather than by literary experts.

Isaac Schapera's volume, Praise-Poems of Tswana Chiefs, states that, by and large, "original praise-poems are regarded as the property of the composer, amongst the Tswana, and are recited in public only by himself during his life-time, although they might be

memorized by others later". He suggests that "they are regarded primarily as sources of historical information", as his informants based their assessment of chiefs on them, saying "He must have been a great warrior, because, as his praise says . . ." or "apparently he fought with one of his younger brothers, because his praises say . . ." ¹³

Damane and Sanders' Lithoko: Sotho Praise Poems ¹⁴ subscribes to the diminishing reserves theory which stipulates that praises are created, then handed down by an effort of memory with the length of the poem being, to some extent, proportional to the stature of the person being praised; but the length also varies in accordance to the passage of time. Thus, praises of contemporary figures, or people from a couple of generations back, are longer and more intelligible than those of their ancestors.

Jeff Opland's study of Xhosa poetry, "Imbongi Nezibongo: The Xhosa Tribal Poet and the Contemporary Poetic Tradition", ¹⁵ was, in effect, a translation of the strictures of Albert Lord into African Studies. In this article, Opland highlights the performance itself at the expense of the poem that is declaimed, and is inclined to draw a rigid distinction between "inspired improvising" izimbongi and the poems recited by memorisers. In subsequent articles, he has considered the use of "Praise Poems as Historical Sources"; and in "The Isolation of the Xhosa Oral Poet", he concludes that the main thrust of Xhosa poetry is no longer oral. He stresses the difference between rural and urban performance and the isolation of the poet from the Homeland leaders and from his audience, which has been brought about by the disruption of the pre-colonial structure of society and the stresses of urbanisation. There are, nonetheless, differences between the Zulu and Xhosa forms of praising, and in the political status of the two groups.

David Rycroft's research has shown how songs feature in court circles,¹⁶ and Elisabeth Gunner's research stresses the vitality of the izibongo amongst commoners.¹⁷ More work needs to be done on the royal praises to ascertain whether there has been a change of emphasis, and if so, why.

Gunner, Rycroft and Opland stress the importance of performance, as do Mafeje,¹⁸ Wainwright¹⁹ and Cope. Whilst it is true to say that, for the "total effect" to be perceived, one should see izibongo performed in an appropriate environment, the question of audience has been over-emphasised, latterly, Bryant's remarks, quoted in Part I, show that izimbongi rehearsed their poems out "in the veld", with or without an audience. The creative use of language upon experience is not limited to the physical presence of an audience - praise-poets are more than mere memorisers, they are creators, too.

Doubtless, the tempo of the performance and its length are affected by the nature of the audience's response (be it enthusiastic, encouraging or bored); but the existence of the texts of royal and other praises should not be received with scorn or derision, for a text does not claim to be, or to rival, the multi-media show of dramatic performance. As Landeg White has commented, it seems a pity to "talk oneself out of using the published material in literary analysis".²⁰

Ruth Finnegan's seminal work, Oral Literature in Africa,²¹ stresses the fluidity of the art of praising, noting how different praises are reworked in different circumstances during the reign of chiefs, and, by extension, after their deaths.

The Hodza and Fortune edition of Shona Praise-Poetry²² is concerned with a different genre altogether - that of clan praises.

Clan praises emphasize corporate identity, whilst Zulu izibongo deal with major national figures or leaders of various clans. Clan-praises are, of their very nature, "simpler" in stylistic terms than individual praise poems, which deal with specificities rather than generalities.

Nyembezi has shown how "The Historical Background to the Izibongo of the Zulu Military Age" can be sketched-in, in analysis.²³ And Landeg White, in "Power and the Praise Poem",²⁴ also demonstrated the value of analysing the poems in an historical perspective. But, one must not lose sight of the fact that the genre specialises in the use of hyperbole - these poems are, after all, produced by people who stand to gain in proportion to the wealth (and charity) of their patron. The few criticisms that occur in the versions of Shaka's poem analysed in Part I counsel restraint, but the main thrust of the poems reflect the poet's delight in reeling off the lists of Shaka's virtues! The poems celebrate the unparalleled success of the founder of the Zulu nation in his wars of conquest: fighting is Shaka's "raison d'être". The detailed analysis that follows focuses on the poet's use of language - perhaps the most important feature of the genre. It is helpful, in this light, to quote some of the comments made by a Zulu informant, who was interviewed in Bulawayo in 1982 by Landeg White.²⁵ Mr. Hlabangana said of the izimbongi:

(they) were people who could speak well . . .
People who could build up things, handle
various materials and incorporate them into
their poems. . . . They had to speak in an
appropriate manner.

Mr. Hlabangana prides himself on being a "full Zulu", and so his remarks are enlightening, as little attention has, in the past, been paid to black aesthetics, with regard to izibongo.

Questioned on what made a good imbongi, his answer was: "A man who can speak well . . . who can combine verbal skill with the form of praising." He elaborated on this, saying that "An imbongi had to say that which is appropriate . . . if praising a king he had to use appropriate praises (or, in literary terms, use the right register). Praises which the people at large would appreciate." These remarks are helpful in assessing those praises which are common to the nine versions analysed in Part I.

Mr. Hlabangana went on to say that an imbongi had to draw on the deeds of an "inkosi" (king or chief) for the fabric of his praises, and by using his imagination, render certain events that had actually occurred in a pleasing manner - but within reason, for he could be "made to sit down if he (was) telling lies."

Questioned on the transmission of praise-poetry, he replied: "People sang praises . . . because they liked to do so." Praises were sung at public gatherings, he said, and were "part of the procedure when addressing the monarch." This is verified in the analysis of three Zulu plays dealing with life in the Shakan era (in Part II Chapter 6).²⁶

On the aesthetic appeal of izibongo, Mr. Hlabangana said, in an admirable turn of phrase: "The things (the imbongi) says will enter your ear and then enter your heart and remain there!"

This thesis breaks new ground in its methodological approach to the analysis of Shaka's praise-poems. Each published version is analysed in turn, and comparisons are drawn between the different versions so as to show how different poets handled the "core" material. Original material is used in evaluating the text edited by Trevor Cope; and in Part II Chapter 3, there are eight of the individual Shakan poems collected by James Stuart (and made available to me by Professor Leroy Vail).

Debates on oral literature in the 1960s and early 1970s were inspired by the work of Milman Parry and Albert Lord, and were thus largely preoccupied with arguments about the role of the "memorizers" and the "performers", focusing in particular on the question of formulae and formulaic phrases. Ruth Finnegan summarises the terms of debate thus:

The present tendency among ballad scholars is to reject memorisation-with-degeneration as the sole process at work - and to stress the element of 'recreation' in oral transmission discussed below. (27)

More recent work has questioned the application of Lord's description of formulae to the metaphors used by izimbhongi:

The 'praises' associated with Shaka's name are not formulae which provide a fall-back position for the poet when his inspiration fails; they are stock materials, the 'evidence' familiar to both poet and audience, which he re-works to produce his own interpretation of Shaka's historical importance. The differences between the available versions are not to be sought in the praise-poets' failing memories, nor in their capacity for inspired improvisation in performance, but in the re-working of familiar words to produce praise-poems appropriate to their audience and their time. (28)

The manuscripts of some of the poems collected by James Stuart (and discussed in Part II Chapter 3) show quite clearly that Stuart cross-examined his informants, and those who accompanied them, when he was transcribing the poems they recited.

The manuscripts of James Stuart's mega-poem on Shaka shows quite clearly that Stuart desired to establish an Ur-text of the Shakan praises, but no such text exists. The percentage of praises that recur in the nine praise-poems analysed in Part I indicate the extent of the stock praises of Shaka that were current when the poems were recorded or transcribed. The variety in length reveals the importance of noting with precision the occasions on which poems are declaimed - this involves taking into account the various audiences to which the praises were sung - it is reasonable to assume that praise-poems recited by court praisers to members of the royal family will differ from those performed in mixed gatherings including counsellors and subjects - this is obviously an area which can be clarified through field-work. My own discussion of the izibongo considered here takes account of these complexities.

In the Second Part of the thesis, the originality rests on the depth, breadth and scope of the material utilized. The analysis ranges from the seminal accounts of the first white traders, settlers and adventurers in Shakan Zululand - notably those of Nathaniel Isaacs and Henry Francis Fynn,²⁹ to the latest accounts by black and white South Africans. I trace the formative influence of early accounts of Shaka's reign in the histories of Zululand published by early missionaries - partly as a means of getting further subscriptions to support those "in the field", and partly for academic purposes. These disparate accounts were brought together and popularised by Rider Haggard's sequence of Zulu novels, especially Nada the Lily and Child of Storm.³⁰

The Haggardian legacy of blood-and-thunder epics, with a dash of romance, had an enormous influence on the subsequent portrayal of Zulus (and Southern African blacks, generally) in English literature (see Chapter 1) and on the work of early fiction written in English by black Southern African writers (see Chapter 2). Chapter 5 details the decline of the Haggardian romance into pornographic literature in the accounts of Shaka's sexual predilections, which is the dominant theme, in Shakan literature produced after Ritter's trail-blazing novel, Shaka Zulu,³¹ by white South African and European writers. The 1960s saw the rise of "Africanist historiography"³² which resurrected the "Black Napoleon" parallel found in the earlier literature. This positivist evaluation of Shaka's historical achievements, though widely accepted by academics, has had little impact on the jaded Freudian accounts favoured by European (or white) artists.

Another tradition exists amongst the literary portrayal of Shaka by black writers from Southern- and West-Africa. The racial division in the literature reflects, in part, the colonial heritage of the writers in question, as well as a qualitative difference in

the choice of theme. Whilst the white writers have, post-Fynn, -Isaacs and -Haggard, tended to emphasize the bloodshed, tyranny and superstitious nature of the Shakan era (which they would regard as symptomatic of the general callousness and incompetence of Africans prior to the advent of British rule, which introduced notions of progress and civilization); the black writers, from the time of the first generation of literate black Southern Africans, have tended to focus their attention on the Shakan regime - on the monarch's use and abuse of power.

Magama Fuze's The Black People and Whence They Came: A Zulu View,³³ John L. Dube's Jeje, the Bodyservant of King Tshaka,³⁴ Sol. T. Plaatje's Mhudi³⁵ and Thomas Mofolo's Chaka³⁶ pioneered the writing of historical accounts and historical fiction in Zulu, Sotho and English. These texts are largely critical of Shaka's excesses, and the Zulu king is generally castigated for intensifying the cycle of conquest and plunder in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in southern and central Africa (see Chapter 2). The most influential of these works is Thomas Mofolo's Chaka.

Mofolo's Chaka was translated into French by Victor Ellenberger in 1939, and this has spawned five Chakan plays by West African writers, plus a "dramatic poem". Léopold Sédar Senghor was the first Francophone writer to adopt the Chakan motif. In his poem, "Chaka", Senghor tried to absolve Chaka of the allegations of wanton cruelty that have been levelled at him, as the poet wished to celebrate Shaka as a founder of an African nation-state. Senghor's Chaka is a négritude hero - a defiant, unapologetic advocate of a unitary state; a man of great emotional capacity; and a staunch opponent of apartheid. The poem sheds more light on Senghor's main concerns, than on the historical Shaka. Indeed, the poem works best when read as an account of the tensions Senghor faced on the eve of

his return to Senegal, in 1956, to establish his political base.³⁷ Senghor's adaptation of the Chakan saga to the dictates of the West African political stage acted as a catalyst for the use of Chaka as a model ruler in other drama written by West African writers, in French (see Chapter 4). Seydou Badian's La Mort de Chaka³⁸ and Condetto Nénékhaly-Camara's Amazoulou³⁹ are attempts to portray Chaka as a selfless leader, dedicated to the welfare of his people. These plays fail because too much attention is placed on the ideological message they are meant to inculcate, at the expense of characterisation and dramatic interest. Whilst the protagonist of Badian and Camara's plays comes across as a bore, that of Djibril Tamsir Niane⁴⁰ and Tchikaya U Tam'si⁴¹ pulsates with demonic energy, à la Mofolo. Technically, Niane's Chaka and U Tam'si's Le Zulu are the most appealing and convincing of the Francophone portrayals of Chaka. Abdou Anta Ka's Les Amazoulous lacks the stylistic competence of Niane and U Tam'si, but it is, nonetheless, an interesting attempt at incorporating Chaka into the metaphysical framework of Senegalese culture. It thus has something in common with Wole Soyinka's Ogun Abibimān,⁴² in which Soyinka sees Shaka as Ogun's "brother spirit".

The deification of Shaka figures prominently in the final chapter of the thesis. Benedict Vilakazi's Shakan poems, referred to earlier, contain impassioned pleas to the "spirit" of Shaka to guide those who run the affairs of the nation. Herbert Dhlomo echoes Vilakazi in his poem Valley of a Thousand Hills,⁴³ in which he deifies Shaka, and his royal ancestors. Although both Vilakazi and Dhlomo are strident in their celebration of Shaka, their preoccupation with Western poetic norms leads to a sharp rift between the black consciousness content of their verse, and the stylized form in which it appears. They lack the self-confidence possessed by Senghor,

Soyinka and Kunene, which would urge them to experiment with poetic form and language.

Whilst Kunene and Oswald Mtshali⁴⁴ praise Shaka with obvious pride and forceful imagery, it is left to Wole Soyinka to work out, in rational terms, the ramifications of a rise of a Shakan spirit amongst the oppressed people of South Africa. Soyinka's Ogun Abibimã can thus lay claim to being the most profound Shakan poem written by a black African.

The most profound Shakan poem written by a white South African is Frank Templeton Prince's "Chaka".⁴⁵ Published in 1938, when Prince was in his early twenties, "Chaka" shows signs of Prince's promise as a contemplative poet, and as a master of the dramatic monologue. Prince, like Soyinka, and some of the izimbongi interviewed by James Stuart, is a master of language - verbal dexterity abounds in the poem. Prince focuses on the central issue of Shaka's use and abuse of power; and thus his "Chaka" is more in keeping with that of Mofolo than the salacious accounts of the Shakan era produced by other white South Africans.

The Haggardian strand and that of Mofolo has influenced both black and white writers - a point made in the relevant sections of the thesis. Two other writers whose accounts have helped to shape subsequent Shakan historiography across the colour line are Robert Samuelson⁴⁶ and Father A. T. Bryant.⁴⁷ Steeped as they were in the oral culture, Samuelson and Bryant's works are useful sources of information on Zulu customs and izibongo, and represent the beginnings of the growth of Bantu Studies in South Africa (see Chapter 3).

Dr. William Worger's admirable study, "Clothing Dry Bones: the Myth of Shaka" shows the difficulties, for an historian, of utilising

the multifarious accounts in Shakan historiography. He stresses the point that the political nature of the sources of oral testimony must be recognised, and the parasitism that riddles the accounts of the man:

Even the European writings of the mid and later nineteenth century, where they are not based on material taken from the reports of Shaka's European contemporaries, are based on information collected from African informants. Less immediately apparent is the oral nature of the accounts of the early traders and explorers, whose examination, however, leads to the conclusion that the great majority of material contained in them relating to Shaka is obtained from African informants rather than personal observation. This is especially so in reference to Shaka's personal life history and to examples of imperial cruelty. A major difficulty for the historian arises from the failure of these accounts to identify informants, compounded by the subjectivity and biases of the authors. . . . (43)

As an example of exaggeration, he points out the discrepancies in the accounts of the killings associated with Nandi's death, and in the contradictory accounts given by Fynn and Isaacs.⁴⁹ He concludes by saying that ". . . Shaka must always be an enigmatic figure . . ." and "historians should engage in shaping an adequate historical reality, not in mythmaking."⁵⁰ For the literary scholar, the mythopoeicis of Shaka is a fascinating field of study.

The Zulus have been universally acclaimed as extraordinary Africans; and this reputation rests on their undoubted military prowess which, in turn, is based on Shaka's conquest of surrounding clans and groups. Ben Orme⁵¹ and Dr. Russell Martin⁵² have produced exhaustive analyses of British "images" of the Zulus in the press and in the literature; and Dr. Brian V. Street refers to the Zulu warrior stereotype in his book, The Savage in Literature.⁵³ Comparatively little systematic and thorough research has been done on the literary portrayal of Shaka, and the concluding sections of

this introduction will be devoted to showing how this study differs from Stephen Gray's article, "Shaka as a Literary Theme",⁵⁴ Donald Burness' Shaka, King of the Zulus in African Literature,⁵⁵ and Kolawole Ogunbesan's "A King for all Seasons: Chaka in African Literature".⁵⁶

Gray's rapid review of Shakan literature is mainly concerned with the South African contributions to the Shakan saga:

Of all characters in Southern African literature, it is the Zulu king's Shaka (c1787-1828), who appears most diversely. He is used as a character in an extraordinary range of works of different genres and styles, and has been right there, as it were, throughout the twisting and sprawling course of the development of literature in South Africa. So, although it might be setting a too exclusive viewpoint on the field to focus on only one popular figure in order to begin to unlock it, concentration on Shaka as a literary motif, a magnetic pole, does serve to crystallize some preliminary speculations on how literature has evolved in Southern Africa. (57)

This preponderance of mixed metaphors illustrates only too clearly the need for a thorough survey of the literary portrayal of Shaka! (One can only hope that this opening paragraph is an "in-joke"!)

The imprecision of the opening paragraph is also in evidence in Gray's remarks on oral poetry:

One assumes that in the tribal oral situation poetry could be said to have played a very necessary and on-going role: it was a sophisticated means of encoding information of both a historical and educational nature that ensured generational continuity and social cohesion. (58)

The first part of this thesis addressed itself to the role and function of praise-poetry and praise-poets, and challenges the static notion of "tribal" society and culture on which Gray's "speculations" are based:

His (the imbongi's) commonest technique was to instruct with wit and skill by means of drawing historical parallels - this simple

trait being the one predominant characteristic of all literature in the vernacular in Southern Africa to this day - and thereby to ensure that tribal knowledge grew layer upon transparent layer, as it were, always varying and developing but never fundamentally changing. (59)

Gwebisa's version of Shaka's praises, as published by the Revd. E. Grout, shows quite clearly how a fundamental change in the content and burden of Shaka's praises can occur, once the political realities in a country or locality are altered.⁶⁰

Gray argues from a firmer base when contemplating the Shakan poetry produced by South Africans, notably Prince, Vilakazi, Dhlomo and Mtshali; and Senghor's "Chaka".

I take issue, however, with Gray's description of Mofolo's Chaka as "a desperately schizophrenic novel, full of nervous, unresolved tensions"⁶¹ and argue, in Chapter 2, that Mofolo strongly disapproved of Chaka's devotion to warfare at the expense of the peaceful progress that occurred during Dingiswayo's rule.

Gray notes how historians feel obliged "to enter upon physical descriptions and character interpretations of Shaka."⁶² Gray's qualified approval of Ritter's Shaka Zulu emerges in his own poem, The Assassination of Shaka,⁶³ which I analyse in Chapter 5. Gray also addresses himself to "the question of language across the cultures"⁶⁴ - a crucial factor in any discussion of (South) African literature, as I point out in the second part of the thesis.

Kolawole Ogunbesan's article provides yet another example of the formative influence of E. A. Ritter's Shaka Zulu, which is billed as "the most reliable biography of Chaka to date".⁶⁵ "A King for all Seasons . . ." is an assault on Mofolo's Chaka, which is erroneously dismissed as a "completely non-political" text.⁶⁶ Ogunbesan either ignores or is unaware of the fact that Mofolo was a member of the Basutoland Progressive Association, which had strong views on how

the African cause could be advanced in southern Africa (see chapter 2). Ogunbesan is happier when discussing the more explicitly "committed" works of Senghor and Badian:

. . . (Mofolo's) accounts of Chaka's crimes were mostly legendary or taken out of context. Although both of them were inspired by Mofolo's novel, Senghor and Badian have come closer to the real Chaka because they emphasized the nationalism that lay behind his actions, especially in his last years. McMenemy's is the closest to the historical Chaka and significantly, the novelist has confined the action of his book to the last four years of Chaka's life. (67)

Apart from getting Mrs. McMenemy's gender wrong, Ogunbesan makes no attempt to reconcile the contradictory views expressed in her book, Assegai!,⁶⁸ on whether or not Shaka is a moral or an amoral being.⁶⁹ Moreover, he is anxious to present Assegai! as a Pan-Africanist text in line with his assertion that "the seventies promises to be the decade of continental unity".⁷⁰ In short, "A King for all Seasons . . ." exemplifies the pitfalls of "committed" criticism in its lack of academic objectivity and depth, and, in certain cases, its highly selective use of quotations.

Donald Burness' Shaka emphasizes the centrality of the legacy of Thomas Mofolo's Chaka in subsequent Shakan literature - especially in the drama produced by the Francophone writers, including Senghor, Badian, Nénékhaly-Camara and Niane. He also points out the influence of Ritter on Mulikita; and analyses F. T. Prince's "Chaka" with admirable clarity; and assesses Mrs. McMenemy's Assegai!

Burness' analysis of Mofolo's Chaka is just - he emphasizes the fact that

Chaka is a political work. Mofolo is concerned with the nature of power and the destiny of African peoples. . . . The success of Shaka's rule stems from his knowledge that fear alone on the part of the masses assures a workable totalitarian government . . . he recognizes the practical necessity of terror as a means of co-ordinating disparate tribal elements into a cohesive force whose "raison d'etre" is the glorification of Shaka's name. (71)

This analysis is similar to E. V. Walter's thesis in Terror and Resistance,⁷² which addresses itself to the dynamics of the Shakan regime.

Burness details the Biblical influence on Mofolo's style and points out that Mofolo does not "put his finger in the pan", to borrow Lawrence's idiom, unlike many of the Francophone writers who set out to "correct" Mofolo's version. Burness concludes by saying:

Ultimately, Thomas Mofolo's contribution to African literature cannot be overestimated. He has succeeded in creating a world, both Christian and African, that speaks of the best and noblest instincts in man while recognizing human failings. In this sense we can understand Chaka's being called a masterpiece, for it belongs among the major works of twentieth century literature. (73)

The religious overtones of Mofolo's Chaka are transposed in Senghor's dramatic poem, in which Chaka is presented as the Black Christ. In Chapter 4, I take issue with this inappropriate comparison, as Chaka is not portrayed as a sacrificial lamb, but, rather, as a culpable figure. Burness' analysis of F. T. Prince's view of Chaka as anti-Christ comes across more powerfully than his arguments on behalf of Senghor's black Messiah.

Burness' analysis of the Shakan plays highlights the importance of the audience in African art:

The mythic element of Shaka is best served through drama, for it is the most public of written art forms. The dramatist cannot function independent of his society, for without an audience there is no performance. (74)

Burness highlights the detrimental effects of the rigid rules of French drama on Badian and Camara's Chakan plays; which is exacerbated by the quagmire of sloganism.

Burness is fascinated by Camara's play, which I deem to be the most inferior of the Francophone dramatisations of the Chakan story. Burness is impressed by the abdication scene, which I regard as the

weakest scene in the play. Burness is also dismissive of Niane's Chaka, which, I argue, is the most dramatic of the five plays I examine.

I take issue with Dorothy Blair's commendation of Abdou Anta Ka's⁷⁵ play, Les Amazoulous, as it is difficult to follow the synthesis of a southern African king in a Senegalese metaphysical framework.

My assessment of Tchikaya U Tam'si's Le Zulu brings the criticism of the Francophone Chakan drama up to date; in thematic terms, U Tam'si's epigraph, taken as it is from Ecclesiastes, counterpoints Mofolo's Christian perspective on the Chakan saga.

Although I accept Burness' assertion that Mulikita's Shaka Zulu⁷⁶ presents Shaka in a more attractive light than the other plays, he overlooks the Ritterian rhetoric in Shaka's concluding speeches, in which the Zulu king emphasizes his devotion to terror as an instrument of policy.

I also argue that Mulikita's play provides a sharp contrast to Wole Soyinka's epic, Ogun Abibimafñ - the former sees education as the new frontier to be conquered; whilst the latter stresses the importance of fighting for political power, and the rebirth of the Shakan warrior ethos amongst the dispossessed peoples of South Africa.

I challenge Burness' assertion that Nickie McMenemy "is impressed by the quality and nature of (African) civilization"⁷⁷ and argue that Assegai! can be read as a record of Mrs. McMenemy's inability to synthesize her African and European heritage (see Chapter 5).

Burness' book includes a bombastic article by Jordan Ngubane, who attempts to portray Shaka as an egalitarian hero whose main aim is to establish a classless society. The specious reasoning which abounds in Ngubane's "Shaka's social, political and military ideals" is illustrated in the following:

Nandi saw herself and her children as the victims of the greed of the aristocratic families of her time. She awakened a hatred for the aristocracy in Shaka which made it impossible for him to want to leave behind any heirs. As a result, he never married; he did not want successors who would impose on the model nation he had built the deprivation which had been his constant companion as he grew up. Anybody with the requisite qualities had every right to become king of the nation he was to found. (78)

Both the oral and written accounts are unanimous in their assertion that Shaka repeatedly stated that he did not wish to have children in case he was overthrown by them. Nor is it clear why Shaka proclaimed himself king if he had such a passionate hatred for aristocrats!

The bogus nature of Ngubane's assessment emerges in the contradictory conclusion he draws:

The most remarkable feature of the balanced society was that it reflected the character and the personality of one man, Shaka the Great.

Tyrants have arisen in history who have affected profound changes in the lives of whole communities, but none has modelled a people's outlook, forever to reflect his whole personality. In the view of most Zulus, Shaka impressed his character on the Greater Zulu precisely because he was not a tyrant (excepting in his last days) . . . (79)

Ngubane tries to portray Shaka as "the father of modern Pan-Africanism"⁸⁰ - but this cannot be achieved by creating traditions and coining new phrases as one goes along! Ngubane also draws on some of Shaka's praises to underline the praiseworthy nature of the king, and he portrays the praise-poet's tasks as prophetic.⁸¹ The article concludes by tracing the Shakan spirit in Bhambada (sic), Dr. Pixley Seme, and Chief Albert Luthuli, and Gatsha Buthelezi. In many respects, Mazisi Kunene's Emperor Shaka the Great can be read as a verification of Ngubane's article!

Daniel P. Kunene's contribution to Burness' Shaka is a review of "Shaka in the Literature of Southern Africa".⁸² Kunene points out

the admiration Dube's Jeje has for Shaka; suggests that Mofolo is torn between love and condemnation in his portrayal of Chaka; and points out that Zondi's Shaka is a megalomaniac. Kunene concludes that Shaka will always be a "controversial figure".⁸³

This thesis goes beyond the analyses of Burness, Ngubane and D. P. Kunene in its scope and depth. By applying a consistent critical method, I show how influential the izibongo composed in honour of Shaka have been in the vernacular literature. And, in incorporating the "historical" accounts, which Burness excludes, I have presented an analytical survey of the mutations from the accounts of the early white visitors in Shakan Zululand to the present day. I have also shown how influential the two accounts of Thomas Mofolo and Léopold Senghor have been to the portrayal of Shaka in West Africa. Furthermore, my study encompasses the works of three Afrikaner writers (see Chapter 5), Philippus van Coller, Pieter Fourie, and Dr. P. J. Schoeman,⁸⁴ which is essential to a fuller understanding of the importance of the Shakan symbol in South African literature.

The July 1985 issue of South African Panorama featured an article on the recently completed serial, "Shaka Zulu", which was produced by the SATV network.⁸⁵ The film, as the title suggests, is heavily reliant on E. A. Ritter's historical romance. Shaka Zulu will thus join Zulu and Zulu Dawn as a cinematic representation of what is undoubtedly the single most famous African nation.

On the 21st September, 1985, I attended, in London, a splendid performance of Amandla, put on by the ANC's drama group, which illustrated the importance of Shaka's praises to black South Africans in exile in Europe; with great delight, I recognized the praises

dealing with Shaka's most important battle: that against Zwide:

Pursuer of a person and he pursues him unceasingly;
I liked him when he pursued Zwide son of Langa,
Taking him from where the sun rises
And sending him to where it sets;
As for Zwide, he folded his two little shoulders together,
It was then that the elder was startled by the younger.

Footnotes - Introduction

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4. A. T. Cope, Izibongo, op. cit., p. 31.
5. J. Döhne, A Zulu-Kafir Dictionary Etymologically Explained, Cape Town, G. D. Pike, 1857, p. ix.
6. A. T. Bryant, Olden Times, op. cit., p. 39.
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8. B. W. Vilakazi, Zulu Horizons, F. L. Friedman, D. McK. Malcolm, J. M. Sikakana (eds.), Johannesburg, Wits. University Press, 1973.
9. A. T. Cope, "Sabela Zulu - the Zulu Response: Zulu Izibongo in Western Context", paper given at the Conference on Literature and Society in Southern Africa, hosted by the Centre for Southern African Studies, 1981, p. 5.
10. see A. B. Lord, The Singer of Tales, Cambridge, Massachussets, 1960; and A. Parry, The Making of Homeric Verse: The Collected Papers of Milman Parry, Oxford, 1970.
11. See, for example, J. Opland, "Southeastern Bantu Eulogy and Early Indo-European Poetry", Research in African Literature, XI, 3 (1980), pp. 295-307.
12. See D. Rycroft, "The Question of Metre in Southern African Praise Poetry" in P. J. Wentzel (ed.), Third African Languages Congress of UNISA, op. cit., pp. 301-323.

13. I. Schapera (ed.), Praise Poems of Tswana Chiefs, Oxford, Clarendon, 1965, pp. 6, 15.
14. M. Damane and P. B. Sanders, Lithoko: Sotho Praise Poems, Oxford, 1974.
15. J. Opland, "Imbongi Nezibongo: The Xhosa Tribal Poet and the Contemporary Poetic Tradition", P.M.L.A. (1975), 90, pp. 185-208. See also "Scop and Imbongi: Anglo-Saxon and Bantu Oral Poets", English Studies in Africa, 1971, 14, pp. 161-178; "Praise Poetry as Historical Sources" in C. Saunders and R. Derricourt (eds.), Beyond the Cape Frontier, Studies in the History of the Transkei and Ciskei, Longman, Cape Town, 1974; "Southeastern Bantu Eulogy and Early Indo-European Poetry", Research in African Literature, XI, 3, (1980), pp. 295-301; "From Horseback to Monastic Cell: the Impact on English Literature of the Introduction of Writing" in Old English Literature in Context: Ten Essays, J. D. Niles (ed.), Suffolk, D. S. Brewer, 1950; "The Isolation of the Xhosa Oral Poet", Institute of Social and Economic Research, Rhodes University, Seminar Paper, 1982; and Xhosa Oral Poetry: Aspects of a Black South African Tradition, Cambridge University Press, 1984.
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17. Gunner, E., "Ukubonga Nezibongo: Zulu Praising and Praises", SOAS, Ph.D., 1984.
18. A. Mafeje, "The Role of the bard in a contemporary African community", Journal of African Languages 6, 1967, pp. 193-223.
19. A. Wainwright, "The Xhosa Imbongi at home and on the mines" in P. J. Wentzel (ed.), Third African Languages Congress, op. cit.
20. L. E. White, "Power and the Praise Poem", paper given at the 1981 Conference on Literature and Society in Southern Africa, hosted by the Centre for Southern African Studies.
21. R. Finnegan, Oral Literature in Africa, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1970; see also Oral Poetry: Its Nature, Significance and Social Context, Cambridge, CUP, 1977.
22. G. Fortune and A. Hodza, Shona Praise Poetry, Oxford, 1979.
23. C. L. S. Nyembezi, "The Historical Background to the Izibongo of the Zulu Military Age", African Studies, 1948, Vol. VII, Pt. 1, pp. 110-125, Pt. 2, pp. 157-174.
24. L. E. White, "Power and the Praise Poem", op. cit.
25. The following extracts are taken from my transcript of Landeg White's interview with Mr. Hlabangana, on 8 April, 1982, in Bulawayo.

27. R Finnegan Oral Poetry, op cit p.142.
28. L E White & T Couzens eds Literature and Society in South Africa Harlow, Longman, 1984.
29. The plays in question are S. B. L. Mbatha's Nawe Mbopha kaSithayi, Pietermaritzburg, Lincroft, 1971; L. L. J. Mncwango's Ngenzeni?, Pietermaritzburg, Shuter and Shooter, 1959; and E. Zondi's Ukufa kukaShaka, Johannesburg, Witwatersrand University Press, 1960. See also, M. Kunene's Emperor Shaka the Great, London, Heinemann, 1979.
29. See J. Bird (ed.), The Annals of Natal, Vol. 1, Pietermaritzburg, P. Davis & Sons, 1888; J. Stuart and D. McK. Malcolm (eds.), The Diary of Henry Francis Fynn, Pietermaritzburg, 1950; N. Isaacs, Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa, 2 Vols., London, 1836.
30. H. R. Haggard, Nada the Lily, London, MacDonald, 1949 (1892); Child of Storm, London, MacDonald, 1952 (1913).
31. E. A. Ritter, Shaka Zulu, Middlesex, Penguin, 1978 (1955).
32. The key text here is J. D. Omer-Cooper's The Zulu Aftermath: A Nineteenth Century Revolution in Bantu Africa, Harlow, Longman, 1980 (1966).
33. M. M. Fuze, The Black People and Whence They Came: A Zulu View, transl. H. C. Lugg, ed. A. T. Cope, Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press and Durban Killie Campbell Africana Library, 1979 (1922).
34. J. L. Dube, Jege, the Bodyservant of King Tshaka, transl. J. Boxwell, The Lovedale Press, 1951 (1930).
35. S. T. Plaatje, Mhudi, London, Heinemann, 1978 (1930).
36. T. Mofolo, Chaka, Morija, 1925, transl. F. H. Dutton, Oxford, 1931; and D. P. Kunene, London, Heinemann, 1981.
37. L. S. Senghor, "Chaka" in Ethiopiques, Paris, Seuil, 1956. See also John Reed and Clive Wake's translation in Selected Poems, London, OUP, 1964.
38. S. Badian, La Mort de Chaka, transl. C. Wake, The Death of Chaka, Nairobi, OUP, 1968.
39. C. Nénékhaly-Camara, Amazoulou, Honfleur, J. P. Oswald, 1970.
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41. T. U. Tam'si, Le Zulu, Paris, Nubia, 1977.
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43. H. I. E. Dhlomo, Valley of a Thousand Hills, Durban, Knox, 1941.
44. O. Mtshali, "The Birth of Chaka", in Sounds of a Cowhide Drum, New York, The Third Press, 1972.
45. F. T. Prince, "Chaka" in Poems, London, Faber, 1938.
46. R. C. A. Samuelson, Long, Long Ago, op. cit.

47. A. T. Bryant, Olden Times, op. cit.
48. W. Worger, "Clothing Dry Bones: The Myth of Shaka", Journal of African Studies, Vol. 6 (3), 1979, p. 145.
49. *ibid.*, pp. 151-152.
50. *ibid.*, p. 156.
51. B. Orme, "Victorian Attitudes towards 'small wars': The Anglo-Zulu War (1879): A Case Study", M.Phil., York, 1984.
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60. See E. W. Grant, op. cit. See also L. E. White's "Power and the Praise Poem" for an informed discussion of the mutation in the praises of Moshoeshoe I, pp. 19-25.
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62. *ibid.*, p. 68.
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64. Gray, "Shaka as a Literary Theme", op. cit., p. 68.
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66. *ibid.*, p. 204.
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68. N. McMenemy, Assegai!, London, MacMillan, 1973.
69. Ogunbesan, op. cit., pp. 212-213, 217.
70. *ibid.*, pp. 197-8.

71. D. Burness, op. cit., pp. 14, 16.
72. E. V. Walter, Terror and Resistance: A Study of Political Violence, with Case Studies of some Primitive African Communities, New York, OUP, 1969. For a detailed analysis of this sound analysis of the dynamics of the Shakan era, see Chapter 5.
73. Burness, op. cit., p. 23.
74. *ibid.*, p. xii.
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78. *ibid.*, p. 132.
79. *ibid.*, p. 149.
80. *ibid.*, p. 158.
81. *ibid.*, p. 159.
82. D. P. Kunene, "Shaka in the Literature of Southern Africa" in Burness, op. cit., pp. 165-192.
83. *ibid.*, p. 190.
84. See P. P. R. van Coller, Die Swart Attila-Verhale van Shaka, Unie Boekhandel (EDMS) BPK, 1946; P. Fourie, Shaka, transl. S. Gillham, Cape Town, Longman, 1976; P. J. Schoeman, Phampatha: The Beloved of King Shaka, Cape Town, Howard Timmins, 1983.
85. "Shaka Zulu", South African Panorama, July 1985, pp. 20-25.

PART I: IZIBONGO ZIKASHAKA

The first part of this thesis is an analysis of the praise-poems; or izibongo, composed in honour of Shaka. The seven published texts I shall be evaluating will be presented, broadly speaking, in the order in which they were recorded and published; and reference will be made to two other texts in which Shaka figures prominently.

The first text to be considered is the "Ode to Dingan", which was recorded by two French missionaries, Reverend J. T. Arbousset and Reverend F. Daumas. The first edition of their travelogue, Relation d'un voyage d'exploration au nord-est de la colonie du Cap de Bonne Espérance, was published in 1842, in Paris, and an English translation appeared in 1846.¹ They mention two sources, Okopulana and Omokotungwana, and the poem was transcribed during the reign of Dingan, one of Shaka's assassins. It is, therefore, valuable as a public legitimation of a regicide, and it is interesting to note that Dingan assumed the praises of his victim, in much the same manner that Prince Hal "inherited" the praises (or titles) of the vanquished Hotspur, in Shakespeare's Henry IV Pt. I, as the following analysis will show.

The second text that will be analysed is, in fact, the first praise-poem in honour of Shaka that was published (in 1859) in an appendix to the Reverend Lewis Grout's Zulu Grammar,² together with a "Song in Honor of Chaka".

The third text to be scrutinized is Robert Charles Azariah Samuelson's version, which was published in 1929, in Long, Long Ago.³ Samuelson was brought up amongst the Zulus, and served as Cetshwayo's Secretary when the latter was being held by the British.

Since there are a number of parallels between the Samuelson text and the Stuart-Malcolm-Cope text, it seems reasonable to discuss what is generally held to be the standard version next. James Stuart was born in Pietermaritzburg in 1868, and served as an interpreter and magistrate amongst the Zulu and the Swazi. Between 1888 and 1912, he gathered oral testimony and poetry on the African people of Southern Africa. These manuscripts are housed in the Killie Campbell African Library in Natal. Stuart interviewed at least thirty-one praise-poets (his transcripts of these poems will be discussed in a later chapter (Part II, Chapter 3) to avoid disrupting the flow of the Stuart-Malcolm-Cope poem, which was composed from a number of individual poems interspersed with variant praises from different sources). Stuart desired to present an Ur-text of the Shakan poem, and collaborated with Dr. Daniel Malcolm, a former Chief Inspector of Bantu Education and the first lecturer in Zulu at the University of Natal, in the task of translating the two-hundred and fifty-eight poems Stuart had collected. Sadly, both men died before completing the mammoth task. Fortunately, Professor Cope assumed responsibility for the manuscripts, and edited twenty-eight of the poems in his Izibongo: Zulu Praise Poems.⁴ It is with regret that one notes that the praise-poems have been omitted from the current series of The James Stuart Archive edited by C. de B. Webb and J. Wright.

The fifth version that will be appraised is that of the Reverend A. T. Bryant, which appeared in that seminal work, Olden Times in Zululand and Natal⁵ which, with Samuelson's Long, Long Ago, was published in 1929. Like Samuelson, Bryant omits any reference to the source of his poem, which is, characteristically, presented in an orderly manner, each "paragraph" or segment being a unit of

thought (as will be seen). Both Long, Long Ago and Olden Times will be reviewed in Part II Chapter 3, as they were influential in crystallizing major themes in Shakan and Zulu historiography.

The sixth version, which was recorded by another cleric, the Reverend E. W. Grant, was also published in 1929.⁶ Grant gives some biographical details of his informants - he obtained the Shakan poem from Gwebisa, the praise-poet of Zibebu, a Mandhlakazi chief, who fought against Cetshwayo when the latter was restored.

It would seem that no other versions were published until the appearance of Cyril Nyembezi's Izibongo Zamakhosi in 1958,⁷ which is based, in part, on the versions of Zulu royal praises published by Stuart between 1923 and 1926 (which will be analysed in Part II Chapter 3).

C. T. Msimang has published a version of Shaka's praise-poems which will be evaluated towards the end of this section,⁸ which concludes with an analysis of some of Isaiah Shembe's hymns,⁹ in which he appropriated the names of deceased Zulu kings, in order to legitimize his own "kingdom" - an Independent Church Movement, the Church of the Nazarites - in much the same way as some praise-poets, izimbongi, appropriate the names of common ancestors (like Ndaba, Punga and Mageba) in order to legitimize their patrons.

Before proceeding with the analyses of the individual texts, it is necessary to address in more specific terms some of the issues raised in the general introduction, on the generic elements of izibongo.

IZIBONGO NEZIMBONGI

Izibongo (praise poetry) is one of the finest elements in Zulu oral culture. The term stems from the verb ukubonga, which can mean either "to thank" or "to praise", depending on its context.

In Zulu society, people are encouraged to compose izibongo from an early age, as it is not considered immodest to sing one's

own praises; and recent research by Professor Abram Nkabinde and Dr. Elizabeth Gunner indicates that the genre is still very much alive, despite the disruptive pressures of urbanisation and proletarianisation.¹⁰

This thesis is concerned with the praise-poems composed in honour of Shaka, the first Zulu King, and the subsequent literary portrayal of him. It is important to note that Royal praises comprise one segment of a larger whole - praise-poems have been composed in honour of cows, women, dogs and spears (this list is not exhaustive) by the Zulu. There is also a separate sub-group designated, izithakazelo, which celebrate the common attributes of members of the same clan, unlike the izibongo, which celebrate individuals.¹¹

The salient feature of these praise-poems is the portrayal of the singularity of the hero - in this case, Shaka. The dominant impression that emerges from reading these poems is the forcefulness of the man, which is revealed through the persistent use of the images of fire, thunder and lightning; together with elemental imagery - fords, rocky outcrops, and rushing wind; and his predatory nature, which is reflected in the image of the hawk and the lion.

The literary worth of the various poems is evaluated in the light of the development of the images employed, and the linguistic skills displayed by the poet. The poems are impressionistic, as C. T. Msimang points out:

Firstly, we must appreciate that the history of an individual is not a biography, consequently it records only those events which are historically significant regarding an individual. Secondly, we must appreciate that the praises are even less than history because the primary objective is to praise, and the recording of

history is of secondary importance. The bard frequently makes historical allusions without furnishing his audience with any details. Without the historical background it might be impossible to understand such allusions. Moreover the bard does not feel duty-bound to make his allusions into history in a chronological sequence of events. (12)

In other words, the poet highlights those elements in his subject's past which he thinks are worthy of note (be they praiseworthy or not), as well as making reference to any physical characteristics which distinguish him from others.

Another deduction that can be made from the above quotation is the principle of selection - the bard, to use Msimang's word, can select any details that he desires to illustrate a certain characteristic. The poet can thus leave his personal stamp on a poem through linguistic dexterity: Shaka's praise poet, Mshongweni, is credited with devising a highly developed stanza consisting of a statement, its development, extension, and a conclusion which is distinguished by a contrary twist.¹³

Stuart, Gunner, Rycroft and Msimang name some of the poets who praised during the Shakan era, listing Mshongweni and Klwana;¹⁴ but it is difficult to go beyond stating that Mshongweni was responsible for the contrary twist stanza as most of the published texts - besides those of Arbousset and Daumas and Grant - do not mention the names of the poets, let alone give biographical details. Magema Fuze cites Mxamama as the praise-poet who castigated Dingane and Mhlangana for killing Shaka to such an extent that they killed him too!¹⁵ Raymond Mazisi Kunene believes that Shaka's poet was Magolwane.¹⁶

Most commentators on the genre emphasise its dramatic nature - perhaps the most vivid is that given by Bryant:

Dressed in the most grotesque of trappings . . . they would stride widely up and down, especially on great festal occasions, blazoning abroad in a never ending rigmarole, such references to every creditable and even discreditable incident in the king's life and his ancestors' lives, and like jesters of old, they were permitted such extravagant freedom of speech that they put on record much that it might otherwise have been dangerous to state. Such a procedure was termed ukuBonga-inkosi (to-tell-the-praises-of-the-king) and the several statements were termed his izibongo. (17)

The version of Dingane's poem given by Arbousset and Daumas illustrates the extent to which the praise-poet could exercise poetic license. This poem is very valuable, firstly as a contemporary account of a Zulu king, and secondly, as a poem addressed to a usurper, who has come to grips with this fact, in public. The poem was written down before Dingan's defeat at the hands of the Boer settlers. The fact that these missionaries obtained the poem from two men suggests that this version was common currency, although no biographical details are supplied about Okopulana and Omokotunguana. Only the first twenty-seven lines of the poem are given in the Reverend Fathers' version of "the zula language". Praise-poems give an interesting account of the accepted values of the society from which they spring, when they were sung. To quote Arbousset and Daumas:

. . . we shall now insert an ode in metrical verse, in which Okopulana and Omokotunguana have preserved the exploits of Dingan, which to them, as to many other of the Zulas, appear most sublime, though these exploits are by no means uniformly deserving of applause. With less pain we admit that the piece is not altogether devoid of true poetry . . . (18)

What the Christians objected to, partly, was the total absence of moral censure in the poem: Dingan's totalitarian regime is not criticised - rather, he is urged to further his empire's boundaries. We get an intriguing glimpse of an imbongi as a propagandist, and the poem begins by celebrating the defeat of Shaka:

Egnoné éa suléla,
 Ea suléla qua Bolaoako,
 Egnoné éa thla régné zégnoné
 Ea thla O'khèlé la qua Bolaoako.
 Makhubalo a thléoa ca capate,
 A thléoa ko Mama no Makhabai.
 Egnoné é thlètzé qu'o sanguéné, qu'o Nobampa.

There is a bird hovering,
 It hovers above Bolaoako.
 The bird that devours other birds;
 It has devoured the sagacious one of Bolaoako.
 The lustral waters have been drunk in silence.
 They have been drunk by Mama and Makhabai.
 The bird has perched at Nobampa in the cattle-fold. (19)

According to Arbousset and Daumas, "The sagacious one is a periphrasis for the elephant, and the elephant a metaphor for Chaka. This is a double figure, common with the Zulus when speaking of their kings; the power and cunning of whom naturally recall to the minds of these savages the greatest and most sagacious of the quadrupeds. . . . Nobampa (is) the capital of Seatsakakona . . . It appears that the best pasturage is to be found at Nobampa, and thither they accordingly lead their flocks. Dingan is represented as going, after the death of Chaka, to place himself at the entrance to the folds, and saying - "Now, this prey is mine!"²⁰ The parallelism and repetitious style, which characterises Zulu panegyrics, is in evidence in the Zulu text that is provided - word-play and the use of certain constructions figure prominently in the izibongo. The "lustral waters" is a reference to the purification medicines that were drunk by relatives of the deceased.

A little later, the imbongi returns to the theme of the defeat of Shaka, praising his lord and master, firstly in a tone which is persuasive (aimed at drumming up support or recognition of his king amongst the populace) and then in hyperbolic terms:

U Fézé! ua zéféza bantu éné
 U lamuléla éntumpé,
 Na manéna, na matota na macacassana,
 U Mocabateri! ucabatela makhosé amagné.

U nomaquélo ka u quéla énthaba
U fégnané léyé le se na enthlela.
Ua le banta, ua le eza, enthlela thlela.

Liberator! thou hast shown thyself to this people;
Thou hast delivered from oppression the virgins,
The women, the men and the children.
Thou art a king who crushest the heads of the other kings.
Thou passest over mountains inaccessible to thy predecessors.
Thou findest a defile from which there is no egress.
There thou makest roads; yea, roads.

How great is my king!

Dingan is presented as the rescuer, the "liberator", of young and old alike, and thus deserves their allegiance. The fact that he is a usurper is celebrated, not glossed over or ignored: "Thou art a king, who crushest the heads of other kings". He is someone who is worthy of support, a pathfinder - or so we are told:

Thou findest a defile from which there is no egress.
There thou makest roads; yes, roads.

He is a leader worth following:

Thou art the pillar which supports the house of Nate.
Thou art the ally of Cele, king of the Taquenes.
That is something different from being the ally of
the Basutos. (21)

Here, the king is being lauded as an astute diplomat ("the ally of Cele"), as a great patron ("Thou art the pillar which supports the house of Nate") and one who respects the views or prejudices of the people by not allying himself with the Basutos. According to Arbousset and Daumas, "The Basutos are very much despised by Dingan, their greatest enemy. It is worthy of remark that under this designation the Zulus comprise all the Bechuanes in their neighbourhood, the subjects of Moshesh, the Mantetis, the Lighoyas, etc."²² Thus, it can be seen that praise-poetry must be seen in the light of what is known and what can reasonably be surmised, about the political and social framework from which it springs.

The propagandist in the imbongi issues a subtle warning or hint to "true men" to come to terms with Dingan's rule:

Before thee the true men of the nations faint in
their heart.
The true men of the nations faint away,
Even those of the Boko 'khu 'khus. (23)

However, Dingan is a merciful ruler, a saviour, and so the poet continues:

Thou sayest to the Motetos and the 'Kuabes
What ill have I done you,
In snatching you from the flames
In my mercy?
King! deliver us, oh saviour!
Thou, who subjectest to thy sorcery the greatest
of kings,
Throw a spell over Bosaze and Mozeungnane
And the Mokhatanes and Mokheme;
For the food upon which thou feedest
Is mighty kings. (24)

Here, the imbongi is both a praiser and a supplicant, hoping to influence policy through praise-poetry.

Chaka is denounced as a trouble-maker and Dingan praised for deposing him, and bringing in a measure of peace:

Formerly we used to say of him - He is a man of
no importance.
We did not know thee!
But now we know thee:
For thou hast cast a spell on the Chakas.
Author of our tranquillity!
Thou gives us flesh and marrow;
We are no longer lank and lean. (25)

Even in the Grant and Samuelson versions, Dingane is praised as a great provider, as a generous man.

Chaka is also denounced as a culpable man:

Thou art he who hath filled with goods
The hands of Cumete, father of the Quezazes,
Thou art he who preservest their head
To the troops decimated by Chaka. (26)

As a usurper, Dingan's position as king needed justification. Shaka's imbongi (à la Stuart) seeks to legitimize him by claiming

kin with Ndaba; Dingan's imbongi attempts to justify Dingan's rule by contrasting the benefits reaped in his reign with Chaka's tyranny; one acts as a foil to the other. Indeed, Dingan is not just better than Chaka, he surpasses his ancestors as a ruler:

The government of thy forefathers thou has surpassed,
Leaving it at Macasana.
Thou art the master of Mayokuane,
Of Entaba, of Mageala, of Kuyeloa,
Of Kugnegnezela, of Yama, of Nomakueba,
Of the great and wonderful court of Kankela. (27)

Patronage characterised the politics of the late eighteenth/early nineteenth century in south-east Africa, and Dingan did well by his people:

Thou art indebted to no one for what thy belly devours,
But thou fillest all bellies,
O conqueror of kings! (28)

Humility on the part of the imbongi might merit acclaim; and his king might become his patron:

Enter thou the magnificent house.
As for me I dare not enter it -
Unless thou shouldst grant to me the favour;
And even then I must be introduced by a servant,
the old Ngeto. (29)

There is a set pattern, procedure, to be followed by those who would like to shine in reflected glory.

The izibongo deal with the politics of power, and he who rules must be obeyed, even by his elders:

Thou, the only one issuing commands,
Issueth orders even to thy seniors.
Thou art not young, for thou art powerful. (30)

Doubtless, this must have been aimed at the old guard who had not come to grips with the new order. Though a regicide, Dingan is said to be on good terms with Mozeakaze, "the most ancient representative of a most noble Zula family" (according to Arbousset and Daumas);
31
"Thou hast the god of the Mozeakazes for a familiar":

Nevertheless, Dingan had to come to terms with Chaka's image in the eyes of the people, for his imbongi praises him as Chaka - the victor, it seems, is entitled to the spoils and the titles of his defeated adversary: .

Thou art he who abaseth all other men;
Thou art Chaka, thou returnest from Tebethlango,
Thou hast taken away both the calves and the mothers
from Tebethlango . . . (32)

Tebethlango was Chaka's grazing ground.³³ It is interesting to note that the praise "Thou art he who abaseth all other men" can be applied to Chaka, as well.

What Chaka can do, Dingan can do better, for: "Hast thou not devoured Chaka?"

As Dingan's propagandist, this imbongi includes in his poem what reads like a "state of the nation" address:

Thou hast the whole nation under thee.
Thou causest to groan the subjects of Zeku.
Thou art Chaka; thou causest to tremble all people.
Thou thunderest like the musket.
At the fearful noise which thou makest
The inhabitants of the towns take to flight.
Thou art the great shade of the Zula,
And thence thou expandest and reachest to all countries.
Thou puttest out of breath thy soldiers.
Thou art like the door of a house:
If it close itself upon an adversary
He must perish.
So it happeneth to those whom thou shuttest up,
Even amongst thine own people. (34)

Now, even the most slow-witted person present when such lines were uttered must have caught the hint, heard what became of Dingan's foes, and been struck by the vivid analogy:

Thou thunderest like the musket.
At the fearful noise which thou makest
The inhabitants of the towns take to flight.

Nonetheless, all is not lost - there is hope for those who will but reap the benefits Dingan's reign has brought about:

Thou art the great shade of the Zula,
And thence thou expandest and reachest to all countries.

Chaka's contribution to this situation is not mentioned; Chaka's achievements have been subsumed in Dingan's. Chaka merely stands for terror:

"Thou art Chaka: thou causest to tremble all people."

There is a subtle balance of challenges and offers in this extract - the imbongi knew what he was about.

The imbongi boasts once more about the defeat of Chaka: "Thou hast stabbed the elephant of Tebethlango"; and having killed Chaka, there is none, we are led to believe, equal to Dingan:

Boko'khus'khus keep quiet.
You are, indeed, men of courage;
But we know one
More courageous still:
It is your conqueror.
Submit your soul, obey him.
Sleep a tranquil slumber.
All the horses of the nation are his.
All leaders belong to him.
Silence! silence! obey him without a murmur;
Or else, murderer of men, do thou arouse thyself
and slay.
Cause the blood of thy foes to stream at the dung-pits,
Amongst the rocks of Quelile, and of Baghagha. (35)

There is something spine-chilling in the equation of sleep ("chief nourisher in life's feast" . . . "the balm of hurt minds") with acquiescence:

Submit your soul, obey him.
Sleep a tranquil slumber.

In Dingan's totalitarian regime opposition will not be tolerated:

"Silence! silence! obey him without a murmur" - at least, not if this imbongi's advice is heeded: "Or else, murderer of men, do thou arouse thyself and slay."

Izibongo catalogue the achievements of those to whom they are addressed, and this imbongi certainly does that, and more. He urges his ruler to even greater acts of valour:

King of kings,
Put to flight the army of Contuane.
Powerful conqueror,
Triumph over all the powers of the east.

nature - he knew well from experience that nothing secured the attachment of such persons as those he had to rule so effectually as an ample allowance of food. (37)

One stanza in Dingan's poem is devoted to the question of raiding cattle, and Smith's remarks shed light on it:

Thou art not the man to rest in ease in thy palace!
Thou delightest in the military expedition!
Out then; flocks have been seen
Going up from the sea-shore,
And proceeding towards the Mathlekas.
Pursue these herds and seize them.
The ox of the Zula is his assegai. (38)

It is doubtful whether this advice is purely disinterested - the imbongi obviously wishes to partake of the spoils.

What emerges very clearly from the Arbousset and Daumas poem is that praise-poetry is the poetry of power and of patronage: the ruler is dependant, to some extent, on his imbongi for the image of him that is being presented, as part of the public affirmation of his right to govern.

The artistic qualities of the poem - such as figurative speech allusion - testify to the talent of the praiser. Praise-poetry is a fluid art, in that no two performances/recitations need ever be the same. The poet adds to the praises he has coined, and can omit some praises if so inclined. If no major event has occurred when the next occasion for praising his leader arises, then he might recreate his poem, adding any new praises he has composed, and repeating the lines that went down well with his audience on previous occasions. Each performance might be different in terms of delivery and content, but the gist of the message need not necessarily change. Although praises do tend to become fixed after the leader dies, and may be used to preserve his memory - if he was an influential figure; and as a form of challenge by past example -

for example, the contrast between the persistent belligerence of Shaka as opposed to the readiness of Ndaba.

It is probable that the version of Dingan's praise-poem quoted by the Reverend Joseph Shooter, in his book The Kafirs of Natal and The Zulu Country was taken from the Arbousset and Daumas edition, as the style is similar.³⁹

Whilst there is no recording of a poem that was incontrovertibly declaimed during Shaka's reign which we can analyse in a similar fashion to the "Ode to Dingan", there is, however, much internal evidence (the abundance of praises based on Mshongweni's "kanti" conclusion) that leads one to believe that many of the verses were composed during the Shaka era, and handed down by court praisers to their apprentices. Msimang makes the fascinating point that Shaka institutionalised praise-poets:

We must note that it was Shaka who made the composition of praises a paying profession, which meant that bards of the kings could engage in it full time. (40)

One of James Stuart's informants, Baleka ka Mpitikazi, whose father was a praise-poet, gives us an insight into the function of izibongo in Shakan days. Recounting her father's plight, she said:

He (Shaka) hunted my father Mpitikazi because he had told the Langeni people of his mother's house to flee, for Tshaka was coming to kill them. Tshaka heard from people that Mpitikazi had said this, causing the Langeni to run away. He sent out an impi to kill my father. Mpitikazi had already heard that he was going to kill him, and so he fled. But there was no place to run away to. A person would simply wander about in the land until he was eaten by wild animals. . . . Father climbed into a tree. The impi searched for him; he could see it while sitting up a tree. It searched and searched, but did not see him and gave up. He ate filth from the river, he no longer knew food. He slept in the forest. (He eventually decided to give himself up) . . .

Tshaka came out of his hut. He said, 'I think I know this person, my Zulu. Look at this red-skinned fellow; I would say it is Mpitikazi!' Then his

mother Nandi came out. Reciting Tshaka's praises, she said to him, 'Surely you will not kill Mpitikazi? What is Mpitikazi that you should kill him, he who is just a dog?' Tshaka said, 'Go, fellow, you with the little red ears. Your 'mother' has saved you, go. Go, genet of the wilderness that outwitted the dogs (the force that had been searching for him). The genet became green in colour while sitting up in the tree.' That is the story of Mpitikazi's escape.

He escaped because Nandi was his mother's sister. He was saved because of that. There was no other place to run away to; one could find no refuge until the white people came. (41)

This story is fascinating because of the insights it gives with regard to the period it relates to. Human rights was not an important issue in Shakan days. It is no accident that Nandi compares Mpitikazi to a dog - the most contemptible of animals, to Africans, which is useful only for hunting, tracking. It is significant that Nandi prefaces her request with a recitation of Shaka's praises: noblesse oblige - Shaka could not refuse such a request when the manner in which it was presented showed the sharp contrast in status between himself as king and the prodigal Mpitikazi. Nandi, as a mother, would best know how to approach her son so as to get him to do what she desired. The evidence suggests that she succeeded in humouring him. The terms in which royal pardon is granted are striking, as they reveal Shaka's obvious fascination with words: "Go, fellow, you with the little red ears. Your 'mother' has saved you, go. Go, genet of the wilderness that outwitted the dogs. The genet that became green in colour while sitting up in the tree." If this is anything to go by, Shaka would have had to have had a good imbongi.

Andrew Smith, in his diary, presents in analytic terms what one can deduce from Baleka's story of Nandi. As we do not have a version of Shaka's praise-poem which can indisputedly be dated as a contemporary record of the man and his achievements, it is

illuminating to read a rationalization of the praises of another (Zulu) chief: Mzilikazi. In 1835 Smith wrote thus on the manner in which Mzilikazi was addressed:

They salute Masalacatzie by 'Ayaat, Kosi, Immenao, Elephant, Zoola, son of Machaban', etc. They reckon that, though angry inclined, he leaves off that disposition when he hears these titles. (42)

As Landeg White states, "We can, a little tentatively, retranscribe this as "Bayete (Hail), Nkosi Elimnyama (the black chief), Elephant, Zulu, Son of Mashobane." These are clearly extracts from Mzilikazi's Izibongo, and what Smith's cryptic note describes is the political function of the praise-poem in easing the relations between Mzilikazi and his people and in providing a medium through which they may press their requests on him."⁴³ Shaka, in Baleka's story, is quite clearly "angry inclined", and so this assessment is valid in that instance, too.

Having provided an appropriate "setting" for the praise-poetry genre, we can now turn to analyses of the individual versions of Shaka's praise-poem.

The Poems Collected by Lewis Grout

The Reverend Lewis Grout arrived in Cape Town in August 1847 from Vermont, and on the 30th September, 1847, he set up his first mission station, Umsunduzi, amongst the Zulu.

One of his first tasks was to learn the Zulu language so as to communicate with his flock, but also with the longer-term intention of producing a Zulu Grammar, which was published in 1859, together with a fragment of Shaka's praise-poem. The praise-poems were omitted from the revised edition of the Grammar, which appeared in 1893.

Grout greatly admired the Zulu tongue:

At first sight, nothing seems more confused and complicated than the Zulu language; yet, when we come to look carefully into its forms, changes, and laws, we are obliged to admit that no language of which we have any knowledge, can lay claim to more order, regularity, flexibility and precision. (44)

Grout also describes and gives examples of various songs sung by the Zulu, noting that "Their songs often have a special fitness for the occasion . . ." ⁴⁵ Apart from hunting songs, festive choruses, work songs, marching songs, "hut" or "evening" songs, there are also songs which are "a compound of praise and prayer . . . offered by kings to the shades of their ancestors", like:

Then hear, O king, thou tallest of the tall;
Son of Kumede Mandomdo, splendid and fair!
While I linger I would implore the first-born:
O great progenitor of Jama! let us twist a rope,
And ascend up to heaven where ghosts never come,
But break their tiny toes if to mount they try. (46)

A variant of the breaking-of-toes praise emerges in the following extract from Grout's version of Senzangakona's praise-poem:

Thou grave of Nobamba!
Ever noosing the ankles of foes at home and abroad . . . (47)

The Stuart-Malcolm-Cope poem in honour of Senzangakona outlines the ancestral prayer given by Grout:

He who plaited a long rope, son of Jama,
Who plaited a rope and climbed up,
There even the ancestral spirits of Mageba could
not come,
When they tried to climb they broke their little toes. (48)

The interplay between tradition and the individual talent is clearly demonstrated by the above examples.

Grout's comments on izibongo are interesting, and deserve to be quoted in full, given their generic resonance:

. . . there is another class of songs which the people sing in honour of their kings. As they consist chiefly in attempts to eulogize the monarch; rehearsing and extolling what they profess to regard as his virtues - his strength, courage, and valor, and his many wonderful deeds,

they may be called heroic songs, or a kind of eulogistic rhapsody. And since the object of the panegyrist is to call the king by such names and recount such deeds as are most pleasing to his majesty, and such as will set him forth in the most desirable light in the eyes of the people, the fearful titles, the savage character which are given him by the royal eulogist, are a sad index to the moral condition of poet, prince and people. You will find, however, here and there, a good turn of thought, a bold figure, and some of the marks of a poetic genius. (49)

Grout was an acute and accurate observer, possessing that rare quality amongst strangers in a strange land of being able to see beyond his own cultural or moral values.

Grout points out that certain "stock praises" (as I term them) were used when introducing the "isibongo, royal rhapsody, or song, in honour of the king . . .":

Bayeti, 'Mngani! Wena 'Yinkosi! Wena Umnyama!
Wena wa kula, be libele; wena u nga ngentaba.

That is -

Hail, my lord! thou art king! thou art black!
Thou hast outgrown others; thou art like a mountain. (50)

Grout's "Song in Honor of Chaka" paints a portrait of a fearsome, unpredictable, threatening figure:

Thou striker of poison into every conspirator,
As well those abroad as those who are at home;
Thou art green as the gall of the goat;
Butterfly of Punga, tinted with circling spots,
As if made by the twilight from the shadows of mountains,
In the dusk of the evening, when the wizards are abroad;
Lynx-eyed descendant of Punga and Makeba,
With looking at whom I am ever entranced.
What beautiful parts! a calf of the cow!
The kicking of this cow confuses my brain,
Kicking the milker and accepting the holder. (51)

This is undoubtedly a beautiful poem, pregnant with meaning and subtle nuances. The poet has a sure grasp of metaphor and language, as the following analysis will demonstrate.

The pejorative opening metaphor of a snake is immediately qualified by the "just" action of the king in killing plotters both

within his own home and in the kingdom at large. Chaka is venomous, and the bewildering speed and accuracy with which he strikes comes out clearly in the opening lines:

Thou striker of poison into every conspirator,
As well those abroad as those who're at home . . .

The sense of bewilderment is again picked up in the closing praises:

What beautiful parts! a calf of a cow!
The kicking of this cow confuses my brain,
Kicking the milker and accepting the holder.

Grout glosses these praises by saying:

The last line, "Kicking the milker and accepting the holder", refers to the fact that a vicious cow requires one to hold her by the nose and horns, while another milks; and the design of the figure seems to be to represent, at once, the power, the caprice, and the sovereignty of the king, putting one to death, and promoting another to honor, without any apparent reason. (52)

One could further highlight the fact that Chaka's actions are unpredictable - one would expect a vicious cow to butt the person holding it by the nose before kicking the milker. The thrust of the punch-line comes as something of a surprize, bearing in mind the unqualified admiration of Chaka's build contained in the praise "What beautiful parts! a calf of a cow!" The latter part of the praise legitimizes Chaka by stressing his royal ancestry.

Chaka's vigour is stressed in the "Thou art green as the gall of the goat" praise; and his captivating personality is reflected in his mesmerizing effect on the poet:

Lynx-eyed descendant of Punga and Makeba,
With looking at whom I am ever entranced.

Indeed, this praise picks up the initial image of keen-sightedness that is brilliantly encapsulated in the snake metaphor with which the poem begins.

The poet's economy of language, his sure knowledge of the connotative range of words is further revealed by Benedict Wallet

Vilikazi's analysis of the relationship between Stuart's rendering of the following praises:

Thou art green as the gall of the goat;
Butterfly of Punga, tinted with circling spots,
As if made by the twilight from the shadows of mountains,
In the dusk of the evening, when the wizards are abroad . . .

Vilakazi cites the Zulu text, given in Stuart's uTulasizwe, which reads:

Uhlaza lwang' inyongo yembuzi.
Umvevane lukaPhunga,
Lumbal' azizinge, sengakh' abekiwe.
Umzizim' ongamathunz' entaba,
Khona kuhlwa, kuhamb' abathakathi.

InqayinqayikaPhunga no Mageba,
Engibuke ngaze ngayejwayela . . .

The poet sees nature with a penetrating and revealing glance, and from her draws his inspiration for the stuff of his poem, and excels in witchery of language; for instance, "Uhlaza lwang' inyongo yembuzi" is symbolic of purity and freshness, for greenness (uhlaza) stands for moral purity. There is nothing greener than the contents of a goat's gall-bladder, hence he says, "The greenness which kisses (excels, approaches) that of the gall-bladder". Among green things one often meets a butterfly (uvemvane); but this butterfly belongs to Phunga (Shaka's great-grandfather). Its colour is deep like the shadows of mountains at sunset. These shadows are the forerunners of witches and wizards. The whole poem is full of ecstasy of feeling and perfect imagery. (53)

Vilakazi's insightful remarks on the "wizard" praise are sound, but one would challenge the "moral purity" symbolism of the goat's gall-bladder - especially when one considers the close proximity of the "wizard" praise, which symbolises, it seems to me, evil, suspicion, fear and treachery: elements which are all encapsulated in the snake metaphor.

The "gall-bladder" praise in this poem can be seen as a microcosm of the ambiguities inherent in the genre (in all poetry, perhaps), for Msimang sees it as a reference to Shaka's "dark brown complexion"!⁵⁴

On balance, I would stand by my interpretation of the praise as symbolising vitality (as opposed to innocence); and Arbousset and Daumas' annotation of Dingan's praise "Um'oeze omotala!" - "Thou art indeed a green adventurer", supports such a reading: "The expression a green man, is employed to designate a vigorous and healthy man . . ."55

Grout also published a "Song in Honor of Chaka":

Wa ledaleda izizwe;
U ya ku 'laselapi na?
E! u ya ku 'laselapi na?
W' a'lula amakosi;
U 'laselapi na?
Wa ledeleda
U 'laselapi na?
E! E! E!
U laselapi na?

Thou didst finish, finish the nations;
Where will you go to battle now?
Hey? where will you go to battle now?
Thou didst conquer the kings,
Where do you go to battle now?
Thou didst finish, finish the nations,
Where do you go to battle now?
Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!
Where do you go to battle now? (56)

The emphasis in this song is, quite clearly, on the havoc caused by Chaka: "Thou didst finish, finish the nations". The repetition of "finish" underlines the annihilation that must have taken place.

Chaka is spoken of as having exhausted all possible forms of military action - there is simply nothing left to do:

Thou didst finish, finish the nations;
Where will you go to battle now?
Hey! where will you go to battle now?
Thou didst conquer the kings
Where do you go to battle now?

One wonders in what tone the last two lines were sung:

Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!
Where do you go to battle now?

is this the song of a victorious army avid for more wars, or the triumphant cry of men who no longer need to fight as there are no foes left? The rhythm heightens the questioning mode in which the song is cast.

Samuelson gives five of "Tshaka's War Songs (Amarubo)", one of which echoes the sentiments embodied in Grout's songs:

Waqedaqeda Izizwe
Uyakuhlaselapi na? ..
Hho! Hho! Eya Ehhe!
Wahlul' abafu
Wahlul' izizwe.

He wiped out all nations,
Where will he wage war?
Hho! Hho! Eya Ehhe!
He worsted enemies,
He conquered nations. (57)

The line "Waqedaqeda Izizwe" - "He wiped out all nations" is quite emphatic.

A second song annotates the reference to wiping out all other nations. It is similar in form (a statement followed by a question) to the Grout song:

Asihambhe sihlasele
Inkani iphelile,
Wayizwa ngobani
Ukuthi inkani iphelile?
Iyoyi
Wayizwa ngobani
Ukuthi inkani iphelile?..

Let us go and wage war
Resistance is ended;
From whom did you hear
That resistance was ended?
Iyoyi
From whom did you hear
That resistance was ended? (58)

The implications of this song are that there was some dialogue (perhaps of a "privileged" nature, such as the poetic licence accorded to izimbongi) in Tshakan times about the necessity of fighting. It is interesting to note that the song is weighted to

those who want more combat, as they are given six lines as opposed to the line "inkani iphelile" - resistance might well be over, but the war-mongers stubbornly insist on questioning the source of this statement.

A third song stresses the resolute approach of Tshaka's army:

Siyayitshisa indhlu ka Qolwane.
Kasenzi manga, kasenzi manga
Wazonda Wazonda
Oyeyiya wo
Siyayitshisa indhlu ka Qolwane.

We will burn the house of Qolwane.
We do not lie, we do not lie.
Oyeyiya wo
We will burn the house of Qolwane. (59)

According to Samuelson, Qolwane was "the Chief of the Amangwane tribe, in the Bergville District".⁶⁰ Samuelson's translation omits the words "Wazonda, Wazonda" - "He became angry, He became angry."

War songs were obviously used to stimulate the army - witness the following:

Oye Oyeye!
Khethani amagwala,
Unomakhwelingonyama wadhla.

Oye Oyeye!
Pick out the cowards
Mount the lion got his blow home. (61)

One of Stuart's informants, Baleni kaSilwana's comments on Shaka's innovations of the Zulu military system sheds light on this song.

Speaking of how the war with the Ndwandwe was won, he says:

At dawn the next day he (Shaka) set them (his warriors) on with the Siklabe regiment in front. He was sitting close by, looking on. He was looking on at his warriors stabbing the men. He said, 'Stop throwing your assegais. Stab them at close quarters. Use only one assegai.' His impi defeated them and drove them into the hills of the Mhlatuze. That was the day when his army finally defeated them. (62)

Samuelson also provides "The War Song of the Izimpohlo, Tshaka's Crack Regiment", and states that "This regiment's name was derived from the verb Phohloza, "to bash or smash in": it was the crack regiment

of Tshaka, carried out the most successful fights of all his regiments, and was a terror to all enemies. It might appropriately be called "The Smasher Regiment".⁶³

Wo! Siyakuziyanda ye
Ezizweni yaya wo!
Ngentaba yezwe.

By jove! We will fetch them (cattle) far away
From nations, yea, by jove!
By reason of the mountain of the land. (64)

Although no mention is made in the Zulu of cattle, Samuelson's parenthesis of them (cattle) suggests that the song was common when "He wiped out all nations", and all that was left was for regiments to collect cattle, the spoils of war.

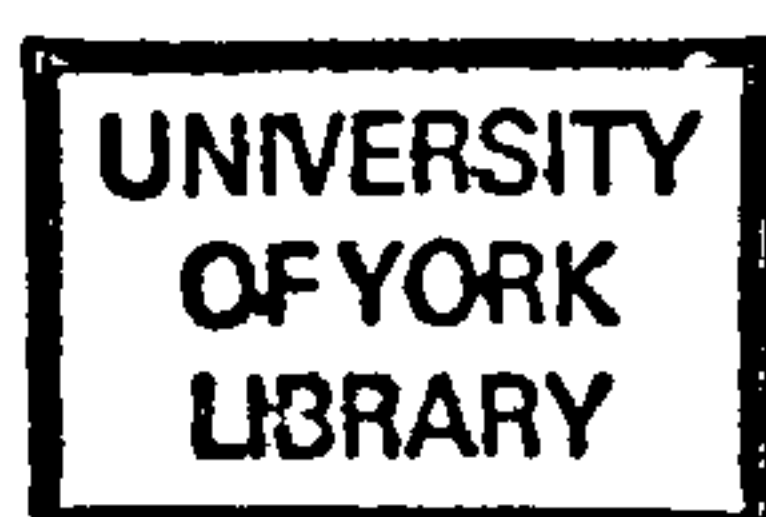
Samuelson's comments on izibhongo indicate that a hierarchical network characterised the official order of praise-poets:

Every military kraal in Zululand had an Imbhongi (sic) besides the special Imbhongi of the King, who lived at his chief kraal. All headmen in Zululand had an Imbhongi, who would carry on his duties in the headman's kraal only; these were subordinate to the King's and National Izimbhongi, and would not dare to carry on their avocation in the King's kraals or military kraals. (65)

Samuelson then goes on to define the izimbhongi's role, linking them to the annalists as people who recorded key elements of the nation's history:

[the] native poets and bards . . . select the most brilliant incidents in the career of their Chief or in the history of the nation and people for their songs and ballads, which they chant at royal festivals in the presence of their chiefs, and on many other occasions. These they hand down to succeeding generations through their successors in office. In this manner a body of traditional minstrels grew up, whose custodians were looked upon as almost sacred and a necessary adjunct to the kraal of a Chief where they filled the position of bards and jesters. (66)

Samuelson's version of "Izibongo zeNkosi uTshaka" celebrates a victorious warrior king, praising his military prowess, and political



skill in raising his clan from vassalage to supreme control.

Samuelson's Version: "Izibongo zeNkosi UTshaka"

This praise-poem begins by highlighting the might, terror and speed personified by Tshaka:

Udumehlezi ka Menzi.
Inyoni edhl' ezinye.
Ilembe eleqa amanye amalembe. (67)

The Thunderer while seated, son of Menzi.
The bird that devours other birds
The agile that leaps over other agiles. (68)

The praise "Udumehlezi ka Menzi" testifies to Tshaka's extraordinary nature - he is imaged as thunder, he is so well-established that his presence is felt even whilst he sits, just as rumbling thunder is unmistakeable and can be heard within a large radius. Tshaka's predatory nature is wonderfully encapsulated in the metaphor:

"Inyoni edhl' ezinye" - "The bird that devours other birds". Tshaka is imaged as a vulture, a wild animal.

Samuelson translates "Ilembe eleqa amanye amalembe" as "The agile that leaps over agiles". This translation stresses the speed and energy of Tshaka. Cope translates "Ilembe" as "Axe" in the Stuart-Malcolm-Cope version, but mentions that the word is sometimes taken to mean "spear" or "hoe". All these translations share the common factor of speed and motion. One of Stuart's most knowledgeable informants, Jantshi kaNongila (whose father spied for Senzangakhona, Shaka, Dingane and Mpande, before crossing over into Natal, "being then tired of the duties of a spy"), gives an interesting commentary on these praises:

Tshaka was known by Dingiswayo as 'He whose fame spreads even while he is sitting; the ilembe which surpasses other amalembe.' I do not know what ilembe means. Ndukwana suggests it might have been something to do with igeya (hoe) in allusion to his stabbing so freely in battle. (69)

There follows a cryptic praise which is repeated in the
Stuart-Malcolm-Cope version:

Intaba le Marwanqa ka Mjokwane
Ebingadhli nkomo
Ebidhla imihlambi yezinyamazane
Idhla amapiva namashongololo. (70)

The particular hill, Marwanqa son of Mjokwane
On which browsed no cattle
On which browsed herds of antelopes
On which browsed waterbuck and milipedes. (71)

I am not happy with Samuelson's translation, and think that the
praise should read:

The particular hill, Marwanqa son of Mjokwane
Which did not eat cattle
It has been eating many wild animals
It eats water-buck and milipedes.

I take it that the poet here contrasts Tshaka's days in exile, when
he was forced to subsist on wild animals, to the days when, as king,
he possessed many cattle. The two praises in the Stuart-Malcolm-Cope
poem which use these symbols are:

Inkosi yehla ngogoma Mdayi
Ebelungehli muntu
Ebelwehl' amaphiva namashongololo . . .

The King descended a steep ridge, Mdayi,
Which was descended by no person,
Which was descended only by water-buck and millipedes. (72)

and

UShaka ubengadl' imihlambi yankomo,
Ubedl' imihlambi yezinyamazane.

Shaka did not raid herds of cattle,
He raided herds of buck. (73)

Cope annotates this last praise by saying Shaka "raided an enormous
number of cattle".⁷⁴ The emphasis is on Shaka as the devourer. My
alternative reading would make sense as a continuation of the second
Samuelson praise of Tshaka as "The bird that devours other birds".

The image of a bird is carried through the next praise:

Uve olubomvu
Kanti lunhloko eluthuli
Seludhlalela pezu kukaSobhuza. (75)

The red flycatcher
Apparently with a dust-coloured head
Is now having sport on Sobhuza. (76)

The Swazi leader, Sobhuza, was one of Tshaka's contemporaries, and reigned from c.1815-39. "Mjokwana" is one of Tshaka's father, Senzangakhona's praise-names, and "Menzi" is another which means "Creator". "Mdayi" also means "Creator", and these praises refer to the rise of the Zulu clan under Senzangakhona. Tshaka's contribution lay in turning the clan into a nation, a kingdom.

This fact is hinted at in the praise:

Ngiyabesaba bethi maduku-ndini
Kanti batsho umuthi lo osentabeni
Kanti bababaza izixa,
Kanti izixa amaseko okupheka. (77)

I am possessed with fear when they say "maduku-ndini"
When, as a matter of fact, they express surprize at
clusters of stones,
Which turn out to be pot-stone supports for cooking. (78)

Samuelson's translation omits the line, "Kanti batsho umuthi lo osentabeni", which, literally, means "whereas or whilst they mean the tree that is on the mountain". Though the precise meaning of "maduku ndini" is not clear, the image of Tshaka as a tree on the peak of a mountain is very striking, and would underline the contrast which is clearly being drawn between Tshaka's solidity and reliability as opposed to the false sense of security which characterises the "they", who, by implication, end up being cooked on Tshaka's fire.

The importance of cattle comes out in the praise which describes Tshaka as a herder, as one with cattle, as opposed to Sonkomose, who had none:

Oye eqhuba nkomonye ngaseMaqwabeni,,
 Wanjengo 'Sonkomose obakh' eDango,
 Kwabo kungasakhonjwa 'nkomo ngaseDango,
 Inkomo yabo isikhonjwa eBabenungu. (79)

He who went driving one beast in the direction of
 Amaqwabe tribe
 And was like Sonkomose who lived at the Idango,
 In whose hut, near Idango, not a single beast could
 be pointed out,
 Their beast being pointed out eBabenungu. (80)

Idango, according to Samuelson, is "one of the tributaries of the Mhlatuze river, where some of the Amaqwabe tribe lived, who were worsted by Tshaka later on".⁸¹ It is curious that only one cow - "nkomonye" - is mentioned - perhaps this is so that a pun is provided when Tshaka is compared to "Sonkomose". There is an intricate word play in this praise - "eqhuba" is echoed in "Qwabeni", and "Wanjengo" in "eDango", and "Kwabo" in "yabo" and "nkomo" in "Inkomo".

Tshaka is described as a troubleshooter who specialises in surprize attacks:

Ugasane kade lubagasela
 Lugasela uSondaba waseMtandeni,
 Ehlezi ebandhla. (82)

The menacer who, for a long time, menaced them,
 Menacing uSondaba of the Umtandeni kraal,
 While seated in the assembly. (83)

Again, word-play features here: "Ugasane . . . lubagasela . . .
 lugasela . . ." We are given a catalogue of Tshaka's victims, of those whom he defeated and by extension, of those who were then incorporated into Tshaka's kingdom:

Wadhla uMtusi wakaMakedama,
 Wadhla uNjiya ka lutuzula . . .
 Wamudhla uMvakela ezalwa nguDhlaba,
 Wamudhla uDuluzana waseMachubeni
 Amakhubalo adhliwa uZokufa noSigananda
 Udengezi lwathathwa uNongogo noNtubeni,
 Amadoda akhona eMachubeni.
 Izulu elidume emuva kwomuzi eKuqobekeni,
 Lizathatha izihlangu zaMaphela.
 Wamudhla uSikhunyane,
 Ezalwa nguZwide
 Wamudhla uNqabeni
 Ezalwa nguZwide;
 Wamudhla uMphepha.

Ukuma kwedala ukuthuka omutsha,
 Indaba ngizayizwa ngesalukazi,
 Umasalemanxiweni;
 Ngoyizwa ngexegu uMasalemzileni. (87)

·He continually chased a person,
 I admired him chasing the son of Langa
 Making him go east
 And then making him go west.
 It is the habit of an oldster to start at a youngster.
 I will get the news from an old woman
 A remainer in the old garden sites;
 I will hear it from an old man, a remainer in the track. (88)

"Langa" means "the sun"; it was also the name of Zwide's father - hence the play on making Zwide go from where the sun rises to where it sets. Right of conquest is not at all challenged - in fact, it is endorsed: "It is the habit of an oldster to start at a youngster". The raided - the "old woman . . . in the old garden sites" (a cultivator) and "an old man, a remainer in the track" - simply express their amazement. They remain at the scene of the devastation, astounded, and speak of it to the imbongi. The imbongi is not detached from Tshaka, but, it seems, followed in his wake. The Samuelson poet expresses his admiration for Tshaka:

Usilwanahелеle emzini yabantu,
 Usilwana ubengelutho,
 Ubeyinduna ka Dubandhlela.
 Inkomo ekhale eMtonjaneni
 Izizwe zonke ziyizwile ukulila,
 Ize yezwiwa Amantungwawe akwaKhumalo.
 Umnini Sibandamatyana aseNkandhla,
 Ebisahlala inkosana yaseMachubeni.
 Ebisahlala uGuluzana ka Manaba.
 Isixhokolo singamatye ase Nkandhla,
 Abephephela izindhlovu uma liphendule.
 Umgengi namhla uyenzile indaba,
 Umhlamule uZwide namhlamula isigcwelegcwele. (89)

He is an animal of "just behold" in the kraals
 of the people,
 Usilwana was a nothing
 He was the induna of Dubandhlela.
 He was the beast that lowed at Mtonjaneni,
 All nationalities heard it lowing.
 It even was heard by the cannibals of the Kumalo tribe.
 The owner of the hiding places in the Nkandhla
 Where stayed the chief son of the Amachube tribe.
 Where stayed Guluzana, the son of Manaba.

The chevaux-de-frise, which was the Nkandhla stones
Where the elephants take refuge when it is bad weather.
Mgengi has today made ructions
He stripped Zwide and killed everyone. (90)

One wonders whether the "namhla" ("today") in the penultimate praise suggests that this poem was composed on the day Zwide was defeated. Tshaka is held up as an intriguing phenomenon: "Usilwanahелеle emzini yabantu" - "He is an animal of "just behold" in the kraals of the people". The question whether or not Tshaka has any right to be there does not occur to this imbongi. "Ours is not to reason why" - merely to "just behold"! Tshaka is so great that Silwana, albeit that he is an induna (chief) is contemptuously dismissed as a nonentity - he is merely brought in to highlight "Usilwanahелеle" - Tshaka. Tshaka's significance is stated:

Inkomo ekhale eMtonjaneni
Izizwe zonke ziyizwile ukulila . . .

He was the beast that lowed at Mtonjaneni,
All nationalities heard it lowing . . .

All those present should note the stature of Tshaka. Again, word-play features - "Izizwe" (all nationalities) is played off with "ziyizwile", "heard it". These vassals include the Kumalo (who were not cannibals - which is an erroneous translation of "Amantungwawe" - which, as Samuelson notes, was "a term applied by Tshaka's adherents to the Kumalo tribe, which had been smashed up by him").⁹³ Tshaka is so fully in control of the country, politically, that even the places of refuge are "owned" by him: "The owner of the hiding places in the Nkandhla", where leading men once hid. Hence the praise "a pile of firmly planted stones at Nkandhla":

The chevaux-de-frise, which was the Nkandhla stones
Where the elephants take refuge when it is bad weather.

The latter praise is an elegant way of saying when important men ("elephants") were in trouble. Tshaka is praised as a destroyer, after his campaign against Zwide:

Mgengi has today made ructions
He stripped Zwide and killed everyone.

Not one qualifying comment is made on these "ructions", they are stated as if they were simply a matter of course. The moral we can draw is that Tshaka is beyond reproach. Indeed, in this poem, reproach is aimed at those who will not co-operate with Tshaka:

UZihlandhlo no Gcwabe abathakathi,
Ngokuba uTshaka kabamtyelanga izibuko,
Bamkhombhise elisacons' igazi
Elaged' uMajola
Emanthanjeni abantabakaTayi,
Ababecupisile ngomowane,
Namhla ukhalo lwabantwana bakaTayi lusamangele. (91)

UZihlandhlo and Gcwabe are wizards
Because they did not tell Tshaka the drift,
But showed him one that was still dripping with blood
Where the Majola tribe was polished off
Among the bones of the children of Tayi
Who had laid a trap in readiness,
Even to this day the ridge of Tayi's children
stands amazed. (92)

The vehemence of this denunciation of Zihlandhlo and Gcwabe as "evil doers" shows that this imbongi does not approve of passive resistance. Their cardinal sin is that "they did not tell Tshaka the drift" where he could ford easily, but "showed him one that was still dripping with blood / Where the Majola tribe was polished off". Obviously, this incident was a close call for Tshaka - even "the ridge of Tayi's children stands amazed" that such a "trap" could have been laid against Tshaka.

Tshaka is not criticised in this poem - just warned of the possible consequences of some of his actions:

Izinkomo zabantu zinenkelenkele,
Zikhunge izingobo ematshobeni.
Ungobe owakwaButhelezi
Othe esadhle ezinye wadl' ezinye.
Uye wadhl' ezikaFaku eMampondweni
Wadhl' ezikaGambushe eMampondweni,
Wayewadhla ezaBesutu abakhintyayo,
Wadhl' ezaMadhlohlongwana apotha imiyeko.
Umgengi phezu kwezitha kusehlobo,
Ubutyanibude buzakukudibanisa. (93)

Inkonjane ekhwele phezu kwendhlu ka Ntombaze
Bathi inohlanya,
Kanti bazi eyakubo enohlanya,
Edundubale kuNomangci phezulu. (98)

He the raving one, who raved among the large kraals
And until dawn the large kraals kept on reporting to
each other.

He, the causer of doubts as to whether to advance or
retire of the house of Phalo,

The seizer of the stabbing assegais of Qengwa
Who was like unto a lion.

Usomfukwana because he crossed rivers.

The calf which mounted the hut of Ntombaze

And they said it was mad,

Apparently they knew the one of theirs which was mad

Which climbed to the top of Mangci Hill. (99)

This extract also illustrates the poetic talent of the imbongi.

Tshaka's ranting and raving is presented in very forceful language:

Udhlungwana odhlunge emanxulumeni
Kwaze kwasa amanxuluma ebikelana.

The play on the words "Udhlungwana odhlunge" and "amanxulumeni . . .

amanxuluma; . . . phezu . . . phezulu; . . . enohlanya . . .

inohlanya" recall Hlabangana's and Bryant's comments on the poet's

"gift of speech". Parallelism is in evidence in the lines:

Unombhangakubuya waophalo,
Unombhambhamajozzi kaQengwa.

Samuelson does not translate the praise-name "Umasukwanakuse" (but

Cope states that it means "Everyday-at-dawn") and it counterpoints

"Usomfukwana".

Tshaka's military prowess is alluded to in the praises:

He, the causer of doubts as to whether to advance or
retire of the house of Phalo,

The seizer of the stabbing assegais of Qengwa . . .

Confusion reigns in the enemy camp. The segment ends by mocking

those who had contemptuously dismissed Tshaka as "mad" for mounting

"the hut of Ntombaze" - that is, for attacking Zwide.

Animal imagery abounds in the poem - "He who is like unto a
lion" - and the animals chosen are often symbolic of energy and power:

That Tshaka's name was revered comes out in Fynn's account of his first encounter with Tshaka's army - as he came to believe that he owed his life to his persistent naming of Tshaka:

I had not the slightest fear in the presence of this dense mass of armed natives; not less than 20,000 strong. That my life was in imminent danger I can now be in no doubt, for, if the leading chiefs had felt a disposition to take my life, they would have met with the approval from Shaka on reporting that they had killed a white animal out of the sea. My life evidently was saved on this occasion by that wonderful talisman of this country, the name of Shaka. (105)

Tshaka is spoken of as someone spoiling for a fight:

Ubengababele ukuhlasela kwaNyuswa,
Kwasekubangwa izinhlakuva emanxiweni
Abafazi abenendeni banyekeza
Bathi teke-teke zilindeneni amajuba. (106)

He had not intended to wage war against the Amanyuswa tribe.

[He had gone to ask for a pretext for attack, thinking they would attack him fiercely.]

There was nothing to dispute over among the Nyuswa tribe,] They were disputing over the castor oil seeds among the early mealie stalks.

Pregnant women hurried about in fear
And trembling said, 'Watch them against the pigeons'. (107)

The obvious note of disappointment here contrasts markedly with the tenor of the criticism levelled at Zihlandhlo and Gcwabe. When opposition is not spirited, when one is only dealing with pregnant women, whose gravest concern is in picking up castor oil seeds before the pigeons get at them, then the tone can be contemptuous, the account disparaging. The segment in parenthesis is not given in Zulu.

Mention is made of an unsuccessful campaign against Mbozane:

'Ubuz' indhlela kuDunjwa
Eziya kuMbozane
Engaezibuze kuMdakuda
Odundubale kuMbozane
Wakhethelwa udwendwe lwamaza
Khasuk' iqhude lamvimbela. (108)

He enquired of Dunjwa about ways
Which lead to Mbozane.
He should have enquired of them from Mdakuda

Who got up the heights to Mbozane
And was danced for by a file of Rhee Bucks
And a rooster started up and blocked his way. (109)

The tone in which this would be said would, I think, be more like friendly advice, rather than criticism - particularly as the last line refers to day dawning, which meant that it was impossible to mount a surprize attack.

Anyone introduced as a foil to Tshaka is dismissed as a nonentity:

Uluhlumayo lumananga lunkone,
Umananga bengelutho.
Ubeyinduna kunaJiyampondo. (110)

Uluhlumayo is spotted, is speckled
Umananga was of no consequence.
He was an induna at Jiyampondo. (111)

"Umananga" is introduced to facilitate a pun on "lumananga" - "is spotted", and although he is a chief, he is said to be "of no consequence" compared to Tshaka. The sun and the moon cannot shine simultaneously, in one place.

Tshaka's singularity is stressed, and his victory over Zwide:

Utshaka katyayeki kanjengamanzi.
Bazokusha abakwaNtombazi nabakwaLanga. (112)

Tshaka is not squirtable, he is not like water.
Those of Ntombazi and Langa will burn. (113)

Tshaka's name is, here, associated with being unable to be beaten "katyayeki". Earlier, we noted, this imbongi drew parallels between "Tshaka" and burning, "Otshise", and thus it is not surprising that we return to the image of fire: "Those of Ntombazi and Langa will burn". It is aesthetically pleasing to see this variation on this theme - especially since there is a tension between these diametrically opposed elements: fire and water.

Tshaka is presented as a man who is determined, who is going places:

In the Tshakan praise, the past tense is used, and its use changes the meaning, placing emphasis on Tshaka's success and the Zulu clan becomes a nation:

Uluthi lwempundu lwakwaNomgabhi
Oluhlal' izikhova,
Beluhlal uDhladhlama wakwaMajola.
Umquangabodwe waOmkabayi. (119)

The gate post of Nomgabhi's kraal
On which roost owls,
On which used to roost Dhladhlama of the Majola tribe.
On which roosted Mecingwana of the Ngomjameni kraal.
On which roosted Cevu, the son of Majola,
Umqangabodwe of the house of Mkabayi. (120)

It is interesting to note that Samuelson's English version adds Mecingwana and Cevu to the list of "has beens".

His poem ends with the classic praise of Tshaka as a "joke":

Uteku lwabafazi bakwazulu
Bebetekula behlezi emlovini
Bethi uTshaka kazukubusa
Kazukuba nkosi
Kanti unyaka ezakunethezela. (121)

The joke of women in Zululand,
Joking while they were in Tshaka's bachelor hut.
Saying Tshaka would not become ruler,
He will not become king.
When, as a matter of fact, it was the year he was
about to live comfortably. (122)

This poem, which canonizes his military exploits, his ruthlessness and boundless energy, certainly proves the lies of these gossiping women "in Tshaka's bachelor hut". The poem begins by stressing the blood-and-thunder, by celebrating "The agile that leaps over other agiles" and deals at length and with a great sense of immediacy with the wars against Zwide, ends on an expectant note, which suggests, perhaps, that this poet thought that Tshaka was just at the threshold of a new era: ". . . as a matter of fact, it was the year he was about to live comfortably."

The Stuart-Malcolm-Cope Shakan Praise Poem

Commenting on the opening lines of Shaka's praise-poem, Cope suggests that it represents Shaka's praise-poem on his accession to the Zulu throne.¹²³ The poet begins by saluting a conquering hero:

UDlungwana ka Ndaba!
UDlungwana woMbelebele,
Odlung' emanxulumeni
Kwaze kwas' amanxulum' esibikelana.
UNodumehlezi kaMenzi,
USishaka kasishayeki kanjengamanzi,
Ilemb'eleq'amany' amalembe ngokukhalipha;
UShaka ngiyesaba ukuthi nguShaka,
UShaka kuyinkosi yasemaShobeni.
UNomakhwelo ingonyama;
UMahlom' ehlathini onjengohlanya,
Uhlany' olusemehlwen' amadoda.
UDabaz' ithafa ebeliya kuMfene;
UNomashovushovu ka Senzangakhona,
UGaka libomvu nasekuphatheni.

Dlungwana son of Ndaba!
Ferocious one of the Mbelebele brigade,
Who raged among the large kraals,
So that until dawn the huts were being turned upside down.
He who is famous as he sits, son of Menzi,
He who beats but is not beaten, unlike water,
Axe that surpasses other axes in sharpness;
Shaka, I fear to say he is Shaka,
Shaka, he is the chief of the Mashobas.
He of the shrill whistle, the lion;
He who armed in the forest, who is like a madman,
The madman who is in full view of the men.
He who trudged wearily the plain going to Mfene;
The voracious one of Senzangakhona,
Spear that is red even on the handle. (ll. 1-15)

No one who is familiar with the rhythms of the Zulu language can fail to be impressed by the manner in which this poem is put together. The repetition of words with similar sounds (for example, "UDlungwana . . . UDLungwana . . . Odlung'; . . . emanxulumeni . . . amanxulum'; . . . Kwaze kwas'; . . . USishaka kasishayeki; . . . Ilembe . . . amalembe; . . . UShaka . . . nguShaka . . . UShaka; . . . onjengohlanya Uhlanya . . . ngonyama . . . UNomashovushovu . . . libomvu; . . . Menzi . . . amanzi") underlines the music of the poem, and the various forms of rhythmic patterns employed and the parallelism that pervades the whole and the use of alliteration all testify to the linguistic

skill of praise-poets. Nine of the praises contained in these opening lines correspond to others in Samuelson.

The very first word of the poem "UDlungwana" sets the tone of this praise-poem. The praise-names, as noted before, means "rager" or "ferocious one" and thus, in a sense, it provides the material for the next two praises. The picture we get from the opening salutation is one of Shaka as a tumultuous force, raging amongst the large kraals: "So that until dawn the huts were being turned upside down". The tone is similar to that of the Samuelson praise, which begins "Udumehlezi ka Menzi". Though the language is different in the Grout version, Shaka is still imaged as something to be reckoned with: "Thou striker of poison into every conspirator . ."

Shaka's uniqueness is stressed:

He who beats, but is not beaten, unlike water,
Axe that surpasses other axes in sharpness;
Shaka, I fear to say he is Shaka,
Shaka, he is the chief of the Mashobas.

According to Cope, chiefs were rarely mentioned by their proper names in praise-poetry.¹²⁴ Shaka is, here, implicitly associated with fear - he is a fearsome person, and this conclusion is underlined by his comparison to a "lion" (as in Samuelson) and a "madman":

He of the shrill whistle, the lion;
He who armed in the forest, who is like a madman,
The madman who is in full view of the men.

Just as there is no mistaking a madman, so too is Shaka outstanding. Shaka's exploits in battle provide the terms in which he is praised:

The voracious one of Senzangakhona,
Spear that is red even on the handle.

His thrust is so powerful that the spear pierces straight through!

In the closing lines of this poem we are reminded that he is the

"Axe that surpasses other axes in sharpness" in the praise:

"Axe of Senzangakhona,
Which when it was chopping worked very energetically."

Izembe likaSenzangakhona,
Elith' ukugawula lakhuthazela. (ll. 443-444)

In all the versions before us, Shaka is presented as a highly successful warrior-king. Hence, by analysing the manner in which his conquests are described in these poems, we can see where the praise-poets have chosen to lay their emphasis. Shaka's "first conquest was the Qwabe tribe under Phakathwayo. Zulu was a younger brother of Qwabe, and the Zulus were consequently far less in number and importance than the Qwabes. The subjection of the Qwabes by the Zulu was therefore a conquest of great significance, as is reflected in the fact that several of Phakathwayo's praises are incorporated into Shaka's praise-poem".¹²⁵

From the information given in the poem, it seems that the causus belli was an insult delivered during a dancing competition:

Bambiz' eMthandeni beyisela
Bathi 'Singesinelane ne Ntungwa lasenhla',
Kanti uzawudl' uPhakathwayo empindelweni.

They called him to Mthandeni despising him,
They said 'We cannot compete in dancing with this
Ntungwa from up country';
Whereas he was going to annihilate Phakathwayo in
the return competition. (ll. 21-23)

It is significant that relationships are seen in terms of competition, as this gives us "an image of the times", to quote Ben Jonson. The word "kanti" - "whereas" introduces the "contrary twist" ending which is characteristic of the Shakan praise-poem. It figures highly, as we shall see, in the Stuart-Malcolm-Cope version.

That Shaka loved up-ending things comes out clearly in this poem - for, not only were huts "turned upside-down", but, as we learn later, "the roots of the trees looked up at the sky". Mpande shares this praise with Shaka, and both claim to be descendants of Ndaba.

Shaka's relentless pursuit of his enemies, rivals, or potential rivals, is the keynote of this praise-poem. Shaka is imaged as a

rising star which eclipsed others - as this reference to the defeat of Phakathwayo shows:

Ilanga eliphahl' elinye ngemisebe,
Kalokhu liphahl' eliseMthandeni.

The sun that eclipsed another with its rays,
For the present it eclipsed the one of Mthandeni. (ll. 23-30)

Mthandeni was Phakathwayo's chief kraal. The word "eclipsed" or "eliphahla", with its connotations of overshadowing, has a potent force. What is also striking is the confident note in "For the present . . .", with its implications of "there's plenty more where that came from", to use the colloquial idiom. Indeed, the defeat of the Qwabe heralded Shaka's ascent, and he reached his zenith, in military exploits, when he "folded" together Zwide's "two little shoulders".

Zwide had defeated Shaka's "foster-father", Dingiswayo, and so Shaka's conquest of Zwide was both a revenge and a triumph, as it established him as the most powerful chief in the land. It is, therefore, not surprising to find that some of the most vivid images and poetry deal with their rivalry:

Nkwenkwez' ende kaMjokwane;
Imi ngomsila,
Iye yabambela phezul' ezulwini,
Amakhwez' aphum' abikelana;
USomakloba akhangelene,
Nelakwa Ntombazi nelakwaNandi.

High star of Mjokwane;
Standing on its tail,
It eventually reached right up into the sky,
And then there came out two morning stars up in the sky,
The father of fires and his rival watched each other,
The one of Ntombazi and the other of Nandi. (ll. 341-347)

"Mjokwane" is one of Senzangakhona's praise-names; Nandi was Shaka's mother and Ntombazi Zwide's. This praise is more highly developed than its opposite number in the Samuelson poem.

The play on words comes out clearly in the original:

"Phezul' ezulwini . . . : phezul' ezulwini; . . . abikelana . . .
akhangelene; . . . Nkwenkwezi", and the tension between Zwide and
Shaka comes across beautifully in the line "Nelakwa Ntombazi nelakwa
Nandi."

The sarcastic streak in the imbongi is revealed in the following
derogatory remarks on Zwide:

UMxoshi womuntu amxoshele futhi;
Ngimthand' exosh' uZwide ozalwa uLanga,
Emthabatha lapha liphuma khona,
Emsingisa lapha lishona khona;
UZwide wampheq' amahlonjan' omabili,
Kuma kwedala ekwethuk' omusha.

Pursuer of a person and he pursues him unceasingly;
I liked him when he pursued Zwide son of Langa,
Taking him from where the sun rises
And sending him to where it sets;
As for Zwide, he folded his two little shoulders together,
It was then that the elder was startled by the younger.
(ll. 100-105)

This parallels the praise in Samuelson. The verbal dexterity of
the imbongi is again in evidence here: "UMxoshi . . . amxoshele
. . . exosh; . . . Ngimthanda . . . Emthabatha . . . Emsingisa";
"lapha liphuma khona" is juxtaposed with "lapha lishona khona".
Zwide was eclipsed, along with Phakathwayo; and the notion of
reversal of fortune, to which we shall return, later, in greater
detail, is emphasised in the punchline: "It was then that the elder
was startled by the younger."

It is interesting to note that, in these times of violent
competition, praise of one is at the expense of another: "I liked
him when he pursued Zwide son of Langa". The poet seems to be
urging Shaka to even more conquests - and in this he is not
disappointed, for Shaka is superlatively successful:

UPhaqa njengelanga;
Ubhobos' isikhal' emaChubeni,
Weza noMvakela ezalwa uDlaba,
Weza noMaqobo obezalwa uDlaba,

Weza noKhwababa obezalwa uDlaba,
 Weza noDuluzana ngasemaChubeni,
 Amakhubalo adliwa uZokufa,
 Udengezi balunik' uNtubeni noNongogo,
 Amadod' akhon' emaChubeni.

He who is alone like the sun;
 He who bored an opening through the Chube clan,
 He came with Mvakela, son of Dlaba,
 He came with Maqobo, son of Dlaba,
 He came with Khwababa, son of Dlaba,
 He came with Duluzana from among the Chubes,
 The magical medicines were eaten by Zokufa,
 The potsherd they gave to Ntubeni and Nongogo,
 Men from among the Chubes. (ll. 262-270)

The repetitive "Weza" construction, as in "Weza noMaqobo obezalwa uDlaba" is almost liturgical in its intensity. The expression "he came with" is a euphemism for "he overcame". Balance, within the verse, is attained by counterpointing "weza" and "ezalwa". The imbongi's ingenuity comes out in the connexion between "nokhwababa" and "amaKhubalo"; and the line "Amakhubalo adliwa uZokufa", as "ukufa" means "to die". This lengthy passage deals with the incorporation of the Chube clan into Shaka's kingdom. An even lengthier praise deals with the defeat of Zwide, in which the metaphor of eating is used:

Wadl' uNomahlanjana ezalwa nguZwide eMapheleni,
 Wadl' uMphepha ezalwa nguZwid' eMapheleni,
 Wadl' uNombengula ezalwa nguZwid' eMapheleni,
 Wadl' uDayingubo ezalwa nguZwid' eMapheleni,
 Wadl' uSonsukwana ezalwa nguZwid' eMapheleni,
 Wadl' inkosikazi okaLubongo,
 Wadl' uMtimona ezalwa nguGaqa eMapheleni,
 Wadl' uMpondo-phumela-kwezinde eMapheleni,
 Wadl' uDengezi-mashumi eMapheleni,
 Wadl' uSikloloba-singamabele kwabakaZwide,
 Wadl' uSihla-mthini-munyekwabakaZwide,
 Wadl' uNqwangube ezalwa uLundiyane,
 Kwakungawakithi esephendul' isihlangu.

He devoured Nomahlanjana, son of Zwide of the Maphelas,
 He ate up Mphepha, son of Zwide of the Maphelas,
 He killed Nombengula, son of Zwide of the Maphelas,
 He destroyed Dayingubo, son of Zwide of the Maphelas,
 He ate up Sonjukwana, son of Zwide of the Maphelas,
 He devoured the chief wife, daughter of Lubongo,
 He ate up Mtimona, son of Gaqa of the Maphelas,
 He killed Mpondo-phumela-kwezinde of the Maphelas,
 He destroyed Dengezi-mashumi of the Maphelas,
 He ate up Sikloloba-singamabele of Zwide's people,
 He devoured Sihla-mthini-munye of Zwide's people,
 He destroyed Nqwangube, son of Lundiyane,
 He belonged to our side, having turned round his shield.

(ll. 185-197)

The names of the eleven victims (including five of Zwide's sons) are reeled off in a ritualistic manner, and the very expressive term "wadla" or "he ate up" is used throughout. Cope's translation uses synonyms - "he killed . . . destroyed . . . devoured . . ."

This imbongi excelled Samuelson's when describing Shaka's "voracious" appetite thus:

Oth' esadl' ezinye wadl' ezinye,
 Wath' esadl' ezinye wadl' ezinye;
 Oth' esadl' ezinye wadl' ezinye,
 Wath' esadl' ezinye wadl' ezinye;
 Oth' esadl' ezinye wadl' ezinye,
 Wath' esadl' ezinye wadl' ezinye;
 Oth' esadl' ezinye wadl' ezinye,
 Wath' esadl' ezinye wadl' ezinye;
 Oth' esadl' ezinye wadl' ezinye,
 Wath' esadl' ezinye wadl' ezinye.

He who while devouring some devoured others,
 And as he devoured others he devoured some more;
 He who while devouring some devoured others,
 And as he devoured others he devoured some more;
 He who while devouring some devoured others,
 And as he devoured others he devoured some more;
 He who while devouring some devoured others,
 And as he devoured others he devoured some more;
 He who while devouring some devoured others,
 And as he devoured others he devoured some more. (ll. 133-142)

Repetition is an integral part of praise-poetry, and the Grant version of Shaka's poem is also very repetitive. The above lines contrast sharply with the one praise similar to this in Samuelson's version. The cumulative effect of this incantation, together with the lists of victims given in the poem, leave us in no doubt as to Shaka's claim to fame, in the eyes of this poet. The fivefold repetition of the couplet:

He who while devouring some devoured others,
 And as he devoured others he devoured some more . . .

indicates that it was considered a pleasing and effective poetic device. The repetition and parallelism in the above is mirrored in the following extract:

Inyon' edl' ezinye,
 Yath' isadl' ezinye yadl' ezinye;
 Ith' isadl' ezinye yadl' ezinye,
 Yath' isadl' ezinye yadl' ezinye;
 Ith' isadl' ezinye yadl' ezinye,
 Yath' isadl' ezinye yadl' ezinye.

Bird that eats others,
 As it was still eating others it destroyed some more;
 Still eating some it destroyed others,
 As it was still eating some it destroyed some more;
 Still eating some it destroyed others,
 As it was still eating others it destroyed some more.
 (11. 279-284)

As can be seen from these extracts, different forms of parallelism and repetition abound in this praise-poem. In the Samuelson version, only the first line "Inyoni edhl' ezinye" is given.

The picture that emerges from this glorification of warfare is one of perpetual conflict and turmoil. The accumulation of detail upon detail tells us something about the scale of havoc Shaka's expansionist policies wrought. The praise-poems of his contemporaries echo his, and tell us of the tremendous upheavals in the land during the difaqane.

Shaka's achievements are inversely proportional to his circumstances as a youth:

USiphepho-shunguza ngasemkhandlwini,
 Siyakwenqab' ubayede ngase Langeni.
 Udlungwan' ongenamthelekeleli . . .

Rushing wind in the assembly,
 We refuse you the royal salute from the Langeni clan.
 Ferocious one who had no one to fight for him . . . (11. 244-246)

These lines refer to Shaka's childhood, his years in the wilderness.

In times of perpetual conflict, one learns to fight one's own battles! A sense of frustration underpins these lines, which would seem to indicate that Shaka was goaded into action by negative factors as well as the positive drive to uplift himself socially.

His vindictiveness is hinted at in the lines:

Ondande ngonkhal' olude,
Wadabul' emthanjeni abantabakaTayi,
Ebebegodola beya kuMacingwan' eNgonyameni.

He who moved slowly along one ridge and returned
on another,
Attacking Bhoyiya, son of Mdakuda;
Ndaba did not intend to go there,
He was going to fetch Macingwane of the Ngonyameni
kraal.

He who moved slowly along a long ridge,
He traversed the bones of the people of Tayi,
Who were cold going to Macingwane at Ngonyameni. (11. 69-75)

Once again, the impression that the action against Macingwane is
a considered, deliberate one comes across in the language used:

"Ondande ngankalo wabuya ngankalo" conveys a sense of balance, and
the second praise begins in a similar manner: "Ondande ngokhal'
olude". Both segments end with references to Macingwane of the
Ngonyameni kraal. Shaka's goal there is to defeat his rival;
whilst the children of Tayi died on their way to "Ngonyameni",
Macingwane's chief kraal, where they had hoped for protection.
Tayi was the "Chief of the Malangeni branch of the Nyuswa clan and
father of Thondozolozzi, who, for fear of Shaka, uprooted his people
and sent to seek the protection of Macingwane. Many of them died of
exposure on the way."¹²⁸ This being the case, it is not surprising
that Shaka would not tolerate a rival source of patronage.

Legend also has it that Shaka sought protection from Macingwane,
whilst he himself was destitute, and that the latter refused to have
him.¹²⁹ Thus, Shaka had two reasons for pursuing Macingwane
persistently, and his delight when he finally settled his score with
Macingwane comes across beautifully in the lines:

'Ocel' ugwayi kuMacingwan' eNgonyameni,
UMacingwane wawulandula,
Wawuzikholisile;
USineke-suduka lapha kuMacingwane
Kunsukwan' abantu ubabangel' uxhuxhu,
Nabasezitheni nabasekhaya.

'He who asks for snuff from Macingwane at Ngonyameni,
Macingwane, you said you had none.
You were giving yourself trouble;
He who grinned as he left Macingwane,
It being some time since he caused people excitement,
Both those with the enemy and those at home. (ll. 213-218)

Shaka comes across as the initiator of frenetic activity in this poem: in the praise quoted above, the implication is that he thrives on "excitement" - the Zulu word "uxhuxhu" is wonderfully suggestive. Shaka, like Marlowe's Tamburlaine, is portrayed as someone with the political muscle to do just as he likes.

Shaka is also described as a man on the move - as someone who is so busy that he stays in "temporary huts":

Oye wakh' amaxhib' oThukela,
Lapho kucushw' isilo ngomwowane,
Weza noKhungwayo ngoNgobizembe.

He who went and erected temporary huts at the Thukela,
Where a leopard was ensnared in a trap,
He defeated Khungwayo by means of the Ngobizembes.
(ll. 66-68)

Ngobizembe was one of Shaka's regiments. Shaka's cunning emerges in tactics of laying traps, and selective misinformation:

Ondlela bazibuza kuDunjwa,
Kanti angabazibuza kuMbozane,
Yen' aphant' ukuya kuNomagaga,
Lafik' iqhude lamvimbela.

He whose routes they inquired from Dunjwa,
Whereas they should have asked Mbozane about them,
As for him he was hurrying to go to Nomagaga,
A cock came and prevented him. (ll. 59-62)

The content and context of this praise is different from that found in Samuelson. Here, the "they" are being shown up for their ignorance, for they ask the wrong person, Dunjwa, about Shaka's movements. The "rushing wind" was "hurrying" to go to Nomagaga, but "By going the long way round, he arrived as the cock was crowing and thus the attack was not the disastrous surprise it was intended to be."¹³⁰

Shaka's tremendous reserves of energy are such that his periods of inactivity are ominous:

Isinyama esilele kuNdaba,
Siyavuka sidl' amadoda,
Ngesakwaphumuz' abant' imilomo.

Ominous stillness that lies in Ndaba,
It wakes up and devours men,
It gives people rest from talking. (ll. 412-414)

One wonders whether the dismissive remark with which this praise ends is aimed at gossipers, as is the praise:

UTeku lwabafazi bakwaNomgabhi,
Betekula behlez' emlovini,
Beth' uShaka kakubusa kakuba nkosi,
Kant' unyakan' uShaka ezakunethezeka.
Inkom' ekhal' eMthonjaneni,
Izizwe zonke ziyizwil' ukulila,
Izwiwe uDunja waselu
Yezwiwa uMangcengeza wakwaKhali.
Umlilo wothathe ubuhanguhangu,
Oshis' izikhova eziseDlebe,
Kwaya kwasha neziseMabedlana.

The joke of the women of Nomgabhi,
Joking as they sat in a sheltered spot,
Saying that Shaka would not rule, he would not become chief,
Whereas it was the year in which Shaka was about to prosper.
The beast that lowed at Mthonjaneni,
And all the tribes heard its wailing,
It was heard by Dunjwa of the Yengweni kraal,
It was heard by Mangcengeza of Khali's kraal.
Fire of the long dry grass, son of Mjokwane;
Fire of the long grass of scorching force,
That burned the owls on Dlebe hill,
And eventually those on Mabedlana also burned. (ll. 37-47)

The idle group of "the women of Nomgabhi" is shown up for what it is in the two sets of praises that follow, which deal with the political consequences of Shaka's rise to power "Izizwe zonke ziyizwil' ukulila" - "All the nationalities heard its lowing", to adopt Samuelson's rendering. The play on the words "Izizwe . . . ziyizwile . . . Izwiwe . . . Yezwiwa" shows the imbongi's fascination with words, as does the conjugation of the verb to joke "Betekula" which is connected to the erroneous view of Shaka as a "joke" - "Uteku". All these praises were analysed in detail when we came across them in the Samuelson poem.

There follows a description of the havoc that Shakan conquest entails, from the perspective of the defeated:

Odabule kuNdima noMgovu,
 Abafaz' abenendeni baphuluza,
 Imikhumbulo bayishiy' izinqindi,
 Imbewu bayishiya semahlangeni,
 Izalukazi zasala semanxiweni,
 Amaxhegu asala semizileni,
 Iziqu zemithi zabheka phezulu.

'He who travelled across to Ndima and Mgovu,
 And women who were with child gave birth easily;
 The newly planted crops they left still short,
 The seed they left amongst the maize-stalks,
 The old women were left in the abandoned sites,
 The old men were left along the tracks,
 The roots of the trees looked up at the sky. (ll. 49-55)

This is what happens in the wake of Shaka's imperial thrust. So fearsome is he that "women who were/child gave birth easily". This is a very forceful image, and one interpretation of it is that natural rhythms were disrupted by Shaka, "the rushing wind", the "ferocious one". People who could, fled - leaving behind those who would slow them down in their flight - the pregnant women. The dominant words are those relating to "abandonment": "Bayishiya . . . Bayishiya . . . Zasala . . . Asala". Expectant women, old men and women, crops, and even seeds are abandoned in terror! There is a pun on the name of the Zulu nation in the concluding line: "Iziqu zemithi zabheka phezulu" - "The roots of the trees looked up at the sky" - and, indeed, amaZulu came out on top during the difaqane.

So great is the disruption that "the time is out of joint" - and unnatural behaviour is the order of the day - witness the desertion of the young and the old by the able-bodied - a thing that is alien to African culture where the old, traditionally, are venerated; and the children, who represent continuity, are treasured:

Ozulu lizayo khwezan' abantwana,
 Ngabadala bodwa abazozibaleka . . .

He who is an oncoming storm, pick up the children,
 For it is only the adults who flee by themselves . (ll. 63-64)

In the immediate quest for shelter from the "oncoming storm", moral checks on people's actions loose their hold. "Ozulu" here, very

aptly, means "storm".

And shelter, it seems, is found in the person of the ruler - only in subservience is there hope for a measure of security, as opposed to mere survival:

Obesixhokolo singamatsh' aseNkandla,
Abephephel' izindlov' uba liphendule,
Aphephel' uPhungashe wakwaButhelezi,
Aphephel' uZihlandlo wakaMkhize,
Izindlovu zabuye zalibalekela.

He who was a pile of rocks at Nkandla,
Which was a shelter for the elephants in bad weather,
Which sheltered Phungashe of the Buthelezi clan,
Which sheltered Zihlandlo of the Mkhize clan,
And the elephants ran away from the place. (ll. 87-91)

The "pile of rocks" praise symbolizes Shaka's firm foundations, and is repeated, in a subtly varied form, in the praise: "Isixhokolo esingamatsh' ommbela" - "Pile of firmly planted stones". The rocks of Nkandla are said to have sheltered elephants (symbolic of power and hardness) in bad weather. Phungashe, a Buthelezi chief, was defeated by Shaka and thus metaphorically displaced from the Nkandla stronghold; and Zihlandlo "sheltered" under Shaka's patronage, and thus was safe.¹³¹ The operative word in this set of praises is "abephephela", meaning "which was a shelter".

That there was a prevalent feeling of insecurity at the time is brilliantly portrayed in the following lines:

UMmoya wemzansi womngenelo,
Ohlez' ubangenela ngangomnyango;
Liwukhiphe qede bayikhoth' imilomo,
Abezindlu nabezindlwana.

South wind of sudden attack,
Which usually attacks unawares even by the doorway;
As soon as the weather brings it out they lick their
lips nervously,
Both they who are prosperous and they who are poor. (ll. 230-233)

The image of wind is maintained and developed. Shaka is as unpredictable as the weather, as the "South wind of sudden attack / Which usually attacks unawares . . ." There is no telling where he

will strike next - Shaka is pictured as a great leveller, and the lowest common denominator is fear, and so both the rich and the poor "lick their lips nervously". What a wonderful eye for detail this poet has, emphasizing the common humanity of those who are fortunate, and those less so, in that very human gesture of licking one's lips. The play on the word "house" in the Zulu text: "Abezindlu nabezindlwana" comes across strongly, with its connotations of relative size.

Shaka is also described as a thrasher:

Ntonga yethusi kaMjokwane,
Eshay' amanzi kwavel' udaka wavela.

Brass walking stick, son of Mjokwane,
That which struck the water and mud appeared and
he appeared. (ll. 353-354)

This is an extension of the praise in Samuelson where Shaka is said to be unbeatable. His "generalissimo or army marshal"¹³² is also described as a stick:

Igwija likaMdlaka ligwegwe,
Lijez' abasini bengoma,
UNdaba uludud' emanxulumeni.

The dancing stock of Mdlaka is crooked,
It upsets the dancers of the ngoma dance,
Ndaba causes excitement in the great kraals. (ll. 298-300)

So notorious are Shaka and his army that their mere presence in an area strikes the inhabitants with terror. Resistance does seem to have ended in certain areas:

Obhiyaz' uMbhiyaza wakwaMachanca phezulu,
Wabaleka wabangazeka wazishiy' izinkomo,
Zaze zeqelwa abaseNtonteleni.
Uyisinise ngokhalo lwabantabaka Tayi,
Izwe laphenduk' umbhedazane,
Izinkomo nabantu zamlandela.
UDlongonyane lukaNdaba!
Luhlezi lundlongophele,
Isihlangu lusibek' emadolweni;
Kabakhisile ababangel' uxhuxhu,
Abasezitheni nabasekhaya.

"He who wards off Mbhiyaza of Machanca above,
He who ran off excitedly and left the cattle behind,
They were eventually gathered in by the Ntontela regiment.

"herds of those who meditate evil" against his people. He is alert and ready - but in a defensive manner, not an offensive one - like Shaka:

Young raging one of Ndaba!
He lives in a great rage,
And his shield he keeps on his knees;
He has not let them settle down, he keeps them in
a state of excitement,
Those amongst the enemy and those at home.

As Landeg White has shown, the poet who composed Ndaba's praises describes "the pre-Mfecane days with a nostalgia so powerful it becomes almost a reproach".¹³⁴ The poet laments the departure of the old, close-knit clan groupings:

UNdaba kaSonani bathi 'Wonani?',
Abantu behlezi nemihlambi yabo,
EyawoMababela wakoGabela.

Ndaba, son of Sonani, they say "What wrong
did he do?",
Since the people are living with their herds,
Belonging to Mababela's people of the Gabela clan. (ll. 1-3)

"Sonani" was Ndaba's father's name, and literally, it means "What wrong did he do?" The poet uses an ingenious, pleasing poetic device as a vehicle for questioning the fabric of the society in which he lives.

Whilst Ndaba was content to keep an eye on his rival's cattle, Shaka collects them. The plight of Mbhiyaza is heightened by the melodious way in which it is described: "Wadaleka wabangazeka wazishiy' izinkomo". The details given in the following extract give some indication of the importance of cattle and the pride taken in them by the southern African people (and the Dinka of Sudan) who compose praises about their cattle:

Obhobos' isikhal' emaMpondweni,
Isikhala nanamuhla lokhu sisakhamisile;
Wadl' ezomdubu zikaFaku wamaMpondo,
Wadl' nezikaNgubowencuge emaMpondweni,
Wadl' ezikaNcokazi emaMpondweni,
Wadl' ezikaNcasana kwaMajola,
Wadl' ezikaMacingwan' eNgonyameni;
Waye wadla nezikaBhungane wamakhulukhulu,
Waye wadla nezabeSuthu abakhwintshayo,
Waye wadla nezamaDlodlongwanyana,
Abaphuth' imiyeko.

Shaka is here presented as a bird of prey, a "hawk". In another variation of the "cattle praises", if one may call them that, Shaka himself is imaged as a bull:

Ithol' elinsizwa akokaMbengi,
Ekade liwagingq' amanye,
Ngob' edl' izinkomo ezinemvungamvunga,
Ngob' edl' izinkomo ezisoDlodlweni.

Powerful calf of the daughter of Mbengi,
Which has been rolling over the others,
For he ate up the cattle that were murmuring,
For he ate up the cattle at the Dlodlweni kraal. (ll. 400-403)

The last couplet provides yet another example of parallelism. The first couplet calls to mind Grout's line: "What beautiful parts! A calf of a cow!"

Animal imagery is often used to describe rulers in praise-poetry, and Shaka's ferocity and unruliness is epitomized in the praise:

USilwane-helele emizine yabantu;
Usilwan' ubenduna kwaDibandhlela.

Fierce animal in the home of the people;
Wild animal that was in charge at Dibandelas. (ll. 106-107)

There is a play on the word "Usilwane" - "wild animal", and "uSilwana", a person. Samuelson's parallel praise runs as follows:

Usilwanehelele emzini yabantu,
Usilwana ubengeluthu,
Ubeyinduna ka Dubandhlela.

Shaka is variously referred to, in the Stuart-Malcolm-Cope poem, as "The small beast . . ." (l. 24); "The beast . . ." (l. 41); "a calf . . ." (l. 208) and an "Elephant . . ." (l. 211 etc.) These various metaphors are summed up in the praise:

UyiSilo! UyiNgwe! UyiNgonyama!
UyiNdlondlo! UyiNdlovu!
Ungangezintaba ezinde oMpehlela noMaqhwakazi
Wen' omnyama,
Wena wakhula belibele.

You are a wild animal! A leopard! A lion!
You are a horned viper! An elephant!
You are as big as the great mountains of Mpehlela
and Maqhwakazi,
You black one,
You grew while others loitered. (ll. 306-310)

This conglomeration of different beasts gives the impression that, in the eyes of the poet, Shaka exceeds things in the natural world - no one image alone could suffice in describing such a man. On the other hand, they might also mean that Shaka succeeded in welding together the various clans in and around "Zululand" into one political unit: Macingwane, for example, is associated with the lion, and his poem openly stresses his vicious nature:

UMacingwane waseNgonyameni,
 UZipito lumeva lwawoNgqengelele lwaseNgonyameni.
 UMichokhobi ngankon' iy' ehlangeni,
 UMacingwane wakwaSikhuba-ngalembe.

Macingwane of the Ngonyameni kraal,
 Claw that came after Ngqengelele of Ngonyameni.
 Croucher like a beast sneaking into a maize-field,
 Macingwane of Sikhuba-ngalembe's kraal.

(Macingwane, ll. 1-4)

"Ngonyameni" means "The Place of the Lion".¹³⁵ Zwide, in the Shakan poem, is referred to as "the horned viper":

USishaya-ndlondlo bakushayile!
 Ubusika nehlobo bahlukene,
 Nobakwa Ntombazi NobakwaLanga.

Beater of the horned viper, they have beaten you!
 Winter and summer are different,
 So it was with those of Ntombazi and those of Langa.

(ll. 205-207)

Shaka is praised for his diligence - "You grew while others loitered". In another praise his growth in political stature is mentioned thus:

UDlondlwane luya luhlezi,
 Luya ludlondlobele,
 Lubek' isihlang' emadulweni.

The young viper grows as it sits,
 Always in a great rage,
 With a shield on its knees.

The image of Shaka as a "young viper", a venomous snake, recalls the lines in Grout:

Thou striker of poison into every conspirator
 As well those abroad as those who are at home.

The question of the scale of Shaka's achievement is also in evidence in the way natural imagery, especially that of the elements, is used. Shaka is as big as any "big" thing:

Ongangezwe lakhe omkhulu kakhulu,
Ongangezintaba,
Ongangosondude,
Ongangesihlahl' esisokhalweni kuMaqhwakazi,
Esasihlal' amaNdwandwe namaNxumalo.

He who is as big as his country, enormous one,
He who is as big as mountains,
He who is as big as Sondude mountain,
He who is as big as the tree on the ridge of
Maqhwakazi,
On which lived the Ndwandwes and the Nxumalos.

(11. 285-289)

No doubt such hyperbolic praises found their mark - no one could fail to be flattered by a praise like "Ongangezwe lakhe omkhulu kakhulu", which explicitly equates Shaka's status with the size of his "enormous" country.

In the above praise, Shaka is likened to the earth; in others, to the wind - "Rushing wind . . ." and "south wind of sudden attack"; and in the following he is likened to the sea:

Ugungudele njengolwandle,
Lona kuze kuse lugubelana . . .

He is curved like the ocean
Which until dawn is rolling waves . . . (11. 301-302)

This image develops the theme of Shaka's forcefulness, of his rough, buffeting temperament.

Several praises liken Shaka to a thunderstorm:

Izulu elimagwabagwaba lika Mageba,
Elidume phezulu kuNomangci,
Ladum' emva kwomuzi eKuqhubekeni laqanda,
Lazithath' izihlangu zaMaphela naMankayiya,
Amabheqan' eZimpaka asal' ezihlahleni;

The sky that rumbled, the sky of Mageba,
That thundered above Nomangci mountain,
It thundered behind the kraal at Kuqhubekeni and struck,
It took the shields of the Maphela and the Mankayiya,
And the little melons of the Zimpaka were left on the vines.

(11. 180-184)

This set of praises mirrors some of the praises in Samuelson. Rain, thunder and lightning do not discriminate, they fall on all and sundry, and are potent images of terror, destruction and forcefulness. Apart from specific grievances - like his grudges against Phakathwayo and Macingwane - Shaka's attacks seem very random:

Ulusiba-gojela ngalaphaya kweNkandla,
Lugojela njalo ludl' amadoda.

Feather that bobbed down on the other side of Nkandla,
Bobbing down always and devouring men. (ll. 92-93)

Several comparisons are made of Shaka and fire, as in:

Ohamb' ebasa eshiy' amakloba,
Ophehlwe weva wanjengomlilo

He who goes along making fires and leaving
behind conflagrations,
Who when he was rubbed flared up like a fire. (ll. 174-175)

As noted earlier, he is also equated to the highly inflammable "uthathe grass". He is also described as a "Burning furnace" "USivutha singinqe!" (l. 394). To return to the image of grass, Shaka is described as someone who showed his true mettle in youth: "UMthent' ohlab' usamila kaMjokwane" - "Grass that pricks while still growing, son of Mjokwane" (l. 376).

Shaka is rarely described in human terms - more often than not, the images stress his unnaturalness, his irrational behaviour:

UDlungwan' odl'imihlambi yabahwebi,
Wadl' ezikuMandeku kwaMlambo,
Udl' abadlungwana bakwokaMbengi,
Owahlab' esengwayo zand' ukwaluka,
Othandayo ahl' amzel' ekhaya.

Ferocious one who devoured the cattle of the traders,
And ate up those that were with Mandeku at Mlambo,
He destroyed the wild little people belonging to Mbengi,
He who slaughtered a cow before the cattle went out
to graze,
Anyone who liked came to him at home. (ll. 274-278)

The "open invitation" that ends this set of praises is highly suspect, coming as it does at the end of praises celebrating "slaughter" - just as Shaka kills a beast as he feels like it, so

too can one be killed if it's in accordance with his whim, is the inference one draws.

Albeit that his maternal relatives (Nandi was Mbengi's daughter) are dismissed as "abadlungwana" - "the little wild people" - here, Shaka is later criticised for killing them. This would suggest that these praises were recorded by Stuart from two different izimbongi.

It is interesting to note that the Stuart-Malcolm-Cope version has a passage dealing with the plight of Mashongwe, "The man Shaka accused as the witch responsible for his mother's death. His eyes were put out, and he was left to wander about until he was killed by wild animals".¹³⁶

Amazwi kaNgoboza noMkhuphali,
Bath' uNgwane uzul' ezintabeni;
UMashongwe waseZibisini wamxhoxh' amehlo,
Wamhambisa ngokhal' okhulu lukaNkume,
Waze wambeka kuHlokohloko,
Wambuyisa wamzisa kuMaqhwakazi,
Wabuye wamdlulisa wamus' eMatheku..

The words of Ngoboza and Mkhuphali,
They say Ngwane is wandering on the mountains;
As for Mashongwe of the Zibisi clan, he put out his eyes,
He made him go along the long ridge of the Nkume,
Until he placed him on the Hlokohloko range of hills,
He brought him back and sent him to the Maqhwakazi hill,
Then again he passed him on to the Matheku hill.

(11. 237-243)

Shaka's remorselessness comes out terrifyingly in this account after putting out Mashongwe's eyes, he forces him to move "Wamhambisa" - "He made him walk" or "go along"; "Waze wambeka" - until he placed him" . . .; "Wambuyisa womzisa . . ." - "He brought him back and sent him . . ."; and "Wabuye wamdlulisa . . ." - "Then again he passed him on . . ." - Shaka is obviously the driving force, and this description shows him as exercising his power in a distasteful display of one accused of witchcraft. What lends credence to this

account is that southern Africans, in general, did not believe that people could "die of natural causes".

There are a number of references to people as "evil doers" "abasokoco" (Stuart-Malcolm-Cope) or "abathakathi" (Samuelson and Grant) or "wizards" (Grout) which would imply that a belief in supernatural forces was strong. Reference is also made, in the Stuart-Malcolm-Cope poem, to the test to which Shaka put the diviners, and from which only one was proved to be reliable:

Ibele likaMjokwane elikheth' izihlambo,
Likheth' uJiyeza ngakubangoma.

The corn-seed of Mjokwane which prefers low-lying land,
It selects Jiyeza from among the diviners. (ll. 372-3)

Reference is also made to the incident of Shaka ordering an operation on a pregnant woman to see how a child lay in the womb:

UVuso ladl' umtwan' osesiswini,
UMavus' ubenduna kwaNomgabhi.

The startler devoured an unborn child,
Mavuso was the headman at Nomgabhi. "ll. 260-261)

No mention is made of whether or not the woman was dead, but Worger's exhaustive study of the evidence available deduces that she was, in fact, dead, and that Shaka was satisfying a scientific curiosity.¹³⁷

Much has been said about the restraints ordained by Shaka on the sexual activities of his soldiers. Mention is made of this in the Stuart-Malcolm-Cope poems - according to Cope, "Shaka gave permission on one occasion to the Zimpohlo regiment to 'hlobonga' (external intercourse without penetration) with their sweethearts. He was upset that not a single soldier remained behind in the barracks."¹³⁸:

Ujoj' obethwe Zimpohlo,
Ziyohlobonga ngaye kubatshazwayo.

The finch which was beaten by the Zimpohlo regiment,
Going to 'hlobonga' on his account the admired ones.
(ll. 374-375)

Praise poetry deals primarily with the use and the exercise of power: it charts the achievements of various rulers, and sheds light on the political basis of the leader. As Ruth Finnegan puts it:

With African as with other literature it is essential to treat both literary and social facets (if indeed these two are ultimately distinguishable at all) for a full appreciation, a point too often neglected by writers on this subject. (139)

The fact that competition was the order of the day in Shakan times comes out clearly in the praises that refer to Phakathwayo and Zwide - witness the following:

UBholokoqa bazalukanisile,
Zalukaniswe uNoju noNgeqengenyeye,
EyakwaNtombazi neyakwaNandi;
Yayikhiph' eshoba libomvu,
Ikhishwa elimhlophe lakwaNandi.

The open-handed one, they have matched the regiments,
They were matched by Noju and Ngeqengenyeye,
The one belonging to Ntombazi the other to Nandi;
He brought out the one with the red brush,
Brought out by the white one of Nandi. (ll. 16-20)

There was competition between members of chiefs' households over succession, and Shaka's usurpation of the Zulu chieftaincy after the death of Senzangakhona is referred to thrice:

Sidlukula-dlwedlwe!
Siyadla sidlondlobele,
Sibek' isihlang' emadolweni.

Snatcher of a staff!
He attacks, he rages,
He puts a shield on his knees. (ll. 311-313)

The forceful fricative "dl" is indicative of Shaka's determination. Mention is made, discreetly, of the murder of Sigujana, the rightful heir: "Shaka was in exile among the Mthethwas at the time. To make way for himself, Shaka sent Ngwadi, his half-brother on his mother's side, to remove Sigujana, which he did by stabbing him while he was bathing in the river"¹⁴⁰:

Isiziba esiseMavivane,
Eseminzis' ununtu eth' uyageza,
Waze washona nangesicoco.

Deep pool which is in the Mavivane river,
Which drowns a person as he is washing,
So that he disappears even as far as his headring.

(11. 383-385)

And, finally, there is the admonition:

UBhicakade waze wafunyaniswa,
Ovunulel' ezimfundeni zamanzi,
Into zakhe zomuka namanzi.

He who dressed late was eventually overtaken,
He who puts on his finery at the water's edge,
His things will be washed away. (11. 108-110)

After usurpation comes consolidation:

Isixhololo esingamatsh' ombela;
Ukleb' engimbon' ukwehla kwezikaNzwakele,
Kwathi kwezikaKhushwayo waqhamalala,
UShaka ufunyanis' izilwane zizibili,
Zihlangene phakathi kweNsuze noThukela,
Izilwane uThondolozzi noSihayo,
Wafika waphons' ihawu zahlukana.

Pile of firmly planted stones;
Hawk that I saw descending from the hills of Nzwakele,
And from those of Khushwayo he came clearly in sight.
Shaka found two wild beasts
Met together between Nsuze and the Thukela,
The animals were Thondolozzi and Sihayo,
He came and threw a shield and they separated. (11. 314-319)

Khushwayo and his son Nzwakele were chiefs of the Dube clan
which submitted to Shaka.¹⁴¹ Thondolozzi and Sihayo were "chiefs of
different sections of the Nyuswa clan"¹⁴² between whom he arbitrated.
In another praise dealing with a dispute amongst the Nyuswa, he is
said to have killed both the contenders:

UBhiyoze kuNomangci phezulu,
Eya kunqumel' umbango wakwaNyuswa;
Kwakungabangwa lutho ngakwaNyuswa,
Kwakubangw' izihlakuva semanxiweni,
Bathi 'Ntekenteke zilinden' amajuba',
Wafika wababulala bobabili.

He who panted up to the top of Nomangci mountain,
Going to give judgment in the contention at the Nyuswas;
They were not contending over anything at the Nyuswas.

They were contending over castor-oil seeds in
deserted sites,
They said, 'Just a moment, wait for the pigeons'
And he came and he killed them both. (ll. 94-99)

There is something awe-inspiring in a description of someone
"panting" up a mountain in order to give judgment. It smacks of
impatience and frustration, and the dispute between "Sihayo and
Mgabi, sons of Mapholoba, over the succession"¹⁴³ is contemptuously
brushed aside as nothing of any consequence. Shaka's judgment is
to "kill them both". Samuelson's Nyuswa praise has, as its dominant
image, the pregnant women scrambling for "castor-oil seeds among the
dry mealie stalks". Note the play on words in the passage - as in
"Wafika wababulala bobabili".

Shaka's credentials as a judge are rather suspect, for he also
stands accused:

Owadi' izinkomo zempathiso,
Okunamini lokhu usaphathekile.
Inung' egwaze amacukubada,
Phakathi kukaMagaye noNzawu.

He who devoured the trust cattle,
Even to this day he is responsible.
Porcupine that stabbed the disorderly young people
Between Magaye and Nzawu. (ll. 321-324)

One is struck by the arbitrariness of Shaka's actions - he has
power, and can use it as he wills - by eating "the trust cattle",
for example - something which is not really in order; and by
stabbing the "disorderly young people". Shaka's iconoclastic nature
is revealed in the praise:

'UMandla kaNgome!
Uwele wayakh' iNtontela,
Babethi kakuyakh' iNtontela wayakh' iNtontela.

Mighty Power!
He crossed over and founded the Ntontela regiment,
They said he would not found it and he founded it.

(ll. 432-434)

He founded the regiment "even although (sic) the men of this age-set

had already assumed the head-ring signifying senior-status and marriageability, which he ordered them to cut off."¹⁴⁴ Shaka exercised his political muscle as and when he liked. Note the repeated use of the name "Ntontela", which is indicative of Shaka's stubborn insistence.

Patronage was a crucial element in the balance of power in Shakan days, and a set of praises deal with "the price of submission to Shaka"¹⁴⁵:

IMfoloz' emnyama kaSithayi noBhiyane inkethabaweli,
Ingawelwa ngonethole,
Ongenathole angakhokh' umntwana,
Inxe engenamntwana angakhokh' igeja.

Black Mfolozi of Sithayi and Bhiyane, who choose
those who ford it,
It can be forded by him who has a calf,
He who has no calf can pay with a child.
If he has no child he can pay with a hoe. (ll. 408-411)

- there is a sliding scale of payment according to one's means.

By and large, Shaka is presented as a formidable figure, a gifted strategist:

UHele engimbon' ukwehla kwezikaMangcengeza,
Kwathi kwezikaPhungashe wanyamalala;
Bathi 'Hele nangunangu',
Kant' uthul' emahlatini njengezingwe nezingonyama.

Hawk that I saw descending from the hills of Mangcengeza,
And from those of Phungashe he disappeared;
They said 'Hawk, here he is, there he is',
Whereas he was silent in the forest like the leopards
and lions. (ll. 155-158)

Confusion reigns in the enemy camp, the lightning speed and swift execution of his attack is reflected in the praise: "Hawk, here he is, there he is". He is likened to the stealthy beasts of prey in the forests - "leopards and lions".

His complete control of the country is apparent in the praise:

Insukamini kaNdaba nanxa ilanga liphenduka;
UMxoshi womuntu amxoshele futhi;
Ngob' exosh' uMbemba ezalw' emaGozeni,
Wamxosha waye wambek' eSilutshana,
Wafunyanis' umhlanga wabakhwetha,
Kanti zithutha zakhona.

He who sets out at midday, son of Ndaba, or even
 afternoon;
 Pursuer of a person, and he pursues him persistently,
 For he pursued Mbemba born among the Goza's,
 He pursued him until he put him at Silutshana,
 He found the reed-bed of young boys,
 But it was only the spirits of the place. (ll. 437-442)

No matter how late he begins his "hot pursuit exercise", Shaka will find his man. As Stuart's informants put it: ". . . there was no place to run away to"¹⁴⁶; and: "The Zulu country was like a pit or a snuff-box, for you did not know where to run to; that is, if a man had to be killed it was inevitable that he would be killed, for there was nowhere to run to."¹⁴⁷

Thus, it is not surprising that a self-confident note runs through most of the praises of Shaka - contempt is poured on his enemies:

Ogcage' emagcekeni koPhuthile,
 Weza noMsikazi ngakwoNdimoshe.
 Wahlangana nondwendwe lwamankankane,
 Mhla eya kudl' amaMpondo iziphukuphuku . . .

He who came dancing on the hillside of the Phuthiles,
 And overcame Msikazi among the Ndimoshes.
 He met a long line of hah-de-dahs (ibis birds)
 When he was going to destroy the foolish Pondos . . .
 (ll. 165-168)

It takes a degree of self-confidence to dance on the way to a battle; and the Pondos are disparagingly referred to as "iziphukuphuku" - "fools". Other victims are similarly dismissed:

Wadl' uBhungane kaMthinkulu emaHlubini,
 Wadl' uMatiwane kaMasumpa emaNgwaneni,
 Weza noSihlangu-vuthuk'-udaka emaNgwaneni,
 Weza noKhwelemthini njengezinyoni,
 Weza noMqabuka ngenjeqele,
 Weza noNgiyekeneni njengomntwana.

He ate up Bhungane, son of Mthinkulu of the Hlubi clan,
 He devoured Matiwane, son of Masumpa of the Ngwane clan,
 He overcame Sihlangu-vuthuk'-udaka of the Ngwane clan,
 He overcame Khwelemthini like the birds,
 He overcame Mqabuka like a hidden hill-side,
 He overcame Ngiyekeneni like a child. (ll. 219-224)

The praise-names given in this extract are fascinating, as they tell us something of the times in which these victims lived and died:

parallels with the praise in Samuelson, which, in translation, runs thus:

Uzihlandlo and Gcwabe are wizards,
Because they did not tell Tshaka the drift
But showed him one that was still dripping with blood
Where the Majola tribe was polished off
Among the bones of the people of Tayi
Who had laid a trap in readiness,
Even to this day the ridge of Tayi's children stands amazed.

In the Stuart-Malcolm-Cope version, Zihlandlo and Mpepho are the "evil doers", in Samuelson, Zihlandlo and Gcwabe. In the former, Zihlandlo is referred to as "son of Gcwabe". In a different praise, however, the Stuart-Malcolm-Cope version reads:

Owadi' izimfe zimbili,
Enye kuwuzihlandlo enye kuwugcwabe,
Kwaphum' ikhasi selilinye . . .

He who devoured two stalks of sweet reed,
One was Zihlandlo and the other was Gcwabe,
And there came out now one leaf . . . (ll. 364-366)

Obviously, the implication here is that Shaka amalgamated the two "stalks" under Zihlandlo. Zihlandlo was a Mkhize chief who submitted, voluntarily, to Shaka, and Gcwabe was his father.¹⁵⁰

In the Stuart-Malcolm-Cope "drift praise", the "ford" is "still dripping saliva", in the Samuelson poem it is "still dripping blood". The clan named in both is the "Majola" - in the former, they "vacated" the spot, in the latter "the Majola tribe was polished off". The striking "hippos and crocodile" description comes in the Stuart-Malcolm-Cope poem, and provides some of the symmetry, the parallelism of the passage:

Bamweze ngelezimbvubu nezingwenya
Izimbvubu nezingwenya zayikhex' imilomo.

The people of Tayi are mentioned in three other praises in the Stuart-Malcolm-Cope poem.

There are other parallels between the Stuart-Malcolm-Cope and Samuelson's versions of Shaka's praise-poem. Over and above those

mentioned before, are the following:

Izinkomo zabantu Shaka ziyeke siyinkelenkele,
Zikhungel' izingob' emashobeni,
ZinjengoNgobe, inkosi yakwaSowethu
UMasukwana-kuse onjengengonyama,
Idl' izinkomo zamadoda;
UMasuk' ubehamba kwaMadilika;
Uhlumayo lumananga uDlungwana,
Uhlumayo lumananga lukonke,
UMANanga ubehamba kwaJiyampondo,
UMANanga ubengelutho,
Ubeyinduna yakwaDibandlela.

The people's cattle, Shaka, leave them alone, they are
a cause of disaster,

They tie sharp knives on to their tails,
They are like Ngobe, Chief of Sowethu.

Masukwana-kuse who is like a lion,
Devour the cattle of men;

Masuku was walking about at Madilika;

Sprouting lily, ferocious one,

Sprouting lily, white spotted one,

Mananga was walking about at Jiyampondo,

Mananga was of no account,

He was the headman at Dibandlela's kraal. (ll. 247-257)

The play on words like "Masukwane-kuse . . . Masuku . . .; Uhlumayo lumananga . . . Uhlumayo lumananga; and Mananga . . . mananga" does not need elaboration. The similar praises in Samuelson are:

Uhlumayo is spotted, is speckled

Umananga was of no consequence,

He was an induna at Jiyampondo.

The people's cattle possess strange things

They have tied to their tails garners.

Ungobe was of the Buthelezi clan,

Who, as soon as he had seized some cattle, seized others.

The gist of these praises, by and large, is the same.

Another shared praise is the "buffalo" one:

Inyath' ejame ngomkhonto phansi kwomZimvubu,

AmaMpond' ayesaba nokuyehlela.

Buffalo that stood glaring with a spear on the banks
of the Mzimvubu,

And the Pondos feared to come down to it.

Another praise that features in both is one of the "wild animal" praises:

USilwane-vukel'-abantu ekweneni;

Wadl' uSigawuzana emaMbatheni.

Wild beast that attacks people in the thick undergrowth;
He devoured Sigawuzana of the Mbatha clan.

(ll. 381-382)

The Samuelson rendering is: "He the beast that rose in anger
against the people out of a thicket".

The "summer and winter" praises are common to both, and the
Stuart-Malcolm-Cope has a praise which runs:

Mgengi phez' izitha kusehlobo,
UTshani bude buzokudibanisa.

'Trickster abstain from enemies, it is summer,
The grass is long, it will get the better of you.

The advice given here is that Shaka should show some restraint.

Further advice comes in the Stuart-Malcolm-Cope version of
"the roads" praise:

Ugijime ngazo zonk' izindlela,
Ezingagijimanga eziyakuZiwedu,
UZiwedu ngambon' esangweni.

He has run along all the roads,
Those going to Ziwedu have not been run along,
Ziwedu I saw at the gatepost. (ll. 234-236)

The imbongi here is quite clearly trying to influence policy. In
the Samuelson version, Shaka is praised as "the track which thought
out for me the roads that are useable".

The Stuart-Malcolm-Cope praise-poem incorporates most of the
praises in the Grout poem:

UHlabahlungu bazomshumayezana,
Nabesezitheni nabasekhaya.
Uhlaza oluyinyongo yembuzi
UVemvane lukaPhunga,
Lumabal' azizinge sengath' abekiwe;
UMzizim' ongamathunz' ezintaba,
Khona kuhlwa kuhamb' abathakathi.
Ingqayingqayi kaPhunga noMageba,
Engibuke ngaze ngayojwayela.
UMasengo mahle inkonyana yenkomo,
Kwangixaba ukukhaba kwalenkomo,
Yakhab' osengayo yadel' umbambi.

Painful stabber, they will exhort one another,
Those who are with the enemy and those who are at home.
He who is dark as the bile of a goat.

You Gambushe and you Faku,
 Do not stab him,
 If you do stab him,
 You will not be stabbing him,
 You will then be stabbing Phunga and Mageba,
 You will then be stabbing the unborn Ngqungqushe.
 (ll. 115-120)

Gambushe and Faku were Pondo chiefs and obviously there was not much love lost between them and Shaka. The poet here seems to be warning them not to stab Shaka, lest he be forced to retaliate, and wipe out the Pondo line. The poet's invocation of the Zulu ancestral spirits, Phunga and Mageba, serves as a warning that supernatural forces will intervene on behalf of their descendant, Shaka.

In the Stuart-Malcolm-Cope poem, several criticisms are voiced, the poet stands back from the situation and criticizes Shaka's lack of restraint and abuse of power. The detailed accounts of Shaka's campaigns suggests that the poets from whom Stuart collected his material took it upon themselves to evaluate Shaka's achievements, not simply to record them. No criticism is made of Shaka in the Grant version. The tenor of the criticism, though, is that Shaka went too far - which implies an overall agreement with his actions, policies. The criticisms come from within the camp - hence the wealth of "praises" that are not pejorative within the Stuart-Malcolm-Cope poem.

Shaka's defeat of Zwide is recited repeatedly:

Kwankungasakhali nkomo kwaNtombazane,
 Inkomo yayisikhala kithi kwaBulawayo.
 UMaswezisela wakithi kwaBulawayo
 Oswezisel' uZwide ngamagqanqula.

There was no longer a beast lowing at little Ntombazi's,
 It was now lowing at our place at Bulawayo.
 Our own bringer of poverty at Bulawayo
 Who made Zwide destitute by great strides. (ll. 176-179)

Zwide is contemptuously referred to as "little Ntombazi", his cattle are "now lowing at our place at Bulawayo". Legend has it

that Shaka followed a scorched earth policy during the first Ndwandwe war, and enticed Zwide's army to stretch its lines of communications, simultaneously depriving it of food supplies. He then routed the tired, ill-nourished soldiers as they wearily turned back. Hence the praise "Our own bringer of poverty at Bulawayo" - for it was through such action that he was able to make "Zwide destitute by great strides". The two sets of praises are held together in an antithetical tension, and do not contradict each other, though it seems that they do at first sight. Bulawayo was the name of Shaka's chief kraal.

The defeat of Zwide is also referred to in the praises:

Inkonyan' ekhwele phezu kwendlu kwaNtombazi,
 Bathi iyahlola,
 Kant' ibona bezaz' ukuhlola.
 Indlov' ethe imuka babeyilandel' abakwaLanga,
 Ibuyis' inhloko yadl' amadoda.

Calf that climbed on top of a hut at Ntombazi's kraal,
 They said it was scouting,
 But it was they who prided themselves on scouting.
 Elephant that when it left, the people of Langa followed,
 It turned back its head and destroyed men. (ll. 208-212)

The Ndwandwe, under Zwide, were the single most powerful group - until overcome by Shaka - thus it is right that they "prided themselves on scouting". Shaka's attack on Zwide must have seemed a great presumption: "Bathi iyahlola". Nevertheless, Shaka came out on top - "climbed on top of a hut at Ntombazi's kraal". Hence the derogatory remarks on Zwide:

UMagongobala!
 Ophekwe ngemzimb' ende yakwaNtombazi,
 Waphekwa wagongobala.

He who gets stiff!
 He who was cooked in the deep pot of Ntombazi,
 He was cooked and got stiff. (ll. 171-173)

After Zwide's death, "Sikhunyana succeeded in establishing himself as chief, and (his rival) Somaphunga 'followed the elephant' south-

wards and submitted to it. The elephant later 'turned back its head' and destroyed Sikhunyana".¹⁵¹

Shaka needs to be told that it is all over:

Buya Mgengi phela indaba usuyenzile,
UZwide umphendul' isigcwelegcwele,
Namuhla futhi usuphendul' indodana.
AbakaZwide Shaka ubalakanyisile,
USikhunyana uyintombi ukuganile,
Ukufunyanis' uhlez' enkundleni esibayen' eNkandla,
Engaz' ukuth' amabuth' akho anomgombolozelo.

Return, Trickster, indeed you have finished this
matter,
As for Zwide, you have made him into a homeless criminal,
And now today you have done the same to his son.
The people of Zwide, Shaka, you have leapt over them,
Sikhunyana is a girl, he has married you,
He found you sitting in council in the cattle-fold
at Nkandla,
Not knowing that your soldiers had a cross-questioning.
(ll. 195-204);

Nkandla features often in this poem, and this is a measure of its worth, in Shakan times. Zwide is once more described in disparaging terms: "UZwide umphendul' isigcwelegcwele" - "As for Zwide, you have made him into a homeless criminal".

Shaka's unruly temperament is openly referred to in the praise:

Ohlobonge ngehlakaza kuNkuna,
Mhla ebuya nemvoko yakoMteli . . .

He who for lack of control attached Nkuna,
On the day he returned with the dependents of Mteli . . .
(ll. 225-226)

Nkuna was the Chief of the Somis.¹⁵²

Shaka is also criticized for lacking discernment:

Nkosi umubi ngoba kawukhethi,
Ngoba nabakwonyokolume uyababulala,
Ngoba wadl' uBhebhe umtakaNcumela ngakwonyokolume,
Izihlangu zona zodwa Dlungwana kaNdaba zenanene
NesikaGwaqaza nesikaNdlaludaka eNtonteleni.

King, you are wrong because you do not discriminate,
Because even those of your maternal uncle's family you kill,
Because you killed Bhebhe, son of Ncumela of your
maternal uncle's family;
Only the shields themselves, ferocious one of Ndaba,
only they retaliate,
Including Gwaqaza's and Ndlaludaka's in the Ntontela
regiment. (ll. 348-352)

Father was of the Fasimba regiment. He grew up among the Langeni people, at his mother's kraal, like Tshaka. If Tshaka had been an ordinary person they would have been 'brothers'; their mothers were born at the same place. (154)

In another instance, the imbongi takes it upon himself to question policy:

Uvumavumane lukaphephe
Udlungwana wavuma na?
UmVumeleni uGodolozu,
Ethi ngowanganeno kwaNandi,
Kant' ukude kwaNtombazi.

The small beast of consent flying like a flag,
Why did the ferocious one consent?
Why has he accepted Godolozu,
Thinking that he was on this side at Nandi's place,
Whereas he was far away at little Ntombazi's place.
(11. 24-28)

The questioning mode in which this segment is cast lends credence to the concept of praise-poetry as a means of dialogue between the ruler and the ruled. The question of agreement - "Udlungwana wavuma na?" - is central, hence the repetition, in a variety of ways, of the word "consent": "Uvumavumene . . . wavuma na? . . . Umvumeleni . . ."

By placing this series of questions in a discussion of a certain issue - the trustworthiness or otherwise of Godolozu - the imbongi can couch a more generalised complaint (on government by consent) in terms acceptable to his ruler, "nkosi".

Shaka is offered advice on several occasions, as can be seen from the praises:

Odl' izimkomo engantuli mazembe
Amazemb' uzakuwantula ngonyak' ozophenduka.

'He who raids cattle not needing hoes,
The hoes he will need in the coming year. (11. 415-416)

The theme of the necessity of manual labour runs through a number of praises - the poet points out that it is not sufficient to rely on capturing cattle, cultivation is a must at some point in time.

USiphuphuma esimadel' imiyalo;
Ivila elidl' amabel ezikhuthali.
Ocaba ngemikhonto amakhos' ecaba ngamazembe;
Wamemez' impi kuMenziwa ethi mayikhweb' amabele.

Overflowing one that disregards warnings;
Lazy one that eats the corn of the diligent ones.
He who clears the ground with spears where chiefs
use hoes;
He summoned an army from Menziwa saying it should gather
the corn before it is ripe. (ll. 404-407)

Shaka's lack of self-control is wonderfully encapsulated in the word "USiphuphuma" - "Overflowing one", and the repetition of the sound "phu" underlines this (the stem "phuma" means "to issue forth"). Shaka is called the "lazy one" - "Ivila" - and that is not a compliment. The impression one gets is that the imbongi is telling him that he should get or use "hoes" - like other chiefs, let alone commoners, instead of getting his "spears", the soldiers, to "gather the corn before it is ripe". This wanton exercise of power is made even more ridiculous because the time for harvesting is not yet come!

It is interesting to note that puns often occur in the very critical passages (and they do so elsewhere) - perhaps this is partly due to the fact that Shaka was fond of them himself,¹⁵⁵ and thus criticism in this form was more flattering.

Shaka was very secretive:

Osifuba sinenqaba uBayede kaNdaba,
Ngob' enentethel' emaLangeni.

He whose secret is a marvel, the royal one
of Ndaba,
For he had skilled speaker amongst the Malangeni
people. (ll. 293-294)

He is also an intimidating person - a glance is enough to give one a vivid impression of him:

UNdaba ngiyameba ngimuka naye,
Ngimbuka kwehla nezinyembezi,
Kuba sengathi ngibuk' isihlahla somdlebe.

As for Ndaba, I steal a glance at him and see
him completely,
When I look straight at him even tears flow down,
It seems as if I am looking at a euphorbia tree.
(ll. 295-297)

A "euphorbia tree" is a thorn tree - a very apt metaphor, as Shaka is both spiky and terrifying - as the salute with which this magnificent poem ends shows:

UNgibi naNgwadi!
Ingwan' ehamb' ivimbel' eziny' izingwan' emazibukweni.
Sikhithi! Sikhith' omnyama!

Ngibi naNgwadi!
Little leopard that goes about preventing other little
leopards at the fords.
Finisher off! Black finisher off! (ll. 448-450)

Shaka succeeded in maintaining his territory, and "finished off" various people in the process. It is interesting that Baleka, whose father was "an imbongi of chiefs"¹⁵⁶ describes his conquests in a similar manner:

He then attacked all the peoples, conquering them. He finished off all the peoples on the other side (north of the Thukela). After this he crossed over and came against those on this side, the Baca people. He killed them, he finished off the Baca in this country, and the Lala. The Baca fled; they now live beyond the Mzinkulu. (157)

Quite obviously, rivers were seen as lines of demarcation.

So widespread was his sphere of influence that he even tried to cross the sea - such was the nature of his ambitions:

Owalokoth' ulwandle engaluweli,
Lwaluwelwa zinkonjane nabeLungu.

He who attempted the ocean without crossing it,
It was crossed by swallows and white people. (ll. 435-436)

One feels that if he had not been so self-willed, he might have heeded his imbongi's subtle hint not to ignore the domestic front:

UMsingi wazansi woz' using' enhla,
Woz' usinge lapha kuyilanga.

Searcher of the south, come and search northwards,
Come and search where there is sun. (ll. 258-259)

The suggestion here is that he should not lose sight of what is happening in his own home territory whilst extending his suzerainty. This might have been a warning that any significant challenge to his authority would come from within - as was the case when his brothers refused to do any more fighting, and returned home, leaving the rest of the army to wage the last war of the Shakan era.¹⁵⁸

It may be useful to pause and reflect on the question of transmission at this juncture. We have noted how most of the Grout poem has been subsumed, more or less intact, in the Stuart-Malcolm-Cope version. The artistic integrity of the Grout poem is unimpeachable. The incorporation of Grout in the Stuart-Malcolm-Cope version is in keeping with Cope's belief that izimbongi are, essentially, memorizers:

The specialisation is more in the performance than in the composition, for the composition of a praise-poem is a matter of collection and perfection rather than creation. (159)

In the texts thus far analysed, it is quite clear that each of these versions has its own particular thrust: the presentation of the praises, as well as their cumulative effect leads one to question the "community creation" myth, and place greater emphasis on the poet's role in selecting and developing certain praises in a manner that gives each poem its own timbre, notwithstanding a "common pool" of praises.

Of the fifty-one praises found in the Samuelson poem, forty-three are similar to those found in the Stuart-Malcolm-Cope version - a high proportion, notwithstanding the fact that the latter has a hundred-and-forty-three praises. Nevertheless, the poems are distinctive.

Twenty of the praises in Samuelson's poem appear, with some modifications in certain instances, in the poem published by Bryant, which contains fifty odd praises. Forty-two of these appear

in the Stuart-Malcolm-Cope version, but the exact relationship between the two is not clear. Cope states, in his Preface, that he relied heavily on Bryant in his annotations, but it is not clear whether or not he took upon himself the task of incorporating Bryant's praises of Shaka as his Ur-text. It is, therefore, my intention to treat Bryant's version as a separate poem, but to focus more on the parallels (and variants) between its praises and those in Samuelson and Stuart-Malcolm-Cope, so as to demonstrate the working of "individual talent". It is ironic that the lengthier versions (certainly those of Bryant and Stuart-Malcolm-Cope) are collations, which would tend to reinforce the community creation myth. The more detailed analysis of the Stuart versions which were collected from individual poets, in Part II, Chapter 3, will help to provide a proper balance between creativity and recitation.

Bryant's "Hymn of Praise"

Bryant's observations on izibongo, though somewhat culture bound, are interesting. Like Cope, he points out that there is a degree of communal creation, in the sense that an individual's praises need not all be his own creation. Commenting on a fragment of Ndaba's praises, he says:

The above is not verse; much less is it poetry. It is what the Zulus are very fond of, and style iziBongo (praises). For every man a number of these 'praises' is coined by his companions. As a matter of fact, they are not praises at all, but simply short sentences commemorative of notable actions, not always laudable, or events, not always agreeable, in the individual's life; are, in short, his memoirs. In regard to the kings, their iziBongo commemorate many small historical incidents that might otherwise be forgotten; but the circumstances surrounding most of the occurrences referred to no longer being known, the statements themselves are nowadays largely unintelligible. (160)

The critic's task, therefore, is to try to elucidate the sense of

the praises in the light of any historiographical advances, as well as evaluating their poetic worth.

Bryant, elsewhere, gives a description of praise-poets:

They lived in a chronic state of vociferous delirium, though otherwise quite intelligent. They would keep up a continuous harangue, addressed to nobody in particular, and, so to say, for hours at a time, whether sitting at home or marching alone across the veld. They had the gift of speech in a most extraordinary degree; and extraordinary memories too. (161)

Bryant's bewilderment stems from his immersion in a literate culture; whilst, as Walter Ong points out, the dynamics of an oral culture are different:

Since in a primary oral culture conceptualized knowledge that is not repeated aloud soon vanishes, oral societies must invest great energy in saying over and over again what has been learned arduously over the ages. (162)

Bryant's presentation of the praises of Shaka is helpful because it does not attempt to render them in verse-form (which is the standard format to which Grout, Samuelson, Stuart, Grant, Nyembezi and Msimang adhere). The opening salutation is similar to that of the poem in Stuart's uTulasizwe, although the order in which the praises are given differs.¹⁶³ Perhaps because he did not regard izibongo highly, Bryant provided no translations (the following translation is mine):

UShaka! Ngiyesaba ukuti nguShaka. UShaka kwakuyinkosi
yasemaShobeni.
Uteku lwabafazi bakwaNomgabi, ababetekula, behlezi
emLovini, beti, 'uShaka kayikubusa,
kayikuba 'nkosi'. Kanti kunyakana
uShaka ezakunetezeka.
UDlungwana womBelebele, odlunge emanxulumeni; kwaze
kwasamanxuluma esibikelana.
Ilembe el'eqa amanye amalembe.
UNodum'ehlezi kaMenzi; uSishaya-kasishayeki.
Umlilo wotate kaMjokwana; umlilo wotate, ubuhanguhangu,
oshise izikova zaseDlebe, kwaze kwasha
nezasemaBedlane.
Inkomo ekala emTonjaneni; izizwe zonke ziyizwile ukulila.
Izwiwe nguDunjwa waseluYengweni; yezwiwa
ngumangcengeza wakwaKali.

Shaka! I am afraid to say it is Shaka. Shaka was the
king of the Mashobas.
The joke of the women of Nomgabi, joking as they sat in
a sheltered spot, saying Shaka would
not be chief. Whereas it was the
year in which Shaka was about to prosper.
Dlungwana of the Mbelebele, who raged among the large
kraals, so that until dawn the huts
were being turned upside-down.
Axe that surpasses other axes in sharpness.
He who thunders while he sits, son of Menzi. He who
beats but is not beaten.
Fire of the long grass of Mjokwane; fire of the long
grass of scorching force, that burned
the owls on Dlebe Hill and eventually
those of Mabedlana also burned.
The beast that lowed at Mthonjaneni, and all the peoples
heard its lowing. It was heard by
Dunjwa of the Yengweni kraal; and it
was heard by Mangcengeza of Khali's kraal.
(164)

Each "paragraph" represents a praise or set of praises revolving
round the same theme. Six of the eight praises given above are also
present in Samuelson's poem. The arrangement of the praises is
logical and sequential, which is to be expected from the methodical
Bryant. The opening salutes a fearsome king; the "women of Nomgabi"
praise underlines his ascendancy; and the following praises reflect
the energetic, startling manner of his conquests.

The following praises revolve around the cattle praise ('izinkomo'),
with the emphasis on the meat which was obtained. Shaka is likened
to a bowl of meal and a pot of millipedes (which would serve as
relish) and the cooking metaphor reaches its peak with reference to
Zwide's mother, Ntombazi's gruesome habit of boiling the heads of
her son's victims. The poet returns to the cow motif - perhaps in
an oblique reference to the fate of Shaka's relatives among the
Langeni, after he had avenged his cruel treatment as a child.

Okangele ezantsi namaDungele, izinkomo zawoSihayo
zamlandela, kwaze kwalandela nezawoMafongosi,
ebezisengwa yindiki yakwaMavela.
Ungangencumbe yamabele engakadliwa; ungangemblza yamasongololo.
Upekwe ngembiza ebipeka amakosi akwaNtombazi.
Kavutwa uShaka kaQengwa.
Wayilanda inkomo'nye, ilandwa kuMakedama, ekaya konina.
(165)

He who looked down towards Dungele and Sihayo's cattle followed him, and those of Mafongosi also followed, those that were milked by the madman at Mavela's.

He who is like a bowl of meal before it is eaten; he who is like a pot of millipedes. He who is cooked in the pot in which Ntombazi used to cook chiefs. Qengwa's Shaka is the one who was cooked.

He sought out the sole cow, he sought it from Makedama at his mother's home.

Both Ntombazi and the Langeni were overcome by Shaka. The reference to Ntombazi neatly heralds the list of her grandsons, who were defeated in the decisive battle between the Zulu and the Ndwandwe - note the pun on "Izulu" in the description of how Shaka's wrath rained down on Zwide's offspring.

Izulu elidume emva kwomuzi ekuQobekeni, lazitabata izihlangu zamaPela. Wamudla uNomhlanjana, ezalwa nguZwide; wamudla uMpepa, ezalwa nguZwide; wamudla uDayingubo, ezalwa nguZwide; wamudla uNommbengula, ezalwa nguZwide; wamudla uMpond'opumelakwezinde, emaPeleni; wamudla uMntimona, ezalwa nguGaqqa, emaPeleni; wamudla uMdandazi kaGaqqa, noMakwela kaGaqqa; wamudla uNozigaba kaTato; wamudla uNkayishana, eCwecweni.

Ondande nga'nkalo, wabuya nga'nkalo, waya ngoBoyiya kwaMdakuda. Wandanda ngokalo olude, wadabula ematanjeni abanta-bakaTayi, ababegodola, beya kuMacingwane, eNgonyameni.

Inkonyana ekwele pezu kwendlu kwaNtombazi. Bati, iyahlola; kanti yibona behlolayo.

Indlovu ete imuka, babeyilandela abakwaLanga; indlovu ebuyise intloko, yadla amadoda. (166)

Since this extract corresponds to that in Stuart-Malcolm-Cope (ll. 171-3; 304-5; 396-8) and is basically a list of victims, there is little point in giving the translation. Samuelson's parallel passage, listing Zwide's sons, runs as follows, in "verse form":

Izulu elidume emuva kwomuzi eKuqobekeni,
Lazithatha izihlangu zaMaphela.
Wamudhla uNomahlanyane ezalwa nguZwide
Wamudhla uSikhunyane,
Ezalwa nguZwide
Wamudhla uNqabeni
Ezalwa nguZwide;
Wamudhla uMphepha

Ezalwa nguZwide;
 Wamudhla uDayingubo
 Ezalwa nguZwide;
 Wamudhla uMpondophumelakwezinde eMapheleni. (167)

The parallels with Samuelson and Stuart-Malcolm-Cope are succinctly encapsulated in the following praise:

Inkomo ekale emTonjaneni, imkubulo bayishiya i'zinqindi,
 imbewu bayishiya isemanxiweni;
 abafazi abanendeni banyekeza. (168)

The beast that lowed at Mtonjaneni; the newly planted
 crops they left still short, the seed
 they left amongst the maize stalks
 and the women with child gave birth
 easily.

In Stuart-Malcolm-Cope, the praise reads:

He who travelled to Ndimma and Mgovu,
 And the women with child gave birth easily;
 The newly planted crops they left still short,
 The seed they left amongst the maize stalks . . .
 (11. 49-52)

Bryant, like Stuart-Malcolm-Cope and Samuelson, also has the "cock at dawn praise", the "on-coming storm praise":

Odabule kuBuzane esangweni, waketelwa udwendwe lwamaza.
 Wadlula kuMcombo, zigoduka, waze wabuza
 izindlela kuDunjwa, ingani indlela
 ngayeyibuze kuMbozane. Yena apanga ukuya
 kuNomagaga, lafika iqude, lamvimbela.
 O'zulu-lizayo, kwezani abantwana; ngabadala bodwa abayakuzi-
 balekela. UDunjwa yedwa limkandanisile,
 owayewake amaxiba oTukela, lapo kucushwa
 isilo ngomwowane. Weza noKungwayo
 noNgobizembe. (169)

All three also share the Zihlandlo and Gcwabe criticism; the "Pursuer of a person and he pursues him unceasingly" praise, with reference to Zwide; and the "pile of rocks at Nkandla" praise; the "Nyuswa" dispute praise; the "Hawk" praise with reference to Pungashe; and the "Buffalo" praise concerning the reluctance of the Pondos to fight against Shaka; the "wild beast in the homes of people" praise and the "usurper" praise, which reads:

Ubinca-kade, waze wafunyaniswa. Ovunulele ezimfundeni
 zamanzi, izinto zake ziyakumuka namanzi.
 (170)

He who dressed late was eventually overtaken, he who
put on his finery at the water's edge,
his things would be washed away.

This oblique reference contrasts strongly with the robust
celebration of regicide that we found in the Arbousset and Daumas poem.

Over and above the parallels cited in the foregoing, the following
praises are shared by the Bryant and the Stuart-Malcom-Cope poems:
the "small beast of consent" criticism; the "trickster, abstain
from enemies" appeal, and its "summer and winter are different"
variant; the "he who clears the ground with spears" praise; and
"the attacker who has long been attacking them"; "He who grinned as
he left Macingwane"; "Young raging one of Ndaba"; "Our bringer of
poverty at Bulawayo"; "beater of the horned viper"; "Sky that
thundered above Nomangci mountain"; "Feather that bobbed down";
"the two words for which I am grateful"; "He has run along all the
roads"; "The words of Ngobola and Mkapali"; the "Mashongwe" and
"Don't stab him, Gambushi and Faku" praises. It is not altogether
surprising that Bryant and Stuart should share these praises - some
of Stuart's manuscripts refer to Bryant as a source; the two men
worked in South Africa before retiring to England in the '20s; and
both were interested in African customs, beliefs and history.
Bryant cites Stuart's school text-books, uTulasizwe, uHlangakula,
uBaxoxele and uKulumetule as sources in his Olden Times.

Bryant does, however, produce his own version of certain lines
- for example, the first line of the Mtandeni praise:

Ngasho ingongoma; kwayingozi. Ilanga elipahle elinye
ngemsebe, kaloku lipahla elisemTandeni.
(171)

I mentioned a wizard [?]; a dangerous thing. The sun
that eclipsed another with its rays,
for the present it eclipsed the one
of Mtandeni.

Bearing in mind that "isangoma" refers to a wizard or wily man, the 'praise' might refer to Pakatwayo, the chief of the Qwabe clan, whose demise heralded the rise of Shaka. Other victims are named:

Wamudla uNonjiya kaMtanda; wadla uMtusi kaMakedama;
wadla uPapa-njengengwe, kwelabaNtungwana;
wadla uGubase enDlovini. (172)

He ate up Nonjiyakson of Mtanda; he ate up Mtusi son
of Makedama; he ate up fly-like-
a-leopard amongst the Ntungwa; he
ate up Gubase at Ndlovini.

Two of Samuelson's praises approximate these:

Wadhla uMtusi wakaMakedama,
Wadhla uNjiya ka Lutuzula. (173)

He felled Mtusi, the son of Makedama,
He felled Njiya, the son of Lutuzula. (174)

Albeit that Bryant, Samuelson and Stuart were collecting their material around the same time, at the turn of the century, one would hesitate to attribute their poems to any one source of "tradition", as each poem has its own peculiarities. One would have to have access to Cope's manuscripts to offer a firm opinion on the influence of Bryant on the Ur-text.

Bryant concludes his selection with an ironical reference to the ending of John's Gospel:

Well, so numerous were the praises (iziBongo) of this eminently praise-worthy man, Shaka, that, 'if they should be written every one, even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written.' So we draw the line here. (175)

Grant's "Izibongo Zikashaka"

The four versions of Shaka's poem which we have considered in detail already have two elementary features in common: they are poems about Shaka, and the poet and the people mentioned in them stand aghast and witness Shaka's extraordinary energy. The poem Grant recorded from Gwebisa is a poem of ethnicity. A sense of

nationalism was vibrant in the 1920's - Africans asserted their dignity, especially amongst the "progressives", and the process of self-definition is closely linked with nationalism. Shaka is thus seen as the father of the Zulu nation and, in marked contrast to the other poems, he is portrayed as binding people together, as opposed to crushing them into submission. Another major difference between the Grant poem and the others is that the reasons for Shaka's actions are given - as opposed to the constant reference to his irrationality in the other poems. The Grant version is clearly revisionist.

Gwebisa fought at Isandlwana and he was a member of the Kandempemunvu regiment.¹⁷⁶ He must have sung the "Zulu War Song" composed after the famous battle:

| | |
|--------|---|
| | Thou the great and mighty chief! |
| | Thou hast an army! |
| | The son of Sogica (Shepstone) sent his forces! |
| Chorus | We destroyed them! |
| | The Amasoja (soldiers) came! |
| Chorus | We destroyed them! |
| | The mounted soldiers came! |
| Chorus | We destroyed them! |
| | The amalenja (volunteers) came! |
| Chorus | We destroyed them! |
| | The Hongai (mounted police) came! |
| Chorus | We destroyed them! |
| | Thou the great Chief! |
| | Thou who hast an army! |
| | When will they dare to repeat their attack! (177) |

This marvellous song celebrates the defeat of the British Army under Lord Chelmsford. The nationalistic element is boldly stated - there is a pride in achievement: "Thou hast an army", and Gwebisa was one of the resisters. It is not unnatural that he should venerate the founder of the Zulu nation, Shaka - especially since, as Jefferson Guy points out:

. . . whatever the exact causes of Shaka's rise to power were, we do know that he left a form of social organisation which survived for half-a-century after his death, in the face of continual

threats from the expanding forces of colonialism. There were, of course, many changes; nonetheless, the fundamental structure of Zulu society remained substantially unaltered, maintaining a continuity between the kingdom Shaka founded and that ruled by Cetshwayo sixty years later. (178)

Grant's comments on the genre are interesting - he stresses the central position of the imbongi and izibongo in Zulu culture:

Attached to the court of the Chief was an important official whose profession was the recording of the praise-names, victories, and laudable characteristics of his master. These "praises" were recited on any occasion which seemed to call for public adulation of the chief, such as the defeat of his enemies, the approach of distinguished visitors, the distribution of royal bounty, and so forth. As the years have passed, the praises of a particular chief have tended toward a set and recognised expression, though, as will be noted later, absolute verbal immutability does not seem to have been definitely sought after. (179)

Grant also emphasizes, like Bryant, the dramatic nature of the performance he witnessed:

The old man appeared clad in a leopard skin, and wearing around his temple a garland of the small bladders of animals. He carried his shield and his long, carved stick. As the recital proceeded the imbongi became worked up to a high pitch of fervour, and was evidently living again in the glories of the past. His voice became loud and strong, his face was uplifted. Shield and stick would be suddenly raised and shaken in the air. Gestures became more and more frequent and dramatic. It was noticeable that, apart from the clear emphasis on the penultimate syllable of each word, additional emphasis fell periodically on the penultimates of certain words, each of which would be followed by a perceptible pause. Thus the poem was broken up into short phrases, each of which appeared to be uttered with one breath. A magnificent rhythm was in this way apparent to the hearer, and an effort has been made to preserve this in the "lines" of the praises as here recorded, the penultimate syllable of each line receiving added emphasis. (180)

Unfortunately, Grant does not name "the old man" - however it could have been Gwebisa, who was about eighty when the Shakan praise-poem was recorded in 1927, or Mvingana, who provided the poems on Senzangakona, Dingana, Mpande, Cetshwayo and Dinuzulu.

Reverend Grant seems to have had some misgivings about the Shakan praise-poem he collected:

It did not appear that an imbongi of necessity reproduced the praises of a particular chief always in the same way. The quantity of material is much larger than that here recorded. The Izibongo of Shaka, for instance, would not always be begun at the same place. The various sections might not follow in the same order, and some might be omitted or new ones introduced. Slight verbal differences might also occur. (181)

A close reading of the text seems to indicate Gwebisa's remarkable faculty for fudging the issue. It is interesting to note that he begins his version by recalling a crime against Shaka, which is then used as a spring-board for his defensive military actions:

OZihlandhlo noGcwabe ngibasolile,
Inkos' abayitshelanga 'zibuko;
Bayitshengis' elibi elisaconsamate;
Lakobant' abakaMajola.
Udonse ngankalo wenyuka ngankalo;
Wabuya ngoBoviya kaMdakuda.
Wadabul' ematanjeni abant' abakaTayi,
Kwaze kwaye kwazamazam' ezingamaFongosi,
Ebezisengwa yindiki yakwaMavela.

I have blamed Zihlandhlo and Gcwabe,
They did not tell the Chief of the drifts;
They showed him a bad one which is still slippery;
It was of the children of Majola.

He went up one ridge and another;
He returned by Boyiya, son of Mdakuda.
He passed through the bones of the children of Tayi,
Until (the cattle) of the amaFongosi were restless,
Which were milked by the mutilated-finger-man of
Mavela's clan. (ll. 1-10)

Though Grant does point out that the order of praises can be changed, it is important to see where people chose to begin their praises. The beginnings and endings of the Grout, Samuelson and Stuart-Malcolm-Cope poems shed light on the tone of the poems, and stress what the poets consider to be salient points. In Grout, Shaka is presented as a venomous snake, and the poem concludes with a vivid portrait of his arbitrary use or abuse of power:

The kicking of a cow confuses my brain!
Kicking the milker and accepting the holder.

Samuelson's poem opens in a manner that crystallizes the blood-and-thunder of Shakan rule:

The thunderer while seated, son of Menzi.
The bird that devours other birds
The agile that leaps over other agiles . . .

The main body of the poem fleshes out the introduction, and the conclusion anticipates the marvels that are to follow:

The joke of the women of Zululand
Joking while they were in Tshaka's bachelor hut
Saying Tshaka would not become ruler,
He will not become King.
When, as a matter of fact, it was the year he was about
to live comfortably.

The Stuart-Malcolm-Cope poem presents Shaka as a warrior that has run amuck, who is bent on a policy of destroying the old, established order, and ushering in the dawn of a new age:

Dlungwana son of Ndaba!
Ferocious one of the Mbelebele brigade,
Who raged among the large kraals,
So that until dawn the huts were being turned upside-down.

We are then treated to very detailed descriptions of how he established his empire in a whirlwind of social, political and military change, in which the whole fabric of society - people's customs and communities - were "turned upside-down". This is all tersely summed up in the final salute:

Little leopard that goes about preventing other little
leopards at the fords.
Finisher off! Black Finisher off!

In Grant's introduction, Gwebisa criticizes Zihlandhlo and Gcwabe for not co-operating with Shaka: this presupposes that all should act according to his will - and, indeed, this note is common to the Samuelson and Stuart-Malcolm-Cope poems as well. My preferred translation of "elisaconsamate" is "one still dripping saliva" - rather like the Cope rendering of "ngelisacons' amathe".

Having established that Shaka's anger was the result of being let down, Gwebisa can then introduce the element of conquest - by using a euphemism:

He went up one ridge and another;
He returned by Boyiya, son of Mdakuda.

Jantshi kaNongila, in a speech which reflects his nationalism, tells us the significance of "ridges":

The Zulu tribe came into existence in what is now (10.2.1903) Zululand. We have always lived in that country and do not come from any other land. The land now known as belonging to the Mapieni people at Nhlazatshe is what was built on by the Zulu people in the old days.

At Ntakankulu and Nglazatshe (in that neighbourhood), the Zulu, Mabaso, Kumalo and Butelezi people . . . used to build their kraals of their respective kraals (sic) close to one another, more or less in a line, and in that way occupy a single long ridge . . . This mode of living was employed to enable the members of the tribe to be quickly called together in case of sudden attack by a foe at night or in the day time. (182)

But Gwebisa is quick to point out that Shaka was not the first to defeat others, as he had to pass through a valley of dry bones:

He passed through the bones of the children of Tayi,
Until (the cattle) of the amaFongosi were restless,
Which were milked by the mutilated-finger-man of
Mavela's clan. (11. 8-10)

Gwebisa "omits", to use Grant's word, the more vivid aspects of Shaka's military energy - he reduces the praises in Samuelson and in the Stuart-Malcolm-Cope versions, editing the catalogues of foes defeated by Shaka which occur in the other poems:

Wadh! uNomahlanjana kaZwide,
Wadh! uMdandalazi kaGaqa emaPeleni;
Wayendhlebe zimayence.

He devoured Nomahlanjana, son of Zwide,
He devoured Mandalazi, son of Gaqa of the amaPela;
He was lop-eared. (11. 11-13)

Apparently, the Zulu can show their appreciation of someone by praising his ears¹⁸³ - hence the "Wayendhlebe zimayence" praise, which is repeated in, for example:

Wadhl' uNomahlanjana kaZwide;
Wadhl' uMdandalazi kaGaqa emaPeleni;
Wayendhlebe zimayence.
Wadhl' uMdandalazi kaGaqa emaPeleni;
Wayendhlebe zimayence.

He devoured Nomahlanjana, son of Zwide;
He devoured Mdandalazi, son of Gaqa of the amaPela;
He was lop-eared.
He devoured Mdandalazi, son of Gaqa of the amaPela,
He was lop-eared. (ll. 26-30)

This set of praises is repeated twice in his eighty-line poem, and the "Zihlandhlo and Gcwabe" praise twice. Gwebisa obviously approved of Zwide's defeat:

Ukozolubulamapikolapimihlambidhla kona!
Uxosh' uZwide kaLanga,
Waze waye wamshonisa pakati koBani;
Waze waye wadabul' enhla neJozi wanyamalala;
OBalule waluwela lapa lunamadwala kona;
Ingani wafulatel' iPitoli ngezinyembezi.
Useshay' indhlondhlo kayishayanga kusehlobo,
Wayishay' ubusika bufikile.

The Eagle-which-beats-its-wings-where-herds-graze!
He drove away Zwide, son of Langa,
Until he caused him to disappear in the Ubani;
Until he crossed above Johannesburg and disappeared;
He crossed the Limpopo where it was rocky;
Even though he left Pretoria with tears. (ll. 41-46)

Shaka is praised as a predator: "The Eagle-which-beats-its-wings-where-herds-graze", and this recalls the earlier line on "the cattle of the amaFongosi".

The contemporary setting, the local flavour of this set of praises, is reflected in the use of European place-names: "Until he crossed above Johannesburg . . . He crossed the Limpopo . . . he left Pretoria with tears". The fact that Gwebisa was Zibebu's imbongi sheds light on this: Gwebisa was reinterpreting material handed down in the oral tradition in the light of contemporary political reality. Cetshwayo had been defeated - in a post-Rorke's Drift world, one cannot sing with great zeal the triumphs of Isandlwana: "When will they dare to repeat their attacks". Obviously, new political myths

were needed to sustain the morale of those who, like Gwebisa, had been the victors of Isandhlwana. And Shaka's most significant conquest was the defeat of Zwide: the Zulus have a great and glorious past, which can be recreated to sustain morale:

UWewelukamabizwasabele,
Oludhl' uNomahlanjana kwabakaZwide,
Kanye noMdandalazi kwabaGaqa emaPeleni;
Wayendhlebe zimayence.
Umxoshi wedala wakokaLanga laze wabangazeka;
Ngoba waxosha amadun' abangazeka;
Uxosh' uSikunyana,
Ute eseZindololwane wabuya waye wahlala pantsi kweNkandhla
kanye neNqutu;
Wati ubahlale pantsi kwentaba, wabonakala.
Ubonwe pakati kweZindololwane kanye noPongolo;
Wadhlula kuSikunyana;
Wakandanis' uZulu, wavela pakati kweHlobane ne Zungeni,
Kwaze kwashon' ilanga ebambis' amabuto,
UZwide waza wabaleka.
Ubambis' amabuto, abamba;
Kwasekusal' uSikunyana lap' eZindololwane
Wasebuyebuy' ezakuye,
Wenyuke ngakalonde.

The Ever-ready-to-meet-any-challenge,
Who devoured Nomahlanjana of the sons of Zwide,
Together with Mdandalazi of the sons of Gaqa of the amaPela;
He was lop-eared.
The Driver-away of the old man born of Langa's daughter,
until he dashed wildly away;
Because he drove the bull-calves, and they dashed wildly away;
He drove away Sikunyana,
While he was at iziNdololwane he returned and settled
below Nkandhla and Nqutu;
When he had settled below the hill, he appeared.
He was seen between the iziNdololwane and the Pongolo;
He passed by Sikunyana;
He welded together the Zulu nation and appeared between
Hlobane and Zungeni.
Until the sun set he rallied the regiments,
Until Zwide fled.
He rallied the regiments, they attacked;
Then Sikunyana remained there at the iziNdololwane.
Then he returned and came to him.
He went up the long ridges. (11. 63-80)

Shaka is praised as "The ever-ready-to-meet-any-challenge" - the closest we have come so far to Kunene's SuperShaka. Zwide is very

disrespectfully dismissed as "wedala" - the "old man". This is one conquest which presumptuous colonialists cannot rob the Zulu of - it is committed to memory, it is there in legend: Zwide "dashed wildly away". Even here, though, the action is described primarily in defensive terms. Zwide was "Driven away" - Shaka is the "driver away" - "Umxoshi". Samuelson and Stuart and Cope see Shaka as the initiator of conflicts, wars, and so, in line with their terms of reference, they describe him as a "Pursuer" - the word "Umxoshi" can be used in both senses, though. Grant's translation is valid for the poem he is working with - and this can be seen in the references to Sikunyana. In the Stuart-Malcolm-Cope poem, we learn that Shaka returned and destroyed Sikunyana, who had succeeded Zwide. In the Grant poem we are told that Shaka "drove away Sikunyana . . . He passed by Sikunyana . . . Then he returned and came to him". "Came to him", as we have seen before, is a euphemism of "killed", and Gwebisa is fond of metaphors: "What else can you do when someone does not mend the errors of his ways?" is the inference we are meant to draw.

No mention is made of Shaka killing five of Zwide's sons during the Ndwandwe wars - facts which figure prominently in the Samuelson and Stuart-Malcolm-Cope poems. The only oblique reference we get is "he drove the bull-calves, and they dashed wildly away" - Shaka was not as lenient as Gwebisa would have us believe!

The hub of Gwebisa's poem is the statement "He welded together the Zulu nation, and appeared between Hlobane and Zungeni". Grant's annotation of this line is very revealing:

Wakandanis' uZulu + Bryant defines the verb as meaning to "put very close together, pack together". In this context it bears the interpretation placed upon it, the reference being to Shaka's undoubted genius in forming from scattered clans the homogeneous Zulu nation, and in recruiting for its army the men of subjugated tribes. (184)

Shaka is portrayed as a dynamic leader - as a man amongst men:

Until the sun set he rallied the regiments,
Until Zwide fled.
He rallied the regiments, they attacked . . .

Given his military background, one can see why Gwebisa admired Shaka for leading his men in battle.

One can also take issue with Grant's inaccurate translation of "Umxoshi wedala lakokaLanga" as "The Driver-away of the old man born of Langa's daughter" - the "daughter" is superfluous, it does not appear in the original.

Gwebisa attempts to limit the scale of Shaka's activity by placing him within certain boundaries: "He welded together the Zulu nation, and appeared between Hlobane and Zungeni". This does not rhyme with the praises in the Samuelson and Stuart-Malcolm-Cope poems of Shaka overcoming other leopards at fords! Gwebisa presents Shaka as being in harmony with natural rhythms - the exact opposite of the bulk of the praises in the three other versions:

He killed the snake, he did not kill it in the summer,
He killed it when the winter had come.

Useshay' indhlondhlo kayishayanga kusehlobo,
Wayishay' ubusika bufikile. (ll. 47-48)

Yet, in the Samuelson and Stuart-Malcolm-Cope versions, Shaka has to be told that "summer and winter are different"! Gwebisa deliberately turns around stock praises to suit his political purposes - a common practice amongst revisionists as Landeg White has shown.¹⁸⁵ Moreover, in the other poems, Shaka is personified as a snake, a viper - whilst, in Gwebisa's poem, Shaka kills snakes - Gwebisa wants us to see Shaka as a very domesticated man, worried about the welfare of his people, a good father-figure whom we should emulate. This is the very antithesis of the other poems.

Gwebisa presents Shaka as a protector:

Usixokolo singamatsh' aseNkandhla
 Abepepel' izindhlovu uma linile.
 Uklebe ngambon' ehla pezu kwezikaMangcengeza,
 Ute epezu kukaPungashe wanyamalala.
 Kwaze kwaye kwamazama ezamaFongosi,
 Ebezisengwa yindiki yakwaMavela.

He who is like the cluster of stones of Nkandhla,
 Which sheltered the elephants when it had rained.
 The hawk which was sweeping down above those of Mangcengeza,
 When he was above Pungashe he disappeared.
 He is like the cluster of stones of Nkandhla. (ll. 56-60)

The "cluster of stones" praise occurs four times, and "Nkandhla" is mentioned five times. The praise also figured prominently in the Stuart-Malcolm-Cope praise-poem. The "hawk" and "eagle" praises in Grant occur in connection with cattle - Shaka, it is suggested, is a provider as well as a protector. The cryptic nature of praise-poems is reflected in the following extract:

Uklebe engimbon' ehla kuMangcengeza;
 Wati ekuPungashe wanyamalala.
 Uhlasel' amahlati avungama, ati ukuvungama,
 Ati, uhlaule ngentshintsho nempunzikazi.
 Ubonw' abazingeli abacupa izimbongolwana;
 Uvinjelwe yiqude ngapambili,
 NgabakwaNtombazi nabakwaLanga.

The hawk which I saw sweeping down from Mangcengeza;
 When he came to Pungashe he disappeared.
 He invades, the forests echo, saying, in echoing,
 He paid a fine of the duiker and the doe.
 He is seen by the hunters who trap the flying-ants;
 He was hindered by a cock in front,
 By the people of Ntombazi and Langa. (ll. 19-25)

The "cock in front" praise figures in both the Samuelson and Stuart-Malcolm-Cope praise-poems, but with reference to Dunjwa and Mbozane. The reference to "the people of Ntombazi and Langa" here introduces the passage already examined (ll. 26-32) on the defeat of Zwide.

As an old soldier himself, a member of the amabutho or age-sets-cum-regiments, military service figures prominently in Gwebisa's poem:

UWewelukamabizwasabele!
 UShaka!
 Amakosan' abonina abebizw' iminyakanyaka
 Usixokolo singamatsh' aseNkandhla.
 Abepepel' izindhlovu uma linile.

The Ever-ready-to-meet-any-challenge!

UShaka!

The first-born sons of their mothers who were called
for many years!

He is like the cluster of stones of Nkandhla,

Which sheltered elephants when it had rained. (ll. 32-36)

Shaka does not initiate conflicts - he merely stands "Ever-ready-to-meet-any-challenge". He can "meet" these challenges because he relies on conscripts, "who were called for many years!" Yet, how else can "the cluster of stones of Nkandhla" shelter elephants when it rains? Security is earned - the price is "the first-born sons of their mothers".

It is interesting to note that Gwebisa uses some of the praises found in the Stuart-Malcolm-Cope version of Ndaba's poem, where Ndaba is described as:

Ozingel' amahlath' az' avungama,
Az' athi 'Nhiya! Nhi!'
Namuhla kakunyamazana,
Az' amlobelele ngentshontsho lempuzikazi.

He who hunted the forests until they murmured,
Until eventually they cried, 'Enough! Isn't it?'
Today there is so much game
That they snip off a tit-bit of a duiker for him. (ll. 4-7)

In this poem - the forests themselves are hunted by Ndaba - so much so that they complain, "Enough! Isn't it?". Yet, a rapport is established and the forests "snip off a tit-bit of a duiker for him".

Gwebisa's Shaka is less fortunate - he has to pay "a fine of the duiker and the doe". Invasion is not tolerated, "He is seen by the hunters who trap the flying ants". Territorial integrity must be respected:

He invades, the forests echo, saying, in echoing,
He paid a fine of the duiker and the doe.

Reference is made to an unsuccessful campaign against the Ngoza which underlines the importance of engaging in purely defensive ventures only:

Ungabusasondela, Shaka kaNdaba!
Ungabusasondela kwezakwaNgoza!
Wayezalw' uMkubukeli;
Ungakukang' upindele!

Do not approach further, Shaka son of Ndaba!
Do not approach further those of Ngoza!
He was born of Mkubukeli;
Nevermore return! (ll. 37-40)

So, even the illustrious father-figure, Shaka, did not win all his battles. Nevertheless, he founded the Zulu nation and established its powerful army.

That the conclusion of this poem is limp, to say the least, highlights the difficulties of revising praises handed down through generations in any substantial way. By omitting the praises which glorify Shaka's military prowess:

He who while devouring some devoured others,
And as he devoured others he devoured some more . . .

we are left with a flat poem which lacks the ecstatic heights reached in the Grout, Samuelson, Bryant and Stuart-Malcolm-Cope versions of a poem of devastation.

Nyembezi's "Izibongo Zikashaka"

Cyril Nyembezi's Izibongo Zamakhosi, which was published, with detailed annotations, in 1958, possibly stems from his research in the '40s on izibongo. In his article, "The Historical Background of the Izibongo of the Zulu Military Age", Nyembezi emphasizes the importance of praises as:

. . . a record of the valorous deeds of great men. The praises were a reservoir for historical events which took place from time to time. (186)

To Nyembezi, the recitation of praise-poetry is an integral part of raising the consciousness of people by harping on their heroic past:

To keep these events fresh in the minds of the praiser himself and the people, in all ceremonial occasions the custom was to praise the king,

starting with his grandfathers who were no more.
He would recite the praises one after another
until he ultimately ended with those of the
reigning sovereign. (187)

If this was the case, then one can conclude that the recitation of the king's ancestor's deeds called to mind, not only his achievements but his style of leadership too, which could then be used to highlight differences in character and political acumen between the present monarch and his predecessors. Implicit in this scheme is a dialogue on the use and abuse of power.

Nyembezi had access to Grout's praise-poem, and reproduced eight of its nine praises. Twenty-nine of the fifty-one praises in both Samuelson's and Bryant's versions also appear in Nyembezi's poem, which contains a hundred-and-twenty-three praises. Various segments from Stuart's school text editions also appear, and it is likely that Trevor Cope incorporated some of Nyembezi's praises in his mega-poem. This section will concentrate on those praises peculiar to the Nyembezi text, after pointing out which praises are shared with earlier versions.

The opening line of the Grout poem does not appear in the Nyembezi poem, whilst the other praises do, though not in the same order.

Nyembezi and Samuelson share the "And it was also heard by the Ntungwa of the Kumalo" praise; the "grasshopper" praise; the "mountain of Mjokwane" praise; "the news I heard from" praise; and the "gatepost" praise.

Samuelson, Bryant, Nyembezi and Stuart-Malcolm-Cope share the following praises: the "Dlungwana"; "He who beats but is not beaten"; "He who is famous as he sits"; "Axe"; "Joke of the women of Nomgabi"; "Shaka, I fear to say it is Shaka"; "Beast that lowed at Mthonjaneni"; "Fire of the long grass"; "He whose routes they enquired of Dunjwa"; "Zihlandlo"; "Nkandla"; "Nyuswa"; "Millipedes"; "Bowl of meal";

"Bringer of poverty"; "Hawk"; "Cattle no longer lowed at Ntombazi's"; the "Attacker"; "Thunder which thundered behind the eKugobekeni kraal"; and the "Elephant which, when it arose, was followed by those of Langa" praise.

Nyembezi's praises which surface in the Stuart-Malcolm-Cope version include the following, too: the "Bhuzane mountain"; "Sun"; "He who went and erected temporary huts"; "He who goes along making fires and leaving behind conflagrations"; the "ridge" praises; the "foolish Mpondo"; "Feather"; "Summer and winter are different"; the "madman"; the "Overflowing one that disregards warnings"; "He who bored an opening through the Chube clan"; "Searcher of the south come and search northwards"; "The startler devoured an unborn child"; "The huge tree on the Maqhwakazi mountain"; "He whose secret is a marvel"; "When I look at him even tears flow down"; "Ndaba causes great excitement in the kraals"; "The animals were Thondolozzi and Sihayo"; "He who came dancing on the hillside of the Phuthiles"; "The rival of Phunga and Mageba"; "The South wind of sudden attack" praise, and the "He who while devouring others still devoured some more" praises.

Nyembezi's distinctive praises deal with Shaka's stubborn and dangerous personality. Some of these are shared with Senzangakona, in the Stuart-Malcolm-Cope version of Senzangakona's praise-poem. Shaka's headstrong nature is beautifully described in the "praise":

Usalakutshelwa, usalakunyenezelwa. (188)

He who refuses to be told, he who refuses to be
whispered to.

There is also a reference to his suffering as a young boy in the praises:

Igawu' bazawuliluma,
Bazawuliphimisa,
Bakhumbul amagaw' abebesi'.
UMjokwane kaNdaba. (189)

The small shoot which they bite at,
They will spit it out,
Remembering those eaten during famine.
Mjokwane son of Ndaba.

The poet tersely highlights the bitterness of Shaka's exile; the bullying he endured; his departure from the Langeni, with his mother, during the famine; and hints at Shaka's disputed paternity by praising him using Senzangakona's praise-names: Mjokwane.

Shaka's slippery nature is reflected in the symbol of the black mamba, which occurs frequently in this poem:

Imamb' edl' umuntu bath' iloyelwe. (190)

Mamba that devours someone, and they said it was
bewitched.

And:

Amanz' omthombo wakwaNobamba,
Engiphuze kuwo ngagangatheka,
Ngaphos' ukudliwa zimamba. (191)

Water of the spring of Nobamba,
Drinking of which I became parched,
And I was almost consumed by mambas.

Cope's similar praise runs:

Fountain of the rocks of Nobamba,
At which I drank and felt faint,
I was almost eaten up by the mambas
Which lay in the thickets and climbing plants. (192)

Shaka's aggressive style of leadership comes across forcefully in the lines:

Indlondlo yakithi kwaNobamba,
Indlondl' ehamb' ibang' amacala. (193)

Our venomous snake of Nobamba,
Venomous snake that goes in search of disputes.

and in:

Wadl' umfaz' umkaSukuzwayo,
Wadl' uSukuzwayo nendodana. (194)

He ate up the wife of Sukuzwayo,
He ate up Sukuzwayo and his son.

Shaka's guile is brought into focus by the cryptic praise:

Ungezwa bethi valela njalo Solunjalose;
Abasho kuwe wena kaNdaba,
Bash' unyok' uMbulazi,
Ovalel' ingonyama. (195)

If you hear them saying trap Solunjalose too;
They are not speaking about you son of Ndaba,
They are speaking about your mother, Mbulazi
Who trapped a lion.

Nyembezi also offers a variant praise as the punch-line of
"Ntombazi's pot" praise:

Wen' ophekwe ngembiz' enkulu Ndaba,
Wen' ophekwe ngembiz' ebiphek' amakhos' akwaNtombazi,
Kodwa wena kawavuthwa. (196)

You who have been cooked in a big pot, Ndaba,
You who have been cooked in the pot that cooked chiefs
at Ntombazi's,
But you were not cooked through.

Nyembezi has an additional "sun" praise:

Ilang' eliphume linsizwa,
Lathi liphezulu lansasa. (197)

Sun that arose as a young man
When it was up above, it eclipsed others.

These praises point out that Shaka was, comparatively speaking, a
"late starter" as he assumed power after Sigujama had succeeded
Senzangakona. The poet alludes, discreetly, to the assassination
of Sigujana.

Nyembezi concludes his poem on the same note as the one on
which it began: by saluting a warrior-king, a conquering hero:

Oth' esadl' ezinye wadl' ezinye,
Wath' esadl' ezinye wadl' ezinye.
Oth' esadl' ezinye wadl' ezinye,
Wath' esadl' ezinye wadl' ezinye.
Ndabezitha! (198)

He who while devouring some devoured others,
And as he devoured others he devoured some more.
He who while devouring some devoured others,
And as he devoured others he devoured some more.
Ndabezitha!

By and large, Msimang's "Izibongo ze Nkosi uShaka" are a replica of Nyembezi's poem - the order of presentation differs in places, but the content is the same, virtually word for word. Msimang adds to his text, praises which Nyembezi, for reasons best known to himself, had relegated to his explanatory notes:

UMbebe kamame,
Ngibelethe sigoduke,
Abanye basemhlane konina,
Abanye babelethwe. (199)

The firmly -fastened one of mother's,
Put me on your back and let's go home,
Others are on their mothers' backs,
Others are carried on backs.

These praises probably refer to the close attachment to his mother that Shaka developed in his childhood, after they were banished from Nobamba.

In some places, Msimang uses a synonym of the word in the Nyembezi text: for example, in the "coming storm" praise, Nyembezi writes:

Ozulu lizayo, khwezan' abantwana

He who is an oncoming storm, pick up the children

whilst Msimang writes:

Ozulu lizayo
Khwezani abancane (200)

He who is an oncoming storm,
Pick up the little ones.

Msimang does present a different first line to the "payment in kind" praise:

Ososa, akhokhe umtwana
Ongena mntwana uyakhokha isikhuba. (201)

He who roasts meat, and lures [?] a child
He who does not have a child can pay [?] with a hoe.

In conclusion, then, it can be seen by comparing the poems recorded by Lewis Grout, Robert Samuelson, A. T. Bryant, James Stuart, Daniel Malcolm, Trevor Cope, Cyril Nyembezi and C. T. Msimang, that many of the Shakan praises were in common currency; and that they were passed down from poet to poet, with little adaptation, for almost a hundred and fifty years, with minor amendments. Gifted poets were able to "extend" certain praises by coining interesting variant lines; and the advent of the printing press helped to formalize the izibongo even further, given the publicity received by James Stuart's school textbooks. Reverend Grant's collection, published in 1929, of Gwebisa's version of Shaka's poem, shows the interaction between tradition and the individual talent, and demonstrates the living nature of the genre by including modern place-names. This poem is the most repetitive of the ones at our disposal - a factor which may irritate modern readers, who are often impatient with the boring nature of oral poetry. Nevertheless, it is a useful reminder of the presentation of izibongo in an appropriate cultural setting.

At their best, izibongo, with brilliant economy of language, paint vivid pictures of the overwhelming nature of Shaka's genius. The earliest poem we have, that of Arbousset and Daumas, illustrates how criticism is one of the functions of praising, as does Lewis Grout's extract from Shaka's poem. In most of the other versions, criticism is implicit, rather than explicit. The Stuart-Malcolm-Cope poem, and that of Nyembezi, contains more explicit criticism; but Gwebisa's poem only criticises the people of Zihandlo for not cooperating with Shaka. Bearing in mind the fact that Gwebisa belonged to the Mandlakazi faction of Zibebu and not to the Usutu faction loyal to Cetshwayo, it is not so surprising that he should be keen to present Shaka as a monarch more interested in defending his land than in attacking other clans.

The fact that one is dealing with the praises of the man whose own personality was largely responsible for the transformation of the Zulu people from vassal-status to being the principal power in southern Africa, is a further argument in favour of a certain uniformity in the praises that have been handed down. Nyembezi's observation that all the praises of Zulu rulers were recited on occasions of state, culminating in those of the current ruler, would account for the length and relative uniformity of the different versions of Zulu royal praises. Even the regicide, Dingane, is praised as "Chaka" for having defeated the most "heroic" of the Zulu kings.

The art of praising did not decline with the defeat of the Zulus, as seems to be the case after the defeat of Lobengula in Matabeleland. Black South African politicians rallied around the Zulu Royal House at the turn of the century, when successive white South African governments tried to break Zulu hegemony.

Amongst the early black South African political figures, two wrote books on the Shakan era - John Langalibalele Dube's Insila kaShaka, and Sol Plaatje's Mhudi, were both pioneering texts: Dube's book was the first novel in Zulu to be published (it was later translated into English) and Mhudi was the first novel written in English by a black South African writer.²⁰² Izibongo figure prominently in these texts, which will be discussed in Part II Chapter 2, along with Thomas Mofolo's seminal historical romance, Chaka, which also cites Shaka's praises. Magma Fuze's pioneering history of the Zulu people also makes use of izibongo as historical sources.²⁰³ Indeed, the latest epic by a black South African poet, Mazisi Kunene, also claims to be rooted in the oral culture, and in many passages, extracts from Shaka's praises are quoted.

Parallels will be drawn, in the second part of this thesis, dealing with the written "tradition" of the life and times of Shaka, with the portrait that emerges from the oral culture, as both "traditions" celebrate, and criticize, the life and legacy of one of Africa's most remarkable sons.

Extracts from Shaka's praise poems have appeared in some Anthologies of South African verse. Jack Cope's sample of "stanzas", with sub-titles, were possibly taken from Samuelson's poem, the opening lines of which are quoted verbatim, except for the lines

. . . the waterbuck feed and the crawling thousand-legs
Red Paradise fly catcher . . .
he is making sport of the Swazi king Sobhuza. (204)

Samuelson's "slippery stones" praise, which is associated with Ziwezu, appears in Jack Cope, associated with Zwide:

He overwhelms the King Zwide

He is the cunning leopard and for long
he has blocked the river crossings against the rabble,
blocking the way against Ngobe of Zwide's family
who had to go over by the drift at which the females cross.
He is the river ford with the slippery stepping stones
and they slipped on the stones, Zwide and his son. (205)

The "Zihlandlo" criticism is introduced thus:

He punishes treachery

Uzihlandlo and Gwele are wizards
for the failed to tell Tshaka of the crossing. (206)

The other versions refer to Zihlandlo and Gwabe.

Jack Cope's extract concludes thus:

He seized firmly the assegais of his father,
he who was like the maned lion. (207)

It is possible that Jack Cope obtained his fragments from a poet, but, bearing in mind the citation of the "Battle Songs of the King Tshaka"²⁰⁸, which are given in Samuelson, it is probable that the latter was the source, though Jack Cope might have produced his own translations.

Landeg White and Jack Mapanje quote part of the Stuart-Malcolm-Cope version in their anthology, Oral Poetry from Africa.²⁰⁹

Isaiah Shembe's Hymns and Praise Poem

The most revisionist expropriation of Shaka's praises occurs in Isaiah Shembe's praise-poem, recorded by Dr. Gunner in 1976. In her article, "New Wine in Old Bottles: Imagery in the Izibongo of the Zulu Zionist Prophet, Isaiah Shembe", Elizabeth Gunner draws parallels between Shembe's praises and those of Zulu royalty.²¹⁰ It is my contention that Isaiah Shembe's praise-poem is, in fact, a subversion of Shaka's poems - this can be seen in the way many of the Shakan praises are radically reinterpreted. But, before analysing these, it is necessary to sketch in a biographical profile of Isaiah Shembe.

Isaiah Shembe was born in 1870 and died in 1935, after founding an Independent Church - Ibandla LamaNazaretha - in 1911, over which he reigned until his death (and beyond, since his followers claim that he was resurrected). Gerherdus Oosthuizen has established that Shembe was baptised in 1906 by the Rev. W. M. Leshenga of the African Baptist Church, in which he later served as an ordained minister.²¹¹ Shembe broke away from this Church in 1911 over the issue of Sabbath observance, and claimed all the Old Testament verses concerning the Nazarites for his movement.²¹²

Shembe was baptized in the year of the Bambatha "Rebellion" when militant Zulu nationalism reached a new height. The Land Act of 1913, which came after the Act of Union of 1910, put further obstacles in the way of the land-hungry African majority. Church groups were, however, able to purchase land, and Shembe established his "kingdom" in a reserve territory eighteen miles from Durban, which he called "Ekuphakameni" (The Exalted Place). Taking advantage

of the weak position of the Zulu Royal House, after the deprivations of Wolseley's so-called "Settlement", and the unfortunate implication of Dinuzulu in the Bambatha "rebellion", Shembe took upon himself the task of presiding over the first-fruits ceremony, amongst his followers. He also incorporated Zulu rituals into his syncretic church, and modelled his leadership along the lines of Zulu royal prerogatives.²¹³ This led to tension with Zulu loyalty, as is recorded in his praise poem²¹⁴:

Fly which pesters a sore
as it pestered the royal line of Sengangakhona (ll. 38-9)

Shembe's Church was a vehicle for a Zulu nationalist spirit, as the praise:

Beautiful Euphorbia Bush on which no (ordinary) birds
perched,
It is a perch for the birds of Zulu. (ll. 70-1)

shows. Euphorbia bushes are associated with royalty in Zulu praise-poetry. Indeed, this ethnic nationalism reached its peak in the hymns Shembe I was said to have composed when he rose from the dead.

As Oosthuizen points out:

Shembe I is not only Mediator but is Messiah,
the manifestation of God. Shembe I is to the
Nazaries the personification of Supreme Power. (215)

The hymns celebrate Shembe as "the Saviour" - "Umsindisi":

I shouted day and night
Why did you not hear me?
Nations go to sleep that Zulu may be audible
Before the uMsindisi.

I was stopped by all the nations
Which are under the heaven.
Nations go to sleep that the Zulu may be audible
Before the uMsindisi.

You maiden of Nazareth
May you cry like a rushing stream
About the disgrace that has befallen you
You young men of Shaka
Before the uMsindisi. (216)

Shembe, to some extent, was reacting against the loss of self-esteem - the "disgrace" referred to above - that afflicted the Zulu in the first half of this century, which was brought on by the decline of Zulu military power after the Anglo-Zulu War, and the suppression of the Bambatha "rebellion". Messianic movements often arise at times of national crises, and Shembe (like Magera Fuze) believed that, in Paul's idiom, "God had not left himself without a witness" anywhere - hence his mobilisation of heroic Zulu leaders as a means of cultural renewal (in much the same way that writers of the Négritude school mobilised ancient African kingdoms and rulers in Paris during the 1920s and 1930s - as we shall see in Part II Chapter 4).

The extent to which Shembe's religion is indigenized is revealed in his adoption of elements of the praise-poems (izibongo) of Senzangakhona and Shaka are utilized in the following hymn. The Stuart-Malcolm-Cope version of Senzangakhona's poem includes the praise:

Fountain of the rocks of Nobamba
 At which I drank and felt faint,
 I was almost eaten up by the mambas
 Which lay in the thickets and climbing plants. (ll. 45-48)

This striking set of "praises" seems to testify to a slippery, treacherous, sly temperament. In Shembe's hymn, these negative attributes, symbolised by "mambas" and "thickets" are expunged, and the "fountain" is presented as refreshing, rather than overpowering:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Rise up with us today on this morning Even today oh! <u>Nkosi</u> . | 3. That you keep them in their staying on that day of today oh! <u>Nkosi</u> . |
| 2. That you be a journey to those who are journeying and even those who are staying let it be so oh! <u>Nkosi</u> . | 4. We are the progeny of that root, we do not lack we are with Sendzangakhona oh! <u>Nkosi</u> . |

5. We of long ago
 we have long been drinking
 at that fountain
 of Sendzangakhona
 oh! Nkosi.

6. Shaka said we are not even beatable
 to you Mhlangana and Dingaan
 and yet today it is even so
 to you Mhlangana and Dingaan
 oh! Nkosi.

(217)

The reference to Shaka's praise-poem, à la Stuart-Malcolm-Cope, is line 6: "He who beats but is not beaten, unlike water". The King, or "Nkosi", is, of course, Isaiah Shembe I. Shembe's hymns frequently mention Senzangakhona and Dingaan - the former is praised as the father of several Zulu kings, and the latter is doubtless celebrated as the Zulu king who dealt successfully with the white intruders when he wiped out Retief's party. Although Dingaan's solution to the "white peril" was shortlived, he demonstrated that Europeans were not invincible - a message which needed emphasis, after the suppression of Bambatha. In the following hymn, Shembe presents himself as the heir of Dingaan:

1. Our uMkhululi -
 we the progeny of Dingaan
 we have heard, he has arrived.
uMkhululi has arrived!
uMkhululi has now arrived!
 Ye Zulus, we have heard him now.

3. Our need -
 we the progeny of Dingaan
 has now come to an end.
uMkhululi has arrived!
uMkhululi has now arrived!
 Ye Zulus, we have heard him now.

2. Descendants of Dingaan
 they are with Sendzangakhona,
 be awake, he has come.
uMkhululi has arrived!
uMkhululi has now arrived!
 Ye Zulus, we have heard him now.

4. May you remember iNkosi
 the work of your hands
 of the progeny of Dingaan.
uMkhululi has arrived!
uMkhululi has now arrived!
 Ye Zulus, we have heard him now.

5. Confess yourself to him -
 you the progeny of Dingaan
 they are with Sendzangakhona!
uMkhululi has arrived!
uMkhululi has now arrived!
 Ye Zulus, we have heard him now.

(218)

Whilst Shaka is mentioned in Shembe's hymns, it is to Shembe's praise-poem that we must turn to elucidate the ambiguity of their relationships. The opening lines of Shembe's praises echo, in terms of imagery, the praises of Shaka, but the emphasis is on Shembe's "compassion", as opposed to Shakan ferocity:

those abroad". It also brings to mind the Messianic appeal:

"Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give thee rest."

Like Jesus, Shembe is a wanderer, always seeking those whom he can "save" - and his hope is to bring Mzilikazi back into the Zulu fold.

Unlike Shaka, Shembe cares for his offspring - whilst Shaka is "The startler who devoured an unborn child". Shembe's dynasty is assured by his progeny, whilst Shaka denied himself a measure of immortality by killing his offspring.

Shaka's "Izulu" praise is mirrored in:

The sky thundered and hurled down lightning above
Nhlankakazi mountain
It took hold of Gwabhaza of the Shangases.
It struck him at the gates of Ekuphakameni. (ll. 129-131)

Shembe's poets also recast the Shakan "Sun" praises:

The Sun come out let us bask in you. Yet at times
it burns those who bask in it.
Elephant which destroys those who give witness because
it destroys those who have lately
followed it. (ll. 147-8)

The above is, I am convinced, a conscious echo, and reworking, of the Shakan praise:

Elephant that when it left, the people of Langa
[sun] followed,
It turned back its head and destroyed men. (Cope, ll. 211-2)

Whilst Shaka's principal weapon is the broad-bladed spear, Shembe's weapons are spiritual: in Paul's idiom "for sword, take that which the spirit gives you - the words that come from God"²¹⁹ - "Attacker with the Gospel at Mpukunyoni".

Albeit that in Shakan days, military supremacy was the most successful strategy, in Shembe's era, the key contests are the battle of wits:

Switch of trickery.
 It outwitted Mbece.
 It outwitted Mtshaba.
 It outwitted Buloze.
 It outwitted Jeremiah son of Mashawuzane.
 Sheyi, the bearded one, son of Madonsela, shook himself.
 Mvelemu, son of Mpatsha of Mhlalane, it filled with wonder.
 He said, "Child of Nhliziyo I am overcome with fear."
 He said, "My body is a-tremble!"
 The partridge is caught voiceless.
 Violent Pusher like the Thukela River which cannot be
 held back. (ll. 59-69)

This catalogue of victims corresponds to those Shaka "ate up".

Shaka's "uNodumehlezi" praise is echoed in:

The fame of the Many-coloured Calf thunders inside the
 gates of Ekuphakameni. (L95)

Shembe, although a commoner, claims kinship with Phunga and
 Shaka in a praise that brings to mind the "Butterfly of Phunga"
 praise in Shaka's poems:

Our own Dappled Butterfly of Ekuphakameni. (l. 102)

Shembe shares Shaka's "horned viper" praise; and he also
 shares, with the Judaeo-Christian God, a fearful providence:

Horned-viper with the compassion of his forefathers.
 They say he is awesome.
 He is worthy of praise
 He is worthy of our praise, our beautiful-kneeler-
 and-they-are satisfied of Ekuphakameni.
 He is worthy of our praise great-hearted-one with the
 heart of ten
 May he be praised! Amen. (ll. 151-6)

It is peculiarly apt that Shembe's poem should end with this
 delicately balanced ironic tension between virtue and vice
 (symbolized by the "horned-viper"). For, in the written tradition,
 two strains predominate - the Shakan apologists who wish to stress
 the "good" he achieved - for example, Badian's suffering servant,
 Senghor's Black Christ, McMenemy's amoral elemental force; and
 those who, with Mofolo, Bryant, Prince, U Tam'si, Fynn, Isaacs and
 James Stuart, portray Shaka as a culpable figure. Some, like Haggard,

Schoeman and Rolfes Dhlomo, try to evade moral issues by saying that he did what was right in his own eyes. They are, in that sense, perhaps closest to the izibongo, which are, by and large, morally neutral, celebrating, as they do, a man who dared to be himself.

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Appendix

1. Isibongo Si Ka Tsaka

U'laba 'lungu 'ba zo sumayezana,
 Naba seziteni naba sekaya;
 U'laza olu nginyongo yembuzi;
 Uvemvane lu ka 'Punga, lu 'mabala a 'zizinge,
 Nga ti a bekiwe umzizima o ngamatunzi ezintaba,
 Kona ku 'lwa ku hambe abatakati.
 Inlainlai ka 'Punga noMakeba,
 E ngi buke nga ze nga yo dzayela;
 Umasengo ma'le! inkonyana yenkomo!
 Kwa ngi iiaba ukukaba kwa le 'nkomo;
 Ya kaba o sengayo, ya dela umbambi.

PART II, CHAPTER 1

"THE BLACK NAPOLEON"¹: SHAKA IN EARLY WHITE WRITING

"An attempt has been made in these pages to set out the true character of this colossal genius and most evil man - a Napoleon and Tiberius in one . . ." (2)

Henry Rider Haggard's characterisation of Shaka as a ruthless warrior-king established the predominant style of the representation of Shaka in white South African literature. Haggard's mythopoeicis of the Zulus stemmed, as we shall see in the third section of this chapter, from the destruction of the Zulu kingdom: a kingdom which Shaka was instrumental in bringing into existence.

Haggard's writing was influential in the internationalisation of Shaka's reputation as a military genius and brutal ruler. It is, however, important to note that Haggard was not writing in a vacuum - he stands at the summit of the evolution of a very powerful myth of Shaka's reputation as a savage warrior.

The first interpretive accounts of Shaka's reign came from the writings of the first Europeans who lived in Shakan Zululand - principally Henry Francis Fynn and Nathaniel Isaacs. Fynn arrived in Zululand in 1824, and lived there for much of the remaining four years of Shaka's reign. His portrayal of Shaka as a calculating ruler forms one of the strands in the Haggardian legend; the other stems from the vilification of Shaka by Nathaniel Isaacs, whose portrayal of Shaka as a "bloodthirsty monster" influenced the early Zulu historiography, which was largely the work of missionaries, who often held Shaka up as a symbol of human depravity: the epitome of fallen man. These accounts are analysed in the second section of this chapter, providing, as they do, the foundations of the Haggardian epics on the Zulu.

But, before evaluating these early portrayals of Shaka, we must address ourselves to the Napoleonic parallel, which figures prominently in Shakan literature. The comparison is an important indicator of the ambivalence of the English response to the Zulu monarch in particular, and the Zulus in general - a point which, curiously, Ben Orme dismisses:

. . . in no sense can Shaka be compared with Napoleon, for example, for he had no set of objectives and was influenced by no political or moral considerations. (3)

Implicit, in most of the parallels, is the innovative nature of the Shakan regime, the grand imperial design, and the use of force as an instrument of policy.

THE BLACK NAPOLEON

Shaka reigned from 1816 until his assassination in 1828. Napoleon Bonaparte effectively ruled France from 10 November, 1799, when he was appointed First Consul. He later entrenched his position by becoming Emperor on 28 May, 1804, a title which he held whilst banished on the island of Elba in 1814. Napoleon eventually abdicated in favour of his son on 22 June, 1815, and in October of that year he was exiled by the British to St. Helena.

The men have much in common. Both began their careers as soldiers - Shaka served in the army of Dingiswayo, the Mtetwa leader who had given shelter to Shaka and his mother, Nandi. On the death of Shaka's father, Senzangakhona, Sigujana, the heir, mounted the throne. Shaka had Sigujana assassinated and installed himself as king. Napoleon Bonaparte engineered three coups (on 4th September, 1797, 18th June, 1799, and 9th/10th November, 1799) which consolidated his position.

Napoleon and Shaka created vast empires; both were dictatorial when exercising power; and hundreds of thousands were killed whilst

they fulfilled their ambitions. Both radically changed the political map in their spheres of influence - Shaka by pounding the smaller clans into a Zulu "nation", and Napoleon by smashing the armies of the Hapsburgs and Bourbons, to name but two royal houses.

Shaka founded a viable nation which continued in existence for almost a century; he created a sense of political identity that is currently part of the political scene in South Africa. The fact that there is to this day a Zulu royal house, notwithstanding the attempts by settler governments to put an end to Zulu monarchy, is a testimony to Shaka's achievement in forging a new national consciousness amongst the clans he had conquered.

Napoleon also instituted changes in the political structures of the areas he subjugated - for example, his creation of the Cisalpine Republic in October 1796. His bequest to France included the administrative system of the prefects; the Code Napoleon; the judicial system; the Banque de France; the universities and military academies. Both men changed the course of history, not only in their own lands, but in their regions too.

Although Napoleon has been called "the most enlightened of the enlightened despots", he did not believe in the sovereignty of the people; nor in the popular will; nor in parliamentary debate - he rejoiced in exercising power: his firm rule was propped up by bayonets; just as Shaka's was by assegais.

The admirers of these two leaders highlight their "positive" achievements, and gloss over the means by which they attained their goals. Jordan Ngubane, for example, writes that ". . . Shaka's truly enduring contribution to human progress was to demonstrate how to found a nation on the basis of a clearly stated ideal . . ." (4)

M. Adulphe Delegorgue, writing in 1839, after a year in Zululand, drew interesting parallels between Shaka and Napoleon:

Chaka, the contemporary Napoleon, the organiser of the tribe, . . . knew how to impose severe discipline . . .

The character of this people has many points of resemblance to that of the French. If a parallel be drawn between the Zulus and the seven tribes of the Mantatee Kafirs more to the west, it will be found that the Zulu are the French of South-Eastern Africa, while the hard-tongued Mantatees, divided into a hundred different principalities, represent in that region the Germanic race. It should be understood, too, that under Chaka the part played by the Zulus in these countries has been very similar to the French in Europe under Napoleon. They then carried their victorious arms in every direction, wiping away from the face of the earth races who are remembered at this day only by enclosures of stone in ruins, the structure, however, being only a piling-up without cement.
(my emphasis) (5)

Delegorgue clearly approved of unitary states, and identified with the imperial thrusts of warrior-kings. His comments might mirror a militant brand of French nationalism.

The British interest in Napoleonic affairs has always been a complex one. British philosophers like Carlyle admired Napoleon for the order he imposed on the chaotic French Revolution.⁶ For many, Napoleon Bonaparte is the man of the Revolution - the man who was enabled by the advent of the Revolution to climb to the highest offices in the land through merit and the exercise of political acumen, rather than gaining office by virtue of his birth. In six years, he rose from the rank of Captain to Brigadier (1792-98); at thirty, he was First Consul; and Emperor at thirty-five. He thus represents, for some, the age of enlightenment.

There are those, however, who see Napoleon as the man who disturbed the balance of power in Europe; as the destroyer of royal houses (albeit that he later founded his own dynasty). Between 1790 and 1815, the British lived under the threat of a Napoleonic invasion - a fear matched, in recent years, by the threat of invasion during the Second World War, with Hitler cast in the role of the continental ogre.

There are, also, those who were flattered that Napoleon chose to throw himself on the mercy of the English, for they, at least, were able to keep "the beast" shackled on St. Helena. Moreover, patriots boast that Horatio Nelson, the victor at Trafalgar in 1805, and the Duke of Wellington, the hero of the Battle of Waterloo in 1815 (the timely arrival of Prussian reinforcements under General Blucher is often forgotten) were more than match for him.

Napoleon Bonaparte attempted to extend his empire in Africa with his Egyptian campaign in July 1798, when he overran the Nile Delta, in an attempt to strike at the source of England's wealth. Furthermore, Napoleon III intensified the extension of French power in West Africa (as well as Indo-China and Latin America). And, to crown it all, Prince Louis Napoleon met his Waterloo in Zululand!

Prince Louis Napoleon, the son of Napoleon III, was born on 16th March, 1856 (the same year as Rider Haggard). Napoleon III reigned from 1852 to 1870, and groomed Louis as the Prince Imperial, the "Child of France" and future sovereign. The Prince attended the Royal Academy at Woolwich, graduating in 1875.

After the humiliation of the British at Isandhlwana, the first victory by a "native" army over a British army, Louis Napoleon volunteered to serve in the British Army. The Bonapartists were appalled by the prospect, for, to them, he was already Napoleon IV, and even the Republicans disapproved. Disraeli would have none of it, but eventually yielded to pressure from Queen Victoria and the persistent Empress Eugenie. When Louis arrived in Cape Town and Durban, all the inhabitants came out to greet him.

Whilst in South Africa, he was in the care of Lord Chelmsford, who wanted naught to do with him since all his references echoed the Duke of Cambridge's distillation: "My only anxiety of his conduct would be that he is too plucky and go-ahead."⁷ The Duke's

fears were well founded - on 17th June, 1879, Louis and Lt. Jahleed Brenton Carey, and six other men went to scout out the terrain surrounding the new base camp at Helezi Hill. Whilst brewing coffee at an abandoned kraal, nearby, the party was overwhelmed by a sustained Zulu attack.

Deléage, a nominal republican who worked for the Figaro, was astounded when he heard the news - for Louis should not have been involved in any military action; he scoffed at the fact that although Louis had ridden off alive with eight companions, over a thousand men went to retrieve his body.⁸ It is ironic that the last of the Napoleons should have died at the hands of the subjects of the last Zulu King - Cetshwayo.

SHAKA IN EARLY WHITE WRITING

The first group of Europeans to meet Shaka included Lt. George Farewell, Lt. James King and Henry Francis Fynn. It is, therefore, to their accounts of that historic meeting that we turn for the first written accounts of Shaka.

Lt. George Farewell, in a letter to Lord Somerset dated 6th September, 1824, gave an account which stressed the order and decorum at the royal kraal:

The king received us, surrounded by a large number of his chiefs and about eight or nine thousand armed men, observing a state and ceremony on our introduction that we little expected, and his subjects appeared to treat him far above any chiefs I believe at present known in South Africa, whilst the nation he governs are so different from any hitherto known as to at once astonish and please us. (9)

Right from the outset, the myth of the exceptional nature of the Zulus is established. Farewell was impressed by the pageantry, "the ceremony" which he had not anticipated at a "native" court. The tone of his letter shows how dependent these early traders and adventurers were on royal patronage:

We had the opportunity of further gaining his friendship by curing him of a dangerous wound he received since we have been here, and I trust I shall, from frequent communications and a studious desire to avoid giving offence, increase his confidence and trust in us. (10)

A point echoed by Fynn and Isaacs.

Farewell sought Lord Somerset's approval of the "grant" of land Chaka had made out to him when he had recovered - a grant drawn up in such a legalistic manner that it is highly unlikely that Chaka understood its terms - a fact borne out by a similar grant made out to James Saunders King in February 1828.

Farewell's account of the "Character of Chaka"; cited in Bird, paints a picture of a blood-thirsty regicide:

History perhaps does not furnish an instance of a more despotic and cruel monster than Chaka. His subjects fall at his word; he is acknowledged to be the most powerful ruler for many hundred miles. He came to the throne after the death of his father; his elder brother should have succeeded, but through some treachery on his part, he got him put to death, and it therefore devolved on Chaka. (11)

Gone is the deferential note found in the letter to Lord Somerset - the implication is that Chaka's standing rests on the powers of his army, rather than any moral legitimacy.

Lt. James King also recorded, in his diary, a brief but informative account of the visit to the royal kraal:

We commenced with "God save the King". On our explanation of its literal meaning, Chaka was greatly pleased: in fact, there was nothing but good humour to be observed in the countenances of everyone present . . . Chaka is about 38 years of age, upwards of six feet in height, and well proportioned; he is allowed to be the best pedestrian in the country; and, in fact, during his wonderful exercises on this day he exhibited the most astonishing activity. (12)

This is the only physical description we have of Chaka from those Europeans who met him. King also refers to Chaka's grief at the

death of his grandmother. His Chaka is a proud, charismatic and vulnerable figure.

Henry Francis Fynn spent more time with Shaka than all the other Europeans who met him. Whilst giving evidence before the 1852 Native Commission, Fynn stated that between 1824 and 1834, he took notes "for a future history" of this country'.¹³ Some of his material was published in 1852; and some in the second edition of The Annals of Natal, in 1888. An edition of his diary appeared in 1950,¹⁴ but the Diary is not a reliable account, as it was rewritten, in segments, after the original was mistakenly buried when Fynn's brother died (his servants, following African custom, buried his possessions along with the body).

James Stuart, in his Preface to the Diary (which he was in the process of editing when he died in 1942) points out the numerous revisions that Fynn's material was subjected to:

. . . [his] difficulty in expressing himself on paper, added to living in abnormal and unsettled times, resulted in such records as he was able to make being for the most part compressed and disconnected. Feeling unable to put together the type of book his travels and adventures obviously called for, he, on various occasions in later years, invited and received the literary assistance of others, notably in the years 1832-34 and 1859-61. But although four or five hands, apart from his own, are observable in his record, and although, probably in 1834, a few chapters were composed under his immediate supervision, and others sketched in part, a great part of the material accumulated, especially in later years, was not worked into the single continuous narrative he had it in mind to put forth.

With the idea of publication always in mind, Fynn, in later years, especially in later years after he returned to live in Natal (1859-1861), continued to amplify his material as well as try to make good what he had lost. What in his earlier writings had been but briefly noted, he now expanded into full and detailed descriptions. (15)

A letter addressed to Fynn from his friend Nathaniel Isaacs, underlines how unreliable their accounts are:

. . . and show their chiefs, both Shaka and Dingarn's (sic) treachery and intrigue . . . Make them out as bloodthirsty as you can and endeavour to give an estimation of the number of people that they have murdered during their reign, and describe the frivolous crimes people lose their lives for. Introduce as many anecdotes relative to Shaka as you can, it all tends to swell up the work and make it interesting. (16)

Notwithstanding this detailed advice, Isaacs claimed that his own account was "the truth and nothing but the truth".¹⁷ Fynn likewise claimed to be giving a factual account, in his preface to the Diary

. . . it has been the writer's wish to convey to his readers a faithfully circumstantial and unvarnished detail of incidents as they met his eyes." (20)

In 1839, Fynn produced a "History of Godongwana and of Chaka", in which he stresses Chaka's despotism:

. . . he governed with despotic severity . . . Those who attempted to withstand him were overpowered by numbers and ultimately exterminated, neither sex nor age being spared. Many were burned to death, their huts being fired at night; while the barbarous cruelties he practised struck terror into many who had never seen his force and fled at his name. (19)

The allegations stem from a desire to portray Chaka as cowardly and cruel. Fynn stresses Chaka's "capricious disposition"²⁰ in such a way as to devalue Chaka's generosity:

Excessive liberality gained for him that ascendancy for which he was esteemed above all before him. His despotism made the lives and property of all his followers exclusively his own. Hence his treasury, though exhausted by liberal gifts, required but the death of two or three wealthy owners of cattle to replenish it. (21)

Chaka's military prowess earned him superhuman reverence from the Zulu, notwithstanding the "violent commotions"²² that it caused:

The success that had always attended him in his numerous wars, and his own pretensions to superiority, led his followers to believe that he was more than human; and in this light he was ever adored by his subjects. (23)

Chaka's subjects are deliberately portrayed as dupes, in an article that is designed to affirm racial stereotypes. Fynn paints a dire portrait of the ravages of the Chakan era, during which thousands of people were reduced to eating poisonous roots that had to be boiled for twenty-four hours before being eaten. These degradations turned people into cannibals, and some Africans survived by attaching themselves to the European settlers:

The excessive liberality of Chaka in his gifts of cattle to the Europeans enabled them to do much in alleviating the distress which they witnessed around them. (24)

Indeed, Fynn's praise-poem celebrates him as a "protector" of refugees.

Fynn does, however, credit Chaka as "a man of intelligence and discernment",²⁵ Fynn portrays Chaka as a successful, if bloody, ruler, and records two incidents during which Chaka lost control of himself and over his subjects - the first was during the attempted assassination referred to earlier, after which Chaka cried all night, thinking he was about to die; and the second occasion occurred on the death of his mother, when the people started killing each other. Isaacs, on the other hand, depicts Chaka largely as an irrational, capricious and cruel tyrant.

Nathaniel Isaacs arrived in Zululand in 1825, hoping to make a fortune through trade. He published a number of articles in the South African Commercial Advertiser in 1832; and his Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa in 1836; extracts from his article were published in Bird's The Annals of Natal in 1888.

Isaacs kept a diary whilst in Africa, and some of the entries in his Eastern Africa are dated. Although the veracity of his accounts is dubious, he is largely responsible for the exaggerated accounts of Chaka's monstrosity:

. . . he seemed a being in human form, with more than the physical capabilities of a man: a giant without reason; a monster created with more than ordinary power and disposition for doing mischief; and from whom we recoil as we would from the serpent's hiss or the lion's growl. (26)

Since Isaacs' accounts were the first articles on Chakan Zululand to receive wide publicity, his interpretation has been the most formative one on subsequent European accounts of the Zulus.

Part of Isaacs' design is to represent Africans as very superstitious - hence the wordy sections in his "History of Chaka" claiming that the Zulus believed that someone who had not been circumcized could not reproduce (and, since Senzangakona had not been circumcized when he impregnated Nandi, then Chaka was perceived as an unnatural being):

As Chaka advanced towards manhood he gave symptoms of realising the opinions of the Zulus that he was more than an earthly being. His strength appeared herculean, his disposition turbulent, his heart iron, his mind a warring element, and his ambition knew no bounds. (27)

The word "symptoms" implies that Chaka was psychotic, and the mixed metaphors symbolize not only Isaacs' inability to come to grips with Chaka, they also serve to underline Chaka's uniqueness, his singularity which "beggars all description":

He finally succeeded in forming a sort of "Zulucratical" government (if I may so term it, for I do not know anything resembling it either in ancient or modern history), a form that defies both description and detail for it cannot be comprehended or digested: such a one as gives protection to no living creature; that puts the subject at the mercy of a despotic king, whose nod may consign him to death, innocent or guilty, and compel the father to murder his innocent and unoffending child, force brother to execute brother, and the husband to impale his wife. After a form of government had been established, recognizing all these barbarities, a calm ensued not unlike that which intervenes between the first and last shocks of an earthquake when all are in consternation, fearing the next moment they may be swallowed during the devastating convulsion. (28)

At best, this can be seen as a record of culture-shock; of an inability to understand the dynamics of Chakan rule. Isaacs' accusations are generalised - few specific incidents are mentioned (for example, the slaughter of a hundred-and-seventy boys and concubines for having illicit intercourse.²⁹) He does, however, claim to have witnessed innumerable incidents of Chakan brutality.

Isaacs is loath to credit the Zulu Army with valour: "In the troops of Chaka there was no moral courage. They fought to avoid being massacred . . ." ³⁰

It is to Isaacs that we owe the description of Chaka's bathing with a mixture of bruised-beef and corn, which was then washed off with soap. Chaka then anointed himself with "sheep-tail fat" or "native butter"³¹ which "gave him a fine, glossy appearance".³² Nickie McMenemy features a similar description in Assegai!³³ One should, however, bear in mind that Isaacs was a youth when he arrived in Zululand.

Isaacs' influence on Chakan historiography far exceeds his literary skills, as his accounts are repetitive:

He was a monster, a compound of vice and ferocity without one virtue to redeem him from that infamy to which history will consign him. I must, however, by way of conclusion, state that if Chaka ever had one redeeming quality, it was this, that the European strangers at Natal received his protection, and were shielded by him against the impositions of his chiefs. (34)

It is important to note that the best known of these early accounts of Chaka, those of Fynn and Isaacs, are unreliable fabrications of events which, because of the status of their originators, carry the weight of eye-witness records. The interests of Chaka and those of Farewell, Isaacs (and, to a lesser extent, Fynn) were not always compatible, hence the prejudiced nature of their reports. The criticisms that are often levelled at oral sources -

that the information is unreliable; coloured by the prejudices of the informant; and that it lacks precision and cannot be ordered chronologically (objections which were discussed in the first part of the thesis) are equally applicable to the influential accounts of the first literate or semi-literate observers in Chakan Zululand.

Albeit that these accounts are of no literary value, they are significant as the sources of the later accounts of Chakan Zululand. The first histories of the Zulus were written by missionaries who, because of their veneration of the word, picked up and recycled uncritically the predominant themes of prejudiced and calculating observers, in their own accounts of the mission field. The misrepresentations of Fynn and Isaacs gained an even greater audience and respectability amongst those congregations and associations which helped to promote missionary activity by publicizing the works of those who pioneered the planting of Christianity on African soil. It is, therefore, to a representative selection of this corpus that we now turn.

The earliest missionary record, that of Revd. Francis Owen, propounds the depopulation theory advocated by Fynn, Isaacs and Farewell:

. . . The work of depopulation was carried on with savage rapidity by the merciless and destructive conquests of a tyrannical monster named Chaka, who bloody proceedings promised soon to leave the whole beautiful country . . . desolate. (35)

Revd. W. C. Holden, in his first text, The History of the Colony of Natal, recorded the horror of Chakan warfare:

Tshaka (or Chaka) like a desolating scourge, overran Natal, with his armies, making his name a terror to all who heard it until no nation dared to stand before his wrath, but all fled, like frightened birds, or deer, to their safe retreats in the dense bush . . .

. . . according to Zulu law, not one enemy was allowed to live; not even the dog of a hostile party might be preserved alive. What a fearful picture of fallen, depraved humanity. Let those who talk of the dignity of human nature without the Gospel, ponder it well, as they have it here in unadulterated perfection. (36)

The same moral was drawn by Lewis Grout, a decade later:

Sanguinary and sad, yet not altogether devoid of instruction, or at least matter of reflection, are the facts of which so brief an outline is here given. Whilst showing what the Zulus and their neighbours have done and suffered in times of ignorance; they also suggest of what these people may be capable under the influence of better motives, or better rule, should they ever be brought under the power of Christianity. (37)

The Revd. J. L. Döhne picks up another missionary theme: the significance of names:

It is not improbable that he met with some resistance from rivals whom he was obliged to depose, and at once showed himself to be what his name signified - Chaka - in Zulu orthography, Tjaka - a fury, an avenger, a firebrand. (And it is very probable that his mother gave him this name in a kind of prophetic hope that he might be an instrument of vengeance on his father's house and other tribes.) (38)

Döhne attributes the close relationship between Nandi and Chaka to the fact that Nandi took refuge with Dingiswayo for fear of an attempt by Senzangakhona to kill Chaka.

Reverend Joseph Shooter, whose text, The Kafirs of Natal and the Zulu Country, was published in the same year as Döhne's Dictionary (1857), damns both Nandi and Tshaka:

Nor was the son more amiable than the mother. Those who were old enough to remember his early days, describe Tshaka as having been exceedingly mischievous and cruel; chastisement, of which he had no lack, failed to improve him; and he grew up a most perverse and incorrigible youth. (39)

Bishop John William Colenso, in his Ten Weeks in Natal, referred to Chaka as "this inhuman tyrant, this South African Attila", but stated that, to the Zulus, Chaka was a man of Napoleonic stature.⁴⁰ Revd. Shooter also spoke of "Tshaka - the Napoleon of South Africa . . ." ⁴¹ - a comparison that was also made by Reverend Lewis Grout, who referred to Chaka as "that prodigy of a prince, that African Bonaparte . . ." ⁴². Grout was one of the first people to qualify the myth of Chakan brutality, by pointing out that, initially, Chaka built up his power base by incorporating weaker groups:

Cruel and bloody as this mighty African conqueror is reputed to have been, or as he really became in the course of his triumphs, his policy, especially at first, was not so much the utter destruction of the neighbouring tribes as to subdue and incorporate them with his own. Pursuing this policy, he conquered one tribe after another, located them here and there among his own people, taking care so as to distribute, guard and govern them, as to hold them in the most complete awe and subordination to himself. (43)

W. C. Holden, in his second book, The Past and Future of the Kafir Races, echoes the above portrait of Chaka as a wily politician:

Those who read carefully his history, as recorded in the former part of this volume, will perceive that he mounted the pinnacle of fame by a course of very carefully prepared plans and by such tact and policy in their execution, and only when he felt himself secure, did he rear his majestic head, and, in full-blown power, issue his imperious commands. (44)

In many respects, the analyses of Grout and Holden anticipate the conclusions of Eugene Walter's comprehensive study of Shakan terror⁴⁵, which will be discussed in Part II Chapter 5.

This positivist strain was rocked by the upsurge in the counter model of "the African Attila", at the time of the Anglo-Zulu War, which was resurrected by J. A. Farrer, amongst others:

The Amazulu are supposed to have been a comparatively insignificant tribe till the days of the now famous Chaka who, for his career of wide and destructive conquest, has been called "the Attila of South Africa". The steps by which he attained power, conquering and assimilating other tribes, till the Zulus acquired a name, and became a nation, constitute the first important chapter of Zulu History. (46)

As Ben Orme has detailed, the "official" image of the Zulu dynasty, propounded principally by Sir Bartle Frere, was that of a series of African Attilas, who would only be pacified by British intervention.⁴⁷ It is upon these foundations that Rider Haggard's blood-and-thunder epics were wrought.

H. RIDER HAGGARD'S NADA THE LILY

In order to fully appreciate Rider Haggard's contribution to the English literary scene, it is necessary to consider the state of literature during the late Victorian era. It is difficult to generalize about the period - Walter E. Houghton, in his monumental work, The Victorian Frame of Mind, has shown that "the character of the age" can be summed up as "a period of dissolving creeds and dashing theories".⁴⁸ A time, in short, of transition.

The Gothic Revival has a long history in the nineteenth century - there was a revival of interest in medieval culture, antiquarianism and folklore. Sir Walter Scott's historical novels gave the Gothic novel a new flavour, set as they were in the "wilds" of Scottish terrain. There was a revival of interest in the wild, the savage, the grotesque and the mysterious - and this is reflected in the poetry of the period, in the exotic settings of Browning, Byron and Shelley.

Dickens, in his vivid portrayal of slum areas like Bleeding Hearts Yard and the London of Pip, Wemmick and Oliver Twist, and in the plight of Poor Tom and Jo, delineated with a vigour quite unmatched, the horrors of the injustices of social institutions and the inequality between the rich and the poor. His unique imaginative power had left an indelible impression in the minds of the English reading public - a growing public, given the serialisation of much of his work in Household Words and All The Year Round.

After Dickens, "invention" seemed to decline, and many people became weary of the problem novel and the three-volume social novel. Rider Haggard, in his essay "About Fiction" complained that:

. . . English life is surrounded by conventionalism and English Fiction has come to reflect the conventionalism, not the life, and has in consequence, with some notable exceptions, got into a very poor way both as regards art and interest. (49)

Haggard spoke in favour of romance, of tales of the imagination. His novels (he wrote fifty-eight novels, forty-seven of which were "romances") were greeted with enormous enthusiasm - he was hailed as the man who had liberated the English novel from a steady decline, a decline which began with the departure of Dickens.

The demand for tales of adventure grew, and Treasure Island, Kidnapped, King Solomon's Mines and She appeared in the 1880s. Such stories reflected the imperial expansion which characterised the late nineteenth century, with the Berlin Conference, between November 1884 and February 1885, setting the rules regulating the "Scramble for Africa", and focusing attention on "the dark continent".

The tremendous pace of colonial expansion led to the growth of "frontier literature", with its ethos of freedom, self-expression, manly courage, the quest for fortune, and tales of exciting adventures. Andrew Lang, an eminent folklorist and critic, commented thus (on King Solomon's Mines):

There is so much invention and imaginative power and knowledge of African character in your book that I almost prefer it to 'Treasure Island'. (50)

Haggard's youthful experiences in Africa served him in good stead in portraying African landscape and scenes, and his "Umslopogaas" is perhaps one of the best known African characters in English fiction.

Haggard's formative influence in the way in which African characters were depicted in early European writing about Africa should not be underestimated. Professor Terence Ranger has traced how the "high, archaic language in which Haggard's African characters often spoke found its way into the reports of African colonial officials."⁵¹

After a chequered education career, Haggard was sent by his father to South Africa in 1875, with Sir Henry Bulwer, the Lieutenant-

Governor of Natal. Haggard was, initially, in charge of the household, but rose fairly rapidly to other official posts. On 1 June, 1877, he was appointed English Clerk to Melmoth Osborn, the Colonial Secretary of Natal; but, following the death of another official, he was promoted, in August 1877, to Master and Register of the High Court - albeit that he had no legal training! At 21, he was the youngest Head of Department in South Africa.

The son of a Norfolk county squire, Rider Haggard was accepted into the orbit of the British Colonial and settler elite, and came to share its hatred of the Boers (as the portrait of Frank Muller in Jess shows). Though steeped in the colonial ethos and a believer in the English civilizing mission in Africa, Haggard remained remarkably uncontaminated by the racism that pervaded colonial circles. Haggard was impressed by the Zulus, learnt their language and noted their stories, and later drew on this material when he wrote his Zulu novels - Nada the Lily, Child of Storm, Finished and Jess.⁵²

Theophilus Shepstone Snr. had a paternal influence over the young Haggard, and when the former left the Cape Province in December 1876, with his secret instructions to annex the Boer Republic of the Transvaal, the latter accompanied him. Haggard raised the Union Jack on 24 May, 1877, when the formal annexation was declared. The day before the annexation, MacMillan's Magazine published Haggard's article entitled "The Transvaal", in which Haggard acted as the spokesman for imperial conquest:

. . . We Englishmen came to this land . . . with a 'high mission of truth and civilization' . . . We alone of all the nations in the world appear to be able to control coloured races without the exercise of cruelty . . . It is our mission to conquer and to hold in subjection, not from the thirst of conquest but for the sake of law, justice and order. Decidedly, the day when the British

flag - a flag that has always brought blessings in its train - is first unfurled, there should be a glad day for the Transvaal, Republic no more - for the South African colonies, who will welcome a new and beautiful sister, and for England who will add another lusty child to her plentiful progeny. (53)

English territorial expansion is presented as part of the "white man's burden" of spreading civilisation throughout the world - as a disinterested venture on behalf of oppressed and benighted natives.

Twelve years later, in his foreword to Nada the Lily, which is dedicated to Sir Theophilus Shepstone, Haggard stressed a different reason for annexation:

It is many years since I was a boy and followed you when you went up among the Boers and took their country for the Queen.

Why did you do this, my father? I will answer, who knows the truth. You did it because, had it not been done, the Zulus would have stamped out the Boers . . . To save bloodshed you annexed the country beyond the Vaal. (54)

The imperialistic principle that "might is right", that the overthrow of an existing form of government automatically legitimizes its successor is never challenged, directly, in Haggard's work, or in praise-poetry. "Right of conquest" is the highest common factor between African and European imperialists.

Ten years prior to the publication of Nada the Lily, Haggard had written Cetywayo and his White Neighbours, or Remarks on Recent Events in Zululand, Natal and Transvaal,⁵⁵ in which he portrayed Cetywayo as a bloodthirsty, treacherous tyrant; and which argued against his restoration. This shows to what extent Haggard had imbibed the Shepstonian rhetoric on the Zulu threat and menace.

In his "Dedication" in Nada, Haggard celebrates Shepstone as one who "mastered this people of the Zulu"; (and special attention paid to Cetywayo's alleged attempt to assassinate the Colonial Official).

Like Dingan, in the Arbousset and Daumas poem, Shepstone is said to possess the spirit of Chaka:

. . . their nobles did you homage, and they gave
you the Bayete, the royal salute, declaiming by
the mouth of their Council that in you dwelt the
Spirit of Chaka. (56)

Haggard cites Bird's The Annals of Natal, along with Leslie's Among the Zulus and Amatongas, and S. B. Fynney as sources, as well as Zulu "oral tradition". It is pertinent, at this stage, to quote from Shepstone's self-confessedly "wild story" - "The Early History of the Zulu Kafir Race of South-Eastern Africa", which he claims to be based on the evidence of "eye-witnesses", who are, nonetheless, unnamed. Shepstone believed that the transformation of the Bantu political system which took place in the early Nineteenth Century was sparked off by Dr. Robert Cowan, who, in 1801, set off overland from the Cape hoping to reach Delagoa Bay. Although no convincing evidence has been presented to substantiate the theory, many Europeans believed that Cowan, a military surgeon, taught Dingiswayo to shoot, and that Dingiswayo, whilst in exile, worked as a domestic servant in the Cape Province and watched British soldiers drill, and then remodelled the Mtetwa army on an imperfectly perceived British model. This "dash of civilisation" aggravated the "unalloyed barbarism" (under which the African communities had thrived), and led to a breakdown of moral order and "turned thousands of square miles into literally a howling wilderness"; which necessitated the advent of Colonial rule:

In the third [phase], we see civilization not only represented by a mere notion or idea, but in its living, bodily form protecting and ameliorating the remnants of this wreck, where a few years ago so dreadful a storm of human passion and violence raged, we now see a British colony with its quiet farms, its representative institutions, its Christianity, its electric telegraph and its little rail roads . . . (57)

True progress can only come in the wake of British imperialism! To both Shepstone and Haggard, Chaka is "the great exterminator". Haggard desires to show the reader "the suffering of mankind beneath one of the world's most cruel tyrannies",⁵⁸ and, like Fynn and Isaacs before him, he claims to give a truthful account:

It is believed that the picture given of the times is a faithful one, though it may be open to correction in some of its details. (59)

Andrew Lang described Nada the Lily is "an epic of a dying people" - it is highly ironic that Haggard, a strong exponent of the deposition of Cetuyayo, should, after the invasion of Zululand and the failure of Wolseley's Settlement, mourn the eclipse of Zulu military power:

Then the Zulus were still a nation; now that the nation has been destroyed, and the chief aim of its white rulers is to root out the warlike spirit for which it was remarkable, and to replace it by a spirit of peaceful progress. The Zulu military organisation, perhaps the most wonderful that the world has ever seen, is already a thing of the past; it perished at Ulundi. (60)

NADA THE LILY

In his foreword to Nada the Lily, Haggard states his aim:

An attempt has been made in these pages to set out the true character of this colossal genius and most evil man [Chaka] - a Napoleon and Tiberius in one, and also that of his brother and successor Dingaan. (61)

Mopo, the narrator, begins by introducing the rejected bride of Senzangakona, Unandi, wearily seeking nourishment and a home. Chaka comes across as a sullen, selfish boy - he drinks most of the water Mopo (as a boy) offered Unandi, and once his thirst is quenched he hands the rest to his mother. His choleric nature is innate - he strikes Mopo's mother a fatal blow when she is rude to Unandi, and he threatens to wipe out the Langeni people when he has the power to do so. Chaka is very ambitious:

"I am little today, and my people are a small people, but I shall grow big, so big that my head will be lost in the clouds; you will look up and you shall not see it. My face will blind you; it will be bright like the sun, and my people will grow great with me: they shall entrap the whole world." (62)

Chaka's predatory nature is revealed by the choice of the word "entrap". The mature Chaka emerges as a tyrannical despot, who loves slaughter⁶³ and is addicted to torture.⁶⁴ Even his mother despairs at his brutality, saying:

"As a babe he bit my breast and tore my hair; as the man is so was the babe." (65)

Haggard stresses Chaka's "unnatural" personality, especially his disinclination to have children, and the cruel death that awaits both infant and mother should a child be borne. Chaka's lack of self-control is evidenced in the destruction of Mopo's household, when he discovers that Mopo has harboured a child borne by his sister, Baleka (who is one of Chaka's concubines). The child, Umslopogaas, manages to avoid being killed, and his story dominates the tale once Chaka has been assassinated.

Chaka's mother is implicated in the plot to save Umslopogaas, and Chaka, in a fit of anger, kills her too. Given the Victorian veneration of the concept of the family, Chaka's depravity must have been highlighted, in the eyes of Haggard's readers, by this act. He then has the temerity to ordain a "smelling out" ceremony in order to discover which "evildoers" brought about her death!

In these scenes, Chaka is shown as a Machiavelian politician, manipulating the superstitious beliefs of his ignorant subjects in order to rid himself of political enemies. Mopo also claims to have spiritual powers, and assumes the role of a puppet master:

. . . though I was young, I learned this: that to be wise is to be strong, for though he who holds the assegai kills, yet he whose mind directs the battle is greater than he who kills. (66)

He amasses great wealth and power by acting as Chaka's counsellor, but he is perilously aware of the fragile nature of his position - reliant, as he is, on Chaka's patronage. When he sought Chaka's protection, he was welcomed with these words: "Welcome, Mopo! Thou shalt be a dog in my hut and feed from my hand."⁶⁷

Mopo prides himself on being the kingmaker, boasting to the nameless European who transcribes his tale, that he helped Dingaan and Umhlangana to kill Chaka; and to have had a hand in the death of Umhlangana; as well as in persuading Panda to depose Dingaan.

African politics is described in terms of treachery and intrigue, plus gratuitous violence - the description of the battle of Halakazi, where Umslopogaas won Nada the Lily, is one of the first of many set pieces on war.

Chaka is portrayed as a bloody tyrant - as Mopo puts it:

. . . in the days of Chaka the rivers ran blood - yes, we had to look at the water to see if it was clean before we drank it. (68)

A review of Nada the Lily in The Pall Mall Budget entitled "Rider the Ripper" stresses the horror many commentators felt over the scenes of carnage described in the novel:

What an odd dual existence must be that of Mr. H. Rider Haggard! In real life, no doubt, an inoffensive, estimable, God-fearing citizen - one of those 'gentlemen and Christians' whom he delights to describe - who would not hunt a fly save in the way of 'sport', he is in imagination a very Attila or Tamburlaine, rejoicing in cruelty and revelling in carnage. During the composition of such a book as this 'Nada the Lily' his mind must be a very shambles. He must wipe out an 'impi' or two every morning before breakfast, devise new methods of massacre as he chips his egg, wade through gore to luncheon, and devote his hours of relaxation to the planning of single combats, hairsbreadth 'scapes and murders by retail. Can he sleep o' nights, one wonders, with his brain in this homicidal ferment? Yes, clearly he must snatch a certain amount of slumber, for the conception of the 'ghost-wolves' of the Witch Mountain can have come to him only in a nightmare . . . Take it all in all, 'Nada the Lily' is probably the most sanguinary work of its size in existence. It is drenched, sodden, dripping with blood. (69)

The warrior ethos is encapsulated by the blood-brotherhood between Galazi the Wolf and Umslopogaas the Slaughterer.

Umslopogaas has his father's spirit, and is described as:

. . . a man, fierce and tall and keen; a slayer of men, fleet of foot and of valour unequalled, seeing by night as well as by day. (70)

Galazi the Wolf is in exile because of an unsuccessful attempt to depose his father, with the aid of a jealous wife. He laments Umslopogaas' marriage to the "fierce" Zinita; and despairs when Umslopogaas falls in love with Nada, "the Star of Death". Umslopogaas realises the error of his ways, and apologises to his friend for yielding to the snares of women:

'Perchance I did ill, Galazi, when first I hearkened to the words of Zinita and suffered women to come between us. May we one day find a land where there are no women, and war only, for without land we shall grow great. (71)

Morton Cohen points out that Lawrence read Haggard avidly whilst training to be a teacher in Nottingham.⁷² Perhaps the blood-brother scenes between Birkin and Gerald in Women in Love reflects the bond of affection, and the tension that results from that bond, between Galazi and Umslopogaas.

Galazi sees women as a pernicious influence:

Surely Chaka was a great king though an evil, and he showed his greatness when he forbade marriage to the warriors, marriage that makes the heart soft and turns blood to water. (73)

Umslopogaas' susceptibility to women is his Achilles' heel.

Nada, in Haggard's saga, is a Helen of Troy figure:

. . . there lived in Swaziland among the Halakazi tribe a girl of the most wonderful beauty, who was named the Lily, and whose skin was whiter than the skin of our people. (74)

Her reputation is such that Dingaan lusts for her, and, at Mopo's instigation, sends Umslopogaas to seize her. Unfortunately, Nada

and Umslopogaas fall for each other. The description of their mutual attraction is a superb rendering of the marriage of beauty and brute strength:

[Nada is] a lovely woman well-nigh white in colour . . . He saw eyes that shone like stars, hair that curled and fell upon the shoulders and such beauty as was not known amongst our people . . . He looked at the girl in all her loveliness, and she looked at him in his fierceness and his might, red with war and wounds. (75)

Mopo speculates that Nada's grandfather was perhaps white, and, in this case, miscegenation has resulted in peerless beauty and a sweet, virtuous temperament. Umslopogaas is drawn by her beauty, she by his robust masculinity. Nickie McMenemy's "coloured" heroine, Thola, might, perhaps, be modelled on Nada. (Mrs. McMenemy's text, Assegai! will be discussed in Part II Chapter 5.)

Their relationship, however, is blighted by Zinita's jealousy. She tells Dingaan that he has been tricked, that instead of sending Nada to the king's court, Umslopogaas married her himself, and sent a dead beauty to the royal kraal. This incident underlines the gospel preached by missionaries on the evils of polygamy, as well as illustrating the Haggardian belief in the heartache beauty draws in its wake:

Yet this beauty of Nada's was a dreadful thing, and the mother of much death, as shall be told; and because of her beauty and the great love she bore, she, the Lily herself, must wither, and the cup of sorrows must be filled to overflowing and the heart of Umslopogaas the Slaughterer, son of Chaka the King, must become desolate as the black plain where the fire has swept it. (76)

Dingaan's lust and Umslopogaas' passion result in a blood bath. Zinita, for her pains, is killed, after being forced to witness the murder of her children. Doubtless, the reader is expected to lump Cetshwayo with the rest of the depraved household of Sengangakona! Umslopogaas, girdled in a wolf skin, is as a chivalrous knight

protecting his virtuous maiden from a degenerate lecher - he epitomizes Haggard's noble savage. Even the intelligent Mopo is made to disparage himself before the superior white scribe:

"Wow! I do not understand. Who am I but a wild man, nor have I found more knowledge in the hearts of you tamed white people." (77)

It is somewhat incongruous that a man who has as high an opinion of himself as Mopo, should debase himself thus. Nonetheless, Haggard has a vested interest in maintaining the myth of white superiority, because this lends moral weight to the claim to political control. And what better way is there of doing that than by making an African character articulate this belief? The lowest common denominator, it seems, is the "animal within". Europeans have tamed it - Africans have not quite evolved to that height!

But Haggard's belief in Britain's civilizing mission was not wholly uncritical. He was intrigued by the decline and fall of civilizations - in later life, he visited Egypt, Mexico and Ireland to do some research. Though he believed in progress, he was conscious of the fragile nature of "civilization" - beneath the veneer of urbanity, he saw the "wild" primeval soul.

Haggard credited his African characters with some intelligence, unlike most of his contemporaries; Chaka comes across as a wily politician; and Mopo is something of a philosopher. The "Colenso Affair", which had rocked the Anglican Church in the 1860s, had type-cast the Zulus as theological disputants. (Bishop Colenso's rejection of the historicity of the Pentateuch was precipitated by his interpreter William Ngidi's scepticism about the story of Noah's Ark.) So it is not surprizing to find Mopo querying whether Christians practise what they preach:

Before this time, indeed, a few white men had come to and fro to the kraals of Chaka and Dingaan, but these had come to pray and not to fight. Now the Boers both fight and pray, also they steal, or used to steal, which I do not understand, for the prayers of you white men say that these things should not be done. (78)

Mopo's objection to Christianity is based on its potential for undermining the Zulu political structure. Referring to a missionary, he says:

Now this was a good man, but no luck went with his teaching, which was hard to understand; and moreover, the indunas did not like it, because it seemed to set a master over the master, and a king over the king, and to preach peace to those whose trade is war. (79)

Significantly, it was the missionaries, embittered by years of fruitless labour, who were amongst the most vociferous in the clamour for the destruction of the Zulu kingdom.

Other aspects of "adventure story" and "romance" in Nada should be mentioned. The quest theme occurs repeatedly in the weird and wonderful escapades of Galazi and Umslopogaas; the battle for the "Groan Maker" and the search for Nada. The "romantic" elements feature in the ghost scenes; references to witchcraft; mystery; magic; wolves; challenges; trials and temptations; as well as in the love stories that link the fate of Zinita, Umslopogaas and Nada. It is interesting to note that Haggard's Icelandic saga, Eric Brighteyes, was published prior to Nada the Lily - for there are several generic parallels between the two.⁸⁰

After claiming that his account of the Chakan era is an accurate one, Haggard felt constrained to comment on the veracity of the wolf-brethren:

As for the wilder and more romantic incidents of this story, such as the hunting of Umslopogaas and Galazi with the wolves, or rather the hyaenas . . . the author can only say that they seem to him a sort that might well have been mythically connected with the names of the heroes. (81)

Haggard's different styles, in Nada, are interesting - his audacity is reflected in his use of a Biblical cadence and language in describing Galazi's and Umslopogaas's hunting expeditions:

Then he clad himself in the hide of the she-wolf and pushing the stone aside came out. And lo! the eyes of the wolves were opened, and they knew him for one of the brethren who ruled over them, and slunk away at his bidding. . . . Now the wolf brethren took counsel together, and Galazi, with the dog-wolves went to the north gate, and Umslopogaas with the she-wolves, to the south gate. They reached them safely and in silence, for at the bidding of the brethren the wolves ceased from their howlings. (82)

Such an expropriation of Biblical register lends credence to the fantastic - a technique which is roundly condemned in a review article in the Church Quarterly Review.⁸³

Haggard's virtuosity emerges in his flights of fancy, in the vigour of his poetic vision, as evidenced in the following passage:

So Galazi thought with his heart, and his thought was swift as the light. Then with a bound he was away down the mountain side. From boulder to boulder he leapt like a buck, he crashed through the brake like a bull, he skimmed the level like a swallow. (84)

Although Rider Haggard's books did not always meet with critical acclaim, he was a very popular writer with the reading public. He also won the respect of influential friends, like Andrew Lang (with whom he collaborated in writing The World's Desire) and Charles Longman. The latter praised Nada thus:

Nada strikes me with wonder and awe. It is in some ways the greatest feat you have performed. I mean because you have constructed a story in which all the dramatis personae are all savages and yet have kept the interest going throughout. There will, of course, be a terrible outcry about gore: I never read such a book. It is frightful and the only justification for it is the fact that it is history, not imagination. (85)

Haggard's African experience, and his marvellous sense of place, gave a "concreteness" to his descriptions, which (backed by his

references to the larger corpus of African ethnographic "studies") were often taken as historical accounts by English readers. Haggard, and John Buchan,⁸⁶ developed the notion of the Zulus as spectacle that pervades the early accounts of Fynn and Isaacs, in their novels.

In Europe, Haggard influenced such diverse writers as Rudyard Kipling, D. H. Lawrence, Grahame Greene and C. S. Lewis (to name but a few); and in Africa, his significance is testified to by the fact that Nada the Lily has been translated into Swahili and Zulu.⁸⁷ Laurens van der Post gives this moving tribute to the influence of Haggard on him as a child:

. . . quite apart from the fact that he wrote adventure stories which will be read as long as there are young people in the world, he was of great pioneering importance to us in Africa because he was the first to find the black man romantic. He did not do this long range, from Europe; Haggard found the black man a subject of romance and wonder as a result of daily contact with him, and on a scale and with an intensity that no one had before. He saw in the black man something epic and heroic, his spirit an instrument of honour in search of greater honour. To know human beings through the sense of wonder they provoke is, I believe, the beginning of grace in this earth . . . Rider Haggard was the first pioneer of this kind in our national imagination, and I can still remember the acute sense of reassurance and liberation of my own childish feelings about the black people that I experienced when I first read him as a boy. (my emphasis) (88)

The Haggardian legacy will be more fully explored in Part II Chapter 5, where the ramifications of his romanticisation of the defeated Zulus will be seen in the works of E. A. Ritter, Nickie McMenemy, Pieter Fourie and Stephen Gray. Shaka Zulu, Assegai, Shaka and The Assassination of Shaka epitomize the degeneration of the romantic novel into pornographic literature. Gone is the Haggardian delicacy in treating sexual themes, which is replaced by Freudian fantasies on Shaka's sexuality. It is only with P. J. Schoeman's Phampatha: The Beloved of King Shaka, that the romantic Shakan novel is resuscitated.

Footnotes - Chapter 1

1. The title, "the Black Napoleon", has also been used in describing the liberator of the San Domingo slaves, Touissant Louverture. See, for example, Percy Waxman, The Black Napoleon: The Story of Toussaint Louverture, New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1931.
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3. B. Orme, Victorian Attitudes Towards "Small Wars": The Anglo-Zulu War (1829) A Case Study, M.Phil. York (History), 1984, p. 86.
4. J. Ngubane, "Shaka's Social, Political and Military Ideas" in D. Burness, Shaka, King of the Zulus in African Literature, Washington, 3 Continents Press, 1976, p. 127.
5. Cited in J. Bird, The Annals of Natal, 1495-1845, Cape Town: C. Struik, 1965, Vol. I, pp. 470, 478. The essay is an extract from Delegorgue's Voyage Dans L'Afrique Australe.
6. For a fuller discussion of this factor, see W. E. Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind, London: Yale University Press, 1951, p. 314.
7. Cited in D. R. Morris, The Washing of the Spears, London: Sphere, 1981, p. 571.
8. *ibid.*, p. 533.
9. cited in Bird, *op. cit.*, p. 191.
10. *ibid.*, pp. 291/2.
11. *ibid.*, p. 93.
12. *ibid.*, p. 184. King's extract is taken from his Diary, published in 1825.
13. *ibid.*, p. 103.
14. The Diary of Henry Francis Fynn, ed. James Stuart and D. McK. Malcolm, Pietermaritzburg, 1950.
15. *ibid.*, pp. xi, xiii.
16. Isaacs' letter to Fynn, 10th December, 1832, in Africana Notes and News 18 (1968-69), p. 67.
17. Cited in Bird, *op. cit.*, p. 173.
18. Fynn, Diary, *op. cit.*, p. xv.
19. Bird, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

20. *ibid.*, p. 74.
21. *ibid.*, p. 67.
22. *ibid.*, p. 123.
23. *ibid.*, p. 67.
24. *ibid.*, p. 69.
25. *ibid.*, p. 75.
26. *ibid.*, p. 179.
27. *ibid.*, p. 167.
28. *ibid.*, p. 171.
29. *ibid.*, p. 191.
30. *ibid.*, p. 169.
31. *ibid.*, p. 182.
32. *ibid.*, p. 185.
33. McMenemy, N., Assegai! London, MacMillan, 1973, p. 66.
34. Bird, *op. cit.*, p. 183.
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36. W. C. Holden, History of the Colony of Natal, Cape Town, C. Struik, 1963 (1855), pp. 41, 48.
37. L. Grout, Zululand, *op. cit.*, p. 77.
38. J. L. Döhne, A Zulu-Kafir Dictionary Etymologically Explained, Cape Town, G. Pike, 1857, pp. xiv-v.
39. J. Shooter, The Kafirs of Natal and the Zulu Country, London: E. Standford, 1857, p. 249.
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41. Shooter, *op. cit.*, p. 249.
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43. *ibid.*, p. 72.
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50. Andrew Lang to Rider Haggard. Letter dated "Sunday" (written between March and September, 1885), cited in Morton Cohen, Rider Haggard: His Life and Works, London, Hutchinson, 1960.
51. T. O. Ranger, Introduction, The Rural African Voice in Zimbabwe Rhodesia: Archaism and Tradition, Social Analysis, Special Issue: "Using Oral Sources . Vansina and Beyond", No. 4, Sept., 1980.
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55. H. R. Haggard, Cetywayo and his White Neighbours; or Remarks on Recent Events in Zululand, Natal and Transvaal, London, 1882.
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57. T. Shepstone, "The Early History of the Zulu-Kafir Race of South-Eastern Africa", in Bird, op. cit., pp. 165-6.
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60. *ibid.*, p. ix.
61. *ibid.*, p. ix.
62. *ibid.*, p. 26.
63. *ibid.*, pp. 38-9.
64. *ibid.*, p. 45.

65. *ibid.*, p. 54.
66. *ibid.*, p. 28.
67. *ibid.*, p. 45.
68. *ibid.*, p. 39.
69. "Rider the Ripper", cited in The Critic, 9th July, 1892, p. 23.
70. Nada, *op. cit.*, pp. 138-9.
71. *ibid.*, pp. 285-6.
72. Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 230.
73. Nada, p. 277.
74. *ibid.*, p. 190.
75. *ibid.*, p. 228.
76. *ibid.*, pp. 192-3.
77. *ibid.*, p. 216.
78. *ibid.*, p. 211.
79. *ibid.*, p. 236.
80. H. R. Haggard, Eric Brighteyes, London: Longman, Green and Co., 1891.
81. Nada, p. xi.
82. *ibid.*, pp. 134, 135.
83. "The Culture of the Horrible: Mr. Haggard's Stories", Church Quarterly Review, 1888, Vol. 25, Jan., pp. 389-411 - a review of Jess, King Solomon's Mines, She and Allan Quartermain. The strictures on the profane use of religious language would hold for Nada the Lily, too.
84. Nada, *op. cit.*, p. 278.
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86. See J. Buchan, Prester John, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983, p. 74. "You have heard of Chaka. He was a sort of black Napoleon early in the last century, and he made the Zulus the paramount power in South Africa, slaughtering about two million souls to accomplish it.
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CHAPTER 2

SHAKA IN EARLY BLACK SOUTH AFRICAN LITERATURE

" . . . Chaka, originator-of-all-things-evil."
Thomas Mofolo (1)

As we noted in the preceding chapter, most of the first Zulu texts and early Zulu historiography was the work of missionaries. Apart from producing Grammars and Dictionaries, the missionaries were also interested in translating Scripture.

Black Southern African authors experienced great difficulty in getting their works published, partly because of the monopoly which the Mission Presses had on local publishing outlets, and, as Tim Couzens and Stephen Gray have pointed out, in their case study of Solomon Plaatje's text, Mhudi, editorial censorship was severe,² as the missionaries' primary desire, when they started publishing works submitted by Africans, was the propagation of Christian ethics. The "Missionary factor" in Southern African publishing has been extensively discussed elsewhere,³ and need not detain us, unduly, here.

This chapter falls into five parts - each of which entails an analysis of one of the pioneering works by black Southern African authors, namely: Magma Fuze's The Black People and Whence they Came; A Zulu View; John Langalibalele Dube's Jeje the Body Servant of King Tshaka; Sol Plaatje's Mhudi⁴; and Thomas Mofolo's Chaka; and a conclusion which summarises certain features that these "transitional texts" have in common. The shared Mission station background of these authors emerges in the high moral tone that pervades their works - a tone that stems from their religious convictions, which, in turn, colour their presentation of a pagan warrior-king. Fuze

presents Shaka somewhat ambivalently: he admired the unification of different groups which Shaka achieved, but abhorred the violence through which this goal was obtained. Dube, also writing within the Zulu fold, abhorred Shaka's brutality and, like Mofolo, finds little to admire in the Shakan era. Plaatje's Mhudi portrays Mzilikazi as a brutal conqueror made in the image of Chaka.

It is difficult to date these texts, apart from their year of publication, which is not very satisfactory, bearing in mind that most of them had been written, in draft form, in the early years of this century, but were not published for many years after completion. The result is that, by the time Dube and Plaatje's texts appeared, their view of Shaka had become somewhat anachronistic, because Shaka was being mobilised, politically, as a symbol of African political achievement by African activists in South Africa in the '30s and '40s, in a manner similar to the way in which French African writers exploited him as a metaphor in current political debate in the '50s, '60s and '70s, as will be seen in chapter 4.

Thomas Mofolo's admirable novel, Chaka, has had a profound influence on the way in which subsequent black writers have approached the Chakan legend - indeed, most of the black contributors to the Chakan literature have attempted, in effect, to re-write Mofolo's epic, by reacting to his estimation of Chaka as "the originator-of-all-that-was-evil." Unfortunately, few of them can match Mofolo's deft control of image, metaphor and language, a skill that has rightly earned him his place as a leading African novelist.

MAGEMA FUZE'S THE BLACK PEOPLE AND WHENCE THEY CAME: A ZULU VIEW.

Magama Fuze's The Black People was probably the first history of the Zulus to be published by a black South African. It encompasses

a historical survey of the pre-colonial period, charting the major events that occurred during the lives of the Zulu kings - and Shaka figures prominently in it, as one would expect.

H. C. Lugg, who translated the original text, points out in his preface that Fuze was probably born in 1840, and that from the time he was around twelve years old, Fuze settled at Bishop Colenso's mission, Ekukhanyeni, where he was converted. His faith, as we shall see, coloured his portrayal of the Zulu kings - his style is similar to that of the ecclesiastical history embodied in The Chronicles, where the judgment is cast in the (subjective) light of whether or not a monarch "did what was good in the eyes of the Lord".

The Colenso's were very interested in African culture, and, at the time of the Anglo-Zulu war, became the champions of the Zulu Royal house.⁵ When Bishop Colenso visited Mpande in 1859, he took Fuze with him, as well as two other Africans. On their return, he encouraged them to write about the visit, and published their accounts. No mention, however, is made of the visit in The Black People.

Nevertheless, this visit did mark the beginning of Fuze's association with the Zulu Royal Family - an association that spanned four reigns. Fuze visited Cetshwayo in 1879, at Bishop Colenso's request, and we read that he first heard of the British intention to invade Zululand from Cetshwayo.⁶ The events leading up to the deposition of Cetshwayo form a significant part of The Black People; and Fuze retrieved the Prince Imperial's sword from Zululand after the latter's death.

Fuze was asked to teach Dinuzulu - Cetshwayo's heir - and his two uncles, Ndabuko and Shingana, during their detention in St. Helena in 1896. He also taught Dinuzulu's children; and, on his return in 1898, he re-established contact with the late Bishop Colenso's

daughter, Harriette, and, according to Professor Shula Marks, he probably acted as her intermediary with the Revd. John Dube, one of Natal's first black nationalist leaders; the first president of the African National Congress, and the author of Insila KaTshaka. Entries in Harriette Colenso's diaries between 1910 and 1920 refer to meetings between Dube and Fuze.⁷

It is not surprising, therefore, to find that The Black People is dedicated to Revd. John Dube, and praises him for his contribution to the black newspaper, Ilanga Lase Natal.

For today we are fortunate in the mutual acquaintance we receive through the services of the newspaper [Ilanga lase Natal] produced by the son of a chief of the Ngcobo people, the Rev. J. L. Dube, son of James, also son of a chief, which makes observations for us throughout this country of ours in Africa. (8)

This dedication reveals Fuze's strong dynastic sense, for he, too, was a member of the Ngcobo clan.⁹ Not only are they kinsmen, they are also members of the same class - that of amakholwa (or "the believers"). Tim Couzens' research has shown how important newspapers were as an outlet for black writers and as a means of establishing a political base.¹⁰

One presumes that Fuze wrote his book between 1899 and 1913 because it traces Zulu history up until the death of Dinuzulu. A draft of it probably existed in 1902, as Lugg recalls Fuze's numerous visits to the Native Affairs Department seeking financial aid for publishing a manuscript.¹¹ It was eventually published privately in 1922, after a generous grant from Harriette Colenso.

The Black People is essentially impressionistic, combining Fuze's own observations with those of his friends, and extracts from Bishop Colenso's Izindatyana ZaBantu Kanye Nezindaba Zase Natal.¹²

Fuze also includes some of Shaka's izibongo, for example:

The blade that vanquishes other blades with its sharpness.
He who roars like thunder as he sits, the son of Menzi.
The rock piles of the Nkandla range.
Protecting elephants in the stormy weather.
Mbelebele's fulminating voice,
Causing disquiet in every home,
Until every home is turned upside-down.
Shaka, a fearful name I dare not utter.
The long-armed robber who robs with violence,
Who destroys always in a furious rage,
With his ever-ready shield on his knees.

Yes indeed, but I cannot quote them all lest I fill this
book with them. (13)

Fuze also quotes the "joke of the women of Nomgabi" praise, the
"Nyuswa" praise; and the "He who gazes to the South of Dungele"
praise. As noted earlier, Fuze was one of Bryant's informants,
Fuze also provides one of the Shakan war songs similar to one that
was later published by R. C. A. Samuelson:

He conquered every country
Where can he conquer now?
He! He! EyaEee!
He vanquished chiefs,
He vanquished nations,
Where can he conquer now? (14)

It is interesting to note the growth in output of ethnographic
books in the late 1920s and early 1930s - Bryant and Samuelson
published their books in 1929, and Dube and Plaatje had their books
published in 1930. Both these sets of books have been enormously
influential in the portrayal of the Shaka era in subsequent writing
by African and European writers (as we shall see in the following
chapter).

In his Introduction, "Inkondlo", Fuze reveals his Pan-Africanist
sentiments by postulating a common ancestry for all Africans, based
on a (mistaken) belief that all African languages are mutually
intelligible. One of the reasons he gives for writing his book is
that he wishes to foster pride in African culture - he feels called
to proclaim Africa's own heritage in the face of the onslaught of
European ideas.

Another justification for writing Abantu Abamnyama comes in his Exhortations - "Amangebeza":

You will attain nothing by your present state of disorganisation. Unite in friendliness like the enlightened nations. Do not merely look on heedlessly when others are being exploited. So long as you desire evil to one another, you will never be a people of any consequence, but you will become the manure for fertilizing the crops of the enlightened nations, disorderly, useless and without responsibility. (15)

The call to unity is a striking one - Fuze had lived through the destruction of the Zulu kingdom, the largest single African nation in South Africa. Like Haggard, he records Cetshwayo's brushes with Sir Theophilus Shepstone¹⁶ but, unlike Haggard, he takes issue with allegations that Cetshwayo was unpopular; and Hamu and Zibhebhu are castigated for spreading disunity amongst amaZulu.¹⁷

Fuze viewed the Bambada [sic] revolt as another incident that highlighted disunity amongst the people, saying "There was confusion throughout the country, the people being in a state of unrest and division."¹⁸ He laments the fact that people did not rally around Dinuzulu, and he holds Shaka up as a model unifier of people.

Fuze's attitude to Shaka is ambivalent: there is a tension between admiration and criticism:

Even though we may condemn Shaka for having a lust for killing people, we can say with conviction that he was a clever man who liked to act intelligently. He wished to co-operate with the white people, having seen the products of their knowledge. I feel sure that had he not been killed, our life would have been different for us, because he ardently desired to associate himself with the white people in respect of all their works of wisdom.

Like so many of his (and subsequent) generation(s), Fuze was overawed by the technological superiority of the Europeans; and their "wisdom" - which is to be expected from a member of the Colenso household. Like many Christians, Fuze saw the future in terms of

"co-operation", of a Christian vision of a universal brotherhood, that transcended tribal and racial divisions.

He criticizes Shaka for his iconoclasm:

Today Zululand is no longer Zululand, it is Natal, ruled by the English, the original government having passed away and a new one taking its place. The rule of Zulu has disappeared, and why is this? It is because Shaka established it with force and haste, like a great wind and whirlwind, discarding the old ways of Senzangakhona and his forebears. (19)

whilst simultaneously looking back on the Shakan era as something of a Zulu golden age:

At that time Shaka was the ruler of the whole of South Africa, there being no chief who dared to touch him. And there in Thekwini [Port Natal] he had white subjects who came from Cape Town, who were with Fynn and Ogle and the others. His power of sovereignty was full to the brim of the basket and he ruled in a manner never known by his [ancestors] . . . It was the first time that there had been a government to unite the whole country of South Africa under a single ruler like Shaka. And it is for this reason that all people were said to be Zulus. Nevertheless, there were a few who were inclined to raise their hackles, but such an attitude soon brought about self-critical regrets. (20)

The above extract is typical of Fuze's quaint style, and his concern with national unity.

Fuze's bias in favour of Shaka is revealed in the manner in which he reports the assassination of Nomkwayimba [also known as Sigujana or Mfokazana] in a matter-of-fact tone, notwithstanding the effect it has on Senzangakhona:

. . . it was shortly after his [Shaka's] arrival at home that he killed his brother, Nomkwayimba. At the time the chief [Senzangakhona] was sick, and as soon as he heard that 'your son Shaka has arrived and killed his brother Nomkwayimba', he was so shocked at the report that he died immediately. (21)

There is no authorial comment on these events; but Mbopha is castigated as a regicide who gets what he deserves.²²

Fuze's partisan attitude to Shaka stems, perhaps, from the mystique of Shaka that exists in the folklore. Shaka is presented as a miraculous creature:

If a person thinks and looks at the unexpected activities of Shaka, he cannot conclude that he was merely the progeny of Senzangakhona and Nandi; he can see clearly that he was a special product appearing from above, who arrived here expressly for the purpose of bringing unity to the country instead of disunity, and rule by one person instead of everyone doing as he pleased. (23)

Fuze's sermon on national unity stresses the urgency with which he viewed the decline of Africans' power in their native land. The Act of Union, passed in 1910, saw the combination of the various white pressure groups in South Africa, and led to the expropriation of African land, which was set in motion by the passage of the 1913 Land Act, which I referred to in the section on Isaiah Shembe in Part I. Fuze's paramount concern is African unity, hence his canonisation of Shaka as a gift from God - who, after all, is not a democrat!

In a passage reminiscent of Isaacs, Fuze ponders Shaka's conception:

Just consider Nandi's longing to meet Senzangakhona without ever having seen him. Consider also their meeting and the fact that as soon as they came together, Nandi became pregnant with Shaka! They never came together again, only once there in a clump of bushes. I trust that even a child cutting its first teeth would realize that this was a deed designed for the rapid advent of the owner of this country of South Africa. (24)

It is highly significant that Shaka is described as "the owner of this country of South Africa" - for the loss of land has almost always acted as a catalyst for a concerted African response to European imperialism. The Black People is not only a history of the African past - it is also a manifesto for political action.

As a Christian, Fuze's notion of kingship was deeply influenced by the Old Testament (he assisted Bishop Colenso in translating it into Zulu). It is thus not surprising to see that Fuze discerns the hand of God in the foundation of the Zulu dynasty:

At the outset, before the account of the years of the reigns of the Zulu kings who were responsible for forging this great nation together, it is right to remember that all kings are supported by God, and it is He who appoints and supports them. If sovereignty is not supported by Him it is dead, and authority non-existent. Also, if a king rules without the realisation that he is a servant, a mere headman to represent his people to God, his kingship is non-existent and dead, because God will soon bring it to an end. (25)

Shaka's overthrow is thus seen as part and parcel of a Divine plan:

Shaka, who moulded the sovereignty [ubukhosi] of the Zulu nation, ruled for only ten years [1818-1828]. For when he defied the Owner of all peoples for whom he ruled his people, his rule was terminated, and God roused his brothers to kill him, advised by their father's sister, Mkabhayi, who said that Shaka had terminated his father's people, killing them for nothing and for no reason. And so Shaka died at the end of those ten years. (26)

Such a view is in accordance with the judgments on the performances of the Kings of Israel in the Books of Kings and in Chronicles.

Shaka is called "the wild animal"²⁷ and the "destroyer of men"²⁸ - his passion for conquering others is recorded; albeit irreverently, by Fuze:

And so Shaka ruled and became a king, as foretold by his grandfather, Ndaba, that it would be a Zulu kingship. He wished to fulfil this prophecy and so attacked all those who opposed him, but those who submitted, he left and ruled through them. (29)

One can, perhaps, discern the influence of Döhne here; and Hebraic beliefs about the significance of naming. Ndaba, the mythical ancestor of a number of Southern African royal houses, is said to have prophesied that one of his descendents "would be king over all the others."³⁰ The inference we draw from the above is that other

chieftains should not have challenged Shaka's pretensions. Indeed, Fuze goes so far as to endorse a "might is right" philosophy:

The vagabond that caused Shaka a great deal of trouble was Mhini, the chief of the Thuli clan. It was he who caused great trouble because he would not consent to the appropriation of his cattle . . . the Thuli refused to part with their cattle and finally succeeded, for the Thuli were the only people never to be robbed of their cattle by Shaka. (31)

Fuze does not pass judgment on the morality of Shaka's actions - following the izibongo perspective, he presents Shaka as a man with a ruling passion:

. . . as for Shaka, he could not put down his shield but continued to attack other clans, wishing to subject them to his will. It was thus that there arose Shaka's praise: "Isidlukula-Dlwedlwe [long armed robber who robs with violence] who destroys with his shield ever ready on his knees." (32)

Any questioning of Shaka's mode of government is muted, as in the izibongo. Fuze also gives us a glimpse of the Shakan myth through the eyes of the common people:

And there was wild confusion amongst the people who began to lift their ears and say, 'What sort of a king has now arisen?' And he conquered everywhere. (33)

Along with Haggard and Mofolo, Fuze suggests that Shaka killed his mother for harbouring one of his sons, borne of a Cele girl - and this is a sign of Shaka's depravity. As in Mofolo's Chaka, the author³⁴ does not wholly identify with Shaka - he is the anti-hero in The Black People. For Fuze, the most reprehensible Zulu king is Dingane:

Dingane, although a person in form, had the heart of a dog and the nature of a witch. Dingane was truly like a poisonous snake. (35)

Dingane, we recall, is the most venerated Zulu king in Isaiah Shembe's hymnal - this opposition reflects the disunity in the African ranks at the turn of the century in South Africa - a point

which exercised the mind of Fuze's friend and fellow clansman: John Langalibalele Dube. Dube's Insila KaTshaka also paints a very gloomy picture of the reigns of Shaka and Dingane.

JOHN LANGALIBALELE DUBE'S JEQE THE BODY SERVANT OF KING TSHAKA

One of the most outstanding personalities in South African politics is John L. Dube. Dube was born at the Inanda station of the American Board Mission, on 11th February, 1870. His father, James Dube, a member of the Qadi tribe, was from a family of chiefs, and was one of the first African ministers ordained by the American Board Mission, (ABM).

After attending the ABM school in Amanzimtoti, John was sent to the States for two years; on his return he worked as a teacher, and then became a pastor of Inanda Church. He returned to the States and trained at the Union Missionary Training Institute in Brooklyn for three years. Whilst in the States, he was inspired by Booker T. Washington's self-help schemes for uplifting Negroes, and on his return, he founded the Zulu Christian Industrial School at Ohlange.

Dube broadened his political base when he founded the first African newspaper in Natal (Ilanga Lase Natal), through which he hoped to get a wider audience for his doctrines of self-help; to spread education; and to encourage vernacular literature. Dube edited the paper for its first twenty years or so. He had a brush with the Governor General, Sir Henry McCallum, over an article criticising an insensitive sermon preached by a European minister on the execution of some of the participants in the Bambatha rising.

In an article entitled "Governor Rebukes Dube", on 25th May, 1906, Dube printed the following retraction:

No one realises more than I do that the situation is very grave, and I intend to come out more clearly in condemnation of the rebellious spirit. I have

always stood by the Government, and I have pointed out that the attitude of the Government towards us although by no means perfect, is infinitely better than under our old kings. (36)

Dube's grandmother had had to flee from the wrath of her husband to a mission station!

In 1909, Dube was sufficiently well established to be invited to the Native Convention called at Bloemfontein, which paved the way to the formation of the South African Native National Congress, since the Boers and the British did not take into account African protest about the proposed Act of Union. In 1910, once the Act was passed, several acts governing labour relations and conditions of employment were passed, and taxation increased, as a means of forcing Africans onto the labour market. The SANNC was intended to be a pressure group against such legislation.

On 8th January, 1912, at a gathering of chiefs and leaders, Pixley Seme delivered this rallying cry on national unity:

We have discovered that in the land of their birth, Africans are treated as hewers of wood and drawers of water. The white people of this country have formed what is known as the Union of South Africa - a union in which we have no voice in the making of laws and no part in the administration. We have called you therefore, to this conference, so that we can together find ways and means of forming our national union for the purposes of creating national unity and defending our rights and privileges. (37)

Dube was elected the SANNC's first president-general, with Revd. Walter Rubusana as one of the vice-presidents, and Sol T. Plaatje as the secretary-general.

In 1913 and 1914, Dube was in the forefront of the protests organised against the Native Lands Act. His visit to England in the summer of 1914 was overshadowed by the declaration of war. During the war years bitter disputes broke out in the SANNC, and Dube was ousted from the presidency, ostensibly because of the division within it over the principle, as opposed to the practice, of segregation.

He nevertheless ran the Natal branch of the Congress for many years, and he continued in his capacity as an adviser to the Zulu Royal House.³⁸

As he had more time to spare, he wrote his first book: Isitha Somuntu Nguye Uqobo Lwakhe (The Black Man is His Own Greatest Enemy), in which he stressed the need for unity, co-operation and self-reliance. In 1930, he published the first novel in Zulu, Insila kaTshaka, and in 1951, Professor James Boxwell translated the book into English, entitling it: Jeqe the Body Servant of King Tshaka.

The story is a simple one: we see life in Tshakan Zululand through the eyes of Jeqe, a young boy who distinguished himself in battle by fighting bravely in the defence of Tshaka, and for his efforts he is made Tshaka's body servant. Initially, he is elated, but his enthusiasm is dampened by the warning given him by Nozitshele, Tshaka's chief attendant:

"Think not that good fortune has brought you hither.
You stand on the threshold of the gates of death.
To be near the king as you are spells death." (39)

The rhetoric is Haggardian. Jeqe is warned not to establish any close links with members of Tshaka's harem, and is upset by having to kill one of his friends, whom he catches in the isigodhlo (the harem).⁴⁰ His alienation from Tshaka is brought about by the numerous killings and futile gestures he has to perform (like stealing twenty Tembu cattle). Dube presents this as his period of "apprenticeship" engineered by Tshaka:

Jeqe had been frequently sent out to kill both men and women, for it was the king's desire to purge his heart of all pity and to make him like himself - merciless and indifferent to human suffering. (41)

Tshaka's outstanding quality is his brutality - but this is tempered by his valour in war. As a warrior king, he accompanies his soldiers

in battle, and there he earns their respect. It is this admiration which keeps Jeqe from escaping:

Even though our King loves to see the red blood flow, I am overcome with admiration for his peerless courage on the battlefield. I shall endure with patience till the day comes on which the spirits of my ancestors call me to their home. (42)

The final straw does come, however, when Jeqe is forced to kill a pregnant woman so that Tshaka can see how a baby lies in the womb.⁴³

Jeqe's loyalty is shattered, and he is prepared to assist the conspirators by poisoning Tshaka. Jeqe is spared the trauma of regicide, as Dingane, Mhlangane and Mbopa seize an opportunity and stab him. Tshaka dies prophecying that "The white swallows are on the wing. They will come and possess the land."⁴⁴

Although we perceive much of the action through Jeqe's eyes, we are also shown other aspects of the reign of Tshaka through the eyes of the omniscient author - like, for example, Dube's assertion that Tshaka ruled through his council, during the early years of his reign.⁴⁵

Tshaka later forsakes rule by council, and neglects to consult his people, even the army commanders and warriors, thus undermining his political base; Dingane and his fellow conspirators manipulate these divisions. As in Mofolo's Chaka, Dube's Tshaka becomes imprisoned by fear:

But fear had entered Tshaka's heart: he felt he was hated by his own people, and was terrified of witchcraft. Fear made him a prisoner in his own heart and he was startled by trifles. (46)

Life under Dingane is equally trying, as Jeqe's father states.⁴⁷

Jeqe flees from Zululand as he does not wish to be buried with Tshaka, according to custom. He undergoes a series of trials and tribulations reminiscent of John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, before arriving in Tongaland, where he learns the art of healing from Queen

Sitela, after experiencing healing himself. Chapter 8 of Jeqe is devoted to healing - redemption is posited within the traditional framework - there is no appeal to the "new religion", which is remarkable, bearing in mind that Dube was a minister, and had refused the leadership of an Independent church, the Zulu Congregational Church.⁴⁸ Jeqe's new mission to "bring health to all who suffer"⁴⁹. He cures the Swazi of dysentery and is so successful that he ends up as King Sobhuza's doctor.

D. B. Ntuli has criticised Dube's style, saying that the book's "literary value is seriously marred by the introduction of legendary incidents".⁵⁰ Gérard has highlighted the infusion of "many ethnographical digressions" which "blur" the story line, which he sees as symptomatic of Dube's concern "with both the past of his people and their traditional culture".⁵¹

The book has an engaging simplicity, which would have been enhanced by greater psychological insight. It does reflect Dube's concern with brotherhood and unity. As Gérard points out:

Partly, no doubt, as a reaction against the painful remembrances of Zulu imperialism, the novel is set in a multitribal perspective, involving not only the Zulu, but also the Tonga and the Swazi, and each of these is shown to contribute something to the growth of the hero. (52)

It is an altogether much sterner condemnation of Tshakan tyranny than Fuze's The Black People, and is thus more akin to Mofolo's Chaka, but lacks the latter's sophistication. It is, however, a significant contribution to the South African historical novel, along with Mhudi's, especially since, as Robert McDowell points out, few historical novels have been written by black South African writers (he lists Mofolo's Chaka, Plaatje's Mhudi and Abraham's Wild Conquest) - perhaps because the recent, retrievable past, has been "especially gloomy".⁵³

The contrast with the writers of the Négritude movement is clear - whilst the French-speaking African writers have been fascinated by the Chakan epic, there has been no corresponding rehabilitation of a West- or East- or North-African "heroic" figure by Southern African writers. Plaatje and Abrahams focus their attention on Mzilikazi, but he is, to them, as culpable as Chaka is to Dube, Fuze and Mofolo.

SOLOMON T. PLAATJE'S MHUDI

Despite his Boer name, Plaatje was a Murolong, and his career was as spectacular as John Dube's. Born on the 9th October, 1876, Plaatje started off as a post messenger in 1894, but he later became Court Interpreter, and interpreted for Joseph Chamberlain when he visited Mafeking, as Colonial Secretary, in 1903.

During the Boer War, Plaatje was besieged in Mafeking, and he kept a Diary during the seige.⁵⁴ Like John Dube, he became a newspaper editor, working for Chief Silas Molema's Mafeking-based Sechuana-English newspaper, Koranta Ea Bechuana; he later edited Tsala Ea Batho, a newspaper published in Kimberley and owned by a black syndicate based at Ntaba Nchu.

Along with John Dube, he was a founder member of the South African Native National Council, and served as its General Correspondence Secretary in 1912. But in 1917, he turned down an offer of its presidency. He visited England at least three times in 1913/14 as a member of the SANNC deputation to London to protest about the provisions of the Native Lands Act; and in 1918/19, as a member of a post-war delegation seeking a better deal for Africans after their "loyal" service in the Great War; and in July 1923, when on his way back from America. Plaatje was, in many respects, a cosmopolitan figure.

In 1921-22 he was in Canada and the United States, where he visited Tuskegee. On his return to South Africa, he travelled widely in the country studying the plight of the people. In 1931 he toured the Belgian Congo, studying labour and social conditions. Unfortunately, he died suddenly of pneumonia, on the 10th June, 1932.

Apart from his newspaper articles, he translated five of Shakespeare's plays (Comedy of Errors, Julius Caesar, Merchant of Venice, Othello and Much Ado About Nothing) into Sechuana. With Daniel Jones, he produced the first Sechuana phonetic reader in 1915 - albeit that his formal education was up to Standard Three.⁵⁵

Whilst in London in 1913/14, he wrote his scathing attack on the implication of the 1913 Land Act, which was based on material gleaned whilst travelling in areas with large numbers of displaced people. As he pithily summarised it, on a Friday morning, on the 20th June, 1913, "the African woke to find himself a pariah in the land of his birth."

Mhudi was completed by around 1920, although it was not published until August 1930. Tim Couzens and Stephen Gray have charted the vicissitudes of the Lovedale text⁵⁶ and the Heinemann edition, published in 1978, is the nearest we have to Plaatje's typescript.

In his preface to the Lovedale edition, Plaatje wrote:

In all the tales of battle I have ever read or heard of, the cause of the war is invariably ascribed to the other side. Similarly, we have been taught almost from childhood to fear the Matabele - a fierce nation - so unreasoning in its ferocity that it will attack any individual or tribe, at sight, without the slightest provocation. Their destruction of our people, we were told, had no justification in fact or in reason; they were actuated by sheer lust for human blood. (57)

Plaatje's own research revealed that far from being "actuated by sheer lust for human blood", the amaNdebele attacked the Barolong to avenge the death at Barolong hands of Mzilikazi's emissaries who sought tribute.⁵⁸

Plaatje's portrait of Mzilikazi mirrors that of Mofolo:

Upon these peaceful regions over one hundred years ago [in 1930!] there descended one Mzilikazi, king of the ferocious tribe called the Matabele, a powerful usurper of determined character who by his sword proclaimed himself ruler over all the land.

Mzilikazi's tribe originally was a branch of the Zulu nation which Chaka once ruled with an iron rod. Initiated by the stern rule of the monarch, Mzilikazi led out his people, who thereupon broke away from Chaka's rule and turned their faces westwards.

Sweeping through the northern areas of Port Natal, they advanced along both banks of the Vaal River driving terror in man and wild beast with whom they came into contact. They continued their march very much like a swarm of locusts; scattering the Swazis, terrifying the Basuto and Bapedi on their outposts, they drove them back to the mountains at the point of the assegai and, trekking through the heart of the Transvaal, they eventually invaded Bechuanaland where they reduced the Natives to submission. (59)

The childhood legacy of the "ferocious" Matabele has not been wholly shaken off in Mhudi. Like the arrival of Europeans in Things Fall Apart, the influx of amaNdebele is likened to "a swarm of locusts" - it is something potentially destructive, as the aftermath of the killing of Bhoya shows. Plaatje, nonetheless, gives a balanced account of the Mzilikazi era:

Still, the new discipline was not stern; and as long as each chief paid taxes each spring-time in acknowledgement of his fealty to Mzilikazi, the Bechuana were left in undisturbed possession of their old homes and haunts. (60)

The slaying of Bhoya and Bangela is presented as a natural reaction by people who resent their loss of autonomy. The result is the virtual annihilation of the people of Kunana because of the Matabele "total onslaught" strategy, based on the Chakan wars:

. . . they [the Bechuana] noticed with horror that the Matabele were not fighting men only; they were actually spearing fleeing women and children. (61)

The amaNdebele are described as "a constantly warring nation"⁶² and their leader, "Mzilikazi the Terrible" has an "uncertain temper"⁶³.

Like Dube's Tshaka, Mzilikazi does listen to the advice of his counsellors. Unlike Mofolo's Chaka, Plaatje's Mzilikazi does care about the plight of his people as they flee from the combined Boer-Barolong force.⁶⁴

After escaping from the ruined city of Kunana, Ra-Thaga, the novel's hero, feels the effects of the Mfecane, travelling for two months "without meeting a single soul." (65)

He meets his future wife, Mhudi, who also managed to escape from Kunana. She chastises him for subscribing to the might-is-right philosophy:

Ra-Thaga at times felt inclined to believe that the land on which they lived belonged to Mzilikazi, and that Mzilikazi was justified in sending his marauding expedition against Kunana. This roused the feminine ire of Mhudi. (66)

For Mhudi, any expropriation of land is evil, and she insists on the right of the Barolong to live under a system of their own creation. They eventually rejoin their clansmen living under chief Moroka.

Moroka is held up by Plaatje as a model ruler - he is a man who rules by consent. He always makes sure that contentious issues are fully discussed before making a decision, which is essentially collective. He makes a point of working in unison with other chiefs, and any judgments he makes are humane.

Ra-Thaga gets his revenge during the joint attack on the amaNdebele. He also befriends a Boer, de Villiers, and he rather romanticises the race - Mhudi, who is more discerning, rejects them

for their brutality to their Hottentot servants. Ra-Thaga has a rude awakening to the general Boer attitude to Africans when he is almost attacked for drinking out of a Boer cup. Nevertheless, Ra-Thaga and Mhudi's friendship with de Villiers and his sweetheart Hannetjie deepens.

Whilst leaving open the possibility of Boer-Black friendships, Plaatje shows that the alliance, at least on the part of the Boers, was a marriage of convenience - once Mzilikazi is overthrown, the Boers want to keep both the land and the cattle. Plaatje seems to be saying that one must choose one's allies with care! Moreover, since the novel is the first one published, in English, by a Black South-African, it is also addressed to a white audience and the message is as stark as the ending of Mofolo's Chaka; kingdoms come and kingdoms go. They warn the Europeans that Empires do not last for ever.

A central motif in the novel is Halley's comet - it foreshadows the defeat of the amaNdebele in Mhudi, and Couzens points out that when it appeared in 1910, "it was widely viewed as foreshadowing the end of white rule in South Africa".⁶⁷ Ironically, it symbolised the unification of the whites, and a concerted onslaught on black rights. But it is interesting to note that this year (1985) its sighting coincides with the most significant civil unrest this decade in South Africa, and the contemplation of political change by a racist minority regime that has been as ruthless as any other black South African regime.

Plaatje gives two reasons for writing Mhudi.

This book has been written with two objects in view, viz. (a) to interpret to the reading public one phase of the 'back of the Native mind' and (b) with the readers' money, to collect and print (for Bantu Schools) Sechuana folk-tales, which, with the spread of European ideas, are fast being forgotten. (68)

With regard to the interpretation of the 'back of the Native mind', one feels that Plaatje is too apologetic - his tale does not flow as smoothly as Mofolo's Chaka: Plaatje is too apologetic about the culture he seeks to present - statements like "the humdrum yet interesting life of other Bechuana natives"⁶⁹ jar, as does the following:

These peasants were content to live their monotonous lives, and thought nought of their oversea kinsmen who were making history on the plantations and harbours of Virginia and Mississippi at that time; nor did they care about the relations of the Hottentots and Boers at Cape Town nearer home. (70)

The impression one gets is of a parochial backwater - not the pastoral idyll its author intends, as when Ra-Thaga laments the past that is gone for ever:

. . . Kunana, where we enjoyed a peace and prosperity that were unequalled anywhere; where our cattle waxed fat along the green valleys and bred like so many wild animals; where our flocks increased - most of the ewes feeding two lambs each, while the she-goats fed from two to three kids each . . . (71)

The dialogue is disappointing - Mhudi's farewell address to Umnandi, Mzilikazi's favourite wife, is too stilted, and thus appears to be lacking in warmth:

"Farewell, thou first Matabele with a human heart that ever crossed my way. Mayest thou be as successful in thy quest as I have been in mine. May the gods be forgiving to thy lord and make him deserve thy nobility, and may the god of rain shower blessings upon thy reunion. Good-bye my Matabele Sister; may there be no more war but plenty of rain instead." (72)

This idiom is too Haggardian, recalling the Gothic style of Nada the Lily, where people apostrophize rather than converse. In a letter dated 25th August, 1920, probably to Dr. Silas Molema, Plaatje acknowledges his adoption of Haggard's style:

One is a novel - a love story after the manner of romances; but based on historical facts. . . . with plenty of love, superstitions and imaginations worked in between the wars. Just like the style of Rider Haggard when he writes about the Zulus. (73)

The Haggardian legacy of African romances which influenced Plaatje and Zimbabwe's Stanlake Samkange⁷⁴ reflects, to some extent, the internalisation of the colonisers' view of the colonized by the colonized. This is understandable because, apart from the missionary histories of African politics, the only imaginative work about Africa that was fairly easy to obtain were the Haggardian romances, and tales of hunting expeditions.

The most impressive text on the Chakan era by an African novelist is Thomas Mofolo's Chaka, to which we now turn.

THOMAS MOFOLO'S CHAKA

Thomas Mofolo's background is, in some respects, similar to John Dube's. Mofolo was the third son of Christian Basutho parents. After a chequered educational career, Mofolo obtained a teacher's certificate in 1898.⁷⁵ After qualifying, he worked for Revd. Alfred Casalis, who had provided the funds for some of his schooling, at the press and Book Depot in Morija. At the Mission for Leloaleng (Quthing) he studied carpentry for two years, before taking up teaching. He returned to Morija in 1904 as Secretary to Revd. Casalis and proof reader for the press. He left Morija, hurriedly, in 1910 when, according to Albert Brutsch, he was found guilty of adultery.⁷⁶

He then worked on the Rand before settling in Northern Lesotho as a labour recruiting-agent for the Eckstein group of Central Mining Rand mines, in 1912. He was an entrepreneur, taking over the management of a thirty-mile postal route between Teyateyaneng and Ficksburg, until 1918.

After the War, he became a member of the Basutoland Progressive Association, which had been founded in the early 1900s, and which was critical of both the traditional authorities and the British administration. In 1922 he left the Eckstein group to become an independent labour agent - until 1927. He then bought a store in the Maluti mountains, which he ran until 1937. Later, he bought a farm from a European at Matatiele, close to the Lesotho border. The transaction was nullified under the Native Land Act of 1913 - Mofolo contested the case, and lost. He never recovered from the financial loss; his health was poor and he died, a broken man, in 1948.⁷⁷

Mofolo also reported for Leselinyana, the Sotho newspaper. He wrote a number of books, Moeti Oa Bothabena (The Traveller to the East), Pitseng (The Fallen Angel), the manuscript of which was lost) and Chaka.

Although Chaka was written before he left Morija in 1910, it was only published in 1925, after two chapters describing the history and customs of the Zulus were withdrawn, in order to reduce the cost of publication. Casalis was responsible, it seems, for its publication.⁷⁸ The report of the meeting of the publications committee of April 1927 shows that one committee member, René Ellenberger, objected to its publication, on moral grounds, expressing his

La grand tristesse que lui cause cette décision, car il considère Chaka comme un livre mauvais, bien qu'admirable au point de vue littéraire. (79)

". . . great sadness that this decision caused him because he considered Chaka to be a bad book even though, from a literary point of view, it was admirable."

René Ellenberger was a staunch advocate of an evangelical press, and objected to the printing of secular literature, glorifying, as

he saw it (mistakenly, in my view) a pagan past. For him, the gospel came before the word:

. . . cet livre . . . à ses yeux, ne peut faire que du mal à ses lecteurs, car il est une apologie des superstitions paiennes. Il est étrange qu'une oeuvre religieuse comme notre Mission publie un tel livre; il ne faudrait pas que la valeur littéraire d'un ouvrage nous fit oublier les effets pernicioeux qu'il peut avoir. (80)

. . . this book . . . in his eyes, will only have harmful effects on its readers because it is an apology for pagan superstitions. It is strange that a religious institution like our Mission should publish such a book; we should not let the literary value of a work make us forget the pernicious effects it can have.

It is ironic that his brother, Victor, translated Chaka into French in 1940, thus paving the way for the adoption of the Chakan motif by the French African writers, from Senghor onwards.

Perhaps René Ellenberger was irritated by the centrality of the malevolent trinity of Isanusi, Ndlebe and Malunga in the book. Many critics, including Daniel Kunene, Ezekiel Mpahlele, Peter Sulzer and Luc Decaunes⁸¹, for example, have felt bound to psychologise Isanusi - to see him as Chaka's alter ego, rather than to allow him a life of his own.

Given the centrality of the diviner in Dube's Insila kaTshaka, one should not underestimate the importance of people with supernatural gifts in African societies. Ben Obumselu enumerates the different shades of meaning the broad term "Isanusi" can have:

Isanusi is evil not because he is the devil, but because he is neither an isanusi (diviner), nor an inyanga (healer), nor an isangoma (witchdoctor), but an umthakathi (sorcerer). Mofolo assumes these tribal distinctions when he implicitly endorses Nandi's early visits to an isangoma. Chaka, too, assumes these tribal distinctions when he conceals his dealing with the sorcerer from his mother. (82)

Chaka recognises Isanusi for what he is the moment he sees him:

When Chaka first woke up from his sleep, and their eyes met, he saw that the man's face was distorted with hate, and his lips were like those of a man sick with nausea, and right inside the farthest depths of his eyes he saw unbounded cruelty, he saw someone who had more evil in his heart than any murderer, the very incarnation of malice, treachery and betrayal. His body shuddered and he blinked his eyes. . . . Then when he looked at the man again he found that his face showed sympathy and pity, and was sad on his behalf; and when he looked deep in his eyes, he saw profound compassion and a heart that felt the grief of others, and had true love. The face he had first seen was completely gone. (83)

At a glance, Chaka accurately sums up Isanusi - the second portrait shows Isanusi's guise, the front he cultivates. Isanusi himself confesses that he is a sorcerer:

"Today, Chaka, we are teaching you witchcraft, how sorcerers kill their own children or their parents in order to ensure that they are efficient in their sorcery." (84)

Unlike Jeje, Isanusi uses his power in a negative manner. Isanusi's two assistants, Ndlebe and Malunga, are detailed to assist Chaka. It is significant that the real hero of the novel, Dingiswayo, cannot stomach this hellish trinity. At Chaka's installation, Isanusi, Ndlebe and Malunga remain in their hut rather than meet Dingiswayo. They hide because they do not wish to be revealed for what they are: as Malunga puts it:

Dingiswayo is wise and has eyes that see more than those of many people. His eyes do not look only at the exterior of a person, but penetrate right into the inner recesses of one's heart. (85)

Dingiswayo acts as a foil to Chaka. For Mofolo, Dingiswayo is a prototype of the progressives - he is a man who represents enlightenment:

Dingiswayo arrived and became king at a time when his nation was in pitch black darkness, when the men simply sat at home without doing any work, and were therefore unable to acquire cattle. He came and changed all that . . . he encouraged them [farmers, weavers, carpenters, blanket makers] in their trades by giving prizes to those whose work was superior to the rest; and that way the nation was greatly inspired to engage in trade, and not only produce goods, but also to work neatly, with an eye to beauty . . . Dingiswayo even opened up a trade route leading to Delagoa Bay where trade flourished. (86)

This catalogue of self-help schemes reflect the options favoured by the educated "progressives", after settler regimes were entrenched in power. Even in times of conflict, Dingiswayo tried to avoid needless bloodshed - as his pardoning of Zwide demonstrates. Mofolo praises Dingiswayo's humanity, but sees him as a man born before his time:

He also tried hard to instil in the nation the spirit of human compassion so that they might refrain from attacking each other for no reason; here, however, he failed, and it was clear that he was teaching them something that was above their understanding by far, something strange and unknown to them. The land basked in the warmth of peace and plenty in the days of his reign; and Chaka assumed the kingship when the affairs of the nation were in that state. (87)

Instead of progressing along the path of Dingiswayo, Chaka destroys all that Dingiswayo worked for. Chaka's bloodlust is held responsible for the moral degeneration that occurred:

Chaka had only one purpose in mind: war. Therefore all his conversations, his expressions of beauty, leaned towards that purpose. So the beautiful traditions which brought good to the people, which had been initiated by Dingiswayo, fell to the ground because all the men had been drafted into the armies and the women worked for those armies. (88)

Chaka is an eloquent testimony of the ravages of the difaqane. Mofolo's account of this phase of Southern African history is fascinating, as it comes from a Sotho perspective. The Basutho

nation was founded by Moshoeshoe out of the refugees who fled from Chakan tyranny. Chaka symbolises regression, for Mofolo, rather than peaceful progress:

Ahead of Chaka's armies the land was beautiful, and was adorned with villages and ploughed fields and numerous herds of cattle; but upon their tracks were charred wastes without villages, without ploughed fields, without cattle, without anything whatsoever, except occasionally some wild animals. (89)

Chaka is portrayed as a culpable figure - the novel traces his moral disintegration. A Protestant sense of one's responsibility for one's actions runs through the novel. Mofolo charts Chaka's unhappy childhood - the bullying he endured and the persecution.⁹⁰ His potential for good, for performing positive actions that are valued by the members of the societies in which he lives is revealed in his killing of a lion, a hyena and a madman. But, the cruelty he endures at the hands of his brothers changes his nature for the worse. Fleeing from home, he resolves to live by force of arms:

. . . here on earth people live by might only, and not by right; he decided that here on earth the only person who is wise and strong and beautiful and righteous, is he who knows how to fight with his stick, who, when people argue with him, settles the matter with his stick; and he decided that, from that day on, he would do just as he pleased, and that, whether a person was guilty or not, he would simply kill him if he so wished, for that is the law of man. (91)

The reader sympathises with Chaka - but hopes that his ruthlessness will be tempered by the more charitable spirit that animates Dingiswayo - Chaka's foster-father. Dingiswayo also suffered in his youth; both were rejected by their fathers - but, in spite of this, Dingiswayo remained humane.

Chaka's downfall cannot be blamed on Isanusi, as the latter always underlines the moral ramifications of the treatment⁹² - Chaka is not forced to kill Noliwa, his lover - he makes that decision for himself, after an interlude of nine months.

In killing Noliwa, Chaka crucifies his capacity to love - he sacrifices the person he loves most to his overwhelming ambition for attaining unparalleled power.⁹³ The more power he attains, the greater his abuse of it - he wages endless wars; kills some of his most loyal soldiers, like Nongogo and Mnyamana. He becomes a megalomaniac:

"My kingdom will begin right here where I am and spread along the breadth of the earth, till it reaches its very ends. There will be but one king, not many, and that king will be me." (94)

Isanusi encourages the Faustian element in Chaka; Chaka is propelled by his self-conceit: ". . . I say work with all your strength and all your skill and take me to the very limits of your profound knowledge."⁹⁵

Chaka is guilty of hubris - this comes out strongly in the chapter where he renames the tribe "Mazulu", likening himself to thunder and lightning.⁹⁶ He also coins a new royal greeting, which, he claims, was ordained by God, and he tells his subjects:

"I say to you, my children, respect this command from Nkulunkulu." Bayede means he who stands between God and man, it means the junior god through whom the great God rules the kings of the earth and their nations. (97)

Chaka indulges his ruling passion to such an extent that he does not even spare his favourite concubines - he kills those who bear his children, taking sadistic delight in their suffering.⁹⁸ Towards the end of the novel, Chaka fills iDonga luka Tatiyana with the bodies of his victims.⁹⁹

Not only is Chaka debased, he debases all those around him - Mofolo sees him as the "originator-of-all-things-evil", and blames him for turning people into cannibals.

Mofolo concedes that Chaka is an enigmatic figure; but believes he has interpreted his career fully:

I do not believe that there was ever a human being whose life was as full of mystery as that of Chaka. Dingiswayo's life was full of darkness and secrecy, but these could be unravelled and made intelligible; but Chaka's life has been cloaked in dark mystery until this very day. (100)

Mofolo attempts to explain Chaka in terms of original sin, in terms of a Christian code of conduct. Apart from his predilection to evil, Mofolo's Chaka is also conceived illegitimately: his parents, especially Senzangakhona, are, in part, responsible for his depravity:

The real issue, the cause of it all, was that Nandi and Senzangakhona suffered from guilt . . . (101)

- the sins of the father are visited on the child.

Unloved during childhood, Chaka is incapable of loving, and the murder of Noliwa and his mother blight his chances of experiencing meaningful relationships. The book ends with Chaka's pathetic isolation, from which he is desperately trying to escape. He longs for his brothers - whom he earlier offered to sacrifice; and, with devastating irony, the very people from whom he seeks solace, kill him, and he dies prophesying that they will not reign: "because Umlungu, the white man, is coming, and it is he who will rule you, and you will be his servants."¹⁰² Chaka dies, tormented by his own conscience, lamenting the negative, destructive nature of his reign - even the hyenas scorn his corpse, which turns green overnight.

The appeal of Chaka rests largely in the moral dimension of the tale - it serves as a warning on the abuse of political power:

The events in Chaka's life were overwhelming because they were so numerous and of such tremendous import; they were like great mysteries which were beyond the people's understanding. But since it is not our purpose to recount all the affairs of his life, we have chosen only one part which suits our present purpose. (103)

That "purpose", which remains unstated, is, I believe, to warn Africans of both the hazards and the opportunities on the political

front that are presented by the contemporary events in Southern Africa. To claim, as Kolawole Ogunbesan does, that Chaka is not a political book, is to misread the text.¹⁰⁴ It is not at all surprising that the Chakan motif in French African literature hinges on the exercise of power (see Chapter 4).

Moreover, Chaka's moral dimension enhances its universal appeal, as G. Dieterlen states:

This book has been translated into English, French and German. The reader will appreciate the beauty of the descriptions, the wonderful analysis of the characters of the story, the skill with which the narrative goes to the climax, and the high philosophical and moral standard of the whole work. It is a book which applies to men in all countries, of all races; but it is also an African book which gives interesting information about the ideas, superstitions and customs of African peoples. (105)

Early reviewers attacked the historicity of Chaka, and Thomas Mofolo's retort, in Leselinyana la Lesotho, was to stress that he was interested in literary truth, as opposed to historical "accuracy":

I believe that errors of this kind are very many in the book Chaka [re the establishment of the Shangana nation]; but I am not very concerned about them because I am not writing history, I am writing a tale, or I should rather say I am writing what actually happened, but to which a great deal has been added and from which a great deal has been removed, so that much has been written that did not actually happen, with the aim solely of fulfilling my purpose in writing this book. (106)

Ben Obumselu's article is also another example of prescriptive criticism, for he wishes Mofolo had presented the birth of Chaka as a violation of the ukuhlobonga custom of external intercourse.

Obumselu also attacks Mofolo for resorting to the aid of the supernatural in his description of the battle against the Ndwandwe:

He [Mofolo] is not a realist and cannot organise a large body of circumstantial detail. For the kind of episode he can handle he needs Isanusi, Ndlebe and Malunga. (107)

But, the "hellish crew" are an essential part of the dramatic nature of Chaka - moreover, Mofolo had to omit the detailed description of the Zulu military system to cut the costs of publication.

Another reason for the popularity of Chaka is Mofolo's powerful imagination: the passage describing Chaka's meeting with the tikoloshe (the water serpent) is brilliantly handled - the atmosphere is tense, and the reader is as enthralled by the hot, steaming breath of the serpent as Chaka and Nandi are. The horror is enhanced by the detail:

It stuck out its tongues and wrapped them round his neck, and they crossed at the back of his head and came to join again in front. Then, supporting its weight on him, it drew itself out and coiled itself around his entire body, and it unwound its tongues and started licking him from the head right down to the soles of his feet. When it finished, it raised its head to the level of his face and looked at him at close range, and its hot, stinking breath engulfed him. Once again it licked him thoroughly all over his face, and then it returned into the water backwards, keeping a steady gaze on his face. (108)

Mofolo varies his tone to suit the topic in hand - the novel begins in a matter-of-fact manner, outlining not the unity of African peoples, as The Black People does, but by outlining the difference between the San, Khoi, Batswana, Basotho and Bakone (Matebele):

These nations are markedly distinct from each other, so much so that a person travelling from the west to the east is immediately conscious of having come to a different country and among strange people when he arrives among the Sotho nations in the centre, and likewise when he descends towards the Matebele nations over there beyond the Maloti mountains. (109)

Obumselu also points out how the rhythms in the battle scenes reflect the breathless ecstasy of an imbongi reciting izibongo.¹¹⁰

It is interesting to see how Mofolo regards Mzilikazi as being made in the image of Chaka. Mofolo's Mzilikazi is presented as very ambitious - as is Sol Plaatje's Mzilikazi. In Chaka, Mzilikazi is the first man to publicly challenge the Chakan myth:

. . . Chaka is a human being just like all other human beings, he is no miracle, he is no god, what he does we can also do; he taught us how to fight and that is enough. We are now able to part from him, to throw off the yoke of servitude from our necks, and create a kingdom all of our own where we shall be kings and princes. (111)

Mzilikazi and his warriors abscond with a regiment of women, who share their resentment at not being allowed to marry. Chaka's warriors, sent in pursuit, cannot catch the rebels, as Mzilikazi follows a scorched earth policy. The kingdom he establishes is not, qualitatively, different from that of Chaka:

He climbed over the Maloti mountains in the same direction taken by his own people, the people of Zwide (towards Bapedi). He found the nations of the Basotho, the Batswana and the Bapedi living in peace with their weak little spears, and he played havoc among them with the Zulu spear which stabbed once and killed. He destroyed the nations in a manner never known before. Whenever he came into a village he killed the men, the women and the children, but incorporated the young into his regiments. (112)

Mofolo's hatred of imperialists like Chaka and Mzilikazi doubtless stems from his Sotho background. Moshoeshoe was prudent enough to flatter Chaka by paying tribute to him before Chaka demanded it, and thus saved his people from being attacked. The Sotho kingdom was a haven of peace and security during the ravages of the Chakan wars. The dominant image Mofolo uses to describe the expansionist policies is that of fire, reminiscent of the izibongo:

. . . the conflagration which had been lit by Chaka in the east crossed the Maloti through Moselekatse, destroyed those in the centre while just singeing those in the extreme west, leaving them as casualties. (113)

One senses that Mofolo is relieved by the downfall of Zulu militarism as the ending of the novel shouts:

Even to this day the Zulus, when they think how they were once a strong nation in the days of Chaka, and how other nations dreaded them so much that they could hardly swallow their food, and when they remember their kingdom which has fallen, tears well up in their eyes, and they say: "They ferment, they curdle! Even great pools dry away!" (114)

CONCLUSION

Several conclusions can be drawn from studying these texts, as they share common themes. Firstly, the most important feature is that they are engaged in the evaluation of the African past in terms of the pre-colonial power structure: Fuze's Abantu Abamnyama deals with the reigns of the Zulu kings, and the destruction of the Zulu kingdom; Insila kaTshaka and Chaka are historical novels set in Shakan Zululand. Secondly, the fiction can be discussed under the broad umbrella of "romance" - in the sense that the tales consist of love stories, mystery and magic. Women have important roles in these books: Zaki, Mhudi and Umnandi are symbols of true love, constancy, fidelity and courage.

Thirdly, as these novels are, in many respects, pioneer works (Jeje was the first novel in Zulu; and Mhudi the first novel written in English by a black South African) it is unwise to try to categorise them according to Western genres. Whilst they share certain themes with the works of the likes of Haggard, they are, in essence, written records of oral testimony and folklore. They are a blend of myth, praise-poems, legends and folk tales. Fuze, Plaatje and Dube set out to preserve the African cultural heritage, and had Mofolo's Chaka not been cut, it, too, would have contained a detailed description of the Zulu military system, which is said to have impressed him.¹¹⁵ Proverbs are shown to be integral to the art of conversation in Mhudi, particularly in those sections detailing life amongst the Barolong and the Matebele.

Songs are woven into the fabric of the novels, for example, the snake song in Chaka:

Hail! Hail! This land is yours, child of my compatriot.
You shall rule over nations and their kings.
You shall rule over peoples of diverse traditions
You shall even rule over the winds and the sea storms,

"The warriors greeted him by saying:

Bayede, baba, Nkosi yamakhosi!
Wena Ngonyama, Ndlovu-ayiphendulwa!
Wena owakhula silibele,
Bayede, baba, Nkosi yezulu!
Wena omnyama, owavela wasiphatha ngetahu!
Wena ongangendlovu,
Wena odl'amadoda,
Wena onzipho zingengezebhbesi!
Wena ongangezulu eliphezulu,
Wena Zulu, siphathe ngetahu!
Bayede Nkosi! Bayede Baba! Bayede Zulu!

(Bayede, O Father, King of Kings!
You who are a Lion, Elephant-never-to-be-answered!
You who grew up while we dawdled,
Bayede, Father, King of heaven!
You, O Black One, who appeared and ruled us with compassion!
You who are great as an elephant,
You who devour other men;
You whose claws resemble those of a lion!
You who are as great as the sky above,
You Zulu, rule us with compassion!
Bayede, O King! Bayede, O Father! Bayede, O Zulu!)

The men of the council woke up in the early hours and went to the court so that they should be able to greet the king; and as soon as he appeared they would stand up as one man and remain on their feet; Mbopha, their leader, would say: 'The sky is clear today' (that is to say the king is happy), and they would respond by saying: 'If the sky is clear, we shall enjoy its pleasing warmth'; and then they would greet the king in unison: 'Bayede, O King! You whose warmth is like that of the sun which makes the seedlings grow. Greetings to you, O our Sun!'

Or Mbopha would say: 'The sky is overcast today' (the king is not happy), and they would answer him saying: 'If the sky is overcast, we are happy because it brings us the blessings of rain', which meant that many people would be killed.

The young women, the king's 'sisters', greeted him by saying:

Sakubona Mntwanamuhle, bayede Mhlekazi

(Greetings, O Beautiful Child, Bayede, Most Excellent One)

or:

Bayede, Nkosi
Uteku lwabafazi bakwaNomgabi
Ababelutekula behlezi emilovini,
Bayede Zulu!

(Bayede, O King!
Sport of the women of Nomgabi
Which they joked about as they basked in the sun,
Bayede, O Zulu!)

Chaka had only one purpose in mind: war.
Therefore all his conversations, his expressions
of beauty, leaned towards that one purpose. So
the beautiful traditions which brought good to
the people, which had been initiated by Dingiswayo,
fell to the ground because all the men had been
drafted into the armies, and the women worked
for those armies.

Here we now reproduce the praises of King Chaka,
in Zulu, which we were able to obtain:

USHAKA (NguChakijana kaMsenteli)

UShaka ngiyesaba ukuthi nguShaka,
UShaka kwakuyinkosi yaseMashobeni,
Uteku lwabafazi bakwaNomgabi;
Ababelutekula behlezi emilovini.
Babethi UShaka kayikubusa
Kayikuba yinkosi
Kanti kunyakana uShaka ezakunethezeka.

UDlungwane woMbelebele,
Odlunge emanxulumeni,
Kwaze kwasa amanxuluma esibekelana.

Umlilo wothathe kaMjokwane kaNdaba,
Umlilo wothathe ubuhanguhangu,
Oshise izikhova zaseDlebe,
Kwaze kwaye kwasha neziseMabedlana,
Izinkomo zawoSihayo zamlandela
Wakhangela enzansi namaDungela,
Kwaze kwalandela nezamaFongosi
Ezazisengwa yindiki lakwaMavela.

Izulu elidume ngenhla komuzi eKugobekeni,
Lazithath'izihlangu zamaPhela,
Lamudl' uNomhlanjana ezalwa nguZwide,
Lamudl' uMphepha naye ezalwa nguZwide.

Indlov' ethe imuka babeyilandela abakwaLanga,
Yase idla uDayingubo ezalwa nguZwide,
Yamudla uMpondophumelakwezinde emaPheleni,
Yamudla uMthimona ezalwa nguGapa.

Inkonyane ekhwele phezu kwendlu kwaNtombazi,
Bathi iyahlola kanti yibona abahlolayo;
Indlovu ebuyise inhloko, yadl'amadoda,
Indlovu ekhal'isemi Thonjaneni;
Izulu elidume ladl'izihlangu zamaPhela,
Abafazi imikhubulo bayishiy'izingundi,
Imbewu bayishiy'isemanxiweni,
Abafazi abanendeni banyekeza.

KwaSomdombana udle izimfe zambili
Kwayisimanga ikhambi laphuma lilinye,
Akayi nasebandla, akayi nasemaduneni,
Unjengo Vimba wakwaMangwekazi.

Igawu abathi beliluma bebeliphimisa
Bakhumbul'amagawu abebesi
Umlunguzi wezingoje, izingoje zilunguzelane.
Ngoba walunguz' ingoje yomfowabo.
Unyaluthi olumnyama lukaHlayukana,
Balukhotha bengakayi enyangeni abakwaZulu.

Umbebe kamame, beba simuke,
Abanye basemhlane kanina babelethwe,
NgabawoMbuzo, ngabawoNsele,
NgabawoSichusa sikaDingankomo
Intethe egolwe ngomkhonto kwaMalandela,
Intethe ethe ukusuka yajubalala.

USHAKA (By Chakijana Son of Msenteli)

(Shaka, I fear to say he is Shaka,
Shaka was the king of Mashobeni,
The joke of the women of Nomgabi
Which they bandied about, sitting in contentment.
They said Shaka would not rule,
Would not be king
Yet that was the very year Shaka inherited a life of comfort.

Ferocious one of the armies at Mbelebele
Who unleashed his fury within the large villages
So that till dawn the villages were tumbling over each other.

Fire of the dry tinder, of Mjokwane of Ndaba,
Fire of the dry tinder scorches fiercely
Which burned the owls at Dlebe hill
And afterwards those at Mabedlana also burned
And the cattle of Sihayo and others followed him
And he looked down towards the maDungela,
The cattle of the maFongosi then followed also
Which were milked by the demented one of Mavela's place.

The Sky that thundered above the village at Kuqobokeni
And took the shields of the maPhela regiment
And ate up Nomhlanjana begotten by Zwide
And ate up Mphepha also begotten by Zwide.

Elephant which, on leaving, was followed by the people of Langa,
Whereupon it ate up Dayingubo begotten by Zwide,
Ate up Mpondophumelakwezinde among the maPhela warriors,
Ate up Mthimona begotten by Gapa.

The Calf that climbed upon a house at Ntombazi's place
And they thought he was portending evil whereas they were
the ones who were portending evil.

Elephant which, on turning its head, devoured the men.
Elephant which trumpets while yet at miThonjaneni.
Heaven that thundered and ate up the shields of the maPhela
So that the women left the sprouting crops while still short
And left their seeds in the deserted villages;
And expectant women were forced to give birth.

At Somdombana's he ate two sugar-canes
Yet surprisingly only one chewed refuse came out,
He does not even go to his court, nor to his personal
bodyguards,
He is like Vimba from the place of Mangwekazi.

Strapping young one whom they bite only to spit out
As he reminded them of the strong-muscled cubs of lions
Peerer over precipices, so that the precipices may peer
at each other

Because he peered into the precipice of his brother.
Black sorghum of Hlayukana
Which the people of Zululand licked before going to
consult the doctor.

My mother's little one, climb on my back and let us go,
Some others are already carried on their mother's backs,
They are the ones of Mbuzo, the ones of Nsele,
They are the ones of Sichusa of Dingankomo,
Locust which was trapped with a spear at Mandela's
Locust which from the very start soared ahead.)" (120)

Later on in the novel, Nongogo greets Chaka with the royal
salute:

Bayede Nkosi yamakhosi
Wena Ngonyama enzipho zibukhali
Wena odla amadoda.
Bayede baba!
Bayede Zulu!

(Bayede, O King of kings!
You, Lion with sharp claws!
You who devour other men.
Bayede, father!
Bayede, Zulu!) (121)

Lastly, there is the question of working with translations.
With the exception of Mhudi, the other texts were first written in
the vernacular. The inevitable problems of the lack of equivalent
idioms, or words, mean that one invariably loses the texture of
the original work - nevertheless, one can take comfort in the fact
that there is, essentially, little difference between the Kunene
edition of Mofolo's Chaka and the Dutton edition, for example.
What mars the Dutton translation is the adoption of the idiom of the
Authorised Bible in the dialogue. The choice of this register
heightens the syncretic elements in Chaka - for example, when
Malunga says to Chaka: ". . . In times of peace when there is no
war, I will abide with thee and we will take counsel together . ." ¹²²
and one is reminded of Haggard's dialogue.

Most of the variant translations are ideologically based, rather than substantially different interpretations - Kunene, for instance, avoids using the word "Kafir" because of its pejorative connotations; and he avoids using the word "witchcraft", presumably for the same reason - as the following extracts show:

The tribes along the western sea-board are
Bushman and Hottentots of a yellow colour . . . (Dutton, p.1)

. . . The nations settled along the western
sea-board are yellow in complexion. They are
the San and the Khoi. (Kunene, p. 1)

and:

. . . the Eastern tribes are the Kafirs and the
Matabele. (Dutton, p. 1)

Those to the East are the Bakone or the
Matabele. (Kunene, p. 1)

and in the following extract, we see that Chaka is a culpable
figure:

'I do not bind thee in any way, but leave the
whole decision to thee, for the witchdoctors
do not give a man the medicine he desires,
even if it brings his destruction.' (Dutton, p. 124)

'I believe, Chaka, that you have heard me when
I said I am not binding you to do anything,
but am leaving the decision entirely up to
you, because we doctors simply give a person
the medicine he wants, even though it may be
one that kills.' (Kunene, p. 102)

By 1930, however, the next generation of educated Africans
were beginning to rehabilitate Chaka, portraying him as a
"Renaissance man", as the following description by T. D. Mveli
Skota shows:

Tshaka was a thinker . . .

Tshaka was a very busy man, being his own Field-
Marshal, Minister of War, Minister of Foreign
Affairs, Prime Minister, Administrator, Political
Agent and King. He was also engaged in research
work. This is indeed a big task for any man,
even under the most favourable circumstances.
That Tshaka, like William the Conqueror, was a
a great man nobody can doubt, and to state that
he was a cruel King is to pay a man who broke

virgin ground and founded a nation the poorest compliment. Had there been no Tshaka, there might never have been a proud Zulu nation. In Tshaka's day there was no need to have an army of detectives and a force of police. Every man and woman had perfect respect for law and order. Tshaka was a well built, tall and, indeed, a fine specimen of a man. Strict as he was, hundreds of civilised Zulus to this day swear by Tshaka. Whatever may be said, the Zulus are indeed a fine people, well-developed physically, good natured, full of humour and as brave as lions. (123)

Published in 1931 or 1932, this extract from The Yearly Register shows how the "originator-of-all-things-evil"'s reputation had been laundered by Africans who felt the need to assert what was positive in their background - in this case the formation of a Zulu empire before the advent of a European empire in Southern Africa - in the face of the entrenchment of white power in the '20s and '30s in South Africa. Tshaka is being mobilised as the vehicle through which African self-respect can be marshalled. He is held up as a paragon of virtue, as a man worthy of emulation, by one of the leading figures of the black bourgeoisie - it is fascinating to see how Skota, who was/a Zulu, wholly identifies with/myth of the Zulus as "the Warrior Race" - a powerful myth, which, as we saw in Chapter 1, has pervaded most of the literature on the Zulus, and has, perhaps, reached its apogee in the films Zulu and Zulu Dawn.

Footnotes - Chapter 2

1. Mofolo, T., Chaka, ed. D. P. Kunene, London: Heinemann, 1981, p. 137. The first English translation was by F. H. Dutton, London: O.U.P., 1931. Kunene renders Chaka's fiancée's name as "Noliwa", and Dutton as "Noliwe". Apart from the conscious archaism of Dutton's adoption of the cadence of the Authorized Version, the two translations are quite alike. The quotations are taken from the Kunene text.
2. T. Couzens and S. Gray: "Printers and other devils: the texts of Sol. T. Plaatje's Mhudi", Research in African Literatures, Vol. 9, No. 2, 1978, pp. 198-215.
3. See, for example: T. J. Couzens' doctoral thesis: "The New African": Herbert Dhlomo and Black South African Literature in English, 1857-1956. Wits, 1984; A. S. Gérard, Four African Literatures: Xhosa, Sotho, Zulu, Amharic, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971; and S. Gray: South African Literature: An Introduction, U.S.A., Harper Row, 1979.
4. Fuze, Mofolo and Dube published these texts in the vernacular and they were later translated into English. The quotations are given from the translations of Fuze: The Black People and Whence They Came: A Zulu View, transl. H. C. Lugg, edited A. T. Cope, University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg and Killie Campbell Africana Library, Durban, 1979; (Abantu Abamnyama LapaBavela Ngakona, Pietermaritzburg, 1922). Mofolo's Chaka was published in Sesotho in 1925; and J. L. Dube's Jeje the Body Servant of King Tshaka, transl. J. Boxwell, Lovedale Press, 1951, was first published in Zulu as Insila kaTshaka, Lovedale, 1930.
5. See, for example, Russell Martin and Ben Orme, op. cit., and Shula Marks: "Harriette Colenso and the Zulus, 1874-1913", Journal of African History, IV, No. 3, 1963, pp. 403-411; and Reluctant Rebellion. The 1906-8 Disturbances in Natal. Oxford, 1970.
6. Fuze, op. cit., p. 110.
7. *ibid.*, pp. xiv-xv.
8. *ibid.*, p. i.
9. *ibid.*, p. i.
10. T. J. Couzens, "The New African", op. cit.
11. Fuze, op. cit., p. xviii.
12. *ibid.*, p. xvii.
13. *ibid.*, p. 53.

14. *ibid.*, p. 55.
15. *ibid.*, pp. viii-ix.
16. *ibid.*, pp. 101, 102.
17. *ibid.*, pp. 100, 130.
18. *ibid.*, p. 142.
19. *ibid.*, p. 146.
20. *ibid.*, p. 66.
21. *ibid.*, p. 47.
22. *ibid.*, p. 70.
23. *ibid.*, p. 59.
24. *ibid.*, p. 59.
25. *ibid.*, p. 97.
26. *ibid.*, p. 97.
27. *ibid.*, p. 51.
28. *ibid.*, p. 53.
29. *ibid.*, p. 50.
30. *ibid.*, p. 55.
31. *ibid.*, p. 65.
32. *ibid.*, p. 50.
33. *ibid.*, p. 50.
34. *ibid.*, p. 60.
35. *ibid.*, p. 84.
36. cited in Gérard, *op. cit.*, pp. 205-6.
37. Benson, M., South Africa: The Struggle for a Birthright, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966, p. 25.
38. Marks, S., "The Ambiguities of Dependence: John L. Dube of Natal", Journal of Southern African Studies (J.S.A.S.), Vol. 1, No. 2, April, 1975, pp. 162-180.
39. Jege, *op. cit.*, p. 9.
40. *ibid.*, p. 56.
41. *ibid.*, p. 26.

42. *ibid.*, p. 19.
43. *ibid.*, p. 26.
44. *ibid.*, p. 30.
45. *ibid.*, p. 1.
46. *ibid.*, p. 29.
47. *ibid.*, p. 75.
48. Marks, "The Ambiguities of Dependence", *op. cit.*, p. 171.
See also, Gérard, *op. cit.*, p. 216.
49. Jege, *op. cit.*, p. 58.
50. D. B. Ntuli: "A Brief Survey of Modern Literature in the South African Bantu Languages: Zulu", Limi, No. 6, June 1968, p. 28.
51. Gérard, *op. cit.*, pp. 214, 215.
52. *ibid.*, p. 215.
53. R. E. McDowell, "The Brief Search for an African Hero: The Chaka-Mzilikazi Story in South African Novels", Discourse, 1968, XI, pp. 276-283; P. Abrahams, Wild Conquest, Surrey: Nelson, 1982 (1951).
54. Comaroff, J. L. (ed.), The Boer War Diary of Sol. T. Plaatje: An African at Mafeking, London, Sphere, 1976.
55. Benson, *op. cit.*, p. 30.
56. Couzens and Gray, "Printers and other devils . . .", *op. cit.*.
57. Cited in Gray's edition, Mhudi, *op. cit.*, p. 21.
58. *ibid.*, p. 29.
59. *ibid.*, p. 28.
60. *ibid.*, p. 29.
61. *ibid.*, p. 32.
62. *ibid.*, p. 51.
63. *ibid.*, p. 50.
64. *ibid.*, p. 175.
65. *ibid.*, p. 37.
66. *ibid.*, p. 66.

67. *ibid.*, p. 18.
68. *ibid.*, p. 21.
69. *ibid.*, p. 27.
70. *ibid.*, p. 27.
71. *ibid.*, p. 39.
72. *ibid.*, p. 167.
73. Cited in Couzens and Gray, "Printers and Other Devils", *op. cit.*, pp. 201-2.
74. See Stanlake Samkange's The Mourned One, London: Heinemann, 1975, p. 3.
75. See Gérard, *op. cit.*, pp. 108-9.
76. *ibid.*, p. 131.
77. *ibid.*, p. 13 ff.
78. *ibid.*, p. 129.
79. *ibid.*, p. 129.
80. *ibid.*, p. 129.
81. See Kunene, D. P., The Works of Thomas Mofolo: Summaries and Critiques, Occasional Papers No. 2, African Studies Center, University of California, Los Angeles, 1967, p. 25; Mpahlele, E., The African Image, N.Y. 1962, p. 172; P. Sulzer, "Nachwort" to Chaka de Zulu, Zurich, 1953; Luc Decaunes, "Une Epopée Bantoue", Présence Africaine, no. 5 (1948), pp. 883-6.
82. Obumselu, B., "Mofolo's Chaka and the Folk Tradition", Papers in African Literature, Sheffield University Seminar Series, 1976, p. 37.
83. Chaka, *op. cit.*, p. 37.
84. *ibid.*, p. 101.
85. *ibid.*, p. 78.
86. *ibid.*, p. 105.
87. *ibid.*, pp. 105-6.
88. *ibid.*, p. 117.
89. *ibid.*, p. 136.
90. *ibid.*, pp. 7, 11.
91. *ibid.*, p. 35.

92. *ibid.*, p. 43.
93. *ibid.*, pp. 46-7.
94. *ibid.*, p. 100.
95. *ibid.*, p. 90.
96. *ibid.*, p. 103.
97. *ibid.*, p. 115.
98. *ibid.*, p. 149.
99. *ibid.*, p. 164.
100. *ibid.*, p. 96.
101. *ibid.*, p. 104.
102. *ibid.*, p. 167.
103. *ibid.*, p. 153.
104. See Ogunbesan, K., "A King for all Seasons: Chaka in African Literature", Présence Africaine, No. 88, 1973, p. 197.
105. Dieterlen, G., "Thomas Mofolo", African Affairs, XLVIII, No. 190 (1949), pp. 74-5.
106. Chaka, op. cit., p. xv.
107. Obumselu, op. cit., pp. 37, 42.
108. Chaka, op. cit., pp. 23-4.
109. *ibid.*, p. 1.
110. Obumselu, op. cit.
111. Chaka, p. 139.
112. *ibid.*, p. 141.
113. *ibid.*, p. 141.
114. *ibid.*, p. 168.
115. *ibid.*, p. xii.
116. *ibid.*, p. 24.
117. *ibid.*, p. 19.
118. Jege, op. cit., p. 4.
119. *ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

120. Chaka, op. cit., pp. 116-120.
121. ibid., p. 143.
122. ibid., p. 71.
123. T. D. M. Skota, ed., The African Yearly Register: Being an Illustrated National Biographical Dictionary (Who's Who) of Black Folks in Africa. Johannesburg: R. L. Esson & Co., Ltd., 1931 or 1932.

CHAPTER 3: "SHAKA THE FOUNDER OF A NATION"

"Yes, in Tshaka, the world, I verily believe,
saw a new creation, fitful and fretful as a
volcano and, as a volcano, world-destroying
when in action." (James Stuart) (1)

This chapter evaluates the crystallisation of the myth of Tshaka the nation-builder in the works of James Stuart, Revd. A. T. Bryant, and Robert Samuelson. Although the texts that will be discussed are not literary masterpieces, they have been enormously influential as principal sources for Tshakan historiography and literature. Notwithstanding their blend of fact, fiction and faction, the works of Stuart, Bryant and Samuelson are to this day often treated as the primary sources of the Tshakan story. Each of these writers deals with Zulu history, anthropology and culture - their breadth and scope reflect the general interest in the African past that had developed in the '20s and '30s amongst the South African settler population.

Stuart, Bryant and Samuelson are also famous for publishing lengthy versions of Shaka's praise-poems - the first to appear since the versions produced by the Reverends Grout and Grant, which were analysed in Part I of the thesis.

The chapter falls into three parts - the first entails an evaluation of eight of the individual Tshakan praise-poems obtained by Professor Leroy Vail (and passed on to me) from Stuart's Books of Eulogies at the Killie Campbell Africana Memorial Library (KCML); plus a description of other material I was sent by the KCML, including drafts of James Stuart's two lectures on "The Life of Tshaka"; and the praise-poems published in Stuart's school textbooks,

uTulasizwe, uHlangakula, uBaxoxele and uKulumetule. These poems were reproduced in the Stuart-Malcolm-Cope version of Shaka's poem discussed in Part I, but they are worthy of analysis as individual poems, as they shed light on the question of style in praise-poetry.

The second part of the chapter will discuss Samuelson's contribution to the Tshakan legend in Long, Long Ago; and the third part will be an analysis of Bryant's enormously influential Olden Times in Zululand and Natal, which consolidated and gave academic respectability to the myths widely propagated by Rider Haggard, of the Zulu warrior-king.

THE PRAISE-POEMS COLLECTED BY JAMES STUART

I shall be analysing the poems by Mgidhlana, Magidigidi, Mayinga, Nduna, Mzenzi, Mpuhlana, Mkungu and Mshapi in the chronological order in which they were transcribed by James Stuart, and discussing their individual merit. Ideally, one would like to gain access to all thirty-three poems cited by Rycroft - but the Killie Campbell Africana series currently being published has relegated izibongo to a secondary position, concentrating instead on the oral testimonies given by Stuart's informants. It is my hope, when I return to Africa, to obtain copies of the other poems, as these would shed light on the composite nature of the "community creation" of the Stuart-Malcolm-Cope mega-poem.

On the 30th August, 1903, Stuart transcribed the following poem from a recital by the poet, Mgidhlana ka Mpande (the translation(s) are mine, except where Stuart and/or Malcom provided explanatory notes in the original manuscript, which I will quote):

Tshaka

uDhlondhlwane lu ka Ndaba!
Lu hleze lu dhlondhlomela,
Lu bek' isihlang' emadolweni,
Uhlanya o lu semehlwen' amadoda.

Umoyo mzansi wo mngenelo,
 Ohleze u ba ngenela na ngo mnyango.
 uSipepo-tshunguza nga s'emkandlwini,
 Siya kwe ngab'ubayede nga s'e Langeni.
 O zungez' uPiso, nge zinyembezi,
 Izinkomo zo Piso za puma zamlandela
 Mlilo wo tate ka Mjokwane,
 Otshis'isikota, e sis eDhlebe,
 Kwaze, kwatchi e si s eMagudunkomo.
 uDhlungwane wo Mbelabele
 Odhlung' emanxulumeni,
 Kwa ze kwas'amanxulum' e bikelana. (2)

Tshaka

The young viper of Ndaba!
 He who grows whilst he sits,
 With his shield on his knees.
 The madman in full view of the men.
 South wind of sudden attack
 Which usually attacks unawares even by the doorway.
 Twirling hurricane about the assembled council,
 'twill firmly establish Bayede in the Langeni tribe
 He who encircled Piso, making him cry (?)
 And Piso's cattle left the enclosure and followed him.
 Fire of the long dry grass, son of Mjokwane
 That burned the owls on Dhlebe hill
 And eventually those on Magudunkomo also burned.
 Ferocious one of the Mbelebele brigade
 Who raged among the large kraals
 So that until dawn the huts were being turned upside down.

Mgidhlana's poem was transcribed in Durban, and it portrays Tshaka as Ndaba's heir - like Ndaba, Tshaka sits "with his shield on his knees".

Tshaka's volatile temperament is encapsulated in the "madman" analogy; and the "South wind of sudden attack" "praises". Stuart glosses the praise:

USipepo-Tshunguza nga s'emkhandlwini,
 Si ya kwe ngab' ubayede nga se Langeni.

as

Twirling hurricane about the assembled council,
 'twill firmly establish Bayede in the Langeni tribe.

With admirable economy of language, the poet develops the elemental imagery of the "south wind of sudden attack" by referring to a "Twirling hurricane", with its powerful connotations of a destructive force, which will result in a "new creation" by establishing Tshakan rule amongst his maternal relatives - the Langeni: the very people

who, in his childhood, refused to greet Tshaka, a Zulu prince, with the royal salute: "Bayede". The "hurricane" image also carries the notion of violent disruption of the status quo which existed whilst Tshaka was "growing" up.

Tshaka's military success is established in the praise: "And Piso's cattle left the enclosure and followed him". He also specialises in surprize attacks; and the "Fire of the long grass" praise highlights his scorching personality, which was largely responsible for the new order which he established:

Ferocious one of the Mbelebele brigade
Who raged among the large kraals
So that until dawn the huts were being turned upside down.

Tshaka is presented as the man who ushered in the new "dawn" of the Zulu people that had been prophesied by Ndaba.

On the 10th May, 1905, in Durban, Stuart collected the following praises from Magidigidi:

uHlany' o lu s' emehlwen' a Madoda!
uNodum' e hlezi, o njengo ka Qengwa, eMgeneleni!
uDhlungwana, o nge na Mtelekeli. (3)

The madman in full view of the men!
He-who-thunders-while-he-sits, like the one of
Qengwa at Mgeneleni.
The ferocious one who had no one to help him.

These praises seem to indicate that Tshaka had to fend for himself from an early age, because his father, Sengangakona - referred to here by his praise name, Qengwa, made no provisions on his behalf. Tshaka's personality hardened as a child, and he became as callous as the madman he is reputed to have killed single-handed.

Mayinga ka Mbekuzana recited the following poem to Stuart on the 9th July, 1905, in which Tshaka is portrayed as a peerless warrior king:

Tshaka
uNodum' e hlezi ka menzi!
uTshaka ka si tshayeki!
uSipupuma si madey' imiyayo!
Ilemb'el'eq' amany' amalembe!

uSibagojela ngale kwa Nkandhla,
 Lu gojela njalo lu dhl'amododa;
 Lu dhl'uMvakela, o be zalwa uDhlaba;
 Lu dhl'uMagobo, o be zalwa uDhlaba;
 Lu dhl'uKwababa, o be zalwa uDhlaba;
 Lu dhl'uDhladhlama, wa kwa Majola;
 Lu dhl'uMpepa, o be zalwa uZwide;
 Lu dhl'uSixolaba, o be zalwa uZwide;
 Lu dhl'uSihlaminimunya, kwa ba kwa Zwide
 Lnyon' e dhl'ezinye!
 Ya t'i sa dhl'ezinye!
 Odh'imihlambi, inge ya ba Rwebi. (4)

Tshaka

He-who-thunders while he sits, son of Menzi!
 Tshaka is not beatable!
 Overflowing with eagerness, he ignored the instructions!
 Axe that overcomes other axes!
 Feather that bobbed down the other side of Nkandhla
 Bobbing down always and devouring men;
 That ate up Mvakela, the son of Dhlaba;
 That ate up Magobo, the son of Dhlaba;
 That ate up Kwababa, the son of Dhlaba;
 That ate up Dhladhlama, the son of Mazola;
 That ate up Mpepa, the son of Zwide;
 That ate up Sixolaba, the son of Zwide;
 That ate up Sihlaminimunya, amongst those of Zwide
 Bird that devours others!
 Which, whilst eating some (still it devoured some more)!
 Which devoured herds of cattle, like those of the Rwebi.

Mayinga refers to Tshaka by his father's praise name, Menzi, which means "Creator". The poem probably celebrates Tshaka's prowess and daring during a campaign against the combined forces of Dhlaba and Zwide; and possibly dates from his youth, as he is praised for using his ingenuity - although this entailed overlooking his commander's orders:

He-who-thunders-while-he-sits, son of Menzi!
 Tshaka is not beatable!
 Overflowing with eagerness, he ignored instructions!
 Axe that overcomes other axes!

As we have seen in the preceding chapters, Tshaka is also praised in the literature as an innovative genius. Mayinga ends his poem with the image of a bird of prey: "Bird that devours others!". Tshaka consolidated his position by his successful cattle raiding - the Rwebi referred to in the closing line bartered tobacco.

On 19th April, 1910, Stuart transcribed the following majestic poem from Nduna ka Manqina, in Pietermaritzburg:

Tshaka

- 1 Dhlungwana ka Ndaba!
O nge na mtekeleli.
O wa-dhl'izinkomo ze mpatiso,
O ku na mini loku u sa 'patekile.
- 5 Inkom' e kal'eMtonjaneni,
Um'kubuli ba mshiy' izinqindi,
Imbewu ba yi shiya s emahlangeni,
Izalukazi za sala s emanxiweni,
Amaxegu a sala s emzileni.
- 10 uXebe ngi m bon' ukwehla kwe zi ka Mangcenza,
Kwa-ti kwe zi ka Pungatshe wa nyamalala.
Inung' e gwaz' ama'cuku'bada,
Pakati ku ka Magaye no Nzawu.
O'bo'bos' isikal' eMampondweni,
- 15 Isikala na namuhla si 'kamisile;
Wa-dhl' uMdubu ka Faku.
Izulu e la duma e s'eMampondweni,
Pezu ku kaFaku umnta ka Ngqungqunshe;
La zi tat'izihlangu za Mampondo.
- 20 U'bani lwa-ye lwema eSikaleni-se-Nyoka,
Wa-ye wa buya kwa ba'Bomvana.
Imfoloz' emnyama ka Sitayi no'Biyane,
Inket'a'baweli;
Ozo yi wela yedwa, u zo kok'imbuzi yake;
- 25 O zo yi wela yedwa, u za u'kok' igeja.
Nkwenkwez' ende ka Mjokwane!
Imi ngo msila, iye ya 'bambela pezul'ezulwini,
Ku pume ama'kwez' amabili pezul'ezulwini,
Amakwez' a puma' a bikelana.
- 30 U hamb' e bas' amaxoba,
Amaxob' e washiya;
uSomaxoba aKangelene ne la kwaNtombazi
Ne la kwa Nandi.
uDhlungwane ka Ndaba!
- 35 U dhlung' emanxulumeni.
U dabule ku Ndimu, wa dabula ku Mgovu,
Wa mu dhl'uMatiwana eMangwaneni;
Wa mu dhl'uBungane ka mtinkulu, emaHlubini.
Nkosi u mubi, ngoba ka u keti,
- 40 Ngoba na ba kwo nyokolume u ya ba bulala;
Wa mu dhl'uBebe, umnta ka Ncumela, nga kwo Nyokolume.
Isixokolo e si nga matsh'a s eNkandhla,
A pepel'izindhlovu uba li pendule.
uMpape gojela ngalapa kwe Nkandhla,
- 45 Lu gojela njalo lu dhl'abant'a ba madoda;
Lu dhl' uTondolozu, umnta ka Tayi,
Lwadhl' uDayingubo, umnta ka Zwide;
Wa dhl' uMpepa, umnta ka Zwide;
Wa dhl' uNomahlanjana, umnta ka Zwide.
- 50 Izihlangu zona zodwa, Dhlungwane ka Ndaba, ze nanene,
Ne si ka Gwaqaza, ne si ka Ndhlaludaka, eNtonteleni.
Ntonga ye tusi, ka Mjokwane!
- 53 Etshay'amanzi kwa vel'udaka, wa wela. (5)

Tshaka

- 1 The ferocious one of Ndaba!
Who has no one to assist him.
He who devoured the trust cattle
Even to this day he is still responsible.
- 5 Beast that lowed at Mthonjaneni
The newly planted crops they left still short,
The seed they left amongst the maize stalks.
The old women were left in the abandoned sites,
The old men were left along the tracks.
- 10 Hawk that I saw descending from the hills of Mangcenza
And from those of Pungatshe he disappeared.
Porcupine that stabbed the disorderly young people
Between Magaye and Nzawu.
He who bored an opening amongst the Mpondo
Even today the opening is still wide open;
He ate up the dun-coloured cattle of Faku.
The sky that thundered over the Mpondos
It thundered over Faku, the son of Ngqungqunshe
It took the shields of the Mpondos.
- 20 The lightning eventually reached Snake's Neck,
And he turned back at the Bomvana Clan.
Black Umfolozi of Sitayi and Biyané,
Who chooses those who ford it;
It can be forded by he who has a goat
It can be forded by he who has a hoe.
- 25 High star of Mjokwane!
Standing on its tail, it eventually reached right up to the sky.
And then there came out two morning stars up in the sky,
The two morning stars came out and confronted each other.
- 30 He who goes along making fires,
And leaving behind conflagrations;
The father of fires and his rival watched one another;
The one of Ntombazi
And the one of Nandi.
- 35 The ferocious one of Ndaba!
Who raged among the large kraals.
He who travelled across to Ndima and Mgovu,
He ate up Matiwana of the Ngwane clan.
He ate up Bungane, son of Mtimkulu amongst the Hlubi clan.
King, you are wrong because you do not discriminate,
Because even those of your maternal uncle's family
you kill;
You ate up Bebe, the son of Ncumela of your maternal
uncle's family.
- 45 Pile of firmly planted stones at Nkandhla
Where the elephants take refuge when it is bad weather.
Feather that bobbed down on the other side of Nkandhla,
Bobbing down always and devouring men;
It ate up Tondolozzi, the son of Tayi,
It ate up Dayingubo, the son of Zwide;
He ate up Mpepa, the son of Zwide
He ate up Nomahlanjana, the son of Zwide.
- 50 Only the shields, ferocious one of Ndaba, will be exchanged.
Those of Gwaqaza and those of Ndhlaludaka of the Ntontela
regiment.
- 53 Brass walking-stick son of Mjokwane
That which struck the water and mud appeared, and he
appeared.

The opening praises salute a self-made man:

The ferocious one of Ndaba!
Who has no one to assist him.

The poem celebrates Tshaka's successful campaigns, and lists some of his victims, including the Mpondo, Pungatshe, Zwide, Matiwane, Bungane and Tondolozzi. The following lines vividly depict the chaos that resulted when Tshaka appeared:

Beast that lowed at Mthonjaneni,
The newly planted crops they left still short,
The seed they left amongst the maize stalks.
The old women were left in the abandoned sites,
The old men were left along the tracks. (ll. 5-9)

The notion of "flight" is taken up in the following lines, but the emphasis is not on the flight of Tshaka's victims, but that of Tshaka himself, who is imaged as a bird of prey:

Hawk that I saw descending from the hills of Mangcengeza,
And from those of Pungatshe it disappeared.

This set of praises implies that Tshaka attacked with amazing swiftness.

The predominant image of Tshaka as a destroyer is qualified by the assertion that Tshaka was a strict disciplinarian:

Porcupine that stabbed the disorderly young people
Between Magaye and Nzawu.

Nevertheless, the poem lauds the achievements of a spectacular warrior-king:

He who bored an opening amongst the Mpondo
Even today the opening is still wide open . . .

High star of Mjokwane!
Standing on its tail, it eventually reached right up to
the sky.
And then there came out two morning stars up in the sky.
The two morning stars came out and confronted each other.

He who goes along making fires,
And leaving behind conflagrations;
The father of fires and his rival watched one another;
The one of Ntombazi
And the one of Nandi.

The ferocious one of Ndaba!
Who raged among the large kraals. (ll. 14-15; 26-35)

The first extract bears eloquent testimony to the impact of a Tshakan campaign; and the second shows the poet's deft control of image and symbol, in the extended use of the "light", "fire" and "star" metaphors. The concluding praises reflect beautifully the rivalry between the two overlords, Tshaka and Zwide.

Nduna's talent is again borne out in the extended "sky", "thunder" and "lightning" praise:

The sky that thundered over the Mpondos
It thundered over Faku, the son of Ngqungqunshe;
It took the shields of the Mpondos
The lightning eventually reached Snake's Neck. (ll. 18-20)

Although the emphasis is on Tshaka the destroyer, he is also seen as a protector - both of other petty chieftains:

Pile of firmly planted stones at Nkandhla,
Where the elephants take refuge when it is bad weather.
(ll. 43-4)

and of those who meet with his approval:

Black Mfolozi of Sitayi and Biyani,
Which chooses those who ford it;
It can be forded by he who has a goat;
It can be forded by he who has a hoe. (ll. 22-24)

The above praises also imply an arbitrary nature, which reinforces the earlier condemnation of Tshaka:

He who devoured the trust cattle,
Even to this day he is still responsible. (ll. 3-4)

The sharpest criticism is reserved for Tshaka's assault on his maternal relatives:

King, you are wrong because you do not discriminate,
Because even those of your maternal uncle's family you kill;
You ate up Bebe, the son of Ncumela of your maternal
uncle's family. (ll. 39-41)

It is interesting to note that the above praises are followed immediately by the "Pile of firmly planted stones at Nkandhla / Where the elephants take refuge . . ." praise - it seems as if the poet is suggesting an alternative response that could have been made.

Nevertheless, one should not lose sight of the fact that the criticisms are made from within the Zulu fold: the poem ends, in the light of Stuart's explanatory note, with Tshaka being portrayed as a Moses-figure, blessed with supernatural power over water:

Brass walking-stick son of Mjokwane
That which struck the water and mud appeared and
he appeared.

Stuart's note reads:

It is said Tshaka used to carry an umkangala stick with which he would strike the water of a river, when the water would stop flowing and so permit him to cross. This wood is found in forests, and is also called umuti kaTshaka. It is come upon freely in Mqolombeni's ward, and in many other parts.

Apparently, Stuart collected two sets of praises from Nduna, ^{were} the first on 21 April, 1905 (five years earlier) which ^{were} not so good as that above of 19.4.'10", and he gives the following additional praises, together with instructions on where they should be inserted:

55 Udhl'uNomatondo, umfo ka'Tayi
Wa mu zw'ukub'a duma,
Wa m'kafula.
Zihlanhlo no Gwabe, a batakati,
Inkosi a ba kwaz' u ku yi tshel'izibuko,
Ba yi wezise ngi zibuk' elibi,
60 Ba yi wezise nge li wel'umajola.
uMandhla kaNgome!
U wele wa y'ak'iNtontela;
Ba be ti ka ku y'ak'iNtontela,
Wa y'ak'iNtontela.
65 (Wa ya wadhli' uSikunyana e zalwa ngu Zwide) (?).

55 He ate up Nomatondo, the relative (?) of Tayi,
And finding him tasteless
Spat him out.
Zihlandhlo and Gwabe are wizards,
They did not tell the king about the ford,
Making him cross at the unsatisfactory one,
60 Making him cross where Majola had crossed.
Mandhla ka Ngome (Mighty Power?)
He crossed over and founded the Ntontela regiment,
They said he would not found it,
And he founded it.
65 (He ate up Sikunyane, the son of Zwide?)

Lines 54-56 come between lines 45 and 46 above.
Lines 57-60 come between lines 21 and 22 above.
Lines 61-65 come between lines 33 and 34 above.

(Line 65 has not been clearly reproduced in the copy in my possession - the praise given is an approximation of the original line.)

Nduna's contemptuous streak emerges in the disparaging remarks on the "tasteless" Nomatondo. And, although he criticises Tshaka for killing Bebe and eating "the trust cattle", he criticises Zihlandhlo and Gcwabe in stronger terms (as "wizards") for not warning Tshaka about the dangers of the ford. The concluding lines of the "additional" praises praise Tshaka for overcoming a challenge to his leadership by forcing married men to form the Ntontela regiment - prior to Tshaka's reign, only bachelors were conscripted!

Mzenzi ka Masele ka Mzanjulwa wa kwa Magwaza also provided an interesting, lengthy Tshakan praise-poem, on 6 January, 1914:

Tshaka ka Senzangakona

1 Ongange zwe!
O mkulu kakulu!
O ngang' uSondude!
O ngange sihlahla e si s okalweni ku Maqwakazi,
5 E sa pi hlal' amaNdwandwe na maNxumalo.
uSitshayanDhlondhlo ka Mjokwane.
uTshak'u dhlondhlobele,
U'bek' isihlang' emadolweni.
U nqumel' umbango wa kwa Nyuswa,
10 Ku belesuwe kwa Nyuswa,
Ku bangw' umhlakuva emanxiweni.
U bobos' isikal' emaCubeni,
Be za no Mvakela, e zalwa uDhlaba,
Wa i vumelani inkabi ka mswazi emLumeni?
15 We za no Mpepa, e zalwa uZwide,
We za no Dhlaingubo e zalwa uZwide,
We za no Nomahlanjana, e zalwa uZwide.
uSiba gojela ngalapaya kwe Nkandhla,
Lu gojela njalo lu dhl'amadoda;
20 Lu dhl' uNomahlanjana kwa ba ka Zwide,
Lu dhl' uMpepa kwa ba ka Zwide.
U ngi size, Mapita no Ngqengelele,
U mnike nkomonye a fund' ukuxeza.
O sifuba pi ne nqaba, u'Bayede ka Ndaba,
25 Ngob' e ne ntetela emaLangeni;
U m nik' ukande lo ku z'imbela.
uNdaba ngi ya m eba, ngi muka naye,
Ngi m 'buka, kwehla ne zinyembezi
Kuba sengati ngi buk' isihlahla so mdhlebe.

Whilst eating some, still he ate some others,
 Still eating some, he also ate some more
 35 Whilst eating some, still he ate some more,
 Still eating some, he also ate others.
 While eating some, still he ate some more.
 The ferocious one with no one to assist him;
 He who devours the cattle of others,
 40 They are the cause of disaster,
 They have spears tied to their tails,
 They are like Ngobe amongst those of Langa.
 The enormous one!
 He who is as big as his nation!
 45 He who is as big as mountains!
 Bird that devours other birds,
 Whilst eating some, still it ate some more
 They called him to Mtandeni, despising him
 They said, "We cannot compete in dancing with this
 Ntungwa from up-country.
 50 Whereas he was going to annihilate Pakatwayo in the
 return competition.

Mzenzi's opening salutation presents Tshaka as a nonpareil:

He who is as big as the nation!
 The enormous one!
 He who is as big as Sondude mountain!
 He who is as big as the tree on Maqhwakazi hill;
 On which lived the Ndwandwes and the Nxumalos.

The equation of the leader with the nation is indicative of Mzenzi's
 veneration of Tshaka. The "tree on Maqhwakazi hill" praise hints
 at the eclipse of the Ndwandwes and Nxumalos by the Zulu, and
 introduces the praise:

Tshaka grows while he sits
 With his shield on his knees. (ll. 6-7)

Mzenzi also reproduces the "stock" "Nyuswa" and "Feather that
 bobbed on the other side of Nkandhla" praises, and the "He who
 bored an opening through the Lube kraal" praise. The poet lists
 some of Tshaka's victims, including Zwide's household, and Mvakela,
 and refers generally to other victims in the classic praise:

"Whilst eating some, still he ate some more . . ."

Mzenzi's poem is, in many respects, very personal - hinting
 broadly at some disputes which broke out at Tshaka's court:

Why did you accept the castrated beast from
 Mswazi at Lumeni? . . .

Help me Mapita and Ngqengelele,
Give him a cow so that he can learn to milk into the mouth
He whose secret is a marvel, the royal one of Ndaba,
For he had a skilled speaker amongst the Langeni people.
Give him an army to build his own nation.

[or Give him a stick to dig for himself] (ll. 14; 22-26)

Mapita and Ngqengelele were Tshaka's valets, and the inference one draws is that Tshaka was stubborn and secretive, and not prone to listening to advice. Indeed, he is fearsome:

As for Ndaba, I steal a glance at him and see him
completely,
When I look straight at him, tears flow down,
It seems as if I am looking at a euphorbia tree.
The dancing-stick of Mdlaka is crooked,
It upsets the dancers of the ngoma dance,
Ndaba causes excitement in the great kraals.
Whilst eating some, still he ate some others,
Still eating some, he also ate some more. (ll. 27-34)

Tshaka is praised as a self-made man:

The ferocious one, with no one to assist him;
He who devours the cattle of others,
They are the cause of disaster,
They have spears tied to their tails,
They are like Ngobe amongst those of Langa.

The poet's cautioning tone implies a certain recklessness in Tshaka's actions. Nonetheless, nothing succeeds like success:

The enormous one!
He who is as big as his nation!
He who is as big as mountains!
Bird that devours other birds,
Whilst eating some, still it ate some more.
They called him to Mtandeni, despising him,
They said, "We cannot compete in dancing with this
Ntungwa from up-country".
Whereas he was going to annihilate Pakatwayo in the
return competition.

Stuart's manuscript of Mzenzi's praise-poem also bears a three-line set of Tshakan praises, given by Mpuhlana "at his own kraal near Bulawayo sites, 4.1.1914", which reads:

1 uDhlungwana o nge na mtelekeleli.
O dhl' izinkomo za baRwebi;
3 Wa dhl' e zi ka Mandeku kwa Mlambo.

1 The ferocious one who has no one to assist him.
He who devours the cattle of the Rwebi;
3 He devoured those of Mandeku at Mlambo.

The "master poem" provided by Stuart, Malcolm and Cope is, doubtless, a pastiche of other lengthy poems and short praises such as those provided by Mpuhlana, quoted above, or the praise cited by Baleka ka Mpitikazi, given below:

isidhlangudhlangu, e si njenge ndhlebe ye ndhlovu. (7)

He is as rough as the ear of an elephant.

On 7 January, 1914, Mkungu ka Mpande recited this fine poem "at his kraal near J. Louw's store, Eshowe."⁸

Tshaka ka Senzangakona

1 uNodum' ehlezi ka Menzi,
 Ilemb'e l'eq' amalembe ngo kukalipa.
 uDhlondhllwane lu ka Ndaba,
 Lu ya dhla lu dhlondhlobele,
 5 Lu bek' isihlang' emadolweni.
 Uhlanya o lu s emehlweni emadodeni.
 uXeb' e ngi m bon' ehla kwe zi ka Mangaengeza,
 U t'e kwe zi ka Pungatshe wa nyamalala.
 uLusiba gojela ngalapaya kwe Nkandhla,
 10 Lu gojela njalo lu dhl'amadoda.
 U dhl' u Dayingubo kwa ba ka Zwide,
 U dhl' u Nomahlanjana kwa ba ka Zwide,
 U dhl' uSixoloba-si-nga-mabele, kwa ba ka Zwide,
 A ba ka Zwide, Tshaka, u ba lakanyisile,
 15 uSikunyana u intombi, u ku ganile;
 U ku funyanis' u hlez' enkundhleni esibayen' eNkandhla,
 E ng' azi ukuti amabut' ako a no mgombolozelo.
 O hlobonge nge nhlakaza ku Nkuna,
 Mhla e buya ne Mvoko ya ko Mnteli.
 20 O dabule ku Mdimu no Mgovu,
 Iziqu ze miti za beka pezulu.
 Wa dundubala ku Nomagaga,
 IQude la fika la m vimbela.
 uTshaka u ye wak' am axiba,
 25 Pakati kwe Nsuze no Tukela;
 Weza no Mantondo umnta ka 'Tayi,
 Weza no Sikwayo.
 uTshaka u finyanis' izilwane zi zibili
 Zihlangene pakati kwe Nsuze no Tukela,
 30 Izilwane uTondolozu no Sirayo;
 Wa fika wa pons' irau, za hlukana.
 Be ku nga bangwa luto kwa Nyuswa,
 Be ku bangw' izinhlakuva emanxiweni.
 O dabul' o kalweni lwa ba nta ba ka'Tayi,
 35 A ba godole ngalo
 Be ya ku Macingwane eNgonyameni.
 Wa hlangana no dwendwe lwa mankenkane,
 Mhla e ya kudhl' amaMpondo, izipukupuku.
 uTshak' u be nga dhli imhlambi ya nkomo,
 40 U be dhl' imhlambi ye zinyamazane.

U t' e sa dhl' e zinye, wa dhl' e zinye,
 Wa t'e sa dhl' e zinye, wa dhl' e zinye,
 U t'e sa dhl' e zinye, wa dhl' e zinye,
 Wa t'e sa dhl' e zinye, wa dhl' ezinye,
 45 U t'e sa dhl' e zinye, wa dhl' e zinye,
 Wa t'e sa dhl' e zinye, wa dhl' e zinye,
 U t'e sa dhl' e zinye, wa dhl' e zinye,
 Wa t'e sa dhl' e zinye, wa dhl' e zinye.
 Izinkomo za bantu, Tshaka, zi yeke, zi inkelenkele,
 50 Zi kungelw' izingob' ematshobeni,
 Injengo Ngobe, inkosi ya kwa Sowetu.
 OZihlandhlo no Gcwabe ngi ba solile, a batakati,
 Inkos' a ba yi tshelang' izibuko,
 Iye ya wela nge li pel' uMajola,
 55 Ingani ba ya bona ukuba li sa con' ingazi,
 Li sand' ukudhela.
 uTshaka u ye wa vunulela e zimfundeni zo mfula,
 Izinto zako, Tshaka, zo muka na manzi.
 uMlilo wo tate ka Mjokwane,
 60 O tshis' izikota, e zi s eDhlebe,
 Kwa ze kwa ya kwatsha ne zi s eTokazi.
 O gcagc' emagcekeni ko Putile,
 63 We za no msikazi nga koNimoshe. (8)

Tshaka ka Senzangakona

1 He who thunders while he sits, the son of Menzi,
 Axe that surpasses other axes in sharpness.
 The young viper of Ndaba,
 That eats in a great rage
 5 With a shield on its knees.
 The madman in the sight of the men.
 Hawk that I saw descending from the hills of Mangcengeza,
 And from those of Pungatshe it disappeared.
 Feather that bobbed down on the other side of Nkandhla
 10 Bobbing down always and devouring men.
 He ate up Dayingubo amongst those of Zwide,
 He ate up Nomahlanjana amongst those of Zwide
 He ate up Sixoloba-si-nga-Mabele, amongst those of Zwide,
 The people of Zwide, Tshaka, you have leapt over them,
 15 Sikunyana is a girl, he has married you,
 He found you sitting in council in the cattle-fold at Nkandhla,
 Not knowing that your soldiers had a cross-questioning.
 He who for lack of control attacked Nkuna,
 On the day he returned with the dependants of Mteli.
 20 He who travelled across to Ndima and Mgovu,
 The roots of the trees looked up at the sky.
 He reached the summit of Nomagaga
 A cock came and prevented him.
 Tshaka went and erected temporary huts
 25 Between the Nsuze and the Tukela rivers;
 He overcame Matondo, the son of Tayi,
 He overcame Sikwayo.
 Tshaka found two wild beasts
 Met together between the Nsuze and the Tukela,
 30 The animals were Tondolozu and Sirayo,
 He came and threw a shield and they separated.
 They were not contending anything amongst the Nyuswa,
 They were contending over castor-oil seeds in deserted sites
 He who travelled across the ridge of the children of Tayi,

35 Where they suffered from the cold,
 On their way to Macingwane at Ngonyameni kraal.
 He met the bridal party of Mankankane,
 [or He met a long line of ibis birds]
 On the day that he went to beat the foolish Mpondos.
 Tshaka did not eat herds of cattle,
 40 He ate herds of buck.
 He who while devouring some, devoured others,
 And, as he devoured others, he devoured some more,
 He who while devouring some, devoured others,
 And, as he devoured others, he devoured some more,
 45 He who while devouring some, devoured others,
 And as he devoured others, he devoured some more,
 He who while devouring some, devoured others,
 And as he devoured others, he devoured some more.
 The people's cattle, Tshaka, leave them alone, they are
 a cause of disaster,
 50 They tie sharp knives on to their tails,
 They are like Ngobe, Chief of Sowetu.
 The people of Zihlandlo and Gcwabe, I have criticized
 them, the wizards
 They did not tell the King the ford.
 Where Majola came to grief,
 55 Although they knew that people had drowned there,
 That it had just killed a man.
 Tshaka put on his finery at the water's edge,
 Your things, Tshaka, will be washed away.
 Fire of the long grass, son of Mjokwane,
 60 That burnt the owls on Dhlebe hill,
 And eventually those on Tokazi hill also burned.
 He who came dancing on the hillside of the Putiles,
 And overcame Msikazi amongst the Ndimoshes.

Mkungu's opening praises portray Tshaka as a very restless and
 volatile man:

He-who-thunders-while-he-sits, the son of Menzi,
 Axe that surpasses other axes in sharpness.
 The young viper of Ndaba,
 That eats in a great rage,
 With a shield on its knees.
 The madman in the sight of men.

Mkungu reproduces the stock praises of the "cock", "temporary huts",
 "Tshaka did not eat herds of cattle / He ate herds of buck", "He who
 while devouring some, devoured others", "the people's cattle", and
 "the fire of the long grass, son of Mjokwane", when describing
 Tshaka's conquests.

His version of the "feather" praise is linked to an interesting
 variant of the praises on the theme of the rivalry between the Zulus
 and the Ndwandwe:

Feather that bobbed down on the other side of Nkandhla
Bobbing down always and devouring men.
He ate up Dayingubo amongst those of Zwide,
He ate up Sixoloba-si-nga-Mabele amongst those of Zwide,
The people of Zwide, Tshaka, you have leapt over them,
Sikunyana is a girl, he has married you,
He found you sitting in council in the cattle fold
at Nkandhla,
Not knowing that your soldiers had a cross-questioning.
(11. 9-17)

Mkungu also re-works the Zihlandlo and Gcwabe praise:

The people of Zihlandlo and Gcwabe, I have criticised
them, the wizards,
They did not tell the king the ford,
Where Majola came to grief,
Although they knew that people had drowned there,
That it had just killed a man. (11. 52-56)

These praises are followed by a variation on the theme of water,
in which the poet sees a certain justice in the fact that Tshaka, a
regicide, was also deposed by fratricidal regicides:

Tshaka put on his finery at the water's edge,
Your things, Tshaka, will be washed away. (11. 57-58)

Mkungu also presents Tshaka as a judge, arbitrating over the
disputes between minor chieftains:

Tshaka found two wild beasts
Met together between the Nsuze and the Tukela,
The animals were Tondolozzi and Sirayo,
He came and threw a shield and they separated.
They were not contending anything amongst the Nyuswa,
They were contending over castor-oil seeds in deserted sites.
(11. 28-33)

The predominant note is one of destruction:

He who for lack of control attacked Nkuna,
On the day he returned with the dependents of Meteli.
He who travelled across to Ndima and Mgovu,
The roots of the trees looked up at the sky. . . .
(11. 18-21)

Tshaka's enemies are described in a disparaging manner:

He who travelled across the ridge of the children of Tayi,
Where they suffered from the cold,
On their way to Macingwane at Ngonyameni kraal.
He met the bridal party of Mankankane,
[or He met a long line of ibis birds]
On the day that he went to beat the foolish Mpondos.
(11. 34-38)

The "children of Tayi" fled, anticipating a Tshakan attack, only to die during a snow storm, on their way to seek sanctuary at Macingwane's court.

So awesome was Tshaka's reputation that he only had to parade his army, and clans, like the Putile, succumbed without a contest:

He who came dancing on the hillside of the Putiles,
And overcame Msikazi amongst the Ndimoshes.

(11. 62-63)

Mshapi, a member of the Magwaza clan, recited the following poem on 29 March, 1918:

Tshaka

uDhlungwana ka Ndaba!
Onge na mtelekeleli!
Inyon'e dhl' ezinye!
Et'i sadhl' ezinye, yadhl' ezinye.
uLusiba lu gojela ngalapaya kwe Nkandhla,
Lu gojela njalo lu dhl' amakanda, nga wa madada.
Isixokalo si ya matsh a s e NKandhla,
A be pepel' izindhlovu uba li pendule.
I lembe' le q amany amalembe.
u Zi hlandhlo no Dube ngi ba salile,
Inkosi a ba yi tshelanga ne zibuko
Ize ya-ye-ya wela nge la wel'u Majola
Izinkomo za baleka, za kwa Sirayo
E be zi sengwa indiki ya kwa Mavela.
uTshaka ka si tshayeki!
O dhlimhlambi ya ba Rwebi
u Gung' umgubele, o njengo lwandhle
Zona ku ze kuse lu gubelana.

Tshaka

The ferocious one of Ndaba!
Who has no one to assist him!
Bird that devoured other birds!
Which, whilst devouring some, devoured others.
Feather that bobbed down the other side of Nkandhla,
Bobbing down always and devouring men.
The pile of rocks at Nkandhla,
Which was a shelter for the elephants in bad weather.
Axe that surpasses other axes.
Zihlandhlo and Dube I have criticized them,
They did not tell the king about the ford,
So that he crossed by that which Majola crossed.
Sirayo's cattle ran away
Which were milked by the hysterical man at Mavela's kraal.
Tshaka is not beatable!
He ate up the herds of the Rwebi
He is curved like the ocean
Which until dawn is rolling waves.

The first nine praises of Mshapi's poem chart the rise of "The ferocious one of Ndaba" from destitution - He "had no one to assist him!" - to pre-eminence as:

The pile of rocks at Nkandhla,
Which was a shelter for the elephants in bad weather.
Axe that surpasses other axes.

Tshaka is described as a successful cattle raider and warrior through the use of the "Bird that devoured other birds" and "feather" praises. Zihlandhlo is here paired with Dube, and both are "criticized" for not alerting Tshaka to the dangers of the ford "which Majola crossed". The poem concludes with the powerful image of the relentless force of Tshaka:

Tshaka is not beatable!
He ate up the herds of the Rwebi.
He is curbed like the ocean
Which until dawn is rolling waves.

Stuart also provides a transcription of the version of Tshaka's poem that was published in Bishop Colenso's Izindatyana Zabantu Kanye Nezindaba Zase Natal, in 1859. This poem is reproduced in this section of the thesis, rather than in Part I, because I have been unable, so far, to obtain a copy of the original publication:

- 1 U isilo! U ingwe! U ingonyama!
U indhlondhlo! U indhlovu!
U ngange zintab' ezinde, o Mpehlela na oMaqwakazi!
Wena u mnyama!
- 5 Wena wa kula be libele!
Sixokolo e si nga matsh' a s eNkandhla,
A pepel' izindhlovu li pendula
Lemb' l'eq' amany' amalembe ngo kukalipa!
Nodum' e hlezi ka Menzi!
- 10 [Sidhlukula dhlwe dhlwe.] (10)
- 1 The upper grindstone! The leopard! The lion!
Ferocious one! Elephant!
He who is as big as a string of mountains, those of
Mpehlela and those of Maqwakazi!
The Black One!
- 5 You who grew whilst they were dreaming!
Firmly planted pile of stones at Nkandla,
That sheltered the elephants during the bad weather.
Axe that surpasses other axes in sharpness!
He-who-thunders-while-he-sits, son of Menzi!
- 10 [The long-armed-robber-who-robs-with-violence.]

The poet praises Tshaka through the metaphors of ferocious animals - "The leopard! The lion!" - that are notoriously powerful, vicious and agile. If any lions or leopards were killed during hunting expeditions, their skins were given in homage to the leader of the clan or nation. The "Elephant" is a famous Zulu Royal Praise, as noted in Part I, as is the title, "The Black One!"

Praise-poems are useful signifiers of the values of a given people or culture; and, from Colenso's poem, we learn how highly nineteenth century Zulus valued individual enterprise:

"You who grew whilst they were dreaming"

and how cattle-raiding was a "normal" practice:

"The long-armed-robber-who-robs-with-violence".

Stuart also had access to Lewis Grout's praise-poem of "Tshaka" published in his Grammar; and to the "Song in Honor of Tchaka" (sic) war song published in J. Wood's "Uncivilized Races of Men":

"Thou hast finished, finished the nations!
Where will you go out to battle now?
Hey! where will you go out to battle now?
Thou hast conquered kings!
Where are you going to battle now?
Thou hast finished, finished the nations!
Where are you going to battle now?
Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!
Where are you going to battle now?"

The extract is followed by a note:

The above was composed after that warlike despot had made himself master of the whole of Kaffirland. Note the remarkable resemblance between the burden of the song "Where will you go out to battle now?" and the lament of Alexander, that there were no more worlds to conquer. (10)

Stuart transcribed portions of Gwebisa's praise-poem (discussed in Part I) from Revd. Grant's article in Bantu Studies¹¹. Samuelson's version of "The Praises of King Tshaka" was also included in the Stuart Papers.¹² These poems, plus those analysed above, together with that of Bryant and sundry praise-poets, form the basis of the

lengthy poem jointly edited by James Stuart, Daniel Malcolm and Trevor Cope.¹³

In his first Zulu textbook, uTulasizwe, Stuart published the following poem:

Izibongo Zi Ka Tshaka

uDhlungwane ka Ndaba!
O dhlung' emanxulumeni,
Kwaze kwa-s' amanxulum' e sibikelana.
uSitshaka ka si tshayeki;
uNodum' e hlezi ka Menzi;
Ilemb' e l'eq' amany' amalembe.
uTshaka ngi y'esaba ukuti nguTshaka,
uTshaka kwa ku inkosi ya seMatshobeni.

Inkom' e kal' eMtonjaneni,
Izizwe zonke zi yi-zwil' ukulila;
I-zwe uDunjwa, wa seLuyengweni,
Ye-zwiwa uMangcengeza, wa kwa 'Kali.
Uteku lwa bafazi, ba kwa Nomgabi,
Be tekula be hlez' emlovini,
Be-t' uTshaka ka ku-busa, ka ku ba Nkosi,
Kanti ilap' e za ku-netezeka.

Umlilo wo 'tate, ka Mjokwane!
Umlilo wo 'tate, u buhanguhangu;
O tshis' izikova, e zi seDhlebe,
Kwaye kwa-tsha ne zi seMabedhlana.

(14)

The ferocious one of Ndaba!
Who raged among the large kraals,
So that until dawn the huts were being turned upside down.
Tshaka is not beatable;
He-who-thunders-while-he-sits, the son of Menzi;
The axe that surpasses other axes
Tshaka, I fear to say he is Tshaka,
Tshaka is the chief of the Mashoba clan.

Beast that lowed at Mtonjaneni,
And all the peoples heard it lowing;
It was heard by Dunjwa, of Luyengweni,
It was also heard by Mangcengeza of Kali.

The joke of the women of Nomgabi,
Joking as they sat in a sheltered spot,
Saying, 'Tshaka would not reign, that he would not be king'
Whereas it was the year in which he was about to prosper.

Fire of the long grass, son of Mjokwane!
Fire of the long grass of scorching force;
That burned the owls on the Dhlebe hill,
And eventually those on Mabedhlana also burned.

The poem celebrates Tshaka's rise from the status of a petty chief

- "Tshaka is the chief of the Mashoba clan" - to that of an overlord:

Beast that lowed at Mthonjaneni,
And all the peoples heard it lowing . . .

Tshaka's growth, in political terms, is reflected in the praises:

He-who-thunders-while-he-sits, the son of Menzi;
The axe that surpasses other axes
Tshaka, I fear to say he is Tshaka . . .

The classic "women of Nomgabi" praise best illustrates the theme of reversal of expectations that characterises most of the Tshakan poems, and which is first introduced in the opening lines describing the political upheavals that occurred in Tshaka's lifetime:

The ferocious one of Ndaba!
Who raged among the large kraals,
So that until dawn the huts were being turned upside down.
Tshaka is not beatable . . .

The poem ends with the forceful image of Tshaka as a veld fire.

The second instalment of Tshaka's praises was published in uHlangakula:

Izibongo Zi Ka Tshaka - II

O Dabule ku Ndima no Mgovu,
Abafaz' a ba ne ndeni ba puluza;
Imkubulo ba yi shiy' i zinqindi,
Imbewu ba yi shiya semanxiweni.

O dabule ku 'Buzane pezulu,
Wa ketelwa udwendwe lwa maza,
Wa dabula ku Mcombo zi goduka.

O ndhlela ba zi buza ku Dunjwa,
Anti, a ngu ba zi buza ku Mbozane;
Ondulel'uku-ya ku Nomagaga,
La fik'iqude la m vimbela.

O zulu l'izayo, kwezan' abantwana,
Ngabadala bodwa a ba zo zi balekela,
uDunjwa yedwa li m kandanisile.

O-ye w'ak' amaxib' oTukela,
Lapa ku cutshw' isilo ngo mwowane,
We-za no Kungwayo no Ngobizembe.

O ndande ngo kal' olude;
Wa dabul' ematanjeni
A banta ba ka Tayi,
E be be godola be-ya ku Macingwane, eNgonyameni.
oZihlandhlo ka Gcwabe, ngi ba solile, abasokoco,
iNkos' a ba yi tshelang' izibuko;
Ba m weze nge li sa cons' amate,
E be li sa suk' ukupel' uNtube, wa kwa Majola.

Inyat' e jame ngo mkonto pezu kwo Mzimvubu,
amaMpond' a yesaba no ku y'ehlela;
"Nani bo Gambushe, nani bo Faku,
Ni nga m hlabi,
N'oti ni nga m hlaba,
Kwoba se ni hlab' uPunga, na hlab' uMageba."

O be sixokolo si nga matsh' a seNkandhla,
A be pepel' izindhlov' ukuba li pendule.
Ulusiba gojela ngalapaya kwe Nkandhla,
Lu gojela njalo, lu-dhl' amadoda.

U biyoze ku Nomangci pezulu,
E ya ku nqumel' umbango wa kwa Nyuswa,
Kwa ku nga bangwa luto nga kwa Nyuswa,
Kwa ku bangw' izinhlakuva semanxiweni,
Be-ti: "Ntekenteke, zi linden' amajuba." (15)

The Praises of Tshaka - II

He who travelled across to Ndimba and Mgovu,
And women who were with child gave birth easily;
The newly planted crops they left still short,
The seed they left in the deserted sites.

He who reached the top of Buzane mountain
He came across a long line of buck,
He passed by Mcombo as the cattle were leaving.

He whose routes they enquired from Dunjwa,
Whereas they should have asked Mbozane about them;
As for him he was hurrying to go to Nomagaga,
A cock came and presented him.

He who is an on-coming storm, pick up the children,
For it is only the adults who will flee by themselves,
Dunjwa alone it has crushed.

He who went and erected temporary huts at the Tukela,
Where a leopard was ensnared in a trap.
He defeated Kungwayo by means of the Ngobizembes.

He who moved slowly along a long ridge,
He trampled upon the bones
Of the children of Tayi

Who were cold going to fetch Macingwane at Ngonyameni.

The people of Zihlandhlo the son of Gcwabe, I have
criticised them, the evil-doers,
They did not tell the king about the ford;
They made him cross at the one still dripping saliva,
Which was recently vacated by Ntube of the Majolas.

Buffalo that stood glaring with a spear on the banks
of the Mzimvubu

And the Mpondo feared to come down to it;

"You Gambushe and you Faku,

Do not stab him,

If you do stab him,

You will then be stabbing Punga and Mageba."

He who was a pile of rocks at Nkandhla,

Which was a shelter for the elephants in bad weather.

Feather that bobbed down on the other side of Nkandhla,

Bobbing down always and devouring men.

He who panted up to the top of Nomangci mountain,

Going to give judgement in the contention at the Nyuswa'

They were not contending over anything at the Nyuswa's,

They were contending over castor-oil seeds in deserted sites,

Saying: "Just a moment, wait for the pigeons."

Most of the praises in this poem are introduced by the apostrophe
"O" - "He who . . ."; and it celebrates a fearful, crafty, destroyer-
protector and arbitrator. The stunning opening lines highlight Tshaka's

fearsomeness - the sight of him is enough to induce labour:

He who travelled across to Ndimma and Mgovu,
And women who were with child gave birth easily;
The newly planted crops they left still short,
The seed they left in the deserted sites.

The ferocity of Tshaka is underlined in the praise:

He who is an on-coming storm, pick up the children,
For it is only the adults who flee by themselves,
Dunjwa alone it has crushed.

These lines reinforce the sense of total panic that accompanied Tshaka's advance - a panic eloquently depicted in the opening lines, which stress abandonment and desertion, not only of valued land, and crops and seeds; but, in the lines quoted above, children are also abandoned by adults, hoping for a speedy escape.

So successful is Tshaka in battle, that few dare to challenge him:

Buffalo that stood glaring with a spear on the banks
of the Mzimvubu.
And the Mpondo feared to come down to it . . .

Not only was Tshaka a skilful warrior, he was also a crafty tactician, who specialised in mis-information and surprize attacks:

He whose routes they enquired from Dunjwa,
Whereas they should have asked Mbozane about them;
As for him, he was hurrying to go to Nomagaga,
A cock came and prevented him.

On this occasion, the people of Nomagaga were fortunate in that dawn came before the Zulu warriors had arrived - and so the attack was not the complete surprize Tshaka had intended it to be. Perhaps the clue to why Dunjwa was "crushed" by "the oncoming storm" lies in the above praises - he was obviously on the losing side! The poet is, perhaps, also hinting that a similar fate should befall "the people of Zihlandhlo" for not warning Tshaka about the treacherous ford.

The poet advises Gambushe and Faku not to "stab" Tshaka because he is favoured by his ancestors, Punga and Mageba. Tshaka is also

praised as the "shelter for the elephants in bad weather"; and the poem concludes with a picture of Tshaka the diplomat, sparing some of his precious time to deal with the trite squabbles amongst the Nyuswa clan.

The third Tshakan poem published by Stuart appeared in uBaxoxele, together with a picture of TshingaNa ka Mpande, "Enkul' imbongi ya makosi" ("a great royal praise-poet"). Stuart also hints that the previous poems came from the same source:

Zi ning' izibongo e zi ku Tulasizwe, no
Hlangakula, na ku lona lel' ibuku, e sa zi
 tata kuye (ngo May-July, 1907). (17)

"Many of the praise poems in Tulasizwe and Hlangakula and in this volume were taken from him (between May-July, 1907)."

Izibongo Zi Ka Tshaka - III

uMxotshi wo muntu,
 A m xotshele futi;
 Ngi m tand' e xotsh' uZwide, o zalwa uLanga,
 E m tabata lapa li puma kona,
 E m singisa lapa li tshona kona;
 uZwide wa m peq' amahlonjan' omabili, -
 'Kuma kwe dala ukw-etuk' omutsha.
 uSilwana-helele, emzini ya bantu!
 uSilwan' u be nduna kwa Dibandhlela.
 uBincakade, waze wa funyaniswa;
 O vunulele ezimfundeni za manzi,
 Into zako zo muka na manzi.
 Mgengi, pez' izita, ku sehlobo,
 Utshani bude, bu zo ku gibanisa.
 uXebe e ngi m bon' ukwehla
 Kwe zi ka Mangcengeza,
 Kwati, kwe zi ka Pungatshe, wa nyamalala.
 O kangel' ezansi na Madungela,
 Izinkomo za buya zi ka Sirayo;
 Kwaye kwa landela ne zi ka Mafongosi,
 E za zi sengwa indiki ya kwa Mavela.
 O hamb' e bas' e tshiy' amaxoba;
 O pehlwe we-va, wa njengo mlilo.
 Kwa ku nga sa kali nkomo kwa Ntombazane,
 Inkomo ya i si kala kiti kwa Bulawayo.
 uMaswezisela wakiti, kwa Bulawayo,
 O swezisel' uZwide nga magqanqula.
 uSitshaya-ndhlondhlo, ka Mjokwane!
 Ubusika sehlobo b'ahlukene,
 No ba kwa Ntombazi, no ba kwa Langa.

Inkonyan' e kwele pezu kwe-ndhlu kwa Ntombazi,
 Ba-t' i ya hlola,
 Kanti ibona be z' az' ukuhlola.
 Indhlov' ete i muka,
 Ba be yi landela a ba kwa Langa;
 I buyise nhloko, ya-dhl' amadoda.
 uGasane, - kade lu ba gasela;
 Lu gasel' uPungatshe, wa kwa Butelezi;
 Lwa gasel' uSondaba wo Mtanda, e hlez' ebandhla;
 Lwa gasel' uMacingwan' eNgonyameni;
 Lwa gasel' uNxaba ka Mbekane;
 Lwa gasel' uGambush' emaMpondweni;
 Lwa gasel' uFaku, emaMpondweni.
 uDhlondhllwane, lu-ya lu hlezi,
 Lu-ya lu dhlondhlobele,
 Lu bek' isihlang' emadolweni.
 Ot' e sa-dhl' ezinye, wa-dhl' ezinye;
 Wat' e sa-dhl' ezinye, wa-dhl' ezinye.
 Ot' e sa-dhl' ezinye, wa-dhl' ezinye;
 Wat' e sa-dhl' ezinye, wa-dhl' ezinye.
 Ot' e sa-dhl' ezinye, wa-dhl' ezinye;
 Wat' e sa-dhl' ezinye, wa-dhl' ezinye.
 Ot' e sa-dhl' ezinye, wa-dhl' ezinye;
 Wat' e sa-dhl' ezinye, wa-dhl' ezinye.

The Praises of Tshaka - III

Pursuer of a person

And he pursues him unceasingly;
 I liked him when he pursued Zwide, the son of Langa,
 Taking him from where the sun rises,
 And sending him to where it sets,
 As for Zwide, he folded his two little shoulders together -
 It was then that the older was startled by the younger.

Fierce animal in the homes of the people!
 Silwane was the chief at Dibandhlela.

He who dressed late was eventually overtaken;
 He who puts on his finery at the water's edge,
 His things will be washed away.

Trickster, abstain from enemies, it is summer,
 The grass is long, it will get the better of you.
 Hawk that I saw descending
 From the hills of Mangcengeza,
 And from those of Pungatshe he disappeared.

He who looked South towards Dungela,
 And the cattle of Sirayo followed him;
 And those of Mafongosi followed them,
 Those that were milked by a hysterical person at Mavela's

He who goes along making fires and leaving behind
 conflagrations

Who, when he was rubbed flared up like a fire.
 There was no longer a beast lowing at Ntombazi's,
 It was now lowing at our place at Bulawayo.

Our own bringer of poverty at Bulawayo,
 Who made Zwide destitute by great strides.

Beater of the horned-viper, son of Mjokwane!
 Winter and summer are different,
 So it was with those of Ntombazi and with those of Langa.

Calf that climbed on top of a hut at Ntombazi's kraal
They said it was a bad omen
Whereas it was they who were about to marvel.
Elephant that when it left,
The people of Langa followed it;
It turned back its head and destroyed men.

The attacker has long been attacking them;
He attacked Pungatshe of the Butelezi clan;
He attacked Sondaba of Mtanda as he sat in council;
He attacked Macingwane at Ngonyameni;
He attacked Nxaba the son of Mbekane;
He attacked Gambushe amongst the Mpondos;
He attacked Faku amongst the Mpondo's.

The young viper grows as it sits,
Always in a great rage,
With a shield on its knees.
He who while devouring some, devoured others;
And as he devoured others, he devoured some more.
He who while devouring some, devoured others;
And as he devoured others, he devoured some more.
He who while devouring some, devoured others;
And as he devoured others, he devoured some more.
He who while devouring some, devoured others;
And as he devoured others, he devoured some more.

This poem is largely devoted to praising Tshaka for defeating his most significant rival: Zwide. There are four sets of praises about the Zulu-Ndwandwe wars - the first is perhaps the most poetic:

Pursuer of a person
And he pursues him unceasingly;
I liked him when he pursued Zwide, the son of Langa,
Taking him from where the sun rises,
And sending him to where it sets;
As for Zwide, he folded his two little shoulders together -
It was then that the older was startled by the younger.

The poet's delight in the eclipse of Zwide is colourfully rendered. The elaborate pun on "sun", "Langa" and "the son of Langa" was described, in detail, in Part I. Several praises later, the poet returns to this theme, boasting of how scorched-earth policy broke the back of Ndwandwe resistance:

There was no longer a beast at Ntombazi's,
It was now lowing at our place at Bulawayo.
Our own bringer of poverty at Bulawayo,
Who made Zwide destitute by great strides.
Beater of the horned viper, son of Mjokwane.
Winter and summer are different,
So it was with those of Ntombazi and with those of Langa.

The poet plays on the ramifications of "Bulawayo" - "the place of killing" - in the praise "Our own bringer of poverty at Bulawayo". The concluding sets of praises highlight the theme of the reversal of expectations:

Calf that climbed on top of a hut at Ntombazi's kraal,
They said it was a bad omen,
Whereas it was they who were about to marvel.
Elephant that when it left,
The people of Langa followed it;
It turned back its head and destroyed men.

At the outset of the Ndwandwe-Zulu confrontation, Zwide had hoped to make the Zulu "follow" him - in the end, the Ndwandwe were forced to sue for peace - on Tshaka's terms!

"The attacker has long been attacking them" praise introduces a catalogue of Tshaka's victims, including Pungatshe, Sondaba, Macingwane, Nxaba, Gambushe and Faku. Mafongosi and Sirayo lost their cattle - the symbol of prosperity amongst the Nguni. Tshaka was, indeed, the "Fierce animal in the homes of the people."

The poet feels bound to warn the monarch of the dangers of usurpation, and on forming relationships that are based on conquest:

He who dressed late was eventually overtaken;
He who puts on his finery at the water's edge,
His things will be washed away.
Trickster, abstain from enemies, it is summer,
The grass is long, it will get the better of you.

But one doubts whether this advice, when first given, was heeded - for Tshaka is volatile:

He who goes along making fires and leaving behind
conflagrations,
Who, when he was rubbed flared up like a fire . . .

The young viper grows as it sits,
Always in a great rage,
With its shield on its knees.
He who while devouring some, devoured others,
And as he devoured others, he devoured some more.

Tshaka

The implication is that/is consumed by his ruling passion: the spirit of destruction; and, like a veld fire, the only real hope

is that he will burn himself out!

The fourth version of Tshaka's praises was published in

uKulumetule:

Izibongo Zi Ka Tshaka - IV

Izul' e li dum' emva kwo muz' eKuqobekeni,
La zi tat' izihlangu za maPela.
Wa-dhl' uNomahlanjana, e zalwa nguZwide, emaPeleni;
Wa-dhl' uMpepa, e zalwa nguZwid', emaPeleni;
Wa-dhl' uDayingubo, e zalwa nguZwid', emaPeleni;
Wa-dhl' uNombengula, e zalwa nguZwid', emaPeleni:
Wa-dhl' uMntimona, e zalwa uGaqa, emaPeleni;
Wa-dhl' uMpondo-pumela-kwe-zind', emaPeleni;
Wa-dhl' uNdengezimatshumi, emaPeleni.

Buya Mgengi, pela! Indab' u su y'enzile,
uZwid' u m pendul' isigewelegcwele,
Namuhla futi u su pendul' indodana.

Izinkomo za bantu, inkelenkele;
Zi kungel' izingob' ematshobeni.

uMasukwana ku-se, o njenge ngonyama;
uMasuk' u be hamba kwa Madilika.
uHlumayo lu mananga, uDhlungwane,
uHlumayo lu mananga, lu nkone;
uMananga u be hamba kwa Jiyampondo.

Msingi wa zansi, woz' u sing' enhla;
Woz' u singe lapa ku-y' ilanga.

O vuso la-dhla mntwan' o sesiswini;
uMavuso u be nduna kwa Nomgabi.

uSipupuma, si madel' imiyalo!
O bobos' isikal' emaCubeni;
We-za no Mvakela, e zalwa uDhlaba;
We-za no Maqobo, e zalwa uDhlaba;
We-za no 'Kwababa, e zalwa uDhlaba.

Inyon' e-dhl' ezinye!
Yat' i sa-dhl' ezinye, ya-dhl' ezinye.
O-dhl' imhlambi, i nge ya baRwebi.

Omkulu kakulu!
O ngange-zwe lake!
O ngange zintab' ezinde, oMpehlela no Maqwakazi!
O ngange sihlahl' e si sokalweni ku Maqwakazi,
E sa si hlal' amaNdwandwe na maNxumalo.

U ngi size Mapita no Ngqengelele,
U m nike nkomonye a fund' ukuxeza.
O sifuba si ne nqaba, uBayede ka Ndaba,
Ngob' e ne ntetela emalangenini;
U m nik' ukande le ku z'imbela.

uNdaba ngi ya m eba, ngi muka naye,
Ngi m buka, kw-ehla ne zinyembezi;
Ku ba sengati ngi buk' isihlahla so mdhlebe.

iGwija li ka Mdhlaka li gwegwe,
Li jez' abasini be ngoma;
uNdaba u lududo emanxulumeni.

uDhlungwan' o nge na mtelekeleli.
Sidhlukula dhlwedhlwe!
uHlany' o lu semehlwen' a madoda.

uTshaka u funyanis' izilwane zi zibili,
Zi hlangene pakati kwe Nsuze no Tukela, -
Izilwane uTondolozu no Sirayo;
Wafika wa pons' irawu, z'ahlukana.

Wa hlangana no dwendwe lwa mankankane,
Mhla e ya ku-dhl' amaMpondo, izipukupuku.
uTshak' u be nga-dhl' imhlambi ya nkomo,
U be-dhl' imhlambi ye zinyamazane.
O gcagc' emagcekeni ko Putile,
We-za no msikazi, nga kwo Ndimoshe.
uHlabahlungu, ba zo tshumeyezana,
Na ba seziteni, na ba sekaya.
uHlaza lwa ng' inyongo ye mbuzi.

uVemvane lu ka Punga!

Lu mabal' a zizinge, sengat' a bekiwe.
uMzizima o nga matunz' e zintaba,
Kona ku-hlwa, ku hamb' abatakati.

iNqayinqayi ka Punga no Mageba,
E ngi buke ngaze nga y'ojayela.
uMasongo-mahle! iNkonyana ye nkomo!
Kwa ngi xaba ukukaba kwa le nkomo,
Ya kab' o sengayo, ya del' umbambi.

uMoy' o mzansi, wo mngenelo
Ohleze u ba ngenela, na ngo mnyango.

(18)

The Praises of Tshaka - IV

The sky that thundered behind the kraal at Kuqobekeni,
It took the shields of the Mapela regiment.
He devoured Nomahlanjana, the son of Zwide of the Mapelas;
He devoured Mpepa, the son of Zwide of the Mapelas;
He devoured Dayingubo, the son of Zwide of the Mapelas;
He devoured Nombengula, the son of Zwide of the Mapelas;
He devoured Mntimona, the son of Gaqa of the Mapelas;
He devoured Mpondo-pumela-kwe-zinde of the Mapelas;
He devoured Ndengezimatshumi, of the Mapelas.

Return trickster, indeed you have finished this matter,
As for Zwide, you have made him into a homeless criminal,
And now today you have done the same to the son.

The people's cattle are a cause of disaster,
They tie sharp knives onto their tails.

Masukwana-kuse who is like a lion,
Masuku was walking about at Madilika's.
Sprouting lily, ferocious one,
Sprouting lily, white spotted-one,
Mananga was walking about at Jiyampondo.

Searcher of the south, come and search northwards;
Come and search where there is sun.

The startler devoured an unborn child,
Mavuso was the headman of Nomgabi.

Overflowing one who disregards warnings!
He who bored an opening through the Cube clan;
He overcame Mvakela, the son of Dhlaba;
He overcame Maqobo, the son of Dhlaba;
He overcame Kwababa, the son of Dhlaba.

Bird that eats others!
As it was eating some, it ate some more.
He who ate up the herds of the Rwebi.

The enormous one!
 He who is as large as his country!
 He who is as big as the mountain ranges of Mpehlela
 and Maqwakazi!
 He who is as big as the tree at the summit of Maqwakazi,
 On which lived the Ndwandwe and the Nxumalos.
 Help me Mapita and Ngqengelele,
 Give him a cow so that he can learn to milk into the mouth
 He whose secret is a marvel.
 For he had skilled speaker amongst the Langeni people.
 And give him a sharpened stick so that he can dig for
 himself.
 As for Ndaba, I steal a glance at him and see him
 completely,
 When I look straight at him, tears flow down,
 It seems as if I am looking at a euphorbia tree.
 The dancing-stick of Mdhlaka is crooked,
 It upsets the dancers of the Ngoma dance,
 Ndaba causes excitement in the great kraals.
 The ferocious one has no one to help him.
 Snatcher of a staff!
 The madman in full view of the men
 Tshaka found two wild beasts
 Met together between the Nsuze and the Tukela, -
 The animals were Tondolozzi and Sirayo,
 He came and threw a shield and they separated.
 He met a long line of ibis birds,
 When he was going to destroy the foolish Mpondo's.
 Tshaka did not eat herds of cattle,
 He ate herds of buck.
 He who came dancing on the hillside of the Putiles,
 He overcame Msikazi among the Ndimoshes.
 Painful stabber, they will exhort one another,
 Those who are with the enemy and those who are at home
 He who is as green as the bile of a goat.
 Butterfly of Punga!
 With colours in circles as if painted on.
 He who is hazy as the shadows of the mountains,
 When it is dark the evil-doers move about.
 The rival of Punga and Mageba,
 Who looked at me until I got accustomed to him.
 Powerful limbs! the calf of a beast!
 The kicking of this beast puzzled me,
 It kicked the milker and left the one holding it.
 South wind of sudden attack,
 Which usually attacks unawares even by the doorway.

This marvellous poem begins with a catalogue of the leading
 figures in the Mapela regiment, in which Zwide's sons served, who
 were killed by Tshaka in his crucial battle against Ndwandwe
 hegemony. The poet later refers to Tshaka's other victims - including
 the Cube clan; Dhlaba's sons; Msikazi and the Mpondos. The central
 motif, that of the destroyer, is tersely captured in the praises:

"Bird that eats other birds", and:

South wind of sudden attack,
Which usually attacks unawares even by the doorway.

This praise also occurs in Mgidhlana's poem, analysed above.

The poem in uKulumetule shares many praises with some of the poems discussed earlier on in this section - for example, the concluding lines of Mayinga's poem:

Bird that eats others!
As it was eating some, it ate some more,
He also ate up the herds of the Rwebi..

Two of the three praises given by Magidigidi also appear in the poem under consideration:

The ferocious one has no one to help him

and

The madman in full view of the men.

The opening lines of Mzenzi's poem are approximated in Stuart's poem:

The enormous one!
He who is as large as his country!
He who is as big as the mountain ranges of Mpehlela
and Maqwakazi!
He who is as big as the tree at the summit of Maqwakazi,
On which lived the Ndwandwe and the Nxumalos.

Both poems celebrate the defeat of Zwide's sons; and in both there is the appeal to Tshaka's servants, and subsequent praises:

Help me Mapita and Ngqengelele,
Give him a cow so that he can learn to milk into the mouth.
He whose secret is a marvel,
For he had skilled speaker amongst the Langeni people.
Give him an army to build his own nation
[or And give him a sharpened stick so he can dig for himself.]
As for Ndaba, I steal a glance at him and see him
completely,
When I look straight at him, tears flow down;
It seems as if I am looking at a euphorbia tree.
The dancing-stick of Mdhlaka is crooked,
It upsets the dancers of the Ngoma dance,
Ndaba causes excitement in the great kraals.

There are some minor differences - for example, Mzenzi's version of the following praise is more highly developed:

The people's cattle are a cause of disaster,
They tie sharp knives to their tails.
(uKulumetule)

He who devours the cattle of others,
They are the cause of calamity,
They have spears tied to their tails.
(Mzenzi)

Several praises are shared by the uKulumetule poem and that
of Mkungu:

Tshaka found two wild beasts
Met together between the Nsuze and the Tukela rivers,
The animals were Tondolozzi and Sirayo.
He came and threw a shield and they separated . . .

He met the bridal party of Mankankane,
[or He met a long line of ibis birds,]
When he was going to destroy the foolish Mpondos.
Tshaka did not eat herds of cattle,
He ate herds of buck . . .

He who came dancing on the hillside of the Putiles
He overcame Msikazi amongst the Ndimoshes.

Two lines in Mshapi's poem also come up in uKulumetule:

He who has no one to help him . . .
He ate up the cattle of the Rwebi

These comparisons demonstrate how some praises were held in
"common currency". Although the poem in uKulumetule might well be
a pastiche presented by James Stuart, it does have some distinctive
features of its own - for example, the opening praise:

The sky that thundered behind the kraal at Kuqobekeni,
It took the shields of the Mapela regiment.

There follows the "stock" list of the sons of Zwide and other
members of the Mapela regiment who perished, but the "concluding"
Ndwandwe praise:

Return trickster, indeed you have finished this matter,
As for Zwide, you have made him into a homeless criminal,
And now today you have done the same to the son.

differs from the pithy remarks made by Mkungu:

The people of Zwide, Tshaka, you have leapt over them,
Sikunyana is a girl, he has married you,
He found you sitting in council in the cattle-folk at
Nkandhla,
Not knowing that your soldiers had a cross questioning.

These renditions highlight the interplay between "tradition and the individual talent".

Another variation can be found in the opening lines to the "Butterfly of Punga" poem, first published by Grout:

Painful stabber, they will exhort one another,
Those who are with the enemy and those who are at home.
[Grout: Thou striker of poison into every conspirator,
As well those abroad as those who are at home;]
He who is as green as the bile of a goat.
Butterfly of Punga!
With colours in circles as if painted on.
He who is hazy as the shadows of the mountains,
When it is dark the evil doers move about.
The rival of Punga and Mageba,
Who looked at me until I got accustomed to him.
Powerful limbs! the calf of a beast!
The kicking of this beast puzzled me,
It kicked the milker and left the one holding it.

The distinctive feature of the poem in uKulumetule lies in the sophisticated puns within it, given here in the original Zulu (the emphasis is mine); and the internal rhyme scheme:

uMasukwana ku-se o njenge ngonyama;
uMasuk' u be hamba kwa madilika.
uHlumayo lu mananga, uDhlungwane,
uHlumayo lu mananga, lu nkone
uMananga u be hamba kwa jiyampondo.
Msingi wa zansi, wol' u sing 'enhla;
Wol' u singe lapa ku-y' ilanga.
O vuso la-dhla mntwan' o sesiswini;
uMavuso u be nduna kwa Nomgabi.

It is sobering to note that, apart from F. T. Prince's "Chaka" (see Chapter 5), none of the works of literate poets match the verbal dexterity of the praise poets, at their best.¹⁹

The assassination of Senzangakhona's successor, Sigujana, is referred to in the praise: "Snatcher of a staff!" This praise also has connotations of an abrasive personality, which counterpoints the stark praise: "Overflowing one who disregards warnings!" - Tshaka was, indeed, a marvel - both energetic and stubborn, and very successful, too.

Whilst in London, between 1927 and 1930, James Stuart recorded some of Tshaka's praises, and copies of the zonophone recordings can be obtained from the School of Oriental and African Studies in London.²⁰ His recording shed light on the mode of delivery used by Zulu praise-poets.

On 6 September, 1904, James Stuart delivered a lecture entitled "The Life and Reign of Tshaka, King of the Zulus" in Durban. In it, he stressed Tshaka's military innovations - particularly his dissatisfaction with Dingiswayo's "soft" approach, and preference for a "total war" strategy. The Zulu Army is described as "a highly wrought engine of war", after the fashion of Sir Bartle Frere.

Tshaka is described as "the Napoleon and the Attila of South Africa",²¹ and his "greatest triumph"²² lies in welding together a nation state. Stuart obviously admired Tshaka's pluck speaking of "those strokes of clever daring for which he is justly famous".²³ But, above all, Tshaka is presented as a spectacle - as a figure who galvanised his subjects into action and dominated everyone; and as an inspirational figure whose spirit lives on:

His pride and dauntless spirit still lives on
and will live in the memories of his swarthy
kinsmen. His image, branded as with fire on
their souls, haunts them still, whilst his
ferocious example and harrowing, ruinous deeds
stand as a warning to many a distant age.
There he is: the angry tyrant, cruel king,
vindictive foe! He looks, and the subject,
having anticipated the fearful glance, is
crouching on bended knees. He speaks and
there is instant silence. He walks abroad,
forthwith a regiment to do his least command.
He nods, and the last hour of more than one
unhappy man has come. When he is humorous,
all are elated. When he mourns, all mourn.
If asleep at night, and he awake, then all
must wake and sing to keep him company . . .
The vultures hovering above must be fed with
human corpses, for they too have come to attend
the Court! His will depends on his own caprice,
measured by his own changing moods, uninfluenced
by the general voice . . . Inhuman monster!
Scourge of God! Such was Tshaka!

(24)

Tshaka's emotions are thoroughly extroverted, his will is all-supreme. And, behind the rhetoric lies the spectre of a Zulu revival on a similar scale - a prospect that haunts the principal actors in Buchan's Prester John.

By casting Tshaka in the mould of a "savage" king, Stuart can indulge in special pleading:

. . . the fact should not be lost sight of that he was a savage dealing with a savage peoples. So far as allowance can be made, it should be made. (25)

The second Lecture, entitled "The Life of Tshaka", traces the political transformations that occurred during the reigns of Dingiswayo and Tshaka.²⁶ In a third Lecture, "Tshaka: His Life and Reign", delivered in the YMCA Hall in Pietermaritzburg on 18 August, 1905, Stuart spoke of Tshaka as "one of the most extraordinary men that ever lived".²⁷ Here, Stuart stressed the "beneficial" effects of colonial rule, after propounding the thesis that traditional African societies tended to stifle individuality - and that only "such master-spirits" as Tshaka could ever break out of those bonds.

ROBERT SAMUELSON'S LONG, LONG AGO

One of the reasons Samuelson gives for writing Long, Long Ago is his profound concern at the deterioration in race relations in South Africa during the '20s; as well as the general political upheaval in the world that followed the First World War - in particular, the rise of Bolshevism. Samuelson, in his Preface, preaches the gospel of benevolent paternalism:

Let us cease dealing with the natives and their interests in a manner that will render the estrangement chasm between us and them unbridgeable . . . The only safe course is to close our eyes to the colour of the natives and give them unstinted justice and fair play free of any

differentiation against them; extend to them sympathy and kindness, and always give them guidance and a helping hand instead of knee-haltering him in the race for life while all others are allowed to have an unfettered run. All will be well for Africa if right is done and all wrong if wrong is done. (28)

The Biblical cadence in the concluding sentence is indicative of Samuelson's mission station background; indeed, an apocalyptic hope runs through the book. A hope, founded on the desire to make Zulu culture intelligible to a wider audience of white South Africans, so that bridges of understanding could be built.

Long, Long Ago was published in 1929, forty odd years after the Anglo-Zulu war, but it is, nonetheless, a passionate appeal on behalf of Cetshwayo (whom Samuelson served in the capacity of Secretary at Oude Moulen) and his descendants. Given Samuelson's close connections with Zulu Royalty, his text is an important source for historical details on the life and times of Zulu kings.

Samuelson provided versions of the praises of the Zulu kings, and detailed notes about the regiments formed by different rulers, and the songs sung by their warriors.²⁹ Long, Long Ago is both eccentric and encyclopaedic in scope - full of closely-observed details (the plight of Cetshwayo and Zulu customs) and wild speculation (for example, the section headed "Moses, the Israelites, the Ethiopians and the Zulus").

For Samuelson, Tshaka epitomized Zulu cruelty:

Tshaka had become quite callous with regard to human life, and often caused whole families to be killed without trial and for no reason except to supply food for vultures, which he called his izinyoni (birds). Tshaka, the cruel and dreadful, but very brave and able Zulu king, was assassinated in 1828. (30)

The tension between admiration and repulsion is self-evident. Samuelson does, however, also stress Tshaka's kindness to his European settlers - a factor applauded, understandably, by the

likes of Henry Francis Fynn, and Lts. Farewell and King, as we saw in Chapter 1.

Samuelson attributes Tshaka's successful empire-building to the superiority of his disciplined and well-trained army; and one of his sources was Sukuzwayo, a former member of the Izimpohlo regiment (which was originally founded by Tshaka).³¹

Samuelson's account of Zulu history is altogether more sympathetically written than that of A. T. Bryant, whose cultural chauvinism emerges in the tone he adopts:

For us, the more richly endowed Caucasian race, we hold it an altruistic duty to our unlettered Negro brother to rescue from final oblivion, before too late, such of his simple traditions as are still recoverable, whatever be their worthlessness to us. (32)

A. T. BRYANT'S OLDEN TIMES IN ZULULAND AND NATAL

Bryant's Zulu epic is essentially a Shakan epic - recounting, as it does, the rise of Shaka, under Dingiswayo's patronage, and his subsequent transformation of the political map of the sub-region. Bryant obtained much of his information during his forty-five years as a priest "in Native territories"³³ during which he kept notes for an eventual history of the Nguni people.

In his Preface, Bryant addresses himself to the question of the veracity of oral sources:

. . . with a knowledge of their past so imperfect and incomplete as is that of our South African Natives, a certain amount has necessarily been left to conjecture. We are dealing here with an illiterate folk, whose historical traditions, already half-forgotten, are fragmentary and conflicting. The historian of such a race must needs have so thorough a general acquaintance with his subject as to be in a position himself to 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 harmonize with

their surroundings, drawing conclusions following naturally from well-founded premises. Otherwise than that the past history of such a people could never be written. (34)

Bryant also feels constrained by the nature of his putative audience:

And, then, we are dealing too with a European public to which all history is proverbially insipid; to which that here presented is particularly unattractive, and so alien to its understanding that, on that account again, we have been compelled to adopt unusual devices to make our historical reading intelligible and pleasant - by assuming, in general, a light and colloquial style; by supplying a 'necessary' background; by clothing the 'dry bones' of history with a humorous smile; by uniting disconnected details by a patter of our own based on our knowledge of Native life and character. In such ways as these we hoped that the reading might be made endurable, and the interest be sustained. For if any truth has forced itself upon us in the compilation of this work, it is this, that our subject must be rendered entertaining and our book be made to sell. (35)

This extract brings to mind Isaacs' advice to Fynn to "swell up the work and make it interesting". William Worger, in his article which takes up the 'dry bones' image presented by Bryant, has shown how pervasive is Bryant's influence in Shakan historiography;³⁶ and Shula Marks expresses similar reservations, too. One might add that Bryant's legacy can be discerned in the literary portrayals of Shaka, too.

Indeed, on his own terms, Bryant certainly does succeed in entertaining, as his description of the plight of the unfortunate passengers on board the "Julia" shows:

. . . another batch of Cape Colonists was already craving for the flesh-pots of Natal. Instead, alas! they became themselves flesh-pots for the fishes, and the 'Julia' was heard of nevermore. (37)

Another ploy adopted by Bryant to bridge the gap between this English audience, and African material, is to quote famous English poets (like Shakespeare, Browning, Tennyson and Byron), thus establishing literary parallels - for example, his verdict on Shaka:

As Malcolm said of the Thane of Cawdor, so may we say of Shaka: "Nothing in his life became him like the leaving it." (38)

BRYANT'S SHAKA

Whilst Grout is prepared to endorse Shaka as a symbol of Zulu potential, Bryant sees him as largely atypical:

Shaka was in no wise a normal Zulu, and the Zulu people are not to be measured by his standard. He himself was the Supreme Being and responsible to no-one . . . He feared none, obeyed none, considered none, respected none . . . in his own esteem, he was a paragon of all virtues and all beauties and all other men but vile and verminous sinners. (39)

Like Stuart, Bryant praises Shaka for transcending the limitations of his environment:

Shaka's was a distinctly progressive type of mind, favouring every possible means for the acquirement of useful knowledge. As such he was a strong and early advocate of vivisection. In his study of human anatomy, he had the habit of having pregnant females opened alive, that he might learn 'how the foetus lay'! The mysteries of the heavens intrigued him, and the history of mankind and its doings outside the limits of his own little world, was a subject of constant interest. No opportunity was lost by him of gaining wisdom and enlightenment by the Socratic method of asking questions whenever his white friends chanced to be available. (40)

Shaka is endowed with the spirit of renaissance man, ever probing for a fuller understanding of his surroundings.

Bryant also states that Shaka's "magnum opus" was the creation of an organised Zulu nation - a legacy which is still firmly imprinted on his "descendants":

Strange but true, this Shaka was as sublime a moral teacher as martial genius. Submission to authority, obedience to the law, respect for superiors, order and self-restraint, fearlessness and self-sacrifice, constant work and civil duty, in a word all the noblest disciplines of life were the very foundation stones upon which he built his nation. So vigorously enforced was the life-long practice

of all these excellencies that he left them all a spontaneous habit, a second nature, among his people . . .

But, in accomplishing his 'glorious' work he ruined himself - if, indeed, he was not ruined already; in gaining the world, he lost his own soul . . . He was man reverted, not to savage, but to brutish stage, in which all altruistic sentiments are absent, and the animal instincts reign supreme. (41)

The moral censure in the second extract quoted above, calls to mind Revd. William Holden's stricture;

Terror reigned; pity was unknown; and savage human nature walked in state amidst suspicion, horror, murder, death. How dark is fallen humanity! how depraved and cruel the heart of man! and how melancholy are its workings, when left to its own natural development. (42)

Bryant's conclusion, like that of Mofolo, is that Shaka gained the whole world, but lost his own soul. Both writers believe that the root cause of Shaka's "ferine" behaviour is his unhappy childhood - his initial rejection by his father and his subsequent humiliation at eLangeni.

Bryant also hints at a sexual dimension to Shaka's frustration:

Then his little wrinkled ears and the marked stumpiness of a certain organ were ever a source of persistent ridicule among Shaka's companions and their taunts in this regard so rankled his breast that he grew up harbouring a deadly hatred against all and everything eLangeni. (43)

The succeeding generations of European contributors to the Shakan myth have been obsessed with Shaka's sexuality, as we shall see in Chapter 5. E. A. Ritter's Shaka Zulu; Nickie McMenemy's Assegai!; Stephen Gray and Cecil Skotnes' The Assassination of Shaka; Pieter Fourie's Shaka; and P. J. Schoeman's Phampatha: The Beloved of King Shaka⁴⁴ can all be read as extended annotations of Bryant's line on Shaka's "thousand concubines":

Shaka was a greedy and jealous god, feasting on ambrosia alone on Olympus, while the nether-world starved. (45)

Bryant stresses the fact that permission to marry was granted by Shaka to his warriors as a reward for their conduct in battle. This sanction is presented as a symbol of Shaka's inability to love, to have a meaningful relationship with someone. His cruelty is shown in the way he killed his concubines and their offspring when he discovered that they were pregnant or had delivered. Bryant cites Mbuzikazi and Pampata as Shaka's favourite concubines - both bore children, the former fled, with Nandi's assistance, and the latter's child arrived after Shaka's death.

Like Samuelson, Bryant attributes Shaka's success to his martial skill - especially his disciplined assaults on the enemy using the ox-horn formation; the use of short-stabbing spears; and his preference for surprize attacks at dawn. The Zulu army is described as "Spartan",⁴⁶ and Shaka as "a war lord of Germanic thoroughness".⁴⁷

Although Bryant acknowledges that "for his time and surroundings Shaka was a distinctly progressive monarch",⁴⁸ he reports Shaka's assassination with hyperbolic glee:

Mene! Tekel! Upharsin! Thy days are numbered;
thou art weighed and found wanting; thy kingdom
is broken up. This was the writing on the wall;
"And the king's countenance was changed in him,
and his thoughts troubled him; and the joints
of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one
against the other" (Dan. v.6). Mhlangana, Dingane,
Mbopa! treachery, retribution, death! . . .

. . . the monster of a myriad crimes rolled over
in the dust and gave up his ghost to Satan. (49)

There is no quarter for the wicked.

As in Mofolo's Chaka, the "hero" of Bryant's Olden Times in Zululand and Natal is Dingiswayo, who is referred to as the "chivalrous knight". The influence of Haggard on Bryant can be detected in the epic style, as well as in Bryant's reference to

Nandi, Shaka's mother, as "Nada the Lily".⁵⁰ Haggard's blood-and-thunder epics were given academic respectability in Bryant's detailed discussion of the devastating wars that shook nineteenth century southern African politics.

Footnotes - Chapter 3

1. J. Stuart, "The Life and Reign of Tshaka, King of the Zulus". A lecture delivered in the Presbyterian Schoolroom, Commercial Road, Durban, 6th September, 1904. Stuart Papers (S.P.), Killie Campbell Memorial (KCM) 24150, File 52(3), p. 26.
2. From Stuart Collection (SC), KCL, Book of Eulogies (BE), Vol. I, File 75, KCM 24403, p. 91.
3. From SP, BE, KCM 24403, File 75.
4. From SC, KCL, BE, Vol. I, File 75, KCM 24403, p. 51.
5. From KCML - manuscript of Nduna's praise-poem on Tshaka. No further details given re file or BE volume.
6. From KCML - manuscript of the praises of Tshaka recited by "Mzenzi ka Masele ka Mzanjulwa wa kwa Magwaza. Lives under Ch. Mbango, near road and 2 or 3 miles from Louw's store, Eshowe side. 6th January, 1914"
7. Baleka ka Mpitikazi, 16th July, 1919. From SP Book 7, BE, KCM 24403, File 75.
8. Mkungu ka Mpande: "Tshaka ba Senzangakona". From SP Book 7, BE, KCM 24403.
9. From SC, KCL, BE, Vol. I, File 75, KCM 24403, p. 61.
10. "Song in Honor of Tshaka". Extract from J. Wood's "Uncivilized Races of Men", Vol. 1, p. 147, 1879, in SP, File 38, KCM 23725.
11. E. W. Grant, "The Izibongo of the Zulu Chiefs", Bantu Studies III, 3, 1929, pp. 203-244; extracts from Gwebisa's poem can be found in SP, File 29a, KCM 23484; and the whole poem, complete with notes, is reproduced in extract from SP, File 38, KCM 23723.
12. See extract from SP, File 38, KCM 23724.
13. The heavily-annotated, hand-written manuscript of Tshaka's praise poem is housed in the SP, File 29a, KCM 23483; and another typed version, entitled "Shaka", can be found in SP, File 28, KCM 23478.
14. J. Stuart, uTulasizwe, London: Longman, Green & Co., 1923, p. 17.
15. J. Stuart, uHlangakula, London: Longman, Green & Co., 1924, pp. 30-32.
16. J. Stuart, uBaxoxele, London: Longman, Green & Co., 1924, pp. 81-85.
17. *ibid.*, p. 82.

18. J. Stuart, uKulumetule, London: Longman, Green & Co., 1925, pp. 78-82.
19. Compare, for example, the poems of D. J. Darlow, "Tshaka" in African Heroes: Ntsikana, Tshaka, Khama and Moshoeshoe, Lovedale, 1958; S. Gray and C. Skotnes, The Assassination of Shaka, Johannesburg, McGraw-Hill, 1974; R. Grendon's "Tshaka's Death", The Return of the Amasi Bird: Black South African Poetry, 1891-1981, Johannesburg, Ravan, 1982; M. Kunene, Emperor Shaka the Great; O. Mtshali, "The Birth of Chaka" in Sounds of a Cowhide Drum, New York, The Third Press, 1972; F. T. Prince, "Chaka", in Poems, London, Faber and Faber, 1938; L. S. Senghor, "Chaka" in Ethiopiennes, Paris, 1956; D. A. Smith, "Shaka the King of the Zulu", UFAHAMU (Journal of the African Activist Association), Vol. VIII, No. 3, 1978, p. 146; B. W. Vilikazi, "The Grave of Shaka" and "Shaka, Son of Senzangakhona" in Zulu Horizons, ed. F. L. Friedman, D. McK. Malcolm and J. M. Sikakana, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1973 (1962).
20. SOAS tapes: Tape ZUL/VIII, Zonophone 4175a; and proof copies YY18379-1; 18380-1; 18381-1; 18382-2; 1838-2.
21. J. Stuart, "The Life and Reign of Tshaka, King of the Zulus", op. cit., p. 25.
22. *ibid.*, p. 27.
23. *ibid.*, p. 11.
24. *ibid.*, p. 26.
25. *ibid.*, p. 27.
26. See J. Stuart, "The Life of Tshaka", 2.7.05. KCM 24169 MS 1050; MS STU 1092.
27. J. Stuart, "Tshaka: His Life and Reign", 18 August, 1905. SP, File 52(4), KCM 24151, p. 1.
28. R. C. A. Samuelson, Long, Long Ago, op. cit., Preface.
29. *ibid.*, pp. 233-87.
30. *ibid.*, p. 13.
31. See pp. 397-402.
32. A. T. Bryant, Olden Times, op. cit., p. ix.
33. *ibid.*, p. vii.
34. *ibid.*, p. viii.
35. *ibid.*, pp. viii-ix.
36. W. Worger, "Clothing Dry Bones: The Myth of Shaka", op. cit. See also S. Marks: "The Traditions of the Natal 'Nguni': a second look at the work of A. T. Bryant", in L. M. Thompson, ed. African Societies in Southern Africa, London, 1969, pp. 126-144.

37. Olden Times, op. cit., p. 566.
38. *ibid.*, p. 663.
39. *ibid.*, p. 633.
40. *ibid.*, p. 649.
41. *ibid.*, pp. 641, 648.
42. W. C. Holden, History of the Colony of Natal, op. cit., p. 57.
43. Olden Times, op. cit., p. 6213.
44. See E. A. Ritter, Shaka Zulu, Middlesex, Penguin, 1978 (1935); N. McMenemy, op. cit; S. Gray and C. Skotness, The Assassination of Shaka; P. Fourie, Shaka, Cape Town, Longman, 1976; P. J. Schoeman, Phampatha: The Beloved of King Shaka, Howard Timmins, Cape Town, 1983.
45. *ibid.*, p. 636.
46. Olden Times, op. cit., p. 587. See also W. S. Ferguson: "The Zulus and the Spartans: A Comparison of their Military Systems", Harvard African Studies, Vol. 2, 1918, pp. 197-234.
47. Olden Times, op. cit., p. 597.
48. *ibid.*, p. 651.
49. *ibid.*, pp. 660, 662.
50. *ibid.*, p. xiii, title of Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 4

SHAKA IN FRENCH AFRICAN LITERATURE

This chapter traces the development of the Shakan motif in African writing in French, and the poets and dramatists we shall be considering include Léopold Sédar Senghor, whose dramatic poem "Chaka" was published in his volume "Ethiopiques"; Konyate Seydou Badian's La Mort de Chaka; and Condetto Nénékhaly-Camara's Amazoulou; Djibril Tamsir Niane's Chaka; Abdou Anta Ka's Les Amazoulous; and Gerard Felix Tchikaya U Tam'si's Le Zulu.¹

In these works we find that Shaka is mobilised as a symbol of African political achievement - he is portrayed, with varying degrees of sympathy, as a man who managed to weld together various tribal groupings into a Zulu nation.

It is interesting to note that four of the six poets/playwrights mentioned are/were politically active in French-speaking Africa - Léopold Sédar Senghor's "Chaka" was composed in 1956 before the Senegalese Deputy returned home to build up his political base; Seydou Badian served as a minister in Mali from Independence (in 1960) until 1966, when he left politics to return to private practice. He was detained when President Keita was overthrown in the military coup in 1968; imprisoned in a remote part of Mali, before being released on the 2nd June, 1975.² Djibril Niane and Camara are committed socialists, and have served in a number of administrative posts in their native Guinea. We have, here, men of letters, who were trained in France, who are politically aware, and who are concerned with the imaginative recreation of a "heroic" African past, in the hope of finding a political leader whose actions can serve as a metaphor for successful nation-building.

The nationality of these writers is interesting - Senghor and Ka are Senegalese; Niane was born in Guinea, of Senegalese parents, and has now taken Senegalese nationality and is living in Dakar; Camara comes from Guinea; Badian is Malian; and U Tam'si was born in Congo-Brazzaville, but has lived most of his life in Paris.

It seems, at first sight, rather odd that these West African writers should choose Shaka, a Zulu leader, as their model of leadership, as opposed to a figure from one of their own ancient kingdoms, like Sundiata, the hero of the Mali Empire. (I should just add, at this juncture, that Niane has, in fact, written a racy epic based on the myth of Sundiata's rise to power.³) And yet, considering the universal acclamation of Shaka as the first African to found a nation state, it is not difficult to see why he has attracted the attention of the first generation (and subsequent generations) of politically active writers.

Moreover, since crises of integration have generally followed the granting of independence to African states, it is not surprising to see that a "unifying figure", like Shaka, should be sought out and exploited for political ends. And the fact that he hails from the most distant tip of Africa makes Shaka amenable to mythopoetic exploitation on the West African political stage. Members of ethnic groups which were ravaged by local "heroes" would not always rally round the standard of someone who, in folk memory, has come to symbolise villainy, or cruelty, or worse.

The translation of Thomas Mofolo's seminal historical romance, Chaka, into French by Victor Ellenberger in 1939, caught the imagination of the writers of the Négritude movement which began in the Left Bank of Paris in the '20s and '30s, and whose influence is still felt in Black Consciousness circles today.⁴ Senghor read

Ellenberger's translation, and there is strong internal evidence in the other plays of their writers' awareness of the political, theological and literary ramifications of Mofolo's classic.

Before proceeding onto an analysis of the individual texts, it is pertinent to give a general outline of "Négritude", as Senghor's Chaka is presented as a Négritude hero. The term first appeared in print in 1939, in Aimé Césaire's powerful pastiche Cahier d'un retour au pays natal (Notebook of a Return to the Native Land). It has generally been used to describe the peculiar anxieties faced by West African and Antillean students, studying in France in the '20s and '30s who, to their chagrin, suddenly realised that total assimilation into the metropolis was an impossible dream. These anxieties were initially expressed by Senghor, Césaire and Leon Damas in their magazine L'Étudiant Noir, which appeared in March 1935. The cosmopolitan nature of this publication is significant - Senghor is Senegalese, Césaire is a Martinican, and Damas is from French Guiana. Two years earlier, a group of Caribbean students, led by Etienne Lero, Jules Monnerot, and Rene Maran, founded Légitime Défense, a vitriolic paper aimed at attacking the imitative style of Caribbean poetasters. The latter was more avowedly "radical", Marxist, in emphasis.

Since Négritude is a concept that is not easily defined, save through close reference to the individual circumstances of its advocates, I propose to discuss its manifestations in the writings of its two greatest champions - Léopold Sédar Senghor and Aimé Césaire, who are widely regarded as the most distinguished poets writing in French, from Africa and Martinique - so as to show some of its nuances.

Senghorian Négritude and Césairean Négritude

Lilyan Kesteloot, in her pioneering study of the Movement, Black Writers in French, A Literary History of Négritude, stresses

the fluidity of the term "négritude",⁵ tracing, as she does, its birth, growth and development. Abiola Irele and Janheinz Jahn stress its revolutionary nature as revealed in its transformation of the pejorative connotations associated with the word "black", "coloured", "nigger", into a source of racial pride.⁶ This point needs to be emphasised so as to explain the greater currency the concept had in the '40s and '50s, when it was utilized as a political platform over and above its initial reputation as a vehicle for cultural renewal. The tide turned against the concept in the '60s, when African intellectuals, who had not had to face the peculiarly acute sense of acculturation felt by Senghor's generation, rejected its tenets as espoused by Senghor and Césaire. It is significant that part of this criticism stemmed from the frustration felt by the younger generation at what it saw as the political conservatism of first generation of independent African leaders.

Négritude is a broad church, embracing people from different backgrounds, different political persuasions, and different temperaments. Like all Black Consciousness movements, its highest common factor is that it is all-inclusive. This in itself is both a strength and a weakness: a strength because it brought together people with a rich, authentic tradition (like Senghor) which sustained them in a Paris which, at best, was antipathetic to the peculiar problems of black students studying in the "mother country", or at worst, openly scornful of African "backwardness"; and those "coloured" men from the West Indies, whose rootlessness could be traced back to the tremendous upheaval caused by the slave trade. (Frantz Fanon's pithy Black Skin White Masks draws a psychological profile of the "average" Antillean assimilé.⁷) The weakness of the movement lies in the impossibility of generalising about the essential features of

négritude because of its catholic nature. Césaire acknowledges his indebtedness to Senghor:

"At that time I knew absolutely nothing about Africa. Soon afterwards I met Senghor and he told me a great deal about Africa. He made an enormous impression on me: I am indebted to him for the revelation of Africa and African singularity." (8)

Césaire's testimony is worth dwelling on, for those who love to hate Senghor "ground" their arguments on the "fact" that he is a "Black Frenchman". By denying him an African authenticity, they try to strike at the heart of his creed, his négritude, in the hope of discrediting not only the creed, but the man also.

Léopold Sédar Senghor typifies, for many people, a stereotyped image of the assimilated African. He was the first African to attain a highly competitive agrégation, and in 1983 he was the first African to be awarded France's highest literary honour: election to the Académie Française. And yet, for Senghor, the term assimilé has pejorative overtones, as the following extract from his poem, "On the Appeal from the Race of Sheba":

May my guardian genies grant that my blood not
lose its spirit like an assimilé, like a civilized man.

shows. As a sensitive man, Senghor's innermost feelings find their outlet in his poems. Senghor constantly exhorted his fellow Africans to "assimilate; do not be assimilated". This is not mere equivocation, but the studied reaction of a "Master of language", of a man who went through the French colonial education in Senegal, and proceeded to "finishing school" in France - and maintained a sense of pride in being an African.

A "civilized" man, by any standard, Senghor's defence of African culture was not acquired in Paris, but characterised him when, as a young Seminarian in Dakar, he used to argue with Father

Lalouze (one of his teachers) over the latter's diatribes on Africans' lack of culture. For Senghor, there is a subtle distinction between "culture" and "civilization" - these two concepts are not necessarily synonymous: culture is the collective sum of a nation's or a race's way of life, whilst civilization reflects the manifestation of "culture" in ideal conditions. Thus, when Senghor describes négritude as the:

. . . sum of the cultural values of the black world as expressed in the life, institutions and the works of black men; the sum of the values of the civilization of the black world. (9)

he in effect states that culture can exist "regardless of the vicissitudes to which the historical and political reality or civilization may be subjected."¹⁰

Senghor, and other exponents of Négritude, reacted to the culturalism that characterized French (and Portuguese) colonialism. At its best, assimilation posits the possibility of becoming "civilized" - a synonym for becoming French; at its worst it is based on a system of values predicated on race. Since it is essentially ethnocentric, culturalism debases the culture of the "inferior" group; but it can present itself as a doctrine of meritocracy. Those subjected to such a creed find themselves in an invidious position of having to deny their own culture whilst claiming in that denial that they are cultured in a Western sense.¹¹ The problem is crystalized in Senghor's enigmatic poem "Totem" -

I must hide him in my intimate being,
My ancestor with the flesh of bright thunder and
skin of fire,
My animal protector, I must hide him
Lest I snap through the doors of shame -
He is my faithful blood who requires faith
Guarding my naked pride against
Myself and the scorn of the blessed tribes . . .

The psychological tension that results from suppressing his "Africanity"

in the face of "the scorn of the blessed tribes . . ." must find release, for he cannot deny his African heritage which courses through his "intimate veins". Négritude is also a means of renewal, of rediscovery of both an individual and a collective (black) identity, and so it is that Senghor finds liberation, in recalling his "kingdom of childhood".¹²

Senghor spent his childhood days in pastoral bliss - if the word "bliss" can be used to describe a period punctuated by hidings from his father, who objected to his constant visits to his maternal uncle Tokô' Waly. Senghor states that he was sent to the local Catholic school by his father as a punishment for not staying at home. Nevertheless, his introduction to African culture by his father, who was related to the Kings of Sine, and Tokô' Waly, nourished him, years later, during his sixteen years' "wanderings" in Europe.

The childhood memories were able to sustain Senghor whilst he was busy learning Prospero's language in France. In "Let Koras and Balafong Accompany Me" he celebrates this paradise:

A paradise preserved from fevers by a child whose eyes
are bright as two swords
Paradise my African childhood, that watched over the
innocence of Europe . . .
Tokô' Waly, my uncle, do you remember the long-ago
nights when my head would grow heavy
on your patient back?
Or when, my hand in yours, you led me through the signs
and shadows? . . .
Tokô' Waly, you listen to the inaudible
And you explain to me the signs spoken by the Ancestors
in the marine serenity of the
constellations.

Romance and an Eden-like innocence constitute part of Senghorian Négritude, but, as Ulli Beier points out in his masterly article on "The Theme of Ancestors in Senghor's Poetry":

Senghor's poetry is not artificially folkloristic;
it is genuinely African, because it expresses
genuine African attitudes on very basic questions. (13)

The Antillean writers of *négritude* poetry, like Césaire, relied more on the ethnographic work published by sociologists and ethnologists like Maurice Delafosse, Leo Frobenius and the Revd. Placide Tempels¹⁴ for their image of Africa.

Much emphasis has been laid on the difference between Senghorian and Césairian Négritude, and rightly so. What has, however, been blurred (often for ideological reasons) is the close friendship that exists between the two. Césaire is on record as saying that Senghor (seven years his senior) was like an "elder brother" to him in Paris.¹⁵

The differences between Senghorian and Césairean *Négritude* stem from the different backgrounds, class and historical experience, and, to a certain extent, political stance. Senghor comes from a wealthy family of Serere businessmen, whilst Césaire's father was a teacher. As James Arnold points out in his admirable book, Négritude and Modernism, The Poetry and Poetics of Aimé Césaire, Césaire's family had "made it" in Martinican terms. Arnold's meticulous research underlines the need to speak of Césaire's "narrator" when analysing Notebook of a Return to My Native Land.

Senghor celebrates the grandeur of the great kingdoms of West Africa - the achievements of Sira-Badrar, the queen of the Guélowar dynasty; the Songhai empire; the Ghanaian empire and the Sine Kingdom. By contrast, Césaire "accepts" Antillean non-achievement:

I refuse to pass my swellings off for authentic glories. And I laugh at my old childish imaginings. No, we have never been amazons at the court of the King of Dahomey, nor princes of Ghana with eight hundred camels, nor doctors at Timbuctoo when Askia the Great was king, nor architects at Djenne, nor Madhi, nor warriors. We do not feel in our armpits the itch of those who once carried the lance. And because I have sworn to conceal nothing of our history (I who admire nothing so much as a sheep grazing of an afternoon in its own shadow), I wish

to confess that we were always quite undistinguished dishwashers, small-time shoeshiners, at the very most fairly conscientious witch-doctors, and the only record we hold is our staying-power in wrangling over trifles . . . (16)

Cultural renewal depends on the ability, first of all, to come to terms with oneself, before reconstituting a new personality.

One can also trace some developments in the political careers of Senghor and Césaire - careers that have been marked by reversals and successes. Senghor initially fought for the creation of a unified West African state, which crumbled with the fragile Mali federation, and then led his people to independence. Césaire is still a Deputy in the French National Assembly. Senghor has the rare distinction of being one of the few African leaders who have voluntarily relinquished office, giving way to his Prime Minister in 1980, in a smooth transition.

Another parallel between the négritude of Césaire and Senghor is the question of audience - their writings are, basically, addressed to fellow intellectuals, and reflect the French love of theory and philosophy. Césaire was greatly influenced by the Modernist Movements - Surrealism and Cubism; the so-called "Miraculous Weapons" of Surrealism enabled him to undermine the Western rationalist mould in which he had been trained and gave sanction to his exoticism. Though Senghor and Césaire rebel against the norms of French versification, Clive Wake is correct in arguing that their verse should be regarded as part of modern French literature, bearing in mind their indebtedness to St. John Perse, Victor Hugo and Paul Claudel, amongst others.¹⁷

Okechukwu Mezu, in his stimulating book, The Poetry of Léopold Sédar Senghor, points out, amongst other things, the influence of the poets of the Harlem Renaissance on the Négritude

writers in Paris.¹⁸ Langston Hughes, in his article, "The Twenties: Harlem and its Négritude", states that a number of the poets of the Harlem Renaissance left America for Europe, and sees parallels between the concerns of the exiles in Paris with those of American negroes at the turn of the century:

Had the word Négritude been in use in Harlem in the twenties, Cullen, as well as McKay, Johnson, Toomer and I, might have been called poets of négritude . . .

The Harlem poets and novelists of the twenties became an influence in faraway Africa and the West Indies - an influence reflected till today in the literature of black men and women there. To us, négritude was an unknown word, but certainly pride of heritage and consciousness of race was ingrained in us. (19)

The "American factor" also provides an indirect link with the early Black South African leaders who sought progress for their people, and their class, through assimilationist policies - the generation of John Langalibalele Dube, discussed in a previous chapter. John Dube's Ohlange Industrial Institute, was based on Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute, which was founded on the qualified acceptance of segregation:

"In all things purely social we can be separate as the fingers. Yet (here he balled his fingers into a fist) one, as the hand, in all things essential to mutual progress." (20)

One must not, however, press the analogy too far, for Dube did not, tactically, renounce political struggle.

The ambiguous place assigned to Africa in the Negro - or Afro-American - psyche is perhaps illustrated by Countee Cullen's haunting poem: "What is Africa to Me?"

What is Africa to me?
Copper sun or scarlet sea,
Jungle star or jungle track,
Strong bronzed men, or regal black
Women from whose loins I sprang
When the birds of Eden sang?

One three centuries removed
From the scenes his fathers loved.
Spicy grove, cinnamon tree,
What is Africa to me?

Léopold Sédar Senghor's "Chaka"

As mentioned earlier, Senghor's "dramatic" poem was published in the volume Ethiopiques, which came out in 1956. The poem is quite remarkable, as it sheds more light on Senghor's personal problems than on the historical (in the sense of literary history, since that, essentially, is all that remains of) Chaka.

Ethiopiques was a timely collection, as it symbolised a new phase in Senghorian poetics. Gone is the tremulous, fragile verse that characterised the early works; gone, too, is the despair that animated much of the verse written during the Second World War, lamenting the poor treatment of the African soldiers. In the powerful poem, "Prayer for Peace", dedicated to a former classmate of his at the Lycée Louis-le-Grand, Georges Pompidou, Senghor berates the hypocrisy of France, in formal tones:

Yes, Lord, forgive France who hates occupying forces
and imposes such grave occupation on me
Who opens triumphal ways to heroes and treats her
Senegalese like mercenaries, making them
the black watchdogs of the Empire
Who is the Republic and hands over countries to the big
concessionaires . . .

and, in "To The Senegalese Tirailleurs Who Died for France", he expresses his hope that he will be able to act as their spokesman:

Ah! may I one day in the glowing-coloured voice,
may I sing
The friendship of comrades fervent as entrails and
slender and strong as sinews.

The war-years opened Senghor's eyes to the mercenary view of the European powers to the rights of Africans. Spurred on by the terms of the Atlantic charter, black leaders spoke out for more political rights. West African leaders pressed France to honour

the republican slogan of "Liberté, Égalité et Fraternité", under the broad umbrella of a "Confederated France". In 1945, Senghor was a member of the Constitutional Committee of the Fourth Republic, and a member of the French National Assembly. In 1951 he was re-elected to the Assembly as the Senegalese representative, and in 1954-55 he served in the Cabinet of Edgar Faure. In 1956, the year in which "Chaka" was written, he returned to Senegal to establish his political base. In 1958 he served as a member of the Constitutional Assembly of Senegal, and after the collapse of the Mali Federation, he was unanimously elected President of Senegal - a post which he held for twenty years.

As Clive Wake and John Reed point out, Senghor's education prepared him for leadership, and the assumption of leadership was, in itself, cathartic.²¹ It justified his sixteen-year "wanderings" in Europe, and a dominant note of self-assurance pervades Ethiopiennes, as Clive Wake has noted:

The verset has the rolling, almost rhetorical quality of the epic, the medium of a triumphant hero. This is very evident in Ethiopiennes which represents the culmination of Senghor's poetic evolution. These are essentially poems of the Hero-King. (22)

The Chaka we find in Senghor's poem is a high-priest, politician, poet and king. In it, we find Senghor struggling with the tensions between his poetic nature - the gentle, reflective, sensitive soul - and the exacting demands of public leadership. His inability to resolve this dilemma will be demonstrated by the schizoid portrayal of Chaka in the poem. It is only when he comes to write his Epîtres that Senghor satisfactorily achieves a synthesis.

In a letter to Donald Burness, Senghor acknowledged his indebtedness to Mofolo:

It's reading Mofolo's book which inspired me to write this poem; but there was no literary influence, properly speaking. It's my situation which I have expressed through the figure of Chaka, who, for me, becomes the poet and politician torn between the duties of his role as a poet and those of his political role. (23)

In the first part of the poem, Senghor presents Chaka as a "Black Christ":

Yes I am here between two brothers, two traitors
two thieves
Two fools - ah! not as the hyena, but as the Ethiopic
Lion with head erect . . .
. . . it is the end of my passion.

The "two brothers" are, presumably, his assassins (traditionally held to be Dingana and Mhlangana), and their "folly" rests in the fact that, in line with Chaka's legendary prophecy, they would not rule because Europeans would usurp their power. But, the portrayal is quite inapposite - Chaka is neither humble, nor is he the meek, sacrificial lamb, but a proud "Ethiopic Lion with head erect".

His is not a selfless self-sacrifice - he is an arrogant murderer:

Yes, I killed her! while she was telling stories
of blue lands
I killed her yes! my hand did not tremble.
A flash of fine steel in the odorous thicket of her
armpit.

Such cocky self-confidence alienates the reader. Chaka is indicted by the "White Voice" for various atrocities, for which he shows no remorse:

WHITE VOICE

So you admit it Chaka! Will you admit to the millions of
men you had killed
Whole regiments of pregnant women and children still at
the breast?
You, provider-in-chief for vultures and hyenas, poet of
the Valley of Death.
We looked to find a warrior. All we found was a butcher.
The ravines are torrents of blood. The fountain runs blood
Wild dogs behowl death in the plains where the eagle of
Death hovers.
O Chaka Zulu, worse than plague than the rolling fire of
the bush.

CHAKA

A cackling farmyard, millet-eaters in a muffled cage . . .
I have set the axe to the dead wood, lit the fire in the
sterile bush
Like any careful farmer, when the rains came and the time
for sowing, the ashes were ready.

WHITE VOICE

What? not a word of regret . . .

CHAKA

Evil is regretted.

WHITE VOICE

The greatest evil is to steal the sweetness of breath.

CHAKA

The greatest evil is the weakness of fear.

So much for the "Black Christ"! There is no tender love, no
compassion here. The "White Voice" is the voice of judgment, to
which Chaka replies with astounding arrogance. Indeed, the more he
tries to excuse his action as a labour of love (performed on behalf
of the masses), the more he condemns himself:

I would not have killed her if I had loved her less.
I had to escape from doubt
From the intoxication of the milk of her mouth, from the
throbbing drum of the night of my blood,
From my bowels of fervent lava, from the uranium mines of
my heart in the depths of my blackness
From my love from Noliwe
For the love of my black-skinned People.

We are presented with a love-sick man, casting around, desperately,
for some excuse to dress voluptuousness in noble clothing. The
White Voice's retort can, presumably, only be said with heavy
sarcasm: "My word Chaka, you are a poet . . . a fine speaker, a
politician."

Chaka's next line of defence is to plead on the grounds of the
long-term good of his people; the plea is couched in terms of
political necessity:

Messengers told me:

'They are landing with rulers and set squares, with compasses
and sextants,
White skin, clear eyes, thin lips, bare speech
And thunder on their ships.'
I became a mind an untrembling arm, neither a warrior
nor a butcher,
As you said - a politician - the poet I killed - a man
of action alone
A man alone, dead already before the others, those you pity.
Who will understand my passion?

The anguish mirrored in these lines is not that of Chaka Zulu, but that of Senghor, grappling with the contradictory demands of an inner (personal) and an outer (public) world. The theme of the tragic isolation of a leader will be taken up later by Nénékhaly-Camara, Badian and U Tam'si.

Under the relentless accusations of the White Voice (which could be that of Henry Francis Fynn, or Nathaniel Isaacs, or Rider Haggard,²⁴ or, for that matter, the voice of John Dube, or Thomas Mofolo²⁵), Chaka's selective amnesia ("An intelligent man whose memory has remarkable lapses") is cured and he is condemned, first by Isanussi's crisp outline of the moral choices before him, and then by his recollection of his lust for power:

THE VOICE OF THE WIZARD ISANUSSI (far off)

Think hard Chaka. I am not compelling you. I am only a
wizard, a technician.
There is no power gained without sacrifice. Absolute power
demands the blood of the dearest
of all.

A VOICE (as of Chaka, far off)

She must die then - there is no other way.
Tomorrow her blood will sprinkle your medicine like milk on
the dryness of the couscous.
Wizard, out of my sight. Even the condemned man is given a
few hours to forget.

Chaka reiterates his opposition to the regimented rule of the Europeans he foresaw in a dream, which is symbolized by "the set square, the compass". Horrified by the sight of "a forest of woolly heads" "segregated in the kraals of misery", he responds by forcibly uniting them:

If we seek a rationale for Senghor's identification with Chaka, perhaps we shall find it here - for Senghor is often the hero of his own poems; and the Narcissism inherent in the Zulu/Nguni genre of ukubonga, "singing praises" (including one's own), is mirrored in the griots of West Africa.

Chaka is presented as a Négritude hero, luxuriating in his sensuality (he dies imagining a reunion with the (now sacrificed, as opposed to murdered) Noliwe) - gone is the reasoning Chaka of "Chant I": the facile Négritude equation of reasoning with Europe and sensuality with Africa reasserts itself. There is no synthesis, no psychological balance here - merely an oscillation from one extreme to another. It is such a naive division of virtues, which has elicited the widespread condemnation of Négritude poetry by Anglophone African critics.

Nevertheless, in "Chant II", the language takes on additional vitality - Chaka symbolizes rhythm - an emblem of Négritude, according to Senghor:

LEADER OF THE CHORUS

You are the slender dancer operating the rhythm of the
chorus, the balance of your body and
your arms.

The "time of rebirth" is symbolized by the resurrection of the poet in Chaka's swan song. But Senghor is quite uncertain which part he should play - he swings from humility:

But I am not the poem, but I am not the drum
I am not the rhythm. It holds me still, it carves all my
body like a statue of Baule
No I am not the poem that springs from the sonorous matrix
No I do not make the poem, I am the one who accompanies it
I am not the mother but the father who holds it in his arms
and caresses it and speaks tenderly
to it.

to self-assertion:

This can be seen in, for example, the "Elegy of the Circumcised" - the title itself symbolizes a "coming of age" - the last stanza of which reads:

The poem pales in the noon sun, it suckles the evening dew,
And pulses the tom-tom, the drumming of sap under the scent
of ripe fruit.
Master of Initiates, I need to know your wisdom to pierce
the riddle of things,
To learn my tasks as a father and lamarch,
To measure exactly the fields of my trust, to portion the
harvest with shares to each worker
and orphan.
The song is not just a charm, it suckles the woolly heads of
my flock.
The poem is a bird-snake, marriage of the shadow and the
light of dawn -
The phoenix rises and sings on extended wings over the
carnage of words!

Seydou Badian's "La Mort de Chaka"

Seydou Badian was born on the 10th April, 1928, in Bamako, Mali. He had most of his secondary schooling in France, and graduated in medicine from Montpellier University in 1955. When Mali was granted its independence in September 1960, Badian became the Minister of Rural Economy and Planning.²⁹ La Mort de Chaka was published in 1961, by *Présence Africaine*, and translated into English in 1968. As Dorothy Blair points out, the play was written when Mali separated from federation with Senegal, to form a new socialist republic.³⁰ It is thus not surprising that much of the play is taken up with polemical speeches on the virtues of national unity, and in promoting the cult of the leader. It reflects the values which Badian, on the eve of his assumption of political power, adhered to, and wished to impress onto the consciousness of his own constituency.

Clive Wake has noted some of the parallels with Senghor, highlighting the fact that Senghor's dramatic poem focuses on pre-independent issues, whilst Badian's homes in on the post-independence era.³¹

Badian's play is essentially a reinterpretation of Mofolo's Chaka, in the light of the historiography of the '50s. The author's preface shows that he desires to rehabilitate the Mofolo-difaqane image of Chaka as "a military genius consumed by an insatiable thirst for blood" to the currently fashionable one of an accomplished strategist:

In the eyes of history, Chaka is the greatest black conqueror to come out of Africa. At the height of his reign, his army, organized and disciplined and living in barracks, was estimated to number 400,000 men. This play is based on one of the accounts of his end. (32)

This extract reveals the author's touchstones - his concern is with 'organization' and 'discipline'. Chaka is used as a prototype of the charismatic socialist leader, and, perhaps with an eye to his own future prospects as a government minister, Badian propounds the thesis that all leaders have their weak points, and so people, in judging them, should keep at the forefront their outstanding contributions to the nation, in Chaka's case, welding together different tribes into one political unit. Badian was arrested after the military coup in Mali in 1968, and spent the next seven years in detention.

In line with the canons of classical French drama, La Mort de Chaka subscribes to the unity of action: the play focuses on the last days of Chaka's life and the circumstances surrounding Chaka's last battle against the joint armies of the groups south of Zululand. Badian does not specify quite which "account of [Chaka's] end" he is following, but elements within his plot seem to indicate that he is "correcting" Mofolo's account to suit his ideological aims - propaganda on behalf of pioneering African leaders.

The echoes of Mofolo are revealed in a number of speeches - for example, Mhlangana's recollection of Chaka's battle with warriors:

Think back to the time when Chaka was a child, Remember how, all alone, with only one stick, he routed a band of warriors armed with deadly spears. Remember how, on the battlefield, his face would shine for joy at the approach of the enemy while everyone else was petrified with fear and choking with anxiety. (33)

The first incident could refer to Chaka's battle against Senzangakhona's warriors before his escape from home; and the second to the portrayal of Chaka as "Bellona's bridegroom" in Mofolo's book.

Badian does not, however, feel bound by Mofolo's story - he adapts some of its details to suit his own purpose - for example, in Chaka, Mfokazana's girlfriend is carried away by a hyena and then rescued by Chaka. In The Death of Chaka, Notibe, Dingane's fiancée, claims to be the rescued girl:

. . . I owe him a personal debt. I was the girl who was carried off from a hut by a hyena. (34)

One wonders whether her name is deliberately similar to Chaka's fiancée in Mofolo's tale, Noliwe.

The presentation of Chaka's bloodlust mirrors that of Mofolo:

The orgy is at its height. Chaka raises his assegai and points it to the skies. Those who dance badly are killed. The warriors who return from the battlefield without their assegais are killed. Those who return with their assegais, but without an enemy assegai as well, are killed. (35)

Unfortunately, dialogue predominates over action in this play - as with Senghor, the focus is on people's states of mind rather than on deeds - with the result that it has little dramatic tension.

Badian's radical re-interpretation of Mofolo is revealed in his presentation of Isanusi and Ndlebe. Because he wants to underline the humanity of his Chaka, Badian omits any reference to "supernatural soliciting", but bolsters the myth of Chaka as the servant of Nkulunkulu. Thus, the first meeting between Chaka and Isanusi lacks the ominous overtones of Mofolo's chapter - Isanusi does not initiate Chaka's path to power - he succumbs to Chaka's charismatic appeal:

Do you remember our first meeting? You were lost in the forest and you were tired. You were asleep, still holding your assegai. I watched you for a long time and I saw your remarkable destiny written in your face. With Ndlebe, I put myself at your service, without reserve, without any thought of gain, simply and always with the pride of sharing in a great work. (36)

Badian's Isanusi is not the medium through which Chaka gains his strength, but the selfless devotee to a cause that transcends self, the process of state formation:

From a host of tribes living in anarchy and unconcerned about their future, you have made a great people conscious of its greatness, and ready to make any sacrifice to retain it. You have turned undisciplined aimless warriors into fearless soldiers, handling the assegai as never before. A new people has been born, thanks to your faith and your genius - the Amazulu, the children of the sky. It was to achieve this that Nkulunkulu, the Almighty, sent you. (37)

Might is indeed right, and sanctioned from above! - this is the antithesis of Mofolo.

Badian's revisionist tendencies are best exemplified by his reference to Chaka's meeting with the Lord of the Deep. Chaka rejects the proffered prosperity, if it is to be attained at the cost of his people: "Grant me the greatness of my people and leave me in misery." Mofolo's account ends with the Serpent's warning: "Make sure that you take the right path" - unnecessary advice to Badian's exemplary self-effacing leader.

The Cult of Leader

The play begins with the generals airing their grievances against Chakan rule: Dingana criticises the senseless killing of Zulus and others, lamenting the fact that neither he nor the other soldiers can enjoy the fruits of victory. He argues that Chaka is mad:

Mapo, believe me, Chaka really is going out of his mind, what he has achieved must be saved before it is destroyed. (38)

Dingana epitomizes the concensus politician, who values "negotiation" and compromise.

Mhlangana harps on Chaka's stubbornness and bloodthirstiness, pouring scorn on his "sacred mission", viewing it as monstrous egotism:

I know Chaka as well as you do. He is a child of war: blood, destruction, glory - these are what his life is made of . . . Nothing can stop him, nothing can make him change his mind. The greatness and the power of the Zulu people, the people of the sky, come first. Only Chaka, invested by Nkulunkulu, the Almighty, with the sacred mission of leading his people, may make decisions, give orders and command. Chaka alone rules. Only Chaka counts. (39)

Mhlangana's bitter complaints reflect the disenchantment of the generals with Chaka's refusal to credit them with some token of recognition - like permission to marry. Mhlangana attacks Ndlebe and Chaka's other "confidants" who "live in his shadow" for fostering Chaka's self-image.

The generals are fed up with endless campaigns, questioning their purpose - most conclude, with Mhlangana, that: "We fight for one man's prestige" (p. 30). Mapo, the third member of the triumvirate that kills Chaka says that those closest to him are also to blame as they have never told him their innermost feelings, choosing, rather, to echo Chaka's own opinions:

Our sole thought has been for our positions, and we have left him in isolation. We have often praised his deeds when in fact we did not approve of them. (40)

As soldiers, though, they know that discretion is the better part of valour - even Notibe confesses that:

. . . going to Chaka with an opinion contrary to his own is very dangerous. (41)

Chaka also speaks of his isolation when he first appears, in the third tableaux. Doubtless, Badian, during his ministerial years, felt alienated from the thoughts and wishes of the public whom he

sought to serve, and so he appeals to all middle-ranking officials (symbolized by the generals) to keep the channels of communication with leaders open. Moreover, he was acutely aware of the threat posed by the military - which was confirmed by the 1968 coup.

One of the major weaknesses of The Death of Chaka lies in the fact that the protagonist does not appear until well into the play - the audience is thus not given much of a chance to assess the man, and might well be put off by the arrogance of his tone and his condescending remarks.

Like Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, Chaka has a high opinion of himself, and refers to himself by name in his speeches:

Chaka will conduct the war alone, Chaka and two young officers . . .

I have always believed, and I still believe, in the destiny of my people. I, Chaka, have been the instrument of this destiny. We had a mission. Nkulunkulu, the Almighty, assigned us a task and it had to be accomplished. People say that I've left a trail of blood behind me: the blood of enemies, the blood of people who wished us no harm, and often even the blood of friends . . . Even here, among my own people, I have put to death the cowards and the waverers because, you see, man is an animal with two heads. One is named Greatness and the other Mediocrity. Greatness is born of sacrifice and suffering. Mediocrity grows on idleness, indifference and pleasure. (42)

Chaka here justifies the use of brute force in order to instil a particular frame of mind in his subjects. The "Greatness-Mediocrity" dichotomy is too bland; and his image of himself as an "instrument of destiny" comes across as self-righteousness.

Because Chaka appears late in the play, his policies and attitudes are articulated by his mouth-piece, Ndlebe, who all too often sounds like a party hack, trotting out pat answers, on demand. In response to the generals' bewilderment over the ceaseless fighting, Ndlebe's speech on the virtues of self-sacrifice is tactless, to say the least:

We don't fight for cattle, even less for beads.
A few years ago we were the laughing stock.
Today we are all fully aware of the position we
occupy. You can't achieve this by resting, nor
by peace. And we continue to fight to consolidate
what we have won. That is our life. (43)

A vision of perpetual conflict is hardly likely to persuade
"tired" men to do battle! Neither does his simplistic echo of his
master's voice: "You must make your choice: indolence and pleasure
or greatness", satisfy the demands of those who, with Mhlangana,
point out that "men are made of flesh and blood".

Ndlebe's idealism leaves him flat, lacking in rotundity - a
factor which is accentuated in a play full of cardboard cut-outs.
Ndlebe's loyalty to Chaka often comes across as childish hero-worship:

If we are what we are, it is because we have had
a leader who knew how to organise us, who knew
how to guide us, who knew how to give the whole
people that confidence without which there can be
no victories. (44)

Much "committed literature" fails because it insults the intelligence
of the average reader - it is difficult to believe that all the
soldiers share Ndlebe's tabula rasa mentality. It is interesting
to note that the old have no spokesman in the play, as such -
Ndlebe claims to represent the warriors; the youth venerate Chaka
to the point of idolatry; and Notibe claims to speak for all the
girls and the women when she thanks Chaka for bringing peace and
stability to the nation.⁴⁵ Badian obviously saw himself as a
representative of the "New African".

The fact that Chaka fights his last battle with regiments of
youths would seem to indicate that that is his power-base. Notibe's
renunciation of the conspirators indicates that she has been
"conscientized":

I was Mapo's sister. I was Dingana's fiancée. Now
I am neither Mapo's sister nor Dingana's fiancée.
I am Chaka's daughter. Like everyone else, I am a
Zulu, and like many of the young people, I cannot
live if Chaka dies. If my people collapse, I
prefer to be dead and buried. (46)

Though doubtless uttered with sincerity, these sentiments have a kind of "puppy-love" about them. Nonetheless, they testify to Chaka's success with the youths, which is reflected in his boast:

But I know Chaka will never die. A new generation of young men, especially my own children, the Machaka, rise towards the sun with the heart and mind of Chaka. Yes, with the heart and mind of Chaka. They are always ready to fight. (47)

Chaka's popularity stems from his identification with his soldiers - he lives in the barracks with them; he leads them into battle in person; and sends them his own doctor if they are ill - he is truly a man of the people.⁴⁸ Many like Notibe are grateful for the new stature Chaka's conquests have given them:

Let's be fair. Before Chaka neither our harvests nor our children belonged to us. We were the playthings of others. We were a laughing stock. We were pillaged and massacred. (49)

Clive Wake points out that when Badian wrote his play the controversy over Kwame Nkrumah's style of leadership was rife.⁵⁰ Badian seems to favour the indulgence of leaders' foibles, rather than confrontation. As a socialist, Badian, in his essays,⁵¹ emphasises the need for self-sacrifice (on the part of the leaders and their people); dedication; and a sense of common purpose which does not highlight errors. Indeed, Chaka stresses the need for unity after routing the southern armies, as the way forward, and, also, the importance of obedience:

Our people seem to me to be made for greatness because they know how to obey, because they know how to deprive themselves, because they have endurance. Soon our land will be in a state of turmoil. Something extraordinary is about to happen. There will be storms. For a while there will be no light, only torture and humiliation. But keep alive the memory of this victory and never forget how we won it. I repeat: we won it because we knew how to obey, because we knew what we wanted, because we were able to forget ourselves for the sake of the unity we believed greater than the individual. (52)

The "extraordinary" thing that is "about to happen" can be taken on three levels - firstly, the impending death of Chaka; secondly, "the long, long night" of colonialism, as reflected in the closing prophecy of the play:

You are murdering me so as to take my place. You are
too late.
Umlungu, the white man, is on his way. You will be his
subjects. (53)

Thirdly, bearing in mind the socio-political context in which the play was written, the threat of neo-colonialism that hangs over the newly independent African states.

This analysis illustrates the weakness of The Death of Chaka in terms of dramatic interest - the potential of the topic, though great, is not tapped; characterization is weak - people are subordinated to causes. The dialogue is flat and repetitive - opportunities for real discussion of the central point at issue: the quality of life people want to lead are not taken up; the conspirators' desire for marriage, comfort and peace is not fully explored; nor are the clichés trotted out by Notibe and Ndlebe vigorously scrutinized. The writer is content to posit ideological issues, without fully integrating them with personalities involved. Chaka is murdered whilst offering thanks to the Almighty for giving the Zulus another victory. As Burness points out:

Within the context of the play the assassination is
a revolt not only against a putative tyrant but also
against divine authority. (54)

Chaka's piety stems from his realisation that he is a servant of a force greater than himself. Badian clearly sees political service in terms of devotion to high ideals - to principles, rather than self-aggrandizement.

Nevertheless, the overriding impression the audience has is one of disappointment because, as Blair puts it:

All the epic potential of the subject has been sacrificed by Badian in favour of a moral lesson in political commitment. (55)

Condetto Nénékhaly-Camara's "Amazoulou"

Condetto Nénékhaly-Camara was born in 1920, in Guinea; and is a poet (Lagunes or Poemes pour La Révolution), a playwright (Continent-Afrique and Amazoulou), an ethnologist, and is also a Government official in Guinea. Trained in Paris, he, along with Djibril Tamsir Niane, is a dedicated socialist.

Like other socialists, he sees literature as primarily a vehicle for propaganda - and his Continent-Afrique stresses, at length, the solidarity of members of the third world. His dire lack of imagination, as evidenced in Amazoulou, has earned him the blistering condemnation of Professor Dorothy Blair:

Ideologists and sociologists (and particularly the ideological sociologists) are equally unsuccessful in their efforts to infuse new life into the historical subjects that they aim to turn to use in the cause of the people's revolution. (56)

Camara's Chaka is, to say the least, uninspiring. Of the texts discussed in this chapter, his Chaka is quite unheroic.

We first meet him, in the Prologue, pining in "exile", in his forest "retreat".

He is petulant and vain:

"I don't owe anything to anyone, Mother.
It's Dingiswayo who owes everything to me." (57)

He allies himself to two other generals, Malonga and Ndlebe, so as to attain his "most secret desire" - "fortune and glory". The dramatic potential of his progress from the periphery of power to its centre is squandered by the presentation of him as the drugged puppet of Malonga and Ndlebe. He sips some "marvellous water"

presented to him by Malonga, and is immediately taken in by the basest flattery:

O King, since you have tasted it, this water has just acquired the great virtues that passed from yourself into its most intimate nature. (58)

Chaka confesses that his "head is topsy-turvy", and does not, in any convincing sense, recover a sense of balance in the rest of the play.

In the following Tableaux Chaka does not convey any sense of authority, of commanding presence. In the first, he is easily influenced by his mother, and Ndlèbè and Malonga urge him to beware of the troublesome influence of women; cautioning him to remain his own man: "Marry Nolive, but remain Chaka". At the end of the second Tableau, Nolive complains bitterly of the power the two commanders have over Chaka:

"My love for you, and your mother's, alas, our love has neither the weight nor the force of their advice. If they asked you for my head, you'd be ready to bring it to them straight away." (59)

The third Tableau begins with Mohlomi's diatribe against Ndlèbè and Malonga:

What hopes can the Zulu nation have, led by a sovereign you hold on a leash. (60)

Chaka is hardly the charismatic figure around whom revolutionaries rally!

The crux of the matter lies in Camara's unwillingness to build Chaka up at the expense of his creed that "the people are more important than the leader." In the French Classical tradition, most of the action occurs off-stage - we learn of Chaka's exploits merely by report - we are told that his empire extends to the ends of the earth; but the few glimpses we get of him show him as a weak and vacillating man, manipulated at will by others, which would seem to deny that he has any drive at all.

The Chaka of the praise-poems, and of the first accounts by literate black Southern Africans (like Mofolo and Dube), pulsates with demonic energy. As a "progressive" socialist, Camara edits the supernatural elements in the Chakan myth, in the vain hope that this will make him more "accessible to the African masses" (unlike Abdou Anta Ka's Les Amazoulous, which, on the other hand, emphasises the supernatural). The result is a flat and uninspiring figure, as Blair points out:

With Nénékhaly-Camara, gone is the superhuman stature of the hero, like Milton's Satan, as haughtily confident of his destiny in error as in right; gone is the grandeur of his exploits, inspiring equal terror and admiration; gone is the supernatural that lifts the facts of history to the domain of myth; gone, too, is the noble eloquence of language that charms the ear and uplifts the passions. (61)

Seen against Mofolo's Chaka, on which his Amazoulou is patterned, Camara's play is turgid. Whilst objecting to the supernatural in Mofolo, Camara lacks the imagination to substitute an alternative driving force.

He cannot wholly deny the "superstitious" outlook of the historical period he is dealing with, and so his Issanoussi equivocates when questioned about his supernatural powers - in the Prologue, he claims that he has learnt his "wisdom" through travelling, and says that he is just a herbalist. But when he reappears in the Third Tableau, he claims to have the supernatural gift of foresight!

Unlike Mofolo's Isanusi, who plays on Chaka's baser emotions, Camara's Issanoussi is not a wizard, but a counsellor whose effect on Chaka is, essentially, positive. He sees Chaka as someone who can restore the glory of his people:

But a great hope is calling you. Can't you feel it?
Can you restore these faded hills and that pretty
valley below to their former colours? . . . Leave
this cage of fear that is stifling you. (Prologue) (62)

He cautions Chaka against pride: "Man's desire for strength very often leads to his downfall."

When he is publicly presented as King, Chaka humbly acknowledges that the source of his power is his people. It is, therefore, somewhat incongruous to learn, later, that he is arrogant. Chaka himself assents to Ndlebe's accusation that "Pride is all Chaka knows":

It is true that I wanted to be great, but it was an inhuman pride that I developed in myself. Now, when I have lost the affection of my people, I don't even have the consolation of the love of my family. (63)

We are told, in the list of Dramatis Personae, that Namdi and Nolive are sacrificed for the "glory" of Chaka and the Zulus. Although they represent love, indeed, the spirit of self-sacrifice, their death, and the circumstances leading up to it are not clearly presented. At first it seems that Nolive offers herself as a human sacrifice in order to stave off the famine that has hit the land - a remedy Chaka opposes as old-fashioned and unacceptable - he speaks as a "New African" when he renounces superstitious customs:

The customs of the past authorized such practices, but now no one believes them any more. (64)

And yet, when we next hear of them, it is in the context of their deaths. The incongruity is explained away in three words: "He's so changeable."

Camara's ineptitude is best demonstrated in his inability to cope with psychological motivation. Instead of charting the rise to supreme power of peerless spirit, Camara can only offer a self-confessed dupe. Ndlebe and Malonga are said to be motivated by a desire for revenge against Zwide - but we never learn what, if anything, they suffered at his hands. The split between Chaka and his griot is lamented at length by Mohlomi, but is not prepared for

at all - it just happens, as is the case with most events in this play. Chaka's abdication is also unexpected, and Chaka's recommendation of Mosheshe as his successor lacks credibility because Chaka voluminously sings the praises of a man whom he does not know:

Mosheshe's arrival coincides with the coming of a new era, that of the Zulu's struggle for the defence of their fatherland and their blood . . .

. . . But let's go and welcome Mosheshe. Without knowing him, I know already that he is worthy of taking command of the fortunes of the Zulu nation. (65)

Going on his past record, Chaka's choice of leader is not to be trusted - he freely confesses to Issanoussi that he worked closely with Ndlebe and Malonga, notwithstanding Issanoussi's warning of their treachery. He fades from the scene hounded by the ghosts of the people he has slaughtered, haunted by shadows, frightened of the dark, and quite worn out: "I am weary, Issanoussi, very weary."

The play is dedicated to (the then) President Sekou Toure of Guinea - a fellow "revolutionary and friend", whose regime was characterized by the brutal suppression of any revolts against his authority. The Chakan parallel is therefore apt.

For much of the play, the accusations of savage slaughter are aimed at Ndlebe and Malonga - archetypal self-seekers. Chaka's confession to having "thousands" killed blackens the image of him as a selfless leader which the play attempts, unsuccessfully, to establish. One can only assume that the abdication scene is prompted by a reluctance, on the part of the playwright, to offer, as a tribute to one's leader, a play that advocates the assassination of leaders who fail to please the masses!

The theme of national unity runs through the play. How this brotherhood is attained forms the subject of the debate during Chaka's

installation as King. Mohlomi sees universal love as the source of the new bond (but, since Chaka rejects love right from the start, this position is untenable) whilst Ndlèbe and Malonga bluntly assert that fear is the prime motivating factor:

MOHLOMI: Here we have a profound love of the world and the creatures that Oumkouloukoulou - the Divine has spread over it. Chaka is their defender.

NDLÈBÈ: Who are they? Anonymous crowds of people who don't know each other and who are held together only by a common fear of the sword of Chaka.

MOHLOMI: Don't blaspheme. Men accept only the protection they have chosen for themselves. They recognised in Chaka one of their own who rose above the others because he had a conscience about the weak, deprived of justice. The prosperity of the people is complete.

MALONGA: That's a lie! It is by hate and spilled blood that he has increased his stature. (66)

Ndlèbe and Malonga win the argument, as Chaka confesses the blood-thirsty nature of his regime.

In trying to shift the blame, Issanoussi attributes the "fratricidal wars" that afflict the country to men's greed and slavery - an evil which is exacerbated by the arrival of the Europeans. He urges Chaka to fight the Europeans, but Chaka demurs:

That would be a useless epic. The task surpasses our weak methods of defence, and the undertaking would be too arduous. To judge by the rumours we have heard, these invaders have already set foot on Zulu soil. They have even arranged alliances with some of our own. How can we resist them then? (67)

It is easier to hand over the problem to Mosheshe, "sovereign of the Matabeles and the LeSothos".

Camara seems to advocate early retirement for politicians who lose their zeal when he has Chaka say:

The truth is, Issanoussi, I'm tired, very tired. A tired man must know how to stand down. My mind can no longer manage to dominate the steep slopes of reason like a sovereign. All effort seems in vain to me. (68)

- a path which Sekou Toure did not follow! The writer's response

to the protagonist is somewhat ambivalent - for the divine messenger, Issanoussi urges him not to relinquish power:

CHAKA: Friend, when one has been mistaken he must know how to withdraw. . . . Mosheshe will be unknown to many of them. I myself ran up against the obstacles of provincial particularities which exacerbated one another; and others, no doubt, will run up against them after me. The only way to overcome these obstacles is to be firm and to rekindle the sentiment of national unity among the Zulus.

ISSANOUSI: Nevertheless, this vicious circle must be broken . . . Even if you are crushed by the internal conspiracy that has built up against you, you still have one more battle test by which you will regain the votes and favour of your people . . .
. . . you have no right to abandon the struggle and flee. (69)

The language rarely goes beyond this pedestrian level, as the above quotation shows, and it often lurches towards some anachronistic reference, as in:

The rest was a sort of gearbox whose cogs were kept going by the inhumane passions of Malonga and Ndlèbè. (70)

Given the fact that Camara has held a high post in the Guinean bureaucracy, it is doubtful that Amazoulou offers a sustained critique of the Sekou Toure regime. The play was written for a Guinean audience by a man more interested in creating a prototype African statesman than in historical verisimilitude. The principal character, Chaka, comes across as a weak, vacillating person - Sekou Toure is generally perceived as a forceful, determined leader. This tedious play is a resounding failure because of the writer's lack of free-flowing, sensitive, poetic imagination that will allow the characters it creates to have that freedom of action and association which characterises liberated people.

Like much literature which purports to be for the people, it is interesting to note that "the masses" do not get a word in,

unorchestrated, in Amazoulou. The subjects appear only in those scenes where Mohlomi is haranguing the people, and, as a griot dependent on his Master's patronage for survival, he cannot be taken as their spokesman. Those in the limelight are often the people who have their own interests at heart.

Like Badian, Camara feels that the greatest threat to a pioneering African leader's position comes from discontent in military circles, symbolised in Amazoulou by Ndlebe and Malonga, who are war lords. As Gutteridge has shown, army coups are a recurrent feature in West African politics.⁷¹

Camara concludes his play by refuting the 'kingdoms come and kingdoms go' proverb with which Mofolo's historical romance ends; prophesying, in effect, an everlasting kingdom.

Djibril Tamsir Niane's "Chaka"

Djibril Tamsir Niane was born in 1932, and educated in Guinea and in Dakar, before going to Bordeaux University, where he obtained a double "Licence" in history and literature, in 1958. He did postgraduate work in history before returning to Guinea in 1959, where he had various jobs in rapid succession - his work-experience ranges from reading history, working for the Ministry of Education, and heading the Social Science Department at the Institut Politique. He has also worked for radio, and in the theatre, and was the Director of the Troupe Federal in Conakry.

His best known work, Sundjata: Epic of Old Mali stemmed from his doctoral research into the ancient Mali kingdom. This work has been translated into English, German, Russian, Chinese and Spanish. His interest in myth is borne out in Fiançailles Tragiques; and he has also written Sikasso, a play that deals with a Sudānese King who ruled towards the end of the nineteenth century.

Niane's Chaka was published in 1971. His play was clearly influenced by Thomas Mofolo's Chaka, and of all the Francophone writers who have treated the subject, Niane is the one who most closely parallels Mofolo. Like Mofolo and Senghor, Niane stresses the tensions Chaka was subjected to as a child - the first Act of the play homes in on the bullying Chaka endured. But, unlike Seydou Badian and Condetto Nénékhaly-Camara, Niane does not feel obliged to "whitewash" Chaka's reputation for blood-lust.

The play begins with a poignant scene where Chaka is bullied by the other herd-boys who force him to do all the work, and one of them justifies their action by claiming to be doing Chaka a favour!:

2nd CHILD: Apparently, he is a child of misfortune. I heard his mother say that to our neighbour. Apparently, it's a good thing to beat him; that way, this misfortune in him loses its force. (72)

The opening scene reveals Chaka's alienation from his agemates. His later association with the Sorcerer, Issanoussi, is prefigured in another child's comment:

4th CHILD: Look, here he is, coming back. Look how red his eyes are. He's just like an Issanoussi, he's a sorcerer. He frightens me. (73)

The others leave him and go and play by the river. In his despair, he cries out to God, lamenting his plight.

His mother appears, and tries to comfort him by speaking of his prosperous future, as foretold by the Lord of the Deep. She instils in him the creed that might is right, for those who succeed in this world are the ones who impose their wills forcibly on others:

NANDI: First of all, you must fight back, blow for blow, and not back off, even when there are a hundred of them. You must want to be strong. Life is strength; what is a man without strength? It is by strength that your father, King Senzangakona, imposed himself, thereby gaining the respect and admiration of all the men in the tribe. If the lion is king, it's because of his claws and teeth. (74)

Given his devotion to this philosophy, it is not surprising that Chaka yields easily to the tempting offer of supreme power given by Issanoussi. Nandi sees Chaka as the instrument of her revenge on Senzangakhona, who humiliated her by losing interest in her, soon after they married, whilst she was carrying Chaka; and on the villagers who scorn her.

NANDI: You must revenge me (she sobs). Won't you have the courage of a man! (75)

Chaka resolves to change things and asserts himself over the other boys, who acquiesce. He has learnt his lesson well, crowing approvingly:

Oh! that's it, strength, nothing but brute strength. (76)

Nandi explains the torment Chaka endures by saying that peasants have an ambivalent attitude to members of the ruling class - hence Chaka's royal nature is part of the source of his suffering:

NANDI: It's simply because they know you must rule. At one and the same time, the ordinary people love and question the force that must be imposed on them. (77)

Chaka develops a complex over the indignities he, as Senzangakhona's eldest son, suffers - a complex which Issanoussi exploits during his first visitation. Niane's Issanoussi is altogether more malevolent than Mofolo's:

ISSANOUSI'S VOICE: . . . Ah! have you ever seen that before? Sons of peasants beating a prince, the son of a King. (he sniggers) (78)

Issanoussi extols the virtues of courage, which gives a man a reputation, unlike cowardice which vanishes like a shadow "leaving neither trace nor memory". Issanoussi cunningly presents himself as Chaka's alter ego:

Who's talking to me as though I were talking to myself? Who expresses my own thoughts so clearly and comes to proclaim that which I haven't dared to admit to myself?

Nevertheless, didn't I show them a while ago that I was the strongest? Didn't my playmates bow down when I spoke to them like a king? They obeyed . . . (79)

In response to Issanoussi's questions on whether or not he desires power Chaka forcefully replies that he does. This power, Issanoussi says, is obtained at a cost - one must sacrifice compassion and love. Chaka is anointed by Issanoussi and Ndlebe and Malonga. Issanoussi encourages Chaka's self-conceit by proclaiming him a God: "Son of heaven, Chaka, here you are, a God."

As in Mofolo, Issanoussi leaves Chaka, returning after an absence of nine months, to "prepare [Chaka] for the ultimate test"; he also absolves himself from any hint that he forces Chaka to act against his conscience:

Only know that I shall not force you.

The path of glory lies ahead of you. Go, but if you pull back, if your heart gives in to fear, my medicine will turn against you, for it wants blood, an abundance of blood, and still more blood. (80)

The first Act ends with Chaka being sent off to Dingiswayo, where he will learn the arts of war.

The second Act begins with a vivid picture of Chakan Zululand - we see three passers-by who exchange remarks on the quality of life under Chaka's regime: the first passer-by denounces Chaka, indirectly, by pouring scorn on a chief beyond Oum Flossi who fights to maintain his freedom:

1st PASSER-BY: There is always some fool around who thinks he should defend freedom. (81)

He acknowledges the transformation Chaka has achieved in raising his clan from vassal status to supreme eminence - but questions the price of "success".

1st PASSER-BY: I used to think that the happy times heralded by the first conquests had come; now, however, I see that at each victory, happiness is further off. In place of the fear that gripped our fathers when the enemy war drums beat, our hearts know a greater fear when our own drums call the men to assembly. And . . .

2nd PASSER-BY: Friend, it's not good to talk too much in these times. (82)

The climate of fear is brought out superbly in the second speaker's intervention, checking the first passer-by's flood of eloquence, his nostalgia for the past, when fear was the result of external aggression.

Albeit that the third passer-by denounces Chaka's regime as a nightmare, the atmosphere is charged with suspicion. Chaka's quest for glory, his unbridled quest for power is the source of the dis-ease:

3rd PASSER-BY: He won't stop until there's nothing more than mountains in front of him. I've never seen such devastating love of glory. I'd really like to see the end of this nightmare. (83)

People are so fraught, so tense, that they give vent to their innermost fears despite the dangers that can bring - given the fact that the kingdom of Oum Goum Goum is riddled with spies and informers. The fifth scene ends with the ominous line:

2nd PASSER-BY: Too late - we've talked too much. (84)

The following scene develops this theme of insecurity - Dingana gives vent to his frustration with his lot - he laments that he, a king's son, should be reduced to dusting Chaka's throne. Mapo cautions him about airing his feelings - but, in delivering the warning, he himself lets slip what is on his mind:

MAPO: Brother, you forget that the master has ears that listen for him. The son of Nandi is not a man like others. He knows what is said in the secrecy of the huts, so it is not next to the throne that imprudences should be committed. What would he not sacrifice for his glory? His hand has been dipped in the precious blood. Oh, what am I saying . . . (85)

What Mapo hints at, darkly, is Chaka's murder of his wife, Nolive, and his mother, Nandi - crimes which Chaka confesses during his dark night of the soul.

N'Polo and Dingana agree that "even fear has its limits". Mapo mocks the sycophantic manner in which Chaka's "wisdom" in discovering plots against him is received. Dingana laments the demise of the

old established order where the views of the nobility and the generals were taken into account.

N'Tussi suggests a rebellion, but is overheard by Chaka's ear - Ndlebe:

N'TUSSI: Unless, in a surge of patriotism, our armies unite against the tyrant. Comrades, we . . . My God, here's Ndlebe, the damned soul of Chaka. (Enter Ndlebe) . . .

N'POLO: . . . Will he have heard us?

N'TUSSI: My legs are trembling, I am dead. (The trumpet sounds announcing the court) My God, how sinister the trumpet sounds this morning. (86)

This scene brings to mind the claustrophobic atmosphere of suspicion and death that surrounds Macbeth - another warrior-king who sacrificed love and pity in search of "gloire". Both Chaka and Macbeth, having obtained supreme power, are plagued by insecurity, which leads them to place spies everywhere:

There's not one of them, but in his house
I keep a servant feed. (Macbeth III iv 130-131)

Indeed, N'Tussi can be said to correspond to Lenox, one of the King's generals, who denounces Macbeth (for which we read Chaka) as a "tyrant" (Macbeth, Act III, Scene vi).

We first meet King Chaka in the seventh scene, which reinforces the dominant impressions we receive in the first two scenes of the Second Act we have just discussed. Chaka's arrival is heralded by songs, culminating in the herald's deification of Chaka:

You who speak directly with heaven
You who know everything, hear everything
Oh, Son of Nandi, the Zulu People
Kneel, waiting your infallible word
Bayete, Bayete. (87)

N'Tussi and N'Polo are denounced as traitors, for criticising the slaughter of the Buffalo regiment and the wholesale tyranny. Chaka manipulates the bloodthirsty crowd into demanding their death by presenting N'Tussi's and N'Polo's complaints as blasphemous, as crimes against the people:

CHAKA: What can be said of these generals who blame everything on the decision from heaven. What shall be the fate of these generals who have profited from the victories of the people and who begrudge the power of the people. Who bears a grudge against me - Chaka?

PEOPLE: Death, Death, Death. (88)

Albeit that he can manipulate most of his subjects, Chaka's personal victories are pyrrhic ones - like Macbeth, he cannot sleep as he is haunted by the ghosts of those he has slain:

CHAKA: My God, when, then, will sleep come? Nkoulou, Nkoulou, give me sleep, grant me rest. (89)

He claims that the present campaign, "to bring these wild mountain men to reason" will be the last, followed by "a happy life, peace, peace." He calls upon Issanoussi to give him rest - only to hear a mocking voice querying why he is complaining:

VOICE OF ISSANOUSI: What do you want, Chaka . . . Haven't I given you Power, Glory, Renown? (He sneers diabolically) Chaka, Chaka, do you want more power? Would you walk on the seas and subjugate under your law peoples yet unknown? (sneering . . .) (90)

Mocked by his supposed friend, Chaka delivers his speech which sums up his tragedy:

Oh God, I have had the glory. I have had renown. My name alone sows dread in mothers' stomachs. Kings, like shameful dogs, dare not look me in the face.

Master, you said it: "I will not force you." I wanted power. But my heart is weary. An assegai forever dripping with blood, a people terror-stricken - that is my glory. All around, hypocritical looks, words that come only from the lips. Impeccable armies flying from victory to victory amidst the agonising death moans of the battlefields. Yes, the vultures and the crows also sing my praises. High above my marching armies, squadrons of the air, they form a sinister parasol. That is my glory, and the young girls at the river, in the huts and in the fields, await, fearful, the messenger from Chaka.

I am not loved. (91)

Again, one recalls Macbeth's tragic self-realisation speech:

I have lived long enough: my way of life
Is fallen into the sere, the yellow leaf;
And that which should accompany old age,
As honour, obedience, troops of friends,
I must not look to have; but in their stead,
Curses, not loud, but deep, mouth-honour, breath,
Which the poor heart would fain deny, and dare not.

(Macbeth V iii 22-28)

Issanoussi callously mocks Chaka's sense of isolation, and desire for comfort: "Rather than complain, you should be more vigilant."

In the penultimate scene, Chaka's abuse of the warriors shows how alienated he is from his power base. Nongo, Sonto and Maile are not given the opportunity to rest - they are sent on impossible missions, which are really a pretext for getting them "removed". We are given a privileged view of the dynamics of Chakan rule:

CHAKA: (They go out) Malonga, at the first crow of the cock, you shall take care of Nongo. I want it done properly - he must disappear without a soul knowing what has become of him. As for Maile and Sonto, it is all arranged. They shall never return from this excursion. (92)

This scene confirms the assertions of the conspirators in Act II Scene 6.

And yet, for all his machinations, Chaka is gripped by fear. Chaka's loneliness is underlined by Ndlebe's assertions that all the people hate him. He asks for the names of those who hate him, and Ndlebe candidly tells him he would have to name "the entire population". A sinister note comes in the uniform insistence that "the end is not far off", which precipitates Chaka's crisis of confidence:

CHAKA: .Ndlebe, speak to me sincerely - Am I a tyrant?
Am I not the man from heaven? Is my glory mortal?
What end? The end, the end . . . (he holds his head) Ah, I need rest. (silence) (93)

Ndlebe holds out somewhat cynically the prospect of rehabilitation at a later date:

NDLEBÉ: Those very women, those very fiancées who are crying and bemoaning their lot, those grumbling warriors who are groaning - tomorrow, when they're surrounded by their grandsons and their nephews, they'll compose the most beautiful epic ever.

You will be a legendary hero, the model whose image will haunt the spirit of generations to come. What have you to fear when the entire population follow you and sing your glory? (94)

The play closes with Issanoussi asserting his ascendancy. An eerie sniggering fills the air, as Issanoussi heralds the end of Chaka:

ISSANOUSI: It's now that the glory begins, all the kings are vanquished. The end is not far off.

CHAKA: Yes, it's now that I want to make my people happy. I have conquered the entire South. (silence . . . silence) Issanoussi, Issanoussi. (does not reply) (95)

Issanoussi asserts his independence by not making himself visible, despite Chaka's numerous requests that he does so. Instead, he orders Chaka to sit down at the foot of the tree and sleep. Chaka's brothers, Adona and Dingana, creep in and spear him - Chaka wakes up and gasps: "the end, the end, and it's you, my brothers . . ."

ISSANOUSI: Everything is in order, Chaka. (the latter starts) Have no fear, everything is in order. (96)

The play ends with Issanoussi's announcement of his understanding of "gloire":

ISSANOUSI: (He appears as he appeared before to Chaka)
The supreme glory is yours Chaka. The gates of eternity open to your powerful breath, and you shall take your place among the ranks of the immortal. Death, consolation of the weak and the strong, opens her arms to you. (97)

Niane's play charts the transformation of the bullied child into the bully-king. Whilst the audience sympathises with Chaka in the first Act because of his tremendous suffering, the audience is forced to revise its original estimate during the second Act, where the horror of the passers-by and the ill-treatment of the warriors testify to Chaka's megalomania. His paranoia knows no limits, and it is with some relief that the audience witnesses

Chaka's murder, bearing in mind his ravings for the "names, names" of people "with evil motives hidden in their hearts"; for Chaka himself has lost his innocence in the cruel world of experience.

Unlike Nénékhaly-Camara's Chaka, who is prepared to step down after forfeiting the trust of his subjects, Niane's Chaka, like Mofolo's, desires only to kill - a trait he shares with Macbeth: ". . . whiles I see lives, the gashes do better upon them." (V viii 31/2). As the curtain descends, the audience feels that they have witnessed the purgation of evil - "the time is free", but not in the sense of a restoration to pristine purity by a virginal King, in the manner of Shakespeare's Malcolm. We no longer live in a world bolstered by a firm faith in the transcendence of the forces of good over evil. It is not for nothing that the play concludes with Issanoussi, the sorcerer, at the centre of the stage. In the world of experience, the tiger does not lie down with the lamb.

As an historian, Niane is well aware that the pre- and post-independence history of Africa was not all sweetness and light. Not for him the rose-tinted spectacles of the Caribbean-brand of négritude. His Chaka is not the prototype of a selfless leader dedicated to the cause of his people's freedom à la Senghor, Badian and Nénékhaly-Camara. The dominant impression on the audience is that of catharsis - a purgation of pity and terror which enables us to face the history of Africa, and its present political character, with sober eyes.

As Niane's Chaka was published a year later than Camara's Amazoulou - one is tempted to conclude that Niane's forceful Chaka is a response to Camara's colourless "man of the people". Although he portrays powerfully the eerie atmosphere of Chakan Zululand - a metaphor for Guinea? - with its intrigue and "restless ecstasy", Niane's Chaka has its hilarious moments too.

Abdou Anta Ka's "Les Amazoulous"

Abdou Anta Ka's Les Amazoulous was completed in 1968, in Dakar, and published by Présence Africaine in 1972. It thus probably preceded Djibil Tamsir Niane's Chaka, in composition, albeit that it was published a year later than the latter.

In his preface, Ka acknowledges his indebtedness to Thomas Mofolo, to (the then) President Léopold Sédar Senghor, and to Dr. Seydou Badian Kouyaté. I would argue that Ka is most strongly influenced by Senghor's "dramatic poem", as he emphasizes Chaka's love for Nolive (unlike Mofolo, who presents the love as essentially one-sided - that of Noliwe for Chaka). Furthermore, the play concludes with a prophetic vision of the quality of life black South Africans will lead, after conquest by Europeans, whose will, as in Senghor, is characterized by "compasses", . . . "set-squares", and "rules".

Ka notes that, in French-speaking Africa, Chaka has been dramatised by a Poet-President (Senghor) and an ex-Minister (Badian) - he finds scope for his own presentation:

But as I like to tell my friends: "There has been a Chaka by a poet and president of the Republic; a Chaka by a Minister, there must be a Chaka by the man in the street." And the man in the street is me. His vision of Chaka will prove different. Was not Chaka a bastard condemned to death by his father, hunted down like an evil animal by his brothers, and by hunger? He kept close to his people, because he knew how to set them free from the beliefs of the priests and tribal chiefs, and the admiration of his people elevated him to the level of a Guide. (98)

Perhaps the preface was written before the play, for Les Amazoulous is not quite what it is billed to be. The man in the street barely gets a look in - the crowd literally muscled into the court-room scene set up by the gods in Act II Scene I, and challenges the elitist proceedings which have dominated the first Act. Ka might be

making the point that the popular abstraction, "the people", cannot rely on the leaders - be they religious (priests) or political nobles (Latyr) - to state their case. Their striking contribution is to mock Chaka as a Prince-Hangman, as we shall see.

The bedrock of Chaka's power lies in the idolatrous veneration of the cavaliers, as the response of the first cavalier to a question on where he has come from demonstrates:

1st CAVALIER: From the North of the Empire of Chaka the
Magnificent, of the man of heaven, of the Amazulus:
A name that makes things happen. (99)

Like Niane's Machaka, Ka's cavalier deifies Chaka, referring to him as:

. . . the name that revives souls, makes them blossom
again in all the colours. (100)

The cavaliers are, presumably, formed of people incorporated into Chaka's Empire by conquest or voluntary submission - significantly, they come from the West, North and South, whilst the term "soldiers" possibly refers to "ethnic Zulus". It is interesting to note that the three cavaliers parry a question on ethnicity in unison:

1st SOLDIER: A question: To which tribe did you belong?

3 CAVALIERS (TOGETHER): This word - tribe - does it still
exist? Ask the cemeteries. (101)

This is a stark reminder of the fate of those who do not wish to belong to a Zulu Empire, those who cherish their independence. For both the "new" Zulus and the "old" Zulus are united in their desire to extend the Zulu Empire:

2 CAVALIERS AND 3 SOLDIERS: The Empire of the Amazulu,
the Empire of the sharing of life, will then extend
from the dunes to the mountains, from the blue beast
to the red infinite. (102)

Paradoxically, this "empire of the sharing of life" is founded on the destruction of other tribes.

Interspersed with the soldiers' and cavaliers' exchanges is the Chorus, which tells the cast and the audience a little of Chaka's

lifestory - his illegitimacy (he is referred to as a "child of the field"); his rejection by his father and brothers; his period as an outcast, a "leper".

The dominant impression one gets is of a bizarre situation. The Choric interludes often appear as intrusions, rather than well-integrated scenes. It is not always easy to differentiate between past and present in some scenes.

The play is, basically, a re-enactment of the rise and fall of Chaka. The setting is interesting:

[Ka] sets his action in the mysterious island of Sangomar, which Senegalese mythology claims as the home of the dead, haunted by gods, djinns and spirits of all kinds. (103)

Such a setting, whilst foreign to Southern Africans, can be justified as an indigenisation of a Pan-Africanist hero.

The dramatic potential of the situation is dissipated by giving the prominence to a garrulous "old King", whose characterisation is feeble, and whose few gems on pre-Chakan politics are lost in a morass of words.

The central point is the "trial" of Chaka, essentially a replay of the last days of his life. Chaka enters into the twilight world looking "calm, haughty", summoned by three masked men (gods). Nolive is also summoned, and she wishes to sit next to Chaka, despite having been killed by him. Chaka's two assassins, Latyr, his half brother (corresponding to Dingane) and Kain (one of Chaka's advisers) are also summoned. Once the principal characters are assembled, the dramatisation of the past begins. In his preface, Ka explains the significance of the trial:

I will carry them to the Isle of Sangomar, where DEATH admits those who deserve to enter the Big Pyramid of the Heroes of the Race, and sends back amongst the living those who have not enriched the human condition and must atone for their faults, not in the hell of the beyond, but on earth. (104)

The tale of Nolive and Chaka's love is dramatised - Chaka prevaricates over killing her, but he is stirred on by a valiant Nolive, who willingly lays down her life:

Nolive was in love with the Chaka who was builder of a new world, more than with Chaka the individual, in pursuit of a self-centred happiness. Nolive did not hesitate. Her consent to the sacrifice of her life is in short only the sign of the Negro-African ethic - life is for sharing. (105)

Ka's Chaka is an unimpressive figure - he is petulant, in the early scenes. The stage directions associated with him in the first set are not at all inspiring - he is "nervous", "beside himself" and "furious". He is not the cool, calm, collected Chaka of Badian; or of the first "Chant" of Senghor's poem. He desperately tries to recollect the past by pumping Nolive for information. His speech to the wives of his warriors at the end of I iv is not at all spirited.

We rarely see Chaka exercising any power - he lacks the dramatic splendour of Lobengula, in Stanlake Samkange's On Trial For My Country, which presents Lobengula's trial before his father, Mzilikazi and the Zulu nobles in the land of the spirits.¹⁰⁶ Most of the time, Chaka dithers - even the Old King confesses that he yielded to Chaka because of famine, rather than the sword.

Ka addresses himself to the question of old and new orders. Latyr represents adherents to the former, Chaka, adherents to the latter. Latyr and the Priests had hoped to strike up an alliance with the Old King against Chaka, in order to defeat him and re-establish the pre-Chakan order. The Old King is prudent enough not to upset Chaka or Latyr, saying philosophically: "Crowns and bastards . . . longstanding fiancés in a word." The Old King's surrender symbolises the end of the old style politics of supporting "governments in exile".

The triumph of Latyr and Kain, at the end, is unconvincing, and is unsatisfactorily explained. Were it not for the prophetic

utterances of the Djinn children, Chaka's ascendancy would be difficult to explain. Chaka is never portrayed as being in control of anything, albeit that the soldiers testify to the extent of his kingdom. At one stage, we are presented with a pathetic Chaka, sleepwalking, and struggling to come to terms with his fate, with having to kill Nolive:

No more light. Don't abandon me to myself. I am still walking without knowing where to go. I hate the night; the day time exasperates me. Where is my error if I preferred those almond eyes of my sweet Nolive as the songster says to the Pyramid of Heroes? And all those crimes that I commit . . . why not my blood . . . a bastard's blood . . . (107)

The pathos is heightened by Chaka's realisation that Nolive's self-sacrifice is in vain:

Nolive, this gift of your blood will not stop the fatal fall of the Empire, even with the East conquered, Latyr pardoned. Amazulu, soon some strangers will arrive.

(Thunder, lightning, rifle shots, half-light.
All those present change costume into modern dress
of the Africans of South Africa.) (108)

After an interlude of police sirens, cries, howling and rumbling thunder, the actors revert to their traditional dress; Chaka extends his meditation on the future suffering of his people in a Senghorian vein:

We will become the slaves of their compasses and their squares. The Empire of the men of heaven will have another name: South Africa. And our Gods will let it happen . . . Less than dogs, the right to walk will be forbidden us. Cards to go from one quarter to another. Special trains. Men will come to contemplate our destitution, shed a tear quickly dried up by diamonds, gold, since women, you will give birth in grief for grief. Your daughters will be their property, appreciated less than necklaces which the wives of these foreigners will wear, and for which your sons will go to search in the bowels of the earth . . . Voices will rise, but will be powerless. We will have known more martyrs than the plains of Judea. (109)

This revelation is punctuated by the song of Myriam Makeba.

Assouk and a chorus of women demand action. Nolive counsels whole-hearted commitment against seemingly overwhelming odds:

One does not struggle against fate with the reason,
but with the heart. I am ready Chaka. (110)

Nolive claims that she hears the cries of victory over the foreigners; and Chaka divulges his impending assassination.

Together, they echo Mofolo's final verdict on the plight of Empires:

NOLIVE AND CHAKA: Boiling today, mud tomorrow. They
finish by drying up one day, however deep the
waters may be.

CHAKA: Bayete Nolive.

NOLIVE: Bayete Chaka. Now go and die . . . To be born
again everywhere where the man of sharing, the Negro,
will be humiliated! (111)

Nolive's benediction seems to affirm the value of self-sacrifice as a way of confirming the Negro-African virtue of sharing - a virtue that is all the more desirable when life offers little more than humiliation for blacks.

The fact that the play ends with Chaka alone on the stage is interesting - for we learn in the opening scene that he has been killed by Latyr and Kain. The fact that regicide and parricide does not occur on stage reflects Ka's classical pretensions.

Abdou Anta Ka's Les Amazoulous is an interesting experiment in retelling the Chakan myth in a Senegalese folklore medium. Its weakness lies in the diverse strands which are not always kept in harmony. The erratic development of its central themes might be a reflection on Ka's unstable mental state.¹¹² The theme of the role of art and the artist, presented in Act III, Scene I, is not developed sufficiently clearly.

Perhaps the last word, on what is supposedly a "people's view" of the life of Chaka, should go to the "people" - who mock his regal affectation by claiming the court jester's immunity:

PRINCE HANGMAN: (imitating Chaka and indicating him)
I am Chaka the Conqueror of the Lion. He had no
tail, this lion.

THE PEOPLE: It is indeed him . . . the conqueror of the
lion without tail or fangs. Ah, you should see it
today. It hides in front of its shadow and laughs
and laughs.

PRINCE HANGMAN: (imitating and indicating Chaka) I am
the Shadowy Beauty made to command with mercy.

THE PEOPLE: With cudgel blows . . . common graves . . .
disembowelled women's stomachs. (113)

Perhaps the most devastating estimation of Chaka's regime is given
in the players' parody of Chaka's "morning greeting", which mirrors
the idiom of the praise-poems:

DIGNITARIES (3 jesters): Lord of Lords,
Yours is the great lion,
The elephant whom no one can answer
You who have grown
Whilst we were growing smaller.

THE PEOPLE: You who devour men! (114)

Is this the canonisation of a man who has "enriched the human
condition . . ."?

Tchikaya U Tam'si's "Le Zulu"

Gerald Felix Tchikaya U Tam'si is one of the most prolific of
the contemporary African poets writing in French. Born in 1931, he
accompanied his father, M. Tchikaya, to Paris in 1946, when the
latter took up his post of the first Deputy to represent Congo
Brazzaville in the National Assembly.¹¹⁵ This background might shed
light on the fact that his play, Le Zulu, centres on the exercise
of power.

U Tam'si has lived in Paris since 1946, but, as his volume
Epitomé¹¹⁶ shows, he has kept a keen eye on the spasmodic eruptions
that characterise African politics - with special reference to his
native Congo. Since he lived in Paris during the years leading up
to the granting of independence to West African states by France, it

is not surprising that his play Le Zulu is dedicated, first and foremost, to Léopold Sédar Senghor, one of the most prominent of the African leaders.

Senghor, in his preface to Epitomé, describes U Tam'si as a Négritude poet; but U Tam'si asserts that his "Négritude (is) unconscious, or at least involuntary".¹¹⁷ Like Senghor, U Tam'si is an intensely personal poet, who nonetheless has the imaginative talent to present his emotions in terms that have universal significance.

U Tam'si, along with Césaire, was profoundly influenced by the surrealist movement. Both have fashioned a style uniquely their own, with certain recurrent images which encapsulate their principal themes of death, regeneration and resurrection.

The volumes of A triche-coeur¹¹⁸ and Epitomé reveal U Tam'si's curious love-hate relationship with Christianity - his obsession with religious (Christian) imagery, and his hankering for a pagan creed. This tension has not been resolved through a Senghorian synthesis of the twin legacy, and is perhaps best illustrated by this extract from the poem L'étrange agonie:

a Christian could never understand
what is evoked in me
by saint george and his intimate verse
shadow the pagan no longer remembers
we were foolish among the vines
and stroked the seas in order to weep
between the pine needles
her agony my agony our agony oh virgin
but love not being a christian virtue
I have given joy to none
my face to the backs of men
all christians tactically
thrusting at me the cross of a god betrayed
whom I betray to remain faithful
to the shadow.

We find here those central preoccupations of his: understanding, or the quest for it; wisdom and folly; paganism; agony; love;

fidelity and betrayal - themes which surface in his interesting play, Le Zulu.

The epitaph in Le Zulu comes from Ecclesiastes 10⁵:

There is an evil that I have observed here under the sun, an error for which a ruler is responsible: the fool given high office, but the great and the rich in humble posts.

The citation of Ecclesiastes is in itself interesting, bearing in mind U Tam'si's scepticism, for Ecclesiastes epitomises the literature of Israelite scepticism. The writer of Ecclesiastes queries the usefulness of belief in God, and propounds a view of history that is cyclical - things go on very much as they have gone on since time immemorial: there is no progress, no grand design - "All, all is vanity". Notwithstanding the internal evidence of "judicious editing", it is probably true to say that the writer of Ecclesiastes did not doubt the existence of a God (Creator), but doubted the efficacy of trying to probe the mystery that surrounds him.¹¹⁹ True wisdom resides in getting on as best as one can (Eccl. 7¹⁶⁻¹⁸) rather than trying to invest life with a larger significance that cannot be verified:

Enjoy life with the woman you love all the days of your allotted span under the sun, empty as they are; for that is your lot while you live and labour here under the sun. Whatever task lies to your hand, do it with all your might, because in Sheol, for which you are bound, there is neither doing nor thinking, neither understanding nor wisdom.

(Ecclesiastes, 9⁹⁻¹⁰)

This is the grim view which gradually dawns on Chaka towards the end of his life, and his refusal to accept it is symbolized by his suicide - the desperate act, in terms of the text, of a desperate man, as this extract from his last soliloquy shows:

I have strangled Noliwe . . . I have strangled Nandi. Who will inherit this legacy? Spilt blood? To whom shall I bequeath a dream that has turned into a nightmare? . . . I weep, I the Zulu weep, because I have dreamt too much. . . . A man. . . . What sort of

a man have I been? A caricature of myself, because I have not become the master of the scum of the sea, nor faithful to Destiny. We must go. Man is blind because he does not see where he goes. What I see is horrible. Poor earth. It doesn't even comfort me to know that I am going to die . . . To die! That's an inevitable failure; but before the approaching horror what can I do! . . . (120)

His estimation of his life is poignant, as his last words show:

"Dead at the feet of defeat . . . What glory. Sad!"

Scepticism entails disbelieving in the truth of revelation. U Tam'si's Le Zulu is, in this respect, the antithesis of Mofolo's Chaka - the latter wrote from within the Judaeo-Christian fold, whilst the former has a heightened consciousness of evil, but no corresponding faith in the power of good - as Ndlebe's scornful remarks on the sleeping Chaka show:

"He sleeps! A sleeping tyrant is a mediocre sight. Does God sleep? What does Umzikulu look like when he sleeps? Does he resemble Chaka? If so, then even his lightest nights are infernal! And propitious to all plotters!" (121)

Dreams are the medium through which revelations are made in Le Zulu, and their betrayal, as well as their intrinsic lack of substance, form the central core of the play, which begins with the devils (or spirits) Ndlebe and Malounga loitering with intent.

The gratuitously mercenary nature of evil is revealed in Ndlebe's comment, in the Prologue:

We shall lead him to the paroxysm of his dream. (122)

What Malounga, Ndlebe and "The Voice" are after is spasmodic suffering, misery and blood - and this is best obtained by tapping Chaka's monumental ambition:

"He is waiting for a sign. Those who dream of absolute power always wait for a sign." (123)

The illusory nature of dreams is underlined in Ndlebe's invocation:

He dreams. Dream anxious soul! What he devours
with his eyes does not nourish the body, it hurts
the soul with an everlasting bleeding wound. (124)

Convinced that Chaka is "damned", Malounga and Ndlebé take on
human form and lead him to the "nethermost region of hell".

Chaka, we learn, had had a dream in which he sees a small man
wreaking havoc in the midst of the enemy with a new weapon - a
short stabbing spear. Spurred on by "The Voice", Malounga and
Ndlebé, he tentatively voices his desires and reveals his ambition:

If my blood does not betray me, I will make a success
of everything. Everything: the sky and the earth
together, united to my will. An equal part in each
hand of love of man and of power to be just.

Or is this just dancing on a tightrope on top of
precipices . . .

. . . This dream is crazy! Am I going to be lost in
it? My body trembles, my muscles tense up, my mouth
is parched. I can see what I have never been able to
name . . . (125)

His dream is to unite all the clans under a "unique" chieftainship.
He sees himself as Umzikulu (God)'s servant, initially - then hubris
sets in:

"How can L'Épervier know my plan? Umzikulu himself
cannot imagine it." (126)

He forgets that man is at the mercy of capricious fate, and
cultivates a personality cult in order to ensure the devotion of
the populace, in a scene reminiscent of Mofolo:

CRIER: Umzikulu has sent us Chaka. Umzikulu has given
the name Zulu to Chaka, Zulu is our father. People
from all the clans, people from all the tribes,
people from the whole earth, what the Zulu says has
been said by Umzikulu. Whose children are we?

VOICES: The Zulu. The Zulu. The Zulu. (127)

Not content with raising his clan from the lowly state reflected
in their opprobrious clan-name ("People of the Dog's Penis") to their
heavenly heights, symbolised by the new name (Zulu) he resorts to
double dealing to achieve his goal of total power. He makes a pact

with Zwide which results in the death of his brother-in-law, Ding Iswayo. This web of intrigue alienates his greatest admirer L'Épervier, and also Nandi, his mother - both eventually plot against him. Chaka's fatal assault on the distraught Noliwe alienates the audience, and the betrayal gains a momentum of its own. We witness Chaka's growing inability to keep a tight control over the lives of his subjects.

He becomes paranoid, and is plagued by nightmares. He is haunted by the curse Zwide laid on him just before he was executed - that "his own blood would stifle him". Chaka's folly, according to L'Épervier, lies in his refusal to share power, and he retreats into his self-serving myth that his mission is to build a dam that will withstand the threat of a white invasion from the sea.

The pathos is heightened by his tragic realisation of the failure of his mission, and he resorts to special pleading, as a front for his fear of assassination:

It's not so much for my own sake that I must live,
it's for the sake of the task that I have come to
do . . . It will be centuries before another like
me comes. My God! My God! I have given them the
reasons for dreaming and they dare not dream . . .

I have done nothing for them to be so afraid of me,
so much so that they are running away from me,
betraying me . . . (128)

The audience is left to infer that the mass desertions from Chaka's regime, which occur off-stage, stem from the repugnance felt by his subjects, at his bloody and treacherous regime.

L'Épervier and Nandi stand for those virtues that informed the old order, the order that reigned when Ding Iswayo was the overlord. As in Mofolo's Chaka, Ding Iswayo encapsulates decency: to him, power is a trust, managed on behalf of people:

Yes, the tribes are quarrelsome, prompted by rapine.
The sight of a kraal where the bulls are fat and
numerous triggers greed, and the blood of men must

be spilt. I referee, when the excess of insolence does not force me to wage war. I have been elected by the tribes for that role. What else is there to be done? (129)

U Tam'si suggests that the answer to African political turmoil is consensus, rather than vainglorious dreams of "unity" at the expense of the wishes of others - as in Mofolo, Ding Iswayo is the hero of The Zulu, and Chaka the anti-hero.

The Senghorian legacy can be seen in the pervading fear of the advent of the white man, the scum of the sea. Chaka's Southern Campaign is aimed at anticipating the threat to his kingdom. Whilst the bulk of Senghor's dramatic poem is taken up with an attempted justification of Chaka's sacrifice of those dear to him in the service of the people, U Tam'si does not feel bound to sloganise. U Tam'si's Chaka is psychologically more convincing than Senghor's narcissistic Chaka, when he laments his violation of love and family ties.

When Ding Iswayo brings news of the death of Senza Ngakona, he underlines the importance of filial duty: "Look after your Mother, console her." Chaka glosses over his treacherous "entente" with Zwide by giving a "filial token" of his love to his brother-in-law-to-be, and "protector". The error of his ways strikes him too late, when all that is left is "spilt blood", and life loses any significance for him.

Curiously, this denouement has resonances in Ecclesiastes:

But I have studied all life here under the sun, and I saw his (the king's) place taken by yet another young man, and no limit set to the number of the subjects whose master he became. And he in turn will be no hero to those who come after him. This too is emptiness and chasing the wind. (Ecclesiastes 4¹⁵⁻¹⁶)

Bearing in mind that the Jewish Wisdom Literature was primarily aimed at young courtiers and apprentice-administrators, it is

pertinent to quote the verse that precedes the epitaph:

If your ruler breaks out in anger against you, do not resign your post; submission makes amends for great mistakes. There is an evil that I have observed here under the sun, an error for which a ruler is responsible: the fool given high office, but the great and the rich in humble posts.

Irony is one of U Tam'si's favourite devices, and I submit that the "evil" he presents us with in Ndlebe, the "spirit of the air", in Malonga, the "spirit of the earth", and in Chaka, "the spirit of the flesh" reflect the "fallen" world, of which he is painfully aware. "The ruler" - God, Umzikulu, as well as the earthly rulers like Chaka, and Zwide - is "responsible" for the dismal state of the world, for they place "fools" in high places, instead of the "great" - like L'Épervier". U Tam'si's message is that as long as a topsy-turvy morality exists at the highest levels of government, with cronyism as opposed to meritocracy being the principal vehicle of patronage, then no regeneration is possible. Mankind will find itself locked in a vortex of agony, betrayal and folly.

U Tam'si's scepticism compels him to make the most of this life, for the one certainty in life is the advent of death. What pains him most, as a sensitive man, is the widespread oppression such as is in evidence in the Chakan era he portrays; and what is more, the era that succeeds Chaka strikes terror in the devil incarnate: Ndlebe:

CHAKA: "Dead at the feet of defeat. (silence) What glory. Sad."

(Sounds of cannon fire and gunshots. Warriors are all around. Spears fly in all directions. Outbursts of gunfire. Ndingana and Fokazana appear in military uniform, and a European comes in with them)

NDLEBE (now scared stiff): The scum of the sea . . .
Hell adds to the flames of agony. (130)

The parallel with Ka is clear.

Although U Tam'si is a sophisticated writer, he seems to lose his grip on language and metaphor in the closing scene. Nonetheless, along with Niane, he has produced one of the most dramatic plays on the life of Chaka. The key to understanding Le Zulu lies in the book that is dear to all sceptics who are delicately balanced on the brink of disbelief - Ecclesiastes:

Again, I considered all the acts of oppression here under the sun; I saw the tears of the oppressed, and I saw that there was no one to comfort them. Strength was on the side of their oppressors, and there was no one to avenge them. I counted the dead happy because they were dead, happier than the living who are still in life. More fortunate than either I reckoned the man yet unborn, who had not witnessed the wicked deeds done here under the sun. I considered all toil and all achievement and saw that it comes from rivalry between men and man. This too is emptiness and chasing the wind.

(Ecclesiastes 4¹⁻⁵)

His vision, in common with most of the other writers considered in this chapter, is a depressing one. One recalls Yambo Ouologuem's terrifying conclusion, in his Bound to Violence, that Africa's history is locked into an endless cycle of violence.¹³¹

Conclusion

Gary Warner, in his article on "The Use of Historical Sources in Francophone African Theatre" points out that the plays written in the '30s were largely assimilationist in outlook, though not necessarily naively so. The ambiguity of the Africans' response to "La paix française", founded on the myth that the French came to Africa as liberators and not conquerors, was evident from the '40s onwards.¹³²

The advent of Independence, together with the wider currency of the Négritude notions of the rediscovery of African history, culture and values, meant that many of the Western trained leaders

cast around for a symbol of African unity around which they could rally their people.

Chaka appealed to many of the politicians because they saw in his career the challenges that lay before them, of imposing a supra-tribal sense of identity. Senghor's "Chaka" reveals the ambiguities inherent in projecting one's own hopes, fears and dilemmas onto a well-known historical figure. Those playwrights who do not have an intensely personal dilemma to resolve, immediately prior to political independence, still have difficulty in trying to rehabilitate as a socialist hero, a feudal king whose primary concern (quite justifiable within his own setting) was with personal aggrandizement. The contradictions inherent in such an attempt are clearly revealed in Badian's The Death of Chaka, Camara's Amazoulou and Ka's Les Amazoulous.

Djibril Tamsir Niane and Tchikaya U Tam'si are not simply concerned with portraying a "glorious" past; they do not seek to peddle a Négritude hero, and so their plays have more life, more vitality than those of the other writers who wish to confine Chaka within their narrow ideological parameters.

Another common theme is the "problem" of the appearance of Europeans in Africa. Whilst the historical Chaka befriended the early traders and adventurers in Zululand, and extended his patronage to them, as we saw in Part II Chapter 1, thus underlying their total dependence on him; the Chaka of the French-speaking African writers perceives the arrival of Europeans as a political threat.

Léopold Sédar Senghor, Condetto Nénékhaly-Camara, Abdou Anta Ka and Tchikaya U Tam'si all focus on the subsequent dispossession of the Africans by the Europeans, with the institutionalised racism that was entrenched by the apartheid policy of successive Nationalist

governments the prime topic for debate.

Some of the politically active writers, Camara and Badian in particular, cast the villains of the piece in the garb of the military.

The question of genre is interesting, for most of the other accounts of Chaka appear in novels or poems. Césaire's remark, cited in Warner, is helpful on this point:

"Africa needs to understand herself, to have an awareness of herself. That is why this theatre always draws on history. The reason is because beyond the individual destiny it involves the destiny of an entire people." (133)

The quest for self, which exercised the minds of the Négritude writers in Paris, can be discerned in the latest version of Chaka's story as presented in U Tam'si's Le Zulu. U Tam'si's title reflects a shift from the preceding attempts, by Camara and Ka, to subsume his story within the story of "the people", to a sharper focus on Chaka's singularity. As Aristotle pointed out, character is revealed by the choices one makes¹³⁴ - in U Tam'si's judgement, Chaka receives his just deserts:

"When one has no love for one's own people, one must not count on the friendship of others." (135)

His isolation is self-inflicted.

Footnotes - Chapter 4

1. L. S. Senghor, "Chaka" in Selected Poems, ed. John Reed and Clive Wake, London: OUP, 1964, pp. 67-77; K. S. Badian, The Death of Chaka: A Play in Five Tableaux, transl. C. Wake, Nairobi: OUP, 1968; C. Nénékhaly-Camara, Amazoulou précède de Continent Afrique, Honfleur: P. J. Oswald (Coll: Théâtre Africaine), 1970; D. J. Niane, Chaka, suivi de Sikasso, la dernière citadelle, Honfleur: P. J. Oswald (Coll: Théâtre Africaine), 1971; A. A. Ka, Les Amazoulous in Théâtre Quatre Pièces, Paris, Présence Africaine, 1972; T. U. Tam'si, Le Zulu, Paris: Nubia, 1977. Burness gives Badian's final name as Kouyaté.
2. Zell, H. M., Bundy, C. and Coulon, V., A New Reader's Guide to African Literature, London: Heinemann, 1983, pp. 359-60.
3. Niane, Sundiata, An Epic of Old Mali, transl. G. A. Pickett, London: Longman, 1970.
4. See Lewis Nkosi's Tasks and Masks, London: Longman, 1981, p. 27, for a positive reading of the influence of négritude; and Craig Charney's "Negritude and Black Consciousness: The Social and Political Roots of Two Black Ideologies" - research paper, Witwatersrand University, 1984 - made available by Dr. T. Lodge to me.
5. L. Kesteloot, Les Ecrivains Noirs de Langue Française Naissance d'une Littérature, Brussels, 1963, transl. Ellen Conroy Kennedy, Black Writers in French: A Literary History of Negritude, Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1974.
6. See Janheinz Jahn, Neo-African Literature: A History of Black Writing, transl. O. Coburn and U. Lehrburger, Grove Press, New York, 1968, and A. Irele, "A Defense of Négritude: A propos of Black Orpheus by Jean Paul Satre, Transition 3, no. 13 (1964), 9-11; see also "Négritude and Black Cultural Nationalism", Journal of Modern African Studies (JMAS), 3, no. 3 (1965), 321-48; "Négritude - literature and ideology", JMAS 3, no. 4 (1965), 499-526; "Post-Colonial Négritude: The Political Plays of Aimé Césaire", West Africa 27, Jan. 1968, 100-101; and The African Experience in Literature and Ideology, London: Heinemann, 1981.
7. Fanon, F., Peau Noire, Masques Blancs, Sevil, 1952, transl. C. L. Markmann; Black Skin, White Masks, Grove Press Inc., New York, 1967.
8. Cited in L. Nkosi, op. cit., 1981, p. 26.
9. Introduction to Liberté I cited in Sylvia Washington Bâ's The Conception of Négritude in the Poetry of Léopold Sédar Senghor, Princeton Univ. Press, 1973, p. 44.

10. Ba, op. cit., p. 44.
11. I am indebted to Gervase Clarence Smith's remarks at a Seminar in York on culturalism. Referring to the ambiguities inherent in culturalism, he cited a late eighteenth century defense of Portuguese culturalism: "His majesty does not discriminate against his subjects in terms of colour, but in terms of merit."
12. Ezekiel Mphahlele's frustration with Négritude, as revealed in his African Image stems, in part, from his confusion of French culturalism, as evidenced in assimilation, with the Apartheid brand of culturalism. The former leaves room for African advancement into white society, whilst the latter rests, at least in so far as it was envisaged by its principal architect, Dr. Verwoerd, on exclusion.
13. Ulli Beier, "The Theme of Ancestors in Senghor's Poetry" in Ulli Beier ed. Introduction to African Literature: An Anthology of Critical Writing, London: Longman, 1979 (1967).
14. Leo Frobenius, a German ethnologist, spent twenty years (1890-1910) exploring West and Equatorial Africa, and was one of the first Europeans to admit that Africans had had a medieval culture equal to the West's, and that they were "civilized to the marrow of their bones". His work on the history and origins of African civilization appeared in the original German between 1894 and 1928, and was translated into French in 1896 as Histoire de la civilisation africaine (Paris, Gallimard).
- Maurice Delafosse, who served as a Colonial Governor in Afrique Occidentale Francaise, the region originally comprising the French West African colonies, published dictionaries and grammars of some African languages and encouraged African school-teachers to collect folklore and local history. He wrote a number of books himself, including Le Noirs de l'Afrique (Paris, Payot, 1922), which was translated in 1931 by F. Fligelman (Washington, Associated Publishers, 1931). Summary of D. S. Blair, Af. Lit. in French, p. 21.
- See also Revd. Placide Tempel's La Philosophie Bantoue, transl. A. Reubens, 2nd ed., Paris: Présence Africaine, 1949.
15. See James Arnold, Négritude and Modernism: The Poetry and Poetics of Aimé Césaire.
16. Césaire, Aimé: Return to Native Land, transl. J. Berger and A. Bostock, Middlesex: Penguin, 1969, pp. 66-7.
17. I am grateful to Professor Wake for consenting to an interview on the 25th July, 1984, during which I was treated to a panoramic overview of African writing in French, with special reference to poetry and drama. For a published elaboration of these points, see C. Wake, An Anthology of African and Malagasy Poetry in French, London: OUP,

- 1965; J. Reed and C. Wake, Léopold Sédar Senghor: Poetry Prose, London: Heinemann, 1979 (originally OUP, 1965); and J. Reed and C. Wake, French African Verse, London: Heinemann, 1972.
18. O. S. Mezu, The Poetry of Léopold Sédar Senghor, Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1973.
 19. Hughes, L. "The Twenties: Harlem and its Négritude", African Forum, I, No. 4 (Spring 1966, 11-20), pp. 16, 18.
 20. Cited in "W. E. B. Du Bois", in C. L. R. James, The Future in the Present: Selected Writings, London: Allison and Busby, 1977, p. 203.
 21. See Reed and Wake, Léopold Sédar Senghor: Selected Poems, 1964, Introduction.
 22. C. Wake, "The Personal and the Public: African Poetry in French", Review of National Literatures, 1971, Vol. 2(2), p. 113.
 23. The original extract can be found in Burness, op. cit., p. 30. The letter is dated 12th May, 1971, and I am indebted to Mr. Kingsley Boulton for his assistance in translating this extract.
 24. Writers whose portrayal of Shaka was analyzed in Part II Chapter I.
 25. Early Black South African writers whose works are discussed in Part II Chapter 2, who did not feel compelled to excuse Chaka of crimes against humanity. Chakan apologetics starts with Skota, who attempted to rehabilitate his reputation in the 1930s.
 26. See E. A. Jones, "Diallo and Senghor as Interpreters of the new French Africa", French Review, 1948, Vol. 20 (May), 444-9.
 27. M. J. Hoog, "Chaka de Senghor", Francité, St. Louis University Missouri, No. 2, Spring 1973.
 28. C. Wake, "The Personal and the Public: African Poetry in French", op. cit., p. 115.
 29. Burness, op. cit., 71. Hans Zell et al date his ministerial appointment from 1962.
 30. Blair, op. cit., p. 98.
 31. Transl. C. Wake, The Death of Chaka, Nairobi: OUP, 1968, pp. 3-10.
 32. ibid., p. 15.
 33. ibid., p. 18.
 34. ibid., p. 22.

35. ibid., p. 27.
36. ibid., p. 35.
37. ibid., p. 35.
38. ibid., p. 28.
39. ibid., pp. 18, 19.
40. ibid., p. 20.
41. ibid., p. 22.
42. ibid., pp. 37, 37-8.
43. ibid., p. 30.
44. ibid., p. 31.
45. ibid., p. 27.
46. ibid., p. 34.
47. ibid., p. 38.
48. ibid., p. 30.
49. ibid., p. 22.
50. See Clive Wake's introduction to his translation of The Death of Chaka.
51. See, for example, Les Dirigeants africains face à leur peuple (1964), (The African Leaders facing their People.)
52. Wake, p. 46.
53. ibid., p. 47.
54. Burness, op. cit., p. 78.
55. Blair, African Literature in French, p. 98.
56. ibid., p. 98.
57. Camara, Continent Afrique suivi de Amazoulou, Théâtre Africain, P. J. Oswald, 1970, p. 66.
CHAKA (brusque): Je ne dois rien à personne,
mère. C'est Dingiswayo qui me doit tout.
58. ibid., p. 61.
O Roi! depuis que tu y as goûté, cette eau
vient d'acquérir les grandes vertus que tu
as fait passer en son intime nature.
59. ibid., p. 84.
Mon amour pour toi et celui de ta mère n'ont
hélas pas le poids et la force de leurs avis.
Ils te demanderaient ma tête que tu serais prêt
à la leur porter sur-le-champ.

60. ibid., p. 85.
Qu'espère le peuple zoulou conduit par un souverain que vous tenez en laisse?
61. Blair, op. cit., p. 99.
62. Camara, Amazoulou, op. cit., p. 57.
Mais une grande espérance t'appelle. N'en sens-tu pas le souffle? Puisses-tu rendre leurs couleurs à ces collines ternies et à cette belle vallée là-bas. . . . Quitte cette cage de peur qui t'étouffe. Frémis et respire au grand vent libre.
63. ibid., p. 91.
C'est vrai que j'ai voulu être grand, mais c'est un orgueil inhumain que j'ai développé en moi. En ces heures où me fuit l'affection de mon peuple, je n'ai même plus la consolation de l'amour familial.
64. ibid., p. 83.
Les coutumes du passé autorisaient de telles pratiques en l'efficacité desquelles nul n'a foi aujourd'hui.
65. ibid., pp. 97, 98.
L'arrivée de Mosheshe coïncide avec l'avènement d'une ère nouvelle, celle de la lutte des Zoulous pour la défense de leur patrimoine et de leur sang. . . . Mais, partons accueillir Mosheshe. Sans le connaître, je sais déjà qu'il est digne de conduire les destinées de la Nation zoulou.
66. ibid., pp. 73-74.
Il y a ici un profond amour de la terre et des créatures que Oumkoulou-koulou-le-divin a répandues sur elle. Chaka est leur défenseur.
NDLEBÈ: Qui sont-ils? Des foules anonymes qui ne se connaissent pas et que seule maintient ensemble la crainte de l'épée de Chaka.
MOHLOMI: Ne blasphème pas. Les hommes n'acceptent que les protecteurs qu'ils se donnent. Ils ont reconnu en Chaka un des leurs qui s'est élevé parmi d'autres parce qu'il portait en lui la conscience des faibles assoiffés de justice. . . . La prospérité du peuple est complète.
MALONGA: Mensonge! C'est par la haine et dans le sang qu'il a grandi sa stature.
67. ibid., p. 93.
Ce serait une vaine épopée. L'aventure dépasse nos faibles moyens de défense et l'entreprise serait trop ardue. A en juger par les rumeurs qui nous parviennent, ces envahisseurs ont déjà pris pied sur le sol zoulou même. Ils se sont ménagé des alliances auprès de certains des nôtres. Comment résister dès lors?

68. ibid., p. 96.
 En vérité, je suis las, très las Issanoussi.
 Et un homme fatigué doit savoir s'effacer. Mon
 esprit n'arrive plus à dominer souverainement
 les pentes raides de la raison. Tout effort me
 semble vain.
69. ibid., p. 95.
 CHAKA: Ami, il faut savoir se retirer lorsque
 l'on s'est trompé. . . . Pour beaucoup,
 Mosheshe sera un étranger. Les particularismes
 provinciaux exacerbés les uns contre les autres
 sont les obstacles sur les quels j'ai buté moi-
 meme, et d'autres, sans doute, buteront dessus
 apres moi. Pour les réduire il n'existe d'autre
 recours que la fermeté et la volonté de redonner
 corps au sentiment national d'unité parmi les
 Zoulous.
 ISSANOUSI: Il faut pourtant rompre le cercle
 infernal. . . . Même si la coalition intérieure
 qui s'est dressée contre toi doit t'écraser, il
 te reste une grande bataille à livrer que tu
 sauras gagner. Ce sera l'épreuve décisive par
 laquelle tu reconquerras les suffrages et la
 faveur de ton peuple. . . . Tu ne peux abandonner
 et fuir l'épreuve.
70. ibid., p. 94.
 Le reste fut une espèce d'engrenage dont les
 passions inhumaines de Malonga et de Ndlébè
 entretenirent les rouages.
71. Gutteridge, W. F., The Military in African Politics, London:
 Methuen, 1969.
72. D. T. Niane, Sikasso ou La Dernière Citadelle Suivie de Chaka,
 Théâtre Africain, P. J. Oswald, 1971, p. 71.
 2nd ENFANT: Il paraît qu'il est un enfant du
 malheur. J'ai entendu ma mère le dire à notre
 voisine. Il paraît que le battre est une bonne
 chose, ainsi le malheur qu'il porte en lui perd
 de la force.
73. ibid., p. 72.
 4th ENFANT: Regardez, le voilà qui revient.
 Voyez comme il a les yeux rouges. Il a tout d'un
 Issanoussi, c'est un sorcier. Moi, il me fait peur.
74. ibid., p. 73.
 NANDI: D'arbord rendre coup pour coup et ne pas
 reculer quand bien même ils seraient cent. Il
 faut vouloir être fort, la vie c'est la force,
 fils, qu'est-ce qu'un homme sans force. C'est par
 la force que ton père, le Roi Senza Ngakona, s'est
 imposé au respect et a l'admiration de tous les
 hommes de la tribu. Si le lion est Roi, c'est bien
 à cause de ses griffes et de ses dents.

75. ibid., p. 74.
NANDI: Il faut que tu me venges (elle sanglote).
N'auras-tu pas un coeur d'homme.
76. ibid., p. 75.
CHAKA: . . . Ah! y'a que ca hein, la force, rien que ca oui, la force.
77. ibid., p. 74.
NANDI: C'est tout simplement qu'on sait que tu dois régner. Les petites gens aiment et redoutent à la fois la force qui doit s'imposer à eux.
78. ibid., p. 76.
VOIX D'ISSANOUSI: . . . Ah! a-t-on jamais vu ça. Des fils de paysans bafouer un prince, un fils de Roi (il ricane).
79. ibid., p. 76.
CHAKA: Qui me parle comme si je me parlais a moi-même. Qui m'exprime si clairement et vient proclamer ce que je n'asais m'avouer. Ce pendant, n'ai-je pas montre tout a l'heure que j'etats le plus fort. Mes copains n'ont-ils pas baissé le front quand j'ai parlé sur le ton d'un Roi: Ils ont obei . . .
80. ibid., p. 79.
ISSANOUSI: Cependant, sache que je ne te force pas. Le chemin de la gloire est devant toi, va, mais si tu recules, si ton coeur cède à la peur, c'est contre toi que ma médecine se retournera car elle veut du sang, du sang en abondance, encore du sang.
81. ibid., p. 80.
1er PASSANT: Il s'en trouvera toujours un fou pour prétendre défendre la liberté.
82. ibid., p. 81.
1er PASSANT: Moi, j'avais pensé que l'ère de bonheur annoncée par les premières conquêtes était venue. Cependant je m'aperçois qu'a chaque victoire le bonheur s'éloigne. A la peur qui saisissait nos pères quand retentissait le tam-tam de guerre de l'ennemi succède dans nos coeurs une peur plus grande quand nos propres tambours appellent les hommes au rassemblement. Et . . .
2^e PASSANT: Ami, il ne fait pas bon trop parler par les temps qui courent. Il y a un moment que nous sommes ici seuls.
83. ibid., p. 80.
3^e PASSANT: Il s'arrêtera bien quand il n'aura plus devant lui que les montagnes; je n'ai jamais vu amour de la gloire si devastateur. Je voudrais bien assister à la fin de ce cauchemar.

84. ibid., p. 82.
2^e PASSANT: Malheur, nous avons trop parlé.
85. ibid., p. 83.
MAPO: Frère, tu oublies qu'il y a des oreilles qui écoutent pour le maître. Le fils de Nandi n'est pas un homme comme les autres. Il sait ce qui se dit dans le secret des cases, alors ce n'est pas à côté du trône qu'il farit commettre des imprudences. Que ne sacrifierait - il pas pour sa gloire? Sa main à trempé dans le sang précieux . . . Oh! que dis-je . . .
86. ibid., p. 84.
N'TUSSI: A moins que dans un sursaut patriotique nos bras ne s'unissent contre le tyran. Camarades, nous . . . Mon Dieu, voici Ndlèbè, l'âme damnée de Chaka (entre Ndlèbè) . . .
N'POLO: . . . Nous aura-t-il entendu.
N'TUSSI: Mes jambes tremblent, je suis mort (la trompette sonne, annonçant la cour). Mon Dieu comme la trompette a un son sinistre ce matin.
87. ibid., p. 86.
Toi qui t'entretiens directement avec le Ciel
Toi qui sais tout, entends tout
O Fils de Nandi le peuple Zoulou
Attends à genoux ta parole infaillible
Bayeté, Bayeté.
88. ibid., p. 87.
CHAKA: Que dire de ces généraux qui s'en prennent aux décisions du ciel. Quel sort faire a ces généraux qui ont profité des victoires du peuple et qui en veulent au pouvoir du peuple. Qui m'en veulent à moi, Chaka.
LA PEUPLE: La mort, la mort, la mort.
89. ibid., pp. 87-8.
CHAKA: Mon Dieu, quand donc viendra-t-il ce som meil? N'Koulou N'Koulou, procure-moi le sommeil, accorde-moi le repos.
90. ibid., p. 88.
VOIX D'ISSANOUSI: Qu'est-ce que tu veux Chaka . . . Ne t'ai-je pas donné Puissance, Gloire, Renommée. (Il ricane, ricanement diabolique) Chaka, Chaka, désires-tu plus de puissance, voudrais-tu franchir les mers et sonmettre sous ta loi des peuples encore inconnus (ricanement . . .).
91. ibid., pp. 88-9.
O Dieu, je l'ai eue cette gloire. La renommé je l'ai. Mon nom seul seme l'épouvante dans le ventre des mères. Les Rois devant moi, tels des chiens honteux, n'osent lever le regard.
Maître, tu m'as dit "Je ne te force pas." Je l'ai voulu le pouvoir. Mais mon coeur n'a plus de repos. Une sagaie toujours dégoulinant de sang, un peuple épouvanté, la voilà ma gloire. Partout des regards

hypocrites, des paroles qui ne partent que des lèvres. Des armées impeccables, volant de victoire en victoire au milieu des râles déchirants des champs de bataille. Oui, les vautours et les corbeaux aussi chantent mes louanges. Au-dessus de mes armées en marche, escadron de l'air, ils forment un sinistre parasol. Voilà ma gloire et les jeunes filles à la rivière, dans les huttes et aux champs attendent, craintives, le messenger de Chaka.

Je ne suis pas aimé.

92. ibid., p. 92.

CHAKA (Ils sortent): Malonga, a l'heure ou le coq chantera pour la première fois, tu t'occuperas de Nongo. Je veux du propre - Qu'il disparaisse sans jamais qu'on sache ce qu'il est devenu. Quant à Mailé et Sonto. C'est réglé. Ils ne reviendront jamais de cette excursion.

93. ibid., p. 93.

CHAKA: Ndlebè, parle-moi sincèrement - suis-je un tyran, ne suis-je pas l'homme du ciel. Ma gloire est-elle mortelle. Quelle fin? La fin, la fin . . . (il se tient la tête) ah j'ai besoin de repose (silence).

94. ibid., p. 94.

NDLEBÈ: Ce mêmes femmes, ces mêmes fiancées qui pleurent et se lamentent, ce guerniers bougons qui ronchonnent, demain, quand ils seront au milieu de leurs petit-fils et neveux, ils te composeront la plus belle des épopées.

Tu seras le pur héros de légende, le modèle dont l'image hantera l'esprit des générations à venir. Qu'as-tu à craindre quand le peuple entier te suit et chante ta gloire.

95. ibid., p. 96.

CHAKA: Oui, c'est maintenant que je veux rendre mon peuple heureux. J'ai conquis tout le sud (silence . . . silence) Issanoussi, Issanoussi (ne répond pas).

ISSANOUSI: C'est maintenant que commence la gloire, tous les Rois sont vaincus, le but n'est plus loin.

96. ibid., p. 96.

ISSANOUSI: Tout est en ordre, Chaka (celui-ci sursante). N'aie pas peur, tout est en ordre.

97. ibid., p. 97.

ISSANOUSI: (il apparaît tel qu'il apparut à Chaka jadis . . .) La gloire suprême est à toi, Chaka. Les portes de l'Eternité s'ouvrent à ton souffle puissant et tu vas prendre place aux rangs des immortels. La mort, consolation des faibles et des puissants, t'ouvre se bras.

98. A. A. Ka, Les Amazoulous in Théâtre, Quatre Pièces, Paris, Présence Africaines, 1972, p. 36.
 Mais comme j'aime à le dire à mes amis: "Il y a en un Chaka d'un Poète-Président de République; un Chaka d'un Ministre; il faut bien un Chaka d'un homme de la rue." Et l'homme de la rue, c'est moi. Ma vision de Chaka se révéla autre. Chaka n'était-il pas en partie un homme de la rue, un bâtard condamné à mort par son père, pourchassé comme animal malfaisant par ses frères et par la faim? L'admiration de son peuple, qu'il côtoyait, parce qu'il sut l'affranchir des croyances des prêtres animistes et des chefs des tribus, cette admiration t'éleva au rang d'un guide.
99. ibid., p. 42.
 LE PREMIER CHEVALIER: Du nord de l'empire de Chaka le Magnifique, des hommes du ciel, des Amazoulous: Un nom qui fait agir.
100. ibid., p. 42.
 . . . du nom qui virifie les âmes, les refléurit de toutes couleurs.
101. ibid., p. 44.
 LE PREMIER SOLDAT: Une question. A quelle tribu appartenais-tu?
 LE TROIS CHEVALIERS (a la fois): Ce mot-tribut-existe-t-il encore? Intorrogez les cimetières.
102. ibid., p. 44.
 LES DEUX CHEVALIERS ET LES TROIS SOLDATS: L'Empire des Amazoulous, l'Empire du partage de la vie, s'étendra alors des dunes aux montagnes, de la bête bleue a l'infini rouge.
103. Blair, op. cit., p. 101.
104. Ka, Les Amazoulous, op. cit., p. 36.
 Je les portais à l'île de Sangomar, ou la Mort. admet ceux qui méritent l'entrée de la Grande Pyramide de Héros de la Race et renvoie parmi les vivants ceux qui n'ont pas enrichi la condition humaine et doivent expier leurs fautes, non dans l'enfer de l'au-delà, mais sur la terre.
105. ibid., pp. 36-7.
 Nolivé, elle, amoureuse de Chaka bâtisseur d'un monde nouveau, plus que de Chaka individu, à la poursuite d'un bonheur égoïste. Nolivé n'hésita point. Le consentement au sacrifice de sa vie n'est en somme que le signe de l'éthique négro-africaine: la Vie est Partage.
106. S. Samkange, On Trial for My Country, London: Heinemann, 1981 (1966).

107. Ka, Les Amazoulous, op. cit., p. 70.
 Plus de lumière. Ne m'abandonne pas à moi-même.
 Je marche encore sans savoir où aller? Je hais
 la nuit; le jour m'exaspère. Où est ma faute si
 j'ai préféré ces yeux d'amande de ma douce Nolivé
 comme dit le chantre à la Pyramide de Héros? Et
 tous ces crimes que je commets . . . Pourquoi pas
 mon sang à moi . . . le sang d'un bâtard . . .
108. ibid., p. 72.
 Nolivé, ce don de ton sang n'arrêtera pas la chute
 fatale de l'Empire, même l'est conquis, Latyr gracié.
 Amazoulous, bientôt arriveront des étrangers.
 (Tonnerre, foudre, balles de fusils, pénombre. Tous
 les assistants changent de costume. En habits
 modernes des Africains de l'Afrique du Sud.)
109. ibid., pp. 72-3.
 CHAKA: Nous deviendrons les esclaves de leurs compas
 et de leurs équerres. L'Empire des hommes du ciel
 portera un autre nom: l'Afrique du Sud. Et nos Dieux
 laisseront faire . . . Moins que des chiens, le droit
 de marche nous sera interdit. Des cartes d'un quartier
 à un autre. Des trains spéciaux. Des hommes viendront
 contempler noire misère, verser une larme vite séchée
 par le diamant, l'or, car femmes, vous enfanterez dans
 la douleur pour la douleur. Vos filles seront leur
 propriété, moins appréciée que les colliers que leurs
 épouses à ces étrangers porteront, et que vos fils
 iront chercher dans les entrailles du sol. . . . Des
 voix s'élèveront, mais impuissantes. Nous aurons connu
 plus de martyrs que les plaines de Judée.
110. ibid., p. 73.
 NOLIVÉ: On ne lutte pas contre la fatalité par la
 raison, mais par le coeur. Je suis prête, Chaka.
111. ibid., p. 74.
 NOLIVÉ ET CHAKA: Bouillantes aujourd'hui, demain
 la boue. Elles finissent par se dessécher un jour
 Les eaux si profondes soient-elles.
 CHAKA: Bayeté Nolivé.
 NOLIVÉ: Bayeté Chaka. Va à présent mourir . . . pour
 renaître partout où l'homme du Partage, le nègre, sera
 humilié!
112. Dorothy Blair points out that Ka has spent a lot of time in
 mental clinics. Blair, op. cit., p. 140.
113. Ka, Les Amazoulous, op. cit., p. 66.
 LE PRINCE-BOURREAU (mimant Chaka en le ridiculisant):
 Je suis Chaka, le vainqueur du lion. Il était sans
 queue, ce lion.
 LE PEUPLE: C'est bien lui . . . le vainqueur d'un
 lion sans queue ni crocs. Ah, il faut le voir
 aujourd'hui. Il se planque devant son ombre et
 rit, rit.

LE PRINCE-BOURREAU (mimant Chaka en le ridiculisant): Je suis le Beau Ténébreux fait pour commander avec clémence.

LE PEUPLE: A coups de triques . . . de fosses communes, de ventres de femmes éventrées.

114. ibid., p. 67.

LES DIGNITAIRES (tres bouffons):

Seigneur des seigneurs

O toi le grand lion

L'Eléphant auquel nul ne peut répondre

Toi qui as grandi

Tandis que nous rapetissions.

LE PEUPLE: Toi qui dévores les hommes!

115. Blair, op. cit., p. 172.

116. U. Tam'si, Epitomé Les Mots de tête pour le sommaire d'une Passion, Tunis: Societe Nationale d'Edition et de Diffusion, 1962.

117. Cited in G. Moore: African Literature and the Universities, Ibadan University Press, 1965, p. 62.

118. U. Tam'si, A triche-coeur, Paris: Hautefeuille (Caracteres), 1958.

119. See Henry McKeating's Studying the Old Testament, London: Epworth, 1979, for an analysis of Jewish "Wisdom Literature".

120. T. U. Tam'si, Le Zulu suivi de Vwene le Fondateur, Paris: Nubia, 1977, p. 130.

J'ai égorgé Noliwé . . . J'ai égorgé Nnandi.

À qui léguer un tel héritage. Le sang répandu?

À qui léguer un rêve qui a tourné au cauchemar

. . . Je pleure, moi le Zulu, parce que j'ai trop rêvé.

L'homme . . . Quel homme ai-je été? Une caricature

de moi-même, parce que je ne me suis rendu ni

maître de l'écume de la mer, ni féal du destin!

Allons donc! L'homme est aveugle puisqu'il ne

voit pas où il va. Moi je vois - ce que je vois

est horrible. Pauvre terre! Il n'est même pas

consolant de savoir que je vais mourir . . .

Mourir! C'est l'échec inévitable, mais face à

cette horreur qui vient, qu'y puis-je maintenant?

121. ibid., p. 110.

Il dort! C'est médiocre un tyran qui dort! Bien

dort-il? À quoi ressemble-t-il Umzikulu, quand il

dort? À Chaka? Si c'est oui, on comprend que la

nuit, même la moins noire soit infernale! Propice

à tous les complots!

122. ibid., p. 17.

"Nous le mènerons au paroxysme de ton rêve."

123. ibid., p. 19.
Il attend un signe. Ceux qui rêvent du pouvoir absolu attendent toujours un signe.
124. ibid., p. 17.
Il rêve. Rêve, âme inquiète! Ce qu'il dévore des yeux ne nourrit pas le corps mais blesse l'âme d'une blessure toujours sanglante!
125. ibid., p. 30.
Si mon sang ne me trahit, je triomphe de tout.
Tout: le ciel et la terre unis à mon vouloir.
La part égale dans chaque main, d'amour pour les hommes et pour le pouvoir. Pour être juste . . .
Est-ce danser sur une corde raide au-dessus des précipices? . . .
. . . Ce rêve est fou. M'y perdrai-je? Mon corps tressaille, mes muscles se noeuent, ma bouche est suave . . . Je vois ce que je n'ai jamais su nommer.
126. ibid., p. 56.
Comment l'Épervier pourrait-il connaître mon plan? Umzikulu lui-même ne l'imagine même pas.
127. ibid., p. 67.
CRIEUR: Umzikulu nous a envoyé Chaka! Umzikulu a donné le nom de Zulu à Chaka. Zulu est notre père à tous. Hommes de tous les clans, hommes de toutes les tribus, hommes de toute la terre. Ce que le Zulu dit a été dit par Umzikulu. Nous sommes les enfants de qui?
VOIX: Du Zulu! du Zulu! du Zulu!
128. ibid., pp. 103, 104.
Ce n'est pas tellement pour moi que je veux vivre . . . C'est pour finir ce que je suis venu faire . . . Il faudra des siècles pour qu'un autre vienne. Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu! Je leur ai donné des raisons de rêver et ils n'osent pas rêver! . . .
Je n'ai rien fait pour qu'ils aient si peur de moi, au point de me fuir, de me trahir . . .
129. ibid., p. 50.
Oui, les tribus sont querelleuses, promptes à la rapine. La vue d'un corail où les boeufs sont gras et nombreux déchaîne les conroitises, et le sang de l'homme doit couler. J'arbitre quand l'excès d'insolence ne m'oublige pas à faire la guerre. Les tribus m'ont élu pour cela. Que faire autre?
130. ibid., p. 131.
Mort au champ de la défaite. (silence) Quelle gloire. Triste!
(Coups de canon mêlés à des coups de tonnerre. Des guerriers envahissent la scène. Des lances volent dans tous les sens. Des coups de fusils éclatent. Apparaissent Ndingana et Fokazana en habits militaires européens, entre eux un Blanc.)

131. Y. Ouologuem, Bound to Violence, London: Heinemann, 1983.
132. G. Warner, "The Use of Historical Sources in Francophone African Literature", Theatre Research International, Vol. 9, No. 3, pp. 180-194.
133. ibid., p. 180.
134. See T. S. Dorsch, ed., Classical Literary Criticism, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1979, p. 41.
135. U. Tam'si, Le Zulu, op. cit., p. 13.
Quand on n'a pas l'amour des siens, il ne faut pas compter sur l'amitié des autres.

CHAPTER 5

"Shaka and the Use and Abuse of Power"

'You go too far, you have gone far enough.'

F. T. Prince.

In Chapter I, we traced the development of the Haggardian legacy of Shaka, the ruthless warrior; and in Chapter 3, we saw its modification and consolidation in A. T. Bryant's Olden Times in Zululand and Natal. In this Chapter, we shall analyse the threefold development of the Shakan legend in the works of Europeans writing in the latter half of this century.

The first part of this Chapter evaluates the portrait of Chaka drawn in F. T. Prince's poem "Chaka" - which is, perhaps, the finest poem composed about Chaka that has been published to date;¹ as well as S. Goro-X's play: Shaka: A Drama² and D. J. Darlow's "Tshaka".³ These texts show how two poets and a dramatist, writing in the late '30s and '40s, focused on Shaka's use and abuse of power, with the emphasis on its abuse; and in this we can discern the influence of Mofolo.

The next generation of European writers, led by E. A. Ritter, focus their attention on the sexual restrictions Shaka imposed on his warriors, whilst leading a lifestyle of unparalleled carnal indulgence himself. The writers considered in this part include Nickie McMenemy, Stephen Gray, Pieter Fourie, P. J. Schoeman; and Donald Morris and Max Gluckman, who suggest that Shaka was a "latent homosexual".⁴ Here we see the degeneration of Haggardian romance into pornography.

The concluding part assesses the contribution of social scientists and historians to the current views on Shaka - notably James Fernandez's elucidation of the Freudian elements within the Shakan story; the Africanist historiography popularized by J. D. Omer-Cooper's influential work The Zulu Aftermath; and E. V. Walter's distillation of Shaka's systematic use of terror as an instrument of policy.⁵

Before making a detailed analysis of F. T. Prince's "Chaka", it is useful to show how the lesser white South African poets used Shaka as a symbol of bloodthirsty rule. W. C. Scully, in his Notes to Acelandama, wrote:

He Chaka was, it is pretty evident, imbued
with the belief that he came into the world
with a mission - the mission of a destroyer.
He was, moreover, one of the most cruel and
ferocious savages ever gifted with irresponsible
power. (6)

In the poem, Chaka boasts of his destructive potential:

My spears are like the tongues of flame
That lick the craving autumn grass.
To drink of blood and tears I came;
Earth shudders where my footsteps pass. (7)

F. T. Prince's "Chaka" utilizes the images of fire, "blood and tears" to far greater effect, as shall be seen.

In Ethel Campbell's "Ricksha Boy", Chaka appears as a symbol of racial pride and bloody conquest, à la James Stuart:

The Ricksha Boy sees his savage fathers in the fray,
Athirst for blood and swooping on their prey.
Wild war-mad impis, hurling death to those
Unhappy creatures, Chaka's tribal foes. . . . (8)

Roy Campbell, in "The Flaming Terrapin", also hints at the dark deeds perpetrated by Tchaka. This poem reflects Roy Campbell's split loyalties - his dual allegiance to a Western cultural heritage and his quest for an African muse:

My task demands a virgin muse to string
 A lyre of savage thunder as I sing. . . .
 Now while across the night with dismal hum
 The hurricanes, your meistersingers, come,
 Choose me some lonely hill-top in the range
 To be my Helicon, and let me change
 This too-frequented Hippocrene for one
 That thunders flashing to my native sun
 Or in the night hushes his waves to hear
 How, armed and crested with a sable plume,
 Like a dark cloud, clashing a ghostly spear,
 The shade of Tchaka strides across the gloom. (9)

Campbell's generation grappled with the tensions induced by a parasitic colonial culture which, emotionally and in the field of education, was dependent on metropolitan trends; but which also had to come to grips with its own, unique, African identity. The passionate rejection of classical allusions cited above comes from one steeped in Hellenic culture - the protest is mediated through rhyming couplets!

It is to F. T. Prince, a fellow South African exile, that we turn for a satisfactory synthesis of the dual African and European legacy. A synthesis which calls to mind Léopold Sédar Senghor's satisfactory resolution of the twin calls of Senegal and France. For Prince, along with Roy Campbell, William Plomer and Laurens van der Post, belongs to that generation of promising South African poets who emigrated in the '20s and '30s.

F. T. Prince's "Chaka" conveys the profound imaginative vision of the (young) poet, in the way in which he enters into the mind of the young Zulu ruler, Chaka, as he contemplates his achievements. In "Chaka" we find the synthesis of African images and sentiments with what Donald Burness calls "the psychomachia motif in English poetry".¹⁰

F. T. PRINCE'S "CHAKA"

Frank Templeton Prince was born in 1912, in Kimberley, and he spent his childhood and adolescent years in South Africa, before

reading English at Balliol. After a year at Princeton University he returned to England and worked as an Assistant in the Study Groups Department at Chatham House. During the Second World War, he served in the Intelligence Corps before taking up a Readership in English Literature at Southampton University, where he later assumed the Chair.

A distinguished Miltonian and Shakespearean scholar, Professor Prince has also published several volumes of poetry. In 1938, under T. S. Eliot's patronage, Prince published his Poems, which included the poem "Chaka"; in 1954 came Soldiers Bathing and Other Poems; The Doors of Stone collection appeared in 1963; and Memoirs in Oxford in 1970; these were followed by Drypoints of the Hasidim in 1975; Afterword on Rupert Brooke in 1977; and the Collected Poems, plus additional verse, in 1979; in 1981 the Yuan Chên Variations were published, and in 1983, the volume Later On.¹¹

As the titles themselves reveal, F. T. Prince has a global vision. His topics range from the very personal - his love poems, and Memoirs in Oxford - to the universal: "Soldiers Bathing" deals with the horror of war; The Yuan Chên Variations reflect on the process of ageing; and a number of his poems deal with the purpose, role and function of art; and in much of his verse, one can detect the influence of his Roman Catholic faith.

Prince has the rare distinction of belonging to several poetic worlds - his poems have appeared in South African and in English Anthologies, and his celebrated poem "The Old Age of Michelangelo" reveals how closely he has been able to assimilate the essence of the Renaissance era. Paradoxically, the sense of "belonging", though dearly bought, is somewhat tenuous - hence, the personae in Prince's dramatic monologues are often haunted by self-doubt, by

feelings of alienation from their societies, that result from their fidelity to their innermost dreams and ambitions.¹²

The first version of "Chaka", as Burness points out, was written in late 1934; revised between 1935-36, and in 1937, before appearing in 1938.¹³ Prince had read Thomas Mofolo's Chaka, when the Dutton translation was published, and as the poet was twenty-two when "Chaka" was composed, the appeal of a South African youthful hero was very great:

I also saw in the personal history of Chaka an emblem of a certain adolescent crisis; the poem was intended to give the pattern of such an emotional and moral crisis and evolution as we find in Rimbaud's Saison d'Enfer. (14)

Rimbaud's youthful brilliance and iconoclasm obviously appealed to Prince, and two sections of Chaka, Section II "He Compares Old Customs with Those of His Kingdom" and Section IV, "He Bathes in the Morning" are iconoclastic in tone.

It is interesting to note that "Chaka" was published in the year that Prince left the Presbyterian Church and was baptised into the Catholic Church¹⁵ - as the following analysis will show, religious images and language pervade the poem. Prince's Chaka is essentially an anti-Christ; whilst Senghor's is a Black Christ. Both these Catholic poets were influenced by St. John Perse's verse.¹⁶

The political turbulence of the '30s and the rise of European nationalism also inform a reading of "Chaka":

The theme of the creation of a military nation by ruthless discipline and conquest seemed relevant to the rise of Nazism in the 1930s - a system I abhorred, but which showed the fascination which evil and tyranny held for the human spirit, in certain conditions. (17)

The poem begins with a powerful evocation of Chaka's "dark night of the soul":

The air cool and soft,
The darkness early about this sorrow. I
Am alone awake, I am alone
To watch the trembling of so many tears
Above my hard and empty lands. The plain
Mutilated and scarified, with dust and ashes on
a black face
Looks brittle as a moth's wing. Shall I weep?

With breathtaking economy of language - Prince is a master of the
expansible image - Prince sets the tone that reverberates throughout
the poem: that of sombre questioning.

Chaka's isolation is captured in the lines:

Am alone awake, I am alone . . . I

and the spatial arrangement of the words on the page highlights
key words and phrases in the poem; as does the use of internal
rhyme and repetition. Chaka posits the question that he has to
"face": "Shall I weep?" - which is answered in the fourth section
of the poem.

The dominant images of the devastation of the Chakan era are
introduced right at the beginning, and picked up in subsequent
stanzas - "the trembling of so many tears"; watchfulness; "sorrow";
"Mutilated" people; the "scarified" landscape; "dust and ashes"
all highlight the "brittle" nature of Chaka's achievements.

Chaka oscillates between Rimbaudian self-satisfaction - "You
have done well for yourself . . ." - and acute self-doubt:

Often night lets down darkness upon me
And every kind of doubt to weigh upon me.
I have said to him, as he thrust out his breast,
As he leapt forward like a pitch-black bullock,
As he buttocked with his buttocks
"Are you not coming to an end because of dawn?"
And he murmurs back, the night,
"You go too far, you have gone far enough."

Prince's craftsmanship can be seen in the powerful manner in which
he apostrophizes "night". The nightmarish force of Chaka's vision
and ambition, makes him plead for dawn to release him from the
powerful thrust of his dreams. Note the force of the alliteration in

As a young ruler, Chaka is naturally concerned with the question of identity - he wishes to differentiate himself from those around him:

So we had too a name in the world
And war was our host in these places (there was blood
in the dregs of the cup).

Chaka is said to have been very fond of punning, so the play on the words "we" and "host" is interesting. Chaka employs both the royal "we" and the African (and French) use of the plural (or "vous") form, when addressing an elder or social superior; as well as hinting at the identification of the subjects with their ruler.

The word "host" can be read on several different levels - firstly as a synonym for army; secondly in the religious sense of a communion wafer; thirdly with reference to the "heavenly hosts" ("amaZulu"), and fourthly, with reference to the parasitic nature of the Zulu nation - points which are picked up and extended in the closing lines of the Section:

So my state
Was fanned by a frond of fern and in the red shadow
Of cloud-like trees I was repaid.
Among gossip of moist leaves, tongues of an upstart court
To my gaudy establishment as general
Many emissaries, bitter, brought the crane's feather
And offered many tokens to placate, including
Sea-shells and a quantity of melons.

In times past, it was the dead, the ancestral spirits, who needed to be placated: now, atonement must be made with the living. Chaka speaks in terms of possession "my state", "my gaudy establishment as general", albeit with a touch of self-mockery, born of his sense of security in his "upstart court". The reference to a "quantity of melons" is not indicative of a "tribesman's" inability to count, as P. S. Marais suggests¹⁹ - it is, rather, indicative of Chaka's contentment with his status as overlord, rather than in the precise

enumeration of quantity. His reflection dwells more on the fact that people pay tribute to him than the exact nature of that tribute.

The next section, "How Festivals Were Celebrated", highlights the Messianic resonances; and the tone shifts from elation to despair:

The eye lid severed from its terrible schemes
Is reproached by a leafage built of numberless small
flames. . . .

A scarlet tree
Hit by the late wet season to her tips
Sways and offers to the man who sways a scarlet crown
And shakily a man's mind
Controls its longing to be split . . .

Perhaps it is not unreasonable to see in Chaka a projection of the young Prince's own time of testing; of coming to grips with his own desires and ambition, and the quest for a resolution of those wishes. For Prince, catharsis comes through Christ's sacrificial death, whilst, for Chaka, it is other people who are sacrificed:

At last there will be something to be said
That I have made my own.

I have brought fear to this people,
I have rendered them as rich and smooth as ox-blood.
But am I a bird of prey that I pursue
Only after the scent of a carcass? I might say
How with my lust I have refreshed the laws,
Giving out orders to hoe: and in the autumn
How some were allotted new wives.

All power has been centralized - even marriage is now a matter of patronage!

Chaka's penchant for exhibitionism is revealed in the recollection:

There were the feast days when, bare as a bolt
I danced before the people . . .
. . . I might have cried I was puffed up
With gross and fanciful enjoyments. Holidays
When on the smooth floor of a public place
As if in the teeth of all things I would act
As thunder, commandeer an echoing tube
And a congratulatory drum . . .

Chaka's vulnerability lies in his dependence on a public, on an audience that can congratulate him, as he stretches his faculties to the limit.

This brings to mind a line in Shaka's praise-poem: "Shaka, I fear to say it is Shaka", which captures the mesmerizing power of the man. The "People" clearly have difficulties in articulating their response to Chaka's "brilliance". The notion of "gifts inflicted" on dazed recipients is startling; and there is a strong sense of purgation.

The "brittle" nature of Chaka's success is hinted at by the introduction of the "swallows" (Europeans - perhaps Fynn, Isaacs and King):²¹

We smoke hemp
And the conversation of some swallows is both a keen
burden
And sweeter than that of the dead.

Chaka's pioneering spirit has whetted the appetite of his people for new frontiers, symbolised by the "swallows" - the creatures from beyond the coast. Nonetheless, the people's pride in their new identity is mirrored in the challenge of the concluding lines of the poem:

What do you dance,
What do you dance? we ask. We clap hands. How
Is it one sings your king's name? We have dreamed
Of an adorable authority and the brooks
Sobbing absurdly in the bright morning, the brooks
Glitter. There is so often news,
Yet we listen for news of the Men of the Sun and of
the Mist,
We murmur against the Men of the Baboons and those
of the Showers,
We learn of the Men of the Little Bluebuck, the Men
of the Young Lions;
Of the Sons of the Dancers of Iron and of the Children
Of the Elephant. All these are ours
And we are the People of Heaven. Tell us no lies
On our noons made loud by abolished clans.

Chaka brought the Zulu nation to its zenith by abolishing other clans, and his people have a vested interest in his fame, basking, as they do, in reflected glory. Doubtless, the Italians and the Germans rejoiced at the rehabilitation of their public image under their respective "adorable authority" - Hitler and Mussolini. Such

is "the fascination which evil and tyranny held [and still hold] for the human spirit, in certain conditions."

F. T. Prince's "Chaka" is perhaps the most powerfully realised attempt, by a European, to enter into the mind of Chaka, and of his people. Prince's deft handling of the spiritual, political and personal ramifications of his subject is reflected in his mastery of both language and technique, which results in the "seamless unity" of the poem. A poem that reveals more of its treasure with each subsequent reading - a fact lost on Marais, who, naively, criticises Prince for "his inexact and rambling sentences."²² One can hardly accuse Prince, that master of language, of inexactitude, as his diction is chosen with precision.

Marais' inability to appreciate "Chaka" stems from a failure of sensibility:

This poem is an interesting achievement, but as the average reader is incapable of identifying himself with Chaka as pictured here, it leaves him unmoved. (23)

Only those lacking souls can fail to sympathise with someone experiencing a dark night of the soul.

In Chapter 3, I stated that Prince's "Chaka" was the most intelligently worked-out Chakan poem since the Stuart collection of izibongo. I should qualify this statement by pointing out that, in terms of perspective, the poems differ: royal izibongo are rarely introspective; no imbongi would dream of portraying Shaka as a self-questioning individual - for them, Shaka is an elemental force: the personification of energy and power. The criticism, when it occurs in izibongo, is from without, it comes from izimbongi, but its burden, like that of Prince's "bullock", is "You go too far, you have gone far enough."

Over and above the beauty of the language of Prince's "Chaka", the appeal of the poem also lies in the poet's convincing evocation

of Chaka's psyche - in his presentation of Chaka as a man faced with moral dilemmas, irrespective of how he resolves them: a significant achievement, by South African standards.²⁴ One is reminded of part of Laurens van der Post's tribute to Rider Haggard:

To know human beings through the sense of wonder they provoke is, I believe, the beginning of grace on this earth. (25)

S. GORO-X'S SHAKA

S. Goro-X was a white man,²⁶ and the style of his play, Shaka, reveals a predilection for Shakespearean idiom, which is at odds with his South African setting, as we shall see. As I pointed out earlier, generic questions have dogged South African writing from the outset, and Goro-X's Shaka and David John Darlow's epic poem, "Tshaka", are of interest to a literary historian as examples of how writers in certain periods attempted to resolve - unsatisfactorily, in both cases - the question.

Nevertheless, Goro-X's play is convincing, on a psychological level - as he pays attention to showing what motivates his characters. Dramatic tension is created, and maintained, by the interplay between the main characters, and this militates against the inappropriate register. Shaka is thus able to sustain an audience's interest to a greater extent than most of the plays discussed in Chapter 4.

The play begins with a scene reminiscent of Macbeth's encounter with the witches on the "blasted heath", and a "voice" prophecies:

O Shaka, Shaka, chief of many men,
I see your history revealed in blood. (Ii)

Ndlela's bombastic description of Shaka in action against Zwide is quite unconvincing:

Then at a glance,
Just like a tawny bird on the prowl
When favouring winds lasciviously winnow
The savoury smellings from a fouled cote,

Prostrate upon its belly, with its tail
Spasmodically it flicks its tauted flanks
Then with a blare like thunder havoc wroughts,
So Shaka to the attack has spurred himself
Again. (Ii)

The contrast with Prince is clear - the language is wholly inadequate: the line "The savoury smellings from a folded cote" is atrocious; and would jar even in a description of a sheep farm in the Yorkshire dales. The word "sheep-pen" or kraal would, at least, add local colour, unlike "folded cote", and few would describe farmyard smells as "savoury smellings"!

Shaka is portrayed unsympathetically - he alienates his brothers, Dingaan and Malangan by patronizing them; and as the play progresses, we see his increasing isolation and alienation from his brother and counsellors to such an extent that no-one protests when he is assassinated. Dingaan presents the assassination as a liberation:

Involuntary,
With seeing feelings thitherward constrained
We have become your saviours against
The Shakan butchery. (V iii)

Once again, the language is turgid, lacking the boastful vigour of the praise-poem recorded by Arbousset and Daumas:

Liberator! thou hast shown thyself to this people;
Thou hast delivered from oppression the virgins,
The women, the men, and the children.
Thou art a king, who crushest the heads of other kings.
Thou passest over mountains inaccessible to thy predecessors.
Thou findest a defile from which there is no egress.
There thou makest roads, yea, roads. (ll. 14-20)

Okopulana and Omokotungwana's Dingan pulsates with life and vigour, unlike Goro-X's Dingaan.

Towards the end of the play, we learn that many impis are deserting - partly because of their frustration with endless campaigns, but also because Shaka withholds permission to marry, as Nongogo's remarks show:

He bluntly bids his ministers
To entice their daughters from their mother's homes
To swell his overflowing seraglio.
Whence, having plucked the flower of their youths
Are flung defiled to servile warriors
Thenceforth to be the breeders of our race.

(II i)

Mofolo voices a similar complaint: .

Behind that house of the king's was a long row
of houses in which the king's women lived. But
Chaka had no wife, he never married. Instead he
chose for himself the most beautiful girls in
the nation, who were well built and smooth and
brown like the cannabis seed; the ones with
beautiful bodies and perfect poise, and he kept
bringing them into those houses. He called them
his sisters, which meant they were ones with whom
he could have no carnal contact, and yet they were
the very ones whom he continually visited; he ate
the fruit of other men's daughters, picking the
very flower of their youth, and then when they
became too worn out to please him, he would pass
them onto his councillors, if they were still alive.

(27)

I quote at length here, to show how the principal African contributor
to the Chakan legend alludes to Chaka's concubines in a tone of
moral stricture, as opposed to the salacious fantasies of the later
white writers.

Goro-X introduces an incestuous dimension to the Shakan story
in his description of Shaka's bath in the presence of his mother,
Nandi, and aunt, Embokai:

Good mother, feast upon your son's expanse.
Ho, ho! Aunt Embokai, licentious maid!
Your creaky frame still keeps a girlish look!

(II ii)

Such appalling vulgarity is on a par with the sexual fantasies of
Ritter, McMenemy, Fourie and Gray, cited in the second part of this
chapter.

That Shaka is incapable of love is revealed in his cruel murder
of his offspring, Gijima, Noliwe and Nandi (II ii). Shaka's
callousness is highlighted by the way he comes between Noliwe and
her suitor, Ndlela - the latter then tries to kill Shaka, and is
tortured for his pains.

In conclusion, certain elements of Goro-X's style need further comment. Shaka is an imitative play, modelled on Shakespeare's tragedies and the Roman plays, but profoundly lacks the master's skill: Mala and Jobe attempt to inject some comic relief into the play, but the puns in I iii are laboured; Nomgogo's curse in II iii lacks Queen Margaret's venom (Richard III) - nevertheless, Nomgogo emerges as a spirited woman in her forthright condemnation of the "stern dictates / of Shaka's rule" (I ii). Dingaan's resolve to "Give Shaka a hero's burial" brings to mind Fortinbras' speech at the end of Hamlet, and the "ghost" scene in Act III Scene iii is clearly modelled on the one in Hamlet.

Shaka, though not without potential, ultimately fails because of Goro-X's choice of a foreign idiom, when dealing with an African setting, as Dingaan's comment:

This game of fautoccini I'll despoil
And break the strings if more he should persist.
(I iii)

African literature (or literature set in Africa) must be rooted on African soil if it is to succeed, as Prince has shown.

D. J. DARLOW'S AFRICAN HEROES: NTSIKANA, TSHAKA, KHAMA AND MOSHOESHOE

David John Darlow produced several volumes of poetry, including Poems; Shadows of the Amatole; "The Mendi", a poem inspired by the sinking of the Troop Ship Mendi in the English Channel, which resulted in the death of six-hundred-and-fifteen men of the South African Native Labour Corps; African Heroes; and In Remembrance: Poems.²⁸

In these volumes, one can trace a movement from the lyrical descriptions of English country scenes in Poems, through to an identification with the South African landscape in Shadows of the Amatole. The volume, African Heroes, is indicative of the extent

to which Darlow identified with the "Great Ones" of Southern African past - but the balance is heavily weighted in favour of the Christian leaders: Ntsikana is praised as a Christ-child - as the Gaika Messiah raised up amongst his own people; Khama is honoured as an enlightened soldier of Christ, a diligent pupil, and wise statesman; but Darlow has difficulty in fitting Moshoeshoe into his Christian propagandist mould, as the Sotho king was converted very late on in his life - he thus stands as a symbol of peaceful political growth, unlike the bloodthirsty Tshaka.

In "Tshaka: King of the Amazulu", Darlow acknowledges his indebtedness to:

. . . Mr. Mofolo, for the personification of
Tshaka's ambition in Isanusi and his force and
guile in Malunga and Ndlebe. (29)

Although Darlow follows Mofolo's imaginative account quite closely, citing such incidents as Tshaka's meeting with the Lord of the Deep (II); the killing of the lion and hyena (III); Tshaka's motivation by hatred (IV); Isanusi's visit (IV); Dingiswayo's peaceful era (V); Nolizwe's love for Tshaka; Tshaka's degenerate bloodlust (XI); and his deplorable treatment of Nongogo (XII); and the murder of Nandi (XIII); Darlow manifestly lacks Mofolo's sense of the dramatic and descriptive powers.

Darlow's description of Tshaka is dull, lacking, as it does,
F. T. Prince's sensitivity to language itself:

Some men have lived whom nought but death can quell -
Alexander, Tamurlaine, Napoleon;
With them is Tshaka, Amazulu's chief.
He, too, relentless, sought the farthest bound
That Nemesis might stretch to, tho' the way
Be strewn with land or with carrion.
There is a force which cannot be restrained,
A store of manhood held in vast excess
That thrusts beyond itself and dominates
Or crushes beneath the iron of his heel.
Though the world may shake when such a one is born
For he will drag to evil or to good
Ten thousand others with answering will
Ere Death the one last warrior cast him down,
As 'twere a weakling, on the blood-stained earth.

(30)

There are Bryantian overtones in the invocation of Nemesis, and the "Black Napoleon" parallel is drawn.

The bitter fighting of the Tshakan era provides a unifying thread to the poems on Tshaka, Khama and Moshoeshoe; and the desolation that resulted is described in terms that anticipate J. D. Omer-Cooper's influential evaluation of Shaka's reign:

What words are there to tell of deeds of blood?
Like a great torrent after weeks of rain
The Zulu army swept across the land,
A ruthless desolation. Those who fled,
In earnest of the flood worked their revenge
On who withstood them; ruin everywhere;
Behind the host the wolves devoured the slain,
Dogs that trotted at their masters' heels,
Hounds of hell obedient to fiends,
Raging th'Inferno slaving with joy. (31)

The poem ends, like Stuart's lecture, with a hint that the spirit of Tshaka

. . . ever nests and broods
Undaunted in the Amazulu heart. (32)

For Darlow, Tshaka represents the depths of human brutality, and the inevitable corruption of political leadership that presents itself as an object of worship; rather than following the Christian model of service rendered on behalf of a higher authority: a pattern which, in African Heroes, is exemplified by Ntsikana and Khama.

SHAKA AND SEXUAL FANTASY

The most prominent theme in later European Shakan literature is the elaborate speculation on the Zulu king's sexual predilections. These works shed more light on the obsessions of their writers than
or
on the character/significance of Shaka.

Ernst Ritter's Shaka Zulu is the seminal text, and one can detect his influence on Stephen Gray, P. J. Schoeman, Nickie McMenemy and Pieter Fourie.

Ritter purportedly wrote Shaka Zulu in an attempt to bridge the gap between black and white South Africans - but a close reading of the text reveals how steeped Ritter was in the stereotypes of black brutality and wantonness.

Shaka Zulu partially rehabilitated Shaka's image by casting the blame for the anarchy that occurred in southern and eastern Africa in the early nineteenth century on Zwide, Matiwane, Mpangazita and Mantantisi.³³

Nevertheless, a Shepstonian condemnation of African barbarity is implicit in Ritter's depiction of Shaka as a nation builder:

. . . the turbulent Nguni chiefs and their fierce fighting clans needed the master-hand and ruthless genius of Shaka to weld them into a homogeneous nation after first smashing them, in many cases, well nigh out of existence. (34)

Ritter's father was a Filibuster who fought for Sir Theophilus Shepstone and Sir Garnet Wolseley during the "pacification" of the Zulu. Ernst Ritter took part in quelling the Bambatha "Rebellion" in 1906,³⁵ and, like Rider Haggard, felt the need to romanticize the Zulu after their conquest. Given his military background, Ritter admired Shaka's tactical skill and military innovations - and much of the book gives detailed descriptions of the Zulu army in action. The predominant theme, however, is the portrayal of Shaka as a sexual athlete.

Ritter's morbid pre-occupation with black sexuality is indicative of how prevalent the fear of the "black peril" was in South Africa during the '50s, at a time when the newly elected Nationalist Government was introducing laws designed to curb sexual intercourse across the colour bar. An indication of Ritter's sexual jealousy can be seen in the statement:

Ngunis . . . were past masters in the delicate art of pre-coition excitation or love play. (36)

And there is a tinge of envy in the description of the ukuhlobonga custom of "external intercourse" (euphemistically known as the "pleasure of the road") which offered a socially acceptable means of coping with sexual tension amongst unmarried youths in Zululand.³⁷

Ritter highlights the importance of "customary intercourse" after battle, which he presents in ritual terms:

Having killed in battle, it was Shaka's duty to sula izembe, to "wipe the axe", that is, to have intercourse with a woman. Until he had done so, he was unclean, could not enter the social life of the tribe, could drink no milk and must observe other taboos; thus a woman, if unmarried, accosted by any warrior for this ceremony, was normally bound to agree with it. (38)

These sentiments are entirely in keeping with the European myth of unbounded African sexuality. The connection of sexual energy with fighting, and the presentation of sexual intercourse as a reward for victory in battle embodied in the above quotation is reminiscent of Sir Bartle Frere's remarks cited in Chapter 1.

Ritter describes the Shakan innovation of a broad-bladed stabbing spear in sexual terms:

Shaka beheld the new furnace with great interest. It is by ancient lore, supposed to represent a female, which remains unfruitful until it is fertilized by the male. To conform with this idea, the aperture at the base of the clay furnace for the ingress of the air from the bellows and the egress of the pig iron is made in the form of the human pudendum distended as at childbirth. Into this is inserted the clay nozzle of the bellows. It is given a phallic shape. (39)

Stephen Gray, who is principally responsible for the text of The Assassination of Shaka, echoes Ritter:

[ukusula izembe] Old Zulu custom: the ritual purification by the sexual act immediately after killing gives rise to the basic metaphor of this work. That the forge should be in the shape of a woman's thighs continues this metaphor. (40)

Ritter introduces Pampata as the girl with whom Shaka loved to "wipe his axe". As in Haggard, an intricate web of romance is intertwined with the military thread, in Shaka Zulu: "The pair are said to have made love lying upon Shaka's great shield of ox-hide."⁴¹

Pampata prophesies Shaka's future greatness;⁴² is an "able and intelligent woman";⁴³ is described as Shaka's "principal unofficial adviser in civil affairs";⁴⁴ is upset by Shaka's cruelty;⁴⁵ is close to Nandi;⁴⁶ prophesies Shaka's death at the hands of Mkabayi, Mbopha, Mhlangana and Dingane;⁴⁷ shows considerable courage in guarding Shaka's corpse overnight, thus stopping hyenas from eating it; and warns Shaka's half-brother, Ngwadi, of an attack, before committing suicide, rather than being captured by the regicides.⁴⁸ P. J. Schoeman faithfully reproduces and expands on this synopsis, but chooses to end his romance at a moment of triumph - after the battle of Qokli Hill.

Ritter, fascinated by the possibility of exploring virgin territory, focuses on Shaka's harem, saying:

Shaka certainly enjoyed a little diversion with his harem, but he was never a sensualist like his half-brother and successor Dingane. Almost invariably, it was women with brains who appealed to Shaka, but he was also attracted to those in whom he was able to arouse an unusual degree of sexual excitement, and particularly to that tornado of passionate reactions, Mbuzikazi of the Cele clan . . . (49)

In an appendix, Ritter praises Shaka's self-control in preventing unwanted pregnancies:

For a very potent and virile man, with a harem of 1200, he established something like a record of self-control, for he only caused one authenticated pregnancy. (50)

Ritter is impressed by Shaka the demon lover and Shaka the skilful leader; but this admiration is not altogether unqualified, for it

is from Ritter's book that the most notorious incident of Shakan sadism emerges: Shaka paraded a scantily dressed female regiment before his naked troops, and slaughtered those who were physically aroused - ostensibly for not mourning the death of his mother sufficiently.⁵¹

Shaka is also praised as a free thinker:

. . . he became first an agnostic and then a heretic, who openly flouted most of the superstitious beliefs of his countrymen. (52)

Ignorance and superstition are, perhaps, the two charges that have consistently been levelled against Africans and African society.

Ritter subsumes Shaka's idiosyncrasies under the general umbrella of an artistic temperament:

The truth is that Shaka was a most unusual product of his race. He was highly emotional and sentimental behind the facade of iron self-discipline. The fact that he was the finest composer of songs, the leading dancer and the wittiest punster suggests the artist, who would naturally have a highly strung nature, and be more sensitive than the common rung of the Nguni race. (53)

Ritter is one of the few white Shakan apologists - and I suggest that one of the reasons why Ritter feels bound to rationalise Shaka's actions lies in a soldier's comradeship with another warrior - a bond which, in this instance, transcends race and time.

Ritter patronizes Shaka when he describes the latter's political philosophy in Haggardian terms:

"Terror is the only thing they understand, and you can only rule the Zulus by killing them. Who are the Zulus? They are parts of two hundred or more unruly clans which I had to break up and reshape, and only the fear of death will hold them together." (54)

For a qualitative investigation of the dynamics of the Shakan regime, we must turn to the work of social scientists.

The enormous influence of Ritter's Shaka Zulu is reflected in the Gray and Skotnes contribution to the Shakan saga, which was

published twenty years later. In a section entitled "Shaka Wipes His Axe", we read:

then a young fighter had to wipe
death in a woman's thighs
there was this following girl
Pampata on my dappled shield
her veins like tomorrow's drum
that was when I knew
the bursting of my life. (55)

Furthermore, Ritter's ideas about Shaka's "sexual marathon" ⁵⁶
with his concubines also resurface:

the world reeled out of
abstinence and my sisters
clicked pink palettes
you must admit that took
some discipline twelve
hundred black virgins
to be loved by me
I don't think they were
dissatisfied. (57)

In the section "Shaka the Herd Boy", the king reflects on the insults that were bandied about over the size of his penis in the reference to "an earthworm between my legs". Only at nineteen does Shaka feel his "front apron rising with sap". In Prince's poem, Chaka's adolescent crisis is precipitated by his quest for his own identity - not by sexual anxiety, as in Gray's poem.

Pieter Fourie's play, Shaka, is more vulgar than either Ritter or Gray and Skotnes. Like Ritter, Fourie claims that his interest in Shakan exploits was kindled by the fireside tales he heard as a child. Fourie concentrates on the Freudian dimension of the relationship between Nandi and Shaka. Pampata is critical of Shaka's "twisted love for Nandi", ⁵⁸ but she lacks the demureness of her namesake in Ritter and Schoeman. The attraction between her and Shaka is genital:

PAMPATA: And between those slender legs
a giant now stands
for whom women do not hide their desire
and wistful yearning
that he might just so much as glance at them. (59)

In a similar vein, Shaka recollects the time -

. . . when
into the softness where her thighs meet
I wiped the white blood from my spear . . . (60)

Fourie accentuates Shaka's sadism in his presentation of the official decrees promulgated on the death of Nandi:

SHAKA: At each full moon
shall all the women sway their bodies
in a love dance before the men
and he that erects desire
shall lose his passion for ever
under the hard blows of a kierie
that
at my command
will club bulls into oxen . . . (61)

Fourie's Shaka is portrayed as a perverse maniac; indeed the play reinforces the white South African stereotype of Shaka as "a cruel, blood-thirsty barbarian" which the playwright says he rejects.⁶²

Shaka decides against sending his troops to England, for:

They will bring the sticks [guns] and white
women and so dishonour their own people. (63)

Fourie's protagonist thus endorses what one may call the "Immorality Act Syndrome" - a peculiarly South African disease. Fourie believes that, by making an African utter such sentiments, the corner-stone of the apartheid policy can remain unchallenged - and the same is true of Ritter, who writes:

But when the question of possible intermarriages was raised by Nandi, supported by Pampata, Shaka strongly supported Mgobozi's objections to anything of the sort. It would not do to allow good Zulu blood to be bastardized by a people not belonging to the Nguni race. (64)

It is most likely that both Fourie and Ritter project onto their African characters their own racial prejudices in an attempt to come to terms with their own (perhaps unconscious) sense of inadequacy. The two cultures are opposed and unequal.

Nickie McMenemy's novel, Assegai!, is an interesting, if unsuccessful, attempt at reconciling the twin heritage of Africa

and Europe in South Africa. Significantly, the heroine of the novel *Thola* ("That which has been found") is a coloured.

Nickie McMenemy is a South African, and was born in 1925. Between 1966 and 1976, she edited a woman's magazine in Durban, and this background sheds light on her style, especially in the passages referring to the romance between *Thola* and Shaka. As Burness points out, although the novel was published in 1973, it was written in the late 1950s.⁶⁵

Thola, at the tender age of six, is snatched from her "ebony-skinned mother", who had been abandoned by her "mixed blood" husband;⁶⁶ and, born into slavery, she lives amongst Europeans under a vindictive mistress, before being shipwrecked between Delagoa Bay and Cape Town.

From the outset, *Thola* is presented as an outsider, whose sympathies, on an intellectual plane, lie in Europe - but a Europe purged of slavery and a hellfire-and-damnation form of Christianity; but who, nonetheless, cannot escape her African background.

Thola feels ill at ease amongst the "savages" who found her on the coast, and flees with a cowardly youth, Malanga, to Tshaka's court - where she finds herself caught in another form of slavery, as a member of Tshaka's harem. Doubtless, one of the morals of the tale is that women are everywhere in chains!

The novel is largely anti-pastoral, and highlights the brutality of Africans - to man and beast alike (life is cheap in Tshakan Zululand, and bulls are mutilated, their galls removed, and the animals left to die a painful death, as sacrifices to rain gods!). McMenemy, through *Thola*, lampoons the notion of the "noble savage":

She was lost amongst savages whose music consisted of a wild elementary chanting; whose unrestrained dancing was indicative of unpleasant sexual gestures; she had discovered noble simplicity in its starkest form. (66)

Thola is overcome by a "deadly ennui" in a "traditional" African community which is characterised by stasis: "in everything the community mattered, not the individual."⁶⁷ She objects to the cow-dung floor and alleges that the Zulus leave their plates, after eating, to be "cleaned" by cockroaches.⁶⁸

I would argue that there is little distinction between the "assumed narrator" of Thola's story, and the author - that McMenemy projects her disgust with African "primitivism" onto Thola, who, like her creator, is torn between two worlds: her African "home" and spiritual "home" - Europe. One must therefore take issue with Burness' view that Mrs. McMenemy is "impressed by the quality and nature of Zulu civilization",⁶⁹ and Kolawole Ogunbesan's assertion that she is a proponent of Pan-Africanism is utterly redundant.⁷⁰

Tshaka is introduced in the fifth chapter, in all his awesome physicality:

Tshaka stood before his subjects and his servitors brought him fresh raw beef which had been pounded into a salve and he rubbed the red mass over his tremendous limbs; globules of blood, so much more viscous than water, ran down his great chest; and in the steaming heat of the mid-summer morning the blood clotted along his thighs.

The people stared at his huge nudity. (71)

The above description, barring the punch-line, is an echo of Isaacs, as noted in Chapter 1. Tshaka is a great exhibitionist, and his sexual prowess overwhelms Thola:

. . . he laughed and pulled her against him and began to caress her with practised skill; and as much as she longed to resist him, her body failed her; and not only her body; but her heart too, for love made an agony within her; a yearning and a tenderness, a compassion, an adoration that was searing pain. (72)

Mrs. McMenemy reveals her women's magazine background here, as the description would not be out of place in a serialised romance.

Notwithstanding Tshaka's sexual prowess, Thola patronizes him, from her vantage of a superior, Western education:

In comparison to white men, Thola thought, how like a child you are: you are like an immensely clever child; and you are, on occasion, as naive as a child, but your brilliant childishness is merciless; you have the cruelty of a child, you and all your people. When necessary, you slaughter with total abandon; at other times you are as tender as a mother with her baby. Yet, in your own self, there is a greatness of adult wisdom too. And genius. You are a complete paradox. (73)

Both Thola and Nickie McMenemy oscillate between wishing to credit Tshaka with "genius", with "adult wisdom", whilst simultaneously adhering to the stereotype of Africans as overgrown children.

Thola is appalled by Tshakan violence - "This is not the land of heaven: this is a kingdom of murder and death".⁷⁴ In the final analysis, to Thola and Nickie McMenemy, Tshaka is an elemental being:

"Are you truly evil? Are you as cruel as men say?" she wanted to ask, and knew immediately that he was neither good nor evil; more, he was a personification of that affliction which life produces now and again, an impersonal product of nature which, by its mode of life, brings out greatness in those who suffer under such a scourge. (75)

A view that is largely consonant with that of the izibongo.

Professor P. J. Schoeman's Phampatha: The Beloved of King Shaka presents us with another portrait of Shaka that is largely mediated through the perspective of women. The author was born in Natal in 1913, and claims that "Phampatha, the heroine of this book, is fully authenticated in Zulu tradition".⁷⁶ His heroine is a courageous, spirited and attractive person, and his tale marks the resurrection of the Shakan romance from the salacious corruption outlined above. Indeed, Schoeman's motives in writing this book are interesting, as they show his reaction to the predominant trend in Shakan literature outlined in this chapter:

It is Shaka, the hero, who needs more sympathetic attention than he has hitherto received. (77)

Most of the Shakan literature portrays the Zulu king as an anti-hero - and Schoeman consciously ends the story at the height of Shaka's military success: the defeat of the Ndwandwe. Most accounts also depict a downward trend in Shaka's popularity during the ceaseless campaigns that were waged after the defeat of Zwide.

By sandwiching Shaka's story in-between the tale of Phampatha's burgeoning love for him - a love which stems from the tender pity she feels over his unhappy childhood - Schoeman is able to show how a young Zulu girl is socialized in a rural culture. Perhaps the most striking quality of the novel is its use of agrarian metaphors - idioms that are entirely in keeping with a rural African setting, unlike S. Goro-X's Shaka, with its inappropriate diction.

Like Ritter's Shaka Zulu, Schoeman's Phampatha is presented as a bridge between two cultures:

As peaceful co-existence between blacks and whites in South Africa becomes more essential, it is of vital importance that we as whites should have a deeper knowledge of "the man behind the black skin" and a thorough knowledge of his past, before he was influenced and perhaps contaminated by Western civilization. (78)

The novel lacks the cultural chauvinism of Ritter, Bryant and McMenemy, and the vulgarity of Fourie's Shaka, notwithstanding the central motif of the ukusula izembe custom.

Shaka is motivated by a desire for revenge on those who mocked his illegitimate birth, calling him "a despicable little dung beetle";⁷⁹ and those who laughed at his small penis, whose fate is impalement.⁸⁰

The close parallels between Ritter's Pampata and Schoeman's Phampatha were detailed earlier on in this chapter - suffice it to say here that Schoeman's Shaka sees her as a mother-substitute:

She reminded him more of his mother than any other girl did. And just like his mother, she was unafraid. (81)

The novel ends with Phampatha receiving the royal salute on Qokli Hill for her courage in joining the Zulu army there.

As in McMenemy's Assegai!, Shaka comes across as something of a paradox - oscillating between gentleness and ruthlessness. His "split-personality" is reflected in the contradiction between his refusal to sire off-spring and his determination that

"Everyone must see from the size of my harem that I am the most virile man in the land." (82)

Donald Morris, on the other hand, suggests that Shaka was impotent:

He was unquestionably a latent homosexual, and despite the fact that his genitals had more than made up for their previous dilatoriness, so that he always took great pride in bathing in full public view, he was probably impotent. (83)

Morris also pours scorn on the Shaka-the-demon-lover myth:

Shaka maintained that he had no desire for off-spring who might some day oppose him, and by tradition he would only engage in ukhlobonga, but in view of the utter lack of control that characterized every other facet of his personality, it is far more probable that he never managed to consummate a full relationship. (84)

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE SOCIAL SCIENTISTS

The main thrust of the Shakan historiography has been the presentation, with varying degrees of sympathy, the image of an innovative warrior-king - as in T. V. Bulpin's Shaka's Country: A Book of Zululand,⁸⁵ which was published three years prior to Ritter's Shaka Zulu. In both texts, the man is the nation, for the nation arose from his exploits. William Worger has shown how facts, fiction and faction are so intertwined that the historian of the Shakan era has great difficulty in sifting out the "truth" from the

apocryphal. My aim, in this concluding section, is to outline the stances adopted by several Zulu historians and social scientists, and to evaluate their contribution to our understanding of the dynamics of Shakan rule.

Before analysing the "liberal" historiography that has dominated the evaluation of Shaka in the last thirty years or so, mention must be made of Philippus Petrus Rudolf van Coller's remarkable book, Die Swart Attila - Verhale van Shaka (The Black Attila - The Story of Shaka),⁸⁶ which can be taken as an example of "popular" Afrikaner history, which stresses the Shaka-the-Destroyer myth, unlike the Ritterian historiography, which stresses the positive aspects of the Black Napoleon's contribution to political change in the sub-region.

Van Coller's Die Swart Attila follows Bryant quite closely in its outline of events that occurred in Shakan Zululand. The author also cites Magera Fuze, Lt. King, N. Isaacs, H. F. Fynn, Sir T. Shepstone, oral testimony and Shaka's praises: . . . (for example, uMadumehlezi - "He-who-thunders-while-he-sits").⁸⁷ He also refers to the story of Sililo, the victim of witchcraft - a story which is related in Assegail, too.

Like Bryant, van Coller homes in on Shaka's bitter childhood experiences to explain his later actions. Van Coller diagnoses emotional insecurity, principally a lack of love, as Shaka's fatal flaw. The second section of Die Swart Attila begins with the image of Shaka's childhood being like a clay tablet on which the dominant strokes were the characters of hate - Shaka was almost killed by his grandfather; rejected by his father and bullied by his maternal relatives. Only under Dingiswayo's protection did Shaka attain a measure of emotional security. And, as in R. R. R. Dhlomo's uShaka

(see the following chapter), his prime motivating force, once a power, is to wreak vengeance on the Langeni:

The Black Attila had begun his career. The black mamba had his first revenge. It was the first example that the black inhabitants of South East Africa had of the slaughter that was to follow, in which more than a million people were untimely sent to the world beyond. (88)

As in P. A. Stuart's An African Attila, Shaka excels in devising new forms of torture.⁸⁹

Shaka's brutality is seen in the slaughter of "cowards", and of the men who dug Nandi's grave, so as to provide a "floor mat" for her; and in the murder of those who started filling in the grave, to provide a "blanket". The section "Shaka as a Judge" stresses the king's sadism:

The vindictiveness of his judgment, more than anything else illustrated that Shaka was possessed by a strong form of sadistic insanity. Just as Nero, for his own satisfaction, set fire to a city full of people, so could Shaka, whimsically, have hundreds of people killed. (90)

Citing the execution of the young boys at the royal kraal for peeping into Shaka's hut, van Coller draws a parallel with Herod's massacre of the innocents.⁹¹

Van Coller echoes Bryant when enumerating the taboos concerning Shaka's concubines: no men were allowed to approach or speak to the girls when they went to the river to bathe.

As in the praise-poetry, Shaka is described in animal imagery: "The tiger had tasted blood and his heart called for more victims".⁹² A recurrent image in the work is that of a black mamba - a forceful symbol of aggression, speed and venom.

Dramatic episodes, such as Nandi's encounter with the herd boys; Nandi's intercession in behalf of Mpitikazi; Gala's appeal for an end to the restrictions imposed on Nandi's death; and Shaka's

encounter with the cattle thief Gcucwa, are rendered in direct speech.

The description of Shaka's assassination is very gory,⁹³ and van Coller gives prominence to Shaka's prophecy that his assassins would not rule for long, as the white men are coming as "eagles" that will "tear" them apart.⁹⁴

The story ends with the presentation of the arrival of the Voortrekkers as Shaka's bequest to his nation! Their arrival is presented as the fulfilment of Shaka's prophecy:

Ten years later, the Voortrekkers arrived in Natal.

Today, there is a monument over Shaka's grave.

But there are no monuments over the graves of Dingane and Mhlangana.

(95)

The inference is that Dingane, the "treacherous" murderer of Piet Relief does not deserve commemoration; nor does his fellow regicide, and victim, Mhlangana. Shaka, doubtless, is honoured for conveniently de-populating the region in readiness for a Boer take-over!

Although van Coller is appalled by the devastation caused by the Shakan wars - the panic-stricken flight and the reduction of people to cannibalism - he nevertheless admires Shaka's military skill - especially in the Ndwandwe wars.

Apart from Ritter's Shaka Zulu, Geoffrey Bond's Chaka the Terrible⁹⁶ serves as another example of an English-medium popular "history" of Chaka. The title is probably taken from John Buchan's Prester John,⁹⁷ and reveals Bond's attitude to his subject.

Bond is a Zimbabwean who has written numerous books - besides the "Sergeant Luck" Series, the author has published, under the umbrella of a "Brave Lives" Series, The Baden Powell Story, The Lawrence of Arabia Story, The Kit Carson Story; as well as Ned Kelley, the Armoured Outlaw and Chaka the Terrible in an "Amazing Lives" Series; and Remember Mazoe (this list is not exhaustive).⁹⁸

Bond's stylistic device in Chaka the Terrible is the "fire-side tale", and the book consists of a recital of Chaka's "heroic" encounters with human and supernatural foes - including the mad giant; the "human hyena" (which "blesses" the creation of ixwa - the short stabbing spear); the killing of a black mamba; the great hunt; the witchdoctors' day of reckoning; Ntombazi's come-uppance; and several set piece battles. In short, it is Haggardian adventure without romantic entanglement.

Although the setting is African - the putative audience is predominantly European (both settler and metropolitan). The Zulus are presented as natural gentlemen: "those Zulus played as hard as they fought".⁹⁹ The moral of the tale is to encourage manly pluck:

'You must understand that when Chaka died the Zulu nation lost its greatest champion. Whatever his faults he did right by his own conscience, and no more can be expected of any man.'

(100)

And, with an African audience in mind, the narrator adds:

'Africa faces another day. Let us learn from our past mistakes, for the eyes of the world are upon us. Whatever tribe we may come from, let us cling to the old ideas and forget personal grievances in the new life that lies ahead.' . . .

His Africa was gone, Chaka was gone, but he prayed that the proud Zulus would always remain.

If his story had reached the heart of one hearer it would all have been worthwhile. (101)

Chaka the Terrible was published in 1961, in the era of Harold MacMillan's famous "winds of change" speech.

It is interesting to note that Chaka the Terrible has been re-issued, under the title Shaka, by Longman's, Zimbabwe, after another wind of change - Zimbabwe's Independence.¹⁰² The Longman edition purports to be written by James Langa (a respectable Zulu surname) - but, barring the judicious editing of pejorative terms

like "tribes" and the substitution of the more acceptable term "peoples"; and the substitution of "king" for "chief"; and "Shaka" for "Chaka" - the text is largely unaltered. The "Table of Contents" in both texts are almost exactly the same, except for Chapter 5 which, in Chaka is given as "The Zulu March", whilst in Shaka it is rendered as "The Marching Zulu". If Langa is Bond's "African" pseudonym, then no charges of plagiarism can be made - if not, one could argue, with Donatus Nwoga, that the charge is invalid, as plagiarism is not recognised in an oral narrative setting!

I received the following reply to a query on Langa's biographical details, from Longman Zimbabwe:

James Langa is a pseudonym for a mature Zimbabwean professional author of over 30 books. And that, I'm afraid, is all the information I can give you. I contacted the author, who is emphatically opposed to revealing his identity. I'm sure you are aware many authors maintain different identities for the different types of books they write. The author in this case feels very strongly about the subject. (103)

If my supposition is correct, I suspect Bond's anxiety stems from the fact that Shaka is targeted at the school text-book market, and he feels that an African name will stand a better chance in the market. A tell-tale sign of white authorship is the comment:

All the strategy he ever learned would be needed to combat the Ndwandwe menace, and now he was as concerned with tactics as any European general. (104)

The "new image" extends to the jacket covers - Josef Gross's cover portrays a delirious-looking warrior brandishing a gigantic broad-bladed assegai; whilst the cover of the Longman edition has a splendid silhouette of three Africans in plumed wardress on the front, and a Zulu village scene on the back. The three warriors bring to mind the three musketeers.¹⁰⁵

The academic historians concentrate on the significance of the Shakan transformations, in relation to the style of political leadership in the sub-region.

The most influential, liberal history of the Shakan era is J. D. Omer-Cooper's The Zulu Aftermath: A Nineteenth Century Revolution in Bantu Africa. This text was the spear-head of Africanist historiography, and it portrays Shaka as the catalyst in transforming the basis of political power amongst the Nguni. Shaka's "total war" strategy broke the impasse that had checked the advance of the Mtetwa and Ndwandwe empires; and provided an outlet for tension brought about by population growth:

. . . as population continued to increase, a local centre of high pressure developed in Zululand producing a violent eddy which sent ripples scudding over most of Southern Africa. (106)

Jefferson Guy's The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom builds on this, by providing a detailed hypothesis of the ecological basis of the crisis that led to the change in the power structure of the region. He also presents Shaka's prohibitions on marriage as a form of birth control. These explanations are preferable to Ritter's suggestion that the Nguni leaders at that time were of marauding temperaments.

The Zulu Aftermath popularised E. A. Walker's term, mfecane,¹⁰⁷ which has been used to describe the chain-reaction of conquest and flight that occurred during the disturbances.

Eugene Walter, in 1969 (three years after The Zulu Aftermath was published), pointed out that the term was unhelpful as it cast a "mystic aura" on "the wars amongst the nascent states".¹⁰⁸ Julian Cobbing has recently reiterated Walter's objections, and urged that the term be abandoned altogether.¹⁰⁹

Cobbing also attacks Omer-Cooper's suggestion that Shaka's conquests established the basis of the Nationalist Party's Homelands

policy - a point picked up by Afrikaner historians like F. A. van Jaarsveld.¹¹⁰

Nevertheless, Omer-Cooper's description of Shaka is unimpeachable:

In his personality a distinct streak of sadism combined with high intelligence and a ferocious determination to prove himself by dominating over his fellows. He was personally courageous and callous of the sufferings of others. Only for his mother, and to a lesser extent his grandmother, did he show much normal human affection . . .

He ruled to a great extent as an absolute despot, deciding cases while taking his morning bath and ordering men to death with a nod of his head. (111)

To Donald Morris, Shaka epitomised corruption: "The power was indeed absolute and it had reached the ultimate corruption."¹¹²

Morris also states that Shaka "waged war for the sake of war".¹¹³

But David Hedges argues that Tshaka desired to control the trade networks.¹¹⁴

The most convincing analysis, to date, of the dynamics of the Shakan state is found in Eugene Walter's thesis that there was method in Shaka's "madness" - that Shaka used terror as a principal instrument of government:

Regardless of its political orientation, the first element of the terror process in a logical as well as chronological sense is the specific act or threat of violence which induces a general psychic state of extreme fear, which, in turn, produces typical patterns of reactive behaviour. . . .

Some political conditions call forth continuous violent behaviour encouraging a kind of institutionalized rage or supporting psychotic behaviour. The image and definition of the overlord as a dangerous person may enable the power system to function in a set pattern that could not persist in other circumstances. As I shall point out in the Zulu case, it is uncertain whether the madness of one overlord was genuine or feigned, for the method was more striking than the madness. (115)

This analysis chimes with the sense of the praise-poems analyzed in Part I, and Part II Chapter 3. Shaka was universally

feared, even by his own subjects. The poems present him as a free-flowing elemental force; and very little criticism is levelled at his moral stance. Nevertheless, he was able to maintain his power, despite the brutality of his regime, because of the general state of political turmoil: "In a terroristic despotism . . . violence is culturally syntonic."¹¹⁶

Given the dislocation of families during crises of integration, Shaka was able to strengthen his personal position by attacking kinship ties:

To augment his despotic power, Shaka struck at the primary loyalties of kinship ties and personal attachments, not permitting those sentiments to compete with the total loyalty he demanded from his people. (117)

One often reads of how he incorporated the young men into his regiments, after killing the older people.

Moreover, as James Fernandez points out, Shaka's own semi-nomadic childhood militated against his having a highly developed sense of family. Whilst arguing for a cautious appraisal of the Freudian elements in the Shakan story - which he sees as a projection of European notions onto an African character, Fernandez does diagnose the "Shaka Complex" as resulting from Shaka being a product of a "diluted marriage" in a polygynous society, and comes to this plausible conclusion:

"Ye children of my fathers (sic)," he asks, dying, "what is the wrong?" The wrong is that Shaka has not been through his father properly socialized in his lineage and is thus heir, from the lineage view, to a dangerous megalomania. . . . the aggressive rivalry and fundamental alienation of his mother in the patrilineal social situation in which she finds herself. (118)

The "dangerous megalomania" can be interpreted as the cultivation of what Walter calls "the image of an omnipotent destroyer-provider"¹¹⁹, at the court by the praise-poets, sycophantic

counsellors and hangers-on. And, given Shaka's continued military success, the army had a vested interest in remaining loyal, and thus partaking of the plundered herds:

Plunder was the major source of wealth. In the area controlled by Shaka, the policy of destroying or routing communities decreased the population, accumulated cattle and added more men to the machines of destruction - to seize more cattle, to incorporate more warriors, and to destroy more communities. (120)

Shaka thus found himself enmeshed in a system of his own creation - he had to keep his soldiers on endless campaigns in order to keep them occupied, and fed, without depleting his own stocks - he is said to have complained, during a peaceful lull, that the army was "eating him up".

The final challenge to his authority came from within - as is often the case in despotic or tyrannical societies - and Dingane and Mhlangana were able to exploit the discontent caused by the mass slaughter that is said to have erupted at the death of Nandi, and assassinate Shaka. The remnants who returned from the ill-fated campaign against Soshangane were relieved to escape being killed at the capital for not succeeding in their task; and it is significant that two of the concessions offered by Dingane were a rest from fighting, and greater freedom to marry. James Fernandez and Eugene Walter are quite correct in placing the emphasis on the use and abuse of power by Shaka - a theme they share with F. T. Prince - rather than on the red-herring of Shaka's sexuality.

Footnotes - Chapter 5

1. F. T. Prince, "Chaka", in Poems, London, Faber and Faber, 1938.
2. S. Goro-X, Shaka: A Drama, Johannesburg, Juta, 1940.
3. D. J. Darlow, African Heroes: Ntsikana, Tshaka, Khama and Moshoeshe, Lovedale, 1958 (1940's? Date of first publication unknown).
4. E. A. Ritter, Shaka Zulu, op. cit.; N. McMenemy, Assegail, op. cit.; S. Gray and C. Skotnes, The Assassination of Shaka, op. cit.; P. Fourie, Shaka, op. cit.; P. J. Schoeman, Phampatha: The Beloved of King Shaka, op. cit.; D. R. Morris, The Washing of the Spears, Reading, Cox and Wynman, 1981 (1965); M. Gluckman, "The Individual in a Social Framework: The Rise of King Shaka of Zululand", Journal of African Studies I, No. 2 (1974), pp. 113-44. See also M. Gluckman, "The Rise of a Zulu Empire", Scientific American 202, 4, 1960, pp. 157-168.
5. J. W. Fernandez, "The Shaka Complex", Transition 6, No. 19, 1967, pp. 11-14; J. D. Omer-Cooper, The Zulu Aftermath, op. cit.; E. V. Walter, Terror and Resistance: A Study of Political Violence: With Case Studies of Some Primitive African Communities, New York, OUP, 1969.
6. W. C. Sculley, Poems, London, 1892, p. 187.
7. ibid., p. 131.
8. E. Campbell, Natal Verse, 1921. Pages unnumbered.
9. R. Campbell, "The Flaming Terrapin" in G. Butler, ed., A Book of South African Verse, Cape Town, OUP, 1963 (1959), pp. 33, 34.
10. D. Burness, op. cit., p. 44.
11. F. T. Prince, Poems, op. cit.; Soldiers Bathing and Other Poems, Fortune Press, 1954; The Doors of Stone, Rupert Hart Davies, 1963; Memoirs of Oxford, Fulcrum Press, 1970; Drypoints of the Hasidim, Menard Press, 1975; Afterword on Rupert Brooke, Menard Press, 1977; Collected Poems, London, Anvil Press Poetry/The Menard Press, 1929; Later On, London, Anvil Press, 1983; The Yuan Chen Variations, Sheep Meadow, 1983. See also The Italian Element in Milton's Verse, Oxford, OUP, 1954; and William Shakespeare: The Poems, London, Longman's Green, 1963.
12. For a fuller discussion of "the isolated, misunderstood or deserted figures" Prince celebrates, see Jane Hedley's "Imprisoning and Expressing Him: The Dramatic Monologues of F. T. Prince", The Malahat Review No. 7, July 1968, pp. 92-105. See also Jacques Berthoud's unpublished manuscript on Prince's "Chaka" and Memoirs of Oxford for a discussion of Prince's place in the poetry of South African exiles.

13. Burness, op. cit., p. 43.
14. Extract from F. T. Prince's letter to D. Burness, cited in the latter's Shaka, King of the Zulus, op. cit., p. 46.
15. Personal communication from Prince dated 5 April, 1985.
16. See Berthoud's manuscript cited above. For a detailed analysis of the "anti-Christ" imagery in Prince's "Chaka", see Burness, op. cit.
17. Extract from Prince's letter to Burness, op. cit., p. 53.
18. Gibexhegu means, literally, "There where the old men were pushed out and thrown away." See A. T. Bryant, Olden Times, op. cit., p. 586, for an account of the incident.
19. P. S. Marais, The Black Man in English Poetry in South Africa, M.A. Dissertation, Orange Free State University, 1970, p. 60: "The quantity conscious white man would have counted, or at least estimated the number of melons, but a tribesman is satisfied with the vague 'quantity of melons'."
20. T. Mofolo, Chaka, ed., D. P. Kunene, op. cit., p. 24.
21. See also Berthoud, op. cit., to whose elucidation of the concluding section of the poem I am indebted.
22. P. S. Marais, op. cit., p. 61.
23. *ibid.*, p. 62.
24. For a more detailed analysis of the problems faced by white South African writers in portraying black characters, see G. Butler, Introduction, A Book of South African Verse, op. cit.; P. S. Marais, op. cit.; N. Gordimer, The Black Interpreters, Johannesburg, Spro-Cas/Ravan, 1973; and A. J. Bullier, "The Position of the Black Man in Afrikaans Literature", Présence Africaine No. 114 (2ème triestre).
25. L. van der Post, Introduction, Turbott Wolfe, op. cit., p. 32.
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29. African Heroes, op. cit., p. 24.
30. *ibid.*, p. 25.
31. *ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

32. *ibid.*, p. 48.
33. E. A. Ritter, Shaka Zulu, *op. cit.*, p. 132.
34. *ibid.*, p. 132.
35. *ibid.*, pp. 8-10.
36. *ibid.*, p. 220.
37. *ibid.*, p. 25.
38. *ibid.*, p. 37.
39. *ibid.*, p. 41.
40. Gray and Skotnes, The Assassination of Shaka, *op. cit.*, "Footnotes".
41. Ritter, *op. cit.*, p. 38.
42. *ibid.*, p. 35.
43. *ibid.*, p. 37.
44. *ibid.*, p. 84.
45. *ibid.*, p. 339.
46. *ibid.*, p. 84.
47. *ibid.*, pp. 376-7.
48. *ibid.*, pp. 375-8.
49. *ibid.*, p. 223.
50. *ibid.*, p. 399.
51. *ibid.*, p. 340.
52. *ibid.*, p. 45.
53. *ibid.*, p. 67.
54. *ibid.*, p. 339.
55. Gray and Skotnes, *op. cit.*, p. 10.
56. Ritter, *op. cit.*, p. 222.
57. Gray and Skotnes, *op. cit.*, p. 27, "Shaka Relaxes with his Concubines".
58. P. Fourie, Shaka, *op. cit.*, p. 39.
59. *ibid.*, p. 8.

60. *ibid.*, p. 15.
61. *ibid.*, pp. 52-3.
62. *ibid.* Preface.
63. *ibid.*, p. 29.
64. Ritter, *op. cit.*, p. 290.
65. Burness, *op. cit.*, p. 90ff.
66. N. McMenemy, Assegai!, *op. cit.*, "Author's Note".
67. *ibid.*, p. 11.
68. *ibid.*, pp. 111, 177.
69. Burness, *op. cit.*, p. 92.
70. K. Ogunbesan, "A King for All Seasons: Chaka in African Literature", Présence Africaine No. 88, 1973 (Forth Quarterly), pp. 212-17.
71. McMenemy, *op. cit.*, p. 65.
72. *ibid.*, p. 99.
73. *ibid.*, p. 124.
74. *ibid.*, p. 111.
75. *ibid.*, p. 73.
76. P. J. Schoeman, Phampatha: The Beloved of King Shaka, *op. cit.*, Preface.
77. *ibid.*, Preface.
78. *ibid.*, Preface.
79. *ibid.*, p. 20.
80. *ibid.*, pp. 71, 117, 158-9.
81. *ibid.*, p. 145.
82. *ibid.*, p. 160.
83. D. R. Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 46.
84. *ibid.*, p. 54.
85. T. V. Bulpin, Shaka's Country: A Book of Zululand, Cape Town, Howard Timmins, 1952.
86. P. P. R. van Coller, Die Swart Attila-Verhale van Shaka, Pretoria, Unie-Boekhandel (EDMS) BPK, 1946.

87. *ibid.*, p. 24. See also p. 43, "Ndabezitha" ("Your Majesty"); p. 54, Usigidi (He-who-will-kill-the-enemy).
88. *ibid.*, pp. 31-2. "Die Swart Attila het sy loopphaan begin, die swart mamba het sy eerste slagoffers geeis. Dit son die eerste wees van 'n lang reeks slagtings wat jare lank die swart inwoners van suidoos-Afrika met vrees son laat sidder en waardeur meer as 'n miljoen mense ontydig na die geestewêreld gestuur sou word."
89. *ibid.*, p. 79.
90. *ibid.*, p. 67. "Die wreedheid van sy regsprake meer as enigiets anders toon dat Shaka aan 'n sterk vorm van sadistiese waanjin gely het. Net soos Nero destyds vir sy plesier 'n stad vol mense aan die brand laat steek het, so kon Shaka vir die gril van in oomblik honderde mense laat doodmaak."
91. *ibid.*, p. 67.
92. *ibid.*, p. 83. "Die tier het non weer bloed geproe en sy hart vra meer slagoffers."
93. *ibid.*, p. 93.
94. *ibid.*, p. 93.
95. *ibid.*, p. 95. "Tien jaar later het die Voortrekkers Natal binnegekom. Vandag staan daar op Shaka se graf 'n sierlike monument. Op Dingane en Mhlangana se grafte staan geen monument nie.
96. G. Bond, Chaka the Terrible, op. cit.
97. J. Buchan, Prester John, op. cit., p. 104.
98. Bond, op. cit., "By the Same Author".
99. *ibid.*, p. 86.
100. *ibid.*, p. 175.
101. *ibid.*, p. 176.
102. J. Langa, Shaka, Salisbury, Longman Zimbabwe, 1982.
103. Personal communication from Mrs. Sue McMillan, Sales Executive, Tertiary and Trade, Longman Zimbabwe, 21 March, 1985.
104. Langa, op. cit., p. 46; cp. Bond, op. cit., p. 76.
105. I am indebted to John Suckling for this insight.
106. J. D. Omer-Cooper, op. cit., p. 213.
107. E. A. Walker, The History of South Africa, London, 1940.
108. E. V. Walter, op. cit., p. 111.

109. J. Cobbing, "The Case Against the Mfecane", Witwatersrand African Studies Institute Seminar Paper, 4 March, 1984.
110. F. A. van Jaarsveld, From Van Riebeeck to Voster, 1667-1974: An Introduction to the History of the Republic of South Africa, Johannesburg, 1975, p. 115.
111. Omer-Cooper, op. cit., pp. 30, 36.
112. D. R. Morris, op. cit., p. 79.
113. ibid., p. 64.
114. D. W. Hedges, Trade and Politics in Southern Mozambique and Zululand in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries, Ph.D. Thesis, ICS, London, 1978.
115. E. V. Walter, op. cit., pp. 7, 8-9.
116. ibid., p. 55.
117. ibid., p. 152.
118. J. Fernandez, "The Shaka Complex", Transition, 1967, Vol. 6 (29), p. 13.
119. Walter, op. cit., p. 248.
120. ibid., p. 252.

CHAPTER 6

SHAKA AS A PAN-AFRICANIST FIGURE

"He lay there, the warrior, the son of Ndaba, the
wisest of men.

Emperor Shaka the Great, Ruler of Many Rulers,
King of Kings!"

Mazisi Kunene. (1)

The concluding chapter focuses on the mobilisation of Shaka as a symbol of African political achievement in the works of the later generations of black Southern African writers, dating from the mid-1930s to the present day. Benedict Wallet Vilakazi's two poems - "UShaka kaSenzangakhona" ("Shaka, the son of Senzangakhona") and "Phezu Kwethuna LikaShaka" ("The Grave of Shaka")² marked the beginning of the rehabilitation of Shaka as a national hero by educated African poets. Although the poems are stylistically flawed, they are of historical interest as they illustrate the self-conscious manner in which Vilakazi, and other poets of his generation, adopted historical figures and events as central themes in their verse. Herbert Dhlomo's Valley of a Thousand Hills³ also illustrates the difficulties and embarrassment experienced by these men in handling African subjects - a factor that is reflected in the striking contrast between content and style in their poems.

They were victims of an educational background which stressed the virtues of classical and romantic literature and Christian ethics, at the expense of African religious practice and artistic forms. Like some of the writers of the négritude movement (discussed in Chapter 4), these poets experienced some difficulty in obtaining the recognition they expected as the reward for their scholastic endeavour, and they were thus forced to reconsider their role and

status in an African context. Vilakazi's two Shakan poems illustrate the struggle the poet had in overcoming his disapproval of Shaka's brutality (which figure prominently in "UShaka kaSenzangakhona") and his eventual identification with the spirit of Shaka in the more militant poem: "Phezu Kwethuna LikaShaka". In the Prologue to Valley of a Thousand Hills, Herbert Dhlomo also appeals to the Spirit of Shaka to assist him and, by extension, other Zulus to gain a sense of pride and self-respect, which is essential if national and cultural renewal are to be attained. Dhlomo deifies Shaka, and his royal ancestors in the main section of his poem, and composes new "praise-poems" for them, which, however, lack the rhythmic power and forceful imagery of the izibongo discussed in Part I and in Part II Chapter 3.

Vilakazi makes use of some of the images found in Shaka's praises in his poems. In "UShaka kaSenzangakhona" Vilakazi has difficulty in fusing the rhythm of izibongo with the dictates of his chosen medium - rhyming couplets! "Phezu Kwethuna LikaShaka", which is written in free verse, incorporates people's praises much more easily into the fabric of the poem. The analysis of these poems, and Rolfes Dhlomo (Herbert's brother) 's historical text, UShaka, forms the first part of this Chapter.

The second part assesses the portrait of Shaka that emerges in three Zulu plays dealing with the Shakan era. Two of these plays - Elliot Zondi's Ukufa kukaShaka⁴ and Lindinkosi Mbatha's Nawe Mbopha kaSithayi⁵ concentrate on the machinations of Shaka's assassins, Mhlangana, Dingane and Mbopha, and on the scheming nature of Shaka's aunt, Mkabayi, who goads the trio into action. Shaka is presented as a relentless warrior-king in these plays, and their principal interest, for the purposes of this thesis, lies in the incorporation

of Shaka's praises in various scenes. Shaka also appears in the penultimate scene of Leonard Mncwango's Ngenzeni?, where he gives sanctuary to two lovers fleeing from a wrathful chief. The praise-poem transcribed by Bryant is recited, almost word for word, by an imbongi in Ngenzeni?, whilst Shaka inspects his troops.⁶

The third part of the thesis examines the adoption of Shaka as a Pan-African "hero" by the Zambian playwright, Fwanyanga Mulikita, whose play, Shaka Zulu, is, as the title suggests, based on E. A. Ritter's novel.⁷ Mulikita attempts to portray Shaka sympathetically by stressing the hardships he endured as a child, and which led to his desire for vengeance. But the writer has difficulty in reconciling Shaka's severity with his expressed desire for peace. Also included in this section is an analysis of Wole Soyinka's Ogun Abibimafñ,⁸ in which Shaka is portrayed as Ogun's "brother spirit". Ogun features in much of Soyinka's poetry as a "creator-destroyer" figure,⁹ and one can see why Soyinka readily identifies with Shaka. Ogun Abibimafñ suggests that a resurrection of the Shakan spirit is necessary if apartheid is to be rooted out; and it modifies the rather negative manner in which Chaka (sic) is referred to in the enigmatic play, A Dance in the Forests,¹⁰ which was written earlier.

Soyinka's Ogun Abibimafñ and Mazisi Kunene's Emperor Shaka the Great¹¹ are the works of accomplished poets, who are able to handle African themes in a competent and authoritative manner, whilst writing in English. Their mastery of their chosen tongue contrasts forcefully with the diffidence of Vilakazi and Herbert Dhlomo, who are shackled by the language and rhythms of the post-Romantic, late nineteenth century poetry, which they emulate, slavishly.

B. W. Vilakazi's Shakan Poems

Cyril Nyembezi, in his introduction to Zulu Horizons emphasizes Vilakazi's isolation from his contemporaries which stemmed from the contempt many of the other educated Africans had for the unorthodox manner in which he gained his degrees (by "candle-light!"). This fact sheds light on the acute sense of alienation, coupled with a strident tone, that runs through much of Vilakazi's poetry, and is evident in the first stanza of "UShaka kaSenzangakhona":

Listen to me you ignorant people! -
You to whom I speak in vain
Until I waste to thinness of a rake!
For now I know my true vocation:
To sing in praise of Shaka - mighty Cub
Of Phunga and of Xaba - who was borne
Upon the shoulders of the sun
And suckled by the tender moon herself;
For was it not his destiny to blaze
A trail for Zulus into Pondoland? (11)

The poem focuses on Shaka's military innovations and conquests, and reflects Vilakazi's pride in his national heritage:

Yes, ask yourselves how I could sing
Of waters stabbed by lightning's spears
If I had not been born a faithful Zulu,
Sharing with all the Zulu clans
The customs of a common heritage
Bequeathed to us in years long past by Jama,
Enduring till Shaka ruined both rich and poor
By ravaging the forests, flocks, and herds and rushes?-
O Shaka, what then was left for all your people?
You, Shaka, were the spiritual father
Of brave and powerful men today . . . (12)

As in F. T. Prince's "Chaka", the Zulu king emerges as an iconoclastic figure - as a man who disrupted the established order of things; but, unlike Prince, Vilakazi lacks the gift of the imaginative and creative use of language - for example:

You looted the deserted homesteads,
Ransacked all the villages,
And when, at last, your eyes turned homeward,
You filled the many cattle-folds
With droves of oxen, cows and calves,
Whose numbers were a cause for wonder.

You conquered and plundered Basutoland
While those who saw you scratched their heads
And felt, their mouths agape with horror
That they were lost, and you invincible. (13)

The above stanza is based on Shaka's izibongo which, in the Stuart-Malcolm-Cope text read thus:

He who travelled across to Ndimma and Mgovu,
And women who were with child gave birth easily;
The newly planted crops they left still short,
The seed they left amongst the maize-stalks.
The old women were left in the abandoned sites,
The old men were left along the tracks,
The roots of the trees looked up at the sky. (14)

The vitality of the izibongo is lost in inflexible rhythms of the Friedman-Malcolm-Sikakana translation given above (and the Zulu original is undoubtedly fettered by the demands of the rigid rhyme scheme). The praise-poem's immediacy is not reflected in the scholarly alternative!

As the poem progresses, one senses Vilakazi's unease with the demands of his "true vocation":

Such your timeless enigma, great Shaka! -
O you who, like the scorching sun,
Left all behind you parched and desolate. (15)

Like so many of the writers noted in the previous chapters, Vilakazi is both attracted and repelled by Shaka. Six of the first nine stanzas are devoted to Vilakazi's fantasy on Shaka's "never-sated lust", and one of them runs:

Close by, young women also could be seen,
Unmoving, almost mesmerized,
Wearing the briefest of Zulu skirts,
Waiting eagerly to begin
A passionate love affair
With one whom all desired:
For you, O mighty Cub, who leapt
Above men's heads and severed them,
Had so much knowledge of a woman's heart
And cast such spells, that magic charms were needless. (16)

Vilakazi is obviously convinced that power is the greatest aphrodisiac! Such prosaic passages sum up Vilakazi's original

contribution to the Shakan saga, and pre-empt Ritter and Senghor. They do, however, detract the reader's attention from the main thrust of the poem, the celebration of a provider-destroyer king which is the central theme of the izibongo.

Part of Shaka's appeal for Vilakazi is that he was feared by the Portuguese:

. . . The name upon their lips was yours, O Shaka!
They uttered it with no less awe and wonder
Than when they spoke of Caesar and of Charlemagne. (17)

For many Africans, the Shakan era symbolises the peak of black power - an age when Europeans relied on African patronage, and not vice versa (as was the case in Vilakazi's lifetime):

Thus, when we speak of you today,
We swear by you with utmost faith.
Still you inspire us in our councils
And guide the hands of those who guide us,
Left by you in Zululand.
Yes, all who are not deaf, shall learn
That you, like Nemesis
Bound to triumph
Have won for yourself eternal fame.

Ah, let us come together Zulus
And dance, unfettered, in his honour! -
For we shall never fail him or allow him
To be defamed by any foreign breeds.
So let us dance or use our eager pens
In praise of all the victories
Of him they spoke of as "The Hoe"
Of Shaka, the mightiest Hoe of all!
Let us tell of how tribes once reeled and fell,
Their blood congealed with shock and terror! (18)

The sense and images of the extracts given above anticipate the more sophisticated adaptation of these themes by Kunene and Soyinka. Vilakazi can claim to be the initiator of the poetics of Shakan apologetics, and his verse bears the traces of the limitations of his pioneering zeal. The following stanza contains his exhortation to other patriotic poets to join in the task of celebrating black-consciousness in language akin to that of the poets of *négritude*:

Yes, we who write shall use our pens,
 And those who dance be unrestrained,
 That both may give strength and inspiration
 And both, O comrades, offer him their praises.
 Yet, let us not consort by day! -
 Let us gather at the hour
 When night obliterates the sun
 And darkness is our shield!
 O, let us never shun the dark
 Or gaze with terror at the night! (19)

The iambic rhythms highlight the sharp contrast between the protest and the style in which it is delivered. The diction in these stanzas is reminiscent of Tennyson - lines like "We swear by you with utmost faith" mirror the poetic tradition in which the poet (and translators) were schooled.

Apart from the poverty of the language, another difficulty with the poem arises out of the unflattering picture painted of the Shakan wars:

O Zulu who lies at Kugobokeni,
 Who swallowed the tribes upon your borders
 Where cruel marauders, trained by you,
 Caused ceaseless strife and suffering.
 You were the unpredictable,
 The tyrant whose fury brought destruction
 To babes newborn and those within the womb.
 The moment you appeared, there rose
 Wails from the huts and cries of terror
 From those who knew the bloodlust of your spears. (20)

This is yet another sanitised version of Shaka's praises, which reveals the Westernized nature of Vilakazi's brand of ethnic nationalism. Nevertheless, the poem ends with a defiant assertion of the poet's resolve to praise his enigmatic hero:

. . . Your name, reviled throughout the earth,
 Will live while men can speak and write
 And strive to solve your mystery! -
 Yet who, mighty Shaka, shall fathom your heart? (21)

Vilakazi appeals to the spirit of Shaka for protection and aid:

. . . O you, who saw the coming of the swallows,
 Give us powerful charms to shield our children -
 Senzangakhona's true descendants -
 Who, guarded by you, shall never fail or fall. (22)

The poet develops this theme further in "Phezu Kwethuna LikaShaka".

Vilakazi's indebtedness to Shaka's praises is underlined by the citation of the famous "women of Nomgabi" praise at the beginning of the poem. The first stanza, cited earlier, asserts that the poet's "true vocation (is) / To sing in praise of Shaka . .>"; and, in the second, Vilakazi demands the ceremonial attire of an imbongi:

. . . Give me the skin to wrap around my loins!
Give me too my feathered head-dress!
Give me as well my assagai! -
For I am about to sing my song of praise
Of spears that stabbed the very flanks
Of waves upon the seashore. (23)

The "waves" analogy refers to the legend, quoted by Ritter, amongst others, that Shaka introduced the tactic of sending his soldiers out in waves after watching the "oncoming waves" at the shore.

Apart from the images of fire, "sun", "cattle", and "The Hoe" cited earlier and that of the "Bull", reference is also made to the blocking of fords across the rivers. Perhaps the finest incorporation of Shaka's praises occurs in Vilakazi's adaptation of the "buffalo" praise, which is given here in the original Zulu (to illustrate Vilakazi's adoption of rhyming couplets) together with D. B. Z. Ntuli's translation:

Zath' inyathi zijamile
Nezwe likhandanisile
Ligcwel' iziqhanazana
Ezimfuphi nezindana
Njengamanqe zigijima
Zishiy' imiz' ivuliwe
Namanxulum' eshisiwe
Ngob' inyath' isijamile
Emazi bukwen' imile.

(The buffaloes stood threateningly,
And the land was full of
Those who were fleeing,
The short ones and the tall ones,
They were running like vultures
Leaving their homes open
And their villages burnt down
Because the buffalo stood threateningly
At the ford.) (25)

Ntuli's translation is terser than that of Friedman, Malcolm and Sikakana, but the sense is nevertheless the same. In his thesis, Ntuli points out how Vilakazi was forced to sub-divide words in order to fulfil the dictates of his rhyme scheme:

Ungilibazise ngeze
Ngiboshw' ukuba ngifeze
Inkondlo yethole lika -
Phunga noXab'a elafika
Ngokubelethwa . . .

(You delay me for nothing.
I am bound to finish
The poem on the calf of
Phunga and Xaba which arrived
By being carried . . .)

. . . For the sake of rhyme the poet even breaks the word 'likaPhunga' into two parts so that '-ika' may appear twice at the end of the lines. This forces words to create artificial patterns, and it does not contribute towards the elevation of the standard of the poem. (26)

Ntuli concludes that "The izibongo style is used with great success"²⁷ in "Phezu Kwethuna LikaShaka", which is written in free verse and incorporates the stylistic devices characteristic of praise-poetry, such as repetition and parallelism (features which I analysed with reference to the Shakan praises, in Part I; Vilakazi also refers to the use of Cetshwayo's praises in "Phezu Kwethuna LikaShaka").

In "The Grave of Shaka", Vilakazi relies on the use of names of people and places to trigger off the association with the royal praises in, for example, the lines:

Even the women had derided him
During the time of the Nyuswa wrangle,
Asking if he, a henchman of Mavela,
Could solve the problem of the protracted crisis,
When the conflict was so bitter and enduring
That even Sihayo had failed to heal the breach . . . (28)

Shaka is praised as the "Mightiest of all the Suthu kings!"²⁹ and Vilakazi reveals his discontent with the present which leads him to contemplate the heroic age that is past: "O, would that our present were worthy of your past!"³⁰

In "UShaka kaSenzangakhona" the poet mobilises Shaka as a Zulu hero; but, in "The Grave of Shaka", Vilakazi sees Shaka as a hero around whom both Europeans and Africans can unite:

Today we live to know that dawn
Means rising to burn the sugar-cane,
And yet, we still can marvel at the sky
And dazzled by its radiance,
Watch Venus chasing Jupiter:
Venus, like you, resplendent Shaka,
Is the herald of the dawn
That brings to us the sun of knowledge
Whose rays transmit the purest light of all
To shine upon your burial-stone,
The swallows of your prophecy -
Those you had seen when dying were black and white!
Now both, O Ndaba, have raised your monument
In lasting tribute to your bones.
Of this, when we have left the earth,
We, for the ancestors, shall boast,
Extolling what we left behind us
In honour of you, O Shaka and Dukuza. (31)

Given Vilakazi's earlier indictment of "this white man's wilderness", his implicit belief in the brotherhood of men reflects not only his Catholicism, but also to the measure of faith in a peaceful solution to the political problems in South Africa. The poem thus provides a sharp contrast in tone with Soyinka's Ogun Abibimãñ. Vilakazi's belief that the day of the spear is over, and that the new frontier lies in education is mirrored in Mulikita's Shaka Zulu.

Although the language is often disappointing in Vilakazi's poems, one must bear in mind that he pioneered the writing of poetry in Zulu. He thus faced the problems that beset any innovative venture; and at a time when some are preaching on the need for African artists to return to traditional art forms, it is worthwhile to assess the efforts of a poet who tried to wed the oral poetic heritage with what he perceived to be the norms of written poetry.

H. I. E. Dhlomo's Valley of a Thousand Hills

Shaka appears as the guiding spirit in Herbert Dhlomo's poem, Valley of a Thousand Hills. Herbert Dhlomo also wrote a play, entitled

Shaka, the manuscript of which was lost. Nevertheless, the opening sections of Valley give some indication of how Shaka is perceived by Dhlomo.

Like Vilakazi, Dhlomo is a disciple of the Romantic movement - he is prone to seeing visions which illuminate an imperfect present with the radiance of a glorious past; and which the poet projects, tremulously, into the future in the apocalyptic hope that a "new heaven and a new earth" will come to pass. Valley of a Thousand Hills and "The Grave of Shaka" are poems about the personal regeneration of the poet, who is nurtured by a vision of his ancestors who, as spirits, still hover over creation, guiding and sustaining those who are in touch with them.

The Prologue to Valley of a Thousand Hills charts Dhlomo's return to his roots, in both a physical and a metaphysical sense:

Mfolozi Black and Mahlabathini!
Inkandhla, Nongoma and Ulundi!
Mfolozi White and Umkhabathini!
Mgungundhlovu and Sibubulundi!

O brave and magic names of Zululand!
To hear but your sweet sound is music grand!
On your dear fame, proud offspring here I stand!
Sweet names of a sweet strand!

O charms of my dear fatherland!
Blest spots! I long to see them all!
Where men of yore, great Shaka's band,
Sang, wrought and fell! To me they call!

Great scenes of old - like magic wand! -
Of heroes wise and strange feats done,
Where men of might, like ocean sand,
Mocked seas of life . . . and wrought for fun!

Born sealed with immortality,
Hymned Shaka god of war-writ fame,
Homeric feats attained, and we
Plumed Trojan Black Bulls, claim a name!

For Shaka, now our Jove, more than
Sung classic names achieved. His name
More than vain demagogue boasts can,
Or ever will, has brought no fame.

And those whom we in pride adore,
Moshoeshoe, Hintsa, Khama's strain . . .
Hannibal, Aggrey - these and many more
With gleaming names, deck Shaka's train.

Out of the living past they haunt me still!
And voices mute forever speak to me!
My eyes with tears, my thoughts with visions, fill!
I see them all, but see not where they be!

These men and places call to me!
They speak out of Eternity!
I see, I feel, I live it all!
I rise! and yield before the call!

(32)

This is a trite introduction to a flatulent poem. The tyranny of rhyme is obvious, and the adoption of a four-line stanza (a form which appears often in the rest of the poem) underlines the poet's devotion to Western poetic norms.

One can detect the influence of Shelley, filtered through nineteenth-century hymns and the adoption of Miltonic inversions throughout the poem. Dhlomo wrote in English, and in his verse we can see a representative literary figure (in the 1930s and 1940s) struggling with the language which he has acquired, which is at odds with the setting and scenes that the poet describes - "magic wands" are alien to the African environment, and should not be adopted as images. The contrast between the content and style is evident in the stanza:

Out of the living past they haunt me still!
And voices mute forever speak to me!
My eyes with tears, my thoughts with visions, fill!
I see them all, but see not where they be!

The rest of the poem makes it clear, in the deification of the royal Zulu ancestors, Phunga, Mageba, Ndaba and Shaka, that the Zulu dynasty is very important to Dhlomo; but the chosen medium is inadequate - it lacks the vigour of Soyinka's exploitation of the Ogun myth, and Kunene's self-confidence. The praise-poems Dhlomo composes in honour of these ancestors³³ are totally divorced from those of the "traditional" izibongo. The poem composed for Shaka reads:

Hail to thee, O Lion!
 Mighty One, O hail!
 Thou wast not born as we were born;
 Thou wast moulded as none were made.
 Mother earth shook - and thou wert born;
 The wind then called - and thou didst come.
 Shaka - we fear to call thy name;
 Shaka - we thrill to hear thy name!
 Son of the spirits, O Wise One!
 Star of the nation - immortal!
 Speak and we shall hear!
 Lead and we obey!

This is, quite clearly, mediocre.

Vilakazi's Shakan poems have more authenticity than the above, westernized verse. Both Vilakazi and Dhlomo fail to capture the rhythm of the izibongo, which Kunene's epic approximates - one should add, though, that Kunene's poem owes less to the genre of praise-poetry than he claims. Nevertheless, Kunene synthesises the different poetic traditions he has inherited, and is thus able to create a poem that is peculiarly his own.

For Dhlomo, the Shakan spirit represents a new militancy - a resolve to fight for "freedom":

. . . My home is not
 My home! I am an outcast in my land!
 They call me happy while I lie and rot
 Beneath a foreign yoke in my dear strand!
 Midst these sweet hills and dales under the stars,
 To live and to be free, my father's fought.
 Must I still fight and bear anew the scars?
 Must freedom e'er with blood, not sweat, be bought?
 You ask me whence these yearning words and wild;
 You laugh and chide and think you know me well;
 I am your patient slave, your harmless child,
 You say . . . so tyrants dreamt as e'en they fell!
 My country's not my own, - so will I fight!
 My mind is made: I will yet strike for Right. (34)

The protest is mannered, and thus loses much of its impact. Dhlomo overuses the word "strand" in the poem - which conjures up images of London, rather than Africa, in any case! - because of the dictates of the rhyme scheme. The ". . . sweet hills and dales under the stars" are not at all in keeping with the charged atmosphere of the

verse, and illustrate Dhlomo's clichéd style. The ghosts of Milton and Tennyson haunt the pages of Valley of a Thousand Hills, and can be discerned in Robert Grendon's poem "Tshaka's Death". Grendon describes Shaka's angry dismissal of an unsuccessful impi thus:

. . . Henceforth must they
Depart! My face must they behold no more!
They must depart! Mine eyes do loathe to look
On conquer'd men! Throughout my most illustrious reign
I never bowed, nor yielded to the power
Of man; nor turned my back towards the foe! . . .
Dukuza, wake! Betwixt myself and these
Bear witness; and give ear to their response!

The Impi's Reply

1

'Stern Lord, thy will have we obey'd!
For thee we've nobly striv'n!
But victory, for which we pray'd,
Unto our foes was given!

2

Thy rancour and thy anger spare,
Thy pow'r is undefied!
A conq'ror dreaded everywhere
For evermore abide!

3

Illustrious chieftain, stay thy hand!
Let not Dukuza weep
For remnants of a luckless band
Who must damnation reap! (35)

Thus, and much more, Grendon! The poem concludes with Shaka's assassination, and "Tshaka's last words" consist of a nine-stanza poem forecasting the assassins' rivalry and the coming of the whites.

While Herbert Dhlomo was writing historical plays (featuring worthy figures like Ntsikana, Dingana, Cetshwayo and Moshoeshoe), his brother, Rolfes, wrote biographies of the Zulu kings, Shaka, Dingane, Mpande and Cetshwayo.

UShaka was published in 1937, and, in many respects, it follows Bryant's account of Shaka's reign (analysed in Chapter 3). Rolfes Dhlomo drew upon the accounts left by the early traders and adventurers in Shakan Zululand, and refers to Fynn, Isaacs, Farewell

and King. Rolfes Dhlomo's assessment of Shaka is consonant with that of Thomas Mofolo, John Dube and Magera Fuze, but he does also strive to give examples of instances of Shaka's generosity.

Rolfes Dhlomo emphasizes the importance of izibongo:

The praises of kings are not something that does not depict the truth. They refer to incidents relating to the king or to his acts of bravery. (36)

He also reproduces Bryant's version of Shaka's praises.³⁷ UShaka is thus a blend of oral and written material, after the fashion of Bryant's Olden Times in Zululand and Natal. The author concedes that Shaka's legacy is one of bloodshed and conquest, but, like Magera Fuze, he believes that Shaka is the Scourge of God:

When we look at Shaka's birth, and look at how he ruled the country, killing people, stabbing them left and right, we do not know what to say and we think it is the will of God, which is beyond our understanding.

We keep quiet, wondering,
And we see our nakedness before God! (38)

The text is written in meticulous Zulu, and it reflects the confidence and ease with which Rolfes Dhlomo wrote in his native tongue. Between 1943 and 1953, Rolfes and Herbert Dhlomo edited the newspaper, Ilanga Lase Natal, which was founded by John Dube. Rolfes was in charge of the Zulu section of the paper, and Herbert of the English. The brothers encouraged budding writers by publishing poems and other articles. In an article entitled "The African Artist and Society", Herbert Dhlomo wrote:

. . . It is he who can touch the mind, heart and spirit of the people. He can speak to a greater audience than many a politician and affect the thoughts and lives of more people than a financier. Geography and colour boundaries have no power in the field of art. Here the African can speak on a universal level denied in the political field. (39)

The Plays Set In Shakan Zululand

The portrait of Shaka that emerges in Elliot Zondi's play, Ukufa KukaShaka ("The Death of Shaka") and in Lindinkosi Mbatha's

Nawe Mbopha kaSithayi ("And you, too, Mbopha, son of Sithayi"), is best summarised in the following, lengthy quotation from Albert Luthuli's autobiography, Let My People Go, in which Shaka emerges as a Napoleonic figure:

At about the time when the Battle of Waterloo brought to an end the turbulent and disruptive career of the Emperor Napoleon, a man of similar ambition came to power in far-off and little-known Zululand. In a brief twelve-year reign, Shaka, undoubtedly the greatest of the Zulu kings, welded a number of bickering clans into a strong, united nation.

Shaka achieved the feat of creating the Zulu nation by methods which were sometimes ruthless. All the same, his occasional ruthlessness was minor in comparison with that of modern dictators, and it was seldom, if ever, as calculated and sub-human as theirs.

Shaka has been much maligned by white South African historians. His outlook was that of his day, and when that is taken into account, and when all that can be said to his discredit has been said, this king of legendary physique emerges as a brilliant general, and a ruler of great courage, intelligence and ability. Without the moral support of any precedent, he had the strength to withstand (and on occasion to expose) the power exerted over his people by wizards. His reorganisation of his army was enough to make it in his time the mightiest military force in Africa.

Nevertheless, Shaka did violate some of the customs of his people, and this was his undoing. In particular, he over-used his army, allowing his soldiers little time for the normal pursuits of peace. As the years passed, his ambitions got the better of him. That he could be despotic was probably no great matter, but his people expected their king to temper this with benevolence. Shaka's rule grew harsher. Finally, he estranged himself from his people by setting up as an unqualified dictator. For a time his subjects submitted to arbitrary rule as loyally as they could. In the end, however, Shaka went the way of most tyrants. Even his army appears to have connived at his assassination by his half-brother, Dingane. The extent to which he had forfeited the allegiance of his subjects is seen in that no murmur was raised against his assassins. Shaka died unmourned by the nation which he had raised out of obscurity. (40)

Zondi's Preface makes a similar point, humorously:

The reader must make up his own mind on whether or not he should mourn the Lion (or paramount chief) 's death. I doubt whether anyone will find anything improper in this as, where I come from, even a wizard is mourned. (41)

It is highly significant that the veteran A.N.C. leader, Chief Albert Luthuli, should begin his autobiography by referring to Shaka's achievements, for it underlines the importance of Shaka to the nationalist movement. Luthuli endeavours to judge Shaka as a man of his age - although Luthuli is clearly opposed to genocide (hence the oblique reference to Nazism), he does appreciate that Christian moral precepts were not current in Shakan Zululand. Nevertheless, Shaka's subjects passed their own judgment on his despotism - that a ruler should rule with the consent of his people: a theme that runs through these Shakan plays.

Zondi's Shaka sees his mission in terms of building a united people. Mhlangana believes that unity can be obtained without bloodshed, whereas Shaka is bent on conquest, although he is prepared to incorporate those who surrender, like the neighbouring chief Mjojani (III ii).

Mkabayi manipulates Dingane by convincing him that Shaka wishes to eliminate him and his brother, Mhlangana. Mbopha, Shaka's counsellor, is enlisted to assist in bringing about a palace coup. Mbopha and Mhlangana are wary of their co-conspirators, Mkabayi and Dingane - and this rivalry provides much of the dramatic tension. Before he dies, Shaka prophesies that the kingdom will be ruled by swallows - a prophecy which features prominently in the literature.

One of the reasons for Shaka's downfall in Zondi's play is his idealism:

In order that emancipation can come, I must overcome witchcraft, theft, lies, along with all the petty chieftains whose subjects cannot live in peace. You will complain that this spells the end of the Zulu, oblivious of the fact that beauty is the essence of the Zulu. (42)

When the spy, Hlambamanzi (who also features in Bryant's Olden Times), who represented Shaka amongst the settlers, reports their desire for land, Shaka criticises their desire for authority, saying that in his kingdom there will be one centralised authority (II ii).

In Act IV Scene iii, Jeqe (Shaka's friend) recites some of Shaka's praises:

"Pursuer of a person and he pursues him unceasingly,
I liked him when he pursued the son of Langa,
Chasing him from the west to the east
He folded together Zwide's little shoulders." (43)

A little later (in the same scene), a messenger recites the following praises before passing on the message:

The sky that thundered above Nomangci mountain,
Feather that bobbed down the other side of Nkandla,
Bobbing down always and devouring men,
Pile of firmly planted stones of the Nkandla range,
That sheltered elephants during the storm. (44)

These and the following examples give some insight into the use of royal praises in everyday situations.

Jeqe's eulogy over Shaka's corpse gives us some indication of the playwright's attitude to Shaka:

Although the king was prone to anger, and not inclined to coax people, nor to forgive, he was capable of ruling with authority, instilling self-respect and discipline, courage and pride in his subjects. Wo! Sishaka, you twirled before us, and we followed you. (You were worthy of emulation.) (45)

Jeqe bursts into song, reciting Shaka's praises, before wishing him rest:

The young viper grows as it sits, Always in a great rage;
Snatcher of a staff! He attacks, he rages,
He puts a shield on his knees.
Pursuer of a person and he pursues him unceasingly . . . (46)

Mbatha's Nawe Mbopha kaSithayi was published eleven years after Zondi's Ukufa kukaShaka, and it also deals with the theme of conspiracy.

Shaka figures more prominently, as one would expect in the latter, than in the former. The protagonist of Mbatha's play is, as the title suggests, Mbopha. The playwright utilizes soliloquies to reveal Mbopha's dilemma in the face of Mkabayi and Dingane's request for assistance in killing Shaka. Mbopha is torn between expediency and prudence, between the risk of forfeiting his life (if Shaka is killed without his assistance) and living as a marked man, if he acquiesces:

I am tempted to betray my king!
Yet it is foolish to gamble with your life;
Doing something aimlessly is stupidity.
Shaka's death is my death,
My death is Shaka's
Our death is the death of the nation. (47)

Mbopha is haunted by his betrayal of Shaka, and loses interest in life. He is haunted by Shaka's last words: "Nawe Mbopha kaSithayi!" - "And you, too, Mbopha, son of Sithayi"⁴⁸ - which are reminiscent of Caesar's cry "Et tu Brute . . .". The rest of the play revolves around Mkabayi's plotting on Dingane's behalf. The princes, Mhlangana and Dingane, are overawed by their aunt, and she sees to it that Mbopha is killed.

The play brings out the strong bond between Shaka and Mbopha; nevertheless, Shaka comes across largely as an insensitive leader. The opening scenes bring into focus the discontent amongst the soldiers over the endless military campaigns. Act I Scene iv shows how Shaka's prohibition on marriage accentuates the discontent in the ranks. Rumours of a palace coup abound, and Shaka is suspicious of Dingane and Mhlangana, and plots against them - he insists that they be killed during a campaign, and their heads brought back (II iii). This plot precipitates the betrayal.

In Act III Scene i, a praise-poet recites some of Shaka's praises:

Dlungwana, son of Ndaba!
The ferocious one of the Mbelebele brigade
Who raged among the large kraals
So that until dawn the huts were being turned upside-down.

. . .

The grasshopper which was caught on the shafts assegais
among the Malandela tribe
Fire of the long grass, son of Mjokwane
Fire of the long grass of scorching force
That burned the owls on the Dlebe hill
And eventually those on Mabedlana also burned.

. . .

Sun that arise as a young man.
When it was up above it eclipsed others.

. . .

Mamba that devoured a person and they said it was
bewitched.

. . .

He who moved slowly along a long ridge,
He traversed the bones of the people of Tayi,
Who were cold going to Macingwane at Ngonyameni.
The people of Zihlandlo, son of Gcwabe,
I have criticised them, the wizards!
They did not tell the king the ford,
They made him cross at the one still dripping blood,
Which was recently vacated by Ntube of the Majolas.

. . .

Our venomous snake of Nobamba
Venomous snake that goes in search of disputes
Ndaba ploughs his fields with spears
Whilst other chiefs use hoes.

(49)

Shaka, then, addresses his troops, and when he returns to his house,
the imbongi continues to praise him, listing some of his victims:

The Ferocious one of the Mbelebele brigade,
I liked him when he chased Zwide, the son of Langa,
Taking him from where the sun rises
And depositing him where it sets.
As for Zwide, he folded together his two little shoulders.

. . .

He ate up Nqabeni, the son of Zwide.
He ate up Mpepha, the son of Zwide.

. . .

Help me Maphitha and Ngqengelele
Give him a cow so that he can to milk into the mouth.
Give him a spear so that he can hunt.

. . .

The cow that kicked those milking it instead of the
one holding it.
South wind of sudden attack,

Which usually attacks unawares even by the doorway.
He who whilst eating some devoured some more
Whilst eating some, still he ate some more.

(Kneeling down, the praise-poet says)

Ndabezitha, the praises of a lord are endless! (50)

These praises could be a pastiche of praises gleaned from the texts published by James Stuart, A. T. Bryant, Robert Samuelson and C. L. S. Nyembezi.

The praise-poet reappears in Act IV Scene vi, during Shaka's funeral, and delivers this eulogy:

He went to the Bhalule kingdom
And killed his brother.
The sun rose as a young man
When it was up above, it eclipsed others.
Rest, pursuer of a person and he pursues him unceasingly.
I liked you on the day you pursued Zwide
Zwide the son of Langa.
You took him from the East
And put him down in the West
The spears that stabbed you will bend
He who longs for your throne will not be satisfied.
Wo! The birds that will eat this man
Their beaks will rot. (51)

The praise-poet is, obviously, fond of Shaka - indeed, some of the soldiers lament his demise. (IV ii)

Elliot Zondi's play, Ukufa kukaShaka, is superior to Mbatha's Nawe Mbopha kaSithayi, as the former has more vibrant dialogue than the latter, which is, at times, more difficult to follow. Both, however, provide interesting insights into the use of izibongo in an appropriate environment. Ukufa kukaShaka has been republished (at least) five times - which is a tribute to the playwright's desire, expressed in his Preface, to recast the Shakan legend in a novel way, notwithstanding his indebtedness to other Shakan literature.

Leonard Mncwango's Ngenzeni? ("What shall I do?") is a very sophisticated play, which dramatises the tensions within families as well as those that exist in the larger community. Zenzile and Hilwayo represent the quest for self-determination, on a personal level. They

rebel against their chief's decision to possess Zenzile, and seek asylum in Zululand. The ordinary members of Menziwa's clan do not approve of their chief's demand that the twins enter his harem, nor does the girls' mother. She disapproves even more strongly of Simelane's dereliction of duty, when he is supposed to be guarding the homestead on the night of Zenzile's escape.

Ngenzeni? is full of pointed criticism of sycophantic counsellors and the chief's servants, who lord it over the common people. Mncwango seems to be saying that government by councils can work to check the excesses of the ruler, if the counsellors chosen are men of principle (as Zenzile's father is). Although volatile by nature, Menziwa is prepared to let the accused stand trial before the court, and defend themselves.

Shaka appears, briefly, in the penultimate scene, to address his regiments. After the Royal salute, "Bayede! Bayede! Bayede! UyiZulu!", the imbongi recites a praise-poem which follows, almost word for word, that published by Bryant, whilst Shaka inspects his troops. When Zenzile and Hilwayo are brought before Shaka, the poet is listing some of Shaka's victims - which bodes ill, or so it seems, for the pair:

He ate up Nonjiya, the son of Mthanda;
He ate up Mthusi, the son of Makhedama;
He ate up Fly-like-a-leopard amongst the Ntungwa;
He ate up Gubase amongst the Ndlovu. (52)

But Shaka instructs the spies to provide the couple with cattle and material to build a home, so that they can raise soldiers for him. Whilst the jubilant lovers retire, the praise-poet celebrates the provider-destroyer king:

He who whilst eating some, he ate others.
Whilst eating some, still he ate some more.
Still eating some, he ate others. (58)

The profound influence of the izibongo on the vernacular literature can be seen in these plays, and it links them with the pioneering works of Thomas Mofolo, John Dube and Magera Fuze discussed in Chapter 2.

Unlike the clearly revisionist drama of Seydou Badian, Condetto Nénékhaly-Camara and Abdou Anta Ka, which set out to absolve Shaka of the charges of cruelty; the plays of Zondi and Mbatha, like those of Niane and U Tam'si, concentrate on the Shakan abuse of power, emphasizing the need of rulers to rule by common consent. Shaka's political failure stemmed from his lack of response to his army's desire to enjoy the fruits of peace. Although he is a tragic figure, Shaka is, nevertheless, mobilised as the founder of what was, perhaps, the greatest nation-state in Southern African history. This legacy has led to the mytho-poetic exploration of his significance and nature by numerous writers - and Oswald Mtshali's poem, "The Birth of Shaka", presents him as the favourite of the gods:

The gods
boiled his blood
in a clay pot of passion
to course in his veins

His heart was shaped into an ox-shield
to foil every foe

Ancestors forged
his muscles into
thongs as tough
as wattle bark
and nerves
as sharp as
syringa thorns. (54)

The poem seems to suggest that South Africa needs men of such mettle, if apartheid is to be destroyed. The lines quoted above bring to mind the "fearful symmetry" of Blake's Tyger:

Tyger, Tyger, burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What Immortal hand and eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry? . . .

And what shoulder and what art
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat
What dread hand? and what dread feet? (55)

Both "The Birth of Shaka" and "The Tyger" are poems about creation, power, strength and vision; but there is the obvious difference in tone between the "sharp" assertiveness of Mtshali and the questioning mode in which "The Tyger" is framed.

F. M. Mulikita's *ShakaZulu* and W. Soyinka's *Ogun Abibimān*

Fwanyanga Mulikita's *Shaka* also comes across as an exceptional man. In the first scene, we learn of how the young boys respect Shaka, and of the jealousy of his peers:

MTEMBU: And he has usurped the leadership in everything.

GUMEBE: We, the younger boys, hate him for his stern discipline. But we respect him as a hero. (56)

Shaka understands his peers' bitterness, and tries to make allowance for it; but he and Nandi have to leave when Shaka kills some boys who gang up on him. His commanding presence leads to his promotion by Dingiswayo - the two leaders disagree on the question of what strategy to adopt in uniting the clans:

DINGISWAYO: I have already told you, ka Senzangakona, that I wish to become lord of all the Ngunis without using force. I prefer negotiation.

SHAKA: I believe the word negotiation is not part of the Ndwandwe vocabulary. The only language they understand is 'impi ebomvu', red war, war to the finish. (57)

After the death of Dingiswayo, Shaka pursues his "red war" strategy unfettered, and becomes the paramount chief. But, once resistance has ended, he comes to realise that military success is no lasting solution to problems of government:

. . . I have come
to see that killing is easy - it is the discipline
in times of peace that makes a nation great. I
have been thinking about this problem, but only in
the last few months have I begun to see the answer. (58)

The Chronicler, who introduces some of the scenes, suggests that Shaka attempted to reform his "iron rule" - but adds that his mother's death made him "bitter" and led to much spilling of blood.⁵⁹ Indeed, in the last scene, Shaka underlines his devotion to slaughter in terms that reveal Mulikita's indebtedness to Ritter:

SHAKA: (sinking back) Terror is the only thing they understand and you can only rule the Zulus by killing them. I used to think differently, but now I have changed my mind. Who are the Zulus? They are the oddments of more than two hundred unruly clans which I had to break up and reshape. Only the fear of death will hold them together, until the time comes when they will be as one nation, and the clans will be remembered by their surnames. Then, and then only, can the killing stop. (60)

This speech reveals Shaka's megalomania, and militates against the largely favourable portrait of the Zulu king, in this play.

Since the play was written as a school-textbook, the principle of delayed-gratification is not thoroughly investigated - the playwright does not challenge Shaka's claim that a golden age will be realised in the future. It can, perhaps, be best described as a Bowdlerised form of Ritter's Shaka Zulu - Shaka's relationship with Pampata is platonic (Burness sees her as a mother-surrogate, stressing the fact that she appears only after Nandi's death⁶¹). Shaka reveals to Pampata his new creed:

. . . In ten years I will conquer ignorance with the same zeal as I have conquered all our enemies. I have built a nation, Pampata. My power has done this and my power will maintain it. I will never weaken. There will be killing of cowards and the fools and the weak until knowledge can keep us strong on its own. (62)

Given the callous disregard for "cowards . . . fools and the weak" expressed by Shaka, Burness' conclusion that Mulikita portrays a "sensitive" Shaka needs qualification.⁶³

Henry Fynn attempts to excuse Shaka's brutality by comparing it with that of Titus' crucifixion of a thousand Jews a day when he

beseiged Jerusalem, and Crassus' slaughter of six thousand slaves.⁶⁴ Such a defence is clearly inadequate - frequency does not alter the fundamental nature of massacre!

Nonetheless, Fynn comes across as an attractive person because of his spirited insistence that Africans and Europeans must be judged by the same criteria. Fynn is a principled "empire builder",⁶⁵ unlike the hypocritical Farewell, whose unscrupulous nature is revealed by the comment: "All's fair in love, war, and the interests of the British Empire".⁶⁶ Fynn attacks Farewell's deceit in obtaining a grant of land from Shaka, and receives the stock "settler mentality" response: ". . . we don't need to treat them on the same level as Europeans".⁶⁷ Though an odious man, Farewell is quite shrewd in his analysis of Shaka's quest for education:

... I admit he's remarkable for a native. And he knows what side his bread is buttered. All this friendliness towards us is merely to gain our knowledge. It's power Shaka is interested in. The days of spear-fighting are over and Shaka is the first to see it. He wants our knowledge to increase his power. (68)

Mulikita's faith in the dividends of scholarship is not unfounded - his own career is a testimony to it. As Burness points out, Mulikita has held a number of posts ranging from being the Clerk Interpreter at the High Court of Northern Rhodesia; a Welfare Officer; a teacher; a freelance journalist; a Headmaster; the Zambian Ambassador at the United Nations Organisation; the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Education; the Permanent Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs; and also the Minister of Transport and Works in Zambia. After graduating from Fort Hare University, where he majored in English and Psychology, Mulikita embarked on some research in psychology at Stanford University, and in political science at Columbia University. He has published, in Lozi, a volume

entitled Batiliki Mwanaka, which handles the quest for education theme.⁶⁹

Mulikita's adoption of the Shakan saga as a model for the creation of a unitary state parallels the Chakan plays written by the Francophone African political leaders - Niane's Chaka, Camara's Amazoulou, Badian's Le Mort de Chaka, and Senghor's dramatic poem, "Chaka" - analysed in Chapter 4. His treatment of the Shakan theme is different - his play does not dramatise a personal dilemma à la Senghor, it approximates the detachment of Niane's Chaka, although it lacks Niane's craftsmanship. Albeit that Mulikita's Shaka is an intelligent man, who questions his own methods, the writer does not seek to exonerate him of allegations of cruelty, after the fashion of Camara. Furthermore, Mulikita's Shaka is more appealing than Badian's uncharismatic model ruler. The main weakness of Mulikita's Shaka Zulu lies in its episodic nature - it is essentially a series of incidents (that occurred in Shaka's life) which are strung together with little attention paid to organic wholeness. Its very structure - it consists of eight scenes - indicates the lack of a systematic organisation of the material used. Knowledge of "historical" accounts of the Shakan era are essential to a full understanding of the play.

Mulikita's Shaka is closer to the "traditional, historical" accounts of Shaka - which is what one would expect from a writer who was born in southern Africa. Indeed, the Ngoni people in modern Zambia are descendants of the Nguni refugees, who fled from Shaka. The Malawian writer, D. D. Phiri, has written a popular history of the Nguni Diaspora, in which three of the fifteen chapters are devoted to the Shakan legend. Shaka is described as the man who revolutionized warfare in Nguniland by adopting 'impi ebomvu' ('red war') tactics, and Phiri often refers to Shaka by his "praise-name",

"Umbulali" - "the killer".⁷⁰ It is interesting to note that Phiri's career bears some resemblance to that of Mulikita. Whilst working as a clerk, Phiri obtained his O- and A- levels and his Economics degree by correspondence; and later served as the Commercial Attache and as the First Secretary in the Malawian Embassy in Bonn.

Wole Soyinka's Ogun Abibimã is an "Epic Poem Dedicated to the Fallen of Soweto" - a dedication that calls to mind Senghor's "Chaka", which is dedicated "To the Bantu Martyrs of South Africa". Both poems are passionate condemnations of the evils of apartheid; and both appeal for a regeneration of the Shakan spirit amongst black people throughout the continent, which will assist Africans in their struggle for "repossession". Like Senghor's Chaka, Soyinka's Shaka also confesses to being "Lost in dreams of Noliwe", who provides interludes of quiet in an otherwise turbulent life:

. . . I, Shaka,
Sunk in gossamer memories of She
Whose naming was Breeze-that-cools-Bayete's blood. (71)

In his glossary, Soyinka does, however, point out that Noliwe was "probably purely mythical".⁷² The influence of Senghor can also be discerned in the lines:

. . . Now is the hour of Song, the hour
Of ecstasy on dancers' feet. The drummers'
Exhortations fortify the heart. (73)

"Song", "ecstasy", "the drummer" and dancing figure prominently in the second "Chant" of Senghor's poem.

Ogun Abibimã is divided into three parts - the first, entitled "Induction", is a satiric attack on the South African government's diplomatic offensive in the 1970s - the era of "Dialogue". The state's brutal suppression of the Soweto Uprising and the Sharpeville massacre are recurrent motifs in the poem. Soyinka draws the inevitable conclusion that only violence will end institutionalised brutality and injustice. It is thus not surprizing that the poet draws

on his patron, Ogun - the "God of War and Creativity, of Metals, of the Road; Restorer of Rights; Explorer - He Who Goes First"⁷⁴ - as a metaphor for the destruction and recreation that must take place.

Elemental imagery abounds in the "Induction" - the references to "Storms", "the ocean's / Savage waves" and to the "earthquake" all portend the cataclysm that must occur when racists reap the harvest they have sown. Ogun is imaged as a "Blacksmith" in lines reminiscent of Blake's poem, "The Tyger":

Who dare intercede between
Hammer and anvil
In this fearsome weaving? (75)

Ogun, like most, if not all, of the Nigerian gods, is a flawed hero who, in this text, meets with Soyinka's qualified approval:

. . . In times of strife, none vies with Him
Of seven paths, Ogun, who to right a wrong
Emptied reservoirs of blood in heaven
Yet raged with thirst - I read
His savage beauty on black brows,
In depths of molten bronze aflame
Beyond their eyes' fixated distances -
And tremble! (76)

The reference here is to "Ogun's day of error", which is dealt with at greater length in Part V of "Idanre". Ogun was, according to legend, appointed King of Ire against his will, and:

. . . he soon led his men into battle. Drunk with wine
and blinded with gore, Ogun turned on his own men
and slaughtered them. Annually he re-enacts his
deed of shame. (77)

In Ogun Abibimañ, the god takes on his more respectable role as the Restorer of the Rights of the depossessed. He is, nonetheless, dangerous, as the confession, made by his "brother spirit", Shaka, emphasizes:

. . . Distance breeds ignorance, your companion host
From far-flung lands of Abibimañ (the Black World) may seek
A leader in the heart of amaZulu and embrace
A viper. Bid them beware. The viper knows
No kin. The bond of blood to him is - letting. (78)

Shaka and Ogun are fused together, in the poem, united by the sacred task of uprooting apartheid:

Our vow of silence consecrates the act
For all, breaks the spell of feeble,
Cold resolve in Dialogue's illusion.
The sorcerers' wands are broken, weavers
Of consolation in the crystal glass
Of fractured sights.
Oh distanced statesmen, conciliators
Soon snared in slight cocoons of words!
Will you make a gift of the gab to swollen tongues
Broken on the boot, and make their muteness
Proof of cravings for a Dialogue?
Sanctions followed Dialogue, games
Of time-pleading.
And Sharpeville followed Dialogue
And Dialogue
Chased its tail, a dogged dog
Dodging the febrile barks
Of Protest -
Always from beyond the fence.
Sharpeville
Bared its teeth, and that
Proved no sleeping dog
Though the kind world let it lie.
Ogun is the tale that wags the dog
All dogs, and all have had their day.
For Dialogue
Dried up in the home of Protestations.
Sanctions
Fell to seductive ploys of interests
Twin to dry-eyed arts of Expediency.
Diplomacy
Ran aground on Southern Reefs . . .
Pleas are ended in the Court of Rights. Hope
Has fled the Cape miscalled - Good Hope. (79)

"Good" "Protest Poetry" is a rather rare commodity on the African literary scene - Soyinka excels here largely through his (newly found?) respect for language. He uses clichés in an imaginative and humorous way, whilst simultaneously making biting criticisms of "Dialogue's illusion". The contrast with Herbert Dhlomo is clear.

With admirable economy of language, Soyinka details certain features of the settler states' means of repression - "the febrile barks" of police dogs; the "swollen tongues" of those tortured in police custody; and "broken" by "the boot". Dialogue is revealed

for what it is: "games of time-pleading" - the superficial gloss of diplomacy hiding the "Bared . . . teeth" of fascist states. The poet simultaneously attacks those who sit on the fence, content to criticise, and then let things lie.

The Soweto Rising of 1976, and the Mozambican declaration that it was virtually in a state of war with settler-run Rhodesia, acted as a catalyst for this profound, moving, contemplative poem. The failure of "Sanctions" in the Rhodesian case testified to the success of the "seductive ploys of Interests", and Soyinka's message to black South Africans, and all oppressed peoples, is that self-reliance yields the best results. Ogun, a representative figure in the Nigerian pantheon, and Shaka are mobilised by Soyinka in much the same manner as Herbert Dhlomo drew upon the Zulu ancestor-gods in Valley of a Thousand Hills - namely, to underline the message that the Ancestors can come to the aid of those who call upon them: ". . . say not the dead are dead!"⁸⁰ The themes of death and resurrection feature in the following section.

The second part of the poem is entitled: "Retrospect for Marchers: Shaka!" In this section, the identification of Shaka with Ogun is pursued, as Ogun exhumes Shaka:

This will to desecration now be ours,
Our sacred graves to yield, in need, thigh-bones
Honed to drinking-points, as Shaka, roused,
Defines his being anew in Ogun's embrace,
And worlds encounter to the founding cry -
Replete in act of repossession - Sigidi!

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>[Turmoil on turmoil! Ogun treads the earth of Shaka Turmoil on the loose! Ogun shakes the hand of Shaka All is turmoil.]</p> | <p>Rògbòdiyàn! Rògbòdiyàn! Ògún re lé e Shákà Rògbòdiyàn! Ògún gbọ wọ ọ Shaka Ò di Rògbòdiyàn. (81)</p> |
|---|---|

Shaka and Ogun are both pioneering spirits, and, in a lengthy speech, Shaka attempts to justify his actions:

. . . What I did

Was Shaka, but Shaka was not always I.
Beset by demons of blood, Shaka reaped
Harvests of manhood when time wavered
Uncertainly and the wind was transposed in
Another place. Yet Shaka, king and general
Fought battles, invented rare techniques, created
Order from chaos, coloured the sights of men
In self-transcending visions, sought
Man's renewal in the fount of knowledge.
From shards of tribe and bandit mores, Shaka
Raised the city of man in commonweal.
This last, this Shaka I, crave release
From masks, from cracked mirrors in the sockets of skulls
With the panga for a grin. He mashes earth
In mock heroics laying waste to anthills
The world is called to cheer the antics of
The master-strategist who make-believes
A pile of earth in the life-usurpers' fortress
To the South, attacks and razes it with weaponry
Long hidden by the gods from reach of men. (82)

Shaka acknowledges his hubris in the first part of the speech, before pleading guilty to allegations of indiscriminate slaughter. He does, however, expect recognition as a military innovator. Shaka's monologue can, at times, be described as delirious. In it, he appeals to Ogun to assist in the regeneration of the Zulus:

. . . O Silent one, my tap-roots
Wait your filling draught to swell
To buttresses. Restore my seeds. Reclaim
The manhood of a founder-king. (83)

Shaka is anxious that his innovations bear fruit in the present age, as they did in his era:

You tread above my peace, showering
Sand among my ivory beams.
Is all understood? The lesson gained?
Has history purified our gods beyond
Mzilikazi, beyond Soshangani, beyond
Lobengula or, beyond the forbear of them all -
Patriots and traitors - Shaka, womb of the amaZulu. (84)

In the closing section of the poem, "Sigidi" - which Soyinka glosses as "Shaka's war cry. The song of the spear-blade as it bites: I have eaten!"⁸⁵ - the poet calls for a new "mfekane" ("a crushing, total war")⁸⁶ that will destroy the Pretoria regime. This can be

brought about by partaking of the spirit of Shaka, and although liberation entails great sacrifice, this is not synonymous with sheer callousness:

. . . - Vengeance
Is not the god we celebrate, nor hate,
Nor blindness to the loss that follows
In His wake.
Nor ignorance of history's bitter reckoning
On innocent alike. Our songs acclaim
Cessation of a long despair, extol the ends
Of sacrifice born in our will, not weakness.
We celebrate the end of that compliant
Innocence of our millennial trees. (87)

Ogun Abibimafñ attacks the Christian doctrine of "pacific love", which has led to the emasculation of Africans' will to action. It rejects the apocalyptic vision of "a new heaven and a new earth" - the supposed reward of the "faithful" - asking:

Will love survive the epitaph -
Another Kaffir gone, saves us the sweat?
Can love outrace the random bullet
To possess the heart of black despair?
Remember Sharpeville - not as aberrations
Of the single hour, but years, and generations. (88)

When peaceful protest is met with bloody repression, the response to violence must be violent. Moreover, we must:

. . . remember Spain - Guernica
Remember dreams that will go sour, ideals
Afloat upon the cesspools of our time -
Aborted fetuses - remember this. And remember
Lidice - then Sharpeville too. Remember,
When, safely distanced, throned in saintly
Censure, the prophet's voice possesses you -
More anarchy is loosed upon the world et cetera
Remember too, the awesome beauty at the door of birth.
Labour is holy - behold the midwives with
The dark wine and black wafers of communion,
Ministering to history, delivering the missing
Chapter of the text. Let the living mourn
Hereafter. But in this hour,
Since song is arduous task to grieving tongues
And drums must pause while hands are raised
To heal, and to rebuild;
Now is the hour of Song, the hour
Of ecstasy on dancers' feet. The drummer's
Exhortations fortify the heart. (89)

The language, here, is reminiscent of Senghor's moving volume, Hosties Noires; and the poet-politician's quest for a fusion of politics and poetry, in "Chaka". Both Soyinka and Senghor attack the "impossible god"⁹⁰ of Christianity; and advocate a return to one's roots, a celebration of one's ancestor-gods, who still tread the earth, offering succour and strength (is this the "missing / Chapter of the text"?):

Now, before sad spaces recreate the loss
 Before the shields are frayed that would
 Protect the frail, now is true need
 Of song and lyric, of festal gourds,
 Libations, invocation of the Will's
 Transubstantiation! -
 Ogun in the ascendant - let us now celebrate! (91)

Ali Mazrui, in his article, "The Resurrection of the Warrior Tradition in African Political Culture",⁹² also stresses the role played by Christianity in emasculating African's drive for political autonomy. Mazrui's uncritical endorsement of the Freudian accounts of Shaka's life (discussed in Chapter 5), and his highly selective reference to Mofolo, lead to a naive comparison of Shaka and Idi Amin:

Whereas Shaka had defined manliness in terms of sexual abstinence, Amin has seen it in terms of virile promiscuity. . . .

A new Shaka has indeed cast his shadow across the African continent - but committed to virile masculinity, rather than to celibate manliness. (93)

Most of the Shakan literature points out quite clearly that Shaka was not, personally, committed to sexual abstinence, hence the facile nature of Mazrui's deduction.

Wole Soyinka's Ogun Abibimãñ challenges, obliquely, the equation of Shaka and Amin drawn by Mazrui:

SHAKA: King of the amaZulu, easily Africa's most renowned nation builder. A military and socio-organizational genius, he suffered towards the end of his life from what, from this distance, we can only surmise as manic depression. It resulted in the decimation of his own people, a history which reminds one of a similar lapse in Ogun's own leadership of men.

The professional apologists of our time have tried, uncritically, to place in the same category of leaders as Shaka, that murderous buffoon who straddles territory where once the great Shaka trod: the recent earth tremors recorded along the Mbongwe Pass is simply Shaka turning in his grave at the blasphemy. (94)

Shaka has been adopted as a Pan-Africanist hero by many writers from West- and Southern-Africa - Idi Amin had few admirers, apart from maverick academics, ruthless Ugandan factions, and his Saudi Arabian protectors!

Ogun Abibimã is a reasoned analysis of the political significance of the Shakan innovations, albeit that the fusion of the myths of a Southern-African warrior-king and a Nigerian god is not always handled smoothly. Like Abdou Anta Ka's Les Amazoulous, Soyinka's epic is an attempt to incorporate Shaka within the metaphysical framework of West African culture.

Shaka is also mentioned in the play A Dance in the Forests,⁹⁵ which was first performed in 1960, to mark Nigeria's independence. The play revolves around a feast that is to be held in honour of the Ancestors. The Council Orator, Adenebi, states that the gathering will reflect:

The accumulated heritage - that is what we are celebrating. Mali, Chaka, Songhai. Glory. Empires. . . . (96)

Adenebi's bombastic effusion is undercut by the arrival of a grotesque pair - the Dead Man and Dead Woman - whose identity is revealed during the course of the play. The old man was a warrior who refused to fight a needless war on behalf of Mata Kharibu, the tyrannical ruler:

I plead guilty to the possession of thought.
I did not know that it was in me to exercise it,
until your Majesty's inhuman commands. (97)

Brought before the king, the warrior argues cogently against senseless slaughter:

Mata Kharibu is leader, not merely of soldiers
but of men. Let him turn the unnatural pattern
of men always eating up one another. I am
suddenly weary of this soldiering where men
must find new squabbles for their cruelty.
Must I tell the widowed that their men died
for another's trousseau? (98)

The Warrior does not yield to the specious arguments about the virtues of unquestioning obedience mouthed by Physician, and is castrated and sold into slavery for impugning the "honour" of the King and Queen.

In A Dance in the Forest, Soyinka stresses the importance of independent thought, and challenges the "leader knows best" mentality that is at large in the world. The rejection, by the community as a whole, of the warrior's moral stance leads to his tragic isolation - the play presents a profoundly pessimistic vision of the likely course of events in the post-colonial era in Nigeria (and in the whole of Africa?). The Biafran War, which broke out after Nigerian independence, was, in a sense, foreshadowed in Soyinka's play. The legacy of Africa's glorious empires is quite bleak, according to the text.

Ogun Abibimãñ, which was written about sixteen years later, is not oblivious of the grim legacy of the Shakan era, but it does see some purpose behind the Shakan experiment in founding a nation-state.

It seems appropriate to conclude this chapter with an analysis of the latest epic published, to date, by a black South African writer on the Shakan theme - Mazisi Kunene's Emperor Shaka the Great.

Mazisi Kunene's Emperor Shaka the Great

Mazisi Kunene, an exiled South African poet, can be described as a poet in search of an audience. His first anthology, Zulu Poems,

published in 1970, testifies to his strength as a lyrical poet.

Emperor Shaka the Great deals with the life and times of the first Zulu monarch. His latest volumes, Anthem of the Decades and The Ancestors and the Sacred Mountain, explore Zulu mythology; Kunene's preoccupation with the ancestors is quite obvious. Before analysing Emperor Shaka the Great, it is useful to consider Kunene's attitude towards the role of poetry.

No less than ten poems in Zulu Poems deal with the role of a poet and the function of song, and, in my opinion, the most outstanding of these are: "To the Watcher of the Gates", "The Sweet Voice", "The Valley of Rest", "Dedication to a Poet", "Suddenly We Lost", and "To the Reluctant Poetess: Alicia Medina". In these poems, the tensions Kunene feels in writing poetry is evident: on the one hand he is exploring his talent as a writer of lyrics, and on the other he is acutely aware of the dilemma between personal ecstasy and commitment to other issues. He is a very self-conscious writer, and so he attempts to pre-empt criticism on this score by saying that the persona is a non-issue with regard to his poetry:

Where individualistic societies read 'I', this philosophy (that of the African communal life-style) requires one to read 'I on behalf of'. (99)

By the time he comes to publish Emperor Shaka the Great, Mazisi Kunene feels that ". . . artists embellish their past to inspire their children". Writing poetry is as good as carrying a gun for "A nation's power lies in its weapons and poems".¹⁰⁰

It is interesting to note that:

He was a founder member of the Anti-Apartheid Movement in Britain and became Director of Education for the South African United Front. In 1962 he became Chief Representative for the African National Congress in Europe and the USA, changing to Director of Finance in 1972. He has lectured widely and has been Visiting Professor in African Literature and Languages at the University of California, Los Angeles. (101)

As can be seen from the above, Kunene is a man with a mission. The man is intricately involved with his medium, and his reputation is inextricably bound up with the portrait he presents of Shaka. He addresses himself to the task of explaining Shaka's rise to fame:

How did it happen? In order to reach a suitable answer it is necessary to cut through the thick forest of propaganda and misrepresentation that have been submitted by colonial reports and historians. The following epic poem is an attempt to present an honest view of the achievements of Shaka. (102)

Since one of Kunene's targets is the "colonial . . . historians", he goes to great lengths to state that his poem is an "accurate . . . historical account . . .":

Throughout the epic I have attempted to give as accurate a historical account as possible. On rare occasions where I felt rearrangement would make the central story more dramatic, without distorting the history, I have changed the sequence of events. (103)

The "epic" is an appropriate medium to adopt for the mythopoeicis of Shaka (or any figure), as the form has, traditionally, been used to describe poems dealing with human destiny.¹⁰⁴

Kunene hints that this epic was first written in Zulu:

It is regrettable in a way that this book should first appear in translation before it is published in the original. The reasons for this are many and complex. Suffice it to say here that its publication is in itself a tremendous achievement. It is only through the collective efforts of many of my relatives and friends that this has been possible. (105)

The main reason, one assumes, is the limited audience a Zulu poem would have, whereas English is an international language and thus ensures a wider audience.

Kunene singles out his "brother and leader, Prince Gatsha Buthelezi, who greatly inspired and encouraged me", in his acknowledgements:

His glorious example of leadership is a true continuation of the tradition of his ancestor, Shaka the Great himself. Through such vision as he possesses, the actions of the forefathers became a living reality. (106)

Although the received wisdom, in the West, is that Gatsha Buthelezi is a thoroughly compromised figure, Mazisi Kunene and Jordan Ngubane see him as one of a long line of resisters.¹⁰⁷ Perhaps this stems from Gatsha's refusal to accept the nominal "Independence" proffered to "Homeland Governments" by the South African government. Both Kunene and Ngubane see Shaka's achievements in "epic" terms; both claim to be working from traditional sources; they tend to reach parallel conclusions, but Ngubane is prepared to concede that Shaka was bloodthirsty,¹⁰⁸ something Kunene does not.

Kunene claims to be writing down what his paternal and maternal grandparents told him, and states that they "took great pride in preserving and narrating our national history". Furthermore,

Through these traditions and literary techniques I was able to learn much about the history of Southern Africa. . . . I have learned how greatly valued are the oral traditions of telling the story, of dramatizing the story and of making it socially relevant. (109)

Kunene uses segments of Shaka's praise-poems, or izibongo, fairly liberally throughout his epic. Those of Senzangakhona, Zihlandlo, Mkhabayi, Zulu, Jama and Ndaba (the list is by no means exhaustive) are also drawn upon, at various points. It is significant that Nandi's poem, as rendered in Cope's Izibongo-Zulu Praise Poems, is not used, as it is quite unflattering,¹¹⁰ and cannot be subtly modified, as some of the segments in Shaka's praise-poem are. Perhaps it is in atonement for this sin of omission that Nandi is elevated to the status of a "Goddess" in Anthem of the Decades, a Zulu epic dedicated to the women of Africa! Kunene objects to the term "praise-poem" by the time he comes to publish Emperor, preferring, rather, the term "poems of excellence":¹¹¹

When Zihlandlo joins Shaka, he prefaces his appeal for protection in words that bring to mind the "Pile of firmly planted rocks of Nkandla" praise:

. . . King of kings, ruler of many lands,
You whose shadow overwhelms those of the mountains!
The elephants huddle together as the storms threaten.
They retire to the shelter of the mountains,
It is you who protects the heads of fugitives. (112)

Kunene utilizes the images found in izibongo and renders them in plausible English.

Zihlandlo admires Shaka's military innovations - the discarding of sandals; adoption of a total war strategy; the development of a network of spies; and the use of the crescent formation in battle. These tactics enable Shaka to centralise all political authority and he draws a parallel between his ambitions and those of George III:

Like us George seeks to unite all the white nations.
If by this great vision the Palm Race and White Race unite
Then they shall abide by one great law.
For nations turn to bandits
Only when they are without an all embracing order. (113)

Shaka sees his task as one "designed for me by my Ancestors",¹¹⁴ as Kunene is anxious that the king should be perceived as a man of destiny.

Kunene's revisionist tendencies can be seen in the claim that Shaka was invited to take the throne after Senzangakhona's death,¹¹⁵ despite the numerous references to Sigujana's assassination, in the recorded izibongo.

Kunene's Shaka owes much to E. A. Ritter's Shaka Zulu, which portrays Shaka as a man of Napoleonic stature. Kunene downplays Shaka's quest for the elixir of life by suggesting that Shaka desired to save Nandi through it, rather than to prolong his own life.¹¹⁶ The poet is embarrassed by Shaka's friendship with the white settlers, and suggests that Shaka was planning to confront them after defeating

Soshangane,¹¹⁷ a campaign which did not take place as Shaka was assassinated by his brothers, who were fed up with endless wars. The description of the assassination illustrates Kunene's incorporation of Shaka's izibongo in his text:

They stabbed Shaka of Senzangakhona from all sides.
Blood spurted out even from his mouth.
When Shaka realized the truth at the last moment
He smiled and said: 'So, my brothers, you are killing me?
And you, too, Mbopha, son of Sithayi!
You think you shall rule Zululand after my death.
No, you shall never rule. Only the swallows shall rule
over it.'

These were the last words he uttered as he fell onto the
ground.

They stabbed him, making numerous wounds,
Still fearing he might suddenly rise
And, with the anger of the whirlwind, rush headlong at them.
He lay there, the warrior, the son of Ndaba, the wisest
of men.

Emperor Shaka the Great, Ruler of Many Rulers, King of Kings!
He followed the great heroes of Zululand.
Throughout the land people wept; many ran to Dukuza in
disbelief.

The poet on the verge of insanity, and to console the people,
Declaimed Shaka's heroic epic:

'You shouted from the mountain in the regions of Mandla
and Zimema.

Summer and winter were separated.

The fields were left unfinished!

The grains were gobbled up by little birds!

And the ruins of Tayi were still there!

He ate two pieces of cane, one was Gcwabe,

The other was Zihlandlo,

But only one bundle of chaff he discarded.

He overwhelmed Matshingele of the Khulumbeni region.

He captured Gwayi of Mazindela.

He captured Mpangalala of Nomgqobo.

He overcame Phalaza of Khanyile.

The breast of Mjokwane that favoured the Feasts of Return.

It favoured Jiyeza among the diviners.

The beautiful finch that adorned the Zimpohlo regiment.

They were sleeping with women in his name -

What an outrage! Short grass that pierced with fierce
barbs in its tender age,

The Proud One who leaned on an elephant's cave.

You brought Mangcengceza of Khali among the Mbathas.

You humbled Matiwane, the son of Masumpa of the Ngwanes.

You punished Makhedama of emaLangeni among your mother's
people.

Wild one, who surprised the enemy in the tall grass.

You destroyed Sigawuzana of the stubborn Mbatha clan.

You, the deep pool that is centred in the river of Mayiwane:

A man slipped while carelessly trying to bathe.

He sank deep and was swallowed with his head-ring.

Black staff of Mjokwane, that chastised Zwide of the Ndwandwes;

It castigated Nomahlanjana, the son of Zwide.

Eternal greenness, that is like the bile of a buck!
You destroyed Mdimndwane, the son of Msweli of the
Xulu clan.

You annihilated Mdladlana of the Mbedus.
You captured Mphezeni of the Nxumalos.
Fierce one, who is like a vulture.
Thou wisest of men! Eagle that descended from the sky!
You crossed by the short route the regions of Madlungela
And seized the cattle which nourished the madman of Mavela -
But those of Sihlayo simply followed him.'
In tears the poet uttered Shaka's epic. . . . (118)

The rhythm of this extract approximates that of Shaka's izibongo.

Kunene stresses Shaka's friendship with the members of the
iziChwe regiment, who recite his praises:

The young man applauded his words and sang his heroic poem:
'Thunderbolt that fell into the House of Phungashe,
All-spreading fame, son of Menzi!
Shaka, the invincible one, no one can conquer!
Uncontrollable overgrowth, son of Ndaba!
Luxuriant vegetation that grows wild over the village cities!
Until dawn the flames of the villages overwhelm each other.
Multivoiced one, who is like a lion!
You trespassed on the grounds leading to the village of
Mfene -
The spear whose handle is red with blood of men.
Eternal movement! Son of Senzangakhona!
Such were the celebrations of the iziChwe regiment. (119)

Praises are also sung after victorious battles; the following
poem, for example, is recited after the defeat of Phungashe:

The heroes of Zululand returned ecstatic with victory.
Their triumphal songs rose in harmony over the little
mountains.
Great crowds rushed to meet the triumphal army.
Poems of excellence were chanted everywhere.
Women sang in accompaniment to their children.
At the arena the poet's voice boomed with ancient epics.
He sung of Mdlani, of Malandela, of Phunga, of Mageba,
of Jama.
He sang of the young lion of Senzangakhona.
He shook the hill of cranes with his poems of excellence:
'The bull that bellowed from Mthonjaneni -
All nations heard it.
Dunjwa of Luyengweni heard it, clearly.
So did Mangcegeza, the son of Khali,
The uncontrollable blaze of Mjokwane
Which seized all things on its way!
It burnt the sleeping owls at Mdlebe
Until those of Mabelane were destroyed.
When he passed through the villages of Ndina and Mgovu,
Women who were pregnant aborted.

The tender fields were left unfinished.
The precious seed was left in the fields.
People fled in terror!
Old women were abandoned in ruined villages.
Old men were left half-way to their sanctuaries.
The giant roots were upturned as if by a whirlwind.
He hurried through the villages of Mcobo in the evening.'
Thus did the poet eulogize Shaka's triumph. . . . (120)

Kunene has clearly "embellished" the poems published by Stuart, Samuelson and Trevor Cope, in his account of Shaka's military success.

Praise-poems were also recited about Shaka's defeat of Zwide, Macingwane and the Langeni. Reference is also made to the Nyuswa dispute.¹²¹

The main weakness of Kunene's poem is that Shaka is presented as too "great" a figure - he is far more intelligent than other people (and thus appears patronising); he can do no wrong; and is above reproach - even if his new laws (the proscription of marriage, for example) lead to much dissatisfaction. Had Kunene painted a portrait of a more culpable man, his hero would be more attractive! The more vulnerable Shaka, who emerges in the early part of the epic, which deals with Shaka's tragic isolation as a child, elicits a more sympathetic response from the reader, than the arrogant ruler who dominates the later books, and calls his subjects "children".

Emperor Shaka the Great is the work of an exile - it thus shares the limitations of such literature. The nostalgia for a past and a country that the poet loves dearly necessarily distorts the writer's vision. Kunene's desire to portray a Pan-African hero leads to exaggerated claims - for example, the assertion that Mzilikazi did not flee of his own free will, but was given secret instructions by Shaka to extend his empire to the north¹²² - casts doubt on the historicity of what is supposed to be a reliable historical record. Kunene's contribution to the Shakan literature illustrates the potency of the Shakan symbol amongst black South African writers.

In a recent research report recently published by the University of Zululand, S. J. Maphalala writes:

It should be understood that the spirit of King Shaka, the founder of one of the most powerful kingdoms in Southern Africa, has continued to exert an influence on Zulu rural life to this day . . . even after the Bhambatha rebellion of 1906, the last armed struggle between blacks and whites in South Africa. Shaka's spirit remained an ever present force for unity amongst the Zulus . . .

Shaka formed the regiments primarily because he wanted to maintain discipline among the Zulu people. He knew that in discipline lay strength. (123)

By mobilising the spirit of Shaka, many (black South) African writers hope to encourage their countrymen and women to take pride in their national and cultural heritage, which will enable them to contemplate a seemingly bleak future, with a sense of hope and purpose.

Footnotes - Chapter 6

1. M. Kunene, Emperor Shaka the Great, op. cit., p. 425.
2. The poems first appeared in B. W. Vilikazi's volume Inkondlo kaZulu, published in 1935. English translations of them were published in the volume Zulu Horizons, edited by F. L. Friedman, D. McK. Malcolm and J. M. Sikakana, Johannesburg, Wits. University Press, 1973 (1962). This volume includes translations of Vilakazi's poems, entitled Amal'eZulu, which were first published in 1945.
3. H. I. E. Dhlomo , Valley of a Thousand Hills, Durban, Knox, 1941.
4. E. Zondi, Ukufa kukaShaka, Johannesburg, Wits. University Press, 1979 (1960).
5. S. B. L. Mbatha, Nawe Mbopha kaSithayi, Pietermaritzburg, Lincroft, 1971.
6. L. L. J. Mncwango, Ngezeni? Pietermaritzburg, Shuter and Shooter, 1977 (1959).
7. F. M. Mulikita, Shaka Zulu, Lusaka, Longman, 1967.
8. W. Soyinka, Ogun Abibimañ, Johannesburg and London, Ravan and Rex Collings, 1980.
9. See, for example, W. Soyinka, Idanre and other Poems, London, Methuen, 1967.
10. W. Soyinka, A Dance in the Forests, London, OUP, 1963.
11. Zulu Horizons, op. cit., p. 35.
12. *ibid.*, p. 35.
13. *ibid.*, pp. 38-9.
14. T. Cope, Izibongo, op. cit., pp. 90, 92.
15. Zulu Horizons, op. cit., p. 39.
16. *ibid.*, p. 37.
17. *ibid.*, p. 39.
18. *ibid.*, p. 40.
19. *ibid.*, p. 41.
20. *ibid.*, p. 42.
21. *ibid.*, p. 42.

22. *ibid.*, p. 41.
23. *ibid.*, p. 35.
24. *ibid.*, p. 38.
25. D. B. Z. Ntuli, The Poetry of B. W. Vilakazi, Pretoria, J. L. Van Schalk, 1984, p. 62.
26. *ibid.*, p. 63.
27. *ibid.*, p. 66.
28. Zulu Horizons, *op. cit.*, p. 49.
29. *ibid.*, p. 48.
30. *ibid.*, p. 50.
31. *ibid.*, pp. 53-4.
32. H. I. E. Dhlomo, Valley of a Thousand Hills, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-3.
33. *ibid.*, pp. 6-8.
34. *ibid.*, p. 66.
35. R. Grendon, "Tshaka's Death", cited in T. Couzens and E. Patel, eds., The Return of the Amasi Bird, Johannesburg, Ravan, 1982, pp. 20, 21.
36. R. R. R. Dhlomo, UShaka, *op. cit.*, pp. 96-7.
- Izibongo zamakhosi kakuzona nje izinto ezabunjwa ukuba kubatshazwe amaKhosi ngezinto angazenzanga, noma ngezinto ezingaqandakaliyo. Ziqonde isici esithile esenzekayo esimayelana neNkosi leyo mhlawumbe ziphawule izenzo zobuqhawe ezithile ezenziwe yileyoNkosi ezitheni zayo.
37. *ibid.*, pp. 68-72.
38. *ibid.*, p. 2.
- Nxashana-ke sibona ukuzalwa kukaShaka, kube kuyilapho sibona futhi ukubusa kwakhe izwe, ebulala abantu, ebasakaza ndawo zonke ngezikhali, sifike sikhohlwe ukuthi sizothini. Sibone-ke ukuthi ukwenza kwentando kaNkulunkulu kungaphezu kwemiqondo yethu.
- Sithule simangele.
- Sizibona ubuze bethu phambi kukaNkulunkulu.
39. H. I. E. Dhlomo, "The African Artist and Society", 5 March, 1949, Ilanga Lawe Natal.
40. A. Luthuli, Let My People Go, London, Fount. 1982, p. 17 (1962).

41. E. Zondi, op. cit., p. v.

Kuhle umfundi azibonele ukuthi kufanele yini ukuba siyililele ingonyama. Angisho kodwa ukuthi ukhona ongafumana ijadu lapha, ngoba kithi nomthakathi uyakhalelwa.

42. ibid., p. 5.

Ukuze inkululeko ime kufanele ngiqede ubuthakathi, ubusela, amanga, kanye nawo onke lamakhosana abantu bawo bedlela egilweni. Nina nizothi lokhu kuqeda uZulu, nilibale ukuthi uZulu ubuhle bodwa.

43. ibid., p. 37.

"Mxoshi womuntu amxoshisise,
Ngimthande exosha okaLanga,
Emsingisa lapho lishona khona, futhi
Lapha liphuma khona.
UZwide wampheqa amahlonjana omabili."

44. ibid., p. 38.

"Zulu elidume pheZulu kuNomangci,
Lusiba gojela ngalaphaya kweNkandla,
Lugojela njalo ludla amadoda,
Sixohokolo esingangamatsh' aseNkandla,
Aphephel' izindlovu uma liphendule."

45. ibid., p. 52.

Nakuba inkosi ibinolaka, ingancengi, ingathetheleli,
Ikwali ukumisa umthetho, inhlonipho, ukuzibamba,
Ubuqhawe, nokuzithanda, konke lokhu okuzobhuntshe.
Wo! Sishaka, ubuphothana phambi kwethu sikuthande.

46. ibid., p. 53.

"Dlondlwane luya luhlezi, luya ludlondlobele;
Sidlukuladlwedlwe siyadla sindlondlobele,
Sibeke isihlangu emadolweni;
Mxoshi womuntu amxoshele futhi . . ."

47. Mbatha, op. cit., p. 23.

Ngilingwa

Ngenkosi yami! Nginikele inkosi yami!
Ukuzabalaza udlalele empilweni yakho,
Uqome ukufeza ize, yinto embi.
Ukufa kukaShaka ngukufa kwami
Ukufa kwami ukufa kukaShaka
Ukufa kwethu ukufa kwesizwe.

48. ibid., p. 48.

49. ibid., pp. 38-39.

UDlungwane kaNdaba!
UDlungwane woMbelebele
Odlung' emanxulumeni
Kwaze kwas' amanxulum' esibikelana.

.
.

Inteth' egolwe nganti zamkhonto kwaMalandela
Umlilo wothathe kaMjokwane
Umlilo wothathe ubuhanguhangu
Oshis' izikhova zaseDlebe
Kwaye kwasha neziseMabedlana.

. . .
. . .
Ilang' eliphume linsizwa,
Lathi liphezulu lansasa.

. . .
. . .
Imamb' edl' umuntu bath' iloyelwe.

. . .
. . .
Ondande ngokhal' olude,
Wadabul' emathanjen' abantabakaTayi,
Ebebegodola beya kuMacingwane.
OZihlandlo kaGcwabe ngibasolile,
Abasokoco!
Inkosi kabayitshelang' izibuko,
Bayiweze ngelicons' amathe
Ebelisasuk' ukuphel' uNtube wakwaMajola.

. . .
. . .
Indlondlo yakithi kwaNobamba,
Imamb' edl' umuntu bath' iloyelwe.
UNdab' ocaba ngomkhonto
Amany' amakhos' ecaba ngamazembe!

50. *ibid.*, p. 40.

UDlungwane woMbelebele,
Ngimthand' exosh' uZwide ezalwa uLanga,
Emthatha lapho liphuma ngakhona,
Emsingisa lapho lishona ngakhona.
UZwide wampheq' amahlonjan' omabili.

. . .
. . .
. . .
Wamudl' uNqabeni ezalwa nguZwide
Wamudl' uMpepha ezalwa nguZwide.

. . .
. . .
. . .
Ungisize Maphitha ninoNgqengelele
Umnike nkomony' afund' ukukleza
Umnike ukhande afund' ukuzimbela.

. . .
. . .
Inkom' ekhab' abasengayo yadel' umbambi,
Umoy' omzansi womngenelo,
Ohlez' ubangenela nangomnyango.
Oth' esadl' ezinye wadl' ezinye
Wath' esadl' ezinye wadl' ezinye.

(Iguqe ngamadolo lapho imbongi)

Ndabezitha, Izilokotho zeSilo aziqedwa!

51. *ibid.*, p. 58.

Imbongi: Owandulel' ukuy' oBhalule
Wafik' umfowabo wambulala.
Ilang' eliphume linsizwa
Lath' ukufika phezulu lansasa.
Lala mxoshi womuntu amxoshele futhi.
Ngakuthanda mhla uxosh' uZwide
UZwide ezalwa nguLanga.
Wamthabatha lapho liphuma khona
Wamsingisa lapho lishona khona.
Imikhont' ehlabeni wena yogoba
Ogabadel' inkundla yakho yomdingisa.
Wo! Izintuthwan' ezodla lensizwa,
Zobola phuhlu, imilonyana.

52. Mncwango, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

Wadla uNonjiya kaMthanda;
Wadla uMthusi kaMakhedama;
Wadla uPhapha njengengwe kwelabaNtungwa;
Wadla uGubase eNdlovini.

53. *ibid.*, p. 121.

Othe esadl' ezinye, wadl' ezinye;
Wathi esadl' ezinye, wadl' ezinye, wathi esadl' ezinye
Wadl' ezinye.

54. Mtshali, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

55. G. Keynes, ed., Blake: Complete Writings, Oxford, OUP,
1972, p. 173.

56. F. M. Mulikita, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

57. *ibid.*, p. 21.

58. *ibid.*, p. 52.

59. *ibid.*, p. 59.

60. *ibid.*, p. 69.

61. D. Burness, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

62. Mulikita, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

63. D. Burness, *op. cit.*, pp. 57, 68.

64. Mulikita, p. 63.

65. *ibid.*, p. 62.

66. *ibid.*, p. 63.

67. *ibid.*, p. 64.

68. *ibid.*, p. 65.

69. D. Burness, op. cit., p. 57.
70. D. D. Phiri, From Nguni to Ngoni, Limbe, Popular Publications, 1982, p. 31.
71. W. Soyinka, Ogun Abibimañ, op. cit., pp. 9, 10.
72. *ibid.*, p. 24.
73. *ibid.*, p. 22.
74. *ibid.*, p. 23.
75. G. Keynes, ed., Blake: Complete Writings, op. cit., p. 173.
76. *ibid.*, pp. 7, 22.
77. W. Soyinka, Idamre, op. cit., p. 87.
78. Ogun Abibimañ, op. cit., p. 14.
79. *ibid.*, pp. 5, 6.
80. *ibid.*, p. 17.
81. *ibid.*, p. 9. The translation is given on p. 24.
82. *ibid.*, p. 15.
83. *ibid.*, p. 13.
84. *ibid.*, p. 12.
85. *ibid.*, pp. 23-4.
86. *ibid.*, p. 24.
87. *ibid.*, pp. 20-21.
88. *ibid.*, p. 20.
89. *ibid.*, pp. 21-22.
90. Senghor, "Chaka", op. cit., p. 71.
91. Ogun Abibimañ, op. cit., p. 22.
92. A. A. Mazrui, "The Resurrection of the Warrior Tradition in African Political Culture", The Journal of Modern African Studies, 13, I, 1975, pp. 67-84.
93. *ibid.*, pp. 81-82, 83.
94. Ogun Abibimañ, op. cit., p. 23.
95. W. Soyinka, A Dance in the Forests, London, OUP, 1963.
96. *ibid.*, p. 8.

97. *ibid.*, p. 53.
98. *ibid.*, p. 56.
99. M. Kunene, Zulu Poems, 1970, Andre Leutch, p. 11.
100. Emperor Shaka the Great, *op. cit.*, pp. 116, 272.
101. M. Kunene, Anthem of the Decades, 1981, London, Heinemann, back cover.
102. M. Kunene, Emperor Shaka the Great, *op. cit.*, p. xiii.
103. *ibid.*, p. xxvii.
104. For a detailed discussion of the epic genre, see K. K. Ruthven's Myth, London, Methuen, 1976.
105. *ibid.*, p. xi.
106. *ibid.*, p. xi.
107. See Ngubane, J. K., "Shaka's Social, Political and Military Ideas", in Burness, D., *op. cit.*, p. 161.
108. *ibid.*, p. 152.
109. Emperor, p. xi.
110. Cope, T., *op. cit.*, pp. 174-5.
111. See Emperor, pp. xxix-xxx.
112. *ibid.*, p. 186.
113. *ibid.*, p. 236.
114. *ibid.*, p. 100.
115. *ibid.*, p. 78.
116. *ibid.*, p. 270.
117. *ibid.*, p. 376.
118. *ibid.*, pp. 425-6.
119. *ibid.*, p. 60.
120. *ibid.*, pp. 97-8.
121. *ibid.*, pp. 172, 175; 221; 425-9.
122. *ibid.*, p. 199.
123. S. J. Maphalala, "Aspects of Zulu Rural Life during the Nineteenth Century", University of Zululand Publication (B.55.), 1985, pp. 1, 4.

CONCLUSION

Since I have drawn conclusions in the various sections of this thesis, a general conclusion repeating earlier conclusions is unnecessary.

The originality of this thesis rests partly on its scope; partly on the analysis of previously unpublished Shakan praise-poems; partly on the comparisons drawn between various versions of Shaka's praise-poetry; and on its methodological approach.

Like Dr. Anthony Chennels' panoramic survey of Rhodesian settler literature,¹ I have produced a thorough survey of Shakan literature from the 1820's to the present day. In selecting material to be considered in this thesis, my method has been to examine comprehensively all the literature at my disposal which presents a "view" of Shaka. This inevitably involves me in including some literature of dubious literary value - and this is justified by the following reasons.

Firstly, there are some valuable texts on the Shakan theme including the izibongo; Thomas Mofolo's Chaka, Léopold Sédar Senghor's "Chaka"; Frank Templeton Prince's "Chaka"; Djibril Tamsir Niane's Chaka; Tchikaya U Tam'si's Le Zulu; Wole Soyinka's Ogun Abibiman and Mazisi Kunene's Emperor Shaka the Great.

Secondly, the "good" texts listed above have grown out of a larger corpus of Shakan literature. The pre-occupations of the lesser works are illuminating because of the revelations they make on the social and political issues at stake during the times in which they were written, and the usefulness of the Shakan motif to the writers in question. Moreover, a dialogue can be detected between the "good" and the "bad" literature which reflects on the potency of the Shakan myth.

Thirdly, since "good" and "bad" writers are involved in the mythopoeicis of Shaka, a Leavisite isolation of great works would run

counter to the comprehensive nature of Shakan literature.

Fourthly, an examination of the contexts which give rise to manifold variations on the Shakan theme often illuminates qualities in (pioneering) texts which have played a part in the establishment of certain "traditions" of South African literature.

It is interesting to note that there are African boundaries to Shaka's significance. With the exception of Rider Haggard, who, as we have seen, is a special case, and stands out as an enormously influential settler novelist; and F. T. Prince, who drew upon his South African background when composing "Chaka"; Shaka has not made any impact on the imagination of British writers. It is only in the works of historians and anthropologists that there has been an attempt to measure his significance. Given the importance of South Africa in the imperial context, and the special position of the Zulus in the British imagination - from the aftermath of the Battle of Isandlwana to the present day² - this seems to be an extraordinary gap. It seems to me that there is room for another thesis on the lack of an imperial dimension to nineteenth- and twentieth-century English Literature along the lines tentatively mapped out by L. White and T. Couzens in their introduction to Literature and Society in South Africa.³

Equally surprizing is the absence of a Shakan theme in Afro-American literature, apart from a mediocre poem by Denise A. Smith.⁴ This is partly a reflection of the fact that until very recently, Africa has been West Africa in the black American imagination; and Dr. Marion Berghahn's research bears eloquent testimony to the tensions brought about by the heritage of slavery in the various attempts by Afro-Americans to identify with Africa.⁵ Black American literature in general has no need for African heroes as the first authentic black heroes were the leaders of the anti-slavery revolts;

and Africa often features as a mythical homeland, a Garden of Eden where there is no need for political struggle. Professor Max Gluckman has pointed out some of the American reverberations of the Shakan saga:

Among American Blacks, he and his Zulus are also esteemed as heroic (as indeed they were and are): in Minneapolis, Professor E. A. Hoebel told me there is a Black group which calls itself "Shaka's Zulu Warriors", and in Philadelphia the dominant Black "gang" calls itself "the Zulu Nation", though, save perhaps for a few individuals, Zulus were not enslaved to America or elsewhere. Louis (Satchmo) Armstrong in 1921 composed and recorded "The King of the Zulus". (6)

It is interesting to note Shaka's appeal to gangland bosses!

My task, as a literary critic, has been to evaluate the merits and demerits of the different interpretations of Shaka's significance, and the following is a summary of the main themes that have been explored in this thesis:

Enormous One, He who is as big as his country
Shaka, the Black Napoleon
Shaka, the African Attila
Shaka, the Satanic Tyrant
Shaka, the anti-Christ
Shaka, the Divine Ancestor
Shaka, the Black Christ
Shaka, the Négritude Hero
Shaka, the founder of an African nation-state
Shaka, the innovative military genius
Shaka, the isolated leader
Shaka and the use and abuse of power
Shaka, the model ruler
Shaka and sexual fantasy
Shaka, the source of inspiration
Shaka, the Pan-African Hero
Emperor Shaka the Great

Shaka, in short, is all things to many Africans, but the mythopoeicis of Shaka is a largely African phenomenon.

Footnotes - Conclusion

1. A. J. Chennels, "Settler Myths and the Southern Rhodesian Novel", D. Phil., University of Zimbabwe, 1982.
2. See A. T. Cope, "The Zulu War in Zulu Perspective", Theoria, May 1981, pp. 41-50; S. J. R. Martin, British Images of the Zulus c1820-1879, op. cit.; B. Orme, Victorian Attitudes to 'Small Wars', op. cit.
3. L. E. White and T. J. Couzens (eds.), Literature and Society in South Africa, London, Longman, 1984. See also the fascinating collection of essays in D. Dabydeen's (ed.): The Black Presence in English Literature, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1985.
4. D. A. Smith, "Shaka King of the Zulus", UFAHAMU (Journal of the African Activist Association), Vol. VIII, No. 3, 1978, p. 146.
5. See M. Berghahn, Images of Africa in Black American Literature, London, Macmillan, 1977.
6. M. Gluckman, "The Individual in a Social Framework: The Rise of King Shaka of Zululand", op. cit., pp. 117-118.

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