

A FRAGMENT OF THE JIGSAW : AUTHORITY  
AND LABOUR CONTROL AMONGST THE EARLY  
NINETEENTH CENTURY NORTHERN NGUNI.

---

Carolyn Anne Hamilton

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of Arts  
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg  
in Partial Fulfilment of the Degree of Bachelor  
of Arts, Honours

Johannesburg 1980

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. P.L. Bonner, for his assistance and tolerance; Adriaan Koopman of the Zulu Department, University of Natal, for his encouragement and much help with translation difficulties; the staff of the Killie Campbell Library, Durban, for their co-operation and endless cups of tea; and finally Mrs J. Hewitt for her patience and endurance in typing this dissertation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction .....	III
Umuntu Nenyoni.....	V
1. Population and Labour Distribution .....	1
2. The Status of Women in Early Nguni Society ..	10
3. The <u>Amakanda - Amakhosikazi</u> .....	18
4. The Distribution of Power and Authority between the Military Offices and Kinship Positions .....	24
5. <u>The Inkosi</u> - an Absolute Myth .....	32
Conclusion .....	38
Bibliography .....	39

## INTRODUCTION

The study of pre-colonial south-east Africa has long remained an area relatively neglected by historians. This is, in part, a consequence of the lack of conventional historical evidence that characterizes most African societies. The few written eye-witness accounts are limited to the late Shakan and subsequent period, and exemplify the other major problem hindering a clear conceptualization of early Nguni history, viz. the imposition of Western preconceptions and ideals.

The only testimonies by Nguni informants are those recorded by Bryant, Stuart and the European authorities in Natal. Hence, they too are couched in Western terms, elicited in response to questions considered relevant by a Western mind, or concerning issues highlighted by a difference in culture between informant and recorder. This discrepancy frequently results in a distorted emphasis within the testimony, such as on the practice of ukuhlobonga, a normal occurrence in Nguni society, but an apparent source of fascination and opprobrium to the Victorian mind. Similar distortions occur when Nguni concepts such as isigodlo or lobola, are translated into Western terms, or vice-versa, as in the attempt to locate the precise point of 'marriage' in an Nguni union.

These distortions and other apparent misrepresentations, such as the tendency to describe the accession of a new ruling lineage in terms of a full-scale population movement, arise out of the use of literary conventions particular to oral tradition. The student of Nguni history must continually identify and re-interpret these stylizations. He must also be aware of a reciprocal relationship between himself and his material, in the sense that the directional thrust of his own questions will both activate the evidence and determine the nature of its yield.

The available facts then, must not be seen as static entities with set positions in relation to one another, but rather as the pieces of a puzzle which can be assembled in several different ways; the end result reflecting the approach of the researcher as much as the intrinsic content of the material. The student of Nguni history has a dual role to play; a role that is both generative and interpretative.

The fact that he has limited conventional evidence available to him, makes two major demands on the researcher. Firstly, he is often forced to move out of his own discipline to utilize the potential sources offered by linguistics, archaeology, environmental and geographical analyses and anthropology. Secondly, he must fill certain of the gaps in his material by drawing his own hypotheses, and using them to build up a logical argument. Both approaches are valid and potentially enriching, provided that one maintains historical integrity, and stays alive to the danger of building an argument upon an assumption.

It is an assumption of this kind that is examined in the opening chapter of this thesis. The widespread acceptance that it was a population explosion that led to the ecological degeneration of early 19th century Northern Nguniland, is itself an hypothesis. This being so, it is equally valid to posit a number of alternative hypotheses, thrown up by a re-examination of the evidence. One of the chief results of this fresh approach was an intensified focus on labour and in particular, agricultural production. This in turn, necessitated a close examination, in Chapter Two, of the role of women; the primary producers in Nguni society. Two fundamental points emerged from this analysis. Firstly, it became evident that control of agricultural production (and hence of the women) was a basis for authority. Secondly, since it emerged that women need not be considered 'socialized inferiors', this authority could be wielded by the amakanda-amakhosikazi. Hence chapter three is a detailed analysis of their control over women in Zulu society, and the implications with regard to control over the military.

Chapter four goes on to discuss the nature and limitations of military power, under Shaka, vis-a-vis the kinship systems, and the subsequent ascendancy of the military under Dingane.

Finally, chapter five looks at the role and functions of the inkosi in relation to the power structures previously discussed.

Ba ti kambe, ab' insumansumane, kwa ku kona kukqala indhlala enkulu, ku nge ko izinkomo futi. Kwa ti umfazi wa ya 'kulima ensimini; kwa ti kwa fika inyoni, ibizo layo umvemve. Umfazi wa lima, wa buya, wa y'ekaya. Kwa ti kusasa wa buya wa ya futi ukuya 'kulima. Kwa ti indima e be i lime izolo, ka bi sa i bona; wa fika, se ku njengotshani nje. Wa ti, 'Indima e ngi lime izolo i pi na?' e kuluma yedwa. Wa pinda wa lima futi, e se pinda okobubili. Kwa ti e sa lima, kw' eza inyoni, ya hlala pezu kwomuti ebusweni bake, ya ti, 'Tshiyo, tshiyo, tshiyo! Umhlaba kababa lo, e ngi ti ng' ala nawo. U b' u ngi pikelele. Zidinjana, mbembe! Bewana, sakasaka! Mpinyana, pokqopokqo! Gejana, ntshi! '

Kwa ti wa ya 'kulima futi; umfazi wa fika; indima e be i lime izolo, futi e nga sa i boni; so ku njengaloku be ku njalo: ngokuba izidinjana za ti mbembe; nembeu ya ti sakasaka; nompini wa puka; negejo la ti ntshi. Wa pinda wa lima futi. Ya fika inyoni, ya ti, 'Tshiyo, tshiyo, tshiyo! Umhlaba kababa lo, e ngi ti ng' ala nawo. U b' u ngi pikelele. Zidinjana, mbembe! Bewana, sakasaka! Mpinyana, pokqopokqo! Gejana, ntshi! ' Kwa se ku ba njengokutsho kwayo. Izidinjana za ti mbembe; nembeu ya ti sakasaka; nompini wa puka; negejo la ti ntshi.

Wa buya futi umfazi ukuya ekaya, wa ya 'kutshela indoda yake; wa ti kuyo, ' i kona inyoni e ngi ti lapa ngi lamayo, i fike, i ti kwimi, 'Umhlaba kababa lo, e ngi ting' ala nawo. U b' u ngi pikelele. Zidinjana, mbembe! Bewana, sakasaka! Mpinyana, pokqopokqo! Gejana, ntshi! " Se ku njengokutsho kwayo. '

Kwa ti kusasa kwa puma umfazi kukqala wa ya 'kulima, se be koebe ikcebo lokuti, 'Uma se ngi lima, wo fika, wena ndoda, u ze 'kubona oku tshiwoyo inyoni.' Ya landela indoda, ya hlala eduze nomfazi, ya kcatsha. Kwa ti umfazi e lima, ya fika inyoni futi ya pinda ya tsho njalo. Indoda ya se i zwa, ya vumbuluka pantsi, ya pakama, ya i bona inyoni e kulumayo: ya i sukela, ya i kxotsha; ya baleka inyoni, nendoda nayo futi. Inyoni ya tshona ngalukalo, indoda ya tshona ngalukalo futi; ya i kxotsha njalo; ya za ya dinwa inyoni; ya i bamba. Ya ti inyoni, 'A k' u ngi yeke; ngi za 'ku kw enzela umlanzana.' Indoda ya ti, 'Ake w enze ke, ngi bone.' Y' enza, ya kam' umlaza, ya ti khla. Ya puza indoda. Ya ti futi, 'Ake w enz' insangqondwane.' Ya ti puhlu, puhlu, puhlu. Ya dhla indoda, y' esuta, loku kad' i lambile; i jabula, ya ti, i tole inkomo. Ya hamba nayo, ya fika endhlini kwayo, ya i faka embizeni, ya i nameka, ukuba abantwana nomfazi wayo ba

nga i boni, ku be isisulu sayo yodwa;  
ngokuba ya ku zuza yodwa.

Kwa ti umfazi wa ya 'kulima, nendoda ya ya 'kulima; ba buya bobabili futi; indoda ya fika, kwa hlwa; ba lala bonke; yona kodwa a ya ze ya lala: ya ya embizeni, ya zibukula. Wa fika, inyoni i s' i te kcoka pezulu: wa i bamba ngesandhla; wa ka amasi, wa kela esitsheni sake; wa buya, wa i faka embizeni, wa i nameka. Wa dhla amasi yedwa, se be lele bonke abantwana nonina.

Kwa ti kusasa indoda y' emuka, ya ya 'kugaula izibonda; umfazi wayo wa ya 'kulima; kwa sala abantwana bodwa. Kanti omunye umntwana u m bonile uyise e dhla amasi yedwa, wa ba tshela abanye kusasa, wa ti, 'Ngi m bonile ubaba; ku kona e be ku dhla kusihlwa, se si lele sonke; u zibukule embizeni; nga bona e ka amasi kona; nga tula nje, nga ti, i kona e ya 'kuti a nga hamba a ye kude, si sale, si wa dhle amazi, loku e si ncitshayo.' Ba sala, ba ya 'kuzibukula embizeni; ba i fumana inyoni i s' i te kooka pezula kwamasi; ba i bamba; ba dhla, ba dhla, ba dhla, ba dhla, ba za b' esuta. Ba sibekela futi. Wa ti nyise, ' Banta bami, ni dhle ni na, ni suti kangaka nje na?' Ba ti, ' A si suti 'luto,' be m kohlisa.

Kwa hlwa indoda y' enza njalo futi, se be lele bonke futi. Kanti omunye u ba tshelile ikcebo, ukuba ba za ba nga lali, ba ke ba bheke ukuba uyise wabo u ya 'kwenza njani na. Lapa se be lele bonke, y' enza njalo ke indoda; ya zibukulu, ya dhla, ya dhla; ya buya, ya sibekela. Kanti se be m bonile abantwana bake, ukuba u ya ba ncitsha ukudhla. Ba ti, 'Ku ya 'kusa kusasa, si ya 'kubona ukuba ka yi 'kumuka ini na.'

Kwa ti kusasa y' emuka indoda. Ba ya ba zibukula; ba fika, inyoni i s' i te kooka pezulu; ba i susa; ba dhla, ba dhla. Wa ti o i peteyo ya m punyuka, ya baleka, ya ti dri; ya hlala emnyango. Omunye umntwana, Udemazane ibizo lake, wa ti, 'Demane, nansi inyoni kababa i muka bo! ' Udemane wa ti, ' Ake w enze kahle, mnta kababa, ngi sa funda 'mtanyana. ' Y' esuka inyoni emnyango, ya ti dri; ya hlala pandhle ebaleni. Wa ti Udemazane futi, ' Demane, nansi inyoni kababa i muka bo!' Wa ti Udemane, ' Ake w enze kahle, mnta kababa, ngi sa funda 'mtanyana.' Y' esuka inyoni ebaleni, ya ti dri; ya hlala pezu kwotango. Wa pinda wa tsho njalo Udemazane. Inyoni ya ze ya ndiza, ya hamba, y' emuka. Kwa ku pela.

Wa buya uyise. Kwa ti kusihlwa, e ti u se za 'kutola isisulu sake, ka be sa i bona inyoni, amasi futi e nga se nga nani. Wa mangala, wa biza abantwana bake, wa ti,

'Ku pi o be ku lapa embizeni na?' Ba ti abantwana, 'A si kw azi.' Omunye wa ti 'Kqabo! Ba ya ku kohlisa, baba. Inyoni yako ba i yekile; y' emuka; namasi futi si wa dhlile.' Wa ba tshaya kakulu, e mangalele isisulu sake, e ti u se za 'kufa indhlala. Kwa so ku ba 'kupela ke.

(Callaway, H. Zulu Nursery Tales ...)

This folk-tale is essentially the story of the fruitlessness of one woman labouring alone in her field in a time of famine and dearth. There is a little bird which undoes all her work, but through the utilization of that bird, much food is to be had. For early nineteenth century Nguniland that little bird was war and the army. Increased militarism drew off labour from the homestead to the detriment of production on a local level, but it replaced it with surplus production on a national level. Consequently, control of the little bird was a crucial issue.



## 1. POPULATION AND LABOUR DISTRIBUTION

In attempting to account for the emergence of the Zulu kingdom, students of Northern Nguni history have generally had recourse to a thesis of rapid population expansion. They argue, and more often, assume that central to the transformations taking place in the Thukele-Phongola region in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, was a problem of over-population.<sup>(1)</sup> Gluckman<sup>(2)</sup> suggested that the population level had grown above that which the environment could sustain, under prevalent socio-political conditions. Thus a dynamic for change was generated, providing the essential impetus towards state formation. In such terms, the state was understood to be a form of rationalizing access to, and exploitation of, available resources, and also of extending production to incorporate new forms.

The thesis of over-population received the most validation from the ecological and geographical analyses undertaken by Guy,<sup>(3)</sup> Acocks,<sup>(4)</sup> Webb<sup>(5)</sup> and Daniel,<sup>(6)</sup> and the dendroclimatological findings of Martin Hall.<sup>(7)</sup> Using climatic information derived from dated growth layers of an exceptionally old tree-trunk from the Kar-kloof area, Hall has argued that from the mid-18th century, a persistent amelioration in the rainfall regime meant that the low points of the normal cycles, viz. 1755 and 1774 were less acute than for the preceding rainfall cycles. This suggested that the population would have increased in response to the consistently improved conditions. Immediately after the very wet period 1787-1789, a sharp decline in rainfall culminated in the droughts of the early 19th century. These resulted in the Mdhlatlule famine, since the population had been allowed, over the previous fifty years, to expand beyond the numbers that could be supported by the environment under adverse conditions.<sup>(8)</sup> Guy's ecological analyses of Zululand indicate that the physical environment of the region was particularly well-suited to the needs of stock-keeping cultivators, but that by the turn of the century, the physical resources were breaking down under existing systems of exploitation - a consequence of factors such as over-population, overgrazing and the resultant irreversible soil erosion.<sup>(9)</sup> He argued further that it was the all-important sweetveld that was particularly vulnerable

to such depredations. Shortage of land and a decrease in palatable pasture served to aggravate population pressure and led to widespread environmental degeneration.<sup>(10)</sup>

This ecological crisis, understood within the context of Acocks' analysis of the various veld types, and Daniel's illuminating geographical survey of the area, led Guy to conclude that state formation was the result of a need to assume political control over larger and more varied areas of land, particularly the more desirable regions identified by Daniel,<sup>(11)</sup> as well as a need to extend resources through raiding. The conflicts thus generated would have placed emphasis on military strength and organization, which was ultimately best realised through the state.

This approach indicates the demand in early Northern Nguni history for the utilization of sources not conventionally regarded as historical material. Furthermore, it should be noted that this argument is a particularly good example of an attempt to gain insight into the forces at play within a specific framework, through the correlation of a number of hypotheses, which together appear to constitute a picture of the Zulu state. This kind of evidence determined by the degree of correlation is by no means conclusive, and it may be that if the same pieces of the jigsaw were put together in a different way, working on a different determining principle, an entirely new picture would emerge.

Guy argues that ecological degeneration was a consequence of over-population. However, it may equally well have been a result of an inadequate labour supply.<sup>(12)</sup> The intrusion of unpalatable pastures could well have been caused by undergrazing rather than overgrazing.<sup>(13)</sup> Competition for prime areas could just as easily have been generated by a labour problem as by a crisis of over-population, for these areas, such as the Pongola corn-fields, demanded less labour investment than more marginal lands. Furthermore, as Guy himself puts it, the excellent Zululand pasturage was above all, a result of hand and hoe.<sup>(14)</sup> It demanded the constant clearing of lands, not merely for field and kraal sites, but also to contain the tsetse-fly. Similarly the game population had to be closely controlled.<sup>(15)</sup> Thus it appears that the Northern Nguni economy depended, above all, on an intensive labour investment. With escalating ecological degeneration, the amount of labour essential to maintain the same level of production achieved under favourable conditions, would

have increased. Consequently a need to rationalize labour processes would have emerged, which together with the demand and competition for the most fertile areas (i.e. those requiring less labour investment) contributed to the dynamic towards state formation, and the development of the amabutho.

Hedges draws attention to the emphasis placed on the manuring of fields, by allowing cattle to graze in harvested fields and through the placing of fields on old kraal sites.<sup>(16)</sup> Furthermore he indicates that as soon as the soil declined in productivity, field sites were shifted. These features not only suggest labour-intensive farming but also an abundance of land not consistent with the notion of over-population, nor with the cultivation of marginal lands, (which has been suggested as the consequence of over-population, and chief cause of the Mhadlatule famine following a period of sustained drought.<sup>(17)</sup>)

It appears that in fact large tracts of land remained empty even during periods of excellent rainfall. The testimonies of Ndukwana and John Kumalo<sup>(18)</sup> agreed that in the early nineteenth century, land was widely available, and could be obtained by 'small men', without even having to khonza for it. They further stated that a man could place his gardens anywhere and headmen seldom needed to set boundaries or allocate ground. Under Dingiswayo there was no attempt to enlarge the area of the kingdom through conquest or incorporation, and when this did happen under Shaka, large tracts of land, notably in Natal were empty.<sup>(19)</sup> Thus a land shortage seems unlikely.<sup>(20)</sup>

Precise demographic evidence for such an early period is well-nigh impossible to establish. Contemporary reports for the period and the area are infrequent, and where they are obtainable, the references to the availability of land and the size of the population are at best vague and imprecise. Furthermore, since the first Europeans, particularly shipwrecked mariners journeying to or from the East, did not anticipate finding thriving communities in 'deepest' Africa, they were constantly surprized at the evidence of life encountered, as well as the degree of political activity and economic prosperity. They frequently found areas to be 'well-populated'. They did not further specify what was meant, and their estimations should be seen as relative

to their preconceptions of Africa. Where historians have been rigorous in their approach to this material, as is Hedges in distinguishing between references to coastal and inland areas, they have nonetheless accepted the estimations made by shipwreck survivors. Furthermore they have tended to be arbitrary in their selection of evidence.

The Perestrello account, widely cited by Hedges, is the narrative of the wreck of the St. Benedict which occurred in 1554 at  $30^{\circ}$  latitude. <sup>(21)</sup> Hedges stresses that four days' walk north of the shipwreck, the survivors 'learnt that the country was thickly populated and provided with cattle'. <sup>(22)</sup> Not only is the reference characteristically unspecific, but it is also incomplete. Hedges neglects to say that for the next three to four days, the area through which the party travelled was absolutely empty. <sup>(23)</sup> Two slaves from an earlier shipwreck <sup>(24)</sup> refused to join their expedition because of the deprivation further north. At  $28\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$  they saw no-one with whom to trade, and eventually on locating a village, found it too poor to barter. Finally, a couple days still further north, they came upon two villages where they were able to buy three goats, but no beef, and even then the price was very high. The reluctance of the local inhabitants to trade, that characterized the whole of their journey, suggests that a very limited surplus was being produced. This together with the descriptions of the barren lands, is hardly continuous with the vision of perfect conditions postulated by the expanding population theories, particularly considering that, according to Hall's climatic cycles, <sup>(25)</sup> it was a period of good rainfall.

The narrative of the wreck of the 'Great Galleon St. John', two years earlier and only one degree further south, suggests that the countryside was sparsely populated. Members who set out to look for provisions 'walked for two days, finding no living human being and only a few deserted straw huts.' <sup>(26)</sup>

This appeared to be the case on the coast as well as inland. The accounts of Perestrello, Dampier <sup>(27)</sup> and the Stavinesse <sup>(28)</sup> over the next two centuries all referred to a super-abundance of game, not normally compatible with a high population density. All experienced problems obtaining produce, and mention meeting local inhabitants infrequently, relative to the distances travelled over.

Contrary to the conclusion reached by Hedges, the records of the shipwrecked parties suggest that the area was neither densely populated, nor were available resources widely utilized. They clearly do indicate that substantial areas of land were empty, and that those areas under cultivation did not yield large surpluses, exchangeable for prestige items such as metals.

Finally the case for the over-population of Northern Nguniland rests on the hypothesis that the amabutho system functioned to restrict reproduction.<sup>(29)</sup> It has been argued that among other functions, the amabutho limited the fertile period of a marriage by delaying the jutshwaing of men, from the regiments, until the age of about forty, when at last they would don the head-ring. However, the regiments were frequently ordered to marry into a female amabutho of a much younger age.<sup>(30)</sup> This meant that in practice, the fertile period of the marriage was not limited, for women still had the same opportunity to fall pregnant, although in their later years, perhaps not by their husbands. Considering that marriage was by royal command and not a matter of personal choice, adultery was not only more likely, but also widely condoned.<sup>(31)</sup>

'When the Mkosi was held annually... the women would dress up but the men would be practically nude. After the ceremony when making homewards the men would lie with one another's women. It was the custom to do this.'<sup>(32)</sup>

This is further borne out by early lobola laws and customs, whereby if a woman deserted her husband for a lover, the husband frequently did not reclaim his lobola, report the matter, or in any way cause a furore, but was content instead to receive the children of all future liaisons made by his wife.<sup>(33)</sup> This custom suggests that within marriage the emphasis lay on the children, and that the preference and law was for, rather than against, reproduction and any other means of adding to their numbers. The implication was that lobola was paid not merely for the woman, and her labour power, but even more for her potential as a reproducer of labour.

Thus if a marriage were to prove barren, the bride could be returned and the lobola reclaimed although the man had had use of the woman's labour.<sup>(34)</sup> Similarly, when a man died his wife would remain in his homestead and form an ukugena union with his brother, so

as to 'raise up seed to the deceased',<sup>(35)</sup> The woman's labour was thus retained as was that of her children, and of any future children. If however, she remarried out of her deceased husband's household for some reason, her children still belonged to the estate of the deceased husband;<sup>(36)</sup> Usually widows who did not remarry at all belonged to the state which was thus able to appropriate their labour.<sup>(37)</sup>

The etula system,<sup>(38)</sup> by which lobola cattle could be borrowed from an induna against the first female issue of the proposed marriage, was obviously based on the premise that not only was the expected lobola of the etula'd daughter an investment for the future, but that her labour power was an important form of interest, making the loan attractive to the induna. This is affirmed by the fact that the female child was surrendered by the mother as soon as she was capable of performing more labour than was demanded by her care and upkeep. This was usually at about six years, since small children in early Nguni society were required to begin working at an early age. Small girls emptied urine-pots and scrubbed floors,<sup>(39)</sup> while young boys herded goats and tended poultry.<sup>(40)</sup>

The emphasis on the labour power of children and women, and the latter's role as reproducers of labour was not confined to marriage customs. Relief parties looking for survivors from shipwrecks seldom had any success locating women, who were hidden by the local inhabitants and kept as menials.<sup>(41)</sup> Furthermore, the Nguni frequently sought wives amongst the San (as well as employing San men as herders) for whom they paid little or no lobola.<sup>(42)</sup> This kind of incorporation is not consistent with a problem of over-population. Women and children were never slaughtered in battle but incorporated by the conquerors.<sup>(43)</sup> Shaka appears to have broken this unwritten law in his Mpondo campaign, but it must be noted that he only slew the women and children of a clan and its allies which had renounced his control, and incorporation into the Zulu nation.<sup>(44)</sup> In the campaign against the Tembu, the Zulu army took great risks to capture the Tembu women and beasts.<sup>(45)</sup> Furthermore, every insizwa was entitled to take captives in war. The boys thus taken, could be ransomed by their fathers, but the girls had to remain with their captors.<sup>(46)</sup>

These captives were known as 'aba sihlengu' and were spoken of as the man's children, and treated as such. Isigqila girls were taken by izindunas in the vicinity of a kraal being destroyed by the central authorities. At first they performed menial tasks, but once married, these girls lost their position of inferiority. (47)

This emphasis on the labour power of women and children was not only demonstrated within the amabutho institution through the taking of captives. Through its raiding and tribute-exaction functions, the amabutho system facilitated an accumulation of cattle that would have otherwise been impossible for a single man, considering the cattle-hungry trade with Delagoa Bay, the ecological crisis, and the dearth of labour, which meant a limitation of the amount of surplus labour which could be released as cattle.

Furthermore, under Shaka the lobola rate was lowered and fixed at between one and three beasts, (48) which were frequently obtainable through the state authorities. (49) A preference was developed for lobola with oxen since they were in no way a drain on basic production, as were goats or cows. (50) Thus the amabutho system and the Shakan state functioned to facilitate marriage rather than to inhibit it. The assembling of women from different areas into the female amabutho and the izigodlo encouraged meetings between men and women of different izibongo, essential to exagamous marriage. Previously this difficulty could only be overcome through the ujuba. (51) Thus every man was sure to wife, and seldom only once.

The amabutho were a form of rationalized labour, not only because they extended the period of cadetship to the state and hence the appropriation of the young men's labour, but they also functioned to overcome barriers of sex differentiation, by introducing the men into the fields, (52) a traditionally feminine preserve. The izinsizwa tended the crops of the amakanda, gathered building materials, and erected and repaired huts and fences. (53)

The udibi, the most junior cadets frequently performed the domestic duties usually assigned to women. On arriving at an ikanda, they had to sweep out the hut, smear it with ubulongwe, fetch water and collect firewood. Furthermore, one boy had to work for at least two or three huts since there were seldom enough young boys in a family to act as carriers for the men and to tend the cattle at the homestead. (54) On active campaign, the izinsizwa themselves would do the cooking, since the udibi were not

supposed to intrude onto the battlefield proper,<sup>(55)</sup> It should be noted that in the homesteads, young boys increasingly had to attend to their sister's fields, particularly in guarding the crops against birds and other such hazards.<sup>(56)</sup> Overcoming barriers of sex differentiation thus, would have been crucial in a period of labour shortage in which the greatest labour investment would necessarily have been in the production of grain, at home and at the ikanda.

The withholding of marriage, although not an impediment to reproduction ultimately, would have relieved agricultural labour of the hindrance of pregnancy, child-birth, recuperation, feeding and general infant care. This meant the release of considerable labour for production - a short-term method to alleviate an immediate crisis.

The notion of a labour problem emphasises the central role of agriculture in the Northern Nguni economy, since agriculture was essential to subsistence. A labour problem thus explains the adoption of maize, which in turn further accounts for competition over optimum lands.<sup>(57)</sup> Although maize is less versatile than other cereals, under the right conditions, viz. abundant rain and fertile soil, it does have a higher yield. More importantly, it requires a lower labour investment in that it needs no milling and only simple storage.<sup>(58)</sup> Because of its short growing season, maize can be repeatedly cropped i.e. the same labour force can produce a number of crops in one area in a single season. It also meant that an insizwa could harvest one crop at his ikanda and then when on leave, another at home. The crucial advantage of a number of crops in a single area was the decrease in the amount of clearing of indigenous scrub forest. Furthermore, it should be noted that maize is an important source of the protein zein, crucial in a diet including only a little meat. Sugar-cane was also introduced early in the Shakan reign,<sup>(59)</sup> probably because it too needed no milling, while being rich in glucose and hence an immediate source of energy.<sup>(60)</sup>

The centrality of agriculture, long obscured by Guy-type analyses which focus on cattle-keeping,<sup>(61)</sup> emphasises the role of women as primary producers. Furthermore, it suggests that real power and authority must lie in the control of agriculture and of women -



the primary producers, and reproducers of labour. It is to these issues that the following chapters turn.

FOOTNOTES.Chapter One

- (1) Gluckman, M. 'The Rise of the Zulu Kingdom' in M. Fortes and E. Evans-Pritchard, (eds) African Political Systems; Omer-Cooper, J.D. The Zulu Aftermath; Thompson, L. 'Cooperation and Conflict; the Zulu Kingdom and Natal' in M. Wilson and L. Thompson, (eds) The Oxford History of South Africa; Webb, C. de B. 'Of orthodoxy, heresy, and and Difaqane.' (Unpublished paper, 1974.)  
Also Morris, D.R. The Washing of the Spears; Ritter, E. Shaka Zulu. And more recently and perhaps more selectively rigorous, Hedges, D. Trade and Politics in Southern Mocambique in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, unpubliished Phd. Thesis, University of London, 1978.
- (2) Gluckman, op.cit. Population expansion was seen as a response to the immensely fertile and productive qualities of the Zululand environment, the sustained periods of excellent rainfall and the abundance of rivers, as well as the variety of veld types located within a limited area. Fission and expansion were however, ultimately limited by the presence of the Xhosas, and beyond them, the Cape farmers to the south.
- (3) Guy, J.J. particularly 'Ecological factors in the Rise of Shaka and the Zulu kingdom', unpublished seminar paper (1977) and 'Production and Exchange in the Zulu Kingdom.' (1976)
- (4) Acocks, J. Veld Types .
- (5) Webb, C.de B. op.cit.
- (6) Daniel, J.B. 'A Geographical Study of Pre-Shakan Zululand' in South African Geographical Journal (1973) .
- (7) Hall, M. 'Dendraclimatology, Rainfall and human adaptation in the latter Iron Age of Natal and Zululand.'
- (8) *ibid.*
- (9) Guy; 'Ecological factors...' pp 6,7.
- (10) *ibid.*
- (11) Daniels, op.cit. pp.28-31. It was particularly important to control the transitional veld type in association with an adequate water supply and alluvial soils. One of the major areas of conflict was the so-called 'Pongola cornfields'.
- (12) This idea was first suggested by Slater, Transitions in the Political Economy of South-East Africa before 1840 unpublished D. Phil. thesis, University of Sussex (1976).
- (13) Guy, op.cit. pp 6-8.
- (14) *ibid.* pg 3. Acocks, op.cit. argues that Zululand was basically an area of forest and scrub-forest held back only by man's activity. Regular burning particularly, favoured the grass understorey.

- (15) Hedges, o.cit. chap.II .
- (16) ibid.
- (17) Hall, op. cit.
- (18) KCL S.P. file 59, nbk.34
- (19) Bird, Annals of Natal vol I, pg 192, Fynn says, 'Chaka's country appears very thinly populated - 50000 souls, fourteen of which might be fighting men at a push, from the whole population of the large territory he is possessed of.'  
KCL, S.P. file 61, nbk.44, evidence of Mmemi.  
 Webb and Wright, Jame Stuart Archive, vol.2, pg.16 , evidence of Mabonsa and Paul Ngwenya, that the area around Newcastle was also empty.
- (20) The late 18th and early 19th century Northern Nguniland, appears to have been characterized by unusually large kraals, suggesting that more people were needed to cultivate the same amount of land, as well as that security and military strength were to be found in unity.  
KCL, S.P. file 58, nbk.24, evidence of Nduna and Socwatsha; file 60, nbk.3, evidence of Nqobo and Mavela.
- (21) Theal, G. Records of South-East Africa, Vol.1 'Narrative of the Wreck of the Ship St. Benedict' by Perestrello.
- (22) ibid. pg. 235 .
- (23) ibid. pp. 235-245 .
- (24) The party of Manuel de Sousa .
- (25) Hall, M. op.cit.
- (26) Theal, G. op.cit. pg.185. 'Narrative of the Wreck of the Great Galleon St. John'.
- (27) Bird, Annals of Natal vol.I. pg. 57.
- (28) ibid. pg.31.
- (29) Guy, J. op.cit. pg.14.
- (30) Webb and Wright, op.cit. vol.1, pg.317, evidence of Lunguza. 'Girls jutshwa'd to a particular regiment might go to a man older than the lisenced regiment.'
- (31) Bryant, A.T. The Zulu People pp 578,9.
- (32) KCL, S.P. file 57, nbk. 2, evidence of Mqaikana ka Yenge.
- (33) KCL, S.P. file 59, nbk.34, evidence of Ndukwana and John Kumalo.  
Z.A, Report of Resident Magistrate Knight, on Divorce customs.
- (34) Z.A, Report of Resident Magistrate G. Hignett, of Umlalazi area.

(35) Z.A. Report of Resident Magistrate R.H. Addison of Nqutu.

Z.A. evidence of Mlepa, induna of the chief Siwedu.

Z.A. evidence of Sigonyela, induna to Tshambezwe.

Bryant, A.T. The Zulu People pg. 598.

(36) Z.A. Report by J.Y. Gibson, Resident Magistrate of Nongoma.

Z.A. Report by T. Maxwell, Resident Magistrate of Lower Umfolozi.

Z.A. Report by R.H. Addison, Resident Magistrate of Nqutu.

(37) Slater, H. op.cit. pg. 302.

(38) Z.A. Report by C.R.P. Saunders.

Z.A. Evidence of Foketi ka Mpangezita.

Z.A. Report by A. Phipston, Resident Magistrate of Melmoth.

Z.A. Report of Knight, Resident Magistrate.

Z.A. Report of T. Maxwell, Resident Magistrate of Lower Umfolozi.

Bryant, A.J. The Zulu People, pg. 590.

(39) Webb and Wright (eds) op.cit. vol I, pg. 45, evidence of Baleni.

(40) 'Small girls are also put in charge of amatole if their fathers go to the royal kraal, and little boys collect stones for kraal building.'

KCL, S.P. file 61 nbk, 31, evidence of Ndukwane.

(41) Webb and Wright (eds), op.cit. vol. 1, pg. 62, evidence of Bazley.

(42) Wright, The Bushmen Raiders

(43) This was particularly the case under Dingiswayo but also during the Shakan regime with a limited number of exceptions, notably refugees, whose labour power was about to be lost anyway.

(44) KCL S.P. file 57, nbk.14, evidence of Lugubu.

(45) Bryant, Olden Times in Zululand and Natal, pg. 250.

(46) KCL S.P. file 60, nbk.6, evidence of Mkando.

(47) KCL S.P. file 60, nbk.7, evidence of Mkando.

(48) Z.A. Report of Resident Magistrate T. Maxwell of Lower Umfolozi.

KCL S.P. file 61, nbk.35, evidence of Socwatsha, and Dhlazi who placed the maximum at six oxen. Furthermore the lobola was seldom all paid by the wedding feast.

Z.A. Report of Resident Magistrate J.Y. Gibson of Nongoma.  
Bryant, A.T. The Zulu People pg. 591.

(49) Etula system, see above, pg. 6.

(50) KCL, file 61, nbk 35, evidence of Socwatsha and Dhlazi.

(51) Bryant, The Zulu People pg. 567.

(52) Webb and Wright, op.cit. vol 2, pg. 50, evidence of Madikane;

Bryant, The Zulu People pg. 179, 497.

- (53) Webb and Wright, op.cit. vol I, pg. 9, evidence of Baleni.
- (54) KCL S.P. file 61, nbk. 31, evidence of Ndukwana.
- (55) *ibid.*
- (56) *ibid.*
- (57) See above. pg. 2.
- (58) Hedges, op.cit. chap.II.
- (59) KCL S.P. file 62, nbk.61, evidence of Mkehlengana and Socwatsha.
- (60) Interestingly it appears that the Hlubis were unable to plough mielies at all, and relied on the Mthethwa to supply them. (op.cit.) and this may have been one of the reasons why Bungane sheltered Dingiswayo and fostered his aspiration to the Mthethwa chieftaincy. Bungane was acknowledged as one of the most powerful chiefs and yet he fell under Zulu hegemony with little resistance (Webb and Wright (eds) op.cit. vol 2.pg 14 evidence of Mabela). Possibly this was related to the coastal tribes monopoly of maize production. (KCL S.P. file 62, nbk.61, evidence of Mkehlengane and Socwatsha)
- (61) Particularly Guy, 'Cattle-keeping...'

## 2 STATUS OF WOMEN IN EARLY NGUNI SOCIETY

The analysis of the role of women as primary producers and reproducers of labour, has long been recognised as crucial to the further understanding of early Nguni society. However, it is inadequate to assume that any divergence from the Western ideal necessarily implies a lower status for women, as do many early writers such as A.T. Bryant.

'How strange it is that, among the primitive races, woman obviously as human a being as is man, should, almost all the world over, have become so degraded by him as to be placed on a level hardly higher than that of his prized stock, or worse, that of a mere commercial commodity, a piece of trade-goods.' (1)

Outrage towards the 'sale' of women, through the lobola system, and the supposed concomitant of total subordination of women to men, has imposed severe limitations on the analysis of the importance of agriculture on one hand, and control of agricultural production, notably through the amakanda heads, themselves women, on the other hand.

John Wright in a recent paper on women and production in the Zulu kingdom,<sup>(2)</sup> restates the long-held view of the total subordination of women to men within the household. He argues that this subordination functioned on both a material and an ideological level, which, through the kinship system 'socialised females into accepting a position of inferiority.'<sup>(3)</sup> On the ideological level, he isolates and examines three main factors of male domination; the daily taboos and avoidances which determine the women's existence within the homestead, the exclusion of women from formal decision-making, and their exclusion from important rituals. On the material level, he argues that subordination is a consequence of a rigid differentiation of labour. The two levels overlap in the cattle-kraal - where grain is stored and to which women have limited access. It is in this overlap that Wright locates subordination, for he argues 'that this is how the producers are separated from the product of their labour and that men are able to control the extraction of surplus labour. Thus the basic premise of Wright's argument is that the driving force of the Zulu social formation was the surplus created by labour within the homestead,

controlled and extracted by the homestead head.

A major problem with Wright's paper is the use of sources such as A.T. Bryant,<sup>(4)</sup> which assume that merely because polygamy is at variance with the Western ideal, it must necessarily involve total subjugation and submission. Wright argues that from a tender age, children are taught 'to behave with restraint, combined with a certain amount of fear'<sup>(5)</sup> towards their fathers, thus implying that although children may be closer to their mothers, they accord them less respect. What Wright ignores is that the respect of all Zulu men towards their mothers and mothers-in-law is widely noted, from giving way to them in doorways, to seeking their advice in matters of importance, including the declaration of war.<sup>(6)</sup> Furthermore, sons and their mothers are an acknowledged political combination working closely to their mutual benefit.<sup>(7)</sup> Two notable such couples were Zwide and Ntombaze, and of course, Shaka and Nandi.<sup>(8)</sup> Not only is the primary importance of the mother in the family ignored, but in stressing the intricate hlonipha that a new wife must observe, and her initial subjection to the authority of her mother-in-law, an erroneous picture of a very harassed, lonely slave-wife is created.

Instead it should be noted that the wife became independent of her mother-in-law's authority immediately after the birth of her first child, a delay not necessarily as long as nine months. Prior to that, she benefited from the assistance and advice of her mother-in-law in becoming acquainted with the ways of her new home. She retained links with her natal family and returned home frequently to visit.<sup>(9)</sup> As lobolas were often paid over time, her husband remained for a long period in her father's debt,<sup>(10)</sup> and she consequently retained a measure of independence.

Maintaining that sex differentiation is a pre-condition for sex discrimination, Wright then posits a rigid division of labour between males and females, the latter tending to all agricultural production and domestic labour, including child-rearing, the manufacture of household items such as pottery and mats, and the thatching of houses. The men were responsible for all matters concerning livestock, the clearing of land, the building and repairing of houses, and homestead fences, the manufacture of wooden and iron artefacts and the conduct of war.<sup>(11)</sup>

As has already been indicated however, the amabutho in particular, functioned to overcome such barriers of sex differentiation in labour, by introducing men into the fields<sup>(12)</sup> and conversely women into war.<sup>(13)</sup> Domestic labour too, was performed by men within the amakanda, notably by the udibi,<sup>(14)</sup> and the izinceku.<sup>(15)</sup>

Women participated in Shaka's campaign against the Mponde in 1828, notably the Ntshuku, Mcekeceke and Mvutwamim regiments.<sup>(16)</sup>

'They sika'd izihlangu and carried assegais and had to fight when required to do so. Girls were sometimes seen wearing iziqu showing they had killed people.'<sup>(17)</sup>

Likewise Nqeto, having served under the Shakan regime, eventually fled to Pondoland with a small section of Qwabe, with regiments made up of men and women in alternate viyos.<sup>(18)</sup> Women were also known to have worked in iron-forges, particularly amongst the Tuli.<sup>(19)</sup> Thus it seems difficult to seriously uphold the notion of rigid differentiation.

Women held positions of immense authority and prestige, and were frequently drawn into top-level decision making.<sup>(20)</sup> Mnkabayi, a sister of Senzangakoma was accredited with securing Dingane's accession,<sup>(21)</sup> as well as with making the major decisions regarding warfare - another so-called male prerogative and preserve.<sup>(22)</sup>

At the local level, mothers and step-mothers of officials were permitted to attend the ibandhla.<sup>(23)</sup> Not only did women participate in formal decision-making, but they also wielded a great deal of informal influence. The dimension of pressure exerted by women within a household, on their menfolk is described by Denise Paulme, editor of a study of women in tropical Africa.<sup>(24)</sup> Where women are responsible for domestic labour as well as agricultural production, they exert direct and very immediate influence since any sort of 'strike' on their part would disrupt not merely production, but also daily life, particularly felt in the non-preparation of meals<sup>(25)</sup> and the withholding of conjugal rights.<sup>(26)</sup> A household's wives, united against its head, would render the latter helpless, and yet for the head to encourage dissension amongst his wives, would be to adversely affect the production and hence economic well-being of the whole homestead.



Finally Wright argues that the basis of the men's authority lay in their monopoly of the central rituals, particularly those concerning the agricultural cycle. However, he points out himself, that the uNomkululwana was performed by the women,<sup>(27)</sup> invoking the blessing of 'iNkosayana-y-s-e-Zulwini'<sup>(28)</sup> on the fruits of their fields. This ceremony occurred in three parts at different intervals during the growing season and was considered crucial to production. In addition, women featured prominently as raindoctresses, notably Madungudu, daughter of Zwide,<sup>(29)</sup> Women were also commonly the holders of magic charms.<sup>(30)</sup>

Ultimately, Wright argues that on the ideological level, men controlled agriculture through the umkhosi, or annual 'first-fruits' ceremony, which had to be performed locally in every homestead after the king's great umkhosi.<sup>(31)</sup> Firstly, it should be noted that during the regency of Mnkabayi, during Senzangakona's minority,<sup>(32)</sup> she would have officiated over the ceremony, thus illustrating that a woman was not excluded from performing the ceremony by her sex. Mnkabayi, Mmama, Mawa, Nandi, Langazana and Nobenlungu all ruled over amakhanda,<sup>(33)</sup> for as members of the Zulu ruling lineage they shared the ubukosi of the king,<sup>(34)</sup> from which they derived their authority. Thus they had the same access to their ancestors as their male counterparts. Finally, implicit in the tradition recorded by Bryant regarding Nozinja, mother of Zulu and Qwabe, is the fact that as a widow she flourished economically and was able to complete a number of agricultural cycles despite being alone and having no male old enough to conduct the umkhosi for her uJiba fields.<sup>(35)</sup>

Although a household head could delay a harvest through the umkhosi, it was of little practical purpose. To have prevented the harvest altogether would have been self-defeating. It seems, in fact, that very little argument remains for the thesis that Zulu women were socialised into accepting a position of inferiority, at least not on an ideological level.

On the material level, Wright, following Meillassoux,<sup>(36)</sup> argues that men nonetheless retained control of agricultural production (and hence of women) through control of the cattle kraal and matters bovine. Since grain was usually stored in a pit in the cattle kraal, women had limited access to the product of their labour, being

excluded for the duration of their menstruation each month.<sup>(37)</sup> In practice this signifies little, since the period of time involved was almost negligible. It would have been simple for a woman to anticipate her needs for the period involved, and keep sufficient grain in the large store attached to her hut.<sup>(38)</sup> If she needed more than she had stored, another woman could obtain it for her, most probably her co-wife. It is inadequate and misleading to presume as Wright does, that a man's permission would be necessary to gain access to the cattle kraal every time.<sup>(39)</sup> Furthermore, as David Webster has indicated, amongst the Tembu at least, grain was not stored in the cattle kraal at all.<sup>(40)</sup>

Men were responsible for the allocation of gardens to their wives,<sup>(41)</sup> but as a form of control, this like the umkhosi ceremony, could be self-defeating as it was always in the husband's interests that all his wives produced as much as possible, and hence got good, fertile land. At best, he could discriminate against a recalcitrant wife, or delay a new wife in setting-up house. However if she arrived with a substantial dowry,<sup>(42)</sup> umgano<sup>(43)</sup> and imbeko<sup>(44)</sup> beasts, other assets such as a quantity of brass<sup>(45)</sup> and perhaps a retinue,<sup>(46)</sup> the delay would be awkward and relatively ineffective. Once having allocated cattle, the husband was powerless to effect any redistribution.<sup>(47)</sup> Milking, although performed by young boys, was strictly controlled by the women, through their authority over the children. Significantly, milking was done just prior to the main meal, which could be withheld by the women if the milking was in any way unsatisfactory.<sup>(48)</sup> All the milk was taken straight to the hut of the Great Wife, or the mother of the homestead-head, and redistributed there.<sup>(49)</sup> Thus the power to reallocate milch-cows retained by the homestead head amounted to little. Women thus exerted control over all the staple products.

It seems that in fact, male monopolization of animal husbandry did not function to ensure the extraction of surplus labour by the men, and the concomitant subordination of women. In practice, the only real monopoly was that of beef, which was in demand as a trade commodity in Delagoa Bay.<sup>(50)</sup> However, unlike ivory, beef could not be traded in substantial quantities without severely disrupting the homestead economy. Thus the homestead head was unable to derive sufficient advantage from the trade to significantly alter his status vis-a-vis his wives.

Although he could obtain hoes through trade, the control that it gave him over his wives was not continuous, a hoe being a rather enduring item and only occasionally needing to be replaced. Once again it was, in fact, in his interests to facilitate increased production as far as possible. The only way that the men could really and materially ensure the subordination of their womenfolk, was to somehow limit their access to some commodity essential to agricultural production. But to withhold any commodity thus, would have been to seriously affect the production of that man's homestead, and he would limit his own economic prosperity. Hence control over women could not be exerted by the menfolk within their homestead, but had to come from without, viz. a source not directly affected by the production of the homestead containing the woman, or women, brought under control. Thus it is insufficient to argue that in general terms women were subordinate to men in early Northern Nguni society, as does Wright. He further asserts that with the establishment of a powerful state-apparatus under Dingiswayo and Shaka, the position of authority-holders at all levels of command was strengthened, including that of the homestead head vis-a-vis his wives.<sup>(51)</sup> If control was strengthened, then it was at the expense of the homestead as a whole and the abanumzane at one end, and the king at the other,<sup>(52)</sup> through the two sets of state institutions controlling women, viz. the izigodlo and the female amabutho.

Symbolically, the isigodlo occupied the central spot of the settlement,<sup>(53)</sup> and every ikanda contained an isigodlo.<sup>(54)</sup> Thus it is noted in the traditions that Shaka not only had more amakanda than his predecessors, but also many more izigodlo.<sup>(55)</sup> Considering that the ikanda head was also usually in charge of the isigodlo,<sup>(56)</sup> it may be more relevant to analyse the relationship between the isigodlo and the ikanda, than that of the king and the isigodlo.

The conventional view of the isigodlo as a 'harem' has generally been discounted, but the link between the king and the isigodlo is still strongly affirmed.<sup>(57)</sup> Wright argues that the izigodlo were important sources of patronage and domestic labour for the king. However it seems that the king had little personal authority within the isigodlo,<sup>(58)</sup> and that the izigodlo were frequently harbours of intrigue against the king.<sup>(59)</sup>

Furthermore the king could only reside in one isigodlo at a time, and the produce of a single isigodlo would have been sufficient for his entire retinue and his guests. Thus it seems probable that the izigodlo provided domestic and agricultural labour for the amakanda rather than for the king.<sup>(60)</sup>

It has been argued that the amakanda received agricultural supplies from the families of the warriors of each ibutho, carried to the ikanda by their sisters. This is unlikely since the amabutho were age-sets incorporating men of widely differing localities, not necessarily close to their military quarters.<sup>(61)</sup> Furthermore, it would have been both difficult and hazardous for young girls to have undertaken long journeys alone in early 19th century Nguniland. The terrain was broken by interminable, wide rivers that were not only difficult to cross, but which entailed continual ascent and descent. The countryside was full of refugees and vagrants, and often cannibals, a consequence of the ravages of war. In addition, the labour power of the girls was crucial to the continued existence of the homestead, already debilitated by the departure of all the young men over fourteen, some of who were udibi, others had gone to kleza, and the eldest to butwa. The homestead had probably already given one or more of its daughters into the izigodlo and could not spare the remaining girls for long periods, and at great risk.

Membership of an isigodlo ensured that the woman would marry with a good dowry,<sup>(62)</sup> which would have been difficult for the homestead to supply in a time of ecological degeneration. Furthermore the woman gained in status<sup>(63)</sup> as a result, a form of upward mobility not possible within the kinship system alone. In addition the izigodlo girls were often assured of re-employment by the state once beyond child-bearing age.<sup>(64)</sup> Sometimes the girls entered the izigodlo in exchange for hoes for the homestead.<sup>(65)</sup> The state also appeared able to tatwa girls whenever and wherever they were needed to fill the izigodlo<sup>(66)</sup> or else could oblige men to give up their daughters as a form of tribute.<sup>(67)</sup>

A certain amount of disagreement exists as to the functions of the female amabutho. Wright argues that their activities were largely ceremonial, and that their chief function was as a source of wives.<sup>(68)</sup> This is somewhat at variance with Slater's view of the amabutho

as a further form of rationalization of agricultural labour by the state.<sup>(69)</sup> Both ignore the military role of the female amabutho discussed earlier. It appears that they did not reside permanently at the amakanda but could be called up when needed, as in the Mpondo campaign.<sup>(70)</sup> Thus the framework existed for the state to draw off labour from the homesteads to be reapplied in a more rational form for the benefit of the state as a whole.

NB  
 Through the izigodlo and female amabutho, the state rather than the abanumzane controlled marriage, and hence the reproduction of labour. Since the lobola of an isigodlo girl was high and often paid over a protracted period, the men released to thunga remained in the debt of the izigodlo head for a substantial period after being released from their dependence on isigodlo agricultural production.

FOOTNOTES

- (1) Bryant, The Zulu People, pg. 586.
- (2) Wright, J. 'Women and Production in the Zulu Kingdom', paper presented to the workshop on the history of pre-colonial Nguni societies, Rhodes University (1979).
- (3) *ibid.* pg. 3.
- (4) Bryant, *op.cit.* Also Olden Times in Zululand and Natal, and Zulu-English Dictionary.
- (5) Wright, *op.cit.* pg. 4.
- (6) KCL, S.P. file 60, nbk. 30, evidence of Mgidhlana.
- (7) For a more detailed analysis of the mother-son political combination in Africa, see Paulme, D. (ed) Women in Tropical Africa.
- (8) The relationship between these two pairs is strongly emphasised in the izibongo, particularly that of Shaka, in which the conflict between the Ndwandwe and the Zulu is described as:  
     'Eyakwa Ntombazi neyakwaNandi;  
     Yayikhiph' eshoba libomvu,  
     IKhishwa elimhlophe lakwa Nandi.'  
 (taken from Cope, T. (ed) Izibongo)
- (9) The first visit home was a month or so after the wedding 'to get shaven (ukuPuca) around the top-knot. Soon after this, the various restrictions were lifted one by one, and she began to accumulate stock for her household. Bryant, Zulu People, pg. 559.
- (10) Bryant, *op.cit.* pp. 590, 595.  
Z.A., report of J.Y. Gibson, Resident Magistrate of Nongoma.
- (11) Wright, *op.cit.* pg 1.
- (12) Bryant, *op.cit.* pp. 179, 509.  
KCL, S.P. file 60, nbk. 29, evidence of Madikane and Ndukwana.
- (13) NPA, papers of J.W. Shepstone, vol. 8.
- (14) See chapter one, pg 7.
- (15) The izinceku accompanied the isigodlo girls to the fields, carried food prepared by them to the amabutho, and seem most frequently identified by their activities as the smearers of dung on hut floors. They were also employed as personal attendants. Webb and Wright, *op.cit.* vol I. pp 45-48, evidence of Baleni; pg. 101, evidence of Dinya.

- KCL, S.P. file 62, nbk. 83, evidence of Ngidi.
- (16) KCL, S.P. file 61, nbk. 47, evidence of Ngidi.
- (17) KCL, S.P. file 61, nbk. 39, evidence of Ngidi.
- (18) KCL, S.P. file 61, nbk. 41, evidence of Mbovu.
- (19) KCL, S.P. file 61, nbk. 59, evidence of Mkontano.
- (20) See below, pg 21.
- (21) See below, pg 22.
- (22) See below, pg 18.
- (23) 'The mother of a household was considered to have the same importance as a man, and if she was dead, her place (in the ibandhla) would be taken by a step-mother' KCL, S.P. file 60, nbk.30, evidence of Mgidhlana; file 61, nbk.43, evidence of Mmemi.
- (24) Paulme, D. (ed) Women in Tropical Africa.
- (25) This type of pressure is more closely analysed by Paulme in the introduction to Women in Tropical Africa.
- (26) Z.A, report of C.R.P. Saunders.
- (27) Wright, op.cit. pg. 8.
- (28) Bryant, op.cit. pg. 665.
- (29) Bryant, Olden Times in Zululand and Natal, pg. 162. For raindoctresses, also see Werner, A. 'The Evolution of Agriculture', (NPA Colenso pamphlets, C1283,) for the Rev. H. Rawley's striking account of the 'Manganja' rain charm ritual, performed by the chief's sister. Also Webb and Wright op.cit. vol I, pg 69, evidence of Bikwayo and Ndukwana.
- (30) Bryant, op.cit. pg. 56.
- (31) Hedges, op.cit. chapter three.  
Bryant, Zulu People pp. 511-515.
- (32) Webb and Wright, (eds) op.cit. vol II, pg. 47, evidence of Madikane and Ndukwana.  
Bryant, Olden Times in Zululand and Natal pg. 41.
- (33) See chapter three.
- (34) Hedges, op.cit. chapter three.
- (35) Bryant, op.cit. pg. 19.
- (36) Meillasoux, C. Femmes, Greniers et Capitaux, also 'The social organization of the peasantry: the economic basis of kinship', Journal of Peasant Studies, vol. 1, (1973).
- (37) Wright, op.cit. pg. 9; Bryant, Zulu People, pg. 303.
- (38) Bryant, op.cit. pp. 414-415.
- (39) Wright, op.cit. pg. 9.

- (40) Bryant, Zulu People, pg.302, points out that the Zulu stored their grain in baskets.
- (41) Bryant, op.cit. pg.414-415.
- (42) Z.A. report of J. Knight. The various resident magistrates suggested that lobola rates for the daughters of izinduna were high because, as men of prestige and wealth they gave good dowries to ensure their daughter's status in the new household. Callaway, H. Nursery Tales and Traditions and History of the Zulu, 1868, pg.321, also refers to a dowry.
- (43) Doke and Vilakazi, Dictionary pg.231.
- (44) Bryant, op.cit. pg.547.
- (45) Webb and Wright, op.cit. vol. II, pg.7, evidence of Mabola, vol. I, pg.150, evidence of Giba and Mnkonkoni,
- (46) Webb and Wright, op.cit. vol. II, pg 7. evidence Mabola.
- (47) Wright, op.cit. pg.8.
- (48) Bryant, op.cit. pg.180.
- (49) Wright, op.cit. pg. 8 .
- (50) See below, pg. 36.
- (51) Wright, op.cit. pg.10. Wright maintains that the household survived as a viable production unit during the Shakan era. Thus he is inclined to see the state as strengthening ties of the existing kinship system, rather than debilitating it, by drawing off all possible labour, as does this paper. The basic issue that this revealed, is whether the military expanded at the expense of the kinship system.
- (52) See chapter five.
- (53) KCL, S.P. file 61, nbk. 39, evidence of Ngidi.
- (54) ibid. Also Bryant, op.cit. pg.497.
- (55) KCL, S.P. file 61, nbk. 39, evidence of Ngidi.
- (56) See chapter three.
- (57) Wright, op.cit. pg 10.
- (58) Webb and Wright, op.cit. vol. I, pg.83, evidence of Miss Colenso.
- (59) Nandi, for example, was supposed to have hid a 'son' of Shaka's in the isigodlo. Webb and Wright, op.cit. vol. I, pg.311, evidence of Lunguza,
- (60) Gardiner refers to the izigodlo girls weeding 'imphi grounds'. Gardiner, A. Narrative of a Journey into the Zoolu Country in South Africa, pg.40.



- (61) This was a deliberate policy to facilitate the incorporation of the conquered, and to diffuse local clan loyalty. For example, Nombanga of the Cele (Webb and Wright (eds) op.cit. vol II, pg.71) joined the Fasimba regiment under Mapangazita, which was stationed near the Malakata, in the old lands of the Sithole (vol.I, pg.301). Mpangazita himself, was an Ndwandwe (vol II; pg 237) Hence, they were both stationed far from their homes.
- (62) See above, footnote (42).
- (63) Their lobola price was very high, and men had to treat them with respect.  
KCL, S.P. file 60, nbk. 5, evidence of Mkando.
- (64) KCL, S.P. file 59, nbk. 34, evidence of John Khumalo and Ndukwana.
- (65) Gibson, J.V. The Story of the Zulus, pg 31.
- (66) KCL, S.P. file 60, nbk. 5, evidence of Mkando.
- (67) *ibid.*
- (68) Wright, op.cit. pg. 10.
- (69), Slater, H. 'Transitions in the political economy of south-east Africa before 1840', unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of Sussex, 1976, pp 302, 308.
- (70) KCL, S.P. file 61, nbk. 47, evidence of Ngidi.

3 THE AMAKANDA AMAKHOSIKAZI

Mnkabayika Jama, and hence paternal aunt to Shaka and Dingane, was perhaps the most prominent and powerful ikanda head ever. Her praise poem suggests that she wielded great power, and was personally responsible for the destruction of many personages and peoples. She was known to be a cunning plotter, 'the father of guile'.<sup>(1)</sup> She was also known to advance people according to ability, and to protect those she favoured.

'USoqili !

Iqili lakwatloshoza,  
 Elidl' umuntu limyenga ngendaba;  
 Lidl' uBhedu ngasezinyangeni  
 Ladl' uBheje ngasezanuseni.  
 UBuku lukaMenzi,  
 Olubamb' abantu lwabernela;  
 Ngibone ngoNohela kaMlilo, umlil' ovuth inaba zonke,  
 Ngoba lumbambe wanyamalala.  
 Inkom' ekhal' eSangoyana,  
 Yakhal' umlomo wayo wabhoboz' izulu,  
 Iye yezwiwa nguGwabalanda,  
 Ezalwa ngu Mndaba kwaKhumalo. ...

...UMthobela-bantu izinyoni,  
 Bayazimbamba usezibu ka ngamehlo  
 UVula-bangene-ngawo-onk'-amasanga,  
 Abanikazimuzi bangene ngezuntuba. ...' (2)

The poem refers in two places to the Zulu ancestors from whom Mnkabayi drew her authority. This ideological emphasis was a key feature of the ikanda-heads control over the izinduna of her ikanda. Propitiation of ancestral spirits was crucial to the successful pursuit of war, and war was increasingly becoming a way of life. 'The only ancestral clan gods (amakosi) that mattered now, since the foundation of the Zulu "nation", were those of the Zulu clan...'<sup>(3)</sup> First, the regiments were doctored by the medicines of Nonduma, or his successor 'Mqalane. Then they headed for the Qonqato ridge, to the graves of the Zulu kings, where they offered prayers and izibongo. From thence, they proceeded to an even older emakosini where Mnkabayi had erected her Hlabaneni kraal, to receive the final and ultimate 'medication'.<sup>(4)</sup>

'War has in the past had its seat in Mnkabayi's Mahlabaneni kraal. When the men of that place take the field, it is generally known that war has broken out in the land in earnest.' (5)

Mnkabayi also ruled at kwaNobamba<sup>(6)</sup> and esiKlebheni.<sup>(7)</sup>

Thus she controlled the most ritually significant areas,

+ the most sacred regts

particularly kwa Nobamba, which was considered by some sources to have been built by Ndaba, or Jama.<sup>(8)</sup> EsiKlebheni was built by Senzangakona,<sup>(9)</sup> and Shaka was supposed to have been born there.<sup>(10)</sup> It was later ruled by Langazana, the chief wife of Senzangakona.<sup>(11)</sup>

Nobamba was there to watch over the chief, Nkosenkulu. When rain was wanted, it was asked for in the Emakosini country, and those asking would go to Nobamba.<sup>(12)</sup>

Nobamba was also a place of inviolate refuge.<sup>(13)</sup> The greater part of the umkosi ceremony took place at Nobamba and esiKlebheni,<sup>(14)</sup> while these two kraals also provided the cattle essential for the iziNkomo zemZimu ceremony that preceded the umkosi.<sup>(15)</sup> This ceremony was conducted by amakanda heads with some of their regiments. The inkata was kept at esiKlebheni or Nobamba.<sup>(16)</sup>

Mawa, sister of Mnkabayi, ruled at enTonteleni which was another of the original amakanda of Senzangakona.

*Oh* 'There may have been other kraals, but the tribe was small.'<sup>(17)</sup>

Thus, between them, the amakhosikazi occupied most of the ancestral lands,<sup>(18)</sup> central to war, rain and agricultural rituals.

The isibongo of Mnkabayi suggests yet another factor of the ikanda-heads authority;

'Intom' ethombe yom' umlamo,  
Zase ziyihlab' imithanti ezawonina' (19)

The lines refer to her rejection of men and marriage. The amakanda-heads were all women past child-bearing age, usually those without male-heirs. Bryant describes the amakhosikazi as

'bold and independent hussies. They evinced aversions to the bonds of matrimony and preferred to remain queans. (sic) By this we do not mean to suggest that they knew no man, quite the contrary. Their particular penchant was to go off, and sometimes, though rarely, get a child, and leave it behind and return home... True the name of Mnkabayi's 'man', or men, has never been revealed; nor that of Mmama's either. We meet them as two 'old maids', already firmly established as kraal-heads. Mnkabayi at her ebuQulusini (or emaHlabaneni) kraal... and Mmama at OSebeni... Mawa, in Shaka's time reigned over his Ntonteleni military kraal.' (20)

Mostly the amakhosikazi were old female relatives, particularly aunts of the king, but sometimes amakhanda-izighodlo heads were appointed from the ranks of ex-isigodlo girls, who had no issue.<sup>(21)</sup> It was essential that the king delegated control of the military, since the expanding Zulu

*Lancaster here on lack of kids freeing women for other control*

state and army was too large for the personal rule and administration of the king, even if he had had the means to carry it out.

Since the amakhanda-heads had no heirs, no longer any possibility of conceiving, and were excluded from the succession themselves, by their sex, they did not constitute foci of rival factions. Rather, since they owed their positions to the ubukosi of the king which they shared as abantwana, it was in their interests to uphold his position. Thus a reciprocal relationship was established, between them and the king. Furthermore, as the amakhanda-heads were beyond menopause, they were no longer 'unclean' or restricted by the cattle taboos and other avoidances observed by menstruating women. This meant that they functioned as 'men' within Zulu society. The praise poems of both Mnkabayi and Nandi address their subjects as men.<sup>(22)</sup> Because of their great age, these women were accorded much respect and esteem by all young men.<sup>(23)</sup> They were able to use their position within the ruling lineage, as the elders, to influence the king. Until a man was married, he remained attached to the household of his mother, and neither Shaka nor Dingane ever married. Thus Shaka remained closely influenced by his mother, as is demonstrated by his isibongo, which associates many of his actions with his mother, and those of Zwide with Ntombaze.<sup>(24)</sup> 2.

The authority of the amakanda-heads was equally rooted in a material base, as in an ideological one. The amakanda-heads exerted direct control over the regiments and izinduna under them, through their control of the isigodlo, and its agricultural production.<sup>(25)</sup> This control replaced the earlier control of the king, who had used his monopoly of trade to translate products of little local value such as ivory, into cattle with which he rewarded the amabutho. However, with the change to beef trade in Delagoa Bay, the amabutho had to concentrate their energies on accumulating cattle, not only valuable for the trade, but for their own use. Thus the king's control was circumvented, since the izinduna no longer had to depend on him for rewards.<sup>(26)</sup> However, increased military activity required longer absences from the homestead of each warrior, and also meant that less labour could be invested, by the amabutho in agriculture at the ikhanda. Consequently, the military establishment

came to depend increasingly on the agricultural production of the izigodlo, and the izigodlo wife controlled by the same women who constituted the amakanda-heads.<sup>(27)</sup>

Furthermore, the amakanda-heads also controlled marriage, particularly of the izinduna and other men of authority, through their control of the izigodlo. Since most izinduna were appointed to office, they needed to secure their positions through advantageous marriages. Membership of the izigodlo conferred status and prestige<sup>(28)</sup> and these women were thus most desirable. The strict control and taboos that protected the izigodlo women, including high palisades<sup>(29)</sup> and night police,<sup>(30)</sup> functioned to ensure that the ikhanda head retained ~~that~~ control over marriage, an important source of patronage, rather than to keep the 'harem' inviolate. This would explain why the izinceku were permitted access to the izigodlo.<sup>(31)</sup> They were entirely exempted from military service,<sup>(32)</sup> and their presence in the izigodlo did not threaten the control of the amakanda-heads over the amabutho.

The izinceku were essential to the maintenance of the relative autonomy of the isigodlo within the ikanda, for they tended to the isigodlo cattle, did the milking and could help with arduous labour.<sup>(33)</sup> They also participated in the umpakati<sup>(34)</sup> and could thus exert the influence of the izigodlo, and amakanda-heads. They frequently acted as personal agents, messengers, and spies of the amakanda-heads. Mnkabayi is supposed to have sent an inceku to warn Shaka of treachery from Senzangakona.<sup>(35)</sup> Izinceku <sup>also</sup> were also sent out to effect the replacement of izinduna.<sup>(36)</sup> They were frequently rewarded by appointments as izinduna, as were Mzilikazi,<sup>(37)</sup> Zulu<sup>(38)</sup> and Langalibele.<sup>(39)</sup> They were often armed,<sup>(40)</sup> and together with the night police<sup>(41)</sup> constituted an extra-military force attached to the izigodlo. *Mbopa - as an inceku, Komfuya - a woman*

The umNdlunkulu girls, like the izinceku, were part of the isigodlo under the ikhanda-head. They were usually girls taken as captives, and who performed the menial tasks of the isigqila and younger girls in the homestead.<sup>(42)</sup> They gained status only through marriage. Thus they depended greatly on the favour of the ikanda-head for permission to marry. They provided added sources of domestic labour, patronage and lobola for the ikanda head. Because of their lower status, they usually married poor, low-ranking men who could not pay the lobola in full.<sup>(43)</sup>

Thus the men remained in the debt of the ikanda head after they had jutshwa'd.

The amakhosikazi were of immense political consequence. Mnkabayi, co-regent with Mudli, during the minority of Senzangakona, was supposed to have organized the flight of Nandi and the baby Shaka, from the young king.<sup>(44)</sup> This story may, however, be a relatively typical distortion of oral history to indicate that she engineered his succession, since it affirms his legitimacy. Alternatively, considering the amount of dispute concerning the details of Shaka's conception, it may, just as well, be that Shaka was a total usurper of the Zulu chiefdom, supported by Dingiswayo.<sup>(45)</sup> Thus Mnkabayi's 'knowledge' of the baby Shaka could have been utilized to authenticate a tradition that obscured the fact of usurpation.<sup>(46)</sup> This would have been essential in order for the new king to draw authority from the Zulu ancestors. However this might be interpreted, it seems that Shaka owed his successful accession to the approval of Mnkabayi, Mawa and Mmama. They had rejected Sigujano on the grounds that his mother, Mpikase, was not a woman of rank, whereas Nandi, daughter of Mbengi, was.<sup>(47)</sup>

After the assassination of Shaka, and the murder of Mhlangana,<sup>(48)</sup> both of which Mnkabayi is supposed to have engineered, 'She was summoned either to Dukuza or Bulawayo. She was dressed as a man... she had a white shield with a black spot, assegais also, imphendhla with which she dondalazela'd - she chose Dingaan'.<sup>(49)</sup> She is appropriately praised as 'the little mouse that started the runs at Malandelas'<sup>(50)</sup> for she determined the course of Zulu history. She seemed able to make and unmake kings.

Nandi, too, was ambitious,

'Udl' ubisi lwenkom' enezimpondo (51)  
Ukwesab' abayisengayo '

and apparently closely allied with the military.<sup>(52)</sup>

She commanded the Izinyendane regiment, composed of Hlubis who had konza'd her after their defeat.<sup>(53)</sup>

Shaka is said to have murdered her after having discovered that she was concealing a 'son' of his.<sup>(54)</sup> If this was so, he probably feared that the amakhosikazi were plotting against him, since in the event of Shaka's demise, Nandi would have needed the support of Mnkabayi to secure the accession of the young 'son' she was harbouring. This would have meant a long regency during which the amakhozikazi would have ruled alone. Mnkabayi's swift move against

Shaka following Nandi's death, was possibly to defend herself against suspicion of complicity. The fact that he insisted she participate actively in the Mpondo campaign may have been a manifestation of such a suspicion.<sup>(55)</sup>

The authority and political strength of the amakanda-commanders depended on their effective extraction of the surplus labour of the izigodlo, and its redirection to the amabutho as agricultural produce, as well as on their ideological pre-eminence as members of the ruling lineage. Thus the amakanda-commanders straddled the top of both the kinship and the military hierarchies, and many of the contradictions generated by the simultaneous existence of these two systems, were resolved within their persons, rather than in that of the king. It was their control that upheld the king and the remaining kinship system and checked the power of the military.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter 3

- (1) Isibongo of Mnkabayi ka Jama, in Cope, T. Izibongo (1968)  
Mgidhlanana ka Mpande said she was the first Zulu woman to become 'queen and sovereign.' KCL, S.P. file 57, nbk. 7.
- (2) Cope, op.cit. pp 172 - 173.
- (3) Bryant, Zulu People pg.503.
- (4) *ibid.*
- (5) KCL, S.P. file 61, nbk. 45, evidence of Ngidi.
- (6) Webb and Wright, op. cit. vol. 2, pg.91, evidence of Magidigidi.
- (7) KCL, S.P. file 60, nbk. 29, evidence of Ndukwana and Madikane.
- (8) Webb and Wright, op.cit. vol. II pg.252, evidence of Mayinga. Mayinga further states 'Nobamba is the very oldest kraal in Zululand... The kings were always said to be buried there'.
- (9) Webb and Wright, op.cit. vol I, pg.41, evidence of Baleni ka Silwana.
- (10) Webb and Wright, op.cit. vol II, pp.47, 51, evidence of Madikane.
- (11) Webb and Wright, op.cit. vol II, pg.256, evidence of Mayinga.
- (12) *ibid*, pg. 253.
- (13) *ibid.*
- (14) Bryant op.cit. pg.515.  
Webb and Wright, op.cit. vol II, pg.253, evidence of Mayinga.
- (15) Bryant, op.cit. pg.515 .
- (16) Webb and Wright, op.cit. vol. I, pg.41, evidence of Baleni ka Silwana.  
Bryant, op.cit. pg.476-477. The national inkata was kept by one of the inkhosikazi, and the king's private inkata by a specially selected old lady, or isabukazi.
- (17) Webb and Wright, op.cit. vol II, pg.252, evidence of Mayinga; pp 48, 60, evidence of Madikane.
- (18) Senzankona's other umizi was emBelebeleni. (vol II, pg 252, evidence of Mayinga), but it was burnt down by Zwide (vol II, pg 181, evidence of Mandhlakazi). The elderly men had resided there, as well as at Nobamba and esiKlebheni. (vol II, pg 96, evidence of Magidigidi).



- (19) Isibonga of Mnkabayi, in Cope, op.cit. pg 173
- (20) Bryant, Olden Times in Zululand and Natal, pg.41.
- (21) KCL, S.P. file 60, nbk. 21, evidence of Mdabukelwa.
- (22) Cope, op.cit. pp 172-175. Mnkabayi is addressed as a man in the praise name 'Soqili', as the prefix 'uso-' indicates a man. Nandi's praise name 'Sontanti' also indicates masculinity, as does 'Somqeni'.
- (23) See above, pp 11
- (24) Cope, Op.cit. pp 88-117
- (25) Bryant, Zulu People, pg.478, 497.  
Stuart, J. and Malcolm, D. (eds)  
The Diary of Henry Francis Fynn, (1950) pg.25.  
KCL, S.P. file 60, nbk. 21, evidence of Mdabukelwa.
- (26) See below, pg 36.
- (27) See footnotes (24) and (25) Bryant makes the overlap more explicit. 'The later Zulu kings had a large number of military or regimental kraals (amakanda), each of which was at the same time an occasional royal residence, presided over by one of the great royal ladies (mothers, aunts and the like) and provided with a bevy of the umNdlunkulu unfortunates', Zulu People, pg 478.
- (28) KCL, S.P. file 59, nbk.34, evidence of Ndukwana and John Kumalo.
- (29) Bryant, op.cit. pg.474.
- (30) *ibid.*  
Webb and Wright, op.cit. vol.I, pg.178, evidence of Jantshi and Ndukwana.
- (31) KCL, S.P. file 60, nbk. 5, evidence of Mkando.
- (32) Bryant, op.cit. pg.475.
- (33) The cattle taboos were therefore no hindrance.
- (34) KCL, S.P. file 62, nbk. 84, evidence of Sivivi.
- (35) Webb and Wright, op.cit. vol. 1, pg.179, evidence of Jantshi.
- (36) KCL, S.P. file 61, nbk. 55, evidence of Dinya.  
This suggests that the appointments of izinduna may have been controlled by the amakanda-amakhosikazi.
- (37) KCL, S.P. file 62, nbk. 74, evidence of Madikane.
- (38) Webb and Wright, op.cit. vol.I, pg.107, evidence of Dinya.
- (39) Webb and Wright, op.cit. vol.II, pg.19, evidence of Mabonsa.
- (40) KCL, S.P. file 60, nbk. 22, evidence of Tununu,

- (41) Bryant suggests that the night-police were attendants of the same or similar status is the izinceku, also attached to the isigodlo. Zulu People, pg.474.
- (42) Bryant, op.cit. pg.478-479.
- (43) Lobolas were seldom paid in full. See above, pg.11.
- (44) Bryant, Olden Times in Zululand and Natal Webb and Wright, op.cit. vol.II, pp.47, 51, evidence of Madikane.
- (45) This approach follows that of J. Argyle regarding Dingiswayo, discussed in A. Koopman's unpublished seminar paper, 'Dingiswayo rides again'.
- (46) Since she occupied a position of ideological consequence, her recognition of a king would confer on him a share in the ubukosi of the Zulu royal lineage in the eyes of the people. The tradition concerning her dealings with the baby Shaka and Nandi may have been invented to confer such recognition. Legitimation by such means has been identified as a characteristic of oral history. These kinds of distortions of oral history are discussed by Vansina, J. Oral Traditions.
- (47) KCL, S.P. file 61, nbk. 39, evidence of Ngidi.
- (48) Webb and Wright op. cit. vol.I, pg.196, evidence of Jantshi and Ndukwana.
- (49) KCL, S.P. file 58, nbk. 23, evidence of Socwatsha and Mhokodoka.
- (50) Isibongo of Mukabayi, in Cope, op.cit. pg.172.
- (51) Isibongo of Nandi, in Cope, op cit. pg.174.
- (52) *ibid*.
- (53) Webb and Wright, op.cit. vol.II, pg,20, evidence of Mabonsa.
- (54) Webb and Wright, op.cit. vol.I, pg.57, evidence of Bazley; also pg.311, evidence of Lunguza.
- (55) KCL, S.P. file 61, nbk. 39, evidence of Ngidi.

4 THE DISTRIBUTION OF POWER AND AUTHORITY BETWEEN  
THE MILITARY OFFICES AND KINSHIP POSITIONS.

The timing of the murder of Shaka, and the caution with which the assassins proceeded, must be seen as indicative of their respect for the power of the army. The assassination appears to have been made possible by three factors. Firstly, the sustained absence of the entire army as it was sent south after the Mpondo, and then immediately north in pursuance of Hlangabæza and Sotshangane,<sup>(1)</sup> was of dual significance. It meant that Shaka was left entirely unprotected for a substantial period, and also that the izinduna were excluded from the political arena for that length of time, giving the assassins valuable time to consolidate their actions. It also meant that when the army eventually returned from an arduous campaign season, it was debilitated and broken up, unable to act cohesively or effectively.<sup>(2)</sup> Secondly, the important interval meant that the assassins had an opportunity to act against Ngwadi ka Gendeyane, another son of Nandi, and a potential focus of army loyalty.<sup>(3)</sup> Thirdly, the length and relative failure of the campaigns, particularly in the capture of cattle,<sup>(4)</sup> increased the dependence of the amabutho on the izigodlo, and hence on the amakanda-heads, for the ensuing season.<sup>(5)</sup> This military failure further called into question the whole tyrannical regime of Shaka, since for the first time, it failed to bring reward, illustrating thus the importance of successful raiding to the maintenance of the Shakan regime.

These factors suggest that the disastrous campaigns may have been deliberately decided on by Mnkabayi and the princes, as it is unlikely that the king would have deliberately arranged to be left unguarded. The 1828 campaigns did not follow the usual pattern of Zulu warfare, and it seems as though they were planned as a divergence for the army, rather than for victory. The recall of the udibi to form the iziNyosi regiment,<sup>(6)</sup> functioned to give a semblance of protection to the king, while depriving the army of their food-supplies, which were utterly crucial to a sustained campaign. Furthermore, the udibi had not yet soma'd with the king,<sup>(7)</sup> and were thus free from a sense of personal loyalty to him. Consequently, they constituted a force that could be manipulated by the assassins, particularly the amakanda-

heads.

The circumstances of the assassination suggest that a relatively strong link existed between king and army, that the assassins were at pains to neutralize. It was probably in part a hangover from the earlier direct control of the army by the king, which had grown out of his organization of the hunt.<sup>(8)</sup> It was also in part a result of the subsequent need to retain the king as a figurehead, a focus of loyalty for the various clans comprising the army, as well as an essential source of intercession with the ancestors, vital to the successful prosecution of war. Thus, the fiction was retained that the men were butha'd by the king, and remained under his control. The association between the king and the army was re-emphasised whenever there was a possibility of war.

\*All the men had great affection for their king. It could not be otherwise, for they were songwa'd together. This songaing took place in the shape of an ikata,... the amabutho would on a given day be directed to go and hlanza.<sup>(9)</sup>

Furthermore, Shaka had gained prestige and power through his military prowess and organizational ability. When he laid claim to the Zulu chieftaincy, he was an induna in the Mthethwa army.<sup>(10)</sup> Thus he was respected as a man of courage, as well as epitomizing the possibility of upward mobility through the army, a principle all izinduna were loath to see disregarded. Since the izinduna owed their appointment and authority to the king, and his ubuKosi, the assassination threatened their positions. It was further, a political fact of early 18th century Nguni politics, that a new king seldom retained the principal izinduna of his predecessor, lest they grew overpowerful.<sup>(11)</sup> Mobility within the army and appointment regardless of birth or hereditary right, was crucial to military efficiency, the key factor in Zulu campaigning success. The Zulu army was a relatively small force which depended for victory on sophisticated technology, shrewd tactics, superior training, efficient supplies and a high degree of organization generally.<sup>(12)</sup> Thus a premium was placed on an officer-corps of high ability, talent, bravery and daring.

"Anyone who was xwayile (wide-awake) was bekelwa'd (appointed to) amabutho made an induna. A man who was hlankanpile (clever) was placed in a position even though he was not of high-birth." (13)

Ndlela, son of Sompisi, the family cook of Senzangakona, 'by his wonderful deeds of prowess, grew to be the outshining amongst the Zulu braves.'<sup>(14)</sup> He rose rapidly under Shaka, but when Dingane ascended the throne, Ndlela ascended the pinnacle of power, becoming the king's first minister, the most important personage in the whole Zulu nation.<sup>(15)</sup> Since the izinduna were mostly men of ability, they drew authority from yet another perhaps less tangible source, for in a military situation the life and death of their men depended on that ability. Thus they commanded the respect and trust of the izinsizwa.

The izinduna owed much of their influence to their control and distribution of the king's sisa cattle, which could be withdrawn or reallocated at their discretion.<sup>(16)</sup> Their influence and patronage was also extended through the etula system,<sup>(17)</sup> and the distribution of the iminaka, which were a sign of prestige.<sup>(18)</sup> These copper bangles could only be removed with the permission of the king, also obtained through the izinduna.<sup>(19)</sup> The private wealth of the izinduna was augmented by their right to one out of every three captives taken by a warrior in a campaign,<sup>(20)</sup> and by the children and cattle taken from men who had been 'eaten up'.<sup>(21)</sup> The izinduna closely controlled the advancement of men in the army, since promotion and reward depended on the izinduna reporting bravery and ability.<sup>(22)</sup> The distribution of rewards, although authorized by the king, was not only based on the izinduna reports, but was also carried out by the izinduna, from the cattle captured. They were further responsible for the execution of justice, although obliged to report serious misdemeanours and the imposition of severe or capital punishment to the king. In practice, however, such reports were frequently neglected, or so delayed as to be of no consequence.<sup>(23)</sup>

It appears that the izinduna were able to arrogate for themselves many of the rights and prerogatives that the king had previously exerted through his control of the ivory trade. However, the major limitation placed on power of the army was its reliance on the production of the izigodlo, a consequence of ever-increasing military activity.<sup>(24)</sup> As Bryant remarked, 'The one outstanding

flaw in this otherwise excellent organization was ... the chronic dearth of food, and the dearth of girls.'<sup>(25)</sup>

The reign of Dingane saw the ascendancy of two izinduna, Ndlela and Dambuza.<sup>(26)</sup> My research has not as yet indicated to what extent this meant a decline in the power of the amakanda-commanders. It may have been a consequence of the deaths of Mnkabayi, and earlier, Nandi, two of the most powerful and influential of their number. It may have been that Dingane became increasingly dependent on the military to hold the vast kingdom together, in place of the great myth, the tyranny of the Zulu king which had received a severe blow with the assassination of Shaka, and the subsequent period of 'benevolent' rule, which Dingane had been forced to initiate to safeguard his accession.<sup>(27)</sup> Furthermore, as Gardiner points out, Dingane, unlike Shaka, did not accompany his amabutho to battle, and was hence completely dependent on his inzinduna.<sup>(28)</sup> Perhaps more significant however, was the fact that both Ndlela and Dambuza were in charge of areas of the kingdom,<sup>(29)</sup> as well as having control of the army. This may have meant that they, and their regiments, were to some extent, freed from dependence on the izigodlo. This is borne out by the widespread release of izigodlo girls during Dingane's reign.<sup>(30)</sup> Furthermore, it meant that for the first time the izinduna could lay claim to the authority base of the izikhulu or regional commanders, and in combining the two sources of power, contribute further to the erosion of kingly authority.

Under Shaka, the izinduna were category distinct from the izikhulu and abanumzane, defined by their appointment to office, and their association with the army. There were great and small izinduna, as well as izikomo who had not yet thunga'd, and amaphini who were lower-ranking military officials. However, their positions did not incorporate civil activity in the way that they did under Dingane. Under Shaka, such civil functions, particularly in the rule of subregions, were undertaken by the izikhulu, and on a local level, by the abanumzane.

Like the amakanda-commanders, the izikhulu owed their power and influence to the expansion of the Zulu kingdom. They were permitted to accumulate authority and trappings of kingship in order to facilitate the incorporation of many disparate elements of the kingdom. Thus it was essential that they too, shared the ubukosi

of the Zulu king, in order to command respect and also to stress the legitimacy of Zulu hegemony. They mostly ruled over the outlying areas of the kingdom which could have proved the most troublesome. They wielded great authority, but like amakanda-heads, they were not in the line of succession.

Mapitha, who controlled the area to the north of the Mfolozi, known as cousin of Shaka, was the son of Sojiysa, who was the adopted son of Jama, and not the real brother of Senzangokona.<sup>(31)</sup> He was therefore, technically excluded from the Zulu succession. Mapitha was responsible for the revival and reorganization of the Mhandlakazi, after the defeat of the Ndwandwe in 1826.<sup>(32)</sup> His powers were far-flung, but not on a military level. Ideologically he could supervise homage and sacrifice to the Zulu royal ancestors, an essential focus in a hitherto hostile area. His town was effectively a royal court, autonomous in political and judicial matters. His family also exercised considerable authority, notably his mother, Sondile. He controlled the road to Mabudu, essential to the Delagoa Bay trade route and itself 'a great supplying country for Zululand,' as well as the Mona Valley. Brass and copper products were locally manufactured, the only place other than at the royal court itself.<sup>(33)</sup>

Ngwadi was also allowed a large measure of autonomy, and authority over many people, since he too was technically excluded from the succession, as a son of Gedenyana, and not Senzangakona.<sup>(34)</sup> The other major izikhulu all acknowledged Zulu supremacy. Mlandela of the Nyambose, (Mthethwa ruling lineage) had khonza'd Shaka after Somveli, Dingiswayo's heir, had fled.<sup>(35)</sup> Jobe of the Sithole, a subordinate Tembu lineage, defected to the Zulu (before the defeat of Ngoza), as did Nqetho of the Qwabe, both of whom required Zulu might to sanction their authority.<sup>(36)</sup> Magaye of the Cele had been chosen by the Zulu authorities to succeed, while Zihandlo of the Mkise-Mbo had also submitted.<sup>(37)</sup> Thus, the izikhulu owed their positions to the might of the Zulu army or election by Zulu authorities. They were drawn into the aristocracy that monopolised power within the state, frequently at the expense of the king. Nqeto, for example, was able to demand that the Zulu king accord him greater respect. He rejected the king's gift of a head of a beast 'as the meat that ticks ate',<sup>(38)</sup> and Shaka acquiesced by sending him

rib-meat. Likewise, the traditions state that Nqeto would only be content with the best beer.<sup>(39)</sup>

Although the incidents related are trivial, they are typical features of oral history, and metaphorically suggest that Nqeto did have substantial status, vis-a-vis the Zulu monarch, particularly considering that the Qwabe were essential to augment the Zulu forces; as were the regiments of Zihandlo.<sup>(40)</sup>

Similarly, Magaye, of whom Shaka was supposed to be afraid,<sup>(41)</sup> was able to extract from the king the right to 'protect himself' - i.e. he did not have to offer hospitality to those en route to the Zulu imizi, as was the custom.<sup>(42)</sup> Although the izikhulu retained certain monopolies, such as over trade-routes, (Mapitha), fat-tailed sheep<sup>(43)</sup> and the best cattle (Jobe)<sup>(44)</sup> or river-crossings and local crafts, and took acknowledged precedence over the izinduna,<sup>(45)</sup> their power was limited because they could neither call up regiments, nor command them directly. Frequently, the amabutho stationed in their areas were not made up of their clansmen, and thus were not influenced by any residual ubokosi that the izikhulu might have retained.

The lesser izikhulu were often heads of such pre-existing lineages, rooted in old kinship systems. However, they mostly had few resources other than cattle and land given by Shaka, to whom they sent tribute in the form of izigodlo girls. They were under the great izikhulu.<sup>(46)</sup>

Furthermore, the izikhulu were dispersed and far from the central government, making participation in the umpakati awkward, and thus they were often excluded from immediate day-to-day decisions.<sup>(47)</sup> In practice, it appears as though major decisions were a consequence of the deliberations of the izinduna, moderated by the opinions of the izinceku when submitted to the umpakati.<sup>(48)</sup>

The izikhulu were essentially part of the kinship system, as were the abanumzane, but their power was gradually being eroded along with that of the homestead, through the growth of the military. They retained control over land resources,<sup>(49)</sup> but not over labour, and the labour was being directed away from homestead land by the amabutho. The abanumzane were for the most part hereditary lineage-heads, regional or village heads. They could not extract service from the people under them, 'though when



tutaing (moving) or shifting kraal, he (the umnumzane) would expect them to help, and they would. They would help to cut wood for his kraal.<sup>(50)</sup> He did however retain the right to izincinza girls, of men who had come to live at his kraal.<sup>(51)</sup> He would settle quarrels over gardens, though people had the right to appeal to the isikhulu.<sup>(52)</sup> The abanumzane also had to report any new arrivals to the izikhulu.<sup>(53)</sup>

Sahlins, in focussing on the household in primitive economies has concluded that they tend towards under-production or limited surplus,<sup>(54)</sup> a situation which would have been considerably aggravated by the labour demands of the amabutho, and progressive ecological degeneration.<sup>(55)</sup> Furthermore, the abanumzane no longer controlled marriage, either through the loan of lobola cattle or through arranging the ujuba dances. Neither did they continue to control the period of cadetship of juniors, through local circumcision lodges. Thus it appears that the abanumzane also suffered a considerable erosion of authority, as a consequence of the expanding military system.

By the time Gardiner visited Zululand, he found that the izinduna in complete control over the local abanumzane.

'Finding the matter hopeless among these petty numzana's, I sent, as recommended by the headman here, for the necessary permission to the Indoona of a large military town not far distant, without whose sanction it appeared, these inferior chiefs were reluctant to take the responsibility of assisting me with men.'<sup>(57)</sup>

On arriving at Umgungundlovu, Gardiner found it impossible to deal with Dingane, without the sanction of Ndlela and Dambuza, who he found to be all-powerful.

'Umkunginglove, which is the present seat of government and by far the largest town in the kingdom, is strictly an ekanda officered by about twenty Indoonas, including Umthlella and Tamboozza who, being the two national councillors and head Indoonas, By far the greater proportion of soldiers comprising this regiment (about nine hundred strong) are chiefs of smaller towns, bearing the appellation of Indoona or Umnumzana (head of a village); and it is evidently with a political view of state surveillance, that the most influential of these are formed into this description of a body-guard, and that all in rotation are obliged to appear and reside for some time in the capital, where they become not only hostages for the good conduct of those dependent on them, but are thereby prevented from plotting any scheme for the subversion of the existing government.'<sup>(58)</sup>

Thus by the reign of Dingane, the military appeared to have consolidated their position on one hand through control of the remnant kinship system, particularly over

the abanumzane and on the other hand through the arrogation of most of the earlier prerogatives of the king.

FOOTNOTESChapter 4

- (1) Webb and Wright, op.cit. vol.I, pg.95, evidence of Dinya; also pg.187, evidence of Jantshi and Ndukwana. 'Even the old men went out to fight', ibid.
- (2) 'It returned to find Tshaka dead and it returned dying too along the way, for it was attacked by malaria. The men returned in ones, twos, fives etc. at a time.' Webb and Wright, op.cit. vol I, pg.187, evidence of Jantshi and Ndukwana.
- (3) Webb and Wright, op.cit. vol.I, pg.191, evidence of Jantshi and Ndukwana; vol II, pg.254, evidence of Mayinga, Dinya and Mkotana. Hedges, D. op.cit. pg.219.
- (4) See footnote (2) for the failure of the campaign in the north.
- (5) Webb and Wright, op.cit. vol I, pg 213, evidence of Kumalo.
- (6) Morris,D. The Washing of the Spears pg.107.
- (7) Soma'd - rolled up together, as in the inkata.
- (8) The development of centralized authority by the inkosi is analysed by Hedges, op.cit. chapter 3.
- (9) KCL, S.P. file 60, nbk. 28, evidence of Tununu.
- (10) KCL, S.P. file 62, nbk. 68, evidence of Melapi, Mazinyana and Dinya.
- (11) KCL, S.P. file 70, pg.9, evidence of Socwatsha.
- (12) These included use of the short, stabbing spear, running barefoot over long distances, introduction of the udibi and surprise attacks.
- (13) KCL, S.P. file 60, nbk. 25, evidence of Tununu.
- (14) Bryant, Olden Times in Zululand and Natal, pg.59.
- (15) ibid. Bryant further stated that Ndlela was able to use his position and influence to further many of his clansmen.
- (16) KCL, S.P. file 73, pg.131,
- (17) See above, pg 6.
- (18) Webb and Wright, op.cit. vol.I, pg.109, evidence of Dinya.
- (19) ibid.
- (20) KCL, S.P. file 72, pg.1.
- (21) ibid.

- (22) 'Considerable authority is delegated to the principal Indoona of each ekanda as well to inflict punishment as to reward', Gardiner, A. op.cit. pg.94. Gardiner also describes how officers are appointed to control the distribution of meat. (pg.55)  
KCL, S.P. file 57, nbk. 2, Mqaikana ka Yenge.
- (23) N.P.A. Shepstone Collection, papers of T. Shepstone, vol.79, pg 17-18,
- (24) See above, Chapter 3.
- (25) Bryant, Zulu People, pg. 188.
- (26) Gardiner, op.cit.
- (27) Subsequently, the Zulu state returned to a policy of terrorism, but under the direct control of Dambuza and Ndlela.
- (28) KCL, S.P. file 57, nbk. 2, evidence of Mqaikana.
- (29) Bryant, Olden Times in Zululand and Natal, pg.59.
- (30) Webb and Wright, op.cit.vol.I, pg.312, evidence of Lunguza, also pg.196, evidence of Jantshi.
- (31) Bryant, op.cit. pp.44,45.
- (32) Hedges, op.cit. pg. 215.
- (33) *ibid.*
- (34) Webb and Wright, op.cit. vol.I, pg.191, evidence of Jantshi and Ndukwana.
- (35) Hedges, op.cit. pg.203 .
- (36) Bryant, op.cit. pg.200; Stuart and Malcolm (eds) op.cit. pg.17, 165.
- (37) Hedges, op.cit. pg. 206. Also Webb and Wright, op . cit. vol.I, pg.117, evidence of Dinya.
- (38) KCL, S.P. file 61, nbk. 51, evidence of Mmemi; Webb and Wright, op.cit. vol.I, pg. 210, evidence of Kambi.
- (39) *ibid.*
- (40) Webb and Wright, op.cit. vol.II, pg.53, evidence of Madikane .
- (41) Webb and Wright, op.cit. vol.I, pg.117, evidence of Dinya.
- (42) *ibid.*
- (43) Hedges, op.cit. pg.226.
- (44) Webb and Wright, op.cit. vol II, pg.60, evidence of Madikane .
- (45) KCL, S.P. file 60, nbk. 30, evidence of Mgidhlana .

- (46) KCL, S.P. file 60, nbk. 4, evidence of the 'amaduna of John Dunn'. Also, Hedges, op cit. pg.217.
- (47) KCL, S.P. file 59, nbk. 34, evidence of Ndukwana and John Kumalo. Stuart and Malcolm (eds) op.cit. pg.27-28. Omer-Cooper, 'Aspects of....' in Thompson,(ed) op. cit.
- (48) See above, chapter three,
- (49) KCL, S.P. file 60, nbk. 4, evidence of the 'amaduna of John Dunn'.
- (50) KCL, S.P. file 59, nbk. 34, evidence of Ndukwana and John Kumalo,
- (51) KCL, file 72, pg.2.
- (52) KCL, S.P. file 60, nbk. 4, evidence of the 'amaduna of John Dunn'.
- (53) *ibid.*,
- (54) Sahlins,M. Stone Age Economics .
- (55) See above, chapter one,
- (56) Both of these sources of influence and authority were appropriated by the central state authorities.
- (57) Gardiner,A. Narrative of a Journey into Zoola Country, pg.26.
- (58) *ibid.* pp 93, 94.

5 THE INKOSI - AN ABSOLUTE MYTH

Conventional studies of the Zulu state have focussed on the despotism of Shaka, and to a lesser extent, that of his successor Dingane.<sup>(1)</sup> In the 'Great Man' tradition, they have frequently attributed the rise of the Zulu state to the personal abilities of Dingiswayo and Shaka. Sir Theophilus Shepstone remarked of Shaka that his 'surprising talents and energy gave him unbounded influence over the minds of his people as well as power over their persons and property.'<sup>(2)</sup> In this, they have closely followed oral historical accounts of the period, which associate the military innovations and increased scale of warfare with the ability, bravery and tyranny of Shaka. Thus he is popularly accredited with the introduction of the ikilwa, close in-fighting, intensive training, and utilization of the crescent formation in war.<sup>(3)</sup> It has been argued that it was the military sophistication of the Zulu army, inspired by the genius of Shaka that led to the conquest and incorporation of neighbouring clans and the establishment of the Zulu state.

However, focus on a central figure has been recognized as an essential feature of oral history. Since the greatest military successes were achieved under Shaka, the oral record tends to attribute to him all military innovations, a natural association where no written record is kept. Likewise, the oral history tends to attribute absolute power to the monarch personally, in describing the Zulu nation at the zenith of its power. Oral history revolves around major figures and dominant trends as this simplification facilitates its retention. Thus frequently when testimonies refer to Shaka they function metonymically meaning the state as a whole or as synecdoche referring to a specific and different form of central authority. Thus the person of the king is the peg on which the past is hung.<sup>(4)</sup>

This explains the discrepancies between the written accounts of European eye-witnesses, such as Fynn,<sup>(5)</sup> Isaacs<sup>(6)</sup> and Gardiner,<sup>(7)</sup> and the oral testimonies given at the end of the 19th century to James Stuart by Nguni informants. The former are more specific regarding the delegation of authority in the Zulu kingdom and the

limitations on the king's power, while the latter tend to associate all occurrences and all authority, directly with the Zulu monarch.

Nevertheless, the accounts of the earliest Europeans in Northern Zululand, although displaying awareness of the limits of, and the rationale behind, the tyranny of the monarchy,<sup>(8)</sup> were as profoundly affected by its evidence as were the Nguni informants. Nathaniel Isaacs expressed his horror at Shaka's barbarity.

'The world has heard of monsters - Rome had her Nero, the Huns their Attila, and Syracuse her Dionysius; the East has likewise produced her tyrants, but for ferocity, Chaka has exceeded them all: he has outstripped in sanguinary executions all who have gone before him and in any country.' (9)

Shakan atrocities, such as the slaughter of women and children in war, the filling in of the Tatiyana donga with human bodies, and the disembowelment of pregnant women, outraged Victorian sensibilities.

Recent studies too, notably that of Donald Morris,<sup>(10)</sup> have sought to explain these actions as a consequence of the 'abnormal' personality of Shaka, which Morris relates to the king's presumed homosexuality and/or sexual inadequacy. He argues that Shaka was able to indulge in himself for the effects of his tyranny satisfied prevailing social needs. Fynn and Isaacs however, did not find Shaka in any way abnormal, but they did accuse him of 'political tricks'.<sup>(11)</sup> Fynn claimed that Shaka admitted that the severe penalties, imposed after the death of Nandi, were calculated to inspire fear amongst the people of how much sacrifice would be involved in the death of Shaka himself.<sup>(12)</sup> As E.V. Walters has indicated, in his Terror and Resistance - a Study of Political Violence, 'terroristic despotism depends on the impact that violence makes on the consciousness of witnesses and on the communication of this fear to others more remote.'<sup>(13)</sup> This would have been a crucial factor in the maintenance of control over an empire as disparate and far-flung as the Zulu state. Walters further argues, that Shaka used terror as a personal weapon to maintain his position under changing conditions, not only to assert control over the conquered and incorporated, but also to inhibit potential political resistance from leading men within the state.

The Walters' thesis indicates how terrorism was employed rationally and consciously by the Zulu monarch, as a crucial device in the control of the Zulu kingdom. However, Walters ignores a second dimension suggested by much of the evidence he uses to prove that terrorism was deliberately propagated, viz: that the impression of despotism or absolutism was much a device to ensure control, submission and ultimately total unity. Fynn was amongst the first to suggest that there were limitations to the real power wielded by the Zulu kings, that were not entirely consistent with the official image.<sup>(14)</sup> He felt that Shaka 'was unable to restrain his army once it arrived at its destination', that it would only be content with total destruction even against the king's orders.<sup>(15)</sup> The regiments Ndabenkulu, Dekenya, and Dhlagezwa actually went out after Matiwane against Shaka's orders.<sup>(16)</sup> Isaacs noted that Shaka was known to harangue and threaten the warriors, but that he was never able to punish the army as a whole.<sup>(17)</sup> Cowards had to be isolated and identified, by the induna, and then the king would order their execution. Isaacs further corroborated the view of limited power, particularly vis-a-vis the army, 'the Zoola monarch has merely the shadow of power'.<sup>(18)</sup> Evidence of this nature led Ferguson, author of 'The Zulus and the Spartans' to conclude that Shaka lived in fear of some of his izinduna.<sup>(19)</sup> He was unable to control various rebellious subjects who were esteemed within the army, notably Mzilikazi<sup>(20)</sup> and Ndengezi.<sup>(21)</sup> Those chiefs who had submitted to Zulu hegemony and whose forces constituted a crucial part of Zulu armed might, were able to exert substantial pressure on the Zulu king, notably Nqeto and Magaye.<sup>(22)</sup> Shaka apparently struggled to secure the appointment of his own nominees to positions of military rank.<sup>(23)</sup> Furthermore, the Zulu king did not monopolise the manufacture of the implements of war. Assegais were made in Mhandlakazi<sup>(24)</sup> as well as at the royal court, while the regiments themselves manufactured shields.<sup>(25)</sup> Since the Zulu army no longer used throwing assegais, they did not lose many weapons during a battle. It was considered a great loss of honour, as well as of iron, to return without one's weapons. Thus the assegais did not need to be continually replaced, and the king's limited monopoly was of little effect. Neither did the king exert a monopoly over the ubukosi of the Zulu ancestors. Thus



although he played a key role in the rituals before and after war, and in the ceremonies surrounding the agricultural cycle, it was not an indispensable one.<sup>(26)</sup>

Furthermore, it appears that the incwala was the chief occasion on which the king could be publicly criticised by his officials.<sup>(27)</sup> It seems therefore that one must not make too much of the ideological level of kingly authority.

It should further be noted that the king only owned the land on which the royal imizi were situated.<sup>(28)</sup> The king could not allocate any other land at will, he could only recommend people to one of the isikhulu who in turn would send them to a local umnumzane.<sup>(29)</sup> The latter could refuse to have the people if he wished, though in practice this seldom happened since labour was needed.<sup>(30)</sup> Finally, the king did not have a final say in the declaration of war. It depended on the manifestation of one of two possible omens, either the king could dream his ancestors agreed to it, or an ox might bellow in the night long after all had gone to bed, which might be heard by any of the izinduna.<sup>(31)</sup> Finally, the emphasis in the Shakan state was on energy, youth and vigour. Old people lost status in Nguni society as the army gained in ascendancy.<sup>(32)</sup> Shaka was acutely aware of his own grey hairs<sup>(33)</sup> and the possibility of an associated decline in his authority.

These limitations on the conventional conception of the king's power meant that the maintenance of control over the expanding army constituted a major problem for Shaka. The izinduna had managed to arrogate for themselves many prerogatives, and sources of power and influence that the king had previously maintained.<sup>(34)</sup> This was essentially a consequence of the expansion of the Zulu kingdom, which rendered central government in the person of the king impossible, and of the changing nature of the Delagoa Bay trade. Recent materialist analyses, notably those of Smith<sup>(35)</sup> and Hedges,<sup>(36)</sup> have attempted to explain the basis of Zulu kingly authority in terms of the monarchy's monopolization of the increasingly important ivory trade with Delagoa Bay. They argue that hunting was a form of rationalized labour organised by the local inkosi who received in return, the ground-tusk of every elephant killed. Through the growth of the Delagoa Bay trade, the inkosi was able to utilize his monopoly of it to turn ivory, a commodity of no local

value, into prestige trade goods, with which the inkosi could expand his sphere of influence and patronage. Thus he gradually centralized government in his person.<sup>(37)</sup>

However, Smith and Hedges do not fully illuminate the implications of the change from ivory to the beef trade in which whalers participated after 1800.<sup>(38)</sup> This meant that the maintenance of royal authority through an influx of prestige goods depended on the extraction of a product of great local value. Furthermore, the shift in the nature of the trade occurred in a period of ecological degeneration, drought and famine, during which surpluses were not easily realized as cattle.<sup>(39)</sup> Thus extraction through force was demanded. This meant an increased emphasis on the activities of amabutho as a military unit in raiding, tribute exaction, political executions and the collection of fines. The army had to expand extensively and demanded intensive organization. Thus the king could no longer maintain personal control over his forces. Furthermore, he lost the key basis of his authority over the amabutho viz: his ability to convert a product of little local value into one of great prestige. Essentially the amabutho were now able to win their own rewards since they raided for cattle, the local form of wealth.<sup>(40)</sup>

During the Shakan regime, the amabutho were kept in check by the amakanda heads,<sup>(41)</sup> and by the myth of terroristic despotism. The latter was a national policy for the control of a large kingdom by a small aristocracy. A figurehead was an essential focus in the disturbed kingdom. Thus great emphasis was placed on the ideological role of the king. He was the key figure in the inspiration of the warriors on the eve of battle, in ensuring their safety and success through his medications.<sup>(42)</sup> Furthermore, this ideological role was central in the justification of the domination by a small aristocracy over a large labouring class, and hence the continued existence of the state.<sup>(43)</sup> Thus the frequent bongaing which characterized the royal court functioned to reiterate the association between the king and the Zulu ancestors, as well as stressing the king's own abilities as a ruler. The izibongo helped to unite the Zulu state since they promoted the fiction of common ancestry in a form that was reiterated every occasion. The izibongo recited at the king's graves were used to stimulate the warriors on the eve of war, to fight

for the Zulu nation.<sup>(44)</sup> Similarly, the inkata was a symbol of the unity of the nation welded through its king.<sup>(45)</sup>

Under Dingane however the control of the amakhandas over the army appears to have faded,<sup>(46)</sup> and the myth of the great and invincible Zulu monarch had been destroyed with the assassination of Shaka. Thus Dingane found himself increasingly at the mercy of the izinduna and the army.<sup>(47)</sup> Unlike Shaka, he did not accompany his army to battle and was thus forced to accept the recommendations of the izinduna on all matters military.<sup>(48)</sup> News of Shaka's death had been announced immediately instead of following the custom of delaying public knowledge until the succession was arranged,<sup>(49)</sup> and new power alignments were settled. The military were able to capitalize on the period of instability that followed, and on Dingane's insecurity in office. This is reflected in the immediate relaxation of controls regarding the army, that followed Dingane's accession,<sup>(50)</sup> rather than the customary 'washing of the spears' campaign, to divert the army while the succession was settled.

The subsequent return to a policy of terrorism under Dingane, Isaacs firmly blamed on the 'fiery spirit of some of the chiefs who are more impetuous than national',<sup>(51)</sup> and who often broke into turbulence, and provoked the king to violent acts. Isaacs further stated the king admitted he was often forced to appease his izinduna, lest they say he was not fit to rule.<sup>(52)</sup> The missionary Gardiner felt that Dingane was virtually powerless at the hands of Dambuza and Ndlela. He described how Ndlela was able to insist on the execution of Dingane's brother despite the king's attempts to protect him.<sup>(53)</sup> Owen too, felt less afraid of the Zulu king than of his zealous captains.<sup>(54)</sup>

It seems that while the Shaka period saw the expansion of the army, and the extension of military power, complete ascendancy was only achieved in 1830's, through the king's dependence on the army.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter 5

- (1) Including the eye-witness accounts of Isaacs, Fynn, Farewell, Gardiner and Owen, the testimonies of Stuart's informants, popular histories such as Ritter's Shaka Zulu, Morris's Washing of the Spears, and Omer-Cooper's Zulu Aftermath.
- (2) NPA, Shepstone Collection, papers of T. Shepstone, vol. 83, pg.2.
- (3) See Ritter, E. Shaka Zulu, and Shaka's isibongo in Cope, T. Izibongo.
- (4) It is crucial that these characteristics of oral history be considered.
- (5) Stuart and Malcolm, (eds) op.cit.
- (6) Isaacs, N. Travels and Adventures in Eastern Africa.
- (7) Gardiner, A. op.cit.
- (8) See below pg.34
- (9) Isaacs, N. op.cit. vol. I.
- (10) Morris, op.cit.
- (11) Stuart and Malcolm (eds) op.cit. pg.137.
- (12) *ibid.*
- (13) Walters, Terror and Resistance - a Study of Political Violence, pg.132 .
- (14) Stuart and Malcolm (eds) op.cit. pg,232 .
- (15) *ibid.*
- (16) KCL, S.P. file 61, nbk. 47, evidence of Ngidi,
- (17) Isaacs, vol. I, op.cit. pg.158.
- (18) *ibid.*, vol. II pg.230, 231 ,
- (19) Ferguson, 'The Zulu and the Spartans', Harvard African Studies, vol. II, pg.230.
- (20) Mzilikazi refused to surrender to Shaka all the cattle he had taken in battle, and chose to flee north.
- (21) Ndengezi felt that he had not been adequately rewarded for his bravery in battle, and also chose to depart. Webb and Wright, op.cit. vol. II, pg.52, evidence of Madikane, also vol. I, pg.107, evidence of Dinya.
- (22) See above, chapter four.

- (23) Webb and Wright, vol. I, pg. 101, evidence of Dinya.
- (24) See above, chapter four.
- (25) Otherwise, the regiments would take the skins to a shield maker. Bryant op.cit. pg. 404.
- (26) See above, chapter three.
- (27) Bryant, op.cit. chapter twelve.
- (28) KCL, S.P. file 60, nbk. 4, evidence of the 'amaduna of John Dunn'.
- (29) *ibid.*
- (30) Webb and Wright, op.cit. vol. I, pg. 29, evidence of Baleni.
- (31) KCL, S.P. file 58, nbk. 17, evidence of Mtshapi and Ndube.
- (32) Stuart and Malcolm (eds), op.cit. pg. 14,  
 'The aged must be separated and placed in the rear  
 Do you not see that they impede the king's own  
 army,  
 They were men formerly,  
 But now our mother's mothers,  
 We must find petticoats to wear.'  
 Gibexgu, meaning 'drive out the aged' was the  
 name of a principal royal umizi.
- (33) He wanted the macassar oil, promised by the Europeans more than anything else.
- (34) See above, chapter four.
- (35) Smith, A. 'The Trade of Delagoa Bay as a factor in Nguni politics', in Thompson, L. (ed) African Societies in Southern Africa, (1969)
- (36) Hedges, D. 'Trade and Politics in Southern Mocambique in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', unpublished Phd. thesis, University of London, 1978.
- (37) *ibid.* chapter three.
- (38) Smith, op.cit.
- (39) See above, chapter one.
- (40) In a sense, the role of the king was no longer essential in the realisation of surpluses of local significance.
- (41) See above, chapter three.
- (42) Bryant, Zulu People, pg. 503.
- (43) Hindess and Hirst in Pre Capitalist Modes of Production define a state by the existence of a large labouring class and small non-labouring aristocracy. Ideologically, this class differentiation in Zulu society was justified by the monopoly of the abantwana of access to the ancestors of the Zulu royal lineage. Thus the state could

not exist without the king, particularly once that aristocracy began to be infiltrated by the izinduna. They depended on the person of the inkosi to perpetuate the dominance of one class over another.

- (44) Bryant, op.cit. pg.503, 504.
- (45) *ibid.* pg.469.
- (46) See above, pg. 27.
- (47) Gardiner, A. op.cit. pg.44.
- (48) KCL, S.P. file 57, nbk. 2, evidence of Mqaikana .
- (49) KCL, S.P. file 58, nbk. 23, evidence of Socwatsha and Mhokado.
- (50) Particularly the relaxation of control over marriage.
- (51) Isaacs, op.cit. vol.II, pg.183.
- (52) *ibid*, vol.I, pg.158.
- (53) Gardiner, op.cit. pg.45-46.
- (54) Bird, Annals of Natal, vol.I, pg.353 .

## CONCLUSION

The utilization of the research principles discussed in the introduction, can be seen to have opened up an area hitherto obscured by assumptions about demographic increase and the essential inferiority of women. A re-examination of these two precepts resulted in a focus on the role of the amakanda-heads, an aspect previously ignored. The importance of this analysis lies in the fact that it goes some way to resolving the contradiction that appeared in the co-existence of the military and kinship systems, both depending on the appropriation of what seems to have been the same labour. Old men, young men and boys, abanumzane and women were all drawn into the amabutho. It seems impossible therefore to see the continued existence of the homestead as a viable productive unit, as do Wright and Hedges. Conclusions such as these, indicate that the approach taken and the resultant emphasis on the centrality of labour compel a basic re-analysis of the major structural features of Zulu society.